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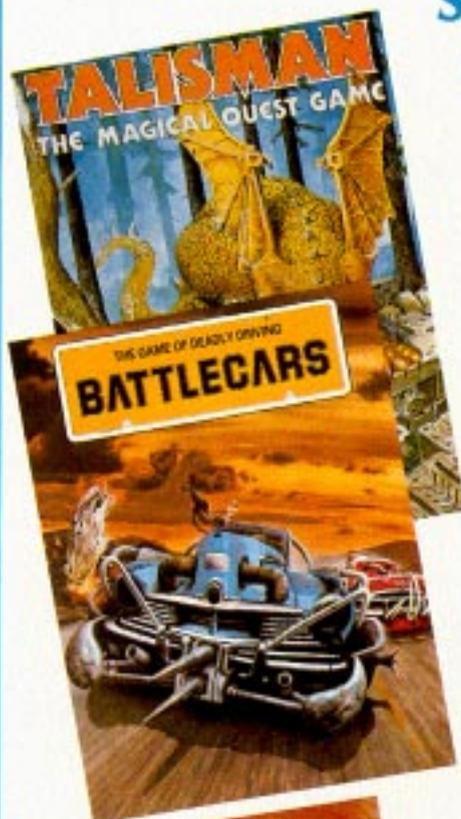
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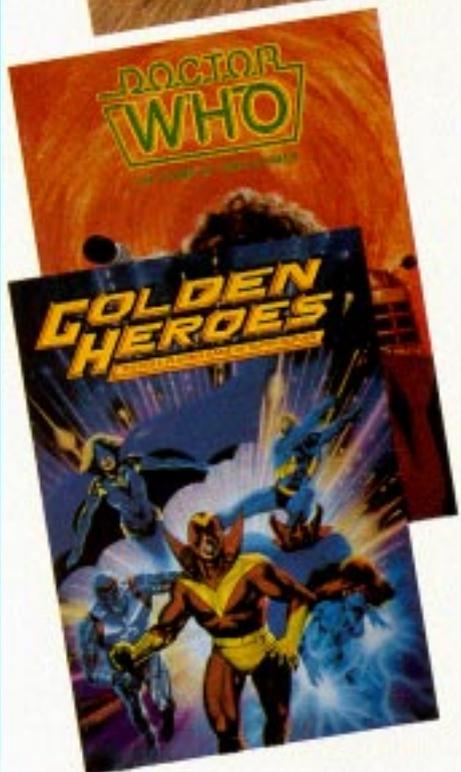
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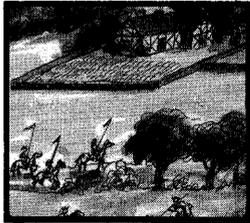
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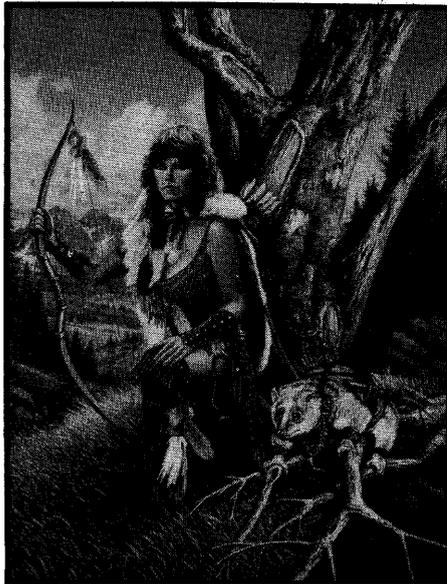
24



10



43



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Monthly adventure role-playing aid Dragon[®]

Vol. IX, No. 2

February 1985

SPECIAL ATTRACTION

- 43 **Creature Catalog II**
Eighteen more new monsters for AD&D[®] game adventures

OTHER FEATURES

- 8 **Official changes for rangers** — *E. Gary Gygax*
The long-awaited tracking rules, and more
- 10 **An army travels on its stomach** — *Katharine Kerr*
Even fantasy armies must live by the laws of the land
- 18 **Same dice, different odds** — *David G. Weeks*
Divided rolls produce more unpredictable results
- 22 **Reptiliad Attack wins big** — *Dan Sample & Kim Eastland*
Color photos of the Masters champ from the Miniature Open
- 24 **The ecology of the chimera** — *Ed Greenwood*
The three-headed terror and its even more horrible relative
- 32 **Playing in the modern era** — *Game review by Arlen P. Walker*
The many virtues and few faults of the *MS&PE* system
- 41 **'My Honor Is My Life'** — *Tracy Hickman*
Background for DRAGONLANCE[™] campaigns: The Knights of Solamnia
- 56 **Fortunes of a Fool** — *Nicholas Yermakov*
Wherein a man and his frog are not soon enough parted
- 82 **The Gun That Shot Too Straight** — *Ralph Roberts*
Sooner or later, this story will hit the spot
- 88 **World Gamers Guide**
Our first listing of, by, and for overseas gamers

DEPARTMENTS

- | | | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|----|-------------------------------------|----|--------------------|
| 3 | Letters | 35 | Convention calendar | 89 | Wormy |
| 6 | The forum | 64 | Coming Attractions | 93 | Dragonmirth |
| 37 | The Role of Books | 65 | The ARES[™] Section | 94 | Snarfquest |

COVER

The first Clyde Caldwell painting we've published in more than a year is this striking portrait of a female ranger. The model was Jeanne Stanley of Winston-Salem, N.C., who met Clyde when both of them were attending the 1984 GEN CON[®] Game Convention.

Drop a name and make a point

I got a memorable phone call from Greg Stafford the other day. Memorable because we only cross paths every couple of years or so, and because it's a special pleasure to pass some time with Chaosium's counterpart to Gary Gygax. We got caught up a little bit on this and that, and then Greg sort of tentatively changed direction.

"Are you looking for . . . anything on Runequest?" he asked.

"Well, shore," I shot back. "Especially if you're offering to write it. We'd always be glad to see stuff from you guys out there," I said, thinking back to Steve Perrin's article for the *SUPER WORLD*[™] game not too long ago.

Greg said he'd think about doing that, but apparently he wasn't just asking for himself. "Some of the kids out here," he added, "say that they haven't sent anything to you because they didn't think you'd use it."

"I guess I can understand how they get that impression," I said. We don't devote a lot of space consistently to many popular games, including the ones Chaosium has produced. We do like to keep our hand in by using an occasional piece of (what we think is) top-quality

(Turn to page 87)

Letters

Off center

Editor:

I would like to complain about the practice of placing the modules printed in DRAGON in the magazine in such a manner as to make it impossible to remove them without damaging other portions of the magazine. Recently this was done with "Aesirhamar" (#90) and "The Sword of Justice" (#92). I would like to know why you place modules in the magazine this way.

Robert W. Clark
Gettysburg, Pa.

We always start out intending to position each issue's special feature symmetrically around the center of the magazine, and intending to have it occupy a number of pages evenly divisible by four so that those who want to can remove the module, game, or whatever and leave the rest of the magazine intact and stapled together. Nine times out of ten, that's the way it has worked ever since we started our middle-of-the-magazine features in issue #37. But sometimes they just won't fit nicely into four, or eight, or twelve, or sixteen pages. If the text and graphics can't be stretched or trimmed to hit one of those numbers, you get an off-center module.

By putting our special feature in the center, we intend to make it possible for the feature to be removed and used separately. Based on what you've told us, we know that for every reader who does remove every module, there's at least one other who doesn't want to dismember the magazine and leaves the module stapled inside. Although we regret having to frustrate the takers among you, we think that's preferable to leaving out a vital part of a module, or fluffing it out and taking up space that could be better used by something else. If we did either of those two things instead, all of you would suffer the consequences. — KM

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Ettin addenduh

Dear Dragon,

In the article on the ettin (#92), it's stated that "a one-headed ettin is well able to survive its loss and carry on a normal life." How is this possible when the jugular vein obviously had to have been cut? Wouldn't the ettin bleed to death after this has happened?

Sean C. Parry
Madison, Fla.

Dear Dragon,

In issue #92, you emphasize the fact that the right head of an ettin is always dominant. You also said it could survive with only one head. Would the ettin have any significant loss in fighting ability, tracking, etc. if he lost his right head?

Scott Sawson
Marion, Mass.

A few words about the physiology of the ettin (Duh what?) are in order. First, let's assume that an ettin can survive the serious injury, or even the loss, of one of its heads. Because it has a head to spare, and that head is capable of "running" the body by itself, it can and often does survive such an injury. Why doesn't it bleed to death? For the same reason that a chimera or a hydra doesn't die when one of its heads is put out of action. Maybe all multi-headed creatures have some sort of instinctive muscular or biochemical reaction that shuts off blood vessels and nerve endings and reroutes the circulatory and nervous systems so that blood and nerve impulses go only to the remaining head(s). (Our latest ecology article proposes something like this; see p. 24.)

Does losing his dominant head make an ettin dumber, slower, or less coordinated? Nope. The article described what happens if one head is rendered powerless by magic: ". . . the unaffected head will resume control of the body without pause or struggle." It seems that the ettin can throw some switches in its nervous system almost instantaneously, so that one head takes over while the other lies drooping on its shoulder. This works the same regardless of which head is incapacitated. If an ettin loses his right head, that's all he loses. The left head becomes the dominant head, more or less by default. An ettin is already born slow, dumb, and clumsy; let's leave bad enough alone. — KM

Different dwarves

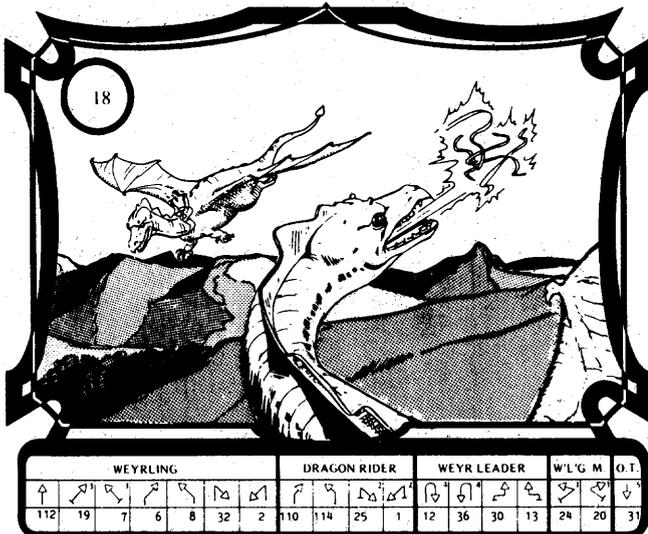
Dear Dragon,

The section in the Aesirhamar module (#92) describing Dwalin says that he is a neutral evil 7th-level fighter/17th level magic-user. But the chart on page 14 of the Players Handbook says that dwarves cannot be magic-users, even as NPCs. Could you please explain this?

Ricky Rushing
Killeen, Tex.

We already did. The module's companion article, "Plane facts on Gladshiem," points out that dwarves native to Gladshiem (specifically, Midgard) "are not dwarves as described in the AD&D® game." They can cast spells, but they lose a "normal" dwarf's special resistance to magic — and they cannot be used as player characters without breaking the rules of the game. — KM

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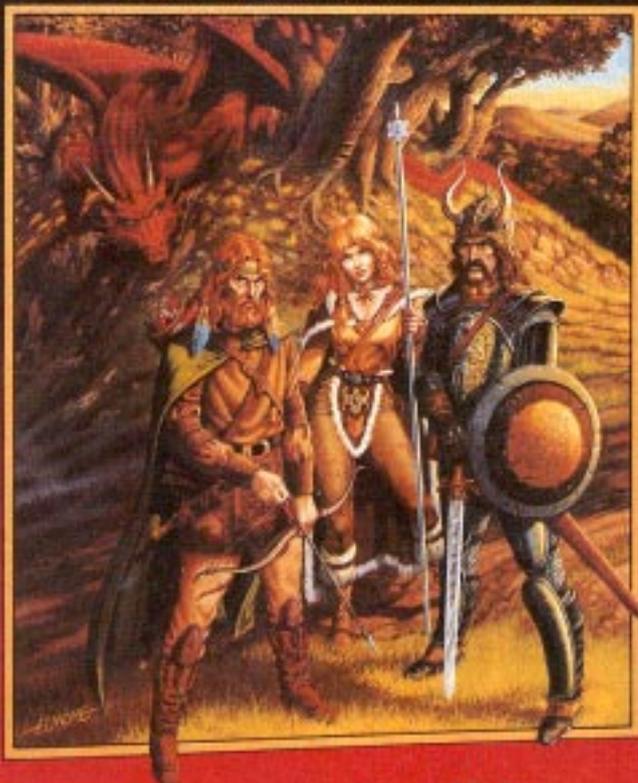
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The rules of the AD&D® game state that as a character's level increases, his skill to hit an opponent also improves, manifested by the figures on page 74 of the Dungeon Masters Guide. But do not the injuries received by a player character decrease that character's ability to hit? Surely a 4th-level fighter on the verge of death would not be able to fight an opponent as well as a perfectly healthy 2nd-level fighter. This could also apply to damage (which might be lessened by a weak blow, caused by injuries).

I propose that a system be established whereby the existing system (roll d20 "to hit") would be modified by the character's percentage of hit points (# of hit points/total hit points), checked against page 74 of the Dungeon Masters Guide. As one might imagine, this system might get lengthy, so this modification might be made at the first two 33% changes (66% of character's original hit points = -1 penalty "to hit"; 33% of original hit points = -2 penalty), and at 25% of the original hit points, when the character's amount of energy and strength starts to decrease rapidly, the penalty "to hit" would be -3. After this, as the character is suffering extensively, the penalty would be an extra point per every 5% below 25% (-4 at 20%, -5 at 15%, etc.).

Kurt G. Barringhaus
N. Little Rock, Ark.

* * * *

While I admire the detail of research and reasoning in Stephen Inniss's article ("Realistic vital statistics," #91), I think he's made an error by comparing the proportionate weight of a dwarf expanded to six-foot stature to that of a six-foot human. This is comparing apples with pears. A dwarf is not human, therefore the human equivalent needn't apply. There's nothing intrinsically wrong with a four-foot dwarf, as in his example, weighing 150 pounds, yet a six-foot dwarf of any weight is absurd!

Additionally, he is imprecise in stating, "the weight (or volume) of an object is proportionate to its linear dimensions." He does not address a third factor, the density of an object. A pound of lead and a pound of feathers weigh the same but have nowhere near the same volume. Therefore, if the physical components of a six-foot man could be compressed into the volume of a dwarf, the density could skyrocket while the mass remains the same.

Dwarves are essentially muscular creatures of heavy build and short stature. It seems unfair to limit them to the weights of small humans (children). There are many people alive in our real world, one a line actor in a well-known television comedy, that disprove [the contention that] short

The forum

adults must weigh as [much as] children.

Ultimately, the statistics in the article render dwarven characters less playable because they disadvantage dwarves in combat. A lighter character (logically) has greater difficulty overbearing and using his weight against an opponent, as a child would versus an adult. What justifies this disadvantage?

A stronger case might be made for halflings, who are very similar to small children. But, again, why disadvantage such characters? They are already disadvantaged in combat.

I must reject Mr. Inniss's system because it interferes with playability without *appreciably* improving the game. But I reject it again because it interferes with the *fun*. With the original system in the DMG, fantastic varieties of sizes and weights can be generated, adding to the craziness and fantasy elements of the game. A friend of mine has an immensely obese halfling character who never fails to amuse us all with his weight problems. This in turn adds to the playability.

I respect the "realism" in this newer system, but it brings with it the relatively mundane aspects of our real world, and that is what I wish to escape through playing the AD&D game.

Tim Nye
Bellingham, Wash.

* * * *

I want to respond to two comments about my "Forum" letter on evil PCs and all-evil campaigns. In issue #91, Scott Hicks wrote at great length to defend this kind of gaming, but he utterly avoided my basic question: Why is playing evil PCs so important in the first place, and why does he derive such satisfaction from this kind of fantasy? It's a pity he missed the point, because he seems to be in a good position to answer those questions.

In issue #92, Christopher Kopec made a thoughtful and well-reasoned attempt to answer those questions, but I still feel that he fell a bit short of the mark. First of all, he started with an argument-by-exaggeration when he misinterpreted me as saying that such players are

"psychotic." There is a world of difference between a psychotic and someone with a few hang-ups that bear examination.

Secondly, he compared the release of negative emotions in an all-evil campaign with the release of expressing such feelings in a therapy group. There is another world of difference between expressing negative feelings that are firmly anchored in reality under the supervision of a trained therapist and dwelling on morbid fantasies in the company of a couple of friends. Besides, it's possible to release all kinds of emotions by playing a good-aligned character. Christopher thus leaves himself open to another question: Why are his negative feelings directed at good NPCs, not evil ones?

Katharine Kerr
San Francisco, Calif.

* * * *

I would like to comment on the current debate over the most logical, realistic, and simplistic system for determining the success of actions attempted by characters, using the corresponding ability score to generate a base percentage roll. It seems to me that Katharine Kerr's system appeared in an earlier issue of DRAGON Magazine. [Editor's note: Yes, in issue #68.] I do agree that her system is much more logical than the one designed by Jonathan Heiles in his letter in issue #91.

I have come up with a subsequent system that seems to follow a similar pattern as Katharine's, but which compensates for Jonathan's complaint that Katharine's system is too generous toward low scores and too stringent toward high ability scores. It also affords a variation of percentage chances for scores between 15 and 18 inclusive, unlike Kim Mohan's idea in his response to Jonathan's letter.

The system follows Katharine's 5% theory up to and including an ability score of 10. This is also the same as Kim's suggestion, but this is where my system changes. For scores between 11 and 17 inclusive, the adjustment should be an additional 7%, not 10% as Kim suggested. This would constitute a 99% chance to perform an action which is taken into account by a score of 17. Thus at 18 (or higher in the case of strength) the action being attempted would automatically be successful, as it should be with a perfect ability score.

Of course, everyone likes to create their own system, but I've found that this system is easily adapted to any campaign and is flexible enough to be used by even the most devious DMs.

Steve Pajak
Schenectady, N. Y.

* * * *

A few comments on your answer to Jonathan Heiles's letter in issue #91.

The chance of rolling 5 or less on 3d6 is slightly over 4.6%, not slightly over 3%.

The reason you couldn't think of an example of a charisma check is simple: "Charisma check" is simply another name for "reaction roll." Any

(Turn to page 30)

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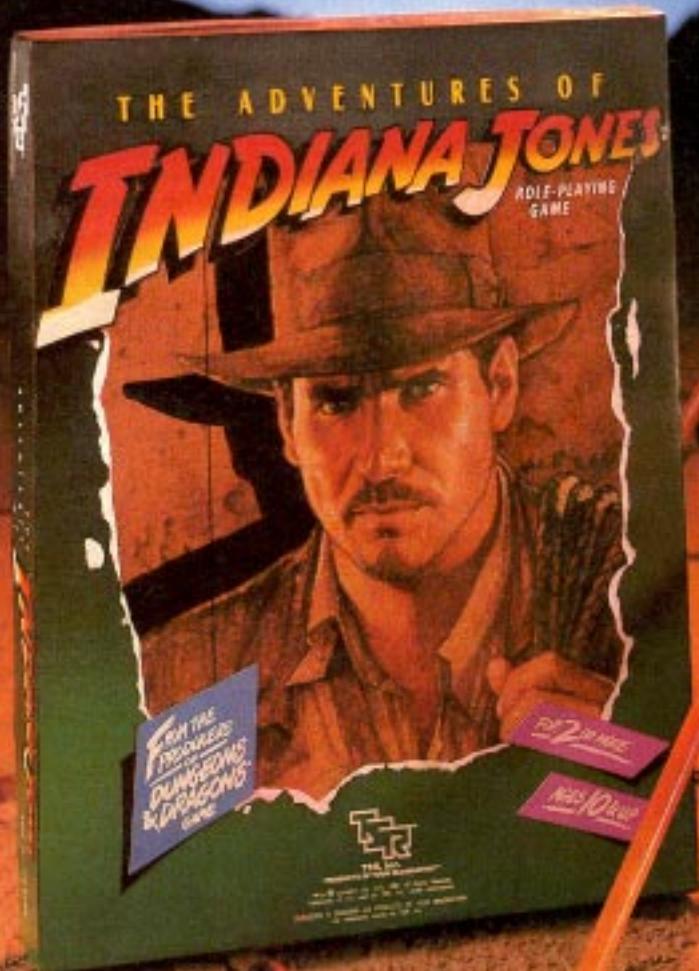
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Official changes for rangers

New rules to clear up tracking and hacking

by Gary Gygax

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For some years now, I have used a system for tracking by rangers which differs markedly from that presented in the AD&D® Players Handbook. The level of the character is considered, and the circumstances of the trail to be followed are likewise important. Since so many Worthy Players have requested that this system be detailed, I herein offer the following as an "official" change for the sub-class of ranger.

Tracking is principally used in outdoor situations, although there are conditions underground ("indoors") which will enable a ranger to track a creature.

Outdoor tracking

The base chance to successfully track outdoors is 10% per level of the ranger, plus an additional 10% — for example, 20% for a 1st-level ranger or 70% for a 6th-level ranger. The base chance can rise as high as 110% (for a ranger of 10th level or higher), but can never exceed that figure. Note that, even in such a case, the adjusted chance can drop below 100% if negative modifiers are taken into account. An adjusted chance of greater than 100% is treated as 100%; that is, the trail can be followed for as long as the current conditions (terrain, number of creatures being tracked, etc.) apply.

Terrain modifiers:

- Soft enough to hold impressions (footprints, pawprints, etc.) of creature being tracked+20%
- Allows occasional marks or obvious signs of passage (broken twigs, bent grass, etc.)+10%
- Allows only infrequent signs of passage due to rock, water, wind, other creatures crossing or overtracking, etc.0%
- Prevents all but the minutest traces of passage-50%

Other modifiers:

- For each creature beyond the first in group being tracked.+02%
- For every 12 hours elapsed since the trail was made-05%
- For each hour of precipitation that has fallen on the trail between tracker and quarry-25%

If intelligent efforts are made to hide the trail, consider the terrain modifier to be of the next lower category (e.g., down from +20% to +10%). If the terrain modifier was already of the -50% category, then tracking is impossible.



Indoor tracking

Base chance is the same as that for outdoor tracking.

Surface condition modifiers:

- Dirt floor, or unused and dusty area+20%
- Wooden floor, or area which allows some occasional indication of passage0%
- Stone floor which prevents all but the minutest traces of passage-50%

Other modifiers:

- For each creature beyond the first in group being tracked.+02%
- For passing over an area where other creatures cross or overtrack trail-50%

If intelligent efforts are made to hide the trail, including passing through a secret door, consider the surface condition modifier to be of the next lower category. If the surface condition modifier was already of the -50% category, then tracking is impossible.

Special note: Tracking indoors is impossible if the ranger desiring to do so has never observed some distinguishing feature about the tracks of the creature to be tracked, or if the ranger does not observe the quarry making the trail and then follow the tracks within a reasonable period of time (typically 10-30 minutes) thereafter. In all cases, the DM must use common sense as to whether or not it will be possible to follow a creature by tracking. For instance, creatures which leave obvious trails can almost always be tracked — worms, slimes, jellies, and the like are obvious examples of this. Conversely, creatures which do not normally leave any sign of passage are almost always impossible to track — flying creatures, ghosts, wraiths, and spiders come to mind. However, since tracking is a combination of visual, audio, and olfactory abilities, tracking might sometimes be possible by unusual means — the disturbance of

things left by a flying creature's passage, the sound of its passage, the trail of odor left, and so forth.

Light condition, outdoors or indoors

All tracking is assumed to be done under conditions of good illumination — daylight or the equivalent (a *continual light* spell, for instance). The movement rate of a ranger while tracking is somewhat slowed even under optimum conditions; in even poorer conditions (of light, or of the quality of the trail, or both), the ranger's movement rate may be reduced drastically.

Movement rate while tracking:

- Obvious tracks, good illumination. 3/4 of normal
- Obvious tracks, poor illumination. 2/3 of normal
- Occasional tracks, good illumination. 2/3 of normal
- Occasional tracks, poor illumination. 1/2 of normal
- Faint tracks, good illumination. 1/2 of normal
- Faint tracks, poor illumination. 1/4 of normal

Definitions:

Obvious = 71% or better chance to track.
Occasional = 31% -70% chance to track.
Faint = 30% or less chance to track.
Poor illumination = anything less than daylight and greater than total darkness. Tracking is not possible in total darkness unless some non-visual evidence is available (as referred to above).

Identification of tracks

Whether tracking outdoors or indoors (underground), a ranger may be able to identify what sort of creature(s) made a trail, what direction the quarry was going in, how many creatures were in the group being tracked, and how fast they were traveling. When the trail is outdoors, the ranger may also be able to determine the approximate time of passage — that is, how much time has elapsed since the tracks were made.

Identification of tracks can only occur if the attempt to track is successful. The chance for successful identification is the same as for tracking, with a second dice roll required to determine success. Identification abilities gained by level are cumulative; i.e., a 4th-level ranger has the abilities of a 3rd-level ranger, in addition to the skills gained at 4th level. For the purpose of this determination "woodland creatures" are those which are able to be encountered in faerie or sylvan settings, as per the encounter tables in the AD&D rules.

Ranger

- Ability to identify:*
- 1st *Common* woodland creatures' tracks and direction of travel
 - 2nd *Common* woodland creatures' number and pace
 - 3rd *Common* woodland creatures' time of passage (outdoors only)
 - 4th As 3rd level with respect to *uncommon* woodland creatures
 - 5th As 3rd level with respect to *rare* woodland creatures
 - 6th As 3rd level with respect to *very rare* woodland creatures
 - 7th As 3rd level with respect to all sorts of creatures (woodland and otherwise) within a 100-mile radius
 - 8th As 7th level, plus the ability to determine the general size and weight of humans
 - 9th As 8th level, plus the ability to determine the size and numbers of mounted creatures (for instance, if a horse is carrying more than one rider)
 - 10th As 9th level with respect to all creatures ever observed, prior to attaining 10th level or subsequently

Humanoid/"giant class" opponents

Following is an expanded list of those humanoid creatures that are considered "giant class," qualifying the ranger for a damage bonus (+1 hit point per level of the ranger) when such a creature is engaged in combat. The roster includes all "giant class" creatures mentioned in the Players

Handbook, plus other similar creatures from the FIEND FOLIO® Tome and Monster Manual II.

bugbear	goblin	ogre mage
cyclopskin	grimlock	ogrillon
dune stalker	hobgoblin	orc
ettin	kobold	quaggoth
flind	meazel	tasloi
giant	norker	troll
gibberling	ogre	xvart
gnoll		

The ranger's weapons

Of the ranger's three initial weapons of proficiency, one must be either a bow (any sort) or a light crossbow. However, the ranger cannot have both a bow and a light crossbow as weapons of proficiency until attaining 7th level (at least), when the weapon type not already taken could be counted as the fifth weapon of proficiency. By the time a ranger gains a fourth weapon proficiency at 4th level, the character's list of weapons must include:

- either a bow or a light crossbow,
- a dagger or a knife,
- a spear or an axe, and
- a sword (of any type).

The initial weapon selection for the character must be made so as to take these requirements into account.

Have fun tracking and fighting!

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 Side: Evil Level: 1
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 2. Special Weapon: Power-chuks, HTH +3 to hit, +1d6 damage, carries a Power Blast
 3. Heightened Defense: -4 to be hit
 Other Weaponry:
 Katana, HTH +2 to hit, +1d6 damage
 6 Shuriken, HTH +3 to hit, +1 damage, with a 13 inch throwing range.

Weight: 130 lbs.
 Strength: 16
 Endurance: 13
 Agility: 13
 Intelligence: 12
 Charisma: 15
 Dam. Mod.: +1
 Accuracy: +1
 Hit Points: 9
 Heal: 9
 Car. Cap.: 351
 Basic HTH: 1d6
 Power: 54
 Movement: 42"
 Det. Hidden: 10%
 Det. Danger: 14%
 Invent. Pts.: 1.2
 Inventing: 36%

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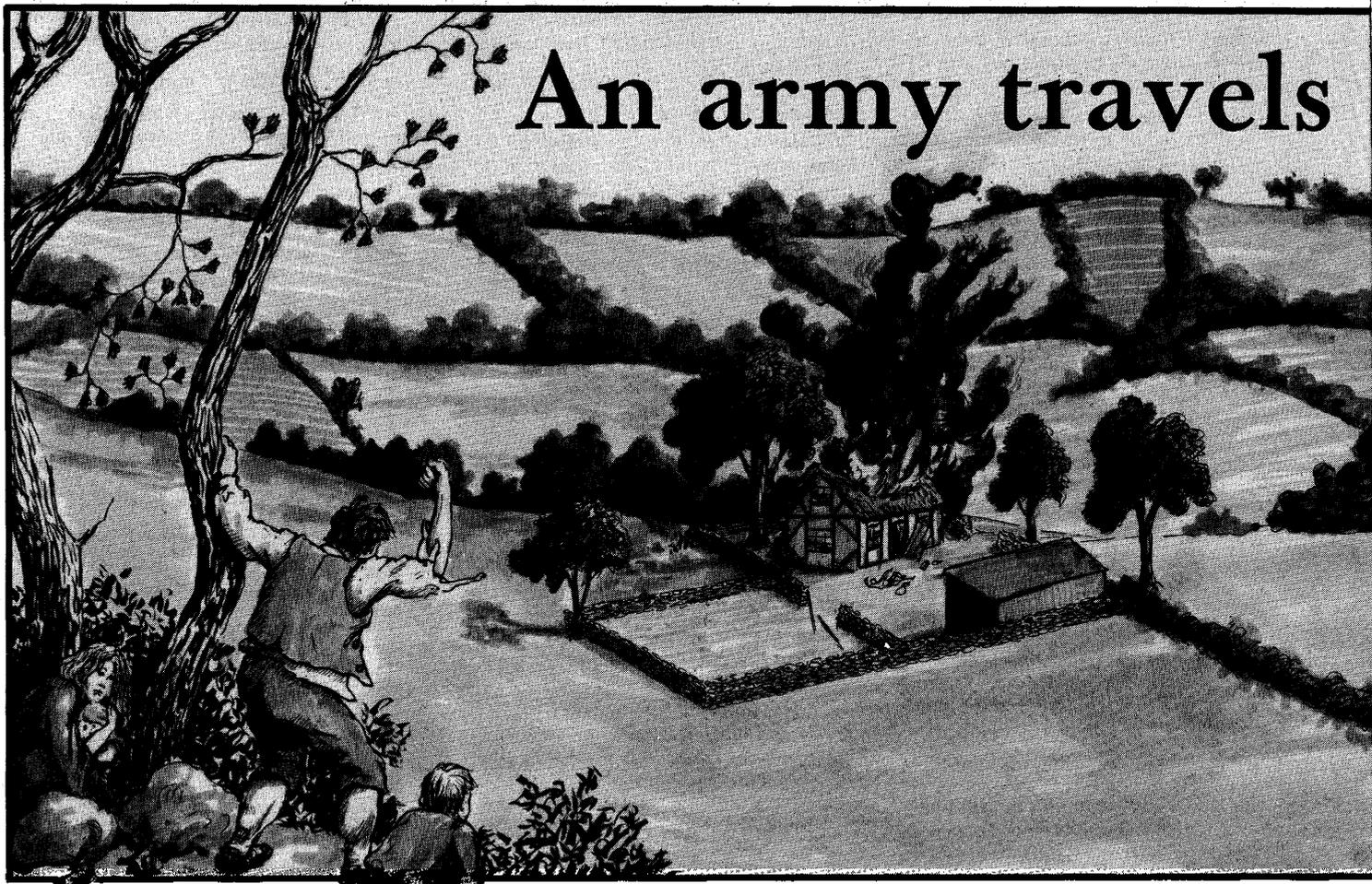
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An army travels

Large-scale logistics in a fantasy world

by Katharine Kerr

In most fantasy role-playing games, the basic unit for adventuring is the small party, which can move across open country quickly, cheaply, and easily. Eventually, however, many long-running campaigns reach the point where both the players and the gamemaster want to field small armies or at least squads of troops. At this point certain basic problems arise, particularly with the movement of these armies.

Although most role-playing rules point out that movement rate is reduced for large units, many gamers don't understand the reasons behind the rules and thus are unable to role-play them. Army and troop movement end up being a version of standard wargaming and lose the special excitement of role-playing. What gamers need to understand is that once the moving unit grows beyond a few people and animals, the realities behind the movement rate have changed drastically. To role-play a medieval-style war, both gamemaster and players must know something about the logistics of the medieval-style army.

Logistics can be simply defined as the art of supplying and moving troops, but the simplicity is deceptive. Even in a technologically advanced society like our own, movement is always dependent upon supply, not

the other way around, for the basic reason that it's futile to send troops into an area where they'll eventually starve. In a non-technological society, feeding itself becomes an enormous problem for any army, because of the inefficient agricultural system and inherent problems of food transport.

To role-play wars and troop movements properly, gamers have to take food supply into account. Players need to know how much their army will eat, how they will get what the army needs, and finally, how their supplies will be transported. This article will discuss these and related questions and show gamemasters how problems of supply, not arbitrary movement rules, can be used to determine how far a given army can march on any given day.

First, it should be pointed out that an army consists of more than the actual fighting men. Although the ratio of combatants to noncombatants in a medieval or ancient army was far larger than it is today, an army would still have about one noncombatant for every five combatants. These noncombatants include armorers, fletchers, blacksmiths, a surgeon or two, a scribe, some heralds, servants for the noble-born, and (in fantasy-world armies) magicians and priests. All these personnel also need

food for themselves and their mounts. Also, an army packs along a large amount of non-edible supplies — weapons, blankets, and so on. On the average, there will be one horse or mule, or three slaves, per each six personnel to carry such gear.

The minimum daily requirement

Until recently, historically speaking, grain was the mainstay of an army for men and animals alike. Almost all ancient or medieval armies carried querns (handmills) to grind grain fresh daily because flour spoils more quickly than whole grain.

The modern role-player has to understand what transporting food means in a world without refrigeration and preservatives. For example, in summer fresh red meat will begin to spoil in three days. Yeasted bread either moulds (in damp air) or turns rock-hard (in dry air) in about three days, too. Thus the main rations of medieval armies were porridges of various grains, dry flat bread like sea-biscuit, and soda breads cooked fresh nightly, supplemented with small amounts of cheese, salt pork, and whatever pickled meats or vegetables were available in their part of the world. Even these rations often spoiled; let us remember that the army of Henry V

on its stomach



won the battle of Agincourt while suffering from diarrhea brought on by bad food.

No matter what the kind of food, to determine how much of it an army requires, the gamer must start with the needs of each member of it. The following food requirements are those of a 150-pound human male, a decent average. Although in ordinary conditions women require less food than men, we can assume that an army of Amazons will have the same energy output and probably the same body-bulk as a group of men and thus will have the same food needs.

Each warrior needs 3,500 calories a day, including 70 grams of protein, to stay in fighting trim and good condition. In prolonged battle conditions, he requires 4,000 calories and 80 grams of protein. In medieval ration terms, this translates to three or four pounds of whole grain, measured raw, and a pound of mixed cheese, meat, fruit and so on a day. Without some fruit and vegetables, warriors will develop scurvy and yaws.

In a fantasy world, non-human races have different needs, based on average size and food preferences, which can be figured by referring to the standard ration above. Here are some examples of races common to many game worlds. Elves need three-fourths of a standard ration, which translates to 2 pounds of grain and 1 pound of fruit and vegetables. Salt pork and other preserved meats would be indigestible to elves. Dwarves, despite their small stature,

need a full ration to maintain their extraordinary endurance. They will, however, eat the same things humans will. Technically speaking, halflings only need half a standard ration, but if they feel underfed, they will grumble badly and lower the army's morale. Orcs and goblins require a standard ration, but they will insist on having a large part of it in meat and will spurn fruit and vegetables.

When adding up individual figures to arrive at the army's total needs, the gamer should use common sense and only include those non-humans who will make a difference to the averages. Among 500 humans, for instance, 10 elven archers will make little difference — but 10 giants, with their need for 50 standard-sized rations each a day, would make a drastic one.

Besides the warriors, both riding mounts and pack beasts require large amounts of food. Although horses and mules can survive on grass in the wild or in the pasture, they need grain every day to perform heavy work like carrying riders. The average horse or mule needs 10 pounds of grain and 10 pounds of fodder — grass, hay, or (in a pinch) straw — every day, or it will be unable to perform its job with the army.

Carnivorous mounts, like the wolves used by orcs and goblins in many game worlds, present a special problem, because they need fresh meat every day or they will turn nasty — a situation to be avoided at all costs. The average war-wolf will eat about 5 pounds a day; beasts the size of lions will

need about 20 pounds. Carnivore-mounted cavalry thus either has to spend several hours a day foraging for fresh meat or else bring cattle or other herds along as a messhall-on-the-hoof. Prisoners of war could provide another source of supply for evil armies, of course.

Let's see how these figures translate into provisions for an example army. Our typical medieval-style army might comprise 500 mounted warriors, 500 mixed pikemen and archers, 200 noncombatant personnel, and 180 pack horses carrying the non-edible gear. In one single day, this army eats 10,400 pounds of grain, 6,800 pounds of mixed animal fodder, and 1,200 pounds of mixed human rations. We're talking, in short, of over 9 tons of food every day — and this is only a small army. Even a squad of 50 mounted men, traveling without noncombatants and pack animals, would need 650 pounds of grain, 500 pounds of fodder, and 25 pounds of mixed rations a day.

Water is another basic necessity. The average man drinks about 5 pounds of water a day in mild weather conditions. (This includes the water content of ale, mead, milk, and so on.) Dry (desert) or humid (jungle) conditions double this and all amounts following. A horse or mule needs 80 pounds a day; an ox, 160 pounds. Non-human needs can again be judged proportionally. An elf, for instance, needs about 3½ pounds of water. If these figures seem high, remember that we're not talking

about people sitting around in offices or schools all day, but people who are marching and fighting in the warm summer.

Even in well-watered countryside, getting enough water for a large group can present problems. Armies need rivers or deep streams, not just wells or springs. Consider our example army, which collectively needs 26,400 pounds of water a day. Suppose that they come to a village well with a bucket holding 40 pounds and that it takes two men one minute to raise the bucket and pour the contents into a receptacle. It will take more than 5 hours to raise half a day's rations — assuming that the well hasn't gone dry by then.

In desert or arid conditions, water must be carried. The game referee should insist that the players figure out their armies' water needs and make provisions for the necessary water. The average man or horse deprived totally of water will die in 3 days; on half-rations of water, an army will fight and move at half normal efficiency.

In general, the lack of adequate food of the right types should have a strong effect on play. A half-starved army will fight at below its normal capability and will refuse to march at normal speed. Morale is another important problem with hungry armies. Although the player characters may drive themselves on by willpower, the humble NPCs who make up their armies are going to be preoccupied with their rations just like real soldiers are. If a player is

undersupplying his army, the referee should add penalties to morale checks in games that have them, or decide when mutiny and desertion will occur in games without formal morale rules. As a general guide, I'd say that after five days of poor and inadequate rations, 25% of a mercenary army will desert, and 5% of a motivated one. Armies led by great, awe-inspiring heroes will stick things out longer, but after a couple of weeks of real hunger, even the most loyal soldiers will begin slipping away, 05% at a time.

Living off the land

Once the players figure out the amount of food that their characters' armies need, they can turn to the far more interesting question of where they are going to get it. One method is to follow the example of some ancient and medieval commanders and resort to foraging as the army marches. "Living off the country" produces visions of swaggering warriors with hams tied to their saddles and loaves of fresh bread in their knapsacks. In a subsistence agricultural economy, the real picture is grim. To understand why, we must consider what subsistence agriculture, the economic basis of most game-worlds, really means.

Primitive agriculture is extremely labor-intensive. For example, it took the medieval farmer about 148 man-hours to raise 2½ acres of wheat, as opposed to the 6½ hours it takes a modern farmer. Depending on the

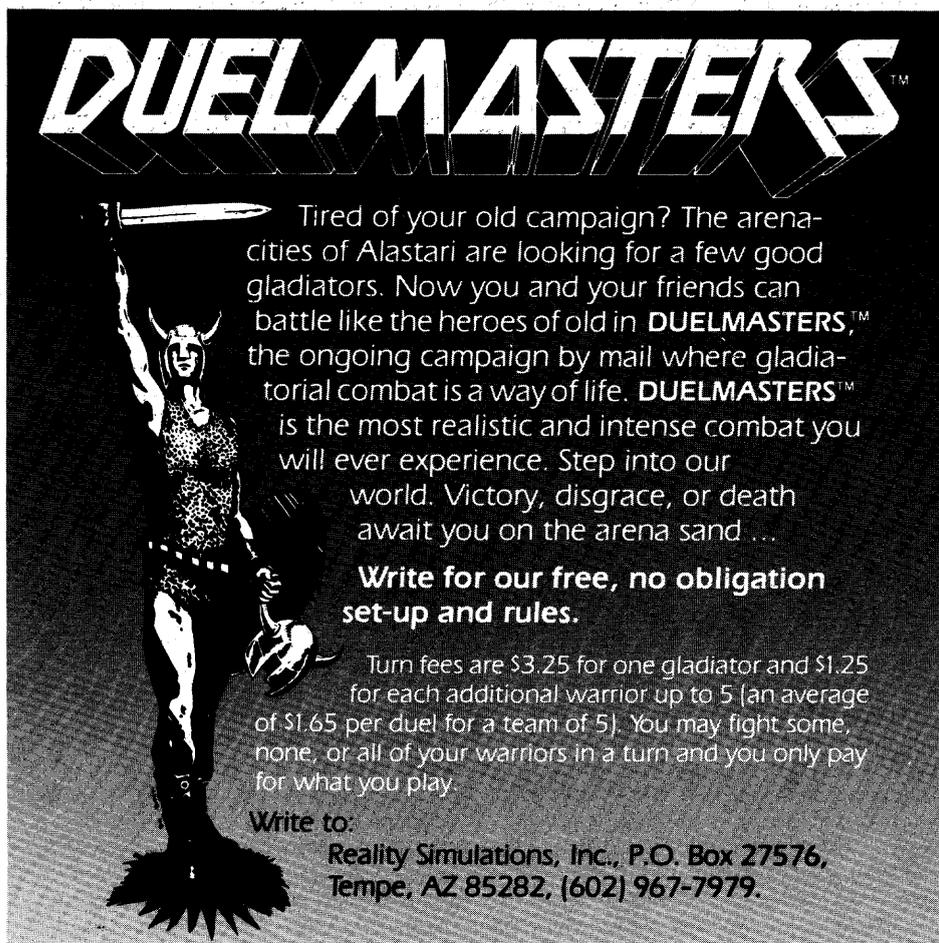
fertility of a region, at least 85% or more likely 90% of the population must actively engage in agriculture, stock raising, and gardening in order to supply the needs of the total population. Thus we can see that surplus food is going to be in short supply.

Furthermore, with poor tools, like the medieval iron-tipped wooden plowshare, and a limited knowledge of fertilizers, like manure or nothing, the yield per acre is also low. The total yield is lowered further by the three-field system in use during the Middle Ages, in which only one-third of the arable land is growing crops at any given time while the other two-thirds lies fallow to restore its fertility. Obviously, the yield of this system varied enormously depending on the fertility of a given stretch of land, the amount of available rainfall, and so on, but as a very rough average, medieval farms on good land produced per year about 500 pounds of grain per acre, or 160 tons per square mile. (Compare this to the modern United States yield of 1,760 pounds per acre.) Our example army of 1,200 men consumes about 21 acres of wheat per day, or a square mile's worth in one short month. Thus we see why contemporary writers often compared medieval armies to hordes of locusts.

In a world with poor storage techniques, the food supply is also dependent on the seasons. The three-field system brings in two crops a year in a European or North American kind of climate — one in June, the other in October. Starting with the June harvest, grain is as plentiful as it ever is until December, when the grain stored from the October harvest begins to spoil. King and peasant alike begin to go hungry; by March, people are hunting sparrows and scavenging old cabbages from the bottom of barrels. Finally, in May, some of the harvest is milk-ripe and harvested green to tide everyone over until most of the grain ripens in June.

An army, therefore, can demand grain as loudly as it likes in March, but there will simply be no grain to give it. In the late fall, farmers and villagers will fight to keep their harvest for themselves, because the alternative is starving to death in the winter. Because we moderns, with our vast food surplus produced by mechanized farming and protected by freezing and preservatives, forget that getting enough food to eat is a constant battle in primitive societies, I want to drive this point home: Gold coins and jewels cannot buy food that doesn't exist.

How, then, can we translate this situation into game terms? First of all, armies run by player characters can only march during the standard "war season" of the Middle Ages and the ancient world — that is, the summer and fall. Although there are historical cases of wars being fought in the winter, those cases are rare and usually the result of desperate circumstances, like the civil wars during the reign of King Stephen of England. Most fighting begins in May or June, and truces or retreats are declared by November.



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TABLE OF FOOD PRODUCTION

Land type	Grain	Fodder	Meat	Vegetables ¹	Other
Rich arable	4,500 tons	600 tons	2 tons	2 tons	500 lbs. each of ale, cheese, butter
Poor arable	2,225 tons	300 tons	1 ton	1 ton	Small amounts of above
Forest	none	1 ton	2 tons ²	none	A few berries, nuts, roots
Wild scrubland	none	100 tons	2 tons ²	none	Berries, nuts
Wild grassland	none	unlimited	3 tons ²	none	none
Pastoral	none	1,000 tons ³	120 tons	none	What few provisions the herders have

(Remember that this is not the total year's production, but what will be available during the summer or directly after the fall crop comes in.)

1. Includes fruit.
2. Wild game, including deer, rabbits, fish, etc., but hunting takes much time.
3. The army will be competing with the herds for fodder and water.

Second, if armies are going to forage, the gamemaster needs to know how much food is available for the army to acquire, either by force or by coin. Here we have a very complex situation indeed, because the amount of food will depend on the kind of terrain, its fertility, its degree of settlement, the year's weather, and myriad other factors that make a precise and realistic determination too time-consuming to be worth the effort. For simplified gaming purposes, the system summarized in the table above is playable, but I offer it only as a suggestion. Any referee who wishes can vary the table to make it more precise, historically accurate, or suitable for special conditions in a particular game world.

The referee should first map out the war zones and march routes in ten-mile hexes, mark in the streams and rivers, and then decide what type of terrain each hex contains. Pastoral land is open meadows, often hilly, given over exclusively to large flocks or herds of cattle, sheep, and horses. Wild grassland is basically pastoral land that no sentient races are using; it supports many wild animals. Wild scrubland is semi-grassy, but dry and covered in part with bushes and chapparal. Forest is of course obvious; desert is not included because it offers so little food that it might as well offer none.

