

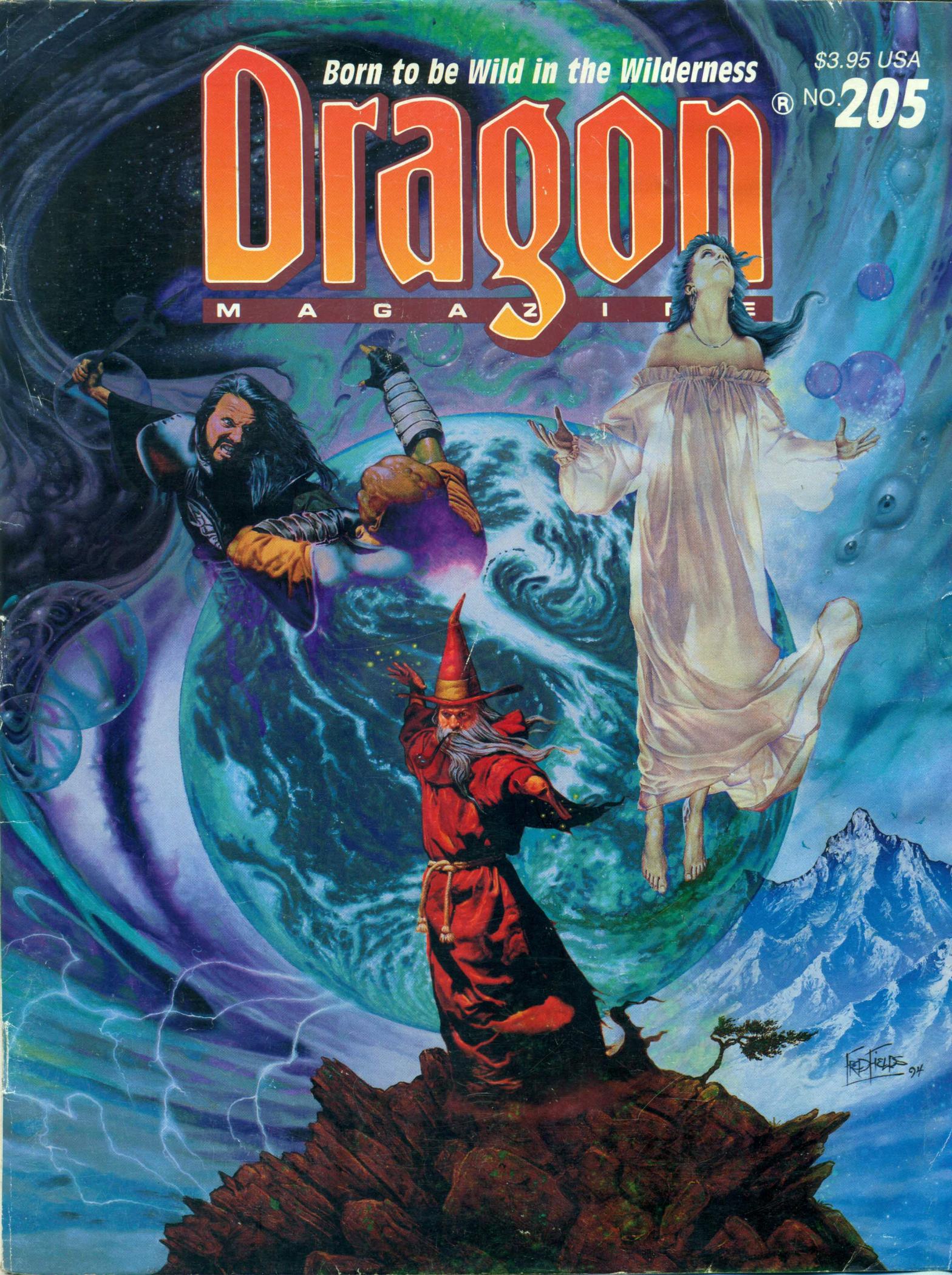
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Dragon

M A G A Z I N E



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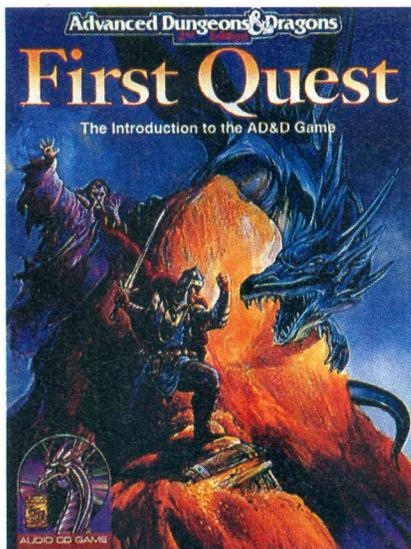
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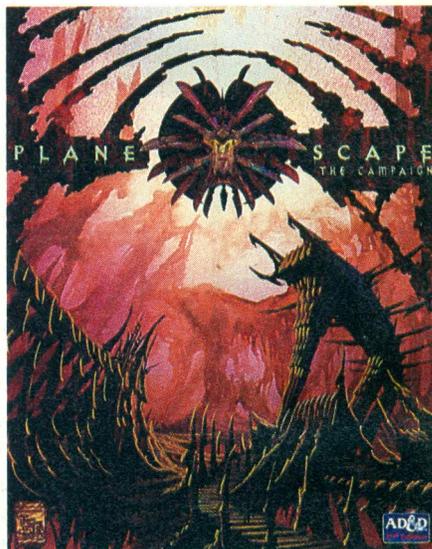


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Dragon[®]

M A G A Z I N E

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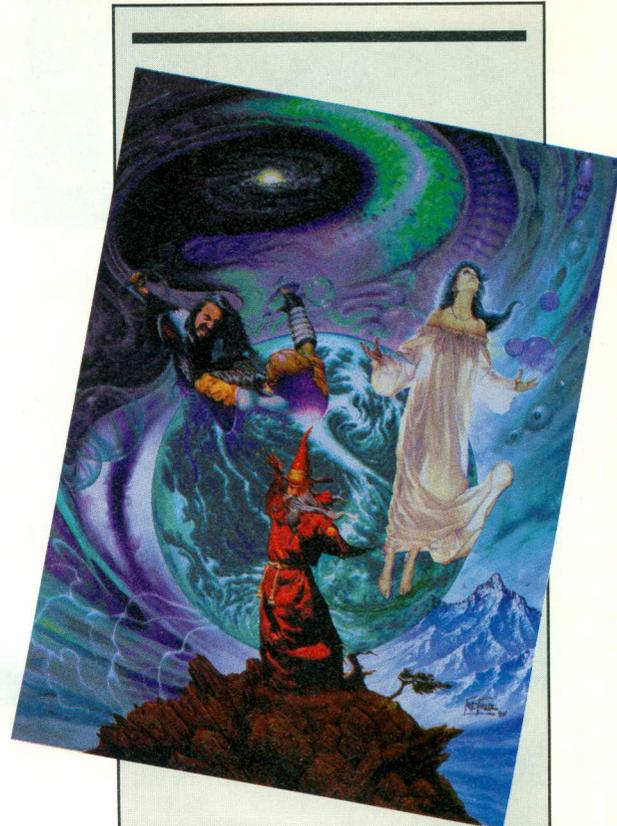
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COVER

Our cover this month requires some explaining. The wonderful work that graces this magazine is by TSR's own Fred Fields. This same artwork will appear as the new cover to the revised FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting, originally published in 1993. The contents of said boxed set are not changing, just the cover. We are able to explain the fact that the FR boxed set is going to look different, but the interior material will remain the same, and at the same time, run a way-cool Fred Fields piece on our cover. Quite a bonus, eh?

each subscription is printed on the mailing label of each subscriber's copy of the magazine. Changes of address for the delivery of subscription copies must be received at least six weeks prior to the effective date of the change in order to assure uninterrupted delivery.

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L e t t e r s

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.

Africa #1

Dear Dragon,

The various articles on Africa have been great! Although my campaign is not set in Africa or Egypt, my world has an Africa-like area that I use the materials in. How about more articles on other neglected areas? What about Native Americans?

Liam Astley
Oxfordshire, U.K.

We're glad you've been enjoying the articles detailing aspects of African mythology in gaming terms, and we've got a few more coming down the pike. If readers are unfamiliar with the African articles we've published, they can be found in DRAGON issues #189, 191, 195, 200, and 202.

Articles on other real-world cultures or areas are certainly possible, but I don't want to promise anything prematurely. One promise that is easy to keep is the article, "The People" in this very issue, which gives a Native-American campaign setting for use in fantasy games. The author of "The People," David Howery, is the same man responsible for "The Dark Continent" African campaign setting in issue #189.

All readers are encouraged to let us know their opinions on "culture" pieces like "The People" and "The Dark Continent." Do you like them? Do you use the settings (or elements thereof) in your campaigns? Do you want to see more of these articles? DRAGON Magazine can publish what you want to read only if you tell us what you enjoy seeing in these pages.

Africa #2

Dear Dragon,

I have noticed many articles regarding an African campaign setting in the magazine's pages. Why are these articles being published if the material probably will be published in a hardcover later? Since I would buy the hardcover if it were published, as would many other readers of DRAGON Magazine, I feel like I am paying twice for the same material. I furthermore feel that if a hardcover is published, the precious space in DRAGON Magazine is being wasted. So, why do you print African setting articles?

Jean-Philippe Suter
Randolph NJ

To the best of my knowledge, there are no current plans to publish an African Historical Reference sourcebook, etc., for the AD&D® game. As it stands now, DRAGON Magazine is the only source for African material for the AD&D or D&D® games. I hope that allays your concerns.

Learning can be fun

Dear Dragon,

I head the working group on education for the Game Manufacturers' Association (GAMA). We are a group of teachers who are using games in our classrooms. I edit the group's newsletter, "Gaming & Education" about the use of games in schools. It is sponsored by GAMA and is for teachers, students, parents, publishers, writers, editors, artists, and anyone else who is interested. Subscriptions are free. Contact me at the address below if you'd like to be involved. Thank you for your consideration.

David Millians
Paideia School
1509 Ponce de Leon Ave.
Atlanta GA 30307
U.S.A.

I've already commented in these pages that gaming positively affected me, from increasing my interest in history and mythology to tremendously expanding my vocabulary and even to doing simple math in my head. I wish you the best in your endeavor, David.

One heck of a commute

Dear Dragon,

If TSR, Inc., (and DRAGON Magazine) is based in Lake Geneva, Wis., and all submissions must be sent there, why are subscriptions sent to Boston, Mass.?

Conrad R. Geist
Ft. Morgan CO

Ahh, a simple question-the kind I can answer even with a deadline breathing down on me. TSR is indeed in Lake Geneva, Wis., but the bank that processes all your magazine subscription checks is located in Boston.

Hypnotizing hologram

Dear Dragon,

I awaited the arrival of DRAGON issue #200 with teeth clenched and the nervousness usually associated with Christmas Eve. The magazine was my one gift for me this year, so my excitement was understandable.

When the issue finally arrived, I gave a great "Yahoo!" which startled my two-month-old son, Joshua. Needless to say, I had to put off looking at the magazine until the demanding munchkin was soothed. He was still fussing when I turned back to the magazine, exasperated. I soon became immersed in the contents of the issue when I realized my son was finally quiet. I glanced at him to find him staring at the cover of my magazine. Joshua had fun with the hologram for hours.

P.S. We'll miss you, Roger!

Nicole Brokaw
Maitland FL

We're glad to be of service, Nicole. (Maybe we could market "The Amazing Infant Hypnotizing Hologram Babysitter." Yeah, that's the ticket . . .) Seriously, issue #200 is something the whole staff is very proud of, and we hope Joshua grows into a healthy, happy gamer.

Ω

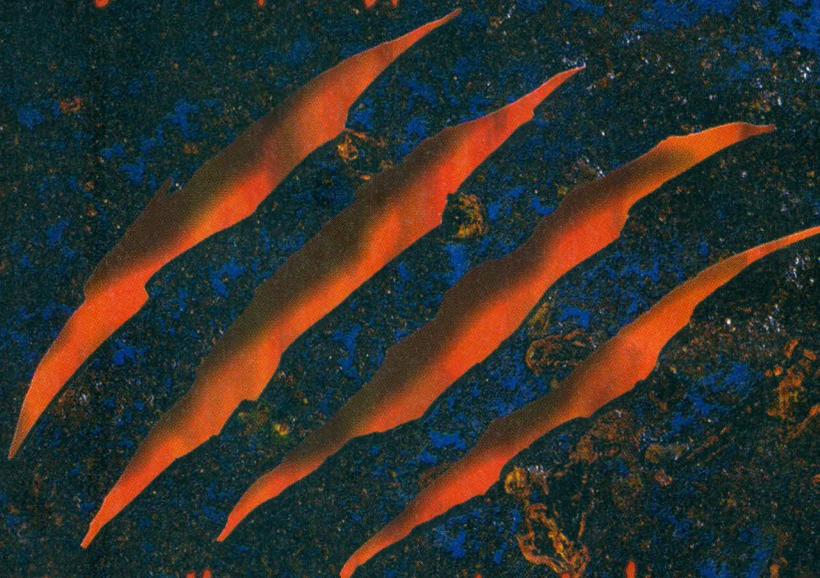
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E d i t o r i a l

Life, Art, and the Suspension of Disbelief

From time to time over the past few years I've offered to write the editorial for DRAGON® Magazine. This generous offer continually fell on deaf ears. 'Til now. I don't flatter myself with the *belief* that the editor feels I've suddenly gained some valuable insight that demands an audience. No, he's abandoned this lofty page because of pressing obligations elsewhere. It sounds *unbelievable*, but it's true.

Every day we are confronted with observations and information that we must categorize as being believable or unbelievable. As children, we have a seemingly endless capacity to believe. We believe in ghosts and goblins, Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny. We believe our parents are always right and that the world is basically a good place. We believe in that creature from our own imagination that's living under our bed. But as we get older, something changes.

We begin to doubt, to distrust our beliefs. The world appears more chaotic, less welcoming, and we become unsure of ourselves and our place in it. We arrive at adolescence being angry and self-absorbed, yet painfully shy. We learn to disbelieve.

If believing is a natural state of mind and disbelieving is a learned response, then it's easy to see how the entertainment industry has grown to be the powerful influence it is today. We need to believe that an infant can fall from space, grow up to become a mild-mannered reporter, and leap tall buildings in a single bound. We need to believe that mutant turtles can live in the sewers, where they eat pizzas and relax after performing heroic deeds for the creatures that dwell on the surface. Or that elegant and complex civilizations existed beneath the sea, and societies of intelligent apes could rule the planet. It is in the act of believing, if only for a little while, that we gain a sense of control over our world and ourselves.

To see further evidence of this theory, just watch a few commercials on television. The guy uses the right mouthwash and gets the girl, the junior executive drives the right car and gets the promotion, the Mom serves the right macaroni

and cheese and gets a happy family. And, if the advertiser can persuade us to suspend our disbelief, we'll probably remember the brand name when we're out shopping. In truth, the "slice of life" commercial is offering us a little fantasy.

What does all of this have to do with art? Well . . .

Judging from the approach taken by many people in submitting art portfolios to this magazine, it seems that few of them realize the volume of work that we review. I examine between 40 and 75 submissions every month, a task that's usually relegated to an intense two or three days' worth of work between deadlines. The average submission consists of about ten pieces, which means I'll look at about 500 images in three days, or about 175 images a day, which is more than 20 an hour, or one image every two or three minutes. That's not a lot of time to determine the value of a piece of art. One of the first judgments I must make in those few critical minutes is, "Does this art (or artist) contribute to the suspension of disbelief?"

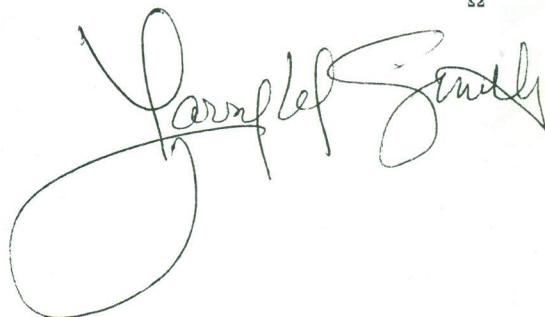
Anyone who is a fan of special effects in film, or graphics in computer games, or posters and illustrations in game materials knows how important such material is in enhancing the believability of the experience. Far too often, the artists submitting portfolios seem to be overlooking this fact. It is obvious, and frequently commented upon, that this publication presents a wide range of illustrations, both in terms of quality and of style. Some of that range is purposeful, and some of it is just plain necessary due to the rigors of production in a deadline situation. But all of it, we hope, contributes to the suspension of disbelief. When an artist starts a cover letter with "My work is at least of the level of Artist X in your last issue," she is often right. Yet I'll publish "Artist X" and not the other person. Why?

I try to respond in a positive and constructive way to each submission, mentioning what I feel to be the artist's strengths and elaborating on what I think are the weaknesses of the art. But still, something is lacking in that type of critique. Why will I publish "Artist X" but not

this other artist? I've never tried to put the answer to that question into words before.

If the sum total of the weaknesses of the art becomes the focal point of the piece, then those weaknesses get in the way of the suspension of disbelief. If you paint dragons that look like Jeff Easley's and your dwarves are just like Larry Elmore's, all set against an elaborate background that emulates Fred Fields, but the light is coming from everywhere and the shadows all seem out of whack, then the screwy lighting will dominate the viewer's experience and destroy the believability of the image. The image is only as strong as its weakest part. Another artist can present a simple line drawing of the same scene—without demonstrating outstanding competence in the technical areas, but also without displaying any weaknesses—and get it published, all because the piece works as a cohesive unit and believability is maintained.

In our games, we get a chance to step out of ourselves for a little while and examine our actions and our beliefs through the eyes of someone else. While few of us ever will get the chance to outwit the Nazi army and preserve an historic relic, or singlehandedly win the battle to right an ancient wrong, there are lots of opportunities every day for us to show our stuff to the world, and prove to ourselves that we can make a difference. In the overall scheme of things, every submission we receive has an effect on the illustrations we publish—and for that reason, I applaud all the artists who pick up their pens and brushes, summon their courage, and send in their works for evaluation.

Ω


OBITUARIES

Kim Sharpshire
Sales Manager

The funeral for Kim Sharpshire, a sales manager for Stone Hill Publishing will be at 3 p.m. today at M.T. Burke & Sons Funeral Home, with burial at Bridges Cemetery.

Mrs. Sharpshire, 27, died from injuries obtained in an automobile accident last Friday.

Surviving are her husband, Wade R. Sharpshire (28) and daughter, Julie Sharpshire (7).

"Daddy,
where do people go when they die?"

Face Death.

Wraith.



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F

i r s t Q u e s t

TM

FIRST QUEST is the title of TSR, Inc.'s Audio CD Introduction to Role-playing Game. This series is a feature where veterans of role-playing describe their first experiences in the hobby.

"Bork! Bork!"

by Karen S. Boomgarden

"So, you like that game, huh?"

I was sitting before the Wang word processor across the hall from my office, mesmerized by the game of ADVENTURE* unfolding before me. The plover with the emerald was making me crazy. The speaker was an older gentleman, a member of the quality-control department of my company. We produced instructional videotapes and manuals for data processing. It was natural, then, that part of our unwinding was done on a computer.

"If you like that, I bet you'd like the D&D® game." I'd heard of that game, but never knew anyone who played it. "Our whole family plays, every Friday night. Why don't you and David come by this week and try it?" We jumped at the chance.

Friday night found us sitting at a card table in the family's basement, rolling up characters. We proceeded to storm the island of Pak, inhabited by far more lizard men than should have been allowed by natural law. For the next several hours, in fact, we battled lizard men. Dawn's proverbial rosy fingers touched the windows of the basement, and we were still battling lizard men.

It's a wonder I ever played again.

I did play again though, and kept playing for several years. Why? Because it was fun playing pretend with little metal figures, and with weird-looking dice, and with friends who were willing to drive 70 miles for a one-day marathon. (Hey, we were all employed full-time. One day a week was a marathon.) My first character is still my favorite, although she retired years ago.

Her name is Brunhilda. She's a dwarf (surprise surprise), and she was a mighty warrior in her time. She lucked into a *ring of gaxx* and the *axe of the dwarven lords* because the thief who had found them didn't know what they were. (Such a deal.) At one time she became Brunharold, but only for a short while; he thought the extra "pockets" on his chain mail were great for carrying extra water skins. Brunhilda was proud to be among the

party that found the Clockwork Dragon of Mai Faddah, and prouder still to be one of the few among that party who figured out how to make it go.

More important than any of these was her beloved war dog, Sigurd. He had been hers since he was a pup; she had trained him herself, and they were never apart. Until that fateful day . . .

Brun and her friends were whacking their way through a hedge maze filled with yellow musk creepers and their attendant zombies. Sigurd had run on ahead, scouting for a way out. That would have been fine, except for the impatience of the party. Everyone was getting tired of the creepers and the zombies, and tired of being able to see the tower on top of the hill (the ultimate goal) but not getting any nearer. Brun finally got fed up with everything and everyone, and in her anger neglected to look for Sigurd before firing off a *fireball* with her *ring of gaxx*. There was a muffled "yip" within the "Fwoomp!" of burning bushes, and all that remained of her beloved partner was a little pile of charred bones.

She quietly gathered the remains into a sack, slung it over her shoulder, and walked away from her friends. She never looked back.

(We always were kind of melodramatic.)

Enough of the "Can I tell you about my character?" part of my story. Having read the installments preceding this one, I have an idea of some other things to tell you all.

I learned that there are many different kinds of intelligence. There's the kind that allows someone to calculate impossibly large numbers in her head (not me, not the Kid, uh-uh, no way!). There's the kind that warns someone when not to ring that huge brass bell hanging in the village square. (Don't you think there's probably a r-e-a-l good reason for the square to be *completely empty at high noon*?) There's also the kind that helps the characters (and their players) figure out that if they cast enough *web* spells on the sleeping evil fighter whose right hand is now a de-

monblade, and give the dwarf (who's wearing magical plate armor) two vials of holy water, one for each fist, and fill two more while she's "tanking" her way up to the sleeping, *webbed* nasty fellow, let her douse the evil, nasty form with the holy water, and then refill the empties while she takes the replacements up and dumps them, and keep doing this, and the DM doesn't figure out a way to stop them from doing this, eventually the evil fighter will evaporate into nasty-smelling mist and the demonblade will become a plain old really magical sword and they can take the treasure. (Hey, it worked. I didn't ask why, I just took the treasure and ran.)

I learned that there are as many kinds of players as there are characters. There are players who would rather sleep on the couch during a fight since their mage is standing in the back not doing anything anyway; there are players who question everything everyone is doing, whether they have the right to or not; there are players who have to run everything, even when their characters aren't in the room; and there are players who are just in it for the fun, who don't care if everything isn't just exactly by the book, as long as they and everyone else at the game are having a good time.

I learned that sometimes, misreading a clue can make an adventure as much fun for the DM as for the players. Honest, we really thought the scrap of vellum read "When wall is wet, with no way through . . ." Why else would we be flinging water at this wall with no door in it? The DM thought we were all nuts, until we showed him the scrap of paper he'd passed us, and read the clue aloud. He hadn't realized his "m" looked like a "w," which was why we were convinced that the wall had to be wet before we could fling the shrunken squirrel's head at it. (Good thing there was a well nearby, or we'd have been using up all our drinking water just because the old coot who gave us the clue couldn't write worth a darn.)

Continued on page 62

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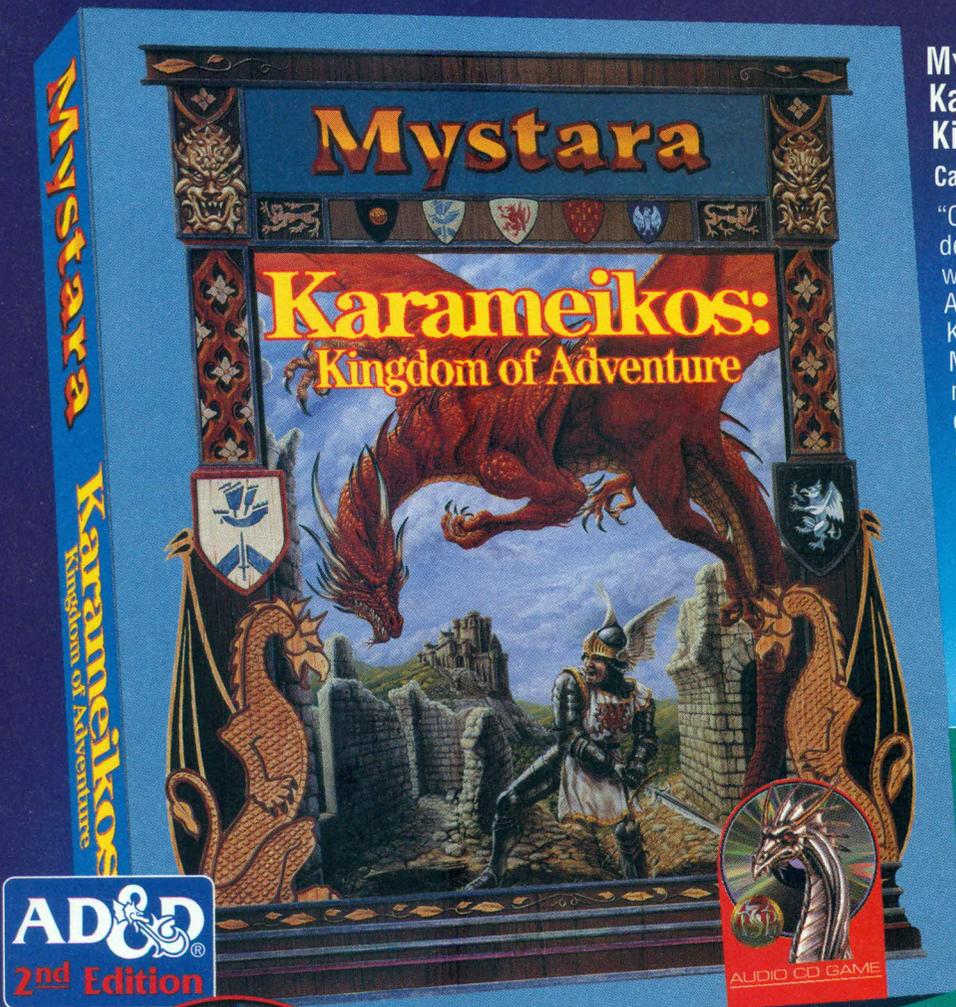


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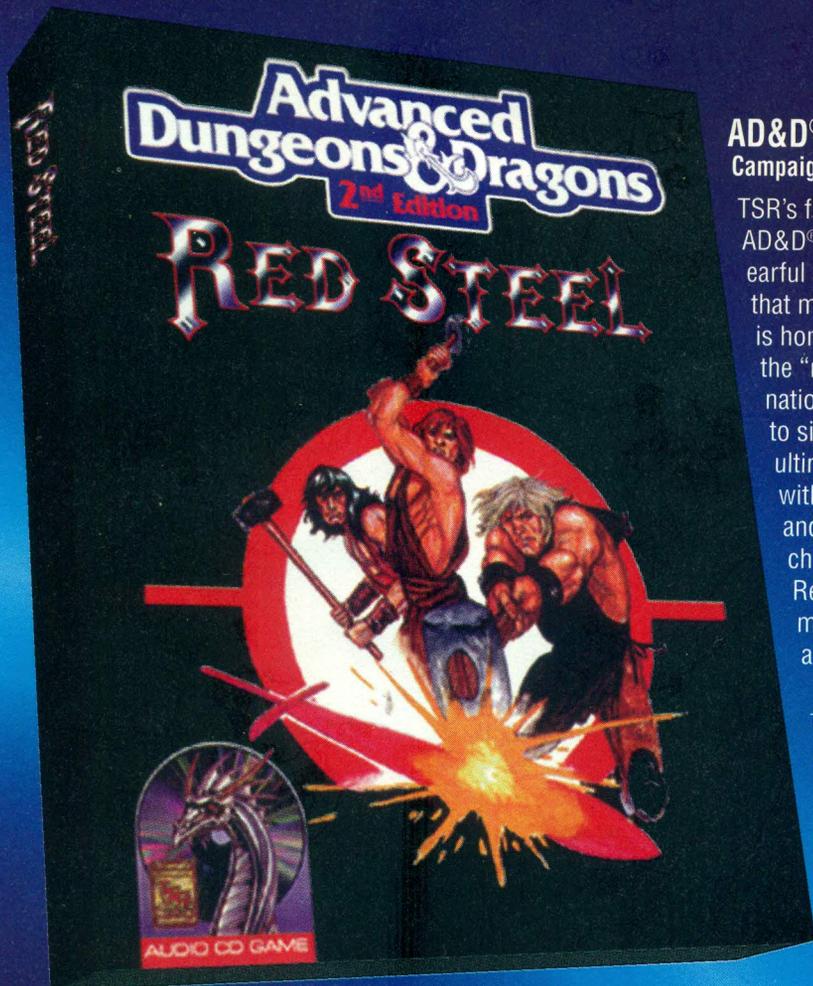
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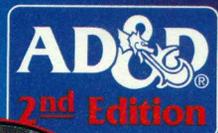


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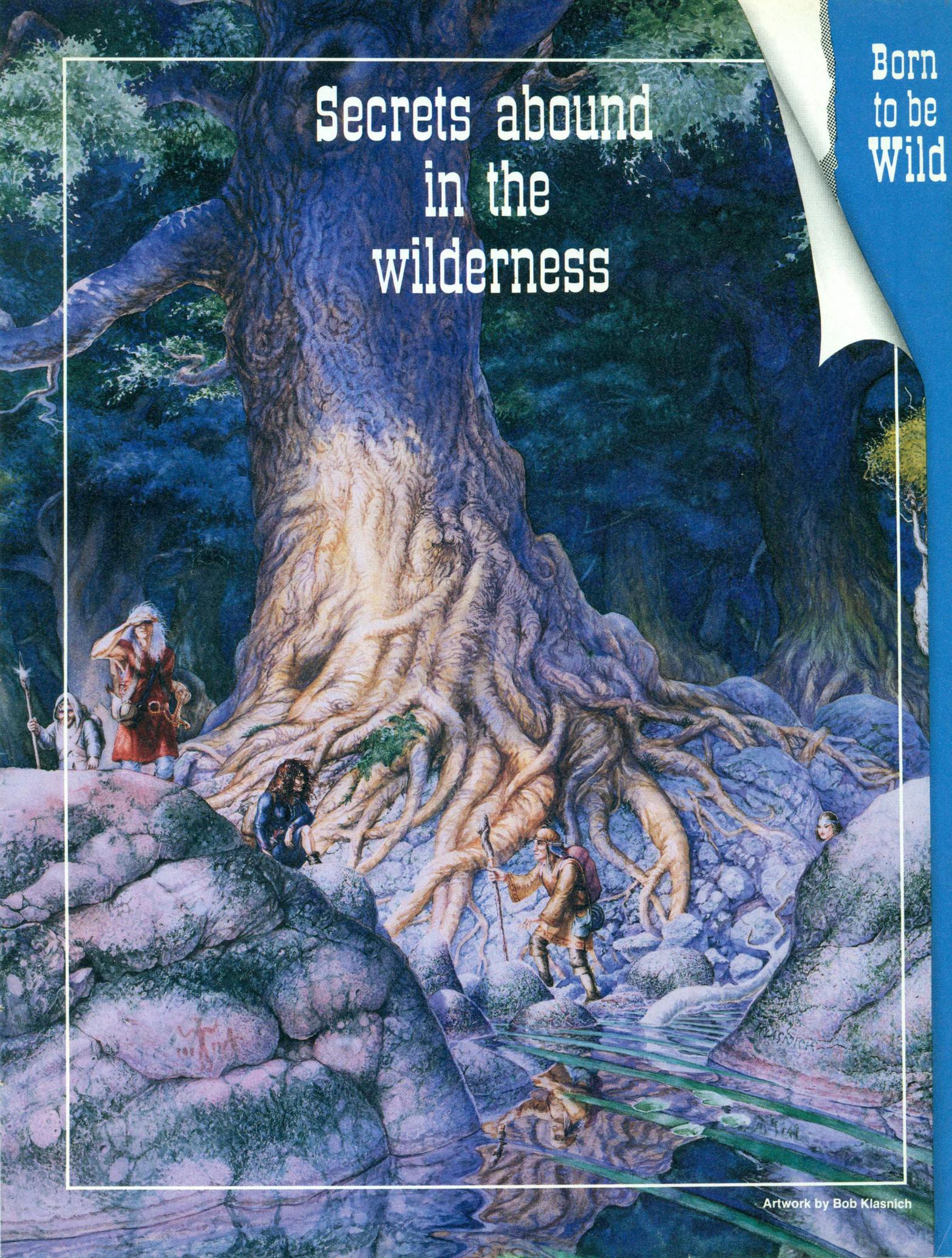


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The People



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The cultures of the Native-American peoples are diverse and interesting. Their religion includes numerous deities and spirits. Their folklore includes tales of warriors, sorcerers, monsters, and magic. Their history is filled with great leaders: Red Cloud, Crazy Horse, Tecumseh, Chief Joseph, Cochise, etc. All these factors (heroes, monsters, magic) were used to develop the AD&D® game, although from a European viewpoint. Since the Native-American cultures have the same features, they also can be adapted to an AD&D setting.

This article presents three simplified Native-American cultures in AD&D game terms: the eastern woodlands peoples, the great plains tribes, and the desert-southwest peoples. A generic continent, a fantasy version of pre-Columbian America, is given to be dropped into the DM's campaign world. By no means is this article a complete discussion of Native-American cultures; the DM is encouraged to read more on his own.

While a fantasy America is suitable for most "normal" AD&D worlds, the more unusual settings may not be appropriate, such as the DARK SUN®, DRAGONLANCE® or RAVENLOFT® campaigns. Two other game worlds are discussed below.

The WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting: In the northern Flanaess was a land called the Barrens, with a people called the Rovers. In my old GREYHAWK® campaign, I made the Rovers into a fierce Sioux-like tribe. They were savage and free, and had a brief moment of glory in "Ghost Dance" published in DUNGEON® Adventures issue #32. With the recent wars in the Flanaess (see the *From the Ashes* set), the Rovers were destroyed by Iuz. However, my campaign also included a continent far to the east across the Solnor

Ocean. This was a fantasy America with many cultures inspired by the Native Americans. This continent is the basis of this article.

The FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting: This world contains an ideal setting for placing Native-American cultures: the lands north of the Maztican nations. Obviously, if Maztica is the fantasy counterpart of the pre-Columbian Central America, then the lands to the north are the fantasy version of North America.

The land

The heart of the People's lives is the land and the life that grows there. The People live at nature's mercy. When it is kind, the People have plenty, but when nature is harsh, they suffer. None of the People actually own land, as it is understood in feudal lands. Instead, they are more like caretakers, making use of the land but not owning it; they do not buy or sell land. It is necessary for each tribe to defend its villages and hunting territories as a practical matter, but tribal boundaries are not marked out with signs or fences.

The continent is varied in terrain and climate. Two mountain ranges divide the land. The smaller range near the east coast is older, smaller, and much more weathered. The great ranges in the west stretch the entire length of the continent. There are numerous hills and plateaus. The rivers in the southwest cut many canyons in the hills, including a legendary one hundreds of miles long. Forests cover much of the continent, including the mountains. Most of the east has dense forests of pine and broadleaf trees. The taiga, a belt of pine forest, stretches across the continent in the north. The land between the forests of the mountains is a vast sea of grass: the

great plains, home to vast game herds and horse-riding natives. The western mountains have several interior basins that are harsh deserts. The natives here are skilled at finding water. The basins also have many salt flats and a few lakes that have extremely high salt levels, since there are no outlets. In the southeast, the lowland basins and heavy runoffs combine to form vast tracts of swamp. The west coast is blessed with abundant rainfall, and forests grow lush. Giant sequoias and redwoods are found here.

Wildlife

The lands of the People are filled with animal life. The people know them well, and live among them in harmony. They take what they need for food or religious use, but never to excess.

Hoofed animals abound on the continent. Most valuable to the people is the bison, a walking mountain of meat and hide. There are many types of deer: moose, white tail, mule deer, and wapiti. Forest caribou sometimes can be found in the taiga. Bighorn sheep and mountain goats roam the western mountains. The piglike peccary roams the southwest. The fleet pronghorn antelope lives on the prairie in large herds. The wild horse is a fairly new resident of the plains.

Of course, where there are herbivores, there are carnivores to prey upon them. Wolves and cougars are abundant across the continent. Coyotes are the wily canines of the desert. Foxes, ranging from the red to gray to kit, are found in all terrain. Jaguars sometimes are found in the far south, as they wander up from the tropics. Weasels, martens, fishers, otters, and wolverines are abundant furbearing hunters. Black bears inhabit forests and mountains across the land. The aggressive grizzly lives in the western mountains, from the taiga to the desert, and a particularly large and fierce subspecies lives on the prairie. Polar bears visit the far northern coast in spring.

Vast flocks of birds darken the skies during migration, including ducks, geese, cranes, trumpeter swans, and passenger pigeons. Sacred eagles, hawks, and falcons soar in the sky. Enclaves of huge condors are found on the west coast, while vultures are common over much of the west. Owls are common, from the tiny burrowing owl to the barn owl and great horned owl. There are numerous edible birds, such as grouse, sage hens, quail, ptarmigan, heath hens, and turkeys. Less useful birds include the crow, parakeet, heron, and magpie.

Reptiles are common across the continent, but are of small size compared to other continents. The exception is the alligator of the southern swamps, which can reach lengths up to 19 feet. Poisonous snakes are abundant; cottonmouths and water moccasins of the south, coral snakes in the west, and rattlesnakes from coast to coast. Two odd lizards of the southwest,

the gila and beaded lizards, are the only known poisonous lizards.

The coastal areas are rich in wildlife. Seals, ranging from the giant elephant seal to sea lions and fur seals, are abundant on the west coast. Manatees are found along the southeast coast, while colonies of sea otters live along the northwest shores. Walruses live only in the far north.

The continent is well watered, with numerous lakes and rivers. This provides homes for hundreds of species of fish: trout, salmon, pike, bass, gar, sturgeon, etc. In the seas are literally thousands of species, from sharks and barracudas to tuna and cod. The great whales are abundant, including killer whales, sperm whales, and gray whales. Porpoises and dolphins can be seen in the bays.

Of course, there are many mundane creatures: opossums, beavers, bobcats, rabbits, etc. While not all animals are used by the People, all are part of the web of life across the land that the People live within, and all are honored in religion or folklore. There is no creature so small or unimportant as to receive no respect.

At the DM's option, some prehistoric creatures may be found on the continent. This is not totally farfetched. Some Native-American tales include creatures that sound much like ground sloths and mammoths. Do these tales stretch back to the Stone Age, or did these creatures die out later than is commonly thought? In any case, in a fantasy America, prehistoric creatures could be found in the land's vast mountains and forests. Dire wolves are rare predators of the southwest coastal plain. The sabertooth cat, smilodon, also lives there. Mammoths are scarce residents of the taiga; they are fast dying out as the natives hunt them for their meat and hides. Ground sloths live in hilly regions that have thick shrubs and trees. The giant lion (spotted lion) lives in the western mountains; unlike normal lions, the males have no manes, and both sexes are colored much like cougars. This leads to confusion among outsiders traveling in the mountains. Other Stone Age creatures could include the mastodon, giant camel, and giant bison.

Monsters

There is little in common between the monsters of America and those of Europe. The usual monsters of Europe, adapted to the AD&D game, are solid physical monsters, such as the griffon and dragon. Many monsters of Native-American lore are partly or completely spiritual or elemental in nature, rather than physical. The gahongas from the *Legends & Lore* book are an example of this. However, there are several monsters that are solid and physical creatures, such as the big-heads and ohdowas from *Legends & Lore*. Others are detailed below.

The ohmah is a giant wild man who lives in the high mountain forests of the west. He is also called hoquiam, ahtik, and toki-

muksi. The ohmah stands up to 10' tall, weighs over 600 lbs., and is incredibly strong. They are covered with long black hair, and their skin is dark. They live in small family groups, and are generally shy and peaceful. However, the ohmahs will attack anyone who tries to settle on their foraging grounds. The ohmah looks very human, except for their long hair, bullet-shaped head, and heavy brows. They also have a powerful stench noticeable up to 10' away. Treat the ohmah as the sasqualaminoi in the *Monstrous Compendium*® #4 (DRAGONLANCE setting), but without immunity to magical cold.

There are huge monsters in the northern lakes. They are long-necked, flipped creatures that attack any who try to swim across their waters. Treat lake monsters as plesiosaurs (MC3, "Dinosaur").

Coastal tribes believe that there are counterparts of land animals in the seas. Thus, there are sea bison, sea bears, etc. Treat these animals as their land counterparts, except that they have flippers and gills, swim at a speed of 18, and move on beaches at a speed of 3. These tribes also tell tales of whales that live in landlocked lakes. Treat these as killer whales and narwhals; only the largest lakes could support larger species.

The hunting snake is a giant constrictor (MC1) that befriends exceptional warriors or shamans. It will go hunting when the



tribe is starving, and bring back game. Rarely, snakes of the spirit world take human form and mate with humans, producing monstrous halfbreeds. Treat these as yuan-ti, but of varying alignments; not all are evil. Giant sea snakes (MC1) are seen near the southwest coasts. A fearsome foe is the two-headed rattlesnake; treat it as a giant poisonous snake (MC1) but with two bite attacks.

Other races

The People are not necessarily the only intelligent race in this setting, versions of demihumans and nonhuman races are present. They are rare, but they exist for DMs and players who desire a stronger fantasy element to the campaign. None of these races should possess technology (forged metal weapons, armor, etc.) much beyond that of the People. DMs should choose a level of technology they and their players are comfortable with, and enforce that level throughout the campaign.

Faerie creatures can, at the DM's option, exist in this setting. Dryads could inhabit some of the forests' trees, various types of sprites could exist all over the continent in appropriate locales, and sylphs could ride the winds above the plains or mountains.

Dwarves live in some hilly regions, but these are not the gruff bearded folk of Old World folklore. These dwarves look and dress like the People, but they are evil

cannibals. Treat these dwarves as the duergar (*Monstrous Manual*), except that they have no metal and are unaffected by sunlight.

Giants also live in the hills and mountains. All are evil and monstrous, but look and dress like the People, and use the same weapons. Treat these as hill giants or verbeeg.

The creatures from the *Monstrous Compendium* volumes allowable in a fantasy America campaign are listed below:

Vol. 1-3: herd animal (buffalo, antelope, sheep), ant (swarm), ant lion, badger, barracuda, bat (all), bear (all), beetle (water), boar, great cat (jaguar, mountain lion, giant lynx), centipede, crocodile, crustacean (all), crimson death, wild dog, dolphin, eagle, eel (all), elemental (all), firestar, fish (all), frog (all), fungus (all), galeb duhr, ghost, hawk (all), hornet, horse (pony, wild, riding), lamprey (all), leech (all), lycanthrope (werebear, werewolf), small mammal (all but cats and pigs), octopus, owl (all), carnivorous plant (all), poltergeist, porcupine, rat, ray (all), scorpion (all), sea horse, shadow, shark, skeleton, skunk, snake (poisonous), spectre, spider (all), squid, swanmay, toad (all), urchin, vulture (all), water weird, weasel, whale (all), wolf, wolverine, wraith.

Vol. 5—GREYHAWK appendix: iguana, vampiric mist, carnivorous plant (all), camp rat, raven (all), sea snail, turtle (all), mist wolf.

Vol. 6—*Kara-Tur* appendix: flame spirit, ikiryō, nature spirit.

Vol. 12—FORGOTTEN REALMS appendix: wild cat, carnivorous plant (black willow), skuz, tempest.

Vol. 14—FIEND FOLIO® appendix: apparition, thunder children.

Many of these monsters are not Native American in origin, but they fit in well with their concepts of ghosts and spirits. The elemental, spirit, and undead creatures given in the lists provide variety in the campaign. The People invariably simply call all of them "spirits" or "ghosts," which is confusing to outsiders.

The unique monsters of the *Maztica* boxed set exist only in the tropical regions, but could be encountered if the PCs go to the south.

Other PC races: Elves seem to be a natural addition to this milieu. Any of the land-based, nonevil races of elf can inhabit the land's forests. Sea elves can live in the coastal waters. Gray elves are very rare in most AD&D campaigns; perhaps they are more common in this setting. This continent could even be their home. Maybe they live high in the western mountains. [Editor's Note: For those readers with access to DRAGON® Magazine issue #155, the article "In the Frost and the Snow" detailed the snow elves. This subspecies lives in cold climes, and could reside in alpine valleys high in the mountains or in the cold regions to the north of the lands displayed on the map that accompanies this article.] There could be tribes of

gnomes living in the eastern mountains, and tribes of wild or wood elves in the northern forests. Halflings could live as members of any of the three cultures discussed in this article, but their small size would serve them well (with concealment, etc.) in the rocky badlands of the desert southwest.

For those interested in role-playing nonhuman characters, the *Complete Book of Humanoids (CBH)* expands the list of potential PC races (and kits) considerably. The alaghi race, creatures quite similar to the ohmah described above, are available for use as player characters. Further, aarakocra could live high in the mountains, tribes of centaurs could roam the great plains, and swanmays (mentioned in the monster list above) can live by lakes in secluded woodlands. DMs are left to determine the People's relationships to these races and how they would interact.

The People

The three cultures described here are the most populous ones, but there are many smaller cultures, such as the adobe-brick builders of the southwest, the whale hunters of the northwest, and the farming villages of the south. In spite of this variety, there are some similarities between the cultures' peoples.

Appearance: All the People have black or brown hair and dark eyes, although a few have lighter brown hair. Their skin color ranges from reddish to bronze or brown. Nearly all the people have distinctive high cheekbones and aquiline noses. Most are lean and muscular, due to constant hard work and lean diets.

Alignment: The people are strong individualists. While there are laws and morals to be obeyed, the natives insist on personal liberty. Even chiefs are obeyed only as long as they give good advice. In game terms, the majority of the People are neutral. Of course, PCs may be any alignment they choose.

Languages: There are innumerable languages and dialects among the people. Even natives within a certain culture cannot always speak with each other; the tribes of the northern plains cannot speak with those of the southern plains. However, there is a common language used from coast to coast, for trading and negotiating: sign language. Through the use of hand gestures, the People can communicate basic ideas or trade offers. The sign language relates to their pictography; for example, lightning is drawn as a jagged line, and signed by zigzagging the hand. Sign language is graceful and expressive. It is assumed that all PCs of the People know two languages, their tribal tongue and sign language; other dialects may be learned as normal.

Trade: The tribes do not exist in isolation. Like cultures everywhere, the tribes trade excess items they produce for items they cannot obtain themselves. For example, mountain tribes trade the hides of



highorn sheep for vegetables from the east. Trading is done at neutral villages, where even blood enemies can meet in peace. New ideas and inventions spread quickly along the many trails that crisscross the continent. The trails are so important that those who travel on them with only the intention to trade are not bothered by even their enemies.

Demeanor: With friends and family, the People are boisterous, happy, mischievous, and talkative. They enjoy stories, songs, and jokes. However, pride and dignity are important qualities. When outsiders are met, the people present the most stoic and dignified bearing they can muster; this can change once the strangers are befriended.

Law: The people do not have laws engraved in stone, but do have a system of rules and punishment. Theft is a rare crime, since the People have no possessions that cannot be made by many others; a tribesman always can obtain what he needs without stealing it. The only penalty for theft is the return of the item, or something in trade for it. The exception is when taking something from another tribe; this is not only allowed, it is encouraged. Treachery is punishable by death on sight. Many crimes are punished by public humiliation, a hard blow to those whose lives are based on personal honor.

Technology: The People are skilled craftsmen, but none have any metal. They work with native materials only: stone, bone, wood, and sinew. Even with this limitation, the people produce colorful and functional items. Their possessions are all portable, as the tribes are nomadic.

—**Weapons and armor:** The preferred weapons of the people are the short bow, war club, spear, hand axe, and knife. Bows are either simple short bows or composite short bows. Arrows are tipped with flint or bone, and are color coded to identify the owner and his tribe. Spears range from the short ones of the eastern tribes to the lances of the plains' inhabitants. Clubs range from the simple cudgel to the spiked, ball-headed war club and sling club. The latter has a stone in a flexible leather strap, operating much like a flail. Knives are carried by everyone, mainly as tools. In game terms, only the following weapons are available to the people: bow (short, short composite), flight arrow, club, horseman's flail (sling club), morning star (war club), hand axe, knife, light horse lance, sling and stone, spear.

There are no class restriction on weapons; any class can use any native weapon. Thus, clerics can use knives, and mages can use spears. Armor is limited to the shield. Body armor is not worn, since mobility is preferred over weight. Shields are usually painted with many symbols. They are round wooden frames covered with smoked hide; bison is preferred.

Note: DMs who want detailed information on nonmetal weapons should check out the DARK SUN boxed set, which has rules for stone and bone weapons, includ-

ing chances for breakage.

Warfare: While different tactics are used by the tribes, depending upon the local terrain, there are points in common. All take advantage of mobility and maneuvering in battle. Open warfare on a large scale is rare. Most conflict is a matter of raid and counter-raid.

Warfare in the east is dominated by the dense forests. The tribes there have no horses, and could not use them easily in the forests anyway. The warriors fight on foot, using the trees for cover. Melee is a rather disorganized affair, since the trees break up formations. The tribes are adept at hiding and ambushing foes. Flint hatchets are preferred melee weapons, once bows have reduced the numbers of the enemy.

The plains tribes go to war mounted on fast horses. Tactics are dominated by the level terrain and mounted archers. Bows are used from horseback at first, but eventually, all the warriors resort to melee with clubs and hatchets. Battles can change direction quickly, as the warriors are skilled at leaping off of and onto their horses.

War is uncommon in the southwest desert, since mere survival is so time consuming. Most conflicts are over water sources and arable ground. The desert warriors are superb guerilla fighters. They excel at ambushes and have a knack for concealment. They use the cliffs and mountains in their lands to hit their enemies from an unexpected direction, or to hide from stronger foes. The desert tribes have no horses, and would be hard pressed to feed them if they did.

If a warrior has fought bravely, it is no shame to retreat from a lost battle. If cornered, warriors fight to the death. This is done partly to avoid the shame of capture, and partly because of the treatment of captives. The People have cruel policies toward captured warriors, who are put to death in horrible ways. With this fate in mind, it is no wonder that warriors prefer a clean death in battle.

Outsiders often use the terms "warrior" and "brave" as if they are the same. Actually, a brave is a man who has not yet killed an enemy, while a warrior has made at least one kill.

The year

The people have a pattern of life dictated by the seasons. The People must store up food in the spring and summer to survive the winter.

