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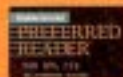
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**February 1992**

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## COVER

Fantasy role-playing is full of great battles and brave warriors, but the still-smiling dwarf in Jim Holloway's cover for this month is obviously a front runner in the Greatest Victory Won By Just One Fighter contest. Jim said he imagines that the dwarf to the far left is pointing at the frozen dwarf and yelling, "Hey, this guy still owes me five bucks!"

# LETTERS

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

## Tactical errata

Dear Dragon,

I'm slightly confused about a few points in the article, "The Strategy of Tactics," in DRAGON issue #169.

The first occurs under the description for active defense. The ranger in the example has an armor class of 7, due to wearing leather armor and wielding a shield. When using the active defense tactic, his frontal armor class would be 5 ( $7 - 2 = 5$ ); this statement is correct. The next states that if the ranger did not have a shield, his armor class would be 6, but this statement is incorrect. Since the ranger does not have a shield, his base armor class (leather armor only) would be 8. The +1 AC bonus would put his armor class at 7, not 6.

I also found the example under the description for full defense to contain this same sort of error. What confuses me most about this example is the statement that says, "If he has a shield, he receives a +4 bonus on his armor class for that round, excluding all shield bonuses." Is this statement correct? Excluding shield bonus sort of defeats the purpose of defense tactics.

Dennis J. Hudak  
Murrysville PA

*There are indeed two errors in the armor-class calculations on page 28 of issue #169. Under the description of active defense, the ranger's shieldless armor class should be 7 ( $8 - 1 = 7$ ). Under the description of full defense, the ranger's shieldless armor class should be 3 ( $5 - 2 = 3$ ). In each case, your editor used the ranger's original armor class with shield when making out the final calculations.*

*The statement about excluding all shield bonuses was not well phrased. Magical bonuses for shields are indeed added to the armor class of the shield bearer, after the +4 bonus for having a shield is accounted for. If a ranger in chain mail has a shield +2 and uses the full defense tactic, he will have a frontal armor class of  $-1(5 - 4 - 2 = -1)$ ; without this tactic, he would have a frontal armor class of  $2(5 - 1 - 2) = 2$ .*

*We did catch another typo in this article, which we corrected on page 6 of issue #170 ("Errata"). Your editor was obviously not playing with a full deck when he got into the card game, and he will try to do better. Sorry!*

## DARK SUN™ errata

Dear Dragon,

You have made a mathematical error in the article, "Random Magic For Organized Minds," in issue #173. Messrs. Brown and Connors split spells in the DARK SUN world into three categories: Common, Uncommon, and Rare. This is a good idea, but since there are more spells in the "Uncommon" list than on the "Rare," each individual spell in the "Rare" list is much more common than any single "Uncommon" spell.

For example, if I were rolling a third-level wizard spell for a scroll, the result would be *blink* 1% of the time (15% chance of getting the "Uncommon" list, then a 1-in-15 chance of rolling *blink*). However, *water breathing* would be the result 1.667% of the time (10% chance of rolling on the "Rare" list, then a 1-in-6 chance of getting *water breathing*). As a result, more wizards in the DARK SUN world know *water breathing* than *blink*. A simple fix for this problem would be to change Table 1 to read:

1d100	Frequency
01-75	Common
76-95	Uncommon
96-00	Rare

Michael J. Buce  
West Conshohocken PA

*Nice work—thank you. If more spells were added to these spell tables, Table 1 might need to be readjusted; DMs should keep a calculator handy for figuring out probabilities if they are sticklers for accuracy.*

## Handbook errata

Dear Dragon,

I would like to reply to David Howery's article "Completing the Complete Fighter," in issue #172. Mr. Howery's article, while having some excellent suggestions for fighters (especially the assassin kit, which I intend to adapt to my campaign soon), has some incorrect information in it.

First, he says that single-class fighters can specialize in only one weapon. Mr. Howery goes on to say that this is written on page 52 of the 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook*, and that page 58 of *The Complete Fighter's Handbook* states an incorrect contradiction of this by saying that single-class warriors can specialize in more than one weapon. However, the *Player's Handbook* states on page 52, under the heading "Weapon Specialization," that specialization "is normally announced (and paid for with weapon proficiency slots) when the character is created. But even after a player character earns experience, he can still choose to specialize in other weapons, provided he has the weapon proficiency slots

(Continued on page 7)

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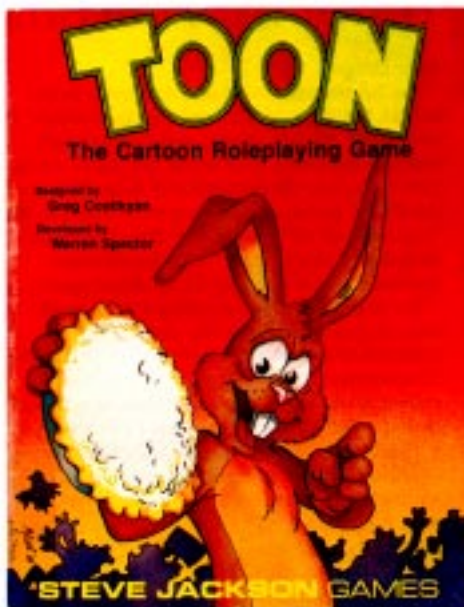
# EDITORIAL

That's *still* pretty kinky!

Last month, as you'll recall, we talked about "kinkiness" in role-playing games. When you get right down to it, almost any RPG is kinky in one way or the other. Some of the most popular and intriguing RPGs involve very weird concepts, such as an underground society run by a computer and completely populated by traitors (West End Games' *PARANOIA*\* game); urban battlegrounds filled with punk orcs, troll mercenaries, and elven technologists (FASA's *SHADOWRUN*\* game); an alternate history in which space travel was discovered during the Victorian period (GDW's *SPACE: 1889*\* game); a transdimensional invasion of Earth by everything from wizards to dinosaurs to cybernetic religions (West End Games' *TORG*\* game); and high-school life after Earth is invaded by wacky alien races (R. Talsorian's *TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE*\* game). These games are fun for their very uniqueness.

Games have also been created around kinky ideas that appeared in other media formats, such as pizza-eating reptiles who practice martial arts in the sewers (Palladium's *TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES*\* game, from the comic book); evil gods and monsters from outer space that attempt to conquer the Earth in the 1920s (Chaosium's *CALL OF CTHULHU*\* game, from H. P. Lovecraft's tales); and an eccentric gentleman who voyages through time and space in a police box (FASA's *DOCTOR WHO*\* game, from the British TV show). Tolkien seems pretty bland, huh?

It seems to me that one of the most basic requirements for "kink" in a role-playing game is that it not include elements of traditional fantasy role-playing games (particularly the AD&D® or D&D® games), which have roots in Tolkien's Middle-earth tales, Robert Howard's Conan stories, and Middle Ages lore. Elves are probably the most-recognized elements of a traditional fantasy game, so dumping elves is a step in the right direction in creating a kinky RPG. Different Worlds' *EMPIRE OF THE PETAL THRONE*\* system and Skyrealms Publishing's *SKYREALMS OF JORUNE*\* game present science-fantasy alien worlds



with no elves (or even unicorns) at all, and the *TALISLANTA*\* game was advertised by Bard Games as having no elves, too, though some of the many humanlike races of Talislanta looked more than a little like elves. TSR's AD&D 1st Edition *Oriental Adventures* tome and FGU's *BUSHIDO*\* game, both based largely on Japanese medieval culture and folklore, offered entertaining no-elf worlds with the added stamp of mythological authenticity. You could call them kinky, too, for their uniqueness and appeal.

On the other hand, you can make even elves kinky. I mentioned the techno-elves of the *SHADOWRUN* game earlier, and spacegoing elves crew fleets of butterfly-shaped ships in TSR's *SPELLJAMMER*™ setting, but you can also have fun with more traditional material. Chaosium produced the *ELFQUEST*\* game, in which there is almost nothing but elves; if that's not kinky, it's at least unusual (I haven't, of course, mentioned those elves' mate-finding practice called "recognition" — now, *that's* kinky!). Some of the strangest pure-fantasy elves are probably those in the *RUNEQUEST*\* game's *GLORANTHA*\* universe (from The Avalon Hill Game Company), who are religiously fanatical ecoterrorists; and the tall, nomadic, desert-dwelling elves of Athas, in the AD&D game's *DARK SUN*™ setting. Elrond they're not.

In my opinion, however, the kinkiest of

games are those that are not only rare and appealing, but *funny*. Humor is priceless, and any game that can offer rules that promote genuine laughter is my kind of game. The *TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE* and *PARANOIA* games noted earlier are prime examples, as are TSR's *BULLWINKLE AND ROCKY*™ game and West End Games' *GHOSTBUSTERS*\* system. FGU's *BUNNIES & BURROWS*\* game, detailed in the last issue's editorial, was usually pretty humorous (I mean, you were playing rabbits, after all). My all-time favorite kinky funny game, however, is Steve Jackson Games' *TOON*\* game.

In the *TOON* game, you can role-play anything. You can be a barbarian, a robot, a rock star, a cartoon-character rabbit, a plant, a microwave oven, your boss at work, yourself, anything. You get a handful of skills and powers appropriate to the kind of character you are. Then you do the most stupid things, and you laugh until you can't breathe.

The *TOON* game was reviewed in *DRAGON*® issues #92 and #144, and discussed in #106 in an article on "bad" ideas and whether they can make good games. I won't bother detailing the game's simple mechanics; results are all that count, and they've been the best. One of our most memorable adventures began when a duck with a bazooka destroyed the space/time continuum, and it ended when Godzilla stepped on everyone after Tina Turner got him to dance. In another game session, adventurers traveled across Mars in a balloon shaped like June Cleaver from the *Leave It to Beaver* TV show. Later, the D&D® Cartoon Show kids—Bobby, Presto, Hank, Sheila, you know the gang—had a ferocious encounter with the Smurfs, the details of which a sense of decency forbids me to mention.

And then there was The Greatest Role-Playing Adventure Ever Known. Everyone's got one. Ours was the *greatest* Greatest, however. Lectroids from Planet 10 (from the Buckaroo Banzai movie) had taken over the TSR building, and a team composed of such greats as Darth Vader,



## Letters

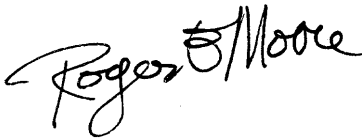
Continued from page 5

the Road Runner, Doctor Who, Wile E. Coyote, Danger Mouse, the duck with the bazooka, and Tutu Monchichi (you remember those cute little monkey-thingers, right?) tried to take the building back. The adventure ended when Tutu Monchichi accidentally destroyed the universe<sup>1</sup> and everyone went to Heaven<sup>2</sup>. I cannot describe the rest of the adventure, as human cognitive structures are not meant to withstand such mind-distorting abuse<sup>3</sup>.

That was a kinky adventure, and that, for me, set the standard for kinky RPG stuff from then on.

When I was a frequent game master, it helped to take an occasional break from the regular campaign, whatever it was, and play something entirely different for one or two sessions. The TOON game was the perfect break-time game. Any other game could do, but I would strongly recommend that the game be humorous. A humorous or off-beat adventure using the original game system would do, too; we once role-played peasants who were caught in the magical blitz that our original characters had flung against an invading orcish army, and another time we role-played AD&D game deities who fought robotic war machines (see the editorial in issue #156 for details). Taking the time to run an oddball adventure or two keeps the original campaign fresh without spoiling any of its flavor.

Kinkiness is a trait that you should learn to hunt for and put to use in your role-playing recreation time. Your players will thank you for it, and if you don't already have a Greatest Role-Playing Adventure Ever Known, one day you will<sup>4</sup>. Give it your best kink.



### Footnotes

1. Famous last words: "I just know that somebody somewhere will want to buy a Happy Factory franchise!" Thanks, Laura.
2. Except Darth Vader, of course. Thanks, Margaret. Maybe the duck shouldn't have gone, either, as he shot both the D&D Cartoon Show Dungeon Master and the space/time continuum in the same adventure, but we were being generous. Thanks, Michael.
3. The group never did meet the Great Flying Fish in the Hall of Mysteries. Bummer.
4. But it won't be as good as ours was.

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available." Fighters could specialize in only one weapon in the AD&D 1st Edition game, not the AD&D 2nd Edition game. The reference in *The Complete Fighter's Handbook* on allowing single-class rangers and paladins to specialize in weapons is one I would leave to be decided by the DM running the campaign, since everything in *The Complete Fighter's Handbook* is optional.

Second, I would like to counter Mr. Howery's barring of elves and other demihumans from the assassin kit. Dark-elf characters, if allowed by the DM, would certainly have fighters with the assassin kit. Evil dwarves do exist, so this option should be open to them, too. The assassin kit in *The Complete Thief's Handbook* allows all races to be assassins, although the DM can "forbid elven, gnome and halfling Assassins... since this profession is quite antithetical to their cultures." This is a fantasy world, however, so no one character has to follow the dominant philosophy of his race.

Other than these mistakes, the three kits listed are excellent, and I hope Mr. Howery will publish more in the future.

Chris Danielson  
Houston TX

*Regarding your first point, a mistake was indeed made—but not by David Howery, and not by you (and, thank goodness, not by the editor, either). You obviously have a first-printing copy of the 2nd Edition Player's Handbook. The very line you quoted was changed in the second printing of this rules book, so that the corrected text now reads: "But even after a player character earns experience, he can still choose to specialize in a weapon, provided he has the weapon proficiency slots available." In other words, a fighter can specialize with only one weapon, and no more. During the editing of David Howery's article, I took care to rewrite part of the second paragraph to reinforce this point, as many people had already been snagged by this problem in the rules. The Complete Fighter's Handbook is thus still in error. Individual DMs can, of course, rule as they wish in their own campaigns.*

*On the second point, David Howery originally allowed humans, elves, and half-elves to be assassins. This was changed during the article's editing, but you do make a good point, and I can accept your reasoning about drow and dwarven assassins. I would still keep other races from adopting this kit in most campaigns, unless there is good reason to the contrary.*

## Fame errata

Dear Dragon,

I would like to thank you for the editorial nod in my direction (issue #175, "Editorial"). However, you did spell my name incorrectly. Fortunately, the thrill of being mentioned in my favorite magazine more than makes up for the oversight!

I have been trying to get something published for some time now, and to receive recognition for a contribution is an immense pleasure. In issue #154, Alex Iwanow wrote a letter proposing a contest, to which the response was that getting published was in itself a contest. The response went on to explain that although you don't pay for certain submissions, you do get the fame of having them appear in the magazine. That is my point—the fame! I can (and

have) shown all my friends that I, Tracy Greathouse, have my name in DRAGON Magazine!

So, again thank you very much. I am honored, thrilled, happy, overjoyed, and generally ecstatic over this.

Tracy Greathouse  
Bedford Heights OH

*If you were happy before, you should be in Heaven now. Sorry about misspelling your name. By the way, the other TSR staff members loved your news clipping about the giant hamsters in Kansas, particularly after they photocopied my face onto the hamster and passed the picture around the building.*

## Hoopy froods

Dear Dragon,

As I was reading DRAGON issue #175, I was deeply entranced by the editorial on giant space hamsters. I noticed the editor's remark on one response near the end of the editorial on page 100. The response read, "They're so cool and froody that you can keep ice on them," and the remark read, in brackets, "Froody?"

First, I would like to note that "froody" is not a word. I resume the writer meant "frood." The term "frood" comes from *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, by Douglas Adams. "Frood" is a noun, not an adjective as the writer uses it, as the definition of "frood" is "really amazingly together guy." However, the writer could have used the term "hoopy" and possibly have gotten away with it. "Hoopy" means "a really together guy!" Even better, the entire passage could have been written as: "Those hoopy froods are so cool they can be kept on ice." Being a hoopy frood is the utmost desirable thing to be called, because it means you're such an amazingly amazingly together guy that it's really amazing.

Thank you from a hoopy frood.

Robb Howell  
Bozeman MT

*You're welcome. Thank you, too, and thank you to hoopy froods Joel Patton (Travelers Rest, S.C.), D. Mark Griffon (Kenosha, Wis.), Sarah Whedon (Morehead, Mass.), and Stewart Stremler (San Diego, Calif.) for their assistance on this critical matter. I made sure that I spelled your names correctly (Side note to Joel Patton: I'm sure that if you want to name a sect of hamster-revering gnomes after Ann Sheffield for her poem on giant space hamsters in issue #175, that would be fine with everyone. She's a hoopy frood herself, for sure.)*

*And now I'm going home to rest and maybe have my head examined.* Ω

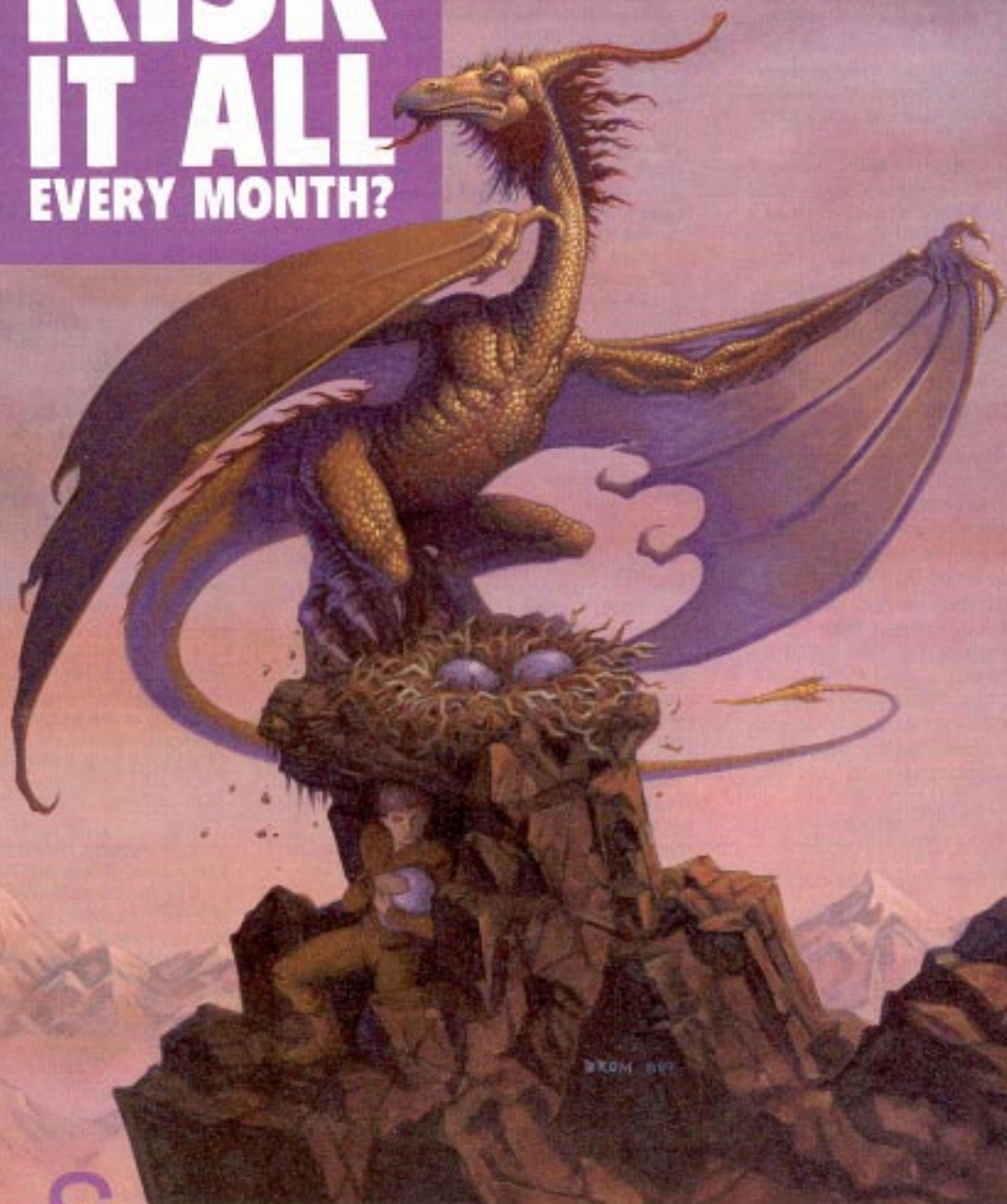
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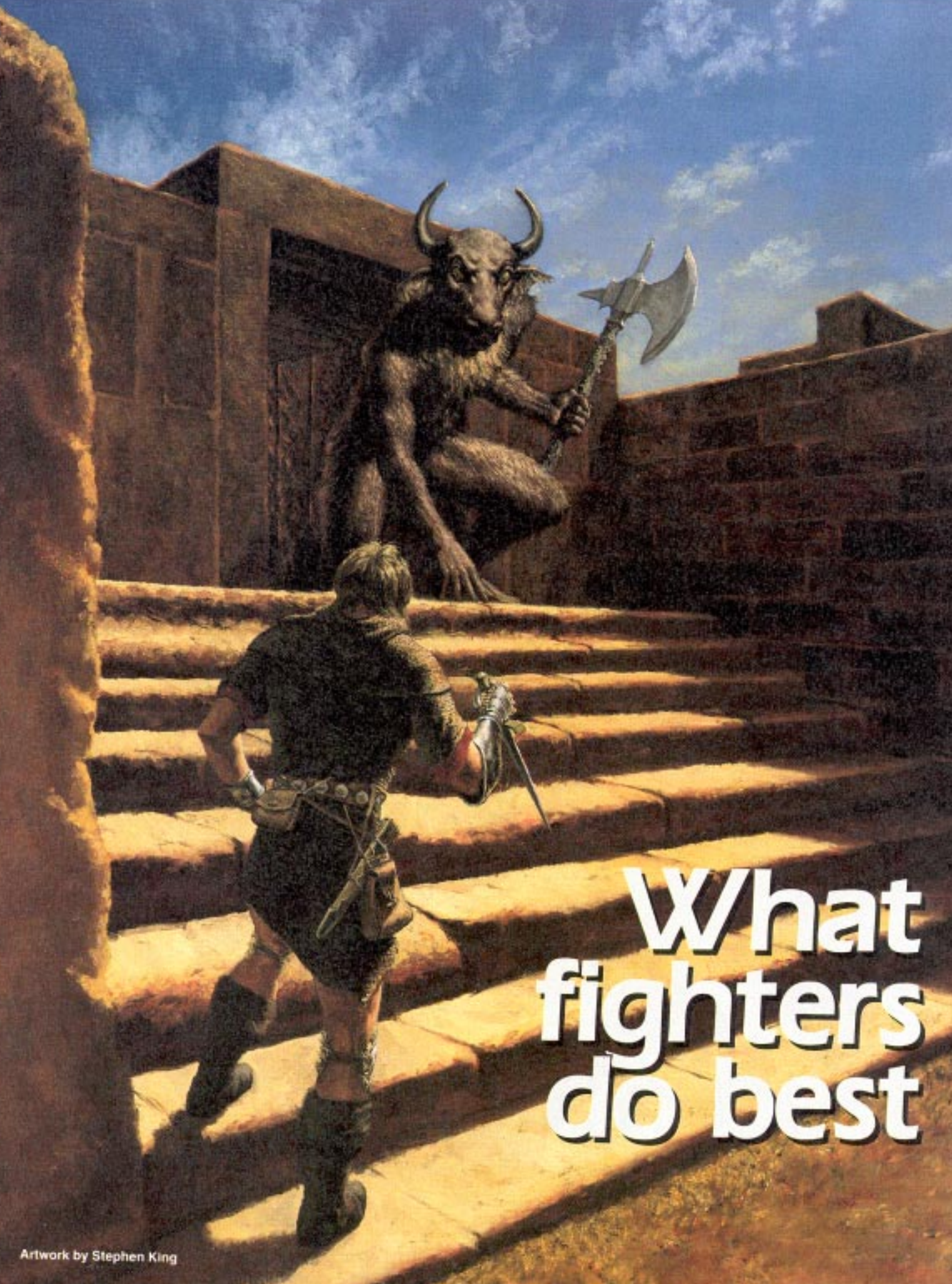
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**What  
fighters  
do best**



Defining and playing chivalry for knightly characters

# The Three Faces of Chivalry

by Len Carpenter

Artwork by John Stanko



Ever since the publication of *Unearthed Arcana* for the AD&D® 1st Edition game, players and DMs have debated the respective roles of the paladin and cavalier classes. The changes made in the AD&D 2nd Edition rules with the appearance of a new *Player's Handbook* and *The Complete Fighter's Handbook* have added more options for the players of knightly characters, but have also added to the muddle of controversy.

For those having trouble distinguishing between the play of cavaliers and paladins, a look at how chivalry was actually viewed in the Middle Ages can prove helpful in reducing confusion and disputes. The different chivalric codes touted by medieval authors can aid players in portraying the forms cavaliers and paladins can assume in AD&D games, as well as inspire the DM in creating the chivalric codes known in the campaign world.

In his outstanding work, *French Chivalry*, historian Sidney Painter argues that there never was a common code of chivalry recognized in medieval times. Writings that survive from the Middle Ages describe a wide variety of opinions offered by knights, ladies, ecclesiastics, and troubadours on which characteristics embody the ideal of knighthood to be emulated by nobles. Painter groups this diversity of beliefs into three major categories, which he calls feudal chivalry, religious chivalry, and courtly love.

## Feudal chivalry

Feudal chivalry emerged from the ruins of the western Roman Empire as a martial

code inspired by the warriors of Germanic legend. Warfare was the chief occupation of the Teutonic and Frankish nobility, so the nobleman was defined by those traits that make an effective soldier: personal bravery, physical strength, hardiness, skill at arms, and fortitude. To be *preux*, to possess martial prowess, was the minimum expected of every nobleman. In the violent centuries following the fall of Rome, a nobleman who could not fight was of little use to his feudal lord.

Loyalty joined prowess to form the two major qualities admired in the knight. To the feudal world, loyalty primarily meant upholding the personal obligations that bound a knight to his liege lord and a lord to his vassals. A knight who couldn't be relied upon to act as a trustworthy soldier in his lord's service was also useless, if not dangerous, to his feudal lord. Only by observing the mutual contracts that held feudal society together could total chaos in a fragmented Europe be averted.

The knight was taught to faithfully serve the lord above him and in turn be obeyed by the vassals and peasants below him. In return for the goods produced by the peasantry, the knight provided protection from external threats. When obligations were ignored and internal dissension present, a fief became ripe for plunder or conquest. The ethical duties of a knight to his society proved crucial in a time when competition among rivals was fierce and the disunited perished.

A tradition of knightly courtesy later emerged with growing political stability and class consciousness among nobles. Courtesy was a matter of practical sense shown by noble to noble to preserve and protect the members of an exclusive club.

A courteous knight, according to the feudal code, should face a fellow noble on equal terms and should neither attack an unarmed knight nor take advantage of an unfair opportunity. A knight must always be ready to accept a defeated knight's surrender, to spare his life, and promptly release him on parole.

A captor must treat a noble prisoner with respect and must never demand an excessive ransom from a vanquished knight. (Haggling was little known, since a knight's vanity was satisfied by the high ransom he could command.) In return, a knight taken prisoner and then released on his word of honor must never violate the terms of his parole and should pay his ransom in reasonable time.

The yearning for glory came to be as much a part of the nobleman as the desire for land, plunder, and ransom. Every knight dreamed of having his deeds live on beyond him in song and story, just as the Germanic heroes of old did. The pursuit of glory through the accomplishment of heroic feats was declared the chief goal of the true knight; the earning of booty was merely a side benefit—at least, that's what knights said in public.

The virtue of generosity, lauded in early Germanic literature, was also valued in later medieval times. Great honor could be won by the open-handed noble who gave lavishly to his vassals and allies. Hungry minstrels and landless knights seeking employment spread the message that *largesse* ranks high among the chivalric virtues. A rich nobleman who lacked martial prowess but who gave his wealth freely could always find knights to fight for him and minstrels to sing his praises.

The nobleman who lived within his means was despised by some medieval writers. Often living on the edge of bankruptcy, a noble should think nothing of mortgaging his lands to hold extravagant banquets and to bestow costly gifts. A disregard for fiscal responsibility came to mark the true nobleman from the frugal townsman, who was always ready to exploit the poverty of knights in order to buy or marry his way into the landed nobility.

While warfare was considered the true vocation of knights, the tournament offered an acceptable substitute to break up the monotony of peacetime. For a landless knight with no steady source of revenue and no war to earn him regular pay and booty, the horses and armor captured or ransoms claimed through tournament victories provided an exciting way to earn a living.

Tournaments brought prestige to the noble who sponsored them. The spirit of hospitality and social activities accompanying a tourney reinforced the feeling of comradeship among nobles, encouraged the use of chivalric courtesies, and further separated tournaments from the horrors of war, in the process changing tournaments from a practical exercise of the skills needed in battle into a grand sport to be enjoyed for itself.

The 13th-century knight William Marshal personified the spirit of feudal chivalry. On one occasion, while Marshal waited for a tournament to begin, a young herald

asked William in song for a gift. Marshal promptly overthrew the first knight he faced and gave the loser's horse to the herald, impressing all present with his knightly skill and impetuous generosity.

At its core, feudal chivalry in AD&D game terms embraces the lawful-neutral ethos. Feudal chivalry concerns itself primarily with the ethical contracts binding society together, while also closely regulating the rights, powers, and duties of the various classes of society. The morality of the actions performed by individual knights merits far less attention.

## Religious chivalry

Religious chivalry emerged as the church tried, though with only middling success, to restrain the violence and greed of feudal knights. The church worked to replace the knight's sense of loyalty to his feudal obligations with an even higher loyalty to the church. A knight, clerics proclaimed, should serve the church first and obey other worldly contracts second, devoting his life to serving the clergy and adhering to the edicts of the church in all matters.

Knighthood is not an accident of birth, priests maintained, but a divinely instituted order like the priesthood. The act of conferring knighthood upon a noble became a holy ritual. The church taught that a nobleman, no matter how high his birth, betrays his knighthood if he follows an irreligious and immoral life.

The religious knight aspires to be honest, temperate, frugal, charitable, humble, and strictly monogamous, if not chaste. He also shuns greed, luxury, extravagance, and the desire for worldly honors. The only deeds worthy of a knight are those that serve the church, not those performed to win glory in the eyes of others.

The feudal knight viewed his prerogative to make war on his neighbor as an inalienable right of his class. The church strove to curb this propensity for violence by forbidding a knight from warring on his fellow Christians. The church believed the only war a Christian knight could justifiably wage was a religious crusade called by the church. Moreover, the noble who failed to go crusading when called upon was denounced as a worthless knight and a false Christian.

The church also preached against the taking of booty in war and the plundering of the weak and innocent. Condemning the seizure of goods from a fellow Christian defeated in war or tournament, the church restricted the knight's hunger for the fruits of war to only those goods taken from the unrighteous while in the act of enforcing justice against evildoers, never for the simple lust for profit.

Despite the church's declaration that no knight could be saved who had not returned all the goods taken from others, William Marshal remained unrepentant for all the wealth claimed from the 500 knights he had vanquished in tourna-

ments. He insisted on his deathbed that the church's teaching was false and unfair to knights.

While a few ecclesiastics approved of the tournament as a training ground for the necessary skills of knighthood, the church in general abhorred tournaments, where the seven mortal sins of pride, envy, hate, avarice, luxury, extravagance, and homicide thrived. The knight's quest for glory was mere vainglory in the opinion of priests. The bloodshed inherent in tournaments was repugnant to the church, and the seizure of the horses and armor of fellow knights was decried as an unjust profit. The pomp and pageantry surrounding the tournament was scorned as a wicked waste of resources better employed in more charitable ways.

Yet all the threats to excommunicate the participants in tournaments and to deny church burial to anyone who died in a tournament were in vain. The church never extinguished the love of rough melees and splendid jousts in the hearts of knights and commoners alike.

In the AD&D game, religious chivalry will likely be allied with a dominant god or goddess of lawful-good alignment, a deity concerned with both the well-being of society and virtuous personal behavior. The patron of paladins and many good-aligned cavaliers, this deity will charge his priests to instruct knights on how to follow the path of righteousness, as well as chastise knights who lead an immoral or unethical life.

## Courtly love

The origins of courtly love have been debated endlessly by scholars, but the chief ideals of the code emerged from the lyrical poetry of southern France in the 11th and 12th centuries. The content of romantic poetry varied widely as poets throughout Europe explored love in all its many forms: dreamy and mystical, coarse and bawdy, platonic and chaste. The most flowery of poets described the sweet agony of longing from afar, never to be fulfilled. Their poems recounted the unquestioning worship of and subservience to a noble lady, and portrayed knight and lady as equals in the service of Lady Love.

Most poets did agree that love is a strong source of goodness in the world. Love makes a knight more valiant, more noble, more *preux*. Where the feudal knight gains strength through devotion to his liege lord and the religious knight through dedication to the church, the romantic knight grows mighty through adoration of a noble lady. A nobleman who has no high-born lady to love lacks the essence of true knighthood. A lady who has no knight to worship her and no minstrels to praise her should feel clearly out of fashion.

Knights were advised to practice the social graces and courtly arts to win the favor of cultured ladies. A knight must possess charm, eloquence, taste, civility, and a ready wit if he wants to stay popu-

lar at court. A knight who wishes to win the heart of a lady of gentle birth should be as adept at singing, dancing, playing a musical instrument, and composing poetry as he is at jousting and fencing.

Romantic literature described loyalty to one's paramour as preeminent over all other obligations. True love places a knight and his lady above all laws of state or church. Nothing should stand in the way of true love—not even marriage. In an age when marriages were arranged to forge political alliances or because of economic necessity, few persons married for love. As nobles often married young, the only ladies available to be worshiped from near or afar were already married. The intractable laws of the church and deeply rooted customs of feudal lords ensured that the ideals of courtly love remained more the stuff of literature than of everyday life.

The most famous tales of courtly love, which recounted the affair between Lancelot and Guinevere, broke sharply from the ideals of the past. Not only was Lancelot's adulterous love for his queen a sin in the eyes of the clergy, it also violated Lancelot's sworn obligations to honor his lord, King Arthur.

In a romance written by Chretien de Troyes, Lancelot journeyed the land on incredible adventures for no better reason than the approval of Guinevere. During a quest to rescue his queen from a villainous knight, Lancelot lost his horse and was compelled to ride in a hangman's cart carrying condemned criminals. Lancelot hesitated a moment before boarding the cart and thus subjecting himself to a humiliating way for a knight to travel. When Guinevere later heard of Lancelot's momentary hesitation, she considered that a flaw in Lancelot's love for her. Guinevere required Lancelot to set forth on yet another series of adventures before she finally forgave him.

In another test of Lancelot's love, Lancelot entered a tournament in disguise but Guinevere recognized her champion anyway. Lancelot defeated every knight he faced until Guinevere sent him a note ordering him to fight poorly. Lancelot allowed himself to be soundly thrashed and driven from the field in disgrace. He continued to fight badly the next day until the queen sent him another message commanding him to fight at his best. Thereafter, no knight could stand against Lancelot.

Courtly love at its most extreme, and as played in the AD&D game, describes a chaotic system of ethics advocating lovers to flout any laws or customs that hinder the course of true love. The romantic knight owes loyalty to his paramour only; all other duties are shown to be meaningless when the two fall under the spell of Lady Love.

## Gaming chivalry

These three chivalric codes should be seen as separate and, in their entirety,

irreconcilable standards of conduct. Feudal chivalry chafed at the moral restrictions laid down by the church and regarded the beliefs of courtly love a threat to the proper business of arranged marriages, as well as a weakening influence on the rigorous life a warrior should lead. Religious chivalry struggled to limit the excesses and violence inherent in feudal chivalry while vigorously opposing the wanton behavior of proponents of courtly chivalry. Courtly love sought to throw off the prohibitions imposed by feudal custom and religious doctrine to give freer reign to the passions of nobles.

While these codes could never be wholly combined into a single ideal acceptable to all, some medieval writers succeeded in merging particular features of two or even all three codes to form a composite model. The DM, too, will need to make compromises to blend aspects of each code to form the knightly codes that add color to the campaign world.

The DM will typically find three types of warriors involved with chivalry. The first is the cavalier, depicted as a character class in *Unearthed Arcana* and as a warrior kit in *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*. Feudal chivalry will be the major influence on these knightly characters.

Next is the pure paladin, drawn strictly from the 1st or 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook*, whose abilities and attitudes are little influenced by any warrior kit he may adopt. Like a Galahad radiating an aura of otherworldly purity and holiness, this paladin is driven exclusively by the principles preached by the temple he serves. The concerns of class, politics, and worldly ambition seem trivial to the pure paladin when compared to the glory of serving his deity.

Most complex of all is the paladin-cavalier, drawn from the paladin subclass of the cavalier class of *Unearthed Arcana*, or created when an AD&D 2nd Edition game paladin fleshes out his background by adopting the cavalier or noble warrior kit. This character is shaped by both religious and feudal chivalry in roughly equal parts.

Most cavaliers will align themselves with the cause of good. Many such cavaliers will draw on aspects of religious chivalry to add a needed dose of morality to the traditions of feudal chivalry. *Unearthed Arcana* properly reflects the benefits that accrue to good cavaliers while penalizing cavaliers who follow neutral or evil alignments. *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*, however, mandates that all warriors choosing the cavalier kit must be good. As I'm inclined to ignore the noble warrior kit and instead mix parts of the noble warrior description into a broadened cavalier kit, I suggest that Dungeon Masters who use the AD&D 2nd Edition rules consider permitting cavaliers—even if only as NPCs—to follow nongood alignments.

A campaign trying to capture the spirit of the feudal age should contain a high

proportion of lawful-neutral cavaliers upholding the ideals of feudal chivalry. Other knights will drift over toward the true-neutral or chaotic-neutral alignments, or will descend into the moral abyss of the evil alignments. Meanwhile, heroic cavaliers vigorously oppose their wicked brethren. Nobles of all stripes must be present to form a credible world.

Even a good cavalier with strong religious values will respect the traditional values handed down through generations of feudal nobility. Always an avid adventurer, the cavalier sees warfare as a thrilling game with glory its ultimate goal. Best of all is a battle settled neither by a lengthy siege nor by the intricacies of strategy and logistics, but by a courteous combat between equal parties of knights, bringing honor to all participants.

The cavalier is always eager to joust in a tournament or duel with a fellow knight in order to defend his honor and to prove his skill. The true cavalier never hesitates to throw down the gauntlet before one who challenges the cavalier's reputation or who insults his paramour. Fearless in battle, the cavalier hopes his knightly deeds will live on in the words of troubadours and the works of artists.

The booty earned through conquest or tournament victories passes freely through the cavalier's hands. Largesse is acknowledged as an important part of winning prestige. To maintain an aristocratic image, the cavalier will spend his money on appearance rather than creature comforts. His clothing must be fashionable and extravagant, his jewelry top quality, his armor stunning, and his residence opulent. "It is better to look good than to feel good" is a truism to the cavalier. Never worry about saving for the future, the cavalier is told; frugality is for common merchants. So what if bankruptcy seems imminent? The next adventure will provide more wealth.

The pure paladin follows a different set of principles. The paladin doesn't boast of his prowess as cavaliers do, but cherishes the value of humility. Never confusing egotism with self-respect, the paladin never duels merely to defend some petty point of honor. The pure paladin never seeks glory for its own sake; he is more interested in tangible victories over evil. The only approval the paladin needs is the thanks shown by his temple for valiant service to the cause of good.

The paladin never involves himself in an unjust war. Even in a just war, the paladin doesn't lust after plunder, but collects only what profits his temple deems acceptable after the battle has been won. The paladin will then donate most of this profit to his temple or other worthy charities. To dress lavishly and dine on rich foods while others go threadbare and hungry is a sin that no paladin can condone.

To the cavalier, war is a splendid game; to the paladin, it's a serious business. The paladin believes in getting the job done as

quickly and as humanely as possible to restore peace to the land, and as a result will study the strategies of warfare with thoroughness and intelligence.

Never taking prisoners for the sake of ransom, the pure paladin advocates the lawful judgment of evildoers by a court of law or military tribunal; some societies may give the power to judge to the paladin himself. The paladin would sooner see a dangerous criminal or vicious monster imprisoned or executed than ransom back an enemy who is then free to wreak havoc once again.

The pure paladin decries the violence and greed of the tournament. No true paladin need prove his worth by fighting for the amusement of a bloodthirsty crowd. By participating in a tournament, a knight risks committing the sin of homicide to satisfy a base craving for worldly honors and wealth. Besides, why waste time on a frivolous tournament when there are so many wrongs to be righted and villains to be undone?

The paladin strives to thwart evildoers and suppress hostile infidels no matter how high their birth. A cavalier can tolerate and perhaps even relish the company of fellow knights though they worship different gods or serve foreign kings. Not so the paladin, as a pure paladin has little patience with neutral cavaliers and none for evil knights. Loyalty to temple always supersedes loyalty to social class.

The paladin-cavalier is perhaps the most difficult of all characters to play. More Roland than Galahad, the paladin-cavalier serves not one religious cause only, but many worldly duties as well. Both temple and liege lord demand his obedience, and he struggles to serve each equally well. But when the character's feudal and religious obligations differ, and his soul feels torn between conflicting drives, he must ultimately submit to his deity before any mortal. This internal conflict makes the paladin-cavalier a real challenge to role-play well.

While the cavalier may too strongly love the privileges of his class, the paladin-cavalier pays more attention to the responsibilities and obligations a noble birth confers. *Noblesse oblige* guides paladin-cavaliers (and the most lawful and good cavaliers, for that matter) in every aspect of life. Respect and obedience cannot simply be demanded: They must be earned. The paladin-cavalier thinks nothing of laying down his life for the most lowborn of peasants for a just cause, or sharing his last loaf of bread with a hungry vassal.

Where the neutral cavalier sees peasants as a resource to be exploited, the paladin-cavalier views them as beings of value. Charity to the poor always takes a high priority with the paladin-cavalier, even if he must deprive his own manor of stylish furnishings. The noble taste for luxury is tempered by a moral drive to provide for the needs of others before his own.

Exposed to the thrill of jousting since early childhood, the paladin-cavalier understands how the tournament hones a knight's skills. The paladin-cavalier may not relish war as cavaliers do, but he does recognize the need to keep himself in fighting trim for those times when his temple or lord calls upon him to engage in a regrettable but necessary battle. So long as a tournament is conducted in a civilized and orderly manner—e.g., regulated jousts or a mock assault on a wooden castle to rescue its "captive" maidens, rather than a savage melee—and the paladin-cavalier's temple or lord doesn't forbid his participation, the tournament can be enjoyed.

Imagine, however, the misunderstanding when Lady Bess the paladin-cavalier unhorses Sir Brian the cavalier in a joust, yet she doesn't claim from him a ransom. She's in it for the practice, after all, not the profit. Sir Brian might believe she rates him a knight of such poor prowess he doesn't merit a ransom, treating him like a common foot soldier. To avenge the unintended insult, Sir Brian might turn the courteous joust into a bloody duel of honor.

The ideals of courtly love will likely influence most knights to varying degrees. Cavaliers will embrace courtly love for the sophisticated pleasure of the games of courtship or for simple bawdy fun.

Whether a gracious knight adoring a lady or a female cavalier courting a famous prince, the knight who can boast of championing a noble paramour and who proudly wears the paramour's scarf or kerchief in tournaments adds greater glory to the knight's name.

The courtly arts also mark the cultured noble as someone distinct from the common townsman or yeoman farmer. A knight with political aspirations will be well served by mastering the talents that can win favor at court and attract the attention of high-ranking patrons.

Few cavaliers, however, will go so far as Lancelot in placing service to a paramour above their own pride as warriors. Most lawful cavaliers will also not permit themselves to fall so headlong into love that the traditional practices of marriage are endangered by jealousy or the complications posed by bastard offspring.

A truly romantic knight will likely follow the chaotic-good alignment, believing that devotion to his paramour and to the games of courtly love represents the highest ideals of knighthood. The romantic cavalier will never let the ethics of a faceless and unfeeling society stand in his way when he sees the moral good of a person's individual liberty and happiness is threatened, especially when that person is his paramour.

The chaotic-neutral knight, in contrast, practices the most selfish aspects of courtly love. He views personal pleasure as more important than respect for the traditions of society or the feelings of those whose lives he touches.

Paladins and paladin-cavaliers will certainly concede love is a tremendous power for good, but their romantic activities will be guided by the tenets of their religion. If not restricted to lives of chastity, they will still honor their temples' teachings regarding courtship and marriage. They treat love as a more serious matter than cavaliers typically do, and they respect commitment and honesty over frivolous games of flirtation, seduction, and courtly intrigues.

### Other codes of behavior

Of course, not all AD&D campaigns will limit themselves to the milieu of feudal Europe. The DM whose campaign world embraces a wide variety of colorful societies should draw inspiration from the warrior codes of many historical cultures.

The samurai, like the knight, was drawn from the lesser ranks of Japan's highly cultured landed nobility. The characteristics and qualities of this exotic warrior, shaped by a different culture, will naturally differ from those of Western cavaliers. Bushido rather than European chivalric codes is a better guide to the DM whose world reflects an Oriental flavor.

Other societies of a fantasy world may know noble warriors inspired by Byzantine cataphracts armed with bow and lance, ancient Near East charioteers, or Indian nobles who waged war with elephants. Such warriors will likely obey standards of behavior distinct from those identified with the European heavy-cavalry lancer.

Consider, for example, a nation where the sons of the landed gentry are trained to fight as traditional cavaliers. Aristocratic daughters, using their smaller and lighter frames to their advantage, are instead born and bred to fight as lightly armored horse archers. Equipped with asymmetrical composite long bows capable of being fired from horseback, they favor maneuver over mass, firepower over shock power. While products of the same culture, the siblings who master disparate combat styles cannot help but reflect different martial philosophies and conduct themselves according to different chivalric codes.

Even more unusual are demihuman cavaliers. Elven cavaliers might despise the rigid legalities of feudal chivalry and instead throw themselves into the fun and games of courtly love with more passion than any human could muster. Viewing the long bow rather than the lance as the ultimate symbol of warrior nobility, elven cavaliers may not scorn fighting at long range as human knights do and consider discretion an important part of valor.

Rejecting the frivolity of courtly love, dwarven cavaliers may abide by unyielding laws and traditions of dwarven chivalry so fervently that human feudal chivalry seems lax in comparison. With combat from horseback so impractical for the dwarven stature, they may prefer the

thrill of driving a war chariot pulled by stout mountain goats or fierce rams. Chariot racing and the exchange of axe strokes on foot may replace jousting in dwarven tournaments.

In addition, paladins and paladin-cavaliers too may differ markedly from campaign to campaign. One world's paladins serve a benevolent sun goddess, another world's following a wrathful storm god. Paladins across many campaigns wield different spells, fight different enemies, practice different rituals, obey different marriage customs, and preside over different legal systems. Paladins in some campaigns might even adopt unusual warrior kits that make sense in their own particular culture. While rooted in historical study, the chivalric codes of any world must be tailored to fit in with the campaign's cultural environment—its institutions, mythologies, races, fighting arts, economic realities, and political struggles.

### Putting it into practice

Once the DM has fully developed the chivalric codes of the campaign, he must then explain them in detail to the players. The DM can hardly fault a PC cavalier or paladin for violating a subtle point of the code the character professes to serve when that code had never been outlined to the players in the first place. The DM should never assume the players know the same historical facts he knows.

Historical research can prove valuable but shouldn't be followed slavishly. It's the DM's prerogative to remake fact into fantasy, to create societies whose elite warriors embrace novel philosophies and traditions in rulership, religion, and romance.

*[Other articles on this topic have appeared in DRAGON® Magazine. These include:*

*"From the Sorcerer's Scroll: Good Isn't Stupid..." (issue #38, reprinted in **The Rest of DRAGON® Magazine** anthology, volume II);*

*"The Anti-Paladin" (issue #39, reprinted in **The Rest of DRAGON® Magazine** anthology, volume II);*

*"Leomund's Tiny Hut," "It's Not Easy Being Good," and "Thou Shalt Play This Way" (issue #51, the first reprinted in volume II and the second in volume III of **The Rest of DRAGON Magazine** anthology);*

*"From the Sorcerer's Scroll: The Chivalrous Cavalier" (issue #72);*

*"A Plethora of Paladins" (issue #106);*

*"The Elven Cavalier" (issue #114);*

*"Feuds and Feudalism" (issue #117);*

*"The Code of Chivalry," "Meanwhile, Back at the Fief..." "Lords & Legends," and "Glory, Danger, and Wounds" (issue #125);*

*"Lords & Legends" (issue #127);*

*"The Corrected Cavalier" and "Good Does Not Mean 'Boring'" (issue #148);*

*"The Making of a Paladin" (issue #154). Ω*



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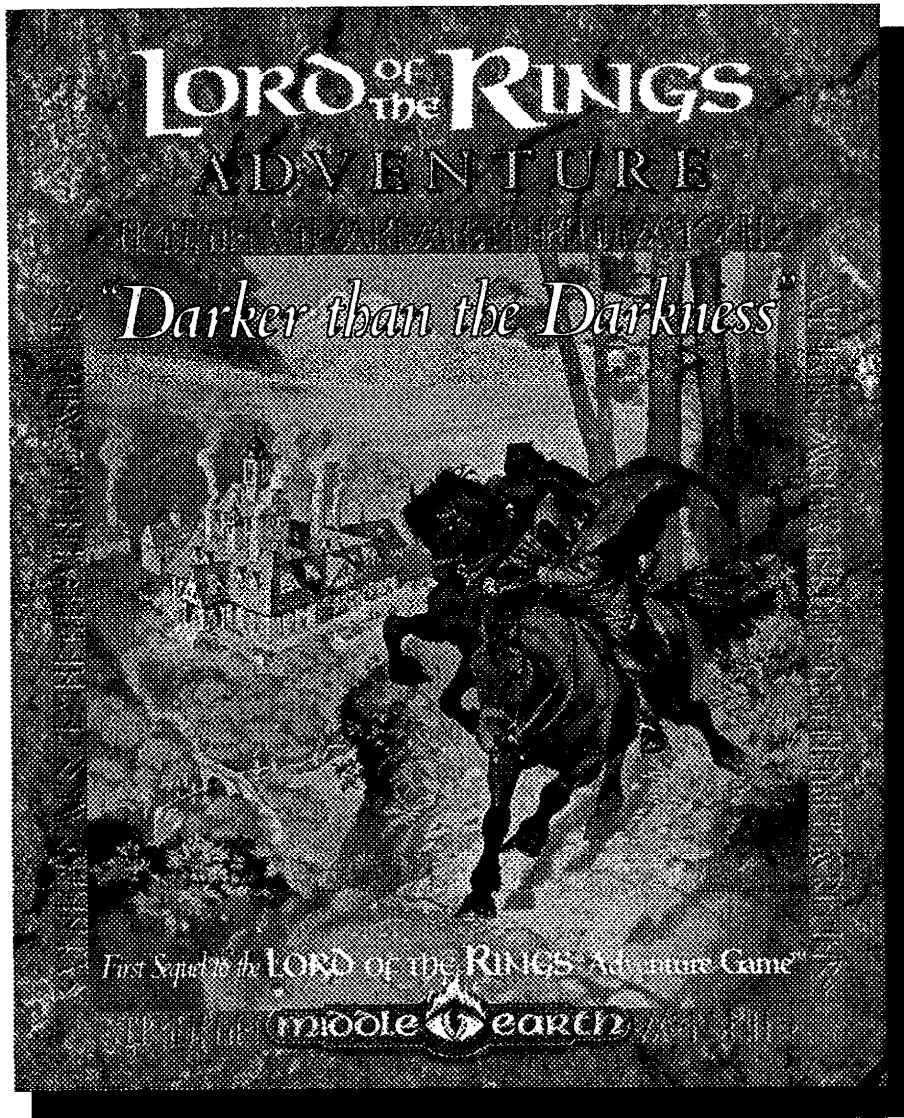
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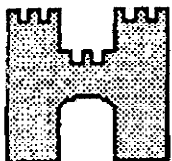
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# BAZAAR OF the Bizarre

## Military magical items for the fantasy battlefield

by Mark Galeotti

Artwork by Gerald P. Sawyer

Two things found at the heart of most fantasy worlds are magic and war. Generals and kings would no doubt have been the first to hit on the potential value of magic to their dreams of conquest. While they would obviously use normal magical items to their fullest effect, they would also look for items meeting the specific needs of armies. Hence, there is good reason to introduce magic that, though often of only limited direct value to most adventurers, has every reason to exist and can be of great use to those with grand designs of conquest.

