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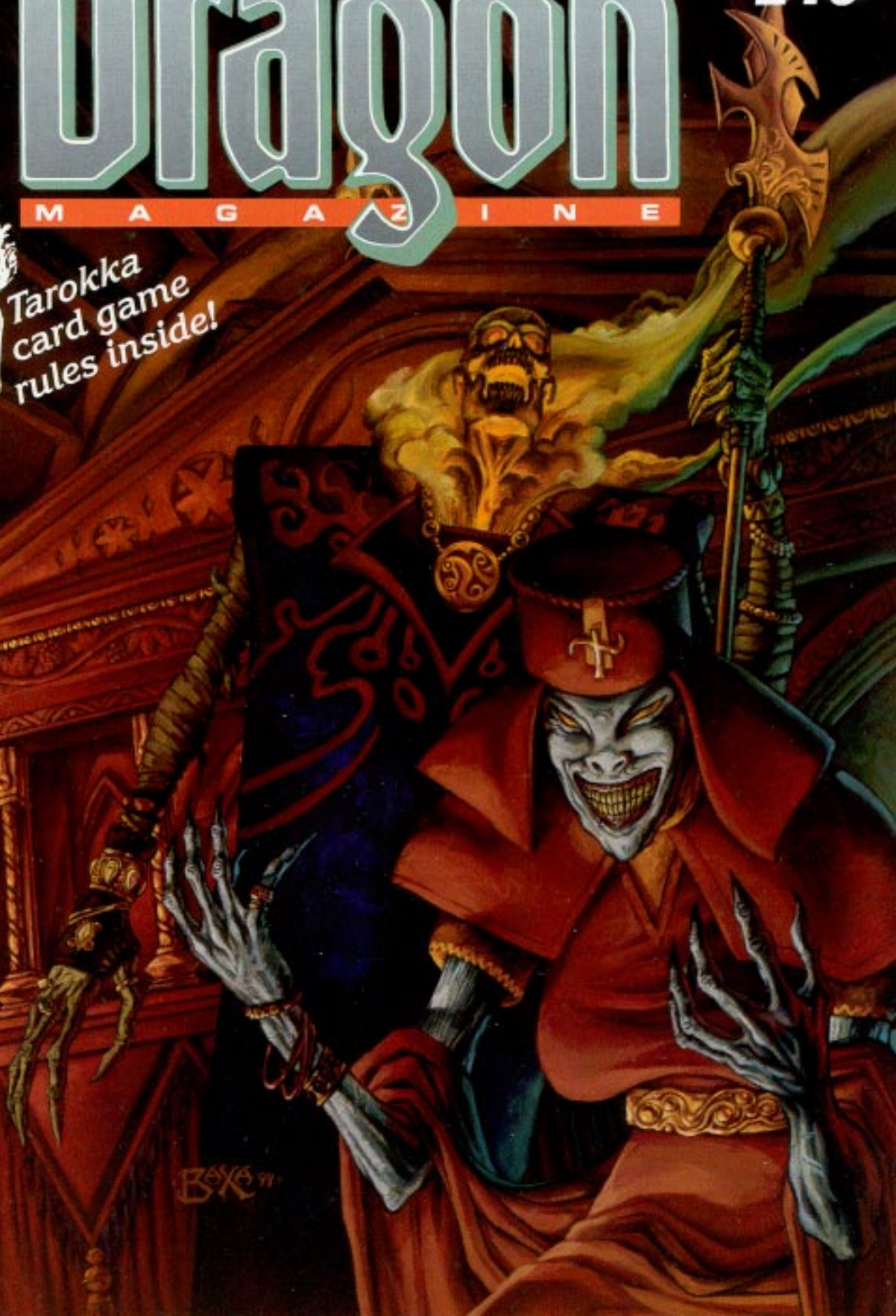
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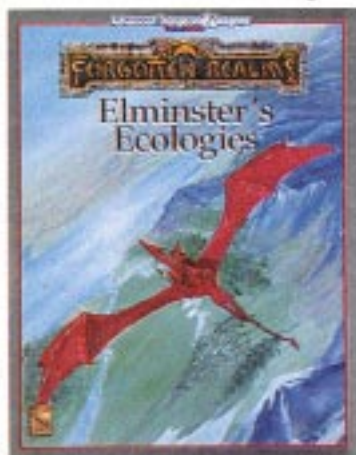
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Issue #210
Vol. XIX, No. 5
October 1994

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Printed in the U.S.A.

DRAGON® Magazine (ISSN 0279-6848) is published monthly by TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756 (201 Sheridan Springs Road), Lake Geneva WI 53147, United States of America. The postal address for all materials from the United States of America and Canada except subscription orders is: DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, (201 Sheridan Springs Road), Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A., telephone (414) 248-3625; fax (414) 248-0389. The postal address for all materials from Europe is: DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom; telephone: (0223) 212517 (U.K.), 44-223-212517 (international); telex, 818761; fax (0223) 248066 (U.K.), 44-223-248066 (international).

Distribution: DRAGON Magazine is available from game and hobby shops throughout the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and through a limited number of other overseas outlets. Distribution to the book trade in the United States is by Random House, Inc., and in Canada by Random House of Canada, Ltd. Distribution to the book trade in the United Kingdom is by TSR Ltd. Send orders to: Random House, Inc., Order Entry Department, Westminster MD 21157, U.S.A.; telephone: (800) 733-3000. Newsstand distribu-

tion throughout the United Kingdom is by Comag Magazine Marketing, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 7QE, United Kingdom, telephone: 0895-444055.

Subscriptions: Subscription rates via second-class mail are as follows: \$30 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent to an address in the U.S., \$36 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent to an address in Canada, £21 for 12 issues sent to an address within the United Kingdom; £30 for 12 issues sent to an address in Europe, \$50 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent by surface mail to any other address, or \$90 in U.S. funds for 12 issues sent air mail to any other address. Payment in full must accompany all subscription orders. Methods of payment include checks or money orders made payable to TSR, Inc., or charges to valid MasterCard or VISA credit cards, send subscription orders with payments to: TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 5695, Boston MA 02206. U.S.A. In the United Kingdom, methods of payment include cheques or money orders made payable to TSR Ltd., or charges to a valid ACCESS or VISA credit card, send subscription orders with payments to TSR Ltd., as per that address above. Prices are subject to change without prior notice. The issue of expiration of

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COVER

This month's cover artist, Tom Baxa, beckons you inside our annual excursion into the horrific. The figure in the rear doesn't seem to be enjoying the light streaming in through the window, though. He (it?) was heard to ask “Is it me, or is it hot in here?”

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Back issues: A limited quantity of back issues is available from either the TSR Mail Order Hobby Shop (P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.) or from TSR Ltd. For a free copy of the current catalog that lists available back issues, write to either of the above addresses.

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Second-class postage paid at Lake Geneva, Wis., U.S.A., and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to DRAGON Magazine, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. USPS 318-790, ISSN 1062-2101.

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 3LB, United Kingdom. If you wish your letter to be published, you must sign it. We will not publish anonymous letters. We will withhold your name if you request it.

MAGIC*: The Obsession

Dear Dragon,

I am writing about the MAGIC: THE GATHERING* game from Wizards of the Coast. The game is so enjoyable that instead of playing our AD&D® game set in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign world (and working to destroy the Zhentarim's influence in Scardale), they chant "MAGIC! MAGIC!" etc. While I am trying to run the adventure, they throw down their character sheets and play MAGIC during our game sessions. I know of only a few players who would rather play the AD&D game. All my hard work on the campaign is being wasted.

Are there any other GMs or players out there with the same problem? Comments, please!

Clint Hooper
Clearwater KS

Clint is not the only person I've heard make this comment. I've even talked to retailers who say that their sales of other game materials have declined due to the MAGIC game craze. Does this spell the end of role-playing as we know it? In my opinion, of course not.

Before I continue, let me congratulate Wizards of the Coast (WotC) on all the success they've had. They broke new ground in the gaming industry (just as TSR did some 20 years ago with the original D&D® game), and deserve to reap the rewards. The MAGIC game also has exposed many new people to the gaming industry and the industry only can benefit from such an influx of new gamers in the long run. I wish WotC luck, and I hope to see new WotC products for a long time (especially since WotC picked up one of my favorite FRPGs, the ARS MAGICA* game).

The mania surrounding the game can cause problems though, as Clint points out. Although it's easy to do so, try not to take an adversarial or confrontational tone when talking to MAGIC addicts. Calmly explain that you don't want your RPG campaign to suffer since you've all put so much work into it. It may help to set up a time separate from the group's normal get-togethers

so MAGIC players can get their fix. If this doesn't work and your players continue to rudely interrupt your RPG sessions, you may have to ask those players not to come to your AD&D game sessions. Good luck. —Dale

Astray Adventures?

Dear Dragon,

I tried to order the FORGOTTEN REALMS® Adventures hardcover book from the Mail Order Hobby Shop, but found out that it has been discontinued and no copies are available. Is there any way for me to get a copy of this book? I'd even be willing to buy a used or (slightly) damaged copy.

Jason Hubred
Montevideo MN

I've checked, and Jason is correct that the FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures book is out of print and will not be reprinted. The reason for this is that most of the information first presented in that tome was added to the revised edition of the FORGOTTEN REALMS boxed set (TSR Product #1085) published in 1993.

For those still interested in acquiring a copy of this book (or any other out-of-print game product), there are a few things to try. You can ask your local retailer to try to order a copy from her distributor. Sometimes, distributors order more copies of a product from a publisher than they can sell immediately to retailers, leaving copies to gather dust in their warehouse. You also can ask your retailer if she has a bulletin board where you can post a note (an index card, etc.) declaring your interest. Posting a notice on gaming-related on-line computer services and BBSes is another possibility for the computer literate. Members of the RPGA® Network can submit a free classified ad to be published in the POLYHEDRON® Newzine. Also, check the "Convention Calendar" in every issue of DRAGON® Magazine for cons in your area. Many cons have game auctions or flea markets. Good hunting. —Dale

Pudding proof

Dear Dragon,

I just received DRAGON issue #208 and, while I don't like to nit-pick, there is an error that has irritated me enough that I couldn't help but bring it up.

The problem is on page 91, in the "Role-playing Reviews" column by Lester Smith. Smith

says, "... the proof is in the pudding, as they say." Well, a few may say that, but most get it right: "The proof of the pudding is in the eating." This expression becomes clearer when you consider the fact that the word "proof" was formerly a synonym for "test"—that is, "You can't test a pudding except by eating it."

It is a small thing, but I'd hate for my favorite magazine to sound incoherent.

Christopher Davis
Snoqualmie WA

Thanks for the pudding proof, Christopher. Lester has been properly chastised by being forced to eat nothing but pudding for the next three months. He'll not make that mistake again.

—Dale

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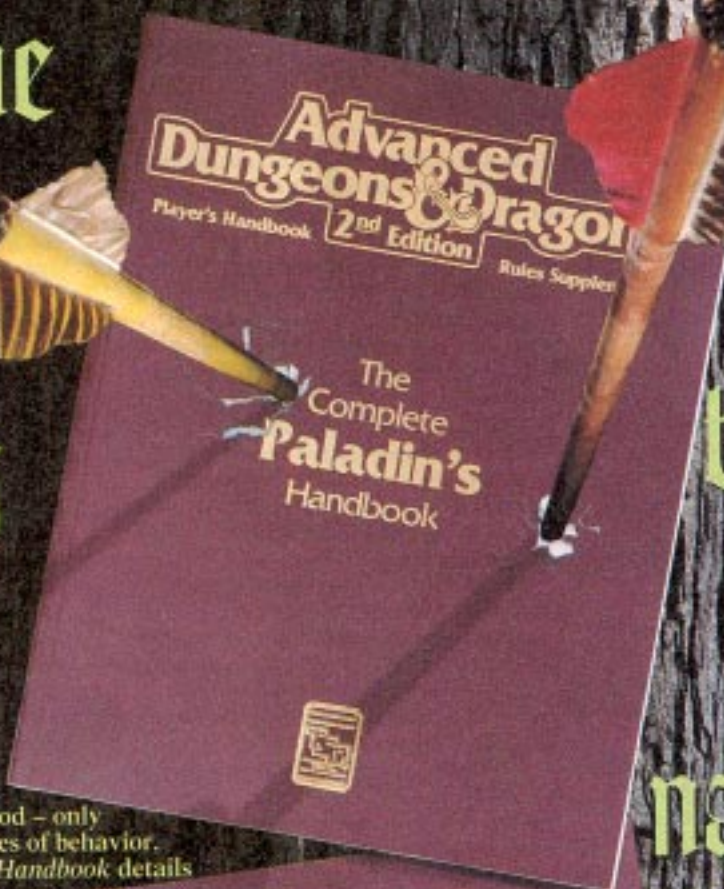
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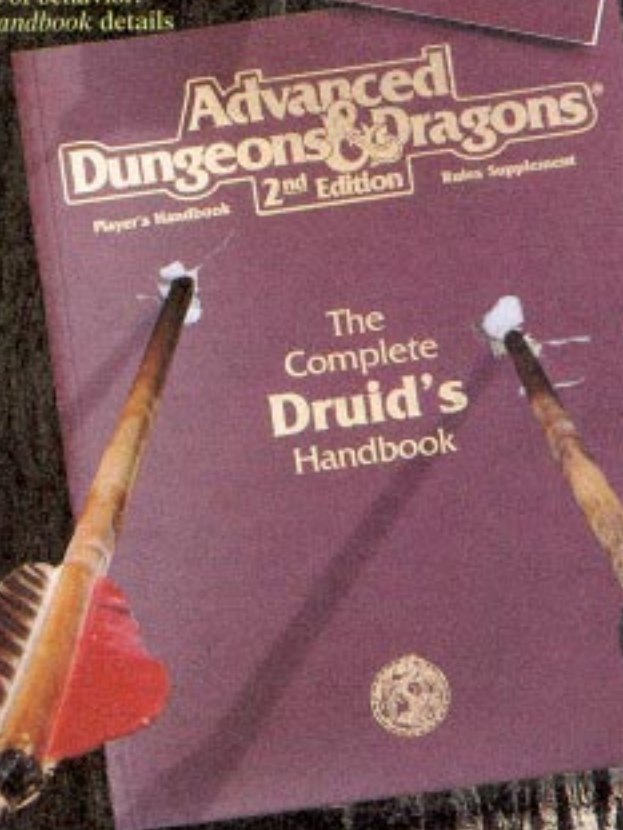
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The Dawn of International Gaming

I've always had a weakness for the exotic, for novelty for its own sake. I bought *Oriental Adventures*, the *EMPIRE OF THE PETAL THRONE**, and *JORUNE** games the instant they appeared. I still read histories of odd times and places (currently, the Minoans). But after working for TSR for a while, I thought I'd seen it all. Boy, was I wrong.

All the world came to the 1994 GEN CON® Game Fair; about 25,000 gamers descended on the MECCA Convention Center in Milwaukee, Wis., from every corner of the globe. I ran hours of demos, talked myself hoarse at seminars, answered questions, and handed out about a million free *PLANESCAPE*™ buttons at the TSR castle—the usual duties of a TSR staffer. After looking out from the castle over the vast sea of game companies, I went on a short quest to find something exotic (yes, in Milwaukee). Not everyone plays straight SF or fantasy or horror games. In fact, finding exotic games wasn't as hard as I expected. The gamers from around the world had brought their own games with them.

Gaming has gone international in the past few years. Games about other cultures are as old as the hobby itself: for example, the *BUSHIDO** game from FGU, the *EMPIRE OF THE PETAL THRONE* game, the *Maztica* and *AL-QADIM*® settings for the *AD&D*® game, the *Vikings* and other campaign source books also from TSR, and more recently, *White Wolfs Gypsies* and *Berlin by Night* supplements. But these games are just an American perspective of other places and times. (I wonder what Scandinavians think of the *Vikings* source book?) I was really after games made in other countries, games that had made it to the U.S. in one form or another.

Games crossing borders is not a new phenomenon. I already have a few foreign-produced games on my shelf: the *WARHAMMER** FRPG, *RUS**, and the *LACE & STEEL** games, to name just a few. But they were written in English by British and Australian authors, so they aren't really exotic.

Translation from English to other languages isn't new either. For years American games have been translated into French, German, Japanese, and other languages. Those don't count either. *DRAGON*® Magazine has French, Spanish, and German editions—they do discuss games that never make it to America, but more often than not they discuss American game releases.

Gaming is even more of an educational experience abroad than it is in the States, because many gamers in other countries have learned English so that they can play the games! Part of the reason is that most games are available in English months or even years before they are translated. Some releases are never translated. And some languages are still not represented: How many games are written in or translated into Finnish, Urdu, or Dutch, for example? Because English was the first language of gaming, it has become the official language of gaming. English gaming terms pepper the talk of non-English-speaking gamers.

But not every gamer wants to learn English just to enjoy a hobby. So what do gamers do when frustrated with a lack of official material? They create their own systems, of course, like the *DAS SCHWARTZE AUGEN** game in Germany (literally, "The Black Eye") or the *AQUALARRE** game (reviewed by Lester Smith in *DRAGON* issue #186) from Spain. Everyone knows that giant robot games come from Japan, but Japan also is the home of the *GEAR ANTIQUE** game, a steampunk FRPG that appeared in 1991, and the *RECORD OF LOTOS WAR** game, a traditional FRPG that was released simultaneously with an original video anime series.

The difference at this year's Game Fair was that now games from France, Germany, and elsewhere are being translated into English and sold in the U.S. The French have been especially busy. The translations from French this year include the *NEPHILIM** game now available in English from Chaosium) and the *IN NOMINE** game (published in the States by Steve Jackson Games). A translation of *Les Annees Folles* (the Crazy Years), a 1920s Paris adventure box for the *CALL OF CTHULHU** game, is still under consideration. It's not just new games either: some foreign supplements include the *Germany Source book*, written by German gamers for FASA's *SHADOWRUN** game and now available in English. Even the latest American games have a European flavor (or should I say flavour?), such as R. Talsorian's *CASTLE FALKENSTEIN** game's emphasis on Bavaria, Prussia, and central Europe. What's going on here?

The engine of American culture is spreading its spores abroad: MTV everywhere, McDonald's in the Kremlin, Coca-Cola in China, and role-playing games everywhere that gamers take them. Friends, soldiers, and the Internet make

even relatively small hobbies like ours international. It doesn't take much to get somebody hooked on this bizarre American invention. If they tell two friends, and they tell two friends, and so on, the hobby takes root. And once the forces of imagination are unleashed, the gamers are bound to create worlds that reflect their own ideals and fears. The flavor of gaming depends on what myths and legends you grow up with; American games are most likely to appeal to other Americans (though, oddly, the Europeans enjoy Westerns more than we do). The flavor of a foreign game is, well, foreign.

What do these games have in common? Do they have anything in common other than not being written in English? How are they different from American games? It turns out that the answers to all three questions point to the same thing. Medieval fantasy games produced abroad are closer to some neat source material, so research is different, for one. Think of how much easier it is for a German gamer to visit a real castle than for a New Jersey gamer to do so, or for a Saudi gamer to investigate a mosque. Also, different genres seem popular: for example, military simulation role-playing games are harder to find overseas (at least, I can't seem to find one). Maybe the influence of role-playing's war game heritage is felt less strongly further from the hobby's roots.

Some differences are just a matter of emphasis; these games are tailored to the favorite legends of the country that fostered it. Every foreign game is a great idea generator, because the basic assumptions aren't all the same. In fact, that's what makes some of TSR's freelance designers so interesting; they're writing in Canada or Britain or elsewhere, and—not surprisingly—they bring something from their homeland into their games. Willie Walsh and Lee Shepherd, authors for *DUNGEON*® *Adventures*, are just two examples.

I'm looking forward to playing games created by Japanese, Russian, Turkish, Brazilian, and other gamers from around the world. Write to me and let me know what local variants, house rules, and game systems are popular in your corner of the world. We'll print the most interesting responses. What systems of magic, what views of technology, and what twisted plots are being hatched in role-playing games outside the States? I can't wait to find out.

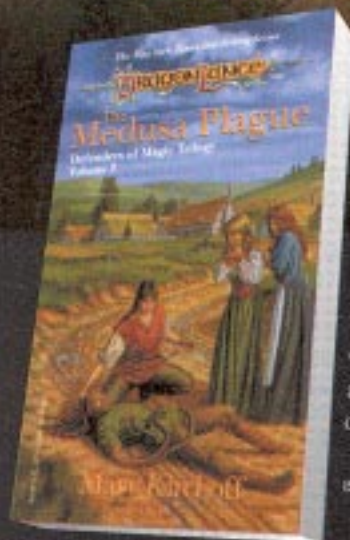


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“Hey, wanna play this cool new game I got?”

by Dale A. Donovan

It all started with an article in a pop culture teen-magazine called *Dynamite!* (One of my coworkers here at TSR has admitted to seeing the same article, so I feel somewhat vindicated.) The article was about this strange thing called the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game where you pretended to be brave warriors, mighty wizards, noble clerics, or cunning thieves battling huge dragons and other such evil beasts. To my fevered 15-year-old brain (raised on superhero comic books and Saturday afternoon monster movies), that was it. I was sold. I *had* to have this game. It was so *coool*. I pleaded, begged, and whined to get this game. (I’m very good at whining, just ask any body who works with me.)

In order to shut me up, my parents bought me the purple-boxed rules set (with the Erol Otus artwork and the red-covered rule book) of the Basic D&D® game for my next birthday. I read and reread the rule book and the included adventure B2 *The Keep on the Borderlands*—although they called them “modules” back then. I still have not a clue why they were called that.

Not long after, I discovered DRAGON® Magazine. Again, I whined until my folks coughed up the bucks for a subscription. The first issue I received via the kindly U.S. Postal Service was #52 with a cover painting by Boris Vallejo. (I had already bought issues #50 and #51.) I noticed the editor was some yahoo named Mohan, but I didn’t care. I didn’t understand all of it, but I didn’t care.

About that time I noticed the code number on the adventure from the boxed set: “B2.” Hmm, that must mean there’s at least a “B1” and maybe more (a cunning lad, wasn’t I?). Excited by the prospect of more goodies, I headed to one of the few places in my home town (Kenosha, Wis.) I knew of that carried TSR products: my local Ace hardware store. Seriously. I kid you not. This was long before the days of “comics shops,” “game shops” or any such luxury. The hardware store had a big book rack in the Toys section chock full of games, books, dice, etc. The store even carried all the old “Panzer” games from Avalon Hill.

That book rack was the closest I’d then come to Nirvana (no, not the band).

There I found the adventures B1 *In Search of the Unknown* and B3 *The Palace of the Silver Princess*. I also bought other products now lost to mists of time, such as: *Dungeon Geomorphs*, *The (original) Rogue’s Gallery*, *Monster and Treasure Assortment: Set I*, and more. I read and reread these and my growing collection of DRAGON Magazines.

Finally, I figured I was ready to play. After reading about “campaigns” and “continuity” and “structure” and so on in the pages of DRAGON Magazine, I cobbled the three adventures into something vaguely resembling a campaign setting—a small valley kingdom named “Haven.” Okay, I had a setting. I had dice (although the family’s dog, Blue, did chew up my d12). I think I even had some miniature figures. But, what I didn’t have was people to play the game with.

Before too long, I had drafted my neighborhood buddies—Leon, Tim, and Jeff—into playing the game. Since this whole thing was my idea, I was going to be the DM. Keep in mind, I’d never played the game, just read the rules a few hundred times.

We had a blast as I remember, even though I look back on those time-shrouded memories of sitting in my basement around the ping-pong table rolling dice and having to bend over the table in order to read them (since there were no inked dice for sale back in those days) and cringe. I obeyed the dice slavishly—if the dice said a PC died, he was toast. At least I used the “Inheritance” rule that allowed PCs, in case they should meet with some tragic end, to will their belongings to a relative—the player’s next PC of course. (Half the people in that whole valley must have been related to those three original PCs. Maybe that explains what they all did between adventures.) We played for months, and I don’t think any character actually made it to 2nd level.

I also had such grand designs for “my” campaign by this time that I almost lost sight of the fact that the players wanted to have input in the game too. “What do you

mean you don’t want your PCs to go that way? Listen, do you want to play or not?” Despite these abuses, the players put up with me. Heck, none of us knew any better. One of the PCs even walked around for awhile in “lather” armor.

But we kept at it, and we learned from each other. We learned how to role-play together. I even learned the valuable skill of running a game session on-the-fly when my buddies would call and say, “Well, we’re all over at Jeff’s house, and we thought that since we were all here, you could come over and run something.” To this day, that is my preferred method of being a DM—having a basic outline of what I want to happen during a session, and then just playing off what the PCs say and do.

We soon discovered other games, such as the original GAMMA WORLD® and TOP SECRET® games, and later we started playing both the STAR FRONTIERS® and MARVEL SUPER HEROES game. Others tried their hands at being DMs, allowing me to be just a player for the first time. Players dropped out and others joined in.

In high school, I fell in with another group of malcontents with the names Gary, Tomas, Steve, and Jeff. We were practically inseparable, spending most every weekend evening in somebody’s basement (Jeff’s most of the time, though Tomas’ and Steve’s also did time—Steve’s even had an air-hockey table; anybody else remember those?) playing, munching junk food, drinking *way* too much caffeinated soda, and having a fantastic time—even when our PCs screwed each other over. (Steve, you aren’t still mad about how my halfling fighter/thief, using a *philter of persuasion*, got your PCs to leave all their magical items with him while they took a nice stroll down in the dungeon, are you?)

I owe a lot to this game of ours (not the least of which is my paycheck), but I owe more to the friends named above. I did a lot of my growing up with them, and they put up with me while I did it. I’ll carry the memories of those times with me for the rest of my life. Thanks, guys.





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DEAD OR ALIVE?

by Michael Satran

Artwork by Timothy Riley

The economic, legal, and political aspects of *resurrection* magic



The battle was over. Moljor Sword-breaker stood around a heap of orc bodies, their corpses beginning to frost over in the chill winter air. He sheathed his sword and walked over to the mage, Delissa. "This is a great day for the people of Bruntmann Town, Delissa. No longer shall these orcs plague them. Where's Dalvar?"

"Dead." A quiet sob escaped her lips. Delissa and Dalvar had been married for some time.

"Well, no problem!" Moljor chuckled with a sly grin on his face. "The nearest temple is only three days away! Let's ride!"

The above exchange is an example of the attitude about *resurrection* and other similar magics that pervades many AD&D® game campaigns. Characters fight, characters die, and characters get *resurrected*. It is generally accepted by many people who have been playing the game for quite a while that this is standard practice. Those playing the AD&D game should fully consider the consequences of such a world-view. Remember that in the original AD&D game, *resurrection* cost 10,000 gp plus 10,000 gp per level of the character to be *resurrected*, a formula that is still adhered to in many campaigns. This is a lot of cash. Why does *resurrection* cost so much? What are the consequences of being *resurrected*? How does a character feel who has been *resurrected* two, three, or more times? Note that the following discussion assumes a successful resurrection roll. With adventurers and their typically high ability scores, this isn't an invalid assumption.

Social significance

It usually is a good idea, when looking at a world where *resurrection* is available, to look at the social consequences first. *Resurrection* produces a number of social problems, most of them revolving around one central point. That point is this: Life is cheap.

If life is cheap, then assassins are cheap.

In a world where *resurrection* is commonplace for example, when the assassin wants to warn a rich merchant that he is about to make an enemy of the assassin's guild, he slips into the merchant's house, boldly steals up to his bed, and kills him. The assassin knows that, in a few days, the merchant most likely will be *resurrected*, and the merchant will think twice about crossing the assassin's guild again.

If life is cheap, moral and ethical values go down the drain. "Why should I bring my enemy to justice, bringing him back alive, when I can simply bring him back dead? It's easier, and if the government really needs this nasty person alive, they can always *resurrect* him." Furthermore, this removes values from PC to PC relations as well, as the beginning of the article demonstrates. While Moljor is an insensitive clod, he has a point. Why worry? The deceased is an adventurer. Chances are, he'll survive the *resurrection* attempt.

If life is cheap, and the PCs are this bad, think about the villains. They know that the heroes are going to do everything possible to keep the villains from being *resurrected*, and are going to take steps to both keep themselves alive, and make sure that the PCs can't be *resurrected* when they die. If the villain knows that *resurrection* exists, he's certainly going to try to make sure that none of the PCs escape, and will use the most vicious and brutal tactics possible to make sure that these people do not achieve their goal, because he knows if he blows it, or he can't escape, the same fate is in store for him.

While it makes acts of great heroism possible, it also devalues those same acts. If Moljor goes off to fight the deadly dragon menacing the town of Brandsnow, he's much more likely to do so if he knows that the potential of *resurrection* awaits him should he fail. Then, he can try again a little while later after he's gained a couple of levels. Worse, more people will be trying this endlessly, knowing that they will have the ability to return and finish the

job, possibly against a wounded creature who can't heal as fast as a PC with a cleric friend. Since life is cheap, the lives of the monsters become even cheaper. Instead of "Bravely, Moljor fought the dragon, until it coughed its last weak breath!," a legendary fight against a legendary beast becomes absurd: "Moljor bravely fought the dragon over a period of about five or six weeks, dying twice, but thanks to the powers of the priest of Brandsnow, Moljor was eventually able to rescue the citizens from the menace that plagued them."

The other problem is that it leads to an irrational discourse among adventuring types:

"How many times have you died?"

"Oh, three or four . . ."

This is a conversation I've heard in more than one discussion in an AD&D game. Note that this was an "in character" discussion. The problem is that this only encourages the devaluation of life. If all you're going to lose when you die is some cash, and possibly a Constitution point, who cares how many people get resurrected?

Legal consequences

What happens legally when somebody dies and gets resurrected? Well, in most campaigns, nothing. But under medieval law, a couple of interesting things occur. The first of these is this: Is the person dead, or isn't she? Technically, she died. Yes, she is alive now, but didn't that character have a will that says, "In the event of my death, please pass my worldly possessions to X, Y, and Z?" What happens now? As any good DM can figure out, there are loads of adventures that can be launched from such a premise. The inheritors in question may not be willing to give up those possessions, and one of them may hate the character so much for being *resurrected* that he tries to kill the character again in order to avoid returning the inheritance. Whose possessions are they, and how can a dispute like this be resolved? In some cases, you can't even fight a duel, because the offending person has your sword +3, and he claims it's his (it may very well be). Medieval courts may not be willing to handle a case like this. The situation certainly is confusing, and leads to questions such as these: "What do you mean she's dead? She's here now, isn't she?" and "But I saw her die, doesn't that mean that her will is legal?"

The second question that must be answered is "Is the character legally the same person?" The answer is again, yes and no. The character died, so obviously she can't be the same person. Yet she lives in the same house, with the same people, and she's married to the same man, so she must be the same person. If the character died, does that mean that she becomes a completely new individual in the eyes of the law? Can she be jailed for any crimes she may have committed prior to her death? Something must be done to allevi-

ate this confusion.

If the deceased (if she really is deceased) individual has a spouse, what is the condition of their state of wedlock? Marriages in a normal world tend to be " 'til death do us part." But in an AD&D game, this kind of logic gets you into trouble. If the spouse dies, and is *resurrected*, is the spouse still a spouse? If one of the participants has another rather nasty aspect of *resurrection* that nobody seems to notice. If you're married, and you die, normally all your possessions are divided up according to your will. However, upon *resurrection*, what happens? A 14th-level cleric can resurrect someone who has been dead for over a hundred years. If this occurs, must the law legally retrieve every single possession the *resurrected* person had, especially if each and every possession was catalogued? Imagine the PCs looting a tomb, only to discover several months later that the tomb occupant is alive again, wants his possessions back, and has hired lawyers in order to retrieve them. What do the PCs do if they no longer have these items? They are certainly responsible. After all, they looted the place. It was clearly his tomb, and now the tomb's occupant is alive and all his material goods are missing.

By this logic, the former occupant of said tomb can press charges and have the PCs thrown in jail, unless they retrieve all the goods they stole, another interesting adventure if ever there was one. Furthermore, what does this person do when she discovers that her spouse lived to a ripe old age, or has married someone else? This is a logistical nightmare. What if his descendants are still alive? Are they obliged to provide for him, or is he legally a different person now that he once again is among the living?

Can someone be legally taxed if he dies before tax time, and is *resurrected* afterward? Technically, taxes are paid for the entire year. But if a person dies before the day of collection, is he a taxable subject of the government? If he lives alone and has no heirs, he isn't, because you can claim funds only if his heirs are responsible for his debts. If he has no heirs, no one is responsible for his debts, which means that they all disappear. The state can attempt to confiscate the money, but there are so many loopholes in the situation at this point that they will never be able to get away with it. (Just look at Shakespeare's *Richard II* for what a medieval nobility's reaction is to immediate seizure of noble lands.) Then, the character is *resurrected* after the day of taxes. (He should wait to accumulate a huge debt before he does this, and although he will make many enemies, he'll simply be *resurrected* in a few days after one of his enemies kills him, if any of them have the courage to do so.)

As can be seen, there are a large number of problems with *resurrecting* someone, not the least of which can be viewed

in the politics of nations. While PCs in most campaigns will never reach a level of rulership, they can certainly become involved in the politics that result from it.

Political problems

The funeral bell tolls loudly, declaring that the King is dead. However, a kindly wandering priest, passing into the local temple of his deity, sees the dead body of his lord, whom he has always served faithfully, and resurrects him. What now?

While it is obvious that all sorts of chaos can erupt from such a situation, it should be noted that some places may not be willing to allow their rulers to be *resurrected* for this very reason. Lawful priests, especially lawful neutral ones, will be extremely reluctant to *resurrect* people given circumstances similar to the ones listed above. Nonetheless, in places where this does happen, it should be noted that a number of role-playing situations are created when powerful personages are arbitrarily *resurrected*.

No matter the level of nobility, problems immediately arise. In the example above, the King is *resurrected*. He has been declared legally dead, and the funeral date has been set. Is he still King? Again, the answer is double edged. If he is, and he didn't die of natural causes, those who killed him will certainly want to kill him again. If he isn't King, he may think he is, and attempt to raise an army to take his throne back from the "usurper" who has stolen his throne, even if it's one of his relatives.

The consequence of this doesn't only rest with the King. What about his successor? Surely the royal heir will not be pleased, having been king for a day or more, that the old King is back, and not only is he back, but even though he's legally dead and everyone saw him die, he wants the throne returned to him. Is the new ruler legally obligated to do so? Technically, his predecessor did die, and the rites of succession already have been performed. If one of the parties is evil, as is often the case when such things happen in fantasy campaigns, it should be noted that the situation is comparatively easy to resolve. However, if there is no guilty party, total chaos erupts. The PCs can be hired by one side or the other in such a dispute over royalty to prove that the claims of one side are more legitimate than another. It is likely that factions will break out for and against one or both sides. If factions only break out against one side, and that side happens to be the guy the PCs are supporting; it's time to look for a new stomping ground, or the PCs will more than likely get stomped.

Furthermore, what of nobles' privileges? Does the new ruler have to keep the old ruler in his house while all this frenzied jockeying for power is going on? Who gets to sleep in the master bedroom during this time? (A surefire proof that sometimes little things can escalate into really big

things.) Who gets to wield the family's sword is but one problem among many that will cause both parties no end of angst.

Politics can get worse than this. A civil war could erupt between factions, and many lives could be lost as a result. A predominantly good party might split along the lines of law and chaos on this one, depending on the nature of the occurrence and who knows whom. Even worse, if one of these parties involved should somehow be related to a PC, that PC could be called upon to serve on the side of that individual during the coming crisis, and the PC could feel that the side he is working for is not the side that he should be working for . . . What then? If the PC is working for the successor, then the PC is going against the will of a blood relative, possibly even his father or mother. If the PC is working for the resurrected person, then the PC is insulting his brothers and will wind up fighting them over property rights and land claims. Needless to say, this causes no end of mayhem.

Dead or undead?

Naturally, when dealing with the restoration of life functions, one's thoughts also turn to necromancy and the undead. The question here is simply this: Is becoming an intelligent undead a form of *resurrection*? Some priests will say no, but others might say yes. The question isn't as easy as it initially appears. If becoming an intelligent undead creature is not a form of *resurrection*, then it's more than likely such undead creatures will be destroyed. However, problems can arise, especially in the case of intelligent undead such as spectres, vampires, and liches. While most people will say that these creatures are not alive, a court of law may be forced to acknowledge their existence. If it is capable of testimony in a court, then the being is allowed to bring suit. Imagine, if you will, the following situation:

A group of high-level characters have spent several months tracking down an ancient wizard's treasure hoard. They take everything in the place and leave, having destroyed several powerful monstrous guardians. They return to their home city, only to find the city's constabulary waiting for them. The lich who owned the treasure has brought suit against the PCs for thievery. Worse still, since he has every item catalogued including fees for damages due to the monstrous guardians the PCs destroyed, the PCs may have no choice but to fork over the goods and the appropriate damages, and perhaps spend some time in jail. While most liches are not demented enough to do this, as every lich-hunting high-priest in town might converge upon the courtroom to destroy him. The lich may simply hire a lawyer to present his case, and not appear in court himself. There is no law against representing a client in most medieval societies, especially if that client cannot himself be

present (e.g., vampires, who can only come out at night).

This all boils down to one question. Are undead beings citizens? If they conduct themselves in a manner befitting the citizens of the city or country, there is no reason not to allow them to be. The difference between a lich and an ordinary high-level mage who obeys the laws and restrictions of a large city is that the lich doesn't go shopping at the food market. If a vampire conducts himself civilly and works out an arrangement with the city by which to ameliorate his blood-drinking problem, then he should be granted such status. After all, he'd be the natural suspect if large numbers of vampires suddenly started showing up, and then he wouldn't live much longer, would he? Lastly, this would prove to be a blessing for local authorities. After all, they can claim to have dealt with powerful undead beings without bloodshed, though local priesthoods might be somewhat upset.

One little *helm of opposite alignment* can go a long way. (See Jeremiah Morningmist, the lawful good vampire from FR5, *The Savage Frontier*). This demonstrates that undead don't necessarily have to be evil. Imagine the horror of the PCs as they storm into the vampire's house to slaughter his pets, loot his home, drive a stake through his heart, and are promptly arrested for the murder of a prominent citizen by the constabulary.

Even worse, let's combine this with politics. "The King is undead! Long live the King!" While the undead King is usually evil, this doesn't always have to be the case. Imagine the frustration of a powerful wizard-king when he discovers that his descendants have turned him into a lich! Imagine the shock when the PCs are hired to destroy this powerful being, charge into the throne room, and discover that not only is he supposed to be there, but the PCs have actually been hired by the local assassins' guild to do away with the undead monarch. Imagine that this lich also is of good alignment. It's not so easy for the PCs to slay the vile undead now, is it?

If the undead being has been around for more than a hundred years or so (and he isn't a king), he may claim that he is a loyal servant of his lord, having served faithfully for far longer than the PCs, and demand that they be thrown out of town for harassing him and trying to steal his property.

If the undead being is a citizen, then destroying one is murder. And if destroying one is murder, then the destroyers of the undead being must be brought to justice. If the undead being commits any crimes, he must be brought to justice as well, the law has to work the same for everyone, even the undead. Granted, if a vampire is loose in the city, and he's killing a lot of people, the courts aren't going to be too particular about exactly how the killer is brought to justice. The same thing, however, should apply to normal living

folks (such as PCs).

Is the undead being legally alive or not? And what does this mean for people who are *resurrected*? If a person dies and comes back to life, is he undead? Imagine the PCs' shock as a group of angry townspeople marches on the church where their comrade is being *resurrected* in order to destroy the evil undead being before it can be created. While we know *resurrection* doesn't allow characters to be turned by priests, he can be turned away from doorsteps. People, especially people who saw the character die, should be quite unnerved by his reappearance.

In other words, when you start *resurrecting* people, the lines between living and undead begin to blur. This can be a problem both for PCs and NPCs as they struggle to come to terms with a character's death and subsequent *resurrection*.

Solutions

The attitude toward *resurrection* also can be curbed by careful restrictions, either by the DM or by powerful NPCs. DM methods include, but are not limited to, the following:

Resurrection is able to take place only on the four holiest days of the year, when the stars and planets are in the right conjunction, or in the presence of the most powerful living member of the temple clergy.

It is possible that only certain gods have the capacity to *resurrect* fallen followers. This should not overly concern the PCs, but a DM should carefully consider deity portfolios before casually allowing *resurrection* simply because a deity has access to the Necromantic sphere of spells.

Perhaps the gods only grant *resurrections* if it serves their purposes. This means that instead of getting one quest from the church, the PCs find themselves worthy of two quests: the one the priest assigns, which should be difficult, and the one the god assigns, which should be even more difficult.

Perhaps more importantly from a DM's perspective is the issue of alignment. Deities will not allow characters of different faiths or belief systems to be *resurrected* by their priests. Lawful priests may refuse to *resurrect* people whose *resurrection* will cause a great deal of chaos and mayhem. Chaotic people simply may not want to do it, and that's that! Neutral people may weigh the situation carefully, driving the PCs crazy with their deliberations. Alignment can be a useful tool in limiting the number of *resurrections* that occur.

Some forms of *resurrection* require a thirty-minute ceremony, though rings, rods, and similar devices do not. A lot can happen in thirty minutes. The priest, suffering from a head cold, could have a thunderous fit of sneezing, the spell would be disrupted, the priest would age three years, and no *resurrection* would take place. The enemies of the PCs or the priesthood performing the ceremony

could attack the temple during this time. Just remember the amount of force necessary to circumvent the defenses of a temple whose high priest is at least 14th level. Unless the PCs are very high level, whoever is attacking the temple is going to level them if this attack is to have any degree of success whatsoever. Or, one subtle, well-placed agent could pick a crucial moment to strike.

Secondly, the fact that the priest ages three years when the spell is cast can produce numerous problems for the characters. Very old priests may not wish to cast the spell at all, and even young priests, especially ones who worship deities of youth, strength, health, and other such values, will decline to cast such spells merely for fun and profit. If a thirty year-old human priest has cast 30 **resurrection** spells, then he is in the grave, for humans in the AD&D game can only live for 120 years. If the PCs wish the spell to be cast, perhaps several *potions of longevity* or *elixirs of youth* will be part of the negotiation process.

For the preferred role-playing method when dealing with *resurrection*, examine the government of the area in which the *resurrection* is taking place. Consider the following possibilities.

Monarchy: In a monarchy, *resurrection* either can be subject to the laws of the state, or subject to the whim of the ruler. In the event that *resurrection* is subject to the ruler, the PCs must petition that ruler to allow the priests to *resurrect* their dead friend. If *resurrection* is subject to the laws of the state in addition to paying the temple however much money it is supposed to receive and performing the assigned duties in exchange, there may be some sort of fee payable to the royal exchequer.

Monotheistic theocracy: In a theocracy, it may be illegal to *resurrect* people who are not of the faith. If the PCs are of the faith necessary to have their comrade **resurrected**, they still may have to undergo several tests in order to prove that their faith is strong enough to deserve the **resurrection** of their friend.

Polytheistic theocracy: In a theocracy with multiple deities, religions barter for power over who gets to perform the great miracles. Some priesthoods may resent the fact that their deities or priests do not have the power to do this and may try to undermine the *resurrection* process. Others may wish to go through with the *resurrection* process themselves, ahead of time, against the wishes of both the ruling council and the PCs! If the PC is not of a particular faith, the priests may refuse to *resurrect* him altogether, though altruistic priests and selfish priests surely will make their voices heard in theological debate, and we all know how long those can last.

Oligopoly: In an oligopoly, *resurrection* is going to cost a great deal of money, possibly more than the PCs would have to pay elsewhere, or perhaps a little less if they

can cut a deal. However, especially in high-level campaigns, this can be a problem. When greed is the motivating factor, anything can happen. Not only that, but carrying 100,000 gp or more to a temple is a challenge in and of itself. Unscrupulous priests and thieves will await around every corner, trying to liberate the party's hard won cash that they are using to **resurrect** their fallen ally.

Oligarchy: Since power is diffuse in an oligarchy, a great emphasis is placed upon law and order. As a result, bureaucracy tends to be high. Characters may have to register with the government upon being **resurrected** and have to undergo a series of trials to prove that they are in fact the same person. After all, it could be theft if someone else were to wind up with your possessions after *resurrection*, couldn't it? Characters also may have to pay the state a fee as in monarchies on the grounds that it makes bookkeeping difficult and causes legal confusion.

Plutocracy: In a plutocracy, PCs may have to appease several rulers instead of just one. This can have dire consequences, especially if Plutocrat A doesn't like Plutocrat B. Deities forbid the PC should actually be related to one of the plutocrats, with all-out chaos resulting. Plutocrats will be trying to increase their own personal power at the expense of the others in this situation, so the PCs must be careful not to alienate too many of them.

Obviously, there are other forms of government that are not listed here, but the DM should feel free to handle the situation as she chooses. It should be noted that some governments may not have any restrictions, but most will find *resurrection* problematic in some way or another.

Adventure ideas

1. Death before taxes: A wealthy man with many debts dies right before tax time, and the tax collectors are up in arms. The PCs are hired by the tax collection office to accompany the tax collector to collect the funds. The PCs must protect the tax collector, and attempt to discover any funny business that might be going on.

Scenario: The man was dead, but he's not planning to be for long. Having accumulated a great deal of debts, he killed himself and arranged for a priest with a **ring of resurrection** to be on hand after the tax collectors became frustrated. He also has hired a powerful illusionist to conceal this fact from the PCs, and one illusionist can cause a great deal of confusion. The illusionist and the priest must keep the PCs from discovering that the gentleman is alive, having not expected this final and sudden visit from the tax collector.

2. When in doubt, duke it out!: The PCs are hired by the younger of two brothers, each of whom claim to be the duke of a small province. The elder brother, recently **resurrected**, wants his dukedom back. The

PCs must prove the claims of the younger against the elder.

