

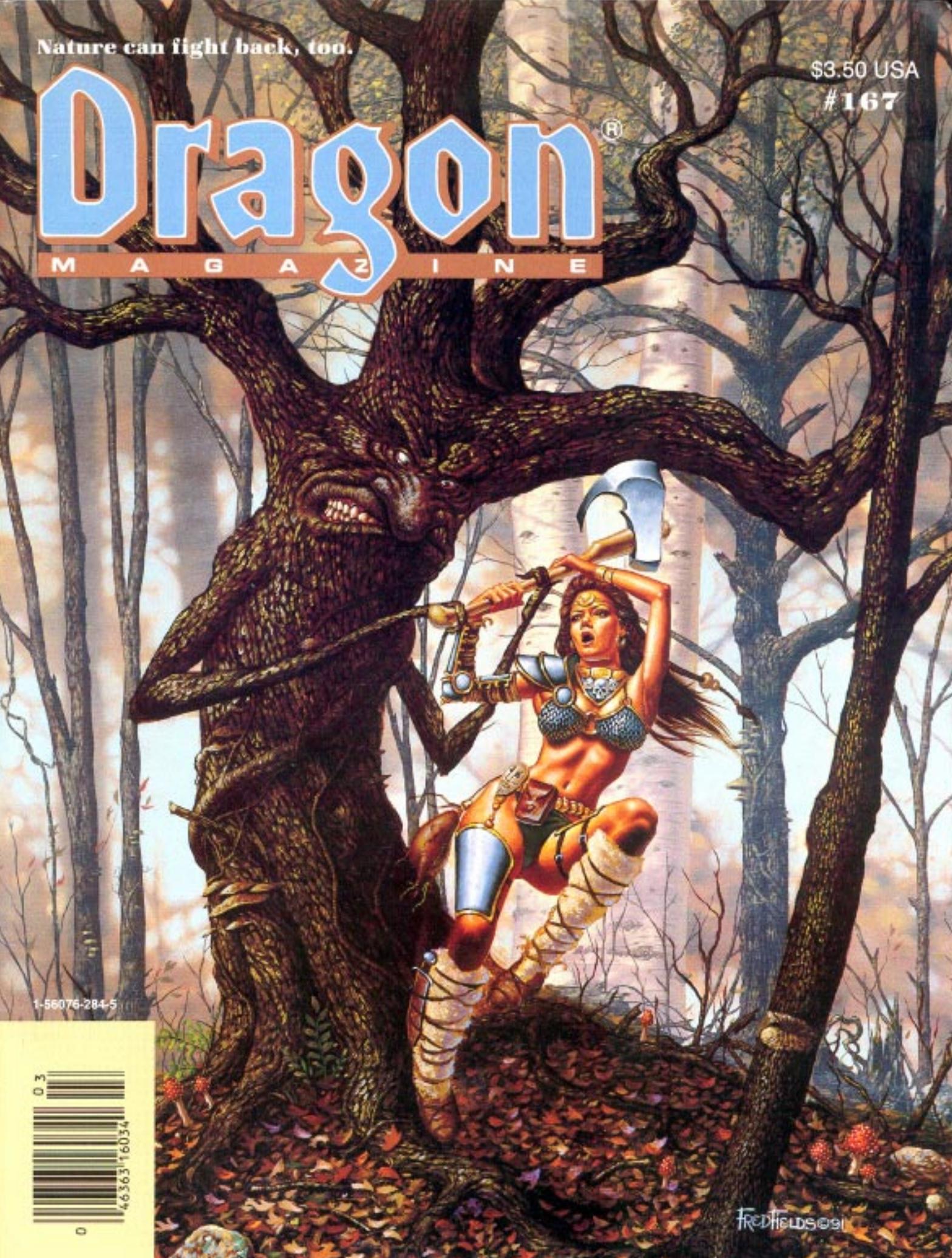
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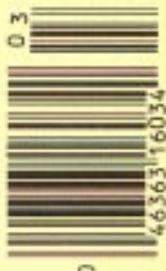
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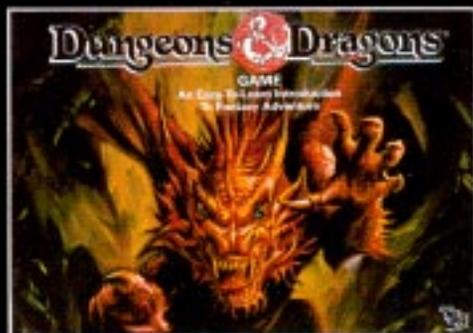


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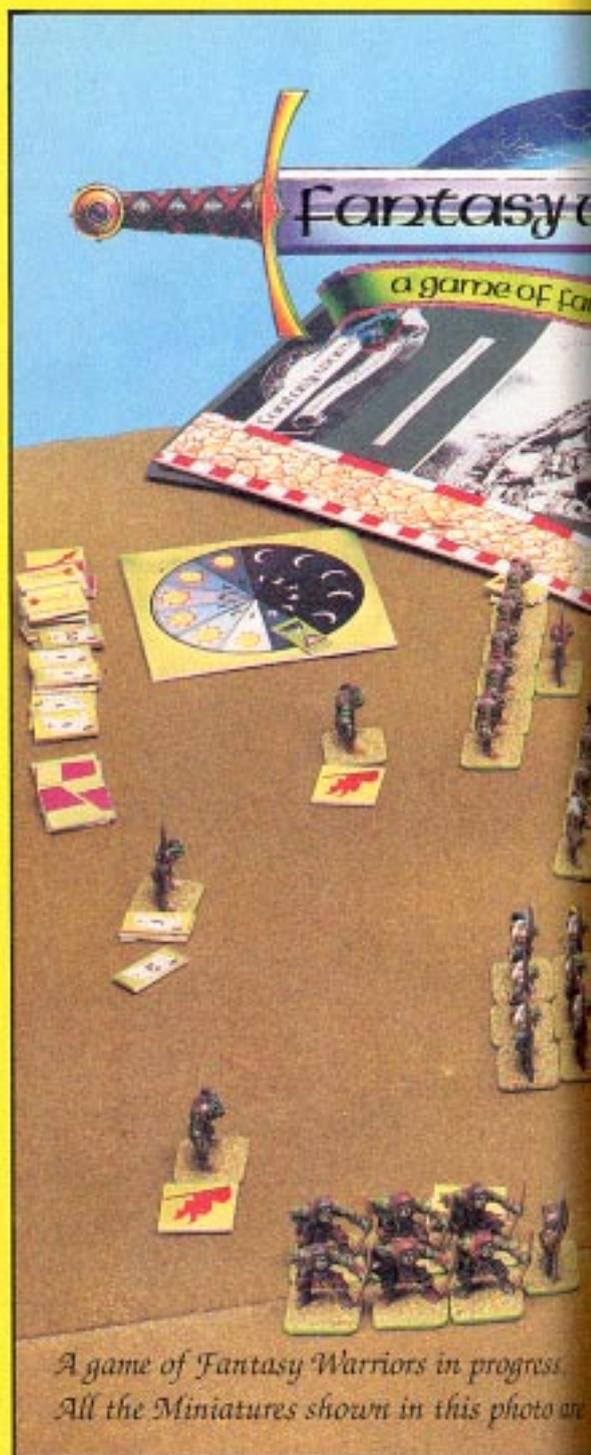
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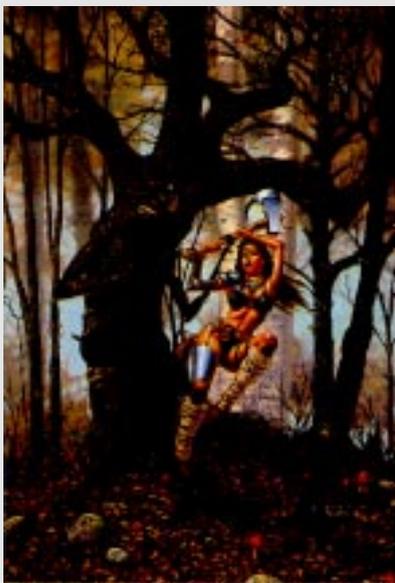
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COVER

This month, our cover artist, Fred Fields, takes a sharp look at ecology. Our treant has obviously decided that his forest has one too many axe-wielding barbarians, and it has decided to take matters into its own, um, limbs.

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.

Chain mail mail

Dear Dragon,

This is in response to the person who wrote to "Sage Advice" [about chain and scale mail] in issue #162, page 32.

Scale mail in general, and *metallic* scale in particular, was quite frequently cursed by the soldiers who had to wear it. Without mentioning its discomfort, it was a less useful armor than chain. Its plates were frequently cracked apart or cut away entirely after facing troops with "common" weapons. May the gods help the wearers if they had to face "bearded" or "noble" weapons the next day. ("Common" weapons were of iron; "bearded" weapons each had a steel edge welded to the cutting surface, making it extremely deadly; "noble" weapons were made with good steel and excellent craftsmanship.)

The chain-mailed warrior, while possibly bruised and sore, could look forward to the next day's battle confidently, at least in regards to his armor. It took about five minutes to hammer in a replacement rivet, if someone held your armor. Chain mail was, historically, the most affordable (in more ways than one) "common" armor. Steel was extremely difficult for our ancestors to work with on a bulk scale (they didn't have dwarves, gnomes, and elves to help them).

A few other books that people could look into are: the Osprey Men-At-Arms series; Froissant's *Chronicles*, and *A Distant Mirror*, by Barbara W. Tuchman.

Also, here is a free piece of advice from three DMs. It's fairly simple, but it is one that the "Sage" cannot and will not give because he's a gentler person: "If you cannot be civil, be quiet."

Dave, Jon, & David Timmons
Philadelphia PA

Skip Williams, our "Sage," had this response:

After quickly reviewing my own sources, I discovered that our scale-mail enthusiast [in issue #162] has me on one count. There are plenty of examples of soldered chain mail preserved in museums and collections—I over-looked this in my haste to get the column ready for publication.

The various Osprey Men at Arms books are excellent introductory sources; I own quite a few of them myself. They are easy to read, and the excellent color plates really help you get a feel for the subject matter. But they are far from definitive works, so don't count on them to back you up in an argument with someone who knows what he's talking about. *A Distant Mirror* is a general history of 14th-century Europe, not a work on medieval weapons. It is well over-

reading, however, and is available in paperback from Ballantine Books.

Propriety demands that I limit my comments on your closing remarks to the following: I've heard various epithets applied to me over the years, but seldom "gentleman." Of course, you are referring to "The Sage," who is a fictional character created by my editor and me. The Sage becomes a bit more genteel after my editor (who really is a fine fellow despite what I said in issue #156) finishes tinkering with my prose.

In the dark

Dear Dragon,

I am writing in regard to the editorial in issue #164. The quote, "Character is what you are in the dark," was originally said by Dwight L. Moody.

Sean Burd
Pt. Pleasant NJ

We'll take your word for it, but that does leave us with one question: Who is Dwight L. Moody?

I've an idea....

Dear Dragon,

I have an idea for a product that I believe TSR would perhaps be interested in. Assuming you take ideas from free-lancers, how would I go about proposing my idea and protecting it at the same time? I would tell you my idea now in this letter, but I'm afraid someone may steal it.

This is the first time I have done anything of this nature, so any advice you may have would be appreciated. I think this idea I have is a pretty good one, and it could become a very popular item. It is not a new game system or anything that grand. It is a simple aid for RPGs.

Name and address withheld
at writer's request

Our publisher, James M. Ward, has a few words of advice for everyone out there who is interested in submitting a game design, role-playing adventure, or the like to TSR, Inc. (this advice does not apply to the submission of materials to DRAGON Magazine or DUNGEON® Adventures; our writers' guidelines cover our own submissions requirements, which differ from those of TSR's Games division):

If you have a card game or board game, submit a one-page letter (with an SASE) briefly describing your game to: Game Proposals, c/o Mike Martin, Vice President of Product, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. You should have a working prototype of your game prepared, but do not send that with your cover letter.

TSR is not interested in seeing designs for new role-playing settings, particularly new fantasy game worlds, as the TSR staff designs all of those. TSR also has its own pool of free-lance writers who design some of the role-playing

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Continued on page 60

EDITORIAL

Shield against the storm

I met Marc twelve years ago at an AD&D® game in Mannheim, Germany. One of a group of gamers from an Army armored cavalry unit, Marc was a sandy-haired guy with a mustache, a dry sense of humor, and an enormous collection of miniatures. He could quote whole sections of the Harvard Lampoon's *Bored of the Rings* parody from memory. Marc (known as "Marac the Mad" to some) also designed a game world in which the monsters were so awful that the local cities put up the highest walls that they could build, and no one ever left town. Our adventurers went there and happened to pass by a lake just as a 10'-diameter eyeball on a stalk broke the water's surface. We, who gleefully attacked liches and greater demons, immediately ran away.

Marc and some of my other Army buddies elected to stay in the service when I left it, almost a decade ago. Lately I find myself thinking a lot about Marc. He and his unit left for Saudi Arabia weeks ago. Postcards he sent before the war started told of the boring life there, though he was apparently lucky enough to find a group that played FASA's BATTLETECH* and Task Force Games' STAR FLEET BATTLES* games. The mail has slowed greatly since then, but I would guess that Marac the Mad is still commanding space fleets and quoting wonderfully bad poetry somewhere out in the desert, thousands of miles from home.

Given that there are far over half a million American, British, Canadian, and other Allied servicemembers in the Persian Gulf at present, many of you reading this probably have gaming buddies who, like Marc, were suddenly called away, leaving vacant spots in your Friday night get-togethers. Your gaming groups go on, but you are probably very aware of the missing characters, the missing faces, the missing laughter.

You aren't the only one who misses the good old days. Your missing gamer is probably thinking about you and everyone else in your gaming group, right now.

And you can do something about it.

1. Write. Write a letter or mail a postcard. Your gaming buddy is alive and well and desperate to hear from you. Think about what he or she has to look forward to instead of reading your letter—then write.

When you write, be honest but upbeat. Talk about how everyone is doing and what your nongaming life is like, and think of funny things that happened recently. Clip out interesting or bizarre articles from newspapers and magazines. Take a few instant photos of yourself and other gamers. Talk about the game campaign, to—all of the amusing things that happened recently, like the five orc raids in one day, the new measure Tax, and the dragon that ate Bill's paladin (his third character to meet that fate). Don't dwell too long on your real-world problems. Your gaming buddy in the Persian Gulf might have an especially large set of personal problems right now; don't add to it.

2. Write some more. Once every so often, when mailing restrictions permit, prepare a "gamer's CARE package" with some paperback books, trinkets, and snack foods: nonmelting cookies, crackers, easily opened canned foods, and so on. Contact your local post office for mailing restrictions on items sent to the Persian Gulf; many packages are checked for items forbidden by Islamic religious law, such as pork, strictly political or religious materials, alcohol, and scantily clad men and women (I know it's tempting, but don't try it; trying to beat the customs people will just delay your package).

If you think a letter is welcome to a soldier in wartime who has seen no mail for weeks, think of the impact that a package will make. Then put your package together and mail it.

3. Keep writing. If you write just once to your gaming buddy, that's fine—at least he or she knows that you're alive. But your buddy will then go for weeks and weeks and weeks with no other word, and it will become obvious to him or her that the missing gamer is now a forgotten gamer, one who will get only lip service instead of real thought and care.

Make it a habit with every weekly game session to write some notes on a postcard or letter, something from everyone, and mail it off. Put down the funniest out-of-context sayings made in the group, the



most horrible mistakes and the greatest triumphs, the DM's nastiest adventures. Think of something different—a silly card, a group photograph, a cassette tape, a synopsis of the game campaign so far, anything out of the ordinary.

It is important to remember that your missing gamer might not have the time or opportunity to write back, and mail delays seem to only get worse. Don't let the lack of a response stop you. Your missing gamer is far from home and is involved in a war; he or she might be very tired, very busy, or both. Give your gaming buddy a break and keep writing.

4. Wait and hope. It could be a long time before your missing gamer shows up again. When he or she does come home, be there and give out the best welcome you can give. Throw a party. Take your gamer to a nice restaurant. Get your gamer worked back into the fabric of day-to-day life once again.

5. Help others, too. Even if you don't know anyone at all in Operation Desert Storm, write anyway. Letters, postcards, and packages sent to the following address will be randomly divided among land-based members of the United States Army, Air Force, and Marines:

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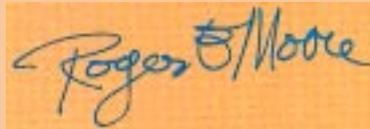
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I wrote this column for Marac the Mad. Now it's your turn to write. 



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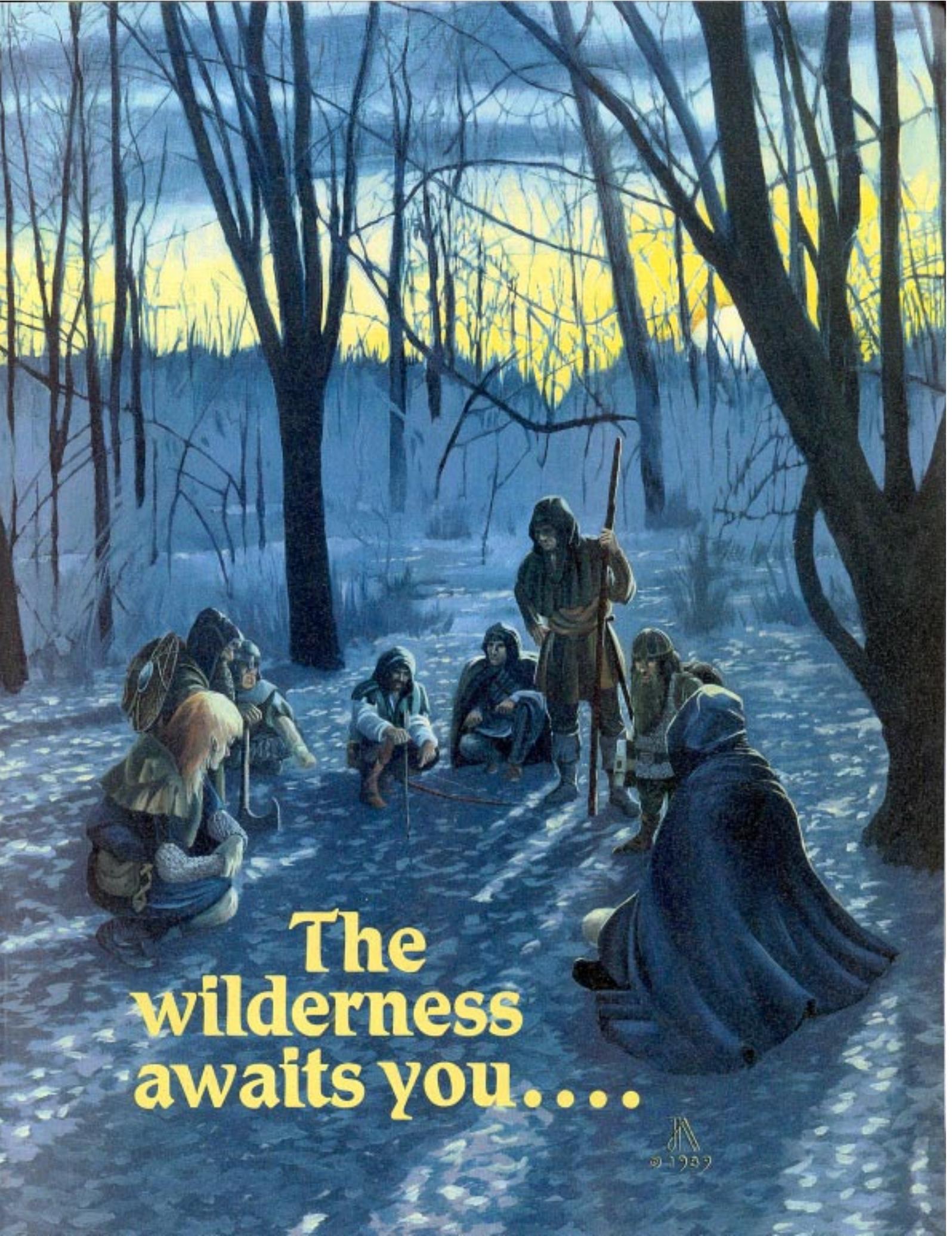
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**The
wilderness
awaits you....**

[The following article is an unofficial description of a wilderness portion of the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® campaign. It is presented to show the level of background detail that an AD&D® game Dungeon Master can add to an established campaign setting.]

The Pomarj is famous in the lore of the central Flanaess as a nest of humanoids, giants, and other fell creatures. However, few people have made a serious study of the lands known as the Chaos Fields and the Hills of Horror. Far from being merely a reservation for a number of humanoid tribes (refugees from the Hateful Wars of 498-510 CY), the Pomarj is a living and breathing—though not exactly thriving—region in its own right.

The WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting's haven for humanoids—and heroes

by Joseph Bloch

See the Pomarj

—and Die!



History

Few humans remember the time when the Pomarj was free from the yoke of humanoid domination. Even few of the Short Races (dwarves, halflings, and gnomes) can remember the day when it was under the suzerainty of the Prince of Ulek. But it has been all these things and more.

The region known today as the Pomarj was first settled about 1,100 years ago by Oeridian tribes, fleeing eastward from the great wars in the West. Several small villages were founded then, the inhabitants having to fight off indigenous troll, goblin, and barbarian inhabitants. By the time the Suel migrants had arrived, the region had been well stabilized, and the raids of the fell creatures beyond the wooden palisades of the Oeridians were infrequent at best. The arrival of the Suel tribes was neither welcomed nor despised, and the two groups eventually merged into the stock found throughout the central Flanaess today.

The area prospered under the rule of petty lords for two centuries. Dwarves and gnomes then entered this region, creating the first mines in the Drachensgrab Hills to remove the precious stones that lay beneath them. In 350 CY, the whole region was absorbed into the Empire of Keoland and set up as a march of its own (the Poor March, a title that was eventually shortened to the "Pomarj"). The region was called the Poor March because of its distance from Nirole Dra, which was then considered the center of learning and culture in the western Flanaess, from whence all intellectual wealth flowed.

This situation lasted for a little more than 110 years, with the three great towns of the Pomarj being founded during the time of Keolandish hegemony: Highport, Blue, and Stoneheim. All three came into being as a result of the near-obsessive building programs of the Keolandish kings.

With the allegiance of the demihuman realms of Ulek, the Pomarj was wrested away from the domination of Keoland. Due to the great numbers of dwarves and gnomes already at work in the region, the newly crowned prince of Ulek took possession of the lands, not as absolute monarch but as protector. Again, the wealth flowed from the mines of the Drachensgrab Hills, invigorating the economy and stuffing the coffers of the prince.

Greed is often an overwhelming factor in human behavior, however, and so is pride. The human inhabitants of the Pomarj began to resent the growing power and wealth of their dwarven lords, even if they themselves were better off than ever before. The minor human nobles of the area met in secret conclaves, led by the evil mage Count Veja, an outcast from the court of the Overking in Rauxes. The count was the driving force behind the revolt that ousted the dwarvish lords from their strongholds in the Pomarj.

The prince of Ulek bore the new human

lords of the Pomarj no ill will. Indeed, he had been toying with the idea of giving away a piece of the Pomarj to his cousin, the lord of the Iron Hills. The prince saw a collection of petty human states on his eastern border as an excellent compromise: They were too proud to band together, and individually they could not threaten his position. The arrangement seemed to benefit all concerned.

But Count Veja was not satisfied. Having wrangled for himself the title of Overlord of Highport, the count was determined to conquer the rest of the Pomarj for himself (it was only by sheer chance that he had not done so immediately, thanks to the bite of a venomous snake on the day after the dwarves were driven out). He began to amass an army of mercenaries and humanoids from the Suss Forest, and it seemed that nothing could stand in his way. But on the night before the attack was scheduled to begin, the count died. It seems that his legendary vigor and youthful visage was no accident. The count had been imbibing *potions of longevity* for many decades, and the last one had caught up with him. He aged many decades in the span of a few minutes, and that was the end of him. No one in Highport possessed as strong a will as the count's, and control of the town passed to the Guild of Merchants. The possibility of a Kingdom of the Pomarj passed away with Count Veja.

The lands of the Pomarj prospered for 10 years under the rule of the petty human lords. The gold and gems of the Drachensgrab Hills filled the pockets of the commoners and the coffers of the nobles, and everyone (except the dwarves) was happy. Indeed, more gold and gems were unearthed during this 10-year span than had been uncovered for the Prince of Ulek in twice that time.

Ironically, it was this wealth that had allowed the prince to organize the highly successful campaign to oust the marauding humanoid tribes from the Lortmil Mountains. A vast number of fell beings dwelled among and beneath the Lortmils, and they were no end of trouble to the Ulek states, Celene, the gnomes of the Kron Hills, and even Veluna. Each of these states participated in the campaigns, which lasted from 498 to 510 CY and finally succeeded in their goal. The humanoid tribes that had infested the Lortmil Mountains were gone forever.

However, these humanoid tribes were not destroyed. The wiser tribal leaders, seeing the inevitable outcome of facing the combined might of so many foes, fled southeastward into the Suss Forest. Soon they traversed its length, emerging into the arid hills of the Pomarj. The fierce humanoid tribes, having been tempered into fine fighters by the Hateful Wars that drove them from their mountain nests, swept down upon the now-complacent inhabitants of the area.

The carnage was terrible. Thousands upon thousands of humanoids came down

out of the forest, laying waste to dozens of villages and mining communities. Dwarves and gnomes were put to the sword, and vast numbers of human slaves were taken. Within a month, it was over. The humanoids had firmly entrenched themselves in the Pomarj.

Even the three great ports of the region were seized, but in each case it was treachery rather than force of arms or cunning siegecraft that won the day. Each town was besieged for several days, with fierce fighting right at the outset of the siege. Then the humans were set upon from an unexpected direction: the sea. Kopoacynths and aquatic ogres aided their air-breathing cousins and fell on the humans, opening the gates of the city in the process. None of the towns stood a chance, and much havoc was wrought.

The Prince of Ulek sought to relieve the Pomarj, to destroy once and for all the humanoid tribes that had caused him so much grief over the years. A rather large expeditionary force was sent over the Jewel River, but it was turned back with heavy losses before it even entered the highlands. The Pomarj belonged to the humanoids from then on.

The Pomarj today

There has been much reconstruction since the humanoid invasion more than 60 years ago, mostly in the rebuilding of fortresses and castles throughout the region. Even the three cities are returned to a fairly normal status; commerce takes place, ships sail to and from their harbors, and people walk the streets. But everywhere are the oppressive visages of the orc, hobgoblin, and gnoll occupation forces.

Many humans of evil bent have flocked to the Pomarj, seeing there the opportunity not only to wreak mischief but also to grab power. Under the control of so many different humanoid tribes, the Pomarj is more fragmented than it ever has been before, and many an evil wizard or lord has traveled there to make a home.

The humanoid tribes

The principle inhabitants of the Pomarj today are the humanoid tribes that came down from the Lortmils and conquered the region. The majority of these humanoids are either orcs or goblins, but there are many hobgoblin, gnoll, and kobold groups as well. These tribes can be divided into two major types.

The first type of humanoid tribe found in the Pomarj are those major tribes with a permanent base. More often than not, these bases are former dwarven mines or strongholds, sometimes expanded by their new inhabitants. These tribes are two to three times as large as those described in the *Monstrous Compendium*. They are often led either by a powerful warlord (half-orcs, half-ogres, and orogs are most often in this role in orcish tribes) or by a powerful shaman or witch doctor.



Artwork by Timothy Truman

Tribal name	Race	Warriors*	Location**
Black Tongue	Gnolls	600	D4-104
Bleeding Moon	Gnolls	850	F4-104
Bloody Axe	Gnolls	700	V3-100
Bluebottle	Hobgoblins	500	V3-102
Blue Eye	Gnolls	900	B4-103
Cracked Skull	Orcs	800	C4-104
Crooked Claw	Orcs	700	Z3-102
Dead Rat	Kobolds	650	Y3-103
Dripping Eye	Hobgoblins	700	E4-104
Fell Ichor	Kobolds	800	Y3-102
Flaming Skull	Orcs	900	E4-103
Green Meat	Kobolds	350	A4-102
Hill Beater	Goblins	850	A4-102
Jagged Blade	Orcs	750	B4-104
Meat Eater	Hobgoblins	550	C4-104
Ochre Tooth	Kobolds	600	U3-104
Purple Squid	Hobgoblins	700	W3-104
Puss Dripper	Hobgoblins	750	C4-103
Red Fang	Orcs	950	Z3-104
Red Nails	Gnolls	800	W3-104
Rotting Kraken	Hobgoblins	700	X3-101
Saltburner	Orcs	500	V3-100
Shadowdoom	Orcs	250	V3-103
Victorious	Flinds	800	A4-103
Vile Epithet	Gnolls	650	Z3-102
Wicked Eye	Goblins	400	B4-103
Wolfbrother	Goblins	700	W3-102
Wormridden Tree	Goblins	600	F4-103

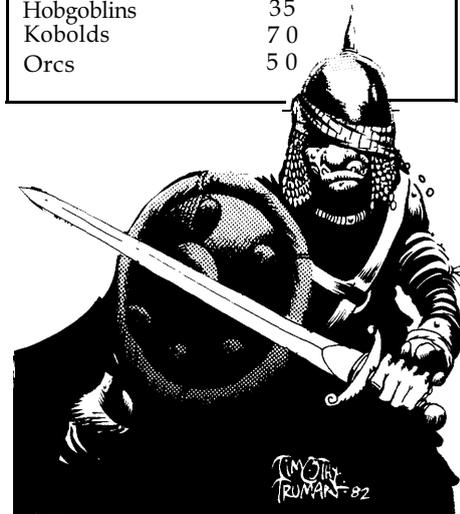
* The figure for the number of warriors does not include females or young, which constitute an additional 100% and 150% of the number of warriors, respectively.

** Coordinates refer to the maps in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK setting folder set.

Minor Humanoid Tribes of the Pomarj

As noted in the text, each tribe has 10-100 warriors. See the first footnote in Table 1 regarding females and young.

Race	Number of Tribes
Flinds	20
Gnolls	40
Goblins	80
Hobgoblins	35
Kobolds	70
Orcs	50



Several tribes are led by evil humans or demihumans, but these are exceptions. Twenty-eight of these major tribes of various races are scattered around the Pomarj (see Table 1).

The second type of tribe are lesser tribes, having 10-100 members without permanent homes. They are seminomadic, settling down in one spot for a few years, then moving on for various reasons. These tribes make their homes in either abandoned dwarvish tunnel complexes or in shabby surface villages, surrounded by wooden palisades and ditches. These lesser tribes are often led by humanoid warriors or evil humans or demihumans. Many of these tribes pay tribute, including slaves and precious items, to the more powerful ones (see Table 2).

The Slave Lords

There is a third power group, aside from the cities and humanoid tribes, operating in the Pomarj. This is the group of evildoers known as the Slave Lords, who operate from the secret city of Suderham (found in hex A4-104 on the WORLD OF GREYHAWK setting map). Detailed information concerning the Slave Lords and their operatives can be found in AD&D modules A1-4 (collected as the large model A-4 *Scourge of the Slave Lords*).

However, their more general goals and tactics regarding the Pomarj are not covered in those modules.

The Slave Lords operate with the eventual goal of establishing a kingdom in the central Flanaess, with themselves as its rulers. Their plan is essentially threefold. The first stage involves spreading fear and terror throughout the Wild Coast region, eliminating high-powered opposition and establishing a reputation among the people there. They are currently operating in this stage and are about to proceed to the next, having created a large base of wealth through their slaving operations.

The second stage is the conquest of the Pomarj, or at least establishing some sort of hegemony over it. While they realize the difficulty of bringing all of the humanoid tribes in the region under one banner, they are confident. Through the use of guile and magic, rather than force of arms, they have already secretly brought many humanoid leaders into their fold. Fully one-third of the tribes of the Pomarj are secretly under the thrall of or are allied to the Slave Lords.

Lastly, the Slave Lords seek to subjugate the whole of the region east of the Lortmils, starting with an invasion of the Wild Coast by their humanoid hosts. After the fall of Celene (which, they realize, will be a most difficult campaign), they anticipate seizing the City of Greyhawk as their capital. Needless to say, these plans are far in the future and will probably not begin for another few years, until the Pomarj is completely under their control.

The sleeper

According to *A Guide to the WORLD OF GREYHAWK Fantasy Setting*, page 49, the Drachensgrab hills are rumored to "hide the resting place of one or more powerful creatures who may someday return to life." This is indeed true.

Hidden in the sandy hills of the Pomarj lies the resting place of Krovis, a quasi-deity. Krovis has been resting in a hidden crypt for almost 2,000 years, awaiting-the-time, foretold in several ancient Flan legends, when his presence is once more required in the Flanaess. Krovis is close to the deity Trithereon ("The Summoner"), and it is his purpose to prevent the domination of any goodly portion of the Flanaess by a single individual or state. Krovis's avatar has, in the past, emerged from his crypt to bring down several empires that dominated the central regions of the Flanaess, including the dominions of the Isles of Woe and the Empire of Lum the Mad (both of which occurred more than 1,000 years ago). There are whispers from those sages that know of his existence (not many do) that the current machinations of the Great Kingdom and certain of the Princes of the Abyss could potentially awaken Krovis from his sleep.

Krovis's Avatar (Quasi-Deity)

ARMOR CLASS: -4
MOVE: 14
HIT POINTS: 98
NO. OF ATTACKS: 3
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *See below*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: 40%
SIZE: M (6'2" tall)
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
WORSHIPER'S ALIGNMENT: *Any (but few recognize and worship him)*
SYMBOL: *None*
PLANE: *Prime Material (the Flanaess of Oerth)*
PRIEST: *Nil*
WARRIOR: *15th-level ranger*
MAGE: *20th-level illusionist*
ROGUE: *7th-level thief/4th-level bard*
S 15 D 17 C 18
I 17 W 20 Ch 25

Krovis is of pure Flan stock (bronze skin, brown eyes, curly brown hair) and is known as a master military strategist as well as a skilled negotiator. His efforts in these matters will almost always be used toward the downfall of some empire or whatever else threatens to dominate the Flanaess.

Krovis lives in a secret crypt somewhere beneath the Drachensgrab Hills, magically hidden from detection, and his avatar emerges only to prevent the conquest of the Flanaess by some group. His magic resistance (40%) applies equally to all spells cast upon him, whatever their level.

In addition, Krovis is immune to all enchantment/charm spells.

Whenever Krovis's avatar awakens from his sleep, he immediately sets about raising an army, collecting high-level characters to serve as lieutenants, etc. He is usually equipped with a *bastard sword* +5, a suit of *bronze plate mail* +3, and a variety of miscellaneous magical items, including such items as are useful in fighting large battles, in scrying, or in negotiating. He rarely fights himself, except when it necessary to complete his often rather intricate and complex plans. Krovis' trademark is careful planning rather than off-the-cuff improvisation (despite his alignment, which applies more to his large-scale interpretation of the multiverse than to his short-term actions).

Krovis' disposition is usually somber and grim, and he is often seen brooding atop lonely castle walls during the night when fighting a campaign. It is only after the foe is conquered that he is jovial, but then only for a short time. He returns to his secret crypt 1-4 months after the successful conclusion of his campaign.

Adventuring in the Pomarj

There is much opportunity for adventuring in the Pomarj. Operating from bases in either the Principality of Ulek, Celene, or the southern Wild Coast region, a party of adventurers could make repeated forays into the Pomarj. It is even possible for a party to establish a secret base in either Highport, Blue, or Stoneheim.

The Pomarj presents an ideal situation for the DM. The place is riddled with old dwarven mines and towns, now inhabited by humanoids and monsters. Providing the players with a series of ancient dwarven texts, giving the locations of some of these cities, is an excellent way to keep your PCs (and your players) occupied. The Pomarj provides an excellent locale for humanoid bashing.

Also, don't forget the Slave Lords. DMs with access to the AD&D Slave Lords modules can expand them and turn them into a campaign lasting years. Rather than taking the direct route and wiping out the Slave Lords (which shouldn't be easy), you can have the party counter the ambitions of the Slave Lords over a long period of time, eventually leading up to a climactic battle, possibly involving the AD&D BATTLESYSTEM™ game.

With just a little bit of added detail, the Pomarj becomes a vibrant center of activity in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK campaign and serves as the center of an entire campaign. It has the welcome feature of having a logical reason for its concentration of humanoids and monsters, as well as a large number, of ancient dwarven ruins. What more could a DM ask for? Ω

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Back to the Age of Mammals

Giant warthogs and dwarf elephants in the scenic Cenozoic

by David Howery

The years between the extinction of the dinosaurs and the rise of human civilization are called the Cenozoic era, or the Age of Mammals. As the reptiles vanished, mammals expanded rapidly to occupy the vacant niches in the ecology. Cattle, antelope, and horses replaced the herbivorous duckbills, sauropods, and horned dinosaurs. Bears, cats, and dogs preyed on the new herbivores, since the carnivorous dinosaurs had died out. Whales, seals, and dolphins took to the seas to replace the mosasaurs and plesiosaurs. Only in the air did the mammals lose out, as birds largely replaced the pterosaurs.

The mammals' greatest asset is their flexibility. In time, they went far beyond the reptiles' capabilities and entered new environments, such as the high mountains and polar regions. Compared to dinosaurs and related creatures, mammals developed a variety of new forms very quickly.

The Cenozoic era was also the age of mammalian giants. Almost every family of land mammals existing today had giant relatives in the past. There were huge versions of bears, lions, wolves, hyenas, kangaroos, beavers, apes, horses, hippos, rhinos, tapirs, deer, swine, and even dormice. After the last Ice Age, these giants vanished suddenly and in huge numbers. The cause of this mass extinction is just as mysterious as that of the dinosaurs earlier, but the result was not as devastating; mammals are still on top today.

This article supplements an earlier one, "Into the Age of Mammals" (DRAGON® issue #137), with descriptions of ancient animals that can be used in AD&D® games. The creatures from both articles can be used in a prehistoric campaign, time-traveling adventures, or the normal campaign world. Additional statistics for prehistoric mammals and birds appear in the *Monstrous Compendium* under "Boar," "Cats, Great," "Elephant," "Hyena," "Pleistocene Animals" (in MC3, FORGOTTEN

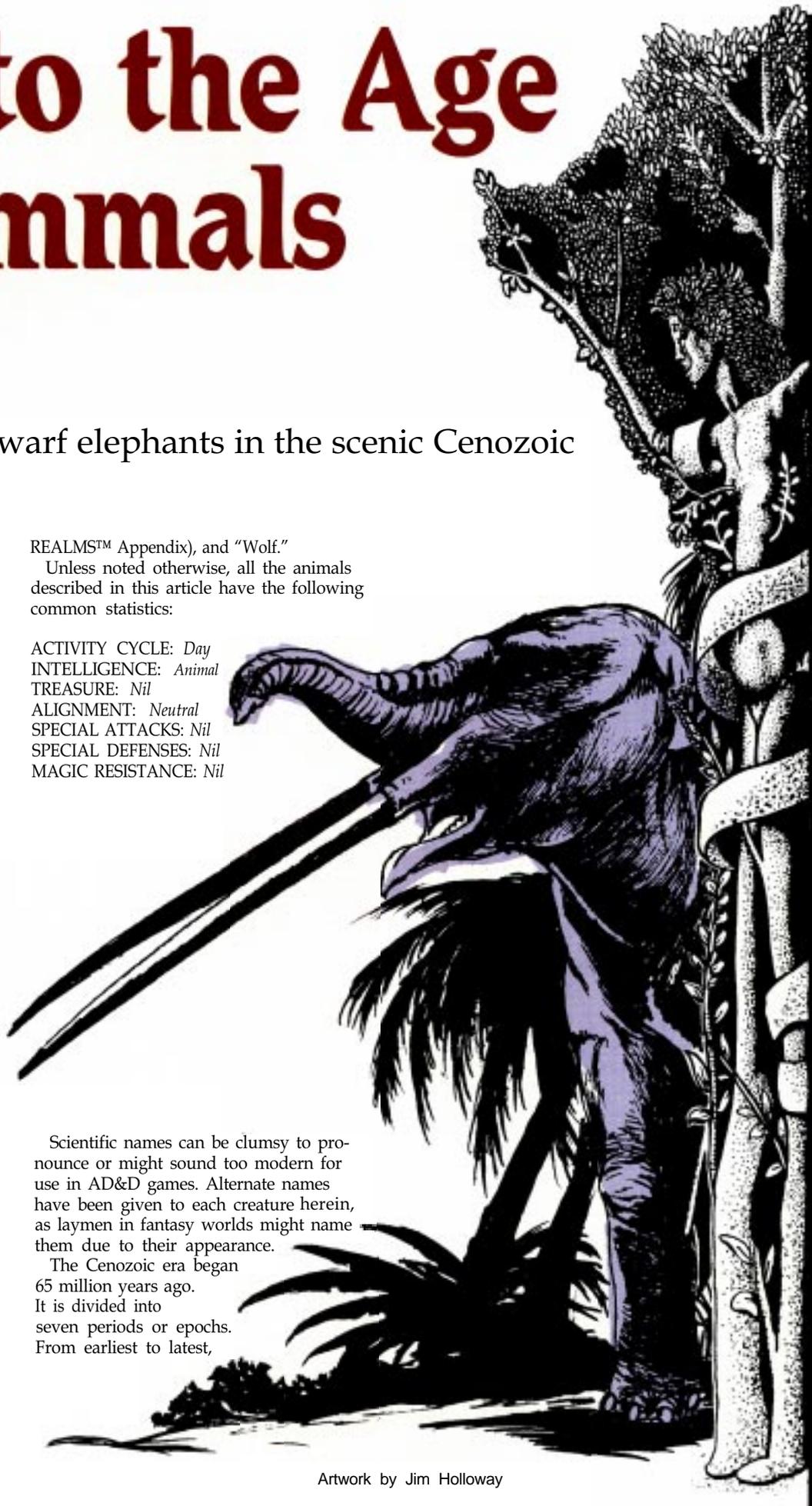
REALMS™ Appendix), and "Wolf."

Unless noted otherwise, all the animals described in this article have the following common statistics:

ACTIVITY CYCLE: *Day*
INTELLIGENCE: *Animal*
TREASURE: *Nil*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Nil*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Nil*

Scientific names can be clumsy to pronounce or might sound too modern for use in AD&D games. Alternate names have been given to each creature herein, as laymen in fantasy worlds might name them due to their appearance.

The Cenozoic era began 65 million years ago. It is divided into seven periods or epochs. From earliest to latest,



Artwork by Jim Holloway

they are: Paleocene, Eocene, Oligocene, Miocene, Pliocene, Pleistocene, and Holocene (Recent). The Pleistocene is noted for its Ice Age and the rise of early man.

It is not totally farfetched to include Cenozoic creatures in a medieval world. Some of these creatures survived into the historical world, where we barely missed seeing them. The moas, a species of giant flightless birds, survived in New Zealand until the late 1700s. Another giant, the elephant bird, may have lived into the 1600s on Madagascar. Sivatherium (see "Into the Age of Mammals") died out in the Middle East at the beginning of civilization. The giant hippopotamus died out in Egypt at the beginning of that culture. Cuvieronius, a spiral-tusked mastodont that was the last of the American elephants, vanished around A.D. 400 in Argentina. The huge cave lion, the largest feline ever, died out in the Balkans around 100 B.C. The dire wolf, cave bear, ground sloth, and Irish deer all survived the end of the Ice Age, but died out soon thereafter, some only a few thousand years ago.

Agriotherium

(savannah bear)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Savannah*

FREQUENCY: *Uncommon*

ORGANIZATION: *Solitary*

DIET: *Omnivore*

NO. APPEARING: 1-2

ARMOR CLASS: 6

MOVEMENT: 15

HIT DICE: 8

THAC0: 13

NO. OF ATTACKS: 3

DAMAGE/ATTACKS: 1-10/1-10/1-10

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Hug*

SIZE: *L (10' high)*

MORALE: *Average (8-10)*

XP VALUE: 2,000

Although bears do not now live in Africa, *Agriotherium* roamed the southern African plains of the Pleistocene. Paleontologists are not sure how it got there; no other bear fossils have been found elsewhere south of the Sahara. *Agriotherium* was a huge, primitive bear, slightly smaller than the cave bear, with a doglike head.

Combat: Like other bears, *Agriotherium* strikes with two paws and a bite. If either paw hits with an 18 or better, it also hugs for 3-18 hp damage. It fights for 2-5 rounds at 0 to -10 hp, but dies instantly from greater damage.

Habitat/Society: All bears are solitary, pairing briefly only to mate. The mother raises the cubs alone. *Agriotherium* does not hibernate, due to its warm climate. Being at the top of the food chain and having no natural enemies, this bear can bring down large game that is sick or wounded, but it usually feeds on plants and small animals.



Amphicyon

(bear dog)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Temperate plains*

FREQUENCY: *Uncommon*

ORGANIZATION: *Solitary*

DIET: *Omnivore*

NO. APPEARING: 1-2

ARMOR CLASS: 6

MOVEMENT: 15

HIT DICE: 7+7

THAC0: 13

NO. OF ATTACKS: 3

DAMAGE/ATTACKS: 2-8/2-8/1-8

SIZE: *M (6½' long)*

MORALE: *Average (8-10)*

XP VALUE: 650

Amphicyon giganteus was the largest of an early group of carnivores. It looked like a bear with a wolfish muzzle and canine tail.

Combat: *Amphicyon* is much like a bear in combat, striking with two paws and a bite (but no hug).

Habitat/Society: The bear dog is solitary and lives much like a grizzly bear. It feeds heavily on roots, wild fruit, and small animals. Unlike bears, however, it regularly attacks larger game, striking from ambush. Its prey includes the titanotheres and hornless rhinoceros. *Amphicyon* is at the top of the food chain, having no natural enemies.

Anancus

(pike-tusked elephant)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Temperate forest*

FREQUENCY: *Common*

ORGANIZATION: *Herd*

DIET: *Herbivore*

NO. APPEARING: 2-20

ARMOR CLASS: 6

MOVEMENT: 15

HIT DICE: 10+5

THAC0: 9

NO. OF ATTACKS: 4

DAMAGE/ATTACKS: 3-18/3-18/2-12/2-12

SIZE: *L (10' high)*

MORALE: *Unsteady (7)*

XP VALUE: 2,000

Anancus was an elephant adapted to woodland life. It had small ears, a small trunk, and two tremendously long (10') and straight tusks, almost as long as the animal's body, that extended straight out in front of its mouth. Each tusk is worth 200-800 gp.

Combat: *Anancus* attacks with two tusks and both front legs. However, an opponent can be attacked by one tusk or both legs, not both tusks and legs at once.

Habitat/Society: *Anancus* is adapted to temperate forests, much as modern elephants roam open tropical forests. It feeds on tree and shrub foliage. Adults have no natural enemies except disease and tree blight (which destroys its habitat). The young may fall prey to large predators.



Andrewsarchus

(giant long-jawed hyena)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Temperate plains*

FREQUENCY: *Rare*

ORGANIZATION: *Solitary*

DIET: *Carnivore*

NO. APPEARING: 1-2

ARMOR CLASS: 6

MOVEMENT: 15

HIT DICE: 9+9

THACO: 11

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

DAMAGE/ATTACKS: 3-18

SIZE: *L (13' long)*

MORALE: *Steady (11-12)*

XP VALUE: 1,400

Andrewsarchus was the largest known carnivorous land mammal. Unrelated to any modern or past carnivore, it was more closely related to the animals it fed upon than anything else. *Andrewsarchus* looked vaguely like a hyena but had a huge skull nearly 3' long. Its tail appeared feline.

Combat: *Andrewsarchus* can attack with its strong jaws, but prefers to feed on carrion.

Habitat/Society: Large carnivores are usually solitary, and *Andrewsarchus* is no exception, pairing only once a year to mate. It is mainly a scavenger but can attack large game, including *Coryphodon* and *Uintatherium* (see "Into the Age of Mammals" for details), as well as hornless rhinos and tapirs. This beast is at the top of the food chain, having no enemies.

Bears

Bears are successful carnivores of Pleistocene to Recent times. Several are described in the *Monstrous Compendiums*, but there is one glaring error. The cave bear was the largest bear ever, while the polar bear is much smaller. Thus, the statistics for the cave bear and the polar bear should be switched. The Kodiak brown bear is roughly equal to the polar bear, averaging slightly larger. The black bear statistics are fine as is and can also represent several species of tropical bears. The short-faced bear (see "Into the Age of Mammals") is an odd-looking relative from the Ice Age.

Camel, giant

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Temperate plains*

FREQUENCY: *Common*

ORGANIZATION: *Herd*

DIET: *Herbivore*

NO. APPEARING: 1-20

ARMOR CLASS: 6

MOVEMENT: 15

HIT DICE: 7

THACO: 13

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 or 2

DAMAGE/ATTACKS: 1-6 or 2-8/2-8

SIZE: *L (11' tall)*

MORALE: *Unreliable (3)*

XP VALUE: 420

The giant camel looked much like modern species, except that it did not have a

fatty hump. It was a grazer on Pleistocene plains, standing taller than the mastodons around it. If domesticated, the giant camel can carry up to 800 lbs. at full speed or 1,600 lbs. at half speed.

Combat: The giant camel attacks with a bite or two hooves, but cannot use both in one round.

Habitat/Society: Giant camels live in herds on temperate prairies, with habits similar to other herd animals. They tend to flee predators who come too close, but otherwise ignore them. As large herbivores, giant camels occupy a middle niche in the food chain. The young are taken by many carnivores, but only large carnivores can bring down an adult.

