

A Halloween guide is always welcome.

Dragon[®]

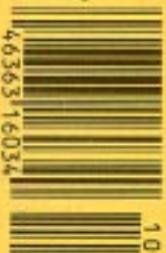
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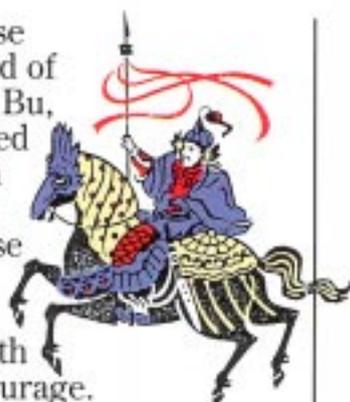
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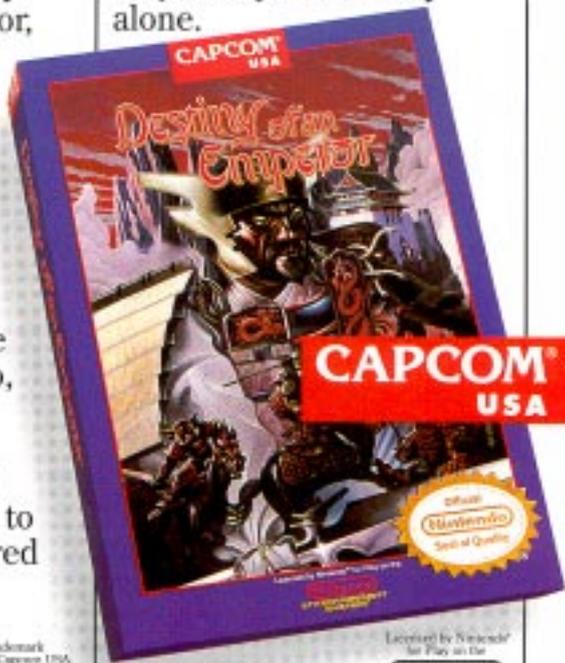
can actually save up to three histories exactly where you've left off.

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But no matter who you are, it will be hard to win the war against Zhang Jao, the deadly leader of the Yellow Scarve rebels and founder of the Tai Ping sect. Not to mention the most feared



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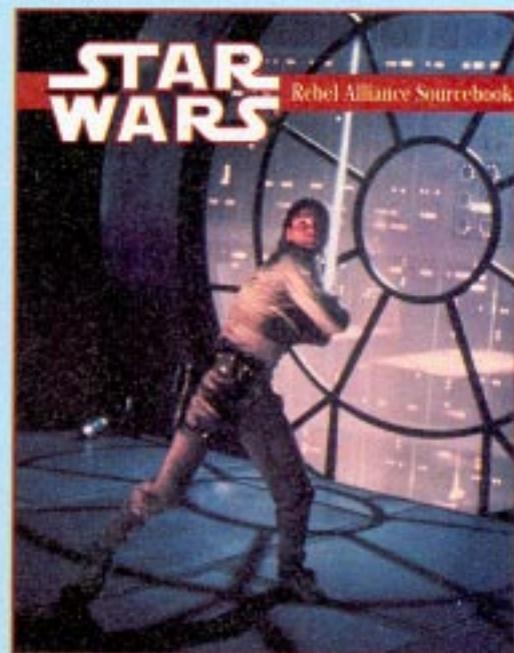
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outgunned, but
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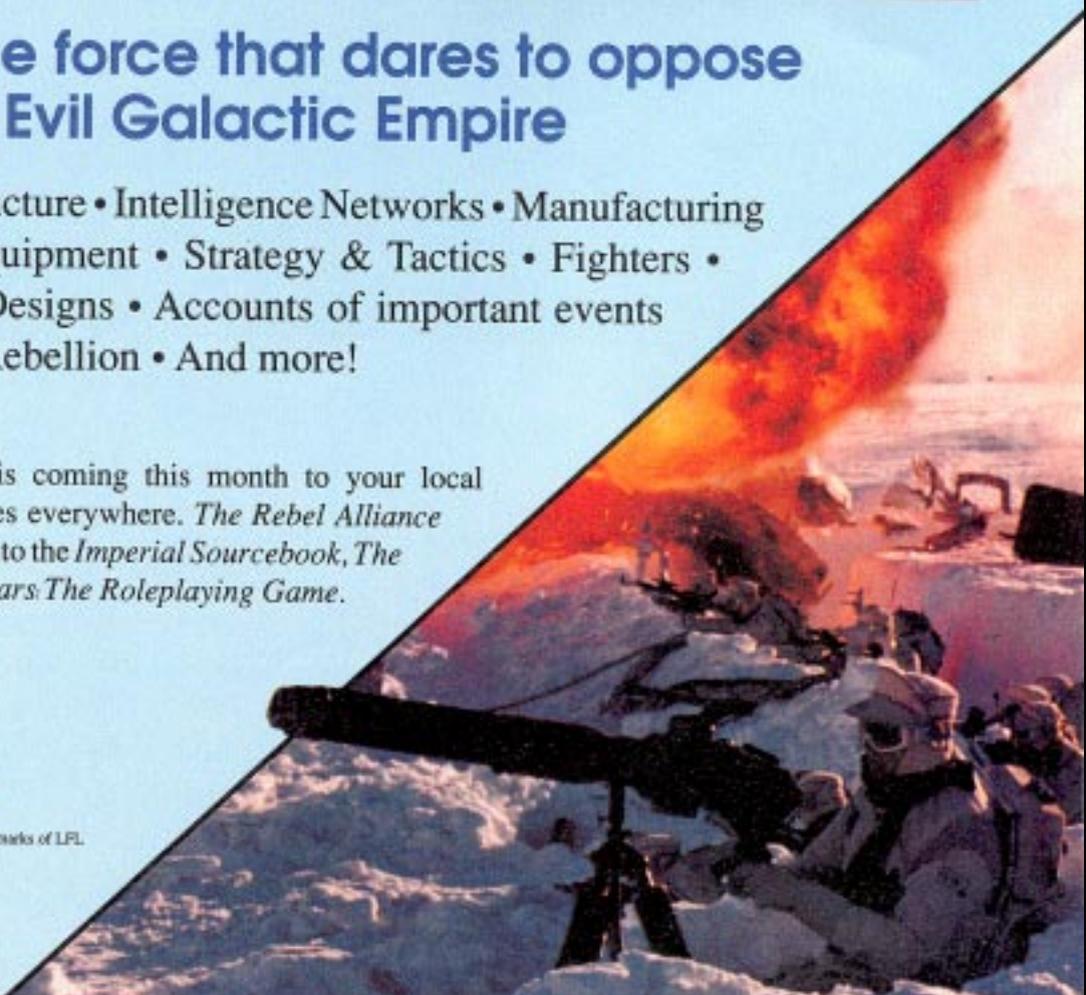
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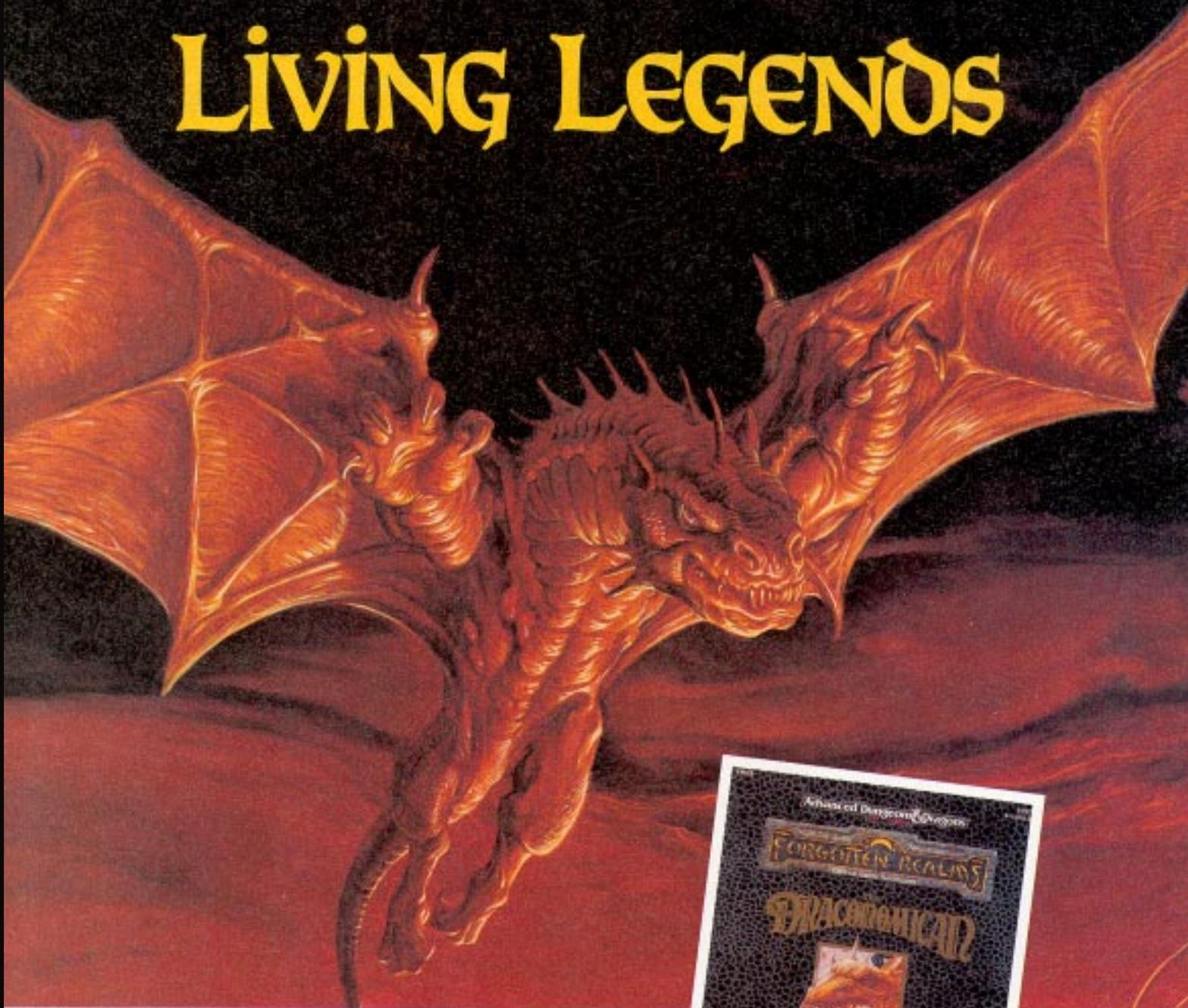
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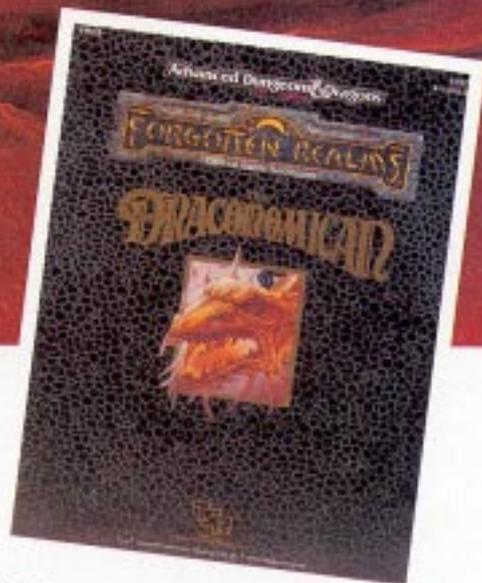
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Issue # 162
Vol. XV, No. 5
October 1990

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Fiction editor
Barbara G. Young

Assistant editor
Dale A. Donovan

Editorial assistant
Joseph M. Nowak

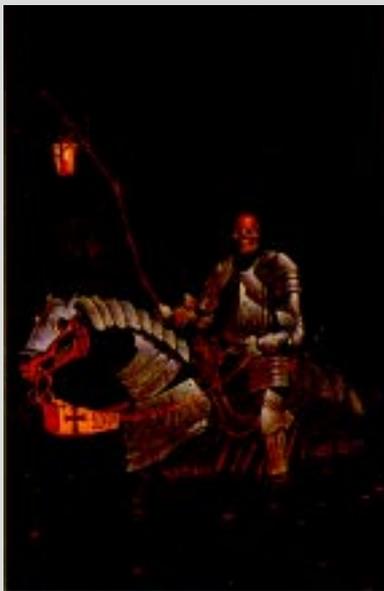
Art director
Larry Smith

Production staff
Gaye O'Keefe Angelika Lokotz
Tracey Zamagne

Subscriptions
Janet L. Winters

U.S. advertising
Roseann Schnering

*U. K. correspondent
and U.K. advertising*
Sue Lilley



CONTENTS

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS

- 9 Halloween:**
A time to summon friends.
- 10 Bazaar of the Bizarre** — Christian Bök
A magical tome with deadly spells: *The Book of Horrors*
- 15 The Mind of the Vampire** — Nigel D. Findley
The lords of the undead never wait around to kill heroes. They stay active!
- 21 Hammer and Stake** — Kevin A. Ross
Hunting Cthulhu isn't enough? Try a foe with fangs *and* brains!
- 27 Out of the Shadows. . .** — Tom Moldvay
Three shadowy monsters, and what they want to do to your player character.
- ## OTHER FEATURES
- 41 The Voyage of the Princess Ark** — Bruce A. Heard
If your flying ship crashed, would you let gnomes fix it?
- 47 The Role of Computers** — Hartley, Patricia, and Kirk Lesser
You're back in Britannia to face your ultimate challenge in *Ultima VI*.
- 52 The Dragon's Bestiary** — Spike Y. Jones
Undead with a twist: the spiritus anime and the ankou.
- 58 A Prayer for the Dead** — fiction by Deborah Millitello
The dead have their own good reasons for hanging around.
- 65 Novel Ideas** — Theresa Hickey
Reach the outermost limits of science fiction and fantasy in three new novels from TSR.
- 71 The MARVEL® - Phile** — Dale A. Donovan
Only one person could be as dangerous as Dracula: his daughter.
- 79 The Game Wizards** — Bruce Nesmith
Try this RAVENLOFT™ game advice and really scare your players!
- 89 Role-playing Reviews** — Allen Varney
A super game for super characters: Hero Games/ICE's CHAMPIONS® system.
- 103 Through the Looking Glass** — Robert Bigelow, Jay Clennedenny, and Ralph Cooper
The war continues! More campaign rules for FASA's BATTLETECH® game.

DEPARTMENTS

- | | | |
|----------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| 5 Letters | 36 Forum | 86 TSR Previews |
| 6 Editorial | 68 Gamers Guide | 94 Dragonmirth |
| 32 Sage Advice | 83 Convention Calendar | 96 Twilight Empire |

COVER

Michael Weaver feels that undead are overdone as the subjects of fantasy and horror paintings, most of them being killers and objects of fear. Preferring to evoke other emotions with his work, he offers his cover painting, "Lost Soul," which depicts a knight destroyed by a guest that was too great for him. For information on prints, write to: Michael Weaver, P.O. Box 2428, Athens GA 30605.

LETTERS

What did you think of this issue? Do you have a question about an article or have an idea for a new feature you'd like to see? In the United States and Canada, write to: Letters, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Letters, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LD, United Kingdom.

PLASTIC!?!?

Dear Dragon:

I just received the latest copy of DRAGON Magazine today, and I was shocked. It was wrapped in PLASTIC! I'm not sure where you got this environment-destroying idea, but I'm totally against it. Please return to the brown wrapping that I'm used to seeing. If this is not possible, then at least tell me that you are using recycled plastic or make an effort to start using recycled plastic. I hope lots of other concerned readers have asked you the same thing.

Harry Moren
Plano TX

The brown paper wrapper that we formerly used to ship both DRAGON Magazine and DUNGEON® Adventures has indeed been replaced by plastic wrap, as our North American subscribers are aware. The plastic is better able to protect your magazine during shipment, and it also allows us to place loose inserts in the magazine without fear of losing them. We have also received numerous reports over the years of lost and damaged magazine issues resulting from the use of paper wrapping, and we feel that the change will benefit all of our readers.

The plastic wrap itself is not recycled plastic, but you might be able to find a local recycling center that will accept that type of plastic (if you are already used to separating your trash for recycling or pick-up). Check your Yellow Pages under "Recycling Centers."

Deux faux-pas

Dear Dragon:

I am writing this letter to show my annoyance at some comments made in the "Novel Ideas" column in issue #158. In it, Will Larson stated that Douglas Niles will be releasing two games to commemorate the 50th anniversary of World War II in 1991. We in England were always under the impression that it started in 1939. How silly we are, for it evidently started on December 7th, 1941. This news comes as a shock to me, especially as we are presently commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

While I am in a moaning mood, I would also like to complain about the DRAGON Magazine subscription-card insert designed to be used by British and European readers. It has three Union Jacks on it. But some fools have managed to place all three upside down. I hope to see that in future

issues this mistake will be corrected.

Apart from these gripes, I would like to congratulate you on producing such a fine issue.

Christian McCarthy
King's Lynn, Norfolk, England

We are mortally embarrassed that we did not catch the reference to the 50th anniversary of America's entry into World War II. We were being a little too self-centered there, and we offer you (and everyone else who rolled his eyes at the reference) our apologies.

Your second complaint caught us off guard, and we spent many minutes flipping the Union Jack card from issue #159 over and over, trying to figure out which end was "up" (neither end was, as they are identical). Then we found an illustration of the Union Jack in an almanac, and we discovered that the flags on the subscription card had been reversed left-to-right, so we were actually running mirror images of the three U.K. flags. We are now twice as mortally embarrassed as we were formerly, especially since we have repeated this error on subsequent cards. But one could say that it's the little surprises like this that make life interesting, eh?

Vampire blues

Dear Dragon:

While gaming, one of the characters in my campaign has become a vampire. His assailant was killed, though, and the character is now free willed. The party is evil and accepts his presence. His current state has quickly unbalanced my campaign.

I've already consulted the *Monster Manual* and the AD&D® 1st Edition *Dungeon Masters Guide*, but still have no clue as to how to handle free-willed undead in my campaign. If this topic has been covered, could you please tell me where? (If not, would you please cover it soon in "The Ecology of . . ." or similar column?)

James Massaro
Elizaville NY

A vampire PC in an AD&D game is a serious problem. The vampire is probably creating a horde of charmed slaves and half-strength vampire servants, has coffins in hundreds of places, can kill anyone he wishes with a touch or two, can escape pursuit with impunity by assuming gaseous or animal form, and so on. Even vampire NPCs operate under serious restrictions given their fantastic powers; I would rather have a lich PC in a game campaign any day

My best advice for handling the situation—assuming that you wish the campaign to continue as it is—is to have every NPC in the area take at least minimal precautions against the vampire, and have large numbers of NPCs set up antivampire patrols (not to mention creating

DRAGON® Magazine (ISSN 0279-6848) is published monthly by TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756 (201 Sheridan Springs Road), Lake Geneva WI 53147, United States of America. The postal address for all materials from the United States and Canada except subscription orders is: DRAGON Magazine, P.O. Box 111 (201 Sheridan Springs Road), Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.; telephone: (414) 248-3625. The postal address for all materials from Europe is: DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LD, United Kingdom; telephone: (0223) 212517 (U.K.), 44-223-212517 (international); telex: 818761; fax: (0223) 248066 (U.K.), 44-223-248066 (international).

Distribution: DRAGON Magazine is available from game and hobby shops throughout the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and through a limited number of other overseas outlets. Distribution to the book trade in the United States is by Random House, Inc., and in Canada by Random House of Canada, Ltd. Send orders to: Random House, Inc., Order Entry Department, Westminster MD 21157, U.S.A.; telephone: (800) 638-6460 toll-free except Alaska (call (800) 492-0782 toll-free in Maryland). Newsstand distribution throughout the United Kingdom is by Seymour Press Ltd., 334 Brixton Road, London SW9 7AG, United Kingdom; telephone: 01-733-4444.

Subscriptions: Subscription rates via second-class mail are as follows: \$30 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent to an address in the U.S. or Canada; £16 for 12 issues sent to an address within the United Kingdom; £24 for 12 issues sent to an address in Europe; \$50 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent by surface mail to any other address; or \$90 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent airmail to any other address. Payment in full must accompany all subscription orders. In the U.S. and Canada, methods of payment include checks or money orders made payable to TSR, Inc., or charges to valid MasterCard or VISA credit cards; send subscription orders with payments to: TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 5695, Boston MA 02206, U.S.A. In the United Kingdom, methods of payment include cheques and money orders made payable to TSR Ltd, or charges to a valid ACCESS or VISA credit card; send subscription orders with payments to TSR Ltd, as per that address above. Prices are subject to change without prior notice. The issue of expiration of each subscription is printed on the mailing label of each subscriber's copy of the magazine. Changes of address for the delivery of subscription copies must be received at least six weeks prior to the effective date of the change in order to assure uninterrupted delivery.

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Second-class postage paid at Lake Geneva, Wis., U.S.A., and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to DRAGON Magazine, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. USPS 318-790, ISSN 0279-6848.

Continued on page 7

EDITORIAL

Number 23: The untold story

The 1990 GEN CON® game fair, which ended on August 12th, was TSR's 23rd and my eighth such convention in a row. By early estimates, it was the greatest of them all. It broke all previous records for attendance (estimated at over 12,000), number of events (over 1,200), and amount of cake displayed, of both the cheese and beef varieties (I guess that's why the Milwaukee MECCA Center is called an "exhibition hall"). I also broke all my previous records for amounts and varieties of Chinese food consumed, thanks to Toy's restaurant, across the street from the Hyatt. My thanks to MECCA for the forklift used to get me back to my room.

Our TSR Periodicals booth was at the east end of the TSR Parthenon (the green marbeloid thing up front; you couldn't miss it). We had lots of space to show off back issues of DRAGON® Magazine and DUNGEON® Adventures, along with our (surprise! surprise!) brand-new T-shirts and drinking mugs! The T-shirts were sold out by Saturday; a few mugs survived for next year. Our thanks to Ray, Barbara, and Derek Van Tilburg, who created and air-brushed the T-shirts designs.

There was a lot to see and do, and I met staggering numbers of old friends, new friends, friends of friends, vaguely familiar people whose names I could not remember, and total strangers who seemed to know me like a brother. I was also pleased to see that many gamers and staff members decided to break tradition and catch their post-convention flus and colds right at the convention's start. The following things stood out as those most worthy of mention of this incredible event:

- Good behavior from nearly everyone. There were lots of comments on this. This was a genuinely fun convention.
- The much-appreciated magazine feedback we began to receive from those who read the editorial in DRAGON issue #160. I feel a lot better now; your comments were very helpful. Thank you!
- My favorite bad pun of all time. You've gotta hear this. I was at the TSR Books booth when Mary Kirchoff asked me to check the front of the glass case for a copy of *The Legend of Huma*. I looked, then said, "I'm sorry, but I fail to see the Huma in it." Ha, ha! Get it? Wasn't that . . . um . . . Next, we have:
- The discovery of spontaneously generated twin editorials, first noticed by Dale



Donovan. He picked up a copy of GDW's *Challenge* magazine, issue #45, and read associate editor Julia Martin's discussion of romance in role-playing games, which was the topic of my editorial in DRAGON issue #161, which was at the printer during the convention. Maybe cosmic background radiation is responsible.

- The glass elevators and open balconies in the Hyatt, which terrorized all the agoraphobics and acrophobics. The height didn't bother me at all, though my feet started to sweat when I got within a yard of the railing on the 14th floor. And no, I didn't throw any airplanes off the balconies. That's a big no-no, and those who try it will be taken away and gently chastised by the Hyatt staff, who are ex-bikers with names like Napalm, Crowbar, and Dead Zone. Just a word to the wise.

- The great response to the Wheeler & Rice seminars on game and campaign philosophy, which saw their third successful year, and the great response to the seminars run by your Periodicals staff, which were also lots of fun, particularly when Barbara Young tried to address an audience while she had laryngitis. She would poke Dale and whisper "Tell them about . . ." and Dale would turn to the audience and say, "Barbara says to tell you . . ."

- Comics artist and writer Steve (*Twilight Empire*) Sullivan, who signed autographs and gave informal talks next to our booth, without once telling people he was my evil twin, Skippy.

- West End Games' PARANOIA* brand drinking cups ("Bouncy Bubble Beverage: It's the MANDATORY thing!"). I forgot to get one.

- The truly original TSR Model Shop, run by Dave Sutherland and Dennis Kauth, at which you assembled your own 3-D grav tanks and SF exploration rovers from the materials they provided. The 15-mm and 25-mm vehicles you could make from paper and plastic parts were better than those from store-bought kits.

- The huge 25-mm cityscape set-up for FASA's SHADOWRUN* game, including graffiti, burned-out cars, internally lit executive offices, and elevated highways. Everyone wanted to take it home and put it in the basement.

- The partial suits of chain mail armor sold by one booth, which we nicknamed Frederick's of Byzantium, which included chain mail bras and halter tops. Really. (An aside to those courageous enough to wear them: Like, didn't they *pinch*?)

- The complete suit of chain mail armor manufactured by Brian ("Bud Knight") Smith of Springfield, Ohio, composed of

4,000 pop-tops from aluminum cans (the armor, not Brian or Springfield, Ohio).

- My first viewing of the Australian Design Group's hilarious HUNTER PLANET* role-playing game, in which you play aliens who come to Earth to bag the fearsome *Homo sapiens*, who can (unfortunately) fight back. I also saw copies of the NIGHTLIFE* game (vampire and werewolf PCs in New York City), West End Games' TORC* game (Earth conquered by transdimensional villains), StarChilde's JUSTIFIERS* game (SF humanoid animals go to war), ADG's ALBEDO* game (SF cartoon animals go to war), Crunchy Frog's CRITTER COMMANDOS* game (regular cartoon animals go to war), and the PUPPY POUNDERS* game (stuffed plush animals go to war). May Jim Ward strike me down if I am lying.

- The Chaosium booth, which offered each visitor a chance to stick his hand into a vat containing a (real) proto-shoggoth in order to grab his very own prize: an eyeball. As you can imagine, it was gross and yukky and horrible and everyone did it. I'm glad I didn't have to clean it up.

- The demo copy of the soon-to-be-released Jorune computer game, which has beautiful graphics (my favorite was the breathing, blinking corastin, a dragonlike humanoid).

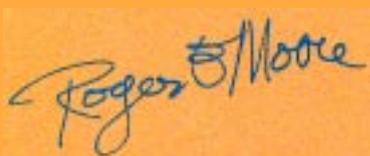
- Friday morning's excellent RPGA™ Network breakfast, at which the Gamers' Choice awards were presented. My thanks once again to MECCA for the forklift.

- Friday night's awesome TSR party for the game-company industry, funded by the in-house production of the *Monstrous Compendium SPELLJAMMER™* Appendix (hi to everyone there, glad to have met you, sorry I had to turn in so early and miss the rumors and the 2 A.M. cut-off, my thanks to MECCA for the forklift, etc.).

- Saturday's Miskatonic University's 1990 Class Reunion, featuring the Laugh-ter of Insanity and Scream of Terror contests, the Piñata of Doom, and the Dread Parade through the dealers' area to celebrate H. P. Lovecraft's 100th birthday. The Dread Parade's unscheduled stop by the Periodicals booth was especially touching; our thanks to all who made faces at us.

- And last but hardly least, a visit from Santa Claus (courtesy of Iron Crown), who joyfully presented your editors with a lump of coal and an offer for us to do his laundry.

Then it was over. We packed up our magazines and went home to take baths, relax, and discover how much weight we'd gained (M&Ms: They're not just for breakfast anymore). The coal looks very nice on my office bookshelf, and we've mostly recovered from our colds. And if you miss next year's GEN CON games fair, it will be all your fault. It's gonna be better still.



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Letters

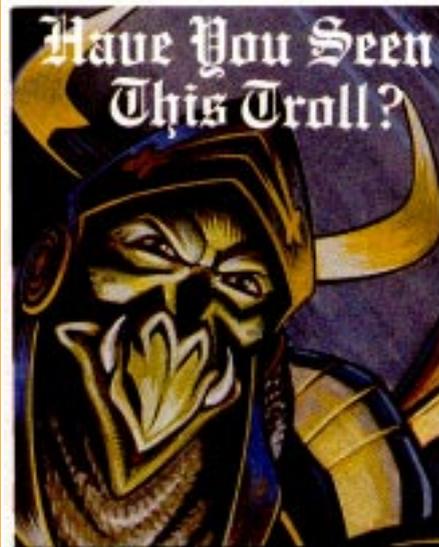
Continued from page 5

assault teams of adventurers bent on destroying the menace). Spread garlic, holy symbols, holy water, and the like all over; also make sure no one ever allows anyone but trusted friends to enter a home. If the situation is truly desperate (roaming teams of vampires are slaying everyone outdoors at night, whole villages are being depopulated, etc.), then have a group of NPC clerics summon one or more powerful entities to deal with the situation: a squad of movanic devas, backed up by a few paladins and a bunch of clerics and mages, for instance. Attacks on the vampire and his allies and minions should grow more frequent and powerful as word of his threat spreads among adventurers.

If the vampire's player complains that you are trying to "kill" his character, you should cheerfully nod and say, "You bet!" If he thinks about it and gives up his character, all the better; it shows that he is mature and intelligent enough to know that the campaign is flying out of

balance, and he is willing to work to bring the fun in the game back again.

You could just ban that character from play, too, without bothering to go through all of the stress of trying to kill the character off. A neutral deity might "cure" his vampiric powers to preserve the "balance," leaving the character alive but less powerful. Or you could start a new campaign from scratch and ban all undead and lycanthropic PCs, making such characters into NPCs once they "cross the line." It is conceivable that you can find a way to balance your campaign again with a vampire PC in it, but it would be challenging only if most of the NPC opponents were at least as tough as the vampire—not a likely situation!



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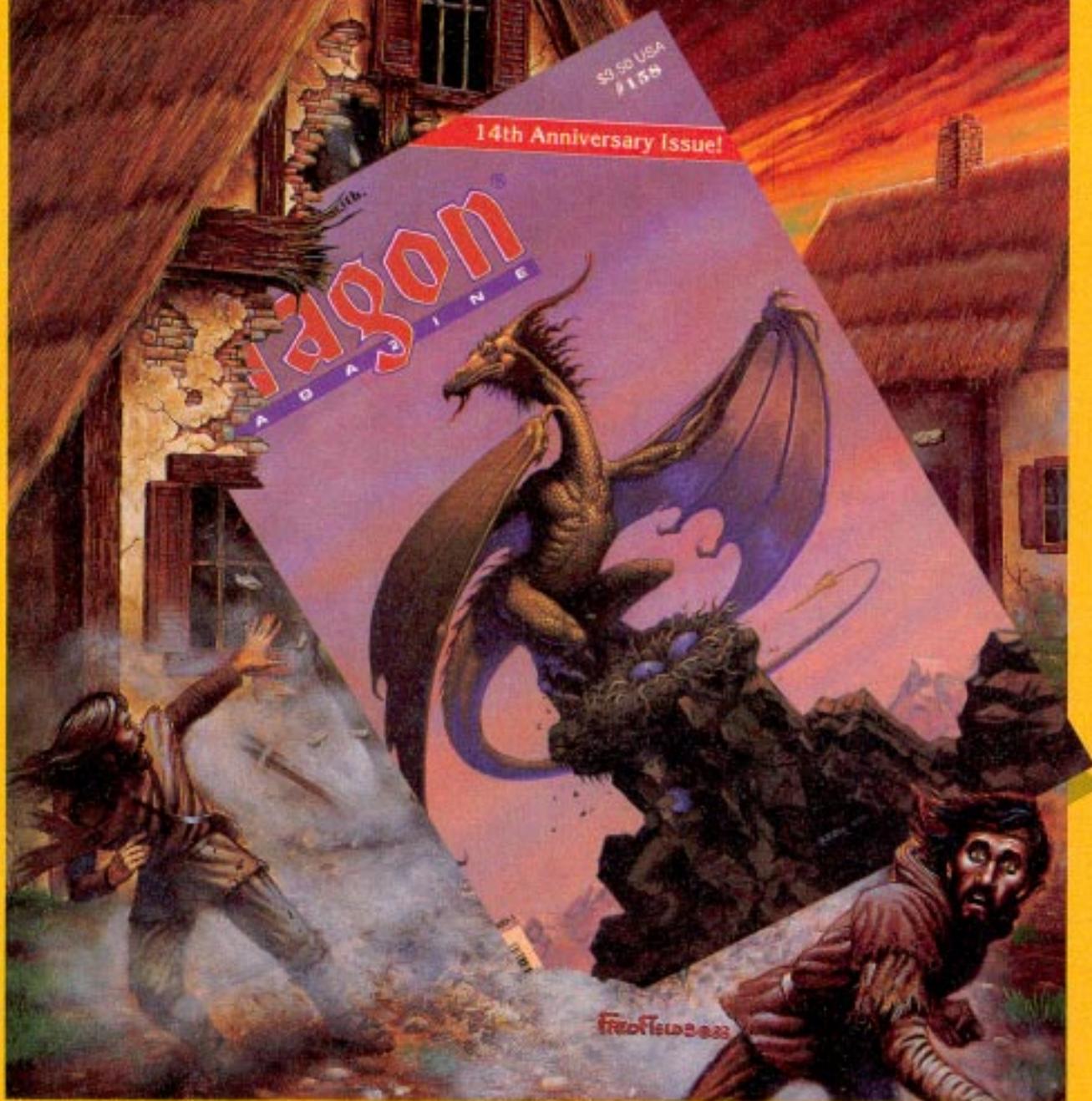


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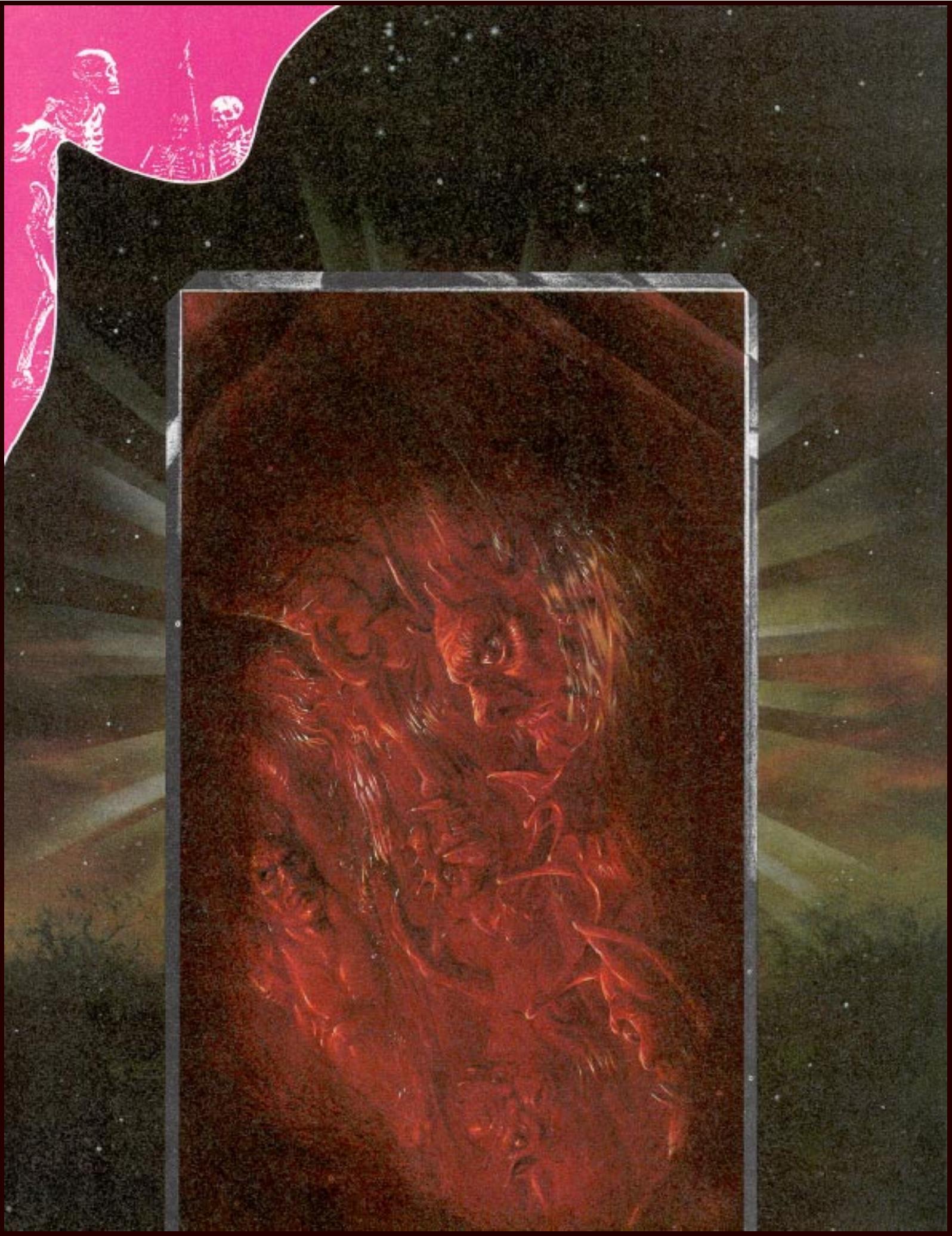
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**Halloween:
a time to summon friends**



Bazaar of the Bizarre

The Book of Horrors:
a compendium of terrifying spells

by Christian Bök

Ancient legends relate that an evil sorcerer named Azirian once summoned a black ship from a distant land far across the ocean, a ship loaded with a cargo of terrifying artifacts, among them the *Cryptichronos* (also known as *The Hidden Time*, in reference to its ancient origins, and as *The Book of Horrors*, for more obvious reasons). Scholars agree that Azirian must have gone insane when he read the grimoire, for he tried to use its powers to summon a beast he claimed could destroy the world, then fled with the book into the earth's catacombs, where he surrendered his will (and his body) to the hunger of the illithids.

No more is known of the *Cryptichronos* until it is mentioned 500 years later in the journals of the wandering mage Adjazzet, who discovered the book in a rusted, subterranean vault and managed to record some of the book's contents before also going mad, committing suicide by ingesting green slime. His apprentice Olmoroth inherited the work and used it to become the tyrannical ruler of a dying city; however, he eventually lost the book (and his life) in a necromantic duel with a vastly superior opponent, possibly a beast from the lower planes.

The present whereabouts of the *Cryptichronos* remain unknown, and wise men fear that the book may have fallen into wicked hands. Anyone finding the grimoire is encouraged to destroy it for fear of someone unleashing an unspeakable horror upon the world. Indeed, this latter possibility may have already happened in the campaign world.

Description: The book consists of 19 pages of vellum bound with silver wire to two thin plates of obsidian that bear no identifying marks or inscriptions. The plates measure two spans by three spans in size and are especially resistant to chipping and grazing (treat as hard metal for item saving throws). The obsidian surface

is darkly reflective, and Adjazzet writes that eerie, phantom "images" sometimes appear in the plates and then immediately vanish. No one can decide for certain what these swirling, shadowy images are, but glimpsing them is extremely disconcerting to the viewer. Those who gaze for over a turn at the covers suffer the effects of a *scare* spell at the 16th level of ability.

The first page of the book depicts an illustration of a laughing skull burning up in violet flames. A *magic mouth* is activated whenever the book is first opened to this page, causing the skull to speak in a heretofore unknown language, perhaps the one indigenous to the land of the book's origin. (A spell such as *comprehend languages* provides the following rough translation: "Curse the thief of secrets! Let him know his heart's corruption! What he reads here is the writing on the walls of his own tomb!") When the *magic mouth* intones this weird message, the opener of the book must make a saving throw vs. death magic or become afflicted with a rotting disease similar to the leprous touch of a mummy. This disease is fatal within 1-8 months, and for each month that it progresses the victim permanently loses two points of charisma (possibly acquiring a negative ability score). The course of the disease can be halted only by administering a *cure disease* spell (from a priest of at least 9th level) or a *heal* spell (the latter offering the added benefit of restoring lost charisma points). While so afflicted, a person cannot respond to any other *cure wounds* magic, and all nonmagical healing occurs at 10% of the normal rate. Once the *magic mouth* has been activated, it never speaks to the same individual again, although another person opening the book may hear the message and possibly suffer its ill effects.

The next 16 pages of the *Cryptichronos* contain various spells, one spell to a page. The exact content of these pages remains

unknown (so that each DM may design the book to his liking). The tome is rumored to include not only such familiar magic as *animate dead* and *Evard's black tentacles*, but also such exotic magic as the wu jen spells *creeping darkness* and *wall of bones*. At least five of the spells in this section are known to be completely unique, never before seen in any other volume of magic.

The last two pages of the *Cryptichronos* describe the drawing of a special pentacle used in the summoning and binding of extraplanar creatures. The textual description, written in the language spoken the *magic mouth*, is accompanied by actual rendering of the pentacle—a rendering that acts as *symbol of insanity* to all who look upon it without the benefit of an *anti-magic shell* spell. The victim becomes subject to every manner of madness, becoming a (short-live NPC).

The unique spells follow:

Undead Control (Necromancy)
Level: 3 Components: V,S,M
Range: 20 yards CT: 1
Duration: Special Save: Special
Area of Effect: Special

With this spell, the caster may control any undead creatures within range as if an evil priest four levels lower in experience (thus, a 5th-level wizard may affect undead as though he were a 1st-level evil cleric). While casting the spell, the wizard rolls 1d20 and consults Table 47 on page 67 of the 2nd Edition DMG in order to





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determine whether or not the monsters are commanded (a "D" result is treated as a "T"). The wizard can make only one attempt to control the undead; whether or not the attempt succeeds, the spell is used up and lost from memory. Any encountered group (not type) of undead that resists the control of the wizard can never be commanded by his use of this spell.

When confronting a variety of undead, the wizard affects the weakest type of creatures first. Multiple castings of the spell are required in order to exert control over the more powerful members of an undead horde. The spell permits the wizard to wrest control of the monsters from another evil priest or from another wizard employing this magic. Note that anyone of good alignment must, of course, use the spell only after careful consideration. (See the 2nd Edition DMG, page 68, for more information regarding the influence of evil priests over undead creatures.)

The material component is an evil priest's unholy symbol or some other properly *cursed* talisman forcefully presented to the affected monsters. The component is not lost in the casting and may be subsequently reused.

Sinuus Horrors (Alteration)

Level: 4 Components: S
Range: 0 CT: 1
Duration: 5-10 rnds. Save: Special
Area of Effect: Caster

This spell transforms each of the wizard's arms into a writhing, hissing serpent that can strike at any opponent within arm's reach. Each snakelike tentacle can attack once per round as a monster with as many hit dice as the wizard has levels of experience.

The snakes each do 1-3 hp

damage with their fangs, and there is a 3% chance per level of the spell-caster that the serpents are poisonous to humanoid creatures. Anyone bitten by a venomous snake must make a saving throw vs. poison at -2 or go into violent convulsions for a number of rounds equal to the caster's level. A convulsing creature suffers 1 hp damage per round and is incapable of any action (treat as a stunned opponent).

The wizard cannot cast this spell while holding any object or while wearing anything upon the hands (e.g., rings and gloves). Similarly, the wizard cannot grasp anything while under the influence of this transformation, nor can he cast spells with somatic components. A *snake charm* can pacify the tentacles for 5-8 rounds if the wizard fails a saving throw vs. spells. Note that the *sinuous horrors* can never be compelled to attack their host, and that they remain in effect until the expiration of the spell, regardless of the wizard's desire.

Vampire Mist (Evocation)

Level: 4 Components: V, S
Range: Special CT: 5
Duration: 1 rnd./lvl. Save: Special
Area of Effect: 6' diameter cloud

With this spell, the wizard causes a pale cloud of chilling vapor to form at any desired spot within a 30' radius. The vapor billows, shifts, and appears almost sentient even though it is not truly alive. It moves at a rate of 30' per round, seeking out and enveloping the nearest life-form within reach of its gaseous tendrils (possibly attacking the spell-caster if he does not take precautions). Once the spell is cast, the wizard does not need to concentrate upon the magic in order for its effects to persist.

The vapor can flow over 10' high walls and can seep through even the smallest openings and cracks. It cannot pass through airtight barriers (such as a *wall of force* or a hermetically sealed door), nor can the mist move across an area of fire. The gas avoids open flames, so a character

could conceivably keep the vapor at bay with a torch.

The mist drains blood from any creature caught within its area of effect, doing 1-8 hp damage per round. The enveloped creature must make a saving throw vs. death magic during the first round of damage or else fall down incapacitated, unable to leave the gaseous cloud without help. As the *vampire mist* "feeds," it turns dull red and can drain up to 48 hp damage before being completely "satiated" (i.e., inactive) for the remainder of the spell duration. A creature does not need to breathe the vapors in order for their effects to work.

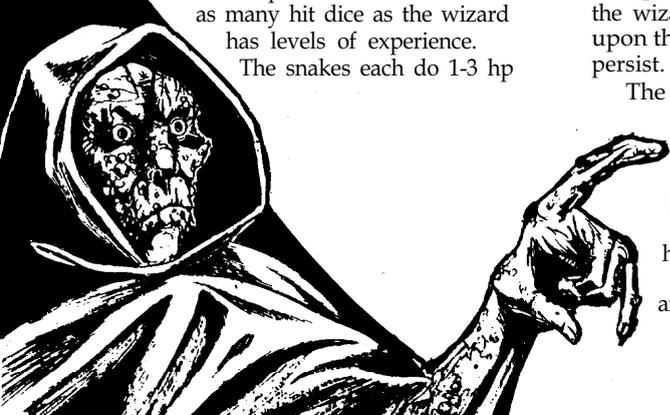
The mist cannot harm an individual protected by an *anti-magic shell*, and a *gust of wind* repels the vapor without dispersing it. Violent winds (such as those created by an air elemental) completely obliterate this gaseous horror, as do extremely hot fires (such as those created by a *fireball* or *flame strike*). *Vampire mist* does not harm fire-based creatures, undead, or monsters from a plane other than the Prime Material. When the duration of the spell expires, the cloud simply thins out into nothingness.

