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COVER

This month's cover celebrates the wonderful world of fantasy sport fishing. Fred Fields shows a memorable moment that will no doubt bring smiles to the faces of the fisherman's friends as they recall "the one that didn't get away."

LETTERS

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

Martial arts & kids

Dear Dragon,

I have just finished reading the editorial in issue #158, "Mica Antelope: An editorial for parents." In general, the article is helpful in explaining the approach gamers could take in calming their parents' fears of role-playing, whether those fears are media inspired or the parents are just not enlightened to the fun of gaming.

But the reason for this letter is that Roger Moore displays a hypocritical side when referring to the martial arts. He displays the same paranoia concerning the martial arts as do other parents who object to role-playing. I understand that Roger's son is very young. But with the correct supervision, there is no reason at all at a later date that his son couldn't learn karate, kung fu, etc. My martial-arts training is fun, educational, and healthy. I am a keen gamer and practice kung fu. Neither of these subjects has had any negative effects on my personality while growing up. Both have been fun, and I shall continue to practice them.

If Mr. Moore would take time to look into the martial arts, as he suggests parents who are concerned about their role-playing children should do, he would discover that the martial arts have been afflicted with the same hype, rumor, innuendo, and paranoia as role-playing.

David A. Daniel
Crewe, Cheshire, U.K.

I was startled to see that my editorial was interpreted as being against the martial arts. Another editor pointed out that my comment that I had "banned any other sort of martial-arts flailing about in the house" might have been misunderstood.

A kindergartner has no real concept of martial arts beyond yelling "Take that, Shredder!" and windmilling his arms, throwing himself to the floor, and sometimes wrestling with his friends (my son managed to cut his lip yesterday thanks to this sort of behavior while playing "Tidja Midja Nidja Turtles"). This does not give me a bad image of martial arts. It merely means I have to chat with my son about the negative effects of wrestling at day care.

I don't practice any martial art, but a number of editors and designers at TSR are involved in aikido, judo, kyuki-do, and tae kwon do, and some close friends of mine in Eau Claire prac-

tice shorie-ryu (they were the ones mentioned in issue #160 who forced me to look at their plastic bug collection). I think martial-arts training would be an excellent idea for almost any kid from about age eight on up.

But I'm still not going to let my kid flail about in the house while I'm trying to fix supper.

DRAGON® index!

Dear Dragon,

In issue #112 was one of the most useful things ever published in DRAGON Magazine. I'm referring to the article index. Whenever I wanted to find an article, I could just look it up. Now that it is years later, I've had to go back to searching for an hour and then either throwing my hands up in utter desperation or forgetting why I wanted the article.

My point to all this is: WHEN IS THE NEXT INDEX COMING OUT?

Michael McGuire
Ridgefield WA

We have two partial solutions to your problem:

1. We have already purchased an article index for DRAGON issues #111-155 from a dedicated reader, Shannon Appel, and this index has been uploaded onto the GENIE computer network in the TSR area's gaming library. Information on GENIE can be found in "The GENIE Unleashed," in POLYHEDRON™ Newszine #56 (that's the November/December 1990 issue). If you access this file, you can download it into your home computer by modem. Because of the size of this index, we would rather not publish it in the magazine at this time.

2. Before we purchased this new index, your editors simply photocopied the "Table of Contents" pages from every issue we needed, adding extra notes to the pages for easy reference. This worked well for many months.

Art in 1991

Dear Roger,

Good editorial in issue #162 except for one thing: YOU FORGOT THE ART SHOW! (Yes, now better than ever.)

This was the third year for the art show [at the GEN CON® Game Fair]. We doubled the number of artists, floor space, and sales from last year, and tripled from two years ago. How about letting the public know that we are here?

And while you're at it, could you mention that we are gathering names and addresses of artists for next year? Artists should contact us at:

1991 GEN CON® Game Fair Art Show
c/o Elizabeth and Gary M. Williams
P.O. Box 6031

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Thanks for your time.

Elizabeth & Gary Williams
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EDITORIAL

Bye-bye, complacency

I was fooled, and I should have known better. To explain, let's stray a bit between the two worlds of games and real life, and how they connect through war.

"Bye-bye, WWII," my editorial in DRAGON® issue #154, was a farewell to the idea of World War III in gaming (and reality), given the news of the political changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. It certainly seemed like atomic holocaust was not as plausible an outcome as I'd once thought, and I happily showed the Bomb to the gaming-room door and booted it outside.

Only a few readers took me to task for my comments. Charles P. Harris (West Covina, Calif.) noted that the possibility of a world-wide war had not been eliminated at all, and he offered some thoughts about civil warfare in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. "Just because one happy thing occurs in our world doesn't mean all other worlds become instantly spiffy," he wrote. "Role-playing games are, by their very nature, unrealistic and romantic, so if you think this world is just too nice, you have every right to make your game world as twisted as possible!"

Allen Varney (Austin, Tex.) was specifically concerned that my editorial might mislead readers into the complacent thought that the world was becoming more peaceful with the thaw in Soviet-American relations. Allen went on to (correctly) point out that the world since 1945 has been anything but peaceful. There have been over 120 wars, with at least 20,000,000 deaths, since the end of World War II. (I later found a news article that put the number of wars—each having taken over 1,000 lives per year—at 127, with the conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, and Nigeria each leaving over 2,000,000 dead, and five others killing over 1,000,000 apiece.) After naming some of the current destabilizing factors at work in the world today, Allen wrote, "this is no time for complacency."

I admit that the idea had occurred to me that I might not die from fallout, and I did feel pretty good about that. The thought had been with me since I watched Civil Defense supplies being stockpiled in my high school during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. With regards to gaming, my main thesis was that gamers who wanted realistic scenarios would have to forget about the Big Nuke option. I did take pains



Artwork by Timothy Truman

to point out in my editorial that there were "lots of believable bad things left to come for our gaming enjoyment." I wasn't very specific about what bad things there were, though. I wasn't in the mood to think about them.

In all that cheer, I missed a few things, like Iraq, and an Army buddy of mine is now in Saudi Arabia for the indefinite future. War has lost its "gaming enjoyment" value for me. I certainly don't feel complacent about anything, either.

And nukes? They never went away, did they? Submarines still cruise the seas. Bombers still fly. ICBMs still sleep in their silos. At least six nations have atomic

weapons, and every one of them has been at war within the last 45 years. Many other countries would love to have the Bomb. Iraq sure would. No reason the Bomb can't hang around in games as well.

I fooled myself, and I admit it. Sometimes you go with what you want rather than what's actually there. I'll avoid getting too wishful in my editorials in the future.

Role-playing games are unrealistic and romantic. And that's a blessing, isn't it?

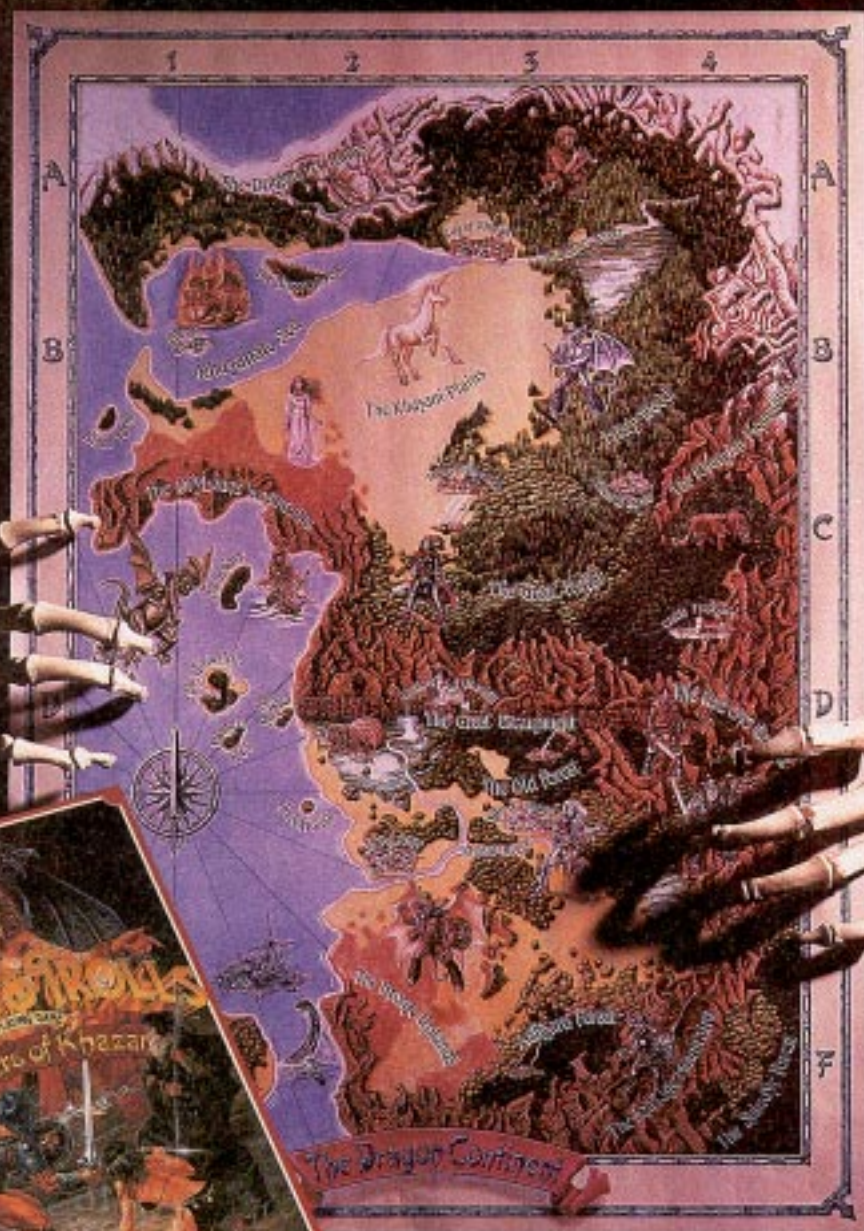
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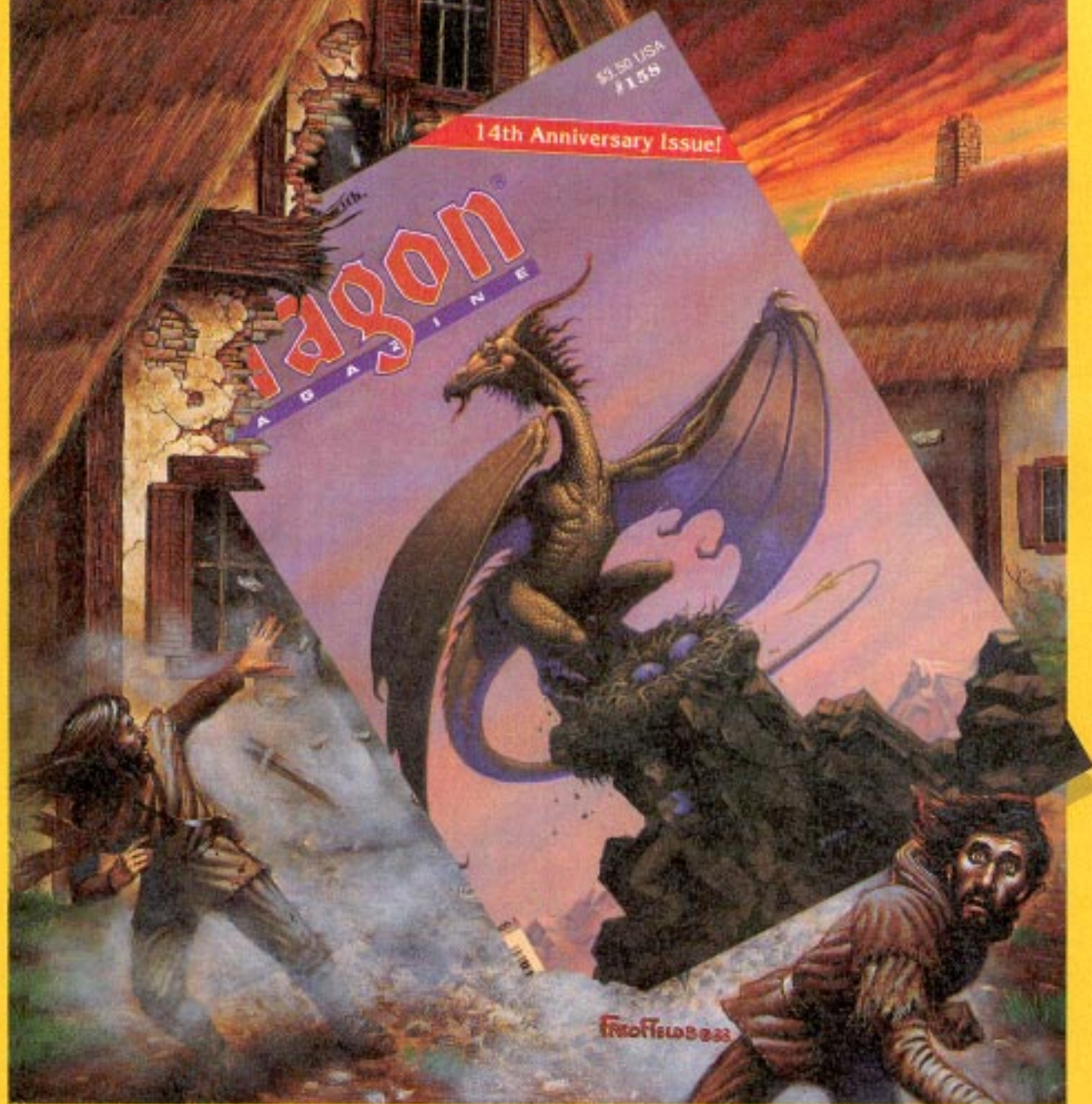


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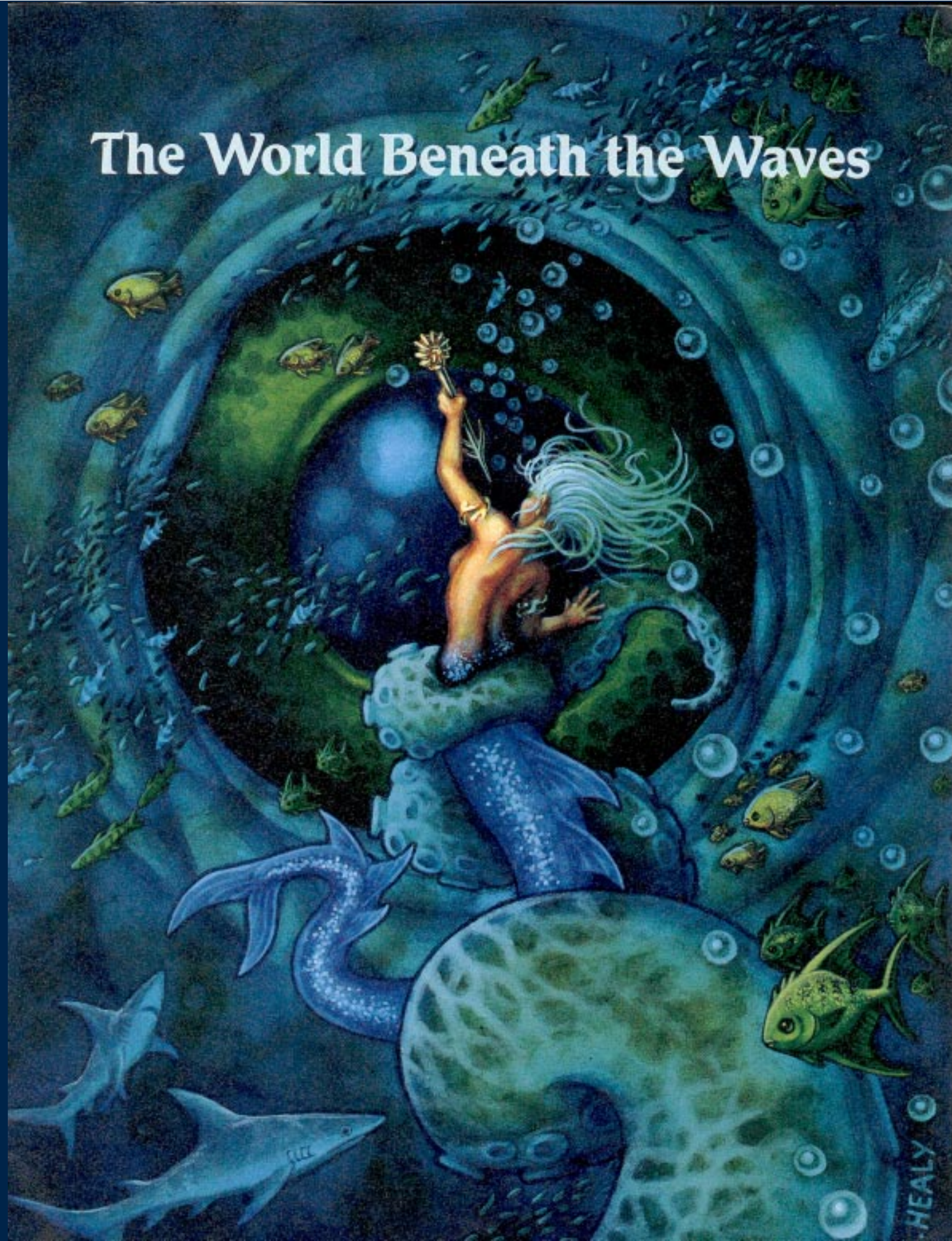
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The World Beneath the Waves





Artwork by Jeff Menges

Anchors & Arrows

Naval rules for 1st Edition BATTLESYSTEM™ games

by Thomas M. Kane

William the Conqueror carried out an amphibious invasion of England. The city of Tyre survived a Babylonian siege of 13 years by shipping in food, because although Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon commanded an invincible army, he had no fleet. Even in a primitive world, no military leader can ignore warfare on the high sea. When naval battles occur in an AD&D® 1st Edition game, the 1st Edition BATTLESYSTEM™ rules can be modified to simulate them. Some general guidelines and ideas follow on setting up such a campaign.

The ships

Even the earliest seafarers knew the value of organization, but ancient and medieval sea captains were not shackled into the rigid formations of land troops. In naval BATTLESYSTEM games, each counter represents one independent ship. When several ships unite in one attack, they can be treated as figures in the same unit, with all attacks resolved with one roll on the BATTLESYSTEM Combat Results Table (CRT). Likewise, when several ships are the victim of one assault, damage against them can be determined once and spread evenly among the victims. Because ships can move freely, each might belong to several temporary "units" during the course of a single game.

Most ships' statistics can be found on pages 53-55 of the AD&D 1st Edition DMG. Table 1 herein provides details needed for BATTLESYSTEM games. These numbers may be varied slightly to create customized ships. More precise information about historical ships appeared in Margaret M. Foy's two articles, "High Seas," in DRAGON® issue #116, and "The Oriental Sea," in issue #130. Note that very few ships are specifically designed for combat. Until gunpowder and cannons appeared, "navies" were usually merchant fleets that had been pressed into war. Ordinary ships carried weapons to ward off pirates. Furthermore, no king could afford to pay for a fleet that was useful only in war, so navies had to be suitable for trade as well as for fighting.

The men

Most "real" fighting takes place between shipboard marines. Develop statistics for

these soldiers as if they were ordinary land units wearing light armor (to allow for fast movement). A typical ship will carry at least one force of skirmishers to fire missiles from the castles and rigging. Larger craft use regular troops in their forecastles and aftcastles, and maintain a second unit of regulars to board the enemy. Some rare skirmish troops can swim with a movement rate of 4" when unarmored. They may swim to enemy ships with drills and bore away one structural point per round (see "Combat").

A ship's crew is a special unit type. The crew can contain from one to 23 figures, depending on the kind of ship; these figures may represent a real:scale figure ratio of 10:1, 5:1, or 2:1. Sailors suffer no morale or discipline penalties for belonging to small units. A ship's crew may fight in either regular or skirmish formation, but while the sailors are in battle, their vessel cannot move. If half a galley's crew—or *any* scale sailor figure on a sailing ship—is killed, the ship is automatically crippled (see "Combat").

Since there is usually no room to maneuver aboardship, you do not need miniature figures or counters to represent marines and sailors. Simply record their unit strength on paper, indicate which figures that are in the rigging and castles, and note any figures that are wounded and killed. The action takes place between ships. You need counters only in an amphibious battle, in which marines land and fight ground engagements.

Movement

Movement rates for assorted ships and wind conditions in BATTLESYSTEM game scale inches are shown on Table 2. Once a course has been set, the waves never forgive. When a ship turns, it must pay a movement penalty as shown on Table 2. In addition, whenever boats wish to change facing, the crew must check discipline by rolling 2d10 and attempting to score below its DL rating. If this check fails, the ship is "in irons" and cannot move until the next round.

A drifting ship moves forward twice its length during each BATTLESYSTEM game round. If some obstacle lies in this path, the ship collides with it, taking crippling damage (see "Combat"). Should the ship

strike another ship, both suffer this damage. Ship lengths are shown on Table 2.

The speed values in Table 2 assume that both oars and sail are used to full advantage, except in the case of galleys. Real galleys always removed their sails before battle. If players insist on sailing galleys to combat, they will be fast but almost impossible to maneuver. Galleys require two rounds to raise or lower their sails. A galley can also be rowed 3" faster for 20 BATTLESYSTEM game rounds, or 6" faster for 10 BATTLESYSTEM game rounds, but after this, the rowers must rest for one hour. These speeds may be interchanged; for example, a galley crew could go 6" faster for five rounds and then 3" faster for 10 more before resting.

Even the boldest sailor cannot defy the wind. Table 3 shows directions in which a ship may sail during a given breeze. Use the Wind Direction and Force tables on page 54 of the 1st Edition DMG, and place a pointer on the game table to indicate the wind direction. A protractor is helpful in interpreting the ways a ship may sail. You may wish to start both navies on the windward edge of the table, since they will drift across as the game progresses.

Game set-up

Since turning is so difficult, a navy must prepare its formation before it meets the enemy. The fleet that sees its foe first has a vast advantage. Therefore, you may wish to begin a naval BATTLESYSTEM game while the fleets are still miles apart. Both navies can send out scout ships, and the DM can keep track of their adventures on a map. Without telescopes, ships must approach within 150" (4,500') to distinguish each other. Sailing ships can see 10" (300') farther because of their high crow's nests. Vessels may camouflage themselves with gray paint, so that enemies must approach to within 100" (3,000') to see them. However, few ancient admirals would forgo their brilliant sails and gilded hulls for this. In AD&D games, magical spells and items can be used for scouting as well. Whichever side is first to safely locate and examine the enemy is allowed to place its ships on the battle-board second, allowing that player to examine the foe's apparent positions and prepare to counter them.

Command

The captain of a ship's crew can be treated like any other unit commander, but his orders can reach any point on the vessel, regardless of command radius. A ship cannot sail while the crew is out of command, so a first mate acts as deputy commander in case the captain dies. If a ship carries boarding parties or marines, they will probably be a separate unit with their own officer. If the boarding party is destroyed, its mother ship can still sail. Sometimes, marines are deposited on an enemy deck and abandoned, left to capture the enemy ship and make it their own. These untrained sailors can use their new ship, but they suffer a +4 penalty on all DL checks.

Ancient mariners often tried to disrupt their foes by blowing trumpets in an attempt to drown out the enemy captain's orders. This can work whenever ships are within 1" of each other. While the trumpeters blow, they penalize all DL checks by one point per 10 hornblowers. This penalty applies both to the enemy's ship and to the trumpeter's own!

There is often only one way for primitive ships to communicate: They must physically contact each other, so that captains can shout from ship to ship and be heard over the crashing sea. Historical navies sometimes fought battles long after their kings had made peace, because there was no way to recall a fleet. For complete realism, you could rule that players may not talk with each other during naval BATTLESYSTEM encounters, unless they sail their ships into contact or use magic. This rule makes magical communications devices priceless. It also presents interesting strategic decisions, in which captains must choose between taking immediate action or conferring with their allies. However, it requires great self-restraint from the players. If you wish, you may ignore this rule and assume that ship crews communicate with some form of semaphore, torch, or blinker code. These systems did not exist in the historical Middle Ages, but they may have been invented in a fantasy world.

Combat and damage

Ships can be damaged in battle by the use of artillery, spells, fire, drills, and the like. Artillery can be directed at either a ship or its crew for attack purposes; attack bonuses and damage against characters are given in the 1st Edition DMG, pages 108-109 (see also "Artillery and archery").

Each vessel must be in one of three states: normal, crippled, or destroyed. This status is determined by the number of structural points a ship loses from a given attack. When a ship loses half its structural points, it has been crippled. If a vessel loses all its points or is crippled twice, it sinks. A crippled ship cannot move above half speed, and it requires twice as long to perform any turn. When several ships are attacked together, and

the damage is sufficient to cripple more than one, one ship sinks, leaving the others undamaged. An attack that cannot do at least half damage to a ship is ignored. Two exceptions to this are fire damage and drill damage. Both sorts of damage add up until they are stopped or the ship is crippled and, eventually, sunk. Since "units" of ships fluctuate, you should record the structural-point total for each counter. Hull values appear on page 54 of the 1st Edition DMG.

When a ship sinks, all its passengers are considered killed. Few people could swim in ancient times; although some sailors might survive by clinging to wreckage, there will not be enough survivors to form another unit. When a ship is afire or otherwise endangered, its crew will probably try to board an enemy ship, capture it, and escape. When friendly ships try to rescue sailors, use either the grappling and boarding rules in the 1st Edition DMG (page 551 or the guidelines under "Boarding" herein to determine how many sailors cross from ship to ship. Once a ship has been "destroyed," it requires 3-18 rounds to sink below the water.

Artillery and archery

Archery is resolved using the standard BATTLESYSTEM rules. The wooden fortifications of a ship's "castles" give their archers a +3 bonus to armor class. An extra missile-armed skirmish figure could be placed in a sailing ship's masts, although heavy crossbows cannot be reloaded in rigging. The elevated positions of castles and rigging allow figures there to shoot over the heads of their allies on the deck, without resorting to indirect fire. Note that the normal movement restrictions for troops using missile weapons (BATTLESYSTEM rule 10.4) do not apply, since archers can stand still while their ship maneuvers. The effects of archery fire on a ship are divided between its crew and marines, as per the normal AD&D BATTLESYSTEM rules.

Artillery can be treated normally against crew on enemy ships. When ships fire artillery at other ships, ignore the rule that catapults always strike against AC 0 and ballista against AC 10. Ships are such large targets that catapults have a reasonable chance of hitting them, while more accurate ballista bolts often rebound from wooden hulls. Armor classes for ships are given on Table 1.

Use the Siege Attack Values table on page 109 of the 1st Edition DMG to determine the hull-point damage done against wooden ships, if the BATTLESYSTEM CRT is not used (ballistae have no effect on a ship's hull). To determine artillery damage to ships using the BATTLESYSTEM CRT, assume that a light catapult or mangonel inflicts 1d6 hull points damage; a heavy catapult, 1d10; and a trebuchet, 1d14. Few ships can mount even a light catapult. Heavier artillery engines must always be based onshore.

Ancient ship artillery occasionally hurled caltrops and slippery soap onto enemy decks to impede marines. If this is attempted in a game, calculate damage on the normal BATTLESYSTEM CRT, as if the missiles caused 3d10 hp damage. Do not cripple or remove any vessels, but whenever a ship would be crippled by this damage, mark it to show that its decks are hazardous. That ship's marines suffer a +2 on their AR, whether they are boarding an enemy ship or defending themselves. Defenders in ship castles are not affected because of their wooden shields.

Boarding

Sailors can grapple enemy vessels whenever their ships are within one inch of each other. If both captains agree to grapple, the attempt automatically succeeds. Otherwise, the grappled ship has a 25% chance of escaping, as per page 55 of the 1st Edition DMG. The attacker may break contact whenever he desires, unless the defenders grapple his ship. Once grappling occurs, push the two ships straight toward each other, without turning either one. When they make contact, measure the area where the ships touch to determine the attacker's frontage. Every $\frac{3}{4}$ " allows one boarding figure to attack. For example, if the frontage is $1\frac{1}{2}$ " long, two man-size figures can invade. A minimum of one figure can always board. When galleys attempt to board taller ships, the galley crew suffers a +1 to its AR, while the defenders gain a -1.

In boarding raids, any unit that fails morale surrenders, because there is no room for routs or open formations. Once all defenders have died or surrendered, the attackers own the defenders' ship.

The defenders of each ship can usually surround intruders. Assume that the defenders can pit two figures against every one attacker, if enough warriors are available. The ship's castles allow extra defenders to thrust tridents or spears at invaders. When any corner of the boarders' frontage is within 1" of the victim's prow or rear, troops in that castle may join the meleé.

Ramming

Rams are formidable in mass formations. When fleets crowd together in constricted waterways, one ramming charge can sink a navy.

Ramming attacks occur during the movement phase. The attacker must move at least two-thirds of its normal movement rate straight forward, and the attacker must strike an enemy ship's side. Assume that a ram does 5d6 hp damage, or 12 hull points. You can also determine ram damage with the normal BATTLESYSTEM CRT table, reading results as 2d12 hull points damage. A ram's AR equals 30, with the crew's DL rating subtracted from that. Thus, if the crew's DL rating is 16, the ramming AR is 14. The victim of a ram is forced backward 1" for every three hull

points of damage suffered. The rammed ship goes straight back from the ram, possibly colliding with other vessels. Every ship involved in a crash suffers half the damage that the ram attack caused, so the ship that was rammed first takes additional damage from a secondary collision.

Ramming leaves the attacker in contact with the defender. Unless the rammer pulls away as soon as possible, it may be boarded. If the victim sinks, the rammer must spend the rest of the round doing nothing except pulling away, to avoid being dragged under. Only galleys normally mount rams; Viking-type longships seldom carry them. A ship without a ram may nonetheless drive itself into an enemy, inflicting half ramming damage on both the attacker and victim (it may still be useful for huge ships facing rowboats). Rammers can also drive directly at a galley's prow, then turn and shear off its oars, crippling the enemy. A DL check must be made for the attacker; if the check fails, the attacker's oarsmen left their own oars out, and both attacker and defender are crippled. (A defender can make a DL check to have its oars shipped to avoid shearing.) Shearing leaves the ships in contact unless the attacker has enough movement left to escape.

Fires

Fires can divert a boat's crew or engulf an entire ship. When catapults hurl burning shot, use the BATTLESYSTEM CRT and treat damage as 1d10. Then round the result up or down to correspond to one of the damage entries on Table 4, and cross reference to determine how long the fire burns.

Other fire attacks can be resolved by a roll on Table 4. This includes collisions

with burning hulks, such as the "fire ships" used by England against Spain's Armada, and attacks by fiery piles dropped with tongs by aerial enemies. Assume that unpowered "fire ships" drift at half their normal speed in the direction of the wind. Roll on Table 4 once for every enemy figure firing flaming arrows or for every 5 HD of magical fire used against a ship. Lightning does only half the burning damage of fire. When a burning ship grapples an ordinary one, there is a 10% chance per BATTLESYSTEM game round that the new ship will also suffer a fire attack. This applies to friendly rescuers and to enemies.

Only an extremely advanced navy should possess "Greek fire." For game purposes, assume that this substance can be projected only 2' but always hits its target. The victim suffers one roll on Table 4. Greek fire can also be sprayed on the water; each shot covers a rectangle 1" x 3") burning for 1-4 BATTLESYSTEM game rounds. Any ships that enter these pools of flame suffer the effects of one attack on Table 4.

When a ship loses all its hull points to fire, it burns uncontrollably. The Ship's Burning Time table on page 55 of the DMG shows how long the passengers have to escape. If no friend can rescue them, they will probably try to board an enemy ship and capture it. Lesser fires still require the full attention of all crewmembers and marines for a length of time shown on Table 4. Even if a fire is too small to cause damage, the crew must stop it. The crew cannot move the ship or fight while extinguishing flames. In any BATTLESYSTEM game round in which fires are neglected—the crew must repel boarders, for example—the ship suffers damage as if

another fire attack had been made on Table 4. All fire damage is cumulative. If a ship takes three points of damage from fire, then takes another two, the crew must spend two rounds fighting the fire. Furthermore, if the ship had only 10 hull points, the combined five points of hull damage will cripple her.

Natural enemies

Winds and water can ruin a ship as surely as a ram. In stormy weather, each ship must check for wind damage at the beginning of the storm (or game) and once every 10 BATTLESYSTEM game rounds thereafter. Wind damage cripples normal ships and sinks damaged ones. There is a 10% chance of wind damage at wind speeds of 32-38 MPH, a 30% chance at winds of 39-63, a 60% chance at winds of 64-103 and a 90% chance at winds of 104 and up. Galleys and rowboats have double normal chances of being damaged.

The sea itself waterlogs galleys. If these ships are not taken ashore to dry each night, they suffer double the normal turning penalty. For this reason, galleys seldom conduct blockades. Viking longships are an exception to both of these rules, being as seaworthy as any ship.

DMs may also choose to place whirlpools, icebergs, seaweed, reef mazes, and other hazards on the oceanic battlefield. Islands, shorelines, and hidden coves can conceal ambushers and influence an enemy's maneuvers. The exact effect of these perils depends on the scenario, but you may assume that collisions with underwater objects automatically cripple a ship. Fog has all the effects listed in the BATTLESYSTEM rules and can also cause ships to collide. When any two ships cross each other's path in fog, their crews must-



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Table 1
Ship Statistics Table

Ship	AC	Length (game inches)	Width (game inches)	Crew (no. figures *)	Marines (no. figures *)	No. figures per castle **	Maximum artillery ***
Rowboat	0	1/2-1	1/8-1/2	1	1		
Barge, small	3	1/2-1	1/4-1/2	1	1		1 ballista
Barge, large	3	3/4-1	3/4-1	1	2		1 ballista
Galley, small	5	3-4	1/4-1/2	17	3	1	4 ballistae
Galley, large	5	4-6	1	23	7	1	8 ballistae
Merchant, small	0	4-5	1-2	3	12	2	8 ballistae, 4 catapults
Merchant, large	0	6-8	2-3	3	31	3	12 ballistae, 6 catapults
Warship	1	3-4	1/2-1	2	15	3	9 ballistae, 5 catapults

* This assumes man-size figures with 3/4" bases; the number given is the maximum number of figures that can fit on the ship. If the battle is fought any distance from land, larger ships will probably have far fewer marines on board, since they will also be carrying food and water. You can plan ship logistics using Katharine Kerr's article, "An Army Travels On Its Stomach," from DRAGON issue #94.

** This statistic indicates how many figures can fight from each of a ship's defensive castles. All ships have two: one forecastle on the prow, and one aftcastle on the stern. Thus, a warship can place three marine figures in its forecastle and three more at the stern. This does not increase the total capacity of the craft, as these troops must come out of the ship's normal complement. Combat in the castles is described under "Archery" and "Boarding."

*** Catapults are light catapults (mangonels). Most ships have less artillery than this figure, and longships carry none.

Table 2
Ship Movement Table

Ship	Turning penalty	Wind speed (MPH)						
		0	1-12	13-24	25-38	39-63	64-103	104+
Rowboat	1/4	3	9	12	13	13	14	17
Barge, small	1 1/3	3	9	12	13	13	15	16
Barge, large	2	1	4	7	8	8	9	10
Galley, small	2/3	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
(with sail)	2	15	27	33	41	42	44	50
Galley, large	1 1/3	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
(with sail)	4	12	21	24	33	35	36	43
Merchant, small	1 1/3	1	15	21	23	24	26	31
Merchant, large	2	-	9	15	16	17	20	23
Warship	1	1	13	19	20	21	22	23

* This number equals the fraction of a ship's movement rate that must be forfeited to change direction. Therefore, a rowboat can turn and still have half its movement left, while a large barge requires two whole rounds to turn.

Table 3
Points of Sail Table

Angle to wind	Maneuver	Required wind speed (MPH)*
120°	Tacking	8-46
90°	Reaching	8-54
60°	Broad reaching	4 - 7 2
30°	Running free	1-82
0°	Running before the wind	1+

* Thus, a ship can run before the wind with any breeze at all, but tacking is impossible in winds of under 8 or over 46 MPH.

Table 4
Fire Attack Table*

1d100	Hull-point damage	Time to extinguish **
01-15	1	-
16-25	2	1
26-35	3	1
36-53	4	2
54-64	5	2
65-75	6	4
76-86	7	4
87-96	8	8
97-98	9	8
99-00	10	16

* Adapted from pages 54-55, 1st Edition DMG.

** Time in BATTLESYSTEM game rounds.

Continued on page 24

Virgin

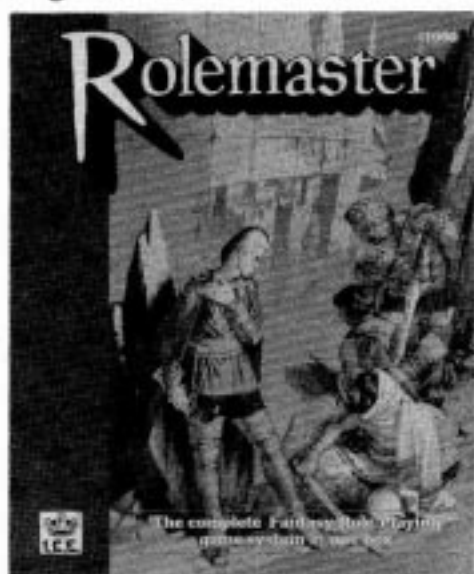
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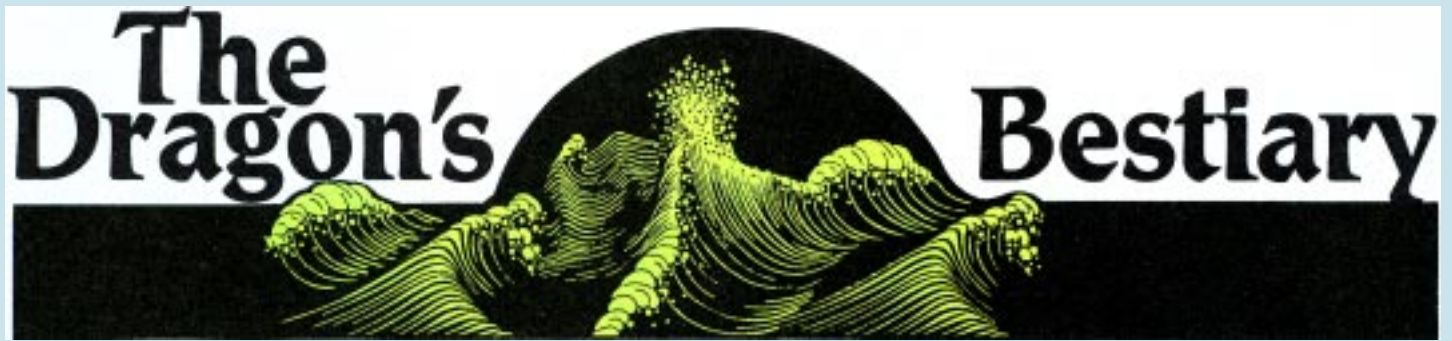
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The Dragon's Bestiary



Send your PCs on a fishing trip they'll always remember

by Tim Malto

Not many campaigns take place in a watery environment. But a party will occasionally undertake a short voyage by boat, simply to get from point A to point B. How does a DM get the PCs' feet wet without introducing a tribe of koalinths, some seawolves, or something worse? These two creatures can bring the PCs into the water in ways they least expect.

Giant Archerfish

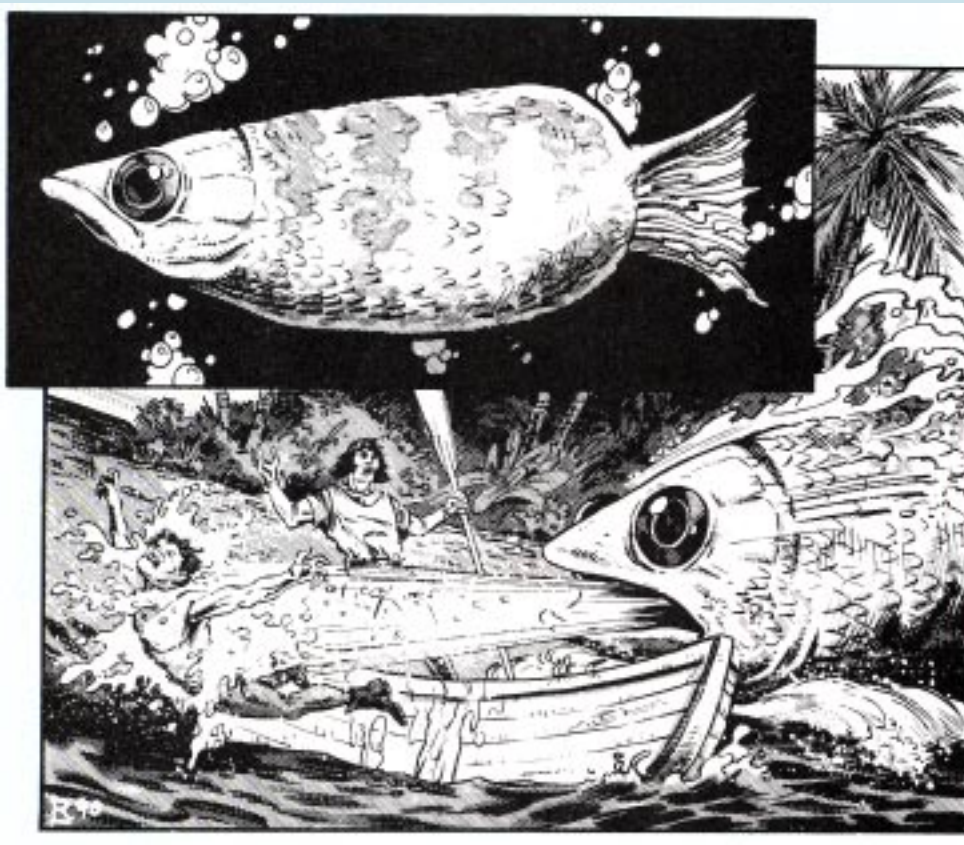
CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Tropical/large freshwater lakes*
FREQUENCY: *Uncommon*
ORGANIZATION: *Solitary*
ACTIVITY CYCLE: *Day*
DIET: *Carnivore*
INTELLIGENCE: *Animal*
TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
NO. APPEARING: *90%: 1-3 adults; 10%: 5-20 young*
ARMOR CLASS: *6*
MOVEMENT: *Sw 20*
HIT DICE: *3 + 3*
THACO: *17*

NO. OF ATTACKS: *1*
DAMAGE/ATTACKS: *2-8*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Water jet, swallows whole*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Nil*
SIZE: *L (9' long)*
MORALE: *Steady (11)*
XP VALUE: *420*

The giant archerfish is a silvery creature with heavy jaws, giving it a squared-off look when seen head on. This is due to two powerfully muscled water bladders, one on either side of the head. Behind the head, the body narrows quickly to a streamlined shape with a powerful tail.

The water bladders can generate a water jet once per three rounds, fired from the fish's mouth, with a range of 30'. Used by a full-grown specimen, the jet can knock a human from the deck of a ship or out of a ship's rigging. A target is treated as AC 5 regardless of actual armor class, A free-standing victim is knocked backward by the force of the jet; for every 20 lbs. less than 200 lbs. he weighs, he is forced back 1', and any victim under 200 lbs. must make a dexterity check on 4d6 to remain standing (the point is moot for a victim hurled from a ship). If the victim is grasping a support or is braced, he must make a strength roll on 3d6 to avoid being, knocked back. A saving throw vs. paralysis must be made to continue grasping any hand-held item. An attack roll of 20 indicates that the victim is stunned for 1-3 rounds by the force of the jet.

Once a victim is in the water, he is subject to a bite attack similar to a shark's. On a natural roll of 20, the archerfish will swallow whole any victim the size of a halfling or gnome. A swallowed character can cut his way out if he inflicts enough damage to the AC 10 interior of the fish to slay it, but he can do so only if he has a dagger or knife in hand. Meanwhile, the character suffers 1 hp damage per round due to digestive acids, and he has no air to breathe. It should also be noted that, once in the water, a victim loses all armor-class bonuses due to dexterity unless he is wearing a *ring of free action* or similar magical item, and shields cannot be used.



These fish seldom come together except to spawn. Eggs are laid on the sea bottom and fertilized there. Those eggs not devoured by other predators hatch in 3-4 weeks. The young remain together in a school, ranging from 5-20 individuals, until they reach the length of about 3'; then they separate. Young archerfish have these statistics: AC 7; MV 18; HD 1+1; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; SA none effective; SZ 1-3'; XP 35.

The water jet is usable upon hatching. These fish cruise near the surface and track prey by sight, following long enough to orient on course and speed. Then they break the surface in a jump and squirt their jets to bring down large insects, birds, and small water-dwelling animals. The school of young is cooperative in this hunting style until the individuals reach adulthood, when the victims rarely provide enough food for the entire school (hence the break-up). The water jets of young giant archerfish do not endanger characters, and they cannot swallow characters whole, though they could consume sprites or brownies.

These fish are not territorial and travel to any place they can take down prey. They eat people only if such are available. In a pinch, giant archerfish are known to scavenge the bottoms of their shallow seas or large lakes.

Giant archerfish have no interest in treasure, though an occasional item may be found in the stomach of a slain fish. They themselves are not good to eat, nor do they have any body parts known to have practical use (except as bait to catch other fish). Nor is there any use for them as components for any known spells,

The streamer can be folded down tightly against the body, leaving a ridge that the fish uses in swimming.

Nocturnal by nature, this fish rises to the surface at night to hunt. It deploys its dorsal fin and floats with its head down and tail relaxed. Upon hearing the approach of potential prey along a shore or in a boat, it wiggles its body and flutters its dorsal fin in such a way as to mislead a viewer into thinking that a woman, either human or elf, is drowning. (The DM should secretly roll intelligence checks on 1d20 for the characters if anybody becomes suspicious. Any character who fails his check is deceived by the ploy.)

Once a victim swims within 10-15', the giant damselfish lets its "lady" sink convulsively into the water. It then folds back the dorsal fin and lunges at its victim with its head. If the ram is successful, 1-4 hp damage are done to the victim. The fish then makes a second attack roll (at +2 to hit) in the same round to do 1-4 hp biting damage. It will subsequently circle and ram whenever it sees a chance. Should the fish miss its lunge, it cannot bite. A natural roll of 20 on a ram indicates the victim is stunned for 1-3 rounds, during which time the fish will automatically hit with its ram-and-bite routine twice per round (for a total of 4-16 hp damage per round, with no further chance of stunning until the victim recovers).

These fish can be found in any warm, shallow ocean. They are fiercely territorial, each staking out an area of one square mile near a shipping lane and staying with it until prey no longer passes by. They come together only to mate; the male then leaves while the female carries the fertilized eggs in her body until they hatch. She then gives birth to up to 25 young that swim rapidly away to avoid being eaten by their parent. Young giant damselfish seem to gain their taste for human and demihuman flesh at adulthood, which is when the "damsel" fin is fully developed and the "fishing" instinct appears. (Sages speculate that an Arch-Mage or higher power was involved in their creation.) Adult giant damselfish are also highly aggressive and try to eat any creature that comes near them. While this ploy usually ensures a hearty meal of other fish, it's usually a disaster if the other creature is a shark.

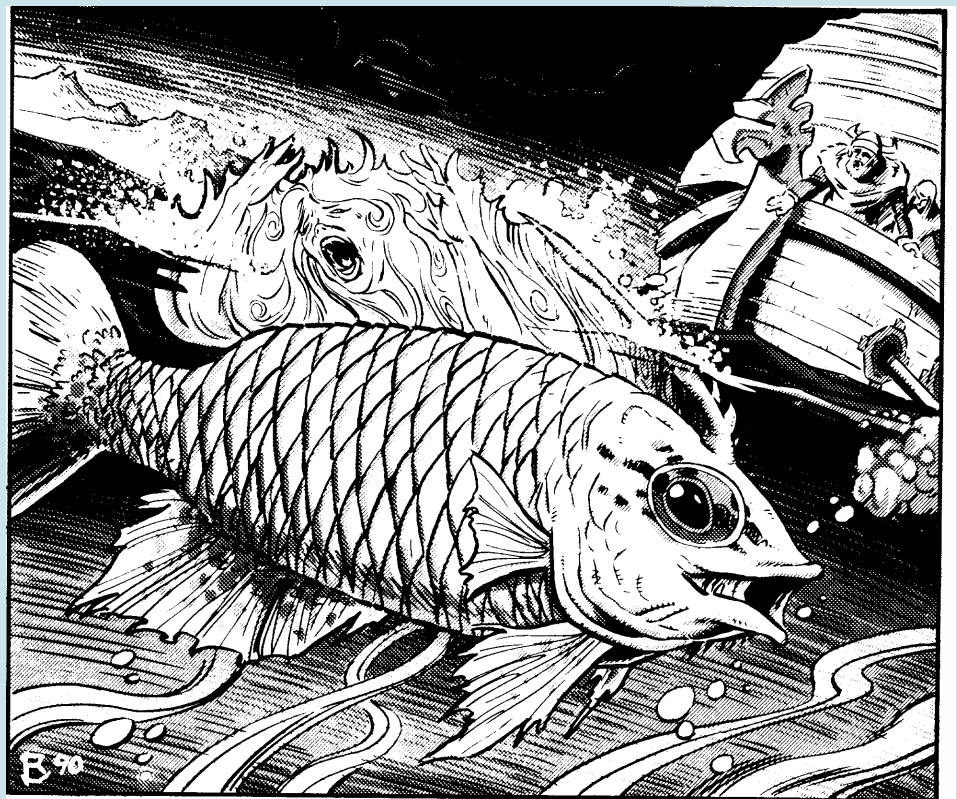
Damselfish do not collect treasure, though an occasional valuable item may be found in the stomach of a dead fish. Nor are these fish edible, being exceedingly tough and possessing a very strong taste. The one reason they are occasionally sought after is for their dorsal streamers, which can be used as a component in certain illusion/phantasm spells (any that use the fleece needed by a *phantasmal force* spell).

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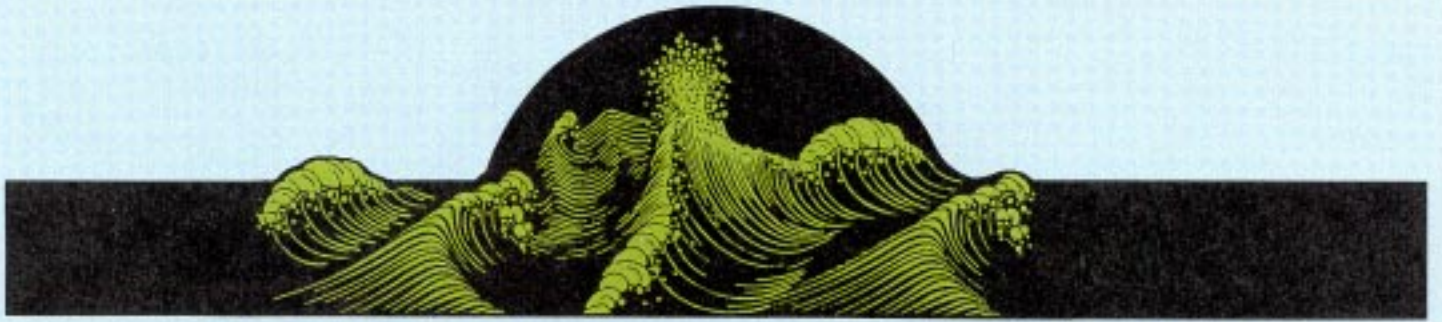
Giant Damselfish

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: *Tropical and temperate/saltwater oceans*
 FREQUENCY: *Uncommon*
 ORGANIZATION: *Solitary*
 ACTIVITY CYCLE: *Night*
 DIET: *Carnivore*
 INTELLIGENCE: *Animal*
 TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*
 ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*
 NO. APPEARING: 1-2
 ARMOR CLASS: 5
 MOVEMENT: *SW18 (lunge 30)*
 HIT DICE: 2+4
 THAC0: 17
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 2
 DAMAGE/ATTACKS: 1-4/1-4
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Stunning ram*
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Nil*
 SIZE: *L (7½')*
 MORALE: *Steady (11)*
 XP VALUE: 120

This fish has a bony head and a slim, dull, dun-colored body. A specially modified dorsal fin trails a streamer that vaguely resembles a humanlike female.