Elephant, dwarf

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Subtropical wooded islands*

FREQUENCY: *Rare*

ORGANIZATION: *Herd*

DIET: *Herbivore*

NO. APPEARING: 1-20

ARMOR CLASS: 6

MOVEMENT: 12

HIT DICE: 3

THACO: 17

NO. OF ATTACKS: 2

DAMAGE/ATTACKS: 1-6/1-6

SIZE: *S (3' high at shoulder)*

MORALE: *Unsteady (7)*

XP VALUE: 65

While giant versions of many mammals lived in the Cenozoic, this elephant went the opposite route. Inhabiting only isolated wooded islands in the Mediterranean and Java, the dwarf elephant looked much like any other elephant, just smaller.

Combat: The dwarf elephant uses only its tusks in combat, as it is too small to use its feet or trunk.

Habitat/Society: Dwarf elephants live in herds and browse on tree and shrub foliage. In spite of their size, they are used to being the largest creatures on their isolated islands, and no large predators bother them. When confronted by men and other larger creatures, they prefer to run. If sold, the tusks are worth 10-100 gp each. This elephant is the ancestor of the minimal elephants (*Monstrous Compendium*, "Mammal, Minimal").

Eucladoceros

This giant forest deer is equal to the giant stag in the MC4 *Monstrous Compendium*, DRAGONLANCE® Appendix. However, *Eucladoceros* has a huge antler array with numerous tines; its antler damage is 3-18 hp damage.

Hippopotamus, giant

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Topical lakes and rivers*

FREQUENCY: *Rare*

ORGANIZATION: *Family group*

DIET: *Herbivore*

NO. APPEARING: 1-4

ARMOR CLASS: 4

MOVEMENT: 6; *Sw 12*

HIT DICE: 10 +5

THACO: 9

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

DAMAGE/ATTACKS: 5-20 or 4-16

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Surprise*

SIZE: *L (12' long)*

MORALE: *Unsteady (7)*

XP VALUE: 2,000 (*males*), 1,400 (*females*)

This massive animal is the direct ancestor of the behemoth (AD&D 1st Edition *Monster Manual II*) but has two differences, detailed below.

Combat: First, the giant hippo has smaller tusks than the behemoth, doing only 5-20 hp damage (4-16 for females). Second, the giant hippo has eyes that stick up above the skull like periscopes. Thus, it can hide its entire body below the water, with only its eyes above the surface. This gives it a -2 modifier to surprise rolls against swimmers and boats.

Anancus



Habitat/Society: When a group is encountered, it will typically be one male (bull) and 1-3 females (cows). Only the young are subject to attack, and only by the largest predators.

DAMAGE/ATTACKS: 2-16 or 2-5
SIZE: *G (26' long)*
MORALE: *Average (8-10)*
XP VALUE: 650

Megalania was not a mammal, but a giant lizard that hunted on the Pleistocene plains of Australia. It looked much like modern monitor lizards and the Komodo dragon, having long, serrated teeth.

Combat: The giant plains lizard attacks with its bite. Like other giant lizards, the bite does double damage on an attack roll of 20. Anyone behind the lizard can be attacked by a slash of its tail, doing 2-5 hp damage and being knocked down if a dexterity check on 4d6 is failed.

Habitat/Society: *Megalania* is a solitary hunter, inactive at night and during the hottest hours of the day. It ambushes its prey from concealing grass and shrubs. As with most reptiles, the young are left to fend for themselves, receiving no care from the parents. The giant plains lizard is at the top of the food chain, having no natural enemies.

Marsupials

Pouched mammals are primitive and relatively unsuccessful, usually being confined to isolated lands (except for the opossum). Before modern placental mammals took over the world, marsupials developed into a variety of forms, some very similar to other mammals, such as lions, bears, wolves, tapirs, and even sabertooth cats. Unique marsupials included 10'-tall kangaroos and rhino-sized wombats. The DM can create a Pleistocene version of Australia with these creatures and perhaps a human aboriginal culture. Whatever the final result, this land will be an odd and unique place.

Megalania

(giant plains lizard)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Savannah*

FREQUENCY: *Rare*

ORGANIZATION: *Solitary*

DIET: *Carnivore*

NO. APPEARING: 1-4

ARMOR CLASS: 5

MOVEMENT: 15

HIT DICE: 7

THACO: 13

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

Metridiochoerus

(giant warthog)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Tropical forests*

FREQUENCY: *Uncommon*

ORGANIZATION: *Family group*

DIET: *Omnivore*

NO. APPEARING: 1-10

ARMOR CLASS: 6

MOVEMENT: 15

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HIT DICE: 5
 THACO: 15
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 2
 DAMAGE/ATTACKS: 2-12/2-12
 SIZE: M (3½' high at shoulder, 5' long)
 MORALE: Average (8-10)
 XP VALUE: 175

Metridiochoerus was a giant warthog and a contemporary of the earliest humans. It had the same squat body and long head as the modern species. Its tusks were long and sharp.

Combat: The giant warthog fights with slashes from its two sets of tusks. Females are equal to males. This swine fights for 1-3 rounds at 0 to -8 hp, but greater damage kills it instantly. (Those who do not think pigs are dangerous should rent the video *Razorback*.)

Habitat/Society: Giant warthogs live in family groups. If more than one is encountered, the largest is the male, while the others are females (50%) and young (50%). Normally rooters and browsers, warthogs also eat carrion and small animals. Giant warthogs are in the middle of the food chain. The young fall prey to many predators, while lions can take the adults.

Pelorovis
 (long-horned buffalo)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Savannah*
 FREQUENCY: *Common*

ORGANIZATION: *Herd*
 DIET: *Herbivore*
 NO. APPEARING: 4-40
 ARMOR CLASS: 6/3
 MOVEMENT: 15
 HIT DICE: 6
 THACO: 15
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 2
 DAMAGE/ATTACKS: 1 - 10/1-10
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Charge*
 SIZE: M (6' high at shoulder)
 MORALE: *Steady* (12)
 XP VALUE: 420

This was a close relative of the modern African buffalo and looked much like it. However, *Pelorovis* had huge horns, curving out to the sides and down to form a half circle. The total horn span could reach 12'.

Combat: *Pelorovis* fights with its massive horns. If it can charge at least 40', it inflicts 5-20 hp damage, automatically knocking down any human-sized opponent, and tramples for an additional 2-5 hp damage.

Habitat/Society: *Pelorovis* lives in large herds like other African herbivores. It roams the open woodland scrub, not the jungle or bare plains. The females are smaller, equal to normal buffalo (see "Animal, Herd" in the *Monstrous Compendium*). Only lions can bring down an adult. Females and young fall to hyenas, leopards, and crocodiles.

Sarkastodon
 (long-tailed bear)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Temperate plains*
 FREQUENCY: *Uncommon*
 ORGANIZATION: *Solitary*
 DIET: *Omnivore*
 NO. APPEARING: 1-2
 ARMOR CLASS: 6
 MOVEMENT: 12
 HIT DICE: 9
 THACO: 11
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 3
 DAMAGE/ATTACKS: 1-12/1-12/1-12
 SIZE: L (10' long)
 MORALE: *Elite* (14)
 XP VALUE: 2,000

This carnivore was the largest of the creodonts, an early order of carnivores that included *Hyaenodon*. *Sarkastodon* looked much like a bear with a long tail; it was larger than even the cave bear.

Combat: *Sarkastodon* fights with its paws and a bite.

Habitat/Society: *Sarkastodon* is a solitary predator, living much like a bear. Its prey includes titanotheres and rhinoceroses, but it also feeds on roots, wild fruit, and rodents. *Sarkastodon* is at the top of the food chain, having no natural enemies.

Ω

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*The following is a Common translation
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Baron Belhad Hellengrammor, received on
the 753,457th day of the life of the Empire
of Dunswhorld, and filed 10 days later
under "Unsolvable Dilemmas."*

The Ecology of the Su-Monster

Updated, revised – and ferociously evil

by Matthew Schutt



Please forgive any niceties of etiquette that may be compromised in this letter, but I am a desperate man and my desperation overrides diplomacy. As required, I will give details of my problem so that you may take into account every possibility in the solution I hope to receive. Also included with this message are the necessary and proper payments to do honor to the personage of an artifact and sage.

My dilemma: My barony has been denoted as "cursed" since its inception, and now the source of this curse is slowly destroying the fabric of this state. The barony of Hellegrammor is largely covered by a rugged, dense expanse of forest. This provides for a breed of people who are rough and well suited for the wilderness, such as trappers and hunters. Still, this race of outdoorsmen is losing a war against the wretched devils that inhabit the woods. The common name for these devils is the su-monster.

I am no naturalist, but knowledge of these creatures is common in Hellegrammor. They are the constant "black news" in every day's report, just as if we were at war or troubled with a plague. Thus, my family members have always been experts on this macabre subject, seeking some weakness to expose, some Achilles' heel to sever and end the monsters' apparent indestructibility. I will tell you what I know of them, gained by stealth and magic.

Su-monsters are filthy gray creatures, like large monkeys, quadrupedal in form, with rounded apelike muzzles and tails the length of their bodies. Adult males are, on the average, 5' long and 110-130 lbs. in weight, while females are slightly smaller and weigh 15-20 lbs. less than males. These monsters can live up to 30 years, but this is the exception rather than the norm. They are almost skeletal and always appear starved.

Their hides are normally dark gray, to blend with the dun of dawn or twilight. This color varies, from the almost black members of the deeper woods to the whitish-gray devils of underground caverns. Their faces and tails are always black, and their paws are a fierce crimson, as if stained by their bloody habits.

Despite their large size, most su-monsters are tree dwellers; even when underground, they prefer to make their lairs near the ceiling. This mode of life would not be possible without their prehensile tails, which are used as extra limbs. This tail is incredibly powerful, capable of holding the monster's own weight plus that of any large prey, in the grasp of its claws. The monster also uses its tail in balancing, maintaining posture, and even communication. The way a su-monster holds its tail indicates its emotional state and social rank in a complex set of gestures that my family and others have carefully documented.

Su-monsters live in small groups, called cadres or enclaves, though it might be

more correct to call them families, for that is what they are in a literal sense. A few families may join together to form larger groups, but the social structure within these groups is loose. Feuds over potential mates, slain prey, territory, etc., occur constantly. They have the same unruly nature as many humanoids: rule by the strongest, usually a male. These leaders never last long, and "leaderless" enclaves are common.

These unholy families are incredible hunting units. They can smell prey over a mile away, and their other senses are also acute. I've noticed that these senses grow even more sensitive in the colder months. They have had long ages to improve their ambushes, which occur primarily at dusk or daybreak. Belying their chaotic nature, su-monsters can organize a complicated ambush, perfectly timed by way of communication with certain calls and howls. These and other factors contribute to the fact that su-monsters, unlike other natural hunters, succeed in hunts more often than they fail.

The su-monster's menu is long, as they are omnivorous and are active all year round. They feed upon just about every animal in the forest, including other carnivores, insects, and humans, demi-humans, and humanoids. Their diet is balanced by grasses, lichens, and berries. Despite their looks, I have never known a su-monster to die of starvation.

Curiously, su-monsters rarely touch any prey in a lame, aged, or sick condition; nor do they touch carrion. They are neither stupid nor compassionate. Rather, I would say they prefer meals that go down fighting, boosting their appetites with combat. Then again, they may just prefer healthier meals. (This strange aversion does not extend to sleeping travelers, though.)

Su-monsters customarily devour a kill in one sitting. What cannot be eaten, they bury, often leaving no trace of their kills. Minor treasures from past kills may be found throughout the forests of my barony, just beneath the ground's surface.

Su-monsters are active sporadically, being neither truly nocturnal nor diurnal. They may sleep 3-4 hours at a time, then stay active for 6-7 hour intervals. They have no preference for day or night, and are able to see just as well at either time with enhanced night vision and color perception by day. When awake, su-monsters are incredibly aware and active—lethargy does not exist in these creatures.

These monsters breed throughout the year and have gestation periods of about 6-7 months, with infants being born singly. The parents are totally devoted to their young. The young depend on the adults for food, protection, and transportation, and stay with their mothers for at least two years. Males never abandon their mates, once chosen, and seem to share an equal burden of protecting and feeding young su-monsters. Transportation is left

to the mother; each young clings to its mother's back as she moves from tree to tree. As mammals, the young are fed by the mother's milk.

So far, I have neglected to speak of the su-monsters' deadliest talent. It is complicated to explain, and not much is known of it. This talent is a unique psionic attack, used only in the presence of others possessing psionic talents. Debates over its exact workings have been waged for years, with little progress. At first, it was thought the su-monster had a special psionic defense, reflecting back psionic attacks onto the user. This idea has been abandoned, however, as many non-psionics and psionics express this talent. What special defense mode have been attacked in this manner.

Naturalists have examined the opened brains of the few su-monster corpses acquired by royal forces, and found no abnormal organ or development to explain this psionic prowess. The brain is, however, very much like our own, being highly convoluted and nearly the same size. This worries me. Only a tiny percentage of humans have psionics, but all adult su-monsters express this talent. What special knowledge do they possess?

In any case, I am no expert on the art of mind talents, but I do suggest that no psionics be included in your solution. In the past, people have lost their psionic talents, have been enraged to insanity, and have even been killed while attempting to use psionics on su-monsters.

The su-monsters have the intelligence of primates, the cunning of canines, and the physical power of the ursids (bears). Because of its speed, strength, intelligence, high durability and adaptability, ambush techniques, and brain-talent attacks, my great-grandfather referred to the su-monster as the "perfect carnivore." Even the barbarians in the area, who call it "ape-bear" and "wolf-in-the-treetops," show the creature the appropriate amount of fear and respect.

Su-monsters have no natural enemies, and man provides them with only a minor nuisance. Long, vengeful campaigns have been held to wipe out these beasts, but those quests are still unfulfilled. I led a great many of these awful crusades personally, when I learned first-hand the ways of the su-monster. My hunting groups were plagued by an inexhaustible supply of problems, most caused by the monsters themselves.

The search for their dens was not a simple one, though they commonly take the form of hollow trees somewhere near fresh water. Also, our projects were delayed in the winter months, due to a lack of food. The su-monsters had no such trouble, as they had the simple task of seeking out and devouring small animals while they hibernated. Because of their aversion to carrion and ill or wounded animals, traps and poisons would have to be used very cleverly.

Then, of course, there is the su-monster's ambush. Our hunting group lived in a perpetual state of paranoia, with sentries staring wide-eyed into the pressingly thick foliage, trying to discern shadow from su-monster. And then instantly, without warning, a cadre of the creatures would drop from the branches, hanging by their tails, and rake at our ears and bite at our scalps. It was difficult telling who was hunting whom.

The su-monsters also made constant raids on our encampments, usually during the day while we were out "hunting" them. Posting sentries helped little. They also have opposable thumbs, and their clawed digits are so dexterous that they can undo basic latches and uncomplicated knots: Our camps were more often destroyed than set.

Su-monsters move surprisingly well on the ground, so our plan of driving them from their trees with fire was useless. They are also accomplished swimmers, as we discovered when driving the grounded creatures to the shore of a lake, where we thought we had them trapped. And when our dogs gave chase into the water, the su-monsters gleefully took the time to drown the whole pack.

I apologize for the nature lesson and the melodramatics, but I wanted to leave no room for misconceptions. Su-monsters thrive on them. The other lords, my bordering associates, believe I have a useless obsession with these monsters. They, of course, may speak freely and boldly while their lands are hilly, treeless grasslands, no place for a su-monster. They do not receive countless reports from villages and

towns about the mayhem caused by these monsters. They don't have to put up with clownish opportunists, who wish to put their greedy hands into the barony's coffers with their special ideas on the su-monster's destruction (all have failed miserably — su-monster harpoons, indeed!) They are not kept awake at night by the sounds of the monsters carrying away livestock and babes with chaotic, cheerful abandon. They did not witness the death of their eldest son, being dragged up into the dark branches while the beasts howled with what seemed to be laughter.

Su-monsters have our intelligence but not our civility. They have no cities of their own but are slowly taking over mine. Many at my court are predicting the day when the su-monsters will swing freely from the chandelier in my own dining hall. If not rushed, your aid may be too late to save my homeland, much less my sanity.

I await your assistance, and remain your respectful and obedient servant, etc.

Appendix & footnotes

The AD&D® 2nd Edition statistics for the su-monster were published in PHBR5 *The Complete Psionics Handbook*, released in February. Some basic statistics are reproduced here: IN average; TR C,Y; AL C(E); AC 6; MV 9; HD 5 +5; THAC0 15; #AT 5; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-4/1-4/2-8; SA/SD psionics, ambush (-4 to victim's surprise), females can attack hasted for 6 turns if young are attacked, males attack *hasted* for 4 turns if females are attacked; flesh is poisonous (save vs. poison or fall ill, no healing for one week); SZ M; ML 8-10; XP 650; PHBR5.

Psionics: Level 2; Dis/Sci/Dev 3/1/3(2/5); A/D PsC,MT,PB/nil (immune to attack); Score = Int; PSPs 120; powers: enhancement (no cost), psionic sense (always on, no cost); 10% chance of one extra science, two extra devotions in psychometabolic discipline. All other notes given in this article are unofficial additions that may be used by DMs as desired.

The su-monster's movement rate of 9 is the same in the trees, on the ground, and in the water. In the trees, though, it may travel at MV 15 for 10 rounds up to three times per day.

Having the constant advantage of elevation, su-monsters may be given a +2 bonus to avoid being surprised in heavily forested regions.

The su-monster's favorite attack method is hanging by its tail and attacking with all four claws, as well as its jaws. One su-monster can normally attack only one target, unless a group of targets are unmounted and crowded within a 5'-diameter area. In this upside-down fashion, the su-monster's attacks are all upon the head and upper body area. If the victim is wearing a helmet, the armor class of the head is the same as that of the body, minus any shield and dexterity bonuses for the first round of attacks. The head is AC 10 (for the first round only; dexterity modifiers apply thereafter) if no helmet is worn.

Another common attack form used by su-monsters, especially when dealing with a small number of opponents, is the use of overbearing and grappling. The creatures dive from their vantage points and attempt to knock victims down, holding them prone for other attackers. If a successful overbearing attack is made on a mounted character, the character takes 1-4 hp damage and must save vs. petrification or be stunned for one round, unable to regain his feet after being thrown. Pummeling attacks are used only rarely by su-monsters and then only with small, hard objects, like large rocks and sticks. They are medium size to determine overbearing attack modifiers. For the rules governing unarmed combat, see pages 59-60 of the 2nd Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

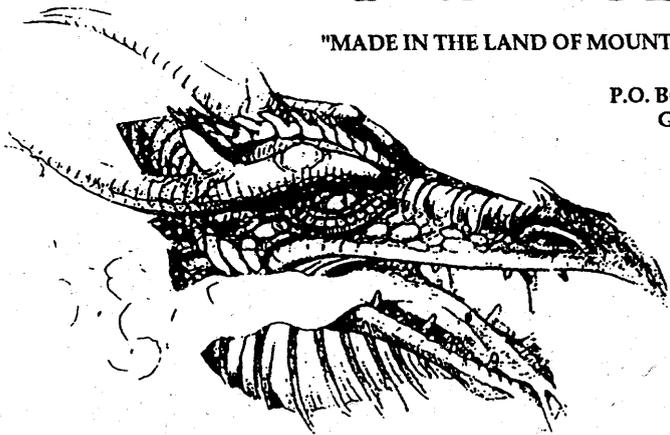
Su-monsters that have lived several generations in or near human or demi-human populations may learn to wield weapons crafted by these populations. A su-monster can use its tail with such care so as to wield either a hand axe, dagger, knife, or sap. The su-monster can attack only once with a weapon and cannot use its claw or bite attacks in rounds in which it uses a weapon. Also, su-monsters suffer a nonproficiency penalty of -3 when a weapon is used.

While they may flee combat, su-monsters do not surrender (they have no understanding of this concept), nor can they be subdued. If captured, a su-monster thrashes in its bonds until it mortally wounds itself.

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The following are some monstrous plants that DMs may use to add extra spice to AD&D® wilderness campaigns (or even city campaigns, if an NPC possesses an interest in unusual horticulture). Giant plants such as the bladderwort, butterwort, waterwheel, and rainbow plant are based on actual carnivorous plants; the sword grass, clubthorn, bloodflower, and helborn plants are fictional.

The following information is standard for all plants in this article, unless otherwise noted:

FREQUENCY: *Uncommon*
ORGANIZATION: *Solitary*
ACTIVITY CYCLE: *Day*
DIET: *Carnivore*
INTELLIGENCE: *Non*
TREASURE TYPE: *Incidental (10% chance each of J, K, M; 5% chance each of Q and one small magical item)*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
MOVEMENT: *Immobile*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Nil*

The Dragon's Bestiary

The thorns that bite, the vines that catch

Gregg Chamberlain

Artwork by Ron Wilber



Statistics for morale indicate whether a plant will continue to fight back if damaged below one-half its hit points. DMs should greatly reduce earned experience for many of these plants if they are destroyed at a distance (e.g., by a *lightning bolt* cast in the water) and with minimal casualties.

For more information on carnivorous plants, see the "Creature Catalog," in DRAGON® issue #89, and "The Ecology of Carnivorous Plants," in DRAGON issue #137.

Giant Bladderwort

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Stagnant swamps or marshes*

NO. APPEARING: 1-2

ARMOR CLASS: 6

HIT DICE: 8

THACO: 19

NO. OF ATTACKS: 11-20

DAMAGE/ATTACKS: *See text*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *See text*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *See text*

SIZE: L to G

MORALE: *Steady* (12)

XP VALUE: 4,000

The giant bladderwort is a rootless, free-floating water plant found drifting just beneath the surface of stagnant waters in deep marshes or swamps. It may grow in combination with other marsh plants in huge floating mats, which appear solid but through which even small animals quickly sink. The greenish-brown stem may grow up to 50' or more if conditions are right, and it usually has 1d10 + 10 traps, each about 4' across, attached to its feathery green branches.

Combat: The traps are translucent bladders, each containing a partial vacuum, that lie beneath the water. Due to the slightly greater pressure of the water outside the trap, the sides of each bladder are slightly concave around the middle, giving it a pinched-in look. Water is kept out by a flap at the mouth of the trap, which is sealed with a weak glue and acts as a valve. Long guide hairs and shorter trigger hairs surround the mouth of the bladder. When the trigger hairs are touched, the valve opens inward and the victim is swept along with some water into the chamber. The flap reseals and the water is absorbed (to be expelled later), restoring the partial vacuum. The triggering, activation, and closure of a trap all take place in less than a second. Digestive fluids then flood the chamber, causing 1-4 hp damage per round. Due to the very small quantity of air inside the bladder, the victim suffocates in 1-6 rounds unless assistance is given.

A small-size creature (4' or less) is wholly engulfed, while a larger one may have only part of its body caught in the bladder, which will still close and seal its flap, doing damage to the victim there-

after. In such cases, DMs should roll percentile die to determine what area of the victim's body has been caught (1-20 right arm; 21-40 left arm; 41-60 head and upper torso; 61-80 right leg; 81-100 left leg). A character caught may attempt to break free by successfully rolling his chance to bend bars against the trap's seal or by attacking the trap itself.

Each trap has 2 HD; the body of the plant has 8 HD. Damage inflicted on traps will not kill the body of the plant. Outside attacks on a trap holding prey inflict half the damage on the prey within and half on the trap itself. Victims wholly engulfed by the trap may attack only with teeth, claws, or daggers.

Habitat/Ecology: Bladderworts usually reproduce by pollination. Their purple and white flowers rise just above the water on narrow stems. During the winter, this plant forms green buds, called turions, that sink to the bottom of the marsh and rise up again in spring to develop into mature plants. If a bladder can be wholly raised above water (by itself, it weighs 50 lbs.), it collapses with a loud popping

Giant Butterwort

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Any bogs, marshes, or swamps*

NO. APPEARING: 1-6

ARMOR CLASS: 7

HIT DICE: 5

THACO: 15

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

DAMAGE/ATTACKS: *See text*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Dissolving, surprise*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*

SIZE: M

MORALE: *Average* (10)

XP VALUE: 420

The giant butterwort grows in rosettes of 2-8 6'-long oblong leaves of pale yellow-green, having a greasy appearance and a faint, funguslike scent. The leaves of this plant rest flat against the ground and are difficult to see against the terrain (-2 to victim's roll for being surprised).

Combat: Anything walking over this plant's leaves becomes stuck, due to the mucilage secreted by glands in the leaves. The plant then attempts to roll all of its leaves up and over its prey (attacking as per its hit dice), becoming a tight, leafy cocoon that fills with digestive fluid, causing 1-4 hp damage per round. Victims holding small, edged weapons when caught may cut themselves free by doing damage equal to half the total hit points of the plant. Attacks from outside inflict half the damage on the plant and half on the victim trapped inside. The mucilage may be neutralized with liberal quantities of alcohol.

Habitat/Ecology: One of the most adaptive of carnivorous plants, the giant butterwort is found from arctic to tropical

areas, favoring acidic or alkaline bogs with moist to very wet soils.

Giant Rainbow Plant

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Temperate and tropical forests and swamps*

INTELLIGENCE: *Semi*

NO. APPEARING: 1-4

ARMOR CLASS: 7

HIT DICE: 6

THACO: 15

NO. OF ATTACKS: *See text*

DAMAGE/ATTACKS: *See text*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *See text*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Dazzling*

SIZE: L

MORALE: *Elite* (13)

XP VALUE: 3,000

The giant rainbow plant has a woody, trunklike stem from which grow 5-20 branchlike leaves that each end in a knobby tip. The stem grows up to 10' in height, with each leaf half the height of the plant in length.

Combat: Like the giant sundew, this plant has developed an awareness of its surroundings and is selective about its prey. It will not attack anything under 4' in height. The leaves and the stem are coated in a thick mucilage produced by glands throughout the plant. This mucilage gives the plant a shimmering appearance during the day, and under intense light causes a nonmagical dazzling effect on those who view and fail to save vs. petrification. The effect lasts for 1-4 rounds and makes the dazzled creature -2 on attack rolls.

Also like the giant sundew, the rainbow plant strikes with its leaves, with 1-6 branches lashing out at each victim within reach and striking for 1-2 hp damage from the knob at the end of each leaf. Each leaf adheres to the object struck, reducing the victim's ability attack by -1 for every four leaves adhering to him. If the plant rolls a natural 20, the plant's leaf struck the victim's head, clogging the victim's mouth and nostrils with mucilage. Suffocation results in 1-4 rounds unless the sap is dissolved with vinegar or alcohol. The leaves also produce a mild enzyme causing 1 hp damage per round per leaf unless the leaf is broken. The chance for breaking a leaf is the same as for opening doors, checking for each leaf separately. Fiery attacks and missiles do only half damage because of the plant's mucilage covering. Blunt weapons do no damage.

Habitat/Ecology: The plant favors sandy soils under moist conditions, though it may die back during drought seasons, going into a dormant state until conditions improve. A few druids and wizards are said to keep such plants as guardians, but this is a very rare practice.

Giant Waterwheel Plant

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Temperate marshes*
NO. APPEARING: 1-2
ARMOR CLASS: 6
HIT DICE: 5 (see text)
THACO: 19
NO. OF ATTACKS: 3-12
DAMAGE/ATTACKS: See text
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Suffocation/dissolving, surprise*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: Nil
SIZE: L to H
MORALE: Average (9)
XP VALUE: 2,000

The giant waterwheel is a rootless plant that floats just below the water's surface, drifting with the currents. It has a single curved stem about 20' long; 3-12 trapping leaves, resembling open clamshells, grow in whorls about the stem like spokes on a wheel. During high summer, the plant's white flowers may be seen just above the surface of the water, borne up on narrow stems. Victims have a -2 modifier to be surprised, both underwater and on the surface, and might not detect this plant until they have blundered into it.

Small items may be found buried in the silt beneath where a giant waterwheel floats. The traps open 1-2 days after prey has been digested, allowing indigestible parts to fall out.

Combat: Anything of small size brushing against any one of the many trigger hairs inside a trap causes it to close in less than a second. The lobes of the trap then press together, forcing the victim down to the bottom of the trap and forcing the water out, creating a hermetic seal that requires a successful bend-bars chance to break. Anyone caught inside the trap must act immediately, or he will be unable to brace himself to attempt to break the seal. The trap accepts small-size creatures up to halfling size) only; larger objects are released in the next round. Each trap has 2 HD and attacks accordingly. The body of the plant has 5 HD.

When closed, the trapping leaf begins secreting digestive fluids, causing 1-4 hp damage per round. Suffocation occurs in 2-4 rounds unless the victim is able to cut free with a small hand weapon by doing damage equal to half the trap's hit points. Attacks from outside inflict half their damage on the trap itself and half on the victim inside.

Habitat/Ecology: Considered by some to be an aquatic version of the giant venus flytrap, the giant waterwheel plant grows under the surface of the water in acidic marshes, in company with reeds, rushes, and other aquatic plants. It has no natural enemies and is so subtle a predator that few communities are even aware of it. Swamp-dwelling races sometimes attempt to move these plants around their island lairs in lakes.

Sword Grass

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Shaded areas of marshes and swamps*
NO. APPEARING: 1-6
ARMOR CLASS: See text
HIT DICE: 1
THACO: 19
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1-8
DAMAGE/ATTACKS: See text
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES: See text
SIZE: S-M
MORALE: Average (9)
XP VALUE: 175

Sword grass grows in clumps of 1-6 green plants, each plant appearing to be 1-8 huge blades of grass (1'-6' tall) growing up from a central spot on the ground. The main stalk of each plant lies 1' underground and is treated as 100% concealed against anyone trying to destroy it without first digging it up.

Combat: The main body of the plant has hit points equal to the total number of blades it has. Each leaf also has 1 hp, but these hit points are in addition to those each plant already has, and destroying the leaf blades does not cause the death of the plant. Damage is incurred upon walking through patches of sword grass. The leaf blades are amazingly strong (AC 8) and extremely sharp; the body is AC 10 (AC 0 underground). Collective damage occurs as the blades slash at whatever passes through them. Damage varies according to the height of the blades (1', 1-4 hp; 2'-3', 1-6 hp; 4'-5', 1-8 hp; 6', 1-10 hp). Blades attack as 1 HD monsters.

Blunt weapons and thrusting weapons do not harm the plant. The blades may be uprooted, but if precautions are not taken to protect one's hands, maximum damage is automatic. The blades may be burned but will grow back at the rate of 6" a week.

Habitat/Ecology: Sword grass is not a true grass, but is closely related to ferns and mushrooms. It reproduces by spores, and the plant's "blades" grow from a central underground rhizome. Sword grass is a perennial; the leaf blades die during cold weather, and the root stalk goes dormant, becoming active again in spring.

The usual prey for sword grass is small animals, with the plant using blood and decaying bodies to supplement its diet. Some people grow plots of sword grass in place of moats or in addition to them; sword grass has also been used to form defensive lines around farms and military bases.

Clubthorn

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Temperate forests and swamps*
INTELLIGENCE: *Animal*
NO. APPEARING: 1-2
ARMOR CLASS: 5
MOVEMENT: 1 (see text)

HIT DICE: 6
THACO: 15
NO. OF ATTACKS: 2-8
DAMAGE/ATTACKS: See text
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES: See text
SIZE: L to H
MORALE: *Elite (14)*
XP VALUE: 975

Clubthorn is related to the holly tree and shares many of its physical characteristics. Often found growing alongside holly, clubthorn is 90% likely to be mistaken for it. Clubthorn grows to a maximum height of 20'. It acquires 1 HD each year after its first year of growth until it achieves its maximum number of hit dice. Clubthorn is an evergreen with glossy green leaves and bright red berries. The leaves are as stiff as boiled leather, with sharp spines along their serrated edges.

Combat: The tree possesses a set of special rootlike tentacles concealed just beneath the surface of the ground, extending in a radius equal to half the tree's height. When a suitable victim approaches, these roots erupt from the ground and wrap around the victim's legs, holding him fast (they are easily cut with a single successful stroke against AC 6). The tree then attacks with its limbs, doing clubbing damage according to the age of the tree: 1-4 hp ($\times 2$) for a sapling, 1-6 hp ($\times 4$) for a young tree, 1-8 hp ($\times 6$) for a mature tree, and 1-10 hp ($\times 8$) for an old tree (the number in parentheses refers to the number of attacks the plant can make per round).

Because of the hardness of its wood and bark, blunt weapons do only half damage against clubthorn. Also, like the holly, the inner bark of the tree contains a sticky substance, similar to birdlime, that causes edged weapons to become stuck when they cut into the tree. A successful roll to bend bars or lift gates is required to pull a weapon free. A vinegar solution will dissolve the gum.

Habitat/Ecology: This tree feeds on the blood and decaying bodies of its victims through its roots. It is smart enough to move about 20'-50' away from the site of a kill after it feeds, so as not to scare or warn off potential prey (it moves otherwise only to escape fire). Attempts to cultivate clubthorn as a hedge plant for defensive purposes have met with mixed success, thanks to the tree's mobility.

Bloodflower

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Temperate and subtropical marshes and jungles*
FREQUENCY: *Rare*
ACTIVITY CYCLE: *Any*
NO. APPEARING: See text
ARMOR CLASS: 10
HIT DICE: 1 hp per bloom
THACO: 20
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1



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DAMAGE/ATTACKS: *See text*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Narcotic perfume, blood drain*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*

SIZE: *S (1'-tall bush)*

MORALE: *Average (9)*

XP VALUE: *65*

The blooms of the bloodflower plant are a pale, almost translucent, white. As the plant feeds, the petals become slowly pink, eventually flushing to a deep, rich red. After four turns, digestion is completed and the plant is ready to feed again. The wild bloodflower grows in clumps of 2-5 bushlike plants.

Combat: The flower exudes a fast-acting narcotic perfume that is effective within a 5' radius. Victims must save vs. poison or fall asleep immediately. If the victim falls within 2' of the plant, the plant stretches out and attaches a set of 6" -long spiny underleaves to the victim's body. These leaves then drain blood from the victim, doing damage each round equivalent to the plant's hit points. If the victim is not removed from the vicinity of the bloodflower, he remains unconscious and the plant continues to feed until the victim dies. If removed from the area of the plant's perfume, the victim regains consciousness after one turn. Healing may occur in any normal fashion.

Habitat/Ecology: Because the plant blooms both day and night, the domestic species is sometimes used as a passive defense and may be found scattered about in flower gardens or in huge beds surrounding important buildings or cities. Individual potted flowers are kept in treasure rooms as traps for the unwary.

Helborn

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Subtropical and tropical swamps and jungles*

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*

INTELLIGENCE: *Low*

TREASURE TYPE: *Z*

ALIGNMENT: *Neutral evil*

NO. APPRARING: *1*

ARMOR CLASS: *See text*

MOVEMENT: *3*

HIT DICE: *8*

THACO: *13*

NO. OF ATTACKS: *See text*

DAMAGE/ATTACKS: *See text*

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Spell-like powers, continuous damage*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *30%*

SIZE: *L (10'-12' tall)*

MORALE: *Champion (16)*

XP VALUE: *2,000*

The helborn is a sentient, carnivorous plant with spell-like powers. It is also able to use a telepathic, nonverbal empathy within 60', allowing it to communicate with potential prey. All attempts to cultivate it have ended tragically. A mature

helborn consists of a large, 4'-long head (AC 1) formed by two lobes like hinged clamshells. The trunk (AC 3) contains the plant's stomach, and from the trunk grow from 4-12 large tendrils (AC 5).

The helborn can uproot itself, then travel short distances by using its roots to grasp objects and pull itself along. It is very cunning and uses treasure as a bribe or as a lure to trick prey into coming within reach of its tendrils. The helborn might also try to nonverbally convince its victims that it wants to help them in return for "food."

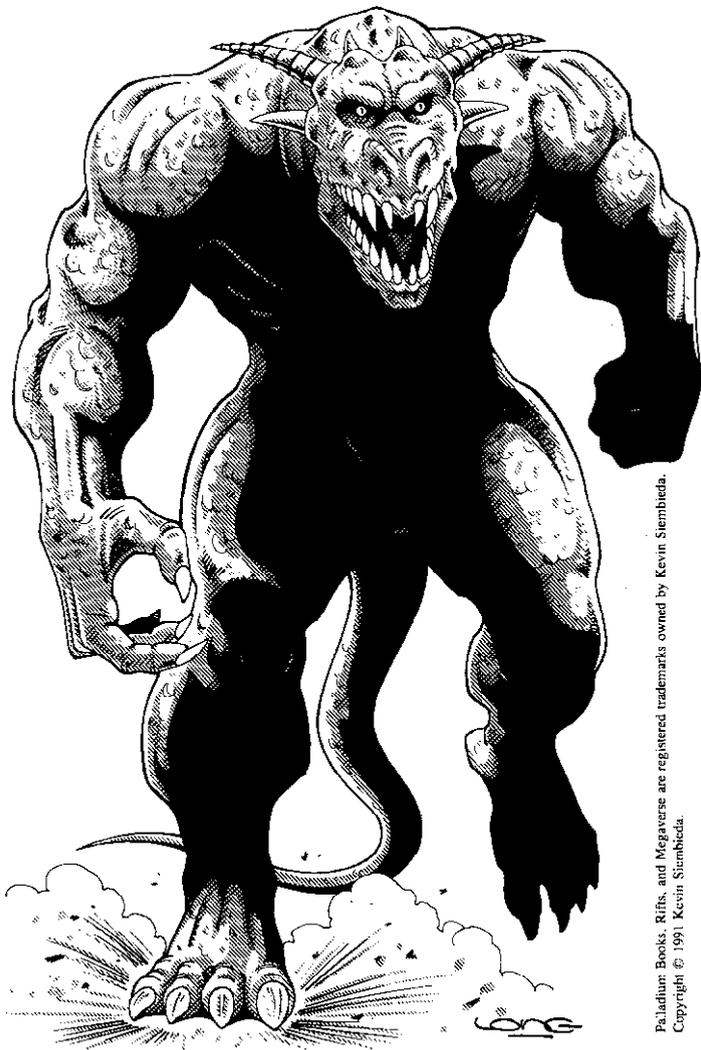
Combat: The tendrils of the helborn are each able to club for 1-6 hp damage. A tendril can also wrap around an attacker on a to-hit roll, then crush for 1-4 hp damage per round thereafter. Each AC 5 tendril can sustain 8 hp damage before severing or breaking; this does not affect the plant's own hit-point total. A tendril can lift a man-sized victim.

Prey is placed inside the helborn's mouth, where the victim is held in place by the spines lining the inside of the lobes. If the prey struggles while inside, it receives 1-3 hp damage per round from the spines. A mild enzyme causes 1 hp damage per round for four rounds after the victim enters the mouth, after which the victim is moved down into the plant's stomach where digestion continues. Inedible materials are later regurgitated and expelled. The inside of the head is AC 5, and small edged weapons (short-sword size or less) may be used to inflict one-quarter of the plant's total hit points in order to escape.

There are four stages to a helborn's growth, each stage taking a year to reach. A seedling consists of the head (6" across with 1 HD) surrounded by a rosette of leaves. The head of a *young plant* (2 HD) is 1' across, and there appear the beginnings of a trunk; some of the young plant's leaves have become tendrils capable of a weak grasp, easily broken by medium-size or larger creatures. The *subadult plant* (4 HD) stands 6'-8' high, with a head 2' across and tendrils capable of 1-3 hp clubbing or 1-2 hp crushing damage. *Mature plants* live about 11-20 years.

Helborn plants gain certain spell-like abilities as they grow (each power is usable once per day). A helborn seedling possesses *ESP*; as a young plant, it can use *hypnotism*; a subadult plant can use *domination*; and a mature helborn possesses *mass suggestion*. These powers duplicate the mages' spells of the same name cost at the 12th level.

Habitat/Ecology: Helborn are rarely encountered by those who do not dwell in swamps, and so have little effect on the world at large. They prey on all creatures except other plants, tolerating no rivals near them. In turn, they are attacked only by communal creatures who can amass the magic and military might to destroy them. ♀



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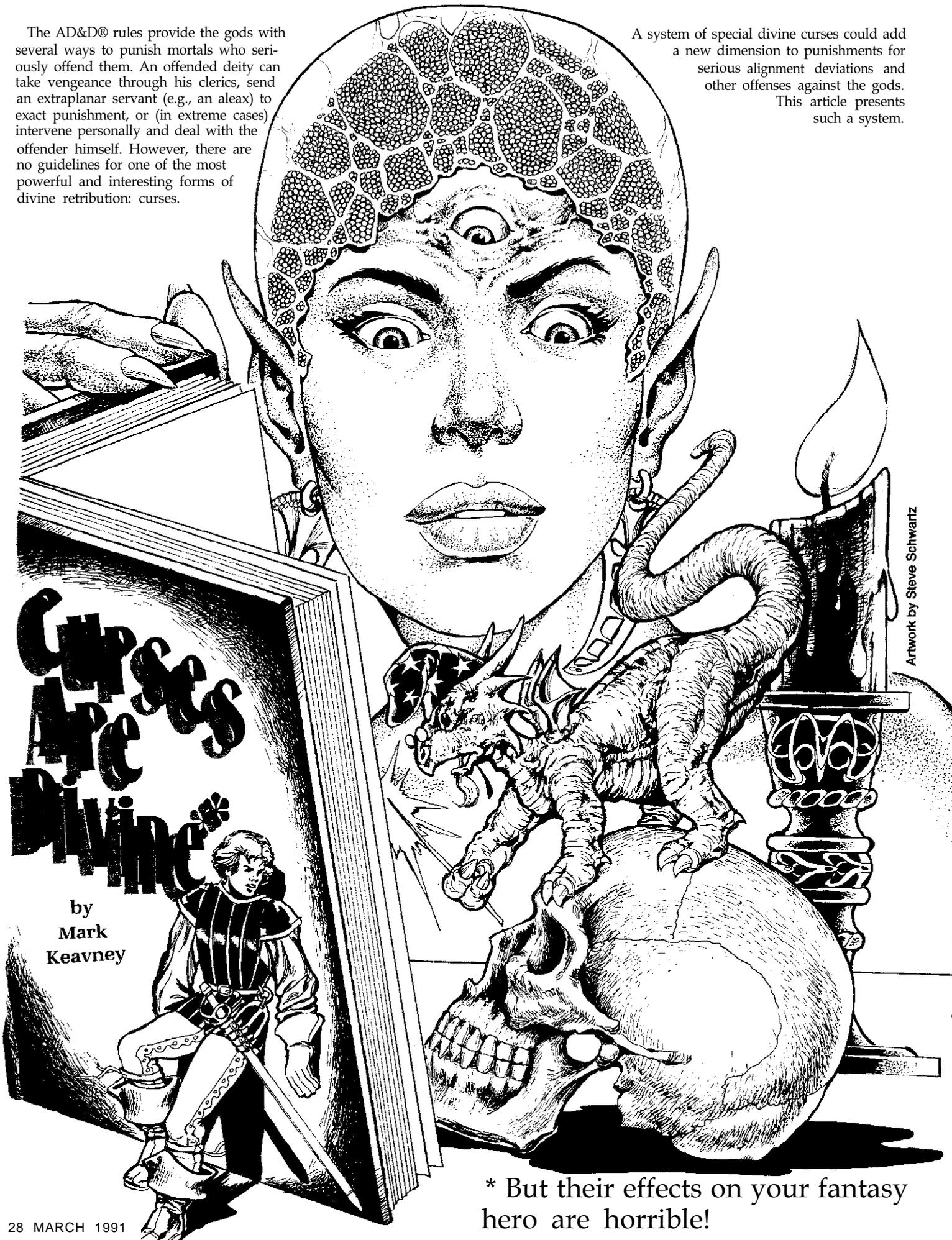
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The AD&D® rules provide the gods with several ways to punish mortals who seriously offend them. An offended deity can take vengeance through his clerics, send an extraplanar servant (e.g., an aleax) to exact punishment, or (in extreme cases) intervene personally and deal with the offender himself. However, there are no guidelines for one of the most powerful and interesting forms of divine retribution: curses.

A system of special divine curses could add a new dimension to punishments for serious alignment deviations and other offenses against the gods. This article presents such a system.



Artwork by Steve Schwartz

* But their effects on your fantasy hero are horrible!

Curse determination

There are two types of divine curses: major and minor. Major curses are generally more severe and more difficult to remove than minor curses, and are generally bestowed for more serious offenses. The base roll to determine whether a god will bestow a major or minor curse is given in Table I.

Obviously, when the base roll is unmodified there is no chance of any curse. However, the roll on Table I is modified by values rating the seriousness of the offense that the transgressor committed and by other factors that depend on the offended deity. The modifications for the offense committed are given in Table II, while the other modifications are detailed in Table III and in the explanations below.

Modifications for two or more offenses are cumulative only if they are performed together. Generally, only offenses that are part of the same specific goal are considered to be carried out together. For example, if someone killed 200 of a gods nonclerical worshipers and one of the gods high priests in one battle, he would get a cursing roll with a modifier of $(200 \div 5) + 35 = 40 + 35 = 75$. These offenses are considered to be performed together, even if they occurred at different times during the battle, because they were both part of the specific goal of winning the battle. However, if the same offender killed 200 worshipers in one battle and the high priest in another encounter, he would make two separate cursing rolls, one with a +40 modifier and the other with a +35 modifier. The offenses would be considered separate, because they are not both a part of the same specific goal of winning a battle, but only of the more general goal of winning a war. Naturally, the DM must be the final judge of when a goal is specific or general, and when offenses are performed together or separately.

The offenses in Table II are detailed as follows:

Killing a god's worshipers: There is no cursing roll for this offense if fewer than 20 worshipers are slain.

Causing worshipers to abandon worship: There is no cursing roll for this offense if fewer than 10 worshipers abandon their god. This offense includes conversions by clerics of other gods, but the negative modifications for having the support of another god are so great (see Table III) that the chance of a divine curse is very small.

Stealing: This applies only to stealing church property, not to thefts of personal property belonging to members of the church. Defrauding a church and refusing to pay for its clerical services are included in this offense. Note that unless a thief steals so much that the church is brought to financial ruin, the god will typically not consider the amount stolen as a factor in determining whether or not to curse the thief.

Insulting a god's clerics: This applies mainly to severe, usually public, insults

given to the gods clerics.

Insulting a god: This also applies mainly to severe, public insults.

Major alignment deviation: This applies to an action undertaken by the worshiper of a god when the action is opposed to the general moral outlook of that god. To classify as an alignment deviation, the action must be undertaken by a character of his own free will and must be committed while the character still worships his god. If the character renounces his god before he performs an act out of alignment, there will be no curse.

Note that to commit an alignment deviation, a character does not have to directly offend his god in the same way as most of the other offenses listed in Table II. As long as the character commits an act opposed to the alignment of his god, his god will be insulted, and there is a chance of a divine curse.

Diametrically opposed alignment deviation: All of the restrictions detailed above for a major alignment deviation also apply here. In addition, the deviation from alignment must be diametrically opposed to the alignment of the character's god (a lawful-good act by the worshiper of a chaotic-evil god, a lawful-evil act by the worshiper of a chaotic-good god, etc.). Obviously, no diametrically opposed alignment deviation can occur when a character's god has an alignment that has some neutral component to his ethics or morals.

Acts opposed by a god that are performed in that god's name: This refers to acts opposed to a gods will that are carried out not by his followers, but that are done in his name by the followers of another god. This includes impersonation of a gods priests for purposes that are unworthy (according to the offended god). Treat this offense as an alignment deviation for purposes of curse determination, even if the offender is not actually deviating from his alignment.

Killing a high priest: This offense is used instead of the simple offense of killing a gods clerical worshipers in cases where a high priest is slain. The curse can befall either the person who actually carried out the killing or the person who ordered it, whomever the god believes is most responsible.

Killing an extraplanar servant: This applies only to the slaying of an extraplanar servant who is on the Prime Material plane on behalf of its deity.

Stealing a sacred item: This applies to the theft from a church of a powerful magical item sacred to the church's god. Usually items of this sort are very rare or even unique, and they are highly prized and well guarded by the gods clerics. This offense is cumulative with the offense of stealing if more than just the sacred item is stolen from the church.

Ineffective impersonation of a god: An impersonation of a god is considered ineffective if most onlookers do not believe it, even if it accomplishes the ends of the

impersonator. Note that this offense and that of the effective impersonation of a god apply only to impersonations of the god himself. Falsely claiming to be sent by a god or to be a servant of a god is an act opposed by a god but performed in the gods name.

Destroying a sacred item: This applies to the destruction of any powerful, sacred magical item, whether or not the item was in the possession of its church at the time of its destruction.

Defiling consecrated ground: This offense includes the physical destruction of any temple resting on consecrated ground (as most temples do), even if the ground itself is not actually defiled or deconsecrated.

Effective impersonation of a god: An impersonation is effective if it is believed by onlookers, even if it does not accomplish the goals of the impersonator.

These offenses are only some of the possible ways in which a gods anger can be aroused. There are far too many offenses to list all the possibilities in one table. Let your common sense guide you in deciding when a cursing roll should be made and what the precise modifications for the offenses should be.

Even if an offense is noted in Table II, the modifications given there may be adjusted depending on several factors. Some of these additional modifications are given in Table III. All modifications in Table III are cumulative with each other and with those in Table II.

In Table III, note the large penalties to the cursing roll when the offender has the protection or encouragement of another god. In such cases, the offended god considers the supporting god, rather than the offender, to be responsible for the offense. The offended god typically responds to such an offense with an attack by his worshipers upon any available worshipers of the offending god. This is one reason why many clerics are hesitant about committing or encouraging a "curseable" offense against another deity.

In addition to the modifications listed in Tables II and III, the cursing roll may be adjusted in other ways, depending on the particular deity against whom the offense is committed. The first of these modifications is due to the general personality and "portfolio" of the offended god. A god of revenge would be much more likely to bestow a curse than other gods, while a god of mercy would be less likely to do so. Naturally, there are too many deities to list all of the modifiers here, but the DM should be able to tell if a given deity is especially vengeful or merciful, and should adjust the cursing roll to match.

