

238

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Dragon[®] MAGAZINE

Humor & Villains

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ENEMIES**

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Bard on the Run

**Return of the
Wizards Three**

... and More!

1997 TSR PRODUCT

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The Wyrms' Turn™

The Halls of Amusement

Back in the distant days of middle school, Greg was one of my first players to take a turn behind the DM's screen. We were all eager to see what he'd do, and I couldn't wait to play my own characters, a min-maxed high elf fighter/magic-user named Windrhymer the White and an even more min-maxed fighter/magic-user/thief half-drow named Ralph the Rogue. (Yes, I'm still embarrassed about it all.) All we knew for sure was that Greg had drawn all over a ream and a half of graph paper. He called the dungeon "The Halls of Amusement."

My elves had pals, naturally. Tom played a pair of fighters named Harry and Burt, or something equally English. Someone else was stuck with the cleric and another character. While the PCs didn't find a lasting place in my memory, certain moments of the dungeon will haunt me until my dying day.

It started out all right, I guess. We marched into the place, and Greg dutifully mapped out the entrance chamber, carefully concealing the real map behind his bunker of three DM's screens. There were doors everywhere, and of course it was all perfectly symmetrical. We picked Door #1.

Our thieves all took turns checking for traps, listening at the door, making a lot of noise, and finally opening the door. The eight-headed hydra put up a good fight, but we killed the thing, took its treasure, healed our wounds, and continued. Everything seemed perfectly normal, until we learned upon returning to that room that the hydra sprang back to life with an extra head each time we shut the door. Okay, that was odd, but it wasn't too silly for a dungeon.

And so it went, with a tribe of blue kobolds with one female and an old bearded fellow, slurpee-colored green slimes, and pretty much every other monster you could find in the old *Monster Manual* — each with a twist. When we met the stone golems in French maid outfits, we thought that was pretty weird. When a few of the Federation's finest accosted us with phasers, we pummeled them until they begged Scotty to beam them back up. We laughed a bit, but we groaned even more. Something in us knew that this was wrong, but the

treasure was so good that we didn't complain. Until we reached the central chamber.

The place was huge, with a raised platform in the center. The walls were covered in black flock, and the floor was tiled with some weird glowing material that changed patterns. When Greg pointed out the spinning mirror-balls on the ceiling we became nervous. When he described the huge black dragon wearing the white leisure suit, dancing upon the high platform; we realized he had gone way too far.

"The Disco Dragon!" someone cried. We fell over each other to kill the beast, not so much for fear of our lives, but because even at that age we realized that a reptilian John Travolta was an abomination that must be destroyed. (Sure, he redeemed himself years later, but how were we to know then?)

When the fight was over, we gave Greg our most baleful looks, warned him that this had better not get any sillier, and continued our exploration. Greg only giggled. The encounters grew worse and worse, until eventually we all rebelled and insisted on a different campaign.

Years later, upon discovering the old character sheets and maps from the Halls of Amusement, I finally realized why we loved that adventure in the beginning but hated it at the end. It's the same reason you can laugh at a comedian for an hour but would probably throttle him in his sleep if he came home and did his routine for you all day long. Humor is a wonderful diversion from an otherwise straight adventure campaign, but there's a reason it's called comic *relief*.

Last year we tried balancing the April issue with both humorous and straight AD&D® game articles, and the reader response was great. Here we go again, a little later than April, with what we hope is just enough of a good thing to give you a few belly laughs and still provide plenty of straight game material for your own not-too-terribly-silly campaigns.

Dave Gross



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Lawrence R. Wenzel

Mess with this non-player character and you'll be sent to your room without supper!

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Dating Ourselves

Dear DRAGON Magazine,

I am an avid reader of DRAGON Magazine and was delighted when I saw the new DRAGON Magazine Annual. I am especially interested in articles about Toril. One such article was published in the Annual, "Gem of the North: The High Palace of Alustriel." The reason I am writing is because there is a problem with some of the years stated in the article. The Year of the Dawn Blades (765 D.R.) and the Year of the Burnt Spear (766 D.R.) were mentioned in the second paragraph of this article. From the FORGOTTEN REALMS supplement *The Seven Sisters* on page 7, 765 D.R. was stated to be The Year of the Cowl and 766 D.R. THE Year of

the Yearning. I wanted to know which names for these two years was correct. I would appreciate an answer directly by e-mail. Thank you in advance.

Clarke Hughbanks
Via e-mail

First, an answer from the article's author, Steven Schend:

"Elminster tenders his abject apologies for the errors of his chroniclers. Apparently, the mage's crabbed handwriting was too difficult to read properly (i.e., I screwed up!)."

"The Year of the Dawn Blades and the Year of the Burnt Spear are respectively 465 and 466 D.R.; the years listed in The Seven Sisters are correct."

And an editors note on e-mail letters: While we love receiving letters and even questions via e-mail, we can only rarely reply directly. If you ask us a question we can answer without leaving the keyboard or opening a book, there's a chance we'll reply via e-mail. Otherwise, the best we can do is consider it for "D-Mail."

Also, please don't send change-of-address notices via e-mail. Because of the large number of messages we receive, it's actually faster to send a postcard directly to subscriptions at the magazine address. Do please keep sending "D-Mail" and "Forum" letters, as well as article proposals, to our address at tsrdragon@aol.com.

Remember, you can send letters to "Sage Advice" via e-mail also (see this month's column for the address), though the Sage, too, is unable to make personal replies.

A Prodigious Returns

Dear DRAGON Magazine,

I have to say that the quality of DRAGON Magazine has steadily improved over the course of 1996. I have let my subscription run out because the quality and entertainment value was no longer there, but after reading the last four issues or so, I think I am ready to resubscribe. I am sure you guys hear all kinds of negative feedback, and I just wanted to give you my positive. Keep up the good work.

Terry J. Green
Arlington, TX

Holding Out on You?

Dear DRAGON Magazine,

I really like the AD&D® game with its different campaign worlds, although gaming is a very expensive hobby. Every time you buy a product, you will recognize that some important parts are missing, which are then presented in a later product or the DRAGON Magazine (see the "Artifacts of Athas" article in issue #234).

If this is some sort of selling tactic, please stop it. I enjoy your magazine very much, but what happened with "Forum"? I think it is too short. There are only two pages of feedback now. The letters of other readers are very important for new clues, questions and comments to specific topics. Without it your magazine loses one of its best parts. I hope you think about it.

Bjoern Dobbelstein
Berlin, Germany

While we can see why one might mistake "Artifacts of Athas" for a portion of the product of the same name, Kevin proposed and wrote the article after the supplement was finished. Whenever we present an article that supports a recently-released product, the requirements are the same: It must be a good useful article that can stand alone, even if it is related to the product. We think "Artifacts of Athas" fits the bill.

As for "Forum," we'd love to print a longer installment from time to time (as with this issue), but to do that we need letters from you. Send more!

Take My Letter, Please

Dear DRAGON Magazine,

Let me start out by congratulating the entire staff on the great job of redecorating the magazine. I have bought an issue here and there in the past, but when I discovered the new look, I finally subscribed — and not just for one year, but for three. I was especially impressed with issue #229. The article with Emil Duli Wonk was a kick to read. I got a whole slew of ideas (as well as a few good laughs from Cletus and his lich master) from the "Curses" and "Survival of the

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Smartest" articles. And I won't forget to mention the amusing short story by David Wise. Keep up the great work, and I will gladly resubscribe in three years.

Now I would like to put in my dollar's worth (so to speak) on what more I wish to see in future issues. Having an elven mage PC, I would naturally like more material on elves and, well, mages. I am sure that many other players out there would agree with me. I would also like to see more in the "Role-Playing Reviews" column, since it was the reason I purchased the *Night Below* adventure, and I am not disappointed with it in the least.

Thanks for your time in reading my letter. If you print this one, there just might be a nice check in the mail with your name on it . . . perhaps.

E.J. McGhee
Ellsworth AFB, SD

All right, E.J. We've lived up to our part of the deal. Just don't skimp on the zeroes when writing that check!

More Wyrms

Dear *DRAGON Magazine*,

One of the departments I use most is Wyrms of the North." I DM and play in both the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting and the COUNCIL OF WYRM™ campaign. The question I have is this: Will you start putting in your articles a stat sheet with the dragon's ability Scores, proficiencies, class, level, and hit points? This way I could use the dragons in both settings. Also, a brief sketch of their lairs in addition to your descriptions would be very helpful.

Keep up the good work, and may your dice not remain idle.

William "Bug" Muncy
Richmond, KY

The reason Ed doesn't include more game statistics or lair maps (and the reason we haven't asked him for them) is that the DM really should have some secrets left up his sleeve when using the dragons presented in "Wyrms of the North." We don't want to give away too much.

We mentioned your idea of including COUNCIL OF WYRMS statistics to Ed, and though you won't see them in the regular articles, we're thinking about a special "Wyrms" article in future. In the meantime, we would love to see a good COUNCIL OF WYRMS submission for "Campaign Classics."

Rogues and Wizards Three

Dear *DRAGON Magazine*,

I've been reading your magazine for quite a while now, and I wanted to tell you how pleased I am with the current result. It seems that you have something for almost every type of role-player in every issue. Your articles on discontinued campaigns such as the GREYHAWK® and AL-QADIM® settings have proven to be excellent, while articles on current campaign worlds such as "Wyrms of the North" for the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting are an asset for almost any DM. I especially like the emphasis that has been put on character development and would like to see more articles dealing with it.

Although it was originally in the new format's line-up, I have noticed that not many of the issues following have featured my favorite part of the new format: "Rogue's Gallery." Are the characters depicted in this feature sent in by players around the world? Are they taken from the RPGA® Network? Do the staff at TSR provide some of their own characters for the article?

Speaking of favorite articles, will Ed Greenwood continue to write "The Wizard's Three"? Or has that been discontinued? It has been one of my favorite although infrequent parts of the magazine since it first appeared. Let's see the return of both of these columns!

John L. Combs
Mena, AR

"Rogues Gallery" articles have come so far from readers, a TSR staffer, and one of TSR's most popular novelists. This issue sees "The Return of the Wizard's Three," and you'll see more of both "Rogues" and "Wizards" in upcoming issues.



On the Cover

This month we're "introducing" another "new" artist to the ranks of our cover illustrators. While this marks Todd Lockwood's first cover for *DRAGON Magazine*, he is a seasoned pro in all other respects. Todd joined our illustration staff just about a year ago with sixteen years of experience in advertising and publishing illustration. And he has the scars to prove it.

Todd's work has appeared on the covers of *Asimov's* and *Analog*, and in the pages of *Science Fiction Age*. Currently, he stays busy creating new images for upcoming FORGOTTEN REALMS® products.

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Mommy Dearest

The Mother as NPC

by Lawrence R. Wenzel

illustrated by Valerie A. Valusek

Did you notice when you were young that your mom could do really spooky things? For example, when you tried to raid the cookie jar at night, your mom suddenly appeared half-asleep from her bedroom, ran down the steps, and hauled you back to bed by the ear. How did she know that you were up? What about the monsters under your bed that instilled the fear of dangling your legs or arms over the edge — because you might pull them back shorter than before? How could your mom come in to tuck you in, her ankles untouched by the gaping maws? And then there was the day when you fell off the fence playing “follow the leader.” Your friends assured you the only life-saving measure was to amputate your leg. Your mom appeared, kissed the red spot under the knee, and seconds later you went dashing off with the others to jump across Death Gorge. Maybe your mom isn’t just a mom; maybe she’s really a Mother NPC.

“Mother NPC” refers to a very select class of females who train secretly in the rites of Motherhood, a cabalistic professional order for women that combines elements taken from the Templars and the Free Masons with all the sinister aspects of a daycare center. Mother NPCs strive to understand all creatures, to classify their basic needs and desires, to codify the dark rites used to raise children from the crib, and to apply this dread knowledge beyond the nursery. The order has gained a vast pool of knowledge over the centuries, knowledge that applies to any race or society; thus a Mother NPC can be of any race, age, or alignment. In order to be considered a candidate, one must first and foremost be female. Candidates need not be raising families of their own, but those who do make better prospects. A minimum Intelligence of 11 and a Wisdom of 13 are required to become a Mother. The prime requisite for Mothers is Wisdom; a score of 15 or higher earns a 10% bonus in experience awards.

The chosen candidate is made aware by a member Mother from the local chapter that she has been chosen to join the Maternal Order of Motherhood (M.O.M.). Once inducted, the initiate begins training. Mothers advance using the same tables as priests.

Mothers never adventure, remaining instead where they can study the family unit in its natural environment — the home. It is highly unlikely that a Mother NPC will travel with an adventuring party unless she has exceptional need and a written excuse from her chapter. The order frowns on any Mother who abandons her charges without their express consent and daily arrangements for babysitters.

Weapons available to this NPC class are limited to cleaning aids and kitchen utensils. Most Mothers, however, prefer psychological warfare over brute weaponry and have developed innate, spell-like abilities that duplicate mundane practices mothers perform daily. The general population remains oblivious to the truth and dismisses factual accounts reported by children as “daydreams” and “childhood fancy.” The following spell-like powers are granted to the Mother NPC. Reverse forms of these powers are granted only to Mothers of evil alignment.

Berate: This empowers the Mother to verbally abuse anyone for 1d4 rounds, three times per day, reducing the victim’s morale by -25% for the next 8 hours.

Detect Lies: A Mother is able to divine at will whether someone is telling a lie and, if so, what color and size (Table 1). Listening to the person’s conversation is a mere formality, since a Mother usually knows the truth before the speaker even opens his mouth. Base chance is 20% plus 5% per level. The reverse, Hide Lies, prevents the detection of falsehoods by accusing others of similar crimes, blanketing everyone in a cloud of shame and denial, making specific guilt difficult to ascertain.

Gossip & Rumor Mill: Through a network of backyard, over-the-fence sources, a Mother can divine the name and intimate particulars of anyone, anywhere (see Table 1). The sphere of knowledge the Mother can draw from increases at each level, extending to other planes at higher levels.

Hindsight: This ability, which can be used three times per day, allows a Mother NPC to sense what’s going on not only behind her back but even in another room or outside, down the street, over the





hill, beyond the meadow, in the hay-wain (range is $\frac{1}{4}$ mile per level).

Kisses of Healing: When a creature presents a minor injury to a Mother, she kisses it and declares, "It's all better!" This charm cures 1d4 hp damage and dulls the pain. The reverse, kisses of smearing covers the child in 1d6 big, red, gross kiss marks, which the child must spend the next 2d4 rounds trying to wipe off to the exclusion of all other activity.

Lullaby: A Mother NPC can calm any upset child with the lullaby (children older than eight years old are granted a saving throw). The Mother NPC need only start humming a few strains to catch the attention of any child within hearing, silencing the child as she sings softly for 3d4 rounds. At the end of the lullaby, the Mother may choose to have the children fall asleep and wake 1d8 hours later, refreshed and cheerful, or remain awake, quiet, and in an agreeable mood for the same duration. The reverse of this ability upsets all children within hearing, causing them to erupt into fits of screaming and bad temper for 4d10 rounds, unless soothed by a counter lullaby.

Mothering: At will, a Mother NPC can examine one creature per level and find something wrong (attire, hair style, cleanliness, attitude, love life, career, etc.), point it out, divine and exaggerate the consequences at length, and then say "I told you so" when these things actually come to pass.

Power Word, Middle Name: If the Mother knows the middle name of a creature (Table 1), she can summon him before her to give him a piece of her mind, once per day. If the creature fails its save vs. spells at -4, it appears before her and must bear the wrath of the avenging Mother. Afterward, the creature must perform some domestic service "to build character." Creatures who successfully save evade the call but risk angering the Mother further. When used with berate, the effects are doubled.

Spittle of Cleansing: This extraordinary and unusual ability allows a Mother to clean the face of one child at will, dissolving any dirt, blood, mud, tar, ectoplasm, or similar substance. A Mother dabs a bit of cloth repeatedly to her tongue and scrubs the face of one creature. This ability also makes everyone witnessing this display slightly nauseous.

Shout: The Mother can raise her voice and be heard clearly by all creatures within a one-half mile radius, three times per day.

Turn Children: At 1st level, the Mother can turn children of the same species, effectively sending them off to their rooms (Table 2). A turned child is sent to their room for 1d6 turns or to bed for the rest of the night; an automatic turning (T) means the child departs without whining kicking, or screaming; grounded (G) means the child cannot leave his room for 1d4 days + 1 day per level of the Mother.

Mother Proficiencies

Mother NPCs may choose four initial non-weapon proficiencies from the general group and learn another proficiency every four levels thereafter. They can also choose from the following additional non-weapon proficiencies. Cooking and cleaning are considered requisite proficiencies for Mothers and do not count against the initial number.

Budgeting: A Mother learns how to pay bills, juggle figures, balance a checkbook, track finances through any record, use and manipulate double-entry finances, and justify refurbishing a living room instead of buying a fishing boat.

Child Rearing: This ability allows a Mother to handle random encounters involving children. A Mother has a base chance of 25% plus 5% per level above first to identify the situation and determine what measure or weapon to use. Identifying the situation does not guarantee that any measures taken are successful, but they do have a greater likelihood of success. Additionally, a Mother gains the ability to change diapers and potty train.

Cleaning: This proficiency grants Mothers two skills: Find/Remove stains and Clean/Straighten. To remove a stain from a garment or item, a Mother must first Find (identify) the unknown stain(s), with a base chance of 29% plus 4% per level. An identified stain can be removed without harming the affected material. If a Mother attempts to remove an unidentifiable stain, there is a 20% chance, minus 1% per level, that the stain sets and becomes permanent. Mothers are also able to clean and straighten a room in a matter of rounds, a house in turns, and a castle, labyrinth, or child's closet in a few hours. The room(s) becomes pristine: windows sparkle, books are dusted, and flowers are placed strategically to brighten up

the interior. In the course of cleaning a Mother may find something worthy of the gossip & rumor mill (25%), an item previously lost for ages (100%), or something nostalgic that delays cleaning for 1d6 turns (50%), if not halting cleaning altogether (1% cumulative chance per nostalgic item found).

When cleaning, Mothers may randomly suffer a wild purge. A simple straightening of the throw pillows on a sofa can erupt into a housewide flurry of feather dusters, mops, and brooms. Walls are whitewashed or replastered, floors are scrubbed, and entire rooms are suddenly rearranged. Wild purges have a 2% chance of occurring normally (modified by +10% if the weather is nice or by +25% if a child has gone away on vacation) and last for 3d8 hours. There is a 10% probability that items of value are lost during the wild purge.

Cooking: This proficiency grants Mothers the ability to wield recipes and create meals. A 1st-level Mother is provided with a cookbook and a few 1st-level recipes. A Mother memorizes recipes in the same manner as a wizard memorizes spells. Unlike wizards and priests, Mothers may cast recipes from their cookbooks without penalty, although there is a 5% chance of staining the recipe while cooking, thus rendering 1d4 ingredients illegible. A recipe wielded without prior memorization has a 50% chance, reduced -1% per level of the Mother, of ruining the food.

First-level recipes are easy to prepare, require simple material ingredients, and provide a basic taste and nutritional value. Higher-level recipes grow more exotic in taste and nutritional benefits, and they require greater preparation times and rare ingredients. Magical items such as *pouches of dried grains*, *instant brown puddings and gelatinous cubes*, *Mikor Waifs magnificent oven*, *Githyanki knives of vorpal sharpness*, and the venerable *Bede Kraahger's Cookbook of Arcane Recipes* are boons for Mothers. As they become more experienced, Mothers can research new recipes for magical pot roasts and multi-course dinner parties.

Seamstress/Tailor: This standard nonweapon proficiency has been perfected by Mothers. This version confers the knowledge necessary for creating, mending, and adjusting garments for any creature. A Mother knows how to repair clothes slashed to ribbons in sword fights, how to make costumes for priest-school plays, and even how to hem and fit magical garments (for

Table 1: Mother NPC Abilities

Level	Title	Detect Lie	Find Stain	Know Rumor	Know Name ^{1,2}
1	Mater	25%	33%	50%	relatives
2	Madre	30%	37%	53%	33% of town
3	Mutter	35%	41%	57%	66% of town
4	Mere	40%	45%	60%	33% of region
5	Om	45%	49%	63%	66% of region
6	Bonda	50%	53%	66%	33% of race
7	Mor	55%	57%	69%	66% of race
8	Mother	60%	61%	72%	25% of world
9	Abuela	65%	65%	75%	50% of world
10	Ocho	70%	69%	78%	75% of world
11	Babushka	75%	73%	81%	10% of plane
12	Eldrama	80%	77%	84%	33% of plane
13	Jaddah	85%	81%	90%	57% of plane
14	Nenda	90%	85%	93%	75% of plane
15	Grandmother	94%	89%	96%	90% of plane
16	Great-Grandmother	96%	93%	97%	2 planes
17	Great-Grandmother	98%	97%	98%	3 planes
18	Great-Grandmother	99%	99%	99%	4 planes

1. Includes 100% knowledge of areas under current level.
2. Separate checks must be made to know middle names.

example, letting out a *girdle of giant strength* for the paladin who's put on a little weight).

Shopping: A Mother learns how to shop for the best buys from ordinary goods to rare items, how to haggle with merchants, how to power shop for a number of hours equal to their Constitution score, and how to detect the worth of goods to determine if the items are overpriced. If a Mother sees a sale, she must make a saving throw vs. petrification at -4 or she succumbs to an impulsive buying spree.

The following unique magical items are available to Mothers through their order: *aprons of protection* (+1 vs. fire, +2 vs. nonmagical stains, +3 vs. children, +4 vs. pets, +5 vs. spitup), *brooms of sweeping* (+1 vs. nonmagical dirt, +2 vs. dust bunnies, +3 vs. toys, +4 vs. pets, +5 vs. unwashed laundry), *Bucknard's everfull toy chest*, *Bucknard's mother's everfull milk bottle*, *chicken soup of healing* and *cured ham*

(each heals 1d8 hp damage); *elixirs of fruit-flavored medicines*, *junk drawers of holding*, *mustard plasters of elemental fire*, *pot holders of fire protection*, *spoons of accurate measurement*, *spoons of medicine*, *ultimate detergent*, and *vapor rubs of choking and stinking*.

The Grandmother NPC

Before completing 8th level, the Mother NPC may be nominated by her chapter to become a Grandmother. A review committee considers the candidate's status, background, progress, and achievements in service of Motherhood. Then, if the candidate can host her review committee for three days, preparing all meals from scratch, the nomination is then put to the local M.O.M. chapter for approval. If a Mother does not achieve Grandmotherhood, she remains at her current level until she is able to adequately host a dinner party. Upon attaining Grandmotherhood, additional spell-like powers are conferred.

Table 2: Mother Turning Children

Age of Child	Level of Mother								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 ¹
less than 2	10	7	4	T	T	G	G	G	G
2	13	10	7	T	T	G	G	G	G
3-4	16	13	10	4	T	T	G	G	G
5-6	19	16	13	7	4	T	T	G	G
7-8	20	19	16	13	7	4	T	T	G
9-10	-	20	19	16	13	7	4	T	T
10-12	-	-	20	19	16	13	7	4	T
Teenager ²	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20
20-21	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	19	16
22-29	-	-	-	-	-	20	19	16	13
30-49	-	-	-	20	19	16	13	7	4
50-69 ³	19	16	13	7	4	T	T	G	G
70+ ³	4	T	T	G	G	G	G	G	G

1. Progression continues beyond 9th level.
2. Teenagers are a special age group that are impossibly hard to get to do anything let alone going to their rooms.
3. This applies only to the senile. Crabby old codgers who won't take lip from anyone certainly won't take it from a Mother.

Creatures of other species are affected as if the Mother were one level lower; extraplanar creatures are affected as if the Mother were two levels lower.



Charm Creature: Once a day, a Grandmother can favor a target creature with an endearing smile. If the creature fails its save vs. spell, it dotes on the Grandmother for the next 24 hours. Note that after the charm wears off, the affected creature feels no ill will toward the Grandmother.

Divine Favorite: Allows a Grandmother to divine the favorite food, drink, or item of one creature, once per day. Divining food or drink in this manner allows the Grandmother to prepare it to the creature's liking; divining objects yields the location of a favorite object, which has a percentage chance equal to the Grandmother's level of experience of actually being in her possession.

Gaze Attack: Three times per day, a Grandmother can sternly gaze at any creature, reducing them to a childlike persona for 2d6 rounds.

Immunity to Backstabbing: Who would backstab a Grandmother?

Pampering: This ability gives a Grandmother license to pamper and spoil children of other parents or Mother NPCs with impunity.

Protection from Cleaning Purges: Grandmothers never suffer from wild purges as they are meticulously neat and tidy.

Once the Mother becomes a Grandmother, she usually settles down in a quaint little house some distance from her relatives (over rivers, through woods, in wolf-infested countrysides, etc.). A Grandmother refrains from traveling and attracts 1d8 Mothers who settle nearby to attend to her needs. Nevertheless she still has access to the Gossip & Rumor Mill — news of births, weddings, affairs, illness, and deaths come to her by her attendants, visiting relatives, and local delivery boys. However, when propriety demands a social call, the Grandmother can persuade others to provide transportation for her.

Additional magical items available to Grandmothers are: *Bucknard's Grandmother's everfull candy dish*, *kettles of hot tea and hot chocolate*, *knitting needles of accuracy*, *patchwork quilts of protection (+1 to +5, cast color spray in the form of quilt patterns once a day)*, *rocking chariots of Sustarre*, *shawls of comfort*, *tea*

leaves of soothing, *of healing*, *and of divination*, and *teapots for summoning hot water elementals*.

The Great-Grandmother NPC

Before completing 16th level, a Grandmother receives a social call from a group of her peers who stay as her guests and enjoy her hospitality for a week. If food, drink, social graces, and gossip are abundant and exemplary, the Grandmother may then become a Great-Grandmother. Otherwise she must remain at her present level until she is able to prove her social goodwill.

Upon attaining 16th level, a Mother immediately relocates to an unknown area to lead a hermits life, rarely to be heard or seen from again. This contributes to the popular misconception that Great-Grandmothers do not exist, which is of course patently false. They do exist; most people have simply not been told of them. Great-Grandmothers build up an immense collection of memorabilia which, since these objects were things they collected when they were younger, are now regarded as antiques. Great-Grandmothers also do not speak the current form of common; their grammar is so archaic that it is no longer comprehensible. Interpretation must be provided by an attendant Grandmother or a *comprehend languages* spell. Great-Grandmotherhood confers these additional abilities.

Arcane Gossip/Rumor: This power grants knowledge of all rumors, news, and social, political, and metaphysical events in the world, such as the last time the drow and other elves had charitable things to say of one another. This information is always whispered, generally over watercress sandwiches and tea.

Bestow Present: This ability allows a Great-Grandmother to confer anonymous gifts to their favorite relatives in the form of magical items, large quantities of gold or platinum, or handwritten notes temporarily excusing someone from the experience needed to attain the next experience level (the creature is treated as having obtained the needed experience). These presents can be received only once in a creature's lifetime.

Know Family: Great-Grandmothers have an exacting knowledge of family lineage with the most current information on remote and forgotten family members. A complete recitation of the family tree takes a number of days equal to the level of the Great-Grandmother +1d4.

Protection from Cleaning Urges: This power grants protection from any impulse to clean.

Protection from Scrying: This ability confers proof from detection through any magical means, spells, or devices, short of supernatural agents unless the Great-Grandmother wishes to be found.

Regenerative Sleep: A Great-Grandmother regenerates hit points by sleeping, recovering 2 points per turn; as a consequence, Great-Grandmothers lapse into a regenerative sleep whenever needed, especially in the middle of an intense conversation.

Timelessness: a Great-Grandmother radiates an aura of serenity and timelessness; all actions within her house are slowed to one round equals one turn (healing and spell recovery occur at normal rate). All who are affected remain acutely aware of the change. Thus it not only feels like time is dragging by, it actually is.

Once the Great-Grandmother has resettled, she sets out a tin of milk and attracts 4d8 cats. These cats are not familiars, but they remain in her company and follow her from room to room, occupying any furniture, window sill, lap, or other horizontal surface. Great-Grandmothers have all sorts of magical items lying around their houses collecting dust, although rarely are these items useful, charged, or both. A typical Great-Grandmother's home may include the following: *Bucknard's Great-grandmother's everfull jars of mint ochre jelly, crushed sprigs of eternal hope, lace doilies of protection, Rary's first spellbook* (with illustrations on every other page), *Heward's magnificent toy piano, live cockatrice feather dusters, naga-hide recliners, marzipan and gingerbread figurines of wondrous taste, stinking cloud mothballs, and Vecna's dentures.*

The Fairy Godmother NPC

Upon reaching 16th level, a Grandmother may decide not to become a Great-Grandmother and may choose instead to join the magic-using chapter of the Mother order, the Fairy Godmother subclass. To be eligible for this, a Grandmother must be of good alignment, possess a minimum Intelligence of 16, and be willing to drop all previously gained experience, although all previously gained abilities and hit points are retained (Table 3).

Further review is required by the chapter of Fairy Godmothers before admittance is allowed, making certain the candidate has helped nice, down-

Table 3: Fairy Godmother Levels

Experience	Level ¹	Hit Die (d4)	Title
0	16	1	Godmother Initiate
500,000	17	2	Godmother Adept
1,000,000	18	3	Godmother Sister
1,500,000	19	4	Godmother Superior
2,000,000	20	5	Demi Godmother
2,500,000	21	6	Lesser Godmother
3,000,000	22	7	Greater Godmother
3,500,000	23	8	Fairy Godmother
500,000 for every level above 22nd	24	9	Fairy Godmother 23rd level
	25	10	Fairy Godmother 24th level

1. Indicates corresponding wizard level for spells.

trodden little girls to live happily ever after and so on. Once accepted, the Fairy Godmother wears pastel-colored clothing, gains a *wand for polymorphing anything into anything else* (works only for the Fairy Godmother, creates *glitterdust* with all functions), and the following abilities:

Borrow Magic: Once per day, a Fairy Godmother can "borrow" magic from other sources in order to cast a spell she knows but has not memorized. The Fairy Godmother sings a rhyming, nonsensical little song that invariably appeals to small children. All borrowed magic returns to its original sources at the end of a specified time, although some permanent, physical trace of the spell cast by the Fairy Godmother remains (usually in the form of footwear).

Fairy Powers: *Fly, teleport without error, enlarge/reduce, haste, invisible* at will.

Immunity to Poison: Fairy Godmothers have an automatic save vs. poison, including instantly fatal types. A successful saving throw allows a Fairy Godmother to turn and give the perpetrator a good smack on the wrist or *polymorph other*; otherwise the Fairy Godmother takes a quick catnap, giving her a well-deserved rest for 1d6 rounds while the poison wears off.

Longevity: Fairy Godmothers gain longevity equal to their level in decades (16th level = 160 years).

Fairy Godmothers trade their cookbooks for actual spellbooks, which are replete with all the spell levels that their Intelligence and level of experience allows. They are permitted to use spells to teach lessons or to make mischief (such as *polymorph* someone into a frog). If a Fairy Godmother causes permanent injury or death that cannot be justified through good triumphing over evil or someone living happily after, the Godmother is stripped of her status, abilities, and experience as a Fairy Godmother; furthermore, she is reduced to a beginning 15th-level Grandmother and is forever banished from the Fairy Godmother subclass.

Tales from the Crib

Recent rumors also indicate the existence of another echelon of Mother NPCs, known only as Anti-Mothers or Step-Mothers. They are rumored to be a branch of evil Mother NPCs who seek to cause children endless mischief and slander the name of M.O.M. Mother NPCs rarely speak of Anti-Mothers and never invite them to play bridge; all other information is hidden in the chapterhouses of M.O.M. It is hoped more will be discovered about this evil sect and what they are capable of doing.

Mother NPC Spell-like Abilities

Change Diaper

(Alteration, Conjuraction/Summoning)

Level: 1

Range: Touch

Duration: Instantaneous

Area of effect: One infant per level

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 round

Saving Throw: None

With this spell, the Mother NPC can change one infant with fouled diapers for each level of experience. The Mother NPC grimaces and says "Phewww!" or "Oh!" or something similar while sprinkling the target infant with talcum powder. The diaper is automatically cleaned and re-scented, any excrement is disposed of in the nearest dung heap, and the infant's skin is oiled and powdered dry.

Detect Worth

(Divination)

Level: 2

Range: Touch

Duration: 1 round/level

Area of effect: One object (or creature) per round

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 round

Saving Throw: Special

When a Mother employs this ability, she is able to determine the actual worth of one item per level of experience each

round. If the ability is applied to living or dead creatures, their actual worth or potential in life shall be known, as well as whether that potential has been realized. A saving throw is allowed for live creatures, a successful save vs. spells canceling the entire spell. A Mother must take the item or creature's head in hand and peer at it in intense scrutiny while "hmphing" or "um-huming" (the material components are not consumed in the casting).

Power Word, Middle Name (Conjuration/Summoning)

Level: 5

Range: Hearing range

Duration: 1d10 rounds

Area of Effect: One creature

Components: V

Casting Time: 1 segment

Saving Throw: Negates

When *power word, middle name* is cast, a Mother recites the creature's full name, including the middle name. The summoned creature is filled with a sense of dread and must save vs. dragon breath at -4. If the creature fails the save, it loses 25% + 5% per level of the summoning Mother of its ego points in crushing damage (ego points are equal to Intelligence or Charisma, whichever is

higher) and must immediately appear before the Mother performing the summoning. The creature will automatically be submissive and obedient; protective circles are not required. The Mother NPC may then upbraid and harangue the creature for the duration of the spell, asking it, for example, what it uses its head for other than as a hat rack. At the end of the spell, the Mother may compel the creature (e.g., a *geas*) to show some improvement in behavior or perform some domestic service "to build character" before being released from her scrutiny. The service lasts the number of hours it takes to regenerate half of the creature's ego points (5% per hour). Should the creature make its initial save, no damage is taken and the call may be ignored, although this only makes the Mother angrier and reduces the creature's save by -2 to every successive summoning. Creatures with magic resistance will discover that it doesn't save them from their own Mothers.

Borrow Magic

(Alteration, Evocation/Invocation)

Level: 9

Range: Unlimited

Duration: Special

Area of Effect: Special

Components: V, S

Casting Time: Special

Saving Throw: None

When a Fairy Godmother uses this ability, she draws magic from other magical sources all around her, including functioning spells, magic items (dormant or operational), and artifacts. The amount of spell levels or charges drawn is equal to the level of the spell the Fairy Godmother intends to cast. The affected objects or spells temporarily cease functioning or are drained of the charges until some specified time, for instance midnight of the same day, when the borrowed magic spell expires. All *borrowed magic* returns to the sources which resume functioning or regain their charges as if nothing had happened. The verbal component must be sung in the form of a rhyming, catchy tune; afterwards the spell inexplicably leaves behind some permanent aspect as evidence.



Although the author plays a mage in the GREYHAWK® setting, he is currently working on a non-weapon proficiency in art history to battle the Old Masters, medieval manuscripts, and his thesis review committee.

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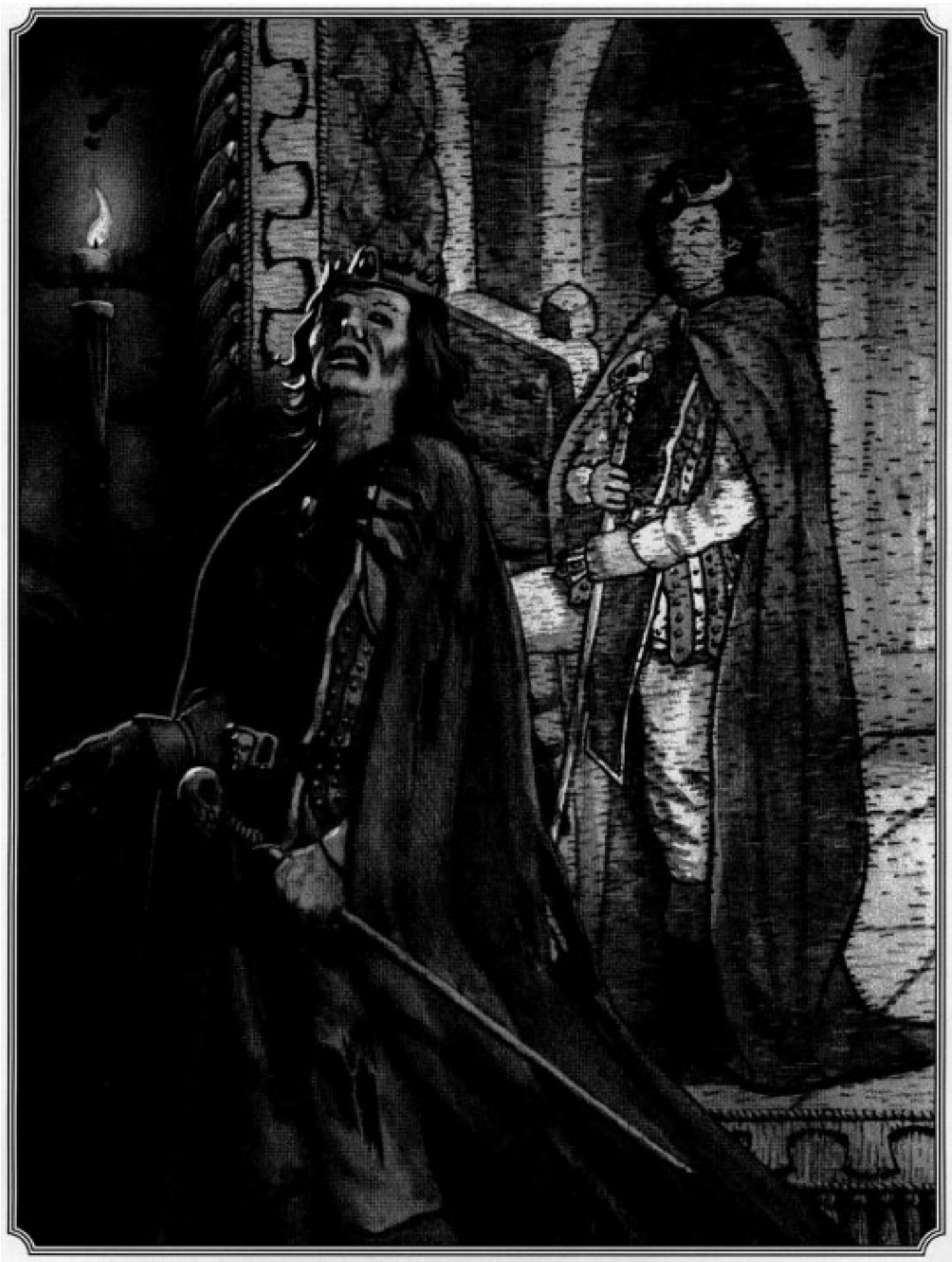
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FORGOTTEN REALMS

BOOKS





Ancient Adversaries in Your Campaign

Villains, like fine wine...

By Lloyd Brown III

illustrated by Kevin Ward

Just like player characters (PCs), the best villains seem to be magnets for trouble and have exciting, dangerous lives. How much more so those that live for hundreds of years and see tremendous changes in politics, religion, magic, learning, art, and possibly even geography? Too often, a Dungeon Master (DM) allows PCs to bump blithely into a creature that has lived for 500, 600, or 1,000 years or more; then present this villain with no more depth than any other wandering monster. Long-lived villains should have a background as full and detailed as the most successful of PCs.

This is not to say, however, that the DM must spend hours creating every hag, giant, fiend, or lich that encounters his PCs. After all, not every creature with the potential to live over 500 years is encountered at that age. Most are met (and often killed) well before they reach such venerability. Those met only briefly, however, may have more ability than indicated by the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*TM tome description, and those who are major figures in the DM's world should have much more behind them than a mere list of statistics.

Ancient Villains

To start with, an ancient villain should have the potential for long life — at least 500 years. Hags, rakshasas, dark elves, certain giants, and intelligent undead all have the ability to survive at least that long. Some creatures, such as fiends, may potentially live forever. Other monsters do not have their lifespan clearly delineated in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* tome, but there is no reason to assume that they necessarily have short lives. These include yuan-ti, nagas, and aboleths. Curiously, dragons are not included in any of these examples because they are assumed to enter their last stage of life at a mere 400 years. Their inclusion is up to the DM, of course. If he wishes, dragons can be immortal, assuming that they "ripen" at about 400 and have many years of vigor left to them. Like everything else, it is the DM's discretion that determines how much of these guidelines may be applied to those slightly younger villains who play a major part in his campaign world.

Another major criterion is that the creature singled out for detail must be an important figure with whom the PCs will interact. The DM should never spend a great deal of time detailing minor figures that the PCs meet only briefly. His attention is better directed at other parts of the campaign.

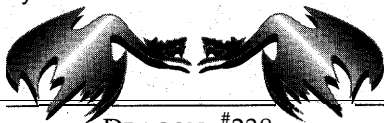
History, the Starting Point

Any creature older than most countries likely has a rich and colorful history. When describing the villain's history, the DM should check his campaign record for existing historical events and decide which of these the villain was around to witness. Then the DM can decide, on the villain's role, if any. He may have been a bystander, a champion, or even a victim of political upheaval, magical destruction; natural disaster, or a new religion. Perhaps the lich was one of the Suel wizards who brought about the Invoked Devastation on Oerth, or maybe the DM's stone giant villain witnessed the break of Thay from disintegrating Mulhorand. If the DM uses his own world, having a record of major historical events helps give a little background. These events all have some impact on the old villain's life (or undeath) and may seriously affect his outlook or behavior.

After the effect of these major events, minor events can be added to flesh out the character even more. These are local events, like the founding of a minor city, a marriage of gentry, the establishment of a temple, or building a dam. These also include personal events that had a major influence on the villain. The death of a loved one, a serious defeat, or great discovery. An elven vampire from the *RAVENLOFT*[®] setting may have once been so beloved a champion that he was given a rare suit of magical elven chainmail. After he turned to evil, he had to flee his home to escape the bands of warrior/wizards who came to reclaim their prize. Subsequently, as a domain lord, he may forbid all elves from entering his lands. This may make things difficult for elven PCs.

As part of the ancient villains history, the DM must include where he has been, as well as when he has been there. If the DM wishes for a hag to have had a major part in two events that were 2,000 miles apart, then she will have had to travel from one to another somehow. And along the way, she had the opportunity to learn languages, proficiencies, meet possible allies and enemies, engage in trade, learn of new spells and magical items, and quite possibly improve her tactical skills through combat. If the PCs can do it, the villains can, too.

The history of an ancient villain may be the most important part of his character. This may determine what motivates him, how he tends to react to events, his fears and desires. It gives the DM some insight as to which skills his ancient villain may have. *The Complete Book of Villains* gives excellent advice on how to flesh



out the villain's personality. Although usually only a little of this may be learned by the players, this information can aid immeasurably in role-playing the ancient NPC, making him unique and memorable to the players and their characters.

Wealth

Over many years, a villain accumulates a choice selection of treasures. He may have had to flee from enemies several times over the centuries, but most likely he has had a chance to grab a few items of low weight and high value. When met by the PCs, however, the ancient villain probably is near the completion of his plans and has collected a tidy sum of wealth. This wealth is not likely to be in coin, because vulgar accumulation of cash is hardly sufficient motivation for an evil creature that must be thwarted by heroes. Most likely, the villain has a small, portable cache made up of gems, jewelry, and some coins for quick spending.

Instead of gold and silver, valuable tools and equipment are the order of the day. Servants must have good equipment to help in their job. Previously gained treasure has been traded or spent on services, equipment, or magical items. Instead of the 20,000 gold pieces that may be indicated by a treasure type description, the villain may have had a secret passage dug, a curse removed from a lieutenant, *explosive runes* cast on a scroll, or perhaps he bribed officials in high places.

The villain may have a false treasure room filled with false guards and enough treasure to convince intruders that they have found the real thing. A key point is that the false treasure consists of coins and lesser jewelry, so thieves are heavily burdened as they are pursued.

The most important kind of wealth — magical items — is a special consideration. Consider a greenhag who has lived nearly a full life of 10 centuries. If she engages in combat only once a year (and survives each ordeal), she has defeated close to a thousand enemies. If only a handful carried magical items, she still has probably more than she can carry. Undoubtedly, most are consumables — potions, scrolls, and one-shot items. Some are cursed and give her more trouble than their previous owner. Some can't be used and are traded or given away. She gives the *leather armor +1* to a wood elf she is trying to corrupt. The crossbow bolts are traded for gold,

which she uses to bait a trap. The other items are potentially useful: a *rope of constriction*, a *brooch of shielding*, and a *necklace of missiles*, for example.

These items need little work on the DM's part. In the case of the *necklace*, the hag would simply make sure that she uses it above ground. The *rope* would probably not be used if her ogre allies were in close contact with the enemy. In some cases, however, an item is so powerful or so uniquely affects the ancient villain's powers that its use must be taken into consideration from the start. If the hag discovered a *deck of many things* and drew the Throne (raising her Charisma to 18 and granting her a keep), the circumstances of her encounter with the PCs would be altered considerably. Naturally, as time goes by, the selection of magical items, while not necessarily growing until it looks like a shopping list, is increasingly useful and appropriate.

Any rakshasa, ever wary of crossbow bolts, does whatever possible to avoid missile weapons. *Gloves of missile snaring* take on new importance. A *cloak of displacement* would be invaluable. Consider a spellcaster who creates a magical staff that, although it has no magical bonuses, allows the user to extend his spells delivered by touch through the weapon, thereby negating the terrible penalties an unarmed attacker suffers for attacking an armed opponent. He's thinking *cause light wounds* and *shocking grasp*. The vampire that takes it from him is thinking differently. The DM is advised to consider the villain's natural strengths and weaknesses carefully when deciding which magical items the creature is given, and to consider how it will affect his tactics, aggressiveness, and even surroundings.

Allies, Followers, and Slaves

Loyal followers are the most valuable "possessions" these villains can have. Undoubtedly, a betrayal at some point in the past has cost our ancient villain a great deal. Certainly, magical items are helpful, but these can be found, stolen, bartered for, or made. Followers, on the other hand, must (in most cases) be courted, recruited, and trained. They represent a great investment in time and energy. They are allowed or encouraged to grow powerful in order to serve better, but they are watched carefully to see that they do not gain enough power to become a threat to their master. This is not to say that these villains are kind and benevolent to their minions. The

methods that evil-aligned creatures use to obtain loyalty differ from the methods of good-aligned creatures, but they can still be effective.

At the very bottom tier of the ancient character's retinue are slaves and *charmed* victims. These are unwilling followers who probably revolt if given the opportunity and some hope of success. For this reason, they are given menial jobs and little or no trust. They have close supervision, and their failures are acted upon immediately. Most ancient monsters have at least one or two slaves, but drow have as many as they can keep. Giants tend to have a small group of slaves, and fiends may even have lesser fiends to serve them. Nagas and certain fiends keep *charmed* followers, as do vampires and many spellcasters with the appropriate spells.

Followers who are loyal of their own choice usually have magical items if it is possible for their master to acquire them. Naturally, the master saves the best for himself, but he gives lesser items to those followers who can best use them. When it comes to normal equipment, loyal followers tend to have the best that gold can buy. Armor, weapons, and steeds are the best quality available. Such gifts are a cheap price to pay for continued loyalty. Willing followers are aware of their master's wishes and endeavor to live up to his expectations. They are alert, follow directions to the best of their ability and intelligence, and fight fiercely to protect his interests.

Ancient villains also typically have allies of varying degrees. Some share identical goals, while others have ambitions that only marginally coincide with the ancient villain's. A rakshasa slaver might know a mind flayer to whom he had sold slaves on occasion. In return for a couple of choice elves, some tough dwarves, and a brilliant gnome, the mind flayer might provide the rakshasa with some adamantite from the Underdark, release the rakshasa's wild talent, or use his psionic powers to take the rakshasa to another place or plane.

One loyal servant very important to a monstrous villain is a human or a human-appearing creature who can interact with human society. Humans have (in most worlds) the largest centers of population, and much trade goes through their hands. They also have powerful magic and many humans can be found who are willing to deal with evil creatures or who don't care about good or evil.

General Tactics

Eventually, persistent PCs should corner even the wildest of opponents and force them into what the players hope will be a final battle. They will not be the first to do so. Given the myriad outcomes of combat and the infinite possibilities added by magic, even the mightiest fall if they take their chance on the battlefield off en enough.