Artwork by Thomas Baxa



Undersea Priests

Spells for aquatic clerics in the AD&D® game

by Randy Maxwell

Artwork by Robert Klasnich



Creating viable NPC priests and shamans for underwater societies is often difficult for DMs attempting to run oceanic AD&D® campaigns. What spells and magical items are available to underwater priests and shamans? What about holy water and spell components? While many of the priest spells listed in the AD&D 2nd Edition Player's Handbook are as useful underwater as they are on land, sea-dwelling priests have little or no use for other spells used by their land-based counterparts.

However, DMs can make up for this lack of useful spells by assuming that the deities of the sea-dwelling peoples grant altered versions of certain standard spells to help their sea-priests and worshipers survive. The deities of the locathah, mer-men, ixtxachitl, tritons, and sahuagin are detailed in the 1st Edition Monster Manual and Legends 6 Lore. The tritons are more mysterious, and all that is known is that they serve a god named Triton.

Sea-priests are primarily clerics. However, many of the underwater races are neutral in alignment and might take a naturalistic, druidic approach to matters. Like the normal druid, the sea-druid wishes to protect the unspoiled nature of the sea from those who would pollute the waters, over-fish the oceans, or hunt creatures like whales to extinction. It is up to the individual DM whether to allow sea-druids into the campaign. If allowed, the class must be given a complete overhaul to suit the underwater wilderness and abilities of the aquatic races.

The AD&D 2nd Edition game's *Monstrous Compendium* sets limits for the maximum levels of the various sea-priests. However, when a DM is creating a sea-priest NPC, he has the option of creating exceptional characters by using Table 8, under "Exceeding Level Limits," on page 15 of the 2nd Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*. (For convenience, *DMG*, *PHB*, and *MC* will be used hereafter for references to the 2nd Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*, *Player's Handbook*, and *Monstrous Compendium*.)

Priests beneath the waves

Sea-priests serve the same functions as their land-dwelling cousins: They use their powers and abilities to protect and serve the community. However, due to the aquatic environment in which he dwells, the sea-priest must change or adapt certain standard religious articles and items.

Holy/Unholy water: A sea-priest does not use *holy/unholy water*; containers of the precious liquid would immediately be contaminated and rendered useless if opened underwater. Instead, a sea-priest uses *holy/unholy silt*. The silt is the sand, powdered coral, or powdered rock from an especially holy or unholy site belonging to the sea-priest's mythos. The silt is carefully prepared and filtered to remove all impurities. It is then placed in special pouches that hold about 1 lb. of *holy/*

unholy silt each. *Holy silt* performs precisely as *holy water* with regard to undead, creatures from the lower planes, or creatures whose primary purpose is the promotion of evil. *Unholy silt* may likewise be used against paladins or creatures whose primary purpose is to defend good. *Holy/unholy silt* can be used as a material component for a spell, as such it is used exactly like *holy/unholy water*. However, a pouch of *holy/unholy silt* cannot be used as a grenadelike missile if hurled underwater. It is most commonly used in hand-to-hand combat. The pouch is opened directly over an opponent, and the *holy/unholy silt* pours down in a 1'-diameter, 10'-tall shower. This does 2-7 hp of acidlike damage to affected creatures caught in the silt. Unless used as a material component for a spell, the *holy/unholy silt* will hang in the water for only one round before being rendered inert. *Holy/unholy silt* is instantly contaminated and rendered useless, whether it is being used as a material component or not, if it comes in contact with air (including an *airy water* spell).

Scrolls: It is almost impossible to use paper, papyrus, or vellum scrolls in the underwater realms. Sea-priests, therefore, use specially prepared shells. These shells are often worn as jewelry and appear to be nothing more than amulets or simple decorative shells hung from a necklace or belt. Any type of shell can be used, but it must be of a sufficient size for a spell to be etched on its surface using a special piece of coral, shark tooth, whale bone, etc. The etching device used depends on the priest's mythos and ethos. Shell spells work exactly the same as scroll spells with regard to spell level, spell failure, casting time, etc. Once the spell is cast, the etching is reduced to meaningless scratches. The shell can be reused if the scratches are polished off.

Besides shells, sea-priests may use or construct other magical items based on the items' applicability and availability in the underwater world. *Pearls of wisdom* will be more plentiful than, say, *brooches of shielding* or *scarabs versus golems*. In addition, even if they are available, certain items have little or no use underwater, such as magical boots, bowls, braziers, candles, censers, and dusts. However, sea-priests may possess alternative magical items that duplicate the effects of items used on land, such as *sand of choking*, *silt of illusion*, etc.

Combat and weapons: The sea-priest uses the weapons and armor normally used by his race; e.g., a locathah cleric will use either a lance, crossbow, trident, or short sword; triton clerics use tridents or long spears, etc. (see the *MC* for details on the arms and armor used by the sea-dwelling races). As always, DMs have the final say on what arms are allowed and may limit the selection to nets or spears.

Undead haunt the seas just as they do on land. Evil sea-priests and sea-wizards create skeletons and zombies to act as

guards and servants. Lacedons are terrible water-dwelling ghouls, and ghost ships wander the seas, troubling both surface and underwater denizens. Therefore, as they often have ample need and opportunity to do so, the sea-priest turns undead as any priest can do.

Sea-priest spells

When selecting spells for a sea-priest, consult Table 1 herein. When the sea-priest casts a spell, the spell-casting attempt is made precisely the same underwater as on land with regard to range, duration, casting time, area of effect, and saving throw.

However, in many cases, the material components for a spell are quite different for a sea-priest than a land-priest. While a holy symbol is a holy symbol, regardless of the type of priest, it is obvious that a triton or locathah will not be able to obtain such things as burning incense, oak leaves, thistledown, etc. As stated earlier, *holy silt* replaces *holy water*. Likewise, other material components used by the sea-priests reflect the nature of their aquatic habitat while retaining some logical (but not necessarily obvious) connection to the spell in question. For example, a sea-priest casting an *air walk* spell may use the fin from a flying fish for the material component rather than the bit of thistledown as described in the *PHB*. On the other hand, when casting a *moonbeam* spell, a sea-priest may substitute a sea plant for the moonseed plant, but the spell may still require (at the DM's option) a piece of moonstone. DMs need only substitute sea plants for land plants, and powdered shells of can be substituted for charcoal, chalk, or sulfur. Ground or powdered coral of various colors can be substituted for gold dust or any metal dust, while pearls and the organ-gems of urchins (see the *MC*) may be substituted for gems.

One interesting fact about many water-dwelling creatures is their highly developed senses of smell. For spells requiring burning incense as a material component, the sea-priests may use scented oils instead. Scented oils are especially pungent, having the consistency of cod liver oil, and (not surprisingly) smell very "fishy." The oils are released into the water.

Using sea-priest spells

Other than material components, some sea-priest spells are completely unchanged from their descriptions in the *PHB*. Spells such as *cure light wounds*, *detect lie*, and *restoration* are used by a sea-priest in precisely the same manner and in the same circumstances as a priest on land. Just as land-based person may dive into water to escape swarming insects, the sea-priest can use *air walk* or *wind walk* to escape waterbound opponents.

While many of the sea-priest's spells are no different than those used by land-based clerics, the circumstances in which a spell is used or the application of a spell is often

quite different. *Warp wood* and *turn wood* spells, for instance, are much more likely to be used as an offensive attack on ships rather than a defense against wooden missiles or weapons. For a sea-priest, *dispel magic* is an extremely effective spell against underwater opponents requiring *water breathing* or *free action* spells. In the sunless depths, *faerie fire* is deadly as the fearsome predators are attracted to the light. *Entangle* can be extremely troublesome for those it traps in a forest of seaweed and whose time underwater is limited by a *water breathing* potion or spell. *Part water* is an excellent defensive spell, putting a barrier of air between the sea-priest and pursuers.

In addition to their applications, such spells as *earthquake* and *commune with nature* are changed slightly. Thus, the Earthquake Effects table on page 233 of the *PHB* remains unchanged. However, creatures do not "fall" into chasms created by the earthquake; they are "pulled" in by irushing water. In the case of the *commune with nature* spell, a sea-priest will want to "know" the sea plants, sea creatures (fish, mammals, or fantastic), or the general state of the underwater environment just ahead.

Sea-priests do not have access to a wide variety of spells. Some spells are either impossible to cast underwater, such as *call woodland beings* and the fire-based spells, or are completely useless, such as *create water trip*, or *transmute water to dust*. In some cases, the land-based spells duplicate an ability that occurs naturally underwater, such as *pass without trace*. If a spell is not listed on Table 1 herein, sea-priests do not have access to the spell in either normal or altered form.

Altered spells

Some spells on the sea-priest spell list have been altered from their standard forms given in the *PHB*. The changes made in these spells are merely the transformation of what is logically available or needed on land to what is logically available or needed underwater. Unless otherwise stated, spells retain the same sphere, range, duration, casting time, area of effect, saving throw, and material components as presented in the *PHB*.

1st Level: The *fish friendship* spell usurps *animal friendship's* place on the sea-priest's list of spells. The area of effect is one fish, the spell being ineffective on sea mammals such as dolphins or whales. The *fish friendship* spell allows the spell-caster to show any fish with zero (non-) intelligence that he desires friendship. The fish is handled as if it were an animal for the *animal friendship* spell with regard to its saving throw, reaction to the spell-caster, detection of ulterior motives, number of hit dice, alignment, etc. The spell-caster can teach the befriended fish a maximum of 1-4 simple tricks or tasks, such as "attack" or "fetch." Each task requires a training period of one week, and

all tricks must be taught within one month of acquiring the fish. During this month, the fish will not harm the caster, but if the fish is left alone for more than one week, it reverts to its normal state and acts accordingly. The material components are the caster's holy symbol and a piece of food the fish likes.

Detect snares and pits has little use underwater and is replaced by *detect nets*. The area of effect remains the same, a 10' × 40' area. The spell-caster is able to detect any net constructed of nonmagical material in the area of effect. The spell-caster can scan and detect nets in an area the size of the area of effect every two rounds for the duration of the spell. The spell is directional: The caster must face the desired direction to determine if a net is placed in that direction. Otherwise, the spell performs as *detect snares and pits*.

Invisibility to animals becomes *invisibility to fish* when used by a sea-priest. The spell makes one creature touched per level of the sea-priest become totally undetectable to normal and giant-sized fish. Sea mammals (e.g., dolphins, whales, sea otters, etc.), fantastic creatures (e.g., krakens, sea hags, eyes of the deep, etc.), and fishlike creatures with an intelligence greater than zero (non-) are unaffected by this spell. The material component is kelp, rubbed over the recipient.

Locate fish or plants replaces *locate animals or plants* in the sea-priest's spell repertoire. The spell enables the caster to find any fish or sea plant using the same guidelines on the general frequency of a subject as given for *locate animals or plants*. The spell enables the caster to find only fish, not sea mammals or fantastic creatures.

Purify food is the same as *purify food and drink*, only it has no effect on water or liquids of any kind. The spell purifies (or putrefies, in reversed form) food only. *Holy/unholy silt* is unaffected by this spell.

2nd Level: *Shellskin* replaces *barkskin*. When a sea-priest casts this spell upon a creature, its skin becomes as tough as crab or lobster shell, increasing its armor class to AC 4, plus one point of armor class for every four levels of the sea-priest: AC 3 at 4th level, AC 2 at 8th, and so on. The material components for this spell are the sea-priest's holy symbol and several pieces of crab or lobster shell.

Sea-priests use *water devil* in lieu of the *dust devil* spell. The water devil created by this spell is actually a weak water elemental (AC 4; MV 6, Sw 18; HD 2; #AT 1, Dmg 1-6; hit by normal weapons; AL N). On the surface of the water, a water devil appears as a small wave about 3-4' high and 5' wide, but it is completely invisible underwater. It moves as directed by the cleric, but it dissipates if it is separated from the sea-priest by more than 90' or if the sea-priest fails to keep his concentration. When a water devil is used to attack a ship, a seaworthiness check is made (see Table 77, page 126, *DMG*). Only one sea-

worthiness check need be made. If the water devil is unable to sink or capsize the vessel on the initial attempt, then successive attempts fail automatically. The water devil has no power to disperse the ink cloud left by a giant squid or kraken. However, it is able to hold at bay liquid creatures (e.g., slimes, oozes, and jellies, including jellyfish) or push them away from the caster. A spell-caster hit by his own water devil while casting another spell must make a saving throw vs. spells to keep his concentration or the spell is ruined. Any creature native to the elemental plane of Water—even another water devil—can disperse a water devil with a single hit.

Speak with animals is replaced for the sea-priest by *speak with fish*. The spell enables a sea-priest to comprehend and communicate with any normal or giant-sized fish of zero (non-) intelligence. Otherwise, it operates the same as *speak with animals* with regard to cooperation, evasiveness, or inanity on the part of the creature involved. The *speak with fish* spell is ineffective on sea mammals, monsters, or other sea creatures with an intelligence greater than zero.

Spiritual trident functions the same as *spiritual hammer* in terms of targets, range, magical bonuses, caster concentration, and opponent's magic resistance. However, damage done is 2-7 hp vs. opponents of man-size or smaller, and 3-12 hp vs. larger opponents, plus the magical bonus. The material component for this spell is a trident that the sea-priest must hurl toward opponents while uttering a plea to his deity.

As the wyvern does not exist underwater, the *wyvern watch* spell is replaced by *manta ray watch*. *Manta ray watch* functions the same as *wyvern watch* in all aspects, except that the insubstantial form brought forth by casting the spell resembles a manta ray.

3rd level: *Create food and water* becomes simply *create food* for the sea-priest. The *create food* spell brings forth appropriate kinds and amounts of food as described for the *create food and water* but does not cause any water or liquid of any kind to appear.

Hold animal becomes *hold undersea animals* for sea-priests. The spell works the same as *hold animal* with regard to number of creatures, saving throws, duration of spell, etc. Normal or giant-sized fish, crustaceans, and reptiles are affected, but not monsters such as eyes of the deep or sea mammals such as dolphins. The weight restrictions for the *hold undersea animal* spell are: 400 lbs. (100 lbs. for non-fish) per fish per caster can be affected; e.g., an 8th-level caster can affect up to four 3,200-lb. fish or a like number of 800-lb. reptiles or crustaceans.

Speak with dead is as given in the *PHB*, but when cast by a sea-priest the spell functions underwater. The material components are the sea-priest's holy symbol

and scent-oil.

As insects are unavailable underwater, the sea-priest uses the *summon crustaceans* spell rather than *summon insects*. The *summon crustaceans* spell attracts a swarm of normal crustaceans to attack the foes of the caster. The crustaceans include lobsters, crabs, shrimp, and barnacles. The damage done by the crustaceans and effects on a victim's attack rolls, armor class, and spell-casting are the same as for the *summon insects* spell. The crustaceans have a movement rate of 4. The crustaceans disperse and the spell ends if the victim is able to enter an air-filled area or outswim the swarm. The material components needed for the spell are the caster's holy symbol and a crab or lobster claw.

The *frond* spell is to the sea-priest what the tree spell is to the land-based priest. *Fron*d performs exactly as tree with regard to the caster's armor class, hit dice, and abilities while transformed. By means of the *frond* spell, the sea-priest can assume the form of a large frond of seaweed, kelp, sea lettuce, or even red algae. The material components for the spell are the caster's holy symbol and a small piece of the plant the caster wishes to imitate.

4th Level: *Fish summoning I* replaces *animal summoning I* on Table 1. By means of this spell, the caster calls up to eight fish that have four hit dice or less, of whatever sort the caster names when the summoning is made. The caster may try three times to summon three different types of fish. The caster may only summon normal or giant-sized fish, such as sharks, swordfish, barracudas, etc. The spell fails to summon sea mammals or fantastic creatures. Spell range, creature actions, and chance of a creature type being within range are the same as *animal summoning I*.

The *giant crustacean* spell is the sea-priest's alternative to the *giant insect* spell. By means of this spell, the caster can turn one or more normal-sized crustaceans into larger forms resembling those in the MC. This spell works only on crustaceans. Starfish, jellyfish, and other types of small sea creatures are unaffected. Only one crustacean can be altered at one time (i.e., a single casting cannot affect both a barnacle and a lobster), and all crustaceans affected must be enlarged to exactly the same size. The number of crustaceans, the size to which they can be enlarged, and their statistics are the same as for the *giant insect* spell.

Note that barnacles are a special case for this spell. Barnacles do no damage but are often attached to a ship's side and bottom. If one or more of these barnacles is enlarged by a *giant crustacean* spell, it slows the ship and may even sink it. For every ship-attached barnacle enlarged by a *giant crustacean* spell, a ship's speed is reduced by one-half (fractions rounded up) and its seaworthiness is reduced by 10%. An immediate seaworthiness check is made upon the enlargement of one or more

barnacles. For example: A caravel has a base movement rate of four and a seaworthiness of 70%. If two barnacles on its side are suddenly enlarged, the ship's base movement rate becomes one ($4 \div 2 = 2$ for the first barnacle, then $2 \div 2 = 1$ for the second barnacle), and its seaworthiness is reduced to 50%. If the ship fails its seaworthiness check, it means the enlarged barnacles have either capsized the vessel or caused it to ride so low in the water that the waves swamp it.

Hallucinatory forest retains its name for the sea-priest. The forest produced when a sea-priest casts this spell is an illusory forest of seaweed. The illusory seaweed appears to be perfectly natural and is indistinguishable from real seaweed. Unlike the normal *hallucinatory forest*, there is no guarantee that anyone or anything will detect the sea-priest's *hallucinatory forest* for what it is. There is a 5% chance per intelligence point of a creature viewing the illusion that the viewer will recognize it as an illusion (e.g., non-intelligent creatures have no chance of seeing the *hallucinatory forest* for what it is, while a creature with an 18 intelligence has a 90% chance of seeing it as an illusion).

Repel crustaceans is the sea-priest's version of the *repel insects* spell. The spell creates an invisible barrier to all sorts of crustaceans. Normal crustaceans will not approach within 10' of the caster. Giant crustaceans with hit dice of less than one-third of the caster's experience level are also repelled. A crustacean with more hit dice can enter the protected area if it rolls a successful saving throw vs. spells, but it takes 1-6 hp damage from passing the magical barrier. The spell does not affect any other sea creature besides crustaceans. The material component of this spell is a bib worn around the neck of the sea-priest.

5th Level: *Fish growth* is the same as *animal growth*; except that it affects fish only. The spell does not affect crustaceans, sea mammals, mermaids, locathah, hippocampi, or any other fishlike creature.

Fish summoning II is much the same as *fish summoning I*, only the spell allows the summoning of either more fish or fish with a greater number of hit dice. The spell summons six fish of eight hit dice or less, or 12 fish of four hit dice or less, if such are within range. As with *fish summoning I*, the caster may try three times to summon three different types of fish, and only normal or giant-sized fish can be summoned. Spell range, creature actions, and chance of a creature type being within range are the same as *animal summoning II*.

The *crustacean plague* spell is used by a sea-priest to perform the functions of the land-based *insect plague*. The crustaceans include barnacles, crabs, lobsters; and shrimp. The *crustacean plague* does damage, obscures vision, disrupts spell-casting, and causes morale failure as per *insect plague*. The victim of the *crustacean*

plague must leave the water or be within the area of effect of an *airy water* spell to be free of the crustaceans. The material components are a crab or lobster claw and a small piece of fish.

6th Level: *Fish summoning III* is much the same as *fish summoning I* and *II*, except this spell allows the summoning of up to four fish of no more than 16 hit dice, eight fish of no more than eight hit dice, or 16 fish of no more than four hit dice each. As with *fish summoning I*, the caster may try three times to summon three different types of fish, and only normal or giant-sized fish can be summoned. Spell range, creature actions, and the chance of a creature type being within range are the same as for *animal summoning III*.

Anti-fish shell is far more appropriate to the underwater world than the *anti-animal shell*. By casting this spell, the sea-priest brings into being a spherical (or hemispherical, if standing on the sea floor) force field that prevents the entrance of any sort of living creature that is wholly or partially fish (excluding strongly magical or extraplanar creatures). Thus, a shark, a hippocampi, or a merman would be kept out, but a dolphin, an undead mammal, a dragon turtle, or conjured creatures could pass through the magical barrier. The spell requires the caster's holy symbol and a small sea anemone.

The *conjure fish* spell is to the sea-priest what a *conjure animals* spell is to land-priests. The total hit dice of the conjured fish cannot exceed twice the level of the spell-caster. Guidelines for hit dice for the *conjure fish* spell are the same as those for the *conjure animal* spell. Only fish such as sharks, tuna, swordfish, etc. may be conjured. Sea mammals and fantastic creatures are not conjured using this spell.

The difficulties in conjuring a fire elemental underwater are obvious. Therefore, the *conjure fire elemental* spell is changed to *conjure water elemental*. In this case, it is 65% likely that an 8-HD elemental appears, 20% likely that a 12-HD elemental appears, 10% likely that 16-HD elemental appears, 4% likely that two to four uncontrolled and uncontrollable water weards appear, and 1% likely that a water elemental of 24 HD will appear.

The *heroes' feast* spell simply becomes *feast*. When the sea-priest casts this spell, he brings forth a great feast that serves as many creatures as the sea-priest has levels. Each underwater race has a different idea of what a magnificent feast would entail. Therefore, when a sahuagin casts this spell it would include delicacies such as dolphin fins, hippocampi or mermaid tail, kraken tentacles, etc. Tritons, on the other hand, would balk at eating mermaid or hippocampi. Their *feast* would include only favorite fish, shellfish, and seaweed delicacies. The *feast* requires the same length of time to complete and has the same beneficial effects as the *heroes' feast* spell. The *feast* spell produces a sweet caviarlike substance that produces the

Table 1
Sea-Priest Spell List

1st level	2nd level	3rd level	4th level	5th level	6th level	7th level
Bless	Aid	Animate dead	Abjure	Air walk	Animate object	Animate rock
Combine	Augury	Continual light	Cloak of bravery	Anti-plant shell	Anti-fish shell*	Astral spell
Command	Chant	Create food*	Control temperature, 10' radius	Atonement	Blade barrier	Confusion
Cure light wounds	Charm person or mammal	Cure blindness/deafness	Cure serious wounds	Commune	Conjure fish*	Conjure earth elemental
Detect evil	Detect charm	Cure disease	Detect lie	Commune with nature	Conjure water elemental*	Control weather
Detect magic	Enthrall	Dispel magic	Divination	Control winds	Feast *	Earthquake
Detect nets *	Float **	Feign death	Fish summoning I*	Crustacean plague *	Find the path	Exaction
Detect poison	Find traps	Froned*	Giant crustacean	Cure critical wounds	Forbiddance	Gate
Endure heat/cold	Heat metal	Glyph of warding	Hallucinatory forest*	Dispel evil	Heal	Holy word
Entangle	Hold person	Hold undersea animal *	Hold plant	Fish growth*	Part water	Regenerate
Faerie fire	Know alignment	Inkjet* *	Imbue with spell ability	Fish summoning II*	Speak with monsters	Reincarnate *
Invisibility to fish	Manta ray watch*	Locate object	Lower water	Moonbeam	Stone tell	Restoration
Invisibility to undead	Messenger	Magical vestment	Neutralize poison	Plane shift	Transport via plants	Resurrection
Light	Obscurement	Meld into stone	Plant door	Quest	Turn wood	Swarming doom*
Locate fish or plants*	Resist fire/cold	Negative plane protection	Protection from evil, 10' radius	Raise dead	Wall of coral*	Succor
Protection from evil	Shellskin*		Repel crustaceans*	Spike stones	Weather summoning	Sunray
Purify food*	Silence, 15' radius	Snare	Speak with plants	Transmute rock to mud	Whirlpool* *	Symbol
Remove fear	Siren song* *	Plant growth	Spell immunity	True seeing	Word of recall	Transmute metal to wood
	Slow poison	Prayer	Starshine			Wind walk
	Snake charm	Remove curse	Sticks to snakes			
	Speak with fish*	Remove paralysis	Tongues			
	Spiritual trident *	Speak with dead*				
	Warp wood	Spike growth				
	Water devil*	Stone shape				
	Wave * *	Summon crustaceans*				
	Withdraw	Water breathing				
		Water walk				

* Altered version of a standard spell.

** New spell.

same effects as the nectarlike drink of the *heroes' feast* spell. The material component for this spell is the sea-priest's holy symbol and specially prepared fish eggs.

The sea-priest creates a *wall of coral* instead of a *wall of thorns*. The *wall of coral* spell creates a barrier of hard, rough coral with many razor-sharp edges. The dimensions of, damage inflicted by, and duration of a *wall of coral* are the same as *wall of thorns*. A passage can be battered through the *wall of coral* in four turns.

7th Level: The *creeping doom* spell is changed to *swarming doom* for the sea-priest. When the *swarming doom* spell is cast, the sea-priest calls forth a swarming mass of 200-1,200 (2d6 × 100) small crustaceans, jellyfish, and sea urchins. The swarming mass forms a globe about 30' in diameter. Upon command from the caster,

the swarming globe moves toward any prey within 240' at a rate of 3. This spell inflicts damage and is reduced in size as per the *creeping doom* spell.

The *reincarnate* spell remains unchanged. However, when a sea-priest casts a *reincarnate* spell, use Table 2 herein rather than the one provided in the *PHB*.

New priest spells

The following spells are used primarily by sea-priests. However, any priest with access to the appropriate sphere may be granted the use of one or more of these spells.

Float

(Alteration) Reversible
Sphere: Elemental Level: 2
Components: V,S,M Range: Touch

CT: 5
Save: Neg.

Duration: 1 turn/1vl.
AE: One creature or object

A priest can place float upon his person, an object, or any single creature. The priest can *float* a maximum of 200 lbs. per level of experience. When cast, the spell causes the priest, object, or creature to float upward toward the surface of the water at a movement rate of 3. This movement rate is in addition to or subtracted from any other (e.g., a priest or creature that normally has a swimming movement rate of 12 can swim toward the surface at a rate of 15, or dive for the bottom at a rate of 9). Horizontal movement is not empowered by the spell, but the recipient can still swim or be pulled laterally. Once cast, the spell requires no concentration and the caster can cancel it at will. If the

Table 2
Sea-Priest. Reincarnation Table

1d100	Incarnation
01-03	Dolphin
04-08	Merman
09-12	Urchin (yellow)
13-16	Locathah
17-19	Sting ray
20-23	Urchin (black)
24-28	Vurgens
29-31	Triton
32-34	Pungi ray
35-36	Swordfish
37-40	Moray eel
41-44	Urchin (green)
45-58	Same race as spell-caster
59-61	Manta ray
62-64	Jellyfish
65-68	Urchin (red)
69-70	Ixitxachtl
71-75	Urchin (silver)
76-80	Shark
81-85	Sahuagin
86-00	DM's choice

subject of the spell is unwilling, or the object is in the possession of an unwilling creature, a saving throw vs. spells is allowed to determine if the *float* spell affects it. This spell works only in liquids or liquified matter (water, quicksand, molten lava, etc.) and cannot cause objects or creatures to float into the air. Objects affected by the spell will float on the surface of the water for the duration of the spell or until the spell-caster negates it. Creatures affected by the spell will also float on the surface but have the option of swimming or diving. The spell does not empower any creature with *water walk* or *free action* abilities.

The reverse, *plunge*, causes objects to sink into the depths (movement rate as above). The *plunge* spell can be devastating to ships and swimmers. Naturally, a *float* spell can be used to counter a *plunge*, and vice versa.

The material component is a small splinter of driftwood for the *float* spell or a small pebble for *plunge*.

Wave

(Alteration)

Sphere: Elemental Level: 2
Components: V,S Range: 0
CT: 1 turn Duration: Special
Save: None AE: Special

When a priest casts this spell, a wave originates from him and moves in the direction he faces, in a 60° arc. The wave is 1' high per level of the caster, and it travels for 60' plus 30' per level of the caster on the open sea, reaching inland for 10' per level of the caster. Ships caught in the wave spells area of effect must make a seaworthiness check to avoid capsizing, though at a + 30% bonus at 1st level; this bonus decreases by 5% per level thereafter, so that normal seaworthiness checks

are made for a *wave* cast by a 7th-level sea-priest. The -5% penalty is applied for every level after 7th level as well, so a seaworthiness check is made at a -20% penalty against an 11th-level sea-priest's *wave*; which is 11' high and travel for 390' on the sea. The wave causes 1 hp damage per level of the caster to any land-based being struck by it if the wave rolls overland, but it does no damage to swimmers on the open sea.

Wave spells are unaffected by sea or weather conditions. Thus, a wave can be made to run at a right angle to or completely counter to the direction of any other waves. Wave spells affect the surface of the water only and have no more affect on underwater creatures than naturally occurring waves.

Siren Song

(Illusion/Phantasm, Enchantment/Charm)

Sphere: Charm Level: 2

Components: V,S,M Range: 300'

CT: 2 rnds. Duration: 1 turn

Save: Neg. AE: Special

The victim of this spell hears haunting, beautiful music and is overwhelmed by a desire to find the music's source. The sound is illusory and is, therefore, impossible to find. The victim wanders aimlessly in the area of effect looking for the source of the music. The desire is so all consuming that the victim will ignore food and treasure, though not obvious dangers. (The victim may be caught by hidden dangers, of course, and many who wade or swim out into the sea risk drowning or attack.) The victim fights all attempts to constrain him by either friend or foe. In the first round of combat, the victim is surprised, strikes last in the round, and fights at -2 on attack and damage rolls; thereafter, he fights at -1 on attack and damage rolls but normally otherwise. Should the victim be injured in combat or forced out of the area of effect, the spell is negated and the victim returns to normal immediately.

To use this spell, a spell-caster need not be underwater, but must be within 60' of the sea or the spell fails to work. Also, the victim of the spell must be in the area of effect when the spell is cast; this area encompasses a globe with a radius of 60' + 30'/level. Those who wander into the area of effect after the casting are unaffected. The victim is allowed a saving throw vs. spells. The saving throw is modified by the intelligence of the victim. The more intelligent the creature, the more beautiful the music seems. Creatures with intelligences of four or less (semi-intelligent) roll with a + 2 bonus on their saving throw. Those with intelligences 5-7 (low) roll with a + 1 bonus. Those with intelligences of 8-12 (average to very) roll normally. Those creatures with intelligences of 13-14 (high) save with a -1 penalty. Those with intelligences of 15 or greater receive a -2 penalty on their saving throw. The caster can affect one

creature for every three levels attained (e.g., one at 3rd level, two at 6th level, three at 9th level, etc).

The material component for this spell is any large, empty sea shell.

Inkjet

(Alteration)

Sphere: Protection Level: 3

Components: V, S, M Range: 0

CT: 1

Duration: Instant. 1

Save: None

AE: The caster

When cast, the spell gives the priest the ability to jet away for one round at a movement rate of 18 in the direction he is facing, like a giant squid. The spell-caster must be careful about his direction and not accidentally jet into an obstruction. Jetting into a solid object, such as a coral reef, the bottom of a ship, or into the sea floor causes 3-18 hp crushing damage. Jetting through plants, such as seaweed or kelp, causes 2-8 hp damage from being whipped by the fronds. If within 10' of the surface of the water, a spell-caster may jet straight upward and actually leap out of the water like a dolphin to a height of 1-8'. Ixitxachtl clerics and sahuagin priestesses sometimes use this leap technique to attack anyone who leans too far over the side of a ship or dock.

At the moment priest jets away, he leaves behind a great cloud of inky darkness. The cloud is a large oval shape, 60' high, 60' wide, and 80' long. The cloud reduces visibility to zero within its confines. It lasts for five rounds, suddenly dissipating at the end of the fifth round. The cloud cannot be negated by a *light* or *continual light* spell.

The material components for the *inkjet* spell are a small (not necessarily living) squid and a black pearl.

Whirlpool

(Alteration)

Sphere: Elemental Level: 6

Components: V,S,M Range: 0

CT: 1 turn

Duration: 1 turn/lvl.

Save: Neg.

AE: Special

By use of this spell, a priest causes a large whirlpool to come into being. The spell is effective against both surface and underwater creatures and objects. The spell requires the use of a specially constructed ball of sharks teeth that is 1' in diameter. The ball is taken to the appropriate depth (10' for every level of the spell-caster) or is placed on the sea floor or ocean bottom if the depth is insufficient. The *whirlpool* spell is then cast, and the ball of teeth begins to rotate, slowly picking up speed with every rotation. Once the spell is cast, the ball stays in place and cannot be moved. The ball will rotate for two turns before the *whirlpool* forms (the two turns count against the spell's duration). The caster has these two turns to get out of the area of effect, or he may get caught in his own *whirlpool*.

The *whirlpool* has a radius of 100', plus another 10' per level of the spell-caster.

The center of the whirlpool, called the vortex, is 1' per spell-caster's level wide at the surface, narrowing to 1' wide just above the ball; the vortex is 10' deep per level of the spell-caster. If the ball has not been placed deep enough in the water, or if the water is of insufficient depth and the ball is placed on the ocean floor, the depth of the vortex is shortened accordingly. If the ball is placed too deep, the vortex fills with water immediately after forming and the whirlpool collapses on itself and is destroyed. When the spells duration expires, the ball of sharks teeth disintegrates and the whirlpool collapses in on itself and disappears in one round.

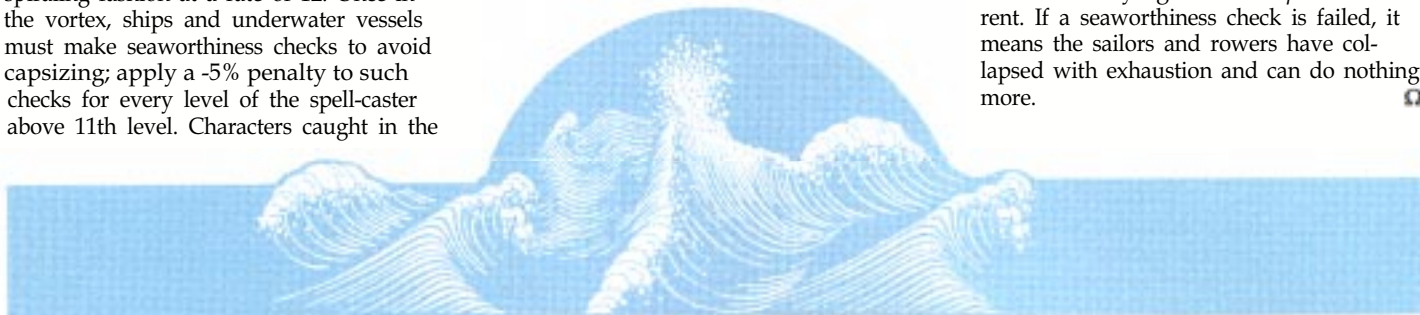
Anything entering the area of effect is inexorably drawn into the vortex of the whirlpool in one turn. Movement is in a spiraling fashion at a rate of 12. Once in the vortex, ships and underwater vessels must make seaworthiness checks to avoid capsizing; apply a -5% penalty to such checks for every level of the spell-caster above 11th level. Characters caught in the

vortex suffer 1-6 hp damage per round from battering.

Swimmers and ships may fight the pull of the whirlpool's current, but their movement rate must exceed 12 to escape. For swimmers, use the information on swimming on pages 120-121 of the *PHB*; for ships, use the information on ocean voyaging on page 126 of the *DMG*. To determine how long a swimmer or ship may fight the whirlpool's current, deduct the swimmer's or ship's movement rate from the whirlpool's movement rate (12), then divide the whirlpool's movement rate by this number for the time in rounds. For example, a human with a swimming rate of nine is caught in a whirlpool. The swimmer will be drawn into the vortex in four rounds ($12 - 9 = 3$, $12 \div 3 = 4$). Swimmers whose

movement rates exceed 12 can avoid being pulled into the whirlpool.

Swimmers and ships with a maximum movement rate of 12 make no progress and only keep themselves the same distance from the vortex. Swimmers may swim at full speed against the whirlpool's current for four rounds, after which they must make a constitution check every round. If a swimmer fails a constitution check, he is considered exhausted and can do nothing but keep his head above water until the whirlpool takes him under. Ships with a maximum movement rate of 12 hold their own against the whirlpool for five turns. After that time, a seaworthiness check must be made at -10% per turn in the whirlpool. This check reflects the growing exhaustion of the sailors and rowers as they fight the whirlpool's current. If a seaworthiness check is failed, it means the sailors and rowers have collapsed with exhaustion and can do nothing more.



Anchors & Arrows

Continued from page 14

each make a DL check, penalized by adding the ship's turning penalty, with all fractions rounded up. If either crew fails this check, the ships collide and each is crippled. A ship already crippled sinks.

Tactics

With BATTLESYSTEM rules for naval fights, adventurer-admirals need to learn how to win these fights. Historically, there were two philosophies of naval tactics. The Mediterranean peoples preferred to fight in carefully arranged lines of battle, with rams and catapults. After these engines had disabled the foe, marines systematically boarded each enemy ship. (The Vikings scorned that caution. They boarded enemy ships recklessly, hoping to win through the prowess of their warriors.) The object of line battle formations was to attack the foe's flank and rear, while defending one's own. Without gunpowder weapons, the "broadside" position was often useless; in fact, rammers preferred to face the foe's side.

When lines of ships confronted each other, they had two options. Attackers could attempt to sail straight through the enemy line, then return from behind, or they could attempt to maneuver around the foe's flanks. To defend against these attacks, fleets formed "hedgehogs," circles with their forecastles facing outward. Defenders also took up positions around reefs, shorelines, and islands. Navies exploited numerical superiority by forming

two lines, one behind the other, so that if the attacker foiled the first formation, a second was available. However, in narrow straits, large numbers of ships were a handicap: One ram attack could crush them all together.

Even the less-sophisticated Norse style of sea battle required some art. Norse captains were like generals who designed their own battlefields, customizing every detail to suit their plans. Each ship chose when and how to board its enemy, so ships that carried many marines could surround foes, while vessels with few mighty defenders could sail between obstacles or friendly ships to protect their flanks, forcing enemies to attack one by one. The Vikings were known to lash ships together for defense, making floating fortresses.

In a battle of sailing ships, each captain must decide how to use the wind. Aggressive admirals prefer to attack from the windward side, the "weather gauge." This lets them sail straight against the foe, or hold still and refuse battle. If the "weather fleet" does not come forward, its enemy cannot reach it except by oar. Unfortunately, the "weather gauge" prevents ships from withdrawing and forces them to sail straight into enemy missile fire. The fleet with the "lee gauge" can remain orderly and flee if it desires. When both admirals seek one side of the wind, a long competition of maneuvers can result with no combat. This is an excellent chance for the

side with higher discipline and faster ships to win without fighting.

Last notes

Few gamers own navies of tiny ships, so you can make naval BATTLESYSTEM counters by cutting out pieces of cardboard to the size of a ship on the BATTLESYSTEM game scale, as per Table 1. Snip off the two front corners on each ship to make a pointed prow. You can also fold cardboard into three-dimensional oval hulls or build ships from toothpicks. Model kits and lead miniatures may also provide more attractive ships.

Pirates, sea monsters, and enemy nations provide reason enough for PCs to become admirals. Yet not all naval BATTLESYSTEM scenarios need be military. Peril haunts the most routine voyages in the ancient world, and PCs may find that their fortunes depend on merchant fleets. Emperors may dispatch great navies to search the world for riches and curiosities. Guiding these flotillas through narrow seas, battered by storms and hemmed by reefs, can be exciting too.

Remember, *The Odyssey* began when the war ended.

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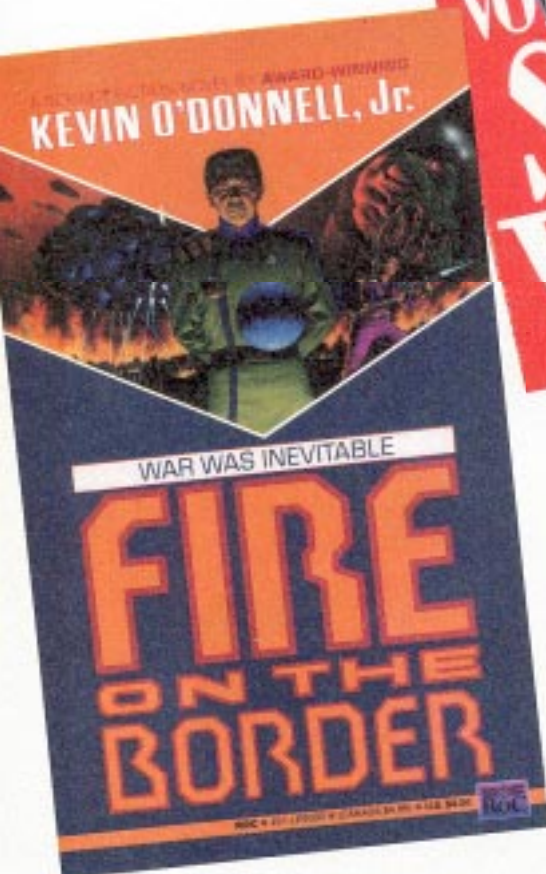
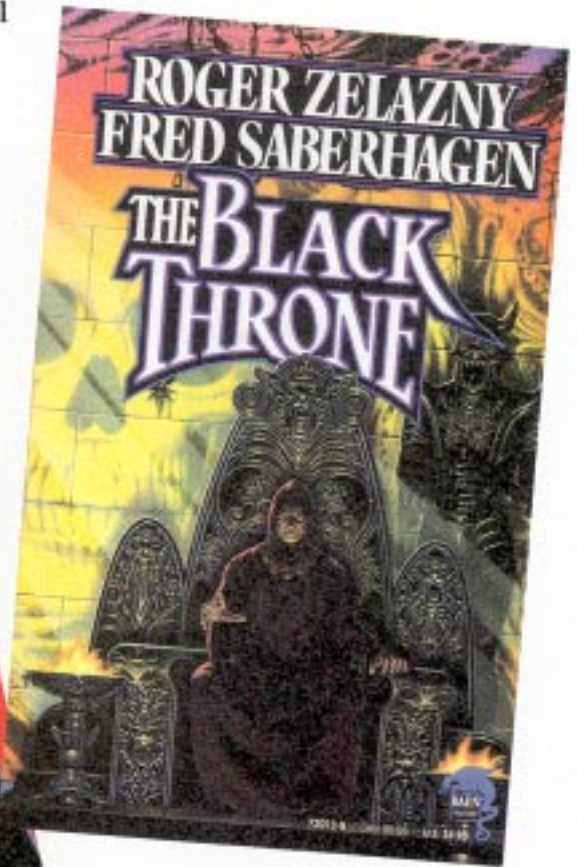
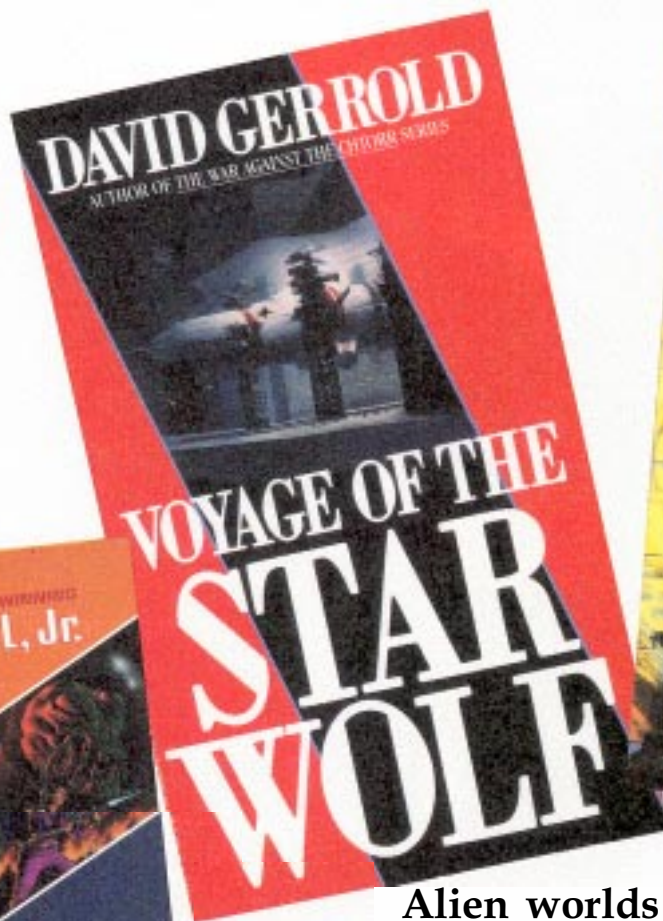
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Alien worlds and worlds unreal

IN THE NET OF DREAMS

Wm. Mark Simmons

Questar 0-445-21016-8 \$4.50

Its execution is peppy rather than sophisticated, and author Wm. Mark Simmons sometimes shows more daring than skill in his world-building. Nonetheless, *In the Net of Dreams* comes about as close as possible to translating the sheer experience of fantasy gaming into novel form.

The concept isn't totally new: We've seen other giant game-computers into which players can plug their consciences and play out their fantasies. But the Cephtronics Dreamworld is a better-realized game construct than most; Sim-

mons knows his game mechanics and populates his realm with all the familiar denizens of dungeon, tavern, and wilderness. Some of these are even recognizable as AD&D® game borrowings: Orcus, complete with wand; the Wand of Xagyg ("in case of Armageddon, break glass"); and Dreamworld creator Robert Ripley's choice of character class ("Bard never got final approval for public use").

The game has been in business for five years when the real-world programmers suddenly lose control of the system, leaving participants trapped inside the game. Ripley is summoned out of retirement to trace the "Anomaly," but forces both inside

and outside the game world are assembling against him. Simmons' fantasy quest is rambling but fast paced, and his treatment of the computer-intelligence aspects of the plot is spirited as well. There's a fair dose of humor and pun-craft, but it serves as an effective background rather than the tale's centerpiece. If anything, there's more here than will fit comfortably in a single novel (and despite a solid ending, Simmons leaves a tag line that virtually demands a sequel).

The style is breezy, sometimes almost too breezy for the more serious elements of Simmons' narrative, and not all the set pieces are successful. But the book as a whole is a clever and winning yarn. In the *Net of Dreams* is what gamers may have hoped for, but didn't get, from Kevin Anderson's Gamearth books. Tracking down a copy may be a challenge, though; at least in its first printing, there's no name on the novels copyright page, which means that collectors or lawyers may have cornered the market by the time this sees print.

FIRE ON THE BORDER

Kevin O'Donnell, Jr.
Roc 0-451-45030-2 \$4.50

It's the middle of the 24th century, and the Terran Association is 1,200 worlds strong—but there are a couple of small problems. One is the alien Wayholder Empire, which has abruptly informed the Terrans that it's going to destroy a number of the Association's worlds as part of a war-training exercise. The other is the Sagittarian Guard, which is defying orders not to resist and is doing its best to stop the Wayholder devastation.

Kajiwara Hiroshi is under orders to stop the Guard, but he's also acting as its leader, in a sense, as a clone of Hiroshi sent to spy out Guard resources is co-opted into the rebel movement. Yet both Hiroshi and his duplicate (rechristened Daitaku) are acting with honor by the lights of the nearly forgotten samurai codes they follow, as is secondary protagonist Darcy Lee, a crack pilot also drawn to the Sagittarians.

Fire On the Border is three sorts of novel at once: a solid, square-jawed battle story crowded with firefights and split-second timing; a sophisticated strategic conflict in which vast fleets, the economy of war, and the craft of intelligence are all elements of the plot; and a surprisingly introspective examination of the individual's obligations to self, to superiors, and to survival. It's a logical but demanding combination, and O'Donnell does an excellent job of keeping the pace even and smooth while juggling the various aspects of his narrative.

Only when O'Donnell strays too far from Octant Sagittarius, the disputed segment of Association space, does the novel become less than convincing. The full scope of Terran colonization is at best implied rather than made explicit, so that on reflection the book doesn't have as much context as it should (a little like getting a

European's-eye view of World War II).

But the sins of omission are minor compared to the virtues of what made it into the story. Campaigners in the various SF gaming universes should find *Fire on the Border* a challenging and readable resource, and the samurai lore may also be of interest to those with Oriental worlds and characters. This is one novel that amply demonstrates the principle that war is as much a mental as a physical struggle—and that the adversaries are not always who we expect them to be.

THE BLACK THRONE

Roger Zelazny & Fred Saberhagen
Baen 0-671-72013-9 \$4.95

Neither the letter nor the marketing brochure that came with *The Black Throne* tried to classify or categorize the book, which struck me as rather odd until after I'd read it. Collaborators Zelazny and Saberhagen have, between them, managed to come up with a story that simply doesn't fit any of the usual pigeonholes normally found on a fantasy editor's desk. Instead, it goes into the long-forgotten secret compartment with Edgar Allan Poe's initials scratched on the inside.

Readers will need at least a modest acquaintance with Poe's works to make much sense of the novel. Saberhagen and Zelazny propose that the eccentric Poe was a refugee from an alternate Earth, switched for our worlds Edgar Perry as part of a mysterious arcane conspiracy. And in Poe's original dimension, what we know as the stuff of bizarre fiction is very real and very dangerous. Perry meets a remarkably deadly orangutan and its keeper, penetrates a compound carefully guarded against the Red Death, obtains advice from a corpse that is not quite dead with the aid of a strange young woman named Ligeia, and narrowly escapes the razor-sharp blade of a slowly descending pendulum.

The focus of this involved and exotic quest is Annabel Lee, a young woman of extraordinary will whose psychic powers provided the initial link between Perry and Poe, but is now sought as the key element in a strange alchemical scheme for creating gold. The relationship between Perry and Annabel is as peculiar as the rest of the story; there isn't enough character development to make it work as a romance, but it's hard to imagine any other motivation sufficient to keep Perry committed to rescuing her in the face of increasingly spectacular opposition.

Zelazny and Saberhagen have done a good job of capturing the relentless, off-kilter, and slightly ornate character typical of 19th-century fantasy and science fiction. *The Black Throne* reads much as might an undiscovered manuscript from the pen of Poe, H. G. Wells, or Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. What they haven't done is to give the novel any sort of context. Is it simply intended to be a "synthetic" 19th-century yarn? The extensive catalogue of

scenes and characters from Poe's work makes that explanation unlikely. Yet there's no apparent rhyme or reason to the borrowings, or at least none accessible to a general reader.

So while players of the right specialty role-playing games (perhaps using GDW's SPACE: 1889™ game or Chaosium's CTHULHU BY GASLIGHT* supplement) may want to acquire the book purely on the basis of its unusual setting, most gamers will be safe in passing it by. Saberhagen and Zelazny have written a novel that's much more likely to please graduate students in literature than it is to satisfy the average lover of fantasy.

