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A return to the Realms for a look at a dozen deadly daggers.

Through the Looking Glass — Robert Bigelow
History on instant replay: the sinking of the Bismarck.

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Cover

The heroes have found their dragon—but will they survive the final confrontation? Denis Beauvais captures the terror and excitement as the adventurers meet their quarry—or their doom.
Dear Dragon,

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Haifa, Israel

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—DMGR1 Campaign Sourcebook and Catacomb Guide: You've already mentioned this product, which contains nearly 100 pages on the art of DMing and another 23 pages on setting up detailed dungeon campaigns. This is one of the best DM’s aids ever published.

—Dungeon Master’s Design Kit: The fundamentals of adventure design are laid out (complete with organizing forms) in this accessory, which comes in three booklets. Setting up, detailing, playing through, and wrapping up adventures are covered in great detail. This is another extremely valuable product.

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Dear Dragon,

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

DM do’s & don’ts

Dear Dragon,

I've played the AD&D® game for quite a time, and I was wondering if you could publish an article about being a good Dungeon Master . . . maybe something like what the DM should do and what he shouldn’t.

As stated in the AD&D 2nd Edition Dungeon Master’s Guide, in “The Fine Art of Being a DM,” being a good DM “involves a lot more than knowing the rules” (page 7). Later on is written: “There are hundreds of tricks, shortcuts, and simple principles that can make you a better, more dramatic, and more creative game master. But you won’t find them in the Dungeon Masters Guide.”

Well, in the AD&D Campaign Sourcebook and Catacomb Guide, I have found some answers and a lot of help, but it is not enough. So please, I'm sure there are a lot of people who will appreciate such an article.

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A round the roadblocks

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The answers (sort of) at last!

Last month, we published an editorial test for everyone who ever wondered what it was like to work on the TSR magazine staff. This month, we present the answers, with a little philosophy on editing and some thoughts on what we look for in the submissions that our readers send to us.

Editing fantasy game material is a demanding job. You have to read not only the current rules for a game, but you might need to know the old game rules, too, as well as have a broad knowledge of medieval civilization, world mythology, hand-to-hand weapons, modern fantasy literature, and so on. On top of that, you must have a strong grasp of editing skills, knowing where to put the commas, how to reword an unclear sentence, how to check a quoted reference, and where to find the information you need on a particular monster or character class.

When editing, style is important. There are often no fixed and absolutely correct ways to edit game material, but you have to pick a way that works and stick to it. Consistency is critical to an editor in any field, but in this particular field you will drown in a sea of chaos without it.

And now, the answers. As you look them over, you’ll see that there was often more than one correct answer to a question. And, indeed, some questions were booby-trapped. In fact, they all were booby-trapped. Editorial comments from staff members others than myself (Roger) are in brackets and italics.

1. Gone are the days when you could stick the letter “s” on the end of a monster’s name and have that be a plural. What you often have instead are plurals like the following, which we have verified as best we can in AD&D® game books, dictionaries, and other sources:
   a. Allosaurus (because this sounds rather clumsy, you could use a simpler but broader term, “allosaur,” though paleontologists prefer to avoid the issue by using the species name as an adjective for “herd” or “family,” as in “the Allosaurus herd”; take your pick)
   b. ballistae (which is preferred) or ballistas (this copy the styles used for “medusa”—the jellyfish, not the monster—in some dictionaries) [I hate “ballistae.” Count my vote for “ballistas.” —Barbara]
   c. cyclopes (not “cyclopes”)
   d. jermalaine (same as the singular form)
   e. ninja (there is no difference between singular and plural forms in Japanese)

2. Medusa was the name of one of three monstrous sisters, the Gorgons, who had snaky hair and could turn men to stone with a glance. Being the only mortal sister, Medusa fell victim to Perseus’s sword and mirrored shield. Thus, answers (a) and (c) are correct. I have no idea how the word “gorgon” came to represent a metal-scaled bull with a petrifying breath.

3. Due to an editorial error, the AD&D 2nd Edition Monstrous Compendium spells the AD&D 1st Edition monster huecuva (from the FIEND FOLIO® tome) as “heucuva” (c). The latter is now the official name of this creature.

4. The best answer to the question “What is a Bohemian ear-spoon?” may be f. Ornitholestes (same as the singular form; see also “Allosauruses”)
   g. phlogiston (this word has no plural form)
   h. portcullises
   i. samurai (see “ninja”)
   j. shadowpeople
   k. shamans (some say “shamen,” but that’s wrong) [What about “shiwomen”? —Barbara] (“Shufolk”? “Shaguya”? —Dale] (Nope.)
   l. sons of Kyuss
   m. svirinbli (a weird one, rather like the D&D® game race of the faedornae, whose singular form is “faedome”)
   n. violet fungus (this word is plural, but it is often listed in AD&D game references in this manner, contrary to normal style, and I’ve heard some people say “violet fungis”; the singular form, of course, is “violet fungus”)

5. The most correct answer is (b). A trapper stays on the floor, and so does gray ooze, which does not stick to walls. Editors must constantly look up monster references since so many of them seem so much alike—especially the various slimes, molds, fungi, oozes, jellies, etc. [I voted for (d); then I didn’t have to look up all those monsters! —Barbara]

6. If you kept up with the AD&D 1st Edition books, you might have thought the only species name that was correctly spelled was “kopoacinth” —but that name was changed in the Monstrous Compendium, Volume Two (see question #3). Correct forms of all the given monster names, using the AD&D 2nd Edition rules, follow:
   a. bulette
d. morey
e. kapoacinth
f. obliviax
g. phlogiston (this word has no plural form; see also “Allosauruses”)
h. yuan-ti
i. sons of Kyuss
j. shadowpeople
k. shamans (some say “shamen,” but that’s wrong) [What about “shiwomen”? —Barbara] (“Shufolk”? “Shaguya”? —Dale] (Nope.)
m. svirinbli (a weird one, rather like the D&D® game race of the faedornae, whose singular form is “faedome”)

7. This question deals with creativity, the elusive quality that can make or break a module or article submission. Thus it receives a longer-than-usual answer.
   The best answer here is (c): We, meaning TSR, have never published a dungeon or setting based on a klein bottle, but we have published many other environmental horrors. A möbius-strip dungeon was in “The Curse and the Quest,” in DUNGEON® issue #26. Baba Yaga’s home is a tesseract in “The Dancing Hut,” in DRAGONS® issue #83. Time-travel paradoxes infest the dungeon in “A Hitch in Time,” in DUNGEON issue #24. “Forbidden Mountain” in DUNGEON #6, details a completely non-Euclidean dungeon that will have mappers in fits. Longtime readers might recall the “episodic dungeon” composed solely of illusions (all derived from dreams, too) in “The Titan’s Dream,” from DUNGEON issue #2. Finally, neither DUNGEON Adventures nor DRAGONS® Magazine has ever published a dungeon based upon Lewis Carroll’s stories about Alice, the TSR Games Division has done so twice (EX1 Dungeonland and EX2 The Land Beyond the Magic Mirror, both unfortunately now out of print).

This listing does not scratch the surface of the bizarre settings and dungeon twists introduced into other TSR fantasy modules. D&D module CM4 Earthshaker has a
“dungeon” inside a gigantic steam-powered robot. The interior of a crashed starship (full of electronic robots) is explored in the old AD&D module Expedition to the Barrier Peaks, republished as part of S1-4 Realms of Horror. IMI The Immortal Storm takes high-level D&D game heroes to Chicago; the AD&D adventure “The City Beyond the Gate,” from DRAGON issue #100, takes place in London. The Demonweb, a geometric-paradox dungeon with an impossibly interwoven series of corridors and rooms, appeared in the AD&D module Q1 Queen of the Demonweb Pits (reprinted in GDQ1-7 Queen of the Spiders). A dungeon set up like a sliding-square puzzlebox appears in DUNGEON issue #29 (“Ex Libris”), and a dungeon whose roofers are guarded by a deck of many things was designed for DUNGEON issue #19 (“House of Cards”).

We’ve also seen and printed settings including a mind-flayer spacecraft, a dwarven planetarium, a dungeon in a giant volcano, a sewer-system dungeon, two environments we’ve seen are a buried fortress, a dungeon built into a buried flying crystal over a lava pit, an astral plane, a dungeon carved into a tree, a dragon’s skeleton, an undersea dragon’s house. —Barbara

8. Surprise, surprise! They’re all horrible! Opinions here vary widely, but I personally think the answer is (d), because I cannot use the tinker invention tables in DRAGONLANCE™ Adventures to save my life. As a side note, AD&D game players unfamiliar with the delights of the hive-brood should get a copy of AC9 Creature Catalogue and look it up on pages 68-70. If this isn’t one of the most dangerous and complicated creatures in any role-playing game system, I don’t know what is (for an example in game play, see the D&D module “Of Nests and Nations,” in DUNGEON issue #13, in which a few of these critters take on an entire city). Authors should triple-check all complicated character and monster statistics to make life easier for the editors. We will be grateful for it. [The number of spells in (a) just make me tremble. – Dale] [I’m personally glad to see the last of the AD&D 1st Edition (non-Oriental) monk. – Barbara]

9. There are two answers here. The behemoth (a) was an updated hippo from the Monster Manual II that was never converted to the AD&D 2nd Edition game, as far as I know. And, so far, no Monstrous Compendium appendix (or any other AD&D game source) has mentioned anything called a “goliath” (e). The gargantua, greater titan, and colossus have appeared in the Kara-Tur, Outer Planes, and SPELLJAMMER™ appendices, and the levianth is hidden in the “Whale” entry in the Monstrous Compendium, Volume Two. This and some later questions (#16 and 17) point out the need to be as familiar as possible with the game material you edit.

10. All of the names are misspelled. I was being mean with this question, but the point here is that monsters with unfamiliar names (and especially Oriental and other foreign ones) should be carefully checked. Sometimes only an apostrophe is missing, but it’s still wrong. The correct forms are:
   a. hengeseykai
   b. dota’cu’t’c
   c. shirokinukatsukami (the longest monster name in the AD&D game; please don’t send us an article or module on it!) [Or we’ll send one of these to your house. – Dale] [Spoilsport! – Barbara]
   d. korobokuru
   e. shan sao

11. This was a trick question, since “sorcerer” is misspelled and thus will appear in no dictionary at all (except for listings of frequently misspelled words). Excluding that entry, the answer depends heavily on which dictionary you’re using. I cannot find “ninja” or “psionics” in Webster’s Third New International Dictionary (unabridged), though I’ve seen the word “psionics” used elsewhere in science-fiction and fantasy literature. “Ninja” doesn’t even appear in some Japanese dictionaries, I’m told. Smaller dictionaries may have none of the correctly spelled entries here. This problem is sometimes a bane to gaming editors, but you can always fake it and go on from there.

12. You’ll find the rules for spellfire in FR7 Hall of Heroes, on pages 49-50. The “sage” who writes “Sage Advice” gets asked this question all the time.

