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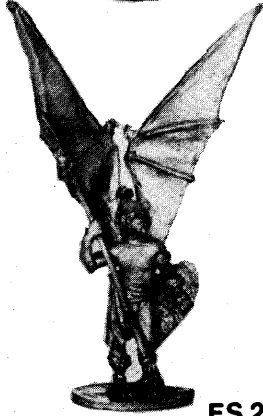
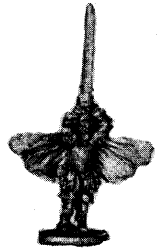
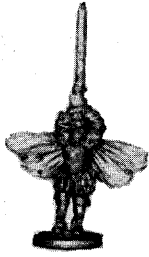
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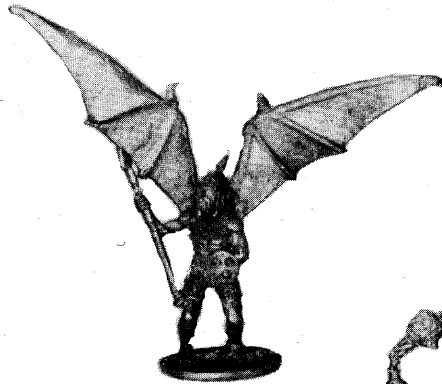
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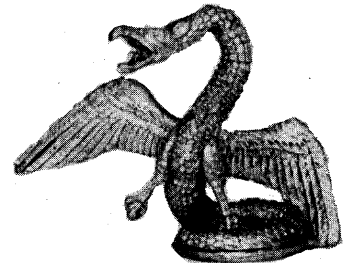
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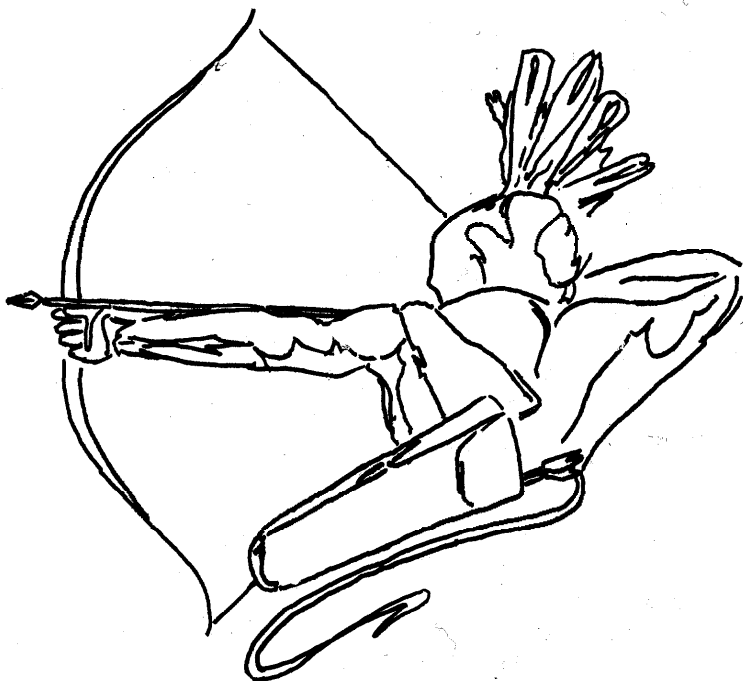
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**ORIGINS '78 — Biggest Con To Date**

*Origins '78* is finally history, and those that were there will long remember it, for many different reasons. I've waited a few days to allow the jumble of images, incidents and events to sort themselves out in my mind, as well as to be able to look back with a little more detachment.

It's a flaw in human nature that the things that aggravate us often leave a more intense short-term impression than all the pleasant things connected with an event or a memory. It is one of the human mind's greatest powers that allow us to forget those same things with the passage of time, leaving only the pleasant associations. *Origins '78* had its share of both high and low points. The following is an attempt to recall both.

*Origins '78* was BIG! When we left on Sunday night, the attendance was being estimated at anywhere from 3500 to over 4200, depending upon whom you queried. I'd estimate, and it is only an estimate, as I was heavily involved in tourneys and events all weekend, that around 35-3600 people attended. That is by far the biggest con to date. It was far more attendees than anyone had rationally predicted, and that could have posed some serious problems, yet I don't believe it did to any extent. I did hear some grouching at the Central Desk about "everything" being filled up from people that didn't register until it opened. What "everything" is to one gamer doesn't necessarily matter to another; who can say?

Overall, I'd say that MDG did as good a job as could be expected under the circumstances. The MDG staffers remained calm and courteous throughout, and were very helpful to anyone in need of assistance.

Some of the circumstances certainly qualify as some of the low points. It seems that the University changed sites on MDG, and they had no recourse. The change involved the gym being used as the exhibit hall; the original was air-conditioned — the replacement was a sweat box, all too reminiscent of Wagner College, last year's site on Staten Island. From what I was able to learn, any of the attendees that suffered that gym owe their thanks to the UofM, not MDG.

The part of the campus that was used was indeed beautiful; how could it miss, being on the side of what surely could have passed for a mountain in some parts of the U.S.? By Saturday evening, I was certain that I was mutating into a mountain goat. The *D&D* tourney was held almost as far from the exhibit hall as possible. Getting there each round was all downhill; the walk back after each one was all uphill, and grueling.

The exhibit area this year was quite impressive in the number of different companies. represented, many of them newcomers to the convention circuit. Our hobby *must* be getting more significant, as evidenced by the fact that Parker Bros. had a large booth this year, and had a new game called *Black Box* that drew a lot of comment and atten-

cont on pg 11

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# TRAVELLER: THE STRATEGY OF SURVIVAL

BY Edward C. Cooper

Recently, while attending a good sized gaming convention sponsored by the local wargaming club, I took advantage of the opportunity to observe the *TRAVELLER* phenomenon first hand. A full fledged campaign version was announced to the crowd. With a roar of approval, a throng of players squeezed themselves into the playing area, some leaving wide-eyed opponents still staring at now vacated wargames.

However, the scene attracting my eye as I approached nearer was a small, late twentyish gentleman seated at the far end of one table. Sensing something amiss in his obvious detachment, I politely inquired into what war was disturbing him.

He had generated a UPP (Universal Personality Profile) of 375A99 — and was grumbling over the “chance” involved in the game and the *bad luck* he’d received on the roll! I looked at him twice and still had to ask if he was serious. Somewhat taken aback, he retorted of course he was — and that was that.

Later, I watched the same individual enlist his character, with low strength and endurance, but an intelligence of 10 and social, educational levels of 9 each, successfully into the Scouts.

Had I been a referee, I would have convicted the guy of cold blooded murder on the spot. Clearly, he simply did not know what to do with his character, nor did I believe he’d taken the time to stop and examine all his alternatives. Somewhat puzzled by the turn of events, I declined an offer to play and continued watching.

Several other similar occurrences proved to me then that the success or failure of a character in most cases cannot be traced to “dice or chance” as often as it can to poor handling on the part of a player. I was both surprised and disappointed that some players even blamed a character or given situation for their own bad decisions. But then again, I was extremely excited, awed, by the skill some showed in manipulating their character’s life.

Looking back now, *Traveller* is simply too well made for a player to bow out using “character” as an excuse. The roles generated that afternoon certainly did have their weaknesses, but *all* were people who could have been successful in their lifetimes. I found as a general rule, *the characteristics of the players themselves were the true limiting factor of their representatives in Traveller.*

It’s a scary idea to think about — that it might be possible to learn something of yourself and your reactions to various situations from such a “game.” Some might scoff at this and perhaps they have a right, but still I wonder . . .

It’s only one intriguing step on to speculate on the therapeutic values of role playing in general if such is the case. From the way a person handled a given part in a situation made to seem realistic in the strict sense of the word, doctors might be able to analyze and pinpoint various problems.

Yet returning, had the particular gentleman’s character had a UPP of 99A375 instead of 375A99, I might have agreed with his action, though such a character could have done well in a service such as the Army, and learned through experience.

As it was, the player did not want to enlist his 375A99 character in the Merchant Marine, yet a quick look at that category shows every requirement from enlistment to promotion requires intelligence alone. This “man” could have easily won a commission and promotion with his DMs for intelligence if he’d been directed to the right service.

A further close look at the Acquired Skills Tables shows the strength and endurance he required to round himself off as an individual were available. *Notice that all categories, the Acquired Skills Tables directly complement the abilities an individual possesses when he joins a particular service.* In this case, the Merchant category is the logical pick for characters who lack the physical requirements for a military service, though not surprisingly it is seldom picked.

For my own insight, I assumed the character did enlist in the Merchant Marine and received both a commission and a promotion in his first term — probable with his assets. He then has four skills coming. The rolls, right now . . . On the Personal Development Table . . . 4,2,1 and on Service Skills . . . a 3. Two strength points, one dexterity and a course in electronics. With the rank of 3rd Officer and an intelligence of 10, the man would have had a very successful career going at age 22.

The strategy of survival, and success, in *Traveller* is not an especially difficult one. But there are three prerequisites a player must develop to achieve survival and success, three very important virtues more easily gained by some than others: Patience, Imagination, and an ability to see F.M. Busby’s (Via his book

*Rissa Kerguelen*) “The Long View.”

With six characteristics to generate, not all are going to be 10 or above (though I have seen it happen — and using my own character’s above average intelligence, decided to tag along with that individual!!!) but by the same token, they are not all going to be 4 or below either. Initial character generation does not have to be a painful process, but the results do require a little bit of ingenuity to bind up the weakness of a character. Sure, dice *are* used, yet measure our own births and talents in comparison. I’d say the chances of what *we* get endowed with are about the same . . .

### ENLISTMENT

The enlistment period in *Traveller* paints intricate and absorbing picture of the basic features that will influence a character’s life decisions. Skill and expertise mature over a range of attributes, which in turn enables a detailed historical background to be formulated from birth to present.

These character profiles can be extremely important in reflecting other “special” details about the 18 year old; such as skills and talents developed by a situation or particular event, personality traits, perhaps even attitudes toward a particular life type, etc., brought about through his upbringing. Inheritance is another example for a character with a high social attribute. In fact, all characters should have *some type* of inheritance to work with.

How and where do the three virtues mentioned earlier come into play? There are three distinct sub-phases incorporated within the Enlistment phase:

1. Choosing a Service
2. Skill acquisition
3. Mustering Out

Patience, Imagination, and Seeing the Long View each influence the outcome of one or more of these subphases.

To see how, enter Sir Ivan Sa’Lyn whose generated UPP is 784B6B.

\*\*\*\*\*

Though born to the Duke and Duchess Sa’Lyn of the planet Ariius, (the nobility level of parentage was determined by consulting the Nobility Table in *Book 3, page 22*, numbering the titles given from one through six and then generating a 6 on a die roll) and hence in line for succession, the Title must still be earned and seeker found worthy on Ariius, a Charismatic Oligarchy and emerging power in the K’risilan Sector.

Ivan’s father, a member of the Kings Council of Three, and administrator over Sa’Lyn, one of the three predominate land masses on Ariius, earned his right as did the eight generations of Sa’Lyn before him.

Ivan and his father have already held talks lasting long into the mornings over the future of the Sa’lyn. Ivan is the sole male heir to the Title in the Family. The two twins had died shortly after birth leaving Ivan’s mother grief stricken and unable to have further children.

Ivan himself is well aware of the problems that confront him. His intelligence is sound, the product of refined gene pairing. He is, his father told him, the most promising Sa’lyn in this category to come along. But Ivan knows too, his physical qualities are not what they should be in the ideal eyes of a young nobleman. While fair of strength and dexterity, the sickness that racked him while yet a young cub has left his endurance suspect. And like all the Sa’lyn before, with the Coming of Age, he must leave the household and the safe shadows of the family guard and venture off-world in proof of his right to succession.

Should he fail, not all — but many of the Imperial Estates would be forfeit on the death of his father. Yet more importantly, the family influence in the Council would vanish, perhaps never to be regained. The private businesses of the Sa’lyn would cease to flourish without this influence. Both he and the family have everything to gain by his success.

The Time of Choice is upon him.

### CHOOSING A SERVICE

After heavy consultation with father and family patriarchs, many nights alone in personal planning — studying of the different requirements, chances, advantages, disadvantages — Ivan elects to try for service with the Empire Navy. It was easy narrowing the field down to the Merchant Marine or the Navy, but then, he reflects, the choice remained a hard one.

Though Ivan realizes he is ideally suited for the Merchant Marine, the Long

View has dictated him along another path. Much more so than the Merchant Marine, the Navy is a "class" service where social influence can be won and powerful friends made which in turn will support the position of both himself and the Sa'Lyn. His chances of survival (a grave concern to his father) will not be diminished by this choice since both are intellectual services. With his social standing, chances for commission are good. And though his education is not what it should be (because of his already heavy involvement in politics back home, being sole heir) with regard to promotion, the overall chance for an intelligent individual is only slightly less than that in the Merchant Marine. Looking at the educational opportunities available, Ivan feels the Navy will best provide him with the abilities needed to succeed his father. The Long View already tells him he will not make the service a career.

Endurance is of course an over-riding concern, yet he rationalizes, it can best be improved with relative safety in the Navy, and more importantly, it must be improved. The Long View ability again tells him to let his ingenuity be the strength in his life's armor, with the armor's joints in turn being strengthened with experience.

With a roll of seven, +1 DM for intelligence, the Navy decides to overlook his past medical history in light of his recent good health, outstanding intelligence and social standing. He is accepted into service.

Of course, the important point to recognize here is the tie-in to be found between the service chosen by Ivan and the possible skill requirements needed to successfully follow in the footsteps of his father.

It is only to the best advantage of a player that the time be taken to thoroughly examine background and inheritance, plus any other pertinent factors governing a selected career path, and only then — with this information concrete — select a service for the character from which he can reach that career.

Ivan weighed the physical risk involved in Naval Service versus the chance of gaining social influence to support the Sa'Lyn in the coming time of crisis.

Had Ivan not been the sole male heir, and the family not so badly in need of influence to preserve its position should something happen to Ivan, it's a safe bet Ivan would have joined the Merchant Marine with a sharp eye on increasing the family's own fleet and already well established trading ties — perhaps even extending them out of the K'risilan sector altogether and into neighboring Malchin.

### SKILL ACQUISITION

Ivan understands that the key in preparing for the Rites of Leadership lie in a passive state of being. He cannot force qualities to be something not of nature's own choosing, but instead, should seek to develop talent from seeds already sprouted.

The words of the first patriarch remain with him, "*The single key to absolute readiness springs of gaining VARIETY in skills through your enlistment period. Master nothing, seeking all. Experience shall then hone the sword's edges into tempered sharpness.*"

The first term of service holds no undue hardships for Ivan. (survival throw = 8) Ivan wins a commission and subsequently finds himself promoted to Lieutenant. He has learned well. In recognition of the achievement, Arius increases his social position and corresponding privileges to that of Baron. His powers of intelligence also continue to sharpen, thanks to Naval training and discipline — and Ivan finds his abilities not limited to any one field. (Jack-O-Trades) This, Ivan knows, is good revelation indeed. Though routine ship operations also require that he be familiar with a Vacc Suit, physical testing shows a worried Ivan the endurance he had hoped to gain has not improved significantly. Calmly, Ivan realizes his duty tours have not been exactly in line with this seeking.

The now Baron Ivan Von Sa'Lyn reenlists at age 22. Assigned to combat duty by his own request in a move that nearly splits the family in two, but unknown to them secretly secures several important young friends also assigned to the flagship squadron as junior officers, Ivan's unit is one that responds when an uprising breaks out in a nearby system.

Sent down in one of a number of Ship's Boats in an effort to restore order, the rebels — with unexpectedly sophisticated weaponry, manage to hole Ivan's craft and it crashes on landing.

Multiply wounded, suffering from exposure, and barely alive, Ivan is found by friendlies three weeks later after avoiding capture several times. Most of his next year is spent at a Regrowth and Rehabilitation Center recovering from the incident.

Though decorated twice for his courage, his superiors reluctantly decide promotion is not possible until a probation period on his health has ended. Grimly, Ivan smiles when later testing shows his endurance up +1.

Ivan again reenlists at age 26. With an intelligence and wit that continue to leave friends behind him, Ivan is recommended for a second-in-command spot on an Empire Light Cruiser. With this comes a promotion to Lt. Commander. For a time, life is pleasant and easygoing. Ivan's duty tour is a diplomatic one, with Captain Teregard dipping the ship into a system here and there to assure all of the Empire's continued interest and good-will. Then, on Argus IV, one year into the cruise and a scant six months from his tours' end, action finds Ivan once again.

Captain Teregard is killed in an ambush by terrorists. Short on manpower, as usual, the Empire orders Ivan to continue the tour with the acting rank of Commander in response to his report.

Subjectively, time seems to pass slowly for Ivan in the next few months. Yet several crisis decisions and continued personal appearances throughout the diverse volume of the ship win him an uncanny personal loyalty from the crew. In his time alone he becomes familiar with a Ship's Boat, often taking it out to ponder his future moves in solitude. A tremor within himself tells of still another hard career decision. A small bright moment occurs when the Chief Engineer commends him on his overall excellent knowledge of ship systems. (Jack-O-Trades)

Two weeks out from Final Port, Ivan announces his retirement to the crew, taking a Captain's privilege in breaking regs to explain to them of his responsibilities at home and his gratitude for a tour well run and efficient crew. Wide-eyed at their reaction, for the first time in his life, Ivan Sa'Lyn was truly taken off-guard.

In fact, among the huge volume of retirement and enlistment papers shuffled at Headquarters Central, the Empire did not even notice it had lost an entire crew from the same vessel . . .

. . . but a greedy executive beamed with pleasure when a 1000 person Archaeology Expedition personally chartered a Liner to Arius . . .

### MUSTERING OUT

Mustering Out is an integral part of the Enlistment Phase in Traveller. Done too soon or too late, a character's chances for survival, and success, can be considerably diminished. Every roll made at this time should be weighed and analyzed separately before deciding on which chart the next one is to be thrown.

Avoiding duplicity of effort is a function of common sense and *not* the simple reason this should be done. Rather a player must consider the tie-in between the character's attributes and a desired profession — whether it might be to that character's benefit to strengthen certain areas almost lopsidedly if you will, or if a general rounding out can better insure a certain degree of success.

Patience and caution stem from the same mold. While some encounter situations dictate reflective response, the majority of decision making in *Traveller* have no specific deadlines attached to them. Many players, upon completing a four year enlistment without promotion, decide to muster out.

Characteristic of the character's youth, the *player* becomes anxious to be on the way. Resist the temptation! True satisfaction comes only from success — and ill-equipped characters frequently meet death at the most inconvenient of times. The question then is raised, how does one determine the proper time to muster out?

Let us again return to the example of Ivan Sa'Lyn.

Ivan's decision to return to Arius at age 30 was, as the story suggests, far from easy. One of the first factors he took into account was his *inheritance*. His father was fast approaching the age where he could not manage the family assets alone. The transition of power would take both time and Ivan's continued presence on Arius.