Spring is the season of preparation. Weapons are repaired or made. Hides are treated and prepared for processing into clothes and shelter. Soon, the tribes move from winter camps to summer camps. The farming tribes plant their seeds as soon as the frosts are gone. Little hunting is done, but the women do much foraging.

Summer is the season of ceremonies and hunting. The women tend gardens and forage, and the men go to the hunt or to

war. The plains tribes capture and train wild horses. This is also when they hold their dangerous bison hunts. There are many ceremonies held at tribal gatherings.

Autumn is the season of harvesting. Food is gathered, dried, and stored in underground caches. Before the first snowfall, the tribes move to their winter camps.

Winter forces the People to be less active, although the eastern tribes stay busy trapping small game. The others relax, tell stories, and teach their history to the children. Most of the winter food comes from their caches. When spring approaches, the people prepare to move, and the cycle begins anew.

Religion

Rather than create an entirely new pantheon, use the Native-American deities given in the *Legends and Lore* volume; these have been given excellent descriptions. The new monsters and spells are also appropriate. The DM can change the names of the deities, if desired.

The people have a great variety of beliefs, with many points in common. They see the world as filled with spiritual power that must be honored. Success can be gained only through the favor of the spirits, so sacrifices are made to them; sacrifices are things like food or materials, never anything living. Success required an offering of thanks, such as part of the meat gained from hunting.

Since the Great Spirit made them all, animals are brothers to the People. Animals possess abilities that the People can emulate, and they represent several qualities. The bison represents life itself, the bear is wisdom, the wolf is craftiness in war, and the butterfly is the bringer of dreams. One of the most important is the eagle, who symbolizes courage.

With hardship and danger a constant part of their lives, the People have many small rituals of thanksgiving for survival. Short prayers are said at dawn and sunset, before battles, and before hunting. Success in war or hunting is followed by a prayer of thanks.

Death is a mystery to the People. While they have the concept of an afterlife and heaven, it is abstract. When one of the People dies, her spirit usually rises to a plane to reside in eternal happiness. This heaven is a wilderness where the spirits will hunt, fight enemies, and feast for eternity. It is a mixture of Valhalla and the Happy Hunting Grounds (see the *Manual of the Planes*). The DM either can create a special Outer Plane for the people's religion, or modify a layer of the Happy Hunting Grounds.

A spirit will rise to the heavens only if the corpse is given a proper burial by his fellow tribesmen. A man who was scalped, strangled, or not given the proper burial has a 10% chance to arise as a type of undead spirit; roll 1d6 to see what he becomes: 1-3 shadow; 4 wraith; 5 ghost; 6

spectre. The undead will prey upon its former tribesmen. This rarely happens, but when it does, the tribe must muster all its clerics and magical weapons to combat the creature.

Note: This is a greatly simplified version of Native-American religions. Their true faiths are much more complex. The DM is encouraged to read further on his own for a true understanding of this subject.

Women

Outsiders describe the People as a male-dominated culture. Appearances seem to support this conclusion, since women are seen doing all the planting, foraging, etc. But this is not a matter of male dominance; it is a loose agreement for division of labor. It is true that women do all the "domestic" work, but they also produce the clothing, tack, and other items needed for daily life. They prepare meat and meals, forage for berries and roots, and collect wood and water. In turn, men are expected to hunt and defend their camp, families, and tribe. Women refuse offers from men to help with their work; they are *not* drudges. They take part in dance ceremonies, sit on counsels, give advice, and berate their men in public, if deserved. If necessary, women fight to protect their children. Women are respected for their crafts, advice, labor, and the reasons that men value women all over

the world.

Still, women have an unexciting role in a gaming sense. This can be dealt with in two ways. First, the PCs can all be male. Second, and better, the above customs are loosely kept in place, but exceptional women can become adventurers. In general, if a player wants to run a female PC, there should be no obstacles.

The tribe

The word "tribe" is used casually when dealing with the People, and is not always clear. In general, a tribe is a group of people who are allied by a common culture and language. Tribes are often splintered into smaller groups, and these groups are divided into numerous camps and villages. Only by dispersal can the People get enough to eat. Only in times of great crisis or festival does the entire tribe gather in one place. Like all cultures, the People have wars and feuds between different tribes. In addition, there are often internal feuds within a tribe, although rarely within a village.

Government

No culture can survive without leadership, and the People are no exception. Unlike most medieval cultures, the chiefs of the People are not a hereditary line. The chiefs have little authority, compared to feudal kings or oriental emperors.

Chiefs are elected, not born. Most tribes have a head chief and lesser camp chiefs in charge of the villages. The chiefs meet in counsel to discuss matters of importance, such as when to move camps and when to make war. In times of war, temporary war chiefs are chosen to lead the war parties.

To be elected, a camp chief must be known for charity and courage. Giving to those in need is the highest virtue. A warrior may become a war chief through extraordinary deeds of bravery. A PC warrior may become a war chief, if he is of a higher level than any other warrior in his tribe. However, camp chiefs cannot be war chiefs.

Above all, a chief must be successful. Those who fail are either forced into retirement or killed. Thus, dictators are rare among the People. A few evil shamans and mystery men have maneuvered their way to camp-chief status, and proved to be the worst leaders; but fear of their magic keeps them in power for life. On the other hand, spell-casters are sometimes great war chiefs, since war strategy can be used by anyone. (A historical example is Geronimo, who was a holy man, not a chief.)

While the chief counsel works well for the people, it discourages the development of large nations. Long distances prevent frequent meetings. Tribes with boats or

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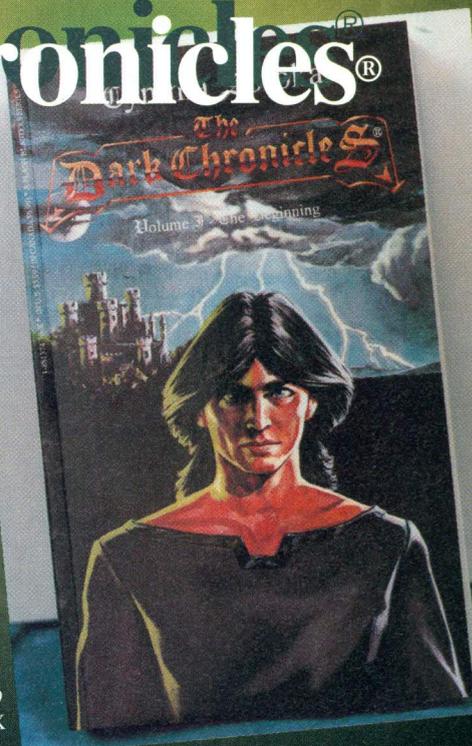
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horses have the largest nations, since they allow for rapid travel.

Names

Each of the People may have several names in his lifetime. While women usually have only one name (one exception could be female PCs), men have one name as a child, and another as an adult. Names are usually based on nature, animals, or some feature of the person. Historical examples include Red Cloud, Spotted Eagle, Touch the Clouds (a very tall man), and Standing Bear. Chiefs who retire take a third name. Men who turn traitor or are disgraced are called a different name than their given adult name.

Clothing

The people wear clothing that is both colorful and functional. Men in the hotter lands may wear only a breechcloth and moccasins, while those in the north wear heavy furs. Much of their clothing is fringed, to help shed water. Women wear long dresses and leggings.

In addition to being functional, clothing can be very decorative. Fringes, tassels, beads, and painted quills are used as decorations. Everyday clothing is less decorative, as the decorations wear out quickly.

Shelter

The People use native materials to create

dwellings. The woodlands' tribes build bark-covered lodges over a frame of woven branches. The plains tribes build tepees, a hide cover over a framework of four main poles and 11 smaller poles. The desert tribes build small wickiups, a brush covering over a frame of branches. All tribes prefer to base villages at sites where there is plentiful water and shelter from the wind. Scouts must be able to see enemies approaching in time to give a warning. Farming tribes need to have arable land, while the desert tribes like to be near stands of mesquite, a plant that provides much of their forage.

The horse

Horses evolved in America, but died out in prehistoric times. Europeans re-introduced them, and some soon escaped to go wild on the plains. The Native Americans quickly learned to ride them and became some of the finest horsemen in the world. Obviously, this line of history doesn't work for a fantasy America, since it is assumed that the European cultures have not established colonies here yet; the continent still belongs to the People. It can be assumed that horses never died out here, and the plains tribes learned to ride them. Or, the horses can be brought in by outsiders; assume that an expedition from an European or Oriental civilization came to the People's continent, and was wiped

out by the natives. Some of the invaders happened to have been mounted, and these horses escaped to run wild on the plains. In any case, the plains tribes have been mounted for a few hundred years, and it has drastically changed their lives. Horses are now vital to their way of life. Since they require large ranges of grass, horses live only on the plains. None are found on the desert or in the forests, and none have passed into the tropics; horses fare badly in tropical regions, due to disease and poor fodder. Those horses that do wander into the forests and deserts are usually eaten by the natives, who can't really care for horses, and don't have the concept of riding them anyway.

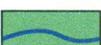
The horses of the plains are small (averaging 14 hands and 700 lbs.), but amazingly hardy. It survives on grazing alone, requiring no grain. They come in a variety of colors: pinto, piebald, appaloosa, gray, white, and many mixed colors. The head looks overlarge for the body. The People's horses are very calm animals, able to gallop into war or among stampeding bison. In many ways, a warrior's favorite horse is also his best friend.

The bison

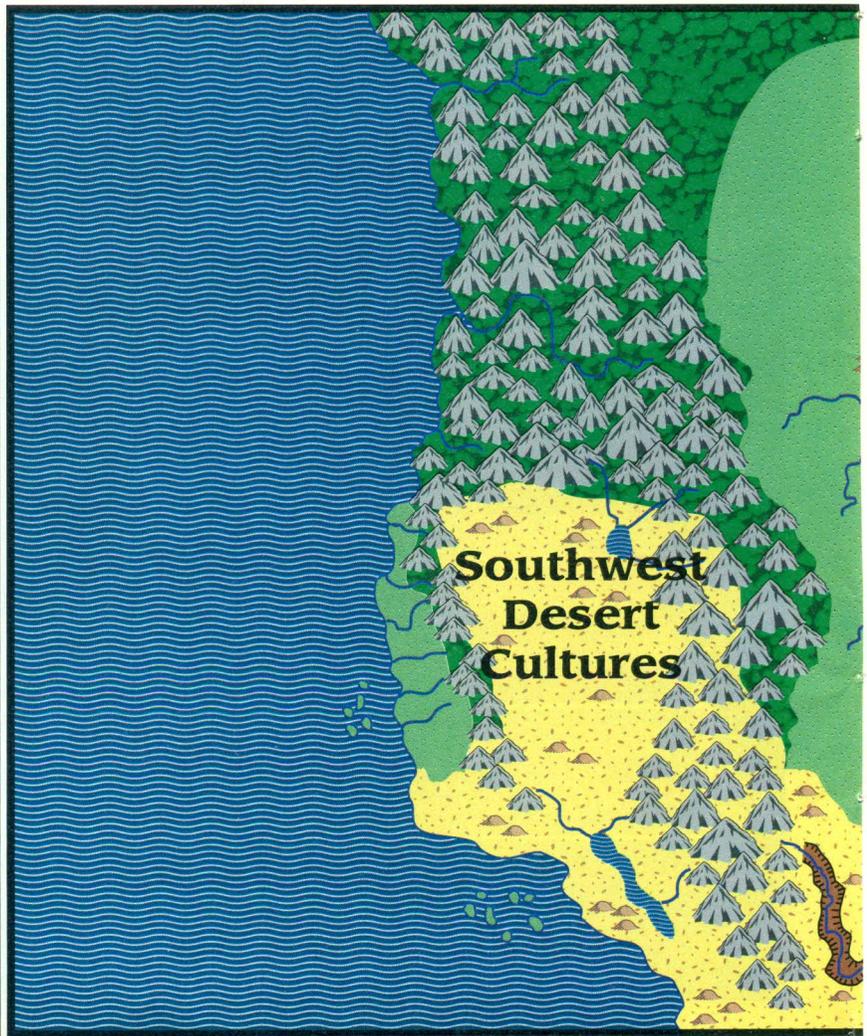
This wild relative of the cow is an important source of food and leather to many of the people. To the plains tribes, it is literally the source of life. The bison is regard-

Lands of the People

0 50 100 miles

-  Desert
-  Rainforest
-  Plains
-  Mountains
-  Hills
-  River
-  Sea or Lake
-  Marsh

Cartography by John Knecht
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ed as tangible proof of the favor of the spirits who created the world.

Bison have shaggy coats and small curved horns. There are three races: the large wood bison of the east and north, the small mountain bison of the western mountains, and the numerous plains bison. Bulls may stand six feet at the shoulder and weigh over a ton. Two distinguishing features are the hump on the shoulders and the bull's "beard." Most are dark tawny brown to black, but others are blue, gray, yellow, or mouse. Rarest of all is the white bison, a sacred animal.

Bison are usually calm animals, except for bulls in rut. Calves are born in the spring and mature in six years. Bison are constant grazers, moving as grass is depleted in one area to another where it has recovered. Bison can be panicked by hunters or thunder, causing them to stampe. Nothing is more feared than to be in the path of hundreds of running bison.

Bison are difficult to hunt on the plains, due to the level terrain and vast areas to run away in. The easiest way to hunt is to bog them down in snow drifts, but this is limited to winter months. The tribes also may run the bison over cliffs or corner them in box canyons.

The most dangerous hunt is the chase on horseback. The chase requires brave men and trained horses. The bow is used at short range (ideally one bow length) to

maximize its power. However, this required riding among the running bison, where a single misstep or fall leads to instant death under bison hooves. A horse trained for the chase or war is the warrior's most useful mount.

The products garnered from the bison such varied items as meat, clothing and shields from the skins, cups or spoons from horns, bow strings and thread from the sinews, and fuel for their fires from the dung.

In addition to food and possessions, the bison is a source of religious inspiration to the plains tribes. The bison skull is used in many ceremonies and prayers; some are enchanted to hold great powers.

Characters

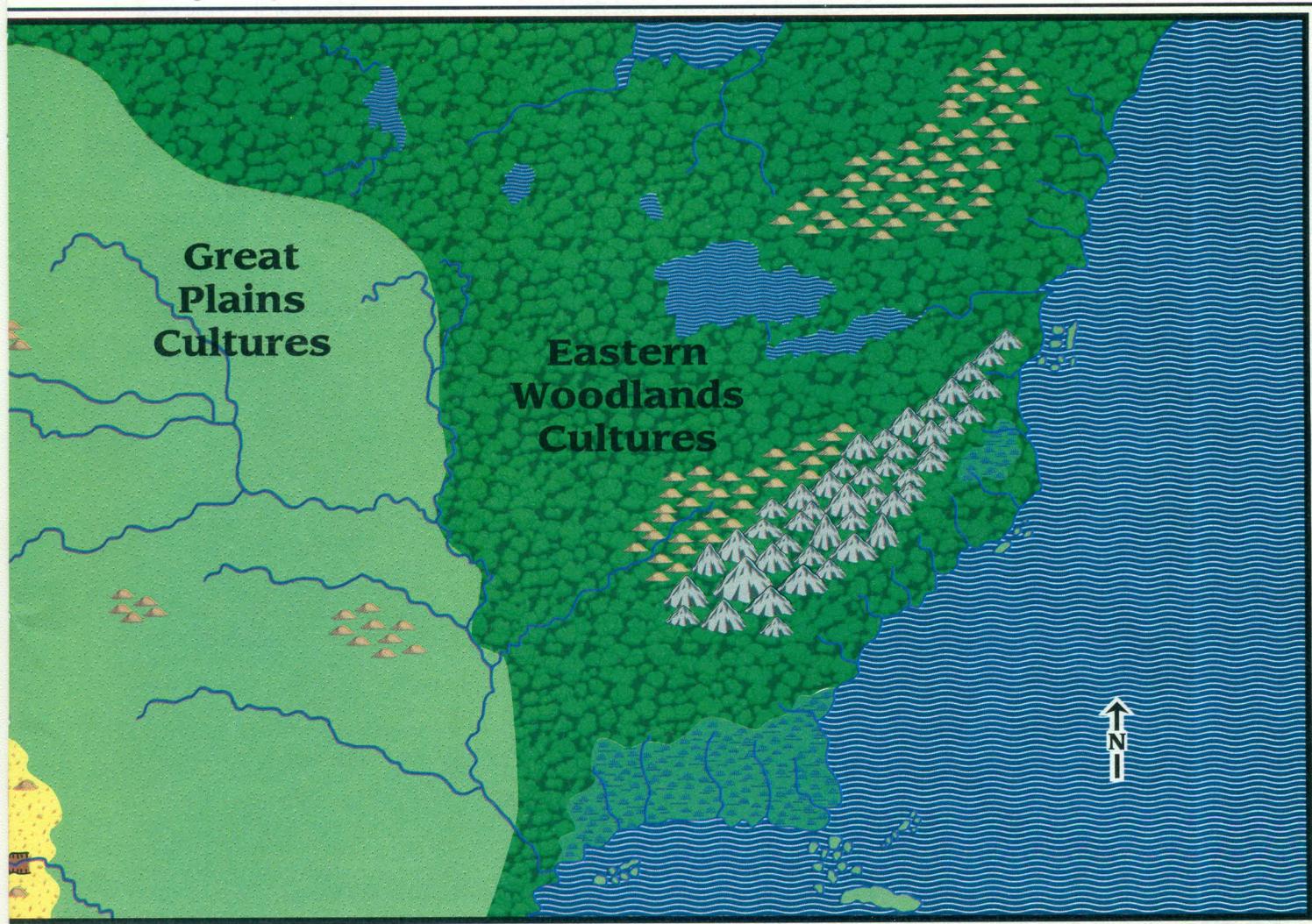
The People's culture does not allow certain classes. The paladin, with his unbending devotion to law, fits in poorly with the independent People, and does not exist here. Psionicists are ill-suited for this setting. Bards are strongly Celtic in nature, and unfit for a fantasy America. The role of druids is filled in this setting by the Shaman priest kit detailed below.

The most common class by far is the fighter, which exists in every tribe; the goal of nearly every man is to be a warrior. Rangers also are common, and are appreciated for their tracking and hunting prowess. Those high enough in level to

cast spells are also regarded with some awe. Priests are not common, but one or two are found in every village. Mages are the rarest class, found only in the largest villages. Thieves also are rare, but one or two live in every village, serving as scouts and spies rather than burglars. None of the unique classes from the DARK SUN, DRAGONLANCE, Kara-Tur, or AL-QADIM® settings are present. The unique classes from the *Maztica* boxed set are found only in the Aztec lands in the tropics. Note that none of the men are 0-level characters among the People, all are 1st-level warriors, at least. Most women and children are 0-level, except for a few exceptional women. Kits from the *CBH* are available to races from that book, if such are used with this setting.

Proficiencies: For the full flavor of a Native-American campaign, the DM should have a copy of the *Wilderness Survival Guide (WSG)*; after all, the whole continent is wilderness. Many of the proficiencies given in the *Player's Handbook (PH)* are inappropriate for this culture, due to culture or technology. All proficiencies dealing with metal, reading/writing, gems, or advanced sciences are absent. Wilderness proficiencies are not only allowed, they are vital.

All characters of the People, regardless of class, have the following proficiencies when created. Those marked with an



asterisk are found in the *WSG*: direction sense, fire building, weather sense, animal lore, endurance, hunting, running, tracking, alertness*, plant lore.*

Other proficiencies are given to beginning characters of all classes of a particular culture:

Eastern Woodlands: boating (canoes)*, swimming, fishing.

Great plains: animal training (horse), land-based riding (horse), survival (plains).

Southwest desert: mountaineering, survival (desert).

Mage and priest characters also begin with the following proficiencies: dancing (ceremonial), singing (ceremonial), ancient history (oral), healing, herbalism, local history (oral), religion.

Thief characters start out also with the animal noise proficiency from the *Complete Thief's Handbook (CTH)*.

Due to the many nonweapon proficiencies that PCs start out with at 1st level, they receive no nonweapon proficiencies at this time. However, they will gain slots at higher levels as per normal (*PH*, p. 50). The following proficiencies can be bought by PCs, as they earn enough slots to buy them: artistic ability (pictographs), fishing, land based riding (horse), gaming, rope use, swimming, blind fighting, jumping, survival, animal noise, set snares, foraging. Note that some of these are given to particular cultures automatically.

Weapon proficiencies are given and gained as per normal, and only fighters may specialize and with only one weapon. Note again that there are no class restrictions on weapons; a PC of any class may use any native weapon.

In all villages, there are those who know the following craft proficiencies. PCs also may learn these if they wish: leatherworking, weaving, bowyer/fletcher, weaponsmithing (but remember, no metal).

Equipment: The People do not have a system of money, so new characters do not have starting currency. New characters can have any *normal* items desired, so long as it is found in their culture. The PC is assumed to have had years to make or trade for any needed items. So long as they are in good standing with their tribe, PCs will be given the items they need; the People provide for their needy. PCs can make much of what they need, with the proper proficiencies. PCs of the plains start out with one horse and tack; it is customary to give a child a horse to care for and learn to ride.

The following items are available to all cultures and all PCs: leggings, sheath, shirt, vest, moccasins, backpack, belt pouch, bucket, quiver, blanket, needle, awl, torch, waterskin, dog, shield.

A few items are available only to PCs of certain cultures. The eastern woodland tribes have dugout canoes and the short bow. The plains tribes have horses, tack, and composite short bows. The desert tribes have short composite bows also.

Magic: While mages and priests cast spells as per the normal rules, there are limits to the spells available to them. Any spells affecting metal, jewels, or other items foreign to their culture are prohibited. Spells that don't affect these items, but have material components that are not available in this culture, are allowed; simply change the material component to a native material.

Kits

The Character Handbook series introduced the idea of kits, a special background for the basic classes which gives certain benefits, penalties, and goals. Five kits for PCs of the People are presented here, along with suggestions for using existing kits from the Handbooks. Note that proficiencies and equipment have been discussed earlier, and are not repeated here. There are no wealth options (no money), and all the People are human (unless the DM decides otherwise). None of these kits can be abandoned. The only requirements are those for the basic class (fighter, mage, etc.).

Fighters

If desired, warriors of the People can be of the savage kit from the *Complete Fighter's Handbook (CFH)*, or the beast-rider kit for plains tribes. Three new kits, one from each culture, are presented here.

Eastern woodland warrior

Description: The eastern forests are ruled by nations of nomadic tribes. This is the most populous region on the continent. The warriors are superb woodsmen who use the tree cover to great advantage in battle. Like all the People, these warriors place high value on pride and dignity. The warriors are soldiers, hunters, husbands, and fathers.

Role: Warriors are the providers for the tribes. They bring in game, plunder other villages, and protect their own camps. They strive to be brave and honorable, and to keep the respect of peers.

Special benefits: Woodland warriors have the same combat bonuses as elves when fighting in the forests. As such, they have a -4 bonus to surprise enemies. They also are able to move their full movement rate and fire a bow once (one arrow) in one round.

Special hindrances: Woodland warriors have no real hindrances. However, they have no knowledge of survival on the plains or deserts, and are at a disadvantage in those lands.

Great plains warrior

Description: The life of the plains warrior revolves around the horse and the bison. The warrior's only wealth is the number of horses he owns. He revels in combat, not necessarily to the death, but to gain glory, honor, and respect.

Role: The plains warrior is a brave and dignified horseman. His life is punctuated by swift raids, dangerous bison hunts, and harsh winters. Defenders, hunters, and raiders, the warrior is the base of every tribe.

Special benefits: The plains warrior is an excellent mounted archer. He is able to fire a bow from a moving horse at the full rate of fire (two shots per round) with no penalties to hit.

Special hindrances: Plains warriors are at a disadvantage when in the eastern forests or southern deserts, since their horses are hard to feed and less useful in battle.

Southwest desert warrior

Description: The desert tribes always are on the verge of famine. This causes them to be fiercely protective of their sparse resources. Simple survival is a daily struggle.

Role: The desert warrior is a master of ambush and concealment. Honor is less important than winning and surviving. Trickery, ambush, and massacre are acceptable. Warriors have detailed knowledge of every source of water in their territory, and can live off the land. They have great endurance, and can jog for hours at a time.

Special benefits: Desert warriors excel at concealment. In one full round, the PC can conceal himself in his native terrain so completely, he has a -4 bonus to surprise enemies. Of course, this



doesn't work if the PC is observed in the process.

Special hindrances: Desert warriors are brutal to captured enemies, and are hated and feared by outsiders. When away from their own lands, they suffer a -3 reaction-roll adjustment from outsiders.

Priests

The priests of the People are highly respected by all their tribe. The savage

priest kit from the *Complete Priest's Handbook (CPH)* may be used, or the special kit presented below.

Shaman

Description: The shaman is a priest of nature. He is closely attuned to the spirits of the wilderness. His powers are used to intercede on behalf of his tribe, to keep them healthy and fed. He is a connection between the deities and men.

Role: The shaman is a unique man in his village, as there is rarely more than one per town. People look to him to bring good luck by speaking to the spirits on their behalf. He is an interpreter of omens, an advisor, healer, ceremony leader, and historian. A shaman is not dedicated to one deity, but appeals to them all.

The shaman can cast spells from these spheres: Major access to all, animal, elemental, healing, plant, protection, sun,



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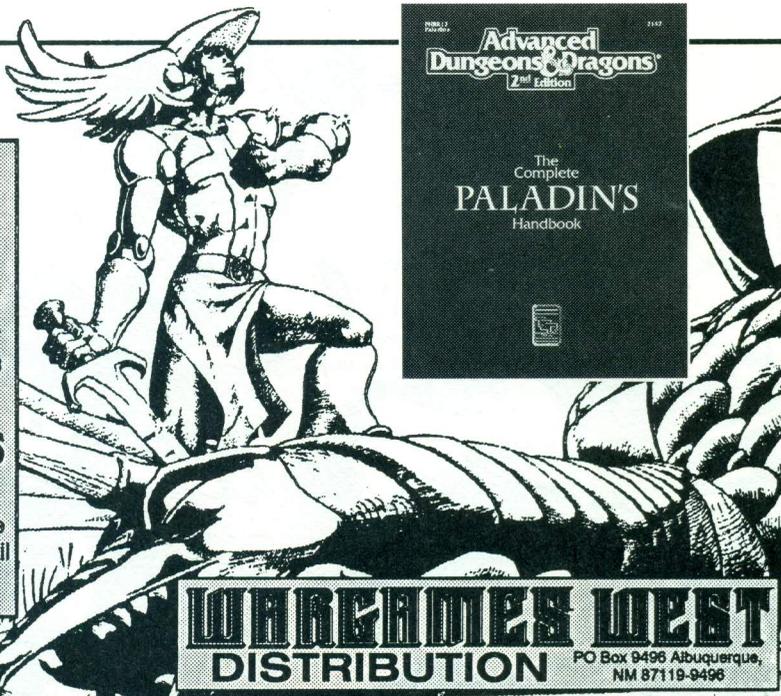
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weather; Minor access to charm, combat, divination, necromantic, summoning.

Special benefits: At higher levels, the shaman is able to enchant magical items (see below). He has a good knowledge of celestial cycles, and can predict the appearances of comets and eclipses. In times of hardship, the shaman can summon game animals (bison, wapiti, etc.). He can summon 5HD of animals for each of his levels. The animals will move within one mile of the village, but they must be hunted in normal ways.

Special hindrances: Shamans have no special hindrances.

Mages

Wizards are rare among the People. It takes a lot of mental skill to learn magic without the aid of spellbooks. As for kits, the savage wizard from the *Complete Wizard's Handbook (CWH)* can be used, or the special kit given below.

Mystery man

Description: The mystery man is so called because he deals with mysterious powers. Clerical magic is understood since it comes from the deities, but wizardly magic is feared. The mystery man is an advisor and source of power.

Role: The mystery man is a shadowy figure in his village, somewhat feared by

the others. He is sought out as the source of amulets, bundles, and potions. They not only deal with the unusual, mystery men look unusual in some way; odd colored skin or hair, strange dress, etc. It is this uniqueness that allows them to take up magic; in the minds of the People, power is found in the unusual.

Special benefits: The mystery man will always be provided food and water; he is not expected to hunt. He is able to create some magical items at higher levels (see below).

Special hindrances: Mystery men cannot be specialized mages.

Thieves

The classic AD&D thief does not exist among the People. With no system of money, no houses, no chests, and nothing that can't be made at home, there is no need for burglars. However, there is a need for another type of thief, the tribal scout, who is a spy and observer. This kit, described below, is similar to but not the same as the Scout kit in the *Complete Thief's Handbook*.

Tribal scout

Description: The scout is a loner, continually spying on his tribe's enemies. His skills are tilted toward stealth and observation.

Role: The tribal scout is a brave man who lives on the edge of his tribal territory. His job is to find and report any enemies or other dangers to his village. Skilled in survival and woodlore, the scout is a rugged individualist. In war, the scout rides ahead of the war party to spy out ambushes.

Special benefits: The thief's find traps skill is replaced by a new skill, detect ambush. The percentages are the same. This skill allows the scout to see an ambush prepared by an enemy; the DM should roll this secretly. If successful, the scout has found each body of warriors taking part in the ambush. Beginning scouts do not have the limit of 30 points per skill. At higher levels, scouts do not have the limit of 15 points per skill that can be added per level.

Special hindrances: Scouts do not have these skills: pick pockets, open locks, find/remove traps, read languages.

Magical items

Magical items of the People are made by shamans and mystery men in ceremonies. Some items are found only in certain cultures (EW = eastern woodlands, GP = great plains, SD = southwest desert).

Permanent items

These are magical items that have a permanent enchantment, and can be used by anyone of the proper class who possesses them. However, all these items will function only in the hands of the People; a person of any other culture will find these items to be inert.

Snake belt

This item is made from the skin of a rattlesnake and enchanted by a mage of at least 15th level. The bearer may change himself into a giant rattlesnake (giant poisonous snake, MC1) once per day, for up to one hour.

Calling stone

These are magical stones that call game animals. They were once just rocks that were naturally formed into the shape of an animal (deer, bison, etc.). When enchanted by a shaman of at least 15th level, the rock can be used to summon 1-6 animals of the type that the rock resembles; they will move to within one mile of the PC's village. The animals must still be hunted in normal ways. The stone is usable once per week.

Medicine fire (EW)

This is a medallion-like object of feathers and beads sculpted into the shape of flames. It is an item made by shamans of at least 20th level. In the hands of a shaman, the medallion grants the following powers: protection as per *ring of fire resistance*; *burning hands* (2/day, same level as bearer); *fire shield* (1/day); *flame strike* (1/day).



Tribal lance (GP)

These are ancient lances that belong to the plains tribes, one per tribe. In the hands of a warrior of the tribe who owns it, the lance does damage as a heavy horse lance +3, but is as light and handy as a spear. Any opponent who faces the wielder of the lance must save vs. spells or be stricken with a special type of *fear*; the character will be unable to attack the lance bearer in any way, and cannot even bear to look at him. This does not affect the character's ability to fight other opponents.

Pipe tomahawk

This hand axe has a hollow handle and a tobacco bowl opposite the axe head. Oddly, it is an item of both war and peace. The pipe is used at council meetings, and its powers depend on whether war or peace is the issue. In peace councils, the pipe is passed from person to person in the circle around the fire. All who smoke from the pipe fall under its spell, from which there is no save. Those who smoke must tell the absolute truth so long as the council lasts; no lies, evasions, or omissions are possible. The pipe cannot force peace, but it creates an atmosphere of honesty for discussion. In war councils, the pipe bestows a bonus on every chief who smokes it. The chief is immune to all types of *fear*, and all warriors within 100 yards need not make morale checks. The pipe is made by a shaman of at least 20th level.

Bison skull totem (GP)

This very rare item is made from the skull of an albino bull bison, by a shaman of at least 20th level. The skull is covered with mystical symbols. The totem may be either wielded in the bearer's hands, or hung on a pole in the village. When hung on a pole, all villagers within one mile of it receive these benefits: +1 on all saving throws and *protection from evil* spell.

In the hands of a spell-caster, the bearer receives these benefits: +2 on all saving throws, immunity to *fear*, *protection from fear 10' radius*, *protection from normal missiles*.

The totem has several greater powers, usable once per day each, which are invoked by holding the skull over his head and chanting the command phrase: *fear* (as *wand of fear*), *insect plague*, *flame strike*, *sunray*.

If the skull is in danger of being captured by an enemy, it can *teleport* itself to the nearest friendly shaman of the same tribe.

In DRAGON issue #189, the "Bazaar of the Bizarre" featured a collection of magical items for the Savage kits detailed in the Complete Handbook series. These items, like those kits, can be used with this setting.

Personal items

These items function only in the hands of the specific person they were made for. They are inert in anyone else's hands, and

become nonmagical upon the owner's death. Personal magical items are created by spell-casters of at least 15th level. If the owner ever turns traitor, or uses the item against his own tribe, the spell-caster may call for the item's return. The item will vanish from the owner, and is lost to him forever.

Horn bonnet (GP)

This headdress is made from the scalp of a bison. It is decorated with feathers and quills. Once per day, the bonnet will give its owner strength of 18/00, for one hour.

War bonnet (GP)

This magnificent headdress is a head band of feathers, with two long trailers of eagle feathers to the sides. The bonnet gives its bearer very sharp vision and hearing, meaning he is surprised only on a 1 in 10, when the bonnet is worn.

Medicine bow

This is either a short bow or short composite bow. In addition to being a bow +1, it has no penalties for medium or long ranges.

Sacred bundles

These items are described in the *Legends & Lore* tome.

Pronghorn cap (SD)

This magical headdress is made from the scalp of a pronghorn antelope, horns and all. Once per day, the owner may move at a speed of 24, for up to one hour.

Medicine shield

This light round shield is made of hide stretched over a wooden frame, and painted with many symbols. It gives no AC bonus beyond the normal bonus, but the bearer has the benefit of a *protection from normal missiles* spell.

War shirt

This is a vestlike garment that grants magical protection to a warrior. The shirt grants a base armor class of 1-6 (roll randomly) and immunity to all types of fear, magical or otherwise.

Adventures

The information given in this article is sufficient to start a campaign set among the People, or to use the continent as an expansion area for an existing campaign. The continent is also a natural expansion area for the *Maztica* boxed set.

An adventuring group of the People have far different goals than their counterparts across the ocean. There is no gold to collect, and magical items must be earned from the tribe by brave deeds, not plun-



dered from enemies. Mere survival plays a much larger role; there are no farmers providing food for all, and no inns to buy food and provide shelter. PCs will have to hunt for their own food, and for their village. A warrior's first priority is to keep his people safe and fed; not an easy task in a world of wilderness. Warfare is never far away, as enemy raids could happen at any time. Raiding predators or monsters are constant dangers.

A PC's goal is honor and glory, not wealth. Prowess in battle is a valued trait. Most adventures involve threats to the home village, in the form of famine, drought, kidnappings, or enemy raiders. The PCs will often be called upon to solve problems.

In time, the PCs likely will wish to explore the continent. The first step is to travel to the lands of another culture, which requires some adjustments. A plainsman will find his horse less useful in the dense forests of the east, while a woodsman will find the desert a terrible place. It is possible to explore even further afield; the tundra, the tropics, or the equator. It is possible to run a typical "dungeon" adventure; assume the ruins are the remains of an Aztec-like culture, or even a prehuman culture.

The ultimate adventure is the clash of cultures, as expeditions from beyond the

continent come to the People's lands. The invaders could be from the Old World, the Orient, or even Maztica. Invasion too can come from the depths of the earth, as the races of the Underdark find tunnels to the continent. The People suddenly could find themselves facing orcs, drow, duergar, or worse.

Conclusion

Again, I'd like to point out that this article presents a very simplified look at Native-American cultures. The DM is encouraged to read on her own to learn more. The rules given here are not historically appropriate for all cultures, but a good cross-section has been given to make a cohesive set of rules.

TSR has two supplements that discuss Native Americans in game terms. The first is GAZ14; *The Atruaghin Clans*. This D&D® product has several new spells that are excellent for the culture, and can be converted to the AD&D game easily. The information inside is fairly good, although there are some quirks. (The plains tribes disdain to use bows!) FR14 *The Great Glacier* presents AD&D rules that excellently describe an Eskimo culture for the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting. Both products are a little odd in that they place a Native-American culture in the middle of a Europe-like continent. At the moment,

there are no other supplements on these cultures available.

There are literally hundreds of books available on Native-American cultures, from the Inuit people of Canada to the natives of Patagonia. Any large bookstore has a section for Native-American studies, as do most public libraries. The bibliography below gives some of the better books on the three cultures discussed in this article. Read, learn, play and enjoy!

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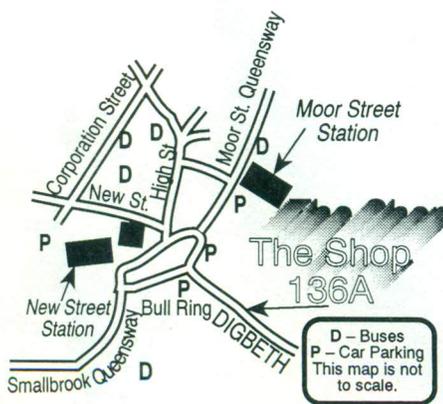
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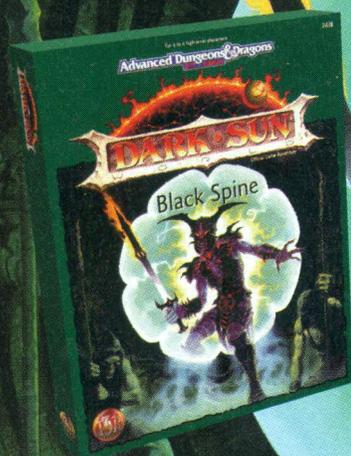
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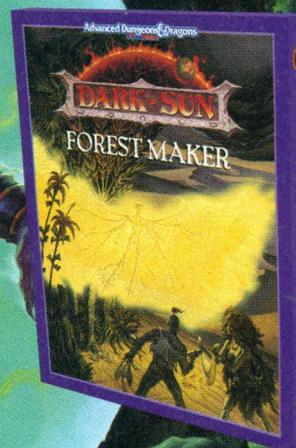
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Getting

Back

to nature

This article originated from a rules discussion at a convention in which I talked to some AD&D® game players who felt that the clerical and druidic spell lists were “hopelessly mixed” in the 2nd Edition game. This article presents an optional, alternative arrangement of the priest spell spheres to rectify this. To those players at the convention, and others like them, I dedicate this article. (I also would like to give special thanks to Skip “Sage Advice” Williams for reviewing this article.)

The spell lists given here are currently undergoing testing in a local campaign. Try them yourself to see if you like them, and then drop me a note here at TSR (P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147) and tell me what you think!

PAUL JACQUAYS

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Re-aligning the druid's spell repertoire

by Jon Pickens

Artwork by Paul Jaquays

The case for change

One effect of the 2nd Edition game's clerical spell-sphere lists is that some spells central to the play of a cleric have become much less available. For example, the good/evil split has always been a core concept of the cleric class. In the *Complete Priest's Handbook*, fewer than half of the sample priesthoods even have access to the *light* spell, including some obviously good-aligned ones (such as Guardian, Good, Justice, Peace, and Redemption priesthoods). Likewise, some evil-aligned priesthoods should have *darkness*, the reverse of *light* (notably the Disease and Evil samples).

A second problem is that some spells, once the sole province of the druid, have become available to most clerics. This has erased a certain amount of flavor from the druid character. In particular, spells like *heat metal*, *protection from fire*, and *protection from lightning*, all once druid specialties, have gone into almost every cleric's grab-bag.

Third, by lumping all Protection spells into a single sphere, a priest either has all such spells, or none. This grouping of spells by function limits the DM's freedom to give her own special priests with different, yet equivalent, abilities.

Finally, certain oddities have crept in. For example, *reflecting pool* and *magic font* do almost exactly the same thing.

What can be done? The 2nd Edition game is far and away superior to the previous edition, not to mention much more accepted and widespread among the players. However, the following changes to the spell lists can return to the druid much of the flavor that was lost.

What's in a class?

The AD&D 2nd Edition game's *Player's Handbook* states that a standard cleric has

access to 12 spheres (All, Astral, Charm, Combat, Creation, Divination, Guardian, Healing, Necromancy, Protection, Summoning, and Sun), plus minor access to the Elemental sphere.

Since major access to 12 spheres out of a total of 16 is a lot, reducing this number is desirable. The 12-sphere access really looks excessive once you start spinning off specialty priests with major access from just three to six spheres. We'll keep this in mind as we work through the spell lists (eliminating the Astral sphere, and getting ready to retire Summoning to specialty-priest status).

The spheres available to the druid in 2nd Edition are All, Animal, Elemental, Healing, Plant, Weather, plus minor access to Divination. Not only does this net us a few spells druids shouldn't have, but we have lost *cure disease*, *dispel magic*, *remove curse*, and *sunray*.

Using the current sphere lists as a starting point, it should be possible to duplicate the balance and feel of the original druid. This article features a combined chart that puts everything together.

A matter of principle

One thing to watch for in this process is the idea of the "specialty" spell. In other words, instead of placing a spell like *reflecting pool* into the Divination sphere simply because it is a divination, we respect the higher principle of clerical specialization.

In this case, *reflecting pool* is taken off the Divination list, and added to the Weather list. At one stroke, this eliminates the oddity of having two spells that do virtually the same thing at two different spell levels in the same sphere.

Furthermore, by limiting clerical access to the Elemental spheres to Earth and

Water (no access to Air or Fire), we can eliminate many of the druid's specialty spells from the cleric's list.

All for all

First, we must make sure that all clerics can do their jobs; that is, perform their basic class functions of protection and support. The most obvious way to do this is to expand the All sphere.

Move *detect good/evil* from this list to both the Divination and Guardian lists. Replace this spell with *detect magic*, which all priests should have access to, be they cleric, druid, shaman, etc.

Expand the revised All sphere to include the following spells: *chant*, *dispel magic*, *remove curse*, *glyph of warding*, *tongues*, *commune*, *planeshift*, *quest*, *true seeing*, *speak with monsters*, *astral spell*, *gate*, *symbol*.

The reason for the addition of *dispel magic*, *remove curse*, *tongues*, *commune*, and *quest* is that they are basic class functions for the cleric. *Planeshift* and the *astral spell* are added here to balance high-level mage spells and to avoid the oddity of a two-spell sphere with no possible minor access. *Gate* and *symbol* match high-level mage abilities, and they are part of the balance between the classes. *True seeing* is also a necessary counter to the class ability of the mage to employ *invisibility* and other illusion spells. *Glyph of warding* is strictly a judgment call; it reasonably could be placed here, or in the Guardian or Protection spheres. I suggest putting it here, as the spell can be endlessly mutated to adapt it to nearly any cleric variation that the DM desires. *Speak with monsters* should be on this list also. The ability to communicate where others cannot is a key class ability. *Chant* should be here because, in 1st Edition game, this spell was one of the few allowed to the nonhuman shamans. Primitive cultures should not have as effective a selection of clerical combat spells as more advanced cultures, and *chant* gives them a basic spell without giving them access to the whole range of combat spells. (Also, *chant* is appropriate for some situations involving the more barbaric cultures, such as a trigger for the appearance of nasty DM specials, for example.)

Party animals

Moving to the Animal sphere, add *commune with nature* from the Divination sphere. An Animal sphere cleric should have access to this, while a standard cleric should not. Likewise, add *detect snares & pits* from the same sphere for the same reason. Add *reincarnate* to this list from the Necromantic sphere. This spell is the druid's equivalent of the *raise dead* spell, so it should be where the druid specialty priest can get at it—and where, in turn, the druid can't get the *raise dead* spell.

Astral blues

As stated above, we can get rid of the

Revised Clerical Sphere List

All (C,D)

Bless (1st)
Combine (1st)
Detect Magic (1st)
Purify Food & Drink (1st)
Chant (2nd)
Dispel Magic (3rd)
Remove Curse (3rd)
Glyph of Warding (3rd)
Tongues (4th)
Atonement (5th)
Commune (5th)
Planeshift (5th)
Quest (5th)
True Seeing (5th)
Speak With Monsters (6th)
Astral Spell (7th)
Gate (7th)
Symbol (7th)

Animal (D)

Animal Friendship (1st)
Charm Person or Mammal (1st)
Detect Snares & Pits (1st)
Invisibility to Animals (1st)
Locate Animals or Plants (1st)
Messenger (2nd)
Snake Charm (2nd)
Speak with Animals (2nd)
Hold Animal (3rd)
Summon Insects (3rd)
Animal Summoning I (4th)
Call Woodland Beings (4th)
Giant Insect (4th)
Repel Insects (4th)
Animal Growth (5th)
Animal Summoning II (5th)
Commune with Nature (5th)
Animal Summoning III (6th)
Anti-Animal Shell (6th)
Creeping Doom (7th)
Reincarnate (7th)

Charm (c)

Command (1st)
Sanctuary (1st)
Detect Charm (2nd)
Entrhall (2nd)
Snake Charm (2nd)
Hold Person (2nd)
Sticks to Snakes (4th)
Free Action (4th)
Imbue with Spell Ability (4th)
Dispel Evil (5th)
Confusion (7th)
Exaction (7th)

Combat (c)

Command (1st)
Magical Stone (1st)
Remove Fear (1st)
Aid (2nd)
Spirital Hammer (2nd)
Prayer (3rd)
Cloak of Bravery (4th)
Flame Strike (5th)
Heroes-Feast (6th)
Word of Recall (6th)
Holy Word (7th)

Creation (c)

Light (1st)
Magical Stone (1st)
Aid (2nd)
Continual Light (3rd)
Create Food & Water (3rd)
Negative Plane Protection (3rd)
Sticks to Snakes (4th)
Raise Dead (5th)
Animate Object
Blade Barrier (6th)
Heroes Feast (6th)
Chariot of Sustarre (7th)
Restoration (7th)
Holy Word (7th)

Divination(c)

Detect Evil (1st)
Detect Poison (1st)
Augury (2nd)
Detect Charm (2nd)
Find Traps (2nd)
Speak with Animals (2nd)
Locate Object (3rd)
Speak with Dead (3rd)
Detect Lie (4th)
Divination (4th)
Magic Font (5th)
Find the Path (6th)
Stone Tell (6th)

Elemental

Air (D)

Faerie Fire (1st)
Dust Devil (2nd)
Call Lightning (3rd)
Air Walk (5th)
Control Winds (5th)
Chariot of Sustarre (6th)
Wind Walk (7th)

Earth (C,D)

Dust Devil (2nd)
Meld into Stone (3rd)
Stone Shape (3rd)
Spike Stones (5th)
Transmute Rock to Mud (5th)
Stone Tell (6th)
Transmute Water to Dust (6th)
Animate Rock (7th)
Conjure Earth Elemental (7th)
Earthquake (7th)
Transmute Metal to Wood (7th)

Fire (D)

Fire Trap (2nd)
Flame Blade (2nd)
Heat Metal (2nd)
Produce Flame (2nd)
Flame Walk
Protection from Fire (3rd)
Pyrotechnics (3rd)
Produce Fire (4th)
Wall of Fire (5th)
Conjure Fire Elemental (6th)
Fire Seeds (6th)
Chariot of Sustarre (6th)
Fire Storm (7th)
Sunray (7th)

Water (C,D)

Create Water (1st)
 Water Breathing (3rd)
 Water Walk (3rd)
 Lower Water (4th)
 Reflecting Pool (4th)
 Part Water (6th)
 Transmute Water to Dust (6th)

Guardian (c)

Detect Evil (1st)
 Light (1st)
 Protection from Evil (1st)
 Remove Fear (1st)
 Continual Light (3rd)
 Abjure (4th)
 Cloak of Bravery (4th)
 Protection from Evil, 10' radius (4th)
 Dispel Evil (5th)
 Blade Barrier (6th)
 Forbiddance (6th)
 Holy Word (7th)

Healing (C, D)

Cure Light Wounds (1st)
 Cure Blindness or Deafness (2nd)
 Slow Poison (2nd)
 Cure Disease (3rd)
 Cure Serious Wounds (4th)
 Neutralize Poison (4th)
 Cure Critical Wounds (5th)
 Dispel Evil (5th)
 Heal (6th)
 Regenerate (7th)

Necromantic (c)

Invisibility to Undead (1st)
 Aid (2nd)
 Cure Blindness or Deafness (2nd)
 Slow Poison (2nd)
 Animate Dead (3rd)
 Cure Disease (3rd)
 Feign Death (3rd)
 Negative Plane Protection (3rd)
 Remove Paralysis (3rd)
 Speak with Dead (3rd)
 Neutralize Poison (4th)
 Dispel Evil (5th)
 Raise Dead (5th)
 Regenerate (7th)
 Restoration (7th)
 Resurrection (7th)

Plant (D)

Entangle (1st)
 Locate Animals or Plants (1st)
 Pass Without Trace (1st)
 Shillelagh (1st)
 Barkskin (2nd)
 Detect Snares & Pits (2nd)
 Goodberry (2nd)
 Trip (2nd)
 Warp Wood (2nd)
 Plant Growth (3rd)
 Snare (3rd)
 Spike Growth (3rd)
 Tree (3rd)

Hallucinatory Forest (4th)
 Hold Plant (4th)
 Plant Door (4th)
 Speak with Plants (4th)
 Sticks to Snakes (4th)
 Anti-Plant Shell (5th)
 Commune with Nature (5th)
 Pass Plant (5th)
 Liveoak (6th)
 Transport via Plants (6th)
 Turn Wood (6th)
 Wall of Thorns (6th)
 Changestaff (7th)

Protection (c)

Endure Cold/Endure Heat (1st)
 Protection from Evil (1st)
 Sanctuary (1st)
 Silence 15' rad. (2nd)
 Resist Fire/Cold (2nd)
 Withdraw (2nd)
 Magical Vestment (3rd)
 Negative Plane Protection (3rd)
 Remove Paralysis (3rd)
 Water Breathing (3rd)
 Protection from Evil, 10' radius (4th)
 Spell Immunity (4th)
 Anti-Plant Shell (5th)
 Anti-Animal Shell (6th)

Summoning (S)

Protection from Evil (1st)
 Dust Devil (2nd)
 Messenger (2nd)
 Detect Charm (2nd)
 Wyvern Watch (2nd)
 Abjure (4th)
 Protection from Evil, 10' radius (4th)
 Dispel Evil (5th)
 Aerial Servant (6th)
 Animate Object (6th)
 Conjure Animals (6th)
 Weather Summoning (6th)
 Word of Recall (6th)
 Creeping Doom (7th)
 Exaction (7th)
 Succor (7th)

Sun (D)

Light (1st)
 Continual Light (3rd)
 Starshine (3rd)
 Moonbeam (5th)
 Rainbow (5th)
 Sunray (7th)

Weather (D)

Faerie Fire (1st)
 Obscurement (1st)
 Call Lightning (3rd)
 Control Temp., 10' radius (4th)
 Protection from Lightning (4th)
 Reflecting Pool (4th)
 Control Winds (5th)
 Rainbow (5th)
 Weather Summoning (6th)
 Control Weather (7th)

small Astral sphere. It is true that in the *Tome of Magic* book, one low-level spell was added, *detect ethereal/astral being*. We'll make this spell a specialty divination in the Summoning sphere. The reason? This spell is esoteric enough that a general cleric probably wouldn't have it (so we don't put it in Divination). On the other hand, it is exactly the type of spell that a Summoning specialist is likely to have.