13. As far as I am concerned, the best answer is (c). A good author can come up with a way around everything else, but you can’t use Godzilla in a detailed game module unless you have the rights to do so from the company that licenses him. (You can mention Godzilla in an article and discuss his movies, but you cannot produce products based on him.) [But you could change “Godzilla” to “ Herman,” and the PCs still wouldn’t stand a chance. I vote for (d). – Barbara]

14. You might find this part boring [and it is – Dale], but editors who don’t pay attention to their company’s trademarks will get their hands slapped or worse. Trademarks are among a company’s most valuable assets and should be protected, even if readers find it annoying (who pays you, anyway?). The answers are:
   a. FIEND FOLIO™ tome (originally a ™ but upgraded later)
   b. POLYHEDRON™ Newszine
   c. CHAINMAIL game (no trademark!)
   d. HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set (this was trademarked after the set came out)

15. None of these words must be hyphenated. In fact, depending on which game company you work for, which department you’re in, and which dictionary you use, there are any number of ways to write these words. Take your pick, but whatever you choose, be consistent. The italicized words are currently preferred by DRAGON Magazine staffers, but we might change our minds eventually and adopt a new “permanent” style.
   a. chainmail, chain-mail, or chain-mail (as an adjectival form)
   b. demihuman or demi-human
   c. spellcaster, spell-caster, or spell caster
   d. greatsword or great sword
   e. freelance, free-lance, or free lance
   f. roleplay, role-play, or role play

16. Here’s another question related to staying abreast of the latest game developments [I thought of this question. – Dale]. The AD&D 2nd Edition statistics for derro are described in (c) WGR1 Greyhawk Ruins and (e) WGA3 Flames of the Falcon; the statistics sheets are identical (see #17). Derro do appear in the Monster Manual II, but that’s an AD&D 1st Edition product. They were cut from the GREYHAWK® appendix to the Monstrous Compendium for lack of space, but you wouldn’t know that. Some readers may remember that the DRAGONLANCE® saga included derro as a degenerate dwarven race, the Theiwar, in some early modules; the Monstrous Compendium, DRAGONLANCE appendix, describes Theiwar in terms making it clear that they are very much like derro.

17. You look in the Monstrous Compendium, Outer Planes appendix, under (d) yugoloth [This was my question, too. – Dale]. Game editors need to be aware of the latest products and how they will affect the material they publish. I went for almost a year before discovering that derro had been published in AD&D 2nd Edition format in two different modules, both major releases.

Continued from page 86
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Preparation is everything
New Weapons For Old

Add an exotic edge to combat in the AD&D® 1st Edition game

by Jordan Clarke Hayes

Most players in AD&D® 1st Edition campaigns own copies of the 1st Edition Players Handbook and Unearthed Arcana. These two books allow players access to the statistics of every weapon imaginable—almost. Wouldn’t it be refreshing for the Dungeon Master to surprise the local party with a few entirely new blades, crossbows, and similar instruments of orc-felling? The following weapons are intended for use by DMs who wish to add extra spice to their fantasy battles.

Basilard: The basilard is derived from a short, bladed weapon of the same name employed between the 12th and 15th centuries in medieval battle. The basilard differs to a small but significant degree from a short sword in balance and shape. The hilt of a basilard has a lopsided H-shape, with the crosspiece of the letter being the weapon’s handle and the upper legs of the H being placed as the blade’s hand guards. The weapon’s blade is a slim, perfect V-shape from point to hilt with no expanse of metal formed by parallel edges, as is usual with most swords. Due to its shape, the basilard is an exceptional stabbing and thrusting weapon that can function as a chopping device if necessary.

The basilard’s speed factor of 2.5 places it between a short sword and a dagger in balance. No nondwarves desire to employ such weapons, because the dwarven style of forging their claymores yields a blade with a weight imbalance beneficial to wielders with a low center of gravity, but feeling quite odd and fatiguing to taller and less stocky warriors. In game terms, this peculiarity can be handled by requiring the use of two proficiency slots when any taller race gains proficiency with the dwarven claymore. Halflings cannot employ the dwarven claymore, and only the largest and most able of gnomes (both surface and deep) would use the weapon, although gnomes suffer no penalty when learning to use it. No nondwarf can gain weapon specialization with the dwarven claymore, in any event.

For a dwarf, a dwarven claymore would cost about 22 gp. The price would, in all likelihood, be significantly higher for a member of another race.

Club, dwarven war: This is a fairly common weapon among the older houses of the bearded folk, but it is not often found in the use of other races. A massive weapon in anyone’s hands, the dwarven war club is a large, steel-reinforced weapon appearing much like a mace, doubly thick at the striking end than at the tail. It is used by dwarven priests and warriors. War clubs are made from heavy wood with an iron or lead core, inlaid with round or slightly pointed studs of steel. These projecting studs add a great deal of bludgeoning weight to the war club, making the weapon very effective against heavy armors that absorb the shock of lighter blows, but less effective against light armor that allows the wearer to avoid such attacks. This club is a two-handed weapon for dwarves and all other beings of human size or less, but it can be wielded one-handed by larger folk such as gnolls and ogres. A dwarven war club, because of its size and bulkiness, cannot be used by halflings and gnomes.

Dwarves do not commonly offer such weapons for sale, though members of their own race may purchase an unadorned war club for 10 gp. The bestowing of a dwarven war club upon a nondwarf is an honor similar to the giving of elven chain mail to an outsider by elves. Only those deemed worthy by dwarven standards might be given a chance to take possession of a war club. If an honorable dwarf sees a member of another race bearing a war club obviously taken from a fallen dwarf, his reaction will surely be one of disgust, if not violence.

Dwarves of moderate to high status have war clubs ornately carved and decorated so that the value of these weapons may be significantly higher than their base price. Such carvings often are written lineages dating from the first clan member who employed the war club and lived to pass it on to another of his kin. Despite its worked appearance, there is no such thing as a “dress war club” that exists purely for
show; all are true weapons.

**Crossbow, disk:** This rare form of heavy crossbow fires an extremely thin steel disk from a horizontal shaft. The weapon is decidedly more effective than other crossbows or bows against lightly armored targets at close range, and can inflict severe wounds against them. However, the disk crossbow is not nearly as deadly against well-armored foes.

The disk-firing crossbow resembles a heavy crossbow. A wood block with a slit parallel to the crossbow's handle and the absence of a bolt shaft on top of the crossbow reveals the weapon for what it truly is. Fighters and rangers are the classes most prone to using it.

As with the doubled crossbow, but to an extreme degree, this weapon should be encountered rarely and only in expert militia or mercenary units unless the disk crossbow is added to the list of what characters can purchase at the beginning of a campaign. The fact that the disk crossbow fires a projectile of carefully forged and sharpened metal is a factor that contributes to its rarity, limiting its manufacture to humans, dwarves, and elves.

**Crossbow, doubled:** The doubled crossbow is essentially two light crossbows joined with the same stock and handle. Two separate triggers, side by side, are included along with two separate bolt shafts and strings, one over the other. The design considerably decreases the crossbow's range in comparison to that of the standard light crossbow, although the light crossbow and the doubled crossbow fire exactly the same type of bolt. Both strings of this odd but useful weapon can be cranked back with a single hook, making this a rapid-firing weapon (by AD&D game standards) that can fire two bolts per melee round in the hands of someone who has proficiency with this weapon. A warrior employing the doubled crossbow without having a proficiency with it can fire only one bolt per round until he has a chance to stop firing for one round to reload both parts of the two-fold weapon. Someone with standard light or heavy crossbow proficiency would still be treated as having no proficiency with a doubled crossbow.

A fighter or ranger who gained weapon specialization with a doubled crossbow would get the standard crossbow specialization bonuses, except that additional attacks would not be gained until 13th level. At 13th level and above, the specialist can fire two bolts in the first round and have the weapon cocked and loaded by the end of the round; at the start of the second round, he may fire the two loaded bolts, then have the weapon cocked and loaded again to fire two bolts at the round's end. This rate of fire (two, four, two, four, etc.) continues thereafter. These crossbows are almost exclusively employed by expert missile troops because so few crossbow makers have the skill or knowledge to craft these devices. Humans
and dwarves are the races most favoring their use.

**Mace, great:** The great mace is a larger version of the basic footman’s mace. Its huge, awkward head, when properly wielded, deals crushing blows hindered little by armor of any type. The great mace appears as a standard (if oversized) spiked or studded steel head atop a long, heavy length of wood that is often reinforced with bands of steel that help to prevent the haft from breaking or cracking under the strain of a blow. The limitations of the great mace, like so many heavy melee weapons, are its unwieldy size, great weight, and sheer bulkiness. However, the great mace is not nearly as expensive or difficult to repair as such weapons as the two-handed sword and is therefore more accessible to groups of non-noble warriors. Troops employing great maces in large numbers are almost always of an elite and physically powerful type (minimum strength 9) in order to wield their armor-rending weapons.

**Morning star, double-balled:** This two-handed weapon is quite similar to the normal morning star except that, as its name implies, two separate chains and spiked balls are affixed to the weapon’s haft. This weapon of human design is generally effective against any armor and is exceptionally useful against lightly armored opponents. In combat, to-hit and damage rolls are made separately for each ball of the weapon. The two balls are smaller than the one on a single-balled morning star, to avoid making the weapon too heavy and clumsy to handle. A three-balled morning star can be made with even smaller spiked balls (doing 1-4 ×3/1-3 ×3 damage), sharing all characteristics of the two-balled weapon including separate rolls for each ball to hit. Beyond this three-ball limit, however, the weapon becomes ineffective because of tangling, clumsiness, and the light weight of the spiked balls.

**Spear, hook-tailed:** This variant combination polearm is a thrusting weapon, not balanced for throwing, with a steel hook affixed to the butt end. The point is used as a normal spear with the standard armor-class adjustments, while the butt end is used to fell mounted opponents much like a guisarme or bill hook. If a dismounting attack is successful, minor damage from falling from the horse is caused (1-6 hp, with dexterity check on 4d6 for half damage); and any further attacks that round on the individual who was knocked down are at +4 to hit (as is usual vs. prone opponents). Obviously, only one end of the spear may be used at a time, so at the beginning of each round a user of the hook-tailed spear must state which end he is going to employ. When an individual wielding this spear opts to employ the opposite end of the spear, he must accept a +1 penalty on that round’s initiative roll. Due to the time and space required to change weapon ends, groups of warriors armed with hook-tailed spears often have half of their number use the hook end of their weapon to knock opponents to the ground, where the remainder of the troop can fall upon the unfortunate victims with the spear points of their weapons, thereby disposing of enemy warriors quickly and relatively easily. However, whichever end of this weapon is not being used is bound to get in the way of the wielder and those close to him, possibly causing injuries (15% chance per round of a nonproficient user making an unintentional attack against anyone standing within range; reduce this to 1% per round for proficient user). In a fairly short time, troops using hook-tailed spears switch to using glaive-guisarmes, on which the hooks are mounted behind the spearheads.