Scenario: The elder brother should have several powerful bodyguards and people in the castle who are loyal to him. These people will attempt to sabotage the PCs' attempts to prove equally well in reverse, or, as an additional variant, both brothers can hire the PCs to investigate, and both sides will be attempting to sabotage the claims of the other. What fun!

3. The Queen is waiting: The King of a small nation has recently died and been **resurrected**. The Queen of this nation, having no love for her husband, hires the PCs to prove that she is no longer married to her husband, a philandering man with no love for her.

Scenario: The PCs must deal with the King's agents through bribery, stealth, or force. While he could simply marry someone else, it would look very bad for him at this late date were he to have to choose a new wife. In addition, the Queen's family has money and influence, that's why the King married her in the first place, and losing those could be very bad. This scenario can become even more complicated if the Queen falls in love with one of the PCs.

4. Too legit to quit: The Royal Archmage, a fine rotund little figure of a man, dies of a heart attack during a courtly banquet. The PCs, who are present at the banquet, witness his death. Hopefully, they know this archmage from previous contact with the royal household. The king appoints a new royal archmage, whose presence annoys everyone.

Scenario: About a week later, the Royal Archmage comes to the PCs with a problem. She has received notes that present her with two choices: Resignation from her post as royal archmage, or the continuing harassment of nobles and their families. She wants the PCs to discover the source of the trouble. The source of all the trouble is the old court archmage, who had been preparing himself for lichdom and succeeded, though he had not expected to die in quite the manner that he did. The lich wants his old job back, but is not willing to use actual violence to get it. Who do the PCs side with? The snooty new archmage, or the reasonably friendly undead old archmage? Either way, it puts the PCs in quite a nasty little pickle. If the PCs try to attack the lich, he will take the PCs to court. He has, after all, held the post of court archmage for over thirty years before his untimely death.

5. Holy Daze: The PCs take a deceased comrade to a temple of his faith, but the priests at the temple refuse to **resurrect** him, no matter how much the PCs try to get them to do so. The reason, it seems, is that the only priest at this temple capable of casting the spell refuses to do it.

Scenario: The priest is under a powerful curse, and is afraid to admit it to anyone. A long time ago, a priest of an evil religion cursed him so that if he ever tries to **resurrect** anyone, he would go into a coma



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Book Two**

ISBN 1-56076-701-4
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until that person dies again. Remove curse will have no effect, as the curse is a quest spell. The only way to break it is to convince that priest's evil god to do it (unlikely) or to find the priest and convince him to undo it himself.

The priest has foregone his evil ways (unknownst to the PCs) and currently lives in a monastery, atoning for his evil deeds through a life of humble meditation. When the PCs discover his location they will be very surprised and no doubt pleased that he has taken up a life of goodness. Unfortunately, this means that he also has lost the power to remove the curse. The high priest at the monastery is unwilling to cast the spell himself, though he does have a *scroll of resurrection* that he might be able to part with in exchange for some service on the part of either the temple or the PCs, thus getting around the limitations of the curse. If the PCs accept, their return journey they will be attacked by followers of the evil god led by a moderately powerful priest, intent on destroying the scroll and leaving the curse intact.

6. Property of the gods: A PC dies, and the characters take him to a temple of his faith to be *resurrected*. This event occurs in a location where *resurrection* is viewed as a great miracle, and there are several temples that can perform the service and who are willing to. However, the character's body is stolen before the service can

be performed, and the PCs must find out where the body has been taken, what purpose stealing the body serves, and why the body was stolen.

Scenario: The followers of the god of thieves have stolen the body in order to *resurrect* the body themselves and claim the glory of the miracle forthwith (if the god of thieves in your campaign doesn't have the Necromantic sphere, give them a *rod of resurrection* with just enough charges to do the job). The PCs must find their secret base, storm in to retrieve the body of the dead PC, and return it to the proper temple before the thief gods followers *resurrect* the dead PC, which will change the balance of power among the existing churches drastically. If the PCs arrive too late, there's no need for bloodshed, the thieves will simply steal the money from the church the PCs gave it to. This might start a nasty little bit of infighting, which the PCs would probably wind up being involved in as well, and we all know how pleasant holy wars can be.

Role-playing resurrection

In most campaigns, the character dies, is *resurrected*, and life goes on, as though the person had never died. Instead of this cavalier attitude, it should be recognized that there is a lot of role-playing potential in *resurrection*. Death is a traumatic experience, and that experience should come

out in role-playing situations. Even the character's attitude toward combat might change as a result of this highly frightening and sobering experience.

Some characters may act as though they're immortal, having come through the *resurrection* process, they may feel that nothing can kill them, that in fact they are somehow special because they have been *resurrected*. That is, until they are killed again. While people must not necessarily be afraid of death or dying, they should be sobered by whatever killed them, possibly developing a fear of or intense hatred of whatever did so.

Other characters may become remorseful and guilty, missing either the afterlife or the knowledge that their skills were not enough, because that one time, they weren't. Some characters may suffer from a kind of post *resurrection* stress disorder, and become depressed because they cannot cope with the process of coming back to life.

Still others may view themselves as having some form of great destiny that has not yet been completed. After all, if the gods *resurrected* them, there must be a reason and purpose behind their *resurrection* that they currently cannot fathom. Such characters tend to be philosophical and contemplative, waiting only for the day that their destinies will be fulfilled so they can finally rest.

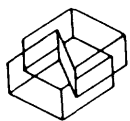
Other characters may become violent and grim, obsessed with eliminating forms of unnecessary and stupid death. Still others may become remorseful over their own perceived inadequacies and retire from adventuring completely (or at least, for a while). The role-playing possibilities are endless.

While not all these methods may be appropriate for your campaign, it certainly does open the field for role-playing some very different kinds of situations. It makes the whole *resurrection* process not only more difficult, but more believable precisely because the process has become more difficult.

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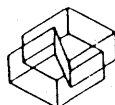
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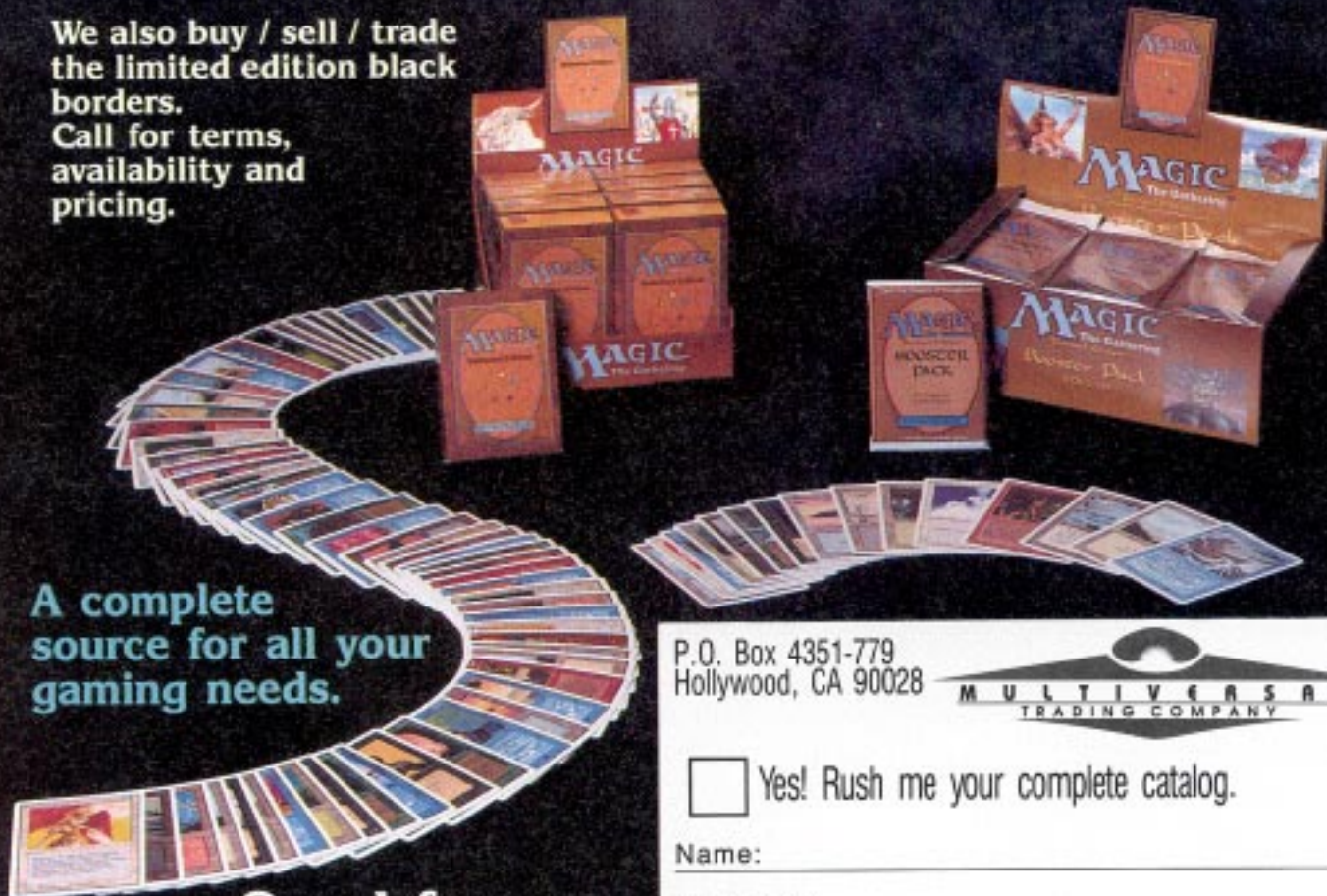
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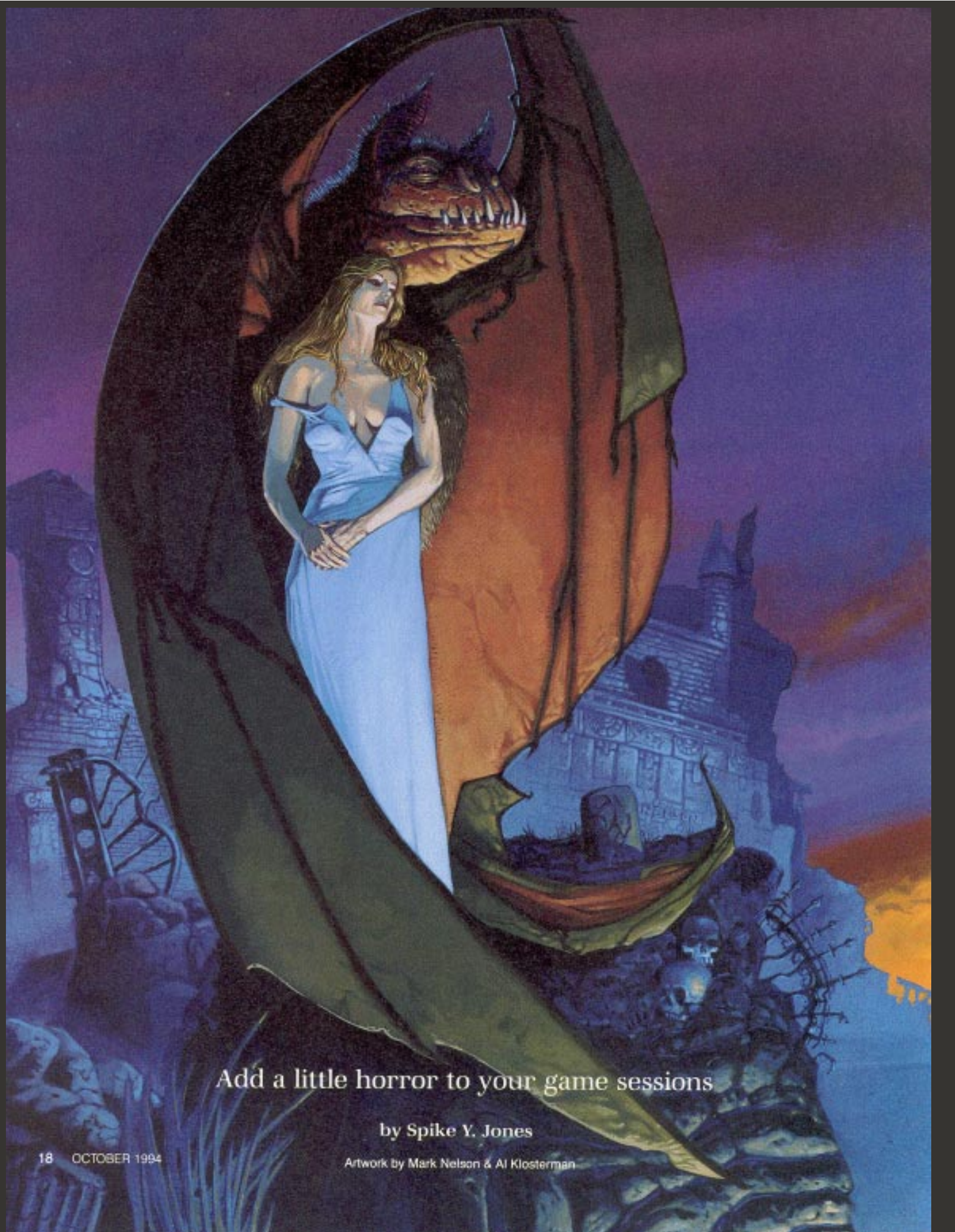
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Add a little horror to your game sessions

by Spike Y. Jones

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WHO'S AFRAID OF THE BIG, BAD GHOST?

Who's afraid of
ghosts in
an AD&D®
game campaign?

Nobody.

At least, not the players in the average AD&D campaign. Oh, they may be anxious about the possibility that their PC will get prematurely aged while fighting the things (and those running nonhumans don't even have that to worry about), but they're not afraid of the ghosts themselves. This lack of fear gets translated into the behavior of the PCs; they treat ghosts (or any other "scary monster") as just another collection of hit points, sometimes with a special power or two, that exists only to be hacked into little ghostly bits.

The reason for this is that without proper preparation and a good delivery (and I don't mean playing by candlelight while wearing dark clothing), there's nothing to make an encounter with a ghoul or ghastr any different from one with a skunk or rust monster. In fact, considering the hit dice and special attacks of skunks and rust monsters, the average character is more likely to run from the latter pair than from either of the "terrifying" monsters. The effect you want to create when running a horrific encounter or a horror game is the one many people remember from camp-fire ghost stories where tension was slowly built up through the course of the story before being released in one big burst that was no less frightening when the cause of all the fear was a harmless white bunny, then if it really had been a ravenous night-haunt.

But all is not lost; by using just a few tricks, one can convince the players that their characters should be afraid, even if what they face is no more substantial than mist in a breeze.

"What do you mean 'nothing happened'?"

It's hard to strike fear in the heart of a character if a PC's "spooky" encounter is presented in the same way as a meeting with a friendly pixie, the city watch, or his girlfriend. Fear (as opposed to the schlock-value of a goalie-masked psycho springing out at you) takes time and the right frame of mind. In many folk-tales, before running into a ghost on a dark and deserted country road, the hero (victim) has a premonition of impending doom. He feels that he's being followed, or that he's being watched, or even something as nebulous as "knowing that something's about to happen" even if he can't tell what it will be. Finally, after his nerves have been stretched almost to their breaking point, the climactic encounter occurs. Sometimes, it turns out that the "ghost" is no more than the hoot of an owl, or a shaft of moonlight shining on a scarecrow in a field, but the effect is still frightening after the build-up its been given. *That's* the sort of effect needed to make horror horrible.

To simulate this in a game, the DM has to

make *the players* as nervous or frightened as *the characters* are supposed to be. What makes most players uneasy is to have things occur within the game that they don't understand and which don't follow the normal pattern of events. An easy one to manipulate is the saving throw. The purpose of a saving throw is to give the characters a chance to avoid impending doom, resist magical attacks, or detect things that otherwise would be hidden from them. Usually, the effects of a save (whether "made" or "failed") are immediately noticeable in the form of characters falling down dead, *fireballs* exploding, or monsters springing out from behind rocks and bushes.

The DM can make a few "phantom" saving throws on behalf of the characters as tension builders, asking the players what they'd need to save against a specific attack form ("polymorph" is a better choice than "spells" as it's rarely used, and therefore more disquieting) and then going through the motions of making secret rolls for them behind the DM's screen. After the roll, he shouldn't tell them whether they were successful; he should just go on as if absolutely nothing had happened.

Deprived of the usual saving-throw information the players might get curious or nervous. The DM shouldn't stop this. When asked if the save was successful, he should merely tell them that "nothing out of the ordinary seems to have happened yet." If asked what the save was against, he should say: "your character thought he (heard/felt/saw/smelled) something, but I guess he didn't." Or you could describe mood-setting results like: "You notice that the birds in the area have stopped singing." Ambiguous or misleading answers have always had their place in a DM's repertoire, and this is a time when they should be used more freely than ever before.

You must be careful though, so that these don't give away too much too soon, leading to a "something's wrong; everyone get their weapons out" response. If the players do have the PCs draw weapons and prepare for an attack after one of these rolls, don't be suckered by them; wait a suitable period and then say that nothing has happened and that the party is getting nowhere standing in the middle of the road. The occasional false alarm lowers the tension level (although not back to its pre-alarm levels) so that you can work on building it up again. Once the journey is under way again, let things get back to normal so that you can lull them back into a sense of security before you jar them out of it again. You don't want to overdo this, though; maybe twice or three times at the most before something really happens to "reward" the players for their indulgence.

On the other hand, if the players become indifferent about the situation because nothing seems to be happening (or, worse yet, they figure out that the saving

throws were fake), throw a couple of real saving throws their way. Ask each player what the Dexterity of her PC is, and then pretend to roll against that number. After going through these motions, announce that a rotten tree falls across the roadway, narrowly missing the slowest member of the group. This will likely convince them that all the other saves were for equally real reasons, and if you're really lucky the players will ask leading questions (such as, "Did we hear any noise in the bushes before the tree fell?") that you can play along with just to heighten their paranoia. ("Come to think of it, you did hear some rustling, but it could have been a small animal or an errant gust of wind.") Whatever it takes to keep the players off-balance is useful.

Don't forget the NPCs and livestock of the party; even if the players and their PCs ignore the strangeness signified by the saving throws, the NPCs shouldn't. The DM should remember that NPCs are bound to be just as uncomfortable as the PCs, probably more so; NPCs should be skittish. So the NPCs (including animals) should demonstrate their nervousness by way of Morale checks. If one check is failed, NPCs are likely to ask for reassurance from the supposedly stalwart PCs, but if there is none forthcoming, or if things just get worse, a second check could result in a rout by some or all the scared NPCs, possibly taking the PCs' horses along with them. If the PCs weren't scared yet, watching their hirelings run off with their equipment may finally get them in the mood.

Another thing that upsets players is when they seem to have no control over a situation. You actually can't take over their characters for them, as that would leave them with nothing to do in the game, but you can take over all of the rules aspects of the game, declaring them to be entirely the DM's purview. In the example of the phantom saving throw, the primary tension is caused by the fact that the players don't know what the roll was for, but there is also a secondary factor; the DM made the saving throws for them. In most AD&D game campaigns, the players make their own attack and damage rolls as well as saving throws, pick-pocket attempts and other miscellaneous rolls. Just the feel of those little polyhedrals of plastic in their hands gives some a sense of comfort and control. So take them away. Declare that you will be making all their attack and other rolls for them in certain situations (this added DM-burden will be a lot easier to perform if you've remembered to write out the PCs' THAC0s and other relevant statistics beforehand), and even try to convince them to put away their own now-useless dice so they won't be distracted by them during the game.

Doing this will have a number of effects on the game. The first is that the player's attention will be more focused on the role-playing aspects of the game than on the dice-

rolling (as they won't have any dice to roll). And secondly, it means that you will have more control of the flow of information from you to them about encounters. Normally, a player knows when he has made a good roll, and will then become suspicious if the DM announces that he has missed his target. In fact, with a number of good rolls, some missing and some hitting, the players usually can determine the exact armor class of opponents, which gives them a bit of specific rules-information they can pin on the monster they face. By removing that source of information, the players are left with only whatever you choose to tell them.

This means that you have a greater responsibility to tell the players *something*. You have control of the information flow, and you must remember to use it. You don't have to be completely honest in what you say, but you have to keep a dialogue going between you and the players to represent the dialogue going on between their characters and the environment that surrounds them.

"But what do we see?"

One of the reasons we humans tend to be afraid of the night is that we can't see as well. We are visually oriented creatures, so limiting or eliminating that information channel makes us nervous. In game terms, this means that if you are going to be giving sensory information to the players, make sure you don't do it in the same old way that they're used to. Descriptions should concentrate on anything but sight if they are to be scary; if the players can visualize their situation, it becomes at least in part comfortable and comprehensible. If they can't, it's automatically strange, and strange can mean upsetting. Instead of saying: "You see a room festooned in cobwebs" say: "You enter a room and you feel something brush against your face and the back of your hand." When a zombie approaches them, don't say that they see a dead body coming towards them, say that they smell a dead body and the smell is getting stronger. Let them hear something paralleling their course through the woods, instead of catching glimpses of it.

And never tell the players everything they sense in one sentence. Separate the data into individual bits of information, first telling them that they hear a noise in the distance, and only later, after at least one player has reacted to the noise, identifying it as the hoot of an owl. If they are receiving information about something from more than one sense, such as the sight and smell of a ghoul, only tell them about one of these sensory inputs at first, and then add the second piece of information a minute later to confirm or deny the players' suspicions.

You don't have to keep all communications open and above board. Certainly, there'll be some things sensed by one PC but not by another. In a normal game, you'd merely announce that one particular member of the group heard a noise, and everyone would automatically assume that

he'd share this information with the rest of the party. But in the fear-tinged atmosphere of a horror adventure, you shouldn't make that sort of assumption.

Occasionally, you should pick a player and write him a note saying that his character has sensed something out of the ordinary, hopefully passing it to him in such a way that the other players don't notice the exchange, and adding a statement that the PC will gain an extra experience point or two if the player doesn't reveal the existence of the note to the rest of the group. The player can of course tell the party what his PC heard, but when you are asked for confirmation, you should just say, "None of the rest of you sensed anything, but that's what he claims to have heard."

You can do this more than once, but you will always have to pass your notes to that same player to keep the rest of the group from guessing what's going on; if each one of them received a similar note, the cat would be out of the bag. Of course, to keep your pigeon cooperating, you must remember to keep the XP bribes coming. Eventually, the rest of the party either will begin to treat him as the conduit for secret information (if you give them the impression that what the note-taker senses is accurate), or as an unreliable "PC who cried wolf" (if you deny publicly everything you reveal to him privately). Either way, it is up to you to decide how accurate the information was in the end, possibly just choosing to take the opposite tack from whatever the party believes.

Another sensory element that has to be remembered is contrast. To emphasize the cold and damp of the fog-shrouded moors at night you should start the adventure in a comfortable and warm environment, such as the ubiquitous inn and then somehow draw the party away from their comfort. Remember to work multi-sensory descriptives of the inn into the introductory portion of the adventure so that there'll be something for the characters to compare the night terrors to.

You also should make use of other foreshadowing elements in this pre-adventure setting. If the night's adventures are going to include encounters with wolves (or werewolves), make sure you casually mention a friendly old hound-dog lying next to the inn's fireplace. When the PCs leave the inn, have the hound-dog howl in a way that makes the characters think of wolves. If the encounter will be with a vampire, draw the players' attention to their blood early by having one of the PCs accidentally cut a finger while eating supper, describing the way he puts it into his mouth to clean off the blood before applying a bandage. Then have one of the NPCs in the inn make a joke about "the vampires among us."

Speaking of NPCs, have one of the NPCs in the party (a henchman or hireling) grumble about how much nicer it was at home (think of a Tolkien hobbit on an

adventure). When things get rougher and scarier, the NPC should remember reasons why he should return to the inn immediately (an excuse for another Morale check), or even reasons why the PCs should be going home.

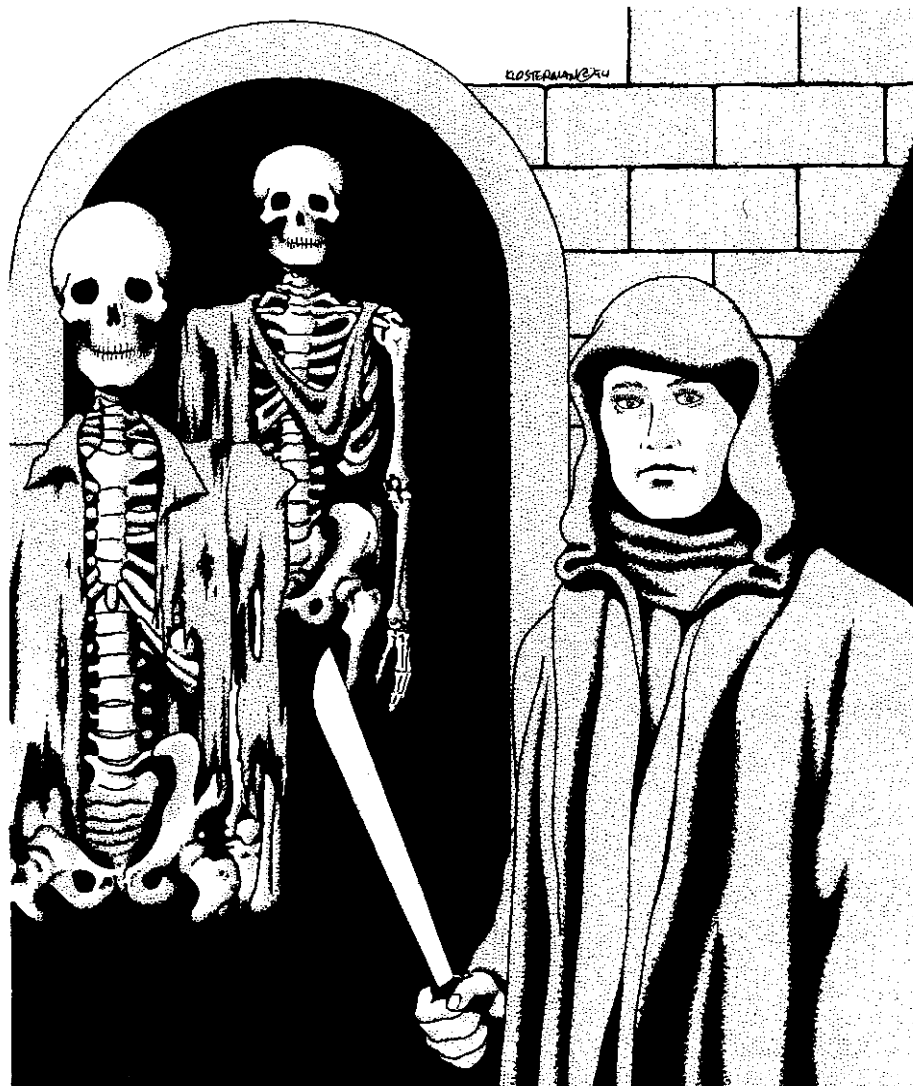
A variation on this involves the party getting delayed on a journey, leaving them to decide whether they want to travel at night to reach their destination or set up camp in the wilderness for safety's sake. No matter which they choose, the NPCs can argue that the other course of action sounds safer, and either one can be the setting for a ghost story. Even if the party has travelled on this road before, it's important to remember that a place that is objectively the same by day and night, is subjectively quite different, as the NPCs will be quick to point out.

One bit of preparation you can do a day or two before the game is to sit on your front porch through twilight and into the night noting what things are different at night. Besides the light-levels, that is (there's vision again). There's lots of inconsequential things you can point out to build on the players' paranoia if you notice them. Little things like the change from day birds and insects calling to night birds and insects. Or the fact that flights of

birds are replaced by flights of bats at twilight. Distances become deceptive, and even normal sounds are strangely amplified, muted, or distorted so that a coyote howling a mile away can sound like it's only a few yards away in the woods (if the players are kind enough to provide you with a supposition ("Have we heard any rumors of werewolves?") indulge them. ("Now that you mention it, one or two might have crossed your ears.") Moonlight washes out colors, which can explain away the pale appearance of some of the almost-normal undead types like vampires or spectres, and which brings us to the actual appearance of the ghostie.

"Suddenly . . ."

Unlike the average AD&D game session in which the player characters are going to slay monsters by the dozens over the course of the evening, in a proper horror setting, all the night's activities are going to be directed at a few key encounters. For sure, there may be a few preparatory confrontations along the way, but such fights should be both limited and planned; rolling for random wilderness encounters just adds unnecessary clutter to the game (although you can pretend to make such a roll before presenting a preplanned en-



counter; who says the players have to know what's going on?). You always should keep in mind what the climactic encounter of the evening will be, and direct events towards that eventuality (such as having minor skirmishes with wolves or stirges in preparation for a major battle with a vampire).

Still, if the ghost story is to culminate in the attack of some monster, the temptation is to build everything up to a climax and then have the beastie spring out of the woods. While this may be fine in some cases, we were trying to be more subtle and psychological here.

Some monsters, like vampires and spectres, can pass for living creatures in the right light (or lack of it). While the latter is unlikely to consciously take advantage of this, if one confuses a vampire for a live man, the vampire will exploit the error as much as possible. In either case, by the time the party discovers that the "frightened, fellow traveler" (an example of the sort of thing a DM can introduce as another NPC to play scared with even if the traveler isn't a vampire in disguise) is dead, it may not be long before they join him.

Vampires prefer to act subtly, using charming to isolate victims from witnesses, possibly carrying out the deception over the course of hours before being discovered. In another example of fore-

shadowing and irony, a vampire in disguise might even introduce the topic of vampires into a conversation, in order to determine how knowledgeable and prepared to deal with him the party will be when the time comes. Subtle undead act subtly, carefully picking targets, possibly even "shadowing" the group for a while to scout them out. These sorts try tactics such as picking off stragglers at the back of the party or quickly taking out advance scouts if they make the mistake of getting out of sight of the main party.

In such a situation, it is important to co-opt the isolated player to keep the tension level up in the session. If the PC is overwhelmed, charmed, or in some other way removed from the action, don't tell everyone at the game that this has happened. Pass the affected player a brief note telling him the situation, and offer him bonus experience points if he can convincingly pretend that nothing is out of the ordinary (of course, this offer will be received much more favorably if his character was only incapacitated, and not killed); after all, you're in a role-playing game, and he'll just be doing a little extra role-playing. If anyone else sees you passing your note to him, make up a fake note (saying something like, "You think you hear a noise, but no one else seems to have noticed it"), just to keep them from guessing that only one

player is getting any extra attention.

If you still want to do a "suddenly" scene, don't have the monster rush the party; switch it around to make it an action on the part of the PCs that triggers the monster's attack. Banshees and ghosts for example prefer to let their victims come to them, standing or sitting with their backs to the party until the PCs come well within range, and then suddenly spinning around to get the first attack in. While the party approaches, the CM should be reassuring them with statements that make it seem that everything is normal: "You see an old woman sitting by the roadside" as opposed to "You see a banshee waiting for you to get into range." It must be remembered that many ghosts and other revenants spend their noncombat time rerunning scenes from their past life, so going through the motions of domestic activities, or even bizarrely reenacting their own death ("You hear a woman's scream from off in the woods.") are more likely to occur than the traditional "waiting for the party to arrive" scene.

If your players are the sort that would attack an old woman by the side of the road at night just on principle, you'll have to break them of this habit before you can use this sort of encounter to its best effect. Try presenting them with just that sort of encounter a few sessions in advance, and after they kill the woman they suspect of being a banshee, have her turn out to be a normal farmer's wife just out for a walk after a fight with her husband. Then have them meet the woman's enraged husband trying to kill them in revenge. Or, if your players are the type who would kill the husband as quickly as the wife, have him appear leading a posse, demanding their arrest and due compensation for their crime. If you get the players into the habit of thinking that some encounters don't have to be deadly ones, they'll be more likely to be taken off-guard by the ones that are.

"But it can't do that!"

Many players own copies of the MONSTROUS MANUAL™ tome, and those who don't often have experience with various undead creatures from other game sessions and campaigns. Once these players know their PCs are fighting a spectre, for instance, the wonder goes out of the encounter and they immediately open the books or sift through their memories to come up with as many details of spectre behavior as they can, so that they can most effectively defeat it. Then the encounter reverts to the usual hacking and slashing.

But what if the players never manage to figure out exactly what type of undead terror they are facing? What if your campaign's spectres don't behave exactly the same way as "book" spectres? At first the players are likely to be confused, but when they realize that they don't know how to fight this type of "mystery undead,"



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they may actually begin to fear for the future of their characters. And that's just the sort of reaction we were trying to establish back at the start of this article!

Your variant monsters shouldn't be all that different, with extra attacks, spell use, and the like. Minor changes like a special effect that accompanies them (e.g., if it's windy, the wind dies in the spectre's vicinity; if it's calm, the wind picks up) will be enough to disturb the players without making them think that it's a different creature entirely. Changes also should be in line with the power level of the monster; changing a vampire's charming power to a paralyzing touch is not a drastic change, but adding such a "ghoul touch" to a skeleton more than doubles the effective strength of that monster, creating a brand new monster instead of making an old standard less predictable.

Another important element of such changed or added powers is that it's best if they're not obvious powers. If you give a ghastr the powers of a permanent *burning hands* spell, the players will react to it as just another combat element to be countered. But if the ghastr is given a more subtle or invisible ability, such as ESP: *charm*, or *suggestion* powers, it will be able to make use of it for some time before the players even notice that the ghastr has this special power, and when the truth is eventually discovered, it will be that much more shocking. For higher level horrors, effects like *magic jar* can be substituted for level drain to equally good effect. An interesting special effect to add to a strength or level drain would be a *reduce* spell (the reverse of *enlarge*) that decreases the victim's size by 10% at the same time as it drains one point of his Strength or one level; it doesn't increase the power of the drain much, but the visual effect is frightening (especially with an appropriately graphic description).

Even changing the way you describe the monster can make the players think they are facing a novel creation. With the proper build-up and just a little bit of exaggeration in the descriptions, a zombie can be turned into a lich in the eyes of a frightened party, forcing them to use up a good number of their valuable and powerful spells destroying this menace before the real lich enters the scene. If you avoid using the actual name of the creature facing the PCs, even if the players think they have guessed what it is and have started using the name amongst themselves, there will always be some doubt in their minds about what they are actually fighting; a "ghost" is something specific they can fight against, but an "eerie translucent spirit" could be one of a number of different monsters, some benign and some positively deadly. And if you never actually use the word "lich" in the description of your zombie, the players won't even be able to accuse you of cheating when the truth is revealed.

The subtlety that a vampire exhibits while stalking his prey doesn't have to end at the moment the first sword is swung.

Remember, even after throwing off his disguise, the vampire who until recently has been almost a part of the party can still speak with them. During a one-minute combat round, there is plenty of time for the give-and-take of dialogue as well as the regular give-and-take of attacks, and a vampire who has grown to know his opponents will take advantage of this, trying to convince them to give up, playing on their fears, making the fight more frightening by describing exactly what he'll do to his victims when they lose, or even taunting them cruelly with descriptions of the homes and loves they will never again see if they should fall to him. The fighting itself can go on as it normally would, but it will be made all the more horrible by the need to counter the vampire's suggestions and taunts between sword-blows.

"Can we do that again?"

If your horror session was a real success, the players will enjoy themselves as much as you do, and they'll probably ask you to do it again some time. But it will be difficult to pull the same trick on them twice. So if you want to do it, you've got to start building the framework for the surprise from the moment they ask.

Instead of blithely agreeing to have another scary session next weekend, tell your players that you had something else planned for the next little while and that, while you might eventually do another horror run, you won't be doing it for at least a couple of months.

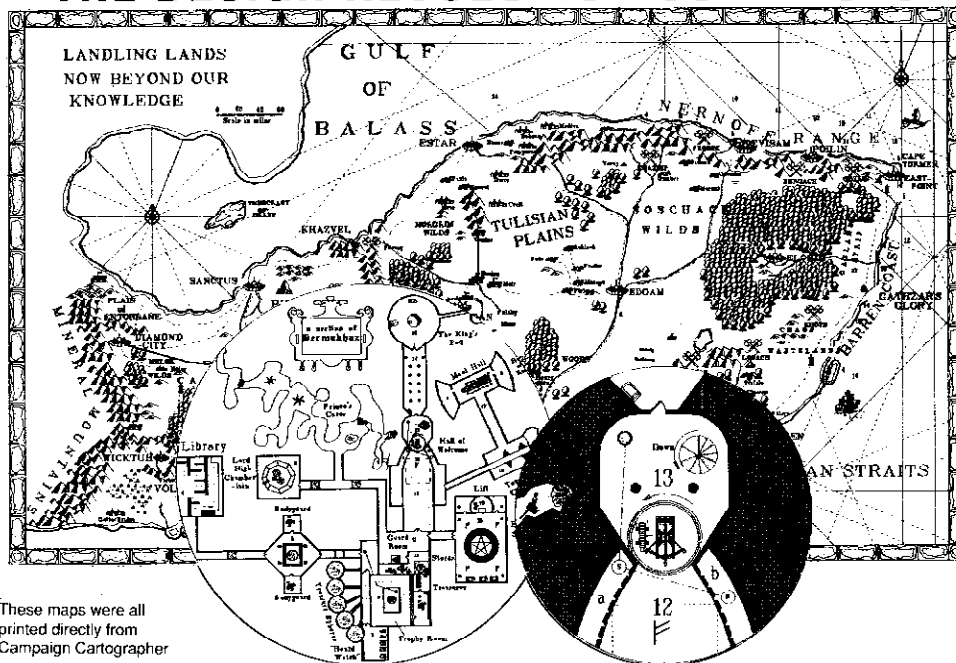
Now you can go back to your normal style of gaming, hoping to lull the players back into their old routine. In order to dull their reactions, you can recycle some of the tricks you used in the scary session, but don't have them lead to horror. For instance, use some "phantom saving throws" in a game but give them some other explanation besides tension-building (like a thief picking their pockets, or an invisible magical effect) so the connection between the "phantom rolls" and the scary game becomes less clear. Once the horror session has become just one memory among others, it will be time for you to start on the next one.

Reference

In an article in *DRAGON*® issue #162, Bruce Nesmith had a number of other suggestions for running horror adventures, especially suited to RAVENLOFT® campaigns, but also useable in the standard AD&D campaign. Other sources of horror ideas are, of course, the RAVENLOFT boxed set and supplements, as well as the horror books of other game systems, such as Steve Jackson Games' *GURPS Horror**, Mayfair's *CHILL**, or White Wolfs *VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE** games.

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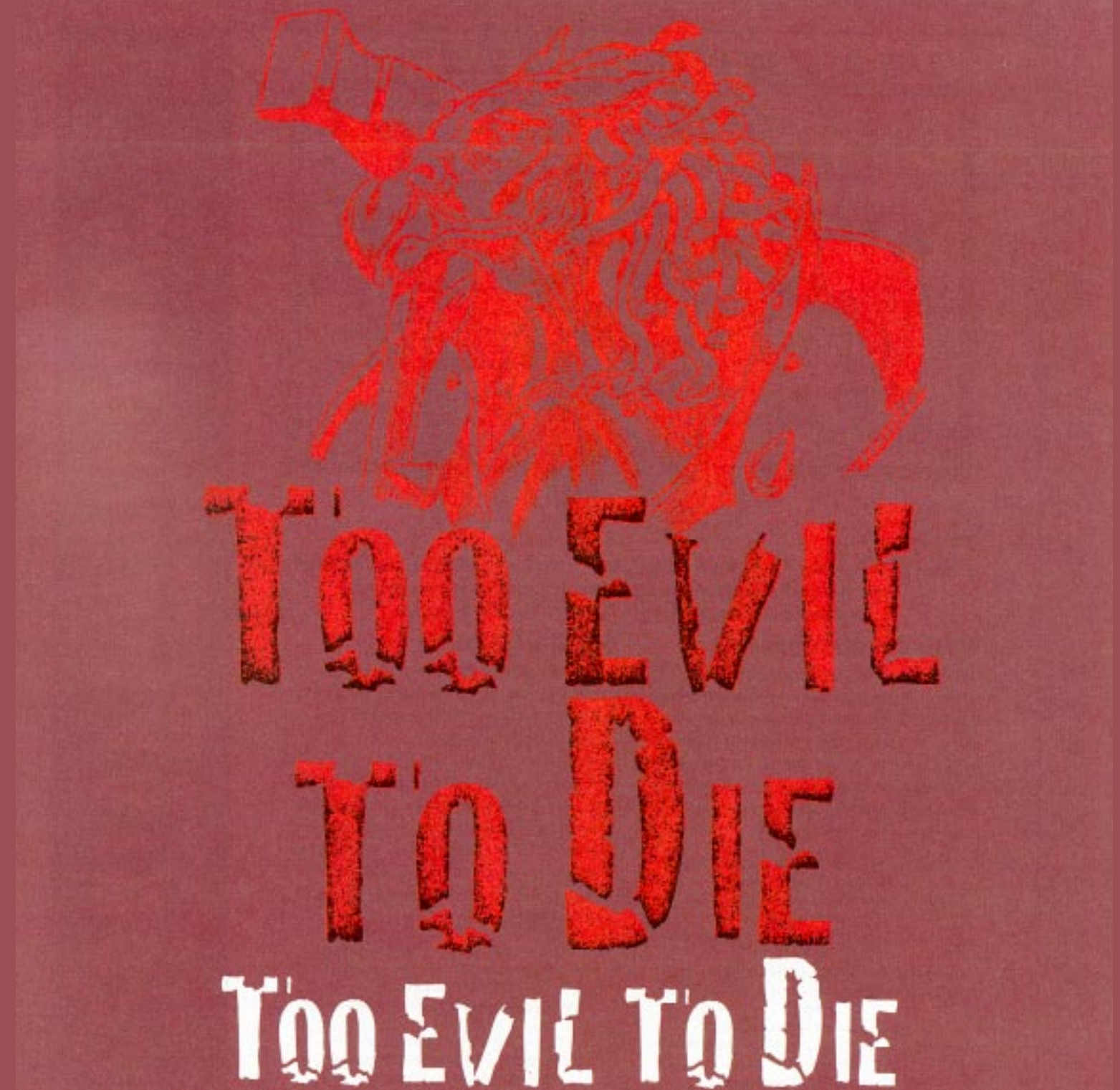
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TOO EVIL TO DIE

TOO EVIL TO DIE

This is the fifth article on the basic undead (those appearing in the original AD&D game's Monster Manual). The articles have been printed irregularly in DRAGON® Magazine's Halloween issues over the years and include: "Hearts of Darkness" (#126), "The Ungrateful Dead" (#138), "Out of the Shadows" (#162), and "Beyond the Grave" (#198). "Too Evil to Die" covers the last three types of undead: the spectre, ghost, and the lich. The undead variants described herein are among the most powerful of the undead.

Background and variants for the spectre, ghost, and lich

by Tom Moldvay

Artwork by Jim Holloway

Spectre

Spectre is the British spelling for specter. It is not a monster based on traditional lore, but one that was made up specially for the game. The word "spectre" is defined as: "a ghost, an apparition, any object of fear and dread."

R. Campbell Thompson, in *The Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia*, states that: "The Ekimmu was the departed spirit of a dead person unable to rest, which wandered as a spectre over the earth. If it found a luckless man who had wandered far from his fellows into haunted places, it fastened upon him, plaguing and tormenting him until such time as a priest should drive it away with exorcisms."

Mr. Thompson likewise translates two ancient tablets referring to the ekimmu. The first describes how the ekimmu comes forth, the second provides a further description and gives a protective incantation against them:

*The gods which seize (upon man)
Have come forth from the grave;
The evil wind-gusts
Have come forth from the grave.*

*To demand the payment of rites
And the pouring out of libations,
They have come forth from the grave;
All that is evil in their hosts,
Like a whirlwind,
Have come forth from the grave.*

*Spirits that diminish heaven and earth,
Spirits that diminish the land,*

*Of great strength and giant tread,
Demon-like, raging bulls, great ghosts,
Ghosts that break through all houses.
They grind the land like corn;
Knowing no mercy.*

*They rage against mankind:
They spill their blood like rain,
Devouring their flesh and sucking their veins.
Great Naba*: Invoke the ban against them,
That they no more return to this neighborhood.
By Heaven be ye exorcised!
By Earth be ye exorcised!*

* Nabu was the ancient Babylonian god of writing and wisdom, the son of Marduk and Sarpanitu. As scribe of the tablets of destiny, he would be an appropriate god to which to pray to alter the fate of the ekimmu so that the monster no longer raged against its victim.

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

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

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

Ekimmu

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Ruins & wilderness

FREQUENCY: Very rare

ORGANIZATION: None

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Prefers night

DIET: Carnivore

INTELLIGENCE: Semi-intelligent

TREASURE: 25% F

ALIGNMENT: Any evil

NO. APPEARING: 1-4

ARMOR CLASS: -6

MOVEMENT: 12

HIT DICE: 8

THACO: As per victim

NO. OF ATTACKS: As per victim

DAMAGE/ATTACK: As per victim

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Possession

SPECIAL DEFENSES: None

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

SIZE: L

MORALE: Fearless (20)

X.P. VALUE: 2,000

Ekimmu are undead spirits that hate humans (and demihumans) and seek only to wreak havoc and destroy their victims. The ekimmu themselves were once humans. The ekummu died far from home and were not given proper burial rites. Those unfortunates who were good or neutral merely bemoan their fate, seeking proper burial. Those unfortunates who were evil became undead to satisfy their hatred and destroy anyone fortunate

enough to be living.

Note that, if the characters can find the remains of the ekimmu, and give it proper burial, the ekimmu will cease plaguing its victims.

An ekimmu appears as a bull-headed, spectral humanoid nearly 10' tall. It thus looks a bit like a ghostly minotaur. An ekummu may be *invisible* until it attacks. If *invisible*, however, its presence will still be felt as a ghastly wind carrying the charnel stench of the grave.