The second modification that depends on the identity of the offended god is a modification based on the offense committed. The numbers given in Table II do not hold in all cases for all deities; some gods might consider an offense more worthy of their divine anger than the numbers indi-

cate, while other gods might consider the same offense less worthy. Again, there are too many offenses and too many deities to give every possible modification. However, a general rule to follow is this: Whenever an offense conflicts with a god's sphere of influence, the cursing roll should be adjusted upward, and whenever an offense is in harmony with a god's sphere of influence, the roll should be adjusted downward. A god of wealth would probably be very likely to curse a thief who steals from his temples, and the DM should adjust the cursing roll upward for such thieves. On the other hand, someone who steals from the church of a god of thieves might have the cursing roll modified downward, probably by so much so that there would be no chance at all of attracting a divine curse. Conceivably, a god of death would be unlikely to curse an offender who killed a large number of his worshipers, while a god of longevity would be very likely to do so. The actual amounts of adjustment in these cases must be decided by the DM according to the circumstances of each situation; a good rule of thumb is that the upward modifications should be between +5 and +30, and the downward modifications between -5 and -30.

There is one final modification that can be made to the cursing roll. A deity might be more or less angered by an offense depending on the way in which the offense was carried out. Again, the same general rule applies as in the modifications based on the offense itself. If an act is carried out in a way that is in harmony with the god's sphere of influence, it is less likely to draw a curse; if an act is carried out in a way that is in conflict with the god's sphere of influence, it is more likely to draw a curse. For example, a god of war would be more likely to curse an offender who killed the war-gods high priest while the latter was asleep than if the offender had killed the high priest in battle. On the other hand, a god of assassins would be less likely to curse an offender who did the same thing. Again, the amounts of these adjustments are left to the DM to decide.

Once all of the appropriate adjustments to the cursing roll have been determined, roll the percentile dice and consult Table I to find out if the offended deity bestows a divine curse. If a god does not cast a divine curse on a transgressor, that does not mean that the god has forgiven or overlooked the offense. It simply means that he has decided not to punish the offense in this particular way. The offended god's clerics and worshipers remain the main instrument of the gods will on the Prime Material plane, and the god will not hesitate to use them to attack or punish those who have angered him.

Divine curses fall only upon single individuals. If an offense committed by a group draws a divine curse, generally the group's leader will receive the curse. If there is no leader, the angered god will

either curse the strongest character or simply choose a character at random.

Curse bestowal

Once it has been determined that a curse is cast, the curse is delivered to the transgressor within 24 hours of the offense. Usually, the nearest high priest of the offended god delivers the curse; if this would be dangerous or impossible for the high priest, the god can send an extraplanar servant to deliver the curse, or the god can deliver the curse himself, either in his avatar form or in the guise of one of his high priests or other being. Minor curses are never delivered by a god personally.

In any case, the agent who delivers the curse need only name the cursing god and the means by which the curse can be removed (see "Curse removal"), and the curse takes effect. There is, obviously, no saving throw against a curse.

Curse selection

Tables IV and V give some possible major and minor divine curses, with a random method of selecting a curse. In some cases, the random-roll results should be modified or even ignored. Some gods have their own favorite curses, and other gods have curses that they will avoid casting at all costs. The cursing god is more likely to cast a curse that is in harmony with his sphere of influence, and less likely to cast a curse that is opposed to his sphere of influence. Thus, a god of healing would never bestow the *curse of contagious disease*, but a god of sickness would probably bestow it in favor of any major curse. Similarly, a god of the sea would never cast the *curse of fire*, but a god of volcanoes and fire would cast it more often than any other minor curse.

Major curse explanations

Curse of undignified transformations: Every turn, there is a 5% chance that the cursed character changes into an animal and remains that way for 1-4 hours. In his transformed state, the cursed character has his normal intelligence and alignment, but cannot speak; all other abilities, including hit points, armor class, movement rate, and hit probability, are as per the animal into which he is changed. Animal forms include small mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and large but normal insects, with statistics similar to those for small and minimal mammals (as per the *Monstrous Compendium*).

A cursed character never changes into an animal form while he is in the form of another—i.e., the duration of one change must expire before there can be another.

Curse of ambrosial odor: The cursed character exudes a very powerful odor that smells like whatever food the creature smelling it most desires. The odor can be smelled up to one-quarter mile away. At the very least (depending on the number of monsters around), this odor triples

wandering monster encounter chances. All unintelligent monsters automatically attack the cursed character, and even some intelligent ones (like dragons) look for every opportunity to kill and eat the unfortunate.

Curse of the rain cloud: A permanent *cloudburst* 10' high and 30' in diameter surrounds the cursed character and follows him wherever he goes until the curse is removed. He (and everyone with him) is soaked with cold rain and is struck by tiny bolts of lightning for 1 hp damage once per hour.

Curse of gradual weakness: The cursed character loses one point from each ability score and 3 hp per week until he reaches zero in any ability score or in hit points, whereupon he dies. If the cursed character is *raised* after dying in this way, his hit points and ability scores are the same as they were one week before he died, and the curse is still in effect. If the curse is removed, hit points and ability scores return to normal at the rate of one point in each ability and 3 hp per day. Losses of hit points and ability scores through this curse are permanent until the curse is removed—i.e., such a loss cannot be stopped or reversed by spells, rest, or any other means.

Curse of hostile appearance: The cursed character assumes the appearance and voice of the viewer's or listener's worst enemy. Although undead and semi-, animal, or nonintelligent creatures are not affected by this illusion, all other creatures are affected, including members of the cursed character's party. Obviously, reactions will be very hostile. Although the illusion cannot be dispelled, and any attempt to disguise the cursed character's voice or face has no effect on the illusion, the illusion can be hidden if the cursed character totally masks his face and is silent.

Curse of the pest: A highly sophisticated illusion of an unarmed person, with full visual, auditory, and tactile components, appears next to the cursed character. The illusory person cannot be made invisible, silenced, or dispelled in any way. He always stays near the cursed character, no matter how fast or through what environment the character moves, and is unaffected by any attacks or spells. There is simply no way to get rid of him, short of removing the curse.

The goal of this person's "existence" is to be an absolute nuisance to the cursed character. He will wake the cursed character at night, confuse combat when monsters are attacking, sing loudly when the character is trying to sneak around, insult innkeepers where the cursed character is staying, and otherwise make himself a royal pain. The illusory being never harms the cursed character directly, as by pushing him off a cliff.

Curse of slowness: The cursed character is *slowed*, as the spell, until the curse is removed.

Curse of contagious disease: The cursed character becomes the carrier of an extremely contagious disease, though he himself is immune. Any humanoid within 20' of the cursed character must make a saving throw vs. poison at -3 every five melee rounds, or else contract the disease.

Specific effects of the disease should be detailed by the DM to fit the circumstances. The disease might be fatal or simply uncomfortable and annoying (like a severe head cold). The effects of the disease begin one turn after it is contracted, and anyone who has the disease transmits it as easily as the cursed character. Victims of the disease can be cured by the spell *cure disease*, but the cursed character remains a carrier until the curse is removed.

Curse of aimless wandering: The cursed character is affected by a *lose the path* spell for the duration of the curse.

Curse of insanity: The cursed character becomes insane. Roll or choose from the insanity table in the 1st Edition DMG (page 83-84), or from the article "Methods to Your Madness" in DRAGON® issue 138, to determine what insanity affects the character. The insanity cannot be cured except by removing the curse.

Curse of incompetence: The cursed character's prime attribute is lowered to 3 and remains there until the curse is removed.

Curse of smallness: The cursed character shrinks 1" per day in height (and changes proportionally in width and weight) until the curse is removed. When the curse is removed, the character grows to normal size at 1" per hour. If the cursed character's height ever goes below 2", he dies and remain dead at the same size (2" or less). A character who dies in this way cannot be *raised* until the curse is removed.

Curse of excessive sleep: The cursed character contracts a very severe case of narcolepsy. Each round that the character engages in strenuous activity (such as running, spell-casting, fighting, etc.), there is a 30% chance that he falls asleep. The sleep lasts for 3-18 turns or until the character is awakened (by noise, shaking, attacks, etc.).

Curse of fumbling: Each round that the character engages in strenuous activity, there is a 30% chance that he fails miserably at whatever he is trying to do. If he runs, he falls; if he casts a spell, he miscasts; if he fights, he drops his weapon; etc. The character can successfully accomplish normal activities such as walking, eating, and talking, however.

Curse of wealth: The cursed character's armor, weapons, and clothing all appear extremely fine and luxurious. The character seems to droop with expensive jewelry, and his pouches seem to burst with gold and other treasure. Anything else that the character carries or wears appears to be the finest and most expensive possible—obviously attracting thieves, monsters,

jealous NPCs, etc.

If any of these items ever leave the character's possession, the illusion fades and the item appears as it actually is (nonexistent gold or jewelry simply vanish in smoke). However, the illusion around the character does not diminish. Illusory items stolen from the character appear back on his person; emptied or stolen pouches appear full and in the character's possession, and the character always appears clothed in the finest garments, even when stripped naked.

The illusion has full visual, olfactory, auditory, and tactile components, and it cannot be masked or dispelled by disbelief or by any other method while the curse is in effect. However, the illusion does not confer any real benefits to the character. Illusory clothing does not confer protection from the cold, nor does magical-seeming armor afford any better protection from attack.

Curse of paralysis: The character is paralyzed from the waist down and cannot walk or stand. The character can sit on the ground or on a mount, and from these positions he can fight or cast spells, but he cannot move faster than crawling on the ground (MV 1).

Curse of anger: Whenever a potential enemy comes in sight of the cursed character or is in combat with the character's party, the character goes berserk. He screams a war cry and charges into battle, attacking wildly until all enemies are dead. The character attacks the closest enemies first, always with melee weapons. He has no concept of stealth, planning, or retreat while in this state. Any attempt to direct or stop the character's attack by a member of the cursed character's party only causes the cursed character to attack the one restraining him.

Curse of fear: Whenever the cursed character or his party engages any creature in combat, the cursed character experiences sudden, total panic. He screams loudly and moves away at maximum speed. The character stops only 2-12 rounds after he is out of sight of the creature that caused the fear. Successfully restraining or gagging the character prevents him from running away or screaming.

Curse of hunger: The character is cursed with a tremendous appetite. He must consume the equivalent in food weight of five cows per day, or lose 1 hp per cow under five that he consumes. The lost hit points cannot be cured by rest or *cure wounds* spells; they can only be restored if the character eats extra food sometime in the future (one cow per hit point) to compensate for what he didn't eat earlier. The practical effect of this curse is to prevent him from adventuring, as he is always eating; food costs will run as high as 1d100 + 100 gp per day.

Curse of rapid aging: The cursed character begins aging at an accelerated rate. If the character is human, half-orc, or half-

ling, he ages one year for each week that passes; a half-elf ages two years each week; dwarves and gnomes age one year each day; and elves age two years each day. The effects of the aging can be temporarily reversed by *potions of longevity* or by similar magic.

Minor curse explanations

Curse of truth: The character cannot tell a lie. If he attempts to speak anything but the literal truth, no sound comes out of his mouth. The character can still give off false nonverbal cues, such as shaking or nodding his head, except in more powerful versions of this curse.

Curse of falsehood: The character cannot tell the literal truth. If he attempts to speak anything but a lie, no sound comes out of his mouth. It is possible for a character to pointedly tell lies in a way that his friends will correctly interpret to get the truth ("He said that five orcs were not ahead of us, so there must be five orcs over there."), but confusion may still result if allies forget about the constant lying or if the liar cannot get across all of the needed information in his twisted speech.

Curse of miscasting: Every spell that the cursed character casts has a 10% chance of failing, and an additional 10% chance of backfiring. Failed spells simply have no effect, while spells that backfire affect the wrong person, do the opposite of what they were intended to do, etc., according to the DM's discretion. In either case, the character still loses the spell. This curse is obviously only effective when bestowed on spell-casting characters. More powerful versions of this spell have increased chances of failure and backfiring.

Curse of unfriendliness to animals: All animals fear or hate the cursed character. Small animals such as rats, dogs, and cats attempt to flee if the character comes within 20' of them. Larger animals hate the cursed character and attack him if he comes within 20'.

Curse of amnesia: The character's memory for new things is damaged. Until the curse is removed, the character is unable to learn or cast any new spells (though he can still memorize the spells he already knows). He is unable to learn any new languages or proficiencies, and he earns no experience.

Curse of hair: The character's body hair grows at 1" per turn until the curse is removed. The hair can, of course, be cut.

Curse of heat: All metal carried or worn by the cursed character heats up as though it were the object of a permanent *heat metal* spell. The metal stays at its hottest point (the fourth round of a *heat metal* spell) until it is no longer in the cursed character's possession, when it cools down as though the *heat metal* spell were ending. The character is, unfortunately, not immune to heat, and he does take normal damage from it.

Curse of lucklessness: The cursed character has a -4 on all saving throws.

Curse of light: The cursed character's nose becomes the center of a powerful *continual light* spell. Light equal to broad daylight goes out from his nose in all directions to a 60' radius. The character has a penalty of -4 to hit and on saving throws, and +4 on armor class. However, unlike a *continual light* spell, covering the center of the light does not stop the light, which shines through anything.

Curse of tracks: Wherever the character walks, he leaves behind large, black footprints which, though they can be covered, are impossible to erase or wash away. The character will leave the tracks as long as his feet or shoes touch the ground. If the character is riding, flying, being carried, etc., there will be no tracks.

Curse of finding: Anyone using a *crystal ball* or a *scrying spell* (*magic font*, *magic mirror*, or *reflecting pool*) in an attempt to locate the cursed character will automatically be successful and can scry for double the time normally allowable.

Curse of gravity: The cursed character falls at three times normal velocity and takes triple damage from all falls.

Curse of wounds: The cursed character's wounds do not heal easily. These wounds heal from rest and time at only half the normal rate, and any *cure wounds* spells cast on them are only half as effective as normal (e.g., half as many hit points restored).

Curse of fire: The character becomes extremely sensitive to fire and heat. He finds room temperature uncomfortably hot, takes + 1 hp per hit die of damage on any fire- or heat-based attack, and saves vs. fire and heat at -4. This curse does not confer any special resistance to cold.

Curse of noise: Unstoppable noise continually follows the cursed character around. The noise is about as loud as normal conversation. The cursing god chooses exactly what the noise is; some possibilities are voices singing the praises of the cursing god, voices describing the sins of the cursed character, or some sound sacred to the cursing god.

Curse removal

Divine curses can be removed only by the power of a god. The deliverer of the curse always gives the cursed character some task that he must accomplish or gift that he must donate in order for the god to remove the curse. This could involve, for example, the recovery of some lost item holy to that god or the donation of large amounts of gold and jewels to that god's religion. Whatever the task or donation, it is always both beneficial to the cursing god and his religion, and difficult or costly for the cursed character. The means of curse removal is difficult and costly if the curse is major, and less so if the curse is minor. If the curse was brought about by a breach of alignment, the character, in addition to performing this task, must be properly penitent and humble before the curse is removed.

In any case, if the cursed character accomplishes what is asked of him, a special religious ceremony, presided over by a high priest, is performed. At this ceremony, the high priest casts the spells *atonement* and *remove curse* consecutively. If the victim has truly performed the acts requested, the curse is lifted.

If the character has a major curse, the clerics of the offended god interact with the cursed character only by performing this ceremony. Until the victim has fulfilled the demands of the cursing god, they leave him totally alone, allowing him to stand as an example of their gods anger.

If the character is cursed with a minor curse, the reactions of the offended god's clergy depend upon the offense and the circumstances. If the curse was brought about by an alignment deviation, the god's clerics shun the cursed character for the duration of the curse, but do not seek to harm him. If the curse was brought about by a worse offense, the clerics may attempt to punish or kill the cursed character, either while he is cursed or even after the curse is removed (in severe cases). However, the clerics of the cursing god always consent to peacefully perform the ceremony that lifts the curse, if the cursed character has fulfilled the conditions of curse removal.

In very rare cases of extreme divine displeasure, the offended god could require a repeating remedy for the curse. In such a case, the cursed character can remove the curse normally, but must then perform another task set by the god every year thereafter or the curse will automatically return.

If the cursed character does not worship the god who cursed him (i.e., if the curse was not brought about by an alignment deviation), the cursed character can petition his own god to remove the curse. The cursed character's god will consider this only if the offense against the cursing god was in keeping with the general ethics and morals of the character's god. If it was, then the clerics of his god will name a certain task to be performed or donation to be given for their religion. Again, the means of removal will be more difficult if the curse is major, and less difficult if the curse is minor. In either case, if the char-

**Table I
Chances of Curse Bestowal**

1d100	Result
01-100	No curse
101-125	Minor curse bestowed
126+	Major curse bestowed

**Table II
Offense-Related Modifiers To Cursing Roll**

Killing a god's worshipers (20 minimum): + 1 per five nonclerics; + 1 per two clerics
Causing a gods worshipers (10 minimum) to abandon the worship of the god: + 2 per five nonclerics; + 1 per cleric
Stealing from a gods church: +5
Mocking or insulting a gods cleric: +5
Major alignment deviation: + 15
Diametrically opposed alignment deviation: + 25
Performing acts opposed by a god in the god's name: As per following.
Killing one of a god's high priests: + 35
Killing one of a gods extraplanar servants: +40
Stealing a powerful sacred item from a god's church: +40
Ineffectively impersonating a god: +45
Destroying a powerful sacred item: + 55
Defiling consecrated ground: + 55
Effectively impersonating a god: + 55

**Table III
Additional Modifiers To Cursing Roll**

Each previous warning to the offender from the god or religion: +3
Each previous cursing roll made by the offender for an offense against his deity: +5
Offended god is of evil alignment: +5
Offended god is of good alignment: -5
Each cleric of another god who helped the offender commit the offense: -10
Offender is a cleric of another god: -55
Offender was commanded or strongly encouraged to commit the offense by the clerics of another god: -55

acter's god or his clerics were involved in the offense that brought about the curse, the task or donation will be considerably less.

If the cursed character then completes the task assigned by his god, the clerics of his god lift the curse. Until that time, the clerics offer the character little help in accomplishing his task or even in surviving. Their attitude is that the cursed character alone has offended the cursing god, and that he alone should pay the price of that god's wrath.

A cursed character cannot convert to another religion while he is cursed. No religion will accept him, believing (understandably enough) that he isn't truly interested in their god but is only looking for an easier way to remove the curse.

Table IV
Major Curses

1d100	Major curse
01-05	Curse of undignified transformations
06-14	Curse of ambrosial odor
15-23	Curse of the rain cloud
24-25	Curse of gradual weakness
26-33	Curse of hostile appearance
34-43	Curse of the pest
44-47	Curse of slowness
48-55	Curse of contagious disease
56-63	Curse of aimless wandering
64-69	Curse of insanity
70-71	Curse of incompetence
72-73	Curse of smallness
74-75	Curse of excessive sleep
76-77	Curse of fumbling
78-83	Curse of wealth
84-86	Curse of paralysis
87-89	Curse of anger
90-92	Curse of fear
93-97	Curse of hunger
98-00	Curse of rapid aging

Table V
Minor Curses

1d100	Minor curse
01-06	Curse of truth
07-12	Curse of falsehood
13-16	Curse of miscasting
17-23	Curse of unfriendliness to animals
24-28	Curse of amnesia
29-37	Curse of hair
38-43	Curse of heat
44-46	Curse of lucklessness
47-53	Curse of light
54-64	Curse of tracks
65-67	Curse of finding
68-76	Curse of gravity
77-86	Curse of wounds
87-91	Curse of fire
92-00	Curse of noise

Except for the methods described above, there is no other way to lift a divine curse. Even a *wish* spell cannot remove this type of curse, although at the DM's discretion some spells might be effective in temporarily negating the effects of some divine curses. The death and subsequent *resurrection* or *reincarnation* of a divinely cursed character will not remove the divine curse.

Sample curses

1. Tabbur is a worshiper of Forseti, the lawful-good Norse god of justice. At one time he faithfully followed Forseti's laws, but for the past two nights he has become of a vigilante. He has taken to masquerading as a beggar and waiting in dark alleys until "suspicious" characters approach him. Tabbur then draws his sword and attacks them, yelling, "Feel the justice of Forseti!" So far he has been fortunate enough to escape with only warnings about his behavior. The first warning was delivered by the clerics of Forseti, and the second came in a dream sent by Forseti himself. Tabbur has listened to neither warning.

On the third night that Tabbur is masquerading as a beggar, two men in dark cloaks approach him. Tabbur jumps up and attacks in the name of Forseti, and wounds both of the men before they run off. As it happens, one of the men was a faithful worshiper of Forseti, and the other was a cleric of Odin.

Forseti is a lawful-good god, and Tabbur's action was chaotic and evil. Therefore, the modification due to the offense is +25 (diametrically opposed alignment deviation). The DM adds +6 because Tabbur has been warned twice before, and decides that Forseti's preoccupation with justice make him slightly more likely to curse than most good gods. Thus the DM adds +5 for Forseti's personality. Since Forseti is good, however, the DM also subtracts 5. That makes the total modification to the cursing roll $25+6+5-5=31$. The DM rolls a 71, and $71+31=102$, so Forseti casts a minor curse on Tabbur.

The DM rolls the *curse of falsehood*. However, this curse does not fit in well with Forseti's nature, and it probably wouldn't affect Tabbur much anyway. So the DM rolls again and gets the *curse of noise*. Forseti decides to surround Tabbur with voices saying, "You have sinned against Forseti!" over and over again.

The high priest of Forseti in the city finds Tabbur and curses him, saying that he will remain cursed until he slays a brown bear that has been terrorizing some inhabitants of a southern village (many of whom worship Forseti), then donates a third of his worldly possessions to the temple of Forseti and a sixth to the temple of Odin.

After the curse is bestowed, Tabbur realizes the error of his ways and travels south to fulfill his quest. After some trou-

ble, he succeeds in slaying the bear and returns to the city to make the necessary donations. Judging Tabbur to be properly penitent, the high priest performs the ceremony that lifts the curse. Tabbur, poorer but with a stronger faith, travels closely to the path of Forseti for the rest of his life.

2. A chaotic-evil thief named Stilleth breaks into the temple of Athena in a large city. In addition to looting the main treasure room of the temple, Stilleth kills one of the high priests in his sleep and takes the priest's personal treasure. To prevent the clerics of Athena from raising the high priest, Stilleth cuts off the priest's head and takes it with him, making off into the night unseen.

There is a modification to the cursing roll of +35 for killing the high priest, and +5 for stealing from the temple. Since the actions were performed together, the modifications are cumulative. In addition, the DM adds 15 because the way in which the high priest was killed is dramatically opposed to Athena's emphasis on combat and fairness, and subtracts 5 because Athena is good. Stilleth worships Shargaas, the orcsish god of thieves and darkness, but he was not commanded nor encouraged by that deity to loot Athena's temple. Therefore, Stilleth gains no subtraction for divine assistance. The total modification is $35+5+15-5=50$. The DM rolls an 82, and $82+50=132$, so Athena casts a major curse on Stilleth.

Athena rolls the *curse of hostile appearance*, making Stilleth assume the appearance of the viewer's worst enemy. She bestows the curse by sending a messenger down from Olympus, *polymorphed* into the form of the slain high priest. The "priest" tells Stilleth that he is cursed by Athena until he kills his guildmaster (who ordered Stilleth to loot the temple), burns down the main hall where the guild is located, and returns everything he stole from the high priest and the temple, including the high priest's head.

Angry citizens soon chase Stilleth out of the city, and he flees to the outskirts of the kingdom, where he seeks out the clerics of Shargaas. After finally convincing them of who he is and what has happened to him, Stilleth is told that Shargaas will lift the curse if Stilleth donates all of the treasure he stole from the temple of Athena to the temple of Shargaas and also steals a *ring of air elemental command* that once belonged to the temple of Shargaas, but now belongs to a human warlord who lives in a castle nearby. His face masked by bandages, Stilleth undertakes the quest and succeeds in stealing the ring. Shargaas lifts the curse, and Stilleth returns to his profession, very wary of the power of Athena.

Ω

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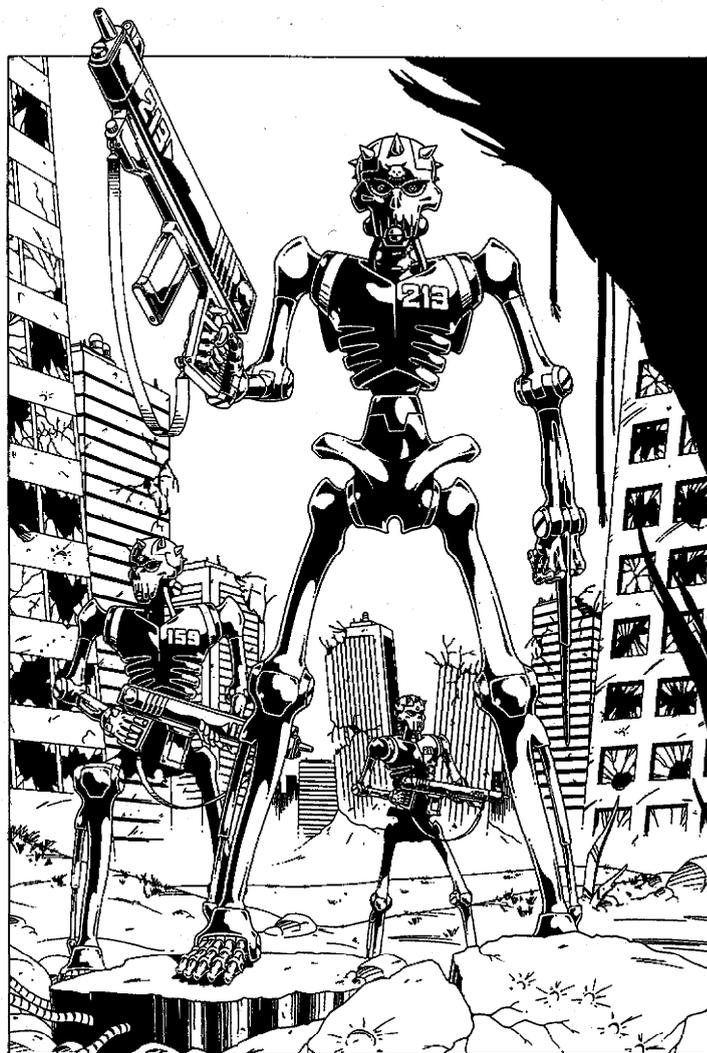
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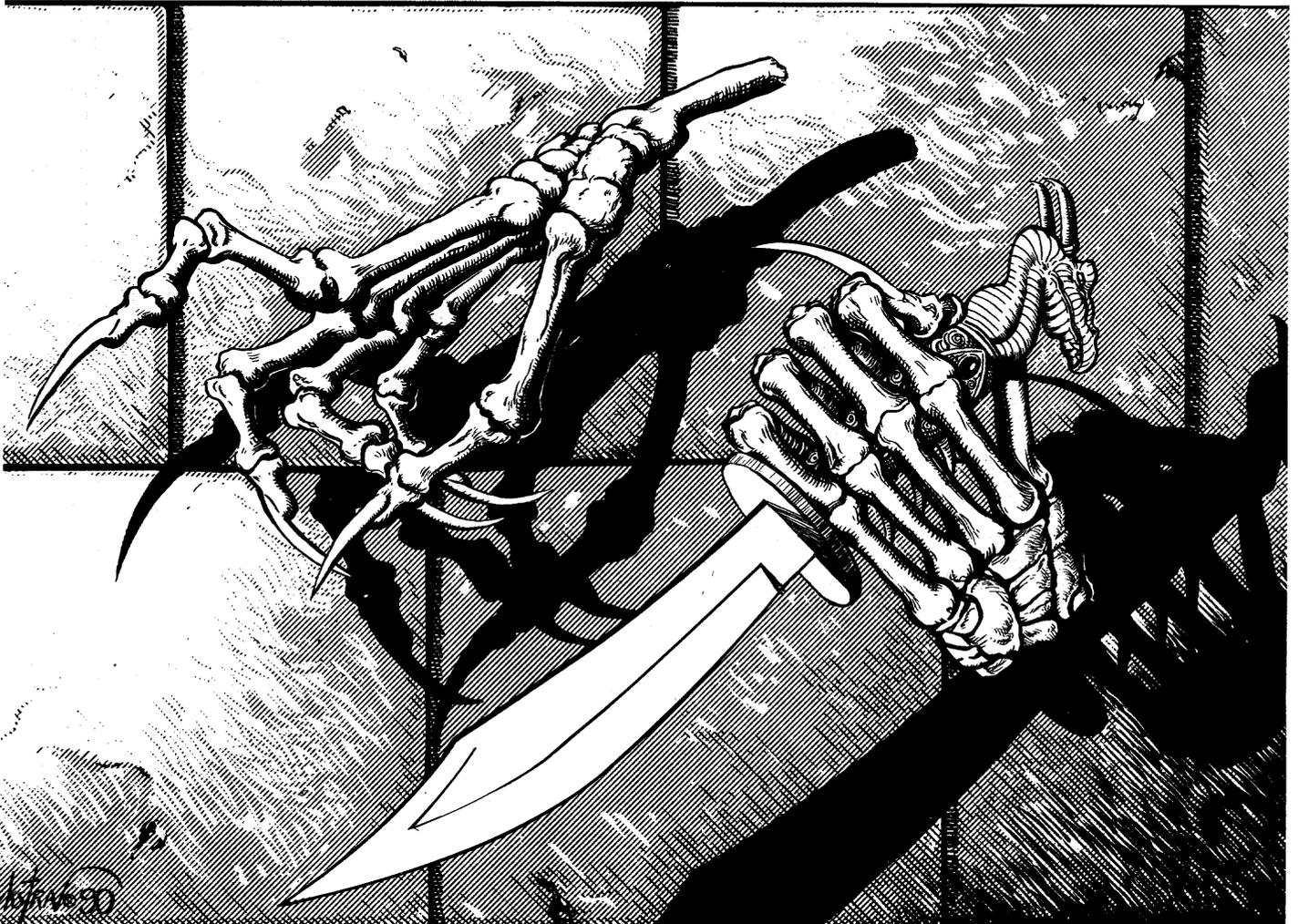
by Jeffrey Pettengill

Arcane Lore

With the publication of the AD&D® 2nd Edition Player's Handbook, the ability to specialize makes wizards more powerful by allowing them to cast more spells. This advantage is offset by the fact that specialist wizards have a limited number of spells from other schools of magic that they may learn and cast. For example, a transmuter—a wizard who specializes in alteration magic—cannot cast spells from either the school of abjuration or the school of necromancy. A study of the wizards' spell list by school shows that of the eight schools of magic, the school of necromancy has the fewest spells, with 18.

This article provides necromancers with more variety in their spell lists. Note that casting some of these spells is considered to be an evil and unnatural act by most intelligent beings.

Artwork by Terry Dykstra



Fleshing out the bare bones of necromancy spells

Animate Dead Animals (Necromantic)

Level: 1 Components: V,S,M
Range: 10 yards CT: 2 rounds
Duration: Perm. Save: None
AE: Special

The use of this spell is often a necromancer's first experience with the animation of corpses. This spell creates undead skeletons and zombies from the bones and bodies of dead animals, specifically vertebrates (fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals). The animated remains will obey simple verbal commands given by the caster. The caster need not use other magicks to communicate with these undead, as they will understand his commands no matter what language he uses. Only naturally occurring animals of semi-intelligence or less can be animated with this spell (e.g., lizards, cats, frogs, weasels, tigers, etc.), including minimal (see "Minimal, Minimal," in the *Monstrous Compendium*) and nonmagical giant-sized animals. These undead remain animated until they are destroyed in combat or are turned; the animating magic cannot be dispelled.

The number of animal undead that a wizard can animate is determined by the animal's original number of hit dice, the caster's level, and the type of undead being created. The caster can create the following number of animal skeletons:

- Animals of ¼ HD or less: four skeletons per level of experience.
- Animals of ½ to 1 HD: two skeletons per level of experience.
- Animals of 1+ to 3 HD: one skeleton per level of experience.
- Animals of 3+ to 6 HD: one skeleton per two levels of experience.
- Animals of over 6 HD: one skeleton for every four levels of experience.

The caster is also able to create the following number of animal zombies:

- Animals of ¼ HD or less: two zombies per level of experience.
- Animals of ½ to 1 HD: one zombie per level of experience.
- Animals of 1 to 3 HD: one zombie for every two levels of experience.
- Animals of over 3 HD: one zombie for every four levels of experience.

The animated skeletons of animals that had ¼ to 1 HD conform to the statistics of animal skeletons as given in the *Monstrous Compendium* (see "Skeleton"). Skeletons of animals that had less than ¼ HD conform to those statistics, with the following changes: AC 9; HD ¼; hp 1; #AT 1; Dmg 1. Skeletons of animals of over 1 HD conform to the statistics for the animal as given in the *Monstrous Compendium*, with the following changes: armor class is worsened by two (maximum of AC 10), damage per attack is reduced by two (minimum of 1 hp), and movement is reduced to half normal. Animal zombies conform to the statistics for the particular animal that has

been animated, with the following changes: the animal's number of hit dice is increased by one, the armor class is worsened by three (to a maximum of AC 8), and movement is reduced by half.

Undead animals have special defenses only of the appropriate type of undead (e.g., immunity to cold-based, *sleep*, *charm*, and *hold* spells), with none of the special defenses that the natural animal might have had. Special physical attacks are those of the living animal only (e.g., raking of rear claws, swallowing whole, etc.). These undead cannot inject poison or emit fluids such as musk or saliva. Swallowing does no further damage to the creature swallowed, except to trap it within the swallower's rib cage. Priests receive a +1 bonus on all attempts to turn these undead.

For this spell to work, the animal bodies or skeletons must be intact. The material components for this spell are a drop of blood and a bone chip from the type of animal that is to be animated (only one animal type may be animated per spell).

Spectral Ears (Necromantic, Alteration)

Level: 1 Components: V,S,M
Range: 10 yds./lvl. CT: 1
Duration: 1 turn/lvl. Save: None
AE: Caster

By casting this spell, a wizard establishes an auditory link between himself and a skeleton or zombie within the spell's range. This link allows the caster to hear any sounds that occur within the vicinity of the undead being. The wizard can hear exactly as if he were standing where the undead creature is standing (if he is a wizard/thief, he can use his hear-noise ability, too). The spell also allows the caster to issue simple commands to the undead creature via this link. These commands can be no longer than four words and can deal only with the creature's movement (turn left, walk forward two steps, etc.). If either the caster or the undead creature moves beyond the range of the spell, the effects are negated. The material components for this spell are a mummified human ear and the ear of another creature that is noted for its excellent hearing.

Spectral Eyes (Necromantic, Alteration)

Level: 1 Components: V,S,M
Range: 10 yds./lvl. CT: 1
Duration: 1 turn/lvl. Save: None
AE: Caster

This spell establishes a visual link between the caster and a skeleton or zombie within the spells range. The spell lets the caster see what the undead creature sees as if he were looking through the creature's eyes. The spell also allows the creature to follow the commands of the wizard

(each command up to four words long). If either the creature or the spell-caster moves beyond the range of this spell, the effects are negated. If the caster has infravision, he sees what the creature sees with infravision as well. The magical link created by this spell does not allow the wizard to use the undead creature as a focus for spell-casting; thus, the caster could not cast a *fireball* spell and have its range calculated from the location of the undead creature. The material components of this spell are a carefully preserved human eye and the eye of another creature that is noted for its exceptional visual abilities.

Spectral Voice (Necromantic, Alteration)

Level: 1 Components: V,S,M
Range: 10 yards/lvl. CT: 1
Duration: 1 turn/lvl. Save: None
AE: Caster

This spell is similar to the first-level spell *ventriloquism* in that it allows the caster to throw his voice. However, the caster's voice issues only from the mouth of a specified zombie or a skeleton. The voice coming from the undead creature will not sound like the caster's voice; it will be a scratchy, raspy whisper. For the duration of this spell, the caster is unable to cast any spells requiring verbal components. The material component for this spell is a preserved human tongue.

Skeletal Hands (Necromantic, Evocation)

Level: 2 Components: V,S,M
Range: 10' + 10'/3 lvls. CT: 1 round
Duration: 4 rnds./lvl. Save: None
AE: Special

By casting this spell, a wizard brings into existence a pair of bony hands that float in midair and move as directed by the caster, who uses verbal command and somatic gestures to guide them. The hands can perform only simple grasping, lifting, and carrying activities. They cannot perform complex movements, such as somatic spell components, or movements that require great dexterity, such as picking locks, etc. They can, however, open unlocked doors, drawers, chests, etc., and can mix substances together. The hands can also make two clawing attacks per round, each attack directed against a different target. They attack using the wizards table at the same level as the spell-caster, and each inflicts 1-3 hp damage on a successful hit. The hands may be physically attacked in turn (each hand has AC 5, hp 4, and MV 6), and may move anywhere within their range.

The hands can carry up to 5 lbs. each; together, they can carry an object of up to 20 lbs. The hands may wield weapons within these weight limits. When using weapons, the skeletal hands attack on the wizard's combat table, with a level half that of the spell-caster and with applicable penalties for nonproficiency. Hand-held

melee weapons do half their normal damage (round up fractions), because the hands cannot generate the proper forces that the weapons need in order to inflict normal damage. The hands may fire an already loaded crossbow with the missile inflicting normal damage, because the crossbow provides the necessary force to propel the bolt. All other missile weapons have their ranges reduced to one quarter and inflict half their normal damage (round up fractions). The material components of this spell are four human bones taken from hands, two from a right hand and two from a left hand.

Bone Knit (Necromantic)

Level: 3 Components: V,S,M
Range: Touch CT: 3
Duration: Perm. Save: None
AE: One skeleton

This spell allows the caster to rejoin the pieces of a skeleton. All of the pieces of the skeleton must be present for the spell to work. The wizard casts the spell, then places his hands over the bones or as close to them as possible (1' maximum distance). The bones then transform themselves into a whole skeleton. If this newly joined skeleton is then animated with an animate *dead* spell, it will have maximum hit points. The spell can be cast upon an undead skeleton that has not been utterly destroyed in order to "heal" it of any damage that has been inflicted upon it by physical attacks. This spell may be cast upon an undead skeleton in conjunction with a permanency spell to create a skeleton that "regenerates" 1-4 hp of physical damage every other round (magical, fire, or acid damage cannot be regenerated). The material component of this spell is a drop of the spell-caster's blood and a drop of troll's blood.

Ghastly Hands (Necromantic)

Level: 3 Components: V,S
Range: 0 CT: 3
Duration: 3 rnds./lvl. Save: Neg
AE: Caster

When this spell is cast, the flesh of the wizard's hands changes to resemble the flesh of a ghast. Those within 10' of the wizard will smell a sickening stench; if they have met ghastrs before, they will recognize the stench as being similar to the nauseating odor given off by those beasts. All humans, demihumans, and humanoids touched by the affected wizard must make saving throws vs. paralyzation or be paralyzed for 3-18 turns. Only one creature may be touched per round, and the wizard must make a successful attack roll. The wizard retains this paralyzing ability for the full spell duration or until he decides to end the spell.

Skulltrap (Necromantic, Evocation)

Level: 3 Components: V,S,M
Range: Touch CT:4
Duration: Special Save: ½
AE: One skull

This spell may be placed upon any non-living skull or upon the skull of an undead skeleton. The skulltrap remains dormant until the skull is either touched by living matter or is struck and damaged by non-living matter (e.g., is struck by a weapon in combat or falls to the floor); assume a normal skull is AC 8 and has 2 hp. The trap is as likely to be set off by the touch of the wizard that cast the spell as by a rat brushing up against it. When the *skulltrap* is discharged, the skull explodes, releasing a blast of energy drawn from the Negative Material plane. The blast of negative energy does 2-8 hp damage plus 1-4 hp damage for every level of the wizard casting the spell. All living creatures within 10' of the skull must make a saving throw vs. breath weapon to suffer only half damage from the blast. Because the trap is so easily triggered, the skull is often placed in its final resting place before casting the spell on it. The trapped skull may be moved without triggering the trap, but it must be moved very slowly and without contact with living matter. Gloves or any other thin materials used to cover the flesh of a living being are not enough to prevent the *skulltrap* from being discharged. The material component of this spell is a pinch of vampire dust.

Transmute Bone to Steel

(Necromantic, Alteration) Reversible
Level: 7 Components: V,S,M
Range: 30 yards CT: 1 round
Duration: Perm. Save: Special
AE: One creature or object

A wizard casting this spell makes any object made of bone, including the joined skeleton of a creature, as strong as steel. The spell may be cast only upon the unanimated bones of a dead being; the bones may thereafter be animated into skeletal form by the usual spells. The bones do not change in appearance and can still move as they could before the casting of this spell. Objects made out of bone will make all future item saving throws as if they were made of hard metal (1st Edition *Dungeon Masters Guide*, page 80, or 2nd Edition *DMG*, page 39). The bones now break only under a great deal of pressure, but they will bend. Skeletons that have had this spell cast upon them have AC 3 and take half again the damage that they would normally take from physical attacks. However, skeletons affected by this spell still take normal damage from holy water and magical attacks, and are also subject to spells affecting metal (e.g., *transmute metal to wood* or *heat metal*) and the attacks of creatures that affect metal (e.g., rust monsters, which will destroy them). The material components for this spell are steel filings and powdered bone.

The reverse of this spell is *transmute steel to bone*. By casting this spell, a wizard weakens any metal by making it as brittle as bone, altering all item saving throws appropriately. Each nonliving recipient of this spell (including golems)

must make an item saving throw vs. disintegration to avoid the spells effects. Once the spell is in effect, the former metal item makes all future saves as if it were made of bone. All metal armor loses its effectiveness, becoming AC 7. Whenever a successful hit is made by or upon the item, the transmuted item must make a save vs. crushing blow to remain intact and functional. Magical items weakened by this spell remain magical, with any bonuses applying to their saving throws. Weapons affected by this spell do -2 hp per die of damage (and must save to avoid breakage). Physical attacks versus metal creatures that have failed their saving throws and have been affected by this spell inflict +2 hp per die of damage.

Undead Servants (Necromantic, Alteration)

Level: 8 Components: V,S,M
Range: 10 yards CT: Special
Duration: Perm. Save: None
AE: Special

When a wizard casts this spell, he imbues animated skeletons and zombies with limited intelligence. The spell gives these undead the ability to speak, in order to answer questions, respond to certain situations, shout warnings if under attack, or make introductions. This spell affects a maximum of one skeleton or zombie per experience level, though the exact number of undead affected depends upon the number of tasks that each servant is to perform. For example, a 30th-level wizard could affect 30 undead creatures, with each being able to perform one task—or he could create one undead servant that could perform 30 different tasks. A task can be as simple as opening a door when visitors arrive or as complex as cooking a specific dish, each task taking no more than an hour to perform. The tasks are short routines that are performed either daily, when a certain situation arises, or when the proper commands are given. The undead servants are of low intelligence for the purpose of determining what they know or how they will react, but they are still treated as if they were non-intelligent for the purposes of combat (so they are still immune to spells of *fear*, *charm*, *hold*, *sleep*, etc.). Thus, while they can talk and perform tasks that require thinking, these skeletal servants still retain their natural defenses and immunities.

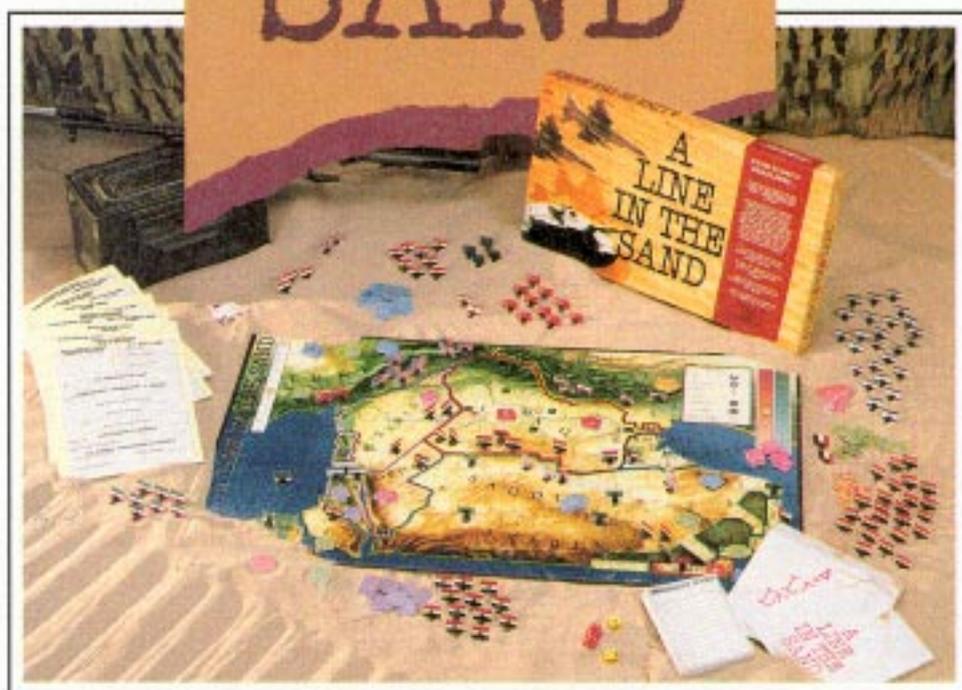
It takes one turn for this spell to affect each creature. Once the spell is cast, the servants need no monitoring except for any commands required to start the performance of specific tasks. The material components are human bone fragments and a dragon's brain. Ω

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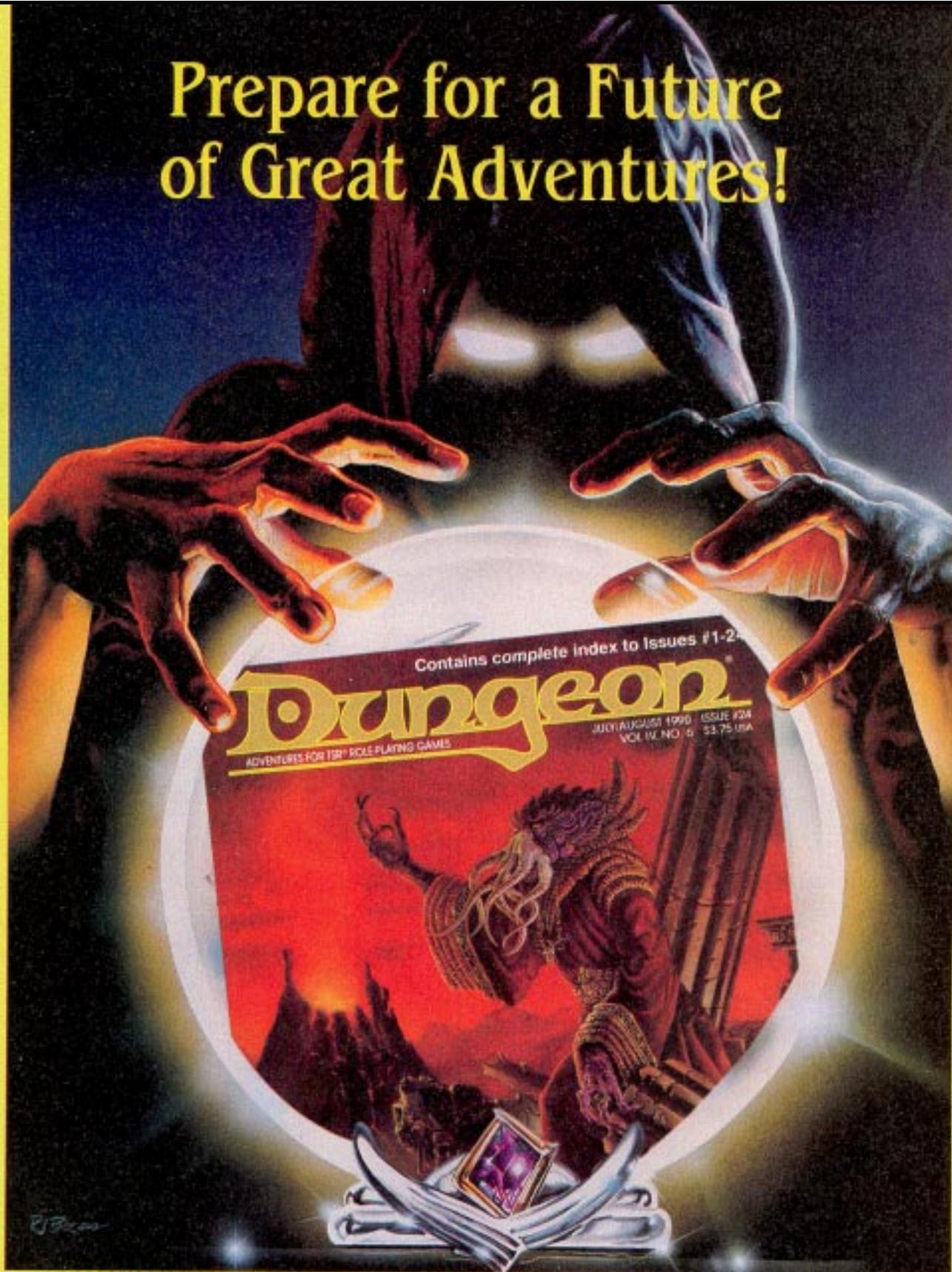
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The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

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From the Journals of
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Tslamir 8, 2000 AY—Talaras: Three days already. I, Talaras Ecbashur, have taken over this vessel's command until the admiral's return from his cabin, but his absence has lasted far too long. I thought several times of reaching him but have decided not to, for fear of disturbing his work. I could also sense magical wards near his quarters and so ordered everyone to stay away. I am hoping for some sign from the admiral. I could not order the Princess to head back to the Empire, for not much help would be found there. We have to continue on our primary mission, so I have decided to keep sailing west. Patience will be my guide.