Proficiency with a hook-tailed spear takes one proficiency slot. The hook-tailed spear requires special consideration when applying the weapon specialization rules found in Unearthed Arcana. A fighter specialized with a hook-tailed spear should be allowed the normal melee-weapon hit and damage bonuses but should not gain three attacks every two rounds until 7th level. The maximum number of attacks per round a hook-tailed spear specialist could gain would be two, at 13th level (usually hooking a victim, then spearing him). Note that the specialist does not have to abide by the changing/initiative penalty rules outlined here.

**Dwarven war club**

Weapons are not shown to scale with each other.
Like most spearlike weapons, the hook-tailed spear does double normal damage (with its point) on a hit against a charging opponent, if the weapon’s butt has been set to receive the attack. A hit with the hook end of the spear against a charging opponent takes advantage of the -1 armor-class penalty taken by the charger. Only humans use this clumsy weapon (and they rarely use it for long).

**Sword, flamberge:** The flamberge is based vaguely on a medieval sword. It is a long, two-handed weapon with a broad, wavy blade, useful against armors such as splinted, banded, scale, chain, and plate. Cavaliers, paladins, nobles, and knights would logically have armor-penetrating weapons such as the piercer and flamberge swords. These types of warriors traditionally engage in conflicts against other rich warriors who in all likelihood would invest in good suits of armor.

**Sword, mariner’s:** The maranim was a stout human race in my AD&D campaign that lacked height but sailed expertly. They developed a midlength blade as wide as a broad sword, the result being an effective close-combat chopping weapon, perfect for land as well as shipboard use. On the mainland, the “maranim sword” became the “mariner’s sword” and, later, the “guard’s sword” to the common folk. The mariner’s sword has a double-edged blade between a short sword and long sword in length, sharply tapering only at the point. It is a one-handed sword used largely by humans and elves.

**Sword, piercer:** This fantasy blade is based on the thin but quick and accurate swords employed by warriors in the 15th century when full suits of plate were in widespread use. These thrusting swords were designed to pierce the numerous cracks and joints of heavy armor. The piercer sword, however, is less useful in parrying any weapon heavier than itself unless made of the strongest alloys in perfect balance (-4 penalty to save as hard metal vs. normal or crushing blows if used to parry). The piercer sword has long, slim blade tapering down its entire length, with a standard hilt and crosspiece to protect the user. It is used one-handed, largely by humans and elves.

**Closing notes**

The use of these new weapons need not include them being wielded by player characters. A perfect use for them is to arm groups of unusual or previously unknown beings. For example, a party, lost in an unexplored mountain range, is suddenly surrounded a group of gray-skinned dwarves mounted on huge black mountain goats. Encounters such as this are made even better with the addition of strange weapons, so each dwarf bears a strange, metal-studded club covered with runes and gems.

It would be unfair for a DM to deny a character possession of a new type of weapon outright, but finding a teacher to aid the character in becoming proficient with his new weapon could become an
adventure in itself. Unless the DM has a practice of allowing proficiency with any sword, polearm, and bow characters can lay their hands on, hunting for teachers is unavoidable.

Except as noted in the previous descriptions, proficiencies and specializations gained lawfully with the aforementioned weapons are treated normally, with the usual restrictions and bonuses. Assume that any of these new weapons that does not have information included on its origin was developed in the author’s AD&D campaign.

Table 1
New Weapons: Power and Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weapon</th>
<th>Damage (S-M/L)</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Space required</th>
<th>Speed factor (FR: fire rate)</th>
<th>Weight (lbs.)</th>
<th>Cost (gp)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basilard</td>
<td>2-5/2-7</td>
<td>1½'</td>
<td>¾'</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claymore, dwarven</td>
<td>2-8/2-12</td>
<td>4½'</td>
<td>4½'</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club, dwarven war</td>
<td>2-8/2-7</td>
<td>3½'</td>
<td>4'</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossbow, disk</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>****</td>
<td>FR: ½</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossbow, doubled</td>
<td>1-4 ×2</td>
<td>5'</td>
<td>5½'</td>
<td>FR: 1 or 2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disk (for crossbow)</td>
<td>2-7/1-6</td>
<td>5'</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mace, great</td>
<td>2-9/2-8</td>
<td>5½'</td>
<td>5½'</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning star, double-balled</td>
<td>2-5 ×2/1-4 ×2</td>
<td>4'</td>
<td>5'</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spear, hook-tailed</td>
<td>1-6/1-8</td>
<td>6'-14'+</td>
<td>3'</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sword, flamberge</td>
<td>2-9/2-16</td>
<td>5½'</td>
<td>5'</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sword, mariner’s</td>
<td>1-8/1-8</td>
<td>3'</td>
<td>2'</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sword, piercer</td>
<td>2-7/1-8</td>
<td>3½'</td>
<td>1½'</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Not normally for sale
** As per disk (for crossbow)
*** As per heavy crossbow
**** As per light crossbow

Table 2
New Weapons: Armor Class Adjustments & Ranges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weapon</th>
<th>Armor class adjustment</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basilard</td>
<td>- 4 - 2 - 3 - 2 - 1 - 1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claymore, dwarven</td>
<td>- 1 - - +1 +1 +2 +2 +1 +1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club, dwarven war</td>
<td>+2 +2 +1 +1 0 0 0 +1 0 +2 0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossbow, disk</td>
<td>- 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 2 - 2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossbow, doubled</td>
<td>- 3 - 2 - 2 - 1 - -</td>
<td>- +1 +2 +3 +3 +3 6 11 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mace, great</td>
<td>+3 +3 +2 +2 +1 +1 0 0 -1 0 -1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning star, double-balled</td>
<td>- 1 - - - +1 +1 +1 +1 +1 +1 +1 +2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spear, hook-tailed (hook end)</td>
<td>- 3 - 3 - 2 - 2 - 1 - 1</td>
<td>0 0 0 -1 -1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spear, hook-tailed (spearhead)</td>
<td>- 2 - 2 - 2 - 1 - 1 - 1</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sword, flamberge</td>
<td>- - +1 +2 +3 +3 +3 +3 +2 +2 +1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sword, mariner’s</td>
<td>- 4 - 3 - 2 - 2 - 1 -</td>
<td>- - +1 +1 +2 - -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sword, piercer</td>
<td>- 1 - 1 - +1 +1 +1 +1 +2 +2 +2 +3</td>
<td>- -</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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The genetically enhanced troopers of the Sun Kings of Mercury have landed on Luna. While the battle for control of the orbital space overhead is being won by the Lunarians, the ground war is being lost to the superior forces of the Sun Kings. Just as the Sun Kings are about to celebrate victory, a powerful terran space fleet descends upon a weakly defended Mercury. So much for the diplomatic agreement from last turn.

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- Turn sheets are scanned into play by the computer.
- The winner receives free set-up in a new game, and his partner receives a free turn.

Turn Costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turns</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 6</td>
<td>$4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - 12</td>
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<td>13 - 18</td>
<td>$5.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>19 and up</td>
<td>$6.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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- Earth
- Luna
- Mars
- Asteroids

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- Fast Game (2 weeks/turn)

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Requested Teammate: (print)

(You are not guaranteed to get your requested teammate)

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Creative Casting

Interesting uses for low-level wizard spells

Wizards generally seek to perfect their craft, striving for higher levels of power. In this quest, many wizards lose sight of the usefulness of lower-level spells. Even spells of little power can be very useful if creatively applied, often in ways never intended by their creators.

The following are unofficial examples of innovative uses for lower-level spells. Players should check with their DMs for final approval to use these in campaigns, as some may be subject to different interpretations.

First-level spells

Dancing lights — Used at night to simulate a party’s lanterns or torches, this spell can lead pursuers to their doom—over a cliff, onto an unsafe bridge, into quicksand or carnivorous plants, etc. Since the caster controls the movement of the lights, they can also be used for signaling over long distances at night—a real boon for large armies. This may also be used as an entertainment spell to brighten up a performance at a party, tavern, playhouse, music hall, etc.

Enlarge — Reversed, this spell can be used on large spearheads to reduce them to the size of arrowheads; when fitted onto shafts, they can then be fired as normal arrows. Several could be reduced at once by having them forged into one unit with thin strips of metal, then be broken apart while small. They could also be given barbs to hold them in the wounds when the shafts are pulled out (because of the pain, an injured being must make a constitution check each round to remove one such barbed arrowhead; use a save vs. death magic for injured monsters). When the spell ends, the arrowheads return to normal size, causing 1-2 hp damage apiece for every 10% by which they were reduced. If the caster has a dispel magic ready, the reduce spell could be negated when desired. In a similar fashion, a mage could have giant darts made, the heads of which would break off in wounds while reduced. Hurling reduced boulders or ballista bolts at enemies inside an antimagic field is a possibility. Placing a reduced monster in a tiny stone or steel room with thick walls will guarantee death or massive injury when the spell wears off (but remember to stand back). Consider the options for smuggling allies and equipment past guards, too.

Mending — Delicate wooden or ceramic objects can be carved with secret messages, then shattered. The pieces can be delivered as packing material around something else. The spell will pull the pieces together so the message can be deciphered. The pieces can also be sent by multiple couriers, so it would be impossible to decipher the message without all the pieces.

Mount — In a somewhat shady application, the animals summoned may be sold before the spell’s duration wears off. This is an easy way to make a profit with zero inventory, but it’s best to be far away when the spell ends. Remember that a summoned mount can also be made to attack foes; a 1st-level spell that can summon a fighting elephant or griffon is a tough spell, and even a war horse can do well against orcs.

Spider climb — This too has less than honest uses, apart from enabling the user to scale walls like a thief. Since it literally gives the user “sticky fingers” (and feet), it will make certain thefts easier. Although actually picking pockets would become virtually impossible because the hands would stick to the clothing, small objects could be palmed by merely touching them. Slippery objects may be easily grasped, too. Try this spell as an attack against spell-casters, who will then be unable to use somatic components for a brief time.

Walking across spilled coinage in bare feet would allow the user to make off with several coins. The feet could also pick up items from under tables with little dexterity required.

Tenser’s floating disc — This spell can be used to attack foes, with a little work. It can’t cause damage by itself, but it can
carry weapons. A "sword wheel" (with swords as spokes, chained or roped together) can be placed on it, the points projecting over the rim. Although it can't be made to spin in place, it goes anywhere within 20' of the caster, at a constant 3' above the ground. It can thus attack once per round, hitting with 1-2 swords for half damage per sword (round fractions down). This sword wheel's THAC0 would be the same as that of the caster, less strength bonuses and with a -4 penalty for the clumsiness of the attack. The caster could have more than one sword wheel going at once, but could concentrate on only one sword wheel and victim at a time. Victims might dive under the disc, but such tactics can be hindered by having more blades pointing down from the rim of the disc, to a point about 6' from the ground. In a narrow corridor, this spell and device combination could slow or stop pursuit.