Combat: The ekimmu does not attack physically, at least not directly. The monster has one desire: to inhabit a physical body again. Thus, it seeks to possess the body of a character. If the victim fails its save versus spells then that individual becomes possessed. The ekummu will then seek to wreak havoc on the rest of the party, attacking as if it were the possessed character.

Note: In their mindless fury, ekimmu are classed as "semi-intelligent" so DMs may wish to limit the intelligent use of spells by ekimmu in possession of a spell-caster's body.

An ekimmu has no care whatsoever for the body it possesses. In fact, the ekimmu will do its best to get that body killed. When in possession of a body the ekimmu will only take one point of damage for every two points of damage taken by that

body. It is thus possible, but difficult, to dissipate the ekimmu (i.e., reduce it to 0 hp) without killing the possessed host. If so, the possession ends and the victim returns to normal (retaining any damage taken until cured). It also is possible that the host body will be slain, leaving the ekimmu with hit points. In that case, the ekimmu will leave that body and seek to possess another victim. The ekimmu will continue attacking until all the characters are dead, or it is dissipated.

Even in possession of a body, the ekimmu retains many special undead powers. It is immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, *paralysis*, and cold-based spells and poison. It will take 2d4 points of damage from holy water, but so will the possessed victim. The most effective spell against the ekimmu is a *holy word* spell.

If an ekimmu seeks to possess a character's body, and the character makes its save versus spells, then that character is immune to further possession attempts by that particular ekimmu. Another ekimmu may attempt possession. Likewise, the ekimmu can try to possess another character.

In its natural form, the ekimmu has little physical substance, hence its low armor class. When in possession of a victim the ekimmu has the same armor class as the victim.

A cleric has the same chance to turn an ekimmu as she does a vampire.

Note: A group of ekimmu can be especially deadly. In gaming, it was found that few things were more deadly to the characters than the characters themselves. A DM may want to take special care in an encounter with multiple ekimmu.

Habitat/Society: Ekimmu are mainly solitary. Ekimmu may, however, band together to better vent their hatred. Ekimmu are more likely to band together under circumstances where several of them died in the same place at the same time. Ekimmu have no real society.

Ekimmu are most likely to be found in wilderness areas where no one has discovered their remains and given them proper funeral rites. Ruins and isolated caverns are among the favorite lairs for ekimmu. Ekimmu prefer to remain reasonably close to the spot where they died, but they are not limited to such a spot, and may sometimes roam at will. If so, the ekimmu usually will return to the spot of its death every few days. Seeing its unburied remains serves to rekindle the anger and hatred of the ekimmu.

Ghost

Like the spectre, the ghost largely was made up for the game. Ghosts are, however, more strongly rooted in legends and folklore. Ghost tales, and ghost stories, have been part of our heritage for as long as people have spoken. The first ghost story was probably told around a fire using rudimentary language supplemented by hand signs. Down through the ages



ghosts have continued to fascinate us. One interesting ghost story, which was inspired an undead monster, is entitled: "The Bloody Stones of Kerrigan's Keep." The version given here was recounted by James Reynolds in his book: *Ghosts in Irish Houses*.

In the year 1360, Roe Kerrigan, chief of the tribe bearing his name, built a towering fortress on a bare cliff top overlooking the sea near Moycullan in Connaught. It was a mighty keep that no man alive could breach. It took ten years to build, and was a wonder to all who beheld its strength. It came to be a scourge as well.

For fifty years comparative quiet reigned at Kerrigan's Keep, as the place was called. Then Roe's son, Anair, married a Darty woman, the daughter of Liam Darty, King of Leinster. Marra Darty, now Marra Kerrigan, was a bold, ambitious woman who sought power and cared not how she gained it.

It did not take Marra long to lay her plans. One night Kerrigan men, heavily armed and led by no less a person than Marra Kerrigan herself, crept by stealth across the walls of the O'Conahey defense. All who contested her were put to the sword.

This was only the beginning. Farm after farm was despoiled by Kerrigan men-at-arms. Driven by an insatiable lust for power, Marra attacked and overwhelmed a score of castles. She pillaged as far south as Ballylongford in Limerick.

Over the years, Marra sorted her gains and reared a family. Yet she was not content. Once more the banner of the Kerrigans, which displayed a stalking leopard, orange with crimson spots, was on the march.

One fair spring morning Marra Kerrigan, astride a great roan stallion, rode to battle. Under her steel cuirass she wore a full-skirted white-wool surcoat. Her raven-black hair was hidden under a small, uncrested helm. Marra was armored for fighting, not for show.

Five thousand men bore arms behind her, one thousand horse and four thousand foot soldiers. They were bound for Castle Kelso on the Lough Rea near Killreekill. The castle was the home of her mortal enemy Ordlin O'Downey, chief of the O'Downey tribe.

One night as they neared enemy territory, Marra Kerrigan bid her son and second-in-command Ailor, find a suitable encampment. He, in turn, told an aide to find a campsite. In the darkness of night, the aide, tired and hungry, choose the first piece of treeless ground he came upon. The campsite chosen was at the fringe of the Bog of Bealaclogga. Once in it, there was no way out for the Kerrigans but ahead.

Ordlin O'Downey had not been idle. He had sent messengers far and wide to rouse the countryside against the Kerrigans.

Many of the clans of the west country joined the white heron banner of the

O'Downeys. A purple lion on a red background signified the O'Harras. The O'Boylans marched under the device of a sapling larch tree. The MacCarricks sported a banner with a mailed fist grasping a flaming arrow. The O'Malleys fought under their golden watchtower banner. Lesser chiefs joined the alliance: McDuvan, O'Hagan, O'Conran, and, youngest of all, O'Mahoney Mor.

In the hours of the eerie dawn Marra's men awoke to a grim surprise. Enemy soldiers attacked from all sides. Men and armor seemed to rise like spectres from the soggy ground. Bugles blew through the clinging mist. Arrows rained down as if from heaven itself. Bright banners tangled with spears and swords. Such was the Battle of Bealaclogga Bog.

The ferocity of the battle knew no bounds. When the sun broke through the mist, at high noon, the proud army of Marra Kerrigan lay slaughtered, half drowned in the bog, slashed to ribbons. Among the dead was Marra Kerrigan herself.

As she had lain dying, with the battle still raging around her, Marra had watched as two of her sons, Ailor and Brodon, were slain defending her. Marra had then traced, in her own blood, four words that were to travel down the years like thunder. In those four words, her last will, Marra spoke a doom worse than her own.

Avenge me

Never cease

The years passed. Marra Kerrigan's third son, Dulin, now ruled the Keep. Outwardly a mild-mannered man, Dulin was too much his mother's son ever to forget the words traced in her blood on the hem of the ragged surcoat that he kept hanging behind his chair in the great hall. Dulin, however, bided his time.

There came a day when Ordlin O'Downey, now an old man close to ninety years of age, was journeying by litter, accompanied by a small retinue of men-at-arms, and a few women of his household, to Inchiquin near Moycullan. He planned to visit his daughter who had married the Baron of Inchiquin.

When Ordlin passed near Kerrigan Keep he found that seasonable floods had torn away the bridges to Inchiquin. He accepted the hospitality of the Kerrigans to wait until the bridges were repaired. Wars between the tribes O'Downey and Kerrigan were over and done with these many years, and, by Ordlin at least, forgotten.

On the second night of Ordlin's stay a banquet was held in the great hall to celebrate the birthday of Cullen, the eldest son of Dulin Kerrigan. O'Downey attended along with his followers who, all told, men, women, and children, numbered more than one hundred.

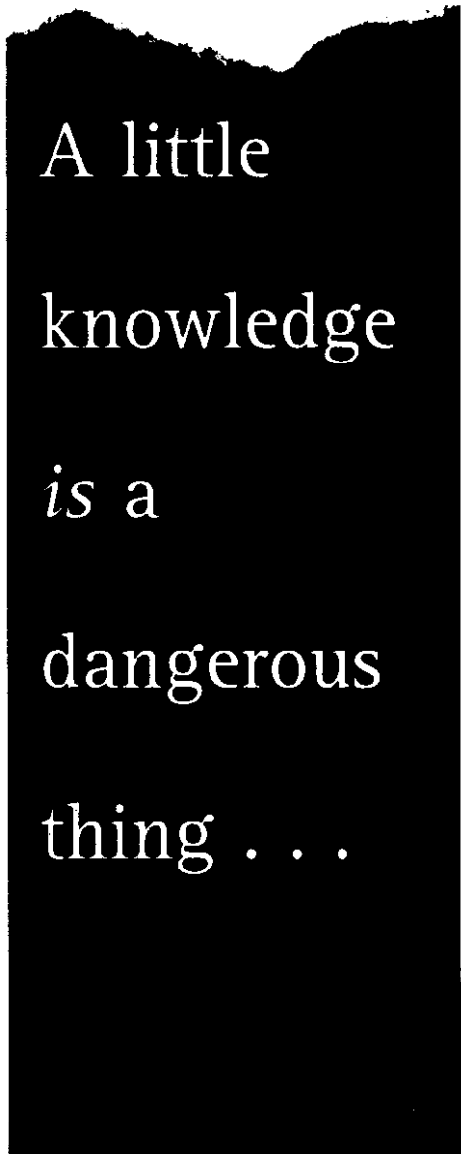
The banquet proved a veritable feast, with pink salmon from the River Finn in

Donegal; spiced flesh of the wild boar, roasted before their very eyes; and mounds of sugared fruits and fresh cream. When the meal was finished jugglers entertained the assembled crowd.

As it neared midnight the jugglers withdrew. Ordlin O'Downey arose to leave. His old bones cried for rest. As he turned toward the door leading to the staircase it banged shut, and he heard the sound of iron bars falling into place.

Unknown to Ordlin O'Downey, Kerrigan's Keep had been built with one peculiarity. The huge pillars, nearly eight foot square, were hollow, large enough to hold a half dozen men-at-arms. Secret doors in these pillars now opened, and Kerrigan soldiers rushed out to attack.

The massacre that took place that night in the great hall of Kerrigan's Keep wiped out every man, woman, and child of the hundred-odd souls who had come in the train of Ordlin O'Downey. Through all this terrible blood-letting, Dulin sat hunched in his carved chair. He sat as a man hewn of rock. The only sign that he saw what took place was the continuous mumbling of his lips. Over and over he repeated the same words: "Avenge me—never cease. Avenge me—never cease."



A little
knowledge
is a
dangerous
thing . . .

In such a manner was Marra Kerrigan's last wish fulfilled by her son.

Behind the great hall the Kerrigan had started to build a vast room. No one knows what use it had been intended for. Dulin Kerrigan found a new use for it. The room was tall and narrow and had no windows save for small slits high up under the eaves. It was in this room that Dulin Kerrigan hastily buried the bodies of the slain O'Downeys. The floor stones of the room were raised, the bodies buried in the ground, then the stones were laid back in place. The room was finally sealed up.

There comes a long blank now in the history of Kerrigan's Keep. Certainly, though, after the massacre the Kerrigans ceased to prosper.

Then, in 1600, one hears of a member of the family, one Connard Kerrigan, to whom the estate reverted in default of a direct heir. This man, by all accounts, was interested in architecture. It was he who put up the Renaissance doorway in the wall of the Keep where, in Marra Kerrigan's time, the portcullis yawned. The irony of this Renaissance doorway is that Connard was the first man to charge headlong through it, after encountering the Bloody Stones. Heedless, in his raving state, Connard plunged straight over the cliff into the Lough of Liscannor below. After a few more unfortunates had run screaming through this classic doorway,

the natives in the surrounding villages started calling it the "Madman's Door."

Years after Connard, came a Darty descendant, in 1730. This man cared only for books and shut himself away in one of the towers. One day he came across a old, mildewed document pertaining to the Kerrigan-O'Downey feud and which must have contained some reference to the graveyard room.

Curiosity overcame this Michael Darty. He hired a workman who was a new-comer to the locality and a scoffer to boot. The workman set about removing the stones that sealed the door leading from the great hall to the strange, vacant room. The man removed the stones one by one setting each carefully aside in case the door had to be sealed up again. Then he started down the stairs into the dark chamber. A roaring noise and a crashing, as if a hundred stones were hurled against the wall, reverberated through the castle.

When the man had crawled back up the stairs, only to die just inside the great hall, he was found to have marks of bloody hands all over his body. He had been beaten almost to a pulp, and the marks of great flat stones could also be traced on his battered flesh. Because the workman died almost immediately, it was never learned what he had seen in the haunted room. When someone braver than the rest peered down into the void below the

stairs, every stone was in place as it had always been since the day Dulin Kerrigan's men had tamped them down on top of the O'Downey dead.

It was a year after this occurrence that a devastating fire swept through the living quarters of the castle. Michael Darty was burned to death in his bed.

In 1802, Fitz-Allen Darty inherited the Keep. Fitz-Allen was a sportsman and wanted none of the grim feudal barracks with the bloodiest history on record. He built another house to live in, a mile away, called Kerrigan's Acre.

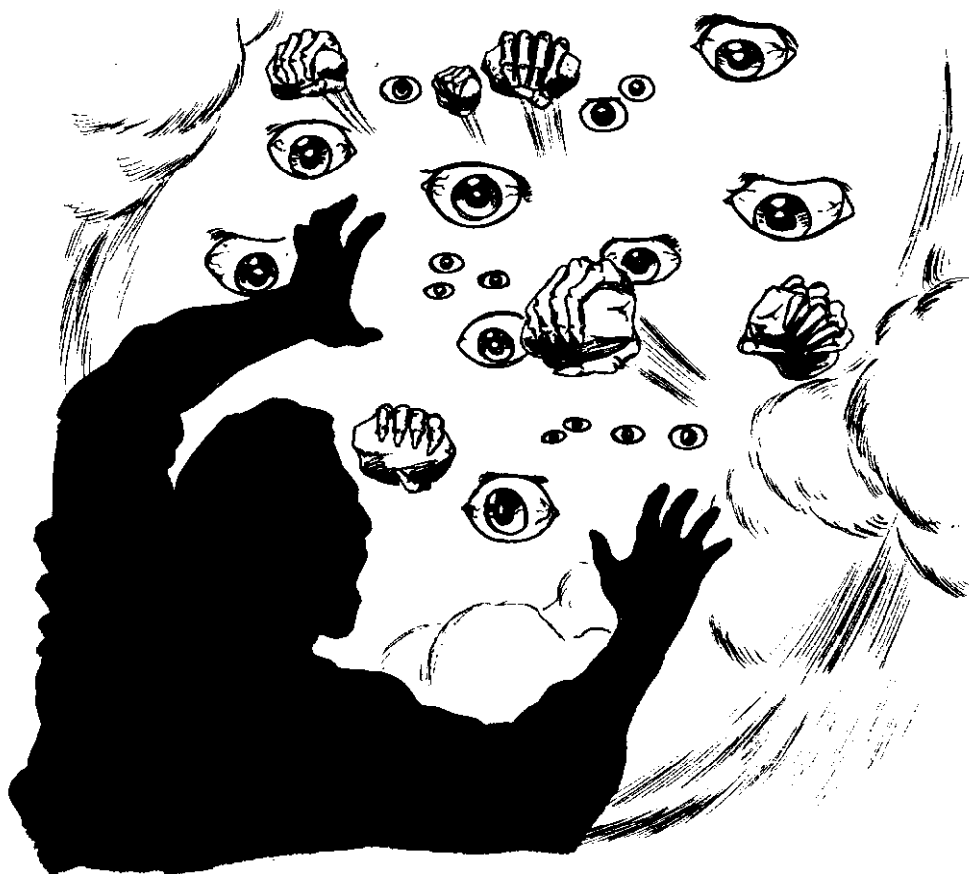
A few months after Fitz-Allen Darty established himself in his new house, the hunting season opened. Among the guests was a young Britisher, an officer in the Coldstream Guards. His name was Hambelton. The night after his arrival, someone brought up the subject of the frightful doings in the sealed room at the Keep. Hambelton not only laughed at, but derided, the whole story. He declared he would go down the fatal stairs into the room, look about, and prove for all time that the ghost-haunting was all an old wives' tale and errant poppycock.

Next day at sunset a group of six men gathered in the great hall of Kerrigan's Keep. The door was breached by crow-bars. When the stones were removed, a dark rectangle gaped in the wall. A fetid odor, as of carrion long unburied, rose up in gusts from the dark room below. Wrapping a cloth around his mouth and nostrils, Hambelton made ready. Lighting a little lamp, he turned and waved gaily to his friends. Silently they watched the young guardsman start down the stairs to the noisome room.

For a few minutes the motionless watchers heard nothing but the sound of Hambelton's footsteps receding on the stairs. Then a most appalling noise rose in waves from below—a low rumble of moans, then inarticulate voices, gabbling, as if smothered under earth and stones, a hundred voices of the murdered crying for vengeance. Next came the deafening clamor of stones being hurled against the wall. Some seemed to crash together in mid-air, for sparks flew in at the door. There seemed to be one concentrated volley of stones, followed by a silence one could cut with a knife. The watchers ran toward the door and looked down. All was in darkness, for the lamp lay flattened on the stones. What they did see was the cruelly mangled body of Hambelton lying halfway up the stairs. He still lived, for his hands groped feebly toward the lighted door.

Hambelton lived for ten days after his gruesome experience. Nearly every bone in his body was broken, and huge purplish welts covered him. Only the amazing vitality of his strong heart enabled him to talk at all. This is his story.

As he started down the long curving flight of stone stairs he sprayed the ray of light from his lamp along the walls and floor of the stone room. Halfway down the



stairs, he saw what appeared to be the stones of the floor heaving, undulating, like an oily swell rolling in from the outer sea. He tried to cry out, to call the attention of his friends above, but all sound froze in his throat. Then the stones seemed to rise up on end. Eyes, eyes, eyes, blazing eyes, everywhere, were leveled balefully at him. Great skeletal hands with earth-stained rags still clinging to the bones lifted from the ground. Each hand held a flat stone that seemed to drip with blood. As the fearful cries rose in volume, these waving hands hurled the stones at him. A veritable wall of flying rocks seemed to strike him. With the odious stench of the grave cloths overwhelming him, he knew no more.

After Hambelton died, the room was sealed up again, a tomb in which no stone in the floor was found out of place.

In 1924, an odd-appearing individual arrived at Kerrigan's Acre. He gave his name as Dr. Santly. At this time Mrs. Tancred Kerrigan-Darty lived at The Acre. To her was presented a rather soiled visiting card that read: "Dr. Arno Santly, Magician, Prophycist, Exorcist. All Ghostly Apparitions Expelled Forever. Fee Nominal. Partly Street, Galway."

The lady told Dr. Santly she did not require his services in any form. The Keep no longer bothered the family, nor anyone else. There had been no recurrence of ghostly incidents since the Hambelton tragedy. The infamous stone room was stoutly sealed. Fire had made the castle untenable; in any case, the sooner it fell into complete ruin, the better.

Dr. Santly persisted. He argued that to exorcise the famous Bloody Stone Ghosts would add greatly to his prestige as an exorcist. He would do it without charge.

Mrs. Kerrigan-Darty finally gave in. She ordered a laborer to remove a few stones from the sealed doorway, enough for the doctor to enter the room. Dr. Santly was overjoyed and returned to Galway to fetch his paraphernalia.

A week later, Dr. Santly appeared at the Keep alone. He carried a small black bag and in his hand was a long metal rod tipped with a gilded metal cross.

The promised workman removed five of the big stones, just enough for the doctor to crawl through on his hands and knees which, he said, was all he wanted. Afterward, the workman settled himself down for a smoke. Dr. Santly gathered the various articles he needed, grasped the rod with the gilt cross in his right hand, and crawled through the aperture in the wall.

Meanwhile the workman drew pungent smoke from his coben pipe and thoughtfully regarded the "Madman's Door" towering above him. Suddenly a wild discord resounded through the empty house—a low roar, then the crashing of stone against stone.

While the bewildered workman was puzzling what to do, a figure covered with blood came crawling back through the

hole in the wall. As he reached the great hall, he staggered to his feet and started to run crazily across the room. The workman had a glimpse of the doctor's face, the sight of which scared him out of his wits. It was surely the face of one demented, eyes starting from their sockets, drools of slaver hanging from the mouth. Out of the door the doctor sped blindly, making for the sheer drop of the cliff over which so many unfortunates had already lost their lives.

The workman was galvanized suddenly to life and followed the doctor on the double. Almost at the brink of the cliff, the worker caught up with the crazed man and hauled him back to safety.

Shortly after this, Dr. Arno Santly was committed to the Asylum of St. John of Gods near Dublin, a retreat for the hopelessly insane.

The casurua is an undead monster inspired by the Bloody Stones of Kerrigan's Keep. The Irish name means, approximately, "Red-hammer."

Casurua

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any, primarily ruins

FREQUENCY: Very rare

ORGANIZATION: Doomed group

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Not applicable

DIET: Not applicable

INTELLIGENCE: None

TREASURE: 25% A

ALIGNMENT: Any

NO. APPEARING: 1

ARMOR CLASS: 0

MOVEMENT: None

HIT DICE: 22

THAC0: 5

NO. OF ATTACKS: 4

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 3d6

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Poltergeist powers

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Invisibility

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 75%

SIZE: M

MORALE: Fearless (20)

X.P. VALUE: 21,000

The casurua is an undead phenomenon that results from a group suffering traumatic death. It is most likely to form where a massacre has taken place, but could be found anywhere a group might suffer violent death, such as a battlefield or a burned-out building. It is possible for the actions of the player characters to result in a casurua forming (for example, a high-level *fireball* exploding in a packed room).

A casurua often will be *invisible* to normal senses. Should it choose to appear, or be seen by magical means, the victims will see dozens of eyes, blazing with hate, floating in the air; along with dozens of skeletal hands readying rocks for an attack. When a casurua becomes active, a graveyard stench will fill the air.

Combat: The casurua attacks by flinging stones, or whatever else is available. If substances less dangerous than stones

(such as tree branches) are flung the DM may want to lessen the damage. Likewise, if the casurua has access to a substance more dangerous than stones (such as a cache of weapons) the DM may increase the damage.

In addition to the stone attack, the casurua has a poltergeist-like power. The casurua is able to cause the sounds of knocking and footsteps, which can be used to trick the characters into entering the focus of danger.

Anyone who encounters a casurua must save versus paralyzation or run screaming in fear for one turn.

The casurua has no movement and may be avoided. If it cannot be avoided, it can still be damaged at a distance with spells, though with 75% magic resistance it may take many spells to quell even one.

Fortunately, a casurua has a limited amount of ectoplasm at any given time. Any casurua reduced to 0 hit points has run out of ectoplasm. A cleric of at least 9th level can then lay the dead to rest using the proper rites. Even then it is best to dismantle the physical surroundings of the casurua (tearing down any building, chopping down any trees, digging up the earth, etc.). Otherwise, the casurua may become active again after a month has passed.

The chance to turn a casurua is not good. A cleric of level 9-13 can do so on a

...because
what you
don't know
can hurt
you.

roll of 20. A cleric of 14th or higher level can turn a casurua on a roll of 19-20.

If the DM wishes, she can customize casurua. Besides adjusting damage depending on the substance used to attack, the casurua can have a variable number of hit dice. For every 5 HD (rounded down) give the casurua one attack. Thus, the number of attacks also vary. Casurua with fewer than 22 HD will have weaker powers. Their experience value also will have to be recalculated.

Habitat/Society: A casurua is a mindless entity and has no society. A casurua is partly a ghost, hence its need for ectoplasm. But a casurua also is a kind of bizarre "recording." The trauma of multiple violent deaths has imprinted itself upon the physical surroundings where the deaths occurred. Hence the need to break up that physical surroundings to quell the casurua.

A casurua could form any place where violent death is common. Battlefields are usually exempt because a soldier has adjusted to the thought of violent death. If treachery was added, however, a casurua could form on a battlefield. Otherwise, a casurua is most likely to be found on the sites of disasters (natural or otherwise). Ruins, especially places that were looted, are prime habitats for casurua.

Keres

In Greek mythology, the keres were the children of Nyx and Erebus. Nyx was the goddess of night, and Erebus ruled that part of the underworld inhabited by the shades. The keres were closely related with the Moirai (the Fates) and the Erinyes (the Furies). They served Ares, measuring the fate of each warrior and dragging off the corpses of the dead. They also appeared as goddesses of death, often identified with the avenging Furies.

Popular tradition, however, identified the keres with evil spirits of the dead, perhaps ancestral spirits, who had to be appeased by sacrifices. Entire holy days, such as the festival of Anthesteria were set aside for such sacrifices. The festival closed with the command: "Out of the house, ye keres"

If the keres were not properly appeased they would roam the earth bringing misfortune, disease, old age, and death. In popular belief, the keres were one of the plagues that escaped from Pandora's box. The root "ker" means: "bane, evil, death."

The various accounts of the keres from Greek mythology have inspired an undead monster by the same name.

Keres

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any
FREQUENCY Very rare
ORGANIZATION: Minimal

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Largely nocturnal
DIET: Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE: High
TREASURE: Nil
ALIGNMENT: Any evil
NO. APPEARING: 1 or 3
ARMOR CLASS: 1
MOVEMENT: 12, Fl 18
HIT DICE: 9 + 9
THACO: 11
NO. OF ATTACKS: 3
DAMAGE/ATTACKS: 1d8
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Bad luck, aging, and disease
SPECIAL DEFENSES: + 1 or better weapon to hit
MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil
SIZE: M
MORALE: Fearless (20)
X.P. VALUE: 7,000

Keres are malignant undead spirits who seek revenge against the living. They look like horrible, black-winged humanoids with gleaming fangs and long, pointed nails. They are dressed in blood-stained robes and carry scourges (barbed whips).

Combat: An attack by keres will be either one ker (the singular form of the word) alone, or a group of three keres. While characters could conceivably chance upon the keres by accident, the undead monster usually is specifically stalking the characters. An attack by a single ker usually will be the spirit of some NPC or monster the characters recently killed. An attack by three keres is often a retaliation visited upon those characters who have become overly bloodthirsty. This latter kind of attack may even be sent against the characters by the gods as a warning. Likewise, keres may be sent as retribution against characters who have proved overly greedy. Thus, there is an element of fate in most keres attacks.

Keres can strike three times per round with their whips. Each attack does 1-8 points of damage. The first attack could, in addition, bring the victim bad luck. The second attack might age the victim. The third attack could infect the victim with disease.

Victims are allowed a save against the additional effects of the attacks. The save against bad luck is the same as petrification. The save against aging is the same as death. The save against disease is the same as spells.

Bad luck lowers all attack rolls and saves of the victim by - 1 to - 4 (roll 1d4) for 3d10 turns. Aging will age the victim 10d4 years. The disease caused by the keres is the same as that imparted by the rotting touch of a mummy. Multiple hits are cumulative.

Keres will fight on until they are reduced to 0 hp or they have slain all the characters. If they are victorious, the keres will drain the blood of their victims then tear the corpses into pieces and devour them, even the bones. There will



thus be nothing left of the victims to later raise or resurrect.

Keres can *shapechange* themselves into tiny gnat-like creatures so they can better stalk their victims. In gnat form they can fly at a speed of 18") but only for a maximum of six turns. If they are not spotted, Keres may follow their victims and wait to attack when the victims are otherwise occupied (usually with another combat). Keres cannot attack in gnat form. The transition takes one round.

The following spells or attack forms have no effect on keres: *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, *cold*, *poison*, and *paralysis*. They take only half damage from electricity.

A cleric has the same chance to turn a keres as she does a ghost.

Habitat/Society: Keres have no particular society. They may have memories from when they were alive and still believe in the dictates of their once-living society. For example, a hill giant is slain by the characters and comes back as a keres to attack his slayers. The keres still will have the same superstitions as the original hill giant.

Sunlight does not harm keres, but they prefer to attack at night. During the day they remain in gnat form, in some hiding place.

Lich

Again, the lich is a game monster given an appropriate name. "Lich" is an archaic word from Middle English and is still used in certain Scottish and English dialects. It also has been used to give "flavor" to some fantasy, gothic, and horror stories. The word comes from the Anglo-Saxon "lic" and is akin to the Germanic "leiche" which means "corpse." According to the dictionary, lich means a dead body, a corpse. It is only a step of the imagination for a lich to become a walking dead body; an animated corpse.

The Etruscans often associated their own mythology with that of the Greeks. In the course of time Greek names have come to replace the Etruscan ones. It is more probable that, because the only accounts we have of the Etruscans were written by Greeks and Romans, that the writers simply used more familiar names. Sometimes the names were given slightly different spellings to differentiate them from the Greek originals.

Charun was a male demon in the Etruscan underworld who may have been a god fallen on hard times. His symbol is a hammer that he carries on his shoulder, or with which he supports himself, like a cane. He has a nose like a vulture's, pointed animal ears, hair entwined with snakes, and wings growing out of his back. In Etruscan mythology Charun escorts the dead, and watches over the portals of graves.

Charun is obviously associated with the ferryman of the dead for the Greeks: Charon. The Charun of the Etruscans is,

however, more ferocious and active than the dread ferryman. It seems likely that, for the Etruscans, Charun really was the demon of death who kills the dying and carries the victim off to the underworld.

Charun was worshiped, or appeased, by the Etruscans essentially like a god. He even had a special order of priests called charuntes (or charontes) who served Charun and who carried hammers similar to the demon's. These priests have inspired an undead monster. They have returned from the dead, much like a lich, to serve the gods of death and evil using clerical spells instead of magical spells.

Charuntes

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any

FREQUENCY: Very rare

ORGANIZATION: Roving bands

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Not applicable

DIET: Not applicable

INTELLIGENCE: Very to exceptional

TREASURE: Nil

ALIGNMENT: Neutral evil

NO. APPEARING: 1-4

ARMOR CLASS: 0*

MOVEMENT: 9, Fl 18

HIT DICE: 9 + *

THACO: See below

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 hammer/1 snake

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2-8 + 2*/1-4 + poison

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Clerical spells

SPECIAL DEFENSES: + 1 weapon to hit

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

SIZE: M

MORALE: Fearless (20)

X.P. VALUE: 9th = 7,000 xp;

10th = 8,000 xp;

11th = 9,000 xp, etc.

* At the DM's discretion, higher level charuntes could have more hit points (due to a high Constitution score when alive) or have better armor and do more damage with their hammers (i.e., using more valuable magical equipment, or having better Dexterity or Strength scores).

Charuntes were once the priests of some neutral evil death god, goddess, or major fiend. They look like winged humanoids with the nose of a vulture, pointed animal ears, and snakes instead of hair. They have come back from the dead to harvest victims for their evil masters.

Combat: Charuntes attack using +2 two-handed hammers. They wear full plate armor +2. The snakes in their hair also attack once per round. Any victim bitten by a snake must save versus poison or die in 2-12 turns.

Charuntes also have clerical spells appropriate for the level they held in life. A priest must reach at least 9th level to come back from the dead as a charuntes. Otherwise, they could be of any level up to level 29. Note that the X.P. VALUE of a charuntes depends on its level. Hence, several values are given.

The THACO of a charuntes will also vary by level. Taking into account the + 2 weap-

on, the THACO for various levels is: 9th = 14, 10-12th = 12, 13-15th = 10, 16-18th = 8, and 19th + = 6. If a DM allows a charuntes magical weapons greater than +2, or a high Strength score, she should adjust the THACO accordingly.

The following spells or attack forms have no effect on charuntes: *charm*, *sleep*, *hold*, *enfeeblement*, *paralysis*, *polymorph*, *cold*, *electricity*, *insanity*, or *death* spells or symbols (including any poisons).

A cleric has the same chance to turn a charuntes as she does a lich.

Habitat/Society: As undead, charuntes have no real society. They do, however, still retain an affinity for attacking in a group. If only one charuntes is encountered, he will be guarded by two skeleton warriors (see the MONSTROUS MANUAL™ book, page 317).

While charuntes can be encountered anywhere, they are most likely to be found in spots that death gods would consider holy. Such spots include: tombs, graveyards, ruined temples, altars to a death deity, battlefields, death-cairns, and burial vaults or mounds.



Dark lords

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any, often subterranean

FREQUENCY: Very rare

ORGANIZATION: Solitary

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Not applicable

DIET: Carnivore

INTELLIGENCE: Exceptional to godlike

TREASURE: 25% H

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic evil

NO. APPEARING: 1

ARMOR CLASS: - 2

MOVEMENT: 12

HIT DICE: 13 +

THACO: See below

NO. OF ATTACKS: 2

DAMAGE/ATTACKS: 1d12 each

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Energy drain, aging

SPECIAL DEFENSES: See below

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 50%

SIZE: M

MORALE: Fearless

X.P. VALUE: 13 = 17,000 xp;

14th = 18,000;

15th = 19,000 xp, etc.

A dark lord is an extremely high level, chaotic evil NPC who was slain by a *sphere of annihilation* and has managed to return to the world as one of the undead. In essence, when the dark lord was killed, it was sucked into another dimension. The creature joined the ranks of the undead and has struggled its way back across the

dimensions with one goal in mind: revenge on the living. In so doing, the dark lord has gained a number of powers dealing with other dimensions, gravity, and the space-time continuum.

A dark lord looks like the shadows of a person—but looks are deceiving. The monster is actually composed of material from the Negative Material Plane.

Combat: Any character who comes within 200' of a dark lord is *slowed* due to the effects of heavy gravity (no save allowed). On each successful hit, a dark lord not only causes 1-12 points of damage, but drains one energy level if a save vs. death is failed. It also ages its victim 10d4 years if a saving throw vs. spells is failed. Both the energy drain and aging apply to each of the dark lord's physical attacks. Thus, an unlucky character might lose two levels and age 80 years in one round.

In addition to its physical attacks, a dark lord can cast one spell per round. Consider the spell to be an innate power without the usual spell-casting requirements (e.g. no somatic gestures, incantations, or special components are needed). The dark lord has only nine spells that can be cast, but they are extremely powerful ones: *disintegrate*, *duo-dimension*, *alter reality*, *reverse gravity*, *maze*, *astral spell*, *gate*, *imprisonment*, and *time stop*.

The THACO of a dark lord depends on

its level: 13th-14th = 7; 15th + = 5.

A cleric of level 9-13 can turn a dark lord on a roll of 20. A cleric of level 14 + can turn a dark lord on a roll of 19-20.

A dark lord can be hit only by magical weapons with a +2 or greater bonus. The following spells, or attack forms, have no effect on dark lords: *charm*, *sleep*, *enfeeblement*, *hold*, *cold*, *electricity*, *teleportation*, *polymorph*, *fear*, *magnetism*, *insanity*, *slow*, *disintegrate*, *maze*, *imprisonment*, *gravity*, *time*, *paralysis*, or *death* (including poison). Holy water will do only half normal damage on a dark lord. A *raise dead* spell will destroy a dark lord, but it is allowed a saving throw versus spells.

Note: Dark lords are even more powerful than liches and should be used cautiously by the DM.

Habitat/Society: Dark lords are strictly solitary and thus have no society. They prefer to inhabit lonely, forlorn places, especially ones that were once the abode of great evil. Graveyards, ruins, battlefields, isolated caverns, and wild wastelands are their preferred dwelling places. Sunlight does not harm dark lords, but they will stick to darkness or shadow if at all possible, making them harder to notice, and better fitting their mood and temperament.

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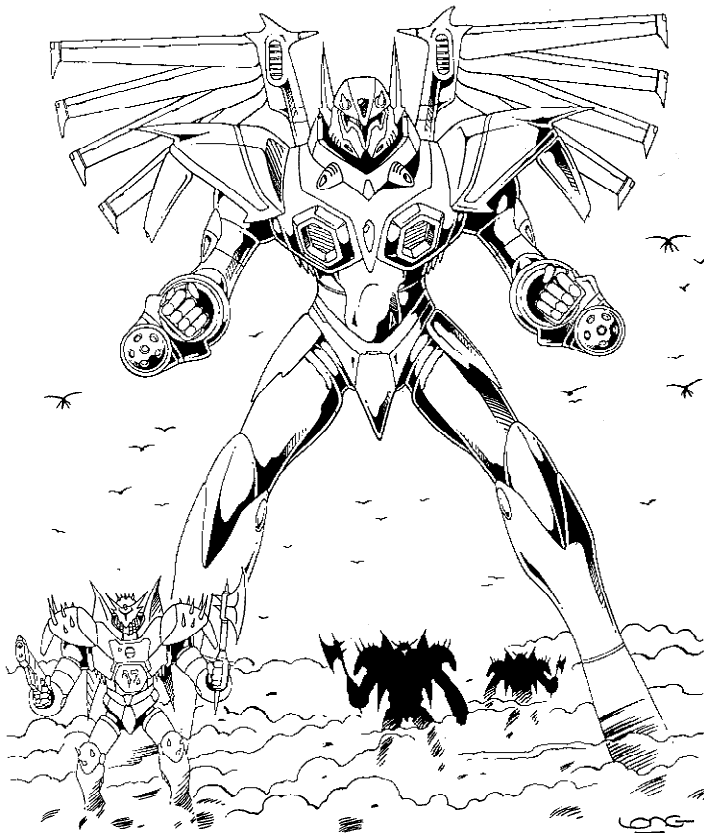
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Ω



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A Monster in the



CLASSICAL TRADITION

An untapped source of Mythos horror for Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU* game is the myths and legends of ancient cultures. Described in stories and legends are terrible creatures, many of which need very little work to provide horrific foes to intrepid investigators.

Classical Greek mythology is perhaps the best known such culture. An imaginative Keeper can find a wealth of monsters to adapt to her campaign from the various Greek legends. Below is the example a description of one monster from the myths, the Echidna (whom the Greeks described as a half-woman, half-serpentine beast). I have included beyond the creature's statistics and portions of a journal written by one ill-fated professor that can be used in an adventure dealing with the echidna. More mention of campaign uses for the echidna can be found at the end of this piece.

Add the Greek echidna to your CALL OF CTHULHU* game's roster of horrors

by Steve Berman

Artwork by Jim Holloway

The journal excerpts below are offered as a springboard for adventures with the echidna. The journal may be found years they were written amid Professor Gohmier's effects. A reporter or writer PC may be asked by an academician NPC (or perhaps by one of the dear departed Professor's relatives) to compile, edit, and authenticate the writings. Or, the encounter with the Professor may be more recent, with the investigators being hired by the Professor's university (Keepers should choose an institution appropriate to their campaigns) to discover what has happened to a member of their staff.

The last entry of the journal is optional. Some Keepers may feel it reveals too much information, spoiling the horrific effect of first encountering the echidna. Feel free to omit it, leaving the fate of Professor Gohmier in doubt. How the journal finds its way to PCs is then more problematical, though. Perhaps the professor survived the experience and is now locked up in some Greek insane asylum, an unidentified madman.

Excerpts from the Journal of Dr. Alexenor T. Gohmier Ph.D., Associate Professor of Classical Studies.

February 17th: The university recently acquired the notes from the estate of Nikos Denopoli. While poring over the notes of the revolutionary that lived during the Otomans' rule, I noticed mention of some sort of beast living in the hills of central Greece. What interests me so is that the creature is described as part woman, part serpent. One does not have to hold a graduate degree in the classics to realize what such a thing sounds like the echidna! Surely,

ly, the beast must be just a myth though. Still, my thoughts keep coming back to the detailed reports of the witnesses. This bears further study.

June 6th: I am now convinced after reading through so many pages that the echidna lives! Though my eyes are raw and my head aches, I feel flushed, near ecstatic. Oh, the creature is no mythological teratism, but rather some enormous serpent to be sure. The ancients must have confused the animal with something more sinister. I wonder how such a thing could remain obscure to this day. But I intend to find it nonetheless. I shall request my sabbatical, so more time can be devoted to this.

October 27th: I have done all the work possible in these hallowed halls. Thank God my sabbatical begins this winter. I have already planned my itinerary. The exact location of the village where the echidna was first mentioned must be found.

January 14th: The salt-laden Atlantic sea air is quite refreshing. Still, for all this cruise ship has to offer, I look forward to reaching Greece to once more begin the task of finding the echidna. The University of Athens should hold some accounts, perhaps even the report of a witness, if I may be so lucky.

March 10th: My second night in the village and still I feel uncomfortable among these folk. Though their outward treatment of me is without complaint, I seem to sense a hostility behind their simple faces. Is it directed at me, or my research—and why?

I must return to the village church. I noticed several odd woodcuts in the vestry. They portray some creature that looks like a cross between woman and

viper luring men into caves. The priest will not discuss the carvings with me. I shall try once more to pry forth some details.

March 12th: I have had enough of searching through manuscripts and papers. It is past time for me to bring a more personal element to my hunt for the echidna. Though I have some doubt about exploring the caves to the north, a grand discovery awaits me, I am sure. To find tangible proof of this serpent's existence would propel me to the zenith of my field. Schliemann beware! I shall soon surpass your beloved Troy!

March 12th, later: The villagers saw the spelunking equipment I bore and became most alarmed. Several tried to stop me, arguing most emphatically that the caves were not safe. I thought at one point to be physically prevented, but I managed to stare them down. The hike to the caves was mildly fatiguing, and I plan to rest for an hour and check all my equipment before entering the caves. My hand nearly trembles from the mounting excitement.

The caves have a damp atmosphere. I should have worn warmer clothing.

There's no sign of any life—odd glistening trails here and there. Is this some sort of mineral secretion?

The tunnels branch often. I shall mark the ones I enter with chalk.

I have stopped my gawking at the immense cave I entered not an hour ago. My colleagues back at the university would not be able to contain themselves. I myself, no archeologist, feel my breath catch. Pre-Hellenic ruins, to be sure! My lamp rests upon ruined marble, then finds a series of ancient columns—perhaps an entire city, beneath the earth. How did these ruins become mere earth and rubble? Did the earth open and engulf them? I feel like a protagonist in a Verne novel. I must explore further.

I hear odd sounds—sort of a slithering noise. Water perhaps?

Dear God, whoever carved the stone had abominable thoughts on his mind. Terrible bas-reliefs. My hands tremble at the sight.

Found a focal point to the ruins. A large statue set on a malachite dais. Bronze, yet showing no sign of verdigris. Figure is male and reclines, with one hand outstretched as if regarding the fingers. The face is twisted, laughter perhaps. Odd to find empty eye sockets. The craftsmanship is very good.

Hold! There is another visage on the rear of the head. With only my lamp's light, it is hard to see, but there it is. A smaller face scowling. Could this be a representation of Janus?

Have to sit down a moment and think. Why would a Roman deity be found here?! A few colleagues have often conjectured at what the worship of Janus offered. Remember reading in Frazier that "the true nature and functions of Janus the ancients themselves were puzzled; and where they hesitated, it is not for us confidently to

decide." Now I wonder what more did that man know and did not dare to say—

Odd sounds again. Much stronger and coming from behind. What in blazes—

March 15th: At last I can write again. Here I lay in a shepherd's cottage. My fever has broken, my wounds tended to. I wonder—should I explain the lapse in entries? Though what sort of therapy would be gained by once more experiencing the horror? Yet, I know that I must for my own sanity, if not scholarship.

I was sitting down beside the statue. I heard those awful sounds. Turning my head, I began to scream my throat raw. For coming out of the ruined structures were these horrible things. Large pale slugs was my first thought, crawling toward me. Their front ends were reared up like cobras, but there was no fanged mouth, no face. Only a black pit set in the center of the things' quivering flesh. A mane of black quills were set around each creatures' heads, like some mockery of hair.

I could see now how ancient man might have caught a glimpse of the echidna—for I know without doubt, that is what I was faced with—and thought it a monstrous mix of woman and serpent. I ran from them, thankful for the slow, shuffling crawl of the creatures. I headed for the outskirts of the ruins and the tunnel that would lead me back to sanity and safety. As I passed the buildings, I saw within many recesses more of the hideous echidna sliding forth toward me. Thank God I had been content to walk past those ancient structures and not enter, else I would have been lost to them.

I had made the tunnel, trying to climb at a fast pace. I must have slipped on a trail of slime, nearly breaking my leg and leaving me helpless to the maws of the things below. But aside from scrapes and bruises, I pulled myself forth whole, my mind still reeling.

What are my intentions now? I cannot simply leave the area and arrive back at the university, and hope to return to safer studies. I feel my idle thoughts returning again and again to the horror I was witness to. A veil has been rent aside for me, and I shudder to think what other terrible truths there are to the myths of our ancestors! No, I must take action else I shall never rest. I seem to recall the library of Miskatonic University in Massachusetts has some esoteric tomes on such subjects—perhaps it's time for another journey.

ECHIDNA Lesser Independent Race

These creatures resemble large pale worms. They possess no eyes, only a huge gaping maw filled with rasping teeth and file-like members. Around the bloated head is mane of long black or dun-colored

quills. Some of these creatures possess rudimentary arms, more like a frill of tendrils by which they can drag themselves more easily, otherwise they move about like slugs, leaving a glistening trail behind them.

The echidna (used both in the singular and plural) are a degenerate race worshipping the Outer Gods, usually Nyarlathotep. They dwell underground, often in weird Grecian-style ruins. Whether they once constructed such cities or have merely usurped the past builders is unknown. But those historians who have encountered the creatures often worry on the impact they might have had on the early Greeks. Echidna have been sighted in the Balkan countries, the mainland of China, and many parts of Greece.

The echidna are blind, but possess a highly developed sense of smell by which they track their prey. A sure sign of the presence of the echidna are trails of glistening slime. They use such trails and patches to mark their territory and common passages. For the most part, the creatures seem content to stay in their ruins and worship obscene gods. However, when presented with an opportunity, they have a voracious appetite for human blood.