Avoidance of *unnecessary* combat, therefore, becomes a primary goal of our ancient enemy. Some fighting may be unavoidable, and some may be the very purpose of our enemy's existence. A mummy may be on a quest to track down the last defilers of his masters tomb, or a giant may wish to destroy a dwarven enclave too near his personal gemstone mine.

Unnecessary combat, however, is delegated to those capable servants, allies, or others who excel in it. Slaves and *charmed* victims are used as shock troops. Loyal followers are held back to throw into the battle at a crucial moment, or they might be allowed to use special abilities to remove a particularly potent foe. Allies are watched intently, because their loyalty is never entirely assured. Their powers, though, probably far outmatch any followers, and they can be a deciding factor in many fights if employed properly.

At least one escape route is available to an ancient villain at all times. This might be a mundane path, like a chute that takes the villain to a stable of fine horses, or it could be magical, like a *flying carpet* on a tower roof. As in everything else, the ancient villain's natural strengths and weaknesses must be taken into consideration. Undead can travel underwater, since this is often difficult for other creatures but doesn't harm the non-breathing undead at all. Fiends may be able to *teleport* away or cover retreat with *pyrotechnics*.

An ancient villain's escape route is also protected. Besides the standard magical defenses (*glyphs of warding*, *fire traps*, etc.) cunning and deceit are used enthusiastically. One of the horses in the stable might be a nightmare, waiting for pursuers to try to mount it. In similar fashion, there may be a *rug of smothering* beside the *flying carpet* on the tower roof.

The Sequel

Keeping the escape contingency in mind, ancient villains become ideal for a recurring villain who plagues the PCs.

This situation can be integrated into an adventure that has already been played by linking an adversary the party has defeated in the past to our villain. The PCs may disrupt a slavers henchman's smuggling operation, unwittingly kill an NPC who happened to be a major contributor to a cultist, or arrest the warlord's chief recruiter. In this way, the villain can have an edge on the PCs because survivors of this previous adventure can provide the villain with descriptions and maybe the names of the PCs. Since the villain has a long list of enemies of greater importance, the PCs aren't likely to be noticed at first. This earlier adventure can then lead to another adventure involving the villain's own plans.

Since the ancient villain is more concerned with surviving than with a quick victory, he is most likely to flee an initial encounter with the PCs, as already mentioned. His capable lieutenants are left behind to deal with the meddlers. And, depending on the DM's intention, the PCs' actions!, and possibly chance, this situation could result in victory for either party. In either case, the villain now takes direct notice of the PCs and should make some accommodation for their next meeting. If the PCs were unsuccessful in stopping his plans, the villain takes moderate action. Victorious PCs have cost him a great deal, and he is sure to take them into consideration from the beginning when he starts over. The ancient villain has a long memory and will not appreciate a subsequent meeting with those who have defied him in past. Any more interruptions by the same group of PCs undoubtedly convinces the villain that removing them is vital to completing his plans.

Personal Combat

When the ancient villain is forced into personal combat, his exact moves are dictated by alignment, personality, and abilities. One thing remains constant: The ancient villain makes full use of all of his unique abilities, including physical attacks, inherent abilities, spells, and magical items. Giants may have huge chasms separating rooms in their stronghold — a small leap for the giant, but a major obstacle for man-sized creatures. Fiends and undead tend to maintain an inhospitable atmosphere in their lairs that makes simple survival difficult for beings without their particular immunities.

The weapons, if any are used, of a foe who has seen 20 generations or

more of humans are almost certainly magical. They may have been custom made and not usable by others. They may have special properties or custom enchantments. It is easy to imagine a dark elf with a *short sword +3*, but if the sword also has *protection from law* (similar to *protection from good*), it may confuse and confound the drow's enemies.

The ancient villain's skill level varies with class, race, personality, and age. Those that belong to the Fighter class or that have few magical abilities (drow, some vampires, mummies or giants) are most likely to be specialists, masters (see the *PLAYER'S OPTION™: Combat & Tactics* rules), or even more skilled combatants. Those with magical abilities use them more frequently than melee combat and so have not developed fighting skills to the extreme of their non-magical counterparts. Liches, ghosts, and rakshasas do not rely heavily on physical skill to overwhelm their enemies.

Many of these monsters may specialize in unarmed combat, either by personal preference or to capitalize on their innate deadly touch. A mummy who is a high master of wrestling would overwhelm virtually any single foe. He would seek to come to terms on the outcome of a duel, confident in his ability to defeat any mortal. A vampire with multiple attacks due to specialization could quickly weaken an entire adventuring party. Others, like aboleth or nagas, have no arms and so may develop new attack forms. The aboleth may use his tentacles to steal weapons from his enemies or uncork a potion bottle. The naga may entwine about one enemy, bite another, and use her tail to trip a third.

The DM should be sparing with how he doles out skill levels, but older enemies have already proven that they have something their dead contemporaries lack, so the skill of those that still live should be higher than average. Thus, those ancient enemies mentioned here should have a slightly greater occurrence of specialization (and greater prowess) than other, younger, monsters. The determining factor, as always, is the effect on the DM's campaign. If the villain is the finale for a single adventuring session, he should probably not have more than one level of specialization. If he is a major villain or *the* major campaign villain, high mastery or grand mastery is certainly appropriate.

Knowledge and tactics are also important. There are factors besides THACO and hit points in a battle, and the

older enemies are aware of this fact. Those with infravision or the blind-fighting proficiency might prefer to fight in the dark.

Considering the age and experiences of some of these monsters, the DM should be liberal in allowing special proficiencies as mentioned in the *Combat & Tactics* book. Wouldn't it be a treat for the players to meet a monster for whom humans are a "species enemy" and attacks with at +4 bonus! An ancient rakshasa might be the last master of a lost style of martial arts that allows for a free trapping move every round. A giant might sometimes use his 18'-long spear to trip up several opponents and then attack them while prone. The possibilities are limitless.

DMs looking for a table to determine how many proficiencies villains should have based on age will be disappointed. There is none. Instead, this should be based on the history of the villain and his importance in the campaign. If the DM is still at a loss, compare the Hit Dice of the monster to the same level of whatever class is appropriate (fighters for most) and compare to a player character of the same level and add one proficiency (alternate weapon/nonweapon) for every 50 years or so, not counting inactive time for undead. Don't forget to add extra proficiencies for high Intelligence.

Psionics

A monster that knows it has a long or potentially endless lifetime is willing to devote much more time to an investment for later, return. A lich may consider 20 years of spell research the same way that a human views two years at a university. In this light, spending a decade or so attempting to bring out a latent wild talent becomes a viable option. Especially on Athas, psionics can often be a vital edge. Aboleths, yuan-ti, tanar'ri, and baatezu are the prime candidates for psionic ability, but others may have developed a wild talent that can be used to augment or complement their inherent abilities or skills. A wraith with the ability to shadow walk, for example, would have amazing travel capabilities. A giant with complete healing could recover from an inconclusive battle faster than the PCs, returning at full strength while the PCs are still wounded.

Psionics also have the added benefit (from the DM's point of view) of giving the monsters extra abilities without giving them magical items that the players

may acquire if they defeat the villain. The DM is advised that psionics work best with creatures without access to strong magic or combat ability. The DM may decide that specialization is not appropriate for his ancient villain and allow him to learn the psionic devotion accelerate to give him a combat bonus in a tight spot. If a smaller degree of "boost" is needed, the DM may allow graft weapon or displacement.

Innate Abilities

Many of the monsters capable of attaining great age, especially those from other planes, have a number of innate abilities that they can use as well as humans can use speech. With this in mind, the DM should allow them to make the best use of such abilities. A fiend who can use *pyrotechnics* for example, can make it a point to keep an open flame nearby. Creatures who can *charm* by gaze or touch might constantly make the attempt, even if they do not actively exercise control over the victim. Those who can *change self*, *polymorph self* or use illusion to disguise their appearance could have a well-developed alter ego, complete with cover skills and personality. A covey of hags, with the ability to *animate dead*, might have dozens of skeletons in the area around their swampy home. One of the hags always keeps a *mind blank* active, since it has a duration of 24 hours and can be used once a day.

Extra-planar creatures can always *gate* in help appropriate to their situation. Where they are required to be discreet, they might have little help available. Where they don't care if they attract attention, they probably have large numbers of *gated* creatures at hand. Normally, although any number can be summoned this way, those *gated* in can rebel or take credit for the task from the summoner, so they are tolerated only when absolutely necessary. (This problem helps explain why two or three fiends haven't *gated* in enough of their peers to completely take over the Prime Material Plane already.)

Spell Selection, Research and Use

Many of the creatures mentioned here can cast spells as a standard wizard. These creatures are potentially much more deadly than those who can only use certain innate abilities, because they can learn or create new spells, use different spells for different purposes; and possibly create their own magical items as well.

If an ancient villain has the ability to do so, some time and effort might have been spent customizing his spell selection. To the DM this means that he can select spells from other sources, like the *Oriental Adventures*, AL-QADIM® setting, *Drow of the Underdark*, or even the SPELLJAMMER® campaign sourcebooks, whichever and whatever is appropriate given the monster's history. These can be used to augment those spells in the *Player's Handbook* or may take precedence over the *PHB*, depending on the exact age and origin of the monster in question. Fortunately for DM's, there is now a full encyclopedia of spells to choose from when creating unique spell lists for NPCs.

Spells that are available to wizards or creatures with the innate ability to cast spells *will* be used by ancient villains. Doors to their lairs are likely *wizard locked* and/or *fire trapped*. *Explosive runes*, *sepia snake sigils*, *permanent illusions*, *magic mouths*, and other permanent spells will be present. Spells from sources other than the *PHB* are probably also used to protect the person or property of the ancient spellcaster. The spell books of an ancient villain are nearly impossible for PCs to find, but they can be quite a coup if captured. They may be hidden on other planes, *sequestered*, covered by illusion, or in a form that is difficult to identify. Perhaps the PCs, searching a half-buried pyramid, find strange hieroglyphics on every wall. Their spells cannot translate them, and their rogues do not recognize them. Hundreds of feet later, deep in the center of the tomb, the party stumbles upon a stone sarcophagus. The characters ready their Greek fire and prepare to attack the inevitable mummy. Their dying realization as the *ice storm* hits them is that the secret to the lich's magic was in front of their eyes the entire time.

As with the example with the lich, the DM must keep in mind that these cunning adversaries always look for ways to use their advantages against the mortals that wish to thwart them. Undead love to use cold-based spells at point-blank range. Naturally, they also like things like poison gas (*cloudkill*, *stinking cloud*), flooding, and charms that affect enemies but not them (*fear*, *charm*, *hold* spells).

The DM should always keep in mind that the experience point reward for defeating these ancient monsters should be increased if he adds abilities or gives them an extreme situational advantage over the PCs. If they have to work much



harder to defeat their enemies, they should be better rewarded as well. Common attributes which warrant an experience point increase for defeating these monsters include high hit points, Intelligence that affects combat, spell use, magical items usable against the party, or any other ability the DM gives the monster over and above the standard. But the characters should earn this extra award. The PCs must use every bit of vigor, cunning, skill and luck they have to defeat the oldest and wisest of their enemies.

Archetypes of Villainy

While the best villains are always unique individuals, with a personality and history of their own, certain general categories are useful to DMs constructing a new villain. Here are a few of the most common.

The Slaver

Slavers seek to make a profit on the sale of intelligent life, usually humans and demihumans. Many slavers also take pleasure in the degradation of spirit and humiliation of their victims.

Slavery is often the path of a villain who has suffered a great defeat at the hands of a clan or community of a certain race. Even a great setback at the hands of a particular individual may lead a villain to generalize his anger against an entire race.

These villains live in better conditions than many others, openly displaying the gulf between their own excess and the pitiful lack of the slaves. They have a select few henchmen who they can actually trust, characters usually motivated by promises of more gold. Slaver allies usually do not have great individual power, and they tend to be few and uncooperative. None of these greedy folk wish to add another factor into their split of the profits. Below the henchmen and allies are the enforcers, those who actually stand in the pits with the slaves and enforce obedience. These are typically powerful, low-Intelligence humanoid: bugbears, ogres, even trolls, depending on the power of the leader.

PCs may try to pose as slave traders in order to infiltrate the ancient slaver's organization. The ancient slaver has seen this technique many times and

probably has magical methods of detecting falsehood in effect when negotiating with strangers. The slaver does not necessarily give away the fact that he has identified his enemies. He may choose to insinuate a " sleeper" agent with any slaves the PCs buy (probably with the noble intentions of freeing them and getting more intelligence from them). An ogre mage, jackalwere, or doppelganger can cause chaos among the party or sow misinformation that could cause a major strategic error. Many of the ancient slavers are capable of assuming human or demihuman form themselves. They might have a lieutenant pose as themselves while the slaver boldly enters the party's camp with some of his own freed slaves!

Ancient slavers endeavor to outthink rather than outfight their enemies. Although their great wealth enables them to purchase the loyalty of highly skilled bodyguards, there is no money to be made in fighting. They may seek to bribe enemies into leaving them alone or even joining the slaver as henchmen. Those naive enough to fall for this old trick are assassinated in their

sleep unless the slaver can find some way to coerce their good behavior. The slaver seeks to maintain loyalty among his followers somewhere between the “carrot” of plentiful gold and the “stick” of death in the night.

Common races found as slavers include rakshasa, spinagons, abishai, nabassu, alu-fiends, cambions, hags, yuan-ti, aboleths, nagas, stone giants, and dark elves. Many of these races prefer to use humans and their ilk for their own ends (food, mostly) in addition to the benefits to their ego and purse.

The Warlord

The warlord is a belligerent individual who sets his organization up along military lines. This villain’s activities focus on the assimilation or destruction of large areas of land and groups of people. He may wish to take over a particular land, race, or geographic area — or he may aim at nothing less than the entire world. If undead, this villain might try to regain the lands he ruled or controlled when alive. Since villains do not necessarily declare war or restrict their attacks to military targets, they are often thought of as brigands or pirates until they gain considerable power.

Most warlords do not often enter combat personally. If a party were to infiltrate the army surrounding him, he would assume that it was through subterfuge or powerful magic rather than through military force. His scouts and wizards would have detected an army nearby, but maybe not a handful of spies. If a party does find its way to the warlord’s presence, he immediately attacks, regardless of the circumstances.

The enemies are first subjected to an area-affecting spell, to disrupt spellcasters and identify opponents with special immunities. Those who look like wizards are showered with missiles, magical ones if possible. Warriors have their movement restricted so that they can be dealt with individually, by ranged attacks, since a powerful fighter’s combat advantage is often lessened if he can be attacked at a distance. Priests’ spells are slow to cast and therefore difficult to use in combat, so they are a secondary target during the initial battle. They are engaged in battle by weaker opponents and separated from the rest of the party so that their *cure wounds* spells (which must be delivered by touch) will be use less. The military master always assumes that there are hidden attackers — an ambush is something he never falls for

on the battlefield. Troops are dispatched to find and neutralize *Invisible* or hidden enemies. If he must enter battle personally, the warlord is the ancient villain most likely to have multiple levels of specialization or special talents. No penalty when attempting a disarm, for example, means that the PCs lose their precious magical weapons early in the battle. The ability to behead an opponent on a natural “20” with an axe or two-handed sword might not affect every combat, but even once might be enough to force the survivors to reconsider their motivation for staying around.

This is a common profession among Villains: rakshasas, stone giants, vampires, liches, mummies, dragons, cambions, mariliths, nalfeshnees, amnizu, cornugons, and drow all have the ability to become crafty generals. Possibly the greatest of all are balors and pit fiends, who command unimaginable numbers of troops in the endless Blood War. Fortunately, these vile creatures spend little of their precious time developing their tactics on the prime material plane.

The Cultist

Cultists are ancient villains who wish to revive or spread a faith with evil tenets and illegal practices. The leader is often a priest of this religion, possibly even a hero, as defined in *Legends & Lore*. Mummies, vampires, clerical liches, wraiths, spectres, yuan-ti, and most fiends with average or higher intelligence can fulfill this role.

When threatened, a cultist attempt to converts his enemies first, by persuasion, by force, or by magic. Those who fail to see things the villain’s way are usually considered heretics fit only to be destroyed. Offensively, the cultist demands that his followers use, any political power they have to imprison, assault or harass the offenders. Merchants who belong to the cult refuse services or goods to their enemies, possibly accusing them of theft or assault. Undead may be plentiful, depending on the nature of the cult and its beliefs. If so, antagonistic PCs may be visited by a variety of unliving foes.

When the PCs become aggressive and bring the attack to the cultist, he undoubtedly wishes to be in his own temple. This temple should have protective magics, either by personal spell, magical item, or faith magic. Special magical effects are designed to maximize the cultists strengths. The temple may be kept at a freezing temperature,

causing the PCs to choose between allocating spells for survival or suffering damage each round. Similarly, the temple could be kept magically dark, foggy, slippery, or animated. Columns might reach out and strike unbelievers, missile fire might fall to the ground harmlessly, magical fire might be diminished in effect. The altar or other priestly accoutrements might be magical as well, usually bestowing a combat advantage on the loyal followers who fight within sight of it. A permanent *chant* might be sung by special *magic mouths* that come out of the walls of the temple.

The weaker followers of the cult are the first enemies invaders meet. While they are thus engaged, the cult’s spellcasters prepare a counter-attack. *Blessed* and *aided* junior priests or allies join the battle, throwing unholy water at paladins and priests as they charge. Followers probably employ a rotation system, so that the wounded can be healed and returned to battle. Fallen foes may be *animated*. Similarly, fallen servants may be *reincarnated*, *raised*, or even *resurrected*, depending on their value. Innate abilities, spells, and granted powers are used liberally in battle with the PCs. This tactic both destroys the enemy and impresses the cultist’s followers at the same time.

Contemporary priesthoods are not the same as priesthoods from the distant past, so DMs can be creative when assigning new spells and unique and deadly granted powers. The DM has quite a library to refer to for ideas on creating unique priesthoods: *The Complete Priests Handbook*, *Legends & Lore*, *PLAYER’S OPTION™ Skills & Powers*.



Lloyd Brown III is a gamer from Jacksonville, Florida. He writes in his spare time, and though he can’t claim to have penned the Dead Sea Scrolls or the works of Shakespeare, he can point to a few articles in DRAGON® Magazine.

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On the

Still Gamin After All These Years
The AD&D® Game

(with apologies to Paul Simon and
"Still Crazy After All These Years")


I met my old DM
On the street last night.
"Have you gamed since college?"
He just smiled.
And we talked about our old games
And I couldn't believe my ears:
He's still gaming after all these years.
Still gaming after all these years.

Now I'm the kind of man
Who'd rather socialize.
I left behind those
Old familiar games.
And I gave up slaying dragons
Without shedding any tears.
I'm not gaming after all these years.

It's four in the morning
My life is
Boring
I'm longing for games to play.
Where is my dice bag?
My *PHB* ... ?
Can I play the thief?

So I went to my hobby shop
And I played some D&D.
"I get to roll my damage —
"1d8!"
I'm right back in the dungeon
Fighting orcs with giant spears.
I'm still gaming after all these years.
Oh, still gaming
Still gaming

Still gaming after all these years.

 Can't Cast This Healing
Or
"The Cleric's Lament"
The AD&D Game
(with apologies to REO Speedwagon and
"I Can't Stop this Feeling")

I can't cast this healing any longer
And yet we've still ten levels left to go.
What started out a SideTrek has grown deadly
I only hope that stupid treasure lies below.

I tell myself that this quest can't last forever.
I say there is no reason for my fear.
But then the fighter rushes thirteen ogres.
I know my life's direction —
It's time for me to heal.

And always as we wander
I keep the thief in sight.
I bandage up the fighter
And cure the wizard's blight.
And I'm wasting more spells than I ever thought I might.

And I can't cast this healing any more.
I've forgotten what we're down here fighting for.
It's time to find ourselves an open door
And leave this dungeon floor
Forever.

'Cause I can't cast this healing any more.
I've forgotten what we're down here fighting for.
And if I have to call upon Great Thor
And cast *dimension door**
Then I won't be here for healing any more.

My life has been such a bloodbath since I joined them.
I've been turning every zombie that we find.
And it always seems that I'm resurrecting someone
As they take me through these dungeons,
Lost tombs, abandoned mines . . .

And always as we wander
I keep the thief in sight.
I bandage up the fighter
And cure the wizard's blight.
And I'm wasting more spells than I ever thought I might.

And I can't cast this healing any more
I've forgotten what we're down here fighting for.
It's time to find ourselves an open door
And leave this dungeon floor
Forever.

'Cause I can't cast this healing any more.
I've forgotten what we're down here fighting for.
And if I have to call upon Great Thor
And cast *dimension door**
Then I won't be here for healing any more.
Oooooooo . . .

*Yes, we know that clerics can't cast *dimension door*, but *word of recall* doesn't rhyme.

Baatezu
The PLANESCAPE® campaign setting
(with apologies to Olivia Newton-John and "Xanadu")

A race
The scariest that I know
They come from the planes below
They're called baatezu-u-u-u-u.

For them
Baator's the place to be
It sounds more like hell to me
They are baatezu-u-u-u-u,

A million fiends are fighting
On planes afar
It's so bizarre.
An everlasting war
With their enemy
The tanar'ri.

Baatezu.
Baatezu-u-u.
(They feed on fear) The baatezu-u-u.
Baatezu.
Baatezu-u-u.
(Hope they don't hear) The baatezu-u-u.
Baatezu, their evil plots entwine
'Round you, baatezu-u-u!

The law
Corrupted with hate and woe
Pure Order is all they know
They are baatezu-u-u-u-u.

So, berk
If a balor is drawing near
Your best bet's to disappear
For he's a baatezu-u-u-u-u.

A million tortures waiting
For clueless sods
Pray to your gods.
It's everlasting pain
'Course, it's best to flee
If you ask me.

Baatezu.
Baatezu-u-u.
(Their evil's clear) The baatezu-u-u.
Baatezu.
Baatezu-u-u.
(Stay far from here) The baatezu-u-u.
Baatezu, their evil plots entwine
'Round you, baatezu-u-u!

Oh no, they're here
The end is near
Baatezu.
Oh no, they're here
Pack up your gear
Baatezu.
Baatezu-ooo-ooooooo . . .

The Day the Magic Died
Or
"Palin's Song"
The DRAGONLANCE® Saga
(with apologies to Don McLean and "American Pie")

A long long time ago
I can still remember when that magic
Seemed to me unclear.
But I knew if I had had more time
That I could make that magic mine
And make my uncle proud, if
He were here.

But summer chaos left me hollow
My heart could harbor only sorrow
Death lived all around me.
Would life always be this empty?
I can't remember if I tried
To cast the spells that Fate denied
But I know I thought the gods had lied
The day the magic died.

So, bye-bye
Three moons gone from the sky
Sought the power at the Tower,
From the Tower, a sigh
As wizards all raised up their voices to cry
Praying, "Gods of magic, answer us — why?"
"Won't someone explain to us, why?"

Did you ever cast a spell,
Feel the powers that within you dwell?
(That's how magic works, you know.)
And do you believe that you could fly?
With magic I would touch the sky
And, then I'd make the ground come nigh
Real slow.

Well I know I was entranced with him
When I saw him in my dreams so grim.
He had hour-glass eyes
Well I thought him evil but wise
Oh, I was a lonely frightened White Robed mage
With my uncle's staff from long-gone age.
Still I knew I would write my page
But then the magic died.

So, bye-bye
Three moons gone from the sky
Sought the power at the Tower,
From the Tower, a sigh
As wizards all raised up their voices to cry
Praying "Gods of magic, answer us — why?"
"Won't someone explain to us, why?"

Helter-skelter in the summer swelter
Chaos spawn gave us no shelter
Till we flew into the Rift
We came out in the Abyss
We'd never seen a sight like this
Knights on dragons fighting Chaos — he was miffed!

Now the pungent air was thick and hot
As Brightblade tried for one good shot
We needed Chaos blood
Oh, but it landed in the 'mud!
My Usha bore the gem of gray.
A kender made the Father pay.
Do you recall that fateful day?
The day the magic died.

We'd all be singin', bye-bye
Three moons gone from the sky
Sought the power at the Tower,
From the Tower, a sigh
As wizards all raised up their voices to cry
Praying, "Gods of magic, answer us — why?"
"Won't someone explain to us, why?"

Oh and there we were all at the tomb
A people who escaped their doom
Or did we just delay the end?
So come on, Sir Steel Brightblade
Tanis too
Tas, Flint, tell us what to do
'Cause Krynn is ours alone now to defend.

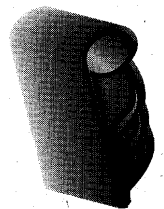
Oh and as I worked to find the key
His words, they echoed back at me
"Make magic born anew."
Is that all I must do?
And as the pale moon climbed into the night
I raised my fist and cursed its light
I saw Chaos laughing with delight
The day the magic died.

I was singin', bye-bye
Three moons gone from the sky
Sought the power at the Tower,
From the Tower, a sigh
As wizards all raised up their voices to cry
Praying, "Gods of magic, answer us — why?"
"Won't someone explain to us, why?"

I saw a face with hourglass eyes
And I asked how I could find my prize
But he just smiled and turned away.
I knocked upon the Wayreth door
Where he'd passed his Test before the War
But the Master said it never went away.

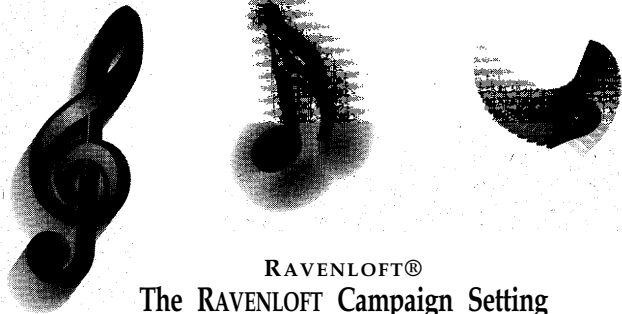
And in those days I rarely slept
While clerics prayed and wizards wept
And, lo, did I at last see
The magic all around me!
And the man whom I admired most
The archmage, Raistlin, raised a toast
To sorcery, no more a ghost
No more has magic died!

And we were singing: On high,
New moon shines in the sky
Found the power at the Tower.
"Wield the power!" I cry.
Let wizards all lift up their faces and sigh



Knowing, "Sorcery is never to die.
"Sorcery is never to die."

We were singing: On high,
New moon shines in the sky
Found the power at the Tower.
Wield the power!" I cry.
Let wizards all lift up their faces and sigh
Knowing, "Sorcery is never to die.
"Sorcery is never to die!"



RAVENLOFT®
The RAVENLOFT Campaign Setting
(with apologies to
the Beach Boys and "Kokomo")

Sabua, G'Henna
This ain't no Vienna.
Forlorn and Dementlieu
Dark lord's gonna get you.
Barovia, Markovia
Strahd is gonna love ya!
G'Henna —

In the shadowy Mists
There's a place called Ravenloft
Tough place, so don't get soft
You may get mad from it all.

Bodies in the ground
Crawling back up, shambling around.
We'll be fleeing in fear
As we listen to our heartbeats pound
Down in Ravenloft.

Sabua, G'Henna
This ain't no Vienna.
In Forlorn and Dementlieu
Dark lord's gonna get you.
Barovia, Markovia
Strahd is gonna love ya!
Ooo I wanna get us out of Ravenloft!
We got here fast but we will die here slow.
Why can't we up and go
Right out of Ravenloft?

In Sithicus
They're coming to get us!

We will break and flee
And we'll escape the Vistani
But you and I may say 'bye
To a little of our sanity.



What a life of fright!
Under the moon tonight
Will we be meeting a ghost,
Werewolf, vampire, or a foul death knight?
Down here in Ravenloft.

Sabua, G'Henna
This ain't no Vienna.
In Forlorn and Dementlieu
Dark lord's gonna get you.
Barovia, Markovia
Strahd is gonna love ya!
Ooo I wanna get us out of Ravenloft!
We got here fast but we will die here slow.
Why can't we up and go
Right out of Ravenloft?

Domains of dread
Now we're as good as dead.

All the mortals fear
The demiplane called Ravenloft
But undead like it here
Come, get away from it all.
Come to Ravenloft.

Sabua, G'Henna
Who wants old Vienna?
In Forlorn and Dementlieu
Dark lord came to get you.
Barovia, Markovia
Strahd, you know we love ya!
Ooo I wanna spend unlife in Ravenloft!
We got here fast but then we died here slow.
Now we will never go
Right out of Ravenloft.

The Ranger or "Drizzt's Song"
The FORGOTTEN REALMS® Campaign Setting
(with apologies to Billy Joel and "The Stranger")

Well, he cloaks his dark face
One he cannot hide forever.
He must venture forth, confront his past
Or all his friends could die.

With his scimitars of steel
And his boots of well-worn leather
In the sunrise stands the ranger,
Then he leaves the world of sky.

All his life he had no home
Now his new home is in danger.
All his path is paved with secrets,
Private torture for the elf.



"How can I be surprised?"
Thought the white-haired, green-clad ranger.
"Did I ever leave behind me
"Menzoberranzan — myself?"

He's not afraid to travel down
To the land of night.
To the land of drow.
(Mmmm, mmmmm)
He lived there oh so long ago
Seems another life
And a younger soul.

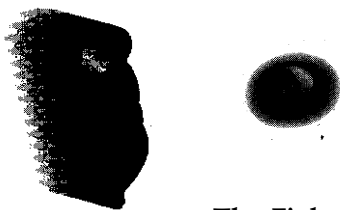
Once he used to believe
He would never find his answer
Then he met up with an old dwarf
And a band of surface friends.

When they pressed him to stay with them
In the hall of Battlehammer
It was then this lost drow ranger
Found a home, his journey's end.

He's not afraid to travel down
To the land of night,
To the land of drow.
He lived there oh so long ago
Seems another life,
And a younger soul.

He will never understand,
This brave ranger, why his kinsmen
Must live all their lives in evil,
Must live all their lives in hate.

As he ventures ever deeper
In the realms of mold and spiders
He is driven toward the driders.
Nods the ranger, "Toward my fate."



The Fighter
The AD&D Game
(with apologies to
Simon and Garfunkel and "The Boxer")

I am just a poor elf, and my story's often told.
I have slaughtered all the king's men
For a belt, pouch full of coinage
(Copper, steel, and gold).
I'm laying low
Skulking from the scene of battle
Just as fast as I can go
Roll percentile dice and I elude my foe.

(Roll the die. Roll the die, die, die, die, die.)
(Roll the die. Roll the die, die, die, die, die, d-d-d-d-die.)

Wanting only fame and riches, I go seeking a new job
But I get no offers.
Just a come-on from a wench
Who's serving luke-warm ale.
I must admit I was shocked when she attacked, me
And the DM rolled a hit!

(Roll the die. Roll the die, die, die, die, die.)
(Roll the die. Roll the die, die, die, die, die, d-d-d-d-die.)

Now I'm tearing out the tavern door,
The barmaid at my heels,
What's the deal?
Now two orcs appear before me,
Growling threat'ningly.
Resignedly, I face the three.

In the roadway lies my long sword,
Bent and broken the first blow,
And my body lies unmoving
Thanks to fumbling three times in a row.
I'm cut down, and I cry out —
"How come my fighter never wins?
"You have killed him. You have killed him!"
But the DM only grins.



Tanar'ri
The PLANESCAPE® Campaign Setting,
(with apologies to the cast of "Annie")

We baatezu hate tanar'ri.
Bet your bottom gold piece that tanar'ri
Hate us, too.

Just fighting against tanar'ri,
Bash their sneering faces till they're sorry,
It's what we do.

Tanar'ri, tanar'ri
We hate you, tanar'ri.
You're only a plane away.

Tanar'ri, tanar'ri
We hate you, tanar'ri.
You're only a plane away.

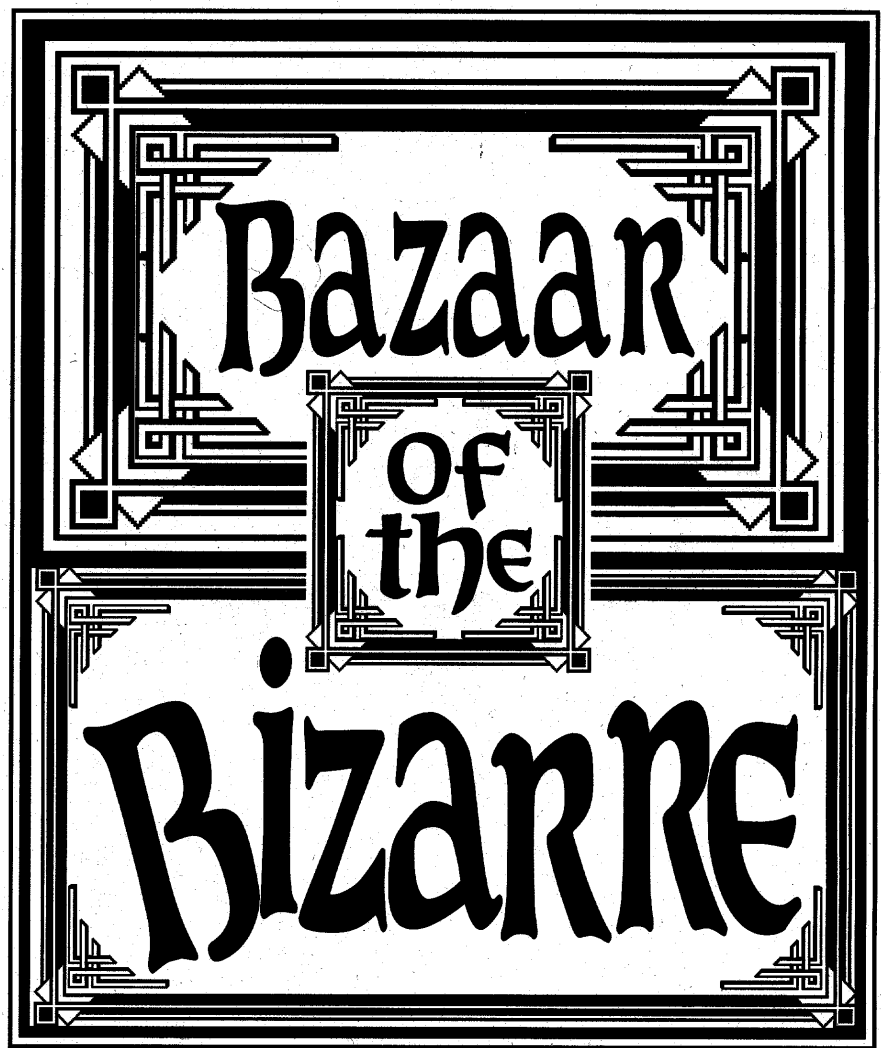


The Rewards of Villainy

by Wolfgang Baur

illustrated by Bob Klasnich

Magical items intended for use by heroes are common fare in AD&D® campaigns, and items made especially for good-aligned paladins are, if not exactly common, then at least known from bardic legends and heroic tales. However, the AD&D game contains very few magical items crafted by and for villains, brigands, blackguards, and betrayers. Since evil wizards seem positively to infest most campaigns, someone must be enchanting arms and armaments for the dark side. Here are some of those items.



The experience points values listed for these items are not provided for creating these items, since it is unlikely that a PC would want to make one of them. Instead, the experience points listed below are for destroying the items. How difficult it is to destroy these sources of evil varies from item to item, but destroying the most powerful items would certainly be an adventure in its own right.

Of course, not every adventurer will want to destroy powerful magical items; some will be tempted to use them or will not realize their true nature. Many of them could be used by neutral PCs, but most will simply be consigned to the scrap-heap by decent and heroic adventurers. Those who give in to the temptation may suffer alignment or other penalties, at the DM's option.

Finally, neutral PCs or PCs ignorant of what they possess may want to sell these items for money. The gp values given represent what an evil NPC would pay to acquire the item. As with using the items, selling them could endanger a good PC's alignment.

Betrayer's Shroud

Made of the funeral wrappings of a murderer, a thief, and an oathbreaker, these rotten rags are deeply magical and useful to the minions of evil. They allow the wearer temporarily to tap into a target creature's basest and most evil instincts simply by speaking softly to the target, who is entitled to a saving throw vs. death magic. Good characters and lawful characters gain a +4 bonus to this saving throw (lawful good characters gain +4). Chaotic and evil characters suffer a -2 penalty (chaotic evil targets suffer -4).

If the saving throw fails, the creature obeys one reasonable and evil suggestion from the shroud's owner. In this case, though, "reasonable" simply means any suggestion that is not directly self-destructive: poisoning one's liege lord is acceptable, poisoning oneself is not. If the saving throw succeeds, the target realizes the true nature of the owner's suggestion and may oppose it with righteous anger, gaining +1 to any attack or saving throws against the owner.

XP Value: 500 **GP Value:** 2,000

Black Crystal Ball

While its color isn't truly black, this form of *crystal ball* is carved from dark gray crystal. These magical items are sometimes enchanted to include a single glowing eye floating in its center: Unlike a normal *crystal ball*, the *black crystal ball* is usable not only by wizards; any being with an Intelligence score of 9 or more can use the *ball's* scrying powers. Also unlike normal *crystal balls*, however, a *black crystal ball* shows its owner a strangely distorted and perverse version of reality, one that reveals only the direst of "news": friends seem treacherous, evil seems triumphant, and danger lurks in every dark corner.

To an evil-aligned creature, the *ball's* tainted view of reality seems normal, not surprising or shocking in the least. Any evil creature using the *black crystal ball* gains *true seeing* with regard to every creature and object viewed through the *ball*. In addition, evil creatures using the *ball* can *detect good* on creatures and objects seen in the *ball* once per day. Otherwise, the item works as a normal *crystal ball*.

The *black crystal ball's* shadow of the truth is obvious at first to any good-aligned creature who makes a saving throw vs. rod, staves, and wands (neutral creatures save at -3). However, if a good-aligned creature fails its saving throw, or if it continues to use the *black crystal ball* despite the evil it saw within it, the *ball* works its cursed magic on the owner's mind.

Over time, the *black crystal ball* slowly shifts the user's alignment to evil. For every failed saving throw against death magic, the owner's alignment shifts one step closer to evil. Wisdom bonuses and penalties apply to this saving throw, and the *black crystal ball* preys on weaker minds far more than stronger ones. Creatures with less than 5 levels or Hit Dice suffer an additional -2 penalty to the saving throw.

The corrupting power of the *black crystal ball* has no effect on the victim's alignment with respect to the ethos of Law and Chaos, and the shift occurs in stages rather than all at once. For example, a lawful good creature must fail two saving throws before becoming lawful evil, because its alignment turns to lawful neutral before it can shift all the way to awful evil. The curse of the *black crystal ball* has no effect on creatures that are already of evil alignment.

XP Value: 2,000 **GP Value:** 7,500

Chain of Command

This chain of steel links, invariably connected to a spiked iron collar, is used to keep large and potentially dangerous beasts or people enslaved by the chain's owner. It is usually used on dragons, wyverns, or whatever large and rebellious creatures the owner has available. Most *chains of command* are kept by the wizards who made them, and their value is confirmed by the strange story of their origin. Legends say that the very first *chain of command* was forged by a wizard who served an evil warlord; when the *chain* was completed, the warlord had it placed around its maker's neck, guaranteeing his loyalty and continued services.

Any person or monster wearing a *chain of command* serves loyally but somewhat stupidly. The chained creature obeys all of its owner's commands very literally, its effective Intelligence and Wisdom both drop by 2 points, and it loses one level of spellcasting ability (if it had any to start with); these losses last only while the *chain of command* is in place.

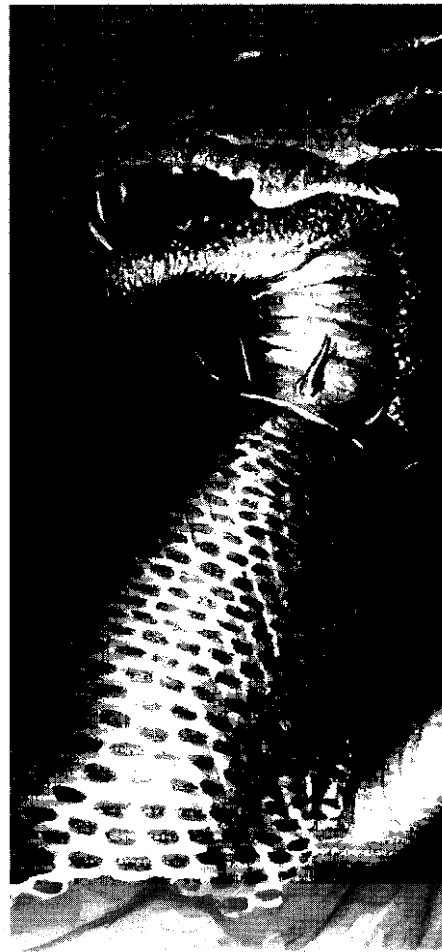
Any creature made to wear a *chain of command* is entitled to a saving throw vs. spells to resist its effect; if the saving throw succeeds, the creature still suffers the ability score losses, but it suffers no compulsion to obey the chain's owner. As long as the *chain* remains around a creature's neck, it must make a new saving throw as often as given on the *charm person* table (see *Player's Handbook*), but use Wisdom instead of Intelligence.

As a result of the *chain's* relentless attack on a resisting mind, smart evil wizards throw the collar on a monster or a newly-captured adventurer, then *teleport* it into the dungeon until it obeys. The collar can be removed only by magic, such as a *knock* or *disintegrate* spell, or by the command of its owner. The chain and collar expand or shrink to fit any neck.

XP Value: 1,000 **GP Value:** 4,000

Darkfire Lanthorn

Also called a *ghoulfire lantern*, this corroded bronze lantern burns oil taken from good-aligned creatures. The resulting magical flames have one of two possible effects, according to the will of the owner. It either sheds magical *darkness* in a 60' radius that allows only undead and evil-aligned creatures to see as if it were daylight, or it sheds normal light and dispels all *invisibility* and *invisibility to undead* spells within its glow. The owner of the *lanthorn* may switch between the



two functions by speaking a command word. These lanterns are often found in the throne-rooms of lich-lords or priests who control great masses of undead.

XP Value: 500 **GP Value:** 2,000

Bloodbane

Made from the specially enchanted blood of yugoloths, this poison is a slow and painful killer that magically rots the victim from within. The poison is a sticky, crumbly, rust-red powder that must be injected into the victim's bloodstream to be effective. If examined closely, the particles of the poison can be observed to move slowly, almost like water beading on glass. Unless the victim makes a successful saving throw vs. poison with a -1 penalty, the rot begins within a round. The victim quickly becomes pale, haggard, and slowly thinner, until literally nothing is left but skin and bone; the skin then slowly disappears.

Bloodbane inflicts 1 hp damage/turn until both *dispel magic* and *neutralize poison* are cast on the victim; neither spell alone is effective. *Dispel magic* plus *slow poison* reduces the damage to 1 hp/hour. A *holy word* cancels its effect instantly. No other curative magic has

any permanent effect, though *cure light wounds* and other healing spells may help delay the inevitable. Experience and gold values are given per dose.

XP Value: 200 **GP Value:** 700

Gravebringer

Gravebringers are swords forged deep underground using night-black adamantite, and tempered by cooling their red-hot blades in paladin's blood. In the hands of any character other than a chaotic evil warrior, this weapon performs simply as a *sword +1*. It increases an evil wielder's Charisma by 2 points.

When wielded by a chaotic evil warrior, the *gravebringer* burns with bluish-black fire. Its combat bonus increases to +4, and the dark blade deflects arrows and missiles of all kinds from its wielder, just as if he were protected by both *protection from normal* and *protection from magical* missiles (as per the spells in the *PHB* and *Complete Wizard's Handbook*).

In addition, many *gravebringers* are sentient blades, with an Intelligence of 12-18 and an Ego of 16 or more. These swords are inhabited by fiends or by the spirits of great evil warriors. If the spirit

possesses its owner, the sword's greatest power is revealed. For as long as the sword is unsheathed and possesses its holder, it becomes a danger to everyone and everything near it. The controlled warrior holding the blade gains 1 hp/round for every living creature within 20' (and loses 1 hp/round for every undead creature within that range). All that life energy comes with a price; every creature within 20' automatically loses 1 hp/round to the sword's vampiric power. The hit points disappear at the end of combat, often leaving the warrior exhausted and possibly even unconscious, though never quite dead. After all, the sentient blade wants to keep its owner alive to commit ever greater and more heinous evils. Eventually, the wielder becomes a physical wreck, at which point the blade forces him to give it to another, stronger warrior. Without the blade to prop up his failing health, the discarded warrior soon withers and dies.

XP Value: 5,000 **GP Value:** 25,000

Brightstar Daggers

With blades forged of meteoric steel and honed to a fine edge, *brightstar daggers* do the one thing that all villains long for: they snuff out good lives. When thrown, *brightstar daggers* become bright streaks of light that fly to their target with great accuracy, attacking with a +3 bonus. When they strike successfully, they are destroyed.

Creatures struck by a *brightstar dagger* gain a saving throw vs. death magic, with a -4 penalty for good creatures, -2 for neutrals, and no penalty for evil creatures. If the saving throw succeeds, the daggers merely inflict normal damage and provide the effect of a *strength* spell to the target. If the saving throw fails, the *brightstar dagger* actually helps its target, infusing the creature it struck with magical positive energy. The target's skin begins to blister and bubble from within, as the daggers' energies fight against being contained. The target gains 18 in each ability score (18/00 Strength for warriors), maximum hp for its level or Hit Dice, and makes all saving throws automatically.

However, this incredible new power is strictly temporary; each round after the first, the creature loses a level and loses a point from each ability score (percentile Strength drops to 17). In addition, the creature loses a number of hit points equal to its class's maximum: 10 for warriors, 8 for priests, and so on. The crea-

ture no longer makes saving throws automatically after the first round, and suffers a cumulative -1 penalty each round thereafter. When the victim's hit points reach zero or when its ability scores drop below 3, the victim dies. The victim literally bums through its entire lifespan in minutes. Flesh and skin wither, and hair turns white and falls out.

The only way to stop the deadly spiral of a *brightstar dagger* is with a *limited wish*, *wish*, or *Mordenkainen's disjunction*, or by placing the victim in some form of magical stasis (a *statue*, *tree*, or *time stop* spell, petrification, or the like).

A *brightstar dagger* is destroyed when it strikes and its magic begins; each can be used only once. A few rumors claim that a 7th-level spell known to evil mages called *guttering candle* creates a similar effect, but the spell's formula, if it was ever known, has been lost. It was used to make minions unstoppable in combat; their death thereafter did not concern the caster.

XP Value: 2,000 **GP Value:** 8,000

Enchanter's Knife

This small, ceremonial knife is usually made of mithril and embellished in gold and precious stones. It can be used by any wizard enchanting a magical item to avoid the Constitution loss that sometimes accompanies making an enchanted item's *dweomer* permanent through the *permanency* spell. Doing so, however, requires using the *knife* to take blood from a sentient creature. This blood must then be used as part of the *permanency* spell's material component; any Constitution loss is suffered by the victim cut by the *enchanter's knife*, rather than by the wizard casting the *permanency*. This allows the wizard to enchant many more permanent magical items than usual without any of the attendant risks, and so these items are highly sought after among evil wizards, who are known to steal the *knives* whenever possible and to murder each other to possess them.

XP Value: 1,000 **GP Value:** 6,000

Ebony Helm

These helms are favored by warriors serving the most powerful scions of evil. Their faces are shaped into twisted forms or skull-like masks, and they both hide their wearers' identity and strike fear into the hearts of enemies. Their secret is that they belong not to the warlords who wear them but to the wizards that they serve. An *ebony helm* has several powers, all usable by any wizard.





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The *ebony helm's* most basic power allows the wizard to see and hear whatever the wearer sees and hears; thus, the helms are usually given to favored and trusted lieutenants.

In addition, an *ebony helm* allows the wizard to cast spells through the *helm* against his enemies. All spells cast through the *helm* have a 5% chance of success per level of the wizard; if the *helm* is worn by a creature with spellcasting abilities, the *helm* provides an additional 10% bonus. Spells that fall simply fizzle; the spell energy dissipates without negative effects.

An *ebony helm* allows the wizard to cast *dominate* on the helm's wearer once/day. Evil creatures wearing the *helm* are not entitled to a saving throw, neutral creatures save with a -2 penalty, and good creatures save normally.