Crimson Scourge (Necromancy)

Level: 5 Components: V,S,M
Range: Touch CT: 5
Duration: Special Save: Neg.
Area of Effect: Special

This terrible spell can affect one human being whose number of levels (or hit dice) do not exceed the level of the spell-caster (dwarves, elves, and other humanoid creatures are immune to this magic). Upon pronouncing the curse, the wizard touches the victim, who is entitled to a saving throw vs. spells at -2, with failure indicating that the target person begins to bleed profusely through the pores of the skin, taking 1-2 hp damage per round until dead. Regular first aid cannot prevent this damage, and most magical curatives have no effect upon the affliction. Such spells as *remove curse*, *cure serious wounds*, and *cure critical wounds* can staunch the hemorrhaging, but hit points may be regained fully only through time and rest. A *heal* spell, on the other hand, can dispel the results of this evil magic entirely.

The most horrible property of the *crimson scourge*, however, lies in the "contagiousness" of its effects, for whenever an afflicted victim comes into physical contact with someone else, the touched person may have to make a saving throw vs. spells at -2 or become likewise afflicted. Fortunately, a character is immune to the curse so long as he has more levels or hit dice than the person bleeding; moreover, the spell-caster can never suffer the effects of his own *crimson scourge*. Certain plagues throughout history have, in fact, been attributed to this spell (that often goes by the name of "the red death"). However, the spell does not really cause a biological illness and is, therefore, unaf-



fectured by any spells that cure *disease*.

The working of this curse requires that the wizard wear a scarlet robe and a faceless red mask, both made from the finest silk, worth at least a 1,000 gp each. These components are not lost in the casting and may be used as many times as desired.

Amorphous Blob (Alteration,

Necromancy)

Level: 7

Components: V,S,M

Range: Touch

CT: 1

Duration: Special

Save: None

Area of Effect: Glass orb filled with fluid

The casting of this spell requires that the wizard first construct a crystal orb filled with a swirling, gelatinous fluid. The orb and its contents take 1-4 weeks to manufacture. In order for the spell component to be made properly, the wizard must enlist the aid of an experienced alchemist and must build a special laboratory equipped with its own strange, custom-made apparatus, the total cost of which can be no less than 5,000 gp. The wizard also needs to procure the following ingredients used to formulate the weird fluid: one pint of the spell-caster's blood, three pints of ochre jelly, and one dram of acid from a black pudding. With these ingredients, the alchemist prepares a viscous solution and encapsulates it in a finely blown glass ball, 1' in diameter. The wiz-

ard then holds the sphere in a *shocking* grasp so that he can magically activate the liquid contents. Once these procedures are completed, the wizard may use the orb at any time thereafter to cast an *amorphous* blob. Should the glass container break before the spell is actually employed, the fluid is lost and the wizard must start the process over again from scratch.

Casting an *amorphous blob* causes the fluid inside the sphere to congeal into a dangerous, amoeboid life-form that is released whenever the glass is shattered. The wizard can smash the ball by hurling it at an opponent (treat as a grenadelike missile), but great care must be taken since the caster has no control over his creation once it is released. The blob resembles an ochre jelly and has the following statistics: AC 6, MV 6, HD 3, hp 24, #AT 1, Dmg 3-12, AL N. The monster feeds in order to grow, and it grows extremely fast. The blob has a volume of four cubic feet upon its release, but on a killing attack, the amoeboid creature engulfs its prey and gains 1 hp for each hit die of the dead victim. Every 8 hp gained by the *blob* endows it with an additional hit die (in terms of fighting ability) and results in not only an increase in volume of four cubic feet, but also a cumulative bonus of +1 on damage rolls (modified results cannot exceed 12 hp damage per round).

Example: A blob freed from a sphere

kills four 2-hp opponents. The blob, therefore, grows four cubic feet larger and attacks as a 4-HD monster, doing 4-13 hp damage per round.

Note that the blob needs only one round to grow to its new volume, and during this time the creature can perform no other action. All increases in hit dice, size, and damage are permanent and do not decrease with the loss of hit points. No known limit exists to the blob's total volume, and if not soon killed, the creature can become extremely powerful.

The blob can regenerate 1 hp per round, but this ability cannot bring a dead blob back to life. The creature can flow through narrow openings and can ooze along walls and ceilings. The blob also secretes a digestive acid that dissolves wood (at a rate of 2"/round) and metal (at a rate of 1/2"/round); stone and glass remain unaffected. Magical cold does no damage to the blob, but slows the monster (as the spell) for 2-8 rounds. Fire harms the creature normally, but lightning actually imbues the blob with an extra hit point for every hit die of damage that might have been inflicted; thus, a 6d6 lightning bolt endows the creature with 6 hp, possibly increasing the blob's size and attack potential. Mind-influencing spells, of course, have no effect upon this unintelligent creation, and all forms of magical control are useless against it.



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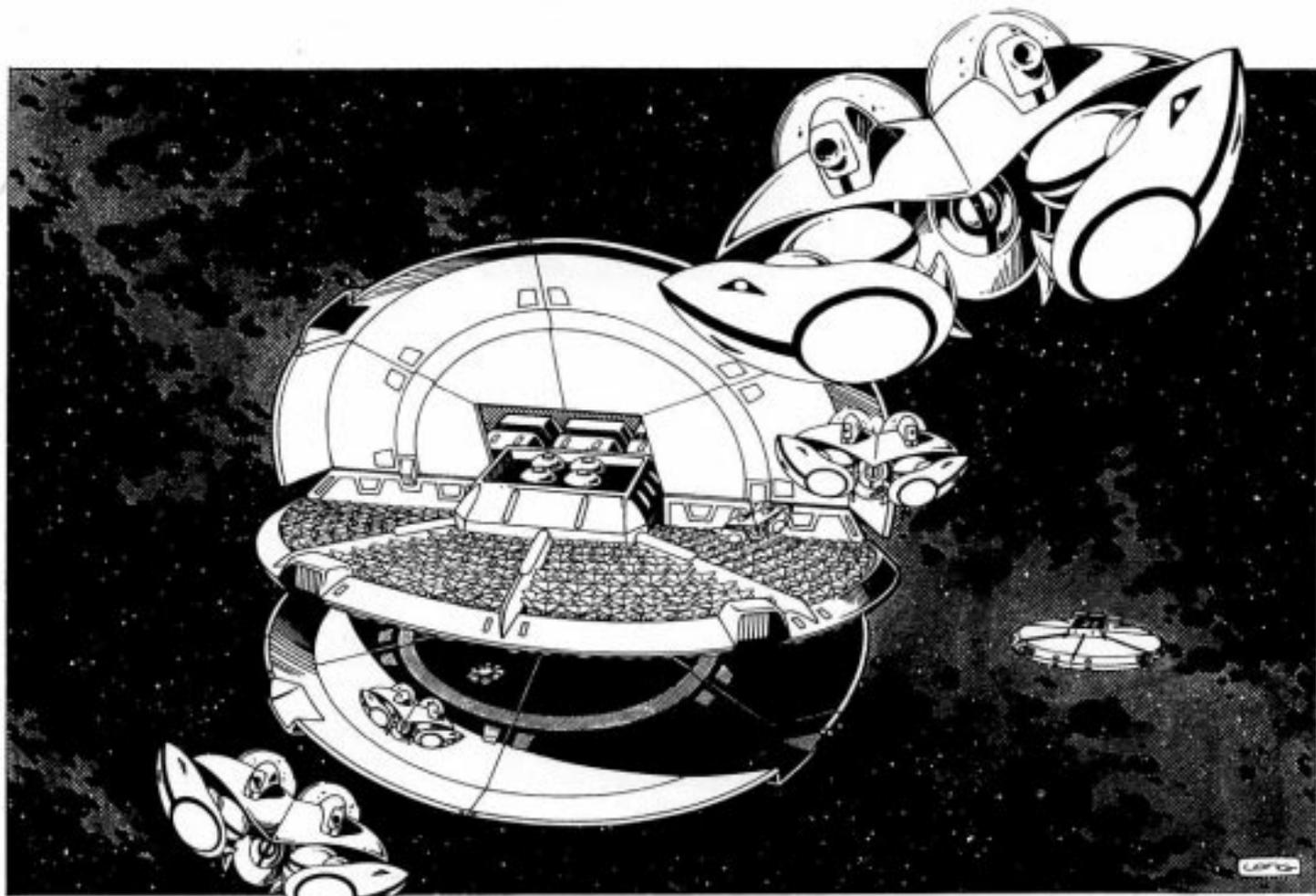


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The Mind of the Vampire

by Nigel D. Findley

The lightless crypt is silent, as only a grave can be. No movement stirs the dust on the floor, no stray currents of air disturb the delicate drapery of cobwebs that embellishes the ceilings and walls. Even the tiny but venomous spiders that dwell in the webs are motionless. The crypt is waiting, endlessly waiting.

Then in the blackness something moves: a figure lying on a bier of black stone. Eyelids spring open to expose a sullen red glow burning in the sockets. The figure sits up and pulls its moldering garments closer about its gaunt frame. It knows that intruders are in the chapel above. Its arcane senses can detect them; it can smell their blood. The figure's thin pale lips draw back from its fangs. The waiting is over. Now it is time to feed.

This is the way vampires (and undead in general) are usually played in AD&D® games: as lurking creatures of the darkness whose one goal in (un)life is to kill heroes. When they're not draining blood or life levels, the undead are usually hanging around in dusty crypts, doing nothing except waiting for a hapless intruder to wander by so they can drain blood or life levels. It's a rather empty existence, and it makes you wonder if vampires and their undead kin haven't been shortchanged.

The undead aren't the only ones who've been shortchanged, of course. DMs who play powerful but one-dimensional undead are cheating themselves and their players of some great role-playing. Remember, high-powered undead are free-willed and are often as intelligent, if not more so, than many of the PCs who hunt them. Liches and vampires have supra-genius and exceptional intelligences, respectively, and even spectres have high intelligence. Here we have creatures who were once humans or demihumans, but have undergone a change and now must come to terms with new powers, new limitations, and immortality. What must their world-views be like? What goals and aspirations do they have? What motivates a vampire?

This article points out some of the options that DMs have when handling

ghosts, liches, and vampires. Many of these options are based on representations of undead in fiction and cinema; others are logical outgrowths of the creatures' characteristics as described in the *Monstrous Compendium*. Scattered throughout this text are concrete examples of atypical undead. DMs should feel free to mix and match options or replace them with ideas of their own.

Ghosts

According to the *Monstrous Compendium*, ghosts are the souls of creatures who were either so evil or so emotional during life that, upon death, they were cursed with undead status. Their central motivations are usually revenge (a desire to “get even” with people who wronged them during life) or the discharge of obligations or obsessions that drove them while alive. These obsessions might have driven these beings to their deaths.

Revenge is an easy motivation to role-play, but only when the DM knows exactly what happened to generate such hatred in the ghost. Obvious examples involve a person who was murdered by another or was put into a situation in which death was inevitable. Thus a ghost might be motivated by a desire to kill its murderer or the superior officer who sent it on a suicide mission.

Other situations are a little more tricky. It's been said that love and hatred are closely allied emotions, very similar in their depth and power. This offers a convenient “character tag” for ghosts in the AD&D world. For example, take the case of a person hopelessly in love with another (in literature, this is often a young girl who's fallen for a heartless cad). When the girl realizes that her love is unrequited, she falls into despair and kills herself. Her passion is so strong, even in death, that her soul remains bound to the Prime Material and Ethereal planes as a ghost. The ghost might respond to this situation in one of two distinct ways; however, each is based on the desire to kill

Undying love: In the first scenario, the ghost doesn't hate the love interest at all. If only she can be reunited with her beloved (so she believes), she can persuade him to love her. Unfortunately, since the

ghost is dead and her beloved isn't, the only way this reunion can come about is if her love interest dies as well. Think it through: The poor, despairing girl finds existence without her beloved intolerable. She responds by killing herself, terminating her existence and her despair. But then she finds that death doesn't bring oblivion after all; consciousness and despair remain. This realization might be enough to unhinge even the most stable of psyches—and a mind that would choose suicide as an escape from pain probably isn't particularly stable. Thus the trauma of death, and the realization that the end of life isn't the end of pain could easily unhinge the ghost's reason.

In this case, the ghost could be role-played as a tragic, pathetic figure, adding a new twist to the phrase “undying love.” Her undead status is such that anyone who sees her is subject to *fear*, and anyone she touches is aged by 10-40 years, but she has no desire to inflict these horrific effects on anyone. She won't actively attack anyone other than her beloved, either physically or through her *magic jar* power, unless attacked first. She would probably try to communicate with anyone who came near, asking pathetically for information on her beloved and asking that the intruders take a message to him, begging him to dwell with her forever.

If she encounters her beloved, she'll probably beg him to come with her, an invitation he would certainly refuse. Her response would depend on his reactions. If he insulted the girl or demeaned her “love” for him, she could easily fly into a rage and attack him or anyone nearby. If he didn't, she might concentrate her attentions on trying to kill him alone.

An attack on the lover brings about an interesting role-playing opportunity: How would the ghost respond when she saw the aging effect her touch had on her beloved? A sensitive ghost might be horrified at seeing her beloved aging before her eyes, and might stop the attack. She might simply withdraw to the Ethereal plane and spend the rest of eternity wallowing in her own despair. A more selfish personality wouldn't care what ravages her attentions were having on her beloved and continue to attack him until he died.

Undying vengeance: William Congreve said it best: “Heaven has no rage, like love to hatred turned, nor Hell a fury, like a woman scorned.” What's true for a woman is true for a man. The ghost's suicide might not be an attempt to escape from pain, but rather an act of anger, a spiteful “grand gesture.” In this case, anger, quickly turning to hatred, will be the ghost's primary motivation. His hatred

might easily extend to everyone (after all, they're alive and he's not), driving him to attack anyone who comes near. The ghost would, of course, show the greatest ferocity in attacking his one-time beloved, but others might attract more than their fair share of his wrath. Any other man who shows even the slightest attraction toward his beloved would be hated above all, as might others who have found the love that the ghost was denied. Thus, obvious lovers or man-and-wife couples would be among the ghost's preferred targets. In this scenario, the ghost wouldn't be a pathetic character, but a ravaging killer.

In either scenario, the ghost's goal would be achieved with the death of the love object. What follows depends on the alignments involved and on the DM's preferences as a storyteller. Ghost and beloved might end up on the same Outer Plane, where either true love might blossom or their enmity might continue. Alternatively, their spirits might go to totally different planes where they'd be separated for eternity. In both cases, once the ghost's goal is achieved, the spirit would fade away and never return.

Obsession: A ghost's obsession might run in a direction totally different from the pursuit of love (or revenge springing from unrequited love). As with haunts (*Monster Manual II*, page 74), people who die leaving a vital task unfinished might remain bound to the world by their own indomitable will or sense of duty.

Since a ghost is noncorporeal, the creature might be unable to discharge its obligation and might need the help of the living to complete the task. Such a ghost would probably try to communicate with living characters, trying to persuade or threaten them (depending on the creature's alignment when alive) into discharging the duty. The use of *magic jar* here is almost guaranteed in order to gain a physical body as a last resort.

Imagine the frustration of such a ghost. Most attempts to communicate would cause the potential helpers to flee in fear or to instantly attack. Since the ghost is duty-bound to complete its task, it would be forced to fight back, no matter how much it regrets the necessity.

Possible focuses for such an obsession might be a binding oath or other duty. Such a ghost could be role-played as a strong, almost noble (but obsessive) personality, like the spirit of Hamlet's father. Such a ghost can be found in Tanith Lee's novel, *Kill the Dead* (required reading for any DM who wants to add new depths to undead). The ghost would fade away forever as soon as its task was complete.

Spiritual anchors: A ghost might be bound to the world not by its own will, but by the existence of a particular object. In literature, this "spiritual anchor" is sometimes an item that was of great emotional importance to the ghost while alive, but more often it is a piece of the ghost's mortal body. In either case, the ghost's

psyche is somehow linked with this anchor. Destroying the anchor permanently destroys the ghost. While the anchor still exists, however, the ghost—even if apparently destroyed—will return and manifest itself again weeks or months later. A ghost is usually but not always aware of the importance of this anchor, though it often protects it to the best of its abilities.

"Anchored" ghosts have no great goal, whether revenge or the completion of a task, toward which they strive. Instead, they're simply here. Just as mortals fear death, either because it's the great unknown or because they hate the idea of nonexistence, anchored ghosts fear their own destruction. Although they know they're not really alive, they sometimes cling to the fiction that they live and that the memories of their death are actually nightmares. Such ghosts go through the motions of mortal life, trying to convince themselves that they never really died. They often frequent areas where people rarely come, since the reactions of intruders force them to recognize their undead status. Anchored ghosts will often attack intruders on sight as a way to remove these unpleasant reminders of their true nature.

Sometimes, other mortals will play along with this self-deception. A living person who was very close to the ghost while alive, particularly a parent or twin sibling, might be immune to the ghost's *fear* effect and might delude himself that the ghost never actually died (see the film comedy *High Spirits* for examples). Thus, adventurers might meet twin sisters, living far from any town where one sister is actually undead. Or they might find a widowed mother caring for and protecting her ghostly son. (Such mortals will try to drive away or kill anyone who tries to take their ethereal companion away from them, or even anyone who poses a threat to their fragile self-deception.) Again, such ghosts might be more pathetic than horrific.

Alignment: The *Monstrous Compendium* classes ghosts as lawful evil in alignment, but this reflects our prejudices more than it does the nature of ghosts themselves. The lawful component is appropriate for ghosts bound to this plane by an undischarged obligation, but ghosts with other motivations could easily have other alignments.

The evil component is more obviously a human perception. The merest touch from a ghost can kill an older individual, it's easy to see how this can be interpreted as an active antipathy to life. The ghost itself might have a totally different view of its own alignment; take, for example, the case of the jilted lover or the soldier whose duty was interrupted. In many cases, however, the definition of evil as given in the AD&D 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook* will apply: lack of recognition that what the creature does is destructive or disruptive, and the belief that people and things obstructing the creature's plans are mere

hindrances that must be overcome.

Many of these considerations could also be applied to the other noncorporeal undead, such as spectres or wraiths.

Liches



Liches are arguably the most powerful and most intelligent of all undead. All liches are mages or priests of great skill and power, and all are highly formidable opponents.

But must all liches be opponents? From the description in the *Monstrous Compendium*, it seems so. But a creative DM can ring in some interesting variations on the lich's personality.

Unperceived change: Horror literature contains many tales of people who were too involved in their pursuits, often magical research, to even notice their own deaths. Their concentration is intense enough to bind their spirits to their bodies, and to the Prime Material plane. Characters like this present fascinating possibilities for role-playing, and liches represent the best such candidates.

The *Monstrous Compendium* explains the process by which prospective liches achieve their undead status, and certainly this is the way most liches come into existence. The world is wide, however, wide enough to contain atypical liches as well. These atypical creatures are unaware of their true state or, like some ghosts, are unwilling to admit it. Perhaps at the time of their physical death, their concentration and willpower was intense enough to bind them to the material world, or perhaps the transition was the whim of a deity. In any case, NPCs like this might guess that "something has changed" only when they realize that they haven't eaten or slept for months or years, or when their familiars start hiding from them.

Initially, these "accidental liches" would have no reason to change their alignment or world-view. Thus PCs might encounter a kindly, reclusive mage still completely immersed in her research—but one whose body has taken on a withered, decayed appearance. Perhaps the researcher isn't

so kindly; her reaction to the interruption of her work might be a blinding rage that she is now uniquely able to vent on anyone unfortunate enough to be nearby. These accidental liches may be of any alignment and may vary in personality almost as much as living NPCs. DMs should remember, however, that only reclusive and obsessive personalities would ever get into this situation in the first place. (For an example, see the lich Azimer in the adventure "Lashan's Fall" from the DM's Sourcebook of the Realms, in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS™* boxed set.)

Facing the change: Eternity is a long time, and even the most single-minded researcher would eventually realize his true nature. The lich's reaction would vary from individual to individual. Some would be horrified and might go so far as to end their own existence. If they cannot face self-destruction so directly, perhaps they could enlist the help—voluntary or otherwise—of a band of doughty adventurers. One means to gain such unknowing "helpers" might be to spread rumors that a wealthy lich abides in a certain place (the lich's actual home), then wait for the "lichbusters" to come and finish the lich itself off. Other liches might send *charmed* intermediaries to actually hire adventurers capable of destroying them.

Other NPCs would see lichdom as a boon rather than a curse, focusing on their immortality and the whole of eternity in which to continue their work. Liches like these would be protective of this "gift" that fate has given them. Whatever their alignment, they would probably use their considerable powers to ward their homes and would fight furiously to ensure their continued existence.

Whatever their outlook, liches will find that eternity is a long time. Liches who don't destroy themselves or have themselves destroyed would eventually change their outlook. As they forget the day-to-day details of their mortal lives, they'd lose their sense of kinship with the living. More and more, the concerns of mortals would seem petty things, and the liches wouldn't concern themselves with mortal affairs. Such liches would eventually consider the death of a mortal as nothing important. What does a human lose when he's killed before his time, after all? Thirty or forty years, perhaps as many as fifty. How can that seem important to a creature who's existed for a thousand years and might continue for eternity? For this reason, most accidental liches will eventually swing further and further toward evil.

The key word in the previous sentence is "most." Some few liches might see the boon of immortality and their continually expanding power in a different light. They might decide that with privilege comes responsibility. From their reclusive retreat, they might use their great powers to further the cause of good or perhaps neutrality. Their actions would almost certainly be indirect, but even the indirect actions

of a creature as powerful as a lich would be significant.

Another consequence of accidental lichdom is that these creatures won't create a phylactery in which to store their life—force—at least, not until they've realized (or admitted) their true nature. Even then, certain liches won't bother.

Free will: The majority of liches have chosen and actively sought their current state. These are the individuals that use the process described in the *Monstrous Compendium* to achieve lichdom.

Why would a powerful mage or priest seek this rather horrific form of immortality? (Remember, the outcome isn't guaranteed, and the price of failure is instant death.) The motivation to take this gamble will certainly vary.

As an aging mage feels the chill winds of approaching death, he might decide to risk the chance of instant death, and the avoidance of perhaps a decade of diminishing faculties, senility, and pain, against the chance of gaining an eternity in which to continue his work. There are interesting nuances here. Does the prospective lich fear the waning of his abilities and eventual death? Or is what he fears the fact that his work might remain unfinished? Both motivations reflect different world views and different personalities for the lich. Dedicated researchers who choose to gamble death against the freedom to continue their work will probably share many characteristics with the accidental liches discussed earlier. Those who fear personal death will probably tend more toward evil in alignment; at least, the alignment shift will probably take place earlier.

The most common motivation for choosing lichdom is probably power. Again, however, there are various nuances that can be interesting to explore. What kind of power is the prospective lich seeking, and why is he willing to risk instant annihilation for that goal?

One candidate for voluntary lichdom is the despot of a country or region, a "magocrat" or autocrat who rules mainly by virtue of his magical prowess. The decision might be made when the despot starts to feel the ravages of age and realizes that his position as "President For Life" might be coming to an end. For an individual like this, there might not be too much of a choice. Age brings with it diminishing capacities, that in turn brings with it the possibility, developing into a certainty, that someone will eventually stage a coup. The despot might quickly decide that the possibility of becoming "President For Eternity" is worth any risk. If the process is successful, the lich-king can continue his rule, his authority backed up by his new power.

Despots rarely show concern for the lives and well-being of their subjects to begin with. How much worse this would be when the ruler is undead. A lich-king would be pragmatic in all its decisions, quite willing to "spend" an entire army if that's what it takes to achieve his goals.



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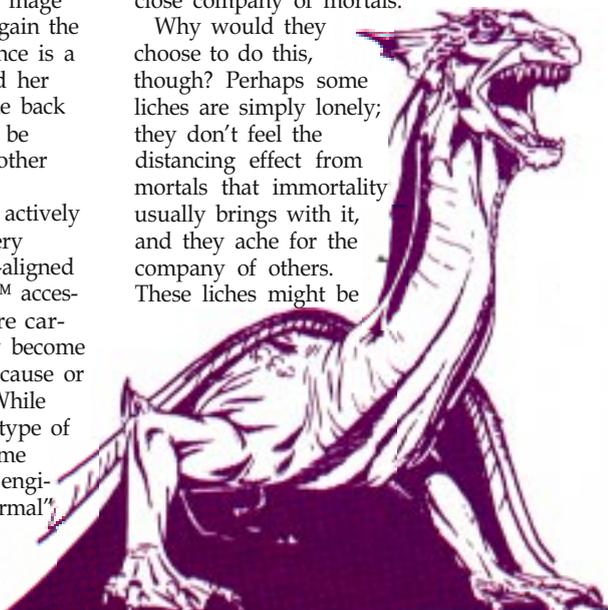
(After all, the dead could conceivably be animated and would thus be less likely to question orders than they were in life.)

There are other kinds of power than rulership, of course, such as the power to change the course of history. Powerful spell-casters might take the lichdom gamble in order to acquire power that they'd never have while alive. (For example, a magic-using ruler has been deposed by overwhelming outside forces. Although the desire for vengeance still burns in her heart, she recognizes that she's not powerful enough to ever turn the tables—at least, not while she's still alive. The mage might decide that risking death to gain the power to finally wreak her vengeance is a good gamble. After she's completed her revenge, the mage might try to take back the reigns of government or might be completely satisfied and go about other concerns.)

There's another kind of lich that actively sought its undead status but for very different reasons. This is the good-aligned archlich, from the SPELLJAMMER™ accessory, SJR1 *Lost Ships*. Archliches are caring individuals who've deliberately become undead so they can better serve a cause or protect a beloved being or place. While the archlich is classed as a unique type of monster, there's no reason why some good-aligned characters might not engineer their transformation into "normal" lichs.

Liches in society: Liches are almost exclusively played as reclusive monsters or as the rulers of evil empires. There's another possibility, of course: partial assimilation into society. Because of their incredible "life" spans, lichs have the opportunity to develop unique spells. Some lichs might develop dweomers that disguise their true nature: spells that mask the power to detect or affect undead, for example, or that temporarily counteract the lichs' *fear* aura. Using these spells, coupled with disguise spells like *change self* lichs could conceivably dwell in the close company of mortals.

Why would they choose to do this, though? Perhaps some lichs are simply lonely; they don't feel the distancing effect from mortals that immortality usually brings with it, and they ache for the company of others. These lichs might be



helpful, if sometimes irascible, purveyors of magical wisdom. Or maybe a lich's intricate plans require the unwitting aid of many people. (Remember, with the whole of eternity to play with, lichs can afford to be eminently patient. Their plans might take centuries to complete, and their day-to-day actions, when viewed without the long view of immortality, might not make much sense.)

Lichs who dabble in society are taking serious risks. While the population of an entire town might be unable to physically harm a lich, it can certainly slow or destroy any plans that the creature might be brewing. Only the most confident or heart-sick lich would take the chance.

Ars longa: When dealing with lichs, the old Latin aphorism *vita brevis, ars longa* could have a second translation: "Life is short, but the Art is longlasting." Although the concept is already discussed in the *Monstrous Compendium*, it's worth stressing again that a lich has literally unlimited time in which to research and develop new or "customized" versions of familiar dweomers. The nature of these idiosyncratic abilities depend on the lich's personality.

A power-driven lich, for example, would obviously concentrate on spells that increased its influence on those creatures around it. This kind of lich might wield enhanced versions of *mass charm* or *domination*, and combat spells of hideous lethality. A lich whose dominant emotion is scientific curiosity might have developed extended versions of scrying or divination spells such as *speak with dead* or *contact other plane*. Finally, a lich fascinated with the aesthetics and nuances of magic, rather than its eventual outcome, might have eccentric versions of familiar spells: *magic missiles* that look like multicolored sparks, or *fireballs* that explode accompanied by a musical tone, for example.

Like any other high-powered spell-casters, lichs can be great sources of new magical powers. A PC mage who acquired a lich's spellbook is in a marvelous position. Of course, getting the spellbook is no, easy task. Even a lich of the most benign personality will defend its spellbook with wards and traps, some of which might never have been seen before.

A "living" lich can also be a source for new spells, if the PCs are lucky enough to locate one with the right alignment, outlook, and personality. No matter how friendly the lich may be, the principles common to mortal spell-casters will hold true. Lichs won't freely reveal the details of spells that they know, particularly any "customized" dweomers they've developed. Everything will be *quid pro quo*; the lich might exchange a spell for another spell of equal level (and good luck finding a spell that the lich doesn't already know!) plus an interesting magical item. Acquiring something that a lich might accept as barter could develop into a series of adventures.

Vampires



Although not as powerful as liches, vampires can be even more interesting NPCs than their magically inclined kin. The recent overwhelming popularity of vampire-related books and movies show how compelling these creatures are. DMs who prefer the dark and labyrinthine trappings of psychological horror to simple-minded slash-'em-up combat could find few monsters better suited to that playing style than vampires. (DMs will also find the new AD&D RAVENLOFT™ supplement fits this style perfectly.)

“The Dark Trick”: In her cycle of vampire novels, Anne Rice uses the phrase “the Dark Trick” to describe the transition from life to vampirism. The circumstances of the Dark Trick, when and how it happens, as well as the nature of the victim can have a great effect on the personality of a vampire. Take a young, naive man, raised in a sheltered household, who fell prey to a vampire that was stalking the region. The man knew nothing about the vampire until it attacked and killed him. Compare this case with a determined vampire-hunter who was cut down by her quarry in the heat of battle. When the new vampires arise from their graves, their views of the world will be totally different.

The naive man might at first be totally unaware of his true nature. He might come to the (seemingly reasonable) conclusion that he actually never died but merely was badly wounded and then buried prematurely by his overzealous family. At first, he wouldn't understand why people run when he tries to explain to them their mistake, or he might decide that the townsfolk have wrongly assumed that he's “risen from the dead” (how ludicrous!). Evidence of his true nature would quickly build up, however: the fact that he doesn't cast a shadow or appear in a mirror, the fact that he feels an uncontrollable urge to return to his coffin when sunrise is imminent, and the steadily growing urge to feed. When he finally realizes his fate, the

shock might drive him mad, turning him into the ravaging monster that is the stereotypical vampire. Alternatively, he might hang onto his sanity but believe that since fate has decreed that he become a monster, he has no option but to act the way he thinks such a monster should act. A third possibility—and maybe the most interesting of the three—is that the poor wretch is unable to fully renounce the life he once had. A pathetic figure, the vampire “haunts” his old home, watching from the darkness and trying to pretend that he's still part of mortal life, if only as a spectator. Such a vampire would feed rarely and would never deliberately kill, stopping before he'd drained all his victim's life levels. Using his *charm* abilities, the vampire could easily make sure that his victims don't remember what happened to them, thus sparing them the emotional trauma they'd otherwise suffer (and, incidentally, protecting the vampire from detection). Pathetic or not, such a creature would be likely to viciously attack any vampire-hunters who came after him. After all, the adventurers are taking away even the semblance of his old life.

The intrepid vampire-hunter who rises as an undead would certainly have a different view of the world. Since she's very familiar with her one-time quarry, she'd immediately realize what happened. Her reaction would probably depend on her motivation for becoming a vampire-hunter in the first place. If she took up the career as a moral duty, to rid the world of vicious monsters, then the shock to her sanity would be profound: suddenly she's become exactly what she'd once dedicated herself to fight. She might easily go mad. Alternatively, the new vampire might make best efforts to destroy herself immediately. Since only the strongest-willed of vampires could overcome their “instinctive” revulsion to sunlight or running water, the creature might take the easier way out and enlist the (voluntary or involuntary) aid of adventurers, as was previously mentioned for liches. Or the vampire might continue to dedicate herself to her former life's work. She might use her powers as an undead to help her track down and destroy others of her kind. (See Tanith Lee's *Kill the Dead* for a portrait of such an undead ghost-hunter.)

But what if the one-time adventurer originally got into the vampire-bashing business for other reasons: the money, for example, or the adventure? The undead character might decide that being a vampire isn't that bad after all, since she's got a much better chance now of reaching her goals than she did when she was alive.

As with ghosts, the fact that vampires are described as chaotic evil says more about human perceptions than it does about the creature's true personality. “Chaotic” simply means that these creatures put their personal interests over those of the masses—understandable, considering that they're immortal. And

since “evil” is defined as “holding life in low regard,” a creature who must drain life force to survive could be classed as evil, despite its other behavior.

Vampirism is fun: In most role-playing games, the main motivation for creatures such as vampires is to simply kill the living. Why is this the be-all and end-all of a vampire's existence? Vampires are exceptionally intelligent, which means they're capable of abstract thought. They're also immortal. When you've got the whole of eternity spread out before you, the simple pursuits of draining innocent maidens and trashing adventuring parties would eventually grow stale. Immortality must be a pretty bleak picture if all you've got to look forward to is your next kill.

Assume that a character can make the transition to vampirism without being driven insane by moralistic shock and without otherwise becoming the stereotypical “exists to kill” vampire. What, then, would be the character's motivation? It can be almost anything.

Vampires have powers far beyond the capabilities of most mortals: exceptional strength, the ability to *charm* with a glance, superhuman combat abilities, the power to change to gaseous form or *polymorph* into a giant bat, etc. To the right kind of personality, these powers would be boons beyond price. The person would relish his new-found powers, constantly pushing their limits and “living” an existence of otherwise unattainable fun. (“Can I spy on Lady Maretha's mansion? Sure. Can I move the ceremonial cannon from the town square into the mayor's office? Why not?”) Feeding is still a necessity, but he would probably do it in the most humane way possible, never killing his victim and only rarely leaving any evidence behind. Fun-loving DMs could easily develop a vampire who'd fit well into the movie *Animal House*.

On a more serious note, a thief turned into a vampire would find her supernatural abilities tailor-made for her career. Who needs grappling hooks when you can *spider climb*, or needs lockpicks when you can assume gaseous form? A thief-vampire might cut a swath through the rich inhabitants of a city, cleaning out their valuables in daring raids that leave the constabulary scratching their heads. The vampire's den would be full of opulent furniture and fittings. (If the character couldn't enjoy luxury while alive, why not take advantage of the opportunity afterward?)

A compelling figure from many historical novels is the gentleman adventurer, the person who's as much at home in polite society as he is outside it (often way outside it). A vampire would make a perfect gentleman adventurer. A somewhat aloof manner and a very daunting reputation would keep others distant enough that they'd never learn the vampire's true nature, while the character's habit of dropping out of sight to go on adventures

would be a perfect cover for the vampire's "hunting trips." (Presumably, such a vampire would fast while within civilization, and then gorge himself once away from polite company.) Some of the vampire's acquaintances within the social milieu might suspect or know the creature's true nature, but not take any action because the vampire is such a "jolly good chap."

The gentleman adventurer vampire is quite a different creature from the typical monster described in the *Monstrous Compendium*. That rampaging killer "lives in areas of death and desolation where they will not be reminded of the lives they have left behind." The social vampire has come to the conclusion that he doesn't have to forego all the pleasures of his life after all. Social vampires soon learn ways to disguise their true nature. They'll avoid mirrors and brightly lit areas (where their lack of shadows might be noticed), and they'll devise plausible justifications for their "allergy" to garlic and their "moral offense" when they see openly displayed holy symbols. As with lichs, magically capable vampires have eternity in which to develop new spells. Thus a social vampire might be warded with dweomers that block powers that detect undead, and perhaps even calm the fears of dogs and other creatures.

Social vampires are well documented in literature. One of Anne Rice's vampire characters was a participant in Parisian aristocracy's social whirl, while another pursued a career as a rock star. Even the archetypal vampire, Count Dracula, proved himself a charming and debonair host when it suited his purposes. While multidimensional characters like these might exist in any given campaign world, the majority of vampires will be the superficial killers described in the *Monstrous Compendium*. DMs should use just enough "complex" vampires to make the PCs wonder what they're going to meet next.

Gifts of un-life: Why do vampires "work the Dark Trick" and create other vampires? The accepted theory, as stated in the *Monstrous Compendium*, is that vampires use chattel creatures as slaves and, if necessary, cannon fodder. There are other, more interesting possibilities, however.

How about a vampire who used to be a very social personality while alive and is now suffering from his enforced withdrawal from society? (In short, he's devastatingly lonely.) The idea of creating another vampire—a creature like him, someone he can share his thoughts and fears with—might become too attractive to resist. Unfortunately, since "secondary" vampires aren't truly free-willed, the lonely vampire wouldn't find the companionship he was seeking. In fact, he might start to see the secondary vampire as a horrible parody of the friend he sought: nothing more than a mirror or echo chamber, feeding back to him his own beliefs and thoughts.

Another possible reason for creating a

vampire is to "save" a loved one from death. Imagine the feelings of a sensitive vampire knowing that a relative or close friend is dying. The vampire is immortal and knows that he has the power to make the dying person immortal as well. The temptation to work the Dark Trick might become almost irresistible. Of course, once the deed was done, the master vampire would find the same horrible situation: the loved one, remembered as an independent personality, would have lost all free will and become a mindless slave of the master vampire. (Both these motivations for creating new vampires are worked through in Ann Rice's vampire cycle.)

The descriptions above assume that secondary vampires aren't free-willed entities. This is implied in the *Monstrous Compendium* entry, in the corrected version published in DRAGON® issue #150, but isn't stated explicitly. The entry merely says that "the new undead is under the complete control of its killer." The question remains: What form does this control take? Is the new vampire merely a mindless puppet? Is it controlled by some variation of the master's *charm* spell? Or does the new vampire follow the master's commands simply because it believes, rightly or wrongly, that the master is more powerful than itself? The latter two theories are the more interesting from a role-playing perspective, since they imply that the secondary vampire might somehow be able to escape the control of its creator. The possibilities are interesting. For example, a "social" vampire has created a secondary vampire. This secondary vampire is slowly resisting the control of the master and reverting to its true personality: a ravaging, heartless monster—the complete opposite, philosophically speaking, of the primary creature. (Again, Ann Rice explores this concept in her novels.) Alternatively, cunning PCs might be able to turn a secondary vampire against its evil master.

Good vampires: Can a vampire be good? Not according to the *Monstrous Compendium*, which states that a vampire is "a thing of darkness that exists only to bring about evil and chaos." But if we assume that these are "typical" vampires, and that atypical individuals exist, then the answer might well be "yes." Theoretically, a vampire isn't restricted to feeding on the life force of sentient creatures; it could feed on unintelligent creatures as well. Thus a vampire could "live" without ever having to kill a human or demihuman.

Imagine the case of a good-aligned human who fell prey to a vampire. While the first vampire existed, the new undead was under its sway, forced to commit horrifying and sickening acts. When the master vampire was destroyed, however, the secondary vampire became free-willed. How would it react? The *Monstrous Compendium* states that "In most cases, vampires do not lose the abilities and knowledge which they had in life when they become undead." Thus the secondary vampire might still remember his one-time

moral and ethical stance. Now that he's able to act freely, he might decide to use his powers to set right, at least partially, the damage that he and his master did. This creature could become a secret benefactor to a community: performing good deeds late at night (e.g., using his great strength to repair walls) and defending the village from marauding monsters. The townsfolk may never suspect the true nature of their benefactor. Those few who might have some suspicions would be careful to keep them silent, in case someone tries to destroy their benefactor. Since vampires—particularly magic-capable individuals—can often successfully "pass" for human, the vampire might even be known to some of the townsfolk, perhaps as "that strange hermit who lives in the cave."

Eternity is a long time, however, and vampires' attitudes would probably shift. Eventually, they'd lose their kinship with the living and consider the fates of mortals as petty things, unworthy of their attention. Thus, vampires too would eventually swing toward a passively evil alignment.

Conclusion

It's not necessary that every powerful undead in your campaign world have complex motivations. Sometimes motivation should take a back seat to convenience. Take Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, for example. What was Count Dracula's motivation? Nothing consistent, that's for sure. The sole purpose of his actions seemed to be to drive a good story. (Take, for example, when he crawled like a lizard down the outside of his castle, apparently just for the fun of it, since he could turn into a wolf, a bat, or a cloud of fog at will.) If the story you're telling as DM requires a straightforward, kill-crazy ghost or vampire, use one. What I've provided here are just suggestions, ways to throw a little further complexity at your players.

Many DMs won't feel the urge to use any of these suggestions. After all, undead are conveniently simple villains. Players and their PCs don't have to feel any moral qualms about destroying creatures that are played as thoroughly, unquestionably,* and unrepentently evil. Lots of DMs and players like to have at least some monsters where the instant response to sighting them is—and should be — "Kill it!" It's good to have something with which you can get into a knock-down, drag-out fight, and yet not feel guilty afterward. For these reasons, many players and DMs will always enjoy beating on undead guys.

For those DMs and players who enjoy a little more complexity—both moral and tactical—in their role-playing, atypical undead can be interesting and exciting. They add a few more decisions to the player characters' already confusing lives. When PCs meet a ghost, should they attack it or commiserate with it? When they encounter a lich, should they destroy it or exchange magical trivia?

It's your choice. Happy role-playing! Ω

Hammer and Stake

Let vampires put the bite on your Cthulhu investigators!

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Artwork by Thomas Baxa

Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU® game is sometimes referred to as a gothic horror role-playing game. However, in recreating the cosmic horrors of Lovecraft and his disciples, little space was devoted to the petty terrestrial horrors of man's imagination, the true gothic menaces. The scenario "The Rescue" in the first *Cthulhu Companion* (and the fourth-edition game rulebook) described one of the more traditional horrors, the werewolf, in great detail. This article expands the existing vampire rules so that an entire campaign can be based on the hunting and slaying of these legendary creatures. These rules can be used with RUNEQUEST® and other games based on Chaosium's BASIC ROLE-PLAYING system. The fourth-edition CALL

OF CTHULHU rulebook describes vampires briefly on page 131. Information from this source will be referenced herein but will not be repeated.

The vampires described here aren't taken verbatim from any single piece of literature. Instead, these rules reflect the aspects of vampirism most suitable for use in a role-playing game. In particular, this article attempts to recreate the flavor of the numerous vampire movies made by Hammer Films in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, as many gamers are familiar with these celluloid undead.

Two types of vampires are discussed in this article: the fledgling lesser vampires and their more experienced and much more powerful counterparts, the greater vampires. Lesser vampires are relatively weak, and their tactics reflect their inexperience and lack of finesse. After a few

years, these lesser creatures strengthen and become greater vampires. But quite often their lack of subtlety arouses suspicion, and they are hunted down and destroyed before they make the transition to greater vampires.

Becoming a vampire

The most obvious way of becoming a vampire is to be bitten by one. In some legends, the mere bite of a vampire is *not* enough to infect the victim with the curse of blood-thirst, although some Game Masters (GMs) might not let their players know that. The vampire must have killed the victim by completely draining all of his blood. If the proper steps are not taken, the corpse will rise within a week or two (for game purposes, 2d6 days) as a lesser vampire, which is described later.

Another way of becoming a vampire is



to be excommunicated by one's church. According to this belief, the body of the excommunicated person will never rest until it is accepted back into the church. In this case as well, the corpse arises as a lesser vampire within a few days of its burial.

The last method of becoming a vampire is one that should set any good CALL OF CTHULHU Keeper's creative gears in motion. The bodies of men and women who were purported to be sorcerers were said by legend to rise again to continue their evil doings. Needless to say, these creatures also need the blood of the living to continue this nefarious "afterlife." They, too, start off as lesser vampires.

Vampiric disabilities

The two types of vampires have a number of things in common, one of which is their aversion to garlic. This aversion prevents them from approaching any closer than 6' from a person wearing or brandishing garlic. The vampires take no damage from this substance; it merely irritates them in a manner similar to a severe allergic reaction. Vampires can (and probably will) use their hypnotic gaze to force offenders to drop the garlic.

Both types are also damaged by contact with holy items, in particular the Christian cross, the Star of David, and holy water. The cross or the star does 1d6 points of damage to a vampire per touch, and the vampire will try to avoid contact at all costs, usually keeping about 10' between itself and the offending object. As with the garlic, a vampire will probably use its hypnotic gaze to make the holder drop the item. A splash with holy water also does 1d6 damage per hit to the undead. These weapons should be in the arsenal of every competent vampire-hunter.

Two of Nature's most common phenomena spell doom for the vampire: sunlight and running water. Immersion in running water (and this means *immersion*, not throwing a bucket of water over it) and direct sunlight each causes a vampire one point of damage per round of contact. A vampire reduced to zero hit points as a result is permanently destroyed. Neither vampire type is able to cross running water or open sunlight for this reason.

Obviously, vampire hunters can use the above vulnerabilities to limit the movements of vampires. Blocking their routes with crosses, smeared garlic, or water courses suggest themselves.

Lesser and greater vampires cast no reflections, whether in mirrors or other glass surfaces or on the surface of water. Neither variety casts a shadow. Extrapolating from these properties, it can be assumed that their images cannot be captured using normal photographic techniques. (Characters with the Photography skill should be allowed a roll to see if they can come up with a way of catching these creatures on film. Before allowing this roll,

the character should have made at least one previously unsuccessful attempt to photograph a vampire.) On a similar note, the voices of vampires cannot be recorded by normal means. These problems limit a vampire's ability to move among humans and appear to be human itself.

A vampire needs to rest during daylight hours in a coffin or crypt that contains soil from the country of its birth. If this is not done, it loses 1d6 hit points each day until it either perishes or has rested on its home soil. These losses are regained only after the creature has slept on home soil and has then fed on blood. Its hit points are then restored by an amount equal to the number of CON it drains during a feeding (see "The lesser vampire: Feeding"); this continues until the vampire's hit points are restored to their original level. This same deterioration occurs if the vampire is unable to get its quota of blood (see "Feeding" under "The lesser vampire" and "The greater vampire"). Failure to obtain blood results in a loss of 1-6 hit points per day, and this loss can be halted and reversed as noted previously. The POW that the vampire drains from its victim by touch is added to its own POW total (though a vampire still has a SAN of zero, like all monstrous creatures).