No random table is provided for these magical items. The DM should place these items in his world with care since they are both rare and much prized.

### Battle standards

All banners are special to those who fight beneath them, but some are invested with magical powers, either by enchantment or by the reverence of countless generations of warriors. Magical battle standards characteristically share certain traits and have particular special abilities. They all have a base value of 3,000 XP and they are typically 9'-12' long and weigh 20-80 lbs. Their other common features are:

1. They are tough and unfading, making all item saving throws with a +3 bonus to their rolls.

2. They are inspiring. Soldiers get a +1 bonus to all saving throws and +3 bonus to morale checks while in the unit bearing such a banner (a "unit" is any organized body of troops up to 100 beings strong).

3. They are hard to steal or capture. Any hostile soldier who manages to seize such a banner finds it twice as heavy as it should be and has a -2 penalty to all

saving throws while he carries it.

4. Their powers wane and wax, depending upon whether they are being used for "legitimate" mass-combat purposes (i.e., the DM may declare the powers of a certain standard will fade if it has been captured by a group of adventurers). This effect is the result of the gods withdrawing their goodwill toward such a device, the lack of proper battlefield preparation and blessing, and other causes, as the DM chooses.

Most magical battle standards have specific attributes in addition to the above abilities. Note that experience-point values supersede the previously given value for standards possessing the following special attributes:

**Magic shield:** All hostile spells cast within 60' of this item have a flat 20% chance of being dispelled (including potions possessed by hostile beings), and all unit saving throws against spells cast by hostile forces are at +2. (XP value 5,000)

**Ferocity:** Friendly troops within 60' need not check morale, and save against fear and mind-control attacks at +3. (XP value 4,000)

**Terror:** Enemies within 80' of this dreaded flag must make an immediate morale check. All their subsequent morale checks in the zone of influence suffer a -1 penalty per 20' distance as they continue to close in on the flag, to a maximum of -4. (XP value 4,000)

**Protection:** This banner provides all friendly troops within 60' with protection from one or more specific sorts of attack (fire, cold, electricity, gas, petrification, etc.). Saving throws against those attacks are at +3; successful saving throws result in only one-quarter normal damage, and failed saves result in half damage. (XP

value 3,000, plus 750 per specific form of protection)

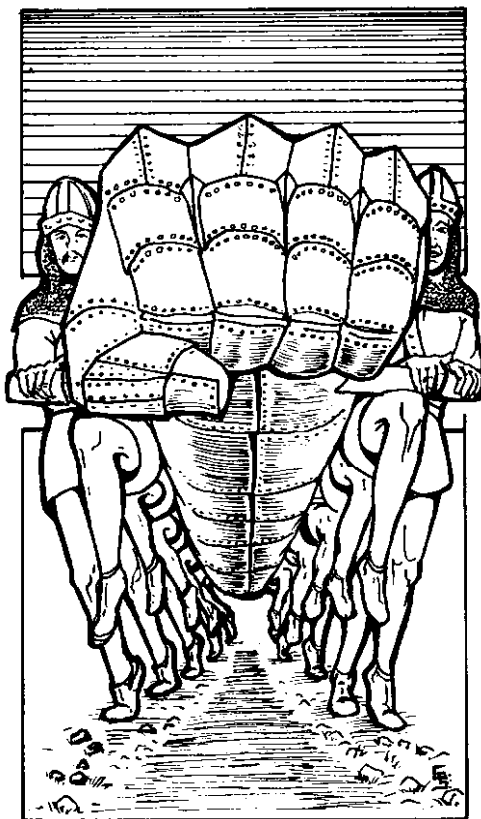
**Holy:** This is a banner that gives a +2 bonus to the saving throws of all friendly troops within 60' who are of the alignment to which the banner has been consecrated. In addition, it turns (or commands, for evil-aligned banners) undead as would a 12th-level cleric. All hostile clerical spells cast by clerics of a different alignment have a chance of being dispelled while in the area equal to 20% minus 1% per level of the caster. (XP value 6,000)

### Bigby's demanding ram

A singular item manufactured by a master mage of the City of Greyhawk, this ram is a 10' brass-sheathed battering ram, forged by dwarves from the farthest mountains. It was bathed in the boiling blood of a dozen yeti to give it strength, rune-etched with the acid of a black dragon, then tempered in a living volcano. Its head was forged from a single wedge of bronze brought from the elemental plane of Earth and carved in the shape of a clenched fist by six bound efreet. Finally, it was invested with *Bigby's clenched fist*, *Bigby's forceful hand*, and *wall of iron*. The result is a battering ram that takes 10 men of strength 13+ or the equivalent to use. On impact, it delivers a blow equivalent to triple the usual structural damage inflicted by a ram. (XP value 2,500)

### Cask of the wind spy

A breathtakingly beautiful, normal-sized casket of clear crystal with a lid mounted on hinges of gold, this device has trapped within it a minor form of air elemental who will act as a scout and spy for anyone knowing the magic word of command. This word



refreshed and alert for the next six hours, and any wounds they possess neither fester nor become infected. To simulate this, double the total natural healing for the first day of this philter's use only. In addition, a bonus of +2 is given to saving throws against poison and nonmagical attacks against a character's health, such as normal disease rolls. It also confers a saving throw vs. spells against the additional damage from a sword of wounding, allowing one such save per round after the victim has been wounded.

**Durimal's potent draught:** Any drinker of this philter feels confident and strong. He makes all morale checks and saves against mind-affecting spells at +2 for the next 24 hours or until a saving throw is failed, whichever comes first.

**Durimal's merry blend:** If mixed with alcohol, this philter will ensure that drinkers will sleep well and awake fresh and clear-eyed, with no trace of a hangover, thus allowing a commander to let his troops have a celebration without impairing their combat readiness. Actual game effects are at the DM's discretion; use of this potion usually improves morale and loyalty scores of troops for a short period of time.

metal rod has a number of functions:

1. On command, it will extend up to 12' in length, while its surface roughens in alternating bands to allow the engineer to use it as a ruler and measure. This form uses no charges and is too slender and unwieldy to use as a weapon, though doing so will not harm this device (nor will it cause damage, except to small insects).

2. This rod can always, using no charges, indicate magnetic north on command.

3. If rapped firmly against stonework, this rod can indicate to its user, by telepathy, the stonework's thickness and composition for no charges (this is useful for gauging the thickness of walls).

4. For one charge, the rod may cast a *dig* spell with a one-turn duration.

5. The power of the rod can function as a *move earth* spell for two charges per turn, or three if the effect is to move features rather than collapse them (as though an earth elemental were being used).

6. A wall of *stone* (at the 12th level of experience) may be created for one charge.

7. For one charge, the user can summon 10 unseen *servants* for one hour. They operate as per the spell but are each twice as strong as usual and hence can be used for stacking timber, grading roads, etc. (XP value 4,000)

must be spoken before the box is opened, lest the elemental fly out and return to its native plane. The elemental can be commanded for a total of two hours before it must return to the box for a full day.

The elemental is invisible and will not engage in combat, but it is intelligent and able to communicate in a high, lilting whisper. It cannot draw maps but can describe what it has seen. Though it cannot distinguish some details (medium infantry rather than heavy, spears rather than pikes, etc.), it can provide basic information of what and who it saw (infantry rather than cavalry, gnomes rather than ogres). If the casket breaks (which occurs if an item saving throw is failed for crystal glass), the elemental is free to return to its home plane (MV fly 24; AC 0; hp 24). (XP value 4,000)

### Durimal's philters

Characteristically, this comes as a trio of small bottles in a sturdy leather case. Each bottle's contents are magical and of extreme concentration. One quarter of a bottle is enough for 20 men if diluted in water or other drink. If more than a sip is taken in concentrated form, it is very dangerous: treat as a type I poison (DMG, page 73). The three philters all have different effects. (XP value: 2,400 for the set)

Durimal's sovereign tonic: Those drinking this philter in its diluted form feel



### Excellent rod of engineering

A much-prized accessory for a military engineer, this plain, rechargeable, 2'-long



### Fodder dust

This is the solution to many logistical problems. A single pinch of this magical dust, added to a gallon of water, balloons out into a heap of vegetable fodder sufficient to feed 30 horses or the equivalent for a day. It usually comes in a small, flat box of 3d4 +1 pinches. A single dry pinch, if consumed inadvertently, expands to kill the imbibor in gruesome fashion: save vs. death magic at +1 or die (unless especially large). (XP value: 200/pinch)

### Ipsissimo's black goose

A bizarre but cunning mage, Ipsissimo, built this marvel to guard the camp of his friend and patron, Cosimo the Dark. Built of some strange black metal, this construct is shaped like a 4'-tall goose. During the day it is completely immobile and very heavy (200 lbs.). At sunset, it will whir to "life" and begin patrolling the outskirts of a camp, house, or other dwelling or area of less than 10,000 square feet, as directed by its owner.

If it comes across someone with 60' bearing ill will toward those persons it is protecting, it will launch itself to the attack, all the while clacking and squawking at the top of its mechanical voice. In combat, it has MV 15, AC 0, 40 hp, THACO 13, and attacks once per round with its beak for 2d4 hp damage; it is able to hit all normal targets, as well as ethereal ones or those susceptible only to magical weapons. Its attack causes NPCs to make a morale check, and it is immune to all forms of sleep, *charm*, fear, death magic, mind-control spells or psionics, or illusion/phantasms. When down to 5 hp, it gives one last, deafening clack, then falls over.

The *black* goose detects its targets by true *sight*. During the day, it will regenerate 5 hp damage per hour so long as it was not brought below 0 hp. If the goose is brought below 0 hp, it will permanently cease to function. (XP value 8,000)

### Iron forge of the armies

This is a great black iron anvil, embossed with runes of power in gold and brass. A competent smith will find non-magical tasks uncannily easy when using the forge. Bent swords will straighten with a single tap and will have lost none of their strength; horse shoes will be just the right size; and everything worked on this anvil will have a little extra shine and finish. In actual game terms, the smith will work at six times his usual speed.

The anvil is too massive to transport except with the most elaborate methods, and using it is hard work. The smith must have a minimum strength of 15 and is able to work only as many days in one stretch as his constitution score divided by five (rounded down) before he must rest for a like period of time. (XP value 1,750)

### Manual of stratagems

This is a medium-sized book, bound in seasoned leather for durability. A fighter, ranger, or paladin may consult it at any time to try to find a cunning ploy in any situation, with a chance of success equal to 80% minus 1d10% per use. Once the chance of success reaches zero, the book is useless to that reader. The book covers purely military tactics, not limited-scope adventurer's methods. It is for generals and captains and will only be of relevance in situations with at least 20 combatants on each side. Its effects can be simulated by allowing the commander to change one set of orders, movement, etc., retroactively during a battle—that is, he will know what will happen within one turn (10 minutes) after making a certain move, and he can make the move over again to correct for any mistake or to take advantage of any opportunity. Therefore, a commander could thwart an ambush by retracting orders to move into the trap, but he could not decide that he didn't order an unsuccessful attack once he was

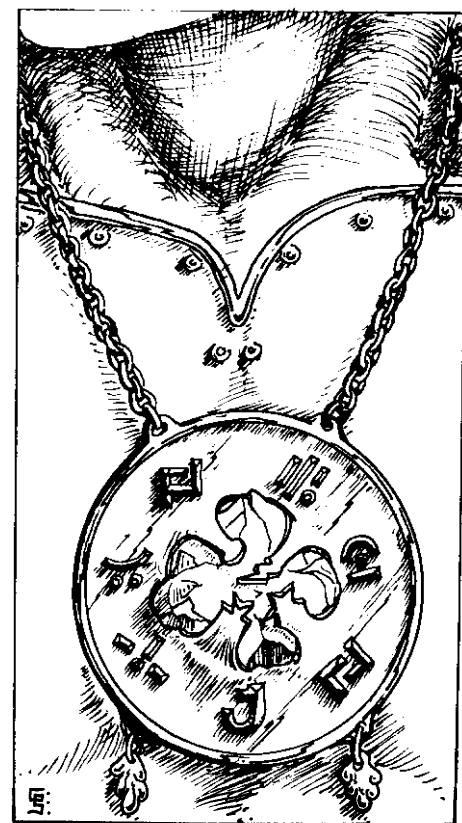
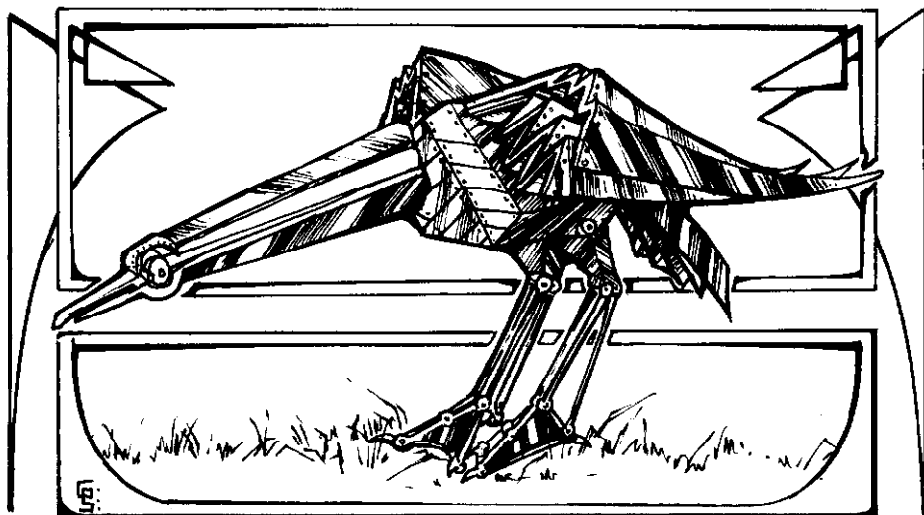
several hours into the battle. If a character of any class other than a fighter uses this book, the character gains nothing but must save vs. spells at -2 or else become deluded for 1-4 hours into thinking he is a fighter, acting in all ways as a front-line combatant and refusing to use any spells. (XP value 6,500)

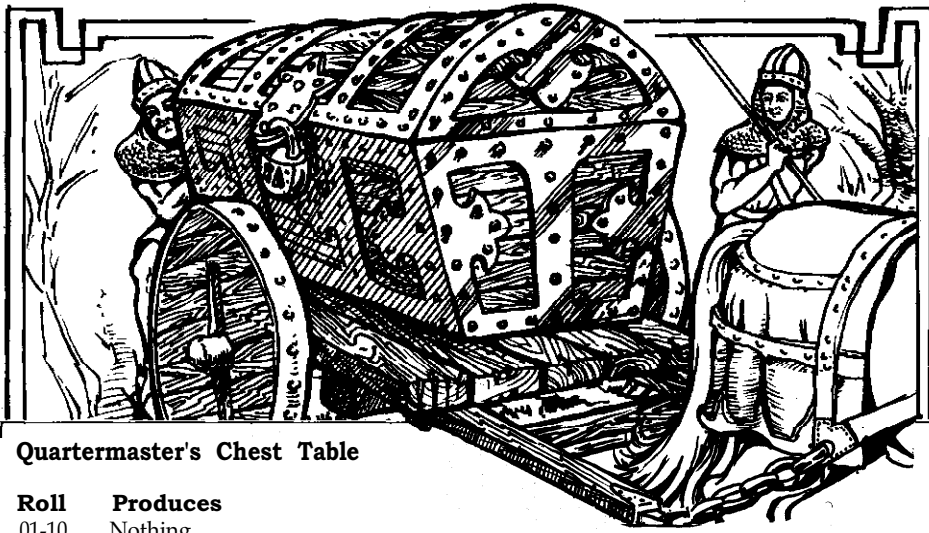
### Quartermaster's chest

These are huge, iron-bound chests that need large, sturdy carts (pulled by large, sturdy animals) to be transported. They can provide theoretically limitless supplies and equipment, albeit on a fairly erratic basis, and they are invaluable when marching through barren lands where foraging is not possible. Each day, the quartermaster can place gems of at least 100 gp total value into it, slam the lid, then open it and see what the chest will provide that day: roll on the Quartermaster's Chest Table. Whatever the result, the gems are gone forever. The goods will fill the chest, no matter how much space they would logically take up, but they will disappear if left in the chest until the next morning. (XP value 2,500)

### Talisman of mire

This is a 6"-diameter silver disk on which is mounted a rather ugly gray-green stone. This talisman allows the user to call up ground water to form sticky, unpleasant swampy areas, characteristically used to protect a camp or flank since it takes so long to operate.





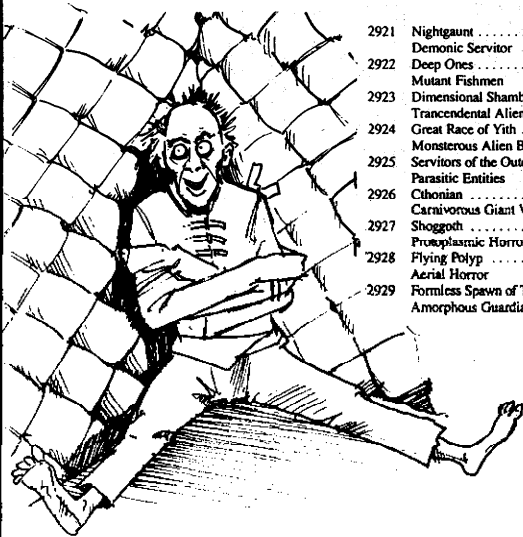
### Quartermaster's Chest Table

Roll	Produces
01-10	Nothing
11-50	Tolerable but unexciting food for 100 men for one day
51-75	Fodder for 100 animals for one day
76-77	750' good rope
78-81	30 planks of timber, each 6" wide and 3' long
82-84	A bolt of coarse, strong, white cloth, 60' long and 3' wide
85-87	Assorted bits and pieces: consult the Miscellaneous Equipment table in the <i>Player's Handbook</i> , pages 67-68, and select 100 lbs. total of 1d3 items
88-94	Water: 100 gallons; this will drain away in 10 minutes if not immediately decanted
95-97	Cheap wine: 100 gallons, as above
98-99	Strong ale: 100 gallons, as above
00	DM's choice: unusual foods, horse barding and equipment, foreign items (possibly from <i>Oriental Adventures</i> ), alchemical glassware, etc.

Such a talisman has 40 + 1d20 charges and is rechargeable. One charge will turn a 40' X 40' area into shallow marsh, hindering movement on foot and making mounted travel dangerous (both types of movement are at half speed). Attempts to ride, run, or fight within the area require a dexterity check on 1d20 every round, or a slip and fall results. Two charges make the area all but impassable to those on horseback and very hard to traverse on foot. Mounts must save vs. paralyzation at -6 or fall; footmen attempting anything but the slowest, most careful walk (one-quarter usual speed, and no melee combat) must check against dexterity on 1d20 or fall. Damage from falling off an animal is only 1 hp; the soft mud will usually cushion any fall.

After activating the talisman's magic, it takes 10d4 minutes for the water to rise; it remains for six hours. In addition, the talisman will not work in very dry areas such as deserts, or on sheer stone surfaces and areas where the water is prevented from rising, such as areas having permafrost. The effect will not cause buildings to sink into the ground, but will make them rather damp and dank for a while. (XP value 2,250) Ω

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# Follow



All-new followers for  
high-level AD&D®  
game paladins  
by Carl Sargent

Artwork by Gerald P. Sawyer



# the Leader



Paladins do not gain followers as fighters and rangers do in either edition of the AD&D® game. Fighters gain large numbers of fighter and men-at-arms types, and rangers gain special assistants (woodland creatures and demihumans), but paladins gain no such followers. This seems implausible for two powerful reasons.

First, it is clear that followers are attracted in part by the renown of the warrior to whom they come to offer their services. The AD&D 2nd Edition Player's Handbook makes this quite explicit. A fighter needs a castle or stronghold to attract his men-at-arms, but he must also be 9th level; having a castle and lands is not enough. Why not? Because "it is only when he reaches this level that his name is so widely known that he attracts the loyalty of other warriors" (PHB, page 27). You've got to have a reputation! Now, if a 9th-level fighter can be assumed to have a reputation, the 9th-level paladin will have a bigger and better one, because he needs more experience points than a mere fighter and must therefore be more accomplished. The paladin's deeds are also more likely to be the stuff of legends than the adventures of most fighters, because the paladin is a heroic figure of epic quests. This is one reason why a name-level paladin should surely attract followers at least as easily as a name-level fighter.

Second, there is the paladin's tremendous charisma. Leadership is a strong aspect of this attribute, and it is a quality that inspires loyalty and affection from

those around the paladin. Charisma powerfully affects the loyalty of henchmen, so why doesn't it attract followers?

I suggest that, both by virtue of his deeds (higher XP total) and strength of personality (charisma), the paladin should attract followers just as other warriors do. The only counterpoint might be that of the paladin's lawful-good alignment. Perhaps such a strict lord and master might not be attractive to many people. This suggestion can be dismissed easily, however. Lawful-good fighters don't find it harder to attract followers than other alignments, and neither do lawful-good clerics. Why should this be a problem for the paladin? The alignment of the lord, in the AD&D rules, doesn't influence the number or quality of followers offering service. If anything, it might improve their honesty and integrity (no chaotic-evil hangers-on will turn up!).

This article details who the paladin's followers might be. These followers will turn up when the paladin reaches 9th level. As with the fighter, the paladin should have a castle, stronghold, temple, or similar base before these followers arrive. In almost every case, he should also have lands that he wishes to (or is charged to) protect, or else what need has he of men-at-arms and suchlike? I've also compromised with the existing rules by making the human and demihuman followers of paladins fewer in number and weaker than those of the fighter, because the fighter should keep some advantage over the specialists in the game! Perhaps the alignment of the paladin is a little daunting to less-lawfully minded vassals, after all.

In giving these details, I'll also give some suggestions for the roles and behaviors of unusual followers, and also attempt to personalize some of the more conventional followers that the paladin may attract. In

this way, the article should have something of use for any player or DM who is dealing with PC followers of almost any class in their campaign. I hope to stimulate DMs into designing details of important NPC followers with these suggestions and outlines, because a player handed a dossier of his followers by a DM who has clearly put some time and effort into this will appreciate this a lot.

## Standard followers

This term is used to denote human and demihuman followers the paladin attracts at name level. Two of these are special and should not be rolled up from tables.

The first of these special followers we can term a "squire:" although this is not really a fully appropriate term for a paladin of 5th-7th level (1d3+4). The squire is the leader of all the men-at-arms and warriors who will arrive to serve the paladin. He may have worked hard to assemble this group himself, having secretly admired the paladin-lord for some time and having labored long in preparation for the day when he can arrive offering his services. The squire should perhaps be younger, and his family of slightly lower social standing, than that of his lord to avoid any embarrassment (paladins can be touchy about this sort of thing). The squire should possess some magical items, similar to the list given for the 7th-level fighter in Table 16 on page 27 of the PHB. The squire will be ready and eager to command the defense of his lord's stronghold, by organizing the watches and patrols, recruiting replacements for slain or injured soldiers, and being the Lord's right-hand man in all military matters.

The second NPC is a cleric, often selected with care by the senior priests of the paladin's faith in the area, then sent to give spiritual succor and counsel to the paladin

**Table 1**  
**Men-At-Arms (Zero Level)**

### d100 Troops/Followers

01-50	25 infantry, each with splint mail, shield, hand axe, and dagger; plus 10 infantry, each with chain mail, shield, long sword, and short bow
51-75	30 infantry, each with splint mail, shield, hand axe, short sword, and dagger; plus 2d10 infantry, each with chain mail, shield, long sword, and light crossbow
76-90	20 infantry, each with splint mail, shield, hand axe, and dagger; plus 2d10 infantry, each with chain mail, shield, long sword, and dagger; plus 10 cavalry, each with studded leather, shield, light lance, and long sword
91-00	Any grouping above, but add 1d10 to each type in that group

and his warriors. This may be a younger adventuring cleric (of levels 3-6; 1d4 + 2), but quite often an older cleric is selected, one whose adventuring days are over. This cloistered cleric will be a father-confessor figure with many potential roles. He will be literate and a man of letters, looking after the lords correspondence (and may drag along a young acolyte-scribe with him). He may teach the children of the castle. At the DM's option, he may have a sage proficiency, usually in some sphere of interest of the deity that he and the paladin follow (or else a field such as theology). It is an excellent idea to have this sage proficiency in some area where the DM can feed adventure-related information to the paladin through the cleric—although this isn't a freebie for the player. ("Yes, milord, I can find out where the tomb of the evil necromancer lies, but I must consult tomes, send out letters, and offer a

small consideration to my old friend Tasaskil of Silvermoon for his help. All this will not be without expense.")

Other followers will be more standardized men-at-arms and warrior types. Roll once on Table 1 for ordinary men-at-arms, then once on Table 2 for an elite ("household guard") group. The followers derived from these tables will be human unless stated otherwise, but the DM can always introduce a small proportion of demi-humans instead. For example, if the paladin has provided sorely needed help to a dwarven clan beset by evil in the past, it's quite reasonable for a small group of his followers to be members of that clan, come to renew their fellowship and to pay back their debt of honor. Such followers are likely to be highly loyal, and the DM can reward good deeds in a practical manner here!

## Specialist followers

First, the DM should roll once on Table 3. This table has been carefully compiled to include groups of specialist warriors (heavy cavalry, a ballista crew, etc.) as well as single NPCs of medium level. The DM should consider *choosing* an entry from this table, rather than making a random roll, to suit the circumstances of his campaign. For example, if the paladin has a stronghold at the edge of dangerous, monster-infested wilderness, then extra warriors would be most helpful; in a castle, expert bowmen trained in firing through narrow arrow slits would be a useful resource. A castle in the country side could do with a fine animal-training ranger. A night watch of infravision-blessed half-elves will be prized by any captain of the watch. Finally, a paladin could do with a bard ready to compose odes eulogizing his master's deeds.

It's important for the DM to make some determination of why such specialists might arrive offering service. They might have been recruited by the squire or the temple of the paladin, but they may have their own reasons, too. A young bard may simply be seeking a warm hearth and home with a famous master; a young ranger might admire the paladin's wonderful war horses almost as much as the paladin himself, and might wish to work with them; a young cleric may come to aid in the process of converting the ungodly. For individuals in particular, such reasons are important and should be individually determined by the DM.

The DM should then roll on Table 4 once, or twice only if the paladin is of exceptional quality (as determined by the DM) in observing the tenets of lawful good. The creature denoted by this dice roll can be fairly exceptional, as a quick check through the table shows. Again, the DM may want to choose from these entries rather than use random choice. The aim of Table 4 is to give the paladin a truly exceptional follower, though the term "follower" is a misnomer here. The creature indicated is a friend more than anything else. Other possibilities that could apply in special cases; a paladin having a castle by a seashore could attract 1d10 + 10 dolphins or 1d3 selkies, for example. A special case is the moondog, for those who have *the Monster Manual II*. A moondog is an excellent guardian for keeping watch around a paladin's stronghold, and one will arrive on a roll of 86-95 on 1d100 (using Table 4) if you wish to allow this.

The nature of the association between such a friend and the paladin is very important. The creature isn't a henchman of any kind and may deeply resent any suggestion that this is the case; a dragon may get *extremely* huffy about this! Rather, the creature is attracted by tales of the paladin, by an intuitive sensing of the paladin's presence and aura, because it is sent by others (dragons might send their young to

**Table 2**  
**Elite followers**

### d100 Troops/Followers

01-50	10 1st-level fighters, each with chain mail, shield, long sword, long bow, and dagger
51-75	As for result of 01-50, but 1d2 are 1st-level paladins, and 1d4 others each have exceptional stats (-2 to AC and +2 hp/HD, due to dexterity and constitution bonuses)
76-90	10 1st-level fighters, each with chain mail, shield, long sword, long bow, and dagger; plus 1d4 + 6 cavalry, each with chain mail, shield, medium lance, and long sword; plus a light war horse (25% chance for chain barding)
91-99	As for result of 76-90, but add 1d2 1st-level paladins; each of the 10 fighters has a 10% chance of being 2nd level
00	As for result of 91-99, but add the following: a 1st/1st-level elven fighter/cleric with chain mail, footman's mace, long sword, and long bow; two 2nd-level fighters, each with plate mail, shield, bastard sword, dagger, and heavy cross-bow; and 1d3 1st-level rangers (in rural settings only), each with leather armor, long sword, long bow, and dagger

**Table 3**  
**Specialists**

### d100 Troops/Followers

01-20	10 expert archers: 1st-level fighters specialized with light crossbows, each with chain mail, short sword, dagger, and crossbow, all with dexterity scores of 15-18 (14 + 1d4)
21-30	10 expert heavy cavalry: 1st-level fighters, each with chain mail, shield, heavy lance, long sword, and short bow, each with a chain-barded medium war horse, specialized in the use of the long sword; all are also unusually fine bowmen (dexterity scores of 12 + 1d6, no penalty for firing from horseback when stationary)
31-40	Ballista crew: eight zero-level men-at-arms of great strength and constitution (12 + 1d6 per statistic) led by a 1st-level fighter (S 18/1d100, C 17)
41-50	"Night watch": 1d4 + 4 1st-level half-elf fighters, each with chain mail, shield, long sword, and long bow
51-60	Ranger of 2nd-4th (1d3 + 1) level who is an expert animal handler; nonweapon proficiencies of animal training, animal lore, and hunting
61-70	Bard of 2nd-4th (1d3 + 1) level, NG alignment
71-80	Cleric of 2nd-4th level (1d3 + 1), exceptional proselytizer (Ch 16)
81-90	Half-elf fighter/cleric of 2nd/2nd level
91-95	Half-elf fighter/wizard of 2nd/1st level
96-99	Human wizard of 2nd-5th level (1d4 + 1)
00	Roll once on this table and once on Table 4

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experience the lives of humans in a trustworthy environment), or because the creature is there when the paladin arrives to set up his stronghold (as a brownie or talking owl might be, for example).

It's impossible to review every case presented in Table 4, but here are a few ideas that should suggest alternatives for other cases to the DM:

-A guardian naga has been keeping watch over hidden ruins infested with evil

and undead. The naga comes to the paladin's stronghold asking for help, in return for which she offers to keep watch over the boundaries of the paladin's lands or some area the paladin needs watched or protected.

-A ki-rin comes asking for help to drive off neutral-evil cloud giants assaulting a sky castle occupied by good creatures (giants, pegasi, aarakocra, etc.). If helped, it will serve as the paladin's steed for one

adventure per year that is directly in the service of lawful good.

-A juvenile silver dragon is dispatched to the paladin's castle by its parents, who wish it to learn of human history and religion (subjects the paladin's father confessor and resident sage are very knowledgeable about), or perhaps to develop its use of magic. In return, the youngster is to help protect the stronghold. The draconic parents offer some helpful magical item as payment for looking after their somewhat impetuous and freewheeling offspring for a decade or so.

-An old couatl is attracted by a magical flux that allows him to find his way easily along the edge of an extensive *curtain of vaporous color* (see the *Manual of the Planes*) in the area of the paladin's stronghold (this means that the paladin doesn't have to live in a jungle to gain a couatl's friendship). Drawn by the aura of the paladin, he offers the paladin and his fellows his *plane shifting* ability to assault evil creatures on their home planes. He can only offer such help rarely, however, since he has many duties and responsibilities of his own. This is a natural way of drawing a high-level party into extraplanar adventuring, if this is what the DM wishes to do.

-Evil dao have become active in Underdark lands that lie almost directly below the paladin's stronghold. A jann comes to warn the paladin of this, and he can give information on areas, enemies, special curses emanating from buried magical stones, and the like. The jann wishes others of his kind liberated from magical control, in return for which he freely offers service for a fixed period (three years and three days, or however long seems reasonable depending on the scale of the quest).

Every "follower" can bring its own story and needs to the campaign, and it can become an important NPC in its own right. The DM should not worry about the apparent strength of creatures (such as a gold dragon) if the principles of the association with the paladin are worked out properly. Having a gold dragon in one's castle seems a terrific idea—except that the dragon might want its existence kept secret (only in human form, it feels, can it learn about humans properly). This at once places many restrictions on the dragon's role and keeps matters well within bounds. Also, don't underestimate the usefulness of apparently weaker brethren; brownies and owls can both be excellent spies, and through their kin they can learn of many happenings in the lands around.

A paladin deserves followers for his force of personality, charisma, and good deeds. A player who has role-played a paladin well deserves them, and any DM should have fun designing them (as well as introducing enough themes and leads for several adventures yet to come). Ω

**Table 4**  
**Exceptional Followers**

**1d100 Follower**

01-10	1d2 brownies
11-15	Couatl (20% chance for mated pair)
16-20	Dragon, gold, age category 3-5 (1d2 + 3)
21-25	Dragon, silver, age category 3-5 (1d2 + 3)
26-30	Jann, NG alignment
31-40	Cloud giant, NG alignment
41-45	Ki-rin (optionally a young one, casting spells as 14th-level mage)
46-50	Lammasu, lesser
51-55	Lammasu, greater
56-65	Naga, guardian
66-75	Owl, talking (25% chance for mated pair)
76-85	Pack of 1d6 + 6 mist wolves (see <i>Monstrous Compendium</i> , Greyhawk Appendix)*
86-00	DM's choice or other* *

\* Substitute another entry if you do not have this supplement.

\*\* See article text.

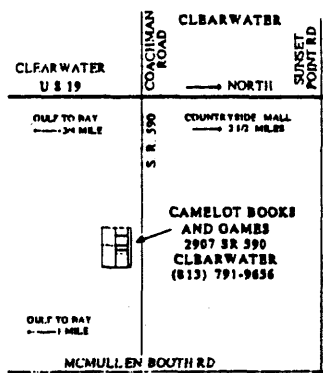
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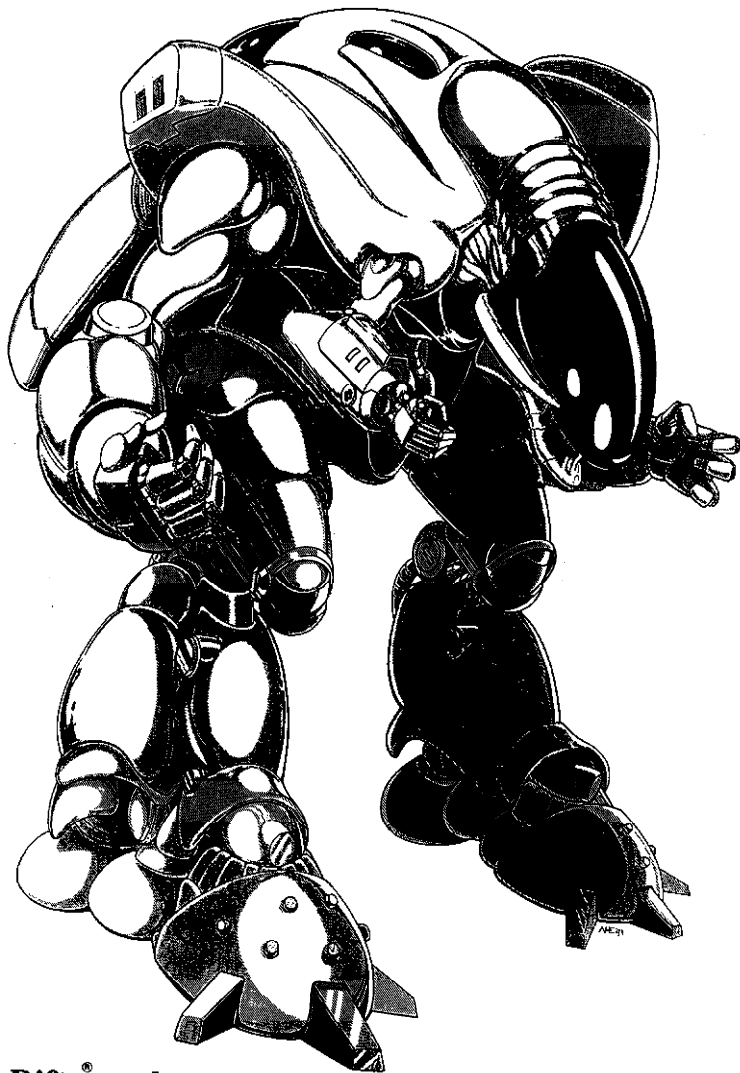


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# IN DEFENSE OF POLEARMS



Artwork by Jim Holloway

by Gregory Detwiler

# Improve your reach—and your damage—in AD&D® game combat

Of all the weapons given for the AD&D® game, polearms are the most neglected. (By polearms, I mean everything from spears on up, including the trident; the quarterstaff is technically a polearm, but we'll skip it here as it lacks a blade.) This is an oversight, as polearms should be a vital part of any medieval-style fantasy role-playing game with even a moderate amount of combat in it. The many peculiar shapes and names of polearms add color to the game. What would an illustration of medieval and Renaissance era armies be without the sight of massed troops bearing pikes and halberds? Of course, this visual effect is absent in the game unless miniatures or illustrations are used to portray characters or their foes. This article points out a host of reasons to retain and use polearms in your campaign.

## Military usage

Polearms are extremely useful in many types of combat. In some battle conditions, they are irreplaceable. DMGR3 *Arms and Equipment Guide* contains information on and illustrations of all polearms in the game. The AD&D 1st Edition *Unearthed Arcana* also has an illustrated appendix describing polearms (pages 123-128).

Polearms are at their best when grounded to receive a charge. Just about any spearlike polearm is good at holding off shock cavalry when employed in a massed formation. When firmly grounded, the military fork, glaive, and the glaive-guisarme all do double damage against large charging creatures. In addition, the awl pike, lucern hammer, partisan, ranseur, and spetum do double damage against any charging opponent when firmly set in place. Thus, a glaive-guisarme (which so many people joke about) normally does 2-12 hp damage against a large opponent such as a gorgon, but does 4-24 hp damage if firmly set against a *charging* gorgon. Doing more damage means killing the enemy quicker, which among other things allows the victors to get at the treasure quicker.

Most polearms do at least as much damage as most swords do; some do considerably more. What is more, they do it economically. The glaive-guisarme does more damage to large-sized foes than does a broad sword, yet it costs exactly as much. Many polearms cost 10 gp or less, while doing just as much damage as more-expensive swords. For a new character

starting out with limited funds, the combination of high damage and low cost should be well-nigh irresistible. A spear costs just 8 sp, compared to 2 gp for a dagger, and does 1d6/1d8 hp damage to the dagger's 1d4/1d3. Fighters who insist on sticking to swords from the very beginning should not complain about the high cost of effective weaponry.

In a game world where cavalry is common, a polearm can dismount riders. The mancatcher, in the AD&D 2nd Edition game, may be used for this purpose. *Unearthed Arcana* also gave this ability to the fauchard, fauchard-fork, military fork, glaive-guisarme, guisarme, guisarme-voulge, and lucern hammer. When characters are fighting on foot against cavalry, polearms are vital for evening out the odds. Many of them are cheaper than a saddle, let alone a war horse, and if land-based riding is a specialized proficiency in your campaign, merely buying a horse and saddle will not be enough. Buy a polearm for defense against other horsemen, if for no other reason. When that knave comes charging after your hero with leveled lance, you'll be glad you did.

## Special uses

The primary advantage of polearms is that they afford a longer reach for their bearer, so you can gain initiative automatically in combat and strike your enemy before he can get close enough to strike you. You also have a chance to catch the enemy's weapon and parry it before he gets close enough to use it on you. Even when parrying a sword or axe blow, jabbing a polearm at the oncoming weapon means that the enemy will have to swing from a distance. Therefore, even if you fail your attempt to parry with a polearm, the foe might not even be close enough to hit you with his blow.

Additionally, *Unearthed Arcana* allowed those using either a spetum or ranseur to disarm foes on any roll sufficient to hit AC 8. Other polearms in certain campaigns, at the DM's whim, can have this ability as well, such as the trident, military fork, and certain other complex polearms with "catching tines!"

When fighting an enemy at a distance, only missile weapons are generally superior to polearms—but polearms won't run out of ammunition. There are a number of special situations where polearms can be very useful. Suppose you must cut the

nooses off the monster known as the hangman's tree, preparatory to going for the treasure lying beneath it. A slashing weapon like a voulge or fauchard would be safer for the user than if he walked right up to the thing with a sword. How about cutting or fending off the multiple heads of a hydra, or the tentacles of a giant octopus or squid? Or when you're trying to get at a bear or giant wolverine holed up in its den, which can be reached only through a narrow passage or crawl-space? Thrusting polearms are made for fighting in restricted areas.

Another good use of these long weapons is when your hero is a beleaguered defender with a vantage point above his attackers. The defense of a fortified position such as a castle is a prime example. Nothing can equal the thrill when a character with a bill hook snags a goblin and yanks him off a storming ladder, to fall screaming to his death below. This works in the defense of a ship against boarders. Boarding pikes were used throughout the Age of Sail, long after cannon and muskets were introduced. Polearms can force sahuagin and the like back into the water, while the slashing versions can cut ropes and nets. When two ships are fighting side-by-side, those same slashing polearms can be used to cut sails and rigging.

Thrusting polearms are also of great value in an underwater environment. Indeed, aside from short swords and daggers, thrusting polearms are just about the only regular weapons that *can* be used underwater, due to the resistance offered by the liquid medium. If you anticipate underwater duels, getting a polearm is certainly safer than standing around hoping the DM will let you have a *ring of free* action, especially since blunt-weapon-equipped clerics have far more need of it.

Aside from the thrusting effects of spears, pikes, etc., polearms have other uses underwater. Races such as the tritons and locathah go into battle mounted on water creatures much as land warriors ride horses, so dismounting can still take place under water (damage from the fall will be nonexistent, but the "fallen" creature might need a round to get reoriented before combat). Not only that, but all those fancy hooks and projections on polearms can also be used to foul, cut, or pull off the nets that so many underwater races like to use. The trident, of course, is practically synonymous with oceanic warfare.

Finally, if you need a long lever to pry open a giant clam, you'll always have one handy if you take along a polearm.

This polearm-as-lever tactic also works well on dry land, too, which brings up another aspect of these weapons. Polearms may be used for a number of utilitarian purposes as well as for combat. When dungeon-delving, characters often like to prod the floor ahead of them to prematurely set off any traps (or trappers, grey ooze, lurkers above, and the like) that might be there. The main purpose of the 10' pole on the equipment list is to check out terrain in this manner, but a polearm would be just as suitable—better, in fact, as it can serve as a weapon as well as a prod, thus insuring that its owner will not be overloaded with gear. Granted, even the cheapest polearm, the spear, costs more than a 10' pole, but try using the latter to kill a dragon and you'll get my point. Since many polearms were adapted from pruning hooks, characters could use them as such, as when they want to bring down fruit from a tree too slick to climb and too stout to shake. Mountain defenders can use them to set off a rockslide without exposing themselves to missile fire from the attackers.

Polearms are used by many monsters as well. If you remove or ignore polearms, you'll have to come up with new weapons and tactics for certain monsters (it would be weird indeed for monsters to be equipped with polearms when player characters couldn't have them). If you're running a campaign with lots of combat, diversity in weapons and tactics is essential to stave off boredom.

Finally, think of that grand occasion in adventuring: the bold improvisation, when players are bereft of their usual weaponry and must improvise with mundane items. Stephen Inniss' article "Sticks, Stones, and Bones," in DRAGON® issue #97, is a must in this case. In particular, check out Table E1 in that article, showing mundane tools and other objects and their corresponding weapons, and note that only the machete may be used as a substitute sword. If you lash various tools to the ends of poles, however, you can improvise other high-damage melee weapons, namely polearms.

With this system, a butcher's knife at the end of a pole makes a type 1 voulge (using Inniss' system), while a carving knife makes a glaive of equal quality. Scythe or sickle blades can be used for making substitute fauchards, while the head of a woodcutting ax or hatchet can be used in a substitute pole ax of some sort. You don't have to be restricted to using mundane items, of course. Improvise a spear with a lashed-on dagger, or a fauchard with a broken scimitar blade. The DM will assign penalties for hitting and damage due to the inferior materials used, so fighters and monks should reduce the pile of penalties as much as possible by having weapons proficiency in some of these polearm types, as opposed to merely being allowed

to use them. To be guilty of a cliché, it's better than nothing.

### Magical polearms

Another DM tactic to introduce polearms is to tempt players with polearm treasures that have special powers. For starters, DMs can create polearms that have enchantments greater than +1 on them. Surely it can't be that difficult to come up with a *partisan +2? You* can also duplicate the effects of swords and other weapons. What's wrong with a *fauchard of sharpness*, a *vorgal* voulge, a glaive-guisarme that's a *flame tongue* weapon, or a *frost brand bardiche? Care for a lucern hammer of disruption*, anyone? You also ought to have polearms that have combat bonuses against certain foes; a trident with bonuses against aquatic creatures would be a natural.

To set a good example, here's a magical polearm weapon for low-level characters: a *polearm rod*. This thick rod is covered with push buttons. The owner will learn, by using *identify* spells or trial and error, that each button, when triggered, will extend and reshape the rod into a different type of polearm. Every type is represented on the rod, each as a +1 version, with a button to turn the thing into a rod again, of course. When in plain form, it may be used as a *club* +1. As an added inducement, since these are not "natural" polearms, the owner may use any version of the rod as though he had a weapons proficiency slot filled with the weapon version being used. The XP value of such a weapon is 1,000.

### Heroic tradition

Some players may believe that, unlike swords, polearms have no heroic tradition behind them. What bardiche is as well known as Excalibur? Surprise! There are a number of cases in human history in which the use of polearms by individual heroes made the legend book and, at least once, changed history.

During the wars of the Diadochi (Successors), when Alexander the Great's generals fought over their deceased leader's empire, his general Ptolemy was attacked by a rival while stationed in a fortified camp. The enemy used war elephants to break a hole in the camp's outer wall, and the herd leader soon came lumbering in. While his men gave way in panic, Ptolemy grabbed a sarissa (a 21'-long Macedonian pike) and single-handedly fought the elephant. The wounded beast soon turned and fled, panicking and carrying the rest of the herd with it. The stampeding elephants trampled their way through the attacking troops, notwithstanding the fact that they were supposed to be on the same side. Ptolemy's men rallied and won the battle. Eventually, Ptolemy grabbed Egypt for himself and started his own dynasty, which ended with Cleopatra.

In 14th-century France, during the siege of Mortagne, the Sieur de Beaujeu was

among the defenders. He was armed with what was described as a spear with a hook beneath the blade. Using this singular weapon to snag men and yank them off the scaling ladders and into the moat, he drowned more than a dozen men in one day's fighting. Though not important in the sense of changing history, it should be noted that this was a *French* knight who was using a polearm. Evidently, even the haughty upper class could stoop to using such weapons, at least in the case of siege warfare when defending one's castle. Perhaps DMs ought to relax the weapons restrictions against AD&D 1st Edition game cavaliers in cases like this and let the snobbish knights swallow their pride. After all, a lance is a polearm; if it can be used on foot like a spear, why not use a spear as well?

Derring-do with polearms is not restricted to the Western world. Another historical case took place in medieval Japan, thus providing inspiration for *Oriental Adventures* players. In 1180, during one of many battles between the Minamoto and Taira clans, the Minamoto clans were reinforced by warrior monks of the Mii-dera temple. Japan's warrior monks were the real-life counterparts of the sohei of *Oriental Adventures*. Historically, their favorite weapon was the glaive-like naginata. The armies faced each other across the Uji River. Being the smaller of the two, the Minamoto army was on the defensive, and to gain time they tore up many of the planks on the only bridge in the area. The Taira began trickling over anyway, and it was obvious that someone among the Minamoto would have to go face them.