Tslamir 8—Haldemar: Three days already. A sinister magic has overcome my quarters; the entire room seems to have shifted out of reality. Bulkheads feel much farther away than they should, and beyond the crystal windows reigns a perpetual realm of threatening shadows. I sense that I can no longer leave my quarters. From the corners of my eyes, I can perceive unnerving movements in the room, but as I turn to watch, the movements always dance away to the sides. Flames on the candelabrum are frozen as if time has stopped. In this unreal light, I proceed with the infernal Thothian enchantment, again struggling against the nightmarish delirium of the hieroglyphs. Patience will be my guide.

Tslamir 9—Talaras: At last, a sign! I was brutally awakened by the sound of thunder; we were nearing a large storm. Both Xerdon and I reached the upper deck at the same time. By then, the wind had picked up great strength. At this moment, a large blue whirlpool of light appeared directly in the path of the Princess. I ordered the helmsman to veer hard to the north, but in response a cavernous roar rose from the ship. The helmsman suddenly lost his grip on the wheel as it spun wildly out of control. The entire hull shook, and the Princess resumed her course straight toward the pool of light. This could only be the doing of the admiral. The blue whirlpool must be a magical gate. But to where?

Tslamir 9—Haldemar: At last, a sign! I unveiled a major axiom in the principles of ancient Thothian wizardry summoned in this papyrus. This dweomercraft was far more elaborate than the initial enchantment invoked on the ship. As I conjured the power encrypted in these runes, the papyrus consumed itself slowly. There was no stopping then, for the rest of the text would have disappeared and I would





have remained stranded forever in this nightmarish netherworld. When the papyrus disappeared completely, new pictograms began to glow in the air, continuing their maddening ballet. The eerie markings transformed their shapes and forms as I read them, endlessly adding more depth to the sorcery's mechanism. After I had deciphered the meanings of the mystic sequences, the hieroglyphs blended to form a whirlpool of blue light. I had opened another portal. But to where?

Tslamir 10—Talaras: Blue light everywhere . . . The place past the gate was amazing. The storm stopped as abruptly as it had begun. Its billowing clouds revealed a vast new world, much like the heavens beyond our skyshield. At first I reached for the airmask at my waist, but found there was no need for that. There was air—cold and pure like steel.

Above and below the *Princess* I could observe several worlds, some spherical and others more rugged, slowly following their celestial courses. In the distance, dark blue clouds seemed alive, with an eerie light pulsing inside them. The watch then sounded the alarm. There, coming from the clouds, a horde of draconic creatures flew toward us.

The boltmen quickly reached their battle stations, and the crew braced for combat. The creatures weren't dragons, as I first thought, but were more like wild cats with huge eagle wings and the tails of great wyrms. One among them was truly immense. Myojo was close to panic. At the sight of the great celestial felines, he clutched his sword and muttered his ancestral prayers.

The beasts began a gracious but sinister dance around the *Princess*. Suddenly, a younger cat broke from the ranks and lashed at the ship. Its claws seemed formidable enough to rip through the hull. A fury of lightning bolts converged on the cat, as testimony of the boltmen's power. Alas, despite the fiery conflagration they created, the bolts proved miserably ineffective. The cat didn't even twitch. Myojo prayed harder.

The cat roared and reached the *Princess* as the others dove in to join the attack when, suddenly, a frightening shriek rose from our ship itself! The cat's roar was a mere caterwaul in comparison. The younger cat froze in its path and hissed in fear; the others bristled up and hunched their backs at the *Princess's* thunderous warning. At last, the largest beast with the lion face came closer, dwarfing its lesser kin. It spat a bolt of lightning in the air; a clap of thunder then shook the skies.

The younger cats finally flew away. Their leader approached the aft deck where I stood, stretched a paw toward the starboard railing and disappeared. In its place stood a woman of blue and silver light. Myojo steadfastly stepped forward, but she raised a hand. "There will be no need for this, my friend," she said. "The time for battle has passed. I must talk in

peace with your Commander. I bear news of your master." To my question as to who she was, she merely added, "I am she who rules over this part of the universe. In this realm, a *Princess* I am."

Tslamir 10—Haldemar: Blue light everywhere . . . In some places, I could see beams of cobalt brilliance; in some others, wisps of dimness. Once past the portal, I could no longer sense up, down, or even keep a notion of time. I drifted in this azure void for what seemed an eternity. Somewhere in the distance, I could hear crystalline sounds. I came close to sinking again into insanity when I heard Abo-vombe's voice calling me. Memories filtered back.

Then I saw the *Princess*, and I was there on the deck, as if my thoughts had gotten me there in some obscure way. The ship was deserted, merely a ghostlike image of its former reality. I returned to my quarters and there, sitting on my chair, was a woman of shining sapphire and opalescent light. I didn't notice at first, but it soon became evident that she actually blended with the seat and the rest of the floor. She looked up to me and said, "I waited so long. I remained trapped here in this half-world, with the other part of my soul in your hands, Haldemar. It is time to finish what you started and set my mind free." To my inquiry about her identity, she replied, "In this realm, a *Princess* I am."

Tslamir 11—Talaras: A great blue sun arose in the distance. The mysterious wyrm requested that I come with her to her palace. I rode on her back to a great tower on a cloud, lost somewhere in a shifting, mazelike aurora. At the top was a hole into which the wyrm dove. The flight ended in a vast hall made of solid, purple clouds.

There, the wyrm—Meryath, as she later introduced herself—offered me rest and sustenance. For the sake of my comfort, Meryath reverted to a human form. She explained she sensed the soul of her mother inside the *Princess Ark*. Meryath's mother died several centuries ago in a great battle against creatures known as spectral hounds, leaving Meryath to succeed her. The mother, Berylith, briefly contacted Meryath just seconds before the sky wyrms' attack. But that was enough to convince her daughter of her mother's existence. She later mentioned her imminent binding with a human, the master of the ship—the Admiral, no doubt.

Suddenly, Meryath stopped talking and listened. Her eyes widened. Then she uttered strange words and ran for the opening in the hall, transforming herself into a great wyrm while the younger beasts coiled up in the hallways in alarm. Perhaps some intrusion? A sinister baying echoed my thoughts.

Tslamir 11—Haldemar: A great blue sun arose in the distance. Its light filtered through the crystal windows, toying with the shadows in my room. I had lost consciousness for some time. The princess

was still there, watching over me. I realized she was none other than the soul of the creature I had bound to my ship.

She called herself Berylith. She related how I had pulled her away from the realm of the Immortals when I used the Thothian enchantment on the *Princess Ark*. Berylith did not show anger however. She had come very close to becoming an Immortal being herself, but when she died in this world she remained a mere servant of the Immortals in the Draconic Plane. Her master permitted her to depart in answer to my conjuration, but only if she would accomplish a certain goal that would grant Berylith higher status among the Immortals upon her final return. What the quest was he did not tell her.

One thing is certain—I have to complete the Thothian enchantment. Without it, Berylith's soul will eventually decay into oblivion, and the *Princess Ark* will fly no more. Either way, a terrible waste . . .

It seems that what I had magically siphoned into the hull of the *Princess Ark* was only Berylith's life force. Her psyche had been lost in this plane of torment and solitude. Only the completion of the Thothian wizardry could bring the two back together. More than ever, it was imperative I unveiled the final chapter of this enchantment. But what could it be? A sinister baying echoed my thoughts.

Tslamir 12—Talaras: Horror again. The spectral hounds had apparently returned, and I feared the worst for the *Princess Ark*. Meryath left me very little time to join her. It was a great sensation to ride on her back amidst her horde of ferocious sky wyrms. I uttered a short prayer and unstrapped my hammer. I was ready for battle.

Indeed, many hundreds of these evil creatures surrounded the ship. At the sight of our arrival, Xerdon opened fire on the hounds while the younger sky wyrms dove into fray. The battle was frightening. To the sky wyrms' ferocity and agility, the hounds responded with sheer numbers. Many came close to me, only to taste my war hammer's fatal might or Meryath's thunderous roar. Many sky wyrms died or faded away, weakened by their numerous wounds. Many more hounds perished at the boltmen's aim or at the wyrms' dizzying whirlwinds.

Suddenly, a horrible howl rose from the ship. It sounded like one of those hounds, but more powerful and much more frightening. The hounds instantly halted their attack. After a moment of anxiety, they mysteriously turned from the battle and fled. A clamor of joy rose from the sky wyrms and the men on the *Princess Ark*. We had won.

The sky wyrms commenced a war dance around the *Princess* to celebrate their unexpected victory. I could see Xerdon waving up at me. Soon he ordered the crew to attend the wounded. Meryath chose that moment to make a few loops in the air, which did not make me feel so

glorious after all. I hoped that Razud had some cure for that.

As the celebration went on, I noticed from the corner of my eye that something was wrong with the princess. A plank fell off the bottom of the hull. A second later, a maelstrom of chaos overtook the ship. Whole sections of the ship cracked and splintered. Masts and their rigging collapsed on the decks. In shock, I witnessed the princess breaking up utterly before my own eyes.

Tslamir 12—Haldemar: Horror again. My presence in the Plane of Nightmares had finally attracted someone's attention: Hundreds of ghostly hounds surrounded the phantasmal image of the *Princess Ark*. Berylith said in a somber voice they were the spectral hounds that had killed her in centuries past and now they were back to destroy her soul.

Suddenly, the hounds began racing around the ship, rushing forward and back, growling and biting at some invisible enemy. Some of them bled ectoplasmic ichor, while others were literally torn into spectral pieces. Slowly their foes began to appear, bizarrely fading into existence, but these twisted apparitions were all dead and gruesomely mutilated. Horrified, I suddenly realized what was happening. Both men from the *Princess Ark* and sky wyrms were fighting these beasts from another plane. Those who fell before the spectral hounds then reappeared in this plane of madness.

I had to intervene at once. Just then, phasing through the bulkhead, appeared the nightmarish muzzle of a spectral hound. It was much larger than the others and much more terrifying. Berylith looked frightened. The hound snarled at me and entered the room completely. Berylith implored my help, stretching out for me, incapable of defending herself.

To flee was my first thought. But where? The blue whirlpool was still there. It must be the way. Without realizing, I grabbed Berylith's translucent hand and ran for the magical portal. We both jumped through just as the giant hounds jaws snapped empty behind us. The gate led back to my room, the real one in the Prime Material Plane. At last, I was back.

The hound attempted to follow immediately but got caught halfway through the closing gate. It howled horribly as it was cut in two; its fore half fell at our feet, still writhing in agony. Then the monster faded away forever.

Berylith stood there a moment, almost completely human. She smiled, then cried out, "At last, I am whole again! I will remain within this ship for as long as you live, Haldemar, for you are now a part of it almost as much as I am. This is but a small price for my Immortality. I will then be free to complete my own quest. Be wise in your command, Haldemar, for my fate is in your hands until then. But beware—the Princess must change. . . ." Berylith's shape blurred in a flash of blue light, then

blended away into the wooden bulkhead. The enchantment was finally complete.

I hurried up to the deck to resume command. The crew was quite surprised, and I must admit it was the first time ever I noticed a smile on Xerdon's face. I was about to reach the upper deck when a sudden, low, unnerving rumble shook the *Princess*. Railing, planks, and masts started to crack and splinter. In moments, wooden and metal debris was hurled about within an abominable shower of broken masts and rigging. In shock, I witnessed the *Princess* breaking up utterly before my own eyes.

To be continued. . .

The Thothian Enchantment

This very rare spell was invented by a skillful Thothian priest, King Haptuthep. His dream was to create a vessel powerful enough to carry him to the realms beyond the Skyshield and back. He spent a great part of his life putting the spell together, but the Alphatian empire accidentally thwarted the pharaoh's plans with a surprise invasion.

King Haptuthep fled his coastal domain while his capital and palace were shamelessly sacked, and the unused magical papyrus were lost. King Haptuthep later became a lich in order to continue his struggle against the invaders. His followers were able to retrieve some of papyrus, but they could not locate the first sheets.

Haldemar of Haaken acquired these lost sheets in 1959 AY, during the war between Thyatis and Alphatia, and the remainder were taken by him from King Haptuthep's secret lair in 2000 AY. It is not known whether other copies exist elsewhere. The first few sheets could conceivably have been reproduced in Thyatis or Alphatia, while copies of the last might be found in some forgotten lair of King Haptuthep.

The spell conjures the soul of a powerful, mortal being in order to confer a large object with intelligence and some magical abilities akin to that of the conjured creature. The object becomes attuned to the thoughts of the caster. The spell was originally written with a greater sky wyrm in mind, but it could be, modified to affect other types of creatures. The spell can be cast either by a wizard (9th-level spell), or by a cleric of Haptuthep's ideology (7th-level spell).

The first part of the spell invokes the life force of the creature in order to seal the magical abilities within the object. The last part compels the creature's psyche to become one with the object in order to give it sentient thought. This second part is by far the more difficult to master, because the sigils used by Haptuthep are both sophisticated and cursed.

In order to understand and use the second part, the caster temporarily becomes a gate between the Prime Material Plane and the Plane of Nightmares. By holding someone by the hands and gazing in his eyes, the caster can send that per-

son to the other plane and eventually bring him back.

The spell bestows upon the caster a limited prescience that enhances his psychic perception. This grants a better understanding of the hieroglyphs, the sensing of emanations from the Plane of Nightmares in the Prime Material Plane, and the comprehension of other languages. The caster, however, cannot use any spells, magical items, or magical abilities during the time of the enchantment.

Since the spell deals with the very fiber of Chaos, Intelligence checks (or Wisdom checks for clerics) are needed at random times to avoid temporary insanity. Check once every 2d12 hours. Temporary insanity lasts 1d4 hours. Assume a failed check wastes half a day of work. Each time the caster fails an Intelligence check, his Intelligence score drops one point. Three consecutive failures to avoid temporary insanity will cause the caster to spoil the enchantment. He then phases into the Plane of Nightmare and remains permanently insane. Only a *wish* or a *cureall* spell can cure the insanity if the caster is later retrieved from the Plane of Nightmares. The caster may recover Intelligence at the rate of one point for every five successful Intelligence checks. The caster also gets a +3 bonus on Intelligence checks if he is sleeping or deliberately not working on the enchantment at the time of the check.

Completion of the spell requires 30 days of work (assume the caster can work for 12 hours each day) minus a number of days equal to the caster's initial intelligence score. The caster may interrupt his work for any length of time, but he must keep checking against temporary insanity until the enchantment is completed. The spell automatically succeeds if the caster hasn't become permanently insane by the end of the enchantment time.

Upon completion, the spell binds the caster's and creature's souls to the object of interest. The creature may alter the shape of the object in the process, and the caster gains the ability to mentally control the final object through the bound creature's mind. The creature can physically move any original part of the object that is mobile (e.g., doors, levers, windows, traps, and other mechanical parts). If the object was capable of movement, the creature can then control the object's path. Conflicts of personality may occur between the creature and the caster, just as with intelligent weapons.

Should the caster die, the object will lose its powers and the creature's soul will be freed. If the object is destroyed, the caster dies instantly and the creature's soul is consumed. The enchantment is permanent and cannot be broken by a mortal *wish*.

Ashari Sunlil (1st Class Navigator & Yeoman)

History: Ashari never knew her par-

ents. Her father died before she was born, and her mother—a Heldanner slave—died while giving birth to Ashari. She lived the hard existence of an orphan and homeless beggar in Sundsvall's Pit Quarter, often panhandling in the aerodrome. There, she dreamed of flying on one of those fantastic ships while in reality she lived a meager existence, scavenging and pick-pocketing. She joined the thieves' guild in Sundsvall and developed her thieving skills.

The House of Arogansa hired Ashari's services several times, and Tarias of Arogansa noticed her good looks. As a reward for her services, she was granted her wish to enter the Imperial Navy School for basic training. She performed well and served several months on a small Imperial galley as an air navigator. She was then unexpectedly transferred to the illustrious *Princess Ark*. This was all the doing of Tarias, who had been ordered to join the navy as a desperate effort by his elders to teach the brat some good sense. Tarias made sure some good company would be available during his tour of duty, and he used family influence to quietly effect Ashari's transfer.

Personality: Ashari is extremely proud of her achievements and is devoted to her duty. Her training taught her discipline and conscientiousness. She is a clever and perceptive person, except when it comes to Tarias, whom she finds attractive and entertaining. She has also become Lady Abovombe's confidante and companion, and they often quip about Haldemar's attitude toward Abovombe.

Disposition: Goodwill toward Tarias, Haldemar, Lady Abovombe, and Talasar; Neutral toward Xerdon, Leo, and Myojo; Antipathy toward Ramissur and Raman.

Appearance: Ashari just recently turned 20. She is a captivating blonde with emerald eyes and pouting red lips—the dream of any young serviceman. She always wears an impeccable uniform, even in the worst situations, an uncanny talent that befuddles even the most experienced officers.

Equipment carried: Ashari normally carries a (stolen) *earring of protection* +1 in addition to her standard navigational equipment: a few navigational tools and manuals that normally remain in her cabin. If leaving the ship, she takes along a *dagger* +1 that Tarias of Arogansa gave her. She keeps a complete thieves' kit in her personal effects.

Game statistics: S 10, I 13, W 10, D 16, C 12, Ch 17; 3rd-level Thief; AC 6 (with Dex); hp 10; MV 120'(40'); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (magical dagger); Save T3; ML 10; AL N, Languages: Common Alphatian and Thieves' Cant. Skills: Navigation (In), Sailing Weather (In), Evade (Dx), Gain Trust (Wi + 2).

Ramissur Zumrulim (1st-Class Boltman)

History: Ramissur comes from a family

of poor Amburese farmers. Severe drought and disease decimated his family when he was a boy. He was too young to work in the fields and had to be fed, so his folk "donated" him (for a fee) to a local wizard who needed a stable boy.

Although at first illiterate, he got some education as the wizard befriended him. In a few years, Ramissur became his apprentice and learned a few magical tricks but showed little magical skill beyond that. He was out of place as a student; he was meant to be a logger or a professional wrestler.

The wizard died of old age, and Ramissur went to Sundsvall, seeking fame and wealth. He fell madly in love and got married to a tavern wench, but she left him for a better, more refined wizard. Heartbroken, he joined the Imperial Navy to forget his pain.

Personality: Ramissur is a brave boltman who cannot deny his origins, being crude and rude by wizardly standards. Though a tough and impetuous soldier who thinks nothing of taking on dangerous tasks, he has a pathological fear of darkness since his misadventure with the Night Dragon, and he hates Haldemar, whom he holds responsible. Ramissur has a lot of respect and loyalty for Xerdon. He finds Leo amusing and feels he should protect his little friend. Ramissur's greatest weakness is that he is a heavy drinker and will pick drunken fights with anyone (the reason why he's still a 1st-class boltman after 20 years in the service).

Disposition: Goodwill toward Xerdon and Leo; Neutral toward Myojo and Ashari; Antipathy toward Talasar, Raman, Lady Abovombe, and Tarias; Hates Haldemar (secretly).

Appearance: Ramissur is a tall, muscular man. The fact that he is now in his early forties hasn't affected his strength. He has the tanned skin of those who spent many years on the seas and in the skies. Most of his head is cleanly shaven, except for a long black tassel in the back. His thick, bushy eyebrows almost cover his eyes, giving him a somber and gruff expression.

Equipment carried: *Wand of lightning bolts* (6d6) and standard boltman equipment.

Spells memorized: *Light* (×2).

Game statistics: S 17, I 13, W 8, D 12, C 16, Ch 10; 2nd-level Magic-User; AC 8; hp 10; MV 120'(40'); #AT 1 (dagger or wand); Dmg 2d4 +2 (Ramissur reached *expert proficiency* in his mastery of daggers) or 6d6; Save MU2; ML 10; AL C. Languages: Common Alphatian and the Ambur dialect. Skills: Brawling (St + 1), Drinking (Co + 1) and Singing (Co).

Tarias of Arogansa (Midshipman)

History: Tarias is the youngest son of the cousin of the Grand Duke of Arogansa. His four brothers have all gotten some illustrious

position either at the Grand Duke's palace or at the Imperial Court in Sundsvall, but Tarias has failed his father so far.

Tarias has always been very bored with life at his family mansion in Shavadze, and he has been the source of many scandals, from Shavadze to Bluenose City. Tarias once threw a grand party where zzonga fruit was so common that some of his guests tossed handfuls out the windows to commoners in the street below. Local authorities quickly covered up the affair. Tarias so far has conducted himself as an aristocratic brat and never proved to be anything but a troublemaker and a complete embarrassment.

Tired of Tarias's excesses, his father, Nargol of Arogansa, finally ordered him to join the Imperial Navy. The political power of the Arogansa House is such that, sooner or later, Tarias will become an officer with his own ship command.

Personality: Tarias has the outrageous attitude of those young, rich, and pretentious aristocrats who believe everything is for them to use, abuse, and carelessly discard. Tarias is handsome and dashing but brash and ungrateful to the extreme. His impertinence with authority and his irreverence with the clergy has commonly earned him enmity in many areas of the empire. Tarias's apparent attraction for Ashari is merely casual and probably short lived. Tarias is a lazy, selfish, greedy scoundrel and coward.

Disposition: Goodwill toward Xerdon, Ashari, and Lady Abovombe; Neutral toward Haldemar and Talasar; Antipathy toward Myojo, Leo, Raman, and Ramissur.

Appearance: Tarias is a 30-year-old, pure-blooded Alphatian. His black curly hair, light suntan, and dark brown eyes go a long way with young, adventurous ladies. Tarias is a tall, well built, and self-assured noble.

Equipment carried: A *headband of human control* that he used on Ashari, a flask of zzonga liquor (three doses, illegal on the princess), a *short sword* +2 of *deceiving* that he "borrowed" from his father's seneschal, a *medallion of protection* +2 that he extorted from a magistrate in Shavadze, and a *scroll of equipment* containing, in addition to three random objects, a 1,000-gp gem, a phony treasure map, and an air mask (common to those used on the *Princess Ark*).

Game statistics: S 13, I 12, W 8, D 14, C 11, Ch 15; 4th-level Fighter; AC 6 (with Dex and magic); hp 20; MV 120'(40'); #AT 1 (magical sword); Dmg by weapon type; Save F4; ML 6; AL C. Languages: Common Alphatian. Skills: Dancing (Dx), Music (Harpsichord, Ch), Hip Conversation (Ch+3).

Leo of Le Nerviens (Civilian Advisor)

History: Leo was born of legitimate Le Nerviens kin. He was a straight "A" student at the corporate school, often seeking the

most unexpected solutions to problems. As a reward for graduating with honors, he was sent on a commercial prospective mission aboard one of the corporate airships. There, he learned a bit about blimp technology and Hollow World geography.

In the following years, he joined the Research & Development division of Le Nerviens and bettered his creative and engineering skills—in the usual gnomish way. He joined the *Princess Ark* expedition by accident and felt this was so much the better; there was much to be discovered on the outer world, and the *Princess Ark* would definitely need someone of his talent to maintain all the gnomish inventions added to the ship.

Personality: Leo is of the *eccentric inventive disorderly nosy obtrusive alignment*—in short, a perfect Le Nerviens gnome. Leo never seems tired; he's a hyperactive perfectionist who is never pleased with his work. His incredible naivete and constant pranks often test Xerdon's and Raman's patience. Leo is a peaceful character whose biggest weaknesses are his love of gems and beer.

Disposition: Goodwill toward Ramisur, Haldemar, Talasar, Lady Abovombe, Ashari and Raman; Neutral toward Xerdon; Antipathy toward Tarias and Myojo.

Appearance: Leo is a middle-aged gnome with short blond hair, a large handlebar mustache, and a reddish face. His spectacles sit squarely on his protuberant nose.

Equipment carried: There is no telling what Leo carries in his pockets; what he has one day can be lost the next somewhere on the ship. Leo constantly tinkers and comes up with various trinkets and gadgets that may or may not function.

Game statistics: S 13, I 15, W 8, D 14, C 17, Ch 10; 8th-level Sky Gnome with Special Abilities I-VI (see note following); AC 8 (with Dex); hp 56; MV 60'(20'); #AT 1-4 (unpredictable widgets; randomly pick one die of damage for each new encounter); Save D8; ML 9; AL L. Languages: Oostdokian, Milenian, and Common Alpha-tian (treat as an Intelligence Skill). Skills: Gemcrafting (In), Ship Building (In), Helmsman (In), Memorizing (In), Drinking (Co), Singing (Ch).

Note: Sky gnomes, their experience levels, and their abilities were originally described in PC2 *Top Ballista*. If that material is not available, use a common gnome from the Basic Set.

Letters

While reading "The Voyage of the *Princess Ark*," part 9, I discovered a minor error. The HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set indicates that the *invisibility* spell does not function in that setting. However, the *Princess Ark* seems to be able to do so anyway. See issue #162, page 45: ". . . Leopold had probably failed to tell his kin that the *Princess* was not visible."

It is true that the invisibility spell does not work in the Hollow World, but the Princess

Ark does not use that spell. If you remember the ship gamed "invisibility" when the Myoshiman monolith was placed on board. The monolith bends rays of light to a certain degree (a careful observer could still see a blur; like in the movie Predator), but it does not confer true invisibility like the spell. This is an example of how a DM can deal with a potentially annoying limitation in a game setting (it's a cheap way of cheating but it works, eh?).

Can PCs imitate that feat by carrying around chunks of the monolith? The monolith itself is barely sufficient to conceal the ship, and we'll assume the mineral's magical properties grow in a geometric progression compared to its mass. If so, that pesky PC might end up needing a 500-lb. hunk of rock to make him invisible. Well, I guess he still could hide behind it!

I'm a DM from Denmark who wants to tell you how much I enjoy the Gazetteer series, particularly *The Orcs of Thar*, but I think an injustice was done to the trolls. I love trolls, I really do! In GAZ10, trolls are portrayed as unintelligent scum, and that's not fair! Why haven't you matched the Expert version of the troll, or your descriptions of the goblins that seem far smarter? GAZ10 trolls have no faith, either. You also mentioned war dogs in GAZ10 but did not give their stats. Are they described elsewhere?

Hmmm . . . As for trolls, I kind of like them, too. I wrote the darn gazetteer, so I'd better like those dumb, smelly ugly dudes! What happened is that they were presented that way in GAZ7 Northern Reaches, and I decided to stick with that description. Nothing says that you cannot change trolls to fit your preferences! This is especially so if you're going to make a PC out of a troll. However, you are incorrect in assuming that I presented them as totally faithless. They do have a certain Bagni Gullymaw to worship. (They could also believe in peanut butter.)

Ah, yes, the war puppies. We should have noted that their statistics can be found in AC9 Creature Catalog, page 13. Here are the abbreviated stats, if you cannot find that accessory: AC 7; HD 2 +2; MV 120'(40'); AT 1 bite; Dmg2d4; Save F1; ML 11; TT Nil; IN 3; AL N; XP 25, The illustration on page 13 shows a cutesy war dog with gleaming canine barding. Add to that some smudges, dents, rust, spikes, and plenty of disgusting drool, and that war dog will be ready for service in Thar's Legion.

Are undead PCs allowed? (I have a non-feratu cleric.) If yes, can they reach Immortality?

Why not have a PC undead? There aren't any guidelines that I know of on how to create and role-play undead creatures in the D&D game. You'll have to come up with a system that balances the undead PC reasonably well with the other character classes in the party I can't help

wondering, though, what kind of party would associate with such macabre companionship—other undead, perhaps? The rest of the population might also stage a major hunt to rid their beloved land of these ghastly fellows. Considering that undead are already immortal (sort of), your point is moot. If it were at all possible, undead could attain "true"Immortality in the Sphere of Entropy, but I would limit that to the really powerful undead (vampires or better).

About dominions: How many hexes can a single person rule, and how many troops are needed to maintain each hex?

There is no real limit to how much a single ruler can control, especially in setting where magic can be used. In D&D game terms, Genghis Khan would have ruled over more than 125,000 eight-mile hexes, with no magic at all. The number of troops needed to maintain your borders depends upon a multitude of factors (like troop quality, economy, population, and the presence of peace or war). For example, the Roman Republic in the second century B.C. maintained over 12% of its citizens in its legions (and that wreaked havoc on its economy). On the other hand, Imperial Rome in the fourth century A.D. had only 0.7% of its citizens in arms, and did quite well-well for the Visigoths, that is. Medieval kingdoms were incapable of coming anywhere near these numbers (it wasn't called the Dark Ages for nothing).

I am anxious to see GAZ14 *The Atrughin Clans*. Wendar, Sind, and the Heldann Freeholds would be good next choices. Gazetteers on Norwold and Hule wouldn't require much work, since they are based upon previously published material. Some of these modules are hard to get, so it wouldn't be just reprinting old material. Also, please make some new countries more like "typical" medieval settings. Few countries in the Known World have kings, knights, and serfs (Kara-meikos and Thyatis seem to come close, though). Too many of these types of countries would be boring, but what's the point of having the Companion Set if no country really matches that rules set directly?

Good point. The closest thing that we could develop into a medieval setting would be the Heldann Freeholds, which are close to a Dark Ages Germanic setting with clerical magic. The freeholds are barbaric tribes that are being "pacified" by the Heldannic Knights. The regions now under the Knights' control are definitely getting feudal in style. (By the way, the creation of a 96-page accessory can hardly be referred to as requiring not much work; a typical Gazetteer manuscript comes close to 200 pages!)

Ω

THE ROLE OF Computers

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Crescent Hawks' Revenge
(Infocom)

The biggest, the best, the Beasties!

We receive many letters asking how readers can send game hints to us. Just send your hints in a legible format to: The Lessers, 521 Czerny Street, Tracy CA 95376. Please use a pen, as pencil is hard to read on some of the different paper stocks we receive. Thanks for everyone's interest!

Also, thanks to those of you who enjoy this column and wonder why we haven't started our own game magazine. It requires a great deal of money to begin any new magazine. Not only must you hire the finest editors, writers, illustrators, and artists available, but production issues must be considered: how much color there will be, what kind of paper will be used, and where and how will the magazine be printed. Then, too, one of the most expensive items to consider is the mailing cost.

TSR, Inc. and DRAGON® Magazine are most gracious and highly professional, and that helps us to get the entertainment

word out to computer and video gamers worldwide. DRAGON Magazine deserves everyone's continued support. Should we ever have the funding necessary to publish a game newsletter or magazine, we'll certainly let you know right away!

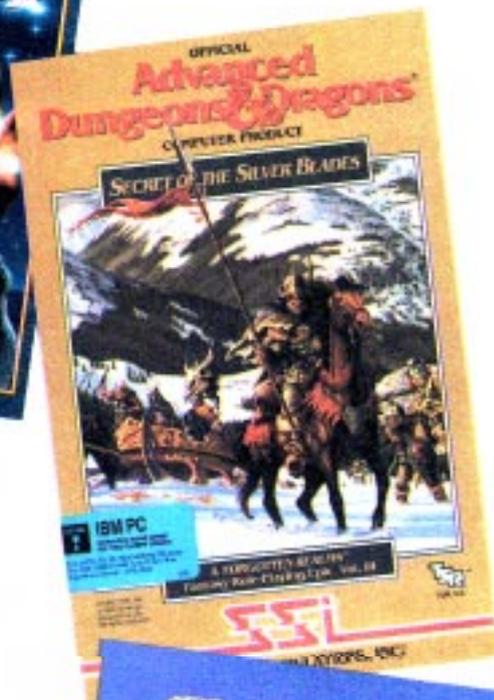
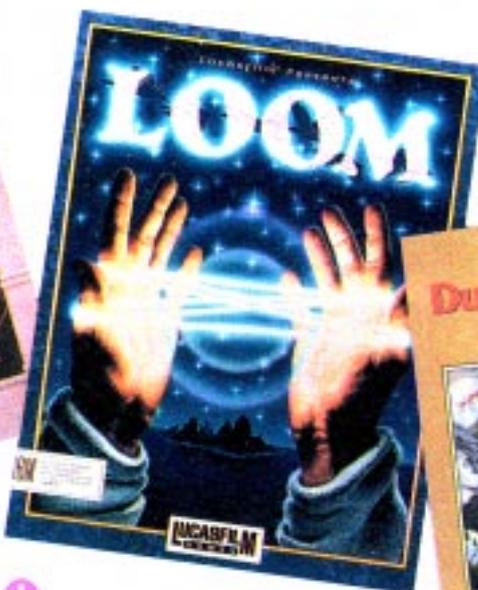
We are glad most of you find benefit in reading the reviews, news, and hints. And, yes, we also acknowledge that we are not always correct. For example, a fair number of readers have written to state that we erred when describing how to move items from one character to another when playing *Ultima VI*, from Origin (issue

#162). You can move items from one character to another by simply selecting the Move icon, selecting the item to be moved, placing the cursor on the character to whom you wish to move the item, then pressing the Enter key. Now, on to the awards!

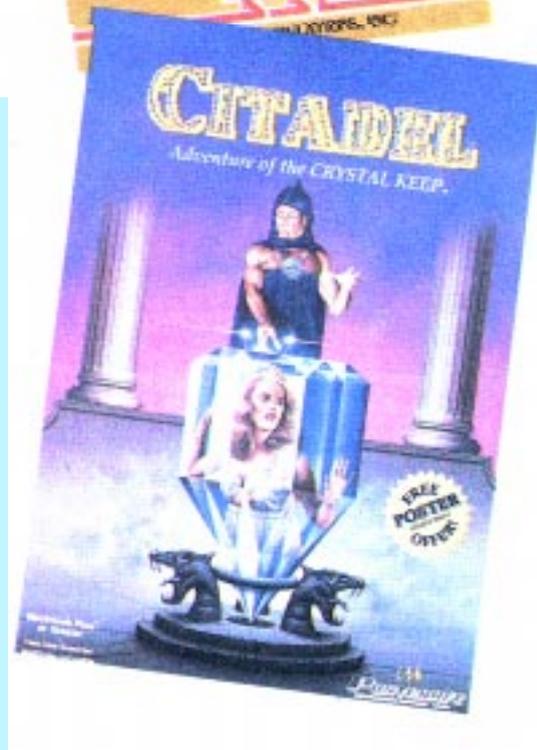
The Beastie Awards are given to those published, commercially available, software-based fantasy role-playing adventures that receive the most votes (for each computer system) from the readers of this column. Other individual awards are selected by the authors of this column. These awards cover games reviewed in DRAGON issues #153-164. Many fine software entertainments were released after issue #164, in November and December 1990. However, due to our review schedule, we can't bring our reviews of these products to you until later this year. This means that many of these fine entertainments will be in the running for the Beastie Awards of 1991.

Computer games' ratings

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



The 1990 Beastie Awards



PC/MS-DOS system (tie): *Ultima VI* (Origin) and *Secret of the Silver Blades* (SSI). In our reviews, *Ultima VI* received a higher overall rating than did *Secret of the Silver Blades*. However, each is an outstanding example of the best available adventures for gamers.

Apple II system: *Dark Heart of Uukrul* (Broderbund Software)

Macintosh system: *Citadel* (Postcraft International): black and white graphics award; and *Might and Magic II* (New World Computing): color graphics award

Amiga system: *Draconian: Drakkhen* (Data East USA)

Individual awards

Best science-fiction game: *Mega-Traveller 1: The Zhodani Conspiracy* (Paragon Software)

Best graphic adventure: *Loom* (Lucasfilm Games)

Best simulation: *Railroad Tycoon* (MicroProse Software, PC/MS-DOS version). You didn't see this review in any of the issues between #153 and #164. The review of *Railroad Tycoon* that appears in issue #165 (January 1991) was originally scheduled for the November issue but had to be pulled due to space restrictions. Therefore, this fine simulation was actu-

ally reviewed during the eligible time frame for game selections.

Best combat simulation (tie): *Harpoon* (Three-Sixty Pacific); and *M-1 Tank Platoon* (MicroProse Software)

Best arcade game: *Projectyle* (Electronic Arts)

Best strategy game: *Ishido: The Way of the Stones* (Accolade)

Best driving simulation: *The Cycles* (Accolade)

Best flight simulator: *Their Finest Hour: The Battle of Britain* (Lucasfilm Games)

Most original game: *Dragonstrike* (SSI)

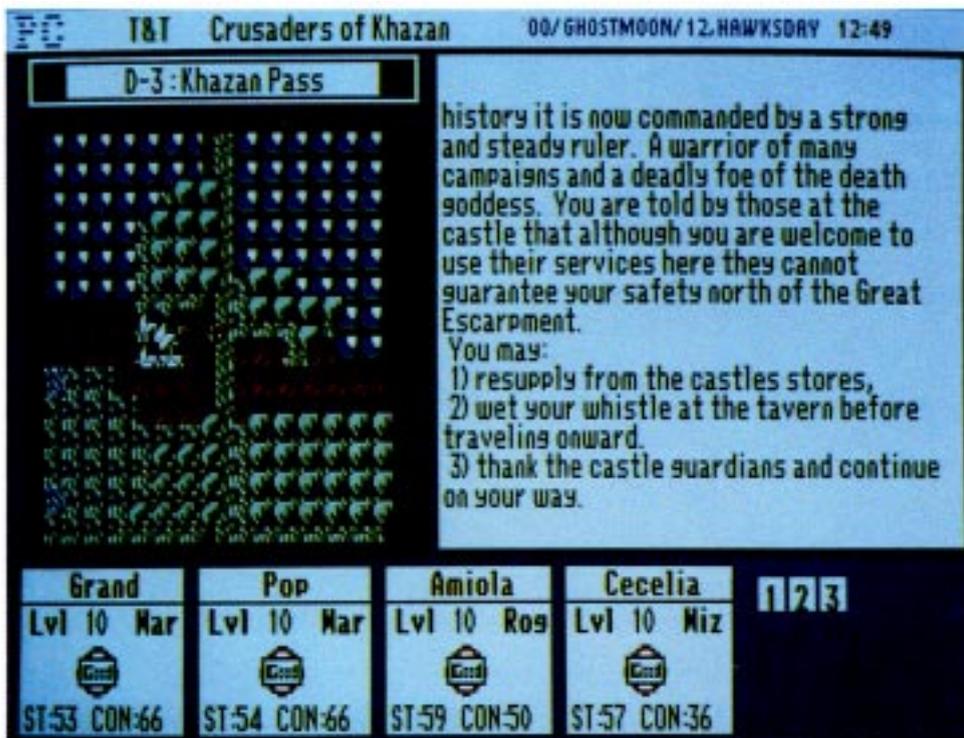
Best sports simulation: *Rick Davis's World Trophy Soccer* (Virgin Mastertronic)

Best board-game conversion: *Stratego* (Accolade)

Best game conversion (tie): *Champions of Krynn* (SSI), from PC/MS-DOS to Amiga; and *Pirates!* (MicroProse Software), from Macintosh to Amiga

Best video arcade game: Sega Genesis—*Revenge of Shinobi* (Sega); and NEC Turbographx-16—*Alien Crush* (NEC)

Best video role-playing game: Sega Genesis—*Phantasy Star II* (Sega of America); and NEC Turbographx-16—*Dungeon Explorer* (NEC)



Tunnels & Trolls (New World Computing)

Tunnels & Trolls

New World Computing (818-999-0606)
PC/MS-DOS version in
VGA graphics mode

\$49.95

Tunnel & Trolls (T&T) surprisingly lacks support for additional boards (such as sound boards), but this does not detract from this true-to-form fantasy role-playing game (FRPG). Having just played several games with AdLib or Roland sound support, the lack of sophisticated sound initially was missed. But, as play continued, *T&T* compared favorably with other FRPG offerings running on IBM computers or their clones.

Converting a successful role-playing environment to the computer is an especially difficult task. *T&T* succeeds where many fail; the environment is true to the original FRPG form and play. Although the graphics employed when adventuring outdoors seem somewhat diminutive at first, the reasoning for this becomes clear as you realize the expanse of the *T&T* world. You must move an entire party across huge land and water masses within the boundaries of computer memory—hence, the rather reduced view of your party within what are sometimes indistinct terrain hexes. The included multicolored map is a great aid as you hunt for the wizard-king Khazan.

The game features over 60 spells as well as auto-mapping. However, we highly recommend you do some of your own mapping because accessing the automatically generated map requires a complete screen change. You cannot move and view

the map simultaneously.

The game begins in the Silver Swan tavern in the city of Gull. Elysan, a bard, is telling the tale how the great wizard Khazan united all the towns to drive the monsters from the land. For six centuries, he ruled mankind wisely. Unfortunately, one of his trusted advisors, Khara Kang, was subverted by Lerotra'hh. The peace pact signed by Khazan and Lerotra'hh, honored for over 400 years, has been abandoned by the Death Empress, and her grisly troops are gathering to finish off mankind. Khazan is bound in a magic sleep in the capital city of Khazan, and you must assemble your party at the mouth of the Tharothar River to defeat the tyrant and rescue the wizard.

The mechanics require that you create four characters. Pay particular attention to the dexterity and strength needs of the weaponry listed in the gamer's manual. For example, if you want to arm a warrior with a double-bladed broad axe, he needs at least a 10 dexterity and a 21 strength just to lift the weapon. We recommend that before you roll up each character, you arm him on paper. Then, as you roll his characteristics, you'll know the minimum attributes that he must have in order to use the weapon you have selected.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the game is its use of languages. *T&T* is rich in the variety of races and creatures that roam its lands. In order to communicate effectively, we highly recommend that all of your characters learn additional languages whenever possible. Training is

costly, but each adventurer can learn two or three major languages in addition to the ones he automatically knows, to cover most of the encounters.

In Gull, you'll probably want to join in an encounter that involves assisting others in wiping out a group of orcs. You will lose one or two characters in this battle, but those who survive will find the riches worth the effort. You can recruit others at the inn or at some of the specialty guild shops to fill the vacancies in your party. If you are careful when you create your first characters, your group might survive this battle.

Once the orcs are done away with and you have carefully spent your winnings on improved armor, weaponry, goods, spells, and other guild training, we recommend that you save at least 3,000 gold pieces (gp). It's a good idea to buy your own boat to travel to the Dragon Continent.

Should you survive your early encounters (and believe us, these are some of the toughest battles that your new characters will ever face), look around the dank and dark mazes beneath Gull. But watch out for traps—they are killers! Be certain that, whatever you meet, you have a very lucky individual in your group. Gambling will certainly cost a life if you don't have someone skilled with dexterity and luck.

Sail to the City of Knor and make sure you have enough money to pay to enter this port of civilization. If you don't, you'll be hounded for payment throughout your city investigations. Then travel upriver to Khosht. It's fairly safe there, but if you cross the bridge between Knor and Khosht, expect to fight a significant beastie who'll batten your hatches faster than you can cry for help!

Always make certain your group has plenty of light available, and consider running away to be a critical battle decision. For example, our party heard cries for help and, in our haste to rescue a girl in trouble, found ourselves battling the Spider Cult. Our group took many hits, but we hung in there until it could be plainly seen that all would die if we continued the battle. So, we did what any self-respecting fighters would do: We ran! Lo and behold, it turned out that we rescued the girl from the cult at the same time. And was she someone special! Not only was she able to heal all of our wounds, but she gave us information about a dragon named Nepenthes that lives in the heart of a swamp.

T&T is filled with lively encounters. We suggest you save your game every time you've completed a significant action (you will make hundreds of game saves before you complete this adventure). Overall, *T&T* is a well-crafted FRPG. The player's interface is completely icon driven, but it will take a few minutes for gamers to understand how windows relate to one another. Each character also has an on-screen portrait. By clicking on a character, all of his capabilities and possessions can

be displayed. You simply move items from one window to another to enable characters to possess or drop those items. The text portions of the game are well written and offer elaborate explanations or details. Write down these important messages!

T&T is a faithful rendition of the original FRPG and would also, in our opinion, be a fine candidate for conversion to other popular computer systems such as the Macintosh, Amiga, and Atari ST. Hopefully, New World will consider this appeal. This adventure is a great deal of fun and is quite exciting, and it requires gamers to not only gird themselves for battle, but to also put on their thinking caps to solve puzzles.

BattleTech: The Crescent Hawks' Revenge ****

Infocom (415-329-0800)
PC/MS-DOS version with VGA graphics card and Roland sound \$49.95

As Jason Youngblood, you must find your kidnapped father. Building a lance of four 'Mechs, you head for the planet Lyons in hope of obtaining information that will lead to your father's location. In this sequel to *BattleTech: The Crescent Hawks' Inception*, the MechWarriors don't have individual statistics but are ranked in combat experience. As they obtain more experience, they don't need to rely on your commands as much and they can function better in combat.

The game is less of a role-playing game and more of a war game with a continuous story line. As you succeed or fail in a mission, the story line changes as well, giving you a new challenge each time. Within each mission, you have tasks that range from protecting a bridge to engaging enemy forces and forcing them to retreat. As you advance in the game, you are also given chances to command as many as three lances (12 'Mechs). You can select from over 30 'Mechs and vehicles. A 'Mech recognition chart is included with the game and makes such decisions easier.

Each 'Mech is ranked in long, medium-, and close-range firepower, armor level, and speed. As the game progresses, you'll find you are able to make better decisions as to which 'Mechs are needed to create a balanced and formidable force.

During battle, the screen shows an overhead perspective of the surrounding terrain and your enemies. By clicking on any unit, you can find out an enemy unit's combat capabilities, armor, speed, and heat status (heat is caused by the weapons' firing and movement of the 'Mechs). Devices called "heat sinks" inside the 'Mechs try to dissipate excess heat; if combat gets rough, the heat increases. If the 'Mech gets too hot, it will shut down and be inoperable for a few turns.

You can issue orders by clicking on a unit, causing an options screen to appear. You can move a 'Mech to a designated square, target an enemy or another square, change firing tactics between



Stellar 7 (Dynamix)



Stellar 7 (Dynamix)

shooting defensively and shooting at will, alter the speed of the 'Mech, and determine if your pilot is going to be safe with current heat levels in the 'Mech.

The speed of real-time combat can be altered. Once a unit completes its orders from the player, depending on the experience of the pilot, it does one of several different things: If the pilot is inexperienced, it stops and waits for new orders. An experienced pro can continue to run and dodge enemy fire while continuing to fire at its target.

During later scenarios, DropShip commands are available (DropShips are spacecraft that transport 'Mechs). They include intelligence commands that allow you to check the formation, location, speed, and heading of both your lances and enemy lances. Satellite maps are also available from the DropShip, as are artillery shelling and strafing by Aerospace Fighters. Unfortunately, the enemy has identical capabilities and can also spy, shell, or strafe your 'Mechs.

The animation, music, and sounds for this game are well done. With an AdLib card, the user can hear the pilots' voices digitized as they call to you for assistance.



Hard Nova (Electronic Arts)

This game is good but is not the same as the first BattleTech game. Players wanting a role-playing game might be disappointed, but war gamers will thoroughly enjoy the variety of 'Mechs and vehicles available as well as the needed strategies for combat success. Infocom has produced a highly enjoyable strategic war game that happens to possess a great story line as well.

Hard Nova *****

Electronic Arts (415-571-7171)
PC/MS-DOS version with VGA graphics card and Roland sound \$49.95

Hard Nova is a hard-driving science-fiction adventure in which your wits must be as fast as your weapon. There's no room for hesitation here. As a mercenary, your life is on the line every time you turn around. Say or do the wrong thing, and you could face blazing automagnums at 10 paces. Whether you're flying your hovercraft in orbit above a planet to search for a suitable drop zone, or meandering carefully through mazes designed to test your mettle against combat robots, *Hard Nova* is packed with action.

Don't expect to sit down at this science-fiction adventure and be immediately able

to play it. Take your time to learn each command and how to use your mouse to move characters and hovercraft. Save your games as you learn the environments. There are many game elements you should not take for granted. For example, one of your major efforts is to locate additional spacecraft crew members. Forget to assign them to specific assignments on board your spacecraft, and you'll lose them.

Your life as either Nova (female) or Stark (male) has not been an easy one. You are a free-lance Starkiller mercenary; your last ship was destroyed, and only you and your navigator, A'kri Janr, survived. After you were picked up, the commander of the Starkiller Mercenary Group, Gerard Kendall, offered you new opportunities. He has given you a new ship but no crew. You can carry out his assignments, but there's always room on the side for smuggling. The higher the reward for your secretive deliveries, the greater the danger. We recommend you stay away from smuggling until after you've completed your first assignment from Kendall.

To make matters worse, the denizens of Planet Typhon, beyond the frontier of the Core Worlds, know their sun is dying. They must find a new home, and if the planets they encounter are populated, their battle fleet stands ready to ensure more homey environments.

Hard Nova's on-screen displays are well designed. If you are adventuring indoors, the main screen area shows a map. You are displayed in green, and your party in yellow. Opponents are red, while all non-hostiles are blue.

You target opponents by using the space bar. Targeting is necessary for both talking and firing. When targeted, an opponent appears on the screen and you can learn its name, weaponry, and armor status. Watch the opponent's health status to the right as you attack, so you can determine if you are successfully engaging your target.

While wandering around, you'll be able to enter elevators, pick up objects, and earn valuable experience points when engaging in battles. Within your first environment, we recommend you enter the shop on the right side of the screen and purchase some additional ammunition for your automagnum. Your faithful navigator carries a sonic mace that requires no ammunition.

The interaction with other characters in the game is unique. What you say has a definite effect on the targeted party. However, you can return to a character later in the game if you feel you messed up the first contact. He might have some critical information to give you!

Once you have assembled your crewmen and assigned them to their posts aboard your craft, it's time to head into space. Your craft has a broad range of capabilities, including the ability to change the signature of your vessel to something others would

consider less hostile, such as a tanker. You can also select specific weapons bays to increase your offensive potential.