Finally, removing an *ebony helm* is at the discretion of the owning wizard. If he permits it, the *helm* can simply be lifted off. If not, the helm can be removed only if a *remove curse* is cast on it first.

XP Value: 2,000 **GP Value:** 7,000

Honeydrop

This potion tastes as sweet as its name and can easily be concealed in food or drink — it must be ingested to be effective. Any creature so much as tasting food or drink laced with *honeydrop* must make a saving throw vs. spell or poison (whichever is more difficult) with a -4 penalty for the potion's magical power. The potion can be detected by both *detect magic* and *detect poison* spells.

If the saving throw fails, the poisoned creature suffers a -4 penalty to saving throws vs. enchantment/charm spells, illusions, phantasms, and all forms of mental control. If the saving throw result fails on a 4 or less, any character with a Charisma of 15 or greater can make a creature poisoned with *honeydrop* obey its commands simply by speaking. The effects last for 1-6 hours or until nullified by a *dispel magic*.

If the saving throw succeeds, *honeydrop* has no effect other than causing a mild drowsiness, easily shaken off. The potion's recipe requires honeycomb from a giant bee's hive and succubus blood.

XP Value: 500 **GP Value:** 1,500

Iron Maiden's Plate

This trapped armor seems to be a suit of magical full plate armor, but many evil-doers add it to their treasure hoard as a form of revenge against anyone bold enough to steal the makers trea-

sure. The plate armor is specially enchanted to deceive magical probing; it responds to *identify* spells as if it were *plate armor +2*, and it can be donned normally. The armor is meant to seem helpful and innocent — but it's not.

Once the last piece is strapped into place, spikes magically appear inside the armor, piercing the hapless wearer in dozens of places as if he had been thrown into the implement of torture that gives the armor its name. The spikes inflict 8d10 hp damage, with a saving throw vs. death magic for half damage. If more than 50 hp damage are inflicted, the wearer may suffer death from massive damage (see Chapter 9 in the *DMG*). Once put on, the armor can only be removed by a *remove curse* or *dispel magic* that overcomes the level of the armor's maker. Until then, healing spells have only half their usual effect, since the victim remains wounded until the armor is removed. Moving while wearing the armor inflicts 1d4 hp damage/turn and requires a successful System Shock roll to avoid falling unconscious from the pain.

XP Value: 3,000 **GP Value:** 10,000

Shield of the Faithless

The *shield of the faithless* is a powerfully enchanted shield carried by Andelar, a great paladin of ancient times. It cracked and fell from his arm during a battle against a fiend, and Andelar received his death wound. He had just enough strength left in him to lay a curse with his last breath. Rather than accept responsibility for his failure in battle, he blamed the shield, cursing it to fail its owner in his time of need. Since then, the *shield of the faithless* has served evil masters well, but it has betrayed every good warrior who ever carried it.

The *shield* is made of stout mahogany covered with a layer of iron and reinforced by a mithril rim. When wielded by an evil-aligned warrior or priest, the shield provides a +4 AC bonus and increases the wielder's attacks by 1/2 per round (from 1 to 3/2, or from 3/2 to 2, for example). For evil creatures, these powers are dependable. The shield of the faithless always registers as "faint evil" on a *detect evil* spell, because its evil is always held in reserve.

However, for good or neutral creatures the *shield of the faithless* is unreliable. When used by a paladin, ranger, or a good-aligned priest, it inflicts 2d6 hp damage to the wielder per touch and also eliminates the characters Wisdom bonus to spells. For other creatures, the shield

provides its protection to non-evil creatures when used against minor foes, those with as many or fewer levels or hit dice than the wielder. When used in combat against more powerful enemies, the shield has a 5% per encounter cumulative chance of failure. Alternatively, the DM may rule that the shield's failure always occurs when it will have the greatest dramatic impact, such as in the final battle of a long adventure, when the adventurers confront the master villain.

When the shield fails its owner, it becomes a *cursed shield -4*, which the owner cannot discard unless a 9th-level or higher priest casts a *remove curse* spell on him. In addition, when the *shield of the faithless* fails, it curses its bearer with a -4 penalty to all saving throws and proficiency checks.

XP Value: 1,000 **GP Value:** 4,500

Staff of Bones

This item is always carved of aged and polished bones, joined together in a laminated series of rings; a dragon's thigh-bone is always used to form the *staff's* core. Used to raise undead armies, the *staff of bones* allows an evil priest to animate and command ten times the normal number of undead. In addition, while holding the staff, an evil priest automatically succeeds in commanding or turning any undead he could normally influence; no turning or command roll is required. The *staff* can also be used by any intelligent undead with spellcasting ability, such as a lich, spellcasting vampire, or the like.

The *staff's* connection to dragons is more than just coincidental; it is the source of the legend of the dragon's teeth, which says that dragon's teeth can be turned into unfailingly loyal warriors. The *staff of bones* transforms any dragon's tooth into a giant skeleton; doing so requires a single round and drains one charge from the *staff*. The resulting skeleton serves faithfully until destroyed.

If touched by a good-aligned priest, the *staff* inflicts 4d6 hp damage to the priest per touch, with no saving throw. Priests of gods whose spheres include death are immune to this effect.

XP Value: 2,000 **GP Value:** 8,000



Wolfgang has been accused of being a low-down, dirty sneak; a sadistic monster; and a vile, gibbering creature of darkness. So far, his infernal attorney has gotten him acquitted on all charges.

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GANGSTERS OF THE UNDERDARK

Waterdeep's Most Wanted,

by Keith Francis Strohm

illustrated by the Brothers Filbach

His Grace, Jayedgar Hoover,

As your Grace previously ordered, I have compiled all of the information obtained in this year's successful raid on the Underdark Think-Easy Gehem Ubris. Enclosed you will find the results of my work. I think we're closer than ever to shutting down those gangsters for good! You will, of course, note that we finally have the goods on the underworld godfather known only as "Da Pen," and his elusive advisor, "Tommy Gun" Tortello. Finally, I wish to lodge a formal complaint against my new deputy-squire Furl and the special investigative team brought in after my successful raid. The former is so incompetent as to seem buffoonish, and the latter are far too secretive for my tastes. I have included their dossiers for your perusal.

Eliot of Kress

Deep inside the heart of Abeir-toril lies a realm of such labyrinthine complexity and foul horror that even the mightiest beings of the Realms hesitate to explore its twisted expanse. Within this place of evil, known to Faerûnians far and wide as the Underdark, lurks a host of powerful creatures dedicated to the complete destruction of all that is good.

And yet, the taint of corruption runs deeper. As last year's startling expose revealed, there exists within the various cultures of the Underdark an alliance of evil that transcends mere racial or political boundaries. Beyond the dark prophecies of the drow and the conquest-filled dreams of the aboleth, beyond the embittered grumblings of the duergar and the half-mad thoughts of the illithid, stand the true rulers of that infernal realm: The Gangsters of the Underdark.

Once again, this intrepid bard takes a peek inside the heart of darkness, offering you a revealing look at the lives and thoughts of those mysterious gangsters — and the men and women devoted to their downfall. This time, a source close to the Forthright Band of Investigators (FBI) intercepted several intra-departmental missives detailing the FBI's latest information. Thanks to the hard work of this source (who goes by the name Deep Moat to protect his identity), the people of Faerûn can now put a face to the evil that menaces them from below. Be warned that this information is highly sensitive. Remember: *Trust no one.*

Da Pen

Underdark Godfather

Strength:	Unknown
Dexterity:	14
Constitution:	16
Intelligence:	19
Wisdom:	14
Charisma:	16
AC:	4
THACO:	13
Move:	3, Swim 18
Hit Points:	64
Alignment:	Lawful evil
Special Attacks:	Psionics
Special Defenses:	Nil
Magic Resistance:	Nil
Size:	H (20' long)

Special Abilities/Bonuses: As an aboleth, Da Pen possesses the following psionic abilities: false sensory input, mass domination, and mindlink. Because of his fierce reputation as the leading Underdark powerbroker, Da Pen radiates fear in a 20' radius, and his laugh often disconcerts friend and foe alike.

Weapon Proficiencies: Da Pen views himself as a consummate businessman and financier. As such, he disdains the use of weapons and personal violence to achieve his ends. In fact, the aboleth often warns his opponents that "Da Pen is mighteah dan da sawd." Despite this, he is quite adept at using hired muscle when his reputation fails to impress.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Bureaucracy, gaming intimidation, reading/writing survival (business).

Physical Appearance: No one has ever seen Da Pen up close, but sources have identified him as an imposing aboleth. Like all aboleth, Da Pen possesses 4'-long tentacles attached to his body. According to our information, the Underdark Godfather has a shock of black, curly hair atop his head, a decidedly mammalian trait. It is unclear whether this is a genetic trait or simply an affectation designed to place his business associates at ease. Whatever the case, it seems that Da Pen often slicks back his hair using a thick, gelatinous substance. An unconfirmed report states that Da Pen often speaks as if his mouth were stuffed with several soft cottonballs. Some sages attribute this phenomenon to the fact that Da Pen once lost several teeth — including two teeth of Dalhvar-Nar — during combat with a shadow dragon. Perhaps the cotton relieves the Godfather's aching jaw.

Background: Da Pen once lived his life as a normal member of an aboleth

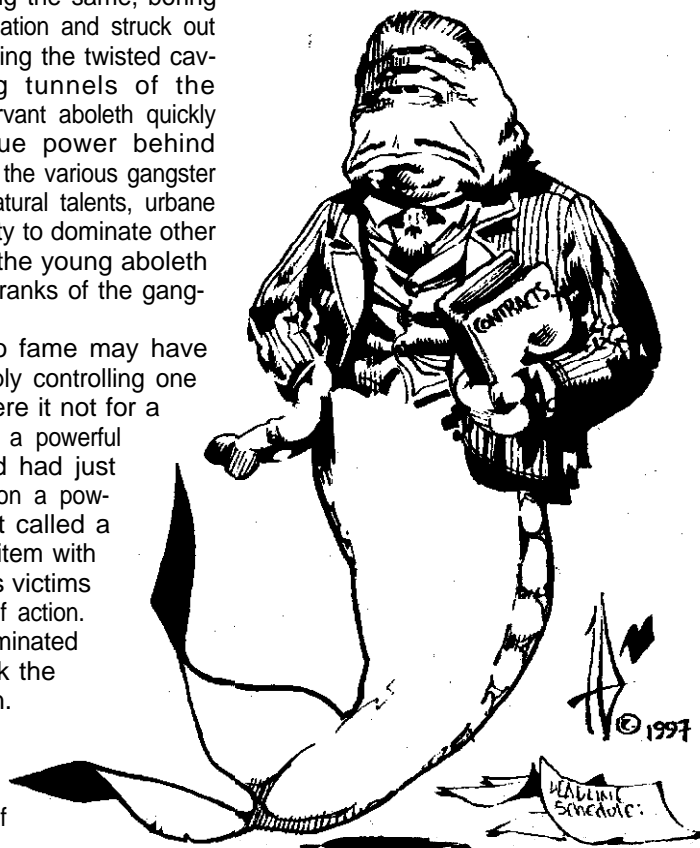
brood. The overly intelligent youth soon grew tired of spinning the same, boring plans of world domination and struck out on his own. Wandering the twisted caverns and winding tunnels of the Underdark, the observant aboleth quickly discovered the true power behind Underdark society — the various gangster families. Using his natural talents, urbane wit, and psionic ability to dominate other minds completely, the young aboleth quickly climbed the ranks of the gangster hierarchy.

Da Pen's rise to fame may have ended with his simply controlling one gangster family, were it not for a chance meeting with a powerful wizard. This wizard had just completed research on a powerful new construct called a *contract*, a magical item with the ability to bind its victims to a certain course of action. Da Pen quickly dominated the wizard and took the *contract* for his own. With the help of this item, the cunning aboleth soon controlled all of gangster society.

Equipment: As the business manager of a vast financial empire, Da Pen always has a number of business accouterments on his person. The aboleth's attaches (as well as other sycophants) are always on hand to provide needed items.

Magical Items: Da Pen always carries around his *tome of contracts*. This magical item allows him to produce one *contract* every turn. These contracts force victims to perform prearranged actions — in effect placing a *geas* on the signatory — if the victim fails a saving throw vs. spell. There is currently no known way to escape the binding power of a *contract* short of a *wish* spell. However, dissatisfied factions within gangster society are currently working on a high-level dweomer called *create lawyer*. It is unknown whether this spell will have any effect on the *tome of contracts*. Sources close to the rebellious wizards have revealed that costs for research on the *create lawyer* spell are extremely high and soaring by the hour.

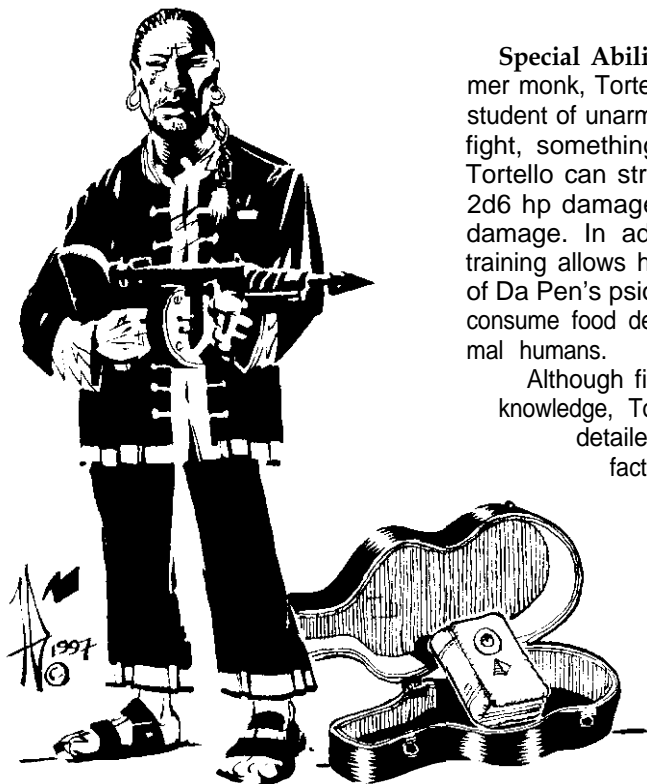
Da Pen also wields a mysterious item (developed by the aboleth's pet wizard) known only as a *deadline*. This *deadline* causes any creature with the reading/writing proficiency to save vs. spell or death magic (whichever save is lower).



Regardless of the results of the saving throw, creatures exposed to a *deadline* quake pathetically in *fear* (as the spell). Victims who fail their save suffer several days of insomnia, bar the entrance to their dwelling with any item available, and often snap at close associates. Many affected creatures invent wild stories and far out excuses in hopes of thwarting this terrible dweomer. Unfortunately, these tactics never help.

Role-playing Notes: Currently, Da Pen lies at the center of Underdark life, quietly spinning a complex web of business deals designed to imbue him with more power. He is quite simply the most feared man in all of gangster society. Despite repeated attempts, the FBI has never succeeded in apprehending him, nor have they found anyone willing to inform on him (despite repeated attempts by the FBI's wizards to *polymorph* these worthies into pigeons).

Favorite Quotes: "No problem. Just sign on da dotted line." "I'll make ya an offah ya can't refews."



"Tommy Gun" Tortello

Exhausted 7th-level Monk

Strength:	14
Dexterity:	16
Constitution:	15
Intelligence:	23
Wisdom:	17
Charisma:	14
AC:	0
THACO:	12
Move:	12
Hit Points:	40
Alignment:	Lawful neutral
Special Attacks:	Extended discourse
Special Defenses:	Resist domination
Magic Resistance:	Nil
Size:	M (5'8")

New proficiency: Bureaucracy (Intelligence -1)

This proficiency allows a character to surround himself with a dizzying array of committees, sub-committees, administrative assistants, and procedural miscellany. On a successful proficiency check, any creature attempting to speak with or otherwise engage in any form of non-magical communication with the proficient character wastes 1d10 turns as it vainly tries to follow the bureaucratic "red tape." Such bureaucratic obfuscation is possible up to five times a day. Creatures "lost" in this way cannot undertake any actions until the proper amount of time has elapsed.

In addition, this proficiency enables a character to hide his or her involvement in any action through the creation of a "paper trail." Creatures that possess the confound bureaucracy proficiency can see through this paper trail on a successful proficiency check (made with a -2 penalty). Rangers who possess the corporate tracking skill automatically discover the Bureaucrats involvement — though this process takes 1d4 days.

Special Abilities/Bonuses: As a former monk, Tortello is a very competent student of unarmed combat. If forced to fight, something he is loathe to do, Tortello can strike with his hands for 2d6 hp damage and kick for 2d8 hp damage. In addition, his mind/body training allows him to resist the effects of Da Pen's psionic domination and to consume food deemed too toxic for normal humans.

Although filled with almost infinite knowledge, Tortello often engages in detailed expositions of arcane facts. Creatures exposed to such an extended discourse must save vs. spell or suffer the effects of a *feblemind* spell.

Weapon

Proficiencies:

Although trained in several different styles of unarmed martial

arts, Tortello possesses the following proficiencies: bo-stick, nunchaku, short-bow, and sai.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Ancient languages (6), ancient history, astrology, bureaucracy, craftsmanship, herbalism, healing, poetry, and many more.

Physical Appearance: Tortello is a quiet, unassuming human with a gentle demeanor. Though he is second-in-command of the largest business conglomerate in all of Abeir-toril, Tortello often wears simple, unadorned robes and understated sandals. Recently, Tortello has taken to wearing part of his hair long. He pulls this excess hair back into a ponytail near the top of his head. Although false, local legend suggests that this high queue is the source of Tortello's intelligence.

Background: The man whom most consider the second most dangerous individual in gangster society began his career as a humble monk. In his youth, Tortello hungered for knowledge — both of the world and of his own being. This hunger led him to the far shores of Kara-Tur, where he studied for many years in distant, mountaintop monasteries. During the course of his monastic studies, Tortello received a powerful vision that revealed to him the location of an ancient artifact known as the *Tome of All Knowledge*, written by the revered sage R. Limbaw.

The young monk left immediately to pursue this vision. After many months of

harsh travel and deadly encounters, Tortello found the tome. Without pause, Tortello read the book, devouring its ancient secrets. To his delight, Tortello discovered that the magical *Tome of All Knowledge* filled his head with an almost limitless amount of odd information. Unfortunately for the monk, the book also possessed a powerful curse, causing him to expound publicly on a variety of different subjects.

On returning to his monastery, Tortello soon found that the books curse made monastic life difficult; his endless exposition on various and sundry topics drove his more contemplative brothers to distraction. With great sadness, the abbot of Tortello's monastery released the monk from his vows and sent him on his way. Unfortunately, Tortello soon found himself exiled from most surface communities as a result of his curse, so the ex-monk decided to live his life in the Underdark.

It wasn't long before the Underdark Godfather known as Da Pen discovered the brilliant but troubled human. The shrewd businessman quickly realized the human's potential and, after several failed attempts at domination, offered Tortello a position as his "consilare" or advisor. It is primarily Tortello's brilliant advice that has kept Da Pen one step ahead of the law.

Equipment: Tortello rarely carries any equipment other than his clothes. Would-be antagonists have quickly learned that the advisor's open hands are quite dangerous by themselves. However, the brilliant advisor recently completed work on a multi-firing crossbow which he calls a Torque Operated Mauling Machine (or T.O.M.M.Y. gun for short). Tortello's TOMMY gun has revolutionized assassination and gang warfare in the Underdark, becoming the weapon of choice among hit men and other "heavies." The TOMMY gun fires up to 12 crossbow bolts in a single round and takes three rounds to load.

Magical Items: The *Tome of All Knowledge* disappeared after Tortello read it. However, its effects still remain with the consilare. The book raised his Intelligence to 23 but laid a dreadful curse upon him. Tortello must expound out loud on any given topic five times a day for a period of about two turns or go insane. As noted above, this extended discourse causes all within hearing range to save vs. spell or suffer the effects of a *feblemind* spell.

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Tortello's fondness for herbs and gardening led to his development of an incredibly fiery plant known as the habanera. When Tortello consumes one of these plants, it acts as a *potion of fiery breath*. Anyone else who foolishly eats this plant must save vs. poison or suffer 6d10 hp damage as their internal organs burst into flame!

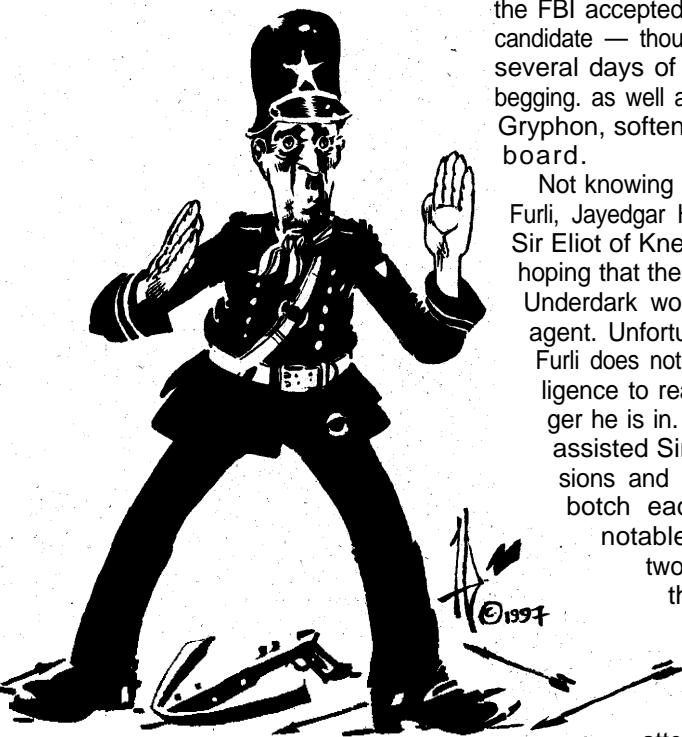
Role-playing Notes: Although generally happy with his current position, Tortello sees himself as the head of Da Pen's business consortium in a few years. Using his magically-enhanced intellect, the consilare quietly plots against the Godfather, striking secret deals among the various gangster Houses. It won't be long before people call "Tommy Gun" Tortello the Godfather!

Tortello's Favorite Quote: "Not many people know dis, but . . ."

Master Furli

4th-level Squire (Fighter)

Strength:	9
Dexterity:	9
Constitution:	9
Intelligence:	5
Wisdom:	6
Charisma:	4
AC:	9
THACO:	17
Move:	12
Hit Points:	9
Alignment:	Lawful good
Special Attacks:	Nil



Special Defenses: Nil
 Magic Resistance: Nil
 Size: M (5'6")

Special Abilities/Bonuses: Furli possesses all the abilities of a standard 4th-level fighter. For some unknown reason, he can also *polymorph* himself into a fish. While in this form, Master Furli retains the power of speech.

Weapon Proficiencies: Although he has attempted to learn the use of various weapons, Furli has no weapon proficiencies to speak of — though he does occasionally, make reference to his skill at unarmed combat.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Begging, complaining, intimidation (poorly), and whining.

Physical Appearance: Furli is a rather homely human with large, bulbous eyes and overly purplish-red lips. This squire usually wanders around pulling up his tights and flashing his exceptionally vacuous smile. In addition, he always carries his unloaded heavy crossbow attached to his belt.

Background: Born and raised in Mayburr, a small hamlet nestled beneath the jagged splendor of Mount Peylot, Furli grew up idolizing the local law enforcement agent — a man known as Gryphon. After a brief career as a deputy sheriff (the hamlet of Mayburr released him from service, citing philosophical differences), the young law enforcement agent applied for admission to the Forthright Band of Investigators. It is unknown exactly why the FBI accepted this obviously sub-par candidate — though many speculate that several days of constant whining and begging, as well as some string-pulling by Gryphon, softened up the admissions board.

Not knowing exactly what to do with Furli, Jayedgar Hoover assigned him to Sir Eliot of Kness as a deputy-squire hoping that the dark, evil nature of the Underdark would frighten the young agent. Unfortunately, it appears that Furli does not possess sufficient intelligence to realize the constant danger he is in. The deputy-squire has assisted Sir Eliot on several missions and managed somehow to botch each one. Furli's most notable gaff occurred when two grimlocks outsmarted the young squire and held him hostage with his own unloaded crossbow.

Equipment: In an attempt to appear impos-

ing, Furli always carries a heavy crossbow. However, his inability to use the weapon, coupled with his aversion to violence, forces him to keep the bow unloaded. He does carry two crossbow bolts in his backpack — though he has an 87% chance to drop the bolts down a hole or in an underground lake, or lose them in the darkness, when confronted with a tense situation.

Magical Items: Deputy-squire Furli possesses one magical item of which he is unaware. This item appears in the form of a diaphanous purple cravat that Furli wears everyday. The cravat functions as a *brooch of shielding*.

Role-playing Notes: Despite his obvious inability, Furli perceives himself as a towering figure in the law enforcement community. As a result, he often attempts to intimidate creatures that are far more powerful than himself. This often forces Sir Eliot into confrontations he'd rather not deal with.

Favorite Quotes: You'd better look out! These hands are certified lethal weapons."

Vanyard "The Fox"

9th-level Thief (Investigator)

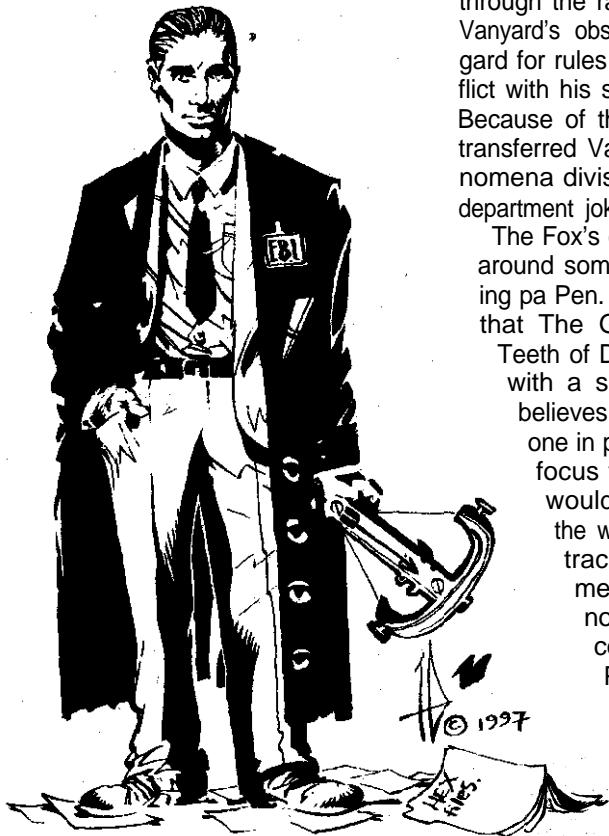
Strength:	13
Dexterity:	16
Constitution:	15
Intelligence:	18
Wisdom:	8
Charisma:	17
AC:	7
THACO:	16
Move:	12
Hit Points:	49
Alignment:	Chaotic good
Special Attacks:	Nil
Special Defenses:	See below
Magic Resistance:	Nil
Size:	M (5'6")

Special Abilities/Bonuses: In addition to his incredibly deductive and agile mind, Vanyard possesses a mystical connection to his partner; Danna the Skull. Whenever Vanyard finds himself in a deadly situation, Danna mystically *teleports without error* to his location and rescues the beleaguered investigator. He also has all of the abilities of the investigator kit.

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, short bow, and short sword.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Confound bureaucracy, disguise, obfuscation, reading/writing, spellcraft; and trailing.

Physical Appearance: The Fox is a rather short, wiry agent with a conservative hairstyle. For some unknown



through the ranks of the FBI. However, Vanyard's obsessive behavior and disregard for rules has brought him into conflict with his superiors numerous times. Because of these conflicts, the bureau transferred Vanyard to its magical phenomena division, a low-profile, fringe department jokingly called the Hex Files.

The Fox's current obsession revolves around some new information regarding Da Pen. Special agents discovered that The Godfather once lost two Teeth of Dalhvar-Nar during a battle with a shadow dragon. Vanyard believes that these teeth (the front one in particular), could act as the focus for a magical item which would enable agents to locate the whereabouts of Da Pen and track the Godfather's movements. Vanyard has sworn not to rest until he can discover the location of Da Pen's front tooth. As such, he has attached himself to Sir Eliot of Kness.

Equipment: Vanyard carries the standard equipment of an FBI field agent.

Magical Items:

The investigator possesses a specially prepared pouch of magical dust that allows him to see the residue left by the hands or claws of certain creatures. This *dust of fingerprinting* functions only under a purple light.

Role-playing Notes: Vanyard is not a popular bureau agent, and he knows it. However, this investigator will not stop until Da Pen is behind bars. Vanyard frequently withholds information from Sir Eliot and other bureau personnel and often breaks procedural rules. It is only his obvious ability that keeps him within the FBI.

Favorite Quotes: "The tooth is out there."

Danna the Skull
9th-level Necromancer (Anatomist)

Strength:	11
Dexterity:	15
Constitution:	14
Intelligence:	18
Wisdom:	14
Charisma:	16
AC:	5
THACO:	18
Move:	12
Hit Points:	33
Alignment:	Lawful good
Special Attacks:	Nil

Special Defenses: See below

Magic Resistance: Nil

Size: M (5'6")

Special Abilities/Bonuses: Danna possesses a mystical connection to her partner, Vanyard. Whenever Danna finds herself in trouble, Vanyard mystically *teleports without error* to her location and rescues the imperiled investigator. Danna also has all of the abilities of the anatomist kit found in *The Complete Necromancer's Handbook*.

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, dart, and staff.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Embalming, forensics, grave robbing, reading/writing, spellcraft, and trailing.

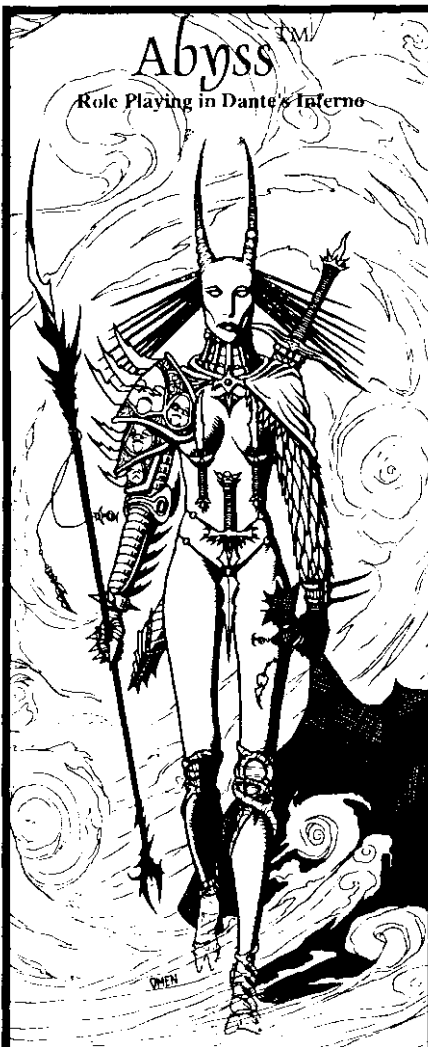
Physical Appearance: Danna is an attractive (for a necromancer) human woman. Her pale skin and red hair make her a favorite at bureau soirees. However, her features take on an intense cast when she engages in any professional activities. More than one would-be suitor has walked away ashen-faced after seeing Danna hard at work. Danna's hairstyle changes often, sometimes within the span of a week. It is unknown whether this phenomenon relates to her study of the powers of death or is the result of some other arcane influence.



reason, members of the opposite sex seem to "fall all over" the somewhat nerdy looking investigator.

Background: Vanyard grew up rather normally as the son of a brilliant wizard on the Island of Lantan, near the West coast of the Realms. This was all to change on the fateful day that Vanyard witnessed several black-robed spell-jamming thugs kidnapping his sister — though only years later was he able to access that memory. Through an arcane technique known as *hypnotic regression*, the young man soon remembered the kidnapping and identified the persons responsible as agents of an Underdark crime family. After months of research, the investigator traced the kidnapping back to the mysterious figure known as Da Pen. It seems that the Underdark Godfather wished to appropriate certain magical items created by Vanyard's father. It is unclear whether there exists any connection between The Fox's father and Da Pen's pet wizard. The evidence so far presents a convoluted picture filled with conflicting theories.

At the moment of this discovery, The Fox applied to the Forthright Band of Investigators and dedicated his life to bringing Da Pen to justice. The investigator's intelligence and ability rocketed him



Abyss is a role playing game set in the fantastic world of Dante's Inferno. It is a world of treachery and evil, where violence is a continual threat and doing a good deed could get you killed. Powerful Archfiends dominate a world filled with the lost and the damned, but are themselves dominated by the Lords of the Inferno. It is a world where absolute evil is mirrored by absolute good. Even the Lords of the Abyss must heed the servants of the Divine, or face the Wrath of God and his sword, the Host.

ABYSS incorporates the Inferno rules system, a system where a character's statistics are less important than its skills. This is a system which allows the players to have as rigid or loose a playing style as they want. Only six sided dice are required, and once players have a basic understanding of the rules, they will rarely need to refer to the rules book again.

Players will take the roles of low ranking fiends, out to increase their patron's power and influence, as well as their own. As characters increase in power, they increase in size, eventually becoming Archfiends. Players are not limited to playing the Damned, angels and other beings will also be available as character options. A character could be a Calabine (mage), Black Paladin, Succubus, Puck (trickster/thief), Minotaur or one of many other characters. The tortured landscape of the Pit allows for endless adventures: dungeons, wilderness, urban, any setting you can imagine is available in the nine levels of Dante's Inferno.

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BOOTHS 1515-1519

New Proficiency: Confound Bureaucracy

(Charisma -2)

Characters proficient in confound bureaucracy evidence a blatant disregard for established procedures and rules of conduct. More often than not, the use of this proficiency either rockets a proficient character to the top of his profession, or lands him an uninterrupted term cleaning garderobes and mucking stables.

However, a successful proficiency check allows a Character effectively to cut through bureaucratic red tape as if he wielded a corporate *vorpal sword*. Successful checks indicate that a character may immediately communicate with any creature that attempted bureaucratic obfuscation.

Background: Danna, a brilliant student of magic, gave up a promising career with the Red Wizards of Thay to join the FBI. Unhappy with the direction taken by Szass Tam and his cronies, the young necromancer eagerly accepted Jayedgar Hoover's personal invitation to join the bureau.

Dedicating herself to the study of the corporeal body as it relates to death, Danna soon distinguished herself as the bureau's foremost forensics expert.

Recently, Danna received special orders from a mysterious figure in the bureau. On short notice, the necromancer was transferred to the bureau's low-profile Hex-Files division, a branch of the bureau that investigates phenomena unexplainable by magical or scientific means. Apparently, Danna's level-headed behavior and her devotion to reason came to the attention of several high-ranking bureau officials who wanted to keep an eye on the brilliant but unorthodox Vanyard "The Fox." Danna was assigned to work with Vanyard and submit a detailed report each week to these officials, ostensibly "debunking" Vanyard's wild accusations of a strange spelljamming conspiracy.

Danna and Vanyard have worked together for several years. Over the course of this time, the two have become close friends. Unfortunately, Danna's objectivity and professional skepticism have become compromised as a result of their relationship. Danna now claims that a group of spelljamming creatures kidnapped her for reasons unknown.

Whether or not this is true, the fact remains that FBI healers have discovered a mysterious device implanted in Danna's neck. These healers are unsure of the device's nature. However, recent tests show that the young necromancer suffers from the early stages of the shaking plague, a virulent disease that recently struck the village of Scardale. Some agents attribute this sickness to the implant.

Equipment: Danna carries the standard equipment of an FBI field agent.

Magical Items: Danna possesses a powerful magical item called the *skull of numbing*. The item consists of a strangely shaped skull attached to a chain. When activated, the *numb skull* causes all creatures within a 15' radius to lose feeling in their bodies for a period of 53 rounds. This affliction forces the numbed creatures to fight at -4. In addition, the numb skull reduces its victims' Wisdom to 4. This reduction manifests itself as a powerful lack of common sense; affected creatures say and do things without thinking of the consequences.

Role-playing Notes: Danna is a hard-working no-nonsense FBI agent. Though more open to the possibilities of unexplained phenomena because of her experiences with Vanyard, the necromancer still eschews superstition and wild speculation in favor of logical thinking.

Danna is oftentimes frustrated by her partner's unorthodox methods and chaotic brilliance, but she stands by his side no matter the odds. Her recent experiences with the spelljammer implant have heightened Danna's desire to see Da Pen brought to justice. Both she and Vanyard have made it their primary objective.

Favorite Quotes: "Fox, look out!" and "Vanyard, look at this."

***Special Agent's Note:** I have not been able to ferret out much information about this mysterious figure, though reliable sources confirm that he stinks of pipeweed. I shall send you a file on this individual, code-named "Pipeweed-Smoking Man," as soon as new data appears.



Keith "Pinball" Strohm would like to thank all the boys down at Luigi's Deli for their help gathering information for this article.

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The Return of the WIZARDS THREE

The Lady
in Black

by Ed Greenwood

illustrated by David Day

“Ye gamers,” an all-too-familiar voice said suddenly from behind me, “have dirty minds.”

I barely managed not to jump. It was hours before Elminster had said he'd appear in my study, and the place was festooned with — well, all right, buried under — the usual mess of untidy stacks of books, game maps, notes about the articles not yet written and sourcebooks half-done. I turned, feather duster in hand, and asked with my best air of nonchalance, “Oh? How so?”

Elminster replied, “I meant the chatter on what ye call ‘the net’— comments about thy last account of our meetings. Lewd assumptions about what two dignified, arthritis-ridden arch-mages — and a younger, supercilious, and overly fastidious elven colleague — would get up to with Mordenkainen's three young apprentices, after I ushered thy spying gaze safely away.

Well, if you'd let me watch, I could have ‘reported it all,’ I said innocently.

Elminster's snort nearly sent the duster flying out of my hand. “Thy fancies are betimes little better than the wild imaginations of these poor typists on this net,” he told me firmly. “Besides, 'tis simply not done, to compromise the dignity of young ladies in such a manner. Even wizards have rules.”

I blinked. “You do? What are they?”

He wagged a finger at me. “Ah, no — I'll not be trapped into listing such things by thy goading disbelief Suffice it to say that if ye publish one more account of our meetings in yon magazine —

He inclined his head toward a nearby stack of *DRAGON® Magazines* that were (as usual) threatening to slide into a rather more horizontal pile.

— I want ye to make one thing perfectly clear. No intimacies — er, beyond washing each other's backs, afterward, in thy stream — occurred between any of us six.”

“So why the privacy?”

Elminster's pipe chose that moment to rise silently out of a pocket somewhere in his robes and hover beside his mouth.

He nodded to it in polite greeting, and then returned his gaze to me. Can ye keep a secret?” he growled.

I put on my best innocent look and spread my hands. “Of course.”

“Ye and the hundreds of thousands of gamers who read yon periodical?” he asked dryly.

Ah, well. If one must deliver an obvious lie, make it a good big one. “Assuredly,” I told him blandly, trying very hard not to blink as I met his sharp old eyes.

They twinkled, just for a moment, before the Old Mage spoke. “Ye lie like a Waterdhavian official,” he told me. “So I'll tell thee: the privacy — and the wards I threw up after ye were in the bag as it were — are necessary because of a rather undignified game mages play with colleagues and apprentices they can trust.”

I raised one eyebrow. “It mustn't get played very often, then.”

“It doesn't. It's called ‘Twenty Transformations.’ Everyone takes off all their clothes — ”

I raised the other eyebrow.

“Ah, yes; I forget ye have these silly notions about the human body,” Elminster said with a sigh. ‘How d'ye enjoy strolling in the warm spring rains, then, with all those clothes on,?’

“We don't. Go strolling, that is, trying to get wet.”

“Mad, quite mad — it's how all growing things know the warm season has come again,” Elminster explained, as if to an idiot child.

Then he sighed, shrugged, and continued. “As I was saying, everyone disrobes — to keep from ruining our clothes, ye can tell all those prurient folk — and stands in a circle. The oldest mage (or, ahem, the one who'll admit to being eldest) begins, and from him around the circle, widdershins, all the mages in turn change shape. The idea is to top the shape taken by the last changer, in an amusing manner, while using — or echoing, or parodying — at least one element of that shape.”

The gaunt old archmage slumped into my best chair and propped his booted feet on the ring of my sword-stand (other folk have umbrella-stands; I have a stand ready to accommodate the blades of heavily-armed visitors. Elminster once persuaded a sultry lady adventuress to leave her broadsword behind, but that's another story).

"I daresay ye can picture the chaos — and the vulnerability assumed by the participants. Those are two more reasons why privacy is essential. Besides — would ye desire an unwanted audience looking on when ye want to just relax and have fun?"

"Fun?" I echoed, trying to goad him into saying more. His last few remarks had been delivered in a tone of finality.

"There's generally a lot of levity," the Old Mage explained. (My ploy had worked.) "Everyone changes as often as they can, until there've been twenty transformations. Then everyone tries to change one last time, combining all the elements they liked the most from the shapes they've seen taken or themselves assumed. Giant rooster heads, corkscrew pigtail arms, elephant-snout tails, and centipede feet all at once . . . that sort of thing. Then we all sing old songs and hoot a lot; if we were near a village, back home, we'd chase each other through it and give the locals a good scare and some new monster tales to tell around their hearthfires."

"Great fun," I agreed, hoping the Old Mage wouldn't see through my false enthusiasm. He did, of course. The gaze he leveled in my direction was quite fierce.

"Tag is usually a part of such games, and tickling," he said severely, "sometimes occurs. The throwing of food is also often a popular feature."

Then he acquired an almost boyish grin, and added fondly, "They liked thy ice cream very much, though." His pipe gave forth a blue ring of smoke. He regarded it sourly; he hadn't put it to his lips yet. "Impatient contrivance," he muttered, crooking a beckoning finger. It slid obediently toward his lips.

"I hope ye'll be cleaning up this sty rather more thoroughly than usual," he added, "because we'll be entertaining one of the ladies again this night."

The air around me erupted into a whirlwind of flying books, pencils, papers, teacups, and magazines. I narrowed my eyes and hunched down beside a chair as the conjured tempest raged around me.

A breath or two later, it subsided. I heard a few muffled thumps in the distance. The study was pristine in its gleaming emptiness; all of the books in the room were neatly arranged on full bookshelves, there was nary a piece of paper or untidy stack of anything in sight, and the table was bare and freshly polished. As I gaped, a bowl of fresh flowers appeared on it. I winced, recognizing which neighbors front window display those blooms had been plucked from.

Elminster ignored my expression. "Ye'll feel right at home later," he said reassuringly, "I but moved all the mess into thy bedroom. Ye can sleep on this table tonight, if ye aren't feeling up to major excavations."

He frowned, seeming to study something in the air before him. "Thy larder seems depleted," he said disapprovingly. "And thy wine cellar! Ye've been drinking some of the best!"

"My apologies," I said sardonically. "I wasn't aware, after your last two visits, that you'd left any 'best stuff' undrunk — except the last two inches in the jug of ice-water."

The Old Mage waved a finger. "Bitterness ill becomes thee! You expect me to serve this 'black cherry pop' swill of thine to a lady?"

"No," I replied, heading for the bedroom, and the box of bottles in its back closet (Christmas gifts whose labels had frankly scared me) that his prying spells obviously hadn't discovered yet.

I swung open the closet door. In the distance, almost immediately, I heard his whistle of respect. Paranoid arch-wizards! He was obviously watching my every move from afar, in case I tried some treachery.

I put on my best hurt look and clanked back the way I'd come. Along the way, two bottles rose from among the others, dusted themselves off into my face, and flew ahead of me.

Puffing at the spiderweb across the bridge of my nose, I followed them into my study.

Elminster was sitting regarding the labels on my two bottles of wine; as they floated in front of his nose. He was nodding slowly.

"Good," he said. "Very good indeed. May I inquire as to the health and abundance of thy stock of ice cream?"

"Good and lots," I replied elegantly. "Pralines'n'cream and butter almond are well represented."

The Old Mage turned a smile on me that was as bright and as sudden as the

noon sun stabbing down through the tiny window in the back parlor, and said, "Ye do us proud. Is there any *small* boon I can grant thee?"

"Well," I said slowly, "yes. You mentioned two spells in your remembrances of Myth Drannor, and I'd like to know their details, if I may . . ."

His smile, if possible, grew even brighter. "So ye'd like me to share them here, this even? Capital! Much better to hazard forth than the spells I'd been thinking of handing to my colleagues; young Dalamar, especially, I'm a trifle reluctant to trust with — but ne'er mind which spells, now. A good thought, friend Ed."

He puffed upon his pipe approvingly, and then added, "I think ye can eavesdrop by the *farscry* method again, rather than filling up the boots of thy old armor with sweat. I can site thy eyes upon my ever-smoking pipe, here, if ye can find a place rather more distant than thy bedroom to lay thy lumbering body down in."

I could, and I did.



It was a little later than the usual time when something rose out of the flames in the fireplace, grew with menacing speed, and acquired two heads.

As the fiery apparition melted into a man and a woman with their arms about each other's shoulders, Elminster nodded in polite greeting to his visitors. "Be at ease, both of ye. Has the Lord Mage taxed thy mind overmuch these last few moons, Rautheene?"

"I live yet, Lord Elminster," the lady on Mordenkainen's arm replied serenely, as the last flowing flames fell away to reveal a stunningly beautiful lady as slim and slender as an upright serpent, and half a head taller than either wizard. Black hair swirled down over her shoulders, framing the low bodice of a clinging black gown. The gems upon the fine chain that encircled her hips glittered a glossy black. The tiny dragon earrings that dangled from her ears were jet black. Even her large and liquid eyes were black. Her smile, however, was a gentle thing.

"Moreover," she added, "I have no complaints at all about my education under the greatest mage of Oerth."

Mordenkainen coughed. "I don't think I'd go so far as to use a word such as 'greatest' in connection with myself," he ventured.

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"Well, I would, Lord," she said firmly. "Lord Elminster, lower your eyebrows this instant!"

"I was but easing a facial itch, Lady," the Old Mage said smoothly, with a twinkling smile that fooled no one. "Pray be seated, both of ye."

His gaze flicked over to meet the eyes of Mordenkainen. "We've known each other for some time now," he added, "and I can tell when there is trouble on thy mind. Pray share it?"

Mordenkainen inclined his head in grave assent. "Dalamar will not be joining us this night," he announced, as both he and his apprentice took their seats. "There is magical trouble on Krynn — very great magical trouble. His own fate and future are uncertain."

Elminster frowned. "Just when I was beginning to like the little sharptongue, too," he murmured,

"Sentimentality, Lord?" Rautheene inquired innocently.

Mordenkainen fixed her with a cold and level eye. "Ne'er forget he can turn you into a few wisps of smoke. Only archmages can afford to offend archmages — and then only one at a time.

"Sometimes 'not even one,'" Elminster murmured.

Rautheene flushed, clear down to where her low bodice began. "True enough. Forgive me, I pray, both of you."

"Thou hast it, and more," Elminster rumbled. "For this meeting speak as freely as if I was thy younger brother. Chide, scold, sneer — I give ye license. Thy lords warning was a good one, but I find it a lot more fun trading jests with a spifire than listening to soft, evasive emptinesses mumbled by a frightened servant."

Rautheene looked to Mordenkainen, who shrugged. "The host sets the rules," he said. "So long as you set these meetings aside from your everyday conduct."

"Speaking of which," the Lord Mage of Greyhawk added smoothly, "in the absence of our colleague of the Conclave, I propose that Rautheene stand in his place, as full equal to us both."

"No argument here — yet she's hardly going to be able to trade spells with the same facility as our absent elf," Elminster responded, "seeing as thy hand put what spells she has into her grasp."

Mordenkainen replied, "Actually, Rautheene took a little trip after you dried her off with that clever warming spell, last time. She went from the banks of yonder stream straight to Faerûn, and there met your Magister, Noumeà."

Elminster's eyebrows climbed almost

up to where his snowy hair began. "And learned some spells from her?" he asked softly. Then he leaned forward, put on an easy, open, debonair smile — some unkind folk might almost have termed it a leer — and said, "Lady, I understand ye have a weakness for a delicacy of this world known as ice cream ... in particular, that possessing the flavor 'pralines'n'cream.'"

Rautheene ran a very red tongue over her lips. "Don't tease me, Elminster," she said huskily. "I'll trade any spells I have for a good big bowl of that delight ... and *you* know it, old rogue!"