Their bite attack is leech-like, with the maw holding on and draining one point of STR worth of blood each round. The victim must make a successful CON × 2 roll or a POW × 2 roll to be able to perform any action other than screaming in agony. Should the creature be torn away with a successful STR vs. STR roll, the drain will stop, but the individual suffers a further 1d4 hit point loss from the echidna being ripped from the wound. Lost STR returns at a rate of one point per day's rest. The beasts also have a tail attack that is used to knock opponents down, so that the echidna may more easily apprehend its prey. Note that stronger members of this race may possess a damage bonus.

Researchers still conjecture about the quills fringing the head of the echidna. It has been suggested they act in reproduction for a carcass of the creature revealed no sex organs. Further study might reveal more.

ECHIDNA, Slug-like Cave Lurkers

Characteristics	Rolls	Averages
STR	2d6 +4	11
CON	3d6 +6	16-17
SIZ	2d6+6	13
INT	2d6	7
POW	3d6	10-11
DEX	2d6	7

Move: 6

Hit Points: 14-15

Average Damage Bonus: +0

Weapon:

Bite	20%	1d4 + STR drain on following rounds
Tail	45%	1d6

Armor: 3 points of slime coated, gelatinous flesh

Spells: An echidna has a small chance of knowing magic. Roll percentile dice, and if the result is lower than the creature's INT + POW, it knows 1d4 spells. Usually such incantations deal with Nyarlathotep or some other Outer God. Suggestions include Consume Likeness, Contact Janus (Nyarlathotep), Dread Curse of Azathoth, and Nightmare.

Sanity: It costs 1d8 to behold an echidna, but a successful SAN roll lessens the mental blow to the loss of only 1 point.

Adventure ideas

Beyond the method described by the journal, there are many other ways for a keeper to use the echidna in a campaign. A lair of echidna may have been uncovered through a mining accident or during an archaeological dig. Slowly the miners or researchers disappear, and the investigators are called in.

Should a Keeper not wish to build an entire scenario around the echidna, she may use them simply as opponents summoned by the principal threat in the adventure to slay the meddling humans. Later on, the investigators might wish to learn more about such things, and this

may lead to further adventures with the horrid race.

If the Keeper feels very creative, he might design a long-running campaign, based on the notion that Nyarlathotep is awakening various Mythos creatures once thought to exist in legends and mythology. The echidna would only be one foe fought, a small scenario along the way to defeating the Crawling Chaos. Other such legendary monsters that might be expanded upon by the Keeper are the hydra (perhaps really a cthonian?), huge sea serpents, and the heraldic yale (tentacles instead of horns would be apropos).

New spell

Contact Echidna: This spell takes two magic points to cast. It must be intoned at a site that the echidna are known to dwell. The wilds of Greece and some of the Balkan countries are the most well-known enclaves. Such creatures often will arrive in a band of 1d3 members. The caster suffers a loss of 1d3 SAN.

Finally, in the narrative was mentioned Janus (or Ianus). What more sinister nature could be revealed than have this god turn out to be another of Nyarlathotep's avatars. Once he was worshiped secretly, his rituals too blasphemous to be revealed. But many of the cults were routed out into the open and destroyed. What was once

part of the services to the god became common knowledge. Folk began to invoke Janus on their doors and gates to keep him out of their homes and cities. Time eroded much of the horror, leaving modern researchers only whispers of the truth.

But in certain tomes, the real nature of Janus is mentioned and revered. Besides in ancient Greece and Rome, Janus was worshiped in such countries as Surinam and the Plateau of Leng, as evident by the preponderance of two-headed artwork at those locales.

These days, the cult of Janus is few and small, scattered around the globe. Many of the cultists have the Mark of Janus, a second set of facial features. Such freaks are quickly indoctrinated into the cult, whether through other members or strange dreams.

Notes

1. Sir James George Frazier, *The Golden Bough*, volume 1, abridged ed. (New York: Macmillan Co., 1951) page 191.

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by William W. Connors

Artwork by Stephen Fabian

Geas

The
Vistani
card
game

When Bruce Nesmith and I first set about designing the *Forbidden Lore* boxed set some years ago, we had intended to include the rules for several card games designed to be played with the Tarokka cards included in that boxed set. Well, as often happens, reality got in the way. It turned out that there just wasn't enough space to put them in, so they got chopped out.

The months rolled by, and the rules for those card games languished in the literary mausoleum that is my hard drive. When the release of the revised RAVENLOFT® Campaign Setting boxed set brought Wolfgang Baur into my office searching for a related contribution to DRAGON® Magazine, I decided that it was time to do a little grave-robbing. With his kind encouragement ("Hey, Bill, did you finish that &#x\$%\$ article for me yet?") I ran some playtests and handed in a manuscript detailing Geas, the favorite card game of the Vistani.





Background

The origins of the Tarokka deck are as mysterious as those of the Vistani who craft them. There are those who say that the first Tarokka deck was created in some distant land where it had no unusual powers. Through fair means or foul, the deck came into the possession of the Vistani and therefore into the misty domains of Ravenloft.

While some people are able to use the cards to predict the future, often with amazing accuracy, the vast majority of Ravenloft's Tarokka decks are used for

nothing more mysterious than common card games. Fortunately, this more mundane use of the cards is very entertaining and doesn't require a Powers Check.

The deck

For those not familiar with the Tarokka deck presented in the *Forbidden Lore* and revised RAVENLOFT Campaign Setting boxed sets, a bit of review is in order.

The Tarokka is a special deck of cards used by the Vistani for fortune-telling and entertainment. It is composed of 54 cards. These cards are split into two groups, the smaller Crown Deck (also known as the high deck) and the larger Common Deck (also known as the low deck). The Common Deck is composed of four suits of 10 cards each, a total of 40 cards. The other 14 cards are all unique and comprise the Crown Deck.

The four suits of the Common Deck (swords, stars, glyphs, and coins) each represent one of the major character classes in the AD&D® game (fighters, wizards, priests, and thieves). The nine numbered cards in these suits represent the alignments available in the game, ranging from chaotic to lawful and good to evil. For the purposes of the *Geas* game, it is only important to note that cards numbered 1, 2, or 3 are of good alignment, those numbered 4, 5, or 6 represent neutral characters, and those with a 7, 8, or 9 on them are evil.

In addition, each suit contains a tenth card, known as the Archetype card, that is without a numeric value or alignment. The special uses of Archetype cards are defined later.

The cards of the Crown Deck represent the quests that adventuring parties undertake to score points for the players. Although each of these cards has a unique name and illustration, all 14 of them are identical for the purposes of game play.

Object of the game

Players of *Geas* attempt to assemble a party of adventurers (made up of cards from the Common Deck) and then score points by completing quests (represented by the cards in the Crown Deck).

The player who has completed the most quests when the deck has been cycled through three times wins the hand. The game is completed after each of the players at the table has dealt one hand.

Number of players

Geas ("Tahn" in the Vistani language) plays equally well with three, four, or five persons, a feature that has no doubt led to its great popularity among the gypsies. Anyone who travels with the Vistani will note that it is not uncommon for those riding in a wagon to spend hours playing this game while their driver guides them through the mists toward their next destination.



Preparing to play

The game begins with the selection of the dealer. To do this, each player shuffles the deck and then draws a card from its middle. Whoever draws the highest-numbered card is the dealer for the first hand. Those who draw a card from the Crown Deck are assumed to have lost, while an Archetype card is treated as higher than any numbered card. If two or more players draw cards of the same rank, and those cards are the highest ones drawn, each of those players selects an additional card until all ties are broken.

The deal

The game of *Geas* is played as a series of hands, each of which begins with the dealer distributing five cards to form each player's hand. Throughout the game, all players will maintain a five-card hand, although the cards in this hand will change as play progresses.

Those cards not dealt into a player's hand are formed up and place in the center of the table to form a reserve. The top card of the reserve is flipped face up to start the discard pile. With this done, the game is ready to commence.

The draw and the play

After the deal, the hand begins with the player to the dealer's left drawing either the top (face-down) card from the reserve or the top (face-up) card from the discard pile. He adds this card to his hand, being careful—if it was a face-down card—not to allow the other players in the game to see it.

After this draw, the player will have six cards in his hand. His turn ends when he selects one of these cards and either plays or discards it. The player must remove one of the cards from his hand in order to return it to the five-card limit. There are many ways in which this can be accomplished: forming a party, completing a quest, attacking another party, replacing a party member, or discarding.

Forming a party

A card from the low deck can be played out onto the table, in front of the player, to start or fill out that player's party of adventurers. There are two types of parties, adventuring and discordant.

Adventuring parties: A player has a full adventuring party when he has played on the table before him four cards (one from each suit) that are of similar alignment (all good, all neutral, or all evil). Once a player has such a party assembled, he is vulnerable to attack by other players, but also is able to complete quests (thus scoring points).

Discordant parties: It is possible for a player to assemble a party of adventurers that are of differing alignments. Like an adventuring party, the group must have one card from each suit in it, but these cards need not be of like alignments. Discordant parties are vulnerable to attack,

but may not complete quests.

An Archetype card can be used to help form a party, and if a player chooses to use an Archetype card in this way, the card represents whatever alignment the player desires. For instance, it can be used with other low-numbered cards to form a good-aligned party, or with high-numbered cards to form an evil-aligned party. As the composition of the player's party of adventurers changes during the game (because of attacks or the replacing of party members), the designated alignment of the Archetype card can be changed by the player at any time.

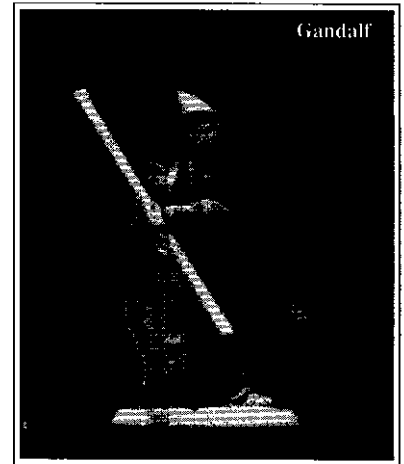
Completing a quest

If the player has assembled a full adventuring party, he may complete a quest. This is done by playing any Crown Deck card from his hand face up near the adventuring party. Once a Crown Deck card has been played, it scores one point for the player and cannot be removed in any way.

Attacking another party

There are two important elements to consider in making an attack on another player's party. First, is the group vulnerable to an attack? Second, do you have the right cards to make an attack?

In order to be vulnerable to attack, a player must have a full adventuring party (see "Forming a Party"). An incomplete party may not be attacked. A complete but discordant party is vulnerable to attack. An Archetype card that represents a member of a party is always invulnerable to attack.



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If a player is vulnerable, any one of his cards can be attacked and destroyed only by the card with the next higher number in its suit or by the Archetype card for its suit. For the purposes of this determination, the 1 card of a suit outranks the 9 of that suit. Thus, the 9 of Swords can be used to destroy (only) the 8 of Swords, but the 1 of Swords can, in turn, be used to destroy the 9. An attack made with an Archetype card destroys any card of the same suit. Thus, the Archetype of Swords—if it is played from the hand of one player against a sword card in the party of another player—can destroy any other sword card in the game.

Attacked cards and the card used to battle them go to the bottom of the discard pile, so that neither of those cards is available to be taken into the hand of the next player in turn.

Replacing a party member

From time to time, a player may need to change the alignment of his party or may wish to replace a normal card with an Archetype to help protect his group from attacks. This is easy enough to do—any face-up card in a party may be replaced by one of the same suit from the player's hand. The replaced card goes to the bottom of the discard pile.

Discarding

If none of these options is particularly appealing to the player, she may take a card from his hand and place it on the top

of the discard pile, making it available to be picked up by the next player in turn.

A player may not discard one of the cards that he has played on the table before him. The only way in which a played card may be removed is described above in "Replacing a party member." Cards representing completed quests can never be played, but a Crown Card in a player's hand may be discarded.

Continuing play

Once the player to the left of the dealer has taken his turn, play proceeds clockwise around the table. This continues until the last card in the reserve is drawn and either played or discarded.

Once this is done, the discard pile is picked up by the person who dealt that hand. The cards are shuffled, squared up, and placed face down on the table to form a new reserve. After a cut by the player who will deal the next hand, the top card of this pile is flipped face up to form a new discard pile.

The next player in sequence, the one to the left of the last person to play, either draws the top card from the reserve or the top card from the discard pile, and play proceeds from there.

Concluding the hand

The hand ends when the deck has been cycled through three times—that is, the initial deal and then two subsequent passes through the reserve. As soon as the player who drew the last card from the reserve completes his turn, play is halted.

Closing out

At this point, any player who has a full adventuring party on the table before him and unplayed Crown Cards in his hand must play them. It is not possible to make attacks or perform any other type of action at this point. Players make note of how many points each of them has scored, and the deal passes to the next person in line.

Early conclusion

A hand also ends when all 14 of the quests in the deck are completed. After all, there is no point in continuing to play beyond that point.

Concluding the game

A *Geas* game is over after everyone at the table has dealt a hand. At this time, the number of points scored is totaled, and the person whose adventurers completed the most quests is the winner.

Tips on play

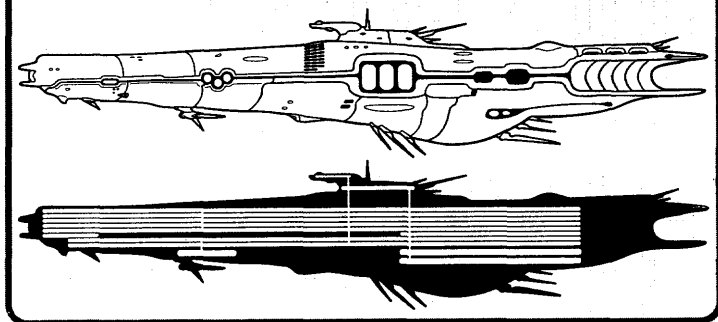
During playtests, many styles of play proved to be effective. The following are among the most effective of them, but it is worth noting that I don't plan on giving away all the techniques we discovered. (After all, I want to have an edge when playing *Geas* against you at conventions.)

Quest hoarding

Do your best not to discard quests (cards from the Crown Deck), even when your hand is full. This is especially true during the later phases of a hand. The odds are



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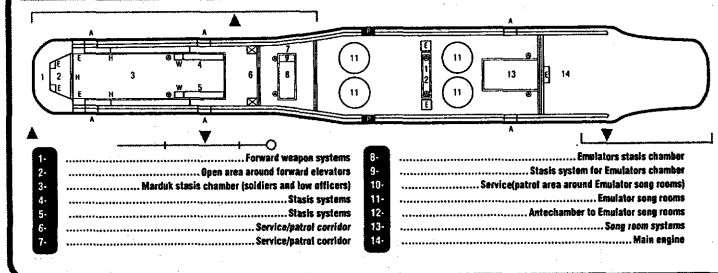
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that any quest card you toss down will quickly be snapped up by another player and end up scoring a point for his team of adventurers.

Discordant parties

At first glance, the thought of forming a discordant party might seem absurd. After all, it makes you vulnerable to attacks and doesn't permit you to complete quests. However, it does allow you to keep a card or two out of circulation. This is especially important if a certain card can complete a party for the player to your left, and you don't want to discard it to give him a chance to pick it up.

Archetypes

The Archetype cards are incredibly valuable when placed in your party. If you draw one of these cards, consider getting it into play as quickly as possible.

Of course, Archetype cards are deadly weapons if you need to break up another player's adventuring party. However, they are far more valuable as indestructible party members. Use them to attack others only in the most desperate situations.

Unique alignments

Keep an eye on the alignments of the parties being constructed by the other players. After all, if two players are trying to complete parties of similar alignments,

they'll be fighting over the same cards. If you're the only one trying to forge a party of, say, good characters, you'll have a much easier time getting the cards you need.

Changing alignments

Don't be afraid to change alignments if you have to. This is especially true in a four- or five-player game when your alignment matches one (or more) of the other players' parties.

This is especially important to remember if you have at least one Archetype card in your party. Because these cards have no set alignment of their own, they allow you to quickly shift from one alignment to another with much less effort than a player who has none of these valuable cards.

Variations

The rules presented in this article detail the most commonly played form of *Geas*, but there are lots of variations on this theme. Some are more common than others, but all have been found at one time or another within the misty borders of Ravenloft's macabre domains.

The two-player game

It is possible to play with only two players, but this is generally only done as a contest of honor or a type of duel. In such cases, defeat in the game can result in any

number of horrible fates for the loser. Among the gypsies, a two-player game of *Geas* is known as "Tangar Rak," or Confrontation.

Lots of players

More than six players also can be accommodated, but it is standard practice to use one deck of cards for every five players. Stories have been told of Vistani games that included as many as 30 players and six decks, but the logistics involved make this an almost unheard-of event. Games involving more than one deck are known by the Vistani as "Tankempaki," or Great Battles.

Gambling

The Vistani often play this game for money, especially when playing with outsiders. When playing for money, every character playing tosses in a gold piece as an ante. Whenever a PC completes a quest, she tosses in an additional coin. At the end of the hand (sometimes the game), the player who completed the most quests claims the pot.

Nine alignments

Players who wish to add an extra level of complication to the game might wish to consider the full alignments of the cards in the Common Deck. The complete alignments of the cards are as follows:

One	Chaotic good
Two	Lawful good
Three	Neutral good
Four	Lawful neutral
Five	Neutral
Six	Chaotic neutral
Seven	Neutral evil
Eight	Lawful evil
Nine	Chaotic evil

When this option is used, an adventuring party can be composed of characters that are all lawful or all chaotic, in addition to the more traditional good, neutral, or evil gatherings. Thus, a party would be complete if it had the one of swords, the six of stars, the six of glyphs, and the nine of coins.

Neutrals wild!

When this option is used, the three neutral-aligned cards (the 4, 5, and 6 cards) can be used to fill out an otherwise good or evil party. This option generally results in the quick formation of a party and the rapid completion of all the quests in the deck.

Final notes

I've had a lot of fun tinkering with this game. Just about everyone here at TSR has been dragged into at least one of my playtests. With luck, you'll have as much fun playing it as I have.

If you enjoy playing *Geas*, let me know. After all, the Vistani might just have a few more card games up their sleeves.

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CAMPAIGN JOURNAL:





Adventure seeds for Athas

by Gregory W. Detwiler

Artwork by Tom Baxa

Athas, the sun-blasted world of the DARK SUN® setting, is the harshest AD&D® game world. Although standard adventures are possible there, the unique nature of Athas makes for some very interesting adventure ideas, some of which would simply not be possible in the standard AD&D world.

Treasure hunt

At first glance, this sounds like the standard AD&D adventure in any world, but the impoverished nature of Athas leads to a major expansion of what constitutes treasure on this stricken world.

Water

Water is important to life everywhere, and its importance is most emphasized where it is scarcest. Only the major urban centers of Athas (and the halflings' forest) have an assured supply—for the moment, at least. Everyone else must scrounge around, looking for a water hole or hoping the local well doesn't run dry. Armies, caravans, and even lone travelers often will be hard-pressed to find a steady supply of water in the desert, and carrying enough water or the trip (if possible), slows your PCs considerably.

Finding a steady supply of water holes in the desert for the benefit of merchants and other travelers is a good way for a wilderness type, such as a ranger or a nomad, to make a living. Any spell-casters or psionicists with water-finding powers also will be useful here. As this is more in the nature of an exploration than a true treasure hunt, the bill for the expedition will have to be footed by a city government or a merchant house, but there was no way I could keep water out of a chapter concerning the treasures of Athas.

If a city's water supply should run out suddenly for some reason, an explosive state of affairs would exist, for said city's

sorcerer-king would then have no choice but to launch an immediate attack on one of his neighbors in order to supply water for his citizens and crops. Indeed, given logistical problems, the population of the waterless city would have to pick up and move into the conquered city, whose own inhabitants either would be killed outright or driven into the desert. After all, we can't have any more mouths gulping down our water than is absolutely necessary. Borys alone knows when this city's well will go dry, too.

Weapons and equipment

Next to water, the greatest shortage on Athas is of metal. Indeed, strictly speaking, metal is far scarcer than water, but since water is necessary for life, there is a greater drain on the available resources of the latter. As admitted in *The Wanderer's Journal* from the DARK SUN boxed set, the cultures of Athas can get along without metal, much as cave men and other savages do, but metal makes things so much easier. Most of the tools and weapons on Athas are made of bone (or chitin), stone, or wood, with the corresponding disadvantages that they break more readily—and in the case of weapons—do less damage.

This is extremely important. Bone and stone weapons both suffer a -1 penalty on damage rolls, while wooden ones are at a -2 penalty. Attack penalties for these weapons are -1, -2, and -3 respectively. The overwhelming majority of Athas' intelligent inhabitants, PCs and NPCs alike, will be equipped with such weapons. Thus, in terms of equipment, a party of PCs from any other AD&D world bearing standard steel weapons and armor would have the same advantage over the bulk of the Athasians as a party well-equipped with magical items would have over standard NPC types equipped only with mun-

dane gear. Think about it.

Even the armies of some sorcerer-kings are equipped largely with wooden weapons, though in the case of Nibenay, the extra-hard agafari wood is supposed to be as good as bronze. (What a pity that the DARK SUN rule book gives no analysis of the comparative merits of bronze weaponry, or of the difference between weapons of steel and ordinary iron!) Given this state of affairs, some "dungeon-crawling" expeditions into ancient ruins may be sponsored by a sorcerer-king or an ambitious noble. With all the tales of stockpiles of steel weapons and armor in old ruins, you can expect that the rulers of Athas would do everything possible to place into their hands an advantage over their neighbors by grabbing one or more military stockpiles from the past. If your party finds a hoard, and takes it to a sorcerer-king or noble, you can just about name your own price.

It should be noted that even the effects of enchantment are toned down by the inferiority of most Athasian weaponry. As noted in the equipment chapter of the rules book, a *bone dagger* +2 actually gives only a +1 bonus. Any magic that boosts the weapon's attack and damage rolls must first remove the penalties the inferior material imposes before it can become anything like a standard magic weapon. Thus, a +1 bone weapon on Athas, or a +2 stone weapon, or even a +3 wooden weapon, will have no greater chance of hitting its target than a mundane steel weapon. In regard to damage, it's not quite as bad, with both bone and stone weapons of +1 enchantment and +2 wooden weapons are equal to ordinary steel weapons. If your PCs are in an area using mainly wooden weapons, such as the halflings' forest, even stone or obsidian weapons will be seen as a rare prize.

DARK SUN[®]

W O R L D

This writer has long been a proponent of forestalling "Monty Haul" campaigns by stretching out the supply of magical items with those of low power, having put out two articles on the subject ("Magic For Beginners" in DRAGON® issue #149 and "More Magic For Beginners" in DRAGON issue #181). Another way to hold off on the introduction of magical items is to introduce high quality conventional equipment, such as the weapons and armor of quality in the *Oriental Adventures* rule book. For those DMs who think as I do, the DARK SUN setting is a dream come true, particularly if the PCs start out as the poorest of the poor.

Consider this: At the start of the campaign, the characters can be equipped with nothing more lethal than wooden arms. Then, as they begin adventuring, they can start picking up weapons of stone or obsidian, gradually progressing to arms of bone. Then, after all that, they may start to find metal weapons in treasure hoards, whether these are in forgotten dungeon levels or the vaults of wealthy and powerful NPCs.

At this point, they will be extremely wealthy in terms of weapons, for inhabit-

ants of Athas, and yet they will only be at the point where the players in all other AD&D game worlds are just starting out. Once they are ready for something just a little bit better, you can go the weapons and armor of quality route described in *Oriental Adventures* and the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, giving the PCs equipment vastly superior to what they started out with, while still not relinquishing a single enchanted weapon. By this time, a considerable percentage of the campaign should be behind the PCs, and you can start letting a trickle of magical weapons of +1 power appear.

Of course, if you starve the players and their characters of high-damage weapons, you should be all the more careful to make sure that their opposition is equally weak. If your party is a band of elven nomads, forcing them to launch a kank-mounted cavalry charge against a nightmare beast with no more than wooden lances and swords is extraordinarily bad form. True, a wooden lance can be used the same as a metal one, but its wielder will be sweating at every die roll, wondering if this will be the 1-in-20 roll that sees his weapon snapped in two. The swords, of course,

will be lousy weapons. Remember, the overwhelming majority of weapons on Athas are equivalent to cursed magic weapons in all other AD&D game worlds in regard to damage and attack numbers.

Humanoid opponents and ordinary animals will be far more important foes in a DARK SUN campaign than they are in most other campaigns. PCs in any other game world probably would shake their heads to see the eagerness with which DARK SUN players will pounce on a halfling with a bone short sword. After all, they're going to extra trouble to get the equivalent of a *cursed short sword*, -1, because it is *superior* to any other weapon the party has. Aside from hit dice, higher-quality weapons may be used to even the odds when the party outnumbers the opposition, as well as vice versa.

This brings us to another point: the treatment of metal weapons currently in enemy hands. Steel weapons on Athas should be as rare as magical items in most other game worlds. Thus, characters attacking a foe so armed may be reluctant to employ any attack that might damage or destroy the valuable weapon. Have you ever hesitated to use a *rod of cancellation*





or a *wand of negation* to mess up a foe's magical weapon or other item because you wanted to capture it for your own use? The same applies to attacks that particularly hurt metal, such as the wu jen spell *metal to rust* in *Oriental Adventures*.

(There's a reason why rust monsters aren't listed on encounter tables for Athas: if they ever existed there, the species would have starved to death long ago.)

On psionics-rich Athas, this has particular poignancy for psionics, as well as characters with a particularly potent wild talent. Students of psychokinesis have a number of nifty means for destroying an enemy's weapon, such as the sciences *Detonate* and *Disintegrate* and the devotions *Molecular Manipulation* and *Soften*. Go ahead, use them on the enemy's steel long sword; all you'll be doing is ruining possibly the only steel weapon you might get to so much as see for the next year or so. A change in tactics may well be in order. And for *fireball* - crazy mages, remember that flame is potent against all wooden weapons, even those made of agafari wood (the next best thing to bronze, remember?). Similarly, *lightning bolt* has a special effect on metal. Blast-and-burn magical attacks may not be an option for a weapons-poor party.

Natural treasures

Natural treasures are generally the products of plants and animals: honey, silks, spices, ivory, etc. Aside from those crossover creatures from previous *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM*® appendices, the creatures introduced with Athas have a number of products of special value. I'll give two examples here, but close study of the stuff in the boxed set and the *DARK SUN MC* appendix should yield plenty of other candidates for economic exploitation by the PCs.

In the field of food, erdlu eggs top the list, being both a delicacy and a temporary substitute for water. Indeed, the nomadic elven herdsman seem to rely on them almost as much as the plains Indians relied on the bison, using their scales as armor, their beaks and claws as spearheads and knife blades, and their tendons as bowstrings. Any sorcerer-king who is tired of putting up with elves in the vicinity may go the cavalry vs. Indians route and drive off their erdlus to devastate the elves' primitive economy. Note that unlike the cavalry, no sorcerer-king can afford to simply slaughter the enemy's favored animals and leave them to rot; the barren

conditions of Athas make any waste of valuable resources intolerable.

Among the most valuable plant products of Athas is the ranike tree of the Ringing Mountains. When it is burned, its sap gives off an aroma that repulses all insects, including giant ones, particularly the intelligent thri-kreen. Thus, this tree can be a valuable weapon in a battle against Athas' toughest hunters (at least among the intelligent races), assuming the wind's blowing the right way. If any character has qualms about employing chemical warfare against the thri-kreen, I hope he likes being chased down and harassed by a hyperactive foe who never needs to sleep. Travelers to the Ringing Mountains have the mysterious mountain-sickness to deal with, but the profits to be made in the sale of ranike wood are worth it.

Intrigue

This type of adventure can be used in any gaming world with a society, but

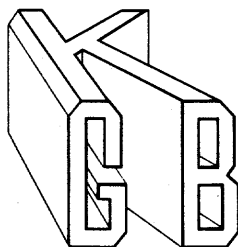
Athas has a number of cases that deserve special attention. The prime example, of course, is the hunt for local branches of the Veiled Alliance that all the sorcerer-kings engage in. Templar PCs can expect to spend much of their time searching for this hidden brotherhood of preservers, and can expect ambushes during the search and a really nasty battle if they catch their prey. Templar clerical magic (granted by the sorcerer-king) vs. the magic spells of preservers, augmented by whatever psionic abilities individuals on either side have—not something you want to get caught in the middle of.

In the matter of ambushes, here is as good a place as any to point out that in the matter of some illusions, preservers have a better chance of having their magical mirages believed than defilers do. Oh, defilers can cast illusions of destructive spells, and even obvious magical constructs such as a *wall of force*, but when the illusion is of something natural, such

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DARK SUN[®]

W O R L D



as a building, a pit, an animal, or monster, the preserver has the advantage. If all the plants in the neighborhood dry up and blow away when a hungry lion appears, even the dumbest NPC is liable to figure out that he is facing an illusion, particularly as animal-summoning spells are the province of priest classes, not wizards. Thus, preserver mages have a reward for being good that partially offsets their slow rate of advancement: they have a far greater variety of items that they can believably duplicate with illusions.

Getting back to the Veiled Alliance, aside from the espionage scenario, just gaining admission to the secret society can be an adventure in itself. Just one little slip, and your PCs can wind up very dead. The DM may want to make things interesting by having the PC mage roll to determine his chances of forgetting the password, with failure being punished by the method mentioned above. If you don't want to risk killing off the character that easily, then have him roll anyway, and don't tell him that nothing bad will happen if he blows it, or at least nothing worse than a missed interview. The extra excitement it will bring to the scene will cause him to forgive your sneakiness; trust me.

Next on the intrigue line, we have the arch-enemies of the Veiled Alliance in the cities: the templars. Aside from their epic conflict with the preservers, templars also must root out illegal defilers, psionicists, and anyone who can read and write, make sure the local merchants kick in plenty of money for them, terrorize the population so that they don't dare even think about revolt, and advance over the bodies of their fellows while avoiding a similar fate. As you may have guessed, a templar's days are full, indeed.

We now turn to another class of templar victims: the merchants. Aside from dealing with the sorcerer-kings' agents, merchants must compete against each other, as well as deal with often shady (especially if they're elves) suppliers. Those merchants who must transport goods cross-country also may have to make deals with local nomadic and slave tribes to avoid attack, or even to get them to attack the outposts and caravans of a rival house. Since merchants are not a PC class, the characters will be bodyguards or go-betweens in this sort of adventure. Bards are ideal for the latter category.

One might think that an adventure centered on the gladiatorial arenas would be only for combat-happy players, but in fact,

a surprising amount of intrigue can be centered around these warriors-for-entertainment. The real gladiators of ancient Rome often had other duties; both Julius Caesar and Mark Antony had bodyguard units composed entirely of gladiators. Such units sometimes numbered in the thousands, making small armies. Also, the conflicts between gladiators in the arena can be proxy conflicts between the nobles who own them. Read the *DRAGONLANCE*[®] saga novel *Time of the Twins* for inspiration. Other inspirations could be the horse racing industry, where rivals often drug or poison their opponents' "livestock," and the boxing and wrestling world, where shady characters often attempt to fix matches. That braxat swinging a spiked club in the arena may be the least of your worries.

Exploration

Since so much of Athas is unknown to the inhabitants of the Tyr region, particularly the Hinterlands, exploration scenarios may be more common than they are in most game worlds. Of course, in the pragmatic world of the DARK SUN campaign, knowledge for knowledge's sake isn't going to be much of a factor. The sorcerer-kings, the nobles, and the merchant houses all will be looking for new resources, particularly iron. This may make throwing an expedition together somewhat easier, as the PCs will be more assured of having NPC financial backing, but too many explorations that don't pay for themselves by the discovery of new goods are a good way to get yourself transformed from mighty adventurer to agricultural slave.

War

This is a very common scenario in the DARK SUN world, on both large and small scales. Revolts in the cities will be fairly common, if futile, due to the harshness of the living conditions, with Raam as a particularly likely candidate. Ambitious nobles will use the mobs in the streets, as well as their own private armies, to set themselves up as new rulers if they can. Not surprisingly, the sorcerer-kings oppose this. See the five-volume DARK SUN[®] "Prism Pentad" series for examples.

With all the marauding tribes of nomads and escaped slaves running around, to say nothing of nonhuman races such as thri-kreen and giants, it is somewhat surprising that more punitive expeditions have not been launched. If a PC fighter reaches

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DARK SUN[®]

at least moderately high level—enough for the local politicians to notice him—and starts building his own army, he may be “invited” to do his city a service by taking his troops out into the desert to hunt down a particularly nasty group of raiders. Either he wipes out the raiders, they wipe him out, or he comes home a failure, in which case the authorities have a plausible reason to kill or imprison him. An option no one likes to talk about is that he can abandon the city for good in the event of failure, with his unit becoming a band of mercenaries, or even turning to raiding in its turn.

Punitive expeditions in widely-varying terrain conditions are an excellent way to test a PC's mettle, to say nothing of his tactical ability. Aside from roaming around in the desert, he may have to find a way to attack giant-haunted islands in the Sea of Silt (possibly using tanklike versions of the broad-wheeled vehicles some dwarves use), or clean out a stretch of the halflings' forest without getting his entire command slaughtered. Note that a successful commander will be a popular one with the people, and thus likely to be assassinated as a threat by jealous nobles or the sorcerer-king himself.

Finally, we come to organized warfare

between regular armies. In the DARK SUN setting, this is less for political aggrandizement than for the capture of vital resources (slaves, food, iron, etc.). This was best shown in the novel *The Crimson Legion* novel, where Urik's king Hamanu took advantage of the death of Kalak to try and seize Tyr's vital iron mines. The final straw for Hamanu (after the repulsion of the initial invasion) was when Rikus' riposte captured Urik's equally vital obsidian mines, and then set off a costly slave revolt in Urik itself. Despite Hamanu's eventual military success, the disruption of trade in iron and obsidian, as well as the huge depletion of his slave labor force, makes him a loser all around.

A look at the map included in the DARK SUN boxed set shows that some cities are natural enemies of each other, due to proximity; why go to the trouble of marching an army farther over the desert than you have to? Thus, Urik and Tyr are natural foes, even before Kalak's death. Urik also can plausibly square off against Nibenay, Gulg, and Raam. No wonder Hamanu's such a great general: he's had plenty of practice.

Nibenay and Gulg have each other as arch-enemies, particularly due to the harvesting of agafari trees by the former.

Nibenay also can fight Tyr, Raam, Urik, Balic, and Draj, while Draj has Raam, Nibenay, and probably Balic and Gulg as foes. Gulg must face Nibenay, Balic, Urik, and Tyr, and possibly Draj, while aside from Urik, Tyr has only Gulg and probably Nibenay as relatively close enemies. Balic is probably farther away from potential foes than any other city, but both Nibenay and Gulg are relatively close. Raam, the most unstable of the cities, has Urik, Draj, Nibenay, and Gulg as relatively close neighbors. Thus, if the DM is planning to have a war somewhere, some cities make better foes than others in particular regions. Of course, with a dire enough need, any city on the map is fair game for any other, no matter how far away it is.

Of all the cities, Gulg and Raam are the most vulnerable to attack, due to having the least advanced weapons in their armies. Their only special advantages are the massive forest hedge that is Gulg's outer wall and the huge number of citizens that Raam can press into service in an emergency. Actually, Gulg's main defense wouldn't be all that effective against a determined attack. A defensive wall of living plants: what do you think defilers are for? They could punch a huge breach in such a wall far quicker than their wiz-



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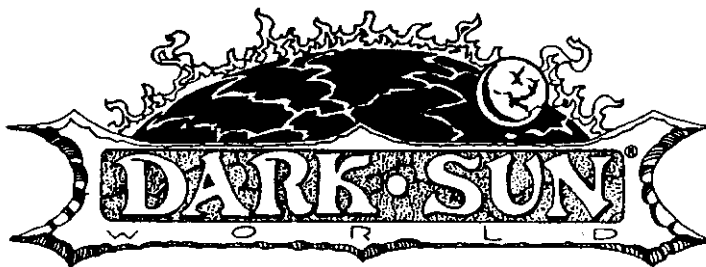
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iardly counterparts in any other game world could, because they don't even need mass-destruction spells. Just casting any spell would be enough to wither away the plant wall.

Raam's population is so unstable that it is at least as much a hindrance as an advantage. The people of Raam openly despise their sorcerer-king (queen?), and openly speak of revolt, even scaring her templars off the streets. If one of Raam's neighbors—say, Draj—wanted to take over the city in a serious attack, the very first thing they would do would be to sponsor a rebellion. If it succeeds, Raam will have no ruler, losing both her own magic and psionics and the spells that her templars would normally have access to, to say nothing of probable confusion as to who was in charge. If, as is more likely, the rebellion was crushed, then the bloodshed inside the city would be so great that Raam's numerical advantage would certainly be dissipated. If the invasion came right on the heels of a rebellion, Abalach-Re might also be reluctant to place weapons in the hands of her recently rebellious subjects, further cutting down her numerical lead.

If your campaign takes place in the period when Kalak is dead, with no sorcerer-king in Tyr, then that city also will be a tempting target. It would be surprising if Hamanu did not make another attack, while the legendary wealth that Tyr's iron mines give her would act as a magnet for everyone else on the map. Any PCs who have read *The Crimson Legion* might be understandably reluctant to serve in a Tyrian army under Rikus' command, particularly as the city must now be running short of gladiators.

Mix & match worlds

This can cover any of the previous categories, taking place when a magical portal allows access between Athas and some other AD&D gaming world. Given the relative harshness of Athas, most of the traffic will be one-way, with the Athasians desperately scouring the newfound world for resources of all sorts. Indeed, the marching orders for any group going from Athas to a more normal AD&D world can be stated as follows: "Mug anyone with iron." Indeed, one option for DMs who favor really big wars could be an alliance of all the cities, and possibly all the other power groups, on Athas, with the intention of conquering some other world and migrating there *en masse*.

Some worlds might be more logical

targets than others, if the DM thinks about it. The Arabian world of Zakhara is quite similar to Athas in matters of climate. To put it another way, Athas is like Zakhara, only more so. If an invasion of the Realms is in order, then the Dark Continent (see David Hower's article of that name in DRAGON issue #189) would be the next target. Both areas are described as having natural defenses against invaders in the form of the terrific heat and (in Zakhara's case) desert terrain. An Athasian army stymied by heat and desert terrain? It is to laugh.

There is no question that DARK SUN characters are, man-for-man, tougher than their equivalents on other worlds, particularly since they all have at least one psionic power. The DM can best get a handle on this by running small expeditions at first, to get used to the mixture of conditions. Athasian PCs may even be somewhat blasé about many threats that leave others shivering in terror. ("The Demiplane of Dread? Hah! Get yourself stranded in the middle of the Tablelands without water; then you'll have something to dread!")

One way to drive home the point of Athasian superiority is to adjust levels to the differing conditions of the game worlds. Remember, all DARK SUN single-classed characters start at 3rd level, two levels higher than their counterparts in all other game worlds. Try this stunt: when introducing an Athasian party to another gaming module, add two more levels to them than the maximum allowed in the module. Remember *The Vault of the Drow* adventure from the original AD&D game? Put in a party of 16th-level Athasians and watch the fun. How many drow does it take to bring down a 16th-level mul gladiator with a wild talent like All-Round Vision, Combat Mind, or Danger Sense? Too many for any drow commander sensitive about high casualties. And if the race in question is half-giant or thri-kreen, look out drow!

The prevalence of iron weapons and armor alone will be more than enough incentive for DARK SUN characters to adventure in another gaming world. By contrast, characters from the other gaming worlds will find the exploration of Athas a relatively discouraging prospect, given the lack of what they consider wealth. Even a character from the RAVENLOFT® setting, if given a choice between Athas and the Demiplane of Dread, might think long and hard before

making up his mind. Remember that non-psionics will be at a considerable disadvantage, and magic-users will be looked at askance by the bulk of the population, thus making negotiations difficult. Bards will face more suspicion than they usually do, and paladins will be simply incomprehensible to the Athasians. Elves, half-elves, halflings, and dwarves are in for considerable culture shock; just imagine Bilbo Baggins' reaction if he were accused of cannibalism.

The DARK SUN world of Athas is a harsh and brutal place, much more so than any of the other gaming worlds that TSR has put out for the AD&D game. The stark attention the inhabitants of Athas pay to the laws of survival will shock newcomers, both players and characters alike. This novelty and culture shock makes for an interesting series of adventures, quite different from those anywhere else. Come to Athas, savor the novelty—and bring along all the water you can carry.



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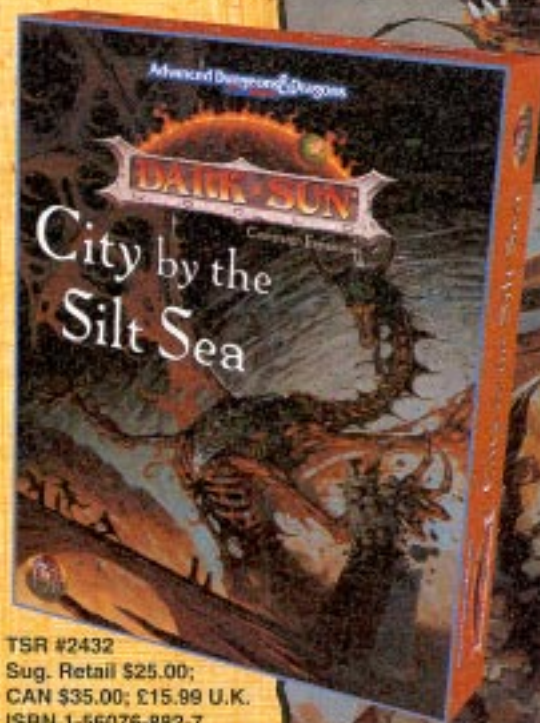
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I have been reading your magazine for about three years now and I can't help but notice other gamers writing in to quarrel over which class(es) are superior to others. In all their debates they seem to have missed the ultimate Monty Haul incarnate: the cleric.

The cleric has the second best hit points and THAC0, second only to the fighter in both cases, and one of the better saving-throw tables. Like the fighter he has unlimited armor selection, and his limit to weapon selection is only one weapon shy of the thief. This combined with his spells and ability to turn undead puts him far above the non-magic-using classes.

He is far superior to his magic-using counterpart, the mage. The cleric has a much better spell progression than the mage at higher levels, and any race may be a cleric, not just humans, elves, and half-elves. Both can create new magical items, spells, scrolls, and potions. In the spell department, the cleric has a monopoly on any type of spell that can heal, and many of his spells require nothing more than his holy symbol as a material component. His spell selection is also greatly enhanced, since all a player needs to do is whip out a copy of the *Player's Handbook* and choose the spells he desires—whereas a mage has to look through his spell books (which may be lost, stolen, or destroyed) and pick through the meager selection that he has accumulated over his adventuring career.

The cleric's spells on average also are more powerful than the mage's. Sure, a

mage may have spells such as *fireball* or *finger of death*, and maybe a few fortunates may have access to a *limited wish* or *wish* spell. These last two spells, of course, will cause a mage to age at an accelerated rate, and the result of their casting is open to the DM's interpretation, which has backfired on more than one PC. The cleric, on the other hand, has such vile spells as *cause disease*, *harm* (the reverse of *heal*), and *creeping doom* (1,000 points of damage?!), which are much more formidable. Pity the adventurer who encounters a cleric with a *quest spell* (from the *Tome of Magic*) at his disposal.

The cleric's spell-casting ability, combined with his ability to turn undead, the second best THAC0 and hit points, unlimited armor selection, saving throws, and weapon selection put him head and shoulders above all the other classes. And what do we have to balance all this out: the second best experience-point advancement in the game. I fall to see the balance.

Adam Bickford
Waterville ME

I have been role-playing in the same campaign for over four years and have thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Recently I started a new player character, a priestess, and for the first time in my gaming experience, I am disappointed in the game because the spell capabilities of priests tend to set them in the backdrop of the campaign. As a result, I am disappointed with my character's growth and expansion because the spells for the priest class tend to be repetitious and weak, especially in comparison to the same level of wizard spells.

First off, let me justify myself. My enjoyment in the AD&D® game does not depend on how many monsters I can kill and how much treasure I can accumulate. My enjoyment does, however, depend on how much input my character can have into the game. Other player characters and NPCs come to my character for healing. I realize, as the other PCs do, that my priestess can do more than just heal, but every time they're lining up for healing, much like grade school kids line up for booster shots, all of my female protecting instincts go berserk, and I find myself playing the mother—not a good character to be trapped into when playing in a deeply political and war-strewn campaign.

In a tight situation, a priest is not much help, unless another ally falls during battle. A mage can use powerful aggressive spells like *fireball*, *disintegrate*, and *lightning bolt* spells. He can protect himself and the party by casting *stone skin*, *invisibility*, *Bigby's Interposing Hand*, and *teleport*. He even can heal—himself through *polymorph* spells, and others through the healing spells for wizards presented in DRAGON issue #148. But the priest is so limited in comparison.

A priest can protect herself from fire—with three different spells, each at a higher level than the one before and each better than the one before. When my character was finally able to use third-level spells, I found that she was repeating many of the lower spells that she already had—not that they weren't more powerful spells, but how about some variety? I want to expand my character in terms of her abilities rather than repeat the same abilities over and over. As the priest character gets to be higher level, she gets more variety in spells, but what takes her so long?

Both priest and wizard gain the ability to cast *dispel magic* at 3rd level, but the wizard's version has a range of 120 yards and a casting time of 3. The priest's version, on the other hand, only has a range of 60 yards and a casting time of 6. Many of the priest spells take much longer to cast than a similar wizard spell. Often, my priestess attempts to show off her abilities during battle by casting a spell, only to have it interrupted during the long casting time by a sword blow in the side.