Ivan would also not be wise unless he admitted to himself he was rather gifted in the area of intelligence and recognize he could use this for all its worth. Though weak *physically*, he was not *weak*. Financially, he could more than manipulate the forces around him to insure adequate protection as well as his own strengthening through tutors and advisors — as you will see.

Had he been stronger physically, the effects of aging might not have concerned him so. As reality goes, better he was out now and making expensive, but *certain* preparations that he would be fit to survive.

Another minor point, but still a consideration to take into account, was the simple fact that it would take *at least* two more terms, eight long years, for him to rise from Lt. Commander to the possible rank of Captain where he would receive increased preference in his mustering-out benefits. (It might be wise for a player to ask the referee for a report on the galactic situation here) Eight years is a long time for an aging officer to die in. In terms of overall effectiveness, at thirty eight years of age, any added skills would only be offset by a reduction in physical qualities — and he would be well into the aging process.

There are many skills that can be learned through living life and experience, especially to one of Ivan's intelligence-12. While one should not blow these possibilities out of proportion, they are not small and it's fatal to underestimate them.

The above are only a few of the many 'pointers' that can be employed in an effort to narrow down the right time to retire. Hopefully, others may have already occurred to you.

If asked for a general rule, the best time to think about retirement is when the benefits and skills a character can gain by staying in the Service begin to equal out with other disadvantages — such as the magnifying of some weakness the character has, because of age and endurance (as was the case for Ivan), or a similar handicap. *Never magnify a weakness in pursuit of a strength!*

Be warned, however, that apart from the last sentence, the above can only be a general guideline to be *considered* when making your decision — *not make it for you*. By the very scope of *Traveller*, there can arise an endless variety of situations one rule cannot govern absolutely. It can only restrict.

Ivan looked at his chronometer, glad the tests were drawing to a close. His final aptitudes would be listed along with any Command recommendations in his dossier. The Service always reserved the right to recall any upper ranking officer to active duty in time of conflict. Ivan had been more than happy to agree

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# REVIEWS

## TRAVELLER

Science fiction role-playing games have lagged behind fantasy RP games for a few years now. No real efforts were made to come up with a SF game to equal the scope and appeal of *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS*.

Summer 1977 saw the release of *TRAVELLER*, the first complete major effort role-playing SF game and GDW's first science fiction game since *TRI-PLANETARY*.

The wait, for those of us who had finally tired of trolls and treasures, was well worth it. *TRAVELLER* is not D&D in space. It has its own unique flavor and style.

Physically, *TRAVELLER* is first class, a tradition with Game Designer's Workshop. The box lid and covers of the three booklets are done in a simple but highly effective combination of red and white lettering on a black background. The interior layout and printing is also of the best quality; the printing is an entirely professional job. Some thought was given to the appropriate use of capitalization, bold face, and italics, points that will be appreciated by anyone who has been forced to disrupt a game for fifteen minutes to seek out some rule hidden in the morass. There are three to seven basic rules section in each booklet, further divided into subsections and finally, into specific rules. Main and subsections are listed in a table of contents found in the fore of each book.

As is the case with most role-playing games, there is a plethora of charts and tables. All of these are found with the appropriate rules sections. It is unfortunate that GDW did not print some of the more common charts on a few fold out sheets (as in *D&D* and *EPT*); this certainly would save wear on the booklets themselves.

Playing *TRAVELLER* requires a group of players, a referee (not absolutely necessary but helpful and more interesting), a lot of paper and pencils, some note cards and a strong measure of imagination. Using miniature spacecraft and figures is optional and certainly adds color.

For a description of the game, I'll let the rules speak for themselves.

Book 1, "Characters and Combat" contains an introduction, rules Character Generation, and Personal Combat. As in other role-playing games, players are rated for a variety of characteristics, in this case, endurance, strength, dexterity, intelligence, education and social standing. Ratings are determined by the roll of two dice. However, where most RP games are in a hurry to usher the newly created character out into adventures, *TRAVELLER* has some extensive rules dealing with fleshing out the character, making him more of a person and less of a mere "body".

Most players will enlist in one of the services, for doing so offers the best opportunities to accumulate cash, skills and other benefits. Enlistment is not automatic; prerequisite die rolls are necessary, as modified for certain characteristics. The various services include: Navy, Army, Scouts, Marines and Merchants.

During each term of service (four years) a number of die rolls are made for survival (failure here ends a character's career early) promotion and commission. Terms of service and promotions allow a player to roll on the Acquired Skills Table, selecting the desired column (such as Personal Development or Service Skills) under their particular service type. The different columns for each service reflect the

fact that the knowledge gained in one is likely to be different than that gained in another. Marines, for example, are more likely to learn brawling gun combat, while naval personnel are more apt to increase intelligence and navigation skills. If a player should roll a certain skill a second time, the roll is not wasted, but provides improved skill in that category often resulting in increased die roll modifications (DMs) later in the game.

When the long years of service are over, the final process of mustering out takes place. This will result in material benefits such as weapons or increased abilities and cash allowances with which to begin adventuring. This is followed by the more unpleasant experience of the aging table to see if players lose some of their physical abilities.

This creation procedure may seem long (actually it only takes about twenty minutes per character) but it is vital and interesting to the game. The initial skills and abilities learned during this period may well determine the player's later employment, or even his survival in a combat situation.

*TRAVELLER*'s rules for individual combat are also fairly innovative. Once an encounter has been made for surprise and range, and possible escape and avoidance.

Tactical movement is used only to determine relative range between combatants; maneuver and terrain do not come into play.

Combat resolution is made by a two dice throw of eight or more to hit, subject to modification for range, expertise, movement and weapons. Strength primarily effects hand weapons (a variety of daggers, polearms and sword-types are offered) while endurance determines how many full strength blows may be struck. Dexterity effects the accuracy of fire weapons. These are primarily projectile guns, though both laser rifles and carbines are listed. Armor, from the futuristic equivalent to leather all the way to battle armor, affects hit due rolls.

If a hit is obtained in the first combat round, the number of dice appropriate the weapon used are rolled and the resulting number applied to any one of strength, dexterity or endurance. If the wound reduces the characteristic to 0 the character is unconscious. Wounds in the second round or further may be distributed as the player sees fit, with reduction of any to 0 resulting in unconsciousness. If all go to 0, death is the result (combats tend to be short and sweet). Reductions during combat affect the conduct of that combat. However, if a player survives he may regenerate factors with medical attention or rest.

The bulk of Book 2 covers Starships, their economics, construction, and use in combat.

Players may purchase passage on starships. Luxurious high passage is available for the rich while the more frugal can opt for middle, or even low passage, a risky form of cold sleep.

The section of starship construction is one of the most fascinating. Buying a starship can be very expensive, even with a long mortgage. First a hull size is selected and then the various components are chosen. These include jumpdrives for interstellar travel, and power plants and maneuver drives for interplanetary travel. Matching of drive and hull size will determine final speed.

Elements of the main compartment include cargo holds and staterooms and most importantly, the bridge, which houses the ship's computer. Computer programs are required for all types of movement and combat. They often provide valuable DMs for fire and defense. The computer's capacity to store and process will largely determine what programs are selected; more advanced programs are more expensive and take up more computer capacity.

If a ship is to have weapons these must be purchased and placed in turrets on hardpoints of the ship's hull. Turrets may be fitted with sandcasters, pulse lasers, beam lasers, or missile launchers.

Crews are an important consideration. Often

players as a group can fulfill some of these positions. Others must be hired at a stated salary per month. Crew positions include such jobs as navigator, pilot, steward, medic, gunner, and engineer.

Spaceships that are non-jump capable may be purchased as well. Small ones, such as shuttles or lifeboats, may be carried within larger craft.

Combat between ships is for tabletop, using miniatures or suitable fascimiles.

In combat, ships move using their maneuver drive, via vector. The system is easy to use with a little practice. Gravity may play an important role in altering vectors.

Fire is by laser or missile. Laser fire is heavily influenced by both offensive and defensive computer programs. Programs may allow a pilot to use his expertise in that field for a defensive DM while another may allow a gunner to use his for fire. The judicious use of computer programs and character expertise allow players to affect combat substantially, rather than leaving it all up to just a die roll.

Missiles are potent weapons; if and when they strike, they do considerable damage. For movement purposes they function as small, independent ships.

In addition to evasive maneuvers, ships may cast a cloud of sand around themselves in order to obtain favorable DMs. Presumably, sand acts to diffuse the destructive power of laser weapons. Sand is the closest the game comes to any active defense; *TRAVELLER* ignores the nearly universal SF game concept of screen or energy shields.

Other major sections of Book 2 are Drugs, a fairly self-explanatory section, and Experience. Unlike most role-playing games, the acquisition of "experience points" is not a prime consideration in *TRAVELLER*. It is refreshing to see that the adventures and color of the game's play is reward enough and the players are not channeling their energy into the rather silly chase of ethereal experience points. Too often, this chase becomes more important than actual play itself! In *TRAVELLER*, players may attempt to improve their skills and abilities through long years of training and study. Increases are neither large nor rapid.

The final section of the book deals with Trade and Commerce, a section of interest to those players who are inclined to operate a trading ship. A large chart lists various types of cargo, base prices and quantity, and die roll modifications for both purchase and resale. These take into account, for example, the fact that items such as electronic parts can be had relatively cheaply on an industrial planet and go for a much higher price on a non-industrial world, while the converse would not be true.

Book 3, "Worlds and Adventures" deals first with the creation of a star map, the strategic field on which the various planets adventurers will visit are laid out. The subsector hexgrid is ten hexes by eight. There is a 50% chance of a world appearing in a given hex. Further die rolls determine starport type and whether jump routes (well-plyed spacelanes) exist between planets. A further series of die rolls is made for each world to determine size, atmosphere, hydrography, population, government type, law level and technology. These factors will often affect one another. Thus a large planet has a better chance for a thick atmosphere. Characteristics such as population, law level and government type help to provide some flavor to a given world, as well as saving the referee some set up time.

I found this world creation process fascinating and highly enjoyable. The randomness of the charts and die rolls offered some very interesting planets. An interesting entry from my own subsector appears below:

|                    |                  |                                  |
|--------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|
| GRENDAL            | Human/Free Trade | (name and political affiliation) |
| Starport: A        |                  | (best type)                      |
| 2000 mile diameter |                  |                                  |
| Atmosphere: Trade  |                  | (mostly due to small size)       |
| 20% Liquid         |                  |                                  |
| Population: 100    |                  |                                  |



Government: Self perpetuating  
 oligarchy  
 Law Level: 1 (very lax)  
 Technology: 14 (very high)  
 Non-industrial world

As you can see, "Grendal" nearly created herself. The small population, high technology and government type seemed to dictate to me that Grendal is some sort of research base on a fairly inhospitable little world. And so she shall be when any adventurers land upon her.

A large equipment section lists a plethora of items, from communicators and vision aids to exotic vehicles. Price and uses of items are given as well.

Encounters with natives and animals form a major portion of the adventures that occur on a planet. Encounters with non-player humans such as a patron can steer player characters into interesting and perhaps profitable adventures. Random encounters with the likes of soldiers, peasants, fugitives or tourists, among others, could lead to fighting or friendship, depending on a die-roll on a reaction table.

Animal encounters are handled with a complex set of rules that create creatures suited for each world. A series of dice rolls will determine basic creature type (such as carnivore or herbivore) and then more specific information such as size, speed and weapons like horns or claws. Information given in the booklet gives specific ideas on how creatures of a certain type would behave. Physical attribute, such as size may be altered by the terrain where encountered.

These animal encounters are generally handled well, though some appearance charts, to help define a creature's physical looks, might have been in order so the referee could give his players some information as to general form the animal takes.

The final section of Book 3 deals with psionic powers, a nearly obligatory section in games of this type. Psionics seem to take the place of personal magic power, often to the same result. Psionic ability is determined through an examination. Training in one of the six specific talents takes place at a Psionic Institute. Each talent is further subdivided into more exact powers. The use of psionic powers can be affected by range and the use of power-heightening drugs.

*TRAVELLER* is a unique SF game and probably the best of the role-playing variety. It offers a colorful but consistent future for players to adventure in.

*TRAVELLER* is \$12.00 (3 booklets, boxed) and is available from Game Designers Workshop, 203 North St., Normal, Illinois 61761. It was designed by Marc W. Miller — TW

## The Emerald Tablet

*The Emerald Tablet* is a fine book of rules for fantasy gaming with miniature figures.

It is difficult for me to discuss rulebooks for miniatures, since I do most of my gaming over a board. Besides, the state-of-the-art in miniatures rules is somewhat diffuse. Admitting my lack of expertise, I think these rules are a cut above the rest of the entries in the field.

The rules for movement and combat are well written and organized. They are also numerically indexed, a nice touch. More, they seem to be both complete and innovative. The payoff is in the handling of magic and here they would be worthwhile even without the other systems.

The game designers have done their homework. The rules for magic are solidly based in the literature of Medieval demonology and ritual magic. This is quite a change from the rules of ordinary fantasy games. In this system, the abilities of magic users are divided into such things which are innate abilities of the character — levitation, invisibility and the like — and those things which require the intercession of an

angel, demon or other spirit. The calling of such astral persons is fatiguing to the magician and also dangerous. The costs and risks involved are proportional to the thing attempted. Summoning Lucifer is costlier but if that's what you need, it's the best way.

Further, each invocation or evocation has associated with it rituals and ephemera which can raise or lower the chance of success. All of these things have been taken from sources on the magic of the Middle Ages and are quite correct. Such sources can also be used to expand the repertoire, if you feel like doing the necessary research. It's open ended for anyone one with a Grimoire.

Without taking anything away from the people who have put work into *D&D*, this is the most developed and "realistic" set of rules for magic I have ever seen. They are readily adaptable to any fantasy campaign and, I think, they are better suited to them. The rules of *The Emerald Tablet* are much more consistent with the expectations of Medieval magic. You don't get something for nothing and the abilities of magic users are confined to those things which the sorcerers of past centuries actually attempted.

It's something new to see a set of rules for magic which are logically developed and consistent. This is not to say that no existing rules are any good. It does mean that the design team for these rules did the kind of research which should have gone into most others. The magic rules are worth the price of the book. I recommend them to anyone who knows something about Medieval magic and wants to bring that into wargaming. — DM

Available from *Creative Wargames Workshop, Inc.*  
 330 E. 6th Street #1E  
 New York, NY 10003

\$6.95 + 30¢ postage and handling (before the last postal hike)

## Imperium

The biggest advances in science fiction gaming seem always to come from Game Designers' Workshop. This tradition is continued by *IMPERIUM*, a board game which, like the role-playing *TRAVELLER*, was designed by people who know and like science fiction literature. They also have a good grasp of current and possible technologies, another thing which puts them a step ahead of most of their competitors.

Now, the basic situation postulated for *IMPERIUM* is a bit hard to swallow, if you are readily critical in your outlook on SF, but it's nothing which SF authors haven't been writing about for a loooong time. The situation is this; the expanding Terrans run up against an established stellar empire, the Imperium. The battlelines are clear. Either the Imperium will put down these upstarts or they will be swept aside by the manifest destiny of earthlings, the next rulers of all space. I couldn't begin to count the number of times and ways this theme has been done in Science Fiction. A number of the classics of the field have been constructed on just this foundation. It is very likely that it will be able to satisfy even the most skeptical science fiction gamers; I liked it, for instance, even if I don't believe in the scenario.

The game is played in sequenced turns, representing two years standard (Terrestrial) time. Hexes are ½ parsec across — about 1.6 light years. Because of the immense area covered by the game map and the distances involved, most movement is by Hyperspace Jump. Such movement is instantaneous but it may only be done along marked transit routes, from star to star but *not* between each star and every other star. For example, there is no direct route of transit from Sol to Sirius but only via some other star. Effectively, this introduces "terrain" to the game.

The stars on the map are all identified by name and spectral class and further differentiated for the

type of planetary system they may have. Most stars are assumed to have some sort of available planets, only Sirius and Altair are devoid of some sort of planetary surfaces for bases. This lack may prove important to a game.

It is assumed that the interplanetary craft operate powered by thermonuclear fusion, requiring hydrogen for fuel. This hydrogen may be taken from the oceans of terrestrial-type planets, the atmospheres gas giants or, with the aid of Tankers, from stellar atmospheres. Fuel is available wherever there is a planet and refuelling is assumed whenever a Hyperspace Jump passes to or through such a star system. Passing *through* Sirius or Altair (without the aid of a tanker) is impossible because of the absence of planets. Sirius is on one fairly important transit route and it represents some very important "terrain".

Hyperspace Jumps are possible only in star-to-star steps and will be interrupted by the presence of enemy ships at a star. The nature of the transit routes is such that some star systems will be critical to movement. Sirius is one, as are Procyon and Nusku/Dushaam. It is possible to move from system-to-system *without* using the lines of hyperspace travel but this will be very slow. Also, some of the ship-types are unable to move by Jump and must depend on the slow, sub-light movement allowance; one hex per turn.

*IMPERIUM* is not a perfect science fiction game, it's not even close, really, but it's a big step in the right direction. In its favor, it is a medium sized game of no great complexity which demands strategic attention and can be in doubt to the end. It is simple in many respects and has some excellent solutions to design problems which work well. The slightly abstract combat procedures are one such. It has all of the rewards of the early Avalon Hill "classics" except historicity. That may be a plus since it can't be swept away by better research.

On the minus side, the "sense of wonder" is all on the surface. There is no "historical" background given — very little, at least — and the gamers must either accept the situation or supply their own. The designers have taken another track from most and demanded that players/purchasers exercise faith in the idea or pass it by. They have not, to my standards, done anything to help keep up the illusion of reality which is most important to science fiction literature. I don't really think this is justified but . . . I'm willing to call this a science fiction game but if it were a novel, I'd never touch it.

Another drawback is the physical system. The counters are the usual GDW variety, graphically quite nice and well printed but painfully thin and incompletely die-cut. The printing of the mapboard is imperfect, too, with some errors of color and even at least one misnumbering of the hexes. Procyon's binary companion is properly placed on the map but Procyon still is given planets, unlike the binaries Altair and Sirius and though the rules mention that binary stars are unlikely to have planets. Last of all, I wish the stars were identified by some other system than their "proper" names. I'd rather see a uranometric name (such as Alpha Centauri, Epsilon Eridani) or even a Groombridge or Harvard catalog number than the Arabic name. All of the other possible designations convey some sense of position, if you know the naming system. The Arabi names given most of the stars won't do that for anyone who doesn't have an extensive grounding in historical astronomy. Expertise in this field, called Astrog-nosis, is surely rarer among gamers than a knowledge of the Groombridge catalog.