When it comes to arable land, the referee should keep in mind that in medieval conditions, a much lower percentage of the land will actually be in crops than is the case in the big mechanized family farms of modern times or in huge agribusinesses. Much of it will be rough pasturage for dairy animals, stands of woodlands for firewood, and space for roads, villages, and dwellings. Thus the yield per hex on the table is lower than the per-acre figures given in the text above would indicate.

Once the referee has established the total food capacity of each ten-mile hex from the table, he can figure the available surplus. Although in reality the surplus would vary at different times during the summer and fall, to keep things playable we can set constant percentages. (Remember that from January to May there will be very little grain or vegetables available at all, and no

surplus.) In rich arable land, the surplus will be 15% of the total; in poor arable, 10%; and in pastoral, 20%. If the army needs more food than the available surplus, it will have to extort it out of the peasantry or fight for it.

The referee also has to keep firmly in mind that this food supply doesn't magically restore itself. If one army strips a territory of food in early summer, there will be no more food for a second army until the fall harvest. In fact, if the first army has stripped every bit of available grain, there won't be a fall crop, because there won't be any seed grain left for planting. There are no convenient feed-and-grain stores in a medieval world.

Once armies strip an area down to the seed-grain, the area becomes depopulated. Those peasants who can will abandon their farms and flee; those who can't will starve to death. When armies march back and forth over small territories, depopulation or at least a major reduction in population is inevitable. During the Viking raids, the northern coast of France became a wasteland not so much because of the deaths caused by the raids but because of the depredations of the armies sent to chase the Vikings. When an area has been depopulated, it will produce no food at all the next year because there won't be anyone there to grow it.

In the Middle Ages, the decent rulers tried their best to spare the peasantry out of enlightened self-interest — empty farms don't pay taxes and support castles — but in desperate conditions, the armies took what they needed first and worried about farmers later. Many commanders also destroyed crops to keep them out of enemy hands. In any game where alignment or some form of "honor points" are involved, the referee should judge player characters' actions carefully in this regard. Medieval knights considered that starving peasants was dishonorable and a bad thing; in one of the old French *chansons de geste*, for example, the knight Rainouart gains great honor by killing men who are stripping a peasant's bean fields.

As a system of food supply, foraging has

other inherent problems, the biggest of which is that it dramatically slows the movement rate of the army. Foraged food must be located, then either bought or extorted from the peasants and townsfolk who own it. If a hostile army is taking food by force, the peasants will flee, leaving the army to do its own harvesting and its own chasing after cows. Once the food is obtained, it must be distributed and packed. Even an army of 1,200, like our example, needs several hours to strip a farm, and what they get may only last them a single day. Food is likely to lie off the direct line of march, thus slowing the army's forward movement even further.

Consider our example army with its grain need of just over 5 tons per day. At the beginning of a summer's campaign, the soldiers march through rich arable land having a surplus of several hundred tons. Farmers gladly sell them what they need, and several days' provisions at a time are theirs for the time spent loading it. But the war rages all summer with that area becoming an important tactical location. By the time two different armies have each marched back and forth across it, the frightened farmers have taken to the hills. Our army is lucky to find a few vegetables rotting in gardens, much less tons of grain. Most of each game-day will be spent fanning out on each side of the road and searching desperately for food. The army will move only about 5 miles per day forward and will also be demoralized and vulnerable to sneak attacks.

Taking it with you

To avoid such desperate situations, most historical commanders preferred to take supply trains with them, and the wise player character will do the same. Since a riding horse or an infantryman can't carry more than a rider and a few pounds of gear (in the case of the horse), or his weapons and a few pounds of gear (in the case of the infantryman), the commander must resort to either large carts or pack animals to carry supplies. Since in our motorized society carts are usually the first thing gamers think of, let us consider them in some detail.

A medieval-style cart or wagon is made of heavy wood and has wooden iron-rimmed wheels, which are extremely vulnerable to ruts and rocks. In any group of five carts, one will break down each day to the tune of two hours of travel time lost while the cart is repaired. Heavy mud renders carts immobile; light mud or hills reduces their movement rate to 1 mile per hour. On steep uphill roads, men have to shove a laden cart from behind in order for it to move at the 1 mile per hour rate.

Each cart requires a team of either oxen or heavy draft horses, plus a carter. In good conditions, oxen pull at 2 miles per hour, but oxen can only pull for 5 hours a day because of their sensitive (and unshoeable) hooves. A horse team pulls at 3 miles per hour for 8 hours a day, but because of breakdowns, it's unlikely that any line of

carts will be moving for a full 8-hour day. Oxen require 25 pounds of fodder and grain per day apiece, while the draft horses require only 13 pounds of each foodstuff.

What oxen can do, of course, is pull much more weight than horses can. As a very rough average estimate, with a medieval-style cart on medieval-style roads, a pair of oxen can pull 6½ tons plus the weight of the cart and carter, while horses can only pull 3 tons. In any case, even in optimum conditions, an army with horse-carts can make no more than 20 miles a day, while one with ox-carts can do a maximum of 10 miles a day.

By now it should be obvious why so many ancient and medieval commanders preferred a baggage train of pack animals to any kind of cart. The difficulty with a pack train is simply that it takes a great many head of stock to carry a large amount of supplies. The average horse can pack 180 pounds beyond the weight of the pack saddle; the average mule, 220 pounds. Even a two-mule team can pull much more weight than the 440 pounds they can pack. A pack train also runs into an interesting law of diminishing returns because pack animals need food of their own. A mule carrying 220 pounds of grain, for instance, on an 8-day march is packing food for itself, a cavalry horse, and several men. On a 22-day march, however, the mule will eat the entire load by itself. Thus, no matter how many pack animals it has, an army can never

carry food for more than 19-21 days on pack animals alone.

Donald Engels (see the bibliography at the end of this article) gives a useful formula for finding the total number of pack animals needed for a given march. Divide the total weight of food by the carrying ability of each animal minus that animal's share of the food it carries. For example, our army wants to march for 5 days through country with ample fodder and water, meaning that they only have to carry grain. They thus require 58,000 pounds of grain and mixed human rations. Each mule can carry 220 pounds, minus the 50 pounds it will eat during the march. Thus: 58,000 divided by (220-50) = 341.2, meaning that 342 mules are needed — an enormously long baggage train, to say nothing of an expensive one. Historically, armies did travel with as many or even more animals than this.

We can also reverse Engels's formula to see how long an army can march if we know the length of its pack train. Let's say our example army with a daily grain and mixed ration need of 11,600 pounds has acquired 200 mules, to bring their need up to 13,600 pounds of food a day. The total carrying capacity of these mules is 44,000 pounds. Thus, dividing the daily food need into the total carrying capacity (44,000 divided by 13,600 = roughly 3.2), we realize that the army can only carry food for a little over 3 days at a time.

Given the limitations of pack trains, we

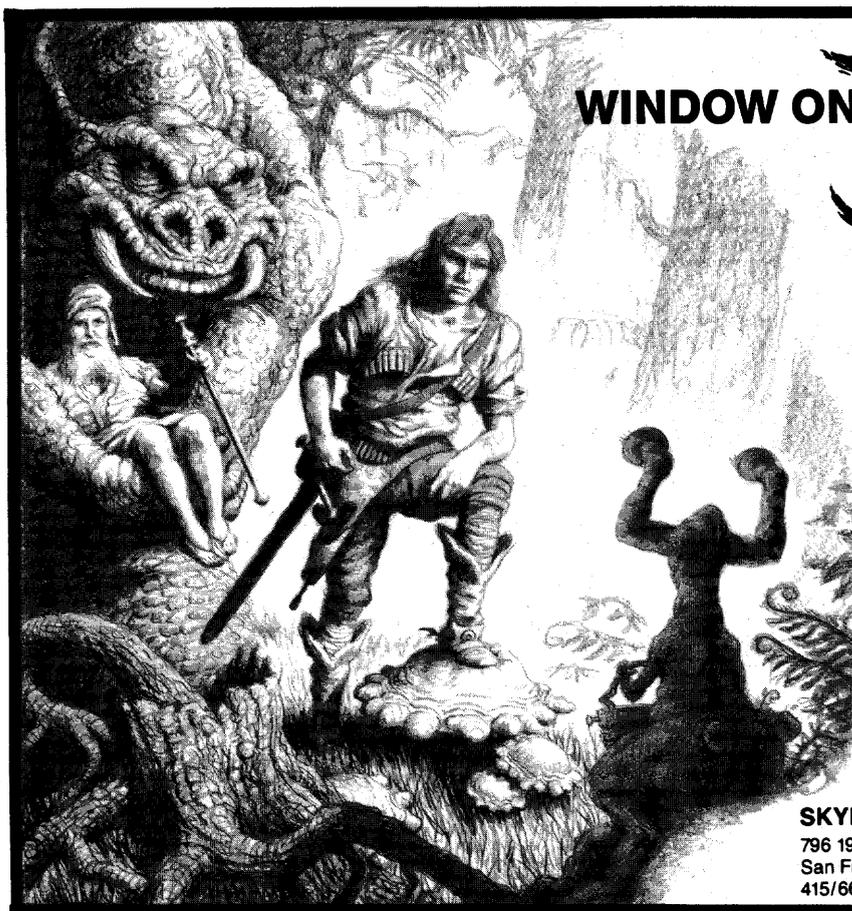
can see that the average army has to resort to a combination of carrying food and foraging if it's going to travel long distances, or else resign itself to using carts and traveling slowly. Making this choice should present players (and their characters) with an interesting decision that could well influence the outcome of the war.

Horse care: a matter of life and death

Whether the army commanders decide to use cart horses or pack animals, finding the necessary animals for the supply train — to say nothing of cavalry horses — should present a further problem in a medieval-style game world. Since supporting a horse or a mule takes about 20 acres, and an ox 40 acres (both for fodder and for grain), few farmers will keep anything but a plow team. Specialized horsebreeders, like any other kind of specialist, will also be rare.

In the Middle Ages, lords set aside part of their holdings to raise the horses and mules so necessary to war. The ancient empires, both Roman and Chinese, bought their horses from the nomads of the Central Asian steppes — as did the much later British Empire in India. Gamemasters will have to decide if such nomads exist in their world, of course, and players may well have to have their warlike PCs breed stock of their own to supply their armies.

What happens, however, if the PCs lose a large portion of their baggage train when far from home base? Determining just how



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many horses and mules will be available in any given part of the game world is a near-impossible task to do accurately and historically, just as was determining the food supply. As rough and playable estimates only, I offer the following. In arable land, there will be only 15 horses suitable for war and 40 pack mules per 10-mile hex. If another army has already marched through that hex, it's a good bet that there won't be any left at all.

On a military campaign, then, horses and mules are worth their weight in gold. Too many gamers persist in treating horses and mules like trucks — inexhaustible as long as they're refueled. By doing so, they are not only going contrary to reality but also ignoring one of the primary logistical influences on movement rates — that is, the need for time to take care of the stock. This kind of ignorance gives rise to rules that state that cavalry may always move faster than infantry over long distances (on the basis that horses can run faster than men, probably) — when the reverse is often actually the case. Well-trained infantry can often out-march cavalry over the long term simply because they don't have to tend and feed their horses. Let's see why this is so in some detail.

For all their appearance of strength and nobility, horses are physically delicate and emotionally moody as well as quite stupid. While his willpower spurs a warrior to feats of endurance, a horse or mule has no such resource. Commanders who force animals beyond their natural limits are going to lose a lot of valuable stock to laming, saddle sores, foundering, and broken wind. While saddle sores can be treated by rest, the other conditions do not automatically go away even with the best care in the world. The only thing an army can do with a wind-broken or foundered horse is to eat it.

What kind of care does stock require on the march? The most important thing is always having grain to eat. An army that tries to feed its stock on grass alone loses 05% of its horses and 03% of its mules on the fourth day of such treatment (this means 05% or 03% of the beginning total, not the steadily decreasing current number) and on every day thereafter. An animal marched with inadequate water will founder in 5 days.

Rest is almost as crucial. No fully loaded animal should be marched more than 8 hours per day at a walking pace if the animal is laboring under a pack-saddle and full load. (Well-fed cavalry horses can travel for 8 hours at a walk-trot-walk pace; they can never gallop for more than about twenty minutes straight without injury.) One day out of every 6, all animals must rest unloaded for a full day. What's more, since animals won't graze in the dark in unfamiliar territory, the army must wait each morning and camp early enough each night to allow the stock at least an hour of grazing, depending on how lush the available fodder is.

If a commander insists on a forced

march, or if one is absolutely necessary, his stock will pay for it. A forced march is defined as moving more than 8 hours in a day at normal speed or moving 8 hours a day at faster than normal speed, that is, at faster than a walk-trot-walk for laden animals or gallop-trot-walk-gallop for cavalry. Well-fed stock can make a forced march of 2 days without harm, provided that they can rest for a full day afterward. If not, and especially if the forced march continues, the army will lose 10% of its horses and 05% of its mules on that third day, as it will also do on the fourth day. If a forced march continues without a day of rest past that point, the army will lose 20% (of the beginning total) of all stock every day the march continues. These penalties are cumulative. Stock fed only on grass or watered inadequately as well as being force-marched will founder at a doubled rate.

Moving it along

Now we can turn to the daily movement rate of an army and see that the crucial point is not how many miles an hour an army can march, but how many hours a day it can stay on the march. The hourly movement rate for an army will be much the same as for an individual foot soldier, that is, 3 miles per hour. (This rate has to be modified for terrain, of course, using the referee's own system.) What the referee has to determine is how many hours a day will be available for moving at this rate.

The first thing that the gamemaster has to consider is any limitations imposed by traveling with carts. As we've seen, oxcarts can only travel 5 hours a day, period. Although horses can keep pulling for 8 hours, cart breakdowns will cause delays, so that horsecarts will be on the road only 6 hours a day.

If the army is traveling with a pack train, food will be the main limiting factor. In summer, with sufficient food, the army can indeed move a full 8 hours per day. In the short days of spring and fall, taking time to let the horses graze reduces movement to 6 hours per day. If the army needs supplies, the referee has to determine how many hours it will take to provision the army. Specific figures for all situations are impossible to give here, but I suggest that buying food takes at least 2 hours and extorting it 4 hours, for 1 day's worth of food. This time should be doubled for 2-3 days' worth and tripled for 4-5 days' worth. It's thus possible for a large army to spend several days acquiring provisions.

There are a number of optional factors that the gamemaster might wish to take into account when determining available marching time. Since a grumbling, disorganized army takes a long time to get moving, the referee could penalize demoralized troops for an hour of march time. If water is scarce, there could be penalties for the time spent searching for it. Finally, if an army is marching into unknown territory, the game-

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master could decide that it must spend several hours a day waiting for advance scouts to rejoin the group.

By taking account of logistics and using this system of determining available march time, daily movement will range from 10 miles per day for an army using ox carts to 24 miles per day for a well-provisioned army with a pack train. Since these rates are much lower than those in most game systems, let's look at a couple of historical examples to see if the system is accurate. Alexander the Great's army, the speed of which absolutely dazzled the ancient world, averaged 20 miles a day. During the Norman Conquest, King Harold, desperate though he was to engage William, took a full week to march the 135 miles from York to London. Charlemagne's army, which used ox carts, averaged 8 to 10 miles a day.

Any player, therefore, who wants to march 60 miles in two days — just because the rules in his system allow it — is deluding himself, as the gamemaster is now in a position to point out.

Logistics and the game

Including logistics in a campaign does more than add a certain sour note of realism to play. Gamers forced to operate within the limits of their armies will have to make fascinating strategic decisions, while gamemasters can add those extra touches that keep campaigns dangerous to the overbold and rewarding to the clever.

To begin with, player characters can't raise large armies and march off to war at the drop of a helmet. While the would-be commanders are scouring the countryside for necessary animals and supplies, the referee has opportunities for diplomacy, negotiation, and downright treachery. Players will also have to send out spies or scouts to find the logistical information they'll need while on the march. Even more to the point, planning march routes on the basis of available supplies and securing supply lines become essential parts of strategy, as in the reality of war. A player character who can feed his army while forcing an opponent into barren territory has won a victory worth ten battles.

Logistics also evens the odds between large armies with stupid commanders and small ones with brilliant commanders. In non-technological armies, movement and position mean as much as total shock strength or firepower. Rather than forcing costly pitched battles, the outnumbered leader can attempt to control grain-rich areas and well-stocked towns and thus dictate his larger opponent's movements. The smaller army also has the opportunity to use "scorched earth" strategies to starve the enemy or to wage a guerrilla war against enemy foraging squads without ever engaging the main body of troops.

When it comes to sieges, logistics takes the center of the stage. The referee should remember that the besiegers need to eat just

as much as the besieged do. By keeping track of the food taken from the surrounding countryside, the gamemaster may well find that the besiegers have eaten the territory bare. In that case, they will either have to negotiate with the besieged or else bring in supplies from a distant area. Such long supply lines will be in danger from attacks by allies of the besieged, as well as draining men from the siege itself.

Logistics is so important to a medieval campaign that the historian H.J. Hewitt wrote: "Medieval warfare is not solely, nor even largely, battles and sieges. For weeks and even months on end, it is military pressure exerted by the destruction of life, property, and the means by which life is maintained" — that is, fields, farms, and livestock. A player character who neglects this important truth should learn his mistakes the hard way, just as Napoleon did during the invasion of Russia. It was then that the great general forgot his own good advice: "An army marches on its stomach."

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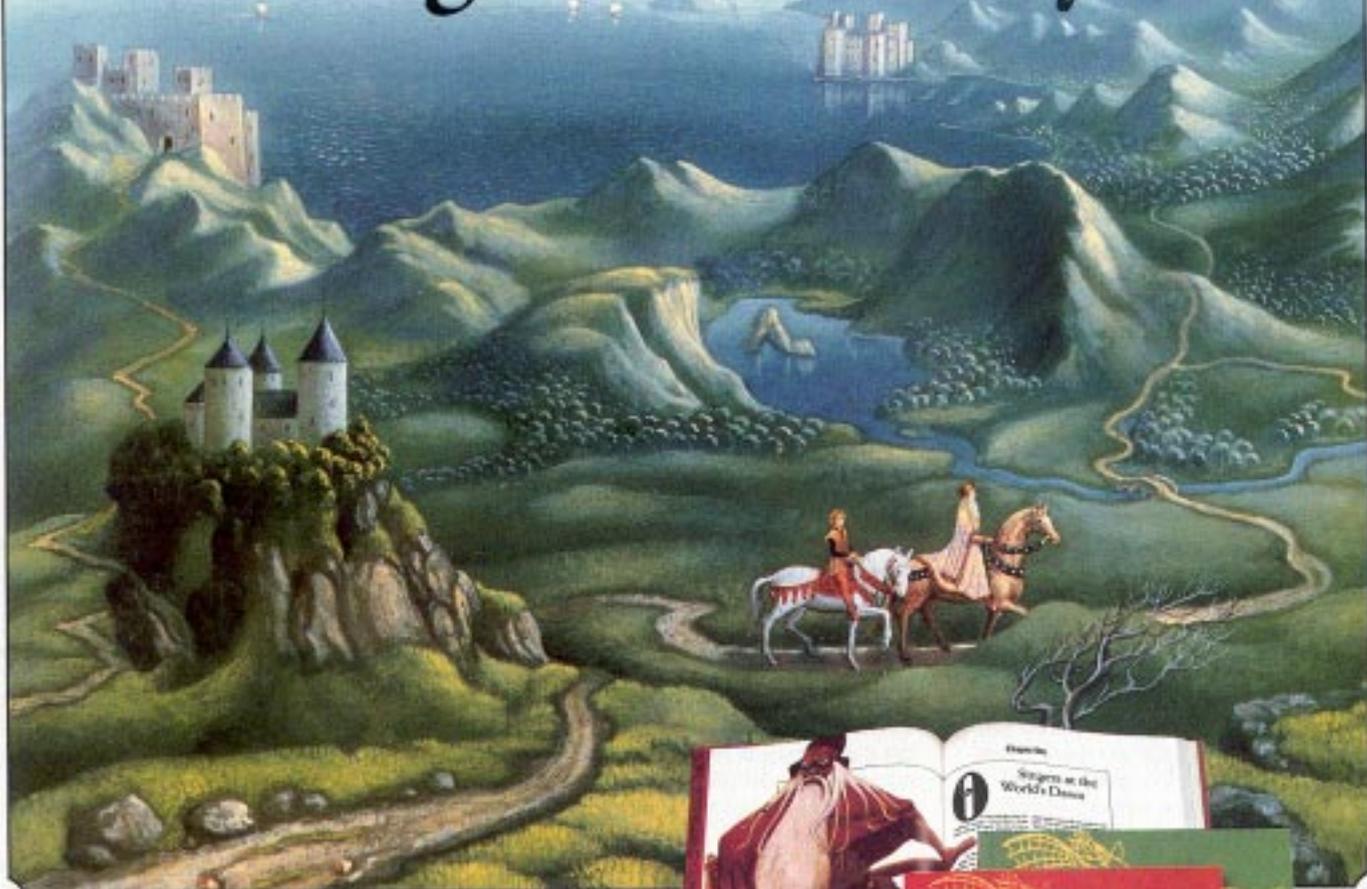
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Same dice, different odds

Divided rolls add variety and uncertainty

by David G. Weeks

In a gaming campaign or even just a single adventure, many occasions arise when a referee must devise a method for rolling damage, or for generating a random number in some non-standard fashion. The rules of the game provide figures for all the standard monsters, weapons, magical attacks, or whatnot. But often a new creature, trap, hazard, or other device will be created in order to surprise and amuse the players. If a new weapon or attack form is introduced, this may require some different rule for calculating damage or some other randomly determined result. In most cases, this result is arrived at by the roll of a die, or by calculating the sum of several rolls of the same type of die. This article delineates some of the limitations of this standard approach, and suggests some of the possible alternatives.

Plotting the distribution of the roll of a particular die or group of dice yields a graphic illustration which indicates the frequency of occurrence of that specific roll. In other words, this type of graphing charts the chance of a specific number (say, 3 on 1d6) appearing when considering all the possible results (1 through 6 on 1d6) that could be obtained. Figure 1a plots the roll of a single die. This is a flat, or linear, distribution: each result has the same chance of occurring. Figure 1b, on the other hand, represents a bell-curve distribution: when several dice are rolled, each result no longer has the same chance of occurring. (With 2d6, results of 2 or 12 occur less frequently than any results between those two extremes.) The top of the curve indicates the number that occurs most often. (For 2d6, this number is 7.) Traveling from that high point down both sides of the curve, the frequency of each possible result decreases symmetrically; the numbers that correspond to each end of the curve have the same frequency, but that frequency is much less than that of the number at the top of the curve.

Figure 1a and Figure 1b have one element in common: symmetry. In contrast, Figure 1c diagrams an asymmetric distribution. If a dice roll using an asymmetric distribution were used for damage calculations, the long tail at the right of the figure would represent a small chance for damage far beyond the typical (average) amount.

The chance of an extraordinary event — in this case, abnormally high damage — is usually beneficial to the enjoyment of the game. Player characters become more wary of an adversary who can occasionally inflict

great damage, and overcoming the challenge then proves to be more satisfying. And, giving player characters the chance to do extraordinary damage encourages them to keep trying when they otherwise might not do so, and helps to build a legacy of memorable events in the campaign.

The extraordinary event must be, by definition, rare. Low-probability events can be found in Figures 1b and 1c, where the height of the curve is low: the long tails on both sides of the bell curve, and the long tail on the high (right) end of the asymmetric curve. Both curves have a long right tail; in game terms, this means high damage with a low probability. The sum of several rolls of identical dice gives a distribution like that of Figure 1b, the bell curve. Why, then, use anything else? The problem with the bell curve is that its average result is a higher number than the average result on an asymmetric curve with the same maximum value. For example, the distribution of a 4d4 dice roll does not have very long tails, but the average is 10. In a certain case, the referee may want the maximum result to be relatively high, but not at the expense of a high average result. Therefore, a method

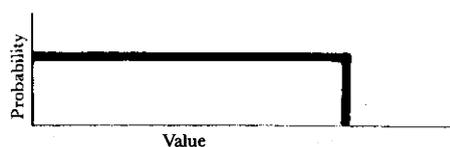


Figure 1a

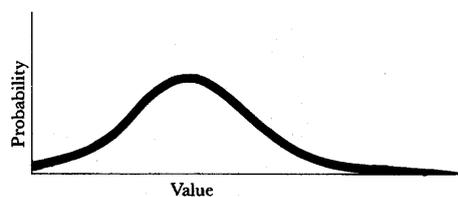


Figure 1b

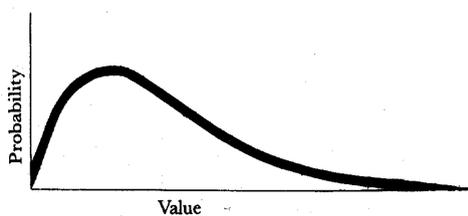


Figure 1c

that renders a small probability for abnormally high damage, yet that has a reasonably low average damage level, must be found.

A *divided die roll* is created by dividing the result of one roll by another roll. For instance, for a d20/d4 divided die roll, simply roll a d20 and a d4, divide the number on the d20 by the number on the d4, and round the result to the nearest integer. (For certain purposes, you may want to round all fractions up, to avoid a result of 0.) The distribution of d20/d4 is plotted in Figure 2. This diagram is an asymmetric distribution just like the one in Figure 1c. The most common number produced will be between 1 and 6 inclusive, but there is a slight chance that the damage could go as high as 20. (Specifically, there is a 1-in-80 chance of this happening.) The average result is approximately 5.6, which is almost the same as the average for a roll of 1d10. So, substituting a d20/d4 die roll for a 1d10 roll leaves the average result essentially the same, but adds the chance of rolling values from 11 to 20.

A few examples will help to illustrate the possible uses of divided rolls. Some low-level monsters in the AD&D® game (e.g., a large spider) do 1 hit point of damage with a successful hit. A similar creature, however, could do d4/d6 of damage. Some of the time, no damage will be done — 2/5 and 1/3, for example, are less than 1/2, so the result would be rounded down to 0. (The attack was enough to be felt, but it proved to be little more than a scratch. Occasionally, though, the damage could be as high as 4 points. The d4/d6 method produces an average roll of about 1. A d10/d20 roll is another alternative here. A much greater chance of no damage exists, but the maximum possible damage is 10 (when the d10 roll is 10 and the d20 roll is 1).

Generally, a hit from a bare fist does 1-2 hit points of damage. This is an average of 1.5. Two divided rolls that can be used

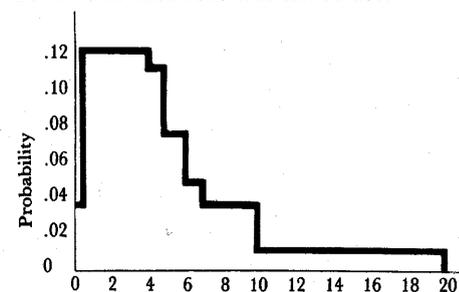


Figure 2

instead are d4/d4 and d8/d8. Which system you should choose depends on how high you want the maximum damage to be; this figure is always the maximum of the first die (the one before the slash). The higher maximum damage of a d8/d8 roll is balanced, however, by a greater chance of a result of 0. Similarly, a dart does 1-2 points of damage against large opponents. This is commonly determined by ½d4. Replacing the ½d4 roll with d8/d8 could result in the dart merely scratching the monster's hide (no damage). Once in a while, however, a dart strike can be as vicious as a good sword blow. Those reluctant to change the rules for all darts could introduce a new type of dart — perhaps one with a longer, thinner point. Often the point bends or breaks — but if it hits solid, watch out.

A dagger does d4 (1-4) points of damage against small or medium opponents. It seems that a dagger-like weapon could be more deadly than this. Any of three divided rolls could be used instead of d4: the rolls of d8/d4, d12/d6, and d20/d12 would be appropriate. These three choices provide a good selection for potential damage. With a d8/d4 roll, 8 points of damage is the maximum — enough to kill any zero-level type, as well as many first-level characters. However, there is but a 1-in-32 chance of rolling this result. The d20/d12 roll, on the other hand, has a much greater maximum of 20 — enough to fell the average third-level lighter in one blow. But there is also about a 13% chance that the blow will do no damage. (In contrast, the chance of no damage with d8/d4 is only 6%.)

Divided die rolls can be useful in many situations not covered by the rules. For instance, consider the problem of determining damage caused by a rockslide that has struck a group of adventurers. Rolling a separate amount of damage for each party member would be a logical procedure. Some characters might get hit with really big rocks, whereas others would suffer only a hail of pebbles. The maximum damage from a rockslide should be very high, while the average damage should be moderate. Perhaps it would wipe out a first-level party, but in a fifth- to seventh-level party, only the really unlucky would die. Let's try a divided roll of d100/d10: in the long run, 5% of the rolls will generate damage of 50 hit points or more. The average damage is around 15, and over half of the time damage will be less than 10. This sort of dice roll would also be well suited to a monster with a powerful breath weapon or other magical attack form. Braving such a creature would be an acceptable risk for even a moderately low-level party — yet the attack has the potential to slay all but the strongest characters. This is a situation guaranteed to generate excitement.

Some game systems allow for the possibility of a "critical hit" — that is, an extraordinarily rare blow that does an extremely high amount of damage. Many of the critical-hit systems (both official and unofficial) used by referees call for an extraordi-

nary result on a roll of 20 on the attempt to hit. Applying this sort of rule to the AD&D game combat system, we can see that it leads to some odd results. For instance, an orc that attacks a human who has an armor class of -1 will always score a critical hit if it hits at all (because the orc needs a 20 to hit AC -1). A frost giant attacking that same human will achieve a critical hit only one-tenth of the time that the giant scores a hit (because it hits on 11 or better, and 20 is just one of ten numbers that indicate a hit). Overall, both monsters have the same chance for a critical hit — a 1-in-20 chance. But the "to hit" roll already reflects the defender's armor class, the attacker's level, any magic defenses and weapons, dexterity adjustments, and so on. It should not be routinely burdened by carrying any more information. For all these reasons, the rare chance of exceptional damage — if this is to be a part of the combat system — should be carried within the damage roll itself.

Critical-hit systems also commonly have a provision for automatic death, but divided die rolls include no such provision. If death is a desired possibility for every blow, regardless of the attacker's power or the defender's hit points, then another system must be used. This point should also be noted: critical-hit systems diminish the value of gaining experience levels, since the chance of dying from a critical hit is not reduced at all as a character gains levels; however, monsters, spells, and magical

weapons that can (according to the rules) cause instant death become less special, because lesser creatures or weapons can do the same thing, just less often.

Determining the number of creatures appearing in an encounter is another good use of the divided die roll. For example, d100/d4 could be used for creatures that tend to lair in large numbers, but that hunt or patrol in smaller groups. A d100/d4 roll has an average result of about 26, and about half of the time, it will be 20 or less. Some monsters appear singly or in pairs. Beholders, for example, are listed in the Monster Manual as appearing singly only. The logic behind this fact is that they are too voracious for two to share a territory (see DRAGON® Magazine, issue #76, p.6). Yet since the monsters are intelligent and lawful, there seems to be no reason why a small group of beholders cannot be occasionally encountered. When a d4/d6 roll is substituted for the number appearing, a high-level party might come to regret its casually considered frontal assault on a beholder's lair when the party discovers that the resident beholder has invited two or three of its friends over for a game of "zap the humans." A result of 0 could be treated in three ways: it could mean no encounter, the 0 could be changed to 1 (though this raises the average), or it could mean that the party does not (yet) encounter the beholder, but acquires evidence that the monster is nearby. →



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Treasure, either the number of coins of a particular type or the value of a particular item, can be generated with divided rolls. Suppose a referee plans to have 1-20 gems in a particular hoard. The average of 6d6/d4 is almost the same as a roll of 1d20, but the range is from 1-36. Alternatively, a d100/d20 roll could be used; it has a lower average result than 1d20 (about 9 instead of 10.5) but a higher maximum one. The principle is the same as that for damage: excitement is enhanced when there is a chance for treasure much greater than the average.

Sometimes, a roll that goes the other way is desired — a large chance of getting a result near the maximum, with a long tail on the low end. To get this effect, make the divided roll as usual, then subtract the result from the maximum roll possible. For example, there is a pool of water into which the party might suddenly need to dive in order to escape some monster. The pool is as deep as 20 feet in some places, averages 15 feet, and has occasional shallow spots. Characters who dive into shallow spots will take damage. A d20/d4 roll has an average of 5.5 and a maximum of 20. So, 20 minus d20/d4 has an average of 14.5 (20 minus 5.5), with results that also (like the "straight" divided roll) range from 0 to 20.

To help the referee select the right divided roll for a particular purpose, a number of possibilities are listed in Table 1. The best way to use the table is to decide first what

the average should be, then select a divided roll with an average close to the desired figure. If several are close, then the one with the range that seems the most appropriate should be used. If a roll with an average larger than any of those listed is needed, one method should be selected and its results multiplied. For example, the referee wants an average result of around 100. In the table, 6d6/d4 has an average of 10.9, so [6d6/d4 x 9] has an average of 98.1 (which is probably close enough to the target average of 100). The maximum is calculated in similar fashion: the highest result of 6d6/d4 is 36, and 36 x 9 = 324.

The examples described in this article illustrate how divided rolls can be used and how their use might improve a campaign. Obviously, the bite of a large spider cannot always be replaced with a damage roll of d4/d6, nor can the depth of every pool be determined by [20 minus d20/d4]. It is up to the referee to decide when a divided roll might be useful, and which combination of dice to use. It may take a little time to find the appropriate divided roll for a specific purpose, but this can be done before play begins, when time matters a little less. The rolls take a little longer to read, but the extra time can be reduced by using a calculator. Though the examples were derived from the AD&D® game system, the uses of divided rolls can extend to just about any role-playing game system.

TABLE 1

Divided roll	Selected divided rolls			95%
	Avg.	Near	P(0)	
d10/d20	1.0	1	.45	3
d4/d6	1.1	1	.25	2
d4/d4	1.4	1-2	.13	3
d8/d8	1.6	1-2	.19	4
d6/d4	1.9	1-3	.08	4
d10/d8	1.9	1-3	.15	6
d20/d20	1.9	1-3	.23	6
d8/d4	2.4	d4	.06	6
d12/d6	2.7	d4	.08	8
d20/d12	2.8	d4	.13	9
d12/d4	3.5	d6	.04	9
d20/d8	3.6	d6	.08	12
d20/d6	4.4	d8	.05	14
d30/d10	4.6	d8	.07	15
d30/d8	5.3	d10	.05	18
d20/d4	5.6	d10	.03	16
3d8/d6	5.6	d10	0	15
3d8/d4	7.1	2d6	0	16
d100/d20	9.1	2d8	.05	33
4d8/d4	9.5	2d8	0	21
6d6/d4	11.0	d20	0	24
d100/d12	13.1	3d8	.03	46
5d10/d4	14.4	4d6	0	32
d100/d10	14.8	6d4	.02	50
d100/d8	17.2	5d6	.02	60
d100/d6	20.7	6d6	.01	70
d100/d4	26.4	6d8	.01	80

Avg. is the average result of the roll.

Near is a conventional roll with an average near that of the divided roll.

P(0) is the probability of a result of zero.

95% lists the number that 95% of the rolls are at or below.

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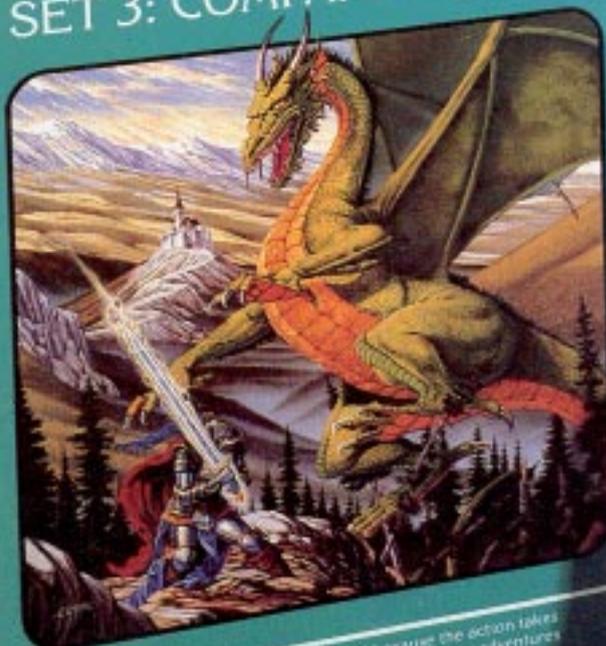
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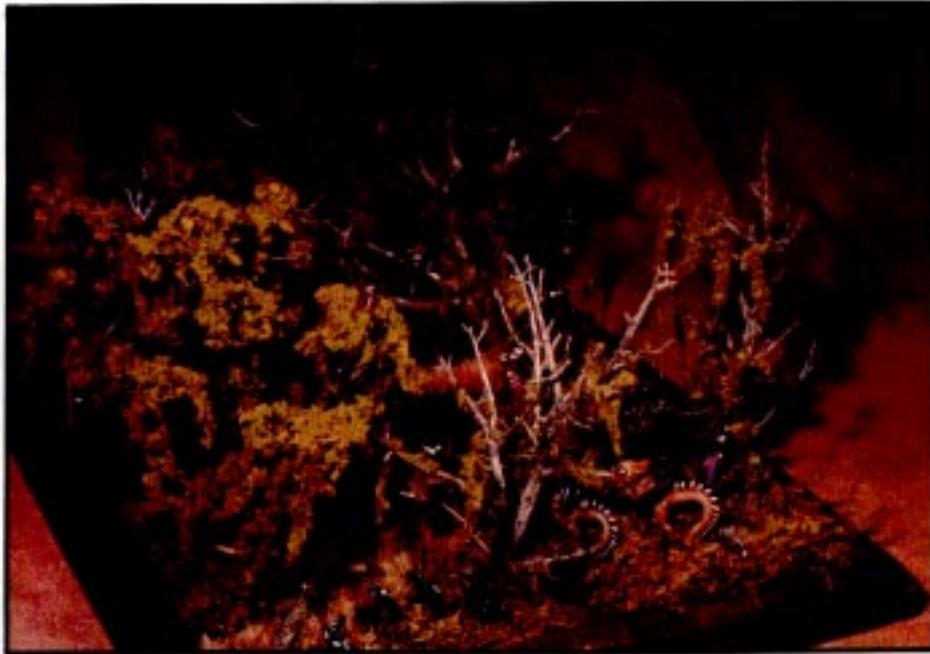
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This long shot of the entire diorama shows the realism appearance and placement of the foliage, which conceals most of the activity within until you look more closely. The small patch of red in the upper right corner of the scene is the crest on the top of the reptiliad leader's helmet, visible because the figure is standing on a log, spurring his troops on to victory.

Reptiliad Attack wins big

*Text by
Kim Eastland*

*Photos by
Dan Sample*

The last two issues of DRAGON® Magazine have contained photographs of some of the prize-winning entries from the Miniature Open contest at the 1984 GEN CON® Convention — but we saved the best for last. Pictured on these two pages is *Reptiliad Attack* by Eric Heaps of Milwaukee, the diorama that won the prestigious Mas-

ters competition. The scene includes dozens of figures from RAFM's Reptiliad line — regular infantry, Gilla-Worm Infantry, Gilla-Worm Cavalry mounted on War Newts, and War Turtles that lead the army's push through this patch of swampland. There are spotters in the trees and many figures that are all but obscured by the

surrounding foliage, even scratch-built snakes — in short, enough features to keep someone looking at the diorama for several minutes just to take in everything that's there to see. Every element of the composition works together to produce a realistic scene that stands as a goal for next year's contestants to shoot for.

If you were hidden in a thicket just off the beaten path, this is what you would see as the reptiliad army advanced past your position. The War Newt Light Cavalry and the Reptiliad Infantry figures show up well, and we get a good close-up glimpse of the trees, ground cover, and foliage that Eric constructed.



This striking aerial photograph gives some indication of the complexity and detail throughout the diorama. As the War Turtles advance through a clearing, the dart throwers on the back of the turtle in the center stand ready to assault anything that moves.

The ecology of the chimera

by Ed Greenwood

Elminster sighed. "Well, it's one of the 'classical' monsters, sung of by every bard and written of by every sage and too many others pretending to sagacity, so I'm not surprised you asked about it." He waved his pipe at me. "Now mind, there's the chimera proper, and its crossbreeds, of which many types are rumored, but only two confirmed: the gorgimera and the thessalmera."

"Thessalmera?" I repeated, astonished. "There is such a thing as the offspring of a chimera and a thessalhydra?"

"Aye. And a more ugly, ungainly, and deadly creature you cannot imagine. Thankfully, they cannot breed." The sage sucked on his pipe and considered. "You'll be wanting a story, of course, and all that I can recall are untrue." At my questioning eyebrow he continued: "All of the ballads and folktales concerning chimerae are always either simple, bloody fights with them, and this or that hero prevailing — or they involve heroes and heroines too weak to fight a chimera, who overcame it and slew it, stole from it, or escaped from it by setting its various heads to arguing among themselves."

"This is pure piffle. Chimerae are too stupid to argue. They know only when to attack and eat weak opponents or withdraw when badly hurt. Instinct tells them what is good to eat, what is too hot or too cold for comfort, and when to mate. Most sages think of chimerae as somewhat less cunning than dragons, but otherwise about the same

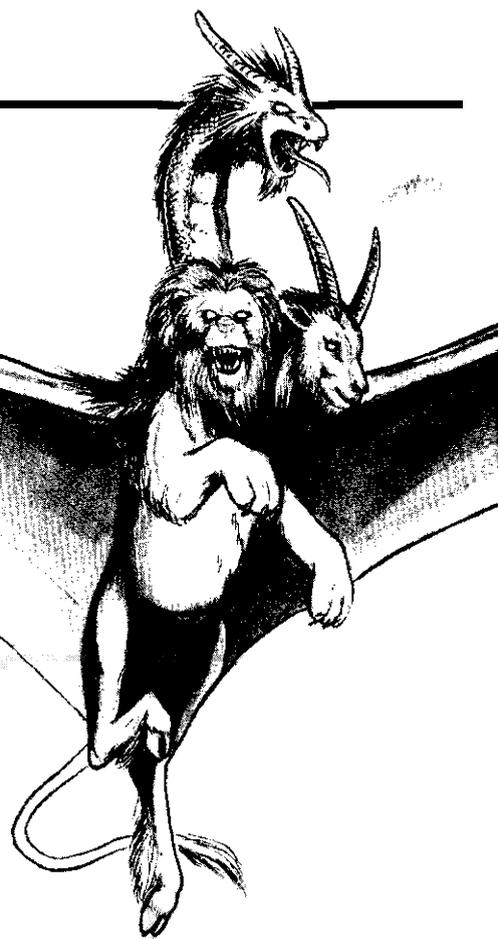
as a foe, and they could not be more wrong. I've found only one report in my library that is correct — and you will note that it is correct only because it is so vague and incomplete."

Elminster then read me the following report. The added footnotes represent the conclusions drawn by the author from Elminster's detailed additions, comments, and explanations, for the study of chimerae was a hobby of his in the days when he worked with the late Laelun of Teshendale.

From the *De Naturis Rerum* ("About the Things of Nature") of Alaphondar, Sage Most Learned of the Royal Court of King Cormyr:

Of the weird and misbegotten creatures of nature, most repellent and infamous to men, one of the most ungainly and terrible is the thankfully rare chimera.

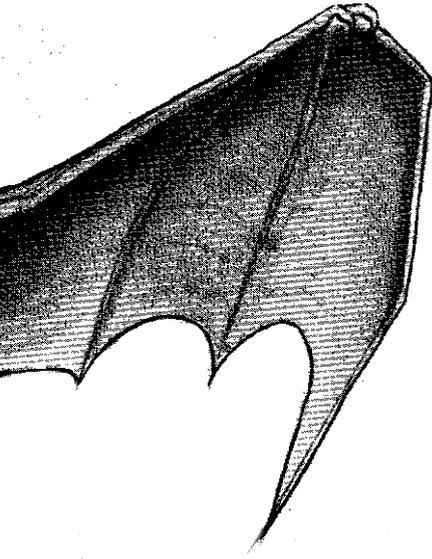
Chimeras (or "chimerae") have three heads: a goat head well equipped for cropping grass and the eating of all manner of rotting vegetables and the like; a lion head admirably suited for battling and devouring game — and a dragon head that can roast flesh and subdue even the strongest prey: man himself. It is an old and cruel joke that the chimera is the only beast that cooks its repast to the desired degree before partaking — old men roasted well done, but young ones only toasted medium rare. Much else is said, often wrongly, about this monster most foul, so herein I do set down the record straight.



A chimera is a stupid beast, but it needs little finesse to survive with the powers it possesses. It seldom cooperates with other creatures, but only rarely does one chimera fight with another. A chimera ranges widely while hunting, trusting to its powers to keep it safe from harm, avoiding only large cities or the lairs of creatures that have bested it before. It is a clumsy flier,¹ able to use its fiery breath, or only one of its heads, or its claws, in aerial combat. It prefers to pounce from flight or high ground onto prey, using its bulk to drive its victim to the ground, where it can rake with its lionlike foreclaws and bite unhampered.²

Chimeras are omnivorous, but prefer to dine on raw flesh. They kill their prey themselves, rather than scavenging or hunting with other creatures. They are largely solitary, banding together with others of their own kind only for short periods to undertake specific hunts or to mate. Chimeras take no permanent companions, but often mate with another of their own kind upon first encounter.³

These beasts have awesome powers of vitality and regeneration.⁴ In a month, one can grow a new head to replace one that is lost or badly damaged. The creature can, of its own will, cut off the blood supply to a damaged head. Then it will ram and rub against rocks to remove the wounded appendage, or sometimes bargain with another creature to devour or remove the useless flesh. If a chimera loses its dragon head, it will hide in its lair until the head grows back and the creature regains its



power to breathe fire (a gas-producing internal organ is involved). This entire process takes between two and three months.

Chimeras speak a grunting, crude form of red dragon language, and sometimes bargain with red dragons for prey and aid, in return for treasure or spell scrolls. A chimera hides such treasure (gained from prey) in its lair, usually under a concealing layer of boulders. Chimera lairs are typically in caverns, disused mines, or ruined castles, particularly if the latter structures rise high to command a view of the surrounding terrain.

The origin of the chimera is unknown; some believe it was human experimentation that initially caused the interbreeding of a red dragon, a lion, and a goat. The truth is lost in the mists of time; it is only certain that chimeras are now a stable, if rare, species, and can breed with their own kind (to produce chimeras), with red dragons (to produce more chimeras), with lions (to produce lions), with gorgons (to produce the sterile gorgimera), or with thessalhydrae (to produce the sterile thessalmera).