Even low-level mages could thus have a weapon that lasts for over half an hour and does medium-distance killing. One disadvantage is having to carry the sword arrangement when the disc vanishes. Another is that the disc returns to within 6' of the caster when not being specifically controlled, so companions could get sliced by a careless mage.

Alternatively, the disc could be used as a weapon's platform for a small ballista or other device crewed by a gnome or half-ling. Note that two or more wizards may cross unstable terrain (but not a chasm) by riding each other's discs.

Unseen servant — The force summoned by the spell can be used to "animate" a robe. Although the servant is shapeless, it can carry a light wooden framework to give the robe a manlike shape. The resulting figure could be mistaken for a bodiless undead and would serve to frighten foes, since the servant can't attack.

Second-level spells

Continual light — Nearly everyone uses this spell to produce everlasting lanterns and the like. If your DM allows it, several can be cast onto the front of a shield, giving +4 to defense by blinding frontal attackers. Sling stones with this spell on them could be hurled far ahead of adventurers traveling at night or underground to reveal hazards and monsters, if the characters don't mind revealing their presence to everyone else as well.

This spell can also replace Nystul's magical aura, since the object on which this spell is cast would radiate magic now and permanently at that; the light could be hidden by paint or other methods.

Magic mouth — This spell can serve for an amusing bit of misdirection. When placed on a broad arrowhead, a large stone, or the like, it may be hurled near anyone you wish to distract. It can be triggered by the sound of its own impact, if sufficient noise is generated, or by the presence of beings. It can say things like: "Guards, guards, over here!" or "Turn and meet your doom!" A magic mouth on a robed, animated skeleton enhances its resemblance to a lich.

Multiple castings on an object (like a mirror, for instance) can make the object appear to be an oracular item. The spells may be set to respond to certain questions or questioners with vague or specific answers.

Rope trick — If cast properly, this spell can be used to go through an opening in a narrow wall. The wall would have to be at least 5' high because of the conditions of the spell. The rope in which the spell is cast should rise until it is exactly level with the opening, so that the extradimensional space created is immediately adjacent to the opening to be passed through. Since the opening to the space is about 3' × 5', those entering the space can look down and see on the other side of the wall, with the wall seeming cut off where it intersects with the "floor" of the space. There should be enough leeway to pull up the rope and climb down on the other side of the wall, trailing the rope through the wall opening (it is assumed that the rope can be dropped only from the center of the "floor" of the space). The wall must be narrow enough to allow room for climbers to descend to the other side, of course.

Note that this spell offers proof against dragon breath, meteor swarms, floods, fires, and other harmful effects, making it almost the ultimate defensive spell.

Third-level spells

Blink — This can function as a short-range, inaccurate dimension door if the caster positions himself before a door, there is at least a three-in-eight chance he will go forward, beyond the door. He gets one try per level, unless he has difficulty returning to his near-door position due to low rolls when timing the blinks. A wizard can escape entombment in this manner if he doesn't mind appearing on the Ethereal plane.

Clairaudience and clairvoyance — Each can be used in the same manner for long-distance communication. Two mages using either or both spells can communicate with each other over any distance, so long as the location of each is known to the other. This is ideal for using on ships on long voyages, since the ship is a known locale, regardless of how far away it is (some DMs may dispute this, saying the location selected must be a particular spot on the earth).

Item — The items changed to cloth can be carried until needed, and they are most effective if left as cloth until the last possible second. Cloth items can be tied to arrows and fired at enemies. When striking solid surfaces, they return to normal, without suffering any ill effects. Thus, half the arrows could carry buckets of oil, and the other half could carry shrunken flaming torches. Containers of acid, water, poison, and other substances could be hidden between doors and other barriers. Only certain types of magical barriers might keep them out. They could open secret doors from within, if physically able. Summoned humanoids can commit thefts or take the blame for them; if captured, they soon disappear and can truly be said to have escaped by magic. These effects will work equally well with the higher level monster summoning spells.

If the DM allows the spell to work on living beings, a volley of arrows could also unleash a hoard of soldiers amidst surprised foes. It could also let someone slip assassins under doors, or disguise somebody as a bookmark. Small monsters, such as green slime or various oozes, could be launched or hidden away.

Monster summoning — Since the creatures may appear anywhere within 30 yards of the caster, they can appear behind doors and other barriers. Only certain types of magical barriers might keep them out. They could open secret doors from within, if physically able. Summoned humanoids can commit thefts or take the blame for them; if captured, they soon disappear and can truly be said to have escaped by magic. These effects will work equally well with the higher level monster summoning spells.

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Ten new nonweapon proficiencies for the AD&D® 2nd Edition game

Alchemy: An individual skilled in the science of alchemy can perform a wide variety of feats when he has access to a well-stocked laboratory. Given time and the proper materials, the alchemist can create such things as smoke bombs, sleep gas, magical potions, Greek fire, strong glue, various drugs and poisons, and many other substances left up to the player’s imagination and the DM’s discretion. Furthermore, a character with this proficiency can conduct experiments to determine the properties of unknown substances.

A laboratory, including the specialized equipment and the innumerable chemicals necessary for its operation, costs at least 5,000 gp. For every additional 5,000 gp invested in the laboratory, the alchemist’s chances of success in any given project should be modified by +1 bonus. However, since there is always a chance of failure, any roll of a natural 20 on the ability check indicates that something has gone wrong—though the alchemist may not always be aware of this!

This skill is almost useless outside of the laboratory, and the character’s abilities should be limited accordingly when this is the case. Some characters may wish to carry small analysis kits with them while adventuring. The DM should allow this, of course, but the delicate equipment is not likely to stand up to the rigors of normal adventuring, and the chances of success at any project will be much less because of the shortage of materials. The DM should determine the penalties on a project-by-project basis.

Possession of this skill grants a +1 bonus on all brewing and herbalism skill checks. This skill is required for the alchemist career mentioned in The Complete Wizard’s Handbook.

Astronomy: An individual learned in the science of astronomy has a good knowledge of the stars, planets, and other bodies in his home crystal sphere (as per the AD&D SPELLJAMMER™ boxed set), as well as the myths and legends associated with them. When the night sky is clear, he can always tell direction by the stars. Phases of heavenly bodies are also easily determined. Furthermore, characters with this proficiency can (if given the time, tools, and materials) construct and use all the instruments related to this field, such as astrolabes, sextants, and even simple telescopes.

Possession of this skill grants a +2 bonus on all astrology skill checks and a +1 bonus to all navigation checks involving sighting on stars, moons, or suns.

Botany: A character with this proficiency is readily able to identify vegetation of all kinds and is familiar with their properties, life cycles, and habitats. This knowledge is limited to the terrain and climate the character has studied (temperate, tropical, sub-tropical, arctic, sub-arctic, etc.). One ability check is required to identify the plant in question, and a second to determine whether the character can recall any specific information concerning it. Elves and other forest dwellers generally have a good grasp of botany, allowing each of them a +1 bonus to all botany...
Cartography: A character with cartographic proficiency is skilled in making maps, making him essential to any group of adventurers exploring unknown territory. A cartographer is a keen-eyed artist with a well-developed sense of distance and depth, whose perception of the physical world is so exacting that with amazing accuracy he can copy onto a sheet of paper whatever he looks upon. He can also copy other maps professionally, and this makes him a valuable addition to the retinue of the aristocracy and other landholders.

In mapmaking, time is important when considering the detail and accuracy of the resulting product. Outdoors, this is best left to the DM to decide in accordance to the type of terrain and the detail the players desire. Under a fantasy setting, however, accuracy and detail are much more important; often the survival of an entire adventuring party will depend on a single map. Once again, the DM must decide how long it will take to map any particular area, but this should take a minimum of one round plus the time it will take the cartographer to pace out the area. Another round or two should be added for increased detail or specific notes.

A cartographer need only make an ability check on three occasions: when he maps a very unusual area, when he attempts to copy another map, and when he attempts to read a map that he has not manufactured himself. If he fails in the first, it is assumed that he has made a blunder that has rendered the map useless; if a failure is indicated in the second, he cannot read the map because symbols have been used that he is not familiar with, or the map lacks a legend or a key. In a fantasy setting, map symbols are unlikely to be universally known. A small travel kit consisting of a waterproof leather case (with stiff sides so that it may be used as a drawing surface), two bottles of ink, a half-dozen quills and a like number of parchment sheets will cost the cartographer about 25 gp. Additional colored inks and drawing instruments should be available in most cities.

It is not necessary for the reading/writing proficiency to have been taken prior to selecting this skill. However, if the mapmaker cannot read or write the languages he knows, his maps, while accurate, will have keys understood by himself only. This skill grants a +2 bonus to all navigation and orienteering skill checks.

Diplomacy: An individual who knows the art of diplomacy has a unique way with people that draws them to his person almost irresistibly. He has a flair for words, an extensive vocabulary, and is articulate and practiced in the arts of subtle and overt coercion. Any character with this ability who makes a successful check against his charisma score, and has at least one round of uninterrupted conversation with any creature that can understand him, adds +5 to his reaction adjustment. For every additional round the character manages to speak, an additional +1 is added, to a maximum bonus of +15 (including the original +5).

Furthermore, the loyalty base of any associates of the individual is adjusted by a +2 bonus for every slot devoted to this proficiency. No ability check is necessary to receive this bonus.

Geology: A character with this proficiency, is able to identify different types of rocks and minerals, including precious metals and gems. Though he cannot accurately appraise the value of such items, he can differentiate between ornamental, semiprecious, and precious stones, and can make an educated guess at the purity...
New Nonweapon Proficiencies Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proficiency</th>
<th>No. of slots required</th>
<th>Relevant ability</th>
<th>Check modifier</th>
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<td>-3</td>
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<td>Astronomy</td>
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<td>Intelligence</td>
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<td>Priest, Wizard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Botany</td>
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<td>Cartography</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Charisma</td>
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<td>General</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diplomacy</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Geology</td>
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<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Warrior</td>
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<td>Orienteering</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dexterity</td>
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<td>Rogue</td>
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<td>Street fighting</td>
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<td>Street sense</td>
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of any vein of precious metal. He is also familiar with underground formations and functions of the natural world related to this science, such as earthquakes, volcanic activity, and the processes involved in the creation of the various rocks and minerals.

There are few dwarves who are not familiar with the basics of geology, and it is also a favorite with gnomes, especially deep gnomes. This skill adds a +2 bonus to all mining skill checks.

Orienteering: A character with this proficiency is capable of reading and following any normal map he comes across. He can even follow, in general terms, maps labelled in unfamiliar languages as long as he makes a successful ability check. Furthermore, if the sky is clear, the character can determine direction, night or day, by using the stars and daytime shadows as guides. The latter method requires one turn to make the proper measurements and calculations.

A character with this skill and an appropriate map gains a +1 bonus to any survival skill roll. He also gains a +1 bonus to any navigation skill roll he makes if he has the right map for the area.