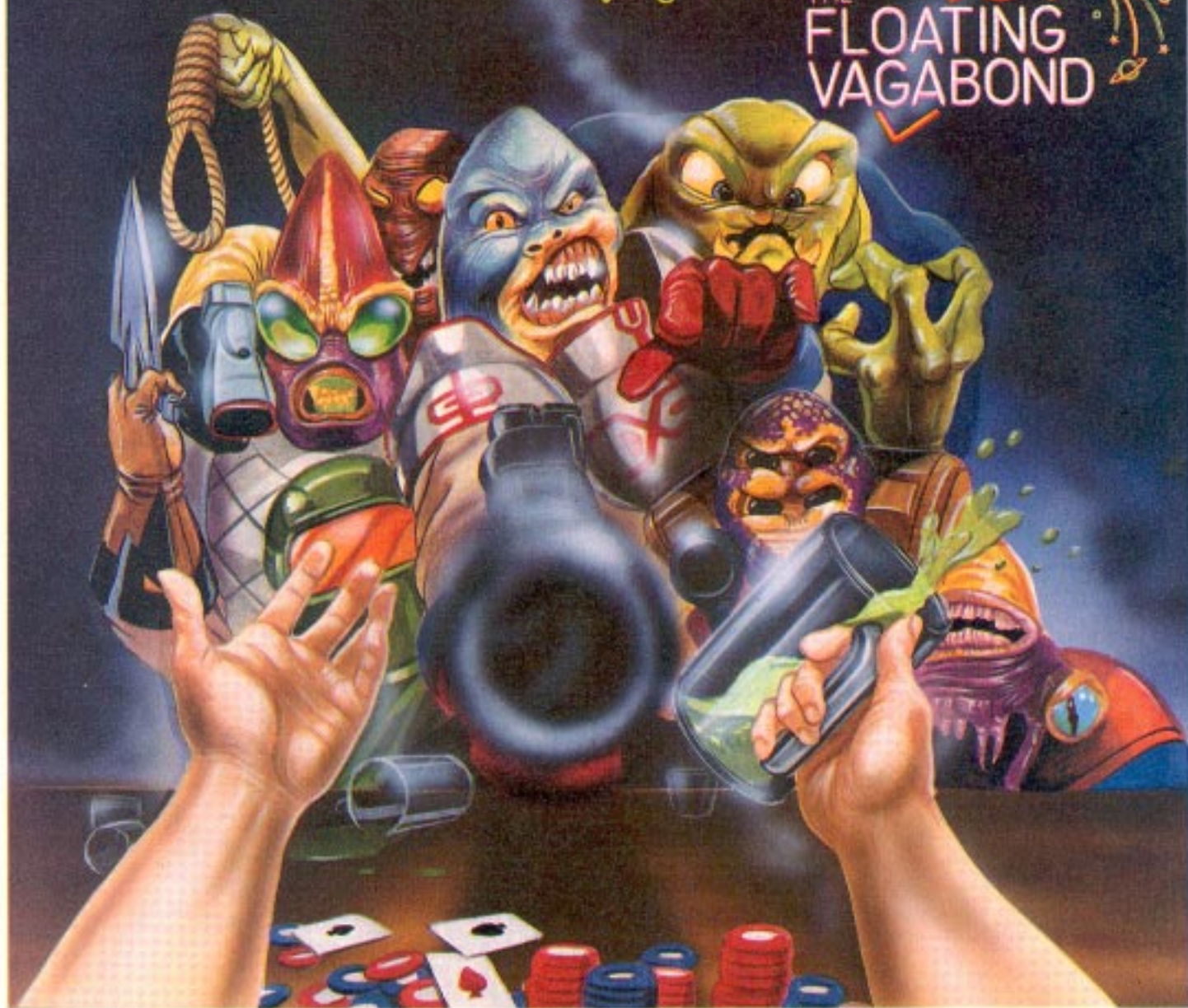
Enter Tajima, a monk of the Mii-dera temple. Tossing the sheath of his naginata into the river, he strode out alone on the damaged bridge. The Taira archers immediately let fly at him. He dodged many of their shafts, and more were stopped by his armor, but he gained fame that day by cutting or knocking aside many arrows with his naginata blade (clearly, he was a man of high dexterity). More men from both sides entered the fight, and the Taira eventually won, but Tajima the Arrow-Cutter won a major place in Japanese military annals. He is also an example for all *Oriental Adventures* sohei to emulate. Change a few names, and this example could have taken place in Kara-Tur. A western character with a glaive, fauchard, or similar weapon might be able to emulate him, given sufficient dexterity and skill.

Here's hoping that this article will convince you to use polearms more often in your campaigns because of their uniqueness, variety, and utilitarian value. A medieval role-playing game just isn't a medieval role-playing game without the presence and proper use of polearms. Ω



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# What Not to Include

## Hard choices in campaign design

by Arthur Collins

There is an old joke (or piece of folk wisdom, if you like) that has someone ask a sculptor if it's hard to carve an elephant. The sculptor replies, "No, you just take a big piece of marble and chisel away everything that doesn't look like an elephant."

That is essentially what designing a campaign world is all about. Once you know (even intuitively) what your world is to be like, you begin to define it as much by what you leave out of it as by what you put in it. If you are planning a world, continent, or region where snow and ice are year-round things, you know that palm trees and camels would seem a little odd. There would have to be very good reasons to put them there. Remove that reason, you would quickly throw those things out.

This point needs to be made, especially in light of the proliferation of monsters and character options in games like the AD&D® game and its relations. The temptation is always there, especially for younger or less-experienced gamers, to try to squeeze everything in and have it all. The result is a loss of creative power. People get confused or bored when everything is included because the campaign then lacks focus.

Aristotle once wrote about the dramatic Unities, observing that if a story was too

confused or included too many elements (such as characters, times, or places), the audience couldn't follow it and the result would be a dramatic flop. So it is with role-playing games. If you try to put everything in one place, that place is unbelievable. Special creatures and practices lose their uniqueness, too, when they are encountered all the time.

This article is meant to help you better define your campaign milieu. It is my thesis that good adventures are dependent upon good background design, good background design is dependent upon maintaining consistency, and maintaining consistency is as dependent upon what you throw out as what you include.

### Peoples

Games such as the AD&D game have lots of humaniform monsters (usually called "races"). In addition to humans, there are the demihumans: elves, dwarves, halflings, half-elves, gnomes, etc. Then there are the so-called humanoid: orcs, goblins, hobgoblins, bugbears, kobolds, ogres, etc. There are giants of various sorts, centaurs and other beast-men, and faerie and mythological types: pixies, sprites, nixies, dryads, satyrs, etc. Nor may one forget the various lycanthropes, merfolk, and subhuman types (yeti, troglodytes, etc.). On top

of it all, many races—especially, for some reason, the elves—have a bunch of sub-races. What do we get out of having so many peoplelike monsters?

On one hand, many monster races are simply easy caricatures of various aspects of humanity. Rather than use race, culture, or philosophy to differentiate one group from another, we just create a new species of humaniform monster. J. R. R. Tolkien did this somewhat in *The Lord of the Rings*. His hobbits and elves showed us different sides of humanity when compared to the men of his world. This is an old and honored literary turn: Sometimes we have to see the humane in the nonhuman in order to appreciate it. However, it also spares us from having to seriously consider some very divisive things, like race, culture, and philosophy. It needs to be pointed out that one's campaign doesn't need a lot of humaniform species if one is good at making believable societies.

On the other hand, the strangeness of the "other" is an important fantasy concept. Our worlds need nonhumans for contrast with the humans and to increase the sense of wonder one has when encountering them. Just remember the Law of Diminishing Returns: The more you normalize nonhumans, the less of a "Wow!" you're going to get each time you

encounter them.

The following suggestions apply, then:

1. Limit the number of nonhuman types in your campaign area. Make home “homey.” Your basic campaign area should be where your player characters hail from; keep any strangeness around the edges (see #3 below). Develop the basic plot devices of your campaign using only those peoples who will allow you to maintain consistency.

2. Develop *cultures* instead of races. Instead of using a new desert-dwelling humanoid, put an orc or human in a burr-oose and have him ride a camel. Instead of creating a race of snow-people, let your halflings adapt to the climate in Eskimo fashion. I once designed a campaign area where the elves dominated the woodlands in a manner not unlike the British raj in India. Their chief foe was the Hobgoblin Overlordship. Instead of making hobgoblins crude and violent, I saw them as cultured and violent, rather like Klingons or the minions of Cesare Borgia. The hobgoblins dressed well, spoke well, and were great sailors. They were also cruel and warlike. They ruled all the lesser peoples (goblins, orcs, etc.) and despised them for being less than hobgoblins. Nevertheless, the hobgoblins had a sort of honor about them. The only thing I had to change about the hobgoblins was their inability to rise in level, and that was easily fixed.

3. Put the occasional extra race at the edges of your campaign. These extra types can add the occasional spice the campaign needs. Extra races can be put in the campaign area itself as long as they are hidden in the shadows: rare trolls living in caves, a few wights in barrows, werewolves on the lonely moors, and pixies that one never meets by chance. Other creatures can be placed in adjacent planes or summoned by magic for the occasional big encounter.

4. Don't let a player make you include a character race that doesn't fit. Some players want to play elves, halflings, or whatever, and nothing else will do. If you haven't accounted for the presence of certain races in your campaign area, don't accommodate the players. Tell them something about your world, and give them a chance to choose a different race.

## Classes and powers

A good campaign doesn't need to include all the classes and powers available to player characters. Not long ago, I ran an adventure for “little people” characters. The setting was all underground, and I limited the party to dwarves, halflings, and gnomes. Since none of those races were originally allowed to have clerics (at least as player characters), I told the characters to stock up on healing potions and gave them a contact outside the dungeon for handling serious injury. The fact that they had no cleric did not unbalance the party. Rather, it had two benefits: it enhanced the experience of playing an all-

little-people party; and it made the players far more careful than they might have been (especially about the possibility of meeting any undead). Thus, the restriction of one factor (no clerics) was tied to a matter of the campaign's identity (all little people). It was not arbitrary and thus enhanced the playing of the game.

Going in the opposite direction, some DMs like to get into class expansion. For instance, wizards might be very common in one campaign, with a great deal of attention being paid to specialists in the various magical schools. That's okay, but it would need to be accompanied by a restriction elsewhere. If wizards are common and specialized, fighters are probably less common, particularly as rulers.

Some hints for maintaining consistency follow:

1. Don't let your players talk you into allowing classes you don't want. If druids (or monks or wu jen) don't fit into your campaign, don't shoehorn one in just so that someone can play the class. The campaign will lose focus if you come up with an arbitrary and far-fetched rationale for having an oddball class in the area. To maintain consistency, the oddball would have to fend off shock or suspicion everywhere he goes, and that, rather than the adventures you are designing, would become the focus of the game.

2. Make the nonadventuring types more interesting. Mayors, aldermen, charcoal burners, merchants, farmers, butlers, gossips, goose-girls, and so forth are not adventuring types, but they can all be used as encounters for the player characters. If you make the people of your world interesting, they won't need to cast spells or swing two-handed swords. In the realm of politics and government, most nobles and sheriffs would be fighters or have some warrior training, but they wouldn't necessarily do a lot of fighting—and they don't have to, to be interesting.

3. You don't have to use all the spells in the books. Clerics are particularly bad about wanting certain spells; since they get their spells from otherworldly powers, clerics don't have to find spells written down anywhere, as mages must. Players assume that means their clerics can have any spells they want. Don't you believe it! There's nothing wrong with a cleric's deity saying, “I'd rather you had spell X than spell Y.”

Along the same lines, if there's no one to teach a character a given proficiency, you don't have to come up with a way for him to acquire it. If you don't want to use weapon specialization, leave it out. It's your world.

## Critters

If you think there are a lot of humanoid races in FRPGs, that's nothing compared to all the other monsters in the game manuals. New, bizarre critters are wonderful, but they have some problems. What about the ecosystem? Where do

these predatory things get their food? Do they ever fight each other? How can civilization exist so close to such terrors? Wouldn't a couple of dragons eat all the cattle in the district? Wouldn't all the fighters wipe out all the dragons?

The old problem of the overstuffed dungeon is not solved just by having a world beyond the dungeon. All you do in that case is to shift the scale of the problem.

Some suggestions are in order:

1. Make the normal exciting. I once killed off a whole party of fighter-types by using giant goats. Giant boars or a herd of bison could be as deadly. You don't even need wilderness to have danger lurking about. Farm animals (such as a cranky bull) can be dangerous foes. For that matter, you don't need an exotic nonesuch to kill player characters. A friend of mine is renowned for his use of giant centipedes (about the only monster he has ever been able to kill a player character with). If you have enough of them, this common nuisance can be deadly.

2. Watch out for too many undead types; one dominant type per area is about normal. Transylvania is known for vampires, Egypt for mummies, and a few types are found all over (e.g., ghosts). Have your characters go to new places to meet new kinds of undead. That way, the undead are always surprising and challenging—and part of the new adventuring environment.

3. You don't need all those dragons. The AD&D game loves dragons, and their ilk has proliferated. Throw out the ones you don't want. No world needs more than three or four main dragon types, and no campaign area needs more than one or two. After that, the existence of so many dragons calls into question how humanity (not to mention everything else) has managed to survive. If you keep dragons very rare and restrict their appearances, their importance will be magnified when they do appear. Conversely, never let your characters pick on baby dragons. Such things exist, but players need to respect dragons. Unless the heroes are going to go to some out-of-the-way place stuffed with dragonkind, let the only dragons they encounter in the world be the ripsnorting terrors they're cracked up to be.

4. Some monsters are only ornamental. You can increase the quality of your players' experience by having them encounter animals of no combat value. Describing the rat-a-tat-tat of a woodpecker or the grassy explosion of a rabbit bolting from cover gives the players the “feel” of their environment, even though there is no initiative to be rolled. Don't use all big, dangerous monsters merely to provide atmosphere. For that matter, things like mosquitos, ordinary leeches, carrion left over from a wolves' kill, the sound of walnuts falling through the leaf canopy, or raccoons raiding the party's food bags can all be part of an adventure without endangering life and limb. This sets up the big encounters that are related to the adventure's goals.

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## Possessions

Possessions tend to fall into two broad categories: tools and gear, and treasure. Once again, players are notorious for wanting whatever is in the rule books, while your campaign may not allow for it. Let's say your campaign world is based on subsistence agriculture, with a technological/cultural base similar to that of the Roman Republic. Gold coins would be close to nonexistent. Swords other than short swords would be unavailable. Remember:

1. Treasure is what is valued. If you have a cash-poor economy where barter rules, your possessions may tend to be unwieldy. Bales of silks and such may be worth a lot, but it takes beasts of burden to transport them, as they don't fit well into your saddlebags. In some societies, most wealth is tied up in real estate, in which case heroes might be rewarded for their adventuring with leases, rents, or feudal estates. Of course, lust for goodies is a basic motivation for adventuring, so characters will probably always be very cash-conscious (more so, perhaps, than their societies). Nevertheless, if you want silver (or even copper or brass) to be the main precious metal, for heaven's sake, adjust the tables any way you want. If it means that your characters have to work harder to go up levels, that may be just what you want.

2. Weapons are tied to technology. If your world isn't very metallurgically advanced, then steel weapons are going to be hard to come by; bronze is fine. The only time you have to worry about adjusting the tables is when a weapon from another technology level is introduced. For example, an iron weapon in a bronze age culture would have a +1 to +2 bonus, while a steel one would have a +3 bonus; conversely, a bronze weapon in a steel-making culture would have a -2 to -4 penalty. Similarly, if a particular weapon hasn't been invented yet in your world, you don't have to include it just because a particular player loves the damage it causes.

3. Weapons are also tied to culture. The Japanese of the 17th century knew good and well how to manufacture and use firearms, but they chose to outlaw them in order to preserve the status of the samurai class. In some primitive cultures, hunting arrows have feathers, but war arrows don't; these people know that arrows with feathers kill more efficiently, but war for these people is about pride, not killing. In a culture that prizes single combat, as between nobles, archery might be relegated to lowly peasants or even discouraged as being a cowardly way to kill somebody. If you design the culture, you should know which weapons are prized by that culture, and you don't have to introduce others just to please the characters. On the other hand, introducing a new weapon into a culture can cause quite a ruckus, and that might be just the thing you want.

## Religions

Most cultures tend to have a dominant religion, one that might not be tolerant toward competitors. Where several religions exist side by side in a situation of comparative strength, a tendency toward syncretism exists. Syncretism is the practice of equating similar things, smoothing over differences, and adding everything together. The Romans were great syncretists, identifying Zeus with Jupiter, Hera with Juno, Odin with Mercury, etc. The result was the dilution of the distinctive religions that existed before assimilation. In effect, this destroyed polytheism as much as the advance of Christianity did. Given too much accommodation, you wind up with a religion that nobody can believe in or care about.

Some things to think about, then, are:

1. Maintain creative control. When you decide on the religions of your campaign area, you don't have to include all the religions and gods in the books. Pick the ones you like. You don't even have to allow for all the nonhuman mythoi current in the AD&D game. In Norse mythology, elves were followers of Frey, so you don't need all that elvish religion in the books if you don't want it. Of course, this makes possible a wonderful conflict between Norse elves and "pure elven" elves who see their Frey-loving cousins as culturally enslaved—or even apostate!

2. Followers of the same religion don't have to agree. Gamers tend to use alignments as equivalent to religions, and religions as equivalent to complicated schools of thought. It needs to be emphasized that it is possible for people to disagree upon the right approach to practicing their mutual religion (e.g., chaotic good arguing with lawful good over the best way to be good). It is possible for people to betray in practice the ideals they profess with their lips (religious bigots). It is possible for people to be official adherents of a religion without caring a fig for its beliefs and practices (a thief who is a member of the state religion). It is possible for conflicts between rival factions, organizations, and orders to be as nasty as any conflict between different religions (Orthodox vs. Catholic, Avignonese papacy vs. Roman papacy, or Dominicans vs. Franciscans, to take a few examples from the Middle Ages). In other words, you don't need lots of religions to have conflict; put in other religions only because they truly enhance your campaign world.

## The official multiverse

Whether one plays the D&D® game or either edition of the AD&D rules, there exists a lot of material about the adventuring worlds for your use. There are gazetteers, modules, guides to Krynn and the Forgotten Realms, the AD&D 1st Edition *Manual of the Planes*, the RAVENLOFT™ campaign set, and so forth. It's very tempting to take some or all of these books, and

the wonderful, well-thought-out material they contain, and say, "Well, I guess I have to use all this."

Don't do it! Even the *Manual of the Planes* provides rules for setting your campaign universe apart from all other campaign universes. You don't have to use what you don't want, and your worlds power will increase as you discover with ever-greater clarity just what it is you do want to include.

Consider the possibilities:

1. Where the drow live is up to you. In the original AD&D giants-drow modules, the drow lived in an underground area called the Vault of the Drow. The conception of their society as given there is different from that embodied in the AD&D 1st Edition *Dungeoneer's Survival Guide*. Both those conceptions differ in some ways from that embodied in R. A. Salvatore's Dark Elf novels, published by TSR, that have drow prominently featured in them. Surprise! The drow live where you put them, and only if you want them. You don't have to use the Underdark, the Vault of the Drow, or anything else.

2. Who says the Outer Planes are even there? *Manual of the Planes* is a great book, but people are free to differ in their metaphysical constructs. Who says reality is divided up that way? Why, my character's religion may even hold that all other gods are mere cosmic piddlers who have deluded their followers; conversely, other characters may think my character's deity (and his whole celestial estate) mere pie-in-the-sky, not really there at all. It's okay to have characters disagree about such things. It's okay to send people out of this present existence, and *not* have it look like what they were expecting. Who knows these things, anyway?

## Conclusion

In attempting to show the materials of FRPGs as nonprescriptive, I am aware that you may see *this article* as too prescriptive. You might be afraid that your players (those real flesh-and-blood people you get together with) may take offense at a high-handed DM who says, "This is the way it is." After all, the players give life to the campaign world, too.

That's perfectly true, but the DM can't shirk his responsibilities. Just say, "It may be our world to adventure in, but if I am the DM, it is *my* world when people want to put things into it that don't belong there." The players define this world by their actions; the DM defines it by its furnishings.

The DM must sell his world to the players. He must woo them and win them to this strange new delight that he is presenting. If the world has a distinctive flavor, the players will eat it up. Isn't that what you wanted in the first place? Ω



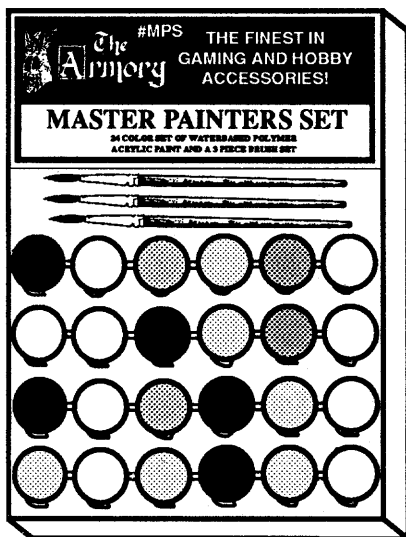
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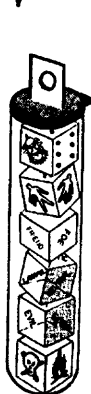
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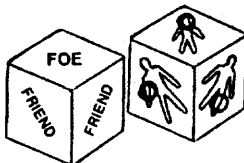
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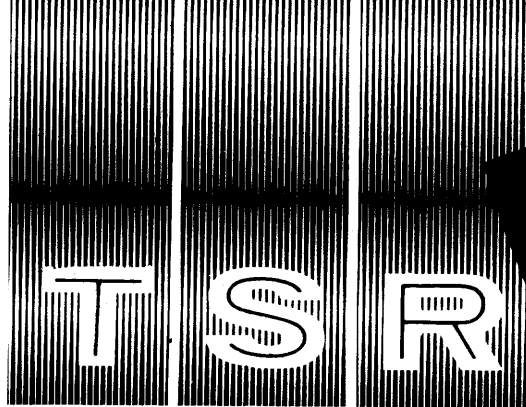
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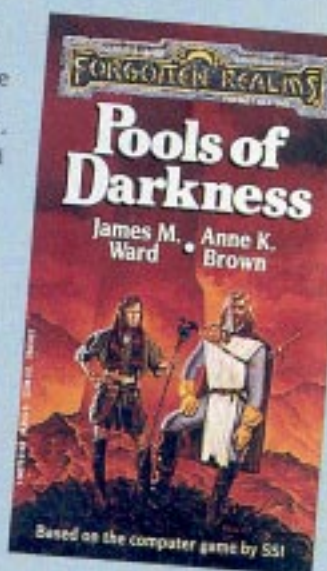
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# The VOYAGE of the PRINCESS ARK

## Part 25: Of blood and steel

by Bruce A. Heard

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

from the Journals of  
prince haldemar of haaken  
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PRINCESS ARK  
Imperial Explorer, etc., etc.

**Burymir 23, AY 2000:** No more than a day after the events in Robrenn were concluded, we reached a fortified city southwest of Eyf. According to the Saragón Gazetteers, this was the capital of Eusdria, a pious realm of knights and paladins whose main enemies were the humanoid tribes of Yazak. I sent Raman as an envoy to announce my visit, and he came back before nightfall with a message of welcome from the king.

**Burymir 24:** I ordered the *Princess Ark* to be made visible again and approached the city's main place. Lady Abovombe, Talasar, Myojo, and I were to meet His Majesty, King Sigismund. A solid guard of knights awaited us, keeping the crowd away from our lifeboat. They all

wore dull red armor with black and gold tabards. We were greeted by the castellan in the castle's main hall, but as we prepared to enter the king's hall, the knights in red armor suddenly turned against us.

There was little we could have done; the knights were too many and too close, and resisting would have certainly cost the lives of my companions. I decided to go along with things for now. Perhaps we would soon discover the reason for this treachery. We were placed in shackles in the castle's dungeons.

Shortly thereafter, our cell was visited by a knight—a Heldannic knight! I should have known. "It seems that what five Warbirds could not accomplish, a provincial ally did all on its own," he said to us. "It is only a matter of time now before you will pay for your villainies against the Order." He turned to Talasar and concluded, "You, among them, will live the longest. You will wish you had died with that Warbird you destroyed. I shall take care of you personally." He slapped Talasar in the face and walked away. Myojo hissed with rage.

There was no point in remaining here any longer. The knights had failed to remove all of my belongings; under my cloak, I still had a pouch that contained my *wand of disintegration*. Abovombe was kind enough to kick off her shoes and reach for the pouch with her bare feet. Eventually, she managed to get the wand and lift it to my hand. It pays to have dexterous toes!

The rest was easy. The knights expected us to be in this cell, so I had the chance to find the king and teach him a lesson. Myojo would remain with me, while Talasar and Abovombe were to return to the ship.

Unfortunately, the plan was only half successful. Shortly after Talasar and Abovombe escaped through a balcony of the main hall, a squad of guards surprised and captured Myojo and myself. These were well-trained guards, although differ-

Artwork by Terry Dykstra





ent from our earlier captors. They wore normal steel armor with blue tabards, and they knew nothing about us. Immediately afterward, the knights whom we had first met came in, and an argument developed; there was clearly tension between their two leaders. The captain of the guard arrived and inquired about the commotion. Eventually, it was decided that we were to be kept under guard of the "blue tabards" until a council could be held. The "black tabards" seemed rather angry at the decision, but bore it.

**Burymir 24—Talaras, later that day:** The *Princess Ark* was gone when we escaped from the palace. Three Warbirds swooped over, not seeing us, sailing full speed toward the southwest where we caught a glimpse of the Princess turning invisible on the horizon. She was ready for battle, but we could not intervene.

We turned back to rejoin our companions, but it became evident that the admiral and his aide had been captured again. We saw the guards take them upstairs in the keep. Lady Abovombe and I agreed to investigate the situation further and free the admiral from his captors.

**Burymir 25—Haldemar:** We spent the night in rather spartan quarters in the castle's keep. It was a far cry from our earlier dungeon cell, though. At least we had some hope of discovering what was going on.

The captain of the guard came in the morning and led us to the king: a kind and impressive man. I could tell he had elven blood in his ancestry. Fortunately, he had heard of our visit in Robrenn.

Among the people in the king's hall were knights of different orders, including the "blues" and the "blacks." I gathered that the "blues" were the king's personal guard. Several nobles attended the hearing, including a few magistrates and, of course, the Heldannic envoy who visited us in the dungeon.

"Your Majesty," I began, "how is it that a visiting prince from the Empire of Alphatia is treated in such dishonorable fashion? We came in peace and with a message of welcome from Your Majesty."

"Silence, Alphatian dog!" the Heldannic knight interrupted. "You stand accused of piracy and murder!"

The king raised a hand. "Steady, Herr Ulrich. There is the question of a certain message given to Prince Haldemar—a message given in our royal name. We, King of Eusdria, would want this issue clarified first."

The captain of the guard stood up and said "Your Majesty, someone indeed spoke in your name. The royal mayor of the palace received the prince's messenger and arranged for the Knights of Harstal to capture the prince and his retinue. The royal bailiff and the lord of the squires will testify to this."

The king signaled his guards. "Very well. Have the royal mayor arrested at once and brought here for questioning. We shan't

tolerate undue use of our Royal Seal: Several nobles muttered in anger as the king postponed the hearings. The king's guard escorted us back to our quarters in the keep. Our sergeant-keeper turned out to be a fine fellow. He explained that the presence of his men were both to protect the king against foreigners, but also to protect us against foes. It seemed there were long-lasting feuds among many of the factions in the palace. He requested that we swear on our honor to remain in our assigned quarters, and this we did.

**Burymir 25—Talaras, later that day:** Lady Abovombe and I had hidden ourselves on the balcony that led to the Heldannic knight's chamber. In the darkness of the evening, we began climbing the north side of the keep to find the admiral, hoping that no harm had befallen him. Soon we heard the Heldannic knight's ranting. We listened.

"What an outrage!" fumed the knight. "How dare they even speak against the mayor! I'll have the captain's head for this." We peeked in and saw the knight was addressing the men who had captured us on our first day here. "Once this Alphatian wizard is dispatched," he continued, "be prepared to act. No matter what happens, keep Morgund near the throne. The king must be removed from power for your order to rise. You shall receive more red steel, as agreed."

This talk of treachery went on for some time. We had to reach the admiral at once. Alphatia had no business in this affair, but anything benefitting the Heldannic Order could only mean trouble for Alphatia.

**Burymir 26—Haldemar:** The hearing started anew. Both the royal bailiff and the lord of the squires testified against the mayor of the palace, who was promptly sentenced to the dungeons. He was dragged away, claiming he had been framed by the captain of the guard.

The Heldannic Knight then stood and said, "Your Majesty, these people are notorious pirates. Clearly, they have come here to seize Your Majesty's treasure. It wouldn't be above this wizard's ability to forge your Royal Seal or to have the mayor of the palace framed as a way to escape. It is a disgrace to see that the captain of the guard and his cronies are using this opportunity to damage their rival's long-standing reputation of loyalty to Your Majesty and to the Kingdom of Eusdria!"

"We are not pirates!" I objected vehemently. "We are a legitimate vessel of Her Imperial Majesty's fleet. We are here only to establish a diplomatic link between Your Royal Majesty and the Empire. We are the ones being stalked and attacked by the Heldannic Knights!"

The knight laughed. "Ha! Listen to this fiend talk! He has become an outcast in his own nation. He has been rejected by the very Empress Eriadna herself and forever exiled from his own empire. He treacherously attacked a Heldannic Prowler on a mission of peace over the coast of Hule,

the Heldannic skyship being mercilessly obliterated after it had stricken its pennants, thus murdering all aboard! How could anyone trust such a criminal? Your Majesty, I beseech you in the name of the Heldannic Order to have these brigands executed at once!"

The king's face became grave, "Is it true, Prince Haldemar, that you are guilty of such an act?"

I nodded. "Heldannic vessels had been stalking us for a long time. The Heldannic Prowler refused to heave to after our warning shots, and then used a magical power that almost destroyed our vessel. We had no choice but to prevent this magic from being used again. This was indeed a tragic episode, Your Majesty, but in times of war, incidents such as this one are bound to happen."

The king sighed. "We see no evidence of treachery so far. However, since you cannot prove your absolute innocence, you will have to leave this kingdom at once. True justice cannot be rendered today."

The knight stood up and said loudly, "Ah, but it can, Your Majesty! There is a way! The Eusdrian Code of Chivalry allows trial by combat. The Immortals will see that the culprit is punished. I demand a duel by the sword with this pirate!"

The captain of the guard raised a hand. "Your Majesty, His Highness, the Prince of Haaken, cannot possibly defeat a knight by the sword. There would be no honor in this duel!"

The king was solemn. "Indeed. Well, then, the Code of Chivalry allows one who cannot fight to chose a champion! What say you, Prince?"

Of course, I immediately chose Myojo. He would be more than capable in this situation. The king accepted this and postponed the fight until the next dawn.

**Burymir 26—Talaras, from a later account:** It soon became evident that we could not enter what we suspected to be the admiral's quarters. We spent most of the day trying to find a way to get around the guards in the hallways, but the place was too well guarded. Both the king and the admiral seemed out of reach. At last, we decided to return to the Heldannic knight's chambers. If all else failed, we could capture him and trade him later on for the admiral. The knight left the castle in the evening, and we followed him.

He went to a tavern where he spoke to a wench wearing a hood. He gave her a vial and left. We attempted to capture him in a quiet street, but we discovered that he was a good warrior; he resisted my magic and fought well. We wounded the man but did not capture him. The noise of the fight attracted far too many bystanders, and we had to retreat.

I could only think of one more thing we could do. Razud had no following in these lands, but a land of knights must certainly follow some friendly Immortals. There were many temples in the city. Perhaps Razud would show us a path there.

**Burymir 27–Haldemar:** All parties were at the site of the duel. Skittish horses with jousting lances and barding were ready for both parties, but the Heldannic knight was nowhere to be seen when the time came.

He arrived a bit later, with some help from a squire. The man bore a bandage around his chest and looked pale. “Your Majesty, I was treacherously attacked last night by followers of the pirate. I am powerless against their poison, and thus unable to fight this day.”

“You must then choose a knight champion,” announced the king calmly. “The fight must take place, for today the Immortals watch!”

With a grin, the Heldannic knight responded, “Your Majesty, I see only one knight here whom I can trust. It is your sword that will bring the truth. I choose you as my champion!”

There was an uproar. The captain of the guard begged the king not to fight, as it would be to the death, but the king accepted. It was a matter of honor. The king requested and received a moment of peace in his tent so he could prepare for the battle.

Indeed, the fight took place. Myojo was tremendously worried and embarrassed. He could not possibly bow out, yet he was requested to strike a king. The battle began. The king soon forced Myojo off his horse and continued the combat on foot, where both displayed great swordsmanship. This was a very short fight, though. No more than a few strokes into the battle, the king suddenly dropped his guard and Myojo’s blade hit him an inch above the heart. The king fell without a murmur as the crowd roared. The captain rushed to his help, promptly carrying him back to his tent. We quickly learned that the king was dying—the second king whose death would be on my hands.

The Heldannic knight smiled tightly at me. “You seem to have won, wizard. What a shame.”

A stuttering noble seized this tragic moment to claim his right to the throne of Eusdria. Behind him stood the Knights of Harstal, who wore the red armor. “The K-k-king is dead! I, C-count of Harstal, thereby c-c-claim my right to be the K-k-k- . . . my right to the throne!”

“Not so, dear count!” A knight who had been standing on the sidelines since the beginning of the duel now walked over and stood before the count. He opened his helm. He was the king! What magic was this? How could he have died by Myojo’s sword, then stand here in a suit of armor?

Clearly the king understood everyone’s confusion. “Indeed I died, count, but there are many things in my power. You will have to wait your turn to rule this land. As far as these ‘pirates’ are concerned, Herr Ulrich, my death warrants their innocence, since it proved you to be wrong. I order you out of my kingdom at once.”

**Burymir 28–Haldemar:** When at

last I was allowed to see the king at the palace, I discovered both Talasar and Lady Abovombe sitting near him. “Prince Haldemar,” he said jovially, “you have two very loyal friends. By chance, it seems, they reached the Temple of Tiuz and revealed what they had overheard in Herr Ulrich’s chambers. The temple reached me with a message of warning against Morgund, my servant, who meant to slay me if all else failed. She was found in her chambers last night with a dagger and vial of blade poison.”

He then offered Lady Abovombe and Talasar quarters in the palace where they could rest. I was left alone with the king, and we relaxed as he explained at length what a predicament he was in. King Sigismund was very powerful from his use of cinnabryl, whose potencies he detailed for me. The red metal gave him unusual abilities, such as the power to create an *al-chemical* ego that allowed him to dodge death. [For *details*, see *cynabryl*’s alchemical ego *power in DRAGON issue #172, page 48, Table 6.*]

Through the Heldannic knights, the king found a steady supply of cinnabryl—but he also suffered an unfortunate dependence upon the knights’ services. Worse, the Heldannic envoys were gaining influence among his knights by offering them red steel. If the Empire of Alphatia could provide the king with a cure for cinnabryl addiction, he would gleefully outlaw the Heldannic knights from the Kingdom of Eusdria. Otherwise, he could only struggle behind the scenes to oppose Heldannic influence. His nobles were growing restless, and he could count on only a dwindling number of loyal knights for his defense.

Until such time as I could help him, I was to leave his lands, for he could not guarantee our safety within Eusdria. He was a wise and noble man, this King Sigismund, for he could see how his own thirst for power was leading him to his doom and to the ultimate corruption of his gallant kingdom.

**To be continued...**

## The Kingdom of Eusdria

**Eusdria–Capital:** Gundegard (Pop.: 25,200–humans, demihumans); **Ruler:** King Sigismund III the Great, son of Godegesil. Royal Domain includes the communities of Othmar, Ingelhad, and Withimer. **Patrons:** Viuden and Tiuz.

The history of Eusdria is very similar to that of its neighboring kingdom, Robrenn (see this column in *DRAGON issue #177*). The Eusdrians are descended from northern barbarians dislodged by Hule’s armies. They relocated in this southern region, hoping one day to reconquer the fatherland. That day never came. Eusdrians came to love this new land anyway and eventually established a medieval society.

In its past, Eusdria has had a number of clashes with the Robrenn. The druids and clerics on either side always spoke against

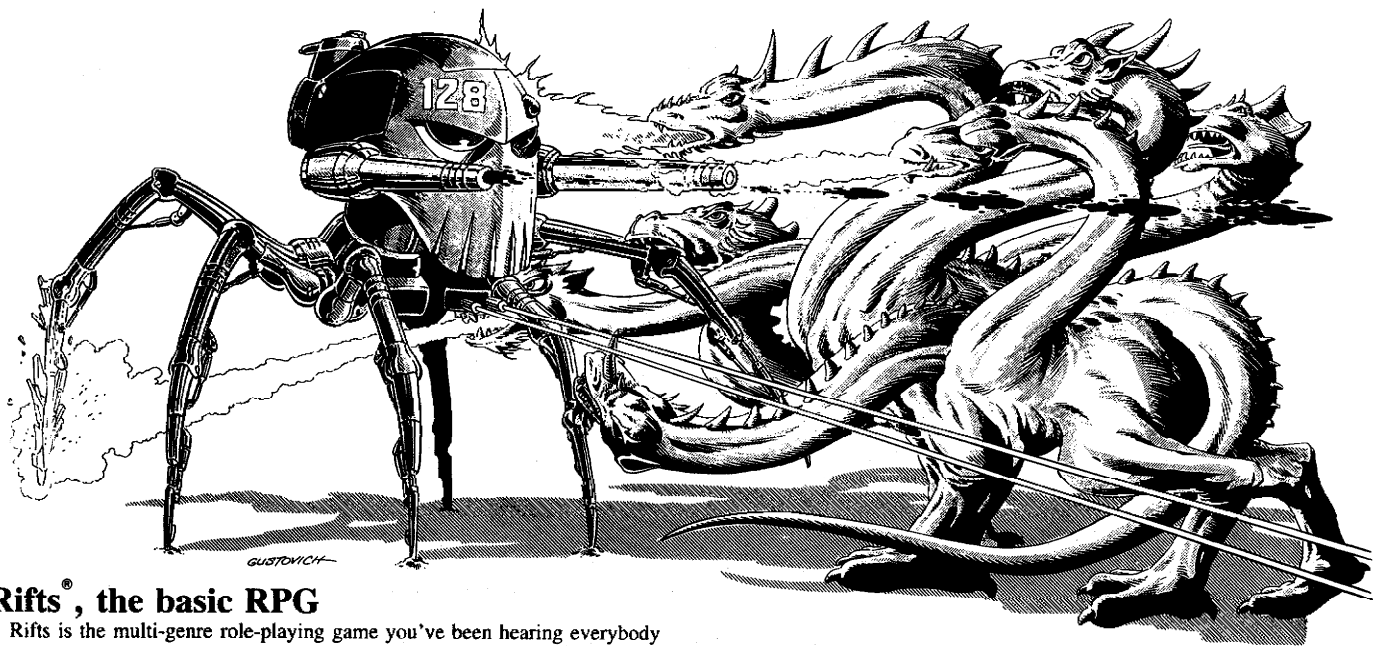
all-out war, since both nations largely honor the same Immortals, although they call them by different names. Eusdrian clerics are uncomfortable with the mysterious and barbaric ways of Robrenn druids, just as druids distrust Eusdrian clerics’ unnatural and self-serving ways. The two kingdoms have maintained a precarious status quo, keeping up a balancing act between cordiality and rampant accusations of heresy.

The biggest difference between Robrenn and Eusdria lies in the greater presence and influence of elves in Eusdria, particularly in the Duchy of Frissonnia and the Barony of Savaria. A great deal of the finer Eusdrian culture has come from the elves, including the alphabet, literature, architecture, and fine arts.

Eusdrians are fond of battle. They believe that death on the battlefield is by far the best way to die, for it opens the path to the land of the Immortals. This ancient belief dates back to their barbarian days in the north. Before a battle, warriors often celebrate and drink beer mixed with honey, thought to give them strength and courage. Fortunately, the elven love for peace and tranquility has toned down this ancestral predisposition to mere aggressiveness. At the very least, it brought order and law to the impetuous Eusdrians.

The elven influence led the Eusdrians to create several orders of knights, including paladins. Instead of fighting for the sake of battle and destruction, the Eusdrians learned to channel their battle fervor through military organizations with a purpose. The easiest ones to impress among early Eusdrians were orders that served their rulers, particularly the king of Eusdria and, later, orders that served the Immortals. This created a caste of knights and paladins capable of defending the nation against any foe.

The present king, Sigismund III, is a half-elf paladin and a highly charismatic follower of Tiuz. Sigismund is well known for his even-handedness with his dominions, both elven (Frissonnia and Savaria) and human (Harstal and Mohesia). He dreams of ridding the Yazak Steppes of goblins and other monsters, and of expanding his kingdom into a holy empire in the name of Tiuz. For the past 20 years of his reign, he has promoted a tradition of chivalry among his people, aspiring to have fewer but more competent warriors rather than the massive barbaric hordes of the past. In knighthood, he also sees the establishment of a highly mobile, elite, heavy cavalry whose loyalty would bring the end of the marauding tribes of the steppes. Dwarven crossbowmen from the County of Harstal also go to battle riding trains of heavy war wagons that provide cavalry with mobile forts. All this allows the king to wage long-lasting wars without pulling common peasants off their fields to be slaughtered in massive battles; such a loss would weaken the kingdom, as it had many times in Eusdria’s past, and bring



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**Rifts Source Book Two: The Mechanoids®:** A.R.C.H.I.E. is back and this time he's found some new friends, the Mechanoids. Will include adventures, adventure ideas, world data, new bots, and new and improved Mechanoids. Written by Kevin Siembieda; art by Newton Ewell.

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famine and pestilence to all.

King Sigismund hasn't unleashed his knights upon the goblins because of a curious phenomenon affecting the Plain of Dreams at the northern limit of the kingdom. The tradition says that the Immortal Lokar lost a bet with Donar and was forced to plant flowers throughout the entire plain. Lokar then cursed the flowers, giving them the power to put people and animals to sleep. These large beds of amber lotuses release clouds of sleeping pollen. The goblins seem to have found a way to protect themselves and their mounts from the pollen, allowing them to flee to safety after their raids into Mohesia and Frissonnia. As a result of these onslaughts, villages and towns in these two dominions are heavily fortified. King Sigismund is still hoping to find a reliable defense against the pollen and to learn how the goblins over came it.

King Sigismund is also famous for developing a true school system for the young, supported by royal taxes. With this, he hopes to lead Eusdria to a golden age and a might comparable to that of faraway Thyatis. This system, however, is largely unpopular among the peasantry, since their children are sent off to school instead of to work in the fields. The nobility abhors this unique policy, since educated subjects are far more difficult to rule and control, and higher taxes have to be sent to the king to support the construction of the schools, the purchase of books, and the payment of preceptors (usually clergymen). The clergy, however, strongly supports the king and these measures, for the influence they provide over commoners and nobles.

The Heldannic knights established contact with King Sigismund not long ago. There are similarities and thus sympathy between the two nations, but King Sigismund is more concerned about the Heldannic knights' conquest-minded views. He suspects their dark and treacherous ways, and under a friendly composure he keeps a watchful eye on their activities. So far, Heldannic knights have arranged for several Eusdrian orders to acquire depleted cinnabryl, through the Texeiran Protectorate south of Eusdria. The Heldannic knights gained the gratitude of these chivalric orders, which worries King Sigismund to no end. The precious red metal is used especially to forge excellent plate armor and bastard swords, bestowing these knights with a clear edge in combat (see "Red Steel" in this column in DRAGON issue #171, page 43).

Most Eusdrian trade is with the Kingdom of Robrenn and the Texeiran merchant fleet. Eusdria has a small fleet in Reslar and Withimer, but it is no match for experienced Texeiran sea wolves. From the Niedegard Mountains, dwarven miners extract iron and copper, which are largely exported along with beer, honey, furs, timber, and herring.

## The Eusdrian pantheon

**Viuden:** (alias Odin). The chief Immortal of the Eusdrians pantheon, Viuden represents the sky, the storms, and authority in general.

**Donar:** (alias Thor). A patron of warfare, Donar is as popular here as he is among the more warlike folk in neighboring Robrenn.

**Eirys:** (alias Eiryndul). Eirys is a patron of Eusdrian woodland beings and elves, but especially of elven wizards.

**Lokar:** (alias Loki) The patron of flames, mischief, and lies, Lokar is not honored except by evil beings. His goals are the destruction of Viuden, Donar, and Eirys.

**Nyt:** (alias Hel). As with neighboring Robrenn, Nyt is acknowledged as a part of the beginning and the end of all. Her interests are death and reincarnation.

**Tiuz:** (alias Ilsundal). Patron of the elves, wisdom, law, and trust, Tiuz is often represented among Eusdrian clerics as a warrior whose right hand is missing.

Other Immortals are known in Eusdria, such as Kagyar, Fredar, and Fredara (the latter two being Frey and Freyja).

## Eusdrian royal dominions

**Duchy of Frissonnia-Symbol:** Tower; Capital: Breimald (Pop.: 12,300—mostly elves, some humans); Ruler: Duchess Beovilda the Blunt, daughter of Onulf; Typical NPC: urban elf warrior; Patrons: Donar or Tiuz.

**County of Harstal-Symbol:** Bear; Capital: Harstal (Pop.: 10,400—humans and dwarves, some halflings); Ruler: Count Theodamir the Stutterer, son of Althuin; Typical NPC: boisterous beer drinker; Patrons: Viuden, Kagyar, Fredar, and Fredara.

**Barony of Mohesia-Symbol:** Horse; Capital: Verdegild (Pop.: 6,600—mostly humans, some elves); Ruler: Baron Arthaulf the Forthright, son of Euric; Typical NPC: righteous knights; Patrons: Donar, Tiuz, Fredar, and Fredara.

**Barony of Savaria-Symbol:** Fish; Capital: Reslar (Pop.: 8,500—mostly elves, some humans and halflings); Ruler: Baroness Utha the Fair, daughter of Aldaric; Typical NPC: elven hunter or fisher; Patrons: Eirys or Tiuz.

**Common men's names:** Adaric, Althuin, Avigern, Atharic, Arthaulf, Childaric, Euric, Fredegern, Galamir, Godegesil, Guntheric, Gothamund, Hildebert, Leobald, Onulf, Rethismund, Rodulf, Sigebert, Theodamir, Theodoric, Theudebald, Thorisbert, Thratemund, Tregibald, Widemir.

**Common women's names:** Auda, Avigerna, Bathilda, Beovilda, Brunehilda, Clothilda, Cunegund, Eleonora, Ethrelgund, Flora, Fredegund, Gudule, Guenevilda, Hilda, Hildegard, Ida, Isolt, Lotha, Mathilda, Morgund, Radegund, Theodora, Utha.

## Elven class variants

**Elven clerics:** Elven characters may be created as clerics or druids who are able to retain some of their racial abilities (infravision, languages, detection, and immunity to ghoulish paralysis). All other racial abilities are lost (fighter combat options, special defenses, and wizardly spell-casting). Elven clerics use the Elven Experience Table, but cast clerical spells, fight, and save as clerics or druids of the same level. In all other respects, they have all the normal abilities, restrictions, and obligations common to clerics. Druids can be created using the same guidelines (see this column's details on the druids in the Kingdom of Robrenn, in issue #177, for background; Eusdrian druids would honor the Great Druidess Maud and have to go to the Forest of Carnuill as required). These elves must start as 1st-level clerics or druids when first created.

**Elven paladins/avengers:** Between 9th and 12th levels inclusive (or at Attack Rank E), an elf may become either a paladin, if Lawful, or an avenger, if Chaotic. As with paladins or avengers, the elf must swear fealty to a church. When this is done, the elf gains abilities, restrictions, and obligations specific to paladins and avengers; this includes clerical spell-casting if the elf has a Wisdom score of 13 or better.

The elf retains all normal elven abilities, including attack ranks, special defenses, and wizardly spell-casting. He uses the Elven Experience Table, with each new attack rank becoming the equivalent of one new experience level for purposes of clerical spell-casting. For example, an elven paladin with attack rank K would be able to cast spells like a 6th-level cleric, in addition to his wizardly spell-casting.

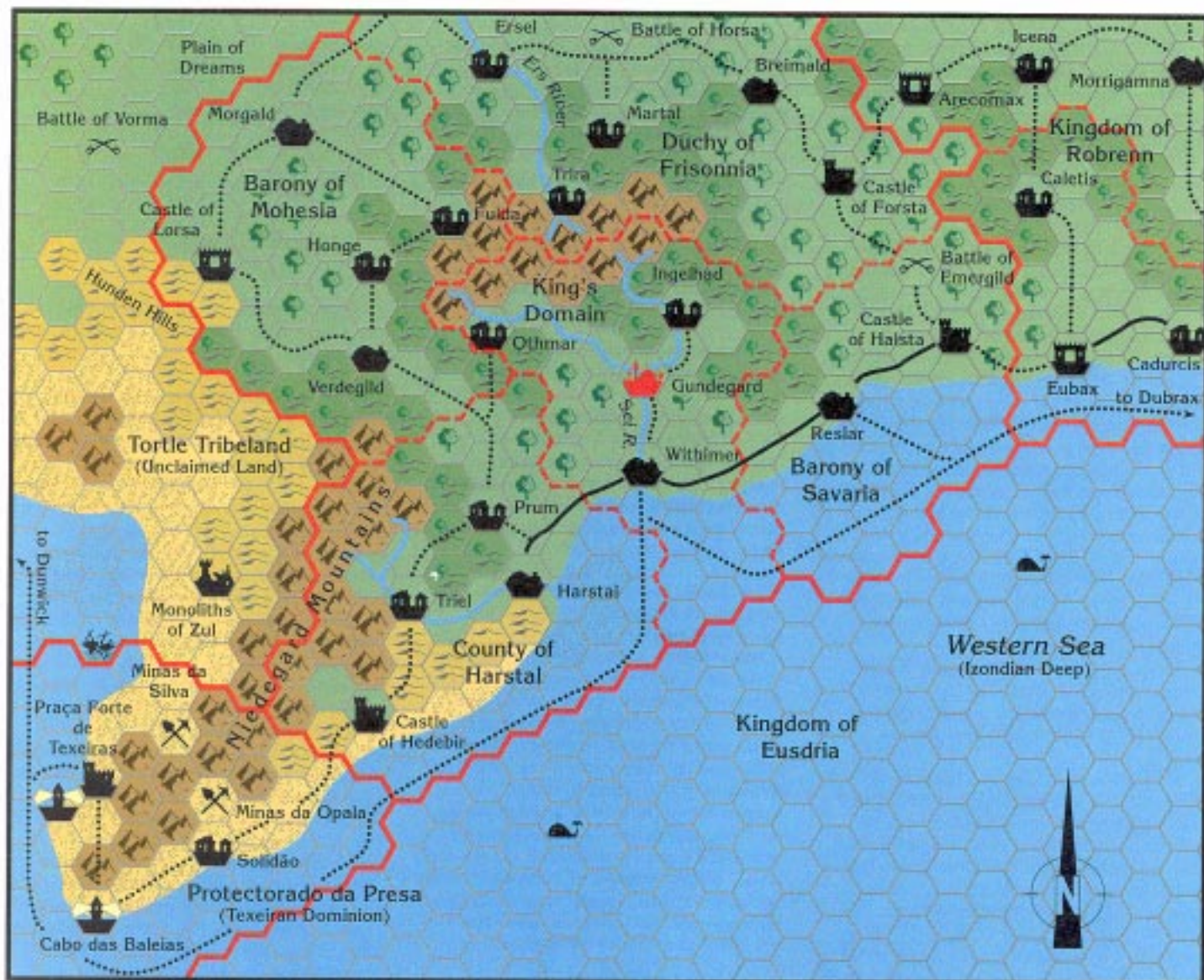
The optional rules on page 266 of the *Rules Cyclopedica* on unlimited demihumans' experience could be used otherwise. They are simpler and fit the case of the elven paladin or avenger better, but should be used from 1st level on.