Spacecraft maneuvering is controlled by the numeric keypad or the mouse. You simply click the mouse in the direction you wish to travel, and through use of the arrow keys you can increase or decrease the speed of your ship. When you reach a planet, you are asked if you wish to dock with the space station or go into orbit around the planet. The former enables you to refuel your ship (and to accept a smuggling assignment), while the latter enables you to select a drop site for your ship. The assignments range from getting fuel cells to the planet Tikorr for 5,000 credits to earning 29,000 credits for carrying fuel cells to the planet Ciberan. Weapon parts to Rouyn garner you 15,000 credits, and alien food to Ariel is worth 9,000 credits.

Not all goes well to and from planets or stargates, as a number of hostile craft are flying about. Before you can repel their attacks, you must target them just as you would a sentient target. You also have to decide which of your weapon bays are most appropriate for the selected target. The hostiles afford you very little time in which to make your decision.

You can continuously fire your A4 Pulser laser if a targeted ship is within range, and you can also attempt to board an enemy ship. Other navigation options include shadowing a ship, jamming radar-guided missiles, flashing optically guided missiles with strobe lights, and confusing incoming heat-seeking missiles by discharging flammable chemicals into your drive exhaust.

Your technician can also hack at the software to improve it. There are software programs for avionics (ship maneuvering); thruster (ship acceleration), targeting (target locks on other vessels), spacecom (decoding ship signatures), and evasion (evading enemy fire).

Hard Nova requires a gamer's commitment for many, many hours. So many options are available that they are impossible to list in a single review. Not only can your technician learn a great deal from targeted ships in space, but you can increase each crewman's skills to afford you an even greater chance of succeeding in this multiple adventure game.

For example, one area in which we highly recommend improving your skills early in the game is your Aptitude. The higher you raise your Aptitude score at the start of the adventure, the more your abilities will increase as you gain experience levels. One way to start this process is to make certain you enter the robot maze when you first start the game. Don't simply go around grabbing the flags for credits! Annihilate the robots, all of them, to earn those valued combat points.

Yes, there is copy protection, but it is not disk based. You must answer a question that relates to a specific nebula that is displayed on-screen. You find the correct

answer by matching the pictured nebula with your answer sheet and entering the correct alphanumeric answer.

The VGA graphics are outstanding, especially when targeting opponents. The inside view is always clear, and the space views leave no doubt as to your surroundings. Not all scenes produce theme music, but when it does play, it is highly enjoyable to hear for a few minutes. However, if you plan on hanging around bars for a long time, you might wish to turn off the music after it gets repetitive.

Hard Nova is a great purchase for science-fiction adventure gamers. The game's broad variety of encounters, both sentient and in space, offer many hours of exciting entertainment. We highly recommend *Hard Nova* as an addition to your software library.

Stellar 7

Dynamix (503-343-0772)
PC/MS-DOS version with VGA graphics and Roland sound \$34.95

Back in the early 1980s, a game called *Stellar 7* was released. Using only wire-frame graphics, this game was a hit for Apple II computers. With the advent of new technology, Dynamix has now re-released *Stellar 7* for PC/MS-DOS computers, and the game has had a major face-lift. Thanks to 3Space technology, Dynamix does for futuristic tank simulations what Origin did for futuristic space simulations.

From the detailed soundtrack and beautiful 256-color opening scenes, to the dramatic end of the game, Dynamix makes *Stellar 7* feel more like a movie than an arcade game. Don't be fooled by the opening cut scenes; there is plenty of action for you in battling more than 20 different enemies on several different planets.

Luckily, you have the Raven, a tank that highlights the power of firepower. The first-person perspective adds realism to the game as you engage the evil forces of Gir Draxon on seven planets. Radar keeps you informed of obstacles and enemies around you, while magnification helps separate the merely deadly from the deadliest.

A targeting scope in the center of the screen shows the approximate location your cannon shells will hit when fired. The scope changes when the Raven finds an enemy within range of your cannons. Below the main screen and radar is the energy gauge that decreases as enemy fire hits the Raven. When the gauge is completely depleted, the Raven can no longer depend on its shields; the next hit by enemies destroys it. Enemies include sand-sleds, hovercraft, and tanks possessing a variety of armaments and armor. There are also flying skimmers and other unidentified vehicles to add to your troubles, as well as forces that may be cloaked, making them virtually undetectable.

Aiding you against the enemy armada are various offensive and defensive weapons that can make the difference between

life and death. The Inviso cloak generator prevents enemy units from tracking the Raven. The Eel shield is a ramming device that turns an enemy's shields against itself and forces the vehicle to explode. The super cannon fires faster and more powerful shells than your main cannon, while the MP thruster gives the Raven a short burst of speed. The cat's eye can reveal cloaked enemies; the RC bomb is a mine that destroys anything that comes into close proximity of it; and the jump thruster makes the Raven airborne for several seconds (this helps in passing over obstacles or enemies). These weapons should be used only as needed, as the Raven can hold only three such devices and, replacements can be obtained only from defeated enemies.

This is a great arcade game. The animated scenes between the battles make *Stellar 7* a complete story as well. The animation and backgrounds are crisp and finely detailed, as are the soundtracks and special effects. *Stellar 7* is rumored to be the favorite arcade game of author Tom Clancy; it certainly is a hit with us, and we heartily recommend it for arcade fans. The plot may not be totally original, but with great graphics, sound, and a number of different, intelligent enemies, *Stellar 7* is a must buy.

Clue corner

Bard's Tale I (Interplay)

1. To escape from Bashar Kavior's domain, defeat his dragon.
2. Bards can sit on Harkyn's throne.
3. There is a secret door to the south of the Jabberwock. It hides a powerful and needed weapon.
4. Silver items are found in the castle and both towers.
5. The One of Cold is a common type of walking statue.
6. Visit Kylearean for the key to Mangar's tower.
7. While the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth words are easily found, the sixth and last words are somewhat disguised.
8. The Keymaster may save you some spell points if you are willing to give up some gold.
9. Dragons complaining about pork can be passed if they hear the right tune.
10. Remember who Odin's greatest son is.
11. There is a hole in the ceiling from the fourth to fifth levels in Mangar's tower.
12. Sacrifices will have to be made if Mangar is to be reached.

Andrew Mussell
Brandon WI

Curse of the Azure Bonds (SSI)

1. In Dracandros' Tower, attack him. When you've killed his guards, rest at the top. Save the game and then go down the stairs. Try to cast a successful Hold Person on the dark elf below; that should kill him.

Go back to the top, then heal wounds and memorize all spells. Even though the mage claims only mages may compete, my cleric had more luck against the Challenge of the Globe. Don't pay the second dark elf lord—he's an illusion!

Ian Rapley
Seer Green, Bucks, United Kingdom

Using any of the standard methods for cloning magical items yields amazing results. Create a second ring (the first is gained from Dracandros' body). Give both rings to the same magic-user. The first ring doubles the number of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd level spells the magic-user can learn; the second does not triple but redoubles the number. An 11th-level mage with 16 Fireball spells in memory is a wondrous sight indeed!

James A. Gilly
USS *Simon Lake* (AS-33)

1. Some magical items can be readied only in combat or in an inn. These include Frost Brands, Flame Tongues, Girdles of Dwarvenkind, Cloaks of Displacement, and all Ioun Stones.
2. When your mage gains a level, have him select the spell Enlarge before other, higher-level spells. Cast by a 9th-level mage, this spell gives a 21 strength that lasts for 1½ hours. In a cavern, this is long enough to last for three or four fights, if you don't Encamp and Rest. This also works well while patrolling the forest.
3. To gain a large number of spells for your mage's spell book, go to the Zhentil Keep magic shop. Buy one of each scroll available. Then go to the inn and cast Read Magic and Scribe. You will be pleasantly surprised at the number and variety of the spells you receive. Keep any scrolls you weren't able to Scribe, because you can cast spells from the scrolls with no chance of spell failure.

4. If you find the council room of the Mulmaster Beholder Corps, Flee In Panic if you haven't saved your game recently. We fled, cast protective spells, and returned to see how well we might fare. On the party we cast Enlarge, Bless, Prayer, and Haste. Each mage cast Blink, Mirror Image (× 2), and Minor Globe. Then we entered. We managed to kill four beholders, one high priest, and one drow lord. Left facing us were eight rakshasas, nine high priests, nine drow lords, and 11 more beholders. Our party lasted for the first three rounds; then we started failing our saving throws. Our fighters, thief, and cleric were killed. One mage was afraid and ran. The other mage managed to last for a surprising five more rounds. We lost in the end.

5. Before fighting Mogion, cast the same spells that we used against the beholders. If you beat Mogion, you must immediately fight three "Bits O' Moander." Have a second Haste spell ready. Charm Monster works well against Mogion.

Robert MacKenzie and Lucas MacKay
Pictou County, Nova Scotia

(Thomas Rigney of Chino Valley; Ariz., writes that the tip stating that adventurers shouldn't go into the Sphere of Annihilation is incorrect. He states "you can use a non-magic-user character and win, thus receiving a great amount of experience points." He also adds the following hints.)

1. Use the Dust of Disappearance against the Mulmaster Beholder Corps.
2. Never attack your NPCs, as they will turn on you.

Might and Magic I (New World Comp.)

1. Become a courier service if you wish to find Zam and Zom and their treasure.
2. Don't bother with the treasure in Erliquin; the treasure below is much better, if you can get it.
3. Arkeno Guire can give you some much needed help, including powerful magic, but you must have lots of food and 4th-level cleric spells.
4. The secret of Portsmouth isn't in the demon- and devil-ridden dungeon; it's in the midst of the city. Also, don't disturb the demon conference unless you're on the verge of completing the game.
5. Have nothing of value in your backpack when trading with the hermit.
6. When you find walls or rooms painted in black and white checkers, search for the idols.
7. Doom is tough, but solve it before the final encounters in the strongholds.
8. After defeating the stronghold that Lord Hacker commands you to defeat, don't go back for more!
9. The end of the Forbidden Crypt holds a valuable amulet.
10. Zam and Zom are in the two towns to which the courier service doesn't take you.
11. Have mercy on prisoners.
12. The Clerical Retreat holds all but the Clerics of the South, who hold the key to raising abilities indefinitely.

Andrew Mussell
Brandon WI

(Kevin Collier of B Company, 92nd Engineer Battalion, currently involved in Operation Desert Storm, took the time to write us with the following hints for what he calls the "Tyranthraxus Trilogy of Terror," namely *Pool of Radianc*e, *Curse of the Azure Bonds*, and *Secret of the Silver Blades*. His advice covers general party makeup for this series of fine FRPGs from SSI.)

1. The six characters that you create in *Pool of Radianc*e can easily (Ha!) complete that adventure. The trolls-and-ogres slum encounter, Sokal Keep, and the Kobold Caves are the only encounters where you may wish to hire an extra hand or two.

2. Three of the six characters should be human, with one being female. The other three should include a dwarf and two half-elves. Because of the very real danger of character death, particularly in the early stages of the game, I do not recommend elven PCs. The optimal party should look like this:

Dwarf fighter/thief male

Half-elf magic-user male
Half-elf magic-user male
Human cleric male
Human magic-user female
Human magic-user male

In Pool, only human clerics rise to a level higher than their demihuman counterparts. Humans and demihumans of all other classes rise to the same levels.

3. If you wish to carry this party over to Curse, drop the half-elves—only demihumans with thieving abilities will advance in levels as high as humans. Good choices to replace one would be either a dwarven fighter/thief, a human fighter, or a human cleric. Having two human clerics allows one of them to change class to either a paladin or ranger.

In Curse, your party should now look like this:

Dwarf fighter/thief male
Human fighter male
Human paladin/cleric male
Human cleric male
Human magic-user female
Human magic-user male

Rangers are okay, but it is my opinion that a good, old-fashioned fighter works just as well. Keep in mind, however, that rangers will work wonders against the giants found in Silver Blades. Fighters cannot change class to become rangers or paladins.

If you transfer this party to Silver Blades, you should drop the human fighter male and create a ranger. If you want the ultimate monster-smashing party, try the following arrangement:

Dwarf fighter/thief
Human cleric/thief (changed class)
Human paladin/cleric
Human magic-user
Human magic-user

Warning: Always advance to the next highest level before changing class!

With the exception of changing the class of one of the magic-users, this party has it all. Good luck, everyone, and watch out for glowing mice!

Secret of the Silver Blades (SSI)

1. Make certain all of your characters have a mirror readied when they go into the Dreadlord's castle. Hordes and hordes of gazers (medusae and basilisks) are much easier to fight if they can't turn your characters to stone!

2. Don't have enough fighters? Try using dual-class fighter/thieves. Just roll up a good fighter with a dexterity of 17 or more. Make sure he's at least 7th level (so he'll have 312 attacks per round). Then, change him into a thief. It's a bit of a pain coddling a 1st-level thief past his level as a fighter and then up to the same level as the rest of the party, but it really is worth the effort in the long run.

3. I don't mean to sound like a bigot, but don't use demihumans (elves, dwarves, gnomes, and halflings). Basically, demihuman characters are better than human characters, but it really is annoying when

they stop gaining experience levels. Use humans, forgive them their shortcomings, and let them rise to greatness!

Graham Horwood
Huntsville TX

1. Before fighting the Dreadlord at 2,11 in the third level of the castle, be certain to cast—in the following order—Haste, Fire Shield, and Globe of Invulnerability. Haste is required only once; the other two spells should be cast on every magic-user in the party. In combat, be certain to cast a Fireball on the group of storm giants to your party's left *before* casting any other mage spell. The Dreadlord is not affected by any spell, so don't waste them on him.

2. After defeating the Dreadlord, heal your party members to their maximum hit points before going north through a secret door. The battle here is one of sheer strength and is with many iron golems. Make sure a Haste spell is cast on all of your fighters, and back them up to one space below the door opening. This is the best defensive area. Remember: No magic affects these golems.

Steve Sheppard
Rutherford NJ

1. Here's a neat trick: When starting, give all the items to one character. Go to the hall and remove your characters. Turn off your computer, reboot, and add characters. Do not load the saved game. You will start from the beginning, and your character will not only receive the same items again but will retain those he received the first time around. You can repeat this procedure as often as you wish.

2. The first action you should undertake is to go to the well. Duck when you encounter the Black Circle fighting clerics and thieves.

3. Do not waste your Wands of Ice Storm on the hatchling or the sub-adult red dragons. Use them instead on the huge, ancient dragon.

4. Give the well your gems, then follow the map to the other dragon's hoard. Use the teleporter to get there and give the well more gems.

5. Clear out the Black Circle hideout. Then search for secret doors and enter the second section of their hideout. Clear the second section and go through the hatchling pool. Clear the Inner Sanctum and teleport back.

6. Teleport to the town and defeat Marcus. Be prepared (get trained, healed, have all of your items identified, and so on), then go to the well. Obtain all of the information you can and then journey to the mines.

7. First, visit the Temple. Meet Derf and join his quest. To find the pieces of the staff, go West on L1, West on L2, North on L3, South on L4, North on L5, West on L6, South on L7, and South on L8. I recommend you go to level six first, because there you will find Vala, one of the Silver Blades.

8. After finding all of the staff's pieces,

go back to Derf. Then go to level eight. Go north to find the teleporter to level nine. Don't go through unless you have all of your hit points, because on the other side is a load of umber hulks.

9. After defeating the 'hulks, follow the corridor and go right at the first turn. Attack the margoyles and gargoyles, then proceed to level ten. Go East to find the dungeons, but memorize a few Stone to Flesh spells first.

10. In the dungeons, the riddle answers are: YOUR HEART, YOUR WORD; YOUR BREATH; RIVER; WATER; SILENCE; WIND; FIRE.

11. The keys are on levels seven, four, and one. Move throughout the dungeon in search mode; there are no random encounters, but there are many secret doors and traps.

12. Always open all prison cells.

13. When you get back to the town, always prepare your party before using any of the teleportation archways.

14. In the ice crevices, the city clerk of Phalen will not lead you to any treasure. Instead, she takes you to a teleportation archway. Go to the frost giant village, find and talk to the king, help him out, then request to be taken to the castle. He will bring you as close to the castle as he can. Beware of encounters with the castle guards.

15. In the Castle of Dreadlord, the alcoves are rotating rooms. Wait, don't flee; to get back out, find a small lever and pull it, then go back to the alcove. In the alcove with the meat is a mini-teleporter that takes you to a stairway. Go up to level two.

16. On level two, go through the maze but do not buy the map from the storm giant. It is not accurate. However, Journal Entry #66 is accurate. The password to the golems is STEELEYE. Do *not* listen to the Magic Mouth, and do not chase after Sagatha and her bunch.

17. On the final level, the order of the keys is: silver, gold, and bronze.

18. Answer OSWULF to the question of the Magic Mouth. Do not hesitate to bash through the door that vaporizes every thing it touches: It is an illusion.

19. When encountering the lich at the door, wait for it to attack first.

20. The battle with the golden warrior and company will yield a Girdle of Giant Strength, Plate Mail +5, and a Long Sword +5.

21. In the battle with Dreadlord, cast Invisibility 10' Radius or Mass Invisibility just before entering. Your archer should have the Girdle, the fine longbow, and the Ring of Invisibility, and he should use the Arrows +4 on the Dreadlord. Have your mages pelt the storm giants and clerics of Bane with Fireballs. Keep your archer and mages safe with your fighters. Have one fighter remain invisible until your archer runs out of Arrows +4, then have him attack Dreadlord. Have your archer (who should be a thief) move up invisibly (using the ring) and backstab Dreadlord. If all

goes well, you will survive the battle. Then Rest (make certain your cleric does not lapse into unconsciousness or die; it could take months to regain your health) and recover your hit points and spells. Find the secret door and go through it. Search, defeat the minions there (iron golems and medusas), free the Soul of Eldamar from the lich's taint, and you will win the game. The two brothers' spirits will be off to their final resting place.

James M. Sorenson
North Babylon NY

In the Temple of Tyr, search all of the Acolyte's rooms. When you locate the room that says "This Acolyte's room is more unused. . ." go through the wall, go to the peephole, and look at the minotaurs. Attack them. Go behind the purple tables in the chapel and search there to get the treasures. Go to the "apparent training room" at square 15,14, then go through the wall. There are many magical treasures here. (Don't forget Derf the Dwarf!)

Tony Wiederhold
Michigan City IN

Ultima VI (Origin)

1. In the bank in Britain, you can find 2,400 gold pieces in magically locked chests.

2. In the village of Britain, you can obtain a magic bow without spending any money. Talk with an NPC!

3. You can find one NPC and a magical helmet in Trinsic, as well as a magical glass sword.

Niels Groeneveld
The Netherlands

1. Sherry the mouse (who lives in Lord British's castle) can be a valuable addition to your adventuring party. You need her to get the Rune of Valor, and she can go through portcullises and fences that block other characters. It is best to arm her with a sling and have her gain levels at the Shrine of Valor so she will gain strength.

2. Ask Gwynneth in Britain about the triple crossbow.

3. Unless you have a very powerful party, make certain you have many invis-

bility potions, spells, and rings before entering Destard (north of Trinsic). You will find an egg room on the fourth level.

4. Good spells to obtain as soon as you can are: Unlock Magic, Untrap, Dispel Field, Disable, Great Heal, Explosion, Pick-pocket, Kill, and Mass Invisibility.

5. The Orb of the Moons is a most useful method of transportation. Where the Orb takes you is determined by the placement of this object relative to the Avatar. Properly used, it can take your party to all eight human shrines, most cities, and four locations within the Gargoyle world.

6. When you are told to go to the Gargoyle world, go through Hythloth (east of the Shrine of Humility, on the Isle of the Avatar) instead of using the Orb.

7. Never gain levels at the Shrine of Humility; it raises *none* of your attributes.

8. If you need money, talk to a wisp while holding the Lost Book of Mantras.

John Regehr
Manhattan KS

Wasteland (Interplay)

1. In Quartz, go to the outlaw hideout (northeast of the courthouse); in the southwest room, you'll locate a map. Behind the map there is a safe. The combination to the safe is 11-16-27.

2. At the waste pit in Needles, you can find numerous assault rifles, ammunition clips, and rad suits.

3. The password to Fat Freddy's is BIRD.

4. If you have Kevlar suits, you can kill the people in the Spades casino.

5. Don't waste bullets on the Scorpion. You can kill it with LAW rockets.

6. You must have cyborg tech skill to get a secpass B from Finster in his mind maze.

7. In Base Cochise, the final destruction sequence is: Blackstar key, Nova key, Pulsar key, Quasar key. To finish the sequence, run the following color sequence: red, yellow, green, blue.

Waldo Strok
Elizabeth CO

Wizardry I (Sir-Tech)

1. When disarming teleporters located on Level 4, be very cautious. One trap

located in the southwestern corner of the level will cause you to stick around forever unless you have a Malor spell.

2. If you can find Lords Garb, go for it! It provides regeneration power when worn by a Lord!

The Lessers

1. On Level 10 is a square to the right of the spot where you begin your travels. Stepping on this square transports you to the castle.

2. Trebor will not take Werdna's Amulet if it is in the Swap Bag.

3. In the darkness in Level 1 is an elevator. If you take it down to Level 4, you can enter the Training Grounds or another elevator. Defeat the monsters in the training ground to receive gold, a Staff of Conflagration (Mahalito), a Ring of Death (don't put it on—it's cursed and it slowly kills the character), and a Blue Ribbon. The Blue Ribbon lets you use the elevator that can take you down to Level 3.

Colin McGuigan
Oviedo FL

Letters

We would like to thank Kenneth Chan of Los Angeles, Calif., for taking the time to write in regards to the problems we encountered in the PC/MS-DOS version of *Dark Heart of Uukrul*. Kenneth successfully completed the Apple II version of the game and called it "the second-best game I have ever played." In fact, Kenneth voted for *Dark Heart* as the Game of the Year!

Kenneth believes we ran into a glitch and that perhaps there was some slippage in Broderbund's quality control. He believes that *Dark Heart* is an exciting and ingenious game. Should we hear from other readers of like minds, we'll let everyone know.

The question of the month comes from Randy Villeneuve, of Nova Scotia. He has been enjoying *Dragon Wars* but has finally reached a dead end. He has conquered the pirates and has visited the eastern isles. However, "in order for me to get any further in the game, I must first cross some rivers and a canyon. In order for me to accomplish this, it seems as though I must get some magical golden boots at the temple in the city of the Yellow Mud Toad. Can anyone give me a hint on how to obtain these boots?" Randy is playing the Commodore 64/128 version of the game. If you have an answer for Randy, please mail it to us and we'll publish it.

That's it for this issue. Please join us next month when we delve into more computer and video games. And send those hints to us. Remember, the life you save may be your next DM's! Until next time, game on! 



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LORD SOTH SCREAMS IN DESPAIR AS SHE RECOGNIZES THE CRYING REMAINS OF HER DEAD LOVER. SHE EARL EXAMINES HIS SWORD AS HIS DEATH DRAGON SMUGS TOWARD THE SCATTERING CROWD.



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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).

This month, the sage considers a few problems that have stymied AD&D® game referees and players. All page references herein refer to the AD&D 2nd Edition volumes.

Are creatures that are immune to normal weapons also immune to "natural" damage such as falling? If not, how much damage equals one "plus"? Is a creature that is immune to normal weapons also immune to normal fire?

Table 48 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (page 69) implies that weapon immunities are not absolute. Until official word comes along, you have several options:

1. You might apply Table 48 directly. That is, a fall of 50' or more can hurt a creature hit by only +1 or better weapons because it inflicts five dice of damage, and such creature can be harmed by any creature with 4 + 1 or more hit dice.

2. You can assume that gravity and impact with the unforgiving earth are more powerful than any weapon, and allow falls of any length to harm any creature.

Although some DMs rule otherwise, immunity to normal fire is a special defense all by itself. Unless a creature's description specifically lists an immunity to fire or other form of energy, it is safe to assume that the creature is vulnerable to various energy attacks, magical or not.

Can a vorpal weapon sever the neck even if the attack cannot reach the neck? For instance, can a dwarf with a vorpal short sword sever a storm giant's neck? What happens if the attacker gets a roll good enough to sever hut not good enough attack the target's armor class?

If the DM rules that an attack cannot reach the neck, then the neck cannot be severed. However, there is no reason to assume that a foe's neck always is out of

reach just because he is taller than the weapon wielder. During the course of a melee round, a very tall opponent might bend over to get a good swipe at his shorter opponent. Individual DMs must adjudicate these situations as they arise. A *vorpal weapon* or a weapon of *sharpness* must score a hit to sever anything. If the die roll is high enough to sever but not high enough to hit, the attack fails and nothing is severed.

According to the *Monstrous Compendium, Volume II*, a shambling mound grows by 1 HD every time it is subjected to a lightning attack. A wizard in my campaign has just charmed a shambling mound and has been busy dumping lightning bolts into it. When I wrote this letter, the shambling mound was up to 30 HD, and it probably will be up to 100 HD by the time you publish this. What should I do?

Gamesmanship such as you have described is fine in small doses; however, the DM must intervene when rules-bending threatens to send the campaign out of control. What should you do? Get creative.

A shambling mound gains 1 HD and grows 1' with every lightning attack. Ever hear of growing pains? Anything that causes pain can be construed as a hostile act (the wizard in your example hardly has the shambler's best interests in mind), and attacks on the subject of a *charm* by the caster break the effect. Or, assume that the growth effect is only temporary—perhaps the shambler can maintain the extra growth for only a few turns or hours. Afterward, the shambler might shrink or the new growth might just die off. If you're feeling especially cruel, you might rule that once the shambler reaches 16 dice, it splits off and forms two 8-HD shamblers. Of course, the new shamblers wouldn't be *charmed*. Note that unless the wizard in your example is using the *charm plants* spell, communication with the *charmed* shambler isn't possible without a *speak with plants* spell.

If a specialist wizard loses enough ability-score points to put him below the minimums for his specialty, what happens? Does he simply become a generalist or is his loss more catastrophic?

The specialist suffers no ill effects at all; ability score reductions of any kind are

painful enough. As this column has explained before, ability-score requirements for class and race are *initial* requirements only! Once a character becomes a member of a certain class or specialty, he stays a member unless he violates an alignment requirement or similar restriction placed on the class.

A couple of issues ago, you said that spells from a combined school are available to any specialist who has access to at least one of the schools. Therefore, a conjurer can cast evocation spells, because he is barred only from greater divinations and invocations. Right?

Wrong. Invocation/Evocation is a single school; the "Invocation" entry in the conjurer's opposition school list is a typo. Note also that the proper name for the Greater Divination school is Lesser/Greater Divination. Conjurers are barred from learning divination spells of all kinds, not (as one reader suggested) just divination spells of 4th level and above.

How can I find a gaming club?

Many local game stores sponsor clubs. If the store doesn't have a club, the management probably will let you post a notice asking about clubs. When looking for a club, be ready to form your own if there isn't one in your area; it's quite likely that other gamers in your area also would like to join a club.

The worlds largest role-playing club, the RPGA™ Network, has members in every region in the United States and in about 17 other countries. For more information about the RPGA Network, write: RPGA Network, P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Although the RPGA Network is a large, centralized organization, it currently has about 40 smaller, local game clubs affiliated with it, and it is getting ready to accept game retailers as members. RPGA Network members have access to a staff of volunteers who help members locate individual gamers or clubs in their local areas. Members can place free classified advertisements in POLYHEDRON™ Newszine, the Networks bimonthly newsletter, which is scheduled to become monthly in May 1991.

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he invisible crossbowman said, "So I'm supposed to sit in this corner and shoot if you nod at me? What sort of customers do you get, anyway?"

Vraid the Alchemist soothed the mercenary. "Normal people for the most part. This is just . . . insurance."

He did not mention that he'd just restocked the potion supply of a very successful adventuring party and was hard put to find places to keep all the gold he'd received in payment.

With a final mutter, the crossbowman found his invisible chair and sat down.

Vraid was composing a note to his supplier—an order for more mandragora—when the doorbell jingled. He looked up from his workbench, careful not to nod. The intruder, a sunburnt old man in a peasant's tunic, looked harmless. Vraid noticed that the stranger carried an enormous pottery vessel on his back. His arm bore a small scar.

"What may I do for you, freeman?" The alchemist strove to conceal the interest in his voice.

The fellow glanced around, then shuffled up nervously. "You're supposed to be the richest alchemist in town. Will you buy dragon's blood?"

He swung the jar, which Vraid now recognized as the sort of container used by farmers to hold pigs' blood, and liquid sloshed inside it—a plenitude of liquid.

Vraid opened his mouth. Then he narrowed his eyes. "I'll buy it, if it's real. Put that down, open it up, and we'll see. What sort of dragon do you claim this blood is from?"

If it was real, Vraid was going to be even richer. Dragon's blood was a key ingredient in many powerful spells and potions, and the demand always exceeded the supply.

The man spat on Vraid's floor. "It's real enough." He bent over to lower the vat carefully to the floor, then turned around and began stripping off the wax seal. "This is red dragon blood. Ancient red dragon blood."

Vraid almost nodded to the crossbowman then, but doubt stayed his head. He reached behind him for the tincture of dragonbane, poured a bit into a ceramic mortar, and added some seawater. "Open the jar. If it's dragon blood, I'll pay well for the location of the carcass. Otherwise, you will not come into this town ever again."

The jar lid came off, and Vraid thrust an iron rod in. He touched bottom where he expected to. That eliminated one dodge. The rod, when removed, was extremely corroded.

"Interesting," he muttered, "but now for the true test."

Vraid dipped some of the liquid out with a long-handled ceramic spoon. He brought the sample up to the light. It was skimmed over but had the look of blood. He held the spoon over the bowl of diluted dragonbane. Cautiously, he let a drop form on the tip of the spoon.

"Could you hurry this up?" the old man complained.

The drop fell and impacted. The resulting flame singed Vraid's eyebrows. It was brilliant red.

Vraid spun around. "Where's the carcass?"

The man raised one hand, fingers spread. "Hey! I want to sell what I have here and nothing else. Do you want it

Dragon's Blood

By Bryan Haught

Illustrations by Scott Burdick

or not?" He closed the jar.

"All right. Two hundred."

The stranger sighed noisily, hoisting the jar. "There's three gallons in the vat. I want three hundred Suns per pint, and you'll do well in the deal. Payment here and now, in gold, or I go visit Natseg's Potions. Yes or no?"

Vraid snorted. "Ridiculous! You beggar me!"

The man turned away. Leaning after him, Vraid noted a charred spot on the floor. "But I'll do it. And a thousand more for the body's location."

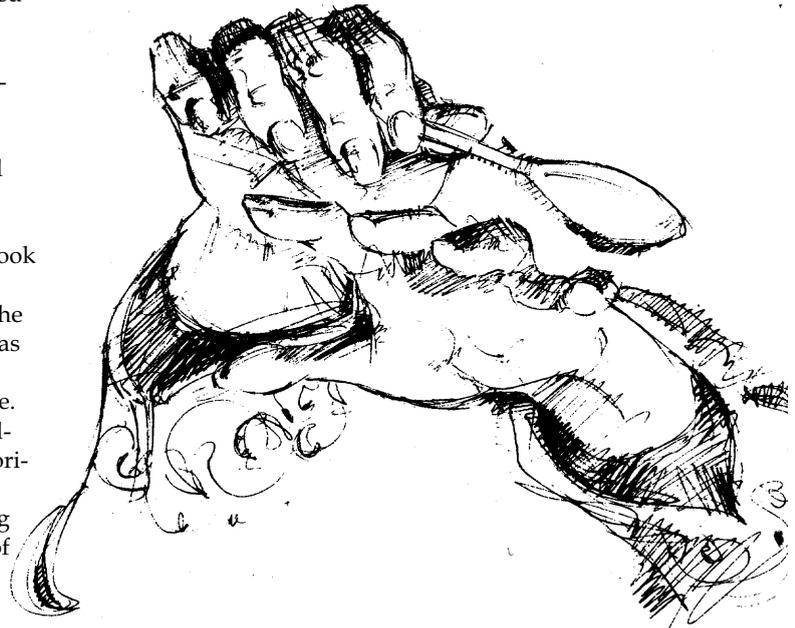
"You wouldn't find it useful." The fellow seemed agitated. "Come on. Hand over the gold or I leave!"

Within three minutes, Vraid was transferring his life savings in hundred-Sun pouches. His customer glanced cursorily at each and gathered them into a burlap sack. The sight of the gleaming metal seemed to loosen his tongue. "Drove me out of my home," he muttered. "Took everything, the misbegotten mammals . . ."

Vraid suddenly understood, and backed away from the pink man-shape that was beginning to blur and spread as its change-spell wore off. Frantically, he nodded to the crossbowman and started to chant a protection from fire. A magical, poisoned bolt splintered on the thing's shoulder. He watched as his customer, growing ever more horizontal, exited the shop with the gold and without a backward glance. It took full shape in the street, leaping aloft with an unfolding of great batwings and a snort of pure fire.

Rushing to the demolished door, Vraid saw the dragon find an updraft and soar away north into the mountains. The streets were very crowded and very noisy; Vraid knew his license was as good as rescinded. He merely screamed when someone tapped him on the shoulder.

The now-visible crossbowman said, clearly and slowly, with only a slight quaver in his voice, "I quit." Ω



Letters

Continued from page 5

modules TSR publishes, so adventures that you yourself have designed will not be looked at if you are not already a TSR free-lancer:

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Dear Dragon,

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Where can I get more info on free-lance artists? Would it be possible to submit some artwork to be considered? There are just a few questions I have. Where can I write to?

Lisa Baglini
Salem MA

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make sure that your work is at least equal to the published standard, and properly reflects current themes and interests. Ω

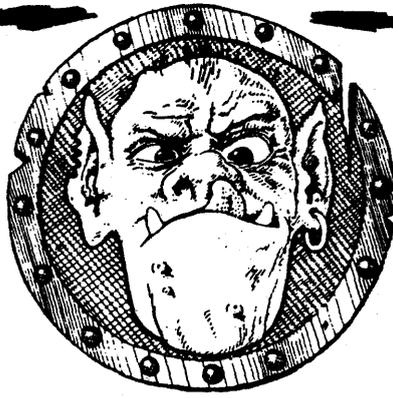
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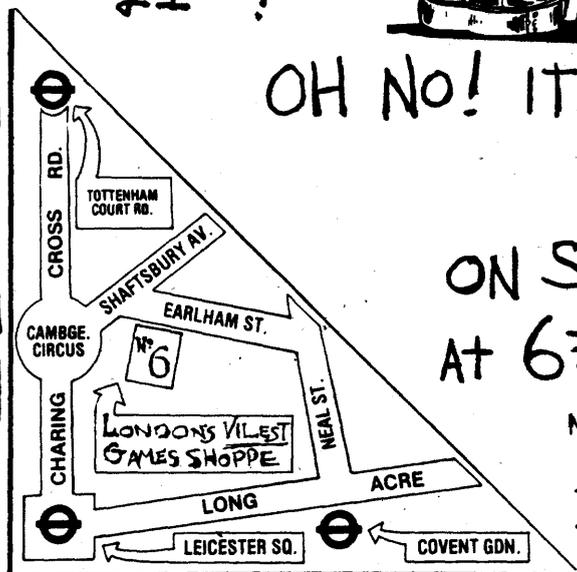
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Table 1
New Standard Coin Values

Coin values	Metal and symbols used
1 copper piece (cp)	copper—cu
1 bronze piece (bp) = 2 cp	bronze—br
1 silver piece (sp) = 10 bp	silver—ag
1 electrum piece (ep) = 10 sp	electrum—el
1 gold piece (gp) = 2 ep	gold—au
1 platinum piece (pp) = 20 gp	platinum—pt

Table 2
Ancient World Currencies

Name	Symbol	Metal	Size (pw)	Value
Mesopotamia & Ancient Middle-East*				
Uncia	U		2	½ cp, 1/8 L
Hemilitron	H	br	4	1 bp ½ L
Litra	L	br	8	2 bp, 0.2 S
Shekel	S	ag	4	1 sp, 0.1 D, 5 L
Daric	D	au	2	½ gp, 10 S
Mina	M	au	10	2½ gp, 50 S
Ancient Greece				
Chalkous			2	½ cp, 1/8
Obol		br	8	2 bp, 0.2
Drachma		ag	4	1 sp, 5
Didrachm		ag	8	2 sp, 2
Tetradrachm		el	2	0.4 ep, 4
Half-stater		el	5	1 ep, ½ 10
Stater		au	4	1 gp, 20
Distater		au	8	2 gp, 2
Imperial Rome				
Quadrans	Qd	c u	1	¼ cp, ¼ As
Semis	Sm	bs	2	½ cp, ½ As
As	As	c u	4	1 cp, ¼ St
Dupondius	Du	br	4	1 bp, ½ St
Sestertius	St	br	8	2 bp, ¼ De, 4 As
Quinarius	Qu	ag	1½	0.4 sp, ½ De, 2 St
Denarius	De	ag	3	0.8 sp, 4 St
Quinarius Aureus	Qa	au	2	½ gp, ½ Au, 12½ De
Aureus	Au	au	4	1 gp, 25 De
Dark Ages Europe				
Nummus	nu	cu	½	1/8 cp
2 Nummi	nu	cu	1	¼ cp
5 Nummi	nu	c u	2½	5/8 cp
10 Nummi	nu	br	2½	5/8 bp
20 Nummi	nu	br	5	1¼ bp
40 Nummi	nu	br	10	2½ bp
100 Nummi	nu	ag	2½	5/8 sp
Siliqua	sq	ag	4	1 sp, 160 nu
Tremissis	tr	el	2½	2/3 ep, 1/3 so
Semissis	sm	au	2	½ gp, ½ so
Solidus	so	au	4	1 gp, 20 sq
Byzantium				
Follis	f	cu	6	1½ cp
Miliaresion	m	ag	3½	0.9 sp, 12 f
Nomisma	n	au	4¼	1.08 gp, 24 m, 288 f

* 1 talent = 60 M = 3,000 S

It's the end of a game month, and our intrepid adventurers are resting before a warm fire at a comfortable tavern, recovering their strength after three solid weeks of wilderness trekking and dungeon delving using the AD&D® 1st Edition rules. The DM takes this opportunity to work out the party's expenses for the past month.

The group consists of five 7th-level characters, plus a 6th-level fighter who started his adventuring career a little later than the others. According to the 1st Edition Dungeon Master's Guide (page 25), the characters' expenses are 100 gold pieces (gp) per level per month. This means that our stalwart band of heroes must fork over 4,100 gp. That is 410 lbs. of gold, enough to fill a small cart! Even converting to that rare metal, platinum, this works out at two large sacks of coins!

In addition, the 6th-level character has finally accumulated sufficient experience points to go up one level. Having been a generally superior fighter, he requires only two weeks of training, at 1,500 gp per level per week (DMG, page 861, or 18,000 gp. This is about two small wagonloads of coins (pulled by heavy horses), and he has yet to get this enormous quantity of treasure from wherever he may be keeping it to the castle of the lord who is going to train him!

A brief examination of this aspect of the AD&D game tends to point towards one or both of two conclusions:

1. Training and living expenses should not be so high; or
2. Gold should weigh less and be worth more.

The first of these has been addressed before, and so will not be dwelt upon here. The second has also been touched upon in several articles. S. D. Anderson, of Whittier, Calif., stated in "Forum" in DRAGON® issue #122 that coins should weigh only one-tenth of their current value. Lewis Pulsipher, in "A Player Character and His Money..." in DRAGON issue #74, suggested a system in which each coin becomes the size of a dime (about 219 coins per pound). And David Nalle, in an article called "For the Sake of Change," that appeared in DRAGON issue #63, put forward three proposals:

1. The silver piece (sp) should replace the gold piece as the standard unit of purchase (also adopted by Pulsipher);
2. Bronze pieces (bp) should replace copper as the most common form of small change, with copper being used rarely because it does not wear as well; and
3. Platinum should be much rarer (even nonexistent in many places) and more valuable than it is now.

This article adopts all three of Nalle's proposals, which are based on historical coinage, along with the idea of using lighter coins, to produce the following system.

The sizes of all coins are given in pennyweights (pw). There are 20 pennyweights

to the ounce, and 16 ounces to the pound. The standard coin ("piece") weighs four pennyweights. This gives 80 coins to the pound, or eight to the standard encumbrance unit (1 SEU = 0.1 lbs.).

The proposal that silver replace gold as the standard purchasing unit is not difficult to implement. For purists, simply divide the cost or value of all things (except gems; see below) by 20, and convert to the most convenient coin type. I prefer, however, to use this conversion:

1. All values expressed in "old" platinum pieces are divided by four to get the equivalent number of "new" silver pieces, or by two to get "new" electrum pieces (ep);

2. All values expressed in "old" gold pieces are converted to the same number of "new" silver pieces;

3. All values expressed in "old" electrum pieces are halved to find their equivalent in "new" silver pieces;

4. All values expressed in "old" silver pieces become values expressed in "new" bronze pieces;

5. All values expressed in copper pieces (cp) are left alone.

This system leaves really cheap items at their current prices. Gems should be left at their "old" values in gold pieces to make them more valuable and rarer.

Let us return to our intrepid adventurers, mulling over their monthly expenses. Even the exorbitant price of 4,100 sp is much more easily handled as 205 gp, which weighs only a little over 25 SEU and fits in a small pouch. Similarly, the 6th-level fighter's training expenses work out to 18,000 sp (900 gp, weighing only 112.5 SEU). This can easily be carried in a backpack with room to spare. (See Table 1 for details.)

Does this destroy game balance? Not if treasure is converted in the same way as prices. Gold now becomes rare, silver valuable, and even bronze is worth a second look. This returns meaning to the lower-value metals. I mean, when was the last time that your midlevel party was seriously excited over a pile of silver? In my experience, once characters reach about 3rd level, they adopt a policy of "Grab the electrum and gold, and leave the rest!" This coinage system also makes shopping more reasonable. Instead of having to cart 40 lbs. of gold down to the armorer's to pay for a suit of plate mail, a character can make the purchase with a single platinum piece.

New coins for old

To add variety and flavor to the campaign, the DM can, if he so wishes, transform the rather bland coins of the standard system into ones with character and history. Consider the "sovereign currency" described in Table 2. These coins could be minted in the country where your party is adventuring, encountered in everyday transactions. This also helps the players adjust to the new buying capacity of the silver piece and saves confusion

Table 3
Medieval European Currencies

Name	Symbol	Metal	Size (pw)	Value
England*				
Farthing	z	cu	5	1 cp, ¼ d
Half-penny	½d	br	5	1 bp, ½ d
Penny	d	ag	1	¼ sp, 4 z
Groat	gr	ag	4	1 sp, 4d
Florin	f l	ag	20	5 sp, 20 d
Half-noble	½ Nb	au	2	½ gp, 40 d
Noble	Nb	au	4	1 gp, 80d
Sovereign	sv	au	12	3 gp, 240 d
France **				
Denier Tournois	dt	cu	6½	22/3 Cp
Gros Tournois	gt	ag	4	1 sp, 12 dt
Ecu D'or (Crown)	Ed	au	2	½ gp, 120 dt
Italian city-states * * *				
Denaro	do	cu	3¼	5/6 cp
Grosso	go	ag	4	1 sp, 24 do
Florin	Fl	au	2	½ gp, 240 do
Ducat	Dt	au	4	1 gp, 480 do
Germanic nations ****				
Pfennig	Pf	br	4	1 bp
Groschen		ag	6½	1.6 sp, 16 pf
Gulden	Gd	au	4	1 gp, 200 pf

* 1 shilling = 3 gr; 1 pound (£) = 1 Sv; 1 guinea = 21 s
 ** 1 sou tournois (st) = 1 gt; 1 livre = 2 Ed
 *** 1 soldo (so) = ½ go; 1 lira (lo) = 1 Fl
 **** 1 schilling (sc) = 12 pf; 1 mark (mk) = 192 pf

Table 4
Near Eastern & Indian Currencies

Name	Symbol	Metal	Size (pw)	Value
Arabia				
Fulus	Fu	cu	4	1 cp
Half-dirham	½Dm	ag	2	½ sp, ½ Dm, 10 Fu
Dirham	Dm	ag	4	1 sp, 20 Fu
Quarter-dinar	¼ Dn	el	2	½ ep, ¼ Dn, 5 Dm
Dinar	Dn	au	4	1 gp, 20 Dm
Russia				
¼ Kopek	¼ K	cu	4	1 cp
½Kopek	½K	br	4	1 bp
Kopek	K	br	8	2 bp
5Kopeks	5K	ag	4	1 SP
10Kopeks	10K	ag	8	2 sp
½Rouble	½R	el	4	1 ep, 50 K
Rouble	R	au	4	1 gp, 100 K
2Roubles	2R	au	8	2 gp
10Roubles	10R	Pt	2	½ pp
Turkish Empire				
Manghir	mg	cu	4	1 cp
Aqche	aq	ag	2	½ sp, 10 mg
Altun	at	au	4	1 gp, 40 aq
Sequin	sn	au	8	2 gp, 80 aq
Persia				
Pul	Pl	cu	8	2 cp, 0.2 Sh
Shahi	Sh	ag	2	½ sp, 5 Pl
Abbasi	Ab	ag	8	2 sp, 4 Sh
Ashrafi	Af	au	8	2 gp, 20 Ab

Table 4 (Continued)

Name	Symbol	Metal	Size (pw)	Value
India				
Paisa	Ps	cu	2½	5/8 cp
2 Paisa	2 Ps	cu	5	1 ¼ cp
4 Paisa	4 Ps	br	5	1¼ bp
16 Paisa	16 Ps	ag	2	½ sp
Xmkah	Tk	ag	5	1 ¼ sp, 5/8 Rp, 40 Ps
Rupee	Rp	ag	8	2 sp, 1.6 Tk, 64 Ps
Mohur	Mh	au	4	1 gp, 10 Rp, 16 T
2 Mohur	2Mh	au	8	2gp
5 Mohur	5Mh	au	20	5gp
10 Mohur	10 Mh	au	40	10 gp

**Table 5
Fantasy Currencies**

Name	Symbol	Metal	Size (pw)	Value
Imperial currency				
Slave	Σ	bs	2	½ cp, ¼ K
Common	K	br	4	1 bp, 4 Σ
Gentle	Γ	ag	4	1 sp, 10 K
Noble	N	el	4	1 ep, 10 Γ
Royal	Π	au	4	1 gp, 2 N, 20 Γ
Imperial	I	pt	2	½ pp, 10 Π, 200 Γ
Celestial currency				
Meteor	☄	bs	4	1 cp, ¼ /
Bolt	/	br	8	2 bp, 4 ☄
Cloud	☁	ag	2	½ sp, 10 ☄
Crescent	☾	el	2	½ ep, 10 Δ
Orb	⊙	au	8	2 gp, 8 ⊙, 40 Δ
Star	*	Pt	4	1 pp, 10 ⊙, 400 Δ
Druidic currency				
Fire	f	bs	2	½ cp, ½ e
Earth	e	br	2	½ bp, 2 f
Holly	h	cu	8	2 cp, 2 e
Beech	b	ag	4	1 sp, 10 h
Ash	a	el	4	1 ep, 10 b
Oak	o	au	8	2 gp, 4 a, 40 b
Mistle	m	pt	2	½ pp, 5 o, 200 b
Bestial currency				
Mouse	ms	cu	2	½ cp, ¼ sk
Snake	sk	br	4	1 bp, 4 ms
Gazelle	gz	ag	4	1 sp, 10 sk
Crocodile	cr	el	4	1 ep, 10 gz
Lion	ln	au	8	2 gp, 4 cr, 40 gz
Elephant	el	pt	4	1 pp, 10 ln
Diabolic currency				
Hoof	hf	cu	4	1 cp, ½ tl
Tail	tl	br	4	1 bp, 2 hf
Talon	tn	ag	4	1 sp, 10 tl
Fang	fg	el	4	1 ep, 10 tn
Horn	hn	au	8	2 gp, 4 fg, 40 tn
Sovereign currency				
Bit	B	cu	4	1 cp, ½ T
Iwo-bit	T	br	4	1 bp, 2 B
Mark	M	ag	4	1 sp, 10 T, 20 B
Half-crown	V	el	4	1 ep, ½ W, 10 M
Crown	W	au	4	1 gp, 2 V, 20 M
Sovereign	S	pt	4	1 pp, 20 W, 400 M

when discussing prices in the official books. ("Well, the *Player's Handbook* says it costs 15 gp.")

However, not all coins found in the campaign are going to be of this currency. Coins from neighboring countries may well be found in merchant caravans or bandit hoards. A dungeon built centuries ago may have ancient coins worth even more than their metal value. Exotic coins from far-off lands or other planes may turn up unexpectedly to spice up your campaign.

The government of one country may outlaw transactions in another country's money, especially if its own economy needs boosting, but would allow characters to trade in foreign coins with a mere 10% exchange tax levied. The government would then, presumably, melt down the foreign coins and remind them with symbols of its own sovereignty, gaining a major source of revenue into the process.

This is not to say that illegal transactions won't take place, and the characters might find themselves caught up in a black-market racket or counterfeiting ring.

To give DMs some ideas for currency systems, I have researched some real-life ancient and medieval coin types and converted them to the coinage system outlined herein (see Tables 2-4). The coin names are genuine, and I have tried to preserve their relationships to one another. Nonetheless, learned numismatists (students of coins) might find discrepancies between this material and documented facts. These are the result of trying to fit real-world coinage into the artificial system of the AD&D game, of the changes in coin values and relationships over the years (inflation is not unique to the modern world), and of incomplete information, both mine and that of scholars in general.

Consider a campaign set in medieval Europe, with the fantasy addition of magic. The heroes are adventuring in the Italian peninsula. They must purchase their food, board, and equipment in grossi, florins, and ducats. They may, however, encounter groats from England, crowns from France, and gulden from Middle Europe. More exotic coins might be nomismas from the Byzantine Empire, roubles from the principalities of Rus, dirhams from Arabia, or aqches from the Truks. If the adventurers discover an old treasure hoard, it might contain Dark Age siliquas and solidi, denarii from the Roman Empire, or drachmae from Greece. Shekels and darics from the ancient world would be so rare as to be worth more to collectors than to money-changers.