When *The Complete Wizard's Handbook* came out, I read the new spells, salivating at the thought of what my character could do if she were only a wizard. Then *The Complete Priest's Handbook* hit the shelves. I bought it without opening it, assuming that there would be new priest spells in it. Needless to say, I was disappointed. I see many issues of DRAGON Magazine devoted to the mage, featuring new spells, new powers, new insights. I have yet to find an issue celebrating priests of the traditional deities, those gods that many gamers already have set in their campaigns. [Editor's Note: Look at DRAGON issue #209. Its theme was clerics and druids.—Dale] I would very much like for my 10th-level priestess to be as relied

upon and as powerful as the 10th-level wizard in my campaign, but for that to happen, the priest character class needs to be expanded.

Melody Alder
Decatur IL

Congratulations to Dan Joyce for his article in issue #200, "The Color of Magic!" Modifying the manifestations of spells without changing their stats is just the thing we need to keep the game fresh. The next time you attack a mage who's hung around with the drow a lot, that impenetrable corridor-wide cobweb might just turn out to be a *wall of force*. However, the potential for versatility does not stop with wizard spells.

Recall, if you will, those grand old days of the original AD&D game, when clerics could employ *all* listed clerical spells no matter what sort of deity they worshiped. Anyone with an intelligence of more than three must be able to see where I'm heading by now. Why restrict 2nd Edition AD&D game priests to certain spheres of magic just because their deities seem to be limited? Using Mr. Joyce's system for priests, we can restore to the priest class all the varied spells it enjoyed in the original game. All we have to do is modify their appearance a bit.

Suppose your priest Olaf Grimtooth worships Thor (a perennial favorite). Using Mr. Joyce's system, and converting it to priest spells, *flame strike* becomes a literal bolt from the blue, composed of heat lightning. Similarly, *insect plague* becomes a massive volley of miniature warhammers, animated *a la Mordenkainen's sword*. With a deity of war, any protective spell, such as *protection from fire* can cause the recipient to seem to be wearing a suit of armor. If he's already wearing one, the armor could glow as if enchanted. Does that enemy NPC priest worship a death god or goddess? *Spiritual hammer* looks like a primitive warhammer with a head made of bone, while any summoned animals have an illusion cast over them to make them appear to be undead. A casting of *shillelagh* could make the club or staff appear to be a long bone, while *wall of thorns* appears to be a *wall of bones* from *Oriental Adventures*, albeit with much smaller bones.

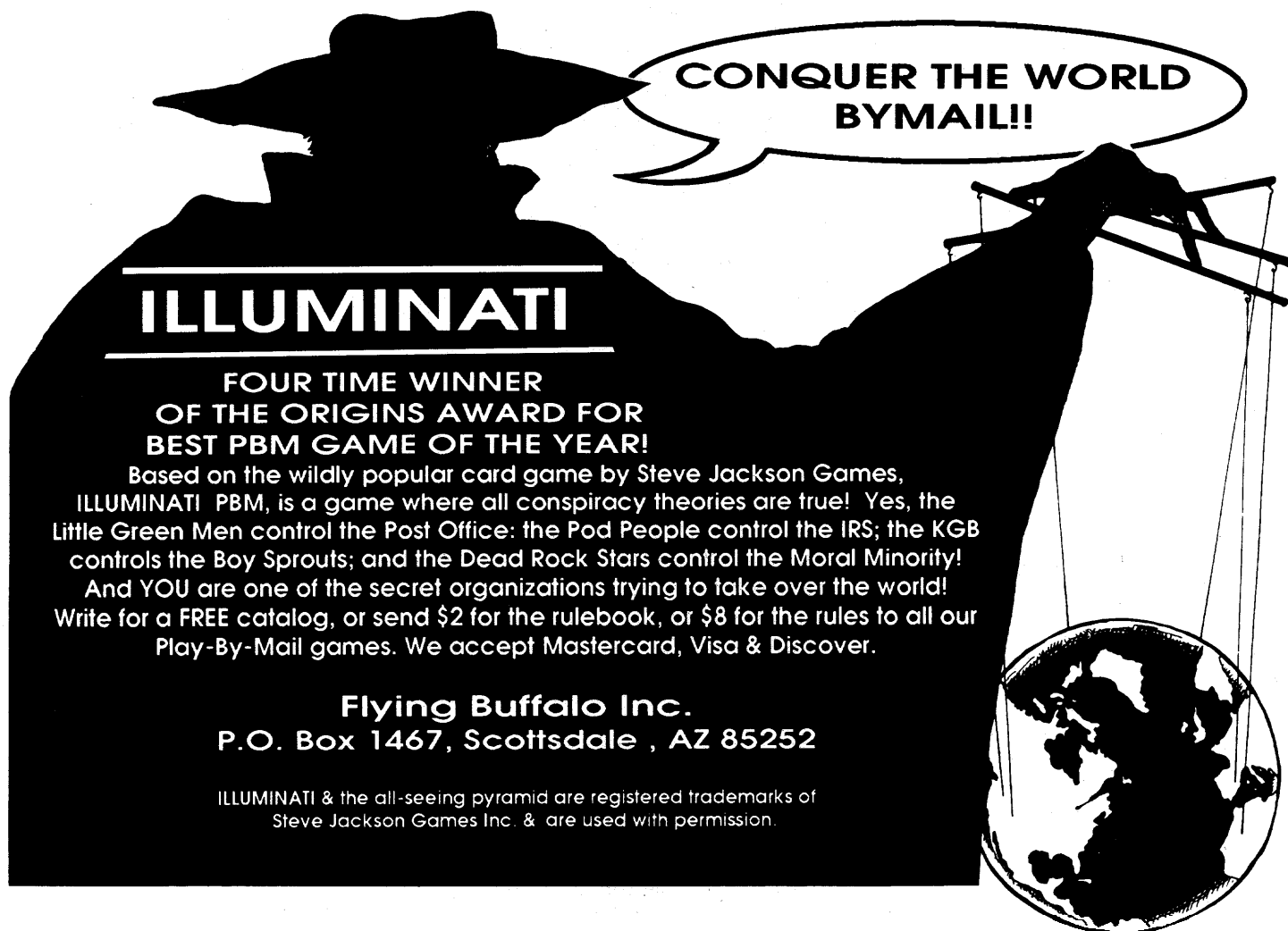
The game value for this sort of thing goes beyond merely making spells mysterious. Suppose the PCs are told that their next target is a temple of some sort, but it is not known what deity is worshipped there. A magical skirmish with some of the acolytes can provide valuable clues, just by noting the appearance of the spells used

against them and what "normal" spells they seem to correspond to. Of course, the party will have to take some licks before they're sure of what they're facing, but this is hardly unusual on an adventure anyway. To be sure, many mythos have similar deity specialties, but this will at least cut down on the number of possible candidates. All in all, this is an excellent system for adding variety and mystery to the priest class.

Gregory W. Detwiler
Williamsburg PA

I have been a player of the AD&D game for 11 years, and I've appreciated the sensitivity to imagination and mythology that has accompanied this long relationship. Although not a perfect system, I have always returned to it to meet my entertainment needs after venturing off into other gaming universes. I have seen the game mature since I began playing it in the days when its basic boxed set had that atrocious artwork on the front, and I would like to contribute to its ongoing evolution.

The particular rule that has plagued me since I first used it as a player and as a dungeon master was the phenomena of the parrying combat maneuver. Either method, as described in the *Player's Hand-*



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book or the *Complete Fighter's Handbook*, leaves much to be desired in continuity with real weapon combat. The books on rapier fighting I have read and the fencing classes I have taken all support the fact that the parrying rule, as it stands now, is inadequate in its reflection of realistic counter-melee. I would not complain if I did not possess what I thought was a better solution.

When two combatants face off in deadly combat, one can assume each is trying to deflect the aggression of the other while looking for weaknesses in form or openings where to focus their own attacks. Parrying, therefore, should be assumed and ignored in normal combat engagements (in other words, a fighter with two combat actions per round could not attack with one and parry with the other because they represent two diametrically opposed forms, stances and attitudes toward the opponent and defending oneself is assumed to occur to a lesser degree anyway).

However, when a fighter wishes to cease his aggression and concentrate on defensive maneuvers only, for whatever reason (to block attacks against a weaker ally, to stave off certain death until reinforcements arrive, etc.), then additional rules for parrying can apply. Rolling a d20 against your opponents armor class, as put forth in the *Complete Fighter's Handbook*, to block their well-aimed, well-timed sword swing is ridiculous. It doesn't matter if your opponents are wearing plate mail or leather if they are swinging a battle-axe—you're blocking the axe, not their armored torso. Likewise, the ever-increasing parrying ability suggested in the *Player's Handbook* is vague and unsatisfactory.

I propose that in order to parry an opponent's attack, the defender must roll higher on a d20 than his foe's attack roll, regardless of his enemy's armor class. The defender's parrying roll would be modified by the same things that modify his attack rolls (i.e., strength, specialization, style, magic) because these things do add to one's ability to beat back an oncoming blade with either skill, brute strength, or magic. Additional modifiers, however, also seem applicable, such as for shields and differences in weapon size between the combatants. Since shields were made for defense, using one expressly for this purpose makes a defender a hard target indeed (until the shield is too crumpled or broken—its hit points exceeded or if it failed a save vs. crushing blow). Also, parrying with a dagger against a two-handed sword is not as advisable as parrying with a battle-axe. The following chart displays the possible modifiers that would apply under different circumstances.

Weapon size & shield modifiers		
Defender	Attacker	Modifier
S	S	0
S	M	- 2
S	L	- 4
M	S	+2
M	M	0
M	L	- 2
L	S	+4
L	M	+2
L	L	0
Buckler (50 hp, or save +0)		+2
Small (75 hp, or save + 1)		+3
Medium (100 hp, or save +2)		+4
Body (150 hp, or save +3)		+5

Lastly, a defender can parry all incoming attacks each round in as many directions as he has attacks in one round (i.e., fighters who can attack 3/2 per round, may, for example, parry all front attacks in round one, and all front and one flank attacks the next round). The only constraint on this ability is that the two parried sides must be adjacent to each other (i.e, a defender could not parry front and rear attacks in the same round). The off hand or weapon hand also may be used to parry attacks from a side adjacent to the primary defense (to the left or right depending on which arm is the primary). The penalty for off-hand weapon use applies here too (-2/-4), adjusted by Dexterity bonuses, fighting style, etc.

Parries against or with magic weapons should be handled with saves vs. crushing blow for each successful parry in favor of the wielder of the magical weapon, who should never have to make such a roll. Parrying an enchanted *long sword* + 3 should be a terrifying ordeal for any upstart warrior with a common steel blade (which would save, in the above example, with a - 3 penalty).

I hope you can use this idea for adding more excitement and realism to parrying. The AD&D system is very open-ended and malleable to everyone's tastes and preference; and this fact no doubt has contributed to its long-term success.

Philip N. Toomey
Huntsville AL

Could you accept one more letter in response to Mark Krzeminski's request for "outside adventuring" and town encounter suggestions? I have several suggestions I feel will help him and others.

First, get your hands on the original AD&D game source book by Kim Mohan entitled *Wilderness Survival Guide*. This book has excellent ideas to use in creating a believable world (10-mile-diameter forests just are not believable). You may be able to enlist a local gaming store for assistance in locating the book, or you can put an ad in the paper for used AD&D materials. Believe it or not, some people quit playing the game and have all sorts of useful items they have no longer need. Also get a copy of DMGR5 *Creative*

Campaigning.

Second, try to find a copy of the 2nd Edition module called "Wild Things." It's a few years old (copyright 1990), but still may be available. This module refers to the *Wilderness Survival Guide* rules and gives several examples of woodland encounters (among others).

Third, even if you cannot find the above-mentioned offerings, put all kinds of "nas-ties" in your woods—you know, poisonous snakes, spiders, trees that throw apples (guess where I got that idea), and any other meanies you can create. Hey, the early Europeans who came to the Americas were *fanatically* superstitious about the forests. They thought of the woods as the devil's playground. Give your bold adventurers something to do (or run like mad from) while they're in the woods, and they'll thank you for it!

Another idea is to have them get lost in the dark heart of the forest trying to find the path out before they run out of rations or run into a snare or pit placed by evil pixies.

Maybe they find an arcane rune; unrecognized and meaningless to them now; it could be an essential key to unlocking a mysterious map later in the campaign. This keeps your players paying attention to details.

Speaking of details, you seem to have problems describing the town's populace. Most people in the city will be wearing "brown boots and a jacket," but, not to be rude, so what? How do they eye the party in passing? Do they glare and mumble about trouble-bringing, good-for-nothing, out-of-town thieves and marauders? Are they curious, giving quick, furtive glances and then look away while children run up and beg to see the fighter's sword or ask if the party has killed any dragons? Are they happy to greet those who have come to rid the city of its most recent infestation of evil? Could they be superstitious about men in robes and pointed hats? Chances are, there will be all kinds in every city.

Don't forget the laborers, either. Blacksmiths with bulging, sweaty arms, bakers with aprons and flour-coated faces, shoemakers with tiny hammers dangling from well-worn leather belts, and yes, even ladies of the evening will be common sights in your towns and cities. Descriptive? Sure, but not a wardrobe recitation.

Lastly, remember that cities appeal to all the senses! Not only do you see, you hear the hammer and anvil, the town crier, and the clomp and rattle of horsedrawn wagons. You smell the acrid chimney smoke, the freshly baked bread, and the horse manure in the streets. You feel the cobblestones through the worn soles of your boots, and sweat stings in your eyes. Your teeth rip into the warm, tender venison that you wash down with stout ale, all the while thankful that you survived another dreadful forest trek between towns. Maybe next time you'll take the road . . .

DMs are the rulers of their game worlds; as such, they must give them the breath of life!

Joel E. Moyer
Emporia KS

I am writing in response to a letter featured in *Forum*, DRAGON Magazine issue #203. The letter written by Joe Kutcherfield discussed the role-playing element of games.

First things first: I have just quit my role-playing group. I then read the letter by Kutcherfield about the flaws associated with the overemphasis placed on role-playing rather than roll-playing. One side of me agrees with his description of a role-player who hampers a game by role-playing too much on minor issues. Too much role-playing can affect the progress of a game. But a lack of role-playing makes a game dull; no interaction between player characters means that to have fun the players need to solve the game. Games like Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU* system thrive on players role-playing—to role-play is to have fun.

The reason I quit my group was that there was no role-playing; players were not creating characters but statistics. The fun for me was player interaction, not winning as if it were a board game. Kutcherfield may be right that role-playing is dominating the hobby, but without it,

what is role-playing?

Lee Sutton
Norfolk, England

I have finally been inspired to write to *Forum*. And the inspiration behind this? Joe Kutcherfield. Mr. Kutcherfield states that too much emphasis is placed on the "role" aspect of role-playing games. Well, sir, I do not agree.

Everyone has their own reason for gaming. There are those who like the action, others the intellectual challenges of puzzles or mysteries, the Monty Haulers, and of course the role-players. This list is by no means complete, but you get the idea. There are a lot of ways to game, and none of us has the "proper" way.

In my opinion, it seems Mr. Kutcherfield is looking for a computer game more than a role-playing game. In many of these you have a straight objective (save the planet, stop the invaders, take over the world, etc.) in which you gain items of power, defeat the enemy, and obtain the prize. This sounds like your idea of an adventure, Joe. If you look closely, it seems like your alpha/omega example in the letter you wrote, and to me, this is very boring.

When I game, I like to role-play as well as the rest of my group. Granted, we do not sit around arguing the proper way to spell our names, but I assume this to be sarcasm on Mr. Kutcherfield's part. We

interact, make our own goals, and spread them through the current adventure. Hey, that kind of sounds like life to me.

I like the adventure of gaming, but if it is sidetracked by PC interaction amongst each other or with NPCs, so much the better. Most adventures do not have a time limit, and do not have to be completed in a few sessions. So why feel as though there is a time limit?

The only point that I agree with Mr. Kutcherfield on is if the two "role-players" dominate the gaming session. Everyone is there to play, so maybe they can go off to the side and role-play. Many times when my GM takes someone to the side, the rest of the group continues to role-play. Or we go off to the side and role-play while the rest of the party goes on with the GM; it's not very hard to do.

I am a little saddened and quite annoyed with Mr. Kutcherfield's generalization of what he sees as a minority (at least in his group). Neither myself nor anyone else in the gaming field needs elitist sentiments coming from one of our own. Go ahead and play for your reasons and I will play for mine. Do not come down on two players who want to actually role-play their characters instead of some automaton that goes around mindlessly for the "goal." Ask the other players to role-play off to the side so all of you can enjoy the game. Do not penalize them because they are having

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a good time. Otherwise, maybe you should be penalized double experience for not playing your character realistically (that means role-playing) while gaining standard experience for reaching your goal.

Matt Lunak
534 Brockton Ln.
Schaumburg IL 60193

I have read the letter in issue #203 on power gaming, and I agree that it does get very bothersome when people tell other people that their games are weak just for following the rules. It isn't isolated. In my 13 years of playing the game, I have run into many people who play impossibly powerful characters. One person told me that his character had scores of 60 in all of his abilities (a character that started at 1st level with all 25s), and that those scores could go up to 100. These people either don't know the rules, or they just don't care about the rules. I have some suggestions for people who play by the rules and get into groups that don't play by the rules.

One situation is where you get into a group with a DM who plays power games. These games can be very fun at times with all the chaos that comes out of them. The only problem is that you are suddenly being given more power than most of the gods have. If you are playing one of these games, and you get things that you don't think you deserve, such as millions of

experience points or tons of treasure, don't take them. Then, when you play with a real group you will still have a normal character. For example, I played one game where the DM was putting us in the outer planes and giving us up to three extra levels just for seeing a god. This could have put most of the people in the group over level twenty for doing nothing. I just didn't add them onto my character.

The other situation is when you are running the game and a player has a power character. This can be fun at times, because the DM can use power control. Part of the job of being a DM is to keep the balance in the game and to make sure that the characters don't get overpowered.

There was a high-level game that I was running where a player claimed to have a high-level evil ranger character. He told me that this ranger had won a ring that would bring all of his abilities to 25. He also said that this character could fire five arrows at a time and had many wild psionic talents.

I allowed this character and all of his possessions, with the exception of the bow that he said he killed a solar for, into the game. I remembered that the only way that a paladin or a ranger could do evil things and still use their powers is if they are being controlled. So, I decided that the evil gods had some control over his character, and that they would only give him the powers if he did their will.

While he was feeling powerful, he used his wild talents to summon a fiend. He rolled a 20 and got the attention of a powerful extraplanar creature. After he killed this fiend by himself, more started appearing all around the party. Many characters in the group got badly damaged and the ranger almost got killed. The rest of the players got slightly angry with the player of the ranger. He started to realize that I played by the rules, and that within the rules he isn't more powerful than everything.

There also are those people who read about monsters just before fighting them so they know exactly what they need to do to kill them. What these people don't think about is that these creatures might have gotten something new and different that is unexpected. Even if a power player is fighting a super-powerful fiend with a sword that can do 153 points of damage per hit, the fiend might have gotten a *wish* spell to keep him at full hit points for a while, or something that will reverse the damage. Always, remember, the enemy always can get the same things that a player character can. When playing by the rules, even a powerful character will have to think to survive.

There can be problems with people who get mad when you do something to get rid of their character or to keep their power down to a normal level. Another person whom I ran a game for said that his character had help from a wizard who could do anything. He said that this wizard would stay with him forever for saving his life. If this wizard could do anything, why did the character have to save the wizard's life? He also said that he had over six sextillion platinum pieces. He kept all of this in a castle that could trap a god in one of his seven pocket dimensions. What I did was to put that character through one adventure and tell him that the gods took him up to train to be a lesser demigod. This took his character out of the game, and he didn't get mad about it. I started him with a new 1st-level character that went by the rules.

Sometimes, it's good to use a character that is starting at a high level if the player doesn't have any high-level characters to use in a high-level adventure. These characters should still be made using the rules for random character generation and should be used only for that adventure.

It can sometimes be fun to play with power groups. Just go by the rules for your character or make a separate character for the power groups. The biggest problem that I have seen with power players is that some of them get bored with the game and stop playing. There also are those people who say that other people are weak for playing by the rules. These people should be avoided.

David Shanahan
Glendale AZ

Ω

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The Game Wizards

by Bruce Nesmith

Boost your SPELLFIRE™ decks' power with new RAVENLOFT®, DRAGONLANCE®, and FORGOTTEN REALMS® cards

At the GEN CON® Game Fair, the SPELLFIRE collectible card game got a terrific boost—TSR, Inc. held continuous demonstrations of the game. Everyone who played in a demo game got to keep the deck they played with. Needless to say, the demonstration area was standing room only, with a line waiting to get in. More than 2,500 people walked away with a free deck.

Another big boost was the release of the long awaited RAVENLOFT® SPELLFIRE booster pack. A special edition was on sale at the GEN CON Game Fair that included Promotional Card #2. Everyone who registered at the door during the game fair received Promo Card #1. While these promotional cards were quite common at the convention, they are going to be extremely rare nationwide.

Promo Card #1 is the Legendary Artifact. It is an artifact that can be attached to any champion, regardless of campaign world. It changes that champion's unmodified level to a 10. Promo Card #2 is the Geneva Conclave. It doesn't take a genius to see the pun. It is a holding that can be attached to any realm, regardless of campaign world. The realm and holding become immune to all event cards. Of the two cards, I think the Legendary Artifact is more useful.

I had the pleasure of designing the RAVENLOFT booster pack cards. Each pack has 15 cards, randomly selected from a set of 100. Each pack contains two rare, four uncommon, and nine common cards. The DRAGONLANCE® and FORGOTTEN REALMS® booster packs due out in October and November will have the same mix.

The RAVENLOFT packs contain a new type of card; the rule card. They are like semi-permanent event cards. Only one rule card can be in play at a time. If any player puts down a new rule card, the current rule card is discarded. The RAVENLOFT packs have three rule cards—all rare of course. There is one for each of the DARK SUN®, GREYHAWK® and RAVENLOFT campaign worlds. All future booster packs will contain rule cards.

The DARK SUN setting rule card allows one DARK SUN holding card to be counted as a realm for the victory conditions. This is sure to be a hit. A player can win by plunking down the DARK SUN rule card and win the game even though he only has five realms, so long as there is a DARK SUN holding attached to one of them.

The GREYHAWK rule card allows a GREYHAWK champion to take one wizard spell cast in battle back into the pool with him. It must be played the next time that champion is in combat. This is pretty tough, but not as good as the DARK SUN rule card, in my opinion.

The RAVENLOFT rule card allows all RAVENLOFT realms to be kept hidden. The cards are laid face down, but vertically, to distinguish them from razed realms. The player's opponents have no idea what realm they are attacking until they attack. If the realm is razed, the player can rearrange the positions of all his RAVENLOFT realms. This is a dark and mysterious card, rather like the campaign world itself, but I think also not as tough as the DARK SUN rule card.

In October, the DRAGONLANCE® packs will be shipped. Written by Jean Rabe, head of the RPGA® Network, she choose to focus mostly on the new heroes and villains of the DRAGONLANCE Saga, rather than the all the classic characters. You will see Raistlin, Caramon and Kaz, but not Verminaard or Kitara.

The DRAGONLANCE world features white, red, and black wizards whose magical powers vary with the waning and waxing of the moons of the same colors. Jean has given us a new type of event card to match that. There are event cards for the waxing of each moon, which grant the proper kind of DRAGONLANCE wizard an extra three levels. There also are events and spells that have different effects depending upon if they are used between dawn and 6 P.M. or not. Now I'm going to have to build separate daytime and nighttime SPELLFIRE decks to take advantage of these cards!

Jean wasn't content to stop there. She

also added swimmers to the card mix. swimmer can attack any realm that shows a coastline in its picture, regardless of where in the pyramid it is played. If you want to upset someone with a DRAGONLANCE deck, use a DARK SUN deck. (Go ahead, find the coastlines in those realms!) I'll answer a soon-to-be-common question right now. Evermeet is immune to swimmers because the picture on the card shows a female elf holding a sword. No coastline, no swimmers allowed. It doesn't matter that the Evermeet in the role-playing game is an island.

David Gross, also of the RPGA network, wrote the FORGOTTEN REALMS booster cards. Dave has a very twisted mind. He decided that the SPELLFIRE game needed to have random effects. Since TSR Inc. wouldn't let him include a die with every booster pack, he hit upon another idea. Several of the cards have powers that are only activated by flipping the top card in someone's deck. If the last digit of the card's number falls in the right range, the power works.

This is more insidious than it seems. In most cases, the opponent must flip over a card from his own deck. This means that he loses that card—it never enters his hand! The other thing to keep in mind is that the game is over if any player runs out of cards to draw. With the FORGOTTEN REALMS cards in play, games are going to end sooner than they would otherwise.

The FORGOTTEN REALMS pack also adds much needed high-level clerics. In the current mix, clerics are much weaker than wizards. The cleric deck that I built is no match for most decks built around other themes. In November, when this booster pack is shipped, that won't be as much of a problem any more.

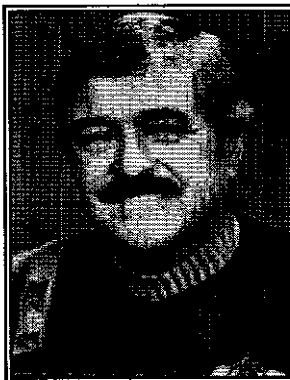
All three of these booster packs make significant contributions to the SPELLFIRE collectible card game. I hope I've revealed enough about each of them to help you decide which ones are best for your decks. Have fun!

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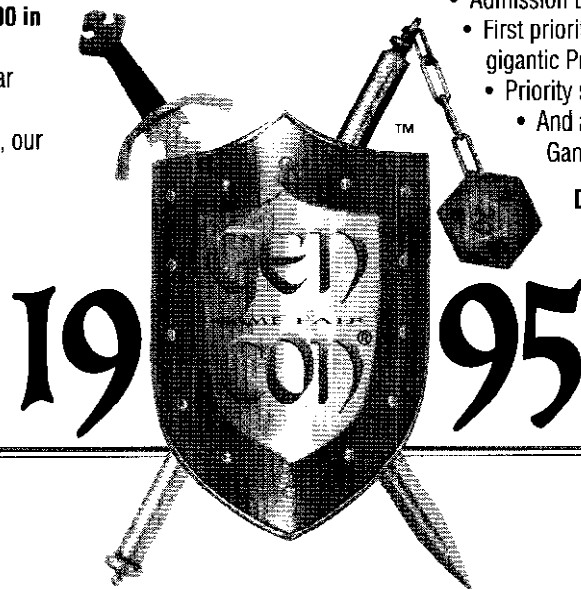
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Convention Calendar

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Important: DRAGON® Magazine no longer publishes phone numbers for conventions. Publishing incorrect numbers is always possible and is a nuisance to both the caller and those receiving the misdirected call. Be certain that any address given is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that your notice was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please avoid sending convention notices by fax, as this method has not proved to be reliable.

QUAD CON '94, Oct. 7-9

IA

This convention will be held at the Palmer Alumni Auditorium in Davenport, Iowa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, a miniatures-painting contest, and an auction. Registration: \$15 preregistered; \$20 on site. Send a long SASE (with two stamps) to: QUAD CON, The Game Emporium, 3213 23rd Ave., Moline IL 61265.

ARTYCON VI, Oct. 8-10

OK

This convention will be held at the Caisson Activity Center in Fort Sill, Okla. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include card games. Registration: \$5/day on site. Write to: Orval, c/o The Game Shack, 2114 Ft. Sill Blvd., Lawton OK 73507.

CON ON THE RIVER '94, Oct. 8-9

MN

This convention will be held in Kryzko Commons on the Winona State University campus in Winona, Minn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$8/weekend preregistered or \$10 on site. Single-day rates available. Write to: CON ON THE RIVER, P.O. Box 751, Winona MN 55987.

SUPERIOR CON II, Oct. 8-9

MI

This convention will be held at the Cisler Center of Lake Superior State University in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich. Guests include Dr. James T. Moody and Randy Asplund-Faith. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an art show, movies, contests, and card games. Registration: \$5/day or \$8/weekend preregistered; \$8/day or \$16/weekend, plus \$2/game on site. Dealers and GMs welcome. Write to: SUPERIOR CON, c/o Lee Allen, 400 Cedar St. #6, S.S. Marie MI 49783.

CONTACT 12, Oct. 14-16

IN

This SF&F/gaming convention will be held at the Ramada Inn in Evansville, Ind. Guests include Dr. Bill Breuer, Ray Van Tilburg, and Tom Prusa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, an art show, a hospitality suite, and panels. Registration: \$22. Write to: CONTACT 12, P.O. Box 3894, Evansville IN 47737.

ICON 19, Oct. 14-16

IA

This SF convention will be held at the Best Western Westfield Inn in Coralville, Iowa. Guests include Gregory Frost, Joe Haldeman, and Mickey Zucker Reichert. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, filking, a masquerade, panels, and an art show. Registration: \$30 on site. One-day rates and children's rates available. Write to: ICON, P.O. Box 525, Iowa City IA 52244-0525.

NECRONOMICON XIII, Oct. 14-16

FL

This convention will be held at the Airport Holiday Inn in Tampa, Fla. Guests include George R. R. Martin and Timothy Zahn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include panels, videos, workshops, a charity auction, and an art show and auction. Registration: \$25/weekend or \$10/day. Write to: NECRONOMICON XIII, P.O. Box 2076, Riverview FL 33569.

TACTICONN '94, Oct. 14-16

CT

This convention will be held at the Ramada Crown Plaza in Stamford, Conn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include numerous tournaments. Registration: \$15 preregistered; \$20 on site. Send an SASE to: Gaming Guild, c/o Jim Wiley, 100 Hoyt St. #2C, Stamford CT 06905.

TOTALLY TUBULAR CON II Oct. 14-16

CA

This convention will be held at the Days Inn in Fullerton, Cal. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA® Network events. Registration: \$20; preregistration will be very limited. Write to: TOTALLY TUBULAR CON, P.O. Box 18791, Anaheim Hills CA 92817-18791; or e-mail at: partdragon@aol.com.

SIBCON '94, Oct. 15

Pa

This convention will be held at Lutheran Youth & Family Services in Zelienople, Pa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA® Network events and dealers. Registration: \$7. Send an SASE to: Circle of Swords, PO. Box 2126, Butler PA 16003.

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



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BAY GAMES '94, Oct. 21-23

MD

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in College Park, Md. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA® Network events. Registration: \$15/weekend preregistered; \$20/weekend or \$15/day on site. Write to: BAY GAMES, P.O. Box 91, Beltsville MD 20704-0091.

NOTJUSTANOTHERCON '94

Oct. 21-23

MA

This convention will be held at the Lincoln Campus Center at the University of Mass., in Amherst. Guests include M.S. Sterling and Courtney Skinner. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include panels, seminars, anime, and an art show and auction. Registration: \$19/weekend or \$10/day on site. Write to: NOTJUSTANOTHERCON, RSO 16, UMass, Amherst MA 01003; or e-mail: amshey@twain.ucs.edu.

SOUTHERN MAINE CON '94

Oct. 21-23

ME

This convention will be held at University of Southern Maine's Portland Campus Center. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include card-game tournaments. Registration: \$10 preregistered; \$12 on site. Game fees: \$2 each. Write to: Richard Davis, Tabletop Gamers, Powers House, Univ. of S. Maine, 96 Falmouth St., Portland ME 04103.

WIZARDS' GATHERING V, Oct. 21-23

MA

This convention will be held at the Days Inn in Fall River, Mass. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$20/weekend. One- and two-day rates available. Early-bird and group discounts also are available. Write to: SMAGS, P.O. Box 6295, Fall River MA 02724.

KETTERING GAME CON XI, Oct. 22-23

OH

This convention will be held at the Charles I. Lathrem Senior Center in Kettering, Ohio. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include computer games and a game auction. Registration: \$2/day. Write to: Bob Von Gruenigen, 804 Willowdale Ave., Kettering OH 45429.

GRANDE MASQUERADE '94

Oct. 28-30

GA

This horror convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Central in Atlanta, Ga. Events include role-playing games, literary guests, dealers, films, and an art show and auction. Registration: \$30 on site. Write (and make checks payable) to: Night Owl Prod., 4598 Stonegate Industrial Blvd., Stone Mountain GA 30083.

NUKECON IV, Oct. 28-29

NE

This convention will be held at the Midlands Community Center in Papillion, Nebr. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include several tournaments. Registration: \$7 preregistered; \$12 on site. Write to: NUKECON, c/o Stephanie Murphy, 13115 Josephine Circle, Omaha NE 68138.

FRONTIER WARS IX, Oct. 29-30

IL

This convention will be held at the Miller Park Pavilion in Bloomington, Ill. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$5/day or \$8/weekend. Game fees: \$1. Write to: Roy Spencer, 1713 Arrowhead, Bloomington IL 61704.

GRAVAL CON '94, Oct. 29-30

MI

This convention will be held at Grand Valley State University's Kirkhof Center in Allendale, Mich. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include costume and painted-miniatures contests. Registration: \$3/day or \$5/weekend; free to GMs and students with valid IDs. Write to: Grand Valley State Univ., GRAVAL CON, 221 Johnson, L.C.1, Allendale MI 49401.

SAINTS' CON V, Oct. 29-30

MN

This convention will be held at Atwood Center Ballroom on the campus of St. Cloud State University in St. Cloud, Minn. Guests include John Nephew. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$3 preregistered; \$5 on site. Write to: Joe Becker, SAINTS CON V, 1404 12th St. SE, St. Cloud MN 56304.

U-CON '94, Nov. 3-5

MI

This convention will be held at the University of Michigan Union in Ann Arbor, Mich. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include seminars and RPGA® Network events. Registration: \$9/weekend or \$6/day preregistered; \$12 or \$8 on site. Write to: U-CON, P.O. Box 4491 AM Arbor MI 48106-4491.

ADVENTURE GAMEFEST '94

Nov. 4-6

OR

This convention will be held at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland, Ore. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a game auction, door prizes, and a miniatures-painting contest. Registration: \$15/weekend. Write to: Adventure Games Northwest, 6517 NE Alberta, Portland OR 97218.

CONQUEST OF SANTA MARIA

Nov. 4-6

CA

This convention will be held at Santa Maria Inn in Santa Maria, Calif. Guests include Richard Garfield, Mike Stackpole, Liz Danforth, and Tom Jolly. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, films, and demos. Registration: \$28 on site. Write to: CONQUEST OF ST. MARIA, P.O. Box 1854, Santa Maria CA 93456-1854.

DEFCON VIII, Nov. 4-6

NJ

This convention will be held at the Ramada Inn at Raritan Center in Edison, N.J. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an auction. Registration: \$15 preregistered; \$20 on site. Single-day rates are available. Write to: DEFCON, 98A Carlton Ave., Piscataway NJ 08854.

FANTASY QUEST '94, Nov. 5

KY

This convention will be held at the Owensboro Executive Inn-Riverview in Owensboro, Ky. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, an auction, and door prizes. Registration: \$5. Write to: FANTASY QUEST, c/o Larry Hedden, P.O. Box 283, Fordville KY 42343.

LEHICON, JR. '94, Nov. 5

PA

This convention will be held at the Wind Gap Fire Hall and American Legion Hall in Wind Gap, Pa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, door prizes, and painted-miniatures contest. Registration: \$8 before Oct. 30; \$10 thereafter. Game fees: \$1. Send a long SASE to:

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- ⇒ **Convention Hours:** 8 a.m. to Midnight Friday and Saturday and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday.
- ⇒ **Dealer Room Hours:** 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday.
- ⇒ There is a parking garage adjacent to the Hyatt Regency. The hotel features three restaurants, and there are other restaurants and sandwich shops within a few blocks of the Hyatt.
- ⇒ The Hyatt offers shuttle transportation to and from the airport. Reserve shuttle times by calling the hotel.
- ⇒ **Preregistration:** Sign up now to attend the WINTER FANTASY convention and receive discount admission.
- ⇒ **RAVENS BLUFF™ Interactive:** Thursday evening, February 9th, the Network offers a special Living City event for members only. Sign up for *Debutante Ball* and bring your favorite LC character. The event runs from 6 p.m. to Midnight.
- ⇒ **Don't delay!** For more information and a registration form, write to:
RPGA Network, P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva, WI., 53147

Tournament Registration And Judge Form

	Friday				Saturday				Sun	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
RPGA® Network AD&D® Feature <i>A Matter of Trust</i> by Theron Martin	★		★		★	★		F	F	★ = single round or first of two rounds F = final round
RPGA Network AD&D Special/Masters <i>Piper's Hill</i> by Carla Hollar and Nicky Rea		★		★	★		F			
RPGA Network AD&D Grand Masters Members 5th level and up <i>Marius the Majestyk</i> by T. Steed & T. Lambertson	★					★				
RPGA Network AD&D Benefit (\$5 charity event) <i>Only Halflings Need Apply</i> by John D. Rateliff		★		★	★		★			
RPGA Network AD&D Survival of the Fittest Event <i>Sands of Fire</i> by Kevin Melka			★			★		★	★	
RPGA Network AD&D Surprise <i>Great Gumballs</i> , by Jeff Grigsby and Mike Dever				★				★	★	
RPGA Network AD&D Club Event <i>Tensions</i> by David Baker		★					★			
RPGA Network Living City Platinum Members only <i>Mansion of the Mad Wizard Ren</i> by James Ward				★	★		★			
RPGA Network Living City Gold Members only <i>Slugfest</i> by James Alan	★		★			★		★		
RPGA Network Living City Silver <i>An Ape for Mr. Mooney</i> by Jean Rabe		★			★				★	
RPGA Network Paranoia <i>Undocumented Features</i> by Scott Nicholson			★				★		★	
RPGA Network MALATRA™ The Living Jungle I Members only <i>From the Gods of Fire Mountain</i> by Kevin Melka	★			★			★			
RPGA Network MALATRA The Living Jungle II Members only <i>Along the River of the Laughing Idol</i> by Tom Prusa		★			★			★		
RPGA Network MALATRA The Living Jungle III Members only <i>Into the Valley of Spirits</i> by Dave Gross (\$5 charity event)			★			★			★	
SPELLFIRE™ Championship Two-round elimination event			★	★	★	★		F	F	
Axis & Allies Battle Royale Two-round advancement competition							★		F	
HMGS Sponsored AMAZING ENGINE™ BUGHUNTERS™ Game A miniatures version of this role-playing favorite			★			★		★		
HMGS Sponsored Introwars Miniature Bash A wahoo introduction to wargaming		★		★	★		★		★	

Plus, many other events will be available on site!

Convention Registration Form

Fees: ☐ Preregistration \$15 ☐ OR Judge preregistration \$10
 ☐ Benefit tournaments: \$5 each ☐ Network Breakfast: \$15

Total fees I have enclosed (Check or Money Order only): _____

☐ I want to judge! I have indicated with a "J" those events above I would like to run and the time slots I desire.

☐ I want to run my own event. I've attached a description and marked the times I want the event to run.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip/Postal Code _____

Phone Number _____

Mail this form and your payment to: RPGA Network, P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva, WI 53147

PENTACON X, Nov. 12-13 **IN**
This convention will be held at Grand Wayne Center in Fort Wayne, Ind. Events include role-

SHAUNCON IX, Nov. 18-20 **MO**
This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson Central in Kansas City, Mo. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures

SOUTHWEST COMIC FESTIVAL
Dec. 9-11 **TX**
 This convention will be held at the Austin Convention Center in Austin, Texas. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a costume contest, art and miniatures contests, films, anime, and panels. Registration: \$25 preregistered, plus \$10 for a comprehensive gaming pass. Write to: SWCF, P.O. Box 650201, Austin TX 78765-0201.

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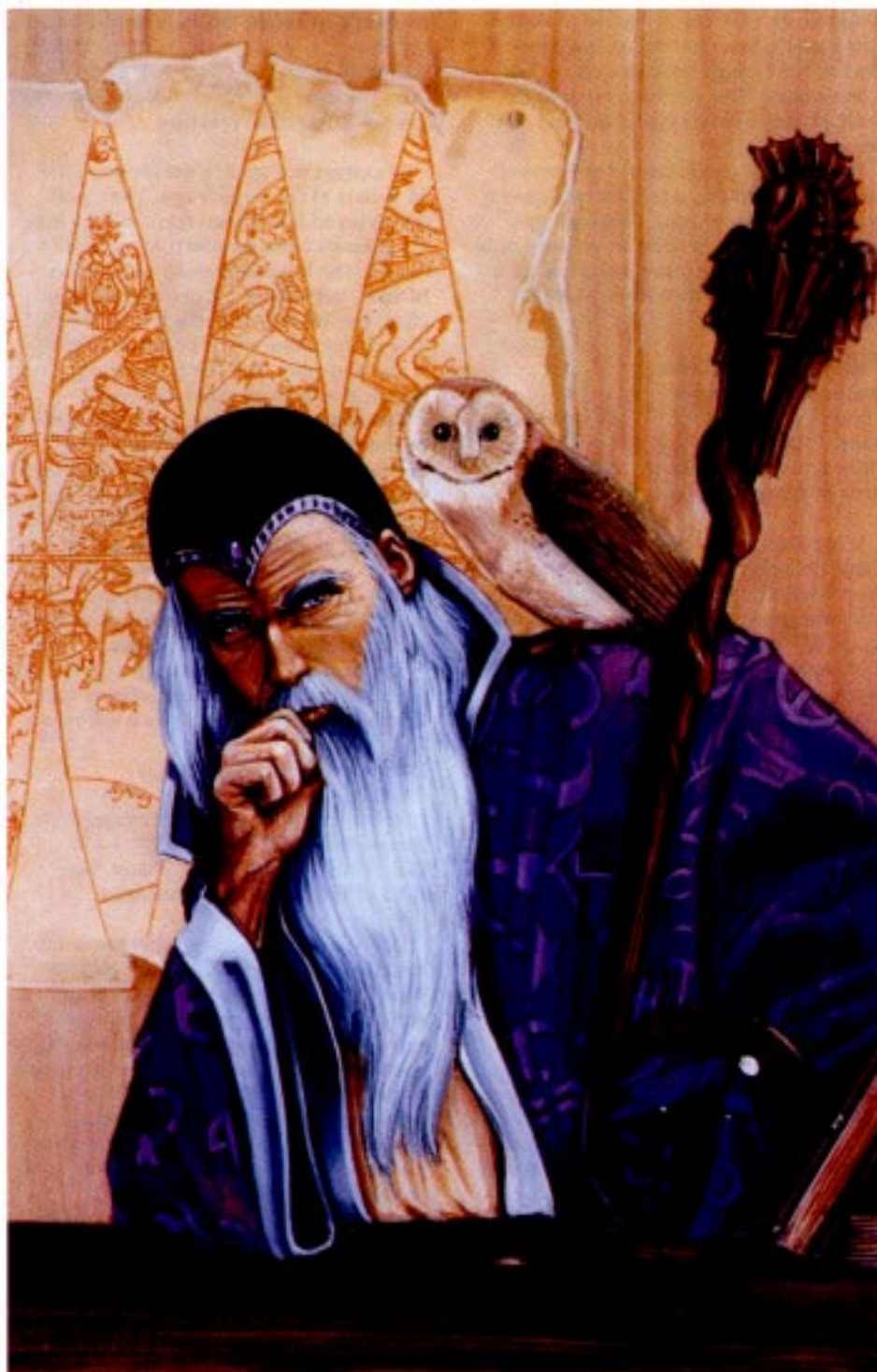


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ARCAINE



The spells of Drenal Farkahn



by Nicholas Baran

Artwork by Lissanne Lake

Drenal was born and raised in a small town that lay just three days' travel from Veluna City in Veluna of the GREYHAWK® campaign setting. Raised by his parents in the forest shared by elves, halflings, and humans alike, Drenal fell into the company of a small and peculiar group of elves and half-elves during his adolescence. This clique had a very intense interest in magic and the development of their magical abilities. Though unrelated, the group adopted the name "The Brothers Arcane." The Brothers would attempt to acquire any bit of magical knowledge in a quest to learn as much about magic as possible. Drenal chose to specialize in enchantments and charms. Although he had no formal magical training, he put all his time into his studies. Self taught, he wrote down everything he saw or heard that had any relevance to magic and its practice.

As a young adult, Drenal left Veluna for a life of adventure. He joined a large adventuring band near Thornwood in Northern Bissel. This region became the base of operations for his adventuring companions, but he would still travel to Veluna twice a year to discuss his findings with his magical cohorts there.

Within his adventuring group he was an outcast. He was quiet, moody, and eccentric. He would be found taking notes on his surroundings while the rest of the group was in combat or puzzled over some barrier that held them back. He carried ink, pen, and paper everywhere he went and he took notes on everything that could have an influence on magical applications. He also took samples of every interesting phenomena of mineral, vegetable, or animal material. His pre-occupation with his own interests and not the interests of the party as a whole caused much discontent.

Drenal's outcast status spurred his accomplishments along. Many of his spells have to do with the taunting he received. A few of his spells have to do with needles. This began when his fellow adventurers made fun of him because he had a sewing needle but no thread. He was teased unmercifully about this and it was this that drove him to give a purpose to his seemingly useless sewing needle.

Unfortunately, Drenal's long career seems to have come to an abrupt end. While taking notes on some phenomena ahead of the party, Drenal disappeared. Most of his notes remain intact, however, and can still be accessed by a select few. These are his spells.

Drenal's annoying poke (Enchantment/Charm)

Level: 2 Comp.: V,S,M
Range: Touch CT: 1
Dur.: 1 turn + 1 rd./level Save: Neg.
Area of Effect: One creature

To cast this spell the caster must chant the verbal component and poke the victim with a 3-4" sewing needle. This attack does one hit point of damage. From that point on, whenever the recipient sees the caster make a thrusting motion, he feels as if he is poked again. This is at first annoying and then, after three subsequent pokes, the victim will be driven to panic and run (50%) or rage (50%) if he fails a saving throw vs. spells. Panic causes the victim to run in the path of least resistance for one round. Rage causes the victim to try to assault the caster at any cost short of fighting to the death. However, Very intelligent creatures or better are not subject to this panic or rage. (Try to picture an Illithid running in panic from a needle.)