Elminster winked. "Compliments, m'lady," he purred, "will get ye everywhere." He waved a hand, and my largest bucket of pralines'n'cream ice cream drifted smoothly into the room and came to an obliging hovering halt in front of her. As it settled gently down to the table top, a placemat and a spoon appeared up over the edge of the table like eager rats and raced in underneath the bucket.

Rautheene smiled down at the lid, eyes sparkling like those of a little girl, as it slowly peeled itself back. Then she looked from one archmage to another, and said formally, "I shall lay full particulars of the spells *scourge of stars* and *turnblade* before you both, ere we leave this place.

"Then we may as well get the horse-trading out of the way right now," Mordenkainen replied. "I can smell pizza."

"Extra garlic," Elminster told him brightly.

Rautheene looked up from dreamy contemplation of the pralines'n'cream and asked, "Pizza? What is pizza?"

"Something wonderful," the Lord Mage of Greyhawk told her. "But ye can only have it after the soups. My two spells are *firedart* and *backshift*."

"Which soups might those be?"

"Cream of mushroom with turkey," Elminster said with a flourish, indicating two steaming tureens that were flying in through the doorway, "followed by a chaser of hot-and-sour. My two spells are *Mystra's unraveling* and *spell echo*."

Rautheene leaned forward to sniff at the incoming tureens. The huge circular platter of pizza was right behind them. "No ice cream until after both of these?" she asked almost plaintively.

"There's no reason ye can't spread thy ice cream on the pizza," Elminster said soothingly.

"Oh yes, there is," Mordenkainen growled. "My gorge!"

"Oh, be a brave wizard!" Elminster remonstrated. "If ye give in on this, I'll

pledge not to throw any food about tonight — unless food is first thrown at me."

"Done," Mordenkainen said promptly, and then asked pointedly, "Where are the bottles?"

"Oh, hanging around somewhere," Elminster replied innocently, as his spell took effect and seventy or so bottles descended from the ceiling in smooth unison.

Rautheene gave an admiring little laugh, which grew into a chortle at the look on her masters face.

When she could speak again, it was to ask softly and intently, "Lords? What would it take, to win a place at this table whenever you meet around it?"

"Ah, now — that'll certainly give us something to discuss this even," Elminster told her — but the lady apprentice's dark eyes were fixed anxiously on the face of her master.

"I don't mind admitting that these little get-togethers are for me something of a break from you and your fellow 'prentices, lady, as well as all my other cares of Oerth," Mordenkainen of Greyhawk said slowly, "but if you could see your way clear to undertaking little expeditions and finding new spells to share with us, each time, I think I could find myself in enthusiastic support of the notion. You're certainly easier on the eyes than Dalamar."

The unladylike whoop that rang off my rafters then was still echoing around the room when Mordenkainen's sleek and elegant eldest apprentice sprang across the table like a lunging warrior, both hands extended to catch hold of his face so she could begin raining kisses all over it.

Thankfully for the ice cream, pizza, soup and bottles, Elminster was alert and ready, and so were his whisking-out-of-the-way spells.

For Your Campaign

The next morning I had no trouble at all in getting a mellow Elminster to tell me enough of the six spells shared to lay AD&D® game details of them before you. All I had to do was promise not to pass on to anyone on the net some of the tales told by the two older mages once they started really competing with each other to impress the lovely Rautheene. (She left looking rather dazed, as overwhelmed as I was. Have you any idea how many wild pranks, mistakes, and crazy schemes two wizards can get up to, over the space of several centuries?)

Spell Echo

(Illusion/Phantasm)

Level: 1

Components: S

Range: 0

Casting Time: 1

Duration: 1-2 rounds

Save: None

Area of Effect: Special

This spell creates a silent illusory scene that depicts the operation (unleashing) of a previously-launched magic. The duration and size of the scene varies according to the nature of that previous spell's effect, but it always includes its caster (or magical item activator) if he was present at the time of the original magic taking effect, and any creatures in the immediate vicinity who were affected by the spell.

Any amount of time can elapse between the original spell and the casting of the *echo*, but the caster of the *echo* must occupy some part of the precise area of effect of the original spell, or the spot in which its caster or activator stood at the time, or the spell fails without effect. If multiple spells have taken effect in the area or have been cast from the spot chosen by the echo-caster, the caster is made aware of the race of the caster or activator of each, the school or sphere of each magic, and the approximate time, and must choose to display just one of the previous magics from that information. Multiple *spell echo* spells can be cast in the same spot to "sort through" multiple previous enchantments, without affecting the "recalls." This spell works only in Realmspace.

A *spell echo* is purely an illusion, but it is known to be a true illusion, not susceptible to alteration by any known magic — and therefore acceptable as evidence of who did what to whom in the past.

Scourge of Stars

(Alteration, Evocation)

Level: 3

Components: V, S, M

Range: 0

Casting Time: 6

Duration: 12 rounds

Save: None

Area of Effect: Special

This spell brings into being a weightless whip extending from an appendage of the caster. It need not be grasped by the wizard (who can hold other items in a hand that it may extend from), but it does preclude other spellcasting on the part of

its caster that requires somatic and material components. The whip appears as a band of shadow dotted with thousands of tiny, twinkling motes of light, and it strikes silently. It can't be grasped or snagged on things, and its reach is the length of the casters appendage plus 10'.

A *scourge of stars* strikes with, a THAC0 6 points, better than that of its caster, and it deals 2d4 hp damage per round. Any damage it inflicts is bestowed on its caster as extra or healing hit points (any excess hit points vanish when the *scourge* does, but until then, all damage suffered by the caster is taken first from these extra points). The *scourge* may strike only once in a round, can never harm its caster, and has no tangible existence (i.e., it can't be tied to anything, or be cut by an opponent, or used to entangle a weapon).

The material component of a *scourge of stars* is a string of nine diamonds or other clear, colorless faceted gemstones of any type and value. The gems must be pierced and have a single, continuous chain or cord running through each stone to link all of them. Other gems and adornments may be present, but all are consumed in the spellcasting.

Firedart

(Evocation)

Level: 4

Components: V, S, M

Range: 300 yards

Casting Time: 2

Duration: 2 rounds

Save: ½

Area of Effect: Special

This spell brings into being one fiery dagger per level of its caster. These look like 4"-long knives whose blades are wavering tongues of flame and which flicker into existence around the casters head and shoulders. They can't harm the caster who creates them or cause harm to any non-living material (they can't ignite wood, cloth, paper, or anything else) but are deadly to living and undead targets.

These *firedarts* fly at targets chosen by the caster. They must be visible to the caster as spellcasting begins, but they need not be so after; the *firedarts* follow and seek them, at MV Fly 20 (A), THAC0 4, two attacks allowed (the second only if the first misses). Contact with any magical barrier or spell effect, or passing out of spell range, causes a *firedart* to vanish instantly and harmlessly.

A *firedart* that misses on both its attack attempts fizzles out and vanishes,

harmlessly, wasted. One that strikes deals 1d4 hp piercing damage and is quenched, its magic expended. The target is allowed a saving throw vs. spell, and if (and only if) that save fails, the *dart* also inflicts 1d4+1 hp fire damage.

A caster can elect to hurl each *firedart* at a different target, or group them in attacks against various targets, or even "save" some to attack on the second round of the spell. All of the *firedarts* vanish when they miss or hit, or if they haven't been fired when the spell expires (the *firedart* spell ends instantly if the caster casts another spell during that second round). Decisions about the targets of *firedarts* saved until the second round need not be made until that second round, but the targets are still limited to creatures visible to the caster when the spell is first cast.

A common use of this spell is to strike out at a group of warriors attacking the caster, saving some *firedarts* to send against warriors who are still attacking after the first "wave" of *firedarts* have struck.

The material components of a *firedart* spell are a fragment of flint and a feather. The feathers may be of any size and from any source.

Turnblade

(Alteration)

Level: 4

Components: V, S, M

Range: Special

Casting Time: 7

Duration: 8 rounds

Save None

Area of Effect: One weapon

This spell allows its caster to transform any weapon (any object that one being can lift and wield, that has in the past been used to cause damage to a living or undead creature, whether it is a rock or a garden stake or a broadsword) into any weapon of his choice.

The "new" weapon must be a copy of an item the caster has personally seen before. Its size, appearance, composition and construction (e.g., silver-coated, non-ferrous, or specific to a left- or right-handed user) conform to the turnblade-caster's desires, but the new weapon has no magical properties beyond having +3 bonuses on all attack and damage rolls. Its base damage is that of the weapon-form chosen, regardless of size. For damage purposes, treat all weapons not easily classified as a standard weapon type as either a quarterstaff or a club, depending on rough overall size.

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This spell is most commonly used to transform a dagger into a *long sword* +3 or a two-handed sword, or to turn a dagger into an axe when the latter weapon is needed as a tool (i.e., to chop through a door to freedom). The weapon can be wielded by anyone (even against the caster, or in defiance of the caster's wishes) and — even if the caster deliberately chooses to forego the magical bonuses the spell affords — is considered a +3 magical weapon for purposes of determining what creatures it can hit.

A *turnblade* spell can't be ended before the weapon it affects has existed in its transformed state for eight full rounds. The weapon affected is the material component of the spell — and it is consumed by the magic, vanishing forever when the spell expires.

Backshift

(Alteration, Necromancy)

Level: 8

Components: V, S, M

Range: 30 yards

Casting Time: 1 turn

Duration: Special

Save: Special

Area of Effect: One creature

This spell forces its target (who must be visible to the caster when casting begins) back into previous body shapes the target has assumed. If it is cast on a creature that has never changed its shape, the spell is wasted. Purely illusory disguises, and minor changes to the nature of a target's body such as in growing and aging do not count as "changes in shape."

The *backshift* spell forces its target back into the last three body shapes it has assumed that weren't the target's own. If the target has taken fewer than three shapes since birth, the spell displays all forms it has taken. The target creature appears into these shapes in reverse chronological order (that is, the most recently-taken form first) for one round each. If there are fewer than three shapes available, the spell cycles through them, never including the form the creature was using when first struck by the *backshift*.

There is no saving throw against this initial part of the *backshift*, and this spell can force creatures into shapes not adapted for survival in the current surroundings (such as aquatic forms, on dry land). Target activities, such as spell-casting and weapon use, may be hampered or aided by the forms taken (dropping weapons is common), but the

backshift spell itself doesn't prohibit them.

At the end of the third round, the victim of a *backshift* is allowed a saving throw vs. spell. If the save succeeds, the spell ends, and the creature is instantly returned to the form it had at first contact with the spell.

If the save fails, the caster of the spell can freely choose any one of the four forms (the initial one and the three forced "returns") as the target creature's new form. As the magic expires, it puts the target creature into the chosen form. This change is permanent unless altered by later magics, though the chosen form isn't the creature's "true" form, a simple *dispel magic* causes the creature to revert to its true form.

Once a *backshift* has been cast, its caster is free to undertake other activities during later rounds (while its victim is undergoing the spell effects). The death of the caster frees the target from the *backshift* immediately, but movement out of spell range does not.

The material components of a *backshift* are a strand of spiderweb, a whole, raw egg and a fragment of shell from an egg that has hatched. Both the whole egg and the shell fragment may come from any egg-laying creature, and they need not both be from the same individual or even species.

This spell was originally developed to unmask individuals who employed shape-changing magics to conceal their identities when they openly carried out crimes. For safety reasons, a *backshift* spell is usually memorized by at least one senior participant prior to any "twenty transformations" game.

Mystra's Unraveling

(Alteration, Enchantment)

Level: 9

Components: V, S

Range: 0

Casting Time: 1

Duration: Instantaneous

Save: None

Area of Effect: 30' radius

This spell instantly destroys all spells and enchantments linked to, focused on, or held within items. Imprisoned beings are set free, magically-preserved items are exposed to all the aging they've been protected from, and so on. Magical items automatically lose their powers, and barriers and wards connected to doors, anchor points, or other solid things collapse. Items connected to other planes lose those connections; if the link-

ages are to non-living items, those items are yanked fully into the plane wherein the *unraveling* is cast. All portions of a large item are affected if any part of it is within range of the *unraveling*.

This magic has no effect on magical items touched by the caster during casting or carried on the caster's person. It also leaves untouched spell effects not attached to an item, including those that originated in magical item discharges. An *unraveling* reveals the multiple powers of artifacts (to the mind of its caster only) in precise and fine detail, but it doesn't affect or harm them — beyond the fact that its touch won't activate an artifact, regardless of the artifact's normal conditions for activation.

Alternatively, an *unraveling* can be cast with a different incantation word. In such cases, it leaves magical items and artifacts completely untouched, and it works only against enchantments. It can affect such magics regardless of their age and origin, even if they are quiescent, awaiting later activation, within an area or a being. Such an *unraveling* successfully destroys multiple linked enchantments without triggering their magics, penetrates all known barriers (including *prismatic* effects and *antimagic shells*), and is roughly the equivalent of four *dispel magic* spells.



The look on Elminster's face as he finally stumbled back toward the fireplace (through which he likes to fade away), pipe floating obediently behind him, tells me he enjoyed the Lady Rautheene's company almost as much as her proud master Mordenkainen did. It seems likely she'll be present at future meetings of the Wizards Three — but whatever befalls, I'll keep you posted.



Ed Greenwood is a busy writer who loves good books, strong old cheddar cheese, magic flying swords, dancing elven maidens, moonlight gallops through the woods, black cherry pop, Celtic music, clever comics about aardvarks, and properly-fitting armor — but not in that order, of course.



WYRMS of the NORTH™

FORGOTTEN REALMS

Felgolos

The Flying Misfortune

by Ed Greenwood

illustrated by Storn Cook

It's not often that the famous explorer, mageling, and sometime travel guide writer Volo admits to puzzlement about something in the Realms. However, Elminster chuckled frequently over the bewildered notations, queries, and counter-notations in Volo's entry on Felgolos, a dragon known to some sages and long-lived inhabitants of the western Heartlands and eastern Amn as "the Flying Misfortune" because of his long career of crashing into things, causing mayhem, and appearing in the midst of draconic battles, clashes of armies, archmages' spell-duels, and other spectacular events.

Felgolos is a juvenile male bronze dragon of sleek build, unshakable curiosity, and unfailing good nature. He refuses to make enemies or to be prudent, and he wanders Faerûn, intruding on the territories of other dragons and venturing into situations of great peril (when Dragon Cultists have urged a dracolich into making its first raiding flight,

for instance, or Zhentarim wizards riding feywings rise aloft from Darkhold in great numbers, to mount a spell attack on some hapless city or other). Through years of this sort of peering about in perpetual wonderment, Felgolos seems to have led a charmed life. Although he has often been hurt and even forced to fight or flee in earnest many times, he has survived poking his nose into one danger after another and continues to blithely do so despite many warnings (and threats) as to his fate.

Born to a pair of magically-mighty bronze dragons who've since used their Art to travel to other planes (where, presumably, they still flourish), Felgolos was taught to experiment, to observe, and to play with magic. When other hatchlings were exulting in tearing apart their first cattle, Felgolos was tinkering with a "pluck-and-grab" *teleport* spell that could uproot trees and stumps at his behest, so that he could make fences around his own stolen herd of cattle. When other

young dragons were raiding their first villages, Felgolos was lying atop crags using spying spells to look around villages and learn how these strange creatures called humans and half-elves lived. His parents encouraged him to go on independent forays. When he wanted to play, they cast spells that linked their three minds and then worked magic together.

This upbringing has given Felgolos three unusual qualities: a carefree self-reliance that steers him well clear of the treasure-grasping paranoia that afflicts so many dragons, a knowledge (matched by few elves and even fewer humans) of everyday life of all things on the surface of Faerûn, and a mastery of magic far beyond the norm for his age.

In AD&D® game terms, from what Elminster tells us, Felgolos can be considered the equal of a 14th-level wizard. (That is, the roster of spells that he knows, and the ranges, damages and other particulars of the magics he casts, are identical to those of a 14th-level

mage — regardless of the norm for young bronze dragons.) Like most dragons, however, Felgolos requires slumber rather than study to replenish his spells, but he can choose which magics “return” from a large selection of spells known to him. Eiminster estimates that the Flying Misfortune has mastered about 30 spells of each of the first six spell levels, including some unique enchantments (two of which appear in these pages) that he either developed or modified from those given to him by his parents.

If he ever turned to evil — or to any aim or scheme in a determined, persistent way — Felgolos would be a formidable foe. He seems incapable of this sort of behavior, however, treating opponents he faces again and again as some sort of amusement “laid on” for him — never as enemies to be hated, feared, or slain.

Instead, Felgolos spends his days wandering aimlessly about the Realms, peering at this and that. He stops from time to time to feed or whenever he sees something that interests him. Trading information about what he’s seen with folk he meets for other news. Felgolos is without guile and never lies outright, though he’s often cryptic and omits important things for pranksome fun or to protect those he considers his friends. Certain hermits, sages, Harpers, and isolated mages (from Malchor Harpell to Eiminster of Shadowdale) are among his favorite hosts; they always have news to impart. Many of these learned friends, of course, aren’t above using Felgolos as an information-gatherer, or aiming him (rather as one goads a goat, or obliquely suggests something to a restless child without saying it directly and thus being refused) at particular places or folk, to have him “stir things up.”

Eiminster, for one, admits to sending Felgolos to “annoy and crash through” the work of the Zhentarim operating out of Darkhold (one of the reasons the Black Network hasn’t been more dominant in the Far Hills area) or to check on activity in the vicinity of Hellgate Keep, and Hellgate Dell).

The sage Velsaert of Baldur’s Gate (a rising authority on the history of dragons up and down the Sword Coast) describes Felgolos as “an eternal wide-eyed blunderer, ignorant of draconic etiquette and ways, but more learned in the doings of men and treants and hedgehogs than the wisest sage alive.” Eiminster says that

Felgolos seems almost not to think of himself as a dragon and to have no interest in others of his kind — other than to regard bronze dragons as trustworthy friends on sight.

The archmage Malchor Harpell once commented that Felgolos “seems to have more bounce (buoyant good humor and optimism) than anyone I’ve ever known — and probably more than any entity active in Faerûn today, short of Tymora herself.” Certainly the adventurer Toross of the elves, known for his boundless energy and high spirits, tried to accompany the Flying Misfortune for a time (riding on his back, as a trusted friend) and later described the experience as “exhausting ... his gusty high spirits wore me down as winter gales tear through leafless branches.”

Felgolos has never shown any evidence of cunning or prudence, but great good luck seems to accompany him — always preceded by clumsiness and a pratfall or two. He is said to be quick and expert in his use of spells, especially when surprised and attacked, but he seems to have few other accomplishments beyond sensitivity to the needs of others, wisdom in the ways of ail surface-world living things, and accomplished storm flying. He loves to ride the wild winds of gales, lightning storms, and even hurricanes. He never seems to take harm from the crackling aerial discharges or tearing winds, however, no matter how furious the weather.

Some sages have even advanced the theory that Felgolos is the avatar of “a sleeping god” or “a child of Akadi.” No “certain death” dealt to him seems to be final, and no foe seems to be able to destroy him utterly, though he has been badly beaten many times. His typical response to these defeats is to forget about the battle — though not who his foes were — rather than to seek revenge. If there is some hidden divinity to Felgolos, or even just a favor of Tymora guarding him, the Hying Misfortune is honestly unaware of it.

Eiminster says the secret behind Felgolos’ astonishing survival dates from the twenty-odd years following the departure of his parents. They tried to keep him safe by offering his service as a steed to a certain archwizard of Halruaa, one Thongameir “Stormspells” Halargoth.

Stormspells was a kindly old collector of rare plants and mosses who liked nothing better than to fly across half Faerûn looking at wilderlands, stopping

for a picnic luncheon, scooping up a few specimens, and then wending his way home to Narthtowers, a mountainside keep in northern Halruaa that simply bristled with intelligent carnivorous bushes, vines, and similar deadly specimens. Felgolos was happy to take him on such “poking around seeing things” jaunts, and they got on famously — despite several close calls, such as the time they landed in the middle of an encamped orc horde one night, or the time they interrupted a conclave of hundreds of gathered spirit naga in a jungle valley deep in Chult.

Such adventures made Stormspells aware that Felgolos could make them both far safer if certain enchantments were worked upon his draconic steed. So he cast a mighty and permanent manyfold enchantment on the bronze dragon. The spell’s secrets have presumably, with Stormspells’ death, been lost — though some of their secrets may exist in written form, somewhere within the now-overgrown Narthtowers. Interested adventurers are warned that the plants growing there have slain several young and ambitious Halruaan mages. This powerful magic has three effects, detailed hereafter.

❖ All magics (including magical item discharges, psionic effects, and natural spell-like powers) of the Enchantment/Charm school cast at Felgolos have no effect other than to give the dragon additional hit points, equal to one point per spell level of the magical attack. These extra hit points serve to heal any damage the dragon has already suffered, or they remain as phantom “extra” hit points for a full day, waiting to offset any other damage Felgolos may suffer during that time.

❖ All Necromancy magics cast at Felgolos have no effect other than to cause him to regenerate 1 hp per spell level of the necromantic attack, once every 6 turns, for a full day (24 hours, or 144 turns). This effect has brought the dragon back from apparent death more than once. Note that as with the healing boon of Enchantment/Charm attacks, this regeneration is cumulative. Thus, if a wizard were to attack Felgolos with a *finger of death* (a 7th-level spell), and another hostile mage later used a *vampiric touch* on the dragon (a 3rd-level spell), neither wizard would harm Felgolos in the slightest (or, in the case of the *touch*, gain any hit points, from him). Also, for a day thereafter, Felgolos would be regaining 10 hit points (7 every six turns after with-

standing the *finger*, and 3 every six turns after his contact with the touch). These boons occur in addition to the normal healing that rest brings to him, or any healing magics he may choose to cast on himself. (Several observers have attested that Felgolos seems to command at least one sort of healing spell.)

❖ All Alteration magics cast at Felgolos have no effect except to empower the dragon instantly to cast an additional spell by silent act of will (casting time 1): a *teleport without error* spell that can take along any number of creatures directly touching the Flying Misfortune, along with any items he or they are wearing or carrying, so long as these additions weigh no more than a ton (extra weight is left behind at random, non-living items first). Felgolos can choose selectively to exclude creatures or items touching him from this journey, so as to leave behind foes. This power was formerly used to take the dragon to the top of a rock pinnacle directly above Narthtowers, but the dragon uses it to “jump” to other locales in Faerûn more often these days; he finds revisiting the home of his dead master a saddening experience. Note that multiple Alteration-school attacks upon the Flying Misfortune give him multiple *teleport* spells, to be used at any time thereafter. If beset by persistent foes, Felgolos can “jump” repeatedly hither and thither in Faerûn. He often does this to drag opponents from frigid mountaintops to blazing hot deserts or tiny, bare rock islets in midsea — and leaves his foes in any or all (if they’re a group) such places, to find their own ways to comfort and safety.

If he knows his foes, Felgolos may mischievously take them to places dangerous to them (the topmost turret of the castle of an enemy, for example) and perch nearby to watch the fun (if necessary, by the use of spying spells, while remaining hidden). The Flying Misfortune isn’t cruel, however — he wouldn’t drop a foe onto rocks from high in the air, or into the pen of a hungry monster.

Felgolos’ Lair

It could be said that the Flying Misfortune has no true lair but rather a score of favorite sleeping-spots. Most of them are shallow depressions in high mountain ridges, where he won’t be disturbed. He does, however, have a few places where he keeps things, and some might judge these to be “lairs.” in both the Thunder Peaks range and the Troll

Mountains, Felgolos frequents mountain-locked high valleys where he can drink from lakes and keep free-ranging herds of stolen rothé, sheep, goats, and cattle for food. The one in the Thunder Peaks has a mountainside cavern large enough to hold Felgolos (if he crawls in) and some keepsakes. These include a huge canopied bed (for humans to sleep in relative comfort, if the dragon should bring them here), a small sailing ship (in case Felgolos ever finds someone who needs one), and even a castle drawbridge the Flying Misfortune once tore away from a fortress so that he could spill the mounted knights on it into the moat, one by one, after giving them an entertainingly wild ride in his claws as he dove, looped, and swooped around the battlements.

In another cave somewhere along the Sword Coast, Felgolos has a growing collection of wagons gained from Zhentarim. Whenever he swoops low to look at a caravan owned by the Black Network, its guards fire crossbow bolts or spells at him. The Flying Misfortune responds by snatching up a souvenir wagon, beasts of burden and all, and taking it away to add to his hoard. If it contains people (Zhents often transport bound captives under other cargo, and sometimes they ride in their own wagons, particularly when guarding precious goods) or food, Felgolos often empties it en route. Zhents are typically dropped into a lake after a terrifying dive toward its waiting waters, but otherwise Felgolos does nothing but store the stolen wagon. He doesn’t care if others find his “ghost caravan” and pilfer from it. indeed, he often plucks a wagon up to take to a traveler on the road whose own conveyance has lost a wheel or overturned.

In all of the Flying Misfortune’s lairs one may find odd coins (even a chest or coffer of wealth in the “ghost caravan”), but Felgolos doesn’t collect or value coins, gems, or jewelry.

Felgolos seems to be a contented loner, but he sometimes teams up with a bored archmage (even one of the Seven Sisters, perhaps, seeking a momentary vacation of sightseeing and prank-playing) for an adventure or two, or even comes to Shadowdale or Candlekeep for aid. The sages of Candlekeep so value his knowledge that they now eagerly trade lore with him; Eiminster or Jhessail can furnish him with a little spell-muscle or a human ally.

Felgolos’ Domain

Felgolos roams Faerûn more or less freely, ignoring the territories claimed by other dragons or creatures. By and large, such entities have learned that it is easiest to ignore the intrusions of the Flying Misfortune; fighting or trying to entrap him always carries a cost, and the bronze dragon clearly has no intention of carving out a domain of his own, seizing treasure, or competing in any lasting manner for food.

The bronze dragon is, however, sensitive to the needs and desires of others, and he tends to avoid the home ranges of mated dragons whom he knows are rearing young. The danger of war, wizards’ duels, and the like is not a deterrent to Felgolos, however — news of such things is likely to attract him.

The Deeds of Felgolos

The favorite prey of Felgolos is any sort of herd animal he can swoop on from above when he comes upon them in his wanderings; he finds having to hunt deliberately for food to be tiresome. He doesn’t seem to have any favorite spells, watering holes, or hunting grounds — doing things differently (and recklessly) all the time is life itself to the Flying Misfortune. His lack of planning and prudence often leads to the mishaps that have earned him his nickname — but it is fatal to believe that Felgolos never learns from his battlefield mistakes nor recognizes individuals who’ve done him harm in the past.

Felgolos spends most of his days wandering the Realms, spying on the deeds of others, playing pranks on them or aiding them as the whim takes him, and looking for fresh fun (or at least interest).

Felgolos is famous for two things: tearing off the tallest tower of the Citadel of the Raven and using it as a club to swat enraged beholders out of the sky (after they rose all around him), and for the *frame teleport* spell he (or perhaps Stormspells) developed — which he uses to enter (or partially enter, for a good look around) areas whose entrances are too small for his body. He has used this spell to eavesdrop on covert meetings of conspirators (in one instance posing as a “stuffed dragon head” on a wail), bedchamber conferences, secret priestly rituals, and even wizards at work on their spells.

Felgolos' Magic

The Flying Misfortune has always been interested in magic — both watching others work it and experimenting on his own. He prefers to develop his own spells rather than to gain them from others via seizure or trading; however, spellbooks, spell scrolls, and magical items are among the few things the Flying Misfortune does like to acquire in his wanderings. Where he keeps them, no one knows.

Snatchport

(Alteration)

Level: 6

Range: 90 yards

Components: V

Duration: 1 round

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: One item of up to 600 lbs.

Saving Throw: Special

This spell enables its caster to take any one item within spell range and place it at another spot within spell range. For the purposes of this spell, a collection of items fastened or held together — for instance, a wagon composed of wood bolted and strapped together, or a chest and its contents — is considered “one item.” Only non-living items may be moved about by means of *snatchport* spells, though they may once have been living. Enchanted items, and items directly worn by or in the grasp of a living creature (such as weapons or belt-purses) can't be *snatchported*.

A *snatchport* moves the chosen item through extra-dimensional space, “around” intervening obstacles such as walls (though it cannot pass unbroken magical barriers such as wardmists). It also has the power to “pluck up” fastened items if its caster makes a successful Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll. Three attempts to pluck a fastened item may be made, with any modifications currently available. In this manner, *snatchport* can be used to tear loose dead trees or stumps, lashed-down catapult arms, moored boats, locked doors, etc.

When a tethered item is torn free by means of this spell, it must withstand a “fail” saving throw or be structurally damaged (cracked). Depending on its nature, this can mean that any subsequent fall or harsh use destroys it, or that it will survive just one more normal usage intact, or that it breaks apart and collapses into component pieces upon delivery to the location chosen by the caster. A *snatchport* can't be cast so as to

move just one wheel, leg, or other component part of an intact item, and therefore cause the item to collapse, begin to move, or be torn apart.

The spell places the moved item exactly where the caster desires — though a midair chosen location will of course mean that the item promptly falls from there (with an attendant item saving throw and possible damage to things beneath). If the caster elects to move an item to the same spot it was in previously, it is considered to have “left” the spot for half a round. Therefore, other beings or items can move through the temporarily vacated area; if one is caught in the area upon reappearance of the item, treat as for direct impact, as described hereafter.

A *snatchport* creates enough of an air disturbance that even unwitting creatures directly under or in the spot of arrival are allowed a Dexterity check to avoid the arriving item (unless they are constrained from moving or are asleep). The damage from the direct impact of a *snatchported* item depends on its weight and size, but it is never less than 4d4 hp damage or a crushing blow saving throw.

Frame Teleport

(Alteration)

Level: 7

Range: Special

Components: V

Duration: 1-4 rounds

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

This spell allows its caster to teleport his body between two closed wooden frames of any size that are any distance apart on Faerûn. The caster must touch one frame directly as the spell is cast and must visualize the other (i.e., it must be a frame the caster has either touched or seen previously, though such viewing may have been by means of a scrying spell or similar means of remote scrutiny).

If either of the frames has a gap or break in it, the spell simply won't work and is wasted. If either of the frames bears an enchantment, or arrival through the far one is into an area filled with an operating magical ward or barrier, that remote magic is unaffected, the *frame teleport* fails, and its caster suffers 2d6 hp damage from a magical backlash.

The spell otherwise operates safely, silently, and without peril to its caster, allowing his body to emerge from frames much too small to allow its physical passage. Arrival is safe regardless of

what is occupying a frame (such as a picture, mirror, or closed door), and it causes no harm to the material within the frame. The spell doesn't guarantee safety thereafter, however, if the area on the far side of the far frame is (for instance) underwater, or filled with a raging fire, or being used for target practice.

The user of this spell can pass entirely through the far frame (ending the spell instantly) or pass only partially through it, leaving part of his body behind by the original frame. This second option allows the caster to withdraw to the original location at any time during the three rounds after the round of casting. Before that time, the caster can take or leave items, observe, speak, reach, grasp things, and even cast spells or launch attacks in the new location (on the far side of the far frame).

If the caster remains in “both places” when the spell expires, he is catapulted through both frames into the “new” location, suffering 4d4 hp damage, and the link with the old frame vanishes. While the caster is “in both places,” he is vulnerable to attacks at both locations and suffers double normal damage from all harmful occurrences in the “new” location. A *frame teleport* protects its caster against any need for System Shock survival rolls or Constitution checks (for whatever reason) while it is operating.

Felgolos' Fate

Whim, curiosity, and a desire to revel in constant fun govern every act of Felgolos. He is likely always to find fresh trouble to blunder into, and he will always like helping creatures who are lost or in need. Sooner or later, such acts are bound to bring him his death, yet he has cheated certain doom so often that it is hard to say what, if anything, can destroy him. Perhaps the claims of sages about his divine nature are true.



Ed Greenwood is a journalist, library clerk, writer, artist, and game designer whose work on the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting has taken him all over the world meeting gamers, whom he describes as “the best hope and indication that our planet will have a thinking, caring future.” He also likes squeaky bath toys.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ANSWERED!

The Future of TSR with Wizards of the Coast

Since Wizards of the Coast, inc. acquired TSR, inc. in June of this year, practically every fan of the two companies has been asking, "What does this mean?" If we waited until we had the answers to every question, it would be months before we could share them with you. Here, then, are the answers to the most common questions asked so far — straight from the Wizards themselves. Keep an eye on these pages for more information in the months ahead.

New Product Schedules

When will new products and magazines ship?

As soon as possible! We're gearing up to ship as fast as we can. There are plenty of completed products just waiting to be printed and shipped to distributors. On the other hand, we don't want to flood the market by releasing too many things too quickly. The adjusted release schedule will probably reflect a more-or-less "typical" TSR release each month in the number of products that are shipped. That means some projects will be pushed back into 1998, but that's better than forcing the consumer to choose between a year's worth of products in six months.

What will happen to *DRAGON* Magazine and *DUNGEON* Adventures? What about the money or issues subscribers are owed?

The magazines will continue to be published and will probably be the first things on the shelves. If you canceled your subscription, you'll be reimbursed as quickly as possible. If you've held on to your subscription, you'll begin receiving issues as they're printed. Remember that subscriptions run by the magazines' issue numbers, not by month, so you'll still receive all of the issues you've bought: 12 per year for *DRAGON Magazine* and 6 per year for *DUNGEON Adventures*.

Which of the products announced for 1997 on the TSR homepage will be produced? Will a new schedule become available?

All projects listed for 1997 are under consideration, and a new schedule's being developed right now. That revised schedule will be made public and released online as soon as its completed.

Will backlist products be reprinted?

Yes. Part of the schedule process includes assembling a list of key backlist products to be put back into distribution.

The AD&D Game

Will AD&D 2nd Edition continue as is? Will Wizards of the Coast continue to produce the current AD&D lines? Are you planning to support all game lines, or just ones based on the AD&D rules? What creative ideas do you have in store for the AD&D game?

Right now, the first priority is to get TSR back up and running. That means figuring out where we stand with projects currently in production and putting products on the shelf as fast as we possibly can. WotC doesn't want to drop anything as result of the merger, but we will do the type of analysis that any company does in looking at the performance of the various product lines. We didn't come in with any "agenda" for changes in that regard. As far as new creative ideas go, they'll evolve as we begin to work with the TSR staff to examine where we are and where we're going. As with all businesses, we'll look at what's best for both the company and the consumer in making these decisions. And we'll certainly continue to invest in any product that's doing well for the company and that people are interested in.

Essentially, the game remains the same — only the names have changed!

What's this talk of a "3rd Edition AD&D" that I keep hearing about?

The idea of a 3rd Edition was being discussed by creative staff and management at TSR long before the merger, and it's still under discussion now. For the moment, the idea's being debated with no specific plans.

The Fate of Your Favorites

Is the new ALTERNITY™ RPG still in the works?

Yes. Like the TSR staff, we consider the ALTERNITY game to be one of the most important new projects on the schedule and intend to give it our full support.

The latest plan for the ALTERNITY game: We intend to preview the game at the 1997 GEN CON® game fair and do a lot of research at the show and beyond. Why? First, to ensure that it's the best game it can possibly be; and second, to get the customers involved in the development process. Any changes required by feedback we receive at the show will be implemented before the product is released. The Wizards staff is very excited about this game and the marketing departments are working together to maximize the research and the effectiveness of the launch. WotC's contributing its marketing expertise to the process, but the creative end of things — like content and product development — is still being driven by the TSR staff members who've been involved with the ALTERNITY game since it was first proposed.

What will be the fate of extinct product lines such as the AL-QADIM®, DARK SUN®, GREYHAWK®, MYSTARA® and SPELLJAMMER® settings?

Each of these lines will be examined on a case-by-case basis after we've finished with current schedule issues.

What will happen to TSR's book lines?

The novels are some of the strongest parts of the TSR family of products, and we'll certainly continue to publish these books as usual.

Will the SPELLFIRE® game survive? What about the DRAGON DICE™ game? Do these continue even though they "compete" with the MAGIC: THE GATHERING® game?

Like everything else on the TSR product list, these projects are being examined. We don't have preset notions about any particular products. Lines that are profitable — both for the company and for the consumer — will continue to

be produced. That's a sensible strategy for any business: You have to support profitable product lines, promote new ideas, and be cautious about lines that aren't selling well.

The GEN CON Game Fair

Will the GEN CON Game Fair 1997 go on as planned? What about the Game Fair in 1998 and further in the future? Since Origins and the GEN CON Game Fair are close together, both geographically and temporally, will one or the other be phased out or moved to the West Coast?

This year's GEN CON Game Fair — the 30th anniversary of that Show! — will go on as planned. At this point, we have no intention of moving the show from Milwaukee; it's a location that's served the Game Fair, TSR, and the whole game industry well, and it's accessible to people from all parts of the country.

Origins will remain a separate show. The two conventions have been combined in the past for specific years; that may occur again at some point, but not on a regular basis.

When can we expect to see GEN CON 1996 exhibitor and judge refunds? How about Winter Fantasy?

All outstanding debts will be handled in a timely fashion.

Do you intend to support the European GEN CON Game Fair this year and in the future? Do you see the European side of the RPGA® Network developing? What will happen to the TSR outpost in Great Britain? Will you change the European distribution policy?

One of Wizards' key beliefs is that gaming isn't (and shouldn't be) restricted to one country; it's a world-wide hobby and deserves to be supported as extensively as possible. We'll definitely support the Euro GEN CON Game Fair. The European RPGA Network will be developed concurrently with the U.S. branch. The TSR outpost in Great Britain will be integrated into the WotC UK office in Maidenhead and the operations will be merged. WotC intends to build on TSR's existing distribution systems while combining operations under a common European management.

What plans (if any) does WotC have for the RPGA Network? What about POLYHEDRON® Newszine?

We have big plans for the RPGA Network. It's a very important part of the

company that lets us really connect with the players. Anyone familiar with WotC knows that we love to become involved with the players and to support them in any way we can, so the redevelopment of the the RPGA Network is an important concern. The return of *POLYHEDRON Newszine* will probably be a part of that process.

Will you provide the AD&D game with the same customer support as the MAGIC: THE GATHERING game?

Definitely. This is one of the things WotC's very good at, and TSR's products will gain WotC's experience and programs for customer support. We'd like to emphasize, though, that WotC doesn't consider itself "the perfect game company" with all the answers; there's plenty we can learn from TSR's staff and experience, as well. We're working to make this a true merger so that we can learn from each other and make all the products — the MAGIC: THE GATHERING and AD&D games and everything else — better.

What sort of cross pollination of the product lines can we expect? Will AD&D game creatures and characters appear in the MAGIC: THE GATHERING game? Are there any plans for an AD&D game setting based on the world of Dominia?

We'll have to wait and see. We're already having some preliminary discussions on these ideas. Again, our first priority will be to bring TSR's production up to speed and get the products out there as quickly as possible. Once things have evened out a bit, we'll examine these options carefully.

But we have determined that the core of both product lines will remain pure. You won't see a Serra Angel in the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM®*, and you won't find an Elminster card in the next *MAGIC: THE GATHERING* expansion. At the same time, the most intriguing idea for a kind of "cross pollination" involves publishing a world of Dominia under the AD&D rules system, similar to the way other game worlds are treated. That option will undoubtedly remain at the top of the list of potential projects for the time being.

TSR and Wizards of the Coast

Will TSR remain its own company? What will happen to the TSR name and logo? To what extent will the two companies be merged?

TSR's brand names will remain distinct entities within the WotC organization. The products will retain both the

TSR name and logo. But we're now one company, not two.

What changes will you make in how AD&D products are distributed? Will you attempt to introduce AD&D alongside MAGIC in stores where it has not been offered before?

For the moment, Wizards will continue to use existing game distribution channels. We'd absolutely like to extend those channels into new markets, and that's something we'll be working on in the months ahead.

What about WotC products? Will the MAGIC: THE GATHERING game continue to be produced and released?

Nothing's being pushed aside on the WotC end. We're intending to go through with all the plans and projects we've been working on. The TSR acquisition essentially just adds a large bunch of products to WotC's release schedule.

How will this affect TSR's online policies, presence, and the Web site?

The online policies are being reviewed and updates will be released online. TSR's online presence and the Web site will remain very much the same. We'll continue to maintain a separate TSR site apart from the WotC site.

Will TSR be moving to WotC HQ in Renton, Washington? Which of the TSR people will join WotC? What about the people who were let go in December?

TSR operations will relocate from Wisconsin to Washington. We're currently in the process of interviewing TSR employees and seeing who's willing to make the big move to the Seattle area. Obviously, we're hoping that most of the staff can continue doing what they do so well! Once that's sorted out, we'll look at the staff that remains and see where we stand.

Policies and Philosophies

Will you maintain the philosophic and original thematic purity of the major TSR game worlds (including the BIRTHRIGHT®, DRAGONLANCE®, FORGOTTEN REALMS®, PLANESCAPE®, and RAVENLOFT® settings)? Players don't want their worlds to change because they're "under new management."

That's a valid concern, but we want everyone to know that we didn't buy TSR with the intent of completely changing everything the players know. We've got a lot of love and respect for the products and want to see them grow. We're working with the TSR creative staff and learning about the game worlds, but product content will remain in the hands of the people who usually

determine those things: the creative staff. There's already a three-year-plan in place for TSR projects, and that'll form the basis for revised schedules and product decisions.

Will TSR's Code of Ethics remain the same or be changed?

In fact, Lisa Stevens is heading up a task force consisting of TSR staff to discuss that very issue. They'll consider the pros and cons of keeping or changing the Code of Ethics before they make any decision. We're very aware of all the ramifications of this question and intend to give it serious thought before making any definite statement.

Will any changes be made to TSR's policies on the use of their intellectual properties by gamers in their own published works?

The policies will be reviewed. In general, it's a good idea for a company to protect and defend its copyrights; otherwise, it doesn't have a business!

Are there any plans for RPG-related computer, movie, or TV projects?

It's no secret that WotC wants to make gaming as big as the movie industry. We'll be pursuing opportunities as they arise.



This is the 125th Anniversary of Arbor Day, the tree planters' holiday. This year The National Arbor Day Foundation asks you to plant Trees for America, and provide for their care.

Trees Make a World of Difference. Trees make our cities and neighborhoods more livable. They create quiet places to enjoy, give wildlife a home, and increase property values.

This year, plant Trees for America. For your free brochure, write: Trees for America, The National Arbor Day Foundation, Nebraska City, NE 68410.

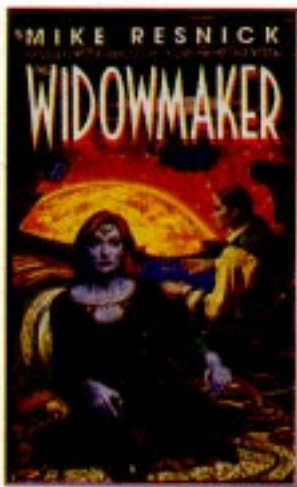
**We Need More
Trees**



**The National
Arbor Day Foundation™**
www.arborday.org

Bookwyrms™

We've been reading some good books lately, and here are the ones we recommend. To give us a tip about a good recent book, drop us a line at "Bookwyrms," DRAGON® Magazine, 201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.



The Widowmaker

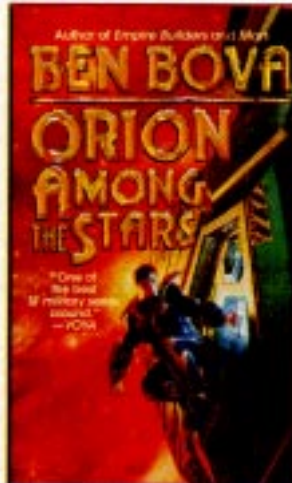
by Mike Resnick
Bantam Spectra

\$5.99

About ten years ago, Mike Resnick wrote a science-fiction novel called *Santiago*, which told the story of the search among the stars for a legendary outlaw (in the vein of Pancho Villa). The galactic frontier was a perfect futuristic old west, complete with native guides, bounty hunters, and numerous larger-than-life heroes and villains. Mike has set other stories in this future frontier, and his most recent is *The Widowmaker*.

The plot in a nutshell is that a legendary gunslinger, "the Widowmaker," has been cryogenically frozen to forestall the lethal outcome of a deadly disease in hopes of a cure being discovered. When his bank account begins to run out, he is temporarily unfrozen so that he can be cloned, and a new Widowmaker can earn a bounty to continue to pay the bills. As with *Santiago*, this is the wild

west of the future, once again filled with colorful characters, gun fights, and more excitement than a John Wayne movie. The added ethical question of cloning for profit is a nice twist, and both *Widowmakers* (the infirm and the clone) are wonderfully interesting characters. B.T.



Orion Among the stars

by Ben Bova
Tor

\$5.99

Orion Among the Stars is the newest addition to Ben Bova's Orion saga, in which god-like beings known as the Creators travel through time, trying to change history to their benefit. One of the mightiest of these Creators is Aten, who created Orion to serve as his tool. Throughout the saga, the reader travels with Orion to many historical or legendary times and places, where Orion must alter history to suit Aten's goals.

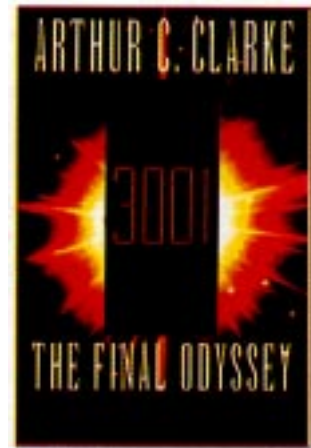
Orion has powers of his own, however, and he is not always as malleable as Aten would wish. Hopelessly in love with Anya, another of the Creators, Orion sometimes ignores Aten's orders to make Anya happy — and sometimes, Orion dies.

Orion Among the Stars differs from most of the other books in the saga, since it is set in the future, when the

feuding Creators have polarized into two groups. One group is headed by Aten, the other by Anya. Both sides use human and alien pawns to achieve their ends. The feud escalates into interstellar war, and Orion finds himself in charge of a squad of a hundred artificially bred soldiers. With them, he must obey Aten and survive the deadly enemy long enough to find Anya.

Ben Bova is a master of military and political science fiction, and this book moves at breakneck pace as Orion works to thwart Aten, find Anya, and discover the hidden goals of the creators, all while trying to keep himself and his troops alive.

Orion Among the Stars is a splendid new chapter in the Orion saga, one that will have old readers impatient for more and new readers searching for the earlier novels. P.W.



3001: The Final Odyssey

Arthur C. Clarke
Del Rey Books

\$25.00

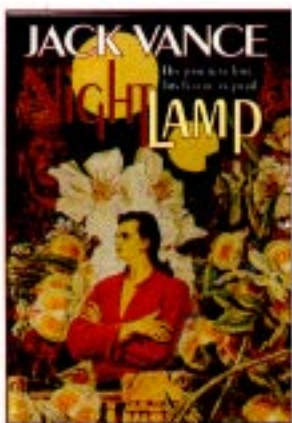
2007: *A Space Odyssey* was the first movie that I can remember seeing where I realized that I didn't really understand everything that was going on and therefore had to read the book in search of answers. After close to 30 years, Clarke has chosen to bring the *Odyssey* series to a close (if one is to believe the title) and answer a few more of the questions that have kept readers coming back through 2070: *Odyssey Two* and 2067: *Odyssey Three*, while leaving ample room open for further explorations within this time line, as every answer leads to new questions and possibilities.

Roy Poole, the astronaut set adrift by Hal, the run-amok computer of the first chapter in the series, is brought back and the riddle of the monoliths and an impending crisis of world-destroying import is resolved. That's the basic plot,

and it's definitely okay even if it isn't the breathtaking climax many of us have been waiting for. If this is indeed the Final Odyssey, it's an okay place to stop.

Where the book really succeeds, however, is as wonderfully convincing vision of the future, illustrating the evolution of socio-political thought (religion, prison reform, etc.), scientific innovation, and integration into everyday life (VR tech as the principle means of education and communication, terraforming, etc.), and a future history of space travel, research, and innovation.

Just as Roy Poole is treated to a street level view of the world a century beyond his "death," we are allowed to go along for the ride, and its a ride worth taking. B.T.