Fantasy coinage is provided in Table 5, in different systems that could be borrowed for any fantasy game campaign, whether AD&D game based or not. Coinage from Tables 2-5 can be added to your campaign to provide added depth and complexity if such is desired.

Table 6
Gem Base Values

1d100	Base value	Description
01-55	10 gp	Ornamental stones
56-75	50 gp	Semi-precious stones
76-85	100 gp	Fancy stones
86-95	500 gp	Precious stones
96-99	1,000 gp	Gem stones
00	5,000 gp	Jewels

Table 7
Gem Value Adjustments

1d100	Size	Weight *	Modifier	Quality	Modifier
01-05	Tiny	1	×¼	Flawed	×¼
06-30	Small	2	×½	Poor	×½
31-70	Average	4	×1	Normal	×1
71-95	Large	10	×2	High	×2
96-00	Huge	20	×5	Fabulous	×5

* Weight is in pennyweights.

Table 8
Jewelry Composition

1d100	Material	Chance of gems
01-05	Copper	2%
06-10	Brass	2%
11-20	Bronze	5%
21-30	Pewter	5%
31-35	Ivory	0%
36-60	Silver	10%
61-75	Silver & gold*	10%
76-85	Electrum	10%
86-95	Gold	10%
96-97	Turquoise	0%
98-99	Platinum	8%
00	Coral (75%) or jade (25%)	0%

* Roll 1d6 for silver/gold ratio: 1-3, 75%/25%; 4-5, 50%/50%; 6, 25%/75%.

Table 9
Jewelry Weight

1d100	Item	Weight *
01-02	anklet	1d4
03-05	armband	1d4 +4
06-07	bangle	1d2 +2
08-10	belt	1d6 +4
11	blade	2d10 + 14
12-14	box (small)	1d10 + 10
15-18	bracelet	1d2
19-21	brooch	2
22-23	buckle	1d4+1
24-27	chain	2d4
28	chalice	1d4 +4
29	choker	1d6 +4
30-32	clasp	1
33-34	coffer	1d6 +4
35	collar	1d4+1
36-37	comb	1d4+1
38	coronet	1d4+6
39	crown	1d10 + 10

Table 9 (Continued)

1d100	Item	Weight *
40	dagger	1d8+6
41-42	decanter	1d6 +8
43	diadem	1d4 +2
44-47	earring	1
48-51	goblet	1d4+2
52-53	headband	1d4+1
54-56	idol	1d10 +4
57-58	knife	1d4 +2
59-60	locket	1d4 +2
61-63	medal	1d4
64-68	medallion	1d4 +2
69-74	necklace	1d4
75-77	pendant	1d4+2
78-82	pin	½
83	orb	2d6+3
84-91	ring	1
92	scepter	10d4 + 10
93-94	seal	2d4
95-97	statuette	10d4
98	sword	10d4 + 20
99	tiaara	1d4 +4
00	special **	

* Weight is in SEU.

** Jeweled armor: Roll on Table 12.

Table 10
Jeweled Armor

1d100	Item	Weight*
01-05	helmet	45
06-10	breastplate	100
11-34	thigh guard	30
35-60	shin guard	30
61-66	knee guard	10
67-84	bracer	20
85-00	shoulder guard	40

* Weight is in SEU.

Table 11
Jewelry Quality

1d100	Quality *	Multiplier
01-05	atrocious	×1
06-20	poor	×1½
21-50	fair	×2
51-83	good	×5
84-98	excellent	×10
99-00	unique	×20-50

* Based on craftsmanship.

Table 12
Number of Gems in Jewelry

Jewelry weight (SEU)	Number of gems	Gem size modifier
up to 1	1d2	-10%
2-10	1d4	0%
11-20	2d4	+5%
21-50	3d4	+10%
51-100	5d4	+15%

Table 13
Jewelry Metal Modifiers

Jewelry metal	Modifier
Copper/brass	-15%
Bronze/pewter	-10%
Silver	-5%
Silver & gold	0%
Electrum	+5%
Gold	+10%
Platinum	+15%

Gems and jewelry

While we're on the subject of treasure, let's take a closer look at gems and jewelry. Gems, as mentioned before, are now worth 20 times as much as formerly-so they need to be at least 20 times as rare. The gems found should also be weighted in favor of low-value items, if you don't want a few 500-gp gems (now worth 10,000 sp each, remember?) to give the heroes more money than they can handle. Also, the method for determining the variation of the base value of a gem should be tied to its size and quality. Finally, jewelry's value should be dependent upon its material, weight, and craftsmanship, plus extra for any gems set in it.

When rolling for the base value of gems, either individually or in groups, use Table 6. This base value is modified by rolling on Table 7 twice, once for size and once for quality, each roll having its associated value modifier.

When generating jewelry, first determine the precious metal or mineral from which the jewelry is formed (Table 8) and the jewelry's weight (Tables 9-10). These give the item's base value: Simply multiply its weight (in SEU) by eight to get the equivalent number of coins of the metal from which it is made. For precious minerals and pewter, the following exchange rates are used:

- 1 pewter unit = 1 bp
- 1 ivory unit = 1 sp
- 1 turquoise unit = 5 gp
- 1 coral unit = 20 gp
- 1 jade unit = 50 gp

The base value of a piece of jewelry is modified by two things: its level of craftsmanship and the presence of any gems. Craftsmanship is primarily what makes jewelry more valuable than the raw metal or mineral, and it acts as a multiplier to the item's base value (see Table 11).

Gems set in jewelry add double their value to that of the jewelry piece. For the number of gems appearing in a piece of jewelry, consult Table 12; roll for gem values on Tables 6-7.

Apply the additional metal modifiers to all relevant tables (cumulative with those given for gems in Table 7, in the case of size) given in Table 13.

This system makes for much more interesting gems and jewelry. Care must be taken, however, not to let these become too common, in light of the change from the gold piece standard to the silver piece. When using treasure-types tables or hoards detailed in modules, use the following conversion method:

1. Every gem should be 20 times as rare—therefore, for each gem indicated, roll 1d20 and include the stone only if a 20 is the result (re-create the gem under this

system, if so); and

2. Re-create all jewelry items under this system.

These suggestions should make treasure rarer and more appreciated, while also making the characters' lives easier. No more lugging around huge sacks of gold to pay the bills, when a few platinum pieces will do the trick!

[Alternate systems of coinage were suggested in David S. Baker's "Many Kinds of Money" in issue #114. Other ideas on coinage—and the troubles involved in developing and storing it—appear in David F. Godwin's "How Many Coins In a Coffin?" from issue #80, reprinted in the Best of DRAGON Magazine anthology, vol. V The 2nd Edition DMG has an excellent discussion of historical coinage on pages 32-34.]

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by Jean Rabe

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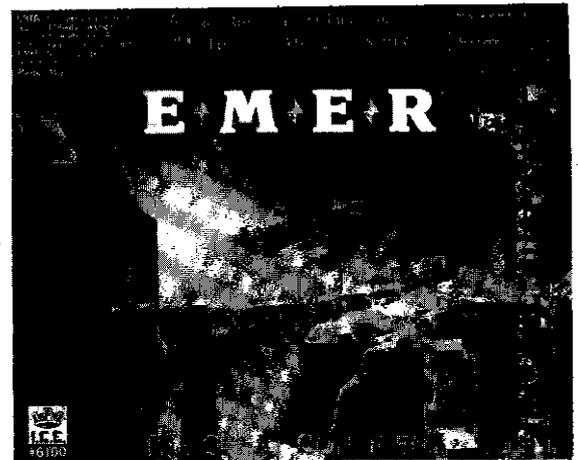
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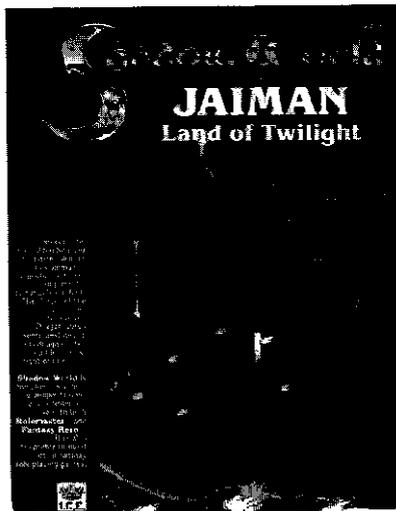


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HE MARVEL®-PHILE

The lads from Liverpool

by Steven E. Schend

In DRAGON® issue #165, "The MARVEL®-Phile" gave you a look at some of Spider-Man's latest foes, the Femme Fatales. This month we're continuing the trend with more new Spider-foes. In the summer of 1990, Spider-Man had a rough time in England with two gangland enforcers of extraordinary power: Knight Fogg. These two are currently based in England, but they have accepted contracts in America; perh aps they'll be hired to track down heroes in your campaign.



KNIGHT™

Malcolm Knight, enforcer

(Statistics given after slashes are for Knight's armored form.)

F	EX(20)	Health: 80/110
A	GD(10)	
S	EX(20)/IN(40)	Karma: 16
E	RM(30)/IN(40)	
R	PR (4)	Resources: GD(10)
I	TY (6)	
P	TY (6)	Popularity: 0

POWERS: As Malcolm Knight, this villain has no powers. Only when he transforms into his alter ego are any metahuman abilities exhibited.

Alter Ego/Armored Form: Knight can instantly change his skin and clothes into a suit of heavy armor that provides him with Incredible (40) protection from physical attacks. His armored form also grants him the following powers and equipment:

– **Growth:** Knight's armored form has an uncontrolled Feeble growth power, making him 8' tall while armored.

– **Sword:** Knight's golden sword is built into his armor, snapping out from a hous-

ing in the left forearm. The sword is of Unearthly (100) material and inflicts Remarkable (30) edged damage on living and nonliving targets.

WEAKNESSES/LIMITATIONS: Knight's armor is vulnerable to electricity; attacks of this sort add +2CS against him. Also, when Knight is unconscious or sleeping, he automatically reverts to his normal human form.

TALENTS: Knight is skilled in the use of his sword in combat, giving him a +1CS when using it.

HISTORY: Malcolm Knight and his brother, Leo, were orphans raised in Liverpool, adopted by an old alcoholic, Edgar

Fogg. Malcolm Knight's only friend was Edgar's son, Thomas Fogg, and the two were bullies in their younger days. While Malcolm tried to maintain a certain level of propriety around Evelyn Fogg, Thomas's sister, he was a lonely boy and to him his friendship with Thomas mattered more than anything else.

The pair grew older and became contract killers for a Liverpoolian mobster. Knight and Fogg accepted a contract on Professor Henry Lewis, a prize-winning physicist whose love for gambling and horseracing led to mounting debts. At the North Umbrage Energy Research Laboratory, Knight and Fogg cornered the professor late one night. When Lewis was shot by Fogg, he fell back against his equipment, disturbing the delicate machinery

and causing a wild, stray power to be released. Fogg and Knight were caught in the energy backlash and were allegedly reduced to their quantum structures by Professor Lewis's particle cannon. The powerful release of energies caused the laboratory to explode, yet Knight and Fogg walked out of the ruins, alive but now more than human.

Knight and Fogg allegedly became what they each were in their minds' eyes. Malcolm Knight now could become a knight in shining armor, and Thomas Fogg was now as slippery and elusive as the mists that regularly shroud London. These powers made them quite valuable to their employers, from whom they kept no secret of their new-found powers.

Recently, Knight and Fogg were contracted by the Kingpin to eliminate the Arranger, the Kingpin's former right-hand man. The Arranger asked Spider-Man for help but was refused because Spider-Man thought it was a trap. After Fogg murdered the Arranger, Spider-Man arrived and fought the pair, meeting defeat.

Using his contact with Thomas Fireheart (a.k.a. Puma), Spider-Man flew to England to pursue Knight and Fogg and bring them to justice. Tracking the pair to Liverpool, Spider-Man again met defeat at the grasp

of the elusive Fogg; Knight was about to kill Spider-Man when Evelyn Fogg happened upon the scene and begged Knight not to kill him. Knight hurled Spider-Man into the river, where Spidey hit his head, causing him to lose his memory.

Spider-Man was pulled from the water and attended by Leo Knight, Malcolm's brother. Stripping Peter Parker of his costume, Leo hoped to prevent any harm from coming to his brother by keeping Peter from remembering who he was; he later changed his mind and attempted to trigger Peter's memory by returning the costume to him.

After a number of mishaps, Fogg guessed that Leo's amnesiac friend was Spider-Man and made plans to finish the job of killing him. Fogg tracked Spider-Man down at Leo Knight's house and attacked them both, throwing Spider-Man outside and strangling Leo. During the fight, Knight's and Fogg's powered identities were revealed to their families. Leo was thought to be dead, and Knight mistakenly blamed Spider-Man for the murder. After it was revealed that Fogg had attacked Leo, Knight attacked his former partner in a rage, but Spider-Man knocked them both out with an exposed electric power cable.

Knight and Fogg are currently under arrest and possibly in prison in England for their crimes, though it is quite possible that they can escape, given their powers. Because of Fogg's attack on Leo, it is doubtful that these two villains are still partners in crime.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES: Knight, despite his questionable occupation, sees himself as an honorable man. He is a no-nonsense person, living by his word or by the exact wording of the contract under which he is currently working. His world is divided into two parts: Fogg's world of killing, and his own world of peace in his home of Liverpool. He suppresses many of his emotions on a mission and simply "follows the contract."

In your campaigns, Knight can still be a contract killer, perhaps signing on with the Kingpin to avoid connections with his old partner or signing on with someone else to hunt down your heroes and eliminate them. He might become an anti-hero, ruthlessly hunting down Fogg; the two of them would leave much destruction in their wake. Knight might also try to make up for his past by becoming a hero. If he is already established as a villain, this could make the next meeting of Knight and your heroes *very* interesting.

FOGG™

Thomas Fogg, enforcer

F	GD(10)	Health: 70
A	RM(30)	
S	GD(10)	Karma: 22
E	EX(20)	
R	TY (6)	Resources: GD(10)
I	GD(10)	
P	TY (6)	Popularity: 0

POWERS: Fogg, like Knight, exhibits no powers in his normal, human form.

Alter Ego/Gaseous Form: Fogg can instantly alter his body into a green, semi-solid mist. His gaseous form grants him the following powers and equipment:

– *Density Manipulation – Self:* Fogg can manipulate his density with a Good ability, changing his density from Shift 0 to normal body density. This density power allows Fogg to solidify his hands and face while maintaining his body in its misty form.

– *Elongation:* Fogg has the ability to allow his misty form (either his whole body or only parts of it) to stretch up to one area away. This Incredible rank power allows him to attack characters in adjacent areas, with strangulation being his standard mode of attack. A victim of such an attack must make a successful Endurance FEAT roll vs. Fogg's strength to remain conscious; treat failure as an automatic Stun. Remember that Fogg inflicts normal Strength damage in addition to the above.

– *Vision Restriction:* While Fogg is elongating his misty form, the normal vision of anyone surrounded or attacked by him is restricted to that person's area alone, due to Fogg's opaque form.

– *Flight:* While in gaseous form, Fogg can fly at Poor rank. This allows an air speed of 4 areas/round.

Weakness/Limitation: When Fogg is unconscious or sleeping, he automatically reverts to his normal human form. For unknown reasons, Fogg is vulnerable to electricity; attacks of this sort add +2CS against him.

TALENTS: Fogg has the Crime and Wrestling (+2CS to choking attacks) talents.

HISTORY: See the notes given for Knight.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES: Thomas Fogg is an unscrupulous, cruel psychopath. He enjoys killing and takes great enjoyment in taunting and scaring his targets. He is totally ruthless, killing for the fun (and profit) of it.

Fogg is still a reliable contract killer for your campaigns, though his partnership with Knight has soured. Fogg will probably work for any established crimelords or even some super villains. How Fogg may change from the loss of his only friend is up to the Judge; Fogg can bitterly hunt Knight down to kill him, or can avoid all contact whatsoever with the "traitor." Ω

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When rumor of these horrors reached King Matthias, he stormed the castle and arrested the Countess. In the dungeon, he found several corpses still hanging, ashen and icy to the touch. Elizabeth was found guilty for the murders of over 600 young women and condemned to be sealed alive in her own castle chamber. Today, almost 400 years later, some say that her screams can still be heard echoing throughout the castle halls.

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I would like to discuss a discrepancy in the damage given for the light and heavy crossbows as per the *Player's Handbook*. Light and heavy crossbows do 1d4/1d4 and 1d4+1/1d6+1 hp damage, respectively, but I feel this is unrealistic when compared to historical data. As my source, I am using *The Complete Encyclopedia of Arms & Weapons*, which states that, "whereas the crossbow was more powerful and its arrow (bolt) was heavier, and could be used in cramped positions, the longbow acted faster and could shoot a larger number of arrows." In AD&D 2nd Edition games, the short bow (using sheaf arrows) does more damage than the heavy crossbow. The Second Lateran Council of A.D. 1139 prohibited the crossbow's use in battle except against infidels, and it came to be banned in Germany. By the 14th century, the wooden bow on the crossbow was replaced with a steel one. Characters who use crossbows are already at a disadvantage because of its fire rate as compared to that of the bows. This is acceptable in light of historical evidence, but the difference in damage is not. More realistic damage, I feel, would be to give a light crossbow 1d10/1d10 hp damage and a heavy crossbow 4d4/4d4 hp damage.

Russell Spier
Austin TX

I feel that the energy-draining ability of undead creatures is a grossly unbalancing feature of the AD&D 2nd Edition game. According to the 2nd Edition DMG, on pages 72 and 73, any creature with energy-draining abilities will drain a character's levels, reducing hit points, spells, saving throws, THAC0s, experience, and special benefits gained with level advancement that are unique to each class. I understand the connection of undead to the Negative Material plane, and how this would, in turn, have a draining effect on characters in the Prime Material (or other) planes. I also feel that there is a simpler way to handle energy draining, one that will keep it in the ranks of deadly abilities without making it so grossly unbalancing.

First, let me make myself clear on how this power is unbalancing. Let's say that Morgeth the fighter is fighting a western vampire (without the age benefits listed in the RAVENLOFT™ boxed set). Morgeth is an 8th-level fighter with 45 hp. The vampire attacks him first. Morgeth loses 6 hp from the force of the blow itself. However, he also loses two levels of experience and the hit points from those two levels, bringing him down another 9 hp. He also loses two points of THAC0 and is quite rudely shoved into the next lower saving-throw bracket. Now he has only 30 hp and 48,000 XP (halfway between 6th and 7th levels, as stated in the DMG, page 73). Now his chance of defeating the vampire are greatly reduced.

One would think that this wouldn't be so bad if the lost experience was compensated for by the amount he would get if he defeated the vampire, but in the 2nd Edition *Monstrous Compendium*, it states that defeating a vampire will only reward a character 3,000 XP. This is hardly sufficient to raise Morgeth to the 64,000 XP required for 7th level, much less the 125,000 XP to get back to 8th level, which is where he began the fight. To me, that is a one-sided fight: Even if Morgeth beats the vampire, he still has lost several levels in the process. With the vampire's 8+3 HD, it is quite likely that it will

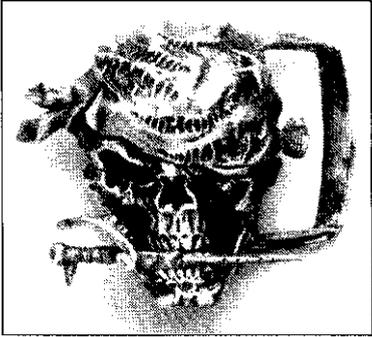
hit Morgeth at least twice more before he defeats it, reducing him to second level. Worse yet, if Morgeth was reduced to zero level, the DMG states that he can never adventure again, short of using a *restoration* or *wish* spell. Whatever happened to the rules for zero-level characters? Even if they are no longer valid in the 2nd Edition game, most people start out at zero level before they decide to come up to 1st level so they can adventure. Why can't Morgeth do this anymore?

For a long time, I decided not to use energy draining at all, since it was so unbalancing. The problem with this is that I just removed the most fearsome power of the undead; now the players in the campaign I was running could defeat an undead creature with ease, unless it had far more hit dice than they. It was sort of like putting a red dragon with no breath weapon into an adventure. For this reason, I set about trying to create a new system for handling an undead creature's energy-draining abilities.

What I came up with involves a character's life energy levels (LELs). This total is the same, initially, as the character's experience level. When an undead creature attacks with energy draining, LELs are drained instead of experience levels. With each LEL drained, the character loses 1d3 hp; with every third LEL lost, he loses one point of constitution. If the character's LEL reaches 0, he dies and becomes an undead creature of the sort that killed him.

After defeating the undead creature, the lost constitution points are restored at the rate of two per day. A *cure wounds* spell restores a number of points equal to half the number rolled on the die (round up), and a *heal* or *restoration* spell restores all lost constitution. A character's LELs are restored at the rate of one per day, and a *restoration* spell raises the character's LEL by one (not to exceed the character's total). However, after suffering an energy-draining attack, that character's LELs never again reach his actual level; his LEL total always remains at least one below that (per energy draining encounter). Thus, if Morgeth defeated the vampire but suffered an energy drain, he would not be able to completely restore his LEL to 8; 7 is the highest it could go. (If Morgeth rose to 9th level, his LEL would become 8, one lower than his actual level.) If he got attacked by a wight the next day and lost an LEL, he would be forever stuck with an LEL two points lower than his actual level.

Using LELs has two advantages. First, it keeps the threat of an undead's energy drain without becoming unbalanced. Characters must still be wary of undead, lest they get killed by energy draining and become undead themselves. LELs cannot be completely recovered, not even by a *wish*. Characters who have already run into undead several times will be kept on edge when they suddenly encounter a half-dozen wights. Second, a character who has been energy drained does not lose all of his abilities or saving throws that come about because of his level. (Wouldn't it be a trifle annoying to have a mage





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prepare a ninth-level spell to blast those undead out of existence, and then forget the spell before it was cast because of energy draining?)

There is another way to handle energy draining, as detailed in the RAVENLOFT boxed set. I think that it's rather ironic that the Realm of Terror, where undead have greater power than those in the prime material, introduced a different and more balanced version of energy draining, as shown in the nosferatu vampire. The nosferatu drains one point of constitution with a bite. It then usually latches on to continue draining one point each round until forcibly removed. True, it takes two days to recover a single point of constitution, but that is less time than it would take to recover two levels (and all the abilities that went with them). This power is still extremely deadly, but not as unbalancing as the original energy drain.

After reading this letter, someone is probably thinking, "Well, what about mage spells that involve energy draining?" This is a reasonable question, and it has a reasonable answer. There are five mage spells, all necromantic, in the 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook* that work on the principle of energy draining. They are *chill touch*, *enervation*, *death spell*, *finger of death*, and *energy drain*. The reasons behind why I feel that they are, for the most part, balanced, while undead energy draining is not, are given individually here for each spell.

Chill touch: This is a first-level spell. It utilizes energy drain in the form of a strength loss similar to the constitution loss caused by a nosferatu vampire from the RAVENLOFT set). This spell offers a saving throw to negate its effects, and even if the save fails, the strength loss is temporary. As such, this spell needs no modification.

Enervation: This fourth-level spell exactly duplicates the effects of normal energy draining attacks. However, it offers a saving throw to negate its effects, and, like *chill touch*, is only temporary. Again, there is no need to fix something that isn't broken.

Death spell: This is a deadly sixth-level spell. It instantly drains all of the life energy of a creature, with no saving throw. It is limited to creatures with 8 + 3 or lower hit dice, and kills off weak creatures first. A kind DM might allow his players a saving throw. Then again, if a small group of 8th-level characters want to attack a 12th-level (or higher) mage, then perhaps they should suffer. This is up to the DM.

Finger of death: This is a seventh-level spell much like the sixth-level death spell. However, it affects only one creature, and a saving throw is allowed in order to negate the effects.

Energy drain: This is a ninth-level spell, and exactly duplicates the effects of a vampire's touch (two levels are drained). This spell is permanent and does not offer a saving throw. The DM may wish to apply this spell to the LELs of a character, as described above. However, it takes an 18th-level mage to cast this spell, and it is unlikely that any mage would have more than one of these ready at a given time, as opposed to an 8 + 3 HD vampire who can do this as often as he wants. I feel that the latter conditions keep this spell within the bounds of play, but each individual DM must decide for himself.

Another question that may come up is that of magical items and artifacts. I feel that magical items that drain levels should either offer a saving throw or use the LEL system above. An exception would be the *sword of life-stealing*.

Since you need a natural attack roll of 20 (a mere 5% chance) to drain a level, offering the victim a saving throw would greatly lower its effectiveness (a weapon of this power is usually wielded against such powerful creatures that they almost always make a saving throw). Artifacts, on the other hand, were created by gods. If the gods can get together and create a world and everything on it, I think that it is reasonable for an artifact to drain levels as much as it wants. Even artifacts have their drawbacks, though, and using such a power wouldn't come without its consequences.

I also agree with Erik Martella's comments from issue #159. Not all undead should be NPCs, especially liches. Many undead, though now evil, realize that they are cursed and are searching for a way to escape their fate. This is an issue that must be decided by each individual DM, but I feel that Mr. Martella's comments should be considered, at the very least.

Thanks for taking the time to read my ideas (even if you don't use them). Whatever your verdict, make sure that you can have fun with undead. After all, if your players don't mind the fact that undead drain levels, then there is no reason to change how you play.

Bradley Wadle
Munster IN



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Lords of the Warring States

Five NPCs from history for your *Oriental Adventures* campaign

by Thomas M. Kane

Artwork by Stephen Schwartz

Some historical ages seem almost as if they were designed for AD&D® games set in Kara-Tur and other *Oriental Adventures* campaigns. One such time period was the Warring States period of ancient China, especially during its final years as the empire of Ch'in swallowed all seven Contending Kingdoms. The heroes and villains of the Warring States were meticulously described in tales, histories, and secret-police dossiers. Fortunately for DMs in search of NPCs, we still have these records, over 2,300 years later.



Lu Pu-Wei

Male human
12th-level yakuza

ARMOR CLASS: 7

MOVE: 12

HIT POINTS: 54

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

ATTACK BONUS: Nil

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon (+ 1 due to strength)*

SPECIAL ABILITIES: *Thieving skills at 12th level of ability; hear noise as 24th-level monk; investigate the events of two wards with a 64% chance of success; six*

contacts; ki power reduces by half any damage he suffers, five times in one day

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*

SIZE: *M (5'1" tall)*

ALIGNMENT *Lawful neutral (good tendencies)*

PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

S 16	I 17	W 15
D 15	C 10	Ch 17

When Lu Pu-Wei was a child, he asked his tutor how much money he could make by investing in agriculture. The answer was twice his original investment. What about trading in gems? The tutor answered that one could make one hundred times that much. Then Lu Pu-Wei asked "And setting a prince up on the throne?"

"Impossible to put a figure on that!"

Lu Pu-Wei had chosen his career.

When Lu became an adult, he saw a chance to set up a prince in the land of Ch'in. The king had sent one of his younger sons as a hostage to the nearby state of Chao to seal a nonaggression treaty. The hostage's name was White Crow, and his captors cared little about him because his elder brother was in line for the throne. Lu Pu-Wei became the exiled prince's friend, sending him gifts and representing his case in the court of Ch'in. Soon, by manipulating the wives of the king of Chin, he convinced the royal family to name White Crow heir to the throne of Ch'in.

Naturally, the elder prince, Tzu Hsi, opposed this change in succession. He arranged a scheme whereby a third nation would attack an area of land that both Ch'in and Chao claimed. Ch'in and Chao would surely intervene, and since neither nation could let any rival take the disputed province, there would have to be war. Then Chao would surely kill its hostages. Tzu Hsi knew the diplomacy of his time and successfully brought the nations to war, but Chin's armies drove deep into Chao, and Lu Pu-Wei was able to smuggle White Crow to friendly lines, disguising him as a fish merchant. Even after this

rescue, the prince had the audacity to request (and receive) Lu Pu-Wei's favorite concubine as a wife.

When White Crow became king, he rewarded Lu Pu-Wei by making him prime minister. Lu Pu-Wei prospered until White Crow's death. The new heir, Ordinance, was still a youth, and Lu Pu-Wei attempted to rule alongside his old mistress, who was now Queen Mother. This naturally created a scandal, so Lu Pu-Wei left the court and sent a substitute to wait on the Dowager Queen. His agent promptly launched a revolt against the queen, betraying both Lu Pu-Wei and Chin. Prince Ordinance easily subdued the rebellion and took full power himself. Ordinance despised the old regime and feared that Lu Pu-Wei had planned the coup against his mother, so he ordered Lu Pu-Wei into exile. The old yakuza knew that he would soon be called back for worse punishments and, perhaps, execution. So Lu Pu-Wei held a great feast, serving the finest delicacies from around the world, and at this banquet he gave away his entire fortune. When his last possession had been handed out, he drank poison.

Lu Pu-Wei was a fat man who went bald early, and he prided himself on being able to arrange any scheme whatsoever. Both his friends and enemies recognized him as a financial genius. His dealings made him richer than most nobles, and he carefully concealed this fact to avoid arousing jealousy.

If Lu Pu-Wei meets an adventuring party, he will certainly try to hire its members as agents, if only to keep his enemies from hiring them. He has a keen sense of people's ambitions and weaknesses, and he will manipulate these to keep his henchmen loyal. An amazing network of spies serves Lu Pu-Wei, making him the most accomplished man of intrigue in his world. Still, no matter how devious or illegal his conniving becomes, it almost always includes a hint of compassion. He saved White Crow from ignominy as a hostage, and he chose to die giving away presents.



Ordinance (Shih-Huang)

Male human
4th-level bushi

ARMOR CLASS: 10

MOVE: 12

HIT POINTS: 18

ATTACK BONUSES: none

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon*

SPECIAL ABILITIES: *Ki power raises him to fifth level for one turn, once per day*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*

Size: *M (5'5" tall)*

ALIGNMENT: *Lawful evil*

PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

S 10	I 15	W 9
D 11	C 8	Ch 18

Impenetrable Ordinance, Son of Heaven, Dragon King, First August Supreme Emperor of the World, Tiger of Chin, would have been a pitiful man without his armies and titles—but he never allowed himself to be without them. His entourage was a caricature of imperial excess, containing countless supplicants, ministers, servants, acrobats, dancers, wives, eunuchs, puppets, and a bodyguard larger than many armies. He defended himself against assassins with a great array of search points and decoys. The August Emperor constantly inspected, his empire; as he traveled, several replicas of his procession visited completely different areas to confuse any assassins that might have followed him. Scribes described Ordinance as having a high-bridged nose, long eyes and the voice of a jackal.

Ordinance condemned the loftiest of his ministers to death on fleeting impulses, so all of his followers vied with each other to appear the most servile. No torture was

too grotesque for those who annoyed Ordinance, nor were his condemnations expected to serve any sort of justice or reason. When steep ground slowed his journeys, Ordinance had an entire mountain stripped of vegetation and painted red, the color of a convict's clothing. When a member of a crowd joked, "Is there anything more unbearable than a great man?" Ordinance had the jester and all his relatives sawed in half. These were not merely acts of sadism or personal whim; they were calculated to impress the people with the power of the law. Ordinance followed the advice of Li Ssu, his prime minister, and based his rule on the mystical symbol of water, which signified law and punishment.

Ordinance feared even to sleep, for he was obsessed with death. He devoted the full power of his empire to a search for immortality and consulted the greatest of shukenja in hopes of becoming a deity. The emperor often dreamed that he had entered the ranks of the divine, only to be disillusioned by some unexpected disaster that would not have troubled an immortal. He hired countless adventurers to search for an elixir of immortality and commissioned any project they suggested. When one explorer hinted of a god in the eastern ocean who might be persuaded to brew such a potion, Ordinance sent several thousand people sailing east as gifts to this deity (legends claim that these sacrificial victims settled Japan). In his old age, Ordinance withdrew from humanity to live in a world of puppets and clockwork automations that obeyed him as unquestioningly as if he were the god he wanted to be.

Despite his efforts, Ordinance did die, and his tomb filled a whole mountain. If he or his analog has already died in your campaign world, this sepulcher would make an ideal "dungeon." Its roof was a great dome painted to resemble the stars of heaven, and the rooms formed a scale model of the Chin empire. The tomb also contained vast riches, many of the king's beloved robots, and an army of clay model soldiers. Crossbow-firing machines guarded this hoard, and all the workmen who excavated it were buried alive inside to keep them from divulging the grave's secrets (in a fantasy game, these unfortunates could now be undead).

Despite Ordinance's great authority and wolflike visage, he was physically weak. Migraines troubled him whenever he made decisions. The Emperor weakened his shaky health further by the constant use of hallucinogenic arsenic drugs that he hoped would grant him visions of immortality. In AD&D game terms, he would be a bushi because he lacked the strength of a samurai (though he would not have the bushi's ability to pick pockets, because he never needed to steal). Ordinance's frailty and preoccupation with immortality left his prime minister in complete control of his empire.

Ordinance would make a properly despicious

able villain for an *Oriental Adventures* campaign, but he could also sponsor the PCs' adventures. Also, he could simply represent "The Government" in a culture where the State is sacred, be it good or evil.



Li Ssu

Male human
0-level (scribe and philosopher)

ARMOR CLASS: 10

MOVE: 12

HIT POINTS: 4

ATTACK BONUS: *Nil*

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type*

SPECIAL ABILITIES: *Nil (but Emperor*

Ordinance will act on almost any suggestion he makes)

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*

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

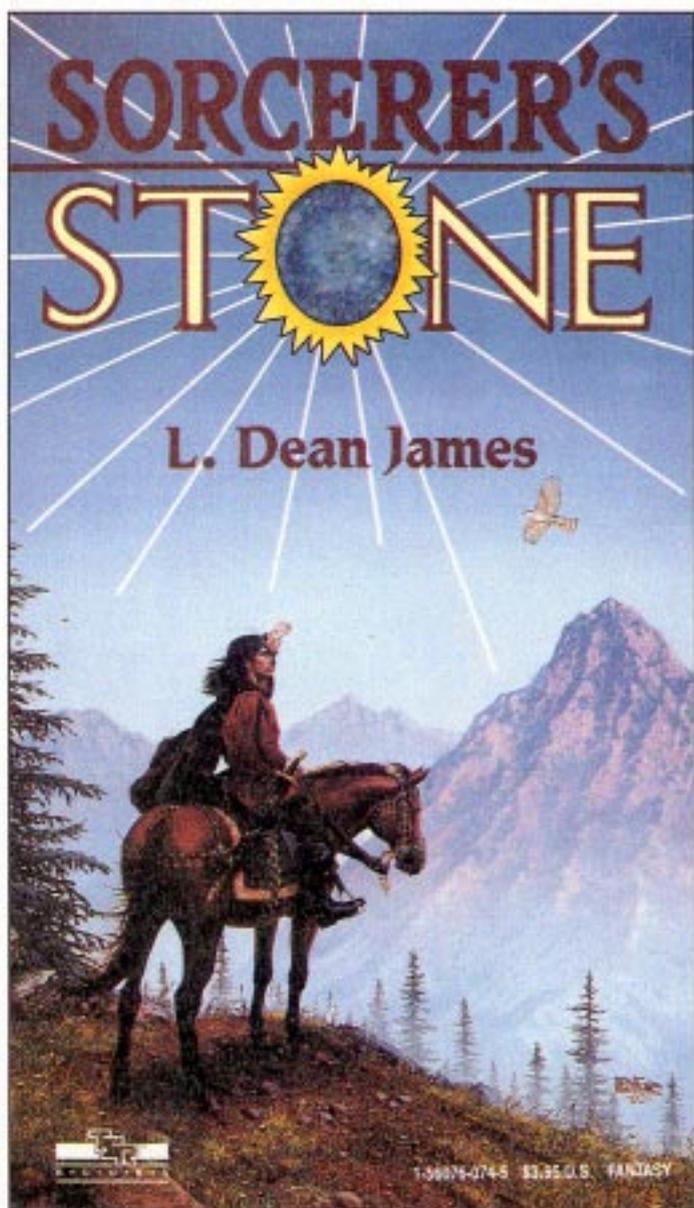
ALIGNMENT: *Lawful evil*

PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

S 10	I 18	W 17
D 16	C 10	Ch 16

With Li Ssu, it all began with rats. He lived a modest life, making a little money, hunting with his son, and telling old folk tales, but he had no great fame or power. Li Ssu served his government as a scribe; as he copied scrolls in his office, he observed that some of the rats that scurried through the offices lived in the latrine and were harried and hungry. Others lived in granaries and ate quite well. Li Ssu resolved to become a human granary rat—and the pantry in which Li Ssu hoped to live was the king's court.

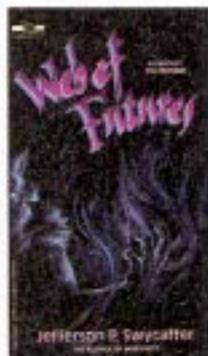
Because he stammered when he spoke, Li Ssu went to study under a master of



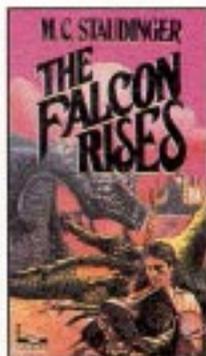
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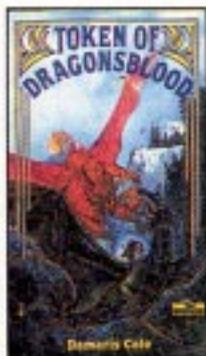
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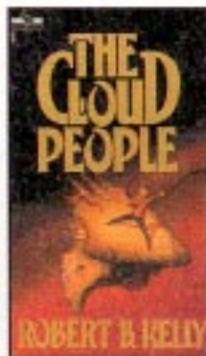
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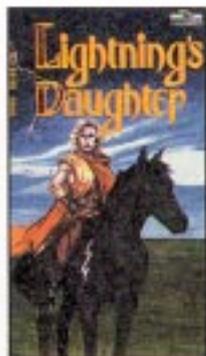
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oratory. As an apprentice, he became close friends with another student, a nobleman named Han Negation. Both soon took to mocking their idealistic old teacher. The master of oratory lectured about the need for paternalism and love among great kings. Li Ssu and Han Negation had formulated another philosophy that specifically condemned benevolence and proposed that the king regulate every minute aspect of his realm with dreadful punishments. By enforcing complete conformity and by maintaining constant wars and famines, the king would keep the peasantry distracted from politics and eliminate any threat of crime or rebellion. By the time Li Ssu left his master for the court of King Ordinance, he was completely enthralled by these theories. He was even more devoted to them than to becoming a "granary rat." Li Ssu always stuttered, but his ideology had become impressive enough to seduce any king.

King Ordinance became emperor of the known world, and Li Ssu became his prime minister, although he had to kill Han Negation in the process. Since Ordinance was preoccupied with his search for immortality, Li Ssu was nearly emperor himself. Li Ssu unified China's chaotic weights and measures, established a readable alphabet of pictograms, and wrote a constitution to replace the injustices of rule by feudal princes. He also established the most intrusive dictatorship his world had ever known.

Adventurers in a game campaign could barely survive under Li Ssu's rule. The true enemies of his law were those independent adventurers, businessmen, and scholars free enough to have ideas of their own. Li Ssu considered such people anachronisms, relics of anarchy. He hindered them by restricting weapons, burning books of lore (and, in game campaigns, magic), and imposing terrible taxes to prevent private wealth.

If Li Ssu and Ordinance rule your fantasy world, PCs will become either outlaws or servants of the empire. Either alternative can bring about numerous exciting adventures.



Ching K'o

Male human
8th-level bushi (ex-kensai)

ARMOR CLASS: 4

MOVE: 12

HIT POINTS: 55

NO. OF ATTACKS: 2

ATTACK BONUSES: +2 on initiative; +3 to hit with katana, due to strength and kensai skills; +2 on "to-hit" with dagger, due to strength and quality

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d10+6 with katana or 1d4 +4 plus poison with Cinnabar's dagger (due to strength and quality)

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Surprised only on a roll of 1 on d6; meditation; ki power lets him cause maximum damage on eight attacks per day

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Standard

SIZE: M (5'8" tall)

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic good (formerly lawful good with neutral/chaotic leanings)

PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil

S 18/49

I 12

W 12

D 16

C 10

Ch 10

Although Ching K'o failed in his great quest, he achieved his dream of entering legend. Ching K'o began his career hoping to become a tutor of swordsmanship to some ruler, but in his time nobles did not find it fashionable to study under masters, so Ching roamed the country with nothing but his sword and a backpack full of books. Wherever he went, he did noble deeds. People loved him across the land for saving lives, driving off bandits, and distributing his rewards to poor peasants. Then Ching K'o argued with another

wandering swordsman about theories of fencing, and the debate quickly turned to fury. Ching K'o turned and left before violence occurred. When he visited the next town, he fell into another dispute about the value of certain pieces in a chess game and rebutted his opponent with a clever argument. The adversary responded by blowing in Ching K'o's face. Once again, Ching departed silently, so people began to call him a coward. He became dishonored (in game terms, he lost all status as a kensai and changed his alignment to chaotic good). Actually, Ching K'o did not fear battle, but he felt that his life was too valuable to risk. He believed that he could become a great hero of legend if he survived. So he gave up adventuring and spent several years carousing with a friendly butcher who had achieved mystical perfection in the preparation of meat.

While the disgraced warrior lingered with his friend, a completely unrelated event gave him the chance to become legendary. Cinnabar, Crown Price of Yen, went to the court of Emperor Ordinance of Ch'in as a goodwill hostage. Ordinance had conquered most of the world, and Cinnabar hoped to find favor with him. After all, they had played together as children. But this only made Ordinance hate the prince, for the Emperor detested all reminders of the fact that he was once young and weak. The Emperor taunted Cinnabar with endless practical jokes and brought these to a climax by gathering his whole court to announce Cinnabar's betrothal—to a goat. After that, the prince of Yen escaped and went home, where he sulked in his palace. He dreamed of revenge but could not find any way to injure Ordinance except to shelter one of the emperor's most hated enemies, a rebellious general.

Finally, one of Cinnabar's friends introduced him to Ching K'o, and the disgraced warrior agreed to assassinate Ch'in's august emperor. Ching K'o knew that this would be his greatest adventure and that he would be executed after it, so he was determined to enjoy his last tastes of life. The adventurer lived in Cinnabar's palace and demanded that the prince fulfill his every desire. He made soup of Cinnabar's favorite stallion and fished by hurling the prince's gold ingots into lakes. The prince of Yen gave him whatever he asked for.

Years went by as Ching K'o lived in luxury at Yen's expense. Then, one day, Ching K'o appeared before Cinnabar in the ragged clothes of a wandering sword master and declared himself ready. He planned to go to Ch'in disguised as an envoy, bearing two presents that would give him access to the emperor—a valuable map and the rebel general's head. When Ordinance reached for the map, Ching K'o would grab his sleeve and stab him. Cinnabar refused to kill his guest. However, when the general learned of the plan and Cinnabar

Continued on page 110





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CONVENTION CALENDAR

Convention Calendar Policies

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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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BASHCON '91, March 8-10

This convention, sponsored by the Benevolent Adventurers' Strategic Headquarters, will be held at the Student Union Auditorium at the University of Toledo's main campus in Toledo, Ohio. Over 150 game events will be featured, including RPGA™ tournaments, plus movies, a miniatures contest, an exhibitors' area, two auctions, and an honored speaker or two. Registration: \$3/weekend or \$1 for Friday, \$2/day for Saturday and Sunday. There is no preregistration Games cost \$5.00 each. Send an SASE to: UT-BASH, c/o Student Activities Office, University of Toledo, Toledo OH 43606-9987.

CALCON 6, March 8-10

This convention will be held at the Sandman Inn in Calgary, Alberta. Over 100 featured events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, SYSTEM 7®, PARANOIA®, WARHAMMER 40,000®, TUNNELS & TROLLS®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, and TITAN* games. Other activities include a game auction, BATTLETECH* computer games by A.M.U.C., miniatures painting, artists, and playtesting. Registration: \$8 until March 1; \$12 at the door, with cheaper visitor rates, plus game fees. Write to: CALCON 6, Box 22206, Gulf Canada Square RPO, 401-9 AVE SW, Calgary, Alberta, CANADA, T2P-4J6; or call Paul Spenard at: (403) 286-3347.

OWLCON XII, March 8-10

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SILICON VI, March 8-10

This convention, sponsored by the Society for Interactive Literature, is dedicated to live-action role-playing games. It will be held at the Annapolis Holiday Inn in Annapolis, MD. Four live-action games will be run: "Cafe Casablanca," "Small Town," "Steeplechase," and "See Jane Run Again." A mini-game, "MASKS," will be run Friday night. Registration: \$35 until March 1, or \$40 at the door. Write to: Terilee Edwards-Hewitt, 3454 S. Utah St. B-1, Arlington VA 22206-1942.

SLANDRAK II, March 9

The SBHS Fantasy/SF & Games Club (SLANDRAK) will hold this convention at the SBHS Cafeteria in San Bernardino, Calif. Tournaments include SHADOWRUN®, CHAMPIONS®, AD&D®,

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This gaming convention will be held at the Radisson Inn at the Jacksonville, Fla., Airport. Events include SEEKRIEG®, JOHNNY REB®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, SUPREMACY®, EMPIRE BUILDER®, WARHAMMER FANTASY* and 40,000*, and AD&D® games. Registration: \$18 at the door. Write to: JAXCON '91, P.O. Box 4423, Jacksonville FL 32202; or call: (904) 778-1730.

LEHICON IV, March 15-17

The Lehigh Valley Gamers Assoc., will host this gaming convention at the George Washington Motor Lodge in Allentown, Pa. Events include RPGA™ events, with AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, SHADOWRUN®, TOP SECRET/S.I.™, CAR WARS®, MEGATRAVELLER®, ASL®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, CIVILIZATION®, DIPLOMACY®, and EURORAILS* games. Special guest is Robert Simpson, creator of the SUPREMACY* game. Other activities include 24-hour open gaming, comics, dealers, SCA demos, and a miniatures-painting contest. Special lodging rates are available. Registration: \$12/day or \$18/weekend. Write to: LEHICON IV, P.O. Box 1864, Bethlehem PA 18016-1864; or call: (215) 538-6109 after 6 P.M.

LEPRICON '91, March 15-17

Formerly known as STELLARCON, this convention will be held at the Elliot University Center on the University of North Carolina: Greensboro campus in Greensboro, NC. Events include gaming, lectures, panels and seminars, an art show and auction, a dealers' room, a movie marathon, and a Dead Writers' Roundtable. Registration: \$10/weekend (\$8 for students) or \$3/day preregistered until March 1st; \$12/weekend or \$5/day at the door. Write to: LEPRICON '91, Box 4, Elliot University Center, UNC-G, Greensboro NC 27412-5007; or call: (919) 378-2568.

PRINCECON XVI, March 15-17

This gaming convention will be held at Whig Hall on the campus of Princeton University in Princeton, N.J. Featured events include over 15 original, interlocking scenarios in one integrated world. These scenarios will run around the clock, and use our own customized system. Registration: \$10 preregistered by March 1st; \$15 at the door. There is a minimum age of 18 years old. Write to: Daniel Eisenstein, 32 Little Hall, Princeton University, Princeton NJ 08544. Please make checks payable to Simulation Games Union.

BATTLETECH* NORTHEAST CHAMPIONSHIPS III, March 16-17

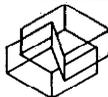
This is the official BATTLETECH* regional competition-singles and team events-with prizes supplied by FASA Corporation. Registration: \$20 preregistered by March 8; \$25 thereafter. Write to: The Gamemaster, 212A Massachusetts Ave., Arlington MA 02174; or call: (617) 641-1580.

AGGIECON XXII, March 21-24

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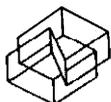
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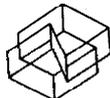
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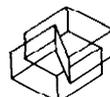
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campus of Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. Guests include Fred Saberhagen, Lynn Abbey, Keith Parkinson, Marv Wolfman, and Larry Elmore. Activities include RPGA™ tournaments, a dealers' room, game shows, a hall costume contest and masquerade ball, SF films, Japanimation, video rooms, and live-action games. Registration: \$13 before March 1, or \$16 thereafter. One day passes are \$10. Write to: AGGIECON XXII, MSC Cepheid Variable, Box J-1, College Station TX 77844; or call (409)845-1515.

CONTEST VIII, March 22-24

Sponsored by the Tactical Simulation Society, this convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Holidome in Tulsa, Okla. Events include AD&D®, AXIS & ALLIES*, and other role-playing, board, miniatures, and computer games, with a large dealers' room and an auction. Write to: TSS, P.O. Box 4726, Tulsa OK 74194.

MIDSOUTHCON X, March 22-24

This convention will be held at the Memphis Airport Hilton in Memphis, Tenn. Guests of honor include Harry Turtledove, Randall Spangler, Steve Jackson, and Steve Francis. Events include gaming, an art show, panels, filking, a con suite, a video room, a masquerade, a scavenger hunt, and a dealers' room. Registration: \$20 until March 3rd; \$23 at the door. Write to: MIDSOUTHCON, P.O. Box 22749, Memphis TN 38122; or talk (901)353-9439 or 274-7355.

NEOVENTION X, March 22-24

This gaming convention will be held at the Gardner Student Center on the University of Akron campus in Akron, Ohio. Events include two RPGA™ AD&D® tournaments, an RPGA™ MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ tournament, a dealers' room, an auction, a miniatures painting contest, 24-hour open gaming, and a seminar featuring game professionals. Registration: \$16/weekend. Send an SASE to: University Gaming Society, Gardner Student Center, Office #6, University of Akron, Akron OH 44325.