Each time the thrust is made by the caster, the victim takes one hit point of damage. If zero hit points is reached, the victim faints and awakens in 1-4 rounds.

The material component for this spell is a long sewing needle.

Drenal's distraction (Enchantment/Charm)

Level: 2 Comp.: V,S,M
Range: 10 yds. CT: 3
Dur.: 1 round Save: Neg.
Area of Effect: One creature

This spell distracts the victim from what he is doing. The recipient momentarily stops paying attention to her surroundings for the round after the spell is cast. So, in the subsequent round, the victim loses initiative, all attacks, as well as all Dexterity and shield bonuses to armor class and prevents the victim from any spell-casting or any other activity that requires the victim to think. Hence, the victim could swallow if liquid were poured into his mouth, but he himself could not grab and imbibe a potion. Note: the victim must be able to see the caster, and the spell only

affects creatures up to 6 Hit Dice.

The component for this spell is a stick with a brightly colored piece of cloth attached to the top. This is thrust from side to side in the air while the verbal component is spoken.

Drenal's dry ink (Enchantment/Charm)

Level: 2 Comp.: V,S,M
Range: Touch CT: 5
Dur.: 1 week + 1 day/level Save: None
Area of Effect: One ink vial and quill pen

When this spell is cast, it will render one vial of ink dry (the ink takes a powdery form) for the duration of the spell. It also simultaneously enchants a quill pen so that it may write with the dry ink as if it were liquid (and when touched on the paper, the ink will change back to a liquid, but won't smear). This spell can be used to enchant only a single vial of ink and quill per casting.

The material components for this spell include a vial of ink, a feather quill, and a pinch of powdered coal. This spell prevents a shattered, broken, or spilled bottle of ink from ruining other materials such as spell books, treasure maps, clothing, etc.

Drenal's stone flame (Enchantment/Charm)

Level: 2 Comp.: V,S,M
Range: 10 yds. CT: 1
Dur.: 1 rd. + 1 rd./level Save: None
Area of Effect: One open flame

When this spell is cast upon an open flame no larger than that of a torch or very small campfire, the flame is turned into orange stone, holding the size and shape of the flame at the time of casting. The stone flame remains attached to the torch or whatever as if it were a part of it. The stone gives off illumination as if it were flame. It will return to flame at the end of the duration.

The material component for this spell is a mix of fine sand and sugar, which is sprinkled in the air as the caster chants the verbal component and points at the desired open flame.

Drenal's amok needles (Enchantment/Charm)

Level: 3 Comp.: V,S,M
Range: 100 yds. CT: 1
Dur.: 1 rd. + 1 rd./level Save: None
Area of Effect: One creature

When this spell is cast, the caster throws large needle(s) into the air and points at the desired target. The needle(s) then dart toward the target and start poking the victim. The needle(s) inflict two hit points of damage each per round. If the victim moves, the needles move with the person, but they will not pass out of the range of the spell. If the range is exceeded, the needles fall directly to the ground, and the spell is ended.

The caster may enchant two needles for every three levels with a maximum of 10 needles. Once the spell is cast the caster no longer needs to concentrate on the spell. The caster may not enchant more than four needles on a single casting of the spell. The duration may never exceed six rounds.

The needles must be 5" long and be made of a light steel alloy. They, however, must be porous (requiring substantial effort to make—25 gp a piece). They also must be stored in a container of magical liquid. The liquid used to cover the needles costs another 25 gp to manufacture. All the spell components may be re-used.

Drenal's eyesore (Enchantment/Charm)

Level: 3 Comp.: V,S,M
Range: 30 yds. CT: 5
Dur.: Instant. Save: Neg.
Area of Effect: One creature

By casting this spell, a needle is enchanted to dart at the target's eye. The needle, which is red hot, causes the victim to drop to his knees from excruciating pain for 1-4 rounds. During this time he can defend himself, but with a -2 penalty to armor class, and he may not attack in any way. The victim takes 1-4 hit points of damage. A save indicates that the target dodges the dart and suffers no other ill effects.

The material components for this spell include a gray tallow candle and a 4-5" needle of the finest steel (at least of 10 gp value). The candle is lit and used to heat the needle. When the needle is heated to the point at which it can no longer be held, it is released to dart toward the victim. The needle used in this spell cannot be tainted in the solution used in the casting of *Drenal's amok needles*.

The flagrant use of this spell could be an act of evil intent, and punishable as such. Drenal used this spell only as a last resort.

Drenal's sound barrier (Enchantment/Charm)

Level: 3 Comp.: V,S,M
Range: Touch CT: 1
Dur.: 1 turn + 1 rd./level Save: None
Area of Effect: 10' × 10' pane/level

Upon casting this spell, a barrier is created through which no sound can pass. When this wall is placed so as to block an entire portal, passage or hole, no sound can pass from one side to the other. The *sound barrier* must be able to anchor itself to four surfaces. The desired effect is possible only when the entire passage is covered, and sounds will not easily travel through the surrounding walls. The barrier can be horizontal or vertical.

The casting of this spell involves sticking small soft clay mounds that have feathers stuck in them, in two corners of the area to be blocked (such as the corners where a door meets the floor), to form a base for the barrier.



CHRIS HARVEY GAMES



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Outfit your natives and barbarians

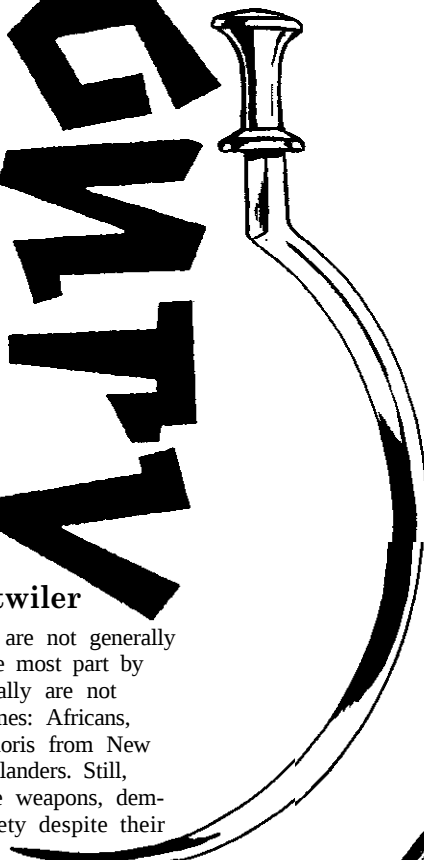
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Primitive Weapons

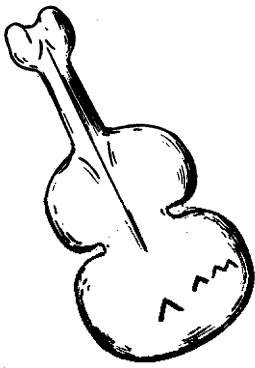
by Gregory Detwiler

The following weapons are not generally known, being used for the most part by tribes whose cultures usually are not copied in role-playing games: Africans, Australian Aborigines, Maoris from New Zealand, and South Sea islanders. Still, these peoples have unique weapons, demonstrating incredible variety despite their few resources.

These weapons would be good additions to any fantasy campaign, particularly one where the PCs explore uncharted wilderness areas, take part in punitive imperial campaigns against "barbarians," or even play barbarians themselves. Novel weapons also are a good addition to the arsenals of gladiators. This is particularly true of the DARK SUN® world of Athas, since so many of these weapons are normally made of substances other than metal.



Artwork by Jim Holloway



Kotiate

Cost: 5 sp

Weight: 1 lb.

Size: S

Type: S/B

Speed factor: 4

Damage S-M/L: 1d6/1d6

Culture: Maori (New Zealand)

The kotiate, or "liver cutter," is a flattened, violin-shaped club slightly over one foot in length, with sharpened edges. It usually is carved out of wood or bone. This thin club is wielded so as to strike with the sharpened edge, in the manner of a hand axe, thus making it a hybrid ax club.

Proficient use: A user with a weapon proficiency in the kotiate may do 1d8 damage when striking, concentrating carefully on the target to hit a particularly vulnerable spot. Such concentration means that the kotiate attack will be the only one the character can make that round, no matter how many melee attacks she normally is allowed.

Specialized use: When a specialized kotiate user fights with a kotiate in each hand, he may fight normally with one at no penalty while using the other as a parrying weapon. Conversely, if he chooses to attack with both weapons, the attack penalties for the primary and secondary weapons only are - 1 and - 2 respectively.



Kugerong/Kugerung

Cost: 5 sp

Weight: 2

Size: M

Type: B/P

Speed Factor: 4

Damage S-M/L: 1d4/1d4

ROF: 1

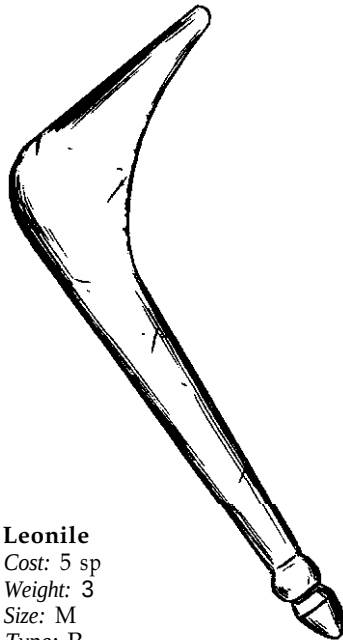
Range S/M/L: 1/2/3

Culture: Aborigine (Australia)

The kugerong or kugerung is a club, slightly lighter than the standard type, which swells out to a round head ending in a point. As such, it may be used both for stabbing and striking (the damage is the same for both attacks), and it may be hurled as a throwing axe is. It is always made of wood.

Proficient use: A proficient user of the kugerong may make two or more melee attacks per round, he may make both a bludgeoning attack and a stabbing one, providing the bludgeoning attack comes first.

Specialized use: A specialized user of the kugerong may improve its capabilities as a missile weapon in two ways. First, if he has a rack of them handy, he may increase his ROF to 2/1. Second, he can put enough extra spin on the clubs to increase their short, medium, and long ranges to 2, 4, and 6 respectively.



Leonile

Cost: 5 sp

Weight: 3

Size: M

Type: P

Speed Factor: 3

Damage S-M/L: 1d4/1d4

Culture: Aborigine (Victoria, Australia)

The leonile is a club shaped like a pick, made to do piercing damage rather than bludgeoning. Several feet in length, it is made of any tough, hard wood. The favorite material for a leonile is an uprooted sapling, with part of the root forming the picks head. It is ideal for adventures where bold improvisation is a necessity.

Proficient use: Aside from the ease of construction, the thing that makes the leonile such a popular weapon is the fact that the pick point can be turned in any direction at the moment of striking, making it difficult to avoid or parry. Thus, a nonwarrior character who tries to parry a leonile will gain no armor class bonus when his attacker is proficient in the

leonile's use. A warrior who attempts to parry will gain an AC bonus only equal to half his level (rounding down). In addition, a character wearing armor or using a shield will suffer a - 1 armor class penalty when he is facing a proficient leonile user. For instance, a character clad in leather armor and holding a shield will be AC 8 instead of AC 7. A character who has the *armor optimization* skill (see the DARK SUN rules) may nullify this advantage.

Specialized use: When the leonile is wielded by a true master of the weapon, no character will be able to make an effective parry against it. In addition, an armored character will have his AC worsened by two steps (i.e., one who is AC 6 will become AC 8) unless he knows the *armor optimization* skill, in which case it will be reduced by one step.

Manopie

Cost: 12 gp

Weight: 3

Size: M

Type: P

Speed Factor: 3

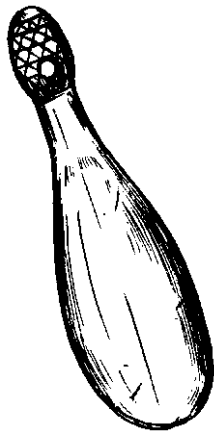
Damage S-M/L: 1d8/1d8

Culture: Moorish (North Africa)

The manopie is a short sword whose guard curves up on either side to form a pair of small, knifelike blades that enable the weapon to do slightly more damage than a conventional short sword. It was mainly used by Moorish boarding parties at sea, so it would be an appropriate addition to the armories of corsair PCs in the ALQADIM® setting.

Proficient use: The curving guard-blades enable a proficient user of the manopie to parry edged weapons more effectively by catching the blade between one of them and the manopie's main blade. A nonwarrior character who parries with a manopie gains an extra + 1 bonus to the normal bonus to armor class when parrying. For instance, a 6th-level bard parrying with a manopie gains an AC bonus of +4, instead of the usual + 3. A warrior PC, such as a gladiator, would gain a bonus equal to half his level plus two, instead of the usual one. Thus, a 6th-level gladiator would gain an AC bonus of +5 when parrying with a manopie.

Specialized use: A warrior character who specializes in the manopie gains an AC bonus equal to half his level plus three when parrying. For instance, a 10th-level gladiator specializing in the manopie gains an AC bonus of +8 when he parries with the weapon. In addition, since the extra parrying bonus comes from catching the enemy's blade between the main and small blades of the manopie, the warrior has a chance of breaking the caught blade with a swift, hard twist. The PC's chances of doing this are 10% for every three levels he has, rounding down. The percentages are cumulative but stop by the time he reaches 27th level, so a character with a caught weapon always has at least a 10% chance of retrieving his weapon intact.



Patu

Cost: 5 sp

Weight: 1

Size: S

Type: S

Speed Factor: 4

Damage S-M/L: 1d4+1/1d4

Culture: Maori (New Zealand)

The patu is a club of wood, stone, or bone that is shaped like a paddle blade. It is less than two feet in length, and the handle is quite short. The paddle edges are quite sharp; this weapon does slashing damage, and may be thought of as a cross between a club and an ax.

Proficient use: A proficient patu user has the option of doing 1d6 damage (regardless of target size) in a single attack per round. He achieves this through carefully concentrating on the target and striking just the right spot. In order to achieve this concentration, he can take no other actions during that combat round than preparing for and striking that one blow.

Specialized use: When a specialized patu user fights with a patu in each hand, he may fight normally with one at no attack penalty while using the other as a parrying weapon. If he chooses to attack with both patus, the attack penalties for the primary and secondary weapons are -1 and -2 respectively.

Pouwhenua

Cost: 5 sp

Weight: 3

Size: M

Type: B/P

Speed Factor: 4

Damage S-M/L: 1d4/1d3 (club) or 1d6/1d6 (point)

Culture: Maori (New Zealand)

The pouwhenua is a wooden staff, from four to six feet in length that swells out to a club head at one end while the other terminates in a spike. Light and maneuverable for its length, it may be used as either a bludgeoning or a stabbing weapon.

Proficient use: A character proficient in the use of the pouwhenua may use it as a parrying weapon as with a rang-kwan (below).

Specialized use: A specialized pouwhenua user may make two attacks in melee combat when he would normally only be allowed one: a bludgeoning attack and a stabbing one with the point. In such a case, the bludgeoning attack must come first.

Rang-kwan

Cost: 5 sp

Weight: 3

Size: L

Type: B/P

Speed Factor: 4

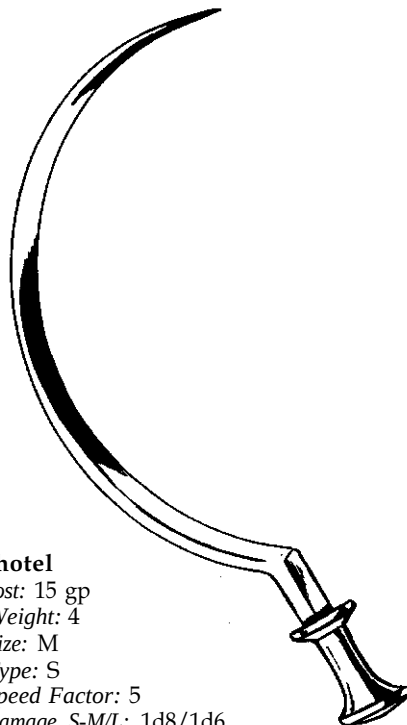
Damage S-M/L: 1d4/1d4 (bludgeoning) or 1d6/1d6 (piercing)

Culture: Aborigine (Queensland, Australia)

The rang-kwan is a type of quarterstaff six feet in length, tapering to a sharp point at each end. On Earth, it is strictly a woman's weapon, while on a fantasy world it may be used by characters of all races and sexes. It may be used for bludgeoning as a regular quarterstaff is, though with less effect due to its lighter weight, but is primarily used as a thrusting weapon.

Proficient use: A proficient wielder of the rang-kwan may use it as a parrying weapon. When the wielder is fighting two enemies in line with each other who have the wielder between them, whether in front and to the rear or on each flank, he may make two attacks where he would normally be allowed one. A proficient wielder will concentrate more on one foe (the one in front, or the PC's choice of flank), so the second attack has a -2 attack penalty. If two foes are not in line as mentioned above, this double attack is not an option.

Specialized use: When a specialist in the rang-kwan makes the double attack listed above, both attacks are made with no attack penalties whatsoever.



Shotel

Cost: 15 gp

Weight: 4

Size: M

Type: S

Speed Factor: 5

Damage S-M/L: 1d8/1d6

Culture: Abyssinian (Ethiopia)

The shotel is a strangely curved sword some three feet in length. Its blade makes a radical outward bulge before curving inward again. This weapon was specifically designed to hook over, under, or around an opponent's shield.

Proficient use: When a character proficient in the use of the shotel attacks someone using a shield, the shield-bearer must save vs breath weapon, or the shield will not count toward his armor class. This attack may be nullified by use of the *armor optimization* skill, as used in the DARK SUN campaign.

Specialized use: When facing a specialist in the use of the shotel, a character with a shield will not be able to use his shield to contribute to his armor class unless he has the *armor optimization* skill. If this is so, the shield counts toward his AC, but the character does not also receive the extra +1 armor class bonus the skill would normally grant.

Tebutje/Pacho

Cost: 8 sp

Weight: 3

Size: M

Type: S or P/S

Speed Factor: 3

Damage S-M/L: 1d6/1d6

Culture: Gilbert Islanders (South Seas Islands)

The tebutje is a light club studded with the teeth of predatory animals of some sort—invariably sharks teeth for the Earth version. The wood is a very light type, such as rattan, and the tebutje relies solely on the teeth to do slashing damage. Some variants end in a wooden spike on one end; this does the same damage in a piercing attack as the teeth do in a slash.

Proficient use: Aside from the lack of nonproficiency penalties in combat, there are no special benefits for proficiency in the tebutje.

Specialized use: Specialization in the tebutje provides no more than the ordinary bonuses.

Tebutje, short

Cost: 5 sp

Weight: 1

Size: S

Type: S or P/S

Speed Factor: 2

Damage S-M/L: 1d4/1d4

Culture: Gilbert Islanders (South Seas Islands)

The short tebutje is identical to the normal-sized version in all respects not listed above.

Tebutje, two-handed

Cost: 3 gp

Weight: 7

Size: L

Type: S

Speed Factor: 6

Damage S-M/L: 1d8/1d8

Culture: Gilbert Islanders (modified)

The two-handed tebutje is used only in fantasy worlds, being a cheap, light weapon capable of doing a good deal of damage. Except for the statistics listed above, it is identical in all ways with the normal tebutje though it cannot be used in a piercing attack.

Tewha-tewha/Taiaha

Cost: 6 sp

Weight: 3

Size: L

Type: P/S

Speed Factor: 4

Damage S-M/L: 1d4/1d4 (blade) or 1d6/1d8 (spike)

Culture: Maori (New Zealand)

The tewha-tewha or taiaha is a staff weapon ranging from about four to six feet in length. One end bears a short wooden blade like that of a small hand axe, while the other terminates in a spike. This weapon may be used for both slashing and thrusting, and is a favorite among many tribes.

Proficient use: As with the rangkwan, the tewha-tewha may be used in parrying.

Specialized use: A specialist in the use of the taiaha may make one additional attack per round per melee round. The first attacks must be a slash with the axe blade, followed by a thrust with the spearlike spike.



Wahaika

Cost: 5 sp

Weight: 1

Size: S

Type: B

Speed Factor: 4

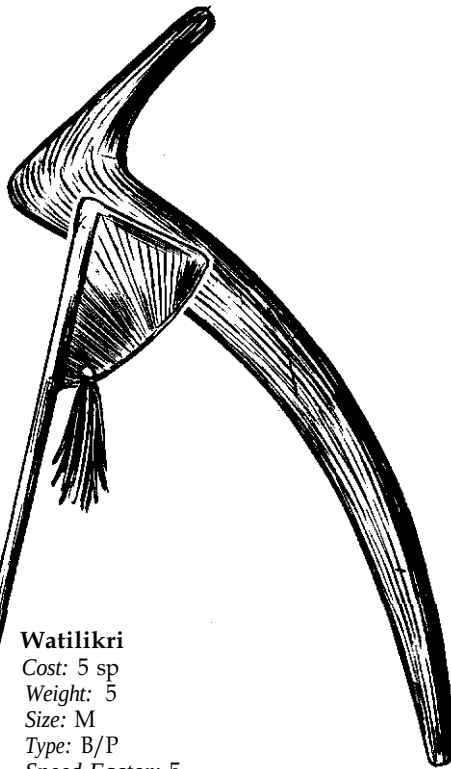
Damage S-M/L: 1d4/1d4 or 1d6/1d6 (mounted use)

Culture: Maori (New Zealand)

The wahaika is a bone or wooden club roughly a foot and a half in length. It is similar to the patu, but is curved like a scimitar. On Earth, this is mainly a decorative weapon, but on fantasy worlds, it provides a means for increased damage. As swordmakers for cavalymen learned long ago, a curved weapon does more damage than a straight one when wielded from horseback. For someone looking to arm a cavalry force on the cheap, this is an ideal weapon.

Proficient use: A character who is proficient with the wahaika may do 1d6 damage instead of 1d4 when he is wielding the weapon from the back of a mount, using the impetus of the charging animal as well as gravity to add force to the blow.

Specialized use: A specialist in wahaika use may do an additional +2 points of damage with it when fighting from the back of a mount.



Watilikri

Cost: 5 sp

Weight: 5

Size: M

Type: B/P

Speed Factor: 5

Damage S-M/L: 1d6/1d6 or 1d2 + 1/1d2 (melee combat)

ROF: 1

Range S/M/L: 1/2/3

Culture: Warramunga Aborigines (Australia)

The watilikri is also known as the beaked boomerang, because it looks like a cross between a large boomerang and a horseman's pick. This wooden missile weapon is nearly a yard in length, and can be used as a wooden horseman's pick in melee combat with the corresponding penalties (see the weapon construction chart in the DARK SUN rule book for details).

Proficient use: A character who is proficient with the watilikri can throw the beaked boomerang in such a way as to make two attacks on the same target with one missile. With a successful attack roll, the plain side strikes the target, inflicting 1d2 points of damage. Not only that, but the force of the impact causes the watilikri to flip over, causing the sharp wooden beak to bury itself in the victim, doing another 1d4 points of damage!

Specialized use: An expert in the use of the watilikri can increase ROF to 2/1, assuming a stack of the beaked boomerangs is handy. He also can put enough extra spin on the weapons to increase their short, medium, and long ranges to 2, 4, and 6 respectively.

Wongala

Cost: 4 sp

Weight: 3

Size: M

Type: B

Speed Factor: 4

Damage S-M/L: 1d4+1/1d4

ROF: 1

Range S/M/L: 1/2/3

Culture: Aborigine (Australia)

The wongala is one of many types of boomerangs designed specifically for combat. It is one to two feet in length, and is always made of wood. It may be used as a club in melee as well as a missile weapon, doing the same amount of damage in both roles.

Proficient use: When a character proficient in wongala use is facing a foe at short range—from maximum short range to practically face-to-face—he may employ a special missile attack. Instead of throwing the boomerang directly at his enemy, he throws it at the ground right in front of the foe. If this is done just right, the wongala will bounce off the ground at precisely the right angle to strike the foe (if he is humanoid and man-sized) in the face. This attack does normal damage, but the disorienting effect of a direct blow to the face is such that the victim will be unable to take any effective action for the next round, in effect letting the character have a free attack or actions in that round.

Specialized use: With a stack of boomerangs handy, a specialist may increase his ROF to 2/1, while throwing the weapons in such a way that they catch the air and increase their short, medium, and long ranges to 2, 4, and 6 respectively.

Wirka

Cost: 5 sp

Weight: 3

Size: M

Type: B/P

Speed Factor: 3

Damage S-M/L: 1d4/1d4 (piercing) or 1d3/1d3 (bludgeoning)

Culture: Aborigine (Queensland, Australia)

The wirka is a wooden club that is thickest at the handle end. On the other end is a pair of sharp prongs that can do 1d2 points of damage apiece. It is possible to grab the wirka by the slimmer end and use it as a club, though because of its light weight, it will do less damage than a regular club.

Proficient use: A proficient user of the wirka can use it to parry an enemy's weapon by catching the blade between the two prongs. If so, the user gains the usual AC bonus.

Specialized use: One who is a specialist in fighting with a wirka may use it to make an extra attack in melee combat than she is normally allowed. First she must make a bludgeoning attack, which is normally a secondary attack mode with this weapon, then quickly reverse the wirka and stab with the prongs. In addition, a wirka specialist who catches an enemy blade between the prongs while parrying has a 10% chance per every four levels of experience she has (rounding downward) to break the blade by a sudden hard twist. This ability will stop increasing by the time the PC reaches 36th level, so a character whose blade is thus caught will always have at least a 10% chance of freeing his blade intact.

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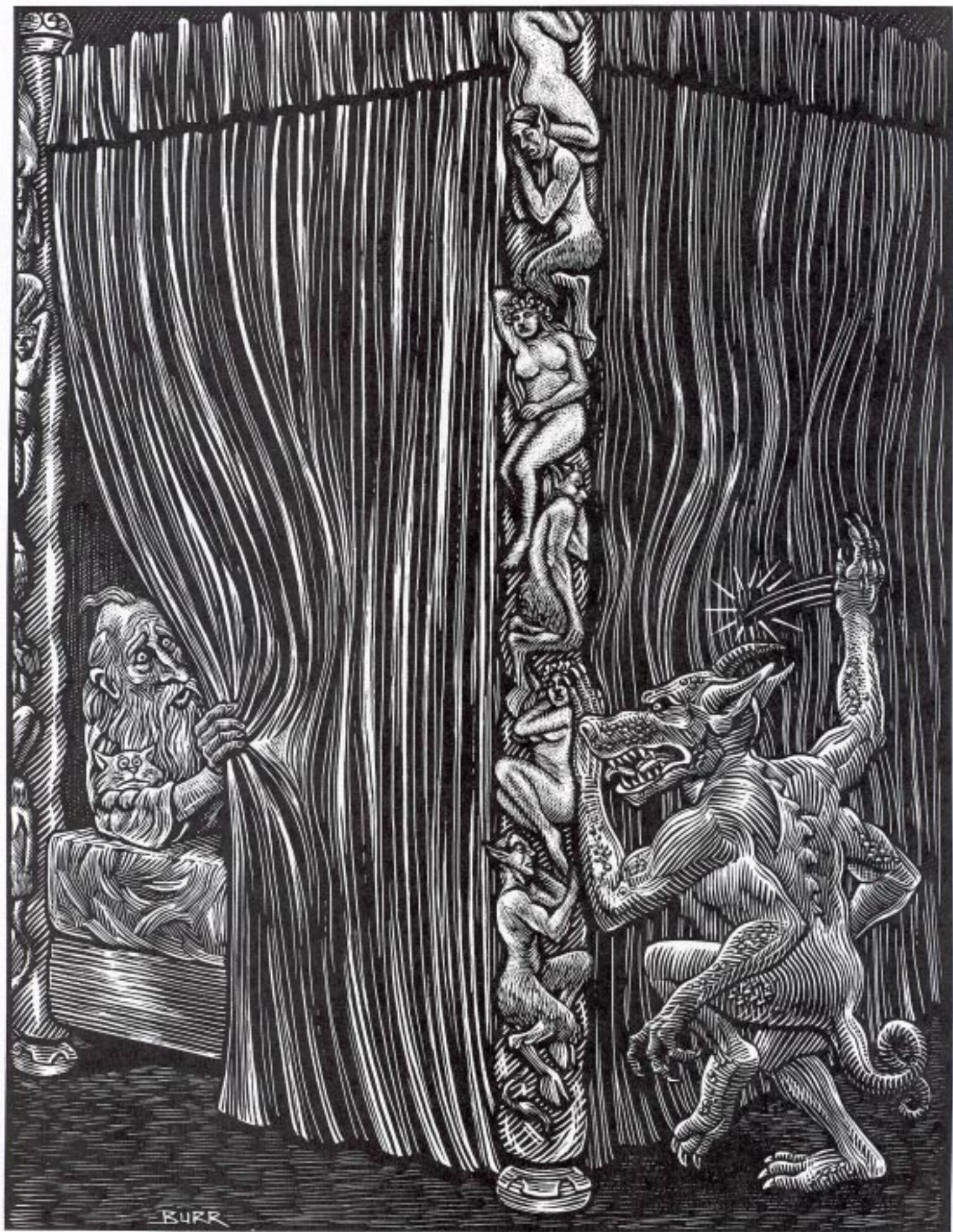
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Bahorel was old when the Mages Guild found his Talent and made him a novice. He was reaching the end of a long and fulfilling career as a scholar, a career that had brought him some small fame in limited academic circles, where he was known as the foremost

expert on ancient magical texts in all of Torquay, a city renowned for its brilliant scholars and its masses of old tomes.

It was, in fact, his expertise on magical books that brought him to the attention of the masters of the guild. When the authenticity of a copy of Rif's *On Prognostication* was called into question, the masters turned to the learned community of Torquay to provide judgment. Torquay presented Bahorel, rail-thin and shy, squinting in the bright sunlight of controversy, as judge and jury. In the space of a minute he ascertained that the book was indeed genuine, saving the masters time, trouble, and face.

Properly grateful, they were prepared to offer a handsome honorarium when a member of their delegation noted a slight, feebly flickering aura over the aged scholar's head.

"He's got some Talent!" the master cried.

When motivated, the Mages Guild can be a powerful force. It quickly decided that it would be to its advantage to have an expert on magical tomes among its ranks, and all-but-irresistible offers were immediately made.

Bahorel, however, resisted. He was old, he was frail, he was comfortable. He did not want to leave his niche in the Ivy Tower, as the crumbling castle in which he rented rooms was called.

"I am old, gentle mages," he politely replied. "I have for long known only the quiet, dusty life of the collegia, the companionship of my peers in learning. How could I possibly move into one of your novitiate dormitories, live with your callow young apprentices, train like a young boy in arcane arts? I could not possibly fit in with them, and they would hardly fit with me. No, gentle mages. I thank you—but no."

The masters were not ones to take "No" for an answer, however polite. They pressured the deans at Bahorel's collegium; they pressured his landlord in the Ivy Tower; they pressured his friends and his students. Soon Bahorel found himself beseeched by all and sundry to join the guild. His landlord threatened to evict him, his students to stop attending his lectures, his friends to stop talking to him. But the final, drastic step that impelled Bahorel into the hands of the Mages Guild came when the deans of his collegium changed the locks on the library and refused to give him a new key.

This struck close to the heart of the old scholar, who found life without access to books little worth living. At this point the masters of the guild, forewarned by the deans as to Bahorel's vulnerability, repeated their offer of membership, adding privileges in the guild's library, rumored to be a fabulous trove of treasures, as a further incentive.

Bahorel leaped at the chance and joined the guild as a novice. He was housed in the novices' dormitory, but out of respect for his age and his learning he was granted a

The Siege of Bahorel's Bed

by Daniel Hood

Illustrations by Dan Burr

tower suite in the hoary old building. Entertaining few misgivings, he filled his new rooms with his scant possessions, chief among which was his bed, a massive affair with heavy, wine-dark hangings and thick wooden posts carved into the shapes of sleeping nymphs and satyrs. There were some snickering comments made by the other novices (young boys all) on the size of the bed and the complete seclusion available when the inch-thick velvet curtains were drawn, but the levity died down when it got out that the bed had been the only legacy of Bahorel's saintly mother, and that he was always alone in it. The old scholar quickly became a quiet fixture of the dormitory.

All was well for several years. Bahorel was exempted from the meaner tasks usually forced on novices—no scrubbing out alembics or washing unhappy familiars for him—and instead was set to work cataloging and maintaining the guild's library, which, while indeed a treasure trove, was in a sad state of disrepair. He learned some of the basics of magecraft and even managed to call forth his own familiar, a bedraggled, myopic little kitten that spent most of its time sleeping on teetering piles of books.

Bahorel was even somewhat popular with the regular novices, the teenage boys who came to the guild with dreams of power and wealth in their heads. They enjoyed his tentative attempts at wit and the slightly smutty manuals of erotic wizardry that he found for them. (Bahorel never understood what the other novices saw in such books; the woodcuts were very confusing and had entirely too many tiny details for his old eyes to make out.) In return, the boys helped him master the few essentials of magic he was required to know.

So the years passed. Bahorel slipped unobtrusively into even older age, becoming something of an institution in the dormitory and the library, happy in the company of his spindly kitten and his books.

Trouble came, though, in the form of an exacting daemonology master named Togodumnus and an uncouth novice named Ryssel.

For all the years Bahorel had lived in the novice's dormitory, he had never progressed beyond the very first stage of magehood. Togodumnus, a new master and a strict man, called the old scholar up before the entire class on his very first day of teaching.

"Novice Bahorel," he said, addressing the gray-bearded man as if he were a young boy, "I notice that your performance is shockingly poor. Shockingly poor, I say. What say you?"

"Well, Master Togodumnus," Bahorel replied, twisting his novice's cap in his gnarled hands and casting shy grins at his classmates, "I'm really more of a librarian than a wizard."

Master Togodumnus was outraged. "A librarian? This is a guild of mages, Novice Bahorel, not a library!"

"Actually, there's quite a good library here."

"A mages guild!" Master Togodumnus went on.

"There is no room here for those who will not learn magic! And since you are here, you *will* learn magic! I swear you'll be able to summon and control a fiend by the time I'm done with you or I'll eat my hat! Now, sit down!"

Bahorel sat down, replacing his novice's cap on his white-haired head, a troubled look on his face.

Master Togodumnus was as good as his word. He worked Bahorel hard, cutting down on his time in the library, forcing him to go over and over and over the simplest of exercises until the old man was ready to drop, exhausted, onto his retorts and beakers and material components.

Bahorel did not complain, but the strain was cruel. Daemonology was by no means the most difficult form of wizardry, but it did require discipline and hard work, which was one of the reasons it was taught early on to novices. Other daemonology masters had let Bahorel slip by, aware of his shortcomings and peculiar status in the guild, but now the oldest novice found himself staying up late, pouring over abstract works of daemonology, practicing his pentagrams and rehearsing his chants. By midterm his work had improved, but his strength was beginning to flag.

It was then that Ryssel appeared. He was seventeen at the time, almost too old for a novice, and some accident of adolescence had left him well over six feet tall and thick as a draft horse. It was only the influence of his uncle, a powerful guild master, that had secured him his spot in the class. Nor did he make a secret of this, being shockingly stupid in addition to physically overdeveloped. On his first day as a novice, he thrashed three smaller boys and cowed the rest with tales of his all-powerful uncle.

He also had his first run-in with Bahorel.

The Master of Novices, on hearing of the late addition to the class, had fretted for almost an entire day over where to put Ryssel. All the beds were taken by boys who had begun the term at the proper time. Then he remembered Bahorel's suite. With dawning hope, he went to the old scholar and explained the situation.

"So you see, Novice Bahorel," the master said (though he managed to make the word "novice" sound like a noble title when he addressed the dormitory's oldest resident), "it would be for only the rest of this term, and you would need to give up only your sitting room." He added that he would not have asked if it were not urgent, nor if the boy hadn't been the nephew of—here he whispered the name of Ryssel's powerful uncle. The name, however, did not impress Bahorel; his response was dictated by pure good nature.

"Of course! Of course!" he said, nodding his gray head and disturbing his scrawny familiar, who had gone to sleep in his beard. "Don't think about it for a moment! I would be glad to accommodate the boy! They really are charming lads here—charming, friendly, and respectful. It would be my pleasure, Master!"

The Novice Master heaved a sigh of relief, happy to have maintained his good relationship with Bahorel. He departed and never gave the matter another moment's thought.

Bahorel, too, forgot about it until later that day, when he returned from the library to find the contents of his sitting room strewn across the floor of his bedroom. The door between the two was open, and from the sitting room he heard an absolutely filthy sailor's chantey being croaked by a dying bull.

He carefully set down the heavy stack of daemonology texts he was carrying and went to the doorway, his familiar stumbling after him.

Ryssel had already unpacked his belongings in the sitting room, and Bahorel could barely recognize it. There were dirty clothes everywhere (Ryssel, apparently, had brought them from home in that state), as well as sixteen pairs of muddy boots, two horsy-smelling saddles, and a growling, snarling, foaming dog. The jet-black beast leapt to its feet at the site of Bahorel's spindly cat and would have charged if Ryssel hadn't caught it by the scruff of the neck and thrown it against a wall, momentarily dazing it.

"Who are you?" Ryssel demanded.

"I'm Novice Bahorel," the old man said, a little stunned himself by the sight of the dog, the gruff boy, and the transformed sitting room.

"Oh. So these used to be your digs?"

"Well, yes."

"I'm Ryssel," Ryssel interrupted, and began scratching at a patch of acne which had erupted on his ugly face, "and they're mine now. I think we'd better get some things straight. I go to bed early, and I don't want any noise or light coming under this doorway, got it? And don't get in my way, got it?"

"But—"

"And keep your familiar," the boy said, pointing a disdainful finger at Bahorel's kitten, quivering between his legs, "away from my familiar." He pointed at the black dog, who had recovered from his encounter with the wall and was staring murder at the petrified kitten.

"You have a familiar already?" Bahorel stammered, taken aback by Ryssel's rudeness.

"Yeah. My uncle helped me conjure him. Know my uncle?"

"I can't say I've had the pleasure."

"Good. Keep it that way. He's one mean wizard, and he wouldn't take kindly to anyone who got in my way. Get it?"

"Why surely—"

Bahorel never got any further, because Ryssel's familiar chose that moment to launch himself toward the kitten, and the boy slammed the door in the old man's face to prevent slaughter.

It took Bahorel over an hour to calm down his distraught familiar and to recover his own wits. Long accustomed to respect and friendliness, he had never before been treated so rudely and didn't quite know what to do about it. He sat on the edge of his bed, puzzling out this new experience, and eventually he put the boy's behavior down to understandable first-day-as-a-novice nerves.

It was not long before Ryssel proved him wrong.

First of all, there was the boy's snoring. Equal parts landslide-rumble, dragon-roar, and steaming-kettle-piping, it woke Bahorel on the first night of Ryssel's residence and kept him up till near dawn. It happened every night, and even the heavy velvet hangings of Bahorel's mother's bed could not keep it out.

Then there was the boy's noise in the morning. He woke early every day and stomped around his room, shouting to himself and at his familiar, which barked back, at which point he threw boots at it. The boots, however, never hit the dog, only Bahorel's door. The rapid succession of thuds never failed to wake the old man, no matter how poorly he had slept the night before.

Bahorel was, however, far too polite (not to mention

easygoing) to mention this to Ryssel. Nor did he remonstrate with him when he let his familiar run free in the library, despite the number of books it chewed up and the unsightly messes it left in the study carrels. He hoped the masters might do something about the situation, particularly after the dog ate the only surviving copy of a rare manuscript, but they were too cowed by the thought of the boy's uncle, and by the boy's enormous physical presence.

These, however, were the least of the indignities Ryssel inflicted on Bahorel. Though he was easily as bad at daemonology as the old man, he bullied the young novices into doing his work for him and then laughed when Master Togodumnus called Bahorel to task for his failures.

Ryssel also made a habit of letting his familiar loose when he knew Bahorel's kitten was around. It quickly became common to hear the boy's braying laugh and then see the kitten come scrambling frantically around a corner, spitting and hissing with all its hair on end. A second or two later, the black hellhound would round the corner, as often as not bowling over two or three unobservant masters or novices.

If Bahorel kept his candle lit too late, Ryssel would throw open the door between their rooms, march in, and take it. Then he would say, "All right graybeard, into the pleasure palace. Hop!" ("The pleasure palace" was what the boy had taken to calling Bahorel's bed, a name the young man relished because of the obvious shock and disgust that showed on the old scholar's innocent face every time he heard it.)

There were countless other indignities—the rude noises, the catcalls, the dead mouse in the bowl of soup, the shorted sheets—but Bahorel, for his part, seemed not to mind. The masters shook their heads in wonder at the oldest novice's forbearance, but in reality he was simply stunned by the magnitude of Ryssel's rudeness. The boy made him miserable—of that he was aware—but he could think of nothing to do about it and was too mild mannered to respond in kind.

Instead, he took refuge in his studies, working himself to the bone to try to satisfy Master Togodumnus.

It was thus that the second to last day of the term found Bahorel in his room late at night, poring over a book of daemonology. It was a weighty and powerful tome, one he had found discarded on a dusty shelf, but it promised any number of secrets that he hoped would help in the next day's examination. He had drawn the necessary pentagram around the small table at which he studied, and in the protective circle of magic turned over the cracked vellum pages. Each offered a different fiend for summoning, with a hand-drawn picture of the evil spirit on one page and an abbreviated spell facing it. The introduction to the book promised that any of the fiends it contained could be conjured up with minimal fuss and effort.

Bahorel was in the process of choosing which he would summon for his final examination when Ryssel stormed in.

"All right, graybeard, into the pleasure—hey!" The boy caught sight of the book. "What's that? Boning up on your daemonology?"

"Yes," Bahorel sighed, closing the book carefully. Earlier in the day, he had tried to rise at the end of his Basics of Elementals class and discovered that his feet were glued to

the floor. Ryssel, of course, was responsible, but Bahorel was good-hearted, even in the face of persecution. "You would do well to study as well, Novice Ryssel. Master Togodumnus isn't pleased with our progress."

"Ha!" the boy brayed. "Who cares? He'll let me by. He knows who my uncle is. You, though," he went on, leaning close and stabbing Bahorel's frail chest with a blunt forefinger, "are going to make a fool of yourself tomorrow. Everyone and his brother knows you're going to make a hash of the exam—and I for one am going to be glad to see it. Now into the pleasure palace, graybeard!"

With that, and the candle, he left the room, slamming the door behind him.

In the darkness, Bahorel placed the book of fiends on his study table and climbed into bed. Before he had even drawn the curtains, Ryssel was snoring. Sighing the sigh of the long-suffering, Bahorel lay back on his pillows, only to notice that his familiar was not there.

He sat up and felt blindly around the bed. When he was sure the kitten was not with him, he began calling it, very softly.

"Here, kitty," he whispered.

The kitten responded from outside the curtains, softly mewling.

"Come along, kitty. It's bedtime."

There was a sudden startled squawk and the sound of something striking the floor. The hangings rustled, and then the kitten jumped into his arms, shivering.

In the dark, Bahorel could not be sure what his familiar had upset (or what had upset his familiar), but he offered up a silent prayer that it wasn't the book of fiends.

It was.

In the room beyond the curtained bed, the book lay open on the floor, just outside the pentagram.

Before Bahorel could finish his prayer, a soft moaning whispered out of the book. If Ryssel had left the candle, it would have looked as if the picture on the page was moving, and that the fiend drawn there (a dwarfish creature with four arms, a long, doglike snout, and mauve skin) was stretching.

It was, in fact, stretching, and in his bed Bahorel could hear its joints cracking. He froze, as petrified as his now stone-stiff familiar.

The fiend, meanwhile, feeling limbered up by its stretching, reached up and out of the book, caught hold of the edge of the page, and hauled itself into the room.

Bahorel, of course, saw none of this. Even if there had been light, his eyes were tight shut, and he was praying in a rapid, breathless voice, the kitten a warm ball of fear on his lap.

The fiend heard the praying and smiled, its tiny eyes glowing with the banked fires of Hell. It hopped toward the bed with a little skip-step.

Bahorel heard the slap of its scaly feet on the flagstones of his bedroom and stopped praying. He could see nothing, but he followed the fiend's progress by the sound of its footsteps. First it came to the foot of the bed, where it paused and sniffed at the curtains. It skip-stepped to the right, then to the left, then back to the right. It sniffed again and growled, a low, pleased sound. Bahorel's kitten fainted.

Then it skip-stepped around the right side of the bed, moving slowly along, pausing to sniff once or twice, until it reached the head of the bed, where Bahorel was huddling with his insensate familiar. It sniffed again and growled once more, this time in a slightly puzzled tone. Then it shuffled quickly down the length of the bed, around the foot, and up the left side. It stopped again right by Bahorel and sniffed.

Suddenly the curtains tented in, the velvet slapping Bahorel in the face. With a stifled cry he scrambled away to the right side of the bed, prepared to meet his end.

Nothing happened.

The fiend growled again, unhappily, and Bahorel heard it bat at the hangings. It slapped them with the flat of its hand, once, then twice, then began running all around the bed, slapping at the curtains as it went.

Inside the bed, Bahorel relaxed, despite the fact that the curtains were snapping and flapping at him like sails in a brisk, crazy breeze. He had remembered something from his studies: fiends cannot cross barriers. Doors, gates, and the like will hold them much more effectively than they will people. Fiends can't open doors, even if they're unlocked. Apparently, the curtains of Bahorel's bed counted as a barrier; as long as he stayed inside, he was safe, and the fiend could not reach him. All he had to do was wait until morning and then start shouting for someone to fetch a powerful daemonologist. Bahorel gathered his still-unconscious familiar in his lap and settled down to outlast the siege of his bed.

The fiend slapped angrily at the curtains for a few more minutes, muttering darkly to itself. And then it began to destroy things.