Notes

1. A chimera is of maneuverability class E, as are its cousins the gorgimera and thessalmera. The creature's body is very bulky, so even its powerful dragon-wings can do little more than keep the chimera aloft; high speed and abrupt sharp turns are out of the question, which is why the beast only uses flight as a means to gain a

positional advantage over a ground-based opponent. A chimera will almost never voluntarily engage in aerial combat with another flying creature, not even one as ungainly as itself.

2. The fiery breath of a chimera does as much as 3-24 points of damage to a target within a 5" distance from its dragon head, in a cone-shaped area 2" in diameter at the farthest point. Against a formidable foe, it will use this attack as frequently as possible (as often as once per round, up to 6 times per day). In a less challenging situation, the creature will rely on its claw, hoof, and bite attacks and only use its breath weapon on a 50% chance (roll separately for each round of combat). A target within the area of effect can take only half damage by making a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon.

A chimera's lion head bites for 3-12 points of damage, the slash of its goat head's horns can do 1-2 points of damage if a target presents itself, and its dragon head does 2-8 points of damage on every bite that hits. The lion foreclaws do 1-4 damage each, and the hooves on its rear goat-legs do 1-3 points of damage each from kicking (only possible against targets behind or below the chimera). The creature's tail and wings do no damage, but can buffet, trip, distract, and sometimes even knock over opponents. A chimera is capable of wielding all of its various appendages against separate foes simultaneously. Its scaled, sinuous dragon head is armor class 2, its leathery wings AC 5, and its vast, bulky body (including the lion and goat heads) is AC 6.

A gorgimera's body is entirely AC 2 except for the gorgonlike hindquarters and bull-head, which are AC 5. A thessalmera's body is AC 0, except for the gorgon-head (AC 5) and the wings and dragon-head (both AC 2).

3. The mating of two chimerae will produce offspring only 30% of the time. When it is successful, the mother will give birth to 1-3 small, mewling, helpless young 6-9 months afterward. (The gestation period is longer when multiple births are involved.) For a month after giving birth, the mother hunts for the young, dragging her kills back to the lair, and then leaves them to fend for themselves. By this time the young can breathe fire (3" range, 2-12 damage, save for half damage, same frequency limits as an adult). A young chimera does 1-6 damage with its lion bite, 1-4 with its dragon bite, and 1 point of damage apiece with any of its claw or hoof attacks. Immature chimeras are size S (2' at shoulder), can move 9" on land but only fly at 12" (for a maximum of 2 rounds at a time before needing to rest for 1 round). They have 3 HD and have AC figures of 8/7/4.

For 3 months after being left alone, the young will hunt together out of mutual necessity. At the end of this time they will have grown to 7 HD and acquired full adult powers, except that they can only breathe

fire 4 times per day. At 4 months of age they strike out on their own, and 2 months later they reach full adult size (9 HD) and powers. Thereafter they may slowly gain weight with age and heavy eating. Chimeras sometimes mate with gorgons (see *Monster Manual II*, "Gorgimera") or thessalhydrae (see below).

THESSALMERA

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*

NO. APPEARING: 1

ARMOR CLASS: 5/2/0

MOVE: 12"/18"

HIT DICE: 10

% IN LAIR: 40%

TREASURE TYPE: *All possible, lair only*

NO. OF ATTACKS: *See below*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-6 (x6 to x8)/

1-12 (tail)/2-8/3-12

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Breath weapon; poison*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Immune to petrification and acid*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*

INTELLIGENCE: *Animal*

ALIGNMENT: *Neutral evil*

SIZE: *L (12' tall, 20' long)*

PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

Attack/Defense Modes: *Nil*

The very rare thessalmera lairs in swamps, jungles, or caverns, and can endure extremes of climate with impunity. A sterile crossbreed of thessalhydra and chimera, the cunning thessalmera is often found close to civilization (where it can feed upon isolated bands of travelers or upon livestock, hunting in stealth by night). It preys chiefly on the choicest of red-blooded creatures: man.

The thessalmera has the scaled, lizardlike body and pincer-clawed tail of the thessalhydra, six to eight snakelike heads, a central lion's head, and a red dragonlike head. The dragon head can bite for 2-8 points of damage or (up to 6 times a day) breathe fire in a cone up to 5" distant, 1/2" wide at its jaws and widening to 2" across at maximum range. This breath weapon does 3-24 points of damage, or half damage if the target makes a save vs. breath weapon (objects save vs. normal fire). The lion jaws bite and rend prey for 3-12 damage. The pincerlike tail does 1-12 damage on a hit, and can grasp one M-sized or smaller opponent, holding that victim immobile (roll less than Str on d20 to escape, one attempt allowed per round). The snakelike heads do 1-6 damage per bite, plus an extra 1-6 on each hit from the creature's acidic venom (unless the victim saves vs. poison). The thessalmera cannot spit its acidic venom like a thessalhydra can.

4. Chimerae, gorgimerae, and thessalmera can all regenerate 2 hit points of damage every 24 hours, regardless of activities engaged in during that time. They are also all resistant to fire (+3 on saving throws vs. all types of heat and fire) and immune to

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petrification, and the thessalmera (like its thessalhydra parent) is also immune to the effects of any sort of acid. The natural lifespans of these three creatures are unknown, but are thought to be more than 30 years in every case.

A mature chimera has 9 hit dice, distributed as follows: dragon head 2, lion head 2, goat head 1, wings ½ each, and body 3. Its dragon head can swivel 360 degrees about to attack creatures behind, above, or below the chimera, and its long, scaled neck can dart with great speed (in 1 segment) up to 1" outward, or around corners, etc., to breathe fire at opponents. The chimera

never falls into a complete, deep sleep; rather, one or two of its heads will nap at one time while the third remains watchful, able to bring the whole beast awake and alert in an instant.

The hit dice of a mature gorgimera are distributed identically to those of a chimera, except that the gorgon head has 2 hit dice, whereas the chimera's goat head has only 1, and the creature sleeps in a like manner.

A thessalmera (see above) has hit dice as follows: dragon head 2, lion head 2, tail 1, body 5. The snakelike heads can be severed by dealing them 12 points of damage each, but harming or severing one or more of them does not diminish the HP total of the rest of the creature. The venom of the thessalmera loses its efficacy upon the death of the creature, and has not yet been successfully duplicated or preserved by alchemists.

Chimerae and gorgimerae are too stupid for their heads to argue among themselves, and are in any case immune to their own breath weapons. A thessalmera is always controlled by its lion head unless it is destroyed or damaged, whereupon the dragon head takes over; if that is also destroyed, a thessalmera will become a semi-intelligent, frenzied killing machine, fearlessly and recklessly attacking all living creatures it can perceive and reach. When all such creatures are slain and eaten, it will seek a lair and remain hidden therein until its lion and dragon heads have regenerated.

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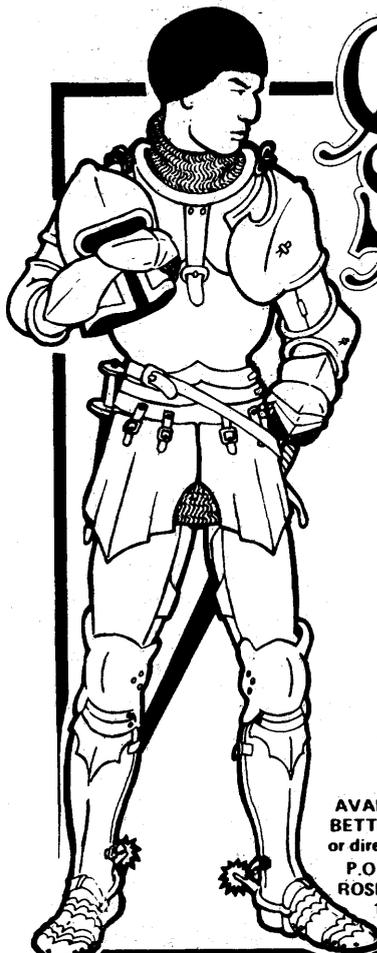
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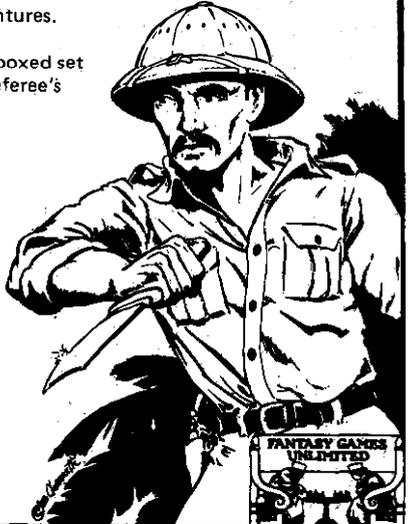
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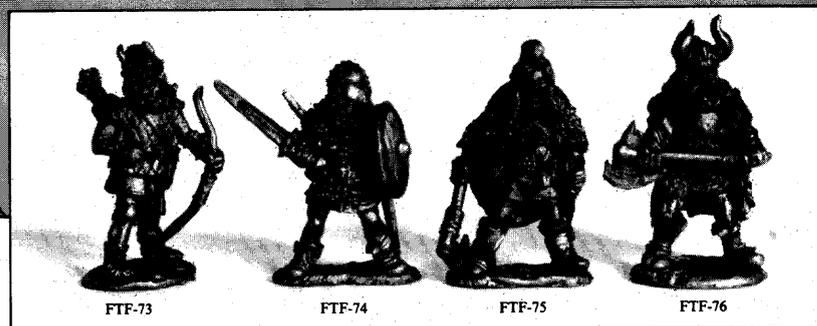


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The forum

(From page 6)

situation that can be handled by either one could be handled by the other equally well. The rules specify the reaction roll table; so be it.

You and Mr. Heiles both missed the main point of multiplying by 5 and using d100, namely that there's nothing sacred about the number 5. For easy tasks where even low-attribute characters have a good chance, you can multiply the attribute score by, say, 8, 10, 15, or 20 (with 00 still an automatic miss — even a dexterity 18 character can plant his foot on something that slips as he makes his leap). For hard tasks you can multiply by 3, 1, or 1/2. Dexterity times 1/2 on d100 is a real test, yet even the clumsiest cleric has a chance (unlike the reaction roll table, I might add, where charisma 3 has no chance of a friendly reaction).

By the way, some other FRP games (*Bushido* and *Runequest*, for example) make quite extensive use of attribute checks. It is even possible to base the mechanics of a system on attribute checks alone (see *The Fantasy Trip*).

Ralph Sizer
Providence, R. I.

* * * *

A reader wrote to you in issue #92 about your using the name "Dwalin" in your Norse mythology-based module "Aesirhamar" when the name was also used in J. R. R. Tolkien's work.

On page 125 of Daniel Grotta-Kurska's biography *J. R. R. Tolkien: Architect of Middle Earth*, it says: "The names of the dwarfs in *The Hobbit*, for example, were not invented by Tolkien, but lifted intact from *The Elder Edda*. In that work, the dwarfs' names were Durin, Dwalin, Dain, Bifur, Bofur, Bombur, Nori, Thrain, Thorin, Thror, Fili, Kili, Fundin, Gloin, Dori, and Ori (there was even a Gandalf)."

The same book quotes Tolkien as saying, "I gave the dwarfs actual Norse names which are in Norse books."

Since the name of Dwalin was invented centuries before Tolkien ever used it, how can there be anything wrong or illegal about using it?

Roy Cozier
Rupert, Idaho

* * * *

In a letter in issue #92, Tim Evenson states that it is a "fact" that bats are blind and therefore wonders how they can have infravision in the article "Bats that do more than bite." This is simply not true.

I normally have no problem accepting any of the monsters in the AD&D game system, either in the official books or those presented in your magazine. After all, there are no real dragons, orcs, dwarves, or, for that matter, most of the monsters found in the game. But for some reason, certain readers always are writing to say that this or that monster is not "realistic," when in fact it doesn't even exist. They are mythical to begin with, so why try and make them fit into the real world in the first place?

My profession is that of naturalist, and a lot of my time is spent trying to educate people about the plants and animals around them. A large part

of this is the squelching of rumors concerning animals who have a poor reputation with the general public, such as snakes, bats, and spiders.

In truth, bats can see very well. But since most hunt at night, they have developed a superb echolocation system to allow them to locate prey. Other bats are fruit eaters, and these bats are active during the day and "hunt" fruit using only their eyesight. The saying "blind as a bat" is simply an old wives' tale.

It is one thing to argue about whether or not a chimera is "realistic," but another to perpetuate myths about animals that really do exist in our world. Bats are not blind, they do not all carry rabies, and they do not get entangled in women's hair. Please bring these facts to the attention of your readers.

In the meantime, keep up the good work in bringing us the fantastic monsters that are only meant to exist in an AD&D game universe.

Gary A. Nelson
New Lenox, Ill.

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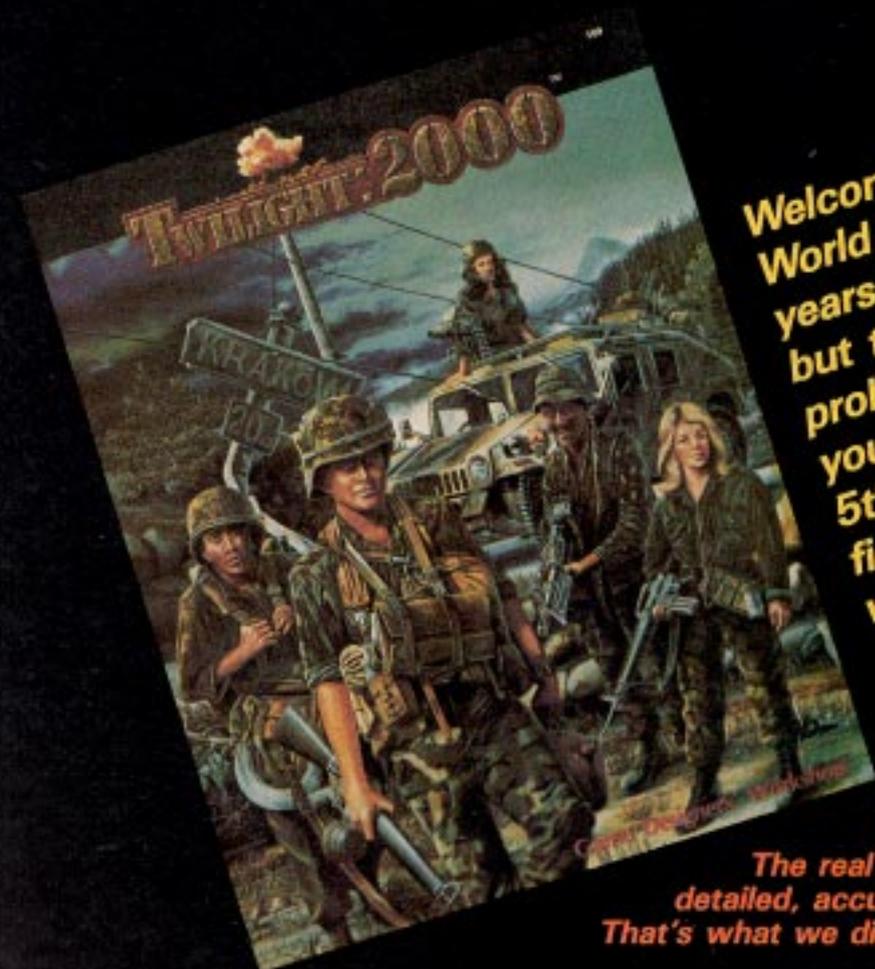
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Background: Extensive background notes are included: a lengthy chronology of the war's first five years and notes on conditions in central Europe. A beginning adventure, *Escape from Kallsz*, forms the basis of a whole campaign, with information on enemy units, nearby towns, rumors and prisoner interrogations, and radio traffic, plus an account of the death of 5th division and the division's last issued intelligence briefing.

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Playing in the modern era

MS&PE package provides both fun and freedom

After finishing a book by Fleming or Chandler, don't you sometimes wish that you could take a character into that world and follow along with Bond or Marlowe, encountering the "monsters" lurking in the dark alleys or dingy brownstones of today? Sometimes we get carried away with all of the fantasy role-playing adventure games on the market and forget that there are other times and places where we can adventure. Cinema and television offer us many different possibilities for adventure right here in the modern world. There's the super-spy world of James Bond or Napoleon Solo, the dirty-grey world of Philip Marlowe or Mike Hammer, even the explosive arena of the A-Team. All of these worlds are rich in adventure. To complete the package, we need a set of rules that enable players to explore the potential for adventure in the modern world.

The *MERCENARIES, SPIES, & PRIVATE EYES*[™] game, by Michael Stackpole, is just such a set of rules for role-playing in the modern era. Released two years ago by Blade (the game division of Flying Buffalo), the game consists of a single 112-page rule book and sells for \$9.95. As might be guessed from its title, *MS&PE* permits you to play almost every type of modern adventuring character.

Characters are created for this game by rolling three six-sided dice, once for each of six characteristics; if any roll comes up triples, two more dice are rolled and added to the total. This makes the usual character fall into the 4-18 range, while an exceptional character (1 in 1296) can have a characteristic as high as 30.

There are two major categories of role-playing systems on the market today: level-based systems and skill-based systems. The *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS*[®] game is an example of the first category, in which a single number representing the character's level determines how well the character performs any particular task, and as that number increases, so does the performance in all of the character's skills. The second category includes products such as the *RuneQuest*[®] and *Lands of Adventure*[™] games, in which a character has a set of ratings that govern the use of the character's specific skills, and these ratings can be improved separately.

MS&PE belongs to an increasingly popular third category: the hybrid system. A character will improve in those skills he uses, but as he adventures, he will also gain in levels, which can lead to other improve-



ments (e.g., a gain in any of his characteristics).

Skill rolls in this hybrid system are made by using the level rating of the skill in addition to the applicable characteristic when the character is attempting to use that skill. For example, if a character has the skill Clip Pistol at a level 4 rating, the level (4, in this case) is added to the character's DEX when he attempts to shoot something. If the gun should jam while fired, the character adds the skill level (once again, 4) to his IQ in order to determine his chance of clearing the jam.

The entire skills system is based on the saving-roll philosophy found in the *Tunnels & Trolls*[™] game system. A level of difficulty for the skill use is determined by the referee. This difficulty level yields a success number, and the character's relevant characteristic (Strength, Dexterity, etc.), plus skill level and the number rolled on two six-sided dice, must meet or exceed that number for the character to succeed. An extremely high success number does not necessarily make a skill roll impossible because every time doubles are rolled on the six-sided dice, you roll again and add this number to the previous total. Therefore, there is no theoretical maximum to the number rolled.

The application of different characteristics to the same skill modifier, depending on the context of the skill use, is something I hadn't seen in a game before, and it makes a great deal of sense. This is the only skill system I've run across which allows for the existence of the "book genius," the fellow

who knows everything about electronics but can't change a light bulb without getting electrocuted in the process.

And the skill list is astoundingly complete. I couldn't come up with a single skill a modern character could be expected to have which wasn't allowed by the rules, due in main to the catch-all categories of Occupational and Recreational skills. While these are quite general categories, enough information is given about the philosophy of the skill-level system here to enable any referee to accurately gauge the level of skill of a character in these areas.

The background a player invents for his character is important in setting up the character, and *MS&PE* is one of the few games that acknowledges this. If the background created for a character calls for a specific skill, but the player doesn't have enough points to buy that skill when generating the character, the referee may use his discretion to allow the player to purchase the skill anyway. I've always granted a character those abilities his background would normally have given him, regardless of how poorly the player rolled dice in an evening. I don't believe the character should be penalized simply because the player is unable to come up with a decent dice roll. Others have claimed that this attitude destroys play balance, but the object of the game is to role-play, not to roll-play, and it's easier to role-play a reasonably designed character than some strange random construction. It's good to have a designer on my side this time.

Being able to adjust a character's skill is a minor point, I realize, but it serves as an indication of the great flexibility found in these rules. They are intended to help players build characters which they can comfortably role-play, and isn't that what every rules system aims for (but so few hit)?

An excellent gauge for the realism of any modern role-playing system is how well it handles combat. In this enlightened era, we have invented many ways of killing quickly and efficiently, and modern combat rules should reflect this fact. Combat is short and bloody in this system, with very few guns (which cannot kill with a single bullet) listed in the tables. This might be considered a handicap if what you're trying to do is role-play the A-Team, but it serves as a definite advantage if you're trying to get your players to do something besides shoot anything that moves (and many things that don't).

The area where most game systems fall down is in the handling of the martial artist.

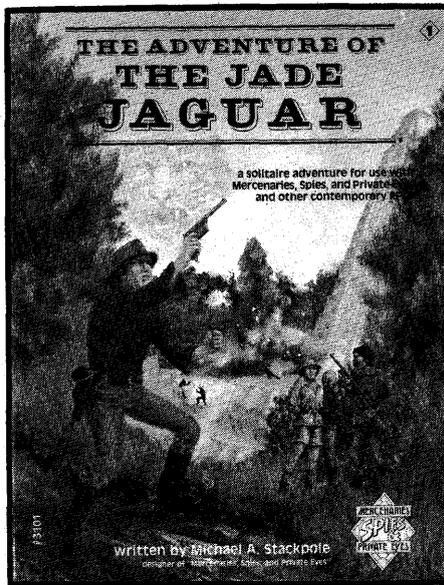
I have yet to play a game which could capture the real flavor of a martial-arts duel (as in *Enter the Dragon*, for example). Most games merely give the martial artist some gimmick or special power, and this game is no different. The gimmick here is that the martial artist is the only character able to attack, in hand-to-hand combat, more than one opponent in the same round, an average martial-artist being able to take on 3 or 4 people. But every type of martial artist is played the same way, with no real difference in game terms between, for instance, karate and judo. As written, the martial arts rules do play quickly, with the resulting damage figures a trifle high for my taste, but probably reasonable. If Blade had provided a gaming difference between the different styles of fighting, it would probably have resulted in a much more complicated and slow system. As it is, the system is hardly less realistic than any other attempt I have seen at gaming martial artists, and plays faster and easier than most.

In fact, the only real fault I can find in this game is in the implementation of the skill system. The number required for saving rolls goes up by five points per level of saving-roll difficulty, while you only get to add one point per level of skill. This doesn't quite feel right in action. An improvement of one level in a skill doesn't feel as if it gives noticeable improvement in the possibility of making the next higher level saving roll. But this feeling is sometimes incorrect, as a single level of skill improvement occasionally raises the percentage chance of success by a significant amount.

The rules for this game take up about the first 50 of the book's 112 pages. The rest of the book contains the expected tables, such as weapons statistics, plus some guidelines for writing scenarios for each of the genres mentioned in the title. The most complete set of guidelines are for the mystery genre, but they contain much information which can usefully be applied to the other genres. The guidelines are well done and should assist any referee in designing an enjoyable adventure for the players.

The release of this game from Blade roughly coincided with the release of Hero Games's *Espionage*™ game, and the two companies struck an unprecedented bargain which bodes well for those who game in this genre. All of the *MS&PE* aids that Blade publishes will also have the game statistics necessary for use with the *Espionage* game, while all of the *Espionage* and *Justice Inc.* game aids from Hero Games will contain conversions for use with *MS&PE*. This ensures that a much wider variety of scenarios will be published for both games. An agreement between two competing companies to essentially supply scenarios for each other's games in order to better serve the gamer is a development I heartily applaud.

If you're planning on role-playing in the modern era, whether you're interested in James Bond or George Smiley — or even Nero Wolfe — this would be an excellent system to choose. If you're after a system



which allows a great deal of freedom of action, both for referee and player, this is by far the best.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE JADE JAGUAR is a small solo adventure released along with *MS&PE*. The original intention was to include this adventure in the box with *MS&PE*, but when the decision was made to release *MS&PE* as a single book, unboxed, it was also decided to issue this adventure as the first solo adventure for the *MS&PE* system.

Because *The Adventure of the Jade Jaguar* was originally intended as a teaching tool as well as an adventure, and because it was intended as a throw-in to be sold with the game, it isn't that absorbing of an adventure. As a teaching tool, it succeeds because it demonstrates the use of many of the rules and also allows you to try both violent and problem-solving approaches to the game.

But as an adventure, it is too short to be very enjoyable. The first time I played this adventure, I was in and out successfully in a matter of ten minutes or less. While some subsequent runs lasted much longer, ten minutes proved to be about the average time for any adventure. Still, it is possible to play this adventure through several times without losing any suspense because there is a great deal of variety in the storyline. The story may take many different courses, with the same character being sometimes a villain and sometimes a hero, depending on the choices you make during the adventure. But while the variety makes it an excellent teaching tool for the game mechanics, the extremely short duration of most adventures leaves much to be desired from the entertainment point of view.

I wouldn't recommend this adventure if you've already been playing *MS&PE* for a while (or, if you play the *Tunnels & Trolls* game regularly); however, if you're just now buying the game, the extra \$4.95 to acquire this teaching tool would be well spent. If you're already familiar with the

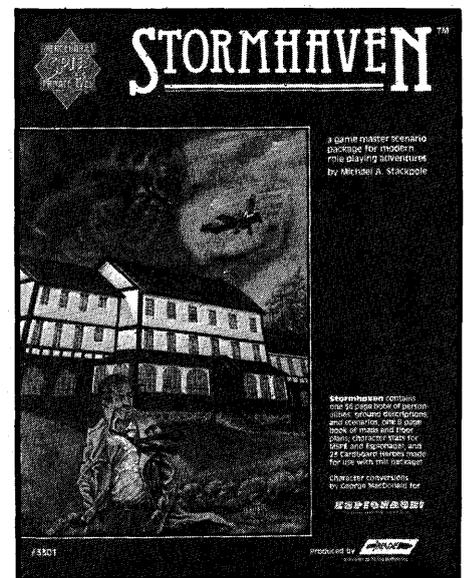
mechanics of either abovementioned game, then you won't need the practice that I did, so the teaching aspect of this adventure will probably not apply for you. For the rest of us, though, the solo scenario will come in handy.

STORMHAVEN, written by Michael Stackpole, comes in a folder containing two books — one an 8-page booklet of maps and the other a 56-page book containing the scenarios and character descriptions. There are also illustrations on the inside cover of the folder, showing a cutaway view of the manor house, as well as diagrams of the caves and control points around the island. In addition, there are 23 cardboard heroes for use with this gaming aid. I use the phrase *gaming aid* rather than *scenario* because there are many different scenarios presented here.

If you're a big fan of oblique references to outside material, this package may be worth the \$9.95 price, even if you never play it. Stormhaven Manor is owned by one Kenneth Allard (wake up, *Shadow* fans) and is located on Savage Island. And how could Savage Island exist without a Renwick nearby (this one's called Jennifer)? There's even a reference to "an upstate New York hospital" along one of the neighboring shore lines. Other familiar names are to be found here as well. For example, without reading the text of the description, I could warn you not to trifle with a Rumanian nobleman named Count Vlad Tepescu.

The acknowledgement in the opening of the book thanks Allard Technologies for its assistance, as well as Fred Saberhagen for introducing the author to "an old friend of the family," and includes a dedication to Walter Gibson and Lester Dent. If you've been on another planet for the last 30 years, you'll probably need it explained that Walter Gibson (a.k.a. Maxwell Grant) is the author of the *Shadow*, and that Lester Dent is the man behind the Kenneth Robeson pseudonym for most of the Doc Savage adventures.

Small details scattered lightly throughout



the text, such as artwork resembling newspaper stories about the people of Stormhaven, help establish the NPCs and Stormhaven itself as real.

As is usual for Blade, quality control is above average. There was only one real problem in the books I had: part of a paragraph on page 13 (describing Count Vlad) was missing. The books are printed in a blue ink that's somewhat troublesome to read. The blue ink was originally intended for the maps only, in order to give you the feel of actually reading blueprints, but for reasons of economy both books were printed at the same time, and with the same ink. If you find the blue ink bothersome, turning the light down a little may help. Also, as usual for Blade, the artwork by itself is almost worth the price of the book. Some of the drawings in here would make excellent posters.

The maps and floor plans for Stormhaven and the surrounding grounds are found in a separate book, allowing you to page back and forth between the different room descriptions without ever losing sight of the map — it's amazing how many game companies overlook this simple convenience.

The major characters in this book are all completely fleshed out. They come equipped not only with complete descriptions and statistics, but each also has a reason for being on the island and a personality which will guide the character's interaction with the player characters.

The *MS&PE* game system is meant for many different styles of play. To which does *Stormhaven* belong? All of them. As I pointed out earlier, this is not so much a scenario as a scene, a backdrop against which many different adventures may be played out. There are scenario ideas provided in the package for all of the different styles of play.

For example, if you are using *MS&PE* as the basis of a horror campaign (along the lines of Lovecraft and Saberhagen), then scenario #1, "Crom's Sacrifice," is the one you'll want to play. On the other hand, if you're playing a spy- or action-oriented game, then scenario #2, "Tiger Trap," is the one for your tastes. Scenario #3, "Quarantine Death," is more oriented toward mystery and problem-solving. Those three are the most completely described scenarios presented here, but there are also ideas for other scenarios dealing with information leaks, lost treasure, revenge, even political intrigue — all organically hooked into the background of the manor, the guests, and the island.

And these are not all of the adventures possible here. There is enough substance in the description of the manor, family, staff, and guests to fuel several more adventures. It is quite possible for Allard Technologies and Kenneth Allard to remain in the players' minds for years. Stormhaven may even take on the status of a welcome vacation spot for your players as they are invited.

back — perhaps as an opportunity to take on another job, or as a reward for bringing the last job to a successful conclusion.

This package won the 1983 Origins award for the Best Role-Playing Adventure of the Year, and, looking at the detail and quality of both the NPCs and the manor, it's not hard to see why. *Stormhaven* gets my vote not only as the best of 1983 but also as one of the half-dozen best of all time. If you role-play in the modern era, regardless of the system, this one's a must!

The *MS&PE CHARACTER FOLDERS* are 8½" by 11" sheets of paper, with spaces in which to write information about your characters. For a folder with a group of 20 sheets, the price is \$4.95.

If these are 8½" by 11" sheets, why are they called *folders*? Because you can fold the bottom third up and staple it to the rest of the paper. This does two things: first, it allows you to fold the top third down, producing a character sheet narrow enough to fit it in most shirt pockets; second, it provides a carrying pouch for all those little notes you write to yourself (or at least, I write to myself) about the people your character meets, the things he does, and what he owes to whom.

There are also 24 small character portraits (beautifully crafted by Liz Danforth), which can be photocopied and fastened in a block on the character sheet reserved for just that purpose. While you may not find a portrait here which exactly fits your mental image of the character, chances are you'll find one which is close enough to be excused as a bad photograph. If you aren't satisfied by any of them, get a picture from somewhere else, and use it. The block on the character sheet is neither too small nor too odd-sized that pictures from magazine ads or newspapers wouldn't fit there as well.

I rarely use a commercially available character sheet for my characters, since no sheet available has enough spaces for the kind of information I write down; these sheets are no exception. They have no space provided for background histories or personality profiles. These things can be written on additional sheets and carried in the pouch, true; however, you end up carrying two character sheets for every character. If you don't work out detailed backgrounds or profiles for your character, however, these sheets will do nicely.

For the \$4.95 price, you get 20 of these sheets, making them about 25 cents per sheet — not a bad price at all. In addition, you get the 24 Danforth character portraits.

While these character sheets include some blocks not found on the character sheet contained in the rule book, the sheets are by no means necessary to the game. But if you make a lot of small notes about your characters and are looking for a way to carry them to the game neatly, they might be worth the quarter apiece.

— Reviewed by Arlen P. Walker

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To be staged at the Oakland Airport Hyatt hotel, this gaming convention will include games, seminars, a painting contest, and a flea market. Admission fees are \$15 until February 10, \$20 at the door, or \$10 for a special one-day membership. For more information about this convention, contact: T. O. Green, 386 Alcatraz Ave., Oakland CA 94618.

WAMCON '85, Feb. 15-17

This convention will be held at the Chamberlain Hotel near Hampton, Va. Events will include a writer's seminar, panel discussions, and NASA displays. A. C. Crispin will be guest of honor. Admission fees are \$15 until December 31, and \$20 at the door. A special gaming fee of \$10 exists for those participating in gaming only. Contact: WamCon, P.O. Box 2223, Poquoson VA 23662.

ORCCON 1985, Feb. 16-18

This gaming convention will be staged at the Pasadena Hilton hotel at Grosvenor Plaza in Pasadena, Cal. All sorts of gaming activities are being planned for the event, as is an exhibitor area. For more details, contact: Orccon 1985, P.O. Box 758, Bellflower CA 90706, or telephone (213)867-4140.

WISCON 9, Feb. 22-24

This annual science-fiction convention will be staged at the Concourse Hotel in Madison, Wis. Guests of honor will be writer Lisa Tuttle and artist Alicia Austin. Admission fees are \$18. Contact: SF3, P.O. Box 1624, Madison WI 53701, or call (608)251-6226 (days) or (608)233-0326 (evenings).

CONFLIX '85, Mar. 1-3

This event will be held on the campus of the University of South Carolina in Sumter, S. C. Events will include a variety of role-playing and board games. For more information, contact: Conflux '85, USC-Sumter Wargamers Club, USC-Sumter, 200 Miller Road, Sumter SC 29150.

COASTCON '85, Mar. 8-10

This annual convention will be staged at the Royal d'Iberville Hotel in Biloxi, Miss. Toastmaster for the convention will be Vonda McIntyre, and Alan Dean Foster will be among the guests of honor. Gaming activities, an art show, a costume party, and an auction will be some of the features available at the convention. For more details about this event, contact: Coastcon, P.O. Box 1423, Biloxi MS 39535.

TRI-CON III, Mar. 15-17

This gaming and science-fiction convention will be staged at the North Carolina State University campus. Guests of honor include Karl Edward Wagner and Orson Scott Card. A variety of tournaments will be offered. Admission is free. For details, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Tri-Con III, P.O. Box 50201, Raleigh NC 27650.

FRONTIER WAR, Mar. 16-17

Sponsored by Dungeon Masters' Association South, this gaming event will be held at the Scottish Rite Temple in Bloomington, Ill. Among featured activities will be a *Traveller*[®] tournament coordinated by Marc W. Miller, the game's creator. Registration fees are \$5 until February 1, and \$6 at the door; in addition, each event costs \$1. For further information, contact: DMA South, c/o Catherine Brennan, 1305 Heritage Road, East Normal IL 61761.

MIDSOUTHCON 4, Mar. 22-24

This event will take place at the Airport Quality Inn in Memphis, Tenn. Fred Pohl will be guest of honor, and Keith Bardek will be artist guest of honor; other guests will include Sharon Webb and Suzette Haden Elgin. Admission fees are \$15. For more information, contact: Midsouthcon 4, c/o Richard Moore, 1229 Pallwood, Memphis TN 38122.

NEO CON IV, Mar 22-24

This gaming convention will be staged at the Gardner Student Center at the University of Akron. For more details about this event, contact: Neo Con IV, P.O. Box 7411, Akron OH 44306.

STELLARCON 10, Mar. 22-24

For more details about this gaming convention, contact: Stellarcon 10, Box 4, Elliott University Center, UNC-Greensboro, Greensboro NC 27412.

CONTEST II, Mar. 29-31

This gaming convention will occur in Tulsa, Okla. Features will include science-fiction and fantasy role-playing games, war games, and miniatures tournaments. For additional information, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Contest II, Tactical Simulation Society, P.O. Box 4726, Tulsa OK 74159.

I-CON IV, Mar. 29-31

This annual convention of science fact, fiction, and fantasy will be staged at the campus of SUNY in Stony Brook, NY. For

further details about convention events and admission fees, contact: I-Con IV, P.O. Box 550, Stony Brook NY 11790.

POINTCON VIII, Mar. 30-31

Sponsored by the Military Affairs Wargames Committee, this convention will be staged at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y. Board and role-playing games, tournaments, and demonstrations will be some of the activities featured at the convention. Note that admission to this event is free. For more information about Pointcon VIII, contact: Cadet John Surdu, P.O. Box 3206, West Point NY 10997.

TIPPY-CON IV, Mar. 30

This convention will take place in the Economics Building of the Tippecanoe County Fairgrounds in Lafayette, Ind. For further agenda information, contact: Tippy-Con IV, P.O. Box 5596, Lafayette IN 47904.

CAROLINA CON IV, Apr. 19-21

To be held at the Tremont Motor Inn in Cayce, S.C., this convention will offer an assortment of role-playing, board, and miniatures tournaments. For more information, contact: Ed Vincent, 1851 Windover Road, Columbia SC 29204; or, Robert Chenoweth, 133 Casbel Court, Hopkins SC 29061.

WIZARDCON '85, Apr. 20

This gaming convention will be held in Ferris Booth Hall at Columbia University in New York, N.Y. Events will include demonstrations, panels, and role-playing and board game tournaments. Although there will be no admission charge, a nominal entry fee will be required for each tournament. For more information, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Columbia Games Club, 301 Ferris Booth Hall, Columbia University, New Ork NY 10027.

ALTI-EGOS, Apr. 26-28

This science-fiction and fantasy convention will be staged at the Sheraton Denver Tech Center in Denver, Col. Guest of honor will be acclaimed author Anne McCaffrey. Featured events will include a writer's panel, an art show, a variety of gaming activities, science-fiction and fantasy films, and a model contest. Registration fees are \$25 until March 1, and \$35 at the door. For more information about this convention, contact: Alti-Egos, P.O. Box 261000, Lakewood CO 80226.

GAME FAIRE '85, Apr. 26-28

To be held at Spokane Falls Community College in Spokane, Wash., this convention will offer a large variety of role-playing tournaments and board games. Preregistration fees are \$7; registration fees are \$5 for a single day and \$9 for a weekend pass. For more details, contact: Paul Wilson, c/o Merlyn's Science Fiction/Fantasy Store, West 621 Mallon, Spokane WA 99201, or telephone (509) 325-9114.

GOLD CON III, Apr. 27-28

To be held at Omni Auditorium in Pompano Beach, Fla., events for this convention will include historical, fantasy, and science-fiction games, various movies, and a dealers' area. Participants of U.S. Armed Forces are welcome. Registration fees are \$6. For further details about this convention, contact: John Dunn, Omni Box Office, B.C.C.-North, 1000 Coconut Creek Blvd., Pompano Beach FL 33066, or telephone (305)973-2249.

MILCON, Apr. 27-28

To be held at the Ramada Inn in Milwaukee, Wis., this science-fiction and fantasy convention will feature *Car Wars*TM, *Chill*TM, and AD&D[®] tournaments. Registration fees are \$10 until March 20, and \$15 thereafter. For more information about convention offerings or about judging events, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Metropolitan Gaming Association, c/o Louis B. Mengsol III, 5616 W. Cairdel Lane, Mequon WI 53092, or telephone (414)242-2304 after 3:00 P.M.

CONJURATION 2, May 10-12

This event will be held at the Camelot Hotel in Tulsa, Okla. Toastmaster will be Ed Bryant, and guest of honor will be Mike Resnick. For more details about this gaming convention, contact: ConJuration 2, P.O. Box 690064, Tulsa OK 74169, or telephone (918)438-3336.

MADNESS '85, May 11

Sponsored by the RECAP Truancy Prevention Program, this gaming convention will be held at Middletown High School in Middletown, N.Y. Registration fees are \$3. For more information, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Madness '85, 34 South Street, Middletown NY 10940.

TALLY CON 4, May 24-26

This gaming convention will be held at the Hilton in Tallahassee, Fla. Guests of honor will be L. Sprague and Catherine Crook de Camp. Activities will include an art show and sale, panel discussions, a game room, and "filksinging." Registration fees are \$12 until March 1, and \$15 thereafter. For more information concerning this convention, contact: The Grinning Gremlin, 824-C W. Tharpe St., Tallahassee FL 32303, or telephone (904) 385-1518.

V-CON 13, May 24-26

This science-fiction convention has a theme which focuses on the bizarre, the macabre, and the supernatural. Featured events will include role-playing and board games, an art show, and a dealers' room. Registration fees are \$15 (in Canadian funds only) until March 31, \$18 until May 23, and \$20 at the door. For more details about this event, contact: V-Con 13, P.O. Box 48478, Bentall Centre, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V7X 1A2.

M.I.G.S. VI, May 26

Sponsored by the Military Interests and Games Society, this event will be held at the Kitchener-Waterloo Regional Police Association Recreation Centre in Cambridge, Ontario. Featured activities include wargaming tournaments and a painting competition. Registration fees are only \$1. For additional information, contact: George M. Bawdfen, 11 Veevers Drive, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8K 5P6.

HATCON 3, June 6-7

To be held at the Ramada Inn, this convention will include a hat masquerade, a pool party, a champagne Sunday brunch, and various games. Guests of honor will be Ian and Betty Ballantine and Fred Haskell. Registration fees are \$25 until April 1, \$30 until June 1, and \$35 at the door. For additional information, contact: Kennedy Poyser, CT SF Society, 108 Park Ave., Danbury CT 06810, or telephone (203) 743-1872.

WINDSOR GAMEFEST III, July 13-14

This convention will take place at Ambassador Hall at the University of Windsor. Fantasy, science-fiction, and miniatures tournaments will be featured. Preregistration fees are \$10 (in Canadian funds); registration fees are \$12. For details, in Canada, contact: WRPA Head Office, 584 Brighton, Windsor, Ontario, Canada N8N 2L6; or, in the U.S.: U.S. Office, 8675 South Lane, Grosse Isle MI 48138.

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The role of books

Literature that's laced with gaming ideas

Reviews by John Bunnell

SECRET OF THE SIXTH MAGIC

Lyndon Hardy
Ballantine/Del Rey 0-345-30309-1 \$2.95

Lyndon Hardy's first novel obviously made a lasting impression on readers of fantasy. Four years later, its somewhat unexpected sequel is fighting for positions on various best-seller lists. (The week I checked, the *New York Times* placed it one slot above the latest Piers Anthony paperback. That's popular.)

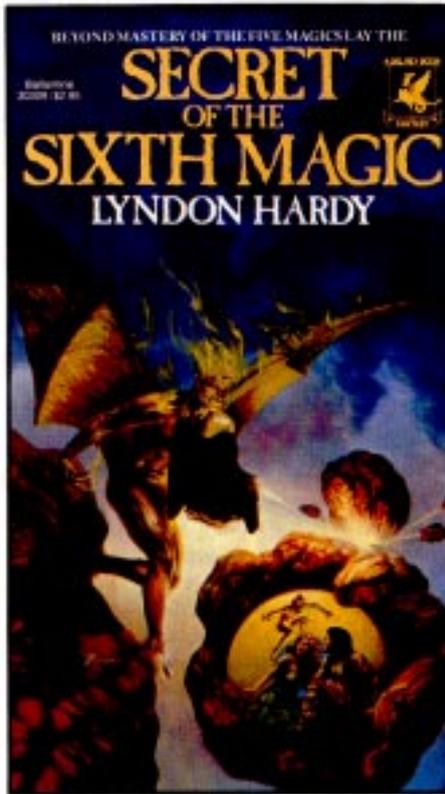
Strictly speaking, *Secret of the Sixth Magic* is a sequel only in the general sense. Though it shares a world and several cast members with its predecessor, *Master of the Five Magics*, Hardy's new novel is really an entirely separate story. The protagonist is Jemidon, a would-be master mage who has found it difficult to apply himself to any of the specialized forms of magic which operate in Arcadia and in the surrounding kingdoms. Jemidon's quest for power and recognition takes up most of the tale.

On the surface, such a plot summary suggests that Hardy has merely rewritten his first book with renamed characters — and in fact, that conclusion isn't entirely wrong. Like Alodar in the earlier novel, Jemidon is seeking a niche in the magical hierarchy of society; and, also like Alodar, he finds intrigue and romance along the way. The quests at the cores of both novels are cast in precisely the same pattern, varying only in details.

But *Secret of the Sixth Magic* is also the opposite of its predecessor. Where the earlier novel discussed the concept of magical unity (or proficiency in several mutually exclusive subfields of magic), *Secret of the Sixth Magic* examines the workings of magical chaos, the power to manipulate the laws through which magic functions without being able to make use of the laws of magic individually.

It's an intriguing idea, both for its storytelling possibilities and as a potential gaming device. Unfortunately, Hardy seems content merely to postulate his "metamagic" without really explaining it. The underlying theory behind the premise isn't treated in depth until near the end of the book, and by then Jemidon is less interested in exploring metamagic's possible uses than in shutting it down and not using it.

Readers are likewise on their own should they decide to develop the principles of metamagic for use in a game environment. With considerable fine tuning and adaptation, the concept might well be used in variant AD&D® game settings akin to the



DRAGONLANCE™ milieu. Likewise, Hardy's books could themselves serve as the basis for an entirely new game system in the same fashion that Robert Asprin's *Thieves' World* anthologies inspired the game of the same name.

Whatever one thinks of metamagic, though, *Secret of the Sixth Magic* clearly reveals Lyndon Hardy's strengths and weaknesses as a writer. His characters and atmosphere are average at best, but his plotting and theoretical speculations are original and fascinating — for example, a trading center in which the economy is based on a unique form of magic. Hardy's career is off to a promising start; its future depends on his ability to continue to break new ground rather than simply revisiting the old.

THE LAND BEYOND THE GATE

Lloyd Arthur Eshbach
Ballantine/Del Rey 0-345-31647-9 \$2.75

A player taking his first character through a dungeon and a reader settling down with a fantasy novel for the first time are comparative innocents. After a dozen or so dungeon campaigns have been experienced, or after a quantity of paperbacks have been read, a jaded feeling settles in,

and one is left with the unsettling suspicion that all dungeons or all quest novels are the same. The initial sense of wonder wears off all too quickly.

By rights, Lloyd Arthur Eshbach should be even more jaded than are most of us: his experiences with fantasy date back to the 1920s, when the genre was just beginning its major upsurge. But *The Land Beyond the Gate* not only possesses a tangible sense of wonder but also does so while recounting a thoroughly traditional tale of a modern scientist thrust headlong into an ancient magical intrigue.

Part of Eshbach's secret lies in good, solid writing that manages to be colorful and understated at the same time. While there is a wealth of detail and a light touch of Scottish dialect in the author's descriptions, the atmosphere doesn't call undue attention to itself. Instead, the descriptive material simply flavors Eshbach's smoothly paced adventure yarn without getting in the way or seeming overdone.

The Land Beyond the Gate also takes care to keep itself firmly focused on Alan MacDougall, whose search for a brother lost on a walking tour of Scotland leads him through a portal into another world. Information about that world is revealed only as Alan uncovers it, a narrative approach that puts the reader on equal terms with the character rather than several steps ahead, as can happen when an author takes the omniscient viewpoint.