VOYAGE OF THE STAR WOLF

David Gerrold
Spectra 0-553-26466-4 \$4.50

David Gerrold's newest novel is a number of things: a vivid space adventure, a rugged character yarn, a biting black comedy, and a convoluted riddle story. That's a lot to pack into one book. For the most part, the components are well packed.

Strictly speaking, the title isn't quite accurate. According to Alliance tradition, a starship isn't named until it's seen and survived a battle; as the story opens, the LS-1187 hasn't yet been blooded.

That doesn't stay true for long—but when the ship does meet the enemy, it has the singular misfortune to survive without firing a shot. Never mind that the odds were impossible and the initial contact accidental; the LS-1187 is branded a jinxed vessel.

Executive Officer Jonathan Korie is therefore trapped. His superiors won't let him resign, but neither will they court-martial, transfer, or promote him. Instead, they assign the LS-1187 to the toughest, deadliest captain in the fleet and send it back out with mysterious and critically important orders.

Gerrold succeeds admirably at creating a high-strung atmosphere aboard the LS-1187 very much like that of the *M.A.S.H.* TV series, in which the characters use humor as an antidote to and defense against the danger surrounding them. As in *M.A.S.H.*, situations can range from the outrageous (notably an involved "exorcism" sequence) to the emotionally charged (Korie's confrontations with Captain Hardesty, also known as the Star Wolf); yet at both extremes the characters are equally convincing.

Just one thing keeps *Voyage of the Star Wolf* from being entirely satisfying. Gerrold has pulled a number of names and references from other sources into the novel: Harlie, the ship's sentient computer, is descended from a namesake in an earlier Gerrold novel, and crew members Hodel and Fontana are named respectively for a noted California radio interviewer (now deceased) and a Star Trek writer-producer. This isn't just window-dressing, as Hodel and Harlie in particular are im-

portant characters, and those who don't know their origins won't see them the same way as those who do.

That's unfair to Gerrold's readers, and it's hard to brush the issue aside. But if Voyage of the *Star Wolf* doesn't stand entirely on its own, it's still more than absorbing and clever enough to give SF gamers more than their money's worth in ideas and entertainment.

MOST ANCIENT SONG

Casey Flynn

Spectra 0-553-28832-6 \$4.50

There's a substantial difference between authentic Celtic mythology and the lore found in most supposedly Celtic fantasy novels. Even the AD&D game's Legends & Lore sourcebook takes liberties (note the changes to the 2nd Edition version, and compare the AD&D game's two Morigans to the one in Tom Deitz's novels). Yet while *Most Ancient Song* bills itself as a retelling of the oldest of Irish myths (and is the first in a series as well), it adopts a style and vision that seem determined to undermine its authenticity.

The names are traditional enough. Nuada, Dagda, Diancecht, Mathgen: All are familiar to us as Irish or Celtic immortals. Here, though, we meet them long before their ascension to godhood, as they arrive to colonize a remote island that is apparently somewhere in the northern Atlantic ocean. (AD&D game players might find this an intriguing campaign premise.)

The writing style, by contrast, is unaffected and modern, littered with contractions and glib speech patterns. It's neither formal nor ornamental enough to convey an aura of power and age, but neither is it straightforward and simple enough to carry the tone of a fable or legend.

Then there are the Fomor, traditionally adversaries of the Irish folk. Here they're portrayed as a mechanized society of genetic mutants possessing a variety of advanced biochemical weapons. The author says this is a free interpretation, but the scientific images again work against a mythological view of the book. (It doesn't help that the benign immortal Lir's powers are described in traditional magical terms, giving the conflict a magic vs. technology flavor.)

What's most frustrating about *Most Ancient Song* is that, as a novel, it's smoothly and entertainingly told: The matter-of-fact writing is appealing and pleasant. As a "plain" fantasy, it's satisfying. But, as the mythological retelling it purports to be, the book is misleading at best. Author Casey Flynn (really veteran Irish fantasist Kenneth Flint under a pseudonym) has done both his source material and his readers a disservice.

TIGANA

Guy Gavriel Kay

Roc 0-451-45028-0 \$21.95

The short description of *Tigana* is that it's a Shakespearean novel. The setting, the

blend of romance, soul-searching, and intrigue, and the character of the storytelling all carry a resonance that recalls Shakespeare's treatments of magic, romance, and royal conflict. There are differences in detail and degree, but Kay's novel definitely has just the right vividness and density to warrant the comparison.

Tigana was once the brightest of several provincial states on a peninsula strategically located between several larger realms. As Kay's tale opens, it's now scarcely a memory; the sorcerer-king who conquered it a generation past has used his powers to wipe the name virtually out of existence. Only a handful of people on the entire peninsula can remember or speak of Tigana, and only this small band has any hope of restoring Tigana to its rightful name and rule.

That makes identity the prize in a multi-layered struggle, for while Kay's conspirators are planning strategies for Tigana's liberation, they also face individual and personal challenges. The young musician Devin must untangle his complex relationship with fellow performer Catria. Erlein di Senzio must come to terms with the powers he conceals and the duty forced upon him by an ancient binding-spell. And Alessan bar Valentin must make dangerous and costly choices as he tries to stage-manage a complex game of politics, intrigue, and wizardry.

These, though, are only a few of the strands in *Tigana's* many-faceted web. In addition to a large and varied cast, Kay packs his narrative with a wealth of images, themes, and symbols that build on and reinforce each other in ways that complement rather than becoming repetitive. An example: The Peninsula of the Palm is so named because it's shaped rather like a hand, albeit one with only three fingers. It's not at all coincidental that wizards on the Palm come into their full powers only after sacrificing the third and fourth fingers of one hand.

It seems almost petty to note that Kay's approach to magic is one that gamers should find intriguing, and that the free-wheeling, Italianesque character of his setting ought to be highly attractive to designers of Renaissance-flavored campaigns. One might better observe that *Tigana* is one of those rare novels that can be read several times over without exhausting its capacity to surprise and enlighten, and even that is a considerable understatement.

SCORPIO RISING

Alex McDonough

Ace 0-441-75511-9 \$3.95

So much of current fantasy and SF is series fiction that we may be starting to take the series form for granted. Then along comes a book like *Scorpio Rising*, to remind us of the rules and conventions that allow good episodic storytelling to stand out.

First rule: The central characters should

be distinctive but easy to identify with. In Alex McDonough's case, both Scorpio and Leah qualify handily. Scorpio is alien but not overly grotesque, and his somewhat retiring manner counters much of the unease with which he might otherwise be greeted. Leah, from 14th-century France and of Jewish ancestry, is more worldly without being too self-assured.

Second rule: Each adventure should be self-contained. McDonough's device is that Scorpio and Leah are time travelers, moving from one era to the next by means of an orb whose workings they don't completely understand. This second entry in the series opens as they arrive in Elizabethan London, and concludes as they depart barely ahead of deadly pursuers. But the London episode is still a complete story with two parallel plots: While Leah and Scorpio attempt to master the orb's elusive powers, royal astrologers John Dee and Edward Kelley see the pair as a useful vehicle for winning influence from the unpredictable Queen Elizabeth.

Third rule: Continuing elements of the series should be given significant attention, but not at the expense of an individual episode's plot. Here again, McDonough does a credible job of balancing his story. Though fully half the book goes by before Scorpio's pursuers, the Hunters, arrive in London, McDonough manages to intertwine their chase neatly with a scheme hatched by the unsavory Kelley so that the Hunters become a part of the overall plot rather than being superimposed on it.

When so many multivolume series are specializing in cliffhanger endings and plots that stretch out for several volumes at a time, *Scorpio Rising* is a welcome if modest counterpoint. While the novel may be only marginally more ambitious than, say, a *Doctor Who* adventure, it's at least well-crafted and competently executed. Series novelists—and RPG campaign designers—could do worse than to take McDonough's work as a model.

Recurring roles

This issue's Department of Things Continued includes a prequel, a sequel, and* three additions to ongoing series. The prequel is Patricia C. Wrede's *Dealing With Dragons* (HBJ/Jane Yolen, \$15.95), and Wrede again demonstrates that there's nothing like a dose of courtesy and common sense for turning fairy-tale conventions on their ears. New readers should like this as much as those who scooped up copies of the earlier *Talking to Dragons*. Two sequences in particular, one involving wizards and buckets of water and another concerning an impatient jinn, are especially clever.

Transition (Spectra, \$4.95) is Vonda McIntyre's sequel to *Starfarers*, but it's a sequel of an unusual kind. Where the first book was mostly a novel of Earth-based intrigue spilling into the realms of space-flight, the new book is a tale of survival and decisions set far out among the stars.

McIntyre's characters are as well drawn as before, and their discoveries point the way toward a third volume that promises to be just as different and just as absorbing.

Best of the ongoing-series arrivals is Barry Hughart's *Eight Skilled Gentlemen* (Foundation, \$21.95/\$10.95). This is the third adventure of ancient Chinese sage Li Kao and his assistant Number Ten Ox. As readers might expect, it's a frenetic combination of wild comedy, harrowingly dangerous detective work, and obscure magic of immense and mysterious power. Hughart's style has been turning more informal with each new book, but this series is still at the very top of the Oriental fantasy lists.

By contrast, *Lord Conrad's Lady* (Del Rey, \$4.95) is rather forgettable. The good news is that it ties up most of the loose ends left hanging at the end of Leo Frankowski's fourth Conrad Stargard book, but the bad news is that it does very little else, instead mostly recycling previous ideas.

New books from Charles de Lint are usually much more reliable, and *The Dreaming Place* (Atheneum/Dragonflight, \$14.95) is no exception. De Lint kicks off a young-adult fantasy imprint similar to Walker's Millennium line with a compelling story involving stepsisters who find themselves the targets of a dying spirit-being's hunger. Another recent de Lint title,

Ghostwood (Axolotl/Pulphouse, \$10.00), is more unusual if slightly less satisfying. This limited-edition, trade paperback book follows up material from the earlier *Moonheart* as well as from two shorter limited-edition pieces. While it's as intensely atmospheric as all of de Lint's work, there are too many characters wandering through Tamson House for him to cover them all effectively. (Contact Pulphouse Publishing at: P.O. Box 1227, Eugene OR 97440; though the edition was sold out by press time, they can recommend likely sources.)

In a completely different vein, V. E. Mitchell's *Enemy Unseen* (Pocket, \$4.50) is one of the meatiest *Star Trek* novels to come along in ages, with a thoroughly nasty batch of villains and an impressively convoluted locked-starship mystery to recommend it. Mitchell packs two or three books' worth of plot into one dense story; this is one *Star Trek* tale that can't be read while your brain is coasting along in neutral gear.

Finally, *The Calling of the Three* (Ace, \$3.95) begins a new Ru Emerson trilogy that finds a loose-knit California family pulled into a world where they must quickly learn to cope with magic and with renegade nobles of several political persuasions. Two points stand out: The magic system, though rather lightly explained, is distinctive (the trilogy's collective title,

Night-Threads, describes it succinctly), and our heroes aren't the only folk from our world who've been drawn across the realities into the conflict.

A quick thanks is in order to those who have written in recent months, readers and authors alike. In particular, regarding the latter: Dennis McKiernan properly notes that dragons are alive and prospering on Mithgar, not extinct as implied in my comments on *Dragondoom* (issue #159). And Margaret Weis has history on her side regarding the idioms in *Dragon Wing* (also noted in #159).

As always, your comments and suggestions are welcome even if time doesn't permit replies to everyone. Correspondence and review materials should be directed to:

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M29	Troll Archer	75p	M101	Dragon Newt	£1.25

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CONVENTION CALENDAR

Convention Calendar Policies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at TSR, Inc., (414) 246-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (6223) 212517 (U.K.).

- ❖ indicates an Australian convention.
- ❖ indicates a Canadian convention.
- ❖ indicates a European convention.

* indicates a product produced by a company other than TSR, Inc. Most product names are trademarks owned by the companies publishing those products. The use of the name of any product without mention of its trademark status should not be construed as a challenge to such status.

GAMICON ALPHA, January 19,1991

Sponsored by SFLIS/ICON, this gaming convention will be held at the Iowa Memorial Union at the University of Iowa in Iowa City. Events include AD&D™, CALL OF CTHULHU*, BATTLE-TECH*, and STAR FLEET BATTLES* games, as well as seminars and panels by guests (including Roger E. Moore) and a silent auction. Registration: \$8 (fee includes all games). Send an SASE to: GAMICON, c/o SFLIS, Student Activities Center, IMU, University of Iowa, Iowa City IA 52242. Call Nigel at: (319) 354-2236; or Ahmad at (319) 351-7963. No collect calls, please.

ROACH-CON '91, January 19

This convention will be held at La Roche College and is sponsored by Project Achievement. Events include AD&D®, TOP SECRET/S.I.™, and BATTLETECH* games, as well as movies, vendors, and a miniatures-painting contest with an entry fee of \$2 per figure. Registration: \$5 preregistered, or \$7.50 at the door. Write to: ROACH-CON '91, La Roche College, Box 22, Allison Park PA 15101; or call Bob at: (412) 793-6028 or (412) 341-6450.

JANCON '91, January 19-20

This two-day gaming convention will be held at the Quality Inn Conference Center in New Haven, Conn. Events include AD&D®, BATTLE-TECH*, and DIPLOMACY* games, with miniatures painting, movies, and a dealers' room. Other activities include a banquet on the 20th and a benefit game with all proceeds going to Alzheimer's research. Send an SASE to: JANCON '91, P.O. Box 822, Shelton CT 06484.

PANDEMONIUM VIII, January 19-20 ❖

This convention will be held at the Ryerson Hub Cafeteria, Jorgenson Hall, Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, in Toronto, Ontario. Highlights include two game auctions, over 50 games, a miniatures contest, and many local dealers. Prizes will be awarded to tournament winners. Registration: \$10 (Canadian)/day. Write to: PANDEMONIUM VIII, c/o 17B Wales Ave., Toronto, Ontario, CANADA M5T 1S2; or call: (416) 597-1934.

WINTERCON '91, January 19-20

The Gamer's Alliance of Miniatures Enthusiasts and the Midwest Masters RPGA™ Club are sponsoring this convention that will be held at the Reunion on the campus of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Events include two RPGA™ tournaments, with BUCK ROGERS® XXVc™, AD&D® *Oriental Adventures*, WARHAMMER 40,000®, STAR TREK TACIXAL SIMULATOR*, and microarmor games. There will also be a free-category painting contest. This convention is free! Write to: Hobbies Etc. (c/o Rufus), 905 N. 16th St., Lincoln NE 68508; or call (402) 477-7006.

PROJECT GENESIS '91, January 20-21

This two-day convention will be held at the Ramada Inn in Fresno, Calif. Tournaments and open events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH*, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, CALL OF CTHULHU*, and CHAMPIONS* games. Other activities include computer gaming, Japanimation, a miniatures contest, and a swap meet. Registration: \$10/weekend, or \$8/day. Dealers, game masters, and swappers are wanted. Write to: PATCO, c/o Phillip S. Pittz, 5415 E. Washington, Fresno CA; or call: (209) 255-1668. Please make checks payable to Phillip S. Pittz.

ADVENTURERS' INN II, January 26-27

This gaming convention will be held at the Stockton Growers' Hall in Stockton, Calif. A medieval/fantasy atmosphere highlights this gathering of gamers. Events include gaming, SCA demos, a 36-hour campaign, a costume contest, and a dealers' area. Registration: \$15/weekend until Jan. 1, or \$13/day or \$20 weekend at the door. A \$3 discount goes to anyone in medieval/fantasy costume. Write to: ADVENTURERS' INN, P.O. Box 3669, Turlock CA 95381.

CANCON '91, January 26-28 ❖

Australia's biggest and best convention will be held at the University of Canberra, ACT, Australia. Our special guest will be Jean Rabe. Events include miniatures, board games, RPGs, RPGA™ Network events, and a costume parade. Registration: \$20 (Australian). Most events cost \$2. Write to: CANCON, GPO Box 1016, Canberra City, ACT, 2601, AUSTRALIA.

REALMS OF ROLE-PLAY II February 1-3 ❖

This convention, organized by TRoA, will be held at Sofieldskolen, Aalborg, Denmark. Events include AD&D® 2nd Edition, CALL OF CTHULHU * , D&D®, MERP * , ROLEMASTER * , SHADOWRUN*, STAR WARS*, WARHAMMER FANTASY BATTLE*, WARHAMMER FANTASY-ROLEPLAY*, and board games. Registration: DKK 50/weekend, or DKK 30/day, GMs are welcome! Write to: TRoA, Hvikildevej 20 A, 9220 Aalborg Oest, DENMARK.

PSURREALCON '91, February 8-10

The Norman Oklahoma Science-Fiction Assoc. (NOSFA) presents its third-annual convention at the Sheraton Hotel in Norman, Okla. This year's guests include Mercedes Lackey, Algis Budrys, Mark Rogers, David Lee Anderson, Keith Berdak, and Donna MacKenzie. Activities include a dealers' room, an art show, an auction, panels, two video rooms, gaming, and filksinging. Registration: \$12 until Feb. 7, or \$15 at the door. Single-day rates are available. For hotel reservations, call: (405) 364-2882. Send an SASE to: PSURREALCON, Oklahoma Memorial Union, Rm. 215A, Norman OK 73019.

CONNECT-A-CON, February 16-17

This SF/fantasy/gaming convention will be held at the Sheraton Westgate in Toledo, Ohio. Guests of honor include Jean Lorrh, Dennis McKiernan, and Rob Prior. Events include gaming, a writers' workshop, a short-story contest, a costume contest and masquerade ball, a murder-mystery contest, a huge dealers' room, a 24-hour movie room, an art show and auction, and a gaming auction. Registration: \$151 weekend before Dec 31, or \$20/weekend thereafter. Write to: CONNECT-A-CON, P.O. Box 4674, Toledo OH 43620.

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DUN DRA CON XV, February 15-18

This convention will be held at the Oakland Airport Hyatt in Oakland, Calif. (Mention the con for special room rates.) Events include over 120 role-playing games, plus seminars, board games, tournaments, miniatures, SCA demos, a flea market, a figure-painting contest, a huge dealers' room, and plenty of open-gaming space. Registration: \$25 until Feb. 1; \$30/weekend or \$15/day at the door. Write to: DUN DRA CON, 386 Alcatraz Ave., Oakland CA 94618.

ECONOMYCON IV, February 16-17

This convention will be held at the Smart Plaza, Road Suites 17 and 18, in Mesa, Ariz. Events include AD&D®, BATTLE FOR MOSCOW*, SQUAD LEADER*, and BATTLETECH* games. Other activities include computer games, Japanimation, open gaming, and a Miniatures Fest featuring WWII microarmor, American Civil War, British colonial, and SF miniatures gaming. There is no admission fee, and all events are free. Send an SASE to: ECONOMYCON IV, c/o Roaming Panther Game Co., 2740 S. Alma School Rd., #16, Mesa AZ 85202.

GENGHIS CON XII, February 15-17

The Denver Gamers' Assoc. presents this convention at the Sheraton of Lakewood. Events include VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC*, CIVILIZATION*, KINGMAKER*, ASL*, and BATTLETECH* games, with official RPGA™ Network tournaments including PARANOIA*, D&D®, and AD&D® games. Other activities include miniatures events, auctions, art and figure-painting contests, seminars, demos, and the PUFFING BILLY* railroad tournament. Guests include Jean Rabe, Darwin Bromley, and Richard Berg. Registration: \$15/weekend preregistered. Write to: Denver Gamers' Assoc., P.O. Box 440058, Aurora CO 80044; or call: (303) 680-7824.

ORCCON 14, February 15-18

This convention will be held at the Los Angeles Airport Hilton. All types of family, board, role-playing, miniatures, and computer games are featured. Get bargains at the flea markets, auctions, and exhibitors' area. Also featured are seminars, demos, and special guests. Write to: STRATEGICON, P.O. Box 3849, Torrance CA 90510-3849; or call: (213) 326-9440.

ECLECTICON 5, February 16-18

This SF/fantasy convention will be held at the Sacramento Hilton Inn in Sacramento, Calif. Guests of honor include Greg Bear, Rick Sternbach, and Rhea Stone. The dead guest of honor is Jules Verne. Registration: \$25 until Jan. 15, or \$30 thereafter. Proceeds will benefit the Sacramento Public Library and the Children's Burn Unit of the University of California at Davis Medical Center, among other charities. There will also be a blood drive at the convention on Feb. 17th. Write to: Publicity Committee, ECLECTICON 5, #176 P.O. Box 19040, Sacramento CA 95814; or call: (916) 421-8365.

NOT-A-CON III, THE SEARCH FOR MOC February 22-24

This convention will be held in the Palmetto Ballroom on the Clemson University campus in Clemson, S.C. Events include RPGA™ AD&D®, other AD&D®, SHADOWRUN*, TOP SECRET/S.L™, and war-gaming tournaments, as well as open ROLEMASTER*, SPACEMASTER*, and TORC* games. Registration: \$10 before Jan. 20, or \$15 thereafter. Write to: NOT-A-CON III, 726 Riverbank Commons, 250 Elm St., Clemson SC 29631; or call: (803) 653-5030 and ask for Wayne Chastain, Andy Berg, or Jeff Peake.

TOTAL CONFUSION V, February 22-24

This convention will be held at the Sheraton Worcester Hotel and Conference Center in Worcester, Mass. Events include AD&D®, GURPS*, BATTLETECH*, CALL OF CTHULHU*, DIPLOMACY*, ASSAULT*, CAR WARS*, DC HEROES*, and AXIS & ALLIES* games. Over 120 games are scheduled. Other activities include a costume competition and a miniatures-painting contest. Registration: \$8/day or \$20/weekend preregistered, or \$10/day at the door. Write to: TOTAL CONFUSION, P.O. Box 1463, Worcester MA 01607; or call: (508) 987-1530.

GAMER'S DELIGHT '91, February 23 *

The Quebec Gamers' Assoc. (A.Q.J.S.), will hold this convention at John F. Kennedy High School in Montreal, Quebec. Events include an AD&D® tournament, plus board games and miniatures. There will be three playing sessions. Registration: \$13 (U.S.) before Feb. 15, or \$16 (U.S.) at the door. A.Q.J.S. members will receive a \$2 discount. Write to: A.Q.J.S., Box 63, Station M, Montreal, Quebec, CANADA. H1V 3L6; or call Larry at: (514) 278-5292.

CHIMERACON VII, March 1-3

This seventh annual SF/fantasy convention will be held at the Union of the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, N.C. Guests of honor include Fred Chappell, Alan Wold, and Gavin and Yvonne Frost. Write to: Shannon Turlington, c/o CHIMERACON, 306 Avery UNC-CH, Chapel Hill, NC 27514; or call: (919)1933-2912.

EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN '91, March 1-3

This gaming convention will be held at the Student Center of Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Ill. Events include RPGA™ AD&D® tournaments, miniatures judging, and a game auction. Registration: \$8 preregistered, or \$5/day. Admission on Friday, the 1st, is free to all. Send a business-size SASE to: S.I.U. Strategic Games Society, Office of Student Development, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale IL 62901-4425; or call: (618) 529-5317.

GUILD FEST '91, March 2-3

This convention will be held at the State University of New York at Binghamton campus. Events include CYBERPUNK 2020*, AD&D®, GURPS*, and RUNEQUEST* games, with a dealers' room. Registration: \$3/day or \$5/weekend preregistered; \$4/day or \$7/weekend at the door. Write to: Gamers' Guild, P.O. Box 2000 c/o SUNY-Binghamton, Binghamton NY 13901.

BASHCON '91, March 8-10

This sixth annual convention, sponsored by the Benevolent Adventurers' Strategic Headquarters, will be held at the Student Union Auditorium at the University of Toledo's main campus in Toledo, Ohio. Over 150 game events will be featured, including RPGA™ tournaments, plus movies, a miniatures contest, an exhibitors' area, two auctions, and an honored speaker or two. Registration: \$3/weekend or \$1 for Friday, \$2/day for Saturday and Sunday. There will be no preregistration. Games cost \$.50 each. Send an SASE to: UT-BASH, c/o Student Activities Office, University of Toledo, Toledo OH 43606-9987.

OWLCON XII, March 8-10

Rice University's WARP and RSFAFA will hold this convention at Rice University in Houston, Texas. Tournaments will be held for RUNEQUEST*, PARANOIA*, CALL OF CTHULHU*, CAR WARS*, TRAVELLER*, DIPLOMACY*,

ILLUMINATI*, CIVILIZATION*, BATTLETECH*, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, ASL*, WORLD IN FLAMES*, and AD&D® games. Prizes will be awarded for some tournaments. Registration: \$10 preregistered, or \$12/weekend at the door. Single day prices vary. Write to: RSFAFA, OWLCON, P.O. Box 1892, Houston TX 77251.

SILICON VI, March 8-10

This convention, sponsored by the Society for Interactive Literature, is dedicated to live-action role-playing games. It will be held at the Annapolis Holiday Inn in Annapolis, Md. Four live-action games will be run: "Cafe Casablanca; "Small Town," "Steeplechase," and "See Jane Run Again." A mini-game, "MASKS," will be run Friday night. Registration: \$35 until March 1, or \$40 at the door. Write to: Terilee Edwards-Hewitt, 3454 S. Utah St. B-1, Arlington VA 22206-1942.

AGGIECON XXII, March 2 1-24

The largest and oldest annual SF/fantasy convention in the Southwest will be held on the campus of Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. Guests include Fred Saberhagen, Lynn Abbey, Keith Parkinson, Marv Wolfman, and Steve Jackson. Activities include RPGA™ tournaments, a dealers' room, game shows, a hall costume contest and masquerade ball, SF films, Japanimation, video rooms, and live-action games. Registration: \$13 before March 1, or \$16 thereafter. One day passes are \$10. Write to: AGGIECON XXII, MSC Cepheid Variable, Box J-1, College Station TX 77844; or call: (409) 845-1515.

CONTEST VIII, March 22-24

Sponsored by the Tactical Simulation Society, this convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Holiday in Tulsa, Okla. Events include AD&D®, AXIS & ALLIES*, and other role-playing, board, miniatures, and computer games, with a large dealers' room and an auction. Write to: TSS, P.O. Box 4726, Tulsa OK 74104.

SIMCON XIII, March 22-24

This gaming convention will be held at the University of Rochester' River campus in Rochester, N.Y. Role-playing events (including an R. Talsorian-sanctioned CYBERPUNK* tournament), miniatures events, board games, and a miniatures contest are scheduled. Registration: \$7 before March 4, or \$10 thereafter. College students with an I.D. receive a \$2 discount. Write to: SIMCON, CPU Box 277146, River Station, Rochester NY 14627.

SCRYCON '91, March 23

Sponsored by The Seekers of the Crystal Monolith gaming club, this convention will be held at the Oakwood School in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. Events include RPGA™ AD&D® games, alternate games, a painted-miniatures contest, and a used-game flea market. Registration: \$6 preregistered, or \$8 at the door. Send an SASE to: SCRYCON '91, P.O. Box 896, Pleasant Valley NY 12569. Space is limited; preregister!

GOTHCON XV, March 29-3 1 *

This convention, sponsored by the Bifrost, Chaos Apes, Skymning, and Ygdrasil gaming clubs, will be held at Munkebacksgymnasiet, Ernst Torulfsgatan 1, in Gothenburg, Sweden. Events include AD&D®, CALL OF CTHULHU*, MEGATRAVELLER*, PARANOIA*, ROLEMASTER*, MERP*, RUNEQUEST* (3rd Ed.), ASL*, CAR WARS*, DIPLOMACY*, and ILLUMINATI* tournaments, as well as several independent

Continued on page 34

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Boxed Nightmares™ is the long awaited adventure/source book for Palladium's **Beyond the Supernatural™** RPG.

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First, the newspaper contains clues and information for the actual adventures inside the supplement. Second, the publishers often hire psychics and parapsychologists to investigate strange phenomenon, so your characters could be working for this rag.

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TSR PREVIEW

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Vecna was the most powerful wizard of his age, and he became the most powerful and evil lich of any age. Legends say that he was destroyed centuries ago and will never return—but the legends were wrong! As the world goes mad under Vecna's coming, who will brave almost certain death to fight him?

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HWA2 *Nightrage*

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This second HOLLOW WORLD™ module further explores the myriad cultures and kingdoms of this new campaign setting. Take your PCs on an incredible journey across this new world on a quest to discover Ancient Nithia and find out what really happened to the great feathered serpent.

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Convention Calendar

Continued from page 32

events. Other activities include a live-action chess game, dealers' rooms, fantasy artists, and an auction. Registration: 150 Swedish Kronor (\$30) before Feb. 15 (140 SKr for SWEROC members), plus tournament fees. No prerequisites accepted after Feb. 15. One-day tickets, if available, will be sold at the door for 75 SKr (\$15)/day. Write to: GOTHCON XV, c/o Bertil Jonell, P.O. Box 154, S-43900 Onsala, SWEDEN; or call: +46 300-61004.

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I read with interest Tom Schlosser's "Romance and Adventure!" article in DRAGON issue #161. I was quite surprised that Mr. Schlosser felt romance in a AD&D® campaign needs to be contrived. In the many campaigns I've played over the years, I would never have thought it was anything but natural.

In my first campaign, I played a young female bard who became interested in and later fell in love with a thief. Several weeks into the campaign, my brother, a paladin, discovered there was hanky-panky going on, resulting in a "cross-bow wedding."

Another instance involved a triangle in which a psionicist and a mage had an affair going when a new character, a beastmaster (beastmistress?), managed to move in and conduct a long-term romance with the psionicist.

In yet another campaign, a druid and a shape-changer had a several-month-long romance that ended with their retiring together, getting married, and building a home. In the same campaign, a second couple planned to retire together, but one met with an untimely death on what was to have been their last adventure.

These are but three of the many campaign romances that have taken place in my living room. I can't think of a campaign we played in that didn't involve at least one. They all blossomed independently of the DM and contributed vastly to the game and player interaction. In almost no case was there any relationship between the two players outside the game.

If campaign romances are as rare as Mr. Schlosser seems to believe, I think there must be a lot of very dull games going on out there. To me and to other members of my gaming group, romance is just as natural within the game setting as it is in real life.

Carol McGarril
Alexandria VA

I have just finished reading "The Enemy at the Gates" in DRAGON issue #160. I enjoyed the article and have a few suggestions and comments to add to it. My only reservation is in the amount of magic, *wishes*, and fantastic beasts that Mr. Collier uses. A campaign with magic as common as he suggests would have no need for castles, catapults, or anything similar; it would probably already have magical mass production, communication, and transportation to make it equal to [cities in] modern or high-tech campaigns. Mages are fairly rare because it takes a special combination of intelligence, magical aptitude, and patience to be a member of that class, and those who do qualify would probably resent being used as "foot soldiers" or common laborers in the city dungeons. A city is more

likely to have a small special-missions corps composed of mid-level mages and a few honored, high-level wizards in its service because those groups would have more opportunities for study and adventure than the mundane guards or workers. Dragons and flying mounts are very rare, hard to keep, and always long for lives of excitement and travel, and this is one of the few things an adventurer can offer that a city guardsman cannot. Flying devices might be more practical, but they are subject to breaking and I find it hard to envision a city having 112 of them. Finally, a *wish* coming from a mortal source could probably not build indestructible towers of gold, though a *wish of omnipotence* might (see "If You Wish Upon a Star . . ." in DRAGON issue #146).

By modifying some of the characteristics of the ancient medieval castles, I think that it's possible to defend them against practically any spell. A good start would be to mix metal with the wall bricks and mortar, then give the bricks a thin coating of lead. This would protect against *passwall*, *phase door*, *stone to flesh*, *transmute rock to mud*, etc., as well as keeping out some of those pesky detection spells. To protect against *earthquake*, *disintegrate*, and sappers, the walls could be made thicker and lower, and the foundations sunk deeper. Special bolts to keep the gate from shrinking could protect against *reduce*, and a drawbridge, portcullis, and additional bars on any doors would protect against a single *knock* spell opening the front door of the castle. Since the greatest danger from *teleportation*, *polymorphing*, and astral or ethereal travel is that of a few people getting through and opening the gate, a gate-opening system that requires several people to operate it might help. One of my favorite ways to defend against underground attackers is to grow a huge pudding, slime, ooze, or similar monster under the city and feed it all of the city's garbage and waste. As the monster continues to expand, it might even be allowed to grow up into the city walls, giving attackers a nasty surprise and keeping out astral or ethereal visitors. All of these suggestions, though, are merely examples. Depending on their situation, each town will have to tailor its defenses to meet its own needs.

Jason Williams
Silver Spring MD

James R. Collier's "Enemy at the Gates" deserves comment. It is a fairly broad examination of the theme of tactics in a world where magic works—always a good topic.

First, his errors: Some of the spells he describes just don't work the way he has them operating. *Improved invisibility* (or normal *invisibility*, for that matter) cannot be cast on objects (area of effect: creature touched). Nor can *protection from normal missiles* be cast upon castle walls, for precisely the same reason. *Polymorph self* limits size changes from hippo to wren. Becoming a bee is not possible with this spell, unless you started out very small.

Commune is not a communications spell. It lets the caster ask one "yes/no" question per level of the caster of the deity or designated servants of the deity. While it is of use to deter-

mine the accuracy of intelligence reports about the enemy, it hardly is in the same group as *tongues* or *speak with animals/dead/plants/monsters* spells.

I'm not exactly sure why he lists casting *legend lore* among the duties that low-level mages can perform. It's a sixth-level spell, and hence a minimum of 12th level is needed to cast it. Also, this is one of the spells whose components are important. A magical item or something of equivalent value to the caster has to be sacrificed to whatever power answers the spell. You don't use it to check junk.

"A giant hurls only rocks." Since when? A giant has hands and brains; anything a human can throw, a giant can throw, too, proportionately.

A city that maintains a large aerial cavalry cannot withstand a long siege. Sir William of Farcastle's griffon cavalry burns a huge number of calories lugging around barding and armored riders, then going out and fighting all day. Figure about two cows per griffon per week. Add in the [needs of the] four dragons, and the herds start thinning real fast. Cut the griffons and dragons off from the herds by siege, and that cavalry quickly ceases to be effective.

Detect spells of various sorts can be negated by one amulet, making the clerics and wizards standing around the gates useless (not to mention reducing the city's income because the wizards are standing around instead of making magical items).

Mr. Collier overlooked one very useful spell: *simulacrum*. Players often mistakenly think the human/humanoid limits put on *clone* apply to *simulacrum* as well. But *simulacrum* can be used to duplicate just about any creature, and it gives either side with access to the spell the ability to "ally" themselves with monsters whose loyalty isn't in doubt—a few strategically placed trappers, for instance.

A phalanx of 60 rust monsters advancing upon an invading or defending army can be devastating, possibly ending the battle before a single ounce of metal has been transmuted to rust. The more metal in the armor of the army facing the monsters, the worse the modifier is on the morale check. This tactic works better for the attacker. Once inside the city, invading rust monsters can start working on locks, pulleys, and grates holding the gates in place.

The friendly djinn guarding the city is less effective than one helping the invaders. Assuming many parts of the city are subject to fire, envision a djinn creating a whirlwind just outside the city. When the winds are about to burst, a flying creature able to take damage from the wind dumps crateloads of red-hot nails into the windstorm. There will be an inferno as those nails ignite various buildings.

Cities and castles are part of the culture on which game worlds are based. To prove that they could not exist due to magic is not what I intend. However, this game was built on a "go to the dungeon and loot, loot, loot" basis, and magic in this game favors the invader rather than the defender. What we need are some official defensive spells so campaign A doesn't need 7th-level casters while campaign B needs 12th-level casters.

S. D. Anderson
Whittier CA



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I recently participated in a group that plays AD&D and D&D® games. The campaigns had one interesting feature worthy of note: There was no thief class.

Needless to say, I was extremely surprised (and disturbed) to hear this, but the DM's explanation not only satisfied me, it got me thinking about my own campaign. His reasoning went something like this about the non-attractiveness of the thief class to the average player:

1. Thieves are, have been, and always be, feared, hated, and illegal.

2. Thieves, in order to train, must go to a thieves' guild, a wretched hive of scum and villainy.

3. The thief's party never trusts the thief not to rob its members, especially since "most thieves tend towards evil" (1st Edition *Players Handbook*, page 27).

4. Thieves are significantly weaker than the other three major classes, especially in the Basic D&D game.

5. Thieves are often looked down upon by their party for the above four reasons.

6. Thieves must train young urchins if they wish to build a hideout or stronghold. The thief then becomes like Fagin, a master of cutpurses.

7. Thieves, because of their very character class, are forced to constantly lie. "Uh, yeah, I'm a fighter. I just like leather armor and can't afford a shield."

So, in that group, there were fighters, clerics, mages, and a group of characters skilled in stealthy endeavors and dungeon adventures. These characters stayed at the very front of the party, not at the back "guarding the rear." They were called scouts, and they could be of any alignment (the non-good part always bothered me about thieves). Instead of the pick pockets skill, they possessed sleight of hand, virtually identical to the former but with a better name and perhaps being a more useful skill. (The DM may not allow a character to conceal something using the pick pockets skill.) Scouts can climb walls and open locks. But they can be proud of their profession. They just aren't thieves.

The 15th-level scout in our Basic D&D party had *leather armor +2*, a *ring of protection +2* and an 18 dexterity, for an AC of 0. He also had weapon mastery, so he was safe to guide the party and even a limited amount of front-line combat was all right.

Thieves' guilds still exist, containing mages, fighters, and scouts who feel that the world somehow owes them a living. As that DM told me, a thief, like an assassin, is not a character class but a profession. [Note the scout PC class for the AD&D® game in issue #1 61, "Scouting For New Options."]

Dirk Waters
Branford CT

Being a DM, I hate to see dissention among players. In most campaigns I've seen, there is competition among the players that all too often results in somebody's character getting killed. Evil characters tend to be the ones who disrupt game play, so I simply discourage those alignments, but I do not rule them out. Another problem between players is when they want power and that is all. If your group has fun "roll-playing," then that's fine, but I think most people would have fun role-playing. Keep in mind that several of the greatest game characters don't have an 18 in any ability, like Tanis, Tasselhoff, or even Raistlin [from the DRAGONLANCE® saga]. If the players don't care about their PCs' stats, then you'll all have more fun.

Another major problem is jealousy, usually involving powerful magical items or higher

stats. To solve the powerful magical item problem, you can simply exclude or make them extremely rare (once-in-a-lifetime things). If a PC already has an item, then simply have a 15th level thief come along and acquire it. As for higher stats, don't allow your players to tell other players their PCs' ability scores. If they do, punish them in some way, such as taking away experience points. I always tell my players that your characters don't have numbers on the backs of their heads for all to know.

John L. Stanton, Jr.
Jacksonville AL

I am writing in response to John Wall's letter in DRAGON issue #159. I am currently involved in a D&D campaign in which my character is a kender, adapted to the D&D game from the description in the DRAGONLANCE® saga books, and I have never played a character that was so much fun and yet so much of a risk to herself. Thistle (my character's name) has an immense curiosity about everything, and a great deal of trust in the good intentions of everything and everyone else. Needless to say, she was very nearly killed on several occasions, in situations that I thought were risky. One good example was when, in a desert, my character found a chest buried in a sand drift and opened it to find that its contents had been almost entirely stolen by bandits—except for a small, sealed pot. "A trap!" I thought. "This looks really interesting!" was Thistle's reaction, who promptly opened the pot and was nearly killed by poison gas ("What a pretty color. Why is the world spinning around like that?")

You will note that I said nearly killed. The one factor that spared my kender's life, time and again, was that she was watched over by a kindly DM. In battles, and from traps and spells, my character faced the normal risks run by all dungeoneers. But on those occasions when my character acted against all reasonable judgment for the sake of role-playing, our DM kept an eye open to see that the manner in which my character was affected was not unfair.

I do not really think that this gives my character an unfair advantage over the other characters, biased though my opinion may be. So long as we did our best and acted as sensibly as our characters' personalities permitted, our DM confessed that she was not going to let a freak roll of the dice spoil the campaign, although our characters still run the risks in a battle or situation in which the odds were against us, or when the situation occurs through our own stupidity. I suspect that my character might wind up being throttled by one of the other characters anyway, as they seem to resent my character's habit of finding items they "lose."

Another thing about playing such characters as kender and gully dwarves—yes, we have one of those as well—is that they encourage role-playing, both in their players and in the others in the campaign. It is very simple to picture the reaction of a mage who has had his spell book "borrowed," or that of an elf who has just stepped on a gully dwarf. No one in our group seemed to mind that we had come out of the adventure with very little treasure; they were all too busy, no doubt, thinking of different ways to cook a kender.

What I am trying to say is if you are DMing a game with characters whose personalities dictate that they do something that seems rash, a little intercession will prevent tragedies without spoiling the challenges of the game.

Bonnie Patterson
Ruskington, Lincolnshire
United Kingdom

I would like to expand upon a paragraph from Michael Griffith's letter in DRAGON issue #154, in which he stated: "If we [DMs] didn't do so [play evil NPCs in a 'nasty and relentless' manner], you would be facing mindless hordes of easy targets, and while this may be great for attaining experience points, it does little to enhance the actual role-playing experience for all concerned."

I've been playing AD&D games for almost seven years, about half that time as a player and half as a DM. I'm currently engaged in my third extensive campaign. My group meets once a week, and we keep in touch between games through a local BBS run by one of my players. In a room aptly named "The Dragon," we discuss the current game, the campaign, and the rules.

Recently, one of my players quit my campaign—via the BBS—without giving a clear reason, simply leaving an "I quit" message. Her most recent complaint before quitting was that her character hadn't gotten any "goodies" during the last adventure and had gotten "only" experience points. She had just come from a Monty Haul campaign, as I could tell from hearing about her character in that campaign.

In my campaign, she played a drow fighter/magic-user who almost always abandoned the party during fights or potentially threatening situations—not always during lethal encounters, but ones that could cause damage to the PCs. Forgive me if my interpretation of dark elves is wrong, but I see them as the most naturally vicious race in the AD&D game, always ready for the kill. Admittedly, PCs may deviate from a race's natural tendencies, but this player delighted in bragging about how her former character, also a drow fighter/magic-user, was

the terror of the land, and I know that is what she wanted to achieve in my campaign.

So we had a conflict of playing with differing styles. I do consider myself a hard DM, but only because I want my players to rely on good player skills and not the magical items they receive during the course of an adventure. I stress this to my players constantly, when they first come into the campaign and during in-between game discussions. The players are quite aware that mine will never be a Monty Haul campaign.

I believe that a player's ability to wield a character is more important than his character's ability to wield weapons, spells, magical items, or whatever. I despise Monty Haul campaigns for supporting weak play. Good players who are just having a loose game is another story, but in a campaign where 3rd-level godly mortals wreak havoc with six artifacts apiece, the game becomes a complete joke.

The pinnacle of my Monty Haul career as a player occurred when my 2nd-level fighter and other party members stole 6.7×10^{50} (that's right: ten to the fiftieth power) gold pieces from under a sleeping Tiamat. And how did we carry all that gold away? In our backpacks, of course. And that was only my second AD&D game. The game grew progressively and incredibly worse, and we quit that DM after about five or six games. Another player took over as DM for a few years, and finally I did. My first DM showed me how ridiculous Monty Haul can get and how weak of a player you can be to play in such a campaign. I was a complete beginner ("Just roll the twenty-sided when we tell you to. That one, the one with the most sides and the '20' on it.").

A good AD&D campaign is kept alive by

players who know how to survive without relying on their characters' "goodies." A DM should challenge his players frequently lest they rest upon their laurels and their magical items. Don't make life a constant struggle for the characters, but don't let them "rod, staff, and wand" their way out of every situation, either. Player skills are the most valuable asset in any role-playing game, not winning an empire or attaining pseudo-deity status.

Robert T Wahl
Browns Mills NJ

I would like to offer accolades to Michael Griffith for his letter in DRAGON issue #154 on the cunning use of evil NPCs and the reluctance of the player characters to accept such actions. I, too, am a DM who plays evil NPCs with extreme stealth and cunning. I, however, acquired the label "character killer." The road to prosperous and high-level characters should be paved with pain, injury, and often severe humiliation at the hands of an enemy. I, though, will also be the first to admit that there is such a thing as going too far.

Some time ago, I ran a campaign involving five PCs of mixed classes and alignments, one of which was a fighter/mage with an exceptionally high strength and constitution. The adventure was out of hand from the moment it began. I lost control of the campaign because I found myself catering to the challenge of the fighter/mage and, for all intents and purposes, ignoring the rest of the party. It ended up that the other four PCs conspired to attack the fighter/mage because they were so bored with the campaign. Needless to say, they died.

What I would like to know is how many DMs

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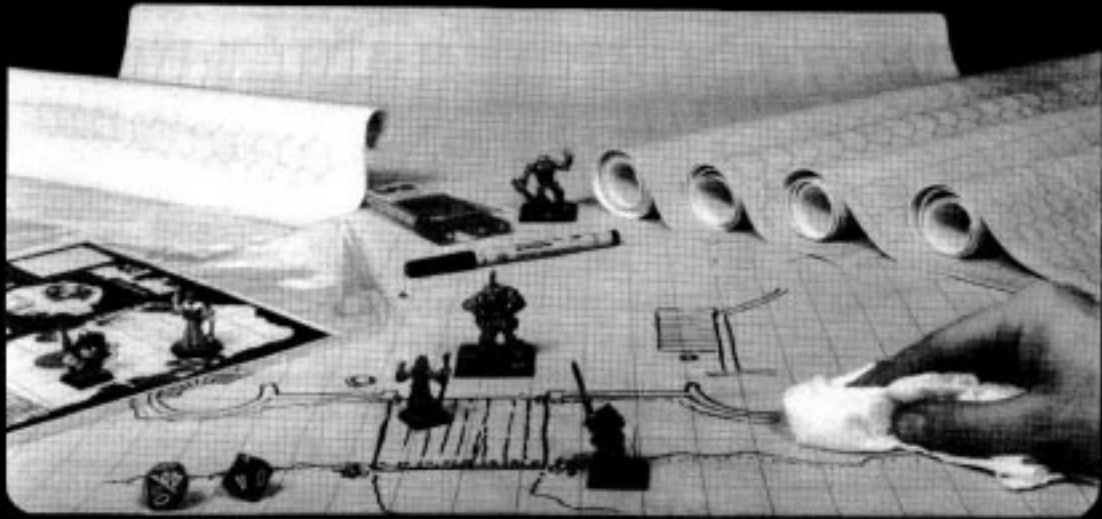
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have made the mistake of playing into the hands of a crafty PC such as this, and not having the foresight to improvise and deviate from your original plans to allow other PCs to join the fray?

Lastly, I would like those of you who have made amateur mistakes such as these to tell me how you did combat with the possibilities of this happening again. From the campaigns that I have been in and have seen, there is always one character who seems to run amok, regardless of who DMs.

Your feedback on this problem would be appreciated.

Ron "Winston" Dippel
Cleveland OH

I would like to find the opinions of this publication as well as those of other role-players on the subject of solo gaming or a variation of such that involves the DM playing one of his PCs as a character with a party of adventurers.

Through my unfortunate experiences of playing in short campaigns (mainly hack-and-slash) with these type of self-Dungeon-Mastered characters, I find that they have become extremely powerful for any character at any level. Several of the offending characters have resorted, to the players' delight, to using magical items for any situation. If an item does not already exist, it is created, then "found" by the DM's character. I personally believe that this defeats the purpose of a fun gaming session. I realize that the option not to play with the superpowered characters is open, and, as of late, I have chosen it. I am just getting tired of listening to: "My 11th-level character has a page-and-a-half of magical items."

I have observed several sessions of the type where the DM plays one of his characters as a PC. This practice is grossly unfair to the other players, as well as extremely helpful, for the power-hungry character of the DM. I see no way possible that this method can be employed so that the true spirit of adventure gaming is achieved. After all, how can the DM play if he already knows everything? Though this may occur only within my group, it must befall even the most honest DM to try not to injure his personal character. Several times a dragon has used its breath weapon on the party, and one character was immune—guess which one? The most irritating problem with this technique is that the DM's character reaps all the rewards from the risks that no one else would take. The DM's character knows there is nothing but treasure behind the door, so he'll open it first. One party happened across three crates of treasure (known to be so because of a ring of X-ray vision), in an attic of a dangerous tower.

For lack of time and want of safety, everyone passed by the crates, except for the DM's character, who casually stashed them in his *portable hole*. Another player mentioned, "Yeah, we'll split it up later," but was confronted with, "No, it's all mine; you passed it up."

Personally, I cannot fathom how to put up with these unfair practices, and I would like to know how you other players feel about these situations. The fun and spirit of the game certainly do suffer, and the ultra-characters that result certainly do not deserve their achievements or recognition.

Michael Repka
Tyler TX

I have been an avid AD&D game player for the last 11 years. A complaint that I have frequently heard is that of players becoming too powerful for the DM to handle, often because of the magical items they carry. Often a DM will allow a powerful magical item to fall into the hands of a character to "spice up" a boring campaign. Soon the magical item becomes a further problem, and so the campaign goes

Let me say that I believe that magical items, properly handled, can make a campaign interesting and more exciting. Some DMs will not even allow players to find a potion until 3rd-4th level or a wand until 6th-8th level. This is wrong. Players often have a real need for helpful potions (healing and the like) at lower levels; these are the levels where the loss of 6 hp can easily mean death!

What all DMs should remember (and I'm boggled as to why they don't) is that they are the sole judges as to what goes on in their campaigns. Everybody makes mistakes, but if a game imbalance is created, it is the job of the DM to straighten out the error or imbalance. If a character has an item that is too strong for the party or makes the owner outshine the other characters, take it away! Don't let players hamstring you! There are a multitude of ways in which magical items can be removed from characters. The following are a few examples:

—Require that the item make a saving throw (as per the *Dungeon Master's Guide*) each and every time it is exposed to *lightning bolts*, *fireballs*, *cave-ins*, and similar damage.

—Require that a saving throw vs. loss be made if the owner is knocked into the ocean, caught in a sandstorm, buried in a mudslide, etc.

—There are creatures such as *jermlaine* and *disenchanted* that can drain items of all their magic. An opponent could use a *rod of cancellation*, or an enemy spell-caster could employ a *Mordenkainen's disjunction* spell.

—Characters possessing valuable items that are obviously magical in nature will draw thieves and enemies that desire the item themselves. A 2nd-level fighter flaunting his flaming sword in town is almost asking for high-level enemies to steal it away in the night or attack him outright. After fighting off thieves and jealous creatures, the owner of the item may curtail its obvious use or bring it only on particularly difficult quests.

—The DM may introduce defects, side effects, or magical limits on any item. After all, it is his campaign and who is to say that each wand and sword is not unique to itself? Swords that only gain magical bonuses at night or items that add months or years to the owner's age when used can be introduced. When an item's unique abilities and defects are discovered by the players, it often makes for a more interesting campaign than when players find an item, look it up in the *DMG*, and say, "Well, it has buttons, I guess we found another *rod of lordly might*." A DM can use an item's history or lore to make it even more fascinating. Some items may only work in a certain terrain. Perhaps that *rod of lightning* the party recovered from the frost giant's lair doesn't work in hot areas such as jungle or desert surroundings. Let the players discover this the hard way. [See "*Magic Gone Haywire*," *DRAGON* issue #163.]