A wounded vampire regains all hit points lost from combat within 24 hours, provided it rests on home soil as detailed above. If damaged but not brought to zero hit points, it is quite able to defend itself during the daylight hours. Its only daytime supernatural powers, however, are its gaze attack and the related "blood slavery" telepathy, both of which are discussed later (the latter in the section "Victims of vampirism"). The vampire can still attack physically, of course. If brought to zero hit points, the vampire is completely helpless and must revert to a smoky, foggy, or misty incorporeal form, returning to its coffin until fully regenerated. Once inside the coffin, the vampire can only call its "blood slaves" or use its gaze to fend off vampire-hunters; otherwise, it is quite vulnerable to destruction.

One of the most dreadful abilities of both types of vampires is the power to hypnotize anyone catching their gaze. The vampire can use this ability on any one target of its choice that is able to see its eyes, and the undead must be successful in a POW vs. POW struggle against the target. Gaze attacks are resolved at the beginning of the round and if the vampire fails, it is still allowed another action besides a gaze (attack, short movement, etc.) at the very end of the round. The target can try to avert his eyes from the vampire's gaze by rolling his POW \times 5 or less on 1d100 each time the vampire makes such an attempt. However, this allows any physical attacks made by the vampire on that character to be at + 10% to the attack roll. If the victim is unable to avert his eyes in time and the vampire makes the

POW vs. POW roll, this victim has been hypnotized. This hypnotizing effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to the vampire's POW, or until the victim is physically disturbed in some way (such as being hit by a successful attack or being vigorously slapped, etc., but *not* by being bitten by the vampire). The effect allows the vampire to give the victim unspoken commands that he will then carry out. A command for overtly suicidal behavior breaks the spell, but a command for attacking one's colleagues does not. Only one victim at a time can be so held by the vampire; an attempt against someone else automatically frees the first. Most vampires use this ability to force their opponents to drop their guard (especially if that guard includes garlic or holy items).

The lesser vampire

Means of destruction: The lesser vampire, in addition to the vulnerabilities discussed above, takes minimum damage from and cannot be impaled by normal weapons of any kind. However, if struck with an impaling roll in the chest by a wooden weapon such as a stake, sharpened staff, or the like, they are immediately destroyed. Also, if struck by an impaling roll to the head with a long-bladed weapon such as a sword, battle-axe, or similar weapon, they are immediately decapitated and destroyed. If you are not using the hit-location tables from the *Cthulhu Now* supplement, allow a 25% chance of striking the chest and a 5% chance for the head; you may double these percentages if the Investigators state they are aiming for these specific locations. Lesser vampires take normal damage from but are not impaled by silver or magic weapons. Fire affects them normally, but it does not destroy them.

To summarize methods for destruction: decapitation; wooden stake through the heart; exposure to sunlight; immersion in running water; prolonged failure to rest on home soil; prolonged failure to feed.

Shapechanging: Lesser vampires have only one form of this power, and it is assumed only involuntarily, when the creature is brought to zero hit points by nonfatal means. This is its smoky incorporeal form. The vampire is able to pass through very small cracks or openings to get to its coffin to rest and regenerate when in this form.

Feeding: A lesser vampire must feast on blood three times per week, or about every other day. A successful attack drains 1d4 each of CON and POW from its victim per round of feeding. This blood can be taken from the bodies of animals as well as humans, but this is only done in extreme emergencies as the vampire prefers humans. The lesser vampire will usually try to hypnotize its victims first; if this fails, it will batter them into unconsciousness or submission.

Behavior and tactics: Lesser vampires

might resort to drinking nonhuman blood, which would sicken greater vampires. For the most part, the lesser variety is driven by animal desires and is likely to make foolish mistakes in its lust for blood. The results of the lesser vampire's loss of humanity is its loss of APP, as illustrated in the Lesser and Greater Vampires' Statistics table. They are not totally stupid, however; lesser vampires often choose weak victims such as women and children to assure their own relative safety. The lesser vampire is more likely to create other vampires because of inexperience, eagerness, blood lust, etc., than the more reserved greater vampire, though they have less of a chance to control their victims (as noted later). They usually don't create other vampires willingly, of course, for this draws too much attention and "crowds the marketplace." If another vampire is inadvertently created, the original one may try to destroy it to keep the competition down.

Skills: For the most part, the lesser vampire's skills are the same as they were during the creature's life. As time passes, increases occur in the subject's Agility (Climb, Dodge, Jump), Stealth (Hide, Sneak), and Perception (Listen, Psychology, Spot Hidden, Track) skill areas. During its stint as a lesser vampire, Manipulation, Communication, and (to a lesser extent) Knowledge skills remain relatively constant. Some penalization in the Communication skills might not be a bad idea, due to the loss of APP ("Isn't that Yorga fella kinda creepy? I mean, he's so *pale*."). In combat, lesser vampires attack as per the details in the CALL OF CTHULHU game's fourth-edition rulebook, on page 131.

The transition: Add together the STR, CON, INT, POW, and DEX scores the vampire had when it was alive, then subtract the total from 100. This gives you the number of months the vampire must remain a lesser creature before becoming a greater vampire.

The greater vampire

Means of destruction: In addition to the vulnerabilities discussed in the text on lesser vampires, greater vampires take no damage whatsoever from normal weapons (with the exception of impaling strikes to the chest with wooden weapons, as per lesser vampires above). They do take minimum damage and no impaling strikes from silver or magic weapons.

To summarize the ways of killing greater vampires: exposure to sunlight; immersion in running water; prolonged failure to rest on home soil; prolonged failure to feed; or a wooden stake through the heart *plus* either burning, decapitation, or exposure to sunlight or running water (the stake alone merely keeps it immobile, decomposes it to the bare bones, and holds it *completely* powerless until the stake is removed).

Shapechanging and summoning: The

gaseous incorporeal form discussed for lesser vampires must be assumed by a greater vampire when it is brought to zero hit points by nonfatal means; this form can also be taken at will by the greater vampire. This monster can also assume the form of a wolf or large bat at will. This process takes a round to complete. While in these forms, the vampire cannot use its gaze but retains its other immunities and vulnerabilities. While in mist form, the vampire is immune to all forms of damage except magical weapons and attacks until it changes form again. When in human or animal form, it can summon each of the following creature types once per 24-hour period: 2d6 large bats, 2d6 rat packs, or 1d3 wolves. These creatures are subject to availability in the area, rats or bats being usually much more accessible in most places than wolves. These animals usually arrive within 3d6 rounds and flee when they have lost more than 50% of their numbers.

Feeding: The greater vampire is able to control its urges for blood to some degree. It needs to feed only once per week, but the greater vampire absolutely will not drink the blood of anything less than a human. As it drains 1d6 + 1 POW and 1d6 + 1 CON from its victim, it must be relatively careful and in control of its urges or it will create new vampires every time it feeds. This draining effect makes the greater vampire more likely to be able to control its victims (see later), making for more frequent visits to these unfortunates. The vampire's feeding is often facilitated by hypnotizing or charming its victims or, failing that, by pummeling them into submission.

Behavior and tactics: Because it has a greater degree of control over its bloodlust, the greater vampire is a far more subtle opponent than its lesser counterpart. With a few exceptions, the greater vampire is infinitely more refined and graceful in its appearance, and definitely more attractive and charismatic; this behavioral refinement is illustrated by the greater vampire's increase in APP. Like the lesser creatures, the greater vampire usually refuses to make its victims into new vampires. If the vampire does, it will probably be for some perverse form of vengeance against said victim, and eventually the vampire will have one of its non-vampiric servants or victims destroy this unfortunate one. Those whom the greater vampire unwittingly infects with vampirism will also be dispatched by his servants.

Few opponents are more dangerous or more alluring than the greater vampire. If it feels that it is soon to be discovered, it will create several new vampires before making its escape to safer environs. This way it not only creates further menaces for its pursuers to deal with, it also leaves behind seeds that may grow into a powerful alliance as well as a bitter form of revenge.

Skills: As a rule, most of the Agility skills of a greater vampire should be at least doubled from its "living" scores to reflect its ability to scale steep inclines, make fantastic leaps, and perform other such feats. This does not extend to such skills as Swimming and Boating, for obvious reasons. Stealth and Perception skill areas should probably be doubled from previous "living" scores. Knowledge skills will probably increase considerably as well due to the additional EDU point (and the accompanying 15 skill points) it receives for every additional 10 years of its "life." A greater vampire may still be weak in Manipulation and Communication skills, and only one or two attack forms other than punching or grappling should have increased very much. Greater vampires attack as do lesser vampires but with a 15% bonus to all of their physical attack forms.

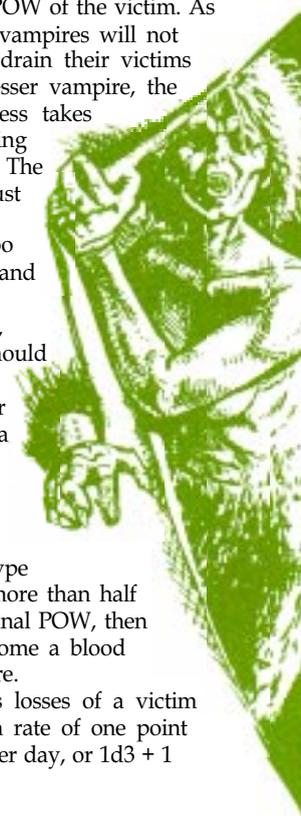
Victims of vampirism

As we saw earlier, a vampire can create a new vampire by completely draining a victim of blood. But if the vampire is very careful or very lucky, it can make one of its victims a slave to its will, as if the creature's gaze attack were permanently in effect on that person.

For this reason, the losses of CON and POW must be carefully tracked for each of a vampire's victims. When a vampire successfully subdues a victim by gaze or by fist, it then bites that victim. The GM should roll one dice of the appropriate type (1d4 for lesser, 1d6 + 1 for greater) each round and subtract the result from both the CON and POW of the victim. As stated earlier, most vampires will not intentionally try to drain their victims completely. For a lesser vampire, the blood-draining process takes 1-3 rounds, depending on the victim's size. The greater vampire must be more careful to keep from killing too many of its victims and making them into vampires. For them, about 1-2 rounds should suffice. If a victim's POW or CON is ever brought to zero by a vampire's draining attack, that person dies and becomes a lesser vampire. If a vampire of either type drains a victim of more than half of that victim's original POW, then that person has become a blood slave to that vampire.

The characteristic losses of a victim are regenerated at a rate of one point to POW and CON per day, or 1d3 + 1

Luck rolls and (more importantly) hit points.



A blood slave is kept in mental contact with its vampiric master at all times. This mental contact merely allows the sending of messages between the two minds, not visual or audial sensations. The victim will follow any command the vampire gives provided the order doesn't involve suicidal behavior as per a gaze attack. However, the blood-slave effect is permanent and is usable by the vampire during the day, usually to aid the vampire if its resting place has been found. This contact can be broken only by the destruction of the controlling vampire and is effective at any distance.

A victim slain by a vampire's blood draining (i.e., brought to zero POW or CON) arises within 2d6 game days as a lesser vampire, independent of the greater vampire's control. There are ways to avoid this, most notably the grisly method of staking the defenseless creature before it arises. Another successful method would be cremation, provided the undead victim has not yet initially risen from its grave. More subtle methods such as prayer vigils or the use of holy items or garlic might be successful, according to the GM's wishes, but this is not recommended. Vampire exterminating should be a dirty, gruesome business.

Sanity and vampires

The various aspects of vampirism can affect the SAN of the viewer. Seeing a lesser vampire and knowing it to be such costs 1d6 SAN unless a SAN roll is made, in which case there is no loss; a greater vampire requires a roll for a possible loss of 1d8 SAN (or 1 SAN if the roll is made). If the vampire was known in life to the witness, an additional loss of 1d4 (or 1) SAN is taken. Being bitten by a vampire (of either type) requires a SAN roll; 1d4 is lost, or 1 point is lost if the SAN roll is made. Seeing a vampire feed on another human being costs 1d3 SAN unless a SAN roll is made, in which case no SAN is lost.

Participating in the staking of a new vampire that has not yet risen also requires a SAN roll. If the roll is successful, the character loses only 1 SAN and can continue the procedure; if the roll fails, that character loses 1d4 SAN and cannot take part in the staking at that time. At least 1d10 x 5 minutes must pass before that character can get up the nerve to try again, at which time another SAN roll must be attempted; there is no loss for the

second and subsequent SAN rolls, but if they, too, fail, this weak-willed individual must wait another 1d10 x 5 minutes and then attempt yet another SAN roll, continuing this process until the SAN roll is made, someone else stakes the vampire-to-be, or the vampire-to-be wakes up!

Staking any already risen vampire (of either type) costs 1 SAN if the roll fails, but the character is still able to participate; if the roll is successful, there is no loss. Staking a vampire, risen or not, who was known in life to the one doing the staking requires a roll for a SAN loss of 1d6 (or 1), and if the roll fails the character cannot immediately take part in the act. A character with a failed roll must make SAN rolls every 1d10 x 5 minutes as before, but each failed roll still causes a loss of 1 SAN. Viewing the disintegration of a vampire due to most usual methods of vampire-killing costs 1d3 or zero SAN, depending on the success or failure of the SAN roll.

On the other hand, destroying a lesser vampire restores 2d4 SAN to those who took part in its execution, while the demise of a greater vampire gains 2d6 SAN for each of his killers. The Keeper may also wish to give an additional point of SAN for each nonplayer character blood slave freed by a vampire's death.

Vampires in campaigns

When using vampires in CALL OF CTHULHU adventures, note that these rules are by no means carved in stone. The Keeper can and should tinker with these ideas to create a few unique vampires to be encountered in addition to those described herein. Imagine, for instance, a vampire who is unaffected by the usual banes detailed above (sunlight, holy items, running water, etc.) until the night on which it must feed, at which time it becomes a sort of bestial "were-vampire." Or picture an atheistic vampire immune to religious trappings such as holy water and holy symbols, but otherwise like the undead described in this article. Or perhaps a vampire unaffected by sunlight and with no special powers during the day, but in all other respects like the vampires described above. Using this article as a guideline, the possibilities are virtually endless.

One of the most important jobs of the prospective vampire-hunter is cutting through all the myth and legendry surrounding these creatures and finding their true banes. Most methods for destroying

vampires are known to anyone with an Occult skill of 15% or more, while the more obscure means (such as the fact that greater vampires are not slain by staking alone) are known to those with an Occult skill of 30% or more. The methods for fending off vampires (garlic, cross, etc.) are known to anyone with a skill level better than 5%. (These figures may seem rather low to some, but remember that we in the 1990s have had 60 years of vampire films to "teach" us about the ecology of the vampire. Folk in the 1920s were limited to written sources of vampire lore. Keepers running campaigns set in the 1990s may wish to lower these minimum skill levels by 5% or so to reflect the Investigators' "education" via the cinematic vampire.) Most of this information can be found at a nearby library with a couple hours research and a few successful Library Use rolls.

It should be apparent that vampires need to change their feeding grounds every so often to avoid suspicion. Sometimes they may be forced to move because suspicion has already been aroused. Vampires almost always have some sort of human slave or contact to take care of major travel arrangements; this is especially true of movements across bodies of water. These slaves are usually victims of the vampire's POW-draining that have been promised eventual full vampirhood for their aid. These slaves often transport several coffins for their vampiric masters, as these monsters tend to have several spread about their hunting and haunting grounds.

A final note: When a vampire gets in a free-for-all with the PCs, if at all possible just knock them around until they're unconscious. Then have the vampire bite 'em. If it suits your needs, you should try to make one of your PCs (or at the very least an important or powerful NPC) into a slave of a vampire. This may involve fudging the die rolls during the vampire's blood-draining (it wouldn't do to kill the Investigator too quickly; just make him and his companions squirm). The characters will then have an even better reason to hunt down the nefarious bloodsucker, to free both their friend and the world of this menace. Then again, if the vampire does happen to kill one of the Investigators, the remainder of the party will have to deal with the victim in addition to the original horror. Imagine the horrible scene when the Investigators set out to stake their former colleague!

[Other recent articles on vampires that have appeared in DRAGON® Magazine include: "Hearts of Darkness" and "A Touch of Evil," in issue #126 (on AD&D® game vampires); "The MARVEL®-Phile," in issue #126 and in this issue (on MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game vampires); and "Fangs Alot!" in issue #150 (on AD&D 2nd Edition game vampires).] Ω

Lesser and Greater Vampires' CALL OF CTHULHU® Game Statistics

Characteristic	While living	As lesser	Lesser's average	As greater	Greater's average
STR	3d6	3d6 + d6	14	(3d6 + d6) x 2	28
CON	3d6	3d6 + d6	14	(3d6 + d6) x 2	28
SIZ	2d6+6	2d6+6	13	2d6+6	13
INT	2d6+6	2d6+6	13	2d6+6	13
POW	3d6	3d6	10-11	3d6 x 2	21
DEX	3d6	3d6	10-11	3d6 x 1.5	16
APP	3d6	3d6 - d3	8-9	3d6 - d3 + d6	12-13
HP (average)	12	-	14	-	21

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Out of the Shadows...

... and into your campaign come three shady creatures



by Tom Moldvay

shadow: something without reality or substance; imaginary vision . . . a ghost; apparition.

New World Dictionary of the American Language

The shadow is an invented monster, one created specially for the AD&D® game and not directly based on traditional sources of mythology and legends (though its inspiration is there). The word "shadow" is sometimes used as a synonym for a ghostly apparition, so it is an appropriate name for a monster type. The gaming logic is elemental. In underground dungeons lit by torchlight, there will always be shadows. Why not have some of the shadows attack the characters every once in a while? A monster could thus be hidden in a room, in plain sight, to give characters an occasional nasty surprise.

In the history of the game, shadows were not always a sort-of undead. The monster was introduced in *Greyhawk*, Supplement I of the original, pamphlet-sized D&D® rules (now usually referred to as the "classic" edition of the game), by Gary Gygax and Rob Kuntz. In *Greyhawk*, shadows were described as "non-corporeal intelligent creatures . . . [that] hunger after the life energy of living things." They were, however, "not 'Undead' *per se*" (pages 34-35).

When Gary Gygax wrote the first *Monster Manual*, he decided it was more logical to make shadows a type of undead. Shadows became "horrible undead creatures . . . [who] . . . exist primarily on the negative material plane" (page 86). The change helped the cleric class by giving it another kind of undead that it could turn. The function of intelligent, malign, non-undead shadows was taken over by the shade in the *Monster Manual II*.

In the *Monstrous Compendium*, shadows

are still the undead of the original *Monster Manual*. They are merely described in more detail, in keeping with the AD&D 2nd Edition game format. For example, the usual details of shadow habitat, society, and ecology are included. According to the *Monstrous Compendium*, shadows "appear to have been magically created, perhaps as part of some ancient curse." The listing also gives a theoretical means for restoring PCs changed into shadows.

The dichotomy of shadows continues. The D&D® game is strictly based on the original ("classic") rules. When I edited the second edition of the Basic D&D rules, and Frank Mentzer edited the third edition of the same rules, we both kept shadows as non-undead monsters. Thus, in the AD&D game, shadows are undead; in the D&D game, they are not. The final decision whether or not to class the monster with the undead depends on the DM's needs. For some campaigns, having more sorts of undead is useful; for other campaigns, it is a hindrance.

The inspiration for shadows as undead monsters comes from Greek mythology. As Edith Hamilton, in *Mythology* (pages 42-43), notes: "In Homer the underworld is vague, a shadowy place inhabited by shadows. Nothing is real there. The ghosts' existence, if it can be called that, is like a miserable dream." This Homeric conception better fits the horrid existence of the undead than it does a true afterlife, as we think of it.

The realm of Hades in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is not a pleasant place. The dead, mere shadows of their former selves, wander aimlessly through gloomy caverns, across cold wastes, and over meadows filled with pallid, ghostly flowers. The dead are forever alone, doomed to a phantom existence and trapped with their faded memories. Precise details of this netherworld are scarce, for few ancient writers cared to dwell on it.

One thing we do know is that all ghosts had an irresistible craving to drink blood. In the *Odyssey*, Homer described how Odysseus consulted the dead prophet Teiresias, once a holy man of Thebes. Following Circe's instructions, Odysseus sailed across the river Ocean, which encircled the world. On the far side he beached his ship on Persephone's shore, where stood the entrance to the dark realm of Hades.

Journeying deep into Tartarus, Odysseus and his crew took living sheep as sacrifices to entice the ghost of Teiresias to appear. Odysseus first dug a grave-size pit. He then killed the sheep and filled the pit with their blood. The ghosts of the netherworld rushed to the pit, thirsty for a drink. Odysseus and his men drew their swords and held off the massed ghosts until Teiresias finally arrived.

The dead prophet drank his fill and, as he did so, became more substantial and looked more like a living man. His full memories returned, and he was able to answer all of Odysseus's questions. Teiresias prophesied Odysseus's further wanderings, gave him sage advice (that was often ignored), and held out a ray of hope that, eventually, Odysseus would return home and be reunited with his beloved Penelope.

Later classical writers modified this primitive gloomy afterlife. They defined the world of the dead more clearly as the place where the evil are punished and the good receive their just rewards.

The allusion in classical mythology to ghosts as "shadows" is reflected in most dictionary definitions of "shade." The usual definitions of "the shades" in this sense is: "the world of the dead; nether world; Hades" or "the disembodied spirits of the dead, collectively" (*New World Dictionary of the American Language*). The Homeric vision of the dead also inspired the following undead monster for the AD&D game:

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the skotos (*skotos* is Greek for darkness or shadow).

The monster format used throughout this article, while essentially the same as that of the AD&D 2nd Edition rules, does differ slightly. These changes are used:

1. "TREASURE" lists both a percentage (the old "% IN LAIR" value) and a treasure-type letter. For example, "30% B" means there is a 30% chance the monster (if randomly selected) will be in its lair, and it has treasure-type B.

2. The subcategory of "Ecology" has been left out since such a category is essentially meaningless when applied to the undead, who contribute nothing to living ecologies.

Skotos

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Any usually subterranean*

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*

ORGANIZATION: *Roving bands*

ACTIVITY CYCLE: *Night or darkness*

DIET: *Living beings*

INTELLIGENCE:

Average (8-10)

TREASURE: *5% E*

ALIGNMENT: *Any evil*

NO. APPEARING:

3-30 in wilderness;

1-10 in dungeons

ARMOR CLASS: *4*

MOVEMENT: *12*

HIT DICE: *5*

THAC0: *15*

NO. OF ATTACKS: *1*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *1-10*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *None*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Hit points increase*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Special*

SIZE: *M (5-6' tall)*

MORALE: *Fearless (20)*

XP VALUE: *420*

Skotos are spirits that have broken free of the netherworld and now roam the world of the living as undead. They form hunting packs to better swarm over their

prey. Skotos look like pale, shadowy versions of normal beings. They can be of any intelligent race and any evil alignment, for only evil creatures would voluntarily leave the afterlife to prey upon the living.

Combat: A skotos is drawn by fresh blood, which it consumes. As it absorbs the blood, it grows stronger (it absorbs blood even from the wounds it inflicts in combat against living creatures). The skotos gains a number of hit points equal to the damage it inflicts in combat; thus, a skotos that hits for 8 hp damage gains 8 hp, up to its maximum hit-point total (40). Note that the hit points are not permanently lost by the victim, who still heals normally.

In a normal encounter, skotos as a group have a 75% chance to hide in shadows successfully and thus surprise their prey. Skotos encountered during or immediately after a bloody conflict will be so frenzied by the sight of blood that they will make no attempt at concealment, immediately attacking any living creature in sight. Intelligent prey is, however, preferred.

As with many types of undead, skotos are not affected by *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, or cold-based spells, nor by poison or paralysis. Holy water causes 2-8 hp damage to them per vial, and a *raise dead* or *resurrection* spell will destroy a skotos. Any skotos reduced to zero hit points or less is forced back into the netherworld. A cleric's chance to turn a skotos is the same as for a ghost. Normal weapons will harm a skotos.

Habitat/Society: Skotos usually roam in bands composed of similar races and alignments, though different beings may band together in their common goal of feeding upon the living. Though they have escaped the netherworld, skotos generally inhabit places that remind them of it. Subterranean caverns and tunnels are preferred, although skotos bands will sometimes roam wilderness wastelands at night. While skotos are not harmed by sunlight, they dislike it intensely and will flee sunlight if at all possible.

Greek mythology is not the only traditional source for a horde of ghosts cursed

to eternal wandering. Gaelic (Scottish Highlands) mythology has tales of the *sluagh* (pronounced "slooa"), who are known as "the host of the unforgiven dead" or, more simply "the host." Descriptions of the *sluagh* vary, but most correspond closely to that given by Alexander Carmichael in the *Carmina Gadelica* (volume II, page 357). He noted that the "hosts" are the spirits of dead mortals. One informant told Carmichael that these spirits fly about in great clouds like starlings and return to the scenes of their earthly transgressions. On bad nights, say others, the hosts shelter themselves under russet docken stems and yellow ragwort stalks (two types of plants found in the Highlands). They fight aerial battles as men do on the earth, and may be heard and seen on clear frosty nights, advancing and retreating. After a battle, their crimson blood may be seen upon the rocks and stones. These spirits use poisonous darts to kill cats, dogs, sheep, and cattle. They can command men to follow them, and men obey, having no alternative. Such human victims slay and maim at the bidding of their spirit-masters, who in return treat them badly and without pity.

The picture of the *sluagh* that emerges is certainly full of horror. On a chill frosty night, one might see the host advance in the bright moonlight. Like fast-moving, low-lying storm clouds, boiling with iridescent blues and greens and reds as if the aurora borealis was trapped within, the host would wash across the night sky. Sometimes the rolling clouds would clash together and, when they did, bloody crimson rain would fall to stain the earth.

As the *sluagh* got closer, it could be seen that the "clouds" were actually masses of malignant bird-sized spirits. Each creature would look much like the negative photographic image of a sprite, with a dark shadowy body and iridescent wings. Each would be armed with a tiny bow with an equally tiny broad sword strapped to its waist. Trapped deep within the cloudlike host would be numerous zombies, magically born aloft and forced to obey every whim of the *sluagh* host.

Sluagh

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Cold or temperate/mountainous*

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*

ORGANIZATION: *Large roving bands*

ACTIVITY CYCLE: *Nocturnal*

DIET: *Living beings*

INTELLIGENCE: *Average*

TREASURE: *Nil*

ALIGNMENT: *Neutral evil*

NO. APPEARING: *10-100 in wilderness*

ARMOR CLASS: *5*

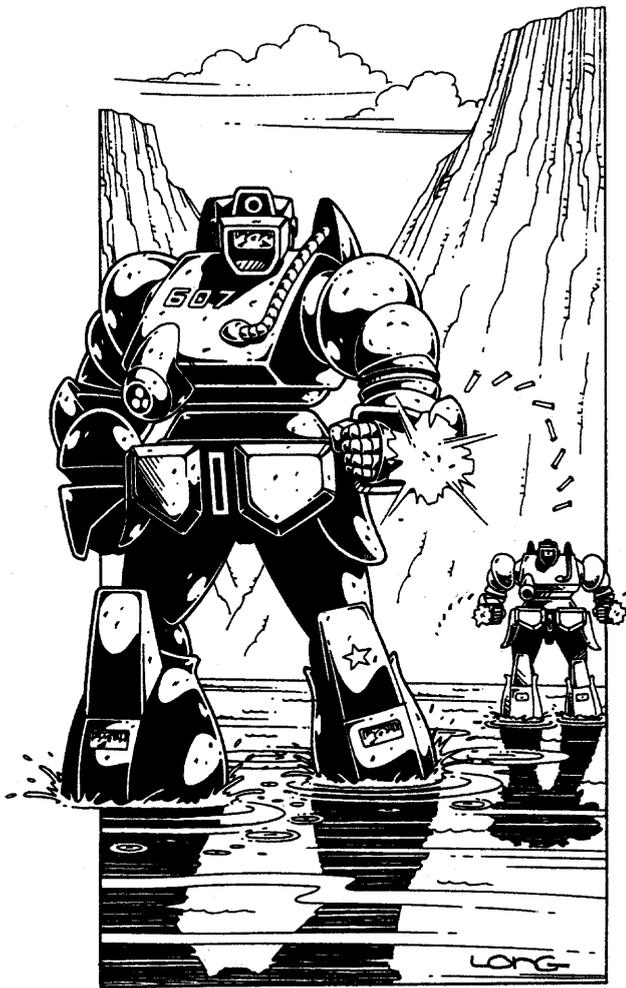
MOVEMENT: *3, F1 24 (B)*

HIT DICE: *2*

THAC0: *19*

NO. OF ATTACKS: *1*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *1-4*



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SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Spell-casting, poisoned missiles*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Control of zombies*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Special*

SIZE: *S (2' tall)*

MORALE: *Fearless (20)*

XP VALUE: *975*

The sluagh (also known as "the host") are undead spirits who roam the night in packs, warring with each other and preying on the living. A member of the sluagh looks much like a black sprite, with a dark shadowy body and gauzy iridescent wings. Seen at a distance at twilight, a group of sluagh looks like a roiling thundercloud.

Combat: The sluagh fire tiny bows with poisonous arrows, having a maximum range of 75 yards. A victim hit by an arrow must save vs. poison or die in 2-5 rounds (unless the poison is *slowed* or *neutralized*). The save need be made but once only; any character who survives such a poison attack is thereafter immune to sluagh poison. The sluagh can also fight with tiny swords that do damage equal to daggers.

The sluagh can cast the spells *animate dead* and *fly*, one spell per round, as often as they wish. Any character slain by the sluagh is turned into a zombie and is then taken along when the sluagh fly away. The sluagh are usually accompanied by 3-24 zombies already under their control.

The sluagh need not make normal morale checks. At the DM's discretion, any time the sluagh turn a victim into a zombie they may choose to fly away. The sluagh exist in a state of barely controlled rage. When not tormenting the living, they are likely to fight among themselves. Tales are told of great aerial battles fought between divisions of the sluagh host. Characters can often turn this animosity to their advantage, as large numbers of the sluagh are easily tricked into fighting each other and leaving the characters alone.

The sluagh are not affected by *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*; or cold-based spells, nor by poison or paralyzation. They take 2-8 hp each per vial of holy water and are destroyed by *raise dead* or *resurrection* spells.

A cleric has the same chance to turn the sluagh as he has to turn ghouls. In the same round, allow the cleric a chance to turn the zombie accompanying the sluagh.

Habitat/Society: Sluagh always travel in large war bands, being the undead forms of warlike elves who turned on their fellow elves and were slain in battle. They appear only in the wilderness, never in dungeon settings. The sluagh never appear during the day and always flee sunlight. Their preferred habitat is any terrain similar to the Scottish Highlands.

The sluagh are sometimes led by other types of undead. For every 20 sluagh there is one wraith lieutenant. For every 40 sluagh there is an additional vampire captain. If 80 or more sluagh are encoun-

tered, their commander will be a lich. Note that special undead leaders make an encounter with the sluagh more deadly and should be used only if the characters are of an appropriately high level (with at least some chance of a cleric of their level turning the leader).

In many cultures, a person's shadow is linked to that person with strong magical bonds. In *The Golden Bough*, a classic collection of folklore written in 1922, Sir James Frazer discussed shadows on pages 220-222. He wrote that "the savage regards his shadow as his soul, or at least a vital part of himself. As such it can become a source of danger to him." If a primitive man's shadow was trampled, struck, or stabbed, he felt the injury as if it were done to himself; if the shadow was pulled away from him entirely, the man believed he would die. Magicians on the island of Wetar, said Frazer, could make a man ill by stabbing his shadow.

In the Banks Islands in the Canadian Arctic are remarkably long stones called "eating ghosts." because dangerous ghosts were believed to live in them. If a man's shadow touched one of these stones, the ghost drew his soul out so that the man died. Such stones were therefore set in houses to guard them. A messenger sent to a house by an absent owner had to call out the name of the sender to keep the watchful ghost from attacking.

When the lid was about to be placed on the coffin at a funeral in China, the bystanders stepped back or even moved to another room, to avoid endangering their health by allowing their shadows to be enclosed in the coffin. When the coffin was about to be lowered into the grave, bystanders stepped away so their shadows did not fall into the pit. Grave-diggers and coffin-bearers avoided these dangers by tying strips of cloth tightly around their waists to keep their shadows attached.

Animals, too, were believed to be harmed or to bring harm by means of their shadows. A snail from the hills of Malaya was believed to suck the blood of cattle through their shadows; the cattle grew lean and sometimes died from blood loss. It was once believed in Arabia that if a hyena trod on a man's shadow, it deprived him of both speech and movement.

If a shadow is seen as so closely tied to the life of a man that its loss means injury or death, the shrinking of the shadow is logically regarded with fear. In Amboyna and Uliase, two islands near the equator (where little or no shadow is cast at noon), local people did not go out of their houses at midday to avoid risking the loss of their souls' shadows.

The Mangaians told of a mighty warrior whose strength waxed and waned with the length of his shadow. In the morning, when his shadow was longest, his strength was greatest; as his shadow shortened toward noon, his strength ebbed, till it reached its lowest point at noon. As his

shadow lengthened in the afternoon, his strength came back. An enemy discovered the secret of this man's strength and killed him at noon.

Sir James Frazer also discussed customs practiced in his day (1922) in southeastern Europe. When the foundation of a new building was being laid in Greece, a cock, ram, or lamb was slain; its blood flowed on the foundation stone, under which the animal was then buried. The sacrifice was thought to give strength and stability to the building. Sometimes, instead of killing an animal, the builder led a man to the foundation stone, secretly measured his shadow, and buried the measure under the stone. The builder sometimes laid the foundation stone upon the man's shadow instead, which it was thought would cause the man to die within a year. Romanians in Transylvania thought that a man whose shadow was so entombed would die within 40 days; persons passing by a building under construction often hear a warning cry: "Beware lest they take thy shadow!" There were even shadow traders whose business was to give architects the shadows necessary for securing walls. The measure of a shadow was seen as equivalent to the shadow itself; to bury a shadow's measure was to bury the soul of the man whose shadow was measured (thus dooming him). The custom was a substitute for an older practice of sealing a living person in the walls, or crushing him under the foundation stone of a new building; this caused his ghost to haunt the place and guard it against enemies.

This collection of shadow-lore from *The Golden Bough* inspired the following monster: the ghost stone.

Ghost-Stone

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Any, often subterranean*

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*

ORGANIZATION: *None*

ACTIVITY CYCLE: *Shadow activated*

DIET: *Living beings*

INTELLIGENCE: *Average*

TREASURE: *50% E*

ALIGNMENT: *(Any) evil*

NO. APPEARING: *1*

ARMOR CLASS: *3*

MOVEMENT: *None*

HIT DICE: *20 (stone only)*

THACO: *Not applicable*

NO. OF ATTACKS: *1*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *1-20*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Blood drain*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *None*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *See below*

SIZE: *L (10' tall)*

MORALE: *Fearless*

XP VALUE: *4,000*

Ghost-stones are just that: stones inhabited by ghosts. A powerful, evil individual may choose to send his malicious spirit into a specially prepared stone upon his



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death. The person prefers an undead existence to risking the punishments of the netherworld. The ghost-stone is often placed so that it guards the treasure the evil person hoarded in life; the treasure may actually be concealed within the stone itself.

Combat: If the shadow of a character falls upon a ghost-stone, that person is trapped. The individual can still fight and cast spells, but is unable to move more than 10' away from the stone. The ghost-stone uses the shadowy connection to drain the victim's blood, doing 1-20 hp damage per round automatically.

There are two ways to destroy a ghost-stone. If the stone holding the evil ghost is completely hacked apart, the spirit is forced to depart and undertake its long delayed journey to the netherworld. An *exorcism* spell has the same effect.

The ghost in the stone can be pacified if its name is known. A simple command of: "[Ghost's true name] be still, and at peace" calms the angry spirit even if its treasure is taken. In a campaign, the DM has the option of revealing the ghost's name to the PCs, perhaps making the answer a puzzle or riddle.

Since ghost-stones look like any other stones, they normally attack with surprise. The first indication of trouble is when a character's shadow gets automatically trapped. If the characters have some rea-

son to be suspicious of that particular stone, the DM should allow a saving throw vs. wands to the PC.

Any character who strikes the ghost-stone physically, without first choosing an attack angle that guarantees that his shadow will not fall upon the stone, could end up trapped also. Each person in addition to the first gains a saving throw vs. wands to avoid entrapment. Only one person at a time will be drained of blood, however. Other trapped individuals are simply unable to move away. If the ghost-stone survives attacks against it, it eventually drains all of its victims of blood.

A cleric has the same chance to turn away the spirit in a ghost-stone as he has to turn a ghost. If turning is successful, the ghost-stone releases all victims currently being held. It will not attack unless it is itself attacked, or if a character tries to steal the treasure the ghost-stone is guarding.

(Note that the "Habitat/Society" category is meaningless for the ghost-stone.)

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SAGE ADVICE

by Skip Williams

If you have any questions on the games produced by TSR, Inc., "Sage Advice" will answer them. In the United States and Canada, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LD, United Kingdom. We are no longer able to make personal replies; please send no SASEs with your questions (old SASEs are being returned with writers' guidelines for the magazine).

Once again, the sage looks back to reconsider some old advice. Page numbers refer to rulebooks for the AD&D® 2nd Edition game.

I could not believe my eyes when I read your answer to the question about the cost of chain mail in issue #158. I, too, thought the prices had been misprinted. Your response that scale mail costs more to make than chain mail is idiotic and grossly unhistorical. Chain mail is made of wire (itself difficult and expensive to make) that is formed into links that are interlocked, then soldered or welded together. In the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., a Roman armorer, using techniques that remained essentially unchanged throughout the Middle Ages, could make four or five suits of chain mail a year. By contrast, scale mail uses metal plates—not wire—that are simply sewn onto a leather shirt.

To reiterate, the base cost of chain mail in the AD&D 2nd Edition game is 75 gp, and the base cost of scale mail is 120 gp. Itemized breakdowns of the costs of manufacture for each type of armor are given on page 6 of the Complete Fighter's Handbook. Your estimate of the construction time for chain mail agrees with the table in the Complete Fighter's Handbook, where an unsupervised apprentice working in a properly equipped shop can make a suit of chain mail in 10 weeks (5.2 suits a year). However, two apprentices working under the same conditions take eight weeks to make a suit of scale mail (16 man-weeks in all). Scale mail requires more raw materials (60 gp worth) than does chain mail (38 gp worth); chain mail's rings require less labor and metal than scale mail's plates.

Note, however, that chain mail and scale mail come from two different historical periods. (See the *Dungeon Master's Guide*,

page 35, for a discussion of time periods in the AD&D game and their associated technology.) Scale mail, an ancient armor type, had all but disappeared by the time chain mail came into common use during the Middle Ages. Obviously, if you have a campaign set right on the borderline between the end of the Ancient period (when the DMG says chain mail doesn't exist at all) and the beginnings of the Dark Ages, about 1100 A.D. or so, chain mail is going to be very expensive. There are several reasons for this. First, chain mail would represent the newest and best concept in body armor—keeping up with the latest developments is always costly. Second, the manufacturing techniques and advanced metallurgy that made chain mail economical to manufacture during the Middle Ages would not yet have been invented. Third, from a campaign standpoint, chain mail *should* be more expensive than scale mail; you can kiss your play balance goodbye if the best armor available isn't also the most costly. You are free to set your own cost for chain mail in such a setting, but I recommend at least double (150 gp) and triple (225 gp) normal prices would not be unreasonable. Furthermore, chain mail in this setting probably would be made of iron, not steel, as the equipment list in the *Player's Handbook* assumes. Such chain mail would weigh 50 lbs. instead of the listed 40 lbs., or 25% more (see DMG, page 38).

Speaking of the "unhistorical": One does not have to have wire to make chain mail. The Romans used rings cut, punched, or drilled from sheets of metal. The Romans and ancient Chinese probably also had access to cast rings. Wire was pretty rare in medieval Europe, and most wire was gold, silver, or copper for use in jewelry and adornments. Medieval armorers almost certainly made their chain mail from rods that they forged themselves from ingots or bars; this is not as difficult as it sounds, especially when the armorer knew what he was doing and had his whole life to practice the skill. (Note that making a rod from a chunk of raw metal takes a lot less hammering than what would be required to make a flat plate out of the same piece of metal.) Furthermore, the chain mail currently preserved in museums and private collections is not soldered or welded, but riveted; in most cases, however, the rivets were hammered so carefully that the links *appear* to be welded. Finally, not all chain mail had its links fastened. Ancient armorers often

simply linked the rings, as did their successors when they were in a hurry or wanted to cut costs. This generally made inferior armor, but Oriental armorers often made very good unriveted chain mail (as good as riveted mail) by using a superior alloy and by making each ring from two or three coils of rod.

For readers who are interested in learning more about the manufacture of chain mail and other types of armor, I recommend *A Glossary of the Construction, Decoration, and Use of Arms and Armor*, by George Cameron Stone. The book is uncommon but is available at better used book stores and at large libraries.

I really enjoyed your "April Fools" column back in issue # 156. Did anybody help you think up the questions?

The questions in #156 were real; readers really sent them in. I am not clever enough to think up questions like that. I suppose I could get together with a few colleagues and think up a few questions that would be pretty wild, but that would be a waste considering what the mailbag holds every month.

To answer your question in issue #156 (page 55, third column): Yes, those questions do arise during play. Now that you know this, perhaps you'd reconsider your answer to the "watery ranger" question. Where I'm from, characters get wished into glasses of water all the time (the idea originated in a fanzine), and your suggestion that such characters can be killed simply by drinking them is tough on PCs.

First, if *wishes* are so common in your campaigns that they are used for anything "all the time," you've got too many *wishes* floating around; cut back. Note that a *wish* is the only magic in the core AD&D rules that can turn a character into a glass of water. *Polymorph any object* can turn organic matter into inorganic matter, but into only one kind of matter at a time; a successful spell could turn a character into a glass, or into water, but not both.

Second, *wishes* are *not* intended to be used as direct attacks on creatures. Such *wishes* fall into the *grossly unfair* category (see *PHB*, page 197), and the DM should actively subvert the intent of such spells whenever they are used, even when they are used by NPCs. Thus, if an evil wizard *wishes* a PC "into a glass of water," a huge

glass containing the PC and many gallons of water should appear; rest assured that at least one novel twist exists for each possible wording of this *wish*.

Third, this *wish* should allow a saving throw, since it is being used as a high-powered *polymorph any object* spell.

Fourth, any *polymorphed* character retains his hit points. Drinking the character will cause harm just as surely as eating the character would, but if the character has 100 hp, drinking the character is going to be a long and difficult process. Water in a glass has no armor class (it just sits there), but the most damage a human can do by drinking is 1-2 hp per round. Note that big, nasty teeth have no real effect on water, but a large tongue does, so a dragon or cow might be able to "drink" 1-12 hp each round. Also, as TSR editor Jon Pickens points out, if a character is turned into a *glass* of water, a few of his hit points will be held in the glass (say 10-20% of the total), and the glass must be smashed before the character can be killed; this, too, is easier said than done if the victim has a lot of hit points.

Finally, although evaporation or spillage can "kill" the character, death won't be instantaneous. An evaporated character is effectively in gaseous form until his molecules are thoroughly dispersed in the atmosphere; a kind DM might rule that the gaseous state lasts indefinitely. Similarly, a watery character poured into the dirt and allowed to soak in can be considered melded into stone and not truly dead.

Back in issue #121, you said that non-yakuza ninja do not have the ability to pick pockets. However, the same issue of DRAGON® Magazine contained a new Oriental character class, the geisya. This class is supposed to have a pick pockets ability that is the same as a ninja of the same level. Furthermore, Oriental Adventures itself says that a yakuza has a chance to pick pockets equal to that of a ninja of the same level. What gives?

This column was right; ninja do not have a pick pockets ability unless they are ninjaya-yakuza. Until an official correction comes along, assume a 1st-level yakuza has a 30% chance to pick pockets. This ability increases by 5% per level to a maximum of 99% at level 15. Allow the geisya to pick pockets as a yakuza (not a ninja) of equal level.

A couple of issues ago, you said that the new dragons can breathe only three times a day. What's wrong with allowing them to breathe once every three rounds with no limit on the number of times per day?

Nothing's wrong with that. In fact, that's the way dragon breath is supposed to work with the new dragons (my error). 