Once Alan arrives on the other side of the portal, his adventures follow a long-standing pattern. He encounters a variety of races and beings ranging from Celtic to Oriental to literally diabolical, discovers that his appearance is the subject of an old prophecy overdue for fulfillment, and finds himself an object of considerable interest to several different gods.

Through all of this, Eshbach's ability to maintain a sense of wonder in the tale prevents it from seeming uninteresting or repetitive. In addition, the cosmology behind the novel seems carefully thought out, and the plot takes an occasional offbeat twist. The result is that, despite its traditional roots, *The Land Beyond the Gate* makes enjoyable reading. While it may not be possible to identify precisely the qualities that make that statement true, Eshbach's success at making the old quest story come alive should prove to even the most jaded role-player that the familiar need not necessarily be dull or void of pleasant surprises.

One final point worth mentioning: the

book's biographical note reveals that *The Land Beyond the Gate* is the first in a four-volume sequence. Eshbach, however, has made the novel entirely self-sustaining — a welcome change from the recent flood of multi-volume sequences of which the stories are left maddeningly incomplete at the end of each book.

RAPHAEL

R. A. MacAvoy

Bantam 0-553-24370-5 \$2.75

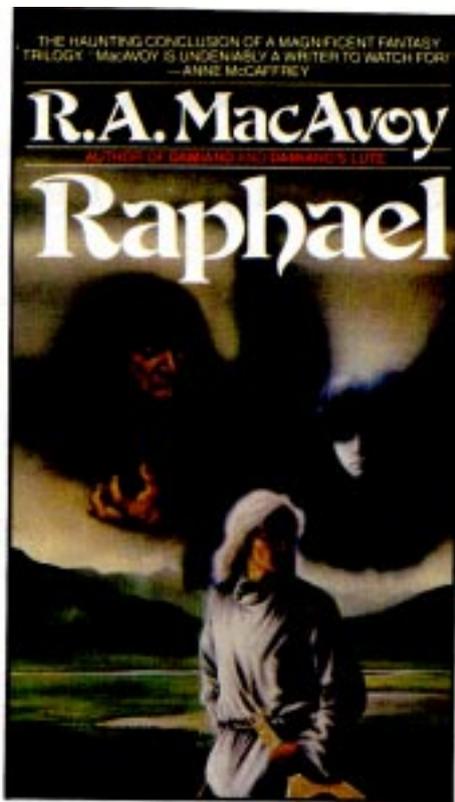
Since the first volume of R. A. MacAvoy's trilogy appeared about a year and a half ago, reviewers have been of two minds about the tales of Damiano Delstrego, a protagonist of the trilogy. Some reviewers believe that the books are positively brilliant, while others are of the opinion that MacAvoy has spent too much effort developing lackluster, weak-willed characters.

For game-playing readers, the debate is largely irrelevant. *Raphael*, which concludes the trilogy, is valuable reading because of its deft handling of an earthly conflict between powers greater than mortal beings. Referees intimidated by the prospect of introducing demigods and their ilk into role-playing campaigns would do well to study MacAvoy's treatment of the problem.

The novel's title character is the angel of Biblical legend, whose outlook on life is so benign as to border on the naive. And that's the crux of the story. Satan, also in all his scriptural splendor, lures the naive Raphael into a situation in which the angel's trust costs him his freedom of action. Satan uses the opportunity to deprive Raphael of his angelic powers and of his contact with Heaven, leaving Raphael to walk the Earth alone, with only a part of his memory intact.

What follows is the tale of Raphael's redemption, as attempted by a reluctant minstrel, a pagan sorceress, Damiano's ghost, and a magnificent black dragon which may or may not be related to the one in MacAvoy's otherwise unconnected first novel. Like deities in an AD&D® game milieu, the opposing immortals tend to avoid direct confrontations on earthly territory; there are, however, several superbly conceived aerial combat sequences that may help players and DMs understand the complications inherent in fighting while airborne. And the novel's climax illustrates what happens when the inadvisable can no longer be avoided, and so Satan and Raphael meet face to face.

Despite the periodic fireworks, however, *Raphael* isn't meant as a tale of hack-and-slash action, nor is it seriously intended as a guidebook for role-players interacting with the gods (though its usefulness in the latter capacity is clear). Rather, *Raphael* is a deeply introspective novel about a quest for identity, and the combination of that quest and the story's religious context produces a texture in MacAvoy's writing that is unlike virtually anything else in the spectrum of contemporary fantasy.



That difference is the source of the critical debate over the trilogy, and it ultimately boils down to a matter of taste. Some readers will welcome *Raphael* and its companion volumes as a refreshing break from the fantasy mainstream, a river overflowing with confident heroes and swarms of elves and fairies. Others will be less comfortable with MacAvoy's deliberate, often philosophical pace and mood and her refusal to provide stock answers to characters' questions. *Raphael* is an unusual novel, though; even those who don't expect to like it can expect to find something worthwhile when they read it.

THE DARKANGEL

Meredith Ann Pierce

Tor Books 0-812-54900-7 \$2.95

There is a tendency on the part of many game players to dehumanize the vampire. Vampires are so difficult to kill that the average DM simply doesn't bother taking the time to develop his vampires as adversaries with character. So, the potential for human feelings and ingenuity on the part of the vampire is ignored.

Meredith Ann Pierce, however, has taken the time. And the result is a very unusual and thoughtful vampire tale that has a ring of reality about it, yet the story bears little resemblance to the usual Dracula yarns.

The Darkangel does not have the narrative quality of a genuine folk tale which has been handed down and retold for generations in the same Eastern European countrysides where the Dracula legends were born. Pierce's writing is both matter-of-fact and richly detailed, providing vivid images of character and scene without seeming heavy-handed or pretentious.

The story also has the power and depth of

a true epic, though even the most exotic and spectacular situations never quite lose an element of down-to-earth common sense. There is an ancient prophecy, as well as a quest; there are magical bags, spindles, and blades; and finally, there are characters of all shapes, dispositions, and origins. This last group includes a duarough (best described as the best parts of a hobbit, wizard, troll, and dwarf put together), thirteen wraithlike women whose souls have been stolen by the vampire, and Aerial, the former servant to one of the wraiths whose capture and enslavement by the vampire form the heart of the story.

Pierce's vampire is by no means the same creature as the one in the Dracula stories or the being described in the AD&D Monster Manual. But *The Darkangel* is worth reading, however. This novel demonstrates what such beings can become if given half a chance. And all those who finish Pierce's tale will find that no vampire, of whatever sort, will never seem quite as predictable as it has in the past.

THE SONG OF THE AXE

Paul O. Williams

Ballantine/Del Rey 0-345-31658-4 \$2.95

Forget for a moment that *The Song of the Axe* is the sixth volume in a loosely knit series called the Pelbar Cycle. Forget that its author picked up the 1983 John W. Campbell Award in the Best New Writer category. And, forget that the book is exactly the type to show up in high-school English classes next to *The Catcher in the Rye*. The important point is that Paul O. Williams has proven once and for all that civilization will survive after The Bomb goes off.

Putting that last claim in perspective involves realizing that the GAMMA WORLD® science-fantasy game, which shares a post-holocaust setting with Williams's books, really doesn't offer a complete portrait of civilization. (I should caution readers that I haven't played the game using the revised rules; I'm judging from earlier experience and recently published articles in DRAGON® Magazine.) What the GAMMA WORLD game provides is simply adventure in a setting somewhat less improbable — though not much less — than that of the D&D® and AD&D® games. Mutations replace spells, while old technological relics substitute for magic items and artifacts. Any background culture is more or less assumed rather than created or explained.

By itself, that flaw doesn't ruin the game's entertainment value, and more enterprising referees can design their own background civilizations. But in practice, GAMMA WORLD game adventures may often seem disjointed by comparison to their AD&D game counterparts. A certain texture and depth are missing from the setting.

The Song of the Axe, on the other hand, possesses those qualities in excellent measure. The future North America that Williams develops is a consistent and

fascinating world, whether or not his characters are on the scene; a society that views hang-gliding as a religious experience and another culture situated next door to a glacier are especially memorable examples. Appropriately enough, certain central characters are not unlike typical RPG characters: Tor is a confirmed wanderer despite the fact that his tribe has been substantially absorbed by a more agrarian, settled group, while Tristal, his nephew, is less inclined to independence.

The story of Tor and Tristal's journey across a generous slice of the continent is noteworthy in another respect: it can be read and appreciated without having Williams's previous books at hand. Though all six are uniformly well written and the characters and events overlap, each volume is an independent story capable of standing on its own merit. In some ways, *The Song of the Axe* is a better introduction to the series than most of the others of the cycle, since it dips only lightly into the complex Heart River society for which the cycle is named.

It's possible to regard *The Song of the Axe* as a classic quest story, as a "growing-up" novel (thus, the comparison to *The Catcher in the Rye*; Williams handles characterization well indeed), or as a more literary look at such abstract things as loyalty and courage. But those with more than a passing interest in the GAMMA WORLD game system will get something uniquely valuable from the book: a genuine feel for life after World War III that can add the needed detail and texture to the average GAMMA WORLD campaign.

THE HAREM OF AMAN AKBAR

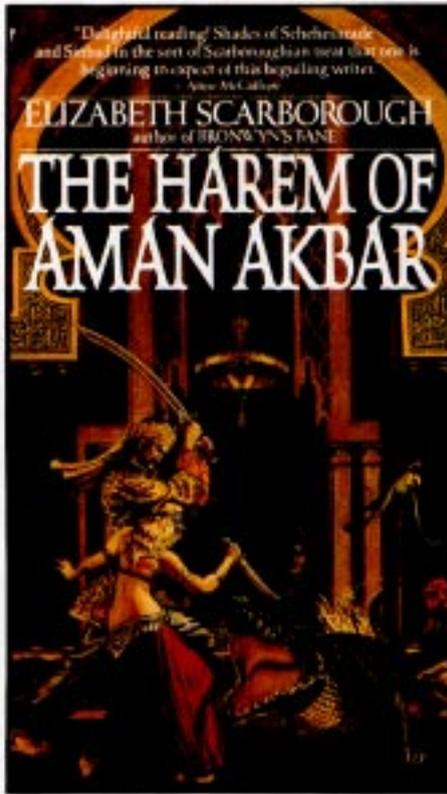
Elizabeth Scarborough

Bantam 0-553-24441-8 \$2.95

Innumerable fantasy novels have been written about dragons and the problems inherent in their care and feeding. Now, Elizabeth Scarborough has assembled what may well be the definitive book on dealing with a rather neglected and even more challenging servant: the djinni.

The Harem of Aman Akbar (subtitled *The Djinn Decanted*) offers vast quantities of practical advice on managing and getting along with those elusive folk from the outer planes. The reader learns, for example, that the AD&D® Monster Manual wasn't kidding about the differences between good and evil masters — Aman's djinn-constructed palace is a magical marvel that testifies to the axiom's truth. And, there is practical advice on what to do if someone tries to steal a djinni's bottle — be sure the thief doesn't get the stopper as well.

Besides being a superb manual of djinni management, the novel is also a rousing adventure straight from the *Arabian Nights*. Included along with the benevolent, if sometimes exasperating, djinn are a captivating harem, a despicable emir, a practical holy seer, and a trained elephant. It all makes for an exciting, danger-filled quest through the mysterious East, spiced with the cheerfully sly humor that has marked



the author's Argonian tales. Scarborough also gives her female characters more life than is usual for women in this genre, without sacrificing a reasonably authentic Islamic background.

No gamer should neglect buying *The Harem of Aman Akbar*. Too few fantasy novels give as much good game-playing advice wrapped up in such a solidly entertaining package; this one does just that, and advances Elizabeth Scarborough firmly into place as one of the field's leading writers.

EXILES OF THE RYNTH

Carole Nelson Douglas

Ballantine/Del Rey 0-345-30836-0 \$2.95

Every Dungeon Master has experienced the frustration of watching a party of adventurers open the wrong door, miss a pivotal clue, or otherwise manage to get completely sidetracked chasing something totally unrelated to the mission or quest supposedly at hand. There are two ways to deal with such groups of characters: the referee can either cater to the party's whims and instincts, following the wishes and priorities of the players, or deliberately channel the group back toward the right goal by means of careful stage management.

But problems arise when, as in *Exiles of the Rynth*, the characters stubbornly resist all efforts at redirection while the "referee" persists in pushing them along toward the next book. As the story begins, Irissa and Kendric are halfway through a gate between worlds that is guarded by Irissa's mystical Torloc relatives. The family, it seems, won't let Kendric through the gate because he's only a swordsman, so the two are cast out into an unfamiliar world.

Kendric adapts fairly easily despite making the unsettling discovery that he's some-

how acquired magical powers along the way, presumably through a romantic link with Irissa. Irissa, on the other hand, persists in getting herself into trouble, as no less than two different unsavory local barons capture her in the course of the novel. But just as Kendric and Irissa seem to be making a place for themselves in their new-found society, who should call for help but Irissa's relatives. Apparently, they now need help badly enough that they'll withdraw their objections to Kendric's presence.

The number of convenient allies and lucky breaks that pop up in *Exiles of the Rynth* is substantial: there are always riding animals at need, creatures rumored to be man-eating menaces turn out to be helpful, and the conclusion finds our heroes with more magic rings than they know what to do with.

In a way, the book is a serious disappointment. *Six of Swords*, which introduced Kendric and Irissa, was interesting if not memorable reading, and the clearly forthcoming third book in the series might easily be a worthwhile yarn, picking up on the original story's themes. But *Exiles of the Rynth* comes across as an irrelevant middle volume that does nothing for the trilogy except provide filler material. Like *Dungeon Masters* entranced by their own brilliantly intricate plots, Douglas needs to learn that her characters are at their best when given free rein to shape their own destinies.

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‘My Honor Is My Life’

All about the Knights of Solamnia

by Tracy Hickman

Much of the background on the world of Krynn is presented in the AD&D® game module DL 5, *Dragons of Mystery*. However, several important aspects of the world of the DRAGONLANCE™ saga still remain to be revealed. This article deals with one of those aspects — the history, development, and organization of the Knights of Solamnia. Players who are using the character Sturm in the DRAGONLANCE™ adventure series will need to know much of this material in order to role-play that character in greater depth. Other player characters directly associated with the Knights will appear in later modules.

The origin of the Knights

The Knights of Solamnia came into being nearly two thousand years before the War of the Lance, rising like a phoenix from the ashes of the empire of Ergoth. The isles of Ergoth were, in those days, one with the continent and not separated from Ansalon by any waterway. From that region, during the Age of Dreams, arose Ergoth. But as the years passed, Ergoth grew into such a vast, and sprawling empire that it could no longer be governed effectively. The emperor, Thal Palik, was the worst of a long line of rulers, impractical and inept; the only way he knew to keep his subjects in line was to govern with an iron hand. His army of knights was of prime importance to him. He lavished the treasury's money on it, depleting the empire's finances and bleeding the peasants dry with taxes.

The people of the eastern plains of Ergoth were a proud, noble, and independent folk, and soon rebelled against the emperor's treatment of them. Having feared rebellion all along, Thal Palik was prepared. He called for the captain of the guard, Vinas Solamnus, and ordered his knights forth to crush the rebellion.

Vinas Solamnus, commander of the palace guard in the capital city of Daltigoth, was a pious man, a gallant warrior, and much beloved by his men. Noted for his honor, his greatest fault may have been that he was too loyal to his emperor and was, consequently, blind to what was happening in the empire. Although he started out firmly determined to destroy the rebels as his emperor commanded, Solamnus was soon repelled by the terrible conditions and oppression under which the people lived outside the capital.

When he reached the northern plains, Vinas let it be known that he would meet with the rebel leaders under a banner of truce to hear their side of the story. So widely respected and trusted was Solamnus

that the rebel leaders came willingly to his camp and detailed their grievances. Solamnus's investigations soon proved the stories to be true. The knight was appalled at the corruption and deprivation he witnessed. What was worse was that Vinas knew he had unwittingly been a part of this evil, by his failure to see what was happening before his own eyes.

Solamnus called his knights together and presented the case of the people. Any knights who believed in the cause of the rebels were entreated to stay. Those who did not were given leave to return to Daltigoth. Even though his men knew that doing so meant exile and possibly death, most chose to stay with Solamnus. Only a few returned to Daltigoth, bearing a message from Solamnus for the emperor. Either redress the wrongs of the people, the message read, or prepare for war. Thal Palik denounced Solamnus as a traitor, and stripped him of his lands and title. The people of Daltigoth prepared for war.

Thus began the War of Ice Tears. Although Ergoth was in the grip of the most terrible winter ever chronicled, Solamnus and his dedicated army of knights and frontier nobles marched on Daltigoth and laid siege to it. Solamnus personally led daring raids into the city itself. These raids had a twofold purpose. First, they reduced the city's food supplies; second, the raiders spread the news of the emperor's corruption among the people of the capital, showing how they were being made to suffer while the emperor remained hidden away safely in his palace. Within two months the capital fell. A revolt of the people, led by some of the knights Solamnus had allowed to return to Daltigoth, forced the emperor to sue for peace.

As a result, the northernmost part of Ergoth gained its independence. The grateful people supported Vinas as their king and named their new country Solamnia in his honor. Although it never attained any great power during the rest of the Age, Solamnia became synonymous with honesty, integrity, and fierce determination.

The organization of the Knights

Vinas Solamnus organized the Knights of Solamnia during the Age of Dreams, and it has changed little over the subsequent centuries. The Knights subscribed to two codes: The Oath and The Measure. The Oath was *Est Sularus oth Mithas* — “My Honor is My Life.” The Measure was an extensive set of codes, many volumes in length, the purpose of which was to define “honor.” The Measure was complicated and

exacting; only a brief summary of its laws concerning organization can be given here. A complete set of the tomes of The Measure was known to exist in the great library of Astinas of Palanthas.

The Knights were led by the Grand Master, who sat in judgement on matters of importance to the Knights and, subsequently, the nation of Solamnia as a whole. Below him were three posts: the High Warrior, the High Clerist, and the High Justice, representing the three major Orders of the Knights. They were, according to The Measure, the embodiments of Honor, Wisdom, and Loyalty. All three ruled the entire knighthood jointly, though they governed the three Orders separately.

The three Orders of the Knights of Solamnia were named the Rose (honor), the Sword (wisdom), and the Crown (loyalty). Squires accepted into the Knights of Solamnia entered under the Order of the Crown, learning the laws and codes of loyalty first. They then had to demonstrate their acceptance of the codes of that Order before progressing to the Order of the Sword. The testing was rigorous, requiring great deeds of bravery in battle as well as strict adherence to The Measure in all aspects of life. Entry into the Order of the Rose, the highest-ranked order, could be attained only by those of noble blood; thus was the great Huma excluded from that order, though he was considered by many to be the greatest of the Knights in all aspects of honor, wisdom, and loyalty.

The military power of the Knights was carefully structured. As set forth in The Measure, the three Orders of the Knights were to maintain seven armies apiece. Each of these twenty-one armies was jointly ruled by three Lord Knights, one from each of the three different Orders. This arrangement apparently helped to temper the leaders' judgment in battle, and kept the knighthood unified.

Each knight wore a clasp bearing the symbol of his Order (a rose, a sword, or a crown) which was used to fasten his cloak to his armor. All knights carried a shield bearing the symbol of the Knights of Solamnia: a kingfisher with wings half extended, a sword grasped by both its claws; a rose centered on the sword between the claws; and a crown held over the bird's head in its beak. By these signs the Knights were known wherever they went.

The Cataclysm and the present

The Kingpriest of Istar brought down the wrath of the gods upon Krynn, and the gods punished the people for their pride by

casting a fiery mountain down on the land. The destruction and desolation caused by the disaster disrupted the world for months. Although their land had been spared the worst of the blow, the people of Solamnia still suffered greatly during that time. Evil creatures, long banished, returned to the land. Many of the Knights perished fighting the unknown and unspeakable horrors that ravaged the countryside.

In the end, it was the common people of Solamnia who cast the Knights into disgrace. For centuries, the Knights had kept the peace and safety of the realm. Now, in the hour of their most desperate need, it seemed that the Knights were powerless. Rumors began to spread that the Knights had foreseen the coming of the Cataclysm and had done nothing to stop it. Some knights, it was said, actually intended to profit by the disaster and increase their land holdings.

Before long, knights were jeered in public and openly reviled. Darker acts were also committed: knights were foully murdered, their castles and homes invaded, and their families slain or driven into exile. So it was that the Knights silently disappeared from the knowledge of most common men.

Of far greater consequence to the knight-hood, more damaging than the Cataclysm and more relentless than the hate of the common people, was time itself. The Oath and The Measure had held up, in the knights' eyes, for more than a thousand

years. Yet during that time, the world changed in many ways which the writers of The Measure could not have foreseen. The code of laws by which the knights measured their every action was outdated and ponderous. It gave no practical answers to the questions that time and change had brought about. The Measure was law, but it was an unbending law, not tempered with a sense of justice. Many of the newer knights secretly questioned how much longer it would be before justice demanded that the ironclad rules of The Measure be broken.

The knights who remained found themselves forced to roam the countryside in secret and under false names, lest they be discovered. Still, they kept their ideals and their honor, and did what they could to fight the growing evil in the world. A few knights who found their loss of status intolerable left their homeland and settled across the waters on Sancrist Isle. To this day, a strong group of knights exists there, while only covert organizations survive within Solamnia.

At the time of the War of the Lance, all the high ruling posts (Grand Master, High Warrior, High Clerist, and High Justice) are vacant. Sixty-three warriors of various Orders remain in the world (that are known of), and all are vying for the high posts by their performance of great deeds in the world. Tension is running high as rivalries develop between the different orders as well as among the knights themselves. Traditionally, one of the Lord Knights of the Rose

would take the place of the Grand Master. However, no one strong enough to be a publicly acclaimed leader has come forth, and the contention for high rank among the knights continues.

Additional notes on Solamnia

Solamnia is on the silver standard; the most valuable coin of the realm is a silver monarch, equivalent to 506 sp in the "world" outside Krynn. Silver castles (worth 10 sp) and silver tharns (worth 1 sp, the lowest-valued silver coin) are used. Copper equivalents of these coins exist, and are respectively worth 50 sp, 1 sp, and 1/10 sp. If a gold coin is minted, its value is always given in silver pieces.

Several legends are common to all of Solamnia and may have particular relevance to the Knights (and thus to players who have characters that are members of the Knights). Two of these legends are briefly described below.

Bedal Brightblade was a hero said to, have fought the desert nomads to a standstill, holding a pass into Solamnia singlehandedly until help came. His sword, *Brightblade*, was said to be of dwarven make and never rusted or dulled despite vigorous use. His tomb is somewhere in the far southern mountains in an unknown location. It is rumored that Bedal will return to aid Solamnia in its time of need. Sturm Brightblade might be a distant descendant of this legendary figure.

Huma Dragonbane, known as the most perfect of the knights, gathered together a group of heroes to destroy the dragons and drive them from the lands of Solamnia. Huma's legend, compiled by the great elven bard Quivalen Soth, is fragmented now. Many doubt that Huma ever really existed (the same people who now doubt the existence of dragons). But the story of the last battle between Huma and the leader of the dragons is still told, along with the tragic love Huma bore for the Silver Dragon. (See the "Song of Huma," in the book *Dragons of Autumn Twilight*, the first volume of the *Dragonlance Chronicles*.)

Huma managed to slay, the evil dragon-leader with the Silver Dragon's help, but in doing so he sustained a mortal wound. By some accounts, Huma died on the field of battle; others, however, say that he lingered for days in such pain that the gods themselves suffered in sympathy, inflicting terrible thunderstorms upon the land. To this day, you will find people who say that when lightning and thunder strike the land, it is in memory of Huma's agony.

Huma was buried with great reverence, and for many years those who aspired to join the Knights made a pilgrimage to the tomb of Huma, which — so legend had it — was carved in the shape of a Silver Dragon. As the world descended into evil, the road to Huma's tomb became dark and dangerous to travel. Soon afterward, people began to question Huma's very existence, and now the location of his tomb and his body are not known.

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CREATURE CATALOG II



CREATURE CATALOG II

Contents

Belabra.....	45	Lightning Bug, Giant.....	49
Betta, Giant.....	45	Lillend.....	50
Bhaergala.....	46	Orgautha.....	51
Dragon, Phase.....	46	Rekeihs.....	51
Ekrat.....	47	Rummele.....	52
Fireball Fly.....	47	Urisk.....	52
Firestar.....	48	Viltch.....	53
Flamewing.....	48	Wyrm, Great.....	53
Hurgeon.....	49	Xaver.....	54

Credits

Designers

Ed Greenwood: Belabra; Bhaergala; Firestar; Flamewing; Orgautha; Xaver.

Matthew Quinn: Betta, Giant.

Samuel Offutt: Dragon, Phase.

Gregg Sharp: Ekrat.

Lenard Lakofka: Fireball Fly; Lightning Bug, Giant.

Roger Moore: Hurgeon; Urisk; Wyrm, Great.

Stephen Inniss: Lillend; Rummele; Viltch.

Kris Marquardt: Rekeihs.

Artists

Dennis Rauth: Belabra; Orgautha; Rekeihs.

Marsha Kauth: Bhaergala; Ekrat; Firestar.

Bob Maurus: Betta, Giant; Dragon, Phase; Fireball Fly; Flamewing; Lightning Bug, Giant.

Roger Raupp: Hurgeon; Lillend; Rummele; Urisk; Viltch; Wyrm, Great; Xaver.

Note: Experience-point values for the monsters in Creature Catalog II were calculated using the guidelines from the article "What is a monster worth?" in DRAGON® Magazine issue #89, pages 48-50.

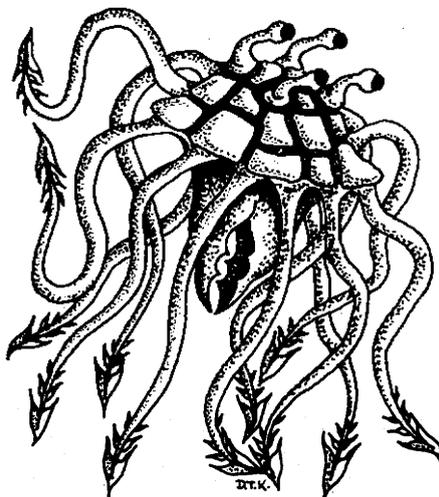
BELABRA

FREQUENCY: *Rare*
NO. APPEARING: 1
ARMOR CLASS: -2 ("head");
6 (tentacles)
MOVE: 4"/7" (hop) (MC: E)
HIT DICE: 4 + 4
% IN LAIR: 10%
TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 bite or 1 ram
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 3-12 or 2-8
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Entangling;*
barbed tentacles
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Blood spray*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
INTELLIGENCE: *Low*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
SIZE: *M (tentacles 5' long)*
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*
Attack/Defense Modes: *Nil*
LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: *V/250 + 5/hp*

The belabra, or "tangler," is as valued among merchants and other travelers as it is feared in the wild. Though it is a carnivore, it can be trained to entangle and hold creatures captive at its master's command without harming its victims.

The belabra earns its nickname for its twelve tentacles, which it uses to capture its meals. Each tentacle grips and holds securely but does no damage unless the victim tries to pull free. (Escape requires the victim to roll his chances to bend bars or lift gates; one such attempt may be made per round.) Barbs on the tentacles holding the struggling victim will then do 3-6 points of damage. In the wild, a belabra pounces upon victims, holds them doggedly, and can then bite repeatedly until only the victim's skeleton is left. A belabra's bite does 3-12 points of damage, and its white stomach expands to take in what is eaten. A belabra can easily devour creatures much larger than itself.

A belabra moves by crawling along the



ground with its tentacles or by bounding into the air, beating its tentacles once with a sharp clap and snapping them out behind it to serve as a rudder. By the latter method it can glide up to 7" in still air (more if descending from a height or riding strong air-currents).

At any point in its glide, the belabra can whip its tentacles about a target and plummet earthward. Falls do only 1 hp of damage for every 10 feet fallen to the rubbery belabra, so this attack method is often used.

A belabra in combat bounds about, seeking to keep its armored head between its opponent and the vulnerable tentacles, until all twelve can lash out at once to entangle the opponent. Entangling occurs if the belabra successfully hits against an opponent as a 9 HD monster. The victim then loses all dexterity bonuses for armor class and the belabra may bite at the victim with a +4 bonus to hit. The tentacles are quite dextrous; belabras have been known to open doors, delve into cages or sacks, and saw through nets with their barbed tentacles. A favored attack is the ram, in which

the belabra springs or glides forcibly into an opponent, striking with its armored head. This does a jarring 2-8 points of damage if it hits.

The belabra hunts by scent and sight. Its four eyes are mounted on retractile stalks projecting from its armored head, and its olfactory organs are located under the rim of the armor. Both sets of organs and the armored head are AC -2; the white, rubbery tentacles are AC 6, and they may only be attacked when the belabra has entangled a victim. However, injured tentacles spray whitish blood that blinds and causes sneezing in humans, halflings, and elves (all within 1" must save vs. poison at -3 to avoid effects). Victims so affected make all attacks at -4 "to hit" and have their armor class reduced by 2 ranks for 3-24 rounds. The belabra is surprisingly light for its size, weighing from 60-80 gp (6-8 pounds) when its stomach is empty.

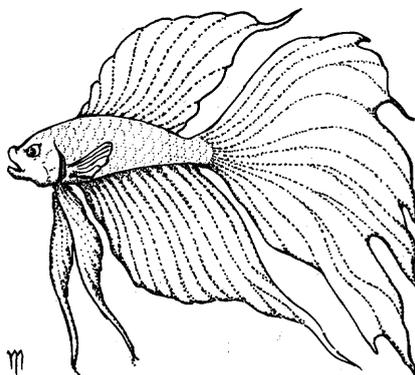
A belabra can be trained to obey the verbal commands of a master, hunting and immobilizing or killing like a trained dog or falcon. It can also aid its master in battle (95% loyalty in dangerous situations, 100% otherwise). Such training is a skill, and good trainers require 4-16 weeks to train a captured belabra, given a secluded training area, a large supply of live animals to serve as training kills and food, and access to the person the belabra is being trained by (for 4 consecutive hours per day). Poor trainers, unfavorable conditions, or constant interruptions will lengthen the training period. Belabra young, if raised for 2 years, will obey many commands and will pause before devouring entangled prey as a matter of course.

Belabra young gestate for 6-10 months in a sack formed within the stomach of the parent. It seems that belabras have only one sex, so any belabra can carry an offspring. Belabras are otherwise solitary. Captured belabra young may bring as much as 4,500 gp on the open market.

BETTA, Giant

FREQUENCY: *Uncommon*
NO. APPEARING: 1 male, 1-8 females
ARMOR CLASS: 8
MOVE: //18"
HIT DICE: *males 3 + 3, females 3 + 6*
% IN LAIR: 55%
TREASURE TYPE: *Q in nest*
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 bite
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-8
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Bonus "to hit"*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
INTELLIGENCE: *Animal*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
SIZE: *M (5'-6' long)*
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*
Attack/Defense Modes: *Nil*
LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: *III/85 + 4/hp*

Giant bettas, also known as giant Siamese fish, are somewhat similar to their



smaller cousins. They inhabit fresh, tropical waters that are warm all year around. Giant bettas are encountered in schools which invariably contain one male fish and one or more female followers. Males are brightly

colored, coming in red, blue, and green versions; females are always a drab green. Males have longer fins than females.

Male giant bettas are extremely hostile toward other males of their kind. If a male betta sees its own reflection in a mirrorlike surface, it will attack the reflection immediately, to the exclusion of any other enemy. The same applies to illusions the betta sees of other males. (Bettas receive no saving throw against illusions of this sort.) Male bettas will attack other brightly colored objects they see in the water, gaining a +2 bonus "to hit" against them; this includes characters wearing flashy clothes, bright silvery armor that will reflect the betta's coloration, and so forth. This does not apply to female bettas.

Male bettas will create a bubble nest when they desire to breed. A bubble nest is an underwater air pocket at least one cubic foot in volume, set under an overhanging rock, a collection of interlocked branches, or

other' suitable object. The male betta will inhale a large quantity of air at the surface, swim down to the place where the nest is being built, and exhale, forming the air pocket. Any leakage will be stoppered by scooping mud onto the leaking spot. The male might also collect a few small shiny objects to enhance the nest's attractiveness (hence the presence of gems).

Upon finding a female, the male will have her lay eggs in the bubble nest and will

then chase the female away before she has a chance to eat the eggs. The male will guard the nest for two days, after which time the eggs hatch. After a short period of time, the male betta will eat whatever young remain in the area; the rest must scatter and hide. Young males soon start attacking each other and separate to go their own ways.

Young bettas are born with 1 hp and gain a full hit die every three months. Their bite damage becomes effective against other

creatures when they are three months old, doing 1-4 points damage. When they are six months old they do 1-6 hp damage, and finally they reach adulthood (and normal bite damage) at nine months of age.

Bettas live in shallow waters not over 100' deep. They have to come to the surface and gulp air to breathe. Though males can be dangerous to underwater adventurers in the tropics, female bettas will attack only if hungry or if attacked themselves.

BHAERGALA

FREQUENCY: *Rare*

NO. APPEARING: 1

ARMOR CLASS: 6

MOVE: 16"

HIT DICE: 4 + 4

% IN LAIR: 20%

TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*

NO. OF ATTACKS: 2 *claws and 1 bite*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-6/1-6/1-8

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Nil*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Poison resistance; spell turning*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*

INTELLIGENCE: *Average*

ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*

SIZE: *L (up to 9' long)*

PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

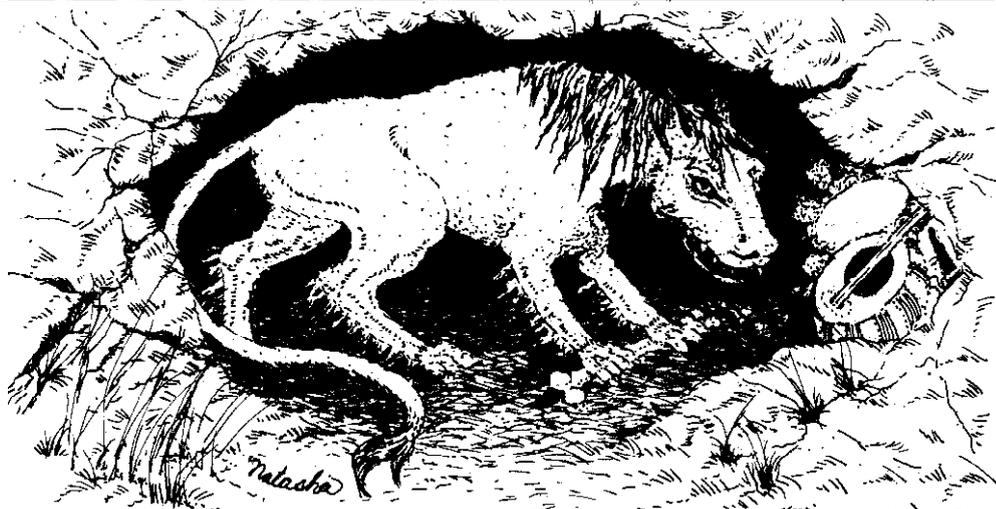
Attack/Defense Modes: *Nil*

LEVEL/X.P VALUE: III/130 + 5/1hp

The bhaergala, or "gunniwolf," is a large predator encountered in heavily wooded areas from tropical to temperate climes. It is most common in jungles where the undergrowth is dense, for it uses the heavy cover to conceal itself from prey. Its food is known to include sylvan elves, satyrs, and man.

A bhaergala can accurately mimic the speech and song of men and elves, and will often use this faculty to lure prey. Most bhaergalas can speak Common, and all of them love song. A bhaergala can be lulled to sleep by good singing. If one feels safe from attack, it may request a song from any men or elves it meets. Stories are told of the bard Mintiper, who befriended a bhaergala that became his traveling companion, but some say these tales are pure fancy.

Anyone encountering a bhaergala has a 25% chance of singing the beast into slumber, +5% if alone, +5% per point of charisma over 16, and +15% if a trained or practicing singer (all bonuses cumulative).



This chance drops to 0% if the bhaergala feels threatened, has been attacked or injured recently, or is hungry. A bhaergala naps for 1-10 rounds, never sleeping for long. If it finds a singer gone upon awakening, it will usually give chase.

A bhaergala is solitary, seeking others only to mate. It is a savage fighter, raking with powerful foreclaws and biting mouthfuls of flesh from opponents with its jaws, dropping these to be consumed later. A bhaergala tends to bite continuously until its prey is dead.

A bhaergala stalks prey from downwind; its fur has a faint but unmistakable odor, often described by adventurers as akin to that of fresh-baked bread or biscuits. It is agile and can spring or fall up to 7" vertically without harm, landing upright as a cat does. In greater falls, a bhaergala will sustain 1d6 damage for every 1" over 7" fallen, but it will often pounce on fleet prey from great heights, hoping to stun or cripple it. Upon impact, a leaping bhaergala's claws both do maximum damage if they strike.

A bhaergala feels little pain or fear, and

will flee or break off combat only when it feels further battle will be useless or dangerous. The great constitution of a bhaergala allows it to regenerate 2 hp of damage suffered per day, and allows it +3 on saving throws versus poison and a 99% system shock score. Further, a bhaergala can consciously *turn* spells directed against it (as a *ring of spell turning*) up to 4 times per day. This is a power under its control and not an involuntary or automatic reaction. A bhaergala has standard magic resistance to spells that are not turned.

Young bhaergalas have the speed and powers of their parents, but have only 2+2 HD and do only half damage. Beasts of both sexes are externally identical, and a mated pair remains together only until the young have made their own first kills. Bhaergalas usually sleep on tree boughs or in thickets; their lairs are seldom-visited places of refuge and also act as storehouses of treasure (musical instruments and noise-makers taken from corpses or in raids on caravans or villages). Such lairs are always well hidden, usually in caves or ruins.

DRAGON, PHASE

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*

NO. APPEARING: 1-2

ARMOR CLASS: 2

MOVE: 6"/24" (MC: C)

HIT DICE: 3-5

% IN LAIR: 10%

TREASURE TYPE: *F*

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 *bite*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-4

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Breath weapon; possible spell use*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Phasing ability; see hidden/invisible objects*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 30%

INTELLIGENCE: *Average to very*

ALIGNMENT: *Chaotic (neutral or good)*

SIZE: *S (3' long)*

PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

Attack/Defense Modes: *Nil*

LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: *IV to V/175 + 3/1hp to 360 + 5/1hp*

The phase dragon can be found almost anywhere, although it prefers sparsely inhabited areas in and around forests. Its lair can be found in caves and in stout, hollow trees. Though of small size, a phase dragon is as greedy as any other dragon and covets precious metals, gems, and magic items.

This dragon's phasing ability allows it to shift out of phase with its surroundings as a phase spider can; it uses this power when attacking or being attacked. The dragon

will bring itself back into phase when it is ready to deliver a bite or breath weapon (it can see its surroundings even when out of phase). When out of phase, the dragon cannot be struck by normal weapons, but it can be seen and attacked by someone wearing *armor of etherealness* or using *oil of etherealness*; other ethereal beings can also attack it. A *phase door* spell will cause the dragon to remain in phase for seven rounds.

Because a phase dragon hates to fight, it will prefer to use its breath weapon first in an unfriendly encounter and then try to escape. The phase dragon can attack once per round with either a bite or by breathing a 10' diameter cloud of white gas that causes all within it who fail a saving throw vs. breath weapon to become *confused*, as per the druid spell *confusion*.

A phase dragon is able to use magic, and if taught to do so (as 40% of them have been), it can learn a 1st-level magic-user spell for each of its first four ages and a 2nd-level magic-user spell every age after that, to a maximum of four 1st-level and four 2nd-level magic-user spells at ancient age.

Phase dragons have the same age categories and abilities to *detect hidden or invisible beings* that regular dragons have, but they lack any *fear aura* abilities. They can be subdued. Phase dragons are a glossy light blue-gray in color, and their scales have a mother-of-pearl sheen to them. They speak their own tongue and their alignment language, and 75% of them know the common tongue as well. Phase dragons are 40% likely to be found sleeping. They make saving throws like regular dragons.



EKRAT

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*

NO. APPEARING: 1

ARMOR CLASS: 6

MOVE: 12"

HIT DICE: 1 + 1

% IN LAIR: 90%

TREASURE TYPE: *L, M, Qx3, plus magical writings (see below)*

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 *weapon*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Consumes magical writing*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Surprised only on roll of 1 on a d12*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*

INTELLIGENCE: *Very*

ALIGNMENT: *Chaotic neutral*

SIZE: *S (1' tail)*

PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

Attack/Defense Modes: *Nil*

LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: *11/44 + 2/1p*

These wily beings are similar in appearance to leathery-skinned leprechauns, though they are thinner and have dull yellow eyes. Ekrats have exceptional hearing and are difficult to surprise. They usually carry a dagger with them for self-defense but are not known to waylay or harm anyone without cause.

Ekrats are most often found in the neighborhood of a poorly guarded library or museum, though a few enterprising specimens have made their ways into major magical libraries. Ekrats feed upon the magical power contained within enchanted writings of any sort. Ekrats also eat paper and drink ink, though no one has figured out how they can get nourishment from them. Any other vegetable matter can be consumed, such as corn, rice, wheat, or even grass and tree bark, but ekrats prefer paper products over all other foods.

The average ekkrat will eat as much as 30 sheets of paper per day, preferably with ink writing upon them, if such can be found. Magical tomes, scrolls, spellbooks, and the like are consumed differently. Four times a



day, an ekkrat can cast a special form of *erase* spell with a range of 12". This spell will affect one spell from a magical scroll, tome, or spell book, and has a 60% chance of successfully *erasing* the magical writings involved. The ekkrat will continue to seek out as many other magical writings to "eat" as possible.

An ekkrat may safely *erase* cursed scrolls, and a *protection* or cursed scroll counts as one "spell" for eating purposes. Magical glyphs, runes, and symbols may also be

eaten in this manner, and the same applies to *explosive runes* (though these will immediately detonate if the attempt to eat them fails).

Even a powerful magical tome such as a *libram of gainful conjuration* or a *vacuous grimoire* can be so destroyed, though the ekkrat must make four successful *erase* attacks in a row in order to destroy the work, and the book must fail a saving throw vs. disintegration each time (roll of 20 required not to fail). Little wonder, then, that ekrats are often referred to as "folio fiends" or "manual monsters."

An ekkrat will keep a lair and is very likely to be found there, casually stuffing itself with paper, drinking ink, or otherwise amusing itself when it isn't hungry.

Though ekrats eat magical writings, they do keep other treasures, particularly gems and jewels. A chance exists of finding some magical writings being kept in an ekkrat's lair as late-night snacks. Roll the following chances for magical writings cumulatively: 50% chance of 1-4 scrolls, 50% chance of a map (with magical writings upon it), 20% chance of a spellbook, and a 5% chance of a magical tome or manual. A spellbook is 80% likely to have belonged to a magic-user (of level 1-8) and 20% to be that of an illusionist (of level 1 - 10).

FIREBALL FLY

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*

NO. APPEARING: 2-12 (6-36 in lair)

ARMOR CLASS: 7

MOVE: 1"/15" (MC: B)

HIT DICE: 1 hp

% IN LAIR: 35%

TREASURE TYPE: 50% each of treasure types J, K, L, M, and N; 5% chance of magical weapon, armor, or shield

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 *bite*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-2

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Fireball burst*

SPECIAL DEF.: *Immune to fire, heat*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*

INTELLIGENCE: *Animal*

ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*

SIZE: *S (3 in. long)*

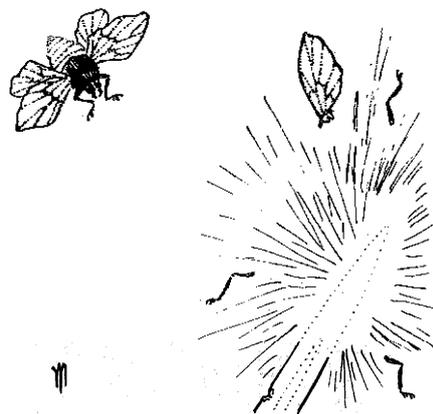
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

Attack/Defense Modes: *Nil*

LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: *11/33*

Fireball flies travel in small groups in warm wilderness areas. They initially attack victims by biting, doing 1-2 hp damage each. If a victim falls, the fireball flies will back away and wait to feed upon the body when it is left alone by any nearby comrades. They will only attack one person in a group at a time.

If one or more of an attacking swarm of fireball flies is slain, there is a 50% chance on each round thereafter that 1-2 fireball flies will dive on the victim in suicide attacks. Diving fireball flies will have a +3 bonus "to hit" and will explode on impact with a solid surface. The dying fireball fly will burst into a 3' diameter ball of flame similar to a miniature fireball; the victim struck will suffer 3-12 hp damage per explosion unless he saves vs. spells (saving will only yield half damage). A victim who fails to save must have all of his equipment save vs. magical fire to keep it from being de-



stroyed; clothing is included, of course.

When a fireball fly dives on a victim, the other fireball flies will move out of range of the fireball and will hover nearby to see if the explosion has disabled the victim. If this tactic fails, the fireball flies will not pursue a

walking or guarded victim and will leave to find easier prey.

A fireball fly is immune to fire of all sorts, even red dragon breath or the heat from molten lava. If struck by any form of magical frost, including a *cone of cold*, *ice storm*, or even being touched by a *frostbrand* sword, the fireball fly will die instantly. If struck by a normal weapon (excluding hands or feet), there is a 25% chance that the fireball fly will explode at once; for this reason, missiles and hurled weapons are preferred means of dealing with them.

Fireball flies lair in rocky areas, and incidental treasure from previous victims might be found nearby; only rarely will expensive or magical items be found. Fireball flies are sometimes released in dungeons, tombs, or other places that need guardians, though capturing them is very difficult.