Charmed, I'm sure

The revised Charm sphere contains spells that emphasize the qualities of subtlety and finesse. We've moved *quest* to the All sphere, so we don't need it here.

Add *sanctuary* to this list. This can be a considered a mind-effecting spell in that the cleric is altering the perceptions of the subject. This is close enough to a charm function to be included here. Add *detect charm* in case some variant cleric is given access to Charm, but not Divination. Add *snake charm*. This spell always was available to the 1st Edition cleric, and was never available to the 1st Edition druid. It makes sense that it be on a list to which clerics have access. Add *sticks to snakes*. This is a stretch, but snakes and charming are connected in the popular imagination, so we needn't be too uncomfortable about including it here. It also provides a reasonable follow-up to the *snake charm* spell. Add *dispel evil* since this is automatically successful at breaking evil charms and enchantments. A cleric specializing in charm magic should have access to this. Delete both *remove fear* and *cloak of bravery*. Fear effects are not quite the same as charm effects, and these are better off as core spells available to war priests.

"Attack!"

The revision of the Combat sphere will produce a list that emphasizes a fairly direct and unsubtle approach. The sphere needs to be beefed up, since *chant* is moving to the All sphere. Add *command*. This is the only clerical spell that a cleric really has a chance to cast quickly in a showdown with a mage, in spite of its short range. Add *remove fear* which is a direct support for friendly warriors. Add *aid*, another support spell that gives the warriors these clerics hang out with a quick boost. Add *cloak of bravery*, which is like *remove fear*.

Add *heroes' feast* which plays right into the theme of the heroic warrior-cleric. Add *word of recall*. This might be something of a stretch. However, being able to retreat and regroup is an important part of battle tactics, and front-line fighting clerics are going to need this occasionally. (Also, we are planning to convert Summoning to more of a specialty discipline, and we don't want to strip *word of recall* from all the standard clerics in the meantime). Delete *shillelagh*. This specialty spell is appropriate only to druids (although you could make a case for its being a granted



power of the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® clerics of Cuthbert). The druids pick it up in the Plant sphere, so there's no reason to keep it on this list.

Art of creativity

The Creation sphere needs to be expanded, for there is little here. Add *light*. Remember that few specialty clerics actually get this staple spell. Putting it here allows specialty priests better access to it. Also, the creation of light is traditionally symbolic of creation. Of course, if we add *light*, we also must include *continual light*. Add *magical stones*. Their effect against undead suggests the presence of raw positive material energy, which is the stuff of creation. Add *negative plane protection* for the same reason. Add *sticks to snakes*. Although this might be stretching, this traditional power of the standard cleric class fits in well with a creationist theme, as this was a power commonly attributed to priests with this background in tradition and myth. Also add *aid*, *raise dead*, and *restoration*. Since creation gods theoretically created everything, including people, it is reasonable to assume that they can imbue others with some of their own creative force. The last addition is *holy word*. Its inclusion is based on the assumption that the ability to create includes the ability to preserve the essence of the creation from outside intruders. It is somehow fitting to give the powers of creation not only the first word, but the last one as

well. Of course, we dump the druid specialty spells *changestaff* and *wall of thorns*. They are specific to the druid and available through the Plant sphere.

Divinations

As noted in comments on the All list, *detect good/evil* is moved to this list. With *tongues*, *commune*, and *true seeing* going to the All sphere, and *reflecting pool* and *commune with nature* being specialty spells, the upper levels of the sphere of Divination look quite thin. No matter, what is left is pretty potent, and the standard cleric will keep major access, anyway. In part two of this article (see "Arcane Lore" in this issue), we shall take a closer look at upper-level divinations.

The *stone tell* spell should be added from the Elemental list. It is both a divination spell and has traditionally been available to clerics of sufficient level. Finally, delete the druid specialty spells *detect snares & pits* and *locate animals or plants*. These go to the Animal and Plant spheres. Move *reflecting pool* to the Weather sphere, and *commune with nature* to both the Animal and Plant spheres.

Elementally, my dear druid

Standard clerics should have their minor access to this sphere limited to the Earth and Water elements. This gives them a good selection of spells, while keeping them away from the druid specialties. Standard clerics should remain limited to minor access.

If you are splitting the Elemental sphere by element, the Air elemental list is too short to be viable (even if you include *dust devil*). In this case, borrow from the Weather sphere, including *faerie fire*, *call lightning*, and *control winds*. (As an aside, an air cleric might be augmented from the wizard spell list, possibly including: *feather fall*, *whispering wind*, and *gust of wind*.)

The *sunray* spell should be on this list. Its original use was to give druids a spell to use against undead and oozes, slimes, and jellies. On a clerical list, it is little more than a poor man's *flamestrike*. In short, it is useful for a druid, for a cleric it is merely redundant.

Guardians of nature

Currently, this sphere just needs development. A fair number of people haven't caught the difference between this sphere and Protection. The primary difference is that this sphere wards areas, whereas Protection spells are personal. Both suffer from the same problem, the cleric either has all spells of the type, or no spells of the type.

It has been suggested to just let this sphere be absorbed into the others. (The comment was that splitting spells between this sphere and Protection is a lot like splitting Comeliness off from Charisma; an interesting experiment, but ultimately, why bother?) I disagree with this view; the addition of the *sacred sentinel* and *holy*

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guardian spells from the *Tome of Magic* add enough to this sphere to keep it. The *glyph* and *symbol* spells go to the All sphere. Also move *silence*, 15' radius to the Protection sphere (for use against sound-based attacks), and move *wyvern watch* to the Summoning sphere. Added to this sphere from the Summoning sphere are *abjure* and *dispel evil*. It makes sense that a guardian priest should be able to get rid of otherplanar or evil entities or effects. Also, the *light* spell should be added here. Its ability to reveal (as *light*) or conceal (as *darkness*) within the area of effect, plus the alignment slant it would introduce to this sphere strongly argue for its inclusion (and where *light* goes, *continual light* follows, so we add that spell to this list, too). To reinforce the alignment slanting of the Guardian sphere, add *protection from evil*, *protection from evil*, 10' radius, and *holy word* to this sphere also.

One last note: In the *Player's Handbook*, the *forbiddance* spell was left off the sphere lists in the back of the book. It should be listed as a Guardian sphere spell.

Priest, heal thyself

Currently, half the spells a healer needs are in the Necromantic sphere. Add the following spells to the Healing sphere: *cure blindness or deafness*, *cure disease*, *dispel evil*, *regenerate*.

Note *dispel evil*. With the disappearance of the *exorcism* spell, *dispel evil* has become the counter spell to a hostile creature taking over a character or object. Thus this spell needs to be on this list to let a Healer address this problem.

Necromantic needs

Closely related to the Healing sphere, because it deals with life-force manipulation, the Necromantic sphere needs a few spells added: *slow poison*, *remove paralysis*, *neutralize poison*, *dispel evil*. The reason these need to be together is that evil necromancer NPCs need their reversed forms.

The *speak with dead* spell should be added to the list. The only other key change here is to move *reincarnate* to the Animal sphere. The availability of *raise dead*, *resurrection*, and so on make *reincarnate* here superfluous. The spell originally was the druid counter to character death, and putting it into the Animal sphere restores it to its proper niche in the game system.

Note that the previous sphere, Healing, does not have access to *raise dead* and similar spells. This is to allow the more primitive priests (and others, like druids) to have healing beyond minor access without allowing them the capacity to bring back dead characters on a regular basis.

A green thumb

Add *locate animals and plants*, *detect snares & pits*, and *commune with nature* to the Plant sphere. While some may consider these listings redundant (and I cer-

tainly recommend that, as a general rule, clerics and priests have at least minor access to the Divination sphere), this ensures that clerics with this specialty can use these spells.

To serve and protect

Moving on to the Protection sphere, *dispel magic* needs to be moved to the All sphere. A cleric who can't *dispel magic* is blocked from one of his basic game functions. The most important spell to add spell here is *water breathing*. This is an important clerical spell and the cleric (who may not have Elemental access) can get access to it here. Finally, all the druid specialty spells should be deleted from this list: *barkskin*, *protection from fire*, and *protection from lightning*. The latter two, especially, are unbalancing power adds for the general cleric; the first totally outperforms the standard clerical *resist fire*, and the latter gives a party too much protection against lightning-based attacks, which were specifically designed to be hard on party magic. These specific advantages of the druid were supposed to make the druid a viable alternative choice on a party level; if every cleric can use these, then why go with the specialist druid?

Summon knocking on my door

The Summoning sphere list is a little short. In particular, it is impossible to have minor access to this sphere, as all the spells in it are 4th level or higher. Add to the list: *dust devil*, *messenger*, and *wyvern watch*. Also add *protection from evil* and *protection from evil*, 10' radius. These additions are based on the principle that a summoning specialist also would have access to the spells that would protect him from summoned creatures. The last addition is *detect charm*, since this allows the summoner to determine if an extraplanar creature is controlling an item or creature. Again, the druid specialty spells should be removed: *animal summoning I, II, III*; *summon woodland beings*; and *wall of thorns*. Also, remember to add *detect astral/ethereal beings* here if you have the *Tome of Magic* book.

Here comes the sun

Aside from noting that the Sun spell list is a little light (ouch!), I have no major recommendations for changes. The list can be bolstered by adding *sunburst* from the GREYHAWK® *Adventures* book. A version of the spell is reproduced in the "Arcane Lore" column that accompanies this article.

Weather or not

All the Weather sphere spells are fine for druids and for weather or sea specialty priests.

Druids: The final frontier

The changes noted above should return the original "feel" to the druid character. As a bonus, by moving the various special

druid divination spells into the Animal and Plant lists, we eliminate the need to give the druid minor access to divinations. (I know I recommended that all priests have at least minor access to Divinations, but the druid specialty is the infamous exception that proves the rule).

Three small adjustments also should be made to the list of the druid's granted powers (this includes all specialty priests of a nature deity):

1. Druids receive *speak with animals* as a first-level spell instead of a second-level spell.

2. Druids receive *cure light wounds* as a second-level spell rather than a first-level spell.

3. Druids receive *neutralize poison* as a third-level spell instead of a fourth-level spell.

The reason for the first is to allow even starting druids the ability to communicate with animals directly; a key character ability.

The reason for the second is that the *cure light wounds* spell is so useful that in most campaigns it nearly always drives out other first-level spells. This important modification of the druid's granted powers brings back into play the first-level druid specialty spells, such as *entangle* and *faerie fire*. It also creates a very different sense of pacing for those playing druid characters.

Likewise, another key druid ability was the early access to the *neutralize poison* spell. In low/mid-level groups, one of the primary reasons to seek out druid characters was their ability to save poisoned adventurers.

Odds & ends

One curious question that came up was how to add new clerical spells to the game, since, theoretically, every cleric knows every spell on the standard list. How, exactly, does clerical spell research work if all clerical spells are divinely given?

One solution that works is to assume that the spells are available if the cleric knows how to ask for them. Thus, the basis for clerical spell research is the cleric's discovery of how to ask a patron for the appropriate spell. The key factors in the attempt: adventuring time lost, monetary expenditures, and chance of failure are, of course, equal to those of a wizard researching a magical spell. Once a spell is discovered, it either may be made available to others of the same religion or perhaps left as a spell unique to the PC cleric. This is the DM's decision, perhaps to be transmitted in the DM's role of the PC's patron.

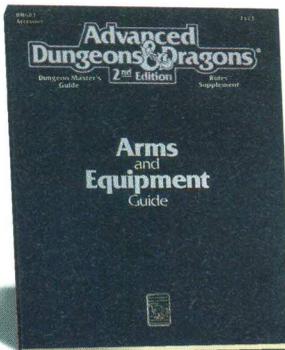
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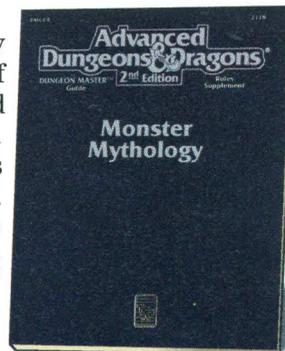
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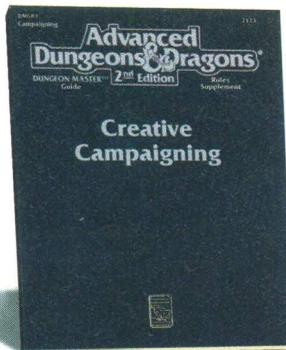
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ARCAINE



New (and old) priest (and druid) spells



by Jon Pickens

Artwork by Paul Jaquays

The article, "Getting Back to Nature" (in this issue) looked at clerical spheres and suggested some revisions to the spell lists. In this article, some spheres are fleshed out with new spells.

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Paul Jaquays

Clear air (Invocation/Evocation)

Level: 4 Comp.: V,M
 Range: Touch CT: 7
 Dur.: 1 turn + 1 rd./lvl. Save: Special
 Area of Effect: 20' radius globe

This spell creates an area in which the air remains perfectly clear. It banishes smoke, gas, fog, and instantly settles particles such as blowing sand, soot, or grit. Creatures in gaseous form are immediately expelled from its confines and they cannot enter the area while the spell is in effect. The spell will affect the area surrounding the creature touched, and it is mobile with it.

Conjure air elemental

(Invocation/Evocation)
 Level: 7 Comp.: V,M
 Range: 30 yds. + 10/lvl. CT: 7
 Dur.: Instant. Save: Special
 Area of Effect: 40' radius globe

A caster who performs this spell summons an air elemental to do his bidding. The elemental is 60% likely to have 12 Hit Dice, 35% likely to have 16 Hit Dice, and 5% likely to have 21 to 24 Hit Dice (20 + 1d4). Furthermore, the caster needs but to command it, and it does as he desires, for the elemental regards the caster as a friend to be obeyed. The elemental remains until destroyed, dispelled, sent away by a *dismissal* or *holy word* spell (see the *conjure fire elemental* spell), or the spell duration expires.

Whirlwind (Invocation/Evocation)

Level: 7 Comp.: V,M
 Range: 120 yards CT: 1 turn
 Dur.: 3 + 1d4 rds. Save: Special
 Area of Effect: cone 30' × 270' high

This spell creates damaging, gale-force winds, capable of destroying structures of less than the sturdiest stone construction. On land, the whirlwind will appear as a tornado, at sea, it will appear as a hurricane. The *whirlwind* can be created only where there is room for it to fully form, and its formation requires a full turn. It automatically scatters unprotected creatures with up to three hit dice (save vs. death or be killed), and grounds all flying creatures (save vs. death or crash). Unprotected creatures with four or more hit dice will take 3d6 points of damage per round of exposure (from buffeting, flying debris, etc.) and cannot move into the wind (i.e., toward the caster). The *whirlwind* has the same effect as an *earthquake* (*Player's Handbook*, page 233) on all structures except those made of solidly constructed stone.

The *whirlwind* moves at a rate of 30 to 60 yards per round, according to the desire of the caster, and the caster can vary its direction by up to 60 degrees per round. The caster must concentrate on the *whirlwind* for a full round to change its speed or direction.

Elemental Water spells**Precipitation** (Alteration)

Level: 1 Comp.: V,S,M
 Range: 10 yds/level CT: 4
 Dur.: 1 round Save: None
 Area of Effect: 30' diameter cylinder up to 60' high

This spell precipitates a light rain out of the air, drizzling on everything in the area of effect. Small flames (candles) will be extinguished. Small fires (torches and campfires) will gutter and smoke for a round after the drizzling stops. Bonfires and most magical fires will be unaffected. Large magical fire effects (*fireball*, *wall of fire*, *flamestrike*) cast into the area during the rain will create a warm fog that obscures vision in an area 60' in diameter. This lasts 2-5 rounds, half that in a breeze, and but one round in a strong wind.

The *precipitation* spell has doubled effect in humid climes, causes only slight dampness in arid climes, produces light sleet at temperatures near freezing, and creates snow if the temperature is below freezing.

Note: This spell also is added to the elemental Air and Weather lists.

Cloudburst (Invocation/Evocation)

Level: 3 Comp.: V,S,M
 Range: 10 yds/level CT: 6
 Dur.: 1 round Save: None
 Area of Effect: 30' diameter cylinder up to 60' high

This spell precipitates a rush of water out of the air, instantly drenching everything in the area of effect. Normal fires will be extinguished. Permanent magical fires will go out, but will re-light in 1-2 rounds (weapons in 1 round). Fire-based spells of first or second level are negated immediately.

Fire-based spells of third level or higher are also negated, but will create a steam cloud with a 120' diameter. Those within the steam cloud are scalded for 1-3 points of damage per round (twice this for cold-based creatures). The steam cloud lasts 2-5 rounds, half that in a breeze, and but one round in a strong wind.

This spell has doubled effect in humid climes, causes a heavy dampness in arid climes, produces slush and sleet at temperatures near freezing, and creates up to 10" of snow if the temperature is below freezing.

Note: This spell also is added to the elemental Air and Weather lists.

Tsunami (Invocation/Evocation)

Level: 7 Comp.: V,M
 Range: 240 yards CT: 1 turn
 Dur.: 1d4 rounds Save: Special
 Area of Effect: Variable

This spell creates a huge, racing wall of water that will destroy structures of less than the sturdiest stone construction. The

size and destructive power of the wave depends on the amount of water present, and can be up to 10' high per level of the caster. An average river can wash away a farmstead, an ocean can inundate an entire town. The *tsunami* washes away and scatters unprotected creatures with up to three hit dice (save vs. death or drown). Unprotected creatures with four or more hit dice will take 3d6 points of damage per round of exposure. The *tsunami* has the same effect as an *earthquake* on all structures except those made of solidly constructed stone.

Guardian sphere spells**Animate statue** (Invocation/Evocation)

Level: 4 Comp.: V,M
 Range: Touch CT: 7
 Dur.: 3 rds. + 1 rd./lvl. Save: Special
 Area of Effect: 20' radius globe

This spell allows the caster to animate a normal statue and have it fight for him. The statue can be from 3-12' tall and can be made of wood, stone, or crystal. When animated, the statue has AC 5, 4d8 hit points, attacks as a 4-HD monster, and can be damaged only by magical weapons. The statue has one attack per round, either by weapon or a blow for 1-8 points of damage. The statue can be deactivated by a successful *dispel magic* spell.

If the spell is cast on a statue that is already magical, the statue will animate and attack the caster, pursuing until the caster successfully escapes it or is slain.

Lesser guardian seal

(Invocation/Evocation)
 Level: 4 Comp.: V,M
 Range: Touch CT: 7
 Dur.: Special Save: Special
 Area of Effect: One portal

This spell allows the caster to magically seal a door, window, box, etc. against one type of creature (ghouls, bears, elves, etc.). The seal is effective against any such creatures whose hit dice are equal to or less than the caster. More powerful creatures will shatter the seal.

In addition all magical and enchanted creatures cannot pass the sealed portal, nor are their magical abilities effective against it. Other creatures can try to physically destroy the door, box lid, etc. The warding magic will inflict one-quarter damage (round up) caused to the closure back upon the creature trying to break through.

The *seal* lasts until the portal is opened.

Greater guardian seal

(Invocation/Evocation)
 Level: 6 Comp.: V,M
 Range: Touch CT: 9
 Dur.: Special Save: Special
 Area of Effect: One portal

This spell is the same as the *lesser*



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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.).

- ♦ indicates an Australian convention.
- * indicates a Canadian convention.
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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.

MARCON 29, May 13-15 OH

This convention will be held at the Hyatt Regency in Columbus, Ohio. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Guests include Philip Jose Farmer, Barbara Hambly, Boris Vallejo, and Forrest J. Ackerman. Registration: \$30 on site. Write to: MARCON 29, P.O. Box 211101, Columbus OH 43321.

NORTHWEST GAMEFEST II, May 13-15 OR

This convention will be held at the Monarch Hotel in Clackamas, Ore. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers and Wizards of the Coast staff members. Registration: \$15 preregistered; \$18/weekend or \$10/day on site. Write to: NRMR, P.O. Box 6068, Salem OR 97304.

OASIS 7, May 13-15 FL

This convention will be held at the Orlando North Hilton in Altamonte Springs, Fla. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games, plus dealers, an auction, videos, and panels. Guest of honor is Raymond E. Feist. Write to: OASFIS, P.O. Box 940992, Maitland FL 32794-0902.

GAMERS' CON '94, May 14-15 NJ

This convention will be held at the Hightstown American Legion hall in Hightstown, N.J. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers and on-site refreshments. Registration: \$8 preregistered; \$10 on site. Single-day rates vary. Write to: Shorecon, Inc., 142 South St., Unit 9C, Red bank NJ 07701-2216.

MADISON GAMES CON '94, May 14-15 WI

This convention will be held at the Edgewood High School in Madison, Wis. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a game auction. Judges

and dealers are welcome. Write to: Pegasus Games, 6640 Odana Rd., Madison WI 53719.

ORGANIZED KAHN-FUSION XII

May 14-15 PA

This convention will be held at the West Enola Fire Hall in Enola, Pa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include open gaming, dealers, food, and a miniatures-painting contest. Registration fees vary. Write to: M. Foners' Games Only Emporium, 200 3rd St., New Cumberland PA 17070.

CONFIGURATION V, May 21-22 OK

This convention will be held at the Days Inn in Tulsa, Okla. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include videos and a used-game auction. Registration: \$9 on site. Write to: WARP, Configuration V, Room 215A, OMU, 900 Asp Ave., Norman OK 73019.

PARADOXICON II, May 21-23 *

This convention will be held at Carleton University's Tory Building in Ottawa, Ontario. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a miniatures-painting competition and a game auction. Registration: \$25 (Canadian) preregistered; \$35 on site. Write to: PARADOXICON II, CUSC, c/o Students' Assoc., 1125 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa, Ontario, CANADA K1S 5B6.

II ENCONTRO INTERNACIONAL DE RPG May 27-29 ◇

This convention will be held at the Parque de Ibirapuera in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Guests include Mark Rein-Hagen. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Write to: Douglas Quinta Reis, Rua Augusto de Toledo, 83, Sao Paulo-SP 01542-020 BRAZIL.

GAMESCAUCUS II, May 27-30 CA

This convention will be held at the Airport Hilton in Oakland, Calif. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, two painting contests, a flea market, and movies. Registration: \$30 on site. Write to: Trigaming Assoc., P.O. Box 4867 Walnut Creek CA 94596-0867.

GAMEX '94, May 27-30 CA

This convention will be held at the Airport Hyatt in Los Angeles, Calif. All types of family, strategy, and adventure board, role-playing, miniatures, and computer gaming are featured. Other activities include dealers, flea markets, seminar, and demonstrations. Registration: \$25 preregistered; \$30/on site. Write to: STRATEGICON, P.O. Box 3849, Torrance CA 90510-3849.

MIGSCON XV, May 27-30 *

This historical gaming convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Hamilton, Ontario. Events include board and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers. Write to: MIGSCON XV, P.O. Box 37013, Barton Postal Outlet, Hamilton, Ontario, CANADA L8L 8E9.

NASHCON '94, May 27-29**TN**

This convention will be held at the Days Inn-Airport in Nashville, Tenn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include guests, dealers, and a game auction. Registration: \$18 (\$15 for HMGS and NASAMW members). Write to: NASHCON '94, c/o Games Extraordinaire, 2713 Lebanon Pike, Nashville TN 37214.

SILI*CON '94, May 27-30**VA**

This SF&F convention will be held at the Howard Johnson in Norfolk, Va. Guests include Dean Stockwell and Armin Shimerman. Activities include SF&F movies, Japanimation, computer software demos, a writers' workshop, an art show, dealers, and gaming. Registration: \$35/weekend; daily rates vary. Write to: SILI-CON, 44 N. Armistead St. Suite 103, Alexandria VA 22312.

3-RIVERS GAMEFEST '94, May 27-30**PA**

This convention will be held at the Airport Marriott in Pittsburgh, Pa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$18. Daily and visitor passes are available. Write to: Andon Unltd., 3-Rivers Gamefest '94, P.O. Box 3100, Kent OH 44240.

WAR!ZONE WEST, '94, May 27-30**FL**

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza in Tampa, Fla. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, a flea market, an auction, and open gaming. Registration: \$19/weekend or \$7/day on site. Write to: WAR!ZONE WEST, c/o Wolf Ent., P.O. Box 1256, DeLand FL 32721-1256.

CONWEST VI, June 3-5**NM**

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson Plaza in Albuquerque, N.M. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include tournaments, a games auction, a storytelling contest, and a miniatures-painting contest. Registration: \$10. Registration doesn't include game fees. Write to: Weregamers Guild, SAC Box 48, SUB, UNM 87131.

ILLINICON '94, June 3-5**IL**

This convention will be held at the Hendrick House dorm on the University of Illinois campus in Urbana, Ill. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include open gaming, free movies, a game auction, prizes, and dealers. Registration: \$5. GMs are welcome. Send an SASE to: Urbana Gaming House, 904 West Green, Box 1801, Urbana IL 61801.

D-DAY '94, June 4-12**CA**

This convention will be held at Game Towne in Carlsbad, Ca. Events include board-game tournaments. Other activities include miniatures games, a miniatures-painting contest, and prizes. Write to: D-DAY, Game Towne, 2933 Roosevelt, Carlsbad CA 92008.

FANFAIRE '94, June 9-12**SC**

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Greenville S.C. Guests include Ardath Mayhar, Holly Lisle, and Ruth Thompson. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include an art show and auction, prizes, contests, and a charity auction. Registration: \$20 before April 30; \$25 thereafter. Single-day rates \$10 on site. Write to: Fanfaire Prod., P.O. Box 1801 Greenville SC 29602-1801.

CAMELOT VI, June 10-12**AL**

This convention will be held at the Radisson Suite Hotel in Huntsville, Ala. Guests include Clyde Caldwell and R. A. Salvatore. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a banquet. Registration: \$25. Write to: CAMELOT VI, P.O. Box 14223, Huntsville AL 35815.

RECONN '94, June 11-12**CT**

This convention will be held at the Ramada Plaza Hotel in Stamford, Conn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers and a video room. Write to: Gaming Guild, c/o Jim Wiley, 100 Hoyt St. 2C, Stamford CT 06905.

SAGA '94, June 11-13

❖

This convention will be held at Glebe high school in Sydney. Guests include Ed Greenwood. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include freeforms. Write to: SAGA, c/o Dennis, P.O. Box 881 Burwood, NSW 2134 AUSTRALIA.

CON*TRETEMPS 8, June 17-19**NE**

This convention will be held at the Ramada Inn in Omaha, Nebr. Guests include Robin Bailey, Nick Smith, and Roger Tener. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include panels, videos, filking, dealers, and gaming. Registration: \$20 before May 31; \$25 thereafter. Write to: CON-TRETEMPS 8, P.O. Box 4071, Omaha NE 68104-9998.

WYVERCON '94, June 17-19**WA**

This convention will be held at the Skagit County Fairgrounds in Mt. Vernon, Wa. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a costume contest, dealers, and a miniatures contest. Registration: \$15 before May 31; \$20 on site. Daily rates available. Make checks payable to SVGA. Write to: WYVERCON '94, P.O. Box 2325, Mt. Vernon WA 98273.

CAPITALCON X, June 18-19**IL**

This convention will be held at the Prairie Capital Convention Center in Springfield, Ill. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a miniatures-painting contest, an auction, and door prizes. Registration: \$10. Write to: John Holtz, 400 E. Jefferson St., Springfield IL 62701.

ARCHON 18, June 24-26**IL**

This convention will be held at the Gateway Center in Collinsville, Ill. Guests include Jack Chalker and Martha Soukup. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, masquerades, videos, and gaming. Registration: \$19 before May 31; \$22 on site. Write to: ARCHON 18, P.O. Box 483, Chesterfield MO 63006-0483.

DALLAS GAME EXPO '94, June 24-26**TX**

This convention will be held at the LeBaron Hotel in Dallas, Tex. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers. Registration: \$10 preregistered; \$15/weekend or \$5/day on site. Write to: DALLAS GAME EXPO, P.O. Box 824662, Dallas TX 75382.

NEW ORLEANS SF&F FESTIVAL**June 24-26****LA**

This SF&F convention will be held at the New Orleans Airport Hilton in Kenner, La. Guests include C. J. Cherryh, George Alec Effinger, and

John Steakley. Other activities include panels, movies and videos, dealers, and 24-hour gaming. Registration: \$25 on site. Write to: NEW ORLEANS SF&F FESTIVAL, P.O. Box 791089, New Orleans LA 70179-1089.

PAXCON '94, June 25-26**MD**

This convention will be held at the Best Western Maryland Inn in Laurel, Md. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA™ tournaments and dealers. Registration: \$12 preregistered; \$15 on site. Write to: Chesapeake Games, P.O. Box 13607, Silver Spring MD 20911-3607.

PHENOMENON '94**June 25-27**

❖

This convention will be held at Karabar high school in Queanbeyan. Guests include Ed Greenwood. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include freeforms. Write to: PHENOMENON, P.O. Box 308, Belconnen ACT 2616 AUSTRALIA.

WAR!ZONE SOUTH '94, July 1-4**FL**

This convention will be held at the Sheraton I.T.T. in Ft. Myers, Fla. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, a flea market, an auction, and open gaming. Registration: \$15/weekend preregistered before June 17; \$19/weekend or \$7/day on site. Write to: WAR!ZONE SOUTH, c/o Wolf Entertainment, P.O. Box 1256, DeLand FL 32721-1256.

ARCANACON XII, July 7-10

❖

This convention will be held at the Collingwood Education Centre in Melbourne. Guests include Ed Greenwood. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include freeforms. Write to: ARCANACON, P.O. Box 125, Parkville, Vic, 3052 AUSTRALIA.

ORIGINS '94, July 7-10**CA**

This convention will be held at the McEnergy Convention Center in San Jose, Calif. Guests include Larry Niven and Steven Barnes. Events include scores of role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Write to: ORIGINS '94, P.O. Box 3100, Kent OH 44240.

NONCON '94, July 15-17

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This convention will be held at the Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane. Guests include Ed Greenwood. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include freeforms. Write to: NONCON, P.O. Box 328, Carina, Qld, 4152 AUSTRALIA.

POLARISCON 3, July 8-10**MN**

This convention will be held at the Thunderbird Hotel and Convention Center in Minneapolis, Minn. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include seminars, demos, videos, dealers, an art show, and a masquerade. Registration: \$20 before June 1; \$25 on site. Write to: POLARISCON 3, c/o Time, Space, & Fantasy, Inc., P.O. Box 8908, Lake St. Station, Minneapolis MN 55408.

V-KHAN, July 8-10**CO**

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn North in Colorado Springs, Colo. Guests include Andrew J. Offutt. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, a miniatures-painting

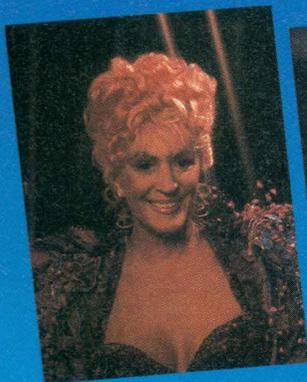
Continued on page 122

THE GAMING EVENT OF THE YEAR IS COMING! August 18-21

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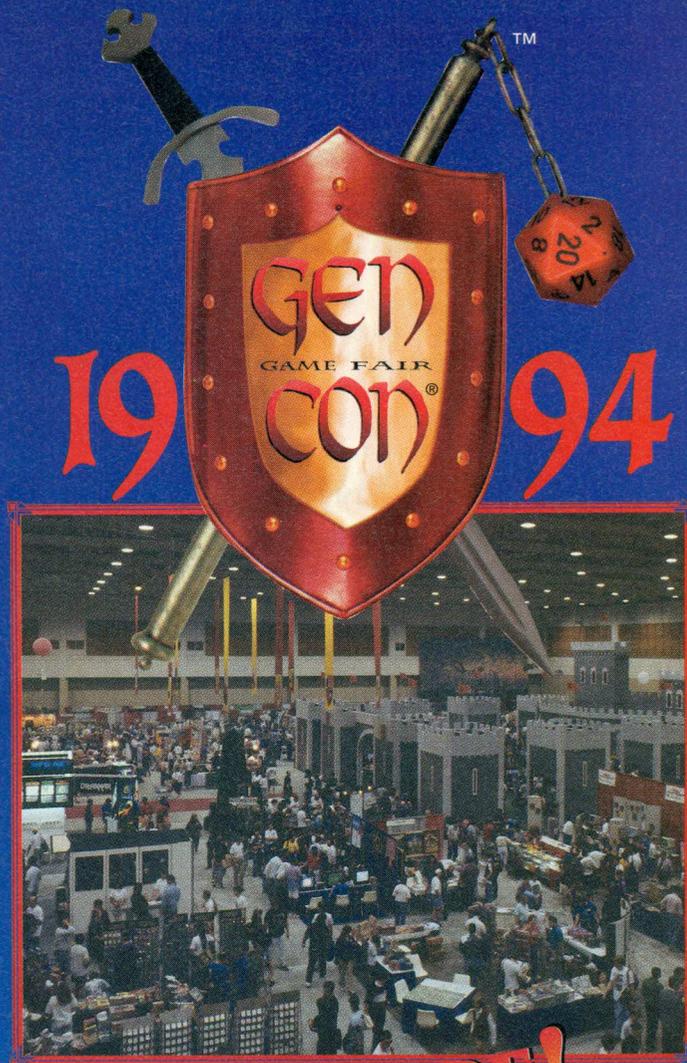
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The fall of night and of heroes



THE LEGEND OF NIGHTFALL

Mickey Zucker Reichert

DAW 0-88677-587-6 \$5.99

Given the imposing thickness of this novel, and its publisher's penchant for world-spanning multi-volume epics, it's quite a surprise to learn that *The Legend of Nightfall* is a mild-mannered and entirely self-contained yarn whose title character is much less extraordinary than the songs about him would indicate. The surprise, though, is altogether pleasant, and there's still enough adventure and sorcery afoot to make the reading lively.

Legend and rhyme call Nightfall a demon incarnate, but the truth is that he's merely a superb self-trained thief and assassin. He does, however, have one inborn magical gift: the power to alter his body's mass at will, from feather-lightness to rock-hard immobility. Thus when he's finally taken as the book begins, his captors have two different reasons for holding him. King Rikard wants him bound by a sorcerous oath to act as bodyguard and teacher-by-example to his younger son, whose high-minded crusades are idealistic but hopelessly impractical. His chancellor Gilleran would much prefer Nightfall dead—for by ritually slaying a man with a mage-gift, a sorcerer can absorb the ability for himself.

Initially, Gilleran must obey his king, and so the novel quickly finds Nightfall and Prince Edward headed out of Rikard's small kingdom by royal decree. The pair are an awkward but beguiling match as Nightfall's cynicism and experience run head-on into Edward's naive faith in pure principle. The catch is that by the terms of Gilleran's spell, Nightfall can't reveal his true identity or his obligation to see Edward achieve landed status.

In Reichert's hands, neither character is a cardboard cutout. We learn enough about Nightfall's street-born background to understand his native caution and suspicion, and Edward, though often inept, gradually proves to be much more than a half-brained fanatic. When an old flame of Nightfall's is added to the equation, the resulting triangle is portrayed with a convincing blend of bitterness and bemused wit.

The plot likewise proves to be both straightforward and rambling, with a few neatly executed twists. Not surprisingly, Gilleran's ambitions prove to reach well beyond one man's mage-gift, but more than one opponent must be removed before the sorcerer's plans can be fulfilled. Reichert juggles the assortment of allies and adversaries with polished smoothness, unveiling the overall pattern at a leisurely pace without sacrificing suspense. In addition, Nightfall's magical ability is thoughtfully and thoroughly worked out, proving remarkably versatile for all its limited nature. Reichert gives enough detail about the overall nature of sorcery and mage-gifts that interested gamers could work out a plausible adaptation of the system

with little difficulty.

The Legend of Nightfall is a strikingly quick read considering the book's imposing size, which is a tribute to Reichert's narrative ability. Light, deft storytelling is a valuable commodity in the ranks of sword-and-sorcery novelists, and it's one that Reichert possesses in notable measure.

THE IMPERIUM GAME

K. D. Wentworth

Del Rey 0-345-38729-5 \$4.50

The good news about K.D. Wentworth's novel about a high-tech role-playing game gone mysteriously haywire is that the Imperium Game itself is an intriguing construct—a replica of ancient Rome where the challenge is to rise from plebeian to Emperor. The bad news is that it's a construct with no visible means of support. The future in which Wentworth places her Game is too important to the plot to be ignored entirely, yet too thinly developed to make the Game's continued existence remotely believable.

Playing the Game is, by implication, mostly a pastime of the very rich, where a campaign for the Imperial throne can take years and an Emperor's daughter can reach her teens almost without having set foot outside the Imperium. (There are reduced rates for artisans, who can offset the cost by selling their wares, but that's described as the exception rather than the rule.) What's not explained is how players can lead full lives inside the Game without totally depleting their personal fortunes. Overworked programmer Arvid Kerickson runs through most of his salary paying his ex-wife's Game fees, so one wonders how prospective Emperors find time to manage outside business interests while piling up authenticity points.

The parallel puzzle is that all this revenue doesn't seem to go anywhere. Kerickson and his coworkers aren't getting rich, and apparently neither is HabiTek, the corporation that owns and operates the Game. In fact, on the slim details Wentworth provides, the Game's profit margin is so thin it's a wonder it hasn't been shut down long ago.

The novel's third mystery isn't actually the murder of the Games current Emperor, for which Kerickson quickly becomes the chief suspect—although Wentworth's plotting is suitably convoluted. It's that the computerized, cybernetically augmented law-enforcement team sent to investigate the killing is utterly ineffective at tracking either the real murderer or the conspiracy behind the crime. That task goes to Kerickson, aided and hindered in equal measure by a pantheon of software-driven Roman gods who are running badly out of control.

The inconsistent background isn't enough to make *The Imperium Game* unreadable; appealing characters and carefully worked out game design are partial compensations. But the lack of

consistent supporting detail is a constant source of low-level frustration. Wentworth has built a provocative Game, but the Niven-Barnes *Dream Park* series still reflects a better balance of game elements with real-world logic.

FALLEN HEROES

Dafydd ab Hugh

Pocket 0-671-88459-X \$5.50

You know you've got an unusual *Star Trek* novel on your hands when the back cover copy could have read "EVERYBODY DIES!"—and been essentially accurate.

What's even more unusual is that Dafydd ab Hugh has managed to kill off most of the familiar *Deep Space Nine* crew without writing an overly depressing story. Though there's plenty of grim, dramatic heroism to go around, there's also an upbeat quality to the tale that neatly offsets the carnage and destruction.

It doesn't hurt that the two longest-lived characters in the book are Odo and Quark, who escape the assault of a mysterious band of deadly invaders by being inadvertently bumped three days forward in time. Author ab Hugh perfectly captures the pair's laconically barbed relationship, which serves as an effective counterpoint to the fact that in this near-future future, everyone else on the station is dead or missing in action.

But the constable and the Ferengi are far from the only players in ab Hugh's drama. The narrative flips smoothly back and forth between times, and in the "normal" time-frame, the rest of the crew is desperately trying to stop the invasion force. Their efforts are ingenious, thoughtful, and well-executed, but the aliens are relentless, well-armed, and utterly single-minded. The result is that nothing Sisko or O'Brien or Kira does is quite enough, and ab Hugh chronicles each sacrifice with a sensitive hand. These are not deaths without reason, nor do they evoke the comic book sense of death as something designed to create a jump in the sales curve. Though no punches are pulled where violence is concerned, neither does ab Hugh indulge in mayhem and gore for their own sake.

Of course, because this is after all a *Star Trek* novel, it's not giving away much to reveal that ab Hugh manages to restore DS9 to its original condition before the adventure is over. But even the eventual rescue is handled cleverly and with a good eye for character. The final tag in particular is an impish bit of poetic justice as skillfully delivered as any closing moment of a DS9 television episode.

Perhaps what's striking about *Fallen Heroes* is that it's an extremely good ensemble story, playing to the strengths and foibles of every member of its cast with remarkable even-handedness. Writers of the original-series *Star Trek* books have occasionally managed this, but it has been noticeably rarer in the TNG line. The fact that ab Hugh has achieved it with only the

fourth entry in the DS9 canon—and with less than two seasons of the TV show from which to draw source material—is little short of remarkable. If future DS9 novels can hold to this standard, readers will be well served indeed.

INDIANA JONES AND THE WHITE WITCH

Martin Caidin

Bantam 0-553-56194-4 \$4.95

You'd think a novel with the Indiana Jones name in its title would be chock-full of action, adventure, narrow escapes, and suspense. But flip open Martin Caidin's newest addition to this series at random, and in at least two out of three cases, you'll hit a history lecture, an internal monologue, or a strategy session.

The lectures are especially frustrating on two counts. First, both Indy and fellow archaeologist Gale Parker are billed as experts on ancient mystical beliefs and artifacts, but whenever Caidin needs to fill in some historical background, one of the two suddenly loses all memory and reasoning ability so that the other can deliver several pages of scholarly-sounding details on the subject at hand. The practice is wildly out of character for Indy, and the lectures occupy an alarming percentage of the novel.

The second historical problem is one of credibility. Caidin strongly asserts in an Afterword to that all of the Wiccan and Arthurian lore mentioned in the story is genuine. While his aeronautic and military material is easily verifiable, he cites no sources for his interpretation of the Arthurian cycle (failing even to name which accounts he consulted), and claims personal experience as the foundation for his use of Wiccan tradition. In both cases, his assessments are intriguing but hardly as conclusive as he suggests—a cavalier dismissal of the academic that seems out of character in connection with Jones.

One might forgive the maverick mysticism if it had been accompanied by a solid, compelling adventure plot. Such is emphatically not the case, however. The villain is an utter nonentity who gets scarcely more than a walk-on at the end of the story; those who've read Caidin's prior Indy Jones novel will recall the character, but will find him less than a shadow of his former self. Even Indy seems like he's barely paying attention to his surroundings, to the extent that traveling with two highly attractive women fails to arouse even the faintest hints of romance.

There's one impressive bit of plot legerdemain near the climax, when Indy pulls a clever if rather cold-blooded rabbit out of his own bag of tricks. But it doesn't redeem the novel as a whole. Readers are advised to stay well clear of *Indiana Jones and the White Witch*; it's a sharp disappointment and much weaker than Caidin's earlier entry in the series. One hopes it's not a sign of things to come, but that may be a vain wish, as the ending virtually

promises a follow-up volume.

A COLLEGE OF MAGICS

Caroline Stevermer

Tor 0-312-85689-X \$22.95

One usually associates Regency fantasy with airy swashbuckling and witty romance, the sort of story that's deftly constructed and vastly entertaining but doesn't carry a lot of literary baggage. Caroline Stevermer has written or co-written that sort of book (and very well, too), but *A College of Magics* takes the form further. While it's still very much a fantasy of manners, with all the stylishness that category implies, it's also a novel of depth and wisdom.

It should first be noted that "Regency" describes the book's tone but not its setting, at least not strictly. There are several new, small principalities on Stevermer's map of Europe unknown to real-world cartographers, and technology is far enough along for trains and steam power to be well-established. At the same time, however, magic is an advanced if largely theoretical discipline, and the Church a more muted influence in Stevermer's world than in ours.

The reader's guide to this landscape is a young woman named Faris who has been sent off to boarding school to get her out of the way at home. Faris, her school, and her classmates are far from ordinary. Faris is in line to be duchess of one small country and perhaps queen of another, depending on how the other heirs and claimants sort themselves out. Greenlaw's is the most highly regarded college of magic on the Continent. And among Faris classmates, in time, are a ranking diplomat and a would-be rival for at least one of her thrones.

Instead of a leisurely romance, then, we get a tense political thriller, complete with spies, bombs, assassins, terrorists, and hair-trigger chases. We get it with all the courtly style and wit characteristic of the setting's Regency heritage. Then there's the magic. Something in the fabric of the supernatural is badly out of alignment, and if Faris doesn't find the inner strength to confront and correct the imbalance, all the political machinations may prove irrelevant.

What comes through all of this, as the scene shifts between Greenlaw's and Paris and a peasant farmhouse and assorted castles, is a sense of moral dimension that the average swashbuckler takes for granted. Where the Musketeers or the Ruritani nobility serve the cause of right almost automatically, Faris comes to her own sense of justice the hard way, through experience and shared peril. Stevermer does a sparkling job of mixing wry humor and heart-wrenching sacrifice, particularly late in the book when it turns out that she hasn't left out the romance after all.

That makes *A College of Magics* a definitely satisfying novel, and a rarity among fantasies of manners—a book in which a second reading is likely to chart new terri-

tory of the imagination, rather than merely passing pleasantly through the old.

CROWN OF FIRE

Ed Greenwood

TSR 1-56076-839-8 \$5.95

As the co-creator of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, Ed Greenwood is almost by definition one of the premier Dungeon Masters in the business. That's the chief difficulty with *Crown of Fire*; it's a first-rate adventure campaign, but its pluses on that score don't always translate well into the novel form.

One of these difficulties is the slightly archaic speech characteristic of Greenwood's alter-ego, the wizard Elminster. The dialect works well enough in the context of short articles in DRAGON® Magazine and framing material in assorted adventure modules, but it begins to wear thin after a few chapters of a novel in which the Old Mage is a major supporting character. Elminster usually functions as a storyteller and sage rather than an active participant in Realms-tales, and the voice that works for the former role eventually grates in the latter.

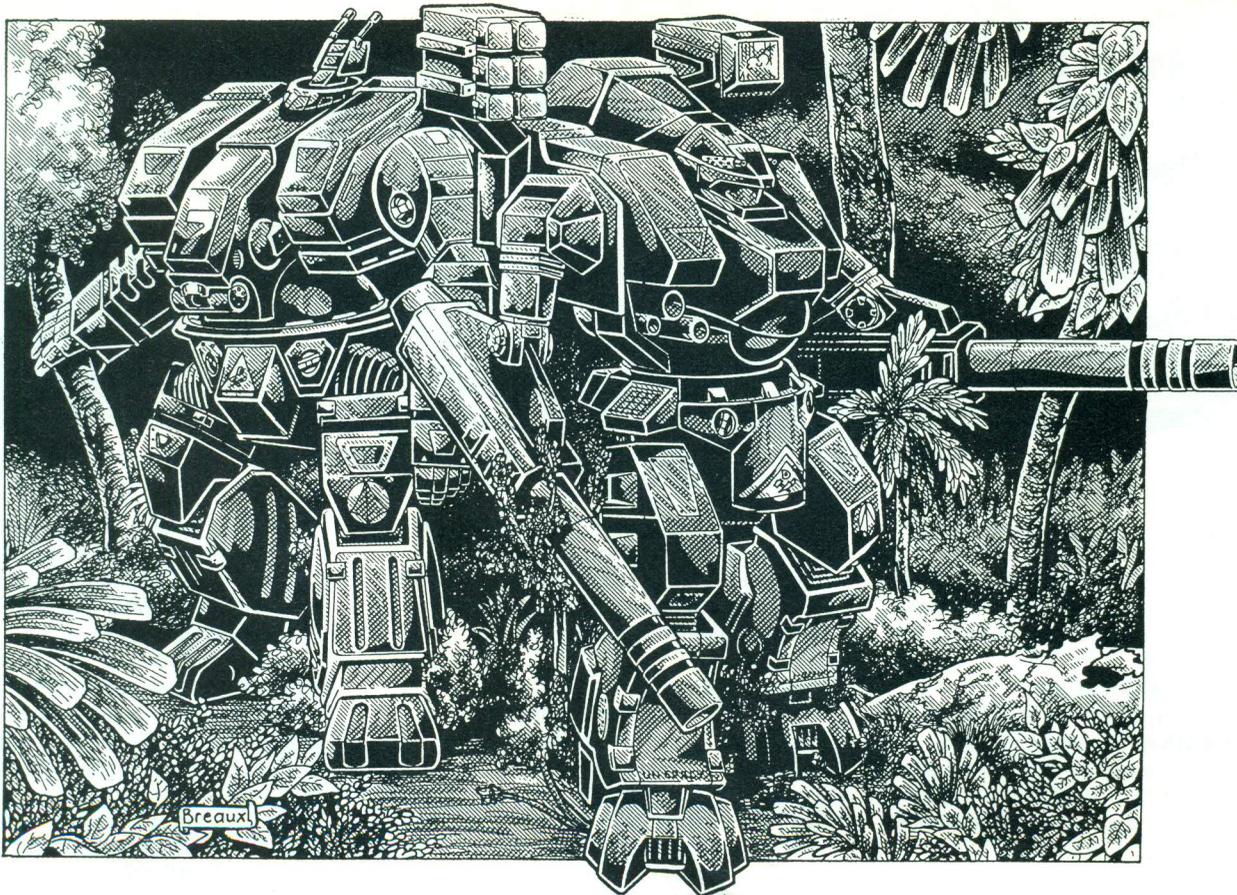
Since this is a sequel to—or more accurately, a continuation of—Greenwood's earlier novel *Spellfire*, its protagonists are Shandril Shessair, the much-sought wielder of spellfire's power, and her husband, the far more ordinary mage Narm. Yet Shandril is not so much the subject of the present story as she is its object, what with a host of Zhentarim mages and darker creatures out to seize spellfire for their own purposes.

Greenwood knows the Realms well enough to keep all the assorted players in line so that readers don't need a scorecard to keep track of them. But he's not quite smooth enough to make the inverted plot and his choice of heroine interlock comfortably. Instead, what we get is something of a MacGuffin hunt from the viewpoint of the MacGuffin, and while it's an interesting concept, the execution is slightly off kilter.

On the plus side of the equation, devoted Realms' enthusiasts will get about as thorough an insight into Zhentarim politics as you're likely to find anywhere, and the list of Shandril's allies reads like a roster of the Realms' best-known adventurers. Greenwood includes a healthy dose of magical pyrotechnics, though the spellcraft tends to focus on mass destruction and subtle camouflage, with little moderate wizardry between the two extremes.

On balance, *Crown of Fire* is neither wildly successful nor strikingly inferior. Perhaps it's best described as something of a throwback, because what it tends to demonstrate is that Ed Greenwood's considerable storytelling skills are most deft when he's playing Dungeon Master or sage rather than novelist.