Street fighting: Restricted to members of the warrior classes only, this proficiency is extremely beneficial to a character who is engaged in unarmed combat. An individual knowledgeable in street fighting may add his strength score to the “%KO” column on Table 58: Punching and Wrestling Results, page 97 of the 2nd Edition PHB, when a successful unarmed attack is made. Thus, a fighter with 15 strength and this proficiency will, on a roll of 12 on Table 58, have a 20% (5% + 15%) chance of knocking out his opponent. Furthermore, if the warrior makes a successful dexterity check on the same round, he is allowed a second attack roll on Table 58, but this time without the strength score bonus.

Street sense: This proficiency is limited to members of the rogue classes. A rogue with this proficiency is adept at making a good impression on underworld contacts in the less-savory neighborhoods of towns and cities, allowing him to better use the information-gathering proficiency described in The Complete Thief’s Handbook. Those whom the rogue contacts are not necessarily moved to trust the rogue using this skill, but they may decide the rogue is worth talking to because he is so entertaining or because he is a person of importance. A street-sense skill check can be attempted once whenever the rogue is talking to a contact. Success means that the contact becomes favorably inclined toward the rogue and will reveal additional information to him, possibly unrelated to the rogue’s inquiries, at the DM’s discretion. Success also means that the contact will act positively toward the rogue in future situations, unless circumstances dictate otherwise.

Possession of this skill adds a +2 bonus to any information-gathering skill check.

Errata

In issue #168, we didn’t show you where to find the six weapons in the crossword puzzle on page 76. Ha, ha! April Fool! Actually, it was an error and we’re mortified, but things like that happen. Here are the six weapons and their locations (in case you didn’t find them on your own).

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by Jordan Clarke Hayes

Melee tactics for either edition of the AD&D® game

In the AD&D® game, the rules for resolving melee are concise and simple. This promotes role-playing and heroics over the secondary details of precisely how a blow strikes or misses. This simple system fulfills its function admirably. However, many tactics besides running away instead of fighting are neglected as a result. Luckily, as the system is open-ended, rules simulating a defensive or offensive posture in melee can easily be added.

Many games in which man-to-man combat is an integral part permit characters to parry, dodge, or otherwise negate blows by allowing combatants to roll against an appropriate skill or ability. This gives players a greater feeling of control over what happens to their characters during melee. Unfortunately, such a system makes additional rules references and die rolls a necessary evil that slows down the action. In the AD&D game, where minutes of game time are ideally resolved with but a few quick tosses of the dice, such a system is not desirable. Likewise, systems that allow the employment of very specific strikes and similar actions do not truly belong in most AD&D games, where much of the activity in melee is assumed and comes to life only when narrated by a Dungeon Master.

The rules here present a set of close-combat tactics that allow combatants to better control their actions in the midst of battle. These rules create the various strategic possibilities of melee without changing the existing game rules or causing the need for additional die rolls each round.

Note that the AD&D 2nd Edition rules offer a simple solution to the problem of the lack of possible options in melee by introducing an optional parrying rule (Player’s Handbook, page 100). Unfortunately, this rule is an all-or-nothing affair. Besides being of limited use to a primarily low-level game, this does not address the possibility of any tactic other than a defensive one. Since the parrying rule in the PHB and melee-tactics system presented here do not work together, consider the rules here as a possible replacement to the parrying rule for those who want to add a little more substance to their AD&D game battles.

The basics
Page 105 of the AD&D 1st Edition Players Handbook contains the passage: “The 1 minute melee round assumes much activity—rushes, retreats, feints, parries, checks, and so on. Once during this period each combatant has the opportunity to get a real blow in.” Building on this statement, one can conclude that a tactically minded warrior can decide how much he lets his guard down when attempting this blow. Likewise, a desperate warrior can attack with complete abandon, neglecting the evasions and parries assumed to be a part of the melee round.

This can easily be simulated in combat by allowing combatants to select from five styles of fighting: normal attack and defense; active defense; full defense; active attack; and full attack. The “normal attack and defense” style of fighting uses the standard AD&D rules for melee combat, assuming a generally equal distribution between offensive and defensive actions on the part of any given combatant. Used extensively when combat is between fairly balanced forces, with neither side having gained the upper hand, normal attack and defense is the most commonly used melee tactic.

Though not an addition to the rules, the normal mode of attacking is shown here for the purpose of comparison. It is the midpoint on which the following offensive and defensive tactics are based.

In all tactics that follow, the modifiers to hit and to armor class are cumulative with bonuses and penalties for strength, dexterity, magical bonuses, weapon proficiency, weapon specialization, and other situations. The armor-class modifiers apply only to the final armor class of the attacker, not his armor type (a distinction important if weapon type vs. armor modifiers are used in an AD&D 1st Edition game). Tactic initiative modifiers are applied to the initiative die roll. Modifiers for the AD&D 1st Edition game are applied to the 1d6 initiative roll, where the highest roll wins, but applies only if every combatant on the side of the battle in question uses the same tactic. If individual initiative dice are rolled, the appropriate modifiers are allowed only to those combatants using these tactics.

Tactic modifiers for the AD&D 2nd Edition game may be applied to either the optional group initiative or individual initiative system of the AD&D 2nd Edition game (see pages 94-95 of the Player’s Handbook). If the standard initiative system is employed, tactic initiative modifiers affect the 1d10 roll only when everyone on one side of the fight is employing the same tactic.

Active defense: This allows some attacking when an obvious advantage presents itself, but there is an underlying commitment to defensive movements during the course of the melee round. Depending on the individual performing the action, active defense may consist of quick dodges and circling maneuvers, a raised and braced shield, a bladed weapon extended in a ready position to keep opponents at a distance or to abruptly strike if they come too close, etc. A warrior who must delay an enemy until aid arrives, or
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who has found himself without adequate armor but must fight anyway, frequently employs the active-defense tactic. Another common use of this tactic is by cautious fighting men who want to “feel their opponents out” for a round or two to get an estimate of their opponents’ abilities, with some insurance against a quick death dealt by a vastly superior foe.

A shield-bearing character using active defense has a -2 penalty on his attack rolls and a +2 bonus to his armor class for that round. A character without a shield gains only a +1 bonus to his armor class with a -2 penalty to hit. Thus, a ranger with leather armor and a shield for the round. A character who is using full defense has an armor class of 7 - 2 = 5; if he had no shield, he would have AC 6. Using the AD&D 1st Edition rules, a character using this tactic has a -1 penalty on initiative. In AD&D 2nd Edition rules, there is a +2 initiative bonus with this tactic.

Full defense: This tactic embodies a simple idea: to hurl blow after blow at an enemy without pausing to dodge or parry. Full attack is a strategy of the foolhardy, the desperate, the berserk, or the extremely well armored. This tactic does not replace the charging rules in either edition of the AD&D game books, as it is not the same thing (see the 1st Edition DMG, page 66, or the 2nd Edition DMG, page 59). A character may not charge and use the full-attack option in the same round unless he is entitled to more attacks after the initial charge in the same round (see “Special cases”). No bonuses are gained by bracing a weapon against a foe using this tactic.

A character utilizing this tactic has a +2 bonus on to-hit rolls and a -2 penalty to his armor class for the round. No armor classes above (worse) than 10 are possible. No shield can be used by the attacker, and no dexterity bonuses for armor class are applied. Using 1st Edition rules, the initiative modifier for the attack is a +2 bonus; for 2nd Edition rules, it’s a -3 bonus.

For example: Trad, a fighter with an average dexterity and leather armor, performs the full-attack tactic. When he is attacked that round, Trad suffers a -2 penalty on his normal armor class of 8, resulting in an armor class of 10 for the round. If Trad had no armor to protect himself (AC 10), the full-attack option would still leave him with AC 10.

Optional rule: Berserker NPCs (as per the Monstrous Compendium, “Men”) may be allowed to use the full-attack routine while doubling their normal number of attacks per round, to make their attacks more deadly. Thus, a 7th-level warrior...
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Close-Combat Tactics Table

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<th>Tactic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Full attack</td>
<td>+2 bonus</td>
<td>+2/-3 bonus</td>
<td>+2 penalty</td>
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</table>

* Figures before the slash are for the AD&D 1st Edition game; those after the slash are for the AD&D 2nd Edition game.
** Figures before the slash are for combatants not using shields; those after the slash are for those with shields.
*** +6 bonus with a body shield vs. small missiles.

who was a berserker could attack three times per round at +2 to hit, but would otherwise be subject to all the restriction given in this article for full attacks.

Tactics in play
To use one of these tactics in place of attacking and defending normally, a player must declare his desire to do so at the beginning of a melee round before any initiative rolls are made. All appropriate modifiers are then applied for the tactic declared, as per the Close-Combat Tactics Table herein. At the end of the round in which the tactic was used, the person who employed the tactic may either keep using that tactic, change tactics, or attack normally in the next round.

To save the DM the trouble of asking each player in turn if his character is using a tactic or is attacking normally at the start of each round, it is generally expedient to assume that any given combatant will always employ the same tactic used on the previous round, unless the player controlling the combatant specifically declares otherwise before the initiative roll. Any character using a melee weapon with which he has proficiency or specialization is free to employ any tactic he desires. These tactics are not restricted to the fighter class. Subject to the DM’s discretion, some weapon-using monster and humanoid types can be disciplined enough to perform these tactics. Someone wielding a weapon without proficiency in that weapon may not use any of the offensive or defensive tactics listed here.

The following is an example of how these rules might be used in play:

DM: “Avorak, you’re in the doorway to the central chamber. You were seriously wounded by the ogre guard after you missed it with your broad sword. It’s a new round, so roll initiative.”

Avorak’s player: “How far back down the passage is the rest of the party?”

DM: “About eighty feet.”

Avorak’s player: “I don’t want get bashed again, I’m going to use full defense as I withdraw back toward the rest of the party. That makes my armor class of four go down to zero.”

DM (after referring to a table and rolling a die): “All right. You raise your trusty shield, and crash! You parry the ogre’s club and step out of his way.”

From this example, it is apparent that close-combat tactics in melee allow those engaged in combat a greater variety of possible actions and provide a vehicle on which game-enhancing role-playing can be based. Beyond this, the use of the system can aid players and DMs in the narrating and visualizing of combat scenes that might otherwise be a meaningless test of dice-rolling with little strategy involved to spark interest.

Special cases

Multiple attacks: The attack modifier of a tactic being used by a warrior with more than one attack per round is applied to each attack the warrior can make that round.

The initiative modifiers of the tactics given here are not affected if the user is capable of multiple attacks. They are exactly the same as in standard situations and are applied in exactly the same way as with tactics’ uses by those with only one attack per round.

The armor class modifiers for tactics-using combatants with more than one attack are implemented normally; they simply are applied as shown on the Close-Combat Tactics Table.

Fighting men who get 3/2 or 5/2 attacks per round use tactics normally, with one exception. These characters must use one tactic per set of attacks (3 or 5 as above), not per round. This means that a fighters with 3/2 or 5/2 attacks per round must keep the same tactic for two consecutive rounds—the time needed to make one set of attacks.