FIRESTAR

FREQUENCY: *Uncommon*

NO. APPEARING: 1-12

ARMOR CLASS: 2

MOVE.: 16"

HIT DICE: 2 + 2

% IN LAIR: *Nil*

TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*

NO. OF ATTACKS: *See below*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *See below*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Electrical spark*

SPECIAL DEF.: *Immune to magic;*

heat/electrical absorption; in visibility

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*

INTELLIGENCE: *High*

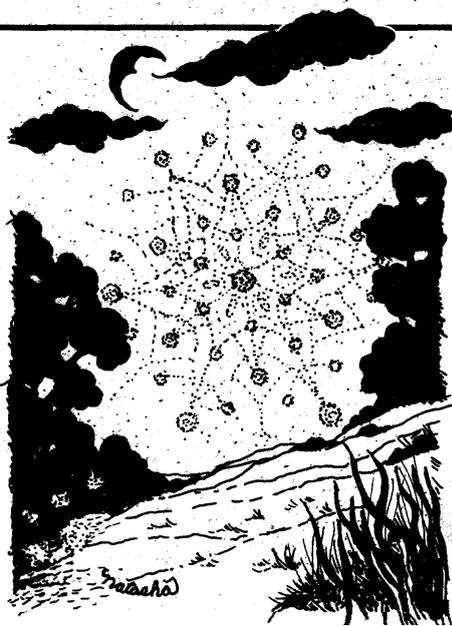
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*

SIZE: *S (3"-6" diameter)*

PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

Attack/Defense Modes: *Nil/Immune to attack*

LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: III/110 + 3/hp



gaining them as additional body hit points, up to a maximum hit point total of four times its original score. For example, a 12 hp firestar could absorb up to 36 hp of damage and keep them as its own hit points. The hit points will be lost after 2-5 hours. Any additional hit points of fire or electrical damage that are not absorbed are lost. A firestar is otherwise immune to the effects of flame and electricity. Note that fiery damage from a *flame tongue* sword can also be absorbed, at a rate of +1 hp absorbed per sword strike (thus reducing the weapon's effectiveness against firestars).

If attacked, a firestar can transmit an

electrical jolt similar to a miniature *lightning bolt* of 2-12 hp damage to an enemy, up to five times per day. No saving throw is given against this attack. Such a discharge has a 30' range, and can be conducted through metal armor or weapons.

Firestars are intelligent and can understand movements, gestures, and even some words of Common or the predominant local tongue. They can communicate only if another creature employs a *speak with monsters* spell or *telepathy* to converse with them. They have their own intricate language, a series of dancing patterns accompanied by fluctuations in their glow. Firestars can control the intensity of their glow and even blank it out entirely for 2-8 rounds (during which times they are effectively invisible).

A firestar's light fails if it is slain, revealing an egg-shaped, 2" long body covered with a black spiderweb of nerves intersecting at many nodes. At each node is an eye. Within the body are several distinct organs, one of which is valued as an alternative component for the *dancing lights* spell, and all of which may serve as ingredients in magical inks for the spells *affect normal fires*, *dancing lights*, and *detect magic*. A firestar itself is immune to psionic attack and to all spells except detection or communication spells, *magic missile*, and cold-related spells (all of which have normal effects). A firestar can be hit by normal weapons, but any flaming weapon which strikes a firestar will both physically wound and strengthen it as noted above.

FLAMEWING

FREQUENCY: *Rare*

NO. APPEARING: 1-3

ARMOR CLASS: 7

MOVE: 22"

HIT DICE: 2 + 2

% IN LAIR: *Nil*

TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*

NO. OF ATTACKS: *2 claws and 1 bite*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *1-6/1-6/1-6*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Flaming wings*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Immune to fire*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*

INTELLIGENCE: *Low*

ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*

SIZE: *M (up to 5' long, wingspan to 9')*

PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

Attack/Defense Modes: *Nil*

LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: III/65 + 3/hp

Flamewings are omnivorous, batlike creatures encountered in temperate climates. They prefer areas with trees or rocky spires where they may perch safe from sudden attacks. Flamewings have keen eyesight and good olfactory and vibratory senses.

Though they never sleep, they often rest by perching in complete immobility. In this state, their body processes are slowed and they may be mistaken as lifeless. But, they may instantly burst into flight or attack at any provocation.

Flamewings hunt like hawks, winging silently down to snatch up prey with their hind claws. But when fighting, they scream, swoop, and wheel about in ceaseless flight, diving repeatedly to buffet opponents with their flaming wings.

A flamewing has a saclike organ connected to its stomach that collects methane gas, which aids in flight by adding lift and balance to the flamewing's tissue layer. The gas also accumulates in expandable chambers located behind the massive bony leading edges of the wings. The powerful wing muscles can expel jets of the gas from vents in the leading edge of the wing at will. By means of its unique body chemistry, a flamewing may choose to ignite (or douse) gas leaving the vents. A wing strike does



1 hp of impact damage, 2-8 hp of fiery damage, and 1-2 hp from the wing claws (unless the target has AC 5 or better, in which case no damage is taken).

Against lesser opponents, flamewings use their claws and powerful bite. The hind claws have been known to strike through armor and do 1-6 hp damage each. Amongst themselves, flamewings communicate the most basic of emotions and intentions with rattling, throaty calls. Flamewings are immune to all heat- and fire-based attacks, but suffer +2 on all dice of cold damage, and they will not survive chilling temperatures for long. They are fearless and ruthless in battle.

Flamewings are marsupials, and one can carry 1-4 "flamelings" — tiny offspring with 1-3 hp, doing 1-4 hp fire damage, 1-3 hp with hind claws, and no damage from buffeting and their immature wing claws. Only one flamewing in twenty will be so encumbered by young. The flamelings will detach themselves and flee to safety if the mother is endangered. Young flamewings have been captured and tamed successfully, but they always turn wild again when they reach adulthood.

HURGEON

FREQUENCY: *Rare*

NO. APPEARING: 8-32

ARMOR CLASS: 5

MOVE: 6"

HIT DICE: 2-5 *hp*

% IN LAIR: 40%

TREASURE TYPE: M (x10)

and X (in lair)

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 or 2 (weapons)

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Missiles; spell use*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Spell use; invisible in natural terrain*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 50%

INTELLIGENCE: *Average to exceptional*

ALIGNMENT: *Neutral good*

SIZE: S (1' tall)

PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

Attack/Defense Modes: *Nil*

LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: II/38 + 1/hp

Hurgeons are small creatures that resemble hedgehogs, though they walk erect on their hind feet and have hands for forepaws. They are dark brown in color and have bright brown eyes. These creatures speak their own language and can speak with any animal naturally. About 20% of them know the elven or Common languages, and 5% know the secret tongue of the druids.

Hurgeons live deep in woodland areas far from civilized places, and they make their burrows in the soil beneath the largest trees. The burrow entrances are so skillfully cam-

ouflaged with flowers and leaves that only spells or devices that detect invisible objects will locate them. Hurgeons gather local nuts, fruits, and berries, and several types of edible roots for their meals. Their vegetarian and inoffensive natures allow them to make friends with local woodland creatures and make arrangements for mutual assistance with them in times of need.

Hurgeons are tool-users and construct elaborate underground dwellings with numerous rooms branching off from the main tunnel. Work aprons and belts made from leaves or softened bark are often worn. If attacked, hurgeons use tiny daggers (1-2 hp damage) to defend themselves. Many carry slingshots that have an 80-yard range (with no range penalties) and inflict 1 hp of damage per shot; two shots may be fired per round. They may use *animal friendship*, *invisibility to animals*, *faerie fire*, *locate animals and plants*, and *pass without trace* as often as they desire, one spell per melee round, at the 6th level of effect. They may also cast an *entangle* spell once per day at the 6th level of effect.

Half of the hurgeons encountered in their lair will be male and half will be female. To the casual observer, both sexes are exactly alike; only druids can tell them apart. There will be 4-10 children in the community as well, though they are usually kept indoors or in the immediate vicinity of the burrow.

The only contact that hurgeons have with other humans or demi-humans is nearly always through sylvan elves and druids



(who love and respect the "hedgehog folk") or humans lost in the woods. Some wanderers in deep forests claim to have witnessed hurgeons performing a springtime dancing ritual in woodland clearings, forming circular paths that are called "fairie rings."

If a druid of 12th level or above encounters a hurgeon colony and performs a great service for the members, one of the hurgeons may follow the druid and become a companion to him. Though the hurgeon will not have a telepathic link to the druid, it will help the druid in whatever way it can and act as a guide in unfamiliar territory. The possibility that this will occur in a given situation is left to the Dungeon Master's discretion.

LIGHTNING BUG, Giant

FREQUENCY: *Common*

NO. APPEARING: 1-12

ARMOR CLASS: 9

MOVE: 1"/20" (MC: B)

HIT DICE: 2 *hp*

% IN LAIR: *Nil*

TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 (see below)

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *See below*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Lightning spark*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Immune to electrical attacks*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*

INTELLIGENCE: *Non-*

ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*

SIZE: S (2" long)

PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

Attack/Defense Modes: *Nil*

LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: II/34

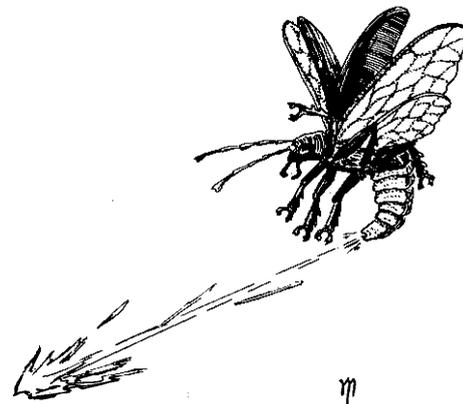
Giant lightning bugs tend to swarm harmlessly in temperate forests unless a

piece of metal larger than 30 gp in weight is brought within 60' of them. The bugs will sense the presence of the metal and will move toward it. When they get within range, they will each discharge a 10' long spark of lightning at the metal; this attack can be made only once per turn. No "to hit" roll is required, though persons wearing metallic armor or carrying metallic weapons or tools of sufficient size must make saving throws vs. spells to sustain half of the total damage taken from the lightning in each round. Note that being properly insulated, such as holding a metal weapon in rubber or thick leather gloves, will prevent any electrical damage from being taken. However, victims who are standing in water have a -4 penalty on their saving throws.

Any magical metal object struck by this electrical spark must save vs. lightning at +4, or all magical properties it has will be lost forever. Giant lightning bugs are themselves immune to all electrical attacks, including natural lightning and blue dragon breath. Nonmagical or nonmetallic items are unaffected by this spark.

These magical insects give off a blink of light from their abdomens at night, one flash per segment, that can be seen up to 60' away. A dead giant lightning bug will radiate this light continuously for up to an hour, and they have been used as temporary trail markers in this manner. A pile of 20 dead bugs will produce enough light to equal a clerical *light* spell.

Giant lightning bugs have no lairs and keep no treasure, even incidentally. Their



habit of "sparking" metal appears to be related to their mating rituals.



LILLEND

FREQUENCY *Rare*
 NO. APPEARING: 3-12
 ARMOR CLASS: 3
 MOVE: 9"/27"/15" (MC: C)
 HIT DICE: 7 + 14
 % IN LAIR: 20%
 TREASURE TYPE: A
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 tail constriction and 1 weapon
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2-12 and by weapon type
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Dropping in flight; spells; continual damage*
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Spells; various immunities*
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: 25%
 INTELLIGENCE: *High*
 ALIGNMENT: *Chaotic neutral or chaotic good*
 SIZE: L (*human torso with 20' long body*),
 PSIONIC ABILITY: 190
 Attack/Defense Modes: *All/all*
 LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: VII/1900 + 10/hp

Lillendi are natives of Gladsheim (see DRAGON® Magazine, issue #90), though they may travel astrally to the Prime Material Plane and may also be found on the planes of Olympus or Limbo. On the material plane, they prefer to dwell in temperate or tropical woodlands. They are peaceful and delight in song and conversation, but they are by no means harmless. Those who offend lillendi may receive harsh treatment at their hands, and even blameless individuals are subject to their pranks. Lillendi are particularly hostile toward those who seek to impose civilized order on the wilderlands.

Lillendi can cast spells, *charm* with music, affect morale, and use legend lore as 7th-level bards, and they may use any magical items that bards can use. In addition (three times per day), *fire charm* (once per day), *hallucinatory terrain* (three times per day), *knock, light or darkness* (as a cleric), *Otto's irresistible dance* (once per day), *hallucinatory terrain* (three times per day), *knock, light or darkness* (as a cleric), *Otto's irresistible dance* (once per

day), *pass plant, polymorph self* (into humanlike form only), *speak with plants*, *speak with animals*, and *transport via plants* (once per day). A lillend can understand any sort of intelligent communication, including writing or sign language. All lillendi have normal ultravision, and each has two major and three minor random psionic disciplines.

These creatures can breathe water and can move swiftly on or under the surface (their features are water-resistant). They are immune to poisons, noxious gases, normal fire, the effects of the Positive or Negative Material Planes (including life-level draining), and to any magical effect which has a musical base, such as harpy song or satyr piping. They are unaffected by all enchantment/charm spells, and only +1 or better magical weapons will harm them.

Both male and female lillendi have 17 strength and 16 dexterity ratings for their human torsos, with attendant bonuses in combat. Their weapons, sometimes magical in nature, are usually longswords, spears, or powerful longbows. If a lillend catches its opponent in its coils, it inflicts 2-12 hp damage that round, and does 2-12 hp automatically each round thereafter. Those held in a lillend's coils save, do damage, and attack at a penalty of -1. Attacks made by the lillend on held persons are at +1 "to hit" and damage. Particularly unpleasant enemies can be carried into the air and dropped from a height. Lillendi can carry up to 2500 g.p. (250 pounds) in flight for up to 1 turn, though they cannot do constricting damage while flying.

A lillend has the torso and head of a comely man or woman, but is provided with broad, powerful, feathered wings and has a stout serpentine body from the waist downwards. Though the humanlike portions of a lillend are of unremarkable hue, the feathered and scaled parts of its anatomy are brightly colored and strikingly patterned. Each individual has its own unique color combination and is quite proud of it. A lillend wears no clothing but sometimes wears jewelry. It always carries weapons and musical instruments.

ORGAUTHA

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*
NO. APPEARING: 1 (5% chance of 2-4)
ARMOR CLASS: 8
MOVE: 11"
HIT DICE: 4+8 to 6+8
% IN LAIR: Nil
TREASURE TYPE: Nil
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 bite
DAMAGE/ATTACK: See below
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Blood drain, slow*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Silence*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
INTELLIGENCE: *Animal*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
SIZE: L (12' long or more)
PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil
Attack/Defense Modes: Nil
LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: IV to VI/210 + 5/hp
to 600 + 8/hp

The orgautha, or "land leech," is a creature encountered so seldomly that it is only a legend to most rangers, wanderers, and hunters. Few who encounter it live to tell the tale, so many human disappearances could well be the results of orgautha attacks. The favorite food of the orgautha is mankind, but any warm-blooded mammal of human size or smaller will serve as food.

The orgautha gets its nickname from its appearance and method of feeding. It is a dark brown, wormlike monster of giant proportions — some have been known to reach 20' in length, although most are about 12' and have a 5'-diameter girth. An orgautha presses its snout, of which it has one at either end of its body, against a victim and exerts bone-crushing suction to hold its prey. The orgautha then bites into



the victim and sucks the blood from its victim's body. The initial contact does no damage, but cannot be broken unless the victim successfully rolls his chances to bend bars or lift gates, or the orgautha breaks it to attack another foe, or it recoils in pain (which it will do on any round in which it receives more than 16 points of damage). Its teeth do 1-4 hp damage on the round after it first catches a victim, and 1-4 hp per round thereafter until there is nothing left.

One end of an orgautha can feed while the other fights, or both ends can drain two creatures at once. The orgautha is very flexible and has been known to attack a victim with both mouths.

The relatively soft body of an orgautha would seem to make it easy prey in a fight, but it has two offsetting natural powers: it continually radiates *silence 15' radius*, concealing its approach and hampering any teamwork among multiple victims, and all within 10' of the beast are *slowed* unless they save vs. paralyzation at -2. All crea-

tures must make a saving throw for each round that they are within 10' of an orgautha to determine if they are *slowed* that round or not.

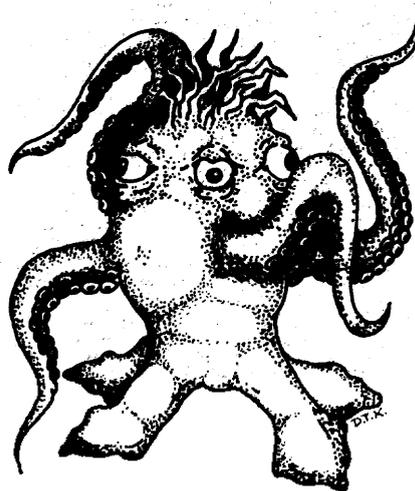
Orgautha wander tirelessly in search of food, instinctively avoiding cities and large settlements. They have been known to wipe out isolated steadings and villages, haunt battlefields when the fighting is done, and even track and ambush trappers along traplines. Orgautha inhabit forests, rocky scrubland, caverns, and subterranean realms. Usually solitary, they seem to gather in as yet undiscovered places to reproduce every ten seasons or so, females laying large (1' diameter) eggs which in texture and hue resemble dark blue grapes. Orgauthas avoid each other rather than fight, but may team up for short periods if they encounter each other while hunting.

Orgauthas have no eyes, but can sense vibrations and large sources of heat within 7". They can also smell keenly, within a 6" range.

REKEIHS

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*
NO. APPEARING: 1 (20% chance of 2-5)
ARMOR CLASS: 7 (body), 2 (tentacles)
MOVE: 3"
HIT DICE: 4-6
% IN LAIR: Nil
TREASURE TYPE: Nil
NO. OF ATTACKS: 4 tentacles
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-10/1-10/1-10/1-10
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Multiple attacks*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Cold resistance*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
INTELLIGENCE: *Semi-*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
SIZE: M (5'-6' tall)
PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil
Attack/Defense Modes: Nil
LEVEL/X. P. VAL.: 4 HD, III/110 + 4/hp;
5HD, XV/170 + 5/hp; 6 HD, 300 + 6/hp

The rekeihs (pronounced ree-KAYZ; the name is the same in singular or plural forms) is a carnivorous plant found in tropical swamps and other warm, damp areas, including some dungeons. It preys largely upon live animals, including adventurers who wander into its territory.



A rekeihs has four powerful legs that form its major root systems; these are used to draw nourishment from slain animal victims and, when necessary, from muddy soil. Although it is powerful, the rekeihs is a slow-moving creature with no jumping ability.

The four upper tentacles of the rekeihs are secondary roots that anchor themselves in mud when the creature isn't moving.

They are also used in combat and can drag slain prey toward the rekeihs. When attacking, the tentacles lash out and grasp a victim, wrapping partially around it; then the tentacles suddenly jerk free and the suction pads underneath each tentacle rip away at the victim's skin. If the victim is using a shield, there's a 25% chance that the shield will be pulled away by any one tentacle unless the shield bearer can roll his chance to open doors (based upon his strength). Victims wearing armor of AC 5 or better will only suffer 1-4 hp damage per tentacle attack.

A rekeihs is able to attack four opponents at once and can direct up to three of its tentacles against any one single opponent. The main body and legs of a rekeihs are AC 7; the tentacles are AC 2.

Growing from the top of the rekeihs's head are vibration and auditory sensors, which can pick up any loud sounds within a 25' radius of the creature. Each of the rekeihs's four eyes have infravision out to 30' and regular vision out to 120'. (Rekeihs are nearsighted.) Rekeihs are drawn toward moving light sources and will often attack illuminated beings at night. They take half damage from all cold-based

attacks, but fire-based attacks do +2 hp per dice of damage to them.

Once a year, a rekeihs will reproduce using a slain animal or human victim. It will attach its four "legs" to the victim, though it will fend off attackers during this time with its tentacles if necessary. Within one turn, the rekeihs will have sent rootlets throughout the body of the victim; raising the victim from the dead is then impossible without use of a *wish*. The rekeihs will become immobile (except for its flailing

tentacles during a fight). Within 3-18 turns after attaching itself to a body, the rekeihs will explode violently, causing 6-24 points damage to all within 30' of it. This kills the rekeihs, but within 2-12 turns after this explosion, from 3-6 young rekeihs (each 1' tall) will grow and separate from the body of the slain victim.

The young rekeihs will grow at an astounding rate; within a month, the (1 HD at birth) youth will have grown to adult size (4 HD). A new hit die is gained every

month afterward until full adult size (6 HD) is gained.

The rekeihs has a bulbous shape with four stout legs and four tentacles-spaced even around the body. Above each tentacle is a single unblinking eye, and a wavy growth of filaments extend from the top of its head. The main body of the rekeihs is a dull, mottled green; the legs and tentacles are darker, turning to purple or even blue in older specimens. The eyes are dull black with green pupils.

RUMMELE

FREQUENCY: *Rare*
NO. APPEARING: 1 (10% chance of 4-16)
ARMOR CLASS: 4
MOVE: 18"/15"@15"
HIT DICE: 5 + 10
% IN LAIR: 20%
TREASURE TYPE: F
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 *bite*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2-12
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Spells*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Various immunities; never surprised*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: 30%
INTELLIGENCE: *Average to very*
ALIGNMENT: *Chaotic neutral or chaotic good*
SIZE: M (3' at shoulder)
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*
Attack/Defense Modes: *Nil*
LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: VI/550 + 6/hp

Rummeles are from the planes of Gladshheim (see DRAGON® Magazine, issue #90), though they are also found on Limbo, Olympus, and the Prime Material Plane. These canids are good-natured and are particularly friendly toward humans and demi-humans. Though they are somewhat unreliable, rummeles generally mean well.

A rummele can *blink* as a blink dog does, with the same chance of attacking from behind and the same ability to teleport away entirely. It may also activate the following spell-like powers at will, one per round, at



the 6th level of ability: *detect evil/good*, *diminution* (as per the potion), *enemy detection* (as the wand), *find the path* (or its reverse), *haste* (once per day), *invisibility*, *polymorph other* (once per day), and *polymorph self* (to humanlike form only). A rummele may also create food and drink and other non-metallic items as a djinni does. A rummele has infravision and ultravision out to 90', and can regenerate 1 hp per turn. This regenerative power can be transferred to one other being, by touch, for as long as physical contact is maintained.

The rummele is immune to diseases, poisons, effects of the Positive and Negative Material Planes (including life-level draining), and to petrification and polymorph effects. It is immune to certain will-force

spells as if it had a 20 wisdom (see the DEITIES & DEMIGODS™ Cyclopedica). Its magic resistance is of the uniform sort, equally effective regardless of the level of the spell or its caster; there is always a 30% chance that a spell will fail against it.

These agile creatures can dodge ordinary missiles or knock them out of the air on a roll of 8 or better on 1d20. They have prehensile paws and flexible joints, and may climb walls as 10th-level thieves. If they fall, they take no damage for the first 30' of the descent, taking normal damage afterwards (4d6 for 40') etc.). Rummeles cannot be surprised because of their keen senses and high dexterity.

A rummele looks somewhat like a long-limbed, shaggy dog with pendant ears and a long, slender muzzle. Its woolly coat may be of almost any color, and it has shiny black eyes. A rummele's charisma is 19 with respect to other canids (dogs, wolves, etc.), including intelligent or magical beasts like winter wolves, and it can communicate with any dog, wolf, jackal, or fox. Though it is voiceless in its natural form, the rummele has *telepathy* (as per the psionic discipline). Because of its fondness for humans and demi-humans, a rummele sometimes travels *polymorphed* as them. The astute and informed may recognize a *polymorphed* rummele by its prominent nose and bright black eyes, which are retained even in *polymorphed* form. If it learns that it has been identified, however, a rummele will almost always leave the area.

URISK (Lubin)

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*
NO. APPEARING: 1 (10% chance of 2-5)
ARMOR CLASS: 6
MOVE: 15"
HIT DICE: 2 + 1
% IN LAIR: *Nil*
TREASURE TYPE: M (x100), Q
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 *butt* or 1 *weapon*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-4 or by *weapon type*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Minor spell use; +1 with weapons*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Hiding in natural terrain*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*
INTELLIGENCE: *Very*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral (lubins are chaotic neutral)*

SIZE: S (3' tall)
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*
Attack/Defense Modes: *Nil*
LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: III/95 + 3/hp

The urisk is very much like a 3' tall, goat-headed satyr, having goatlike legs, a human torso, arms, and hands, and a small bushy tail wagging behind. A urisk is covered in shaggy brown fur. The urisk is solitary in nature and wanders through mountainous and forested terrain with no established lair, though it may have small caches of buried gold or gold jewelry. Intimately familiar with the terrain it inhabits, a urisk can hide well enough to become invisible to the casual observer.

If encountered, a urisk is 25% likely to be alone and 75% likely to have 1-4 mammalian companions with it, such as giant

goats, bears, sheep, rams, deer, or the like. It can cast up to four *charm mammal* spells per day (save at -4) and may speak to any animal as often as desired. The *charm mammal* spell will only affect normal or giant mammals, and not humans, humanoids, or demi-humans. The mammals so charmed will obey the urisk completely, even unto death.

A urisk may also cast *warp wood* at the 12th level of ability three times per day, and may *pass without trace* for up to one hour a day in any terrain. A urisk will attack by butting most of the time, but some prefer to use small weapons like daggers, hand axes, clubs, and short swords. Any weapon being held by a urisk will function as a +1 weapon for hit-determination purposes if it is non-magical; magical weapons are treated normally. This bonus to hit is temporary only,

and is removed as soon as the urisk lets go of the weapon.

Urisks are particularly friendly with gnomes and druids, neutral towards humans, elves, halflings, and dwarves, and hate all humanoids such as orcs and goblins. They speak their own language, their alignment tongue (neutral), common, and the languages of gnomes, dwarves, elves, and orcs.

A variant species very much like the urisk, called the lubin, averages 2½' in height and is black-furred; but otherwise similar to the urisk. Lubins inhabit forests and fields and cast *charm person* spells up to three times a day, rather than *charm mammal*. Lubins may also speak with animals as they please, but do not have companions as urisks do. Lubins are chaotic



neutral alignments, and speak their own tongue, their alignment tongue, and the

language of sylvan elves, gnomes, and common. All other spells, powers, and habits are as for urisks. Lubins and urisks speak to each other in the language of animals rather than in each other's languages. Both urisks and lubins are quite rare, and not frequently encountered.

For random determination of a given urisk's companion when encountered, use *Appendix L: Conjured Animals* in the *Dungeon Masters Guide*, rolling a d6 to see which hit-dice category each of the 1-4 companions is and rolling percentile dice to determine exactly which animal is present. All companions of a urisk will be completely at ease with one another and can work in complete harmony, even if this is not normally likely (due to the powerful *charm* upon them).

VILTCH

FREQUENCY: *Rare*
NO. APPEARING: 1-20
ARMOR CLASS: -4
MOVE: 21"
HIT DICE: 5 + 2
% IN LAIR: *Nil*
TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*
NO. OF ATTACKS: 2 *claws and 1 bite*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2-5/2-5/2-8
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Minor poison; spells*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Spells; never surprised; various immunities & resistances*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: 40%
INTELLIGENCE: *Average*
ALIGNMENT: *Chaotic neutral or chaotic evil*
SIZE: *M (5' tall,)*
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*
Attack/Defense Modes: *Nil*
LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: VI/575 + 6/hp

Viltches are hateful creatures from the plane of Pandemonium, inclined to malign destruction and disorder. They are skilled vandals, ripping open wineskins, spoiling food, biting through ropes and straps, tormenting domestic animals, smashing wood, and generally creating havoc wherever they go. The more beautiful or orderly an object



or an arrangement is, the greater their determination to destroy it. Though they can inflict fatal wounds, viltches prefer to cause mere scratches and nicks, concentrating on various random acts of hooliganism.

They seek out weak prey and avoid direct confrontation with powerful creatures.

The following powers are available to a viltch, usable one at a time, once per round: *detect traps*, *dimension door*, *shatter* (three times per day), *teleport* (once per day), *trip* (three times per day), *warp wood* (three times per day), and *gate* (30% chance of 1-20 more viltches from Pandemonium). A viltch is immune to electrical damage, psionic attacks and powers, and poisons or gases of any sort. It takes half damage from cold or fire. Viltches have both infravision and ultravision out to 90'.

Viltches are never surprised and always gain +2 on initiative rolls because of their speed. They have the abilities of 12th-level thieves in picking pockets, opening locks, removing traps, and climbing walls. A viltch can dodge non-magical missiles if it saves vs. petrification. The venomous bite of a viltch causes pain in a live victim (-3 "to hit" and no chance of casting spells or attacking psionically) for 1-6 turns.

A viltch resembles a mandrill with matted and disheveled fur, and is a dirty gray color. Its muzzle is blue-gray. It has a mane of darker color, and its eyes burn a baleful yellow. A viltch has only three legs: a single leg in back, and two in front. It seems not to be handicapped by this arrangement.

WYRM, Great

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*
NO. APPEARING: 1
ARMOR CLASS: -1
MOVE: 15"
HIT DICE: 13-15
% IN LAIR: 45%
TREASURE TYPE: *H, Z*
NO. OF ATTACKS: 2 *claws and 1 bite*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 4-24/4-24/4-40
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Breath weapon*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Regeneration; detect invisible beings*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: 5%
INTELLIGENCE: *Very*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral evil*
SIZE: *L (60' long)*
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

Attack/Defense Modes: *Nil*
LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: 13-14 *HD, IX/9200*
+ 18/hp; 15 *HD, X/12,200* + 20/hp

Great wyrms are distant relatives of dragons and dragonkind, a dying breed that has become more rare with each passing year. Wingless, six-legged intelligent reptiles, great wyrms lair far from civilized areas.

These gray-green beasts are so rarely seen that encountering one is considered a lucky (or unlucky) omen. Great wyrms are so old that some are said to remember the early days of their world, and a few kingdoms protect and defend their wyrms for the information they possess (though the wyrms charge steep prices for such knowledge). Great wyrms speak their own tongue

and no other, though they apparently understand many languages and will answer questions put to them in a variety of dialects and tongues.

Malign, crafty, and indirect in speech and thought, some great wyrms are also senile, and a few are said to be insane. No new wyrms have been born for centuries, and it is generally believed that these monsters are aware that their species is headed for extinction. Certainly the wyrms say little about this, and tend to eat those who are bold enough to ask them about it.

A great wyrm is capable of breathing out a cloud of poisonous gas four times a day; such a cloud is 60 yards long, 30 yards wide and 26 yards high, and all who are caught within it must save vs. breath weapon or suffer the poison's effects. Victims who

breathe the fumes will be immediately incapacitated by choking and nausea, collapsing at once without defending themselves or attacking in any way. The victims will then die in 1-4 rounds. Saving against the breath weapon will reduce the victim to half of his former hit points (round fractions up) and will leave him choking and gasping; he will, however, be able to attack at -2 "to hit" odds, and can defend himself, though without armor class bonuses for dexterity. These latter effects will last 4-16 rounds.

In addition, great wyrms are able to regenerate their wounds to a limited extent. While they cannot rebond severed limbs, they can heal wounds at a rate of 1 hp every two rounds. Although this does not greatly affect combat, it allows the wyrm to recover quickly from serious injuries if given a chance to rest. Wounds caused by fire cannot be rehealed, though those caused by acid can be healed normally.

Great wyrms pass through the same life stages that dragons do, but no wyrms younger than "old" are known to exist. They also come in the same size categories, and can detect hidden or invisible creatures



within a 1" range per age level. They live about ten times as long as regular dragons, so an old wyrm is probably between 1000 and 2000 years old.

All wyrms possess the *fear aura* of dragons, but regardless of their age, the wyrms have the aura effect operate without

bonuses to the victims' saving throws. Great wyrms, because of their innate egotism and strength of will, cannot ever be subdued; attacking one in this manner is a grave mistake. Wyrms cannot cast magic.

Because great wyrms are so old, each one has at least one especially vulnerable spot upon its body. The dragon's scaly hide will have been damaged by disease, combat, or by general wear and tear at these points, and nervous ganglia tend to gather there. During physical combat, a person striking at a great wyrm with a sharp-edged weapon (including arrows and hurled hand axes and daggers) has a 1% chance of accidentally hitting such a vulnerable spot. The blow will strike the dragon as if against AC 4, and the blow will do double damage to the wyrm. The wyrm will immediately retreat if struck in such a spot, and will attempt to find safety and recover from the wound. Magical attacks, even *magic missiles*, will not affect the wyrm in this way. If a vulnerable spot is located and recognized, attackers may strike at the spot further unless the wyrm covers the spot or moves it out of reach of weapons.

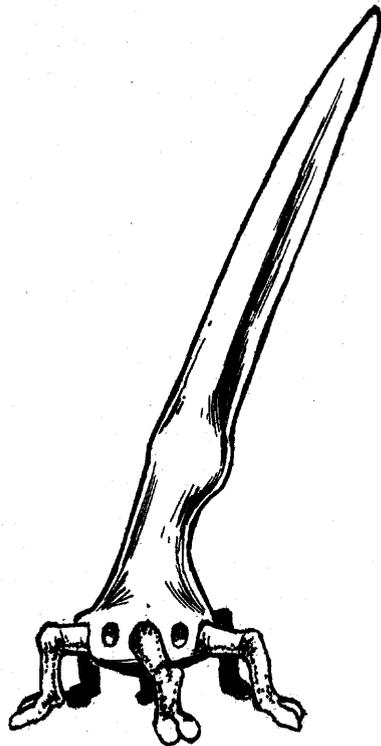
XAVER

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*
 NO. APPEARING: 1-4
 ARMOR CLASS: 2
 MOVE: 9"
 HIT DICE: 2 + 4
 % IN LAIR: *See below*
 TREASURE TYPE: *See below*
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 slash
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2-5
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Metal corrosion*
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Immune to metals, poisons, heat, and electricity*
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: 45%
 INTELLIGENCE: *Average to high*
 ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
 SIZE: *S to M (3' to 6' tall)*
 PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*
 Attack/Defense Modes: *Nil*
 LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: *IV/175 + 3/hp*

Xavers are curious creatures of unknown origin and thankful rarity which, like rust monsters, have a diet consisting entirely of ferrous metals and alloys (such as iron, steel, and mithral or adamantite alloys). Unlike rust monsters, xavers are intelligent and will not be "bought off" with a meal of a few spikes or nails when they see an easily won suit of armor or much weaponry.

Xavers normally inhabit rocky lairs, but are sometimes found in treasure hoards in which they have concealed themselves. (Such hoards will have no ferrous materials in them, of course.) There is a 1% chance that any hoard initially determined to contain magical ferrous armor, shields, or weapons will also contain one or more xavers; then eliminate the metallic items from the hoard.

Xavers have silvery, smooth metallic bodies, and are flat and tapered with a



bulbous base at one end. They resemble short swords or long swords. The ring of the base of a xaver is studded with six green, hard, faceted eyes that resemble gems. An 8-inch-long leg is set between each eye. A xaver lies motionless at the approach of creatures and radiates no body heat (thus being invisible to infravision) or sound. Instead of breathing, it absorbs solar heat and needed gases through the long "blade" of its body. It has no senses of hearing or smell, but has 9" infravision as well as normal vision.

Metal of any sort will pass harmlessly

through a xaver's body as if the latter did not exist, and metallic weapons used against the xaver will do no damage. Weapons of wood, stone, and other materials do normal damage. Heat and electrical attacks do no damage, but the xaver will conduct these through its body and pass the damage on to anyone in contact with it. A xaver suffers +1 hp per HD of damage from all cold attacks. Poison has no effect upon them.

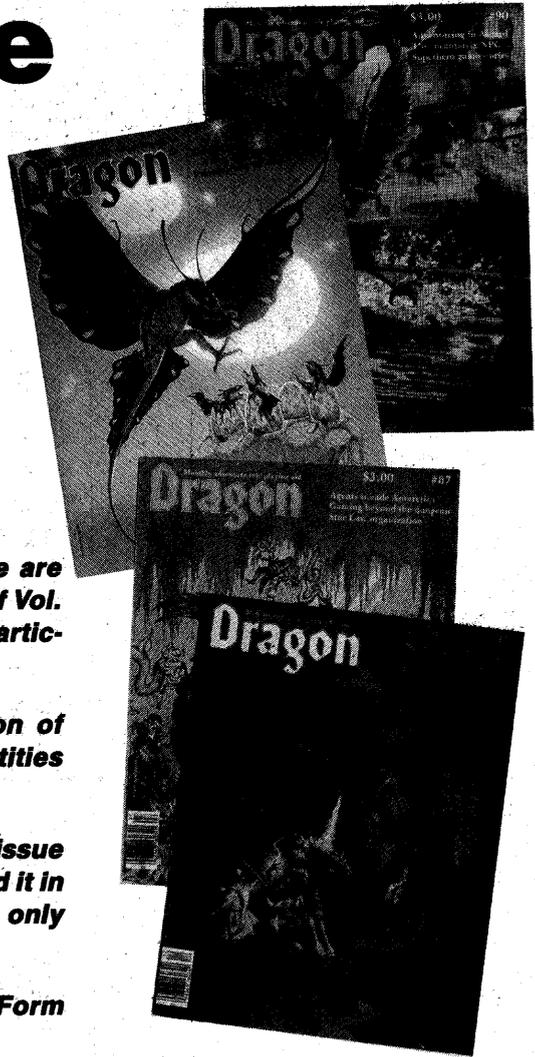
Any ferrous metal that contacts a xaver will crack and fall into shards within 1 segment. The xaver will have caused the metal to corrode (though the corrosion does not resemble rust) and will then attempt to eat the metallic shards for nourishment. As a xaver eats metal it grows slightly; several suits of armor or about ten weapons might make one grow 1" or so.

Though xavers cannot control their corrosive powers, they can choose not to touch metallic items in order to lure victims wearing lots of armor to come closer to them. Non-ferrous metals will not be corroded and destroyed, though they can be consumed for nourishment if necessary.

Xavers scuttle about on their legs, retracting them with blinding speed if they see danger approaching. They can cut victims with the razor-sharp edges of their "blades" like wielded swords, doing 2-5 hp damage. Usually they swing their bodies in wild, circular slashes as they go into their "battle dancing." Xavers do not rust or corrode, and rust monsters cannot harm or eat them.

A xaver about to give birth goes on an eating spree, building its body size to the maximum in order to provide sufficient nourishment for its offspring. Young are born live and singly, and have full powers at birth; young have 1 + 2 HD and are about 3' long, growing rapidly if the food supply allows.

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IVAN THE SIMPLETON HAD NEVER spoken with a frog before. But it did not seem strange to him that a frog knew how to speak; Ivan believed that any animal would talk, if given provocation. The way they sometimes looked at you, it seemed to Ivan that they were just about to speak, only for some reason chose not to at the last minute. He had shared this insight with his Uncle Vanya in the tavern one night, and Uncle Vanya had agreed with him.

"Just so, Ivanushka," he said. "Why, only just this morning, I went into the barn to milk the cow, and I was in a hurry so I forgot to warm my hands before the milking. The moment that I touched her teats, she turned a reproachful look upon me and said, 'Vanya, your hands are cold.' And I said, 'So they are. I'm sorry, I forgot to warm them first.' At which the cow nodded understandingly and said, 'I forgive you, Vanya, but see that you do not forget again.' And, just to remind me not to forget, she gave less milk than she does usually."

And the men in the tavern had laughed uproariously, and Ivan had laughed with them, though he did not quite see why the story was so funny. But ever since then, he always made sure to warm his hands before helping Uncle Vanya with the milking. And it seemed to him that the cows always looked at him with gratitude. Yet, they never spoke to him. But this did not surprise Ivan. After all, he was a simpleton. Everybody said so, even Uncle Vanya. And if animals only speak to people when it is important, why should they speak to him? He was not important. Everybody said so. Whenever he wanted to discuss something with someone, they smiled at him and said, "Ivanushka, that's not important."

So Ivan had taken to discussing matters with himself. Not too far behind the little farm where he lived with Uncle Vanya and Aunt Sonya, there was a stream fed by the snow that melted from the mountains. A large willow tree grew on the bank of the little stream, and its roots were thick and protruded from the ground. The way the roots protruded and the tree trunk angled away slightly from the stream, it made a nice place to sit, almost like a comfortable chair, and Ivan would go there every day when his chores were done to nibble on some stale bread, toss pebbles in the water, and discuss things with himself. He always paid very close attention when he spoke, even if the things he said were not important.

During a pause in his conversation with himself, Ivan noticed a little frog sitting on a rock in the middle of the stream. The frog was watching him intently.

"Are you hungry?" asked Ivan.

The little green frog seemed to nod.

"I can offer you some bread," Ivan said, breaking off a frog-sized piece and tossing it carefully so that it landed on the large flat rock. "I'm sorry that it's a little stale, but it's all I have."

The frog didn't seem to mind. It greedily gobbled up the little piece of bread, and Ivan tossed it another.

"Now there's the life," Ivan said. "Nothing to do but lie upon a rock all day and sun yourself. You can take a swim anytime you want, you don't have chores to do,

Fortunes of a Fool

by Nicholas Yermakov

and if you're hungry, all you need to do is lie very still and wait for a nice big juicy fly to happen by. And at night you can sing to your heart's content, and no one yells at you to be quiet. Oh, to be a frog!"

"You wouldn't like it very much," the frog said quietly.

Ivan sat up. "What did you say?"

"I said, you wouldn't like it very much, being a frog," the frog said, more distinctly.

"Oh? Why not?"

"Being a frog is vastly overrated," said the frog with a sigh. "It's not as easy as you think. You always have to be on guard against a hungry fox or a ravenous raccoon. If you lie down upon a rock to close your eyes and sun yourself, some sadistic child tries to smash you with a stick. The water's very cold, and flies taste awful. Try eating one and find out for yourself. And as for the singing, all frogs ever sing about is how tough life is when you're a frog. I just can't stand it."

"But you're a frog," Ivan said. "It's what your lot in life is. My lot in life is to get up at dawn and work 'til dusk, doing my chores."

"And to sleep in a warm bed—"

"I sleep on a straw mattress in the barn," Ivan said.

"Whatever. It's a vast improvement over a cold rock."

"That's true," Ivan admitted.

"And you get to eat warm, fresh baked bread —"

"Aunt Sonya sells the bread," said Ivan. "I only get the stale stuff that's left over."

The frog shot out its long tongue and scored a direct hit on a passing fly.

"There you are," the frog said. "A nice big juicy fly. And it's freshly killed, not stale. Which would you rather have, the fly or your stale bread?"

"I'll take the bread, I think," Ivan said.

"There, you see? Just as I expected. You're not quite ready to trade places with me yet, whereas I would trade places with you in an instant. A warm straw mattress and a loaf of stale bread — now there's the stuff of paradise!"

"I never thought of it that way," Ivan said. "I suppose that's because I'm simple. I never realized that I was so well off."

"That's just the trouble with most people," said the frog. "They don't know when they've got it good."

Ivan thought about it for a moment, and he decided that the frog was right. He really had the best of it. And, realizing that, Ivan felt sorry for the frog.

"I'll tell you what," he said. "Why don't you come home with me?"

"And get eaten by your dog?" the frog said. "No, thank you."

"We don't have a dog," Ivan said. "Aunt Sonya has a cat, but he's old and fat and lazy. He never leaves the house, and if he sees a mouse, all he does is look at it. You would be in no danger."

"Where would I sleep?" the frog asked,

"In the barn with me. You don't take up much room. And I could share my meals with you, since you don't eat very much. After all, it's only fair, since I'm so much more fortunate than you."

"You'd do that for me?" the frog asked.

"Why not?" replied Ivan. "It would cost me nothing, and with you around, I'd have someone to talk to. I'd like that, wouldn't you?"

So Ivan took the little frog and placed it gently in his pocket. And that night they slept together in the barn on a mattress of warm straw.

The next day, the frog said, "Ivan, I think we should get married."

"Married?" said Ivan, astonished.

"Yes, married," said the frog. "After all, it's only right. I am a female, and we slept together on the same straw mattress. What will people say?"

"I didn't know you were a female," said Ivan.

"That changes nothing," said the frog. "People will talk."

"Why should they?" asked Ivan. "No one knows you spent the night with me."

"I know," said the frog. "After all, I have my principles. What sort of frog do you think I am?"

"But . . . I don't want to get married," Ivan protested.

"Why not?"

Ivan thought hard. "I can't afford a wife," he replied triumphantly.

"What's to afford?" said the frog. "You yourself said that having me live with you would cost you nothing. I eat only crumbs of stale bread and the occasional icky fly, and I don't take up much room on your straw mattress. Besides, you don't have to buy me clothes, and I don't wear any jewelry. It would weigh me down. And you do admit that it's nice to have someone to talk to who doesn't dismiss everything you say as being unimportant."

Ivan pursed his lips and grudgingly conceded that the frog had a point. Then he brightened. "Suppose you give birth to tadpoles?"

"That takes two, you know," the frog answered wryly. "I can hardly do that without your cooperation, and under the circumstances, I'm not too excited by the idea. Sleeping with you is challenging enough. I have to watch out in case you should roll over, and besides, you snore."

Ivan was having a hard time trying to follow the frog's logic, but then Ivan had a hard time trying to follow any kind of logic at all. He frowned, thinking hard and trying to come up with a convenient excuse to maintain his bachelor status.

"I would marry you," he said at last, "only no priest would marry us. What priest in his right mind would marry a human to a frog?"

"If I can find a priest to marry us," said the frog, "then will you do it?"

"If you can find a priest willing to perform the ceremony, then I'll marry you," said Ivan, confident that no priest would ever be so hare-brained as to marry a person to a frog. *I might be simple*, Ivan thought, *but I'm not stupid*.

Unfortunately, the frog did find such a priest. Father Dmitri was very old and very deaf. He was also blind. But he was not dumb, and he could say the words. The ceremony was tasteful and, well, simple.

When Uncle Vanya and Aunt Sonya found out what Ivan had done, they were so shocked and outraged that they turned him out of the house. Actually, they turned him out of the barn, but it amounted to the same thing. Ivan was driven out of town and forced to flee into the forest.

"Now what am I going to do?" Ivan said miserably. "I have no home and I have no money and no one will even take me on to work for my room and board. And it's all your fault."

"It is *not* my fault," said the frog, "but the fault of the ignorant and prejudiced peasants of your town. Can I help it if they're racists?"

Ivan did not know what a racist was, but he was not up to arguing with his little green wife. He only knew that he was homeless and he had no place to go. And all because he had taken pity on a frog.

"Don't fret, Ivan," his gangly-legged wife said. "I won't leave you in the lurch. You did the right thing by me, and I'll do the right thing by you. I know where you can get your hands on lots of money, and it'll only take a little elbow grease."

And the frog directed Ivan to a special place deep in the impenetrable forest (which they only just barely managed to penetrate), and she showed Ivan a giant oak tree that was hundreds of years old.

"Just dig at the base of that oak tree there," she said, indicating the spot with her froggy digit, "and you'll be rich beyond your wildest dreams".

Ivan did as he was told, and after about an hour's worth of vigorous digging, he unearthed a chest. It took

him about another hour to break the chest open, but when he did he saw that it was filled with treasure. Rubies as large as his fists, diamonds the size of his eyes, emeralds the size of meadow muffins, and pearls so large that they would trip swine if they were cast before them. It all took Ivan's breath away.

"As soon as you're able to breathe again," said the frog, "we'll go pawn some of those jewels, and then I'll tell you how to make some smart investments. And then we can see about shopping for a house."