SIMCON XIII, March 22-24

This gaming convention will be held the University of Rochester' River campus in Rochester, N.Y. Role-playing events (including an R. Talsorian-sanctioned CYBERPUNK* tournament), miniatures events, board games, and a miniatures contest are scheduled. Registration: \$7 before March 4, or \$10 thereafter. College students with an I.D. receive a \$2 discount. Write to: SIMCON, CPU Box 277146, River Station, Rochester NY 14627.

ABBYTHON 9, March 23-24

The Abbython Adventure Guild will host its ninth annual 24-hour-marathon gaming convention at the Community Center in Abbyville, Kans. Registration: \$7 before Feb. 28; none accepted thereafter. Send an SASE to: Abbython Adventure Guild, P.O. Box 96, Abbyville KS 67510; or call (316)286-5303.

FRON VI, March 23-24

The 252 Rollenspielverein in Frankfurt, Germany, will host this convention at the Stadthalle Bergen-Enkheim, Marktstrasse, Frankfurt-Bergen-Enkheim (a suburb to the east of Frankfurt). Events include over 20 games in hundreds of events (many in English), a BLOOD BOWL* tournament, and SCA demos. Registration: DM 5/weekend or DM 3/day. GMs and people in costume get free admission. Write to: M. Kliehm, In der Reomerstadt 164,6000 Frankfurt/Main 50, GERMANY; or call (Frankfurt): (069) 574-579.

SCRYCON '91, March 23

Sponsored by The Seekers of the Crystal Monolith gaming club, this convention will be held at the Oakwood School in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. Events include RPGA™ AD&D® games, alternate games, a painted-miniatures contest, and a used-game flea market. Registration: \$6 preregistered, or \$8 at the door. Send an SASE to: SCRYCON '91, P.O. Box 896, Pleasant Valley NY 12569. Space is limited; preregister!

UNIVERSICON V, March 24

This fifth-annual charity convention, sponsored by the Brandeis Science Fiction & Comic Book Club, will be held at the Usdan Student Center on the Brandeis University campus in Waltham, Mass. Guests include Gordon R. Dickson, Mike Gold, Ken Penders, and others. Activities include AD&D®, DC HEROES*, PARANOIA*, and TOON* games, a movie room, a costume contest, a dealers' room, panels, and the charity auction, with this year's proceeds going to the Whale Adoption Project. Registration: \$6 at the door. Write to: Jarett Weintraub, 14 Dartmouth St., Waltham MA 02154; or call (617)894-2694.

GOTHCON XV, March 29-31

This convention, sponsored by the Bifrost, Chaos Apes, Skymning, and Ygdrasil gaming clubs, will be held at Munkebacksgymnasiet, Ernst Torulfsgatan 1, in Gothenburg, Sweden. Events include AD&D®, CALL OF CTHULHU*, MEGATRAVELLER*, PARANOIA*, CAR WARS*, ROLEMASTER/MERP*, RUNEQUEST* (3rd Ed.), ASI*, DIPLOMACY*, and ILLUMINATE* tournaments, as well as several independent events. Other activities include a live-action chess game, dealers' rooms, fantasy artists, and an auction. Registration: 150 Swedish Kronor (\$30 U.S.) before Feb. 15 (140 SKr for SWEROC members), plus tournament fees. No preregistrations accepted after Feb. 15. One-day tickets, if available, will be sold at the door for 75 SKr (\$15 U.S.)/day. Write to: GOTHCON XV, c/o Bertil Jonell, P.O. Box 154, S-43900 Onsala, SWEDEN; or talk +46 300-61004.

MSU IN CONTROL, March 29-30

This gaming convention will be held in the Grand Ballroom of the Student Center at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, Ky. Events include CLAY-0-RAMA, BATTLETECH*, AD&D® 2nd Ed., SHADOWRUN*, and WARHAMMER 40,000* tournaments. Other activities include a video room, costume and figure-painting contests, and dealers. Registration: \$5, or \$4 if you are in costume. GMs also receive discounts. Write to: Jemearl Smith, 424 East Maxwell #2, Lexington KY 40503; or call (606)255-9599 after 7 P.M. Eastern time.

POINTCON XIV, April 5-7

The Wargames Committee of the Military Affairs Club of the United States Military Academy will hold this convention at West Point, N.Y. Tournament events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH*, WARHAMMER FANTASY* and 40,000*, JOHNNY REB*, and Napoleonic games. Other events include TWILIGHT 2000*, microarmor, and miniatures and board games, with painting contests, a military film festival, the West Point Museum, and dealers. Registration: \$7 preregistered; \$8 at the door. GMs and dealers are welcome. Send an SASE to: Wargames Committee, Military Affairs Club, c/o Cadet David J. Morgan, P.O. Box 3857 USCC, West Point NY 10997.

ROUNDCON VI, April 5-7

The Round Table Gaming Society will host this convention at the Russell House at the University

of South Carolina campus, in Columbia, S.C. Events include AD&D®, SHADOWRUN*, PUFFING BILLY* (including 1830*, RAIL BARON*, and a Mayfair railroad game), and board-game tournaments. Other one-round tournaments will be held for CHAMPIONS*, TALISMAN*, TITAN*, B-17 SQUADRON*, CIRCUS MAXIMUS*, and AD&D® games. Prizes will be awarded for all tournaments. Registration: \$5/weekend before March 1, or \$7/weekend thereafter. Write to: Round Table Gaming Society USC, P.O. Box 80018, Columbia SC; or call Trella at: (803) 779-1924.

UMF-CON, April 5-7

This convention will be held at the Student Center of the University of Maine at Farmington. Events include AD&D®, GAMMA WORLD®, SHADOWRUN*, TWILIGHT 2000*, and war games. Other activities include art and miniatures contests and a spectacular Chinese auction. Registration: \$7/weekend, \$4 for Saturday and \$3 for Sunday preregistered; \$10, \$6, and \$4, respectively, at the door. Write to: Melissa Mixer, Box 138, East Wilton ME 04234.

CONNCON '91, April 6-7

This convention will be held at the Danbury Hilton Inn in Danbury, Conn. Jean Rabe will be the guest of honor. Many first-run RPGA™ Network events will be held, including a Masters and a Grandmasters AD&D® event, a Masters CALL OF CTHULHU* event, and a team AD&D® event. Other activities include: role-playing, miniatures, and war games; a banquet; an awards ceremony; and an RPGA™ Network members' meeting. Registration: \$15 preregistered until March 22, or \$20 thereafter. The preregistration fee includes three free games; registration after March 22 does not. Write to: CONNCON, P.O. Box 444, Sherman CT 06784.

MOUNTAINTOP '91, April 6-7

The Gaming Club at Lehigh University will hold this convention at the University Center on Lehigh's campus in Bethlehem, Pa. Events include RPGA™ events, an AD&D® team tournament, with AXIS & ALLIES*, BATTLETECH*, CHAMPIONS*, GURPS*, and SHADOWRUN* games. Other activities include a miniatures contest, vendors, and open gaming. Prizes will be awarded to tournament and contest winners. Registration: \$15/weekend or \$10/day. Write to: Paul Bashus, 9 Duh Drive, Apt. #131, Bethlehem PA 18015; or call: (215) 758-1757.

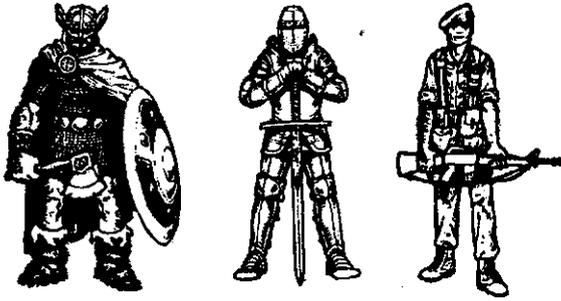
SPRING OFFENSIVE II, April 12-14

Formerly GAME FAIR, this Illinois Central College convention will be held in East Peoria, Ill. Events include Napoleonic, ADEPTUS TITANICUS*, American Civil War miniatures, CHILL*, and other role-playing, miniatures, and board games. Registration: \$5/weekend or \$3/day, plus \$1 per game. Write to: Tri-County Gaming Assoc., 116 Walnut St., Washington IL 61751; or call: (309)444-4640.

TECHNICON 8, April 12-14

This SF/fantasy convention will be held at the Donaldson Brown Center on the Virginia Tech campus in Blacksburg, Va. Guests include Diane Carey, Greg Brodeur, Larry Elmore, Ruth Thompson, Don Sakers, and John "Fuzzface" McMahon. Activities include SF Jeopardy, live RPGs, panels, a play, an art show, films, and dealers. Registration: \$18 general and \$16 for students until March 15th. Write to: TECHNICON 8, c/o VTSFCC, P.O. Box 256, Blacksburg VA 24063-0256; or call: (703) 953-1214.

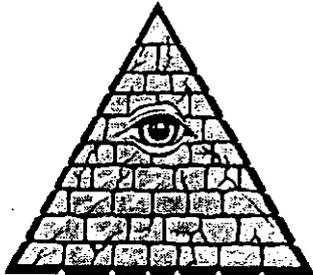
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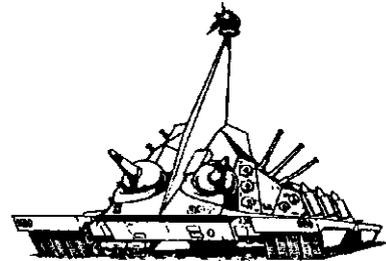
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BAMACON V, April 19-21

This convention will be held at the Ferguson Center on the University of Alabama campus in Tuscaloosa, Ala. Guests include Mercedes Lackey, Brad Strickland, Keith Parkinson, Larry Elmore, Larry Dixon, Dave Arneson, Allen Hammack, and Thomas Fuller. A \$1,000 cash prize goes to the best AD&D® game team at this convention. Many other prizes will also be awarded. Activities include an art show/auction, a banquet, dances, movies, and dealers. Registration: \$20 by March 31; and \$25 thereafter. One-day memberships and dealer passes are also available. Write to: BAMACON V, University of Alabama, P.O. Box 6542 Tuscaloosa AL 35486; or call: (205) 758-4577 or 348-3127.

CAPCON XIV, April 19-21

The Ohio State University Miniatures and Gaming Assoc. (OSUMGA) will hold this convention in the Ohio Union on the OSU Columbus campus in Columbus, Ohio. Activities include miniatures, board, and role-playing games covering all time periods and genres. Admission: \$3/day. Write to: OSUMGA/CAPCON, Box 21, the Ohio Union, 1739 N. High St., Columbus OH 43210; or call Jill Moody at: (614) 267-2649.

CONDUIT, April 19-21

Located at the Quality Inn in Salt Lake City, Utah, this SF/fantasy/gaming convention will feature such guests as Barbara Hambly, Erick Wujcik, and Derek Fegstad. Events include tournaments in AD&D® 2nd Ed., ROLEMASTER*, TMN TURTLES*, RIFTS*, ROBOTECH*, BATTLETECH*, WARHAMMER 40,000*, SPACE HULK*, SHADOWRUN*, CYBERPUNK*, and STAR FLEET BATTLES* games. Other activities include films, Japanese animation, an art show, a masquerade, panels, dealers, and open gaming. Registration: \$18 until March 15; \$22 at the door. Write to: CONDUIT, c/o David Lee Powell, 2566 Blaine Ave., Salt Lake City UT 84108-3359; or call: (801)467-9517.

GAME FAIRE '91, April 19-21

This convention will be held at the Student Union at Spokane Falls Community College in Spokane, Wa. All proceeds will be donated to the Wishing Star Foundation. Events include RPGs, tournaments, microarmor, naval and historical miniatures, SF and fantasy miniatures, board games, a video room, a dealers' area, a used-game auction, and SCA events. Registration: \$12/weekend before April 10th; \$15/weekend, \$6 for Friday or Sunday, and \$7 for Saturday at the door. Write to: Merlyn's—Game Faire '91, North 1 Browne, Spokane WA 99201; or FAX: (509) 624-0957,

I-CON X, April 19-21

This convention will once again be held at the State University of New York, Stony Brook campus. Guests include Ken Rolston, Gary Gygas, Steve Jackson, and Greg Costikyan. Activities include gaming, a writer's workshop, autograph sessions, a "meet the pros" party, dozens of dealers and more. Registration: \$25/weekend at the door, less in advance. One-day passes are also available. Write to: I-CON X, P.O. Box 550, Stony Brook NY 11790.

PENTECON '91, April 19-21

The Cornell Strategic Simulations Society will hold this convention at the Goldwin Smith Hall on the Cornell University campus in Ithaca, N.Y. Events include AD&D®, TRAVELLER*, PARANOIA*, DIPLOMACY*, CAR WARS*, AXIS & ALLIES*, ASL*, and CIVILIZATION* games.

Other activities include miniatures painting and trivia contests. Write to: PENTECON '91, c/o Peace Studies Program, 180 Uris Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca NY 14853; or call Shelley at: (607) 272-1339.

UBCON, April 19-21

Sponsored by the UB Strategists' and Role-players' Assoc., this convention will be held on the State University of New York at Buffalo, Amherst (North) campus. Events include a 2nd Ed. AD&D* tournament and many other popular strategy and role-playing games, as well as a movie room, combat demos, and dealers. Registration: approximately \$8, plus fees for tournaments with cash prizes. Write to: Martin Szinger, UB/SaRPA Pres., 210 Curtis Parkway, Buffalo NY 14223; or call (716) 833-4610.

THE UNTITLED GAME CON, April 19-21

Sponsored by Rutgers University Gamers, this convention will be held in Scott and Hardenburgh Halls on the College Ave. campus of Rutgers University. Events include AD&D® and CHAMPIONS* elimination tournaments, SHADOWRUN* games, a very bizarre AD&D® Mage Duel, playtesting on a new game system, and voting to name the convention itself! Registration: \$16/weekend or \$8/day preregistered; \$20/weekend or \$10/day at the door; plus event fees. Rutgers students receive 50% discount on all registration and event fee costs. Events are welcome up to March 30th. Write to: Student Activities Center, Rutgers University, Box 19, 613 George St., New Brunswick NJ 08903 (include SASE); or call: (908) 745-0454.

IMPACT 0.6, April 20

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Central in Omaha, Nebraska. Activities include table-top and role-playing games from 8A.M. until midnight. Registration: \$5. Write to: IMPACT, P.O. Box 4486, Omaha NE 68194.

LAGACON 10, April 20

This convention will be held at Kaspar's Arc, north of Lebanon, Pa. Events include AD&D® and BATTLETECH* tournaments, plus AD&D®, ASL*, BATTLETECH*, SHADOWRUN*, and AXIS & ALLIES* games. There will also be dealers, and food will be available. Registration: \$5 preregistered, \$7.50 at the door. Write to: Lebanon Area Gamers, 806 Cumberland St., Lebanon PA 17042; or call: (717) 274-8706. Make checks payable to Keith Roth.

OPCON '91, April 20

This convention, sponsored by the OPRF SF/F Club, will be held at the Oak Park River Forest High School in Oak Park, Ill. Guests include Phyllis Eisenstein, Robert Shea, and Richard Knaak. Activities include RPG tournaments, a silent auction, films and videos, autograph signings, a trivia contest, and a vendor's room. Registration: \$2. Write to: Sandra Price, OPRF SF/F Club, Oak River Park High School, 201 N. Scoville Ave., Oak Park IL 60302.

DEMICON II, April 26-28

This convention will be held at the Des Moines Howard Johnson's in Des Moines, Iowa. Guests include Joe and Gay Haldeman, Lucy Synk, and Rusty Hevelin. Events include panels, readings, costume contests, a dealers' room, and an art show, plus open gaming, a live-action role-playing tournament, and a networked computer-game tournament. Registration: \$15/weekend until March 15; \$20/weekend or \$12/day at the door. Write to: P.O. Box 7572, Des Moines IA 50322-7572; or call: (515)270-1312.

LITTLE WARS '91, April 26-28

This miniatures-oriented convention, sponsored by the Historical Miniatures Gaming Society (HMGS), will be held at the Zion Leisure Center in Zion, Ill. Miniatures events will span historical times and beyond. Registration: \$8/day or \$12/weekend, with a \$2 discount for HMGS members. There are event fees. Judges and players are needed. There will be a judge's discount and a large dealers' area. Write to: Robert Bigelow, c/o Friends Hobby Shop, 1411 Washington St., Waukegan IL 60085; or call: (708) 336-0790.

AGOG IV, April 27-28

The University Of Arizona Historical Games Society will hold this convention at the Student Union Main Hall on the University of Arizona campus in Tucson, Arizona. Tournaments include AD&D®, CHAMPIONS*, GURPS*, BATTLETECH*, and WARHAMMER 40,000* games. Other activities include open gaming, a game auction, and a miniatures-painting contest. Write to: AGOG IV, 3150 E. Monte Vista #A, Tucson AZ 85716; or call: (602) 327-3517.

BOISE FANTASY ARTS CONVENTION IV April 27-28

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Boise, Idaho. Activities include workshops, contests, dealers, gaming, movies, demos, and an art show. Registration: \$19 until April 1; \$23 at the door. Supporting memberships and one-day costs are available. Write to: BFAC, P.O. Box 8602, Boise ID 83702; or call: (208) 454-2835.

PLATTECON DELTA, April 27-28

This gaming convention will be held at the Student Center on the UW-Platteville campus in Platteville, Wis. Events include AD&D® games, miniatures games, dealers, door prizes, and numerous games. Registration: \$4/day or \$5/weekend in advance; \$5/day and \$7/weekend at the door. Write to: Platteville Gaming Assoc., Student Center, 1 University Plaza, UW-Platteville, Platteville WI 53818.

MISCON 6, May 10-12

This SF/fantasy/gaming convention will be held at the Best Western Executive Motor Inn in Missoula, Mont. Guests include Barbara Hambly, William Warren Jr., and Jerry Oltion. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH*, and DIPLOMACY* games, with videos, a masquerade, an art show, and panels. Registration: \$16 until April 15; \$20 thereafter. Write to: WMSFC/MISCON 6, P.O. Box 9363, Missoula MT 59807.

KETTERING GAME CONVENTION IV, May 11-12

This convention will be held at the Charles I. Lathrem Senior Center in Kettering, Ohio. Events include FRPGs, an RPGA™ tournament, a MONOPOLY* tournament, and board, computer, and miniatures games, plus a special tournament based on *Double Exposure*, by Piers Anthony. Write to: Bob Van Gruenigen, 2013 Gay Dr., Kettering OH 45420; or call: (513)252-9948.

CONWEST HI, May 17-19

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson Plaza Hotel in Albuquerque, N.M. Our guest of honor is Tracy W. Shurtleff, RPGA™ Regional Director. Events include two-round RPGA™ AD&D® and PARANOIA* tournaments, with ROLEMASTER*, ASL*, and WARHAMMER 40,000* tournaments, plus more board and miniatures games. Other activities include open gaming and a dealers' room. Registration: \$10 preregistered; and \$15 at the door, plus event fees. Daily prices are also available. Write to:

The Weregamer's Guild, Student Activities Center, Box 28, Student Union Bldg., UNM, Albuquerque NM 87131; or call: (505) 277-3083. No collect calls, please.

SUMMERCON '91, May 18-19

The Gamers' Alliance of Miniatures Enthusiasts (G.A.M.E.) and the Midwest Masters RPGA™ Network will host this FREE convention in the Reunion Food Court Bldg., on the campus of the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, Nebr. Events include three RPGA™ tournaments, an RPGA™ Masters tournament, and a benefit tournament. Other activities include WARHAMMER 40,000* role-playing and miniatures events, historical miniatures, a figure-painting contest, and other role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Everyone is welcome! Write to: Hobbies, Etc., N. 16th St., Lincoln NE 68508, Attn: Rufus; or call: (402) 477-7006.

GAMECAUCUS II, May 24-27

Sponsored by Trigaming Associates, this convention will be held at the Oakland Airport Hilton in Oakland, Calif. Events include an RPGA™ AD&D® tournament, with BATTLE-TECH*, WARHAMMER 40,000*, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, TOP SECRET/S.I.™, STAR WARS*, DIPLOMACY*, ASL*, WORLD IN FLAMES*, EMPIRES IN ARMS*, TALISMAN*, and GURPS* games, and various historical and modern miniatures games. Other activities include a World Wide DIPLOMACY* game, plus live-action AD&D®, AWFUL GREEN THINGS FROM OUTER SPACE*, and ALIENS* games. Registration: \$15 preregistered or \$20 at the door. Prizes will be awarded to tournament winners.

Write to: Trigaming Associates, P.O. Box 4867, Walnut Creek CA 94596-0867; or call Larry or Mike at: (415) 686-9319 after 6 P.M. PST No collect calls, please.

SODACON 11, May 25-26

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson's Hotel and Convention Center in Rapid City, S.D. Events include AD&D®, BATTLE-TECH*, TWILIGHT 2000*, CHAMPIONS*, and MORROW PROJECT* games. Registration: \$10 preregistered, or \$12 at the door. Write to: Black Hills Society of Gamers, 2416 Cameron Dr., Rapid City SD 57702; or call Steven at: (605) 642-3316.

TWINCON '91, May 25-27

This convention will be held at the Thunderbird Hotel and Convention Center in Bloomington, Minn. (ask about special room rates). Guests include Julie Guthrie, Ken Rolston, Margaret Weis, Craig Taylor, and Greg Scott. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games, with miniatures-painting and costume contests, a vendors' room, seminars, discussions, and open gaming. Registration: \$20/weekend until May 5; \$30 thereafter. One- and two-day passes are available at the door. Make checks payable to Donald Prust. Write to: TWINCON '91, P.O. Box 8010, Lake St. Station, Minneapolis MN 55408; or call: (612) 888-5759.

OPTICON '91, May 31- June 2

This convention will be held at the Gardiner Student Center on the campus of the University of Akron in Akron, Ohio. Events include RPGA™ tournaments and other individual and tourna-

ment games. Other activities include a large exhibitors' area, an auction, an art show, seminars and panels, a painting contest, and 24-hour gaming. Registration: \$15/weekend preregistered. Dorm rooms are available; ask about rates and availability. Write to: OPTICON '91, P.O. Box 4876, Akron OH 44310; or call: (216) 972-7713.

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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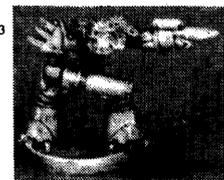


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The Game Wizards



Understanding Undermountain — the king of all dungeons

by Ed Greenwood

had just borrowed his armchair to lay out the first-level maps. (When you see them, they'll fit on the average bed—but the originals, I'm afraid, take up the floor space of a car.)

"Gentle sir," said a warm voice behind me, very close to my ear. "Forgive me, but you've drawn this room incorrectly. Trust me—I helped in its making."

The low, musical, feminine voice jolted me into excited (and disbelieving) wakefulness. I spun about. A tall, slim, beautiful lady in a . . . well, *daring* gown was leaning over where my shoulder had been, one long finger poised over a map. I stared wildly. She winked.

"Well met, Ed of the Greenwood. I've read your works with amusement. I also see why Elminster often tells us he's going out to sample a drink or two with 'Uncle Weirdbeard.' "

Sigh! Even her dimples were beautiful. I scrambled out of the chair and onto one knee, in my courtliest Realmsian bow.

"Well met and welcome, lady," I replied.

"Know, scribe: I am Laeral—consort to Khelben 'Blackstaff' of Waterdeep, and sister to The Simbul, Alustriel, Dove, and Storm of your acquaintance. Elminster has been, ah, detained. The cause of his preoccupation, The Simbul, asked me to drop by to check on the work, to assure you we bear you no ill will for revealing our most

delicate secrets, and to convey a hearty 'hello, and have you a bottle of something that the lady can take back for me' from Elminster."

I grinned, waving at the bottle. "But of course." I swept the maps aside. "Please, won't you sit down?"

She thanked me, sat, and was promptly leaped upon from a dark corner of the study by the larger of our two cats, the one that weighs about 30 pounds.

Amazingly, Laeral kept her smile and the cat. Both the human lady and the feline one are looking over my shoulder now as I set down a few words about Undermountain, the subject of the latest FORGOTTEN REALM™ boxed accessory set.

The Ruins of Undermountain is one of those classic, endless, trap-filled dungeons that early AD&D® campaigns were famous for. Play has continued therein since 1975; it was (and still is) a vast place, of nine levels and 14 or so sublevels, its name derives from its location under Mount Waterdeep, the bulwark and "Storm Wall" of mighty Waterdeep, City of Splendors.

Realms' enthusiasts interested in Waterdeep as a play setting are advised that the boxed set that introduces Undermountain (detailing, for space reasons, only its uppermost levels) is essential. The proprietor of The Yawning Portal inn, Durnan "the Wanderer," has often said that "Under-



mountain would not be what it is without Waterdeep, and Waterdeep not what it is without Undermountain." The city and the dungeon beneath it are inextricably linked, one influencing the other. Many passageways connect the two, and some adventures in the set feature links between Undermountain and the surface Realms. Waterdeep itself is detailed in the FR1 *Waterdeep and the North* sourcebook, the *City System* boxed set, and (to a lesser extent) the third Avatar module, FRE3 *Waterdeep*.

Undermountain has a curious history. Its upper levels were dug before the city stood, by *summoned* and *charmed* creatures under the command of the "Mad Wizard," Halaster. This awesome archmage is over 2,000 years old, and he still wanders secret ways and deep passages of Undermountain, maniacally replenishing the traps and monsters of his "home."

Undermountain is also home to many of the Dread Master's ex-apprentices, some horribly changed by misfortune, magical duels, or their own fell experiments. The most powerful of these, The Seven, could challenge any known wizard active in the Realms today.

Halaster's diggings connected with an older dwarven delve, the Underhalls, once home to the long-vanished Melairkyn clan. It guarded two ancient mithril mines, "The Seadeeps," that extend far under the coastal waves. Duergar, drow, and worse creatures continually invade Undermountain from deeper caverns and passages of the endless, labyrinthine Realms Below.

Over the years, Undermountain has become known as a place of horrors, the lair of many terrible monsters. Certain Lords of Waterdeep freed troublesome miscreants from dungeon cells in Castle Waterdeep and cast them down into Undermountain. It soon acquired the (probably incorrect) title of "The Deepest Dungeon of Them All."

One of the first to walk Undermountain and emerge to tell the tale was the warrior Durnan. Atop the rubble of Halaster's abandoned tower, Durnan built an inn, *The Yawning Portal*. He still makes a good living there, outfitting adventurers journeying into the depths.

Durnan and others who have returned from The Great Below speak of great riches and dangers, and of the vast size of the underways. A few explorers, it is rumored, were introduced to the dungeon after they failed to pay their inn bills. Some in Waterdeep also whisper that the Lords still sentence certain criminals to Undermountain, to die or find their own ways to freedom.

The Lords of Waterdeep certainly turn a blind eye to an entire lawless trading community in the depths, Skullport. Its dark waterways have been linked to the South Seacaves of Mount Waterdeep (controlled by the Lords) by a huge sling-hoist that can lift even the largest seagoing ships.

Skullport thrives as a base for smuggling

cargoes to and from the drow and darker beings who dwell in Skullport. The Lords forbid slavery but turn a blind eye when unsavory folk are smuggled out or down by this route. Rumors of a city in the depths of the earth (home to mind flayers, vampires, drow, gargoyles, and even beholders) have always been whispered about Waterdeep, and the name "Skullport" even appears in some drinking songs as a legendary pirates' port of debauchery and danger. Late at night, when lamps flicker low and the wine is running out, taverns in Waterdeep resound with wild tales of how this rogue or that band of adventurers went down into Undermountain, and what befell them there. Still, most citizens of Waterdeep know nothing of what lies beneath their cellars.

Campaigns in Undermountain

DMs can use Undermountain simply as an idea source for their own dungeons, as an endless dungeon that ignores the world above (or exists in another world), or as an integral part of a campaign set in the Forgotten Realms. In any of these roles, some hints for ongoing play can be useful.

In the original Undermountain, the Core Rooms (the detailed encounter areas) were less important in play than the dynamic interactions between exploring PCs and various NPC power groups. Recurring NPC allies, villains, and neighbors must be handled by individual DMs; it is almost impossible to capture their deeds in a written sourcebook. The major power groups include bands of adventurers seeking their fortunes (both PC groups and rival NPC companies), the bumbling Cultists of Gulkulath, and the sinister, outlawed Thieves' Guild, lurking behind the cultists. Drow and their surface agents are trying to establish a permanent trading base in Waterdeep for smuggling and slaving operations. Orc and bugbear bands struggle to maintain a foothold in Undermountain. All of these send frequent, heavily armed patrols through the dungeon.

Outlaws and misfits dwell in Skullport, trading with the drow (and worse). They are violently hostile to any who might carry word of them to the Lords of Waterdeep and "do-gooder" surface organizations such as the Harpers, the Red Sashes, or Force Grey. There are also the Sharn, a mysterious race resident in—Laeral's hand is on my shoulder, so I guess I can't let slip anything more about these folk.

And there are the natives of Waterdeep. Laeral tells me the dungeon has long served as a sort of safety valve for the busy city above it. Jaded nobles have conducted sporting "hunts" for monsters in Undermountain for generations. Waterdhavian nobles also have a taste for several fresh exotic mushrooms; 'shroom gathering in the depths has made the fortune of many a lucky adventurer. Other daring explorers make livings bringing back magical items, monsters or "monster parts" for use in alchemy and as magical

components, and curios or relics.

Some less-wise adventurers have even hit on the idea of establishing a hideout or stronghold in Undermountain, or trying to control an area of it. If PCs try this, it should consume all their time and effort.

Wise DMs will let the players determine what adventures their PCs have, by what they try to do in Undermountain (objectives can range from "clean out this complex of rooms" to "drive all the mind flayers out of Skullport") and by how they react to what they find there. The tables of odd and intriguing treasures found in DRAGON® issue #164 ("What *has* he got in his pocketses, anyway?") and in the "measure" chapter of the FORGOTTEN REALMS *Adventures* sourcebook are ideal for this use. As Laeral says, "trust me"; both were developed for and used in the original Undermountain.

If a DM wants to experiment with new spells before unleashing them on the wider Realms, or use interesting magicks such as those featured in DRAGON Magazine's "Arcane Lore" articles, Halaster's apprentices offer a good justification for hurling them at PCs deep in this monster of monster dungeons. Again, my long-running "Pages From The Mages" series and the "Rogue Stones and Gemjumping" magic featured in issue #116 were first inflicted on—er, used with PCs in Undermountain.

The chapter on rumors, and several adventures in the set are ideal for enticing PCs in an active Realms campaign into Undermountain. Don't warn them beforehand that Elminster once referred to the place as "the largest known mass grave in Faerun today." (Sorry? Ah, yes, my lady, I suppose that isn't much of a pitch for Undermountain, after all.)

The Lady Laeral has also just asked me to tell what's in the Undermountain box that I'm supposed to be telling you about. (Yes, I *know* I wander; I learned all about the Realms from Elminster, remember?) In the box are some striking maps, a bunch of infamous new monsters (the watch-ghost, the steel shadow, and even nastier beasts) on their own *Monstrous Compendium* -format sheets, some cards, and two books.

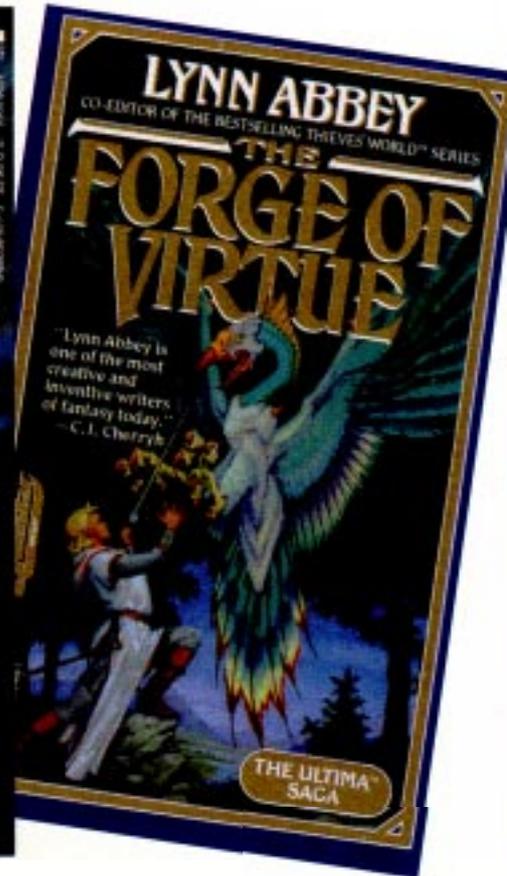
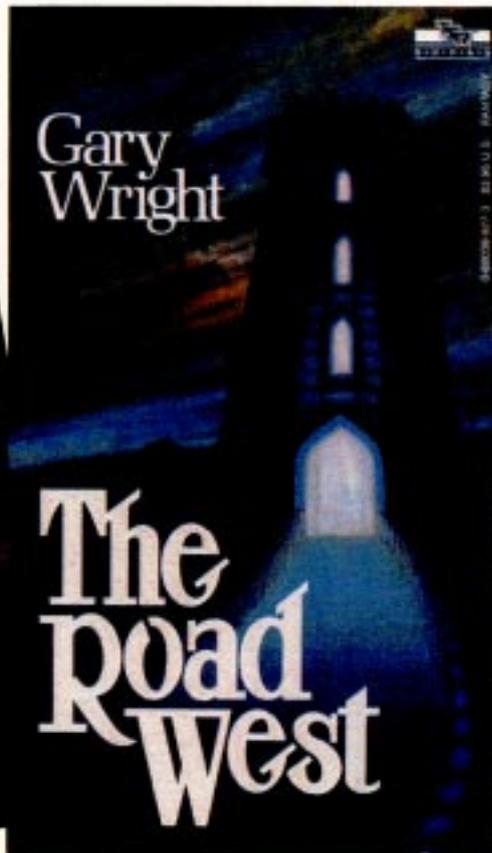
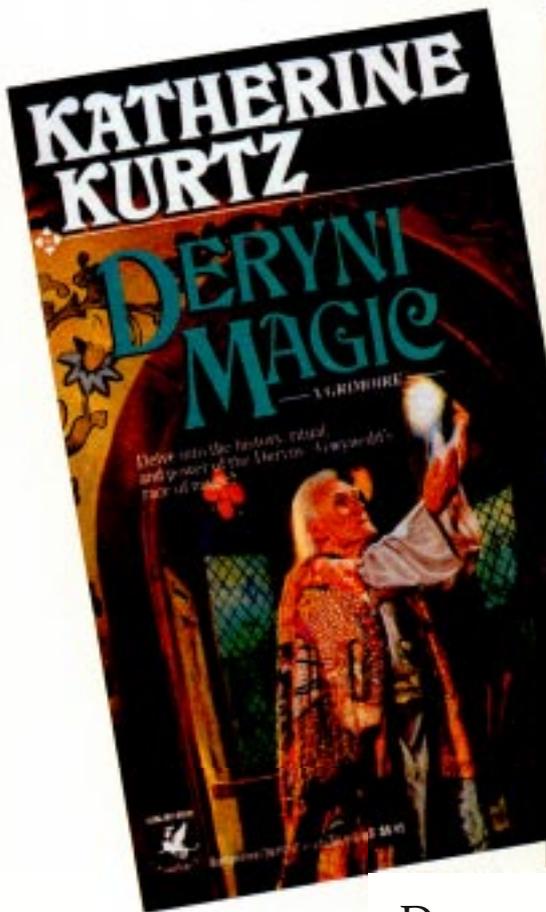
The Campaign Guide to Undermountain contains "the dungeon key" information on what you'll find in Undermountain, with relevant spells and magical items. It also holds guidelines for expanding the dungeon to make it your own. The smaller book, *Undermountain Adventures*, features just that.

Oh, yes, the cards. They're a "DM's hand of tricks" —handy adventure aids detailing traps, encounters, and features that can be dropped into any adventure to make things more exciting.

How's that, Laeral? Well, thank you. Please visit again, any time. Oh, no, leave the cat, please. I'm quite fond of—well, of *course* we can share it. Heh, heh.

Pardon—did you say, "See you in Undermountain"? Well, okay, I guess. ♪

The ROLE of BOOKS



Dragons, Deryni, and much derring-do

©1991 by John C. Bunnell

NEVER DEAL WITH A DRAGON

Robert N. Charrette
 ROC 0-451-45078-7 \$4.50

Robert Charrette's version of the Pacific Northwest isn't much like the one I grew up in-but then, the world of FASAs SHADOWRUN* game universe takes a sharp sideways detour from reality a year or three from now. And apart from the debatable geography, there's more to like than to dislike about *Never Deal With a Dragon*.

Though the title reference is singular, the novel deals with dragons in uppercase plural, and quite successfully besides. Two

have roles in the tangled megacorporate empires of the SHADOWRUN world: Haesslich, whose high-profile post of security director for United Oil is merely an excuse for manipulating power on a vast scale; and Lofwyr, a master of subtlety whose influences are both more direct and more elusive. The third, Tessien, is a different matter. Partnered with a notorious assassin, he adopts simpler goals and a more complex sense of honor.

The connection between the three dragons is Sam Verner, once an anonymous cog in the Renraku conglomerate. A combination of high-level deception and conven-

ient accident draws him gradually into the world of shadowrunning, magic, and industrial espionage, where his efforts to retain his integrity soon make him much more than a pawn. Haesslich is after Sam both to gain knowledge and eliminate an inconvenient loose end. Tessien and his mistress are simply out to collect the price on Sam's head. And Lofwyr, is planning a business coup against Sam's adversaries, in which Sam may prove a useful diversion.

By themselves, solid characters and a convoluted plot might not be especially memorable. But Charrette succeeds amply at conveying the unique atmosphere of the

SHADOWRUN setting, which isn't so much dark as it is wild, a realm where only a thin veneer separates high culture from primal instinct. That makes *Never Deal With a Dragon* worthwhile on two counts, as a game adaptation and as a story with its own merits. (Though it's labeled first in a trilogy, there's no cliffhanger and most of the loose ends are tied up.) If future SHADOWRUN novels hold to the standard established here, their publishers may find themselves with a winner on their hands.

DERYNI MAGIC

Katherine Kurtz

Del Rey 0-345-36117-2 \$5.95

Logically, AD&D® game players might imagine *Deryni Magic* to be an ideal campaign-building supplement to Katherine Kurtz's highly popular series of novels of medieval magic and intrigue. But while that's a perfectly reasonable expectation, it's one that the book fails to fulfill. Instead, this self-styled grimoire qualifies as one of the oddest and most puzzling books I've ever seen.

The term "grimoire" shouldn't be unfamiliar to seasoned fantasy gamers. By tradition and definition, grimoires are books of spells, encyclopedias filled with arcane information, or catalogs of creatures, objects, and sources of power. They are typically specific and detailed, and they are descriptive in nature rather than analytical; one reads a grimoire to answer questions such as "What?" and "How?" rather than "Why?"

But though the books cover and foreword call *Deryni Magic* a grimoire, the content doesn't bear out the label. Kurtz writes in a present-day scholar's voice and even slips into the first person more than once, carefully distancing herself from the Deryni universe. Rather than setting out straightforward lists or descriptions of principles and effects, she uses a deductive approach, taking examples from her earlier books and extracting general rules and theories from them.

This scholarly style is both striking and unsatisfying. Kurtz's pose is that of a historian whose sole sources are the manuscripts of the various Deryni novels and stories. That's implausible to start with. Real historians would have documents, records, and the like from a variety of sources. More seriously, though, the Deryni books are far more precise and introspective than any normal body of ancient material, making the usual techniques of historical scholarship difficult to apply. Kurtz instead appears to present a literary analysis of her own work, which makes very odd reading and at times seems a trifle defensive. While Kurtz is meticulous in citing references from her own works, she tosses in occasional tidbits of seemingly "real" occult lore without so much as a footnote.

Also frustrating is Kurtz's extensive use of quotations from the Deryni novels, which may take up as much as a third of

the book. And even where the prose is new, the information often is not, but has merely been reorganized or gathered from existing material. Perhaps 10% of Deryni Magic actually represents lore not already recorded in or easily compiled from existing sources.

It's hard to determine exactly what Kurtz and her publishers may have had in mind for this volume. As entertainment, it's dry and remote. As a reference work, it's too high flown for a general reader and too limited for those thoroughly familiar with the stories already. *Deryni Magic* is quite simply a waste of effort; Kurtz can better serve her fans by concentrating on her fiction, and leaving peripheral works to others (such as Arthur Collins, whose far more useful authorized AD&D game adaptations of the Deryni appeared back in DRAGON® issue #78).

HEART OF VALOR

L. J. Smith

Macmillan 0-02-785861-8 \$14.95

Getting *Heart of Valor* in the mail was a surprise; as far as I knew, L. J. Smith's first novel (*Night of the Solstice*) had vanished into obscurity a couple of years before and didn't seem to require a sequel. Being wrong in this case is a distinct pleasure; Smith's second book has all the strengths of the first, and it confirms that she's one of the few writers of young-adult fantasy whose work credibly combines 20th-century plausibility with high-powered magical pyrotechnics.

Unlike too many young people in fantasy novels, the four Hodges-Bradley kids have to cope with skeptical teachers, concerned parents, and the real-world problem of getting from point A to point B in an ancient car that barely starts. At the same time, their magical difficulties are real and substantial: Their sorceress patron is away on a mission, a renegade from a neighboring world is sending all manner of magical creatures to harass them, and there's been a marked increase in natural disasters and odd weather phenomenon that might be related to the various sorcerous crises. All of this is only a bare outline; Smith's plot is multifaceted and breathless, packing a great deal into a compact space. The result isn't always as neat or organized as it might have been, but it more than holds a reader's attention.

If the plot isn't always polished, the characterizations and descriptions are lively and compelling. Charles, Alys, Janie, and Claudia are likeable, irritating, and amusing in lifelike proportions, and Smith does a highly skillful job of sketching the animal population with whom Claudia can communicate. Likewise, Smith's knack for writing memorable confrontations is second to none. Most notable is a sequence that goes from dire to ingenious to pyrotechnic, as Janie extricates the young people from a death sentence only to spark a sorcerous battle.

There's also a striking amount of practi-

cal spellcraft; gamers will learn more about the mechanics of magic from Janie's improvised experiments than from the whole of the Katherine Kurtz grimoire mentioned previously. From constructing wards to binding familiars to talking friends out of convertibles, Smith provides evocative details that contribute to the plot as well as to the atmosphere.

In a few spots, it will help to have read the earlier *Night of the Solstice*, which will likely mean a trip to the library (unaccountably, Smith's first book hasn't yet seen a paperback edition). But *Heart of Valor* is good enough all by itself to be worth seeking out, and readers should hope that L. J. Smith's next book won't be as long in coming.

THE ROAD WEST

Gary Wright

TSR 0-88038-927-3 \$3.95

The *Road West* has elements of two distinct stories. Two-thirds of Gary Wright's prose constitute a dense character study of a strong-willed swordsman, nearly as explosive as a vial of nitroglycerin. The other third is a crisp, accurate rendering of a D&D® -game-style adventure. The catch is that these aspects of the book aren't intermingled, but are presented one after the other—and Wright leaves the psychological yarn hanging when he turns to the tale of his adventuring party.

Keven of Kingsend is solitary by nature and almost inhumanly skilled with weapons. After his parents are murdered, teen-aged Keven becomes the King's Arms Academy's star student, excelling at academic as well as martial studies and earning the rarely given title of King's Ranger. He does so, however, by adopting a single-minded dedication that leaves no room for friendships or purely recreational pursuits. At loose ends after his graduation, he journeys westward by himself until reaching the trading city of Midvale, but is stopped from progressing farther west by an encounter with clever brigands barricading the mountain pass beyond the city.

This first significant defeat of his career sends Keven into a cycle of self doubt, depression, and pub crawling that erodes his confidence and finds him questioning his purpose in life. It's here that Wright shifts gears, as local authorities draft Keven to lead a larger strike force into the pass to eliminate the brigands. The force includes all the classic members: a roguish "littler" thief, a doughty "warf," a priestess with a somewhat narrow definition of good, an officious mage, and an elf who appears and disappears at will.

Wright obviously intends the mission to rehabilitate Keven back into fighting trim, and in that respect it's more or less successful. But the earlier focus, on Keven implies deeper psychological issues and raises more basic questions about the ranger's identity. Even though his handling of a game-style adventuring scenario is

crisp, logical, and authoritative, it's several steps removed from the original story, and readers hoping to see Keven truly come to terms with himself are in for a serious disappointment.

What's most frustrating about *The Road West* is its otherwise high level of craftsmanship. In setting scenes, drawing plausible characters, and creating intriguing situations, Wright shows notable perceptiveness and skill. It's only in devising his story's overall structure that he misses the mark. This first novel may merit only a marginal recommendation, but it shows enough promise that further books from Wright will merit close attention.

THE SHADOW GATE

Margaret Bail
Baen 0-671-72032-5 \$4.95

If I ever teach a creative writing class, I'll be tempted to use *The Shadow Gate* as a book-length illustration of things not to do in the process of constructing a story. But despite the mishandled romances, a plot that scarcely exists, and the most convoluted shuffling of viewpoints this side of *Twin Peaks*, there's something uncannily likeable about Margaret Ball's fantasy debut (she's previously written "historical fiction" under another name) that resists my best efforts to label the novel a failure.

Properly, the book has a situation rather than a plot: The elves of the Middle Realm and the staff of a small psychic research center in Texas both face imminent dissolution-magic is draining away from the elves' world, and various legal and financial problems threaten to close down the foundation. One apparent connection is Lisa, the foundation's administrative secretary, who has a mysterious secret in her past; the other is a book that also serves as a portal between the realities. But rather than taking the initiative to resolve the various crises, the characters on both sides of the gate are almost constantly reacting as Ball throws one obstacle after another in their paths, logical or not.

There are at least four major viewpoint characters: Lisa; her colleague Judith, who operates a New Age bookstore out of the research center; Nick, who agrees to handle their legal affairs but winds up facing more arcane opposition; and Berengar, an elven lord who rescues Judith and develops a more-than-passing interest in her well being. Ball doesn't single any of them out as the primary hero or heroine, which further muddles the focus of her already vague narrative and damages her ability to maintain suspense. Preserving Lisa's secret, for instance, is awkward when readers are allowed to follow her thoughts.

Then there are those pesky romances. Ball allows one of her two couples to develop a pleasant, openly suggestive relationship in the course of the book, while the other duo spends too much time fighting monks, monsters, and other villains to

interact seriously with each other. Yet it's this second pair that's headed for marriage at the novel's conclusion, while the two in the first couple allow themselves to be stranded on opposite sides of the closing gate between the worlds. That's implausible and unsatisfying, especially as there are only marginal indications of a possible sequel.

What saves this disorganized tangle from being thrown across the room out of sheer bewilderment? It may be Ball's knack for whimsical characterizations: Lisa and Judith particularly are eccentric yet comfortable personalities, and it's hard not to empathize with Ball's cast as they try to figure out just what kinds of disasters they've been thrust into. Ball also manages to put an intriguing spin on her parallel world, in which elves appear to control much of Angevin France and their queen, Alianora, corresponds to our historical Eleanor of Aquitaine.

But *The Shadow Gate* is notable mostly for being a triumph of facile language over solid literary craftsmanship. Margaret Ball has a way with words that's entertaining while you're turning the pages, but there's no sense of accomplishment on finishing the tale, and her novel might best be compared to a lively gaming session that ends with no treasure, no experience, and no happy ending anywhere in sight.

THE FORGE OF VIRTUE

Lynn Abbey
Questar 0-445-21065-6 \$4.50

Origin's Ultima* line of computer games has been one of that industry's most long-lived and successful series, so it's not surprising to find a novel on the shelves adapted from Richard Garriott's fantasy milieu. It is surprising, though, to find that Britannia in book form somehow isn't nearly as distinctive as its electronic incarnation.

In part, the problem is that author Lynn Abbey exhibits a curious ambivalence about the nature of her setting. On one hand, she seemingly acknowledges the existence of Gamers From Beyond in the form of an Avatar and a host of Peers. But her story stays far away from any of these characters, instead focusing on a small band of native Britannians who have no perspective whatsoever on the concept of their universe as a gaming campaign.

That robs her tale of a great deal of its potential uniqueness. Protagonist Jordan Hawson is the disillusioned son of minor nobility, and he's not appreciably different from the dozens of wayward heirs populating everyone else's fantasy novels. Jordan's younger brother is much like everyone else's irritating and unappreciated younger brother. And Jordan's companion Althea is much like everyone else's reckless but well-intentioned student of magic.

Neither the atmosphere, the magic, nor the plot are any fresher than the characters. Jordan and his friends predictably

view their world as grimy and ordinary, not colorful and unusual. While Abbey tosses off an occasional Ultima spell-phrase, her treatment of the magic system lacks the neat structure of the game's presentation. And the adventurers' quest to find and rescue Althea's missing brother is all too familiar from countless other novels and series.

This isn't to say that the book is badly written. Abbey does a decent job of making her characters personable if not unusual, and she has a solid grasp of medieval society. Her version of Britannia may not be memorable, but it's far from artificial in tone. As a straightforward quest novel (and, by implication at least, the first in a series), *The Forge of Virtue* is perfectly acceptable fare.

But, in this case, that's not enough. As a novel built on the Ultima setting, the book needs to stand out from its competition. To be counted successful, it needs to reproduce the singular aspects of that world, and Abbey's story doesn't even come close to meeting that test. Fans of Richard Garriott's electronic adventures will find more satisfying fantasy on their computer screens than they will within the pages of this book.