*IMPERIUM* has good points and bad, the good ahead by a slim margin. I think it's worth your time since it shows a real regard for science fiction among the designers. The Steve Fabian box art is nice, too. If only you hadn't named that one star system "Remulak" . . . — DM

# PELLIC QUEST: Computer Moderated Role Playing

Imagine a role playing game with a "Dungeon Master" or a "Starship Master" that is completely unaffected by the shouts of his or her players, the bribes made during the game, or the amount of alcoholic beverages consumed during the play. This is the situation that faces all the players in the game of Pellic Quest. It is a game entirely refereed by a computer programmed to take players from their beginning roles into a universe of endless chances.

The game starts you out as a small time controller of a planet with one of six different role types, in a universe that has been vacated by a super-race called the Pellics that has left artifacts all over the place. Two of the six character types, the *Emperor* and *Crusader*, are your typical king-types that are able to use people and materials to build points towards winning the game. The *Brigand* character is a pirate-type that uses a constant hit and run tactic and tries to build fleets to gain his or her winning points. The *Trader* is the character able to best use the production potential of any given world. The *Droyds* (one of the non-human characters of the game) are robotic destroyers that gain points from the destruction of life and the building of more robotic units. The last role is the *Zente* (there is always one of these types in any good sci-fi game) and these beings are insect-like warriors feeding on everything and anything. They also breed at an incredible rate and all of the race are warriors.

You start out as one of these beings on a system of your own knowing certain facts. You have a home system number (used in all orders to the computer), an industrial capacity, an established production capability, troops, and material units in stockpile (the game's equivalent of money). You are also presented with 5 empty fleet numbers that can be filled with ships whenever you choose. The game starts the same for everyone and you are then supposed to use the information supplied in the large, nicely illustrated handbook to initiate the first moves.

The booklet clearly details every character, and how to give the computer orders in the following areas:

1. Creation of star fleets, industry, and troops
2. Movement
3. Combat (inter-stellar and/or planetary invasion)
4. Reconnaissance
5. Acquiring allies
6. Diplomacy

You can see from the list that a wide range of possibilities are covered in the program of the computer. I found the beginning (after I had read the rules several times trying to figure out the easier-than-it-looks computer codes for doing everything) had several possible strategies that could be developed, depending on the over-all action I wanted to adopt. A player can develop fleet strength, troop strength, or industrial output. There are three other known planets (in the form of numbers) that need investigating. Running through the game is the chance to pick up artifacts left by the Pellics. These things can be good or bad, but the real prize is the Pellic Home World that is a store house of information for the lucky player to find it.

While the game is slow because of the play-by-mail aspect it has appeal in several areas. Primary among these is the absolute impartiality of the computer program.

With this there can be no bad die rolls, no faulty judge interpretation, and no over-balanced character overrunning the game. You play against known character types and can react accordingly so that you don't make mistakes because of total ig-

norance. You always know exactly what your limitations are and what you must do to counteract them.

All things considered, the game is well worth trying and spending time on. I look for games of this type to happen much more frequently and Conflict Interaction Associates, the creators of the game, should be real leaders in the field.

For more information, write:  
Conflict Interaction Associates, Inc.  
P.O. Box 504

Prairie View, Illinois 60069  
or see their ads in even numbered TD's. — JMW

## Cosmic Encounter

When you strip *COSMIC ENCOUNTERS* down to basics, there isn't anything there but a variation on showdown poker. That doesn't matter, really, since it is a lot of fun to play.

Now, unless you have a lot more imagination than I do, the advertisements claiming that you are supposed to assume the character and ambitions of one or another alien race will amount to nothing more than hype. The alien creatures listed with the game and important in certain ways to play are not well realized. There is no part or strategy of the game which really requires a player to think like his creature. The aliens are there more for the way they vary

play. The powers of each race are useful in certain ways to the game but you are not more required to think like an alien than playing chess will require you to be ordained a bishop or knighted.

*COSMIC ENCOUNTER* combines several elements of classic, abstract games. There are cards which introduce both chance and strategy of play, as in poker or bridge. There are chips representing the bases which you must build to win the game, giving the positional and matching requirements of pit-and-pebble games, as well as a betting flavor like poker. Beyond these things are the "Destiny Pile", another randomizing element, and the infinite possibilities of diplomacy games. Winning *COSMIC ENCOUNTER* requires cooperation with other players but not too much.

This is a simple game both to learn and to play. Best of all, it's fun and pretty much open-ended. It is fast becoming popular among science fiction fans, who have been the major target of the advertising, so far. It's worth your time to check it out.

Be advised, though, that the science fictional elements are a patina on an entertaining abstract game. It's a good game, I've had a lot of fun with mine but it's science fiction only by default. — DM

(*Cosmic Encounter* is available from Eon Products. Two expansion kits of more alien types which allow the game to be expanded to six players are available for each.)

ARCHIVE MINIATURES  
PRESENTS

# STAR ROVERS™

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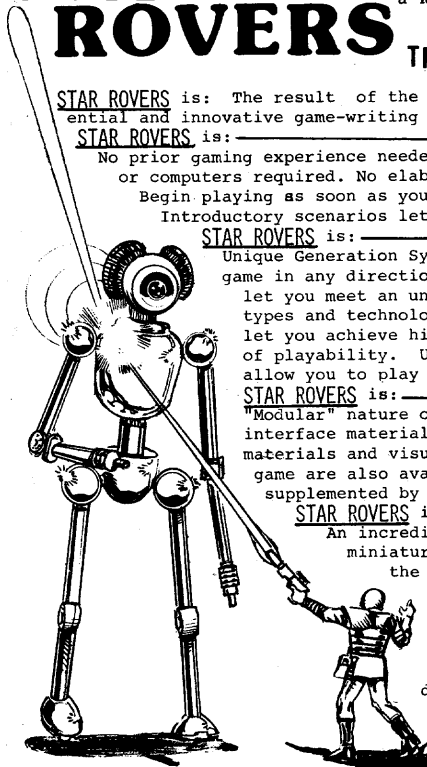
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D&D Variant

# INSANITY, or Why Is My Character Eating Leaves?

by Kevin Thompson

Have you ever screamed, "OK, so he's insane! Now how do I handle it??" If you have, then chances are you are a little bit bonkers yourself. Nonetheless, I herewith have the definitive answer to the musical question, "Just how crazy is he, Doc?":

Here's how to find out.

First, we must develop a saving throw for insanity. For the sake of ease, let me define intelligence as simply the ability to learn or understand an object or situation; and wisdom as the ability to think and act with judgment and clear reason. Therefore, the healthiest mind is one with a high wisdom and an equal amount of intelligence. In the case where intelligence is less than wisdom, there is lesser knowledge and understanding, and is therefore more vulnerability to insanity. On the other hand, if a character has a higher intelligence than wisdom, there is even a *greater* susceptibility due to an understanding of facts without the necessary judgment to put things in their proper perspective. (Ever hear of a "mad scientist"?)

Now that you presumably understand my reasoning (if any), you are prepared to use it. When encountering something that would cause insanity, you must make your insanity saving throw. Refer to the INSANITY SAVING THROW CHART and cross-index your wisdom score (on the left side) with your intelligence score (along the top). This will give you your unadjusted saving throw number. Now, simply add your level (which is at least 1) to that number and roll a 20-sided die. If you roll that number or less, you have avoided insanity. If not, go on to the INSANITY CHART and roll a 12-sided die.

You'll notice that there are many types of "odd behavior" listed on the INSANITY CHART, giving us an interesting spread of psychoses. Note: None of these psychoses will be evident immediately unless otherwise stated.

1. Nutty: Slightly silly behavior. Generally becoming an odd person with odd ideas and plans. Eccentric.

2. Kleptomaniac: Compulsive thief, with no thief abilities. Sneaks away small objects without real regard to value.

3. Perverse: Takes pleasure in the gruesome or grotesque. Perhaps a little too bloodthirsty when dealing with enemies. Dismemberment is a casual result. Mad laughter in some cases.

4. Psychotic hatred: Violent hatred and immediate, deadly actions when dealing with the type he has a Psychotic hatred of: choose — Magic users, warriors, clerics, thieves, monks or rangers of same or opposing alignment, men, women, elves, dwarves, hobbits, giants, royalty, police-type, witches, tall people, short people, bearded people, rich people, peasants, leaders, everyone of opposing alliance, etc. Choose one that best fits the tendencies of the character.

5. Childlike Trusting: total gullibility. Believes *ANYONE*.

6. Schizoid: Split Personality. Roll 10-sided die each turn. If a "1" is rolled, personality reverts to the other personality. One personality does not remember the other personality and will often not believe it when told. There are no physical changes, it is all in his mind and actions. Choose from: young man-old man; violent-gentle; arrogant-shy; confident-unsure; brave-coward; male-female; lawful-chaotic; good-evil; generous-greedy; trusting-paranoid; honest-secretive; trustworthy-untrustworthy, or any combination thereof.

7. Severe Paranoia: Thinks everyone is after him. Does not trust anyone, even friends. If someone makes a sudden, possibly dangerous move near him, he may kill him "in self defense". Whenever anyone is whispering, they are talking about him!

8. Acute Paranoia: Convinced that everyone wants to kill him immediately, and tries to escape from them, or kill them, obviously immediately.

9. Gibbering: Just as it says. Victim can walk, eat and sleep. He is totally useless otherwise, and gibbers all day. Cannot look for his own food. Obvious immediately.

10. Suicidal: Whenever the victim meets up with a harrowing or deadly problem, will attempt to kill himself on the roll of "1" on a 6-sided die.

11. Violent: Tries to kill as many people as he can as quickly as he can. Not clever, just deadly. Obvious immediately.

12. Catatonic: Just sits there doing nothing. Won't eat, talk or move. All thoughts are turned inward and ignores all outside stimuli, including pain. Obvious immediately.

In the above cases, all magic or clerical abilities are functional except when gibbering or catatonic.

The cause of insanity is usually up to the Dungeon Master, and is often caused by such things as chests, rings, horns, etc., but may also be caused by the strain of a failure of responsibility, meeting of particularly mindbending creatures such as a lich or demon, or many other interesting reasons.

ENJOY!

## INSANITY SAVING THROW CHART

### INTELLIGENCE

|             | Less than 3 | 3-8 | 9-12 | 13-15 | 16-18 | Over 18 |
|-------------|-------------|-----|------|-------|-------|---------|
| Less than 3 | 7           | 5   | 3    | 1     | -2    | -5      |
| 3-5         | 8           | 9   | 7    | 5     | 2     | -1      |
| 6-8         | 9           | 10  | 8    | 6     | 3     | 0       |
| 9-12        | 10          | 11  | 12   | 10    | 7     | 4       |
| 13-14       | 11          | 12  | 13   | 14    | 11    | 8       |
| 15-16       | 12          | 13  | 14   | 15    | 12    | 9       |
| 17          | 13          | 14  | 15   | 16    | 17    | 14      |
| 18          | 14          | 15  | 16   | 17    | 18    | 15      |
| Over 18     | 15          | 16  | 17   | 18    | 19    | 20      |

Add character's level to number and roll 20-sided die.

### INSANITY CHART

- |                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Nutty              | 7. Severe Paranoia |
| 2. Kleptomaniac       | 8. Acute Paranoia  |
| 3. Perverse           | 9. Gibbering       |
| 4. Psychotic Hatred   | 10. Suicidal       |
| 5. Childlike Trusting | 11. Violent        |
| 6. Schizoid           | 12. Catatonic      |

### Traveller *cont fr pg 4*

to service in the Reserves as well, keeping his contacts within Headquarters Central open, and still giving him time to attend to Sa'Lyn business.

Mustering Out tests had showed his educational level up +2, intelligence up +2 on the Greely Scale, and the Traveller's Society had also honored him by extending an invitation to membership. He had of course cabled his acceptance right away.

Ten thousand in pay was also outstanding to him due to his temporary promotion to Commander.

Ivan glanced over his final characteristics sheet.

| Aptitude      | Start | Final |
|---------------|-------|-------|
| Strength      | 7     | 7     |
| Endurance     | 4     | 5     |
| Dexterity     | 8     | 8     |
| Intelligence  | 11    | 14    |
| Education     | 6     | 8     |
| Social Level  | II    | 12    |
| Jack-O-Trades |       | +2    |
| Vacc-Suit     |       | +1    |
| Ships Boat    |       | +1    |

\*Member of Travellers Society

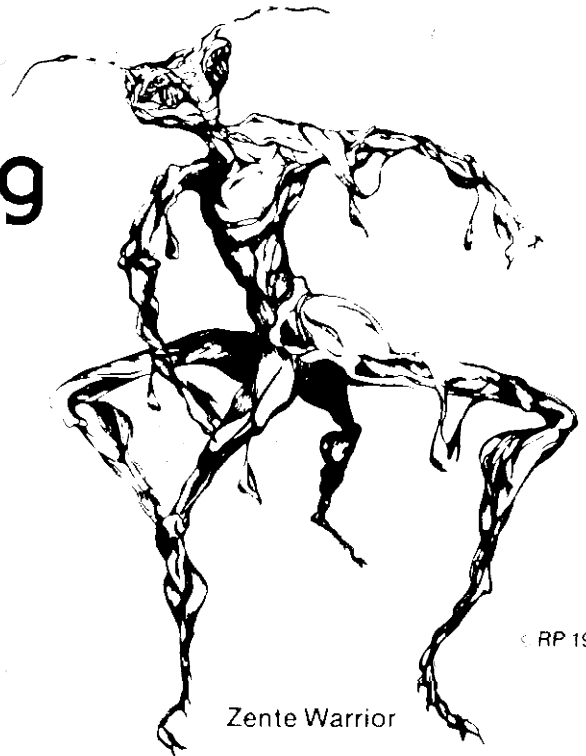
It should speak well enough for him in Council. He had no doubt Baron Sa'Lyn would soon be Marquis Sa'Lyn, and after the Rites of Leadership, Duke. His command record would pull its weight also.

Ivan boarded the chartered Liner Parathon without event. Four hours after Lift from Final Port, he met briefly with two men: Josh Wytland — ex-intelligence officer, now Educational Tutor and Personal Advisor, and Samuel "Sammy" Brice — Ex-Marine major, now Weapons and Training Instructor. Shortly after, Ivan drifted aft to say hello to the rest of the old crew who had gathered aboard one by one, inconspicuously, before takeoff.

He also informed them he'd bribed the Captain to make a small detour by the Naval Yard on Meoln VI before continuing on to Arius . . .

This guy is looking  
for a new food  
source. . . .

Are you it?



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Zente Warrior

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**The Zente:** Hordes of extra-galactic, insect-like warriors insidiously working into the fabric of the galaxy. Totally incompatible with native life forms, they seek only to increase the swarm, using anyone they run into as a new food source!

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**Pellic Quest** is a fast moving, tactically oriented, computer generated and moderated, multi-player, play by mail game. (whew!) Players receive a new printout (turn) approximately twice a month (a quality of service we intend to keep for our players by limiting ourselves to a **maximum** of 30 games at any one time).

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## Rumbles fr pg 2

tion. The opening of the exhibit hall was marred once again this year by the people that couldn't bother to be set up on time for opening. They not only bring discredit to themselves, but to the rest of the exhibitors as well. One thing that I noted this year is significant; this year saw fewer new releases than any other in the past half dozen years that the hobby has been growing. Many reasons for this phenomenon were put forth: some didn't finish titles on time, others are putting fewer titles out and concentrating on polishing them more before release, etc.

MDG seemed to get lousy cooperation from the Univ. in the acquisition of rooms for events. I can only authoritatively speak about the many problems suffered in running our *D&D* event. It was scheduled for the Music Bldg., and we were to have all of the rooms on one floor of one wing for the entire day. It seems as though the word was not well disseminated as many of the rooms were found to be in use upon arrival. As a result, every single round of the tournament was late in getting started, and groups were scattered all over the building, with four of them having to share a large rehearsal hall.

Bursley Hall was the hub of the con, with a good many of the events taking place somewhere within its capacious confines. Every Univ. has a building like Bursley; a seeming jumble of wings off of the main structure, all having differing numbers of floors and the entire Hall having a nearly incomprehensible numbering system. The maps provided for Bursley were inadequate, to say the least.

The maps were provided in the program, which had its share of "oddities" that deserve comment. There were certain parts of the program that showed disturbing lapses of common sense and taste. I can only wonder how many young gamers' mothers have seen the program and forbidden their progeny from ever attending another. It is apparent that a terrible mistake was made by MDG in the inclusion in the program of the totally unnecessary segments on the laws of Michigan and Ann Arbor concerning controlled substances and the one on commercial sex. While I realize that the latter was written very tongue-in-cheek — the fact remains that a significant number of attendees are on the young side, and adult satire has no place in a program distributed to the general public. The danger lies in the potential failure to recognize it for what it was, as well as the danger of misinterpretation by parents that had, up until then, thought that they were allowing their child to attend a weekend of good, clean fun. As an adult, I found it to be amusingly written; I can't say what I would think if Jr. brought his program home and I read it; I do think that a number of parents will be upset.

Another oddity in the program that deserves comment is a section called "Personalities". I'm not quite sure what this section was meant to be used for. It purported to be a survey of some of the "personalities" present at the con, sort of a "Who's Who" in gaming. A better title might have been "Who the hell is He?" It was the most incredible jumble of information and mis-information ever assembled and perpetrated on the hobby. It seems to be a mix of well-knowns, unknowns and MDG people. How some of them qualified as "Personalities" is beyond me. In many cases, people weren't even linked to their companies, or games, or anything. (Before the outcry grows, let me assure you that this is not sour grapes at not being included; quite the contrary, I was listed, but I have no idea why.) I found the entire section to be rather silly, as there was no discernible criteria for inclusion. It did provide comic relief in moments of intense boredom . . .

One other low point stands out in my mind, in stark relief. It's fortunate that this event was not open to the general public. I'm referring to the party at the Marriott Hotel on Friday night for the exhibitors, workers and etc. It started off as a nice party and ended up a disgusting spectacle. If the Marriott ever allows another wargaming-related event within its confines, I'd be very surprised. More than a few attendees left in disgust after watching some of the "captains" of our industry make drunken fools of themselves. As anyone that knows me can attest, I like to party with the best of them, and I'm certainly no teetotaler, but I left the party early. I stopped back some time later and it was even worse.

Let's you think that I didn't like Origins '78, let me assure you that I did, in spite of the bummers. It was a good con, with a huge crowd that taxed, but never broke down, the facilities and schedules and available space. MDG is to be commended for all the good aspects of the con. I heard very few complaints from attendees that were dissatisfied that amounted to anything. MDG hid well the strain they were feeling,

and should be commended for keeping it as smooth as they did. All gamers that attend the cons must have at least a small streak of masochism in them; why else would we go to a con in the summer, endure the lines, the heat and all the rest, and still leave swearing we had a great time? I do, I have, and I did . . .