It wasn't long before Ivan was settled in a palatial home in St. Petersburg. He had a whole closet full of richly embroidered clothes and fancy leather boots, he had a staff of servants and a silver coach with liveried coachmen, and no one thought the things he said were not important any more. He was still a simpleton, but, while being simple is a disadvantage to a hard-working peasant, it's considered a virtue in an aristocrat. The frog had her own room with a built-in swimming pond and a very fancy rock.

With the money from his investments, Ivan had a comfortable income, and he started a profitable loan sharking operation that simply raked in dough. Uncle Vanya had come to Ivan with hat in hand, humbly begging forgiveness and a loan. Ivan gave him the loan, but when he didn't pay it back on time, Ivan had his enforcers beat the living daylights out of Uncle Vanya, tar and feather him, and send him home. Aunt Sonya was so upset at seeing her husband return in such a state she hit him with an iron ladle, cracked his skull, and killed him. Ivan then gave her a job washing floors in his



palatial mansion.

"Never let it be said," he told her, "that Ivan does not look after his own." He gave her a warm straw mattress on which to sleep, and he made sure that she got plenty of stale bread every day.

One night, while he was sitting in his room, drinking the finest wine from Italy and munching on dates imported from Arabia, Ivan noticed a roiling blackness hovering just below the very ornately painted ceiling. At first, there was a dimness in his room, a seemingly momentary failing of the light as though a cloud had passed across the sun — only it was night outside and it was dark. All of a sudden, the atmosphere inside his room became even darker than the night outside. Ivan looked to his candles, which were burning, but for some reason weren't producing any light. Gradually, the blackening effect grew worse, and Ivan couldn't even see across the room. Then the thunder started. It was then that Ivan started to become nervous, for the thunder was coming from *inside* his room. Following the thunder were jagged bolts of lightning that lanced across his bed, and then the whole house began to shake. Truly frightened now, Ivan crawled beneath the covers of his bed and pulled the blankets over his head.

The blackness seemed to throb and pulse, like a giant heart, until it gathered itself at the foot of Ivan's bed and, with a deafening clap of thunder, resolved into the terrifying form of Kastchei the Immortal, the most feared and evil sorcerer in all the land. Kastchei the Immortal stood at the foot of Ivan's bed, dressed from head to toe in blackest black, his long beard buffeted by the howling wind that suddenly shrieked through Ivan's bedchamber. Ivan shivered underneath his covers, mesmerized by the unholy fire of the two red glowing eyes that seemed to pierce him to his very soul.

"I am *not* in a good mood," said Kastchei the Immortal.

Ivan knew who was addressing him, of course. Every mother's son in Russia, at one time or another, was threatened with the name of the greatest bogeyman that ever lived, the evil wizard who could never die, Kastchei the Immortal. This amused Kastchei. He liked making an impression.

"What . . . what did I do, Your Fearsomeness?" Ivan stammered, quaking underneath his bedclothes.

"Have you seen my treasure?" Kastchei asked in a tone of ominous foreboding.

"Your . . . treasure?" said Ivan.

"That's right, my treasure," said Kastchei. "You know, rubies as large as your fists, diamonds the size of your eyes, emeralds the size of meadow muffins, and pearls so large that they would trip swine if they were cast before them."

"Oh. *That* treasure," said Ivan.

"I don't suppose you know anything about it," said Kastchei, to an accompanying clap of thunder. The wizard loved dramatic sound effects.

"Well . . . uh, suppose I do?" said Ivan, trying to disappear beneath his bedclothes.

"It seems to be missing," said Kastchei, glowering at Ivan. "When next the moon is full, I will once again

seek out the ancient oak tree where I buried it, and I expect to find my treasure still intact, just the way I left it."

"Uh, suppose it isn't there?" Ivan said, trembling mightily.

"Well, let's not be pessimistic," said the sorcerer. "I always like to look on the bright side. The next time I check, I fully expect my treasure to be right where I left it. If, however, by some chance, some poor *simpleton* was fool enough to dig it up, why, that would make me very angry. I don't like being angry. I fear I do not possess the temperament to handle being angry very well. I devastate the countryside, turn people to stone, call forth plagues of demons, take people's souls away, and make them burn in eternal torment. Things can get quite out of hand. No, let's just hope I find my treasure where I left it. Then I'd be happy, you'd be happy, and there would be no need for me to run amok with all sorts of nasty necromancy. That would be much more pleasant, don't you think?"

"Just swell," Ivan said, all the color draining from his face.

"Somehow I thought you would agree," Kastchei said.

And with another clap of thunder and an impressive display of pyrotechnics, Kastchei the Immortal disappeared, leaving a wide fissure in the floor of Ivan's bedchamber and a tang of brimstone in the air. Ivan lay absolutely still for a long time, waiting for his heart to start again. When he finally stopped shivering and found his voice, he took a long, deep breath and called his wife.

"Honey, would you come in here for a minute?"

His wife came hopping into the bedroom.

"Yes, Ivan? What is it?"

"You didn't notice anything just now? Like a thunderstorm, a mild earthquake, perhaps?"

"No, Ivan. What are you talking about?" asked the frog.

"Guess who just paid me a visit?"

"I don't know, dear. Who?"

"Kastchei the Immortal."

"Ooops," the frog said.

"Ooops? What do you mean, *ooops*? Is that all you have to say, *ooops*?"

"Now, Ivan, don't get excited," said the frog.

"Don't get excited? *Don't get excited?* You get me to steal the treasure cache of the most feared sorcerer in all the world, and all you have to say is don't get excited?"

"Now, don't exaggerate, Ivan," the frog said. "He's not *that* feared. I'll admit he can be pretty nasty, but the most feared sorcerer in all the world? I'd say that point was open to debate."

"Well, he scares *me* plenty!" shouted Ivan. "What in God's name were you thinking of?"

"Look, don't go blaming it all on me," said the frog.

"I didn't hear you asking where the treasure came from or whose it was when you dug it up. I must admit that I knew there was some risk involved, but I didn't know Father would miss it quite so soon."

Ivan wasn't sure he had heard that right. "*Father?*" he said, weakly.

"Well, you may as well know the truth," the frog said.

"I'm no ordinary frog. My name is Vasilissa the Wise, and I'm Kastchei's daughter. Father turned me into a frog because I was born smarter than he is. If there's one thing he can't stand, it's losing an argument at the dinner table. He has a very nasty temper, and he turned me into a frog one night. My curse is that I must remain a frog until I can get a man to fall in love with me. And what man in his right mind could love a frog? I had just about resigned myself to being a frog forever when you came along. You were simple and no great catch, but you were a man and that was close enough. I thought that I could trick you into marrying me and then make you feel gratitude. In time, I thought that you would grow to love me and the curse would then be broken. But I didn't think Kastchei would miss his treasure quite so soon. I really should have known he'd check his hoard. He's so possessive."

"Well, that's just great," Ivan said miserably. "Now what am I supposed to do? How can I return his treasure when I've already spent it? I'm doomed. It serves me right for being simple."

"If you weren't so simple, you'd know that you're not doomed. Not yet," said Vasilissa. "How long did he give you to return the treasure?"

"Until the next full moon," Ivan said.

"We've got time," she said. "The first thing you must do is liquefy your assets. Sell the house, sell all the serfs, sell your coach and clothes and all the furniture. Tell your enforcers to make sure that all outstanding debts are paid in full. Take all the money that you've made from your investments and everything you'll get from disposing of the house and all your worldly goods, and convert it into gold. Then sell the loan sharking operation."

"But that will leave me with nothing!" cried Ivan.

"You'd rather face my father's wrath?"

"I'll sell, I'll sell," Ivan said hastily.

And he did just as she said. Amazingly enough, by the time that he was finished with all of his transactions, he found that he had quite a bit more money than the original treasure had been worth. But then there wasn't enough time to track down all the jewels that he had sold so he could buy them back. And Kastchei the Immortal said that he wanted to find his treasure just as he had left it.

"What am I going to *do*?" Ivan cried. "There isn't enough time!"

"Control yourself," the frog said, "They don't call me Vasilissa the Wise for nothing. We still have just one chance to restore my father's treasure, but it isn't going to be easy."

"I'll do anything you say," Ivan said, feeling desperate.

"Fine," said Vasilissa. "Pack all the gold into a sack and pack some provisions, too. Put it all into a wheelbarrow and then put on your peasant clothes, if that's all you have left."

"Where are we going?" asked Ivan.

"To see Baba Yaga."

"On second thought, being turned to stone doesn't sound so bad," Ivan said.

"Suit yourself," she said. "I'm only trying to help."

Help? She got me into this mess to begin with, thought Ivan. It was bad enough that he had stolen a treasure cache belonging to Kastchei the Immortal, but now she meant to have him seek out Baba Yaga, an ageless witch who, it was said, was so frighteningly hideous that just one look at her was enough to put you off your feed. It was claimed that she lived in a hut surrounded by a fence of human bones and that she traveled the countryside by flying seated in a giant mortar, steering it with her witch's broom. *And all I ever wanted,* thought Ivan, *was to do my chores and eat my stale bread and sit by the stream, throwing pebbles into the water. And now I'm all mixed up with sorcerers and witches. And all because I took pity on a frog!*

Nevertheless, having no other choice, he did as Vasilissa had instructed, and soon they were once more deep within the impenetrable forest, having penetrated it with a great deal of difficulty. It was almost the time of the full moon when they reached the clearing where Baba Yaga's hut hobbled incessantly about in a circle. Inside a fence made of human bones, the wooden hut swayed about on chicken feet, turning in a constant circle, giving the entire clearing an air of magical foreboding. There were no doors or windows in the hut, and Ivan did not see how they would manage to gain entrance even if the hut stood still long enough. With a whimper of resignation,



Ivan trundled his wheelbarrow containing his gold, his provisions, and his wife through the gate of human bones and up to the shiftless hut.

"Baba Yaga, you have some visitors," croaked Vasilissa. "Let us in so we can show you all the gold we've brought!"

It was well known that Baba Yaga was fond of gold, both because she liked its color and because it was very magical, to one who knew how to use it properly.

"What's to prevent her from taking all our gold and turning us into toadstools?" asked Ivan.

"There is that possibility," said Vasilissa.

"That wasn't what I wanted to hear," he said.

Even as he spoke, the hut stopped turning and a door appeared inside what had been a solid wall moments before. The hut settled on the ground, folding its chicken feet beneath it, and from within they heard a wheezing sound, an emphysemic cackling that made Ivan's blood run cold.

"Come in, my children, do come in," said Baba Yaga. "Come in and show me all the lovely gold you've brought."

"Yes, being turned to stone definitely doesn't sound so bad," Ivan said.

"Oh, come on, Ivan," said Vasilissa. "Be a man! Besides, it's much too late to turn back now."

With a sinking feeling, Ivan pushed the wheelbarrow through the door.

It was dark inside the hut, but there was some light coming from a giant cauldron — an eerie, hellish glow that seemed to shift from red to blue to green. The hut was filled with the sickening sound of burbling as the cauldron bubbled, filling the tiny single chamber with a smell unlike anything Ivan had ever known. It smelled even worse than Uncle Vanya.

Hunched over the cauldron was the most vile creature Ivan had ever seen. Baba Yaga was old and withered, an evil-smelling crone with wrinkles in her wrinkles and with ugly, disgusting warts. Her nose was hooked and so gargantuan that Ivan first thought it was the weight of it that made her assume her bent-over posture, but then he saw that Baba Yaga was hunchbacked. Perched upon her hump was a cat as black as pitch and with eyes that shone a brilliant emerald green. The cat arched its back as Ivan and Vasilissa entered, and spat at them, digging its claws into Baba Yaga's hump.

"Stop that!" cried Baba Yaga, flailing at the cat with her spindly arms and hopping about. Ivan saw that one of her legs was paralyzed. He also saw why the cat chose her hump to perch upon. No matter how she moved, it was the one place Baba Yaga could not reach. "You miserable cat!" she shouted. "If I get my hands on you, I'll boil you for supper!"

But the cat paid her no mind. Instead, it decided to make itself comfortable. It sat down on her hump and did that thing that all cats do when they decide to make themselves comfortable: alternately raising one paw and then the other, digging its claws into her hump and purring all the while.

"Aaah! Oooh! Ouch!" cried Baba Yaga, and then, in desperation, she threw herself against the wall in an

effort to dislodge the cat. But the cat was not dislodged, and all Baba Yaga succeeded in doing was stunning herself. She sat upon the floor, waiting for her eyes to focus and breathing heavily.

"She doesn't look so mean to me," whispered Ivan.

"She does put me off my feed, though."

"Sssh!" said Vasilissa. "You want her to hear?"

"I heard, I heard," said Baba Yaga. "That's the trouble with young people today, no respect for their elders. Well, I'll teach you some respect!"

And with that, she raised her palsied hand in a threatening gesture of wizardry.

"No, wait, Baba Yaga!" the frog cried. "He's just a simpleton. He didn't mean it."

Baba Yaga squinted at the frog. "Vasilissa? Is that you?"

"It's me, Baba Yaga."

"Been fresh with your father, I see," said Baba Yaga, cackling gleefully. "You're lucky I'm more even-tempered than that oaf. And speaking of second-rate sorcerers, how is the old charlatan?"

"As mean and nasty as he ever was," said Vasilissa.

"Pah! Kastchei isn't mean, he's simply arrogant," said Baba Yaga with a sneer. "Well, what do you want from me? To change you back? Can't do that, dearie. Mind you now, I could, if I had a mind to, but I don't believe in interfering when a father disciplines his child."

"No, that's not it, Baba Yaga." And the frog told the old witch all about how they had dug up Kastchei's treasure and how they had until the next full moon to put it back exactly as it was, or else.

"Or else?" asked Baba Yaga. "Or else what?"

"He didn't specify," said Vasilissa.

"He spoke of devastating the countryside, turning people into stone, calling forth plagues of demons, and taking people's souls away to make them burn in eternal torment," said Ivan, trying hard to keep from trembling.

"Tsk, tsk," said Baba Yaga. "It all sounds quite dramatic, but an apprentice sorcerer could weave those spells without a bit of trouble. So what am I supposed to do? Restore the treasure? For this you brought gold?"

"That's more or less what we had in mind," Ivan said hesitantly.

"Hmmm, I could use a little gold," said Baba Yaga. "I think I'll just relieve you of that wheelbarrow and turn you into a toadstool."

Ivan was on the verge of tears.

"Now, don't be hasty, Baba Yaga," said Vasilissa.

"What? You're worried about *him*? He's just a simpleton. Any fool can see that. He'd make a better toadstool."

"Oh, I wasn't all that worried about him," said Vasilissa, "but I was only thinking that Father would be very much annoyed if he found the treasure just the way he left it. Then he'd have no excuse to run amok with nasty necromancy. And he'd *have* to know where the treasure came from. He'd know I went to you. It would be a small way of getting back at him for making me a frog, and it would be yet another opportunity to show who is the greater sorcerer."

"Kastchei would be annoyed, eh?" said Baba Yaga,

scratching her giant nose. "I wouldn't mind tweaking Kastchei's nose for him. All those claps of thunder and jagged bolts of lightning — no finesse, none whatsoever. All right, I'll do it. I won't need all the gold to restore the treasure, but I will keep whatever is left over."

"That's only fair," the frog said.

"All right, then. Let's get to it. I'm a busy woman."

And with a few spare gestures, Baba Yaga turned slightly less than half of the gold inside the wheelbarrow back into the treasure. Everything was there, just as it had been originally. Rubies as big as Ivan's fists, diamonds the size of his eyes, emeralds the size of meadow muffins, and pearls so large that they would trip swine if they were cast before them.

"Child's play," said Baba Yaga. Then she made another pass with her wrinkled hands and the treasure disappeared, to reappear buried at the base of the ancient oak deep in the impenetrable forest, and in a chest just like the one Kastchei had buried it in. Only this chest had Baba Yaga's initials on it, just to rub it in. "The rest of the gold is mine," she said. "Now I have work to do' so the two of you can disappear."

Ivan and Vasilissa disappeared in a puff of smoke, to reappear on the edge of the impenetrable forest, by a road that led to the settlement from which Ivan had come. When he realized that he had escaped with his skin and soul intact, Ivan was overjoyed.

"You did it, Vasilissa! You saved my life! I love you!"

And no sooner had he said those final words than the frog disappeared, and in its place stood the most stunningly beautiful woman Ivan had ever seen. Her hair was the color of spun gold and it reached down to her waist, which was slim and saucily curvaceous. Her skin was soft and flawless, and her eyes were a sparkling

azure blue. Her legs were long and slender, shaped to sheer perfection. She was the kind of woman men would kill for, the kind that caused poets to be at a loss for words. She was incredibly desirable and Ivan, overcome with love, reached out for her.

"Just *what* do you think you're doing?" asked Vasilissa, placing a restraining hand upon his chest.

"But . . . but you're my wife!" Ivan protested, amazed that she should ask.

"Don't be silly, darling. You were married to a frog."

"But . . . but . . ."

"Now that my father's spell is broken, all my powers have returned," she said. "What do I need with a husband?"

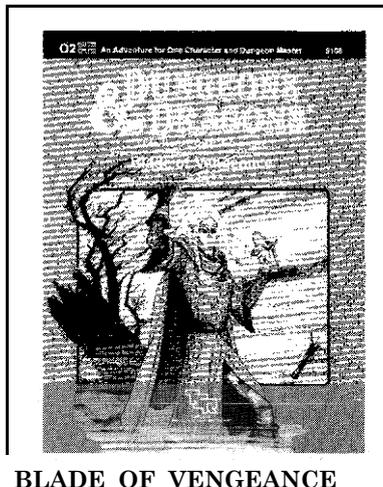
And with that, she turned into a graceful swan and flew away. Ivan burst into tears. Not only had he lost the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, but he had nothing left. No treasure, no gold, no house, no coach, no serfs, not even his loan sharking operation. Once again, he was just plain Ivan the Simpleton.

He returned in shame to his little village and moved back in with his Aunt Sonya, who paid him back for making her wash floors by making him work ten times as hard as he ever had before and by making his life miserable beyond belief. Ivan was so broken-hearted, he no longer bothered having discussions with himself, so now there was truly no one for him to talk to. Late in the evening, when his chores were finally done, he would go back to his favorite place beside the stream, where he would sit, resting his weary bones and throwing pebbles morosely into the water. One evening, as he was sitting by the stream and eating a few crumbs of stale bread, he noticed a little green frog watching him intently.

Ivan smashed it with a stick.



COMING ATTRACTIONS



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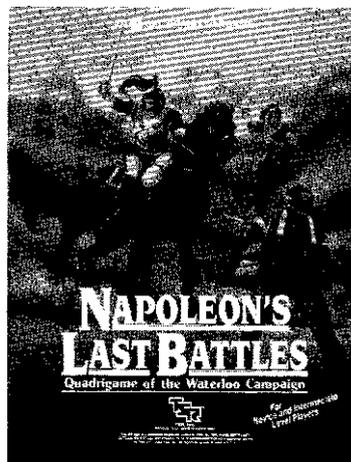
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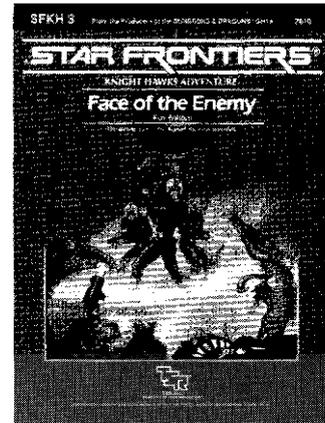
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This ENDLESS QUEST® book, the third to feature one of the greatest warriors of all, takes you (in the role of Conan) deep into a dangerous, barbaric world where only your great fighting ability and wits can keep you alive. Vammatar the Deathless, an evil Hyborean wizardess, is trying to recapture you after your escape from her slave camp. Forced to survive as a warrior turned outlaw, you are hunted by Vammatar's fiendish undead followers and face nightmarish dangers wherever you turn.

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SCIENCE-FICTION GAMING SECTION



CONTENTS

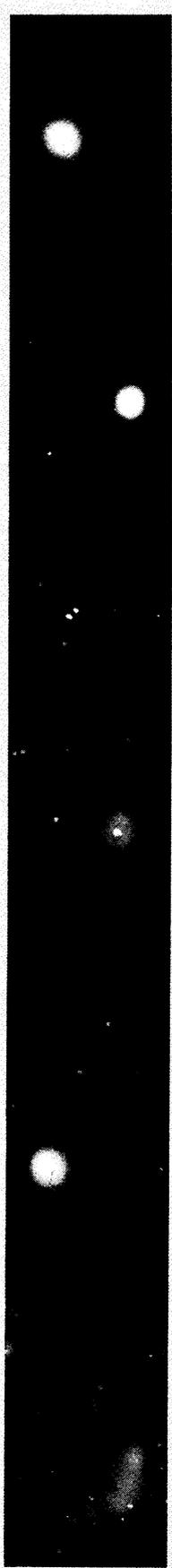
ARES Log 6 6
S.H.I.E.L.D.™
William Tracy 67
 Defenders of the world!

THE MARVEL®-PHILE
Jeff Grubb 7 2
 Unfriendly neighborhood Spider-foes

**FROM ANARCHY TO
EMPIRE**
David Cook 78
 Interstellar governments in the STAR FRONTIERS® game.

ON THE COVER

Nick Fury™ has come a long way from his days with the Howling Commandos™. Now the director of S.H.I.E.L.D.™, he fights on land, sea, and in space for the security of Earth. For more on the man and the organization, see p. 67. Cover art by Steranko (Marvel Comics Group).



You may consider this our MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ Special Issue of the ARES™ Section. Readers asked for more on S.H.I.E.L.D.™, the super-agency responsible for the defense of the world in the Marvel® Universe, and we have the latest information in William Tracy's article. Many of you also wanted to know more about the worst criminals in the Marvel Universe. Curiously enough, the three most-wanted men are all deadly enemies of the Amazing Spider-Man™. Jeff Grubb tells more about them.

Dave Cook, one of the creators of the STAR FRONTIERS® game, also makes an appearance here with some thoughts on setting up interstellar governments in new star sectors. Any-one care for a Dralasite anarchy?

You might want to read Jeff Grubb's introductory remarks about the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game in his article. Some interesting ideas have been tossed around here at TSR, Inc., and you have the chance to tell us what you think of them.

What was the WORST science-fiction game you've ever played? Out of sheer curiosity, I'd like the readers (you) to drop me a postcard or index card with the name of the all-time worst science-fiction game (boardgame, role-playing game, etc) that you ever played, with a few remarks about *why* you thought it was the worst. Be specific; point out the flaws in the game that kept it from being enjoyable or that made it silly.

Send your vote to the ARES Department, DRAGON® Magazine, TSR Publishing, P.O. Box 110, Lake Geneva, WI 53147. In return, I'll pick three winners at random and will send each of them a special prize. Only one entry per person, please, and remember to print your name and address CLEARLY on the postcard or index card. This contest will be open until 1 April 1985.

See you next month.

ARESTM Section 94
THE SCIENCE-FICTION GAMING SECTION

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S.H.I.E.L.D.™

A MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game supplement by William Tracy

S.H.I.E.L.D. (Supreme Headquarters International Espionage Law-Enforcement Division) is an international organization independent of all governments. Its job is to seek out and destroy those threats which endanger mankind and the Earth itself — be they terrestrial or from other worlds. S.H.I.E.L.D. was formed in the early 1960s to oppose the growing power of the organization known as HYDRA™. Nick Fury™, a CIA agent and hero of World War II, was made the agency's public director. Since its beginning, S.H.I.E.L.D. has played a major role in the world's defense, fighting villains and criminal forces, with and without the help of the other Marvel Super Heroes™.

Casebook and history

S.H.I.E.L.D. has fought many opponents over the last two decades. Some of the most challenging cases are briefly described below — though not in chronological order.

HYDRA: HYDRA was a secret, highly-organized group that planned to conquer the world using advanced technology. HYDRA was created by a group of Japanese subversives, but it was taken over by the ex-Nazi Baron Wolfgang von Strucker at the end of World War II. Though von Strucker had been one of Hitler's top men, he soon had a falling out with the Fuehrer and had to flee Germany before the war's end.

Von Strucker came to Japan and became the secret leader of HYDRA by assassinating the former one. He built a small island in the Pacific, and soon HYDRA scientists were learning how to make nuclear weapons. A band of American commandos called the "Leatherneck Raiders" and a group of Japanese commandos known as the Seven Samurai joined forces and destroyed the island, but von Strucker escaped.

Over the next fifteen years, von Strucker slowly rebuilt HYDRA and set up his headquarters in America. During this time, two branches of HYDRA were

created. A.I.M. (Advanced Idea Mechanics), which created the scientific weaponry for HYDRA, and THEM, which supervised the efforts of HYDRA and other subversive organizations.

By the early 1960s, HYDRA had agents all over the world and an arsenal that was larger than that of most nations. It



NICK FURY™

was then that S.H.I.E.L.D. and Nick Fury came on the scene. Baron von Strucker and Fury were bitter enemies from the Second World War, though Fury was not aware at first that von Strucker was HYDRA's leader.

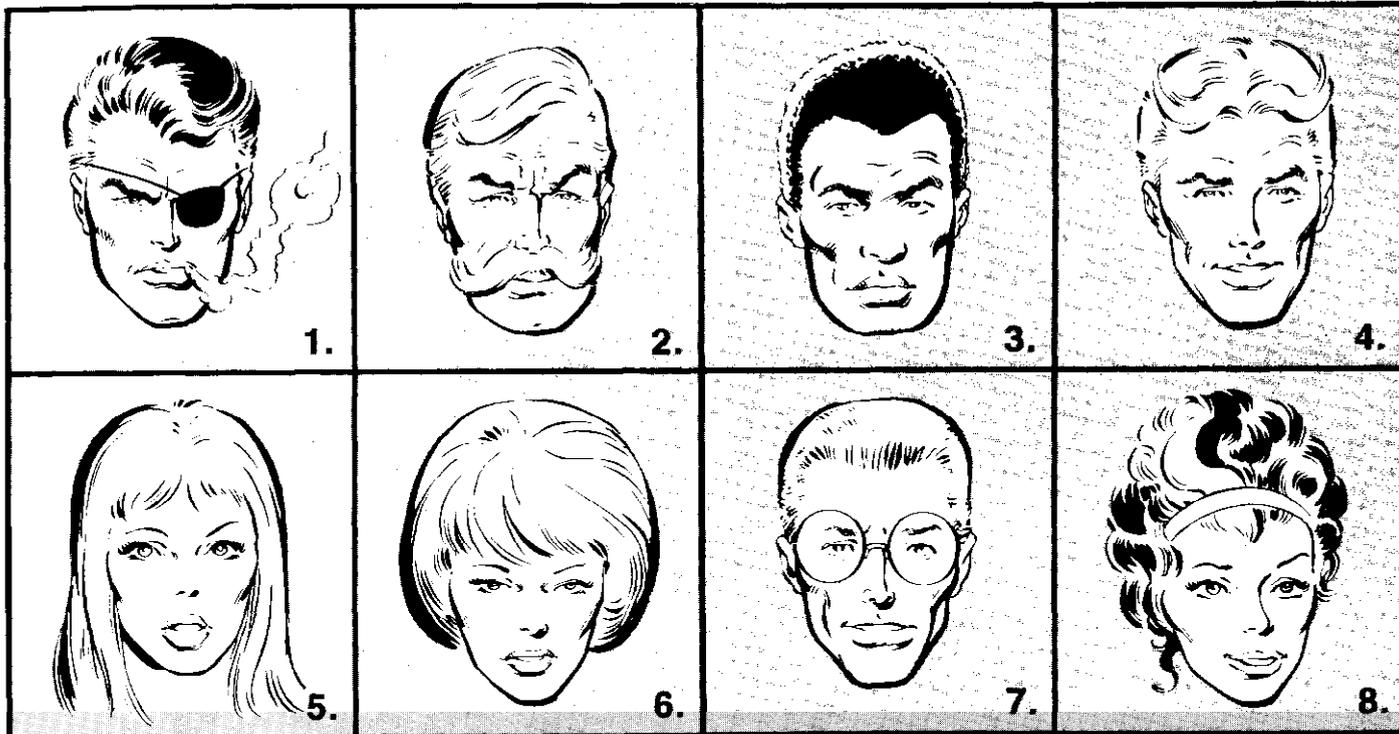
After Fury became S.H.I.E.L.D.'s director, HYDRA tried to blackmail the world with its orbiting Betatron Bomb. While Tony Stark de-activated the Bomb, Fury and his men captured HYDRA's New York office. After that defeat, A.I.M., THEM, and the Secret Empire attacked S.H.I.E.L.D., while HYDRA quietly rebuilt. Von Strucker had stayed out of the picture and assumed many false identities, including that of John Bronston, an agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. Once again he took control of HYDRA and threatened to use the Overkill Horn, which would have set off every nuclear device in the world. He was again defeated by Fury and his men.

Von Strucker then planted a Death-Spore Bomb aboard the *Helicarrier*™, but his plans were again stopped by Fury. Fury invaded HYDRA's new dome-covered island fortress and placed the Bomb there. While fighting with Fury, von Strucker accidentally ran into a nuclear reactor chamber and was incinerated. Fury escaped as HYDRA's island sank into the Pacific forever.

Since then, various splinter groups of HYDRA and its sister organizations have surfaced, but none have achieved any real success. The villainess named Viper™ took control of the New York section of HYDRA for a time, but she accomplished little.

Scorpio: Just after S.H.I.E.L.D. was established, Nick Fury was attacked several times by a man known only as Scorpio. Their confrontations always ended in victory for Fury but escape for Scorpio. It wasn't until many years later that Fury discovered that Scorpio was actually his brother, Jake, who had become mentally unbalanced and has since died (see *Defender's* #50).

Mockingbird™: One of S.H.I.E.L.D.'s



best agents, Barbara Morse, has since resigned from the agency to undertake a full-time career as an adventuress: Mockingbird™, of the West Coast Avengers™. Her struggle against traitors within S.H.I.E.L.D. was documented in the MARVEL®-Phile of DRAGON® Magazine issue #93.

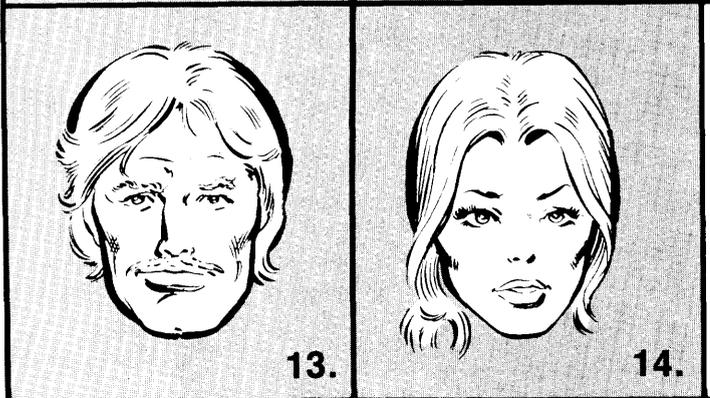
Dire Wraiths™: Recently S.H.I.E.L.D. undertook to fight against the sorcerous, shape-changing aliens known as the Dire Wraiths. Along with the Avengers™, the

Fantastic Four™, and other Marvel Super Heroes™, the Dire Wraiths were repulsed from Earth.

S.H.I.E.L.D. has been involved directly and indirectly with many other adventures, most of them unknown to the general public. Nick Fury™ and his men have worked closely with Captain America™ and the Avengers™ in their battles for justice. Another of S.H.I.E.L.D.'s former agents, the Black Widow™, also works with the organiza-

tion at times. (Black Widow is detailed in Module MH-4, *Lone Wolves*.)

S.H.I.E.L.D. has its share of internal problems, to which some of the cases above allude. S.H.I.E.L.D. once attempted to train super agents, but the project was discontinued when two agents turned traitor. At one point, a telepath named Marvin Flumm worked with the organization's ESP unit; he later became known as the villain Mentallo™.



S.H.I.E.L.D. AGENTS*

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. NICHOLAS FURY
Executive Director (Level 1) | 8. VALENTINA ALLEGRO DE FONTAINE
Special Field Officer (L-4) |
| 2. TIMOTHY "DUM DUM" DUGAN
Special Director (L-2) | 9. SIDNEY E. LEVINE "THE GAFFER"
Technician (L-8) |
| 3. GABRIEL JONES
Special Field officer (L-4) | 10. JAMES "JIMMY" WOO
Special Field Officer (L-4) |
| 4. ERIC KOENIG
Regional Director, Born (L-3) | 11. CLAY QUARTERMAIN
Special Field Officer (L-4) |
| 5. SHARON CARTER (Deceased)
Special Field Officer (L-4) | 12. JERRY HUNT
Regional Field Officer, London (L-5) |
| 6. LAURA BROWN
Field Agent (L-6) | 13. BARTH BUKOWSKI
Regional Director, Los Angeles (L-3) |
| 7. JASPER SITWELL
Special Field Officer (L-4) | 14. GAIL RUNCITER
Field Agent (L-5) |

* Better known members

Organization

The S.H.I.E.L.D. organization is based on eight different command/security levels. Only one man is on Level 1, Colonel Nicholas Fury™, the Executive Director of S.H.I.E.L.D. The duties of the other levels are given below.

Level 2: Special Directors make command decisions when Fury is not available. They also coordinate efforts to follow Fury's special orders. Currently, Timothy "Dum Dum" Dugan, Fury's best friend, is the only person on this level.

Level 3: Regional Directors head up the S.H.I.E.L.D. regional offices across the world, co-ordinating all S.H.I.E.L.D. activities in their area unless they receive special orders from Fury or Dugan.

Level 4: Special Field Officers are agents who usually work alone undercover, taking orders directly from Fury and Dugan. Their task is to gather information for S.H.I.E.L.D.

Level 5: Regional Officers help the Regional Directors co-ordinate activities, and provide leadership in their region when their Regional Directors are not available.

Level 6: Field Agents make up the main fighting force of the organization. Sometimes Field Agents will work undercover, reporting to their Regional Directors. They are the backbone of most para-military operations.

Level 7: Administrators make sure that S.H.I.E.L.D.'s activities are done according to law. They take care of the red tape and paperwork that are a part of any bureaucracy.

Level 8: Technicians keep S.H.I.E.L.D.'s machinery in good repair and constantly update the agency's old equipment while they create new equipment.

The *Helicarrier*™ also houses a small group of people who have no designated level. These are the ESPers, who are employed in special research projects and assist the organization when it is facing psychic foes. The ESPers are hooked into a Psionic Amplifying Machine, which gives them a group Psyche rank of Amazing. When hooked into the PAM, ESPers are capable of performing any of the mental powers listed in the MARVEL SUPER HEROES Campaign Book.

As mentioned above, S.H.I.E.L.D. maintains offices all over the world, including New York, Los Angeles, London, and Bonn. Some hidden bases exist in Communist countries. S.H.I.E.L.D.'s headquarters are in the gigantic *Helicarrier*. Though their operations are secret, the organization's existence is known to the general public, and S.H.I.E.L.D. maintains a few public offices.

The *Helicarrier*™

S.H.I.E.L.D.'s headquarters are based in a gigantic, flying aircraft carrier known as the *Helicarrier*. The *Helicarrier* is an important part of the World-Wide Military Command and Control System (WWMCCS), which maintains communications in times of world crises. It is also a major link in the Defense Communications System (DCS). The *Helicarrier's* main function is the surveillance of land and space, and it houses a number of highly trained electronic intelligence personnel. Field Agents are also tested and trained aboard the *Helicarrier*.

The *Helicarrier* has three layers of armor: two layers of 5-inch hardened alloy with a 12-inch layer of fragment suppressor sandwiched between them. This gives the *Helicarrier* an Excellent Body and Monstrous Armor.

The *Helicarrier* is powered by a small thermonuclear plant and flies by means of an anti-gravity generator augmented by six large twin-bladed helicopter rotors. The *Helicarrier* has Good Control and Excellent Speed. The *Helicarrier* is rigid enough so that it may land on the ground or in water, but its radar "ball" deck must be jettisoned beforehand.

The *Helicarrier* is armed with the following weapons:

- * ten 70mm radar-guided anti-missile electric cannons (Range: Excellent, Damage: Amazing; can be used as anti-missile defense),
- * six 40mm radar-guided anti-missile electric cannons (Range: Good; Damage: Incredible; can be used as anti-missile defense),
- * four armored boxed missile launchers (eight missiles each, Body: Remarkable, Control: Incredible, Speed: Remarkable, Damage: Amazing),
- * cruise missile launch deck (30 cruise missiles, Body: Remarkable, Control: Incredible, Speed: Amazing, Damage: Unearthly); and,
- * an anti-missile teravolt charged particle projector (Range: Amazing, Damage: Amazing).

Not only is the *Helicarrier* heavily armed, but it also serves as an aircraft carrier by the following military aircraft:

- * thirty-two F/A-18 planes (Body: Typical, Speed: Incredible, Control: Excellent); Weapons: 4 guided missiles (regular types) and 2 machine guns (Range: Good, Damage: Remarkable),
- * two E-2C Hawkeye early warning planes (Control: Good, Speed: Excellent, Body: Typical); Weapons: 2 guided missiles and 2 machine guns (as above); they also have a radar range of 300 miles and constantly patrol the airspace around

the *Helicarrier*; and,

- * four mini-Sea King anti-submarine helicopters (Control: Good, Speed: Excellent, Body: Good); Weapons: 2 air-to-sea torpedoes (Body: Remarkable, Control: Excellent, Speed: Good, Damage: Amazing), 2 depth charges (Range: Good, Damage: Incredible), 2 machine guns (as above); used for submarine patrol, cargo hauling, and rescue missions.

The deck of the *Helicarrier* houses a vibration-isolated missile silo which contains an intermediate-range ballistic missile (Body: Remarkable, Speed: Remarkable, Control: Incredible, Damage: up to Class 1000). It has a range of 3500 miles and can achieve low earth orbit. It can be used as a weapon or for a variety of special missions, such as placing a satellite into orbit.

The *Helicarrier* is usually crewed by 450 men, but in emergencies it can hold up to a thousand people. It carries enough food and water to last a regular crew for 30 days. The *Helicarrier* itself can maintain flight indefinitely.

Weapons and special equipment

S.H.I.E.L.D. will always be equipped with the most modern weapons and special equipment. This section details the items that S.H.I.E.L.D. agents regularly employ. The agents themselves are described in the *Avengers Assembled!* module.

S.H.I.E.L.D. regulation uniforms are made of nine-ply kelvar, providing Typical protection from physical attacks. The uniforms are also made of beta-cloth (type C), which can withstand temperatures up to 1700°F, providing Excellent resistance to fire.

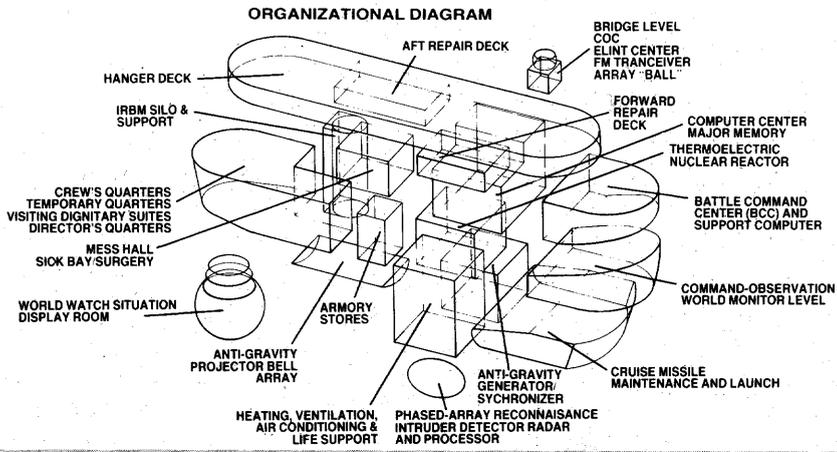
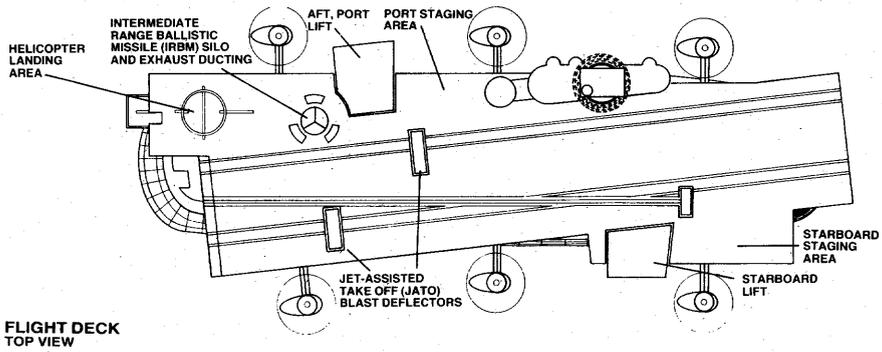
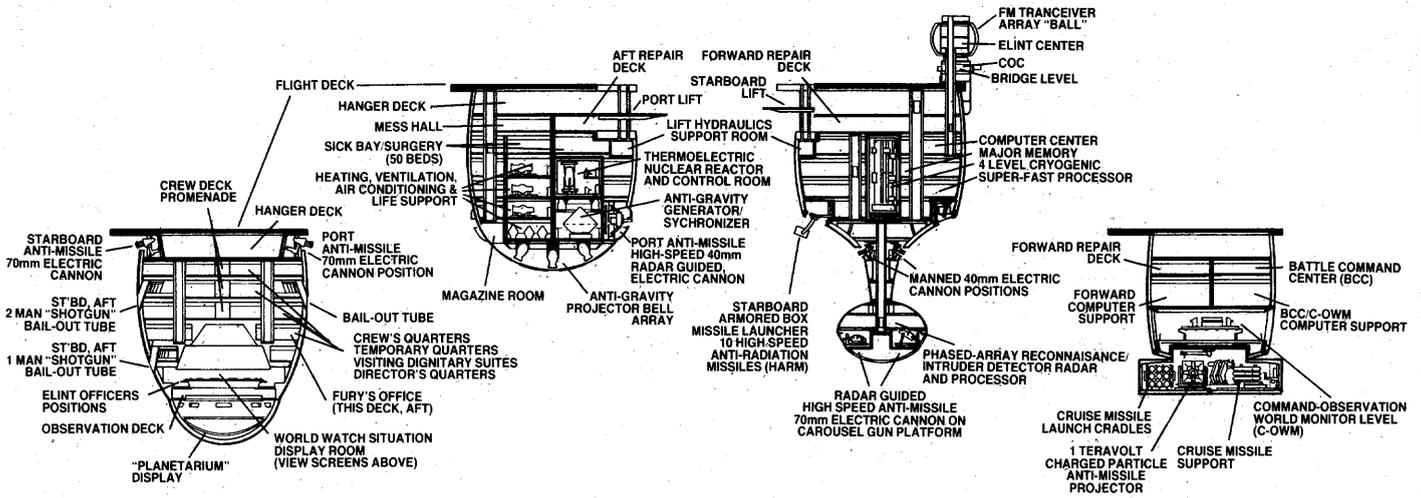
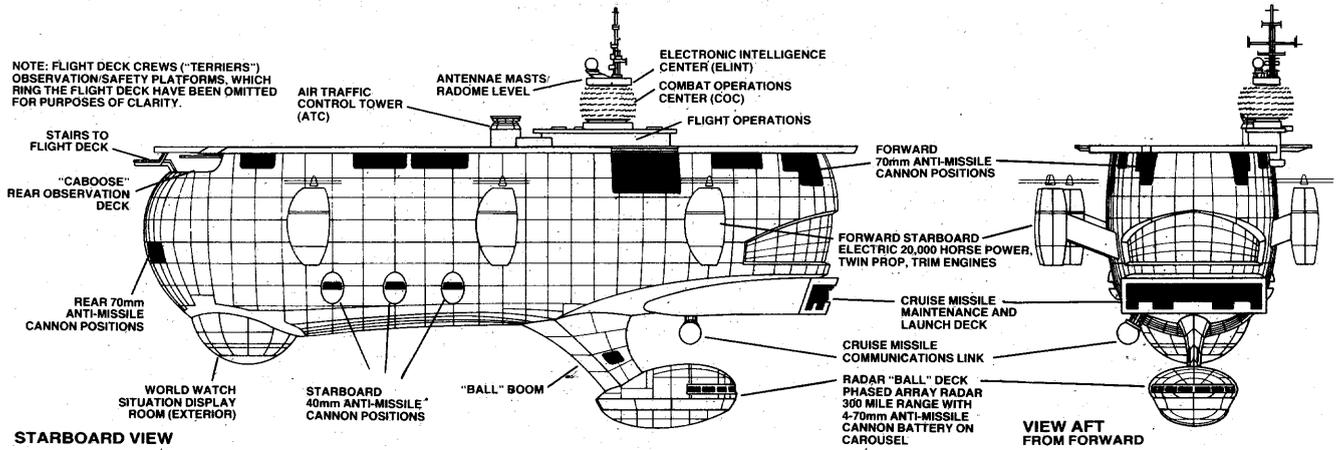
Each S.H.I.E.L.D. agent is provided with two types of handguns. One is a plasma beam handgun (Damage: Excellent, Range: 5 areas), with a powerpack that enables it to fire 19 times before running out of power. The other regulation handgun is a .30 caliber rapid fire automatic machine pistol (Range: Good, Good Damage from single shots, Remarkable Damage from bursts). The bullets are armor-piercing, with cores of high-density spent uranium. Each ammo clip holds 60 rounds (600 bullets), and the gun has a variable rate of fire, enabling it to shoot 1-100 bullets/round.

When S.H.I.E.L.D. agents go on paramilitary operations, they each carry the following weapons and special equipment:

- * 1 smoke bomb (see smoke grenade on p. 17 of the Campaign Book),
- * 1 flare (does Typical damage if used as

S.H.I.E.L.D. HELICARRIER™

NOTE: FLIGHT DECK CREWS ("TERRIERS") OBSERVATION/SAFETY PLATFORMS, WHICH RING THE FLIGHT DECK HAVE BEEN OMITTED FOR PURPOSES OF CLARITY.



a weapon, burns for 5 rounds),
 * 1 thermite bomb (as explosive grenade, p. 17 of Campaign Book, except it does Incredible Damage and will do Excellent Damage every round to anyone hit due to clinging flames until the flames are extinguished),
 * 1 fragmentation bomb (as explosive grenade on p. 17, Campaign Book, except it does Incredible Damage),
 * 1 throwing knife (Excellent Damage when thrown),
 * 1 gas bomb (knockout gas with Incredible potency),
 * 1 radio link pocket computer (10 mile radio range, Remarkable complexity),
 * 1 flexible saw (able to saw through 1 inch of Good material in 5 rounds); and,
 * 1 garrote reel (must surprise opponent from behind to be used; does Excellent Damage each round; use Grappling Battle Effects Table to determine if victim can free himself; escape requires a roll in a Red area).