Continued on page 102



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Lead story:

TSR acquires DANGEROUS JOURNEYS™ game system

A two-year lawsuit involving the rights to the DANGEROUS JOURNEYS™ multi-genre role-playing game recently came to a conclusion. On March 18, TSR, Inc., Game Designers Workshop (GDW), Omega Helios, Trigea Corporation, and Gary Gygax jointly announced all rights to the game system were acquired by TSR.

The specific terms of the settlement are undisclosed, but all parties are satisfied with the amicable agreement. According to the parties, GDW will cease distribution of DANGEROUS JOURNEYS game products as of April 1, and TSR will receive remaining inventories.

The parties said the tremendous amounts of time, money, and energy expended on this lawsuit have left the gaming industry measurably poorer than it might have been otherwise. However, the ability of the parties to negotiate a mutually acceptable settlement allows the parties and the industry to coalesce and move forward in positive and constructive directions with all parties working together.

Interact

*Inter*Action*, the first serious and scholarly magazine of role-playing, was launched on April 30th. It covers the theory of role-playing in education, training, psychotherapy, and entertainment. We are promised that "It won't be as pompous as it sounds," and the cost is \$10 per issue. For more information, contact *Inter*Action* at 29a Abbeville Road, London SW4 9LA, GREAT BRITAIN or e-mail journal@wonder.demon.co.uk.

New wizards

Wizards of the Coast, flush with success from its MAGIC: THE GATHERING* card game, has hired on even more full-time designers including Prof. Richard Garfield,

designer of the MAGIC game, and John Tynes, president of Pagan Publishing. WoTC also has secured a line of miniatures for the MAGIC game due out soon from Heartbreaker Miniatures.

Habla espanol

DRAGON Magazine has had a French edition for more than two years now, but our Spanish edition is brand, spanking new. Congratulations to Luis Vigil, Francisco Jose Campos, and the entire Spanish staff. Teutonophiles should note that work also has begun on a German edition. TSR, Inc., also publishes books and games in Danish, Finnish, French, German, Hebrew, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.

Raiders of the lost licenses

West End Games, justly famous for their STAR WARS* game, has signed with Lucasfilm to produce *The World of Indiana Jones** boxed set this August, using West End's new *MasterBook** system. The designer of the 144-page world book will be Brian Sean Perry, and the game will include stills from the movies. A campaign pack will be released in September, and a *Raiders of the Lost Ark** supplement will follow in November.

Bloody book deal

White Wolf Games Studio has signed a deal with Harper Collins to publish novels in their *World of Darkness** setting: Neil Gaiman and Michael Moorcock have signed for early novels, though no details have been released.

From dragons to the stars

Margaret Weis is beginning work on a *Star Wars* hardcover novel for Bantam Books. She will be working closely with Lucasfilm. The wait for this one isn't quite as long as the wait for the next movie (rumored to be scheduled for a 1997 release): the novel will be released in May of next year.

Del Rey has just released *The Guide to the STAR WARS Universe, Second Edition*, an encyclopedia of the creatures, places, and gear from over 80 movies, books,

radio plays, games, comics, and animated series. Written by TSR designer Bill Slavicek, the *Guide* also includes all the races, places, and gear from the recent Timothy Zahn novel trilogy.

Return of a swashbuckler

Nightshift Games has acquired the rights to the LACE & STEEL* role-playing game by Paul Kidd, originally published by The Australian Games Group and discussed in Roger Moore's "Kinky games" editorial in DRAGON Magazine issue #177. This is a game of swashbuckling adventure, harpies, centaurs, and a Reformation-era magic and dueling. The release this fall will be a single book.

Appearances

Affable Ed Greenwood will be signing his new novel, *Crown of Fire*, at The Worldhouse in Toronto on Sunday, May 1st, from 1-3 P.M. He also will sign at the Silver Snail Comic Shop in Toronto on May 15th from 3-5 P.M. In June, Greenwood is off to Australia to attend three conventions: Phenomenon in Canberra from the 25th to the 27th, Arcanacon in Melbourne from the 7th of July to the 10th, and Noncon in Brisbane from the 15th to the 17th. See the "Convention Calendar" for convention dates and locations.

Books into print

Roy V. Young's first novel, *Captains Outrageous*, is one that TSR's Brian Thomsen has wanted to publish for some time. Roger Zelazny calls it "a light, unpretentious fantasy romp by an author worth watching." Roy Young will be signing his book at Bretano's Bookstore in Rolling Hills Estates, Cal., from 1-3 P.M. on Saturday, May 28. Also, he'll be signing from 1-3 P.M. at Waldenbooks in Torrance, Cal., on Saturday, June 4.

Correction

Though caffeine may play a large part in Sandy Petersen's new position at id Software, he does no coding.

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PLANE SCAPE



THE PLANE TRUTH PART III

THE
TRANSFORMATION

by David "Zeb" Cook

Artwork by Tony DiTerlizzi & Dana Knutson

From the final journal of Ambran the Seeker, former paladin, who forsook his god, name, and country to remain on the Outer Planes. May Oghma forgive him of his errors; may King Azoun not judge him too hastily.

Third day in the

Mausoleum: I have lost all track of days and nights. The march of the sun across the sky, the falling grains of the hourglass—what is the use of these things in Chronepsis' realm? The span of days is his to rule, within the Mausoleum's shattered boundaries. Perhaps I have aged here, perhaps I have not. Glin greeted me this morning, his face unlined and horns just budding. By afternoon he was aged again. Could the same be happening to me? Sometimes my hands

are hard and worn with care, then fresh with youth. There is no way to tell. Chronepsis banishes all reflections, so that even the smoothest water does not share what it sees.

Glin is impatient to leave. He worries that Chronepsis, sole inhabitant of this realm, will change his humor. I am reluctant to leave. I have never been in the presence of a god before, even a scaled one like Chronepsis. Still I have become used to the presence of petitioners throughout the land, so it is strange to find none here. What becomes of those destined for Chronepsis' land? Perhaps they are the grains within his hourglasses.

Glin is right. It is time (if there is time here) to leave.

First day outside the Mausoleum: Glin's fears seemed unfounded. Indeed I wonder if Chronepsis truly knew we were there. Perhaps we are still there in the shuffled randomness of the dragon lord's



hours, arriving with our heads bowed during its breakfast, leaving quietly again at lunch, only to reappear during dinner counting the hourglasses in their niches.

Outside the limits of the Mausoleum, the land has changed. It is no longer green, but has the sere look of fall. It reminds me of Cormyr. Since the Mausoleum I can no longer count the days from Sigil.

Five days after the Mausoleum: The land grows worse—more rugged than I expected. This morning Glin asked his first question of me, beyond the usual queries of every day. He was curious about my dreams, if I had any recently. I have not and told him so.

Seven days after the Mausoleum: Glin asked again about my dreams. His interest is more than curiosity.

Glin says we should pass over Ilsensine's realm soon. Although he did not add any more to that statement, he clearly does not want to linger there like we did at the Mausoleum.

Eleven days after the Mausoleum: I understand now why the bariaur wishes to hurry. The air here is filled with a subtle pain that, were it stronger, would drive me mad. It began this morning with a buzzing burn at the back of my thoughts, a verminous fly lodged behind my eyes. All day the drone has grown stronger. By this afternoon there was the distinct sensation of thoughts—images and whisperings that were not mine. Hands without skin, whimpers from the room of a darkened inn, the ranting of a fevered fiend, and scraps of other thoughts I could not identify—these things have filled my mind. Even focusing on my writing is hard.

Glin solicitously asked about my dreams. I think he only pretends concern—there is more in his eyes than care. It is like he expects an answer, casting his net to collect my dreams. Perhaps he's not a Free Leaguer as he claimed. Is he a follower of the Fated, those who seek to understand the planes by taking it from others? If I tell him what I dreamt, do I lose my visions so that they can become his?

Thirteen days after the Mausoleum: Glin's question persists and this morning I lied. I can no longer trust his motives.

I told him no, but I did dream. It was a persistent buzzing that skirled behind my eyes. It was not my dream, but the dream of another that slipped away in the tangle of other preoccupations. I can even imagine a man, a shadow at the back of the burn. Perhaps because of Glin's curiosity I feel compelled to write down these thoughts, or is this some effect of the illithid-lord's realm? Glin says Ilsensine's domain is in caverns beneath our feet, tunnels lined with the pulsing veins of Ilsensine's mind. Perhaps the mind-flayer god's knowledge is too great for it to contain. Whose dream is this—mine, another's, or the secrets gathered by the thing beneath the ground?



Dream One: I dream about the book. I curse it in my dreams. Each night pages come to me and press themselves against my flesh, carving their images into my skin. The chapters construct places that I will go. They build themselves word by word, slowly tattooing their knowledge onto me. When they are finished they will take me to these places, these places I do not want to go.

There is a man I see who travels toward me, sometimes straight, but more often with the path of the lost. There is a page in the book my dreams are writing for him. When it is done he will stand before me.

When I awoke, my arm stung and itched. Rolling back my sleeve, I was horrified to find a band of writing freshly tattooed there. A single word girdled my forearm—*Fallendor*.

For the first time since I left Faerun, I am truly afraid. The terrors of Baator I glimpsed in Ribcage cannot compare to this. They were real, at least. I could have fought them if it had come to that. Grotesque as they were, they at least had flesh and substance.

What have I done in leaving the safety of Toril? What a fool I was to feel safe in a world where my dreams turn against me.

Seventeen days after the Mausoleum: Glin has stopped asking, although I still think he covets the images in my mind. I know what he is after now, and will not fall for his traps. I'm not a fool—if he can't trick me into giving him what he wants, he may try violence. Let the basher try—I'll be ready for him.

Worse still, the dreams have not stopped and we have left Ilsensine's realm. Each night they become stronger and more insistent. My left arm is almost completely covered by tattoos. Why does this no longer concern me?

Dream Two: Slowly moves the tattooing hand, carefully inking the script on skin like the whorls of a finger. With each touch of the needle, another syllable is whispered. I shape the sounds carefully, adding a little more of myself to the ink. Carefully I inject the memories into the flesh, layering a new skin over the old. Ambran becomes no more. He is the canvas, the escape from the prison the Codex has built for me.

Nineteen days after the Mausoleum: This morning the tattoos advanced beyond the collar of my jacket to coil around my neck. Glin has seen them for the first time and I can see his fear. He no longer hungers for my dreams. Perhaps now he knows what they are. The bariaur can no longer be trusted.

Twenty-three days after the Mausoleum: We have reached Bedlam, gate-town to Pandemonium. After all my wandering through the Outlands, now I travel with a purpose—to reach Pandemonium. I have forced my journey upon my

guide. I lead and he follows, increasingly apprehensive over the paths I choose. Pike it, I tell him when whines.

Dream Three: By day I serve as a slave to the Codex of the Infinite Planes, copying the pages. Today's entry was on the Grotto of Bones at the heart of Hruggekolooh's realm. With fearful patience, I described the cluster of skulls that ring his throne, how those heads whisper of their lives when the winds of Pandemonium blow through their moldering sockets.

I know that when the words are done I will go there, but I cannot stop the dreams from flowing out of me. The best I can manage is to tarry over the arch of a letter, the flourish at the end of a line. The pages of Tzunk's work that I have found show the same touches, the same devotion to artistry, as he too came to understand his fate.

At night the Codex visits me, filling me as its receptacle. Even as it does so, I shape my dreams and send them to Ambran. Each night I tattoo a little more, painting him while he sleeps. Each night I sense that he is a little closer to me. I am amazed that the Codex does not suspect me, even as my escape nears its finish!

Twenty-seven days: Where I have been is meaningless. Where I am going is the only thing that matters. Today I dismissed Glin and he was glad for it. He is useless as a guide. I know where my journey will end.

Still, I fight my fate. I have tarried now for four days in Bedlam, staying to the high ground of the Citadel. The inhabitants are saner here than on the lower slopes, so close to Pandemonium's gate. Every moment I struggle to resist the urge to descend and pass through the iron arch to Pandemonium.

The tattoos continue to appear. The memory of a past love is written in the curve behind my ear. I cannot see it, but I already know what feelings the words carry. I am less of myself and more of someone else.

What is happening to me?

Twenty-nine: Today I almost succumbed. I was searching for a sage, a member of a group called the Sarex. I had a hope he would explain these tattoos (what would Trandleer say?) when I realized my steps were carrying me from the safe haven of the Citadel and into the tangle of the lower slopes. I could barely remember the prayers to Oghma to strengthen me!

My distress did not go unnoticed. Even as I fought for strength, a voice addressed me from the shadows. At first I thought it was another part of the madness that has taken me.

"You are in great danger," it whispered. "The Slave of the *Codex* has written upon you."

I was dumb-founded. Until this point, no one in Bedlam had even noticed the tattoos

that now covered nearly all my face. "You know about this?"

"I am Hrava—leader of the Sarex. Come into the shadows if you want to hear the chant."

It was foolish, but I followed the voice. I needed to know. "What is happening to me?"

There was a soft caress of shadow across the bridge of my nose, tracing the patterns of words etched in tiny lettering there. "You're being replaced. Word by word, memory by memory. Each sentence on your skin's the thought of another, every syllable a moment of their life."

"Impossible!" That was ridiculous to say, but I did.

"And yet it happens."

"Who—"

"Who is doing it? A prisoner and a slave. There is an ancient book—the *Codex of the Infinite Planes*. Perhaps you have heard of it?"

I nodded to the eyes I could dimly see.

"To exist and to grow, the book becomes the dreams of a prime. The slave writes what he dreams and goes where the pages take him, until eventually the slave is a useless husk. When he finally writes his own page in the dead book, the book waits for another and continues its pages."

"I've been captured by the book?"

"No, you berk, you've been snagged by the slave." The darkness gave a dry, throaty chuckle to my plight. "Sometimes the slave learns from the *Codex* even as it's using him. He learns how to ball up his dreams and send them to some poor sod like you."

"And?"

"And you become him. And he escapes the *Codex's* grip—even if he does have wear his memories on his skin for the rest of his life—makes for an interesting life."

I started to shiver. "What happens to me?"

The shadows swirled around me and the voice whispered in my ear. "Maybe you're destroyed. Maybe you're trapped inside your own body. What does it matter?"

I was sick with fear then. "Why are you telling me this? What do I owe you?"

The laughter came again, fading into the darkness. "Owe? Nothing. I'm Hrava, the shadow-fiend, what you'd call a thing from the pits of the Abyss. I told you because it amuses me. But I'm a fiend—am I lying or telling the truth?" With that he left me in the darkness.

I have given up looking for answers in Bedlam.

Pandemonium: Now I have even given up counting days. My body carries me forward as if it knows where to go. The wind cuts and screeches in my ears, trying to drive me insane. It can't—what more can madness do to me now? I (or someone else?) still harbors the hope that I can escape this fate.

Dream Four: He is here! My needles have pricked the last letters. My hands

have wiped away the blood and ink. When I wake he will be before me. He nears the door to my cave. I when I wake, I, Fallendor, will reach out my hand and pull. I will draw him out, trap him within this shell. I will be free!

I feel his footsteps through the earth. My eyelids tremble . . .

Procampur: I still struggle with the transformation. There are parts of Ambran left behind that press me to act against my will. I wonder how his incomplete spirit feels in that cave in Pandemonium? I wonder if he too is a slave of the *Codex*?

I thought I was free of the *Codex*, but even now I realize this too was a lie. I no longer see it in my dreams, but its words still bind me. These notes, for one. I cannot resist the urge to write my experiences, even though I always burn them later. My passions are printed on this face; these hands describe the childhood of another body. All the things that Fallendor was are written for everyone to see—his hopes and his final treachery. People see this tattooed face and shun me. Words still enslave me.



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DRAGON® Magazine issue #187 included a letter from Mr. Nicholas Abruzzo asking for advice on how his paladin should behave. As a Catholic priest who has spent the last five years in the U.S. Army answering those kinds of questions for real paladins (my soldiers) and having been a game player since 1979 (when my parents bought me the game right after ordination), I affirm that his paladin's actions are correct, true, and normal.

A paladin is called by her deity to enhance goodness and eliminate evil. This is not just the "greatest good for the greatest number" but includes as well not violating the rights of the innocent even for some very great good.

The reason the actions of Mr. Abruzzo's paladin are "good" requires some distinctions and use of logical analysis, which most of us do instinctively. Allow me to distinguish between reformable and non-reformable creatures, and between benefit and threat.

1. If a creature does not have free will (animals, insects) and if it is doing evil (a dog attacking a child, mosquitoes carrying a disease, etc.), then killing that creature is a "good" act. Some players claim that "orcs" and similar creatures are not capable of acting altruistically, incapable of doing a free, good act. These creatures thus would never be innocent, and would always be a threat that any paladin would seek to destroy, much as we would rid a house of termites or roaches.

2. In a parallel way, some schools of thought claim that an evil person in the process of doing evil actions and who intends to continue to do evil actions (has not repented and shows no signs of doing so), is a legitimate threat and should be eliminated at once. This protects the innocents and stops the "evil one" from having to answer for subsequent evil actions.

3. However, from a military standpoint, prisoners are never killed; and wounded prisoners are healed. As long as someone is no longer a threat (has surrendered, is no longer attacking, etc.), he deserves protection from the rigors of battle, and is sent to the "rear area" for questioning and safety. The information that the intelligence officer can get from prisoners (by treating them well, not by torture) often can save many lives. The prisoners become a benefit rather than a threat.

4. Yet, prisoners are sent back to the rear *defenseless*. They are not sent there armed in any way. One can argue that an evil cleric or sorcerer or assassin would always be a threat because of the spells or other special skills that couldn't be removed from them without torture or maiming. Even if the paladin had a huge army with him to take these wounded prisoners back for healing and questioning, he would not be obliged to do so—though *ESP* spells might recover some very useful info for the cause of good. Moreover, if the evil clerics or assassins are still in any way functional (not comatose or at negative hit points) they are still a threat because of their spells, concealed devices, etc. Until they are dead (and burnt in the case of trolls) they can still be considered a threat. Furthermore, fighters (including paladins) may sneak up on a sentry in an evil area and kill the sentry as part of the attack on the evil fortress. This sense of "cleansing away evil" and "removing threat" is probably in the paladin's commissioning oath and training. In reality, only clerics are the ones who convert. Paladins protect the clerics and the innocent bystanders while that is happening.

5. If one does have legitimate prisoners,

however, they do have to be safeguarded—even at the risk of the party. Suppose one of the evil clerics had surrendered and asked to be protected from the others in the temple so he could escape their syndicate. To aid this, I suggest that whoever commissions a paladin and his group to go into an evil temple should at least give them a few *diminution* potions and a "pouch of holding" to bring out prisoners without compromising the mission.

In short, it is okay for a paladin to allow to die or even help kill evil creatures that still pose some kind of threat to the community he is under oath to protect. Though killing them might question his mercy, not killing them would question his dedication. I recommend he work this out with his DM (as the head religious authority of his religion), or if in a tight spot, let the other members of the party "distract" the paladin by having him heal someone, etc., while they kill the still-threatening evil prisoners.

Hope this can be of some help to Mr. Abruzzo and any others.

Patrick J. Dolan
Chaplain (CPT)
Kentucky National Guard

I am writing in response to Nicholas Abruzzo's letter in DRAGON issue #187, where he states his confusion concerning the lawful-good alignment in the AD&D® game.

I must agree with him in the situation he states. I do not believe it is the paladin's responsibility to incarcerate evil priests and assassins, no matter what level he is.

I believe the paladin class to be, in many ways, like the Knight of Solamnia in the DRAGONLANCE® setting. The Knights are dedicated to the lawful-good god Paladine, and are defenders of justice, just like the paladins.

If you have read the DRAGONLANCE novels, characters such as Huma and Sturm Brightblade are good examples of Solamnic Knights, their primary concern being honor and virtue, as well as combating evil.

Did Huma fall out of Paladine's favor after having slain scores of evil minions of the Queen of Darkness? Or did Sturm Brightblade, when he ran the evil Lord Verminard through? Certainly not. These were justifiable killings, the key word being justifiable. I think lawful-good characters must have a reason for killing monsters, other than because "They're evil."

For example: Sturm Brightblade is wandering in the wild country and he happens upon a nomadic band of goblins. Sturm runs into their midst and slays every last one, because they are, by nature, evil. This is unacceptable behavior for a lawful-good character.

Now, if Sturm hears a woman's scream and races to the scene to find the goblins torturing an innocent girl, he would have just cause for killing them.

Those of you have read the Dark Elf triology (set in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign world) may recall Drizzt DoUrden's inner conflict following his slaying of a group of bugbears, feeling that perhaps the creatures did not deserve death.

DMs must be careful not to punish lawful-good characters (such as paladins) for simply following the wishes of their gods. However, it is the player's responsibility to know when killing an opponent is an acceptable solution to a problem.

Dan Cuomo
Verona PA

Reading Nicholas Abruzzo's letter in DRAGON issue #187, I note that alignment continues to be a hindrance rather than a help for many gamers. The good alignments, and lawful good in particular, cause the problems. To some extent this is reasonable, since being true to these alignments places the most restrictions on behavior, but there's a lot of confusion over what such an alignment demands.

It seems to me that a lawful alignment means believing that the desires of individuals should be subordinate to the laws of society, and good alignment means placing high value on the needs, goals, and lives of others. Alas, it's not always easy to translate such general guidelines into specific morals.

In an attempt to make things simpler for players of paladins, I've worked out a paladin's code for my own campaigns. I'd like to offer a piece of it here. The code's main points, in no particular order, are valor, mercy, honesty, piety, and moderation. PCs run into trouble on all these points, but the issue raised by Mr. Abruzzo deals with mercy. Here, the code says:

"Paladins must show mercy to vanquished foes—within limits. Genuinely evil beings can be spared only if they will embrace the paladin's faith, and be consecrated to it after ritual purification. Others may be dealt with as the situation permits. It is most unchivalrous to slay nonevil prisoners without offering some alternative.

"Whenever possible, prisoners should be handed over to the authorities for judg-

ment; paladins must not substitute private justice for the law if there is any choice."

The second and last sentences cover the situation described. I understand the DM's point of view; the most desirable outcome for a paladin dealing with evil enemies is their conversion to good, and if there is some reasonable way to achieve this I would expect that an attempt be made. Perhaps the DM believed that prisoners could have been brought back without undue difficulty. To the players, however, the circumstances appeared to make much a course of action foolish. Slaying helpless foes is a harsh, unpleasant measure, but leaving them to die slowly is cruel and cowardly, while healing them and leaving them to recover allows them to commit further evil. A quick, clean swordstroke was the best available solution.

Alan Clark
Kingston RI

I am writing in response to the plea for help from Nicholas Abruzzo. I offer some thoughts on role-playing paladins, from the DM's point of view. For quite a few years I have been collecting articles on alignment within the AD&D game; the subject is seemingly inexhaustible, and the paladin is the clearest and commonest example of how alignment play and alignment enforcement can clash.

In my opinion, what Mr. Abruzzo's DM did in the example cited in his letter is tantamount to saying: "You must play by the rules. You may not know the rules until after you have played, when you shall be judged." If a paladin is bound by a code, she will know what that code is. There may (indeed, should) be gray areas not covered by the code, or there may be contradictory elements within the code (as there was within the medieval code of chivalry), but it is unfair to have paladins constantly guessing what their deity (as played by the DM) expects of them. Below are several areas of concern.

1. If, as a DM, you wish to include paladins in your campaign, you must put them in a context. Are they members of a cult responsible to that cult? If so, their code will be taught to them just as a priest learns the tenets of his church. Or are they inspired individuals marked out from even the most pious of normal folk by their potential for good? If so, how do they receive guidance on what is expected of them? It seems to me that only a basically mischievous and chaotic deity would send its special disciple into action without any clear guidance on a whole range of possible dilemmas.

2. Define "lawful" in terms of your own campaign. One interpretation is that of law enforcement. Paladins who are expected to uphold the law must know what the law is and how it is to be upheld. Are paladins merely jumped-up police officers, or do they have the powers of a justiciar? By divine right or through the worldly organization they represent? Are they pro-

human? What are their duties toward the society they grew up in? How should they behave toward the laws of other lands and peoples? Toward laws that do not seem good or popular?

3. If the DM defines everything too exactly, there will be no fun left in role-playing the paladin. Leave nuances and gray areas for the player to explore, dilemmas to taunt and possibly haunt the paladin. Try to ensure that such gray areas are an inherent part of the trials and tribulations of being a paladin, rather than accidental oversights caused by the DM's failure to tailor the AD&D system's paladin class to the specific campaign in which the individual PC is involved.

4. Give the paladin the benefit of the doubt. Some DMs seem to follow every step the paladin takes just waiting for a slip, then Wham!—massive XP penalty, loss of special powers or whatever. If a DM is so reluctant to see PCs with the kind of powers that paladins possess, then why not just ban the class? It's the DM's world. The challenge in playing a paladin should not be to avoid the DM's "divine" wrath, but to turn a rounded character, without straying from the straight and narrow.

In my own campaign there are three paladins (in different groups): one is a rather boring cardboard cut-out, one is an eminently plausible, low-key warrior for Good, and the third is an equally plausible character worn down by doubt and in danger of angering his deity. Before I take any action to punish the "Doubting Thomas" paladin, I will discuss his actions and outlook with the player and try to agree on a role-playing solution: for example, the player could agree that the paladin is gradually losing the necessary degree of conviction, and come up with a response within character (atonement, despair, etc.). Alternatively, I might gain an insight into the paladin's reasons for wavering, and decide to wait before making any decision.

5. As with the game as a whole, the definition of a paladin belongs just as much to the players as to the DM. As long as players do not merely abuse the paladin as a fighter-with-frills, collaboration should produce a variety of paladin personalities to spice up even the most jaded quests.

Craig Hilton
London, England

This addresses issues in issue #187.

Regarding Nicholas Abruzzo's problem about alignment, I'm inclined to find neither himself nor his game master blameless. He considered the matter to be about understanding the lawful-good alignment, especially as applied to paladins. The case he was arguing was that it was a lawful-good act for a paladin to execute vanquished (and almost certainly evil) opponents. The game master thought that the only acceptable action for a paladin was to take the vanquished opponents as prisoners and cart them home for conver-

sion. Logistical difficulties with this procedure were no reason not to attempt it, the game master ruled.

My opinion is that a paladin's alignment is less important than the preferences of the god that presumably called the paladin to go clean out the evil temple in Mr. Abruzzo's example. Does the god take a fairly harsh line regarding opposition? Is the god pro-life? What does the god have to say about what happens to people (good or evil) after they die? The paladin's understanding of the answers to questions like these will necessarily be lawful good and should guide the paladin in deciding whether summary execution is acceptable for him (and his deity).

As for the game master, he still has the option of just saying no to whatever the paladin decides. In the final analysis, it's his universe. However, the way this game master chose to pass judgment was not good for the game. If the cosmic forces that maintain the universe (i.e., the game master) were offended by the way the paladin was behaving, then it was their responsibility to advise the paladin (not the player) of their displeasure. Crudely, this might be an attention-getting lightning bolt and a voice from the heavens. Better would be media appropriate to the paladin's god. If the game master had worked within the system (as it were) to declare his understanding of appropriate morality, the player of the paladin would have had no basis for argument and the paladin would have gained a new and possibly unsatisfying understanding of the god that recruited him.

It all comes back to role-playing. Naked game mechanics ("You can't do that!" "Where's it say I can't?") are inherently ugly in the middle of a role-playing game. The AD&D game's alignment descriptions, left as they are, are little more than game mechanics. They are such an incredible over-simplification of morals, philosophies, and belief systems that hanging the actions of your game on them is only asking for trouble. Some people may not care to flesh out the personalities of the characters they play and may want simply to take the most appropriate alignment label and paste it on the character while they devote their attention and limited time to some other aspect of the character that really interests them. That's fine, but there may be problematic reality checks in the role-playing later. If a player wants to create a character with a playable personality, then some thought has to be given to the character's philosophy (and history). After that, an alignment label may be distilled from that thinking.

Which, in a way, brings us to Laurence Davison's question about party formation. Suppose you have one of those ideally balanced parties (one of everything and duplication of little except muscle) that are always being called for in adventures. If the dwarven cleric doesn't trust the halfling thief and the elven ranger misses her

forest and the human mage is contemptuous of everyone who is thaumaturgically illiterate, how-the-heck did these guys get together in the first place?

It's a tough question and one that is, unfortunately, entirely up to the game master to answer. Individual players can create their characters and also do the bulk of defining their characters' personalities (likes, dislikes, and prejudices). But it's going to be the game master's job to take the individuals and make up the wildly unlikely story that glued the gang together. (The gathering isn't necessarily role-played, but the game master does need to determine what the story was.) The players and their characters can have their own feelings about the events of the story, but the fiction is the game master's to recount. The only suggestion I can make about the story, is that it doesn't have to have a single cosmic coincidence that brought everyone together at once. The dwarven cleric and halfling thief may have been forced into an uneasy alliance against the overgrown races of the world while the ranger may be hanging around a mage whose wooden personality reminds her of home. The outrageous coincidence that brings these two pairs together and teaches them to depend on each other is left as an exercise for the cagey game master.

Instead, let's move along to a pair of letters from Dorian Loeffler and Andy Shockney that continue to explore the tension between rules and role-playing. Dorian's letter asked how to role-play knowing the rules of the game. Specifically, it is suggested that ignorance of the rules may lead to better role-playing. Loeffler contrasts this with a position that there should always be a good role-playing explication of the rules.

Loeffler should read Andy's letter closely, because the contrast proposed doesn't go far enough. Andy's letter is from a game-playing world where the rules are the thing and could well be the only thing. There is no sense of role-playing coherence to the assemblages of equipment and capabilities that are called characters. (If Albert the dwarf is a cleric of Moradin and Bernard the dwarf is a fighter/cleric of Clangedin, would you be able to tell them apart after a couple of blind interviews?) In Andy's game, the players look at one each character's array of potential abilities and complain, demanding some sort of perfect balance among all the character classes and subclasses that TSR contemplates for its AD&D game.

Andy's mistake is in wanting to "fix" the character classes his players are complaining about. What he should do—as master of the universe in which his players' characters live—is show the characters the reasons why it isn't always good to be multiclassed. A fighter/cleric ought to encounter a lot of ethical quandaries, and ethical quandaries can be made very concrete by the simple introduction of power-

ful beings (i.e., gods) to whom those ethical issues matter a lot. If multiclassed characters keep getting into trouble because of the number of pies they have fingers in, they may be comparatively powerful but you won't have other players envying them.

There is some logic in the rules-ignorance that Loeffler proposes for good role-playing. Nonwizard characters don't usually know the details of magic spells. If Bob the Barbarian sees someone in funny clothes waving his hands in a strange manner, he won't know what the guy is doing or to whom. He will have no idea where it's safe to stand or, even after the bright lights have gone off, whether all the effects that might have resulted have occurred. Wizards, no matter whose side they're on, can be expected to make Bob nervous.

On the other hand, Bob should know how far he can expect to be able to jump without repeatedly finding out the hard way. If Bob routinely uses swords and daggers, Bob should know what each weapon is good for and when it makes sense to switch from one to the other. (i.e., the player running Bob can read and use even the most detailed rules about those weapons and it would be appropriate role-playing.)

The rules are only a codification of what is generally understood to work best. Most folks will tell you that a two-handed sword will work better than a dagger at preventing a hill giant from mauling you. But if Bob the Barbarian believes in his lucky dagger (because it's worked so well before and the player running Bob had decided that Bob puts a lot of stock in fortune) then Bob may choose to flout conventional wisdom and go after the giant with a dagger. (The sword still would have worked better but never try to stop a lucky barbarian.)

If Loeffler is counting ballots, my vote is that there is a place for the rules in the role-playing.

Alan Lauderdale
Englewood NJ

In issue #187, the issues of alignment and of PC background were raised. Lawrence Davison was looking for input on how to determine plausible reasons for such a disparate group of beings, such as compose most adventuring parties, should team up. Nicholas Abruzzo had a disagreement with his DM on how a paladin should behave in a certain situation. Both of these problems could be dealt with by involving the players more closely in the campaign *before* role-playing begins.

About a month before play begins I get all the players together to roll up characters. At that meeting I brief the players on campaign background, i.e., social structure, religious philosophies, economic realities, and other common knowledge that characters would have that players do not. I then give the players their home-

work assignments. First I ask each player to define, in writing, her PC's alignment. She should do at least one paragraph on law, on good, and on lawful good (or whatever her alignment may be) this should be as specific as possible. Then I ask each to write her own background, including how the character got to place "X" at time "Y" where all the other PCs just happened to be. Finally, if I have any experienced or would-be DMs I ask them to design an aspect of the campaign. I might ask a thief to lay out the thieves' guild that he belongs to or a cleric to describe the traditions of his sect. All this needs to be done within two weeks so that I can make any adjustments, discuss any disagreements, and make any necessary changes to either the world or to the opening scenario.

If Nicholas and his DM had done this before their campaign they would have discovered, as is often the case, that the player has a much more pragmatic view of his alignment than the DM does and they could have worked this out. Nicholas' dispute with his DM arose when Nicholas' paladin euthanized some wounded enemies (evil clerics and assassins) rather than binding their wounds and taking them back as prisoners to be converted. In this case I tend to agree with Nicholas and I believe that the DM is trying to apply 20th-century morality to a medieval situation. I would remind Nicholas, however, of the words of the immortal Rocket J. Squirrel that "Sometimes when you're a hero you have to do stupid things, Bullwinkle." The question of the treatment of prisoners is one of the most important things that should be dealt with in the player's definition of his PC's alignment.

It also should be noted that two players whose characters have the same alignment do not necessarily have to agree with each other on their definitions. Players and DMs also should know that fantasy morality must be more black and white than in the real world. Evil is evil and it is the duty of the good heroes to destroy it. Nicholas' DM would not expect his PCs to extend such "humane" treatment to orcs or an evil dragon, I hope. By dealing in advance and in writing with questions of alignment, DMs and players can avoid disputes like the one above. The player in the process of describing his character's alignment in writing is likely to have to give the question more thought than he otherwise would have, and to internalize his character's beliefs more thoroughly. Further, the DM may find some interesting adventure "hooks" in the players' written descriptions of their character's moral beliefs.

In the descriptions of the players' backgrounds, the DM should ask for a description of the character's personality, his motivation (especially why he wants or is forced to be an adventurer), where he is from, and a brief description of how he got to where he is. The DM should tell each of the players that his character is in the common room at the Yawning Portal

Inn in Waterdeep at 2 A.M., or in the dungeon (jail type) beneath the keep of Duplicitous the Untrustworthy, or wherever and ask the player to say how he got there and why. The *players* obviously know that they will be playing together, but I like the *characters* to decide to band together after their first adventure. This way the DMs job is only to find a plausible reason for these strangers to need each other's help to accomplish some immediate task and then let the players role-play their joining together. Lawrence asks "how, for example, is the GM supposed to explain how a Sindar elf, a dwarf, a Dune-dain, a half-orc, and a corsair managed to start adventuring together?" My answer is that while he could do this, he probably shouldn't. Let the players do it. They probably will do a better job, the five of them, than the overworked DM will, and they will remember and know it better than if they simply read their background off of a sheet and stuck it in the back of their file folder. The DM should have this information, including character background and personality information, early enough that he can design an initial scenario with hooks for each character.

The third assignment, designing a part of the world, is not for all players. Players who have been or are DMs should be willing to help and players who would like to learn to be a DM will find that designing

a limited part of a world or campaign is a useful experience. In addition to easing the load on the DM, having the players participate in designing the campaign has another advantage. If the player who is running the party's cleric has helped design his PC's religion, then religious questions from PCs can be directed to the cleric to answer (subject to DM approval). Keeping the players in character is very helpful when it comes to running a smooth, successful, believable campaign.

Getting the players involved in the design process early is extremely helpful, both in the design of their characters and their characters' alignments and, if possible, in the design of pertinent parts of the world. The more the DM knows about the characters, the easier it is for her to design interesting adventures and also to "hook" her players into those adventures. The more the players know about the game world, especially in areas of their characters' expertise, the easier it is for them to role play effectively.

Paul Peterson
North Las Vegas NV

[Editor's Note: Gamers who are interested in further discussion on the topic of paladins' ethics and behaviors are encouraged to seek out PHBR12 The Complete Paladin's Handbook, TSR Product #2147, on sale in June.] Ω

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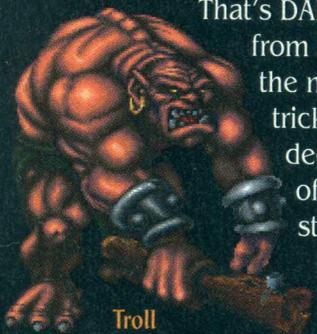
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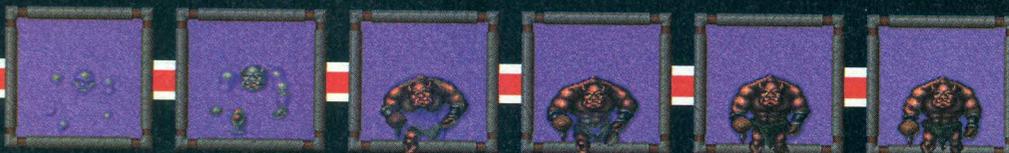
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Can you save your *Homeworld*?

Reviews

GATEWAY II: HOMEWORLD

VGA IBM Legend Entertainment Co.

Design: Mike Verdu, Glen Dahlgren, Bob Bates

Art: Kinetic Arts, 'Lil Gangster Studios

Animation: Mark Poesch, Anne Marie Cox

System programming: Duane Beck, Mark Poesch, Glen Dahlgren

Homeworld is a text adventure, bolstered by graphics. If you've ever played the old Infocom games, *Homeworld's* style will be quite familiar to you. It does not require particular speed to run, since almost all the graphics are still pictures. It takes up around nine megabytes on your hard disk.

Legend has been doing a number of these types of games. Some of you may remember last issue's review of *Companions of Xanth*, or the old game *Sorcery 101*, published by MicroProse Software, but designed and implemented by Legend. In a brief conversation I had with Bob Bates, he said that they were happy to inherit the Infocom mantle, and that we can expect more games in this style. I hope that they will be more in the style of *Xanth* than *Homeworld*.

Homeworld is closely based on the series of science-fiction novels by Frederik Pohl—the so-called "Heechee saga." The basic idea is that humanity has discovered a number of artifacts left behind by the mysterious Heechee super-race, as well as their ancient foes, the Assassins, who are known to wipe out other intelligent species as a sort of hobby. At the start of the game, Earth has discovered a gigantic spaceship out around the orbit of Pluto. It might be Heechee, and you are sent to find out if this is so. Of course, heaven forbid that it is an Assassin probe!

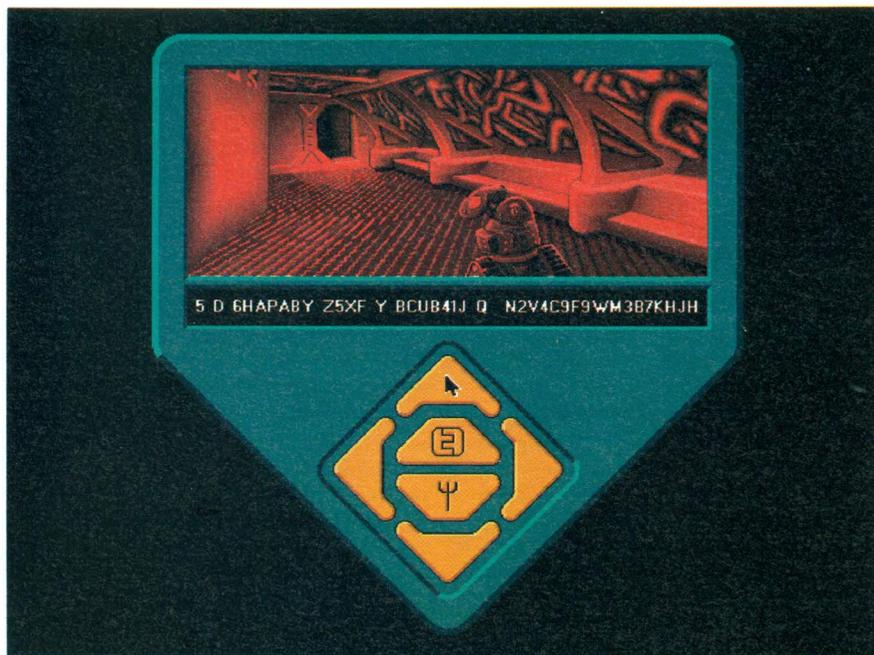
The game's interface is older than that of *Xanth*, and it shows. Each "room" you enter presents you with a static image. Also on the screen is a scrolling menu showing all the objects available to you in this room (with no distinguishing between items you're carrying and objects sitting in the room itself). In addition, there is an extremely lengthy menu showing all the

Computer games' ratings

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

EYE OF THE MONITOR

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GATEWAY II: HOMEWORLD (Legend)

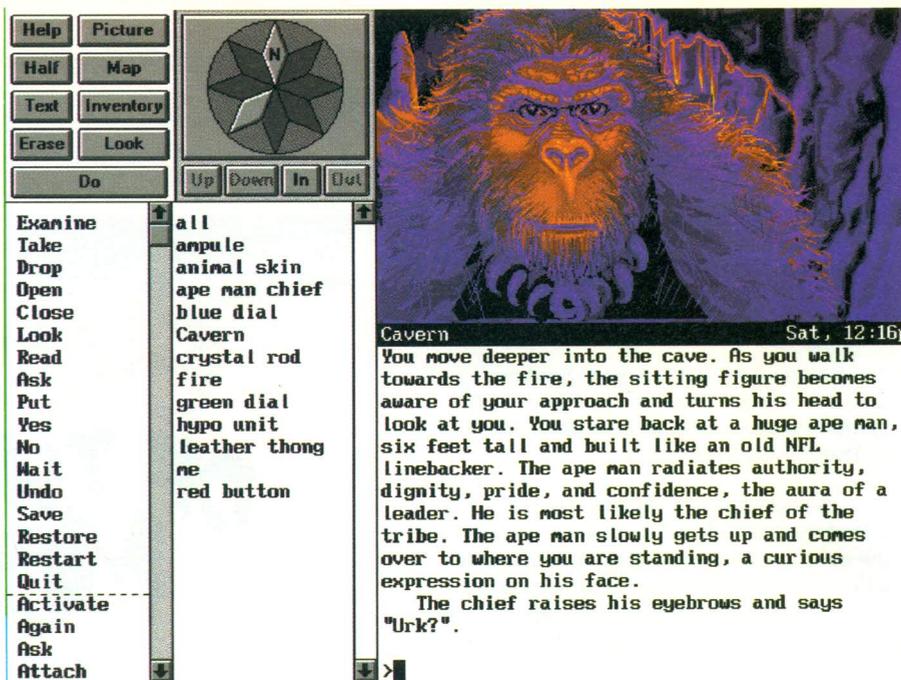
verbs that the game can handle. This includes useful terms such as "save" and "load," meaning "save the game" or "load the game." I found it a little strange to include such disk-access functions in the same list with "jump," "fire," and "investigate," but it didn't require any real effort to get used to it. The most-used verbs are grouped together at the very start of the list, which then goes on to list all the verbs in alphabetic order.

In theory, you can write sentences to the game's parser by clicking on a verb, then on a noun, and so forth—once you've

selected a verb, a list of appropriate participles also appears for you to choose among. However, it turns out that the easiest way to play the game is to simply type in your sentences. I only rarely used the fancy interface, because it was too much trouble to scroll way down the menu, looking for verbs, then clicking on the correct noun then, if I had selected the wrong one, to discard my sentence and start over . . . you get the idea. The interface was not simple, and I disliked it quite a bit. If you think it would pose little trouble to you, you'd like this game more than



GATEWAY II: HOMEWORLD (Legend)



I did. Go buy it.

The graphics are unimpressive. As previously mentioned, they are mostly static shots filling up only about a fourth of the screen.

In *Homeworld*, you must solve deadly puzzles at every stage to continue. Sometimes the answers to the puzzles are obvious, but usually they're quite obscure. A few times I felt the answers were unfair, i.e., I didn't think the game had provided me with enough clues to figure out the answer. The game includes a hint book, so at least you won't be stuck forever if you get to a hard part. The story is quite linear. If you can't get through a particular node, you usually can't go do something else and come back to it later—you've got to solve it or be stuck forever.

The SF story that the game tells is pretty interesting. I got interested in it, and the aliens you encounter also are quite fine. The game doesn't keep notes for you (unlike some other games I've tried), so you'll have to write down information from time to time.

The best way to learn this game is to start playing it. If you get stuck, look at the hint manual, which is cunningly divided into three categories of clues, so you can pick just how obvious an answer you receive, from "vague" to explicit.

There are plenty of other graphic adventures on the market nowadays, and most of them have interfaces light-years ahead of *Homeworld*. Unless you really like Frederik Pohl's work, or think back longingly to the good old days of Infocom, I advise you to try one of the others.

THE HAND OF FATE

VGA IBM Westwood Studios

Written and directed by: Rick Gush

Programmed by: Michael Legg

Lead artist: Rick Parks

Producer: Brett W. Sperry

The Hand of Fate is, as far as I know, Westwood Studio's first foray into the world of graphic adventures. It's pretty darn impressive. It takes place in the fantasy land of Kyrandia, which is a lot more like Xanth or Oz rather than Middle Earth or Hyboria. The land teems with bizarre characters such as human-sized rats and talking trees. It fills 17.5 megabytes of your hard drive.

Westwood has done good games in the past, and, unlike some companies, their games have been improving with time. Certainly their *Lands of Lore* game exceeded either of their previous *Eye of the Beholder* products (completed for SSI). Now with *The Hand of Fate* they've proven they can do things beyond role-playing games.

The interface for *The Hand of Fate* is pretty simple. At the bottom of the screen are little icons (some animated) for all the objects that your character, Zanthia, is hauling around with her. To accomplish any task, either click on an on-screen object or location, or click on one of the objects in your inventory (which, in the time-honored fashion, transforms your cursor into that object) and then click again on either another object in your inventory or something else on the screen.

To move Zanthia around the screen, click on locations, and she'll walk there. This technique is not yet perfected, unfortunately. If you click a second time, she'll

stop where she stands, and if she happens to have stopped right at the edge of the map, you can't get her to walk off until you first have her walk a little way away from the edge, then have her go back. Also, if you're used to double-clicking and occasionally misfire, you'll find yourself frequently frustrated by Zanthia's unwillingness to obey.

Most of the time the interface is fine. I had the game hang on me one time, which is less than perfect, but it could have been worse. Also, the characters' reactions are wrong sometimes. For instance, once you've purchased a voucher for the mustard salesman (don't ask), if you return with more gold coins for him, he tells you that he only accepts gold coins for the vouchers. It's just a loose end that the designers forgot to tie up, but I wish they had done it. There are other examples in the game.

Like other graphic adventures, the point of this game is to solve puzzles. The puzzles are moderately easy, I felt, which was okay, because every game needs to seek its own level of difficulty. This game is certainly suitable for newcomers or occasional dilettantes in the field of adventure games. It's possible, I suppose, that a real hardcore adventure gamer might find it too trivial. A number of puzzles can be solved more than one way, for instance.

The game has plenty of humor, not only visually, but also in the fine dialogue and comments made to the viewer by his alter-ego, Zanthia. She is an alchemist, and does all her magic by means of mixing objects into a big cauldron. At game start, she has lost her recipe book, and is relegated to using an old school notebook, with such trivial potions as "Snowman" and "Lunch."

Naturally, these prove sufficient to save the day.

With one exception, it is impossible to take actions that block all possibility of finishing the game. That exception is death. Unlike many new graphic adventures, you can die in *The Hand of Fate*. However, whenever a possible death scene is coming up, the game warns you ahead of time, so that if you are killed, you know full well you walked into trouble. Sometimes it warns you a couple of times before it lets you die. This gives you an excellent chance to save your game before taking that last step toward doom. Dying is not common, and the death scenes are not particularly spectacular, so they are clearly not intended to be dwelled on (unlike the amazing deaths in *Rex Nebular* for instance).

The game isn't particularly fast-moving—you have no way to speed up Zanthia's motion across the screen, and this can be a bit frustrating, especially when you know exactly where you're going.

All in all, I rate this one of the best graphic adventures I've played, exceeded only by products of LucasArts Entertainment. However, I'm torn—if Westwood is going to do more of these adventure games, does this mean it's going to skimp on its also-excellent role-playing games? I hope not.

DUNGEON HACK

IBM DreamForge Entertainment
produced for SSI

Producer: James Namestka

Programming: Thomas Holmes

Design: Thomas Holmes, Chris Straka

Art: Jane Yeager, Jon Grayson, Frank Schurter, Robert C. Taylor, Lynn Helfrich

Dungeon Hack is a role-playing game of a rather unusual, almost experimental, type. It runs fine on a 386 machine, and uses rather old-fashioned technology and graphics (using a bit-mapped view rather than true 3-D, for instance). It takes up around nine megabytes on the hard drive.

Many years ago, before there were good PCs, there was a primitive role-playing game called alternately *Rogue* or *Hack*. It consisted of a top-down view of a dungeon, usually composed of ASCII characters. The character was displayed as a smiley face, while the monsters were various letters. "E" stood for "Emu," for instance. You had to quest through the dungeon finding vast quantities of magical items to recover the amulet that would let you escape. The game was primitive, but its appeal held, because the dungeons created were random, and hence infinite.

Dungeon Hack is a sort of remake of this old idea. It's taken the concept of an infinitely variable random dungeon, and upgraded it to late 1980s technology. When you first load it up, *Dungeon Hack* looks a lot like *Dungeonmaster*, *Eye of the Beholder*, *Might & Magic*, *Wizardry*, etc.

The animation is a little cruder, and the monsters don't move, as much as they teleport from tile to tile. On the other hand, you can play *Dungeon Hack* forever without finishing it. Not that you can't beat the game—it's just that you can start another game immediately thereafter, with an entirely different dungeon to solve! Therein lies the appeal of this game.

You start out by creating your character, following the AD&D® game rules. Wizards get to be 5th level at the start, while fighters are only 3rd level. You only get one character in your "party," which may seem worrisome, because only clerics can heal, for instance. Don't worry, the game provides for this. You can choose whatever statistics you want for your character, up to and including straight 18s across the board (with 18/00 strength if you're a fighter). The designers didn't mind, because the game can be played again and again. If you want to challenge yourself, choose low stats. It's up to you.

You also can customize the dungeon you're about to enter. You can decide how common food is, for instance, or whether or not undead are present (that bane of AD&D players since time immemorial). You can select the number of levels to the dungeon, from 10 to 25, how tough the monsters are, how frequently they appear, the frequency of pits, and so on. You can just pick Easy, Medium, or Hard. The only objectionable selection provided is the "Character Real Death" option, which I thought was absurd. With this option selected, if your character is killed in the dungeon, all your saved games including him also go away! What's the point? You can always simulate this "option" by choosing not to replay a guy who's died! All it does is make a certain choice irrevocable (if you start playing with this option turned on, then you can't change your mind later on, of course). No one has to select it, so I suppose it's a minor point.