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Mainwaring:
archaeologist

Your quest:
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legendary
'Eye of Set'

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Time and place:
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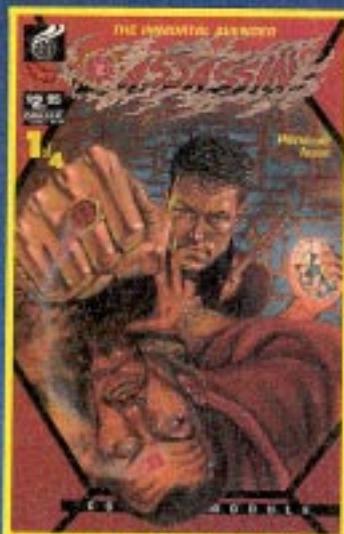
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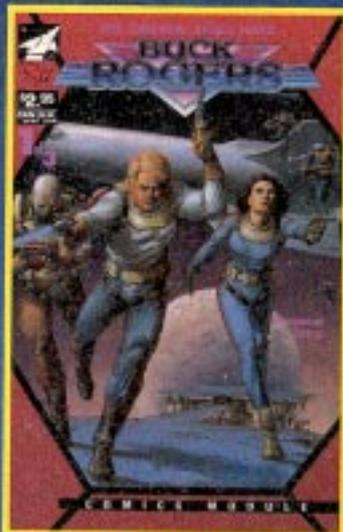
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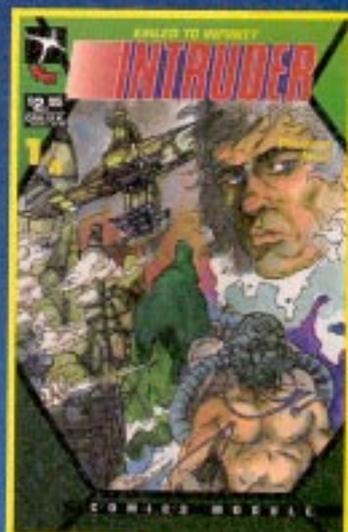
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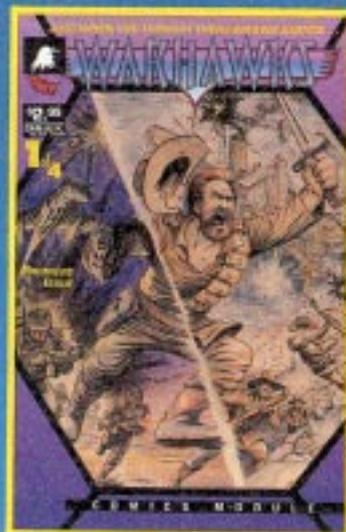
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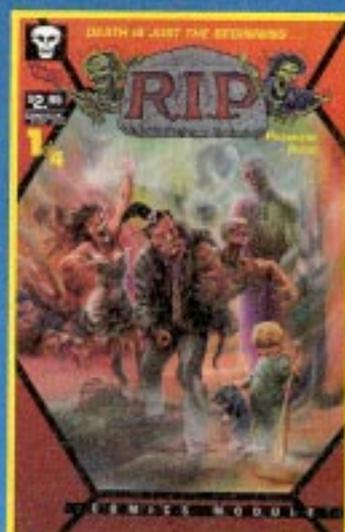
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FORUM



"Forum" welcomes your comments and opinions on role-playing games. In the United States and Canada, write to: Forum, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Forum, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. We ask that material submitted to "Forum" be either neatly written by hand or typed with a fresh ribbon and clean keys so we can read and understand your comments.

For some time, we have been collecting letters from gamers concerning the attacks being made upon role-playing in general (and the D&D® and AD&D® games in particular) that charge such games with being harmful to gamers. These letters address the specific prejudices that gamers encounter and suggest ways to overcome that prejudice. We welcome further letters from our readers on this topic. Please note that the opinions expressed in this column (as in all previous "Forum" columns) do not necessarily reflect the views of TSR, Inc.).

I am one of a seemingly small minority, the Christian gamer. As such, I have to applaud and comment on your "Letters" column and editorial in issue #125. It was an even-handed treatment of parental concerns, while at the same time a valid scratching of the head at the kind of

people who would condemn the *entire* game because there have been a few goofy players. But still, let me say a few things about the light and dark sides of AD&D games:

I learned to play the AD&D game in college, eight years ago. At once the game struck me as being an amazing adventure, a storybook of valiant deeds that could last a thousand lifetimes, a chance to do in a passing evening epic quests that spanned the planes. I was fortunate in that my fellow *players* were all neutral good. Later, when I began to DM and teach the game to others, I made sure that evil characters met an untimely death, and that whatever the adventure, great deeds would be done. I had quickly found that evil characters bug down the game with petty greed at the party's expense. We hung together. In my world, Good always wins.

We ask why people fear fantasy role-playing games. It's partly because the average guy in the street's had his imagination stomped out of him at an early age, and so thinks a "game without a board" is really weird. Unfortunately, it is more than that. It's the few actual oddballs that have gone off gaming's deep end and met with trouble (including a few suicides). As gamers, we know role-playing is like any tool: It does what you do with it, and a few people have indeed given the whole field a bad name. But I'd like to say this about *responsible* DMing:

I'm a Christian and an adult. The AD&D game, as a game for adults, is terrific. Adults already have decided what is good and bad, and how they will live their lives. But when TSR watered down the AD&D game to the paperback book level and started selling it to preteens is where I think the trouble began. Kids do role-model; it's proven. And in "Monty Haul" dungeons where the DM is an adolescent who hates the world, *evil* wins. That is why parents, right or wrong, fear D&D games. It's because when it is run badly, it can feed hate rather than drain it away. It's rather like being a Jedi Knight; as a DM, I feel that if I introduce the AD&D game to anyone under the age of 18, I should show the glory of the game, the valiant hero we all should be, not the cowardly assassin who slinks in the night. (The assassin is an NPC and lives a very short time in my world.)

The other bad side of the AD&D game stems from the few actual magic flaws engineered in by its designers. I'm not the narrow-minded fellow who thinks that a cleric *character* praying to his deity is the same as a *player* "worshipping idols," as some nongaming people would believe (although all PC clerics in my world are neutral-good Jehovahans). But there is elemental evil in the real world. It's a joke to most gamers. But it's a short step from a pentagram inscribed in the *Dungeon Masters Guide* to messing around with tarot cards, Ouija boards, and



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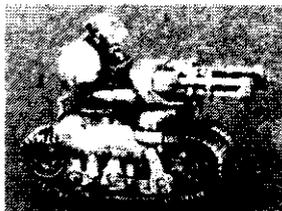
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Darkness. "My magic-user casts a sleep spell," works just fine. When you get into specifics like symbology and actual arcane markings, you *are* playing with fire, as the barriers between ourselves and Satan are there for a reason.

The AD&D game is just a game. It's fun, like all FRPGs. But when it glorifies darkness, greed, or hate, or when it is used as a tool to *escape* our troubles rather than just to let off steam, it runs the risk of harming people. I wouldn't give a loaded gun or a bottle of scotch to a child and tell him to "go have fun." Likewise, if I pass the AD&D game on to another person, it should be as a glorious adventure, a chance to be a hero. In the Bible, good triumphs over evil; in a good game, the same thing happens. If you want to play in a campaign with backstabbing and secrecy are viewed as useful skills, play West End Games' PARANOIA game, where everyone knows that the mayhem is a joke, not something on which to build young lives.

Andrew Bartmess
Cincinnati OH

This letter is in response to your editorial featured in the June 1988 issue of DRAGON Magazine. The underlying theme of your editorial (in my opinion) was that of personal choice. There is another issue that I believe you need to stress when you deal with the issue of role-playing versus no role-playing. The issue is on *legal rights*.

Everyone has the right to his own opinion. Almost all role-players who hear people talk negatively about role-playing get heated up and try to convince these people that role-playing is not evil and that it can be beneficial. Role-players are doing the same thing that the oppo-

sition is doing. They begin to preach about the good aspects of role-playing just as the opposition [preaches about the bad aspects]. Yet both sides seem to forget that it is our legal right either to play the game (it has not been outlawed) or to preach against it. This right is guaranteed by the Constitution in the Bill of Rights. The opposition has every right to try to get the different role-playing games banned, just as role-players and advocates of this hobby have the right to try and make sure the opposition does not get what it wants. Most people, especially those of the opposition, believe that their side is correct and that no one is going to change their minds, and it bothers me that a lot of role-players get this same attitude.

This letter is a reminder to the role-players of the world that those people have a right to try and keep us from playing, just like we have a right to stop them, but it is also to remind those of the role-playing establishment not to get pig headed and see only one way, that makes us as bad as them.

I would like to mention the fact that the people that are trying to stop role-playing have a philosophy similar to that of those that have tried (and are *still* trying) to stop rock and roll.

Robert B. Luhrman
Griffin GA

The greatest threat facing the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game today comes from certain organizations that claim that D&D games have a harmful effect on their players. These organizations (typically parents' associations, school boards, and religious groups) make numerous allegations against the D&D game, ranging from accusing it of glorifying violence to blaming it

for the suicides of several teenage players. These organizations feel that the only solution is to ban or outlaw the game.

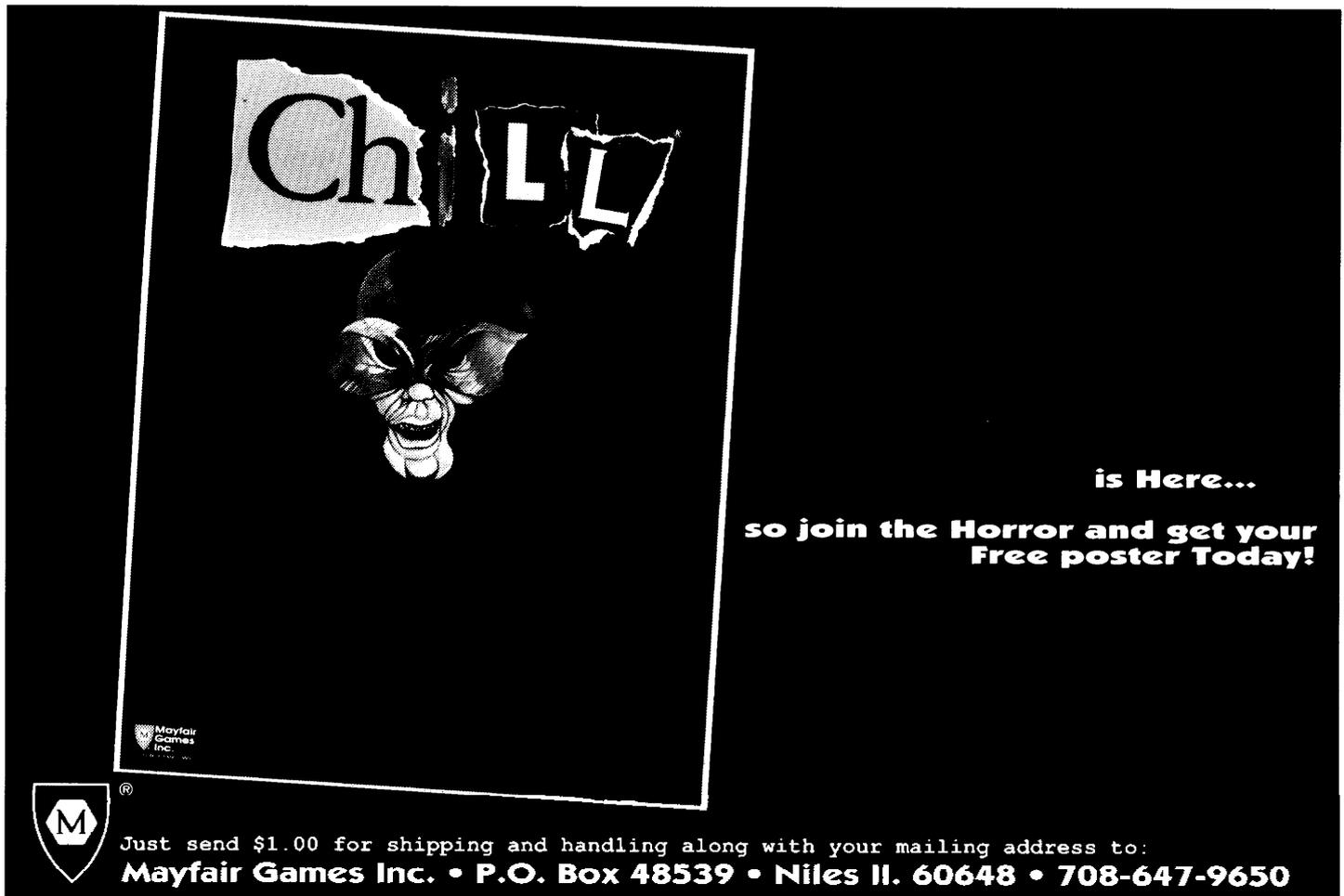
TSR has responded to these allegations through a number of means. The means most familiar to readers of DRAGON Magazine is a series of editorials, the first one appearing some months ago. But this is not sufficient. It is time that someone take a long and organized look at the charges against the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game in order to refute them and prove the innocence of this game.

By far the most serious accusation against the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game is the charge that the D&D game has caused the suicides of several teenage players across the United States. To disprove this claim requires a brief examination of the phenomenon of teenage suicide.

Statistically, suicide is the number-two killer of those 15 to 24, second only to vehicular accidents. It is thought that half of all teenagers have contemplated, planned, or attempted suicide.

Suicide is the result of extreme amounts of stress. This stress can be caused by a number of sources: pressure to perform in school, peer pressure to conform or to use alcohol and drugs, pressure in the home due to parental divorce or unemployment, etc. Stress manifests itself in feelings of confusion, frustration, and helplessness. People undergoing such stress see themselves as sliding into a hopeless pit of depression. A lucky few reach out to friends or family for help, but most cannot stop the inexorable slide and turn to escapes like alcohol and drugs. These escapes, while providing no real solution, at least allow them to temporarily forget their problems.

Unfortunately, drugs and alcohol are very



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popular—but better escapes exist. Consider for example a role-playing game like the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. It allows a player to take on a new persona, to control a character with mighty abilities and without the player's own worries and limitations. It allows a player to adventure in a fantastical world where gold, magic, dragons, and fair maidens are commonplace. In short, role-playing games provide a temporary escape from the realities and frustrations of everyday life.

Unfortunately, retreating to such an escape only postpones a player's problems and does nothing to alleviate them. Victims of stress who try to escape their problems rather than solve them soon discover that such escapes are artificial and temporary. This realization sends them spiraling further down into their pits of depression until they finally seek the One Permanent Escape that will irrevocably solve all their problems.

Thus, the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game is being made into a convenient scapegoat. It is particularly ridiculous to claim that a game could cause the suicides of its players. Suicide is the result of stress, and, if anything, the D&D game helps reduce stress by providing a temporary escape from the frustrations of everyday life.

Another popular allegation is that the D&D game glorifies violence. Critics claim that D&D games, like many television shows, teach that violence is an acceptable way to solve problems. The critics contend that a typical adventure consists simply of the characters slaughtering everything they meet. The players never see the consequences of their actions, and if a character is killed, his player just rolls up a new one and dives back into the fight.

It must be admitted that some campaigns are like this. But this is the fault of the DM and the players, not the game. Good DMs and players never make these kinds of mistakes. Firstly, most DMs realize the importance of interactive character generation. The more detail the player gets to input, the more he sees the character as his own and so the more he cherishes that character. Few players are willing to risk favorite characters in combat if they can think their way out of a problem. Secondly, good DMs try to create adventures that emphasize thinking and problem-solving rather than allowing characters to simply fight their ways past every obstacle.

Currently a popular topic in "Forum" is whether playing evil characters is justifiable. Many players feel it is not. They argue that playing evil characters is wrong because such characters habitually perform such acts as assassination and torture.

However, another group (including a number of psychologists) has recently come out in favor of evil campaigns. Their reasoning relates back to the problem of stress and the pent-up feelings of frustration and anger that stress creates. It is important that such pent-up emotions find some outlet, and one of the easiest ways to alleviate them is through physical violence. The anger is transferred to the target, and the person feels relieved. Unfortunately, hitting things tends to be very destructive, so psychologists are seeking more constructive ways of relieving stress and tension. Fantasy games are a perfect constructive outlet. With every imaginary blow, players drain very real anger and tension into imaginary foes. This is particularly true of evil campaigns in which characters can carry out violent acts on hapless orcs, which is much better than having the players carry out those acts on teachers, bosses, parents, etc.

Religious groups frequently criticize the D&D

game, saying that it is sacrilegious and it promotes devil-worshiping. Of course, this is silly. Their arguments are based on the fact that among the thousands of pages of gaming material can be found such things as maps of the planes of Hell and lists of the powers of demons and devils. But just because players use such material during an adventure doesn't mean they believe it is true. The D&D game is a fantasy game, and most players have no trouble differentiating between it and reality.

Clearly, it can be concluded that, when properly run, the D&D game is an innocent game that has no harmful influence on its players. Any apparent ill effects are the result of some other factor such as stress. In fact, the D&D game can have a beneficial effect on its players because it provides not only a temporary escape from the stress and frustration of life, but also an outlet for pent-up anger and tension.

As a final note, it must be realized that most of the people who criticize the D&D game have never actually played the game. It is a sad fact in this age of education and enlightenment that ignorant beliefs and hearsay can cause so much damage. Rather than naively banning D&D games, why don't the critics try playing it first? Most gaming clubs would be happy to put on demonstrations, and some of these critics just might realize what they've been missing.

Gord Coleman
Nepean, Ontario

I am writing in regard to Alex Martin's letter in issue #152 and Wesley Crowell's letter in issue #155. I understand and agree fully with both of these letters. Parents seem to think that the D&D game is a horrible game. I have talked with my parents several times on this matter. They think that the D&D game has no morals. Well, it does: It teaches that Good forever rules over Evil. I'm an experienced DM, and I know about this kind of stuff.

I have read the book *Mazes and Monsters*, and I say that the author had no idea what she was talking about. I also read a nonfiction book entitled *Dungeon Master*. The same thing happened to the kid in this story as *Mazes and Monsters*, there was one difference: The kid in *Dungeon Master* was on drugs *before* he ever heard of the D&D game.

I can understand Michael Natale's position in his letter in issue #152. A friend of mine thought she knew everything about the D&D game and said it was devil worship. This same person and her mother also believed a story in *The National Enquirer* that said a six-year-old gave birth to a two-headed baby! That just shows that parents shouldn't be worried about us D&D game players.

This is what I did to make my parents see what the D&D game really is. I am running a DRAGONLANCE® saga campaign right now, so I read stories from *DRAGONLANCE Tales* (*Heart of Goldmoon*, *Silver and Steel*, *From the Yearning for War*; and *War's Ending*) to them. They trusted me and my judgment after that.

Thanks to Margaret Weis, Tracy Hickman, and all of the people who made the DRAGONLANCE saga. Even 50-year-old parents love it! And by the way, I'm only 13 years old, but that doesn't mean that parents shouldn't listen to us kids. If they would listen and believe us every once in a while, I think some things (such as the D&D game) could be explained more easily:

Marian Lynn Lucas
Angleton TX

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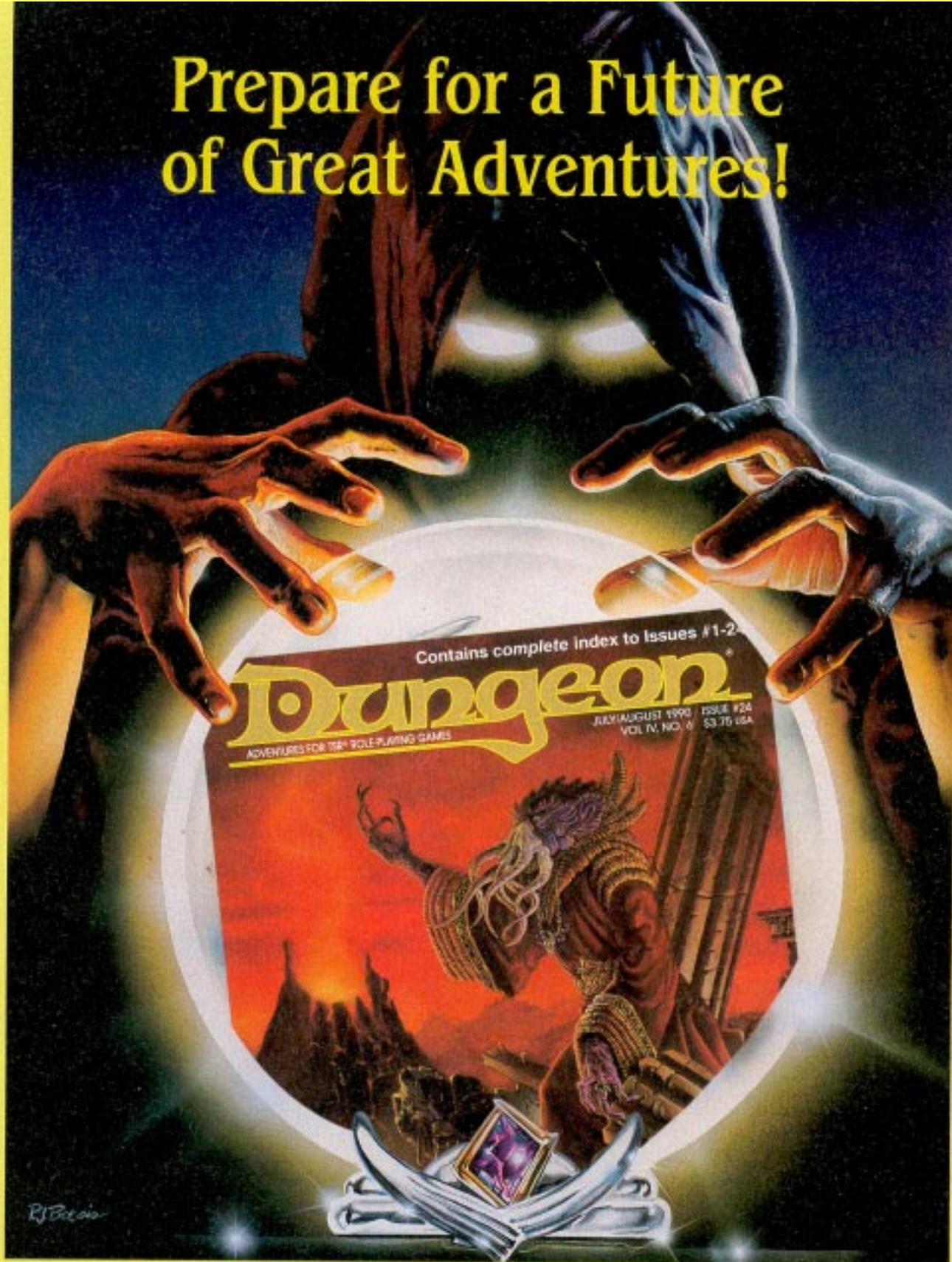
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by Bruce A. Heard

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Nyxmir 26, 1965: Further repairs were completed aboard the *Princess* since the return of magical power. Our long journey being dragged across the rough ice of the Hollow Worlds Antarctic Gate had caused much damage to the ship. Talasar has spent hours restoring order and healing the sick among the crew.

I studied in great detail the topography of the lands below, seeking the whereabouts of Herr Rolf, our Heldannic fugitive. He successfully evaded our vigilance and rode away on a stolen Myoshiman cat to some unknown destination. I am disappointed to notice that several spells no longer function in this new world. More

importantly, some magical items are powerless as well, although they still radiate magic. Alas, I can no longer rely on my *crystal ball* to seek Herr Rolf, that fiend.

I could only conclude that we traveled mostly north through the icy mountain range past Southern Vulcania and the ice pack. Within recent days we navigated over a long, narrow stretch of steep mountains that I named the White Peninsula. Herr Rolf could be in any of this range's narrow, frozen canyons. I hope to catch him later on a vast frozen bay that offers little shelter. At least we have the advantage of speed and absolute mobility over his land-striding cat.

Nyxmir 28, 1965: Myojo spent long hours observing the ground with my spyglass, hoping to see the Heldannic knight. Earlier on this day, he spotted what could be a small campsite. After a short visit, Xerdon and Myojo determined Herr Rolf had been there recently. They found the dead remains of Kenju's cat, reduced to a mere carcass. Footprints revealed that a fight took place, possibly between Herr Rolf and a giant lizard. Myojo pointed out he did not smell the odor of human blood. Xerdon ended the report by adding that no footprints left the scene, which leads me to suspect the beast flew away with Herr Rolf. The question is: Was he prey or master?

Amphimir 3, 1965: An unforeseen event has led me to believe that we are being observed. I was awakened this night by a strange crying. It was reminiscent of 1st Class Boltman Ramissur's cry of agony when he was abandoned to the shadow dragon on Oceania, months ago. At first I thought I had been dreaming, but the noise persisted.

I arose and found the small bat I had recovered over Cestia, lying over my *crystal ball* and staring at the swirling mists inside the crystal. Although nothing else





could be seen inside the sphere, the luminescent stone had dominated the little animals mind and was draining it of its life force. Somehow, the bat had unlocked its cage and pulled the velvet shroud off the crystal. The stone's powerful hypnotic effect had seized the bat's gaze and prevented it from pulling free. I lifted the poor thing off the glowing ball and put it back in its cage.

I suspected foul play. The lock on the cage was not one that a mere bat could undo. It was also quite improbable that an animal would accidentally pull the thick veil from the crystal ball; it could have fluttered across the cabin to seek a way out, or landed on my dinner's leftovers.

Amphimir 5, 1965: We pursued our course toward the northeast above a ridge of high mountains. I have decided to arise above the skyshield; it is much quicker to travel through the void. I am gambling on the chance that Herr Rolf needs to cover a long distance and therefore has done the same. Somehow, I simply cannot believe that someone like Herr Rolf could be taken away by a mere monster. By now he must have found a way to gain the upper hand. I would not be surprised if he had staged the whole event, both to cover up his tracks and to travel faster.

On an unrelated note, it occurs to me that the east and west directions are inverted in this world, compared to the Surface World. If travelers—such as ourselves—followed the Meridian of Sundsvall toward the north on the Surface World, West would be on the left, and East on the right. When continuing along this longitude we would enter the Hollow World through the Arctic Gate, then proceed *southward* along the Central Meridian. Assuming that West remains on the left and East on the right, the two directions then appear to be "reversed." In effect, 10° East on the Surface World would be exactly above 10° East in the Hollow World. Although confusing at first, this is a convenience when reporting relative positions on a map.

Amphimir 06, 1965: By luck and with my spyglass, I have spotted our fugitive riding a white dragon. The Heldannic Knight must have been nearing his destination, for he reentered the skyshield and dove into the clouds beneath, remaining within the thick cloud cover. The cloud bank had been slowly moving to the Hollow Worlds west and stretched several hundred miles across. I ordered the *Princess* to fly under the clouds in the event Herr Rolf would reappear.

Amphimir 7, 1965: An interesting day, indeed. I had been avidly observing the land below the skyshield with my spyglass, spending long hours mapping out these new lands. We were far from the surface, but some detail was visible still. Near the eastern edge of the clouds lies a very large valley. A ridge of mountains forms its eastern boundary, with a large

desert on its western reaches. A long river flows along the entire valley, ending at a large lake in the north. The valley seems to be fertile and probably harbors life—perhaps a great civilization.

While I was deeply involved in my thoughts about the world below, someone coughed softly behind my back. For an instant I believed Talasar had entered my cabin, but I turned to find instead a lady casually sitting on my bunk. A panther was lying at her feet, and a small goblin slowly waving a large feather fan. She had bronze skin and long, black hair. But what impressed me most was her eyes—immense and black as the night, yet intense like the sun. A long, white robe, Thothian in style, draped her body down to her feet. A beautiful lady indeed.

"The land you gaze upon is called Nithia," she said. "And, yes, as you thought, it indeed is the center of a great civilization. Perhaps the greatest ever."

"I suppose Nithians have no doors," I answered. "Else they should know it is customary to knock at one's portal before entering, dear . . . who, may I inquire?"

"Khufiri is my name." She smiled and added, "Of course, you do realize it is you who are prying into our ancestral lands. I don't believe you have been invited to enter the Sky of Nithia. Our priests have a habit of observing the sky, for it is sacred. New objects such as your wondrous vessel are a source of great interest."

"Then perhaps we might find a way to satisfy each other's curiosity. You may remain aboard, in exchange for which I request your guidance in these lands."

Khufiri accepted. She was friendly, but distant and a bit disdainful, definitely a sophisticated lady. She entered my cabin by secret magical means, I would guess, and was reading my thoughts. Although cordial, she could be quite dangerous.

We spoke at length about her lands and its people's common life and customs. Her temple had sent her through spiritual ways up to the *Princess*, essentially as an observer and escort through Nithia. Until such time our intentions are made clear to the temple, the *Princess* was not to land in Nithia—a directive that I intended to follow. Obviously, her temple had the means to observe their skies very well, for I had believed the Myoshiman monolith was still cloaking the *Princess* from normal sight.

The trio was sent to a separate cabin, with a special escort of boltmen to keep an eye on them. All this has been very disturbing and demands further observation. I then ordered the *Princess* to descend below the level of the cloud cover.

Amphimir 8, 1965: Khufiri has proven very useful in identifying and naming regions we flew over. We reached an expanse of water called Lake Thufu and followed a large river to the north—the River Hapta. The region is quite fertile and villages dot the river banks. After flying over the large City of Hapta, the

lowering clouds were forcing the *Princess* closer to the city. Concerned, Khufiri asked that we regain altitude until the clouds cleared up again. Satisfied when I gave the order to climb, Khufiri retreated to her cabin, along with her purring panther and feather-fanning goblin.

At that point I decided to put that time to good use. I could not take the chance of missing Herr Rolf, should he unexpectedly decide to come down. I ordered the crew to prepare for a blind sail. First Class Navigator Ashari took her post at the prow and sounded the horn at regular intervals. A returning sound would indicate the presence of a very large obstacle—if any were possible at that altitude. Ashari was well trained in this technique and navigation went smoothly for several hours.

We got close to Herr Rolf. He appeared no more than 100 yards ahead, and I caught him glancing back over his shoulder several times when Ashari's horn echoed through the clouds. He pressed his dragon forward and dove back into dark, stormy clouds.

The cracking sound of bolts and the growing rumble of the storm greatly altered the effectiveness of Ashari's horn. Threatening flashes illuminated the clouds so often that I commanded the *Princess* to return to safety above the clouds.

And a good thing the *Princess* began her ascension! Just as her prow rose, the clouds cleared up ahead, suddenly revealing a huge cliff. Instantly I thought this could not possibly be, at such an altitude! But yet a cliff was approaching, and so at a frightening speed. I commenced an evasive maneuver, but alas, too late. The stern of the *Princess* was still low and hit the edge of the plateau. Within seconds, the entire hull had scraped the rough, jagged rock, and the ship dragged to a halt. Painfully evident were those planks that flew off the wounded flanks of the *Princess*. We were stranded. Rain then began to fall, and a raging tempest ensued. More later.

Amphimir 9, 1965: The gale has passed on. The clouds cleared up so that we could see for a few hundred yards. It appears we are perched precariously on a high, narrow mesa. The hull is so damaged that the *Princess* can no longer lift herself. Everyone aboard shares her silent pain.

Worse, we aren't alone. Several hundred feet below is a town, a large, populous town. All around our promontory are towers, mansions, and other buildings stretched as far as we can see under the gloomy clouds. No one in the streets seems to have noticed our unfortunate posture.

Much worse yet, an ominous white banner with the black lion emblem flutters in the breeze over a large fortification. On the ramparts pace the unmistakable armored guards of the Heldannic Order. Again we might meet Herr Rolf, but this time in the Black Lion's den.

Amphimir 10, 1965: Still no one

seems to have noticed our presence. I suspect the storm muffled the sound of our crash, and since the Myoshiman monolith is intact, it cloaks the *Princess* from prying eyes. But we are dangerously close to a potentially hostile people, with the prow unnervingly jutting out over the edge of a cliff. Slowly, quietly, the crew has begun to repair damage.

It appears we are on a flying island or continent. The clouds do not allow better observation. Unlike the tall men-at-arms on nearby battlements, the people in the street seem much smaller. I will have to get a closer look later on. The clouds seem to get thicker and darker at regular intervals, pouring rain over the flying land. Amazingly, the storm acts to create "night," a period of sleep for the town people, while heavily armed squads of men-at-arms patrol the street.

I notice Myojo is spending much of his time with Khufiri. He enjoys the presence of her panther, which has adopted him. Khufiri shows much admiration and affection toward the Myoshiman warrior. This is useful for the moment, for Myojo is a loyal follower and I can thus obtain information on Khufiri. I must, however, remain cautious, for this relationship must not get out of hand. All this reminds me of my dear Lady Abovombe. Now that she is far away, I do realize how much I became accustomed to her presence. I long for this wretched mission to come to an end. I must return Herr Rolf to Myoshima and recover Lady Abovombe unharmed, and the sooner the better.

Amphimir 11, 1965: I was quietly but firmly awakened this morning by Talasar. The watch had spotted movement near my cabin. Indeed, observing through the stern's window, I could see a townsman. He was casually walking about, holding a small umbrella in one hand and a pointy cane in the other. Humming and whistling, he was picking snails with his cane and dropping them into a pouch at his waist. I hoped he'd walk past the *Princess*.

We had no such luck. The townsman came closer and attempted to hop onto a rock—under the invisible *Princess's* hull. He bumped flat into the hull, dropping his belongings and sliding down several feet, then landing heavily on his posterior.

In pain, the townsman whined loudly, holding his rather protuberant and now bloody nose. The whine stopped abruptly when two muscular boltmen hastily grabbed him, dropped a bag over his head, tied him up from toe to nose, and unceremoniously lifted him aboard. Nobody else seemed to have witnessed these events.

Amphimir 12, 1965: Talasar and I remained alone with our captive. He turned out to be a gnome, judging from his size, more-than-generous nasal appendage, and somewhat pointy ears.

"I say, once!" he spoke in his curious accent. "What's come into you heer? Theer I go, once, hunting snails, and Boum! I hit something, I thought, but no, theer's noth-

ing heer, you know, but yet I say my nose bleeds and I sit on my reer, once, and I say but theer's really nothing heer, nothing I can see, so, I think I must be dreaming once, and then, Boum! The sky falls on my head, and it's all dark, you know. Is this the end of the world, I say. . . ." The gnome did go on for some time in this way.

Eventually I was able to slip in a word or two. It appears we landed on the floating Island of Oostdok. Our captive, now apparently a willing guest, goes by the name of Leopold of Le Nerviens Corporation (as Leopold said: a Duly Accredited And Consolidated Enterprise, Wholly Owned And Guildmarked By Le Nerviens Family Trust Incorporated—in other words, a respectable family of professional inventors).

Oostdok is an island, roughly 50 miles long by 30 miles wide, with a series of small mountains and plateaus such as the one on which we have crash-landed. It has a capital city, the one sprawling from our vantage point, called Schaerbeek. Oostdokers are essentially gnomes.

It seems the Oostdokers are divided into two main ethnic blocks, the Flamaekers and the Valoins. The problem is very old. It seems Oostdok was originally two separate islands, Oostmaeker and Waldok. The two islands collided and remained stuck together. Since then, both peoples have accused each other of causing the catastrophe. They've never really got along.

Both peoples excel in the art of creating machinery, a science purely gnomish in nature that I will not attempt to explore further. Apparently, when a ship full of Heldannic Knights became stranded (like the *Princess Ark*), the knights offered great rewards to those able to repair their vessel. A large number of Flamaek and Valoin family corporations competed for the contract. One of them apparently built a device that would return the Heldannic ship back to its intended course.

This event was soon followed a massive invasion by Heldannic Knights. They occupied all of Oostdok and forced both the Flamaekers and the Valoins to build wondrous contraptions for the benefit of the Heldannic Order. The Oostdokers' submission to the Heldannic Order is reluctant, and both Valoins and Flamaekers are waiting for an opportunity to throw them out.

Leopold was very interested in the fact we weren't Heldanners. He was all the more interested to learn that we in fact were opposed to the Heldannic tyranny and that we would be able to cause some trouble to the knights provided our ship could be repaired and returned beyond the polar gate.

Leopold's eyes had a sudden flicker of conniving joy. We could already see ideas and schemes crossing his mind. Leopold became very agitated and began pouring an endless stream of nonsensical sentences punctuated by sporadic giggles, while pointing in every direction at once. The gnome went literally all over the *Princess*, observing her structure, mechanism, and

damage. He jabbered something like "Be right back!" and unexpectedly jumped off the railing, hopping away so fast that no one had time to intervene.

I was willing to take the chance. Repairing the *Princess* could take months. Perhaps this gnome will indeed find a way to help without alerting the knights. I only hope these gnomes would not damage the *Princess* further. This might be the ship's death.

Amphimir 16, 1965: Nothing has happened since Leopold's hasty departure. I am confident that he has remained on our side, since no Heldannic Knight has been seen anywhere close. Repairs are proceeding but slowly.

I had several conversations with Khufiri about Nithia and our current fate. She was of course quite worried. Khufiri said she knew about these gnomes and warned that they could bring only woe and chaos with their inventions. The rare times Nithians encountered Oostdokers have lead to untold disasters.

Amphimir 17, 1965: Repairs were temporarily halted as a violent thunderstorm struck Schaerbeek. Soon afterward, our friend Leopold returned. He approached the *Princess*, casually hopping about, hunting for snails after the rain.

Twenty yards from the ship, he stopped, looked over his shoulder, then leaped forward, thinking the *Princess* was near. He was wrong; he flailed his arms, then fell heavily into a mud puddle. After a number of similar attempts, he eventually bumped into the *Princess's* hull and was yanked aboard.

Leopold brought great news. The Vandermerch Corporation was sponsoring the annual Schaerbeek Regatta, when the most powerful family trusts would race in the skies above Schaerbeek with their flying contraptions. It so happens that the regatta's trajectory includes a tight turn right over the Tanneken-Pes, the steep mesa on which the *Princess* is stranded.

Leopold's commercial kin at Le Nerviens Corporation had a plan. Their ship, *L'Epaulard*, would come very low over the plateau's edge and attempt to lift the *Princess* off the rock. Despite my absolute inability to grasp the technical details of Leopold's plan, I found the scheme nonetheless frightening. I am afraid my arguments didn't deter Leopold a bit, either. The plan was already in motion.

Amphimir 18, 1965: The regatta started shortly after another heavy rainfall. Over the edge of Schaerbeek, already dozens of gigantic, multicolored dirigibles were gathering for departure. They looked like incredibly huge, bloated whales, with plump fins at their rears. Each of these grotesque airships had a cabin underneath its chubby belly, with pipes, fans, and tubes sticking out in all directions. A crowd gathered in the streets, at balconies, and at windows everywhere. Great horns echoed through the city, and the crowd cheered, waving the flags and banners of their family trusts.

A deafening roar began as the airships began the race. Billowing clouds of smoke and steam poured out of the airships' cabins, as strange devices caused blades and other parts to propel the ungainly blimps. The *Demeulemeister III* lurched ahead, while the *VandenKoop* spun off course, bumping into *Le Gros Belouga*. The latter landed flat on a large cohort of Heldannic Knights underneath—causing great panic in their ranks—then promptly rebounded back into the race. The crowd went wild! Meanwhile, rattling and shuddering, *L'Epaulard* roared after *Demeulemeister III* along with a horde of other outrageous blimps.

Demeulemeister III came first above the mesa. It launched a grapple that caught on a ridge, using it to spin around the edge of the plateau. The pilot promptly severed the cable and raced back toward the center of Schaerbeek. *L'Epaulard* followed, very low on the ridge. I could see the pilot's head sticking out of a porthole; he was squinting and looking for something. With horror I realized that Leopold had probably failed to tell his kin that the *Princess* was not visible.

That's when I noticed Leopold was missing. He was spotted a moment later, perched on the highest point of the ship, cheering and waving Le Nerviens' colors. He had attached a flag to a pole and had propped it up in the air in order to exceed the area of effect of the Myoshiman monolith.

The pilot waved back and veered toward the *Princess*, cutting across the path of the wild, tubby pack racing after him. The *Montjoie Rouge* made a loop to avoid *L'Epaulard*, while the *Hembeek*, *Johanneke*, and *Broqueville* bumped into each other. *L'Epaulard* got through, scraping the edge of the plateau. It made a pass over our ship and decided to go after *Demeulemeister III*. The *Hembeek* and *Broqueville* followed, some of their riggings fouled together. Both pilots exchanged colorful vociferations on their way. Meanwhile, the *Montjoie Rouge* ended its loop and bumped into the rear of the *Johanneke*, pushing the blimp ahead of the pack. Not far behind, *Le Gros Belouga* and the *VandenKoop* were rushing back into the race.

Soon *L'Epaulard* caught up with *Demeulemeister III* and began the second lap. The crowd was hooting and cheering. The two airships prepared their approach of our mesa. *Demeulemeister III* launched its second grapnel but missed, spinning wildly out of control. *L'Epaulard* reversed its propellers to slow down, causing its whalelike balloon to bulge forward. At this very moment, a dozen cables shot down at us, out of the cabin. Some had hooks, others suction cups; I even saw a few with bola-type endings. Everyone on the deck of the *Princess* ran for cover. Amazingly, no one was hurt, but *L'Epaulard's* machinery started roaring madly as the blimp made its turn and attempted to lift the *Princess*.

Lift her it did—but sideways. The cables

did not hook up to the *Princess's* masts and hull in an even manner, causing the ship to hang starboard down. Everyone aboard grabbed at anything within reach to avoid falling off. Most of the scene was obscured by the billowing smoke and steam pouring out of the blimp.

L'Epaulard's speed was greatly reduced, but its pilot decided to continue the race. *Demeulemeister III* was regaining control, while the rest of the pack was catching up. By then, the pilots on the *Hembeek* and *Broqueville*—still tangled up—had resorted to fist fighting, while the *Johanneke* took the lead, harried by *Le Gros Belouga*.

The end of the second lap came very fast. *L'Epaulard* was desperately trying to gain altitude while the *Princess* swung wildly underneath, threatening to hit some of the Heldannic Knight's upper towers. Sparks shot out of the blimp's portholes. Several cables were being cranked back, slowly bringing the *Princess* to a more convenient posture, just in time for *L'Epaulard* to veer back into the third and final lap.

By then, *L'Epaulard* was in the middle of the main pack of airships. The *VandenKoop* was coming fast behind, and low, thinking it could pass *L'Epaulard* underneath! Its pilot, of course, could not see the invisible *Princess* dangling in its way! At the last moment, *L'Epaulard* swerved aside, but the *VandenKoop's* balloon caught the *Princess's* wing, which scraped along the length of the balloon and finally pierced its thick fabric. The *VandenKoop* suddenly lurched forward as gas violently blew out of the gap at the rear—and it took the lead in front of the *Johanneke*, flying forth to victory!

Meanwhile, *L'Epaulard* dipped behind the mesa, abandoning the race. It flew at a very low altitude over a small river and left Schaerbeek. Everyone aboard was exhausted, panting, and sweating—except for one. Leopold was on the mast, still waving his flag and crying for an encore! But that was enough for the day.

Amphimir 22, 1965: The trip took a few days. We flew over a series of small farming communities and rolling hills. Storms and rainfalls continued at regular intervals on this gloomy land. At last, the pilot waved at Leopold; we were nearing our destination. Leopold pointed at a small rocky hill ahead of us. A large tower stood on the top, bearing Le Nerviens' colors. At last, the *Princess* stood a chance of rest and repair.

To be continued. . . .

If you have any comments regarding this column or the D&D game's Known World as designed in the Gazetteers, please send your inquiries to: Bruce A. Heard, D&D Column, TSR, Inc. P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. We cannot guarantee that all letters will get answers, but they always have our attention.

Oostdok trade houses

Oostdok is a small floating continent made of two celestial islands, each inhabited by gnomes, that collided several centuries past. The two gnomish peoples so joined, the Valoins and the Flamaekers, have different cultures and get along with some difficulty. Both the Valoins and Flamaekers originally had the power to control the flight of their islands through the use of gigantic machinery buried in the rock of each continent. That ability was lost when the two islands collided.

The two gnomish cultures have since then evolved into a society based on powerful trade houses. These are essentially very large families dedicated to commerce or manufacturing as a means of achieving political supremacy on Oostdok. So far, seven trade houses dominate the political and economic environment. Scores of minor trade houses struggle for survival, all of them aiming to one day become one of the major powers. However, all trade houses are in league against a common oppressor, the Heldannic Knights who invaded them a decade earlier.

All members of a trade house are fanatically devoted to their kin, hard-working, and very rarely, if ever, betray their cause. Trade-house members bear the natural birthmark of the family, so both of the member's parents must be natural kin of the trade house. Each trade house comes with its own police force.

Failing to live up to the expectations of one's trade-house supervisor may cause the culprit to be shunned by the entire Oostdok establishment. None of the trade houses will ever "hire" or deal with an individual who wasn't born in the family. One who has been rejected by his kin has his birthmark burned off or branded in a way sufficient to deface it. Those born of illegitimate parents (parents of different trade houses) are treated in similar fashion and abandoned. All those rejected by their kin form a caste of "untouchables": poor, hopeless wretches shunned by all other gnomes.

Broqueville, Sa. (Inc.): This Valoin trade house specializes in the manufacture of military hardware. They are one of the most powerful and disliked trade houses on Oostdok since they do business with the Heldannic Knights—though not by choice. The Knights outlawed all arms ownership by and all arms sales to Oostdokers, but Broqueville is secretly stockpiling common weaponry and has built a doomsday machine, speculating on the day when Oostdokers will revolt and overthrow their oppressors. They are actively manipulating other trade houses to commit themselves to the revolt.