Multiple weapons: The same rules for tactics that apply to those capable of multiple attacks with a single weapon also apply to any character getting extra attacks through the use of two weapons at once (see the 1st Edition DMG, page 70, or the 2nd Edition Player’s Handbook, page 96). Note that most characters using two weapons will suffer penalties for using more than one weapon in combat. Be sure to figure these penalties in when adding a tactic’s bonuses and penalties.

Multiple natural attacks: Humanoid beings that attack using armor and weapons, much like player characters, use these rules normally. Nonhumanoid monsters and animals that rely on natural weaponry must abide by certain strictures when they employ close-combat tactics, unless the DM sees any reason why the monsters in question should be excluded from using tactics (centaurs, for example, might use all such routines).

Monsters such as these are limited in their use of tactics in that they may only employ the active-defense and active-attack options. This is because the use of natural weaponry is usually little more than undisciplined instinct refined by whatever intelligence the creature or animal in question possesses. Also, it is difficult to perform complex parrying or chopping maneuvers with claws and teeth. Optionally, humanoid beings larger than ogres may be placed in this category.

When tactics don’t apply
There are some situations that occur in melee where close combat tactics may not be employed. When a surprise attack is made, as from behind or from an invisible being, tactics may not be used by the attacker. Similarly, when attacking a sleeping or defenseless opponent, the attacker cannot use these tactics. This is because the use of tactics entails performing certain types of actions for an entire round, and these are not the same actions as making a sudden, telling stroke from surprise. Surprise situations are covered by their own melee rules.

The armor-class modifiers gained from tactics do affect missiles being fired at the tactics’ user. The erratic dodges of a defensive-tactic user can easily foil a Bowman’s aim just as the predictable movements of an offensive tactic user can aid it. Conversely, tactics cannot be used by anyone wielding a missile weapon, since the discharging of missiles generally requires the firer to stay still or at least move with smooth, predictable motions.

Conclusion
The easiest way to make the tactics system an option in your AD&D game is to have the other gamers in your group look over this article. Then make two copies of the Close-Combat Tactics Table and affix the information to both sides of the local DM’s screen or to anything else in everyone’s view. That should be more than sufficient provision for anyone wanting to have their character employ melee tactics in the game.
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Continued on page 38
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CONVENTION CALENDAR

Convention Calendar Policies

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

1. In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct. The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:
   1. Convention title and dates held;
   2. Site and location;
   3. Guests of honor (if applicable);
   4. Special events offered;
   5. Registration fees or attendance requirements; and,
   6. Address(es) and telephone number(s) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention Flyer, 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. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the last Monday of March, May, and October for the December issue is the last Monday of October. Announcements for November and December conventions will be held at the Ronald McDonald House in San Diego and the Howard Johnson Plaza Hotel in Englewood, Colo. Guests include Larry Niven, Steven Barnes, Jennifer Roberson, Simon Hawke, and Joe Dever. Activities include open gaming and a dealers’ room. Registration: $10 preregistered; and $15 at the door, plus event fees. Daily prices are also available. Write to: WEGAMERS’ Guild, Student Activities Center, Box 28, Student Union Bldg., UNM, Albuquerque NM 87131; or call: (505) 277-3083. No collect calls, please.

DEFCON IV, May 18-19

This free SF/gaming convention will benefit the Ronald McDonald House in San Diego and will be held at the Price Center on the campus of the University of California at San Diego. Events include an emphasis on SF on the 18th, with panels, guests, movies, Japanimation, and gaming. The 19th is dedicated solely to gaming and tournaments. Everyone is welcome! Write to: DEFCON IV, 642-3316.

SUMMERCON ’91, May 18-19

The Gamers’ Alliance of Miniatures Enthusiasts (GAME) and the Midwest Masters RPGA™ Network will host this FREE convention in the Reunion Food Court Bldg., on the campus of the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, Nebr. Events include three RPGA™ tournaments, an RPGA™ Masters tournament, and a benefit tournament. Other activities include WARHAMMER 40,000* role-playing and miniatures events, historical miniatures, a figure-painting contest, and other role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Everyone is welcome! Write to: RPGA, Ni., 16th St., Lincoln NE 68508, Attn: Rufus; or call: (402) 477-7006.

U-CONII ’91, May 19-21

This convention will be held at the University Center on the campus of the University of Ottawa, Ontario. Events include live-action role-playing, Japanimation, a miniatures-painting contest, and all types of role-playing, board, and miniatures games. Registration: $7 Canadian/day or $20 Canadian/weekend. Housing will be provided by the University of Ottawa. Write to: G. C. Bower, 155 O’Conner, Apt. #17, Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 1T3, CANADA; or call: (613) 236-9235.

GAMECAUCUS II, May 24-27

Sponsored by Trigaming Associates, this convention will be held at the Oakland Airport Hilton in Oakland, Calif. Events include an RPGA™ AD&D® tournament, with BATTLETECH®, WARHAMMER 40,000*, STAR FLEET TACTICS®, TOP SECRET/S.I.*, STAR WARS®, DIPLOMACY®, ASL®, WORLD IN FLAMES®, EMPIRES IN ARMS®, TALISMAN®, and GURPS® games, and various historical and modern miniatures games. Other activities include a worldwide DIPLOMACY® game plus live-action AD&D®, AWFUL GREEN THINGS FROM OUTER SPACE®, and ALIENS® games. Registration: $15 preregistered or $20 at the door. Prizes will be awarded to tournament winners. Write to: Trigaming Associates, PO Box 4867, Walnut Creek CA 94596-0867; or call Larry or Mike at: (415) 686-9319 after 6 P.M. PST. No collect calls, please.

GAMEX ’91, May 24-27

This convention will be held at the Los Angeles Airport Hyatt Hotel in Los Angeles, Ca. Activities include all types of family, strategy, and adventure board, role-playing, miniatures, and computer gaming. Catch the bargains at the flea markets, auctions, and the dealers’ area. Other activities include seminars, demos, and guests. Write: TO STRATEGICON, PO. Box 8399, Long Beach CA 90808; or call: (213) 326-9440.

ONCE UPON A CON ’91, May 24-26

This convention will be held at the Radisson Hotel South in Englewood, Colo. Guests include Larry Niven, Steven Barnes, Jennifer Roberson, Simon Hawke, and Joe Dever. Activities include live-action role-playing games, panels, seminars, a costume ball and contest, a dealers’ room, author readings, an art show, and a con suite. Registration: $24/weekend; or $15/day. Write to: IFGS/ONCE UPON A CON, PO. Box 357, Boulder CO 80307-3577; in Colo., call: (303) 494-4302; if out of state, call: (303) 786-9727.

SODACON II, May 25-26

This convention will be held at the Howard Johnson’s Hotel and Convention Center in Rapid City, S.D. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, TWILIGHT 2000®, CHAMPIONS®, and MORROW PROJECT® games. Registration: $10 preregistered, or $12 at the door. Write to: Black Hills Society of Gamers, 2146 Cameron Dr., Rapid City SD 57702; or call Steven at: (605) 642-3316.
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SPRING GAMES '91, May 25
This gaming convention, organized by the Quebec Gaming Society, will be held at John F. Kennedy High School in Montreal, Quebec. Events include an AD&D® tournament plus board and miniature games, all in three playing sessions. Registration: $12 Canadian before May 19; or $15 Canadian at the door. A.Q.J.S. members will receive a $4 discount. Write to: A.Q.J.S., 1104, Boul. M, Montreal, Quebec, CANADA H1V 3L6 or call Larry at: (514) 278-5292 during the day.

TWINCON '91, May 25-27
This convention will be held at the Thunderbird Hotel and Convention Center in Bloomington, Minn. (ask about special room rates). Guests include Julie Guthrie, Ken Rolston, Margaret Weis, Craig Taylor, and Greg Scott. Events include role-playing, board, and miniature games, with miniatures-painting and costume contests, a vendors’ room, seminars, discussions, and open gaming. Registration: $30. One- and two-day passes are available at the door. Make checks payable to Donald Prust. Write to: TWINCON '91, PO. Box 8010, Lake St. Station, Minneapolis MN 55408; or call: (612) 888-5759.

NASHCON '91, May 31-June 2
This gaming convention will be held at the Music City Rideway Inn in Nashville, Tenn. Events include miniatures tournaments, alternative gaming, a dealers’ room, and an auction. FgFair will also be held here. Registration: $15. Preregisters receive a free NASHCON T-shirt. Write to: Nashcon, Box 2713 Lebonan Pike, Nashville TN 37214; or call: (615) 883-4800.

OPTICON '91, May 31-June 2
This convention will be held at the Gardiner Student Center on the campus of the University of Akron in Akron, Ohio. Events include RPGA tournaments, individual and tournament games, a large exhibit, a role-playing game, an art show, seminars and panels, a painting contest, and 24-hour gaming. Registration: $15/weekend preregistered. Dorm rooms are available; ask about rates and availability. Write to: OPTICON '91, P.O. Box 4876, Akron OH 44310; or call: (216) 872-9713.

STARSCAPE STARCON '91, May 31-June 2
This SF/F gaming convention will be held at the Best Western Convention Center in Long View, Tex. Guests include Keith Parkinson and Ardath Mayhar. Write to: STARCON, 3321 Danville Dr., Suite 505, Kilgore TX 75662.

ZIACON '91, May 31-June 2
This SF/F convention will be held at the Roswell campus of Eastern New Mexico University in Roswell, NM. Guests include Gerald Bronn, Jeff Easley, Fred Fields, Diana Gallagher Carol Heyer, Ken Widing, Michael Williams, and Robin Wood. Gaming events include AD&D®, TRAVELLER®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, and miniatures games. Other activities include a masquerade, interactive literature, miniatures-painting contest, SCA demos, panels, a dealers’ room, an art show, and pinatas. Registration: $22. Write to: ZIACON, 1709 W. Walnut, Roswell NM 88021; or call: (505) 624-0810.

GAMECON III, June 7-8
This convention will again be held at the auditorium of the Bergen Shopping Mall in Paramus, N.J. Events include AD&D® tournaments, BATTLETECH®, SPACE HULK®, WARHAMMER 40,000® and FANTASY®. GMs are needed. Registration: $2 plus $4 preregistered event fee or $5 event fee at the door. Write to: GAMECON III, c/o The Gaming Center, Bergen Mall Shopping Center, Paramus NJ 07652; or call: (201) 843-3308.

MOBI-CON '91, June 7-9
This convention will be held at the Days Inn in Mobile, Ala. Activities include 24-hour gaming, masters, a reading room, an art show and sale, a writing contest, an auction, a galactic feud, games, tournaments, miniatures, and demos. Proceeds will go to the March of Dimes. Registration: $12.50 until May 20; $15/weekend or $6/day thereafter. Send a SASE to: MOBI-CON Inc., P.O. Box 161472, Mobile AL 36608.