The dungeon walls vary greatly from level to level, but have a rather appalling sameness on the same level, evidently to save memory. A given level only boasts two main types of monsters tops, though near the level's exit, there's generally a single example of third type, usually somewhat tougher. I suppose it's an attempt to simulate a "boss" monster. The so-called "boss" isn't too great a problem, because usually the very next level you enter has these very same monsters as one of the standard encounters.

Magical items are strewn around the dungeon, along with food and useful objects such as keys, armor, weapons, etc. The magical items are preselected such that they are always useful to the character you're running. Well, not exactly useful, but at least usable. Frequently they're crocked magical items—cursed weapons, potions of poison, and similar gifts that are just plain bad. So it's good to inspect an item carefully before using it. All the rings look a little different, for instance. Once

you learn what the Ring of Powerlessness looks like, you can discard all similar rings you pick up. However, the objects do change in appearance in different games, so just because the avocado wand produced a Haste Monster effect in your last dungeon doesn't mean it will do so in this one. So you must learn anew which objects have which effects in every dungeon. Still, experience has its virtues, because you do learn what the possibilities are when you pick up an object.

On each level of the dungeon there's usually a blue orb that you can insert coins into. A silver coin heals you, a gold coin not only heals you, but also cures poison. (This is handy if you have no anti-poison magic of your own).

As you progress through the dungeon, you earn experience points, and will frequently advance in level. At the very bottom of the affair is a reasonably dreadful monster that will tax you, so you may want to go back upstairs and get a few more experience points before tackling it. In an appalling case of mismatch, for example, my wizardling's end-of-game monster was a Balor, seething with magic resistance, so my spells were worthless, yet it was able to deliver plenty of damage, so I dared not engage it in hand-to-hand combat (not a very good idea anyway, with a mage). Sigh. I still haven't beaten the dang thing.

The puzzles in the dungeons are not particularly difficult, but I guess it's hard to "randomize" puzzles. They're mostly a case of "get through this door to get Key A, then use Key A to open the door guarding Key B, so you can finally open door B to continue onward," or simple things like "The bull's horn must fit on the sculpture of the bull's head." Alas, because of the randomization, sometimes you'll solve one of the puzzles, or fight your way through a particularly dense batch of nasties, only to find out that your reward is a single bag of food or, worse, nothing at all.

The dungeons themselves are quite varied, better than I'd expected. One level might just be a maze of hallways, with no rooms whatsoever, while another might be a series of areas connected only by teleporters. Each area is completely filled with halls, rooms, or walls, so by looking at the automap you can tell exactly which regions you haven't explored.

Speaking of the automap, it's a work of art. As you explore you see a small view of the area around you to one side. When you need to see the entire map, just click on a scroll bar, and the entire screen is filled with whatever portion of the dungeon you've explored to date. Mysteriously, all the monsters in areas you've seen are made visible on this map. It's handy to see the monsters, though. The only cavil I have about this otherwise fine map is that DreamForge did not provide any method of marking on the map. Hence, you'll have to remember just where the healing orb is, or which teleporter leads to which area.

In summary, *Dungeon Hack* has all the advantages and disadvantages you'd expect in a set of randomized dungeons. I feared it would turn out to be a sad collection of barely-acceptable maps, and it turned out much better than my expectations. Despite its drawbacks, it deserves a place in every computer role-players' repertoire, if only so that you always have a place to play in while waiting for the next blockbuster from some other company.

Game tips

1. If a monster's right on your heels, you can't stop to rest (obviously). However, you don't have to be all that far away to rest—run away from a bad monster and down a hall. You only need to be a few tiles off before the game lets you stop and rest for as many hours as you need, restoring your health, your spells, etc. Then, all beefed up, you can return to the monster and nail him. Or, if he starts getting the upper hand again, run off to heal again.

2. All the mazes I've tried so far respond to the old system of "keep to the right."

DARK SUN™: THE SHATTERED LANDS

IBM & compatibles

*** SSI

Producer: Bret Berry

Lead programmer: Rus Brown

Tools programming: John Miles

Lead artist: Maurie Manning

Dark Sun: Shattered Lands is a grim and gritty sort of game that takes up almost 16 megabytes on the hard drive.

I recommend a fairly fast computer to run this thing, as it was quite slow and clumsy on a 386/33, and was only barely reasonable on a 486/33. The game system used resembles Paragon's *Challenge of the Five Realms* or, to a lesser extent, Micro-Prose's late lamented *Darklands*.

You begin as a group of four trained gladiators, destined to fight and die in Athas' grim coliseum for the entertainment of the bloodthirsty populace. Soon enough, you find out how to escape from the coliseum, and make your way into the barren countryside, where you find lost villages of other escapees, and band them together into a force to challenge the villainous sorcerer-priest who rules the local city.

The view provided is a sort of three-quarters view, and your characters are fully animated. Enemy and friendly individuals also are animated, and you can see them wandering around the view. You have three different potential cursors, each used for a different purpose. The default cursor, a simple triangle, is used to select the area you want your group to walk toward next. Then there is a sword or, if used to point at a foe far distant, an arrow. This second cursor is, of course, used to begin combat. Then there is an eyeball, which is used to talk to people,

inspect objects, open doors, and perform all the myriad of other tasks not already covered by "walk to" or "fight".

If you cannot walk to a place, attack something, or look at something, a "not" symbol (the classic red circle with a diagonal line through it) covers your cursor. Annoyingly, if you try to attack or look at something that is out of your line of sight, you can still click on it, and you receive a message saying that you can't see it. This would be less annoying if it were always obvious if something is in your line of sight or not.

In combat, you take turns moving your characters in an order chosen by the game (though you can modify it with a minimum of effort), while the opponents move at the same time. The screen jumps to follow each character or opponent, no matter how distant they are from one another, so the screen spends a lot bopping around the battle arena, another mild source of annoyance.

Spell-casting is taken care of by symbols. When you select "cast spell or use psi-onics" for a character, you get a bizarre assortment of colored icons instead of a menu. By passing your cursor over the various spells, you can figure out which is which, but it is still a difficult system to get used to. Once you cast a spell, if it has an area of effect, you get to shape the sphere, cone, or other shape on the screen, a little like using an art program.

The game is difficult, no doubt about it. You have to engage in many lengthy and (I felt) rather tedious combats. You must walk each of your characters around the screen each turn, select the opponents they bash on, fire their missiles, cast their spells, etc. Then, you wait for the opponents to do the same right back to you.

It's rather interesting to solve the game's puzzles, talk to the various characters, and explore the world around you. I thought it was rather a pity that the game's designers were so fixated on combat and death, which proved to be the duller part of the game.

First Quest

Continued from page 8

I also learned that when someone in the party yells "Bork! Bork!" it means "Hit the dirt because I'm about to do something that's either really stupid or really brilliant and either way you'd best not be in the line of fire when I do it!"

And, casting a *fireball* in a small hallway to kill the giant wasp that's heading for the doorway you're all standing in can be a good thing, provided you remember to tell the wizard to close the door *immediately* after casting the spell! It's much safer for all of you, and besides—charred wasp smells really, really bad.

Perhaps the ultimate thing I learned was that sending your party's mage up on a *flying carpet*, both having been made *invisible*, with jugs of holy water is an effective way to stop the lich who's just waked from his sound sleep and burst up through the lid of his casket and is about to blast your party into oblivion. (Hey, like I said earlier, we didn't ask questions. The DM couldn't figure out how to stop us, and he allowed it to happen. We rejoiced and made merry for days.)

So, the next time someone challenges you to tell them what's so great about role-playing, forget all about learning to cooperate, building lasting friendships, gaining social skills, polishing problem-solving abilities, and the rest. Tell them it's the only place where you can vicariously take someone who's really, really been bothering you, turn them into a goat, find out they've failed their system-shock roll, and feed them to a table. (Let them stew for a while, and if they still don't get it, reveal to them that the table was really a mimic.) If that doesn't sway them to your view, nothing will.

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Libram

CHAPTER 6 CHARLIE THE CYBER-GHOUL

STORY
JEFF GRUBB

X

ART
BOB LESSL
LET COLOR
CATHY LESSL

THE STORY SO FAR: RETURNING JEN TO HER HOMEWORLD HAS DETOURED ME FROM MY PRIMARY GOAL, BUT I CANNOT ABANDON HER. SO I TAKE HER TO MEET MY FAVORITE COMPUTER ZOMBIE, WHO IS USUALLY A FONT OF INFORMATION.

SO, THERE ARE A WHOLE BUNCH OF REALITIES,

AND WE'RE SORT OF IN A COSMIC HALLWAY BETWEEN THEM?

THAT'S ONE WAY OF LOOKING AT IT.

OF COURSE, NATIVES OF THE MAZEWORKS THINK OF THEMSELVES AS THE CENTRAL REALITY AND YOU AS BEING FROM SOME CULTURAL BACKWATER.

SO WHO'S IN CHARGE?

WELL, THAT'S PART OF THE PROBLEM.

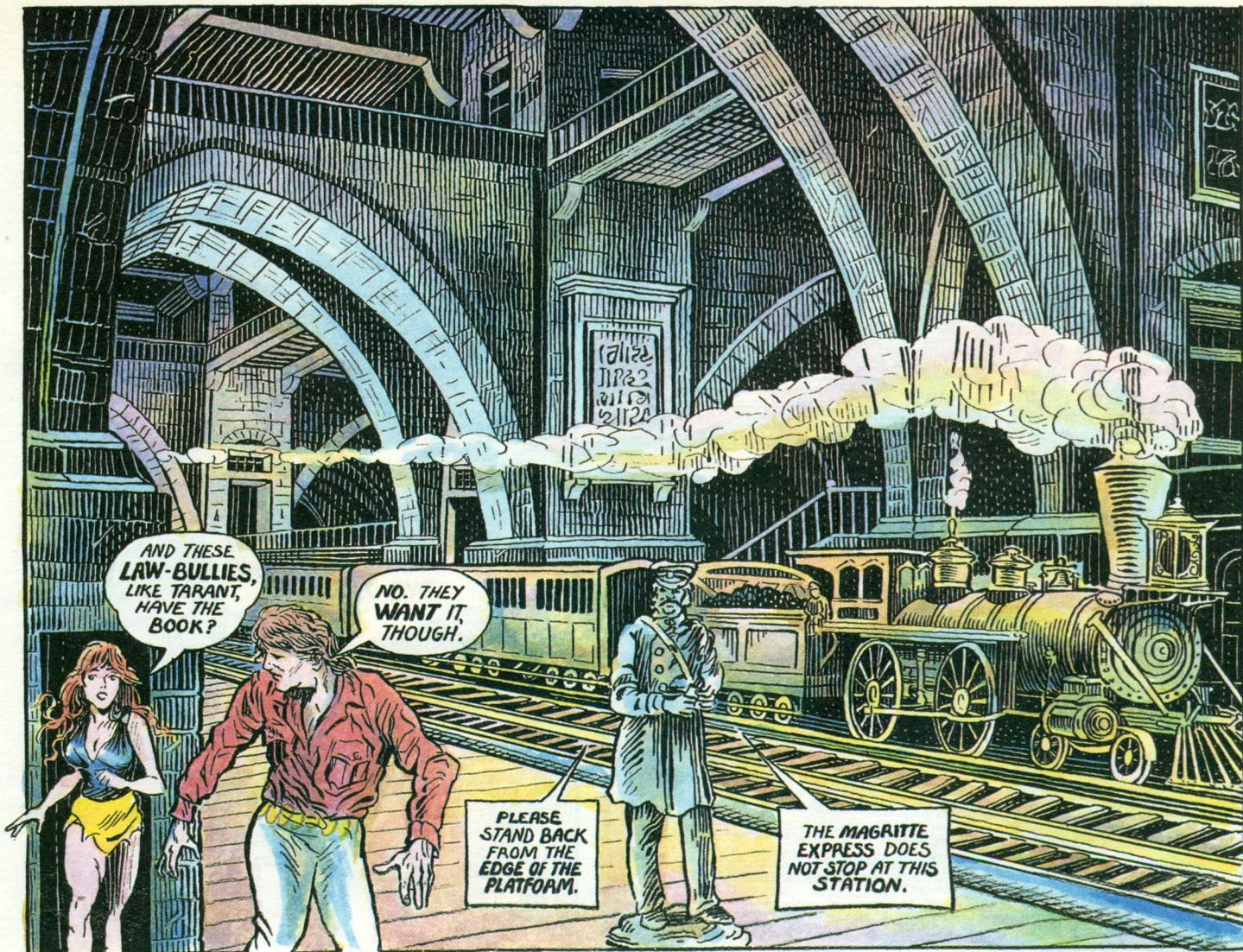
ANOTHER GROUP SAYS THAT THERE ARE SECRET MASTERS OF THE MAZEWORKS RUNNING EVERYTHING.

THERE'S ONE SCHOOL OF THOUGHT THAT SAYS NOBODY IS IN CHARGE, AND NEVER WAS.

AND THERE'S A THIRD BUNCH THAT SAYS THERE WAS ORIGINALLY SOME SORT OF BIG COSMIC ARCHITECT WHO SET EVERYTHING UP, THEN LEFT.

AND THIS COSMIC ARCHITECT LEFT WITHOUT LEAVING ANY WORD BEHIND?

SOME FOLK BELIEVE THAT HE LEFT AN INSTRUCTION BOOK THAT CONTROLLED EVERYTHING. SOME SAY THESE SECRET MASTERS WROTE THE BOOK, INSTEAD. WHATEVER, THE BOOK DOESN'T HAVE AN OFFICIAL NAME, SO EVERYONE CALLS IT LIBRAM X.



AND THESE LAW-BULLIES, LIKE TARANT, HAVE THE BOOK?

NO. THEY WANT IT, THOUGH.

PLEASE STAND BACK FROM THE EDGE OF THE PLATFORM.

THE MAGRITTE EXPRESS DOES NOT STOP AT THIS STATION.

THEY FIGURE THAT IF A SET OF RULES EXISTED ON RUNNING THE MAZEWORKS,

AND THEY HAD IT, THEY WOULD BECOME THE DE FACTO SECRET MASTERS.

AND WHY DO YOU WANT IT?

TO KEEP IT OUT OF THEIR HANDS OF COURSE!



HERE'S MY CONTACT. CHARLIE, YOU THERE?



I AM ALWAYS HERE, BLOODRUNNER... BRING JEN INSIDE WITH YOU.



HOW'S MY FAVORITE KEYBOARD COWBOY?

DEAD, AND BORED, AS ALWAYS.

KNOW WHAT I NEED?



YOU NEED A LEAD ON A PORTAL TO JEN'S HOMETLAND, AND ANY NEWS ON THE LIBRAM. I'VE ALSO ARRANGED AN APPOINTMENT FOR THE YOUNG LADY WITH THE TAILOR...

I'M SORRY, WE'VE MET?

ONLY JUST NOW. I HAVE A FORM OF PRECOGNITION. IN ANY EVENT, POIROT IS WAITING FOR YOU DOWNSTAIRS IN THE FITTING ROOM. YOU GO ON AHEAD.



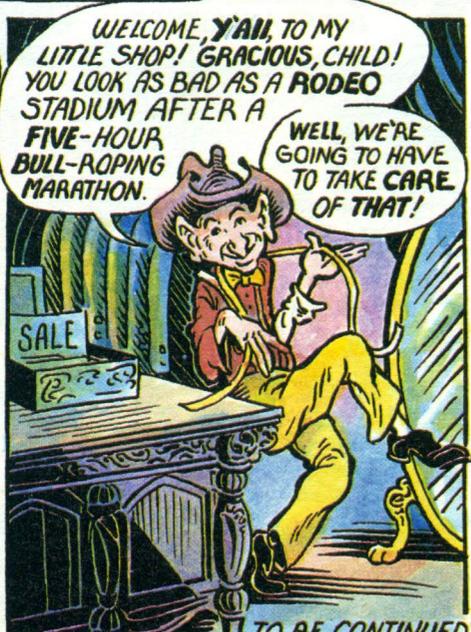
NOW, BLOODRUNNER, WHAT DID YOU WANT LAST TIME YOU WERE HERE?

JUST THE LATEST DOPE OFF THE NETS FOR THE LIBRAM, CHARLIE. AND IT LED ME DIRECTLY INTO TARANT AND HIS MYTES, THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH.

I HOPE I TOLD YOU TO BE CAREFUL AND READY TO TRUST A RANDOM DOOR?

UH-HUH, WHICH IS WHY I BROUGHT JEN TO YOU. BUT YOU SEEMED TO BE EXPECTING HER ALREADY, AS USUAL. HOW IS YOUR...

HELLO? ANYONE HOME?



WELCOME, Y'AN, TO MY LITTLE SHOP! GRACIOUS, CHILD! YOU LOOK AS BAD AS A RODEO STADIUM AFTER A FIVE-HOUR BULL-ROPING MARATHON.

WELL, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF THAT!

TO BE CONTINUED



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This year's extravaganza runs from August 18-21, once again at the enormous MECCA Convention Center in downtown Milwaukee, Wis. Every square inch of the convention complex will be filled with role-playing tournaments and other gaming of all types; exhibits and sales booths sponsored by hundreds of companies; seminars, special events, and more celebrities than there are pages in the average autograph book.

High on the list of special attractions is

an encore presentation of Science Fiction Saturday, which was a massive hit when this "mini-convention" was staged for the first time at the 1993 Game Fair. The organizer of 1993's extravaganza, Sue Weirlein, is on the job again. This year's extra-special guests for Science Fiction Saturday will be two of the stars of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Majel Barrett Roddenberry ("Lwaxana Troi") and John de Lancie ("Q").

New to the Game Fair lineup this year is Super Hero Sunday, orchestrated by TSR's own comics guru, Steven Schend. The Guest of Honor is Peter David, one of the

most accomplished comic-book and science-fiction writers in the field. Many of the comic world's most popular illustrators will be in residence in the Artists' Alley, and the schedule for all four days of the Game Fair includes several exhibits and demonstrations designed to appeal specially to comic and super hero fans.

Of course, the heart and soul of every GEN CON Game Fair is the gaming. Tournaments and seminars devoted to role-playing games make up the biggest part of the convention schedule, but every other kind of game activity—from popular board games and card games to historical/military simulations to miniatures to computer games—will be going on constantly throughout the long weekend.

Tournaments

Most of the hundreds of gaming competitions are set up as tournaments that award prizes to the winners and highest finishers. More than \$10,000 worth of prizes will be handed out, and some of the major prizes are gifts that really keep on giving. For instance, the high scorer in the RPGA® Network AD&D® Game Feature, "Rustymane's Flight," will receive one copy of every TSR product for a year, worth several hundred dollars. TSR, Inc., Ral Partha Enterprises, and FASA Corp., are among the companies offering gift-certificate prizes of as much as \$100 or \$200 to the winners of some of the major role-playing game events. Among the special tournaments known as Pinnacle Events are the AD&D Game Open, the BATTLETECH* Open, the ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER* Challenge, and the *Games Magazine* Triathlon, to name a few.

Over 950 different gaming events, ranging from single-session competitions to multiple-round tournaments, are listed in the Game Fair Pre-Registration Book, which is available free of charge from TSR, Inc. (See the end of this article for information on how to request a book and how to pre-register for the convention.)

Board games

In this broad category, most of the activity centers on historical and military simulations and other types of strategy games. Noteworthy events will include the Game Fair's ninth annual DIPLOMACY* tournament, the sixth annual UP FRONT* competition, a 100-player NUCLEAR WAR* tournament, an enormous EUROPA* dem-



onstration, and an AXIS & ALLIES* mega-event. The Avalon Hill Game Company is once again staging its Classics Open tournament, including competition in FORTRESS EUROPE*, PANZER LEADER*, PANZERGRUPPE GUDERIAN*, RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN*, VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC*, and WAR AT SEA* games. All the most popular games from the early days of board and war gaming will be played at the convention, as well as many of the newer titles.

The War College Lecture Series, one part of the Game Fair's extensive schedule of seminars and workshops, gives strategy-game hobbyists a chance to learn more about their favorite subjects from professional military experts. Special guests for the lecture series this year are Lt. Cmdrs. Dan and Mark McDonagh from the Naval War College. Other speakers include Major David Wesley and Captain Louis Zocchi, both of whom participated in last year's program.

Open gaming library

Sponsored by *Games Magazine*, the open gaming library will have more than 100 different popular favorites that Game Fair attendees can check out for a quick pick-up game or to fill a few spare moments of time. The library is the headquarters for the *Games Magazine* Triathlon, which will feature competition in OHELLO*, CLUE*, and SCRABBLE in a marathon six-hour session on Friday.

Miniatures

The Game Fair will offer nearly 200 tournaments and single-session events for miniatures enthusiasts, including an extensive lineup of events for the BATTLETECH*, CAR WARS*, and SILENT DEATH* games, plus dozens of other games ranging from 15-mm ancients to World War II naval scenarios to STAR WARS* battles and everything in between. Premier events include the BATTLETECH* Open, the official CAR WARS* AADA World Racing Championship, and a three-round BATTLESYSTEM® tournament.

Also in the realm of miniatures is the Game Fair's 14th annual Miniatures Painting Competition, with prizes to be awarded to the most attractive figures and dioramas in several different categories. New this year is the Historical Miniatures Gaming Society Masterpiece Competition, cosponsored by HMGS and the Game Fair, which will present the prizes to the best miniatures displays at the convention.

RPGA® Network events

In addition to the AD&D Game Feature Tournament "Rustymane's Flight" (men-

tioned above), the RPGA Network is staging nearly 20 other game events that will award rich prize packages to the top finishers, as well as more than a dozen seminars of special interest to Network members. If you're planning to come to the Game Fair and you're not a Network member, you should be aware that only Network members can pre-register for RPGA game events—but you can apply for a membership on the same form that's used to register for the convention itself.

The Network's Guests of Honor this year are David "Zeb" Cook, veteran TSR game designer, and Tom Dowd, the developer of the SHADOWRUN* game from FASA.

... And there's more

In next month's DRAGON® Magazine, you'll find out more about Science Fiction Saturday, Super Hero Sunday, the celebrity guest list, and other features of this year's Game Fair. However, you don't have to wait that long to receive a Pre-Registration Book and start making your own plans.

The deadline for pre-registration is June

30th, but it's a good idea to get your name in as soon as possible because events that have a limited number of participants are filled on a first-come, first-served basis. You can get a Pre-Registration Book by return mail by sending your name and address to Pre-Registration Dept., 1994 GEN CON Game Fair, P. O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147. Requests for the book also can be made by fax at (414) 248-0389. The book is 116 pages long and contains details about every feature of the Game Fair, plus information on hotels in the Milwaukee area that are offering discount rates for people attending the convention. Get one soon, and you'll be glad you did.

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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 answers a few questions about *The Complete Book of Humanoids (CBH)*. (The answers given here are official.) The sage also considers a few magical particulars, revisits psionics, corrects an error, and provides some missing maps.

The CBH text on bugbears says bugbear shamans and witch doctors have a level limit of 7, but the table on page 21 says the limit is level 5. Which is correct?

The advancement limit is 7th level for both shamans and witch doctors.

The CBH says some voadkyn are druids, but there is no level limit for voadkyn druids listed in the table on page 29.

Voadkyn druids are very rare, but there are a few. Their advancement limit is 5th level.

Table 8 in the CBH says aarakocra, voadkyn, flinds, and satyrs can be bards, but the tables for these races contain no bard advancement limits.

Aarakocra, voadkyn, and flinds cannot become bards. The advancement limit for satyr bards is 7th level.

Table 13 in the CBH says alaghi can be fighter/shamans, but the alaghi race table lists no shaman advancement limit.

The advancement limit for alaghi shamans is 6th level.

If a wizard used a wildfire spell (from the *Tome of Magic*) to create a magical sword +2, could a permanency spell be used to make the sword last forever?

No. At least, not if you're asking whether

a character using a *wildfire* spell creates a sword +2 out of nothing and then cast *permanency* to make the sword last longer than the 1d4 + 6 hours that *wildfire* objects usually last. There are two problems with this: First, *wildfire* objects cannot be made permanent. Second, *wildfire* objects have no special properties beyond their strength (stronger than steel), weight (almost no weight at all), and virtual indestructibility (immune to everything except *dispel magic* and *wish*). The caster has great latitude in shaping the *wildfire* energy, but the energy does not include any magical bonuses. Note that the *wildfire* description (*TOM*, page 48) says the spell can be used to create magical items, but this refers to using *wildfire* in conjunction with an *enchant an item* spell.

The *Player's Handbook (PH)* lists the range of the *speak with dead* spell as "1," but does not give a unit of distance.

Officially, *speak with dead* has a range of one yard, and this is the way the spell will be listed in the upcoming *Priest Player Screen* and in future printings of the *PH*. Note that this is an error picked up from the original *PH*, where the range probably was one scale inch. That is, the spell had a range of 10 feet indoors and 10 yards outdoors. While most spell ranges in the current game convert scale inches into tens of yards, my colleagues here at TSR felt that 10 yards was too great a distance for conversations, even with the dead.

Can you use the *item* spell to shrink a living creature? How about an undead creature? The description (*PH*, page 150) says the spell works on fires. Will a fire subjected to this spell continue to consume its fuel?

The *item* spell has no effect on creatures, living or dead.

A fire that is simply reduced to 1/12th size continues burning merrily along, consuming fuel and oxygen. It still is hot, and can burn anything that is susceptible to normal fire. If, however, the fire is reduced and turned to cloth it becomes inert (and harmless) for the duration of the spell.

I'm having a real problem with a few players and their wizard char-

acters. First, I explained that a lot of iron or steel next to the skin disrupts magic. Things were fine for awhile, but now they carry plate armor with them and insist on wearing it after they have used up all their spells.

This is what comes from asking too many questions about a fantasy game. Fantasy, by its very nature, deals with the inexplicable and concerns itself with the what; the why is left to philosophers, science-fiction authors, and your ever helpful "Sage Advice" columnist. My first suggestion to you is to consider the obvious: If you're assuming that large masses of metal in close proximity to a wizard's body foils spells, then it is relevant to ask just how your armor-toting wizards are carrying all that armor. If they've bundled it up in a pack, guess what? It's still too close.

Actually, the situation is a little more complex than that. Character-class armor and weapon restrictions are among the few basic and unalterable rules in the AD&D® game. As always, the rule is necessary because of game balance and game logic. It's been awhile since I repeated one of my little exercises in game balance and game logic, so let's go through the game logic first:

Armor is heavy, hot, and confining. Fighters gain their various combat abilities only after undergoing long and rigorous physical training that begins in their youth. (A medieval knight's training began at age six.) This explains why they can do things like slay 30 giants using swords less than four feet long, and keep on fighting even when peppered with arrows. Wearing armor is an impressive physical feat. The stuff is hot, heavy, and generally uncomfortable. It takes a long time before a person can even bear to wear it for any length of time, much less fight or explore a dungeon while encased in it. Fighters, however, develop the ability to resist physical hardships of various kinds and can soldier on through conditions that can kill other characters.

On the other hand, wizards spend their youth and all their spare time sitting and reading. This sharpens their minds, but it does not build the kind of physical skills that fighters enjoy, even in wizards who have naturally high Strength and Constitution scores. All that sitting around and

studying turns wizards into sedentary bookworms who do not have enough stamina to walk around in armor. They probably can't even walk a straight line while wearing armor—a wizard in armor probably would stagger about like a little kid carrying a sack of potatoes. Further, all that studying gives wizards an entirely different mindset than fighters have. They prefer to use their brains to attack their problems; they come to regard accoutrements such as swords and armor as crude and beneath their dignity. It's not so much that wizards *can't* wear armor, but that they *won't* armor. It's too hot, too uncomfortable, too noisy, and just downright unfashionable.

Now, on to game balance: Wizards are potentially the most powerful character class in the game. They have access to a considerable array of offensive and defensive magic and can literally lay waste to whole city blocks. The price they pay for this power is an almost complete lack of physical power. In the beginning, they are so weak that they must depend on the characters around them for support and protection. Fighters, on the other hand, don't have access to a mighty arsenal of magic. All they have is their wits, their weapons, and their equipment. As the only class with unrestricted access to both weapons and armor, they are playable, but they remain so only as long as the DM does not allow other characters to poach on their territory. Otherwise, everyone in

your campaign is going to be playing an armor-clad wizard.

I suggest you sock your armor-loving wizards with any or all of the following penalties:

Encumbrance: Even if the characters in question have high enough Strength scores to carry the weight of the armor, knock their movement rate down to one half (two-thirds if you're feeling generous). They also should make a Dexterity check every turn or fall down and go boom. It's easy to lose one's equilibrium when one is carrying an unaccustomed weight, and a wizard might easily trip. The encumbered wizard also should check Dexterity every time he tries anything that even remotely requires ability: running, jumping, using stairs (in either direction), getting on a mount, etc.

Fatigue: Single-classed wizards who wear armor or carry shields should make a Constitution check every turn (more often if it's very cold or very hot). Failure indicates fatigue. The character must remove the armor and rest awhile. If the weather is bad, the character also must do something to cool off or warm up.

Uncertainty: All this reliance on physical things undermines the mental discipline the wizard needs to command his magic. There is a 25% chance that any spell he casts during the next 24 hours will fail outright. (Of course, if the character is wearing prohibited armor at the time of casting, the spell fails 100% of the time.)

Further, the character gains no experience for the adventure in which he dons armor to protect himself. If he makes a habit of wearing armor, he might even lose a level or two.

Is it my imagination or are there some maps missing from FRS1 *The Dalelands*?

Yes, maps of two towns, Archendale and Essembra, are missing. They appear in this issue courtesy of *Dalelands* author, Rich Baker and DUNGEON® Adventures' cartographer, Diesel.

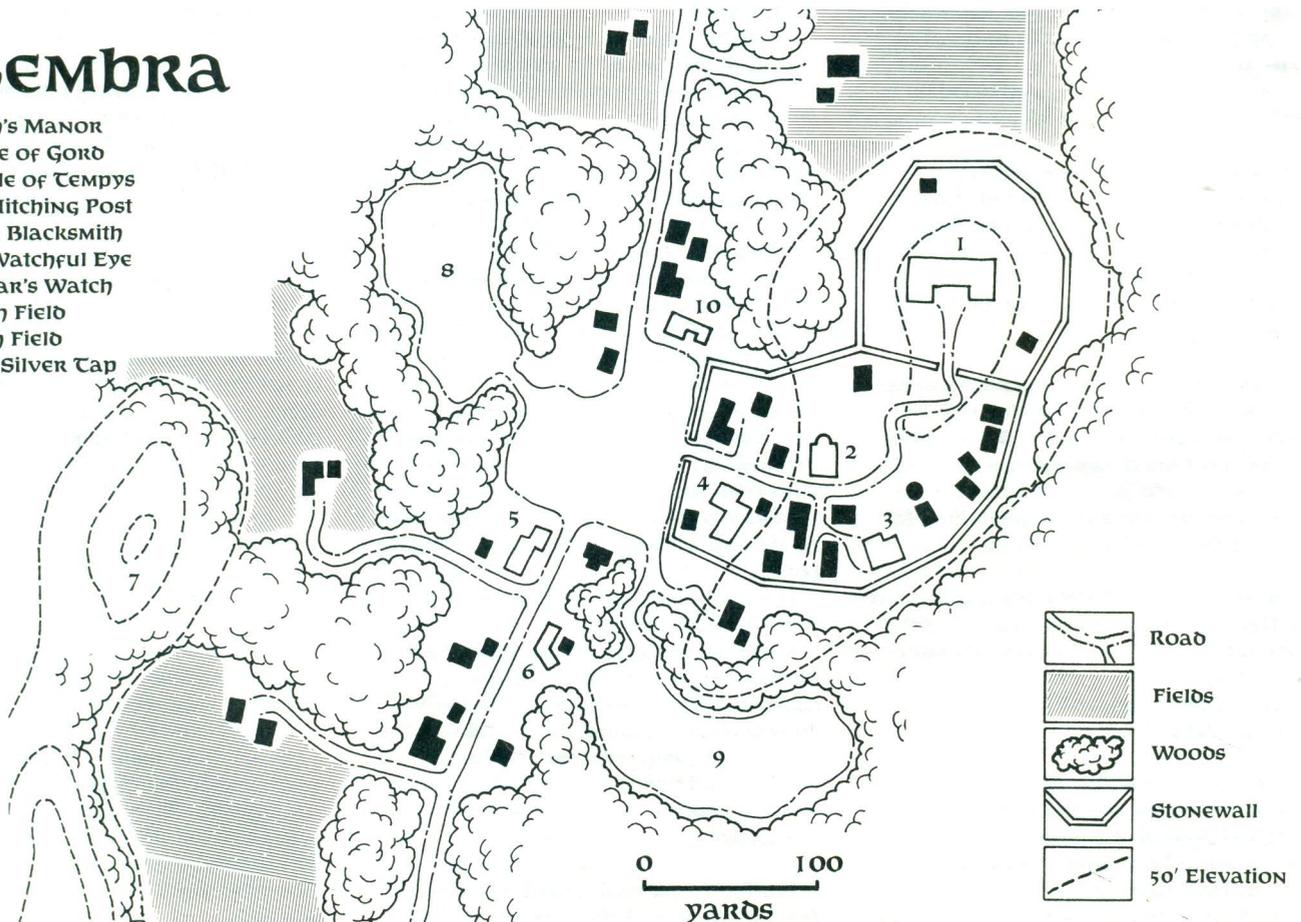
The description for *gauntlets of ogre power* in the DMG (page 169) suggests that their combat bonuses are cumulative with a *girdle of giant strength* only when the wearer is hurling a war hammer. Is this correct? What is the strength score of a character wearing *gauntlets of ogre power* and a *girdle of giant strength*?

As a general rule, an AD&D game character using two similar types of magic gets the benefit of only the strongest item. A character using both *gauntlets of ogre power* and any *giant strength* item (girdle or potion) get only the benefit of giant strength for purposes of encumbrance, bending bars and lifting gates, opening doors, and most attacks.

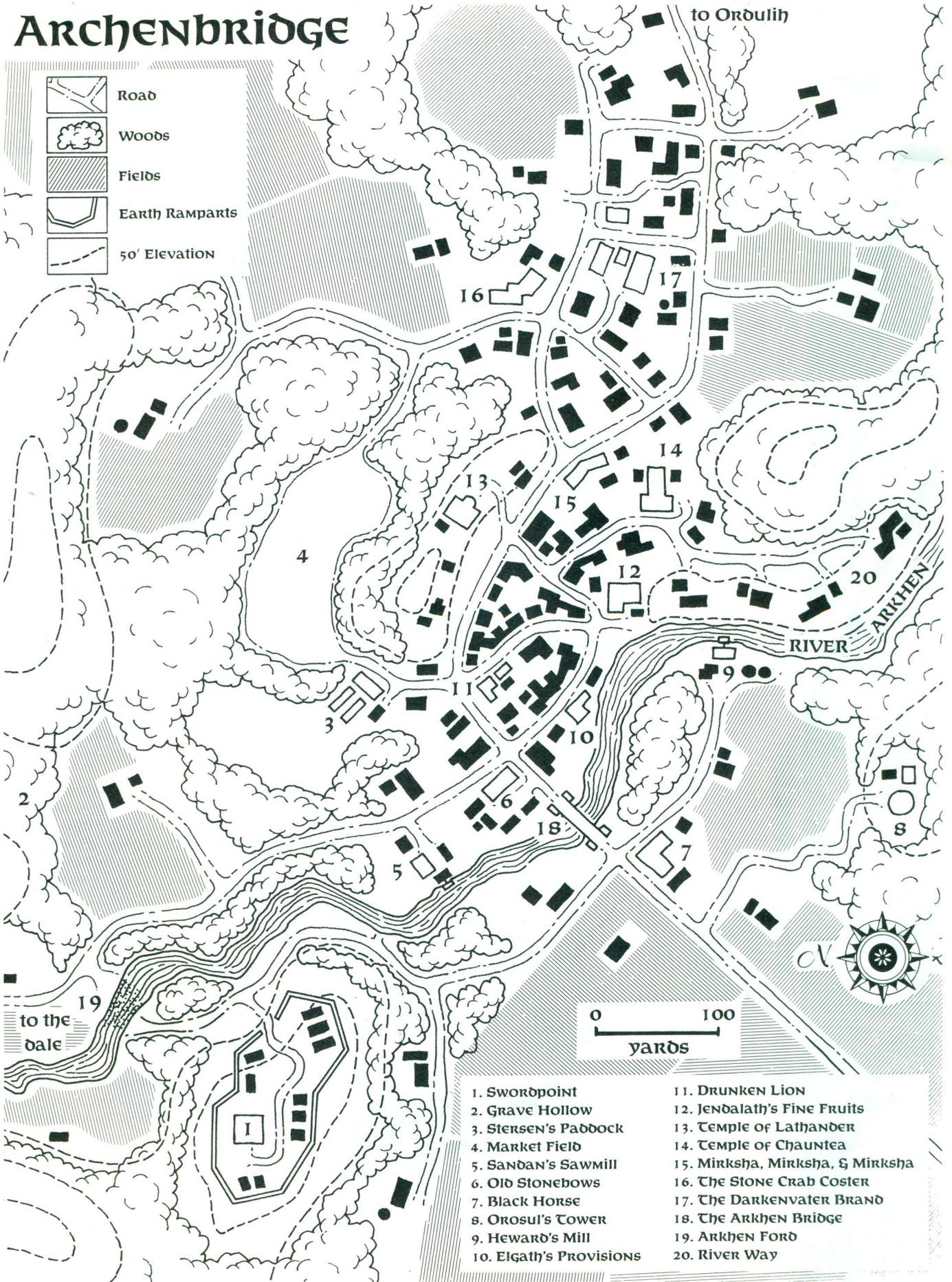
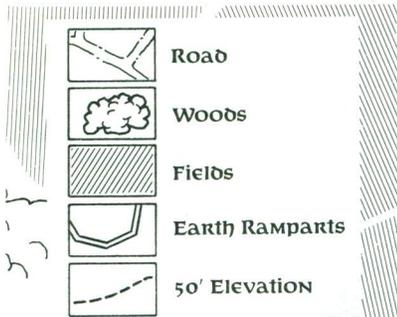
There is an important exception to the general rule in this case, however. A char-

Essembra

1. Ilmeth's Manor
2. House of Gord
3. Temple of Tempus
4. The Hitching Post
5. Durn Blacksmith
6. The Watchful Eye
7. Aencar's Watch
8. North Field
9. South Field
10. The Silver Tap



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acter wearing *gauntlets of ogre power* and a *girdle of giant strength* can combine both items' combat bonuses (and any normal strength and specialization bonus) anytime he uses a magical war hammer—in both melee and missile combat. This is a special property of magical war hammers in the AD&D game; though the rule itself appears in the *girdle of giant strength* description (DMG, page 170).

Does a psionic attack mode's one-two punch apply to both closed (psionicist) and open (nonpsionicist) minds? If so, what happens to the contacted mind if the power works both times?

Yes, the one-two punch applies to all types of opponents. When a psionicist pays the initial PSP cost for the psychic crush science, or the ego whip, id insinuation, mind thrust, or psionic blast devotions, she gets to use the power twice, provided both attacks occur in the same round and are directed against the same opponent. Note that the psionicist must make a power check for each use.

Remember that the psionicist must take the time to establish full contact (three tangents) with the opponent, even when the opponent is not using defense modes. If the psionicist uses the one-two punch against a fully contacted mind, the results vary according to the power. If the power allows a saving throw, such as psychic crush or psionic blast, the victim must save each vs. each successful use of the power and suffers accordingly if the save fails. If the power does not allow a saving throw, two successes in the same round are not cumulative; however, the psionicist gets to use the best of the two results. For example, if the one-two punch delivers two successful uses of the id insinuation devotion, the psionicist would roll twice to see how long the opponent would remain in a moral uproar and only the highest roll would count (though the DM might let the psionicist might let the psionicist choose which roll to take).

Can magical spells or items and psionics work together? For instance, can a *contingency* or *chain contingency* spell be used to trigger psionic powers? Can a psionic character wearing a *ring of telekinesis* use the telekinesis science to boost the effect?

Contingency and *chain contingency* spells trigger other spells. Psionics are not spells and cannot be part of a magical *contingency*. Likewise, *contingency* cannot be used to trigger magical items, breath weapons, gaze attacks, or spell-like abilities.

Under some conditions, it might be possible to use a *ring of telekinesis* and psionic telekinesis together, but this wouldn't happen very often. If faced with an object too big to lift with the telekinesis power, a psionicist wouldn't benefit from a *ring of telekinesis* because he couldn't

initiate the power and concentrate on using the ring at the same time. If, however, the psionicist were already moving an object and was merely maintaining the telekinesis power, he could use the ring's lifting capacity to reduce the maintenance cost. Likewise, if the object were a table and an opponent grabbed it or jumped on it, the ring could be brought into play to handle the additional weight. I suppose that a lenient DM might allow a psionicist to establish a partial "pull" on a large object, for example, spending 80 PSPs to tug at a 100-pound object, and then use a *ring of telekinesis* during the next round to provide the extra power. (In this case, the total PSP cost would be 120 PSPs, 80 to initiate the power, and 40 more to maintain the power on the second round vs. 150 PSPs to move the object with the telekinesis power alone).

It seems to me that the eighth-level wizard spell *mind blank* should protect against all forms of psionic attack. Why isn't this the case?

Actually, *mind blank* offers considerable protection against many types of psionic attacks; see the spell description (PH, page 190) for the list. The protection is magical, however, and psionics are not magical. This allows an attacking psionicist a saving throw vs. spells to overcome the defense. Because *mind blank* is an eighth-level spell, I suggest that you require a save each time a psionic uses a power against a protected character—the spell presents a formidable barrier that does not weaken even if the psionicist already has breached a few times. Note that bonuses from defensive items, such as *rings of protection*, do not modify this save. Wisdom bonuses can apply if the DM allows them to.

Back in DRAGON issue #191 you said spells cast from scrolls in the DARK SUN® setting could have defiling effects, but page 62 of the DARK SUN Rules Book says the act of setting a spell to a scroll strips it of its defiler characteristics.

That's correct; no spell cast from a scroll on Athas has defiling effects. My error.

Pantheon of the Month

These are unofficial suggestions for using the optional spheres of priest spells from the *Tome of Magic* with the deities of the Nehwon pantheon in the *Legends & Lore* book:

Gods of Lankhmar: These deities do not have priests and do not grant spells.

Issek of the Jug: Major: Wards; Minor: None.

Gods of Trouble: Major: Chaos; Minor: None.

Hate: Major: Chaos; Minor: None.

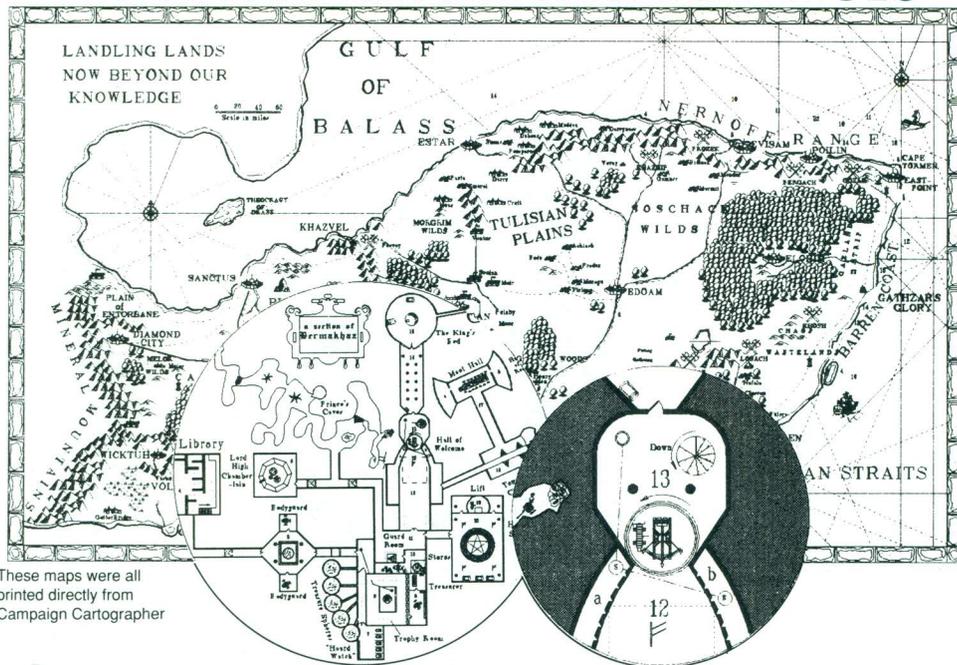
Death: This deity does not have priests and does not grant spells.

Kos: Major: Law; Minor: None.

Tyaa: Major: Time; Minor: None.

Red God: Major: War; Minor: Wards. Ω

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ail in the north," cried the lookout, and Liam Rhenford winced on the quarterdeck. It was not necessarily the pirate, but he feared it was, and he could tell from the worried looks exchanged by the mate and the Old Man that they feared it, too.

"Masthead there," he called. "Any pennant?"

"It's on the horizon, Cap," the lookout shouted back. "Just the sail as yet."

Liam caught the Old Man and the mate in another look.

"Probably a fishing smack," he said, as calmly as he could. "I'm going below. Call me if you make out a pennant."

Forcing himself to go slowly, he went down the ladder to the waist of the ship and then into his own cabin. Once there he bunched his fists and indulged in a silent curse.

There were no fishing smacks abroad in Rushcutter's Bay that season, no vessels of any kind except his and the pirate's. Only he had been foolish enough to make sail, and now he was caught.

He gave himself a full quarter-hour of despair, berating himself for his stupidity, then began making plans. He pulled out charts, established his position, gauged wind and current. His ship, the *Pride of Dordrecht*, was no fast sailer, but after a long set of calculations he figured to make the port he was headed for in three days. If he could stay out of the pirate's hands that long he would be safe.

Not that a port was necessarily so safe, given the pirate's reputation. In addition to the huge number of ships he had taken and sunk in his extraordinary three-month campaign, he had sacked three cities. Still, poor hope was better than no hope, and if the *Pride of Dordrecht* was caught on the sea, its destruction was certain.

There was a knock on his cabin door, and by the confident sound of the knuckles he knew who it was.

"Come," he called.

The Old Man entered, touching his forehead casually. The other crewmembers treated him with considerably more respect, but Liam accepted the informality. If the ancient sailor hadn't volunteered to sail with him, none of the younger ones would have come.

"Well, Cap Renvoort, our luck's out."

He frowned grimly. It certainly seemed that way.

"We can make Ushant in three days. We only have to stay clear until then." Ushant was the Freeporter colony they were headed for, with a cargo of lamp oil and wool.

The Old Man smiled. "The *Pride*'ll never outrun 'im. Den Huys'll have us for sure."

Liam's frown deepened. The Dordrecht's seemed unable to separate myth from reality. The present pirate had taken the name of a long-dead sea rover, a nightmare who had ruled Rushcutter's Bay almost a century before, but they refused to see the difference. Liam had not grown up in the Freeports; the infamous name had never been used to frighten him as a child, and he could not understand the atavistic fear they associated with it.

"It's not Den Huys, you know. It's just a clever man who's taken the name."

The Old Man gave him a knowing look. "Sure, Cap.

Cap Renvoort's Luck

by Daniel Hood

Illustrations by Martin Cannon

But he'll have us anyway."

"I mean, it's impossible. Den Huys has been dead for eighty years."

He would have gone on, but the Old Man's smile stopped him. He should have known better than to try to argue the Dordrechter out of his prejudices. He couldn't even make them pronounce his name properly.

"In any case, we've got a chance. It's only three days, and the *Pride* runs well."

"Not well enough," the Old Man said, his smile deepening as the frustration showed on Liam's face. Liam was aware suddenly of the difference in their ages. He was only twenty-eight, while the man he commanded was easily twice, if not three times, as old. That he was captain at all was the result of a fluke, the fact that he alone of all those capable of running a ship had dared the pirate's lake. And he was also aware that he had a crew only because the Old Man had volunteered, and his reputation was such that other sailors had followed.

The sailors had trusted the Old Man, the Old Man had trusted him, and he had trusted his luck to make the journey without encountering the pirate who called himself Den Huys. Now his luck had deserted him.

"Regrets?"

Liam started, surprised at the way the Old Man had read his thoughts.

"No," he said at last, and firmly. "It's not over yet."

He went up on deck. The Old Man, an approving expression on his lined face, followed in his wake.

It was several hours before the lookout confirmed their fears. The sail on the horizon had grown, the hull gradually appearing, until the sharpest set of eyes on the ship called out.

"There's a pennant, Cap!"

On the quarterdeck, Liam frowned again and paused before answering.

"What sign?"

"Skull and cross bones," was the reply, and the phrase was repeated in a fearful whisper by the off-watch seamen who had gathered in the ship's waist.

"Belay that," Liam growled. *As if no one but the ancient pirate of dark legend could fly that pennant*, he thought. The sailors spoke no more, but milled restlessly in the waist until the Old Man dispersed them with quiet words. Liam was grateful for the support and turned his attention to the northern horizon.

It was a clear, hot day, and he could just barely make out the sail at the extremity of vision, miles away. It was just a smudge, but a bar of black outlined it against the sky.

"Mate," he asked, "what do you think of the sky there?"

The mate shook his head, as if to clear it of the vision of the pursuing ship, and examined the thin line where the sea met the sky.

"Storm," he said suddenly, a smile breaking on his face. "A storm out of the north."

Liam smiled too, slightly relieved. If the storm caught up with them before the pirate did, they might escape in the murk. He called out a volley of commands, and the sailors jumped eagerly to work.



The afternoon passed in a flurry of tasks. The barrels of oil and bales of wool had to be secured, storm canvas fitted out, a hundred small things attended to. Both the pirate ship and the storm line grew closer, but by nightfall there was still a considerable gap between them and the *Pride of Dordrecht*. Liam retired to his cabin when the first stars showed in the sky, and was offering prayers to the Storm King when the Old Man rapped on the door with his confident knuckles.

"Come," Liam said.

"Well, Cap, seems I spoke too early."

"About my luck?"

"Aye," the Old Man said, tapping lightly on one of the cabin's beams. Liam copied the gesture, touching the wood of the bulkhead behind him.

"We may yet get away. If the storm hits before the pirate, we might lose him. The bay is big."

"We'll want to make port when we can, Cap. Even if we lose him, Den Huys'll smell us out wheresoever we are, unless it's a port."

Liam shook his head and risked a confident laugh. "I know there's no point, but I'm going to tell you again. It's not Den Huys. He's been dead a hundred years, and this is just a clever impostor."

"Not dead, Cap Renvoort, just marooned. He's a wizard, after all. What's a hundred years to him?"

Catching at the statement, Liam raised a finger.