Broqueville's dirigibles use magical camouflage patterns that change color to match their background, much like a chameleon. The natural colors are often

Continued on page 76



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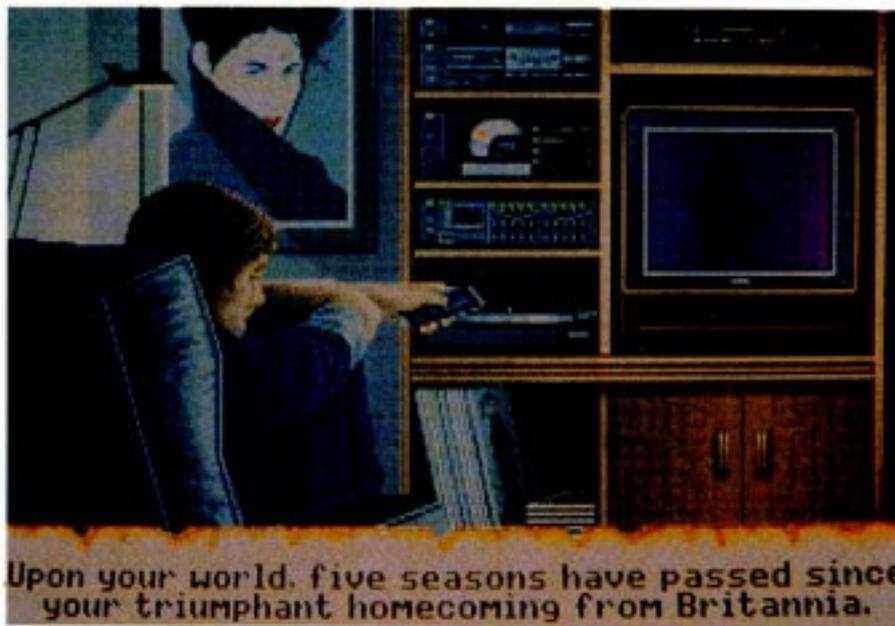
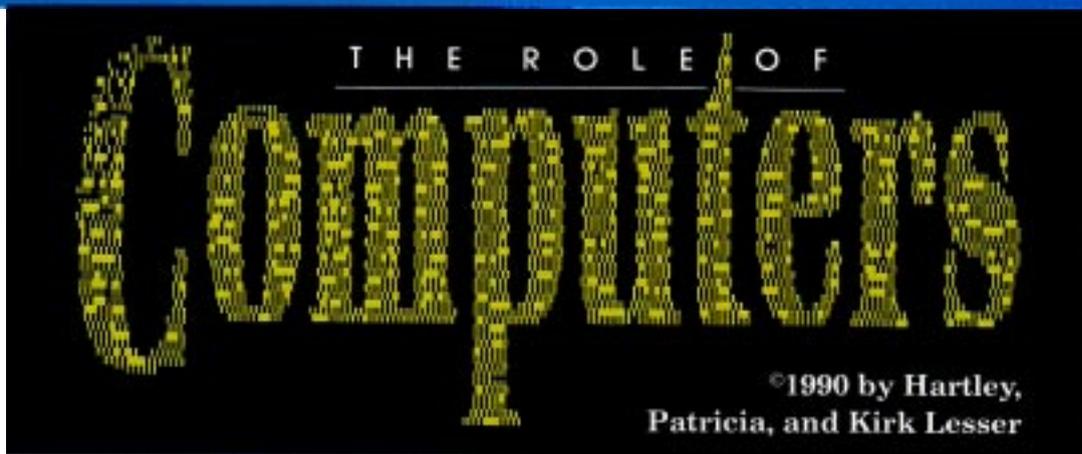
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Ultima VI (Origin)

The ultimate Ultima

This column marks the debut of regular video-game coverage as well as computer-game coverage. The video-game market is predicted to reach nearly five billion dollars in sales by 1991. Due to the number of system units sold, it is not an entertainment medium we can ignore.

We hope that this coverage will allow our readers to broaden their knowledge of both game systems. If this is a good idea, let us know. If not, tell us that also.

Reviews

Computer games' ratings

X	Not recommended
*	Poor
**	Fair
***	Good
****	Excellent
*****	Superb

Origin

P.O. Box 161750
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Ultima VI: The False Prophet *****
PC/MS-DOS 80286 version with EGA board and EGA monitor \$69.95

This is a jam-packed adventure. It'll be months before we are close to succeeding in the quest! The thrill is in trying. The excitement of the Ultima series comes into play as you try to overcome not only dangerous physical adversaries, but your own weaknesses as well.

The adventure starts with you watching television. Lord British summons you to aid Britain, and a moongate appears. You enter Britain and encounter a gypsy caravan. A gypsy confronts you and states, "Behold the Virtues of the Avatar. Let us begin the casting." You must then answer seven questions. We restarted *Ultima VI* several times and learned that the questions are repetitive. You must consider

well your answers to the situations the gypsy presents. Remember the Codex!

As you answer each question, the gypsy pours a small amount of colored liquid from one of several flasks into a glass beaker. You'll note that if you answer the situation by indicating a specific virtue, the gypsy pours from the same-colored flask time and gain. Balance your answers!

When the situations have all been answered, she asks you to drink the liquid. You do . . . and you awake upon an altar, about to be sacrificed by hideous gargoyles! But your associates from previous Ultima adventures rescue you; Iolo the Bard, Shamino, and Dupre drag you through another gate into Lord British's castle throne room.

Guess what? You have company coming through the portal. Gargoyles are all around you, and they are pressing their attack. Before continuing, we'd better explain that you should have read the Compendium and the Reference Guide before you arrived at this stage of the

adventure. If you haven't, you won't know how to equip yourself to enter the battle against these evil beasts.

The gargoyles that now threaten Britain were discovered after the first expedition into the underworld, and they are now seizing the holy shrines. They seem to be seeking something of immense value, and they also want you, the Avatar, dead.

We first played *Ultima VI* in EGA mode and wished we had VGA graphics. EGA is stunning, but occasionally a small character on-screen becomes lost in the background or foreground color. (And you should definitely pay attention to small characters. Make certain that rat you're about to slay is really a rat. Something that looks like a rat but is far more friendly may be needed to help your quest!)

Also, during some combat sequences with a gargoyle, the creature folded or unfolded its wings, which caused slow screen refresh. This became a little confusing when moving our characters because we couldn't tell where the opposition was situated.

We would like to see a better method of distributing items to fellow adventurers. Currently you have to drop an item from your inventory to a specified location on-screen. The character for whom the item is intended must then Get the item. There is also no good way to distribute wealth other than the aforementioned method. This gets a little tiring when in a shop trying to buy goods for all, and only one adventurer has sufficient funds to complete the purchase.

Other than these minor drawbacks, the consistency of graphic excellence is a feature of which Origin should be extremely proud. Add an easy user interface, and you've got the best *Ultima* adventure yet produced.

You move your character by either clicking the mouse in the direction you wish your character to move, or through use of the keyboard keypad (we found keyboard play to be the most efficient method). You control the party through your Avatar character. However, each character can also operate independently in solo mode. Make certain you don't forget where your characters are if you suddenly decide to return to party mode.

You can save your game at any time with the CTRL-S double key press, and you can toggle the music on or off. As you can have as many as eight characters in your party, the numeric keys 1 through 8 enable you to quickly enter solo mode for each numbered character.

Spell casting is unique. In order to cast a spell you must possess the reagents as well as know the magic syllables. For example, to cast the Unlock Magic spell (a second Circle spell), you must have sulfurous ash and blood moss in your inventory. You then utter the words "Ex Por," and the spell is cast. Other spells can be gained through possession of scrolls. The higher the Circle, the greater the power of the



Ultima VI (Origin)

spell and the more magical power required from the caster (all magic power is regenerated over time).

Once you learn the mantra necessary to meditate at a specific shrine, you will learn if you have enough experience to advance in level. But be careful; the shrines are now the targets of gargoyles. Should you travel to a shrine to meditate and be unprepared to rid it of the violent influence that attracts the gargoyles, you may be in for the fight of your life.

Ultima VI is peopled by more than 188 nonplayer characters (NPCs), each with a wealth of information to help you succeed. Some NPCs will try to mislead you, so take plenty of notes. Perhaps a good way to initiate a conversation is to ask an NPC his name and his job in Britannia. Then follow up with an appropriate question based upon what you've been told.

You'll learn where the runes for each shrine have been hidden for safety, and

which individual in each town knows the mantra for a shrine. With the rune and the mantra, you have the power to eradicate the gargoyles from a particular shrine. Each town in Britain is assigned to a shrine. For example, north of the Cape of Heroes is Trinsic. Trinsic was founded on Honor, so it makes sense that the mantra and rune of Honor will be found here. (Clue: The mantra is "summ," learned from the mayor, and you'll want to walk around the town to see what's out in plain view.)

One action important to the quest is in learning the gargoyles' Gargish language. An individual named Captain John has apparently written a dictionary that would be useful if used for learning purposes.

Above all, we recommend you learn to use the Orb of the Moon that you possess when you arrive in Britannia. Ask Lord British about it. If you learn to use this tool, your frustration will decrease, as you'll be able to move from one area to



Ultima VI (Origin)

another with ease. It then becomes a simple matter of tracking your movement in relation to the position of your Orb.

Britain has taverns, shops that stock magical supplies (reagents and spells), provisioners for that desperately needed lockpick and other assorted items, healers (don't forget that Lord British heals you at no charge), weapons shops, inns, and horse merchants. Everything you could possibly require is available to you—if you have the gold to buy the items.

Save your game as often as possible. And never forget the virtues you learned as an Avatar. They will hold you and your companions in good stead.

Origin has not only maintained the Ultima tradition but has improved it. *Ultima VI* is an awe-inspiring accomplishment. Movement through a city or the wilderness is finely detailed. You can use so many items that you may wish to maintain a list so you'll never forget what each item can do for your characters (we've already logged 285 items!).

This game requires 640K of computer memory, with a video board (either CGA, EGA, VGA/MCGA, Tandy 1000, or Hercules), color monitor, and a sound board (either Roland, AdLib, Game Blaster, Innovation, or Covox). The game set contains seven 5.25" disks, a full-color 18" × 18" tapestry map of Britannia, an Orb of the Moon gemstone, a stand-up reference card, and a Compendium playbook. This is the first Ultima to have been developed on a PC/MS-DOS system. We certainly hope Origin sees fit to consider releasing this terrific fantasy role-playing adventure for other 16- and 32-bit systems as well.

News—computer games

Accolade (408-985-1700) is releasing *Star Control*, which combines elements of strategic challenge with arcade action. A three-dimensional star cluster is your

battleground. With three skill levels to choose from, you select one of 14 ships displayed for its handling characteristics, special powers, and secret weapon, each with its own distinctive sound effects. There are melee and full combat modes, with the latter encompassing nine different strategic scenarios. The game is for PC/MS-DOS machines for \$49.95.

Also from Accolade is *Stratego*, the computer version of the Milton Bradley board game for PC/MS-DOS and Macintosh computers. One player competes with the computer.

Bethesda Softworks (301-926-8300) is distributing *Damocles*. This is a real-time arcade adventure played within an accurate and detailed model of a moving solar system. The comet Damocles is hours away from colliding with the planet Eris. As interplanetary destruction nears, the players, with the helpful robot guide Benson, are challenged to save Eris. The adventure takes place while exploring a detailed world created using solid-fill vector graphics and realistic sound effects. There are nine planets, 19 moons, 37 cities, and over 3,000 multiroom buildings to create this game experience. The game is available for the Atari ST for \$44.95, with an Amiga version expected soon.

Also from Bethesda comes *The Terminator*, based on the hit movie. Set in Los Angeles, this is the story of a superhuman cyborg sent back through time from a hellish future where man's existence hangs in the balance and machines rule the earth. The Terminator is to destroy the mother of the one man who is destined to save mankind. The game will be released for PC/MS-DOS, Commodore 64/128, and Amiga computers as well as a coin-op version.

From Data East (408-286-7080) comes *Full Metal Planet*, a science-fiction adventure. You are whisked away on a secret

space mission as you take on the role of one of the best pilots in the galaxy. Hired by the Cobra Steel Company to work on the dangerous world called Full Metal Planet, you are challenged to collect as much ore as possible. Fighting for your life, you must capture all of the ore taken by rival companies on the planet and return safely home. The game is for Amiga and PC/MS-DOS computers for \$49.95.

Electronic Arts (415-571-7171) is introducing *Powerdrome* for PC/MS-DOS computers. This is a futuristic airborne racing simulation that has players racing Typhoon-class jet hovercraft through twisting, tunnel-filled courses, competing against the clock or battling four intergalactic rivals. You race on five different planets and must make strategically necessary decisions. You choose the appropriate fuel, fuel filter, and aerodynamic structure of your racer to keep pace with the competition. The price is \$39.95.

Origin (512-328-0282) is releasing a new line of PC/MS-DOS role-playing products entitled *Worlds of Ultima*. Forthcoming episodes will take players on adventures to all-new story settings. The first installment in this series is entitled *The Savage Empire*, set in the steamy jungles of a hidden land, Eodon, where time has been frozen for millennia. The landscape is punctuated by mysterious pyramids and lost cities where dinosaurs, stone-age tribes, mad scientists, and a jungle princess roam. These all combine to create a world of savage beauty and compelling intrigue. The price is \$59.95; expect this adventure's release this fall.

Also coming from Origin is *Wingleader*. Mankind is locked in a deadly war with the Kilrathi in the 27th century. Battling these vicious militarists are the daring pilots of the Terran Confederation. With his faithful wingman flying at his side, the fearless Wingleader battles with Kilrathi aces in heated deep-space dogfights. The game features Panaview, 3-D technology that employs highly detailed, ray-traced, bit-mapped images modelled in 256 VGA colors. You select from four different starfighters and use such weapons as heat-seeking missiles, neutron cannon, and the deadly Friend-or-Foe missile. The price for PC/MS-DOS machines is \$59.95.

Another game for PC/MS-DOS computers is *Flight of the Intruder*. The game portrays the harrowing missions flown over North Vietnam by Navy A-6 Intruder and F-4 Phantom pilots. Missions are offered in which you are usually part of a larger operation undertaken by one of several sections of aircraft. For example, a section of A-6 Intruders going on a bombing mission would be joined by a section of F-4 Phantoms to help keep enemy MiGs off the bombers' backs. You can also choose to be the Mission Commander, selecting primary and secondary targets, weapons and external stores, and waypoints setting up the desired route. The price is \$59.95, with versions for the Amiga and Atari ST

expected later this year.

Strategic Simulations, Inc. (408-737-6800) has released its latest offering in its line of TSR-licensed AD&D® computer products, *Secret of the Silver Blades*. New adventures may be started by using characters generated in the *Curse of the Azure Bonds* game, or an all-new party can be created. Here, you'll explore the largest 3-D adventuring expanses ever created in a fantasy role-playing game. New monsters and higher character levels are offered, as well as new spells such as *barkskin*, *charm person*, and *delayed blast fireball*. A clue book will be available late this summer for \$12.95. The game itself is being released for PC/MS-DOS computers at \$49.95 and for the Commodore 64/128 computer at \$39.95. All SSI games are distributed by Electronic Arts.

Walt Disney Computer Software (212/475-8030) has *Arachnophobia* for PC/MS-DOS and Amiga computers at \$44.95 and Commodore 64/128 systems at \$29.95. This pits one or two players against a species of spider that is lethally poisonous, extremely aggressive, and strangely intelligent. You must destroy the deadly queen spiders and their lethal offspring before they take over the country.

News—video games

Accolade (408-985-1700) is introducing four products for the video-game market. The company has signed a licensing agree-



Ultima VI (Origin)

ment with Nintendo to develop and market products for the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES).

Data East USA, Inc. (408-286-7080) is releasing a new cartoon-style entertainment for NES entitled *Caveman Games*. Players go back in time when competition began to become one of six cavemen athletes. Each has his own special set of skills and battles against other cavemen in a series of six events that will keep players rolling with laughter. Players compete to earn medals and the ultimate honor, induction into the Caves of Fame. The price is \$49.95.

Also for NES from Data East is *Battle Chess*. This game combines the strategic challenges of traditional chess with the high-tech excitement of 3-D graphics and sound to create a unique game environment. There are six levels of strategic play. Players watch battles unfold as pieces are moved and formulated moves are executed. The price is \$44.95.

Heavy Barrel is also coming from Data East for NES. This is a strategic combat game where players must recapture an underground control complex of a nuclear missile site that has been seized by terrorists. The player's mission is to infiltrate the installation and eliminate the terrorist force before it's too late and the world is destroyed. The price is \$44.95.

Data East also has a Game Boy game ready — *Lock n' Chase*. You assume the role of a clever international diamond thief on the run. You must find your way through a series of twisted mazes, each littered with cash and gems. Players score points by outsmarting their pursuers, picking up coins, sacks of cash and other valuable items with every new turn of the maze.

Electronic Arts (415-571-7171) has signed a licensing agreement with Sega to develop and market games for the Sega Genesis video-game system. Titles to be released



The Savage Empire (Origin)

this year for Genesis include *Populous*, *Budokan*, and *Zany Golf*. Sega will also license 20 games from Electronic Arts to market in Japan. Sega has also licensed *Abrams Battle Tank* and *688 Attack Sub* for Genesis worldwide marketing. The company has also signed a distribution agreement with Ocean Software of Manchester, England. Electronic Arts will introduce six Ocean Titles in the U.S. NEC Technologies (708-860-9500) will soon release the long-awaited *Double Dungeon*. We viewed a prerelease copy and this could be a hot item. Players enter one of 20 different dungeons and explore the underground maze from a first-person perspective. You'll find monsters that must be destroyed and treasure to be gained. The unique feature of this game is that two players can simultaneously delve into a dungeon as a team. *Double Dungeon* looks like a good role-playing game and should be out in stores soon.

Also enroute from NEC is a hand-held color unit to take on the likes of Atari's Lynx portable video-game system. Called the *TurboExpress*, this new unit uses active matrix, backlit, liquid-crystal technology that can display 512 colors on-screen simultaneously. All Turboglyph and TurboChip games (expect about 50 of them before Christmas) will run on the

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TurboExpress. The unit operates on six AA batteries and has an optional snap-on tuner that allows the unit to operate as a portable TV. The tuner also features a video-in port that allows the system to act as a monitor for a camcorder or VCR. The TurboExpress weighs about 1 lb. What NEC has basically done is take its Turbo-grafx-16 home system, add a TurboPad controller and a TV monitor, then reduce the entire unit to a portable whose size is 4 1/3" x 7 1/3" x 1 1/8". The display boasts 238 x 312 pixels, while the Atari Lynx offers 160 x 102 pixels. Expect to see several accessories for this system, including a communication link, an AC adapter, battery pack, and a car cigarette-lighter adapter. The stereo sound uses your own earphones,

For the NES come the following new games. The first is *Lolo 2*, a game that teaches patience, strategy, and logical thinking without sacrificing fun. This is a favorite of the Nintendo game counselors and is a refreshing break from the alarming rise in senseless violence in video games. The price is \$38.95.

Daydreamin' Davey, \$49.95, is a time-travel adventure. Davey daydreams exciting adventures from the relative safety of his school desk. This is a huge role-playing game that uses a character players of all ages can identify with. Take on the Clanton Gang at the OK Corral, search for Excalibur, journey through Greek mythology, then outwit the biggest boss of all, the principal.

Hudson Soft USA Inc. (415-871-8895) has released four new NES titles. *Starship Hector* is a futuristic space adventure with many challenging options. *Princess Tomato in the Salad Kingdom* is a role-playing game that features an exciting plot and a host of intriguing characters far beyond the usual garden variety. *Mendel Place* offers 200 different game screens. The fourth release is *Adventure Island Part II*, with enhanced graphics.

Clue corner

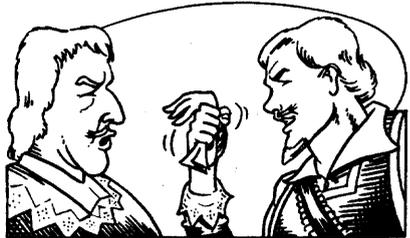
Curse of the Azure Bonds (SSI)

1. In the pit of Moander, at Mogion's shrine, it is very important to fight conservatively. Move your characters toward the right of the screen, and you will find an enclosed area where four can fight abreast and can be attacked only from the front. Warriors (and priests, if you don't have four fighters) should make up the front line. Position any mages and at least one cleric behind this line so they can throw spells at the enemy without being physically attacked. While setting up this formation, let Alias and Dragonbait buy you the necessary time. They fight so pitifully that this is about the only thing you might find them capable of handling.

2. Knock off enemy clerics first so you don't have to worry about their Hold Person spells. The shambling mounds fall

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quickly after their human helpers have been eliminated.

After you have defeated the first wave, parts of Moander that are trapped on the Prime Material plane when you close the gate will form monsters that possess the abilities of shambling mounds but with enormous numbers of hit points. You should hold formation even though these new beasties are so enormous only two or three of your characters can attack at once. Your best bet against these creatures is a Hold Monster spell. Even if only one is paralyzed, it can then be killed with a single blow.

After the battles, your characters will probably be in pretty poor shape. The first room you found when you entered the second level seems to be safer for resting than other areas. You will still be attacked, but not as often as elsewhere. Make certain everyone is in top condition, because you will have to engage in yet another massive melee in the room that contains the only exit route on the first level.

Aaron Richards
San Lorenzo CA

Draconian: Drakkhen (Data East USA)

1. Yes, that shark at Prince Hordtkhen's palace is nasty. It seems like every time someone tries to cross the moat, it's a quick dive, a snap, and it's goodbye character. Why not have one of your party become invisible, wait until the shark's tail disappears beneath the drawbridge, then command your invisible adventurer to cross immediately to the door?

2. Inside Hordtkhen's palace, try activating the second symbol from the left. You won't be sorry.

3. Healing graces can be found north of the north road. Look for a split in the road itself, and head north toward a jagged mountain. Walk carefully and avoid those wet spots! The temple may not be easy to find, but it certainly can aid beginning adventurers in reacquiring hit points.

4. The best way to prevent body compression is to Lock a drawbridge.

5. You won't be able to enter the Prince of Water's castle until the Princess of Earth gives you something very important.

6. The Prince of Water is there, the second time around.

7. Try to avoid travel at midnight; that's when the constellations attack!

8. Teleporters operate only in similar geographical terrain.

The Lessers

Once again, it is time for each of our readers to pick up a pen and postcard and write down the name of the best software adventure of the year. Be sure to specify the system version of the software for which you are voting (PC/MS-DOS, Macintosh, Apple II, Commodore 64/128, Atari ST, Amiga, etc.). The results will be published in our December column.

Keep in mind that your game hints help everyone. Mail them to: The Lessers, 179 Pebble Place, San Ramon CA 94583, U.S.A. Until next month, game on!

Ω

THE DRAGON'S BESTIARY



Two hauntingly good
(but definitely bad)
undead

by Spike Y. Jones

Artwork by Thomas Baxa

Spiritus Anime

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Anywhere dead
bodies can be found*

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*

ORGANIZATION: *Solitary*

ACTIVITY CYCLE: *Any*

DIET: *Nil*

INTELLIGENCE: *Semi- (2-4)*

TREASURE TYPE: *See below*

ALIGNMENT: *Neutral evil*

NO. APPEARING: 1

ARMOR CLASS: 7 (*skeleton*)/8 (*zombie*)/6
(*spiritus anime*)

MOVEMENT: 12 (*skeleton*)/6 (*zombie*)/24
(*spiritus anime*)

HIT DICE: 3

THAC0: 17 (*in all forms*)

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 (*as skeleton or
zombie*)/Nil (*as spiritus anime*)

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-6 (*skeleton*)/1-8
(*zombie*)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Animate dead*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *See below*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

SIZE: *M (as skeleton or zombie), or T
(1' diameter cloud as spiritus anime)*

MORALE: *Elite (13)*

XP VALUE: 650 + 65 per animated body

The spiritus anime is an undead creature, in the shape of a formless vapor, capable of animating the bodies of dead creatures in its vicinity. Its appearance is that of a glimmering cloud of dust with a tenuous thread of dust motes attaching it to the body the spiritus wore in life (its "home body," which is almost invariably buried). This cloud is normally *invisible* but a detect invisibility or true seeing spell reveals it as a glowing nimbus around the bodies it animates, or as a cloud if found without bodies. In addition, if someone actively tries to see this monster without magical aid, the attempt will succeed if a save vs. spells is successfully made. The viewer must be within 10' of the spiritus anime in order to have any chance of seeing it.

Combat: In its natural, cloudlike form, the spiritus anime makes no attacks; to fight, it possesses and animates a corpse or skeleton within 100 yards of its original home body. When in one of these bodies, it fights as if it were a normal animated undead, either a skeleton or a zombie, with the animated body having all appropriate statistics (the body's hit dice and hit points are separate from the spiritus anime's own). Damage done to the animated body is not taken by the spiritus anime; when a body that the spiritus anime inhabits is "slain," the monster merely animates another corpse on the following round and once more rises to the attack (having a +4 penalty added to its initiative roll on the first round of a new body's use). "Slain" undead cannot be animated again by the same spiritus anime, though zombies that are "slain" can be reused as skeletons months later, once the flesh has rotted from their bones. Only the remains of human, demihuman, or humanoid beings can be so animated.

There are four ways to halt a spiritus anime's attack. The easiest is to retreat more than 100 yards from the spiritus' home body, the distance beyond which it cannot move an animated host body. (Theoretically, a spiritus anime could use an animated body to carry its home body to a distant site, in order to find a larger supply of corpses to animate or to follow a particular enemy to which it has developed some special attachment, but such an intelligent plan would surely be beyond it.)

The second method is to destroy the supply of dead bodies that it can animate as weapons, a time-consuming process that can be counterproductive if some of the attacking party dies in the melee, allowing their bodies to be animated as zombies by the spiritus anime (in preference to the weaker skeletons).

The third way is to destroy the spiritus



anime's home body, instead of merely dispatching its host bodies. If attackers manage to identify and dig up its home body, they can "slay" this body and, in so doing, kill its spiritus anime. The home body has the statistics of either a skeleton or zombie, though if not animated it will not attack. When an attack on the home body is begun, the spiritus will concentrate its efforts on protecting its home body either by using animated bodies or by animating its home body and attempting to flee with it. Normal weapons are effective against a spiritus anime's home body, and holy water does 1-4 hp damage per vial both to the body and to the spiritus anime itself.

The final method of killing a spiritus anime is through magic. If any *cure wounds* spell is used on a body the spiritus anime is animating, the spiritus anime permanently loses a number of hit points from its own hit-point total (not from the hit-point total of the animated body) equaling the number of hit points that the spell would have cured. Bless causes 1-4 hp damage to the spiritus anime if it fails a saving throw vs. spells, and *exorcise*, *dispel evil*, *spiritwrack*, *raise dead*, and

resurrection will all kill it without a saving throw.

A spiritus anime can be turned by a cleric as if it were a ghoul. A "D" result destroys the body the spiritus anime is animating but does not harm the spiritus anime itself. If a spiritus anime is turned, it can leave the body it is animating and resume its attacks in the next round by entering a new body, just as if the first body had been destroyed. A bless spell cast upon a body that has not been animated will permanently protect that body from animation by a spiritus anime. If the spell is cast on the spiritus anime's home-body, the spiritus anime takes the usual 1-4 hp damage, no matter where it is or what it is doing.

Once in a while (10%), a particular spiritus anime will have developed a special and deceptive battle tactic. It will abandon a wounded host body before the body is completely destroyed, only to return to it later. As those fighting against the undead will have assumed that they slew the first body, having it rise a second time will make them believe that the undead bodies are impossible to slay—a frightening prospect indeed.

Habitat/Society: A spiritus anime is a type of undead created only when a human, demi-human or humanoid creature is buried alive, either intentionally (as a torture or sacrifice) or by accident (such as a landslide or the result of a tragedy involving a disease, a *feign death* spell, etc.). Many (40%) of those so buried become spiritus animes, desperate to escape burial and return to the surface.

Because such circumstances are usually uncommon, only solitary spiritus animes are typically encountered. If more than one of them haunts a single site, the only sign that they acknowledge each other's existence is that they usually refrain from animating each other's home bodies unless there are no other bodies available to them. If this does occur, and one of these home bodies is slain, this automatically slays the spiritus anime to which the body belongs, without materially affecting the spiritus that had been animating the body. Thus, "killing" a zombie on one side of a graveyard could actually slay a spiritus anime on the other side of the field, causing two undead bodies to fall, in different locations, when only one was struck (though a third body might soon arise!).

Although both skeletons and zombies can be created from the bodies of any dead monster, a spiritus anime animates only bodies that are similar to the one it wore in life, for it feels comfortable in that shape alone. If the body animated is of the same species as the spiritus once was, then the animation is handled with ease. If there is a minor difference in size (such as that caused by a once-human spiritus anime using a dwarven skeleton), the animated body fights at -1 to hit; if there is a major difference between the bodies (such as the size difference between a halfling and an ogre, or the presence of extra body parts such as the tail of a troglodyte or the four arms of some sahuagin), the body fights at -4 to hit.

Ecology: Spiritus animes are not natural creatures and do not participate in any way in the food chain, except to create carrion in their immediate vicinities that attracts scavengers, insects, etc. As these creatures are usually found in areas shunned by civilization, they are set very much apart from the worlds everyday functioning. They exist only to procure additional host bodies to preserve their "lives" aboveground until they are finally laid to rest.

Spiritus animes do not collect treasure, but sometimes they will have incidental treasure. If in a proper graveyard, each of the bodies they animate, plus their home bodies, will have only the normal burial goods of that region, ranging from a burial shroud to the riches of a major tomb. If the bodies used are the result of an accidental burial, then the treasure will consist of the normal goods carried by the creatures when alive.



Ankou

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Any inhabited area*

FREQUENCY: *Very rare (Rare)*

ORGANIZATION: *Solitary*

ACTIVITY CYCLE: *Night*

DIET: *Nil*

INTELLIGENCE: *Low (5-7)*

TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*

ALIGNMENT: *Neutral evil*

NO. APPEARING: *1*

ARMOR CLASS: *6*

MOVE: *6*

HIT DICE: *8*

THAC0: *13*

NO. OF ATTACKS: *2*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type (doubled)*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Nil*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Never surprised; detects hidden or invisible beings within 60'*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Nil*

SIZE: *M*

MORALE: *Champion (15-16)*

XP VALUE: *975*

The ankou is an undead creature who was a miserly farmer or peasant in life, a person so debased as to have murdered

his own family out of greed or to have allowed his family to perish rather than share his hoard of food with them. When death claims such a person, his soul sometimes returns as an ankou, roaming the countryside in search of other victims to collect.

An ankou appears quite ordinary at a distance, seeming to be a poor farmer on the road late at night, perhaps returning from a market town. It wears typical rural clothing: ragged shoes or boots; worn, patched and dusty work clothes; and sometimes a broad-brimmed work hat set to cover its eyes. Closer inspection reveals it as an emaciated old man, with parched lips and with skin pulled tightly across the face and body.

Three things upset this picture. First, an ankou is usually armed with a farmer's scythe (50%), a long sword that it carries without a scabbard (20%), or a large club (20%); it is unarmed 10% of the time. Second, as an ankou takes its slow, stiff, and deliberate steps forward, its head never ceases to turn from side to side, its glowing, flame-red eyes scanning the land to either side looking for prey. Third, the ankou is always followed by an apparently sourceless, wooden creaking sound. This

is a product of an *invisible* cart pulled by an equally *invisible* ox or horse that is even more emaciated than the ankou. The purpose of the cart (a gift of some nether-world god of evil) is to carry away the bodies of the ankou's victims, leaving behind nothing to mark its victims' last struggles. Sometimes the sound of the cart can be heard minutes before the ankou appears, apparently stepping out of the lengthening shadows of dusk or merely approaching along a darkened road.

Combat: The ankou is not particular about whom it kills, but it is more likely to be encountered by solitary travelers than by groups (treat the ankou as if it were only "rare" on such occasions). It has excellent senses of hearing and sight, so it can detect anyone in hiding and cannot be surprised. Even with this ability, it will still attack only those who are accessible. The ankou cannot cross open water or flame, though rough ground slows neither itself nor its beast-drawn cart.

In combat the ankou usually fights with a weapon, doing double damage on all hits (2-16 hp damage with a sword, club, or scythe) because of its great strength and carefully aimed attacks. As it is as slow as a zombie, it gets only one attack per round and always strikes last.

If unarmed, an ankou attacks by grabbing at its opponent and attempting to wrap its thin arms around the victim's

chest to crush him. The ankou needs to make a single to-hit roll; if it succeeds, the ankou has caught the victim in a bear hug of fantastic strength, its fingers locking together with startling power. Every round thereafter, the ankou does damage equal to the victim's armor class (armor type and magical bonuses apply, but shield and dexterity bonuses do not, for the purposes of this calculation). Victims with armor classes of 1 or less take no damage. The hugged victim may attack the ankou with a one-handed melee weapon at - 2 to hit; he may instead elect to attempt to break the ankou's hold, which can be done if he makes a successful bend bars/lift gates strength roll (one attempt per round allowed with no limit to the number of attempts).

Being undead, the ankou is unaffected by spells involving *sleep*, *hold*, *charm*, or cold of any sort, and its excellent senses negate the effects of many illusions (giving it a bonus of + 3 on saving throws vs. illusions). It can be turned by good clerics (or caused to ignore evil ones) as if it were a spectre. The touch of holy water instantly causes it and its cart to return to the nether realms of Tartarus without the possibility of a saving throw.

The invisible cart and beast of burden can be directly attacked only by casting a *dispel evil* or *exorcise* spell upon them, which will instantly destroy them (though

they will re-form on the following night if the ankou still exists). Weapon blows and magical effects are ineffective against them.

Habitat/Society: The ankou is a very slow and patient creature with the ceaseless endurance of the undead. If an ankou's victim escapes alive, it will follow him at its slow, plodding pace for the rest of the night, until it either catches and dispassionately kills him, or until the first light of dawn intrudes, banishing the ankou back to Tartarus until the next dusk. It has no memory to speak of and so will not resume its pursuit the next night out of any spite. But if the ankou encounters the same traveler on some subsequent night, it will attack him normally, as if the first encounter had never occurred.

Ecology: The ankou is probably the undead that contributes the least to the ecology of a world. As with others of its ilk, it neither eats nor can be safely eaten by Prime Material plane dwellers. But unlike other undead, it does not leave even the lifeless bodies of its victims behind to be eaten or picked through for treasures. All that remains after an ankou's attack are a line of the victim's footprints that end at the point where the victim was waylaid by the driver of an ox- or horse-pulled cart, and the wheel ruts that continue down the road, fading to nothingness.

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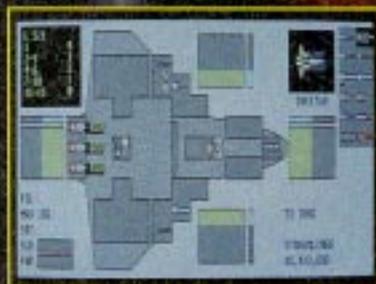
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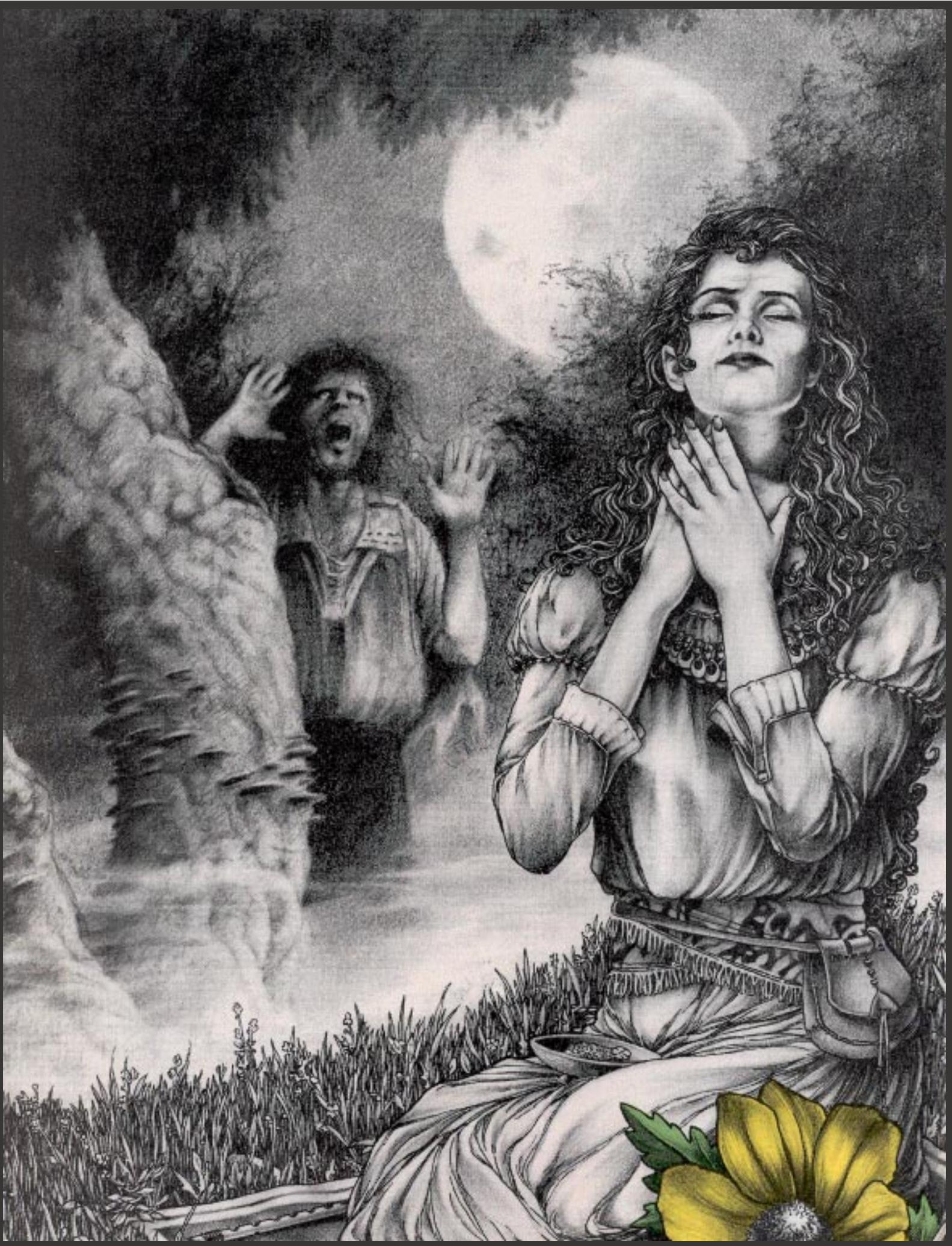
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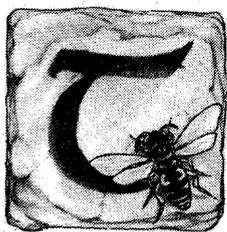


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he dead stayed dead. That was a fact of life. They were buried with solemn rituals and rivers of tears. Friends and neighbors sympathized with the bereaved family, bringing food and drink and comfort. But nothing changed the fact that the dead stayed dead.

"Except in Aldagar," Livvona sighed as she answered the knock at her door. Perhaps because the land had a history of wizard wars or because the lines of magic forces met there—whatever the reason, the dead often left their intended final rest and roamed the desolate hills and scrub grass plains, seeking . . . what?

It was Livvona's vocation to discover what the dead were seeking, then lay them to rest—permanently. At least, that was how people viewed her work, like the four men standing before her, all from the village of Eldon Green.

Livvona sighed again, glancing at the half-finished cloth on her loom. She'd started weaving four months ago, just after High Summer's Day. Every time she'd added a few inches, another group of petitioners had appeared at her door. This time she'd been home for a full day before the men of Eldon Green had knocked at her door.

"You've got to rid us of a Cold One," insisted Taygus, the leader, a nut-brown man who stank of smoke and iron. "He's killing our children!"

"Killing children!" she said, astonished.

Taygus nodded.

"Just children?" Livvona asked, puzzled.

Taygus nodded again. "Cold Fever's already taken three."

"Oh, he's not killing them himself."

"Same as if he did! You've got to stop him!"

Livvona finger-combed a strand of graying hair from her face. Being a priestess of Sorwe the Gentle, she was compelled to help anyone who asked. "I'll come."

"If we leave now, we can reach our village by noon tomorrow," Taygus said. A double arch of black brows frowned together above his sharp nose.

Sighing, Livvona shuffled to the shelves lining one end of her hut. Wooden boxes and ceramic bottles and crocks sat in neat rows, color bands indicating what each contained. Potions for milk fever. Potions to keep locusts from crops. Potions for luck.

She put several containers carefully into her bag, along with food and a reed pipe.

"We've no time for music," Taygus growled.

"Then I pity you," she said as she slid the strap over her shoulder.

King's Road, running north toward Aldagar's capital, was deserted except for a man leaning heavily on a staff. The ragged sling on his left arm almost hid the mercenary's tattoo on his hand. Livvona stopped to check his injury, but Taygus tried to drag her away.

"Forget him! We found you before he did!"

Jerking from his grip with a strength that left Taygus looking shocked, Livvona glared at him. "Everyone who needs my help gets it. He's hurt. I have to help."

"But the Cold One! Our children are dying!"

"The time I give this man won't make any difference,"

A Prayer for the Dead

by Deborah Millitello

Illustrations by Timothy Standish

she said quietly, but her tone was hard as stone.

Taygus started to say something but closed his mouth in a tight frown.

She cleansed and rebandaged the soldier's wound, and gave him the blessing of Sorwe. He gave her thanks and a copper coin in return, then trudged southward.

Her companions said little the rest of the way, except Morthat, the youngest of them. He walked beside her with a loose, easy gait. His eyes were like clouds heavy with life-giving rain.

"Tell me about the Cold One," Livvona asked.

"He came—"

Taygus interrupted Morthat. "I'll tell her what she needs to know."

Morthat lowered his gaze instantly and moved out of Taygus's way.

Taygus looked down at her with eyes of iron. "I'll answer your questions."

Giving him a smile meant to put him at ease, she said, "Then tell me about the Cold One."

Taygus kept his expression blank, staring straight up the road as they walked. "What d'you want to know?"

"When did the Cold One appear?"

Taygus blew out a slow breath. "Ten days ago. A boy named Micah came running from the goat pasture and said a man had crept up from behind and hit him. All the men grabbed their weapons and went after the man." Taygus shivered, although the air was warm. "We found him—it—a Cold One. Skin blotched red from Blood Plague, eyes like the fires of Keddor's hell. We threatened it, but we knew we couldn't harm it. It said it'd kill all our children."

Morthat broke in then. "Our healer died several weeks ago. We'd heard about your power over Cold Ones. That's why we came to you."

For a moment, Taygus looked as if he might strike Morthat. Slowly, anger drained from Taygus's leathery face to be replaced by pain. "Yes, that's why we came to you. You have to send the Cold One to Keddor's endless fires—before it kills anyone else!"

Livvona shuddered. Taygus's anguish was like a blast of winter.

"Why does he only touch your children?" she asked.

"How should I know?" Taygus snapped at her. "It's a Cold One! Who knows why it does what it does? That kind hates life, all life!" His voice softened, and a tear wavered at the corner of his eye. "Any life." He stared at the road for a few moments, then looked up at her sharply. "What difference does it make, anyway? It's a Cold One. You're a priestess. You're supposed to banish it."

"Yes," Livvona said softly as she stared at him, "but I have to know why he's plaguing you before I can put his soul to rest."

Taygus mumbled something she couldn't make out, then picked up his pace. Even Morthat had difficulty keeping up, with him. Livvona was grateful when Morthat offered to carry her sack and gave her his walking stick to lean on. By the time they made camp at sunset, she was exhausted.

No one talked much that evening, except when Livvona prayed after the meal. The men chorused the proper re-

sponse, but without sincerity. She watched them, withdrawn, their eyes avoiding hers. They hid behind invisible walls of fear and distrust . . . or was it something else? She didn't know. What she did know was that pain was Taygus's shield, a pain so sharp it had carved deep wounds in his soul. What could hurt a man like him down to the core of his being?

Livvona fell asleep, watching Taygus and wondering.

Taygus had been right. After turning off King's Road and walking for several hours, they arrived midday at Eldon Green—a dozen stone huts clustered between meadows and woods. All the inhabitants poured from behind locked doors to greet the men.

Livvona could almost taste fear in the air. Hands clutched children close. Eyes, red from lack of sleep, glanced everywhere. But hope flickered in faces as the villagers looked at Livvona.

"Taygus!" a woman's voice cried. From one of the buildings ran a middle-aged woman, her ash-gray eyes wild, her chestnut hair loose and tangled. She plowed through the crowd and tumbled into Taygus's arms, sobbing.

"Ada! Ada, what's wrong?"

"She's dead! Raelyn's dead!"

Anguish filled Taygus's dark eyes and cut deep lines in his forehead. "Raelyn?" he whispered. "Goddess, no. Not her, too." He buried his face against Ada's thick hair and wept. "What about the boys?"

"Alive, barely," she said.

Livvona touched Ada's shoulder. "Show me where they are. I can still save them . . . I hope."

Wiping tears on her gray sleeve, Ada ran to her house, a neat stone building with a forge to the left. Inside, near a blazing hearth, were four cots. A blanket covered a tiny form on one. In the other cots were three young boys, pale as moonlight.

Livvona touched the smallest boy's cheek. Sweaty but cold as frost. Breathing so shallow, she could barely detect it. Body rigid and deathly pale. Just as she feared. Cold Fever in its last stage. Even with the potions she'd brought, she couldn't be certain the children would live.

"Get tubs, troughs, anything large enough to hold the children. You have to bathe them in hot water, hot as they can stand, to stop the Cold. I'll make a potion that will help. Force them to drink it. It should keep them alive until I can banish the Cold One."

Ten other children were also ill, she was told, but none as seriously as Ada's children. Taygus refused to leave Raelyn's body. He sat in a chair beside the hearth and rocked her, singing a lullaby. He stared at the fire, withdrawn, not answering when Ada pleaded with him to help with his sons.

"Raelyn was our only daughter," Ada said as she sank to a stool beside Livvona, who stirred a kettle of potion for the children. "Taygus adored her." Looking toward her husband, she blinked back tears. "One day, some of the children slipped away to play at the edge of the woods. We should've watched them closer. That's when the Cold One found them. Imsen—our oldest son—he tried to protect his sister and the others. Imsen and another boy died right

after Micah. That's when Taygus went to find you. Too late . . . too late for Raelyn." She hid her face in her hands and cried.

Livvona felt cold and sick, remembering how forceful Taygus had been when she'd stopped to help the mercenary. Had that delay caused Raelyn's death? No, surely not. It had taken only a little while to clean and dress the wound. It couldn't have made the difference. Still, doubt bothered her conscience.

When the potion was finished, she sent for the women whose children were ill, giving a cupful for each child. "This should be enough for now. I must talk to the rest of the villagers before I meet the Cold One, but first I need some sleep."

"Please, stay at my house," Morthat said. Livvona hadn't noticed him hovering at the doorway. When she hesitated, he continued, "I live alone, so you'll be undisturbed."

She smiled. "I'll check the other children, then come."

Morthat smiled back, smoothed back his golden-brown hair, then left.