Nightlamp

by Jack Vance

Tor

\$23.95

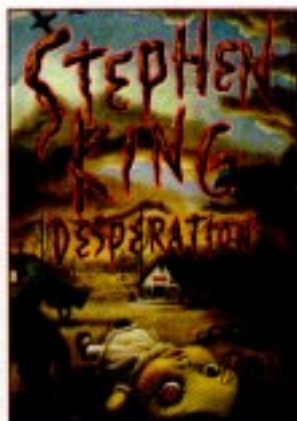
In many of his novels, Jack Vance presents the peculiar human culture of one of countless settled planets. Those farthest from the "Gaeon Reach," the center of humankind, are the most distinct and unusual. Vance's stories show the conflict between these cultures or between an individual and the status quo.

In *Nightlamp*, Jaro is a young boy who has endured hardships to the extent of losing his memory of certain important events. He grows and learns under the care of foster parents on the world of Gallingle. There, the majority of the population strives for social advancement, or "comporture." Membership in social clubs such as the Tattermen, the Clam Muffins, and the Quantorsi is the most desirable. Jaro himself seeks no status, so he is shunned as a "nimp." He is tolerated so long as he does not become a "schmeltzer," pretending to have more status than he deserves.

Throughout the story, Jaro searches for the truth about his early life while

struggling to maintain his individuality on a world in which status is everything. As he gains his majority, he searches for his past, aided by two spacemen, former policemen, and a down-on-her-luck Clam Muffin. The quest leads them all to the star Nightlamp and the world called Fader, Jaro's birthplace. On Fader, Jaro and his companions must deal with the strange culture of the Roum while seeking the answers to Jaro's questions.

For fans of Jack Vance's other work, *Nightlamp* tickles in all the right places. For new readers, it offers glimpses of strange and wonderful worlds. The societies of Gallingle and Fader, for all their strangeness, remind us that our own cultures are no less strange when viewed from the outside. While watching the mystery of Jaro's past unfold is enjoyable, the real delight of *Nightlamp* is the trip through the worlds of Jack Vance. P.W.



Desperation

by Stephen King

Viking

\$27.95

King is back in terrifying top form with a tale set in one those isolated desert hamlets that exist just off the main drag of any one of America's roadways (in this case Highway 50). It all starts with a family on vacation who are pulled over for speeding by a monstrous cop who decides to bring the family in for questioning on a possible drug charge. The cop is, of course, more of a monster than anyone could have imagined, and from that point on the tension doesn't stop as a disparate group of characters struggle to escape an all-powerful evil presence that seems to have escaped from the bowels of the earth.

Peopled with the King archetypes fans have come to know and love (the writer, the mother, the precocious kid, etc.), *Desperation* barrels forward leaving no character unscathed as the ranks of the good are winnowed away in the wake of

the evil presence known as "Tak." In addition to keeping the surprises coming, King also manages to explore man's relationship with God, family, and temptation in a masterfully involving page-turner that ranks up their with the best of this storyteller's previous work.

Note: The "writer character" in *Desperation* is on an author tour via motorcycle, not unlike the one King did himself, and it is a mark of King's powers of storytelling that this author-character identification never gets in the way. B.T.



The Regulators

by Richard Bachman

Dutton

\$24.95

The character names are the same (though playing different roles), the evil presence's name and source are the same, and the overall themes are the same — yet this is a very different book from *Desperation*, as further evidenced by King's choosing to publish this volume under his Bachman pseudonym.

The action of the book takes place during a typical summer in Wentworth, Ohio, when the peace and tranquility of an average neighborhood street is violently disrupted by the arrival of several otherworldly vans whose occupants open fire on the blocks unsuspecting inhabitants. Thus begins a surreal tale of terror and the unknown where the deadly threat to the neighborhood seems to be derived from an old western film named *The Regulators* and a weekday afternoon children's program à la The Power Rangers.

Reminiscent of Dan Simmon's *The Hollow Man*, *The Regulators* is more akin to Kings *The Langoliers* and *Insomnia* than to his more traditional works of contemporary gothic horror. Nonetheless, it too is a page-turner and a marvelous companion piece to *Desperation*. B.T.



The Sandman: Book of Dreams

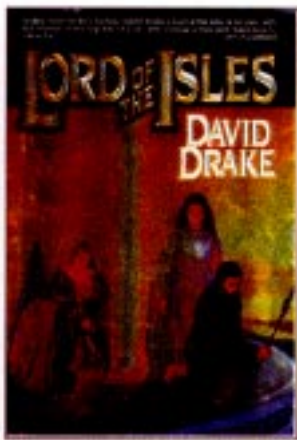
edited by Neil Gaiman and Ed Kramer
Warner Books \$22.00

I was a little bit worried when I first picked up *The Sandman: Book of Dreams*. I didn't think the editors could put together an anthology that would be consistent with the quality of the comics. Gaiman and Kramer have done just that. I have always thought that the art was necessary to the story, but I was wrong. The stories are exceptional. Each is another peek into the realm of the Dreaming, with more understanding of the mythology that Gaiman has created.

Delirium is one of the more popular siblings of Dream. George Alec Effinger writes a fairy tale from a child's point of view, where Delirium is a playmate. Karen Haber makes Delirium a savior of sorts. Tad Williams and Mark Kreighbaum write about teddy bears and why we should all have one. Caitlin R. Kiernan writes about one of my personal favorite characters, a raven named Matthew, in a very sad story about friendship and loss.

They are all inviting tales, but two stand out in my memory because of their uniqueness. "The Witch's Heart" by Della Sherman is a tragic love story with a massive dose of heartbreak and a lot of soul. The second story just plain scared the wits out of me; "Splatter" takes the reader back to a familiar story from Gaiman's *The Doll's House* collection. Be sure to read this one during the day with all of the lights on — and whatever you do, don't take a nap afterward.

Overall, I am pleasantly surprised with this anthology and highly recommend it. You don't need to be familiar with the comic in order to enjoy *The Sandman: Book of Dreams*. L.B.



Lord of the Isles

by David Drake
Tor Books \$25.95

Though it is always a thrill to discover a new author of exceptional talent (such as a Terry Goodkind or a J.V. Jones), it is equally exciting to revisit an old pro, particularly when he is trying something new. For the past few years I have been pleasantly surprised by superlative change-of-pace books by some of my favorite authors. Fantasy world-builder Tracy Hickman changed gears with his extraordinary science-fiction novel *The Immortals*. Horror/SF star George R.R. Martin outdid himself with the first book in his fantasy series, *A Game of Thrones*. Now, the undisputed master of military science fiction, David Drake, author of the Hammers Slammers series, has tickled my taste-buds with another unexpected delicacy.

Lord of the Isles is a BFF, "a big fat fantasy." BFFs are noted for their bulk (way over 400 pages), their fully realized world (e.g., Krynn), and a gradually unfolding plot that only partially resolves itself in a single volume so as to allow numerous revisitations to the same world (e.g., Raymond Feist's *Magician*, Robert Jordan's *The Eye of the World*). Drake's latest work succeeds on all of these accounts, and it is a winner.

Lord of the Isles is set on a classical fantasy world where political and elemental forces are on the verge of colliding. Two young people pursue separate quests for identity, during which the scope of their own powers are made clearer, as are their distinct roles in their world, as the elemental forces empower new heights of magic that both threaten and defend not just their world and lives but also those that exist on other planes as well. Secret lineages, lost heirs, scheming politicians, and a shadowy figure known as the Hooded One all come into play in a novel that is a marvelous

page-turner and an enchanting masterpiece of epic fantasy.

Lord of the Isles (available in hardcover in July) is the new BFF of 1997. Accept no substitutes. B.T.



Neverwhere

by Neil Gaiman
Avon \$23.99

By stopping to help an injured girl named Door, Richard Mayhew falls helplessly away from his comfortable if rather dull life into the grotesque, fantastic world under London. There he encounters oddities ranging from disgusting rat-speakers to noble lords of subway cars. His only hope of returning to his previous life lies in helping Door in her, quest to survive the killers who murdered her family and in learning why they were sent.

Like Arthur C. Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Neverwhere* is a novel written after its screenplay. In this case, the novel follows its BBC mini-series of the same name. While both have been available in the U.K. for some time, *Neverwhere* has been tantalizing Gaiman's American fans ever since. (It appears in its US. hardcover edition in July.)

Readers of Gaiman's previous work will be familiar with the novel's crisp and clever dialogue, as quick to conjure smiles as shudders. The imagery is as vivid as in any issue of *The Sandman*, proving yet again that naked prose can be as evocative as any illustration.

The most obvious pleasures of *Neverwhere* lie in the bizarre cast of secondary characters and villains, but its soul lies in the inept but decent protagonist. Richards endurance and ultimate transformation echo the simple moral prophesied by an old woman upon Richard's departure for London: "You've a good heart. Sometimes that's enough to see you safe wherever you go." D.G.

Cons & Pros Policies

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

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

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

1. Convention title and dates held
2. Site and location
3. Guests of honor (if applicable)
4. Special events offered
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements, and,
6. Address(es) 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 first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: "Cons & Pros," *DRAGON® Magazine*, 201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: "Cons & Pros," *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.).

Cons & Pros

AUGUST CONVENTIONS

Novagcon '97

August 15-17 VA
WestPark Hotel, Mclean.
Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: historical and science-fiction miniature wargaming, flea market and vendors. Registration: \$10/on site. Novag, P.O. Box 223660, Chantilly, VA 20153 or e mail novag@mail.com.

Bubonicon 29

August 22-24 NM
Howard Johnson East, Albuquerque. Guests: John Barnes, Wil McCarthy, Joy Marie Ledet, Gordon Garb and Robert Vardeman. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: panels, art show, dealers room, a dance and charity auctions. Registration: varies. NMSF Conference, P.O. Box 37257, Albuquerque, NM 87176 or website www.unm.edu/~lundgren/Bubonicon.html.

Gateway 17

Aug. 29-Sept. 1 CA
L.A. Airport Wyndham Hotel, Los Angeles. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: flea market, auc-

tion and dealers area. Registration: \$27.50/pre-registered or \$33/on site. Strategicon, 333 N. San Fernando Blvd. Burbank, CA 91502.

GEN CON® Game Fair

August 7-10 WI
The Wisconsin Center (MECCA), Milwaukee. The biggest and best game fair in the Western Hemisphere celebrates its 30th anniversary with the largest show ever. More than 1,500 gaming events are scheduled, including several national championships. Over 200 companies will display their merchandise in the vast Exhibit Hall. All the traditional Game Fair activities are back, including the art show, games auction, anime showings, costume contest, and miniatures painting contest. Four-day admission is \$50 on site, or \$15 per day (\$10 on Sunday). Contact: Sandy Kinney, GEN CON Game Fair, TSR, Inc., 201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

SEPTEMBER CONVENTIONS

Hostile Aircraft Aces Tournament '97

September 26-28 NY
Travel Lodge, Kingston.
Events: Open gaming Friday

night, aircraft tournament on Saturday and Sunday. Other activities: museum tours and WWI and Pioneer Era air shows at Old Rhinebeck. Registration: Tournament registration \$20 before August 31, \$25/on site. Goblintooh Enterprises, 46 Highland St., Reading, MA 01867.

First Contact

September 26-28 WI
Midway Hotel, Milwaukee. Guests: Kaja and Phil Foglio, Margaret Weis, Mike Davis and Robert Bloch. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: comic show, and tournaments. Registration: varies. MSFCI, P.O. Box 92726, Milwaukee, WI 53202-0726 website <http://www.strich.edu/~zinks>.

Razorbattles 5

September 26-28 AR
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Nothing But Trouble

Ed Greenwood

Artwork by Terry Dykstra



other Tethla's Turret Club for Adventurers was currently the most cozy gathering-place for "lads and lasses of the sword" in all the fair city of Waterdeep. Its rooms were

crowded with comfortable old chairs to sink into, handy tables to put your boots up on, and good wine, better beer, and hot, dripping butter-and-bacon sandwiches to consume. There were even eels in honey sauce. Still slithering, of course.

It would be nice to see Teshie again, after all this time. A certain far-too-famous mage of Shadowdale had chosen a good place for their meeting. Now, if Khelben didn't get wind of any of this until they were done, things would be just fine. If not . . .

Mirt the Moneylender shrugged. Disaster would come; he'd learned there was little one could do beyond frantic scrambles to get out of its way. Whatever befell, he'd see Teshie again . . .

With a smile of ready anticipation on his battered face, Mirt glanced up at the soft summer stars, beckoned to the cloaked and hooded figure climbing in his wake, and launched himself into one last, lumbering charge up the final flight of the Club's outside stairs.

Mother Teshla's Turret Club had but one drawback: it was in a turret — and turrets tend to involve climbing.

Gauntleted fists punching the air and mail-girt paunch wobbling indomitably, Mirt wheezed his way to the landing, leaned against its low parapet, and gasped for air. When his ragged moustache was no longer whistling in and out, the stout Old Wolf of Waterdeep reached out one metal-clad finger to slide open a cover on the door in front of him, snarled two words into the hole thus revealed, and beckoned again to his cowed follower.

Then he opened the door — to be greeted by a chorus of oaths from the dimness within. Several swords flashed out, seeking his face!

So he grabbed them in his gauntleted hands and hauled, hard.

With startled cries, the swords' owners flew past him and over the parapet, headed for a swift rendezvous with the cobbles of the courtyard below.

No sooner had their cries died away than an icy voice from the depths of the room beyond the door asked, "Just why, Mirt, are you killing the proud young nobles of our fair city this time? They were paying promptly for their drinks, mind you — unlike some stout Lords I could name!"

"I said the pass-phrase, Teshla," Mirt growled a little sheepishly, "and then gods be-damned if they didn't attack me!"

He was as smitten at the sight of her as he'd been the first time, two dozen summers ago. She stood just a little taller than the proudest curve of his belly, a slender ramrod of fiery spirit. Her skin was milk-white, her eyes snapping black pools, and her petite form eye-snaring in its liquid grace. She wore purple silk that clung to her slimness in ways that left nothing to Mirt's imagination. His eyes fell to her jeweled cloth-of-gold slippers as he remembered another night when she'd been wearing only purple . . . but not all that much purple.

"Beldarra's buttocks hasn't been the pass-phrase since two summers ago," Mother Teshla told him even more coldly, coming to the door. Meeting the sharp black points of her eyes as they drew nearer, Mirt began to understand just how one of his hogs felt when the butcher came into the swine-yard, knife in hand, and looked its way.

He opened his mouth to say something, but all that came out was a sort of sizzling, rustling sound, like a giant beetle calling to its young.

He might remember Teshie with fondness, but it was clear she didn't share his warm memories. Women were different . . .

"So you've slain three young noblemen of Waterdeep for nothing," Teshla snarled, "in a manner that'll have the Watch up here in less than a candle-down. My thanks, O lion among adventurers. How are you going to put this right?"

Mirt tried to speak again. "Ugluckle!" he said heartily.

'Ugluckle' is the favorite comment Lords of Waterdeep use when confronted by particularly glowing examples of their own stupidity. He tried a smile, but he could feel it sliding down off his chin as he met Teshla's waiting gaze. She was a woman whose level stare was capable of making a charging dragon snort and shy away.

Long ago he and Teshla had been lovers, and he'd thought they were still old friends, but right now Mirt was beginning to doubt it. To say nothing of the wisdom of coming here in the first place.

He glanced gloomily down into the courtyard and found it empty of all but a curious cat, looking back up at him.

Trying not to show how astonished he was, the veteran Lord of Waterdeep gestured grandly down at the empty — and unstained — cobbles below.

"No harm done, Teshle," he boomed. "Look you, and behold! Three young gallants whisked away to the beds of their beloveds by a little spell we're experimenting with — er, for the security of Waterdeep, y'understand. They'll find a few coins in their palms when they arrive, for their troubles, and all will be well."

Teshla stormed past him like an angry thundercloud, glanced over the rail, and sniffed.

"Well, I don't know how you did it," she said, looking up from about the level of his belt buckle with her eyes still afire, "but I want no more 'experimental spells' — or slain patrons — this time, O lovelight of my past. You may as well come in, after all . . . you and your quiet friend."

Glancing at the silent, cowed figure, she turned back to the door, then added over her shoulder as she went in, "Oh, yes: the pass-phrase just now is 'Idiot come calling.' Nothing personal, you understand."

"Er, no. No, of course not," Mirt rumbled heartily to the empty doorway. Then he beckoned the hooded figure impatiently and strode into the Turret Club.

Teshla had vanished; Mirt was standing in a room that held only several unshaven, sour-looking men. All of them were bristling with weapons, all of them were glaring at him, and none of them wore friendly looks.

"Be ye thinking of sitting down here, Old Wolf? a man with an eyepatch asked with a crooked smile, as his pet snake slithered lazily up one arm. "I'd think again, if I was you."

"And I'd wish I'd kept my mouth shut, Bollard," Mirt rumbled serenely, as he casually planted his right boot deep into the shadowed flesh under the man's protruding belly, "if I was you."

There are seasoned adventurers in Faerûn who can laugh in the face of disaster, grin merrily at swift-approaching, certain death, and shrug and walk away from calamity. Bollard was not one of them.

He fought briefly for breath enough to scream but managed only a sort of whistle. Looking pale and haggard under his thick coat of pimples, Bollard tried again. He uttered a sort of rattling groan and, liking the sound of it, gave vent to another.

"Anyone else have something clever to say this evening?" Mirt inquired jovially, looking around the room.

No one spoke; and no one met his eyes. With a loud snort, the stoutest Lord of Waterdeep swaggered across the room to its far door. The hooded figure following him silently.

No swords greeted him when he opened this door, which was almost something of a disappointment. Almost.

Instead, he found himself facing a purplish, mid-air shimmering that he recognized as a curtain of silence. Beyond it, a young woman who hadn't managed to put on all that many clothes before

starting work was dancing around a certain table. The table named for the meeting he'd come here for — the table where one of his oldest enemies was unexpectedly sitting.

Truly the gods seemed to be smirking at Mirt the Moneylender tonight.

Orgaz the Boar had cold eyes, ruthless habits, and two protruding lower teeth or tusks that had inspired his nickname. He also had several score thousand gold coins of Mirt's money, a fast ship that some critics had dubbed the home of "the dirtiest Sword Coast pirate unhanged" — and an arsenal of personal spells that had kept him safe from the Old Wolf and several dozen other creditors. But right now, he had his back turned.

Mirt grinned and sidled forward, like a large stone pillar trying to glide stealthily across a room. The radiance of the magical curtain flickered as he passed through it — and Orgaz turned his head.

Knife already in hand, Mirt smiled tightly and threw. The blade flashed through the air and bit deep, pinning the Boar's hand to the table. The hand that had been darting toward the wand that Mirt's second knife now sent flying.

"Well met, old miser," Mirt rumbled, striding forward.

Orgaz stared back at him, looking as stunned as a knight who's dug in his spurs and roared at his horse to charge — only to have it turn its head and calmly inform him that it isn't in the mood just now, thank you.

The dancing girl watched dagger and wand flash past her, stopped singing huskily, and tried screaming instead — with immediate and impressive success.

Mirt had just time to sit down at the table beside Orgaz and swing his feet up onto a nearby vacant chair before the noise the girl was making brought Mother Teshla back into the room.

"Stop that," Teshla snapped, poking the maiden's supple, bare stomach with one bony finger.

The maiden shuddered but did not cease her screams. Mirt winced. Her shrieks were reaching notes that needed to have a fast brace of arrows fired through them . . . or some intrepid adventurer to leap off a turret, catch hold of their rising cacophony, and wrestle it to the ground until the Watch came along to cart them down to the harbor and drown 'em deep.

Teshla evidently thought so too, for she deftly snatched up a tablecloth, tossed it over the maiden's head, and followed it with a hard-swung chair. The girl toppled in sudden silence.

"Mirt, if you've been attacking my guests —" Teshla began, threateningly, as she lowered the girl's shrouded form to the floor.

"Nay, nay, Teshie; I've only just sat down! Orgaz here has kindly caught one o' me blades, that fell from its sheath as I approached," Mirt assured her.

"I'm sure," Teshla replied, in a tone of voice that a noble lady of Waterdeep might use to tell a servant that a giant tick seemed to have found its way into her salad.

She glanced at Orgaz. He still looked decidedly like a corpse that had been floating in Waterdeep Harbor for several hot days — but at least it was now a corpse that had decided to try smiling. Slowly.

"When you're done, would you kindly clean the blood off my table?" she asked him.

Orgaz, who'd managed to say nothing thus far, continued to do so — but nodded hastily, looking at Teshla, and then across the table at Mirt.

Chin resting in one hairy hand, Mirt gave him a kindly smile. He was dreaming of Orgaz sliding helplessly down a steep and slippery castle turret roof, crying out for Mirt to throw him something — and Mirt obliging with the only portable thing in the room: a full chamberpot.

Orgaz gulped at Mirt's wolfish grin, looked back at Teshla, and chirped, "Take me with you. Downstairs"

Downstairs was where Teshla sold disguises and equipment to needy adventurers. She gave the Boar a look of disbelief, then got up, yanked Mirt's dagger out of the pirate's hand, and plucked at his sleeve. Yowling in pain, Orgaz was dragged from the room in the space of a swiftly-drawn breath.

Wiping his bloody dagger clean on the tablecloth that covered the fallen dancing maiden, Mirt sighed and turned to the cowed figure. "None too soon, that. Sit down, lad. Elminster'll be here right soon, now."

"I'm here already," the chair Orgaz had been sitting in said rather testily, as it started to shift its shape. "Long enough ago, in fact, to keep three young nobles from spreading their brains all over yonder courtyard. If ye carved any wider a path through the good citizens of Waterdeep, Old Wolf, ye'd soon have nobody left to be Lord over!"

"No doubt, no doubt," Mirt grunted, "but I'm running late, just now; could you save the lecture and see to the lad, here?" He grabbed the sleeve of the cowed figure and rumbled, "Unhood, Bergos."

Obediently the figure pulled back its cowl and blinked at the mightiest mage in Faerûn. Elminster looked back at him and sighed. Being born wealthy and noble doesn't make a young man handsome, polite, or gallant, but the young man seldom realizes this.

The eyes of young Bergos were bulging and staring, his cheeks as red as the embers of a roaring hearthfire.

Mirt took one look at him and reached for the nearest decanter. He was in love, all right. This would be, let's see, the third time this summer that Bergos Brossfeather had fallen into eternal, undying love with a young noble lady of Waterdeep. Er, if it was a young noble this time. Or a lady.

"He's smitten," Mirt growled. "Some foe cast a spell on him that makes him lovesick. He falls helm over heels for someone new every time there's a new moon. I need him cured; politics." The Lord of Waterdeep held up his decanter thoughtfully. Ever a glutton for punishment, he stared at himself in its reflective depths.

The Brossfeathers owed Mirt rather more gold pieces than what Waterdhavian nobles called a "thousand thousand" (usually with white faces; gulps; and pursed lips). If Bergos, who'd signed the deeds of debt, didn't come to his senses, Mirt would have to tear Brossfeather House apart stone by stone to see his money back. And that would make him enemies in almost every noble family in Waterdeep. Mirt just didn't feel like having that many foes right now.

"Who is it right now, Bergos?" Elminster asked quietly, moving his fingers ever so slightly.

The young nobleman grew still, his staring eyes seeing someone not in the room.

The Old Mage nodded as if he could see that someone, too. Then his face seemed to melt and run, dissolving slowly into the features of a young, sapphire-eyed lady with a sparkling grin.

"The things I do for Waterdeep," Elminster growled, as Bergos flung himself across the table to embrace his newly revealed love. From under a rain of kisses, the mage growled, "Ye owe me one, Mirt."

In a conjured voice that only the old merchant could hear, the great mage added, "I'm probably

going to have to, keep us both hidden and act like a little spitfire for a month or more to cure him. The spell's a good one; just smashing it would leave his mind in ruins. D'ye know what *better* things I could be doing, with an entire month?

"Wait!" the Old Wolf rumbled, as wizard and ardent young noble began to fade away together. "Who cast the love-spell on Bergos?"

"She did," Elminster replied, pointing, before he was entirely gone.

Mirt spun around, following the Old Mage's pointing finger.

Teshla was standing in a doorway, hands on hips. She was smiling brightly, an expression often assumed by women engaged in slipping something past the wits of their loved ones.

"Hello, Old Wolf," she said huskily.

Mirt got up hastily, decanter in hand. "Why, Teshie? Why'd you do it?"

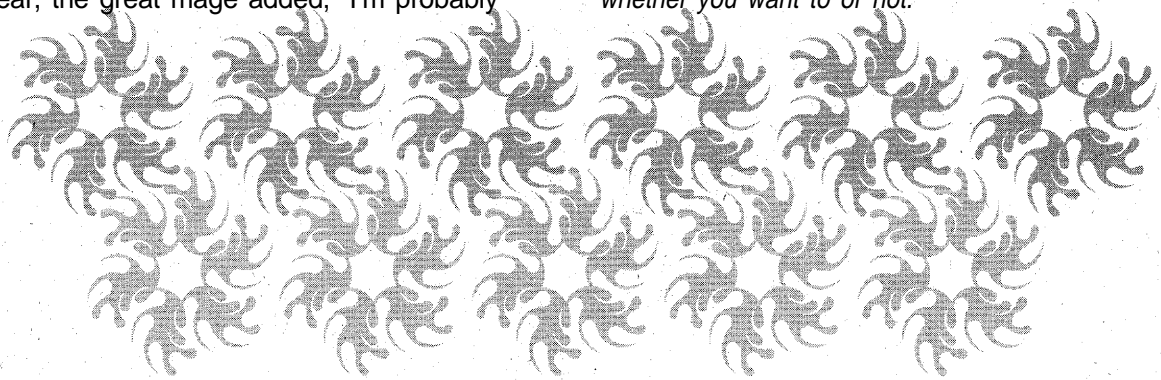
"It finally got you here, didn't it?" she replied, a familiar flame kindling in her eyes. As she glided forward, humming a tune he remembered, Mirt wondered if Elminster had left behind another teleport, to save him if he dove into the courtyard . . .

"No," Teshla told him a little smugly, "He did not. He even laid this spell on me, to let me read your mind. You can't escape me any longer, Old Wolf. Sit down."

"Oh," Mirt replied a little faintly. "Oh, well . . ." And he sat down.



Ed Greenwood is the creator of the original FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting and a man who is often surprised by how real its characters seem, and what they get up to. He insists that there is no truth to the rumors that he's grown fatter than Mirt, and he promises that you'll see more of the colorful old moneylender in the future — whether you want to or not.



Barbarians

Skeletons

02-200 Reavers: Marines (6)



02-201 Reavers: Slavers (6)



02-204 Tyrants w/ 2 Handed Weapons (6)



02-205 Tyrant: Shield Wall (6)



02-212 Savages: Bowmen (6)



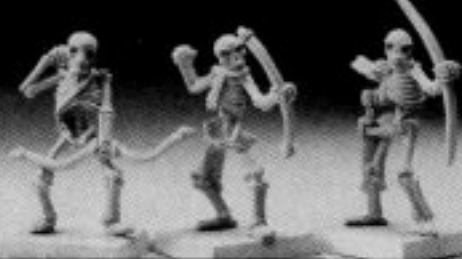
02-180 Skeleton Foot Command (5)



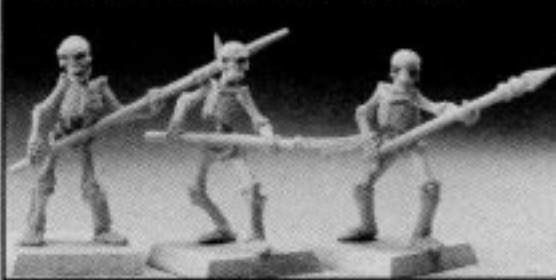
02-181 Skeleton w/ Sword & Shield (6)



02-182 Skeletons w/ Bows (6)



02-183 Skeletons w/ Spears (6)



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The Dragon's Bestiary

Spawn of the Sewers

by John Baichtal

illustrated by Tom Baxa

Rumor speaks of a wizard's guild, secretive and nameless, that manipulated peasant, merchant, and king alike from its underground school deep beneath the city. Entering and leaving through the sewer pipes, the wizards remained cloaked in mystery for years. One day, a civil war broke out among their ranks. An evil necromancer, cruel and hungry for power, attempted to take over the school. By the end of that day, every other member of the guild died rather than submit to his rule.

In time, the necromancer met his own special doom. Old age overtook him, and he wasted away in the solitude of his underground kingdom. As the end approached, the necromancer began working frantically, trying to discover the secret of lichdom before death took him. He conducted experiment after foul experiment, and the waste from these projects was casually dumped into the sewer or thrown into a shadowy corner. With the last of his strength, the necromancer stirred his iron cauldron, staring hopefully at the crimson goop bubbling within. Without warning, the goop slithered out of the pot and rushed up the old wizard's arm, enveloping him, plugging his nose, and surging into his mouth. It clung to his skin like a coat of blood. In seconds, the necromancer's wicked spirit flew howling into Acheron.

Most people in the city above were cozily ignorant of these events. Indeed, no one would have learned of the necromancer's experiments had he been more tidy. As it was, decades of alchemic pollution had permanently altered the denizens of the sewers. They had become tougher, smarter, and almost immune to magic. The first sign of trouble was when the rats fled to the surface . . .



Necromantic Sludge

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Sewers
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION	Pack
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Life energy
INTELLIGENCE	Low
TREASURE:	C (incidental)
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral Evil

NO. APPEARING:	1-6
ARMOR CLASS:	10, 8 as zombie
MOVEMENT	1, 6 as zombie
HIT DICE:	4+2
THACO:	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d4+2 and poison, 1d8 as zombie
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	See Below
SIZE:	M (4' diameter)
MORALE:	Elite (14)
XP VALUE:	975

Necromantic Sludge is a black puddle of vile goo, an accidental byproduct of the necromancers experiments in the pursuit of extended existence. Rather than creating potions that could transform him into an undying lich, the necromancer ended up with this foul mess, which he dumped into the sewer.

Combat: Necromantic sludge can sense sentient humanoid life within 100 yards, and it attacks relentlessly with little regard for its own safety, seeking to feed on the life energy of its victims. This keen perception makes it impossible to surprise the monstrous goo. Necromantic sludge is poisonous to the touch, and casual contact inflicts 1 hp damage per round. In melee, the sludge lashes out with a pseudopod, inflicting 1d4+2 hp damage per successful strike. If the sludge slays an opponent, it attaches itself to the body to be absorbed through the skin, which turns dark gray within one round, regardless of the victim's original skin color. The body becomes a zombie in all respects, under the control of the sludge. After a few months, the decaying zombie body is discarded, unless a fresh body is encountered earlier. Necromantic sludge reflects spells as a *ring of spell* turning, except that it reflects 100% of a spell's or magical item's effect. The sludge is vulnerable to normal weapons, but magical attack and damage bonuses are not counted. In zombie form, the sludge sometimes employs a weapon, but like normal zombies, it inflicts 1d8 hp damage regardless of whether it uses a weapon.



Habitat/Society: Necromantic sludge exists only in the sewers, close to the old necromancer's lair, but lately some has been

because of their singular behavior, but some speculate that they attack because of some nameless necromantic urge to destroy life. Others suggest that necromantic sludge attacks because of an urge to fulfill its "purpose" of bestowing undeath on its creator. Groups of necromantic sludge display some intelligence in the way they interact. They employ crude tactics sometimes, with one sludge lying still upon a sewer floor while in zombie form, with the others lurking nearby to attack when foolish intruders investigate the "corpse."

Ecology: These monsters have little place in the noisome food chain of the sewers, since they can subsist only on humanoid lifeforce. They never bother mundane animals or other monsters, unless attacked. Since they are composed of magical, inedible slime, they are not themselves preyed upon by other spawn of the sewers.



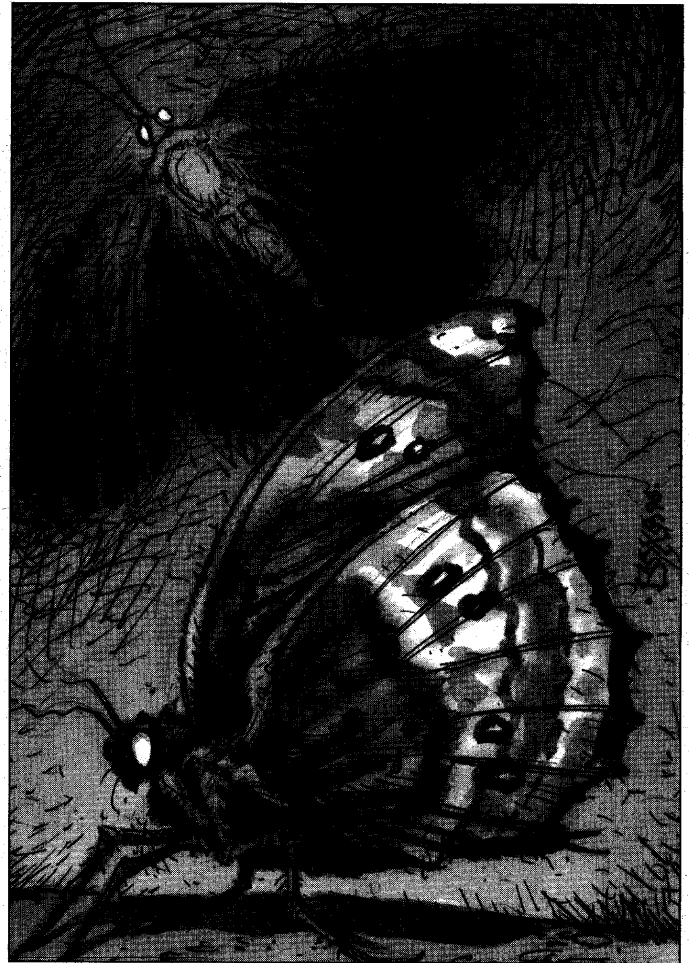
Plague Moth

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Sewers
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION	Swarm
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Blood
INTELLIGENCE	Animal
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral

NO. APPEARING:	1-20 (special)
ARMOR CLASS:	6
MOVEMENT	Fly 15 (MC B)
HIT DICE:	1+4
THACO:	18
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d4
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Venom
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	
SIZE:	T (1' wingspan)
MORALE:	Average (8)
XP VALUE:	420

These peculiar creatures were created by the wizard in an attempt to manufacture potions "naturally." The moths turned out less than perfect, with a tendency to produce bad potions and an intense craving for blood. They are huge gray moths with luminescent green eyes. They feast on blood much as do stirges, but their magical venom slays more often — and more spectacularly — than does their physical attack.

Combat: Plague moths typically attack in large swarms, but no more than three moths assault the same target — the others seek out other victims rather than fight over the same prey. While plague moths are agile and nearly immune to magic, their greatest asset is a magically venomous bite. Each moth has its own venom, equivalent to a randomly-determined potion from Table 89 in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*. Treat any result of *potion of healing*, any oil, or any potion with an XP value of 300 or higher as a *potion of delusion* (of *extra healing*, *giant strength*, or some other beneficial effect). The most dangerous result of a plague moth attack comes when a victim is bitten by more than one moth; then the victim must roll on Table 111: *Potion Compatibility*, ignoring the rule that makes a *potion of delusion* compatible with all other potions. Plague moths are immune to the venom of all of their kind. Note that unlike stirges, plague moths typically wait until their prey is dead before feeding.



Habitat/Society: Plague moths live in swarms that are dormant half the time, hunting the other half. As they live in the sewers, day and night have no meaning to them. On the very rare instances in which plague moths have emerged from the sewers, they have been active only at night.

Ecology: As a blood-drinking predator, the plague moth tends to attack all living things and therefore has a huge impact on the food chain. However, being fairly weak, they are easily killed by other monsters and have so far failed to overrun the sewers. The more intelligent sewer creatures have learned not to eat the plague moths after witnessing or experiencing first-hand the dangerous and unpredictable effects of their venom. Attempts to harness their potion-generation ability have thus far failed by those few who have managed to capture one alive, as the moths soon wither and die in captivity.



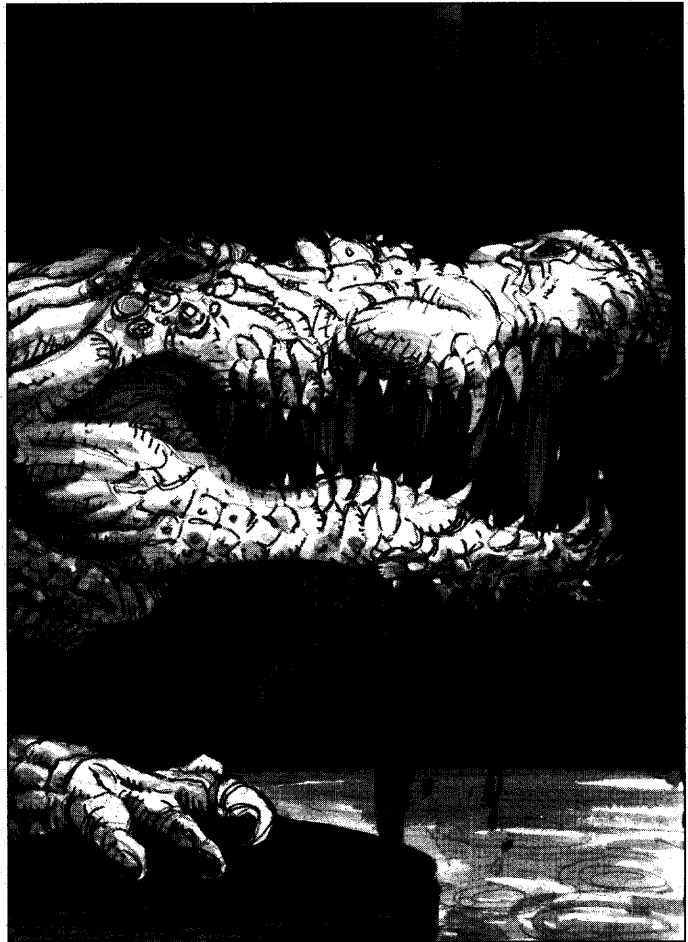
Albino Crocodile

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Sewers
FREQUENCY:	Common
ORGANIZATION	Solitary (pack)
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivorous
INTELLIGENCE	Low
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral

NO. APPEARING:	1 (10% chance 2d4+1)
ARMOR CLASS:	5
MOVEMENT	9, Swim 12
HIT DICE:	2+3
THACO:	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2d4/1d6
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Attack with surprise, trip
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	See Below
SIZE:	M (4-5' diameter)
MORALE:	Steady (11)
XP VALUE:	420

Miniature albino crocodiles are descended from the pets of the master wizard who presided over the school decades ago. After their master was slain, the crocodiles quickly escaped into the sewer. The necromancer made token attempts to hunt them down and slay them out of malice, but he met with little success, and the creatures have thrived over the years. The pollution from the necromancer's experiments has altered the crocodiles subtly, giving them a special resistance to magic.

Combat: Albino crocodiles are surprisingly ferocious, and they are nearly equal in strength to the full-sized crocodiles of the outer world. They are notoriously unpredictable and sly, usually finding a way to ambush their prey. In such situations, victims suffer a -3 penalty to surprise rolls. The albino crocodiles have two main attacks, a bite inflicting 2d4 hp damage and a tail slap that causes 1d6 hp damage. Since the latter attack is usually at leg-level for most humanoid opponents, any successful strike against such a foe forces the victim to make a save vs. paralysis or be tripped and lose all actions for the remainder of the round. The albino crocodile's main power is a total immunity to magic, gained from generations of constant exposure to the magical waste of the sewers. The only spells that can harm them are those that create effects that are not themselves maintained by magic. For example, a *Wall of thorns* can harm an albino crocodile, but not a *magic missile* spell. If a *wall of stone* falls on one of these creatures, it suffers harm, but the same monster could walk right through a



wall of force or a *prismatic sphere* as if those barriers did not exist. While the crocodiles are not very intelligent, they do know that two-legs who cast light from their hands are easy prey, so spellcasters are often targeted by these creatures.

Habitat/Society: Albino crocodiles are typically loners, but they sometimes congregate in groups of 3-9 when the pickings are especially good. Ironically, this is when it is safest to encounter them, for they do not attack unless hungry or threatened. When not hunting, albino crocodiles tend to stay near the bottom of a water-filled channel, waiting for new prey or digesting the last.

Ecology: Albino crocodiles subsist mainly on rats and other small animals, attacking humans only when very hungry or when attacked.



Water Cat

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Sewers
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivorous
INTELLIGENCE	Average
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral (Good)

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	5
MOVEMENT	12, Swim 5
HIT DICE:	2
THACO:	19
NO. OF ATTACKS:	5
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d2/1/1/1/1
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Poisonous bite
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	50%
SIZE:	T (1')
MORALE:	Average (9)
XP VALUE:	420

Water cats are descended from the familiars of several of the wizards who died at the hands of the necromancer during his overthrow of the guild. Like many other creatures of the sewers, they have been warped by the magical pollution. Unlike most others, however, the cats are still benign and retain a strong affinity to man. Rumors speak of water cats guiding lost delvers back to the surface.

Combat: In many respects, water cats are unchanged from ordinary cats. They attack with their claws and bite, and these are not especially dangerous, except for their poison. Interestingly, water cats' fangs are hollow like a snake's, and poison is injected with every bite. If a save vs. poison fails, the victim is affected as by the 2nd-level Wizard spell *ray of enfeeblement*. Furthermore, human, demi-human, or humanoid victims must make a second save or gradually transform into a mongrelman over the period of a month. Rats, giant rats, wererats, and other rat creatures are slain instantly upon a failed saving throw. Water cats are the prominent cause of so many giant rats fleeing the sewers recently; normal rats are better at avoiding their predators, but many of them have also fled to the relative safety of the surface.

Habitat/Society: Water cats, true to their name, live in and around water. Unlike their normal cousins, they have no qualms about getting wet. They are secretive creatures who rarely allow themselves to be seen. Water cats rarely interact



with others of their kind, except for mating. They communicate with each other in the manner of normal cats, but a select few actually understand common, a gift from their extraordinary forebears.

Ecology: Rats, mice, and other small mammals make up the majority of the water cat's food, but occasionally they will nibble on a fallen monster or other creature. Water cats serve admirably to limit the rat population, and should one ever be captured and taken to the surface, it would make an incomparable mouser.



Lich's Blood

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Magic
INTELLIGENCE	Exceptional
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	7
MOVEMENT	3
HIT DICE:	4+2
THACO:	16
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-4
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Drain spells
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Immune to weapons and all magic
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Special
SIZE:	M
MORALE:	Fearless (20)
XP VALUE:	1,400

The lich's blood is an artificial monster created by the necromancers final experiment. Fittingly, the first monster slew its maker before slinking off to find more of his kind, planning to take out its vengeance on all of its creator's ilk. Thus, this creature is a menace to all wizards. Lich's blood looks like a pool of animated blood that slowly oozes or drips around, searching for wizards and magical items.

Combat: Lich's blood attempts to coat a wizard, running down his throat, blocking his nostrils, and suffocating him as it drains his spells. This suffocation takes the form of 1d4 hp damage per round, with no attack roll needed to hit after the first successful attack. Each round the victim is coated, he must save vs. spells or lose 1d4 spells from his memory, starting with the highest-level spells memorized. Even after the victim is devoid of spells, the lich's blood continues to coat him, draining every last bit of magic from his body. Only after five rounds have passed after all spells have been drained does the lich's blood leave the victim alone. Because of its liquid state, lich's blood is immune to all weapon-based attacks. Thanks to its magic-draining nature, all spells cast on it are absorbed harmlessly. The only way to kill a lich's blood is to use nonmagical acid, fire, or the deprivation of magic. A *dispel magic* spell cast on lich's blood causes 1d6 hp damage per level of the caster; an *anti-magic* shell cast on one destroys the creature immediately.



Habitat/Society: Lich's blood has no society, working individually. These monsters heed magic as a human needs water. A lich's blood can survive indefinitely by coating a permanent magical item, living off the magical emanations of the object. However, the best source of such sustenance is a wizard, and a lich's blood will never miss an opportunity to attack such a being. Upon feasting on a wizard of 6th level or higher, lich's blood divides much as an amoeba does. The separate entities then go their own ways, each to seek out more sustenance alone. Lich's blood may exist in any environment, but it prefers the darkness of underground setting. Sunlight is painful but not damaging to the creature.

Ecology: Lich's blood has no natural predators and no prey other than spellcasters.





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Spellbook Sizes

I'd like to respond to Ian Bloomsburg letter about spellbook sizes in issue #234. I agree that if you use the type of paper used in this marvelous magazine, you would get a very thin (about 0.5 cm) spellbook. But as I think *most* readers understand the paper quality of the fantasy worlds are not to compare with this mundane worlds paper especially, the fine and thin sheets of this magazine. And if one would be able to make this sort of paper, then the wizards would be reluctant to use it in a spellbook. "Why is that so?" you might ask. Well this is a book that the wizard would have to use every day to be able to memorize his spells, and therefore it requires more persistent paper. So I looked for paper that would respond to the sturdy demands that I set in my mind and eventually I found a reasonably good type of paper that with 100 pages would get the thickness of 4 cm. If you add the covers, it would get the overall thickness of 5 cm or 2 inches; this is how I think the TSR designers thought when they set the present spellbook size.

Peter Johansson
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Sweden

The Fear of Death

Roni Saari's letter in *DRAGON Magazine* issue #234 raises an interesting point in that in too many campaigns, death is not feared as it should be.

The AD&D® game is not like a game of chess where a PC is merely a pawn to be carelessly sacrificed in one game and then taken back out of the box for the next — the fear of death should be a real risk that haunts PCs (and players), not just a minor inconvenience that the healers at the local temple will fix up in a jiffy. Without the risk of death, there can be no real challenge, no real thrills, and any rewards become hollow and shallow.

Additionally, the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide* stipulates that the person to be raised must be "of similar faith or belief," and this means that the caster and the PC should share the same ideals and suchlike, *not* just the same alignment. Even then, there will invariably be some service required. In any 'event, what do the Gods think of all this coming and going from their domains? Maybe they won't want to release the soul now that it has gone to its just reward (or just desserts). And most pantheons would boast at least one God of Death who might not take kindly to those who would steal back any souls that belong

The AD&D® game is not like a game of chess where a PC is merely a pawn to be carelessly sacrificed ... the fear of death should be a real risk ... not just a minor inconvenience that the healers at the local temple will fix up in a jiffy.

But to keep PCs in constant fear of a death from which there is no return, the usual magics involved in bringing a character back from the dead must perforce be limited. One way, as Roni suggested is to set the campaign in a low- or dead-magic world, but in my opinion this deprives both players and DM of a major part of the rich fabric that so colors many fantasy worlds.

A better alternative, I feel, is to take a closer look at the two spells that allow characters to return from the grave: *raise dead* and *resurrection*. The 5th-level Priest spell *raise dead* is the one most likely to be available to PCs, but it has specific problems for any elven PCs, requires the body to be "whole," and also entails the loss of a precious point of Constitution.

The 7th-level Priest spell *resurrection* does not suffer from these drawbacks but has a biggie of its own: that the caster ages three years per casting. Given the level limits for non-human races, that caster is in all probability going to be a human, who can ill-afford to lose three years of life just to bail out careless adventurers, nor did they work devotedly for many years in the service of their deity simply to provide a "back-to-life" service for PCs (or anyone else): there would be such a demand that the unfortunate priest would barely last a month before age took its toll.

to him. In my campaign, loosely based on the Celtic Mythos, Arawn has been known to send his Avatar forth in pursuit of souls snatched away from him.

Also, the people of my world believe in reincarnation, and no priest would dare to interrupt the Wheel of Life without express instructions to do so from their deity. However, *reincarnation* is an ideal way of introducing a players new character into the campaign with a minimum of fuss: the new PC gets the memories, half the hit points, and up to half the levels of the old character: going against the will of the gods is one thing but hurrying them along a little is not so bad.

Go on — put the fear of death back into your campaign!

Kevin McMahon
Kelmescott
Western Australia

Magic in the Campaign

I have several to say regarding the balance of magic in campaign worlds. I agree with both Michael D. Bugg (issue #232) and Lucas Ashlar Lee (issue #234). Magic should not rule completely over any campaign world. I am speaking from experience. Although I have been gaming for only a little over a year, I have role-played in many a campaign in which the DM used magic as an infinite source of torture against his players.