\*\*\*\*\*

A couple of interesting things happened at this year's con that will affect next year's, as well as subsequent *Origins*. The first is that Philadelphia will be the site of next year's *Origins* — *Origins '79*. The group that put on this year's very successful *PennCon* will do the next *Origins*. I think the choice of sites is excellent in that it is back East. I can only hope that *Origins* stays on the East Coast for a few years. There is no need for both *Origins* and *GenCon* to be in the Midwest. In fact, I feel it is detrimental to both cons to be held so near to each other and so close together in time. I feel that both the industry and the gamers would be better served with a regular major East Coast Con (preferably *Origins*) a regular Midwest Con-GenCon, and a regular West Coast Con — whichever one it turns out to be. What the hobby doesn't need is a floating roadshow any longer. How can we in the industry expect gamers to make summer plans, or become hardcore regulars, when the major cons move locations and dates from year to year? If each con were always held in a given month, on the same weekend each year, we would be in far better position to build a regular crowd each year. The other advantage is that more gamers could get to one of the major regional cons each year, and not have to wait for it to "come to town" . . .

The other interesting development is in the steering committee. Where once it was composed of representatives of seven of the largest companies, it has been changed. From now on, the "committee" consists of AH, SPI and whichever group did the last *Origins*. Let's hope they keep it on the East Coast . . .

The shift on the committee came about from a number of influences, the primary one cited as being that two of the members wished to withdraw, until very late, no group had come forward with a bid for O'79.

Avalon Hill stuck their necks out to see to it that the Con didn't die. He favors membership by all the manufacturers on the steering committee eventually. That will probably be a trick, if pulled off, worthy of Henry the K.

It is worthy of note that two of the former committee members were given incorrect times of the meeting, and therefore were not present when all of this took place. (One of them was one of the companies wishing to withdraw, the other certainly did not.) We will be watching further developments most carefully . . .

\*\*\*\*\*

#### Charles Roberts and H.G. Wells Awards Winners

##### Charles Roberts Awards

BEST STRATEGIC GAME 1977 — *Victory in the Pacific* (AH)

BEST TACTICAL/OPERATIONAL GAME 1977 —

*Squad Leader* (AH)

BEST PROFESSIONAL MAGAZINE — *S&T*

BEST SEMI-PROFESSIONAL MAGAZINE — *The Space Gamer*

ALL TIME BEST FANTASY BOARD GAME —

*War of the Ring* (SPI)

HALL OF FAME — Redmond Simonsen

H.G. Wells Awards —

For Excellence in Miniatures and Related Gaming

ALL TIME BEST NAPOLEONICS RULES — *Empire* (Empire Co.)

BEST LINE OF HISTORICAL WARGAME FIGURES —

*Hinchliffe* (Heritage)

BEST LINE OF FANTASY WARGAME FIGURES, 30mm or less for 1977 — Ral Partha

BEST LINE OF VEHICULAR WARGAME MODELS 1977 —

*GHQ MicroArmor*

ALL TIME BEST ROLE PLAYING RULES —

*Dungeons & Dragons* (TSR)

GREATEST CONTRIBUTION TO THE HOBBY, GAME OR RULES, 1967-1977 — *Dungeons & Dragons* (TSR)

BEST PROFESSIONAL MAGAZINE — *THE DRAGON*

HALL OF FAME — *Dungeons & Dragons* (TSR) and

*EMPIRE* (Empire Co.)

next page

**Avalon Hill — with a little help from TSR —  
Battles SPI to Thrilling Tie**

In the first-ever *Origins Softball Game* on Sunday morning, July 16th, AH and SPI met at 8:00 p.m. to do battle on the softball diamond.

SPI was heavily favored going into the contest, having an active team in one of the many NYC leagues, as well as having a much larger staff from which to select their talent. To compensate AH somewhat for their smaller player pool, SPI generously allowed AH two non-AH players on their team of 12.

*The only non-AH player was your kindly editor, having badgered Tom Shaw and Don Greenwood into allowing me on their team. Kindly Ed.*

Two local umpires were hired to call the game, which was to be 12 inch, slow-pitch. It was made clear to the umps that we were primarily there to have a good time, so some liberal interpretations were made. We agreed to play nine innings or two hours, whichever came first. Strikes were to be called on any pitch the ump thought the batter could hit, there being no homeplate; the rest were balls. None of the pitchers (SPI used three, AH just one) was throwing "legal" slow-pitch pitches, but we didn't care.

The lead changed hands often; SPI once led by three or four, AH by as much as six or seven. Jim Dunnigan nearly called it when, with the score at about 5-4, he hoped/predicted that it would be a 12-12 tie. As it was, SPI scored five runs in the bottom of the ninth, tying the game at 13-13, and then loaded the bases before being retired. The game ran over twenty minutes late, and almost everyone on both teams had commitments. It was allowed to end in a tie, 13-13.

Members of both teams were asked/accused of a "fix". I must admit that I might also have been dubious, had I not been there competing myself. What I participated in was one of the toughest, roughest games of ball I've seen between non-regular teams, without a hint of malice or meanness. The casualty list was enormous and scary. One of SPI's players was *carried* off of the field when he injured a leg. One of AH's players severely wrenched his ankle, but was able to continue; another ruined his shoulder over extending it; their center fielder nearly dropped from overexertion, the heat, and the cumulative effects of three days of a con. SPI's shortstop got hit in the chest with a line drive, and their third baseman proved to be made of iron after springing back after two trappings at third. I pulled a thigh muscle that had me limping for three days afterwards, and there were countless bruises, bumps and scrapes. All participants behaved like sportsmen, though it seemed that some of the members of SPI's team placed an excessive amount of importance in winning, even going so far as to criticize their teammates out loud, and in front of a surprisingly large crowd that turned out.

All in all, a good time was had by all; players and spectators alike really seemed to enjoy it. As soon as it was over, both sides congratulated the other and promptly quit trying to maul the other, with smiles and handshakes all around. I can't wait for the rematch.

\*\*\*\*\*

TD #19 will contain a report on the massive *D&D* tourney; it will contain insights into the scoring system, judges guidelines, and such, as well as some accounts of what actually happened. The tournament was conducted with the three new modules that TSR has produced and now has commercially available. The winning team had two ladies on it, both of them capable players. I know just how good the winning group was because I had them for Rd. Two.

\*\*\*\*\*

Anybody with a set of rules for a Chinese tile game called "Wah Hwar Pei" is invited to write me here, in care of TD. I would like very much to have a copy of the rules. It was popular in southeastern China, having originated in Kiangsu Province hundreds of years ago.

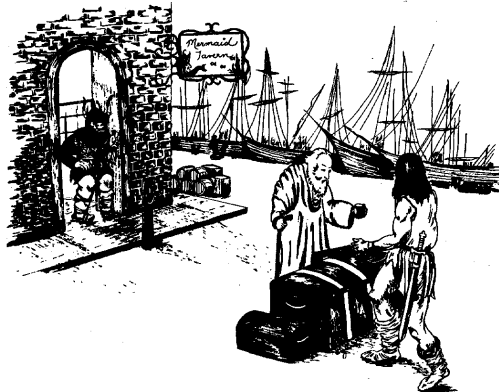
\*\*\*\*\*

Sheldon Price, please contact TD. We've lost your address.

\*\*\*\*\*

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D&D Variant**NEW SPELLS IN D&D!****Cure for an Ailing Campaign or  
Killer of A Healthy One?**

by Paul Suliin

*Editor's Note:* The following is an example of how one group handles the research of new spells. They are NOT recommended for general absorption into existing campaigns willy-nilly. A DM must carefully consider each and every new spell he ok's; the side effects of a seemingly simple spell can be devastating to a carefully wrought campaign. A DM should carefully quiz the "inventor", before approval, about the reasoning behind a spell; its projected uses, applications, need, etc. If the DM can safely allow the spell: i.e., it won't ruin his campaign, he should then set the parameters of what he will allow the spell to do or not do. Every spell should have a "loophole"; some other spell or power that will negate it, or influence it in some way. The fastest way to ruin a campaign, and/or let the MU's "rule the world, is to bring in a "perfect" spell, one with no counter or "crock factor".

**Author's Introduction:**

*One of the greatest and most useful abilities of the D&D Magic-user is the capability to research and create spells not on the standard lists. By the use of this ability, even a low-level type can greatly increase his strength and formidability, since any level may research. Since the clarification and extension of the research rules in THE DRAGON #5, many players have virtually made research a science, turning out some truly useful and ingenious spells. The list which follows has been play-tested extensively in the Druid World campaign in Malvern, Arkansas, and proven gameworthy.*

**LEVEL 1**

**NATURE CALL:** Allows a form of communication between man and animal. The caster may summon 1-10 small mammals and/or birds, ranging up to squirrels or small hawks in size. These make quick, feinting rushes at the caster's opponent(s), confusing stupid monsters and subtracting two from the hit die of more intelligent creatures. They may not, however, be forced into attacks on monsters which they would normally flee (undead, demons, etc.).

If he desires, the M-U may summon one creature, as large as an eagle, which will carry an object or message to any given point within three days travel. Creatures summoned by this spell take 1-4 melee turns to arrive, and the spell may not be used underground.

**LEVEL 2**

**MAGIC MISSILE II:** As Magic Missile, but this spell allows the caster to fire one +2 arrow or two +1 arrows, with a like amount added for every fifth level advanced beyond third.

**MOON RUNES:** These are silvery, shining letters, drawn with the finger on any reasonably solid surface. They may glow constantly, or be "set" to shine under certain conditions, such as the presence of a specific person, or a certain time of day. Likewise, they may also be set to fade under certain circumstances, or after a preset length of time. Duration: 1 year, maximum.

**LEVEL 3**

**FLAMEBOLT:** This spell produces a bolt of light which does 3-24 points of damage to living beings (3-30 to undead) and ignites flammables within 5' of the impact point. One use of the spell allows the beam to be fired the level of the caster plus 1-3 times. Range: 240 feet. Duration: Until last charge is fired.

**MYSTIC ROPE:** Creates a magical rope, up to 100' long, which moves about on command. The rope has sufficient independent movement to make untying it impossible for anyone but the conjurer, and it is immune to all non-magical forces. It takes 1 point per 4 feet, and regenerates 1 foot/melee turn.

**PIT OF FLAME:** This spell conjures a pit, 20' x 20' x 5' filled with flames. Those falling in take damage equal to 1/2 the caster's level, rounded up, so that a fifth level pit does 3 dice/melee turn. In another way, the pit may be used as an interrogation device. When used in this fashion, a person placed in the pit floats just above the surface, taking

no damage until he tells an untruth. A lie causes the person being questioned to fall into the pit, taking the damage given above. Duration: 3 turns.

**WORD OF WARDING:** This is one of the only spells which may be used while the speaker is meleed. Utterance of this word causes any one weapon, either a specific one, or merely the next one encountered, to be deflected from its intended course toward the speaker. Normally, this spell would be used during the Magic-user's initiative, to take effect after. However, if necessary, it may be used before or after his initiative, to take effect immediately. If it is used in this fashion the speaker may use no spells higher than third level during his initiative, when it comes again. Duration: 1 melee turn.

**LEVEL 4**

**FORCE FIELD:** Projects a spherical field, 10' across, similar to a cube of force, except that it will not block magic. The field may be cast around any object, but it will not move unless the caster is inside it. Duration: Level of caster, in turns. Range: 60 ft.

**EXTEND I:** This spell extends the range of 1st-3rd level spells by 50%. Duration: As spell extended.

**SHATTERRAY:** The caster may generate a shimmering beam of force from his palm, which has roughly the properties of a high-powered battering ram. Creatures struck by the beam take 5-30 points of damage from the impact, and structures such as walls and buildings suffer 20 structure points, as per *Chainmail*. For every level the caster progresses beyond seventh, add one damage die, to a maximum of 12 dice total, for damage to living creatures, and 5 structural damage points, to a maximum of 60 points. Range: 120 feet.

**WALL OF WATER:** Creates a wall of water up to 50' x 20'. Normal fire cannot pass through the wall, and flaming creatures take 5-30 points when breaking through. The wall's swirling currents block missile fire, and prevent creatures with fewer than 5 hit dice from passing through. Range: 30 feet. Duration: 1 hour.

**LEVEL 5**

**EXTEND II:** As Extend I, but applies to fourth level spells as well.

**BEAM OF BLASTING:** This spell produces a golden beam which transmutes any object struck into a fireball. The blast area is 30 feet across, and the fireball does 1 point of damage/Gold Piece weight of matter transmuted, up to 50 points, maximum. For every three levels the M-U progresses beyond ninth, a like amount is added, so that a twelfth level does 2 points/GP, etc. If the object transmuted is being held or worn, there is no save for the holder, otherwise making one's saving throw halves damage. *Note: This spell will not transmute living matter.* Range: 200 feet.

**LEVEL 6**

**CONJURE DJINNEFREET:** Uttering this spell conjures a djinn or efreet, which will serve the conjurer for 24 hours. At the end of this time, djinni will vanish, but efreet must be forcibly banished by the reversal of the spell, or attack the summoner.

**DENSITY CONTROL:** Through the use of this spell, the M-U may alter his body density within a range extending from gas to steel. Such changes will also alter his natural armor class, so that at minimum density, no solid weapon can affect him, and at maximum, he is armor class one and his hands strike as swords. The caster may change density at any time during the duration of the spell, and any item(s) in contact with his body change also. Duration: 3 turns.

**EXTEND III:** As Extend II, but applies to fifth level spells, and doubles range.

**COMBINE I:** Allows the caster to combine spells in any combination not exceeding seven spell levels, or three spells, maximum. Duration: As shortest spell combined.

**CALL SPIRIT:** With this spell the Magic-user may summon the shade of a deceased person and ask it two questions. The chance of the ghost knowing the answer(s) varies from case to case and must be individually determined by the DM, depending on the spirit's former level, occupation, time of death, etc., but it should never be less than 25%. The spell may only be performed at night, since the spirits are dispelled by sunlight. Also, the body, bones, or other remains must be within 20 feet, and the name of the deceased must be known.

**RUST MONSTER TOUCH:** Affects all ferrous metal touched by the caster as if it had been touched by a rust monster.

## Magic: Governed by Laws of Theory

by Thomas A. McCloud

In most dungeon adventures magic, or at least its detail, is treated rather casually. A player says: "My magic user casts sleep on those orcs." The dungeon master replies: "All right, six of them fell asleep, the other ten are still coming." But what words did the magician speak? What gestures were made? Why did it work?

Of course for the vast majority of adventures the simple rules in use are quite enough. But for special occasions (such as the magic contest I will be hosting on my birthday) it is worth while to know more about the theory and practice of magic.

Surprisingly it is not necessary to invent an imaginary theory of magic. A theory has been developed to explain the "logic" used in magic spells throughout the world. Descriptions of it may be found in such places as the article "MAGIC" in the 1960 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and Sir James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. It is a system which has already been adopted by more than one author of fiction. Additions can of course be made to the theory, and the theory is incomplete without a discussion of the practice of magic, but the theory as outlined by Frazer is summarized in just two laws, the Law of Similarity and the Law of Contagion.

The Law of Similarity may be stated as "An effect resembles its cause." The most classic example of applying this law is the use of a voodoo doll to inflict injuries. The evil magician makes a wax doll similar to his victim, and then sticks pins into it, whereupon the victim feels a corresponding pain. Another example of employing similarity is the use of grave dirt, dead mens' bones, and the like to induce sleep. Frazer discusses no fewer than ten such spells where the similarity of sleep to death is invoked. The most elaborate is the use of a candle made from the fat of a hanged man held in a Hand of Glory (which is the dried and pickled hand of another hanged man). Anyone presented with this grisly item of necromancy could no more move than could the dead.

Frazer also gives examples of white magic which employ the Law of Similarity. A charm by which a banished king may regain his kingdom is to eat food cooked on a fire which was made from wood which grew out of the stump of a tree which had been cut down. Simply wearing a wine colored amethyst can keep a person sober. In the Kei Islands women anoint fruits and stones with oil and chant: "Oh lord sun, moon, let the bullets rebound from our husbands, brothers, betrothed, and other relations, just as raindrops rebound from these objects which are smeared with oil."

The Law of Contagion may be stated as: "If things once joined are separated they will remember each other and remain effectively similar." The classic example here is the affinity presumed between a person and clippings of his hair or nails. Among other uses such clippings can be included in voodoo dolls to make them more effective, although it could be argued that this is more a matter of improving the similarity. A clearer example of the Law of Contagion is found in the practice of cooling a weapon to reduce the fever of a person injured by the weapon. Another is found in the widespread practice of spiking, stabbing, or putting sharp objects in footsteps to injure the feet which made them.

A fictional use of the Law of Contagion occurs in Robert A. Heinlein's *Magic Inc.* wherein is described the practice of building a section of bleachers, cutting it to pieces, then expanding each of several pieces by magic to produce several copies of the original section.

Besides the Laws of Similarity and Contagion formulated by Frazer, several other laws have been, or could be, propounded. Of these the most widely mentioned seems to be the Law of Mana: magic power is based on a mysterious supernatural force called *mana*. Unfortunately there is no consensus as to how mana works. In many books it is simply inherent in magic users; in Randall Garrett's Lord Darcy stories, mages have the "talent," others don't. In Larry Niven's Warlock stories mana is inherent in an area or territory, when it is used up, it is gone and no more magic will work in that place. At the same time, Niven does allow that there is mana in sacrifice, and also in meteorites. In the "spell points" systems used by some dungeon masters magicians

have a fixed amount of mana per day, which is used up as spells are cast, but then renewed by rest.

In my own dungeons I will be using the Law of Artistry: "Mana derives from art." By art I mean "the quality, production, expression, or realm of what is beautiful, or of more than ordinary significance." Note that art may be good or evil. In C.S. Lewis's *That Hideous Strength*, the use of art both sinister and bizarre is quite chillingly portrayed. In Niven's Warlock stories killings in war produce no mana, murders produce some, and ritual sacrifice produces the most. But art need not be evil. In deCamp and Pratt's *The Compleat Enchanter* it seems to be poetry which powers the spells, and the works of major poets produce more mana than those of minor poets. Nature is full of art, and much mana is sometimes derived from it, as in the star magic in Joy Chant's *Red Moon and Black Mountain*.

Another closely related law is the Law of Obscurity: Potency is proportional to abstrusity. This is the theory presumed behind the strangeness of ingredients found in many magic formulas. For example in *The Golden Bough* Frazer quotes Bacon's description of a salve to be smeared on a weapon to cure the wound made by the weapon. The salve includes among other ingredients "... the moss upon the skull of a dead man unburied, and the fats of a boar and a bear killed in the act of generation." The Law of Obscurity is also presumably involved in the fact that magic spells are very often in obscure and arcane languages.

Finally there is the Law of Harmony: The balance of the universe must be maintained. Basically this means that there is a price which must be paid for the use of magic. In John Brunner's story *Imprint of Chaos* it appears that one magician pays for his powers with feet that get painfully red hot when he walks, and another pays with impotence. In Joy Chant's *Red Moon and Black Mountain* those who wield the star magic pay by forsaking all warmth. The price to be paid for the powers of satanic witchcraft is too well known to mention.