Livvona checked all the children, making certain the potion was being used properly, and gave them Sorwe's blessing. As she trudged to Morthat's house, she leaned heavily on the walking stick he had lent her. She felt old suddenly, tired, and she wondered if she were strong enough to deal with the Cold One. Too late to send for another priestess. She had to face him now, whether she was ready or not.

Morthat had moved his bed before the hearth and provided a thick fur to spread over the blankets. "I'll guard the door while you sleep."

She smiled at him. "Thank you. Wake me well before sunset."

He nodded and left.

Huddling under the covers, Livvona breathed the slow, calming prayers she'd learned so many years ago, then fell asleep.

She moaned as Morthat woke her, not wanting to leave the warmth of the bed. "So soon?" she whispered.

"Yes. The men are waiting outside, as you asked."

Joints creaked as she pushed back the blankets and sat up. This would be the last time she gave a Cold One peace. Somehow, she knew it. She tugged her sack over her shoulder, the weight like lead. "May I use your walking stick a while longer?"

"Of course," he said, offering his arm for support.

She smiled, shook her head, and preceded him from the house.

All the men were there, all but Taygus. Livvona heard his voice singing softly to his dead child. She would have to heal him later.

"Stay inside tonight, all of you," Livvona said. "Bar doors and windows, and don't step outside until dawn." She started to leave.

"I'll come with you," Morthat said.

She didn't stop or even look back at him. "No. I need to be alone and undistracted tonight. Sorwe will protect me. Stay inside."

There was a momentary silence, then hurried footsteps

and closing doors.

Walking west across the wide meadow, Livvona looked for a place for the confrontation. The setting sun dyed everything blood red and rust orange as it crept toward the mountains. At last, she chose a slight rise with a clear view on all sides. Shadows spread across the meadow as she searched for a flower, finding a tiny but fragrant butterdrop. From her sack she removed a square of fabric and spread it on the ground. Sorwe's symbol, an outstretched hand, glittered golden on the silver cloth. She placed the flower and a small dish of honeycomb on it, then sat crosslegged on the ground, shivering as the chill air seeped through her clothes and into her joints. Taking the reed pipe from her sack, she prayed a protective circle around her as she watched the final sliver of sun sink behind the mountains.

The moon rose milk-white and full over the trees. Livvona began to play her pipe softly, a tune filled with summer skies and bubbling streams, warm days and pleasant nights, woman's love and child's laughter. The music glided on the night wind, growing stronger as she played.

Suddenly, she felt a draft of cold that even Keddor's fires couldn't warm. A graveyard stench made her stomach lurch. The Cold One was near. Her hands shook, but she kept playing.

Soon, a shadowy form covered with rotting clothes stood before her. Even in the moonlight she could see dark stains on his skin, signs of the Blood Plague that had killed him, but lesions of decay marked him as well. He stared at her, eyes glowing like a forge, burning with hate.

"Who ar-re you?" he asked, his voice like dry leaves.

"Livvona, priestess of Sorwe the Gentle, healer, peace giver." She held the pipe between her palms and bowed. "And who were you?"

"Wer-re?" His laugh was cold as ice, sharp as steel. "No one."

"But you had a name."

"Yes-s," he answered slowly. "Sethim. My name was-s Sethim."

She bowed again. "One who was Sethim, I offer you gifts. Breathe the scent of this flower, and remember the perfume of spring meadows. Taste the sweetness of honey, and remember the satisfaction of good food and mead. Hear the music of my pipe, and remember the songs of birds and the laughter of children. All these are the joys of living."

He looked down at the butterdrop, then knelt and touched it. A tear oozed from his eyes and fell on the flower, coating it with frost. Jerking his hand away and standing quickly, he glared at her.

"The joys-s of life have no m-meaning to m-me," he hissed. "Only sor-r-row and r-reveng-ge."

"Revenge? You seek revenge against children?"

"No!" The force of his voice was a gale against her shields. "Not against-st children! Against-st their parents-s!"

"Why? What did they do to you?"

"They know." The hellish light in his eyes burned brighter. "They know well. J-justice for their crim-me!"

One seeking vengeance—a true revenant, she thought, shivering. The power of his hate, his rage, pounded against her

circle of protection. This was going to be harder than she'd imagined. Revenants didn't reveal their purposes readily, and they weren't banished to the grave by prayers alone.

She pushed against his hate, gently, without threat, then spoke again. "But you're killing children! Four are already dead, and more will die."

He squeezed his eyes shut and turned his face from her. A sob heaved his hollow chest. "No . . . I . . . No."

As his hate wavered, Livvona pressed him. "Today a little girl died, one who'd never harmed you. She died slowly, painfully, Cold Fever stealing the warmth of her life away. You killed her! Why?" She thought she'd touched his compassion, stirred his pity. His reaction wasn't what she expected.

"They killed m-my daughter-r!" he shouted at her. "Death-th for death-th!"

The fury of his hatred slammed her back against the cold ground. Gasping for breath, she rolled slowly to her side, pushed up on her elbow, and met his gaze. "The villagers . . . murdered . . . your daughter?"

"Yes-s!"

"How?" she whispered. "Tell me the truth, Sethim, and by Sorwe I swear justice will be given to them."

Sethim hesitated, anger and pain flitting across his ulcerated face.

"Did the villagers of Eldon Green murder your daughter?"

"Yes-s! No. But they killed her-r!" His shoulders sagged, and he closed his eyes. "We fled our-r village in the west because of the Blood Plague, but I didn't know we alr-ready had the sickness. I was trying to r-reach the Temple of Sorwe when I found the village. Chellaine was-unconscious-s by then. I shouted for a healer. They told me to go away. I begged, I pleaded for-r help, but they threw stones at us-s and drove us-s into the woods." He sank to the ground as if weak. "Chellaine died a short time later. I dug her grave with my lingers-s and buried her. Not long after that, I died too."

Livvona's thin brows pulled together as she closed her eyes in shock. Only one other village in Aldagar had ever acted as Eldon Green had. A barren desert covered the remains of that cursed place. "Sorwe forgive them."

"No!" Sethim pounded his rotting fist against the ground. "They deserve no forgiveness-s-s! When they came for me, I swore they'd pay for Chellaine's death-th, that none of their children would live!"

Horror clutched her heart and forced tears from her eyes. Her stomach felt as if she'd eaten a half-cooked lump of dough, and her throat was as raw and burning as if she'd vomited. Why did children often pay for their parents' sins? And what sin was worse than lack of compassion?

She swallowed hard before she spoke again. "You know what it is to watch your child die, helpless to stop it. You know how she suffered. Do you want other children to suffer as she did? To feel the burning fever, the freezing chills? To be too weak to breathe, too tired to live?" She summoned the images of the sick children of Eldon Green, showing him their pain, forcing him to feel their suffering, hear their sobs, see life drained from them by the Cold

Fever. Her voice became soft, gentle, as a mother whispering to her child. "Will stealing their lives give life to Chellaine?"

"No," he said, leaf-tangled hair falling over his face as he hung his head. "But what justice is-s there for her death-th?"

Livvona considered his question. What would be justice for the villagers' actions? "I don't know. But I will. By Sorwe I swear, I will. Rest tonight. Tomorrow, come to the edge of the village at sunset. Justice will be done."

He looked at her, eyes narrowed, brow creased with doubt. At last, he spoke. "I'll wait one more day."

She nodded. "That's all I ask."

He turned and started toward the woods, but over his shoulder he said, "One day only. And I swear that if your judgment isn't true justice, you'll be the first-st to join me in Keddor's hell."

Sethim merged into the night shadows, taking his killing cold with him. The fiery gleam from his eyes remained with Livvona for hours.

The last stars were fading when Morthat met her halfway to the village.

"I couldn't stay in the village while you were out here alone. I watched from here, to make sure you weren't hurt. Are you all right?" he asked. "Let me help you."

Even though she was drained and barely able to stand, Livvona pulled back from his offered hand, leaning heavily on the walking stick to keep from shaking. "No."

"Is he . . . gone? Forever?"

"No." Her voice was sharper than she'd intended. "Why didn't you tell me the truth?"

He flinched, then stared at his feet, his shoulders drooping. When he met her gaze finally, his face was pale, his cheeks sunken. "I wanted to. Sorwe knows, I tried, but Taygus said you wouldn't help us if you knew. I . . . I couldn't let the children die."

Putting an arm around her waist for support, Morthat told her the truth while the two of them walked. The village healer had just died when Sethim had stumbled into Eldon Green, marks of Blood Plague covering his body. "There was nothing we could do to cure him or his little girl. I wanted to give him water and food, but Taygus said no, and the others agreed with him." He hung his head. "I should've anyway."

Livvona gave his arm a light squeeze. She understood the villagers' fear. Blood Plague spread quickly and was always fatal unless treated by a healer. But to do nothing, to drive the sick away with stones. . . .

When she and Morthat arrived at Eldon Green, they were surrounded by the villagers.

"Is he gone?"

"Are we safe?"

"Will the children live?"

Livvona stared at each of them, her mouth tight, her eyes narrowed. Not one could meet her gaze for long.

"Sorwe forgive you all," she said, her voice soft but piercing. "I know."

The villagers shrank from her, shame coloring pale cheeks.

"But they had the plague. . . ."

"We had no healer . . ."

"We would've died . . ."

"There was nothing we could do . . ."

She raised the walking stick with both hands, then pounded it against the ground like a forester splitting logs. "You could've built a shelter of sticks and hides outside the village! You could've given them food and water and firewood, and sent for a healer! You could've cared! See what your fear and lack of compassion has cost you!"

Heads turned away. Hands muffled sobs. Eyes fixed on grass, sky, woods, anywhere but on her.

Morthat bowed his head, lines cutting across his high forehead. "Priestess, I knew it was wrong, but I didn't stop them. I did nothing. What punishment do I deserve? What will give the Cold One—and us—peace?"

Livvona shook her head. "I don't know. I must pray and ask Sorwe's guidance. The Cold One will come at sunset. Then, I'll give you my judgment."

The strength her anger had given her disappeared. She walked toward Morthat's house, stumbled, and felt his arms catch her.

"Please. Let me help you," he said.

Too tired to argue or answer, Livvona leaned on him. He guided her to his house, helped her into bed, and built a new fire in the hearth.

Shivering beneath the blankets, she prayed. *Lady Sorwe, goddess of healing, show me what is justice for Sethim and Eldon Green.*

She waited for an answer to come, as it always had before. This time there was silence within. All she heard was Morthat adding wood to the fire, and the echo of his words: "Let me help you." The words became visible, letters written in light and blood that changed into hands reaching out.

Livvona smiled as she drifted to sleep. She had her answer.

Morthat stood beside Livvona as the sunset turned the world to flame. Behind her, the villagers shuffled uncomfortably. She shielded her eyes against the red glow, watching, searching.

Out of the sunlight came a shadow, a darkness without warmth of life. Preceded by a blast of soul-chilling cold, Sethim approached, his eyes glowing brighter than the sun. "It is-s time, priestess of Sorwe. Show me justice."

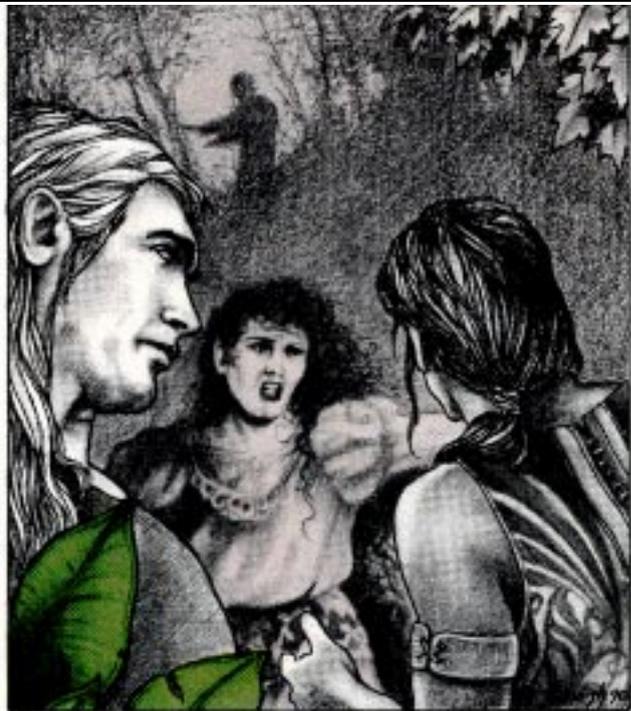
She nodded slightly and turned to the villagers. "He asked for your help; you refused him. He asked for shelter; you drove him away. He asked for pity; you showed him fear. You caused the death of this man and his child. You murdered them as surely as if you had driven swords through them. Their blood has stained your fields and pastures, and Sorwe's face is turned from you."

Terror paled faces as villagers gasped or sobbed. Her curse meant no blessing at birth, no prayer at death, and no healer between.

Shaken, dark eyes haunted, Morthat sank to one knee and reached out to her. "Priestess, please, show mercy!"

"Mercy!" Sethim said, eyes like bonfires. "What mercy did you show Chellaine or m-me?"

"Peace!" Livvona said, glaring at Sethim. "Death for death. That's what you said. They caused two deaths, you and Chellaine. Count the deaths here, Sethim. You've



caused four deaths, taken four innocent lives. You'll have to answer to Sorwe for them!"

Sethim winced under her gaze but didn't answer.

Livvona looked back at Morthat. "Mercy? Can you give life to the dead?"

"I would if I could," he said. "I'd trade my life for theirs, if it were possible." His eyes widened. "Is it?"

She shook her head. "Only the goddess can give life. But you can give what she demands as just payment."

"Anything."

"She asks your life."

Morthat's thin brows arched and met above his sloping nose. "But you said . . . but they can't . . . I don't understand."

"'Let me help you.' Twice you've said that to me. That is what you must do, what all of you must do." She swept her hand toward the villagers. "Offer your help to everyone who needs it. Eldon Green will be a haven for the sick, the homeless, the hopeless. No one will be turned away, ever. Life for death."

The villagers glanced at each other, then nodded at Morthat.

"Thank you," he said, a smile almost bowing his lips.

Turning to Sethim, Livvona said, "Life for death. Is this justice?"

He was silent for a moment, then he said, "Justice. . . and mercy."

"Then be at peace, Sethim. Rest in the gentle arms of Sorwe."

The fire in his eyes mellowed to the soft glow of dying embers. "Peace be yours, priestess-s-s. May we meet again beyond this world." He bowed, turned, and walked with stiff, halting steps toward the woods.

Livvona started to follow, but Morthat stopped her.

"How can we care for the sick? We have no healer."

The corners of her mouth twitched as she held back a smile. "You do now."

She hobbled after Sethim, reciting prayers for the living and prayers for the dead. 

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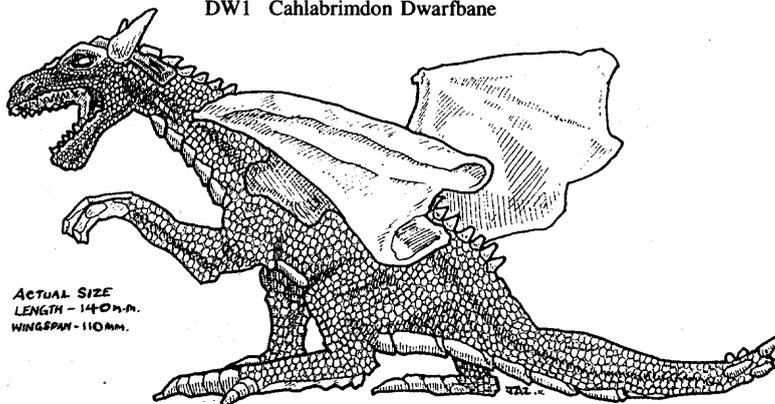
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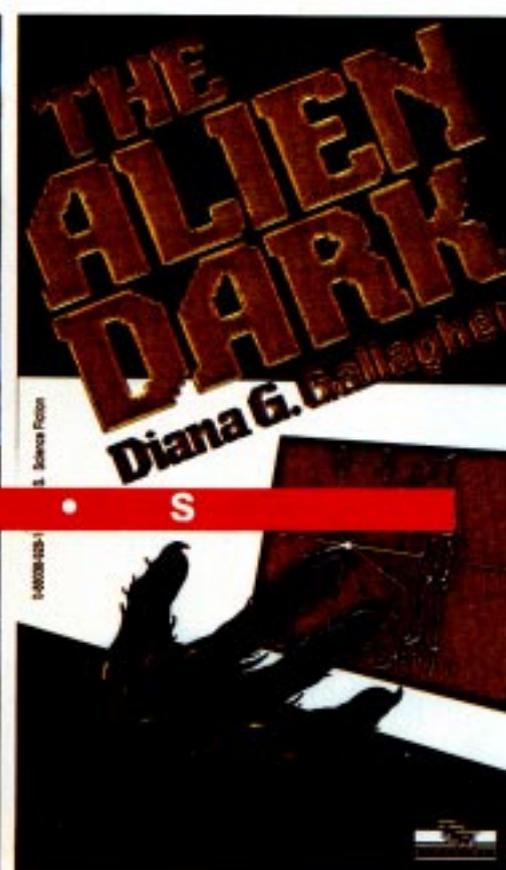
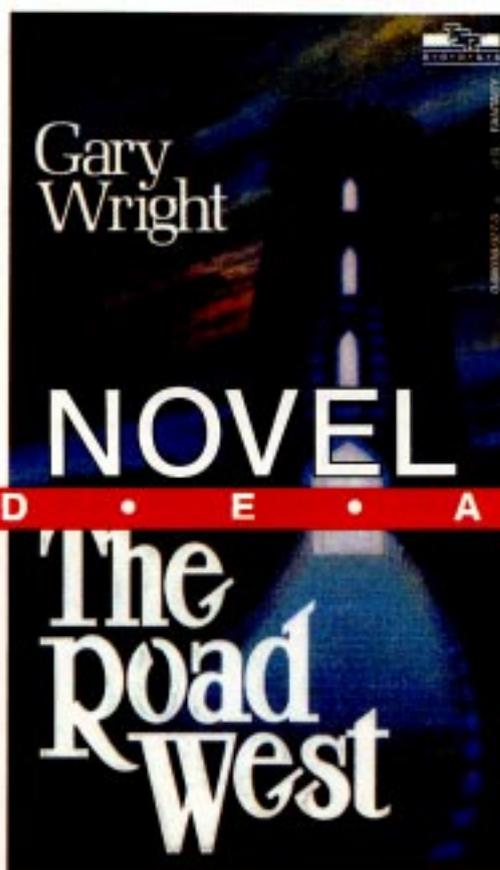
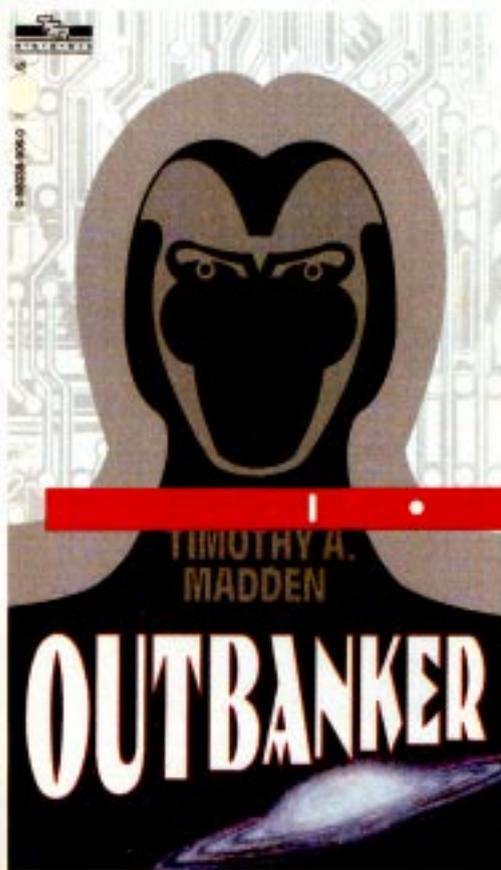
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Madden conceived the idea while driving home from Springfield, Ill. "It had been a bad week. Murphy's Law had worked everywhere," he says. "I was out in the middle of Route 55, rolling along, there wasn't much traffic, and suddenly the first lines of the narrative popped into my head."

Madden was not always a writer by trade. He has a master's degree in public administration and was an intelligence analyst, a rehabilitation center director, a

national sales manager, and a vice president of manufacturing. He also has worked as a professional lobbyist and currently is the managing editor of Scorpio Press.

"I've had a lot of career changes and jobs in my life, and I think the reason for it is that I've always been a writer and wasn't writing," Madden says. "I have a lot of talents, but I never knew what I wanted to do—I was a creative artist and wasn't doing creative arts of any kind."

These experiences, though, did not constitute lost time. "I was always 'psychologically' or 'spiritually' destined to write, so until I did it I was just going along gaining experiences for my writing," Madden explains.

Currently he has four other completed novels and plans to begin a fifth; all of his books include the theme of political power and its intrigues. In addition, his characters never seem to have all the information necessary to make important decisions, and yet, at some point in his stories, they are forced to decide. Madden considers this type of decision making an essential part of life.

When he's not writing, Madden reads science and technology books, and philosophy books covering science and technology. He watches movies and lists among his favorites *Predator*, *Conan the Barbarian*, and *The Terminator*.

Outbanker is already on your bookstore shelves.

A trio that'll take you to the limits

by Theresa Hickey

The Road West

Gary Wright is no stranger to the feel of mountains underfoot. "I'm very much a mountain man," he says. "I grew up in the hills of New England, and I have to have mountains around me." His love of the outdoors may be one reason Wright set his first novel, *The Road West*, in the troubled mountains above a city named Midvale.

The Road West follows the life of Keven of Kingsend, a young man orphaned at an early age who, by his own talents, manages to join the prestigious King's Arms Academy. After graduating with highest honors, Keven goes west on the questing road and discovers adventures in the mountains above Midvale. The story addresses internal as well as external turmoil, and the enemies are not always clearly evident.

"Keven carries a lot of his own problems along with him, and most of his enemies are within himself," Wright explains. "But the problems he meets on the road are a means of solving his own troubles." One notable characteristic of *The Road West* is the author's use of dialogue and colloquialisms. Wright borrowed heavily from local conversation, recording the voices of those around him. "A lot of those [colloquialisms] are New England Yankee sayings, and sometimes I even used the accents," Wright says. "And some are expressions I heard when I was a little boy, though I've changed them around to fit the story."

The main character and portions of the

plot were, at one time, part of a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game scenario. "Keven was a character that was rolled up at one time, and he graduated from there," Wright says. But it took many hours of developing to transform Keven from a game name to a character who was able to sustain a novel. Then it took many more hours of writing to express these ideas clearly.

"I'd get at it early in the morning and work until my back started telling me to quit. That could be anywhere from four to eight hours," Wright says. He worked daily and occasionally on weekends. Whenever he ran into a snag, he'd go hiking to let his subconscious work things out. "Writing allows you to be independent, but it can become very strenuous. You have to be very strict with yourself."

Although *The Road West* is Wright's first novel, he is no stranger to writing. He has sold stories to periodicals such as *Galaxy* and *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, and his story "Mirror of Ice" was included in *Nebula 3* and in a volume of Harry Harrison's *Best Science Fiction of the Year*.

The Road West will hit bookstores in October.

The Alien Dark

Diana Gallagher, a 1989 Hugo award-winning artist, makes a strong showing with her first novel, *The Alien Dark*. The

main characters are aliens that the author describes as "a combination of cats and bears, but as removed from cats and bears as we are from apes." This alien species has reached an evolutionary dead end and, faced with a slowly dying home planet, decides to launch six vessels into deep space. They hope to find an uninhabited world suitable for colonization. After a decades-long mission, the search party finds a system that seems ideal for the species—until some startling discoveries throw everything into question.

Gallagher admits that using alien creatures as main characters was not the easiest way to begin her novel-writing career, but she believes readers will be able to empathize with her characters. "The trick is to have them be alien enough without having them be something that a human reader can't identify with. My characters grew by small increments until they became real personalities and very real to me, so consequently I'm sure they'll be real to the reader," she says.

The themes covered in *The Alien Dark* are not easily summarized, according to Gallagher, but they center around a type of societal myopia. "I guess you could say the book is about not looking ahead to see the results of your actions," she says. "And yet, when faced with the ultimate disasters, there will always be hope."

"I'm a very positive person," she explains.

"No matter what the adversity, there is a very positive side to it. It doesn't matter how bad it is, it could be worse,"

Gallagher spent 10 years, off and on, writing *The Alien Dark*, and unlike many writers, she does not have a regimen when writing—she writes whenever she can find the time. "I'm working in negative hours at the moment," she says with a laugh. She isn't certain if training and taking care of her daughter's show horses constitutes a true hobby, though it's the only type of leisure she can afford at present.

Before she embraced novel writing as a type of second career, Gallagher experimented with poetry and dabbled in song writing and in the entertainment profession. "Then I went through a hiatus for about four years when I didn't do anything," she says. But one night her activities began again as suddenly as they had stopped. "I went to see *Star Wars* and was totally blown away," she explains. "It was the visual scope, to know that someone, somewhere, envisioned this in his mind and then made it happen. At that point, I started writing immediately."

The Alien Dark will be in bookstores in December, 1990.

Keep your eyes on the table of contents for our next "Novel Ideas" column in issue #164, when we will tell you what's new with the barbarians in the Empires Trilogy. □

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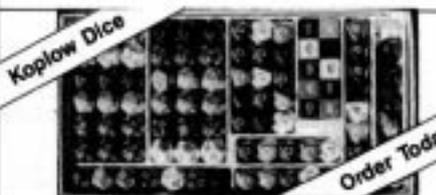
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“Hi. My dad’s Vlad.”

by Dale A. Donovan

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THE MARVEL-PHILE®



If you haven't been following the latest story line in Marvel's Doctor Strange comic, you might not know that the spell Doc Strange cast awhile back that wiped out vampires on Earth (the Montesi Formula) has been invalidated, and vampires are back in the MARVEL UNIVERSE®. In brief, here's how it happened:

Many years ago, when Stephen Strange was a mere apprentice to his mentor, the Ancient One, Strange cast a spell he was not familiar with (the Vampiric Verses) in order to save his dying brother, Victor. Victor's life was saved, but he was transformed into a vampire. Using his medical expertise, Strange had Victor put into suspended animation for safekeeping and stored him in an empty warehouse that Strange owned.

It was after this point that Doc Strange cast the Montesi Formula from the Darkhold (a book of "black magic"), banishing all vampires from Earth. This spell did not affect Victor Strange, however, as being in suspended animation apparently protected him.

More recently, after Doc Strange's apparent death, his associate Sara Wolfe sold the land on which the warehouse was built. When the empty warehouse was torn down, the suspended animation equipment was damaged, and Victor revived. This event, and those that followed, have seemingly "broken" the Montesi Formula, opening the door for vampires to again plague the mortals of Earth.

This month, I'll give the statistics for my favorite MARVEL UNIVERSE vamp, Lilith, and discuss using vampires in your Marvel campaign. For more information on MARVEL UNIVERSE vampires, see Dracula's statistics in either DRAGON® issue #126 or the *Gamer's Handbook of the MARVEL UNIVERSE®*, Vol. 1, and see DRAGON issue #104 for the MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ module, *Sudden Dawn*, which details the Nazi vampire, Baron Blood.

POWERS: All of Lilith's vampiric powers stemmed from a spell cast on her by a gypsy when Lilith was a normal child (see "History"). Lilith possessed all of the standard abilities of a vampire, almost none of the limitations, and one extra power. Due to the spell, Lilith's vampiric powers exceeded the levels of all other vampires, with the possible exception of her father,

Resistances: Lilith could not be permanently harmed by most physical or energy attacks. She could be poisoned but could not die from poison. (Ignore Kill results against her, but Lilith can be Slammed and Stunned. For specific weaknesses, see "Limitations" below.)

Transformation: Lilith could change her shape to any of the following forms in one round, with Amazing ability:

— A visible cloud of mist that could pass through very small cracks and openings. Lilith could fly at Feeble airspeed in this form and was immune to physical attacks. She could transform discrete portions of her body into mist as well.

— A normal-size bat that retained Lilith's intellect. In this form, she could fly at Poor airspeed and attacked on the Edged Attacks column, doing Poor damage (but couldn't score any Kill results). See page 58 of the MARVEL SUPER HEROES Advanced Set Judge's Book for more on bats.

Vampire's Bite: Although Lilith did not need to ingest blood to survive (see "Limitations"), she did savor the taste and would often bite the neck of a victim to obtain it. Her bite did Typical (6) damage per round. As she fed, Lilith also injected an enzyme into her victim's body that would add to his weakness (due to blood loss) and make him susceptible to Lilith's hypnotic commands, even over long distances (see "Summoning and Controlling" and "Limited Telepathy" below). If the victim died from blood loss, the enzyme would cause him to arise three nights later as a normal vampire. This vampire would have all the traditional weaknesses of vampires (sunlight, garlic, holy symbols, etc.) even

though Lilith did not.

Summoning and Controlling: Lilith had several powers in these areas:

–Lilith could summon and control up to her Psyche number in rats, mice, bats, dogs, or wolves with a successful Psyche FEAT roll. The type of animals summoned depended upon the environment in which Lilith was encountered.

–She also had the ability to hypnotize an ordinary mortal when she caught the victim’s eye, even for a few seconds (one round). Lilith could then command successfully hypnotized victims into performing virtually any act short of outright murder or suicide. Lilith could perform no other actions in the round she attempted to hypnotize.

–Lilith could control the weather with a red Psyche FEAT roll. The effects varied from thick fog to powerful rain, snow, wind, or electrical storms, all equal to Lilith’s Psyche in strength. This act drained Lilith, however, and left her unable to use any other vampiric abilities for 1-10 hours.

Immortality: Even if Lilith’s body was destroyed, her spirit would escape and eventually enter the body of an innocent woman who wished her own father dead. Lilith could then, using certain mystic rituals, transform her “new” body into a duplicate of her own. Lilith could not be permanently destroyed as long as her father, Dracula, existed. Lilith also possessed Excellent (20) regenerative abilities in any body she inhabited.

Limited Telepathy: Lilith could telepathically command any person anywhere on Earth from whom she had drained blood, whether that victim was still alive or had died and arisen as a vampire himself.

LIMITATIONS: Because Lilith’s vampirism was due to the spell cast upon her, she was immune to most of the traditional banes of vampires. Lilith did not need to rest during the daylight hours, had no dependence on her native soil, and could withstand direct sunlight. She also did not need blood to sustain herself (but she did enjoy the taste). She was not repulsed or harmed by religious objects, and she could use them against other vampires. She was also immune to the effects of garlic.

Lilith was not totally invulnerable, however. Her body could be killed by driving a wooden stake through her heart. This would require restraining Lilith (getting at least a Partial Hold), and getting a Red result for the staking attack. Also, successfully attacking Lilith with silver weapons did normal damage to her.

TALENTS: Lilith had considerable knowledge about the occult, mystic lore, vampires in general, and her father in particular. Treat her Reason as Excellent (20) in these areas.

CONTACTS: Lilith had few contacts in the world of mortals, although she could

have contacts with Dracula (as a nemesis, not an ally) and Doctor Strange, as she was present when he cast the Montesi Formula.

NOTE: It is important to remember that Lilith is a member of the undead, and there is no Karma loss for destroying her. If Lilith is inhabiting a “captured” body, however, the PCs should be awarded extra Karma if they attempt to remove Lilith from the body she’s inhabiting, rather than just killing Lilith outright.

HISTORY: Lilith was the daughter of Vlad Dracula and his first wife, a Hungarian noblewoman, Zofia. After Lilith was born, Dracula drove her and her mother away; Lilith was given to an old gypsy woman named Gretchin, and her mother committed suicide. A few years later, Dracula himself was mortally wounded in battle and was taken to a gypsy healer who was actually a vampire. The healer killed Vlad and transformed him into a vampire. As a result of this treachery, the now-undead Vlad Dracula went on a rampage, killing all the gypsies he could find.

The vengeful mother of one of the gypsies Dracula killed, Gretchin, cast a spell on Dracula’s daughter, Lilith. This spell transformed the child into an adult vampire. Certain properties of this spell gave Lilith both the vampiric and unique abilities she possessed and granted her the status of Dracula’s eternal foe. Lilith would exist, moving from body to body as each died, as long as Dracula roamed the Earth.

At first, Lilith attacked humans indiscriminately to feed her vampiric tastes. She eventually learned to control her bloodlust, only attacking those whom she considered evil. She also came to the realization that she didn’t need blood to survive, thanks to Gretchin’s spell.

Lilith wanted to punish Dracula for all the evil and suffering he had created in the world. After battling her father for centuries, the two eventually came to a truce, vowing never to meet again. They did not see each other until about 30 years ago. On the estate of Quincy Harker—Dracula’s longtime nemesis—Harker’s wife died from fear of Dracula. Harker took his revenge by killing Lilith.

Lilith’s spirit wandered the British Isles for three decades searching for an innocent woman who wished her father dead. She finally found such a woman in Northern Ireland. A girl named Angel O’Brien, a Catholic, had married and become pregnant by a Protestant man named Ted Harnigan. Upon hearing this, Angel’s father attacked both Angel and Ted. Ted was felled by the blow, struck his head, and died. At that moment Angel felt a murderous hatred for her father, and Lilith entered her body.

Angel/Lilith killed Angel’s father (he did not become a vampire) and began a dual existence. Lilith often took over Angel’s

body completely, even to the point of making it look like Lilith’s original body. Angel had no memories of these episodes, although she realized she was experiencing “blackouts.”

Bored with the British Isles, Lilith coerced Angel into moving to New York City, where Angel met, fell in love with, and lived with a man called Martin Gold. Lilith soon wearied of having to share a body, so she sought out Victor Benzel, a descendant of the gypsy, Gretchin. Benzel, who had inherited much of Gretchin’s mystic lore, performed mystical ceremonies that removed Lilith from Angel’s body and provided a duplicate of Lilith’s own for her. Angel returned to her life under a spell so that she would never remember any part of her life and dealings with Lilith.

Lilith now sought out her father for a final confrontation. She found him at Castle Dracula, where they battled. Dracula finally bared his chest to Lilith and dared her to drive a stake into his heart. Lilith found that she could not do it. Dracula taunted her, saying that as a part of the spell that changed Lilith, Gretchin had made Lilith incapable of killing Dracula, which would then end Lilith’s own existence. Lilith doubted this reasoning, but they parted soon after. It remains unclear whether Dracula’s reasoning was true or whether he was exerting some kind of control over his daughter.

Lilith lost track of Dracula after this. Although she still longed to destroy Dracula should she ever find him, Lilith began to live an independent lifestyle. She eventually came to live in a villa in southern France, after adopting the surname Drake (the form the family name Dracula evolved into). She was present when Doctor Strange and his allies cast the Montesi Formula that ended her existence and her father’s.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES: Since vampires can again exist on Earth, it is possible for Lilith (and other vampires, including her father) to appear in your campaign. She could be searching for her father, perhaps aware of his (recent or impending) arrival in your campaign city. If so, she might even be inclined to work with the heroes to help eliminate her father’s threat. She would, of course, do her best to keep her identity and powers secret—at least until the right moment.

Lilith need not be linked to her father, however. She could also come back as a ravaging monster, worse than her father, if her “death” by the Montesi Formula drove her mad. Lilith would be an extremely dangerous foe, given that she has so few weaknesses common to other vampires and is immortal.

OTHER VAMPIRES: Vast possibilities exist for encounters and even full campaigns featuring vampires. If vampires infest your city, your heroes could become

modern-day vampire-hunters, carrying around hammers and wooden stakes along with their splurge-guns and wakka-wakka devices. Imagine your players' faces the first time their characters encounter a vampire attacking some poor soul. They'll charge to the rescue, only to discover this being is no ordinary mugger!

For those Judges devilish enough to incorporate vampires into their campaigns, a brief conversion system is offered to transform characters into the vile, blood-sucking fiends we all love so much. Remember that very few vampires would have abilities at Lilith's level. She was definitely an exception to the rule. (Thanks to Jeff Grubb for the original conversion guidelines in DRAGON #126.)

Agility: +1CS (maximum Remarkable);
Strength: +1CS (maximum Remarkable);
Endurance: +2CS (maximum Amazing);
Health: modified accordingly.

A "normal" vampire can: transform into mist and at least one animal form; climb sheer surfaces (wall-crawling); use Typical (6) or better Regeneration; command certain animals; and control any vampire it creates if the target vampire fails a Psyche FEAT roll. It also has all weaknesses normally associated with vampires.

Feel free to adapt these conversions to fit the power level of your campaign and heroes. Just remember that vampires are some of the most dangerous beings in the MARVEL UNIVERSE, and any encounter with one should be extremely challenging for your heroes.

One more thing to remember about Lilith in particular, and MARVEL UNIVERSE vampires in general, is that through biting (but not killing) a victim, a vampire can control the victim's actions. This includes most PC heroes. Although Lilith certainly could attack and control one of your PCs, I personally don't recommend it. The heroes are really the "stars" of the campaign, and taking the control of a character from the player is a very tricky situation at best. To me, taking a character away from the player, especially in a super-hero game where the PCs have powers "beyond the ken of mortal men," just isn't right. If you decide to do this, do it very carefully. NPCs are another matter entirely. If a vampire attacks and controls an important NPC, maybe even a loved one of the hero(es), many interesting role-playing situations can develop.

That's it for now. Next month, look for "Leftovers II: The Villains," and I'll be back in issue #165. Send any comments or questions to: The MARVEL-Phile, DRAGON Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Ω

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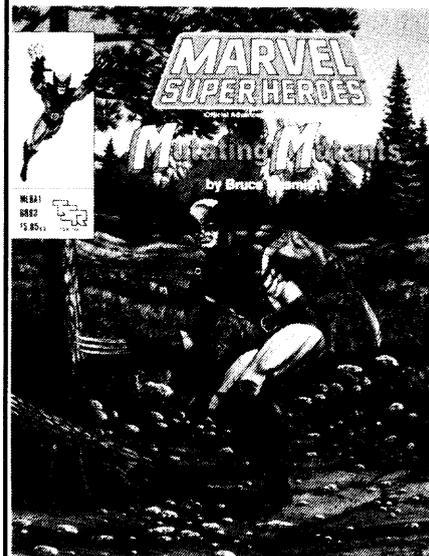
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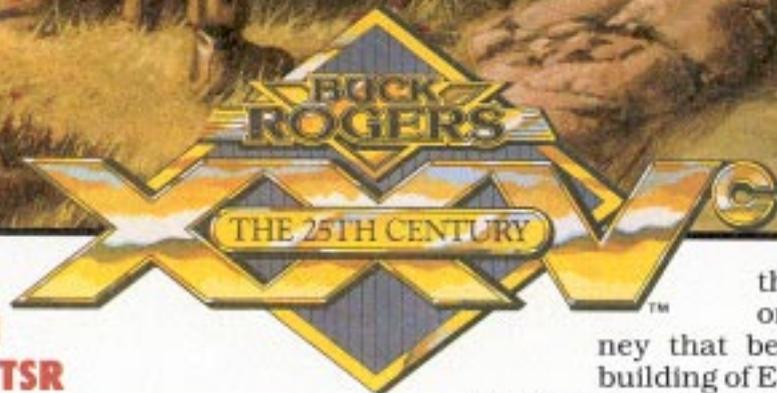
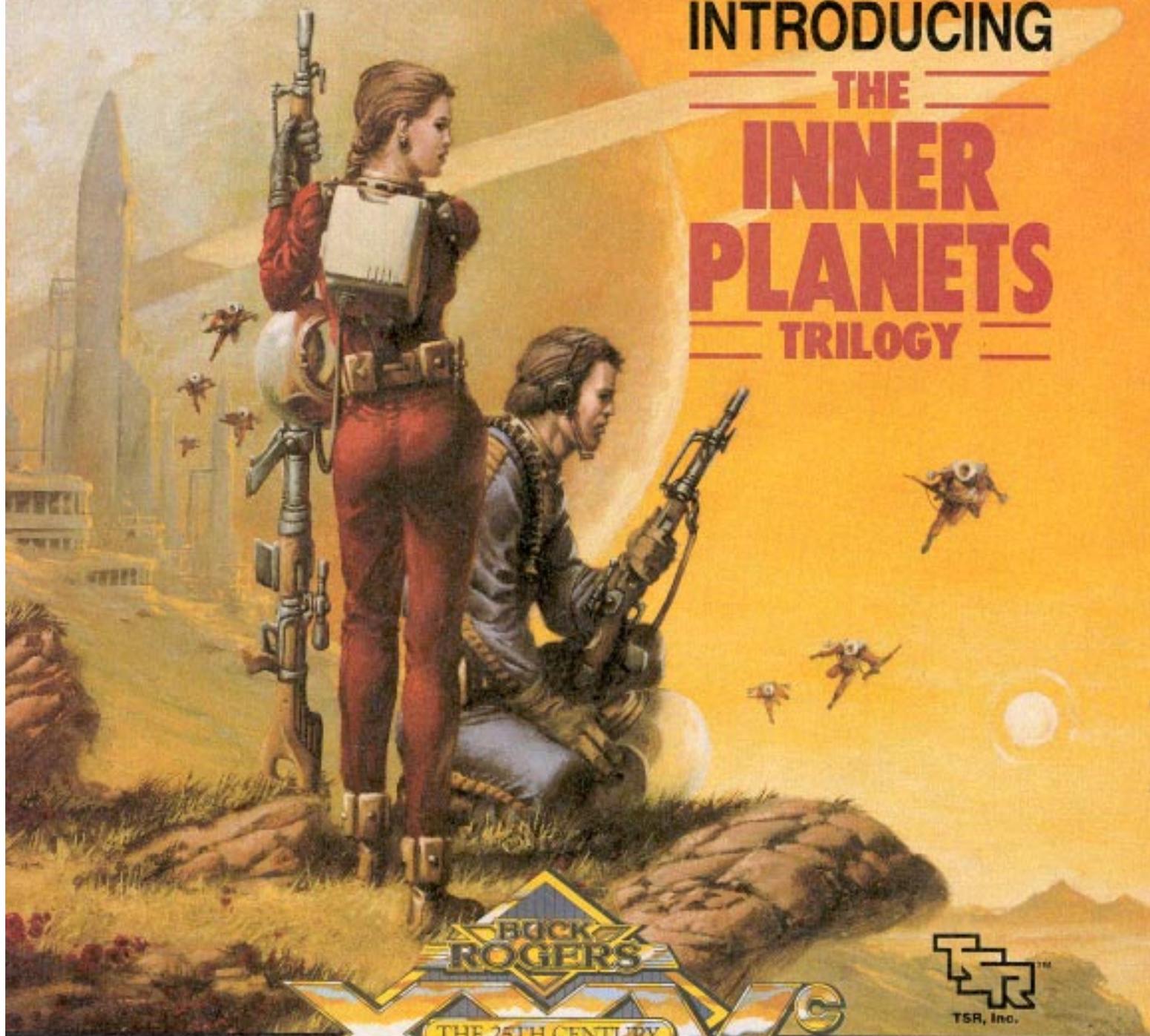


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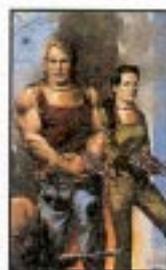
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Voyage

Continued from page 45

patches of green and beige. These dirigibles are often (illegally) armed.

Demeulemeister, Ltd.: This Flamaeker trade house is specialized in the construction of vehicles that fly and in the business of transportation. Its specialty is the dirigible. Part of Oostdok's economy relies on doing business with people living on the mainland, and good dirigibles are difficult to build and fly. Transport dirigibles are often purchased or rented from Demeulemeister's Rent-a-Blimp service, under the condition that a properly accredited and trained Demeulemeister crew controls all piloting procedures. Demeulemeister is having difficulties with the Heldannic Knights, who want the company to train Heldannic crewmen. Hembeek, Hembeek & Huysevart (see later) has been administrating the case . . . for the last 10 years. Demeulemeister officials are in contact with Broqueville representatives to purchase armament in the event the case is lost. Demeulemeister intends to defend its policies against the Heldannic intrusion to the bitter end.

Demeulemeister's dirigibles bear red and white stripes. The company owns a dozen, each with a large number painted at the rear, on the fins.

Hembeek, Hembeek & Huysevart, Ltd.: Created by the amalgamation of two Flamaeker cousin clans with a third allied family, this trade house deals with all aspects of the law. The majority of its kin form a powerful corps of attorneys, lawyers, magistrates, and legal scribes having a monopoly on all judiciary proceedings on Oostdok. Professional advocates and prosecutors working for HH&H have been mentally conditioned to be absolutely impartial to their clients; the best of them work only for HH&H proper. This house's greatest power resides in its legal right to cause other trade houses to sue each other, whether they want to or not; this is a major source of revenue for HH&H

when business is poor.

HH&H dirigibles come in light- and dark-blue wave patterns.

Johanneke Gnomes Worldwide, Ltd.: These Flamaeker gnomes established the bulk of their business in banking. Not only are most major projects financed directly by Johanneke, but the trade house also owns and operates countless gold mines on Oostdok and in the mountains at the Hollow World's equator. The gold is what attracted the Heldannic Knights in the first place, but in the long run the gold may in fact turn against them. This gold is harming the Heldannic economy by causing inflation in the various Heldannic colonies; prices are rising without limit. Johanneke is aware of the effect, and it tends to be overgenerous to the Knights when paying the annual gold tribute in hopes this will accelerate the inflation process (the plan does seem to be working). Johanneke Gnomes Worldwide also act as traveling gold and gem traders with other mainland cultures, from whom they extort high change fees.

The Johanneke dirigibles have a purple-and-yellow checker pattern.

Le Nerviens Family Trust, Inc.: A respectable trade house of Valoin origins, this group specializes in pure inventions. Although its members are often referred to as "The Mad Scientists," many of their creations have been legally guildmarked—a patenting process that has produced the ever-so-ominous "GM" sigil—and are widely used by the Oostdok public. Le Nerviens scientists have discovered and now control some of the most sensitive information about the cosmology of the Hollow World and its relationship with the Known World on the surface. They are attempting to reactivate a giant mechanism that will allow the company to regain control over the flight of Oostdok. The scientists' plan is to change the natural flight path of the island and relocate it to hide from the Heldannic Knights.