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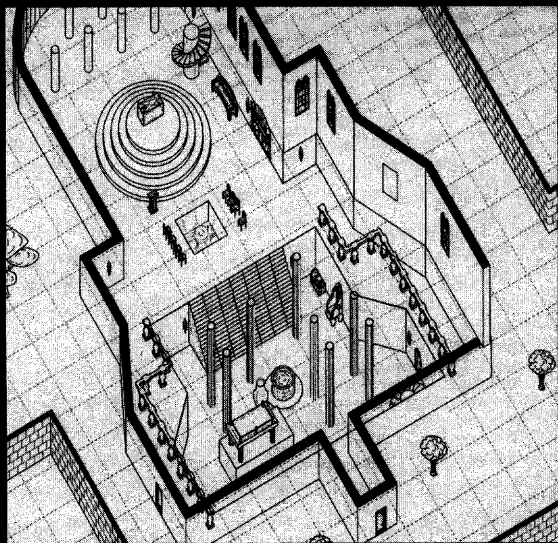
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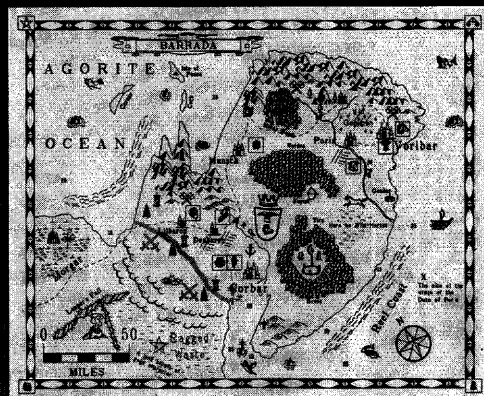
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After battling about 500 wizards (which, I must admit, gave me a pretty good cache of experience points), it got boring.

With examples, such as the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, where powerful wizards like Elminster and Khelben are allowed to dominate the game, it can become rather humdrum. I'm not saying that I hate the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting, so I don't want any angry fans showing up on my doorstep with a rope!

The DRAGONLANCE® setting has a steady balance of magic, especially in the Fifth Age, now that the gods have vanished. As it stands, there are only three noteworthy mages left on Krynn, and perhaps there will be four, since Ulin Majere has taken up the study of magic. The only mages that ever threatened to tip the balance were Raistlin and Fistandantilus.

accepting any venture, even from poor villagers.

How about the wizard? Oh, no. That kind of magic costs money. There are research costs, material costs, components to be prepared, and the wizards safeguarding to say the least. So, who is left?

The obvious answer is the chivalrous cavalier. But he has been truant from the game table these past couple of years. His kit is collecting dust as players seek to play fighters not bound by honor, and humility, and whose combat prowess is beyond reproach because of specialization.

The Second Edition has done a great injustice to the cavalier kit, making him less desirable to the players. The cavalier is hard enough for them to play

and is bound to his liege in unswerving loyalty. He is a noble, a born leader recognized by all. It is his birthright, as a nobleman, to lead. Those below his station will follow even if it is to their death. He will defend his honor as well as the honor of those he has sworn his service to. He seeks responsibility as a chance to excel and promote his reputation. He will complete his task meritoriously and then refuse any sort of compensation other than praise.

In order to save this kit, we must grant the cavalier specialization. This will allow him to compete with average warriors and place him back into his rightful status as the ultimate warrior. In addition, he must retain the ability to raise his Strength, Constitution, and Dexterity by his own merit. Finally, as he is the savior of the oppressed and bound by strict code of honor not to retire from physical combat, he should retain the ability to function at negative hit points. We can breath life back into this great character kit with these additions to his kit.

This will not destroy game balance; it may even put the game back into perspective and make his kit more appealing to players. I cannot imagine an AD&D game setting without the gallant and chivalrous cavalier (knight). I challenge anyone to thumb through any given *DRAGON® Magazine* and not find a picture of a knight on one of its pages. The cavalier is too great a kit to have filed away by players because normal warriors retain more combat power through specialization. After all, who will save us?

Just for the record, no I don't believe that paladins and rangers should be allowed to specialize. They are subclasses and by definition cannot specialize. They have too many special abilities already. To begin with, a paladin can elect to take the cavalier kit as his kit, thus absorbing all of that kit's special attack bonuses, etc. The ranger can attack with two weapons nearly without penalty; spend a couple of proficiency slots and make him ambidextrous and he attacks twice in a single round, with the same length weapon without penalty. The cavalier has none of this, and my players are beginning to lose heart with the kit because their subordinates kill the bad guy leader before their one attack per round will allow them to get there.

1 LT Bruce F. Beyers
114 Zuckerman Street
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In order to save this kit, we must grant the cavalier specialization. This will allow him to compete with average warriors and place him back into his rightful status as the ultimate warrior.

As Mr. Lee states in his letter, the overbalance of magic makes the world seem less magical. The inhabitants and adventurers become too accustomed to the art of magic and no longer fear it or live in awe of it. For example, in the DRAGONLANCE saga, the Knights of Solamnia always detested mages because they did not trust them. Magic was a mystery to them, and they feared it.

The way I see it, magic should always be considered something mysterious, something to be feared and admired. It might even be used as an unexpected twist. Magic adds a bit of spice to a campaign world. That's only my opinion.

**Amber Decker
Hedgesville, WV**

Ode to the Cavalier

Who will save us now that the cavalier is filed away in the archival portfolios of the players?

The warrior? He does possess the strength and skill-at-arms through specialization that afford him the combat prowess to conquer nearly any opponent in physical combat. However, the average warrior is nothing more than a mercenary. He continuously makes inquiries about compensation before

because of the honorable codes he must follow. To remove any of the benefits granted the kit by the *Unearthed Arcana* is to force him into subjugation. Why should the player play a cavalier, given all his restrictions, when he could play a straight warrior and deal out twice as much damage, then confiscate all the treasure for himself? Second Edition has removed the cavalier's ability to attack five levels higher with his weapon of choice. Gone is the bonus of attacking one level higher while mounted. He can no longer train to improve his Strength, Constitution, and Dexterity with each new level gained. And where in the PHBR1 does it say that the cavalier can function while at negative hit points?

The cavalier is supposed to be the ultimate warrior, but we are in great danger of allowing this character kit to slip into the halls of the AD&D game's past. We must not let this occur; this game was founded on gallant knights, captured maidens, and fearful dragons. Lest we not forget the articles, "The Code of Chivalry," by Mark Easterday and "Glory, Danger, and Wounds," by Gary Hamlin, in issue #125. The cavalier combines courage with humility, prowess with gentleness, he respects all ladies

Wild West Specialization

Okay, first of all, I didn't like the specialization rules found in the *Player's Handbook*. Thus when I started my infamous "Wild West Drow Campaign," I created levels of specialization. Normal specialization (2 slots) provides a +2 to hit, +2 to damage, and 3/2 attacks per round at 1st level; expert level (3 slots) is a +4 to hit and damage with 2/1 attacks; master level (4 slots) is +6 to hit and damage with 5/2 attacks per round. These all go up in number of attacks according to the specialization chart in the *Player's Handbook*. The exception is a Doctor level specialization (6 slots, +8 to hit and damage and 4/1 attacks), but it is available only after 15th level and only to warrior classes. (Drizzt Do'Urden, in my book, would have eight attacks every round).

Needless to say, the word "Doc" scares my players quite easily now.

I'm also going to add my two cents to Nathan Kirschenbaum (issue #229) and Chris Leon (issue #236) and comment on the roles of females in the game. Knowing there was only one female in a Palladium campaign last year, I became determined to prove the worth of female PCs despite the comments of the others, so I created Olivia, a Spanish spy akin to James Bond (because she rarely got hit, rarely missed, and was a chauvinist). I also received many comments on Olivia's far-fetched tactics and came away with this advice for other players who want to play female characters: Try to avoid being a bimbo!

People shouldn't be afraid to try new things, however, and one character that comes to mind is an elven fighter-mage in our group. He specialized in golf clubs and created a batch of spells like *magic golf balls*, *fire ball*, *lightning ball*, and *poison ball*. The result? A character who could dump a bag of golf balls on the ground and hit opponents at extremely far ranges with *fireballs*, *lightning bolts*, and *magic missiles*. Note also that with specialization he could throw more than one *fireball* per round. The only trick was to make sure he didn't roll a "1."

A similar character is my own Marque Draque a drow fighter/mage/thief which I used as a NPC in my Wild West campaign. He smoked cigars and threw them at opponents at close range; thus *Marque Draque's exploding cigars* became a 4th-level spell that causes 3d8 +1/level damage to a 5' radius of impact. They are enchanted ahead of time of course which meant a full pack of cigars could be deadly to a dragon.

Each cigar must be of high quality and cost no less than 1 sp. Shooting them via a modified drow hand crossbow is also effective.

Well, so long, and watch out for those flying cigars and golf balls!

Chuck Moffat
Formose, Canada

awareness that players have as to which levels are required to cast certain spells (and their ability to plan accordingly), and the second concerns a non-standard form of the *magic missile* spell.

Imagine, if you would, that you were a 3rd-level wizard in a campaign, and your 5th-level opponent just cast *cone of cold*

He specialized in golf clubs and created a batch of spells like *magic golf balls*, *fire ball*, *lightning ball*, and *poison ball*. The only trick was to make sure he didn't roll a "1."

NPCs and the Rules

Mr. Donovan states (in issue #231) that he's "always believed in the maxim that NPCs needn't follow all the same rules as the PCs all the time." This is something with which I disagree whole-heartedly.

Mr. Donovan uses two examples to show why he believes that allowing NPCs to break the rules occasionally is worthwhile. The first concerns the

(which requires at least a 9th-level caster). You are going to want to know just how your opponent did that. You might even devote a lot of time to the problem because of the obvious benefits such an ability would give your character. Maybe you would never figure it out — that's fair enough. But what if you learned that there was no way to figure it out? That the DM just broke the rules for that character?

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In the second case, where the opponent casts two *magic missiles*, each causing 12 hp damage. Obviously, this is a variant spell (an idea which, by the way, exists within the rules — as spell research). The group's wizard will obviously want a look at this character's spell books when (if) he is defeated. What if the new spell is not in there? What if there is only the standard *magic missile*? How will the players feel?

The fact is that there is no reason to change the rules for NPCs. In an AD&D game, most DMs create all kinds of campaign-specific rules, many of which are not known to the players. The deities of a given campaign world, for example,

Jealous stonemason guilds will harass their dwarf PCs, and bratty teenagers will beat up the halflings. "Sorry sir, the inn is full. Why don't you and your elf-loving friends go sleep in the woods?"

are capable of all kinds of "rule-busting" acts, yet the existence of these deities is part of the rule structure of the campaign world. If Mystra wants to give Elminster special powers, that is not against the rules. However, if a PC wizard wants to investigate just how one becomes the Chosen of Mystara, the DM should have a better answer than "You can't; NPCs only." NPCs and PCs are a game construct; Mystara should have better methods of choosing her Chosen.

In my own campaign, I have devised an evil god whose portfolio is Knowledge Man Was Not Meant To Have. This god works to corrupt wizards (PC and NPC alike) by giving them secret knowledge for a price. If the PCs wish to pay the price, they too may cast *cones of cold* at 5th level . . . but I make sure that the price is obvious in the villains they face. This is the difference between arbitrary rulings and allowing the PCs choice and consequence.

Mr. Donovan states that "Anything the PCs can do, my NPCs can do too." This is a good rule of thumb. However, the PCs can have secrets that the NPCs have to work to discover, and vice versa. In the end, the PCs and NPCs must operate under the same "rules of nature."

**Daniel Bishop
Toronto, Canada**

High Elves and Gray

Having only recently acquired issue #230 of *DRAGON Magazine*, I hope that I am not too late in voicing my own thoughts regarding the issue of high and gray elves brought up by Peter Heyck in "Forum." While his argument appears sound from a FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign perspective, where many non-human races are common, I would point out that in order to find a reasoning for the naming of the elvish sub-races, he should put himself in the shoes of a human living in a fantasy realm. In virtually all such worlds, the elves are seen as great teachers, but have suffered schisms when addressing how they

should interact with the *younger* races (including humanity). Those creatures of light that helped and nurtured mankind with their knowledge and art would thus well deserve the name of high elves from their beneficiaries, even if it resulted in a loss of racial and cultural purity. It follows that those elves that remained aloof in their woodland fastnesses, shunning contact with *those upstart humans* would then be treated with superstition and awe, and thus become gray elves, creatures of the shadows. A point I would like to make is that there are far too many fantasy worlds that are over-populated with fantasy races, a sort of racial "Monty Haulism": When there are elves at the bottom of every garden and dwarves in every tavern, the fantastic becomes the mundane. Meeting an elf should be as magical an experience for characters as it was for Sam Camgee in Tolkien's *Fellowship of the Rings*. This argument flows quite effortlessly into the recent discussion on level limits and non-human characters. If, as it appears, many DMs experience difficulty resisting player calls for upping the limits, remember that these limits are there for the very good reason of play balance; otherwise, few adventuring groups would possess a single human character. DMs wishing to discourage non-human

characters should make plain to his players prior to the start of a campaign that they may experience a certain amount of hostility from the human population, and from their own kind who may consider them traitors. Jealous stonemason guilds will harass their dwarf PCs, and bratty teenagers will beat up the halflings. "Sorry sir, the inn is full. Why don't you and your elf loving friends go sleep in the woods?" I wouldn't recommend a constant barrage of this, but once or twice per gaming session should suffice to remind players that their non-human characters are very different, not just someone with a pair of Spock ears who can see in the dark!

**John Cudmore
Bristol, United Kingdom**

Multi-classed Humans

I really hate to open that old issue about multi-classed humans, but I suppose I really didn't bring it up this time. This is response to Chris Leon's letter, published in the issue #236.

In his letter, he mentions that he sees no reason why humans should not be allowed to multi-class; he allows multi-classed humans in his campaigns and has no problems. If that works for him, that's fine. I, however, have my objections.

The primary reason not to allow multi-classed humans is, of course, game balance. I personally quail at the thought of a high-level Paladin/Bard, who would have virtually every skill in the game. Even multi-classed demi-humans may only have three classes. The human Paladin/Bard has effectively all four. And before anyone objects, I will point out that a Paladin/Bard combination, like the Ranger/Druid combination (see the *Complete Ranger's Handbook*), is indeed possible. Paladins have been known to be other alignments than lawful good, depending on the deity, and there is a Bard class somewhere, the Welsh Bard, I think, that allows the bard to be any non-evil alignment. With multi-classed humans, the Paladin/Bard combo is viable, and scary.

While speaking of Paladins and Bards, need I point out that both of these classes are effectively multi-classed humans? The paladin, made for humans only, is effectively a Fighter/Cleric (remember the demipaladin rules in the *Complete Paladin's Handbook*?). True, his abilities are somewhat less than a true Fighter/Cleric, but

he advances almost twice as fast. The bard, allowed only to humans and half-elves (who are half-human, too), is basically a Mage/Thief. He, too, is slightly weaker, but advances much faster. Other single classes that allow multi-class abilities can be easily made using the Custom Character Class optional rules in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*.

Next come the historical reasons.

One must remember that we are dealing with a medieval society here. Young humans are made apprentices, virtual slaves, to master craftsmen who, in return, teach their ward skills for life. Only two methods allow young apprentices to multi-class. The first involves being apprenticed to two (or more!) masters simultaneously. Given that each master would be very jealous of the other, not to mention that the poor sod would have full round-the-clock taskloads from each of them, this method does not work too well, if at all. The other is even more difficult. The young human must apprentice himself to a multi-classed master. Given the poor race relations on most campaign worlds, a demihuman master is out. That leaves a multi-classed human master. Remember that characters do not gain followers until around 9th level or so. This is partially because the character does not have enough reputation until that point in his career and partially because the character cannot effectively teach skill until he himself has, essentially mastered them. For both of these reasons, the master of our apprentice would have to be not just 9th level, but 9th level in both (or all) of his classes. As is explained below, human multi-classed characters don't tend to live quite that long.

A third choice exists. The character could always apprentice himself to one master, graduate, then apprentice himself to another. This is called dual-classing and is not really multi-classing, but humans are allowed to do it.

Lastly, the very physiology of humans deters them from multi-classing. As we all know, humans age very fast when compared to demihumans. In a normal campaign, several years of game time are spent to gain a single level. Any human somehow becoming multi-classed, in spite of all of the above, may very well find himself old and withered by the time he reaches the middle levels. The youth above, still searching for a high-level human multi-class, is out

of luck, because all candidates for his search have died of old age! Sorry, chum!

I hope this puts a fresh perspective on an old topic. If not, and I've just bored everyone, I apologize. I welcome correspondence, responses, arguments — but no hate mail, please.

Alexander Fontenot
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Indianapolis, IN 46241

Parrying

Parry, parry, parry. Most rules I've seen need a lot of calculation and are much too complicated. The system we've been using has no tables, and the only new things you need to learn are the logic of the basic roll and the nature of the modifiers.

Let's say that someone rolls to hit and succeeds in hitting AC 0. Since the targets AC is greater than 0, he's been hit. Whether the attacker had a high THACO and rolled high, or a low THACO and rolled low, his blow was of such precision that it hit AC 0. What the target wants to do is make a parry of such precision that it puts his weapon between his body and his opponents weapon. To

do that, he needs to roll and hit an AC equal to or better than the one his attacker did — in this case, AC 0

The nature of the modifiers is also simple. For each step of difference of size between the weapons and opponents, apply a modifier of 3 (maybe 2 or 1 if the weapons are close in size, like a Bastard sword and a two-handed sword).

For example, to parry a two-handed sword with a dagger, (If the DM even allowed it!) would be at a penalty of -6. Parrying with or against flail and chain type weapons should also have a modifier. When parrying with a shield, it has a bonus equal to the number of attacks it's good against. But remember, bucklers are Small, small and medium shields are size Medium, and body shields are Large. Terrain might also give someone a modifier.

That's it. Just hit an AC equal to or better than the one your opponent hit, and apply any modifiers you see fit.

Paul A. Schreiber
Riverside CA

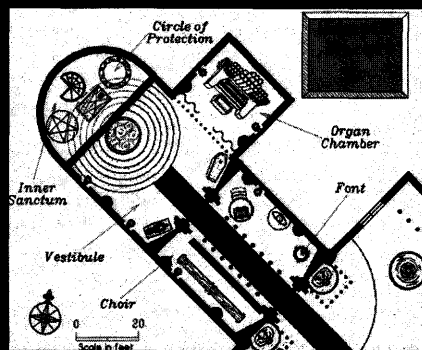


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Sage Advice

by Skip Williams

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Join the Sage for his traditional April look at the year's most unusual questions. All questions were submitted on paper or e-mail by readers. No gamers were harmed during the production of this month's column.

Please define "spasms, shocked, and scorched" in game terms.

Assuming you refer to specific injuries from the critical hit tables for spells in the *Spells & Magic* book, these three injuries usually have the following effects:

Spasms distract a character for several rounds. If the critical hit table does not specify a duration, the spasms last 1d4 rounds; a character suffering from spasms has a -2 penalty to attack rolls while they last.

Shocked characters usually fall down, though they sometimes drop something instead. If the critical hit table doesn't list an effect, the victim falls down (see Knockdowns, page 121 in *Spells & Magic*, for details).

Scorched characters suffer a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the injury heals. A *cure light wounds* spell or magic capable of restoring 5 lost hit points heals a scorch. A scorch heals naturally as if it were a wound of 2d6 hp damage.

The spell *righteous wrath of the faithful* "transports" allies. Are the

affected creatures moved physically or emotionally? Is this spell part of the War or Combat sphere? The spell description lists the sphere as War, but Appendix 4 of the *Spells & Magic* book lists the spell under the Combat sphere.

The word "transported" in the spell description would seem to be an error; the spell's recipients don't move in any physical sense.

I recommend you include *righteous wrath of the faithful* in the Combat sphere instead of the War sphere.

My lupin fighter (from the SAVAGE COAST™ campaign setting) has just killed a werewolf — which is good because lupins hate werewolves. Unfortunately, my character also contracted lycanthropy during the fight. Since lupins are canine humanoids, what will happen to my character when the lycanthropy finally manifests itself?

Your character will suffer all the effects noted in Chapter 15 of the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*. A lupin/werewolf probably would look more wolflike than a human/werewolf once the curse of lycanthropy sets in, no matter what form the werebeast assumes. Even when not actually in the throes of the curse, the character would look decidedly wolflike. Note that other lupins can detect the character's condition and will become distrustful and suspicious at best. On the other hand, a lupin infected with lycanthropy is no more difficult to cure than any other infected lycanthrope.

A druid in my game recently found that when summoning a fire elemental (with the 6th-level spell *conjure fire elemental*) he had a 4% chance to get an efreeti. He then proceeded to cast the *conjure fire elemental* spell at every opportunity — usually during rest periods in town — and when an efreeti actually arrived, he demanded three wishes from the creature. He continued to do

this until all his ability scores were 25. Is this something all druids do or just a slip in the rules found and exploited by my resident rules lawyer? Do you have any suggestions for preventing every new player character in my campaign from becoming a druid and repeating the process?

Let's pause for a brief aside before we begin. Are you aware that increasing all a character's ability scores to 25 would require at least 660 *wishes* assuming that all the character's ability scores started at 18? That's because a *wish* never raises an ability by more than a full point. Actually, a *wish* often does not raise an ability by a full point at all. The wishing character gains a full point only when the affected ability score is 15 or less. If the ability score is 16 to 20, it takes ten *wishes* to raise it one point and if the score is 21 or more it takes 20 *wishes* to raise it a full point. See chapter 1 of the *DMG* for details on this rule (though the part concerning ability scores of 21 or more has been erroneously dropped from the most recent printings). Anyway, your druid would have to cast *conjure fire elemental* something like 5,500 times to get that many *wishes* from efreet.

So, the first way to prevent players from abusing *conjure fire elemental* is to make them play out each casting of the spell. It's a good bet the other players in your group will resent all the time this little charade is wasting and will intervene to stop smart aleck. If not, it's an even better bet that some local is going to object to the parade of fire elementals (in a medieval town, a being composed of elemental fire can do a whole lot of damage without even trying) and put an end to the druid's shenanigans permanently.

Of course, efreeti are not the most agreeable creatures in the multiverse. If an efreeti appears in response to a *conjure fire elemental* spell, it expects to find the druid in real trouble or faced with some grave difficulty. If capriciously asked for a *wish* or three, the creature will ask what the *wish* is. If it the *wish* is something the efreeti can pervert in some way, it will do so — just to teach silly priest a lesson. If the *wish* is reasonably airtight, the efreeti simply stalls until the spell's duration (one turn per caster level) ends, and then it leaves, probably vowing to get revenge someday.

Seeing as how the efreeti in your campaign have seen fit to humor the druid, I can only guess that they have some unpleasant surprise in store for him. Put yourself in the efreeti's place and try to

think up some way to get even with this presumptuous mortal. Perhaps the efreet need an agent to perform a long and arduous task (or series of tasks) on the Plane of Elemental Water (hardly prime terrain for efreet). Perhaps the druid should wake up one morning and find that he has to consume a couple of thousand gold pieces worth of rare gems each day to maintain his superhuman existence (the actual amount should slowly increase over time). Perhaps both of these events — and several more — await the character. It's possible that some efreeti has decided to enslave the druid and has arranged to boost all his ability scores so he'll make a better servant. A party of efreet might even now be forming up to capture the druid and haul him off to the City of Brass, where his penchant for calling fire elemental creatures into service will undoubtedly be amply "rewarded."

In any case, the character should discover that he can keep his increased ability scores only so long as he agrees to whatever the efreeti propose. If the druid tries to escape his fate through the use of another *wish*, the attempt should either fail or strip him of his boosted abilities.

In the past, I have not considered *bracers of defense* as true armor. This is presently causing some difference of opinion. I have just introduced the character generation rules from the *Skills & Powers* book and I'm allowing the players to rework their existing characters. Most of the characters already have *bracers of defense* and their players now want to choose a limitation on armor to gain extra character points. Of course, the magical *bracers* would make the (imitation irrelevant. So, are *bracers of defense* armor? In this case, it seems to me they are. Can wizards wear *bracers of defense*? How do *bracers of defense* affect thief abilities? If you print my question in the magazine, I would appreciate it if you would make reference somehow to the statement in the *Player's Handbook* that says, "Armor Class is measured on a scale from 10, the worst (no armor), to -10, the best (very powerful magical armors)." This implies a limit of 10 for armor class — yes? Please? Pretty Please? With sugar on top? Would you be offended if I offered a small token of my appreciation?

Bracers of defense are not a type of armor; characters normally prohibited from wearing armor, such as wizards, can use them. Thieves wearing *bracers of*

defense are considered unarmored for purposes of modifying their thief skill scores.

On the other hand, when using the *Skills & Powers* character generation rules you should not allow any character to claim extra character points for a limitation that does not actually affect him. I recommend that you tell your players the "no armor" limitation isn't available to them — even the ones that don't own *bracers of defense*. Whenever you apply a complex rule retroactively, you've got to be careful lest you alter your game too much. In this case, you probably don't want characters, who've been wearing armor to suddenly give up the habit. Your players should be selecting abilities that reflect their characters' game histories.

You are correct in assuming that -10 is the limit for Armor Class in the AD&D® game. There are a few creatures that exceed the limit, but characters have to stick to it. I am amused, not offended, by your offer of a "token of appreciation." This marks the third time I've been offered a bribe (though only the second time I've mentioned being bribed in print). If this answer makes you especially joyful, please do not hesitate to

make a generous donation to your local children's hospital.

Could a wizard put a *sepia snake sigil* on his hand and use it to attack?

No. The *sigil* must be added to a piece of writing, and activates only when someone reads that writing.

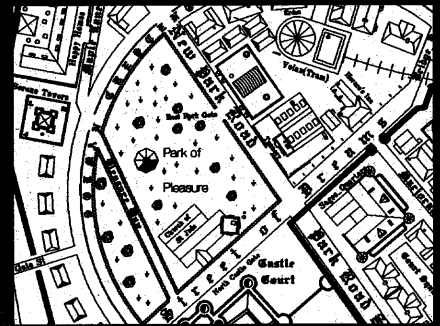
One of the players in my game has an *apparatus of Kwalish*. He uses it above ground (since it can *levitate*) and tows it with a horse (since it can't, move very quickly on its own). He is almost always in it. In fact the character sleeps in it and hoards all his treasure and equipment in it — right now it contains about two dozen unstrung longbows. The character takes cover in the *apparatus* during every encounter, where, the player says, no attacks can reach him. If that weren't bad enough, we're now engaged in an argument over exactly how much damage the thing can sustain. The item description says 200 hp damage is enough to stave in a side. But the player argues that the *apparatus* has more than one side. Finally, I ruled that 400 hp damage would destroy the *apparatus*. The player said no big deal, he'll just take it to a blacksmith and have the appa-

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tus patched up. Since when would a blacksmith be able to patch up a magical item? What would he use to do it? A blowtorch? I know that a *Daern's instant fortress* can't be repaired except with a *wish*.

First, although the item description for the *apparatus of Kwalish* includes a table that uses the term "levitate," the item is actually a miniature submarine and has no ability to rise into the air. The *apparatus* can move on land by walking on its mechanical legs, but only at rate of 3; the backward rate of 6 depends on the combined action of the device's legs and tail, and it works only in water.

If the *apparatus* suffers 200 hp damage, one side collapses and the device becomes completely inoperative.

It would be entirely reasonable to require a *wish* to repair damage to the *apparatus*, but the DM might allow an armorer (not just a blacksmith) to repair the device at the rate of one hit point a day. Each point repaired should cost 150-200 gp (for unusual materials, special fuels, and intense labor). Also, the armorer should make one proficiency check, and the *apparatus* should attempt a saving throw vs. crushing blow (an *apparatus of Kwalish* makes item saving throws as metal, with a +2 bonus). Make the proficiency check first, at the beginning of the process. If the check fails, the armorer cannot repair the current damage to the particular *apparatus* he's working on, though he could try to repair another *apparatus* or new damage to the current *apparatus*. Make the saving throw at the end of the process; if the device fails its item saving throw, something goes awry and the item ceases to function, regardless of the success or failure of the repair attempt.

Also, you might note that the *apparatus* can hold only two man-sized creatures. There might not be room inside for the character and all his treasure equipment, especially if it includes about two dozen long bows.

A PC attempting to hurt a spectre had no magical weapons but did have a *shield +4*, so he attempted to bash the spectre with his shield. Does the spectre suffer damage? If so, how much? And what about a ninja whose hands count as a +1 weapon? Will he be level-drained when he hits?

If your campaign allows shields to function as weapons, then an enchanted shield counts as a magical weapon when used to attack — the item has a magical

aura that can overcome an opponent's resistance to normal weapons.

The PLAYER'S OPTION™: Combat & Tactics book includes information on the damage shields inflict when used as weapons. If you don't have this book, just assume the shield inflicts a moderate amount of damage, say 1d3 or 1d4 points. Note that many DMs do not give enchanted shields damage or attack bonuses when characters use shields to attack.

If a creature counts as a magical weapon, it can attack and damage creatures hit only by magical weapons, provided their immunity is not stronger than the attacking creature's "plus." The attacker may or may not be subject to special damage when striking an opponent. A character striking a green slime, for example, can expect to get some slime on his hand. In the case of energy-draining undead, however, the energy drain occurs only when the undead monster makes a successful melee attack vs. the defender's normal Armor Class. Creatures do not suffer any energy draining when striking the undead creature with fists or natural weapons.

I have been reading "Sage Advice" for some time now. And I wish you to keep up the good work I would like to give my own interpretation on the *frisky Chest* spell as discussed in issue #225. The problem was that the DM thought the spell would have to cause the object to run from the players who were trying to get it out of the dungeon. Think on this, the spell was made to stop people from stealing the object it is cast on, so the only thing that should cause the statue to move is a titan or large dragon. I mean, what character, or even group of 10 characters, is able to steal a statue that weighs several tons? Try this next time the players use that ploy. When they go up to "spook" the statue into moving, have it just stay there. If you really want to be cruel have the statue scare them into backing off. What player wouldn't have his character run from a giant statue of gold that could squish him like a bug. I would not let the players use this to create golems, but it will stop them from stealing the statue.

I think players who cast *frisky chest* on a statue might have reason to gripe if the statue moves toward them. On the other hand, the deity granting the spell might object to the spell's misuse and decide to play with the characters' minds a little.

If you ever feel stressed with all the

questions you get, stuff 29 tiny marshmallows up your nose and try to sneeze them out. Wouldn't that make things easier for you?

Nah, deciding which nostril gets the odd marshmallow would cause too much stress.

What does a DM do when he has a 10-year-old player who has a character with high Intelligence and Wisdom scores and the player can't answer a riddle which the character most likely would be able to figure out?

Believe me, it's not only 10-year-olds that can have characters smarter than they are (see next question). If a player becomes frustrated with a riddle or puzzle and suggests that his character could solve it, it's okay to allow a Wisdom or Intelligence check to determine whether the character figures it out. The DM also can suggest an ability check if a the party's failure to solve a riddle or puzzle threatens to derail the adventure. The DM should decide how difficult the solution is and assign an appropriate modifier to the ability check. It usually best to allow the party only one roll to find the solution, though if several characters are working on the problem, you can allow the character making the check a bonus, say +1, for each helper. As an alternative, you could allow each character involved with the riddle a roll but require a certain number of successes for the party to solve the riddle as a group. In any case, if the roll fails the group should have to wait at least a day before attempting another roll. Particularly difficult riddles or puzzles might, allow a roll only once a week, once a month, or even longer.

What happens if someone is foolish enough to swallow an entire vial of *sovereign glue*? I killed the genius mage who did it with no saving throw.

Here's another case of the character probably being smarter than the player (see previous question). No matter how foolish the player is, the character is pretty much bound to notice that "the viscous liquid sliding over his lips and tongue isn't drinkable. I suggest a saving throw vs. poison to determine whether the character has the presence of mind to spit out the stuff. If the player was dopey enough to say his character was slamming down the glue, you might want to assign a penalty to the saving throw, say -4.

If the character spat out the *glue*, he probably should suffer no lasting consequences, as the *glue* takes a full round to set (see item description in the *DMG*),

though the DM is fully justified in assessing some temporary penalty, such as the character's lips being glued together until the character spends a round prying them apart. Alternatively, the container of *glue* could wind up stuck to the character's lower lip.

If the saving throw failed, the character might die, or he might be rendered unable to speak (tongue glued to the roof of the mouth or tongue glued to the glue bottle) until he can arrange to have the glue dissolved with *universal solvent* or *oil of etherealness*.

Note that even a casual inspection should reveal that *sovereign glue* isn't drinkable.

The description of the priest spell *cure disease* says: "Note that the spell does not prevent reoccurrence of a disease if the recipient is again exposed." Third level is a little low to expect the spell to create permanent disease immunity, but if the spell is cast later in the course of the disease, wouldn't the recipients immune system have developed at least some antibodies (if it's a normal disease), or does the spell supersede this?

Receiving a *cure disease* spell does not automatically make the recipient permanently resistant to whatever ailment laid him low. On the other hand, the spell also does not necessarily prevent the recipient from developing resistance or immunity to the disease either (but the DM can play it that way if he wants to). I recommend that if a creature gets a disease and receives a *cure disease* spell before the symptoms fully manifest themselves, the creature's system has no time to develop any special resistance to the disease. If a character with a full-blown disease receives a *cure disease* spell, the DM might grant the character resistance to or immunity to the disease if the DM also determines that the creature would have recovered without the spell.

Can a paladin still lay on hands if his hands are cut off?

Yes. The paladin need only touch someone to heal damage or cure disease. Many DMs might wish to require the paladin actually to use his hands (as opposed to his nose, his feet, or whatever) to prevent abuse of the power. In the case of a paladin who has lost his hands, the stumps or even prosthetic hands — provided they are no larger than a normal hand — count as "hands" for purposes of using the paladin's healing powers.

You have answered past questions on

character hit point increases according to their level advancement with the statement that characters learn to "roll with the blows" etc. rather than having an overall tolerance of more wounds. If this is the case, why don't priest healing spells work more effectively with higher level characters and why don't higher level characters heal naturally faster?

A healing spell repairs the same amount of "damage" no matter who receives it.

It's true that hit points a character gains as he rises in level do not represent the character's slow transformation into a mass of indomitable flesh. Instead, the character's resistance to damage comes from an increasing ability to avoid fatal injury through skill or just plain luck. A high-level character who has endured a series of blows still collects his share of cuts and bruises, but the blows that delivered those cuts and bruises would have slain a lesser mortal. Consider two characters, one with 10 hit points and one with 110 hit points. If the first character suffers two hits that each inflict five hp damage, he has one or two very large wounds and the damage to his body is either mortal or life threatening (depend-

ing on what optional rules the campaign uses). If the character with 110 hit points suffers 20 five-point hits, he has around 20 minor cuts, scrapes, and bruises, but remains otherwise healthy. Some of the character's "wounds" might not be visible at all — the character might simply have strained himself a bit while getting out of harm's way. The situation is similar to what happens to you when you overdo some physical activity and wake up with aches and pains the next morning.

Can you bring back a character from negative hit points with a *shocking grasp* spell? If so, what are the rules and where is it written?

No, a *shocking grasp* spell won't work as a fantasy defibrillator.



Skip Williams notes, with hand clamped to forehead, that the annual April Fool's column generates more responses than any other column. He stands prepared for this year's reaction, computer and aspirin at the ready.

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The Dragon's Bestiary

The Other Mummies

They aren't all from Egypt

by Richard Pengelly
and Brian Walton

illustrated by Tom Baxa

Practically every gamer has a creepy interest in the undead. Perhaps that's because the deathless monsters compel us to remember our own mortality. Perhaps it's that awful feeling that with the appearance of the undead, the laws of nature that make life predictable have been suddenly broken.

From the time western people first became aware of them, Egyptian mummies have been the subject of endless fascination. The heroes or villains of countless stories, mummies bring the thrill of the exotic as well as the chill of the tomb. But what if the AD&D® game included undead from the long past and from much nearer to home?

About a quarter century ago, some peat-cutters in Belgium unearthed a grisly sight. They discovered the remains of a man who had been strangled and thrown into a mere — nearly 2,000 years before. From the clothing and possessions found with the body, as well as from Roman records of the time and place, we know that the people who lived in that area two millennia ago were known as Celts. The druids of the Celts sometimes practiced human sacrifice, and this bog man could have been one of their victims. Over the centuries, the shallow, freshwater lake filled with peat moss. The mild acidity of the peat tanned the skin of the dead man, preserving him and his possessions.

Later, other bog-preserved men and women were found. A number of bogs in Holland and Belgium have yielded remains like those of the first one found. Every feature is preserved on these corpses, right down to the eyelashes and fingerprints.

There have been other miraculously preserved mummies discovered far from Egypt, from the frozen Austrian Alps to Ireland's Newgrange. No longer must all mummies lie buried beneath sun-bleached monuments, awaiting the intrusion of explorers. Here are two new types of mummies for your campaign, shambling out from glacial mountains and boggy moors, along with a selection of bone-chilling new spells with which to bolster their villainous designs.

Bog Mummy

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Temperate Wetland
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	None
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (5-7)
TREASURE:	P (D)
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	2
MOVEMENT:	6
HIT DICE:	6
THACO:	13
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-10/1-10 or by weapon type +3
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Fear, suffocation, and see below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (6')
MORALE:	Champion (15)
XP VALUE:	3,000

The skin of the bog mummy is leathery, tanned by the mild acid of the peat bog. It is clothed in tattered rags, and the remains of the thongs that bound its hands and the strangling cord that bit deeply into its neck dangle from its body. It may carry and use any weapons or magical items that went into the mere with it. Any weapons it uses cause an additional +3 damage as the result of the monster's great strength. Although capable of using any weapons it could use in life, the mummy prefers to garrote its victims when it can do so without attracting the attention of other living beings. Death by strangulation takes two rounds. To escape the garotte, a victim or his rescuer must make a successful Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll in either of the two rounds.

Combat: The bog mummy is eyeless but capable of sensing sentient life as far as a mile away. Although it hates all living beings, it reserves its greatest animosity for priests, especially druids, who sent it to its doom. The bog mummy stalks prey with infinite patience and great stealth. Virtually without intelligence, it practices a simple cunning to keep itself safe and to bring itself upon its prey when that person is alone. Nevertheless, it is not without its protections and weapons.

As a result of its extreme pliability, the mummy suffers no damage from blunt weapons such as maces and staves. Thrusting and edged weapons cause only half damage. Water has no adverse affect on bog mummies, and they take advantage of this by lurking in pools, lying in wait in the shallows at the edge of a stream, or blending with the dark water of a way-side swamp or marsh. It can rise from its hiding place without a sound and moves with silence wherever it goes. Although the chill of cold water does not harm it, cold-based spells may immobilize a bog mummy by freezing its constituent water. The soggy monster is not affected by normal fire and suffers only half damage from magical fire, saving for no damage. Protected against fire and water by the very nature of the bog from which it comes, and resistant to most weapons, it is fearless. Anyone seeing the mummy, however, must save vs. spells or be affected as by the fear effect of a normal mummy.

A single blow from the fist of a bog mummy causes 1-10 hp damage. If both hands strike, the mummy has grabbed its opponent and causes an additional 2-8 hp damage for each



round the victim remains in its grasp. The opponent must also save vs. poison or be suffocated to death in 1d4 rounds.

Ecology: The bog mummy is created through an intricate set of events. The death that causes one is never natural. Bog mummies are the product of a ritual killing. The victim is strangled with a garotte to avoid spilling blood and offending the gods. The body is then cast, while still alive, dying as the leather thong or cord cuts off its breath. Perhaps the victim was a criminal or other evil individual. Perhaps he was some feared enemy captured in battle who was sent back to his gods with all of his possessions. Whatever the circumstances, as life ceases, undeath begins.

Too strong-willed to die, the bog mummy lies waiting for the day when it is freed from the peat. Then, as one of the undead, the monster seeks revenge on all sentient living creatures. As the product of a druidic culture, the bog mummy may have a golden torc around its neck, just below the strangling thong. It may have a distinctive jeweled brooch holding together the tatters of its cloak or a great silver buckle attached to its ancient belt. Disturbed by peasants cutting peat for fires, the bog mummy rises to begin its reign of terror. Night after night, fear grows as the humble, superstitious peasants wait to see who will be gone in the morning.

Surely tales of such disappearances travel far, and fear takes hold in any boggy region. Disappearances in the bogs are often attributed to the bog mummy, even where none exists.

Ice Mummy

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Mountain glacier
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	None
INTELLIGENCE:	High to genius (11-18)
TREASURE:	P (D)
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	3
MOVEMENT:	6
HIT DICE:	7
THACO:	12
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-12 or by weapon type +1
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Fear, breath weapon, withering touch, spell use
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (5'-6')
MORALE:	Champion (15)
XP VALUE:	4,000

Leathery, desiccated brown skin is drawn tight over the bones of an ice mummy. The hair and clothing remain intact but show the effects of centuries of entombment. The clothing and weapons are ancient, perhaps including a flint knife, a copper-bladed ax, a spear with a stone points, or arrows with obsidian heads. The eyes are sunken and opaque, though open and visible, filled with a blank hatred. The ice mummy's mouth is agape in an eternal scream.

Combat: The ice mummy is intelligent as well as cunning. It creates false trails to lead travelers onto fragile snow bridges over crevasses. The only warning of its attack may be the brief glimpse of a figure traveling through the fog on a glacier. When the figure staggers and falls, travelers may go to its aid, only to stumble into its ambush. The ice mummy seldom fights at a disadvantage. When it has its intended victims isolated, it strikes. If the fear it generates has not sent all of the ice mummy's prey into a trap, it uses magic or resorts to its breath weapon, a *cone of cold* that blasts from the hideous, gaping mouth. It then moves away to wait for the cumulative effects of the magical cold and the natural cold to take their toll. If any brave souls are still able to pursue, so much the better.

Although ice mummies are so rare that one can spend a lifetime traveling the high mountains and never encounter one outside of old songs and stories, most of them have the power to work magic as a 9th-level wizard, except that the mummy can employ only spells of 3rd level or lower. Furthermore, ice mummies can never use spells that involve fire as a weapon. Thus, an ice mummy can cast *affect normal fires* to reduce the campfire lit by a group of travelers, but the monster cannot cast a *fireball* spell to attack them. Ice mummies are known to use the following unique spells as well as those commonly employed by human wizards: *slippery slope*, *ice shatter*, and *call blizzard*.

If forced into melee combat, an ice mummy uses weapons. Its inhuman strength lends a +1 bonus both to THACO and to damage rolls. Missile weapons used by an ice mummy, usually barbed arrows, also enjoy a +1 THACO bonus and also cause 2 hp damage for each round they remain embedded in the victim, because of the supernatural cold with which they are



imbued. Removing the barbed arrow of an ice mummy without the help of a character with the healing proficiency inflicts an additional 1d6 hp damage. A *dispel magic*, *limited wish*, or *wish* spell negates the chill effect completely.

If encountered without weapons, an ice mummy can strike for 1d12 hp damage with its cold fists, which also cause damage as per a *staff of withering*. Three times a day, an ice mummy can breath a blast of cold that inflicts 4d6 hp damage to all within its area of effect, a 20' long cone that is 10' wide at its base.

The supernatural cold exuded by an ice mummy numbs all warm-blooded creatures that come within 25' of the creature. Non-magical weapons used against the creature must save vs. crushing blow each time they hit the creature or freeze so cold that they shatter. Additionally, those who remain within 25' of the ice mummy suffer 1d3 hp damage per round from severe frostbite. Finally, ice mummies cause fear as do normal mummies.

Ecology: Ice mummies are the freeze-dried remains of travellers who lost their way in the icy wastes of the mountains. Bitter and afraid, they died alone, hating those who never came to their rescue. At every opportunity, they seek to punish those who mock their demise by traveling the same dangerous terrain that once ruined them.

New Spells

Slippery Slope

(Conjuration/Alteration)

Level 3

Range: 60 yds.

Components: S, M

Duration: 1 day

Casting Time: 2 rounds

Area of Effect: Up to 500 square feet

Saving Throw: None

This spell creates a slick layer of glare ice over the natural surface of snow, ice, or rock. The glare ice coating makes even rough-looking surfaces very slick. Anyone traversing the affected area must make Dexterity checks at a -4 to move at half normal movement rate. Trying to move faster incurs a -8 penalty, and attempts, at running (moving faster than the full normal movement rate) causes an automatic fall. Characters employing a *spider climb* spell can move normally across this surface. Those standing on a slope upon which this spell is cast hurtle down automatically.

The material component for *slippery slope* is the mummy's talisman or tattoo.

Ice Shatter

(Alteration)

Level 3

Range: 10 yds./level

Components: S, M

Duration: Instant

Casting Time: 4 rounds

Area of Effect: 3 square feet/level

Saving Throw: None

By means of this spell, the caster can cause glacier ice to crack and break. The solid ice may split along a single crack or splinter into hundreds of dagger-sharp fragments, at the caster's option. In hard-packed snow, like that which forms bridges across crevasses, the area of effect is tripled. The spell can also be used to start avalanches in areas where there are unstable masses of snow on slopes above the glacier.

If the spell is used to shatter the ice rather than crack it, it can make a trail or path impassable. It can also provide the caster with icy spikes perfect for lining the bottom of a pitfall.

The material component for *ice shatter* is the mummy's talisman or tattoo.

Call Blizzard

(Conjuration/Alteration)

Level 3

Range: 0

Components: S, M

Duration: Special

Casting Time: 1 turn

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

This spell can be cast only on a glacier or a similarly vast expanse of ice, such as a huge iceberg. *Call blizzard* allows the caster to use the unique micro-climate of the glacier to attack its enemies. Even in summer, it is possible to have wintery conditions on mountain glaciers and similar terrain. This spell generates high winds that drive frozen precipitation in a blinding storm that makes travel virtually impossible. Wind-chill effects make the temperatures seem even lower than they already are, and the powerful gusts make walking difficult.

After the spell is cast, the blizzard arrives in 1d6 hours. The spell can be interrupted only during the actual casting period, not between the casting and the blizzards arrival. Signs of the ensuing change in the weather are visible any time after the first hour. Once summoned, the blizzard cannot be dispelled by anything less than a *control weather* or *wish* spell. The blizzard affects the entire area of the glacier.

In warmer seasons, the blizzard is composed of sleet lasting 1d4+1 hours, soaking the clothing of travelers and coating the glacier in a sheath of slippery, wet ice. The soaking effect of the sleet ruins the insulative effect of the victim's clothing, bringing on hypothermia if a fire and dry clothing are not found within two hours. Hypothermia causes a loss of coordination represented by a loss of 1d4+1 points of Dexterity and requires a successful Constitution check each turn until warmth and shelter are found for the victim to remain conscious. Once unconscious, a victim dies within a number of hours equal to half the victim's Constitution (rounded up).

In fall and spring, there is a 50% chance of sleet and a 50% chance of a true snow blizzard, either of which lasts 1d6+6 hours. In winter, the spell always causes a snow blizzard that lasts for 2d10+4 hours. Vision is reduced to 10', and victims must make a successful Intelligence check each round to stay on course when traveling. Movement is reduced to one-third normal, and after four hours, each character in the blizzard must make a successful Constitution check to avoid hypothermia, as described above.

Exhaustion caused by walking through the powerful blizzard winds sets in after four hours of travel. Afterward,

characters must make a successful Constitution check each with a cumulative -1 penalty per hour. Thus, on the fifth hour of travel, the check is at -2, on the sixth -4, and so on. Once exhausted, characters cannot erect a shelter or build a fire.

The high wind-chill factor during a blizzard adds another peril: frostbite. This freezes exposed skin and extremities, so noses and ears are especially vulnerable as well as fingers and toes. Frostbite may occur after one hour of trying to move about in the blizzard. Roll 1d4 to determine whether a character suffers frostbite. A roll of "1" indicates that superficial frostbite has occurred. If the victim is not informed by a companion that his skin is beginning to turn pale, there is a 50% chance that he notices the frostbite himself. If not treated, superficial frostbite becomes serious in one hour. If not treated for a second hour, serious frostbite turns to extreme frostbite.

Superficial frostbite heals in 1d4 weeks. It is painful and causes unpleasant hardening and breaking of the affected skin, but it causes no damage. A *cure light wounds* spell eases the discomfort and heals the visible damage.

Serious frostbite takes 1d4 weeks to heal naturally, and it is more painful and unpleasant-looking than superficial frostbite. Victims suffer a temporary loss of 1d2+1 points of Charisma until the condition is healed naturally or by a *cure serious wounds* or more powerful healing spell.