—When stocking high-level dungeons, supply enemy guards and monsters with magical items the party has difficulty using, if you must give the monsters magic at all. For example, the party should not be able to defeat 12 evil guards armed with magical swords and grab 12 magical swords at one time. Perhaps the guards use *swords +1* that can be used only by lawful-evil creatures. A magical ring or weapon employed by a giant may be too large or heavy for the characters to employ. In the AD&D *White Plume Mountain* module, there was a giant crab that wore an armband that made it psionic-proof. It was noted in the module that the magic of the armband was keyed to that particular monster alone. Obviously some items will be created with their monstrous users in mind!

The type of magical items found by an adventuring party, especially a low-level party, should usually be items with a limited number of uses. These items include potions with only a few doses, scrolls, wands with 20 or fewer charges, and similar things. Create special versions of magical items that will melt, shatter, or crumble after a predetermined number of uses. Above all, your players, even through magic divining, should only have a vague idea of the number of charges in a wand or item. Items such as magical armor or magical weapons should be gained only after a terrible fight and extremely good playing or problem-solving on the player's part. Powerful magic should be earned, not stumbled across!

Magic is one of the things that makes the AD&D game great. Rather than keeping magical items away from your players for a ridiculous amount of levels, let your players have a small taste of different items and put a little variety in your game! This will keep the rest of the party from having to watch Vorko the Fighter pull out his *flaming battle axe +5* and save the day yet again. As the game progresses, let the more advanced characters utilize and keep more powerful magical items. It is the job of the DM to keep the campaign flowing in a balanced manner, making things neither too easy nor too hard for the players. A little creativity can eliminate the problem of super-characters and produce a memorable campaign.

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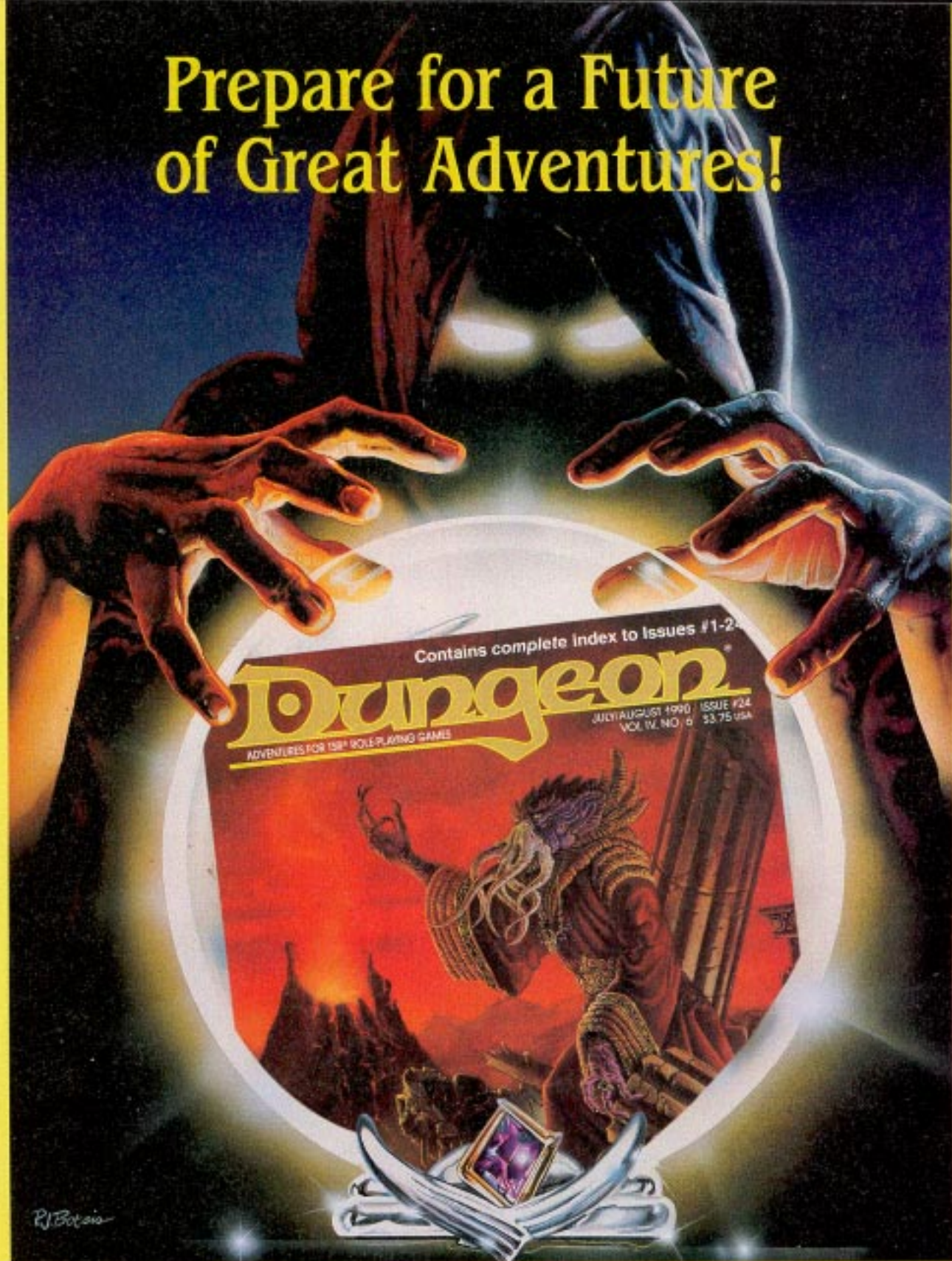
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The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

Part 12: An ancient revelation

by Bruce A. Heard

This series chronicles the adventures of an Alphatian explorer and his crew as they journey across the D&D® Known World in their skyship. The information herein may be used to expand the D&D campaigns using the Gazetteer series.

from the Journals of
prince haldemar of haaken
lord Admiral of the Mightiest Empire
Captain of the Ever-Victorious
princess ark
Imperial Explorer, etc., etc.

Artwork by Jim Holloway

Sulamir 26, 2000 AY: The departure from Starpoint was a grim one. I couldn't take the chance of being discovered. Empress Eriadna might have been watching, and she might not have tolerated a longer stay, no matter how helpful it was to my crew's morale. There would be other stops elsewhere, away from the Empire.

We are now sailing to the southwest, toward East Portage. I decided to remain within the skyshield. I have no doubt in my mind that the Heldannic Knights are aware of our emergence into this era. They would certainly intercept us if we breached the skyshield. Fortunately, their best ships are built in the void and cannot

reach the *Princess Ark* within the atmosphere of this world.

Sudmir 17: I have conducted further research on the Myoshiman monolith during the days of our journey between Starpoint and East Portage. By luck, the Empress did not request this "gift" from Lord Katayama. I have devised a contraption for controlling the effects of the magical monolith. With a simple command word, Talasar or myself can now allow or disallow the *invisibility* to take effect.

Sudmir 19: We entered the sky above East Portage this dawn. As usual, a multitude of busy merchantmen crowded the port, some unloading their cargo and others picking up valuable merchandise from the west. I observed nearly any kind of flag at the docks, and several new ones, too. With pleasure, I noticed the Imperial Banner was still the most common.

Several medium-sized ships were being pulled out of the water and loaded onto large wooden cradles. Scores of logs placed ahead and under the ships allowed the massive hulls to move forward, pulled by hundreds of draft horses. The ships were to be slowly dragged 140 miles overland in this manner until they reached West Portage, on the opposite coast of the narrow Isle of Dawn. This was quicker for surface vessels than circumventing the Isle of Dawn. This is proof that skyships such as the *Princess Ark* are a blessing for all navigators.

The port authorities did not seem to mind our presence; after vague formalities, some of the crew went down, alternating shifts again. I thought it would be a comfort for Lady Abovombe to leave her quarters and visit the city with me. Talasar had spent many hours with her, providing counsel and spiritual help. I was greatly relieved to see that Abovombe had finally partaken of my potions. She is clearly at her best now. Her looks could melt the





heart of the coldest man.

We landed near a huge, paved avenue that divided the entire town of East Portage, from the port to the west gate. The avenue was wide enough for two seagoing ships and their horse carriages to pass through at once. Elephants and a number of other large creatures were also used as draft animals, depending on the ships. Heavily armed caravans lead the ships, often followed by impressive baggage trains and other travelers.

We took a stroll to the commoners' market. It was quaint. I offered Abovombe a selection from a "bird of fortune" at one of those stuffy Ochalean shops that one can only find in a small, isolated street. It is a local custom to pay the shop owner to have his bird pick one of several thousand scrolls in the shop. The scroll often turns out to be a poem, a luck sign, or some obscure saying. Lady Abovombe read her scroll, smiled, and placed it in her pouch. Tradition demands that he poem be kept for oneself, but I wondered what it said.

I then took her out for dinner at The Silver Snake, a native place of my knowledge. Amazingly, it was still there after all these years. Dinner was pleasant, but Abovombe still showed a bit of coldness in her eyes. I was about to reveal how painful that was to my heart when I felt my dagger quiver in my sleeve. Danger was close.

Suddenly, Abovombe screamed, grabbed my arm, and pulled me to the ground. A swarthy man hiding behind a pillar had stepped forward and tossed a dagger at my back. Abovombe was quicker and saved my life. The man shouted, "Death to the Profaner!" and escaped into the crowded street. The dagger stuck into a wooden pillar that had been behind me, the blade oozing a black, oily substance.

After an interminable string of abject apologies from the owner, we left and returned to the Princess. I wondered what I had gotten myself into this time. I could also not stop thinking that Abovombe saved my life, and that perhaps she still had some feelings for me!

Sudmir 20: It was quite inconvenient that I was unable to see my aggressor, for this denies me the option of tracking him with my *crystal ball*. According to Lady Abovombe's description of the man and his accent, he must have been a Thothian. So far, I cannot see in what way I would deserve such treatment.

Raman, our chief engineer, erudite in the matters of ancient history, confirmed the dagger to be Thothian—that is, *ancient Thothian*. Raman had years ago been part of an archaeological expedition in Upper Thothia and had unearthed items of this nature. Sages in the expedition then began dying mysteriously during the excavation of King Haptuthep's tomb. Eventually, a native was caught while attempting to slit the throat of a sage who had fallen ill the evening before. The native had a weapon identical to the one hurled at me.

Unfortunately, the man never revealed

whom he worked for. He died mysteriously within the hour of his capture. Magic was ineffective in retrieving the man's soul for further questioning. Rumors flew among the native workers that frightening, ancient curses were at work. The tomb was dug up at last, however, and its treasures were shipped back to Alpathia. All of the sages in the expedition died of mysterious causes in the following three years. Raman himself nearly lost his life in a fire that ravaged his personal library. Many ancient Thothian scrolls were destroyed in the blaze.

Lacking any other clue as to the nature of this problem, I have ordered an immediate departure toward Upper Thothia, into the neutral region.

Sudmir 25: We located the old excavation site that Raman described. It lay in a deserted, rocky valley; the tomb was abandoned, and no sign of life was visible. Sand filled most of the entrance left by the archaeological expedition.

Raman, Myojo, Ramissur, and a squad of boltmen came with me to study the tomb. Removing the sand from the entrance was no major problem, and soon we started searching the dark monument for clues.

The expedition team had been quite thorough in stripping the tomb of treasures or anything else worth studying. We visited a number of chambers and galleries. Extra attention was brought to the chamber where the assassin had been caught, deep inside the tomb. The chamber had only one entrance, so the assassin must have used a secret passage or magic. It was Myojo who found—or, rather, smelled—the answer.

Raman studied some hieroglyphs on the wall and unveiled an interesting parable which gave away the mechanism of a secret passage. We entered the passage and followed a long stairway down to a larger chamber. It seems the expedition picked up a false treasure, a lure left by the builder of the tomb to fool the grave robbers. This new chamber contained a large sarcophagus, treasures, and statues of ancient Thothian mythology. Especially worrisome was a series of alcoves in which stood the mummified remains of priests and acolytes who remained in the tomb at the time it was sealed. In dark places such as ancient tombs where necromantic magic may be powerful, one must be naturally suspicious of any corpses.

My dagger quivered again. Ramissur and the boltmen took position against the corpses. However, unleashing *lightning bolts* in such closed quarters could be disastrous, and I ordered the boltmen out immediately. About then, a large slab of stone slammed shut with a thunderous rumble. Low voices rose from the corpses, chanting a strange hymn. The corpses did not move—but the walls did. They seemed to fade away into darkness, revealing an even larger chamber, a throne room lit by glowing braziers.

The mummified priests came alive,

progressively regaining their former living appearances. On the throne was a black figure, King Haptuthep presumably. An unsettling, evil glow flickered in his eyes, almost overwhelming my senses.

As the king spoke, Raman translated his whispered words with some difficulty. "You, sage, are a thief in my abode. And you, sorcerer, are a profaner. Your magical powers are useless here, and your feline lackey is an insult to the Immortals."

I inquired of the being as to what I had that belonged to him, and he went on. "That magic you used to empower your ship with the ability to fly is mine. It was stolen centuries ago when your people invaded my land. You have been the last to keep it, and you committed a sacrilege when you invoked its power."

I was properly nettled. "Why have you waited so long to manifest your anger, may I ask?"

"My servants searched your empire for you for decades until an old friend of yours came to me. She revealed many things about you and your servants, Synn is her name. Now you shall become my servants."

Naturally, I didn't wait any longer and tried to *web* this sinister character. I felt the magic go off, but *nothing happened*, or at least nothing that I was aware of. If we had been standing within an *anti-magic* zone, I would have felt nothing at all. And that's what tipped me off. I've seen this kind of trick before. He was merely trying to make me believe that magic didn't work. This was one pharaoh who had lost touch with reality. Alpathian wizards are fully aware of the powers of *hypnosis*. It is the oldest trick in the grimoire!

Myojo swung wildly at the approaching priests, and Raman tried to fend off a few others with his torch. I feigned being a wizard incapable of casting a spell, dropped to my knees, and implored his royal highness for mercy.

The king stood up, already rejoicing at his victory. Then I added, "Oh, what the heck!" and fired my *wand of disintegration* with quite a bit of conviction. It worked perfectly well.

With a cry of rage, the king reeled back. He survived, so to speak, since he was undead as I had suspected. The marching of the dead priests was illusory, and so was most of the room. The old king appeared for what he truly was—a horribly desiccated body with glowing eyes, no doubt a lich. His left arm and shoulder had been obliterated by the wand, unveiling bones darkened by centuries past. He uttered a quick word and disappeared.

Sudmir 26: We had no trouble emptying the chamber of its treasures and scrolls. As I expected after yesterday's encounter, King Haptuthep's royal sarcophagus was empty. The king's lich probably has another lair somewhere in Thothia. We removed the other corpses and gave them a more permanent burial.

It was evident that his chamber had

been regularly visited. There were many gifts, some quite recent, that could not have withstood the passing centuries. The lich probably maintained a group of living followers, fanatics devoted to their ancient king. I must have encountered one of them in East Portage. Well, I am not in the lich-hunting business. This will have to be left to the proper authorities in Edairo.

The most interesting discovery, however, concerns this ancient scroll of which the king spoke, which I obtained decades ago during the war. I am worried that, as a result of my use of the scroll to enchant my ship, the *Princess Ark* may be more than I first thought. But what could the scroll have been? I fear that I was not in possession of the entire spell when I conducted the original enchantment of the ship. According to my findings in the tomb, it seems I must perform a further ceremony to complete the full enchantment. I will have to study these new scrolls further. As an echo to my thoughts, a low groan seemed to arise from the *Princess Ark's* hull.

To be continued

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

Myojo Katamura (Attaché to the Admiral)

History: Myojo comes from a family traditionally devoted to the life of warriors. The Katamuras are vassals to the Katayama clan on Myoshima, and Myojo was sent to serve in Lord Katayama's personal guard. While still a teenager, Myojo gained great honor when he deflected an arrow meant for his shogun. Unfortunately, his awe and admiration for a nonrakasta (Haldemar) has made him a pariah to his kin. His two former companions, Kenju Fuurifesu (the shogun's cousin) and Jiro Tomokato (Myojo's brother-in-law) are now dead, and consequently all Katayama and Katamura will seek to slay Myojo if given the opportunity.

Personality: Myojo is a naturally brave and proud warrior. He was loyal to Kata-

yama until Haldemar demonstrated his daring and power when he bent to his will a ferocious monster (see DRAGON® issue #161). In absolute awe, Myojo wanted nothing else but to serve his new master. Myojo is otherwise hot tempered, arrogant with foes or underlings, and generally haughty with nonrakasta other than Haldemar. He does not trust Xerdon, whom he senses could be a rival to Haldemar, and considers Leo the gnome an inferior being.

Disposition: Goodwill toward Haldemar; Neutral toward Talasar; Antipathy toward Ramissur, Raman, Tarias, Ashari, Lady Abovombe, Xerdon, and Leo (given in order of preference).

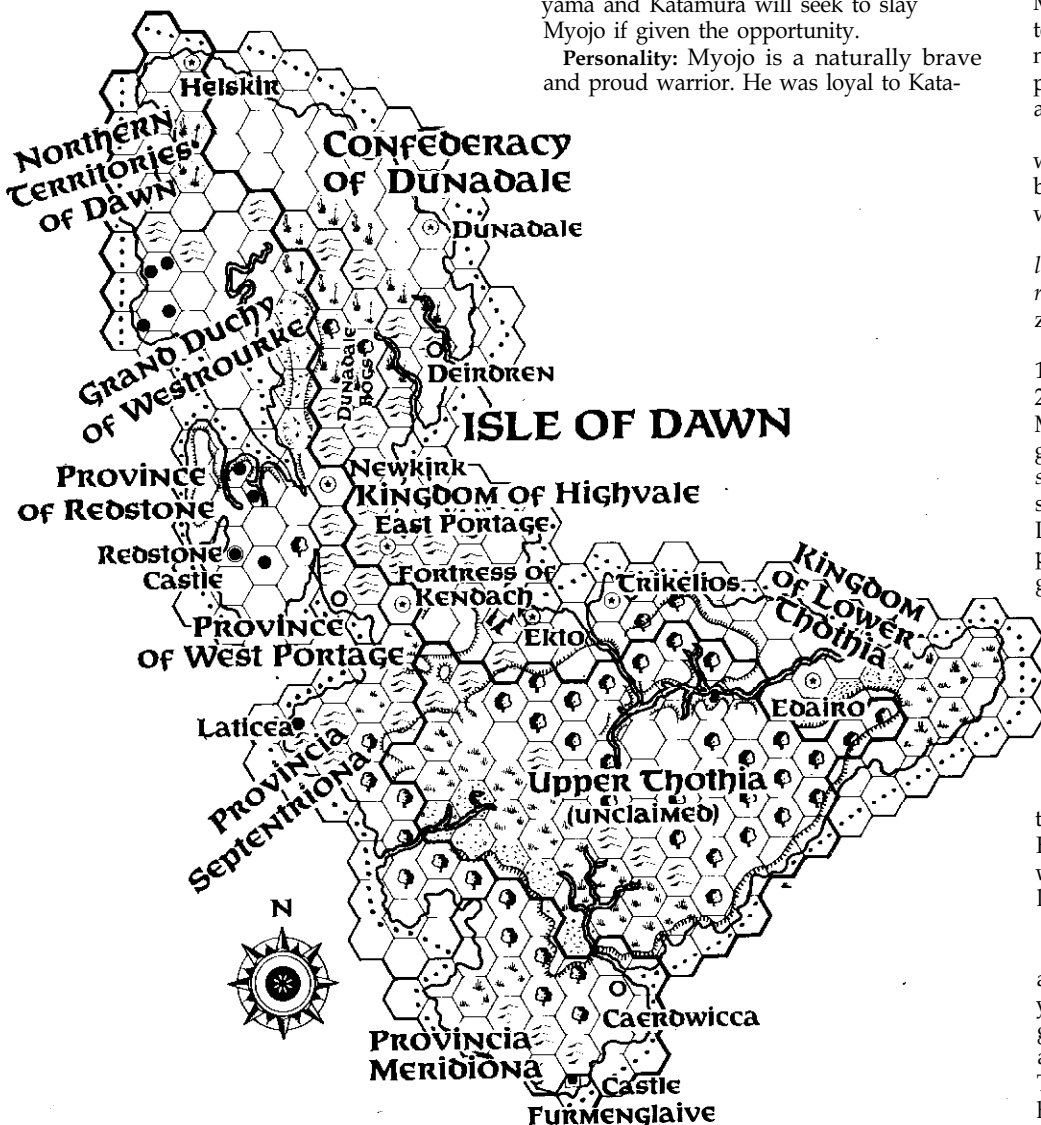
Appearance: Myojo is a rakasta, a cat-headed humanoid. Short gray fur covers his body and face. A rather good looking male by rakasta standards, Myojo is slim but well muscled, with keen yellow eyes and large pointy ears. Myojo usually wears traditional Myoshiman armor complete with kabuto war helm, modified to bear Haldemar's family colors (gold crescent over a crimson and sable background). Myojo bears multiple scars on his chest, a testimony of his fight against Synn, the night dragon. The wound becomes very painful in the presence of wights, wraiths, and other powerful undead.

Equipment carried: Myojo's armor was given to him by his father; it is light but effective *armor* +2. His favored weapon, a katana, is a very fine *sword* +1. He also owns a small *gong of dispelling* (12 charges, casts *dispel magic*, 12' radius at level 10), and a ceremonial waki-zashi (short sword).

D&D game statistics: S 16, I 13, W 11, D 17, Co 15, Ch 10 (14 to rakasta); HD 2 + 1; AC 0 (with Dex and magic); hp 16; MV 90' (30'); #AT 1 or 2 (katana or daikyu great bow); Dmg 2d6 + 4 (Myojo reached *skilled-proficiency* in his mastery of swords) or d6, Save F2 +2, ML9, AL N. Languages: Myoshiman (common and poetry) and Alphantian (treat as an Intelligence skill). Skills: Tracking (Wi), Myoshiman Etiquette (In), Blind Shooting (Dx), and Bravery (Wi).

Raman, Nabonidus (Chief Engineer)

History: Born to a family of horse traders, Raman became a jack-of-all-trades. He raised horses with his elders when he was a teenager, but soon grew bored and left to learn about the marvels of the world. He was a soldier for a short time, studied Basic Magic at Eriadna High, created a mobile theater and sold it a few years later, returned to Eriadna High and graduated in Ship Building, joined an archaeological expedition in Upper Thothia, ran a plantation in Aegos where he made a small fortune, returned and dabbled for some time in politics, gave up the risky and expensive life of politician to



become a poet, then opened his own library, which eventually burned down in a fire. Nearly penniless, he joined the Imperial Navy as a last recourse.

Personality: A snob and a bit pedantic, Raman is the blase type. He is 50 years old and has an opinion on everything and everyone. Thanks to his education and extensive experience in life, Raman does reasonably well as a sage. He is quiet, rational, and despises disorder and non-conformist thinking (such as Leo's). He loves poetry, literature, and famous quotations, although (much to his consternation) he does very poorly as a writer himself. He tells endless stories about his tribulations that often put listeners to sleep.

Disposition: Goodwill toward Halde-
mar, Talasar, and Xerdon; Neutral toward Lady Abovombe and Myojo; Antipathy toward Tarias, Ashari, Ramissur, and Leo.

Appearance: Like many people of the ethnic Ambur background, Raman has a copper skin, dark brown eyes, and short black hair. He is small and bit overweight. Raman grows a neatly trimmed goatee that he pulls at when lost in thought.

Equipment carried: *Wand of lightning bolts* (8d6) and *Zigomar's instant library* (Raman's pride and joy). This large ivory tube contains a scroll listing a collection of books. A *read magic* is required to decipher the scroll. Uttering a title on the scroll makes the corresponding book appear next to the tube. "Keep" is the command word that either returns the book or enters a new one into the scrolls arcane memory. Any summoned book must remain within 30' of the tube or crumble into dust. The scroll memorizes up to 1,000 books. Raman protects the tube with a *wizard lock*.

Spells memorized:

Level 1— *Read languages*, *read magic*

Level 2— *Knock*, *wizard lock*

Level 3— *Dispel magic*

D&D game statistics: S 11, I 16, W 14, D 11, Co 12, Ch 10; 6th-level Magic-User; AC 9; hp 15; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1 (dagger); Dmg by weapon type; Save MU6; ML 9; AL N. Languages: Common Alphantian, Thothian, and the Ambur dialect. Skills: Horse Husbandry (In), Ship Building (In), Literature (In), Archeology (In), Linguistics (In), Ethnology (In), and Zoology (In).

Abovombe, Daughter of Mananjary
(Ambassadress from Cestia)

History: Lady Abovombe is the third daughter of Mananjary, the king of Manaraka on Cestia. Raised to become a diplomat, she always preferred the traditional life of dragon hunter. Whenever she had an occasion, she would leave the palace and join dragon-hunting raids incognito. While still a teenager, she mastered the fighting techniques used against Night Dragons.

She joined the *Princess Ark* expedition in

1965 AY in Cestia. Lord Katayama of Myoshima abducted her when she was 27, and she spent 34 years in a Myoshiman dungeon while the *Princess Ark* voyaged into the Hollow World, then was hurled into the future to the year 2,000 AY. Synn the night dragon then brought her back to the ship to torment Halde-
mar. Halde-
mar gave her two *potions of longevity*, rejuvenating her to the biological age of 41.

Personality: Despite the years of hardship in Myoshima, Lady Abovombe still is a sophisticated and proud person. She can, however, switch quickly to her more rugged side, as dictated by the situation. She is equally at ease within a palace as among a party of crude, ruthless warriors. Her passion and hot temper prevent her from succeeding as a diplomat, and she has gotten her in trouble when dealing with adversity, such as when she was thrown into the Myoshiman jail. Her willpower and tenacity allowed her to endure and survive despite her condition. She now despises all Myoshimans.

Disposition: Goodwill toward Halde-
mar, Talasar, Xerdon, and Ashari; Neutral toward Leo and Raman; Antipathy toward Ramissur and Tarias; Hatred toward Myojo. Lady Abovombe is in love with Halde-
mar but doubts his true feelings for her, and her growing friendship with

Talasar is confusing the issue for her.

Appearance: Now in her forties, Lady Abovombe is still sensual and elegant despite three decades of captivity. She often keeps her jet-black hair tied in a bun. Her dark skin makes quite a contrast with her steel-gray eyes. Although she doesn't look strong, Abovombe's strength and endurance surprise many. To the crew's delight, she speaks with a charming native Cestian accent.

Equipment carried: Lady Abovombe does not normally carry any item of importance when on the ship. She will take along the following objects when expecting danger: *short sword* +1, *bolas* +2, *bolas* of sunlight, *ointment of soothing*, and a *ring of safety*.

D&D game statistics: S 14, I 13, W 10, D 15, Co 16, Ch 16; 4th-level Fighter; AC 8 (with Dex); hp 28; MV 120' (40'); #AT 1 (*short sword* +1 or *bolas* +2); Dmg by weapon type (1d6 + 2 or d4 + 3/entangle; Abovombe reached *master-proficiency* in her mastery of *bolas*); Save F4; ML 11; AL L. Languages: Cestian, Night Dragon (reading only), and Common Alphantian (treat as an Intelligence Skill). Skills: Detect Deception (Wi), Tracking (Wi), Horsemanship (Dx), Leadership (Wi).

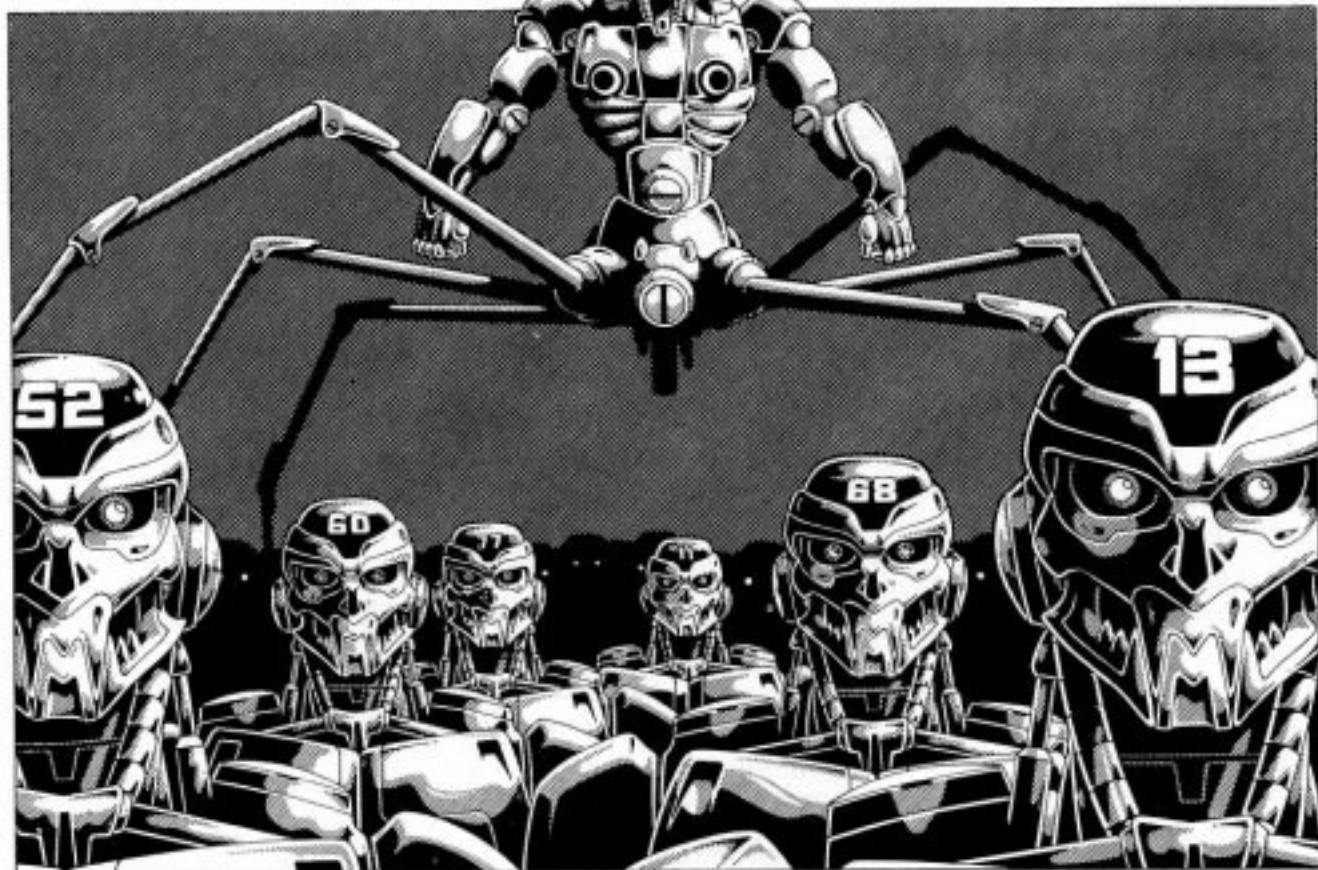
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THE ROLE OF Computers

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BattleTech: The Crescent Hawk's Revenge
(Activision)

Bytes, bits, and (tid)bits

A letter from Anthony Ragan, of Los Angeles, Calif., prompted us to check out problems with PC/MS-DOS games designed before the introduction of DOS 4.0 and DOS 4.1. Anthony's problems were with *Mines of Titan*, from Infocom (Mediagenic), which crashes when running under DOS 4.0.

Hundreds of games were written before DOS 4.0 hit the market. DOS 4.1 was then released because DOS 4.0 was bug-infested. Both DOS versions occupy more memory than previous versions, which means that many games written before DOS 4.0 will crash when you run them.

We talked to Pam Barnett at Mediagenic, who discussed this problem with the Consumer Service technicians at her company. They offered the following suggestions: If you are running under DOS 4.0 or DOS 4.1 and your game crashes, remove unnec-

essary drivers or TSR (Terminate and Stay Resident) programs. Check your AUTO-EXEC.BAT and CONFIG.SYS files. If you reduce the number of buffers and files ordered when your computer boots, you'll save memory there as well.

You might also boot from your floppy disk using a system disk. This is a disk that contains only the DOS files, affording your computer its minimum memory configuration. Then switch to your hard-disk drive or insert your game disk and play on.

Mediagenic cautions that DOS problems differ. The company is more than willing to talk with individuals regarding problems in running games under DOS 4.0 or DOS 4.1. If you are trying to play a Mediagenic (Activision or Infocom) game and it continually crashes, give these helpful folks a call at: (415) 329-7630.

Reviews

Computer games' ratings

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

MicroProse Software
180 Lakefront Drive
Hunt Valley MD 21030
(301) 771-1151

Railroad Tycoon
PC/MS-DOS version

\$59.95

We now have a favorite simulation game: *Railroad Tycoon*. Not since the appearance of *SimCity* last year has a simulation generated as much excitement around our game central. Playing times were never less than two hours; several sessions ran over eight hours. Time seems to become meaningless when you start building your railroad empire.

Railroad Tycoon requires several sessions to learn. A great amount of detail is packed into this game, even when playing at the lowest of the four skill levels. You probably won't realize all of the game's features for several turns. We strongly advise you start your railroading quest at the Investor level, where you run trains in "non-conflict situations." This means your trains won't run into each other (even on single tracks), there is friendly competition between you and other developing railroads, and the basic economy is in effect. This mode ensures that stations in moderate to large cities will purchase all incoming cargo. Other reality levels include Financier, Mogul, and Tycoon. Each level adjusts the amount of money you earn when you deliver cargo to a station.

The manual consists of 180 pages of extremely well-written instructions. Also included is a tutorial, plus historical railroad facts.

You may start your railroad in the western United States, eastern United States, England, or Europe. After three weeks of continuous play, we continue to manage our third railroad empire attempt that we started in the western United States.

The difference between a U.S. railroad and one overseas lies in the cargo that trains carry. In order to drive economies, certain industries require specific consumables. For example, should one of the cities your railroad services possess a refinery, delivery of petroleum rewards your efforts with cash. The farther the distance between pickups and deliveries, the higher your delivery payment. Should you begin your railroad in England, the goods shipped include: chemicals, cotton, coal, steel, hops, textiles, beer, livestock, manufactured goods, mail, and passengers. If Europe is more to your liking, you'll deal with: nitrates, wool, coal, fertilizer, textiles, steel, wine, grapes, armaments, mail, and passengers. (We haven't attempted overseas railroads yet as we are still trying to succeed in the United States.)

The railroad sounds produced through the Roland sound system are also fantastic. Wait until you hear the blast and echo of your train's whistle. The graphic displays are intelligently designed and colorful. We recommend you have at least an EGA system.

There are five game-speed options, from frozen to turbo. The latter speed is not recommended if you want to read the important messages routed to you during the game. These messages range from train messages that report the arrival and departure of trains or the delivery of



BattleTech: The Crescent Hawk's Revenge (Activision)

priority products, to news reports that can affect the operation of your railroad. For example, there are financial news reports concerning railroads stock prices and competitors' railroad maneuvers. Local news informs you about priority shipments needing pickup.

A few of the animated sequences can be overridden by striking the space bar. After you've seen a bridge built to span a river or a train wreck eight or nine times, you'll prefer continuing with the game without these cut-scene interruptions.

You can improve a railroad station by adding a restaurant, a hotel, a switching yard, a maintenance shop, food storage, livestock pens, goods storage, a post office, or an engine shop. Add that post office, and watch your mail delivery and pick-up revenue increase. Add that restaurant and hotel, and watch your passenger loads pick up. An engine shop allows you to build any of the available trains at that location, instead of awaiting a new train from a far-away terminal. We suggest that once you have selected the area for a railroad that you plan your station building wisely.

The abundance of detail in *Railroad Tycoon* prohibits us from addressing each feature in this review. Suffice to say that the manual contains 176 pages of guidelines and suggestions. Add a 14-page technical supplement and two double-sided reference cards, and you've got several hours of learning ahead of you. We feel that the combination of the manual, the tutorial, and the excitement generated in building your own railroad empire offsets the time required.

You can engage in rate wars as your railroading experience grows. Try dispatcher operation for a true feel of rail-

road traffic control. And attempt to buy out your opposition through smart stock purchases.

Railroad Tycoon has it all, from excitement to strategy. We strongly recommend that MicroProse convert this simulation to other platforms, specifically the Macintosh, Amiga, and Atari ST computers. Several other games have now been permanently removed from our hard disk in order for *Railroad Tycoon* to remain as one of the most accessed programs on our system. If you own a PC/MS-DOS machine, railroading could become one of your most favorite activities.

This game was reviewed on a PC/MS-DOS 80286 computer with the Roland sound system, an EGA board, and an EGA monitor. The game requires 512K RAM (640K if using VGA graphics), with CGA, EGA, VGA/MCGA, or Tandy 1000 color cards and a color monitor. A mouse is included. Three 5.25" disks are included.

Spotlight Software

distributed by Cinemaware
4165 Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Westlake Village CA 91362
(805) 495-6515

BrainBlasters

Amiga 2600 version *****
\$39.95

Usually, when a game company offers two games in one package, the consumer receives two lower-quality games for the price of one better-quality software entertainment. This is certainly not the case with *BrainBlasters*. These two games are highly playable, and they offer appealing graphics and great music and sound.

The first game, *Xevious 2*, has you fly

through different levels, blowing things to oblivion. Along the way, you can pick up cash and power up items to make you more powerful. The Amiga's graphics rival some of the arcade shoot-em-ups.

As you get to the ending of each level, you enter a shop. The proprietor is visible in the upper left-hand corner of your screen. This animated creature shows you what can be bought or sold. Watch out, though: The big bosses at the end of each level are almost invincible. You've got to find their weak spots. Xevious 2 is well done with attention given to game details.

The second game, *Bombuzal*, is a thinking-man's *Pac-Man*. The player takes the form of a creature that must detonate bombs on tiles. Each level has different layouts of tiles with a few bombs on some of the tiles. You must detonate all of the bombs before the timer runs out. Should one bomb detonate, it might blow up other bombs around it.

Some tiles are indestructible while others break up after you have stepped on them. Some tiles are slippery, while other tiles are fitted with slots that allow you to move the bombs. Some objects you find (such as teleporters, spinners, and robots) will hinder your progress.

The game can be played in either 2-D or 3-D mode. We preferred the 2-D mode because your on-screen character is far easier to control. We enjoyed this game because each level requires you to consider each move. You must figure out how to detonate the bombs without being trapped on an isolated tile and without being blown to bits.

Both games offer a good balance of strategy and action, and are a great buy.

Electronic Arts

1820 Gateway Drive
San Mateo CA 94404
(415) 571-7171

Imperium

Atari ST version \$39.95

Imperium is a war-gamer's delight. If you enjoy strategic thinking and do not require a graphic display for your hard work, *Imperium* could well be your ticket to grand space adventure. However, if you enjoy fast-action games, *Imperium* is not for you.

This adventure is icon- and window-driven. Icons allow you to save and load games, establish alliances and embargoes, review your wealth, deploy your forces and fight, check maps, and gather news and reports. Windows can be set around the screen. Within the windows are selection areas where you either type in data or click a button to retrieve additional data. All icons and all but one window, with attendant information, are displayed in monochrome. We feel far more color could have been employed in this offering and would have been highly effective in delineating gamer selections. As it is, only

the map-window features the entire galaxy in color.

A highly effective soundtrack happens to interfere with the game's interface. When music is playing, it becomes somewhat difficult to close the game's windows. You must stop the music from loading, and continually click your right mouse button for your on-screen cursor to appear. The on-screen cursor is used to close the window that activates the music. We found that turning the music off through the game menu was the best action to take to speed up game play.

In *Imperium*, you set out to either dominate the entire galaxy or live to a ripe 1,000 years of age. You control all elements, from political to military, as you not only endeavor to spread your own empire's influence but also to prevent other empires from influencing your own territory.

Invasion forces, building your own fleets, ensuring your subordinates remain loyal to your cause—all require a great deal of constant checking and updating. Thankfully, you can have the computer control your empire's economics, defense, and diplomacy.

There are hundreds of hours of playing time packed within this software package. We must stress the strategic aspect of the game and not its graphic elements.

Yes, there is copy protection, but it is manual based. You can simply read the required information from various profiles within the manual and enter the data to proceed through the game. *Imperium* is quite an offering. Its user interface is unusual and sets its own standard of operation. If nothing else, we hope this review has encouraged you to check it out at your dealer to see if its elements match your gaming needs.

Starflight 2: Trade Routes of the

Cloud Nebula ***
PC/MS-DOS version \$49.95

The blasted Spemin have threatened Arth once again! Unfortunately, these slimy and somewhat cowardly aliens have an unlimited fuel source and a brand new weapon. Your objective is to get into deep space and locate not only the technology the Spemin are using, but to acquire it as well as their fuel source.

To take on the Spemin, naturally you're going to have to train your crew and upgrade your ships. Interstel only has so much money—certainly not enough to accomplish this task. So, its going to be up to each captain, his ship, and the crew members he commands to drum up trade and make money to carry out these upgrades to both personnel and spacecraft.

The vastness of space is yours to explore. Given that not all the wonders you encounter are going to be friendly in nature, it is a good idea to upgrade your ship and crew as soon as possible. Despite somewhat sparse funds, we found we were able to upgrade our laser weaponry

one notch, as well as our drives. We also managed to train our communications officer to achieve a higher level. It is your communications officer's responsibility to translate any incoming messages. These alien messages can provide you with any number of outstanding hints, as well as warn you of pending trouble.

You must crew your spacecraft with a captain (who can fill in at any position, should that become necessary), a science officer (who scans planets and obtains analyses of its condition as well as any present civilizations), a navigator (who maneuvers your craft through space as well as prepares the ship for combat), an engineer (who repairs damage and handles any acquired jump pods), a communications officer (who hails spacecraft and questions other ship captains using various voice inflections), and a doctor (to heal, heal, heal your crew!).

Crew positions are selected from the species found on Arth; Human, Velox, Thrynn, Elowan, and Android. Each species has special attributes. The Android, for example, is highly skilled in navigation and engineering. However, if the Android is selected, it cannot be trained to higher skill levels. Other races can be trained when you have enough cash (SPs) on hand to accomplish that.

As you travel about space, you'll also learn when to recommend planets for colonization. Recommend well and you earn SPs. Recommend poorly and you'll be fined, sometimes quite harshly. Just finding planets worthy of colonization efforts will take some time.

Starflight 2 is a good science-fiction adventure for beginning or mid-range gamers. There is nothing supremely challenging about the game. It is quite slow at times, but this was not caused by our computer. The various game modules that must be accessed during play can slow down your command actions. The user interface is through the keyboard only. There is no mouse or joy-stick support.

Starflight 2 is a one-action-at-a-time game. This is not realistic. For example, let's say you are cruising through a solar system after having left a planet. On the planet, two of your crew members sustained injuries in combat with one of the planet's life forms. You have a doctor aboard, but in order to access the doctor, you must disengage from maneuvering (being accomplished by your navigator). Your ship halts in space (forget inertia!). Now you scroll through the navigator's commands to the Bridge option, which takes you to the menu that allows you to command any of your crew members. Once selected, you scroll through the crew positions and access the doctor. You can then select Treat, and he'll start work on one crew member and one crew member only. Don't forget, you're still motionless in space while you determine who should be healed. In order to travel onward, you scroll back up through the menus to the

navigator and once more access Maneuver to get moving.

This one-command-at-a-time feature is quite debilitating as far as game enjoyment goes. *Starflight 2* offers some enjoyable moments, but the game does not offer anything stunningly new.

This game was reviewed using EGA graphics.

Accolade

550 South Winchester Blvd
San Jose CA 95128
(408) 985-1700

Ishido: The Way of Stones *****
Macintosh version \$54.95

The beauty and simplicity of *Ishido* will leave most gamers stunned. Its grace and complexity offer challenges that will find you engrossed for hours at a time. Accolade, which also brought the superior *Shanghai* to the Macintosh computer, has outdone itself with *Ishido*.

Originally developed by Publishers International, this once-obscure but highly praised game was rescued by Accolade, which repackaged it and made it affordable for all gamers. Thankfully, a PC/MS-DOS version of the game is also available, so *Ishido* should reach thousands of gamers.

The object of the game is to master the stones. You are presented with a game board containing 96 squares. Onto this game board you'll place one of the 72 stones contained in your pouch. These stones must match one another in color or symbol. When you place one stone next to another stone, there must be a match. The real strategy comes into play when you try to place a stone next to three other stones whose colors and symbols are different!

The graphics on the color Macintosh version are superb. The richness of the stones and playing board are very realistic. You can also select from other playing boards, backgrounds, and stone types. The Egyptian environment was as rich as the Chinese environment, in our opinion.

You can play either the ancient or the modern game, and you also have the option of playing with a partner in cooperative mode. Sometimes two heads are far better than one in this puzzle game that requires concentration and strategy skills. You can challenge your friend or the computer in the challenge game, and even enter tournament play. The few strategy hints provided are truly an asset for those learning *Ishido*.

Succeed with a four-way placement, and the Oracle of the Stones will issue insight into a question or the situation that was posed prior to the successful stone placements. You can interpret these answers in any way you wish and save them for future reference.

You can also edit your stone sets, backgrounds, and boards. This can provide the creative gamer another outlet to pure enjoyment.



Ishido: The Way of Stones (Accolade)

Ishido is the finest puzzle game of the year. We simply cannot leave its environment long enough to peek at other new offerings. This game is a must for those who enjoy puzzles and superb game coding to produce an offering as delightfully graphic as it is playable.

This review was made using a Macintosh Ix computer.

The Buggies

Armor Alley
(Three-Sixty Pacific, 408-879-9144)
On Macintosh Ix

We don't mind resetting our Macintosh Ix Control Panel to two or 16 colors, and the game is not copy protected. Unfortu-

nately, just about every INIT that occupies high memory in the Macintosh causes this combat simulation not to run. Also, if you are using your CD desk accessory and are playing music in the background through your AppleCD SC drive, the game again refuses to run. And don't even think of running MultiFinder, as *Armor Alley* finds that unacceptable as well. It's no big deal to turn off the music, but we object to having to remove our INITs that conflict with this simulator,

Why is it that other game publishers can produce software that acknowledges and negates memory-address difficulties? We use our Macintosh Ix for a number of functions that require INITs, CDEVs, and D/As to be available for use at any time. As far as we know, few computers are used solely as game machines. A game that requires your computer to be used for entertainment purposes only probably wasn't made to account for the multiplicity of computing needs.

Stratego

(Accolade, 408-985-1700)
On Macintosh Ix, 256-color mode

We bet most of you have played Milton Bradley's STRATEGO board game at one time or another. Accolade has released the computer version of this great strategy game for the Macintosh and, for approximately 30 minutes of play, it was dynamite. The colors were fantastic. The play was authentic. Avoiding the enemy's bombs and trying to find its flag was a great deal of fun.

Then we ran into a fatal crash. We selected one of the predesigned strategies, Wheel of Danger. This strategy had some of our most powerful folk up front, with the flag protected within a wheel of bombs. Unfortunately, once the strategy had been selected and we grabbed our



Stratego (Accolade)

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REVISED Ninjas & Superspies™

The popular *Ninjas & Superspies™*, with its 41 forms of martial art hand to hand combat, cyber-disguises and implants, has been out of print for the last few months to undergo some modest, but significant changes. The role-playing game is now completely compatible with *Heroes Unlimited™*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles® & Other Strangeness, Rifts™*, and the entire Palladium *Megaverse®*! It has also been reorganized for easier use and we've even added a few more pages. But that's not all!!

Highlights include:

- Three NEW character classes: the private eye (complete with his own agency), the cyber-agent, and mercenary commando.
- An expanded section on combining N & S with *Heroes Unlimited* and *TMNT* and some hints about *Rifts™*.
- Reorganization for better use and easier play. Some new art too.
- Still \$14.95 plus \$1.50 for postage and handling.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles® & Other Strangeness is all you need to create your own batch of super-hero mutant animals. This exciting rule book enables you to recreate the "Turtles" comic book action or transform any animal from canary to rhinoceros into the crime fighters of tomorrow.

Plus psionics, animal powers, martial arts, a comic strip by Eastman and Laird, stats on the Turtles, Casey Jones, Shredder, and other characters, as well as, four great adventures! \$11.95 plus \$1.50 for postage and handling. Compatible with *Heroes Unlimited*.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles® and After the Bomb® Game Shields. The two, color, game shields, one for *TMNT & Other Strangeness* and the other for the *After the Bomb®* series, present pertinent charts and tables for quick reference. The package also presents a 24 page booklet containing two *Adventures in the Yucatan* and source information, such as the quick roll mutant animal villain. \$11.95 plus \$1.50 for postage and handling.

Turtles Go Hollywood picks up where *Truckin' Turtles* leaves off... with West Coast action and adventure. Your heroes stumble across a drag ring operated by an insidious group of mutant animals who have no regard for human life. In addition to fighting five new, sleazy villains, our heroes must also face *Shredder* and the *Foot!* Check it out! 48 pages, \$7.95 plus \$1.00 for postage and handling.

Truckin' Turtles! If you're looking for non-stop action, this is the book for you. Your heroes are sent on a cross-country gauntlet of adventure and villainy. Ninja warriors, mutant villains, terrorists, supernatural beings, and the international desperado, Chiquita are but a few of the obstacles along the way. Seven super scenarios and encounter ideas spanning across states and stats for the super-truck, "The Blue Ox." 48 pages, \$7.95 plus \$1.00 postage and handling.

Transdimensional TMNT expands the world of mutant animals into a megaverse of dimensions and shatters the barrier of time.

Realistic rules for time travel, dimension hopping, time magic, a different strain of mutant humans, mutant dinosaurs, new powers, and several adventures round out this book. \$11.95 plus \$1.50 for postage.

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TMNT Sourcebook: After the Bomb®! A science fiction extrapolation of our world decades after nuclear holocaust and where mutant animals are the new order of life. Plus six adventures, maps and world description. Great Stuff! \$7.95. Plus \$1.00 for postage.

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Mutants of the Yucatan. Author, Erick Wujcik, has done it again, creating another exciting source book for the post-apocalyptic world of mutant animals. This time he takes us through the rain forests and jungles of the Yucatan, more deadly and primal than ever. Over 22 new mutant animals. The mysterious gene-molded-cats. More trouble with the Empire of Humanity. Directly compatible with *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and *Heroes Unlimited*. \$7.95 plus \$1.00 for postage.

The Revised Heroes Unlimited™ RPG enables you to create any type of comic book super character; robots, cyborgs, aliens, martial arts masters, super spies, psionics, mutants, magic and more! *Heroes Unlimited* is still the only game that covers every aspect of the comic book hero! 248 pages, Compatible with *TMNT*. \$19.95. Please add \$2.00 for postage.

King Arthur is back!

And he's a mutant

Mutants in Avalon™

Mutants in Avalon is the fifth book in the *After the Bomb®* series of source/adventure books for *TMNT® & Other Strangeness* and *Heroes Unlimited™*.

This time we explore England. Much has changed after the bomb struck. Human life is nearly extinct. Britain is now divided into eight kingdoms, all ruled by intelligent mutant animals. But all is not well. Feuding between the kingdoms promise civil war and then there are the rumors about a human army invading the Waste Lands. The realm needs a leader. A man (or mutant) who can unite the people and restore a nation; *King Arthur!*

Highlights include:

- A dozen new mutant animals.
- A half a dozen mutant insect monsters, not to mention giant snails and slugs!
- Druids and earth magic, and the evil of Morgana.
- The New Britain, described and mapped.
- King Arthur, Merlin, and the Knights of the Round Table.
- Adventure and more.
- 64 pages, \$9.95 plus \$1.00 for postage and handling.

Palladium Books®
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Detroit, MI 48210

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Comic Book Shops everywhere!

first piece with our mouse to move it into enemy territory, the game froze. That little watch icon appeared on-screen, and everything locked up. We could do nothing but reboot our system. We tried this same procedure three times, with identical results.