Le Nerviens generally color its dirigibles to resemble large fishes, like *L'Epaulard* (a killer whale), and *Le Gros Belouga* (a stur-

geon), both of which they own.

Montjoie Rouge, Sa. (Inc.): A family clan of Valoins formed this trade house, which specializes in the business of entertainment. It handles theaters of mechanical puppets, the organization of the Annual Schaarbeek Regatta, the publishing of gnomish joke books, and the management of a fleet of circuses on Oostdok and on the Hollow World's mainland. Less reputable is this house's activities among the shadier circles of the population, for whom nocturnal recreational services are performed behind closed doors. This allows the trade house to quietly spy on and extort information from other trade houses, and especially from the Heldannic Knights. Subtle messages about secret Heldannic plots or patriotic satires of the oppressors are then passed on to customers through the dialogues of Montjoie's mechanical puppets.

Montjoie Rouge's dirigibles are easily recognizable by their all-scarlet color scheme.

VandenKoop Brothers, Ltd.: This Flamaeker trade house specializes in the production of all types of poultry and eggs. It owns huge, mechanical farms in various regions of Oostdok, as well as an important network of quick-service taverns (a large share of Oostdok's population eats at these bustling eateries). In addition to the common ethnic fare on Oostdok (beer-that-you-eat-with-a-fork, potato-fries-in-a-horn, and "Azcan" steak, the VandenKoop Taverns also offer such delicacies as Egg-on-a-Stick(GM), Wing Dings(GM), and Turkey Necks(GM). Many areas of agriculture also are under VandenKoop's control.

The VandenKoop dirigibles have a bright yellow overall color scheme.

The "fifth column": There is a terrorist revolutionary group on Oostdok, most of its followers being those who were rejected by their trade houses. This group is the equivalent of the humans' thieves' and assassins' guilds, being utterly secret and ruthless but working for no one but itself. Most of its members use fake birthmarks and have sworn to destroy Oostdok and its society. Their main goals, among others, are to forever ground Oostdok and dismantle the trade-house structure. The fifth column has infiltrated Broqueville circles, where it has learned about the doomsday machine; these terrorists intend to activate it if they can reach it. For the moment, the fifth column sides with the Heldannic Knights to achieve its ends.

The fifth column owns no dirigibles. Ω

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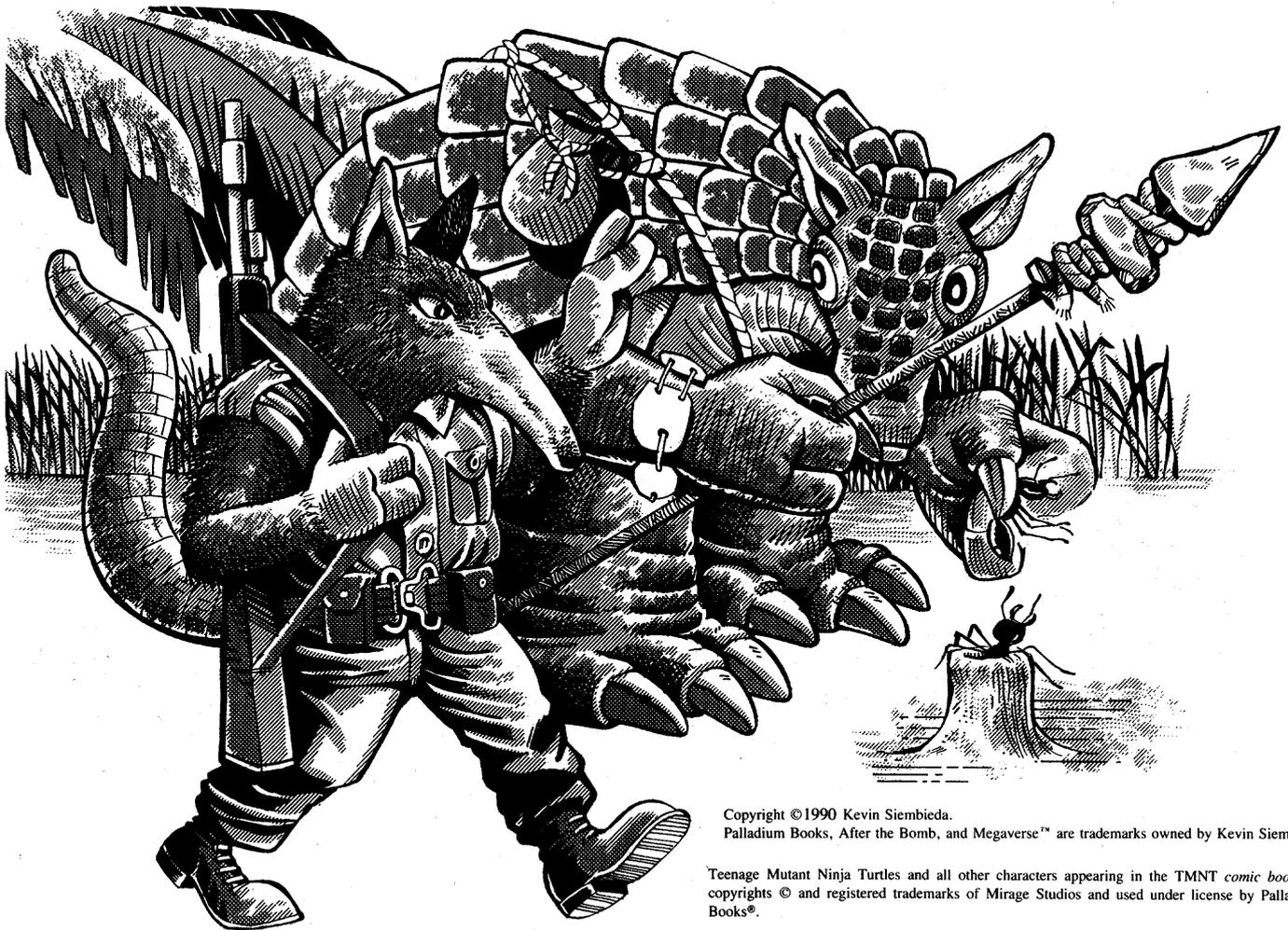
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The Game Wizards

What you don't know will scare you in RAVENLOFT™ campaigns

by Bruce Nesmith

Dungeon Master: "You are walking through the tunnel of bones when the spot beneath you erupts and [*checking a die roll*] knocks you off your feet. Over a dozen large, undulating, insectlike creatures pour out, snapping and crushing the dry bones like twigs. Each monster is as long as your arm, with a sickly yellow fluid dripping from its mandibles. As you lay there, one slithers over your leg and goes for your face."

Player: "Quick! Let's get out of here! I attempt to fling the thing off of me and run back down the tunnel. We need a plan and some heavy firepower to deal with these things."

This is a short rendition, loosely translated, from a RAVENLOFT™ game demonstration run at the 1990 GEN CON® game fair this year. The players were scared out of their minds by — yes, folks — giant centipedes. Each was a double-sized (2' long) giant centipede, with 4 hp, doing 1 hp damage per bite (plus a weak acid). There were 10 of them. A single blow from most weapons could kill one of these ravaging terrors of the tunnel of bones.

How could the players have been fooled by such an encounter? Actually, it was easy. The GM lied. Yes, he intentionally deceived the party. He described the centipedes as being as long as the player's arm, about 3' long, instead of giving their real length of 2'. And he said that there were over a dozen of them, when in fact there were just under a dozen.

Deception is just one of several methods that can be used to frighten the players in your RAVENLOFT campaign. Chapter XV of the RAVENLOFT rules set describes several techniques of terror. Most of those are on the grand scale, useful when designing an adventure or campaign. This article will address the specific elements of how to run a single encounter to scare the players.

Please notice that I am not concerned with scaring the *characters*, but rather the *players*. Characters are easy to scare. The DM merely rolls some dice and announces "the characters are terrified," and the players have to role-play being scared. Keep in mind that the players are the important element in the game. If the players are frightened, they will automati-

cally role-play their characters as being frightened.

The specific elements you need are as follows:

Description: This is the most important element to horror role-playing of any variety. *Never* tell the players the name of the monster they are facing or the technical definitions of scenes or items. Don't be afraid to use lots of colorful descriptions like "horrid" or "bloodcurdling." I even keep a short list of such words handy as a reference tool.

For example: "The huge dog slowly warps and shifts until it is a horrid man-beast towering over the tallest of you." Now *that* is scary! It is much better than: "The werewolf *shapechanges* into its half-man, half-wolf form." By using the terms "werewolf" and "shapechange," the monster is now comfortably pigeon-holed and is not the least bit frightening. They players know right off if they can beat it or if they should retreat.

Whenever possible, compare the encountered monster to the players. Role-playing is a very personal experience, and horror role-playing is even more so. Tell-

ing the player that the monster is "towering over the tallest of you" is much more personal and frightening than saying that the werewolf "is six and a half feet tall" Your adventures will take longer when you have to describe every encounter and scene in this detailed fashion, but it is well worth it.

Deception: In the heat of the moment, most of us tend to exaggerate what we see. In the centipede example above, the DM was merely making that a part of the game. Like all good DMs, he did not overdo it. He did not say that the centipedes were 20' long or that there were hundreds of them. Nobody would be that far off in his judgment. A good rule of thumb is to exaggerate by no more than double (or devalue by one-half). Tell them that what they face is one-half the size of X or is twice as large as X. Tell them its bite hurts twice as bad as it really does.

If the players declare that they are taking a quick head count or that they want to look closely at the scene, then the DM should give them more accurate descriptions. The kind of exaggeration described above only applies to first impressions in tense situations. If the players remain calm enough to ask the questions, reward them by giving them accurate information.

Play upon similarities to safe and ordinary things. For example, describe wolves as dogs. To the undiscerning eye, one could easily be mistaken for the other. For most people, a dog is a friendly creature, and that makes it all the more horrifying when it suddenly becomes a ravenous man-beast. It can be quite a shock!

Suspense: Keep your players waiting. Build the scene a little at a time. Give the players time to worry about what *might* happen. Their fertile imaginations will probably scare them more than the actual encounter. In a recent playtest of the RAVENLOFT adventure, *RA1 Feast of Goblins*, one party was sleeping on the second story of an inn. The thief awoke in the middle of the night to the soft sounds of something trying to slowly open the door. As he woke the others and armed himself, he saw the handle stop as it hit

the sturdy bolt. From the other side he heard faint shuffling noises and some sort of animal sniffing at the base of the door.

By this time, each of the players has had far too much time to think about what might be on the other side of the door. When the werewolves crashed through the walls, ignoring the door, the PCs leaped out of the windows, crashed through the outer walls themselves, and basically did everything in their power to escape from a menace they could have easily defeated. They were more than willing to take the falling damage rather than face the monsters!

The unexpected: Your players know all of the standard monsters and plots. If you give them an encounter that follows this well-trod path, they can hardly be expected to be frightened by it. In the example above, with the werewolves in the inn, the routine outcome would have been for the werewolves to break down the door. In fact, I dare say that a PC or two was standing to either side of the door, waiting to sword-stick whatever poked its snout through. Instead, the werewolves burst through the very walls of the characters' rooms. Great hairy arms shot through the thin plaster and grabbed the helpless characters pressed against the wall.

In order to make the unexpected work, sometimes you must cheat. I don't care what anybody says; all great DMs cheat. Since the DM is not truly all-seeing or all-powerful, he needs something on his side, so he cheats. Wait to see what the party is doing to prepare for an encounter. Then have the encounter act in such a way as to maximize the unexpected, as if the beasts had been planning it that way all along. However, always allow the characters a way out. It's much more fun to watch them run away in terror than it is to kill them.

This technique should be applied sparingly. Your run-of-the-mill encounters should act in predictable ways, allowing the players the satisfaction of defeating them with a well-executed plan. Only the special encounters should have the advantage of the unexpected.

Hidden information: The DM should keep as much game information hidden from the players as possible. When I run a RAVENLOFT adventure, the players roll their own attack dice and damage dice, and that's it. I roll all the saving throws, all the undead-turning attempts, etc. Sometimes I even keep track of the PCs' hit points and wounds. Under no circumstances will I reveal the rolls or numbers involved in my end of the game. If the players ask, they get a narrative description of what happened. A player is more timid if he is told that his character is sorely wounded than he is if told his character has 15 hp left.

When the player rolls a die, he can blame his failures on the die roll. If a roll that should have succeeded fails, he learns that there is something at work here that is out of the ordinary. These kinds of things conflict with a good horror adventure. This is not to say that the player shouldn't get any feedback on his actions or die rolls. As the DM, when you take away a die-rolling mechanic from the players, you *must* replace it with a verbal description of the action.

For example, a priest attempts to turn an undead legion of skeletons, and you roll that he fails. The player gets to hear something like this: "As you hold forth the symbol of your faith, demanding that the undead creatures turn back, your voice breaks. Your convictions seem to weaken as the horror of the situation mounts. The skeletal legion marches toward you without breaking stride." Now the player knows he failed his turning attempt, but he does not know exactly why. Was it his own lack of faith, or was it the powerful and dark forces that animated the skeletons? Is it worth trying again or not? This unknown element is quite frightening.

Final notes: It is hard to scare players who are role-playing fantasy heroes. Their characters come well equipped and armed with powers beyond the scope of normal men. They are used to being in control. You will have to work hard to frighten them, but the techniques from the RAVENLOFT boxed set and from this article should do the trick for most players. Once you have scared them, always reward them. That may sound funny, but remember that your players are just people out to have an evening's fun with role-playing. If they spend the whole game session being scared and unable to succeed at any task or defeat a single monster, they will become frustrated. Their characters may be stuck in the RAVENLOFT universe, but the players can walk away from the gaming table at any time. Give them an encounter they *can* defeat. Let them find or decipher a clue to the solution of the adventure. As the DM, you must lead them from suspense, to terror, to release, and — yes — to success.

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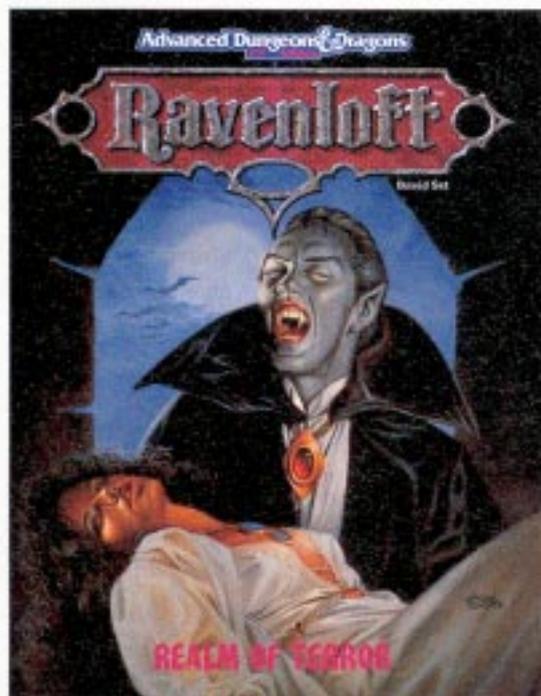
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CONVENTION CALENDAR

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines **must** be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held;
2. Site and location;
3. Guests of honor (if applicable);
4. Special events offered;
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements; and,
6. Address(es) and telephone number(s) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. **No** call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

WARNING: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the last Monday of each month, two months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the last Monday of October. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

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ENBICON '90, October 12-14 *

This gaming convention will be held in the Student Union Building of the University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, N.B., Canada. Events include BATTLETECH*, WARHAMMER*, AD&D®, SHADOWRUN*, CALL OF CTHULHU*, TORC*, and SPACE HULK* games, with a miniatures painting contest and war games. Registration: \$8 (Canadian)/weekend. Write to: ENBICON '90, c/o UNB Student Union, P.O. Box 4400, Fredericton NB, CANADA E3B 5A3.

QUAD CON '90, October 12-14

Sponsored by the Riverbend Gamers Club and the Game Emporium staff, this fifth-annual convention will be held once again at the Palmer Auditorium in Davenport, Iowa. Events include AD&D®, CALL OF CTHULHU*, BATTLETECH*, CHAMPIONS*, MARVEL SUPER HEROES™, and SHADOWRUN* games. Other activities include historical and computer games, a silent auction,

a dealers' room, a miniatures-painting contest, and on-site food. Registration: \$4/day and \$7 for the weekend until Sept. 30; \$5/day and \$10 for the weekend at the door. Send an SASE to: The Game Emporium, 3213 23rd Ave., Moline IL 61265; or call: (309) 762-5577 (no collect calls).

U-CON '90, October 12-14

This gaming convention will be held in the Michigan Union in Ann Arbor, Mich. Featured activities include over 120 events, an auction, and a special AD&D® serial dungeon. Special guests include Robert Lynn Asprin, Lynn Abbey, and Darwin Bromley. Write to: U-CON, c/o Michigan Wargaming Club, P.O. Box 4491, Ann Arbor MI 48106; or call: Eve or Larry at (313) 971-8459.

RUDICON VI, October 19-21

Held on the campus of the Rochester Institute of Technology, this convention is sponsored by the Rochester Wargamers Assoc. and the RIT Student Directorate. Events include RPG and war-gaming tournaments, miniatures-painting and art contests, SCA demos, a large dealers' room, historical miniatures, an auction, and a con party complete with costume contest. Registration: \$5 for the weekend. Dealers are welcome. Write to: RUDICON VI, c/o Student Directorate, 1 Lomb Memorial Dr., Rochester NY 14623.

GAMEMASTER '90, October 20

This gaming convention will again be held in the Student Union Building of Boise State University in Boise, Idaho. The guest of honor is Gary Thomas. Events include AD&D®, MEGATRAVELLER*, CAR WARS*, WARHAMMER*, BATTLETECH*, GURPS*, STAR TREK*, STAR

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NECRONOMICON '90, October 26-28

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn-Ashley Plaza in Tampa, Fla. The guests of honor are Jack C. Haldeman II and Lawrence Watt-Evans. Other guests include Timothy Zahn, Richard Lee Byers, Richard Louis Newman, and Prudy Taylor Board. Activities include artist and author panels, a masquerade, a trivia contest, a fan cabaret, gaming, an art show and auction, the Creatures of Night Pageant, and a charity auction to benefit Wildlife Rescue, Inc. There'll also be a dealers' room, a Friday night banquet, a 24-hour hospitality suite, and an Ygor party. Registration: \$20 for the weekend or \$8/day. Write to: NECRONOMICON '90, P.O. Box 2076, Riverview FL 33569; or call: (813) 677-6347.

STAR CON '90, October 26-28

This convention is sponsored by Star Base Alpha and will be held in Menasha, Wis. Events include a wide variety of games and tournaments, as well as other activities. Write to: Star Base Alpha, 1112 R. Lake St., Neenah WI 54956,

COMMAND.CON TOO, October 27

The convention will be held at the St. Louis Community College in the Forest Park Cafeteria. Events include RPGA™ AD&D® games, a plentitude of miniatures, board, and role-playing games, plus the SAGA game auction. Registration: \$5. Write to: COMMAND.CON TOO, P.O. Box 9107, St. Louis MO 63117; or call: (314) 727-1508 or (314) 721-1155 before 10 p.m. No collect calls, please.

ELLIS CON II, October 27

This simulation-game conference will take place at Harvard H. Ellis Technical School in Danielson, Conn., sponsored by the Ellis Tech Simulation Club. Two tournaments with prizes will be featured, as well as introductory and complex simulations including GUNS OF AUGUST*, AFRIKA KORPS*, NAPOLEON AT WATERLOO*, ARAB/ISRAELI WARS*, AXIS & ALLIES*, and BLUE MAX* games. Registration: \$5 at the door. Write to: John Haskell, c/o H. H. Ellis RVTS, 613 Upper Maple St., Danielson CT; or call John at: (203) 774-8511.

GAMESCON '90, October 27

This convention will be held at the Laindon Community Centre on High Road in Basildon, Essex. Activities include a RPGA™ AD&D® tournament, a painting competition, demonstration and participation games, and traders. Clubs, DMs, and players are all welcome! Write to: Chris Baylis, 67 Mynchens, Lee Chapel North, Basildon, Essex, England, SS15 5EG; or call: 0268-419933.

HALLOWEEN TOURNAMENT XI October 27

This convention will be held at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Tucson, Ariz. Events include an AD&D® tournament, a raffle, and a costume contest. Prizes will be awarded. Food and accommodations will be available on or near the site. Registration: \$5 at Things for Thinkers; call: (602) 326-7679. For hotel information, call: David Orahod at: (602) 887-3983.

CONTRARY '90, November 2-4

This gaming convention will be held at the Quality Inn & Conference Center in Chicopee, Mass. An honored guest is Michael Gray. Events include six RPGA™ tournaments, plus other RPGs, board games, miniatures, and painting and costume contests. Registration: \$15 preregistered. Write to: CONTRARY '90, 933 Belmont Ave., Springfield MA 01108; or call: (413) 731-7237.

GENERICON '90, November 2-4

This gaming convention will be held in the Coffman Memorial Union of the University of Minnesota-Minneapolis campus. Role-playing, board and war gaming will be featured, plus movies, an art show, costume contests, tournaments, and much more. Registration: \$10 preregistered before Oct. 1; \$15 at the door. \$2 discount from at the door admission with the donation of nonperishable food items for Minnesota Food Shelves. Write to: GENERICON '90, 2835 Rice St., #817, St. Paul MN 55113.

HEXACON '90, November 2-4

The Science Fiction Fantasy Federation's fifth annual gaming convention will be held in the Bryan School of Business on the University of North Carolina-Greensboro campus. Events include two RPGA™ AD&D® tournaments, with STAR FLEET BATTLES*, TOON*, AD&D® 1st and 2nd Editions, CHAMPIONS*, and GURPS HORROR* games. Registration: \$5/day or \$12/weekend preregistered by Oct. 20; \$7/day and \$15/weekend thereafter. Student Specials apply with a valid I.D. Write to: HEXACON '90, Science Fiction Fantasy Federation, P.O. Box 4, Elliot University Center, UNCG, Greensboro NC 27412.

SCI CON XII, November 2-4

This convention will be held at the Holiday Executive Center in Virginia Beach, Va. The guest of honor is Kim Stanley Robinson, and the artist guest of honor is Bob Eggleton. This SF convention features panels, readings, videos, a costume contest, an art show, a hospitality suite, and gaming. Registration: \$25. Write to: SCI CON XII, Dept. DR, P.O. Box 9434, Hampton VA 23670.

SOONERCON 6, November 2-4

This convention will be held at the Central Plaza Hotel in Oklahoma City, Okla. Guests of honor include Lois McMaster Bujold, Dr. William F. Wu, Alicia Austin, and Susan Satterfield. Events include open gaming, an art show, a video room, British TV, a masque and a masque dance, an art auction, and a contest for the "Worst-Dressed Sentient Being." Registration: \$10 until October 10. Write to: P.O. Box 4229, Tulsa OK 74159.

GAME-FEST '90, November 3

This convention will be held at Kaspar's Ark, north of Lebanon, Pa. Events include AD&D®, CHAMPIONS*, TORG*, ASL*, AXIS & ALLIES*, and BATTLETECH* games. Registration: \$5 preregistered; \$7.50 at the door. Write to: Lebanon Area Gamers, 806 Cumberland St., Lebanon PA 17042; or call: (717) 274-8706.

ROCK-CON XVII, November 3-4

This convention will be held at Rockford Lutheran High School in Rockford, Ill. Guests of honor are Jim Ward, Tom Wham, and Lou Zocchi. Activities include over 100 gaming events including RPGA™ tournaments, the annual auction, a dealers' room, and the Don Snow Memorial AD&D® tournament, sponsored by the RPGA™ and Black Hawk Distributors. Judges are needed! Registration: \$5 for one or both days. Write to: ROCK-CON XVII Game Fair, 14225 Hansberry Rd., Rockton IL 61072.

UMF-CON '90, November 3-4

Beat the snow to the University of Maine-Farmington Student Center for this convention. Events include AD&D®, GAMMA WORLD®, TOP SECRET/S.I.™, miniatures, war, and board games. Registration: \$3/day or \$5 for the weekend preregistered; \$4/day or \$8 for the weekend at the door. All games have an additional \$2 table fee. Write to: Table Gaming Club, Student Center, 5 South St., Farmington ME 04938.

AUG-CON II, November 9-11

AU Gamers are proud to announce that this convention will take place at the Sheraton Tara Hotel in Parsippany, N.J. Featured events include RPGA™ tournaments, a game for charity, costume and miniatures contests, an auction, and a dealers' room. Registration: \$8/day and \$20/weekend before Oct. 20, \$10/day at the door. Call the hotel for special room rates: (201) 515-2000, ext. 5800, and be sure to mention the convention. Write to: AU Gamers, c/o Oakwood Village Apts., Bldg. #26, Apt. #9, Flanders NJ 07836; or call: (201) 927-8097.

NEBULOUS CON II, November 9-11

The Penn State University-New Kensington campus will be the site of this gaming convention. Various role-playing and strategic games will be featured along with a video room and a costume contest. Sleeping space in the gym will be available. Registration: \$13/weekend preregistered; or \$4 for Friday, \$7 for Saturday or Sunday, and \$15/weekend at the door. Send an SASE to: NEBULOUS CON II, c/o Penn State New Kensington, 3550 Seventh Street Rd., New Kensington PA 15068.



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PROVOCATION, November 10-11 *

Organized by the Quebec Gamers' Assoc. (AQJS), this convention will be held at Pierre-Dupuy High School in Montreal, Quebec. Activities include 33 hours of nonstop gaming, plus an auction, open gaming, an art show, and a figurine contest. Registration: \$21 U.S./weekend and \$13 U.S./day. Write to: PROVOCATION, Box 63, Station M, Montreal, Canada H1V 3L6; or call Christine: (514) 596-0115; or Daniel: (514) 252-3032.

TURP-CON, November 17-19 *

This gaming convention will be held at the Torquay Boys' Grammar School in Torquay, Devon, England. Events include AD&D®, PARANOIA®, MERP®, ROLEMASTER®, WARHAMMER 40,000®, BLOOD BOWL®, and D&D® games, with miniatures demos and painting contests, videos, and gaming tournaments. Registration: £0.50 plus £1.50 fee to play (all fees are one-half price to students). Send an SASE to: Richard Barrow, 169 Windsor Rd., Ellacombe, Torquay, Devon, GREAT BRITAIN, TQ1 1SR; or call: (0803) 297314 evenings.

CONTEX 8, November 23-25

This convention will be held at the Hilton Southwest in Houston, Tex. Guests include Robert E. Vardeman, Sherlock, and Willie Siros. Activities include gaming, merchants, an art show, costuming, writers' workshops, filking, films and videos, plus the Contex Cross-Tavern Cosmic Tour. Dealers are welcome! Write to: FRIENDS OF FANDOM, P.O. Box 266996, Houston TX 77207-6996; or call: (713) 729-6733.

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TROPICON 9, November 30-December 2

This convention will be held at the Ft. Lauderdale Airport Hilton hotel. Guests include Hal Clement and Bruce Pelz. Events include programming, filking, an art show, a video room, a dealers' room, a banquet, a trivia contest, a masquerade, and gaming. Registration: \$20 until Nov. 1; fees will be higher at the door. Write to: TROPICON 9; c/o South Florida Science Fiction Society, P.O. Box 70143, Ft. Lauderdale FL 33307; or call: Tony Parker at: (407) 391-4380.

SYNDICON III, December 8

This convention will be held at the International Inn in Orlando, Florida. The guest of honor is Rembert N. Parker, RPGA™ Regional Director. Events include one- and two-round RPGA™ AD&D® tournaments, with BATTLETECH®, ILLUMINATI®, CAR WARS®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, SHADOWRUN®, SPELLJAMMER™, DIPLOMACY®, DRAGONQUEST™ games. Registration: \$8; \$6 for RPGA™ Network members; \$10 at the door. All of these include four free events. Write to: SYNDICON III, 11324 Porto Court, Orlando FL 32821; or call: (407) 857-1896 or (407) 788-3014.

How effective was your convention listing? If you are a convention organizer, please write to the editors and let us know if our "Convention Calendar" served your needs. Your comments are always welcome.

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TSR PREVIEWS

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Suggested Retail Price: \$10.95/£6.95
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DRAGONLANCE® *saga Classics, Vol 1.* AD&D® DRAGONLANCE® module reprints by TSR staff

The first four classic DRAGONLANCE® modules (DL1-4) originally introduced three years ago have been updated for use with the AD&D® 2nd Edition game. All of the maps, characters, and information from the four modules have been brought together into one package.

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25CA2 *N.E.O. in the 25th Century* XXVc™ module by Troy Denning

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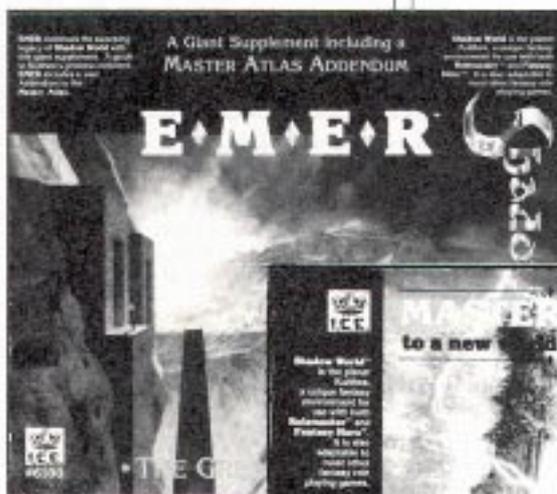
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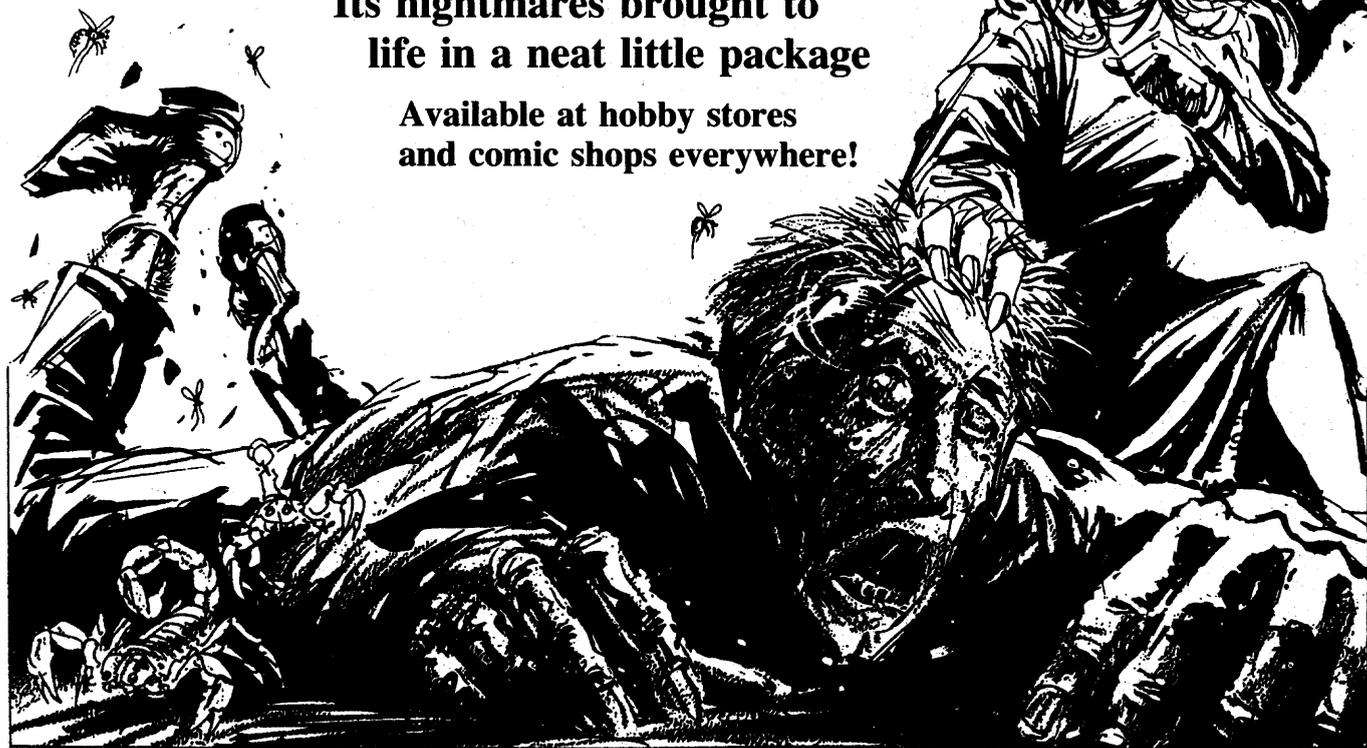
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Role-playing reviews

The state of the art in superheroics

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Scene: The 1989 GEN CON® game fair, on Friday, 11:55 A.M. In the Great Exhibit Hall of the MECCA Convention Center, a hundred exhibitors sensed, the way roosting crows sense an oncoming earthquake, that something momentous approached.

At the Iron Crown Enterprises booth, sealed cardboard boxes stood in tall stacks. Six dozen gamers waited tensely in the aisle as the time crept toward noon. Behind the counter, nervous attendants asked one another at 30-second intervals: Where is he? With the moment so near and with the culmination of his year of labor so close, could the man himself be late? The crowd was growing by the moment, anticipation charging the air, yet the attendants couldn't imagine opening those boxes and pulling forth their contents—not without him, the man of the hour. Thousands of dollars at stake, and the disappointment of a hundred fans, and yet....

But at 15 seconds before 12 noon, he strode casually up that carpeted aisle. Tall, blond, lean as a varsity swimmer, and wearing an immaculate night-black tuxedo, Rob Bell, HERO SYSTEM™ game line editor at Iron Crown, had not planned the drama of his arrival. His wristwatch was set wrong, almost the only detail he had overlooked in a year-long preparation for the great event.

Those last 15 seconds passed, then the packing boxes and the gamers' wallets opened, and across the table passed the first of over 400 copies of the long-awaited fourth edition of Hero Games' CHAMPIONS? The Super Role-Playing Game. It was big, shiny, and beautiful, the hit of the convention. And when anyone saw Rob Bell, he was grinning like a father has given away his daughter at a wedding.

What makes an established game's fourth edition such an event? The answer lies in the checkered history of the CHAMPIONS game.

In 1981, two gamers in San Mateo, Calif., designed a superhero game, printed the manuscript on a daisy-wheel printer, got one of their players to draw some illustrations, and found the money to print 1,000 copies of the 64-page rulebook. George MacDonald and Steve Peterson took the first edition of their CHAMPIONS game to a Bay Area gaming convention with hopes that appear, in retrospect, overly realistic.

"We knew just how much we could afford to lose, what we would do with unsold stock—we had it all figured out," says Peterson. "The one outcome we never considered for a moment was: What if the thing sold a zillion copies?"

Their little rulebook did sell, if not a zillion copies, at least very strongly. The success led Peterson and MacDonald to recruit another player, Ray Greer, as marketing maven and sales rep, and form Hero Games. During the next five years, they produced two more editions of the CHAMPIONS game and two dozen adventures and supplements. They also translated their comic-book superhero rules into other adventure genres: superspy-espionage, pulp-era crimefighting, fantasy, and Japanese robots. Nimbly crossing genres, the CHAMPIONS game spawned the all-encompassing HERO SYSTEM game.

But as the little company's audience grew, so did its troubles. Fundamentally the three partners were gamers, not businessmen. Schedules fell apart, support fell to almost invisible levels, and cash-flow problems sent Hero Games into virtual hibernation. Loyal players in isolated regions of the country sustained their campaigns purely by their own efforts.

In January 1986, the three Hero partners, fed up with business worries, made an arrangement with ICE, the publisher of the ROLEMASTER™ game and a popular line of supplements set in J. R. R. Tolkien's Middle-earth. The Hero partners would acquire and develop HERO SYSTEM properties, and Iron Crown would produce and distribute them. To the core Hero audience that still hung on, the arrangement seemed dubious, but the gamers were

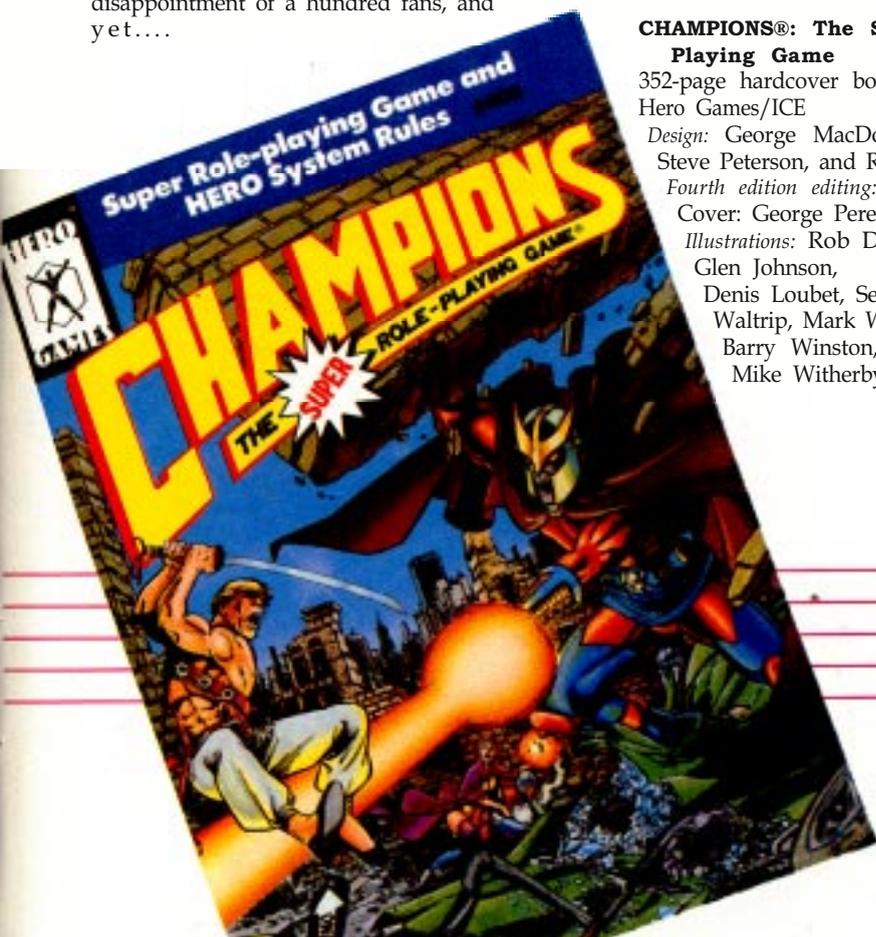
CHAMPIONS®: The Super Role-Playing Game

352-page hardcover book
Hero Games/ICE \$32

Design: George MacDonald,
Steve Peterson, and Rob Bell

Fourth edition editing: Rob Bell
Cover: George Perez

Illustrations: Rob Davis,
Glen Johnson,
Denis Loubet, Sean Sharp, Jason
Waltrip, Mark Williams,
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ready for any change.

Product flow improved for a time, but soon dropped as the Heroes found new pursuits. MacDonald became Senior Game Developer at the software company Strategic Simulations, Inc., where he supervises many of SSI's licensed TSR AD&D® computer games. Peterson also went into game software and technical writing. Greer worked for Steve Jackson Games, then later joined a Los Angeles special-effects company, working on such films as *The Abyss*, *Tremors*, and *Darkman*.

Meanwhile, the Hero support line continued to dwindle. Each release seemed more slender and decrepit. Finally, in 1987, Iron Crown took over editorial duties as well as production. To that end, ICE (after an abortive liaison with a group of fans called "the Hero Auxiliary Corps") hired one part-time intern to take charge of the entire Hero line.

The intern was still at the University of Virginia when ICE hired him, just finishing a degree in History and Environmental Science with a thesis on two invasion scares in Britain during World War I. Yet within weeks of his arrival, despite his academic duties, Rob Bell had jump-started production of new HERO SYSTEM supplements. And he had begun work on the CHAMPIONS game revision.

The reasons for doing the revision closely resemble those behind the AD&D 2nd Edition game. With the HERO SYSTEM rules spread across five separate games, its mechanics were diffuse and inconsistent. Also, 10 years of play by fervent devotees had revealed many rules glitches. To fix the glitches and to pull all the Hero rules into one comprehensive and consistent whole, Bell (who soon went full-time at ICE) and the original Hero partners enlisted over 100 gamers across the country, some of the core audience that had sustained the game during the long drought.

For more than a year this team scrutinized every rule, proposed new ones, tore away at the proposals, and polished whatever withstood playtesting. It was "easily the single largest undertaking of my life," says Bell.

As politicians at budget summits like to say, everything was on the table. A CHAMPIONS game player would blanch to see some of the suggested changes: the Ego characteristic changed in name and cost, mental attacks hitting automatically, Damage Resistance and Mind Scan gone, and four, count 'em, four successive sets of Growth rules. One radical suggested stripping the list of 60 + superpowers down to just four (Attack, Defend, Move, and Sense) and simulating all effects with advantages and limitations.

Yes, that latter suggestion died on delivery. Many others were weeded out in intense playtesting, and the fifth cycle of revisions produced a clean and integrated three-part manuscript. The Rulesbook proper includes the complete HERO SYSTEM rules, applicable to any genre. The Sourcebook section details the four-color

superhero comics genre, its conventions and requirements, and the issues that arise in a superheroic campaign. Finally, the Campaign Book offers pregenerated heroes, villains, bases, and scenarios.

Iron Crown packaged this magnum opus using strong production values and a first-class cover by comics star George Perez. In the year and more since its 1989 release, the fourth edition CHAMPIONS hardcover has seen three or four printings, and even the most particular Hero savants have pronounced it a worthy accomplishment.

Every game has its adherents, but fans of the HERO SYSTEM game have shown devotion above and beyond the call. Why? The answer usually boils down to flexibility.

Character creation: The HERO SYSTEM rules vastly improved on existing point-allocation systems of character building, and they pioneered the much-imitated concept of disadvantages, by which characters take drawbacks in order to buy more abilities. And what a candy-store of abilities the player can choose from! The CHAMPIONS fourth-edition game offers comprehensive lists of skills from Acrobatics to Weaponsmith, perquisites like Followers and Bases, talents ranging from Absolute Time Sense to Simulate Death and Universal Translator, and a long list of superheroic powers.

The game's elegant approach to superpowers relies on the player's creativity. The powers list includes several dozen generic effects, like Energy Blast, Killing Attack, Teleport, and Transform. Three dozen advantages improve the basic effects, like Area Effect and No Range Penalty, but also increase the power's point cost. To bring the cost back down, take a limitation or two, such as Charges, Side Effects, or Focus (that is, making the power work through a device of some kind). Power frameworks like Multipower and Elemental Control also give cost breaks for creative ideas.

Just as important as these game terms, though, is the power's "special effect," what it looks like and how it works. The text sums it up nicely (p. 52): "For instance, when a character buys an Energy Blast, the attack might come from the character's fingertips, eyes, or forehead. The energy may be lightning, fire, cold, sonics, radiation, rubber bullets, or whatever. Rather than trying to list each type of Energy Blast we could think of, we let the player choose what type of energy to project."

With these abilities, and with disadvantages like Secret Identity, Rivalry, and various psychological and physical limitations, the HERO SYSTEM rules let players create any character, in any genre or time period, with any abilities and power levels.

Granted, the player needs an hour or two, plus a pocket calculator, to make a character. It's an arduous process, bolting all those abilities onto the character-conception lathe and grinding them into shape with appropriate advantages, limitations, and frameworks. But the final char-

acter starts play as a capable individual, customized to the player's wishes. The game imposes no arbitrary restrictions of class, weaponry, armor, behavior, languages, or power level; if you can think of it, and can get your game master (GM) to approve it, you can play it.

Combat: The combat rules, like character creation, offer endless, not to say overwhelming, options.

On the face of it, the basic hit rules sound simple: Each character has a Combat Value (CV) based on the Dexterity characteristic. The base roll to hit a target is 11 or less on three six-sided dice. The attacker adds his CV to 11, but the target gets to subtract its own CV. If the attacker can roll the resulting number or less on 3d6, the attack hits.

So far, so good. Then the attacker rolls huge numbers of six-sided damage dice and counts them up in two different ways, while the victim applies the damage against his resistant and nonresistant defenses, subtracts the remainder from his STUN and BODY characteristics, compares the damage to his Constitution characteristic to check for a Stunned result, checks for Knockback . . . are you lost yet?

This intricacy has always been the standard rap against the HERO SYSTEM rules. For the devotee, though, nothing less captures the variety of attack outcomes seen in comics, movies, and adventure stories.

For example, the HERO SYSTEM rules gain much by separating Stun damage (grogginess or unconsciousness) from Body damage (wounds, or "hit points," if you will). In most RPGs characters who take damage get knocked out, then (and only then) die. But think of all those movies in which Edward G. Robinson or James Cagney, riddled with bullets and bleeding to death, staggers on through the final scene, blasting G-Men and calling for his Irish mother. Mortally wounded CHAMPIONS game characters can perform the heroic equivalent and eventually stagger to the nearest first-aid kit. Not that the situation arises often, mind you; this is only one example of the system's wide range.

Action proceeds by 12-second turns, divided into one-second segments. Characters act in phases within the turn according to their Speed and Dexterity characteristics. With various options to delay attacks or abort to defenses (that is, give up a later phase in order to defend against a surprise attack), even the sequence of play can approach the complexity of war games.

When added to the long lists of maneuvers and combat options, this complexity can turn a single battle between super-teams into an evening marathon. This is the price of tactical richness, and few games can match the HERO SYSTEM rules for that.