Extreme frostbite has the above effects and has penetrated far enough to cause the loss of the affected portion of the body. At the DM's discretion, the victim may lose one or more toes and or fingers, one or both ears, or even his nose. Frost-bitten fingers cannot, of course, perform fine tasks such as untying knots or making spell gestures. Only a *regeneration* or more powerful healing spell can cure extreme frostbite.

The material component for *call blizzard* is the mummy's talisman or tattoo.



While Richard Pengelly and Brian Walton live in the boggy, glacier-ridden wilds of Canada, neither of them bears even a passing resemblance to their monstrous creations. It's far too soon for that.

Rogue's Gallery

by Jason Kuhl

Silent Sheehan

7th-level thief

STRENGTH:	16
DEXTERITY:	14
CONSTITUTION:	13
INTELLIGENCE:	12
WISDOM:	12
CHARISMA:	8
ARMOR CLASS:	7
THACO:	17
MOVE:	6
HIT POINTS:	24
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral (with evil tendencies)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	+1 to hit orcs, half-orcs, goblins, and hobgoblins
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	+3 save vs. poison
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	+3 save vs. magical attacks from wands, staves, rods, and spells
SIZE:	4' 6"

Special Abilities/Bonuses: +1 damage; 60' infravision; Dwarven ability to Detect Depth, Slopes, etc.; Thief Abilities: Pick Pockets 15%, Open Locks 60%, Find/Remove Traps 70%, Move Silently 50%, Hide in Shadows 35%, Detect Noise 35%, Climb Walls 50%, Read Languages 55%.

Weapon Proficiencies: Short sword, club (shillelagh), sling.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Ancient history, appraising, local history, tumbling.

Physical Appearance: While Sheehan believes he is a native of Darkon, he actually hails from another world. There, his father was the limner and record-keeper for their dwarven clan, a position that was held in little regard by their gold-minded brethren. Growing up around his father's books and scrolls, Sheehan was a voracious reader from an early age. One day it occurred to him that his family could achieve the wealth of the clan's upper class, if not the respect that it brings, simply by plundering the tombs of those who no longer had any need for it. Armed with the knowledge within his father's library, Sheehan began disappearing for weeks at a time, during which he systematically sacked the crypts of his dwarven ancestors. He would then pawn the booty to svirfneblin in exchange for common coin before returning home with wild and fanciful tales of adventuring in foreign realms. Clan officials grew suspicious, however, and Sheehan was eventually caught during one of his burglaries. Tried and found guilty, his beard was shaven, his clan-name stripped, and he was forever exiled from his homeland. Sheehan roamed the countryside and continued his thieving wherever he could, defiling even churches and mausoleums



of lawful good deities. It was for these actions that the Mists took notice of him, and they embraced him soon thereafter.

Equipment: Sheehan's backpack always carries the tools of his trade: gloves, rope, thieves' tools, multiple torches, pitons, and a prying hammer. In addition to a sling, Sheehan carries a shillelagh for use against skeletons.

Magical Items: *Short sword +2, leather armor +1, ring of free action, two jars of Keoghtom's ointment.*

Role-playing Notes: Sheehan quickly adapted to the land and lore of Ravenloft, and due to the abundance of graveyards, surpassed his earlier efforts. During one particular robbery, his liar's tongue was twisted by the Dark Powers to resemble that of an adder. After several disastrous encounters in which he was attacked by superstitious peasants alarmed by his condition, Sheehan adopted a tradition of presenting himself as a mute, thereby earning the nickname "Silent." He uses a rudimentary system of hand gestures and written notes to communicate, although he will call out in an emergency. When he does speak, it is with strong sibillance, his forked tongue flickering in and out of his mouth. Sheehan understands common, dwarven, and goblin, but he freely speaks thieves' cant (albeit in hushed tones) to beggars and other fellow outcasts.

As a professional tomb-robber, Silent Sheehan knows a great number of ghost stories, unsolved mysteries, and legends of buried treasure. He also possesses first-hand knowledge of many forms of undead. His expertise on both counts has made him a much sought-after guide. Sheehan currently wanders the land around the Darkonian towns of Corvia and Tempe Falls, making occasional forays into Keening to plunder the City of Dead.



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Campaigns of Intrigue, from Foe to Finale

by Steve Miller and Sue Weinlein Cook

Many of today's story-oriented role-playing settings encourage game masters to build insidious villains, web-like plots, and other elements of intrigue into their campaigns. Of course, creating them takes time — adventures of intrigue can require more planning than dungeon crawls or massive battles.

But all that planning isn't as daunting as it sounds. This article takes game masters and DMs through the process of building fully-fleshed villains and intrigue-oriented plots to enrich virtually any character- and story-driven campaign. Many of these concepts are introduced to game masters, or Narrators, using the SAGA™ rules in *Heroes of Defiance*. This new dramatic supplement for the DRAGONLANCE® FIFTH AGE® game is designed to foster sophisticated campaigns that revolve around guile and stealth rather than combat.

Creating the Villain

In campaigns of intrigue, behind the heroes' troubles lurks a master villain. It was a dark goddess in the classic DRAGONLANCE tales; in the FIFTH AGE campaign, it may be a Great Dragon. In any

case, a strong multi-layered master villain can be the backbone of a thrilling role-playing campaign, if the Narrator takes the time to build him right.

Motivation

What really makes a villain what he is? It all comes down to his motivation: What does he want? Everything else — personality, goals, environment, and so on — is shaped by the villain's central motivation, his driving force. This, therefore, is the starting point when creating a new nemesis for a campaign of intrigue.

Of course, finding a motivation is a complex issue. Many possible motivations can cause a character to stray from the straight-and-narrow to become a villain. To get you started, here are a few examples of motivations to choose from when building your villain from scratch:

◆ **Greed:** The villain is hungry for wealth. Perhaps he covets art objects, magical treasure — even knowledge. Greed can also take the form of an unrequited love, an unattainable domain or estate, or a position in life (such as the knighthood).

◆ **Revenge:** A villain may seek to avenge past misdeeds wrought upon him or his family. In some cases, this might be considered righteous revenge, such as the case of a son seeking justice for his wrongfully accused father's execution. When a character ventures outside the law to seek his "justice," however, he moves easily into the realm of villainy. Also, a villain's desire for revenge may be mistaken in some way. Perhaps he believes his father innocent when actually the man deserved his fate. Perhaps the villain seeks redress from the heroes, whom he mistakenly holds responsible for making the charges against his father. In some cases, revenge is merely a cover for another, more sinister, motivation.

◆ **Political Power:** Seeking temporal power is not in itself a villainous motivation. However, this cause can be tainted if the character uses questionable methods to attain it, or if he seeks to hold it to the detriment of his subjects. Often rulers become villains when they seek to advance a personal agenda beyond all reason, come to enjoy dominating others, or abandon their

responsibility to their subjects in their quest to attain a selfish goal. Of course, there are lots of gray areas here — the villain may not hold power at the time (see the “displaced noble” in “Archetypes of Villainy”) or may even appear sympathetic.

❖ **A Personal Agenda:** The individual causes best able to lead a character into a life of villainy are his moral beliefs. Wars fought over matters of religion, for example, can prove longer or bloodier than those waged to gain territory or for other reasons. Some might even consider certain causes noble — except when the ends do not justify the means. Although it’s easier to look at the Evil Knights of Takhisis, with their goal of conquering the world in the name of the Dark Queen, as the villains of the world of Krynn, one might also find a villain among the ranks of the “good” Knights of Solamnia. For instance, a knight so obsessed with sticking to the letter of the Measure that he fiercely prosecutes anyone who fails to obey its strictures makes a perfect villain.

❖ **Fear:** Many of a villain’s actions can be motivated by fear. Fear of dying can bring a man to make a foul deal with an evil god, fear of poverty might lead him to steal, while fear of loneliness might provoke him to kidnap a beautiful woman, whom he forces to become his wife. On the surface, fear, like revenge, can appear to be something altogether different (greed, lust, hunger for power).

❖ **Passion:** Some villains have one-track minds. Their desire for magic, knowledge, love, recognition, or another passion could lead them to abandon all normal inhibitions and seek to satisfy their hunger in any way they can. This motivation is similar to greed, except that the object of the villain’s passion is usually something intangible rather than something that symbolizes wealth.

❖ **Insanity:** A real maniac may initiate his plots with no goal other than to bring pain, suffering and destruction to the world. Whatever his particular brand of insanity — paranoia, megalomania, schizophrenia, homicidal mania — never for a second does this villain think the situation is beyond his ability to control. In addition, even insane villains behave with a sort of internal logic; insanity doesn’t give a villain license to act for no internal reason at all. Such a poor motivation (“He’s just crazy!”) would prove quite disappointing to heroes who have long sought the villain’s downfall. A final caution: An insane, destructive character

is not the best choice for a campaign designed around investigation. and discovery. Such a game of subtlety would be better served by a more rational bad guy. In fact logical, even-tempered villains can be far more dangerous than unstable lunatics with flash-fire tempers.

As you can see from these examples, not all villains must be evil. A villain can be someone who does the right thing for all the wrong reasons — or the wrong thing for all the right reasons. He might mean well; under different circumstances, he could even be defined as a hero. Unfortunately, in at least one area, he remains blind to common sense, ignorant of common decency, or unable to see the line between right and wrong. Allowing the heroes to sympathize with the villain’s situation can actually produce a more dramatic and emotionally-charged game: the difference between a brutal killer and a haunted figure driven to kill by his inner torments.



Let’s say we’re about to begin a new campaign of intrigue that takes place in the Empire of Ergoth, an island realm (described in Heroes of Defiance). Humans there live in an uneasy peace with the barbarians to the north and the goblins to the south. Ergoth’s borders are also threatened by a white dragon farther to the south and an evil order of Dark Knights who may attack at any time. Our villain might be someone who seeks the throne of this wealthy empire — thinking him- or herself the only one qualified to do so — but is prevented by circumstance from earning it lawfully.



Goal

Next, the Narrator must determine the villain’s goal for the adventure ahead. It is imperative that this goal be believable, reasonable, and stem directly from the motivation. The examples below can serve as excellent short-term goals for a villain:

❖ **A theft:** The villain may be planning one individual theft, such as a heist of the crown jewels. He could also pursue many small thefts (as would a guild thief), or even escalating thievery that builds to the criminal escapade of a lifetime (like the spellfilch archetype, described in “Archetypes of Villainy”).

❖ **A conquest:** Perhaps the villain wants to expand his sphere of power. Conquest need not always revolve around a city or wider territory; a char-

acter might just as easily seek to conquer a church or related holding, a race of people, a dragon or other creature, an army or organization, or one person in particular.

❖ **A Kidnapping:** The villain might take as his target a figure of some import, such as a great hero, king, or priest. On the other hand, perhaps the victim merely holds importance to the villain himself, such as a love denied him or someone who he believes has caused him injury. Whether he seeks to kill the target of the kidnapping, ransom him, or release him after he gets a proper amount of attention, is up to the Narrator. Often, kidnappings serve as a first step in a larger plan.

❖ **A Killing:** A villain can seek someone’s death for many reasons and in many ways. Is he interested in assassination, hunting, or war (real or imagined)? Does he murder for perverse pleasure or kill to feed some disturbing need? Does the villain seek the death of one figure, as in the case of revenge, or a larger group — even genocide? The Narrator should answer these questions in the manner that best suits the tone of his campaign

Of course, in an intrigue-based campaign, the heroes might not become aware of the villain’s true goal until relatively late in the game. The villain might even conceal it from his own allies, to further complicate matters, as described in the “loyal servant” entry in “Archetypes of Villainy.”



In our Empire of Ergoth campaign example above, our villain is actually the emperor’s own daughter, whose plots spring from her desire to do more in life than be married off to some nobleman. Ergoth is very strongly male-dominated. Women have few rights, and they certainly aren’t allowed to rule. In this scenario, the princess’s goal is to wipe out the royal family — especially her weakling brothers — and many a weak-willed man through whom she can rule. Not only is her scheme subtle and devious, but the heroes might actually find themselves having some sympathy for the princess. They may even agree with her frustration at being denied her full potential because of her sex. (Of course, the heroes are not likely to identify her as their foe until fairly late in the campaign. This clever and shrewd young woman will have taken steps to isolate herself from her machinations, unless someone starts digging deep.)



The Villain's Identity

Determining motivation and goals provides the Narrator with a foundation for his campaign. Now we're ready to flesh out the villain further with personality and background to make him seem much more three dimensional — and far more frightening — than he or she otherwise might.

Personality

First, think about the villain's personality. The steps above may have already determined such basics as race and gender, but well thought-out personality traits make any villainous identity come alive. Of course, these elements should feed into and grow out of the goals and motivations decided, earlier — they may have determined the motivation in the first place. This kind of complexity turns the villain into a character every bit as vibrant as the heroes attempting to thwart him. A bland or weak villain is hardly a worthy opponent for heroes ready to unravel the Narrator's mystery.

The Fate Deck in the DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE game can help in selecting personality traits for a villain. Each card carries an inscription that describes the character pictured, from "lawless and tough" to "dedicated and timid." Selecting personality traits can make even villains with the same motivations into completely distinct individuals. For instance, a villain motivated by a desire for revenge to kill the heroes for their past deeds might be "rash and crafty," or he could be "thoughtful and conniving." A villain can even be "valiant and motivated," especially if he believes his goal is morally right.

To make the villain's personality even more complex, the Narrator can follow the same system players used to generate their heroes: Give the villain personality traits that describe both his demeanor and his nature. Demeanor indicates merely how the villain acts. As described in *Heroes of Defiance*, the character may have various false demeanors, governing his behavior around different people or in different groups. The villain's nature, on the other hand, is not how the character acts, but what he's truly like, deep down. The nature can be similar to his demeanor — for a "what you see is what you get" villain — or it might be quite different, indicating that the villain employs one or more facades.

The personality traits the Narrator chooses for his villain will shape that character's approach toward attaining his goal. Thinking about the traits, the Narrator should ask himself what villainous methods are born of this personality. A villain whose personality revolves around a deep-seated mistrust of others may, as a matter of course, assassinate his minions after they have concluded their service. Brute force tactics might stem from an aggressive and brutal character, while methods of subtle manipulation better suit a conniving criminal. Is the villain cautious? Then the Narrator should devise stealthy means for him to advance his concerns. In any case, the villain should always go with his strengths to enact his sinister plan.

Just as every personality type has its strengths, so does each have its associated flaws. After all, every character has a weakness. The aggressive and brutal foe might act heedlessly under fire. A conniver or overcautious villain might spend so much time looking for traps or planning for contingencies that he misses the opportune moment. Perhaps other fears are inherent within the personality type. It is up to the Narrator to let these fears and weaknesses, show just as he demonstrates the villain's strengths. Clever heroes will find a way to play upon these flaws to the villain's detriment.

The princess in our example must live at court right under those she seeks to depose and kill. Therefore, she is a schemer, relying on stealth and manipulation tactics. Perhaps her secret flaw is that she wants the throne a bit too much — her greed, added to her healthy ego — might blind her at times to the threat the heroes pose. She secretly desires recognition from her emperor father. Knowing she will never receive it, she continues to plot her takeover of the empire. As mentioned above, the heroes might sympathize with her situation — if they live long enough.

Background

At last, we're ready to put the finishing touches on the villain by giving him or her some important background. Each element of this character's appearance, ethnic heritage, and physical make-up can tie in directly with his motivation, goals, and personality as related above. Of course, by this stage, many basic questions will have answered

themselves, such as the villain's gender and race. But even if they have, think about these points for a minute. By itself, the fact that the newly created villain is a dwarf (or elf or draconian) may not seem important. However, what does this bit of background look like in the context of the villain's motivation and personality? For instance, think about the character's goals and attitudes in light of his:

❖ **Race** (I'm a half-breed, so no one treats me with respect.)

❖ **Gender** (I'm looked down upon because I'm female.)

❖ **Age** (Everyone says I'm too young. I'll show 'em!)

❖ **Height and Weight** (I've got a poor self-image because I'm short and fat.)

❖ **Land of Origin** (My upbringing in a seafaring realm will help me create a mighty navy to conquer the nation.)

❖ **Birthmarks, Injuries, Scars, Etc.** (I'm ugly, so I envy all that is beautiful even as I covet it.)

❖ **Name** (As everyone knows my name, no one would suspect me.)

Our villain in the Ergoth campaign is the emperor's demure, unassuming teenaged daughter Princess Fidelia — a name well-known throughout the kingdom and one which connotes loyalty (fidelity). This petite young girl is loved by all in the empire and would never be suspected as a threat, thanks in part to her gender (at least in her male-dominated homeland), her youth, her slight frame, and her fame.

Now we have in place the basic element of an intrigue-centered campaign: a master villain pulling strings from an unseen location. Once the heroes discover the villain's identity, they again must use tactics of cunning and stealth to defeat her. After all, they wouldn't live very long if they just killed Fidelia — princesses tend to have bodyguards nearby. The heroes would have a lot of explaining to do before the emperor.

Archetypes of Vilainy

When the Narrator just doesn't have time to build a villain from scratch, he can start with a character type. The various archetypes, or roles, for heroes of intrigue introduced in *Heroes of Defiance* also fit the framework of interesting villains, as described below. The game requirements for each archetype appear

in parentheses after the description. Narrators might find that these roles are more than convenient archetypes for villains — they can be the seeds to truly unique campaigns of intrigue!

◆ **Ambassador:** In the guise of an ally and a diplomat, a sinister ambassador enjoys the freedom to advance his plot in foreign lands. Such villains are best suited to campaigns that span a continent or similar large realm. (Presence code “C” min., demeanor drawn from red aura card, wealth 7 min.)

◆ **Bard:** Bards have the advantage of being accepted — even invited — in a wide variety of wealthy homes, both locally and in far-flung lands. Clever heraldic villains use their craft to get them close to their enemy, to maneuver them within reach of the object of their desire, to spread disinformation helpful to their own goal, and so on. These characters’ main drawback is their very public lifestyle and visible identity. (Spirit score 4 min., Presence score 5 min.)

◆ **Barmaid or Barkeep:** Although most people overlook the local innkeeper or serving wench, that’s exactly what makes them excellent potential villains — no one would ever suspect them! Their convenient jobs allow them to interact with a wide variety of locals and travelers as they weave their webs of intrigue. (Strength code “C” max., Presence code “C” min., wealth 3 max.)

◆ **Con Artist:** Con artists often are thought of as small-time criminals, not master villains. However, what happens when a small-time criminal dreams of the con of a lifetime, one that will make him go down in history? (Presence code “B” min., nature drawn from black or red aura card.)

◆ **Displaced Noble:** A wealthy nobleman uprooted from his home due to political unrest or rebellion is a villain with a clear goal, as well as a power base in exile ready to help him win back his birthright. (Wealth 6 max.)

◆ **Fop:** For a more subtle villain, a Narrator might center an intrigue around a fop — or at least, that’s what the villain wants people to think he is! This sly figure lets the public discount him as merely a soft, silly noble of little use, which allows him to reveal his true schemes in his own time. (All ability scores must be 5 min., four ability codes must be “B” min., wealth 7 min.)

◆ **Guild Thief:** The head of a thief guild makes an excellent master villain, while common guild members serve as

handy minions. If the leader should ever venture beyond the bounds of the guild’s articles of conduct, however, minions may turn traitor on him, adding an interesting twist to the adventure. (Code of “B” min. in Dexterity, Reason, or Perception, nature 5 max., wealth between 4 and 6.)

◆ **Handler:** Kender handlers are known for their ability to “acquire” others’ possessions. Misguided members of this curious race might be led to turn their skills against the heroes. As ‘anyone who’s had a kender for an enemy will tell you, the results aren’t pretty. (Must be a kender plus have Agility and Dexterity scores of 8 min.)

◆ **Healer:** Charlatans abound in the world of fantasy role-playing games. Perhaps one of the most despised is the false healer, who lures innocents into his schemes with elixirs and promises. (Strength and Dexterity codes of “B” max., Reason and Perception of “C” min.)

◆ **Scout:** While *Heroes of Defiance* presents the role of scout only in the context of the Legion of Steel, this archetype is actually an important villainous minion. Every bad guy needs several extra pairs of eyes and ears to keep tabs on the situations in the areas where the master plan is unfolding. (Perception code of “B” min, Presence code of “C” max., wealth 5 max.)

◆ **“Loyal Servant”:** Although the character appears a devoted servant to the heroes (or their allies), he secretly plots against them from within. This role is also best for a minion. (Reason and Spirit scores of 4 min., wealth 3 max.)

◆ **Merchant:** Merchant villains might include dealers in stolen goods, magnates building a trade empire upon the bodies of the competition, or greedy guilders seeking greater and greater profits at the expense of their clientele. (Reason, Perception, and Presence scores of 3 min., nature 4 min., wealth between 4 and 6.)

◆ **Rebel:** Although *Heroes of Defiance* defines this archetype in terms of elven characters, rebels of any race can make excellent villains, especially when they lose sight of reason in their attempts to achieve their (perhaps worthy) goal. (No specific requirements.)

◆ **River Pirate:** Pirates are wonderful, colorful villains, though not the most subtle characters. The Narrator should carefully consider whether including these figures suits the tone he’s trying to create for his campaign. (Nature drawn from red aura card, wealth between 4 and 6.)

◆ **Spellfilch:** Some villains aren’t comfortable merely being successful thieves — they must be flashy at their work, for fame is what they’re really after. Spellfilches pride themselves on using magic to help them in their criminal activity. In fact, each has a unique spell effect he uses as a “calling card,” to let the victims know who got the better of them. (Dexterity score of 4 min., Reason or Spirit code of “B” min., unique “signature” spell.)

◆ **“Staunch Supporter”:** Although a character has come out in support of the heroes or their allies on some matter of politics, he actually works toward a very different end. This villain uses his political ties to help him achieve his own desired ends — perhaps a goal exactly opposed to the one he claims to support. (Reason and Spirit scores of 4 min., wealth of 7 min.)

◆ **Street Performer:** Street dancers and corner entertainers have an advantage shared by the barmaid: their low social class makes them almost “invisible.” Such figures often fall easily under suspicion for petty theft and such crimes, but no constable would dream that the local dancing girl is actually a villainous mastermind! (Agility and Presence scores of 4 min. and codes of “C” min., Spirit code of “C” min., wealth 3 max.)

◆ **Street Urchin:** Now there’s a challenging central figure to a campaign of intrigue: A 16-year-old villain with an army of urchins at his disposal! These omnipresent characters have freedom to operate within the confines of their own territory. (Must be able to explain any code better than “C,” wealth 3 max., Novice reputation max., must be a child.)

◆ **Thug:** Alleybashers make excellent minions, ever ready and able to serve as the muscle behind the masterminds. (Demeanor of 6 min.)

Structuring the Intrigue

Once we’ve got a firm idea of who our villain is and what he or she wants (and we have suitable game statistics figured out for him or her), we’re ready to develop the characters plot — the adventure itself. Long-running campaigns can be difficult beasts to maintain, particularly if you add the complication of a master villain working a treacherous web of intrigue in the background. Let’s start with something simple: What does the villain do first?

The Villain's Actions

Once the Narrator thoroughly understands the villain and his ultimate goal, he must figure out how the character intends to reach that goal. A true master villain would never act transparently, so it should take some real digging for the heroes to uncover his plan. Of course, the scheme should stem from the villain's background and motivations. A sinister human wizard will go about seizing the crown in quite a different manner than a power-hungry dwarf priest or a mad elf renegade. Each move from the villain should stem from his uniqueness of character. Not only does such consistency lend believability to the scenario, it also could unwittingly tip off the heroes as to the kind of figure they're dealing with.

To determine the villain's initial actions, think about these points:

❖ **Employing Minions:** The villain may command minions to carry out his dirty work — major operatives as well as lesser servants. The wisest villains do not rely merely on one type of minion. Rather, they take advantage of the unique service each type can provide: While shapechanging creatures like Aurak draconians prove able spies, a tribe of kobolds can serve as cannonfodder, and the winged gargoyles make good scouts. Some of these minions may even be unknowing servants of the master villain, nothing more than victims of his cunning manipulations.

When structuring the intrigue of the campaign, the Narrator should select minions that the heroes can conceivably defeat — after all, the players eventually must get beyond them to the heart of the villain's plot. Allowing the minions to thwart them defeats the purpose of the story. In addition, sometimes minions have their own motives that may differ from those of the master villain.



Princess Fidelia secretly commands an army of goblins from the land south of Ergoth and has a lich wrapped around her little finger — a formerly human sorcerer who loved her in life and would do anything for her, even in death. These common humanoid opponents and the hyper-intelligent spellcaster will aid her in her far-reaching plans. They present a reasonable set of opponents, ones that challenge the heroes but who are not too powerful for them to defeat. But it takes more than strong-arm tactics to reveal the true mover and shaker behind this plot.



❖ **The Master Plan and Backup Plans:** Considering the wealth of villainous personalities a Narrator might create and the multitude of motivations that might drive them, it's impossible to provide the archetypal master plan to suit all campaigns. Basically, however, a villain's plan to achieve his goal can be broken down into three simple stages: Obtain the information and tools needed to achieve the goal, use them to attain the objective, then cover his tracks or cement his public hold on his goal. Throughout this process, he must use all the resources at his disposal to deal with a variety of known and unknown obstacles; the heroes are one of them.

As mentioned earlier, the tactics a villain favors in enacting this scheme may stem from his personality traits. The kind of master plan he devises may also derive from his racial background, however. An elf villain might lure enemies to a secret forest stronghold where he has in place all manner of traps, for instance. The very words "pirate captain" bring to mind a wealth of specialized tactics that add up to a plan the villain can use to win his goal.

A real villainous mastermind will have enacted several parallel plans at once, allowing various minions to bring him closer to his goal through different methods and in different places. He'll also have a backup plan or two in place to fall back on, in case the heroes prove too clever for him. For instance, he may, as a last resort, force a high-placed minion to take the fall for him if he finds his plan endangered. "Plan B" might not offer the villain complete success in his objective but instead allows him a lesser victory or merely gives him a chance to retreat and regroup.

Narrators should briefly sketch out the villain's master plan and some of his backups before play begins. This preparation does not necessarily tie the Narrator to a set storyline — just to the antagonists prospective activities. No lengthy "master plan outline" can account for every single contingency that may arise. All the Narrator really needs to know is how the villain intends to accomplish his goal, use his minions, cover his tracks, and where he might slip up and inadvertently allow the heroes to find clues. The campaign grows as the heroes discover connections between events that at first seemed unrelated and pursue the mysteries surrounding those connections. The villain instigates

the action; then it's up to the players to keep it going, with the villain reacting to the heroes' actions. Reacting quickly to the curves the players may throw at the Narrator isn't hard, as long as he knows his villain inside and out.



How does Princess Fidelia go about getting her crown? First she sets the lich to lead the goblins in the south on raids into the empire, then has a barbarian chieftain murdered to incite an attack on Ergoth from its northern province. Next she approaches her court followers, whom she has been feeding misinformation for months, and through subtle diplomacy and blackmail turns them against the crown as well. After the lich has gained victory over the empire (thanks to supplies and information from Fidelia), she watches another operative assassinate her father and brothers. Following an appropriate period of national suffering, she miraculously escapes her imprisonment and engineers the lich's death — thereby becoming the savior of the empire. So grateful are her subjects that they allow a break with tradition and accept her as empress and ruler. At least, that's the plan.

Smart as she is, Fidelia has a backup as well: enticing a local noble to marry her, then taking control of him through the lich's magic and serving as ruler in all but name. She conceals her own involvement in the lich's attack on her homeland by pretending to also be victimized by his ravages. In keeping with her ruthless nature, she mercilessly kills anyone who gets in her way.



❖ **Tricks and Misdirection:** Once he has his plot in motion, the villain takes steps to isolate himself from it, buffering himself with layers of minions. A mastermind may never tell his minions the reasons behind his orders, for too much information might endanger his secrets. Some villains never even communicate with their minions face to face, but only through magic or couriers. While such efforts keep the villain cloaked in mystery, they form a layer of complexity which could trip him up in the end.

The villain also must have methods in place to throw investigators off his trail. Having a minion or a complete innocent in place to take the fall is one idea. He also could drop clues that would send the heroes off chasing a red herring or frame an innocent character.



Fidelia uses the lich and goblins merely as short-term pawns — she has no intention of living up to any promises she made either of them. In fact, she may even feed the heroes information about the lich's whereabouts when his usefulness has come to an end. After all, she has no interest in destroying the empire she seeks to rule.



Enter the Heroes

Once the Narrator has figured out the villain's scheme, it's time to create several options for how the heroes might stumble into the picture.

One idea is to make the villain's actions intersect the life of one or more of the heroes. Perhaps in carrying out his assignment, one of the villain's minions wrongs a hero or his family. There's nothing like the thirst for justice to pull the heroes into a new storyline. Perhaps the minion is someone that one or more of the heroes has known for a long time; minions can serve as excellent foils for the heroes, mirroring their own ambitions, desires, or backgrounds in a twisted manner. In any case, it's best to involve more than one hero, to ensure that the group investigates the villain's unfolding scheme.

The main thing to remember is patience. Adventures of intrigue must grow — they can't be forced. If the heroes do not seize on one clue that might bring them into the adventure, don't force them to follow it up. Once enough clues fail across their paths, the heroes will realize the links between them and may even deduce that they all spring from the same master plan.

Once the heroes have taken the bait, the Narrator must feed them hints or clues to keep up their interest in the investigation. A cryptic message from a character, an overheard comment, a piece of startling physical evidence — any such tidbits will make the heroes hungry for more. The Narrator shouldn't be too upset if the heroes find these clues "out of order," so to speak. A letter they happen upon may seem meaningless at the time of discovery, until a major plot point occurs at the time and place mentioned in the letter and they realize that they had an important clue in their hands all the time and didn't know it. Once enough clues fall into their hands, things will start to make sense, and the heroes may glimpse the villain lurking behind the pieces of his master plan.

The heroes can become involved with the Ergoth campaign in a number of ways. Two of them might be vying for the princess's hand, they may have spied the lich's barbarian troops to the north, or perhaps their village was attacked by goblins from the south — a mysterious communique found in one goblin's boot alludes to a planned attempt on the life of one of the emperor's aides.



Complications

Throughout the campaign, the Narrator should keep the heroes personally involved in the battle against the villain. Each of them must have the opportunity to further the storyline himself, perhaps by interacting with different minions throughout the course of the campaign. Of course, with each step forward, complications might arise.

❖ **Subplots:** Subplots can arise from the misdirections the villain throws at heroes. (Perhaps, knowing the heroes were hot on his heels, a minion sent them a clue that implicated the local thief guild.) Subplots can also spring up due to the efforts of another to solve the mystery. (Say the minion sent the same clue to the thief guild implicating the heroes.) A small victory in a subplot endeavor can provide a much-needed boost to the spirits of adventurers who have had little luck at solving the mystery of the larger picture. Likewise, a small failure can remind cocky heroes that they are not invincible.

❖ **Red Herrings:** Of course, it's a mistake to make every event in a campaign tie directly to the plot at hand. There's room in any campaign for a red herring or two, and such unrelated happenings accomplish the dramatic goal of making the adventure unpredictable. The players, not expecting something totally unrelated to the major plot, may take the campaign in clever new directions trying to unravel this latest mystery.

❖ **Traitor Minions:** If a minion hears that the villain considers him expendable, the villain may have a big problem on his hands. The traitor might begin feeding information to the heroes, for example — he may even join their forces at the risk of his own life. Of course, such a vengeful character may in the end seek to achieve the villain's goals for himself, compounding the heroes' problems rather than helping.

From Villainy to Intrigue Cheat Sheet

Use this handy outline to remember the basic steps of creating an intrigue-based campaign by first creating an intriguing villain.

Step 1: Selecting the Villain

Motivation
Goal
Personality
Appearance

Step 2: Structuring the Plot

The Villain's Plan
Involve the Heroes
Plot Complications
Wrapping it Up

❖ **Traitor Allies:** Perhaps the villain's misdirections actually succeeded in making the heroes' allies actually suspect them of contributing to the mystery at hand. Or, the villain might have wooed the allies with bribes of wealth and power. In any case, these characters may turn traitor, forcing the heroes to step up their investigations and possibly even clear their own names. As mentioned earlier, Narrators shouldn't be afraid to get personal here. Linking such traitorous developments to the heroes' families, homes, or friends heightens the emotion of the campaign and makes it more exciting for all.

❖ **Nobody's Perfect:** Screw-ups on the villain's part can lead to clues for the heroes. For instance, a nervous minion might let slip some important detail that leads to a new subplot whose outcome is vital to the villain's downfall.



Say the white dragon who rules the land to the south decides to expand his territory and attacks the goblin lands in the southern reaches of the empire. While this tactic might set the heroes to wondering how the dragon fits into the growing threats to Ergoth's security, actually his activity is part of a grander plan that involves a draconic takeover of Ansalon's last remaining free realms. Another possible subplot in the Ergoth campaign might involve the lich turning traitor when he discovers that Princess Fidelia means to kill him when his usefulness ends. Either complication to the plot should force a reaction not only from the heroes but from Fidelia as well.



The Big Finish

When the heroes have finally stripped away all the villain's deceptions, it's time for the Big Showdown. This finale can take many forms — the nature of the climax should reflect the nature of the villain, after all. However, it should always be potentially deadly.

The final path to exposing or defeating the master villain should never be an easy one. The Narrator should base the climactic scene's degree of difficulty on the villain's and the heroes' level of reputation or experience. In a climactic fight, the villain and his remaining minions should have enough available firepower and tactics to seriously challenge the heroes. Some villains are not formidable in combat, however, making a battle encounter a poor choice for a climax. Wrapping up the adventure with a role-playing encounter needs to present the heroes with an equivalent danger: execution if they fail to convince others of the villain's guilt, for example.

On the other hand, the Narrator should not make it impossible for the heroes to defeat the villain in the climactic scene. At least a partial victory must be feasible, or the players will be left feeling dissatisfied. Such a conditional victory is more acceptable in an ongoing campaign than in a stand-alone adventure, for the heroes will have a chance to redeem themselves at a later date or continue the fight in another avenue.

In any case, the heroes should be required to engage in serious planning to outsmart the villain and maneuver him

into a situation where they can gain the advantage. After all, the villain has worked hard to achieve his current position. The heroes must work just as hard to take them away. And, when all's said and done, outsmarting the villain is the most rewarding part of the entire campaign.

As the action of a campaign rises to its climax, the pace should pick up accordingly. To be dramatically satisfying, an ongoing adventure must build momentum as it proceeds to its climax. That means you don't want the grand finale between the heroes and the master villain to come after a significant lull in the action. Which scenario is more appealing: The heroes meet their arch-foe for their final showdown after a pleasant breakfast at a quiet inn, or after a weeklong chase that exhausted them while at the same time saw them fired up by the proximity of their enemy?

A victory should confer ample rewards upon the heroes. Money, treasure, and experience (increasing in reputation) commensurate with the difficulty of the adventure and the extent of the villain's threat are common and well appreciated compensation. However, the Narrator should also consider working less tangible rewards into the victory, such as fulfillment of a personal goal (regain family honor, get the girl, etc.) or merely a sense of accomplishment.



In our running sample campaign, a combat-oriented encounter against the petite princess would not prove much of a challenge. And even if the heroes were to kill her, the parts of her conspiracy still in place

will unfold without her guidance. She'll be dead, and thus unable to benefit from them, but the emperor likely will end up dead, too, leaving the empire in the hands of the lich.

Instead, the climax of this campaign should involve the heroes' attempt to expose the princess's activities to her father and the rest of the empire. A festival or some other public event would be a dramatically appropriate place and time. In addition, the heroes must convince some of her pawns in the emperor's court that she intends to betray them. Using her own weapons of intrigue against her, the patty might even coerce one or more of the courtiers to reveal the princess's true nature to the emperor. Fidelia, of course, will do everything in her power to prevent this. At the very least, she'll show her true colors, call the lich, and command him to kill everyone at the festival.



Sequels?

After the villain is defeated, the Narrator must decide whether this is truly the end of the campaign, or whether it is just the end of an extended story arc. If the players want to continue with their heroes, the Narrator can look at the resolution of the current intrigue adventure and determine whether the master villain will be back for more.

Whether the villain's schemes are truly thwarted when he is defeated depends on how thorough the heroes have been. They may have just gotten lucky — managing to trace one of the villain's diversionary efforts back to him, they confused it with the master plan. Now that the villain is gone, will a minion pursue the main plan, becoming the new master villain and continuing the cycle? Of course, the Narrator also can orchestrate events so the master escapes the heroes, perhaps through an ambiguous death. Even though his plan has failed, he can return for the "sequel campaign" in search of revenge.



While a game designer and editor at TSR, Inc., Steve Miller served as head writer for the DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE game line, producing such work as Heroes of Defiance and the forthcoming Citadel of Light. Steve currently works as a free-lance writer.

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"If the lines are this long, the food must be good!"

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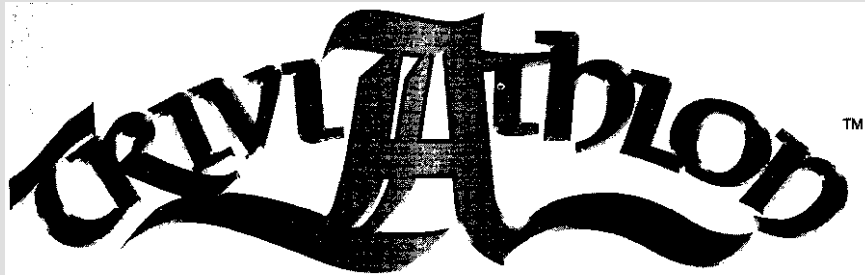
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The Arcane Challenge

answers by Steve Winter

Here's your chance to see how well you scored on last year's quiz of AD&D® game knowledge. If you haven't taken the Arcane Challenge yet, cover the answers and test your knowledge now — or quiz your players before the start of your next game. For the answers to the first 25 questions, see last issue.

26. What AD&D game warrior kit is "the explorer of the Known Spheres, expander of the reach of the spaceborne, and discoverer of new worlds"?

Answer: The Frontiersman

Note: This kit is from *The Complete Spacefarer's Handbook*.

27. Lord Ragnar (fighter 16) has 12 hp after fighting six mummies. Deliah (cleric 18) casts every "cure wounds" spell she can. How many hit points could Ragnar regain?

Answer: None.

Note: This was a lowdown trick question, intended to weed out people who weren't paying attention. Having been injured by mummies, Ragnar had mummy rot. He couldn't be healed at all until the rot was cured, so Deliah's healing spells were all wasted. Poor Ragnar nearly died before dragging himself to a temple staffed by clerics who knew what they were doing.

28. This undead creature is so horrifying that the mere sight of it can age a victim 10 years.

Answer: A ghost.

29. Name the three distinct races of spirit folk.

Answer: Bamboo spirit folk, river spirit folk, sea spirit folk.

Note: Spirit folk are similar to elves and are described in *Oriental Adventures*.

30. How long does it take a person, with assistance, to don a suit of plate mail properly?

Answer: 5-10 rounds (d6 + 4)

Note: Really, if you couldn't find this answer, you're hopeless.

31. What AD&D original edition hardcover book contains tiny drawings of a snit and a bolotomus?

Answer: *Monster Manual*.

Note: The snit is running across the bottom of the black dragon illo. The bolotomus

is sitting on the table in front of the rakshasa, looking like a perfume atomizer.

32. A monodrone modron has only one side. What shape is it?

Answer: Sphere.

Note: This should have been pretty obvious.

33. How far can a paragon black dragon breathe a stream of acid?

Answer: 140'

Note: Paragon dragons are described in *High-Level Campaigns*.

34. Which dragon is the smallest, weakest, and least intelligent of the true dragons?

Answer: White dragon.

35. In the second printing of the *Tome of Magic*, the *mindkiller* spell was replaced by what other spell?

Answer: *Mindtracker*.

Note: This was tricky, but to minimize the cost of changing the printing films, the replacement spell was named so it would fit into the same position in the alphabet. Of course, if you didn't know that, you had to get both books and compare them.

36. If a 3rd-level shukenja casts a *calm* spell onto a breeze-tossed lake, what happens?

Answer: Nothing.

Note: *Calm* affects the mind, not inanimate matter.

37. What is the Wisdom score of Astinus of Palanthus?

Answer: 19

Note: Astinus is a key figure in the DRAGONLANCE® setting.

38. At a roadside inn, a weary human scout and a dwarf swordsman meet a resting halfling cutpurse and a gnome trickster. Under 1st-Edition rules, what do they all have in common?

Answer: They are all 3rd level.

Note: Scout, swordsman, cutpurse, and trickster are level names, which didn't carry over to 2nd edition.

39. How many metal coins weigh a pound?

Answer: 50

40. Name the first hardcover book to be part of a role-playing game.

Answer: *Monster Manual*

41. How many character points would a fighter have left to spend on class abilities after selecting building and leadership?

Answer: 5

Note: From *Skills & Powers*.

42. How far can Hiawatha shoot a pixie bow?

Answer: 75 yards.

Note: Hiawatha was a red herring, meant to send people on a wild goose chase through *Legends & Lore*. Anyone can shoot a pixie bow 75 yards.

43. The only way to be certain of killing me is to reduce me to -30 hit points and then use a *wish* spell. What am I?

Answer: A tarrasque.

44. Igor is a 13th-level fighter wearing *gauntlets of ogre power* and armed with *Melior*. He is a grand master in the weapon's use and he is under the influence of a helpful *prayer* spell. How much damage will he inflict if he strikes a frost giant?

Answer: 3d8 +13 (or 16-37)

Note: This was pretty easy, if you thought to look up *Melior* in the *ENCYCLOPEDIA MAGICA™* tome.

45. What kind of character can safely employ the *Mac-Fuirimh cittern*?

Answer: A bard of 5th level or higher.

Note: Another one that was easily found in the *ENCYCLOPEDIA MAGICA™* tome.

46. Under 1st-Edition rules, what is artichoke juice good for?

Answer: Cures jaundice.

Note: To find this, you had to look in Appendix J: Herbs, Spices, and Medicinal Vegetables in the 1st-Edition *DMG*.

47. How far can a character see while submerged 30' in a freshwater lake?

Answer: By the letter of the rule, 20'. By the spirit of the rule, 30'. We accepted either answer.

48. How long would it take a moderately encumbered character who is sitting at the bottom of a 60'-deep lake to swim to the surface?

Answer: 4 rounds

Note: A lot of people answered 3.75 rounds. We accepted that, even though there is no such thing as .75 round.

49. Table 5: Suggested Begging Modifiers can be found in what AD&D product?

Answer: Shaman

Note: Yes, this was sort of a mean question, because most people had no idea where to look for the answer. If you found it, you should be proud.

50. An electrum piece is worth how many ceramic pieces?

Answer: 50.

Note: Ceramic pieces are used on Athas (DARK SUN® campaign).

Knights of the Dinner Table™

WELL, BOB, AS YOUR THIEF REACHES THROUGH THE SPYHOLE TO RETRIEVE THE LARGE RUBY, YOU HEAR THE GUT-WRENCHING SOUND OF METAL GRINDING AGAINST STONE. BEFORE YOU CAN REACT, A RAZOR-SHARP BLADE DETACHES YOUR ARM AT THE SHOULDER. SADLY, YOUR ARM FALLS THROUGH THE HOLE ON THE OTHER SIDE.

**DISBELIEVE!
DISBELIEVE!
OH, GAWD, I'M
DISBELIEVING!!**

DON'T WORRY, BOB! I'LL GET IT. I'LL RETRIEVE BOB'S ARM AND ...

**WHAT?! OH NO, DAVE! WAIT!
YOU'RE GONNA ... OOPS!
I FORGOT. I'M NOT THERE.**

OLDEST TRICK IN THE BOOK. TSK, TSK.



HA! HA! NO TAKE-BACKS DAVE. AS YOU REACH INTO THE HOLE TO GET BOB'S ARM ... **SWOOSH!** YOU LOSE AN ARM. OH, AND YOU PASS OUT FROM THE PAIN.



BRIAN? BUDDY OL' PAL? HELP ME GET MY ARM BACK. COME ON!

I DON'T THINK SO, GUYS. 75% OF THE SPELLS IN MY ARSENAL REQUIRE THE EXECUTION OF HAND GESTURES. I AIN'T RISKIN' MY HANDS FOR ANYONE. NOTHING PERSONAL.

YOU GUYS HEAR A FANT SQUEALING SOUND THROUGH THE HOLE IN THE WALL.

MINE FIRST! MINE FIRST! THAT'S MY SWORD ARM LYING IN THERE.



OKAY, I'M HOLDING A BULLSEYE LANTERN UP TO THE HOLE AND PEERING INTO IT. CAN I SEE MY ARM?

GAAAAHHHHH! DUDE, OUR ARMS HAVE JUST BECOME TASTY MEAT SNACKS FOR VERMIN!

SORRY, SARA. MY HANDS ARE MY TRADE. SADLY, THE **SEQUESTERED SCHOOL OF MAGIC** DOESN'T OFFER MEDICAL OR DENTAL.

**BOB,
DON'T!**

YES, YOU SEE A VERY LARGE RAT ATTEMPTING TO DRAG IT AWAY.

MAYBE YOU SHOULD HELP THEM OUT, BRIAN.

I'M TAKING OUT MY DAGGER. **DAMN RAT!!!** I REACH THROUGH THE HOLE AND SKEWER THE LITTLE BUGGER. I'M HOPPING MAD! I MAY EVEN MAKE A TOBACCO POUCH OUT OF THE LITTLE VARMINT.



SAAWOOSH! KERPLUNK! HA HA! YOU JUST LOST YOUR OTHER ARM. SMART GUY. OH, THIS WAS TOO EASY. SINCE SARA IS STILL IN THE MAIN FOYER GUARDING YOUR BACKS, OL' DAVE IS PASSED OUT COLD, AND BRIAN IS REFUSING TO RENDER ASSISTANCE, THE **STARVING, CARNIVOROUS RATS** DRAG THE THREE SEVERED ARMS INTO THE MURKY SHADOWS AND DEVOUR THEM!

AFTER THE GAME...

COME ON, B.A., GIVE ME A BREAK. WHAT AM I GONNA DO WITH A THIEF WHO HAS NO ARMS?

AND I CAN'T WIELD MY HACKMASTER +12 WITH ONE ARM, DUDE.

WE JUST LOST HALF OUR FIGHTING POWER, BIG GUY!

NO, SARA, WE JUST MOVED UP SEVERAL TAX BRACKETS. WE'RE GONNA PICK THEIR POCKETS WHILE THEY STAND THERE AND WATCH.

I'VE SAID IT BEFORE, AND I'LL SAY IT AGAIN, "THERE'S NO PARTY SO POWERFUL THAT A GOOD TRAP CAN'T BRING THEM DOWN."