If you purchase *Stratego*, just don't play the Wheel of Danger strategy. Odds are you'll lose.

News and new products— computer games

From Accolade (408-985-17001) comes *Altered Destiny*. Modern-day hero P. J. Barrett suddenly finds himself with a surprising new identity when he enters a world unlike any he could imagine and finds that the future of an alien universe rests on his shoulders. Designed by Michael Berlyn (of *Suspended*, *Cutthroats*, and *Infidel* fame), the game costs \$59.95 for PC/MS-DOS versions (an Amiga version is expected).

Activision (415-329-0800) presents three new PC/MS-DOS games. The first is *Shanghai II: Dragons Eye*. The game features 13 tile formations modeled after the Chinese calendar, nine beautifully detailed tile sets, a layout construction set, and three modes of play. The price is \$49.95. The second new offering is *BattleTech: The Crescent Hawks' Revenge*. Jason Youngblood is back to rescue his kidnapped father and face the newest threat to the Inner Sphere: the Clans. There are 27 scenarios of 31st-century political and military strife, set on five planets, with over 50 'Mechs, tanks, aerofighters, infantry, and other units. Multiple endings mean replayable games. Its price is \$49.95. The third game is *F-14 Tomcat*. This is a dogfighting simulation in which you fly a tour of duty from one of several aircraft carriers. You must earn the right to attend the Top Gun school. The price is \$49.95.

Britannica Software (800-572-2272) presents *Eye of Horus*, an arcade-adventure game set in ancient Egypt. You can transform from man-god to hawk or back again at will, in search of the seven missing pieces of your father's body. The missing pieces must be returned to the burial chamber so peace can be restored to the land. This game is for the Amiga, Atari ST, and PC/MS-DOS computers; the price is \$39.95 and for the Commodore 64/128 it's \$29.95.

In Britannica's *Archipelagos*, you enter the earth's hazardous atmosphere and begin to destroy radioactive nodes and obelisks. The object is to reclaim the once-beautiful earth. The price is \$39.95 for all formats.

MicroProse Software (301-771-1151) has added Legend Entertainment to its Medalist International marketing division. Legend will be producing *Spellcasting 101: Sorcerers Get All the Girls* and *Time Quest* under this label. Steve Meretzky is devel-

oping the former game.

The Software Toolworks is moving to: 60 Leveroni Court, Novato CA 94949. You can reach it at: (415) 883-3000.

Taito Software (604-984-3344) presents *Rastan* for the Apple IIGS computer. You venture to an ancient world of danger and become Rastan, the bravest warrior in Lograth. You must confront and slay horrid gargoyles, dragons, and other wretched creatures if you are to save the land from the tyrannical Castle King. There are four levels of danger, and only your Fire Sword can keep you alive.

News and new products— video games

Atari (408-745-2000) has announced releases for the Lynx portable video-game system. *Slime World* is a scrolling adventure game for as many as eight gamers who enter a world filled with slime to complete six quests. *Klax* is a one-player strategy game. *RoadBlasters* finds you driving through 50 rounds of action while using guns to destroy enemies and collecting fuel to continue the game. *Xenophobe* allows as many as four players to clear alien-infested bases, search for weapons and valuable objects, and make it back to their ship alive. *Rampage* allows four players to become one of four monsters that earn points by destroying buildings and eating tanks and soldiers. *Zarlor Mercenary* finds you involved in an intergalactic shootout where players collect money to buy more powerful items. *Rygar* is similar to the arcade hit in which the player becomes a dynamic warrior in a variety of action-packed battles.

Atari has also contracted six outside firms to develop software for the Lynx. U.S. Gold will produce a sub-atomic warfare game named *E-Motion*, and original titles *Rotox*, *Gold*; and *Italy 1990*. APTI Game Systems has designed two multi-player games called *Battle Universe* and *Alternate Earth*. *Battle Universe* pits players against each other for control of the universe, while *Alternate Earth* has players racing to save the Earth from destruction. Telegames USA will contribute an action-packed, multiplayer game that incorporates driving, stalking, and shooting skills. Shadowsoft Inc. is creating *Bugs*; players must overcome a barrage of obstacles and invading bugs. Cyber Labs will introduce an action game in which players manipulate a vehicle in two- or three-dimensional space, and a first-person, mythological game where players must overcome obstacles to advance.

NEC Technologies, Inc. (708-860-9500) has announced the release of *Ninja Spirit* (\$61.99) for the TurboGraphx-16 system. *Ninja Spirit* features four power-up items, including a multiplying Alter Ego that provides as many as five extra lives on the screen simultaneously. These extra ninjas follow a player's every move, whether in

the air or on the ground. You battle through dark forests, deep valleys, and eerie caves to find and destroy an evil half-man/half-beast. Other villains include a mysterious monk, the ghost of a fugitive warrior, and a two-axed ogre.

Clue corner

Curse of the Azure Bonds (SSI)

1. If a character can somehow attain a 20 in constitution (with the help of the Girdle of Dwarves), that character will regenerate hit points at the rate of one point per turn.
2. Those who show some backbone may be able to get around some rakshasa.
3. In Myth Drannor, don't trust everything you see.
4. Have at least one female character in your group.
5. If you find some Dust of Disappearance, hang on to it for emergencies or for the final battle.
6. In the Tower of Dracandros, if you find an odd-looking object in a pool, get it—someone wants it!
7. If you see some shambling mounds dragging a body, attack them.
8. Anyone can take the test of the sphere, but be careful.

John C. Williams
Ashland OH

1. The best way I've found to win this game is to obtain powerful magical weapons and items. It's best to have at least three fighters who can use these weapons: a Long Sword + 3 Frost Brand (found in the Fire Knives' armory), a Long Sword + 4 (hidden behind Dagger Falls), and another Long Sword + 4 found in Zhentil Keep.

2. In Dracandros's Tower, you should find Plate Mail +3, a Shield +2, a Wand of Fireballs, a Wand of Ice Storm, a Ring of Protection + 3, and Bracers AC 2. The most powerful item you'll find in the game is also here, a Ring of Wizardry.

3. In Yulash, you'll locate Plate Mail + 3, a Shield + 2, a Cloak of Displacement, Gloves of Thievery, an Ioun Stone, and a clerical scroll.

4. Not only will you find a Long Sword +4 behind Dagger Falls, but several other items as well.

5. To beat the Zhentarim, you'll need experience. Try roaming Zhentil Keep and attack everyone you see. You can find a Wand of Paralyzation, 20 Arrows +2, a Shield + 2, and yet another Long Sword + 4. If you need help getting out, check the map in the back of the Journal. Also, there are several magic user scrolls in the game that you'll want to obtain. Make certain you have the Fireball spell. You can roam Yulash or the caves near Shadowdale and Essembria for other magical items.

Alan Bester
St. Louis MO

1. In Shadowdale, go into the dungeon (Search) and fight as many encounters as possible. Have your magic-user or cleric memorize Detect Magic. If you are lucky, you will find a magical sword after a battle. This sword is poisoned; if you hit anyone, he must make a saving throw vs. poison or die.

2. The cleric can also find a magical mace in Shadowdale. It is a Mace +2; if you hit anyone with it, he must make a saving throw vs. death or be killed.

Andy Ahnn
Anaheim CA

1. Upon leaving Tilverton, it is possible to go too quickly after the members of the New Alliance and get in over your head. If your party does not have Neutralize Poison, going after the red wizard in Hap is risky. The red wizard has a number of wyverns as pets. Instead, explore the cities for adventure and obtain experience.

2. When exploring the dungeon near Ashabenford, be certain that your party is fully protected by a Fire Resistance spell. You are likely to meet at least one dracolich and numerous salamanders in those caverns.

3. Stupid monsters, such as hell hounds, shambling mounds, and otyugh, are not afraid to charge through Stinking Clouds. If the monsters are some distance away, oblige them and cast the spell in front of

your party.

4. If you explore around Dagger Falls, you will find a magic shop that is identical to the one in Zhentil Keep.

5. In the burial grounds of Myth Drannor, you can avoid some conflicts with the thri-kreen by parlaying, then telling them that you serve Tyranthraxus. When possible, avoid spiders or attack them from a distance. A Cloudkill is a good way to clean up spiders if a group of them are swarming around your party.

David Rakonitz
Menlo Park CA

1. In the Village of Haptooth, Parlay and Act Nice or Meek to avoid combat with the drow. For an easier fight in the barn, kill at least four drow patrols. Take the map from the efreet in the barn. It will show you the way to Dracandros's tower.

2. If your party has at least one female adventurer, you could find an ally in the caves below the tower. Take note of any arrows you find and follow them. You should Parlay with any female drow you encounter. When you encounter Crimdrac the dracolich, cast only Magic Missiles or Fireballs at him. Through the southern door of his room is the entrance to the tower.

3. When you have either fought the black dragons on the roof or Parlayed with them, Save the game and Rest.

Through the door is one extremely tough drow. Have your magic-users cast Haste andEnlarge on everyone, and cast Magic Missiles at the drow. any any drow weapon you can use. Don't read any paper notes that are lying around. Beware of the Trial of the Sphere. When you fight some wyverns in a room on the lowest level, Dracandros should be through the southern door. Good luck!

Daryl Fraser
Brisbane, Australia

Dragon Wars (Interplay)

The first thing you are going to need in order to survive is magic. Head due west until you reach the far wall. You'll gain some experience points along the way. There is a small hut along the wall. Enter it and have your characters who possess Low Magic take one scroll of each spell. Do not take extra scrolls! Leave and Use each scroll, and the spells are added to your characters' repertoires.

Second, find the magic pool that reenergizes your power points. It's in the middle of the south wall. Memorize the path to this pool—you'll be making many a run for its borders!

Third, get some help for a fighting chance. In the northeast corner of the city is a bar. Listen to the rumors (some will save you from a watery grave), and ask for volunteers. Let Ulrick join the party. He'll

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Altered Destiny (Accolade)

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Fourth, in the middle of the northern wall is the arena (you'll hear the screams). Make certain that you have full power points and have saved the game just before you enter. Make sure you have no items (extra scrolls, weapons, and so on), and you will be given 12 items—yes, 12 items—including your choice of weapons and armor. Don't turn down this chance at freebies. Fight the gladiators, and have the spell-casters cast Lesser Heal on the fighters. Don't worry about the party getting stunned, as you'll live to fight in your new armor another day. You'll have to defeat the gladiators someday to obtain Citizen's Papers, but for now go for more experience points along the way.

After surviving Purgatory, you'll still have to master the rest of the Eastern Isles. Purgatory will seem like a stroll through a park!

Scott Hermansen
Oak Park IL

1. In the fire in the Underworld, you will find a chest with a potent weapon.
2. You need the aid of a dragon to find the secret island off Mudtoad.
3. If you have an Arcane Lore of seven or greater, you can befriend the Humbaba in Purgatory. He might join your party!
4. By standing in the fire in the Underworld area, you can gain some personality points. First, enter the fire and walk around until all of your characters except your most powerful fighter have died. Second, save the game, then reboot and equip your lone fighter with a single dragonstone. Third, have your fighter use the dragonstone while in the fire, and all of your characters will be resurrected with 25 more personality points tacked on for good measure.
5. On King's Island, you will find the word of Mountaineering. You can use this sword if you have a Mountain Lore skill of two or greater.

6. Ulrik's twin brother, Barsad, is a strong and powerful spell-caster. He knows both Sun and Druid magic. Barsad can be found by talking to the blind old man in the Slave Camp.

7. The key weapon in the game is the Black Sickle (which is classified as a two-handed sword). It may be found in the third level of the Kingshome dungeon. Beware, for it is guarded by the Death Knight and a host of Stosstrupen.

8. Discard all dragonstones before entering Necropolis, for they are monsters magnets and are of no use to your party. You can find them again when you leave.

Matt Kirby and Will Plat
Yarmouth ME

Secret of the Silver Blades (SSI)

I recommend at least four dual-class characters: two paladin/magic-users, a ranger/magic-user, and a cleric/magic-user transferred from *Curse of the Azure Bonds*. This gives your party an edge. Have at least two dual-class magic-users memorize Hold Monster before entering the Well of Knowledge. The hatchling and sub-adult red dragons can be dispatched with a combination of Ice Storm, Cone of Cold, and weapons. The ancient red dragon may be overcome with the Hold Monster spell. If that doesn't work, try backstabbing, because this is the toughest dragon in the game. Keep your hit points as high as possible in case you lose the initiative with the red dragon. Also, don't rest in the mayor's house after returning from the Well of Knowledge. The well offers safe rest. Head directly for Marcus' house upon returning to New Verdigris.

Christopher Carter
Brooklyn NY

1. Journal entry #1 of the dragon's lair is correct. Within the lair, you'll find the Amulet of Eldamar. You cannot win the game without it.
2. Find help in a small box in the mine.

3. The staff was broken into eight pieces and these sections are hidden in the eight upper levels of the mine. You need to use the mine shaft to get there. Behind the altar is a secret door to the temple's treasury. Be certain you go to Derf before you start getting pieces of the staff.

4. To find the staff, go: 1st west (on dead adventurers); 2nd west (in a chest); 3rd north or east (in the wyvern's lair); 4th south (in a pouch); 5th north (in a box); 6th west (guarded by lizard men); 7th south (on dead mage, but watch out—umber hulks are nearby); 8th south (in Oswulf's tomb; journal entry #35).

5. On the 8th level is a broken teleporter that will take you to the 9th level.

6. Go east on the 10th level to get to the dungeon.

7. To hit an iron golem, you need at least a +3 weapon. Lightning slows them down, but fire heals them.

8. You need three keys to get to the Dreadlord. They are in the 1st, 4th, and 7th levels of the dungeon. You start from the 10th level and work up.

David Barry
St. Clair Shores MI

Ultima VI (Origin)

1. *The Wizard of Oz* can be found in the catacombs under the Lyceum. If you retrieve this book and give it to Lord British, he will give you many gems.

2. Also under the Lyceum is a book containing several of the mantras. There are many words in the book; try them until one works for each rune.

3. To join the guild, you must make a set of panpipes and play "Stones." The mayor of Yew can tell you where to get a Yew log. Take the log to the sawmill east of Minoc. There it can be turned into a Yew board. After this process, take it to Julia, who can make it into a set of panpipes. "Stones" is 67898978767653 in its numeric form.

4. The Glass Sword, which hits for 255 points of damage, is in Trinsic with several other useful items.

5. If you are having trouble opening the jail cells in Yew, just keeping Moving the keys from the table to the front of each door. Then, Use the keys without picking them up.

6. You need the boat of the humblest man in New Magincia if you want to get to the Avatar's shrine. You should look for his shield south of his house. It's under a plant!

Alex Ingle
Seattle WA

That's all for this month. Don't forget to vote for your favorite game of the year. And continue to send in your game hints!

NOTE: The Lessers have moved. Their new address is: The Lessers, 521 Czerny Drive, Tracy CA 95376, U.S.A. Send all correspondence to their new address. The Beastie Award will be published in next month's column.

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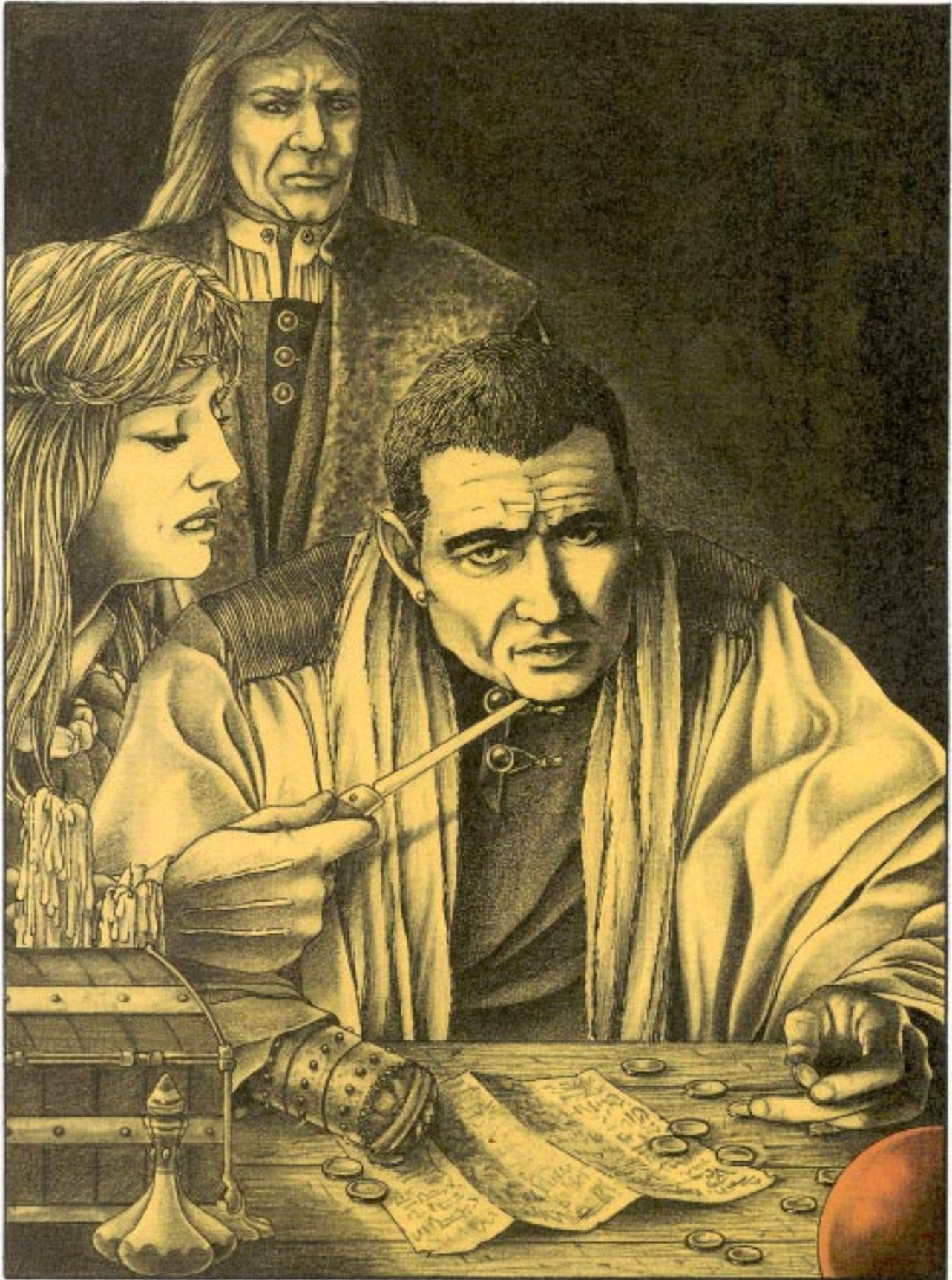
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ilon Songsmith was dying. Brown hair clung to his face in limp, sweat-soaked strands. His skin was gray-tinged, like dirty snow. Breath was a ragged choking sound, his body trembling with the effort to draw air into his lungs.

Sidra Ironfist stood looking down at her friend. Her strong, calloused hands gripped the hilts of her swords until her hands ached. Sidra's solid gray eyes stared down at her friend and willed him to live. She ran a hand through long yellow hair and turned to the wizard leaning against the wall.

Gannon the Sorcerer was tall, as tall as Sidra. His hair was yellow, his eyes the fresh blue of spring skies. But his face was set in cynical lines as if he had seen too much of the world, and it all disappointed him. Today his eyes held anger and sorrow. "I will not let him die like this," Sidra said.

"It is a death curse, Sidra. You cannot stop it. The bard is a better friend to me than any man alive, and I am just as helpless," Gannon said.

"Can nothing stop it?" Her eyes searched his face, demanded he give her some hope.

"It is the most powerful death curse I have ever seen. It would take days for another curse-maker to remove the spell. Milon has only hours."

Sidra turned away from the sorcerer and his compassionate eyes. She would not let Milon die. He was her bard. They had ridden together for eight years. Even with a bard's safe conduct, accidents could happen. If you rode into battle, unarmed, you took your chances. But this—this was a coward's way of killing. By all laws, Milon should have been safe in the tavern. Harming a bard, save in self defense, was punishable by death.

Someone had hated him enough to risk that. But who? And why?

Sidra Ironfist knelt by the bed. She reached out to touch Milon's forehead with one scarred finger. She could feel the heat before she touched his skin. The magical fever was eating him alive.

She whispered to him, though he could not hear her, "I will not let you die." She turned to the sorcerer. "What of the curse-maker who placed the curse?"

Gannon frowned. "What of him?"

"Could he remove the curse?"

"Well, yes, but why would he?"

Sidra smiled, tight-lipped. "I think we could find ways to persuade him."

Gannon nodded. "We might at that, but how to find him in such a short time?"

There was a knock on the door. Sidra pulled her long sword from its sheath and called, "Come in."

A woman hesitated at the doorway. Her hair was streaked with gray, and she wore the robes of a white healer. "I was told you had an injured man." She caught sight of the bard and stepped into the room past Sidra's bare steel. "That is not a wound."

Sidra sheathed her sword. "Tell her, Gannon."

He explained briefly. Outrage showed on the healer's face, then anger, a white burning anger that Sidra found comforting and frightening all at the same time. "By all

The Curse-maker

by Laurell K. Hamilton

Illustrations by Timothy Standish

the civilized laws, bards are sacred. A death curse on one such as this is an insult to all we hold dear." The healer asked, "Who has done this?"

"Unknown," Gannon said, "but we will find out."

Sidra said, "Yes, we will find out." There was something in her voice, in the steel gray of her eyes, that was frightening.

The healer stepped away from the tall warrior woman. "You look like calm death, warrior."

"Can you keep him alive until we return?"

"I will keep him alive, but be swift. There will come a point from which no one can bring him back."

Sidra nodded. "Keep him alive, healer. He's important to me."

"That I knew when I saw your face, warrior."

Sidra looked away from the healer's wise face. She was uncomfortable that anyone could read her so easily.

"Come, Gannon." She was through the door and on the stairs before Gannon had time to move. He jogged to catch up with her. "Where do we begin?"

"Malhari."

Malhari was a big, beefy man. The muscle of his mercenary days had run to softness but not to fat. He was still a formidable man. His black hair was close cropped, framing a nearly perfect roundness of face. His right arm ended abruptly a span above the wrist. A metal-studded leather sheath hid his stump. It had given the tavern its name: The One-Armed Man. His dark eyes caught them as they came down the stairs; no words were needed. He called one of the bar-lads over to pour drinks and motioned them into his office—small, neat, and orderly, the way Malhari had run campaigns years ago.

He eased his big frame into a chair and motioned them to sit. They remained standing. "What has happened to your bard, Sidra?"

"A death curse. He has only hours to live."

Malhari's eyes went wide. His fingers curved over the metal studs as another man might drum his fingers.

"Why come to me?"

"Where in Selewin do you go for a death curse?"

"I go nowhere for such things. Curse-makers are unlucky, Sidra. You know that."

She sat down across from him, hands spread on her legs. Gannon remained standing like a guard at her back. Sidra said, "You did not pay for that splendid house in the hills from this small inn. You are the person in Selewin to come to for information, for a price. Tell me what I need to know, Malhari. Do it for friendship or money; I don't care which."

"If I am what you say I am, and if I had your information, how much would it be worth to you?"

Sidra's eyes narrowed, as if from pain. "Not friendship then, but money."

"You cannot spend friendship on a cold winter's night."

"I think you would be surprised what you can do with friendship, Malhari." She did not wait for the puzzled look on his face to pass but threw a leather pouch on the desk. "Gold, Malhari, twenty-five pieces."

"And," he said.

Sidra hesitated.

"You would quibble over the life of your friend?" Sidra

pounded her fist into his desk twice—violent, painful, but it helped the anger. It kept her from drawing steel and slitting his throat. Her voice came low and soft, the whisper of steel through silk. "That is three times your usual pay."

"This is a seller's market, Sidra. Supply and demand."

"Our friendship is no more, Malhari."

"I know."

"If Milon dies because of this delay, I will kill you."

"You will try," he said.

Sidra leaned toward him, and suddenly Malhari was staring at six inches of steel. The knife caressed his throat with no pain or blood, yet. He did not try to move, though he had several secreted blades of his own. He knew better than to try.

Sidra's words came careful and neat, soft and angry. "You have grown soft, Malhari. In the old days, I could not have taken you without your at least clearing a blade of your own. I will kill you if I want to."

He said nothing but felt the blade dig into his throat as he swallowed. "You have paid a fair price. The one you seek is Bardolf Lordson. I saw one of Bardolf's lackeys talk to your bard tonight. Bardolf is powerful enough to have done the spell."

Gannon cursed. "When we worked for Duke Haydon, I detected magic on Bardolf. I thought that it was not quite enough to warrant training as an herb-witch. But a curse-maker! It suits him."

Sidra nodded. Bardolf had thought to bed a warrior. Sidra had broken his arm for the insult. Neither she nor Bardolf mentioned the incident to Duke Haydon.

"He is Duke Haydon's favorite son, bastard or not. We cannot kill him after he has cured Milon. I will not risk everything we have worked for in one act of vengeance. If Milon dies, things are different. But our true purpose is to save the bard, not to get revenge."

Gannon said, "Agreed. We save the minstrel. If the curse-maker just happens to perish," he smiled, "well, that is an added bonus."

Sidra smiled. "Even a duke's son can have an accident." She bent close to Malhari's face. "Tell me where he is."

"You wish more information from me, Sidra? I am a business man."

"You are a fool," Gannon said.

The blade tip bit into Malhari's neck. Blood trickled down his throat. Sidra said nothing.

The innkeeper's breath caught in his throat. "For you, Sidra. Bardolf has a house on Silk Street." He stared into her eyes and saw death. "Take the money, Sidra. I give you this information freely."

She smiled then. "No, Malhari. If it was a gift, then the bonds of friendship would constrain me. This way it is only money, and I owe you nothing."

He tried not to swallow around the point of the knife. "I don't want you to sell this information to anyone else," Sidra said.

Malhari was having trouble talking. "I give you my word, I will not."

"Your word means nothing. Gannon, if you please."

"With great pleasure." The sorcerer smiled. There was something of fearful anticipation in that smile.

Sidra stepped back from the man, quick and careful. "Please, Sidra, I would not tell. I swear to you."

Gannon made a broad sweeping gesture, hands up-
raised to the ceiling and brought his hands down in a fast
clap, pointed at the man.

Where Malhari had sat there was a large black tomcat
missing one front paw. It yowled once and fell silent. Sidra
had never seen horror on a cat's face, but she saw it
now.

Gannon said, "It is a permanent shapechange,
Malhari, unless I remove it." He knelt, eye-level with the
cat. "It is almost a curse, but not quite."

The big cat just stared at them, yellow eyes dazed.

Sidra said, "Come, we haven't much time."

Precious minutes had passed before they stood in an
alley that spilled into Silk Street. They were in a wealthy
part of town. It was well known that Bardolf was the
duke's favorite son, and the grand house showed it. The
wealthy could afford magical guardians, things that normal
steel could not touch. Sidra's long sword was such
ordinary steel. The short sword was not.

Sidra unsnapped the locks on the hilt, and the short
sword sprang to her hand, rising of its own accord. The
sword said, "Ah, free." Without moving, it gave the im-
pression of catlike stretching.

"I may have work for you tonight," Sidra told it.

The sword hissed, "Name me."

"You who were Blood-letter when the world was new.
You who were Wound-maker in the hands of a king. You
who were Soul-Piercer and took the life of a hero. You
who were Blood-Hunger and ate your way through an
army. I name thee blade mine. I name thee Leech." For
every name the sword had taken, the legend had ended
with the blood blade slaying its wielder.

The sword chortled, "I am Leech, Leech. I am the
bloodsucker." The sword's voice dropped to a whisper,
"Feed me."

Sidra pressed the naked steel against her bare forearm.
The sword felt like any steel against her flesh. Gannon
assured her that, once activated, Leech gave off an aura of
evil. "Feed gently, Leech, for we have much work to do."

There was always the chance that Leech would take too
much and kill her. It had happened to others, great he-
roes. But the sword bit once into her arm. Blood poured
in a sharp painful wash down her skin. The blade said,
"Sacrifice made, contract assured."

Sidra ignored the wound. It would heal in a moment or
two to join the dozens of shallow white scars that criss-
crossed her hands and arms. She did not bother to clean
the blade. All blood was absorbed cleanly. It truly did
feed.

Gannon stepped close, and the sword struck at him.
Sidra held it two-handed, saying, "Behave."

"You don't frighten me, little knife," the sorcerer said.

"Not afraid," the sword whined. "No fun." The sword
turned in her hands as if looking for something. "Where
is bard? Bard fears Leech. Baard," the sword called, draw-
ing the word out in a sing-song, "Baard."

"Silence, Leech." Sometimes the blood blade seemed
aware of everything that went on. It would spring from its
sheath ready for action. At other times it acted as if it had

been asleep until called. Sidra wondered what, if any-
thing, the blood blade dreamed of. She doubted she would
enjoy the answer, and she knew Leech would lie about it
anyway. Blood blades were notorious liars.

She told the sword only that the bard was away. If the
sword knew that Milon's life was at stake, it would de-
mand a larger blood price.

Sidra sheathed Leech but left its locks undone in case
she needed it quickly. The blade did not fight being
sheathed; it was strangely content tonight. It hummed one
of Milon's own tunes—Leech's favorite—"Lord Isham
and the Goose Girl." There were two versions: one for the
taverns and one for the prince's halls. Leech, of course,
preferred the bawdy version.

She persuaded the blade to stop humming and scouted
the house. She was a flicker of shadow, gone before you
could look directly at it.

She returned to Gannon. "Two doors: this one and
another that leads into a small yard. Both doors are posted
with warning signs. They're both warded."

It was the law in Selewin that you had to post signs for
wardings. There had been too many innocent people
killed.

"All windows are barred, no traps that I could see."
She asked Gannon, "What kind of warding is on the front
door?"

He concentrated a moment, staring at the door, and then
said, "Fire, powerful enough to kill whatever touches it."

Sidra gave a low hiss. "I thought death wards had to be
marked as such?"

"By law they do."

"Can you get us past it?"

"Yes, but stay well back while I'm testing it."

Sidra knew what would happen if he failed to negate the
warding. He would die, and he didn't want to risk her life
as well. But Gannon had risked himself before, as had
they all.

Sidra nodded, and Gannon walked alone into the street.
He pressed his hands wide and moved them toward the
door. Leech began to hum a drum roll. "Brrrrrm, brrrrm."
"Hush."

The sword did not stop but only hissed an accompani-
ment as the sorcerer touched the door. Gannon's back
bowed outward, and the sword hissed a crescendo. Sidra
slapped the sword's sheath, and it made a muffled sound
and fell silent.

Gannon was walking toward them, cape pulled close
about him. The door looked just the same to Sidra. A
sorcerous ward was always invisible until you tripped it,
unless you had eyes that could see magic.

The sorcerer stepped into the alley, and Sidra said, "Let
me see your hands."

He hesitated only a moment, then drew them from
inside his cloak. The palms were scorched and hung heavy
with huge watery blisters.

Sidra drew a hissing breath. "Gannon, can you go on
like that?"

He shrugged and grimaced. "There will be many sorce-
ries I cannot do with injured hands. I can still levitate and
teleport, but not much else."

"Our luck is low tonight." She touched his shoulder. "It

is up to you, Gannon. I cannot ask you to go on."

"No one asked me to come."

She nodded. It was his choice, and she would not tell him to stay behind.

The door looked ordinary enough except for the sign next to it that read, "Warning, **WARDINGS** in place. Please ring bell." A brass bell hung from a bracket by the door, its cord swinging uneasily in the night wind.

Sidra knelt beside the door and touched the rough wood. No fire, no warding—Gannon had done his job. The lock was cheap and easily picked. All that money on a sorcerous ward, then skimping on the lock itself. Bardolf wasn't spending his money wisely.

She reached for Leech, and it leapt to her hand. Shield held close, she pushed open the door. They had just stepped into the inky blackness when Gannon said, "Someone teleports nearby."

There was no time for stealth. If they hoped to trace the teleport, they had to find the point of departure quickly. Gannon said, "This way." Against all caution, she let the wizard lead in a mad flight up the broad stairs. Two dim lanterns threw pools of shadow and light on the steps. She glimpsed her own reflection in half a dozen gilt-edged mirrors. Glass and gold were both rare and costly. Bardolf was well off indeed.

Light spilled from a room at the end of a long hallway. Dark rooms with closed doors led up to that one shining door. Sidra pushed past Gannon so she could enter the room first.

It was a bedroom. Silks and pillows were strewn over the carpet like a child's toys, used and carelessly forgotten. A huge candelabra hung from the ceiling, and it sparkled like pure gold. A sobbing woman knelt on the carpet. Her raven-black hair was thrown over her face, and she curled naked near a pile of clothing.

Gannon strode to the middle of the room and picked up a now-blank scroll. He sniffed it as if he were a hound on the scent of a fox and said, "I have it."

There was no time, and Sidra stood beside the sorcerer. As the woman glanced up, Sidra had a glimpse of a lovely pale face that was bruised and battered.

The world spun and Sidra caught her breath. They faced outward, back to back. Sidra crouched, sword and shield ready. Then she recognized the throne room of Duke Haydon. Bardolf had run home to his daddy.

Someone shouted orders, and the room was suddenly full of the red and silver of Duke Haydon's guards. Sidra wondered if they would have time to explain before someone died.

It was the head of the guards, Jevik, who recognized them and called, "Hold!" He strode forward through his men and stood before Sidra. He sheathed his sword, and she did likewise. Leech complained about missing such a lovely fight.

Jevik only blinked. He had fought beside her and tasted the sword's humor before. "Why are you here like this, Sidra?"

"It is a long story, Jevik. But we give chase to an outlaw."

"What sort of outlaw?"

"One who would kill a bard."

"Did this bard give up his safe conduct?"

"He never had the chance. He was attacked in his room, alone."

Jevik waved the guards back and said, "And how did you trace this outlaw here?"

"Gannon traced a teleport."

"Come, we will talk to the duke," Jevik said.

The guards had formed a wary but respectful line to either side of the newcomers. Lord Haydon himself sat upon his throne. His beard was still as full and gray as before. He did not shave because it was court fashion to be smooth-faced. And he did not waste sorcery on looking younger than his years.

He smiled a greeting at them and extended his hands. "Sidra Ironfist, you who saved my castle and all that I own." She bowed and took his hands. He touched hands with Gannon and saw the sorcerer wince. The duke drew a sharp breath when he saw Gannon's hands. "Go with one of the guards and use my own healer."

Sidra did not like the idea of Gannon being separated from her. He looked at her a moment, smiled, and followed a guard from the room. He was right, of course. When a noble offers you hospitality, you do not refuse it.

"Now, Sidra, tell me what has brought you here so unexpectedly."

She told the story quietly, leaving out only the name of the curse-maker.

Haydon's eyes were a glittering icy blue when she finished. "It is against all civilized laws to harm a bard. How are we to hear of the great deeds of heroes if bards are not safe in battle?"

He asked her then, "And do you have a name for this outlaw?"

"Yes, my lord. It is Bardolf the Curse-maker."

He opened his mouth, then closed it. An angry flush crept up his neck. "These are grave accusations, Sidra. If you leave now and say no more of this, I will let it pass."

"It pains me to have to bring you such news, Duke Haydon, but it is the truth. I swear it."

He took a deep breath that shook with rage and perhaps a touch of apprehension. Sidra wondered if others had come before her and told tales of evil against Bardolf. If so, they had been bullied into silence. Sidra would not be bullied. She did not want to believe that Haydon would simply kill her out of hand, but if that were the case, she would not die easily.

At last the duke said, "You will persist in this lie against my son?"

"It is not a lie, my lord."

"Jevik, have my son sent to me now." The guardsman half ran from the room.

Gannon was back with his newly healed hands before Bardolf was escorted in.

Bardolf strode in just ahead of Jevik. He was short, with the soft lines of a man who has never done physical labor. His sensual pouting mouth was set in a confident smile. He was dressed all in brown silk worked with black pearls. When he saw Sidra and Gannon, his smile vanished.

Jevik led him in front of the duke, then stepped back leaving Sidra, Gannon, and Bardolf in a semi-circle around the throne.

Bardolf greeted his father first and then very correctly turned to Sidra and Gannon. "Sidra Ironfist and Gannon the Sorcerer. How good to see you again." He stared up at his father, eyes unreadable. "Father, what is this all about?"

Haydon sat very still upon his throne and kept his face blank. He was a noble and knew how to hide his emotions. He told his son of the accusations. Confusion then anger crossed Bardolf's face. Sidra would almost have believed the act herself. Some people had a true talent for lying.

"Would you convict me of such a vile crime on the word of an information peddler?"

The Duke smiled. "No, Bardolf, not on that alone. I want you to take an oath for me."

"Of course, Father."

"Swear by the birds of Loth and the hounds of Verm that you did not harm Milon Songsmith."

"I have never taken such an evil oath!"

"It is only evil if you have something to fear. Swear, Bardolf, swear to it."

"If you insist."

"I do."

"I swear by the birds of . . . I swear." He stared up at his father, a sort of pleading look upon his face.

Haydon's noble mask slipped, showing pain in his eyes. "Swear." His voice held a note of begging.

"I cannot, Father."

"If you are innocent, the oath means nothing. You are guilty then."

"I cannot take the oath you ask. Perhaps another to Mother Cia."

Haydon looked down at the floor and drew a deep breath. He seemed suddenly older than he had a moment before. "Only the oath to Loth and Verm is binding enough for this. Will you swear?"

"No, Father."

The duke's face seemed to crumble. The tears that threatened in his eyes were chased away by anger. The same anger he had been willing to use against Sidra, to protect his child, now turned against his son. "Why, Bardolf? Have I not shared my wealth with you?"

"Yes, Father."

"Then why?" He stood and walked the few steps to stand before his son—the son who could still look him in the eye and lie, even now.

Bardolf said, "You gave me crumbs from your table, Father. I wanted my own table. My own money. My own lands."

"I have given you all that and more."

Bardolf shook his head. "They are mine until I anger you. Then you take them away as a punishment, as if they were sweets and I were a child."

"There are honest ways to make money!"

"Not enough money."

"Not enough, not enough!" Haydon raised a hand as if to strike him. Bardolf cringed, throwing up a hand. The duke stepped back. Sidra watched the man gain control of himself. It was a painful thing to see. When he spoke again, his voice was soft and controlled. "Do you know the penalty in Meltaan for killing a bard?"

"Yes."

"You will be executed, and your blood money will do you no good."

"Father, even if I cured the bard and gave back the money, my client would see me dead."

"Who, who will see you dead? Who ordered such a vile deed? "

"I cannot say. As your son, I beg that you do not ask me again."

Duke Haydon said, "No! No son of mine would do such a thing." A soundless tear trailed down his face; his voice remained firm, but he cried.

Sidra looked away.

Bardolf's face showed fear. "Father?"

Haydon turned to Sidra. "Do with him as you see fit. Let all here be witness. Bardolf Lordson is no son of mine." Tears flowed in silver streaks down Haydon's cheeks. Everyone in the room was pretending not to see.

Bardolf knelt before the lord, touching the hem of Haydon's robe. A tear trailed down his face. "Father, please. If I cure the bard I will be killed."

Duke Haydon jerked his robe free of the man and left the room. All but two guards left with him.

Sidra had wanted to call after the duke, but what could she say? "Thank you, Duke Haydon, for being just and law abiding"? The man had just signed the death warrant of his favorite son. "Thank you" did not even come close to covering that.

Bardolf stood slowly, rubbing his eyes. Sidra and Gannon moved to stand beside him. Bardolf tensed to run and found himself entangled in a spell. He could not move his arms or legs. Sidra said, "Nicely done, Gannon."

The sorcerer shrugged. "Healed hands do wonders for a person's magic."

Sidra stepped near him and asked, "Do you know what a blood blade is, Bardolf?"

The younger man's eyes flared wide, showing white. She could see the pulse in his neck jump.

Gannon hissed near his face, "Answer the question."

"Yes," he whispered.

Sidra said, "What is it?"

"An evil sword that can suck a man's soul." All the color had drained from his face.

She leaned against the cool marble throne and asked, "Have you heard the song 'Blade Quest'?"

Bardolf whispered, "Yes."

"I think Milon captured the essence of a blood blade in that song: dark, hungry, evil."

Leech chuckled.

Sidra drew the sword. It gleamed in the torchlight. She said, "Leech, I want you to meet Bardolf the Curse-maker."

The sword hissed, "Fresh blood, yummm."

Sweat beaded on Bardolf's face, but his words were brave. "You can't feed me to that thing."

"I think I can." She bent close to him, the naked blade quivering near his neck. She held it two-handed, not trusting it. She spoke low and close to his frightened eyes. "The duke, your father, has decreed that I can do anything I want to you. Up to and including taking your soul."

"No, please."

"Gannon." Gannon unlaced Bardolf's sleeve and began to roll it upward. The skin was pale.

Leech crooned, "Blood, fresh blood, new blood."

The man struggled until sweat dripped down his face, but he could not move. Only his head was free to thrash from side to side.

"Please, please don't let it touch me."

"Tell us who hired you, agree to cure the bard, and you will live."

"I won't live. He'll kill me. Or have me killed."

"But he is not here, and I am. I'll kill you now."

Bardolf shook his head and closed his eyes. "Please, he'll kill me."

Leech hovered over the flesh and said, "Blood." Bardolf opened his eyes and watched the blade come closer to his arm. "No!" The point bit into his flesh and he screamed. Blood spurted out from a cut artery. Leech chortled in a rain of blood. Bardolf cried, "Lord Isham! Lord Isham hired me!"

Sidra didn't remove the sword but watched it lapping his blood.

"Get it away! Get it away!"

"Why would Lord Isham want Milon Songsmith dead?"

Bardolf swallowed, closing his eyes against the sight of the sword in his arm. He looked as if he might faint.

When he finally spoke, his voice was as pale as his skin.

"The song that Milon wrote about him. Lord Isham took insult."

Sidra asked, " 'Lord Isham and the Goose Girl'?"

"Yes. Now, please, get that thing away from me."

Sidra drew Leech back from the wound, but he did not want to come. She fought the sword two-handed as it struggled and cursed. "Not enough, not enough. Fresh blood, not enough."

The sword was quivering, fighting against her, and she could not sheath it. Gannon said, "Sidra." He bared his arm.

She said, "No."

Leech stopped shrieking and began to wheedle, "Just a little more, a taste, fresh taste."

It was a very unhealthy habit to disappoint a blood blade.

Sidra held the blade carefully and said, "Gannon, I would not ask this."

"You did not ask. Do it. I have often been curious."

She laid the blade tip against his arm, and it bit deep into muscle. The wizard winced but stared as the blade wiggled in the wound like a nursing calf.

Sidra pulled Leech free of the wound, and the sword said, "Ah, good, yummm." Gannon ignored the sword and stared curiously at his wound as the edges knit together. Soon there was nothing but a whitish scar.

She sheathed the short sword and turned to Bardolf.

"Are you willing to cure the bard now?"

Bardolf nodded weakly. "Anything you want. Just keep that sword away from me."

Leech chuckled.

Gannon stood on one side of him and Sidra on the



other. Then Gannon released the spell hold, and Bardolf nearly fell. With Gannon steadying him against the dizziness, they teleported to the inn.

The three appeared in front of Milon's bed. His skin was gray, his eyes sunken and black-smudged. If he was breathing at all, Sidra could not tell it.

The healer gasped.

Sidra's heart felt like lead in her chest. "Are we too late?"

The healer shook her head. "There is time."

Sidra pushed Bardolf forward against the bed. "Cure him or the blood blade will taste your soul."

Bardolf half fell to his knees beside the bed. He laid a hand on Milon's forehead and over his heart. The curse-maker's face went blank. It was the tranquility Sidra was accustomed to seeing on a healer's face. She found it strange for a curse doer.

Milon took a deep, shuddering breath, then his chest rose and fell. Bardolf stood up, looking relieved. Gannon forced him to stand back from the bed.

The healer touched the bard's forehead. "The fever has broken; he sleeps. With a few days' rest, he will be well."

Sidra asked Gannon, "Can you take that one to the jail?"

"I think I can manage." Gannon placed a hand on Bardolf's forehead and spoke one strange syllable. The curse-maker's eyes went blank, and he followed obediently

as Gannon moved to the door. He turned back and asked, "What of our feline friend?"

"Do as you think best."

Gannon smiled, a broad cheerful smile. "I will attend to it with pleasure." He left with Bardolf following behind.

Sidra knelt by the bed and smoothed the sweat-darkened hair from Milon's forehead. The healer moved a short distance away, giving them privacy. Sidra whispered to the bard, "I did not let you die."

Leech was singing softly in its sheath. The words came up faint and hollow. "Lord Isham went a riding, a riding, a riding. On his great bay stallion he went riding over his land. First he met a milkmaid, a milkmaid . . ."

Sidra asked, "Leech, have you ever tasted the blood of a province lord?"

The sword stopped in mid-song and whispered, "Never, but I hear they're quite tasty."

"We will be visiting Lord Isham."

Leech asked, "When?"

"Very soon." Sidra fought the urge to smile. One should never smile when contemplating another's death. The sword giggled, and Sidra found herself laughing with it. She saw the healer make the sign against evil. Sidra sighed. Evil had many faces. Some were just more obvious than others. She brushed her lips on Milon's forehead and whispered, "Very soon."

She made it sound like a promise.

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Role-playing

reviews

The state of the art in superheroics, Part 2

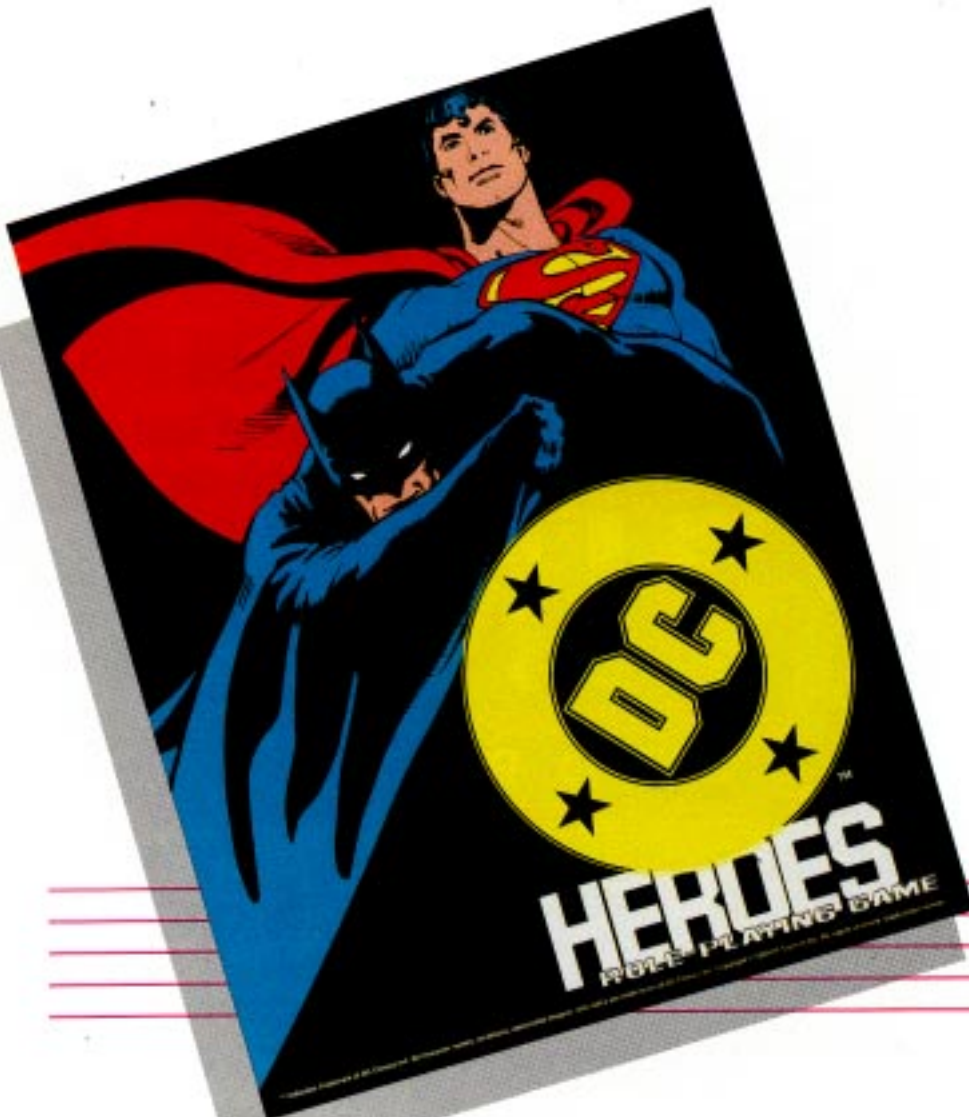
Mostly, I don't get it. T-shirts, underwear, lunch boxes, notebooks, trading cards, collectors' plates, pen and pencil sets, children's vitamins—why do millions of

consumers buy anything with a comic character's picture on it? Is this the mass-market equivalent of the vestments that designate membership in a holy order? A

Western answer to Polynesian tribal rulers, who cover their faces with tattoos or scars to denote status?

Understand, I've nothing against licensed merchandise. But I have never understood how a Walt Disney cartoon character's face on a popsicle box makes the popsicles sell better, let alone taste better. I do not eat presweetened breakfast cereal with a bat emblem on it, nor peanut butter with a big red "S" logo. My closet holds no illustrated T-shirts, except one my mother made depicting "Globbo," a character from one of my own games. Other than that, I have no garments adorned with character pictures or product logos (what writer Paul Fussell calls "legible clothing"). I guess I'm out of step with pop culture.

Except in one way. I don't know why, if you like a comic-book superhero, you therefore want to eat peanut butter, cereal, or castor oil bearing that hero's picture. But I comprehend at once the pleasure of *role-playing* the hero. The peanut butter, one hopes, just sits there; but a role-playing scenario lets me re-live the pleasure and excitement of the hero's original stories. In this column, we look at a new edition of one of the major licensed superhero RPGs, along with its new support line



**DC HEROES™ Role-Playing Game,
Second Edition**

Mayfair Games \$25

16-page "Read This First" guide, 72-page Rules Manual, 64-page Character Handbook, 96-page Background Roster Book, 32-page adventure, three-panel Game-master's Screen, 75 color plastic-coated character cards, 8½ "Action Wheel," two 10-sided dice, boxed

Design: Greg Gorden

Second edition: Ray Winninger with Thomas Cook

"Exposed!" adventure: Dan Greenberg

Illustrations: DC Comics staff

I reviewed the first edition of this game for *The Space Gamer* magazine in 1985, and to this day that review bugs me. It was lengthy, comprehensive, fair—and so wishy-washy that readers thought it panned the game, when actually I have placed the DC HEROES game on the Intense Personal Admiration shelf of my game library. It's just that . . . the trouble is, it's . . . [waves hands vaguely in the air] . . . I see that five years has not improved my wishy-washiness. I'll try again anyway.

Overview: DC Comics editor Robert Greenberger writes in this game's Background Roster Book: "The bedrock of the DC Universe still remains the core heroes—For the record, the 'core characters' are considered to be Superman, Wonder Woman, Batman, the Flash, Green Lantern, and Green Arrow. We have added to that list with the revamped Aquaman, Atom, Hawkman; and the newly-minted Starman."