The main transportation for S.H.I.E.L.D. agents is the Flying Car, a modified Ferrari 330/P4 Berlinetta. The car is armored with 1" foamed alloy, and its windows are made of 1" bullet-proof Lexan, giving it Excellent protection with an Excellent Body.

The car is electrically powered by turbines. While on land the car has Remarkable Control (computer-aided steering) and Remarkable Speed. The car's four wheels are also mini-jet turbines enabling the car to fly with Remarkable Control and Incredible Speed. The car is also totally submersible with a 5-hour air supply, although it only has Typical Speed and Excellent Control underwater.

The car is armed with a 20mm electric cannon (Range: Excellent, Damage: Excellent, ammo supply of 1000 rounds), a 30mm radar-guided anti-missile electric cannon (Range: Excellent, Damage: Excellent, ammo supply of 50 rounds), and a missile launcher (4 air-to-air missiles, Body: Excellent, Control: Excellent, Speed: Excellent, Damage: Incredible). The 20mm cannon is in the front of the car; the 30mm cannon and the missile launcher are in the rear.

The car also has a variety of special equipment, including self-sealing tires, radar, a computer and communications console/scrambler, a S-band communications satellite antenna, 20 cm of radar chaff to disrupt radar signals, ejection seats, and a car parachute.

Over the years, S.H.I.E.L.D. has used the Life Module Decoy Matrix several times. This machine creates android doubles of the person placed in the

Master Matrix. Androids will have the same physical attributes as the originals, but their mental attributes are only Typical since they have no real mind. They are either pre-programmed or voice/radio controlled.

S.H.I.E.L.D. agents have also used jet cycles, an Entrope Phase Barrier Guard System (Remarkable-strength force field), an image scanner (discerns real form of items and people), mold cocoon pellets, and two-way wrist communicators. Assume that any weapon or gadget that can be invented has already been designed by S.H.I.E.L.D. technicians and has probably been built and used.

Nick Fury™

No article on S.H.I.E.L.D. would be complete without mentioning Nick Fury, the director of the organization. Though Fury is no costumed crusader, he is a tough, die-hard fighter, especially with the man-power and technological resources of S.H.I.E.L.D. to back him up.

NICK FURY™

Director of S.H.I.E.L.D.

Fighting: EXCELLENT (20)
 Agility: EXCELLENT (20)
 Strength: GOOD (10)
 Endurance: EXCELLENT (20)
 Reason: EXCELLENT (20)
 Intuition: EXCELLENT (20)
 Psyche: GOOD (10)

Health: 70
 Karma: 50
 Resources: AMAZING
 Popularity: 75

Talents: Fury has trained as a paratrooper, a ranger, a demolitions expert (including underwater demolitions), and a pilot. He can operate any vehicle made on Earth, including spacecraft and lunar landing modules.

A master of martial arts and wrestling Fury is also a marksman and weapons master. He knows much about law and law enforcement, engineering, history, first aid, and military science.

Nick Fury has access to all S.H.I.E.L.D. weapons and equipment. His personal weapon is a .15 caliber needle gun with a range of 4 areas (it does Good Damage). An ammo clip holds 300 rounds.

Nicholas Joseph Fury was the elder of two children born to an American pilot. His father died in action during World War I, and Nick grew up in the toughest section of New York City, Hell's Kitchen. In December, 1941, when America entered World War II, Fury was unemployed and decided to enlist in the U.S.

Army. Fury took basic training at Fort Dix, New Jersey.

After basic training, Fury was quickly promoted to the rank of sergeant and put in charge of an elite group of soldiers who were known as the "Howling Commandos™." This special unit became famous throughout the European theatre of operations, performing many important missions for the Allies. The group was first organized in 1942 by Captain Samuel "Happy Sam" Sawyer, the force's commanding officer. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill made the "Howling Commandos" the first American Ranger squadron to gain the rank of Commandos in His Majesty's Army. The "Howling Commandos" were made up of Nick Fury, Timothy "Dum Dum" Dugan, Gabriel Jones, Robert "Rebel" Ralston, Percival "Pinky" Pinkerton, Isadore "Izzy" Cohen, Dino Minelli, Eric Koenig, Jonathan "Junior" Juniper (killed in action in the war) and Fred Jones (disabled in combat).

During a special mission in France, Fury came under the medical care of Professor Berthold Sternburg, who inoculated Fury with the "Infinity Formula" serum. Fury takes this serum annually, and it has slowed down Fury's aging process enormously.

The "Howlers" were disbanded after the war, but Fury remained on active duty during the Korean War. During this conflict, the "Howlers" were reunited for a special mission in which they secretly crossed the 38th Parallel and destroyed an enemy MIG base. During the mission, Samuel Sawyer was killed and Fury was given a battlefield commission of Second Lieutenant. During the mid-1950s, Fury was on loan to the French government and served as an espionage agent for France during the early part of the Viet Nam War. This work earned him a promotion to Colonel.

After his Viet Nam work, Fury became an agent for the Central Intelligence Agency for a few years. In the early 1960s, he was offered the directorship of S.H.I.E.L.D., which he has retained ever since.

Anytime the player characters discover an international conspiracy or an organization that threatens mankind itself, there is a good chance that at least one S.H.I.E.L.D. agent will be encountered on the scene as well. If S.H.I.E.L.D. agents are involved, heroes such as Captain America™ may soon be on the scene, and more heroes will be coming as things get tougher.

The MARVEL™-Phile

Unfriendly neighborhood Spider-foes by Jeff Grubb

Last month, we revealed the first-place winner of the "Overwhelming Readers' Response Survey" by publishing the abilities and history of the mysterious Mockingbird™. Now it's the bad guys' turn, and the three most-requested pests are all enemies of your friendly neighborhood Spider-Man™: Hobgoblin™, Kingpin™, and Spider-Man's own malicious (former) Suit. [Kingpin is described briefly in Bruce Nesmith's module, MH-4 Lone Wolves; the Karma score given

here is the correct one – Editor.]

Before pressing on, there's a debate going on here regarding the future of the MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game. We've gotten a lot of positive mail concerning the game, and many gamers want to see a more intense treatment of the game in terms of subjects (other dimensions, time travel, and new worlds) and rules (an advanced magic system, a more complicated combat table, and individual Karma awards).

Would you like to see an "Advanced MARVEL SUPER HEROES" book? If so, what would you like to see in it? Drop us a line (and mention which heroes you'd like to see in future editions of the MARVEL-Phile, while you're at it). Roger Moore forwards all the Marvel Mail to my cubicle (usually cackling gleefully while he's at it).

Without any further editorializing, let's bring on the bad guys: Hobgoblin, Kingpin, and Spidey's Suit!



HOBGOBLIN™

HOBGOBLIN™

Real name as yet unrevealed

Fighting: EXCELLENT (20)
Agility: REMARKABLE (30)
Strength: INCREDIBLE (40)
Endurance: INCREDIBLE (40)
Reason: EXCELLENT (20)
Intuition: GOOD (10)
Psyche: EXCELLENT (20)

Health: 130

Karma: 50

Resources: EXCELLENT

Popularity: -20

Powers:

BODY ARMOR. Hobgoblin's outfit consists of small-weave, insulated chain mail that provides Excellent protection from physical attacks and Remarkable protection from electrical attacks.

ELECTRICAL BLASTERS.

Hobgoblin's gloves are equipped with power-conducting microfilaments that enable him to project Incredible electrical damage up to one area away.

GLIDER. One of Norman (original Green Goblin™) Osborn's inventions, this one-man, turbo-powered glider has the following stats: Incredible Control, Good Speed, and Excellent Body (but offers no protection to the rider). The Glider can carry up to 400 pounds, but it is DOWN TWO on Speed and Control if carrying more than the Hobgoblin's own weight.

BATTLE VAN. A complete mobile weapons system devised by Osborn but never used in his career as the Green Goblin,

IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!

The **MARVEL SUPER HEROES™** Role-Playing Game will knock ya out!

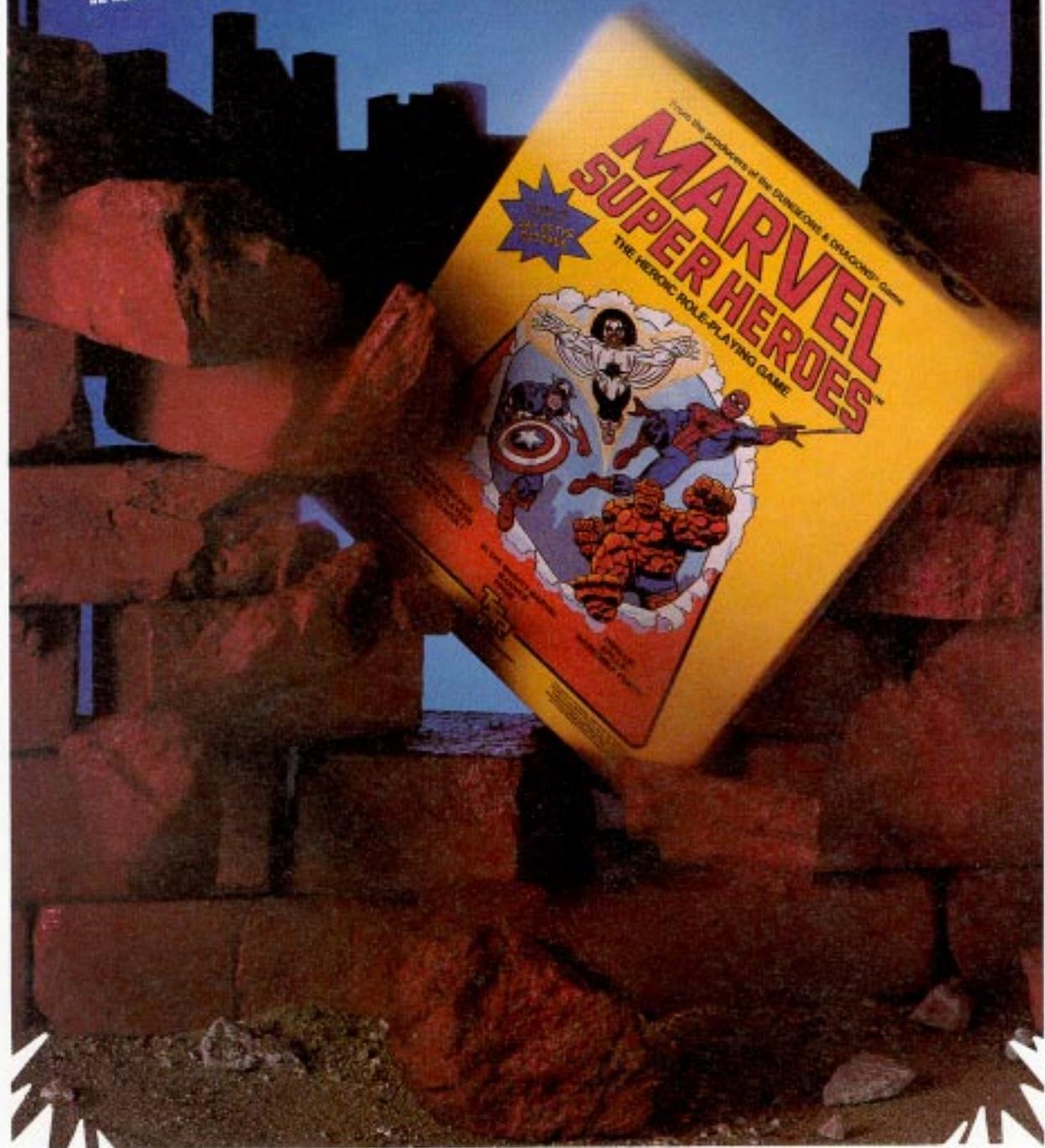
Now you can bash heads with the best of them. Swing through the city with **SPIDER-MAN™**. Save the citizenry with **CAPTAIN AMERICA™**. Knock down entire buildings with **THE THING™**. Piece of cake!

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the Battle Van has Incredible Control, Remarkable Speed, and Incredible Body. It has a full communications and computer setup and can be operated by remote control or on its own auto-pilot (which has Remarkable Control). The Battle Van possesses a top-mounted concussion gun turrent doing Remarkable Damage with a range of 7 areas. The van was partially destroyed in a high-speed chase that left it in the East River, but Hobgoblin has reclaimed the van and is rebuilding it.

THROWING BLADES. Hobgoblin packs a set of throwing knives carved in bat-wing shapes. Each razor-sharp blade does Good Damage on the Hack 'n Slash table. Hobgoblin throws 1-5 of these blades at a time, usually to prevent pursuit. Shift DOWN ONE to hit for every blade cast beyond the first. Hobgoblin carries 6-15 of these blades.

PUMPKIN BOMBS. Hobgoblin's explosive bombs are shaped charges having the form of jack-o'lanterns. He can throw them out to a range of 3 areas, and the bombs can have a timed-delay burst of up to two rounds. When exploded, the bombs cause 20 points of damage and force a victim to make an Endurance FEAT to avoid being knocked out by the concussion. Hobgoblin carries 1-10 of these devices.

WRAITH BOMBS. Hobgoblin's smoke and gas grenades have clear plastic cases resembling wraiths. Their usual effects are as per the smoke and gas grenades on page 17 of the Campaign Book, but both operate at Incredible potency. In addition, Hobgoblin has rediscovered Osborn's formula for a gas that weakens Spider-Man's Spider-sense if he is exposed to it (and fails to make a FEAT roll). He makes use of this chemical whenever he anticipates meeting his wall-crawling foe. This gas deprives Spider-Man of his Spider-sense and reduces his Intuition to Typical. Hobgoblin's satchel carries up to ten bombs, and any that are not explosive jack-o'lanterns will be wraith bombs.

Hobgoblin's story: The Hobgoblin's true identity has not been revealed, yet certain parts of his history are known. His story begins with that of his predecessor, the Green Goblin.

Norman Osborn was co-owner of a chemical company with subsidiaries involved in robotics and electronics. Osborn, ever greedy for more power, had his partner arrested for embezzling

and took control of the business. Among his former partner's notes, Osborn discovered a formula to increase the user's intelligence and strength. Osborn began to experiment with the formula but was caught in a chemical explosion. Exposure to the formula made Osborn stronger, but the chemical drove him insane as well. Taking the identity of the Green Goblin, Norman Osborn set about to slay Spider-Man and establish himself as a New York crime-lord.

His genius boosted by the formula, Osborn built most of the devices that the Hobgoblin would later use, though as the Green Goblin he was continually defeated by Spider-Man. On several occasions, Osborn was believed to have been cured of his madness, but he would soon have a relapse and adopt his criminal ways. During his final relapse, the Green Goblin killed Gwen Stacy, Peter Parker's girlfriend, and was killed himself by being impaled on his own jet glider.

Since Norman Osborn's demise, two others have taken up the identity of the Green Goblin. Norman's son Harry, under the influence of drugs, stole his father's old costume and sought revenge on Spider-Man for his father's death. Harry was defeated and placed under psychiatric treatment. Unfortunately, his psychiatrist, Dr. Barton Hamilton, took up the Goblin's persona. Hamilton was killed

in a bomb explosion, but Harry has since made a full recovery and is now president of Osborn Industries, Inc.

Neither Harry Osborn nor Dr. Hamilton found the large number of weapons caches and secret hideouts that the original Green Goblin maintained throughout the city, usually in secret rooms in Osborn Industries plants and warehouses. A bank robber named George Hill found one of these hideouts while fleeing from Spider-Man. Hill brought his discovery to the attention of another as yet unidentified man, who promptly killed Hill and used the recovered equipment and Osborn's notes to become the Hobgoblin.

At first, Hobgoblin had the technology of his namesake, but not the increased strength, endurance, or intelligence. He refined Osborn's formula and, after using a hireling as a guinea pig, placed himself under the drug's influence. He remained too long affected by the chemical, and this may have had a serious affect on his mental stability.

Hobgoblin is using all of Osborn's hidden lairs and diaries to firmly establish his power where the original Goblin failed. Hobgoblin, with the aid of a crime-lord named the Rose™, wishes to build a crime syndicate rivaling that of the Kingpin. Like the Goblin, Hobgoblin desires the death of Spider-Man, who has foiled several of his plots.

THE KINGPIN OF CRIME™ **Wilson Fisk, "Humble Dealer in Spices"**

Fighting: REMARKABLE (30)
Agility: GOOD (10)
Strength: EXCELLENT (20)
Endurance: INCREDIBLE (40)
Reason: GOOD (10)
Intuition: EXCELLENT (20)
Psyche: GOOD (10)

Health: 100
Karma: 40
Resources: INCREDIBLE
Popularity: 31

Powers:

BODY ARMOR. Through his fighting disciplines, Fisk has developed Poor Body Armor.

MARTIAL ARTS. Fisk is a master of judo and oriental boxing. He may Stun and Slam opponents of higher Endurance than his strength would normally allow.

WRESTLING. An experienced sumo

wrestler who works out daily, Kingpin receives an UP ONE shift to the right when Grappling.

WALKING STICK. Kingpin's walking stick conceals a three-shot, high-energy laser. This laser has a range of two areas and does Excellent Damage. The stick also carries two doses of Amazing-potency sleep gas that requires a yellow Endurance FEAT roll or else the victim falls asleep for 1-10 hours. The stick is made of Remarkable material.

STICKPIN. Kingpin also packs a dose of his sleep gas in his diamond stickpin. He may only use it in a slugfest against opponents who are in front of him.

THUGS. Kingpin rarely travels alone, and although his daily fighting regimen makes him the superior of most "bodyguards" in his employ, he maintains a small private army of goons to protect his headquarters and prevent unnecessary interruptions. Kingpin will always have 4-13 thugs no more than a door away to deal with intruders and test the mettle of his opponents.

The Kingpin's story: Wilson Fisk claims to make his living as a "humble dealer of spices," and is the wealthy owner of several companies. He is less publicly known as the Kingpin of Crime and is the leader of the largest non-Maggia criminal organization in America.

Little is known of Kingpin's background, save that he became interested in body-building early in his life. He now maintains a physical training schedule that makes him a superior fighter despite his apparent bulk. His other keen interest was political science, and he used these theories in forming his own criminal empire. He has been careful not to be directly involved with the criminal activities he promotes, so he has no criminal record.

At one time, Fisk was the leader,

through his son Richard, of the Las Vegas branch of HYDRA™ and planned to take control of America and the world through that group. However, the Kingpin turned against HYDRA upon learning that the Red Skull™ was the actual leader of the Las Vegas organization. He has since had nothing to do with HYDRA or its new incarnations.

Kingpin's one weak spot is his family. His son Richard took on the costumed identity of the Schemer™ in order to ruin his father. His wife Vanessa, a lovely lady of New York society who supported Fisk through years of power struggles, finally convinced the Kingpin to give up his criminal activities. Fisk retired to the Orient until Vanessa persuaded him to testify against his former criminal comrades. Upon his return to the states, one of Kingpin's old "soldiers" sought to

to remove Vanessa permanently, to force his former employer to regain his position in the underworld.

Vanessa disappeared in an explosion, but she was rescued from the New York sewers by the hero Daredevil™, her physical and mental health destroyed. Fisk, anguished first by the loss of his beloved Vanessa and later by her shattered state, has retaken control of his old organization and eliminated those who threaten his criminal empire.

Kingpin has battled both Spider-Man and Daredevil over the years, but he sometimes maintains a standing truce with them, providing aid to both when it is in his best interests to do so. (He rescued Spider-Man from Hobgoblin at one point because he was concerned about the latter's motives.) Fisk has hired super-powered agents as agents and bodyguards, and the respectable position of Kingpin's assassin has gone to the best in the field, including Bullseye™ and Electra™.

Kingpin controls a criminal empire made up of East Coast gangs that, while not in the Maggia's class, is more powerful than any single Maggia family in New York. His limitations are few in regards to morals. He only rarely deals in drugs, nor does he encourage his associates to do so. He is a man of his word and will honor it, letting foes go free when they have done him a great service. Finally, he is so fiercely devoted to his family, in particular to bed-ridden Vanessa, that he had one of his henchmen turn down the office of the Mayor of New York City in order to insure his wife's safe return.



KINGPIN™

SPIDER-MAN™'S SUIT **Alien symbiote**

Fighting: REMARKABLE (30)
Agility: AMAZING (50)
Strength: INCREDIBLE (40)
Endurance: INCREDIBLE (40)
Reason: GOOD (10)
Intuition: EXCELLENT (20)
Psyche: MONSTROUS (75)

Health: 160
Karma: 105
Resources: None
Popularity: Not applicable

Powers:

SYMBIOTIC NATURE. The Suit survives by feeding off a host creature's power. In its most recent incarnation, the Suit has acted as the costume of Peter

Parker, the Amazing Spider-Man™. This symbiosis has several effects:

- 1) The Suit may be commanded to change shape or color by its host to a variety of forms, and can create holding pouches or similar adornments.
- 2) The Suit, with long use, can duplicate the physical powers of its wearer. The above stats are duplicates of the physical abilities of its last host, Spider-Man.
- 3) The Suit can control its host, forcing him to conduct actions against his will. Its ability to control the bodies of others is at a Monstrous level, and it shifts DOWN ONE for each level of Psyche of its target. Unaware or sleeping targets are easier to control, such that the shift is only DOWN TWO at most.
- 4) The Suit feeds off energy from its host, leaving him weak and sluggish. The referee should secretly halve the Health rating of any hero under the influence of the Suit for as long as he wears it.
- 5) The Suit does not wish to be separated from its host and will, therefore, tighten over the host's body, crushing it in an unescapable grappling attack, if an attempt is made to remove it. In this case any damage taken from an outside attack is absorbed by the Suit first, then by the hero wearing it (see below).
- 6) Other than as noted above, the Suit

has no effect on the Body Armor of anyone wearing it. Its structure is such that it transmits the force of a physical blow to its host.

WEB SHOOTERS. In duplicating Spider-Man's original costume, the Suit also duplicated his web-shooters. The Suit can fire monstrously strong webbing up to 2 areas away and can use it for swing-lines, nets, and entrapment devices.

The Suit's story: The creature known as Spider-Man's Suit is a parasitic symbiote, a being that feeds off the mental and physical energy of its host. It was a native of a world used by the Beyonder™ to construct his battleplanet in the Secret Wars™. The creature took refuge in the complex commandeered by Doctor Doom™ and his bench-villains.

Spider-Man found the creature's lair while trying to locate a machine to repair his own badly-damaged costume. Using a likely looking device, Spider-Man "summoned" the Suit from its hiding space. The Suit spread over Spider-Man's body, subtly contacting his mind and reading his thoughts, and became Spider-Man's new costume.

Returning to Earth with Spider-Man [*the Invasion of the Body Stocking?* -Texan

Ed], the Suit quickly began to feed off its host's energy. It took command of Parker's sleeping body during the night, forcing him to sleep-walk (or, more correctly, sleep-websling) through the city in order to get its sustenance. Peter Parker got no real rest, and a general deterioration of Spidey's Health set in.

After several weeks of increasingly strange problems and effects, Spider-Man contacted Reed Richards of the Fantastic Four™ to analyse the Suit. Richards discovered the organic and symbiotic nature of the Suit, but the Suit itself resisted any attempt to be removed from its host. Richards finally separated the Suit from Parker by subjecting it to ultra-sonic waves. The Suit was then placed in a glassed-in environment for study.

The Suit displayed its animal craftiness in its many attempts to escape, but it was finally released by a exploration probe under the control of an unseen foe of the Fantastic Four. The Suit escaped into New York City, and, after possessing a number of bodies, sought out its former host once again.

In the battle with Spider-Man that followed, the Suit was apparently destroyed. It should be noted, however, that no trace of the alien symbiote was found after the final battle.

A

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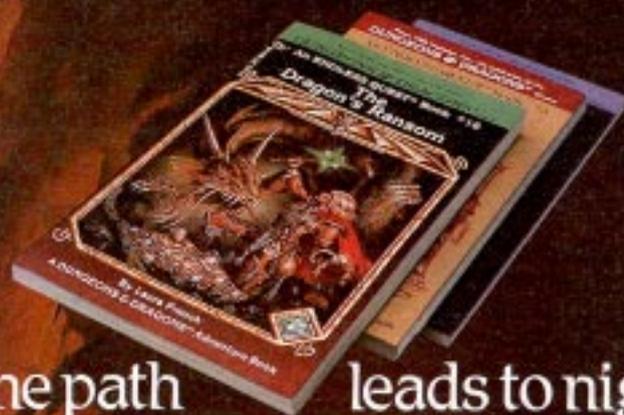
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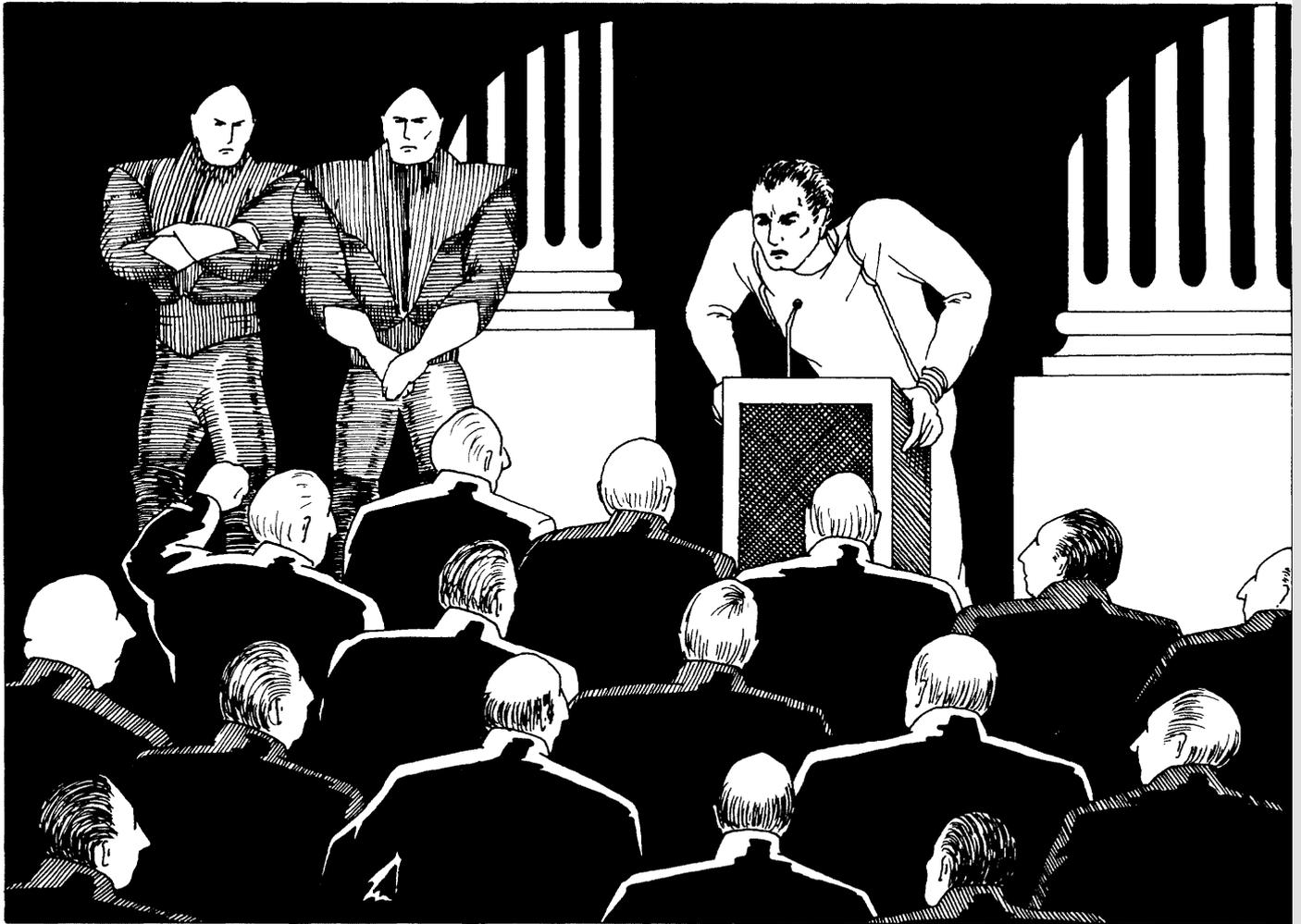
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From Anarchy to Empire

Interstellar governments in the STAR FRONTIERS[®] game

by David Cook

[Editor's note: David "Zeb" Cook was one of the original designers of the STAR FRONTIERS[®] game system. This article is "official" STAR FRONTIERS game material, though its principles may be applied to many science-fiction games.]

What lies beyond the Frontier? Eventually, the characters in a STAR FRONTIERS game campaign will start probing the reaches beyond the known star systems, and the referee should keep up with them by designing new sectors of space for the group to explore.

When preparing a new sector map, the referee should think about the governments that will control the planets in the sector. How many governments will

there be, and what will they be like? How will the different governments get along? These are just a few of the concerns that a referee must consider when devising interstellar governments.

Interstellar governments

Interstellar governments ruling planets in several different systems (as the UPF does) may or may not exist in a sector, as the referee desires. Some basic types of interstellar governments that may be used in the referee's sector are described briefly, with notes on how they work and what their aims or goals might be.

Trade federation: Under this govern-

ment, each member planet rules itself and has its own laws, but all the planets will have signed a trade agreement. This agreement promises free trade between all the member planets and also serves as a mutual peace treaty. The different planets will try not to interfere with each other's business. If one planet is attacked, the other planets will join with it to fight the enemy.

Trade federations are delicate and easily upset, since each member is in the federation for a profit. If a planet or a group of planets decides it can do better on its own or with another group, it may pull out of the federation. An example of a trade federation today is the European Common Market.

Galactic empire: All of the member planets are controlled by one government, usually based on one planet which is considered the heart of the empire. All other planets may be treated as colonies, provinces, or states of the empire. Because an empire tries to control everything from one place, it is often corrupt or loaded with layers of bureaucracy.

An empire stays in power by keeping its subjects (the people) happy and by the liberal use of military force. Since empires have a way of getting in trouble if they stand still, they are often trying to expand their frontiers by colonization or by military control. The ancient Roman Empire is an example after which interstellar empires may be modelled.

Political federation: Each member planet rules itself; however, all planets belong to one loose governmental body, and all must follow certain standards of conduct. The United States of America and the UPF are political federations.

More possibilities exist, of course. The referee should feel free to create any other interstellar government he wants.

Planetary governments

When designing a planet, the referee needs to think about the government controlling the world. Even though the planet may be part of an interstellar union, it may have its own laws and elected officials. Many sorts of governments operate among human worlds, and alien races may have governments that humans have never been able to make work. Some of the possible planetary governments are given below.

Anarchy: No organized government at all. Some Dralasite worlds do very well with this type (or lack) of government.

Company-owned world: A planet controlled by a company or corporation and run for profit. This system is common on Vrusk worlds.

Confederacy: A number of smaller areas banded together under one loose planetary government. Yazirian clans often form confederations.

Democracy/república: A government run by elected representatives. Humans and Dralasites favor this option.

Dictatorship: Absolute rule by one leader. Humans sometimes have this government.

Monarchy: Rule by a king or queen, usually of one family. Only Humans use this type of government.

Plutocracy: A government run by those with the most wealth — another popular government used by the Vrusk.

Socialist state: The state owns and controls most activities for the equal good of all people. Such states are often used by Humans and Dralasites.

Stratocracy: Rule by a nation's military leaders. Yazirians will often form this type of government, using the military leaders from each clan.

Syndicracy: Rule by an organization of the most powerful corporations on the planet. Vrusk favor these governments.

Theocracy: Government by religious leaders, sometimes seen among Humans and Yazirians.

An empire stays in power by keeping its subjects happy and by the liberal use of military force.

Many variations and combinations of these basic governmental structures are possible. A little research into Human history will turn up many more ways to rule a planet (or portion thereof).

Human and alien societies

A society is the way a group of people lives together — how members deal with each other, what they believe in, what they consider important, and how they work. Societies do not have specific natural laws to follow and seldom have written laws or regulations. People in a society generally know what is correct or incorrect; they learn this by experience as they grow up. This section gives general guidelines and suggestions on how to create interesting societies in a STAR FRONTIERS game.

To gain specific ideas on creating planetary societies, the game referee should check out some books on Earth-Human history and present societies. Human civilization is filled with examples of many different societies and cultures that may provide ideas for gaming.

Societies are formed from several different forces — the planet's races, governments, current laws, religions, climate, landforms, history, etc. To ask a referee to think out all these areas is far too time consuming. Instead, the referee should work with what he already knows about the planet.

The race of the inhabitants affects the society with its particular needs, likes, and dislikes; these, then, play a part in any planetary society of that race. If the referee creates a new race, he should write down what that race considers important and consider how that affects the culture.

The physical conditions on a planet affect how people live and what they consider important for their survival. If a planet has very little water, water becomes very important. People who waste water would be "bad," and bathing would be a luxury saved for special events. Swimming and boating might be terrifying for the average dry-lander. If a planet has a great deal of water, people who couldn't swim might become social misfits. The referee should think about the planetary conditions that might affect the society.

The government of a planet also affects the society's customs. A planetary dictatorship is rarely likely to tolerate free speech; people of such a planet may be unwilling to speak their minds. Under an anarchy, those citizens supporting an organized government may be considered dangerous or "strange." Atheists in a theocracy are bound to have difficulties with the focal government. The laws of the planet also make a difference. A theocracy has more laws dealing with religious crimes, while a dictatorship has laws to control free speech, and a plutocracy has laws to protect the very rich.

When creating a society for a STAR FRONTIERS planet, it helps to start by listing a few notable customs of the planet's citizens. These customs should be interesting and obvious to the player characters. The Dralasites of Inner Reach in the Frontier Sector dye their skin every day, for example. As the characters become more involved in the life on the planet, they will probably want to know why the Dralasites do this. By having the players ask such questions (and by giving them answers), the referee will slowly build a description of the society on the planet.

The referee should remember that it is not necessary to have every detail of a society worked out in advance. Significant customs and laws should be prepared, but playing the game and having the player characters get involved with life on the planet often helps the referee focus on the social elements he needs to evolve. The referee should make each planet distinctive and unique whenever possible, to enhance the enjoyment gained in playing the game.



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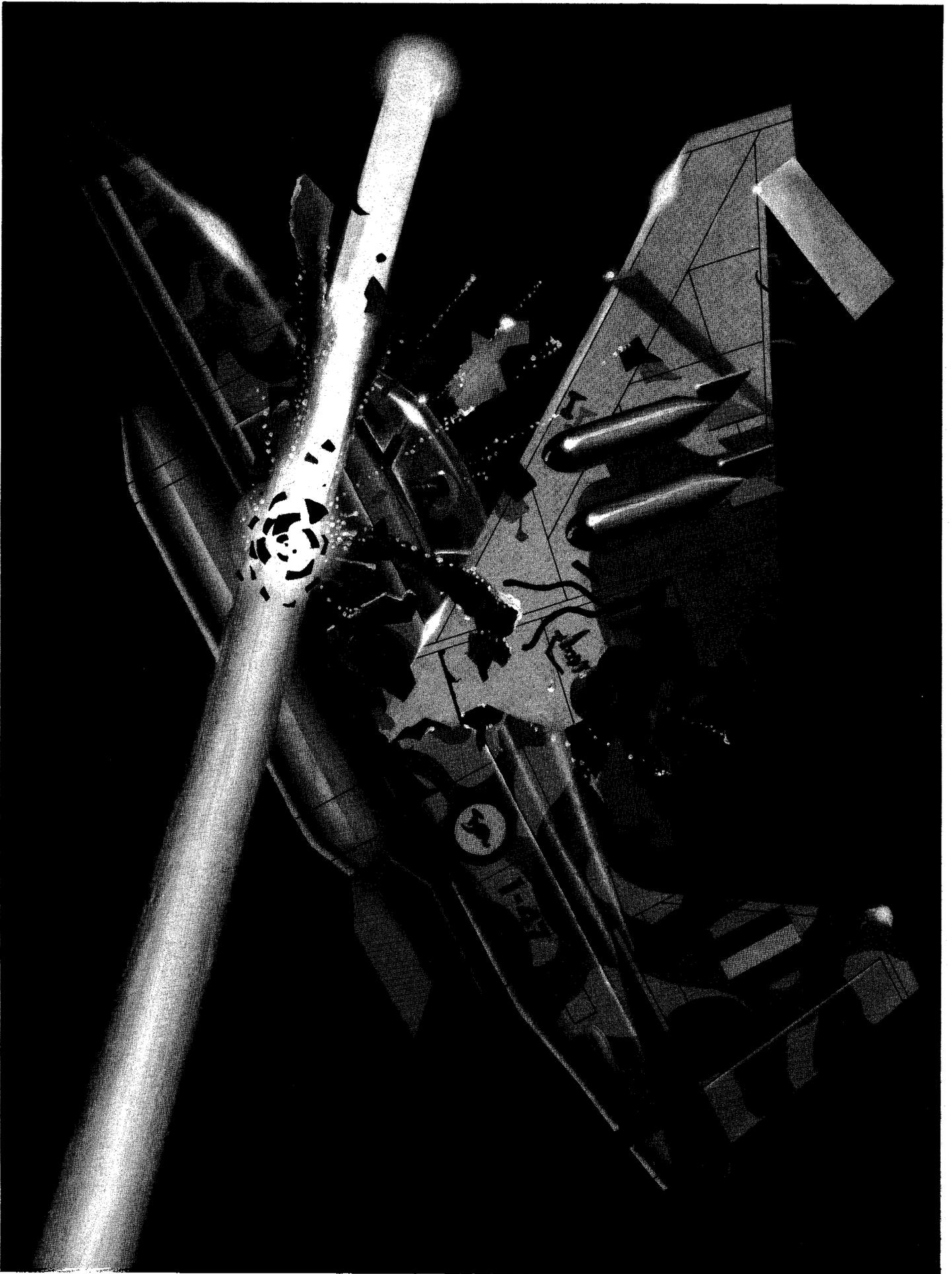
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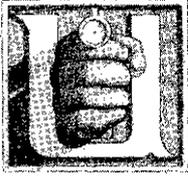
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UNCLE NIRED'S VOICE CAME

close to sputtering as he stood in the driveway berating his nephew.

"I haf better things to do than with my dumb brother's dumber son waste time. Already I lose half day to drive down here from Connecticut.

Then I stand here thinking no one home for five minutes before you show up to tell me doorbell broken. I already know that because push button is gone!"

"Relax, Uncle Nired," Henry said with a smile, knowing his uncle to be much more tolerant toward his only nephew than his present manner might indicate. "Here is the answer to the doubling of your gun factory's business." He extended the hand weapon he held, offering it to his uncle for inspection.

Uncle Nired shrugged, causing a tidal-wave effect to ripple across the plump belly of his obviously tailored three-piece suit. He slammed the door of his huge black Mercedes, brushed one ring-bedecked hand over his full white mustachios, and glared at Henry.

"Hah! With this president we got not increasing defense spending like there's no tomorrow, I should worry about more business? Three shifts I work already," Uncle Nired protested but eagerly took hold of his nephew's new invention. His eyes glinted with intelligent interest.

"Bullets you don't put in, hah?"

"Exactly right, Uncle Nired. A completely new concept in a personal weapon. See, the money you loaned Father for sending me to MIT is paying off."

"Umpf," Uncle Nired grunted while closely looking over the weapon. "Money I haf not yet seen again and money you wasted reading the science-fiction books instead of the engineering books studying. I've spoken to your professors. Bright you are, they say, but unlikely to finish the course. You win awards but not the old sheepskin, eh?"

"That doesn't matter now," Henry said confidently.

"This little beauty is gonna make us millionaires. The military, local law enforcement, foreign governments, all kinds of people will be breaking our doors down to buy the gun of the future from us."

"Hah!" replied Uncle Nired. "Already I am the millionaire several times over and the doors to be broken down already belong to me." He paused momentarily, hefted the weapon thoughtfully in his hand, and shrugged. "But . . . The cost of business, keeps going up — and doors can be replaced. . . . How does this thing work? Some kinda laser, hah?"

A pained look crossed Henry's face. "No, no. Lasers are for kids. This is a truly powerful device. Come out back and I'll demonstrate."

They went through the neatly kept little house and out the back door, while Uncle Nired continued to study the weapon he carried. It was not much to see, he quickly decided. The gun was just a thin metal tube with a barely discernible pinhole on the firing end; the tube was mounted on a thick power pack that served as the pistol grip. It was heavy, maybe five pounds, very hefty for a hand weapon. The workmanship was very amateurish but then, Uncle Nired chided himself, the boy was better with brains than hands. And the trigger looked like the

The Gun That Shot Too Straight

by Ralph Roberts

Illustrations by Peter Berryman

push button from a . . . Uncle Nired nodded sagely, remembering the broken doorbell.

"Over here, Uncle Nired," Henry said and stopped in the center of the small back yard.

Uncle Nired looked first at the board fence only ten feet away, and then to his nephew. "Not the greatest or most safe firing range you have here, Henry." He sighed in resignation, knowing from prior visits that the area behind his brother's house was uninhabited. "Tell me how to shoot this thing."

"Simple," Henry said. "You aim and press the button. I tested it this morning just before calling you." A slightly perplexed expression crossed Henry's face. "Maybe I better show you something first."

Henry motioned his uncle over to the yard's lone tree, a diseased-looking elm. He tapped a paper target hanging on the tree, in a spot where many other targets had been nailed. "See where I test-fired?"

Uncle Nired nodded, meanwhile wondering if the tree looked sickly because it had lead poisoning. His nephew had given this tree a hard time over the years.

"So? You hit it three times. Lousy shot group. You were maybe at arm's length?"

Henry ignored his uncle's condemnation of his marksmanship and reflectively stroked his not-clean-shaven face.

"You can only do so much design work on paper or with computer simulations," he said. "Sometimes the results are greater than you predict."

"I see," said Uncle Nired, whom no one had ever accused of being slow on the uptake. He gazed at the weapon, then strolled behind the tree.

"Low," Henry told him. "I purposely angled it down just in case."

"Hah! It shoots all the way through a three-foot tree!" said Uncle Nired, a hint of excitement creeping into his voice as he examined the three clean exit holes.

"I checked with Dad's calipers. Slightly larger going out. And check the ground."

"Umpf," grunted Uncle Nired, bending over with no small difficulty and looking at the three small holes in the ground. "And how deep are these?"

Henry shrugged and gestured at a three-foot wire rod leaning against the back fence. "More than three feet."

"They look deeper, eh?" commented Uncle Nired, squinting as he tried to look down the small holes. "We have to check these out later."

Straightening and walking back to the front of the tree, Uncle Nired nodded to himself.

"Uh hah. Through a three-foot tree and to unknown depth in ground. Not bad this is." He felt mounting excitement.

But there was still a trace of worry on his nephew's face.

"The holes in the ground," he said, "were just slightly larger than the exit holes from the tree."

"How can you accurately measure the crumbling sides of a hole in the dirt?" questioned Uncle Nired. "Let me try three shots also into the target."

"Yeah," Henry replied, still thinking. "Just point and press the button."

"No safety, hah! You want I should shoot my foot off,

maybe?"

"Sorry, shoulda mentioned that. It's just a prototype; we'll refine it later."

Uncle Nired grunted irritably but angled the gun at the tree-mounted target and gingerly pressed the ex-doorbell button. A tiny but searingly bright ball of light flashed from the muzzle end of the gun to the target, making a small, neat hole next to the others.

"You got two more shots, Uncle, then we need a new power pack."

Uncle Nired shrugged and quickly fired twice more into the tree, this time shielding his eyes from the glare with his other hand. "About the light also I shoulda been warned."

Henry ignored this. "Great, isn't it? I'll help you refine the gun by getting the bugs out, and we can go into production as soon as you can get the plant retooled."

"Not so fast," Uncle Nired said, walking around the tree again and gazing thoughtfully at the six little holes in the ground, three of them still sprouting thin tendrils of wispy smoke. "Let us go inside and chew the fat about this thing of yours. All I know is the holes it makes in the dirt. I'm just an old ignorant gunsmith; the new stuff leaves me in the dark."

"Don't play games with me, Uncle. You have more mechanical engineering degrees than hairs on your head."

Uncle Nired ran a gnarled hand through his thin-on-top white hair. "Maybe a few degrees from the top I am losing, hah?"

"Come inside," Henry said to quickly change the subject. "I'll pour us a splash of brandy and we'll firm up our plans."

"And does your father know how liberal you are with his good brandy?"

"Do you want some or not, Uncle?" Henry asked as they re-entered the living room.

"Be generous," replied Uncle Nired as he sank into the best easy chair. He still was cradling Henry's invention. Again he examined it as Henry poured the brandy into snifters. "No laser, hah?"

Henry handed Uncle Nired his drink. "No, nothing at all like lasers, Buck-Roger rayguns, or any of that ilk. I call it a disrupter-ball generator. The small fireball you saw projected from the weapon is an energy reaction of a rather unusual type. Anything hit by this energy is molecularly disrupted; a hole the size of the diameter of the energy ball gets punched through it."

"Disrupted?" asked Uncle Nired, looking up at Henry.

"Well," Henry said. "It's the closest term I can think of to describe my theory of just how the gun works." He sipped at his brandy as if gathering his thoughts, then continued.

"You see, the gun generates a small but intense field from its firing end that actually breaks down the molecular bonds of whatever substances are there. Free oxygen in our atmosphere, for example, is bonded into a two-atom molecule."

"A chemist, I do not want to be. Get on with it."

"Anyway, the breaking down of these molecules releases an energy which is used like a shaped charge in explosives to affect the adjacent area along the target path. And the

energy from that area disrupts the next one and so on." Henry waved his now empty brandy glass to emphasize his point. "Through air, wood, and dirt!"

Uncle Nired nodded, gazing with some awe at the weapon.

"And how many different materials will this affect? Like plate steel, maybe?"

"Maybe," replied Henry. "I need a lot more computer time to calculate all the different materials the field will disrupt."

Henry put down his glass and grabbed a sheet of paper. "The mathematics of it is rather elegant," he said. He yanked the gnawed stub of a pencil from his pocket and covered the page with esoteric symbols accompanied by obtuse explanations.

Uncle Nired listened with eroding patience for a few minutes.

"Is good, Henry," he said finally, breaking off his nephew's excited flow of jargon. "But tell me, what is the range? What is the muzzle velocity? How far before this energy reaction dies out? These things we must know to further test and evaluate this weapon."

"I don't know, Uncle Nired," Henry answered with a sheepish grin on his face. "My theory's not that exact yet. It's only been fired these six times. My three this morning and yours."

With a disgruntled grunt, Uncle Nired glanced at his watch and took a sip of his drink. "On this I must think. Meanwhile, turn on the television so that we may see the evening news. I must hear if the new defense appropriations passed Congress."