HERO SYSTEM game combat, in short, is for experienced players who prize versatility over simplicity. Note that I don't say "realism over playability"; despite its slow

pace, CHAMPIONS game combat remains quite playable, with well-integrated rules and a clear play sequence. As for realism, that leads smoothly to the HERO SYSTEM rules' greatest virtue.

Campaigning: "Realism" varies from genre to genre, according to the story being told. The .44 magnum load that splatters a post-holocaust starveling will only put a superheroine's boyfriend in the hospital; the same shot just makes James Bond grit his teeth. They're all ostensibly the same weapon and the same human beings, but in each case the genre's conventions set weapon deadlines at a different level.

A system that purports to be universal can adjust the genre to match "reality," but in my experience that simply makes the game's adventures as routine as everyday life or as deadly as a real-life battlefield. These cases seldom recapture the genre's native appeal. Far better to take the HERO SYSTEM game's approach: Adjust reality to match the genre.

The CHAMPIONS rules distinguish between *heroic* and *superheroic* campaigns. The first type involves putative normals, the characters of spy stories, pulp, and heroic fantasy, whereas the second ascends to the fun-filled and garish realm of comic books. The rules separate heroic and superheroic campaigns by their power levels, restrictions on character creation, the availability and cost of

normal-level technology, hit locations, and "pushing" —that is, how easily a character can increase his abilities in emergencies. The dichotomy gives a GM maximum flexibility (there's that word again) in establishing his or her own unique world.

The GM's duties include passing judgment on what abilities are allowed in the game. The text encourages every GM to set up house rules forbidding certain powers, requiring others, and altering the written rules. A GM can change anything in the game, so long as the players are alerted before play. The GM also arbitrates numerous case-dependent rules questions ("Does my Continuous Uncontrolled flame attack go away when I shift the points out of its Multipower slot?") and interprets the consequences of a power's special effects. The GM's total control of the game has given rise to the CHAMPIONS Light-Bulb Joke:

Q: How many CHAMPIONS characters does it take to screw in a light bulb?

A: That's a GM call.

I hear that this open-ended approach brought a sneer from an editor at a rival game company that publishes another universal system. "Look at this!" he said of the CHAMPIONS game's powers list. "They put pictures of magnifying glasses and stop-signs next to some of the powers to warn you that the powers are unbalanced! If they can't balance them, they should leave them out."

A reasonable point. But like the issue of reality vs. genre, it admits of two approaches. In the Balance-or-Die version, the game's designers try to imagine every combination of powers and situations, rule on them at length, and autocratically veto any they've overlooked. They treat rules like the Food and Drug Administration treats medicines, requiring exhaustive testing to prevent consumer toxicity. Once balanced, the rules become Holy Writ, from which thou shalt not depart.

I know players who prefer this approach, perhaps for the sense of control and stability it produces. Again, the CHAMPIONS rules take a different tack by shifting the responsibility for game balance from the publisher to the GM. The rationale is that in a system that allows desolidification, time travel, clairvoyance, and a dozen other story-altering devices, it's up to each individual GM to choose not only the story but the ways in which the players can alter it. This is one more reason that a GM or player should have experience, and a certain amount of courage, before coming to the CHAMPIONS game.

Storytelling: Fortunately, new arrivals get plenty of coaching from the hardcover's Sourcebook. This friendly text tutors the GM in the selection of campaign parameters—for instance, whether the world's morality is fuzzy or clearly drawn, whether the campaign is optimistic or pessimistic, how important the player

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characters are in the world, and so on.

Story values also dominate the discussion of adventure design. Supervillain motivations, the creation of subplots, the narrative use of deathtraps, the role of Hunteds and Dependent Non-Player Characters (DNPCs, another much-imitated CHAMPIONS game tradition)-none of these elements involve hitting the bad guy, but they make the difference between a routine slugfest and a lively plot as engrossing as any in the comics.

Is it paradoxical that a game with 200 pages of rules argues strongly for story values over game mechanics? Only at first glance. In fact, given such a flexible system, story logic becomes a necessary check on "power gamers" who simply want to pile up points and buy their Nova Blasts to planet-roasting levels.

I recall a story about the Computer Science department at MIT university, which had problems in the 1960s with ambitious hackers who tried to crash the mainframe system. The operators finally foiled the hackers by creating a "CRASH" command — type it, and the system would crash, as easy as that. Bored by the lack of challenge, the hackers abandoned their vandalism.

The parallels with the HERO SYSTEM game's power gamers are not exact, but the point is clear. Given a charitable GM, abusing a system this flexible is not only easy, it's positively degrading. Eventually the power gamer, bored with Novablast the Planet-Roaster, grows up and begins to role-play characters with personalities, not just scads of points.

Evaluation: One cannot lightly recommend a game that costs \$32. Sure, it's a 352-page hardcover. But \$32 is almost the price of two 128-page Chaosium supplements, almost twice as much as the 192-page AD&D 2nd Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and over half as much as a big imported box from Games Workshop . . . so maybe \$32 isn't so far out of line. Boy, this industry sure has gotten pricey.

In any case, certain readers need the CHAMPIONS fourth edition game at almost any cost. Fans of previous editions will delight in the new consistency and versatility. Experienced players of other games, discontent with the arbitrary restrictions of their current system, should also find the HERO SYSTEM rules a superb investment.

Lastly, for comic-book fans who want to simulate every maneuver they see in their favorite stories, the CHAMPIONS game remains, after almost 10 years, the system to beat. Though I dislike its slow pace, it's still the one I play. Rob Bell has left Iron Crown for greener pastures, but we long-suffering devotees owe him gratitude for resurrecting this landmark system.

Perhaps the prime virtue of Rob Bell's tenure at Iron Crown has been, not the CHAMPIONS fourth edition rules, but the tsunami of support products that followed it. Unlike the 32-pagers that once slouched forth semi-annually from Hero Games,

these are solid and sometimes very substantial works, appearing monthly and filled with long-term usefulness and campaign possibilities. Whether measuring by page count, number of products, or sales volume, Bell brought out more and bigger Hero material in his three years at ICE than Hero Games did in the six years before his arrival.

The HERO SYSTEM™ Rulesbook

220-page softcover rulebook
Hero Games/ICE \$20

What if you're curious about the HERO SYSTEM game, but you have no interest in superheroes? Or you've sprung for one copy of the hardcover but can't afford additional copies for the players who want to borrow it?

The HERO SYSTEM Rulesbook exactly reproduces the rules section of the fourth-edition hardcover. It omits the hardcover's Sourcebook and Campaign Book, the genre-specific material covering superheroes. Significantly, this softcover edition incorporates errata from the hardcover, a couple of advantages introduced in a post-hardcover supplement, and that most neglected of rulebook virtues: an index.

With this rulebook, a GM can create everything needed for a campaign in any genre. All it requires is a few months of intense effort! How good, then, that ICE has obliged the overworked GM with campaign supplements that detail specific genres (*see* the review of *Ninja Hero* that follows), with more on the way for horror, cyberpunk, and even the Old West.

This book provides an economical introduction to the HERO SYSTEM rules and is a handy reference for those times (such as the last hours of gaming conventions) when the hardcover is just too heavy to carry.

Classic Enemies

112-page softcover book
Hero Games/ICE \$13
Editing and development: Scott Bennie
Cover: George Perez
Illustrations: Pat Zircher, Mark Williams

This book should be every CHAMPIONS game GM's first supplement. Scott Bennie is the author of TSR's FORGOTTEN REALMS™ accessory, FR10 *Old Empires*, and co-author of the MU series, *Gamer's Handbook of the Marvel Universe* for TSR's MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game. Bennie is also a longtime Hero player, and he has poured his heart into this massive roster of 80 supervillains from Hero Games' first three *Enemies* collections, originally published in 1982 and 1984. Hopelessly obsolete in game mechanics and poorly illustrated, these sturdy opponents still excited interest, lo, unto the third edition and beyond. Bennie revised their statistics, updated and expanded their character backgrounds, and generally gave them more pizzazz. (He also took

the opportunity, with some glee, to omit the less well-conceived villains from those three early books. No sign here of the Amazing Darkon, Sledge, or Frizbe the discus thrower.)

Classic Enemies also incorporates an updated description of Stronghold, the venerable supervillain prison that first appeared in 1981 and has since dutifully served as a revolving door for villains in campaigns nationwide. Pat Zircher, currently the best superhero illustrator in the gaming field, presents these fiends with clarity and style.

If you run a four-color CHAMPIONS campaign, you want this book.

Mind Games

48-page booklet
Hero Games/ICE \$8.00
Design and illustrations:
Cover: Neal "Spyder" Hanson

Mentalists of the villainous Parapsychological Studies Institute (PSI) dominate the first supplement for the fourth edition. PSI comprises 13 villains, mostly mutants with psionic powers, with goals as varied as their personalities. A crazier bunch you wouldn't want to meet. There's a megalomaniac, a split personality, a glutton, obsessives, amoralists, and miscellaneous psychotics, all prone to infighting and conspiracy. PSI even trains a cadre of superpowered students, and they're just as maladaptive. The author draws all these personality types from his own experiences in counseling.

Though the text lacks flash and there's little insight into mentalists as such, this supplement offers a scary and ruthless villain group and some nice scenarios. It's worth a good look.

Ninja Hero

176-page softcover book
Hero Games/ICE \$17.00
Design: Aaron Allston
Editing and Development:
Cover: Jackson Guice
Illustrations:

Aaron Allston wrote TSR's new D&D® HOLLOW WORLD™ Campaign Set, as well as the

and for the AD&D 2nd Edition game. He has also been "the CHAMPIONS guru" almost since the game's inception, and he wrote many of its best supplements. *Ninja Hero* is Allston's latest and best, an exhaustive treatise on martial arts as they exist both in reality and in freewheeling kung-fu movies. Technically this book supplements *The HERO SYSTEM Rulebook*, not the CHAMPIONS game; that means it works with both heroic and superheroic campaigns.

One of the great ornaments of the fourth-edition line, *Ninja Hero* describes two dozen martial arts (everything from aikido & wrestling, plus 15 sub-styles of kung fu, not to mention football). It offers

guidelines for developing ninja, samurai, Chinese knights (*shih*), Buddhist warrior-monks, and so on, including classic stereotypes like the Irritable Student and the Unwilling Fighter. A highlight of the book is its rules for designing new martial arts and maneuvers.

Learn how characters fight in enclosed spaces, while bound, or in zero gravity. Check the Sourcebook for huge lists of weapons and gadgets appropriate to different campaign styles. The Campaigning chapter details those styles, from the heroic level of real-world martial arts to the wild martial-arts campaigns of Hong Kong chop-socky films, where frantic avengers leap over buildings, exhale noxious winds, and wield the dreaded Dim Mak touch (that's the one where a master hits you with six precisely timed touches, and a week later you die, explode, or whatever). The scenarios are among the best Hero Games has published.

I'm convinced that Aaron Allston is the best in the business at writing campaign material, so I am biased in evaluating *Ninja Hero*. If the topic interests you, see this one for yourself. Its quality shines forth.

Miscellaneous support

The Hero fan community owes a vote of thanks to the official HERO SYSTEM magazine, *Adventurers Club*. Its constant tardi-

ness has provided fans with an unflagging source of sarcastic humor. The AC, allegedly a quarterly magazine, appeared more or less annually for years. Now in a new comic-book size, it shows signs of lurching back toward regular publication. The AC deserves attention for its scenarios, NPCs, gadgets, and campaigning tips, but it's thin and badly printed. At \$3 an issue, it's still in a wait-and-see stage. Subscription queries can be sent to: AC Subscriptions, Box 1605, Charlottesville VA 22902, U.S.A.

Far more vigorous is the semi-official HERO SYSTEM computer bulletin board system (BBS), Red October. Based in Austin, Tex. (a hotbed of Hero Games activity), this free BBS features active discussions and playtests of works in progress. (*Ninja Hero* and the new edition of *Fantasy Hero* both received active playtest through Red October.) Forthcoming projects and campaign chronicles are available for download. Set your modem to dial: (512) 834-2548 (300/1200/2400 baud, N-8-1).

Short and sweet

RED EMPIRE game, by Frank Chadwick. Game Designers' Workshop, \$12.00. GDW won the topicality award at GAMA's 1990 ORIGINS™ gaming convention with "The Card Game of Soviet Power Politics." Three to six players (more is better) get a Politburo faction of Party, Military, and KGB

leaders, with a hand of cards used to attack rival leaders, expose scandals, and take foreign junkets. Players try to purge opponents and make one of their leaders President. Meanwhile, crises keep turning up in the deck, and everybody has to help solve them—or the Soviet Union falls apart! Despite some rules inconsistencies and gaps, this two-decker game evokes the required ambience of internecine backbiting. Play it before its real-life model vanishes from the Earth.

Challenge magazine, edited by Michelle Sturgeon. Game Designers' Workshop, \$3.50/issue (\$15/six issues from GDW, Box 1646, Bloomington IL 61702-1646, U.S.A.). There's been a dearth of good general-interest gaming magazines, but an ambitious new editor is expanding this one-time house organ to cover science-fiction games of all companies. The bulk of each bimonthly issue of *Challenge* (it's up to issue 46 as I write) still covers GDW's MEGATRAVELLER™ game and other GDW releases, but there's plenty of notice given to FASA's SHADOWRUN™ system and other SF games, and even West Ends PARANOIA® game. You also get reviews, news briefs, a miniatures showcase, and "Players Wanted" classifieds. There's no challenge in learning to like this solid periodical.

Ω

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DRAGONMIRTH



By Mark Doney

"I hope he doesn't expect a tip!"



By Jerry Fuchs

By Peter Callahan



"When did you get cable?"



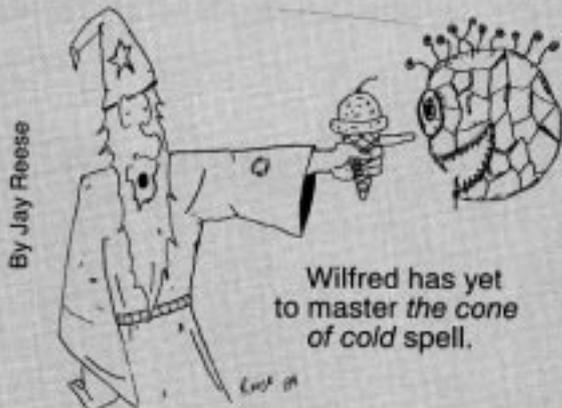
"Give it back, you dope!"

Yamara by Barbara Manui & Chris Adams





By Dwain Meyer



By Jay Reese

Wilfred has yet to master the cone of cold spell.



By Richard Tomasic

"Why, yes. Before I became a barber, I was in another line of work. Why do you ask?"



By Jeff Haas

"Catapult alert!"



By Walt Hackensmith Jr.

"The problem is right over here!"

THE TWILIGHT EMPIRE





IF WE'RE LUCKY WE'LL SLAVE IN HIS IRON MINES UNTIL THE WAR ENDS.

GUESS WE'D BETTER ESCAPE.



WHAT'S THE PLAN?

WE'LL THE HOLE IN THE CEILING IS TOO SMALL TO CRAWL THROUGH AND I DOUBT WE CAN PLY THE BARS OR BREAK THE DOOR DOWN.



GUESS OUR BEST BET IS TO JUMP THE GUARD WHEN HE BRINGS US OUR GRUEL.

IF YOU LIE DOWN NEXT TO MY STUFFED SHIRT IT'LL LOOK LIKE WE'RE BOTH SLEEPING.

GOOD IDEA. YOU HIDE BESIDE THE DOOR.

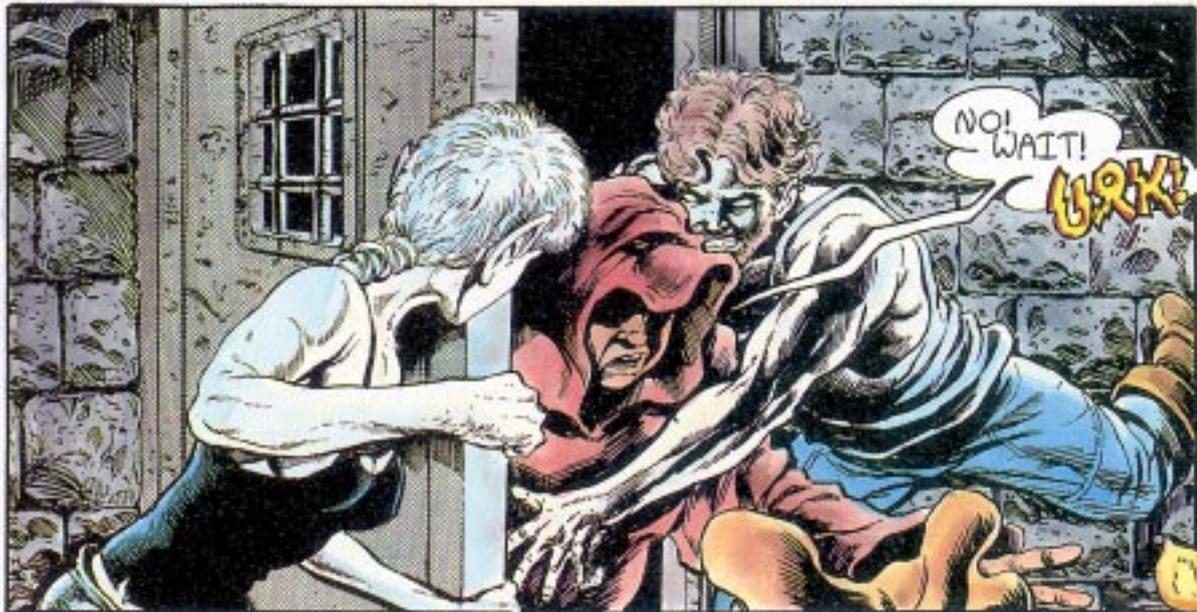


I DON'T THINK THEY'RE COMING.

BE PATIENT. LISTEN.



CLICK

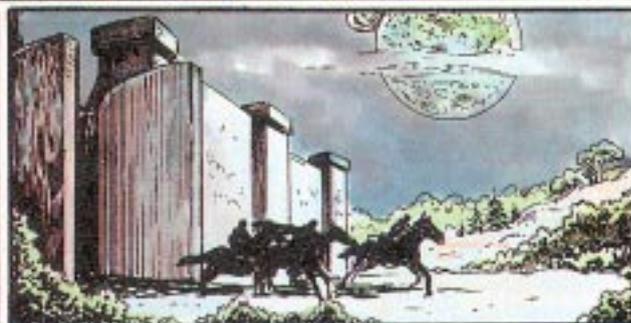


NO! WAIT! **URK!**

ROBINSON'S WAR
PART 7

WRITING & COLORING
Stephen D. Sullivan
ART
John M. Hebert
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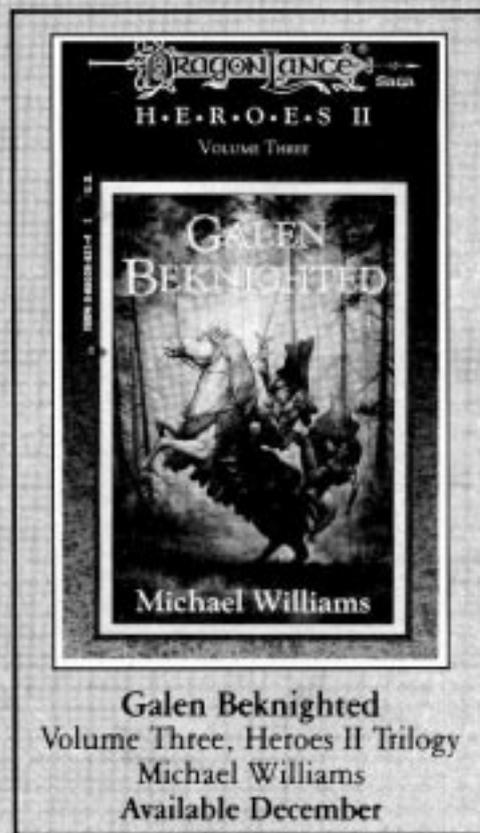
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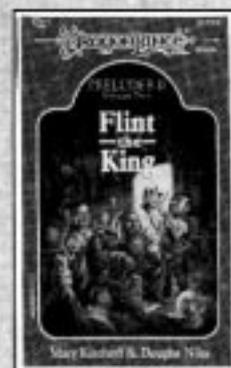
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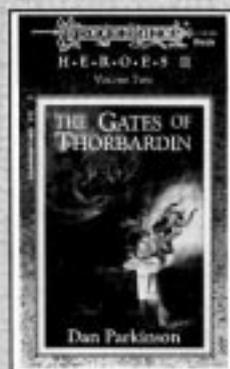
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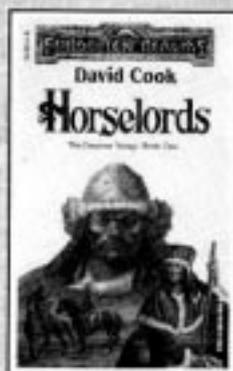
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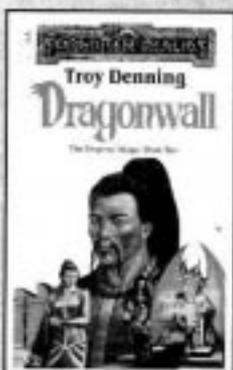
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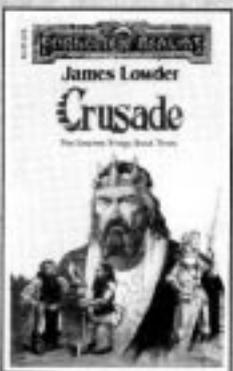
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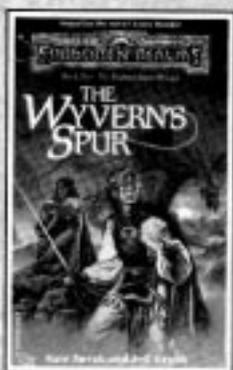
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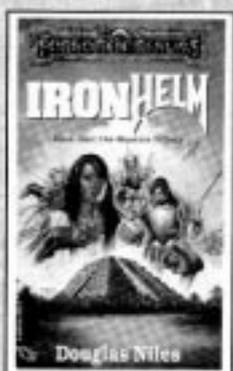
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It is the Mid Third age and a terrible fear has swept through all the tribes of Dunland. For at night the undead are stalking the land and a fearful corpse-like army is preying on the homesteads and villages of Dun Fearen. Those captured by this awful host often themselves appear several nights later as walking dead; new recruits amongst the ghouls and wights of the undead host. Menoib, Chieftain of Clan Daighen, whose own members have suffered greatly from the ravages of the undead will pay a high price to adventurers, brave enough to risk the dreadful consequences and root out and destroy the evil shaman who controls the Ghost-warriors. Rewards in

plenty, there are also, for those bold or foolish enough to explore the cave system, in the southern Misty mountains, whence the Ghost-warriors emanate. For those caves connect directly with the "Underdeeps", whose very name conjures images of its terrifying denizens and the half-forgotten horrors that dwell therein.

This month's releases are based on I.C.E.'s new Middle-earth adventure module "Ghost warriors", which contains scenarios for the adventures described above, and information on all the characters and monsters included in this month's figure release.

NEW RELEASES

	code		code
M165 Eribhen & Ruil (2 figs)	6	M171 Solophen, the Shaman	2
M166 Tughaib of the spirits	2	M172 Lesser Ghost of the Under-deeps	2
M167 Walking dead (2 figs)	5	M173 Skeleton of the Under-deeps	2
M168 Ghoul	2	M174 Cave-Troll of the Under-deeps	6
M169 Wight of Tughaib	2		
M170 Menoib, Clan Chieftain	2		



M165 Eribhen & Ruil



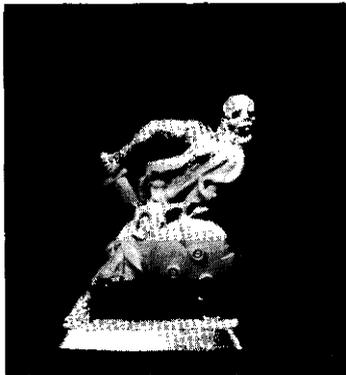
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MINIATURES

Through the LOOKING Glass

©1990 by Robert Bigelow, Jay Clenndenny, and Ralph Cooper



Setting fire to the galaxy: BATTLETECH® campaign rules, part 2

For those of you just joining us this month, we present the second half of our miniatures campaign rules for FASA's BATTLETECH® game, as used by the Gamemaster's Guild of Waukegan. These campaign rules were put together from club input, the sacrifice of time and effort by Ralph Cooper, and the knowledge and skill of Jay Clenndenny.

An alternative campaign

A short, bloody BATTLETECH campaign may be created by using *The Mercenary's Handbook* and restricting construction projects to a total of 1,000 points per turn. No Houses are involved, as this is strictly a campaign between mercenaries. In addition to 1,600 points for initial construction, each player gains JumpShips as needed, but starts with only two Leopard DropShips and a converted Leopard oreship (having open compartments that cannot transport 'Mechs).

The players' planets should form a double ring around a central star (ignoring orbital effects), with a ring of resource planets between the other rings to make

one resource planet per two players (see Mercenary Campaign Set-Up diagram). Each player's home planet contains 300 resource points, plus one each of six facilities (DropShip, assault, heavy, medium, light, and vehicle) and two spaceports, each with cities. Each resource planet contains one resource facility, one spaceport, and 700 tons of resources. Players may raid each other's planets for resources or production facilities. All other control rules apply to the use of resource points, and all other campaign rules apply.

BATTLETECH® Campaign (con't.)

Sequence of Play

1. Industries consume resources and produce new units. Check your accounting figures carefully and have someone double check them.
2. Any mercenary unit not under contract may come up for bid, and offers may be made to mercenary units under contracts to encourage them to break their

contracts. Mercenary units must have a newly written deal at the end of this phase in order to break a contract with a House—and gain the resultant problems. (Mercenary units simply don't break contracts for the heck of it.) Record keeping is very important here!

3. Each House plots its own movements on paper. This also includes orders for mercenary units on contract. If the mercenary unit has secretly broken a contract, then the mercenary unit must plot where it plans to go independently of House orders.

4. Each House and mercenary force moves its units.

5. Combat is resolved by miniatures battles.

6. Repairs, battlefield salvage, and ammunition replacement are conducted. You may not use battlefield salvage collected this turn to repair units, unless the salvaged material is used to repair a unit involved in the same battle. Only repair parts designated at the beginning of the turn are available for use. Repair parts are generic except for limbs and drive compo-



nents, which must be designated as separate parts. (You can generate spares on the following turn.)

7. Resources are shipped to production planets.

Note: If a production facility is captured, resources may be shipped to that facility starting on the following turn, and actual manufacturing may begin for the capturing force on the turn after that.

Variants

Some of the variants given in official sources and articles are not possible due to weight or rules restrictions. Below are our official campaign versions of which unit variants are used. Other 'Mechs and variants are from *BattleTechnology* magazine, produced by Pacific Rim Publishing (3833 Lake Shore Avenue, Oakland CA 94610, U.S.A.). The use of variants must be agreed upon by all of the players taking part in a campaign game. 'Mech body-part abbreviations used include: H = head, RA = right arm, LA = left arm, RL = right leg, LL = left leg, RT = right torso, CT = center torso, LT = left torso. Systems abbreviations used include: AC = autocannon; HS = heat sink; JJ = jump jets; LL = light laser; LRM = long-range missile; MG = machine gun; ML = medium laser; PPC = particle projection cannon; SL = small laser; SRM = short-range missile.

Alliance: No variants allowed.

Archer: No variants allowed.

Assassin: Remove 2 JJ (RT/LT); add 2 SL (RL/LL); armor: H 8, RT/LT 8/4, RL/LL 6, CT 10/4, RA/LA 6.

Atlas: Remove 1 ML (RA) and 1 SRM; add 1 LL (RA).

Awesome: No variants allowed.

Battleaxe: No variants allowed.

Battlemaster: Remove 2 ML and 1 SRM

(rear); add 7 HS; no other variants allowed.

Blackjack: Remove 2 ML (RA/LA); add 2 LL (RA/LA) and 6 HS; armor: H 5, RT/LT 13/5, RL/LL 16, CT 16/7, RA/LA 12.

Catapult-LRM20: Remove 4 ML and 4 HS; add 1 ton ammunition (CT) and 2 SL (RT/LT).

Catapult-PPC: Remove all JJ and LRM; add 2 PPC (RA/LA) and 6 HS.

Centurian-L: Remove AC10; add 1 LL and 1 ML (RA), and 2 HS; armor: H 9, RT/LT 18/6, RL/LL 24, CT 24/7, RA/LA 16.

Centurian-20: Add AC20 (RA).

Charger: No variants allowed, except for the Challenger.

Cicada-F: Remove 1 ML (RT) and SL; add 2 flamers (RT/CT); armor: H 6, CT 8/4 (all else is same).

Cicada-PPC: Not allowed.

Clint-AC10: Remove all JJ and ML (CT); replace AC5 with AC10.

Clint-D AC5: Remove all JJ and ML; add AC5 (RA); armor: H 5, RT/LT 2/1, RL/LL 2, CT 4/1, RA/LA 2.

Commando-AC: Remove 1 SRM; add AC2 (RA) and 1 ton ammunition (RT).

Commando-L: Remove 1 ML; add 1 flamer (RA).

Commando-LL: Remove 1 ML and 6 SRM; add 1 LL (LA).

Crusader-D: Add 4 HS.

Crusader-K: Add 4 HS.

Crusader-L: Add 2 JJ each in RT/LT, and add 2 HS.

Cyclops: Remove AC20 and ammunition; add 2 LRM-15 and 4 tons ammunition in place of AC20; armor: RA/LA 25/25 (all else is same).

Firestarter: Add 2 SL (CT) and 3 SL (RT); armor: H 9, RT/LT 12/6, RL/LL 12, CT 16/6, RA/LA 12.

Gladiator: Remove all JJ; add 2 ML (RT/LT).

Goshawk VTOL: Remove 1 HS; add 1 ML (front).

Griffin-S: Add 3 HS.

Hunchback: No variants allowed.

JagerMech: Add 2 LRM (RA/LA) and 2 tons ammunition each to RT/LT.

Javelin-F: Add 4 ML (RA/LA/RT/LT), 1 SL (H), and 1 HS; armor: H 8, RT/LT 10/4, RL/LL 14, CT 16/4, RA/LA 10.

Jenner: Armor: H 8, RT/LT 12/4, RL/LL 13, CT 18/4, RA/LA 12.

Kirin VTOL: Remove 2 ML; add 1 HS and 1 SRM-2 (front).

LRM/SRM carrier: You may design this unit as you wish, though the unit must have an I.C.E. engine and must weigh 60 tons.

Locust 1E: Remove 2 MG and ammunition; add 1 ML (CT) and 2 SL (RA/LA); keep other ML; armor as Wasp.

Locust 1M: Remove 2 MG and ammunition; add 2 LRM (RT/LT); armor: H 1, RT/LT 2/1, RL/LL 2, CT 2/1, RA/LA 1.

Locust 1S: Remove 2 MG and ammunition; add 2 SRM (RA/LA); armor: H 6, RT/LT 5/2, RL/LL 6, CT 8/2, RA/LA 3.

Marauder-D: Add 1 LL (RT) and 4 HS.

Marauder-M: Add 4 HS.

Marauder-L: Add 2 HS, 1 PPC (RA), 1 LL (LA).

Mercury: Add 1 extra ML (LT).

Orion: Add 3 SRM-4 and 2 tons ammunition (LT), and add 1 HS.

Ostroc: 1 LRM replaces 1 SRM; no other variants allowed.

Ostsol: Remove all ML; add 2 PPC (RT/LT).

Phoenix Hawk-K: Add 3 HS and 1 SL (CT); armor: H 9, RT/LT 18/4, RL/LL 22, CT 23/5, RA/LA 14.

Quickdraw: Add 4 HS and 2 ML (LT).

Rifle AC: Remove all LL and AC; add 2 AC10, 2 ML, 2 tons ammunition (one of each to each arm); armor: H 6, RT/LT 12/2, RL/LL 10, CT 20/4, RA/LA 13.

Rifle PPC: Remove all AC5 and LL; add 2 PPC and 2 ML (one to each arm) and 11 HS.

Shadow Hawk-2D: Remove 2 HS; add SRM-2 (RT) and ML (RT).

Shadow Hawk-2K: Model has only 14 HS.

Spider (both): Remove 2 JJ (one each side).

Stinger-V: Add ML (LA); armor as Wasp-K.

Super Griffin: Not possible.

Thunderbolt-E: Add 2 JJ each to RT/LT, 1 LRM-10 in RT, and 2 HS.

Thunderbolt-S: Add 2 flamers (RT) and 5 HS.

Titan-J: Remove 1 SRM-4 from each side; move SRM-6 to LT; add 3 JJ (RT/CT/LT).

Titan-2: Ignore comment on extra 5 tons of ammunition; add SRM-2 (LT).

Trebuchet-5J: Add 5 JJ (2 RL, 2 LL, 1 CT), 4 HS, and 1 ton LRM ammunition (RT); armor: H 9, RT/LT 13/5, RL/LL 16, CT 22/7, RA/LA 11.

Trebuchet-5S: Add 2 SRM-6 (RT), 1 ton ammo (RT), and 8 HS.

Urbanmech: Add AC20 (RA); remove 1 HS; armor: H 5, RT/LT 7/3, RL/LL 10, CT 10/7, RA/LA 9.

Vindicator: Not possible.

Victor-S: Remove 1 HS; replace SRM-4 with SRM-6.

Vulcan: Add 1 MG (LA) and 3 ML (RT); armor: H 8, RT/LT 16/4, RL/LL 20, CT 16/6, RA/LA 12.

Warhammer-D: Add 3 HS; armor: H 9, RT/LT 21/8, RL/LL 30, CT 30/9, RA/LA 21.
 Warhammer-L: Add 1 flamer in RT/LT.
 Wasp-D: Remove SRM-2; add 2 SL (LT) and 1 flamer (LL).
 Wasp-K: Remove ML; armor: H 6, RT/LT 8/2, RL/LL 8, CT 8/4, RA/LA 6.
 Wasp-L: Remove all weapons; add 1 SRM-4 (LL).
 Wasp-WD: Remove all weapons; add 2 SL (RA), 2 SL (LT), and 2 SL (LL).
 Whirlwind Hover: Change fusion to 135 I.C.E.; remove 2 ML; add 1 MG (turret) and ½ ton ammunition; allow 3 tons for infantry transport.
 Whitworth: Remove LRM; add 3 SRM-6 (RT/CT/LT) and 2 tons ammunition (RT/LT).
 Wolfman: Not allowed in play.
 Wolverine-K: Add 1 LL (RA), 1 ML (CT), 1 SL (CT), 3 HS; armor: H 8, RT/LT 20/6, RL/LL 26, CT 28/8, RA/LA 18.
 Wolverine-M: Add 1 LL (RA), 1 ML (RA), and 4 HS.
 Wyvern VTOL: Replace 1 SL with 1 HS; armor: F 26, L/R 22, B 20, R 2 15.



Prohibited Items

No Star League materials or units are used in the campaign. Additionally, mines, vibra-bombs, Land Air 'Mechs, and pop-up pill boxes or other fancy fixed defenses are not used. All fixed weapons in a city are placed in buildings. If these units are used, prepare to limit them to avoid prolonged trench, siege, or fortress warfare.

Terrain Generation

Terrain for miniatures battles is generated whenever there is combat in nonurban areas across open ground, at resource centers, or at spaceports. One representative from each side involved in the fighting chooses a number between one and six. Add one to each number selected. Each result represents the number of times that the player may roll on the Terrain Generation Table to create the battlefield environment. (If generating terrain for urban battlefields, see "City Layout.")

Both players reveal their chosen numbers at the same time. The person who selected the lowest number (or the defending player, if the numbers selected were a tie) rolls 2d6 on the Terrain Generation Table and places the result on the board; this is his first turn. Players alternate rolling dice and choosing terrain until one player has made as many rolls as he is allowed. The other player then finishes out his rolls. Terrain is placed as it is rolled, before the next roll on the Terrain Generation Table is made.

First and foremost, the layout of the battlefield board must make sense. You can't run a river over the mountains, but you can start one there. You may place trees on mountains if you wish, but they may not be placed on buildings. Buildings may be placed on hills only if they fit. Buildings may not be placed on water. You must use the terrain as rolled, and it must

all fit on the map.

If a resource center or a spaceport is on the board, the defender places that facility after all terrain features have been laid out, and he can automatically place a two-hex-wide road from that center leading off the board. The defender will also be able to place two small maintenance or defense buildings (one-level, one-hex, 75 CFs) for every 25 tons of fixed defenses. These must be placed within six hexes of the facility in question and must also be placed within six hexes of each other, so long as they can each trace a line of sight back to the facility.

A spaceport building is two hexes wide, one hex deep, and three levels tall. Next to it is a concrete launching and landing pad that covers a square four hexes across.

Resource centers cover four hexes and have two levels. A concrete lot one hex in size lies immediately next to the facility; this lot is where resources awaiting shipment are found (and from where they get stolen on raids).

Production facilities cover six hexes and have three levels. A concrete lot one square wide encircles the facility. No other terrain features may be placed next to this facility.

No military units may enter or stand on top of a spaceport, a resource center, or a production facility. Concrete pads and lots may be entered like any other area of clear terrain.

Wind: After terrain is laid out, wind direction is determined by rolling 1d6. On a roll of 1-2, wind is present; numbers are assigned to the cardinal directions (1 = north, 2 = northeast, 3 = east, etc.), then 1d8 is rolled for the direction itself. If the initial 1d6 roll is 3-6, no wind is present. Wind direction remains constant throughout the course of a battle.

City Layout

To create natural terrain on a board showing a city layout, each player selects a number between 1 and 3 and uses the Terrain Generation Table. This terrain is placed first. Any reference to possible extra buildings is automatically treated as open terrain.

The defender of an urban area involved in 'Mech combat is allowed to use 2,000 CFs of buildings to form his city. This sum must be distributed in lots of 25 CFs size. The Building CF Costs Table is used to determine building costs. The selected CF is multiplied by the given multiplier, and the product is then multiplied by the building's level (e.g., a two-hex, level-2 structure of 50 CFs would be 100 CFs total). After the defender decides upon his buildings, they are placed on the board. The player must place paved streets using common sense.

Infantry Costs

The Infantry Costs Tables show the production costs (in tons) for infantry units in a BATTLETECH campaign. Note that anti-'Mech infantry costs double the values given.

Home Guard

Each of the five Houses has a Home Guard to protect its capital. Because of their special status, Home Guard units are treated as exceptions to several rules presented in this column.

Home Guard units for all Houses are created during the initial (pre-game) construction period. Each such unit consists of 12 'Mechs totalling 400 tons (only 'Mechs may be purchased for Home Guards). Home Guard 'Mechs may be of any size but must be regular 'Mechs or approved variants without modifications.



Pilots for such units are received free and include a 2-2 commander, with all other Home Guard pilots being 3-3.

Home Guard units and pilots may not be transferred or moved off the capital city board during a battle. These units do not count for stacking purposes in combat (see "Battles: Stacking" in last month's column).

Finally, Home Guards may replace losses, ammunition, and make repairs at the rate of 40 tons per turn, over and above all other production considerations.

Rules Clarifications

In any campaign, rules disputes may appear and rules lawyers might try to change the intent of the game. The *BATTLETECH Manual: The Rules of Warfare* governs the conduct of combat in this campaign. All rules disputes must be settled by the representatives of each House, the mercenary representative, and the judge. Possible areas of rules conflicts are addressed as follows:

Punching rules in the game are not very clear. You may punch only if your 'Mech has a lower arm actuator (a fist) on the limb in question. It does not matter what weapons the unit has in the arm it punches with. Each official 'Mech's actuators are given on its sheet from the *BATTLETECH Reinforcements* pack. The referee is the final authority on what 'Mechs have in any event. Do not forget the -1 penalty to hit if no hand actuator is present.

A charge attack requires that the charging unit has a chance to survive the attack at the time the charge is declared. VTOLS may never declare a charge. The damage points caused by a charge attack are figured by multiplying the charging unit's tonnage by the distance to the target in hexes, then dividing the result by 10 and rounding up to the nearest whole number.

In engine weight calculations of modified vehicles, the engine must have at least twice the rating of the weight of the vehicle before suspension becomes a factor.

Torso critical hits are not automatic. You must roll on the 'Mech Hit Location Table and Critical Hit Effects Table, pages 22 and 23, in *The BATTLETECH Manual: The Rules of Warfare*.

An ammunition explosion destroys a 'Mech's limb when that limb is blown off, but the blast does not hurt the rest of the 'Mech.

Damages for purposes of a piloting skill roll are cumulative (e.g., if your unit takes 40 points of damage, it gains a +2 PSR modifier; 45 points of damage would still be +2). A piloting roll for leg damage need be made only after a successful physical attack against a 'Mech's leg.

Questions

All questions and comments on these campaign rules may be directed to: Robert Bigelow, c/o Friends' Hobby, 1411 Washington Street, Waukegan IL 60085, U.S.A.

Terrain Generation Table

2d6 Terrain result

- | | |
|----|---|
| 2 | Roll on Mountains Subtable |
| 3 | Roll on Hills Subtable |
| 4 | One one-level hill |
| 5 | One lightly wooded area |
| 6 | Open terrain (roll on Roads Subtable) |
| 7 | Open terrain |
| 8 | Open terrain (roll on Buildings Subtable) |
| 9 | Roll on Water Subtable |
| 10 | One one-level hill |
| 11 | One lightly wooded area |
| 12 | Roll on Woods Subtable |

Mountains Subtable

1d6 Mountain result

- | | |
|-----|--------------------------|
| 1 | One five-level mountain |
| 2 | One four-level mountain |
| 3-4 | One three-level mountain |
| 5-6 | Two two-level hills |

Hills Subtable

1d6 Hill result

- | | |
|-----|----------------------|
| 1-2 | One three-level hill |
| 3-4 | One two-level hill |
| 5-6 | Two one-level hills |

Roads Subtable

1d6 Road result

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 1 | One two-hex-wide road across the board |
| 2 | One one-hex-wide road across the board |
| 3-6 | No roads |

Buildings Subtable

2d6 Building result

- | | |
|----|--|
| 2 | One large two-level, three-hex building (50 CF) |
| 3 | One large one-level, two-hex building (50 CF) |
| 4 | One small two-level, one-hex building (50 CF) |
| 5 | No buildings |
| 6 | No buildings |
| 7 | No buildings |
| 8 | No buildings |
| 9 | One medium, one-level, two-hex building (50 CF) |
| 10 | One large, three-level, two-hex building (50 CF) |
| 11 | One medium one-level, two-hex building (50 CF) |
| 12 | One huge two-level, four-hex building (25 CF) |

Water Subtable

1d6 Water result

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 1-2 | One two-level-deep river (two hexes wide) crossing the board |
| 3-4 | One one-level-deep river (one hex wide) crossing the board |
| 5-6 | One small lake with a one-level-deep river (one hex wide) leading away from it to the edge of the board |

Woods Subtable

1d6 Woods result

- 1-2 Two heavily wooded areas
- 3-4 One heavily wooded area
- 5-6 Two lightly wooded areas

Building CF Costs Table

Building hex size	Multiplier	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
		Min/ Max	Min/ Max	Min/ Max
1 hex	1	25/100	25/75	25/50
2 hex	2	25/75	25/50	25
3 hex	3	25/50	25	n/a
4 hex	4	25	n/a	n/a

Infantry Costs Tables

Foot infantry	Cost	'Mech infantry	cost	Jump infantry	Cost
Rifles	7	Rifles	21	Rifles	30
Machine guns	10	Machine guns	30	Machine guns	28
Flamers	10	Flamers	30	Flamers	28
Portable lasers	14	Portable lasers	28	Portable lasers	33
SRM	14	SRM	28	SRM	33



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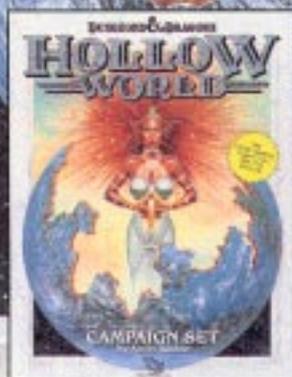
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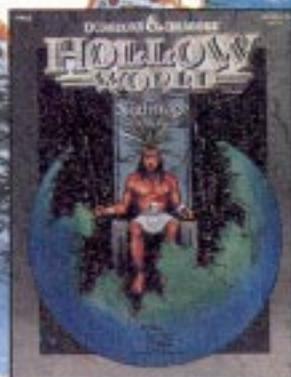
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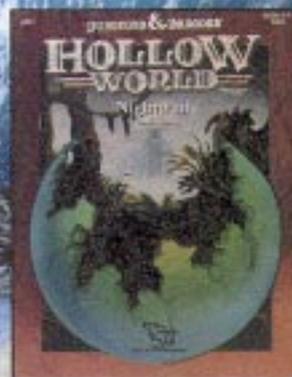
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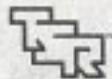
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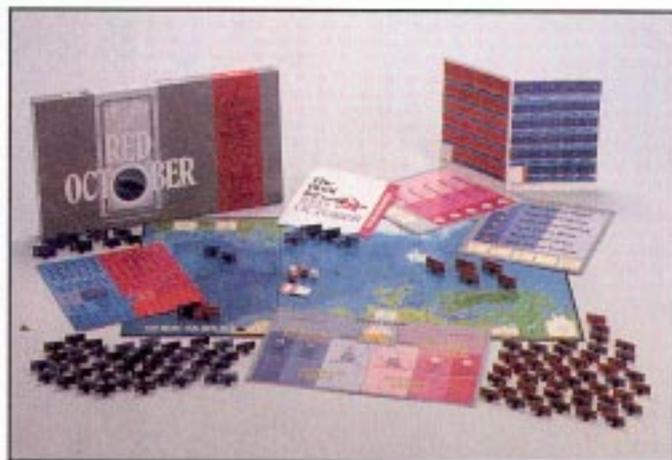
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