The second edition lets you play all these and almost 250 other characters in the DC Universe—nearly everybody except the Legion of Super-Heroes, the Doom Patrol, and a few others. We also get some heroes outside the standard continuity (Sgt. Rock, 'Mazing Man, and the Watchmen). This edition's selection of characters improves significantly over the roster of its 1985 predecessor. In that way, it is symbolic of the entire game.

Components: At its 1985 debut, the DC HEROES game boggled the industry with its large quantity of material at a reasonable price. Going by its components alone, the second edition also offers a superb value: 278 pages of text, a GM screen, two decks of coated cards, an "Action Wheel," and dice, for a price you'd expect to pay for the text alone. The value has also improved in that Mayfair's editorial staff has banished the first edition's notorious layout and textual errors to the Phantom Zone.

Mechanics: This is one of those universal-table games, where every action comes down to a die-roll on a single chart. TSR's MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game is one of the few other survivors of a whole spate that appeared several years back. DC HEROES designer Greg Gorden, who

had previously worked on Victory Games' JAMES BOND 007 role-playing game, adapted that game's ideas in a unique and thoughtful approach that gives DC HEROES' one-table system unusual vigor. (The same design philosophy appears in concentrated form in Gorden's most recent system, West End Games' TORGM™ game.)

The bedrock of the DC system is Attribute Points, or APs. These measure not only characters' abilities but weight, distance, time, money, information, and literally everything measurable. Six APs of time is four minutes; of distance, 200 yards; of weight, 1½ tons. (The second edition has tinkered a lot with the original AP quantities.) If you have a Strength of 6 APs, you can lift 6 APs of weight, or throw 4 APs of weight for 2 APs of distance, or throw 1 AP of weight at 5 APs of speed, and so on. Everything in the game interrelates in this elegant way.

Attribute Points increase logarithmically—that is, as the rules put it, "Each additional AP of measurement is worth about twice as much as the AP before it. Therefore, a Character with a Strength of 6 is twice as strong as a Character with a Strength of 5." An ordinary human has Strength 2; Batman has Strength 5; Wonder Woman, Strength 16; Superman, Strength 25. The strongest characters are the Monitor and Anti-Monitor from the *Crisis on Infinite Earths* mini-series, with Strengths of 28 and 30 respectively. (A Strength of 30 can lift 30 APs of weight, or 100 million tons.)

Attribute Points have to be logarithmic in order to fit both heroes and normals on the same Action Table, the chart used to resolve any action with a single die roll. This is the tricky part of the DC HEROES game's design, but once you master it, you know almost the whole system—the great strength and weakness of one-chart games.

Character attributes provide "Acting Values" and "Opposing Values." Cross-index these on the table to find a number to beat on a roll of 2d10. Roll the dice, count how many "column shifts" you get on the table, then go to the Results Table, the other half of the DC system. Cross-index the characters' "Effect Values" against their "Resistance Values" to obtain a value in Result Attribute Points, or RAPs. These RAPs (increased by column shifts from the Action Table) tell how much damage a haymaker does, how long a magic spell lasts, how much information an interrogation gathers, or whatever.

It sounds forbidding, but it's just two steps up from those "Mileage Between Major Cities" charts on road maps, and no more complicated than reading a slide rule—not that I recall how to do that. Most of the other rules are trivial adjuncts to the Action and Result Tables.

The system has not changed between first and second editions, except that now you can use the "Action Wheel" to figure the numbers instead of using boring old

columnar tables. (The numbers don't *quite* line up in the wheel's windows, but it still works okay.) As before, combat remains fast-paced and fluid.

Hero Points: The game awards these as experience, but they serve far broader functions here than conventional "experience points" in other games. Characters can spend Hero Points to gain initiative, temporarily increase attributes and powers, and reduce damage taken. It costs Hero Points to build gadgets and to buy new powers. They're almost a currency, and more so in the second edition where "pushing" a power now costs three points per AP gained. This is a fair fix of the earlier silly rules, where a good die roll let Batman lift a DC-9 airplane.

The pregenerated heroes start play with 10 to 200 Hero Points, and they can earn 100 or more in a successful adventure. They need them all, because there's always a heavy Hero Point flow during play. Sometimes so many Hero Points get blown in a single phase, maybe on a single punch, that it's like the Weimar Republic, where townspeople hauled hyperinflated deutsche marks in wheelbarrows to buy loaves of bread.

Character generation: This is much improved in the second edition. Players spend Hero Points on selections from a very extensive list of powers and skills, now given a "Factor Cost" to differentiate plot-shattering powers like Continuum Control from non-starters like Super Ventriquoism. These powers can now have cost-changing bonuses and limitations a la Hero Games' CHAMPIONS® game. Character advantages, drawbacks, and motivations lend individuality even to the nonpowered supporting cast.

The second edition designers also encourage heroes with personalities, not just powers. In an elegant streamlining of the first edition's rather bizarre options, players get Hero Point bonuses for defining their characters' backgrounds, physical descriptions, and personalities. The designers realize that this, as much as a list of powers and skills, is what makes a fun and memorable superhero.

One may quibble with certain power cost ratings (Spirit Travel, an astral form, is among the cheapest in the game!), and with the approach that makes, for example, Earth Control, Flame Control, and Ice Control three different powers instead of one Control power with three options. But in general this is a good, balanced system, much broader than the existing DC Universe requires. It produces a wide variety of superheroes without taxing the player.

Gadgets—zero for three: Most major role-playing systems seem to have a blind spot, a particular rule or system that just won't work right no matter how many times the designers fiddle with it. In the CHAMPIONS game, it's Growth or (maybe) the vehicle rules. Players of Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU™ game lament the time needed for character generation vs.

how long the character survives. In the AD&D® game, it's—well, fill in the blank yourself. Every DC HEROES game player knows its blind spot: the gadget rules. The second edition is Mayfair's third try at gadgets, and the rules still don't work.

Gadgets, like characters, are defined by their APs of attributes, powers, and skills. You buy these with both Hero Points and the owning character's money. The more reliable the gadget, the more expensive it is. Most ordinary gadgets break down about one time in 10 uses.

To make a gadget, you use the gadget's AP values to figure its Hero Point cost and dollar cost, spend the Hero Points, then pit the owning hero's Wealth APs against the dollar cost in a check on the Action Table (the hero is trying to buy the parts). To reduce the price at the expense of more time, buy each ability separately. Once the parts are in hand, check the hero's Gadgetry skill to see how long it takes to "install" the gadget's abilities. The baseline time is one week, but a good roll could reduce that to a few hours.

How well does this work? See for yourself. The Batman wants to build a miniature bat-camera. He buys the camera's 1 AP of Body and 12 APs of Recall power at a cost of 13 APs—something under \$200,000. That's for one camera, yeah. This is the same cost as the Batmobile. It's a good thing Bruce Wayne is a billionaire! Of course, he can buy the Recall power in one week for \$100,000 (12 APs), and the Body the next week for \$50 (1 AP), saving \$99,950 for a week's wait.

To build the camera, the Batman must pit his Gadgetry skill of 12, an impressive value, against the camera's 12 APs of Recall. He has a 50-50 chance. If the player rolls 10 or less on 2d10, the task has defeated Batman; the camera's intricacy is beyond him. If the player rolls 11 or 12 on 2d10, Batman has to spend a solid week, doing nothing else but eating and sleeping, to build the camera. It probably breaks if

it takes more than 100 photos, about four rolls of film.

All this may sound like a Pentagon procurement scandal, but it points up the root problem that has always kept DC HEROES gadgets from working: Fundamentally, the designers just don't want heroes to have them. "If Gadgets with long durations were easy and cheap to build," designer Greg Gorden wrote in the first edition, "they could be very inexpensive replacements for permanent Powers."

So what? What else puts nonpowered heroes like Batman in the same (Justice) League with titans like Green Lantern and Captain Atom? Gadgets are practically self-balancing. Villains steal them; heroes don't always have them to hand (no power armor allowed in fine restaurants); and their batteries run out or their warranties expire. A game master can keep them in line as easily as any abusive power. Loosen up, guys.

Evaluation: In that 1985 review, when one-table game designs were proliferating like comic-book mutants, I spent pages talking about the problems of the single-chart approach: You can't memorize the rules. There are lots of tiny little rules on interpreting the table, and the table gives vague results. That's where readers thought I was condemning the game.

Five years later, that whole argument seems, if not wrong, beside the point. Whatever a universal table's limitations, the DC HEROES game has overcome them by cleverness and by sheer longevity. It combines broad combat options with speed of play. It quantifies noncombat interaction, such as interrogation, better than any game I know. Its AP system shows true ingenuity and, in the second edition, improved realism. The background roster is immense, and the "Exposed!" adventure (by the talented Dan Greenberg) is both entertaining and educational for novice game masters. Philosophic objections and gadget rules notwithstanding, this is one sharp design.

so the game still resides on my Intense Personal Admiration shelf. But the problem is . . . you see, I just . . . [more hand waving] . . . oh, darn!

The continuing saga: The biggest change between the first and second editions isn't the

Did You Know?

According to the DC HEROES game's second edition:

- Batman (Intelligence of 12 APs) is twice as smart as Superman (INT 11 APs). Most other hero INTs range from 5 to 10; ordinary people have 2 APs in all stats. Captain Marvel, who supposedly has the wisdom of Solomon, is virtually a dullard (INT 4), as is Green Lantern Guy Gardner (INT 3).
- Sergeant Rock (BODY 6) is as tough as Batman.
- Metamorpho has the Charisma skill. They could have fooled me.
- Batman (STR 5) can lift 1,500 lbs (5 APs of weight) without pushing. He can throw a grizzly bear (5 APs of weight) 10 feet (0 APs of distance). In the new edition the Joker (STR 4) is no longer twice as strong as the Batman. In fact, he's not nearly as good as the Batman in anything except WILL (both have 12).
- Remember how a Green Lantern's Power Ring is powered by the user's will? Of Earth's three Green Lanterns (never mind the alien crew), Hal Jordan has WILL 25, among the highest in the game. John Stewart is WILL 23, and Guy Gardner is WILL 18. Superman (WILL 20) would make a better Green Lantern than Guy, but we knew that.
- As in the first edition, Superman is still not the most powerful character in the game. But this time the previous champ, the villain Trigon, is absent. The new powerhouses are Dr. Manhattan of the Watchmen and the Monitor and Anti-Monitor from *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. These three have 25 APs of the do-anything Omni-Power, that should easily trounce the Man of Steel.
- The highest AP number of any kind belongs to the master villain Darkseid. He has 65 APs of the Warp power, which lets him connect two points 200 quadrillion miles apart. That's, what, 34,000 light years?
- Superman has 14 APs of Superspeed versus the new Flash's Superspeed of 10 APs. I guess the designers hadn't seen the recent issue where the two raced neck and neck around the world.
- Wonder Woman, with 7 APs of Running, can run 400 yards (7 APs) in four seconds (0 APs). That sounds like Superspeed, no?
- Bruce Wayne, with wealth of 20 APs, can lay his hands on 20 APs of money (\$26 million) on a week's notice. Lex Luthor (25 APs of wealth) could marshal \$800 million without trouble.
- To build a headquarters with walls of the super-strong material "promethium" adds 100 APs to the cost of the building (Rules Manual, page 38). One hundred APs of wealth is 25 nonillion dollars (25 followed by 30 zeroes), which is around 500 sextillion times more money than there is in the world.
- Once more, the character roster includes a Mayfair Games designer. He has the highest skill number in the game: 21 APs of Writer/Photographer. Congratulations, Tom Cook!

rules. It's the universe. After the first edition, DC Comics finished its big *Crisis on Infinite Earths* universe-cleaning limited series. Two or three more giant multititle runamuck crossover series followed. John Byrne overhauled Superman, George Perez revised Wonder Woman, and Batmania hit the nation. Hot titles cooled off, and new ones captured the buyers' fickle affections.

The result is a completely different DC Universe. Everybody has changed, and nearly everyone has shuffled group affiliations. Big-time villains have died. Lex Luthor is no longer a mad scientist in power armor but the worlds wealthiest man. S.T.A.R. Labs has become a vaguely sinister conglomerate, and the U.S. intelligence community looks different after the "Janus Directive" story line. For unclear reasons, magic is now less powerful than it was, and the Spectre is no longer an ultimate power. The Green Lantern Corps is gone. Superboy? Who's Superboy?

Free-lancer Michael A. Stackpole ran into this trend when he updated the *Batman Sourcebook* supplement for the DC HEROES second edition (see the following review). Of the eight years of Batman back issues Stackpole was researching, DC editors declared five years' worth, all the work of a particular writer, null and void. Another issue revised the origin of the second Robin, Jason Todd. Then, just before Stackpole's deadline, an issue of *The Question* featured a completely new origin of Batman's foe, the Riddler. Stackpole got caught off guard.

"Is this for real?" Stackpole asked DC. Yes, said DC, it's part of the canon now. So Stackpole wrote that Riddler origin—but now, a year or two later, DC has gone back to a previous origin. The canon, like that of the early Hindus, apparently undergoes frequent revision.

Reading vs. gaming: These changes, whether cosmetic or systemic, make interesting reading if you follow DC comics. But does this maelstrom work as a campaign background? Sure, the DC HEROES Background Roster book does a fine job of describing the universe and its heroes. But note how much this description differs from the first edition. And each month's worth of DC titles puts it further out of date.

Suppose you start a DC Universe campaign, then next year's mega-crossover series or a revised villain origin makes your current subplots obsolete. Do you throw the plots out, or do you decide you're not playing in the "official" DC universe? Presumably the "official" universe was the reason you bought the game, but the subplots are what your players want to play.

This review began by recognizing the appeal of a licensed game background that allows players to re-create their favorite stories. But that background should be stable, a known quantity. For instance, West End Games has set its STAR WARS?

The RPG in the time between the first two *Star Wars* movies. Even if later films in the series appear, the existing material still works. The DC Universe's planned obsolescence, by contrast, makes an official campaign unstable. Even as players relive their favorite stories, the campaign history may be shifting like mercury.

This leads inevitably to a peculiar set of **Recommendations:** Don't get the DC HEROES game's second edition for the license; get it for the system. Though the game closely simulates its subject and provides plenty of background on the DC Universe, that universe carries fatal risks as a campaign background.

But if you find other superhero RPGs too slow or complex for your taste—and if you don't mind one-table systems—use the DC HEROES rules as a fast-paced superheroic combat system for your own campaign world. Sure, you may take your inspiration from DC's universe, but soon your campaign will probably diverge to become your own creation. That new world will entertain you as much as the comics you based it on.

The Batman Sourcebook, second edition

DC HEROES game supplement
Mayfair Games \$10
96-page softcover reference book
Author: Michael A. Stackpole
Additional material: J. Santana, Louis J. Prosperi, Jack A. Barker, and Ray Winninger
Cover and illustrations: DC Comics staff

Mayfair supported the first edition of the DC HEROES game vigorously if unevenly. Though DC is apparently a fussy licensor (DC recently returned the forthcoming Justice League sourcebook for a second complete rewrite), it appears Mayfair is gearing up for the same pace on the second edition. Did Mayfair just want to lead with a strong product, or was it capitalizing on the Bat-craze that still grips the comics market? Either way, the new line benefits from this polished update of one of the original edition's best supplements.

Mike Stackpole designed FASA's new LEGIONNAIRE™ RPG and many other games, and he has written six or seven novels set in the universe of FASA's BATTLETECH® game. In his spare time, this talented writer has updated this comprehensive 1986 reference guide about the Caped Crusader. Along with updated stats for everybody, everything, and every place important to the Batman mythos, *The Batman Sourcebook* includes essays on Batman's relationship to the new, post-Byrne Superman, his role in the Justice League(s), and that perennial topic of arguments at comics conventions, "Is the Batman Sane?" (In the latter, Stackpole almost weenies out from answering the question, but finally argues yes.)

Ray Winninger's "Double Jeopardy," a snappy adventure for a game master and

one player, leads the Batman on an intricate trail of clues to a confrontation with an old nemesis. (Hint: The GM often gets to flip a coin.) Too bad the ending falls a bit flat, but the development to that point should keep the Batman's player working hard.

The Batman Sourcebook maps all of Wayne Manor, most floors of the Wayne Foundation, and all four levels of the Batcave. It even lists the issues in which Batman picked up those two trophies we always see in Batcave scenes: the giant 1947 penny and the Tyrannosaurus Rex. Now, that's complete!

Unfortunately, graphics designer Gregory "Ike" Scott, fresh from giving Mayfair's new edition of the CHILL™ game a stylish and scary veneer, adapted the same bizarre approach to this book. All the titles look like ransom notes! It's good to see that in later DC HEROES game supplements, Mayfair has **abandoned** Scott's **peculiar** use of **boldface** type.

The Otherwhere Quest

Mayfair Games \$7
40-page solo adventure booklet
Author: Ray Winninger
Cover: Arne Starr

I've seldom enjoyed Mayfair's solo adventures, with their hundreds of tiny paragraphs of flat prose and their brief, linear plots with limited replay value. This solo adventure lets you take the role of any of Earth's three Green Lanterns, though your choice is immaterial to the plot, and sends you into an alternate dimension called the Otherwhere. There you must find the MacGuffiner—er, Harmony Beacon—that will re-energize the Forever Barrier, saving the Thurians (characterless good guys) from the Subjugators (offstage bad guys).

This solo features a couple of nice ideas, such as Combat Tables that let opponents use different fighting tactics, and a Power Ring Table that simulates the famous ring's open-ended Omni-Power. This serves as a useful teaching device for the DC HEROES game mechanics. But as I traveled the Otherwhere (that is, moved from square to square over a flat diagram), I concluded this one-shot plot feels as flat as the Otherwhere itself.

The Law of Darkness

Mayfair Games \$8
48-page adventure module
Design: Scott Paul Maykrantz
Cover: Paris Cullins and Mike DeCarlo

Most of the New Gods don't appear in the DC HEROES game's second edition, but Mayfair has quickly remedied the lack with this far-ranging adventure featuring Highfather, Orion, Lightray, and other residents of New Genesis.

That incorrigible Apokolipsian, Darkseid, is still trying to conquer the universe, and this time he's accidentally blown up Supertown's Source Wall, so the New Gods must travel to Earth, where

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Granny Goodness (looking, as the text says, "like Dr. Ruth after a 30-year prison sentence") is hypnotizing everyone in New York City into doing calisthenics. The heroes fight Acidic Blobs, Slow-Down Gas, and the Deathmaker robot from Studio X, then it's off to Gotham City to fight hordes of rats, or maybe to Metropolis to fight hordes of Para-Demons, then to DeSaad's lair to fight hordes of Bug Warriors and a Devolution Cube, then to the big climactic fight with Darkseid himself. Just let me catch my breath!

Once again, the adventure's ending falls slightly flat, but getting there should be a roller coaster ride worthy of the original Jack Kirby stories of the New Gods. But don't try to run this plot with a different group of heroes!

Short and sweet

PHBR3 *The Complete Priest's Handbook*, by Aaron Allston. TSR, Inc., \$15. Is there anything so unlikely as a "generic priest"? This 128-page AD&D® game supplement provides noble priests, outlaw priests, fighting monks, amazon priestesses, and other "priest kits"; priest personality archetypes like the crusader, philosopher, hypocrite, and earnest novice; 60 sample priesthoods of deities for agriculture, birth, disease, elemental forces, hunting, literature, oceans, oracles, trade, wind, wisdom, and more; and rules for designing new faiths for your campaign. There are new weapons and equipment, martial-arts rules, and adventure hooks for priest characters. Never thought of an all-priest campaign? Then you never saw *The Complete Priest's Handbook*. Bravo! (Or do I mean "Hallelujah"?)

Invasions: Target Earth, by Cyrus Harris. Iron Crown Enterprises, \$8. Watch the skies? Too late, they're here! This campaign sourcebook for Hero Games' CHAMPIONS game tells how to game a large-scale, multiscenario alien invasion,

whether by robots, aliens, or (no kidding) giant ants. Learn how to set up the invaders' command structure and firepower, then follow every phase of the invasion from arrival to aftermath. The nicely illustrated sourcebook section details a 13. scenario invasion by Demonicus Rex and his otherdimensional thugs, and it pays lip service to five other traditional invading armies. The scenario outlines here need fleshing out, but *Invasions* takes you a long way toward turning your campaign world upside down and righting it again. Much of this book adapts easily to other superhero RPGs, too. Start filling your game's skies with enemy ships.

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THE MARVEL-PHILE

Girl trouble

by Dale A. Donovan



MARVEL

The Amazing Spider-Man® was the first comic book I ever read and collected on a regular basis. Of course, after a while, my interests changed and I stopped reading about Spidey's exploits. That was over 10 years ago, but recently, Jeff Grubb dropped a copy of *The Amazing Spider-Man* #340 on my desk and said the lady villains therein would make a great "MARVEL-Phile." I read through it and found myself caught up in the life of Peter Parker again, just like I was years ago.

Jeff was right, of course. The "Femme Fatales" really gave Spidey a run for his money in that issue, and now they can keep your campaign's heroes on their toes



KNOCKOUT™

Leader of the Femme Fatales

F	EX(20)	Health: 110
A	GD(10)	
S	IN(40)	Karma: 40
E	IN(40)	
R	EX(20)	Resources: Good
I	GD(10)	
P	GD(10)	Popularity: - 2

POWERS: Other than her strength, Knockout has no discernable powers. She does however, wear a suit of metallic armor that acts as Excellent (20) body armor against physical attacks.

TALENTS: Knockout has the Martial Arts A and Leadership skills.

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WHIPLASH™

Criminal (mercenary)

F	GD(10)	Health: 56
A	EX(20)	
S	TY(6)	Karma: 22
E	EX(20)	
R	TY(6)	Resources: Typical
I	TY(6)	
P	GD(10)	Popularity: - 2

POWERS: Whiplash has no known powers of her own. Her costume contains three retractable steel whips (Incredible (40) Material Strength) in each arm. In combat, they do Remarkable (30) Blunt Attacks damage. The whips are apparently stored in her gauntlets when not in use. Her padded costume also provides Good (10) body armor from physical attacks.

TALENTS: Whiplash is a Weapon Specialist with her whips.

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MINDBLAST™

Telekinetic criminal (mercenary)

F	TY(6)	Health: 28
A	TY(6)	
S	TY(6)	Karma: 61
E	GD(10)	
R	GD(10)	Resources: Typical
I	TY(6)	
P	IN(45)	Popularity: - 3

POWERS: Mindblast's lone power is Telekinesis. Her rank for this power is Incredible (451, but she has not (as of this writing) used it to directly attack a foe. It is probable that she has not yet developed that Power Stunt. She does possess the following Power Stunts, however:

–Flight for herself only at Typical (6) airspeed; and

–A coruscating energy shield that surrounds her body and provides her with Good (10) protection from physical and energy attacks.

TALENTS: Mindblast has displayed no particular talents.



BLOODLUST™ Criminal (mercenary)

F	EX(20)	Health: 92
A	RM(30)	
S	GD(12)	Karma: 34
E	RM(30)	
R	PR(4)	Resources: Typical
I	EX(20)	
P	GD(10)	Popularity: - 5

POWERS: Bloodlust's only power is her Excellent (20) Material Strength claws. In combat, Bloodlust inflicts Excellent (20) Edged Attacks damage. Also, Bloodlust's costume has enough padding to give her Typical (6) protection from physical attacks.

TALENTS: Bloodlust is a Weapon Specialist with her claws, and she possesses the Martial Arts E and Acrobatics skills.

FEMME FATALES™

CONTACTS: At the time of this writing, the only contact revealed for the Femme Fatales is a mysterious scientist named Dr. Turner. He employed the Femme Fatales to harass Spider-Man, so that Spidey would return to Turner's lab. Turner's plans for the Web-slinger are unrevealed.

HISTORY: As this is the first appearance of the Femme Fatales as a team, they have only a brief history to report.

Recently, Spider-Man was asked to attend a public ceremony welcoming an ambassador from an Eastern European country. The Femme Fatales attacked Spidey at the airport. They directed a feint toward the ambassador, but their true target was Spider-Man. The Web-slinger fought them to a standstill, but as police reinforcements arrived, the Femme Fatales fled the scene. It is a safe bet, however, that the Femme Fatales and Spider-Man will meet again.

More information will doubtlessly be revealed about the Femme Fatales and their powers as time and plots move along. For more information on Whiplash and Bloodlust, see *Marvel Comics Presents* #49.


ROLE-PLAYING NOTES: In their battle against the Web-slinger, the Femme Fatales showed sound tactics. Bloodlust and Whiplash kept Spidey off guard and didn't allow him to take the offensive. Meanwhile, Knockout and Mindblast prepared to administer the *coup de grace*. They also took advantage of the situation, using the ambassador's arrival to cover up their true motive—attacking Spider-Man. Mindblast even attempted to roast Spidey by telekinetically holding him above the ambassador's plane, which was leaking fuel, while Knockout tossed a lit cigarette lighter into the pools of fuel.

In your campaign, the Femme Fatales should use similar techniques to beat your heroes. They work together very well and pair up to take on foes they outnumber (Bloodlust with Whiplash and Knockout

with Mindblast are suggested pairings). If your heroes mess up or underestimate these ladies, be sure that the Femme Fatales make them pay the price. These villains use their brains, not just their brawn.

The Femme Fatales might appear in your campaign as hired muscle on any of a number of missions. Perhaps the local Maggia boss has someone—probably your heroes—that he wants taken out of the picture. Maybe a mastermind villain is looking for some super-powered muscle to protect him or to help him wipe out those pesky heroes who keep cropping up at all the worst times. Or maybe the Femme Fatales just arrived in your heroes' town and want to show everyone just what they can do. And what better way than by trashing the local heroes?

A note to those of you who have written to me requesting stats on all the amazing mutants hopping around the MARVEL UNIVERSE™ these days: Pick up *The Uncanny X-MEN™ Special!* boxed set (TSR Product No. 6896) by Jeff Grubb. In it, you'll find a Roster Book full of up-to-date stats on everyone from the Mutant Liberation Front, the Brood Mutants, and the Resistants to the X-Men, X-Factor, and the Reavers. Also included is a campaign book for running your own all-mutant campaign, an adventure book containing the adventure "School's Out," by Rick Swan, plus four full-color maps of such legendary locations as the X-Men's Mansion, Excalibur's lighthouse, and more!

Send any comments or questions to: The MARVEL-Phile, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. 

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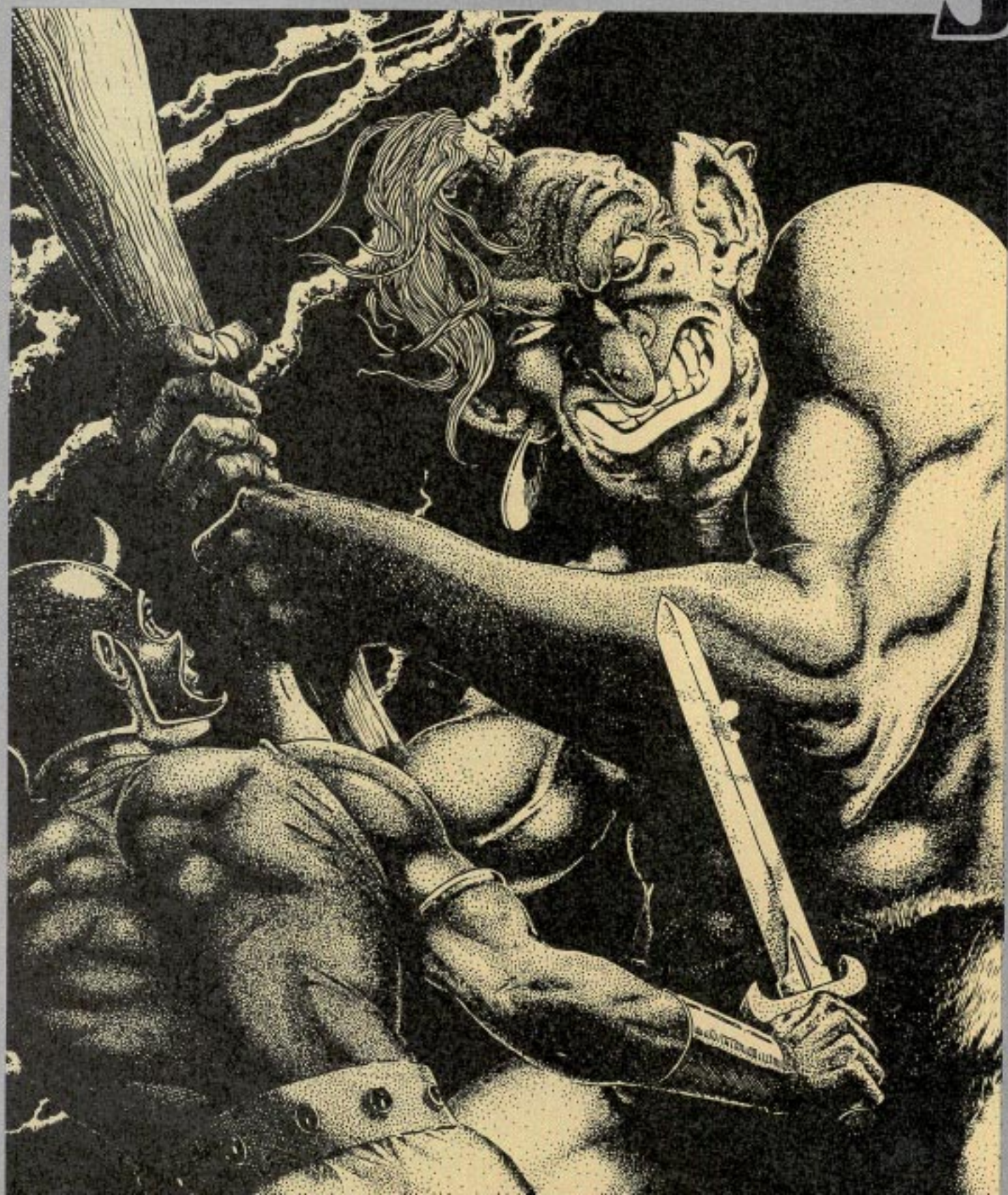
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American Heart Association

Maneuvering



for Victory

Special maneuvers

for AD&D® 1st Edition game fighters

by Cory S. Kammer

Elrion Drowslayer hid in the rocky pass, at the base of a narrow path leading to a natural stone bridge. The bridge arched across a canyon, the only entry to the Arch-Mage's mountain sanctuary. Three ogres guarded the bridge. Beyond them was a spire of stone riddled with twisting passages, laboratories, lairs, and the dungeon in which Elrion's comrades were entrapped. With luck, they still lived.

The bridge had been carved eons ago, with no cover or rails, by Aerdrie Faenya, the goddess of the winds. The ogres had no missile weapons, but they were at least a bowshot away. Elrion's arrows had long been exhaped, and he could not rely on stealth to get past the sentries. He would need his quickness and fighting skills. So be it.

Elrion bellowed a challenge and sprinted from hiding, runesword in hand, his elven boots dancing silently across the rocky path. As he had hoped, two of the ogres charged him with their own insults, swinging their clubs in high arcs. As the first drew near, Elrion feinted, then thrust sharply, drawing blood and driving the ogre over the brink. An instant later, his shield arm rang with sudden pain as Elrion's second assailant was upon him. The impact of its club, just barely parried, numbed his shield arm and shoulder. With a quick riposte, a second blow was deflected sideways, and Elrion thrust his blade deep into the ogre's breast. The ogre crumpled, and Elrion paused to free his sword.

Instead of signaling for aid, the final ogre stared impassively. Its massive arms flexed, one hand patiently resting on his upright mallet, as if posing for a portrait. But as Elrion closed, its two mighty hands closed on the tremendous hammer and hefted it above the ogre's shoulder. The thing grunted obscenities in its native tongue. Bending under the ogre's swipe, Elrion caught the maul on the overlong crosspiece of his long sword, wrenched, and levered it from the beast's grip.

Weaponless, the creature was no match for Elrion. It was a short battle before Elrion, spotted with blood and covered in scratches, stood alone. Elrion then set off across the great span toward the dark tunnel at the end. Knowing it premature

to feel triumph, he hoped his skills would serve him as well in the battles to come—and he prayed that his comrades still lived.

For simplicity's sake, the drama of battle is lost in AD&D® 1st Edition games. Fighting is divided into an attack roll against an armor class, followed by a damage roll. Feints, parries, and ripostes are assumed to occur during the space of a round to facilitate the game. But this is unfair to fighters. Mages, clerics, and druids dominate combat with fabulous spells that alter reality, and thieves can slink and hide before striking critical backstabs. Until the advent of specializations, fighters had no special skills in battle other than a better chance to hit.

Enter *Oriental Adventures*. After its appearance, the whole new world of martial arts and special maneuvers emerged for those who adventured in the mystic realms of Kara-Tur. The special maneuvers were made simple to use, with few additional die rolls; the emphasis was on versatility, fun, and creativity. Each new character could have his own distinctive martial-arts style. Always seeking to simulate the feint, thrust, dodge, and parry of real melee combat, this became the perfect avenue to create special combat maneuvers for fighters.

This article expounds on how gamers can utilize special combat maneuvers to improve play and versatility. Potentially, each fighter can create a combat style unique to himself.

Special combat maneuvers are actions and abilities acquired through intensive training and skill. Some maneuvers are actions that must be announced at the start of each round during a fight (Feint, Parry, Evasion). Others are always in effect (All-Around Sight, Resist Unconsciousness, Dexterity). Sometimes combat maneuvers are risky because failure leaves the character in an exposed or dangerous position. Some are weapon-based skills, and others deal with intellectual and physical power.

Maneuvers are categorized into principal methods of fighting. All special combat maneuvers are ranked from easiest to most difficult to master within each category. The lower a maneuver's number, the

easier it is to master and execute. When choosing a maneuver, a character must select them in a progression from #1 on up. A more difficult maneuver can be learned only when those before it are mastered.

If a character wishes to be schooled in abilities from several categories, all maneuvers must be learned in order. For example, Kyrik Wulfgar begins his career learning skills in the Movement category. After learning Feint, Parting Blow, and Drive, he chooses to improve other skills, so he next masters Dodge and Evasion in the Grappling category. At this point, he decides to return to the Movement category to learn the Speed maneuver, which is possible only because he previously earned the first three skills. Should he later decide to extend his expertise to another category, Kyrik will start at the beginning maneuver yet again.

Special combat maneuvers are the distinct province of the fighter class. Each is earned by expending one weapon proficiency slot. There is no limit to the number of skills that may be learned, but a character must be proficient with at least one weapon type before attempting them. Players must consider their choices carefully, because even a 16th-level fighter has only nine slots to divide among weapon proficiencies, specializations, and weapon maneuvers. Nonweapon proficiency slots cannot be used for these maneuvers.

Training for maneuvers is long and rigorous. First, an individual must seek a qualified teacher who knows the special maneuver desired. In a large city, there may be fighting schools where a variety of disciplines are taught. In an isolated community, a character may be restricted to the skills of a few well-trained individuals. Characters with military training might have received their skills through constant drilling with their units; thus, specific skills might be quite common to a region. It is quite likely an entire adventure could hinge on locating or rescuing the master of a difficult maneuver, just as a mage might go on a quest for an arcane tome.

Having found a suitable instructor, the student begins strict training, similar to level-advancement training. Mastery of a skill is earned in 1-4 weeks, depending

upon a character's performance in prior adventuring. Special combat maneuvers can never be acquired through self-training. Coupled with level training, training time for combat maneuvers may be reduced by one week, but the total training period may never be less than a week.

Training costs are highly variable. The degree that a maneuver is known throughout a region will affect the price of training, as well as the teacher's predisposition to his student. Generally, the base cost per week of special-maneuver training is equivalent to the costs for level training. The prices tend to escalate the more one excels in a category, because few fighters ever achieve those higher pinnacles of skill and they treasure their unique standings. Costs for rare maneuvers may be exceptionally high.

Special combat maneuvers were intended to function as a special ability of the fighter class. A DM may decide other fighter subclasses merit, special combat maneuvers as well, but these subclasses must satisfy their other class requirements before expending weapon proficiencies for maneuvers.

Monsters are also candidates for using special weapon maneuvers. Some logic must be used, or variety will be lost if every creature possesses them. For the most part, humanoid of lawful alignments and of average or better intelligence are prime choices to adopt combat maneuvers, because of their intellect and tendency toward regimented training. With their warlike organizations, orcs and hobgoblins commonly acquire special maneuvers. This can make those one-hit-dice orcs surprisingly tough. Ogres, bugbears, gnolls, and trolls, who tend to be disorganized, should be without maneuvers, except for the rare leader types among them. Not all chaotic alignments should be excluded from special maneuvers, though. The drow, for instance, are chaotic evil but enjoy a structured society that encourages excellence in combat; they could learn weapon skills.

A DM must use common sense in assessing those situations in which combat maneuvers are effective. Some skills are always in effect, but events might circumvent their use. A character stumbling into a pit of spikes will be impaled, so it is improbable that he could use his Fall maneuver to roll when hitting the ground and suffer only half damage. Obviously, it is ridiculous to attempt stunning or incapacitating a red dragon by pummeling; and entangling a creature with no limbs is impossible, if not pointless. The DM dictates whether or not it is possible to use a given maneuver in each case, just as he would judge the effects of a spell. As a rule of thumb, an opponent must be from halfling to ogre size in order for a special combat maneuver to work against it.

Additionally, remember that these are highly experimental additions to the game. Adjustments may have to be made to

maintain game balance. Campaigns relying heavily on fighters will benefit from having more versatile characters, but the strength of the opponents might need to be increased (or fewer combative situations might be encountered, limiting the use of such special maneuvers). Campaigns with few fighters will benefit as the warriors will be better able to fill their roles to defend their allies and attack foes. If fighters come to overshadow other classes, however, these maneuvers should be trimmed down or left unused.

The descriptions of special combat maneuvers follow and are arranged by category, from least difficult to most difficult, as given on the Special Combat Maneuvers Tables.

Balance

Fall: This maneuver enables a character to roll with a fall or to position himself to lessen damage from a fall. Once learned, this maneuver is constantly in effect. A character thus protected suffers only half damage from falls; his carried equipment receives a +2 bonus to save vs. fall.

Instant Stand: Knowing this skill allows a character to instantly regain his feet, whether he's knocked off balance, prone, or recovering from a fall. The character loses only the ability to move that round and suffers no defensive penalties. Only nonbulky armor may be worn when executing an Instant Stand. At the DM's discretion, this maneuver is allowed to function in magical bulky armor, due to its greater flexibility and lesser weight.

Prone Fighting: This maneuver has many functions. First, a fighter with this skill is empowered to fight as effectively when knocked to the ground as if he were on his feet. The only limitation is that no other special maneuvers except Instant Stand may be used when fighting in this manner. Second, all die rolls made to escape a grappling-attack gain a +1 bonus. Third, this maneuver allows a character to overcome penalties when fighting in tight places, such as a cavern with a low ceiling, due to the character's practice in fighting in unusual or off-balance positions. All functions are constantly in effect.

Dexterity: After an initial training time of double the normal length, a fighter is introduced to a regimen of exercises that creates greater agility, nimbleness, speed, and flexibility. He gains one point on his dexterity score. This reflects commitment and hard work, and it takes an hour per day of exercises to keep this bonus. Failure to keep this regimen causes these skills to atrophy quickly. A character who misses training for more than three consecutive days loses the benefit of the dexterity bonus and requires two days of double workouts for every day missed, or must begin intensive retraining as if the skill had never been learned. A new proficiency slot need not be used, however.

If the DM allows a paladin or cavalier to gain this skill, the results differ. When the

paladin or cavalier advances a level and is allowed his 2d10 roll for additional dexterity percentile points, he receives a bonus of +5% to this roll, thanks to the maneuver. No other benefit is received, not even the gaining of a full dexterity point, but no additional training is necessary, either.

Movement

Feint: To employ this maneuver, a character must announce that he intends to make a feint before making an attack roll. A normal attack roll is then made. If the blow hits the opponent, the character's next attack on the same opponent will be at +2 attack bonus. This is a consequence of drawing the opponent's attention away from the point at which the character will strike next. Against a rival countering with a Riposte, there is no chance whatsoever to land a feint; however, the Riposte will be at a -4 attack probability.

Parting Blow: By saving at least one attack and allowing all melee opponents their remaining attacks, an individual may strike the final blow in a round. Should the attack hit successfully, the attacker may withdraw 10' without any opponents pursuing or striking at him (unless he is restrained or surrounded). This allows the character to close the distance with a different opponent, lend aid in another portion of the battle, or get a head start if he intends to flee on the following round. If the Parting Blow fails, the character is still engaged in melee combat.

A fighter with multiple attacks who fells an enemy with his first blow may use Parting Blow to move up to 10' and attack a second foe within that range, as long as he is allowed another attack in that round.

It is possible to strike a Parting Blow but lose initiative in the following round. An opponent who closes in such a case negates the previous round's Parting Blow movement advantage.

Drive: By strength and skill, an attacker may attempt to push or direct his opponent backward. On a successful hit, the opponent may be driven back 1' per level of the attacker. If the distance an opponent is pressed back is greater than 3', the victim must save vs. paralyzation to remain on his feet. In addition, should a victim be driven over 3' into a solid object or wall, he takes 1 hp damage. A victim may also be pushed over a brink. Should an opponent remain standing, he may melee with his attacker normally.

Because of the aggressive nature of this attack, should the Drive fail, the attacker is exposed and loses any bonuses to armor class due to dexterity for the remainder of the round.

Speed: Through concentration and muscle control, the character gains double the amount of melee attacks and twice his normal combat movement rate. This maneuver is very tiring and can be done only once per day for five rounds. After this time, an individual can fight normally for 1-4 rounds more, then must rest for 2-8

rounds, during which time he can move at only half speed and can only defend himself (no spell-casting or psionics). He may fight and move normally thereafter.

Missile Deflection: This maneuver may be executed with a shield or with a weapon 3-6' in length. Lightning-fast reflexes allow a defender to deflect up to two missile attacks per round. If a large shield is employed, three missiles may be avoided. The skill always functions, but the defender must be aware of his assailant. The attempt to deflect missiles must be announced before the to-hit rolls for the missiles are made. If the defender saves vs. paralyzation, he has successfully deflected a missile attack and sustains no damage. A failed save allows a standard chance to be hit.

Missiles that cannot be deflected include exceptionally large ones, such as giant-hurled boulders or catapult missiles, and missiles created by magic, like *Melf's minute meteors*, *fireball*, or *magic missile* spells. Enchanted missiles, such as arrows or quarrels, subtract one per magical bonus of the missile from a defender's saving throw.

Defense

Parry: This maneuver may be used once per round per attack permitted to the fighter. If parrying with a melee weapon, all of the character's bonuses to attack from strength, magic, or specialization may be subtracted from the adversary's attack roll. Should an attacker roll a natural 20, the penalty from a parry is negated. The Evasion maneuver may never be coupled with a Parry.

Weapon's Length: A character using this maneuver, and employing a thrusting weapon (e.g., spear) of equal or greater length than his foe's in melee, may strike the first blow when closing with a foe regardless of initiative rolls or weapon-speed factors. If the blow is successful, the opponent is also forced to remain just beyond the thrusting weapon's reach, unable to close with the character. Failure to deal a successful blow allows the opponent within the character's guard, and the opponent hits with a +2 bonus. The maneuver cannot be reestablished after failure until a round when the opponent fails to attack successfully. Additionally, if the opponent attempts to rush the character, the character may remain in place but thrust at the attacker, striking first and doing double damage as if his weapon were set for a charge. Both of these functions are effective against only one attacker, and both require sufficient room in which to wield the thrusting weapon.

Shield: With this special maneuver, the fighter's training has granted him superior prowess with a shield, giving a +1 bonus to armor class, beyond any other bonuses, which is always in effect. Magical and dexterity bonuses are counted as well. Thus, a nonmagical medium shield offers a +2 bonus to armor class, and a *shield* +2

offers a +4 bonus to armor class. Shields may counter only a specific number of attacks per round, as outlined in the 1st Edition *Players Handbook* (page 36), and this does not change with this maneuver.

Riposte: This maneuver is an attack as well as a defense. To use this skill, a character must withhold at least one attack allowed to him in a round and have an equal or greater initiative roll than his antagonist. The character waits until his foe begins his assault, then parries with his weapon and rapidly strikes his own blow. The success of the Riposte is determined just as a normal Parry maneuver would be; if the Riposte deters the opponent's attack, the character's subsequent attack is at a +2 bonus (strength and specialization bonuses still apply). If an opponent's blow lands despite the parry, the Riposte is negated and the character makes his attack with normal bonuses.

Weapon Catch: When parrying a weapon thrust with his melee weapon, a character tries to catch his opponent's weapon in place by leverage. The character's weapon must be of at least half the size and weight of the opponent's weapon. If Weapon Catch is announced at the start of a round, the opponent's weapon is caught and rendered ineffective if his attack fails and if the character makes a successful attack roll (which does no damage to the opponent). The opponent may drop his weapon or may sacrifice his next attack to automatically pull his weapon free. Should the opponent's weapon be trapped with an entangling weapon, a 1d20 dexterity check is required to break free.

An individual who has caught an opponent's weapon may strike a blow with his free hand at a +2 attack probability, either during the same round (if he has attacks left to make) or during the next round (if the opponent has not released or freed his weapon). He may disarm his foe instead. The opponent is allowed a save vs. paralyzation to retain his weapon, but the character's bonuses to hit with his melee weapon are subtracted from the opponent's save. The DM should administer this maneuver carefully, with an eye toward realism and logic.

Strike

Pummel: When using Weaponless Combat System I from *Unearthed Arcana*, blows from fists do 1-4 hp damage rather than the usual 1-2 hp. If using Weaponless Combat System II, small, soft objects inflict 1-4 hp damage; small, hard objects inflict 1-6 hp; and all large objects inflict 1-8 hp damage on any hit, plus applicable strength bonuses.

Crushing Blow: This maneuver is constantly in effect. Damage from pummeling attacks are at an additional +1/2 hp per level. This bonus also applies to shield smashes. Furthermore, when using Weaponless Combat System II (from *Unearthed Arcana*), the chance to stun a victim is

+1% per level greater than normal. The maximum chance to stun is 95%.

Vital Area: This carefully aimed pummeling attack increases damage by 1 hp per level. This bonus is used instead of the +1/2 hp gained from the Crushing Blow special maneuver. The force of the blow also will incapacitate a victim's limb (selected randomly, excluding the head) on a roll of four or more better than needed to hit his armor class. Again, this bonus applies to shield smashes, and the chance to stun an adversary remains the same as under Crushing Blow.

Stun/Incapacitate: On a successful pummeling attack, besides damage gained as per Vital Area, the impact may stun or incapacitate the victim if he fails to save vs. paralyzation. If the save fails, the opponent is stunned for 1-6 rounds; if a second saving throw vs. paralyzation fails, the victim is knocked unconscious for 2-8 turns. This bonus does not apply to shield smashes, and the normal chance to stun when pummeling is disregarded when attempting this maneuver.

Grappling

Dodge: This maneuver may be used in place of an attack, bestowing a bonus of +2 to a character's armor class against all melee attacks. The defender must be aware of all of his attackers. The dodge maneuver is not negated until the character attacks. This skill constantly gives +1 to saves vs. breath weapons and other magical attacks that may be dodged, or a +2 if the user currently has this maneuver in effect. This maneuver cannot be used if the character is wearing any armor other than non-bulky.

Evasion: This lets a character evade melee attacks directed at him in a round in which he has the initiative. Such attacks can be normal melee attacks or magical attacks that affect a 10'-square area or less. The character's evasion chance is 3% per level and can never exceed 45%. The Evasion chance is rolled for a character before the to-hit roll is made by an attacker. This special combat maneuver cannot be used while the character is wearing bulky armor.

In the event a fighter/thief-acrobat takes this skill, he gains an additional 2% bonus to his thief-acrobat evasion ability each time he earns a new level; this is subject to a thief's armor class restrictions.

Slam: A fighter with this maneuver throws his body weight into an opponent to knock him off balance. With a successful attack, the Slam staggers the defender, giving him a -2 to hit and -2 to his initiative for his following attack. A failed attack leaves the character off balance, applying a -2 to his next attack initiative.

Clinch: A character may execute this maneuver when he has initiative for the round. Provided an opponent's attack misses, the fighter exploits the opening by pinning the opponent's weapon arm to his side or behind his back, with no attack roll

Special Combat Maneuvers Tables

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necessary. Successive attacks made by the character are at +2 to hit, and the opponent's dexterity bonuses are neutralized. The opponent's future attacks must be used to negate the hold; any method mentioned in Weaponless Combat System II may be used to do so. Once applied, this maneuver is in effect until the opponent breaks free.

Mental Training

All-Around Sight: The character's training attunes him to his immediate surroundings so he is able to detect opponents on all sides, provided they are not *invisible*. Characters with this maneuver may never be struck from behind or suffer a penalty from a back attack in melee. Missile attacks still strike normally. This skill constantly functions but is negated by wearing a great helm or similar device.

Mental Resistance: The mental exercises and ordeals of the individual's training have toughened and strengthened his will so that he receives + 2 bonus on all saving throws against mental attacks, including: *charm, hold, and illusion* spells. This maneuver is always in effect.

Blind Fighting: In darkness, when blinded, or faced by *invisible* enemies, a character with this skill suffers only a -1 penalty on attack rolls and saves. While this maneuver is always in effect, any of these instances can be combined with a silence spell to render the character effectively blind again.

Intelligence: After undergoing an extensive initial learning program of at least three times the normal training time, a fighter gains + 1 to his intelligence score. However, if a mind is not constantly challenged, it gets lethargic and knowledge is forgotten. To keep full effectiveness, a fighter must spend 1½ hours of study or reading a day. After more than a month without sufficient reading, study, or research (at the DM's discretion), this ability will be lost. To regain it requires two full days of study for each week of reading missed, or extensive retraining as if the skill had never been learned (a new proficiency slot need not be used).

Physical Training

Ironskin: By physical training and toughening, a character makes himself more resistant to physical damage, improving his armor class by one step. Dexterity bonuses, *rings or cloaks of protection, bracers of defense, shields, and like items* may be used with this skill, but Ironskin cannot be used when wearing any type of armor.

Resist Unconsciousness: When a character applying this maneuver reaches zero hit points or lower, but not below -9 hp, he may function for two segments per level before falling unconscious. The character might have time to call for aid, bind one

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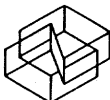
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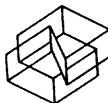


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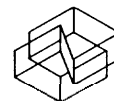
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wound, drink a potion, or even slay his attacker before blacking out. Note that a character in negative hit points continues to lose 1 hp each round, nonetheless.

Perception: Perception instructs an individual to focus his senses more effectively. He gains a +2 bonus on 1d20 rolls (or +10% on 1d100 rolls) to: find secret or concealed doors; hear noises; find traps; penetrate an assassin's disguise; save vs. illusions lacking visual, audible, tactile, or olfactory sensations; and all similar situations that affect the senses. Likewise, surprise rolls are modified by +2, but a roll of a 1 always fails. Some of the skills that will benefit from this maneuver might not be possessed by a fighter who is not multi- or dual-classed.

Health & Fitness: Following double normal training time, consisting of running and aerobic exercise, an individual's stamina is increased enough to gain one point on his constitution score. An additional hour of exercise is necessary each day to retain this bonus. Neglect allows the body to lose its form quickly. Missing exercises for more than three consecutive days disallows the constitution bonus and requires two days of double workouts for every day missed. The other option would be to retrain as if the maneuver were never learned, but the character need not expend a new proficiency slot.