The Law of Harmond also requires that self sacrifice shall be rewarded, and undeserved bad luck shall lead to good. This is woven into more fairy tales and fantasies than I would care to count, from *Jack and the Beanstalk*, to J.R.R. Tolkien's *Leaf by Niggle*. But here we are edging out of magic into another realm entirely.

Turning from theory to practice, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* notes that there are three parts to any act of magic. These are the spell, the rite, and the condition of the magician.

Of these, by far the most important is the spell, the words recited to produce the desired effect. The rite may be entirely absent, the condition of the performer may be irrelevant, but the spoken word is always used. In the "real" magic attempted in the real world spells may seem crude, but they are dictated by tradition and must not be varied. But for my dungeons the extra laws noted above will apply — the spell should be poetic, use archaic language, and refer to the sources of mana to be used. However, these assist the spell, they are not absolutely necessary.

In both "real" magic and magic in my dungeons the spell must above all describe the similarities invoked. The best magic in fiction, such as that in deCamp and Pratt's *The Compleat Enchanter*, does this. For example, in that book Shea lands his flying broom with: "... Like a dead leaf descending, So softly fall you!" to obtain a soft landing. (Unfortunately the broom also spins around like a falling leaf.)

The second part of the act of magic is the rite, which consists of the actions taken and gestures made while the spell is cast. The main purpose of the rite is to give the magic direction. This is the basic idea behind the magic wand; it is a pointer. A specific example from the *Britannica* is the Maori dart throwing charm. The Maori spits on the dart and recites: "Fly forward, my dart, like a meteor in the heavens." From this example it can be seen that the rite need have little relevance to the spell. On the other hand the rite may be directly related to the spell, as in rain making spells which involve sprinkling water on the ground.

The last part of the act of magic is the condition of the performer. Most of the concern of "real" magicians is to avoid breaking taboos. But for some spells emotions may be important, as in some types of death spells where the wizard may need to become as angry and excited as he would if actually stabbing his victim.

But for dungeon purposes the most important condition for the use of magic is that the magician be a magic user of appropriate level.

cont on pg 19



## Design Forum

## Let Your Town Have A Purpose, or, How To Design A Town In *Boot Hill*

by Mike Crane

One of the hardest things for a moderator to do in any role-playing game is to set up the town or towns in which the players will brawl in, buy equipment in, live in, etc . . . and *Boot Hill* is certainly no exception. In practice it may be even harder to set up a town in *Boot Hill* than any other role-playing game if you know little about the Old West.

The first problem confronting the moderator is what scale to use. I have found that the best cross between detail and space-saving is 20 feet per square on a sheet of graph paper. This gives adequate detail of the town without taking up a wall.

Before grabbing a sheet of graph paper and feverishly drawing on it (or building on it depending on your point of view) stop and lay out a rational organization of your town and also establish its reason for being there in the first place. If you hate the thought of organizing your town, relax; your town will probably be much easier, quicker, and fun if you take the time out.

Before you even get out a sheet of graph paper you should have specified where it will be located, what the surrounding area looks like, and most importantly you should have written up a capsule history of the town. Some of the most important things that you should include in the history of the town are the original founders' nationality, race and purpose. These are very important because obviously a Spanish missionary's purpose is going to be much different than an American who is looking to exploit the surrounding area. The other main thing that should have been included in the history is if any other nationalities or races immigrated to that town, as this could create separate nationality quarters that would drastically alter the town. An example of this would be a town founded by a group of Spanish farmers who would build small houses made mainly from adobe bricks. Later this territory could be captured by the Americans who might be cattlemen and would probably try to run the Spanish off their farms, and would probably

ship in lumber with which to build their houses, thus changing the area's original way of making a living and also changing the area's life-style.

Another thing to keep in mind when mapping out your town is its reason for being there. Whatever the reason is it will greatly influence the contents of the town. An example of this would be a town that was founded because it was located in good cattle country. The town would then probably contain a multitude of cattle pens, livery stables, feed stores, blacksmiths, a vet, etc . . . and there might even be a railroad running through the town to ship the cattle back to the east. If the town was founded because of gold deposits found in that area there will probably be at least one main mine, a multitude of claim stakes, and assorted general stores to rip off the miners hard-earned gold dust.

The location of the town is also very important. An example of this would be a town not on a river or stream — this town would either have to drill wells or if this did not work they would have to cart water into the town. A town on a railroad could have a large Chinese population consisting of Chinese who had once worked on building the railroad. If the town wasn't on the railroad then it probably has a Pony Express and/or a Wells-Fargo office. A town located near Indian territory or repeatedly attacked by Indians would probably have a fort and might even have a trading post. If the town is in a easily accessible area it could be the local seat of government and be the headquarters of the Marshal's Office or of the friendly hanging judge. Imagination is the only limit in this department.

One of the last things to consider in mapping your town is the size. When determining the size of your town remember that most western towns consisted of a few shacks (not counting the buildings with the half moon cut into the door) and not thousands of people, and, few western towns had more than a few hundred people. I would suggest, however you design, at least one town with several hundred people as the center of action. Again, imagination is the only limit.

Remember, you are not designing these towns to exactly portray an old western town, but to provide an enjoyable place for your players. Once you have perfected your designing techniques you will be able to quickly design old western towns containing sawmills, saloons, banks, "social centers", tinsmiths, lithograph studios, gunsmiths — well, you get the idea.



## Review

## Alpha Omega

*Alpha Omega* is Battleline's first foray into science fiction gaming and it's pure Buck Rogers . . . with some '70's updates. It reminds me of *Star Wars* more than any other SF game I've seen. That may or may not be an endorsement; I don't think so.

*Alpha Omega* is billed as "A game of tactical combat in space," a claim supported by the rules. Units are individual spacecraft representing human-kind, an alien race (the Rhylish) and a robotic symposium called the Drove. The counters are shape-coded by type, an idea that doesn't work too well in play. The artwork on the counters using it is superb. On the whole, the counters are less successful than the fine counters in other Battleline games. Part of this is because the ship counters are photographic reproductions of Valiant miniatures, muddily done. The rest of the problem is that only white shows up well against dark purple backgrounds. Reading the black lettering on some counters will blind you. Overall, the counters are nice but not up to the standards of other Battleline games.

The mapboard hexes are enormous, in more than one sense. They are physically about 1½" across and they represent 186,000 miles side to side; one light-second. Each turn is six seconds of real time. A

strange scale for tactical combat; in a hex that big, how do you hit your target? How do you find it?

All movement and combat in *Alpha Omega* is two-dimensional. Every action occurs in the plane of the map board. This may be disturbing to those who have played the ordinary run of tactical SF games, most of which are three-dimensional. In the case of *Alpha Omega*, three dimensions wouldn't add anything. There are no "terrain features" which are not represented by counters, the routes of transit are unimportant to most play, so it's not really necessary to add a third direction of movement. It would be a complication without benefit.

An unfortunate flaw of this game is its two-dimensional nature, nevertheless. It is really little more than a naval game set on a starfield map. The rules for movement, facing and combat are more than a little reminiscent of *Submarine*, a fine game but a poor parent for this one.

*Alpha Omega* lacks believability, an important quantity in a science fiction game. The weapons, from the Argonne Accumulator to the Dacer Shield, are just names. They are not only unexplained and unjustified, they are difficult to accept. While I am willing to believe in faster-than-light travel, which is a feature of this game, I am not willing to believe in weapons which arrive instantaneously, as the mechanics require these do.

Anyone else with a scientific inclination may do as I did and check the energy expenditures represented

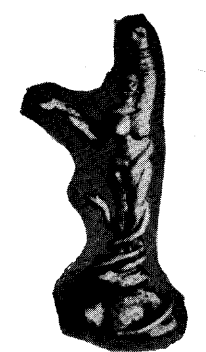
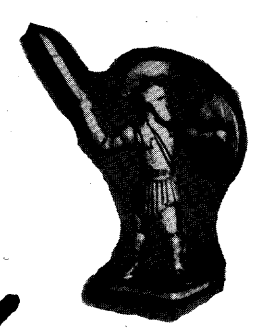
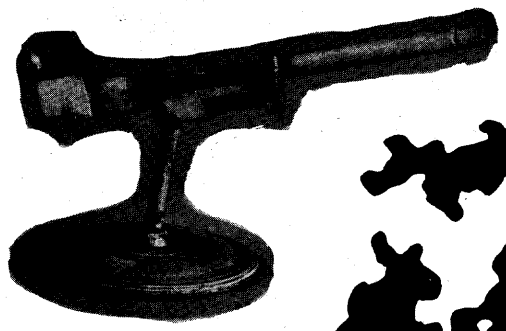
in the movement of these ships. A few minutes with a pocket calculator and the formulae from high-school physics will show that these battlefleets are spending more energy on movement than all the nations of the earth used last year. Ghod only knows how much goes into firing the guns, or that faster-than-light movement. This is failure by extravagance. The same extravagance went into naming the alien ships. I have great difficulty accepting names like "Anopholies", "Siphonphera", "Akroid" and "Balushi". I hope you had fun naming them, guys, 'cause it sure didn't do anything for the game.

*NOTE: I thought most everyone caught the intended references of the latter two. Watch out for Coneheads; they're not from France. — Ed.*

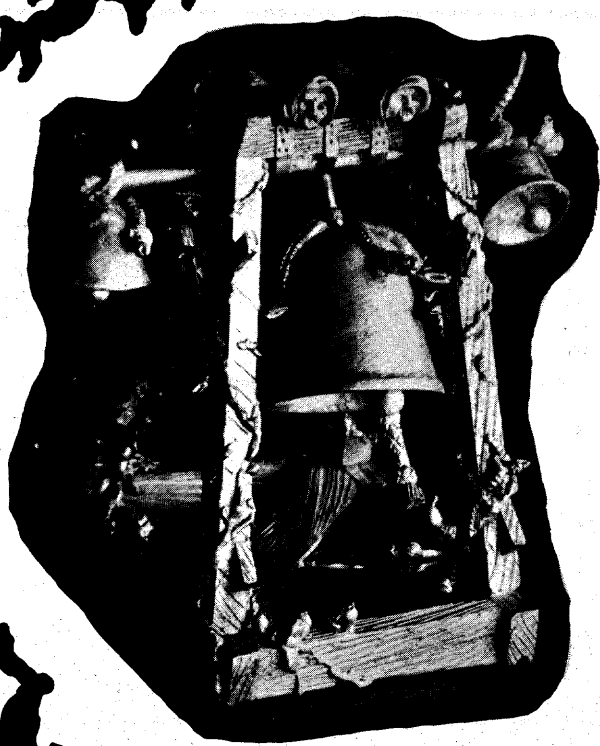
In its favor, *Alpha Omega* does have some nice touches, but not enough to save it. The simultaneous movement and combat by plotting is well done. The pad for this purpose is excellent. Another plus is the dependence of combat on the programming of the battle computers aboard both the attacker and defender. The combat results are decrements of the energy available to a ship for fire and movement and this too is nice.

To anyone with a background in SF gaming, *Alpha Omega* is a second choice; at best. For gamers just making the jump from conventional wargames, it's not bad; it just isn't very good. I hope Battleline's second effort is as good as this one might have been. —DM





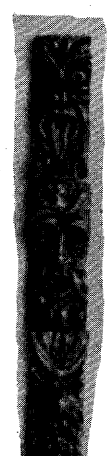
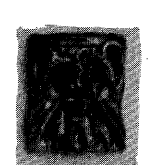
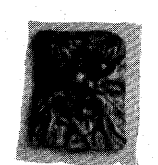
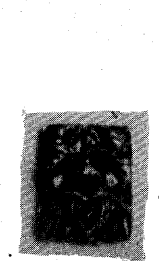
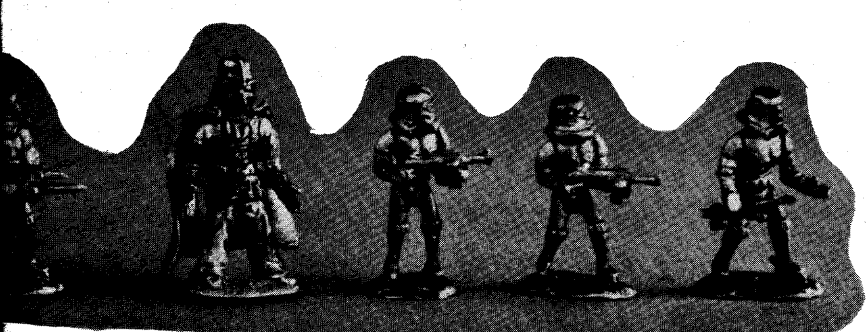
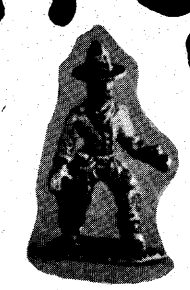
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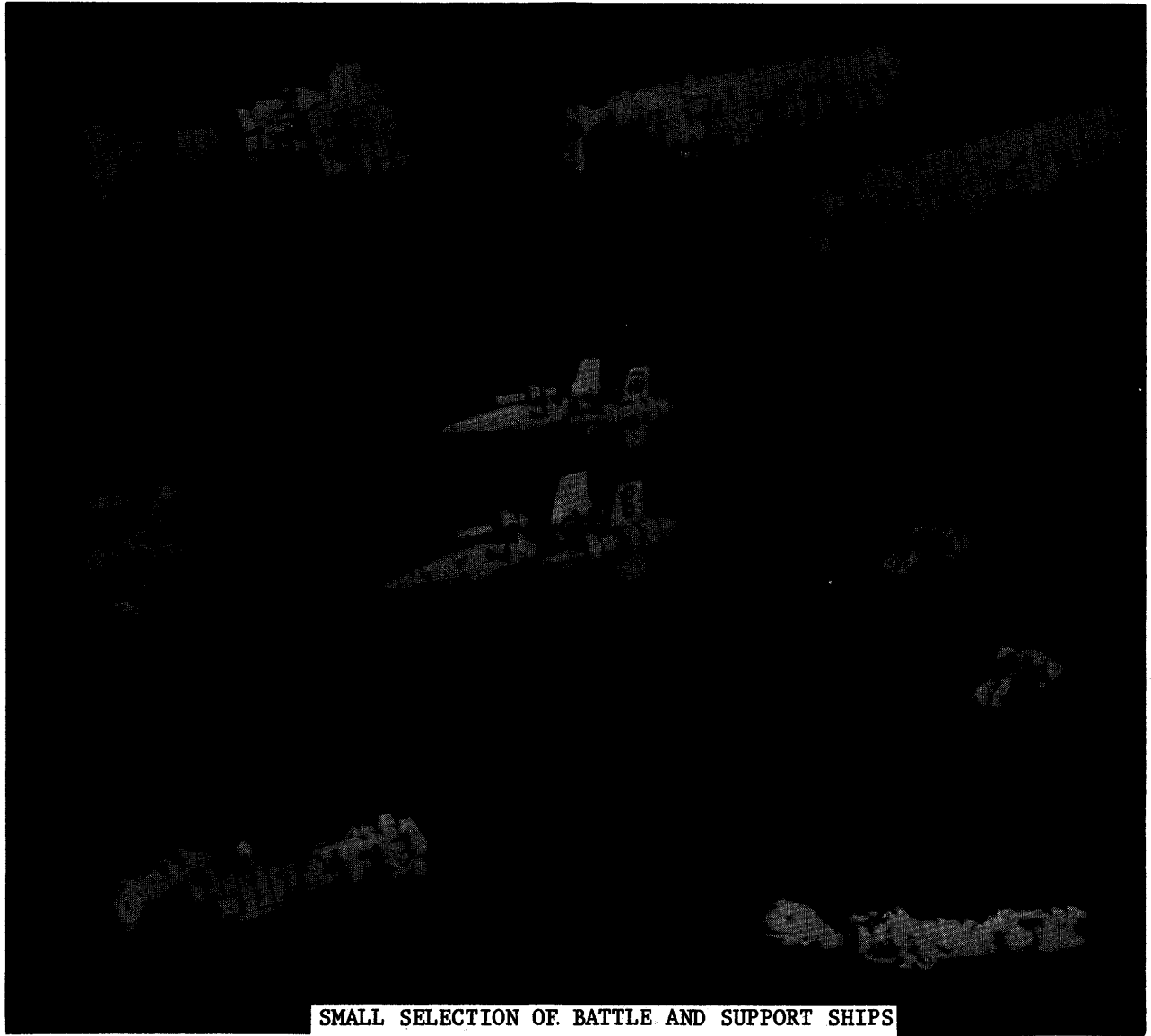


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**D&D Variant****The Chamber of the Godgame**

by Mick McAllister

*The five adventurers entered a sparsely furnished room deep in the dungeon of Hazard Keep. A table, a few chairs, diffused light without a source, no other exits. The door shuts behind them and locks, even though they had both spiked it and secured it with a formidable Hold spell.*

*On the table is a scroll and a set of 4 DG. Kendrick the Wizard examines the scroll, then reads it aloud. The message, in common tongue, is simple, direct, unnerving:*

*"You have entered the Chamber of the Godgame. Welcome.*

*"There is only one way out, a test of courage and self-sacrifice. One among you must voluntarily risk his life to save the others.*

*"Before you are four dice. If you break one, you will observe that it contains a cyanide syrup which kills painlessly and instantaneously. You must select a die and roll it. If you roll a "one," place the die in your mouth; when you bite down, death will come swiftly.*

*"The door will open the moment the terms of the Hazard are fulfilled." Vainly the company attempted to escape. Kendrick employed his many resources — A Knock spell, a Dispell Magic, a Dimension Door, a Pass-Wall — without effect. Desperately, he tried to Teleport: nothing. Trembling with mental exhaustion, he tried Contact Higher Plane, but the only reply he heard was a bland voice which repeated, "There is only one way out." Giblet, a dwarf with the brains of a turkey but the muscles of a steroid-fed Mumakil, bashed himself insensible, meanwhile, trying to knock the door down. Nervously, the others discussed their plight, each reluctant to make the sacrifice. At last a cleric named Malcolm strode to the table, hesitated, then seized a die. The others watched as he rolled — a "one." Commending himself to his god, he placed the die in his mouth. An instant after the crunch of candy breaking, he fell to the floor; an instant later, the door opened silently and Malcolm's body disappeared.*

*Grieving for their gallant comrade, the three conscious adventurers dragged Giblet off down the halls, making their way out of the dungeon. Great was their grief, but encounters were few, and none of them suffered further injuries (except Kendrick, who sprained a wrist hauling Giblet for three turns). At the mouth of Hazard Keep they came upon Malcolm sitting on a rock, well and whole, his eyes touched with the calm power and reserve of one who has met death and returned.*

Some D&Ders will recognize "The Godgame" from a scene in John Fowles' grand metaphysical dungeon novel, *The Magus*. In D&D the game offers many variations, depending on the alignment of "The Godgame Master," a god or unchallengeable Wizard, and posited on the probability that the scroll contains one or more falsehoods.