**Important:** The elf permanently ceases to gain new levels in wizardly spells upon swearing fealty to a church. The elf also loses one level of wizardly spells each time he gains a new level of clerical spells, other than the ones gained upon swearing fealty.

For example: A 9th-level elf can normally cast fifth-level wizardly spells. Upon swearing fealty to the Order of Tiuz, that elf becomes a paladin with the addition of 1st-level clerical spells. When reaching 12th level (or Attack Rank E), the elf would gain the ability to cast second-level clerical spells, but would lose all fifth-level wizardly spells.

This represents the effects of the time spent studying clerical scriptures, meditating, praying, and acting as a paladin or an avenger, which inevitably alters the elf's skills and experience in magic-use. Remember that the elf can no longer swear

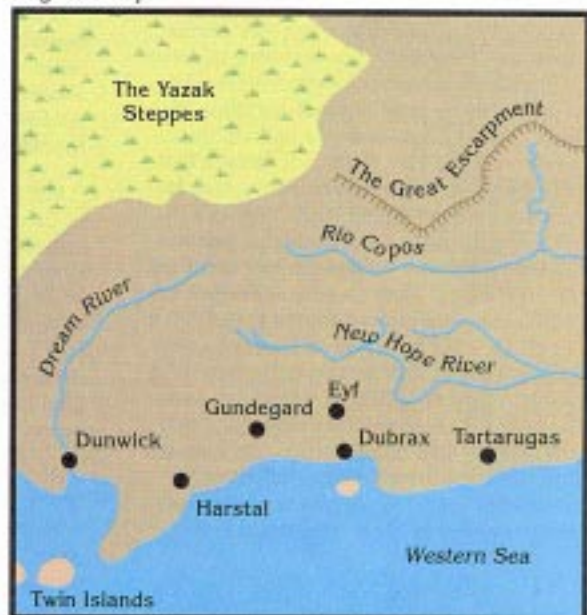




Scale: one hex equals 8 miles

- |  |             |  |                |  |                         |
|--|-------------|--|----------------|--|-------------------------|
|  | Capital     |  | Farmland       |  | Road                    |
|  | Town        |  | Light Forest   |  | Trail or Shipping Lanes |
|  | Village     |  | Forested Hills |  | National Border         |
|  | Castle      |  | Rocky Hills    |  | Dominion Limit          |
|  | Fort        |  | Mountains      |  | Rivers                  |
|  | Ruins       |  | Sand Desert    |  |                         |
|  | Lighthouse  |  | Reefs          |  |                         |
|  | Battle Site |  |                |  |                         |
|  | Whaling     |  |                |  |                         |
|  | Mines       |  |                |  |                         |
|  | Ship Wreck  |  |                |  |                         |

Regional Map



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fealty at level 13 (Attack Rank F) or better. It is assumed the elf has lingered too long in the ways of magic and profane warfare, and thus can no longer faithfully embrace the ways of the church.

Using the optional rules, the best an elven paladin or avenger could ever achieve is 12th-level clerical spell-casting, with four first-level spells and four second-level spells (or three first-level spells if using the standard elven attack ranks). This assumes the elf swore fealty to a church at level 12.

An elf who swears fealty at 9th level must eventually lose all wizardly spell-casting ability and related skills. An elf who makes this ultimate sacrifice, either willingly or because of the rules mechanics, permanently gains enough Wisdom to reach a score of 13, or gains one single extra point of Wisdom (up to a maximum of 18). Once lost, magic-use cannot be regained without permanently losing the status and abilities of the paladin or avenger (including any Wisdom gains), and spending a whole game year in studies for each of the spell levels originally lost. During that time, the "fallen champion" may not gain any experience nor learn any new spells.

Elves may also become druidic knights, using these guidelines. See last months column for information about druidic knights' restrictions and background.

**Knights:** An elf can also become a knight in the service of a monarch. The elf can do so upon swearing fealty, with no alteration to the basic elven character class. Elven knights prefer elven monarchs, but otherwise may swear fealty to a human monarch, although the latter is rare.

**Half-Elves:** Contrary to common belief, there is a race of "half-elves" unknown to Alfheim elves. These rare people live among elven and human communities in the Savage Coast. Fredar and Fredara made the characteristics of this mixture permanent and hereditary in an attempt to create a more homogeneous kingdom in Eusdria. The half-elven gene is dominant (thus, if only one of the parents is a half-elf, the progeny has a 65% chance of being a half-elf). Although still rare in Eusdria, this race is slowly gaining in numbers. Fredar and Fredara are their usual Immortal patrons.

Half-elves have *infravision* but no other elven abilities. They usually speak both the local elven and human tongues, and other languages can be acquired through the normal use of skill points. Half-elves have the life-span of halflings; otherwise treat half-elves as humans with slightly pointy ears. All classes normally open to humans are available to half-elves. Half-elves should suffer a 5% penalty to their experience because of their *infravision* and extended longevity.

## Letters

What happened to Bargle the Infamous in DDA3 *The Eye of Traldar*?

*Author Carl Sargent suggested we send him off on vacation for a while, and use his cousin Sverdloff in his place in the meantime. The Eye of Traldar was designed to help entry-level gamers get started with the basics of adventuring in the D&D game. There would come a point when the PCs might have run into Bargle, and either he would overpower them or the PCs would fry his worthless hide. Either way, that was a problem. So Bargle has gone to Hule to have a serious little talk with The Master. He'll be back soon. You can count on it.*

I think it would be greatly appreciated by D&D-game players if TSR would bring out a "Best of" X-series of modules. Are there plans in that direction?

*No. Would anyone be interested in a "Best of" series? How about Gazetteer reprints? We are considering republishing the collection in a series of big, fat, soft-bound books (in lumps of three Gazetteers each). Anyone interested?*

Are there plans to publish Expert, Companion, and Masters modules for the D&D Rules Cyclopedia?

*There will be modules for use with the Cyclopedia, but they no longer follow the Expert/Companion/Masters structure. They will fall under the more-general "Champion" D&D-game category and will differ only by their game levels or the setting used (HOLLOW WORLD™ setting, Known World, or other). The old "Basic" modules now connect exclusively with the new D&D game's boxed set, and they are a rather different breed of modules. Simpler and shorter than the old Basic stuff, they each provide 3-D character stand-ups and full-color 25 mm-scale dungeon maps.*

Does a dragon roll against its opponent's armor class when using its breath weapon, or does it hit automatically?

*It hits automatically Remember that a breath weapon affects only those opponents who are within its area of effect. Victims do get a saving throw. If they succeed, they take half damage from the breath weapons effects (rounded down).*

Is it possible to publish a "wanted" notice in this column? I have been looking without success for a number of modules, and I would like to get in touch with possible sellers.

*No. Unfortunately there isn't sufficient room in this column or in the magazine itself for such a "Wanted" feature. You can post notices in local hobby shops with the owners' permission, however.*

How do Combat Ratios work in GAZ10's "Orc Wars" game?

*You need to compare the value of the Attacker against that of the Defender. Add up the values of the counters on both sides. Then, divide the Attackers total by the Defender's total. The "Odds" depend on the result you get:*

A/D ratio	Odds
0.49 or less	1-3*
0.50 to 0.65	1-2*
0.66 to 0.99	2-3*
1.00 to 1.49	1-1
1.50 to 1.99	3-2**
2.00 to 2.99	2-1**
3.00 to 3.99	3-1**
4.00+	4-1**

\* Defender's advantage.

\*\* Attacker's advantage.

*In other words, if you are the Attacker you want your Combat Ratio to be as high as possible.*

Why do paladins have to be lawful? After all, their main requirement is that they swear fealty to a church. What if it is a neutral church?

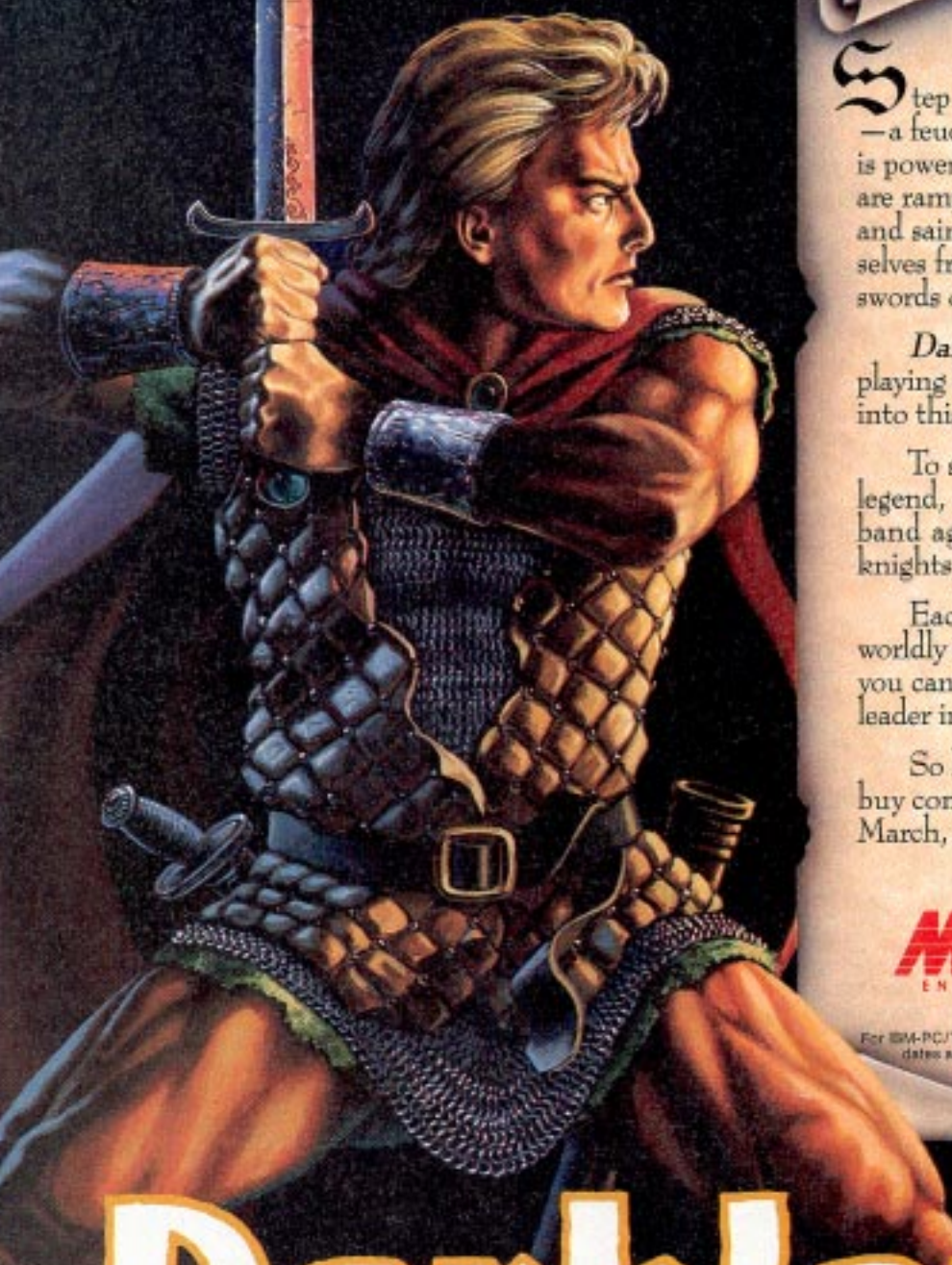
*Good point. In the last issue, we presented the rather unusual druidic knight, but we're still missing an equivalent for a nondruidic neutral order. All you have to do is call it something different, like a Stalwart or a Defender, then give it the paladins spell-casting skills and replace the detect evil ability with remove fear\* (reversible). That's pretty potent, but you should disallow the ability to turn undead. Even better, you can exchange the defenders remove fear\* ability for something else that is more appropriate to the defenders order. The same would be true for specialty paladins and avengers. Keep it balanced though—nothing is free.*

I'd like to know more about souls. In keeping with the idea of the five spheres, a creature's soul could be made of Energy and Thought elements. When the creature dies, these elements are dispersed into the Prime Plane. As the creature ages, entropic elements contained in its soul weaken, then vanish when the creature dies of natural causes. This would explain why Entropy would be so preoccupied with destroying rather than letting life run its natural course, since a violent death would then release a greater amount of entropic elements in the Prime Plane.

*This is a very interesting concept. Remember that the five spheres aren't like outer planes or some sort of elemental fabric. These are similar to "spheres of interest" that explain the powers and goals of the Immortals. It wouldn't take much, however to stretch things a bit to make this idea work. It is a very elegant one. In the same vein, the Spheres of Matter and Time would govern the physical body I suggest that Entropy affect material bodies rather than souls, since souls cannot "normally" be corrupted!* Ω



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# Darklands™

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RUBB



ouchmant froze in the middle of raising his horn of mead to his lips, staring. The banqueting hall of his lord, Prince Vladimir the Golden, was crowded with laughing, singing, jesting bogatyri, the prince's own knights—but that hadn't stopped the domovoy, the house-spirit—small, stout, and hairy—from scuttling out from behind one of the large tile stoves heating the vast hall, hunting tidbits, secure in the knowledge that no one could see him.

No one but Souchmant. The young *bogatyr* tensed as the house-spirit all at once became aware of him. It stared for a startled second, then grinned a wide, toothy grin, gave him an impudent little wave, and disappeared under the royal table. Souchmant took a swallow of mead, nearly choking in his haste. When your own princely lord had a genuine terror of things magical, you hardly announced that, thanks to a quirky little strain of magic in your blood, you had the gift of seeing Otherly beings. Nor did you confess that when everyone thought you were going hunting, you were actually passing the time of day with such old friends as Nieprad, the misty gray being who in some mysterious, almost frighteningly powerful Otherly way was the vast River Nieprad.

You particularly didn't announce such things when you were the youngest of all those here, and of peasant blood to boot. Souchmant stared moodily down into the golden depths of the mead, remembering. He'd been the youngest son of five, yet another mouth to feed on that small farm. His parents had been kind if remote; Souchmant knew they'd never been quite comfortable with this odd son of theirs and his disconcerting talent for seeing the Unseen. That Unseen, powerful Nieprad, who could have drowned a boy as easily as a man drowns a kitten, had chosen instead—bemused, perhaps, or simply amused—to befriend the lonely, dreamy child, telling him wonder tales of what befell along the river's long banks.

*It was Nieprad who showed me my first bogatyr, riding by all shining and splendid. God, how I wanted to be like that!*

He'd nagged a crippled, bored old mercenary into teaching him weaponry, practicing for hours with wooden staves or the bow he'd made himself. His parents had never understood; even now, when he sent them coin in plenty—Vladimir was generous to his warrior-knights—they still seemed almost embarrassed by him.

*Ah well, they do say you can never return home. Not that I fit in here, really, either.*

When he'd arrived at court, a peasant boy with a rusty old sword and eyes full of wonder, he'd never dreamed how difficult it would be to prove himself among this glittering company. No one had ever taught him, till then, that his birth made him "inferior." But he'd learned quickly enough as the *bogatyri* mocked him, calling him *muzhik*, peasant, fit only for tending hogs. Still, Vladimir had been kind enough, in an amused, ever-so-slightly condescending way, to grant him a chance. And the time of testing had come in a skirmish against Tatar raiders, when he'd saved the life of the renowned *bogatyr* Dobrynya.

***And now I'm a bogatyr. And nothing has changed. Oh, I eat fine food and drink golden mead. But to the others I'm still the peasant boy***

# River's Friend

by Josepha Sherman

Illustrations by Dan Burr

**with dung on his boots. Oh, hell, I hate self-pity!**

The sound of shouting brought Souchmant back to the present with a start. The other *bogatyri*, replete with good food, had been debating among themselves for some time about what service might best please a prince, an idle undercurrent of murmuring he'd been able to ignore so far. But now the mead had heated their blood, and debating was accelerating into outright arguing. Vladimir, sharp blue eyes half lidded, hands steeped against golden-bearded chin, was leaning back in his high carven chair, making no move to interfere, secure in the knowledge that no one here was armed, nobody was going to get seriously hurt.

Souchmant couldn't be so patient. *Listen to them, shouting at each other about the joys of war and bloodshed, of this feat of arms and that, like so many little boys performing for Daddy!*

Suddenly overwhelmed by the lot of them—these line warriors who'd never known a day of want—he sprang to his feet, shouting:

"War isn't some glamorous game! People die, crops get trampled—"

"Oh, yes," someone laughed, "the peasant boy would worry about crops."

"So would you, dammit, if you had to watch your children starving! So would you if you and your family had nothing to eat in the winter because some oh-so brave *bogatyri* had galloped by and crushed your wheat before you could harvest it!"

There was a moment's awkward silence. Some of the warriors even had the good grace to look embarrassed. "What would you, Souchmant?" Dobrynya, seated there at his side, asked gently. As Souchmant glanced hotly down at the sensible middle-aged face, the *bogatyri* continued, "I know you're no coward, and I think the others know it, too. But if feats of arms aren't the finest way a man may serve a prince, what is?"

"Why—I—" Souchmant floundered. "Any man can swing a sword. I would do something no one else has done."

"Such as . . . ?"

"I don't know! Capture a—a swan for the prince's gardens, maybe—"

"Any man with decent aim with a bow can do that!" someone shouted derisively.

"No!" Souchmant protested. "I didn't mean kill it, I meant capture a swan alive, without a single arrow wounding it!"

Ripples of amusement swept through the hall. "Oh come now, Souchmant," murmured Dobrynya. "Capture a swift, lively swan without even a net? Are you claiming you can do that?"

"Yes! I've done it already, without a net, with—"

Souchmant stopped short, because the one who'd helped him catch that swan had been a coolly amused Nieprad.

"With what?" yelled fiery Alyosha from across the hall. "A bellyful of mead?"

"No! I—"

But Souchmant got no further, because the hall erupted into laughter. Reddening, the young *bogatyri* watched even Prince Vladimir join in, and wished he could slink off as

unseen as the *domovoy*.

"You—you do that, Souchmant," the prince gasped out. "You bring me that pretty white swan, alive, unharmed," his voice hardened every so slightly, "within a week's time." And now Vladimir was no longer laughing. "Within a week's time, Souchmant, or face imprisonment. I will have no foolish boasters at my court. Now, go."

The others' mockery still ringing in his ears, Souchmant went. And he went with no intention of returning.

By the time he'd ridden blindly for a time, Souchmant's anger had left him and only embarrassment remained. What had ever prompted him to blurt out such a ridiculous thing? Capture a swan alive, unharmed. That was a test out of his childhood, not anything for a grown man, a *bogatyri*!

Ah well, his blind flight had taken him halfway to the Nieprad River. If he ever did mean to return to court, it had better be with that damned swan. Which meant he'd best see if he could convince unpredictable Nieprad, as full of whims and potentially dangerous as his powerful, perilous river was swift of current, to help a mere human once again.

But when Souchmant reached the river, he dismounted, staring in dismay. The Nieprad was a mighty river, wide and deep; Nieprad-the-being took enormous pride in its strength and richness. The Nieprad's banks, thick with reeds, held their own richness, teeming with water fowl. Yet today those reeds stood dry and lonely, far above the waterline and empty of life, while the normally clear, quick water lay shrunken in its bed, thick with mud.

"Nieprad," Souchmant asked warily, "are you . . . all right?" wondering if it was possible for something so Otherly as a river spirit to fall ill. For all he knew, the being was at the far end of his vast domain, too far to hear him, but the *bogatyri* tried again: "Nieprad?"

The water swirled in a faint eddy. A whisper of a voice, hardly louder than the rustle of the drying reeds, said, "River Friend . . . help me."

"Nieprad!" Souchmant stared in horror at the fading, barely visible shape of the being who'd been so proud, so strong. "What is it? What can I do?"

"My river was wild and strong . . . No man could ford it . . . It could not be bound."

"I know that. Please, tell me—"

"Warriors . . . have returned."

Something as purely human as nationality was meaningless to an Otherly being. But Nieprad could hardly have meant the *bogatyri*; those, he tolerated. "Who?" Souchmant wondered uneasily. "Tatars? But—"

"With them is a man of Power. Twenty times they sought to bind me . . . bridge my river . . . Twenty times I scorned them, tore their bridges down. But . . . they will not . . . surrender . . . They are building anew with the man of Power's aid . . . damming my river's flow with iron bars, and I . . . I . . . no longer have the strength to fight them."

Souchmant winced. How that admission of weakness must have hurt!

But there was another problem. Though Otherly Nieprad neither knew nor cared about such human things, his

unfordable river had always served as a line of defense for Prince Vladimir's people. Now, if the enemy was able to steal across before the *bogatyri* could stop them—

**God, even a small force could infiltrate the city before anyone knew it, take it from within, maybe even kill our prince!**

"Nieprad, I—I'll ride back for the others, and—"

"No! There is no time. You must help . . . stop them . . . tear down their bridge."

"One man alone? Look you, I'll hurry—"

"No," the being insisted wearily. "By then I shall be gone . . . I cannot live, bound."

**And I can't live against a whole troop of warriors!**

There was no way around it: He would hurry back to Prince Vladimir, gather the *bogatyri*, and hope they could return in time to meet the enemy as they crossed the river. Of course Nieprad would be dead by then, but the river would still flow and—

*Ah, Nieprad, no . . .*

How could he have forgotten, even for a panic-stricken moment, the warm summer days of childhood spent swimming the fierce river, safely buoyed by Nieprad's will? How could he forget waking alone and terrified because no one in his family shared his odd little magical gift, and stealing out of bed and down to the river's edge? Nieprad had always been waiting, somehow sensing his small friend's fears, comforting the boy with wonder tales, reassuring him that there was nothing evil about his gift, nothing demonic.

Friend, yes. Alien, unpredictable though the being was, Nieprad was his friend, as truly as any vow-sworn *bogatyri*. *More truly*, the young man thought wryly, and asked in compromise:

"Can I get upriver to where the enemy are, without them seeing me?"

"The river will shield you." If Nieprad was relieved, nothing of it showed in the wisp of voice. "Come, swim across. I never yet have let you drown."

Gasping—even with Nieprad's aid, it was a long swim—Suchmant struggled up through mud to the far side, thankful the day was reasonably warm, then started his wary stalk upriver, only to drop to the ground, crouching uncomfortably in the shelter of a clump of prickly reeds.

His first guess had been right: these were Tatar raiders, no doubt about it. Even at this range there could be no mistake, for all that they wore long, sashed tunics with full trousers and high, soft boots even as he did, for all that the hair of many of them was lighter than his own. Only wild Tatars would ever travel in company with that fantastic, fringe-and-fur-robed figure hunched at the riverbank. A Kirgiz, Suchmant guessed, but the rest of what the stranger might be, Suchmant's quirky magical sight told him clearly: a shaman, this, who'd toyed too much with the darker side of his calling and been cast out of his tribe for it. Hints of nasty little Others quivered and circled about him even as he supervised the building of a ramshackle bridge of rope and reeds.

And iron. Curse the man, he knew the effect of that cold, magic-hating metal on the Otherly. Iron stakes impaled the riverbed, an iron chain engraved with twisting sigils bound it, bank to bank, holding back the water as

surely as any dam.

Suchmant sank back into his reedy shelter, trying to ignore the dankness chilling him, the rank, sharp scent of rotting vegetation heavy in his nostrils. Once across the river, the raiders could steal by innocent twos and threes into the enemy city, then cast open the gates to the others. He'd counted nearly twenty at the riverside and didn't doubt there were more back in the woods with their horses.

**What in the name of all that's holy am I going to do?**

His frantic brain was dragging forth scraps of memories of every tale he'd heard as a child, tales of magic, tales in particular that hinted at Otherly alliances, Otherly Power.

Suchmant tensed, realizing where his thoughts were leading him. Oh, impossible! He was only human, not some all-powerful hero from the ballads! Of course it was impossible, something only a child could believe—

But, panicked, he couldn't think of anything else to do except whisper desperately, "Nieprad? Nieprad, listen to me."

"I am here." It was the softest whisper of water.

"You call me River Friend, you and the . . . the other Others have always welcomed me. You trust me, don't you, all of you?"

"As much as any human can be trusted." A hint of Nieprad's cool, alien humor rippled faintly in the words. "Why? What would you?"

"Remember the stories you told me, back when I was a boy? The stories about transfers of Power." All at once sensing a wary stillness about the being, Suchmant rushed on. "Look you, the only way we're both going to get out of this alive is if those stories are true, if—if I'm granted Otherly strength, just for a while."

"No . . . it cannot be done."

But the being wasn't actually denying such a thing was possible. Suchmant glanced uneasily at the Kirgiz shaman, who in turn was scenting the air as nervously as any wild thing, sensing him by the faint touch of magic in him, the dark Others swirling about, hunting. They'd surely locate him in the next moment. "It had better be done," the *bogatyri* whispered urgently, "unless you want to die a slave!"

There was a long, long pause, the faintest trembling of the air. Suchmant realized with a little prickle of wonder that Nieprad could only be communicating in the fabled Silent Language, undecipherable by any but the Otherly, with those Others of Earth and Wood.

**Oh, hurry, Nieprad! The shaman's going to throw a spell at me, and I haven't the vaguest idea how to stop sorcery.**

But in the next moment he forgot fear, forgot name and even humanity as wild, wild Power rushed into him, flooding every nerve and bone and sinew, the river's own strength coursing through him till he could do nothing but scream out that wildness and surge madly forward. In the one small corner of his mind that remained human, Suchmant saw the shaman's black eyes widen with horror. Then the *bogatyri* was upon him, smashing him aside with one blow and racing out onto the makeshift bridge, tearing up bar after iron bar, casting them back, heedless, at the astonished Tatars. He sprang back onto the riverbank with the last of the restraining bars in his hands,

laughing savagely with the force of the Power in him, and swung the bar, two-handed, at the one warrior who dared try to close with him, feeling bones break, hurling the bar and the warrior away. Still laughing, Souchmant turned to rip free the restraining ropes of the bridge. As the stunned shaman struggled to rise, calling his Others to him, Souchmant tossed the heavy mass of rope at him, burying the man beneath it. Ah, but Nieprad wasn't free yet. The iron chain remained to bar the river! The *bogaty*r grabbed the chain in both hands, staggering at the touch of the dark sigils engraved on the links, and for a moment was human, only that, terrified that the wild Power was more than his mind and heart could endure, terrified that it was going to kill him.

***No! Not before Nieprad is freed!***

Souchmant tried to gather the river-strength to him again, the Power greater than anything mortal, but now that he was conscious of humanity, he couldn't hold it. Nieprad would die, and all this would be for nothing—

"No!" Souchmant heard himself scream insanely. "Damn you, Nieprad, *I won't let you die!*"

It was his last conscious thought for a time. With his humanity swamped by the surge of will and rage and sheer, savage desperation, the creature that had been a *bogaty*r pulled new Power to him, pulled both river-strength and his own strange, small, unique magic all together in one wild flood. The massive, sigil-woven chain tore free from the riverbanks in the grip of mingled Power and went whipping about the creature's head (impossible, oh impossible, for any mere human to wield such a burden), striking warrior after warrior, crushing them, sweeping them away till none remained and he could let the chain fly and crumple to the ground.

Slowly river-strength drained away. Slowly Power faded. Aching, gasping, muscles burning as though he'd been torn on a rack, Souchmant came back into himself. He was alive, sane, but so thoroughly weary it was a strain simply to breath. Somewhere behind him, though, the Nieprad River was roaring in wild freedom. Suddenly overwhelmed by the urge to look at it, Souchmant pulled himself, bit by painful bit, to his knees, struggling not to faint or be sick from dizziness. Then, gritting his teeth, he managed to battle on up to his feet. Yes, the river was unbound, and—

And sorcerous pain snapped its jaws on him, tearing at him with blazing knives! The shaman was still alive, bespelling him in frantic rage, and Souchmant, trapped, couldn't do a thing but stand wrapped in invisible flame and die.

"You shall not die!"

The voice rang out like a battle trumpet, mighty as the flood. A great wave arced like liquid silver out of the river, breaking over shaman and *bogaty*r, dragging them both back with it into the torrent. White waves smashing all about him, Souchmant dimly heard the shaman scream once in terror, voice nearly drowned by the river's roar, vaguely saw those waves pull the struggling man under. At once, the sorcerous fire vanished, and the *bogaty*r felt himself sob in relief. Only now was he able to appreciate that none of the whitewater savagery about him was touching him. Nieprad was bearing him gently as ever

parent carried child, back downriver to where he'd first entered. A soft wave lifted Souchmant up and left him lying on dry land.

It was suddenly all far beyond human bearing. Without a word to Nieprad, Souchmant staggered once more to his feet, blindly hunting his horse, wanting nothing so much as to be back among his own merely mortal kind in the safety of the city's walls. The frightened horse, its rider lying half across its neck, galloped straight for its stable, and Souchmant's next conscious act was of straightening himself in the saddle with weary pride, because he'd been brought virtually to the gates of Vladimir's palace. And the prince and his *bogaty*ri were sitting their horses before him.

"Back so soon?" Vladimir asked wryly. "And without even the feather of a swan?"

Souchmant stared blankly for a moment, stunned by the sheer anticlimax. *Swan . . . ? Oh God*, yes. "My Prince, I forgot about it. But for a reason—"

"The swan beat you in single combat!" *bogaty*r Alyosha jibed, and the others burst into laughter.

Souchmant glanced helplessly from face to laughing face. And all at once pure fury surged up in him, an echo of the wild river-strength. Had he survived all that to be mocked by this pettiness?

"No, damn you," he thundered. "There was no swan—only Tatars!" As though a dam had broken, he heard himself shouting, as though the words had nothing to do with himself, all that had happened, all save the magic: the bridge destroyed, the enemy slain.

And then the burst of strength was gone. Souchmant sagged in the saddle and listened to his prince condemning him for a liar and a braggart.

"Everyone said a peasant could never be a true *bogaty*r. Everyone said you should be beaten for even having dared to dream! But I refused to listen. Your courage touched me. But that courage was a lie!"

"No, I—"

"Silence! I raised you up from nothing—from nothing! I trusted you. And this is how you repay me, making foolish boasts, claiming impossible deeds, trying to make your prince look a credulous fool! You have no courage, no honor, nothing at all!"

*I don't blame you*, Souchmant thought wearily. *My story sounds pretty impossible to me, too. Particularly since I don't dare tell you about the magic.*

Vladimir was ordering he be taken somewhere. Souchmant didn't care where, so long as it had a bed. Or even a level floor. By now, he wanted nothing so much as to simply lie down and sleep. "It's true . . ." he heard himself murmur, "I think it is . . . I . . . think I killed them all."

It was the last he remembered for a time.

Souchmant awoke with a jolt, starting up from the cot onto which he'd fallen, aching muscles complaining. Where was he? A bare little room, bars on the one window—

"Oh God."

He sank back to the cot, head in hands. This was Vladimir's own prison, where he dumped those who'd personally offended him. While a stay here was meant merely



as humiliation, for Souchmant this marked the end of his dreams.

*I can't tell the prince what really happened. If I did, he'd ban me as a sorcerer. But if I don't tell him the truth, he'll never trust me again. The lying peasant boy: I'll wind up banished from court no matter what I do.*

A murmuring outside the cell drove him to the window—Akh, too high! All at once excited though he couldn't have said why, Souchmant dragged the cot under the window and stood on it.

He looked down onto the smoothly raked sand of the palace courtyard, whitewashed stone walls all around, to see his fellow *bogatyri* clustered about someone shrouded in full gray robes. A pilgrim, no doubt, come to—

No! Souchmant gripped the bars of the window so fiercely it hurt, his touch of magic responding to the sudden sense of Other, his touch of Sight screaming that, illusion of gray robes or no, that figure wasn't any mere mortal soul: that was Nieprad!

***What's he doing so far from his river? Nieprad, go back. You'll kill yourself!***

But Nieprad didn't seem to be in any particular distress. As Vladimir joined the *bogatyri*, the being bowed as courteously as any human, and Souchmant nearly choked on a laugh, recognizing his own movements, amazed at how beautifully the boneless Nieprad was mimicking him. The being's cool, whispery voice drifted to up to him:

“ . . . many dead . . . signs of a bridge . . . destroyed.”

“I'll go.” That was Dobrynya's earnest voice. “My Prince, I owe Souchmant that much. Let me go and see.”

“No,” Vladimir said quietly. “I accused him. I must be the one. Pilgrim, lead on.”

Souchmant lost track of time after that. He slept and ate and slept some more, and healed in body and mind from the strain of bearing all that Otherly Power. He awoke feeling restored when the guards at last came to release him. By this time, he'd convinced himself the scene in the courtyard, with Nieprad as a gray-robed pilgrim, had been part of his exhausted dreams. He was rather pleased to be allowed to bathe and pull on fresh clothing before being brought before the prince.

***At least I'll be cast out of the palace smelling clean!***

But to his utter astonishment, Vladimir's first words were, “I have wronged you.”

*It wasn't a dream! Nieprad really was here and—“Oh no, don't!”* Souchmant cried in an agony of embarrassment, for the prince was kneeling to him. “Please!”

Vladimir never stirred. “I went to the riverside, Souchmant. I saw what heroic deeds you performed and knew how falsely I had accused you. Do you forgive your prince, *bogatyry*?”

“God, yes!”

To his relief, Vladimir got to his feet and stood aside. In the next moment, Souchmant was engulfed by a cheerful, noisy crowd of *bogatyri*. And for now, at least, they were all equals.

“Nieprad?” Souchmant stood alone and nervous by the river's edge. “Can you hear me?”

“I can.” The misty gray shape rose halfway out of the water. “You are reinstated, I take it?”

“Yes. Thank you.”

“What's this? Doesn't it mean as much to you, being a fine *bogatyry*?”

“Oh, it does. It always will.” Souchmant hesitated. “But after all that happened here, I realized something. Even while the others were finally accepting me as one of them, I didn't really care what they thought. Do you know something? All this time I wasn't trying to prove myself to them, I was trying to prove myself to me. Does any of this make sense to you?”

“Not much,” the being admitted. “This has something to do with human status, I take it? You're no longer ashamed of your origins.”

“I'm ashamed of having been ashamed.”

The river swirled and eddied restlessly. “As if chance-of-birth mattered!”

“It matters to humans!”

“Human ways, human folly. You didn't come all this way just to confess emotions. What would you?”

“I'm grateful to you, I truly am. Akh, but Nieprad, that was a damned foolish thing to do! Coming to court, drying out like that. You could have killed yourself!”

“You could have killed yourself to save me,” Nieprad murmured. “Could I do less?” Amusement rippled the water. “That was a fine disguise, was it not? I *can* be seen by mortals when I wish it. And mortals see only what they want. Except for such as you, of course.”

Souchmant shook his head. “Why do you do it? I mean, I'm just a human, even if I can . . . see things. Why do you bother with me? Why did you ever befriend me in the first place?”

“Because I wished it.”

“Yes, but why?”

“Why? Why?” the being mocked in sudden impatience. “To be human is to always ask ‘Why?’ To be Other is to simply Be! I *like* you, silly, brave, amusing little human! I like you. What more is there?”

“Nothing, I guess. But why—”

A great cold wave came splashing down on Souchmant, drenching him, making him gasp. A sound suspiciously like a chuckle came from deep within the river, and with a swirling of water, Nieprad was gone. Ω



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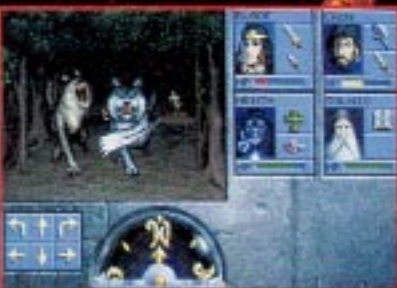
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# THE ROLE OF Computers

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Vapor Trail  
(Renovation)

## Dive into terror in the *Pools of Darkness*

### KnighLine

If you enjoy simulation games, we recommend that you subscribe to a brand-new newsletter from the talented folk who publish *Questbusters*. This new publication is entitled *Simulations!* and will appear seven times a year. It will cover flight-, tank-, and world-simulation games. The cost is \$8 a year for a third-class subscription to North America, or \$15 a year for an overseas subscription. Write to: *Simulations!*, P. O. Box 5845, Tucson AZ 85703, U.S.A.

To Richard W. Bruner in Hungary: We wish we *did* have our own computer-game catalog for gamers wishing to purchase

recommended entertainments for their family and friends. However, to start such a mail-order business and simultaneously initiate our own game magazine requires more money than we can currently raise,

Computer games' ratings	
X	Not recommended
*	Poor
**	Fair
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****	Excellent
*****	Superb

especially during this recession. As you are mainly interested in PC/MS-DOS games, be aware that a number of system-specific publications occasionally run mini-catalog inserts from software distributors. The larger magazines, such as *PC World* and *PC*, might be available in Hungary. Always keep in mind the PC/MS-DOS games you read about in DRAGON® Magazine that receive positive reviews.

The Software Publishers Association has released its monthly top-selling computer and video games list for August 1991. For PC/MS-DOS games, the top five (in order of unit sales) are: *Gateway to the Savage Frontier* (SSI); *Secret Weapons of the*

*Luftwaffe* (LucasFilm Games); *Castles* (Interplay Productions); *King's Quest V* (Sierra); and *Jetfighter II* (Velocity).

Broderbund Software is moving to: 500 Redwood Boulevard, P.O. Box 6121, Novato CA 94948-6121, U.S.A. The telephone number is (415) 382-4400.

Strategic Simulations product support can now be found on the following bulletin-board services: CompuServe, America Online, and GENie. You'll find not only demos of SSI's games but also product announcements as well.

## H.E.L.P.

Todd Drexel's request for assistance with *Dragon Wars*, in DRAGON issue #174, has received many answers. Randy Villeneuve of Upper Rawdon, Nova Scotia, reiterated the cure for obtaining the boots that has been revealed in other columns. He adds the following: "If you would like to make your characters better and faster, go to Irkall's Domain and jump over the barrier. Save your game, then start the game over. Do this again and again. Every time you complete this action, you gain five skill points with which to raise your abilities. Go to the Underworld through Purgatory to gain the fastest access to Irkall's Domain. Good luck!"

Aidan Doyle of Melbourne, Australia, needs some assistance with Maniac *Mansion*, published by LucasFilm Games, and *Rise of the Dragon*, published by Dynamix. "I am stuck in *Maniac Mansion*. The characters I have are Dave, Wendy, and Bernard. I can't open the lab door. I've heard that the Meteor Game score offers the combination but I can't get the power back on. Whenever I try to fix the wires, my character says 'It's kind of dark in here' (even though I have a flashlight with fresh batteries from the radio.) In *Rise of the Dragon*, I can't find anyone to interpret the parchment from Chen Lu's safe. I also can't get into Deng Hwang's warehouse."

Ryan Leathers of Elizabethtown, Ky., needs help with *DragonStrike*, which he has been playing for over a year. "I can't get past either the SwordQuest or Sudden Death missions. I'm desperate for advice!"

Andrew Mussell, of Brandon, Wis., needs the answers to the following questions: "*Spellbreaker*: How do I get the cube in the roc's nest? What do I do in the Octagonal Room?"

"*Demon's Winter*: What do I do with the circle of light in the temple near the volcano? Where is the boat that is guarded by giants, and where is the cave near it?"

"*Ultima III*: How do I get the ring from the Father on Planet 'X'?"

By the way, there are so many gamers with hints out there that it is hard to decide which hints to publish. However, we find many letters are almost impossible to read. Although the hints in these letters may be the finest ever written, if the printed page is unreadable we move to another letter. If you wish to help others,

check your letters before mailing them to ensure that they are legible.

## Reviews

### Pools of Darkness

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PC/MS-DOS version \$59.95

Want a real challenge that leaves you wondering how you're ever going to defeat the bad guys? Want epic-scale questing in alternate universes? Want to see if your characters can reach 25th level—and beyond?

Using an interface identical to previous SSI releases, *Pools of Darkness (POD)* is the final volume in SSI's FORGOTTEN REALMS® fantasy role-playing adventures dealing with Phlan and that scum-sucking Lord Bane. Lord Bane is back, and his minions are more fearsome than ever before. Even if you bring your *Secret of the Silver Blades* characters into *POD*, you'll see them hacked to shreds before too many battles are finished.

The challenge in *POD* is humongous. You initially return to Phlan, that marvelous little city you liberated in *Pools of Radiance*. Because you defeated all of the evil in the earlier volumes, there isn't much in the way of missions for your attention. After you buy and sell weapons, spells, and the like, you agree to go with one of the council members, named Sasha, on her inspection of forces in the lands of Thar.

But, once you leave Phlan, Bane reappears. Not only is Phlan decimated as Bane's lieutenants take charge of the area, but a wizard pulls you into an alternate dimension that enables travel between the Pools. He wants your party to defeat Bane and his beasties, and he'll help all he can—as long as he remains alive, that is!

You agree, and the mage teleports you back to the Realms—but the land has changed. Evil is everywhere! One of your first missions could well be to help Vala of the Silver Blades defeat Avaasan troops and their attendant undead and elemental forces. You are hounded and outmanned at every turn. It takes fortitude and an understanding of how to combat the different forces before you see daylight in the battles you fight. *POD* is not a game for those who don't have patience or don't learn from their mistakes!

Allies can be encountered throughout the adventure. Your rewards for success are high, but your reward for defeat is death. You *must* strengthen your party if you are to fight the ultimate evil. This adventure is, by far, one of the most difficult fantasy role-playing games we've encountered and will test the stamina and wherewithal of your questers.

Now, some may ask, why does *POD* receive a five-star rating and *Gateway to the Savage Frontier* (reviewed here in DRAGON issue #177) only received four stars? Simple: SSI enhanced its game sys-

tem with full VGA support, added a realistic method in which you must use the Rest command to memorize spells as well as heal the party, and reserved the most powerful spells for magic-users with an intelligence of 18 or better, as it should be. The VGA support really is quite an improvement.

We found that the characters you create from scratch here are better suited for this adventure than other types. Also, keep in mind that human characters have a better chance of success in this game, as nonhuman characters will already be close to their maximum capabilities when you create them.

*POD* is quite an adventure and should really be a huge success with SSI adventure gamers. Its versions include VGA/MCGA, EGA, or TGA support, and it is playable with AdLib, Sound Blaster, or Tandy sound boards. You needn't have played any of the previous volumes, but it certainly helps. We found *POD* to be extremely challenging, and we are far from besting Lord Bane. Jump in and help rid the Realms of evil once and for all!

### SimAnt

\*\*\*\*\*

Maxis Software  
Macintosh version Price n/a

Few entertainment companies maintain a reputation as innovators. Maxis Software is one of the few that strikes out on its own and produces such smash hits as *SimCity*, *SimEarth*, and now, *SimAnt*. *SimAnt* is certainly more than a game. Through your control of a black ant colony, you learn more about how they live, work, and die than you could have ever learned from the Discovery Channel. Included with this game are several Help features, tutorials teaching you how ants survive, and great animation and sound effects.

Success is measured by how well you manage to defeat colonies of red ants, control the yard around your home, and eventually drive the humans out of the local house (that's the goal in the Full Game version). In the Quick Game, you are simply out to defeat an opposing colony of red ants. You can also learn from your ants by using an Experimentation mode in which you watch the effects of your interaction with the ants.

Aside from red ants, other obstacles with which to concern yourself include lawn mowers, rain, ant lions, spiders, and human feet. These you must avoid as you search for food for your colony. Without food, your queen cannot survive; if she dies, she cannot produce workers, soldiers, and breeders, allowing you to spread the wealth of your nests throughout the back yard of the humans' home.

You appear on-screen as a yellow ant. You can summon other ants to your cause through your "signals," and you can even change places with them. By holding down the mouse button when your cursor is atop the yellow ant, several selections

appear in a pop-up menu. One of them is Exchange. Once this command is selected, you can search for another type of ant near you and change bodies. For example, when hunting and retrieving food for your nest, it is smart to remain a worker ant. When you know the time is right to go on the hunt and defeat the enemy red ants, it's best to be a soldier ant.

One strategy we found to be most conducive to success included building the nest so that you have an ample supply of worker and soldier ants. This is handled through the Caste selection system, which allows you to determine how many of each type of ant will be brought to maturity from the larval stage. Once there are adequate numbers, call 50-100 ants to your leader ant, then invade the local outside food supply. With you calling the shots, the red ants suddenly find their food supply inundated with black ants. Through ferocious fighting, you'll note that the red-ant health graph bar on the left side of the screen will slowly drop below that of the black ants.

As the red ants are starving to death, pick out a red-ant nest located away from the majority of the red-ant action, then invade it. With a massive attack, you can severely cripple the enemy. If their queens are killed, you succeed in winning another sector of the yard. There are 256 areas to conquer, so you've got your work cut out.

Watch out for the Red Terminator ant. Controlled by the computer, this is the red-ant equivalent of you. He can also call for reinforcements, lead attacks, and generally mess up your plans. There are Health graphs, scent trails that you can drop to warn of imminent attack, and a variety of views that make *SimAnt* an extremely enjoyable environment.

We learned the game in about 15 minutes and won our first Full Game after about four hours of play, with a score of over 4,400,000, which is considered quite good. One great feature about *SimAnt* is that, no matter how often you win, there is always another yard with an entirely new set of circumstances just beyond your nest. Enjoy yourselves, learn a lot about ants, and buy *SimAnt*. It's well worth the cost.

### Gunship 2000

\*\*\*\*\*

MicroProse  
PC/MS-DOS version \$69.95

Once again, MicroProse demonstrates its leadership in the flight-simulation arena. If you've ever wondered what it would be like to fly an Apache or other advanced battle helicopter, *Gunship 2000* is a must purchase. It supports VGA/MCGA only and uses sound boards from Roland, AdLib, Tandy, or IBM. A joy stick is recommended.

The graphics are awesome, and the sound (we used the Roland sound board) draws you into the simulation. Although numerous, complex commands are required to complete your missions, MicroProse allows you to set difficulty and reality levels, and includes training mis-

sions to bolster your self-confidence. When starting out, you can fly your missions in the Persian Gulf or Central Europe (of course, due to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the latter setting is no longer as realistic as it was when MicroProse originally released this program).

You begin your missions after logging in at HQ and picking your area of operations. You attend a briefing mission and read through your mission orders, then adjust your gunship's weapons' configuration to suit the conditions of your orders. After you input a specific code from your manual, you enter your gunship cockpit and engage your rotors. With joy-stick control, you'll soon learn how to fly your powerful machine.

This is not a simple "fly directly to and defeat your primary and secondary targets" game. The enemy is as sophisticated as you wish it to be, but even at the lowest reality level it has several surprises in store for you. Surface-to-air missiles, infantry, tanks—you name it, they've got it.

A good idea is to study your instruction manual after reading your mission orders. Learn all you can about what enemy units might be in your target area and study their weapon systems. Also, learn about your own weapon systems and determine those that would be most useful against both known and suspected enemy defenses. Perhaps you might want to take on your secondary target first, destroy it with a set of offensive weapons, then fly to an advanced fire base to refuel and rearm with weapons better suited for your primary target.

Study your flight map and learn what geographic formations might be used to your best advantage. Flying behind hills and in gulleys lessens the ability of the enemy to paint you with radar.

You've got both flares and chaff to defeat incoming missiles. You can also fly away from incoming fire. Reading the strategy tips

is important if you are to survive even your training missions. As you succeed in various missions, promotions occur. You can, eventually, command several gunships.

*Gunship 2000* is a totally realistic recreation of helicopter warfare. The faster your CPUs clock speed, the better the simulation will perform. When certain complex scenes are loading, you will note some stutter in the animation, but without doubt, *Gunship 2000* is the best helicopter simulation we've ever experienced.

### Police Quest III

\*\*

Sierra On-Line  
PC/MS-DOS version \$59.95

Sonny Bonds is back, and this time he has to face the Kindred. No, it's not a horror movie, but a new Police Quest adventure. Sonny's wife has been stabbed, and he must find and bring in the person responsible for this atrocity—and he must also track down a crooked cop in his department.

*Police Quest III* uses Sierra's new icon-driven interface, which is far easier to use than the old "type in" commands. All you have to do is select the appropriate icon and click on the person or object to complete the needed action. Walking, looking, talking, inventory, and manipulating objects are but a mouse click away.

The graphics are VGA, and the adventure includes digitized actors as well as sound effects. Sierra continues its tradition of featuring guest composers; this game offers the talents of the renowned Jan Hammer, the composer of the *Miami Vice* TV show soundtracks.

The story is quite linear, and you have to use proper police methods when making traffic stops, arrests, and bookings. If you ignore procedure, the result could be a fine—or death. For example, when pulling over a vehicle, remember to approach the car from the passenger side, or else Sonny could wind up flattened under a passing



Police Quest III (Sierra On-Line)



Police Quest 111 (Sierra On-Line)

vehicle's radial tires. We enjoyed making traffic stops and arresting a variety of people.

One problem we experienced was that if certain steps are not finished, you could end up stuck in the game without a clue that you've missed completing a necessary action. We wasted an hour before finding out on Sierra's game-hint bulletin board system that we overlooked making an important phone call. Because the call wasn't made, we couldn't continue the game.

Crashes—game, not car—were also a definite problem. We crashed the game three times in the same location before resorting to a different set of actions that let us continue. Crashes are not the best thing to have happen to a gamer who has been playing the adventure for an hour or so without saving the game. We wonder if Sierra rushed on its game testing in hopes of making the Christmas crunch.