"That's a good point. But if he is a wizard, how come no one's seen him work any magic? There's been no reports of demons summoned, or magic winds, or anything of the sort. If he's a wizard, how come no one he's attacked has mentioned the use of magic?" He smiled, sure he had made a telling argument.

"No one he's attacked has lived to mention anything," the Old Man answered softly. "We'll just have to hope for Ushant."

With that he left Liam to his cabin.

The next morning dawned fair and clear like the last. The pirate ship was much closer, but so was the storm line, and Liam went up to the quarterdeck in good spirits. They were now only two days from Ushant, and it seemed like the storm would hit before the pirate. He checked the positions, smiled, and called over the Old Man, who was teaching knots to a group of younger seamen. The sailor scrambled nimbly up the ladder to the quarterdeck, wearing nothing but a pair of salt-stained breeches. His skin was leathery, his eyes perpetually squinting. Liam considered his own pale skin and the linen trousers and shirt he was wearing, and wondered once again what mad impulse had made him volunteer to captain the *Pride*.

Gods, give me luck, he prayed, and greeted the Old Man.

"That storm line is closer."

"Aye," the Old Man said, squinting back over the rail at the horizon, letting his gaze rest pointedly on the pirate. "But so's Den Huys."

"Yes," Liam agreed reluctantly.

"He's making near a mile an hour on us."

"That much? How long for the storm, do you think?"

The Old Man paused, sniffed. "They're neck and neck, I'd say. It's a toss-up which'll have us first."

Liam realized the sailor was being deliberately obscure. At sea, he knew, it was bad luck to predict, to try to pin fate down. He gave up asking and began a tour of the ship.

The hours crept on. At the mate's suggestion Liam ordered the ballast shifted, and they saw a slight gain in speed as the *Pride* rode the waves better. The pirate, though, still gained, and by noon the sharp-eyed lookout could count all her sails.

Liam stood at the rail, staring back at the distant ship and the even more distant storm line. He was not unaware, however, of the murmuring in the crew, or the little knots of sailors that the Old Man broke up from time to time. They thought it was the old Den Huys after them, a black mage with demons and thunderbolts at his command. Liam could not blame them for being afraid, and was glad he had the Old Man to keep them in line. If they could only stay ahead long enough for the storm to break, they might well escape.

In the midafternoon, with the pirate's hull easily discernible from the quarterdeck, and the solid bar of the storm dissolving into individual black thunderheads, Liam went down to his cabin and ate.

He had just finished his meal when he heard the Old Man's knock and called him in.

"Which is closer?"

"Den Huys, a-course. She's a devil of a ship he's got. The boy at the masthead says it's old Cobber Waakzam's ship, the *Bright Feather*, lost last season. A sweet sailer. He'll be on us by dusk."

Liam frowned and dropped his eyes to the floor. "We could cut for the coast, but with the wind so strong for south we'd lose time going east. We'll have to hope for the storm. There's nothing else."

"Aye," the Old Man said. "Nothing else."

Liam stood and stretched, self-reproach and frustration hidden. "Have the mate break out the weapons. We can at least fight."

The Old Man laughed harshly. "Against magic? Cap Renvoort, we'll stand a better chance with your luck than with swords! Den Huys is gonna burn us to the waterline before he's even in hailing distance!"

Liam was not normally impatient nor intolerant, and he knew he was a much less experienced sailor than the Old Man. But he had spent enough of the night berating himself for leading the ship into danger to have it, as he thought, thrown in his face.

"Look you, get those weapons out and distributed! I'm still captain here, at least until your precious dead pirate blasts us into pieces." He paused, and when the Old Man did not move but only stood regarding him coolly, Renvoort shouted, "Hop, you bastard! Move!"

Almost the moment the Old Man was out of the cabin, Liam regretted his outburst. There was nothing he could do about it, though. He was captain, and the custom on Freeport ships was for the captain to remain aloof. He had violated enough of that spirit by his frequent consultations with the Old Man; he could not stoop lower and apologize to him.

Liam remained alone with his thoughts for the next hour, brooding in his cabin. There was a gallery window

that provided him a view of the sea behind; the *Pride's* furrow-straight wake cut the clear turquoise of Rushcutter's Bay in a line that ran directly to the distant pirate. It was like a lifeline, tethering the two together across the expanse of water. Liam stared heavily at the other ship, noting its rapid approach.

Sitting in a tavern in Dordrecht, it had not seemed so difficult a task to captain a ship across the bay. He had not imagined that the pirate would find him, and had thought that the older captains who refused to sail were, if not cowards, at least old maidish. Now he thought they were far wiser than he; he had not realized that volunteering implicated not just himself but the crew that followed him and the ship he captained. He had reckoned it a purely personal venture, a gesture of courage, not responsibility. And the responsibility weighed on him. It had made him snap at the Old Man, who was his staunchest supporter with the crew, and it was clouding his thinking.

He knew there must be a way to escape the pirate, a logical plan that would have made itself apparent to a more seasoned captain, but he could not discover it. He could only trust to his luck, and to the storm line behind the pirate.

On deck late in the afternoon, Liam could see that both the storm line and the pirate were far closer. Standing alone by the stern rail, he could make out both individual sails and individual thunderheads. In an hour, maybe less, both storm and pirate would be in hailing distance. He squinted sourly across the water, frustrated and unwilling to show it to the crew, which had again gathered in little knots in the ship's waist. Occasionally one of the knots would send an envoy to the Old Man, ensconced on a mass of cordage in the forepeak.

Liam furtively watched these approaches, noting the way the Old Man sent each away with their questions unanswered, and wondering what was being asked. Now more than ever he regretted having blown up at the ancient sailor. A dead hush had fallen over the ship, despite the song of wind in the rigging and the creak of the hull. The leadsman had stopped throwing the log; the *Pride's* speed was insignificant compared to the speed of the ship behind.

They won't mutiny, Liam thought. What good would it do them?

He allowed himself a grim laugh at the idea, and turned back to his study of their pursuers.

Dusk brought many things. The sun was westering on the horizon; the pirate was almost within hailing distance. Liam could see that she was big—far bigger than the *Pride*, with high sides and four masts crammed with sail. The growing distinctness of the pirate's ship, which many of the crew recognized, sent a murmur of dismay among them and sparked an intense round of discussion in the waist. Liam was aware of it and was very little surprised when a sailor came up on the quarterdeck, an obvious deputy.

"Cap Renvoort," he said, coughing respectfully and knuckling his forehead.

Liam swung around to face him and the sailor quailed. It was not Freeport custom to question the captain, and he obviously did not relish his charge.

"Cap Renvoort," he stammered, "we in the crew've been thinking."

"It's Rhenford," Liam said softly. In the hours since the knots had formed in the crew, he had been preparing himself for such as this. "You're mispronouncing it."

"Cap?"

"My name. You're mispronouncing it. It's Rhenford."

"Yes, Cap," the sailor said, confused by Liam's comment, then hurried on. "As I said, we've been thinking, and we wonder if we oughtn't turn to and give up. Maybe Den Huys'll let us go and just take the ship. At least, that's what we've been thinking. Cap."

Liam frowned, appearing to consider the proposal, then raised his head and looked out over the crew. He noticed that the weapons—bows, axes, a few rusty swords and spears—had been handed out, but that the sailors held them carelessly and with a certain distrust. They stared up at him, awaiting his response. He also saw that the Old Man was still on his rope seat in the forepeak, watching the proceedings with apparent indifference.

"Look you," Liam said, raising his voice to address the crew directly, "we could turn to and give in, if this were any normal pirate. Gods, if this were any normal pirate, we could even fight. But it's not. It's Den Huys, as you well know, and he's a black magician who takes no prisoners. If we turn to, we're dead. But if we keep on, and that squall hits us before he does, we may keep out of his hands. It's a small chance, but with luck we may get away. I give you the choice—turn to and die at Den Huys' hands, or keep on and maybe get away."

There was a profound hush, and Liam looked to the Old Man, who nodded once in approval. The sailors in the waist began to mutter among themselves, considering the choice the captain had offered. Liam remained aloof, looking up at the rigging, as if he were considering the set of the sails. A million thoughts raced through his head, not the least of which was to ask whether he really believed now that the pirate chasing them was the Den Huys of legend. In the minutes while he waited for the crew to decide, a strange premonition stole over him that it really was the wizard pirate, risen from his grave to harry the *Pride*—and Liam—to the ends of Rushcutter's Bay. He shivered as the sun sank into the water, though the night was warm.

Gods, what if it really is the old Den Huys? What if he blows us out of the water before that storm hits?

It seemed like hours before the crew decided, but it was only minutes. In those minutes, however, two things happened: the pirate closed to within a mile of the *Pride*, and the storm line visibly picked up speed.

The crew had recalled its deputy and given him their message; he walked back to the quarterdeck, again obviously unhappy, and prepared to tell Liam the crew's decision.

He never had the chance. As he set foot on the quarterdeck, a booming roar of thunder shook the sea, momentarily tearing the wind out of the *Pride's* sails and setting them flapping. Then a voice shouted out of the clear sky.

"Ahoy, *Pride of Dordrecht!* Turn to and prepare to be boarded! This is the *Death*, Den Huys master, and we mean to have your souls and your ship! Turn to!"

The hail came from all around, in a whistle of wind and

punctuated by cracks of thunder. Many of the crew fell to their knees in fear, including the deputy, but Liam only spun around to face the pursuing ship. He was glad that he had told the men it was the Den Huys of old who followed; it was clear that only a wizard could send such a hail, and besides, there was no way short of sorcery for the other ship to have seen their name, painted as it was in the bow.

Still, the sight of the pirate so close made him clutch the rail and set his heart beating fast; if Den Huys could send his voice a mile across the open sea, what else could he send?

A second later the answer came: a brilliant flash of light that struck the mainmast and rent a topsail in two, reducing the ship's way. The *Pride* shuddered, sending more of the crew tumbling to the deck.

Liam stared in awe at the sail, the torn edges sprouting fingers of flame that began to spread across the canvas. The immensity of the magic struck him speechless, and it was the Old Man who answered the danger.

"Get up there, you monkeys," he shouted, leaping from the pile of cordage to slap two sailors into action. "Up, and cut it free! We'll burn to the waterline!" The sailors he hit came to their sense and scrambled up the ratlines; a few others followed their example, pulling knives to cut free the burning topsail. Liam, though, and most of the crew, simply stared at their efforts.

The Old Man trotted across the deck to where Liam stood and placed himself squarely before the captain.

"Well," Liam said thickly, "it looks like you were right."

"They're neck and neck," the Old Man said, pointing over Liam's shoulder. Liam turned and saw at first only the *Death*, all sail crowded on, bearing down on them like a demon; but then he tore his eyes away from it and saw that the storm was just beyond it and rapidly gaining. In a moment the black clouds had swept over the *Death*, and for the first time Liam could accurately gauge its rate of approach.

"Gods," he whispered, "it's a real blow." Then he turned to the Old Man. "We've got to get braced."

The sailor nodded again and dashed off into the waist to rouse the still-dazed majority of the crew.

"Into the lines," Liam shouted. "It's a real blow!"

By the time the burning topsail had been cut away and the stunned crew brought to their senses, the *Death* was completely obscured by the approaching storm, but another hail came nonetheless.

"Ahoy the *Pride!* I'll have your damned souls, storm or no!"

The crew paid this no mind, their attention riveted on the black squall that rushed across the ocean to engulf them. Piracy and black magic they could not counter, but preparing for a storm, no matter how monstrous it appeared, was something they knew. In a matter of minutes they had the *Pride* battened down, storm canvas fully rigged and all but the most crucial sails hoisted in.

There was a full minute of waiting, with everything prepared, before the storm hit them with full force. All eyes focused on the raging clouds and the vicious, hissing curtain of rain, the pirate hidden in its depths forgotten for the moment.

It hit them like a snarling tiger, a palpable darkness with a thousand lashing whips, an angry wall of water and wind that seemed bent on overwhelming them all at once. Two

sails split immediately and Liam, desperately clutching the rail to avoid being swept away, was completely blinded in the first minutes. It was all anyone could do simply to stay with the ship, and a man was torn out of the rigging by the storm's prying fingers without anyone noticing.

The first angry blow of the storm was its greatest, and when the front of the storm had passed them, its anger was spent, though not its strength. After long minutes of blind clutching at the rail and feverish praying, Liam found he could open his eyes and stand, though water still poured down from the sky and the wind howled, gusting strongly through the rags of the sails. Stumbling through the rivers that gushed along the deck, he made sure of the mate at the wheel and sent sailors along the deck, shouting orders directly into men's ears and ensuring that the ship would still sail.

The force of the storm was amazing; he had never seen one so strong, and from the look on the Old Man's face when he came to the quarterdeck, he was impressed as well.

"It's hell's own blow," Liam shouted into the ancient sailor's ear.

"Doesn't seem to've stopped him," the Old Man shouted back, jerking a thumb over the rail. Liam followed his gesture and dimly made out the *Death*, cresting a giant wave behind them. He swore to himself and then shook his head. It could not matter. If the storm hung on long enough, they would have to lose the pirate—unless they broached to beneath the towering waves, or shipped so much water they sank. Liam briefly wondered if the storm wasn't the worse of their two enemies.

A single bolt of light lancing from the *Death* convinced him it was not. The magic shot out and crashed into the crest of a wave as the *Pride* rode up it, flames momentarily playing along the surging water and then dying out.

At least he can miss, Liam thought.

The *Pride* rode the storm all through the night, rising and falling on the mountainous waves, struggling to keep canvas on the masts and the sea out of the hold. Great sheets of cold water crashed across the decks, rendering fingers numb and lifelines slick and treacherous. Three more men went overboard as the ship raced on before the blow.

Liam kept his post on the quarterdeck, scarcely aware of the line by which the Old Man had secured him to the rail or the thick cloak the sailor had brought him. Some captains might have gone below—there was little he could order of which the mate or the Old Man wouldn't have already thought. But he had never mastered the art of sleeping in a storm at sea, and the idea of huddling below in the cold, wet darkness of his cabin did not appeal to him. So he struggled for footing against the waves and the rain and kept his position behind the two men now required to hold the wheel, watching as best he could the *Pride's* progress, and that of their pursuer.

The *Death* kept pace with them. It could be seen occasionally, three or four wavecrests behind, rising high above them for a moment to disappear down into a trough. At each descent, Liam offered a prayer that Den Huys' ship would not rise, but each time it did, cresting the peaks like an avenging demon, all sails set in a gesture



that defied the power of the storm's winds.

Bolts of lightning, more brilliant and fearsome by far than the natural ones of the storm, shot from the *Death* toward the *Pride*. Most fell unheeded into the angry sea, coruscating on the black water, but a number struck home, setting rigging and yards blazing with fire despite the downpour. Sailors scrambled out to cut away the ropes and wood hit by the magic, dropping them into the sea. One bolt struck the rail to Liam's left, and he snatched up an axe to help hew away the afflicted wood. As the last piece fell, another bolt streaked overhead and, turning, he watched it catch a sailor high in the rigging full in the chest. With a cry heard over the full-throated roar of the storm, the man fell like a flaming star into the sea. He sank, but the magic fire continued to burn around him, and long moments passed before it disappeared into the depths.

Throughout the night the storm wore on. Liam was completely numb, his drenched cloak like a lead weight on his shoulders. Toward dawn he became aware of a cloudiness of mind. He sensed that the gale's power was diminishing, but he could not bring himself to consider what that meant. The *Death* was still close behind them; running out of the storm meant facing the pirate as before, with the ship in far worse condition. The rigging and yards were a shambles, the sails mere rags. They could not hope to do more than run a few miles before they were caught.

By insensible stages the storm wore itself out. The howling slowly dropped in pitch, and the sea flattened itself in a process so gradual it could not be perceived until it was done. The lashing rain resolved into a steady downpour, which slowed to a drizzle.

Liam watched all this apathetically. The long run before the storm and the sense that his luck had run out oppressed him, driving all conscious thought away and reducing him to a bystander in the ship's progress.

The sailors at first took the calming of the storm as a good sign, but they quickly realized that the *Death* was with them, and set grimly to prolonging the chase as long as possible. The Old Man circulated among them, giving the orders Liam should have, keeping them at the necessary tasks long after their exhausted bodies should have given out.

It was not an issue of seamanship that roused Liam from his torpor, but a question of money. Dawn had come behind the clouds, diffusing a dull grey glow over the sea; the rain slackened. The positions of the day before were resumed—the *Pride* still in front, the *Death* ever closer. The Old Man had set all possible sail, but it was clear that they could not stay out of the pirate's hands for more than an hour. With a glum expression, the sailor trudged up to the quarterdeck and approached Liam.

"Well, Cap, it looks like we've almost reached the end of our run."

Liam only grunted, sunk in his own dark thoughts.

"We can get a few more miles out of her," the Old Man went on, "if we could start the wool over the side. It's shipped a mess of water and's weighing heavy in the hold."

Slowly the idea penetrated Liam's mind, and his first reflection on it was that, even faced with a deadly pirate and a vicious storm, the Freeporters' respect for property made throwing away cargo an important issue. Then, by degrees, he made himself consider the situation, and at

last brought himself to agree.

"Very well. Toss it over the side."

The Old Man allowed himself a brief, querying look at Liam, wondering at the leaden tone of the captain's voice, then set the crew to pitching the heavy, sodden bundles of prickly wool over the side. It took the better part of an hour, and when it was done the *Pride* had gained appreciably in speed, enough to maintain an even distance from the *Death*. The Old Man went back up to the quarterdeck.

"Cap Renvoort, if we could toss the oil as well, we could gain a little more speed."

"It's Rhenford," Liam said, a small smile playing over his lips. "And no, we'll need the oil. Have the men set to preparing the boats."

The Old Man was as much surprised by the captain's new expression of purpose as by his earlier dullness, but he obeyed.

Liam had been set thinking by the jettisoning of the wool, and by the nearness of the *Death*. Since the storm had stopped, no more bolts had come from the pirate, and Liam imagined that the other ship bore an even grimmer appearance as it came on beneath the lowering clouds. An imaginative leap suggested something to him: Den Huys did not mean just to sink *Pride* or burn it with magic from a distance. He now wanted to punish them for the long chase in the storm. And that suggested something further.

Dropping his heavy cloak to the deck, Liam strode quickly off the quarterdeck and went below.

When Liam came back on deck an hour later, all was clearly lost. The *Death* was less than half a mile behind, though no more hails had come. The rain had stopped and the clouds were breaking up, offering long glimpses of the surface of Rushcutter's Bay littered with storm wrack. To the east, pieces of coastline could be made out. Liam went to the rail and considered these for a moment. The Old Man joined him.

"The storm's brought us in close. Shore's only a few miles away," he observed.

"Yes," Liam said, his earlier smile still on his face. He looked tired and dirty, smudged by the filth of the lowest holds. "Are the boats ready?"

"Aye, Cap. What's the plan?"

"We'll pull in as close to the coast as we can, then disembark. We'll lower the boats on the far side, so they can't see us, then pull like madmen for land."

The Old Man shook his head. "Den Huys'll blow our little boats out of the water. It's best maybe to stay and fight it out."

To his surprise, Liam laughed and clapped him on the back. "Don't worry about that. He'll be so busy with the *Pride* he won't notice our boats. Now make sure they're ready to be dropped."

With that, he jogged up to the man at the wheel and had him set the ship in toward land.

They did not get much closer, just enough to make out the low dunes and marshes in more detail. The pirate was still several cable lengths away, a full fifteen minutes' of sailing, when Liam gave the order to turn to. Shrugging, the mate complied, spinning the wheel and turning the ship in a tight

Continued on page 109

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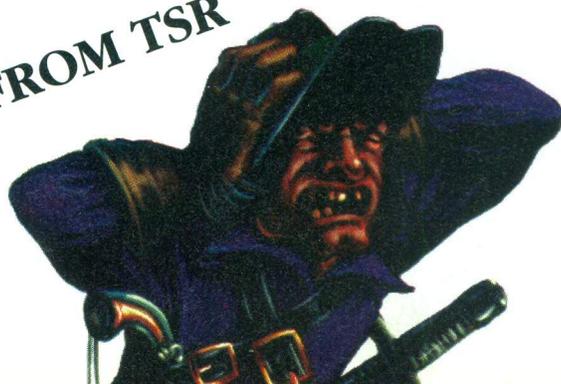
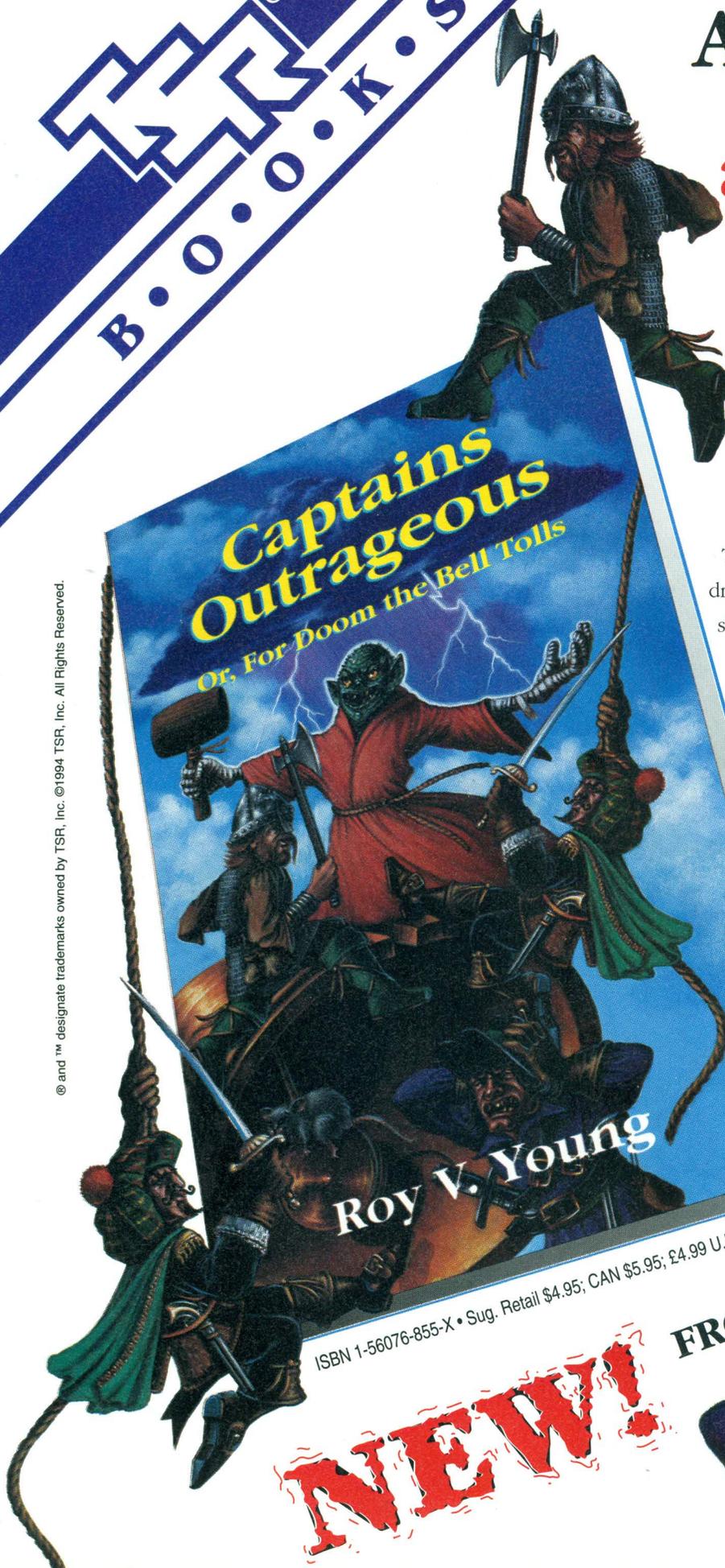
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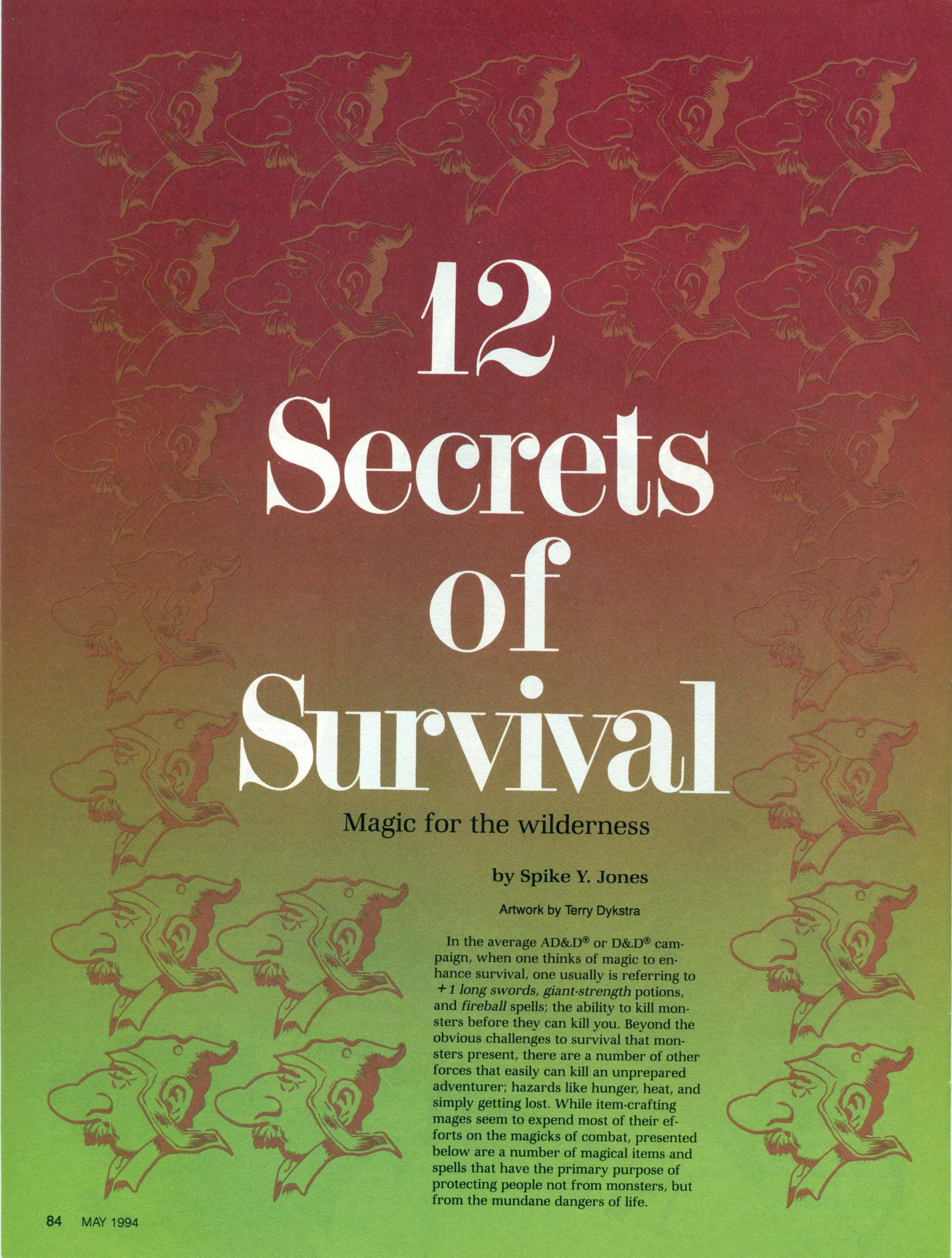
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12 Secrets of Survival

Magic for the wilderness

by Spike Y. Jones

Artwork by Terry Dykstra

In the average AD&D® or D&D® campaign, when one thinks of magic to enhance survival, one usually is referring to *+1 long swords*, *giant-strength potions*, and *fireball spells*; the ability to kill monsters before they can kill you. Beyond the obvious challenges to survival that monsters present, there are a number of other forces that easily can kill an unprepared adventurer; hazards like hunger, heat, and simply getting lost. While item-crafting mages seem to expend most of their efforts on the magicks of combat, presented below are a number of magical items and spells that have the primary purpose of protecting people not from monsters, but from the mundane dangers of life.

Amulet of cat-naps

Wearing this tiger-eye agate amulet removes the burden of having to take an eight-hour stretch of time for sleep from the wearer. Instead, it allows him to take sleep in momentary snatches throughout the day. As these naps are extremely short and the sleep is light, the sleeper suffers no penalties on his actions, initiative, or surprise; the net effect is of apparently being able to stay up 24 hours per day.

Unfortunately, the lack of deep sleep is eventually harmful to the wearer. For every two days that the amulet is worn, a saving throw versus paralysis must be made or the wearer loses a point of Constitution. (Lost Constitution is regained at a rate of one point per night of unassisted sleep.)

XP value: 500

Armor of restful sleep

This armor can be of any type, from leather to full plate, and only a small percentage of these suits provide pluses on AC. (Use Table 105 on *DMG* page 139 to determine the type of armor found, with a "special" result meaning a reroll for type and a roll on Table 106 to determine the pluses of the suit.) The only special effects of this magical armor is that it has no encumbrance and can be worn while sleeping with no discomfort. Thus, the wearer can be fully armored whenever she awakes, even in the middle of the night.

XP Value: 1,000 (More if AC bonuses are granted; see Table 106.)

Exposure salve

The purpose of this magical ointment is to protect exposed skin from the effects of the elements such as sun, wind, and rain. Any skin coated with the *salve* will be immune to injury from normal cold and heat, wind burns, and in sand storms, the abrasion of airborne particles. Someone protected by the *salve* won't suffer even a sunburn from spending days in a desert, nor would she have to worry about frostbite on exposed parts in arctic climes. Unfortunately, *exposure salve* has no effect against any magical attack form, even if it is an exact duplicate of a natural effect that the salve is sovereign against.

The *salve* is found in small jars that typically contain enough to cover the hands and face of ten people, or the entire body of a single person. A single application will last for one week and while it can be deliberately scrubbed off the skin, incidental exposure to water (such as rain) will not reduce its effects.

XP value: 250

Eye of the condor

Unlike other magical eyes, this is a single fine crystal lens to be held up to the eye momentarily, not to be fitted over the eyes for long-term usage. The view from within the jewel is equivalent to that a high-soaring condor or eagle would have of the

user's location. The user can see for a distance of some five miles in all directions around his position, giving him a good idea of large-scale terrain features such as rivers, hills, roads, and forests, but little or no information about minute details such as people or individual animals below the viewpoint. While the *eye* cannot be used to spy in the activities of a person on the other side of a nearby obstruction, it can be used to take note of large-scale activities, such as the movement of a large party of adventurers or of an army within its area of effect.

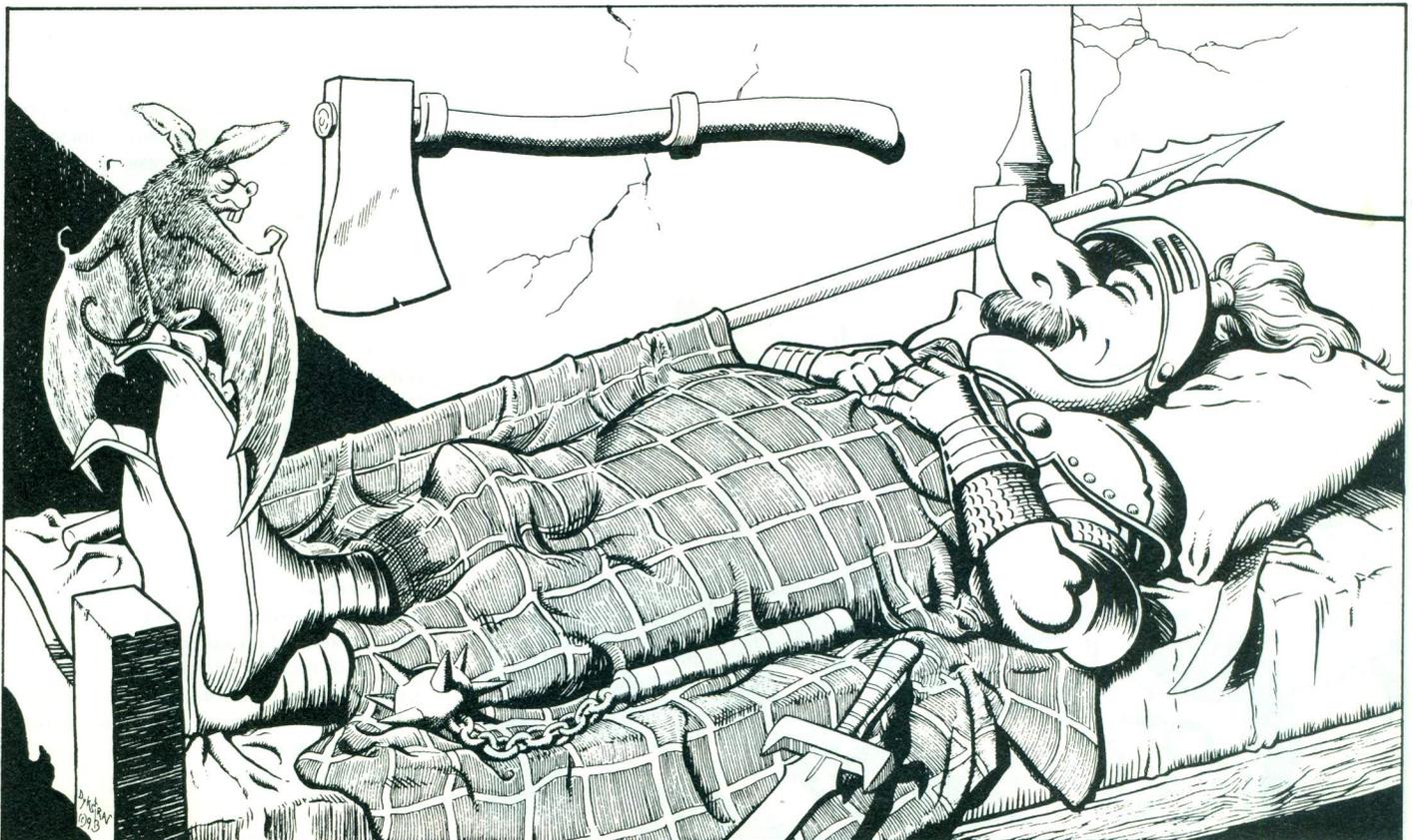
Because of the strange point-of-view the *eye* grants, attempting to perform any normal functions (such as walking or fighting) while employing the *eye* results in severe disorientation and vertigo; the user will have to save against paralysis or be stunned for a period of 1d4 rounds after misusing an *eye of the condor*.

XP value: 2,000

Otiluke's survival sphere

This powerful magic bauble (which might be named after the mage Otiluke only as a tradition) takes the form of a small glass sphere the size of a billiard ball when not being used. At need, the *sphere* can be broken against any hard surface; at that point a crystalline sphere with a 10' diameter will spring into existence around the caster (and anything else within that diameter).

The activated *survival sphere* is trans-



parent, but is otherwise invulnerable to most outside forces. The interior is maintained at a comfortable temperature, breathable air is produced by the sphere, it acts as a *protection from normal missiles* spell, and the caster can command the use of a *create food & water* spell (creating three cubic feet of food and water) once per day while within the *sphere*. It will not prevent the entry of any magical forces, but neither will these forces shatter the sphere; a *control temperature, 10' radius* spell can be used to change the temperature within the sphere, but once the spell's duration ceases, the interior temperature will automatically revert to comfortable levels. The sphere floats, and it can be moved slowly on land by the occupants shifting their weight to roll it about.

The *survival sphere* can be occupied indefinitely, allowing its inhabitants to weather any storm or hazardous situation in reasonable comfort. Most importantly, when the *survival sphere* is deactivated by the proper command word (from within or without), the original glass bauble reforms, and it is fully reusable after one week's time no matter how long the sphere was in use.

XP value: 4,000

Pavilion of plenty

This extremely rare magical item (only three are known to have been created) provides for one's dietary needs at something more than the basic survival level. In form, it is a cumbersome full-size tent that takes up half a mule-load or a man's full pack, even with its collapsible tent poles. It takes 30 minutes for a single man to set up

the colorful *pavilion* (with the time reduced proportionately for every person who helps, up to a maximum of ten persons raising the tent in three minutes), but when this mundane task is finished, the interior of the tent will be found to contain a long trestle table, benches and a few chairs, along with a living butler.

The butler is an elf with no significant combat or magical abilities who lives inside the *pavilion* at all times. When the tent is folded, he goes into a magical stasis, and does not age a moment until the tent is next unfolded. He can remember all the segments of his life that occurred while the tent was unfolded, and his life goes back to a time before the item was even created. He will not willingly travel more than 50' from the tent, and if he is killed, the *pavilion* loses all its magic.

The butler controls a permanent *unseen servant* spell, and is able magically to produce food enough to provide 36 meals per day (in any combination, such as three meals for 12 people, or a single meal for a large party). The food served will be of average quality, but it can be improved to luxurious quality by doubling the number of meals used per serving (e.g., it can produce only 18 luxury meals per day).

The daily food limit is absolute, but the tent can be folded and unfolded any number of times without affecting food production. Any items besides food that are removed from the tent (such as chairs, or the butler) are not reproduced if the tent is collapsed and later erected. Any extra items left in tent during folding (such as the party's packs and other equipment) are not converted; they will retain their

weight and size, which may make it impossible to close the tent or to carry it.

XP value: 5,000

Potion of camel thirst

Imbibing a *potion of camel thirst* renders the drinker immune to the effects of thirst for a week. Unfortunately, when the potion's effects wear off, the potion's user is voraciously thirsty, having to make up for a week without drinking in a single day. If the drinker has arrived at an oasis or in civilization by that time, he should have no trouble quenching his thirst, but if he is still in the desert, he can drink more *potions of camel thirst*, with the end effect being an even more intense thirst at the end of the new potion's duration. Moreover, each additional potion is less effective than the one before, delaying thirst by one day less. (The second potion drunk will work for six days only, providing a combined 13 days of thirst-protection, and the third would only work for five for a total of 18 days, etc.)

XP value: 200

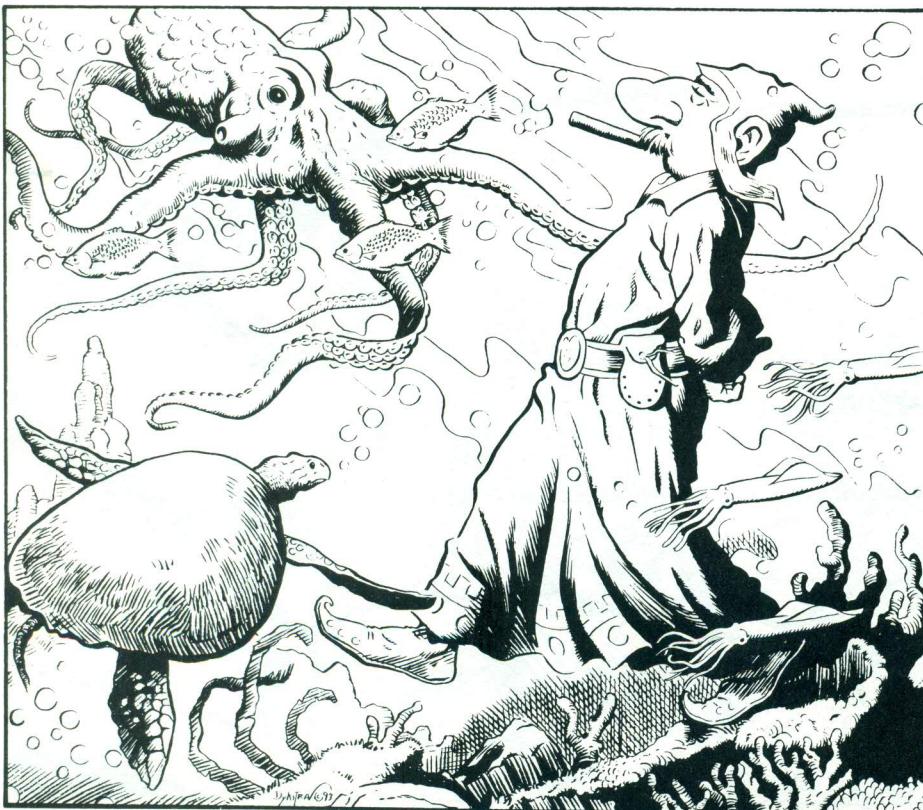
Stone cloak

This simple gray cloak is the ultimate in survival clothing. Under most circumstances it operates as a normal cloak, but when it is pulled tight around the wearer and the command phrase is spoken, the wearer is instantly transformed into a weirdly-shaped mound of gray rock. The rock won't resemble a human body to any except the most imaginative of onlookers, and any physical tests of the rock will show it to be normal in all respects (although *detect magic* will reveal an indecipherable magical aura around the rock).

While in rock form, the cloak's wearer has no need of food or water, nor will heat or cold affect him unless these conditions are so extreme that they cause normal rocks to crack, in which case he will suffer minor damage (1d4 or 1d6). As a rock, he cannot move, nor can he think anything but the most basic thoughts. He can see his surroundings, but only vaguely, as if seen through a many-layered veil.

Deactivating the cloak requires the wearer to think the appropriate command phrase, but the longer he has been in rock form, the harder it will become to think like a living person. In order to remember the command phrase, the wearer must make an Intelligence ability check on 1d20, with a penalty of -1 on the roll for every week (or part of a week) he has been in rock form. A *stone cloak* also can be deactivated from the outside by someone who knows the correct command phrase, and who touches the correct boulder while reciting the phrase; if the cloak's wearer chose a jumbled field of stones to activate his cloak in, it may be some time before a rescuer finds him.

XP value: 2,500



Straw of breathing

This hollow metal tube (about the size of a finger) protects the user from suffocation by most normal means. The user merely places one end of the straw in his mouth and breathes through it as he normally would. The far end of the tube is connected by a dimensional portal to the Elemental Plane of Air, allowing him to draw clean, fresh air through the tube no matter what his surrounding conditions are; whether he is in the midst of a *stinking cloud* spell, is underwater, or even in the vacuum of Wildspace. *Straws of breathing* are not common, but they are most often found amongst mariners who ply the seas or the stars.

XP value: 800

Sun cloak

This stylish item of clothing is reversible to show two different color schemes (usually pure white and black), and provides the wearer complete protection from extremes of solar heat and sunless cold. When worn with the white (or light) side out, a *sun cloak* keeps the wearer cool and comfortable even in blistering desert sunlight, and when worn with the black (or dark) side out, it keeps the wearer warm (but not hot) even against the chill of an arctic night. It gives no protection whatsoever against heat or cold from other sources (such as fires or magic), nor does it help one withstand the painful brilliance of the sun.

If worn incorrectly, the effects of the *sun cloak* can be deadly. Wearing the cloak inside-out during the day will cause the wearer to suffer the effects of sun exposure (dehydration, exhaustion, etc.) at twice the normal rate, while wearing it inside-out at night will cause the victim to freeze as if stranded in a raging blizzard.

XP value: 1,000

Mage spells

Sustain fire (Alteration)

Level: 1 Components: V,S
Range: 5 yds./lvl. CT: 2
Duration: Special Save: None
Area of Effect: 5' radius

When this spell is cast on a nonmagical fire, the fire is made to consume its fuel at only one-tenth its normal rate, while giving off its full amount of light and heat; a boon in areas where firewood is scarce. A fire so affected will radiate magic as such is detected for, but is treated like a normal flame for all other purposes; it can be extinguished normally, and it does not count as a magical attack form when used against creatures that are harmed only by magic weapons.

Sustain fire can be cast on any number of fires, as long as they are all entirely within the area of effect at the time of casting, so that a bundle of lit torches could be magicked and then separated for full effect, but if one of those enchanted torches was used to light another fire, the

new fire would have only a normal duration. Multiple *sustain fire* spells cast on a single target have no additional effects, and any extra fuel added to the fire after the casting will burn at their normal rates, not at the enchanted rate. If the enchanted fire is extinguished, the spell's effects end, no matter how much time was left to the fuel. If the fire is relit, the remaining fuel will burn at its normal rate.

Rainfire (Conjuration)

Level: 2 Components: V,S,M
Range: 10 yds. CT: 5
Dur.: 1 turn/lvl. Save: Special
Area of Effect: 1' radius

The effects of this spell are both limited and impressive. When cast on a small pile of flammable material, that material bursts into flames and burns as a normal fire for a period of one turn per level of the caster. Aside from being a handy way to light a fire at a short distance, the spectacular component of this magic is that the fire created will burn even in a driving rain or a howling wind. It will burn even underwater for one-tenth the normal duration!

The material component of the spell is a small pile of brush or other material to fuel the fire. The material doesn't have to be dry in order to be lit (although it must be a material that would be flammable if dry), but no other fires can be lighted from the magical one, as the flames will not spread past the 1' radius of the spell's effects.

Rainfire can be used as an attack form, lighting the clothing or hair of a victim on fire if he fails a save vs. spells if the caster

hits the target in combat. Damage done by the burning clothing will be 1d4 points per round, and if the clothing is removed, no further damage will be done (as the flames do not spread).

Priest spell

Rainshield (Conjuration)

Level: 1 Components: V,S
Range: 0 CT: 2
Duration: 2 turns/lvl. Save: Special
Area of Effect: 2' radius

This spell causes an invisible barrier to come into existence five feet above the head of the caster. Unlike a wizard's *shield* spell, the *rainshield* doesn't prevent weapons from striking the caster, but it does shelter him from rain or other liquids falling from above. Normal water is automatically stopped, but if the liquid is other than water, and if the caster is unaware of this fact, he must make a saving vs. spells to prevent that liquid's entry.

With conscious effort, the caster can move the *rainshield* from its position directly above him to a better angle for stopping wind-blown rain, or even to a position directly in front of him to impede liquid-based attacks on his person. Because of the limited area of effect, a horizontally-held *rainshield* may allow splashes of water or other liquids to strike the caster's legs even if the major portion of an attack is diverted. If other persons stand near the caster, they also can share the benefits of the *rainshield*, but the caster cannot move the barrier in order to better share the spell's effects.

Ω





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The Palladium Fantasy World

The Game Wizards

Visit the revised RAVENLOFT® setting—if you dare

by Dori Hein

Artwork by Robh Ruppel



The tale of the vampire Strahd and the origin of the Demiplane of Dread is a familiar one to RAVENLOFT players, but for those of you who are new to the line, let me give you a brief introduction to Strahd. He is an integral part of the RAVENLOFT world, and the game line (which was developed from the module, *I6 Ravenloft*, by Tracy and Laura Hickman)

literally arose around this core figure.

Strahd was the elder son of a ruling family and devoted much of his life to the safety of his people—so much so that he entered his middle years with no wife to comfort him. Then, as the Fates would have it, Strahd's younger brother Sergei brought home his betrothed, the beautiful Tatyana. The result is obvious, but

tragic nonetheless.

I happen to think Strahd's love for Tatyana was genuine, at least in the beginning, though because Strahd is thoroughly evil, it's hard to justify this statement. Many believe Strahd felt no noble emotion for Tatyana, and perhaps this is true. However, I'm sure the impulse of a more noble desire existed in Strahd while he was yet mortal. That spark, which could have been ignited and flamed into the embers of goodness, was quelled by the capricious Tatyana. Tatyana, you see, had no interest in this man she called "old man" and "elder brother," and she spurned his advances. I like to think Strahd's fall from grace rests squarely on this young woman's shoulders, and that she is the true reason for the Demiplane's existence. Of course, that's merely my opinion, and the history of Ravenloft squarely points its finger at Strahd as the culprit.

I always thought Strahd at that point in his life was far more interesting than Sergei, and I think Tatyana was a fool to have preferred the younger brother over the elder. After all, the elder was mentally and emotionally more compelling—much more exciting than the younger with his sweet naivete. Besides, there was the inheritance to consider. What young woman would give up money and the throne in favor of a more-than-likely penniless second son?

While that's a cynical assessment, it's probably a more accurate one if the situation between Strahd and Sergei and Tatyana were in real life. However, this eternal triangle isn't real life—it's Gothic drama at its best. The seeds of tragedy were sown the moment Strahd cast his eyes upon Tatyana and coveted her. She fled from him, and he sought other methods to appease his lust, to rid himself of the obstacle presented in the form of Sergei. Strahd made a pact with death that, while it would undo his own mortality, would ensure his immortality in the annals of role-playing history. With this last corruption of Strahd's soul, the domain of Barovia was wrenched from the land, and the Demiplane of Dread was born in the Ethereal Plane. Its first, though perhaps not mightiest, darklord took the shape of the vampire von Zarovich.

Strahd's a romantic antihero of the first magnitude, a complex and intelligent figure. He's integral to the core philosophy behind the RAVENLOFT game line, but he is, after all, only one character. There are others whose stories burn as bright, those who have developed in the last few years through game accessories, adventures, and novels. They, too, deserve to be as thoroughly explored as is Strahd, and that's what the new edition of the RAVENLOFT setting accomplishes.

Hyskosa's hexad

There are other reasons, too, for the revision of the RAVENLOFT setting, the foremost of which is that the land itself changes over time. Ravenloft is a world in flux; it is not meant to be a static environment. Boundaries change, as do the domains and their inhabitants. Darklords wax and wane in power, gaining or losing territory. New land may come from the border ethereal, the fluctuating force that surrounds the Demiplane of Dread, or it may envelop a smaller domain.

On rare occasions of major import, a conjunction occurs between Ravenloft and lands within the Prime Material plane. On such instances, some of the domains of Ravenloft physically *replace* land found elsewhere. It is at such times that the darklords have their only opportunity to escape their prisons within the Demiplane of Dread.

The Grand Conjunction, the greatest of these occasions and the only one known and detailed thus far in the history of Ravenloft, was foretold by Hyskosa, a Vistani seer, in the following verse:

*In the house of Daegon the sorcerer born,
though life, unlife, unliving shall scorn.
The lifeless child of stern mother found
heralds a time, night of evil unbound.
Seventh time the son of suns doth rise
to send the knave to an eternity of cries.
The light of the sky shining over the dead
shall gutter and fail, turning all to red.
The bodiless shall journey to the time
before where happiness to hate creates
land and more.
Inajira will make his fortunes reverse
dooming all to live with the dreaded
curse.
Know thee now that the circle is complete,
what lust hath made, history shall
repeat.*

These events were carried out in a series of adventures (*Feast of Goblins, Ship of Horror, Touch of Death, Night of the Walking Dead, From the Shadows, and Roots of Evil*, respectively).

Fortunately for our gamers in the prime-material worlds (most notably Toril, Krynn, Oerth, and Athas), the Grand Conjunction did not come about. Azalin the lich so desired to free himself from the confines of the Demiplane that in his haste to hurry along the conjunction he sidestepped some of the events. Needless to

say, he still calls the continent of discontent his home.

The Grand Conjunction did have ramifications upon Ravenloft, however—ramifications that have reverberated throughout the Demiplane. Boundaries between domains, ever frail, faded and lapsed. Some inhabitants escaped to new domains, even a few to the Prime Material plane. The core domains and the islands of terror were shaken from their prior stability.