GLATHRICON '91, June 21-23
Sponsored by the Evansville Gaming Guild, this convention will be held at the Executive Inn in Evansville, Ind. The guests include Ed Greenwood, Alan Clark, Don Bingle, and Jean Rabe. RPGA® tournaments include AD&D® Feature, Masters, Grandmasters, and the Joe Martin Cancer Benefit; MARVEL SUPER HEROES® Feature and Masters, JAMES BOND 007®, PARANOIA®, PARANORMAL MASTERS, D.C. HEROES®, CHILL®, and CHAMPIONS® games. Other activities include a dealers’ room, a large art show and print shop, an art auction, a masquerade, a miniatures-painting contest, seminars, panels, and additional gaming. Registration: $20. Write to: Evansville Gaming Guild, PO. Box 15414, Evansville IN 47716; or call: (812) 421-1010.

MICHICON GAMEFEST '91, June 21-23
This gaming convention will be held in the Southfield Civic Center in Southfield, Mich. Events include 60 board game, 60 miniatures game, and 40 role-playing game events. Other activities include dealers, three used-game auctions, open gaming, and food. Registration: $12/weekend or $7/day. Preregistrations are accepted. Write to: Metro Detroit Gamers, PO. Box 4876, Akron OH 44310; or call Barry (daytime) at: (313) 953-2215.

NEW ORLEANS SE/F FESTIVAL '91
June 21-23
This convention will be held at the Clarion Hotel in New Orleans, La. Guests include Frederick Pohl, Pat Cadigan, John Slade, Ellen Datlow, George Alec Effinger, George R. R. Martin, Richard Pini, and Walter Jon Williams. Activities include 24-hour gaming, a costume contest, programming, an art show and auction, a dance, a 24-hour hospitality suite, a meet-the-guests party, a large dealers’ room, and a special charity event benefiting the New Orleans Metropolitan Battered Women’s Center. Registration: $20 until May 26; $25 at the door. Write to: New Orleans SE/F Festival, P.O. Box 791089, New Orleans LA 70179-1089; or call: (504) 835-4314.

INTERPHASE III, June 22-23
This live-action gaming convention will be held near the Folklore Village of Dodgeville, Wis. Gather rumors and treasure from a host of characters, explore the countryside, and purchase supplies at the bazaar. There will be a medieval banquet, complete with court-dancing, musicians, jugglers, and a magic show. Costumes are recommended. A mini-adventure, complete with a pirlata dragon, will be offered for the kids. Dealers and crafters are welcome. For information, send $1 to: Doc Bradshaw, 7637 N. 15th St., Oakdale MN 55128.

MADISON GAMES DAY III, June 30
This gaming convention will be held at the Quality Inn South in Madison, Wis. Events include role-playing, miniatures, and war games, a game auction, and a dealers’ area. Door prizes and discount coupons will be offered throughout the day. Registration: $5, which includes tickets to two gaming events. Write to: Pegasus Games, 6640 Odana Rd., Madison WI 53719; or call: (608) 833-GAME.

ORIGINS '91, July 4-7
GAMA presents this national gaming convention and trade show, to be held at the Baltimore Convention Center in conjunction with the Hvitt Regency and Showboat Inner Harbor in Baltimore, Md. There will be over 500 events to choose from, in all aspects of gaming. Events include RPGA® Grand Masters and Masters AD&D® games and a Boardgame Team Championship. Other activities include a large exhibit hall, an art show, an auction, Persian Gulf War seminars, a painting contest, and special guests. Write to: GEMCO, P.O. Box 609, Randallstown MD 21133; or call: (301) 298-3135.

WESTERCON 44/V-CON '91, July 4-7
This SF convention will be held at the Gage Residence on the campus of the University of British Columbia at Vancouver, B.C. Guests of honor include William Gibson, C. J. Cherryh, Steve Jackson, Warren Odderson, and many Canadian authors. Events include games and tournaments, a gaming auction, panels, and a miniatures-painting contest. Registration: $45 Canadian or $40 U.S. until May 31; $57 Canadian or $50 U.S. at the door. Children under 13 are half price. Write to: WESTERCON 44, PO. Box 48476, Bentall Centre, Vancouver, B.C., CANADA V7X 1A2.

CASTLECON 4, July 5-7
This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Crown Plaza in Arlington, Va. Events include RPGA® tournaments, with live-action and regular role-playing games and board games. Other activities include videos, an art show, artists’ and writers’ workshops, music and comedy, a masquerade, science and technology panels, and computer gaming. Registration: $20 until June 15. Write to: FAITEK, 1607 Thomas Rd., Fort Washington MD 20744.

CONGREGATE 2, July 5-7
This SF convention (it’s theme is “heroes”) will be held at the Moat House Hotel in Peterborough, Cambridge, England. RPGs may be available. Registration: £16 for an attending membership, or £8 for a supporting membership. Write to: CONGREGATE 2, c/o Chris Ayres, 118 Coden Ave., Peterborough, Cambridge, UNITED KING DOM PEI 3EQ.

COSCON '91, July 5-7
Sponsored by the Circle of Swords Gaming Guild, this convention will be held at Slippery Rock University campus in Slippery Rock, Pa. Events include RPGA® tournaments and events, military miniatures, board games, a dealers’ area, a flea market, and a miniatures-painting contest. Inexpensive housing will be available on site. Registration: $15 until June 15; $20 thereafter. Send a SASE to: Circle of Swords, P.O. Box 2126, Butler PA 16003-2126; or call Dave at: (412) 283-1159.

DRAGON CON '91, July 12-14
This SF/F gaming convention will be held at the Atlanta Hilton and Towers in Atlanta, Ga. Guests include Fiers Anthony, Philip Jose.
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II-KHAN, July 12-14

This convention, previously known as I-KHAN, will be held at the Holiday Inn North in Colorado Springs, Co. The guest of honor will be Gordon R. Dickson. Events include AD&D®, CAR WARS®, WARHAMMER 40,000®, SKY GAL LEONS OF MARS®, and BATTLETECH® games, with open gaming, movies, a dealers' room, a banquet, a masquerade, a miniatures-painting "khantest," and a costume "khantest." Registration: $15 until June 15; $20 thereafter, plus $1 fee per event. Write to: Miniatures Wargamers' Guild, 7040 S. Hwy. 85-87, Fountain CO 80817; or call: Perry: (719) 391-8318.

DOVERCON VII, July 13-14

This convention will be held at the University of New Hampshire campus Memorial Union Building in Durham, N.H. Guests include GURPS® game authors Walter Milikan and Steffan O'Sullivan. Events include several RFCA™ tournaments, and miniatures and artwork competitions. Registration: $20/weekend, or $15/Saturday and $10/Sunday. Dealers and game masters are welcome. Write to: DOVERCON VII, P.O. Box 753 Dover NH 03820.

LAGACON 11, July 20

The Lebanon Area Gamers' Assoc., will host this convention at Kasper's Arc, north of Lebanon, Pa. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, ASL®, and AXIS & ALLIES® games. Registration: $5 in advance; or $7.50 at the door. Write to: Lebanon Area Gamers' Assoc., 806 Cumberland St., Lebanon PA 17042, or call evenings at: (717) 274-5392.

HUFFCON/ADVENTURERS' INN
July 20-21

This convention will be held in the California Ballroom in Modesto, Calif. Events include game tournaments and open gaming, costume contests, demos, dealers, and refreshments. Registration: $15 until June 15; $20 thereafter. Write to: Advenatures' Inn, the ICON, P.O. Box 3669, Turlock CA 95381.

ATLANTA FANTASY FAIR XVII, July 26-28

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Central in Omaha, Neb. Guests include Scott Heine (Hero Games), J. R. Daniels, and Gary DeLamatre. Events include gaming, an art room and auction, an electronics room, a dealers' room, videos, an "alien prom" party (raising funds for the Omaha Food Bank—bring a can or box of food), a hospitality suite, a masquerade, and a live-action role-playing murder-mystery game. Registration:

$14/weekend by June 1; $18/weekend, $6/weekday or Sunday, or $12/Saturday thereafter. Dealers are welcome. Send an SASE to: IMPACT, P.O. Box 4486, Omaha NE 68104.

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

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

Tslamir 23, 2000 AY: It took a day to reach the magical gate that had brought us to the sky-wyrms' universe. It was a bumpy flight, and it took all the skill and prowess of a sky wyrmlike Berylith to hold the course through the gate's storm. At last, we could see daylight piercing the billowing clouds at the peak of the storm. Everyone was longing for a moment of calm and rest under our golden sun. With a bang, the ship emerged through the gate into our own universe—and we nearly crashed into a desert sand dune!

The gate’s exit had moved since we had entered the other universe, apparently by hundreds of miles north-northwest of our previous position. Worse yet, we showed up unexpectedly in the middle of a battle in the desert. Apparently, a smaller force had been surrounded and would have been butchered had it not been for our impromptu arrival.

I ordered Berylith to make her ghostly sky-wyrmlike aura turn invisible, wishing to stay out of what was clearly not our business—but no! Instead, Berylith felt this was not becoming of a true princess. She even roared to make her arrival more grandiose. Myojo held his head in embarrassment. Xerdon shrugged. And I was too numb to react.

The larger army panicked immediately. Dropping scimitars, shields, and turbans, the soldiers rode off on their camels toward the southwest. As for the smaller force, its men dropped to their knees, bowing as low as they could. There was nothing else to do but make contact.

It took some convincing on my part to have Berylith go invisible. She obviously enjoyed the awe she caused and wanted to remain the heroine of the day. Finally, with the wooden ship alone being visible, I invited the leader of the defending forces to come aboard.

The man was Prince Dharjee, a polite and soft-spoken person. His father, the maharajah of Putnabad, ruler of the southern province of Sind, had sent him on a mission to King Chandra’s palace in Sayr Ulan. He was to return with special orders for the king’s future visit in the capital of Putnabad. A small army, sent by the rajah of Jaibul, had come close to capturing the prince. Jaibul, I learned, is a small, independent realm on the coast west of Sind, and it has been a rival of Putnabad for centuries.

Prince Dharjee was obviously very impressed with the Princess Ark, her magic,
her workmanship, and, most of all, her decoration and style. His caravan being in such poor shape, he asked if we could transport him and his servants back to Jahore, the capital city of Putnabad. After our undue intrusion into the Kingdom of Sind, the only civilized thing to do was to accept. We picked up his camels, troops, servants, and even the caravan’s royal elephant, and we headed south to Jahore, the pearl of Putnabad.

**Tslamir 24:** Berylith’s mood was truly dreadful all morning. She complained without end about the elephant pacing from port to starboard all night, and about the camel dung all over the stern deck. She nearly ejected one of the crew for referring to that area as the “poop deck.” And we were flying at a snails pace. I couldn’t tell if it was because of the extra weight or Berylith’s bad mood.