It started with Bahorel's table, picking it up by the legs and smashing it against the floor. The noise startled the old novice, who knelt up in bed, thrusting his head forward to figure out what was going on.

When the fiend had demolished the table, it turned its attention to his wardrobe. It tore off one of the doors and began using it to batter the rest into kindling.

Bahorel winced at every crash and every bang as his furniture was destroyed, and then he heard Ryssel's voice. "What in the Halls of the Dead are you doing in there, graybeard?"

"Ryssel!" Bahorel cried. "Don't come in!"

But the boy didn't hear him over the fiend's racket, and he opened the door.

Bahorel heard the cry of delight from the fiend and that of fright from the boy, and leapt from his bed in an instant. By the light that spilled from Ryssel's room he found the open book, snatched it up, and ran through the door.

Boy and fiend were at an impasse. Ryssel was holding it by the throat at arms' length, but the fiend had all four of its hands wrapped around his biceps and was gradually forcing him to bend his elbows, bringing its snapping fangs closer and closer to his fear-contorted face.

"Graybeard! Do something!"

Bahorel paused in the doorway, considering the situation.

"Well—"

"Please! It's going to kill me!"

The outer door slammed open, but neither Bahorel nor

Ryssel (nor the fiend) noticed the crowd of masters and novices who stopped short there, attracted by the noise and shouting.

"I'll try," Bahorel said simply, "but I'm not sure if I can—I'm not very good at daemonology."

"P-p-please! I'm dying!"

The fiend was inexorably bending the boy's arms back, and the foam that flew from its champing jaws flecked the boy's face. Bahorel dithered, but not out of malice—he really wasn't very good at daemonology, and he wasn't sure what to do. He had an idea, though.

"I think I have an idea, Novice Ryssel."

"TRY IT!" the boy screamed, the fiend's hot breath washing now over his face, his arms bulging with effort.

"I will," Bahorel affirmed, and held up the book. Then he closed it firmly.

The fiend disappeared in a puff of acrid smoke.

Ryssel collapsed to the floor.

The novices and masters in the doorway began to laugh. It should not be supposed that Bahorel had been the only object of Ryssel's cruelty. Almost everyone in the dormitory—from masters to novices to servants—had suffered at his hands, and everyone was happy to see him

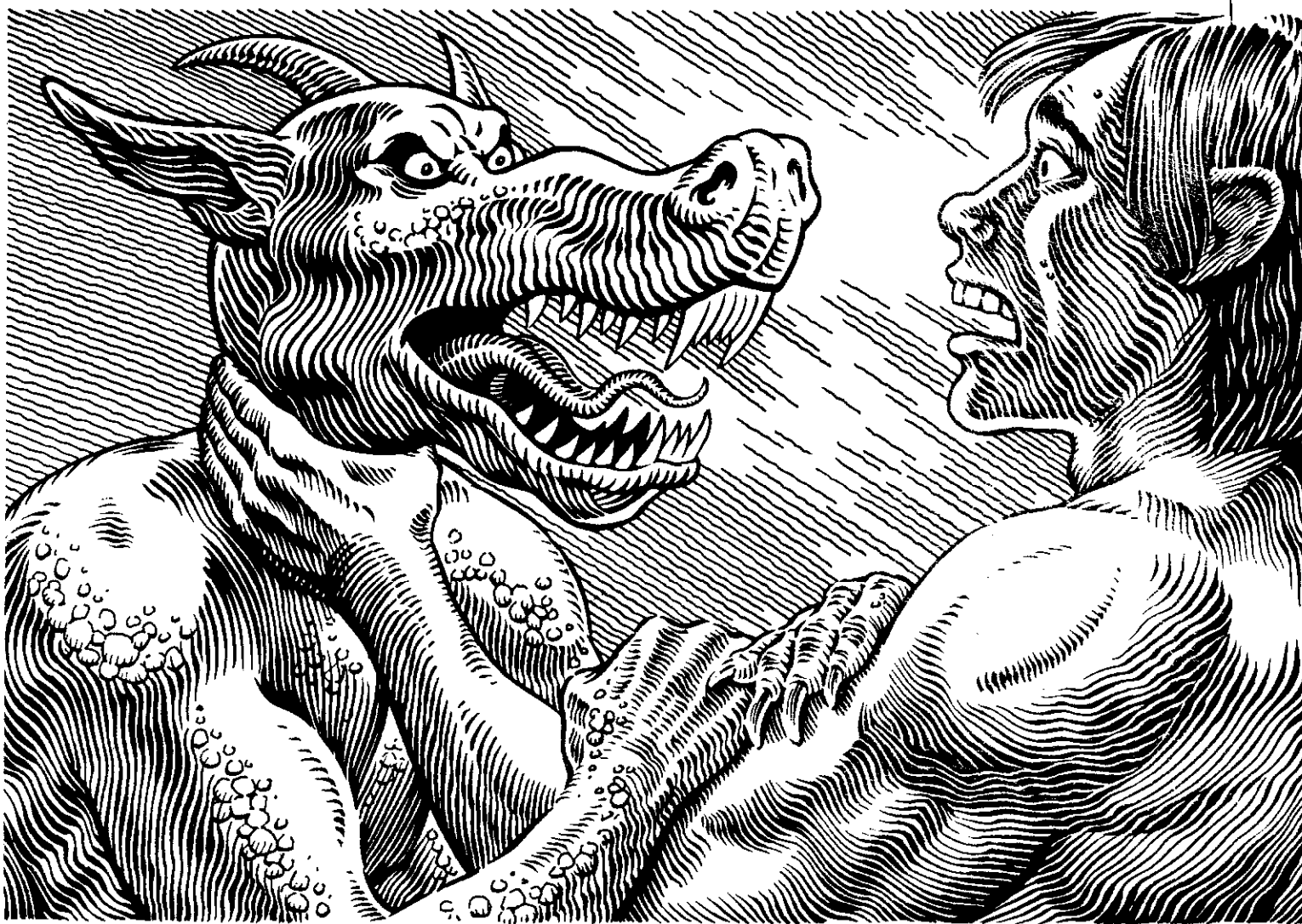
get his comeuppance.

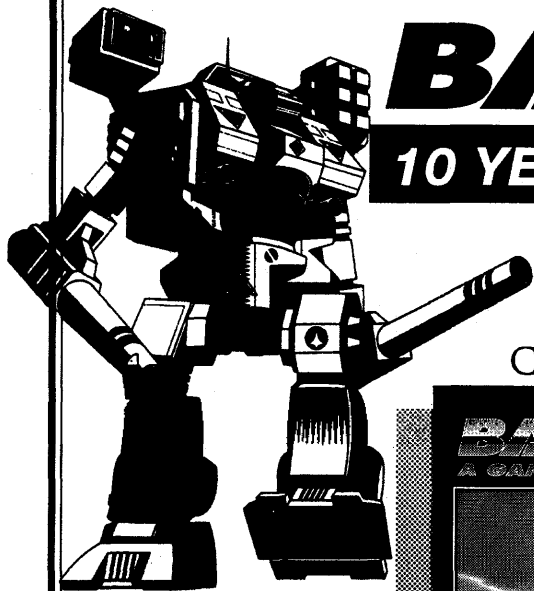
Ryssel, thoroughly humiliated, left the dormitory the next day. His uncle was apparently displeased with his grades and had withdrawn his patronage. He later became a soldier and was said to have killed thousands—many of them in battle.

Master Togodumnus, who had witnessed the end of Bahorel's one-and-only fiend-summoning, exempted him from the final examination and certified him in daemonology. He also took away the book of fiends. Both disappeared one moonless midsummer night.

As for Bahorel (who never had any intention of tricking Ryssel into confronting the fiend), he was puzzled by the sudden reputation for depth and cleverness that he had acquired with the younger novices. He was happy, however, to find that the fiend's attentions hadn't damaged his bed in any way. He was made even happier by the fact that the guild masters removed him from the dormitory, revoked his novice status, and gave him new rooms near the library and a permanent position as guild librarian.

He was still there at last report, cataloging books by day and sleeping in his siege-proof bed by night. Ω

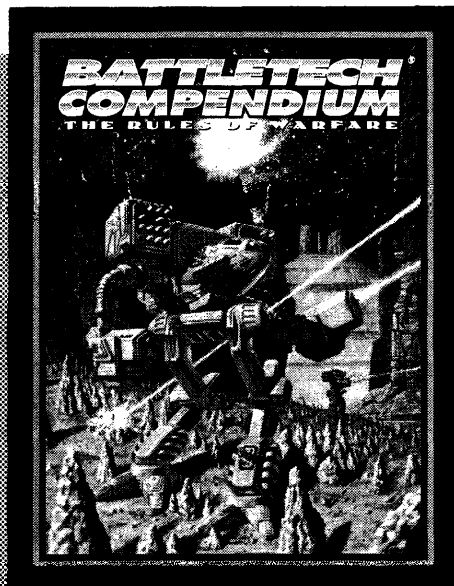
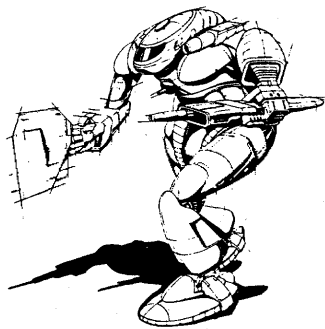




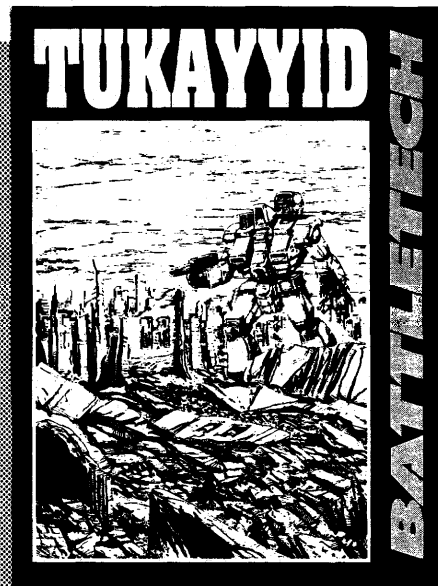
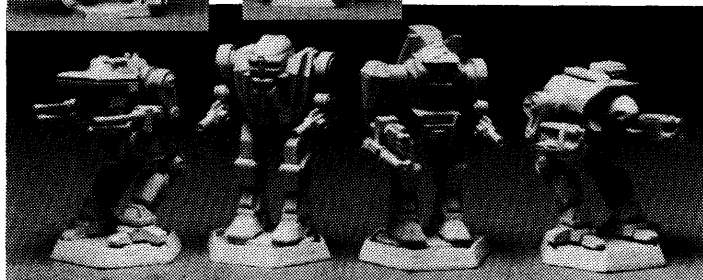
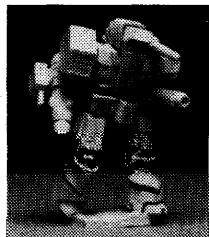
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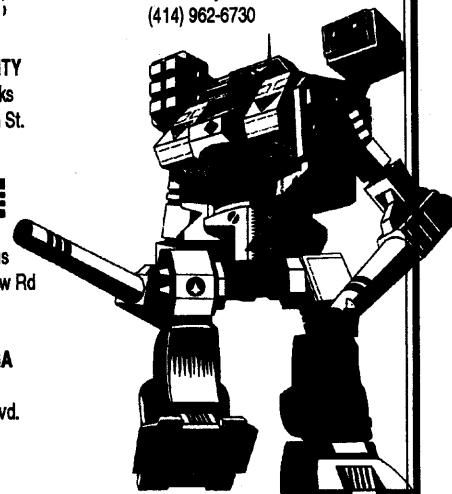
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ROLE-PLAYING

reviews

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Photography by Charles Kohl



Role-playing games' ratings



Not recommended



Poor, but may be useful



Fair



Good



Excellent



The best

Let these player's guides show you the way through the RPG wilderness

Back in the role-playing Stone Age—we're talking the mid-to-late 1970s—there was no such thing as a game world. In a typical role-playing session, The Adventurers went into The Castle, beat up The Bad Guy, recovered The Treasure, and returned to The Village. If you wanted a world to put it all in, you made up your own.

Then along came the first official settings, such as the AD&D® game's GREYHAWK® and the RUNEQUEST® game's Glorantha settings, and everything changed. Suddenly, The Village was no longer a generic collection of buildings scribbled on a scrap of paper. It now had a real name and seemed like a real place. The Bad Guy wasn't just a faceless collection of statistics, but a full-blown personality with a real history.

Nowadays, of course, game worlds are all but mandatory. I can't think of a single established RPG that doesn't have its own official setting (except for Steve Jackson Games' TOON® game maybe?). It's a trend I applaud, a logical extension of what role-playing's all about; if a character becomes more fun to play as he becomes more believable, why wouldn't the same go for the world he lives in?

But pity the poor newcomer. It's hard enough navigating the rule book, let alone a sea of supplements. A novice interested in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, for example, faces what appears to be a lifetime's worth of homework, a tower of source books, atlases, and expansions. Even a referee can be in for a rough ride, particularly if she's unfamiliar with the source material. I, for one, had not read the *Lord of the Rings*, a Conan novel, or any fantasy literature when I first attempted to referee an AD&D® game session. (The operative word is "attempted.") I needed help in the worst way.

I suspect there still are a lot of people in the same boat, those who'd like to get into the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign or some other popular setting but don't know where to begin. Or those who've bought the rule book and *still* don't have a clue. (Believe me, you're not alone.) For them—for all of us—player's guides can provide a world of relief. Here's a look at some of the best, including a few you might have missed.

The WEREWOLF* Player's Guide



WEREWOLF: THE APOCALYPSE* game supplement

232-page softcover book

White Wolf Game Studio

\$18

Design: Emrey Barnes, Bill Bridges, John Bridges, Steve Brown, Phil Brucato, Cathi Brucato, Sam Chupp, Jim Comer, Brad Freeman, Andrew Greenberg, Dan Greenberg, Mark Rein-Hagen, William Spencer-Hale, Robert Hatch,

Sam Inabinet, David Key, J. Morrison, George Neal, Teeuwynn, and Travis Williams

Development: Bill Bridges

Editing: Heather Bryden

Illustrations: John Bridges, Sam Inabinet, Jeff Rebner, Scar Studios, Dan Smith, Richard Thomas, Joshua Gabriel Timbrook, Brion Wackwitz, and Lawrence Allen Williams

Cover: Matt Wagner

If you long to sprout hair and eat the neighbors, you better have a college degree. That was my conclusion after spending a few weeks with WEREWOLF: THE APOCALYPSE game. I was crazy about the premise and gave the system a thumb's up (see DRAGON® issue #192). But as soon as the wolf-folk slipped out of Central Park (the setting featured in the rule book), things got out of hand. I couldn't keep track of the complicated mythology (What the heck is the Impergium?), my players weren't sure how their characters were supposed to behave (What is it you do with totems again?), and none of us were able to keep the tribes straight (Are the Shadow Lords trying to overthrow the Silver Fangs, or vice versa?). The WEREWOLF game was great, to be sure. But it made us feel, er, stupid. So we gave up. We shelved it and went back to the TOON game.

Truth to tell, the WEREWOLF game would've stayed on the shelf indefinitely had it not been for the publication of the *Player's Guide*, a handy—make that indispensable—tome that clarifies the game's murkier concepts. Best of all, it reassures skittish players that the game isn't as daunting as it seems. Our campaign has been breezing along now for a good six months, and I credit the *Player's Guide* for nudging it back on track.

Of all our initial stumbling blocks, the most frustrating was deciding how to role-play the Garou (the game's namesakes). Everybody knows that wizards collect spells and thieves pick pockets. But what motivates lycanthropes? The *Player's Guide* answers this question with Archetypes, a concept imported from White Wolf's VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE* game. An Archetype defines a character's personality with a single word, such as Competitor or Jester, and assigns him a role in the campaign. A Competitor, for instance, sees life as a contest, one he must win at any cost; he often serves as leader of his group. The clownish Jester boosts the morale of his buddies, the Conniver swindles and steals. The Archetypes also have a practical effect on the game by providing opportunities to regain Willpower (which can be expended to ensure the success of various actions). The Com-

petitor receives a Willpower point whenever he wins any kind of contest, the Conniver gets a point when he tricks somebody. Some of the Archetypes are too passive to be much fun—the Cub comes off as little more than an annoying kid—while others seem out of place in a game this grim (a joke-telling werewolf?). It would've been nice if the designers had suggested two or three tribes for each Archetype; not only would it have narrowed a player's choices to a manageable few, it also would've discouraged a party full of Deviants or Predators (which makes for a dull game). Still, the Archetypes provide solid foundations for new characters, and do a better job at getting novices off and running than the vague guidelines in the rule book.

Players wanting characters with more meat on their bones may add Merits and Flaws, personality traits that mimic handicaps, aptitudes, and contacts. Merits, including Common Sense and Ancestor Ally, are purchased with Freebie Points, acquired as part of the character creation process. Flaws, such as Intolerance and Color Blindness, give bonus Freebie Points, which may be spent on additional Merits. While none of this is new—SJG's GURPS* game, among others, uses a similar system of balances and counterbalances—the Merits and Flaws go a long way toward distinguishing WEREWOLF PCs from monster-movie stereotypes. It's possible, for example, to design a mute Garou with an inferiority complex who can operate computers and has a brother-in-law who works for the mayor.

The list of spell-like Gifts, introduced in the original game, is expanded considerably, emphasizing imaginative horror effects. Judicious Gift shopping can turn a run-of-the-mill lycanthrope into a blood-curdling nightmare. For starters, try *crawling hand*, which enables the Garou to detach his paw and let it scuttle across the floor (yow!), and *gluttony*, allowing the Garou to swallow a human in a single gulp (double yow!).

The *Player's Guide* also explains how werewolves keep themselves occupied when they're not terrorizing old ladies. Much time is spent preserving the sanctity and traditions of the Moot, the main social gathering. The book explains Moot structure in detail, beginning with the ritual of the Opening Howl, though the honoring of totems in the Inner Sky ceremony, climaxing with the mock battles of the Revel. Punishments ranging from expulsion to execution are levied against those who violate the tribal Litany code. Young Garou compete for the honor of running with the revered Silver Pack in a series of tests called the Choosing. Personal challenges are resolved with Gamecrafts and Facedowns; the latter may be simulated in an interac-

tive option (the real-life opponents—the players themselves, not their characters—stare into each other's eyes; the first to look away loses).

In the original rules, Caerns (places of power) and Tribes (comparable to character classes) were insufficiently defined. Here, the concepts are clarified and expanded. Caerns, categorized according to function, grant special powers; Rage Caerns, associated with battlefields and haunted lands, give bonus Rage points to Garou who complete an arcane rite. Fertility Caerns, located in national parks, can double or triple the number of progeny of a fertile female. Caern maintenance and rituals are described at length, giving the players an insight into Garou mythology and referees some ideas for adventures. A four-page entry for each of the game's major Tribes features an historical background, an organizational summary, and a detailed run-down of how members perceive their rivals; Bone Gnawers view Black Furies as "cute babes" and the Get of Fenris as "nasty, mean, and just plain ornery."

Too many White Wolf products are plagued by a lack of development and shaky use of the English language. The *Player's Guide*, alas, is no exception. In their zeal to minimize rules, the designers often fail to provide enough hard data to help referees make decisions. A Confident Archetype regains a point of Willpower when "someone confides in you on a personal and intimate level." Fine, but what exactly does that mean? Is saying "I love you" intimate enough? How about "You smell bad"? The Rite of the Pure Earth "purifies the earth in the local area." What's "the local area?" The neighborhood? The back yard? As for the language, White Wolf word processors must have minds of their own. That would explain the tortured sentences ("When you're on to something interesting, become very intense and attentive, and aim all your faculties slyly at your target"), grammatical misfires ("... others spend their waking moments to chronicle the events of the coming Apocalypse. . ."), and strangled syntax ("Each tribe is not as easily stereotyped as it at first seems."). White Wolf has plenty of gamers on staff; they could do with a few more journalism majors.

Evaluation: Though the *Player's Guide* was published as part of the First Edition line, it's compatible with Second Edition WEREWOLF game as well. The few exceptions—changes to the combat rules, outdated references to the Renown—are incidental. Regardless of which edition they're using, WEREWOLF veterans with their campaigns under control will find the *Player's Guide* helpful but nonessential. But if you bought the rule book and don't know what to do with it, or if your campaign stalled in Central Park, consider investing in the *Player's Guide*. It won't answer all your questions, but it'll point you in the right direction.

Player's Guide to the DRAGONLANCE® Campaign



ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game supplement

128-page softcover book

TSR, Inc.

\$15

Source material: David "Zeb" Cook,

Michael Dobson, Jeff Grubb, Tracy

Hickman, Harold Johnson, Douglas

Niles, and Margaret Weis

Compilation, editing, and original material:

Jonatha Ariadne Caspian

Illustrations: Denis Beauvais, Jeff Butler,

Clyde Caldwell, Larry Elmore, Stephen

Fabian, Keith Parkinson, Robin Raab,

and Valerie Valusek

Player's Guide to the FORGOTTEN REALMS® Campaign



ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game supplement

132-page softcover book

TSR, Inc.

\$15

Design: Anthony Herring

Additional material: Jeff Grubb, Karen

Boomgarden, Julia Martin, Steven

Schend, J. Robert King, and Tim Beach

Editing: Jonatha Ariadne Caspian

Illustrations: Valerie Valusek

Cover: Larry Elmore

A couple of years ago, I got a late-night call from a desperate designer working for one of the major game companies (Hint: it's the same one that sponsors this column) scrambling to meet a deadline on a DRAGONLANCE project. "You gotta help me," he pleaded. "Is Lunitari a moon or a god?" Poor guy. I knew what he was going through. Since its inception in the early 80s, the DRAGONLANCE setting has spawned dozens of novels, RPG supplements, boxed sets, comic books, and even a calendar or two. There'll probably be another couple of books in the stores by the time you finish this review. It's tough to keep track of it all. And if the designers have trouble, you can imagine what it must be like for newcomers. (Lunitari, by the way, is a moon *and* a god. Sort of.)

For the hapless souls intimidated by the sprawl of DRAGONLANCE (and the equally imposing FORGOTTEN REALMS setting) TSR comes to the rescue with these two *Player's Guides*. While the content is familiar—old hat, in fact, to veteran AD&D® game players—the format is brand-new. Gone are game mechanics, character stats, and RPG jargon—in short, everything that makes novices feel like they've wandered into a foreign country. Instead of using rules, the books illustrate key concepts with original fiction, as whimsical as fairy tales and a treat to read. Essays, graphics, and sidebars fill in the gaps.

The *Player's Guide to the DRAGONLANCE Campaign*, the better of the two, boasts crisp writing and a generous selection of maps and portraits. Focusing on the continent of Ansalon, where

most DRAGONLANCE campaigns take place, the first half of the book comprises a guided tour of major locations, using first-person narratives to pave the way. The tale of a seafaring Kagonesti elf, for example, sets up an overview of the empire of Ergoth. An encounter with a pirate ship leads into a look at the dwarven land of Kayolin. Each entry features concise but informative sections on culture (ogres prey on the decaying Northern Ergoth), climate (the mild Ergothian summer lasts about four months), and trade (Ergoth specializes in steel tools and cut stone). We're also introduced to a gallery of memorable personalities, among them the undead Lord Soth and the luminous Sivart of the Kagonesti, who speaks in a "voice like dancing waters." There's less fiction but more history in the second half of the book, which emphasizes gully dwarves, tinkler gnomes, and other memorable Ansalon races.

Lucid explanations make this a good resource as well as a good read. Take, for instance, the Knights of Solamnia, an order of chivalrous warriors who fell out of favor prior to the War of the Lance. The responsibilities and membership requirements of the knights have been discussed in umpteen previous supplements (including the *DRAGONLANCE Adventures* hardback and the *DRAGONLANCE MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM®* to name two). But for the novice, the game lingo in the earlier books made life difficult; it's hard to get a handle on the ethos of a Knight of the Rose when you're still struggling with proficiency bonuses. The *Player's Guide*, however, provides clutter-free summaries. A novice who doesn't know a proficiency bonus from a ping-pong ball will come away with a clear understanding of the Rose Knights' commitment to justice and how it relates to the legacy of Huma Dragonbane. Elsewhere, the relationship between a god and his avatar, another tricky concept, is charmingly and accurately compared to "a man and his shadow."

Complaints? A few. By downplaying the conflict between good and evil that forms the backbone of the DRAGONLANCE mythos, the book fails to capture the epic scope of the early novels. (Using a god or a mythic hero in the fiction sections might have helped.) Familiar characters, such as Flint Fireforge and Sturm Brightblade, receive only single-paragraph biographies. For those interested in using Ansalon as a campaign setting, it would've been nice to suggest which supplements they need.

Like its DRAGONLANCE counterpart, the *Player's Guide to the FORGOTTEN REALMS* setting jettisons rules in favor of fiction and stat-free source book material. Here, the fiction takes the form of a journal detailing the travels of an eclectic adventuring party, including a gnome illusionist, a halfling thief, and a human ranger. While the stories aren't particular-

ly plot-heavy—the party assembles to “travel the Realms extensively, witnessing as many of its wonders as time and fate will allow”—they cover a lot of territory. Beginning in Waterdeep, the companions wind their way through Neverwinter, the High Moor, and the Forgotten Forest—and that’s just the first leg of the trip. The gloomy finale dumps them in the dungeons of Zhentil Keep, setting the stage for a sequel designed by the reader. What the fiction lacks in narrative drive, it makes up in fanciful encounters (a korred dance in an enchanted woods, the Night of Many Thumbs celebration in Arabel) and evocative details (the crimson plate mail of the Chionthar horse soldiers, the smell of sweetmeats in the streets of Waterdeep.) It’s lightweight fun, the gaming equivalent of a strawberry sundae.

The source material, confined to brief sidebars, covers topics as diverse as druidic circles, the Harpers, and the Red Wizards of Thay. Much of it, however, seems trivial. Why devote a full page to a discussion of wine? Why describe eight types of bread? Do we really need to know about ten different cheeses? More essays about magic and history would’ve been preferable to all the groceries. And there’s a bit too much fiction for my taste, comprising perhaps two-thirds of the text.

Evaluation: Make no mistake. These books are intended as introductions, providing broad overviews for beginners. Serious players who want serious answers can skip the *Player’s Guides* and go right to the *Tales of the Lance* boxed set (for the DRAGONLANCE setting) and the revised in 1993 edition *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting* set. But if you’re not ready for the big time, or if you’re more curious than committed, try the *Player’s Guides* first.

Investigators’ Companion

CALL OF CTHULHU* game supplement
64-page softcover book
Chaosium Inc. \$11

Design: Keith Herber with John Crowe, Kenneth Faig Jr., Justin Hynes, Andrew Leman, Paul McConnell, Ann Merritt, Kevin Ross, and Lucy Szachnowski
Editing: Keith Herber
Cover: Charlie Krank

One of the CALL OF CTHULHU game’s most appealing concepts is casting the player characters as ordinary people in the ordinary world of the 1920s. Except for the intergalactic monsters, blood-thirsty cultists, and mind-blasting black magic, the 1920s of the CTHULHU game is pretty much like your great-grandparents experienced it.

Trouble is, most contemporary players aren’t all that familiar with the Roaring Twenties, aside from what they recall from television shows and history classes. Enter the *Investigator’s Companion*, a detailed compendium of day-to-day life in the age of Al Capone. Thanks to the *Com-*

panion, I now know the horsepower of a 1921 Pierce-Arrow (110), the major French newspaper of Switzerland (*Journal de Geneve*), and how much a woman spent on underwear (40% of her income). Did I say detailed? I meant *staggeringly* detailed.

The book opens with an overview of the era, concentrating on economic and social evolution. While real-estate speculators were making a killing in the land boom of 1925, teenagers were singing along with “Sweet Georgia Brown.” While Thomas Wolfe was writing *A Farewell to Arms* in 1929, and escalating gang wars foreshadowed the St. Valentine’s Day Massacre. A time line keeps it all straight; a glance tells us that President Harding died in office the same year as dance marathons became popular (1923), and that TWA began regular passenger service in the same year that Richard Byrd flew over the North Pole (1926). Popular culture receives the same meticulous treatment; we’re given year-by-year rundowns of the top novels, stage shows, and movies, as well as breakthroughs in sports (the impact of radio on pro boxing) and fashion (the rise and fall of hemlines).

Subsequent chapters focus on research, transportation, and equipment. Stumped investigators may be able to dredge up clues by poking around the American Museum of Natural History (open from 10 A.M. to 5:45 P.M.) or interviewing Clarence Darrow (he has an office in Chicago). If you need to get out of town, consider a cross-country train (7 cents per mile for a private compartment) or a motorcycle (you can buy a 37 cubic-inch opposed twin Harley-Davidson in Milwaukee). Statistics and descriptions are provided for a warehouse full of weapons, ranging from switchblades and cavalry sabres to Luger pistols and Browning machine guns.

But this deluge of information may disappoint those more interested in role-playing than dry facts. There’s plenty of biographical data on Clarence Darrow, but next to nothing about his personality (and where are his character stats?). It’s good to know the general layout of the American Museum, but don’t they have a secret room some place where they keep the black magic exhibits? I would’ve liked to learn how to interview reluctant witnesses, break into locked buildings, and negotiate for used cars. All the supernatural material—forbidden tomes, alien monsters, secret cults—has been relegated to the *Keeper’s Companion* (a terrific source book for referees). Yeah, I know all the Mythos stuff is supposed to be a surprise, but a CTHULHU book without monsters and magic is like a tofu hamburger—it may be good for you, but it’s not very tasty.

Evaluation: Is the *Companion* interesting? Yep. Impressive? You bet. Useful? Well, you tell me—when was the last time you needed to know the horsepower of a Pierce-Arrow? This is mostly window dressing, helpful for spicing up a referee’s

descriptions, but unnecessary for players. By all means, invest in the CALL OF CTHULHU game. But unless you’re a Keeper, a student of history, or a CTHULHU collector, you can probably learn all you need to know about the Roaring Twenties by visiting a video store and renting *The Untouchables*.

Players’ Survival Guide

OVER THE EDGE* game supplement
80-page softcover book
Atlas Games \$10
Design: Jonathan Tweet with Michael Halse, Robin D. Laws, Greg Stolze, and John Sullivan
Editing: Mark Frein and John Nephew
Illustrations: Cheryl Mandus
Cover: Doug Shuler

I imagine some of you aren’t familiar with the OVER THE EDGE game, so allow me to describe it. Mix J.R.R. Tolkien with liberal doses of James Bond and H.P. Lovecraft. Throw in some cyberpunk, a little *Twilight Zone*, and a few issues of *Mad magazine*. Wrap it all up in your favorite supermarket tabloid. Confused? You’ve got it!

To call the OVER THE EDGE game (OTE) one-of-a-kind is like calling King Kong a one-of-a-kind monkey. I loved it right away, but as with the WEREWOLF game, I had trouble getting a campaign off the ground. Not only was I unable to find the proper tone (one part CALL OF CTHULHU, one part West End Games’ PARANOIA* game), I couldn’t make sense of the characters (understandable since PCs can be anything from Green Berets to talking cats).

In the *Players’ Survival Guide*, designer Jonathan Tweet provides common-sense explanations of OTE’s labyrinthine rules. Using conversational language (“I’ve sometimes had to restrict players’ creations to keep them reasonable, but mostly I’ve let them get away with more than they first thought possible”), he shows how to create a character from the initial concept to the final polish. He addresses the importance of motivations and shows how dark secrets (a prison record, an alliance with the CIA) foster engaging personalities. Courageous players may wish to experiment with the CUTUP (Casually Unrelated Thoughts Under Pressure) system to generate characters from randomly selected catch-words. Skill resolution, combat encounters, and other fundamentals are dissected and analyzed. The role-playing section offers helpful advice for getting through an adventure in one piece; my favorite tip: “If you’re going to play the OVER THE EDGE game, get used to frustration and disappointment.”

Speaking of frustration, I could’ve used a lot more information about the game world. The maps of The Edge and Al Amarja indicate a few points of interest but reveal nothing out of the ordinary. The tourist’s guide, a two-page overview of Al Amarja’s laws and services, belabors the

obvious ("A good weapons shop . . . can provide you with the protective devices you need to keep yourself safe."). Tweet could've been a little more generous without compromising any of the game's mysteries.

Evaluation: With its engaging setting and tidal wave of ideas, I'm surprised that the OTE game hasn't gotten more attention. Though not for beginners—the freeform style requires both the referee and the players to fine-tune the rules as they go along—veterans should go for this in a big way, particularly those with a penchant for the bizarre. And maybe you can navigate the OTE rule book without the *Players' Survival Guide*, but I couldn't. Get 'em both. (Write to: Atlas Games, P.O. Box 406, Northfield MN 55057.)

Short and sweet

FIRST QUEST™ game, by Bruce Nesmith, L. Richard Baker III, and David "Zeb" Cook. TSR, Inc., \$30.

This is the one with the audio CD, and it's the genuine article, complete with 60 tracks, stereo sound, and a plastic jewel box. The adventure text directs the Dungeon Master to play certain tracks at various points to reveal clues or enhance the atmosphere. For example, a typical track opens with croaking frogs and creepy music. A female, presumably one of the PCs, says, "Clearly, this must have been the old castle's garden. Curious, an old fountain." We hear sloshing water, then the woman shrieks, "A giant toad!" A male companion cries, "Watch out for its tongue!" The track ends with squishing sounds, more creepy music, and a synthesizer bleep to signal the DM to return to the text. My younger players were spellbound, the old-timers delighted. Tastefully produced, the CD transcends gimmickry by transforming routine adventures into multimedia extravaganzas. More!

As for the rules, they're streamlined AD&D rules, intended for novice players and first-time DMs. The 16-page rule book covers the basics of character creation, combat, and spell-casting with gradeschool-level explanations: "Thieves are fast and nimble. They are good at being sneaky. They can find and open locks." The Adventure Book contains four simple scenarios, two of which use the CD. Symbols highlight key sections of the text; a big black exclamation point indicates information requiring the DM's scrutiny, a foot impaled on a spike notes the location of a trap. The DM's screen provides step-by-step directions for making saving throws and ability checks. A set of reference cards explains the differences between warriors and wizards. Though the FIRST QUEST game won't sustain the interest of experienced players—it only takes characters up to 3rd level and doesn't have enough detail to stage convincing wilderness adventures—it's a newcomer's dream. This may be the birthday present of the year

The Last Command, by Eric Trautmann. West End Games, \$22.

The third STAR WARS® game source book based on Timothy Zahn's novel trilogy follows in the footsteps of the previous two entries, *Heir to the Empire* and *Dark Force Rising*. Trautmann brings the characters up to date, examines some new aliens, and tears apart the hardware. The impressive graphics include a blueprint of the Golan Space Defense Station and a schematic of Mount Tantiss. Beware—if you read the source book first, you'll spoil the surprises in the novel.

ELRIC Gamemaster Screen, by Les Brooks with Richard Watts and Gustav Bjorksten. Chaosium Inc., \$15.

This elaborately packaged screen for the ELRIC® game comes bundled with four data-packed reference cards (spell summaries, weapon statistics, and price lists), a first-rate mini-adventure set in the Isle of the Purple Towns, a packet of record sheets (for leaders, elementals, and rabble), a cheesy black and white map of the world, and a bookmark with a sword on it. As for the four-panel screen, it contains terrain modifiers, combat tables, and other critical information in an easy-to-read format. Do you need it? Only if the price doesn't scare you away.

Earthdawn Companion, by Greg Gordon and Louis J. Prosperi with Christopher Kubasik and Allen Varney. FASA Corporation, \$18.

Essentially a rules expansion for the EARTHDAWN® game, the *Earthdawn Companion* allows characters to advance to the Fifteenth Circle, and also features a potpourri of new talents (*animate object*, *sense magic weapon*) and airships (gal-leons, t'skrang riverboats). Inventive referees will devour the guidelines for creating disciplines and creatures from scratch. Not everything works—the last thing the convoluted thread magic system needed was more rules—but overall, it's a must for hardcore EARTHDAWN gamers.

GURPS Grimoire, by Daniel U. Thibault and S. John Ross. Steve Jackson Games, \$17.

This imaginative collection of spells for the GURPS game adds hundreds of options to the already lengthy list in the *GURPS Magic* supplement. Animal, Elemental, Gate, Necromantic, and Sound are among the nearly two dozen categories; sample effects include *rain of stones*, *accelerate time*, and *cloud vaulting*. A fascinating section of technological spells allows post-industrial mages to expel radioactive breath, create sentient computers, and speak with lawn mowers. Though everything's in GURPS-speak, a diligent referee should be able to convert it all to the system of his choice.

Paper Mayhem, edited by David Webber. Paper Mayhem Association, single issue: \$5, six-issue subscription: \$24.

Play-by-mail games can be a lot of fun, but at \$5 or more per turn, they can get expensive fast. The long-running *Paper Mayhem* (it's approaching its 70th issue) is an invaluable resource for separating the cream from the crud. In addition to its comprehensive reviews, the magazine also features strategy articles, designer profiles, and a game chart that rates more than 70 games based on player satisfaction (top picks include the ADVENTURERS GUILD®, STAR QUEST®, and WORLD WAR IV® games). *Paper Mayhem's* enthusiasm is contagious; I may enlist in WORLD WAR IV myself. (Write to: Paper Mayhem, Dept. PM, 1518 Adams Street, Ottawa, IL 61350-4770.)

The author of *The Complete Guide to Role-Playing Games* (published by St. Martin's Press), Rick Swan can be contacted at 2620 30th St., Des Moines IA 50310. Enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope if you'd like a reply.

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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 3LB, United Kingdom. We are no longer able to make personal replies; please send no SASEs with your questions (SASEs are being returned with writer's guidelines for the magazine).

This month, the sage considers particular spells and character abilities in the AD&D® game, gives similar consideration to the PLANESCAPE™ setting, and continues his look at the SPELLFIRE™ game.

When a spell-caster uses a touch-delivered spell, does he have to try to touch a recipient immediately or can he wait until a later round? What happens if the recipient is unwilling and the spell-caster fails in his first attempt to touch the recipient? Do attack bonuses from Strength apply to the touch attempt?

Generally, a touch-delivered spell remains active only during the round when it is cast (see DMG, page 61). There are a few spells, such as *dispel evil* that remain active for a short time or until triggered. Check the description of the spell to be sure.

It's safe to assume that a fairly firm touch on the recipient is required to complete a touch-delivered spell, so it's entirely reasonable to allow Strength bonuses or penalties to modify the touch attempt, but that's not official.

How much damage does the seventh-level priest spell *fire storm* inflict? One of our local players insists that a 14th-level caster would inflict 16d8 points of damage with this spell.

The spell inflicts 2d8 points of damage plus one extra point per caster level. A 14th-level caster creates a *fire storm* that inflicts 2d8 + 14 points of damage. A successful saving throw vs. spells reduces the damage by half.

Dwarves, gnomes, and halflings enjoy Constitution-based saving throw bonuses vs. magic. Do these

bonuses apply only to saving throws against spells, or do they also apply to saving throws vs. rods, staves, wands, petrification, and death magic?

The bonus applies to any saving throw against an effect generated from a wand, staff, rod, or spell. If a spell or device produces an effect that uses the saving throw priority rules (see PHB, page 101) the character still gets the bonus. The bonus also applies to monsters' spell-like abilities, but not to gaze attacks or breath weapons.

When a druid is using his shape change ability to assume an animal form and he returns to his normal form he regains 10%-60% of his lost hit points. Does this apply to any lost hit points or just to hit points lost while in animal form?

Actually, the rules say the druid regains 10%-60% of all damage he has suffered whenever he assumes a new form (PHB, page 37). So, the healing would apply to any damage the druid had sustained before assuming any particular animal form. Note that reverting to normal form does not count as assuming a new form for healing purposes; the druid regains hit points only three times a day—once with each assumption of an animal form.

Can thieves use their backstab damage multiplier when using a thrown weapon such as a dagger?

The rules don't say the thief has to use a melee weapon to make a backstab, but I don't recommend that you allow backstabbing with missiles—it makes the ability too easy to use.

Will a *stoneskin* spell protect a character against energy draining? Will it protect against touch-delivered spells such as *cause serious wounds*?

Stoneskin does not protect against magical attacks of any kind—even touch-delivered spells—or against special attacks that do not involve cuts, stabs, blows, or the like. *Stoneskin* prevents a giant snake or spider from injecting venom with its fangs, but it won't prevent green slime from dissolving the character or an undead creature from draining life energy.

Will multiple *stones of good luck* work together? I know items such as *rings of protection* don't work together but a *stone of good luck* has three times the XP value of a *ring of protection* and all it does is increase the owner's saving throws.

No, multiple *stones of good luck* don't work together. Take another look at the item description. A *stone of good luck* does a lot more than just modify saving throws. It can improve ability score checks (when they involve avoiding slipping, falling, dodging, and the like). Because the stone literally makes the character a little more lucky, it also comes into play whenever there is a roll for some random twist of fate, including dice rolls among characters to see who gets the pick of the magical items in a treasure hoard.

In DRAGON® issue #206 you listed an official correction regarding bonus priest spells for a Wisdom score of 19 (one first-level spell and one third-level spell). That's fine, but the corrected progression still gives priests with Wisdom scores of 23 + more bonus fifth-level spells (4) than anything else.

Right, I only gave half an answer. The powers that be are still struggling with the official answer to your question. In the meantime, I suggest you change the entry for Wisdom 23 to read 1st, 5th.

Exactly how large is Sigil (from the PLANESCAPE setting)?

Sigil is literally as big as the DM wants it to be. According to recent reports, the Harmonium has measured Sigil's width (the distance from one outer edge of the ring to the other) at five miles and its circumference at 40 miles, which gives the ring a diameter of a little more than 12.72 miles. Note, however that Sigil is a world unto itself and although it is finite, its size is not fixed. The Lady of Pain can enlarge and reduce it to accommodate newcomers and to force out folk who displease her. Its a good bet that Sigil gets a little smaller whenever some poor berk winds up in the mazes. In any case, I don't recommend making Sigil any narrower than five miles or any wider than 20 miles.

Sigil's population is unrevealed; only the Lady of Pain knows exactly how many residents there are.



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How do the various fiends and planar races of Sigil manage to speak with each other? How do primes and planars speak to the residents of the planes they visit? For that matter, how do primes speak to the residents of other prime material worlds they visit?

The Common tongue spoken by every AD&D player character is generally understood in Sigil. Common also is understandable throughout the planes and prime material worlds. Of course, each place has its own particular idioms that outsiders don't readily understand. (Planespeak, for example, takes a little getting used to.) I suppose that if your group really likes playing charades and has plenty of tongues spells at hand, you could designate different languages for each world, or even for different regions within each world. In any case, most fiends can telepathically communicate with all intelligent creatures.

What are the effects of the cranium rat's mind blast power?

It works just like a mind flayer's mind blast. That is, the pack generates a cone of mental force 60' long, 5' wide at the base, and 20' wide at the far end. Creatures within the cone must save vs. wands, and failure leaves the victim reeling and unable to act for 3d4 rounds. The blast can originate from anywhere within the pack of cranium rats.

SPELLFIRE questions

Can Iuz the Evil (#67) use his power to raze a realm or force a razed realm to be discarded if he is used to defend against an attack?

When Iuz is used in a battle on defense or on offense and is defeated in the normal course of matching levels he uses his power. Note that Iuz does not get to use his power when he is not killed and discarded. For example, if someone plays the Darkness spell (#359) everyone goes home, ending the battle and technically "defeating" the attacker.

Assuming that the aiding the attacker or defender optional rule is not in use in a multi-player game, is there any way for players to affect a battle when they are not directly involved in it? For example in a five-player game, player A attacks player B. What can players C, D, and E do?

Remember that events can be played at any time by anyone. Also, there are a few magical items that can help other people, but most such items are included in card sets that haven't been released yet. Finally, events that stay in effect until the player's next turn affect every battle that happens during that time. If player C in your example had played the Mist Wolf event (#175) during her last turn, neither player A nor player B could use allies in the battle.

The Wall of Fire spell (#355) would be pretty handy to use on defense, but it's an offensive spell! Does the card's +3 level apply against fliers?

Defenders can use offensive spells and magical items. As explained last month, defensive spells and magical items work on the person who plays them and offensive spells work on somebody else. The distinction is important when determining who is immune to what, but it doesn't restrict who can play the card.

Yes, Wall of Fire's level applies against fliers, but it doesn't apply against champions who are immune to offensive spells.

Exactly when and how often does the Temple of Elemental Evil (#124) allow a player to draw extra cards?

When the temple is played—placed in the realms formation—three cards are drawn. If the temple is razed and then restored more cards are not drawn. If the temple was discarded and brought back into the player's hand somehow, then the temple could be played again and another three cards could be drawn.

What does the notation "3/4" on a spell card mean?

A spell marked with a "3" can be cast in step three by a pool champion or by a

realm that acts as a spell-caster before a battle takes place. During a battle (step 4), spells marked with a "4" can be cast by a realm or champion involved in the battle. Spells marked "3/4" can be cast in either step.

If you are defending a realm that has a level of its own, what happens when you play a champion? Does the champion negate the realm's defense value or do you now have two lines of defense?

A realm with a level acts as its own champion and must be defeated by an attacking champion. It can have allies in a battle and can cast spells if its power says its champions can cast spells. Two champions never can be played together. The inherent champion is in effect only when no champion card is played in defense. However, a pool champion could defend the realm during one round of battle and the realm could defend itself during the next round if the pool champion were defeated.

Does Drizzt (#45) have to be defeated on successive rounds?

No, Drizzt only has to be defeated twice in the same battle. It doesn't matter whether the defeats were consecutive.

Can the defender choose to use Drizzt only once per battle?

Yes.

Will the solid fog card (#382) or the faithful hound card (#387) end a battle with no harm to either side?