If you enjoy a law-enforcement environment and want to solve serial killings, buy this game. Don't purchase this adventure for young children, as the label on the box is quite accurate: "This game contains

adult subject matter."

We hope Sierra fixes the game-crash problems for future releases. *Police Quest III* is an entertaining game, but the system problems we encountered detracted from its enjoyment.

**Swamp Gas Visits the United States of America** \*\*\*\*\*  
 Inline Design  
 Macintosh version Price n/a

Rarely do we discuss games that are meant as educational offerings, as this is an entertainment software column. However, Inline Design has produced a marvelous and entertaining Macintosh game to assist students with their knowledge of United States geography. After departing a mothership that hovers far above the map, your highly energetic alien flies his UFO around the U.S. As he "hovers" above various states, he is quizzed about the name and capital of each state. If you guess correctly, you can enter the Alien Arcade. The three nonviolent arcade segments are exciting and provide relief from geography.

When you start the game (as many as four geography-hungry people can play), you view the Mission List using a pop-up menu. When you successfully visit a location, it disappears from the list. Sometimes, due to a malfunction on the mothership, you'll face a Close Encounter. One, for example, is a skunk that jumps into your saucer. To remove the fetid creature from your vehicle, you must correctly answer a multiple-choice question regarding your current location.

With fun graphics and sound, *Swamp Gas* should be of interest to anyone who

wishes to learn more about the geography of the United States. Additional "Swamp Gas Visits" games are in the process of creation. Try it: You'll find geography can be an enormously fun experience!

**Shining in the Darkness** \*\*\*\*  
 Sega of America  
 Sega Genesis version Price n/a

Do you want a game to satisfy your appetite for role-playing adventures while waiting for the next *Phantasy Star*? *Shining in the Darkness* is just enough to fill your adventuring soul without leaving heartburn.

You are Mortred's son. Your father disappeared in the labyrinth with a princess a day ago, near the castle. You must confront your own fears as you face nine levels of monsters, mazes, and puzzles.

Only one town is provided. The tavern is full of friendly folk who can provide you with help, depending on the time of day you appear. Food can be purchased here as well as a room in order to spend a night or two recovering lost hit points. The shrine allows you to be resurrected, recover from paralysis or poison, or save the adventure to one of three available battery back-up positions. Finally, the shops can provide you with armor, shields, weaponry, and trinkets, for a price. Sometimes deals are available, and we suggest that if a decent deal is offered, accept quickly.

All movement occurs with an animated first-person perspective. All action is smoothly handled through the use of graphic icons. Screens allow you to view your statistics, items, hit points, experience points, and magic points. Though you cannot employ magical forces, two other characters you may find during your journey will be able to aid you in your quest by using their mystical powers. These two NPCs can wear armor and use weaponry you cannot utilize, and they can gain levels of experience.

When beasts or monsters appear, you can either attack, activate an item, use magic, or run. When a monster attacks your party, it is fully animated. An on-screen message reveals how many hit points you lose, if any, in the combat. There isn't full animation when you hit a monster, however; the creature only vibrates a little.

When the battle is done, you can see how many experience points, gold pieces, or items you have gained. This game combines the icons and combat of *Phantasy Star III*, the first person perspective of *Phantasy Star I*, and the great close-up graphics of *Phantasy Star II*. The combat can sometimes be tedious without the battle animation so well programmed in *Phantasy Star II*. For Genesis owners wanting another role-playing game, *Shining in the Darkness* should be more than enough to meet your immediate needs.



Swamp Gas Visits the United States of America (Inline Design)



# MATRIX CUBED

SCIENCE FICTION ROLE-PLAYING  
COMPUTER GAME, VOL. II

MATRIX CUBED picks up where SSI's popular COUNTDOWN TO DOOMSDAY leaves off — and keeps on going! A much bigger

universe means much more to explore — including, for the very first time, Jupiter! And, with

nearly twice as many new and different monsters, combat is fast, furious, and futuristic!

Role-playing in space has never been this good! MATRIX CUBED uses an enhanced version of SSI's award-winning AD&D® gold box computer fantasy role-playing game system. That means serious role-playing — your characters gain levels and skills as they explore the vast, complex and dangerous universe of the 25th century.

Aided by higher character levels and better equipment, you and your team must scour the solar system and rescue scientists who can build the Matrix Device. This machine can transform any substance into pure energy, and is the only hope left for the devastated and enslaved Earth!

**MATRIX CUBED** — Sci-fi role playing adventure has never been this good!



Transfer characters from COUNTDOWN TO DOOMSDAY or create new ones. Either way, your team will meet friends and enemies from the last adventure as a new quest unfolds....



Engage in tactical combat on the surface of Venus. Will your plasma throwers, laser pistols and grenades be enough?

**IBM + AMIGA**  
Clue Book available!

SCREENS SHOWN:  
IBM 256-COLOR VGA DISPLAYS.



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STRATEGIC SIMULATIONS, INC.®

**Vapor Trail**  
**Arcus Odyssey**

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\*\*\*\*

Renovation

Sega Genesis versions Prices n/a

Two new games have been released for the Sega Genesis by a third-party developer: Renovation.

**Vapor Trail:** As part of Operation Vapor Trail, you must stop an evil terrorist organization from destroying the world. You can fly one of three different planes, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. For example, one plane can be powered up to have the best firepower, but it cannot fire backwards and has a lack of mobility. You can pick up typical power-ups during the game that increase this ship's firepower.

At the end of each stage, a boss must be destroyed, much as is the case in most other shoot-'em-ups. *Vapor Trail* is not a great action game, and it suffers from blinking sprites every once in a while. There are better shooter games available, but this offering isn't the worst one to select, either. The animation and sound are decent, and two players can embark on a quest to destroy the enemy together.

**Arcus Odyssey** has one of the best Genesis openings we have seen. The Dark Sorceress, Castomira, was defeated by Princess Leaty a thousand years ago. Now, minions of the Dark Sorceress have taken her sword and plan to transport it to the location where the sorceress is trapped. You must recover this ancient artifact before Castomira returns.

The action takes place from a three-quarters-overhead view. You and a friend can select one of four different soldiers to tackle this quest. Each warrior has a different weapon as well as different ways of attacking the enemy, including different systems of magic. Jewels can be found that upgrade magical abilities and weaponry. Other items can be found that heal your wounds or help destroy the enemy.

Allies can be located in the dungeons as well. Some merely give you words of wisdom, while others help fight the evil you face. If you succeed, a 12-character password appears, allowing you to return to the game later on.

This is an in-depth version of the *Gauntlet* arcade game. Power-ups, various magical items, and allies make this a more role-playing oriented game. Add in a character's individual strengths and weaknesses, plus maze puzzles to solve, and this should keep action and fantasy gamers satisfied.

The only problem is that this game suffers from graphic flickering when many sprites are present on the screen simultaneously. A few gamers might not enjoy having to explore twisted caves in order to attain to the next higher level; hackers would probably prefer to blow everything to bits. Although this product is not entirely original, Renovation is offering consumers quite a successful game in *Arcus Odyssey*.



*Vapor Trail* (Renovation)

## Game conversions

**The Immortal**

\*\*\*\*

Electronic Arts

PC/MS-DOS version

Price n/a

What an adventure! You must find your magic-using mentor, Mordamir, who has been captured and imprisoned in the dungeons. This is no easy quest. Will Harvey and his programming crew have not only put together a graphically pleasing entertainment, but they've made darn sure it's going to take gamers some time to figure out exactly how to succeed.

One disappointment is this game's lack of a usable save-game feature. Should you fail in your quest, you must start the game over again from the very beginning, from the start of your current level, or from a level you have previously completed. When you do complete a level, you are awarded a certificate code. You must copy this code down, as it is the only method by which you can reenter that level (this is extremely frustrating). You cannot save the game at all during your investigations; you either gain the level or you lose it and must start over. Granted, you are supposed to learn from your mistakes, but it will take several attempts, especially on the more difficult levels, to wend your way to victory. You should pay strict attention to your dreams when you sleep to recover your health.

When engaged in combat, a separate combat screen appears that enables you to parry or attack. By watching the opposing party's animated attacks, you will soon learn how to take advantage of positioning to strike well. Plus, should the beasties become too tough to conquer, you've always got your own magic to work—if you find the spells, that is.



*The Immortal* is frustrating and quite difficult, and it does not offer full VGA graphics. It does support EGA and MCGA/VGA 16-color graphics, using Roland or AdLib sound boards.

**Wing Commander I & II: The Ultimate Strategy Guide**

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By Mike Harrison

Origin

Price n/a

If you are as addicted as we are to all of the *Wing Commander* games, this book is for you. We recommend you read the chapters that relate to your current status in the games first, then apply what you have learned to your missions. With charts, tables, and screen shots, this publication will certainly be an asset to your *Wing Commander* career.

## Clue corner

**Bane of the Cosmic Forge** (Sir-Tech Software)

1. Don't put a handy healing potion in your character's off hand. You'll find that you'll eventually throw it at monsters. Shields make sense for your fighters until about the fifth level, then use two weapons.





Arcus Odyssey (Renovation)



2. There are two types of books in the game: magical and informational. To read a book, go to the Review screen and Use the book. The game instructions tell you this but don't tell you that if you try to Use a spell book in combat, it simply acts like a one-shot scroll. Using the book from the review screen lets you learn that spell. By the way, the Book of Ramm's poem is actually a set of instructions, and the King's Diary can't be deciphered until the end of the game.

3. As the rules imply, don't kill NPCs.
4. Don't worry about the pirate's den early in the game. You'll find it a long time before you'll have the ability to get into it.
5. There's no significant use for the alchemy lab. Just blow it up.
6. To get the idol of Mau-Mu-Mu, remember the opening to *Raiders of the Lost Ark*
7. Say "No" and "Yes" to the Amazulu queen, then give her a small trinket.
8. When you find ashes, see that they are *all* given to the person who is asking for them. This will be very rewarding.
9. Don't waste the red mushrooms when they are given to you; you absolutely must have one later on.
10. The Faerie Queen knows how to talk to Delphi. Ask her.

Michael Booker  
Knoxville TN

#### Defender of the Crown (Cinemaware)

1. If you rescue a ward who has been captured, a Saxon lord will give you all of his lands.
2. Always seek Robin's help before attacking one of the Norman's home castles.
3. Buying knights and castles is foolish because of the cost. You can easily beat the game with a catapult and a horde of soldiers.
4. The best character is Wolfric the Wild, because with his jousting ability you can become a strong leader.

Sam Carter  
Montara CA

#### Dragon Wars (Interplay Productions)

1. To pass the tests in the College of Magic, you need magic. The first test can be overcome by freezing the fire. The second test is an illusory wall of fire. Dispel it, then take the appropriate action when you see its true nature. To get past the gaze monster, become invisible by cloaking yourself with a spell. Kill the Philistine. You must disarm the trap or eliminate the block by softening it. When the wizard asks to see something novel, just walk past him and claim your treasure.
2. Dragon Eyes are twice as powerful as Dragon Stones.
3. The most powerful weapon is the Freedom Sword, which can do up to 100 points of damage.

Kaoru Takanashi  
Guelph, Ontario

#### Dungeon Master (FTL Games)

1. Once you obtain the Firestaff, do not go back to the surface. Once you arrive at

the entrance, you will be killed.

2. ZO-KATH-RA creates a Zokathra spell.
3. To free the Power Gem, touch it with a Zokathra spell. Then touch the Power Gem with the Firestaff.

Sam Carter  
Montara CA

#### Secret of the Silver Blades (SSI)

1. There is a Ring of Fire Resistance in the first level of the mines. Give this ring to all characters as it makes all users immune to red dragon breath.
2. In the dungeons, you must solve eight riddles. The answers are: your heart, your word, your breath, river, water, silence, wind, and fire.
3. Tell the blind mage, "Against."
4. In the drider base, don't give Sir Deric anything too valuable; you won't be able to get it back.
5. In the Western Crevasses, you can run from almost all of the battles. However, instead of turning and running, you can select Run, then turn back in the direction you were traveling and continue on.
6. In the castle, you should attack only Sargatha.
7. The password to get past the iron golems is "steeleye."
8. In the sanctum, the first time you meet the Dreadlord, let him attack first.
9. Use the keys in the following order: silver, gold, brass.
10. The answer to the riddle is "Oswulf."

Bo Bruen  
Altamonte Springs FL

#### The Magic Candle (Mindcraft)

1. The temple of Kalb in Daklund is at 101,11. The temple of Pax in Rosus is at 87,31. The temple of Hissen in Kherbel is at 97,98. The temple of Sur in Shertuz is at 46,35. The temple to Paladin is at 123,97. The temple in Uberion is at 31,36. The gods aboveground can be found at 105,112 and at 84,9.
2. There are three elven maidens with special songs in Deruvia: Ellidrin is at 132,35 and knows the swan song; Aellin is at 20,87 and knows the river song; Suerfin is at 98,66 and knows the sparrow song.
3. The Green Ring of Order can be obtained from a unicorn on the Isle of Heavently (34,86). You may teleport there from the Isle of Fubernel or work your way through the dungeon Khazan. In order to summon the unicorn, you must use Sherro's High Call, which Gilondo of Theldair will tell you about.
4. In order to get the Shir-aka Ash from the grove in Shiran, you must first get the Cirlet from the ogre king. To get the Cirlet, you must traverse the levels of the tower of Shadrum (you may wish to talk to Dineria first), and ask the ogre king for it. After doing this, don't try to follow your path back out; just take the portal on the other side of the ogre king's room.
5. To get the Blue Ring of Power, you must journey to the top of the Mad Wizards Tower, near the city of Knessos. Ask

him about the Blue Ring repeatedly until he finally gives it to you.

6. Elven Dream Dust can be obtained from the elven sorceress Somona, but she has mysteriously disappeared. However, should you venture into Bedangidar (148,67), you will find her in the second highest level.

7. Crystal Dust is relatively easy to get; you must simply conquer every one of the baddies in the dungeon of Crezimas below the Crystal Castle. The queen can update you on your progress.

Don Isaak and Ryan Dorman  
Seattle, WA

#### Mean Streets (Access Software)

A complete list of the eight passcards and passwords needed to destroy the Nexus Computer follows. The Nav. Code of the passcard's location is included as well as items needed to obtain the passcards.

1. The blue passcard password is Bishop. It is found in Carl Linsky's lab (NC 4675). A key is needed from Linsky's apartment.

2. The orange passcard password is Checkmate. It is found in Cal Davis' lab (NC 3720); the card is in the gorilla cage. A 10' pole (obtained from Greg Call's lab) is needed to reach it.

3. The green passcard password is Pawn. It is in John Klaus's possession (NC 7012). Just ask him for it.

4. The yellow passcard password is

Queen. It is in Sam Jones' possession (NC 0021). Threaten him!

5. The red passcard password is Stalemate. It can be found in Ron Morgan's beachhouse (NC 6470) and is hidden in the piranha tank. Use the piranha food to distract these toothsome fish.

6. The purple passcard password is Knight. It is found in Greg Call's lab (NC 8911) and is on a plant on a ledge. Gloves from Bosworth Clark's lab (NC 9932) are needed to avoid the thorns.

7. The black passcard password is Rook. It is found in a bus station locker (NC 5194); the key from Slade's apartment (NC 4605) is required.

8. The gray passcard password is King. It is found in the safe of the Law and Order Headquarters (NC 5037).

9. The Nexus Computer itself is located at NC 4550. When you are in the furnace room, you must find the key under the boxes, then open the panel to find a gas mask. With the gas mask, you can open the furnace door (using the automatic controls) and rush out the door when the maintenance robot appears.

Aidan Doyle  
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

#### Pools of Radiance (SSI)

1. In the northeast corner of the second room south of the northeast corner of Sokal Keep, there is an illusory wall.

Search this hidden room.

2. Short of money? Go to the training hall, remove a character, create a new character, add him, trade his money to someone else in the party, drop the new character, then add the character you initially removed. You can do this any number of times and obtain all of the money you need.

Iain Murray  
Waterford, England

#### Spellcasting 101 (Legend)

1. In the University, be certain to visit the frat parties.

2. Gretchen Snowbunny has the key to the president's house.

3. In the president's house, you'll find a spell box.

4. The Skonn spell is used on the statue in the library.

5. The moat in the Sim can be crossed by casting Gub on the tree, Zem on yourself, and crossing the tree.

6. In the Sim, hit the dragon with your sword, then cast Gub on the ivy.

Aidan Doyle  
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

That's all for this issue. Please, continue your courageous assaults on all software entertainments, send in your hints, and game on!

# HEROIC FANTASY

Play-By-Mail  
Adventure Game



**Heroic Fantasy** - a play-by-mail game of magic and mayhem; where you control a party of humans, elves, dwarves, fairies, leprecons, ogres, or even a troll or giant. Your characters explore a dungeon maze looking for magical and valuable treasures while fighting off monsters, traps, and sometimes even other players! Each of your characters moves independently, so you can even split up into several parties all for the same price. The game is fully computer refereed and has been running since 1982. Write for our free PBM catalog, or send \$2 for a copy of the rules to HEROIC FANTASY or send \$8 for a complete set of the rules to all our many award winning pbm games.

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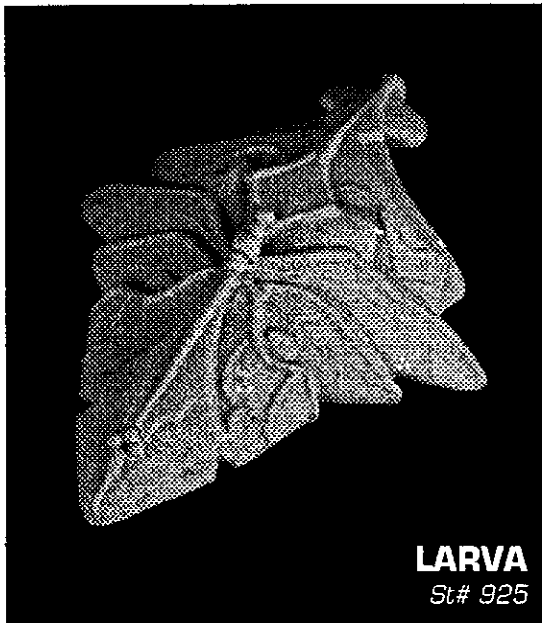
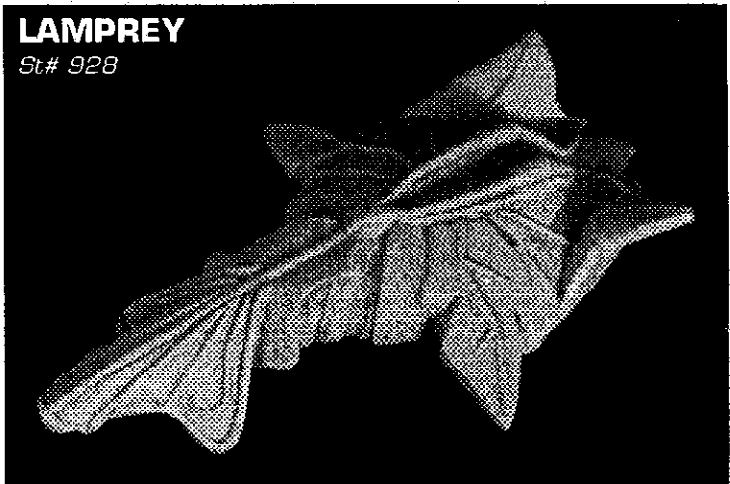
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# CONVENTION CALENDAR

## Convention Calendar Policies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- ◆ indicates an Australian convention.
- \* indicates a Canadian convention.
- indicates a European convention.

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

### BSC's WRATH OF CON, Feb. 14-16 NY

This convention will be held at Ketchum Hall on the State University of New York college campus in Buffalo, N.Y., featuring role-playing games and dealers' tables. Registration: \$4/weekend preregistered, and \$5/weekend at the door. Single-day and Saturday & Sunday passes are available. Write to: Michael Desing, Tower 3, Room 730C, SUCAB, P.O. Box 5119, Box 730C, Buffalo NY 14213-5119; or call: (716) 878-6374.

### CHIMERA CON VIII, Feb. 14-16 NC

This SF/fantasy convention will be held at the University of North Carolina Student Union in Chapel Hill, N.C. Events include panels, workshops, games, and an auction. Registration: \$15. Write to: CHIMERA CON VIII, 6H Kingswood Apts., Chapel Hill NC 27516.

### CONTINUITY V, Feb. 14-16 AL

This SF&F/gaming convention will be held at the Parliament House in Birmingham, Ala. Guests include Harry Turtledove, Brad Strickland, David & Elissa Martin, and Jerry & Sharon Ahern. Activities include role-playing, board, miniatures, and computer gaming, with a hospitality suite, a video room, an art show, a dealers' room, a costume contest, a dance, and panels. Registration: \$25; dealers welcome. Write to: CONTINUITY, 620 80th Place S., Birmingham AL 35206; or call: (205) 836-6460.

### DUNDRACON XVI, Feb. 14-17 CA

This convention will be held at the San Ramon Marriott, in San Ramon, Calif. (Mention DUNDRACON for special hotel rates.) Events include over 120 games using virtually every system now in print. Other activities include seminars, board games, miniatures games, a flea market, a miniatures-painting contest, a dealers' room, and open gaming. Registration: \$25/weekend until Feb. 1; \$30/weekend or \$15/day at the door. Write to: DUNDRACON, 386 Alcatraz Ave., Oakland CA 94618.

### ORCCON 15, Feb. 14-17 CA

This convention will be held at the L. A. Airport Hyatt Hotel in Los Angeles, Calif. Events include all types of family, strategy, and adventure board, role-playing, miniatures, and computer gaming. Other activities include flea markets, an auction and an exhibitors' area. Write to: STRATEGICON, P.O. Box 3849, Torrance CA 90510-3849; or call: (310) 326-9440.

### VISIONQUEST 2, Feb. 14-16 MO

This convention will be held at the Quality Inn North in Springfield, Mo. Events include RPG and WRG tournaments, plus WARHAMMER 40,000\* games, open gaming, Star Trek activities, a dealers' room, and costume and figure-painting contests. Registration: \$12.50 before

Jan 31; \$15 at the door. Send an SASE to: VISIONQUEST, 3821-D S. Campbell, Springfield MO 65807; or call: (417) 886-8482, 2-8 P.M. only.

### ECLECTICON VI, Feb. 15-17 CA

This SF/F convention will be held at the Sacramento Hilton Inn in Sacramento, Calif. Guests include George R. R. Martin and Delight Prescott; the dead guest of honor is Mary Shelley. Activities include panels, seminars, workshops, and a blood drive on Feb. 16. Registration: \$40. Write to: ECLECTICON VI, #176, P.O. Box 19040, Sacramento CA 95814.

### CYBER-CON III, February 21-23 CO

This convention will be held at the Lory Student Center on the campus of Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colo. Events include BATTLETECH\*, DARK CONSPIRACY\*, AD&D®, B-17\*, and ROLEMASTER\* games, with a dealers' room, a costume contest, two video rooms, open gaming, and a con suite. Registration: \$3/day or \$5/weekend before Feb. 14, or \$5/day or \$7/weekend afterward. Write to: Bill Keyes, Box 412, Lory Student Center, CSU, Fort Collins CO 80523; or call: (303) 493-3652.

### TOTAL CONFUSION VI, Feb. 21-23 MA

This convention will be held at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel in Marlborough, Mass. Events include AD&D®, GURPS\*, BATTLETECH\*, SPACE HULK\*, DIPLOMACY\*, CHAMPIONS\*, CALL OF CTHULHU\*, CAR WARS\*, and AXIS & ALLIES\* games. Other activities include RPGA™ Network events, a miniatures-painting contest, and a costume competition. Registration: \$22/weekend or \$8.50/day preregistered; \$10/day at the door. Write to: TOTAL CONFUSION, P.O. Box 1463, Worcester MA 01607; or call: (508) 987-1530.

### CON\*FUSION 1992, Feb. 28-March 1 \*

Formerly listed as TOURNAMENT IN SHADOW, this SF&F/gaming convention will be held at the Student Union on the Univ. of Alberta campus in Edmonton, Alberta. Events include AD&D®, SHOGUN\*, PENDRAGON\*, CHAMPIONS\*, BATTLETECH\*, STAR TREK\*, TRAVELER\*, CYBERPUNK\*, MUSTANGS & MESSERSCHMITTS\*, WARHAMMER FANTASY BATTLE\*, and TALISMAN\* games. Other activities include a video room, panels, sports cards, movies, and a miniatures-painting workshop. Registration: \$6 (Canadian)/weekend preregistered or \$8/weekend at the door. Write to: CON\*FUSION, UAPGC, Box 46, Students Union Bldg., Univ. of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, CANADA T6G 2J7; or call: (403) 492-2134.

### JAXCON '92, Feb. 28-March 1 FL

This gaming convention will be held at the Radisson Inn at the Jacksonville International Airport in Jacksonville, Fla. Events include role-playing, board, and war games. Write to: JAXCON '92, P.O. Box 4423, Jacksonville FL 32201; or call Kathy at: (904) 778-1730.

### WESCON II, Feb. 28-March 1 CT

This gaming convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Cromwell, Conn. Events include RPGA™ Network tournaments, with MIGHTY EMPIRES\*, BLOODBOWL\*, TALISMAN\*, GURPS\*, and AD&D® games. Other activities include board games, war games, SCA demos, a human chess game, a miniatures-painting contest, dealers, an art exhibit, and an auction. Guest artist is Batton "Wolff & Byrd" Lash. Registration: \$15/weekend before Jan. 31, or

\$20 thereafter. Send an SASE to: Games & Stuff, 501 Main St., Middletown CT 06457; or call: (203) 344-8895 during business hours.

**OWLCON XIII, March 6-8 TX**

This gaming convention, sponsored by WARP and RSFAFA, will be held on the campus of Rice University in Houston, Tex. Events include RUNEQUEST\*, CALL OF CTHULHU\*, PARANOIA\*, CAR WARS\*, TRAVELLER\*, DIPLOMACY\*, ILLUMINATI\*, CIVILIZATION\*, BATTLETECH\*, ASL\*, and STAR FLEET BATTLES\* games. Open gaming and other tournaments will be held. Registration: \$12/weekend before Feb. 25; \$14/weekend or \$5-6/day at the door. Registration is at Sewall Hall. Write to: WARP, OWLCON Prereg., P.O. Box 1892, Houston TX 77251. Make checks payable to WARP.

**PLATTECON EPSILON, March 6-8 WI**

This convention will be held at the Student Center on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville in Platteville, Wis. Events include AD&D® games, a miniatures contest, a LAZER TAG\* tournament, and a special guest. Registration: \$5/weekend or \$4/day preregistered; \$8/weekend or \$5/day at the door. Write to: Platteville Gaming Assoc., Student Center, 1 University Plaza, Platteville WI 53818.

**SCRYCON '92, March 7 NY**

Sponsored by the Seekers of the Crystal Monolith, this convention will be held at the Oakwood School in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. Events include AD&D® games and other RPGA™ tournaments, a miniatures contest, and a used-game flea market. Registration: \$6 preregistered; \$8 at the door. Send an SASE to: SCRYCON '92, P.O. Box 896, Pleasant Valley NY 12569. Seating is limited: please preregister!

**BASHCON '92, March 13-15 OH**

This convention will be held in the University of Toledo's Student Union Auditorium in Toledo, Ohio. Special guest is Michael Dorn. Events include RPGA™ tournaments, with AD&D®, PARANOIA\*, and other games. Other activities include panels, anime and SF films, a dealers' room, and miniatures and board games. Registration: \$3/weekend, or \$1-2/day. Games are \$5.00 each. Send an SASE to: Student Activities Office, UT-BASH, 2801 W. Bancroft St., Toledo OH 43606.

**CALCON 7, March 13-15 \***

This convention will be held in the Sandman Inn in Calgary, Alberta. Events include tournaments in role-playing, board, war, and miniatures gaming. Other activities include a dealers' room, computer gaming, a games auction, and a miniatures-painting contest. Registration: \$8 before Feb. 14. Write to: CALCON 7, Gulf Canada Sq., RPO 401, 9 Ave. SW, Box 22206, Calgary, Alberta, CANADA T2P 4J6; or call Brian at: (403) 282-0945, or Paul at: (403) 275-0761.

**DEMICON III, March 13-15 MD**

This gaming convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Chesapeake House in Aberdeen, Md. Events include AD&D®, WARHAMMER\*, SHADOWRUN\*, CALL OF CTHULHU\*, PARANOIA\*, BATTLESYSTEM™, BATTLETECH\*, CAR WARS\*, and TALISMAN\* games, with a dealers' room, a miniatures contest, and seminars. Registration: \$16 before Feb. 15; \$20 thereafter. Write to: DEMICON III, Hartford Adventure Soc., c/o Strategic Castle, 114 N. Toll Gate Rd., Bel Air MD 21014; or call: (301) 569-4025.

**HEXACON 2, March 13-15 AZ**

This gaming convention will be held at the

Celebrity Hotel, 3333 East Van Burne, Phoenix AZ (call: 602-244-8244). Events include 24-hour gaming, a dealers' room, a used-game auction, a miniatures-painting contest, seminars, panels, and food, with role-playing, board, computer, and miniatures games. RPGA™ Network and other events will offer prizes. Special guests include DRAGONLANCE® saga author Tracy Hickman, SHADOWRUN\* game creator Tom Dowd, and author/game expert Michael Stackpole. Registration: \$10 in advance, or \$15 at the door. Write to: HEXACON 2, P.O. Box 11743, Phoenix AZ 85061; or call: (602) 220-9785.

**SIMCON XIV, March 19-22 NY**

This convention, sponsored by URSGA, will be held at the University of Rochester's River campus in Rochester, N.Y. Events include CYBERPUNK\*, STAR FLEET BATTLES\*, CHAMPIONS\*, STAR TREK\*, TRAVELLER\*, and fantasy role-playing games. Other activities include board, tactical, and 15-mm and 25-mm historical miniatures games. Registration: \$7 before March 2; \$10 thereafter. Write to: SIMCON XIV c/o URSGA, CPU Box 227146, River Station, Rochester NY 14627-7146.

**LUNACON '92, March 20-22 NY**

This convention will be held at the Rye Town Hilton in Rye Brook, N.Y. Events include 24-hour-a-day open gaming, RPGA™ tournaments, and the state's premier SF convention. Registration: \$25 before Feb. 22; \$35 at the door gains admission to all convention events. Write to: LUNACON '92, P.O. Box 338, New York NY 10150-0338; or call: (908) 721-1537. No collect calls, please.

**SPRING OFFENSIVE III, March 20-22 IL**

This convention will be held at Illinois Central College in East Peoria, Ill. Events include Napoleonic, ADEPTUS TITANICUS\*, CHILL\*, ASL\*, and other role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$3/day or \$5/weekend, and \$1 per game. Write to: Tri-County Gaming Assoc., 116 Walnut St., Washington IL; or call: (309) 444-4640.

**AGGIECON XXIII, March 26-29 TX**

This convention will be held on the campus of Texas A&M University in College Station, Tex. Guests include Barbara Hambly and David Drake. Activities include a dealers' room, game shows, a costume contest and ball, an art show, children's programming, SCA demos, Japanimation, SF films, a party room, RPGA™ tournaments, and 24-hour open gaming. Registration: \$13 before March 1; \$16 thereafter. Write to: AGGIECON XXIII, MSC Cepheid Variable, Box J-1, College Station TX 77884; or call (409) 845-1515.

**MAGNUM OPUS CON VII, March 26-29 SC**

This convention will be held at the Greenville Hyatt and the Greenville Holiday Inn in Greenville, S.C. Guests include Marion Zimmer Bradley, Lois McMaster Bujold, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, Roger Zelazny, Robert Asprin, and Sergio Aragones. Activities include panels, a costume contest, a dealers' room, a fashion show, fencing, gaming, and a talent show. Registration: TBA. Send an SASE to: MAGNUM OPUS CON VII, P.O. Box 6585, Athens GA 30604.

**IANUA FANTASY III, March 27-29**

This convention will be held at the "Istituto Brignolo" in Genoa, Italy. Events include AD&D®, D&D®, CALL OF CTHULHU\*, STAR WARS\*, 2300 AD, CYBERPUNK 2020\*, RUNEQUEST\*, SPACE: 1889\*, and MERP\* tournaments, in Italian and English. Other activities

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include a costume show and a miniatures-painting contest. Prizes will be awarded for all tournaments. Registration: \$4/day or \$10/weekend until March 1; \$6/day at the door. Lodging is available. Write to: LABYRINTH, Vico S. Antonio 5/3A, 16126, Genoa, ITALY; or call: (10) 291788 at GMT +1.

**MIDSOUTHCON XI, March 27-29** TN

This SF&F convention will be held at the Airport Hilton in Memphis, Tenn. Guests include Margaret Weis, Beth Willinger, Glen Cook, and Belinda Anderson. Activities include AD&D®, CHAMPIONS\*, CALL OF CTHULHU\*, CYBERPUNK\*, ROBOTECH\*, BATTLETECH\*, RIFTS\*, SHADOWRUN\*, and board games, plus panels, a dealers' room, an art show, an auction, filking, a con suite, and open gaming. Registration: \$25. Write to: MIDSOUTHCON XI, P.O. Box 2279, Memphis TN 38122; or call: (901) 353-9439, or (901) 274-7355.

**ABBYTHON 10, March 28-29** KS

This convention will be held at the Community Center in Abbyville, Kans. Registration: \$10 preregistered only. Players will receive materials to create their own ABBYTHON characters. Prizes will be awarded to top ten players. Write to: ABBYTHON Adventure Guild, P.O. Box 96, Abbyville KS 67510; or call: (316) 286-5303.

**DREAMCON '92, March 28-29** MO

Sponsored by the NMSU Fantasy Club, this convention will be held at Ophelia Parrish Hall on the campus of Northeast Missouri State University in Kirksville, Mo. Events include AD&D®, CHAMPIONS\*, and PARANOIA\* games, with a movie room, a costume contest, merchants, and more games. Proceeds will benefit the Dream Factory of St. Louis. Write to: NMSU Fantasy Club, SUB-NMSU, Kirksville MO 63501-4988; or call: (816) 785-5152.

**POCON, April 3-5** PA

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Bartonsville, Pa. Events include role-playing, board, miniatures, and war gaming, with a painting contest. Registration: \$6/day or \$10/weekend, no game fees. Write to: Ed Dowgaillo, P.O. Box 390, Effort PA 18330; or call: (717) 629-7218.

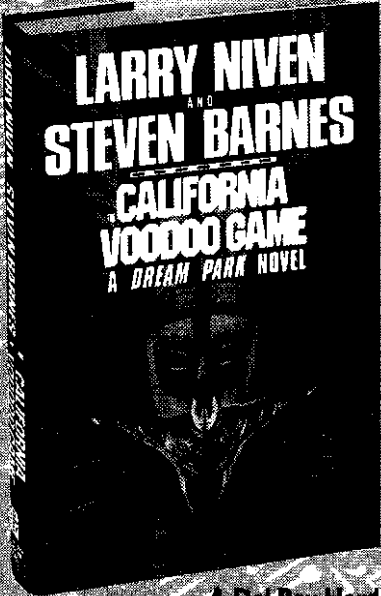
**ROUND CON '92, April 3-5** SC

Sponsored by the Round Table Gaming Society, this convention will be held at the Russell House on the campus of the Univ. of South Carolina, in Columbia, S.C. Events include AD&D®, CHAMPIONS\*, VAMPIRE\*, CALL OF CTHULHU\*, SHADOWRUN\*, JAMES BOND\*, RIFTS\*, STAR WARS\*, BATTLETECH\*, and PARANOIA\* games, as well as an AD&D® game benefit for the Richland County Children's Hospital. Other activities include many board games, a competitive miniatures session, a fiction-writing contest, movies, and a dealers' area. GMs and dealers are welcome. Registration: \$7 until March 15; \$10 thereafter. Game fees are \$1/event and \$5 for the benefit tournament. Send an SASE to: ROUND CON '92, USC, P.O. Box 80018, Columbia SC 29225; or call Trella at: (803) 779-1924.

**FANTASY FEST SPRING '92, April 4-5** PA

This gaming convention will be held at the Days Inn in Shamokin Dam, Pa. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH\*, WARHAMMER 40,000\*, and SHADOWRUN\* games, with RPGA™ Network events, board games, a miniatures-painting contest, a dealers' area, and open gaming. Registration: \$15/day or \$20/

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**POINTCON XV, April 10-12** NY

This convention will be held at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH\*, WARHAMMER FANTASY\* and 40,000\*, JOHNNY REB\*, and micro-armor games, with RPGA™ Network events, a miniatures-painting contest, an auction, computer games, and open gaming. Registration: \$8 preregistered, or \$10 at the door; no event fees. Write to: Cadet Robert Williams, P.O. Box 3643, West Point NY 10997.

**CONVENT, April 11-13** WV

This convention will be held on the campus of Marshall University in Huntington, W. Va. Events include an RPGA™ Network D&D® tournament and scads of other games. Guest of honor is Richard Tucholka. Registration: \$5/tournament or \$3/nontournament for the weekend. Write to: Chuck Puckett, 821 Holderby Hall, Marshall Univ., Huntington WV 25955; or to: Steven Saws, 558 Aspen St., Morgantown WV 26505.

**HYPOTHETICON, April 11** CT

This convention, hosted by the Univ. of Connecticut SF Society, will be held at the Univ. of Connecticut, Storrs branch Student Union. Events include CALL OF CTHULHU\*, TOON\*, and AD&D® games, with panels, Japanimation, movies, and dealers. Registration: \$7. Write to: HYPOTHETICON, c/o Anne MacFadyen, Rm. 128B Shippee Hall, Univ. of Conn., Storrs CT 06269; or call: (203) 427-4985.

**RU-CON '92, April 11-12** PA

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Williamsport, Pa. Events include many gaming events (some RPGA™ Network-sanctioned), tournaments, and dealers. Registration: \$15/weekend before April 1; \$12/day or \$20/weekend at the door. Send a business-sized SASE to: The Role-Playing Underground, Woolridge Hall, Box 39, Lock Haven Univ., Lock Haven PA 17745-2396; or call: (717) 893-3237.

**AMIGOCON 7, April 24-26** TX

This convention will be held at the Sunland Park Holiday Inn in El Paso, Tex. Guests include Jennifer Roberson, Patricia Davis, and Mel White. Registration: \$15/weekend before April 1; \$18/weekend or \$6-\$9/day at the door. Write to: AMIGOCON 7, P.O. Box 3177, El Paso TX 79923.

How effective was your convention listing? If you are a convention organizer, please write to the editors and let us know if our "Convention Calendar" served your needs. Your comments are always welcome.

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T

by William Tracy

# THE MARVEL-PHILE

## Castaways III: A god of lightning and a clone of thunder

Listed here are the last two castaways, Leir and Nobilus, from MU7 *The Gamer's Handbook of the MARVEL UNIVERSE\**, 1991 *Character Updates*. This 128-page book is packed with the best and the brightest Marvel characters, both new and

classic, for your MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game campaign. It's so packed, in fact, that these two powerful beings just wouldn't fit—broad shoulders, you know. Since they both asked so nicely, however, we decided to include them in our "castaways" crew. (How do you refuse a Celtic god and a clone of Thor?)

For more current Marvel information, turn to Steven Schend's "Game Wizards" column in this issue, and read about the new direction we're taking with the 1992 product line for the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game.

### LEIR™

Celtic god of lightning and the spear

F	UN(100)	Health: 270
A	EX(20)	
S	MN(75)	Karma: 42
E	MN(75)	
R	TY(6)	Resources: EX(20)
I	TY(6)	
P	RM(30)	Popularity: 0 (50 w/ Celtic gods)

### POWERS:

**Invulnerability:** Like most gods, Leir has Excellent (20) protection against physical attacks, heat, cold, radiation, poisons, aging, and disease. He also has Typical (6) resistance to energy attacks.

**Lightning:** Leir can create spears of electricity, which he can hurl. These electrical spears can do up to Unearthly (100) Energy damage and have Unearthly range. He can also wield his electrical spears in melee combat.

**TALENTS:** Leir is a Weapons Specialist when he is using any kind of spear, including his lightning spears.

**CONTACTS:** Leir can depend on support from most of the Celtic gods. He has also aided Asgard in the past and can depend on the Asgardian gods in times of need.

**HISTORY:** Leir is one of the leaders of the Celtic gods, who were worshiped by the ancient Celtic people of the British

Isles. The Celtic gods live in an otherdimensional realm known as Avalon. For many centuries, a feud has existed between the Celtic and Asgardian gods based on racial tensions and wars between their worshipers. Recently, the Heliopolitan (Egyptian) god of death, Seth, sent a number of large, black-winged lions to ravage the countryside of Avalon. Seth also sent one of the beasts to Asgard, where it killed an innocent family. The last dying member of this family asked Thor to avenge their deaths. Thor followed the beast through a dimensional portal into Avalon. Upon arriving, some of the Celtic gods accused Thor of killing a family who had actually been killed by Seth's beast. Leir arrived on the scene and began to battle Thor.

Thor's friend, Hogun the Grim, had followed Thor to Avalon. Just as Hogun arrived, Seth's beast appeared. Realizing that the monster was the real killer, Leir helped Thor and Hogun battle the beast. Mortally injured, the beast fled back through the dimensional portal. Thor and Hogun followed, to discover that the beast had finally been killed by Fandral and Volstagg. Feeling that he owed a debt to Thor, Leir led a number of Celtic gods into Asgard when it was invaded by Seth's armies.

With the aide of the Celtic gods, the Asgardians were able to beat back the invasion force. While he was in Asgard, Leir saw the goddess Sif and fell in love with her. Leir later returned to Asgard with a friend, Caber, hoping to get Sif to marry him. He was able to get to Asgard even though Asgard was at that time floating in the Negative Zone, and the Rainbow Bridge was broken. (The Celtic god of druids and wisdom, Dagda, was able to locate Asgard and form a gateway from Avalon to Asgard.) Leir found Sif there and asked her to marry him. Sif was intrigued by the fact that Leir was able to enter Asgard, even though Asgardians were not able to leave Asgard. She promised to marry Leir if he could get her to Thor, and if Leir could beat her chosen champion in combat. Leir agreed and helped her find Thor, who was in the Black Galaxy at the time.



T.M.

Leir then brought them all back to Asgard just as Ragnarok began. Leir helped the Asgardians during Ragnarok. After Ragnarok was averted by the bravery of Thor, Leir attacked Thor, mistakenly believing that he would be Sif's chosen champion. To Leir's surprise, Sif chose to be her own champion. She easily defeated Leir and humiliated him. It is presumed that the embarrassed god then returned to Avalon.

**ROLE-PLAYING NOTES:** Leir is basically a good being, but his arrogance tends to irritate the people around him. Leir thinks that he is the best warrior of all the gods and that he cannot be beaten. He is also slightly chauvinistic when it comes to females. He has not visited Earth in modern times, so he is extremely confused by modern machines and cultures. Leir has a quick temper that causes him to jump to conclusions at times.

## NOBILUS™ New Immortal

F	MN(75)	Health: 245
A	EX(20)	
S	MN(75)	Karma: 16
E	MN(75)	
R	TY(6)	Resources: FE(2)
I	TY(6)	
P	PR(4)	Popularity: 0

### POWERS:

**Invulnerability:** Since Nobilus was cloned from a sample of Thor's skin tissue, he has the typical invulnerabilities of a god: Excellent (20) resistance against physical attacks, heat, cold, radiation, poisons, aging, and disease, and Typical resistance to Energy attacks.

**Berserker Rage:** Nobilus was cloned from a sample of Thor's skin tissue while Thor was infused with the essence of the evil god, Loki. As a result, each round that Nobilus is in a stressful situation such as combat, he must make a Psyche FEAT roll. If he fails the roll, he goes into a berserker rage, adding +1CS to his Fighting and Strength scores. This does not increase his Health score, however. He will attack everyone and everything within reach while he is berserk. This will continue until he makes a successful Psyche FEAT roll-check once per round after Nobilus enters his berserker state.

**TALENTS:** None known.

**CONTACTS:** Nobilus can depend on aid from his creator, the High Evolutionary.

**HISTORY:** Nobilus is the result of one of the High Evolutionary's experiments. Recently, the High Evolutionary and Hercules supposedly evolved to a higher state after the High Evolutionary's abortive attempt to artificially accelerate the evolutionary

rate of all beings on Earth. The New Men of Wundagore contacted Thor and asked him to help rescue Hercules and the High Evolutionary from the Black Galaxy, a huge stellar mass made of organic material. Thor agreed, and they managed to free the two immortals from their imprisonment (they had been captured by a Red Celestial). During the encounter, the High Evolutionary was able to get a cell sample from Thor.

It seems that, during the rescue, Thor was aged by a strange organism in the Black Galaxy that caused him to grow a beard. Upon arriving back at Wundagore, Thor used the facilities to shave off his new beard. He cut himself during the shave, and one of the High Evolutionary's New Men took the razor and got the cell samples off of it. Unfortunately, at the time Thor was infused with the evil essences of Loki, which had happened when Thor, Odin, and Loki protected Asgard from Surtur by themselves. The three gods had to share their essences so that they would have enough power to stop Surtur.


The High Evolutionary returned to the Black Galaxy and began to create a new race of gods. He created Nobilus from Thor's cell samples and the biological soup of the Black Galaxy, hoping his creation would become the mightiest of his New Immortals. Unfortunately, Nobilus sometimes goes into mad, berserk rages, caused by the taint of Loki within him.

Thor and Hercules arrived on the High Evolutionary's ship while answering a summons from the Celestials to return to the Black Galaxy. They were followed by Stellaris, an alien in an armored battle suit who had sworn vengeance on all Celestials for destroying her planet. Stellaris got aboard the ship and talked Nobilus into helping her, then stole data concerning the location of the Red Celestial in the Black Galaxy and took off with Nobilus. Thor, Hercules, and Juvan (one of the High Evolutionary's New Immortals) followed closely behind. Stellaris and Nobilus arrived and began to observe the Red Celestial. Thor and the other arrived next. Upon arriving, Hercules was once again imprisoned in a huge metal box by the Red Celestial. Thor rushed to the attack, as did the Celestial-hating Stellaris and Nobilus.

The Celestial hit Thor with a beam of energy that physically separated the latter from his other self, Eric Masterson. By this time, the High Evolutionary had arrived with more New Immortals. It was soon revealed that the Black Galaxy was actually the birthplace for a new Celestial. Stellaris flung herself at the new Celestial, destroying herself in the attack and providing the final energy for the Celestial's birth. Nobilus looked on helplessly during the new Celestial's birth.

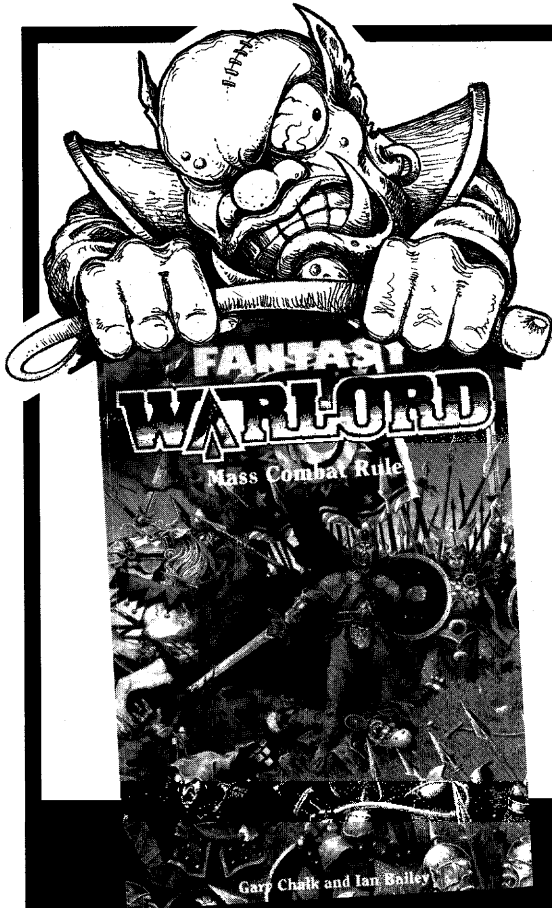
The High Evolutionary had connected himself to a special analyzing device during the birth. Overwhelmed by what he

saw, the High Evolutionary had a mental breakdown. Nobilus and the other New Immortals helped him back to his ship, then left the Black Galaxy. Before leaving, Thor and Nobilus came to a silent understanding of peace between them.

**ROLE-PLAYING NOTES:** Nobilus is a being constantly at war with himself. He is usually a gentle and noble being, but he often goes into his berserk rage, making him a sincere but unreliable ally at best. 