Vechor, Farelle, and Sanguinia, islands all, exist no more. In their place fell Bluet-spur, G'Henna, and the Nightmare Lands—wrenched from the core they became islands instead, struggling to retain their existence within the Demiplane and only just succeeding. Remarkably the domains that remained in the core did not fill this void; rather, a bottomless chasm called the Shadow Rift now fills the area. The domains of Markovia and Valachan were transposed to the Sea of Sorrows. Borca and Dorvinia, on the other hand, merged to become a new domain . . . yet at the new land's heart there wrestles *two* lords. Arkandale was absorbed by Verbrek, however, and lost its lord altogether. Lastly, the drow dwelling in the underground dominion of Arak disappeared, relinquishing the domain to Darkon.

Other changes beyond the warping of the lands were wrought by the Grand Conjunction, including the advent of a few new domains. Rokushima, a cluster of tiny oriental islands, has appeared in the Demiplane. The lord of Gundarak was assassinated by a Dr. Dominiani, but the domain disappeared without accepting Dominiani's rule. For his efforts, however, the dark powers granted Dominiani a tiny island domain, not much larger than the asylum he calls his home. Someone has claimed the Sea of Sorrows as his domain, a captain of a ghostly ship.

Ravenloft is, above all, an unstable place. It is not a rigid plane where lords and lands are constant, immutable forces. It is a place of shifting dimensions and domains, where even the breadth of time fluctuates. Its lands expand, coalesce, or disappear; new ones appear, shaped by the nature of a fresh evil to be entrapped in Ravenloft's snare. This new edition details these changes, bringing players up-to-date with Ravenloft's latest transformation.

The revision

The Grand Conjunction has reshaped the Demiplane of Dread, and what was contained within the original *Realm of Terror* boxed set is now reshaped into a land at once familiar yet distorted. Domains destroyed in the Grand Conjunction have been deleted, new domains have emerged from the Mists, and key personalities have undergone harsh changes in the warping of the Demiplane.

Due in hobby and book stores this June, the new edition combines the original boxed set with elements from the *Forbidden Lore* set, an expansion product that

explored the Vistani, fortunetelling, secret societies, and psionics. The revision includes the following items:

Realm of Terror—a 160-page rule book. This volume details the reshaping of character classes in Ravenloft, expounds on techniques to add terror to a campaign, and describes both new and old spells and magical items and how they have been twisted by the Demiplane. Also included in this book are fear, horror, madness, and Ravenloft powers checks; these have been updated and expanded for players. Lastly, curses and psionics round out this manual.

Domains and Denizens—a 128-page background book. This primer describes the dark lands of the core, the islands of terror, and how these domains have survived the Grand Conjunction. The book also discusses the many nefarious characters populating these domains as well as those few of goodness, most notably Dr. Rudolph van Richten. Details of the mysterious Vistani, who have the ability to read the future, round out this book.

Two maps, which depict the new core domains and the islands of terror.

A tarokka deck of beautifully illustrated cards for role-playing fortune telling. These cards were originally included in the *Forbidden Lore* boxed set. They make an excellent playing aid for Dungeon Masters who want to add a bit of Vistani ambiance to their role-playing sessions. (To all of you who have asked for this at GEN CON® Game Fair: Yes, we have plans to produce a *Van Richten's Guide* to the Vistani in the near future!)

A four-panel Dungeon Master screen, specially designed for RAVENLOFT campaigns. This screen includes all tables pertinent to the RAVENLOFT setting as well as all major AD&D® game tables.

An attractive poster featuring a painting by artist Robh Ruppel. Robh has brought a new vision to Ravenloft that can only be described as exciting.

Some of you may recall that *Forbidden Lore* also included dikesha—dice with special symbols that were also used as a fortune-telling variant. These dice are not included in this new boxed set, because of prohibitive production costs. They are still available in any existing copies of *Forbidden Lore*, however. For those of you who are collectors, TSR isn't reprinting that product, and you may want to find it simply for the dikesha. For those of you who are new to the RAVENLOFT campaign and simply want to play the game, *Forbidden Lore* isn't necessary as all the pertinent rules have been added to the new boxed set.

For all players, whether you are long familiar with the terrors of the night or are new to the genre of Gothic horror, we at TSR extend a special invitation to step into the night and be enter the Mists of Ravenloft. Enjoy!

Ravenloft®

Books

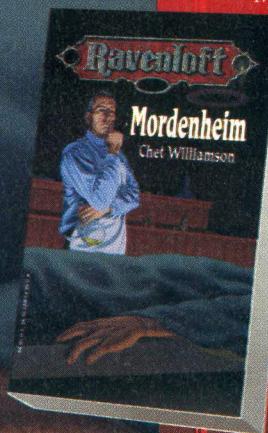
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New!



Dragon SLAYERS

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Concept & pencils by Arnie Swekel

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New character options from the COUNCIL OF WYRMS boxed set

Imagine player characters of such fierce form and unstoppable power that only one setting can hold them. Imagine an isolated island chain where a dragon civilization rules supreme and demihumans exist only as servants. Imagine armored flesh, taut wings, claws like long swords, teeth like daggers, and breath weapons of mass destruction. Imagine dragon player characters (PCs), then create them with the rules provided in the new AD&D® game COUNCIL OF WYRMS boxed set.

Dragons, however, aren't the only new PC types introduced in the product. A new kit for humans—the dragon slayer—is presented as a nonplayer character (NPC) foe for the dragon PCs. In this article, we'll promote the dragon slayer to PC status for use in other AD&D campaign settings, provide a new slayer mage kit, and give both types additional attack forms to employ against their mortal enemies. Much of this information can also be used to beef up a DM's slayer NPCs in a dragon-PC campaign. Finally, you'll find a new *Monstrous Manual* page describing the undead dragon slayers that still haunt the dragon isles.

The dragon slayers

In the setting detailed in the COUNCIL OF WYRMS boxed set, the dragons of the Io's Blood island chain were once constantly at war with each other. The greater god Io, the Concordant Dragon, sent his avatar to bring a message of peace and harmony to the dragon clans. The clans refused to listen, and the wars continued. Io decided that the only way to end the wars was to send a greater threat against the dragons. It would be a threat so deadly that the dragons would have to put aside their own conflicts and work together to turn it

back. Otherwise, the dragon clans would continue to stand alone, and alone each would be destroyed.

Io's avatar searched far and wide across the rest of the world, looking for some foe worthy and powerful enough to threaten the dragon clans. It found a thriving human civilization in the lands far from the dragon islands. The avatar appeared before these humans in all its glory as a great wyrm, playing upon their fears and hatreds concerning dragons, and upon their willingness to appease a god. For the humans saw the avatar as a god, and were not at all bothered that their god should appear to them in the form of their most hated enemy. In fact, they saw this as a true sign of their calling.

The avatar harnessed the natural hatred the humans felt, focused it, and manipulated the humans into becoming the instrument of Io's will in the world. The avatar taught them how to fight dragons, how to forge weapons to kill dragons, how to craft armor to protect themselves from claws and teeth, and how to build ships to travel across the seas to the dragon isles. The humans, meanwhile, listened to every word as though it was a divine command. To them, this was a call to wage holy war—a call direct from their god.

The avatar turned the humans into dragon slayers.

A single human can't match the size or power of a single dragon, but humans are more prolific than dragons, and they are as numerous as the drops of water in the Blood Sea. With the added knowledge and skills provided by the avatar, the dragon slayers were turned into formidable opponents for Io's wayward children.

The dragon slayers invaded the Io's

Blood isles and laid waste to the unprepared clans. It took the near extinction for the dragons to realize their only chance of survival was to work together. They did, and the invaders were wiped out. The humans' ships were sunk, their weapons and armor destroyed, and their numbers reduced from many thousands to a scattered few. This was many ages past, but the dragons still remember the war with the humans. The few slayers who survived had no way to return to their own lands, and within a generation they devolved into harmless savages roaming the wilderness between the dragons' cities. Back in the human lands, with their population decimated and their faith in the dragon god broken, the once mighty dragon slayers almost disappeared. A small, devoted sect is all that remains, and it doesn't have the power or the strength of numbers to contemplate launching another holy war.

Dragon-slayer PCs

The dragon-slayer kit included in *Book Two: Campaign* of the COUNCIL OF WYRMS boxed set works fine as a PC kit with one major change. As humans are extremely rare in the Io's Blood isles, and any encountered wearing the trappings of a slayer would be instantly attacked, they can't be used as PCs in this setting. By removing much of the background and religious overtones, however, a dragon slayer can easily pop up in a more traditional AD&D campaign world.

In other worlds, dragon slayers still can consider themselves holy warriors, but such a background isn't necessary. However, it is up to DMs and players to determine a reason for why the warrior

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any Io's Blood
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Nil
INTELLIGENCE:	High to genius (13-18)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Varies
NO. APPEARING:	1 or 1-4
ARMOR CLASS:	0 (-1, -2 or -3 vs. dragons)
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	9, 10, or 11 (10-sided dice)
THACO:	11, 10, or 9
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3/2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	By weapon
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	60%
SIZE:	M (6'-7' tall)
MORALE:	Fearless (19)
XP VALUE:	7,000

An undead dragon slayer is a horrifying creature who returns from the dead to continue the pursuits it dedicated its former life to—namely, destroying dragons. Some dragon slayers return as the result of necromantic magic, others due to their own indomitable strength of will.

An undead dragon slayer looks much the same as it did in life, though with a skeletal visage, rotted flesh, and dead, hollow eyes. On average, an undead dragon slayer stands between six and seven feet tall, and weighs around 250 pounds in its armor. It wears the specially crafted suit of plate-mail armor it wore in life, armor with a dragon-scale design and dragon-shaped helm. The armor looks battered and beaten, but it glows with supernatural color—color inspired by the dragon type the slayer hates the most—perhaps the type of dragon that slew the dragon slayer.

With a voice as cold as the dead and as deep as a grave, an undead dragon slayer speaks its native tongue, as well as the languages of dragons.

Combat: An undead dragon slayer retains the fighting skills and special benefits it had in life, as well as a few new ones due to its undead nature. All of these creatures have Armor Class 0 because of their plate mail. When facing dragons, the enchantment of the armor increase the armor class to -1, -2, or -3, depending on the Hit Dice of the undead dragon slayer. The THACO also improves from 11 at 9HD to 10 at 10HD and to 9 at 11HD.

Undead dragon slayers use long swords (80% of the time) or two-handed swords (20% of the time). These weapons always function as +2 *dragon slayer* swords in their hands. With these weapons, undead dragon slayers get to make three attacks every two combat rounds. Due to their unnaturally high strength, they have an attack bonus of +3 against nondragon opponents and a damage bonus of +6 against nondragons. The attack bonus increases to +5 against dragons. Against dragons, the damage bonus increases according to their Hit Dice, becoming +15, +16, or +17.

Undead dragon slayers know five of the following special attack forms: breath stun, breach attack, dodge attack, double damage, great blow, weapon throw, wing attack. These are described in this article or in the COUNCIL OF WYRMS boxed set.

Undead dragon slayers are immune to the effects of dragon fear, and take either half or no damage if they make successful saving throws versus breath weapons. They can't be turned by clerics, but will be driven away by the *holy word* spell.



Artwork by Jeff Butler

Habitat/Society: In the COUNCIL OF WYRMS setting, undead dragon slayers were members of the vast army of human warriors who invaded the Io's Blood isles in ages past. Any slayer of 9th level or greater who died before his holy task was finished can rise as an undead warrior. Most are called back from the grave by necromantic magic. Though these summoned slayers retain their own minds and agendas, they also have to obey the commands of their summoners—at least until their task is complete or they somehow win their freedom. A small number of dragon slayers will themselves back from the dead. These individuals have the utmost faith in their cause, an undying hatred of dragons, and a supernatural strength of will. No matter which type of undead dragon slayer is encountered, all seek to destroy dragons and those who would offer aid to them. They usually remain close to the place they met death, such as the Weeping Plains of Exaurdon Island. Undead dragon slayers can be of neutral or evil alignment.

Ecology: Undead dragon slayers have no physiological functions. They can sometimes be found in the company of skeleton warriors or dracoliches. While they do not need to eat, they must slay dragons to replenish the energy that keeps them animated. Killing a dragon provides an undead dragon slayer with enough energy to last one month for every Hit Die the dragon had. If it does not replenish its energy within one week of the moment its last meal fades, it loses strength and must return to the sleep of the dead.

dedicated himself to battling dragons. The requirements, weapon and nonweapon proficiencies, equipment, special benefits, special hindrances, and wealth options remain the same as those in the boxed set with the following modifications.

The list of special attacks available to dragon slayers has been expanded in this article. Using the rules listed in the kit description, any of the new attack forms may be substituted for those in the boxed set. An additional option also exists if a slayer PC takes the new attack-form specialization. It costs one weapon proficiency slot to specialize in slayer attack forms, and it must be purchased by the time the slayer reaches 3rd level. (The PC can use the new slots gained upon reaching 3rd level to purchase the specialization.) Note the character's Intelligence score can be used only to gain additional nonweapon proficiency slots, not weapon proficiency slots.

With the slayer attack-form specialization, a dragon-slayer PC increases the number of special attacks he can learn, as well as the rate at which he can learn them. Instead of learning three special attacks over the course of a career at 1st, 4th and 7th level, a specialized slayer can learn five—one each at 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th and 9th level respectively.

Special attack forms

In the dragon-slayer kit description in the boxed set, three special attack forms are described. These are wing attack, breath stun, and great blow. Other slayer attack forms include *weapon throw*, *breach attack*, *double damage*, *dazzle*, and *dodge attack*.

All special attacks must be declared before any attack rolls are made by either side in a combat round. A dragon slayer can't use special attacks two combat rounds in a row. For example, if Daress the dragon slayer uses a wing attack in the first round of combat, she can make no special attacks in the second round. If a slayer fails to hit after the attack form is declared, the special attack form is still considered to have been used in that combat round. In a round in which a slayer gets to make more than one attack, only certain forms can be used more than once. These are wing attack, breath stun, and double damage. All special attacks are effective only against dragons. They do not work against nondragon foes.

Weapon throw allows a dragon slayer to toss his *primary* weapon at a flying dragon. A primary weapon is any weapon listed in the dragon-slayer kit description under weapon proficiencies that the slayer has spent slots on. Short range for thrown weapons is up to 15', medium is up to 30', and long range is up to 45'. Attack rolls are made with a -2, -4, and -6 penalty at short, medium, and long range respectively, since this is an unusual use of a heavy weapon. Damage is determined normally, and all Strength and damage

bonuses are applied. No other special attack form can be used in combination with a weapon-throw attack.

Breach attack allows a slayer to search for a vulnerable spot in a dragon's armor. The slayer must spend a full combat round without making any attacks as he searches for an opening. He must be facing a dragon's underbelly, from the neck under its maw to its lower abdomen where its rear legs meet its body. The attack must be aimed at this region. In the round of searching, the slayer makes an Intelligence check to find the breach. A successful check gives the slayer a clear look at the spot, and the attack roll in the next round is made with a +6 bonus. If the check fails, the bonus is only +2. Attacks may be made against the slayer during the round of searching, and the slayer takes damage normally. Damage, however, will not hinder his breach attack unless he is knocked unconscious or killed. Slayers with the double damage attack form can use it in combination with a breach attack.

Double damage allows a slayer to call on his knowledge of dragon physiology to inflict greater damage with a single attack. This attack form can be used alone or in combination with breach attack. When used with a successful attack roll, the slayer's weapon inflicts double damage. No damage bonuses are doubled, just the base damage of the weapon type. However, damage bonuses are applied normally. For example, a slayer with a long sword would cause 2d12 (instead of 1d12) plus any damage bonuses.

Dazzle is an attack form designed to confuse a dragon and hinder its ability to cast spells or use its innate powers. The slayer twirls his weapon in such a way as to captivate and disorient his dragon foe. The twirling weapon disrupts the dragon's concentration for the round, making it impossible to gather the merest thoughts necessary to activate a spell or innate power.

Dodge attack is a combination defense and attack form that a slayer can use to avoid damage and deliver his own deadly blow in the same round. A dodge attack requires a successful Dexterity check, otherwise none of the following benefits apply. If successful, the slayer's armor class is improved by +4 for the round against a dragon's physical attacks, and saving throws versus breath weapons receive a +2 bonus. In addition, after making the dodge the slayer puts himself in a better position to deliver his own attack. In the round, a slayer's attack rolls receive a +2 bonus.

Slayer-mage kit

The slayer mage is a wizard trained to battle dragons. A slayer mage often works in conjunction with a dragon slayer. In the COUNCIL OF WYRMS setting, these holy wizards share the same beliefs as their warrior counterparts. In other campaign

worlds, they share a similar type of training and a desire to defend humanity from evil dragons.

Requirements: To use this kit, a human wizard needs the following minimum ability scores: Strength 11, Dexterity 12, and Intelligence 14.

Role: Slayer mages wear cloaks of dragon scales with hoods crafted from dragon skulls. They carry spell components derived from dragon parts. They wield staves of dragon bone and daggers with blades of sharpened dragon teeth. They learn to use their magic to best effect against dragons, and obsessively study their foes so that they know them as well as they know themselves.

Slayer mages are dedicated to destroying dragonkind, though they also have a powerful fascination for these creatures. In nondragon PC settings, the slayer mage's cause focuses on evil (or oppositely aligned) dragons. In these settings, slayer mages may actually join forces with dragons of their own alignment. They do this because they have great respect and admiration for these creatures. They wish to learn more about the dragons, and about the way they view and use arcane energy.

No one knows more about dragonkind than slayer mages. Even dragon slayers only know those things necessary to battle the wyrms. Slayer mages seek to understand the whole picture of dragonkind, for they use this knowledge not only to cast spells, but to find better ways to live their own lives through the examples of dragons. To the slayer mage, dragonkind is the ultimate level of existence. However, dragons themselves have squandered their gifts and used them poorly (as the mages see it). It is the hope of a slayer mage to discover how to gain these gifts for humanity through natural and arcane means.

Weapon proficiencies: The traditional weapons of a slayer mage are the quarterstaff, dagger, and staff sling. These weapons are usually constructed in part or completely from the remains of a dragon. If a slayer mage chooses a dragon attack form at 3rd level, he can purchase attack-form specialization at 6th level (using up the weapon proficiency slot gained with the advancement). This allows a slayer mage to learn one additional attack form at 6th level.

Nonweapon proficiencies: The proficiencies suggested for slayer mages are as follows.

* Bonus proficiencies: Dragon lore, spellcraft.

* Required proficiencies: Reading/writing.

* Recommended proficiencies, General: Any.

* Recommended proficiencies, Wizard: Ancient history, gem cutting.

* Recommended proficiencies, Warrior: Survival, tracking.

* Recommended proficiencies, Rogue: Appraising, gaming.

* Recommended proficiencies, Priest: None.

Equipment: Slayer mages can use any weapons and equipment normally available to wizard characters, though they prefer items that have some connection to dragons: weapons made in whole or in part from dragon remains, clothing and boots of dragon hide, etc.

Slayer mages start play with a spellbook of dragon-skin parchment pages bound in cured dragon hide, and enough spell components made from dragon remains to cast each of their first-level spells 12 times.

The cloak of dragon scales presented to every newly created slayer mage provides a +1 armor class bonus due to its excellent crafting and impervious material. When the slayer mage reaches 3rd level, this cloak becomes enchanted due to a long-standing pact made with Io's avatar (or whatever agency exists in the DM's campaign setting). It endows an additional +1 armor class bonus against attacks from dragons. Slayer mages can perform special quests every level to increase the enchantment of the dragon cloaks. In no case will the enchantment increase by more than +1 during a level, and it will never increase beyond a cumulative +5 bonus against dragons.

At some point during his career, a slayer mage seeks to own the precious metal or gem found in the egg of every hatchling dragon. This item, more fully described in

Book Two: Campaign from the COUNCIL OF WYRMS boxed set, is believed to have magical properties that the slayer mage can draw upon. See "Special Benefits" below for more information.

Special benefits:

Control dragon: If a slayer mage possesses the piece of precious metal or the gem from a dragon's egg, the PC has the ability to control any dragon of the type that corresponds to the metal or gem in his possession, as per the *potion of dragon control* (DMG, page 142). This ability can be used once per week.

If the metal or gem is lost, or if the slayer mage comes to possess a second such item, this ability ceases to function entirely. For this ability to work, the slayer mage can hold only one such item. Note that acquiring the metal or gem from a newborn dragon's egg is no small feat; both the slayer mage's player and the DM should approach the acquisition of such an item as a major quest.

Dragon languages: A slayer mage can speak and understand one dragon family language (either metallic, gem, or chromatic).

Fear immunity: A slayer mage is immune to the effects of dragon fear.

Breath weapon defense: As slayer mages learn to avoid breath weapons, they receive half or no damage when they make saving throws (instead of full or half damage).

Special attacks: Slayer mages can learn any of the special attacks available to dragon slayers. They may select one of these attack forms at 3rd level. If a slayer mage takes the attack-form specialization, he can select a second special attack at 6th level.

Anti-magic resistance: If a slayer mage uses spell components made with dragon remains, spells cast at dragons receive a bonus against the target dragon's natural magic resistance. For every level of the slayer mage, the dragon's magic-resistance rating is reduced by 5%.

Special hindrances: Slayer mages suffer a -4 penalty on all encounter reactions against dragons—even those they seek to befriend.

As slayer mages come to depend on dragon remains as ingredients in their spell components, after 3rd level they suffer penalties when using components not made with these special ingredients. These penalties translate as bonuses for the targets of their castings: a +2 to all saving throws for spells that normally receive saving throws, and a saving throw with a -3 penalty for all spells that normally receive no saving throws.

Wealth options: Slayer mages start play with 1d6 x 10 gold pieces with which to purchase supplies not provided under "Equipment" above.

Ω

Arcane Lore

Continued from page 38

This spell maintains a creature's body heat against cold for four hours, plus one additional hour per level of the caster. Also, any cold-based damage is restored at the rate of one hit point per turn. When exposed to magical cold or special cold-based attack, the protected creature receives a +2 bonus to saving throws, and cold-based damage is reduced by 1 point per die. This spell is not cumulative with any other magical protections against cold.

Sunburst (Invocation/Evocation)

Level: 4 Comp.: V,M
Range: 30 yds. + 10/lvl. CT: 7
Dur.: Instant. Save: Special
Area of Effect: 40' radius globe

This spell creates a brilliant flash of greenish-white light with blazing golden rays. Undead within the area of effect take 6d6 points of damage (no save). Other creatures in the area, or outside the area and looking at the *sunburst*, are blinded for one round if they fail a saving throw vs. spells. Those without eyes, and those not sensitive to visible light, are not affected. The *sunburst* instantly destroys *darkness* created by those of a level equal

to or less than the caster. The material component is the cleric's holy symbol and a crystal bead.

Crown of brilliance

(Invocation/Evocation)
Level: 6 Comp.: V,S,M
Range: Touch CT: 9
Dur.: 1 rd./2 lvls. Save: None
Area of Effect: Special

This spell turns a piece of headgear into a blazing source of golden light as soon as the wearer engages in hand-to-hand combat. All opponents in hand-to-hand combat with the caster must save vs. spells or be blinded for 1d4 rounds (-4 to attack rolls). If not blinded, the opponent suffers a -2 penalty to attack rolls against the wearer due to the dazzling brilliance of the headgear.

Creatures with an aversion to sunlight or a penalty when fighting in bright light are affected more severely (drow, derro, duergar, goblins, many undead, etc.). Those within a 30' radius must save vs. spells or flee. Those who do not flee will suffer their usual penalty for fighting in bright light. Undead other than skeletons or zombies take an additional 1d6 points of damage each round they stay within the affected area.

The spell must be cast on some piece of headgear (hat, crown, helm, tiara, circlet, etc.). The headgear must be properly worn or the spell will not function. The spell effect is triggered as soon as the wearer strikes a blow in melee. The effect lasts one round for every two levels of the caster (round up).

The material component of this spell is an opal worth at least 100 gp, carried on the caster's person. It shatters upon the completion of the spell (if shattered prematurely, the spell ends).

Ω

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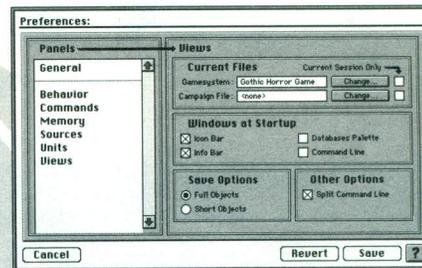
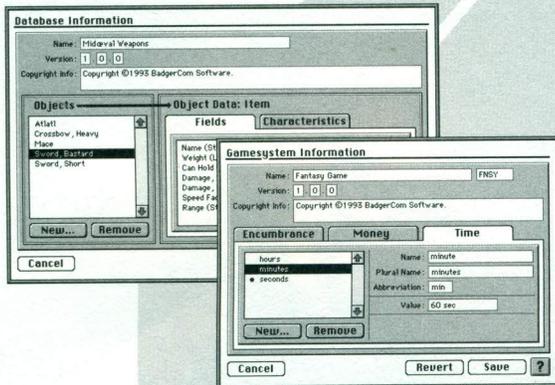
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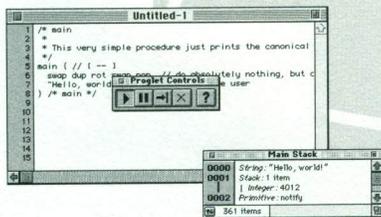
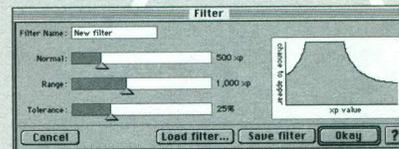
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ROLE-PLAYING reviews

Horror: It's the little things

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Photography by Charles Kohl



Role-playing games' ratings

- Not recommended
- Poor, but may be useful
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent
- The best

When I'm evaluating a role-playing product, the quality of the descriptions counts for a lot. Indiscriminate use of adjectives and adverbs tells me that the designer doesn't know what he's talking about and hopes I'll figure it out for him. Describing a king's dining room as a magnificent hall of breathtaking luxury and spectacularly opulent beauty says next to nothing. Describing the king eating with a platinum spoon says it all.

Nowhere do designers struggle more

with description than in horror games, where words like *hideous*, *horrifying*, and *monstrous* are tossed around like baseballs on the first day of spring training. I'm not sure why. Maybe they lack faith in their own images, unsure that a knife-wielding fiend popping out of the shadows won't yield the desired reaction unless we're told how *horrible* and *terrifying* and *deranged* he is. Maybe it's the influence of H.P. Lovecraft, whose flowery phrasing is easier to mimic than his artistry. Maybe it's

just a failure of imagination. Compare "an unearthly monster who eats everything in its path" to "a creature with eyes as black as bowling balls who swallows school buses and spits out the tires." If these were descriptions from two different source-books, which would you rather read?

In horror, a fine-tuned detail is usually more memorable than an over-stuffed paragraph. It doesn't always take a *night-marish, malicious, inhumanly powerful* monstrosity to elicit a scare. Suppose I told you that a pin-sized serpent is loose in your house, waiting for you to fall asleep so it can wriggle up your nose?

See? It's the little things.

GURPS Vampire: The Masquerade* game

GURPS* game supplement

192-page softcover book

Steve Jackson Games



\$20

Design: Jeff Koke (based on the original game by Mark Rein-Hagen)

Additional material: Chris W. McCubbin

Editing: Steve Jackson

Illustrations: Tim Bradstreet, Doug Gregory, Robert MacNeil, Ken Meyer, Dan Smith, John Cobb, Felipe Echevarria, Laura Eisenhour, Max Fellwalker, Larry McDougal, Rich Thomas, and Josh Timbrook

Cover: Mark Pace

Now here's a great idea. The genre-hopping GURPS system has proven itself adaptable to everything from cyberpunk to the wild west. White Wolf's *VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE** game has a strong setting and enough narrative muscle to crack tombstones, but not everyone is comfortable with the hazy rules. So Steve Jackson Games (SJG) contributes the system, and White Wolf kicks in the game world. Toss 'em in the cauldron, let SJG stalwarts Jeff Koke and Chris McCubbin handle the brewing, and what bubbles to the surface is the most successful hybrid in role-playing history.

With its slick pages and crisp graphics, *GURPS Vampire* is the handsomest volume in the GURPS line and makes the White Wolf version seem lackluster. A set of realistic documents—letters, computer print-outs, diary entries—introduces the reader to, in the words of the scholarly Christophorus, "a world that I know you must find surprising." Lucid writing, never White Wolf's strong suit but a hallmark of the GURPS line, makes the tricky mechanics easy to digest. Concepts that aren't critical to the game, such as vampiric traditions and the role of ghouls, are confined to sidebars. The illustrations are among the best I've ever seen in an RPG product, particularly those by Tim Bradstreet. His depiction of a vampire feasting on the wrist of a fellow burn-out (on page 22) evokes both the horrors of addiction and the intimacy of a shared secret. White Wolf, Steve Jackson, or Bradstreet himself ought to market it as a poster.

The original background survives the transition to the GURPS system more or less intact. And that's good news, because *VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE* boasted the most compelling premise since Chaosium's *CALL OF CTHULHU** game. Designer Mark Rein-Hagen cast his vampires as an independent race called the Kindred, who trace their ancestry from the beginning of time. Nasty and neurotic, the modern-day Kindred have as much in common with Johnny Rotten as with Bela Lugosi. Struggling to survive in a decaying society, they're shunned as outcasts and hunted as monsters. A typical adventure finds the player characters (PCs) fighting for the blood of a rat pack, plotting to regain their humanity by killing their sires, or pursuing Golconda, a nirvana-like state resulting from plumbing the inner mind. This is role-playing at its most subversive, and about as far away from elves and dragons as you can get.

The history is so vividly imagined that I thought I was reading a textbook. Vampires follow a rigid social hierarchy, beginning with the low-level Caitiff feeders, and climaxing with the ancient Antediluvians, arguably the world's most powerful creatures. They also observe a code of laws called the Six Traditions, including the First Tradition, Masquerade ("Thou shalt not reveal thy true nature to those not of the Blood"), the Fifth Tradition, Hospitality ("When thou comest to a foreign city, thou shalt present thyself to the one who ruleth there."), and the Sixth Tradition, Destruction ("The right of destruction belongeth only to thine Elder.") Violation of a tradition may result in Lexatationis, where the lawbreaker is attacked by all who hear the call of the Blood Hunt. The Primogen, a circle of elders, advises their Prince when to establish violence-free zones called Elysium and how to deal with the Inconnu, mysterious outsiders who live with animals and sleep inside the earth. The Kindred may secure servants with Blood Bonds, acquire new powers through the process of *dablerie*, and create new Kindred by engaging in the Embrace.

The GURPS-izing of the rules makes for a smoother game, particularly for referees who prefer die-rolls to improvisation. Players follow the same character-creation procedure as in standard GURPS products, assigning points to attributes, skills, quirks, and advantages. Beginning vampires, typically 200 to 300-point characters, may be Punks, Dilettantes, Drifters, or (my favorite) Politicians. Magic-like abilities called Disciplines are grouped into levels of Power, with each level costing two character points. For instance, a character with the Power 1 level of the *Auspex* Discipline (two points) can only use Heightened Senses. A character with Power 3 level (six points) can use Heightened Senses, Aura Perception, and Spirit's Touch. Compared to the White Wolf system, GURPS is more sensible (White Wolf's Dodge ability is handled in GURPS as a

function of Move and Encumbrance), more precise, (White Wolf ratings range from 1-5; GURPS goes to 18), and better defined (White Wolf's vague Wits attribute translates into GURPS's Common Sense and Intuition advantages).

Evaluation: Because of its grim tone and complex mechanics, *VAMPIRE* is best suited for mature players. The maze of jargon, rules, and historical notes takes time to navigate, and casual players may not find it worth the effort. If the idea of vampire PCs appeals to you at all though, and you're willing to do your homework, *VAMPIRE* is a terrific buy. Which version? If you're familiar with other Storyteller products (such as the *WEREWOLF: THE APOCALYPSE** game or the *MAGE: THE ASCENSION** game), stick with White Wolf; the GURPS book doesn't add enough material to justify learning a new set of rules. If you're a GURPS player, go for the GURPS version; it's better written and easier to understand. If you're not familiar with either rules set, it's a tough call. I lean toward the GURPS book, even though you'll also have to invest in the GURPS Basic Set. Not only has GURPS withstood the test of time, it opens the door to a library of possibilities. Aren't you curious how *GURPS: Vampire* interfaces with *GURPS: Old West*?

Dark Alliance: Vancouver

WEREWOLF: THE APOCALYPSE game and *VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE* game supplement

128-page softcover book

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Development: Bill Bridges

Editing: Brian Campbell

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and James J. Holt

Cover: George Pratt

WEREWOLF: THE APOCALYPSE (re-
viewed in DRAGON® issue #192) had
everything: a fascinating premise, great
characters, thorough mechanics, plenty of
staging tips. Everything, that is, but a
setting. The Central Park material, tucked
away in the appendix, was too skimpy to
be of much use, and manufacturing a
setting from scratch was more than I
could manage.

Which is why I was looking forward to
these sourcebooks. Drawing on influences
from *National Geographic* to *The Twilight
Zone*, these books present a smorgasbord
of locales that should keep the Garou
occupied until the Apocalypse actually gets
here. They're loaded with good ideas. Of
course, good ideas don't guarantee good
products.

Take, for instance, *Dark Alliance: Van-
couver*, which recasts the Canadian city as
a battleground for rival factions of the
Garou and the Kindred (hence, it's suitabil-
ity for a VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE
campaign). A lengthy history describes the
conflict between the immigrant were-
wolves and Siegfried, Prince of the Van-
couver vampires, resulting in an uneasy
treaty called the Vancouver Covenant. A
section on Garou Protectorates, the book's
best feature, details the philosophies and
policies of the area's active tribes. The
conservative Children of Gaia, for exam-
ple, specialize in political lobbying. The
Black Furies resist the Covenant and advo-
cate revolution.

Too much of the book, however, looks
like it was cranked out by the Department
of Tourism, a dreary run-down of hotels,
nightclubs, and landmarks whose descrip-
tions rarely rise above the superficial. The
Great Library is "a staggering collection of
knowledge." The Pan-Pacific Hotel gives
diners "a perfect view of the harbor; the
SeaBus terminal, Stanley Park, and per-
haps a cruise ship approaching or leaving
its berth." Little of this is told from a Gar-
ou's perspective, and most of it's available
in any good reference book, so what's the
point? "War and Peace," an 11-page sce-
nario that's long on investigation and short
on conflict, sets up a civil war between the
Garou and the Kindred. The designer
suggests that two groups of players handle
the opposing factions, but doesn't ade-
quately explain how the groups interact
(what's Group A supposed to do while the
referee is busy with Group B?)

Far better is *Caerns: Places of Power*,
which catalogs the sites of spiritual power
held sacred by the Garou. The 14 entries
span the globe, from the Shigalu Monas-
tery in the mountains of Tibet to the Mea
del Lobo Navajo Indian Reservation in the
Arizona desert. Each entry includes juicy
historical notes, intriguing points of inter-
est, and a host of engaging personalities.
Cracked Teeth, an opinionated Bone Gnaw-
er from the Washington D.C. caern, likes
to quote Thomas Jefferson and is dying of
AIDS. The central chamber of the Brugh
Na Boinne caern in Ireland looks like a
shamrock, each niche holding the ashes of
Tuatha De Danann nobles. The Garou of
Hong Kong visit the Hall of Heads to com-
mune with the skulls of their relatives.
Non-sentient spirits called Moon Bridges,
shaped like elastic tubes, whisk the Garou
from caern to caern in the blink of an eye.

In many cases however, the designers
seem blind to their best material. The
history of the Greek caern hints at a link
between the Garou and Nazi Germany, but
it's left undeveloped. A similar link be-
tween the werewolves of Washington D.C.
and the U.S. government also gets the
short shrift. A cannibal who operates a
corner grocery store in Alaska—a great
idea for a character if I ever heard one—is
introduced then tossed away. The story
hooks, many only a sentence or two, don't
amount to much. "Get the characters
involved with smuggling or smugglers."
"[The] intrigue that is present around the
caern will give you opportunities to tell
stories about the city and the caern itself."
Try to do something with *those*.

*Umbr*a: *The Velvet Shadow*, on the other
hand, is a triumph. Reminiscent of TSR's
excellent *Manual of the Planes* tome, *Um-
bra* describes 13 alternate planes where
physical laws don't apply and mundane
reality gives way to outrageous spectacle.
The striking descriptions border on the
poetic: "[The Aetherial Realm] is a vast
cosmic vault stretching out to the Mem-
brane, filled with Anchorheads and pow-
erful spirits of the air and the stars." I'd be
hard pressed to pick my favorite entry,
but I'm partial to the Atrocity Realm, a
nightmare land of larvae pits, mass graves,
and serial killers, where the Garou wear
Memory Ribbons on their wrists to remind
them of the brutality they strive to resist.
Over in the Cyber Realm, Cyber Wolves
roam the byways of Spider City, perform-
ing bizarre surgery on hapless visitors. In
the CTHULHU-esque Aetherial Realm, the
surfaces of a metallic structure called the
spirit-orrery give access to the mysteries
of the cosmos. What does all this have to
do with werewolves? Beats me, but with
settings this exciting, who's complaining?

Evaluation: Unlike their VAMPIRE
brethren, who thrive in an urban environ-
ment, the animalistic Garou belong in the
wilderness, the further from civilization—

the further from the planet—the better.
Leave *Vancouver* to the Kindred, and start
with *Caerns*: despite its flaws, the sheer
volume of ideas makes this a great re-
source for new campaigns. Experienced
referees should wait no time in tackling
*Umbr*a, which contains an avalanche of
concepts screaming for development. And,
hey, White Wolf, how about an *Umbr*a II?
Maybe *The Atrocity Realm: Adventures in
the Larvae Pits*?



House of Strahd

ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®
game supplement for the RAVENLOFT®
setting

One 64-page book, one 32" × 21" map
sheet

TSR, Inc.

\$11

Original design: Tracy and Laura Hickman

Revised design: Bruce Nesmith

Editing: Richard W. Brown

Illustrations: Clyde Caldwell and James
Crabtree

Cover: Dana M. Knutson



Castles Forlorn

ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®
game supplement for the RAVENLOFT®
setting

TSR, Inc.

\$20

One 96-page book, two 32-page books, one
double-sided 32" × 21" map sheet, one
single-sided 32" × 21" map sheet, one
32" × 21" poster, boxed

Design: Lisa Smedman

Editing: David Wise

Illustrations: Stephen Fabian, Arnie Swe-
kel, and Robert Klasnich

Cover: Dana M. Knutson

When it first came out, I didn't think the
RAVENLOFT setting had a chance, which
is another reason why I'll never make it as
a game publisher. It wasn't bad, exactly. It
just didn't seem special, a FORGOTTEN
REALMS® variant with a few more bats.
But thanks to quality supplements like
Forbidden Lore, *The Created*, and the *Van
Richten's* series (especially *Van Richten's
Guide to Ghosts*), the RAVENLOFT cam-
paign has proven to be a credible alterna-
tive for players interested in the dark side
of the AD&D game. Though it lacks the
flamboyance of CALL OF CTHULHU and
the, er, bite of VAMPIRE, the RAVENLOFT
setting remains the hobby's most enduring
fusion of horror and fantasy.

The best thing to come flapping out for
this setting in many a moon is *House of
Strahd*, the revised version of 1983's clas-
sic 16 *Ravenloft* module. *Ravenloft* stands
as one of TSR's finest adventures—make
that one of the finest adventures from
anybody—and the re-issue improves on
the original. The premise can be summa-
rized in a sentence: Stranded in Barovia,
the PCs must breach a haunted castle and
destroy its master, the vampire-wizard
Strahd Von Zarovich. What a castle! Con-
sisting of almost 100 rooms, it's an archi-
tectural masterpiece, as opulent as it is

creepy. What a villain! A high-level necromancer of incomparable cunning, Strahd holds his own with Count Dracula as one of horror's most memorable bloodsuckers.

The elements that made the original so much fun—Madame Eva, the mysterious gypsy fortuneteller; Strahd's variable objectives (determined randomly, so the adventure can be replayed); the deadly catacombs with the moving black ceiling—are still here. It's the updating that pushes the revised version over the top. Nesmith introduces some new creatures (meld monsters, gargoyle golems), develops Strahd's tactics (with sections labeled "Strahd's Opportunities" that suggest attack routines triggered by the party's actions), and adds a Time-Track Table (so the referee can anticipate the sunset). He's also touched up the descriptions, clipping the clutter and beefing up the sensory details. Here, for instance, is the original description of the Observation Balcony:

There are two large thrones on this balcony. Behind the throne is a large red velvet curtain running 30 feet from the east wall to the west wall. The ceiling here is 10 feet high.

Here's Nesmith's revision:

Two large thrones stand on this balcony. Behind the thrones is a wide, red velvet curtain running from wall to wall. The room is oppressively silent, as quiet as a tomb. Dampness and mildew fill your nostrils.

In fairness, I should mention that *House of Strahd* may be impossible to beat. I've played it three times (twice in its original version) and haven't come close. But, as with the best CALL OF CTHULHU adventures, winning is incidental to the scenery and the scares. Your party may bite the dust, but they'll be smiling when they do.

Castles Forlorn features another terrific castle, this one with a twist. The eight-level Tristenoria mansion exists simultaneously in three time periods, though all three incarnations occupy the same physical space. Castle A, the first incarnation, exists (in 1939 on the Forfar calendar) when the mortar is still fresh, the candelabras still gleam, and the view out the window shows green hills and bright skies. A century later, Castle B exists in a time where supernatural disasters have cracked the plaster, shattered the glass, and blackened the skies. In 2122, Castle C lies in ruin; cobwebs choke the corridors, the walls have collapsed, and the view from the windows reveals a ravaged landscape and scavenging monsters.

While exploring the castle, the PCs activate temporal shifts that spin the castle into different eras. The results are startling, to say the least. A door appears, then disappears. A dark passage fills with light, then goes dark again. A plush bedroom

with expensive furniture becomes a musty chamber piled with debris, with bloody hand prints smeared on the walls. By assigning colors to the various incarnations (red for Castle A, blue for Castle B, green for Castle C), the poster map shows which rooms and doors exist in each period. The text offers sensible suggestions for handling paradoxes (such as when different PCs occupy the same room in different time periods) and measuring time. (Time may pass independently in each incarnation.) In fact, the text includes everything but a developed adventure; instead, we're given an assortment of hazards and encouraged to "build tension gradually by saving the nastiest surprises for last." That's easier said than done, especially for novice referees who require a lot more structure than this to get a campaign off the ground.

The rest of the package, focusing on the domain of Forlorn and its minions, mixes the clever with the ordinary. Tristen ApBlanc, the lord of Forlorn who's part vampire and part ghost, could teach Count Strahd a thing or two about ghastliness. An informative section on druidism reveals the spell-casting secrets of redheaded humans. Noteworthy landmarks include a granite cliff that weeps blood and a half-mile fissure that spews yellow vapor to enshroud the domain. A lot of this seems like filler. The Sacred Groves and the Caverns of the Dead aren't much more interesting than their names. Isolt ApBlanc, Rual, and the other ghostly NPCs work better as obstacles than personalities. Also, Aggie, a clone of the Loch Ness Monster, doesn't have much to do other than pose for the cover.

Evaluation: In the hands of a creative referee, *Castles Forlorn* can be a source of endless surprise. If, for instance, the party steals a book from a room in Castle C, then later tosses a *fireball* into the Castle A incarnation of the same room, the stolen book may turn to ash in their hands. Think of the Forlorn material as a bonus; get this for the castle.

Flawlessly staged and breathtakingly suspenseful, *House of Strahd* should be a part of every RAVENLOFT campaign, even if it means the demise of beloved PCs (which it well might). If you've resisted the RAVENLOFT setting so far, here's all the excuse you need to get on board.

Short and sweet

Barsaive, by Christopher Kubasik, with Rob Cruz, Tom Dowd, Sam Lewis, Mike Mulvihill, Diane Piron-Gelman, and Louis J. Prosperi. FASA Corporation, \$25. The EARTHDAWN* game (reviewed in DRAGON® issue #202) struck me as a warmed-over version of the AD&D game. But with the boxed *Barsaive* set, the game's first major supplement, FASA makes a mid-course correction, nudging the EARTHDAWN game away from light fantasy and toward the sophisticated

setting-based approach pioneered by the Avalon Hill's RUNEQUEST* game. *Barsaive* contains enough geographic, social, and political detail to launch a lifetime of adventures. In the *Explorer's Guide*, Merrox from the Great Library of Throal leads us through 100-plus pages of fascinating material, from the construction of t'skrang riverboats to a discourse on ork scorcher cavalry. The *Gamemaster Book* presents a treatise on the Barsavian economy (the t'skrang deal in trikella, an exotic spice that fetches 20 silver pieces per ounce), the history of the Hand of Corruption (a loathsome secret society), and a gallery of notable personalities (such as Chorak Bonecracker, a tree-sized troll who drenches himself in red paint). The generous package also includes a colorful poster map, 36 new monster and treasure cards, and a cardboard sextant, used to measure distances by the position of the stars. With the RUNEQUEST game on the ropes, the EARTHDAWN system may be poised to take its place, especially if continues with supplements as strong as this.

Rifts Dimension Book One: Wormwood, by Kevin Siembieda. Palladium Books, \$16. Conan the Barbarian meets Freddie Krueger in this wacky sourcebook for the RIFTS* game. Based on the comic strip by Timothy Truman and Flint Henry, *Wormwood* takes place on a sentient planet; that is, the world itself is alive—every hill, every building, every speck of dirt. Fountains and sculptures are "pulled from the planet like taffy and molded into the various shapes desired." Mountain ranges expand and contract. Homeowners furnish their dining rooms by teasing new tables and chairs from the floor. The inhabitants are as warped as the terrain. Sword-sliding Knights of the Cathedral take on thieving rum-rats and drooling morph-worms. Priests of Light employ yecchy spells like *create worm zombies* and *ride giant parasites*. It's as silly as it sounds, and players who take their games seriously may balk at a setting this cartoonish. However, *Wormwood* demonstrates the elasticity of the RIFTS system without sacrificing a whit of playability.

The Glory of Rome, by David Pulver. TSR, Inc., \$18. *GURPS Vehicles*, by David Pulver. Steve Jackson Games, \$20. So what do an historical sourcebook and a vehicular design kit have in common? Only some of the year's most literate writing and meticulous research, courtesy of ace designer David Pulver. In *The Glory of Rome*, Pulver lays out clear guidelines for moving the AD&D game to the Roman Empire. He addresses character classes (mages and psionicists aren't available; fighters can become legionaries, gladiators, and charioteers), equipment (a short sword from the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting becomes a gladius in ancient Rome) and magic (a diviner may foretell the future if he spots a woodpecker). The unstable political

climate—which may be inflamed by senatorial PCs—makes Rome an ideal setting for military campaigns. The Roman gods get a cold shoulder, and the gazetteer should've been ditched in favor of a few adventure outlines; otherwise, this is the most satisfying entry in TSR's *Historical Reference* series. *GURPS Vehicles* explains how to build and operate a mind-boggling array of conveyances. From sailboats to starships to witches' brooms, if it moves, it's here. Step-by-step instructions show how to select the structural frame, propulsion system, and thrust factor for the nuclear-powered tilt-rotor mini-copter of your dreams. Though presented in GURPS-speak, a referee with a calculator should be able to reconfigure the statistics for other games. Pulver, who cut his teeth on *GURPS Psionics** and TSR's 1992 *Update* for the MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game, seems comfortable with any genre that wanders his way. He's a name to watch.

The Complete Book of Humanoids, by Bill Slavicek. TSR, Inc., \$15. I don't know why TSR didn't ring the bells and sound the horns about this one, as it introduces a major shake-up in the AD&D rules. The *Player's Handbook* allows players to choose from six races for their PCs. *The Complete Book of Humanoids* expands the number of options by 20, adding (among others) beastmen, centaurs, goblins, and

pixies. In the interest of play balance, restrictions abound; PCs can't be undead, nor can they be monsters taller than 12 feet. Centaur wizards can't go beyond 12th level; goblins can't be wizards at all. Even with the helpful suggestions in the role-playing chapter, campaign problems are inevitable. How, for instance, does an ogre PC function in a lawful good society? How can a giant-kin PC navigate a low-ceilinged dungeon? Even with all the potential headaches, adventurous players ought to welcome this with open arms. Who could pass up the chance to play a pixie?

Maps Book 1: Cities, by Debora Wykle, Mike Keller, William Kerr, Eric Dinehart, James Bear Peters, James Walker, Dayne Chastant, Steven S. Crompton, and Anita Martinez. Flying Buffalo, \$12. This first-rate play-aid, suitable for any fantasy RPG, contains close to two dozen city maps, complete with terrain symbols, area descriptions, and scenario hooks. Editor Debora Wykle encouraged her designers to stretch their imaginations, and they came through with an inspired collection. Phantom Hollow is an underground cavity concealed by a gigantic tree, its various levels accessible by platforms and ropes. Magewar exists in four different dimensions linked by magical gates. The island of Roos Havanos floats among the clouds, energized by a magical jewel. There's also

a circus, a leper colony, a fairy village, and a smuggler's prison. Consider them instant adventures—just add statistics, and they're ready to plug into your favorite world.

EdgeWork, edited by Peter Hentges. Atlas Games, \$6 single issue, \$20 four-issue subscription. I'm a sucker for fanzines. What they lack in polish, they usually make up in spunk, and *EdgeWork*, devoted to the eccentric OVER THE EDGE* game, is no exception. The premier issue features a look at Alto-Ubica (also known as The Country That Isn't There), a reading list for conspiracy buffs, and an analysis of fringe powers by OTE designer Jonathan Tweet. *EdgeWork* may have the editorial budget of a school newspaper, but for OTE enthusiasts, it's more essential than the *New York Times*. (For information: Atlas Games, PO Box 406, Northfield MN 55057.)

Rick Swan has designed and edited more than 40 role-playing products. His recent projects include *The Complete Ranger's Handbook* and *The Complete Paladin's Handbook*, both published by TSR. You can write to him at 2620 30th St., Des Moines IA 50310. Enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope if you'd like a response. Ω

* indicates a product produced by a company other than TSR, Inc.

The Role of Books

Continued from page 46

Recurring Roles

An especially long-awaited sequel arrives this month: *The Oak Above the Kings* (Roc, \$18.00) the latest installment of the Keltiad. The new novel is bylined Patricia Kennealy-Morrison (as the author adds her late husband's name to her own), but the refreshing, vibrant approach to Keltic and Arthurian lore is as crisply narrated as ever. Indeed, this second volume in the current trilogy wraps up virtually all the loose ends left from the first, and sets up an entirely new set of conflicts to be addressed in the next installment.