As with the Dexterity maneuver, this ability changes if a DM allows cavaliers to gain special maneuvers. When a cavalier achieves a new level, then makes his 2d10 roll for additional constitution percentile points, he benefits by gaining +5% to the roll. No other benefit is gained, not even the full point of constitution, but no additional training is required outside the cavalier's normal regimen.

Strength: Already physically fit, a fighter may now build on his physical power. An initial training time of twice normal duration is required. Through strength-building exercises and weightlifting, an individual's strength score will increase by one point, or one level of exceptional strength (18 percentile) to a maximum strength of 18/00. Only half an hour of additional exercise per day is required to sustain this ability. In all other aspects, this maneuver behaves as the previous skill, Health & Fitness.

Assuming cavaliers and paladins are entitled to gain special combat maneuvers, they receive bonuses to their strength percentile as detailed under Health & Fitness, with the same restrictions.

Weapon Skill

Entangle/Fast Draw: This maneuver is exceptional in that there are two possibilities to choose from. Entangle is often preferred, but few characters use weapons with entangling attacks; therefore, Fast Draw is offered as an alternative. Should a character wish to gain both skills, he must learn each as a separate skill before advancing to the next weapon skill.

Entangle allows a character hitting successfully with a weapon possessing entangling capabilities (like a morning star with chain, a whip, a flail, or a net) to entangle an opponent's weapon and disarm him, unless the foe saves vs. paralyzation. If an adversary's saving roll turns out to be one less than was needed to save, then both the opponent's and character's weapons are hopelessly entangled, taking a full round to disengage them. Normal damage is scored on a successful hit in any case.

Fast Draw is the art of unsheathing or sheathing a melee weapon with blinding speed. The character must specify which weapon this skill applies to, and the weapon must be a distinctive type, not a general class. From that time on, the individual may switch to or from that weapon in an instant without penalty. In an attempt to startle an opponent, a character may Fast Draw his weapon, receiving a -1 penalty on his opponent's surprise roll. If the rival is also skilled in Fast Draw, this penalty is negated.

Stun: This risky move allows an attacker to guide his blunt weapon, sword pommel, spear butt, or like weapon to land a blow that inflicts subduing damage (as per the rules on pummeling in the 1st Edition DMG, page 72) and stuns an enemy for 2-12 segments. A stunned opponent loses all shield and dexterity bonuses, may not attack, and may not use spells or psionics. A missed Stun attack leaves the opponent an opening to strike at +2 on his next attack. If an adversary is currently stunned and subsequently stunned again, the following stun attacks add 3-18 segments to the time he is stunned.

Weapon Breaker: This jarring stroke with a melee weapon will break a defender's weapon unless it saves vs. crushing blow. Additionally, the defender must save vs. paralyzation or drop the weapon. The weapon breaker may operate against shields or armor as well, destroying a shield or weakening armor by one step of armor class if it fails a saving throw vs. crushing blow. Shields will be ruined, but armor may be repaired although any magic dweomer will be lost. The maneuver causes no loss of hit points. Of course, the character's weapon should be solid and heavy enough to break the opponent's weapon, and the opponent's weapon must be breakable. Magical bonuses of the opponent's weapon are added to its saving throw.

Hit Location: Targeting a specific area, an attacker with initiative strikes a blow for maximum damage. The targeted area need not be determined, eliminating the need for hit location charts, as it is assumed that the fighter's superior training and skill guides his thrust to the least-protected area on his victim. This attack is made at -4 attack penalty. If this maneuver is coupled with the Stun maneuver, the penalties are cumulative. Combining this skill with Weapon Breaker penalizes all the defender's savings throws by -2.

Secondary Weapon: This maneuver allows the character to fight two-handed with none of the usual penalties for such fighting. The weapon wielded in the primary hand may be any of the sort that can be used one-handed. The secondary weapon may be any type, 2' or shorter in length. At the DM's option, he may rule that specializations are not effective for weapons in the secondary hand.

For fighters who favor only a few weapons, special combat maneuvers are a blessing. Fighters have always had a multitude of weapons proficiency slots available to them; through personal experience, it is apparent that at some point the slots become excessive. A character with an intelligent *long sword*, *vorpal weapon* will use that weapon to the exclusion all others. Despite the fact a character is proficient with the morning star, long bow, pike, and battle axe as well, the only weapon he will use is that long sword. Special combat maneuvers eliminate wasted weapon proficiencies, enhance the capabilities of a character's favored weapon, and provide bonuses in situations where a character might normally be vulnerable.

Just as two mages differ in spell choices, special combat maneuvers allow fighters to evolve in completely separate directions. A few maneuvers can change generic character stats into a fighter of formidable skill.

As always, the DM makes the final decision on special combat maneuvers. He may choose to eliminate specific maneuvers or entire categories that are inappropriate for his campaign. The variety of special combat maneuvers added to the fighter class opens a new realm of play. Don't forget to riposte!



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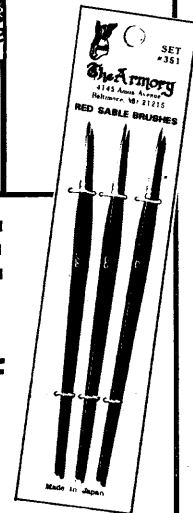
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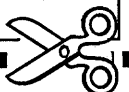
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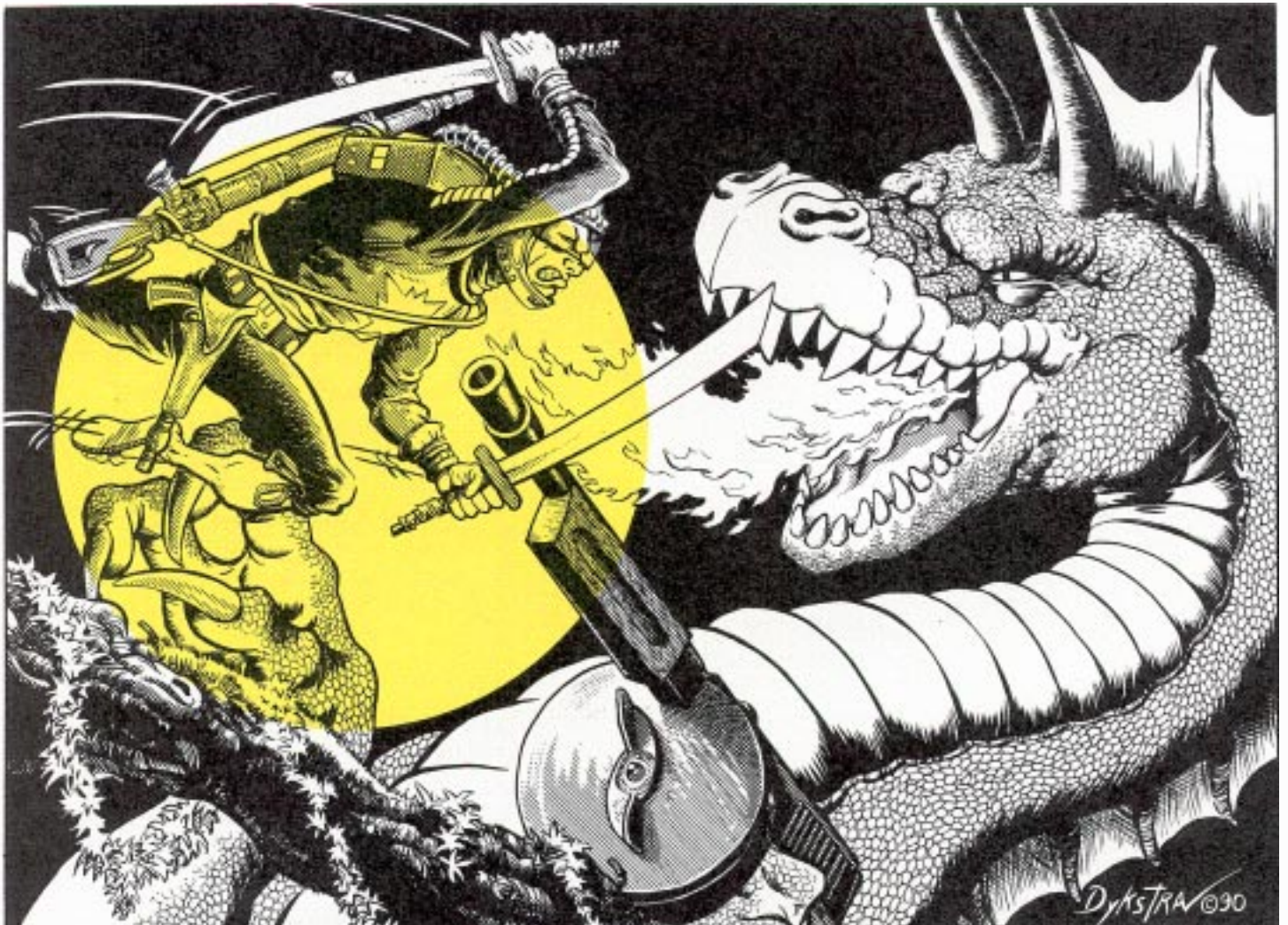
Square Pegs and Round Holes



Dropping commercial adventures into existing campaigns

by Jerold M. Stratton

Artwork by Terry Dykstra



Many game masters are of the opinion that using prepackaged, commercial adventures in their carefully constructed campaigns is similar to forcing a square peg into a round hole. I believe that well-constructed campaigns are the most suitable for commercial adventures and that commercial adventures can enhance a campaign and aid the game master. If a world is created with care, the designer can more easily make decisions about integrating adventures into the world. Also, there is nothing to restrict game masters to using only adventures written for one game system; adventures from other game systems are also useful. There are two major reasons for using commercial adventures. The most obvious is that a large amount of adventure material can be gained with only a small amount of work. The second is that it allows the game master to run adventures in styles he does not feel comfortable creating himself.

How to get started

First, find an adventure that you would like to run. Chances are you have already come across adventures in the local game store and thought "This would be good if it weren't for . . ." If the basic premise of the adventure is something you like, the adventure can probably be integrated into your campaign. There are three steps to fitting an adventure to a world:

1. *Read the adventure:* Make sure you understand what is happening and why it is happening. Why do the antagonists act the way they do? Why are the items where they are? Why are the events taking place when they do? The author did not write this adventure with your world's player characters in mind; your players may do things the author did not expect, and you must be prepared to wing it within the module's context.

2. *Find what you like:* Determine what appeals to you about the adventure. Is it the genre? the plot? the locale? If it is a mystery based in Las Vegas, is the idea of running an adventure in Las Vegas what appeals to you, or is it running an adventure in a backdrop of glamour and gambling? If the latter is the case, then the adventure could be moved to Atlantic City, Lake Tahoe, or a city in a fantasy world. You should look past the trappings to the real draw of the adventure. When you know what you like about the adventure, you know what not to change.

3. *Find what you need to change:* Examine the adventure again, with an eye for ways to mesh the adventure with your campaign. Examine the characters, creatures, items, locales, geographical features, events, and histories (both stated and implied), and modify them to suit your world.

With regards to the characters and creatures involved, will using certain NPC and monsters from your world rather than using the author's NPCs and monsters change their motivations or actions in any

way? Are any characters, PCs or NPCs, in your world similar to any of the module's given characters? If so, replace some of the stock characters with your own. Take Mung, the wilderness guide whom the module recommends your party hire, and replace him with Trasker, the barbarian hireling of a PC in your group, making sure that Trasker knows all that Mung was supposed to know. This is a great step toward making the adventure look like it was written just for your world.

You can also modify the adventure to make it more suited to your style or to simply be different. You may make some creatures more powerful, weaken some, and completely rework others. NPCs that the author largely ignored can be given larger roles, while some the author put in the spotlight can be downplayed.

You may have to modify the history of certain items, magical or otherwise, to make them fit your world. You may also want to simply get rid of some items, either because you do not want the PCs to have them (no *spheres of annihilation*, for example) or because they simply do not have a place in your world (no *dragonlances* in a non-DRAGONLANCE® saga campaign). You can also replace stock items with similar items that already have histories in your world, or with items that you want to introduce to the campaign. Whatever you do, make sure it doesn't adversely affect the adventure. If you replace or modify an essential item, make sure that you somehow make that item unnecessary or move its responsibility somewhere else. A *ring of comprehend languages*, for example, could be replaced with a multilingual NPC critical to the adventure's success.

When changing locales, make sure the module's locale could exist in your world. You could use dimension travel, planar travel, or time travel to get the characters to the exact location of the adventure, but this turns the adventure into a dimension-travel, planar-travel, or time-travel adventure. This is not always bad, but it's usually best to place the adventure somewhere within the confines of the 'normal' world of your campaign. A GANGBUSTERS™ adventure based in Chicago could become an AD&D® adventure based in a fantasy city of your campaign, preferably a city with a reputation for organized crime. You must also ensure that the geography of the adventure fits the geography of the area where you place it. Geography can usually be modified after you find a place for the adventure, but important geographical features may limit the possible locations (if the module requires a volcano or a seaport, you need a volcano or a seaport).

Look at the history involved, too. Would cities, towns, and villages have developed the same in your world as they did in the author's? Would they have the same names? If your world is based on Celtic mythology, a town full of Spanish names

will appear out of place. You should edit the snippets of history the author occasionally mentions, modifying them with your knowledge of your world's history. Tales of great battles with giants thus become tales of great battles with hobgoblins. Also, a background history is often implied in various parts of the adventure. If, in your world, ghouls congregate only around areas of ancient battles, and part of the adventure involves meeting a large number of ghouls, there is an implied history: A battle occurred in the adventuring area sometime in the past. You must ensure that such a history could exist before putting the situation in the adventure. You may even want to make such a history important to the adventure to anchor that adventure firmly to your world.

Now look at the events in the module. Would the reasons for the adventure's existence make sense in your world? Political tensions, religious battles, abandoned strongholds—all can generate adventures and (if the backgrounds are generic enough) can be modified to fit the events of your campaign. Think of adventures in terms of their plots, and you can use them regardless of genre. Here are some adventures whose basic structures are well suited to most genres:

1. An immensely powerful being or group becomes interested in the powerful beings of this world, and sends them to fight for survival on a patchwork planet, continent, or city complex far from home (MHSP1 *The Secret Wars*, for TSR's MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game).

2. Lost on a previously unexplored planet or continent, the players must interact with numerous alien races in their bid to find a way home. On the way they discover that, to help the races survive, they must fight a mysterious villain and bring the races together to fend off an attack from outside (the *Volturnus* series, for TSR's STAR FRONTIERS® game).

3. An expedition is lost in an uncharted jungle. In their quest to save the group, the characters come face-to-face with unimaginable horror and confront a villain from the worlds forgotten past (*The Pits of Bendal-Dolum*, from *Cthulhu Classics*, for Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU® game).

Crossing genres

One of the advantages gained from using commercial adventures is the ability to switch genres within a campaign. If you want to give your fantasy game a taste of horror, go out and buy a good horror adventure. If you want to give it a taste of mystery, buy a good mystery adventure. Simply convert the game mechanics to your own game system, but keep the theme. Crossing genres increases the number of commercial adventures available for your campaign, but you must keep an eye out for special circumstances. Situations tailored for one genre can have

difficulties in another. A major villain in one of TSR's TOP SECRET/S.I.™ adventures may have gone to great lengths to construct a cell to hold her enemies. This same cell may be worthless against a 3rd-level wizard with a *knock* spell. If the villain is altered to be someone who originated from the fantasy campaign world, she will have taken different precautions against escape: a permanent *silence* spell cast over the area by an allied mage, perhaps, or part of the locking mechanism kept out of range of a *knock* spell.

You should also be careful not to lose the feel of things when converting. Remember that the simple conversion of statistics will not always be the correct thing to do. You should also keep in mind what the statistics mean in relation to other characters.

For example, if you use this article's guidelines to convert Thor's strength of 25 from the AD&D 1st Edition *Legends & Lore* (page 106) to Hero Games' CHAMPIONS® system, you would find out how much he can lift (about 1,500 lbs.) and then check what strength is necessary to lift that amount in the latter system (this is also 25). However, remember that a score of 25 in the AD&D game is the limit for any personal characteristic. When converting Thor to the CHAMPIONS game, you will probably want to increase his strength even more so that he is one of the strongest beings on your world. Keep the proper balance and feel of things in mind when converting.

Genre by genre

Each genre has its own idiosyncrasies and special problems. Only a few problems are noted here, but these are among the most important points. Each section first looks at going between game systems within the same genre, then using adventures from that genre in other genres.

Fantasy: Fantasy is the most popular RPG genre, so you will have lots of extra material if you use commercial fantasy adventures. Remember, though, that if you cross game systems, mechanics like spell levels, psionics, and spell-casting will change greatly. High-level spells in one game might be low-level spells in another. Ensure that the adventure can handle the spells used in your campaign, and that the spells necessary to complete the adventure are available. If the adventure assumes unlimited spell-casting (generally with a spell-point system) or the use of different spell components, various things within the adventure may change also. For example, if a spell requires a frog's leg in one game and a dragon's leg in another, the frequency of that spell's casting will probably change.

When going from fantasy to other genres, you need to remember that most fantasy adventures virtually require a spell-caster in the party. Psionics, superpowers, and technology sometimes make up for a lack of magic; take this into account if transferring to genres or games

without magic. Also, NPCs in fantasy adventures may have too many magical items, even for other games using magic, if magic is less common and more mysterious in your campaign (as it often is in the horror genre, for example). You will then need to reduce the amount of magical items carried by the module's NPCs, possibly replacing them with technological items or skills if essential.

Modern Era: This category includes espionage, detective, police, and military systems. One thing to watch when using adventures from different modern-era game systems is the varying level of technology across these games. If the module's author expects the PCs to view the villains with their mini X-ray cameras, and the best your PCs can come up with is a 1932 flash camera, you will have to modify some situations and events.

When using these adventures in campaigns of another genre, remember that the adventures probably assume a complete lack of magic on the part of the PCs. A single AD&D game *locate object* or *passwall* spell might drop the playing time to a couple of minutes if care is not taken. It shouldn't be too hard to add precautions against magic, but keep in mind that it will probably have to be done. Also, most of these adventures are tailored to above-average (but still normal) characters who rely mostly on cunning, intelligence, and skill against similar NPCs. Care must be taken to keep an adventure interesting in other genres with tougher characters. Modern-era adventures most suitable for conversion are those requiring deduction and reasoning, which is generally expected of players in any game system.

Science Fiction/Superhero: Science-fiction and superhero adventures are probably the easiest to convert from game to game within a single genre. SF adventures tend to have few restrictions as to what can happen and how it can happen, since science fiction encompasses a wide range of possible scenarios. Superhero adventures are easy to convert between game systems because the genre has been so well defined by comic books, and most superhero games fall within the comic-book framework.

When using science-fiction and superhero adventures in other genres, look out for the level of technology involved. If you are converting such a module to a fantasy world and plan to keep the technology level of the NPCs (they're part of an alien invasion, perhaps), you must be sure that the PCs have enough resources, magical or otherwise, to balance the NPCs. If you replace the technology, be creative; it need not all be replaced with magic. For example, a science-fiction pirate with an interstellar corsair equipped with a massive computer and a crew armed with lasers and vibroblades might become a fantasy RPG pirate with an ocean-going corsair, a crew armed with crossbows and rapiers, and a reliable sage. Much technology can

thus be replaced with its medieval counterpart.

Trickery can replace special powers. If a villain in a superhero adventure is supposed to be able to teleport, and you don't want this in your detective campaign, make the villain a master of disappearance. His house will have many secret doors and passageways to effectively "teleport" him to different areas. Away from home, he could use manhole covers, crowds, and carefully planned getaways involving vehicles that can be hidden in other vehicles—driving a Porsche into a semi-trailer, or a motorcycle into a van. Even the most amazing powers can be mimicked with careful planning and the correct circumstances.

Horror: When using adventures from one horror game system to another, be careful that you do not violate what that game considers the "rules" of the unknown. Many horror games have very strict views on the unknown forces that the PCs combat. When converting a CALL OF CTHULHU adventure to a "standard" ghost-story adventure, you may have to use demons in place of the major Cthulhoid monsters.

When using horror adventures in campaigns of other genres, your major problem will probably be the lack of detail on certain areas of the adventure. PCs in horror adventures are rarely as powerful as their counterparts in other games (weakness feeds the horror atmosphere of the game). Thus, where the author expects the PCs to be forced to go one way, the fantasy PCs in your campaign may decide to go another way ("So there's a vampire. Let's kill him and see where he came from!"). You should find these situations and take care of them before running the adventure. The most common ways of dealing with this are:

1. Expand the adventure as necessary.
2. Modify the adventure so the players will be forced into the correct direction after all.
3. Replace the locale with one you are already familiar with, making it easier to wing it when the players go in unplanned directions.

There are other things to be watch. Most horror games do not include a power like a 1st-level cleric's undead-turning capability in the AD&D game. Most adventures will not be written with this possibility in mind, so you should pay close attention to it when converting a horror adventure to fantasy.

Funny/Comic: It can be fun to occasionally take an adventure from a tongue-in-cheek game system such as West End Games' PARANOIA™ or GHOSTBUSTERS™ adventure, modify it to suit your needs, and surprise your players with an off-the-wall adventure in another genre. The main thing to worry about is whether or not your players are up to such an adventure. Some players resent sustained comic relief in an otherwise serious campaign,

especially if they don't get to play that often. If your players do not want an adventure of this type, don't force it on them. If in doubt, simply ask or have another adventure ready in case the first adventure doesn't seem to be going over well. Converting a serious module to a comic game system has some advantages (e.g., a CALL OF CTHULHU module for the GHOSTBUSTERS game), but too much seriousness could damage the humorous atmosphere. A good dose of realism and fear, however, can often heighten a session's comic and heroic effect.

War games: War-game scenarios make very good backgrounds for role-playing games, especially for wars set in modern times. A war-game scenario based on the Battle of Normandy, for example, would make a great background for a superhero time-travel adventure. You will have to make your own decisions about what happens as far as the battles are concerned, possibly modifying the expected outcome depending on the actions of the PCs. See the STAR FRONTIERS adventure, SF2 *Starspawn of Voltturnus*, for a good example of dealing with war in a PC-oriented adventure.

Crossing game systems

When crossing game systems, some game mechanics in a given module must be converted to your own system. After replacing some of the original NPCs and items with those from your campaign, this problem will be lessened, but some characters, items, and situations will remain to be dealt with. Not everything must be converted to your game system, however. Characters in encounters that involve only conversation do not need conversion, and neither will combat encounters that will give the PCs no serious trouble. You can easily fake this from your own experience.

Anyone who will return later in your campaign should be converted. Likewise, the people or things involved in pivotal encounters that can give the PCs a hard time should be converted. If the possibility exists in combat that the PCs could lose or that the PCs could be weakened enough to lose later, don't fake it; the situation will get too confusing if you don't have things written down. Once you decide who and what to convert, the question becomes how best to convert them. These four methods that give the best results:

1. Use your own judgment, possibly in combination with the next three methods.
2. Drop specific rules in the original game system to use rules for the same effects in your own game system.
3. Translate effects and statistics from the original game system to their real-world counterparts, then to your own system's statistics.
4. Translate statistics in the original system to percentage values, then back to statistics in your game system.

Using your judgment: The simplest way to convert items and characters from

one game to another is simply to use your own judgment. You must be familiar with both games to do this, and must be at ease with the system you use regularly. This system works best for things that you are modifying drastically. For example, if you are using CALL OF CTHULHU game monsters to create a Lovecraft mythology in your world, but are drastically changing the monsters' looks and abilities, this method will probably be the way to go.

Specific rules: The simplest things to convert are situations and items that have specific rules in your game system. Falling damage is a good example of this. If the AD&D adventure states "The pit is 30 feet deep; characters falling in take 3d6 damage" but you are using CHAMPIONS game PCs, you would look up falling damage in the CHAMPIONS rules and note damage to be 15d6. A D&D® game's saving throw vs. poison would become a GAMMA WORLD® game's resistance roll. Standard animals, weapons, armor, and supplies can easily be replaced, as most games list all standard items and their statistics. Within the fantasy genre, many of the monsters (skeletons, goblins, dragons, etc.) are also duplicated. You do have to be careful that the names don't cover completely different monsters. While goblins in one world might be short humanoids appearing in great numbers, in another world they might be huge monsters appearing in small groups. In that case, you could replace the goblin with another monster similar to the original game's interpretation of goblins, or rename the monster and create or convert it as normal.

Games and reality: Some conversions will not be quite as easy as the previous ones. Character abilities are a good example of this. Many have similar names without quite the same meaning. The CHAMPIONS game, for example, has three character abilities describing intellect and mental faculties: intelligence, ego, and presence. FGU's SPACE OPERA™ game has nine: empathy, intelligence, psionics, intuition, bravery, leadership, general technical aptitude, mechanical aptitude, and electrical aptitude. How can abilities with varying meanings be correlated?

The best way is to look at what the characters can do. Games often tell how to determine a character's IQ from certain mental capabilities, usually involving intelligence tests. You can use this to determine intelligence in other games. Determine the IQ of the character in the first game, then determine what statistics are required for that IQ in the second.

Easy stuff should be done first to lay the groundwork for some of the harder things. As an example, suppose you have to convert the SPACE OPERA game's scores for strength, physique, and constitution to the AD&D game's strength and constitution scores. Strength is the first one. In AD&D games, strength measures almost nothing but carrying capacity—brute force. There is a table in the AD&D

Player's Handbook that lists strength values and carrying capacities. Take the SPACE OPERA character's carrying capacity (determined from strength, physique, and constitution) and determine, from the table in the *Player's Handbook*, what value is needed to lift that amount. You now have the character's strength. From there, go on to work out the rest of the abilities.

Numbers to percentages: If you are using an adventure from another game system in your campaign, and you have access to the rules this adventure was written for, you can be much more specific when converting the adventure. If you know the dice used for determining characteristics, events, and actions, you can determine the exact chances of certain characteristics being generated, certain events occurring, or of certain actions being successful.

On the linear die roll tables provided in this article (1d4, 1d6, 1d8, 1d10, 1d12, and 1d20), the chance of getting any single number is given in parentheses after the column title (e.g., the chance of getting a 5 on 1d8 is 12.5%). On the V and bell-curve die-roll tables, the chance of getting each number is given in the "Single %" column (e.g., the chance of getting a 13 on 3d6 is 9.7%). For both sets of tables, the "Cumulative %" column gives the chance of getting that number or less (e.g., the chance of getting 7 or less on 1d12 is 58.3%). To discover the chance of rolling a certain number or greater, look in the "Reverse %" column (e.g., the chance of rolling 19 or greater on 2d10 is 3%). To find the chance of rolling a certain collection of numbers, add up their individual percentages. The chance of rolling a 4, 5, 7, or 9 on 1d10 is 10% + 10% + 10% + 10% = 40%. The chance of rolling a 4, 5, 7, or 9 on 3d6 is 1.4% + 2.8% + 6.9% + 11.6% = 22.7%. Suppose that the adventure states that a 6 or greater is required to save vs. an event. You know that the game system uses 2d6 for saving throws. You want to convert this to a game system that uses 1d20 for saving throws, to be able to keep the character's ability modifications correct (from magical rings, dexterity, etc.). Also, you want the saving throw to be vs. a number or less. Look at the 2d6 table. The chance of rolling 6 or greater is found on the "Reverse %" column: 72.2%. Now, go to the 1d20 table. The nearest percentage to 72.2% is 70%, which is 14 or less. If you wanted to have the players roll high, it would be 7 or more.

If you want to convert statistics using this method, you can do it using the "Cumulative %" column. For example, constitution in AD&D games is rolled on 3d6. If you wish to convert an AD&D game constitution of 13 to a STAR FRONTIERS game stamina, find the chance of getting 13 or less on 3d6: 83.8%. Since the STAR FRONTIERS game uses percentile dice to determine abilities, just look up this percentage on that game's ability table. This gives a stamina of 60.

When converting statistics, you must sometimes combine many statistics in one game to get a statistic for another, or go from one statistic to many. Going from SPACE OPERA game's nine mental statistics to the AD&D game's three (charisma, intelligence, and wisdom) requires determining which statistics in the former correspond to those statistics in the latter. Make a list of the statistics in the game system to which you are converting; after each of those statistics, list the relevant statistics in the first game system, in order from most relevant to least relevant. For example, to convert an AD&D game statistic (in boldface) to a SPACE OPERA game statistic (in regular type), you might list the following:

Intelligence: Intelligence, General Technical Aptitude, Mechanical Aptitude, Electrical Aptitude, Psionics

Wisdom: Intuition, Empathy, Bravery, Psionics

Charisma: Leadership, Empathy, Bravery, Intuition, Psionics

When determining AD&D game intelligence, SPACE OPERA game intelligence would be the main factor. A high aptitude score might make up for a low intelligence, however, or vice versa. Likewise, in order to have psionic ability in AD&D games, a high intelligence, wisdom, or charisma is required, so SPACE OPERA game psionics might influence intelligence as well.

Final words

One of the main problems you may have crossing game systems will not be crossing genres, but crossing between mythic game systems and realistic game systems. A mythic game system assumes that the PCs are the major characters in the adventure. If the majority of the PCs don't survive to the end of the story, the story probably wouldn't have been written about them. PCs often get breaks that are not realistic. Even if the-PCs do die, their battles and deeds make stories, myths, and legends to be handed down for generations.

In realistic game systems, it is not assumed that the PCs are going to survive to the end of the story. In these games, the chances of death and injury are considerable. A single sword stroke might kill a healthy character. Realistic game systems shift part of the focus of the adventure from the story to PC survival. When using an adventure from a mythic game system in a realistic game system, combat scenarios should probably be toned down, as should most damage-causing events. PCs may have to be given strong inducement to finish the adventure. When survival becomes more important, PCs in a realistic game system might not take the initiative as often as PCs in a mythic system.

On the other hand, when using adventures from a realistic game system in a mythic system, you may find that many of

**Table 1:
Linear Die Roll Probabilities**

1d4 (25%)	1d8 (12.5%)	Cumulative %	Reverse %
—	1	12.5%	100%
1	2	25%	87.5%
—	3	37.5%	75%
2	4	50%	62.5%
—	5	62.5%	50%
3	6	75%	37.5%
—	7	87.5%	25%
4	8	100%	12.5%

1d6(16.7%)	1d12(8.3%)	Cumulative %	Reverse %
—	1	8.3%	100%
1	2	16.7%	91.7%
—	3	25%	83.3%
2	4	33.3%	75%
—	5	41.7%	66.7%
3	6	50%	58.3%
—	7	58.3%	50%
4	8	66.7%	41.7%
—	9	75%	33.3%
5	10	83.3%	25%
—	11	91.7%	16.7%
6	12	100%	8.3%

1d10 (10%)	1d20 (5%)	Cumulative %	Reverse %
—	1	5%	100%
1	2	10%	95%
—	3	15%	90%
2	4	20%	85%
—	5	25%	80%
3	6	30%	75%
—	7	35%	70%
4	8	40%	65%
—	9	45%	60%
5	10	50%	55%
—	11	55%	50%
6	12	60%	45%
—	13	65%	40%
7	14	70%	35%
—	15	75%	30%
8	16	80%	25%
—	17	85%	20%
9	18	90%	15%
—	19	95%	10%
10	20	100%	5%

**Table 2
V and Bell-Curve Die Roll Probabilities**

2d6	Single %	Cumulative %	Reverse %
2	2.8%	2.8%	100%
3	5.6%	8.3%	97.2%
4	8.3%	16.7%	91.7%
5	11.1%	27.8%	83.3%
6	13.9%	41.7%	72.2%
7	16.7%	58.3%	58.3%
8	13.9%	72.2%	41.7%
9	11.1%	83.3%	27.8%
10	8.3%	91.7%	16.7%
11	5.6%	97.2%	8.3%
12	2.8%	100%	2.8%

Table 2 (cont.)

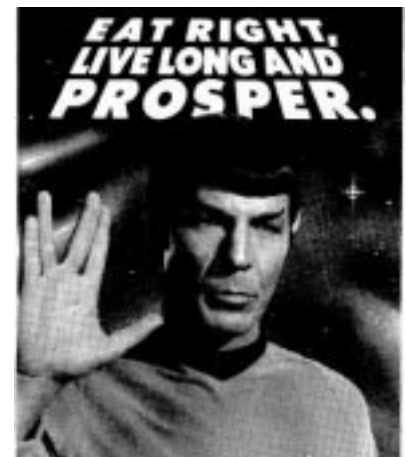
3d6	Single %	Cumulative %	Reverse %
3	.5%	.5%	100%
4	1.4%	1.9%	99.5%
5	2.8%	4.6%	98.1%
6	4.6%	9.3%	95.4%
7	6.9%	16.2%	90.7%
8	9.7%	25.9%	83.8%
9	11.6%	37.5%	74.1%
10	12.5%	50%	62.5%
11	12.5%	62.5%	50%
12	11.6%	74.1%	37.5%
13	9.7%	83.8%	25.9%
14	6.9%	90.7%	16.2%
15	4.6%	95.4%	9.3%
16	2.8%	98.1%	4.6%
17	1.4%	99.5%	1.9%
18	.5%	100%	.5%
4d6	Single %	Cumulative %	Reverse %
4	.1%	.1%	100%
5	.3%	.4%	99.9%
6	.8%	1.2%	99.6%
7	1.5%	2.7%	98.8%
8	2.7%	5.4%	97.3%
9	4.3%	9.7%	94.6%
10	6.2%	15.9%	90.3%
11	8%	23.9%	84.1%
12	9.6%	33.6%	76.1%
13	10.8%	44.4%	66.4%
14	11.3%	55.6%	55.6%
15	10.8%	66.4%	44.4%
16	9.6%	76.1%	33.6%
17	8%	84.1%	23.9%
18	6.2%	90.3%	15.9%
19	4.3%	94.6%	9.7%
20	2.7%	97.3%	5.4%
21	1.5%	98.8%	2.7%
22	.8%	99.6%	1.2%
23	.3%	99.9%	.4%
24	.1%	100%	.1%
2d10	Single %	Cumulative %	Reverse %
2	1%	1%	100%
3	2%	3%	99%
4	3%	6%	97%
5	4%	10%	94%
6	5%	15%	90%
7	6%	21%	85%
8	7%	28%	73%
9	8%	36%	72%
10	9%	45%	64%
11	10%	55%	55%
12	3%	64%	45%
13	8%	72%	36%
14	7%	79%	28%
15	6%	85%	21%
16	5%	90%	15%
17	4%	94%	10%
18	3%	97%	6%
19	2%	99%	3%
20	1%	100%	1%

the “nudges” that the author gives the PCs become less necessary. In a mythic game system, the heat of battle and the chance for glory are often enough to move PCs toward the climax of the adventure.

Another problem comes up when converting adventures to a game very different from its original game system. This involves overestimating the effects of one aspect of the adventure—most often in overestimating the effects of technology in a primitive setting. For example, many modern weaponry systems have been added to the AD&D game, and quite a few give large damage values for handgun fire, ranging from 1d8 to 2d6 or more. A real-world deer-hunting bow (equivalent to a long bow in AD&D game terms), when used correctly, propels its arrow with the same velocity as a .22 rifle bullet. The bullet won’t do more damage than the arrow. The gun has a higher fire rate and is easier to shoot (that’s why it overtook the bow and arrow in our own history), but the bow is a deadly weapon in itself. Similar problems occur when converting martial-arts systems into games with only normal hand-to-hand fighting.

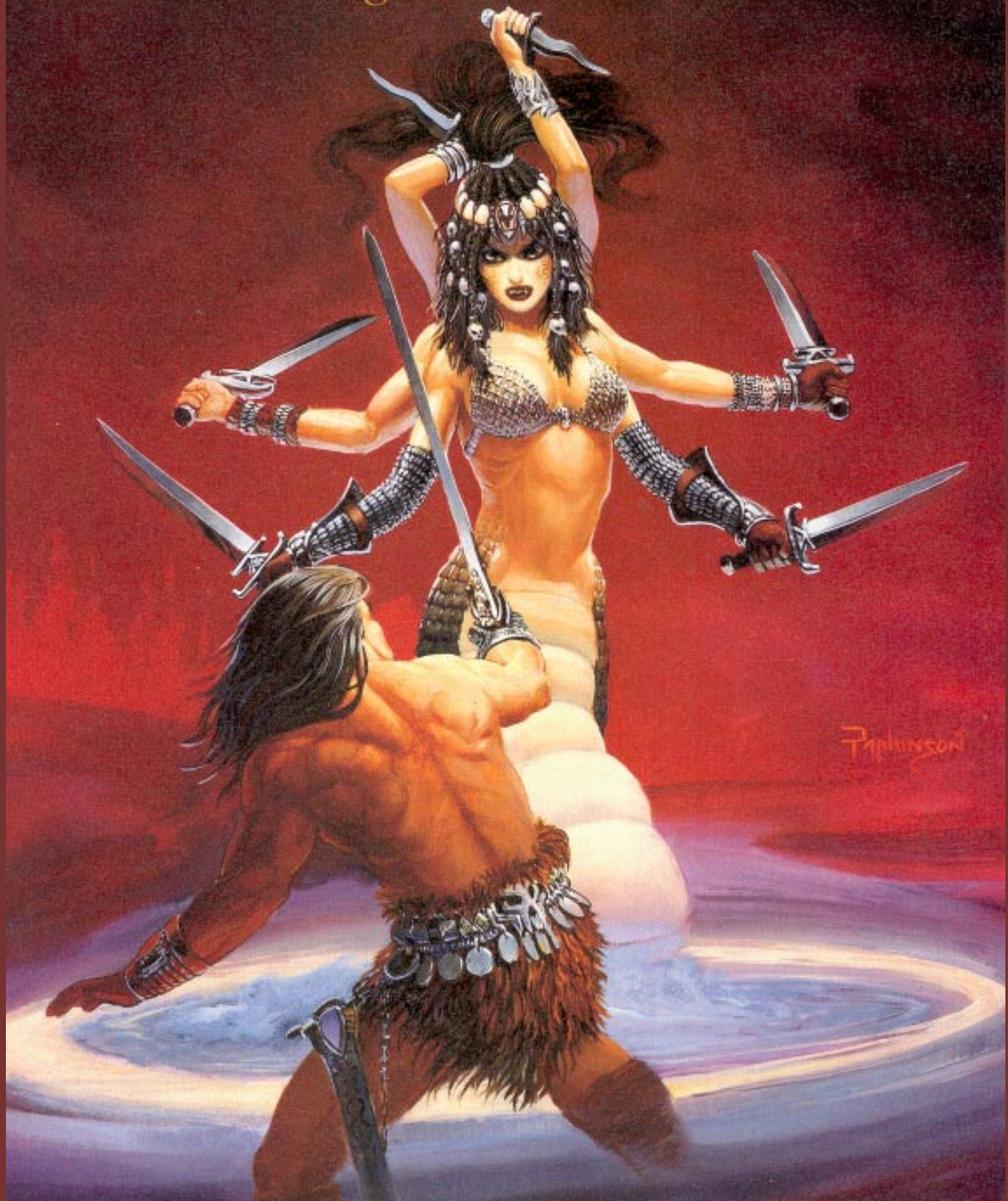
Be sure to replace rather than redo. This drastically cuts the amount of conversion work and makes you that much more familiar with the characters, things, and places. Don’t replace what originally drew you to the adventure, however. Put lots of little notes in the margins of the module, so you’ll remember what you’ve changed when you start running the adventure. Keep notes about what rules cover the events being talked about, what saving throws are required, and what pages you might want to refer to in your rule books or other references.

Use works of fiction as adventure sources. The methods given here for crossing genres and game systems will also work for taking ideas from source other than role-playing, such as films, books, and the real world. Life is interesting—and never let the PCs forget it!



EATING RIGHT IS HIGHLY LOGICAL.

The Game Wizards



Can one ever be sure what'll step through that *gate*?

by Timothy B. Brown

"Far beyond these realms, Sir Knight, are multitudes of beasts from which your mighty horsemen cannot protect us. Our salvation lies in the hope that our enemies, in their wickedness, cannot muster the sorcery necessary to bring them down upon us."

—a comment to His Most Honorable Lordship, Holmer the Earl of Walworth, Knight Commander of the Shield Lands, from Geoffrey of Willip, Wizard Apprentice to the Court, while inspecting the Knights of the Holy Shielding.

Until now, the lives of the highest-level player characters have been a little dull. They clean out a nasty giant's lair before breakfast, slay a few dragons at midday, and dine later with the gods themselves (with whom they're on a first-name basis, of course). Well, take heed, you mighty warriors and wizards—prepare to run screaming from the battlefield. The monsters of the outer planes have arrived!

With the release of the *Monstrous Compendium, Outer Planes Appendix* (MC8 \$12.95) this month, the beasts from beyond the Astral plane can exert their substantial influence in your campaign. Since we introduced the compendium concept, audience demand for these monsters has grown and grown. The package has 96 pages, with 74 unique monster entries and all the information necessary to use the outer planes with the AD&D® 2nd Edition game. But don't just mix these creatures in with your other monsters for the sake of alphabetic consistency; these critters are in a class by themselves.

There are several entries devoted to monsters from the upper planes. These are extremely powerful beings devoted to the causes of goodness. Two creatures, the planetar and solar, are arguably the mightiest beings in the appendix. With their minions, they keep tabs on the upper planes, protecting them from evil influence.

However, a far larger portion of the appendix is dedicated to the evil monsters of the lower planes, collectively referred to as the fiends. It is far more likely that PCs will face the fiends in their adventures, so more space was devoted to them. All the races of fiends are described, one wretched monster at a time.

There's some new background history, as well. The horrible baatezu race of the Nine Hells is locked in a bitter war of annihilation with the foul tanar'ri of the Abyss. Their struggle has been absolute, all encompassing, and virtually eternal,

plunging their respective planes and all those between into further despair and ruin. Other races in the lower planes are mere pawns in this ancient Blood War. Both sides see the Prime Material plane as their future battlefield.

When planes collide

Care must be taken when integrating these powerful monsters into your campaign. The monsters of the outer planes are beyond the norm and so deserve very careful attention. There should be distinct reasons why the characters deal with beings from beyond the Astral plane. Except on their own planes, encounters with outer-planar creatures are never "random."

An encounter with an outer-planar being should be no less than the focus of an entire adventure. A priest might achieve an audience with a solar only after a lengthy ordeal against evil. In order to face a mighty pit fiend, the journey to the lower planes alone would test the limits of the most powerful party of adventurers. Take care never to let interaction with outer-planar beings become commonplace in your campaign.

In any situation in which the PCs are pitted against the overwhelming talents and abilities of a fiend, there are several important elements to keep in mind:

1. *Fiends are geniuses.* And they're ancient geniuses, to boot. Don't make the mistake that the powerful outer-planar monsters are sedentary, mindless guards, stupidly awaiting those who will defeat them and take their enormous treasures. Wrong, wrong, wrong! A pit fiend is *not* just a huge ogre that has scads of hit points and a few spells to cast. A powerful fiend has spies everywhere, vast armies of underlings to do its bidding, and the foresight to protect itself in thousands of subtle ways. If a party is hunting one down, the fiend will certainly catch wind of their efforts and set up an elaborate trap, escape, or ambush. It may, in fact, have been preparing for eons, knowing all the time that this confrontation would come.

2. *Fiends are never alone.* A group of adventurers might think themselves very clever to have tracked down a single fiend for the slaying. But they may have a change of heart when that single fiend *gates* in six more fiends, and they each in turn bring six more! Most of the powerful fiends have the ability to *gate* others of their race to their location, at will, and do so as a matter of course. Again, when

dealing with the fiends, the hunters can easily become the hunted.

3. *Fiends are nearly impossible to kill.* Even if the PCs manage to confront a powerful fiend and injure it, they will be very hard pressed to finish it off. Aside from their impressive array of protections (sub-zero armor classes, *regeneration* abilities, high magic resistances, spell-like abilities, and more, depending on the fiend in question), most have the ability to *teleport without error* at will. A highly intelligent fiend won't ignore its own damage just to press the fight unless it has been utterly enraged.

4. *Fiends can choose their own ground.* Again, using their *teleportation* and detection abilities, intelligent fiends only present themselves for battle when the odds are in their favor. They will not stand and fight against a fresh party that has loads of spells and hit points. The crafty fiends would sooner wait and attack when the party is weak and exhausted after some other encounter. Powerful fiends will send scores of minions to their deaths just to wear a party down for the kill. Also, remember that fiends like to extend the hunt as long as possible, taking great pleasure in the torment and terror they cause.

5. *Fiends never forget.* Even when bested by mortals, fiends never stay beaten for long. They will be back in strength, when they feel the time is right. It may be a week or a century, but they will not be denied their revenge, no matter how much time passes.

If the DM keeps these elements in mind, fiends can become the most feared and respected evil monsters in any campaign. Those PCs that delve into the outer planes and confront the creatures there might well get themselves involved with forces so powerful that they'll never fully recover, and fiends will dog them for the rest of their days.



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SAGE ADVICE

by Skip Williams

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

This month, "Sage Advice" splits some hairs regarding spell-casting and combat in the 2nd Edition AD&D® game and examines a few other fantastic mysteries.

If a wizard casts a *stoneskin* spell on himself, then is struck in melee while casting another spell, is the second spell disrupted or is the wizard able to maintain concentration because the *stoneskin's* protection negates damage?

The second spell is disrupted, as a successful hit ruins a spell in progress (*Player's Handbook*, page 85). Note that a successful attack—not damage—is the critical factor here. Game logic assumes that even a nondamaging hit can disrupt concentration. It's tough to keep your mind focused on something as complex as a spell when someone's using your head for batting practice, even if the blows aren't hurting you. Many kinds of nondamaging hits can disrupt spell-casting: a hand clamped over the mouth, an armlock, or just being knocked down. However, damage always breaks concentration. If, for example, a spell-caster takes damage from a *fireball* or breath weapon, any spell in progress is lost even if the caster made his saving throw and took only half damage.

These distinctions also are important to game balance. Spell-casters are *intended* to be vulnerable to physical attacks during spell-casting, and their opponents *must* be given a chance to anticipate the spell and disrupt it before it goes off. Spell-casters can't get around this limitation by using spells such as *stoneskin*. Likewise, spell-casting monsters that are immune to normal weapons (such as liches and vampires with character abilities) can have their spells ruined by any successful attacker. Some DMs even allow "attack" bonuses when characters make attacks specifically to disrupt a spell. The reasoning here is

that a nondamaging jostle or cross block is easier to make than a potentially lethal blow. While this sort of ruling tends to be an equalizer when the target spell-caster is a high-level evil patriarch with an armor class in the negative numbers, it can be unreasonably tough on a 1st-level wizard with AC 10. Apply such bonuses carefully, if at all. I suggest that bonuses be limited to +4 or less, and you might consider applying them to the target's armor class rather than to the "to hit" roll. If you use the armor-class adjustment method, do not allow an armor class to be adjusted to worse than 10.

Will the damage inflicted from round to round by a *Melf's acid arrow* spell prevent spell-casting?

Yes. Damage makes the concentration required for spell-casting impossible. This is one thing that makes *Melf's acid arrow* a useful spell. However, the acid can be washed off before the duration expires.

How are infravision and ultravision supposed to work? Do they work like infrared goggles that detect heat, or like "starlight" optics that simply gather large amounts of light?

Strictly speaking, infravision is the ability to "see" infrared light or heat. The exact game effects of infravision depend on the rules your DM is using; see pages 118 and 119 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for the rules governing this kind of vision. Ultravision is a bit harder to describe, but generally it is considered to be quite a bit like "starlight" optics. Creatures with ultravision have eyes that can gather large amounts of light and can also detect ultraviolet light and use it to enhance the available normal light. Ultravision generally is useful only outdoors at night.

What happened to psionic abilities? I seem to remember reading something about an upcoming psionic rules supplement.

A new rule book, *The Complete Psionist* is due in early 1991. This book will feature a boatload of new psionic abilities, a detailed combat system, a new psionist character class, and other goodies.

How many attacks would a specialist with a two-weapon fighting style (from *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*) get each round?

The specialist gets the one or more

attacks each round with the weapon in his "good" hand; this varies with his class, level, and weapon specialization. The specialist gets *one* attack each round with the weapon in his "off" hand, regardless of level, class, or specialization.

Game logic assumes that no one is coordinated enough to launch multiple attacks with each hand; there's a limit to how much activity a person's brain can direct in a single round of melee. Game balance also requires such a limitation, as warriors are not intended to be walking *blade barriers*.

Specialization in the two-weapon fighting style from *The Complete Fighter's Handbook* reduces the penalty for attacking with two weapons. Can the specialist further reduce the penalty to nothing if he has a high dexterity score?

Yes. The rules on page 96 of the *PHB* apply to the character, except where modified on page 64 of *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*. Note that high dexterity scores cannot turn the penalty into a bonus, no matter which rules you are using.

How many punches can a character throw in one melee round? Does fist fighting require a weapon proficiency?

This is entirely up to the DM. Contrary to popular belief, fist fighting is not universal and was unknown in several pre-gunpowder cultures; American Indians, for example, generally resorted to wrestling in unarmed combat, so DMs have great latitude here.

I suggest allowing any character to make one attack on the punching/wrestling table (*PHB*, page 91; or *DMG*, page 59) without penalty each round. Since the punching/wrestling table allows for single-blow knockouts, I suggest that this kind of combat be treated as a special case that falls outside the normal weapons rules. However, fist fighting and wrestling *can* be treated just like any other weapons that require proficiencies. If this is the case, the proficiency should be available to any character class. If a character spends a weapon proficiency on punching, he should get the extra melee attacks listed on Table 15, *PHB*, page 26, if he is a high-level warrior. Punching specialists would use Table 35, *PHB*, page 52.) Any character (under any punching system) attacking with both fists would use the attacking with two-weapons rule (*PHB*, page 96).

Note that wrestling generally requires two hands.

The punching/wrestling table allows for results on an attack roll of 1. Don't 1s always miss?

A roll of 1 always misses in normal combat. However, punching and wrestling are not normal combat, and 1s can hit. This is an exception to the general rule.

Is it acceptable for a character to wish for special abilities, such as thieving or spell-casting abilities? If granted, would these abilities be permanent or temporary? Would such a wish turn the character into something that had the desired power?

This is entirely up to the DM. You've listed a couple of reasonable approaches to the problem. If wishes are fairly rare in the campaign, and the DM feels that the need is justified, a special ability such as lock picking might be granted for a limited time, say as much as a month (but more likely a few turns or hours). If wishes are true rarities or if the DM really approves of high-powered player characters, it's fine to make the ability permanent, but I suggest that the ability be low powered, about one-third to one-half of what the average player character in the campaign might

have. It's also a good idea to make the level of power fixed, not subject to improvement though experience. It certainly is acceptable to twist such wishes by changing the character into some creature that has the desired ability; such changes might be permanent or temporary. It also is fine to have a creature possessing the desired ability appear and serve the character for a short time.

"Sage Advice" has discussed wishes before; check out this column in issues #133 and #162 for general information.

What armor class do the various Bigby's Hand spells have?

Each "hand" has AC 0, in either version of the AD&D game.

How can a necklace of adaptation allow a character to exist in airless space? Wouldn't a character in a vacuum just explode?

In a fantasy game, being thrust into a vacuum does not necessarily cause catastrophic decompression. The AD&D SPELLJAMMER™ rules, for example, assume that anything in space carries its own atmosphere. In any case, the necklace has the power to sustain the character in airless space for as much as seven days. What happens to the character at seven days plus one second is up to the DM.