He settled back into his chair and continued to idly examine Henry's prototype disrupter gun and drink his brandy. The sound came up on the TV.

"... in the South Pacific today, a Royal Australian Air Force jet was downed by a yet unexplained fireball rising directly out of the Pacific ..."

"What!" Henry exclaimed.

"Be silent!" Uncle Nired roared.

"... parachuted to safety. Captain Smythe reported that the mysterious fireball was the size of a large beach ball and completely sheared off one wing of his Hawker Boomerang as he flared out of a dive. He immediately ejected and ..."

"Oh, migawd. What have I done?" Henry said and put his head into his hands.

"Ssssh!" hissed Uncle Nired, leaning forward and watching the TV screen intently.

"... the second fireball was reported three hundred miles southeast by an American naval vessel; the third, some fifty miles west, was seen by the crew of an Air France jumbo jet. No other damage by or occurrence of these weird phenomena has so far ..."

"Hmmm," Uncle Nired said. "Not a bad shot group for that far away." He turned to a stricken Henry. "What time did you test-fire this morning?"

"About eight-thirty," Henry said, removing his head from his hands. He looked extremely miserable and frightened.

"Umpf, ten hours. Now we know how to calculate the muzzle velocity of your weapon. In ten hours, hoo boy,

another surprise they got coming!"

"Huh?"

"Not important, Henry. I don't think we'll shoot this gun again just now."

"All the way through and out the other side," Henry muttered. "Oh, migawd."

"Pull yourself together, my boy. To Hartford and the plant we must go."

Henry looked incredulously at his uncle. "Uncle Nired, we can't build this weapon now. It's far too powerful."

"You're not just the Dixie whistling," Uncle Nired said. "A gun that shoots through planets is of no use to anyone; the order of magnitude is too great. But" — Uncle Nired waved the gun and his eyes seemed to gleam — "the principle can be greatly toned down and used. And as a gun, I do not mean. A self-sustaining energy reaction powerful enough to travel through thousands of miles of rock and pressure has many uses. We shall hire great physicists to find these uses. Come!"

They went out to Uncle Nired's Mercedes, but he paused by the door and looked up into the starry night-time sky.

"What is it, Uncle Nired?"

"I was wondering, if the energy balls continue traveling, how big will they get and what will they hit?"

"I don't know."

Uncle Nired shook his head as they got into the car. "Also, who the shooting back will do?"



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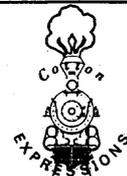
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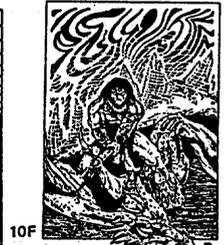
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(From page 2)

material on one of those "other" games. And since we don't use very many "other" articles, we're even pickier than usual about what we'll accept. Considering both of those facts, I can't blame anyone for thinking it's no use to send that kind of stuff to us. The odds are awful high against you (unless your name happens to be Greg Stafford or somesuch), but it ain't impossible. And that, in a nutshell, is what I told Greg.

"A few times, we've addressed this subject in print when someone writes in to ask why we don't cover this game or that game," I said to him. "But I guess it's been a while since we covered it. One of these days I'll have to figure out a way to sneak in some mention of it."

"Good idea," he said. "It might help."

I hope so, Greg. And thanks for calling.

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The World Gamers Guide

We're proud of the fact that many of the people who read DRAGON® Magazine live in countries around the world. But we know, from letters we receive from some of them, that a lot of our readers in foreign countries are frustrated because few, if any, other players live close enough to them to meet them.

Our solution is the DRAGON Magazine World Gamers Guide, a feature that makes its first appearance in this space. Below are listed the names and addresses we've received since we announced several issues ago that this service would begin. Here's how the system works:

If you live outside the continental United States and Canada, you are eligible to have your name and address printed in the guide, free of charge. Put your name and full address on a postcard or in a short letter and send it to World Gamers Guide, c/o DRAGON Magazine, P.O. Box 110, Lake Geneva WI 53147, USA.

Your address must be complete (including the country you live in) and legible; we won't publish something we can't decipher. (And we can't be responsible for a mistake or inaccuracy in someone's address — unbeknownst to us — that prevents a letter from reaching its destination.) As you'll

notice, the addresses do not appear in any particular order. For the sake of simplicity and to save a little space, we will not list multiple names for a single address; only one name (the first one mentioned) will accompany any address. If you want to, you can also list up to three role-playing games that you enjoy, so that anyone who writes to you will know something about what you like. We will publish each name and address for three consecutive issues; if you want to be listed for more than three issues, you'll have to send us another postcard when your first listing expires.

Sorry, but we can't extend this offer to U.S. servicemen who live overseas, or to people who live in sparsely populated areas of the United States or Canada, because there are still more gamers per square mile in places like Utah or Alberta than there are in countries like Japan and India. We can only afford to use a limited amount of space for the World Gamers Guide, and we would run into a severe problem if we tried to expand it any further.

Gaming preferences are abbreviated as follows: AD = AD&D® game; DD = D&D® game; SF = STAR FRONTIERS® game; MSH = MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game; GW = GAMMA WORLD® game;

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And now, without further ado, the first World Gamers Guide:

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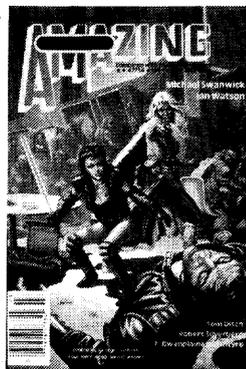
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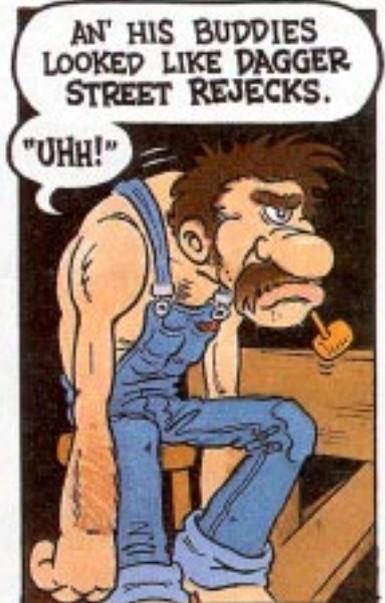
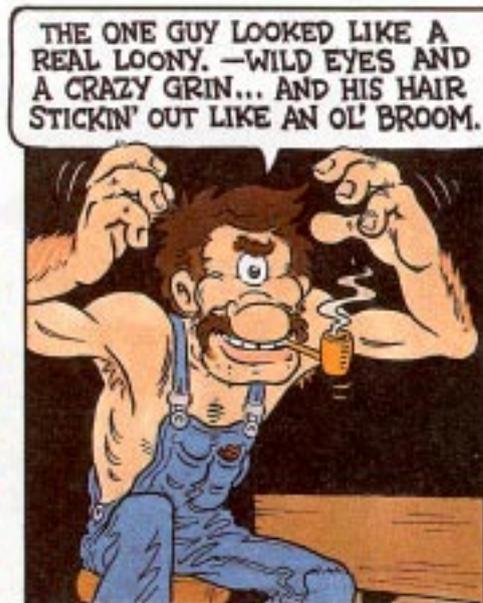
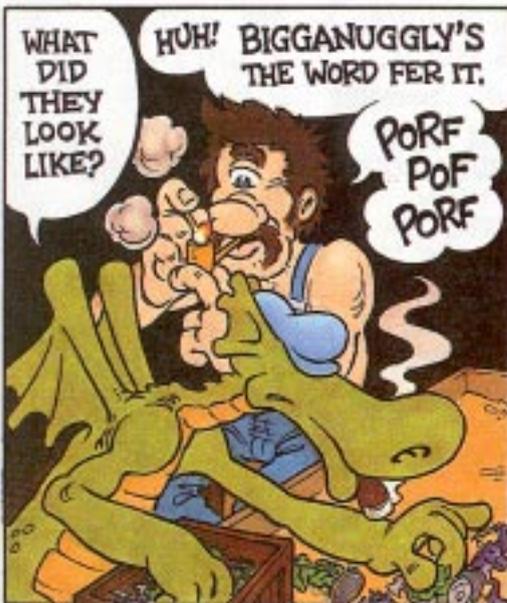
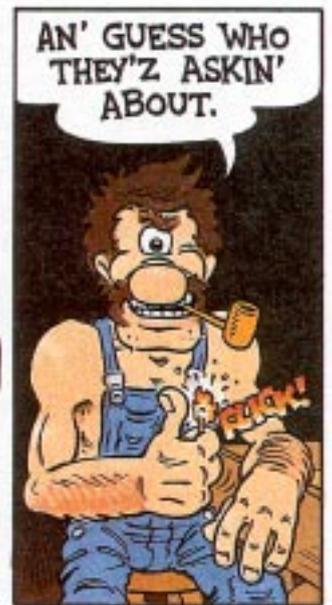
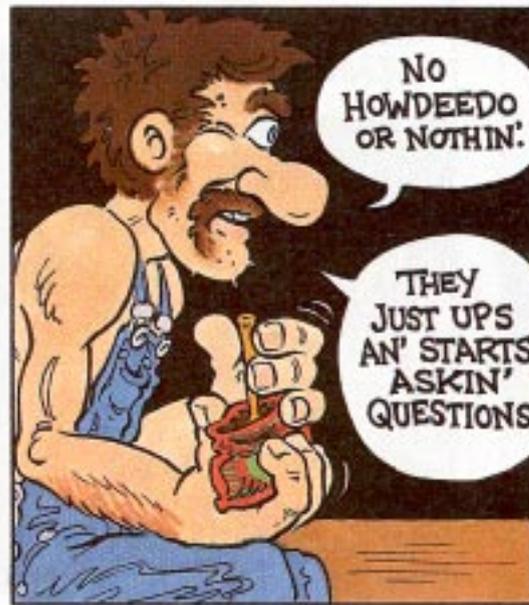
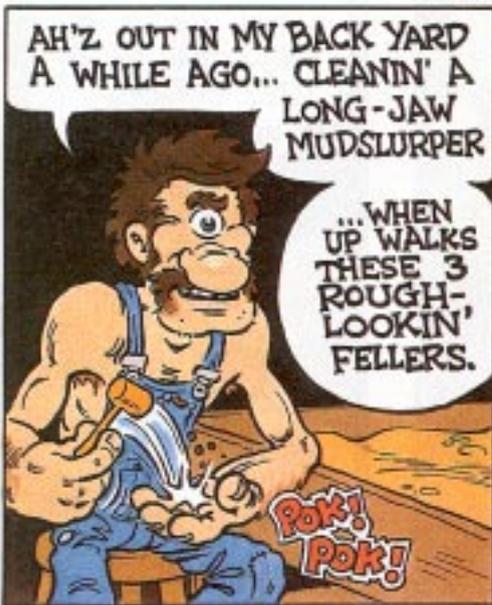
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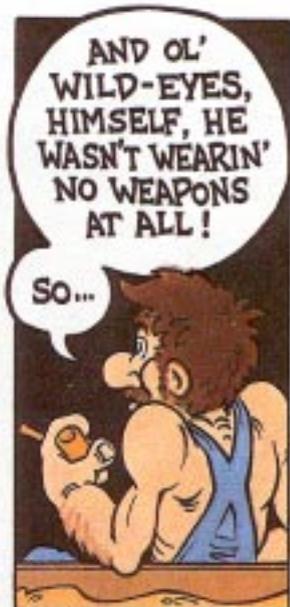
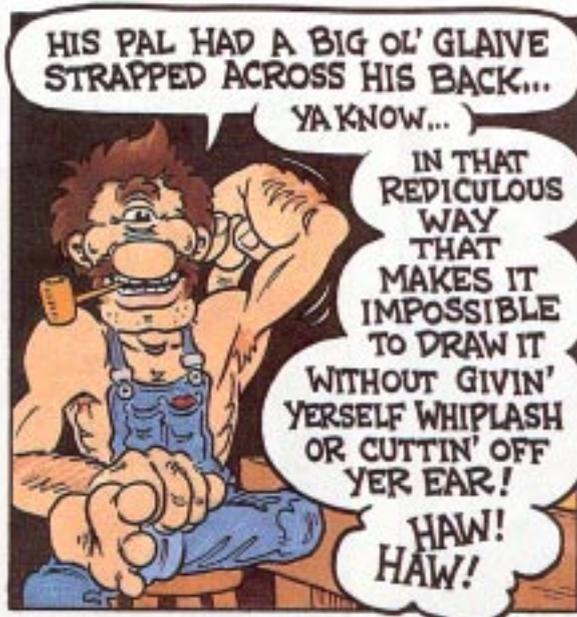
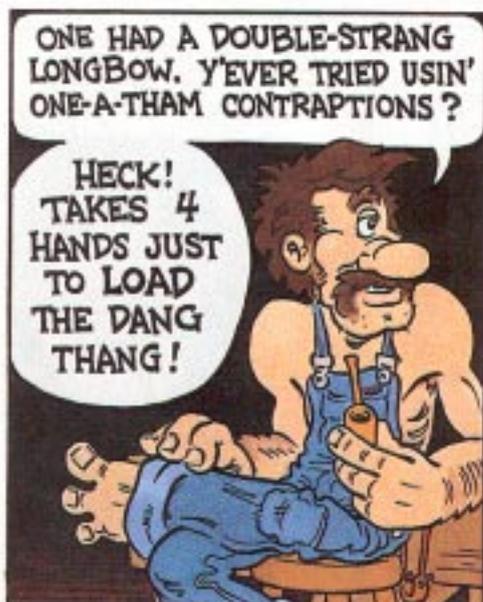
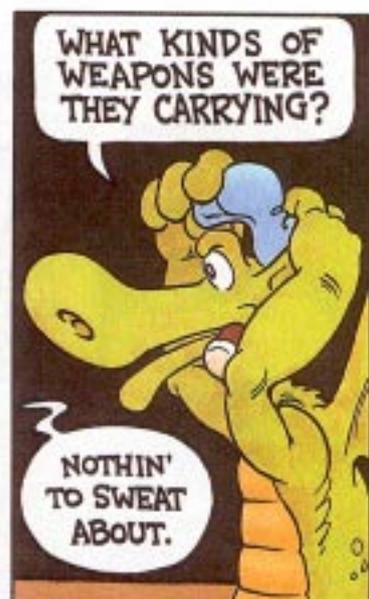
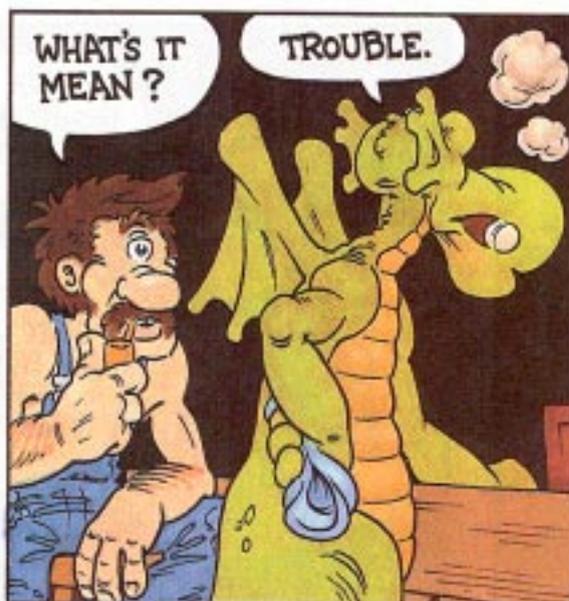
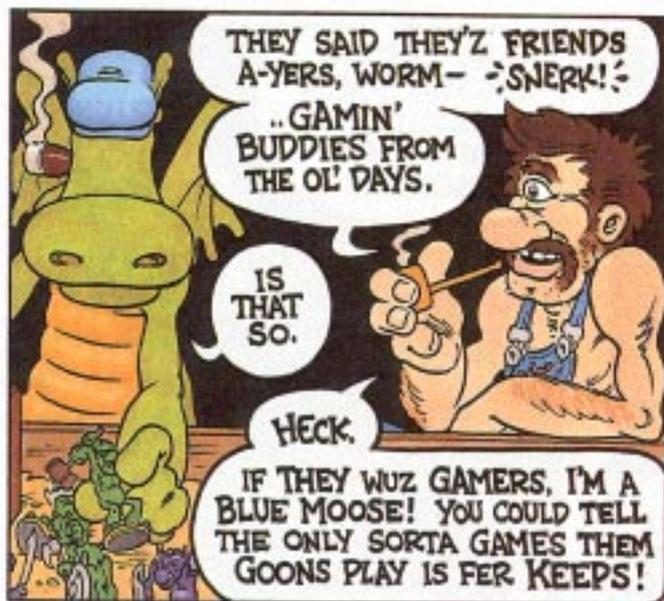
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- ★ an archaeologist attempts a mental link-up with an ancient Celtic seer,
- ★ a boy's perfect day is haunted by a sinister stranger,
- ★ exotic food commercials plague the dreams of British citizens,
- ★ the residents of Cranberry Road discover that they cannot leave their neighborhood,
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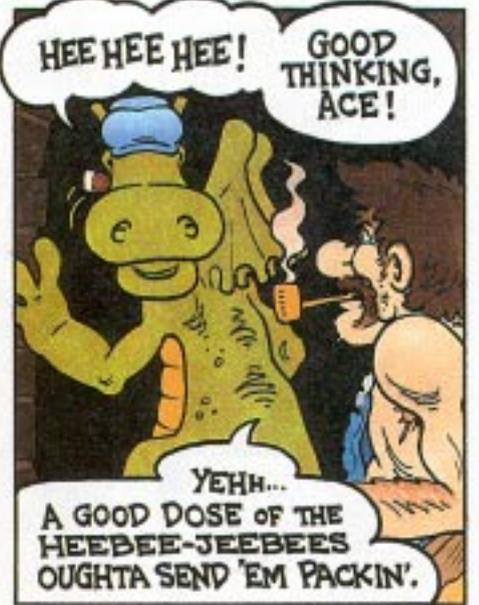
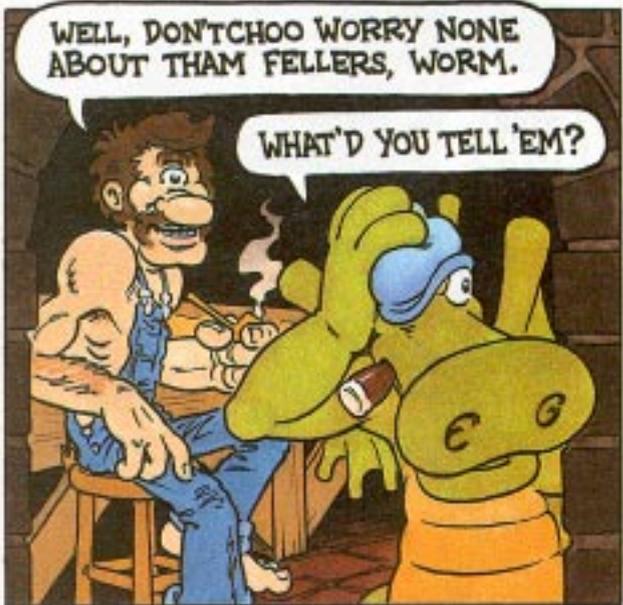
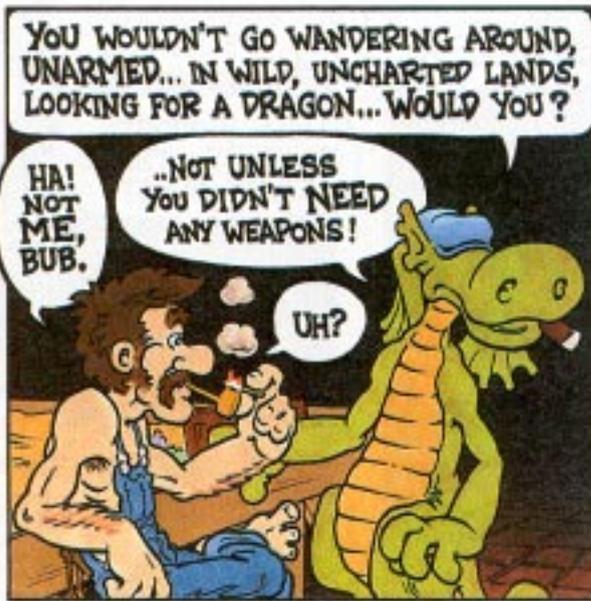
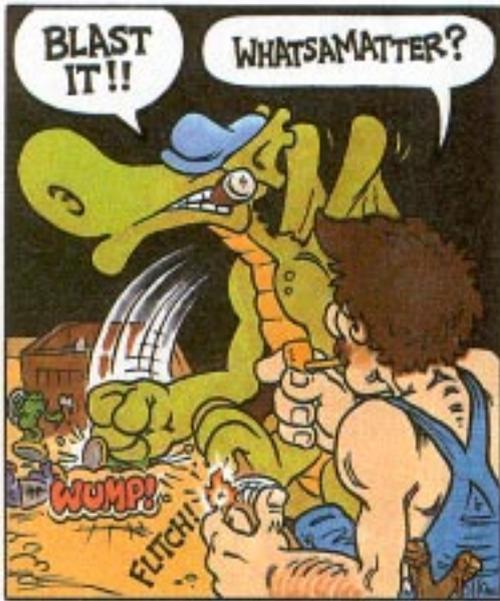


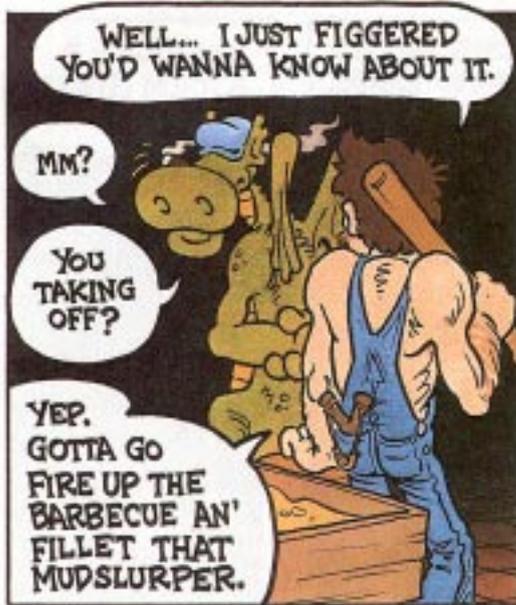
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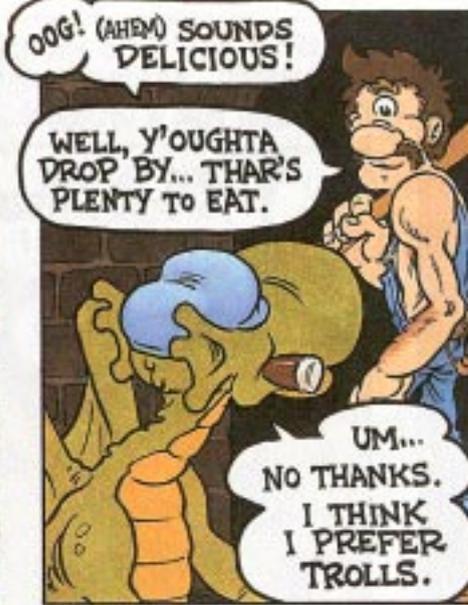


WELL... I JUST FIGGERED YOU'D WANNA KNOW ABOUT IT.

MM?

YOU TAKING OFF?

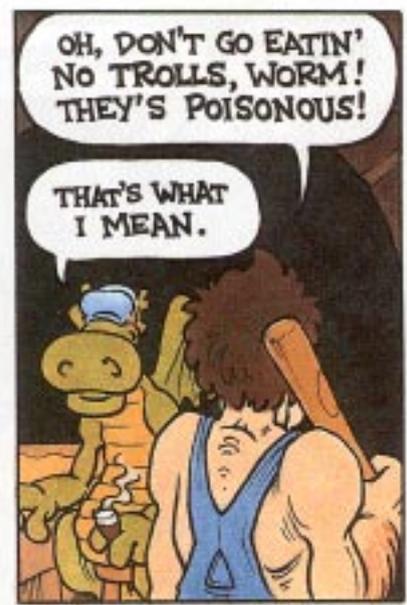
YEP. GOTTA GO FIRE UP THE BARBECUE AN' FILLET THAT MUDSLURPER.



OOG! (AHEM) SOUNDS DELICIOUS!

WELL, Y'UGHTA DROP BY... THAR'S PLENTY TO EAT.

UM... NO THANKS. I THINK I PREFER TROLLS.



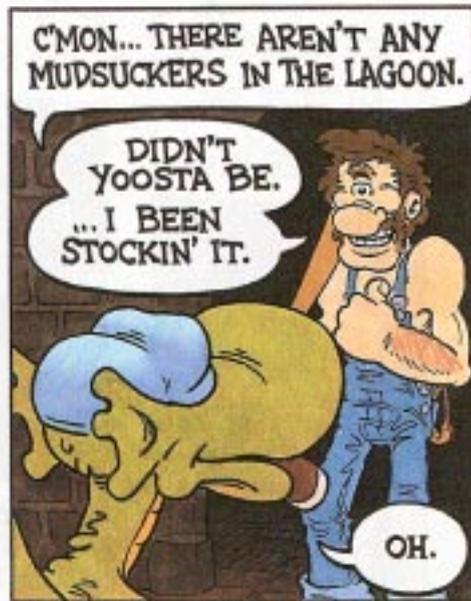
OH, DON'T GO EATIN' NO TROLLS, WORM! THEY'S POISONOUS!

THAT'S WHAT I MEAN.



SAY... WHERE IN BLAZES DID YOU CATCH A LONG-JAWED MUDSUCKER?

OUT OF THE LAGOON.



C'MON... THERE AREN'T ANY MUDSUCKERS IN THE LAGOON.

DIDN'T YOOSTA BE. ...I BEEN STOCKIN' IT.

OH.



WHAT THE HAIL?

KABOOM!
CRACK!
RUMBLE!!!

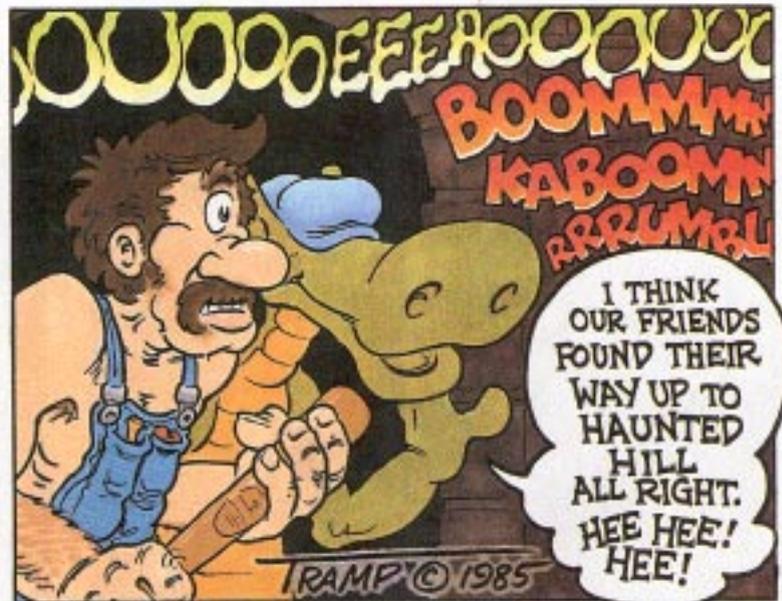


OH LARDY!

IT'S THAT CRITTER AGAIN!

THAT BIG, BLUE CAT THANG!

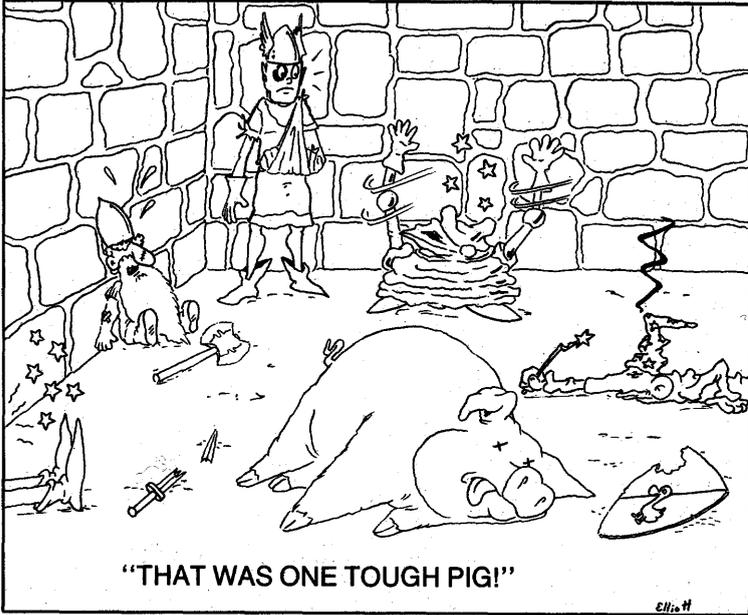
SHH! No it's NOT. LISTEN!



I THINK OUR FRIENDS FOUND THEIR WAY UP TO HAUNTED HILL ALL RIGHT. HEE HEE! HEE!

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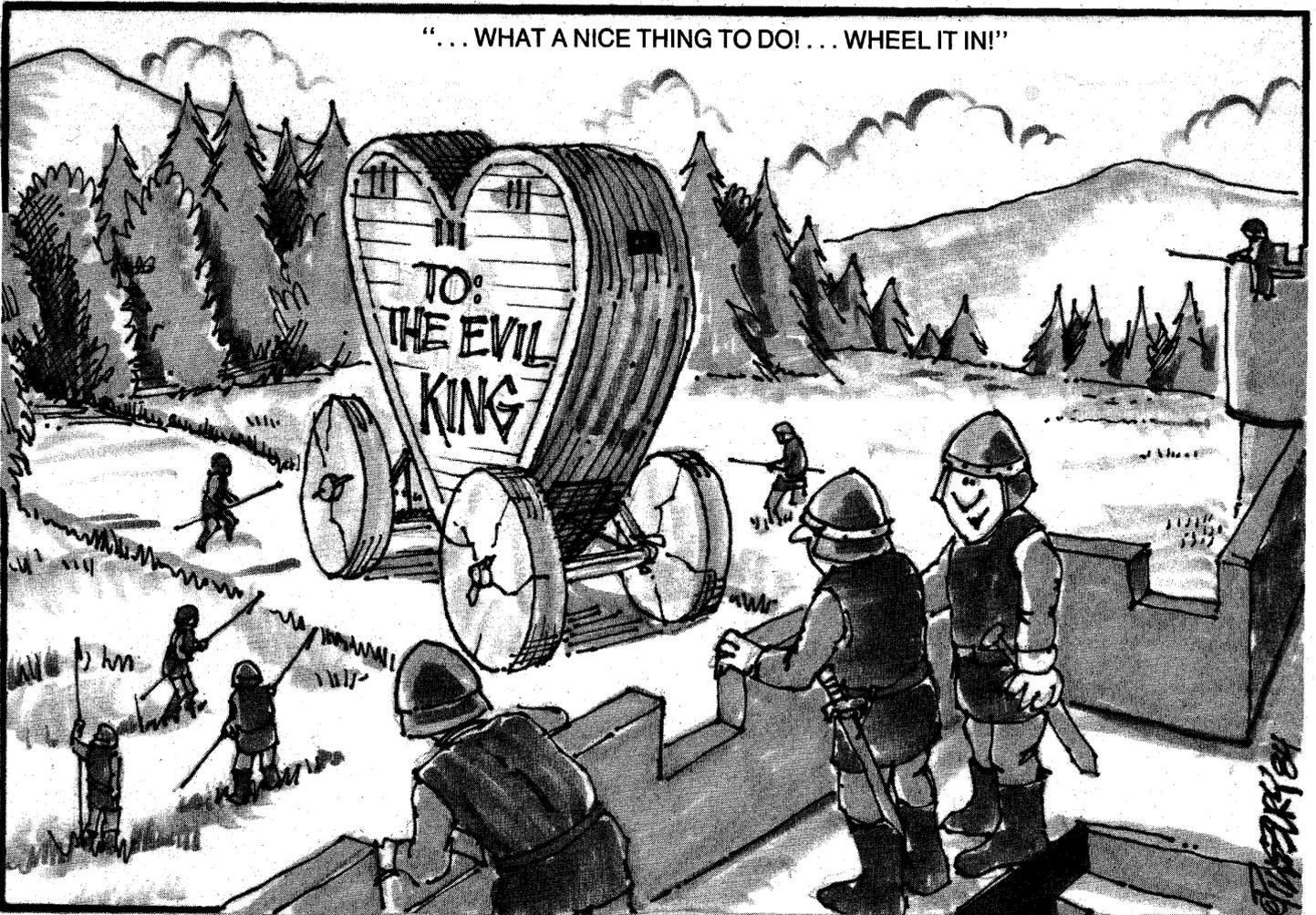
Dragonmirth



"THAT WAS ONE TOUGH PIG!"



"WHEN I SAID BREATH WEAPON, I MEANT FIRE, STUPID!"



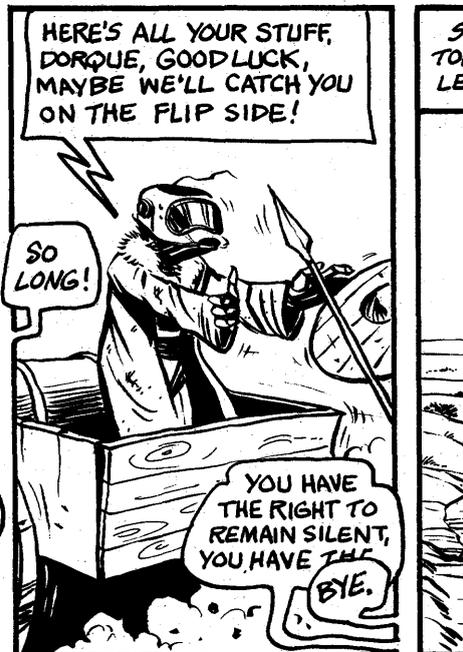
"... WHAT A NICE THING TO DO! ... WHEEL IT IN!"

SNARF QUEST

19

BY ELMORE

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LATER THAT EVENING

YAKNOW, AVEEARE, ONCE DIS OL' GAGGEL ZOOMER GETS LEVELED OUT, HE CAN REALLY EAT UP DA ROAD.



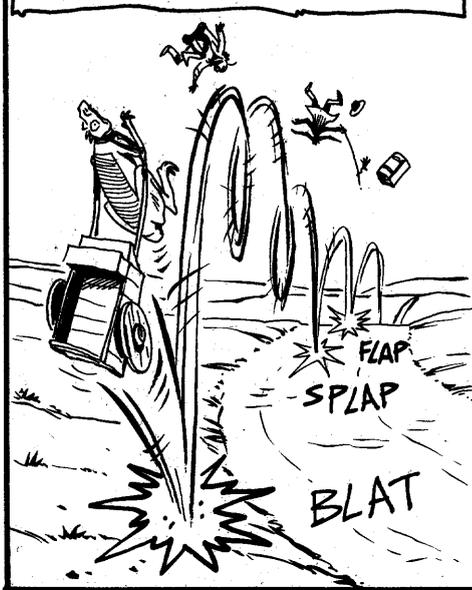
RIGHT, WE HAVE BEEN GOING ABOUT 60 MILES PER HOUR FOR SOME TIME NOW.

HEY, I BOUGHT SOME MAPS BACK IN KEYNOVIA, MAYBE WE SHOULD STOP AN' SET UP CAMP FOR DA NIGHT AN' CHECK OUT DA MAPS... I IS LOST, AVEEARE.



YES, WE HAVE ALREADY TRAVELED AROUND 100 MILES AND SPLIT 2 SMALL VILLAGES WIDE OPEN.

SO THEY STOPPED FOR THE NIGHT!



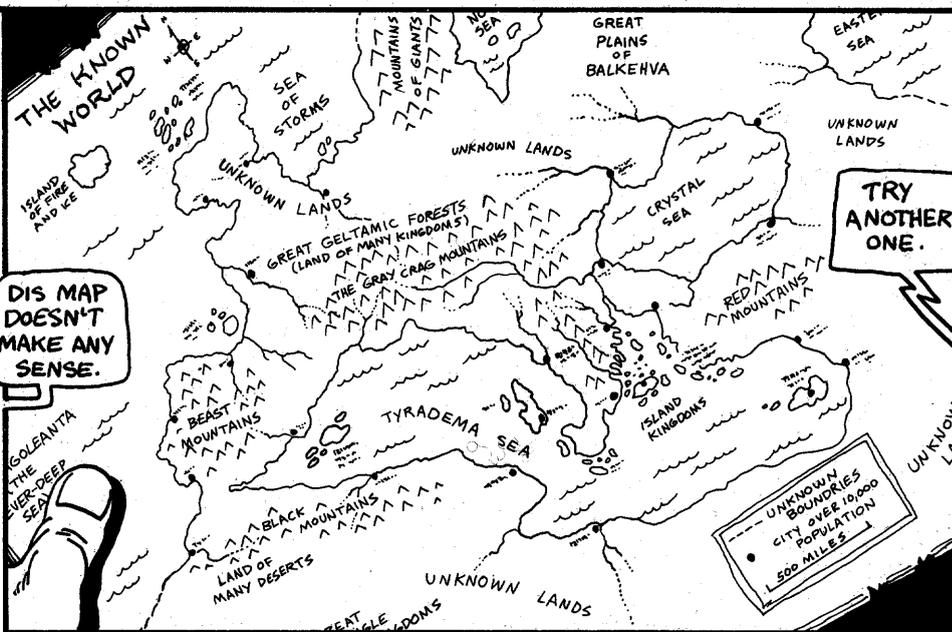
AFTER REPAIRING THE DAMAGE, THEY GOT OUT THE MAPS.

DIS STOPPIN' IS KILLIN' ME... WE GOTTA FIGURE OUT A SAFER WAY WITHOUT FLOPPIN' AROUND.

I'M SHOCK RESISTANT BUT THIS IS RIDICULOUS.

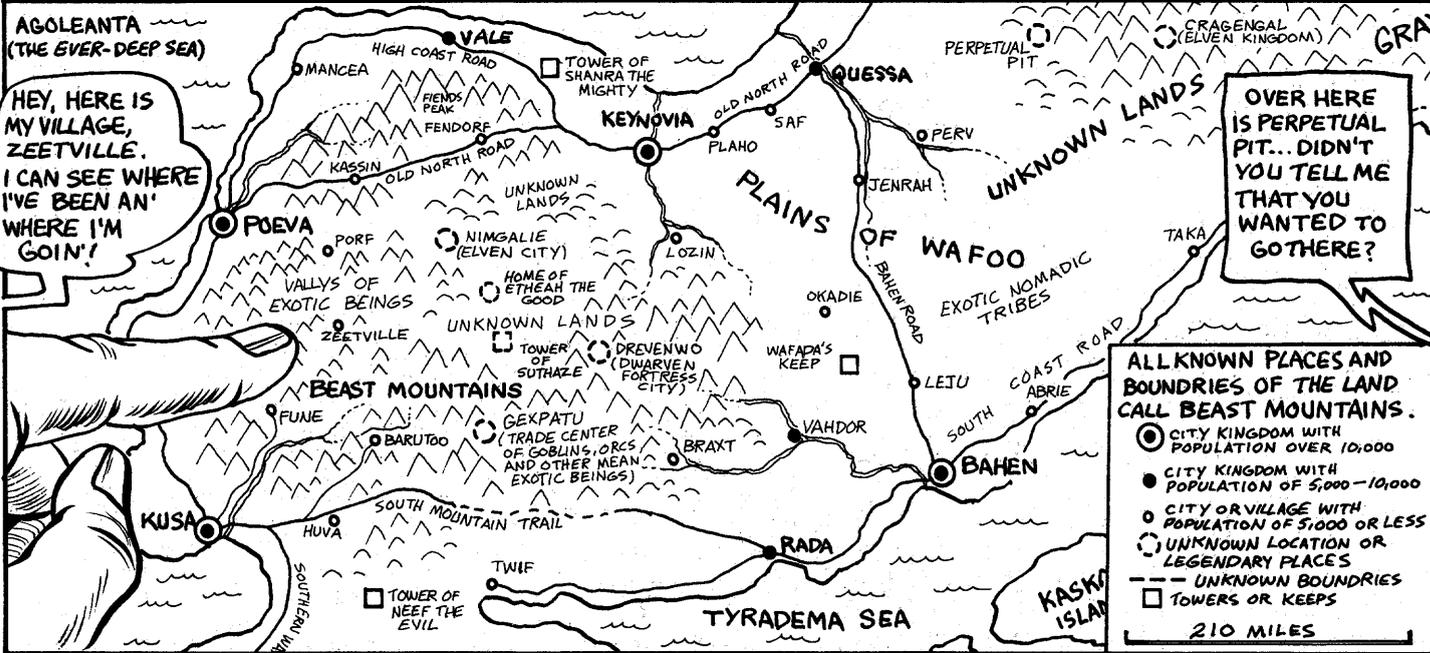


DIS MAP DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE.



TRY ANOTHER ONE.

UNKNOWN BOUNDARIES
CITY OVER 10,000
1,500 MILES



AGOLEANTA (THE EVER-DEEP SEA)

HEY, HERE IS MY VILLAGE, ZEETVILLE. I CAN SEE WHERE I'VE BEEN AN' WHERE I'M GOIN'!

OVER HERE IS PERPETUAL PIT... DIDN'T YOU TELL ME THAT YOU WANTED TO GO THERE?

ALL KNOWN PLACES AND BOUNDARIES OF THE LAND CALL BEAST MOUNTAINS.

- CITY KINGDOM WITH POPULATION OVER 10,000
- CITY KINGDOM WITH POPULATION OF 5,000-10,000
- CITY OR VILLAGE WITH POPULATION OF 5,000 OR LESS
- UNKNOWN LOCATION OR LEGENDARY PLACES
- UNKNOWN BOUNDARIES
- TOWERS OR KEEPS

210 MILES

HERE! THE NEXT CITY WE HIT IS CALLED QUESSA... LOOKS LIKE PLAHO AND SAF ARE THE VILLAGES WE WENT THROUGH.

YEAH... WE'VE COVERED A LOT OF MILES... AT DIS RATE, WE COULD GET TO DA PIT BY TOMORROW NIGHT.

NEXT MORNING

I'M PUTTIN' MY FIGHTIN' CLOTHES BACK ON, AN' A LIL' SOMETHIN' TA KEEP ME WARM... WINTER MUST BE COMIN' ON.

WELL, I'M FINE DOWN TO 150° BELOW ZERO.

I COULD USE A MITTEN AN' A PAIR OF EARMUFFS.

ABOUT AN HOUR LATER... ON THE ROAD TO QUESSA.

YAKNOW, STRAPPIN' DIS OL' 'ZOOMER DOWN EVER NIGHT IS A PAIN... BUT I'M GETTIN' DA HANG OF GUIDIN' HIM.

SNARF, LOOK UP AHEAD! A LOT OF PEOPLE WALKING THIS WAY!

LOOKS LIKE REFUGEES! THINK WE SHOULD STOP AN' SEE WHAT'S GOIN' ON?

YES, WHY DON'T YOU GUIDE THE 'ZOOMER OFF THE ROAD AND IN THE SOFT DIRT... MAYBE HE WILL JUST SLIDE TO A STOP.

WOW! DIS IS (COUGH) WORKIN' JUS' FINE!

CHOKO

RUMBLE RUMBLE

HELLO!... WHERE'S YOU'LL GOIN'?

ARE YOU TWO ALRIGHT? YES.

DADDY, IS DAT A GAGGELZOOMER?

DAT'S AN' ODD COUPLE. A LIL' KNIGHT AND A ZEETVAH!

WE ARE GOING TO THE VILLAGE OF SAF. A GREAT EVIL HAS COME TO OUR CITY OF QUESSA, AND ALL THE POPULATION IS ENSLAVED.

AND WE ARE ALL THAT ESCAPED.

WHAT KIND OF EVIL?

A STRANGE MAN THAT COMMANDS A GREAT DRAGON... THEY HOLD OUR GOOD KING A PRISONER AND THREATEN TO FRY ANYONE THAT DOESN'T OBEY THE EVIL MAN.

YEP, DA ELF IS RIGHT.

A DRAGON! SNARF, I MUST SEE A DRAGON.

MAN, WE DON'T NEED TA MESS WITH A DRAGON!

DEY ARE BAD!

DAT'S DA SMARTEST THING HE HAS SAID YET.

NEXT: THE DECISION, SANITY, CURIOSITY OR GREED!

...STAY ALERT!... TRUST NO ONE!...
...KEEP YOUR LASER HANDY!...

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A ROLE-PLAYING GAME OF A DARKLY HUMOROUS FUTURE

SERVE THE COMPUTER.

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The Computer is crazy. The Computer is happy. The Computer will help you become happy. This will drive you crazy.

Being a citizen of Alpha Complex is fun. The Computer says so, and The Computer is your friend.

Rooting out traitors will make you happy. The Computer tells you so. Can you doubt The Computer?

Being a Troubleshooter is fun. The Computer tells you so. Of course The Computer is right.

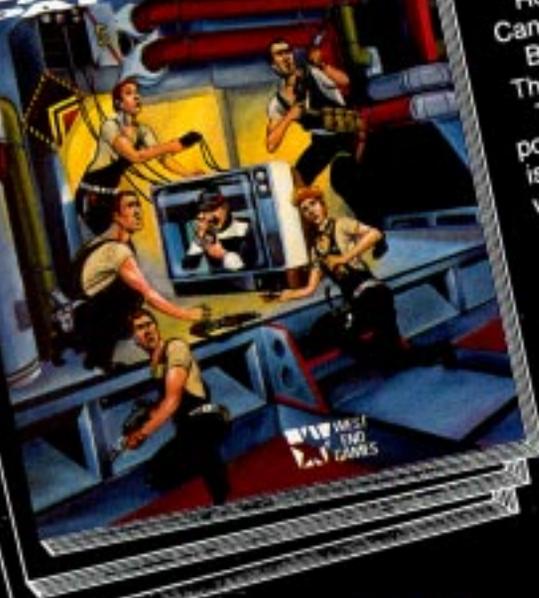
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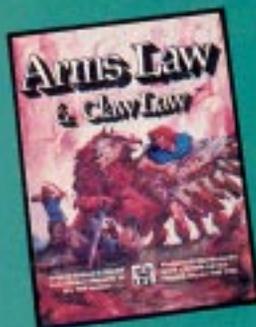
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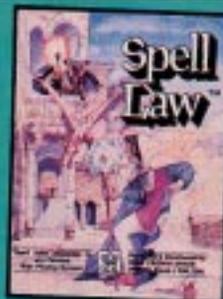
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