Barbara Hambly also has a new novel out, this one a free-standing tale set in the world lately vacated by dog-wizard Antryg Windrose. *Stranger at the Wedding* (Del Rey \$5.99) is at once typical of Hambly's intricate supernatural mysteries and distinctive in its approach. Kyra Peldyrin is an unusual protagonist for Hambly, a would-be wizard not yet secure in her powers, but forced to master them in order to prevent a disaster in connection with her sister's imminent marriage. Only the shape of the disaster is unknown, and in finding it, Kyra sends the romance spinning off in unexpected directions.

Space war is as dangerous as usual in David Weber's third Honor Harrington

adventure, *The Short Victorious War* (Baen, \$5.99). The story feels like half a book though, leaving both Honor and her adversaries from Haven hanging in the middle of a war that promises to be neither short nor easily won. History buffs should have fun, however, picking out the inspirations for Weber's star empires.

It's also a better-than-average season for horror, as Christie Golden returns to the RAVENLOFT® milieu with *The Enemy Within* (TSR, \$4.95), a clever twist on a classic scenario that can be best appreciated by those who carefully avoid the back-cover copy before reading the novel. The tension here comes from watching all vestiges of control, political and personal alike, slip out of Sir Tristan Hiregaard's grasp as an evil cult seeks power in the capital city of his native Nova Vaasa.

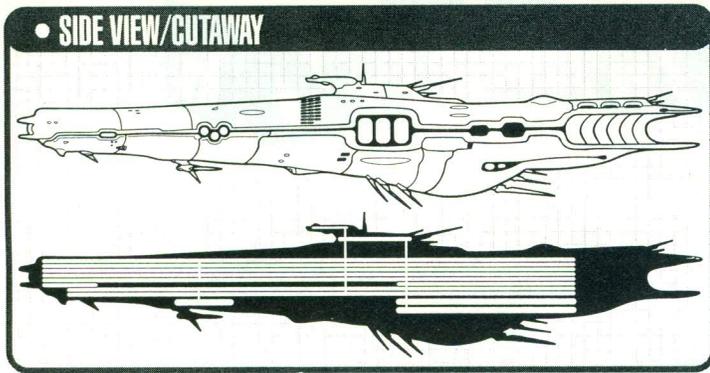
The Hunter (Pocket Archway, \$3.50), meanwhile, finds L.J. Smith slightly below top form in the opening installment of "The Forbidden Game." While the concept and character work are effectively crafted, the obligatory teen-romance elements are a touch overplayed and some of the individual set pieces seem rushed. (It should be noted that the game referred to is *not* a fantasy RPG, but a magically booby-trapped house party game. Smith scores extra points for avoiding the obvious game-gone-wrong premise.)

The *Star Trek* people have been busy as

well, but A.C. Crispin's *Sarek* (Pocket, \$22.00) is the only unqualified success of the three books under examination here. Unexpected romance shares center stage with dark intrigue here, and everyone from young Peter Kirk to a rapidly failing Amanda is very well portrayed.

That's less true of *Sins of Commission* (Pocket, \$5.50), in which newcomer Susan Wright weaves a complex TNG tale in which entirely too many characters undergo too much emotional stress for no particular reason (and in which Guinan is demonstrably wrong for the first time I can remember). Likewise, Simon Hawke stretches telepathic powers to peculiar limits in *The Patrian Transgression* (Pocket, \$5.50), raising a complicated ethical issue and then discarding it in favor of a traditional action yarn involving the usual would-be alien dictators facing off against Captain Kirk and company.

Sacred Ground (Tor, \$22.95) is the latest novel from the prolific Mercedes Lackey, and it puts her solidly back on track with a skilled, free-standing mystical thriller in which Tulsa P.I. and shaman Jennifer Taldeer must investigate a construction-site bombing that may be a great deal more than it seems. The Osage Indian lore looks well-researched and politically even-handed, and this novel is less glib about its magic than Lackey's similar series about Diana Tregard. Ω



Macross II™ Spaceships & Deck Plans — Volume One

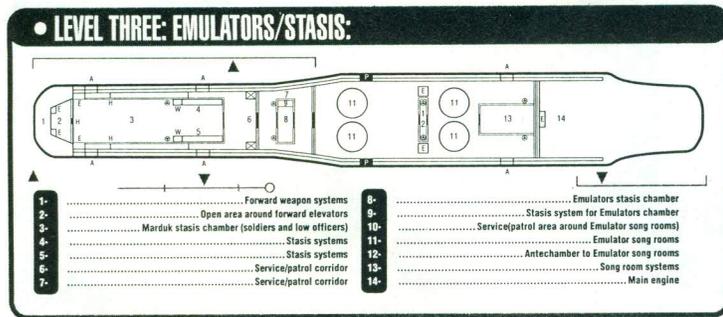
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- Cover by Kevin Long.
- Written and designed by The Dream Pod 9 team.
- 64 pages — \$9.95 plus \$1.00 for postage and handling.



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- Spaceship weapons, a short adventure and adventure ideas.
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- Floor plans for the legendary Macross Fortress.
- Cover by Kevin Long.
- Written and designed by The Dream Pod 9 team.
- Available in stores everywhere by December!
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Macross II is a complete role-playing game and uses Palladium's famous *mega-damage* combat system. It is compatible with **Rifts**, **The Mechanoids** and the entire Palladium Megaverse.

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- Spacecraft, satellites, vehicles, weapons, and war machines.
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- Stats on major characters from the animated series.
- Cover by Kevin Long. Interior art by Newton Ewell, Wayne Breaux and Thomas Miller.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda — Available now!
- 112 pages — \$11.95 plus \$1.50 for postage and handling

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Available at hobby shops and comic stores everywhere!

Dragonmirrh

By Jerry Cogan



"Did anyone think to grab his money-pouch?"

Yemoura

ON THE WORLD OF

HARD FUN

I HAVEN'T HAD AS GOOD A SPATE OF GIRLTALK SINCE MY SISTER ARCALULA STOPPED TRYING TO SPEAK WITH HER MOUTH FULL.

I HAD A SISTER ONCE—NOW WHO WAS IT WHO ATE HER?

YOUR SISTER WAS EATEN TOO? A BULETTE GOT MINE!

HM. HAVEN'T TRIED TO GET A BULETTE TO EAT OGREK...

HOW ABOUT THROWING HIM OVERBOARD WHILE HE NAPS?

TRIED THAT THE OTHER NIGHT. IT WAS WITHERS IN DISGUISE. WE HAD TO GO BACK AND GET HIM, OF COURSE. EVERY TIME THEY PULL THAT, I FEEL STUPIDER...

LANDFALL AT THE HARD FUN SWARMEEET IN 15 MINUTES!

WELL, JOE TELLS ME RALPH'S WORKING ON OGREK'S MEMOIRS—

DARK ELF LEGEND STATES THAT OGREK'S MEMOIRS CONTAIN THE ANSWER FOR HIS UNDOING!!

HIS MEMOIRS? THEY'RE ON BOARD?!

FREE DELIVERY TO THE DARK ELVES

AND WE PUT THIS SKIMPY PIECE OF CLOTH ON THIS SIDE, FOR MODESTY— BUT THIS SIDE, WE LEAVE BARE—

MUMPH! LEMME OUT, HEY!

HE USUALLY LEAVES HIS DOOR UNLOCKED, AND—

WHOAH! JOE HOLY, YOU HAVE A BODY!

WE'LL BORROW IT FROM PERSEY LATER. DESTINY AWAITS US NOW!!

RIGHT. NO TRAPS ON FLOOR OR WALLS. WAIT A MINUTE.

WHAT?

FLYPAPER. HE'S CLEVERLY SHUFFLED IT IN WITH IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS.

AH HA!! LOOK, IT'S RIGHT HERE ON HIS DESK!!

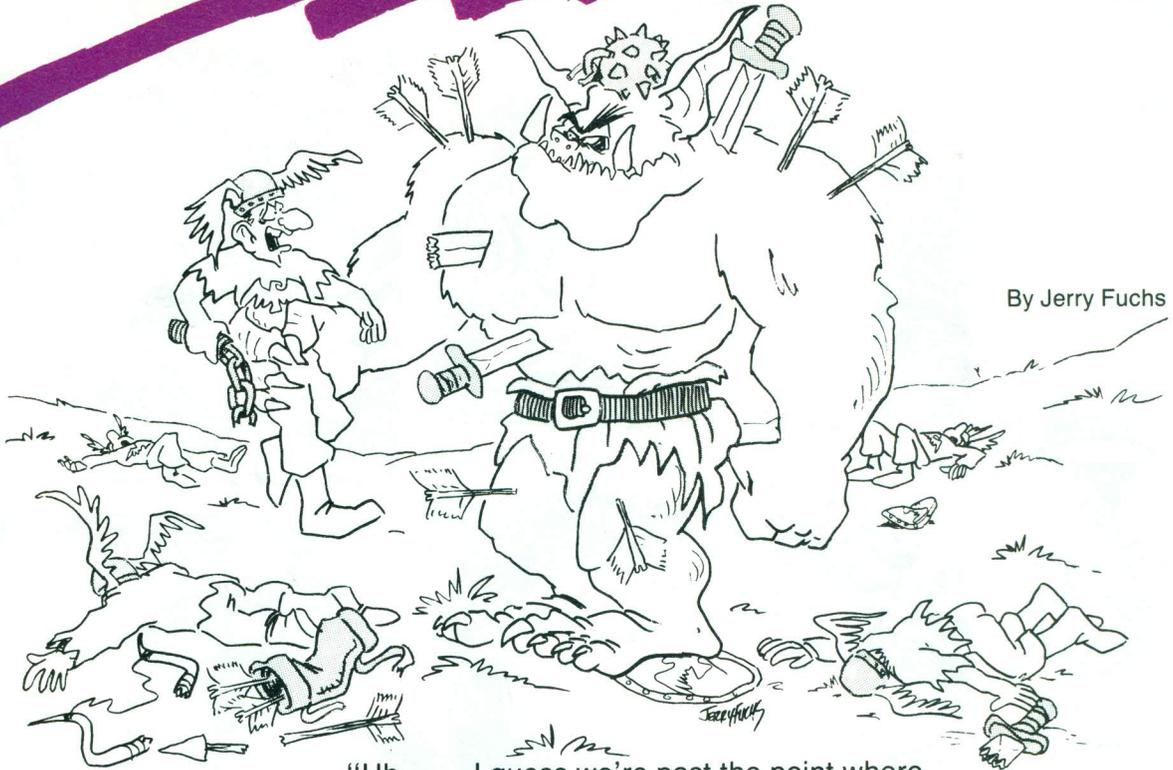
LOOK AT IT, YAMARA!! ISN'T IT BEAUTIFUL?!

TURN TO THE END!!

"FINALLY, IF ALL ELSE FAILS, SHOOT HIM INTO SPACE!"

AND IN ANOTHER HAND IT READS, "DON'T FORGET TO STAY BEHIND."

IT'S GOT A USEFUL SECTION ON THE POISONS HE'S IMMUNE TO. CAN I HAVE MY FREEDOM NOW?



By Jerry Fuchs

"Uh . . . , I guess we're past the point where you'd settle for an apology and a hearty handshake?"



By Joseph Pillsbury

THE TWILIGHT EMPIRE



TO SAVE FINELLA'S LIFE, BRENNA STAYED BEHIND AS ROB RETURNED TO EARTH.

B--BRENNA. WHERE'S ROB? IS HE..?

HE'S FINE, HE'S GONE HOME.

C'MON, WE'VE GOT TO GET YOU OUT OF HERE.

AND, IN THE HILANDS, THE BATTLES ARE ALMOST OVER AS WELL...



RAAARGH! STAY BACK, YOU SCUM! SHE'S MINE!!

Y-YES, MASTER.

GNAR! GNAR!

YOU COULDN'T TAKE ME ON A BET, HALF-OGRE!



HA!



KRAAOW!

WHAT WAS THAT?

JUST THE SPELL I WAS GOING TO USE ON SHANDARA. I LEFT IT BEHIND AS A LITTLE PRESENT.

WHERE TO, BRENNA?

THE HILANDS, I THINK. FINELLA AND QUILLIAN HAVE SOME UNFINISHED BUSINESS THERE.

TM



WRITTEN &
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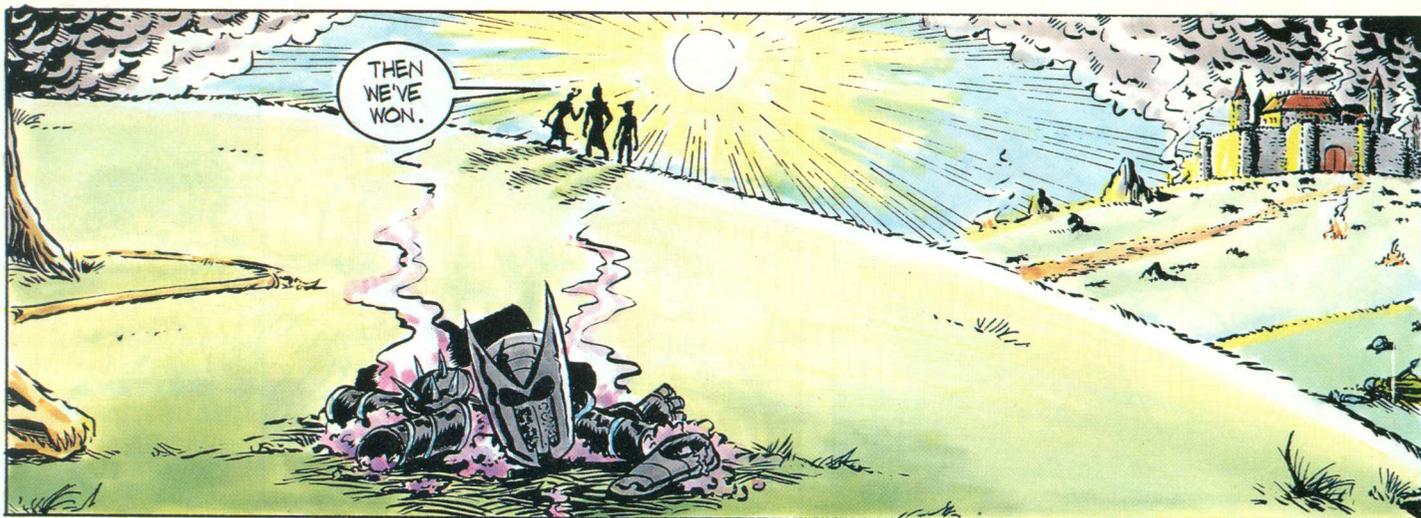
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ROBINSON'S WAR

PART 49



DEDICATED, TO KIFF, JULIE, AND THE ONE ON THE WAY. SPECIAL THANKS TO JOHN HEBERT -- FOR YEARS OF GREAT ART!

Continued from page 80

arc at right angles to present her port side to the approaching *Death*, her bow pointed at the land. Seamen in the rigging dropped the sails, slowing the *Pride's* way.

"Over the side," Liam called, smiling slightly at the eagerness with which the crew scrambled to get down into the boats that were dropped over the starboard side. He took the wheel himself, keeping the ship steady as she slowed. When most of the men were disembarked, he let the wheel go and paused, watching the *Death*. It came down fast now, all sail crowded on, its broad bow aimed straight at the waist of the *Pride*. An eery silence descended on the scene, and for a moment Liam wondered what he was doing. Then, with a shake of his head and a harsh laugh, he ran below to secure his luck.

When he came back on deck with an unlit torch, all the boats but one were away, pulling hard for the coast. In the last, the Old Man stood and called up to him.

"Cap Renvoort, we'd best be off!"

"Go on," Liam replied from the rail, grinning. "I'm staying with the ship."

"Cap, you can't!"

"Go!" Liam shouted angrily. "That's an order!" The sailors at the oars exchanged questioning looks, but he did not wait to see them off. With an impatient gesture he turned from the rail.

Just fore of the mainmast was a hatch that opened on the main hold. He went to it and began tugging at the heavy wooden top, sliding and pushing it open. Looking up between heavens, he saw the *Death* closing the final gap, still racing like an arrow directly at the *Pride's* middle.

The hatch proved obstinate. The wood, thick to begin with and now thoroughly soaked, refused to budge no matter how he tugged at it. With increasing desperation he threw himself at it, tearing his fingers along its edges, wrenching his muscles. A look showed him the *Death* impossibly close; he could make out the individual faces of pirates gathered in the bow, glaring angrily over at the *Pride*. Still the hatch would not open.

Then suddenly the Old Man was at his side, pulling with him. Between the two of them they managed to force open the hatch, tossing it aside as the *Death* suddenly veered hard, only yards from the *Pride*, and the two ships swung parallel to each other.

Liam and the Old Man straightened from the hatch and looked at each other for a moment.

"Is this your luck?"

"Yes," Liam replied, nodding gratefully down through the hatch. "I've been keeping it in the hold."

Then the *Death* came alongside with a grating crash of wood grinding on wood. The pirate's sides were far higher than the *Pride's*, and the two men stared up at the collection of grim privateers ranged along the rail above them. Their hands rested on skulls nailed to the wood of the rail, a row of bleached, denuded bone that marked their conquests. There was no sound but the flap of slack sails and the crack of the skull-and-crossbones pennant snapping in the wind.

Den Huys stood out among his crew not by his features—he looked like any Freeport trader, short and dark with broad, plain features—but by the angry fire in his eyes and the fearful space his crew granted him as he strode to the rail. He uttered a short, scornful laugh.

"So this is the *Pride of Dordrecht*," he said. Then, placing his hands on two skulls, he vaulted over the rail and dropped down onto the lower deck. He landed smoothly, with catlike grace, and stood up to face Liam and the Old Man. Wearing an immaculate tunic of black velvet and a long, silver-embroidered cloak, he made a strange contrast to the other two men, whose clothes were torn and salt-stained. He eyed them disdainfully from across the hatch.

"Which is captain?"

"I am," Liam said, bending down to pick up the torch he had dropped to open the hatch.

"You've angered me," Den Huys said simply, and then gestured four times with his finger. Each gesture called out a bolt of lightning. The first struck the *Pride's* colors, incinerating them, and the other three struck the deck around Liam, setting a small circle of wood ablaze. "Now I'll have to hunt down your boats one by one to get my trophies."

"Sorry," Liam said, gripping his torch tighter. The Old Man stood silently at his shoulder.

Den Huys smiled warily. "No apologies are necessary, Captain. I'm going to honor you. After you die—which will take a long time, I assure you—I'll have your skull nailed to my mainmast. You've led me the longest and best chase I've had in quite some time."

"It was my pleasure, I assure you," Liam replied smoothly, letting the torch dip down to the circle of magic fire around him. It caught quickly, smoking. The scent of burning pine resin filled the air, and Den Huys suddenly started, catching another smell.

"You bastard, what's your cargo?"

"Lamp oil," Liam said, and threw the burning torch into the hold. As one, he and the Old Man turned and sprinted for the rail, throwing themselves over.

Liam had broken open as many casks as he could in his time below, and most of the hold was awash with oil. The first explosion shattered the *Pride's* deck, flinging sharp splinters and hunks of wood into the massed crew of the *Death* and engulfing Den Huys in a sheet of flame. Before Liam and the Old Man had surfaced, flames were running up the side of the pirate ship from the ruined hull of the *Pride*, and the sea was littered with burning scraps of wood.

A flying piece of rail had caught Liam in the side, and he found he could barely tread water. The Old Man threw an arm around his shoulders and starting dragging him through the sea toward the *Pride's* boats. From that position, on his back facing the two ships, he watched the flames covering them, fueled by the oil in the *Pride*, licking hungrily at still-wet rigging and canvas, crackling along the *Death's* yards and masts. Suddenly a brilliant explosion blotted out the sight, a white-hot burst from what remained of the deck of the *Pride*. It flared like the sun for a long moment, then subsided, leaving spots in Liam's vision. When his sight cleared, there was little left of either ship.

The Old Man paused in his swimming and looked back at the nearly empty sea.

"That's my luck," Liam said weakly, and gasped at the pain of his bruised ribs where the wood had struck him.

"If that's luck," the Old Man said, resuming his swim toward the coast, "I want no part of it." Ω

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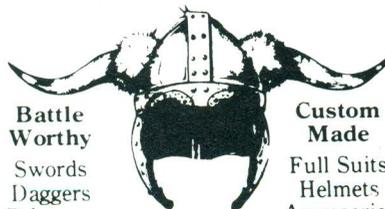
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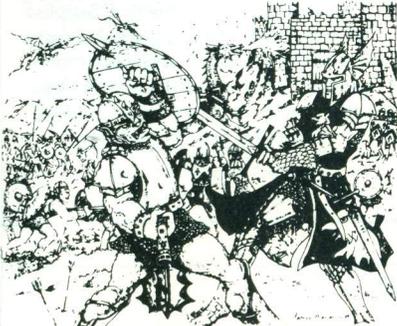
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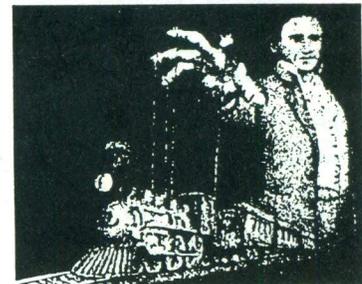
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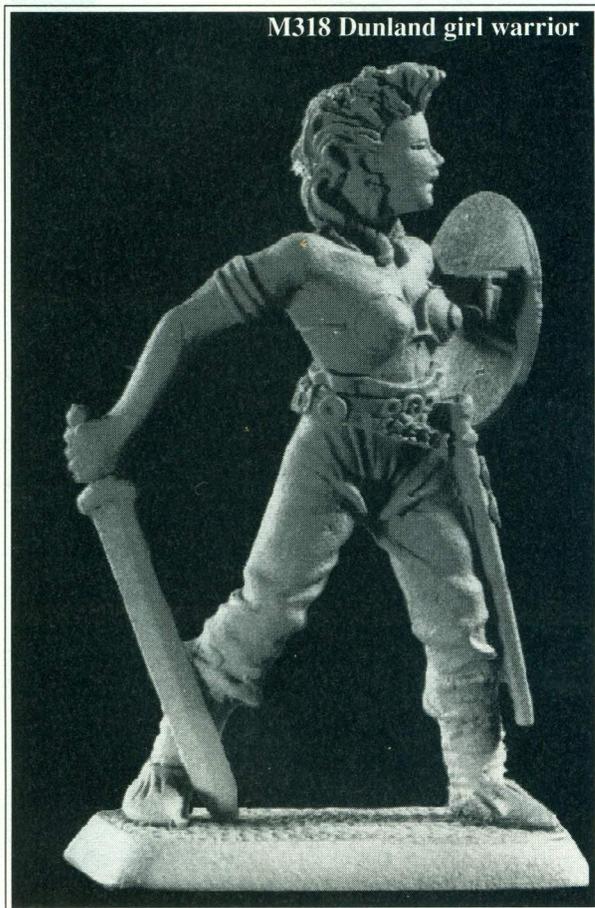
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GLASS

LOOKING



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Colonial Marine APC (Leading Edge)

A reversal on lead

New York State has retreated from its position that lead gaming figures are hazardous to consumers' health when used as intended. The bill that the governor signed overturned the ban on lead figures and admits that their evidence and research procedures were flawed. This was a viewpoint expressed by a coalition of people including industry miniatures makers, societies such as Historical Miniature Gaming Society, and a number of shops and individuals such as the readers of this column. Several hundred calls, letters and intense lobbying by the industry have proved that democracy and good sense can prevail. The first result of this ruling is that there should no longer be a problem in the production of lead figures. Several people have told me that other states were using the New York lead findings and bill as the keystone for bills of

their own. These states also have retreated from their previous positions. The second should be a lowering of prices for miniatures that can now be manufactured in the less expensive lead.

The irony is that there is little chance we will see a lowering of prices. The same industry that fought so hard for the right to sell lead has pretty much decided that it is not in their best interest to produce lead figures any longer. A poll of companies by phone show that most companies are going

to continue to produce in pewter only. The only exceptions to this seem to be large figures or overseas customers. The higher prices for pewter reflect not only the cost of metal, but also the cost for new molds plus the defense fund used to fight the lead ban. Most companies admit that there has been a drop-off in sales of miniatures, especially in "unit" type purchases, but are reluctant to address this loss.

The ball is now in the court of the consumer. As a store owner, I have heard several hundred complaints about the cost of figures in pewter, the difficulty in the finishing and joining, and the brittleness of the figures. Write letters to the companies and express your opinion. Talk to your hobby shop owner. There may not be any change, but at least the industry will know where its consumers stand.

We owe a large debt of thanks to those individuals and companies who fought to protect our rights to free choice and commerce. That does not mean that we have to agree with their decisions. If you are a retailer, these same questions are asked on page 120 of the February 1994 *Model Retailer* magazine. Gamers will have to rely on their feelings and wallets to direct them.

This month we want to welcome a new figure painter aboard. Christopher Foster has been a long-time customer at the shop and recently brought in some examples of painting techniques, and I asked him to do the DRAGON LORDS* figures. I also want to thank Eric Petersen for his work on the APC and some Space Rangers and Kevin Berwick for the last Ranger. We also want to welcome Reaper Miniatures aboard as the newest company to come under scrutiny. Now on to the reviews.

Reviews

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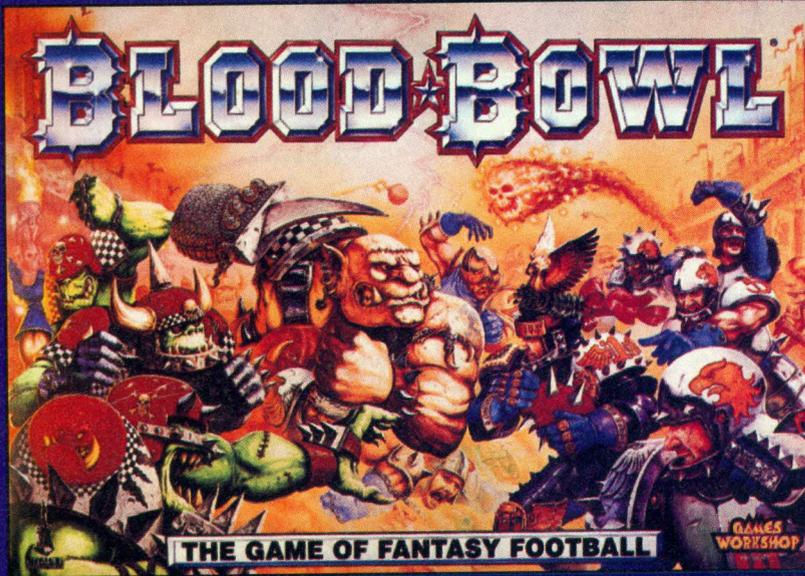


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Easter Day Massacre!

Black Bunny of Death and Doom Thumpers stomp Easter

In a day that is typically reserved for peace and goodwill throughout the Realms, Doom Bunny, the Black Rabbit of Death, and his vile army of Doom Thumpers laid seige to Easter Bunny's "Egg Castle".

Thousands of fluffy white rabbits perished in the battle. The whereabouts of the Easter Bunny are unknown. No eggs or sweets reached the children on Easter.

The Mayor of Tinsel Town said, "This must stop! But we are doomed this day without



(From 02-120) The Leader



(02-123) Thumper Thrashers

heroes to lead us."

Reports say the Thumper Horde now moves on the Forest of the Tooth Fairies. It is

guessed they intend to rob the Tooth Fairy Vaults. Nothing seems to stop the maniacal rabbits of doom.



(02-083) Orc Legion of Death Gladiators



(02-054) Goblin Berserkers

Orc Legions March!

The Orc Legions of Death have been sighted moving north. It is believed the evil army intends to attack Toytown in the North Pole.

When interviewed, Santa said, "We'll be ready for them. The good children of the Realms have nothing to fear. Christmas will come this year."

Santa's Elves are rumored to be making thousands of toy soldiers in preparation for the upcoming conflict.

Where are the Goblins?

For a change we have some good news to report. The Goblins have remained quiet since All Hallowed Eve. After their raid on St. Valentine's Castle in which hundreds of Cupids were slaughtered, the Goblins have ominously disappeared.

As a service to the community, the Partha Chronicle requests that all readers stay on the alert and report any sightings of the missing Goblins.

Known Troop Types of the Evil Armies

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the rear fender. The top deck is complete with running lights and a spotlight and grill. The wheels are included in the two side-piece moldings as is a nonfunctional hatch on the left side and engine grillwork on the right side. The front of the vehicle is in two pieces, a driver's viewport and the nose piece that supports a turret. The pieces didn't match perfectly and required some filing and filling. The front turret sits on a hole-and-peg assembly so the turret swivels. The rear piece has the engine grillwork and connects to the upper deck. This piece also needs some filling. There are noticeable gaps in the rear of the vehicle that allows you to see into the hollow shell. These spaces can be blocked and fixed using small pieces of thin cardboard cut in an "L" shape and fitted to the wheel well. The last piece is a large laser turret with twin guns that fit in a hole mount on the top deck.

The amount of flash and the fit is better than expected for such a large piece. The mold line on the tires is difficult to remove without harming the detail, but is worth the effort. This model could be used as a security vehicle in *CYBERPUNK**, *SHADOWRUN**, or *ALIENS** games. The set lists for \$27.95 and includes a figure of Harris in a firing mode. The figure has overemphasized muscles, but the rest of the figure is not bad. As a whole, this set is worth the price plus you get a nifty figure case.

#64107 Deadite Band Pack ****1/2

This three-figure set is scaled for 25 mm and is made of lead. The figures are all mounted on thick circular bases with textured tops.

Figure #1 has cloth-wrapped feet with the remains of boots, the remains of a pair of trousers, and a tattered fur cloak. The figure has an angry set to its face, and bones are visible everywhere. He is playing a flute made of a femur with a flared end where the joint would be. There is no flash on the figure. A nice touch is the fringe of hair at the back of the skull.

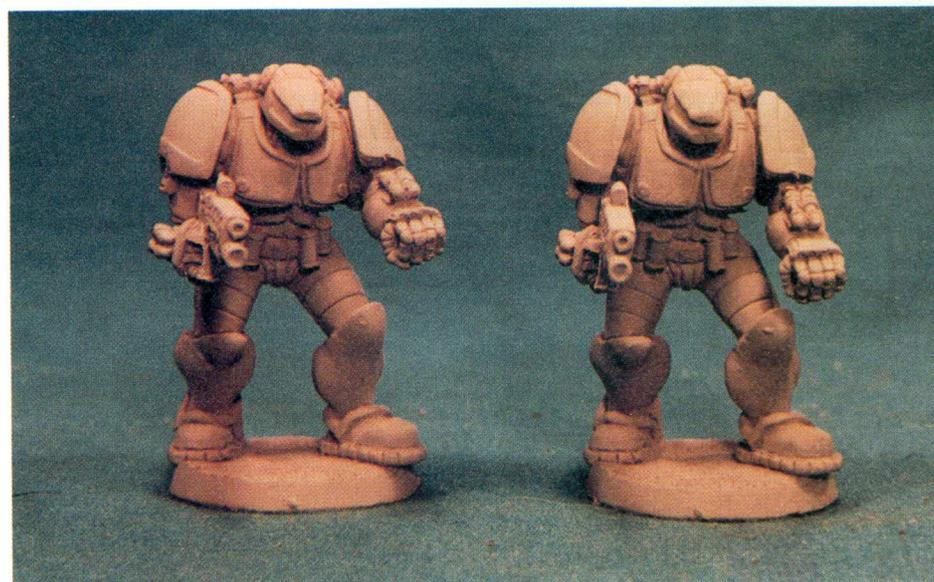
Figure #2 is dressed in rotting boots, the tattered remains of a kilt, and a cape. His headgear hints of a Scottish background and the presence of an off-beat bagpipe confirms it. As the bony hands squeeze, a bearded and mustached skeletal head provides the air. There is no flash on the figure except for the vent pieces.

Figure #3 is dressed similarly to the first skeleton, but his clothes are in much better condition. His heavily bearded skull show signs of damage as it stares straight ahead. Criss-crossing straps support a drum set made of joined human skulls, while the sticks are bones. The five drum skulls vary in size and condition, apparently giving tone to the drums. There is no flash on these pieces.

These figures are a must for *Army of Darkness* fans or people who play war games with musician rules. The variety allows you to customize figures and the



Deadite Band Pack (Leading Edge)



Une Assault Troopers (Global)

number allows you to support several units. These figures are a good deal.

Global Games

1666 St. Clair Ave. W.
Toronto, Ontario
CANADA M6N 1H8

1540 Une Assault Troopers ****1/2

These troops stand at 41 mm in their slightly slouched position. The figures are made of lead and are positioned on a slightly textured oval base. The figures consist of a basic torso and two arms that may be glued at whatever forward angle the owner desires. The figures represent combat troops in flexible, fully armored combat suits. The helmets have full-vision gear built into their wedge shape. They are armed with a laser rifle with under-mounted plasma grenade launcher, four wrist rockets, and shells stored on their belt. Their boots are magnetic and they have full communications and environmental packs built into their suits. This set has a number of small details and should

be fun to paint.

The only flash on these figures was on the bottom of the base, and it came off easily. Mold lines are well hidden and the arms fit on without having to do extra cleaning on the figure. This piece was designed for the *LEGIONS OF STEEL** game and their slightly larger scale, but could easily be used for other games. The price of \$8.95 is for a package of two kits.

Reaper Miniatures

1660 S. Stemmons
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1214 Earth Elemental ****1/2

This is a 44-mm lead casting mounted on a roughly oval base. The figure is an earth elemental that appears to be forming as it strides forward. The shape is humanoid with grimacing features. Fists are visible but closed and solid. There was no flash on the figure and the mold line at the top of the head is easily removed.

My only complaint about this figure is



Earth Elemental (Reaper)



Dracula (Reaper)



Werewolf (Reaper)

the base. It is molded slightly off center and needs to be leveled. The figure is otherwise what I visualize as the end of an elemental-summoning spell. This figure is definitely worth the \$2.50 cost in lead or the \$3.75 pewter cost. Painting of this figure was done by Ed Pugh.

1262 Dracula ***

This is a 25-mm lead figure of everyone's favorite vampire (next to Strahd). The figure is mounted on a square, textured base. He is wearing a waistcoat, tie, and coat. The face is scowling and the teeth

are visible. He has his arms stretched out and his cape is grasped in his hands.

The figure that I received for review was very rough. The cape was extra thick at the bottom and had some pitting. The limbs had a square shape that gives the illusion of four creases. The wrinkles in the clothing are consistent but seem to be exaggerated in the sleeves, while the shirt is too smooth. The right leg appears to be somewhat disjointed slightly below the knee. The detail is there but it is not clean and crisp, and the figure is not up to today's standards. The figure is worth \$.90 only if you are willing to spend the time and effort to fix it.

1264 Werewolf ****

This is a 25-mm scale lead figure mounted on a slightly textured square base. The figure is dressed in torn and tattered pants that end at mid-shin. The figure is covered in coarse fur. The legs end in paws while the arms end in hands. The muscle structure is exaggerated in the back. The werewolf growls out from beneath furry brows and the face is formed in a grimace.

The figure has little flash but a small nub on the end of the elbows. The figure is classically posed and would make a good gaming piece. The figure is worth the \$.90 price tag for lead or the \$1.35 price for pewter.

Grenadier Models, Inc.

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Grenadier Models, U.K., Ltd.

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5915 Dragon on Treasure Hoard **** 1/2

This is a 5-mm scale dragon diorama done in pewter. The package contains three separate castings, an elaborate base and a dragon.

The base is a 45-mm rough oval with a variety of details molded onto it. The background consists of a fallen rock idol with features that benefit from dry brushing, and a small hill with a sun carving. On the same hill, a wizard lies curled up resting on a chest and is buried partially by treasure. His cape and gown are fairly detailed and a tired expression is on his face. Even the beard is evident. The rest of the base is covered by piles of gold and silver, piles of ingots, cups, vases, and chests. This is definitely a dragon's hoard and a challenge to paint.

The dragon is partially curled up in slumber, but still manages to be over 30 mm in length. Scale detail is good, and there are only two spots that did not mold clearly. Spinal ridges and a crest are visible and well detailed. Teeth, eye sockets, nostrils, and ears are all visible and easy to reach and paint. Even the wing detail is clear with well-done bones and leathery

wings. The dragon fits into several small indentations in the hoard.

This could make a nice present or display under glass. The miniature costs \$5.50 and is well worth the price. The only detractors were some light flash on the base and on the dragon's front legs.

5714 Diamond Dragons **** 1/2

This package contains inflight dragons for the DRAGONLORDS game. The package contains two multi-piece dragons and two clear plastic stands made to fit the game hex board. The stands are generic and could be used for several games.

The dragon wings are just over 53 mm tip to tip. The bones are consistent and well spaced with leathery skin and folds visible. The body is just over 60 mm in length with a partially curled tail. Large spinal plates start just behind the head and run to the beginning of the tail. Scale detail is clear and well defined. The feet are curled up into fists.

This is a nice set of combatants for the game, but you will need a set of riders since there are none included. The set is priced at \$5.50 for a package of two dragons.

Gren 87003 Space Rangers *****

This box contains 50 plastic troops scaled to 31 mm and mounted on sprues.



Dragon on Treasure Hoard (Grenadier)



Diamond Dragons (Grenadier)

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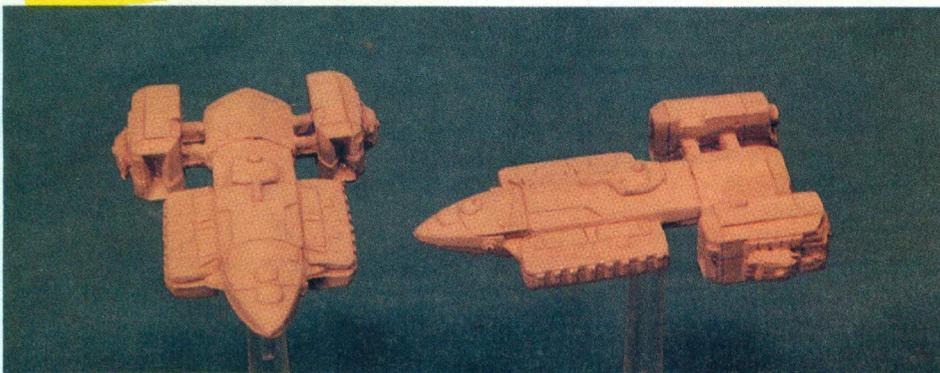
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Space Rangers (Grenadier)



Fantasy Warriors Flags, Standards (Grenadier)



Close Escort (RAFM)

There are two types of troops, a sergeant and a trooper. The trooper is dressed in heavy power armor and a visored helmet. Large shoulderpads support the jetpack and rocket launcher that are strapped to his back. This is a separate piece that fits into a hole in the back. A belt supports the communication gear. Ribbed gloves end at the wrist. The hands are molded onto

individual rail guns that fit into a chest slot and appear to be part of the arms. There are a total of 40 troopers.

There are ten sergeants, one each for four troopers. The sergeant has the same jetpack as the trooper, but is armed with a plasma pistol in the firing position. A power sword is attached by a peg to the left arm. The head is exposed and the eyes

are covered by a visor, while the helmet is attached to the belt on the left side. Power boxes and communication devices are attached to the belt in the back. He is in the same suit as the trooper but with a bit of extra glitz.

The ten sprues of extra weapons, and include smart cannons, chain guns, and organic disrupters. These weapons have hands molded onto the weapons and are interchangeable with the squad weapons. This gives you the ability to make the unit mission-specific in its weapon load. You can use the weapons for fortifications or even with other games.

This is an excellent set that could easily be adapted for a number of different rule sets. We use the set as a "lost chapter" to provide competition to our other Imperial lovers. With the large number of figures and low price of \$39.95 it is an excellent buy.

#408 Fantasy Warriors Flags, Standards

The standards set contains twelve banners in one of six different styles. The banners are scaled for the 28-mm scale of Games Workshop figures and are made of Luminate. They range in complexity from a trophy pole to a full-scale army standard.

There are two trophy poles that are identical and measure 35 mm to their tops. The poles have three heads in varying stages of decay, and all have long hair that secures each to the pole. There is flash on the pole and obvious mold lines. The space behind the skull also must have flash removed. This "standard" is probably from a nonhuman race.

The second set of standards are "L"-shaped poles with the flag face laced at the top and sides. The pole is smooth, 45-mm tall, and has an 8-mm crosspole. The flag is rough and worn. The sharp end of the pole holds a skull that is split at the crown.

There are two back banners that consist of a pole supporting a crescent. Hair drapes across the front and there is an edge to the crescent. These are more pronounced on orc champions. There was some light flash on the edges and the pole.

One of the two sets of human markers is simply a larger version of the "L" standards above. The face is larger, the pole longer, and the top has no skull mounted on the point. It is 47-mm tall. There is little flash on this piece. There are three banners in this group.

The other human standard is more an army or regiment standard. It is 55-mm tall and has a basic "T" construction. A set of horns tops the pole and is secured to the pole by a riveted block that also supports the crosspiece. This is a heavy-duty pole that is designed for long campaigns.

The last standard is a 66-mm tall pole supports cross trees and three crescent blades. The flag face is slightly ragged and various skulls and sashes provide extra decoration.

There are no statistics with this set, only

suggestions on how to use them and a promise of more to come. The sheet that comes with the set shows different faces and designs, but is done in black and white only.

This is a good set, but would have been better with more original banners along with a separate set of banners for evil and good troops. The set is worth the \$7.00 price tag.

RAFM Company, Inc.

20 Parkhill Rd. E.
Cambridge, Ontario
CANADA N1R 1P2

#5803 Close Escort *** 1/2

The close escort is designed for use with the BRILLIANT LANCES* space-combat game from GDW. Though these ships have no scale listed on the package, they measure 38 mm versus their listed size of 48.5 meters. The vessels are multi-piece kits of pewter, with a two-piece, clear, hexagonal base per ship.

The miniatures closely matches the illustration on page 23 of the game's *Technical Manual*. Our miniature has several problems that are not evident on the other miniatures I have in the store. The side cargo vents are misaligned as if there was a mold shift, but the nose and tail show no ledges. There is a slight dimpling by the cockpit and the port engine pod that did



Female Rangers (RAFM)

not fill totally on both miniatures. And even careful removal of the sprue damaged the engine nozzles. Glue-on details appear to be a set of torpedo tubes, but no tubes are included in stats. I therefore assume these are the extra fuel tanks, and

they fit into the only holes on the side of the ship. Surface detail includes turrets that are molded onto the body, bridge blisters, engine nozzles, and some shallow plate grooves.

If you enjoy space miniatures games and



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by Bob Murch

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play GDW's TRAVELLER* RPG or collect starships, these are nice but not heavily detailed pieces. I recommend that you carefully check the ships before purchasing. If the ship is clear of defects, the \$5.25 price per pack of two ships is not unreasonable.

#3699 Female Rangers ****

This three-figure set is made of pewter and scaled to the 28-mm scale. All figures have plain rectangular bases and are all female.

Ranger #1 one is holding a spear in her left hand. Her right hand clutches a sheathed sword in a metal-tipped scabbard. The figure is wearing tights, knee-high laced boots, a short studded-leather dress that doubles as armor, and left shoulder armor. Secured to this armor by a clasp is a long, hooded cape. A belt secures a provision canister, and bare arms end in huge leather gauntlets. The face is simple but has a slight flaw on the chin from a mold mark. Detail is easy to paint and elven ears stretch through the hair that falls straight under the hood. The figure has a large amount of flash on the right side at the junction between hand sword and leg, and will require careful work with a knife and file. The figure gives the appearance of being too slim and needs mold lines removed and square corners rounded.

Ranger #2 is wearing folded-top moccasins, tights, a shirt, and gloves. Her torso is covered by padded or quilted armor. Her right hand is on a sword with no sheath lashed to her right side and her left hand holds a bow. A belt secures a bag with a drawstring. A quiver with arrows lays on the right side of her back. She is definitely elven with twin pony tails falling to mid-back. There are mold lines on the legs

with flash at the leg junction. Once again everything is very angular and you may want to round some surfaces. You also may want to separate the sword from the leg so the sword does not look bent.

Ranger #3 is presenting a sword to someone with her left hand while the right holds a very square sheath. Her feet are extraordinarily thin, especially the left which looks unfinished. Boots have folded tops secured by clasps with gems. A shirt and pants are covered by a leather vest extending to mid-thigh. A thin belt secures a bag. The face looks human or half-elven and the hair looks almost styled. There is minimal flash and my only complaint is the figure's sharp angles.

These figures are more realistically dressed than the chain-mail bikini types, and should fill the bill for people looking for "outdoorsy" female figures. The price for a pack is \$5.75 and worth it, even though work is needed to make the figures perfect.

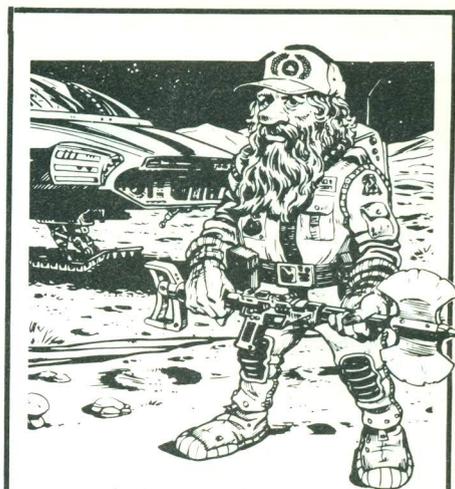
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LOOKING FOR MORE GAMERS?

You may think you'd have to travel to another planet to find a game convention. Finding friends who are also gamers can be a problem, too. Put your scout's uniform away and turn to the Convention Calendar in this magazine. There may be a game convention closer to your home than you'd think — and conventions are a great place to find friends who share your interests. Whether you like board-games, role-playing games, miniature wargames, or just browsing around, a game convention can be all you've hoped for. Plan to attend one soon.

Convention Calendar

Continued from page 42

contest, plus an art show and auction. Registration: \$15 before June 30; \$20 thereafter. Write to: V-KHAN, 695 South 8th St. #55, Colorado Springs CO 80905.

THOMAS COLLEGE MICRO-CON July 9 GA

This convention will be held on the Thomas College campus in Thomasville, Ga. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include dealers, videos, and open gaming. Write to: MICRO-CON, c/o Michael Taylor, 123 Greenleaf Lane, Thomasville GA 31792.

DRAGON CON '94, July 15-17 GA

This convention will be held at the Westin Peachtree Plaza Hotel in Atlanta, Ga. Guests include Barbara G. Young, Harlan Ellison, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, and Clyde Caldwell. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include panels, seminars, demos, computer games, movies, and comics programming. Registration: \$40 before June 15; \$45 on site. Write to: DRAGON CON '94, P.O. Box 47696, Atlanta GA 30362-0696.

QUINCON IX, July 15-17 IL

This convention will be held at the Signature Room at Franklin Square in Quincy, Ill. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA™ events and special guests. Registration: \$12/weekend or \$5/day. Send an SASE: QUINCON IX, c/o Mark Hoskins, 1181 Pratt St., Barry IL 62312.

GRAND GAME CON '94, July 16-17 MI

This convention will be held at American Legion Post #179 in Grand Rapids, Mich. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include RPGA™ events. Registration: \$12/weekend or \$6/day preregistered; \$7/day on site. Write to: John Edelman, 31 Carlton SE, Grand Rapids MI 49506.

CON-DOME '94, July 29-31 *

This convention will be held at the Danish Technical University Lyngby. Events include role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Other activities include a painting workshop. Registration: 80 Danish kroner. Write to: CON-DOME, c/o Mark Denninger, Kollegiebakken 1-C212, DK-2800 Lyngby, DENMARK.

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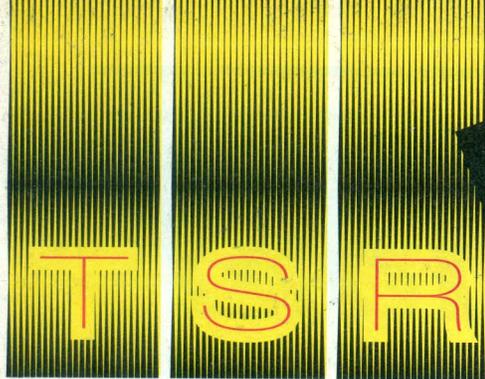
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Cover art by Jeff Easley

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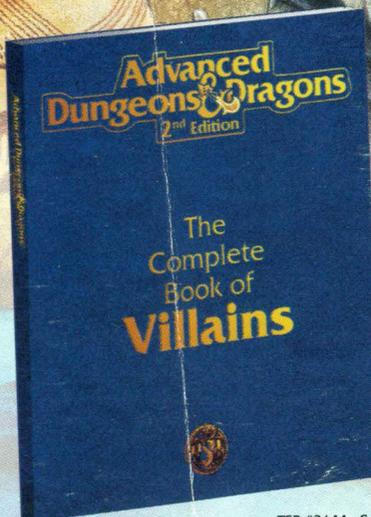
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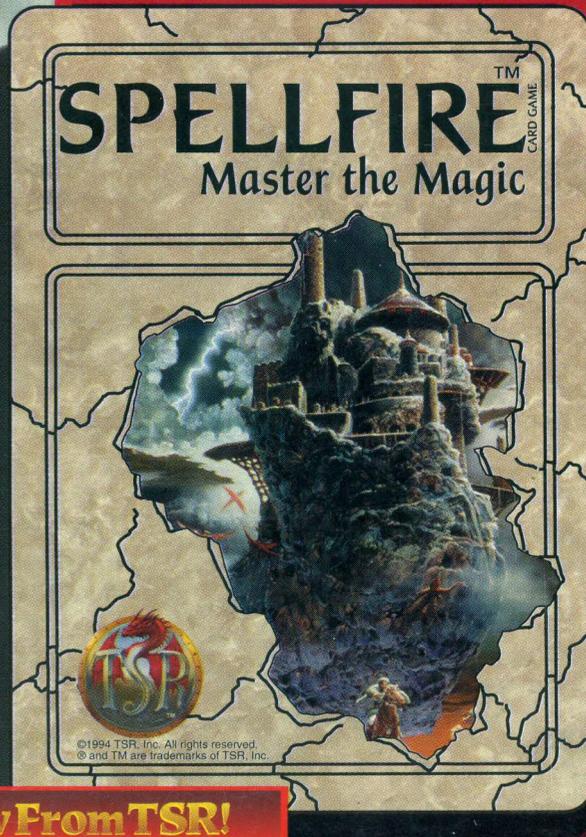
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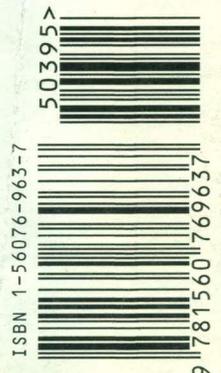
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