In *The Magus*, the dice are loaded, but not poisoned. The hero is rewarded for refusing to fulfill the terms of the game after he rolls a "one," refusing, in effect, to throw away his life for an abstract principle of honor. This could be used in the dungeon, but the circumstances are tremendously altered if the lives of all the party are in the balance, or appear to be.

The variations can range from benign, as in the example, to malicious. An evil magician would simply honor his agreement, accepting one life as ransom of the others. More evil yet, he might not require the voluntary agreement of the victim, but let the party "select" someone themselves. Be warned, though — a party agreeing to coerce a weaker member into submitting may be dealing with a benign or neutral Power who will punish them for their inhumanity.

The benign variants require white lies. The simplest is the one in the example: put the volunteer in suspended animation and teleport him outside the dungeon to wait for his fellows. He should be rewarded for his self-sacrifice, of course, with both experience and treasure — since he believed when he bit the die that he had given up both. A suitable recompense would be a treasure equal to 2x a share of whatever the rest of the party brings out and experience points equal to 2 or 3x those accumulated by the others (for example, the four come out with 4,000 GP & 1,500 Ex. pts. Each of them gets 1,000 GP and 375 ep; and Malcolm is given 2,000 GP & 1,125 ep by the Godgame Master).

There are other possibilities. Simply have the die not poisoned after all, for instance. Or a secret door might reveal a treasure to a worthy party. Or the shortest path to the surface might be cleared and lighted for them.

My own preference is the Neutral Godgame Master, however. He might, like an evil GM, not specify that the tester must volunteer of his own free will, and then anyone coercing anyone else into taking the poison would die in the victim's place at the fulfillment of Hazard. Or, if the victim is no better than his fellows, as willing as they to force someone else to bite the die and only the goat because he is the weakest among them, the Neutral GM might slay them all or — worse, perhaps — set them all free (the die is not poisoned) to finish their adventure in mutual distrust.

If a character ends up alone in the chamber, this variant can be used: there are four dice on the table, and a device which automatically crushes one to release the odor of bitter almonds. The scroll specifies that only one other die is poisoned and the adventurer must select one and eat it if he rolls a "one."

If the loaded dice option is to be used, the DM can fake it by rolling secretly for the character, or an enterprising DM can simply buy loaded dice at a novelty shop.

The variants can be selected by the DM as he creates the chamber (be sure to include an alternate scroll in case a solitary character wanders in) either according to his personal whim or by a series of die rolls.

**Rumbles fr pg 12**

This issue contains a very special story — *The Childhood and Youth of The Gray Mouser*, by Harry Fischer. The introduction I wrote for it will give you its background; the introduction by Harry's life-long friend, Fritz Leiber, authenticates it. It varies with what Fritz wrote, and I have tried hard to meld the two into their proper place in the continuing saga of Fafhrd and The Gray Mouser. My thanks to Fritz Leiber for permission to quote bits of the original tale. This story has never appeared in print before, and we are proud to bring it to you.

**Magic Theory fr pg 14**

Other dungeon masters may use a "spell points" system, wherein the mage must have "spell points" of mana left in order to be able to cast magic spells, but in my dungeons I will be using a fatigue factor. This factor is subtracted from all characteristics, including intelligence. When a magic user tries to cast a spell, the player rolls a twenty-sided die. If the roll is higher than the magician's fatigue-adjusted intelligence, the spell was done wrong and may backfire.

The Law of Similarity, the Law of Contagion, the Laws of Mana, Obscurity, and Harmony, the spell, the rite, and the condition of the performer — these can be used as the fundamentals of dungeon magic. It remains to be seen how they can be applied to produce the specific spells of "Sleep," "Levitate," "Invisibility," "Fire-Ball," and all the others, but I'm leaving that as an exercise for players in the magic contest on my birthday.

*Addendum: Specific Rules for the June 11 Contest in Magic to be held in the City of Kemble by the Magician's Guild of Meng.*

1. *Players must give the dungeon master a written copy of the magic spell setting forth the exact words, and indicating the rite (gestures) to be used. Condition of the performer will be assumed. Apparatus needed may be brought, bought in Kemble, or borrowed from the Magicians' Guild.*

2. *To be effective each spell must invoke at least one similarity.*

3. *The intended effect and intended level of the spell must be specified. Flesh golems will be provided as lawful targets for combat magic. Volunteers must be found by the entrant for spells involving a target mind. No purely black magic will be allowed. Anyone killed will be resurrected if possible. All spectators view the proceedings at their own hazard.*

4. *Scoring will be by points, 1-10 points being awarded by each of three judges. Top total score for a single spell in each category wins. Categories are 1. Implementation of Standard Spells, 2. Original Spells. Winner in the first will receive his choice of any item listed in Greyhawk. Winner in the second will receive his choice of any of the dungeon master's original magic items.*



## GAMMA WORLD: First Report; Setting Up The Campaign

by James M. Ward & Gary Jaquet

The creation of the boxed game of *Gamma World* was brought about when the need for a planet based version of *Metamorphosis Alpha* presented itself. The distances and possibilities presenting themselves on a planet were far more vast than those of a star ship. Also, through the course of playing *MA*, many new concepts were created and old ideas evolved into things far different from what was given.

The creation of a world destroyed by the ravages of an advanced technological war was easy. Filling it up with goodies that might have survived or been created afterward wasn't. In this process, a number of concepts were put together based on the experiences of designing *MA* plus ideas especially made for the game. The material was worked on by both of us and then handed over to the TSR staff, who further modified it and created a booklet able to be used by *D&D*'s and players of *Metamorphosis Alpha*. This game was to be much more than just a supplement of *MA* and it succeeded in this end.

Beginning with the Cryptic Alliances, *Gamma World* presents a game with a flavor uniquely its own. These alliances are groups of beings (rarely all human) that roam the world trying to put their ideals into practice. They can be found in any given batch of beings secretly spying or trying to manipulate the masses. These groups range from the "Knights of Genetic Purity", who seek to destroy all humanoid mutations to the "Zoopremisists", who believe that the time has come for the "beasts" to rule the world.

Realizing that the creatures of *MA* didn't really have enough hit dice for their environment, all of the creatures created were supplied with greater hit dice. A large number of these were designed to become effective player and non-player characters for the world. These are alphabetized from the android, who comes in 3 types, to the Zeeth that is a blade of purple grass that teleports its seeds into bodies.

Naturally the postulation of a worldwide energy war forces the concept of what is left afterward. Things that are left must be made of pretty tough stuff. We have mentioned ancient buildings, towns, cities, and robotic farms. We placed, in more detail, things like fortifications and space ports that would be expected to survive extreme damage. Since wars breed destructive devices, we created a batch of robots and weapons to fill up the preserved areas.

Combat, creating player characters, and the like, have been refined to a point where it should make for an easily understood role-playing game. The excellent map that has been provided gives the total possible picture of part of the world vastly changed by war. It is suggested that when you build your "Gamma World", you place some large forts and things from the past on the map. You should also place bases for all of the cryptic alliances. It would then be a good idea to create a detailed map of a 100 mile section.

In this section you should place some factions of the cryptic alliances, some powerful non-player characters, and some working machinery. Establishing several small tribes of humans and mutants in the area with both aware of each other (this allows for players to start as anything). One of the biggest mistakes a "Planet Master" can make is

*cont pg 23*

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# Birth Tables — Boot Hill

by Stephen Blair

## I Social Class

01-10 — Law Related  
11-55 — Ranch Related  
56-85 — Merchant Related  
86-99 — Drifter  
00 — Historical Character

## IA. Professions of Fathers

### Law Related Professions

1 — Lawyer  
2 — Judge  
3 — Cavalry Trooper\*  
4 — Town Marshall  
5 — Deputy Sheriff  
6 — Sheriff  
7 — Stage Coach  
8 — Deputy US Marshall

### Ranch Related Professions

01-50 Cowboy  
51-00 Homesteader

### Drifter Types

1 — Gunfighter  
2 — Detective  
3 — Vagabond  
4 — Vagabond  
5 — Gambler  
6 — Gambler  
7 — Indian  
8 — Bounty Hunter

### \*Roll for Rank

01-65 EM  
66-85 NCO  
86-95 Lieutenant  
96-97 Captain  
98-99 Colonel  
00 General

### Merchant Related — Roll for Craft

|                    |                  |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 1 — Blacksmith     | 11 — Bank Teller |
| 2 — Physician      | 12 — Assayer     |
| 3 — Dentist        | 13 — Government  |
| 4 — Leatherworker  | 14 — Miner       |
| 5 — Gunsmith       | 15 — Bartender   |
| 6 — Tailor         | 16 — Undertaker  |
| 7 — Preacher       | 17 — Clerk       |
| 8 — Buffalo Hunter | 18 — Railroad    |
| 9 — Telegrapher    | 19 — Stage Line  |
| 10 — Storekeep     | 20 — Muleskinner |

## II Birth Order

1 — 1st Born 5 — 3rd Born  
2 — 1st Born 6 — 4th Born  
3 — 2nd Born 7 — Bastard  
4 — 2nd Born 8 — Bastard

Roll six-sided die to determine orphan status. A die roll of six indicates orphan.

All fathers have one random skill. All Players have two random skills.

## III Skills

1 — Reading/Writing  
2 — Horsemanship  
3 — Crafts\*  
4 — Swimming  
5 — Tracking  
6 — Marksmanship — Gun  
7 — Marksmanship — Thrown  
8 — Gambling  
9 — 2nd Language  
10 — Facility with numbers

## IV Initial Purse\*

01-20 — \$25  
21-40 — 75  
41-50 — 100  
51-70 — 125  
71-80 — 150  
81-90 — 200  
91-99 — 250  
00 — 500

If Player is orphan — \$0

\*Indicated amount for 2nd born on down  
Doubled for 1st Born plus 1/2 of any land that father owns.

## V Size of Spread

1 — 640 Acres 6 — 3840  
2 — 1280 7 — 4480  
3 — 1920 8 — 5120  
4 — 2560 9 — 5760  
5 — 3200 10 — 6400

Each 640 acres will contain 30-80% usable grazeland  
Each acre supports 1/2 Horse, 1/2 Longhorn, 1/4 Hereford,  
or 5 sheep. There is a 0-70% chance of potable surface  
water per 10 acres. Land value \$0.50 — \$2.50

## How to Use the Birth Tables:

Simply roll the appropriate sided dice for a result on the appropriate table:

- I. Roll percentile dice for father's area of endeavor, then roll proper die on the indicated sub-table (IA). If 00 was rolled, player has choice of becoming one of the characters listed on p. 25 or 28 of the Boot Hill Rules or on p. 6 of v1#7 of the Strategic Review. Player may if he wishes, however, continue to use the birth tables in lieu of this option.
- II. Roll eight-sided die to determine sibling rank on table II, then roll six-sided die to determine orphan status.
- III. Now roll for father's skill. Players may choose this as one of their two skills and take one random skill or they may roll for two random skills.
- IV. Now roll for initial purse.
- V. If father is a homesteader, then roll to determine size of spread. Referee will determine types of animals on homestead and the amount of grazeland available, and the availability of water.

## The Skills

Reading/Writing self-explanatory player may acquire this skill by finding an instructor and spending 6 months to 2 years learning.

Horsemanship allows player to improve quality of horse by one step for each six weeks spent in training (Maximum 2 step increase)

Crafts Roll on proper table in section IA.

Swimming Only players who know how to swim may swim. This skill may be learned in 2 weeks if an instructor is available.

Tracking Subtract 5 from all tracking die rolls.

Marksmanship Add 10 to the original accuracy score. Players may add 1 to their original accuracy scores for each week and minimum of 250 rounds of ammunition used in practice. A maximum increase of 5 is allowed. If an instructor who must have an accuracy of 85 or greater is available, then these rates are doubled (2 per week Maximum of 10)

Gambling Adjust all Gambling die rolls 10% in player's favor. 15% chance of being accused of cheating.

2nd Language May speak (and read/write if player can read/write) 1 additional appropriate language.

Facility with numbers can add and subtract, can detect fraud in bills and books.

## An Example:

John W. Bitterrott's father was (I-51) a Homesteader (IA-58). He owned 1280 acres of land (V-2) in Gamer's Territory. John was his second child (II-3) but not an orphan (II-5). Although John's father was a noted horseman (III-2), John was a gambler (III-8) and had learned Arapaho (III-9) from some of his Indian Scout friends. When John reached the age of 21, his father gave him \$125 (IV-61) and kicked him out.

New Scrolls fr pg 13

## LEVEL 7

**SUMMON:** Speaking this spell summons a demon or other being which will perform one task for the summoner, much like an invisible stalker. The DM should prepare an individual list of creatures, such as Quolnarg of the Elric of Melnibone series, in addition to the standard demons, which may be summoned. Their powers should vary: pre-cognition, level-draining, etc., but they should be no more powerful than common sense dictates (this is not a Gate spell!). In some cases, other rituals, such as sacrifices, should be necessary to call forth certain beings.

**APPORTATION:** This is a sort of "reverse teleport": instead of bringing the caster to a prestated location, this spell allows the caster to teleport any given object to himself. Magical items get a saving throw vs. magic as a Magic-user of twice the items' "level". Thus a +1 sword saves as a second level Magic-user. Items on the Miscellaneous Magic tables take their "level" as the number of the table, and all other items have a saving throws of 12. Living targets get saving throws, but all those below fifth save at a -4, and those of sixth level or greater save at -3. Whether or not the spell works, the Magic-user must rest for 1-12 hours before more spells may be cast. Use of a crystal ball when casting this spell adds 10% to the chance of success.

**MASS POLYMORPH:** This spell allows the caster to enchant up to 25 roughly mansized creatures, as Polymorph Others. The potency of this spell causes all those affected by it to save at a -3. If it is cast at two or fewer creatures, they save at a -4. Monsters appreciably larger or smaller than man-size alter maximum number affected accordingly. Range: 120 feet.

**COMBINE III:** As Combine II, but allows combinations of up to nine spell levels, or four spells, total.

## LEVEL 9

**CANCELLATION:** Speaking this spell causes the caster's touch to be treated as a Rod of Cancellation. Duration: 1 melee turn.

As a final word, it should be noted that, although these spells have worked beautifully in my campaign, no two DMs run their worlds in exactly the same way. I therefore urge anyone who decides to use them to playtest them thoroughly before adding them to their spell lists. May your treasures be plentiful, and may you always make your saving throw.

Designer's Forum

# Guidelines for Mixing Campaigns: Androids, Wizards, Several Mutants, and Liberal Doses of Imagination, Well Blended

by James M. Ward

I think it is safe to say (as the designer of the game) that I have played *Metamorphosis Alpha* longer than any other person. From this semi-vast experience my initial concept of the game has undergone a semi-vast change. Being a devoted reader of every bit of Science Fiction I could and/or can get a hold of and a *D&D* addict of the first magnitude, I saw a real need for a Science Fiction based *D&D* game; hence the creation (with a lot of help from TSR) of *MA*. Now, with a major rewrite in the works (for you people that have kindly "demanded" more information on every facet of the game) I see the game every bit as complex as *D&D* with systems that are unique to anything yet known.

The game has been well received by the role playing public. I just wanted to take a few moments to detail some highly enjoyable experiences with the game that others can try. The use of the *D&D* player character has worked very well on the Star Ship Warden. The abilities of Strength, Dexterity, and Intelligence directly translate into Strength, Dexterity, and Mental Resistance in ship terms. Constitution in the *D&D* character is used for the Poison Chart. The hit points of the *D&D* level attained by the character used decides the hit points for the *MA* game. Charisma is the *MA* equivalent of Leadership Potential and is naturally only useable by 100% humans. The wisdom score is the big plus for *D&D* players on the *MA* world. It effects the Mental Resistance score for mental attacks.

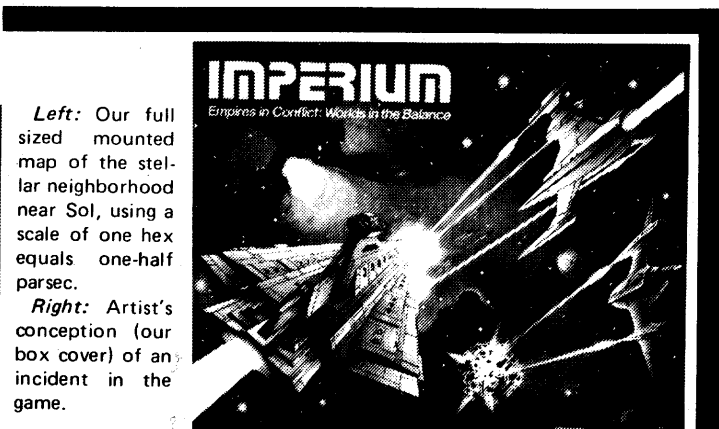
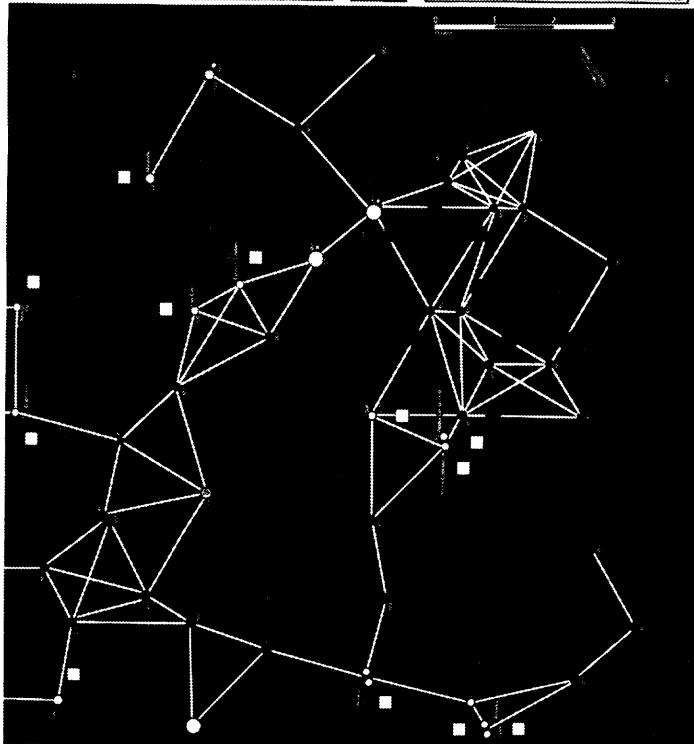
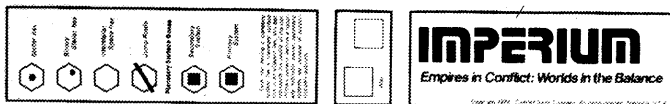
|             |                   |
|-------------|-------------------|
| Wisdom      | Mental Resistance |
| 3-7 .....   | -2                |
| 8-10 .....  | -1                |
| 11-13 ..... | 0                 |
| 14-15 ..... | +1                |
| 16-17 ..... | +2                |
| 18 .....    | +3                |

It should be noted that no addition can take the Mental Resistance roll over the 18 mark.

That covers all the character abilities for both sides except for Radiation Resistance. The *D&D* player has had no former generations to give them immunity so they have a resistance of 3.