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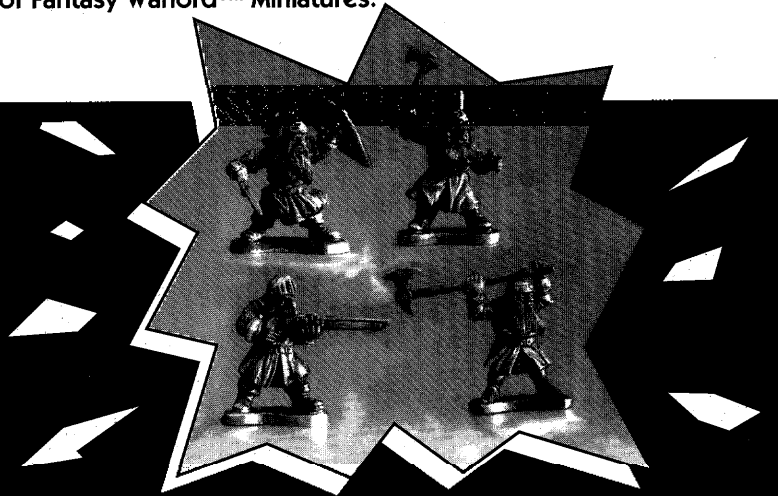
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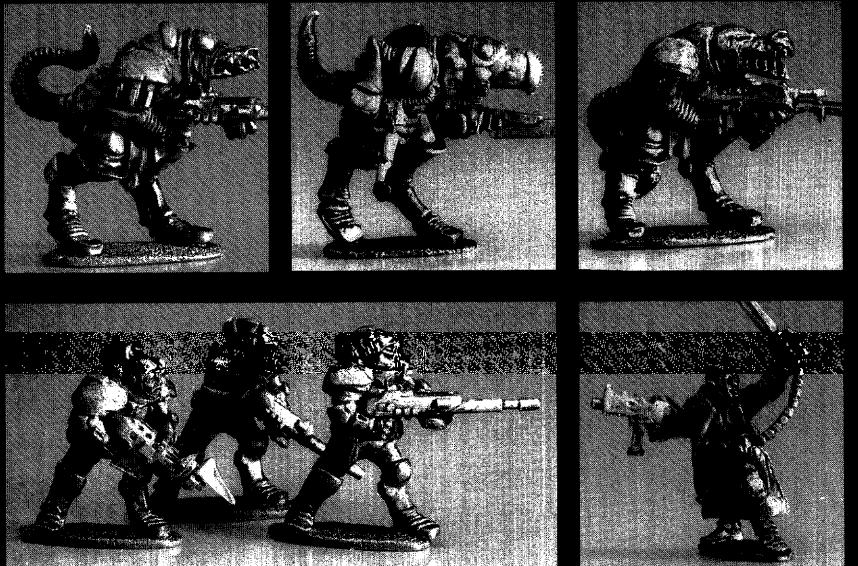
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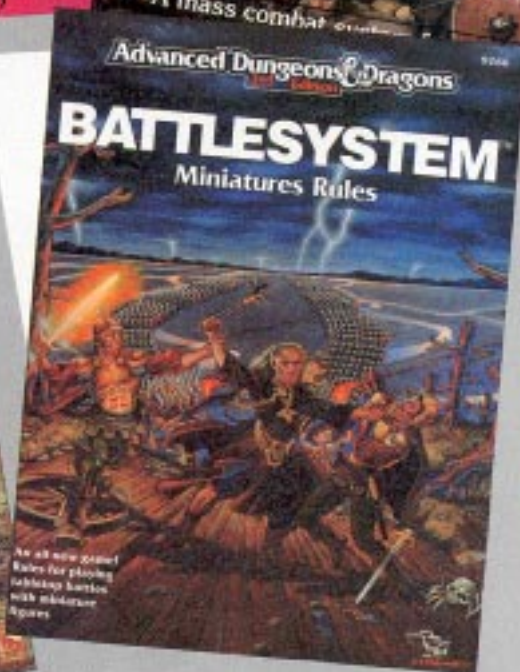
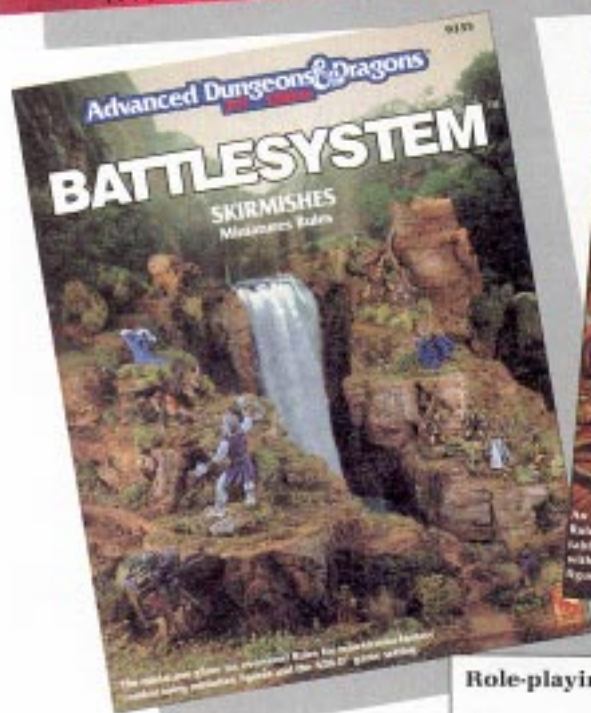
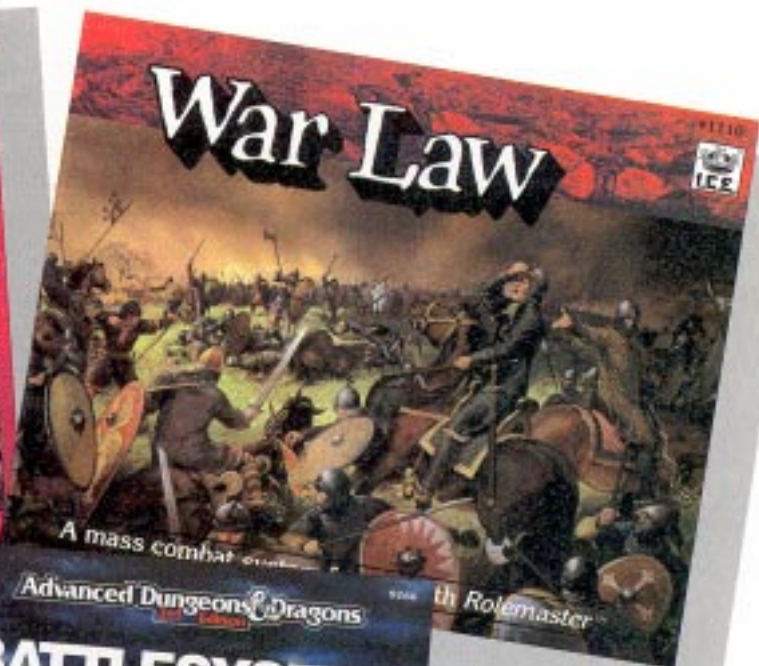
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# Role-playing

## reviews



### Role-playing games' ratings

X	Not recommended
*	Poor, but may be useful
**	Fair
***	Good
****	Excellent
*****	The best

## Tripping the tabletop fantastic—again

©1992 by Rick Swan

Say you're a first-timer at the GEN CON® game fair, and you want to give the folks back home an idea of what all the fuss is about. Camera in hand, you dutifully snap photos of the role-players, the auction, and the exhibit hall, even though it's painfully obvious that what you're recording doesn't amount to much more than a bunch of guys staring at paper or holding up boxes. You can already hear yourself feebly explaining to your buddies that it's a lot more fun than it looks, no kidding, really, you just had to be there.

Then it dawns on you that if you really want to capture the splendor of the convention, there's no better place to do it than the miniatures gaming room. There they are, in all their tiny glory: hundreds of colorful lead figures marching across vast landscapes of green felt, plastic forests, sprawling villages of matchbox-sized houses, and cardboard castles rendered in exquisite detail, right down to hairline cracks in the mortar and drawbridge chains with links no bigger than a needle's eye. This, you think, confidently snapping away, will knock their socks off—and you'd be right. It never fails.

Judging from the crowds in the miniatures room, one might conclude that miniatures games are as popular as spoons in a pudding factory, but that's not the case. Though fantasy miniatures games have their share of devoted fans, the flash-bulb poppers and rubbernecks invariably outnumber the actual players by a considerable margin. If I could have either the money from the sales of miniatures games at the GEN CON game fair or the processing fees of photos taken in the room where they're played, take me to the Fotomat.

So, if there's such a fascination with miniatures games, why aren't more people playing them? Conventional wisdom has it that role-players resist the games because of the number of lead figures required.

Since some games involve upwards of a hundred or more figures, we're talking a sizeable investment in money and time (if they're all to be prepped and painted). However, while it's undeniable that miniatures games are more fun with actual miniatures, the figures are by no means necessary. Role-players are perfectly happy using paper wads or spare dice to represent their characters in RPG adventures, so who needs entire armies of lead figures for miniatures games? More often than not, I use painted poker chips, coins, or cardboard chits, and the games play just fine.

It can't be the rules. If anything, a typical miniatures game is a lot easier to learn than a typical RPG. I've seen GEN CON game fair miniatures games with a only a page or two of rules, taught on the spot to utter novices.

I think role-players resist miniatures games for a very basic reason: The games are not much fun—at least, the early ones weren't. The first generation of fantasy miniatures games (including Games Workshop's WARHAMMER FANTASY BATTLE\* system, Ral Partha's CHAOS WARS\* game, and TSR's 1st Edition BATTLESYSTEM™ game, all covered in "Role-playing Reviews" in DRAGON® issue #142) promised more than they delivered; they felt less like fantasy games than conventional war games with fantasy elements tacked on as an afterthought. The unique attributes of elves and other fantastic creatures were reduced to lifeless combat bonuses. *Fireball* spells came off as just another type of artillery. Where were the magical weather storms, levitating terrain, battlefield teleportation portals, and phalanxes of evil wizards conjuring gargantuan monstrosities to swallow up enemy infantry in a single gulp? Strip away the whistles and bells, and most of the first batch of fantasy miniatures games played like World War II simulations, only with dragons and dwarves instead of Spitfires and Nazis.

Well, pioneers are always penalized, I

guess, and it takes a while for game designers to get it right. The new generation of fantasy miniatures games, the best of which are reviewed here, are more successful in blending fantasy and wargaming than their predecessors, making them more attractive to role-players. The designs are still a little on the tentative side—no levitating terrain yet—but we're heading in the right direction. If you've avoided miniatures games in the past, dust off your lead figures (or round up some poker chips) and give these a try.

### FANTASY WARRIORS\* game

\* \* \* 1/2

Boxed game with 56-page rule book, 102 plastic miniatures, 51 plastic shields, 150 order counters, reference card, various play aids, dice

Grenadier Models, Inc. \$30

Game design: Nick Lund

*Development:* Mark Copplestone and Doug Cowie

*Miniatures design:* Mark Copplestone

*Box and counter art:* Ian Smith

*Rule book illustrations:* Ian Symonds

A solid effort from a company known more for quality miniatures than game design, the FANTASY WARRIORS game combines conventional war-gaming systems with a number of modest but imaginative fantasy elements to produce an engaging miniatures game. What makes it especially appealing is its completeness; because the FANTASY WARRIORS game comes packaged with over 100 plastic figures (two complete armies, one dwarven and one orcish), you can put away your paper wads and poker chips and dive right in.

I'm not a great judge of figure design, but these look pretty good to me. Flowing beards and drooping moustaches give the dwarves a stately appearance, while long fangs and scowling eyes make the orcs look appropriately vicious. I was too lazy

to paint them, but dots of fingernail polish worked fine to distinguish individual units.

The basic game is a snap to learn, thanks to the well-written rule book, liberally illustrated with examples of play and strategy tips from anonymous dwarven and orcish heroes ("Provided you keep your spear-armed units organized, they can effectively stand up to larger creatures like ogres, trolls, and giants."). Set-up involves establishing the size of the battlefield (a dining room table is about right) and selecting armies, based on point allocation. Players receive, say, 1,000 points each to spend on units, each costing a particular number of points; for instance, a warchief might cost 80 points, while 120 points buys you an entire squadron of 10 dwarven archers, including a leader.

Every unit type has a set of statistics that must be recorded on a roster sheet. There are 11 statistics in all, ranging from the obvious, such as Strength and Movement, to the questionable, such as Resilience (just another combat modifier, of which there are plenty already) and Worth ("the measure of any creature in terms of manpower," whatever that means). Because there are so many statistics to keep track of, the FANTASY WARRIORS game works better with small numbers of figures; 20 to 40 per side is about right. Large-scale, convention-type spectacles aren't practical unless you're playing with teams.

Before play begins, each side has a chance to scout the opposition, which you'd think would involve sneaking a figure or two into the enemy camp and reporting back with reconnaissance information, but actually consists of nothing more than a few dice tosses to determine who gets to deploy their units first and decide when the battle begins. Quick, to be sure, but not very satisfying. Better is the boasting option that allows the warchief of each side to make an outrageous declaration that may have profound effects on an army's morale throughout the game. If a warchief declares, "I will stay upon this spot, immovable like a rock, for the entire battle," his army gains a Command Test bonus (essentially, a modifier that makes friendly soldiers less likely to panic) as long as the warchief figure stays put. It's a risky but irresistible option, and it's a lot of fun.

The combat rules aren't significantly different from standard war-gaming systems, with each side taking turns firing missile weapons, moving, engaging in melee combat, and checking for panic. Before combat gets underway, leaders issue orders to their units, directing them to either Attack (charge the nearest enemy and initiate melee combat), Hold (remain in place), or Oppose (maneuver to the most advantageous defensive position) by placing the appropriate marker next to the indicated figures. Units are obligated to follow their orders unless the warchief or a courier moves close enough to deliver a new one before the engagement ends.

The combat rules work quite well, though the avalanche of modifiers required to execute the more sophisticated concepts of the game are likely to intimidate novice players, as are the seemingly endless number of special cases. (A typical example: "Foot figures armed with polearms may choose to fight in two ranks using spear weapons factors, provided that they are not disorganized and are not governed by shaken or bloodlust reactions." Try dredging *that* one out of the old memory banks in the heat of battle.)

The most entertaining element of the FANTASY WARRIORS game is the magic system, which leavens the occasionally stodgy tone of the game with a generous dose of whimsy. Priests, for instance, can call on the gods to undo the result of a previous event, forcing the enemy player to re-roll. Soothsayers can divine omens favorable to the friendly army, making them less likely to panic. Wizards receive a fixed number of magic points, expended to cast powerful spells, such as *hasten day/night*, to move the clock backwards or forwards, and *banish magic*, which prohibits the casting of spells anywhere on the battlefield for several hours of game time. However, there are only 10 spells—a ploy, perhaps, to market a magic supplement somewhere down the line? Though the magic system may be superficial, it's also clean, simple, and goofy. Too bad there's not more of it.

**Evaluation:** If the FANTASY WARRIORS rule book had been stripped of about half its combat modifiers and special rules, it'd earn an enthusiastic recommendation. As it stands, I give it three stars for game mechanics and a half-star bonus for the figures. Improvements necessary to boost the game from good to great are: more spells, imaginative scenarios (there aren't *any* scenarios, imaginative or otherwise), and judicious editing. These will presumably appear in forthcoming supplements or a revised edition. Meanwhile, there's still a lot to like, particularly in the boasting rules, what there is of the magic system, and all those nifty plastic orcs and dwarves. [For another perspective on this game, see "Through the Looking Glass," in DRAGON® issue #177.—The Editors.]

### AD&D® 2nd Edition BATTLESYSTEM™ Miniatures Rules

\*\*\*\*

128-page softcover book  
TSR, Inc.

\$15

**Design:** Douglas Niles

**Editing and development:** Kim Mohan, Jon Pickens, Dave Sutherland

**Photography:** Michael Weaver, Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc. (battle scenes); Dick Kahn Studio, Inc. (rules diagrams)

**Figure painting:** Dave Sutherland

**Cover:** Glen Tarnowski

**Interior art:** Jeff Easley, Keith Parkinson

**Graphic design:** Stephanie Tabat, Dave Sutherland

### AD&D 2nd Edition BATTLESYSTEM™ Skirmishes Miniatures Rules

\*\*\* 1/2

128-page softcover book  
TSR, Inc.

\$15

**Design:** Bruce Nesmith

**Editing and development:** Steve Winter, Annette Bumgarner

**Figure painting:** Dave Hoppack

**Terrain scenosquares:** Duke Seifried, Creative Design, Inc.

**Photography:** Photography Unlimited

**Graphic design:** Stephanie Tabat

For starters, both of these books are flat-out gorgeous, two of the best-looking products TSR, Inc. has ever published. Both feature page after page of glossy, full-color photos of exquisitely painted miniatures, many of them staged in elaborate battlefield dioramas. Their merits as rule books aside, the BATTLESYSTEM and BATTLESYSTEM Skirmishes books make terrific guides for figure painting and are a pleasure to thumb through, even for those with only a passing interest in miniatures games.

Players frustrated by the tentative systems in the first-edition BATTLESYSTEM game (from 1985) are in for a pleasant surprise with the second edition, a complete overhaul that's as impressive as the 1st-to-2nd Edition transformation of the *Player's Handbook* and *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Gone from the original game are the math-heavy combat tables, the awkward base sizes, and the quarter-page unit rosters; they're replaced by streamlined bookkeeping systems, cleaner attack procedures, and a plethora of clever options.

Particularly welcome is the reduction of relevant statistics from a dozen-plus to a mere five. A figure represents either: 1) 10 infantrymen or cavalry, or 2) a single hero or other special individual, rated for Attack Dice, Armor Rating, Hits, Morale, and Movement, all derived from their corresponding statistics in the AD&D game. A character's THACO and maximum damage, for instance, determine his Attack Dice, while his armor class determines his Armor Rating. Compromises, of course, are inevitable, and the hardcore AD&D fans may wince at having to lump characters of armor classes 2 and 3 into identical Armor Ratings of 6. Overall, the conversions are sound, if a bit convoluted, and produce acceptable results on the battlefield.

Players willing to swallow the compromises inherent in the system will find the basic rules elegant and satisfying. A figure's Attack Dice rating indicates the type of die it uses when attacking, from a low of 1d4 to a high of 1d12. In general, each figure in an attacking group is allowed one attack die; a group of eight figures with an Attack Dice rating of 6 rolls 8d6. The higher the roll, the more hits inflicted. The defending player rolls a number of dice equal to the number of successful hits; every roll exceeding the defender's Armor

Rating cancels one hit. All hits not canceled by the Armor Rating rolls are taken as casualties. Obviously, the game requires a lot of clattering dice—two or three dozen rolls to resolve a single combat engagement isn't unusual—but the system is preferable to the dreary bookkeeping required by too many miniatures games.

Less successful is the magic system, which doesn't translate from the AD&D game as well as the combat rules. In a 128-page book, the magic chapter is only about seven pages long, most of it devoted to sketchy descriptions of spell effects. The spell list is woefully incomplete (fewer than 20 wizard spells are discussed). While the BATTLESYSTEM rules applications are adequate, the effects are predictable and not particularly exciting; *fireballs* inflict damage within a given area, *stinking cloud* results in a morale check, *haste* increases movement allowances, and you can probably figure out the rest yourself. What's needed, I think, is a whole new way to look at magic; last year's *Tome of Magic* hardback introduced the concept of cooperative spells, in which groups of priests combine their abilities with spectacular results, hinting at the possibilities of mass-combat magic.

The BATTLESYSTEM Skirmishes book covers much of the same territory as the BATTLESYSTEM book, albeit on a smaller scale. Unlike the BATTLESYSTEM rules, where one figure can stand for 10 characters, BATTLESYSTEM Skirmishes figures always represent a single character. One inch represents 10' in the BATTLESYSTEM Skirmishes rules; an inch equals 10 yards in the BATTLESYSTEM game.

Of course, procedures already exist in the AD&D game for resolving combat between individuals, and the BATTLESYSTEM Skirmishes rules don't so much replace these procedures as streamline and amplify them. Core concepts such as armor class and THAC0 will be familiar to AD&D game players, with the major difference involving the replacement of hit dice with simple "hits." A dragon with 14 HD in the AD&D game has 14 hits in the BATTLESYSTEM Skirmishes game; when the hit total is reduced to zero, good-bye dragon. No big deal, really, and while it's less precise, the hit system is much easier to use in multicharacter battles than standard AD&D combat mechanics. Expanded rules cover movement variants (flying, climbing, levitating), special attack forms (aerial combat, mounted miniatures, breath weapons) and war machines (battle wagons, caravans, chariots), all clearly explained and thoughtfully presented.

Magic receives a more thorough treatment here than in the BATTLESYSTEM rule book. Dozens of spells are discussed, as well as the effects of a number of magical items, but the lists are by no means complete; for example, *wands of negation* and *paralyzation* are included, but not wands of *conjuration* or *illusion*. As in the BATTLESYSTEM rules, there are few

surprises, and the magic system remains the books most disappointing feature.

**Evaluation:** Even though it emphasizes the military aspect more than the magical, the BATTLESYSTEM game scores as a first-class miniatures game; engaging, challenging, and—considering its scope—surprisingly easy to manage. The BATTLESYSTEM Skirmishes game succeeds in smoothing over the rough spots in the AD&D combat rules, but it reaches the point of diminishing returns in battles approaching several dozen figures per side; at that point, you might as well use the BATTLESYSTEM rules. For its versatility and sheer volume of material, the BATTLESYSTEM book has the edge over the BATTLESYSTEM Skirmishes rules, but both books are recommended to AD&D combat aficionados and especially to students of figure painting—these photos are real knock-outs.

### **BLADESTORM\* game** \*\*\*\*\*

Boxed game with 64-page rule book, 160-page sourcebook, 32-page scenario book, 8-page painting manual, 32-page color guidebook, 22 X 17 double-sided color map, dice

Iron Crown Enterprises, Inc. **\$30**

**Game design:** Coleman Charlton

**Source book design:** Tim Taylor, Pete Fenlon, John Ruemmler

**Editing and development:** John Ruemmler, Pete Fenlon, Coleman Charlton

**Cover:** Angus McBride

**Illustrations:** Michael Hernandez, Sandy Collora, Ellisa Martin

I suspect that self-contained fantasy miniatures games are more difficult to design than those based on existing role-playing rules, such as the AD&D-game-derived BATTLESYSTEM rules. That is, they're harder if the designers accept the challenge of creating a game world from scratch. Most designers aren't that ambitious, lacking the imagination (or the budget) to come up with compelling settings, histories, and magic systems. The combat rules may work just fine, but all too often the background material is derivative at best, nonexistent at worst.

The BLADESTORM game is an exception, a remarkable design that not only features an elegant set of game mechanics but a fully developed fantasy world in which to use them. Skillfully written, richly detailed, and endlessly replayable, there may be a better self-contained fantasy miniatures game than the BLADESTORM rules, but I've never seen it.

As in the BATTLESYSTEM Skirmishes game, the BLADESTORM game's figures each represent a single creature or character. In the basic game, requiring only six pages of rules, figures are rated for Movement, Melee Attack, Melee Damage, Defense, and Endurance, essentially the number of damage points a figure can absorb before biting the dust (a puny goblin may have only 10 Endurance

Points, while a good-sized troll may have 50 or more). If a figure is within range of an enemy, the owning player may attack by rolling a number of dice equal to the figure's Melee Attack rating; a 3d6 rating means he's allowed three six-siders. If none of the die-rolls exceed the enemy's Defense rating, then the enemy suffers no damage. Otherwise, damage is inflicted according to the attacker's Melee Damage rating; a rating of High means that the defender loses a number of Endurance Points equal to the attacker's highest die roll (if his Melee Attack rating was 3d6, and he rolled a 2, 4, and 6, the defender loses six Endurance Points.) Since both attack success and damage results are determined at the same time, combat is quick and simple, minimizing the need for charts and complicated formulas. Bravo!

The advanced rules build on the concepts introduced in the basic game, adding interesting twists instead of needless complications. For instance, the advanced melee combat rules utilize a black "Death Die" rolled as part of a normal attack roll. If a 1 comes up on the Death Die, the defender automatically suffers damage, regardless of the circumstance. Targets may take advantage of shields or covering terrain to boost their Defense ratings, while sneaky attackers can stage surprise assaults by sprinting at three times their normal movement rates or climbing ropes to fire missiles from above.

The superb magic system involves the expenditure of Power Points to cast dozens of spells specifically designed for mass combat, such as *extended terrain* (an already existing stretch of forest or other terrain is increased by four square inches per two Power Points expended), *mass frenzy* (targeted figures are forced to charge and attack their closest enemies), and *illusionary troops* (before starting a game, a friendly figure is placed in the enchanted area; the figure isn't revealed as an illusion until an enemy figure approaches or attacks it). Wizards may enhance their abilities by acquiring Power Hues, which give them additional Power Points when the sky turns a particular color. In one of the game's most inventive features, wizards may generate powerful energy fields called bladestorms, manifested as expanding rings or rampaging tornados that inflict massive damage on friend and foe alike.

The nature of bladestorms is explained in the Bladestorm Sourcebook, a comprehensive campaign guide describing the history and denizens of Foleenn, the chaotic world in which the game takes place. In addition to elves, dwarves, and other standards, Foleenn is home to an impressive array of original nasties, among them the apelike Karku and the loathsome Ulca-thu, quasi-humanoids with siphons for mouths and syringes for claws. Detailed statistics, along with painting suggestions, are provided for all relevant characters. The book concludes with an impressive 26

scenarios, complete with army rosters, historical background, special rules, and battlefield maps.

**Evaluation:** Though rules are provided for large-scale battles, the BLADESTORM game is better suited to small engagements involving a handful of figures, as clashes between immense armies require tedious amounts of bookkeeping. Many of the optional rules are likewise cumbersome, particularly those involving formation changes and advanced missile combat (I'm a little fuzzy, for instance, on how missile parrying complements normal defensive actions). That said, the BLADESTORM game is terrific fun, a stylish integration of clever mechanics and sparkling background material, highlighted by the best mass-combat magic system on the market. The BLADESTORM game doesn't easily adapt to standard role-playing systems; it would take a lot of tinkering to fit this into an AD&D campaign, for example, but if you're curious about miniatures games and are comfortable with stand-alone systems, you can do no better than this.

### **WAR LAW\* game** \* \* ½

Boxed game with 160-page rule book, 24-page summary sheets book, four 8 1/2" X 11" plastic hex grid overlays, two 22" X 17" color maps, 476 die-cut counters

Iron Crown Enterprises, Inc. \$30

**Design:** Ron Goral, David Eubanks, Coleman Charlton, Tim Taylor, Lem Richards, David Blank, Ross Henton

**Editing and development:** Coleman Charlton

**Cover:** Angus McBride

**Illustrations:** Jeremy Raben

I like to think I'm a reasonably intelligent guy. I went to college. I took calculus. I even managed to follow an *X-Men* story line for a whole year. But the ROLEMASTER\* game, for which the WAR LAW\* set is the miniatures combat supplement, is just about more than I can handle. There are RPGs more complicated than this—the brain-splitting AFTERMATH\* game from Fantasy Games Unlimited comes to mind—but the ROLEMASTER system is neither for casual players nor for the faint of heart. To give you an idea of what you're up against, consider that the final 60-plus pages of the WAR LAW rule book consist of nothing but charts and tables; the Flail Unit Attack Table, to pick one at random, contains more than 1,600 entries, and there's plenty more just like it. Scary.

The basic WAR LAW system uses die-cut counters, included with the game, to represent units of 50-100 individuals. Units are rated for Offensive and Defensive Bonuses, Armor Type, Level, Movement, and Morale, recorded on status sheets that also feature boxes that are checked off to track casualties. The game includes two large hex maps of sample terrain that can

be cut apart and rearranged into a variety of playing surfaces. Though the hexes help regulate movement, they also limit options, making the WAR LAW game much less fluid than most miniatures games.

Game turns consist of preparation, missile fire, movement, defensive missile fire, melee, and morale phases, which all sound simple until you actually try to execute them. Making a melee attack, for instance, requires the computation of Offensive Bonuses, modified by OB stats, parry amounts, formation state modifiers, morale state modifiers, casualty state modifiers, leader modifiers, and position bonuses, checked against the Defensive Bonus and a roll on the SG Luck Table to obtain an Attack Mod that generates a Net Mod that's cross-indexed with the defender's Armor Type on the appropriate Unit Attack Table. Got that? Wait till you get a load of the *advanced* rules.

The magic system is similarly convoluted, and wizards without calculators are in for a hard time. Casting a *fireball* spell requires determining the area of effect (in square feet), the number of enemies affected (a factor of their Density Ratings), and the attack resolution (more modifiers, more tables, more headaches). I had to limit the use of matter-affecting spells in my games, because I couldn't do the math; it says here that it takes 68 castings of the *powder stone* spell to generate the 48,600,000 hits needed to destroy 11,664,000 cubic inches of a granite wall, I think.

**Evaluation:** This one's a tough call. For fans of the ROLEMASTER system—and there must be a lot of them, judging from the number of supplements spawned by the original game—the WAR LAW game delivers the goods. This comprehensive mass combat system is fully in tune with the spirit of the ROLEMASTER system, impressively flexible (the advanced game allows players to choose their own unit sizes and time scales), and meticulously detailed. Those unfamiliar with the ROLEMASTER game, however, should proceed with caution. With its hex grids, die-cut counters, and war-gaming concepts such as zones of control, the WAR LAW rules feel more like a military board game than a fantasy miniatures game. Tackle the ROLEMASTER system first, and if you're not intimidated by the investment of time, effort, and brain cells, then take a look at the WAR LAW game.

### **Short and sweet**

**AD&D Trivia Game**, by Richard Borg. TSR, Inc., \$25. Sort of a bar exam for rules lawyers, this features a mind-bending collection of trivia questions delved from the pages of the AD&D® 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the first two *Monstrous Compendium* volumes. The clever rules, involving the placement of "skull markers" on character cards (representing wizards, warriors, priests, rogues, and monsters), distinguish

this from most other TRIVIAL PURSUIT\* game descendants, even though there's no meaningful difference between the characters (wizards die as quickly as warriors). Questions are sorted according to levels of difficulty, with Level One questions being relatively easy, to Level Five maddeningly obscure. If you can answer most of the Level Three questions ("How long will a typical torch burn?"), you know the game a lot better than I do. If you can answer most of the Level Five questions ("Which two spells in the *Player's Handbook* require only a somatic component?"), I suggest you get outside more often.

**Fatal Experiments**, by Watts, Love, Miller, Bullman, Detwiler, Ross, Isinwyll, Dunn, Gibbons, Geier, Triplett-Smith. Chaosium, Inc., \$19. Another first-class collection of short scenarios for Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU\* game, each based on a research project most definitely not FDA-approved. The scenarios are full of surprises and are delightfully disgusting, particularly "The Lurker in the Crypt," which features an expedition into the ghoul tunnels of New York's Stanton Street Cemetery (without giving away any of the plot, let's just say that after reading it, I had a strong urge to take a bath with two bars of soap).

**GURPS Wild Cards\* supplement**, by John J. Miller. Steve Jackson Games, \$17. Recommended to super-hero fans in general and GURPS SUPERS\* game enthusiasts in particular, this exceptional supplement discusses the world of the Takisian wild card virus in fascinating detail, addressing many of the questions left unanswered in the Bantam Spectra novel series, such as exactly how the virus triggers human mutations, the history of the Shadow Fist Society, and the mysterious link between the Wild Cards phenomena and baseball. Game statistics and background dossiers are given for the Great and Powerful Turtle, Sewer Jack, and dozens of other memorable characters, along with useful suggestions for creating player-designed mutants. The section discussing actual role-playing is disappointingly skimpy. GMs are pretty much on their own when it comes to creating adventures, and the artwork is adequate at best. Otherwise, this is a terrific effort. Be forewarned that, like the novels, this supplement is not intended for children.

(The answers to the trivia questions are 30 minutes, and *shadow door* and *mislead* spells. You didn't think I'd leave you hanging, did you?) Ω

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# NOVEL

I • D • E • A • S

## 1992: A year to remember—and read

by the TSR Book Department

Great reading is coming your way once again from the book department at TSR. In addition to our continuing book lines, we have some exciting new things coming up in 1992.

Monumental quests, nefarious dragons, and heroic deeds—the first DUNGEONS & DRAGONS™ novel, in bookstores this October, offers that and much more. TSR is also producing its first-ever hardcover novel. Written by R. A. Salvatore, it is a prelude to an upcoming trilogy and bridges the Icewind Dale and Dark Elf trilogies, with more exploits of Drizzt Do'Urden and friends. Finally, after a four-year hiatus, the original DRAGONLANCE® book and game team of Weis, Hickman, Williams, Moore, Niles, and others is back in a new series of anthologies.

### D&D® novels

*The Tainted Sword*, by D. J. Watry, is the first volume of the Penhaligon Trilogy. It tells the story of an aging knight—once the embodiment of glory and honor, but who has fallen into disrepute—as he reluctantly takes on a waif who has proclaimed herself his squire and a young man who dreams of becoming a mage. To restore his good name, they must confront the treacherous green dragon who has dedicated his life to destroying the knight's fame.

As the first novel to explore the Known World, the official campaign setting for the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game, *The Tainted Sword* will feature a double cover with art by Larry Elmore, and full-color interior maps, a first for TSR's book lines. If you're a fan of the Known World, this is the book you've demanded; if you're a newcomer to the magical kingdom of Penhaligon, come see what all the excitement is about.

### DARK SUN™ novels

It's been called gritty, dangerous, and barbaric—and those are the complimentary things one can say about Athas, the DARK SUN campaign world. In the Prism Pentad, Troy Denning tells the tale of three heroes as they fight for survival and search for the secret to their world's misery.

Having defeated the vile sorcerer-king of Tyr in *The Verdant Passage*, the first book of the series, the heroes go their separate ways, each intent on carving a place in the history of Athas. In April, *The Crimson Legion* reveals how Rikus, the man-dwarf gladiator, is spurred on by his success

against Tyr's sorcerer-king. He sets off with a ragtag army to battle the forces of Urik, a neighboring city-state, but his brawn and skill as a warrior may not be enough to save his forces from annihilation.

Book three of the Prism Pentad, *The Amber Enchantress*, focuses on Sadira, the seductive sorceress. Hoping to learn more about her own magical abilities, Sadira travels across the wastes. But the Veiled Alliance, self-proclaimed champions of beneficial magic on Athas, and the cannibal halflings of the weird jungles atop the Ringing Mountains are each hunting the young magic-wielder for their own reasons. *The Amber Enchantress* will reach bookstores in October.

### FORGOTTEN REALMS® novels

February marks the release of the first FORGOTTEN REALMS novel of 1992, *Pools of Darkness*. Three years in the making, this sequel to the best-selling *Pool of Radiance* once again sees the city of Phlan in dire straits. Torn from the surface of Faerun by a power-hungry mage, Phlan finds itself battling hordes of monsters in an underground cavern. The warrior-cleric Tarl, the sorceress Shal, and the famous ranger-thief, Ren O' The Blade, fight to save the city and unlock the secrets of the Pools of Darkness. James M. Ward teams up with co-author Anne K. Brown to weave this fast-paced tale based on the SSI computer game.

*Prophet of Moonshae* is the first book in the new Druidhome Trilogy, a sequel series to the popular Moonshae Trilogy. Author Douglas Niles picks up the series with the children of High King Tristan and Queen Robyn, who work toward righting the one great wrong that remained at the conclusion of the original series. Book one is on sale in March. The series continues in September with *The Coral Kingdom*. A high princess is pitted against a savage undersea race that holds her father prisoner. Her quest leads far beyond the shores of her island kingdom and climaxes in the dark depths of the Sea of Moonshae.

The Cleric Quintet, set in the FORGOTTEN REALMS fantasy world and written by *New York Times* best-selling author R. A. Salvatore, follows an eccentric young scholar-priest named Cadderly as he fends off the hordes and tricksters of Castle Trinity to save his home, his friends, and his life. In *Sylvan Shadows*, on

sale in April, is the second in the series. Cadderly has overcome the chaos curse that beset the Edificant Library, but the evil triumvirate of Castle Trinity isn't finished with its plans for regional conquest. The young scholar and his friends must save the inhabitants of the beautiful elven forest, Shilmista, where a new opponent leads an army of vile monsters. But not even Cadderly's powerful companions can insulate him from the trials of character and courage that he must face. *Night Masks* follows in August. Cadderly has run to the city of Carradoon for solace, but he finds himself besieged by the resident assassins, the Night Masks. He and his companion, Danica, must uncover the killers' latest activities and put a stop to them. But the young priest learns more than he wanted to know.

Next comes *The Legacy*. Life is good for Drizzt Do'Urden, better than it ever has been for the beleaguered dark elf. His dearest friend, the dwarf Bruenor, has reclaimed his throne, and Wulfgar and Catti-brie are to be wed in the spring. Even the halfling Regis has returned. All the friends are united in the safety and prosperity of Mithril Hall. But Drizzt has not achieved this state of peace without leaving powerful enemies in his wake, one of whom has vowed to take vengeance on him. *The Legacy* is on sale in October.

This year also sees the release of the next two novels in the Harpers Series. Each novel in this continuing line tells an independent story, complete in itself.

*The Night Parade* heralds the return of author Scott Ciencin to the Realms (better known to you as the scribe of *Shadowdale* and *Tantras* under the pen name Richard Awlinton). In this dark-fantasy tale, Myrmeen Lhal, the seductive ruler of Arabel, enlists the aid of the Harpers. She has become embroiled in a war against the Night Parade, a shadowy group of creatures that gains sustenance from human fear and misery. If she loses the fight, she may never find her daughter, thought lost 14 years before. Look for *The Night Parade* in June.

The sixth Harpers novel, *The Ring of Winter*, tells the tale of Harper-adventurer Artus Cimber and his search through the jungles of Chult for a fabled artifact. Those of you familiar with the Realms know that Chult is a land of lost civilizations, strange magic—and dinosaurs! If that doesn't present enough of a problem

to our lone Harper, the villainous Cult of Frost has followed him to Chult, intent on capturing the ring and using its might to bring a new Ice Age down upon the world. James Lowder, author of *Crusade* and *Knight of the Black Rose*, spins this adventure yarn in November.

### **DRAGONLANCE® novels**

The Tales II Trilogy reunites many of the writers of the first Tales Trilogy for a lineup of powerful and exciting short stories set on the DRAGONLANCE world of Krynn. On sale in April, *The Reign of Istar* is built around the history preceding the Cataclysm, a seminal and fascinating time in Krynn lore. A new novella by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman, and short stories penned by Nancy Varian Berberick, Richard A. Knaak, Roger E. Moore, Douglas Niles, Nick O'Donohoe, Dan Parkinson, and Michael Williams tell wondrous tales of Krynn in the legendary time of the Kingpriest. A kender becomes a Solamnian Knight (almost); an ogre emerges as an unlikely savior of the dwarven race; and gladiators compete in the blood sport of Istar.

Volume two, *The Cataclysm*, details the time in Krynn lore when the gods threw a fiery mountain down on Istar and plunged Krynn into centuries of chaos. This volume continues to fill in material pertinent to the original Legends Trilogy and is packed with poetry, comedy, stark drama, love stories, and key battles, and features a novella about Lord Soth. *The Cataclysm* goes on sale in July.

Volume three, *The War of the Lance*, is on sale in November. This anthology's theme is built around the history of Krynn during the War of the Lance. The war was covered from one perspective in the best-selling Chronicles Trilogy, and now readers will be treated to tales that reveal the fates of some of the most popular supporting characters of that epic series.

The immensely popular Meetings Sextet, which tells the stories of the Companions of the Lance prior to their fateful meeting at the Inn of the Last Home, wraps up with three brand-new exciting adventures.

In *The Oath and the Measure*, on sale in May, we finally learn the true story of Sturm Brightblade's early years: how he faced the challenge of the enigmatic Lord Wilderness, learned the fate of his long-lost father, and came to understand the true meaning of honor. The author is Michael Williams, whose understanding of the nature of Solamnian knighthood is so all-encompassing that we sometimes suspect he may actually be a knight.

Volume five, *Steel and Stone*, by Ellen Porath, sets forth the tale of the meeting of those two stormy lovers, Tanis Half-Elven and Kitiara Uth Matar. Tanis is forced into an unwilling alliance with a rival for Kit's affections when an old enemy seeks revenge against Kitiara. The dispute leads them across the continent of Ansalon to the frigid wastes of the Icereach. Watch for

*Steel and Stone* in September.

*The Companions* completes the Meetings Sextet with its appearance in January 1993. Written by Tina Daniell, *The Companions* brings together Flint, Tanis, Tasslehoff, Kitiara, Raistlin, Caramon, and Sturm for the first time since the Chronicles Trilogy to face a foe who personifies the ultimate in evil. The quintessential adventure of the Companions that sets the mold for all relationships and adventures to follow, *The Companions* is a "must" read for DRAGONLANCE saga fans.

### **RAVENLOFT™ novels**

The RAVENLOFT novel series continues with more stand-alone fantasy-horror tales of the mysterious Dark Domains. Ravenloft is a netherworld of evil, a place of darkness that can be reached from any TSR world—but escape is an entirely different matter.

Christie Golden, author of the first RAVENLOFT novel, *Vampire of the Mists*, returns to the Dark Domains in July with *Dance of the Dead*. Larissa Snowmane is a dancer aboard a magical riverboat. When the boat arrives at the zombie-plagued island of Sourange, she finds herself dancing to chilling music, indeed. After discovering the captain's sinister secret, Larissa must rely upon the swamp beings and the magical Dance of the Dead to save her own soul.

December sees the release of the first werewolf story in the RAVENLOFT line, *Heart of Midnight*, by J. Robert King. Even before he'd drawn his first breath, Casimir had inherited his father's lycanthropic curse. The young werewolf fled; now, 10 years later, Casimir must embrace his dark heritage to ward off his own murder and gain revenge against his monstrous father.

### **SPELLJAMMER™ novels**

The Cloakmaster Cycle follows Teldin Moore's search for answers to questions about the mysterious cloak he's been bequeathed. Throughout this series, set in the SPELLJAMMER space-fantasy setting, he discovers creatures and places he could never have imagined, both friend and foe.

In the third book, *The Maelstrom's Eye*, Teldin Moore learns more about his cloaks past and its potential powers from an elven admiral at the Rock of Bral—but he doesn't count on being caught up in the hurricane of the second Unhuman War. Vengeful humanoids rampage through the Known Spheres, and they're on the trail of Teldin Moore, who himself is now hunting for the ultimate spacefaring ship of all: the mighty *Spelljammer*. Teldin allies himself with a gypsy kender and is reunited with an old friend on their search for a gigantic genius slug in order to learn more about the cloak. Teldin gets caught between scro and elven space forces, converging to seal his fate. *The Maelstrom's Eye* is written by DRAGON® Magazine editor Roger E. Moore and goes on sale in May.

In book four, *The Radiant Dragon*, on

sale in November, Teldin Moore is still looking for the great ship *Spelljammer*. A radiant dragon also possesses a key to commanding the great ship but needs Teldin's help to take control. Meanwhile, an elven ally named Vallus Leafbower tries to convince Teldin to aid the elves in the second Unhuman War. A group of elf-hating bionids and insectares trade with goblinoids for a secret weapon against the elven Imperial Fleet, and someone in Teldin's inner circle is pulling all parties toward a major battle. *The Radiant Dragon* is written by Elaine Cunningham, author of the FORGOTTEN REALMS novel, *Elfshadow*.

### **XXVc™ novels**

The BUCK ROGERS® XXVc novel line kicks off a new series, *Invaders of Charon*, which ultimately deals with an alien invasion that threatens the entire solar system. Volume one, *The Genesis Web* (May), tells the story of Black Barney's creation and introduces two undercover NEO agents who aid him in his escape from his creators. It is written by newcomer C. M. Brennan.

In volume two, *Nomads of the Sky* (October), NEO undercover agent Vincent Pirelli is captured by the warlike Space Nomads and must fight a ritual duel for his life. In the process, he discovers the Device, a missing RAM artifact that may provide a clue to the meaning of the garbled message received from Buck Rogers in deep space. *Nomads of the Sky* is written by veteran science-fiction author William H. Keith, Jr., whose credits include DOCTOR WHO\* and BATTLETECH\* adventures.

### **TSR™ Books**

The popular TSR Books line features the best in fantasy, science fiction, mystery, and horror. *Thorn and Needle* leads off the list in March. Two intriguing adventurers journey to a perfect city in which miracles are commonplace. Their goal: to murder the mysterious god known as The Fact, who makes possible the marvels of the wondrous city. Thought-provoking science fantasy with surprises from beginning to end, *Thorn and Needle* is written by Paul B. Thompson, who has co-authored four best-selling DRAGONLANCE novels.

In 1991, TSR published L. Dean James's first fantasy novel, *Sorcerer's Stone*. Many of you were so caught up in the tale of Gaylon Reysson and the magical land of Wynnamyr that you wanted to see more. In June, you'll get your wish when we release *Kingslayer*. If you haven't read *Sorcerer's Stone*, don't worry; this new novel can be read and enjoyed on its own. For a millennium, the Red Kings have guarded the magical sword Kingslayer, so named because it has twice killed its royal wielder. Now Gaylon Reysson, the new king of Wynnamyr, must take up the

(Continued on page 118)

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# STEPHEN KING

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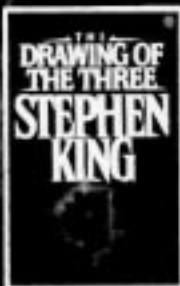
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# The Game Wizards

The old order changeth! New directions for  
the MARVEL SUPER HEROES™  
game



by Steven E. Schend

The cry that once signified major changes in the Avengers' lineup seems appropriate in talking about the 1992 product schedule for the MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game line. Great changes are occurring both in the comic books and in TSR's game line as we launch brand-new packages for the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game. Everything will be bigger and better than ever, with more maps, art, and excitement than ever thought possible.

First and foremost, the changes in the Marvel game don't involve the rules or the playability of the system; it's still the fastest-paced super-hero game around, and we don't want to change that. The changes we're making consist of tightening the continuity between the comic books and our game line, expanding supplementary information to widen the Marvel campaign base, and, through copious researching, making sure you have every shred of information we can add to our own little corner of the MARVEL UNIVERSE®. By providing more supplements, our 1992 products provide more information for your game campaigns, and this material would definitely be of interest to Marvel Comics readers, whether they play the game or not. We're out to make MARVEL SUPER HEROES game products more useful, informative, and fun to read, as well as fun to play.

### Sourceboxes

This year will premiere the MHR series, our supplemental sourceboxes on a variety of hot topics. Each sourcebox provides:

- a 32-page full-color Watcher's Guide, containing lots of information on the box's topic, establishing solid backgrounds for new and old characters alike (this booklet is geared toward the nongamer who wants to find out about characters and topics without having to understand any game mechanics);
- a 64-page Grandmaster's Log, with notes and information narrated in parts by that immortal gamer himself (this log contains all the game-specific information you need, from character and technology statistics to adventures and additional rules to enhance the game);
- card sheets providing full-color character fold-ups and other props for the game;
- two poster maps for use with the game adventures; and
- one full-sized poster of original art, depicting your favorite Marvel comic characters in exciting action scenes!

### Comics as references

We're also providing more direct comic-book references, so when you read something about Hero X or Villain Y in our MARVEL SUPER HEROES game products, you might be able to find its original source material in your collection of comics with the references we'll provide. This improves game play; finding a comic-book illustration of certain game weapons in use, for example, would add to the overall

action during a game. It also makes our game sourceboxes and books more useful to comics collectors, since you have all the information on the heroes and villains in one sourcebook and can find the original comic books using our detailed bibliographies and references.

### New product lineup

I could go on for hours on the change in focus on the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game line, but that's not what you need to hear. This year will be an exciting one for our established fans, and people who haven't given our line a look should notice the high-quality products we're putting on the shelves. If you currently enjoy Marvel Comics or the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game, keep an eye out for these releases and tell your friends.

#### MHR1 X-Forces: The Mutant Update

*Design:* Scott Davis and Anthony Herring  
*Editing:* Caroline Spector

Ready for release in April is MHR1 *X-Forces: The Mutant Update*, our first sourcebox on the ever-popular mutants of Marvel. Useful on its own or as an update for our 1990 X-Men campaign set, this sourcebox provides detailed histories for all the X-Teams from the "Fall of the Mutants" to the "Mutant Agenda" story lines, and attempts to explain the reasons behind the sudden proliferation of all-mutant teams in the MARVEL UNIVERSE. The two books in this sourcebox provide lots of role-playing information on what it's like to be a mutant and gives you a better understanding of the "Mutant Menace" phenomenon. All the current members of the X-Men, X-Factor, X-Force, and Excalibur are catalogued (as well as their foes, like the New Brotherhood of Evil Mutants and the Mark V Sentinels). Information updates are provided, including the time-tossed X-Man, Bishop! One map shows an urban area that can be added to maps from the Basic and Advanced Rules sets; the other map, as a tie-in with the adventures, depicts a full Cerebro-scan of the U.S., so your players can track down a number of all-new mutants specifically created for the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game. The sourcebox also includes character fold-ups of all the X-Teams, their villains, and a special 3-D fold-up of the X-Men's Blackbird. Best of all, there is a special action-filled poster of Marvel's mutants in this sourcebox, done by Marvel artist Tom Morgan (*Alpha Flight*), available nowhere else!

#### Lands of DR. DOOM™ campaign set

*Design:* Scott Davis and Anthony Herring  
*Editing:* Steven E. Schend

Our biggest product of the year, the *Lands of Dr. Doom* campaign set is a 1" - deep box that ships to stores in June 1992. Commemorating Dr. Doom's 30 years as Marvel's master villain, this box contains 192 pages on Dr. Doom and the Balkan countries of the MARVEL UNIVERSE:

Latveria, Symkaria (home to Silver Sable), and Transia (birthplace of the Scarlet Witch, Quicksilver, and the Puppet Master, and base of the High Evolutionary). With this boxed set, the Marvel game goes beyond the United States and gives you detailed settings for your games in the heart of Europe. These countries all have details never before seen, and even receive entries and commentary from the Marvel standard for world travelers, Van Dyne's Guide to Europe. Best of all, there is a new poster map of Doomstadt, the capital of Latveria, suitable for use in game battles and adventures.

As well as providing campaign settings, the Dr. Doom set provides a full examination and explanation of the man called Doom. We have produced the most complete and fully detailed history for Dr. Doom ever compiled. Our history of Doom encompasses his birth, his rise to power, his exiles from the throne, and more, up to his published appearances through early 1992. Coupled with the history is a complete bibliography (organized both alphabetically and chronologically) of every major appearance of Dr. Doom from *Fantastic Four #5* to the *Infinity Gauntlet* mini-series and beyond. This is the only place to find this information, so don't miss it!

Doom is a great inventor, second only to Reed Richards (but don't say that in front of him). Acknowledging that, we've also compiled a catalogue of nearly every invention, weapon, android, and robot created by Dr. Doom over the past 30 years. All items are fully referenced in Marvel Comics and are fully detailed for the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game. This boxed set is bound to become a collector's dream!

Last, but not least, this box reintroduces even more villains and heroes and characters to the Marvel Universe. Full game statistics are provided for Doom and all of his friends, allies, pawns, and lackeys. This is the set to own if players want their super heroes to go head-to-head with the Master of Latveria!

#### MHR2 Webs: The SPIDER-MAN™ Dossier

*Design:* Scott Davis  
*Editing:* David Wise

No, this isn't Peter Parker's collection of Spider-Man photos, though it shares the same title. MHR2 is an in-depth look at the non-mutant hero, his battles and his life, and just what makes him a hero. The books provide personal views of Spider-Man and Peter Parker from the views of his wife, his friends, and his foes. Combined with a detailed history, this is the place to go to find out about this amazing arachnid-based hero.