LIFELINE

Kevin J. Anderson & Doug Beason
Spectra 0-553-28787-7 \$4.95

There's a tacit assumption in nearly all spacefaring science fiction that humanity possesses ample resources for gallivanting back and forth through interplanetary or interstellar space. But one of the characteristics of good SF is the willingness to question even the most basic assumptions, and *Lifeline* is an excellent exploration of a space-based society that doesn't have the usual highly developed economic base to fall back on.

As the action begins, a nuclear exchange has devastated the Earth and thrown a communications-blocking cloud into its atmosphere. That means that Clavius Moonbase and a handful of orbiting habitats have abruptly been cut off from the world below, long before they're prepared for the burdens of self sufficiency. Food for all is by no means assured, and even communicating between the various space outposts is a chancy proposition at best.

The habitats' collective survival comes to hinge on three separate inventions: an unappealing but easily grown food product known as wall kelp; an ingenious monomolecular filament called weavewire; and a species of genetically engineered sail-creatures. The difficulty is twofold: The various technologies exist at different facilities, and the masters of the individual habitats are so busy consolidating their own positions that they don't feel able to look outward toward their fellow survivors.

The novel's high scientific credibility is no surprise; Anderson and Beason both have solid technical backgrounds and

project that expertise into their story. More startling, but no less satisfying, is the duo's large cast of complex and intriguing characters. Protagonist Duncan McLaris is desperate, driven, yet thoughtful in his efforts to save first himself and later the entire space-based population. On the flip side, the acting director of station Orbitech 1 is equally driven but utterly misguided. In Curtis Brahm's, Beason and Anderson have created one of the most compelling literary figures in recent SF; "villain" is much too simplistic a designation, though he can hardly be considered a positive force. There is a wealth of other well-drawn personalities, but these are the two that stand out.

Critics often accuse "hard" science fiction of emphasizing technical extrapolation and scientific speculation at the expense of exciting storytelling. That's not an issue for *Lifeline*, in which all elements find themselves solidly crafted and stylishly presented. Anderson and Beason have proven that it doesn't take a luxurious starship with lots of firepower to make life in space an adventure worth contemplating. Though that's not a bad thought from a gaming perspective, it's also a worthwhile concept in the real world.

Recurring roles

A. C. Crispin's publishers continue to shower glowing quotes on the covers of the StarBridge novels—and the novels continue to deserve them. *Shadow World* (Ace, \$4.50) finds Crispin and co-writer Jannean Elliott presenting another well-crafted tale of an unusual alien species and a StarBridge Academy student thrust unexpectedly into a crisis of interstellar proportions. So far, the series is batting a thousand.

Equally consistent, if in a totally different milieu, is *Pyramids* (Roc, \$4.95), the latest in Terry Pratchett's cycle of Discworld novels. This one combines a practical-minded study of professional assassins with an equally perceptive (and equally warped) twisting of ancient Egyptian culture. As the size of this series grows, Pratchett's ability to remain fresh and hilarious becomes more and more impressive.

Two more praiseworthy sequels merit notice as well. Josepha Sherman's *The Horse of Flame* (Avon, \$3.95) retains both the comfortable amiability and the pungent Slavic spice that made her earlier *Shining Falcon* notable, this time putting an original spin on the old Russian legend of Koschei the Deathless. And far out in interstellar space, the crew of the exploratory vessel *Starfarer* must cope with

Transition (Spectra, \$4.95), as a malfunctioning computer, uncertain resources, and the possibility of alien contact converge to produce a serial crisis that could end not merely the ship's mission, but its very existence. Vonda McIntyre's second book in this sequence tells a completely different sort of story than its predecessor, and that makes it a highly unusual and commendable sequel.

A pair of anthologies evokes slightly more mixed reactions. *Catfantastic II* (DAW, \$4.50) is either a bit too much or not enough of a good thing. While several of the tales are well executed (notably PM Griffin's and Elizabeth Ann Scarborough's), the overall quality is less memorable than the original collection from co-editors Andre Norton and Martin H. Greenberg. Meanwhile, C. J. Cherryh's Merovingen shared-world series continues in *Flood Tide* (DAW, \$4.50)—and though the stories are a step ahead of those in the previous volume, they leave the previous book's climactic revelation almost totally untouched. □

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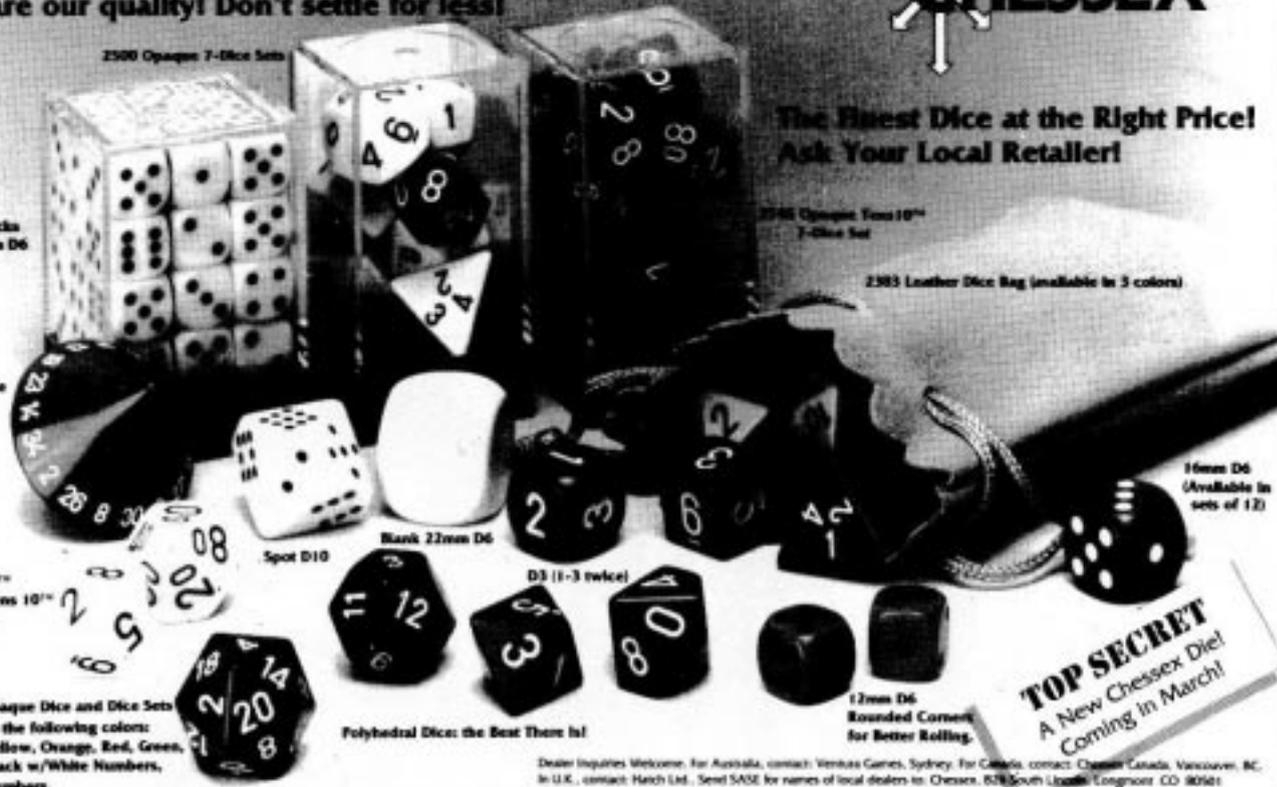
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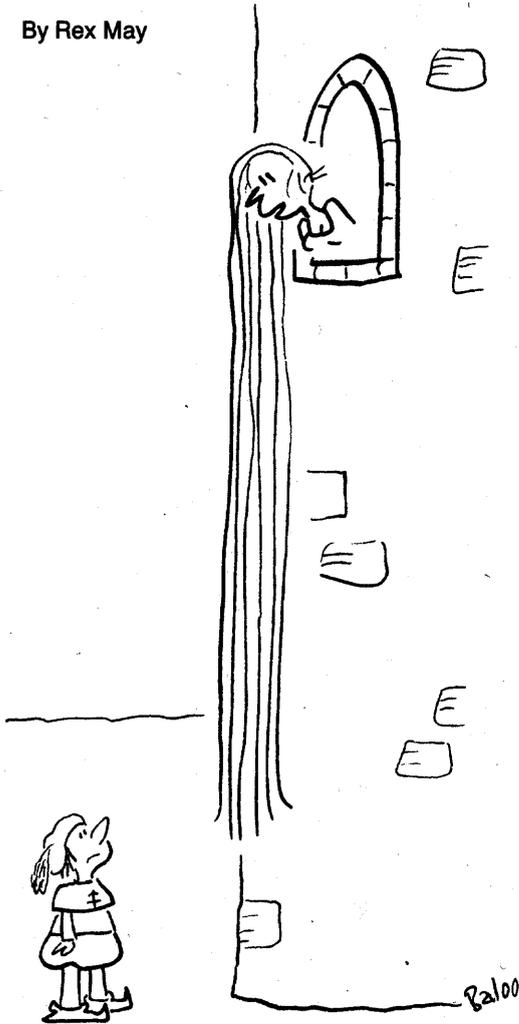
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DRAGONMIRTH

By Rex May



"Did you remember the creme rinse?"



By Jon Carter

"Have you seen two men . . . messy lookin' . . . no shirts? They just escaped from the dungeon."

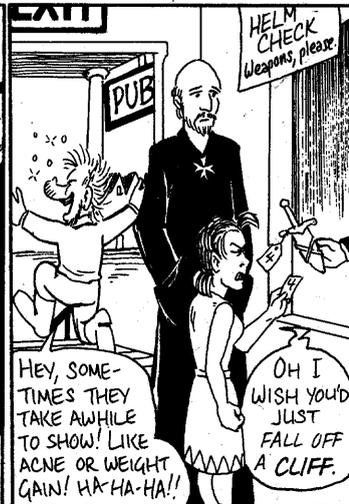


By Peter Callahan

"I wouldn't recommend the black pudding."

Gamara

By Barbara Manui & Chris Adams





By Jim Martin Jr.

"I told you not to try calling a familiar 'til you're older."



By D. Meyer

"...HEY GUYS, I'M GETTING A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS ADVENTURE..."



By Joseph Pillsbury

PILLSBURY

THE TWILIGHT EMPIRE

OUR HEROES SLEEP AFTER THEIR BATTLE WITH LORD UGO'S MEN, WHILE ELSEWHERE...

IT'S JUST NOT FAIR!

WHY CAN'T I GO TO WAR?

YOU GET TO DO EXCITING THINGS AND I'M STUCK HERE.

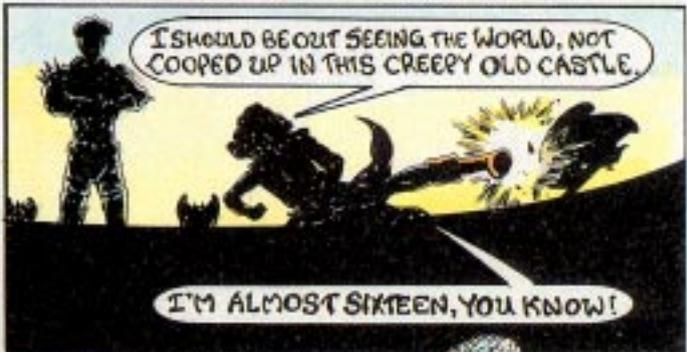


NOW, NOW, MY LITTLE NIGHTSHADE...



YOU KNOW YOUR MOTHER WANTS WHAT'S BEST FOR YOU!

BEST FOR ME?! HA!



I SHOULD BE OUT SEEING THE WORLD, NOT COOPED UP IN THIS CREEPY OLD CASTLE.

I'M ALMOST SIXTEEN, YOU KNOW!



GENERAL KALIL, I ORDER YOU TO TAKE ME TO THE FRONT!!!



HAHAHAHA

BUT I'M NOT RETURNING TO THE WAR, AT LEAST, NOT YET.

FIRST I MUST DELIVER AN ULTIMATUM FROM THE QUEEN TO LORD REDHAND.



THERE'LL BE TIME ENOUGH FOR FUN LATER.



FAREWELL, PRINCESS.

THE HEADQUARTERS OF LORD UGO RED HAND...

HOW LONG CAN NORWATCH HOLD THE FRONTIER?

NO MORE THAN A WEEK, MY LORD.

THE SIEGE HAS TAKEN A GRAVE TOLL ON THE CASTLE'S GARRISON AND DEFENSES.

THEY MUST SURVIVE FOR TWICE THAT! I NEED A FORTNIGHT TO BRING THE MAIN BODY OF MY ARMY HERE.

DAMN THAT WITCH!

MY LORD...? WHAT IS IT?

WHERE DID YOU GET THESE?

I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN HER ASSAULT ON OUR SOUTHERN BORDER WAS MERELY A FEINT!

CAN'T YOU SEE I'M BUSY?

STRANGE TREASURES, LORD REDHAND - POSSIBLY MAGICAL

ONE OF THE MEN CONFISCATED THEM FROM KLEG'S JENRAT FRIENDS.

EH? BRING THEM HERE!

Hmm.

FASCINATING ARTWORK... BUT I SEE NO IMMEDIATE USE FOR ANY OF THIS

PUT THE BOX ON MY SIDETABLE AND GO.

WRITING & COLORING

Stephen D. Sullivan

ART

John M. Hebert

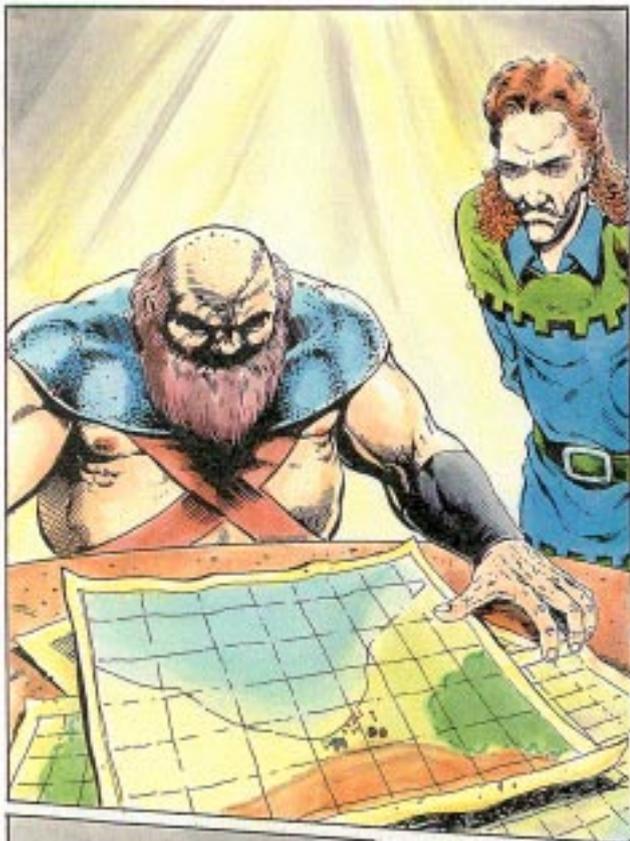
LETTERING

Matt Mattick

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Art © 1991 J. Hebert
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ROBINSON'S WAR

PART 12



MY LORD... SORRY TO INTERRUPE AGAIN...

... BUT ONE OF VARGA'S MEN HAS RETURNED.

THE MEN I SENT TO RECAPTURE THAT ELF MINX?

SEND HIM IN.

L' LORD REDHAND...

WELL? WHERE IS SHE! DID YOU TAKE HER ALIVE?

I... THAT IS, WE...

MY LORD, SHE ESCAPED.

THEY USED SPELLS AND SUMMONED MONSTERS, MY LORD. THERE WERE JUST TOO MANY.

AND VARGA?

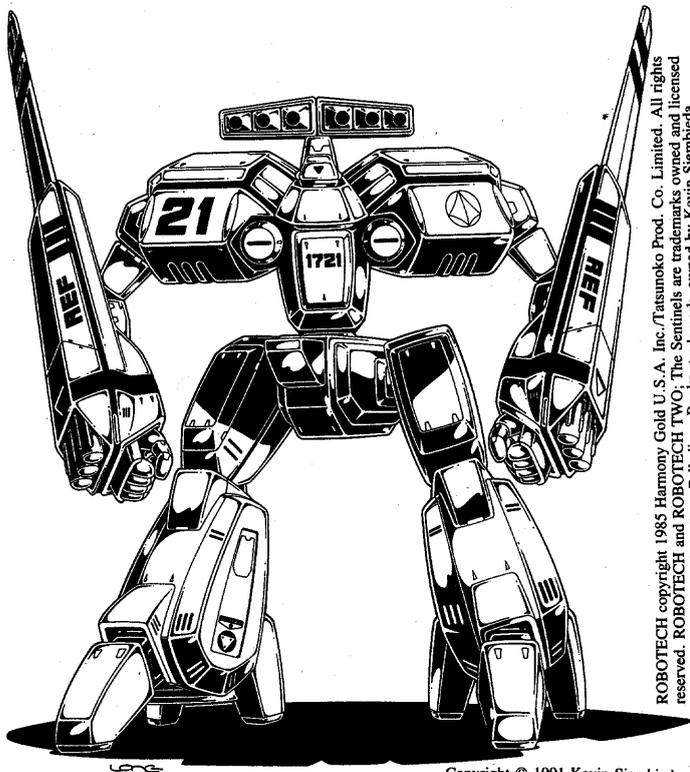
DEAD, LORD REDHAND.

LEAVE US.

THE WAR MUST COME FIRST.

BUT ONE DAY I'LL SETTLE ACCOUNTS WITH FINELLA GIRL.

NEXT: IN THE HUT OF THE HAG



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Volume Four: Episodes **70: Enter Marlene**, **71: The Secret Route**, **72: The Fortress**. The Invid Regis creates a simulant to infiltrate the group of human freedom fighters who are beginning to become a serious nuisance (Marlene). *The Secret Route* reveals Lancer's secret past and the woman he once loved. The combat inside an Invid hive concludes this volume in a spectacular adventure. A must for Robotech fans! **Available May 21th.**

Volume Five: Presents episodes **73: Sandstorms**, **74: Annie's Wedding**, **75: Separate Ways**. Rand has a psychic vision about the Invid and their purpose, the mystery of Marlene deepens, Annie gets married (?) and the group looks to be splitting up after a desperate clash with invid forces lead by a "Pincer" Command Unit.

Available June 28th.

Volume Six: Contains episodes **76: Metamorphosis** (Corg and Sera are introduced), **77: The Midnight Sun**, **78: Ghost Town**. The Regis creates two humanoid Royal Invid to track and destroy our heroes, naval battle, a dangerous trek through snow covered mountains, old rebels, tragic death, and continuing battle with the Invid Royal Command Battloids and their Invid legions.

Available August 14th.

Volume Seven: Presents episodes **79: Frostbite**, **80: Birthday Blues**, and **81: Hired Gun**. More intrigue and subplots develop with Marlene, as well as between Lancer and the Invid Sera, Annie has a birthday, Invid combat and the appearance of the cyborg anti-hero, *Dusty Ayres*.

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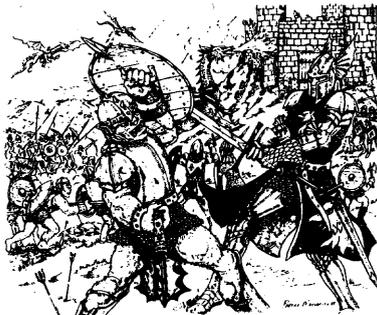
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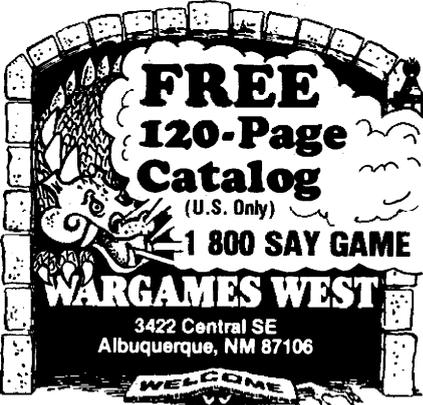
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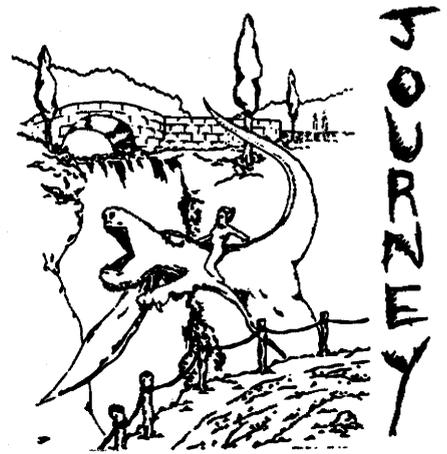
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Through the LOOKING Glass

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Gnomekins (Lance & Laser)

Miniature games for stuffed animals and G.I. Joes?

I attended the WINTER FANTASY convention during the first weekend of January, in Milwaukee, Wis., where I saw a number of miniatures events at what is normally thought of as a role-playing convention. These events included two FASA BATTLETECH* tournaments, several I.C.E. SILENT DEATH* games, a game called Intro Wars (which used Hasbro's G.I. JOE* figures and rules written by Harold Johnson and Nick Klapper), plus some TSR BUCK ROGERS® XXVc™ and AD&D® game events. But one of the amusements that drew the most attention was the PUPPY POUNDERS* game by Inner City Games, which uses stuffed animals and seems absolutely absurd to the average gamer. However, "average" gamers enjoyed themselves at this totally goofy game!

Why is this important? We've talked here about bringing new members into the miniatures fold. Often, this is difficult because of family commitments, lack of family interest, or lack of time. The PUPPY POUNDERS game gives the entire family

a chance to get involved in a fun "miniatures" game without leaving home. The rules can even be used with large military toys to teach tactics and strategy to kids and non-gamers. Once your friends understand the games you play, it will be easier to find miniatures partners or opponents at home, and easier to find time for games outside the home as well. With a little work, we can bring those closest to us into the gaming community, or at least help them understand why we enjoy the games so much.

Now to the reviews.

Reviews

Miniatures' product ratings

*	Poor
**	Below average
***	Average
****	Above average
*****	Excellent

Lance & Laser Models

P.O. Box 14491
Columbus OH 43214

T-005—Gnomekins ****
T-007—Kasmir Trapsmith *** ½
T-014—Vajra Engineer ****

Lance & Laser continues to support its TALISLANTA* line with the submission of three more 25 mm figures for review. They are molded with a metal mixture different from that which most figure companies use and are considerably darker in color than other miniatures. The figures are also slightly more brittle but should hold up well under normal usage. They hold paint well after priming and light cleaning.

The Gnomekins set consists of four pieces: two males, one female, and a baby. Bard Games' *Chronicles of Talislanta* booklet defines Gnomekins as a race of small, brown-skinned humanoids native to the caverns and grottos of Dume.

The nude baby is sitting on a low mound surrounded by two mushrooms. He sits with legs crossed, sucking on its right thumb with its left arm resting on its knee. The figure looks content, but facial features and details are blurred and indistinct. The ears are prominent and pointed, and a Mohawk haircut is obvious but has only a small amount of detail.

The female's ears are sharp and pointed like a Vulcan's, and she has a Mohawk haircut extending across her head and down to her waist. She wears a brassiere, a half jacket, and a split skirt that covers her knees but allows free movement. She leans to the right with a loaded sling in her right hand and a missile in her left hand. Bracelets adorn her wrists, and she has a strap on her shoulder from which hangs a pouch on her left side. She wears no shoes. Facial detail is good, and her expression is determined.

The third figure appears to be a young warrior armed with a sling in his right hand and a knife in his left hand. The sling is well molded, but the knife needs work. His ears and hair are almost exactly the same as the female's, with the hair reaching to the lower back. This figure also has a pouch, but his fighting pose almost hides it. The warrior wears a strap and protector in front that turns into a flap in the rear. Facial features are not as clear on this figure as on the female, and they tend to run together and be chunky and too angular, as also happens with the exposed muscles.

The last figure is obviously either an adult fighter or a chief. Facial detail is good, although the mold line goes through the middle of the face (this can be easily fixed but should be done carefully). He is armed with a sling and with a short sword that has angular edges. He wears a scale-mail outfit, bracers on his wrists and ankles, and a hooded cape that is joined in the front by a simple brooch. The figure is crouched as if awaiting an attack. All four



Rebel Troopers (West End Games)

figures have earrings in both ears.

While these figures were made for the TALISLANTA system, they are usable in others. They would be usable in AD&D campaigns as a gnome group, or could be used in Games Workshop's WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLEPLAY* game with their mohawks. With careful work on the bases and painting, they can be useful additions to a figure collection. The price is \$3.50 per pack.

The next figure is of a Kasmir Trapsmith. The Chronicles describes the Kasmir as citizens of a desert country and as shrewd lenders and appraisers. As such, they are visible targets for thieves and have a whole industry available to protect their treasures. One of these industries is that of the trapsmith, who designs ways of protecting an individual's wealth.

The single figure submitted for review is dressed in long robes that cover his entire body from shoulders to feet, and a hooded cloak that covers his entire head except for the face. The toes of his two boots extend past the lower edge of the garments. He clutches a two-pointed spear, angled to either protect or attack. A set of skeleton keys and a pouch hang from an unseen belt, and there is a visible chest strap. The facial expression is well detailed, with intense anger clearly visible. Eyebrows are arched, and his mouth is open as if to hurl an insult.

This figure has uses in other games as a thief, assassin, or outside guard. This figure is worth its \$1.35 price, especially if you want a different sort of thief.

The last figure is a Vajra engineer. The Vajra are described as members of a stout underground race, with body frames covered by rows of overlapping scaly plates; they are skilled builders and engineers. The figure supports this description.

This figure is 25 mm from feet to eyes, and 15 mm across the shoulders—a very respectable measurement. It is covered by small overlapping scales shaped like diamonds, with some patches of larger scales on the chest, knees, and elbows. The face is covered with fine scales, and his nose consists of two slits for nostrils. In the open mouth, a small tongue is visible; the eyes are open wide, but there are no visible ears. A crest goes from the forehead to mid-skull in back.

This species apparently does not believe in clothing, as the only visible coverings are a belt and loincloth. The belt has a large buckle and a hammer or mallet hanging from it. An oddly shaped tool with curved and pointed ends is held over the Vajra's head with both hands. This could be used as a hook, a climbing tool, a digging tool, or a weapon. He also wears a backpack and has a climbing axe.

This figure will have limited use outside of TALISLANTA games. Unless you want an elemental to irritate your party, you probably don't need this figure. This single-figure pack is \$1.35.

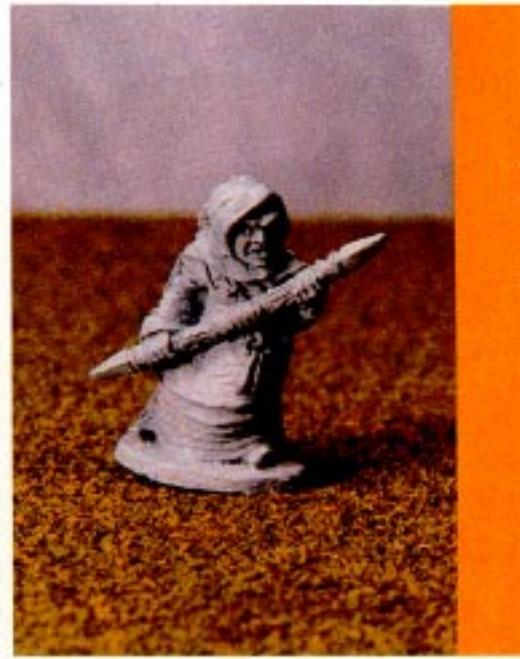
West End Games

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WE 40312--Rebel Troopers ****

The *Star Wars* saga continues in spirit, if not on actual film footage, through the efforts of West End Games. As with any combat situation, the foot soldiers will decide the outcome of a conflict. With the introduction of this figure set, the *Star Wars* rebels now have a fairly comprehensive fighting unit.

The rebel set submitted for review consists of 10 individual figures that form an



Kasmir Trapsmith (Lance & Laser)

effective unit. The 25 mm lead figures all appear to be a bit bulky and large, but when measured are true to scale. Almost every figure has flash at the leg junctions and mold lines, and there is some flash at the ends of the heavy weapons.

SW-101 is a heavy weapons specialist dressed in a one-piece jumpsuit with boots that stretch to mid-calf. Pockets on the fronts of the legs and right chest are visible. He wears a belt with a holster, a knife toward the back, and a large pouch. Spare tripods and jackets for the weapon hang from crossed straps on his back and a sling in front. His left hand supports a repeat blaster, while his right is on the trigger. Swept-back hair and smooth, boyish facial features stand out. The smooth boots have no laces or zipper visible.

SW-102 wears a one-piece jumpsuit with laced boots and many bulging pockets. His belt holds several pouches. Straps that look like suspenders cross his back. He holds a short-barreled gun with a sighting mechanism in both hands in the firing position at shoulder level. The helmet looks like an early football helmet with a hearing device. Facial detail is obstructed by a mold line and flash that will take careful work to fix.

SW-103 and SW-104 are almost identical. Both have boots, slacks, and ponchos that go from shoulders to knees. Both wear the same early-style football helmets and have beards, with SW 104's beard being longer and bushier. Each figure carries a hand weapon in his right hand.

SW-105 is a female figure whose uniform is nearly identical to SW-102's, except that her pockets aren't as full. She holds a blaster in her left hand as if firing. Spare ammo clips are attached to her belt on the left rear; grenade pouches are on the



Vajra Engineer (Lance & Laser)

right. Her head is covered, but a pony tail pokes out from the back of her helmet onto her right shoulder. Facial features are indistinct; she appears not to have a chin.

SW-106 is armed with the same weapon as SW-105 and is firing from the two-handed law-enforcement stance. This soldier wears boots, pants with stripes on the legs, and a uniform tunic with a pocket on the right. Ammo pouches jut out from under the tunic. The uniform includes a tie that is barely visible (or a mold line that looks like a tie). The face is fully exposed except for the chin, which is covered by a chin strap. The facial detail is good except for a small amount of flash. His head is covered by a teardrop-style helmet that covers the back of his head and leaves only his face exposed.

SW-107 is another female warrior with boots, a one-piece jumpsuit with leg pockets, a teardrop helmet, and a tunic jacket open on the right side. She is firing a repeat blaster from the hip and has a determined look on her face, which has well-done features. Her pony tail flows in the wind.

SW-108 is the last female in the unit, wearing a one-piece jumpsuit and a uniform vest. Her facial expression is serious, and she stands as if at a target range, with her right arm extended out and her left arm held behind her.

SW-109 carries an assault rifle, posed as if getting ready to round a corner or go through a door under fire. The gun faces up at a 45° angle from lower right to upper left. His pants have pockets, and his jacket and helmet are the same as for SW-106. His facial expression is watchful and alert and is not ruined by mold lines or flash.

SW-110's uniform and helmet are the same as at least four other figures, and his



Top—mortars; bottom—laser or heavy cannon (Stan Johansen)

blaster is pointed up into the air. His facial detail is good.

These figures have multiple uses. Their uniforms are very similar to the Kurita Machine Gun Assault Platoon from Ral Partha (see later in this column) and could be used as attached troops. These could also be used as security troops for FASA's SHADOWRUN* game. They are worth their \$12.00 price tag even with the work needed to clean up the figures for painting.

Stan Johansen Miniatures

3109 Nautical Way
Lantana FL 33462

SM-000—Mortars

SM-012—Laser or Heavy Cannons

Many people play in the world of GW's WARHAMMER 40,000* game, directing their Squats, Orks, Eldar, or Imperial Marines onto battlefields ripe with heavy weapons. With the ever-rising cost of Games Workshop miniatures, outfitting an army frequently becomes a matter of a battle of the bucks. This leads not to victory by strategy, but victory by disposable income, much like our arms races today.

Enter Stan Johansen Miniatures and its Space Marine line of miniatures. These figures were originally molded for use with a game made by Fantasy Games Unlimited (FGU). The line was extensive and included many weapons that could be used in either 20 mm or 25 mm scales.

SM-000 contains three futuristic energy mortars without crews. Each barrel is 25 mm long from rear to flash suppressor. The body of each mortar has a magazine and rests on the ground, rendered stable through the use of two rear supports.

Height control is done through the use of a side adjustment wheel and gear system or a knob at the top of the front support leg. This support leg is made in an inverted T-shape with a shock absorber mounted on it to keep the gun stable.

This weapon is simple enough that even an Ork should be able to operate it successfully, and they are small and light enough to travel with any fast-moving unit for light fire support. These mortars could fire explosives or energy in the game for which they were originally designed, and game statistics should be easy to create in the WARHAMMER 40,000 system. Add crews, and they are well worth the \$3 price tag per pack.

SM-012 contains two heavy artillery pieces. Each single gun has five pieces to assemble. One part is the gun assembly proper and has the body, barrel, and small blast shield in one molded piece. The barrel measures just under 24 mm long with several reinforcements and ends in a breech assembly. The piece does not elevate, but pistons and adjustment knobs are molded on as if it could. Sighting can be done over the barrel and through the shield for frontal shots, or using the "controls" molded on. The gun mounts directly to the stand using a square peg. The weapon's stand consists of a Y-shaped tripod and four grav or shock-absorbing disks. The stand is molded as if it can be folded up for moving by using the antigrav disks instead of wheels.

This heavy cannon can fire several different types of ammo; you can designate the ammo as per WARHAMMER 40,000 or other rule systems. While you do need a crew, any extra troops will do fine, especially if the weapons are used in front-line antivehicle use, the way World War II Germans used their 88 mm flak guns as



Kurita Machine Gun Assault Platoon figures (Ral Partha)

antitank weapons. You get more bang for your buck, and these are recommended at \$4 for two. While they may not be pretty, they sure are usable.

Iron Crown Enterprises

P.O. Box 1605
Charlottesville VA 22902

#0908—Sorenson III

#0909—Revenge

I.C.E.'s SILENT DEATH* game continues to grow in popularity, and I.C.E. continues to add to its list of impressive new miniatures ships. Unfortunately, the samples submitted for review are the last of the group listed in the Rules & Starcraft Display Pack, and the last ones for which I have statistics.

As described in the Display Pack, the Sorenson III started out as a customs and patrol ship. The Sorenson III cannot protect its crew in close combat due to a shortage of short-range weapons, but it is good for raiding as it can attack its prey from long range, then flee before the victim can reach it.

The lead miniature of the Sorenson III is 40 mm long and 35 mm from wingtip to wingtip. The body consists of a fuselage with step-up-style seating for the pilot and gunner. The miniature cockpit covers appear to be of a one-piece design, while the illustrated window employs support strips. The craft fuselage continues with huge intake ducts that start even with the first cockpit seat, then taper back to blend into the rear third of the fuselage, which then tapers to a point. The wings extend out from the ship at 90° angles, then taper at 45° angles downward. Each wing mounts a large, square engine.

This model follows the Display Pack illustrations well, with two exceptions. The most obvious exception is the tail assembly. The tail in the book is Y-shaped, with the two top parts at 45° angles from

the vertical; the miniature has a V-shaped tail at angles greater than 45° from the vertical. The other difference is in the placement of panel lines along the wings and fuselage. The miniature and illustrations don't quite match, so you wonder which is correct. A little flash is between the intake and weapons pod. The price is \$4 for two.

The first thing that struck me about the illustrations of the Revenge in the SILENT DEATH game was its similarity to FASA's TOG Fluttering Petal ship. The arc of the fuselage and wing curves are close, but just different enough to require a second look. The vessel is billed as a strike vessel that must be escorted by smaller fighters to be truly effective. This notion compares favorably to our modern missile cruiser, which has great offensive capacity but little staying power or self protection, and must be escorted by smaller ships.

The miniature instantly does away with any comparisons to the TOG Petal, other than its similar shape. The Revenge is a short (32 mm long), squat (30 mm wide), swoop-winged ship. The fuselage is in a half-hex shape, with the largest flat side on the bottom. The illustration shows a long cockpit and a small weapons or sensor pod to the left rear. The miniature has the correct cockpit, but the weapons or sensor pod is directly in line with, and connected to, the cockpit. Engines are mounted on the trailing edges of the wings near the fuselage. A connector bridge joins the outer engines and frames the main rocket engine. An obvious mold line strays across the engine exhaust port; it must be cleaned out for the rear to look correct. This miniature came to me in a flattened condition, so it took some careful bending to correct it. Two Revenges come per pack for \$4.

These are plain, nicely done miniatures that are molded for heavy play rather than fragile display. They can be used in many other games as VTOLs, fighters, etc.

I highly recommended these pieces.

NOTE: I.C.E. has pointed out a mistake I made in my SILENT DEATH game review in DRAGON® issue #165. I.C.E. placed the miniatures value in the SILENT DEATH boxed game at \$36, rather than the \$26 value I noted. I apologize for any problems this may have caused.

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RP 10-850—Kurita Machine Gun Assault Platoon ^{**** 1/2}

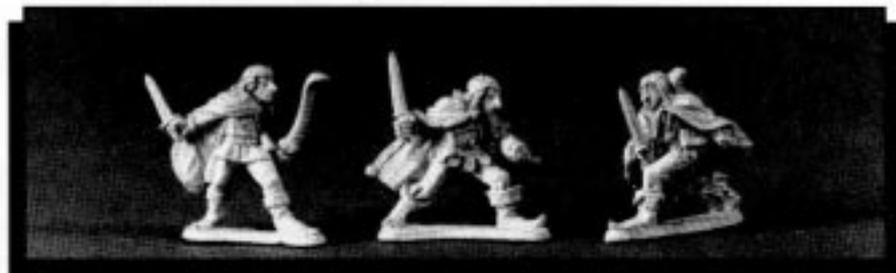
The miniatures set submitted for review represents a platoon of Kurita troops equipped with heavy weapons. The 25 mm lead figures are medium infantry by BATTLETECH game standards, with no power armor or extra armor beyond the regular issue. There are seven different types of figures, with the set containing a total of 36 pieces.

Each of the two machine gun groups consist of six separate pieces, most of which need to be assembled. The gun base is slightly tapered, measuring 30 mm by 30 mm, with a large tripod molded on. Next comes a seat and counter weight that must be glued to a post on the base. The machine gun looks like an old Browning 50 cal. from World War II, complete with cocking slide, vented barrel, and gun handle. The gunner needs to have his left arm glued on; make sure it reaches the gun at the proper angle. Each crewman is dressed in the predominate uniform of Kurita: a teardrop-style helmet, patterned on World War II Soviet helmets, that covers the neck; a quilted vest with armor inserts and front pockets; gloves; and

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GHQ

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132—*LeSupurbe* *****
#231—64 *Gun H.M.S. Bellona* *****

In DRAGON issue #164, we talked about the H.M.S. *Victory* and the political atmosphere of its times. From 1785 to the early 1800s, massive ship-building efforts were made by almost all major European countries and by the fledgling U.S.A. Many of the older ships from the early 1700s were becoming battle weary or obsolete. France was on her way to reclaim her empire, which had been taken apart by other nations over the past hundred years, and a man named Napoleon was coming to power. Britain was shaken from losing her American colonies, and plans were being made to reclaim them. But all of these plans required unrestricted use of the sea. Ships of the line (each with 74 guns or more) were thus built with great haste.

The *LeSupurbe* and the H.M.S. *Bellona* were roughly comparable in size, crew, and number of guns. The GHQ models are also similar. Each ship has three very detailed masts with full sails, the only real difference being two jibs on the British ship versus three jibs for the French. Both vessels need their trailers done (see issue #164, pages 107-108) but not the cross braces, as these were eliminated by this time. Both miniatures have full arrays of anchors, long boats, and short boats.

The *Bellona* has two full gun decks, one deck fully open and the other half open. The stern gallery includes a three-quarters balcony with railing. The rest of the stern is undecorated and fairly plain, and has the detailed lanterns and top scrolling common on British ships. The *Bellona* measures 46 mm long by 13 mm wide at its widest point, and is 48 mm high to the top of the main mast.

The French *LeSupurbe* miniature has two protected gun decks and one open gun deck. The quarterdeck has no guns, and there is an ornate cabin for the helmsman and wheel. The stern simple gallery has no lanterns, just windows for the officers' cabins. Grates on this model are slightly less distinct. Both ships have fine engraving on the deck to represent planking, but the decks are less clear. The hull measures 54 mm long, 13 mm wide, and 47 mm high at the main mast.

Both of these models are well worth the \$5.50 price each. They may be used as playing pieces in the WOODEN SHIPS & IRON MEN* game from the Avalon Hill Game Company or the HEART OF OAK* game from FGU. They can also be made into excellent display models that take up very little room.

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LeSupurbe (GHQ)

pants that are slightly baggy, have pockets, and tuck into the boots. Noticeable on both gunners is a mold line running from boots to rear; the halves of each figure are slightly off center at the joining.

The officer is dressed much like the rest of the platoon. He wears a soft cap with flaps that cover his ears when folded down. The arms have padding that extends up to protect the elbows. His vest is slightly open. The figure carries a submachine gun that looks like either a MAC10 or an Uzi with a sight. There was quite a bit of flash at the leg junction, but this was cleaned up easily.

The light recoilless rifle team consists of three two-man teams, with loaders and gunners. The loader wears the standard uniform, teardrop helmet, vest, pants, and thin gloves. He holds a large rocket shell, which he is preparing to load, and wears two large bags with multiple pockets that probably contain extra shells. Belt and buckle are evident as is the emblem on his left arm and the crossed straps that support the ammo bags. There is some flash on this figure as well. The gunner wears the same outfit, but has a soft cap like the officer's. The recoilless rifle resembles an old panzerchek and is probably small caliber. He has what could be either a pistol or communications device on his right hip as he faces left with his weapon. A small pouch and a medium pouch are on his belt. No flash was evident on this figure. Neither gunner nor loader carries a backup gun.

The largest group of figures in this set consists of regular troops. These nine figures are dressed conventionally with teardrop helmets and quilted vests. The large pouch on each man's right side is probably a pack with personal items. Each carries an AK-47 look-alike with a slightly modified M-203 grenade launcher. The only thing obviously missing is spare ammo. An additional four-man group is

armed and dressed like the other infantry but is shown in advancing with weapons at hip-firing positions. Communications devices are mounted on the right sides of all helmets. No flash was present on these figures.

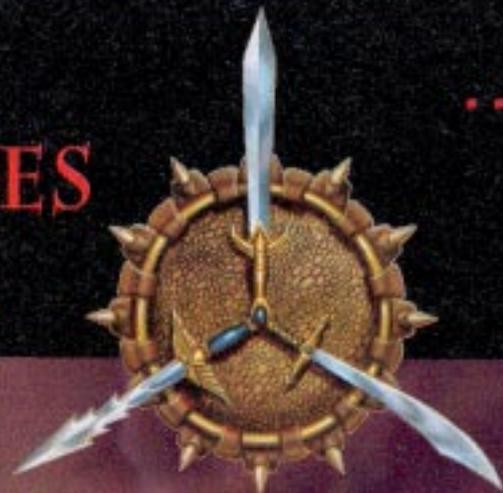
The senior NCO looks basically like the troops. His boots are wrapped with laces, and his pants pockets are filled. A pouch hangs from his belt. Most interesting is the communications device hanging on a strap over his left shoulder and the antenna box on the right side of his helmet. You must cut the antenna wire from the wire stock included in the box, but this is easy. The NCO is shown leading his troops; he has his rifle supported by his left arm, and with his right hand is motioning his troops forward.

The three junior NCOs are almost identical to the senior NCO except they have boot knives, extra cartridge holders, and are attacking aggressively and firing.

These troops are well-done figurines but appear to belong more to the present than to the BATTLETECH game era. The machine guns, assault weapons, and grenade launchers are more at home in GDW's TWILIGHT :2000* or 2300 AD* games, which points out just how far these troops have fallen behind in technology. Although slug throwers will probably never go out, of fashion, I would think Kurita would be further ahead. This is actually a good thing, as these figures could also be used for FASA's SHADOWRUN game or any of a number of other games. With the versatility of this set, it is a good buy at \$22.95, even if it does have a little more flash than I'm used to from Ral Partha figures.

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Lords of the Warring States

Continued from page 80

bar's qualms, he committed suicide to further the plot.

The plan almost worked. Cinnabar equipped Ching with a nonmagical dagger of such exquisite quality as to equal a dagger +1, and he coated it with lethal poison. The adventurer took the head and the map and came before the emperor of Ch'in. As the emperor reached for the map, Ching grabbed the emperor's sleeve and lunged. But the sleeve tore, and Ordinance pulled himself free. His guards cut Ching apart. Ordinance conquered all Yen in reprisal and hunted down Cinnabar's friends, but minstrels never ceased to sing of Ching's bravery. For this reason, uncensored music was banned in Ch'in.

Ching K'o would make a perfect companion for PCs. His reluctance to risk danger and demanding whims could make him a nuisance, but no party could disdain Chin K'o's fighting skill. During his days as a kensai, Ching K'o would have gladly joined a party of adventurers to carouse and discuss swordsmanship theory. A DM could also present him to a party undertaking some mammoth quest meaningful to the whole world. Ching K'o might then see his chance to become legendary and would be willing to die in the attempt.



Sun Pin

Male human
10th-level samurai

ARMOR CLASS: 10

MOVE: 6 in sedan chair or 24 on horseback (cannot walk)

HIT POINTS: 63

NO. OF ATTACKS: 2

ATTACK BONUS: +1 (due to strength)

DAMAGE/ATTACK: By weapon type (+3 due to strength)

SPECIAL ABILITIES: *Kiai increases strength to 18/00 for one round; surprised only on a roll of 1 on 1d6; immune to fear; can cause fear; great kiai both raises strength to 18/00 and stuns enemies who fail a save vs. paralyzation*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Standard

SIZE: M (5'7" tall)

ALIGNMENT: Lawful good

PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil

S 18/49	I 16	W 18
D 9	C 11	Ch 15

Sun Pin traced his parentage back to Sun Tzu, author of the classic, *The Art of War*; like his ancestor, Sun Pin was a military genius. That skill nearly got him killed. In Sun's travels, he accepted a generalship from the lord of Wei, and his glory quickly overshadowed that of Wei's commander-in-chief, a general named P'ang Chuan. P'ang feared that his rival would usurp his position, so he accused Sun Pin of loving a foreign woman and selling secrets to her. The king then ordered Sun's feet cut off and his face branded. Sun Pin was ashamed to be seen as a convict, so he feigned insanity and hid himself in a portable closet to hide the humiliating marks of punishment.

At this time an ambassador from Ch'i (not the same as Ch'in) visited the king's court and became interested in Sun. The ambassador arranged to have his servants steal Sun Pin's closet, with him in it, and carry it back to Ch'i. There, Sun Pin was taken to a horse race where he sat next to Ch'i's general, who was gambling on his horses. The rules of the game were that each player would bet on three separate races, and whoever won the majority of the competitions won the bet. Sun Pin observed that each side in the race had three horses: one superb, one slow, and one of average ability. So he nudged the general and said, "Place a bet on the next contest, and I can help you win."

The general agreed and wagered 1,000 pieces of gold. Sun Pin suggested, "Match your worst horse against his best, your best against his second best, and your second best against his weakest." The general followed his advice; although the general lost the first race badly, he won the next two. The commander immediately offered to make Sun Pin a general and give him command over the entire army. Sun refused, to spare Ch'i the shame of employing a convict as a commander. However, he remained as a servant to the general, and his advice helped the king of Ch'i to defeat several nations.

Fifteen years later, Ch'i went to war with Wei. Sun's old king attacked his new one, and Pang Chuan commanded the enemy, proudly dismissing Ch'i's troops as cowards. The two armies approached each

other through mountainous terrain, and when they were still several days apart, Sun Pin ordered his army to light 100,000 kitchen fires. The following night, they lit only 50,000; the night after that, only a few fires were kindled. On the fourth day, Sun Pin hid Ch'i's entire army in hills overlooking wooded ravines around a deep canyon, with a huge tree in the center. He issued all the troops crossbows and ordered them to fire as soon as they saw flame. Then he wrote "P'ang Chuan dies here" on the tree's bark.

P'ang Chuan's scouts reported the dwindling campfires to him, and he immediately decided that Sun's troops were deserting. P'ang gleefully hurried to meet his foe. If he could strike before Sun Pin restored morale, Ch'i's whole army could be routed. P'ang Chuan's army abandoned its supplies and armor and rushed into the mountain gorges, reaching them on the fourth evening. In the dim light, P'ang Chuan saw a great tree with wavy characters written on its bark. He could not read them in the twilight—so P'ang lit a torch. Thousands of crossbow bolts poured from the hills, panicking and destroying P'ang Chuan's army. It is said that P'ang Chuan ducked the first flight of bolts, then read the writing on the tree and lamented, "So I, too, have contributed to the fame of that wretch!" Then he slit his own throat.

Sun Pin was a scholar who had not only studied all the classic tracts of his day but had amended several of them with his own observations. He could always give PCs useful advice, especially on military matters. PCs might also consult him on any matter of honor, since he also was a paragon of bushido. Sun Pin's punishment may keep him from traveling himself, but he could be in the background of many adventures, perhaps even hiring PCs to go on an honorable quest.

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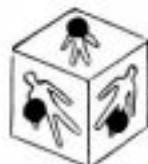
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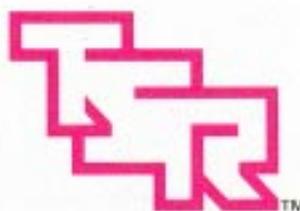
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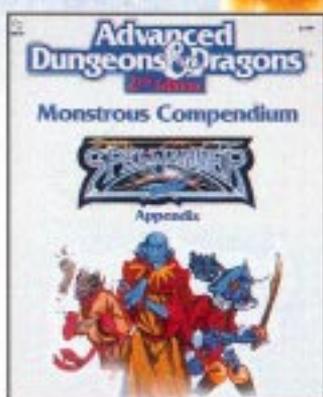
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