Can a wizard with a Zagy's spell component case (from the Unearthed Arcana tome) pull components for nonwizard spells from it?

The wizard can get the components for any spell he knows from the case. If he is a multi- or dual-classed character, he can get nonwizard spell components. If the wizard does not know a certain spell, he cannot "think of" the proper components and cannot get them from the case. ☺

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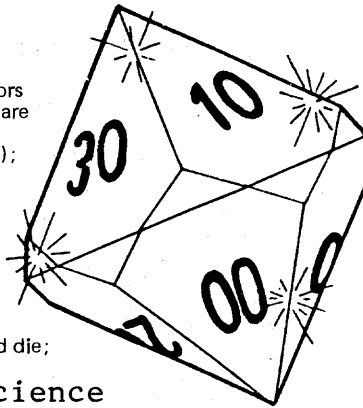
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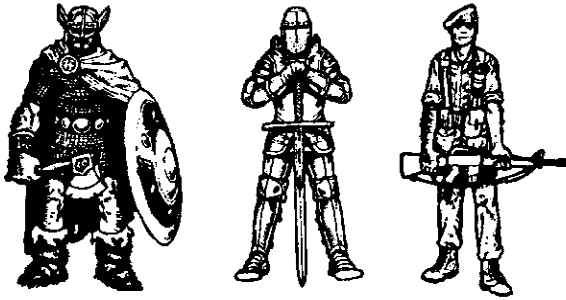
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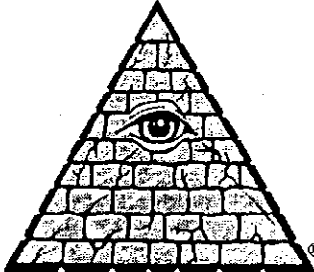
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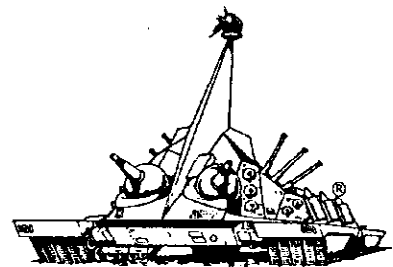
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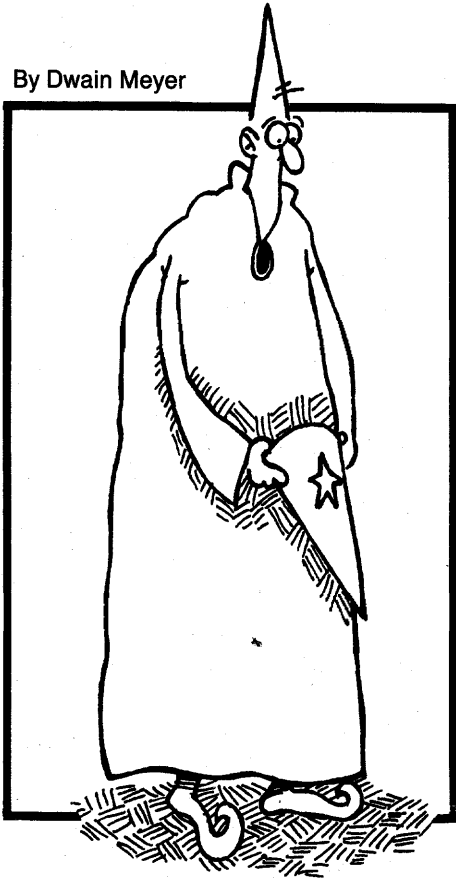
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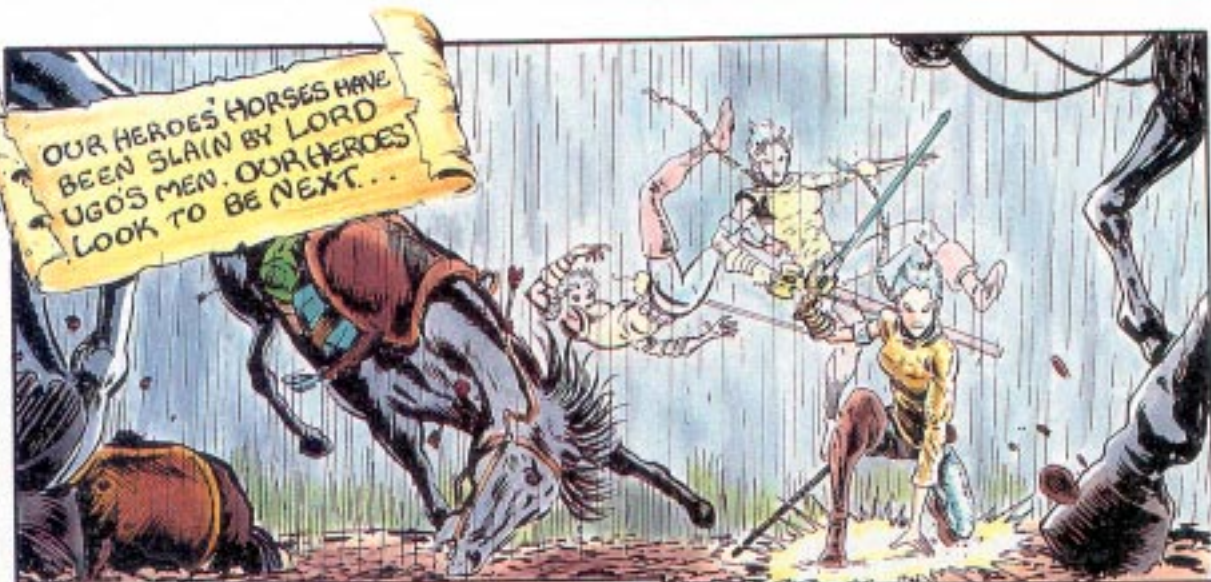
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PART 10





SAY "HELLO" TO LORD UGO FOR ME.



WHEN YOU SEE HIM IN HELL!



BRENNA OKAY?

YEAH. SHE'S COMING AROUND.

HOW 'BOUT YOU, BILL?



I WON'T BE FLYING ANYWHERE SOON.

TOOK ME FOREVER TO FIND YOU GUYS.

GLAD I GOT HERE IN TIME TO SAVE THE DAY!



ME, TOO.

BILL, THIS IS...

YEAH, I KNOW. FIN AND I GO WAY BACK. DON'T WE, FIN?

OH YES.



SORRY I CAN'T HEAL YOUR WING, BILL.

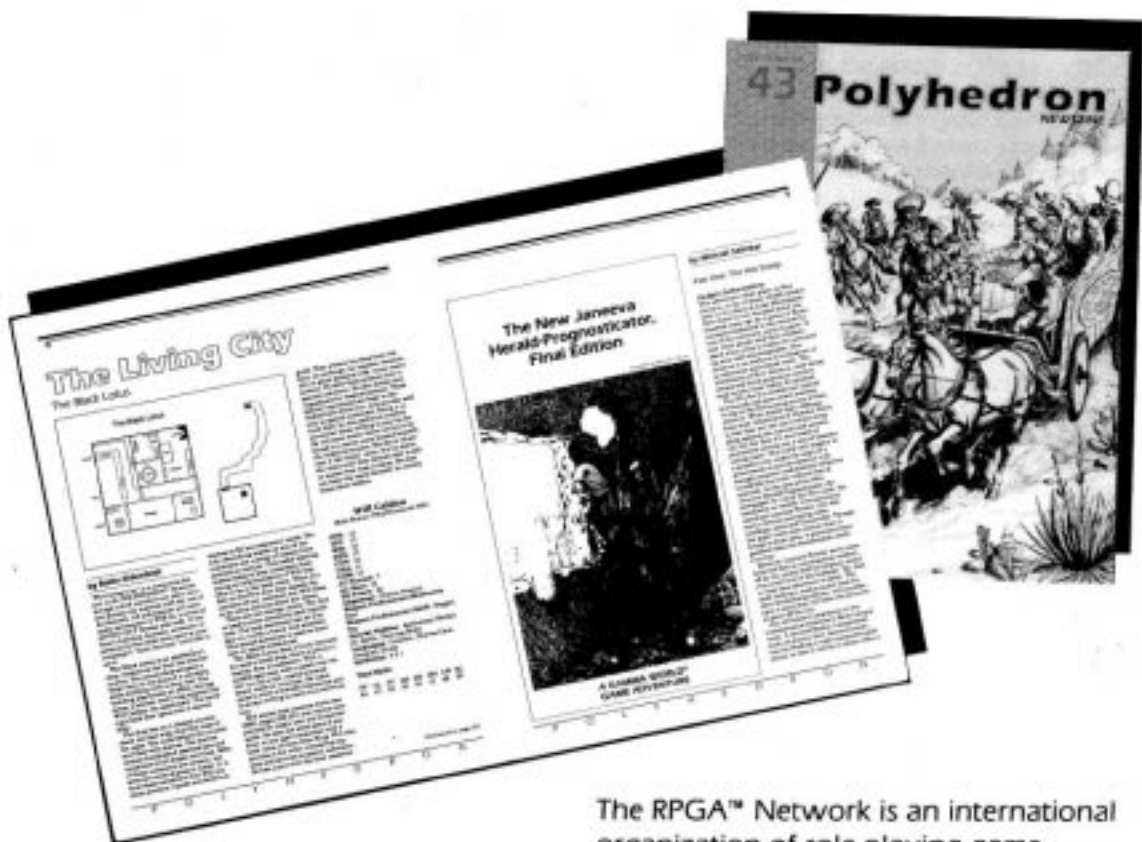
S'OKAY. THAT'S ONE OF THE PROBLEMS OF BEING A MAGICAL BEAST.

WELL, I SUGGEST WE FIND SOMEPLACE TO WASH UP.

AND WE NEED TO TRACKDOWN A FEW OF THOSE HORSES, TOO.



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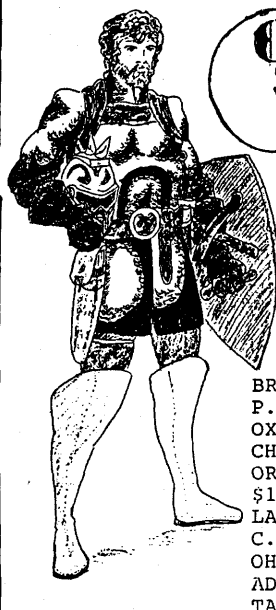
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RAGNAROK
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Princess Ark

Continued from page 45

Letters

I am concerned about the future of the *Princess Ark*. I loathe the idea of seeing the end of the D&D column in DRAGON® Magazine, and I think it should go on as long as possible. So I have two questions: How does "The Voyage of the *Princess Ark*" end, and what happens to the log?

I certainly agree the column should go on as long as possible, provided that it brings something new to the reader. If the series were to meet its end, I suppose the Princess Ark could head into space—that is, with its log book. Don't forget that it is really up to you to decide whether or not the log book should ever become available to PCs. If yes, the party could hear legends about it and go on a quest to find it. But of course, that is another story!

I've been a long-time fan of the D&D game. However I'd like to point out that the rules are difficult to use. The game rules are generally simple, but finding them is a problem. The rules are spread among five different boxed sets, and they are very poorly indexed. Although the D&D Known World is probably one of the best game worlds I ever played in, I must admit that the game's organization is appalling. I would love a simpler, more flexible alternative to the AD&D game; so far, the D&D game has fallen short of this goal. Is there anything planned in future to address that problem?

Yes! Our writers have had the same complaint for years, including yours truly. Fall 1991 should finally see the release of the D&D Rules Cyclopeda, a 304-page, hardback compilation of all D&D rules from Basic to Masters. If everything works out, it should also include beefed-up monster descriptions, a complete listing of skills, a small atlas of the Known World, optional rules, and a complete guide on how to convert D&D game material to the AD&D 2nd Edition game. How's that?

I found a strange sentence in the D&D HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set. Page 119 of the Dungeon Master's Sourcebook reveals that Yagrai's chief ally is Halav, enemy of all humanoid. Am I missing something?

Errare humanoidurn est! The author meant "Yagrai's chief foe is Halav, enemy of all humanoids."

How do you explain that Haldemar referred directly to Nithians in his log book when describing the "Old Nithian" scroll? I thought all memory of Nithians had been magically wiped out.

Direct memory about ancient Nithia was wiped out when that empire was destroyed. However the spell affected only current memory not future knowledge. In the following centuries, Nithian rums were dug up in Ylaruam and Thothia. A small number of sages (Raman is the last

of them) deciphered the hieroglyphs and thus discovered that culture's existence.

There is, after all, an Emirate of Nithia in northern Ylaruam. Ancient Nithia now belongs in the exceedingly obscure realm of Known World archaeology

Could you come up with a plausible reason why a desert setting lies next to a Norse region in the Known World?

Although I understand this is part of the D&D Known Worlds fantasy, how could you explain it otherwise?

A segment of the Elemental Plane of Fire seems to coincide with the general location of the Ylaruam desert, so the hot weather there is magical in nature. As far as the Northern Reaches are concerned, assume that the intersection of cool winds coming down from the Makkres Mountains and the icy sea currents flowing from the north create a cold microclimate. The Hardanger Range shields the northern weather pattern from Ylaruam's.

Exactly which colonies or nations lie on the Isle of Dawn, and where do their boundaries lie? Do these states have capitals? Also, on the Isle of Dawn, what is the "Provincia Septentriona" depicted on the TM2 Trail Map, and how does it relate to the other colonies?

See the map of the Isle of Dawn for specific boundaries. As for a list of colonies and nations, starting from the North on Thyatis' side: City State of Helskir (only covers approximately a 72-mile area); Northern Territories of Dawn (wilderness claimed by Thyatis); Grand Duchy of Westrouрке (archduke's capital: Newkirk); Province of Redstone (colony, administrative center: Redstone Castle); Province of West Portage (Colony, admin. center: West Portage); County of Kendach (similar to Helskir); Provincia Septentriona (colony, admin. center: Latticea); County of Furmenglaive (similar to Helskir); Provincia Meridiona (colony, admin. center: Caerdwicca).

Continuing from the North, on the Alpathian side: Confederation of Dunadale (capital: Dunadale); Dunadale Bogs (wilderness claimed by Alpathia, under the Dunadale Confederation's administration); Kingdom of Hillvale (capital: East Portage); City States of Ekto and Trikelios (both similar to Helskir); Kingdom of Lower Thothia (capital: Edairo); Upper Thothian Territories (unclaimed wilderness, neutral territory).

The Northern Territories of Dawn, the Dunadale Bogs, and the Provinciae Septentriona and Meridiona are largely unpopulated regions. These dependencies were essentially created for administrative purposes. They may be subdivided into dominions as their populations develop.

I would like to know how many Gazetteers there are beyond GAZ13 *The Shadow Elves*. I'm a bit confused about the

Drow and Shadow Elf. Could you clear up some of this confusion?

I would also like to know if you have any product for a jungle setting. In DRAGON issue #160, the HOLLOW WORLD supplement is pictured as a boxed set, and I take it that *Nightwail* and *Nightrage* are extra games within the Hollow World. If so, how many more are involved?

As I live in New Zealand a lot of the games are not available here. Do you have a mail order system? If possible can I get a TSR mail order catalog sent to me?

GAZ13 The Shadow Elves is "it" for the moment. The shadow elves are the D&D setting's equivalent of the AD&D game's drow, sort of. Shadow elves are pale skinned; drow have black skin. Shadow elves also have abilities and magical powers different from drow.

The HOLLOW WORLD boxed set offers several jungle settings. The Dawn of the Emperors boxed set (look for the Hinterlands) and GAZ4 Ierendi (with Aloysius Island) are the only two Known World jungle settings. There is little information on these two regions, however.

Nightwail, Nightrage, and Nightstorm are part of the HOLLOW WORLD Blood Brethren Trilogy. More modules will be published for the HOLLOW WORLD set in the future.

For everyone overseas who is experiencing difficulties acquiring copies of current or older products, TSR has a mail order department where you can also get a free catalog. Just send your address to: The Mail Order Hobby Shop, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.

Like many other D&D enthusiasts, I was a bit distraught at the absence of commentary on the D&D Known World until the present column, "The Voyage of the *Princess Ark*." It was a much-needed overview of the world not yet touched on by the Gazetteers. This information can give DMs like myself a chance to see what lies beyond the realms specified in the Gazetteers.

Personally, I would like the *Princess Ark* column to continue exploring the outer Known World. The SPELLJAMMER™ and HOLLOW WORLD sets cover their respective territories adequately. An overview of the Known World presented in the Masters Set would be more beneficial, since it would touch on areas not yet explored, helping to "explain" little questions that arise as the world is being explored/developed, like why "The Arm of God" (Masters Set) is now referred to as "The Arm of The Immortals" (HOLLOW WORLD set).

The Arm of God became the Arm of the Immortals simply because D&D has Immortals but no gods. By the way, the SPELLJAMMER set does not deal with the D&D universe. Although this excellent system works perfectly well in a D&D setting, it is first and foremost an AD&D product.

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Through the LOOKING Glass

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Silent deaths and shadowrunning

Last month in this column, you read about a bill that could conceivably change the face of our hobby. For those who didn't read that article, I recommend that you do so before you read here any further and become totally confused.

Here is an update on what has occurred since last month. GAMA (Games Manufacturers Association, an organization consisting of game manufacturers, distributors, shops, and clubs) has hired a lobbyist to help protect the interests of both gamers and collectors. So far, this energetic young lady has approached many members of Congress or their staffs to help them understand the feelings and wishes of the hobby industry. The anti-lead bill not only endangers our hobby but could do serious damage to the model-railroad industry and the modeling community at large. These industries use lead to produce weights and scenic accessories such as tree trunks, vehicles, houses, roads, and interior details on car or truck models. A cease-and-desist law would either stop production of all these things or would make them much more expensive.

The amendment to the bill has now taken solid form and reads as follows:

"Proposed amendment to S.2637 and HR: Section 402, subsection (j) shall be amended by adding the following paragraph:

" (4) the administrator shall, by regulation, exempt from the restrictions on the lead content of toy or game pieces described in paragraph (9) of subsection (b) all pre-owned and newly manufactured collectable items as well as the materials used for the creation of such items when introduced for adult use!

"This exemption shall include, but is not limited to, molds, mediums, figurines and accessories-assembled and in kit form, war gaming figurines and accessories created for adult competitions and all pre-owned period toys.

"All newly manufactured items must

incorporate into their respective packaging the words 'collectable item, contains lead, not suitable for children under the age of 12.' "

This bill and its amendment will allow us to continue to purchase miniatures of our favorite characters, monsters, or armies of any period. It also places certain responsibilities on us as gamers. We must make sure that our figures are never left where children can get to them and chew or swallow them. It also means that if we get tired of figures or must otherwise dispose of them, the figures should be given to a gaming club or to someone who wants the figures rather than be dropped in the trash. When you throw figures out, the lead can leech into the soil. You can also spray your figures with base coats of paint several times to seal in the lead.

I encourage you to become politically involved in this matter. Send a letter to your local congressman supporting this amendment, and use the format described in last month's "Through the Looking Glass" column: Also, check your local hobby shop. If it does not have one of the petitions available, point out the danger of the bill and ask him to either contact GAMA or make up a petition for his customers. These petitions should include a space for printed names, addresses, states, zip codes, and signatures. When these petitions are filled, they should be sent to GAMA, P.O. Box 591, Grinnell IA 50112, or they should be sent to your elected representative. With a little luck, all of us will get what we want.

Now let's look at some of the products that this bill would forbid or restrict.

Reviews

Iron Crown Enterprises

P.O. Box 1605
Charlottesville VA 22902

7010—SILENT DEATH* game *****

Over the years, many space-combat games have appeared. Most of these were either board games or miniatures games adapted from board games, and often their game mechanics fell apart when they were used with miniatures. Iron Crown has changed much of this with the introduction of the SILENT DEATH* game.

The SILENT DEATH* game is a miniatures-oriented game with provisions for use as a board game. The game grew from an earlier system for use with Iron Crown's SPACEMASTER* RPG. It is one of the first totally contained miniatures games to hit the hobby field in many years. Included in the box are rules, maps, counters, dice, and miniatures. You don't need to purchase anything else to enjoy this game, but you probably will want to purchase additional ship miniatures as they become available.

The box contains six 17" x 22" hex map sheets. The maps are of random star clusters printed on slick paper and include both small and large hexes over the stars. When all the sheets are put together, they form a huge battlefield that can accommodate large numbers of ships. The sheets held up well under our gaming club's usage, including folding, unfolding, and heavy play. I highly recommend that you laminate these sheets to insure their survival in spite of spills or normal gaming accidents. The extra cost and increased storage space should be balanced against

Miniatures* product ratings

*	Poor
**	Below average
***	Average
****	Above average
*****	Excellent

the fact that replacement sheets are not currently available.

Also included are a multicolored counter sheet and a scenario booklet with all the paperwork to play the game. The scenarios are fairly easy to use and vary from small duels to multiship battles. The scenario sheets have perforations so they can be easily separated and used (I recommend that you pick up some document protectors to protect these sheets). The simple but very effective teaching and training scenarios allow you to introduce new people to your group. The counter sheet contains at least two each of all the fighters and laser satellites, one each of the combat and life pods, and a large number of torpedo and missile counters, all of which are coded and easy to read. The last major part of the sheet is an asteroid belt that is a large-scale obstruction when left together, but can be broken up.

The instruction book is 32 pages long, excluding the pull-out ship players' sheets in the center. These pullout sheets and a copier machine will make it easy to have lots of player and damage sheets available at all times. The book includes simple step-by-step rules and a play-it-as-you-learn scenario. With a competent teacher, you can learn the game in about 20 minutes (many of our club members read the book and played a full game successfully in less time than that). The dice system that determines damage is simple, and dice are included. Even firing orcs are easy to determine. Advanced scenarios and a short campaign are also presented.

Adding to the fun of the game is the short history of the Empire included in the book. This loose, feudal organization makes it easy to build a variety of different conflicts. The frontier provisions allow the entry of pirates and mercenaries. Economic wars and system disputes increase the game's scope even further. Combine this with a "sales brochures" description of different fighters and attack craft, and you can custom build systems and defenses.

Last, but not least, is the large variety of metal miniatures and plastic stands included in the game. The arsenal includes: four each of the Pit Vipers and Spirit Riders; two each of the Thunder Birds, Night Hawks, Salamanders, and Seraphs; and one each Shryak Shuttle and Epping gunboat. These miniatures are well done, with flash present on only two of the ships. I still contend (as noted in issue #163) that the ships are not quite in scale with each other, but this does not detract from the game. The number and variety of these ships allows you to play out most of the available scenarios.

The set contains almost \$26 worth of lead miniatures, if you were to buy them separately. Combine this with all the other components, and you have a product well worth your Christmas money. This game is highly recommended at \$40.



Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

P.O. Box 37024 Roselawn
Cincinnati OH 45222-0024

Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

70 Harcourt St.
Newark, Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM NG 241 RF

1005 - Amazon Queen on Throne

January releases include Thunderbolt Mountain's new sculpture entitled, "Amazon Queen on Throne," a diorama scene based upon the ancient legend of the

Amazons. The Amazons were rumored to be a fanatical and ferocious tribe of women fighters skilled in many weapons. Their devotion to fighting principles was so great that legend says they each removed the left breast to be able to fire a bow. This tribe held men in contempt and considered them fit only for housekeeping, babysitting, and mating. Their queen was chosen by her fighting prowess. Any male trespassers to this realm were either sentenced to death or became a plaything of the tribe members.

The diorama is in 54-mm scale and depicts a captured barbarian in front of the Amazon queen. The base of the diorama is 57 mm x 60 mm, and is 5 mm high.



Amazon Queen on Throne (Thunderbold Mountain Miniatures)



Sleeping Astrologer (Black Dragon Pewter)

Sculpted square blocks form the floor, and a molded, ornate carpet leads from the front edge of the base to the dais on which the throne sets. The barbarian kneels with his chains piled on the ground.

The throne rests on a raised block. The throne itself consists of a U-shaped base and chair, upholstered arms including buttons and appropriate indentations, and a pillow upon which the queen sits. The back of the throne is a huge, shell-type structure that fits nicely between the arms of the throne. This shell is made of ribbed and formed sections with symbols engraved on them. It has a large disk in its middle, and its forward sweep can provide shade as well as protection.

Four figures are included in the

diorama. Two of the figures are pet ocelots, although the figures could be painted as onyx statuettes. The other two figures are the queen and her barbarian captive. The queen sits in a reclined position with her right arm extended (when the figure is placed on the throne, her right hand rests on the head of an ocelot). Her outstretched legs rest on two pillows molded to the base. Her left hand supports her chin, with her elbow on the armrest. She is dressed in sandals and a short costume that can be compared to the Amazons in DC's *Wonder Woman* comic, including the tiara, the wrapped and interlaced hairstyle, and the arm and leg bracelets. Her right breast is exposed but covered by a coiled-snake piece of jewelry. The muscle tone is well done, and the only detractor is a slight mold line on her left arm.

The barbarian male wears a fur loin-cloth and a disk belt. The figure is kneeling with his wrists chained around a wooden pole behind his back, which is attached by more chains to his belt. His hair hangs straight down to his chest, and his face shows pain and determination. This is a striking figure. Muscle detail is excellent, with only a slight mold line.

This is an excellent display diorama that, with work, could become a keystone in a miniature collection. The pieces all fit together with minimal filing. Paint each section before you glue them all together, and a higher quality piece will result. This is an excellent diorama and is well recommended even at its \$19.50 price. Remember to include an extra \$1.50 for shipping and handling if you live in the U.S.

Black Dragon Pewter

c/o Gallow Pewter Sculptures Corp.
166 N. Franklin St.
Hempstead NY 11550

319—Sleeping Astrologer *****

The holiday season and the period thereafter frequently produces a drastic increase in pewter sales. Pewter has always been a good gift idea, and shops of every kind now seem to carry a growing number of different pewter sculptures. Many of these are simple pewter copies of existing lead fantasy-gaming figures, and they are presented as "unique gifts" or "collector's items" but can be seen in store after store with no verification papers. However, pewter collectors' pieces are sculptures produced in limited numbers before the mold is destroyed. Generally, these figures have a "run" of between 100 and 4,000 individual castings.

The "Sleeping Astrologer" is one such figure. The figure is sold through a direct-mail subsidiary of Gallow Pewter, an old and respected name in the field. The figure submitted for review is #453 of 3,000 and includes a certificate of authenticity. The numbers on both the base of the figure and the certificate match. This is important, as a figure with a wrong certificate can be worth up to 25% less. Always make sure the numbers match before leaving a store, or make sure that the company has a return policy if you get the figure through the mail.

The figure is massive in both size and weight, being just over 100 mm from its base to the top of its head. The circular base measures 58 mm across, is 12 mm high, and is molded to look like rough stone blocks supporting a metal-ringed floor. The top of the base holds an inscription that reads: "How Can I Fear The Night When I Have Seen The Stars." The floor also holds a thick tome and a small book, both under the chair on which the astrologer sits. A conical wizard's hat, complete with stars and moons, sits on the floor beside the chair.

Rising from this base is an ornate pedestal over 75 mm high. The pedestal top is angled slightly like an old desk, and has an inkwell, a feathered quill, a partially unrolled scroll, a small book, and a multifaceted crystal ball set in an ornate base. The detail is painstakingly done.

The focal point of the piece is the astrologer, who wears a long, high-necked robe over a shift. The robe is open slightly in front, with a hem of runic symbols running vertically on the front opening. The back of the robe and shift have a sewn flap. The robe shows creases and folds as it conforms to the man who wears it.

The astrologer sits with his right arm supporting his head, while his arm rests on the pedestal. His left arm is draped over the back of his chair, which has a curved back and symbols carved in it. The astrologer's face is calm in his repose, with only a few lines showing. The figure is bald with a long, flowing beard. Separations are visible between the right hand and the head, and his fingers are well sculpted. Curled in his lap is a cat that is as deeply asleep as its master. The astrologer

must have been sleeping a long time, as someone has laid a "Do Not Disturb" sign at his feet. This humor adds to the sculpture's value as a collectible. The only bad spot on this figure is the mold line on the back, which has a slight mismatch and small gap, although I doubt that a piece like this would go out to a customer without this single fault being buffed out. It is a very good value at \$110.

Grenadier Models Inc.

P.O. Box 305
Springfield PA 19064

Grenadier Models UK Ltd.

19 Babage Rd.
Deeside, Clwyd, Wales
UNITED KINGDOM CH5 2QB

9701—Shadowrunners

Much of the gaming industry today seems to be stuck in a pessimistic mood. The hobby itself is booming, but the game content of many newly released games contains a dark future story line that emphasizes everything amoral or bad in society today. These games feature no heroes, simply those who are out for themselves. Of these games, the one that I do enjoy is FASA's SHADOWRUN* RPG, and it also seems to be the best supported.

The set submitted for review contains 10 figures representing the most commonly played SHADOWRUN characters. These 25-mm lead figures form a basic shadow-running party and allow a group to undertake most tasks they may be given. The cast in order of appearance are:

Male Street Samurai—Clearly seen are the cybereyes, ropy muscle replacement, hand razor in the semi-retracted position, and a predator pistol, grip forward on the figure's left side. The figure is also wearing long pants and boots, spare armor pouches on the left leg and right side on the belt, and grenades on a chest strap. The figure has a permanent scowl on a battered face, short hair, and heavy armor covering dermal plating that can be seen on his stomach. His right arm is stretched out pointing, and his left hand hovers over his pistol.

Street Mage—The street mage wears a three-piece suit, complete with tie and wide lapels, spats on his shoes, and a long trench coat with symbols on the lapels. His facial expression is grim. A monocle rests over his right eye. He is topped off with a wide-brimmed hat covered with symbols, and he carries a magic wand in his right hand. Be especially careful when you paint this piece, or you could lose much of the subtle detail.

Burned-Out Mage—The burned-out mage is in a pose that brings to mind a swashbuckler swordfighting, with his left hand over his head and right hand holding what looks to be a .44 magnum instead of a rapier. Two thermo-eyes are visible, with what could be either wiring or a scar over



Shadowrunners (Grenadier Models)

his right eye and armor or plate in his forehead. He wears a mismatched suit with arcane symbols on the legs, a vest, and a coat (with symbols on the lapels) that falls past his knees. A satchel hangs by a shoulder strap. Other straps suggest other, unseen things.

Elven Decker—The elven decker is one of the simpler-dressed figures in the set. He wears a floor-length coat edged in feathers at the shoulders, an open shirt, simple pants, and knee-high boots. Both hands hold a personal computer keyboard in front of him, and the input jacks are visible on his forehead. He has long hair, a widow's peak, and high, hollow cheeks. His face appears to be almost serene.

Shaman—The shaman is the most interestingly clothed figure in the set. Dressed in a long coat and tunic that is patched and laced, he also wears simple calf-length boots and a body suit. A pistol is carried on his right side. Crossed ammo bandoliers sit low over his stomach, and his chest is covered in joined-reed armor such as that worn by several of the Indian tribes of the 1800s. A components bag hangs from his belt, and he has feathers in his hair and fur trim on his clothes.

Female Street Samurai—This figure manages to maintain a feminine form in spite of the enhanced muscles and bio-feed systems visible on both arms. The cybereyes are much smaller and not so protruding as the male's. She is dressed in a one-piece bodysuit covered by hardened armor that conforms to her shape and only becomes visible from the back. She wears a communicator on her left wrist and holds what looks like a Beretta model 101-T in her left hand. Her right hand is drawn up in front of her chest with razor knives extended. A compartmentalized

belt is slung on her hips, and her long boots are probably assisted. Her facial features appear to be relaxed. What look like data jacks can be seen on a shaved section of her right forehead.

Mercenary—This figure has no exposed skin except for the bottoms of his nose, cheeks, and mouth. The rest of his head is covered by a helmet that includes large goggles and a radio on the front right side. His shoulders and chest are covered by extra armor pads, and he wears camouflage down to his laced boots. Two pouches are on his right boot, and a pouch and knife are on his left boot. He has knee protectors and a belt visible only from the rear. He carries an Ingram LM6 with a smartgun attachment; extra ammo is in pouches on his right side. The gun is in a port-arms position.

Rigger—This character has a smug look on his face and a helmet covering most of his head, complete with ear covers and plug points. His cybereyes are clearly visible, and there is no other exposed flesh except for his hands. He wears multilayered, tight-fitting clothes with wide lapels, a thigh-length coat, knee-high boots, and knee protectors. He is pulling his left hand out of his coat pocket; in his right hand he carries a hand gun pointed at the sky. **Former Wage Mage**—The most striking part of this figure is her face. If you look closely, you'll see what could be either a look of horror or intense concentration. Her left hand is out as if casting a spell, while her right hand holds a protection spell. Her long hair covers the band for her tiara, complete with gem, and her entire body is covered with jewelry. She wears a molded brassiere and a half-length, hard-armor jacket that is open in the front. There are no obvious compart-



A-9 Cruiser (GHQ)



Mk VI B+ AA Tank (GHQ)

ments for spell components, and her long, open-slit dress exposes her left leg.

Ork Mercenary—Standing about a head taller than the other characters and having considerably more bulk, the ork doesn't seem to have many of the extra gadgets common on the others. He is armed with a short sword on his belt, a long sword slung over his back, and an AK-94 held in the ready position in his right hand. He wears a beret instead of a helmet and has skin-type boots and pockets on his pant legs. Extra armor is worn under his wrap-around jacket and at the shoulders, but it is barely noticeable. Crossed belts on his chest and spare ammo pouches finish out his attire. He has a baleful glare, and his tusks, two up and two down, are clearly visible.

This set is highly recommended for anyone who plays FASA's SHADOWRUN* RPG. There are some mold lines that will need to be filed, and all of our figures needed trimming on their bases in order to stand straight, but there was no flash and the figures are cleanly molded. Take your time and paint carefully, as there is a wealth of fine detail on these figures that could be covered up by carelessness. These figures can also be used in some of the other "dark future," games so they have extra value. These are highly recommended at \$9.95 per set.

GHQ

2634 Bryant Ave.
Minneapolis MN 55408

UK-36 Mk VI B +AA Tank	****
UK-37 A-S Cruiser	**** 1/2
UK-38 A-10 Cruiser	**** 1/2
UK-39 A-13 Cruiser	**** 1/2

The history of tanks began in World War I when the British used them against the Germans. The Germans were shaken, but watched several bog down and dismissed their importance. This event was to change war forever, but no one seemed to know what the object lesson was.

British tank policy between World Wars was based upon political policy. Vehicles

were to be made to: 1. Police the Empire; 2. Put down guerrilla warfare; 3. Pacify areas; and 4. Fight a major war. These policies dictated that tanks be small, cheap, and light. In addition, the tank supporters were divided as to whether tanks should only support infantry or be able to cover large amounts of area like the old cavalry.

The Mark VI tank was used in all areas of the British Empire, with heavy use in north Africa and fighting in France in 1940. It was the end of the line of highly maneuverable light tanks and weighed only 5.2 tons. It was crewed by three men and normally carried two heavy machine guns, or one light cannon and one machine gun. These tanks were almost always used as early recon units since they could be easily destroyed.

The Mk VI miniature is only 1/2" long and just over 1/4" wide. The tracks are excellently done with individual links clearly visible. The suspension is correct and raised high enough not to be obstructed by paint. Thin plate armor is visible with a wealth of rivet detail. Carrying baskets and small tools are visible; turrets, plate lines, rivets, and hatches with hinges are detailed. Subtracting from this excellent work is a single mold line by the gun, and the fact that it is the B version, which was grossly underarmed but was unfortunately the most numerous type. The AA (anti-aircraft) version is well done, including a tank commander in an open hatch, but I have not been able to find mention of this vehicle in my library. The main difference in the body of the anti-aircraft version is a circular turret and a large box on the rear.

The cruiser tanks were designed to operate on the screening and flanking principle; they were not meant to fight other tanks. Tank columns were designed to operate as mounted infantry or cavalry, seizing single objectives and disrupting enemy lines. Their armor was of medium weight, and the main guns were of small size. These designs were fielded in 1936.

The A-9 cruiser was an intermediate design that was made in small numbers, but was used into 1941 in the African

desert. The vehicle weighed only 12 tons and moved at a maximum of 25 MPH. The tank was armed with a 21-pound gun (37 mm), a coaxial machine gun, and two small turrets with a machine gun on the lower front hull. The A-10 used basically the same body with no front turrets and a Bese heavy machine gun. The A-10 had almost double the front armor, and the tank weighed 13.5 tons. The main gun remained the same.

The A-13 was the first significant change in this line. The A-13 was the first British tank to use the Christie suspension, which consisted of large road wheels rather than the shocks, springs, and small wheels. The gun remained the same, but armor was reduced to 15 mm and speed went up to 30 MPH.

These miniatures reflect their real counterparts exactly. The A-9 has full detailing of the six small road wheels and springs. The body reflects the sloped sides and turrets characteristic of this tank, and it has well-defined hatches, muzzles, and guns. The mufflers are obvious and show the height at which the tank was made to wade through water. The main turret is square, with almost no slope but having a ridge that runs front to back. Tool boxes and racks are excellently detailed.

The A-10 miniature differs by its lack of hull turrets and built-up driver's and gunner's front plate. Rivet detail is superb.

The A-13 is a slightly longer and wider tank with completely different suspension. The Christie suspension is clearly shown, with the rubber edge visible. The bolt that holds the wheel on is also visible. The first plate of the recessed hull is shown, that also connects the Bese heavy machine gun. The muffler is no longer visible, as it is lower and vented to the side. The body is of a more square design, with all hatch detail clearly shown.

These tanks are excellent models for either playing or display, with one small fault: The barrels are thin and should not be bent too many times or they will break. If you want to recreate the fast-moving battles of France in 1940, or of north Africa, these tanks are needed. Their quality makes them highly recommended. The cost is \$5.50 per package of five.

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top—Hoekun cavalry; bottom—hill giant and ogres (Ral Partha)

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10-560— The Horde: Yaemun's Hoekun Clan Warriors **** ½

10-561—Billidum and the Ogre Marauders and Spiderhaunt ****

The new Horde novels from TSR chronicle the story of an army of horsemen who try to conquer the world. If this story sounds familiar, it should, as it was inspired by the Mongols of history. These horse troopers swept westward from eastern Asia and conquered huge areas of the Eurasian continent.

Ral Partha, with TSR's help, has staged a skirmish using the BATTLESYSTEM™ rules. This skirmish is fought using two boxes of figures, each of which represent one side. The set-up and scenario instructions are included in a story-based hand-out included in each box.

Set #10-560 represents Yaemun's Hoekun forces. The box contains 19 25-mm cavalry troops, including three different horse castings and three different figure castings, including the leader, Yaemun.

All of the figures require some assembly. Yaemun is dressed in the woven plate described in the novel, *Horselords*. His helmet covers the back of his head and part of his face, and it has some ornate markings on the brow. A shikoro, or neck guard, extends from the helmet to his shoulders. His face is stern, and his moustache shows clearly. The breast and back plates are plain; only buckles mar the smooth surface. He also wears a thigh guard, bagged pants, leather boots, and reinforced sleeves on both arms. A raised mace is in his right hand. Separate bows in holders and quivers of arrows must be glued to his belt. His horse is not armored and has a braced saddle and correct tack, though no reins are visible. The horse is in mid-step, with its tail slightly droopy. The mane and tail are both excellently done.

The common tribesmen's horses are the same as the leader's, except that provisions, ropes, and jugs hang from the saddles and the horses are moving at a trot. The troopers are dressed in hats with neck flaps, long robes cinched with belts and buckles, pants, and leather boots. They hold bows, and empty bow holders are molded to the left rear of each figure. Separate lances in the box can be glued to their backs.

Also in the set are "valiant men," the elite of the clan fighters and the far-Eastern version of knights. The men in the kit wear plate armor wired onto leather, forming a very flexible plate. These figures wear helmets and neck guards without nose and forehead protection.

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Otherwise these men are dressed as the clan leader. Valiant-men figures can attack with either swords or lances in their right hands. Weapons are separate and must be glued on. The horses are also fully armored except for their breasts, confirming that these are the shock troops that go into battle first. These are highly recommended at \$29.95 per set.

Set #10-561 contains a young hill giant and 12 marauding ogres. According to the scenario book, these creatures have calmly eaten breakfast, consisting of the clan horses, when they left the feast to return home and were caught in a trap on the open plain by clan horsemen.

The young hill giant stands 65 mm high and is almost 40 mm at the shoulders. His body is heavily muscled and is covered with a thin layer of engraved body fur. His face is Neanderthal in appearance and comes as a separate piece that joins to the neck that juts forward from the shoulders. His arms must also be glued on, and some filling is needed to make the junction between the arms and shoulders look realistic. The figure is clad only in skin "boxer shorts" and fur boots. He is armed with a huge log that must be fitted into his right hand after some light flash is cleaned off the fist. This figure almost looks like a giant gorilla.

The ogres come in three different poses. One figure is a leader, differing from the other fully armored figures only in the position of his arms. As with each of the follower types, you must pick out one head from the 12 available and one weapon from the five types available. These weapons include spears, axes, maces, swords and spiked clubs/two-bladed axes.

Ogre group #1 consists of five ogre bodies, all wearing plate armor over animal skins, stomach protectors, left arm and hand protection, and rope sandals. Knives are worn on their right hips. Their left arms stick out almost vertically, and their right arms are almost parallel to their bodies. All hands are open and are capable of holding weapons.

Group #2 consists of six figures. Their armor appears to be buckled over bare, hairy skin. Shoulders, chest, stomach, and groin are all covered by overlapping plates, while the forearms and wrists are uncovered. The legs are bare, and the feet are clad in a slipper-type shoe. These figures have their left arms up as if getting ready to throw something. Their right arms are straight from their sides. All hands are empty.

The 12 ogre heads have an Oriental look and come in four basic types. Two are growling, with lips pulled back, and two have their mouths open. One head has no helmet and has flat hair, one has a top-knot, and the other two have different helmets on.

The spare weapons and heads in this set allow you to make a custom army and

allow you to rig your attacks to display mixed weapons. These figures are just at the right range at \$24.95.

There is one caution on both these sets. No instructions are provided as to where to place weapons, etc. By closely observing the pictures on the back of the box, you can place most of the equipment without problems. Ω

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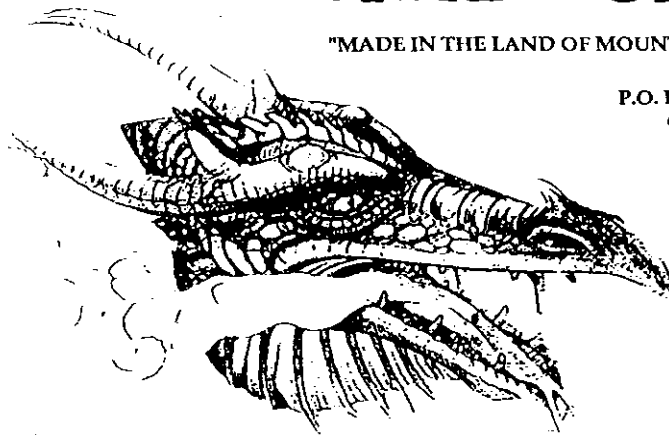
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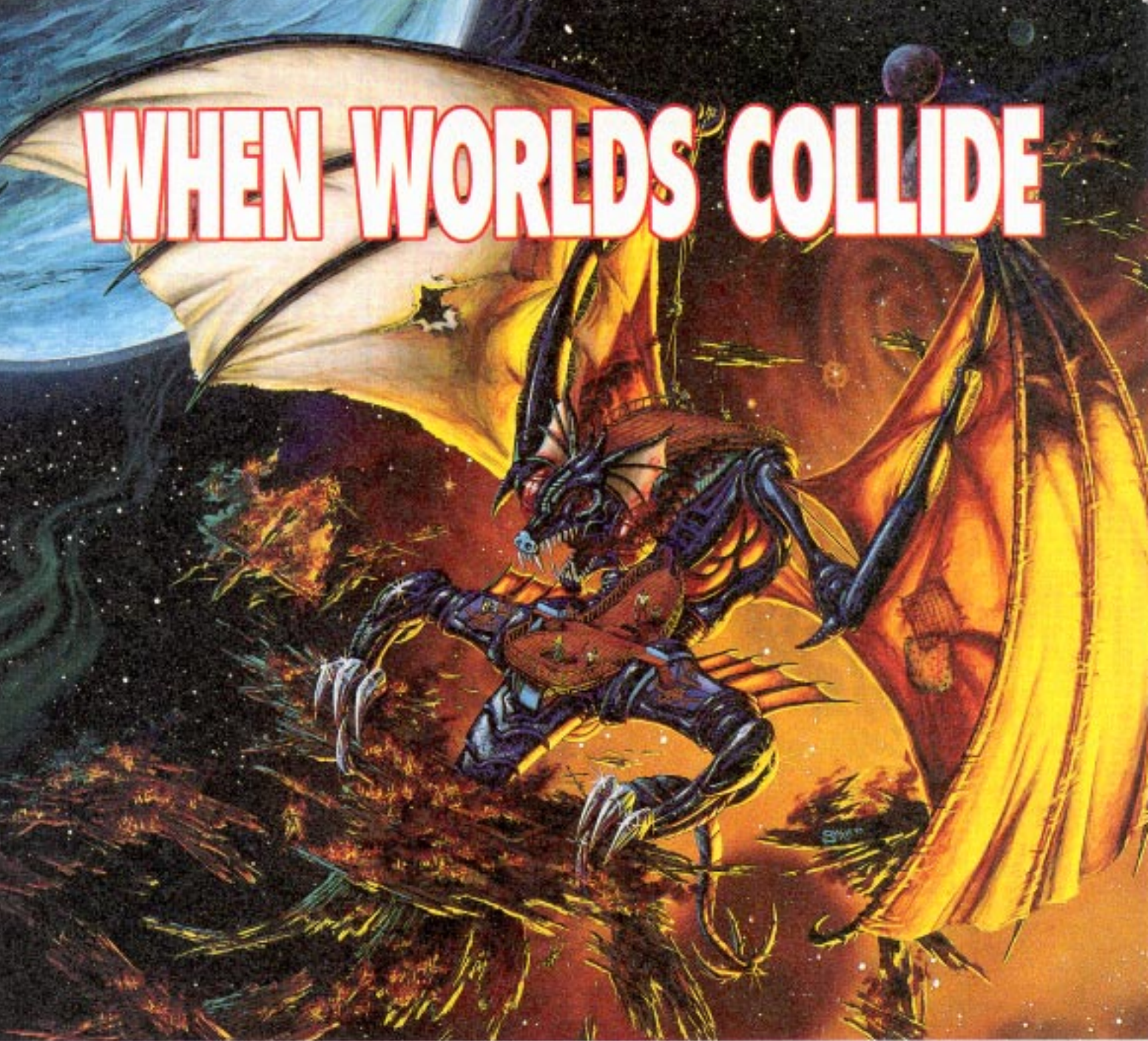
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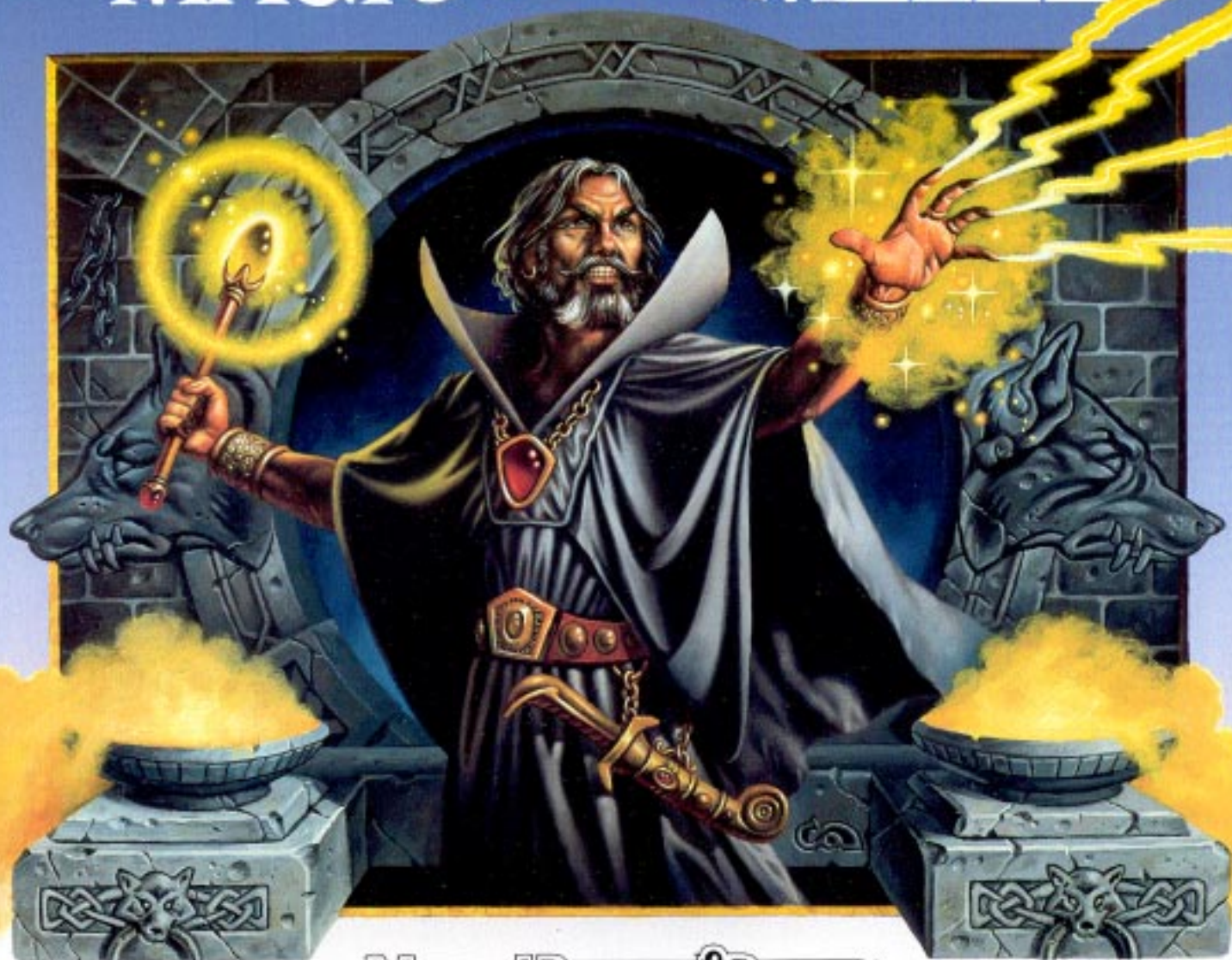
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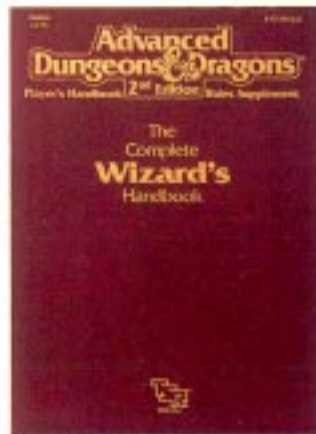
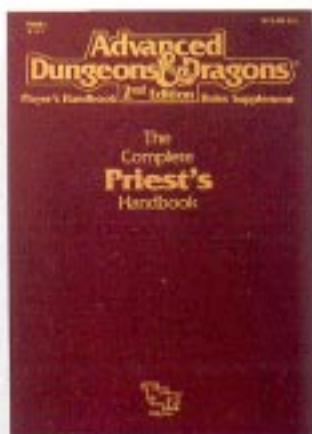


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