Magic and its effects are immense on the starship. Those *MA* creatures have no resistance to magic so they take full effect without a saving throw. A hold person spell will get 1-4 people (not mutants) automatically. A ten die fireball does ten dice of damage with no saving throw. Along the same lines is the use of magical items straight from *D&D*. Magical Armor is probably the best of all the things available. The plusses on the armor are directly applicable to a beings armor class. Plus two armor is as armor class zero, plus three is as minus one armor class. This type of armor completely resists the action of protein and disruptor blasts. Swords do their normal damage plus whatever plus they have. Potions work fine until they are exposed to any amount of radiation and then they are whatever the Starship Master wants to make them. Rings, Wands, Staves, and Rods usually function normally on the ship. Miscellaneous magic items are a slightly different matter. Because of the shielding, metal, and energy fields of the starship Crystal Balls & Helms of Teleportation don't work through the levels. Medallions of ESP and Helms of Telepathy add two points to the mental Resistance score. Elementals of *all* types, Efreeti, and Djinni don't seem to be summonable with any device or spell. Horns of Valhalla, Figurines of Wonderous Power, and Arrows of Direction don't seem to work.

There are many ways to handle the different *D&D* character classes. For every two levels over the tenth a fighter has, allow a plus one to hit with *any* weapon. Magic users over the tenth level should



Left: Our full sized mounted map of the stellar neighborhood near Sol, using a scale of one hex equals one-half parsec.

Right: Artist's conception (our box cover) of an incident in the game.

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have a plus per level to figure out any type of technical item. Since clerics get their spells renewed everyday (and I never liked them anyway) they don't need any special powers or plusses. Bards over the tenth level act like Singing Vines. Monks on the other hand are at one-half their normal level because of the extreme quickness of the *MA* species. Thieves don't have their special attack bonus when attacking the backs of mutants (everyone is always trying to zap them from behind).

As with almost everything there is the other side of the role-playing coin. The use of *MA* characters in *D&D* land might be highly enjoyable. Humans are of the least significant mainly because they don't fit in any of the classes. On the other hand, they do have a potential for a large amount of hit points. The mutants are the beings that have the greatest potential for damage and fun. Mutation attacks should work over any magic resistance and protection. Imagine a mutant with four mental and four physical mutations. Let us give her defects of no sensory nerve endings and a complete mental block for robots. We will also assume she has Regeneration (could be treated as the Troll), Radiated Eyes, Physical Reflection (could be spell energy), and Poison Claws (intensity 12) for her physical abilities. She could have Mental Paralysis, Mental Control, Life Leech, and De-evolution for her mental powers. If any of you are wondering what possible harm De-evolution could do to a non-mutant let me list a few things. In magic users it could take away all the ability to use spells of any type. Fighters could lose a level or two of experience for every attack. Clerics could lose one level of spells forever starting from their lowest level. Normal humans could be transformed into cro-magnon man or even apes (but a few have argued that this skips several generations of evolution).

The weapons of the starship could have many strange effects on *D&D* creatures. The protein disruptor would work 100% of the time on non-enchanted creatures and forces a saving throw (as a death ray attack) on all creatures regardless of their magic resistance. The sonic metal disruptor ruins Iron Golems and does damage to metal covered beings to the tune of 15 dice for a short range hit, 10 dice for a medium range hit, and 5 dice of damage for a long range hit. In using the paralysis rod or the paralysis dart it works 100% of the time on creatures with the standard magical resistance. Creatures with any type of extra normal magical resistance have a 50-50 chance of being paralyzed. The laser pistol is a short energy burst that bathes any fire creature in healing energy, melts Iron Golems, and does triple damage on cold creatures. The third stage slug ejector does no damage to metal-armored beings or creatures with an armor class of better than four. The third stage gas ejector forces a *D&D* being to make their poison saving throw with each hit.

All in all the switching of creatures, players, and items from campaign to campaign can make for novel situations.



GENTLEMEN: I HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THERE IS AN ORCISH SPY AMONG US . . .

## D&D Variant

# Monkish Weapons & Monk vs. Monk Combat

by Garry Eckert

As it is stated in *Blackmoor*, monks can use weapons. There are many different kinds of weapons.

In Japan men were trained to fight in Kedo or with swords. The metal swords are called "live blade". The bamboo swords are called *shimia*. The wooden swords are called *bokutois*. There are eight different attacks used.

2. Shomen: a vertical cut delivered to the centre of the forehead.
2. Hidari-men: an oblique cut at the left temple.
3. Migi-men: an oblique cut at the right temple.
4. Migi-do: a downward cut at the right side of the breast plate.
5. Gyaku-do: downwards cut at the left side of the breast plate (rarely used).
6. Kote: a cut at right wrist of lower forearm.
7. Hidari-Kote: a cut at the left wrist or lower forearm, but only valid if the arm is raised to shoulder height or higher.
8. Tsuki: a thrust at the throat to strike the beard of the man.

The Japanese bow was about seven feet long. This art was known as *Kyudo*. This bow is between one and-two inches thick, depending on the strength of the draw required. The draw was 40 to 50-pound pull. An expert can draw up to 90-pounds. The arrows are 39 inches in length. The bow can be fired while standing, crouching, or on horse back.

A *Naginata* is a curved-bladed spear used to maim the enemy's horse before dealing with the fallen rider. The three basic cuts are waterwheel, windmill and butterfly.

The *Yari* is a straight-bladed spear. The spear is between seven to nine feet in length. The primary use is for *tsuki* (thrusting) or use from horseback. The primary targets are the groin/stomach, chest/throat regions.

The Okinawan weaponry is an example of everyday implements turned in to weapons. First, there is to *rokushakubo*, which means six foot staff. The diameter is one to two inches. The attacks are thrust or striking. Secondly, there is the *Kama*; A rice-harvesting hand sickle. The blade is set at right angles to a hardwood handle the thickens toward the butt. The attacks are slash, rake, hook, chip, deflect, or block. The third weapon is the *ton-fa* or *tui-fa*. This is a handle used to turn the hand-operated millstone for grinding. It is tapered hardwood billet between 15 and 20 inches in length with a short projecting side-handle set at right angle about six inches down from the thicker end of the billet. With either end lying along the underside of the forearm, a person can very effectively punch and strike, as the opposite end is employed to jab with devastating force at vital areas. It is also used to block cuts or blows in a manner dictated by technique. It can be used in pairs.

*Nunchaku* are two equal lengths of hardwood hinged by a short piece of silk or chain. It is used for blocks, smashing blows, and can be thrust in vulnerable areas.

The *sai* is the short sword about 15 to 20 inches in length. It can be used in blocking, cutting, stabbing.

Some of these-weapons needs special skills to use them (i.e., the *nunchaku*).

Novice: can use the *naginata*, *yari*, *kama*, and the *sai*

Initiate: can use the *shimia*, and the *bokutois*

(next page)

## Gamma World fr pg 20

to stuff a small area of the world with everything possible. Your players will get out and stir up all sorts of fun things if you give them a chance. After you have your players started out, you can then take the time to widen the area you have completely drawn up; until a general filling of the entire map is accomplished.

Do not discount the non-player character. The knowledgeable referee will tell you that not only can this created being be fun for the referee to play, it adds zest to any role-playing game to match wits with an unknown element.

Disciple: can use the live blade  
 Immaculate: can use the rokushakubo, and the ton-fa or tui-fa  
 Master: can use the nunchaku  
 Grand Master: can use the 7-foot bow with 40-50 lb. pull  
 G.M./North Wind: can use the 90 lb. pull bowbow

**KEDO COMBAT**

| moves       | sh. | h.m. | m.m. | m.d. | g.d. | k   | h.k. | t. | b |
|-------------|-----|------|------|------|------|-----|------|----|---|
| shomen      | —   | ala  | ara  | x    | x    | ara | x    | x  | — |
| hidari-men  | dla | —    | ara  | dra  | x    | ara | x    | x  | x |
| migi-men    | dra | dar  | x    | dra  | ara  | x   | x    | x  | x |
| migi-do     | x   | dra  | ara  | x    | —    | ara | ara  | x  | x |
| gyaku-do    | x   | x    | dra  | —    | x    | ara | ara  | x  | x |
| kote        | dra | dra  | x    | dra  | dra  | x   | x    | x  | x |
| hidari-kote | x   | x    | x    | dra  | dra  | x   | x    | —  | — |
| tsuki       | x   | x    | x    | x    | x    | x   | —    | x  | — |
| front block | —   | x    | x    | x    | x    | x   | —    | —  | — |

**D&D Variant**

**Effective Use of Poison**

by Bill Coburn

| Poison code | Found  | Description            | Effect   |
|-------------|--|------------------------|--|
| A           | Potion   | Arsenic, Hemlock, etc. | 80% Death in 2-8 turns<br>Stricken for 1 week  |
| B           | Gas, Darts<br>Cobras,<br>Needles                                       | Neurotoxic             | 50% Death in 4-16 turns<br>Stricken 1-3 days<br>Unconscious in 30 min.<br>for 1-4 days |
| C           | Spiders<br>Scorpions<br>P. Worms<br>Other snakes<br>Wyverns . . . Etc. | Hemotoxic              | 10% Death in 1-4 days<br>Stricken 1-10 days<br>Unconscious in 1 hour<br>for 2-8 days   |

**NOTES**

dla: defender's left arm is cut  
 dra: defender's right arm is cut  
 x: cut is made  
 —: cut is blocked  
 ara: attacker's right arm is cut  
 ala: attacker's left arm is cut

Poison in general:

If a player does not make it's saving throw, it shall be considered poisoned. If that player does not die it is considered "STRICKEN". A stricken player will be hindered in the following manner;

Strength = 1/2  
 Dexterity = 1/2  
 Constitution = 1/2  
 Movement = 1/2

In the case of unconsciousness, "stricken" takes effect upon regaining

consciousness. *Neutralize Poison*, if successful, will cancel all deleterious manifestations.

Armor will have some bearing on the outcome of an encounter. Here are the simple adjustments we use, towards saving throws:

Plate +2  
 Chainmail +1  
 Leather 0  
 No armor -2

Armor has no effect on the poisons that have been taken internally. If a portion of a potion is drunk, each individual portion will have it's own saving throw. Plus the amounts are applicable to each other, for their own separate saving throw.

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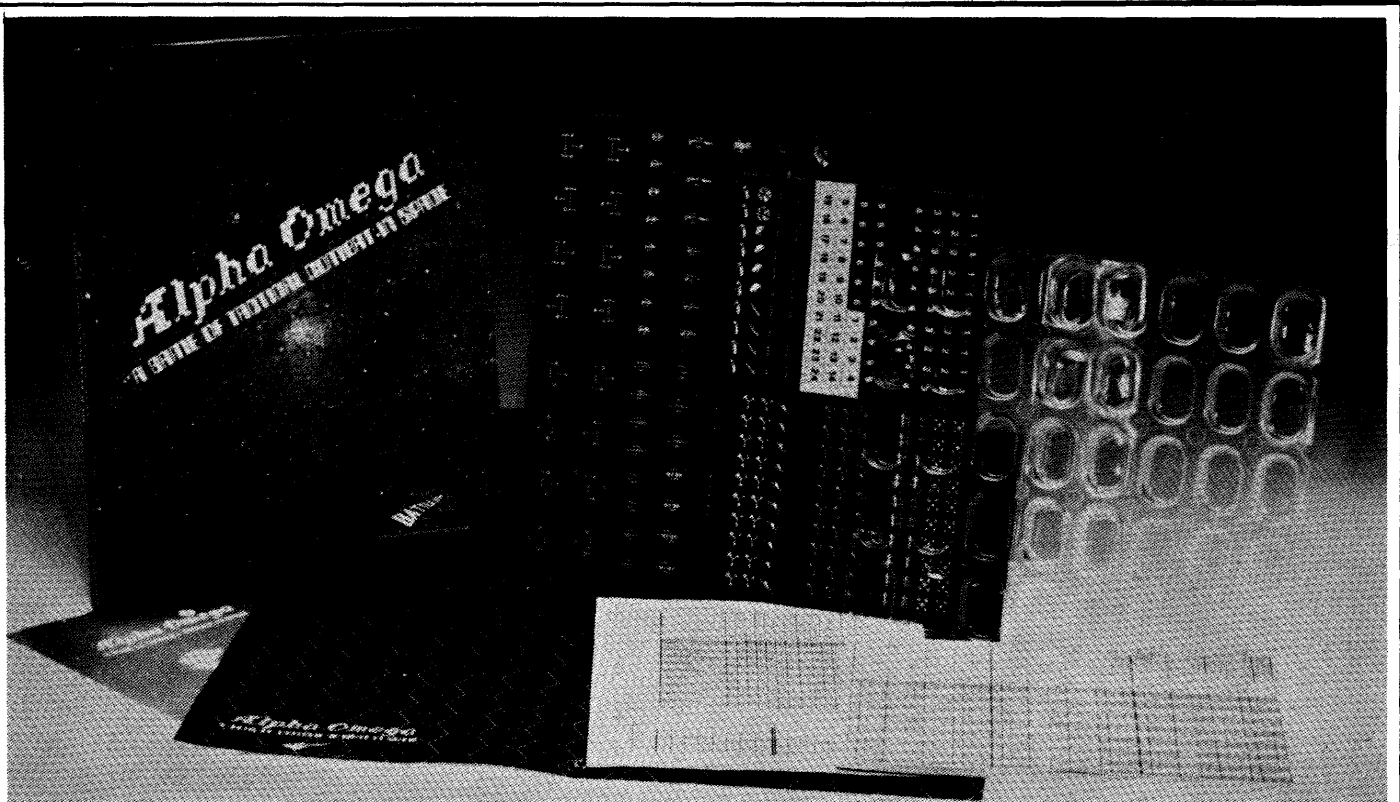
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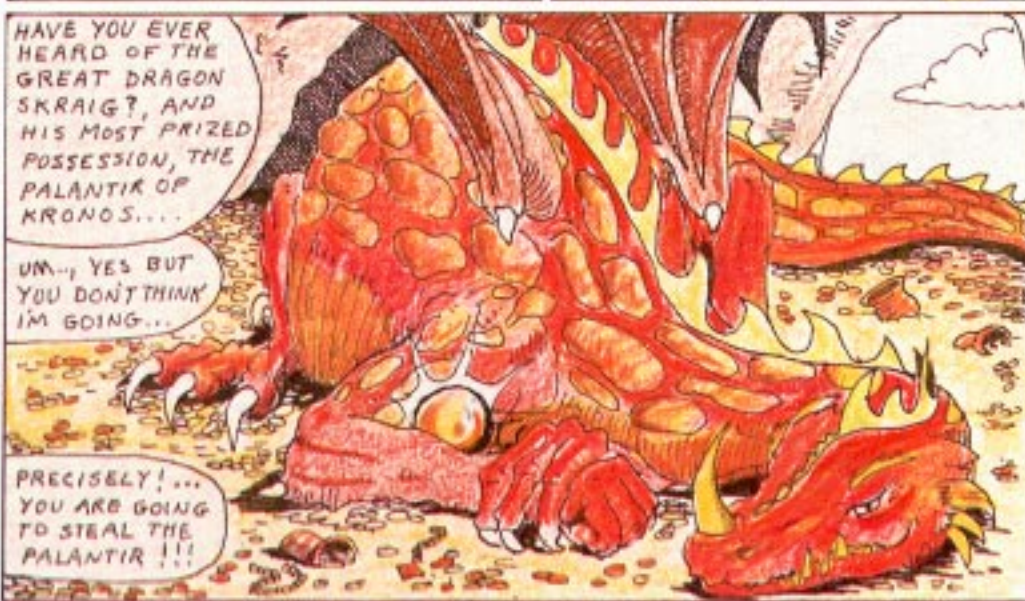
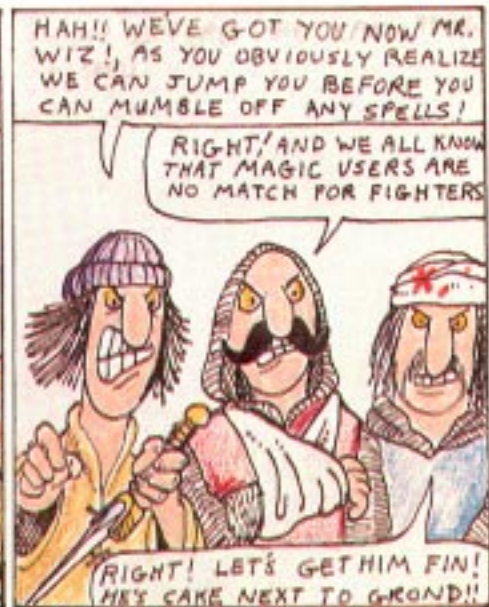
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# WORMY

22, 24, 26 — 27  
BUCKS! 'OT DOG,  
WOIMY! I'M RICH!



... 640,660,680 -  
— THAT'S GREAT,  
IRVING. NOW GO FIX  
SOME LUNCH FOR  
THE LANDLORD.

WHAT ON OITH  
ARE DEM TROLLS  
UP TO NOW?



I'LL BE  
FULLBACK  
AND YOU  
PLAY THE  
GOALIE.

YEAH.  
GIMME A  
BIG, FAT  
SUCKER  
BALL!

'Ey! YOU GUYS  
GOTCHA GAMES ALL  
MIXED UP!



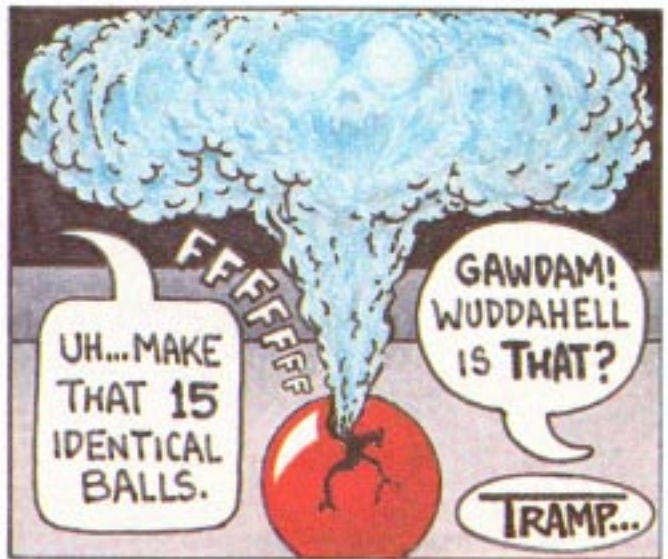
A GIANT  
POOL TABLE  
WITH 16  
IDENTICAL  
BALLS,  
AND HE  
SAYS WE'RE  
MIXED UP!  
— FORE!

WHOK!

CRAZY  
TROLLS!



KRAK!



UH... MAKE  
THAT 15  
IDENTICAL  
BALLS.

GAWDAM!  
WUDDAHHELL  
IS THAT?

FFEEEE

TRAMP...