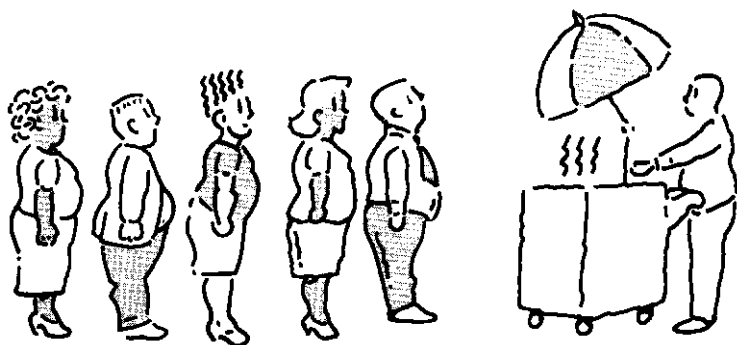
To begin with, if a card play prevents a champion from attacking (a nonflying champion blocked by a wall spell for example), that champion is defeated but returns to its pool, and the battle ends.

A defending champion defeated in this way likewise returns to its pool, but the attacking player can begin a new round of battle.

An event usually stops a battle with no harm done to either side, but any allies or spells that were used are still discarded.

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FLAMINSTER'S notebook

The Serpent Blade

by Ed Greenwood

Artwork by Gary Williams

This was one of several such weapons I saw in the city of Unthalass, borne by cultists of Tiamat. Temple guardians of that detestable faith tried to dissuade my wanderings in the underways of the city when I ventured too near their Altar of Scales. They employed sword-like serpent blades against me: long swords whose hilts and blades are emerald-green and scaled.

When it is drawn, the blade of such a weapon becomes a hissing, animated snake that strikes at all living things within reach¹ except those who wear serpent rings (brass rings bearing minor enchantments that enable the wearer to pass the wards of places sacred to the cult of Tiamat).

These serpent rings seem very similar to the ones used by the yuan-ti of northern Calimshan and the northern coast of Chult—and not too different from a few I've seen lizard men wearing in coastal marshlands around the Sea of Fallen Stars. I must investigate this²

The pommels of serpent blades are brass rings used to hang the blades when not in use, tie them to the wrist of the wielder for use in mounted battle, or to lower them by cord down through trap doors onto intruders below. This last technique (used through bedchamber or upper hall skylights by night) is a favorite for assassinations.³

High priests of Tiamat (in Unthalass, they style themselves Dark Scaled Ones) wield similar weapons: whips that have three serpent-heads, all of which can spit corrosive venom at victims, as well as biting or slashing with their fangs as the snake-head of a serpent blade does.⁴

I've also seen serpentskin bracers worn by some Serpent Guards in rural Mulhorand, but I've no idea what powers these bear, if any—I must investigate this, too. Ward-token powers, or even the foci for personal ward-fields? Some of my spells were turned aside from two guards at first; I suspect personal ward-fields rather than amulets, by how my magic reacted.

Sources⁵ tell me the cult of Tiamat is planning to infiltrate and take over The Cult of the Dragon based in Sembia. Watch for this; first moves are said to be luring Cult agents into Turmish with tales of evil dragons who can take human shape, overcoming them by spells, to read all that's in their minds, and use this knowledge to craft a mercenary attack on Naergoth

Bladelord. When he whelms the Cult to war, the Dark Scaled Ones will take note of who answers his call, and then lie low, seeking to strike down Dragon Cultists in the year that follows, one by one, until fear drives them to a fortress or the Cult of the Dragon is broken, whichever befalls first. Note: put the Harpers onto this in Selgaunt.

Also to be investigated: A possible alliance, slave trading, or other commerce between the drow (beneath Turmish at least where no dwarven or gnomish strength hampers them) and the cult of Tiamat there. The temple I destroyed had several ways down into the Underdark, guarded by snake-pit-traps.

The cult uses venomous snakes almost entirely; I saw no constrictors. I suspect all senior priests are immune to snake poisons—perhaps by a process of gradual exposure rather than magic or any boon granted by Tiamat. Investigate tales of increasing lawlessness in Tunland and Breakback Pass; the western slopes of the Giant's Run Mountains are a logical place for this cult to establish a fortress-hold. Also check on reports of snake-god in Chult—connection with Tiamat?

Send Harpers to watch Gelgunet of Starmantle and Ucharntar Sendril of Sendril's Silks in Ormath; these are probably the most active cult agents at present. The recent increase in musk and wine-scent supplies shipping into Westgate may be the cult trying to amass a large treasury for their struggle with the Cult of the Dragon.

Harper reports speak of two large black dragons establishing lairs on the western side of the Orsraun Mountains—a mated pair? Unusual for two to hunt and dwell so close together in peace. Check on this, and see that word of it gets to The Followers of the Scaly Way, so that the dragon-worshippers arrive in the laps of the faithful of Tiamat before they're ready. This should be fun.

Footnotes

1. Serpent Blade: 9,000 gp cost to make, XP value 7,500, weighs about 6 lbs., Size M (typically 4' long or so), Type P/S, Speed Factor 7, Damage 1d4 + 1 vs. S or M, 1d4 vs. L plus venom: save vs. poison. If successful, victim takes 3d4 damage and is slowed for 1d6 + 1 rounds, but can't be affected again by the venom of any ser-

pent blade for 144 turns (24 hours, or 1 full day; during this time, a serpent blade strike does only physical damage). If failed, victim is paralyzed for the round after the blade strikes, takes an immediate 20 points of damage—and is vulnerable to further venom strikes (a save is allowed for each).

2. Serpent rings function as pass-tokens for temple wards associated with serpent worship (for details of wards, see the *Volo's Guide To The North* guide book), bear a minor enchantment identifying their wearers to serpent blade-heads as not to be attacked under any circumstances, and a strong enchantment rendering wearers immune to all serpent blade venom (this also confers a + 3 bonus on all poison, acid, and venom saving throws).

An openly displayed serpent ring will attract the immediate, suspicious attention of any yuan-ti, lizard men, intelligent snakes, cultists of Tiamat, Set, and others who venerate serpentkind who see it. Such rings are fashioned of plain brass, shaped to resemble an open-mouthed snake wrapped around its own tail to form a band.

Such rings cost 1,000 gp to make, and gain the enchanter 500 XP.

3. Sources attesting to this: festhall-hostess Tantathla, third stair from the south end of Mlara's Street; at The Lusty Lamia on Shondil Street most nights—she likes amber and emeralds—and shopkeeper Alaguth Fydeir of The Five Feathers Weapons and Gear Shop, on Sandaster's Street—he stocks nice watertight wand-sheaths).

4. Same as Serpent Blades except three heads (can attack same or different targets, can retract but full extended reach for each is 5', Speed Factor 8, venom same as serpent blade except spit to 20' distant, hit does 1d4 acid damage and forces a save vs. venom: success means no additional effects, failure means victim slowed for 1d3 rounds. Serpent Whips cost 13,000 gp to make, XP value: 9,000.

5. Eldorn, a Harper ranger who can be contacted by leaving word with Tchond Tchar, keeper of The Dragon's Bower inn on the open road just east of Shamp, in Chondath—fat, mustache, always humming; trustworthy. Eldorn is presently undercover in the cult of Tiamat; when I see him next, I owe him a bottle of firewine and a new pair of gloves to replace the ones that got burnt.

THE SERPENT BLADE

QUILLONS
SOMETIMES
MISMATCHED

THIS ONE
HAS A
SERPENT-
TONGUE
RING

RING POMMEL
(ALWAYS!)

NOTE THE
SNAKE
HELM

TWISTED
SNAKE
DAGGER



NOTE
SCALES

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MASTER
ASSASSINS
CAN KILL
WITHOUT
THE TAIL
RATTLES
MAKING
A SOUND!

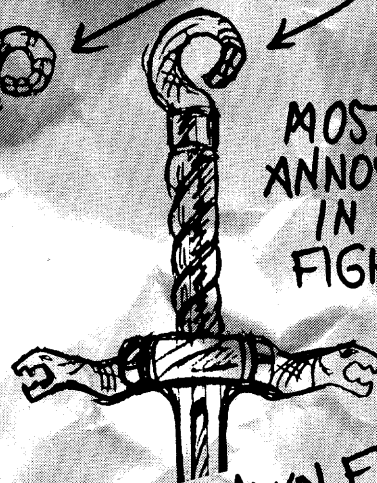
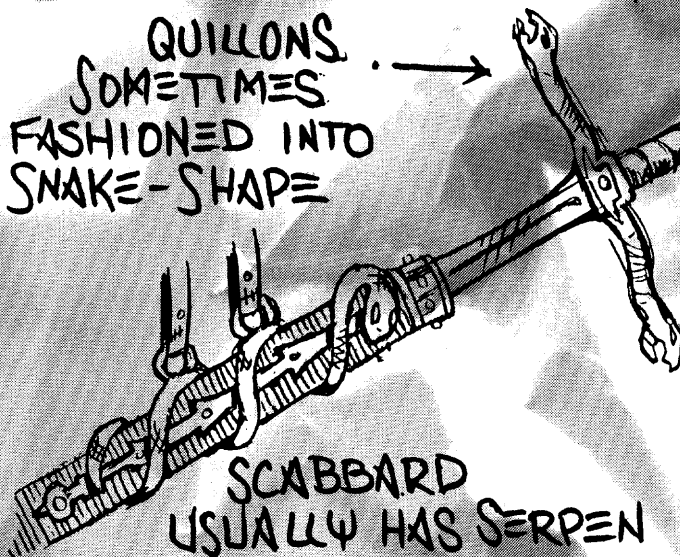
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QUILLONS
SOMETIMES
FASHIONED INTO
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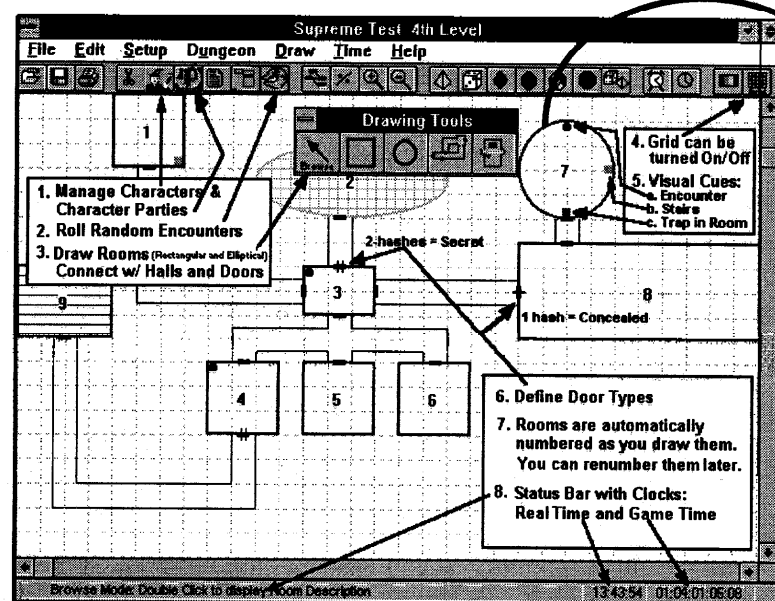
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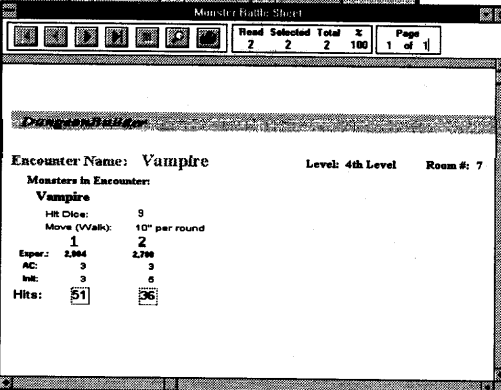
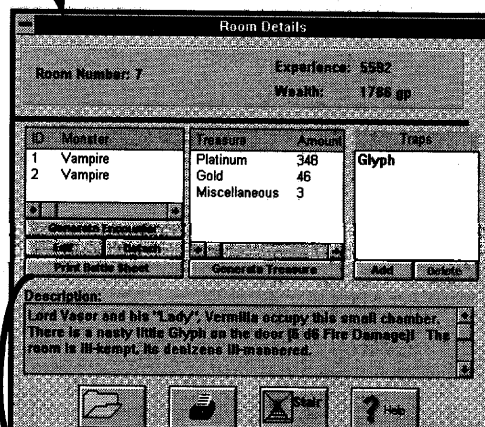
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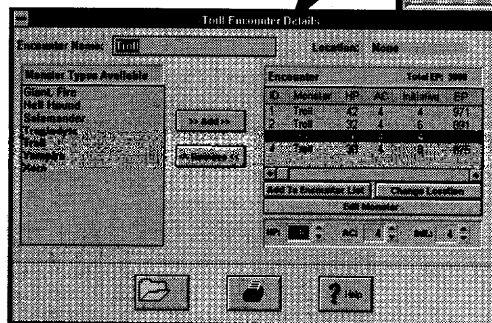
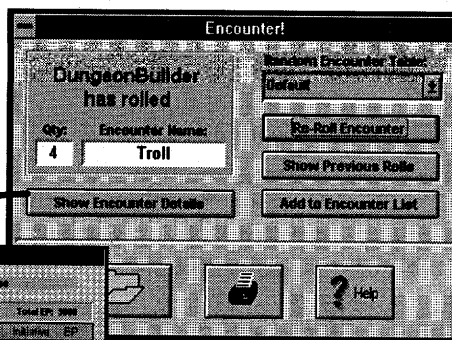
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HELLO,
TARANT.

ACE BLOOD-
RUNNER, I BELIEVE.
IT'S BEEN A
LONG TIME.

IT TOOK A WHILE
TO GET BACK.
HOW LONG IN
YOUR TIME?

FIVE YEARS,
LOCAL. I TAKE IT
YOU'RE HERE TO KILL
ME? TO SLAY THE
OPPRESSING
TARANT?

I'M HERE
TO CORRECT
AN IMBALANCE.
TO SET THINGS
RIGHT.
YOU DON'T
BELONG
HERE.

AND HOW DO
YOU PROPOSE TO
CORRECT THAT,
BLOODRUNNER?
YOU FOUND YOUR
MAGIC BOOK
AT LAST?

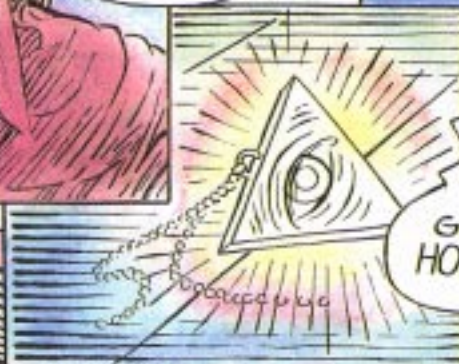
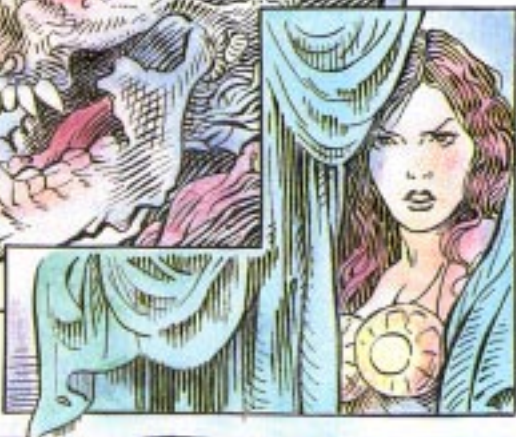
BY GIVING
YOU THIS.
THE KEY
BACK TO THE
MAZEWORKS.

CHK-KA-CHK



THERE IS
NOTHING FOR
YOU HERE.

TAKE IT
AND GO
HOME.



GO
HOME?



BNAH-HAH-HAH!



HOME?

FOOLISH
CHAOS-
CHILD!

IT HAS BEEN
FIVE YEARS
SINCE I CONQUERED
THIS LAND!

IF I WOULD
RETURN NOW,
MY LAW-BROTHERS
WOULD FIND ME
IMPURE AND
SENTENCE ME
TO DEATH.

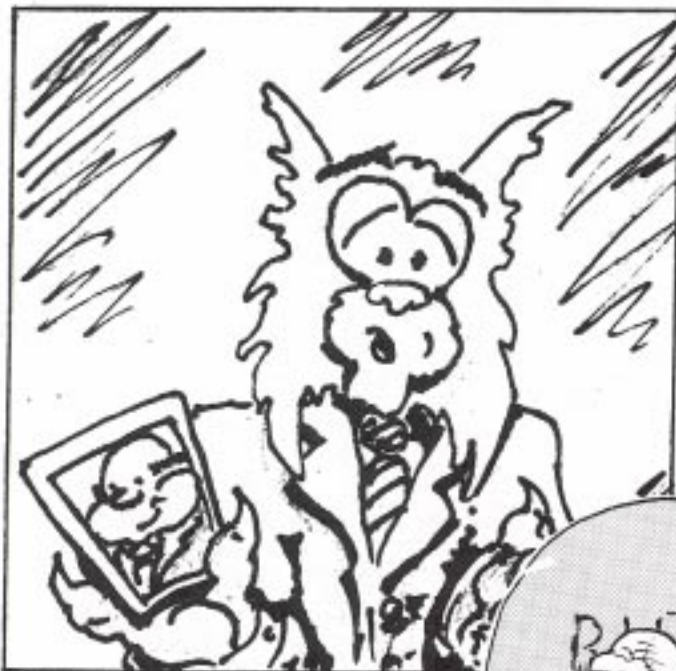
INSTEAD, I
SHOULD SLAY
YOU, AND KEEP
MY SECRET KINGDOM
AWAY FROM THE
MAZEWORKS!



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To drain away what

... and from whom.

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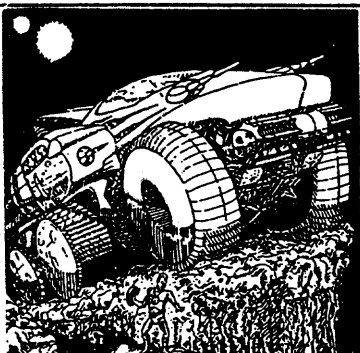


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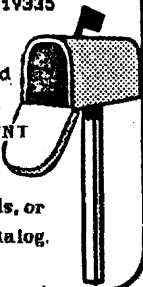
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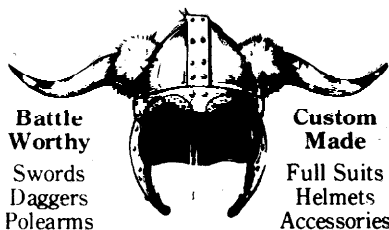
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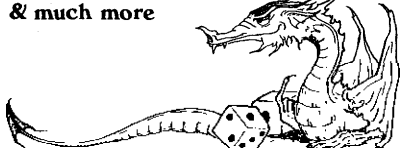
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Runaway figure painted by Ken Carpenter

Some photography courtesy of Ral Partha Enterprises



Undead Chariot (Games Workshop)

One man's lead . . .

Wait, let me climb up on my soapbox . . . okay, here we go. Over the last couple of years we've heard a lot about the lead ban in New York State and the general uprising against lead products, including our precious miniatures. A few months ago the whole effort sort of hit the fan and fell apart. It seems that the scientist or data being used by New York state was determined faulty and discredited.

How is that going to affect our hobby? After speaking with a few manufacturers and distributors, here's the answer to that

question: very little. It took a lot of time and effort to change over to lead-free alloys and not just for the manufacturers. It also was miniatures purgatory for the distributors and retailers. Many of them just aren't willing to go through it again in changing back to lead. Besides, what if the lead fight started all over again?

The fact is, a few manufacturers have talked to their distributors about going back to lead. While some distributors didn't have a problem with that, others said they wouldn't touch any lead products whatso-

ever. Whether or not the distributors believe that lead figures are dangerous, they have to contend with a public that does.

The State of New York was provided data that documented the handling of lead miniatures does not increase the level of lead in the blood, even when it occurs regularly and over a period of years. However, certain special-interest groups have their own agenda and won't let sound, empirical evidence affect their judgement. My point? If you don't have a nervous habit of chewing on your fighter figure when she's in danger, you just might survive the perilous use of lead miniatures.

A few manufacturers are going to maintain two lines of product, one lead and one lead-free, to provide a lower cost alternative to the high-cost alloys they've been using the last couple of years. Don't get too excited, though—this probably will reduce the prices only by about 10%-15% for the new lead figures. About the time that the industry went lead-free, it was due for a price increase anyway so part of the price hike was just regular inflation, which won't go away even with the use of less expensive materials.

While at least one manufacturer is re-evaluating its prices after a solid year of lead-free sales (meaning prices might be slightly reduced), as miniature collectors, modelers, and gamers we will just have to live with the fact that higher miniature prices are here to stay, whether we like it or not. My wallet's no thicker than yours (trust me on this one) so, while I used to buy just about anything that caught my eye, I now have to be more selective about my purchases.

Enough blather, let's get back to gaming and figures. In the next few issues we'll be taking a close look at miniatures accessories and terrain for table-top gamers,

modelers, and visually correct (enlightened) role-players.

As always, I welcome your (snide) comments, (rude) suggestions, and (superior) ideas for future topics. You can write me at: Ken Carpenter, P.O. Box 9, Murrieta CA 92564.

Reviews

Since this issue of DRAGON® Magazine is focused on horror, the review pieces have been chosen to show a snippet of the vast miniatures support for the horror genre. There were so many figures to choose from that I had a hard time narrowing the field to these. There also are some great figure lines that don't appear here that you might like to look for—RAFM's *CALL OF CTHULHU** and *Fantastique Noir Vampire*, Ral Partha's *All Things Dark and Dangerous*, *WEREWOLF**, and *VAMPIRE**, Grenadier's *Nightmares*, and Simtac's *Nightlife* products.

Games Workshop (Citadel/Marauder Miniatures)

3431-C Benson Ave.
Baltimore MD 21227

Voice: (410) 644-5699 Fax: (410) 242-1839

Mail Order: Yes Catalog: Free

#0781 Undead Chariot

WARHAMMER* line

Scale: 28 mm Cost: \$12.99

A necessity for any undead army, this chariot comes with two skeletal horses and four skeletal warriors. There are numerous pieces that allow the model to be completely customized.

As with any plastic model, there are a few mold lines, but they scrape away easily with a #11 hobby knife. Use the knife to cut the pieces from the mold, don't tug, twist, and pull the pieces out—they are thin and break easily.

Assembly is simple and self explanatory, which is good because there aren't any instructions. There are optional pieces galore in this set; armor, bows, lances, and wheel scythes. Your options for conversion are numerous. Bases are provided for the two horses and for all four warriors.

#0523 Nagash, Supreme Lord of the Undead

WARHAMMER line

Sculptor: Gary Morley

Scale: 28 mm Cost: \$17.50

At six pieces plus a base, this huge figure towers over a WARHAMMER battlefield. A special character for the undead army, Nagash is a powerful figure with magical sword, staff, armor, and book.

Minor parting lines run along the arms and torso of Nagash, but they don't disturb the detail so they clean up easily. The model assembles well but a little filing is required to seat all the pieces just right. Epoxy is recommended to fill in and blend

over the joints

The assembled Nagash is impressive, standing a little over 3" tall. The detail of the Staff of Power, his torso, and helm is great. Other accessories, namely his belt, book, and hanging chains bring the figure to life (or as close as he's been in a long time).

Modeling and painting this figure can provide a challenge for even experienced modelers. Taking advantage of all the sculpted detail requires careful blending and a practiced use of highlighting and detailing techniques, but the finished product proves well worth the additional effort.

#0134 WARHAMMER Armies:

Undead

WARHAMMER line

Sculptors: Jervis Johnson & Bill King

Cost: \$19.99

Complete with background, history, and special features of the undead in the WARHAMMER world, this book has all the information you need to run a successful undead army.

This book, like the others before it, is well organized and laid out so the general can find what he needs in a hurry. It contains new necromancy spells, new magical items, undead battle tactics, and most important of all, the undead army list.

While the variety available to an undead general isn't terribly great, the power of an undead army lies in the psychology and the magical abilities of the leaders. Since each unit in the undead army causes fear in its opponents, the army can rout an unprepared foe from the table quickly. Even a prepared enemy may find himself the unfortunate victim of baneful necromancy from undead spell-casters.

In addition, the book contains a sample battle, special characters for use with the army, and specific descriptions of the undead troops and character types. Whether or not you play an undead army, this book presents valuable information on undead that any general can use to her advantage on the battlefield.

Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc.

5938 Carthage Ct.

Cincinnati OH 45212

Voice: (800) 543-0272 Fax: (513) 631-0028

Mail Order: Yes Catalog: \$4.00

#11-480 Lich

AD&D® 2nd Edition series

Sculptor: Robert Olley

Scale: 25 mm Cost: \$2.15

Looking for the ultimate undead villain? Few creatures terrorize an adventuring party like a lich. Let's face it—a lich can out magic all but the most powerful of parties and usually has a host of nasty minions. This figure does a great job of representing the grand-daddy of undead.



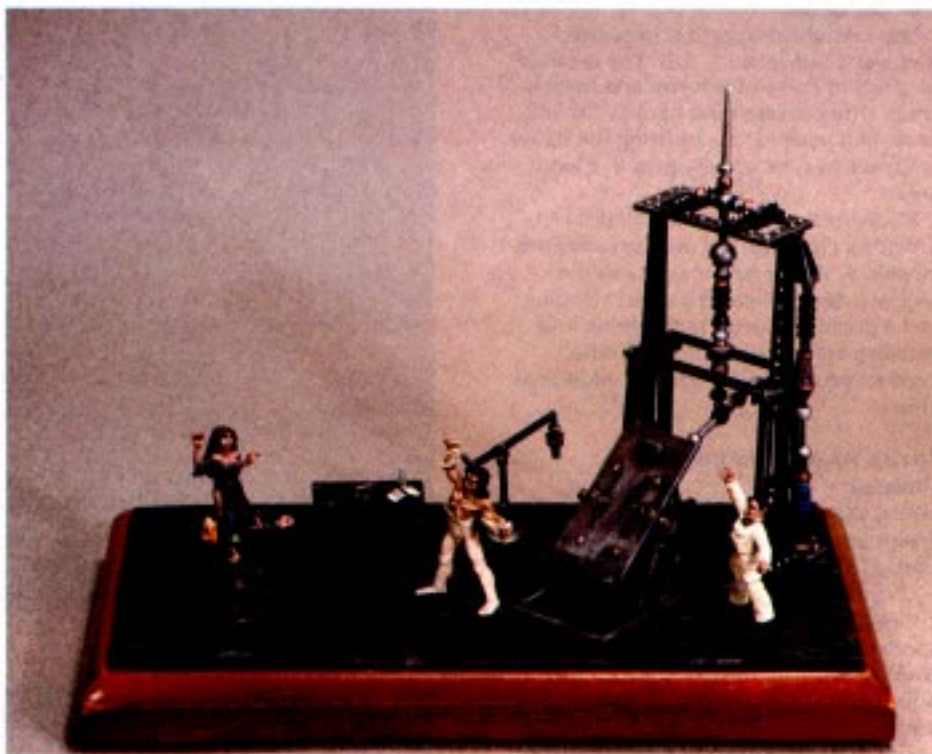
Nagash (Games Workshop)



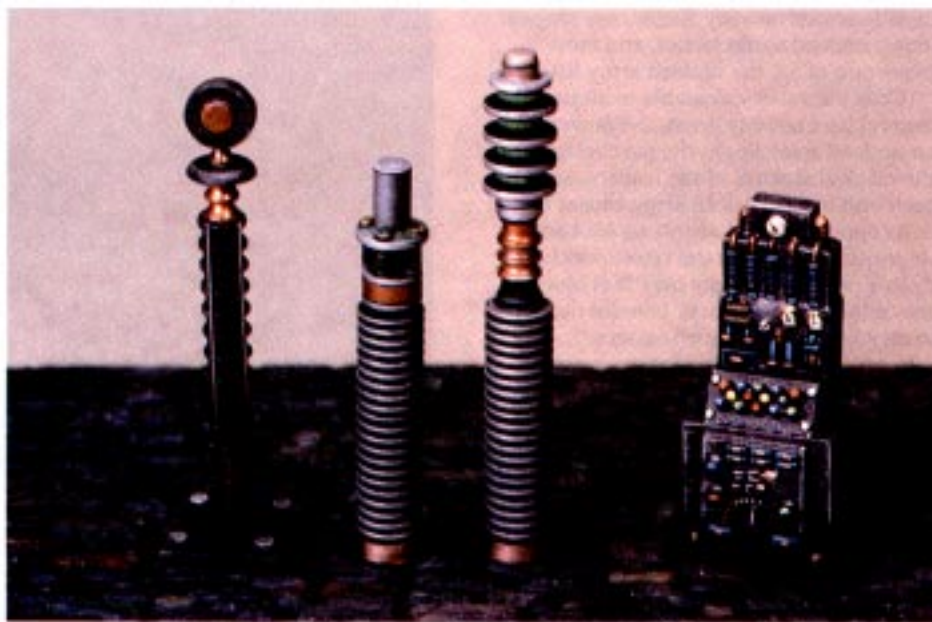
Lich (Ral Partha)

Slight parting lines run down his left side and across his head. Because it goes through his hair, care will need to be taken to stroke the parting line away. Use a #11 blade and gentle pressure to stroke along the flow of the hair.

The lich's clothing is ragged and frayed—the way you get most off-the-shelf tombware. Details of his flowing clothes are quite good and include jewelry and belt pouch. Shriveled and drawn flesh partially covers his bony, decaying corpse. His staff is topped with a toad-like head holding a crystal ball. I don't understand the toad head, but to lich his own (I'm awfully sorry for that—really!).



Dr. Mordenheim's Lab (Ral Partha)



Life Energizers (Ral Partha)



Juggernaut (Grenadier)

#10-517 Dr. Mordenheim's

Laboratory
RAVENLOFT line

Sculptors: Jeff Wilhelm and Dennis Mize

Scale: 25 mm Cost: \$15.95

Gothic horror at its best, this set really takes you into the mad scientist's lair, lets you play with his equipment, and then tempts you to build scenario after scenario around the setting, so you can keep using it.

Dr. Mordenheim's lab contains a tilting operating table, a rolling table of surgical equipment, a standing lamp (?), and a tower of electronic paraphernalia. Includ-

ed with the lab are the Doctor, Igor, the monster and a lovely, if somewhat startled female.

The lab equipment is cast so that parting lines will appear only along detail-free edges and be easy to remove should lines appear on your set. The characters have minor lines along sides but these also are easy to clean.

While there are quite a few pieces, and the assembly isn't self explanatory in the least, the instructions make the process much easier. Most of the pieces assemble easily, though reinforcement is suggested on the finer, weaker pieces. Care must be taken when you assemble the operating table, since some of the pieces are rather thin, but it looks sharp when put together.

All the lab equipment is incredible, and the potential for a Mad Scientist's Laboratory diorama is great. With the nature of many of today's games, there are so many uses for a set like this.

The characters also are very well done. The elation of the doctor's face clearly shows an experiment met with success. His surgical garb is well sculpted and appropriate to the scene. Igor, complete with hunched back, scruffy beard, and torch, appears to be reserving his opinion of the experiment. His sunken eyes, shocked expression, and stance all speak of his inclination to run.

The monster, partially unwrapped from his mummy-like dressings, appears to have taut, leathery skin, but few such creations win beauty contests their first few hours of life. Appearing faint, the damsel isn't withholding her feelings about this mad scheme. Clearly on the verge of screaming, and a little weak-kneed to boot, she has phenomenal facial detail and positioning. She and the monster have a good deal of motion and life to them.

#11-121 Assorted Life Energizers

RAVENLOFT line

Sculptor: Jeff Wilhelm

Scale: 25 mm Cost: \$5.50

When you need a few finishing touches to liven up your laboratory scene, look no further. This set of three, free standing electro-gizmos and a rolling cabinet of switches and knobs adds just what you're looking for.

With only a few easy to remove parting lines, this set is pretty clean and very well put together. Assembly is a snap and there are quite a few ways to put some of the pieces together, if you want to experiment.

Painting should be simple but still be a challenge when it comes to coloring. You also might try to figure out a way to show crackles of electricity passing between the energizers, just to enliven the scene. Cutting thin wire into short pieces, then gluing the segments together in a jagged line, and finally painting it white might accomplish this.

Grenadier Mode

P.O. Box 305

Springfield PA 19064

Voice: (800) 843-2015 Fax: (215) 583-9425

Mail Order: Yes Catalog: \$3.00

#1817 Juggernaut

WARLORDS* series

Sculptor: W. Watt

Scale: 15 mm Cost: \$6.50

This two-piece monster will dominate your battlefield, especially when you consider his scale. As part of a 15-mm army, he quite easily lives up to his name. Now if we could only find a way to feed him while on the march.

There is a slight mold line down his back and along his tail, plus a little sheeting beside his neck, under his left arm, and between his tail and right leg. Most of it is minor and cleans up easily with needle files. Be careful on the tail, the only tough area—the knobs along the tail armor might get removed if you are too cavalier with blade or file, so be gentle and keep the detail.

This figure boasts sharp, crisp sculpting and fine lines along the armor plates of the beast. The rough hide is highly detailed and will paint well. The ridged scales along his upper back attract the eye even unpainted.

Juggernaut's face looks like an interesting cross between a gorilla and a frog, plus a few big teeth. He comes in two pieces and his arm attaches quite easily. Epoxy isn't really needed, but it's usually a good idea if you want to remove all trace of the joint. The base is cut to fit his body position and is much more interesting to look at than a big, clunky, square tab.

Heartbreaker Hobbies & Games

19 E. Central Ave.

Paoli PA 19301

Voice: (215) 544-9052 Fax: (215) 544-9052

Mail Order: Yes Catalog: Free

#9110 Lord of the Pit

MAGIC: THE GATHERING* line

Sculptor: Tim Prow

Scale: 25 mm Cost: \$4.50

This two-piece figure is based on the Black deck's Lord of the Pit card from WotC's MAGIC: THE GATHERING game, though the figure has been altered from the original art to give it more movement.

The only noticeable parting lines are on the underside of the left arm and along both sides of the right arm. The wings fit very well to the back and the base has been textured.

The Lord of the Pit stands with sword and clawed hand at the ready. His body is withered and decayed but his otherworldly power makes him a dangerous foe nonetheless. The wings look better from the backside than the front, because the ribs aren't duplicated from back to front,



Fallen Undead Giant (Grim Reaper Casting)



Pretorian Stalker (Heartbreaker)

but the effect is still impressive. Painting will be aided by all the great detail and a good color scheme will bring out just the nasty in this piece.

#7004 Pretorian Stalker
w/Repeating Heavy Weapon
MUTANT CHRONICLES* line
Sculptor: Chaz Elliot
Scale: 25 mm Cost: \$1.95

I was disheartened to hear that WotC has taken away one of England's best miniatures sculptors, but it's true. Chaz Elliot is no longer sculpting, or not much anyway, since he's behind a MAGIC desk. At least we can look at one of his last pieces, this MUTANT CHRONICLES line's Pretorian Stalker. Should you read this, Chaz—get off your bum and sculpt!

This figure is virtually flawless from a technical standpoint. There are nearly indistinguishable lines between the legs and along the front of the left leg, but they should clean away with almost no effort.

The Stalker, a very nasty foe in the MUTANT CHRONICLES role-playing game, is armed with a belt-fed heavy weapon and armored with heavy plates. His backpack is a great piece of workmanship while the whole figure is finely sculpted and detailed. The Stalker's clawed feet extend beyond the leg and foot armor and mandible-like appendages appear around his jaws. A beast like this guy will slow



down, or put an end to, even the most intrepid freelancers.

Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

656 E. McMillan

Cincinnati OH 45206-1991

Voice: (800) 235-3908 Fax: (800) 235-3908

Mail Order: Yes Catalog: Yes (enclose 2 stamps)

#1038 Saved By the Bell

Vignettes line

Sculptor: Tom Meier

Scale: 25 mm Cost: \$13.95

Another great vignette in a line of them, Saved by the Bell depicts a robed warrior defending a damsel who is in the process of becoming a sacrifice.

The casting is good, but there are a couple of minor problems. Minor mold lines appear down the center line of the alter and the figures that are integral to it. The good guy (the dude with the bell) has moderate mold lines along his side and crossing the back portion of his head. The two skele-priests are extremely clean.

As we have come to expect from T-Bolt, the refined, cleanly sculpted nature of the figures, and the level of detail is great. The embellished trim of the robes, the fine musculature of the hero, and the detailed alter are all excellent. The skeletal features of the bad guys also are very good.



High Fayrie Pack #1 (Soldiers & Swords)



Legion of the Dammed-Set #1 (Stone Mountain)



Saved by the Bell (Thunderbolt)

Assembly is pretty easy, but you'll want to paint the figure first, then assemble it. Note that the hero is wearing the same type of robe as the undead. He may very well have taken it from another skeleton in order to sneak in.

Grim Reaper Casting

Clifton Industrial Ctr.
Mill Rd. & N. Sycamore Ave.
Clifton Heights PA 19018
Voice: (215) 626-8031 Fax: (215) 626-8064
Mail Order: Yes Catalog: \$1.00

#1051 Fallen Undead Giant

NASTEEZ* line
Sculptor: Jim Bove
Scale: 25 mm Cost: \$3.00

In the "You people have a sick sense of humor" department, we have the fallen undead giant who, for lack of a better weapon close at hand, is using his own leg, boot and all.

This figure comes in two pieces, his weapon/leg being separate. The casting is excellent. The only visible parting line is along the weapon's boot end. The base is textured as rough soil.

The giant seems to have fallen down and gone boom. Still, even an undead giant can't give up without a fight so he has taken his leg, which had limited uses, and started swinging it.

The detail is pretty good and the animation is average, but the creativity is great. It brings to mind the Black Knight scene from *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* ("None shall pass!" "It's only a flesh wound!"), except that when you chop this guy's leg off he'll use it against you. ("Right! I'll do you for that!") A good paint job will make this a gem.

Soldiers & Swords Games

40 Jarvis St.
Binghamton NY 13905
Voice: (607) 723-4556 Fax: (607) 723-1633
Mail Order: Yes Catalog: \$1.00

#155003 High Fayrie Pack #1

CASTLE FALKENSTEIN* line
Sculptor: Bob Ridolfi
Scale: 25 mm Cost: \$4.95

This is a three-figure blister pack for R. Talsorian's CASTLE FALKENSTEIN* fantasy role-playing game. As the game crosses technological ages, so do these miniatures.

The figures are well cast, with nary a noticeable parting line among them. What slight traces I can find are along the sides and remove with a single wipe of the needle file. The only exception is a minor line along the suited fellow's right leg. Each figure comes with a round, plastic base.

The suited Fayrie male is well detailed but a little lifeless. His left hand also is missing some detail. The clothing is well detailed, right down to the buttons, vest pocket, and tie. His face is excellent, with a little bit of Elvis in it.

The other male is in uniform, complete with braids, tassels, and tunic. His lined cloak is held in place by a buttoned chain at the neck. The cut of his cheeks is a bit sharp, outlining the mouth more like a muzzle, but some careful filing can do away with that if you don't like it. The look actually has a somewhat otherworldly cast to it—I rather like it. This figure has a bit more life to it, and the cloak flows interestingly around his arm and legs.

The female is a gem of a piece. Her facial features are subdued and refined, like a china doll, while her clothing and poise reinforce the affect. Her low-cut dress becomes full below the waist and her sleeves are bloused to the elbow. Jewelry includes a choker with pendant, sashed belt and bracelets.

Stone Mountain Miniatures, Inc.

P.O. Box 594
Broomfield CO 80038
Voice: (303) 654-7989 Fax: (303) 659-9024
Mail Order: Yes Catalog: \$4.00

#FAN150 Legion of the Dammed-Set 1

FANTASTIC WORLDS* line
Sculptor: Chub Pearson
Scale: 25 mm Cost: \$8.95

A set of seven undead figures, one of which is mounted, this set is a real eye catcher. Three of the figures require assembly, the mounted skeleton and two that have weapons/arms separate.

Most of the figures are extremely clean, but the horse has moderate mold lines and a little flash. One of the figures also has some mild pitting on its cape, but it's light enough that primer and a heavy base coat of paint should cover it entirely. The two figures with arms/weapons separate assemble very easy. The pieces fit very snug, not even requiring epoxy!

The sculpting is very fine, some of it even exceptional. The detail work extends to studded boots, buttoned long coats, expressions (on skulls, believe it or not), incredible scaled armor, and all manner of accessories. Some of the figures have skulls worked into their clothing, shields,

or tunics.

These aren't your typical stances, either. Many of the figures have great movement in their pose, giving the figures a life of their own. The skeleton wielding the greatsword is a perfect example. He is swinging the sword over his head while rising to the balls of his feet, to get that little extra power. That's great, creative design work. The only mediocre piece in the set is the horse. The proportions aren't quite right and he's a bit lifeless, but it's still about average.

Any time you can get seven figures (including one mounted figure) of this quality for \$8.95, you better jump at it—it's a great deal.

Leading Edge Games

P.O. Box 70669

Pasadena CA 91117

Voice: (818) 771-0426

Mail Order: Yes Catalog: Price Sheet (SASE)

#54115 Greater Werewolf

BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA* line

Sculptor: Pete Boundy

Scale: 28 mm Cost: \$5.95

A large werewolf suitable for a myriad of game purposes, this figure is a looker. In addition to the werewolf, there are male and female figures in mid-transformation in the

same blister pack. The additional models aren't included in the review because I'm looking at an advance release, but they will be done by the same sculptor and the blister will stay the same price).

Faint traces of parting lines make occasional appearances along the sides of the creature and under his arms. Only in one or two places will any clean up be necessary. There also is a mild parting line across the stone textured pavement at his feet.

The lycanthrope is poised for action, with a lot of motion built into his upper torso. Additionally, the fur and musculature are very good, if a little overstated. His facial features and the liveliness of the beast really made it for me. The thick mane of hair down his back and the positioning of his arms and hands remind me of a Christmas shopper I ran into last year. Lycanthropy runs rampant during sales.

Global Games Company

136 Geary Ave. Unit 215A

Toronto Ontario

CANADA M6H 4H1

Voice: (416) 516-9118 Fax: (416) 516-4690

Mail Order: No



Greater Werewolf (Leading Edge)

#1750 Runaway Robots

LEGIONS OF STEEL* line

Sculptor: Dave Summers

Scale: 28 mm Cost: \$6.95

These sleek, robotic canines have four legs and two additional appendages for support and manipulation. The blister pack contains four identical runaway robots (one shown), each in two pieces.

The figures have noticeable mold lines along the legs and back, but careful work with a file will clean the lines away. The

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Runaway Robots (Global Games)

tail is pretty slender and delicate, so support it while you work on it with the files. The two pieces of the Runaway fit very well, almost holding themselves together, but you might want to use a little glue.

Aside from the strange "head" of the robot, and the extra two appendages, the Runaway is built very much like a greyhound. The detailed body and legs, plus the streamlined head, make for a great figure with great potential for painting.

During game play the Runaways work in packs of four, going after UNE troops with their special attack. The unique ability of the Runaway is to short the trooper's powered armor and "jack" into the suit, taking control of it. This allows the ma-

chine player to command the UNE figure in later turns.



Best of Show

Because the figures in this issue are so great, and in the interest of fairness, there are two Gamer's Best of Show awards—DC *Mordheim's Laboratory* from Ral Partha, and *Legion of the Damned-Set 1* from Stone Mountain. These are excellent sets with a universal appeal to gamers and GM's alike.

For Modeler's Best of Show we have another tie. *Citadels Nagash* and *Thunderbolt's Saved by the Bell*. Both are so detailed and impressive that I was unable to choose one over the other. But who says that there can be only one Best of Show of each category in each issue? There are so many talented artists and quality manufacturers out there nowadays, there are bound to be numerous quality figures appearing in any review.

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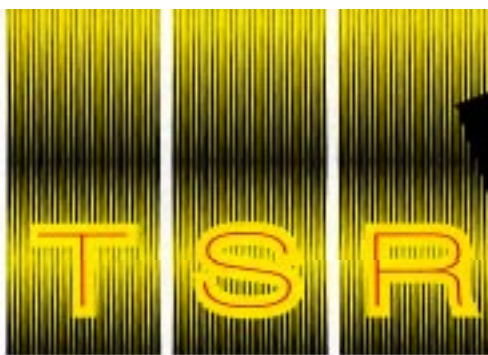


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- * "Back to the Beach" (AD&D® game; 1-2) by Willie Walsh.

- * "The Vaka's Curse" (AD&D® game; 2-4) by Ted James Thomas Zuvich.

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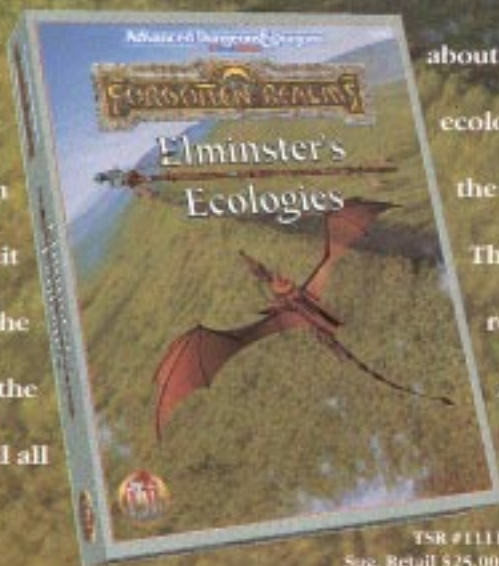


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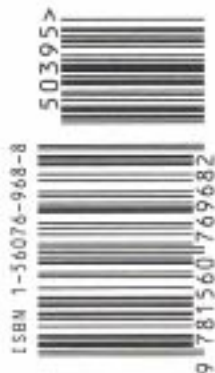
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