A character catalogue completely covers Spider-Man—in all his incarnations including his six-armed version and his Captain Universe incarnation—and his supporting cast, with a rogues' gallery that includes

Dr. Octopus, Electro, three Green Goblins, two Hobgoblins, and many more. There are maps of the *Daily Bugle* city room and a battle map of downtown New York that fits in with maps from the MARVEL SUPER HEROES Basic and Advanced Sets, complete with character fold-ups of Spider-Man, Peter Parker, and all his friends and foes. Adventures within this sourcebox include solo and team-up scenarios for hours of excitement and fun. Finally, for those fans who have always wanted an actual piece of the MARVEL UNIVERSE, you can put together your very own fold-up replica web-shooters!

**MU8 Gamer's Handbook of the MARVEL UNIVERSE™, 1992 Character Updates**

*Design:* by Scott Bennie, John Elliott, and David Pulver

Continuing an annual tradition since 1988, the *Gamer's Handbook of the MARVEL UNIVERSE* presents its latest character updates! The format's the same you've known and loved for years, with all-new characters for your reading and gaming enjoyment. These are the only loose-leaf Marvel character references that provide full character histories in great detail, making them as useful to comic-book readers and collectors as they are for players using them in the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game. This year's version reveals

the statistics and secrets of many of Marvel's newest characters, such as the Acolytes of Magneto, Bishop, Deathwatch, Infinity Watch, Omega Red, Rancor, and the Shadow King. Don't miss it!

**MHR3 Go West: The AVENGERS™ Archives**

*Design:* by Steven E. Schend

Many current Marvel readers were introduced to areas outside New York City by the *Avengers West Coast* comic book. However, Marvel has published material on parts west of the Mississippi for over 40 years, and has established a comic-book-universe time line covering 300 years! The *Go West* set unfolds the full history of the West from 1692, with the westward migration of the Salem witches, to 1992, with the exploits of the worlds premier super-hero team.

The books describe the history and details of the western United States, providing information and campaign bases in different times. Experience Marvel Earth in the Old West with the Two-Gun Kid, the Rawhide Kid, and the Night Rider. Explore the West in the early years of the Atomic Age, when the Hulk rampaged across the deserts. Examine the trouble spots that confronted the Champions of Los Angeles, Johnny Blaze and the first motorcycling Ghost Rider, and the Avengers West Coast. All major characters and technologies will

be fully catalogued and ready for play in the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game.

Shipping in December, this product will unearth secrets long lost underneath the sands of the western deserts and the foothills and crags of the Rockies, secrets of prime interest to comic-book readers and game players alike. Find out the locations of New Salem, the valley of Woodgod and the Changelings, long abandoned bases of the Leader and the gamma-ray caves of the Hulk, and the Mound, the home of the Pantheon. Readers can find details of the many magical artifacts in the possession of Agatha Harkness and Daimon Hellstrom, as well as the mystic heirlooms of the Red Wolf and the Phantom Rider.

Adventures within the sourcebox set up the player characters as reserve Avengers, who must travel across time to rescue the Avengers from the new Masters of Evil! Full-color character fold-ups are provided for the Avengers and the major western characters, and players receive individual Avengers' ID cards for their characters. There's even a 3-D fold-up Avengers' Quinjet you can construct yourself. Two full-color maps are included with a full-color poster of the heroes of the West, from past to present.

As we've said before, 1992 will be an exciting year for fans of the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game, so be sure to check our line out. Former players of the game may want to look at the system again — you'll like what we've done to enhance everyone's enjoyment of the game. And, if you've never played the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game but do read Marvel Comics, give us a try! I guarantee you'll like what you see. Once the 1992 products hit the shelves, send a letter to me and let me know what you think (Steve Schend, c/o TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A.). Your input, and response have made our games what they are today, and we want to hear what you have to say about the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game. Thanks for listening, and we hope you enjoy the games! Ω

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# A Swing and a Hit

by Gary Van Binsbergen

The hand-to-hand fighting styles in the TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game allow for both realism and variety. Agents are able to learn Boxing, Oriental Martial Arts, or Wrestling talents. Each of these fighting styles has several special techniques for agents to use. The Combat Techniques Chart found on page 78 of the Player's Guide lists 14 different techniques that will cover most situations in the game.

This list, however, is not complete. Secret agents always find themselves in predicaments that are not covered by the

rules. It is then up to the Administrator to resolve the situation at hand. One way to do this is to design additional combat techniques that are well balanced and add excitement to your game.

This article offers several new techniques to add to your campaign, each dealing with a variety of situations not dealt with in the Player's Guide. For example, what if an agent is defending himself against the wielder of a spear and decides to break the spear in half? What if an agent psyches herself up for a battle to the

death? What if an agent wants to fake out his opponent in the middle of a fight? Some sort of bonus should be given toward each agent's attacks.

These situations can be dealt with by adding new techniques to your campaign. The format used in this article is taken from Bruce Onder's article, "Up Close and Personal," found in DRAGON® issue #135. Unlike the presentation of combat techniques in the Player's Guide, both Bruce's article and this one have inclusions for Lucky and Bad Breaks. In order to determine which fighting style each technique falls under, the Combat Techniques Chart on page 78 of the Player's Guide has been reproduced here for your convenience. The new techniques are listed with those from the earlier article, "Up Close and Personal."

**Choke hold:** This technique enables the agent to render an opponent unconscious, and eventually dead, by grasping the person around the throat and applying pressure. The opponent must be on the ground in order to use this technique.

The choke hold is attempted at a -30% penalty to the attacker's chance of success. Once grasped, the victim suffers 1d6 points of CON damage. Each turn the hold is applied, a successful skill check at full ability must be made in order to inflict another 1d6 points of damage. If the skill check is failed, 1-3 points of damage are inflicted that turn.

When enough damage has been inflicted to reduce the victim's CON score to half normal, the victim must make a CON check at his CON's current total. If this check is failed, the victim falls unconscious; if not, the struggle continues. When the character's CON reaches one-quarter normal, another CON check at that level is made. If the roll fails, the opponent finally falls unconscious. If the CON check is successful, the victim continues trying to break the hold. Should the victim's CON reach zero, he dies.

In order to break the hold, the victim is allowed a one-quarter skill check every turn, using either Basic Melee, Boxing,

Artwork by Jim Holloway





Oriental Martial Arts, or Wrestling. The results follow:

**Success:** The escape is successful, and 1d6 points of CON damage are inflicted on the attacker.

**Lucky Break:** The victim escapes and inflicts 2d6 points of damage on the attacker.

**Failure:** The escape attempt fails completely, or 1-3 additional points of damage are inflicted by the attacker.

**Bad Break:** The escape fails, and the victim loses his orientation, taking a turn to recover.

**Crushing Blow:** This technique is used to break materials such as wood and brick. For every 1" of wood or every 1/4" of brick through which the agent must strike, the agent suffers a -10% penalty to his attack roll. When striking such materials, the agent suffers one point of bruise damage to either his hand or foot, whichever the agent used. For every 1" of wood or every 1/4" of brick beyond the initial amount, another point of bruise damage is taken.

**Success:** The agent breaks the desired material.

**Lucky Break:** The agent breaks the material and suffers no bruise damage.

**Failure:** The agent fails to break the material.

**Bad Break:** The agent suffers twice the amount of bruise damage and fails to break the material.

**Disarm:** This technique allows the agent to disarm another person by knocking a weapon out of his opponent's hands. The agent might be using a weapon himself.

If the agent uses a weapon to disarm an opponent, the skill check is calculated differently. Because the agent is using both his weapon and a close-combat fighting style, inclusion for both skills must be made. Add 1/2 his weapon skill and 1/2 his close-combat fighting style together. A penalty of -20% is then subtracted from this total (this penalty is the usual inclusion for using a special technique). An agent cannot disarm an opponent if the agent is not skilled with the weapon he is using. The agent cannot use the weapon at default or use the Basic Melee skill with this technique.

If the agent does not use a weapon to disarm his opponent, a successful skill check at a -20% penalty must be made. If successful, the agent must use either his hands or feet to knock the opponent's weapon away.

**Success:** The agent disarms the opponent, and the weapon lands 2d6 feet away from its wielder.

**Lucky Break:** The agent disarms the opponent as per "Success." The opponent is so surprised that he may take no action on the following turn.

**Failure:** The disarm attempt fails, and the opponent retains his weapon.

**Bad Break:** The grip on the agent's own weapon, if any, is lost, and that weapon

lands 1d6 feet away. If the agent wasn't using a weapon, the agent throws himself off balance and must take a turn to recover.

**Feint:** An agent using this technique is attempting to fake out his opponent on the first turn, then follow up the next turn by striking with total surprise. The feint technique itself does no damage, but the attack made on the following turn receives a bonus.

The feint technique is attempted at a -20% penalty to the agent's chance of success. If successful, the agent follows it up on the next turn by using another special technique. This second technique does not suffer its normal penalty, but instead is performed at a +10% bonus. The player must announce that this special technique will follow the feint prior to using the feint technique. The feint is not useful until the agent has mastered 2nd level in his melee style.

**Success:** The feint works, and the agent may use the upcoming technique at a +10% bonus.

**Lucky Break:** The feint works so well that the upcoming technique may be attempted at a +20% bonus.

**Failure:** The feint technique fails, and the agent must attack the following turn using the technique previously announced. This technique is attempted at its full penalty listed within its description.

**Bad Break:** The feint fails so badly that the agent loses the next turn and must spend the time getting repositioned.

**Incapacitate:** The agent using this technique weakens his opponent's joints, such as the knees, elbows, and shoulders, by delivering smashing blows to those areas. A successful attack causes the opponent to make all further attacks and defenses at a -10% penalty. Using this technique several times in a row has cumulative effects. The effects of each use of this technique last one to two turns, plus additional turns equal to the agent's level. The technique is applied at a -20% penalty.

**Success:** The attack succeeds, and the opponent must attack and defend with the above penalty.

**Lucky Break:** The attack succeeds as per "Success." The duration of the penalty is doubled.

**Failure:** The agent fails to make a successful attack.

**Bad Break:** The attack misses, and the agent's next initiative is made at a -5 penalty.

**Meditation:** This technique may be used before and after a fight by those agents with Oriental Martial Arts skill. If used before a fight, the agent must spend at least one hour in a meditative state. At the end of the meditation, the agent must



make an Oriental Martial Arts skill check at a -30% penalty. If successful, the agent may make all subsequent Oriental Martial Arts attacks in the next hour at a +10% bonus. If any special techniques are used, they are preformed at half their normal penalty. The duration of a fight is at the Administrator's discretion. It may be a single fight or a series of brief encounters in one extended battle.

When this technique is used after a fight, it allows the agent to heal damage taken. If the agent must make a successful skill check at a -30% penalty, he is able to heal 1d6 points of bruise damage or 1d3 points of wound damage to any area desired. The player may decide whether wound or bruise damage is healed. This healing may only be used once per fight and will never heal more damage than was taken in that particular fight. This technique may only be used to restore the agent's hit points, not another persons.

**Success:** The meditation works and has the aforementioned effects.

**Lucky Break:** The agent's attacks are made at a +15% bonus, as opposed to the usual +10% bonus, or all special techniques are attempted at a -5% penalty. If the special technique being used has a normal penalty of -10%, the technique is attempted without penalty. If the Lucky Break is rolled when restoring damage, the agent heals an extra two points of

damage.

**Failure:** The meditation fails and provides no bonuses to the Oriental Martial Arts skill checks, or the agent fails to heal any damage sustained in the fight.

**Bad Break:** The agent is preoccupied during the fight and makes all Oriental Martial Arts skill checks at a -10% penalty. If the agent attempts any special techniques, an additional -10% penalty is applied. Agents who try to heal themselves fail. Bruise damage of 1d6 points requires an extra hour to heal, or wound damage of 1-3 points requires an extra day to heal.

**Weapon:** The technique allows the agent to use a weapon against an opponent while employing the Oriental Martial Arts skill. The agent is able to attack twice in one turn, once with the weapon and once with the Oriental Martial Arts skill.

Because he is using both a weapon and an Oriental Martial Arts, inclusion for both skills must be made. Add 1/2 his weapon skill to 1/2 his Oriental Martial Arts skill; the result is the agent's chance of success.

The player must announce prior to initiative which attack will come first and which will be second. The first attack is made at a -20% penalty, and the second attack is made at a -30% penalty. When the Oriental Martial Arts attack is made, no special techniques are allowed; only normal punches and kicks are performed.

The agent must be skilled with the weapon he employs; he may not use a weapon at default or with the Basic Melee skill. The Administrator must determine which weapons are usable with Oriental Martial Arts. No ranged weapons are allowed because the agent is in hand-to-hand combat.

**Success:** The attack is successful.

**Lucky Break:** If the Lucky Break occurs on the first attack, the second attack is made at a -20% penalty instead of -30%. If the Lucky Break is rolled on the second attack, the opponent suffers a -5 penalty to the next initiative roll.

**Failure:** The attack misses, and the second attack is still allowed at its normal penalty.

**Bad Break:** If the Bad Break occurs on the first attack, the agent has overextended and loses his second attack. If the Bad Break is rolled on the second attack, the agent suffers a -5 penalty to his next initiative roll.

**Weapon display:** An agent using this technique is able to twirl his weapon in circles, over his head, under his arms, and behind his back in an attempt to impress or intimidate their enemy. The agent must be skilled with the weapon being used. Weapon Display cannot be used at default or with the Basic Melee skill. In order to determine the agent's chance of success, add 1/2 his Oriental Martial Arts skill to 1/2 his weapon skill.

This technique is attempted at a -20% penalty. If the agent's skill check is successful, the opponent must make a WIL check to resist watching the weapon display. If the WIL check fails, the opponent must watch the entire display, which takes 2d4 turns. If the WIL check succeeds, the opponent may ignore the weapon display and attack the agent without pause. The agent may then discontinue the display, and initiative is determined normally.

In the event that the WIL check fails, the agent proceeds with the weapon display. Once the display is over, the opponent must then make a 1/2 WIL check in order to enter the fight right away. If this 1/2 WIL check is failed, the enemy is not able to attack or defend for another turn, enabling the agent to attack or perform some other action during that time. If the 1/2 WIL check is successful, the opponent may enter the fight immediately.

**Success:** The agent has either intimidated or impressed the enemy and delayed that person's actions as above. A successful roll also allows the agent a free attack or other action if the enemy's 1/2 WIL check is failed.

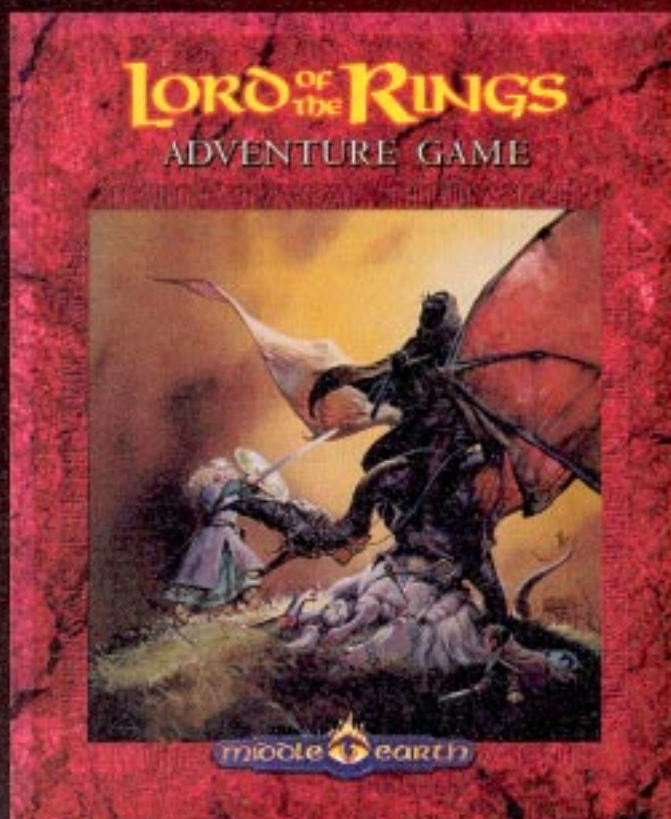
**Lucky Break:** The opponent is so intimidated that not only is the entire display watched, but the person will not take action against the agent until a successful 1/2 WIL check is made. The opponent is allowed a 1/2 WIL check every turn. Once the check is made, the individual may react normally.



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**Failure:** The agent fails to impress or intimidate the opponent. The individual ignores the agent's efforts and attacks immediately.

**Bad Break:** The opponent attacks, and the agent must spend a turn repositioning

the weapon. A skill check at full ability must be made. If failed, the agent drops the displayed weapon, and it lands 2d4 feet away.

**Withstand blow:** This technique al-

lows the agent to be mentally prepared for a blow, thereby taking less damage. This technique is most useful for agents who have no other alternative and are unable to defend themselves, such as during interrogation when the agent is tied up. The agent is not able to take any other action during this turn.

The technique is attempted at a -20% penalty. If successful, the agent suffers half damage from the blow (all fractions are rounded downward). If multiple attacks are made against the agent within the same turn, the player is able to choose which attack the agent attempts to withstand. When this technique is used against another technique, damage is halved as above, as is any duration of the effects from that technique.

**Success:** The agent suffers half damage from the opponent's blow.

**Lucky Break:** The agent makes one-quarter damage from the attack.

**Failure:** The agent takes the damage rolled on the die.

**Bad Break:** The blow was not prepared for, and the agent was struck for an additional two points of damage. Ω

### TOP SECRET/S.I.™ Revised Combat Techniques Chart

Technique	Boxing	Wrestling	Martial arts
Attack/Defend	x		
Blind fighting	x	x	x
Choke hold		x	
Crushing blow			x
Disarm		x	x
Drop		x	x
Feint	x	x	x
Hold		x	x
Incapacitate	x	x	x
Instant defense			x
Instant stand		x	x
Knock down	x	x	x
Leap		x	x
Meditation			x
Multi-attacks	x		x
Multi-defense	x	x	x
Stun	x		x
Surprise action			x
Throw		x	x
Vital areas	x		x
Weapon			x
Weapon display			x
Withstand blow	x	x	x

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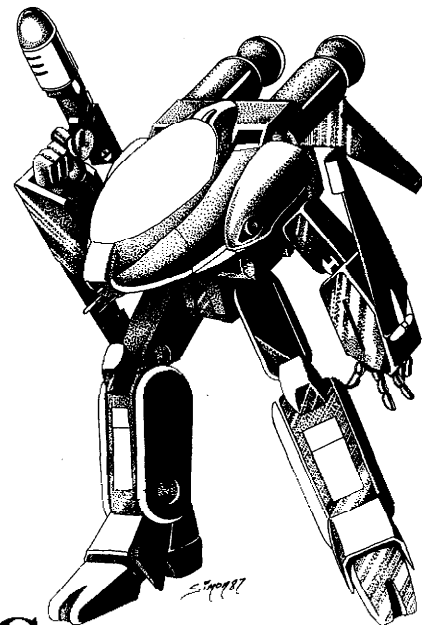
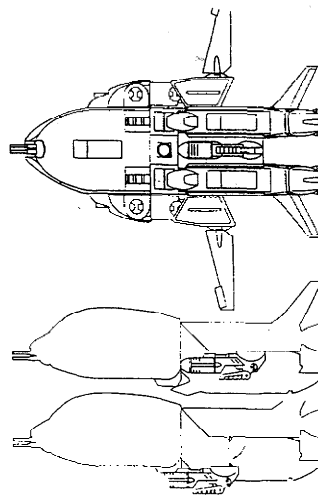
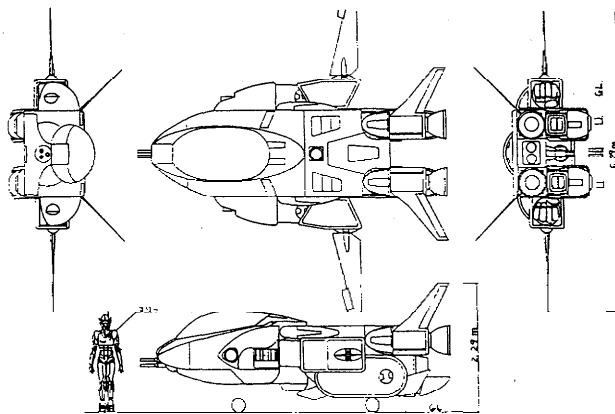
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# SAGE advice

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 writers' guidelines for the magazine).

Join the sage for the second in his two-part travelogue on Athas, the world of the new DARK SUN™ campaign setting. The Rules Book and the Wanderer's Journal are found in the DARK SUN boxed set.

**The Ranger's Followers table in the Rules Book, pages 25-26, does not give levels or races for followers with character classes. What are they?**

I suggest rolling 1d3+1 for level. The DM should pick races according to Table 3 (Rules Book, page 4). For random generation, I suggest: Preservers must be human, elf, or half-elf (roll 1d3). Thieves should be human, dwarf, elf, or half-elf (roll 1d4). Druids should be human, half-elf or thri-kreen; roll 1d3. Independent muls are ex-slaves and not inclined to become followers. Halflings are distrustful and generally not trusted; they make suitable followers only for other halflings. Likewise, it seems to me that nobody but a halfling or an adventurous human would follow a halfling.

**Are the character kits from the various Complete Handbooks available to characters on Athas?**

The material in the Handbooks is all optional and available in any campaign where the DM thinks it will be useful. Not all the character kits, optional rules, and new equipment will fit into DARK SUN campaigns, but some surely will. The DM, however, has final say.

**Does the water-find proficiency work in any terrain? If not, what is**

**the difference between it and the survival proficiency? Can a character use both proficiencies in the same area?**

The water-find proficiency works in any terrain, but yields only water. Survival works in only one type of terrain, but it yields both food and water. If a character with both of these proficiencies tries one and fails, the DM probably should allow the character to try the other one; failing the check doesn't necessarily mean there is no food or water to be found in the area, just that the character can't find it; using a different approach often is the best way to solve a difficult problem. However, if the character succeeds with one proficiency the DM would be quite right to rule that the second fails or has a hefty penalty; there's only so much food and water in the wilderness.

**Do a half-giant's weapons do an extra die of damage like a giant's weapons do? Half-giant equipment costs twice as much as a human's; does a half-giant's food and water cost twice as much as a human's?**

Some of the giants described in the *Monstrous Compendium* gain an extra damage die, sometimes two extra dice, for their oversize weapons. Athasian half-giants don't have this ability.

An Athasian half-giant needs the same sort of food and water as any human, but he has to buy twice as much as a human or demi-human does.

**Considering a thri-kreen's four claw attacks, can a thri-kreen use four melee weapons, one in each hand, or two two-handed weapons? Can they use four-handed weapons? What are the game statistics for four-handed versions of common weapons?**

An armed thri-kreen can use at most one two-handed weapon, or two one-handed weapons, just as a human or demi-human can. Just because a thri-kreen can attack with four claws does not mean it can coordinate four weapons at once. Before somebody writes and asks: No, this does not mean thri-kreen cannot hurl more

than two missiles each round; they get the full rate of fire listed in the rules for darts and similar hand-hurled missiles (but they can't use their extra hands to get a rate of fire better than that listed in the rules). Statistics on four-handed weapons are up to the DM; however, I suggest that limits on thri-kreen strength and coordination make such weapons no more effective than two-handed weapons. Note also that thri-kreen can bite while wielding weapons, but they cannot claw while doing so. I suppose a kind DM might allow a thri-kreen to use a claw as a secondary weapon under the "Attacking with Two Weapons" rule in the PHB, page 96.

**What advancement table do gladiators use?**

They use the paladin/ranger table.

**Can bards backstab?**

No. Bards don't have time for the anatomical studies that allow thieves to use their backstab ability.

**Do the inactive characters on a character tree get an extra die of ceramic pieces when they advance a level?**

This is up to the DM, but giving high-level characters a little extra cash is a darn good idea unless you want a lot of experienced but poor adventurers coming into the campaign at critical points in the story line. Generous but fiscally conservative DMs might want to add an extra +1 to the roll, rather than a full die for each extra level gained.

**Wood, obsidian, and bone weapons have a percentage chance of breaking. Are enchanted weapons made from these less likely to break, or are they immune to the breakage rule?**

Are we reading the same set of rules here? The "breaking weapons" section in the Rules Book (page 51) doesn't use percentages at all. Considering how unlikely breakage is—a 1-in-20 chance when a hit does maximum damage—I can't see any clean, workable way to give enchanted weapons a bonus. The DM might decide to make enchanted weapons immune to breakage, or he might give an enchanted weapon a chance to resist breakage by making a save vs. crushing blow (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 38-39) instead of breaking automatically when the dreaded roll of 1 comes up.

**How much damage does a person caught in a sandstorm take? How long will it take a person buried by sand or dust to suffocate?**

Only extraordinary sandstorms actually cause damage. The worst effects of blowing sand are reduced visibility (Rules Book, page 84) and the fact that sand tends to get into everything, like clothing, armor, equipment, and provisions. Athas, how-

ever, probably has more than its share of extraordinary sandstorms. The DM will have to handle these on a case-by-case basis. I suggest that characters escape damage altogether if they have shelter of any sort (a tent or the lee side of any barrier such as a boulder, hill, or stand of cactus). Characters exposed to the full force of the wind might suffer 1-2 six-sided dice of damage per hour, turn, or minute, depending on how ferocious the storm is. Blowing dust might force characters to save vs. poison or suffer minor damage if they don't breathe through a cloth or filter.

According to the Wanderer's Journal, a character buried in the dust of the Sea of Silt can stay alive for about four minutes (see page 40, "Wading"). To determine survival time more accurately, use the rules on "Holding Your Breath" in the *PHB*, page 122.

**Since the "normal" animals on Athas would be considered pretty nasty monsters on most other worlds, how useful on Athas are speak with animals and the various spells that can affect or summon animals? Will they also work on most "monsters"?**

In the strictest terms, a *speak with animals* spell won't work on many of the most common Athasian "animals," as these really are fantastic creatures. Nevertheless, Athas does have small lizards, snakes, mammals, and birds that are true animals. Athas also has great cats, bats, and an assortment of other mundane animals—enough normal fauna to make the various animal-affecting spells worthwhile. *Speak with animals* also works on commonly domesticated creatures of Athas, such as mekillots, inix, kanks, and erdlus.

**Why are there so few creatures included in the DARK SUN world? The list in the rules, even when augmented by a *Monstrous Compendium* many times larger than the volumes TSR has been putting out recently, is pretty small for players and DMs accustomed to the hundreds of creatures available in the regular AD&D game. Is such a volume coming out?**

Athas has very few species because it's a site of a worldwide ecological disaster. A dying ecology means lots of extinctions and very few surviving species.

There is a DARK SUN *Monstrous Compendium* in the works. Look for it in February 1992; it will be 96 pages long.

**Why are the psionically powerful mind flayers absent from Athas? What about beholders?**

I can't think of one good reason why any sane mind flayer would remain on the surface of Athas when it could escape by plane *shifting* or travelling astrally. The scorching heat alone would be enough to

discourage a mind flayer, not to mention that fact that almost everything that moves has psionics, something that tends to render the mind flayer's psionic abilities indifferent. As for beholders, I can think of at least three reasons why they aren't listed in the rules: 1) They're all dead, because Athas is a tough place; 2) They never were there in the first place; not every world boasts all the species described in the *Monstrous Compendium*; 3) They are around, all right, but are very rare and still lurking deep underground, waiting for a few unlucky Athasians to show up for dinner. (Maybe the mind flayers are lurking down there with them.)

**How does Athas fit into the SPELLJAMMER universe?**

The official TSR position is that Athas lies within a closed crystal sphere; it cannot be reached by spelljammers.

**Does Athas have the equivalent of Oerth's or Toril's Underdark?**

This is unrevealed but unlikely. There are dungeons and subterranean ruins on Athas, but the vast majority of the action takes place on the surface.

**How much do thieves' picks and tools cost on Athas?**

Good thieves' tools are primarily metallic and sell for the listed price on Athas (30

gp). Less-durable tools cobbled together from cactus spines, bone, and other materials sell for 3 sp; however, these probably need frequent replacement. Hard-minded DMs might apply the breakage rule on page 51 of the Rules Book whenever a rogue fails to pick a lock or remove a trap using cheap tools.

**How many attacks can a character wearing wrist razors deliver each round? Can a thief wearing wrist razors on each arm attempt two backstabbing attacks in one round?**

The normal melee rules apply to wrist razors. A character wearing one set gets his normal allotment of melee attacks. A character wearing two sets gets his normal attacks, plus one extra attack for the second set (see "Attacking with Two Weapons," *PHB*, page 96). A thief wearing two sets of wrist razors can attempt a backstab *only* with his first attack.

And one miscellaneous question:

**Is there a reason why the old DMG table for naturally detecting invisibility (page 60) was omitted from the AD&D 2nd Edition rules?**

You'll find a streamlined set of rules covering this situation in the description for the *invisibility* spell in the new *PHB*, page 142. Ω

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# Where's the Thief?



Artwork by Gerald P. Sawyer



# Sneaking around in the AD&D® 2nd Edition BATTLESYSTEM™ game

The 2nd Edition BATTLESYSTEM™ and BATTLESYSTEM Skirmishes miniatures rules are very playable systems for hosting large- and small-scale fantasy battles involving monsters, troops, and spell-casters. What these games lack, though, are adequate rules dealing with thieves. Thieves are popular characters in the AD&D® game, and players who prefer them will not want to be left out of the fun in the miniatures battles, so more rules detailing them are necessary.

## Thieves on battlefields

Since rules covering combat and other skills must be somewhat condensed in order to be easily used in miniatures battles, thief skills must be revised as well.

The first step in converting thieves for use in BATTLESYSTEM games is to convert AD&D game levels to BATTLESYSTEM hits. This is done by using the rules in the BATTLESYSTEM rule book on page 106, treating thieves just as priests and wizards are treated, thus giving the figure 1 hit for every three levels that the character possesses and rounding all results up (see Table 1).

The next step is to convert thief skills to a form usable in BATTLESYSTEM games. The pick-pockets, hear-noise, and read-languages skills can be dropped, since they have little applicability to battlefield conditions. Backstabbing rules are covered in the Skirmishes book on page 107, but are further developed later. The thief's climbing, trap-detection, and stealth skills have obvious battlefield uses and are shown in Table 2. Adjustments for nonhuman thieves are given in Table 3. These adjustments are added to the thief's basic chance of success. In no case will the chance of

success be greater than 90% (a roll of 10 is always a failure). Battlefield conditions are not the most favorable for characters accustomed to urban living.

When one of the allowable skills is used, 1d10 is rolled. Any result equal to or lower than the number listed signifies success; rolling above the listed number indicates failure. A roll of 10 is always a failure, regardless of modifications. Each skill roll is made during the thief's movement phase.

*Lock picking* – This skill allows the thief to open a locked door without the need of breaking it down. It will not affect a fortress gate or a portcullis. This skill may be attempted as often as desired.

*Find/Remove traps* – This skill allows the thief to locate any trap within 1". Any trap found may be harmlessly deactivated if a second successful roll is made during the thief's melee-combat phase; failure on the second roll indicates that the trap remains armed.

*Stealth attack* – This skill allows the thief to approach an enemy unit at 12" speed and employ a backstabbing attack during his movement phase. The thief must be behind the enemy unit at the beginning of his movement phase in order to employ this attack. If the stealth-attack roll is successful, the thief then attacks and does damage according to the backstabbing rules in Skirmishes, page 107. If the stealth-attack roll fails, the thief must complete his move but makes only an ordinary attack that is resolved during the melee-combat phase. All attacks from the rear receive the usual +4 penalty to the target's armor rating (AR). Any figure can be the target of a backstabbing attack.

*Stealth move* – This skill allows the thief to move as if he were invisible. (For the effects of invisibility, see the spell description for *mass invisibility* in the

**Table 1**  
Thief Hits in BATTLESYSTEM games

Thief levels	Thief's game hits
1-3	1
4-6	2
7-9	3
10-12	4
13-15	5
16-18	6
19-21	7

**Table 2**  
Thief Skills in BATTLESYSTEM games

Skills	Thief hits					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Lock picking	4	4	6	7	9	9
Find/Remove traps	3	5	6	7	8	9
Stealth attack	3	5	7	9	9	9
Stealth move	2	4	6	8	9	9
Climbing	9	9	9	9	9	9

**Table 3**  
Skill Adjustments For Nonhuman Thieves

Race	Lock picking	Find/Remove traps	Stealth attack	Stealth move	Climbing
Dwarf	+1	+2	0	0	-1
Elf	0	0	+1	+2	0
Gnome	+1	+1	+1	+1	-1
Half-elf	0	0	0	+1	0
Halfling	+1	+1	+1	+2	-1

**BATTLESYSTEM** rule book, page 92.) The movement cost while performing a stealth move is 4" for every 10' moved. A skill roll must be made each time the thief wishes to move, with failure revealing the thief. This skill cannot be used while the thief is in contact with an enemy unit.

*Climbing*—This skill allows the thief to climb walls or cliffs without the aid of ladders or grapples, at the rate of 2" for every 10' climbed; this allows the thief to cross obstacles at the same rate. The thief cannot attack or use stealth move while doing this.

### Units of thieves

Entire units of thieves can be created, if desired. A standard unit of thieves might look like this: AD 6; AR 9; Hits 1; ML 11; MV 12". Groups of these units will be able to function as irregular units or skirmishers. All the commanders of these units will

be thieves. Thief units may also take part in missile combat if equipped with slings or short bows:

Thief archers: AD 6; AR 9; Hits 1; ML 11; MV 12"; Range 5/10/20

Thief slingers: AD 8/6; AR 9; Hits 1; ML 12"; Range 5/10/20

Thief units might also use poison. If they are using poison on their hand weapons, raise their AD from AD 6 to AD 8. Thief archers using poisoned arrows will have AD 8 in missile combat. Thief slingers cannot poison their missile weapons. Thieves using poison are assumed to have enough of it to last throughout a given battle.

The basic point cost for thief units is 6. Adding short bows costs 5, adding slings costs 6, and adding poison costs 2. No other weapons or armor will be added.

### Thieves and traps

A scenario that features thieves will also

be likely to feature traps. Traps are normally placed inside a building by the defenders before play begins; their location and description must be noted accurately on a piece of graph paper. Agreement must be reached by the players before the battle as to what sort of traps are to be allowed. No piece is placed on the field to represent any given trap, and no trap can go off more than once. Table 4 details types of traps that can be used in **BATTLESYSTEM** games.

Using these rules, you can use thieves as military auxiliaries, particularly when attacking fortresses or urban areas. You could also create a scenario of a major attack on a thieves' guild or bandit gang. Whatever scenario you decide on, thieves can now play a bigger role in your AD&D miniatures battles. Ω

**Table 4**  
Trap Types in **BATTLESYSTEM** Games

Types of traps:	Arrows	Ballista	Deadfalls	Pits
Damage:	d6	d12	d12	d6
Creates obstacle:	No	No	Yes	Yes
Point cost:	1	2	2	1

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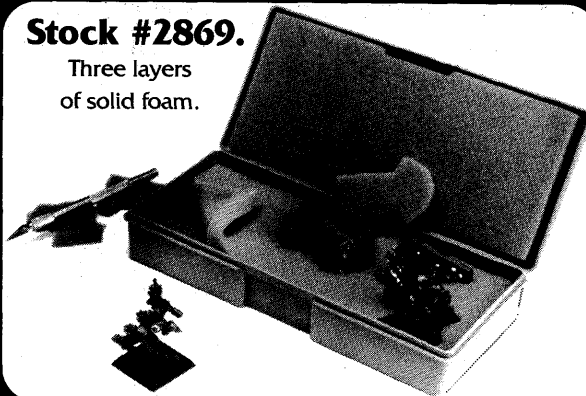
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# FORUM

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I am writing in response to Bradley Wadle's letter in "Forum" in DRAGON® issue #167. As Mr. Wadle stated, the energy-draining attacks from the Negative Material plane are extremely unbalancing in AD&D® game terms. I agree with Mr. Wadle that it is improper to drain levels; I think it would be more suitable to drain strength, constitution, and dexterity points. The number of points drained per successful attack from the character should depend on the creature, as follows:

—Wight or wraith—1 point each from strength and constitution.

—Spectre—2 points each from strength and constitution.

—Vampire—2 points each from strength and constitution, and 1 point from dexterity.

Ability-score losses should have to be cured by restoration (one restoration spell cures the loss of two ability points from one or two ability scores). For example: Narg, an 8th-level fighter with S 16 and C 12, gets drained by a spectre, lowering his ability scores to S 14 and C 10. Two *restoration* spells must be cast on him to allow him to regain his initial ability scores.

John Cummings  
Armonk NY

I've been keeping up with the recent letters about the game realities involved in the use of level-draining undead. There have been several solutions proposed as alternatives to the permanent loss of memory, abilities, and experience. None of these have the ability to inspire the fear that the loss of hard-earned levels does.

My idea on how to handle the level-draining abilities of undead concerns making the level drain a temporary thing. As every player knows, a 5th-level fighter character who is touched by a wight loses 1d4 hp plus one level of experience. The loss of the level of experience also causes the character to lose 1d8 hp more and makes him less competent at his class, as shown by his poorer THACO score and saving throws. In most cases, this is the end of the matter unless the character can find a 14th-level

cleric willing to put himself through the trouble and unnatural aging of casting a *restoration* spell for the unlucky fighter. Finding a cleric willing to do this shouldn't be easy at all.

In the world I run, level drains are temporary. As long as a character doesn't either lose all his levels or die of the total damage done by the undead, he will recover from the draining. The lost levels will return at the rate of one level per day. This allows for the characters to regain their nerve, shake off the unworldly chill of being touched by a form of death, and regain or rebuild the energy reserves inherent in a hero or heroine. On the other hand, if the character dies during the encounter, things proceed just as in the AD&D 2nd Edition rules. If the character dies of the level drains, he becomes an undead of the type that drained him. If he dies of the hit-point loss, he is simply dead. This system is simple, easy to handle, kind to the characters, just as scary to the players, and follows the legends about the effects of the touch of undead much better than the standard treatment in the AD&D 2nd Edition rules.

There is also an item I would like to bring up to the collected DMs who read "Forum," and that is the subject of monsters that have been designed in such a way as to act as spoilers when they affect the characters. I use the term "spoilers" because these particular monsters have an affect on characters that is disproportionate to the monsters' importance in the game. An example of a spoiler is the level-draining undead: One undead touch can destroy a year of careful play.

The troglodyte, with its stench, is also unbalanced. . . . The effect of the troglodyte's musk attack, according to the AD&D 2nd Edition *Monstrous Compendium*, is that characters "failing their saving throws vs. poison are so revolted as to lose 1d6 points of Strength. This loss remains in effect for 10 rounds." This is patently unfair to any character who is strong enough to have an attack or damage bonus. A character with average (11) strength, on an average roll of 1d6, would drop to a strength of 8. This weakens him, but he doesn't lose anything from his attack or damage modifiers, as he has none. A character with an 18 strength, even without exceptional strength, loses a lot more. An average roll of 1d6 drops him to a 15 strength, and he loses all attack and damage bonuses. This is ridiculously unfair to the stronger characters in the game.

My way of handling this is to use a rule from the D&D® game. In that game, a character who fails his saving throw against the troglodyte's musk attack takes a -2 penalty on his attack

rolls and nothing more. This penalizes everyone the same amount and removes the troglodyte from the spoiler category.

Ivy K. Ryan  
Springfield OR

I write in answer to Mr. Michael Repka's letter in DRAGON issue #165. I can understand his DM perfectly well, since I've been a GM for two years and also have my own PCs. Yet the way Michael's DM is using his character is very disruptive and will eventually destroy the game, because his PC is much too powerful. My own PC career started out when I was DMing a group with only two players, using a ranger and a fighter. Since then, I've had various characters, one of them being an extremely powerful mage with only one small problem: He was hunted by a god, and using his magic would have told the god where he was. Additionally, the players became suspicious, resulting in some of the most realistic scenes we had. Thus, I would like to provide a few guidelines for DMs who would like to play PCs without destroying the game balance:

1. Don't use fighters. It's very boring for players to hear about the damage your PC did, and it destroys the fluidity of your fight. It's better to use mages, bards, scholars, etc.

2. Don't use characters who are too powerful. Make them the same (or lower) level as your players' PCs. If you want to use ultra-characters, see that they can't use their abilities freely. Let them be hunted by something more powerful or simply be unwilling to reveal their true identity (think of Fizban in the DRAGONLANCE® novels).

3. Give your NPC an aim aside from amassing wealth and power. It makes him more distinctive and less interfering with the players' purposes.

4. Keep your NPC out of important decisions, except if the players have forgotten a vital detail they are supposed to remember, if they are too close to the solution too early in the game, or if they are too far away late in the game.

5. Most importantly, don't transfer your knowledge to your NPC. He cannot know that this door is trapped, or who's the murderer.

By using these rules, a DM's NPC can be a valuable addition to any game.

After all, there is only one person who can truly unbalance a game, and that's the DM. But remember, DMs are only human and as long as nobody tells them what's wrong with their game, they won't know and thus, they won't change it.

Sabine Volkel  
Korb, Germany

I have just finished reading the letters replying to Robert Rodger's request for assistance in his "Monty Haul" STAR WARS: The RPG\* campaign (from West End Games), and I found many resourceful and imaginative ideas on how to handle Red-eyes, his armor, and his wealth. [See issues #163, 170, and 175.]

Another way to cause Red-eyes some grief with his armor is to use other PCs or NPCs to irritate him. A kid may decide he wants to see the inner workings of the armor ("Gee, Mr. Red-eyes, all I wanted to do was see how your armor worked. I took it apart and when I put it back together, there were all these extra circuits an' gizmos an' stuff.") A Tongue-Tied Engineer may decide that he can make the armor more efficient with several adjustments ("Just hold still. If I can just depolarize the power pack, I can—" several ominous electrical pops follow, then silence while Red-eyes lights up like a landing beacon), or the Ewok the group accidentally picked up on Endor may decide to play some practical jokes on Red-eyes (a few ice cubes, small insects, or rodents down the back of the armor should make Red-eyes squirm for a while).

Perhaps when Red-eyes bought the armor he unknowingly purchased some second-hand armor sold by the former owner due to some bugs in the system. An excellent quirk to play out in the armor could be a short in the power pack, causing a 45%-50% chance of failure. Another could be an annoying squeak in the joints that cannot be repaired or remedied, making it difficult to surprise enemies. Yet another could be the fact that the former owner enjoyed using phosphorescent paints, and after 24 hours of exposure to sunlight, the armor glows like a beacon in the dark, making Red-eyes an easy target for Imperial troops hiding in the shadows. A serious defect could be that the armor is resistant to blaster fire, but when hit with a bullet from a black-powder pistol or slugthrower, or takes a blow from a melee weapon, the armor is easily dented or pierced, causing normal damage to Red-eyes (who, of course, would not get the bonuses of the armor added to his Strength roll due to this defect). Other defects for second-hand equipment could be devised using the tables from the article "Magic Gone Haywire," in DRAGON #163, as an example.

An additional way to get the attention of Red-eyes' player is to assign movement penalties, not necessarily with normal actions but with speed-related actions and evasions, regardless of the dexterity enhancements. Raising the difficulty for movement should tell Red-eyes' player that even though the armor is protecting his character, it can be harmful due to the hindrances it causes as far as movement is concerned. Also, a few squads of Stormtroopers led in group fire against Red-eyes by a very competent commander, such as Mar Barezz (see the hardcover STAR WARS: The RPG rule book, Chapter Three, Adventure Section, for further details on this ISB agent) could give the player a picture of what kind of trouble the armor can cause. You can allow Imperial troops or bounty hunters to have a personal ion cannon or EMP carbine (as per the stats in *The Imperial Sourcebook*, modified for extra stopping power if you're really nasty) to use against Red-eyes' armor. The damage caused by such weapons may not stop Red-eyes, but it should effectively lower the protection it gives him for a short time, allowing the Stormtroopers or bounty hunters time to take further action against Red-eyes and his friends.

Placing Red-eyes in a life-or-death situation

where he has to willingly abandon his precious armor in order to save the life of a friend (or his own life) should definitely give his player an idea of how much trouble the armor is, especially if you administer the penalties on evasions and speed-related actions mentioned before.

The armor could also have serious setbacks as well, such as not being able to fit in a starfighter cockpit or a one-man escape pod. The armor may even have effects after Red-eyes takes it off, such as fatigue from supporting the armor for such a long period of time (effectively raising all difficulty numbers for Strength rolls by one or two for a short time until he recovers) or even more serious problems that are best left to the GM's imagination. The armor could also be the target of an attack from greedy crimelords who wish to steal and sell the armor to the highest bidder or reproduce it for their own evil purposes.

As for his incredible wealth, I enthusiastically agree with those who suggested having the Empire closing down banks at which Red-eyes may have accounts, reducing the number of credits on dead or unconscious NPCs, and forcing Red-eyes to pay taxes to the Empire. If you allow the players to use predesigned templates, do not allow any more credits than are printed on the templates. If they wish to buy extra equipment, allow them to do so as long as they don't get greedy. If the players are designing their PCs from scratch, allow them 5d6x10 credits after they finish selecting their equipment (always stress the basic necessities—a blaster, commlink, medpac, armor or a protective vest or helmet, syntherope, etc.). After each adventure, inform the players that their PC's will receive certain number of credits in accordance to how well they did in the adventure (like the system for skill and Force points); the credits they have may be used to buy replacement equipment or to have equipment modified or repaired, but the credits cannot be saved or hoarded. If you wish, you can also inform the players that if theirs PCs do not use the credits on themselves or their equipment, that they can donate the money to the Alliance, which would increase their chances for better equipment and would make the Alliance High Command look upon them more favorably (this does not mean, however, that the missions will be easier for them).

Mr. Ewing's idea of an encumbrance system for the STAR WARS system (from issue #170) is a great idea, but it would be a large undertaking for a GM, as different races move at different rates, not necessarily the regular five-meters-per-round rate or humans. Also, gravity (be it higher or lower than normal) would affect movement and the ability to carry certain amounts of equipment and armor, and that would further complicate the system. Mr.

Ehret's idea about using sonics against armor is also a "sound theory," but one that must be used with discretion as some races, such as the Xi'Dec (see Galaxy Guide 4: Alien Races for details), who have very sensitive nervous systems and are especially susceptible to sonic attacks. A standard sonic rifle would probably have the range of a blaster rifle and would produce stun damage anywhere from 2d to 4d. Increasing the effects of such a weapon would be detrimental to the user if he is not taking the proper safety precautions and possibly even to the structure of the weapon itself.

Dale Meier  
Holstein IA

Since the publication of the AD&D 2nd Edition game, I have been overjoyed at the revision

of nonweapon proficiencies. I really wasn't interested in them before. I know you try to be complete and flexible, so you can't try to make everything a proficiency. However, I do think one proficiency should be added, especially after the publication of the *Complete Priest's* and *Wizard's Handbooks*. As most people know, most of the priests' and wizards' first few years of class-related experience comes from pouring over hundreds (maybe thousands) of tomes and prayer books. They learn about different cultures, different religions, different spell-casting methods, and countless other tidbits of knowledge. They would have had enough experience to warrant a proficiency I call researching: the ability, knowledge, or skill to go into any library using a written language the PC knows and be able to write together some sort of information. I find some pride in being able to find information where others were clueless. My character, a scholar priest (from *The Complete Priest's Handbook*) lives to read and glean information. What's more, he is a priest of Denier. He has achieved a rank of Duly Appointed Traveling Scribe, a position held by only nine others in his parish. Those knowledgeable about Denier know about the stockpiles of knowledge supposedly gained from a scribe's work.

A character with this proficiency must have spent long hours reading books, scrolls, and other forms of the written word. Thus, this proficiency is allowed only to wizards and priests and will be fairly costly at two slots. A character proficient in researching could go into a library he has already visited and research a subject he already knows with no modifier. If the subject is a variant on a known topic, the ability scores are modified by a -1. If the topic itself is fairly new to the researcher, the modifier is increased to -2, and so on. For each level of difficulty beyond that (as determined by DM), the modifier is changed by -1, to a maximum modifier of -5. If the library is new to the PC, a difficulty modifier is set by the DM using a scale of -1 to -5. These modifiers are then added together. A modifier could be as small as -1 or as great as -10.

Just think of it this way: How many times have you studied a particular problem or situation in an AD&D game and gone to your books for the answer? You probably knew just about where to look or knew enough to guess where it might be. That's basically what you are doing when you do research, using your old knowledge to gain new knowledge.

Obviously, with the low number of libraries existing in fantasy worlds, one must already have access to a library to use it. Not many people in that world would feel enough at home in any library to put it to good use, except for a character who is a wise wizard or an intelligent priest.

James Lawrence Knight  
Winston-Salem NC

There was an article in DRAGON issue #169, entitled "New Weapons for Old," written by Jordan Clarke Hayes. In this article, Mr. Hayes has made a mistake. The basildard that he describes is in no way a basildard except in its length. The weapon to which he is referring is the katar. The katar was a Hindu thrusting dagger with the H-shaped handle that Mr. Hayes credits to the basildard. The katar had a straight, short, broad, 12" (rarely 27") double-edged blade that was either ribbed or fullered (grooved). The point of this blade was slightly thick and very sharp, so as to pierce chain mail. This blade was made in India in the 18th and 19th centuries and was never found in Europe.

As a result, characters in D&D and AD&D games should find this weapon very hard to get and slightly on the expensive side at 100 gp.

The basilard, on the other hand, was quite common in Europe and should be easy to find and buy at 50 gp each; it was made throughout the Middle Ages from the 13th to 15th centuries. It had an I-shaped handle that varied from country to country. In Italy, the pommel and guard were both made the same length and straight across; in other European countries, the guard and pommel were different, the guard being markedly more curved and longer than the pommel. The basilard was first made in the town of Basel. Its length was between that of a short sword and a dagger.

I recommend *The Complete Encyclopedia of Arms and Weapons*, published by Bonanza Books and distributed by Crown Publishers Inc. (copyright 1979). Thank you for listening.

Marcus Wagner  
Long Valley NJ

I will start this by saying that I have had several mage PCs who reached high levels, but they mostly survived on their wits and not some high-powered magic staff, rod, or wand. They had *rings of protection*, but not too many as only so many rings can work at the same time. They managed to avoid the trap of relying on magical items.