# The Childhood and Youth of The Gray Mouser

by Harry O. Fischer

with introduction by Fritz Leiber

## About This Tale . . .

Last year, at GenCon X, Fritz and Harry were Guests of Honor. They gave a couple of seminars, and it was during one of them that this story was finally committed to by Harry. He had said, in answer to a question from the audience, that the only thing about the whole series that he didn't particularly care for was Fritz's version of the Mouser's boyhood in *The Unholy Grail*. Now you must understand that it was Harry who helped Fritz in creating all of the wonderful main characters on Nehwon, way-back-when. Being the gracious gentleman that he is, Fritz told Harry to write his own version. Harry replied that he had started one some time ago. Right after the seminar was over, I immediately offered to print it if ever he chose to finish it.

We formed a friendship at that GenCon that is very special to me, and what you will now read is the result of that friendship and the whimsical offer I made that day. No one in the world was more surprised and delighted than I was on the day this came in the mail. I feel honored to be able to bring it to you. — ED.

## Introduction by Fritz Leiber

This account by Harry Fischer throws a remarkable light on the early years of the Gray Mouser. It is very persuasive and of an almost incontestable authenticity, deriving perhaps from some secret memoir of Sheelba of the Eyeless Face. It establishes the Mouser as city and alley being from infancy and inextricably linked to Lankhmar. Was he born there? Most likely, though the possibility remains that he traveled as babe in slave-caravan from some city to the south or east — Tovilyis, say, or Sarheenmar — or from some still farther bourn. But city creature from the start he surely was.

No, truly, such a background seems to me very right: the warm shrewd aggressive and omni-potent Prince of Pimps; the alternate petting and rejection or at least disregard; early knowledge of sex and dirty-tricks; the link with the cats — all very good.

## The Benefactor

Mokker was the Prince of Pimps in the Street of Whores in Lankhmar. He could just as easily have been King. He was tastefully and expensively dressed, with massive gold and jeweled rings one or more to a finger. He was exceedingly complex; calculating, sometimes ruthless, vulnerable to fits of whimsy, possessing an almost perpetual erection (as it behooves a whore-master to have), and more. He was generous, and delighted in both the giving and getting of surprises. His whores loved him for this, in addition to the fact that he felt not the slightest hesitation about correcting or revenging a wrong to one of his, no matter how slight the transgression. Mokker was a thorough and practical rogue given to sudden impulses, possessing large eyes, a sensual mouth and plump cheeks; a merry companion and a deadly enemy. He was clever, aware of it, and arrogant.

"Cripple-ers-of-children! I say lay off! This one has taken my fancy."

Mokker contemptuously slashed the clutching hand of Yusk — one half of the pair of self-styled 'Creators of Curiosities', and backhanded with gold-shod knuckles the jowls of fat Shish.

"This! Look, you, how alert! How feisty . . . Why, he would bite hands. Touch him at your risk!"

"How much?"; Mokker asked the slave-master.

"For you!?! Very Cheap, oh, very! Only six small silvers for this very active youngster!"; and the child bit the finger of the slave-master to the bone and snarled. A swift clink of coin; a small wiping of blood and the very small child was leashed to the wrist of one of Mokker's women who petted and soothed.

So began the first of the many apprenticeships of the Gray Mouser.

By the time the child was four he was well known to the cats and the cats could be counted friends of his. Somehow, they communicated — and he, in his childish manner clued them to meat and fish, and they fetched him bits of both. Their great sport was the hunting and killing



of rats and mice. The child never lacked for fat mice and plump rats to roast.

This was well. Sad to relate, but the Pimp and almost all of his women had forgotten the boy so gallantly rescued from the Child-Cripple-ers.

Within a year, or perhaps a little more, the boy had gained the name of "Mouser".

He, in infantile bravado, hunted mice, and took to tying them by their tails to his belt for show. He discovered that rat-skulls, picked bare by ants of all flesh, had a good market value. He could always produce fat rats as evidence of his cats' clever hunting, as well as his own skill.

Suddenly, things changed. After about a year, when the Mouser was perhaps four and a half, or even five, years old, the Prince of Pimps — now older, but perhaps no wiser — on a whim decided to train his neglected toy in sword-play and dirty tricks.

The Mouser at this time was very lean, tough and almost tiny. The whores spoiled and adored him; initiating him into diverse tricks and perversions which he enjoyed but was unable to fully appreciate.

In so doing, Mokker became the prime giver, and getter, of the Mouser's talents. The small and wiry lad became more proficient than intended. More deadly. And far more clever!

#### A Thief is Born

Thus, in a very small way the Mouser began his career as a thief. Actually, he began by stealing from minor whores and lesser pimps. A not too risky job since he enjoyed the protection of the Prince of Pimps! It must also be remembered that he still had the cats as friends and allies, and always the Mouser could converse with the felines, understanding the tales they had to tell. This was beyond all ordinary value.

So Mokker's whim caused the Mouser to be trained, as only an arrogant pimp can train, in weapon-skills and unfair, cheating tricks. This was always to prove to the advantage of the Mouser; fair play and honour played no part in survival in the world of Mokker.

There was also, of course, the dancing, the acrobatics, the tumbling and the terrible skills of the most professional whores and the lesser pimps.

By the time he was seven years old the Mouser was most clever — perhaps too clever! He could kill a man (or woman) in several ways. When he was but a year older he had marked and killed an enemy.

Rather than pursuing a career as an assassin, he opted instead for

that of unapprenticed thief, becoming quite skillful and expert in all its nuances. The Mouser was slim and cunning. There was very little he did not know of the foibles, greed, jealousies, loyalties, loves and perversions of pimps and whores, goodmen and goodwives, alike.

The Mouser became expert in weapon-play and so skillful in subtle conversation that Mokker came to rely on him as a go-between in certain 'delicate' negotiations.

By the time Mouser had attained the seasoned age of nine, he was respected by many and feared by more; "a small gray creature who commanded cats"; "a sly assassin who slew swiftly and surely."

It was about this time that the Mouser acquired his beloved and treasured dagger — "Cat's Claw". It was subtly curved with a tiny hook at the point; shaving-sharp, made of blood-tempered steel and always sheathed in soft gray leather. Ofttimes it was carried in the small of the back to be utterly unsuspected and invisible like a true Cat's-Claw until wicked-used.

His innocently evil and murderous life progressed. He grew little in stature but much in wiry strength and wiliness and exotic skills, as well as other abilities and handicrafts. He had learned to hurl pebbles and killing-stones with uncanny skill; he became more than expert with sling and slingshot!

#### A New Calling

About the age of ten he became interested in That Greatest of All the Arts: MAGIC and SORCERY. He listened to the tale-tellers and the sellers of sure charms; he squatted in the dust in front of Magic Vendors, and filled the circle around performing wizards.
















































Glavas Rho was an old and twice-failed sorcerer. He was an itinerant and somewhat crazy wizard. He was a very kind and wise old man. Most importantly, he cured the two persistent pimples on the Mouser's nose! And so gained gratitude.

Glavas Rho continually prated of forests and trees, speaking most enthusiastically of small animals???? (rats or big roaches?). The Mouser had seen several trees, and he was familiar with gulls and vultures. Trees were rare unless protected; bark is edible.

The Mouser was charmed by all this wild and mad talk. In addition, the fey old man *really* could do simple magic tricks and perform



# The Dragon's All-Star Super Snit Revue

|  |   |   |  |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|---|--|
|  <p>NYARLATHOTEP</p>                           | <p>THE INCREDIBLE</p>  <p>SULK</p>           | <p>SPIDER-SNIT</p>                                     | <p>IRON SNIT</p>                            | <p>SNORGOOTH</p>                     | <p>DARTH SNIT</p>                       |
| <p>SNIT-MUTANT</p>                             |  <p>SNITULA</p>                              | <p>THE WERE-SNORG</p>                                  | <p>FRANKENSNIT</p>                          | <p>SNIT THE BARBARIAN</p>            | <p>THE \$6,000,000</p>  <p>SNIT</p>     |
| <p>THE SNIT WITH THE GOLDEN</p>  <p>SNOTCH</p> | <p>THE INVISIBLE SNIT</p>   | <p>THE SIAMESE SNITS</p>                               | <p>LITTLE GREEN SNITS</p>  <p>FROM MARS</p> | <p>SNITZILLA</p>                     | <p>GONDORIAN</p>  <p>SNITIDEL-GUARD</p> |
|  <p>ASTRO</p>                                 | <p>CHEWSNITTA</p>                           | <p>BAT SNIT</p>                                       | <p>SUPERSNIT</p>                           | <p>THE SNIT FROM ATLANTIS</p>       | <p>CAPTAIN J.T. SMIRK</p>              |
| <p>1ST OFFICER</p>  <p>SMOCK</p>             | <p>THE INCREDIBLE</p>  <p>MELTING SNIT</p> | <p>THE JOLLY</p>  <p>HO HO HO!</p> <p>GREEN SNIT</p> |  <p>SNORGTROOPER</p>                      |  <p>JAWS</p>                       | <p>THE QUESTOR</p>  <p>SNIT</p>       |
| <p>IXSNITXACHITL</p>                         |  <p>SNITTO POTAMUS</p>                     | <p>LAMMASNIT</p>                                     | <p>DISPLACER</p>  <p>SNIT</p>             |  <p>PEGASNIT</p>                   | <p>PORTUGESE</p>  <p>SNIT-O-WAR</p>   |
| <p>QUASNIT</p>                               | <p>SNITYR</p>                              | <p>SNITCLOPS</p>                                     | <p>THE HUMAN</p>  <p>SNIT</p>             | <p>LUKE</p>  <p>BEACHRUNNER</p>    |  <p>HAN SNITTO</p>                    |
| <p>LEIA</p>  <p>SNORGANA</p>                 |  <p>LOGAN-5</p>                            | <p>ETHELRAD hi XERXES</p>  <p>SNITLIANI</p>          | <p>SNIT DILLON</p>                        | <p>THE SNIT WHO WOULD BE KING</p>  | <p>BASELISK #2</p>                    |



wizardry of almost idiotic calibre. However, Glavas Rho was kind. The lonely youth was willing to apprentice himself to the gentle old man, in spite of the fact that the oldster called him Mouse instead of Mouser! AND Glavas Rho entirely ignored the Cats! The Mouser knew, though, that they were themselves possessed of far greater sorcery than any possessed by the failed mage.

Nonetheless, the Mouser was entranced by almost any hint of Magic or Spells, simple or complicated sorcery. And, he was mightily influenced by the simple wisdom of the old man.

Glavas Rho was no miracle worker; his influence over the Mouser was not so great as to dissuade him to acquire his sword — *Scalpel!* At this time, it was *almost* too long for so small a person as he; in his strong, skillful hand it was deadly.

So the Mouse learned wizardry, of an impotent sort, and a simple wisdom also from old Glavas Rho.

After three years he was persuaded to a life quite unlike his pimp-prodded previous existence. Glavas Rho yearned to escape from the teeming, noisome city and live in the open glades of the forest.

So it was that one fine morning found them walking through the Great South Gate and leaving Lankhmar. For more than two days, though less than three, they traversed the Grain Fields. They finally came to the vast forests under the Great Duke Janarr! . . . Neither of them knew that the Great Duke despised and hated Magic; Black or White! He feared any sort, and his Chief Huntsman, Giscorl, was of like mind, and cruel.

The old necromancer and the Mouse built a small and comfortable cabin in a fine and open glade. Soon, gossip and word-of-mouth got them some trade; mostly in love potions and potency charms. Glavas Rho was really a purely White Wizard, and never did evil; in no way did he do harm or bring pain or illness.

The Mouser had hidden "Cat's Claw" and his fine blade "Scalpel" in a tree hollow, concealed and in oiled linen wrappings. In their place, a poor substitute, the Mouse carried an ancient bronze sword. It was rotten with too many years and its sheath was mouldy.

*Here, Reader, go peruse The Unholy Grail by Fritz Leiber. (Swords Against Devilry: Ace Books, ©1970.)*

**FINAL NOTE:** *This information dovetails right onto the beginning of The Unholy Grail. No significant details in any of the other tales are altered; some chronology has been shifted and clarified. — ED.*

D&D Variant

**NON-PLAYER CHARACTER STATISTICS**

Among the many aspects of **Dungeons and Dragons**, one which seems, least exploited is the non-player character aspect. Many campaigns appear to have shop-owners, hirelings, and other townfolk, with all of such having nearly identical traits. This tends to become rather boring, with all non-player characters encountered being as greedy (or as generous) as the referee. To correct this, additional characteristics for non-player characters could be incorporated into the game. Guidelines for such items are:

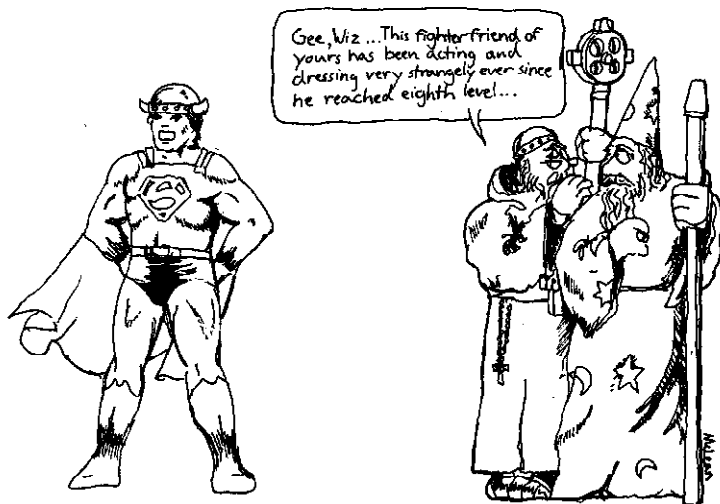
**PRIDE (EGO)**

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| 01    | None, -15% greed (see below), -1 constitution, -5% work quality (see below). |
| 02-07 | Little, -10% greed, -1% work quality.  |
| 08-13 | Some, -5% greed.   |
| 14-89 | Normal.  |
| 90-91 | Good well being, +1 charisma, +1 cons.                                       |
| 92-93 | Very good well being, +1 cons., + 5% greed, + 5% work quality.               |
| 94-98 | Vain, -1 chr., +1 cons., + 10% greed, +2% work quality.                      |
| 99    | Egotist, +1 cons., -2 chr., + 15% greed.                                     |
| 00    | Egomaniac, +1 cons. -3 chr., +20% greed.                                     |

**GREED**

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Any negative amount | Gives things away, sells items (when he has to) for 1/10* price. |
| Zero                | Gives things away, sells items (when he has to) for 1/5 * price. |
| 01-20               | Loans things, sells items for 1/2* price.                        |
| 21-84               | Loans things, sells items for normal* prices.                    |
| 85-95               | May loan (2/3 chance), sells items for normal* prices.           |
| 96-00 + 4           | May loan (1/3 chance), sells items for normal price + 10%*.      |
| 00 + 5 to + 9       | May loan (1/6 chance), sells items for normal price + 20%*.      |
| 00 + 10 to + 14     | May loan (1 /12 chance), sells items for normal price + 50%*.    |
| 00 + 15 to + 17     | May loan (1/20 chance), sells items for double* price.           |
| 00 + 18 or + 19     | Never loans, sells items for 2-1/2 times* normal price.          |
| 00 + 20             | Never loans, sells items for triple* price.                      |

\*Share of due treasure a hireling will accept/demand. Eg. — A character with a greed of -15 has 50 g.p. coming to him after an adven-



ture. He only accepts 1/10 of this (5 G.P.). Likewise, a character with a greed of 00 + 20 would, in the same adventure, demand 150 G.P. (triple the normal share). Also stands for the amount of interest demanded on loans (fractions = 0% interest demanded, normal = 5%, + 10% = 10%, . . . double price = 100%) per game year.

**QUALITY OF WORK**

- Below 01 Trash, falls apart in 1-6 uses, worth about 1/10 price.
- 01-02 Cheap, wears out in half the normal time, worth 1/5 to 1/2 price.
- 21-99 Normal.
- 00-00+5 Sturdy, lasts twice as long as normal, worth up to 2-1/2 times normal price.

Pride (ego) should be rolled once, and left unaltered.

Greed can be rolled like Pride, or the referee can use a base percentage method. When using this base percentage method, the referee rolls Greed as normal, then subtracts ten and notes the result. Whenever a Greed percentage is needed, the referee should roll a 20-sided die and add the result to the base percentage (however, Greed will never exceed 00 + 20).

Quality of work should be rolled once per item.

Also, non-player characters of special types would have certain restrictions; such as: shop-owners never have a Greed below 20, spies never have a Pride factor below 08, hired thieves tend to be greedy (with a Greed factor above 21), armorers have a Pride factor above 13. . .

With these additional statistics, bartering could become part of the game, especially with hirelings' wages.

Thus, the utilization of Pride, Greed, and Work Quality factors could aid immensely during a campaign.

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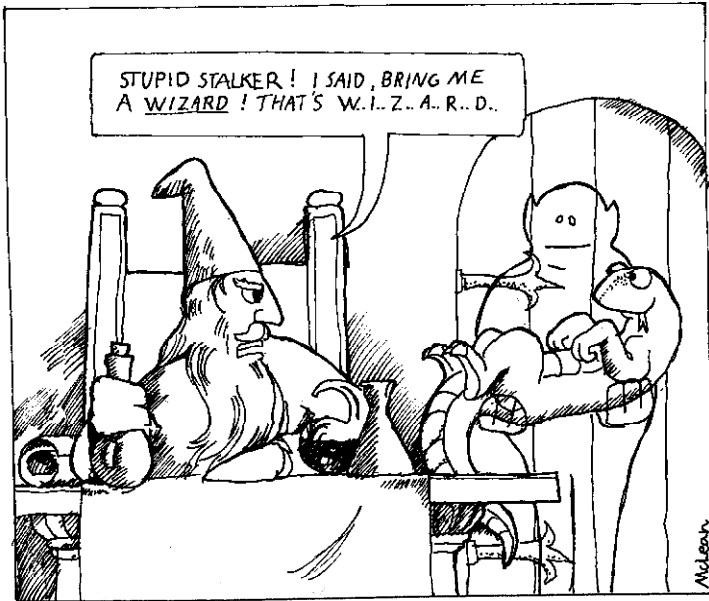
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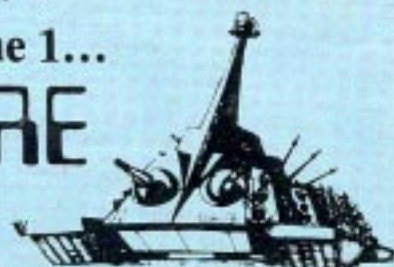
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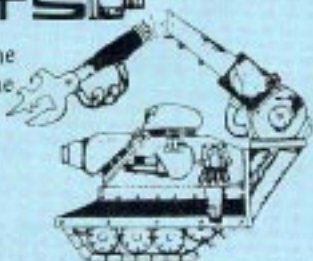
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