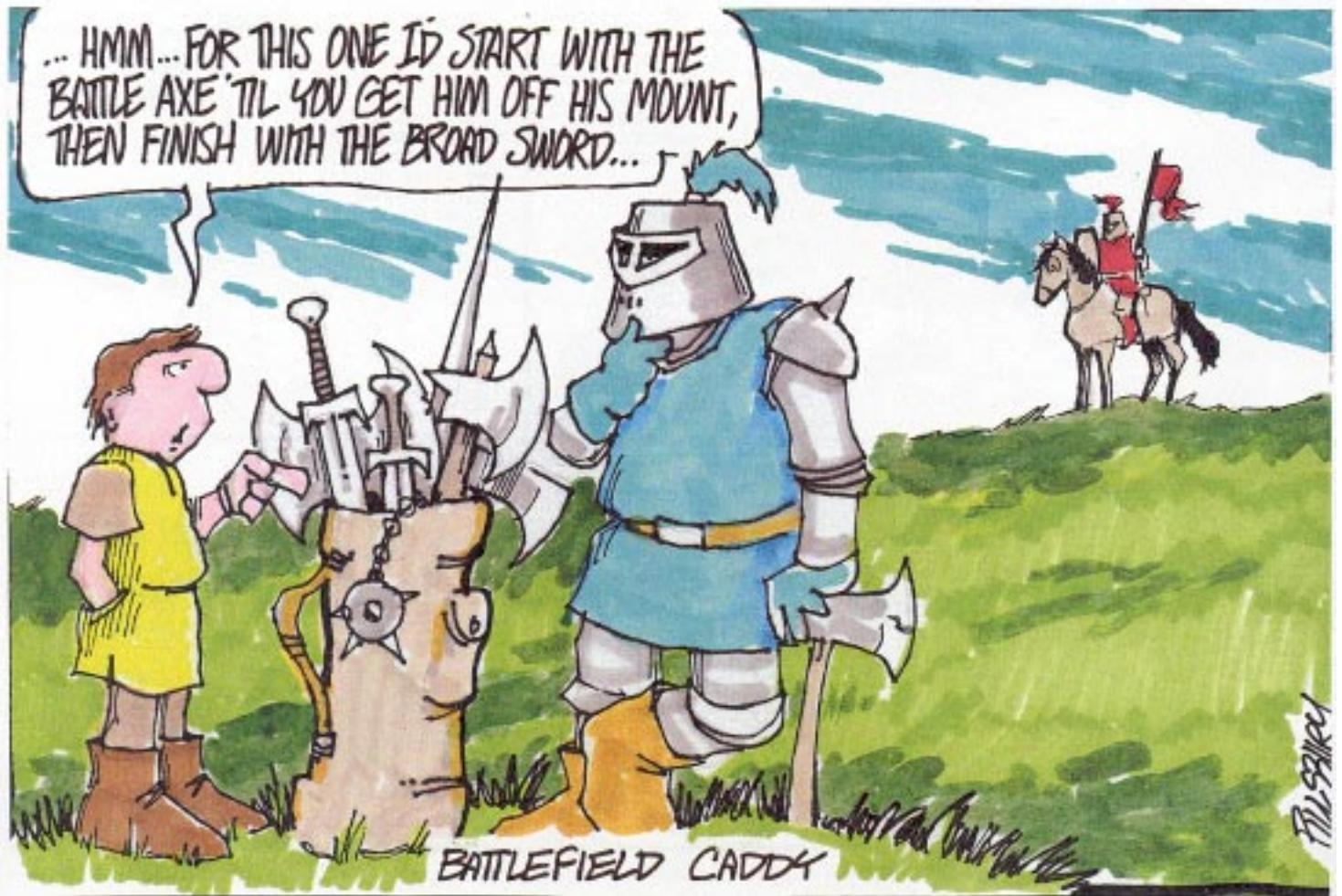
By Kristen S. Gielecki

DragonMirth



"You should have thought of that before we left!"

By Joseph Pillsbury

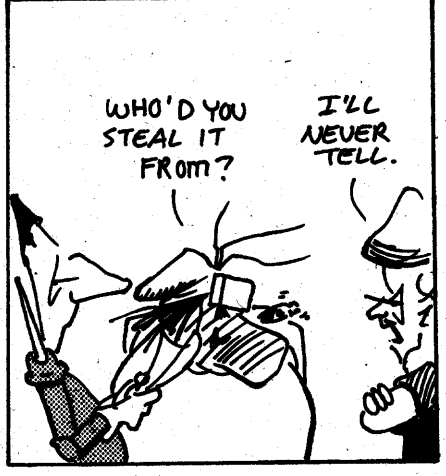




THIS IS A GREAT PLAN, LOUI!



THE WAY YOU'VE THOUGHT OF EVERYTHING, RIGHT DOWN TO THE SMALLEST DETAIL. THE TRAPS, THE MONSTERS, WHERE THE LOOT IS, WHAT WE'LL NEED, WHEN WE'LL NEED IT. THIS IS FANTASTIC!

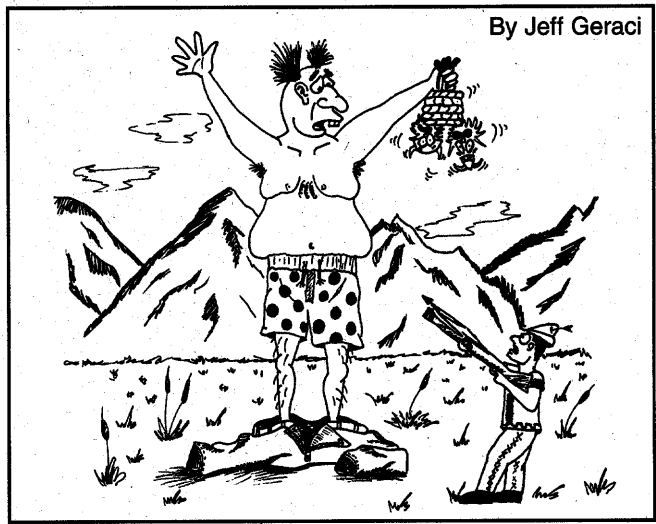


WHO'D YOU STEAL IT FROM?
I'LL NEVER TELL.



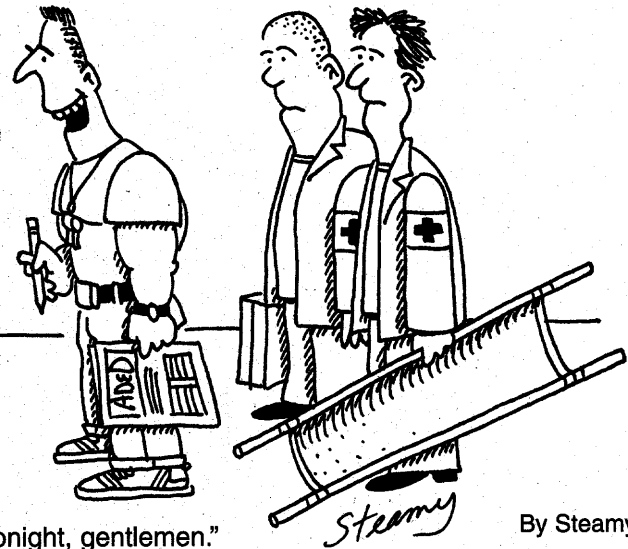
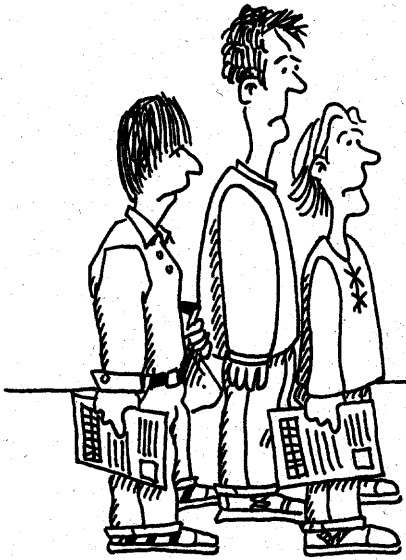
By Frank Gunter

"That's one heck of a non-proficiency weapon penalty there, Earl."



By Jeff Geraci

"Dwarves, you knucklehead!...Drop the **DWARVES!**"



"Rough game tonight, gentlemen."

Steamy

By Steamy

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Dinner **T**able
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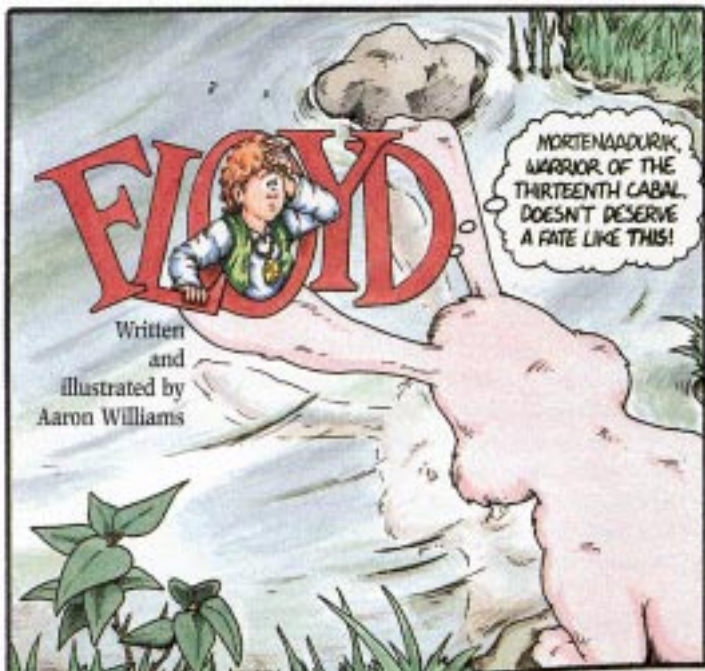
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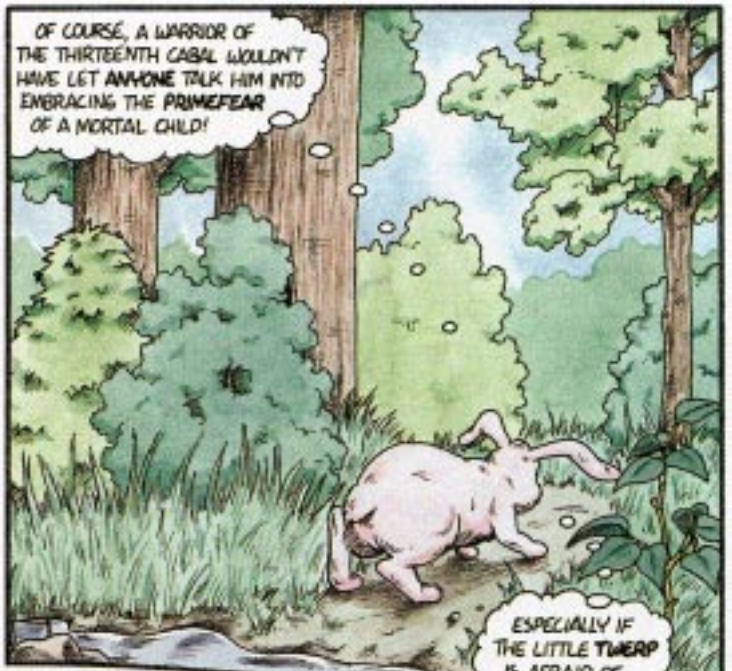
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FLOYD

Written and illustrated by Aaron Williams

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OF COURSE, A WARRIOR OF THE THIRTEENTH CABAL WOULDN'T HAVE LET ANYONE TALK HIM INTO EMBRACING THE PRIMEFEAR OF A MORTAL CHILD!

ESPECIALLY IF THE LITTLE TWEAP IS AFRAID OF RABBITS!



NOW I'M STUCK IN THIS... ADORABLE SHAPE!

WHAT IN GENEMINA AM I SUPPOSED TO DO WITH MYSELF?!



ZING!



WELL, THIS CERTAINLY CRYSTALLIZES MY SHORT-TERM GOALS...



BULLY FO' ME! AH FINALLY GOT ME A BIT O' GAME FO' DINNAH!

BLAMEH! I AIN'T NEVAH SEEN A RODENT O' THIS PANTICULAH TINT!



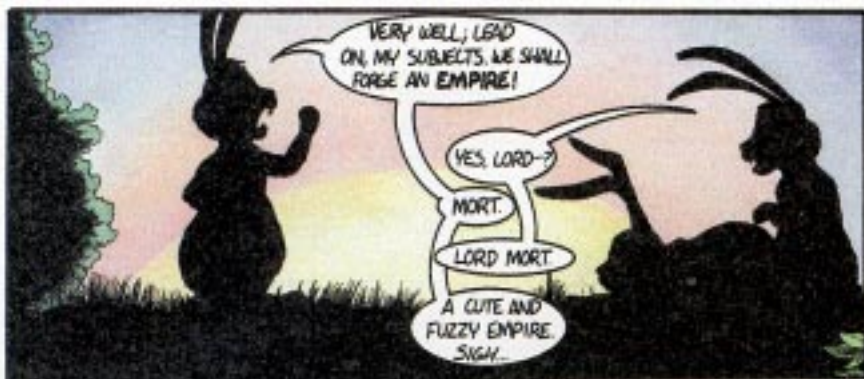
OOH, I WIGAH I CAN GET SOME COIN FROM OL' TILSON FO' THIS RAB!

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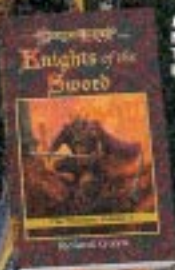
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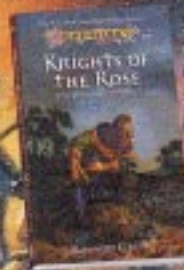
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Role-Playing Reviews

Sizzling Science Fiction

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The year 1997 is shaping up to be science-fiction nirvana for roleplayers, what with outer space spectaculars on the way from TSR and White Wolf, a slew of new products for the *BattleTech** and *Star Wars** games, enough SF card games to make your fingers numb from shuffling, and some star-spanning extravaganzas from the small press. This

month, we'll look at three of the most promising small press-ers, all of which made their presence known at last summer's GEN CON® Game Fair and have since commanded a considerable amount of interest from the playtesters here at Swan Central. Ready for lift-off?

stay dead. It first walked the Earth in 1977 in the form of three cheesy pamphlets from Game Designers' Workshop. The pamphlets contained rules for character creation, starship design, and planetary ecology. Absent was any coherent information about the universe itself, an oversight that was convincingly addressed in more than 60 supplements pumped out over the following decade. In 1987, *Traveller* gave way to the *Megatraveller** game, a comprehensive overhaul that consolidated the previous ten years' worth of modifications, and redefined the universe as a hotbed of anarchy and violent revolution. *The New Era** game, introduced in 1992, added more rules, more history, and an ambitious mythos with the potential to make the *Star Wars* setting look like a Daffy Duck cartoon. But the potential went unrealized when Game Designers' Workshop went belly-up in 1996. Bye bye, *New Era*.

Role-playing games' rating

	Not recommended	
	May be useful	
	Fair	
	Good	
	Excellent	
	The BEST!	

Traveller Fourth Edition* game



192-page softcover book
Imperium Games \$25
Design: Lester Smith (based on an original design by Marc Miller)
Additional design: Tony Lee, Timothy Brown, Greg Porter, Ken Whitman, Don Perrin, and Matt Machtan
Editing: Lester Smith and Tony Lee
Illustrations: Chris Foss and Larry Elmore
Cover: Chris Foss

Traveller is the Count Dracula of role-playing. I mean, this thing just won't

Now, lo and behold, *Traveller* has again risen from the grave. It's slimmed down, 192 pages compared to The New Era's 384, and simplified; gone are most of the complications that made The New Era so daunting. And thanks to an all-star design team headed by Lester Smith — responsible for the DRAGON DICE™ and *Dark Conspiracy** games — its a masterful effort. This is science-fiction for smart guys, featuring technology-based rules derived from real-world physics. And it's science-fiction with a soul, fostering spiritually resonant campaigns that reward honor and courage. I say this without reservation: *Traveller*, especially in its current incarnation, is the best science-fiction RPG I've ever played.

Traveller basics haven't changed much in two decades; wisely, Smith avoided the temptation to fiddle with the rules, recognizing them as fundamentally sound. Character creation, almost a game in itself, begins with the player assigning ratings to six attributes: Strength, Dexterity, Endurance, Intelligence, Education, and Social Standing. By personal choice or random roll, the player then determines his PC's homeworld, which may modify his physical and mental characteristics. The player also selects an educational option (such as Graduate School, Commando School, or Merchant Academy) and career path (Entertainer, Marine, Scout). Die-rolls on a series of tables generate a detailed personal history. My PC, for example, might have the brains and resources to enter Graduate School, but because he fails his entrance exam, opts instead to sign on with a merchant captain as an apprentice. In his first tour of duty, he becomes skilled at fighting pirates (from Merchant Table 1, he acquires the Melee Combat skill), earns a reputation as a good manager (a roll on Table 4 gives him the Administration skill), and learns some questionable talents from a disreputable companion (Table 5 gives him the Forgery skill). The process continues until 20 years worth of experiences have been acquired; he then musters out of active duty with an impressive set of skills. At this point, he's ready to start the campaign. Unlike the blank slates that pass for player characters in many RPGs, **Traveller** PCs begin the game as seasoned pros, complete with plaques on the wall and skeletons in the closet.

Contemporary role-players may find it hard to believe, but in the dark ages of role-playing — back when the **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®** game came in a pink box — there was no such thing as a skill roll. If, say, a PC wanted to play “Turkey in the Straw” on the banjo, the poor referee had to adjudicate the outcome based on an attribute (uh, Dexterity? Charisma?) or, more likely, make a wild guess. **Traveller** came to the rescue by pioneering the concept of skills, tying the resolution of specific actions to the ratings of specific abilities. The original system — elegant, flexible, and fast — remains pretty much the same in **Fourth Edition**. After the player declares his intended action (playing the banjo), the referee computes the target number by adding the skill rating (Music, for which the PC has a rating of 2) to the relevant

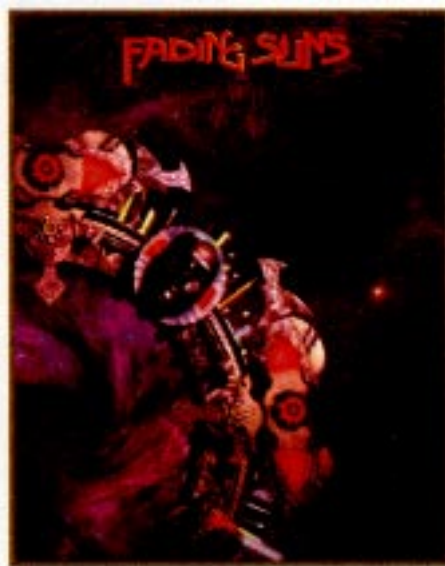
attribute rating (Dexterity, rated at 9; the target number, then, is 11). The referee rates the task for difficulty (Average in this case; the PC's out of practice), which generates the Dice Code (that is, the number of six-siders to be rolled; an Average task uses two dice). If the roll is equal to or less than the target number, the PC successfully executes the task (the roll is 5; he plays a passable “Turkey”). Combat uses essentially the same mechanics, with modifiers for ranged attacks, indirect fire, and concealment; damage is taken as wound points, which temporarily reduce the victim's Strength, Dexterity, and Endurance. Overall, simple tasks generally succeed, complex tasks generally fail, enhancing the humanity of the PCs and the realism of the encounters.

The universe itself receives only modest coverage in **Fourth Edition**, confined mainly to a historical timeline and a bit of background about the Imperium, an intergalactic civilization struggling to rebuild after a long economic decline. But thanks to a fascinating treatise on alien races and a pair of excellent introductory adventures — “Exit Visa,” a trade mission to the authoritarian planet Alell; and “Rubicon Cross,” a tense showdown with a rogue Imperial ship — there's more than enough material to get a campaign off the ground. Industrious referees will get a kick out of the world generation chapter, which gives detailed instructions for creating planets from scratch, complete with tech levels, governments, and terrain characteristics. The Trade and Commerce chapter provides intelligent guidelines for setting up futuristic economies. Also noteworthy are the ship design rules, explaining in 15 steps how to assemble spaceworthy vessels from an impressive array of hull configurations and software options.

Evaluation: Is **Traveller** perfect? Nope. The inclusion of anachronistic weapons like swords and crossbows can turn combat into a bad episode of *Star Trek*. Characters don't change much over the course of a campaign; PCs acquire new skills and abilities about as fast as a tree trunk acquires new growth rings. And more setting information would've been helpful, perhaps a chapter detailing a moon colony or space station so new players would have a place to call home.

So maybe **Traveller** isn't perfect. But it's mighty close. The rules, sensible and intuitive, never get in the way of role-playing; you feel like a character in an epic novel, never a statistician. More to

the point, you feel like a warrior (engaging in white knuckle laser duels with Kusyu mercenaries), scientist (using time/acceleration formulas to calculate jump drive distances), and explorer (landing on a planet containing a fully-developed civilization, not just a bunch of cardboard aliens), all rolled into one. Time-tested and buffed to a sheen, **Traveller** will endure as long there's enough plastic to manufacture six-sided dice. I suspect I'll be playing it in the nursing home. And I bet that some day, they'll be playing it on the *Enterprise*. (Information: Imperium Games, Inc., P.O. Box 481, Lake Geneva, WI 53147)



Fading Suns* game

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Cover: John Bridges



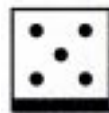
Byzantium Secundus

Fading Suns supplement
128-page softcover book
Holistic Design Inc. \$25

Design: Christopher Howard, Andrew Greenberg, and Bill Bridges

Editing: Jennifer Hartshorn

Illustrations: John Bridges, Tim Callender, Mike Chaney, Michael





Gaydos, Craig Gilmore, Anthony Hightower, Mark Jackson, Brian Mead, Joshua Gabriel Timbrook, and J. Chadlee Stowe

Cover: John Poreda

So I flip open *Fading Suns* and the first thing I see is a snarling monstrosity that looks like it eats aircraft carriers for lunch and picks its teeth with sequoias. Then I turn to the introduction and read: "A new Dark Age is upon humanity, and few believe in renewal and progress anymore. Now there is only waiting. Waiting for a slow death . . . most people have already given up . . ." Yep, it's sci-fi for gloom mongers, a cauldron of interstellar angst that looks like it sneaked out of the back door of the White Wolf Game Studio (birthplace of the *Vampire: The Masquerade** game and other World of Darkness creep fests).

But the *Fading Suns* setting isn't just gloomy. It's downright bizarre. Thousands of years in the future, a once prospering republic has reverted to barbarism. Costly wars against the Ur-Ukar and the parasitic Symbiots have drained civilization of resources and hope. Superstition has displaced scientific inquiry. As the game opens, an uneasy peace exists between the ambitious Emperor of the Known Worlds, the avaricious Merchant League, and the repressive and mysterious Church. The history is staggeringly complex and — with an engaging mix of fantasy, space opera, and horror — as rich as any role-playing game has to offer. Should the game go under, the designers ought be able to find work as novelists; there's enough raw material here for a shelf full of books.

About 80% of the population of the Known Worlds are homebound commoners; that is, they're peasants and cannon fodder. The rest, PCs included, are freemen, unfettered by obligations to Church sects or guilds. To create his PC, a player begins by selecting an archetype from a lengthy list featuring the Hawkwood Noble, Brother Battle Monk, and Vuldrok Raider. He then distributes 20 character points among his Body attributes (Strength, Endurance, Dexterity), Mind attributes (Wits, Perception, Tech), and Spiritual attributes (Passion, Faith, Ego). Another 30 points are spent on skills (Martial Arts, Lockpicking), 10 are spent on benefices (Well-Traveled, Riches), and 40 on blessings (Beauty, Keen Eyes) and occult powers (Crushing Hand, Mind Sight). Depending on his resources and skills, the PC may arm himself with crossbows, assault lasers, and cybernetically enhanced limbs. The PCs are memorable, to say the least; I came up with a shotgun-toting martial artist with multiple limbs, a poison claw, and a cybernetic tentacle.

The basics of task resolution, combat included, are fairly straightforward. The player determines the tasks goal number — analogous to *Traveller's* target number — by adding together the relevant attribute and skill ratings. At his discretion, the referee adjusts the goal number with a situational modifier. The player rolls a 20-sided die. If the roll is equal to or less than the goal number, the PC completes the task. So far, so good. Then, inexplicably, the designers pile on the numbers, adding stuff like effect dice, effect numbers, and complimentary actions, all of which are intended to make task resolution more realistic, but just make it more confusing. Why, for instance, is it necessary for a successful action to generate victory points, requiring yet another table and another set of modifiers? And what, pray tell, is the difference between a Piece of Cake task and a Child's Play task, or, for that matter, an Easy task and an Effortless task? (If I'm reading the table right, Effortless is harder than Child's Play, which is twice as hard as Easy, which is . . . oh, never mind.)

Once the rules have been mastered — a task that's manageable, but no Piece of Cake — the PCs may begin their exploration of the *Fading Suns* universe. Villains abound, such as Sister Tracina Isterot, a part-time pirate and full-time psycho, and Baron Alajandro al-Malik,

an eccentric killer who collects carnivorous plants. The Changed, a secret society of genetically engineered sociopaths, conspire to enslave humanity. Alien fiends like the color-changing Manitar and slaving Night-Crackers lurk in the wastelands. For referees who don't know where to begin, the appendix details the backwater planet of Pandemonium, which can function as a home base for a new party and also serves as the setting for a lively adventure, "Precious Cargo." The adventure, in turn, serves as an introduction to a dangerous segment of the galaxy called the Byzantium Secundus, which, not coincidentally, happens to be the subject of the first supplement. With its meticulous analysis of Byzantium politics, a taut historical overview, and a chapter packed with scenario ideas, *Byzantium Secundus* contains all the ingredients for a thrilling campaign.

Evaluation: The contrast between *Traveller* and *Fading Suns* couldn't be more stark. *Traveller* emphasizes science and technology; *Fading Suns* emphasizes fantasy and the occult. *Traveller* stresses exploration; *Fading Suns* stresses survival. *Traveller* is optimistic and genial; *Fading Suns* is dead serious and dark. But although *Fading Suns* fails to scale the heights of *Traveller* — the setting isn't as rich, and the rules, though solid, aren't nearly as elegant — it succeeds on its own terms, evoking a vividly imagined future where street smarts count more than computer literacy, where betrayal and despair are more common than sunshine. With nearly 50 pages of background to digest, it's not the easiest game to get into. But for players who like a little anguish with their space opera, it's worth the effort. (Information: Holistic Design Inc., 5002-HN. Royal Atlanta Dr., Tucker, GA 30084.)

Gatecrasher Second Edition* game



208-page softcover book

Grey Ghost Games, Inc.

\$19

Design: Michael Lucas

Editing: James Burr, Jasan Eckert, Susan Gross-Gavula, Debra Haberland, Mark Moellering, Scott Rutter, Josh Saulnier, Alex Williams, and Ann Dupuis

Illustrations: Heather Bruton, Bradley K. McDevitt, H.J. McKinney, Christina Wald, and Tonia Walden

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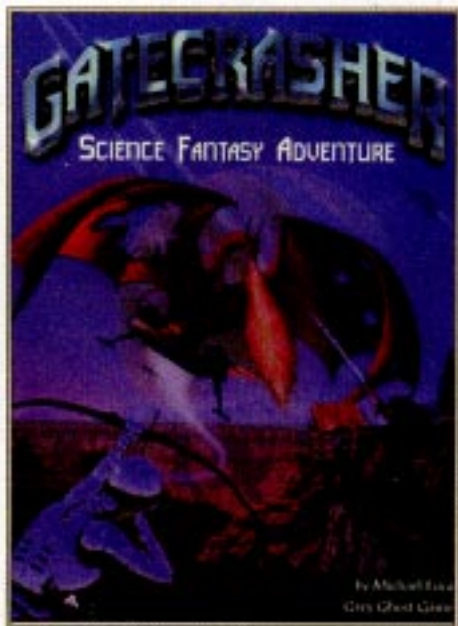
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Like *Fading Suns*, *Gatecrasher* also mixes science-fiction with a generous dose of fantasy. Unlike *Fading Suns*, *Gatecrasher* is feather-light, as goofy as a day at the beach with the Smurfs; this is a game with creatures called Golf Balls From Hell and Killer Pancakes. It's also the first RPG based on the *Fudge** game system, the best universal system since the *GURPS** game. (For more about *Fudge*, see *DRAGON*® Magazine issue #225).

The second edition jettisons the rules of the first edition (a good move; the original rules, by an outfit called Hot Tub Dragon, were a bit clunky), but retains the appealing premise. Seems that way back when — the year 3,000,000,001 B.C., to be precise — a pair of black holes bumped into each other and tore a hole in the fabric of the universe. A tidal wave of magic poured through the hole, spawning a legion of dragons, unicorns, and spell-casters. In time, the hole sealed, and magic all but disappeared. A frustrated wizard named Keorinthol the Incredible attempted to re-open the hole with a *create really big interdimensional gate* spell, but died in the process. Two thousand years later, a grizzled prospector inadvertently activated the gate, and magic poured through again. This time, the universe went nuts. By the 24th Century, the era of *Gatecrasher*, the skies had turned yellow, school kids were sprouting horns, and at Earth's North Pole, a mysterious fat man had set up shop to construct gaudy toys and rocket-powered reindeer.

In a setting this chaotic, it's not surprising that players can generate just about any kind of PCs they like. Angels,

orcs, lycanthropes, and wyverns are among the possibilities, all with wacky enhancements like extra eyes, tool generation (fingers turn into screwdrivers), and gender transformation (males become females at will, and vice versa). To create one of these weirdoes, the player assigns a fixed number of levels (not what you think; I'll explain in a minute) to a variety of attributes, skills, and powers. Considering the complexity of the characters, the system is surprisingly smooth, and the characters, to put it mildly, are unlike any you'll encounter in other sci-fi games.

In place of numerical ratings, *Gatecrasher* substitutes ordinary words called — you guessed it — levels. The highest level is Superb, followed by Great, Good, Fair, Mediocre, Poor, and Terrible. When a PC wants to attempt a task (identifying a snake), the referee decides the relevant skill (Biology, in which the PC has a level of Poor) and assigns a difficulty level (Good; it's a rare snake). The player rolls percentile dice, which generate a modifier from -4 to +4. The modifier boosts or reduces the level of the skill. A modifier of, say, +1 boosts the Poor level to Mediocre. Unfortunately, the modified level must equal or exceed the difficulty level for the task to succeed, so in this case, the PC fails to identify the snake. It's a solid system, but it'd be a lot easier to navigate if the rules weren't so fuzzy. For instance, the definitions of the levels aren't clearly explained; what exactly's the difference between Fair and Mediocre? Likewise, the skill descriptions are way too skimpy; here's the entire description of the Fast Talk skill: "Convincing people through rapid, confusing double-talk." A veteran referee ought to be able to fill in the blanks, but a novice may be in for some headaches.

Though designer Mike Lucas doesn't go into great detail about the setting, he's loaded chapters like "The Tourist's Guide to the Solar System" with tantalizing tidbits. From an unknown location in deep space, intergalactic radio station WILT broadcasts an eclectic mix of celebrity interviews, social commentary, and illicitly obtained government secrets. The farmers of Pluto tend to panic and run at the sight of a laser pistol. Inhabited asteroids have names like Alice Springs, Cheesers, and This Stinking Rock.

Evaluation: Despite the cartoonish premise, *Gatecrasher* is more than a novelty. It's a serious RPG, with the

potential for exciting, involving adventures (which you'll have to invent yourself; the book contains not a single ready-to-go scenario). The Killer Pancakes may sound benign, but they whiz through the air like jet-propelled buzz saws, slicing the heads off anyone in their way. The Golf Balls From Hell are flying piranhas, stripping the flesh off their victims in a flurry of tiny bites. I'm not convinced a game this whimsical can support a long campaign. But if you're in the market for a diversion, you could do worse than *Gatecrasher*. Besides, aren't you dying to know what's stinking up This Stinking Rock? (Information: Grey Ghost Press, Inc., P.O. Box 838, Randolph, MA 02368-0838)

Short and sweet

What's that? You want *more* science-fiction? Okey-dokey . . .

BattleTech Fourth Edition game*, by Jordan K. Weisman, L. Ross Babcock III, Sam Lewis, Bryan Nystul, and Michael Stackpole. FASA Corporation, \$25. **The Fall of Terra**, by Chris Hartford. FASA Corporation, \$12.

No science-fiction survey would be complete without a nod to *BattleTech**, which, next to *Traveller*, stands as SF's most durable game. Since it first appeared in 1984, this board game of Godzilla-sized walking tanks has generated hundreds of supplements, dozens of novels, even a collectible card game. If you've wondered what all the fuss is about, *Fourth Edition* is a good place to find out. The boxed set contains everything you need to get your Mechs up and running: two crisply written rulebooks, a thick booklet of record sheets, 48 stand-up playing pieces, and as a bonus, a sheet of 144 insignia stickers you can attach to the playing pieces, the refrigerator, or your cat. A snap to learn, *BattleTech* is as exciting as it is addictive; there are few gaming experiences more satisfying than blasting giant robots into scrap metal.

If you're a *BattleTech* veteran happy with the third edition (editions one and two are obsolete), there's no compelling reason to invest in version four. Instead, I direct your attention *The Fall of Terra*, a compilation of first-rate scenarios dealing with the control of planet Earth. Rules for mud and snow make movement more challenging than usual, as do the fog banks and planes of ice; a slipping, sliding Mech is not a pretty sight. Note that several of the scenarios

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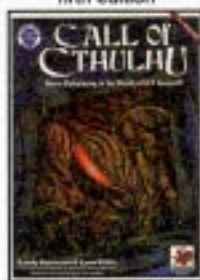
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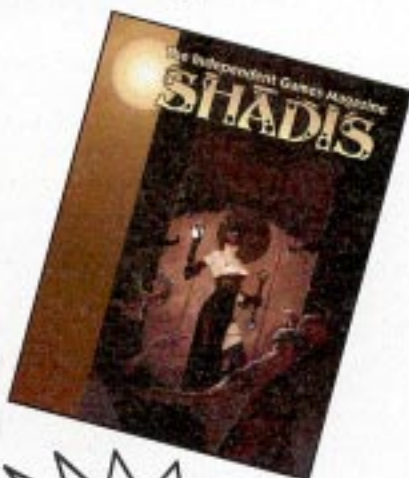
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require the *BattleSpace*, *MechWarrior* and *MechWarrior Companion* supplements. But if you're a vet, you already have all these, right?

Galaxy Guide 3: The Empire Strikes Back by Michael Stern with Pablo Hidalgo. West End Games, \$15. **Shadows of the Empire Planets Guide**, by John Beyer, Chris Doyle, Sterling Hershey, Tim O'Brien, Bill Smith, Paul Sudlow, and Anthony Russo. West End Games, \$15. **Endgame** by Timothy O'Brien, George Strayton, and Eric S. Trautmann. West End Games, \$18.

Here's some more good stuff for the Star Wars* game, beginning with **The Empire Strikes Back** an update of an old first edition sourcebook, bringing it in line with the second edition rules. The overviews of Bespin and Hoth are essential reading for role-players wishing to recreate scenes from the film. But be forewarned: if you purchased the *Movie Trilogy Sourcebook* from a couple years back, you may already have all the *Empire* material you need.

Shadows of the Empire covers the planetary settings from the Steve Perry novel of the same name. You don't need to know the novel, however, to understand the sourcebook, thanks to the vivid, campaign-ready descriptions of the jungles of Rodia and the Vergesso Asteroid Field.

The must-buy in this batch is **Endgame**, the final chapter of the epic DarkStryder campaign (discussed in *DRAGON Magazine* issue #230). **Endgame**

not only brings the adventure to a jaw-dropping conclusion, it also reveals — at last — the secrets of the DarkStryder homeworld. Familiarity with previous DarkStryder products (specifically, the *DarkStryder Campaign* boxed set, *Kathol Outback*, and *Kathol Rift*) is required. That's bad news if you're on a budget. So skip a few pizzas; the most engaging Star Wars campaign to date is worth the money.

Star Trek: The Card Game*, by Jeff Grubb, Don Perrin, and Margaret Weis. Flee/Skybox International, \$9 (65-card starter deck), \$2.75 (15-card booster pack).

Not to be confused with the *Star Trek: The Next Generation Customizable Card Game** (see below), this slick, fast-paced card game derives from the original '60s series. To win, a player must accumulate 25 experience counters (not included) by completing episodes, each episode consisting of a mission card, a plot card, and a discovery card. Episodes also require the deployment of crew cards with the necessary attributes; Yeoman Ross, for instance, has a high Logic rating, but she's low in Combat. Meanwhile, your opponent is busy screwing you up with aliens, seductresses, and other obstacles, all of which may be overcome with the right combination of crew cards and dumb luck. Like the series, the game is action-intensive and a little silly; when you least expect it, one of Mudd's Women may suddenly show up to save the day. That said, **Star Trek** has two critical elements in its favor: (1) You can play a credible game with just one deck. (2) Both sides use the same Kirk, Spock, and McCoy cards, guaranteeing equal access to the series' stars and minimizing the number of fist fights.

Q-Continuum. No credits given. Decipher, Inc., \$3 (15-card booster pack).

Not to be confused with *Star Trek: The Card Game* (see above), the second expansion set for the *Star Trek: The Next Generation Customizable Card Game* focuses on Q, the omnipotent oddball who caused Captain Picard to pull out what was left of his hair. Along with 121 new images, the expansion introduces a mechanic that allows each player to dip into a 13-card sidebar to improve his hand or derail his opponent. As for the cards themselves, they're pretty clever, with titles like *Go Back Whence Thou Camest* and *Vicious Animal Things*. My favorite: *Wesley Gets the Point*, which

instantly kills Wesley Crusher, the galaxy's most annoying dweeb.

Armistice game*, by John Jay Wirth. Renaissance Ink, \$10.

This 22-page pamphlet provides thoughtful, clearly explained guidelines for staging near-future miniatures battles. Units include heavy tanks mounted with plasma cannons, and infantry men armed with belch guns and mine layers. Players take turns moving units, firing weapons, and marking damage. Experienced generals can experiment with liquid flame, helicopters, and a scenario set in Australia featuring Aborigine terrorists. I hope the designer doesn't take this the wrong way, but for a military simulation, **Armistice** is actually kind of, er, cute. (Information: Renaissance Ink, 335 Torrance Avenue, Vestal, NY 13850.)

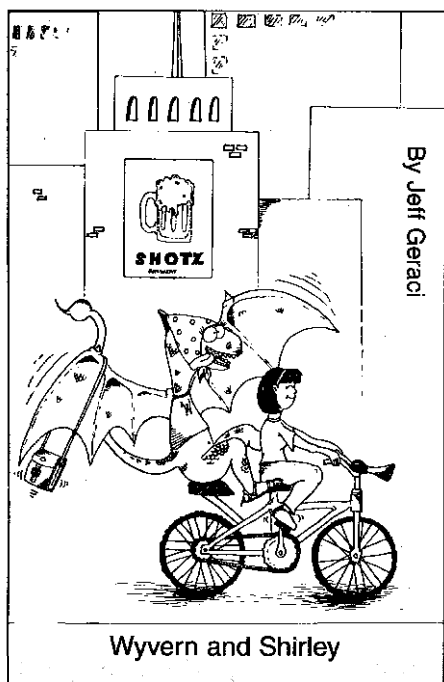
Solarquest game*, by Val Broast. Strunk Games, \$30.

In this lavish boxed board game, players maneuver little plastic space ships around a map of the solar system, buying planets, charging rent to trespassers, and building financial empires. That's right — it's the **Monopoly*** game in outer space. Despite the absurd premise — buying planets? — the rules are surprisingly sophisticated. For instance, players must keep track of their fuel expenditures on a Fuel Tank Hydrons display; anyone who runs out of fuel is lost in space and out of the game. A ship must remain in orbit around a planet until it builds up enough speed to escape the gravitational pull. Should an enemy ship get in your way, you can incinerate him with laser beams. Plus, the game boasts terrific components, including a thick packet of interplanetary currency, a mounted map board, and 50 metal Fuel Stations. Anyone in the market for Mercury? (Information: Strunk Games, P.O. Box 64, Eustis, ME 04936.)



Rick Swan has designed and edited more than 50 role-playing products, including the Complete Wizard's, Rangers, Paladin's, and Barbarian's Handbooks for TSR, Inc. You can write to him at 2620 30th Street, Des Moines, IA 50310; enclose a self-addressed envelope if you'd like a reply.

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Clack *(continued from page 120)*

release, New Millennium plans an online Web strategy game in conjunction with Infomagic, Inc. Players create their own star systems, explore surrounding space, and engage in trade, diplomacy, intrigue, espionage, and combat with other star systems. New Millennium also plans related role-playing and board games, live action rules, and merchandising. Each of these new products will affect or be affected by the online game. Point your Web browser to www.starshield.com for details. (myacks@aol.com)

Kissed and Made Up

In 1995 Decipher, Inc. (Norfolk, VA), publisher of the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* Customizable Card Game*, had an extremely public falling-out (in an Internet newsgroup, no less — as public as you can get, short of prime-time TV) with the Trek licensor, Paramount Pictures. At that time Decipher president Warren Holland announced that the company would not renew the license after it expired in late 1997.

But last Thanksgiving, Holland announced the culmination of six months of secret negotiations with Paramount: the renewal of the *NextGen* license, plus additional licenses for the *DeepSpace 9* and *Voyager* companion series and the most recent Trek movie, *First Contact*. Decipher will use all these properties in expansion sets for the existing card game. A *First Contact* expansion appears this fall, followed next year by sets based on the other new licenses.

Holland says, "It is unusual for Paramount to do an 'umbrella' license like this. The fact that they were willing to do this shows the renewed respect they have for this game, and their intentions to support it." The game's fans helped renew the companies' relationship: "Paramount specifically mentioned in our negotiations that they read those [fan] letters, and it helped them realize how important the game was to many people."

The card game license for the original 1966-69 Trek series is held by Fleer/SkyBox, which published *Star Trek: The Card Game** last year. But an interesting twist of licensing gives Decipher roundabout access to the classic charac-

ters: In a *DeepSpace 9* time-travel episode this season, the *DS9* crew (through the magic of *Forrest Gump* - style computer graphics) took part in a famous 1967 episode of the old series, "The Trouble with Tribbles." Holland says that because the episode shows Kirk, Spock, McCoy, and other characters from the original show, Decipher can publish cards based on them — in that particular episode. It's an interesting world, licensing. (DCustServe@decipher.com; www.decipher.com)

Notes from the Field

After over four years at Steve Jackson Games (Austin, TX) — an impressively long tenure by company standards — Derek Percy has departed. Percy was the "architect" at *Pyramid* magazine and designer of the long-awaited *In Nomine** RPG, which finally appeared in January. Though the company had labored on the game (licensed from a French RPG) for over three years, the finished product is a ground-up redesign that began just last September. "I think it turned out okay," Percy says in a tone of wonder. He's contributing to two *IN* supplements and exploring publication options for a translation of another French fantasy RPG, *Bloodlust*. The *In Nomine* game casts players as either modern-day angels or their fiendish adversaries. Percy modeled one character group on SJG president Steve Jackson himself; whether it's an angel group or otherwise, Clack isn't saying. . . .

Infinite Imagination (Nanuet, NY) is touting its *Quest for Power** game as "the next generation in role-playing." It's a "game-masterless role-playing card game" for one to six players. You lay out, face down, an eight-by-eight grid of cards (monster encounters, attribute checks, healing places, and plot cards). As the party moves across the grid and reveals cards, they generate the scenario's fantasy storyline using the "Random Adventure Game Generating System," or R.A.G.G.S. (Clack is not making this up.) Not collectible, *Quest*'s fixed 104-card boxed set also includes dice, character markers, and a 150-page rulebook; a game takes about two and a half hours. Sounds much like Games Workshop's *Talisman*, White Wolf's *Arcadia* trading card games, and a

Japanese game called *The Four Queens* — but see for yourself. *Quest for Power* should be out in August. (infinite@j51.com)

It wouldn't be a "Clack" column without Gold Rush Games (Elk Grove, CA), the company with the highest press-release-to-product ratio in gaming history. Gold Rush has assumed distribution and sales of the *Legacy: War of Ages** game from Black Gate Publishing (Portsmouth, VA); Gold Rush also has a license to produce *Legacy* adventures. The 1994 *Legacy* game, by Brandon Blackmoor, adapts the style of White Wolf Game Studio's *Vampire: The Masquerade** RPG to a background very strikingly reminiscent of the first *High/under* movie. Gold Rush now distributes Black Gate, *Nightshift/Crunchy Frog*, and *Australian Realms* magazine; has licenses for *Champions*, *Traveller**, and *Legacy* supplements; and is working on two new RPGs, the *Usagi Yojimbo** and *Sengoku** games. It seems almost inevitable that the company will soon publish more than one product annually. (BBBlackmoor@aol.com; GoldrushG@aol.com)



Freelancer Allen Varney is running game programming at this year's World Science Fiction Convention, LoneStarCon 2 in San Antonio, TX, Aug. 28-Sept. 1, 1997. Send gossip to APVarney@aol.com.

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The Current Clack

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Chaosium Rides High

With the huge success of its *Mythos** trading card game, Chaosium (Oakland, CA) is prospering for the first time in many years. Having hired half a dozen new employees and thereby doubled in size, the company has already released an expanded third edition of that classic 1983 *Call of Cthulhu** campaign, Larry DiTillio's *Musks of Nyarlathotep* (Current Clacks choice for best scenario ever). Chaosium has also announced an ambitious monthly release schedule for the *Call of Cthulhu* line (Clacks choice for second-best RPG ever) and a new fiction line based on Greg Stafford's *Pendragon** RPG (Clacks vote for #1).

Recent CoC products include a huge fourth edition of the *Dreamlands* supplement, a new compact edition of *Trail of Tsathoggua*, and a volume reprinting the late author/editor Lin Carter's *Xothic Cycle* stories. (With names like these, you see why Chaosium once crashed its word processor's spell-checker.) Editor Shannon Appel hints at upcoming CoC releases: "the long-awaited *Mountains of Madness*, new editions of *The Fungi from Yuggoth* and *Cthulhu by Gaslight*, and sourcebooks on New Orleans and the Bermuda Triangle."

Curiously, the *Pendragon* Fiction line's first release isn't fiction, but reference. Phyllis Ann Karr's *The Arthurian Companion* is a revised edition of her 1983 *King Arthur Companion*, one of the first supplements for the game's original edition and long out of print.

Of course, the company doesn't intend to kill its new cash cow. This year sees two *Mythos* releases and, next spring *The Eternal Champion*, a new trading card game based on Michael Moorcock's fantasy novels and on Chaosium's licensed *Elric!** RPG. There had been talk of a card game licensed from the hit computer game *DOOM*, but that project fell like a machine-gunned monster.

Chaosium's fan organization, the Cult of Chaos, costs \$25/year in the US, \$30 in Canada, and \$35 overseas. A news release says, "You'll get the quarterly *Starry Wisdom* newsletter, a subscription to either *Shadis* or *InQuest* magazine (your choice), a 10% discount off Wizard's Attic products, and whatever other free promos we come up with." (chaosium@chaosium.com; www.sirius.com/~chaosium/chaosium.html)

West End Changes Focus

So far this year West End Games (Honesdale, PA) has focused exclusively on its *Star Wars** game, but this summer the company introduces two new licensed RPGs: one based on the summer movie *Men in Black* the other on the *Hercules* and *Xena* fantasy TV series. Both use the *Star Wars* "D6 system." (Current Clack continues to hear rumors of another big license in the works: at the last GEN CON® Game Fair, several West End staffers were wearing *X-Files* T-shirts.)

West End has put most of its *MasterBook** role-playing lines on hiatus; only the *Indiana Jones** RPG survives. The *MasterBook* system evolved from Greg Farshtey's 1992 *Shatterzone** space opera RPG, which in turn derived from Greg Gorden's *TORG** game (1990). Both lines enjoyed success for a time, but the *Shatterzone* game is now defunct, and West End has handed support of the *TORG* "Infiniverse" to a small publisher that has not yet published a product. Aside from the popular *Indiana Jones* game, the licensed *MasterBook* properties (the *Tales From the Crypt: Tank Girl**, *Necroscope**, *World of Aden**, and *Species** games) had mixed success, and the line's sole original property (*Bloodshadows**) never found a large audience.

West End plans to resume the *Indy* line in late summer; its licensing contract with Lucasfilm obligates West End to

produce at least four *Indy* products a year. (Contact: WEGEdit@aol.com)

New media Tie-In RPGs

WildStorm: Pinnacle Entertainment (Blacksburg, VA), publisher of last year's well-received *Deadlands: The Weird West* horror-Western RPG, is designing a super-hero role-playing game based on the Image Comics characters produced by Jim Lee's WildStorm studio. WildStorm will produce and distribute the game, planned for release this summer. The main rulebook features the WildC.A.T.s; sourcebooks based on WildStorm's other comic book titles (*Gen-13*, *DV8*, and more) are planned.

"The link between the two companies is Matt Forbeck, co-designer of *WildStorms*: the popular collectible card game from WildStorm Productions," says a press release. Forbeck previously designed the *Western Hero* supplement for Hero Games and WildStorm's *Fast Break** basketball trading card game, among others. "We're going for a real introductory level game here," says Forbeck. "We're hardly going to compete with [the *Champions** or *GURPS** games] for number crunching." Forbeck would like the system to be adaptable to non-WildStorm campaigns, "but I'm not interested in overcomplicating the game for the sake of making it more generic." (PEGShane@aol.com; www.peginc.com)

Starshield: New Millennium Entertainment (Albany, NY), which published the *Conspiracy X** RPG and the excellent but unfortunately dead *Battlelords** trading card game, now plans an ambitious line of games licensed from the "Starshield" novel series by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman, creators of the DRAGONLANCE® saga. The first novel in the series, *Starshield: Sentinel*, appeared from Del Rey Books in November. For its initial

Continued on page 119

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