On my world, the *wand of wonder* is a one-only item and an NPC owns it. He uses it in the arena between fights to amuse the crowd (they laugh when seeing butterflies attacking the man). A flame-tongue *sword* +3 is created only for the creature it is meant to be used upon, and it will either destroy itself as it kills its fated victim or it will compel its owner to hunt down that type of creature and attempt to kill it, thereby destroying itself. If a PC insists on bringing into my world some magical item given to her by some other DM, she will find that it will not help as much as it did on the other DM's world. Magical items are few and far between because they require so much time and effort to make that few mages would be willing to make them for others. Any items that mages make for themselves would be guarded so well that no thief could get to them and live to tell the tale.

Artifacts should be as hard to find as they are in our own world. The finder should have to expend as much time and energy, if not money, as any archaeologist. Granted, some people have stumbled across artifacts in this world, but that is a very rare happening and the finder rarely knows what she has found (some even use their finds as doorstops).

The point of this letter is that magical items should be very hard to get, and they should cost as much as a small castle to buy. Rings would be the exception, along with some *amulets of protection* and some of the lesser protective jewelry, such as might have been made by a magic-user for family and friends.

J. B. Coburn  
Sacramento CA

Psionics—the third mystical power (along with arcane and divine magic), as it has been named by gamers in my area—has a few unbalancing results when played to its full potential. The psionist, as described in the PHBR5 *The Complete Psionics Handbook*, clearly has several advantages over the other character classes.

One of the advantages of the psionist is distance. While the vast majority of wizard and priest spells require line of sight to a target (if not touch), the psionist has more freedom with his range. A psionist who wishes to

“contact” a nonpsionist may do so by using the contact ability (*TCPH*, page 80) with a virtually unlimited range. No touch or line of sight is required. The psionist doesn't even have to be on the same planet. All he needs is a name or an image, possibly gained through *ESP* or some knowledge of the person or creature he is trying to contact. Once contact is established, the target is at the mercy of the psionist. There are several abilities with an unlimited range that the psionist may use: mindlink, daydream, empathy, *ESP*, false sensory input, identity penetration, incarnation awareness, and others. Worst of all, the target does not usually have any way to detect or know that anything is even being done to him!

Unlike wizards and priests, the psionist's powers are not automatic. There is a chance that the power might not work because of a failed power check. However, also unlike the wizard and priest classes, the ability to use the power is not wiped from the mind of the psionist. He can try again and again until he gets it right. It works something like the old “power point” systems that gamers once used for wizards to give more freedom to their spell-casting. The limitation of having to roll a power check is not so great a hindrance when that is taken into consideration. So what if he failed his power check for contact several times before he was able to link up with someone's mind? The victim never knows that the psionist failed, much less how many attempts were made. Few if any wizards or priests can boast of influencing enemies from such a distance.

Psionists also have an advantage when encountering creatures that have magic resistance. While wizard and priest spells have a percentage chance of not taking effect (and still being wiped from the caster's mind, eliminating further attempts to use them), the psionist's abilities are not so restricted. As noted on page 110 of *TCPH*, *anti-magic shell*, *globe of invulnerability*, and several other magic-hampering spells have no effect against the vast powers of a psionist. Even a psionist who has been held immobile by a *hold person* spell may still use his mind. His powers do not require the use of verbal or somatic gestures. These powers even work underwater without restriction!

Psionists can harbor great power even at lower levels. By choosing his powers wisely, a psionist at 3rd level can use the domination ability that takes a wizard at least nine levels to attempt its use, and the wizard is not guaranteed to obtain the spell then. By sixth level, the psionist can use the ability of psychic drain (*TCPH*, page 101). This ability can be deadly if used offensively. Imagine a psionist of only 6th level planning to attack an entire party of 10th-level characters. He waits in a barroom and watches the party, familiarizing himself with them before they go to their rooms at the inn. The psionist patiently waits until he believes they are asleep, maybe even using *ESP* or some other ability to make sure. Once the party is asleep, the psionist contacts each party member one at a time and uses psychic drain on them. Even if the party member makes his saving throw, he still will have his intelligence, wisdom, and constitution reduced to three if over 90% of the victim's psionic potential is lost. The psionist is at complete liberty to drain as many points as he desires, then to convert the drained points into PSPs, for use with psychic drain against other party members! He never even had to leave the barroom downstairs. When the dirty work is done, he simply goes upstairs and relieves the dead or weakened party of any gold or items that he desires. The

closest a wizard can come to such power would be a fifth-level *feblemind* spell (10th-level wizard required) that only affects intelligence compared to the psionist's ability to affect not only intelligence but wisdom and constitution, as well as requiring a save vs. death. The sixth-level *death spell* is a better comparison, but it requires a wizard of 12th level to cast.

I have only covered a few of the game-unbalancing effects psionics can have. A single use of psionic blast can keep the oldest of dragons from flying. Automatic saving throws against phantasms (*TCPH*, page 110) and a +2 bonus against enchantment/charm spells (better than a specialist mage) are just a few other such effects for psionists.

Rather than remove psionics from my campaign, I have devised a means of toning down and balancing out the psionist. Despite the claims (*TCPH*, page 109) of psionics and magic being completely different, I have discovered that in some cases they need to be treated the same. Creatures with magic resistance should have an equal chance to resist psionic abilities. This would prevent low-level psionists (who can have 100% cover) from defeating dragons and mind flayers, while high-level wizards (who must be somewhat exposed to the dangerous beasts) have their powers reduced by magic resistance.

Of all the psionic abilities, the one that causes the most problem is contact. By allowing nonpsionists a chance to fight off contact, the other powers in the telepathic discipline are also limited. My suggestion is this for nonpsionists only: Take the average of intelligence, wisdom, and constitution of the target (or the average of intelligence and hit dice for monsters) and subtract five, using the resulting number for a type of psionic combat. The psionist rolls his power score to try to establish contact, using wisdom or less modified by distance. The target rolls his “power score” or “psionic savings throw” (the average of intelligence, wisdom, and constitution minus five) or less, modified by magical bonuses for protection, high wisdom, etc. Another modifier could be a bonus or penalty due to the difference in level between the target and the psionist, much the same way that the *dispel magic* spell works for wizards and priests. The highest number that did not exceed his power score wins the combat. Only one contact needs to be made against nonpsionists. Contact could not be used against other psionists (standard attack modes must be used, as per *TCPH*, pages 22-26).

With these few suggestions in effect, it should give the rest of the world a fair chance. I personally like psionics and believe they have the potential to add a whole new dimension into the AD&D game. But when a 3rd-level character has the potential to defeat dragons, something should be done to balance it all out. I invite helpful comments or suggestions about psionists and their abilities.

Geof Gilmore  
Arlington TX

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# Just Who Are These Folks?

A recap of “The Twilight Empire: Robinson’s War” story line

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*When, in the course of comic events, it becomes necessary to bring new readers up to date on our current graphic feature, you can count on the designer and editors to do so. If you have just started reading “The Twilight Empire,” or if you have misplaced the last two years of DRAGON Magazines in your collection, we present you with a quick catch-up on the current situation. Enjoy!*

## The good guys



### Robinson S. Edgar—Our hero

Rob is a man from Earth—New Hampshire, to be precise. He woke up one afternoon in a fantastic new world. How he got there is a mystery, as Rob has partial amnesia. He’s currently on a quest to regain the rest of his memory and get home. We know Rob is a novelist, is divorced, has a ten year-old daughter, and is a good swordsman. He was carrying a number of items from our world when he awoke (including a driver’s license, a cigarette lighter, and a gun) but these were tossed off a cliff in Robs first encounter with Kleg. The lighter and license have since turned up in the hands of Rob’s enemies.



### Bill, a.k.a. Maximilianus Xantho III—A griffon

Bill is a talking griffon who claims to be an enchanted prince, though there is some question as to whether he’s telling the truth. Bill has an eye for human ladies, a sharp wit, and a general dislike for things most griffons love—like horse flesh.



### Quillian Ciri—Fin’s brother

There are a number of mysteries surrounding Quill. Foremost among these is whether he had any part in the plot to assassinate Laird Randall Cameron. Another is why he was posing as a minstrel named Reynard. Quillian is a deadly shot with a bow and has shown some aptitude with magic.

### Jimmy Fitzpatrick—Quill’s squire

Jimmy is Quillian’s young companion. He’s a normal kid who has demonstrated no special abilities whatsoever—so far.



### Brenna DuDevan—Forest healer

Brenna is the first friendly person Rob met in the new world, and she has taken it upon herself to help Rob and be his guide. She has an owl companion named Galen. Brenna is skilled in healing and some minor forms of magic.



### Finella Ciri—Elfin warrior

Finella (Fin) rescued Rob from some muggers, then promptly landed him in jail by starting a fight in a bar in Midlan. She took an immediate liking to our hero and has been helping him in his quest. Fin is extraordinarily skilled as a fighter and a deadly shot with a bow. It was recently revealed that Finella is a princess (though she’s 27th in line for the throne).



### Laird Randall Cameron—Hiland chief

Randall is the chief of the hill country known as the Hilands. He’s been smitten with Finella since he first saw her, though she seems ambivalent about him. Someone tried to shoot Randy with a magical cross-bow bolt, though there is still some debate about who this actually was.





### **Aalandria—Elfin advisor to Laird Cameron**

Aalandria is worried about war spreading into Laird Randall's Hilands. She is very single-minded about this concern and is otherwise regarded as a ditz.

### **The bad guys**



### **Kleg—Half-ogre**

Kleg is a thug working for Lord Ugo Redhand. Unfortunately for Rob, Kleg was the first person Rob met upon awakening. Kleg stripped Rob of many of his possessions and dropped our hero off a cliff. Their relationship hasn't gotten any better since. Kleg leads a large band of Jenrat mercenaries.

### **Jenrats—Scum warriors**

Many of Kleg's best friends are Jenrats, which tells you as much about them as about him. Jenrats are short, greenish relatives of goblins (though less nasty). They hail originally from the mythical city of Jenn. Lord Redhand uses them to bolster his army and press gangs.



### **Lord Ugo Redhand—Ambitious warlord**

Ugo, the leader of a small country, was bent on conquering lands to the east (perhaps including the Hilands and the Free Plains) when he himself was attacked by the forces of the Witch Queen. This put

his plans of conquest on hold as he fought a losing war on the western front, until his alliance with the Witch Queen. Ugo hates Finella Ciri for some past offense and wants the pleasure of killing her with his own hands.

### **Horton—Master of Midlan**

Horton is the mayor of the small city of Midlan. He's been aiding Lord Redhand and is something of a sycophant.



### **Shandara—The Witch Queen**

Shandara is the Witch Queen of Ferron and a princess of the mysterious Twilight Empire. She recently proposed an alliance of her forces with those of Lord Redhand, in exchange for some of the items that Rob lost to Kleg. Why she would want these is unknown.



### **Kalil—Shandara's general**

Kalil is one of the Witch Queen's top military men, most recently her envoy to Lord Redhand. His powers and skills are unknown at this time, but he seems to be universally feared. He rides a black, bat-winged stallion.

### **The story so far**

Rob awoke one afternoon in a strange, new world, with a headache, a dry mouth, and almost total amnesia. Before he could recover his wits, he was seized by Kleg and dropped off a cliff for fun. Brenna rescued Rob and decided to help him regain his memory. She turned Rob over to Bill while she drove Kleg out of her forest. Rob lost some personal items in the encounter with Kleg.

Bill and Rob went to the town of Midlan to find help for Rob, but Bill was turned

away at the gates. Inside the town, Finella helped Rob defend himself from some muggers, but Fin then led Rob straight into a barroom brawl (accidentally, of course). Rob and Fin won the fight but landed in jail. They escaped with the help of Osgood (one of Brenna's friends) and left the city with Brenna.

Lord Redhand, who has a grudge against Fin, was delighted to learn of her capture, but his delight vanished when he discovered that Midlan's mayor, Horton, had allowed Fin to slip away. Enraged, Lord Redhand sent some men to capture our heroes. When Ugo's men found our friends, a terrible fight ensued. Rob, Fin, and Brenna were saved by the timely reappearance of Bill. All but one of Ugo's men were killed.

Meanwhile, the Witch Queen, Shandara, sent Kalil to get Ugo to surrender. Lord Redhand refused, but Kalil spotted Rob's driver's license (which Rob had lost in his first fight with Kleg, but which was recovered by Ugo's forces). Lord Redhand noticed the enemy generals' interest. Upon learning that Rob was traveling with Finella, Ugo sent Kleg to recapture Rob and his friends.

Our heroes discovered that the wizard Malik Magnus might be able to help Rob. On their way to the city of Weston, where the wizard lives, they stopped at Hiland Castle. There, they met Aalandria, Laird Randall Cameron, and Finella's brother Quillian (who was posing as a minstrel named Reynard).

Randall fell for Fin, which was fortunate as she then saved him from an assassination attempt. Rob, Fin, Bren, and Bill left the castle shortly afterward, soon hooking up with Quillian, now minus his Reynard disguise. The group was overtaken and ambushed by Kleg and his band of Jenrats; after a ferocious battle, the Jenrats lay dead and Kleg had escaped.

Arriving in Weston, Quill and Jimmy left the group while the rest sought Malik Magnus' sanctum. Meanwhile, Kalil had carried word of Rob's driver's license back to Shandara. She ordered the elf to return to Lord Redhand and offer him an alliance if he would turn over Rob's items to her. Lord Redhand agreed.

At Magnus' sanctum, it was revealed that Rob was from our Earth and that a dragon, Worlik, knew the secrets of dimensional travel. Magnus suggested that the group gain possession of a magical crystal, the Eye of Estal, which could compel Worlik's cooperation. As the party journeyed to the Sunken City of Valdor, the resting place of the Eye, Quillian was captured by agents of Laird Cameron. Jimmy escaped and followed the others to Valdor. And here our story continues. . .

THE

THE TWILIGHT EMPIRE

JICKMY ARRIVED TOO LATE TO KEEP OUR HEROES FROM ENTERING THE SUNKEN CITY OF VALDOR...

AND, SPEAKING OF QUILL, IN HILAND CASTLE...



WE'D GET PULPED IF WE WENT IN AFTER THEM, LUCY.

GUESS WE'LL HAVE TO WAIT WITH THEIR HORSES AND HOPE NOTHING COMES TO EAT US!

I HOPE MASTER QUILLIAN'S OKAY.



WAIT HERE FOR THE LAIRD'S JUSTICE!

OOF!



FAT CHANCE.

PORTUBOKA



HMPH!

PORTUBOKA KUAT.

HMM.

PORTU KARAS!

RRR

PERGI DAU!

IT WON'T WORK, ASSASSIN!



THE CELL IS WARDED AGAINST ALL BUT THE MOST POWERFUL MAGICKS.

I'M GLAD I TOOK YOUR ADVICE ON THAT ACCOUNT, AALANDRIA.

IF ONLY I'D LISTENED TO YOUR WARNINGS ABOUT THE WITCH QUEEN EARLIER...

WE'D HAVE THIS SCOUNDREL SWINGING BY NOW.

CRAP.

TM

WHILE,  
DEEP WITHIN  
THE SUNKEN CITY...

**WRITING &  
COLORING**

Stephen P.  
Sullivan

**ART**

John M. Hebert

**LETTERING**

Paul Hook

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# ROBINSON'S WAR

PART 23

FABULOUS!

HOW DID THE CITY SINK?

NO ONE'S SURE, REALLY.

MY PEOPLE SAY IT WAS A  
WIZARD'S DUEL, OR SOMESUCH.

MAYBE THEY JUST  
FORGOT TO CHECK THE  
LOCAL BUILDING CODES.

REMEMBER SOMETHING?

SOMETHING ABOUT MUSHROOMS.  
WISH I COULD PUT ALL THE  
PIECES TOGETHER.

WHY DID I COME  
HERE AND  
WHAT IS IT I'M  
LOOKING FOR?

EVERYBODY  
WATCH YOUR  
STEP.

NO TELLING  
WHAT WE MIGHT  
FIND DOWN  
HERE.



FENGAL'S BEARD!



BILL, YOU IDIOT, FLY!

WRRAWK!

BLOOP  
BLOOP  
BLOOP



SORRY, FIN. NOT ENOUGH TIME.

EVERYBODY TREAD GOOP A MINUTE WHILE I GET MY WINGS FREE.



NO, BILL! DON'T!

SEE THOSE FLAMES? THIS IS FIRE SLIME. IT IGNITES WHEN IT DRIES.

WE'RE SAFE IN THIS LIQUID POOL, BUT IF WE EXPOSE TOO MUCH OF OUR BODIES TO THE AIR WE'LL DRY OUT JUST LIKE THOSE PATCHES ON THE SURFACE AND THEN....



NICE.

SO HOW DO WE GET OUT?

FOLKS, THIS CHAIN MAIL IS GETTING HEAVY AWFULLY FAST!

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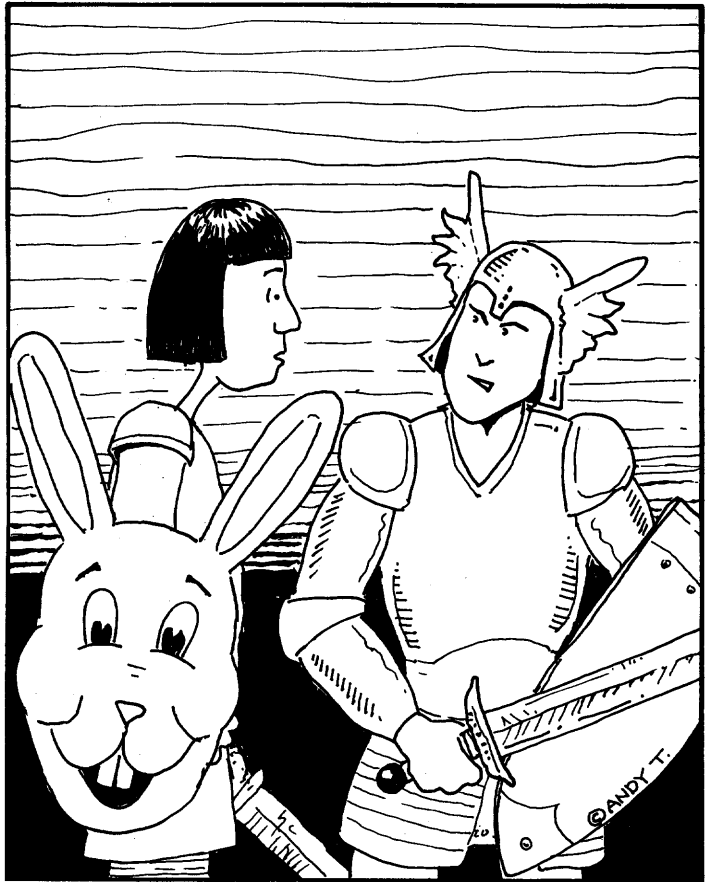
# DRAGONMIRTH

By Matthew Guss



"I don't know, Rolf.  
Kill a monster, steal its treasure.  
Kill a monster, steal its treasure.  
I think I'm in a rut."

By Andrew Triemer



"Honestly, Aelfred, can't you  
find a different shield?"

VAMARA

HE COMES! HE'S COMING TO ME!  
I JUST SAW IT ON THE NEWS—  
WHAT IS SHE ON ABOUT?  
IT'S A CRUSH ON A CLERIC. I'VE SEEN IT BEFORE. SHE'LL GROW OUT OF IT IN A HUNDRED YEARS.

I MUST HAVE HIM! IS HE NOT A VISION? THOSE EYES! THAT NOSE! THE MANLY WAY HE HEFTS THOSE NON-EDGED WEAPONS—  
SO GIVE HIM THE STARE, ALREADY!

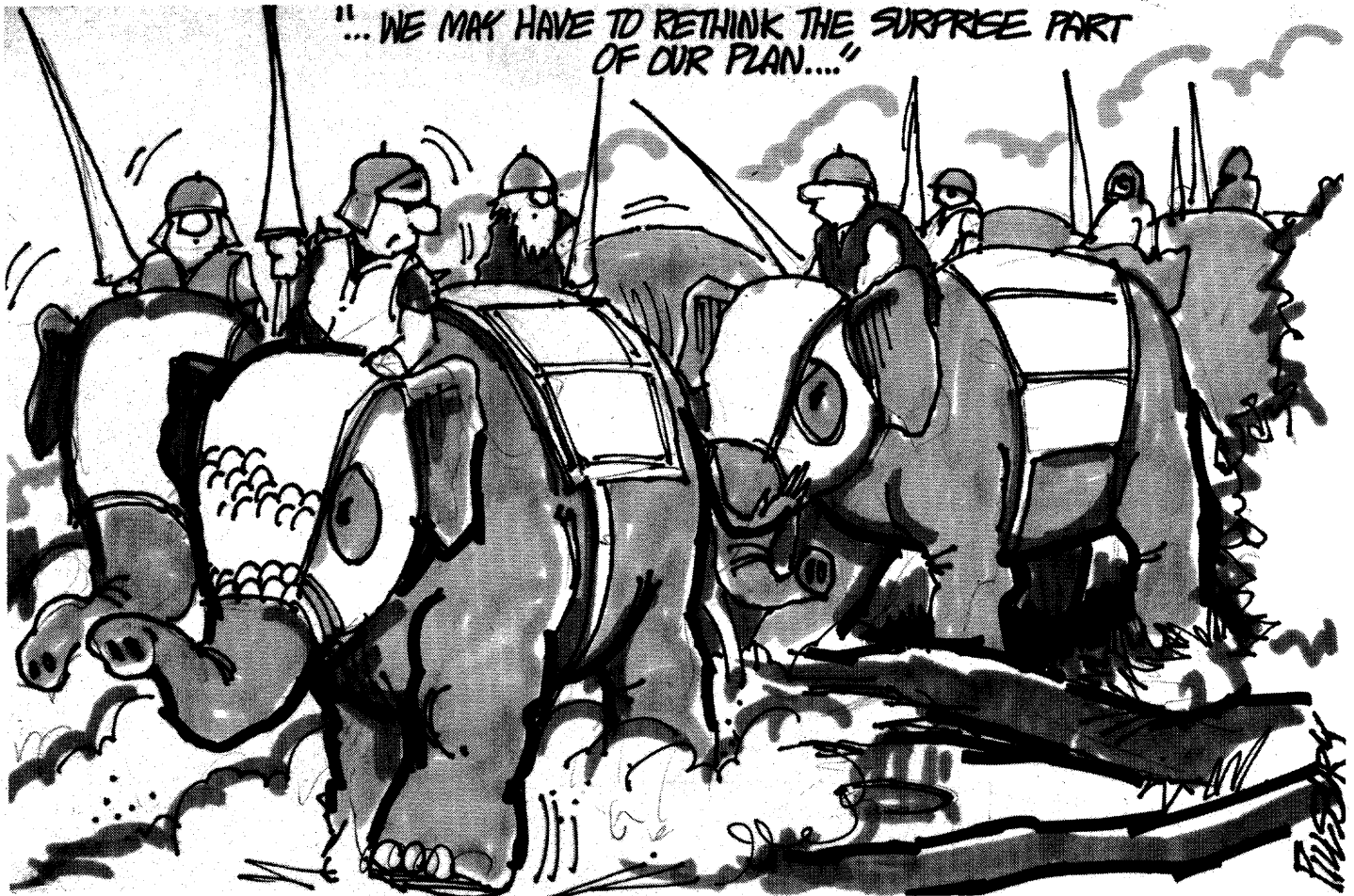
YOU RAGGED LITTLE GHOUL! WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ROMANCE!  
WELL, FLESH-EATING CAN BE ROMANTIC—  
HE MUST BE SUITABLE. I MUST KNOW HE REALLY CARES!

HE MUST ASK ME WITH TENDER SINCERITY TO RIP HIS THROAT OUT AND GOBBLE HIS BLOOD!  
I TOLD YOU IT WOULD GET NOISY IF WE SUB-LETTERED WITH A VAMPIRE.  
LET'S MOVE OUT IF SHE GETS HER WAY. CLERICS ARE EVEN NOISIER.

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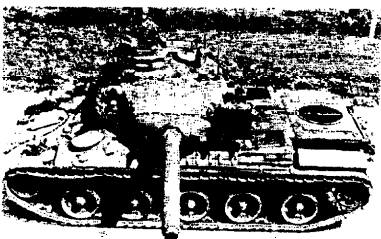
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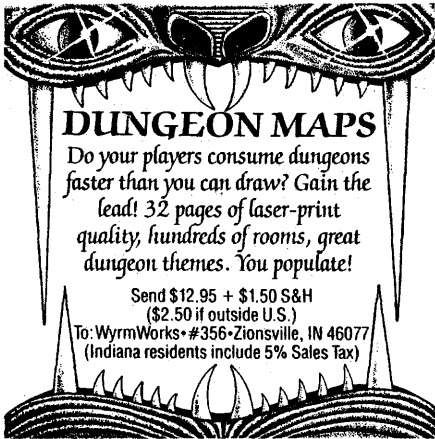
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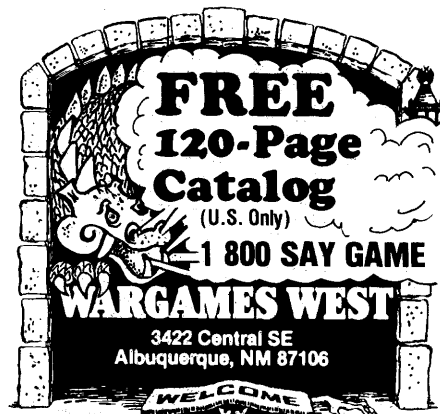
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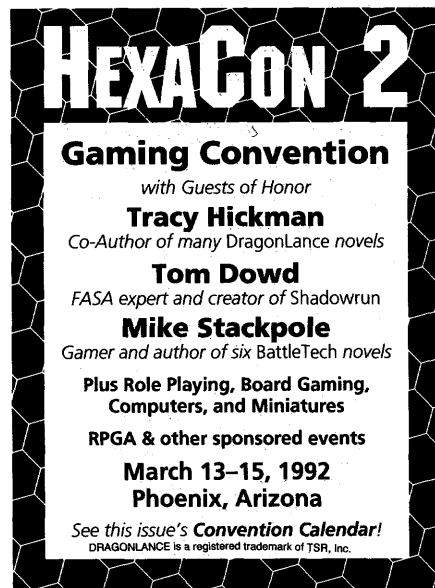
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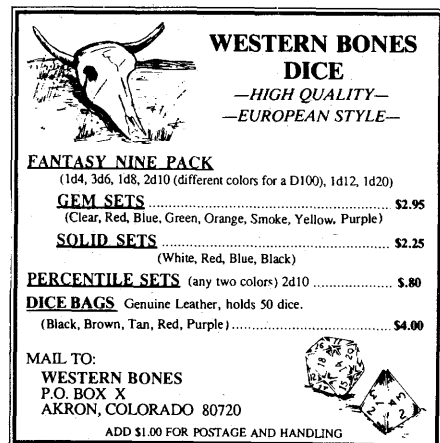
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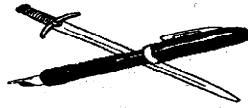


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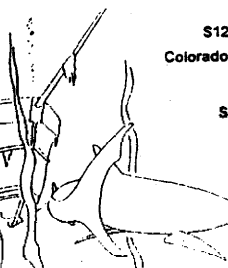
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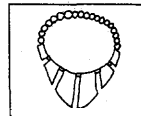
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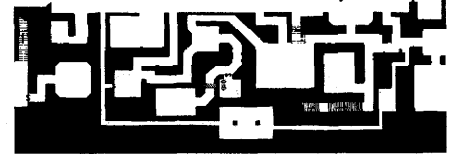
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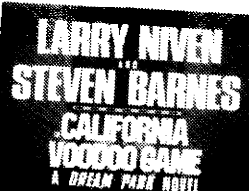
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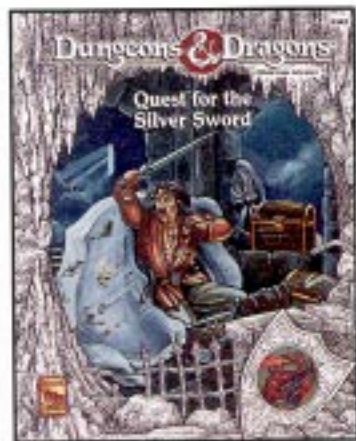


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# Through the LOOKING Glass

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Clockwise from upper left: A-10 Thunderbolt—U.S.A.F., AV-8B Harrier—U.S. Marines, Tornado GR1—U.K. & Italy (Croissant)

## Warlords and warriors galore

Welcome to February. This issue's theme is on warriors and combat, so I've picked out some interesting military figures and combat units to review.

I also want to remind everyone that winter is a good time to catch up on miniatures painting, but this kind of work requires special care. The most common area in which people paint figures is in a basement or other confined indoor area without the benefit of ventilation. This is a dangerous practice, whether you use water- or oil-based paint. Oil-based paint gives off fumes that are hazardous to breathe and can ignite when open flames are present. Open flames can come from such ordinary things as furnaces and water heaters that are gas-fed and have

pilot lights. Kitchens are not exempt, either, as many people have gas stoves. Primers or sealers also give off fumes that can give you a headache or worse in closed-in areas, and they might explode if open flames are nearby. Always have proper ventilation or use a spray booth with new, clean filters; this will improve both your health and your finished product.

### Miniatures' product ratings

*	Poor
**	Below average
***	Average
****	Above average
*****	Excellent

### The air war continues

Last month, we covered the beginning of the 1991 air war in Operation Desert Storm and how we gained superiority in the sky. In the first days of the campaign, huge numbers of sorties were flown by aircraft from many different countries and branches of service. The Free Kuwait Army flew Mirages and A-4 Skyhawks, some of which were rebuilt and on their third lives (the original model was 30 years old). These pilots were fearless, as their goal was to retake their country. The Saudi Air Force fought with distinction, using F-15s of all models (one pilot was a double ace), but also F5Es, Tornados, and early-warning E-3 aircraft. Other Persian Gulf nations provided F-16s, Mirages, Alpha Jets, and Jaguars to assist in the assault.

British forces flew Tornados (their primary plane) and Jaguars. Buccaneers acted as laser designators for high-tech weaponry. French pilots flew Jaguars and Mirage 2000s. Italians flew Tornados in the theater and had 104s in Turkey. Canada supplied fighter escorts for strikes and gulf protection using CF-18s. All of these aircraft contributed to the cause, but the British suffered almost 10% of their Tornados as casualties in their raids to destroy Iraqi bridges and airfields.

The U.S. provided F-14s (for interceptors), A-6E Intruders, A-7E Corsair II Prowlers, and FA-18s. The U.S. Air Force provided F-111s, B-52s, F-15Es, and F-16s for its frequent heavy bombing raids, F-117A Stealth bombers for special missions, and EF-111s and F-4G Wild Weasels, which provided electronic countermeasures to jam ground units. The bombers flew many strikes against the Iraqi army and heavily shielded ground targets. Fighter cover was provided by F-16s and F-15Cs.

These aircraft insured that the Coalition had complete air superiority and allowed the ground-attack aircraft to fly with almost no resistance. The A-10s ranged all over Iraq, using their cannon and huge ammo, missile, and bomb loads to chew up ground targets even though they were never meant to be used as deep penetration aircraft. C-130 gunships prowled freely, and even the OV-10 Bronco, intended as a forward-observation plane and light-strike craft, got in its licks. Gun-film footage provided graphic proof that almost no target was safe from today's precision munitions, even if the target was heavily armored and protected, if you had air superiority.

A number of rule sets are available for those wishing to engage in either air-to-air or air-to-ground miniatures combat based

on the Persian Gulf war. The **FLIGHT LEADER\*** game, by The Avalon Hill Game Company, is easily converted for use as a miniatures rules set even though this requires some room for play. The **AIR SUPERIORITY\*** and **AIR STRIKE\*** games from GDW are good board games, and the **JET EAGLES\*** game from Nova Games puts you into the pilot's seat as well.

Now, on with the reviews.

## Reviews

### Folio Works

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#### Warlords FW 8/1 Dwarf

crossbows

\*\*\*\* 1/2

The rules and figures for the **FANTASY WARLORD\*** game have become more readily available in the U.S., and the latter seem to be quality figures with a few extras. This line offers separate weapons encased in a close-fitting wrap; these should be removed carefully from the wrap as they can break and bend easily.

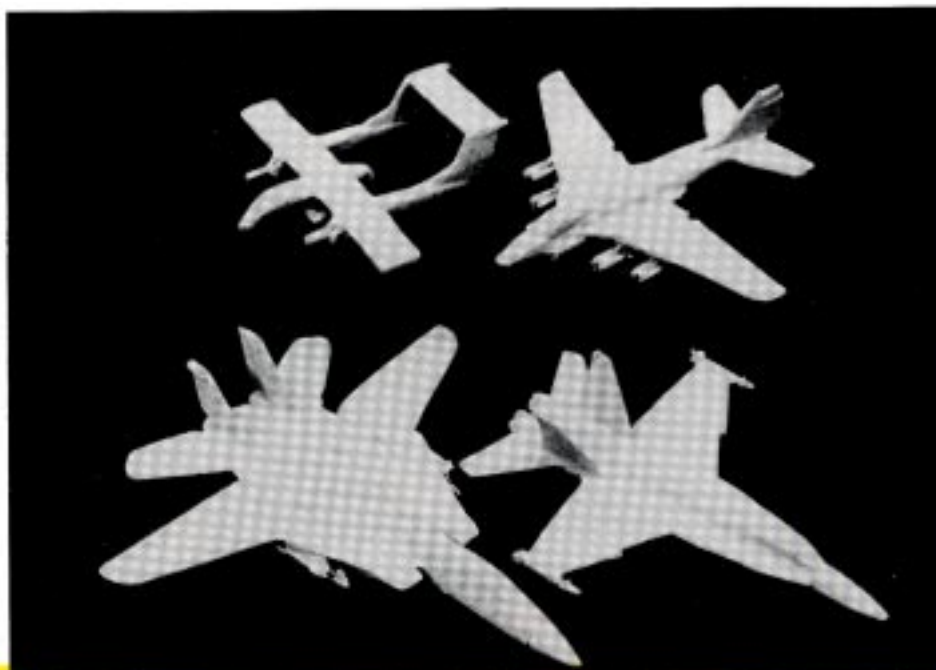
These lead figures are more 25-mm scale than 28-30 mm, standing 20 mm base-to-eyes at a total height of just under 25 mm. Their bases are not wide and conform to each figure's stance, but the bases are too thick, which adds to the illusion of each figure being much larger than it really is.

Figure one wears boots with fold-over tops, and chain mail that covers him from shoulders to boots, with a disk on his right elbow. The figure is weaponless but posed as if firing a crossbow, which would be grasped by the leather gauntlets he wears on both hands. His surcoat is open but held together by a belt with pouch and knife. A very well-done beard frames his face. His head is covered by a stocking cap complete with tassels and a fringe on the bottom. The crossbow must have its stock cut off to fit correctly (this is true of all three figures).

Figure two is much like figure one but lacks the disk on the elbow and the pouch and knife. His beard is short and clipped straight; facial detail is very good (as it is on all three figures). This dwarf wears a helmet on his head with a raised visor.

Figure three seems to be a composite of the other two figures. The pose and dress are identical to figure two, except for a pouch and shoulder strap attached to the belt. The most noticeable difference is the hair plume rising from his helmet.

These figures compare favorably with dwarves from Ral Partha. This three-figure set lists for \$6.99, however, and at that price it will be a long time before it offers any true competition to figures elsewhere. These are recommended for



Clockwise from upper left: OV-10 Bronco—U.S. Marines, A-6 Intruder—U.S. Navy, AV-18—U.S. Navy & Marines, F-14A Tomcat—U.S. Navy (Croissant)



Dwarf Crossbows (Folio Works)

detail but not for price. If you want them to fit better with your 25 mm troops, simply file the bases down.

### Alternative Armies

6 Parkway Court

Glaisdale Parkway, Nottingham

UNITED KINGDOM NG8 4GN

(Available in the U.S. through Armory Distributors)

#### VNT4 The Risen Dead

\*\*\*\*

Alternative Armies' figures are licensed for use with the **FANTASY WARLORD\***

game but seem to be geared toward larger scales than true 25 mm. This pack of figures contains five lead figures ranging in height (base to eyes) from 26 to 30 mm. All of the figures have thin, slightly oval bases that require some trimming and cleaning up, and all show slight detailing but with mold lines. Each figure is a different undead creature.

Figure one looks like a bald elven vampire that wears long robes bound by a braided rope. Over this is draped a long cape with a simple hoop clasp at the neck. The figure appears to be wringing his hands, glaring from slightly slanted eyes



The Risen Dead (Alternative Armies;

above high cheekbones. There's a protuberance from his mouth, but I'm not sure if it is a tongue or bad detail work on his incisors.

Figure two is a humanoid figure bent forward in a position more like that of a monkey than a man. His only clothes consist of a diaperlike garment, and his skin is rough as if damaged or beginning to rot. His right hand holds a curved knife high, and his left holds what looks like an old skull. His hair runs unevenly from high on the crown to his shoulder blades. This figure could pass as a zombie.

Figure three wears a long set of rotting robes pulled tight by a long braided rope. The figure stands almost 35-mm tall, with no feet visible and no face under its hood. The hands appear to be shapeless, with the right hand stretching out. I think this is the equivalent of a wraith.

Figure four looks like it may have been female when it lived. The hair is tattered and matted, sticking straight back in clumps, while the face shows the pinched, tight skin seen in mummification. The mouth is set in a rictus pulled back to expose rotted teeth. Rotted clothes fall away from the body, with visible ribs and strips of flesh. The right hand holds a sharpened stick, while the left is almost shapeless. On the figure's back is a section of metal that, with a little work, could be made to resemble a rat at a final feast.

The last figure has definitely been in the grave for a long time. With careful modeling work, you could show muscles and holes in the face. The teeth are fully exposed, and the clothing is in rags. Large strips of flesh are missing from many parts of the body, but the feet don't match the body's general level of decay.

These are interesting figures that have potential. All the figures had flash on them in different places. All had detail, some sharp but a lot that was not well defined (but could be brought out by painting).

Remember that these figures are for the bigger 28-30 mm scale but might make an interesting diorama. The package of five sells for \$6.99.

### Grenadier Models, Inc.

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### Grenadier Models UK Ltd.

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UNITED KINGDOM CH5 2QB

Grenadier seems to be taking a two-level approach to fantasy figures. One line of figures seems geared to true 25-mm scale, and the other packs are geared to the larger European scale. We will cover true 25-mm scale figures first.

All of these lead figures have slightly thick, oval-shaped bases with mold lines running prominently through them. These bases are undetailed and slightly beveled at the edges; some need trimming to stand flat and level, and some require work to remove their mold lines. All single packs cost \$1.50 each, and the larger group packs are \$5.99 each.

#### #8113 Half Elf Warrior Mage \*\*\*\* 1/2

This figure is almost perfect as an elf in the AD&D® game. I say "almost" because the figure is clad in chain mail, which is forbidden to wizards. This figure wears regular clothes under his chain mail, a long cape, and knee-high boots. The figure has a long sword in his right hand and gestures with his left as if casting magic; he wears gauntlets. His belt supports a component pouch on his right and a knife on his left, under his cape. A headband holds his hair, which drops to his shoulders in waves. His mouth is open as if voicing a spell with a look of anger. This figure is recommended as a fighter but

unfortunately not as a fighter-mage. There is no flash on the figure.

#### 8112 White Knight \*\*\*\*

This heavily armored figure is dressed completely in jointed plate with underlying chain mail from head to toe; over those two layers of armor is a surcoat. Two wide belts with simple buckles cinch the surcoat and support a sheathed long sword and a small pouch. Both hands grip a two-handed sword. The face is covered by a full helmet that closely resembles the helmet worn by European fire fighters. A short double-feather plume rises from the helmet.

This figure is excellent as a knight, but he doesn't quite match the legendary appearance of a "white knight." There was some flash between the legs and along the sword, but it was easily removed. This figure is recommended.

#### 8120 Berserker in Wolf Skin \*\*\*\* 1/2

This figure is almost a classic two-sword barbarian figure. He stands slightly off-balance, as if getting into a fighting stance, wearing high boots held on by wrappings. His groin is covered by an elaborate fur, and his right thigh supports a knife and sheath. His face is solemn, with an open mouth and a short cropped beard. The rest of his body is uncovered, except for clumps of wiry hair and a long wolf-skin cape whose head covers the figure's head. Flash was between the arms and torso and in the groin, but muscle tone was excellent on this figure. This figure is highly recommended.

#### 8121 Dark Paladin \*\*\*\*

This figure's evil look is accented by the jagged, barbed sword in his right hand and a horned helmet with glaring eye holes and rivets. He is covered by jointed plates over chain mail like the White Knight noted earlier, but he has a full-length cape that falls to the top of his boots. He clutches a shield in his right hand and stands with feet apart as if braced against an attack.

The figure has many molding flaws. There is flash along most of the mold lines present and along the front of the shield. The two sides are slightly off, so extra care must be used to avoid damaging the figure when flash is removed. I recommend a small file set for best results.

#### 8108 Fighter with Sword and Shield \*\*\*\*

This figure is completely covered with jointed plate mail, as are the other knights, but more chain mail shows around the edges of the plate. A simple sword and shield are clenched in his hands, obviously set against some opponent. Two belts support a large, sheathed dagger and either a water flask or buckled pouch. A helmet with full visor covers his face.

This knight is much closer to 25-mm scale than the other knights, as he is just



Assorted Warriors (Grenadier Models)

over 26-mm tall. The two halves of the figure are slightly offset and require you to work not only on the figure but on the base. Flash was heavy between the body and shield and under the raised right arm. This is a simple figure but will require a light touch and a good file-and-knife set, as the mold line runs right up its middle.

**1422 Elven Lords** \*\*\*\* 1/2

This pack is the first of the larger-scale troops. It contains three miniatures representing elven battle chiefs, each measuring 30 mm from the top of the base to the eyes.

Chief number one is heroically posed, his sword thrust high into the air while gripped tightly in his right hand. His left hand holds a small, round shield with decorations on the front. His chest and back are protected by plate armor joined by straps and held at the waist by a (possibly magical) girdle that also supports a pouch. His arms are bare, except for gloves and arm rings, and he seems to be wearing leggings, as his legs are smooth and lack muscle detail. The muscle detail is otherwise good, as is the facial detail, which includes a grim look, high cheeks, and visible eyebrows. His hair is long, peaked in front, and braided at the sides, falling onto his feathered cape. My figure had flash between its shield, body, and legs, with a large amount of flash on the cape and under the sword arm. The base also needed work.

The mounted chief, number two, is riding a large horse with full tack, including a blanket, a saddle, a bit, and large reins. The horse has a tall, ruffled mane and a long, twisting tail that falls to the ground as the horse rears up. The horse has large amounts of flash on its legs. Mold lines appear between its hooves; between its head, body, and reins; and on its tail and rump. My figure needed a lot of cleaning up, but the horse is impressive in its simplicity and majesty. It is worth the

work you will put into it.

Elf number three is dressed and molded almost the same as number one, but his cape is smooth and flows out behind him. The sword is simple, and this figure's face is thin and much less angular than chief number one's. His hair flows out behind him and lacks the first figure's ridge and braids. This figure also lacks all of the flash seen on the other two figures.

These figures are recommended in spite of the flash and small flaws. This is a nice, simple leader or champion pack.

**1421 Fighting Men with Halberds** \*\*\*\*

This pack of larger-scale figures contains five figures representing a section of city guards. All figures are armed with swords on their left hips and halberds in their hands, differing slightly in armor and position. All the figures have some flash, and most have obvious mold lines that must be cleaned up.

Figure one is standing and thrusting his halberd forward. He wears hose and low boots, a cloth shirt, and padded armor. His face is set in a glare and framed by a chin strap from his bowl-shaped helmet. Hair extends beyond the edge of the helmet and falls to the top of his padded armor.

Figure two has padded armor, with chain mail showing beyond the bottom, and high boots with cuffs. Hose covers his legs, and extra armor is on his arms. His belt holds a sack. A bassinet helmet with studs rests on his head; his face has an almost vacant look to it.

Figure three wears breast and back plates on top of padded and chain armor. Fully jointed plate protects his legs; gauntlets cover his hands. The face, except for the chin, is covered by a full helmet that has a ridge up the center. He also has a small pouch on his right rear.

Figure four has studded plate and billowing cloth sleeves ending in bare hands.





Two Elven Lords (Grenadier Models)



Fighting Men With Halberds (Grenadier Models)

The figure wears trousers that are slightly bunched at the knees, with low boots. His mouth is open as if screaming or growling. The face and head are protected by a helmet with cheek guards. A pouch lies under his right hand. Flash can be found in all spaces that have tiny breaks and in the groin. Mold lines are unobtrusive on this miniature.

The last figure wears hose, short boots, and studded plate on his chest and back. Chain mail sleeves extends from beneath the chest plate, and a shirt with sleeves extends from beneath the chain mail. The guards mustachioed face is plainly visible, set in a mask of concentration. His breast

plate is held together by clasps. There was little flash except in the groin area.

This is an excellent start on a unit, as these figures have the same arms yet have enough differences to give the unit an individual flavor. This set is recommended in spite on the work needed to bring the figures to the priming and painting stage.

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## Novel Ideas

Continued from page 80

mystical blade. With it, he may capture a glorious victory for his people—or destroy himself and the world he hopes to save.

On sale in August is 1992's third TSR Books novel, *The Nine Gates*, by first-time novelist Phillip Brugalette. When Gopal, the carefree prince of Goloka, sees his teacher burst into flames and the many-armed Virabhadra rampage through the sacred Temple of Durga, he is convinced the gods have turned the universe inside out. He must learn to accept responsibility and perform a *vidhi*, a test beyond imagination. In order to survive, he must secure help from a centuries-old mystic named Vyasa and discover the elusive City of Nine Gates.

*Half-Light*, a mind-bending adventure in space by Denise Vitola, makes its appearance in December. After witnessing the savage killing of her fiance by the batlike Benar, Commander Ariann Centuri contracts a terminal disease. Her only hope is to wed the Viceroy of the Galactic Consortium of Planets, who may be able to save her through his strange priestly skills. Placed deep in a trancelike state as part of her treatment, she must journey to a strange twilight plane called Half-Light in order to rescue her new husband.

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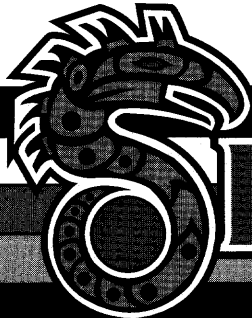
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## LOOKING FOR MORE GAMERS?

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 scoutsuit away and turn to the Convention Calendar in this magazine. There may be a game convention closer to your home than you think—and conventions are a great place to find friends who share your interests. Whether you like board games, role-playing games, miniature war games, or just browsing around, a game convention can be all you've hoped for. Plan to attend one soon.





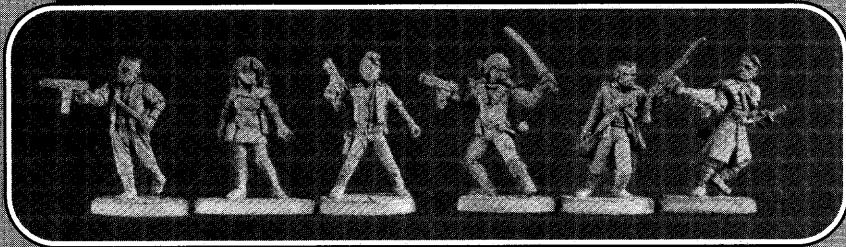
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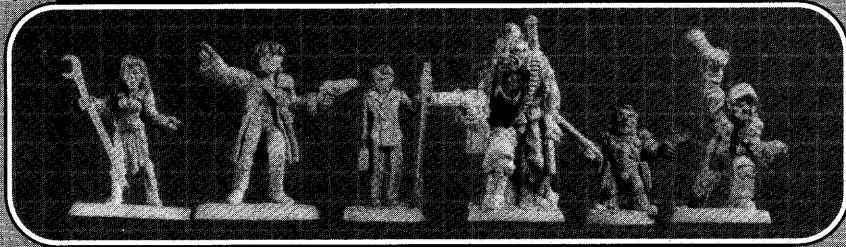


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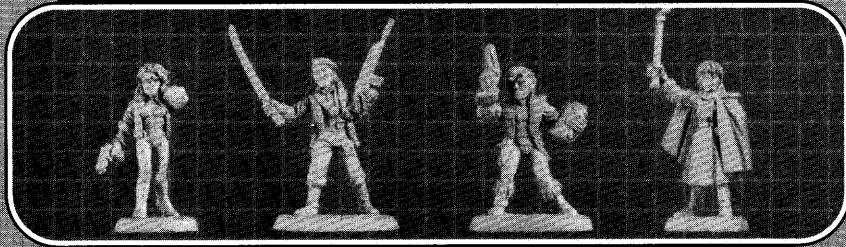
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>>>> [I spied this same fraggin' group of razorguys jandering through the sprawl just the other day! Bad news, chummers!!..... NASTY! (Drummin' biz, no doubt....)]<<<<<  
- Gutterfly <21:46:05/10-22-50>

>>>> [Dull the drek out, hoser! We were just on our way to the local time-passery to hang for a while!!]<<<<<  
- Deckhead <21:48:36/05-22-50>



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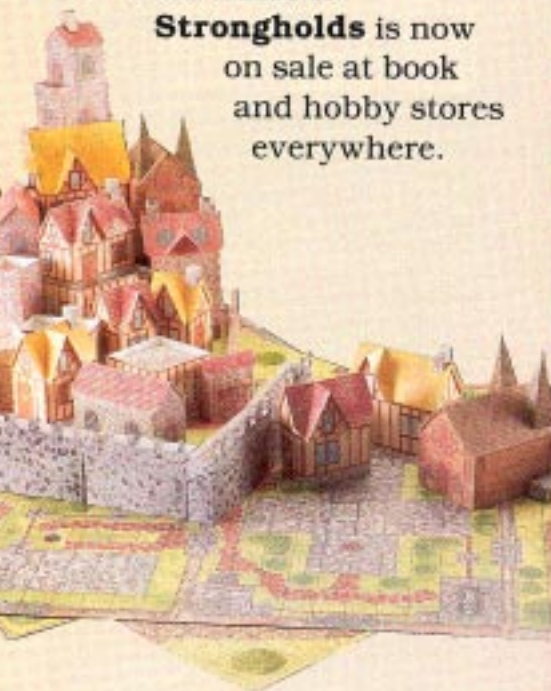
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