Talisar was still in sick bay, recovering from his misadventure on Hakh. I left Xerdon in control of the bridge and spent the remainder of the journey with Prince Dharjee. He was amazed at the ship’s construction, and he had no doubt that a great architect must have designed the plans of this marvel. He assured me his father “would certainly pay a thousand treasures of emeralds and rubies for the services of the divine genius who conceived such a masterpiece as the Princess Ark.” I cringed. Berylith heard that—I knew it. Suddenly, the ship flew faster.

**Tslamir 25:** We reached Jahore this morning. The city is a sprawling megalopolis on the southern edge of the Asanda delta. High, fortressed walls enclose the inner city, protecting middle and upper class quarters, merchant areas, and the maharajah’s palace. Beyond the walls spread thousands of poor, overcrowded dwellings, a squalid collection of shacks and muddy passageways, occasionally divided by the main roads leading to the inner city gates and the numerous temple compounds. A shabby port occupies the southern edge of the city, allowing light ships to sail the grimy delta up to Jahore. Larger ships remain anchored in a small bay, at the mouth of the delta. A few stone bridges span the wide Asanda river within the inner city, while most of the population uses small barges to cross over.

Oddly enough, it seemed none of the main buildings were erected in a regular fashion. As we came closer, it became clear many of the onion-shaped domes were imperfectly built, the towers being crooked nearly to the point of collapse. Certainly none of the windows or doors showed any symmetry at all. This was totally unlike the usual Sind architecture.

As usual, the arrival of the Princess Ark caused quite a bit of agitation among the people and the guard. Prince Dharjee’s appearance on one of the levitating life boats came as a relief to them. We were immediately whisked away to the maharajah’s apartments.

Ashupta Khan, the maharajah, was very thankful to us for saving his son from the rajah of Jaibul. A great banquet was offered at the palace. Later, during the celebration, the maharajah leaned over to me and asked about the Princess Ark. Indeed, his son had described the vessel at length, and I could see a gleam of envy in the maharajah’s eyes. I am afraid I disappointed His Highness when I mentioned the ship had been created by the magic of a creature from beyond this world, and that I was only its keeper.

The maharajah then explained what was happening in Jahore. It was believed that a great curse afflicted the city. Many people were unable to attain the greatness of skill of their fathers. Most of the upper castes were going through an inexplicable decadence and laziness, explaining the imperfect looks of the buildings in Jahore.

Last month, the Black Rajah of Jaibul visited King Chandra in Sayr Ulan, and he joked about the poor state of affairs of the “Pearl of Putnabad.” This greatly irritated the king, who had arrived in control of the bridge and spent the night. The maharajah’s son was on his way to Sayr Ulan to obtain financial aid from the king when the Black Rajah’s troops managed to intercept Prince Dharjee’s caravan. Ashupta Khan was quite broke; he was totally unable to find a competent architect anywhere in Jahore as well. He was in a sticky position.

Of course, being a foreigner and the “keeper” of an incredible piece of architecture, I could not evade his interest. For my assistance he offered many things, including his prized stable, half of his harem, and even the diadem on his turban, none of which I could honestly accept. In time, though, Ashupta Khan was more than willing to offer “preferred client” status to Alphatian merchants in Jahore, with a 1% impost on port trade payable to the Haaken family. At that point, I thought that lending a hand would be a challenging enterprise. Based on this lucrative arrangement, I set forth to build a palace.

**Tslamir 26:** The crew was granted shore leave in Jahore after the elephant, the camels, and their owners disembarked. The scene drew a huge crowd of onlookers in the street below, as the large animals dangled from ropes underneath the Princess. Widespread betting took place in the streets on whether each animal would make it to the ground safely. The elephant drew record bets when one of the ropes began to give. A little levitation spell came in handy, and I won that bet (with 79:1 odds).

The maharajah’s eyes. I am afraid I disappoint- ed my expectations. For my “keeper” of an incredible piece of architecture, I could not evade his interest. For my assistance he offered many things, including his prized stable, half of his harem, and even the diadem on his turban, none of which I could honestly accept. In time, though, Ashupta Khan was more than willing to offer “preferred client” status to Alphatian merchants in Jahore, with a 1% impost on port trade payable to the Haaken family. At that point, I thought that lending a hand would be a challenging enterprise. Based on this lucrative arrangement, I set forth to build a palace.

**Tslamir 27:** The prince was able to attend the meeting after a fashion, reading my mind as the discussion took place. She, of course, said she was skillful in matters of architecture and would gladly provide her knowledge. She also quietly requested that half of that trade impost be used to embellish the Princess Ark through the purchase of objects of art and other ornamental items. Once the details were worked out, Raman, Leo, and myself would disembark and conduct the construction, as per Berylith’s blueprints.

**Tslamir 28:** It took some time to find the proper site for the construction. It was finally decided to destroy the abandoned city library, which was threatening to collapse into the river. Unfortunately, the Sindian workers proved to be incredibly slow, so slow that I had to use the ship’s crew to accelerate the process. There was no telling how long it would take to level the older construction.

**Andrumir 4:** It made sense that the people of Jahore are terribly slow workers. It has been very difficult making them follow a construction plan without erring. Raman and Leo were near nervous exhaustion in their endeavors to explain the work to the Sindians and to avoid catastrophic mistakes.

**Andrumir 5:** I have noticed an increase in construction overnights. Raman and Leo seemed much more indolent and careless today. Worse, the crew has been acting quite sloppily on board, forgetting to clean the decks or to show up for duty. Some crewmembers did not seem to care at all. This was too much of a coincidence. This lazy attitude struck me with its similarity to zzonga addiction, which ravaged our empire some time ago. However, I could observe none of the other symptoms normally accompanying zzonga addiction. It would take quite a bit of magic to affect an entire city—and so far I have not detected any sign of large-scale magic anywhere.

**Andrumir 12:** I found the source of the “curse.” The waters of the Asanda River have been poisoned with a rare alchemical substance. It is unlikely it could happen naturally, so I must admit someone has been seeking the doom of Jahore. But who? There was only one way to figure this out. Ashari and myself would leave the ship under disguise and blend in with the population. With some luck, we could unveil who was behind all this.

**Andrumir 14:** It made sense that someone would be working upstream to contaminate the city waters. We explored the river banks just north of the Jahore and found several areas well concealed from sight. There I dropped hardened compounds of my creation that would take several days to dissolve. The solution,
when mixed with the water, would immediately reveal any evidence of poison by coloring the water. We could then trace the colored solution back to the spot where the poison had been thrown into the water.

Indeed, we were soon able to trace the solution back to one of the hidden sources. Someone had dropped a sheepskin full of slow-dissolving poison into the river. It came in sufficient quantity to affect most of the populace in the city for several days. We even spotted our culprit, a man on a horse. It was time to uncover the conspiracy.

We quietly followed the man back to Jahore. A bit of invisibility allowed us to enter his house just moments after him. There we saw him use a magical item that coloring the water. We could then trace the prisoner once stood, poured them into a chamber.

Intrigued, I followed them. The rajah was then sitting in a comfortable chair and toasting his head with a small piece of jewelry. It looked like a replica of a small flame carved out of a topaz. He had the prisoner stripped and waved the guards out. Soon thereafter the rajah uttered a long invocation and brandished the jewel. Translucent flames began to glow on the prisoner's body. I could see the pain in his eyes, but he endured stoically. He remained quiet and immobile while the magical flames grew and consumed his flesh. The rajah was watching intently, enjoying with a sadistic pleasure his victim's pain and agony. He realized, I think, that this prisoner was staring into my eyes, despite my invisibility. It felt like he was looking through me. For a brief instant, I saw images of great battles, flying ships, death and pestilence, then a great continent sinking into stormy seas. My senses returned just as the man died.

I noticed a certain perplexity on the rajah's face. He squinted for a moment in my general direction. That would not do, so I ducked behind a curtain. The rajah quickly spoke another spell and looked around him, observing the room and listening carefully. I did not think he saw me, but he certainly suspected something. He quickly scooped up the bone cinders and the few ashes remaining where the prisoner once stood, poured them into a golden crucible, and walked out, swiftly shutting the door behind him. By the time I could safely open the door, the rajah had disappeared behind a corner or, more probably, through a secret door.

This was very strange. I had no clues as to how the prisoner could have seen me or what those visions were. Worse, I knew the rajah would use those ashes—and I suspected his intentions to be thoroughly evil. It wasn't until very late that night that I located the rajah and the ashes as well. He was in the palace dungeon, in a chamber that took all my skill to reach. I observed the rajah working at a small brazier. After a litany of incantations, he sprinkled the ashes that had been mixed with another substance. This produced swirls of acrid-smelling smoke with sparks of light. Inside, I was surprised to see the same visions that affected me in the rajah’s apartments. The rajah was quickly taking notes with a quill and a piece of parchment. The same battles and cataclysms appeared as in my previous vision, up to a point when the rajahs apartments also materialized in the vision—with me standing near the curtains!

The rajah jumped to his feet and cursed. He dispersed the smoke and had the guard sound the alarm. If he had a doubt, it was now gone. He knew I was in the palace and what I looked like. I would have to be very careful in the future. The old man had many ways of finding me. It was time to skip out of the chamber. It was late, and I was getting very tired and hungry.

**Andrumir 16—Xerdon:** The ship has grown restless, somewhat skittish like a horse. I suspect she's reacting to the appearance of the Admiral. I attempted to communicate with the ship's entity but failed to obtain an answer. So far, the search by the maharajah's men yielded no sign of the admiral or Ashari. I recovered Chief Ram and Mr. Le Nerviens, both of whom I found in an uncivilized condition and resting with the other construction personnel during work hours. This inexcusably lax attitude before foreign civilians is not permitted for an officer of Her Imperial Majesty's Navy and shall be stopped at once.

**Andrumir 16—Haldemar** (Text added later): I spent the night in a little stable. At dawn, I took a stroll down the streets. The town of Jailub was as sinister and oppressive as its palace. This was a haven for thugs and cutthroats rivalled only by the rajahs guards, a brutal and arrogant bunch. The rajahs palace and his army's quarters were located inside an imposing citadel. A port opened directly on a small bay. There I noticed the rajahs guards were unloading another prisoner; he looked a bit like the one the rajah murdered earlier. He displayed the same, unmistakable dignity as the other. These people could be powerful seers, perhaps. I was getting horribly curious about their origins.

Aside from the unspeakable tortures and murders that had been probably taking place for some time, it was clear the rajah was up to something big. I had to return and find out, so I cast a new spell and flew up to the rajahs tower. There, from the window I could see the rajah sitting in front of a mirror. Instead of his reflection, the mirror revealed a man in black, wearing a hood. The rajah picked up the scroll containing his notes on the vision and stuck it through the mirror, causing strange ripples through its glassy surface. The man in black nodded, then quietly produced a pen and wrote something on the scroll before returning it. The rajah read the response—then said, in proper Alphatian, “Their destruction will be a blessing for us all. How soon, though, is the question, isn't it, my obtrusive friend?”

The man in black faded away as the rajah turned toward me. “You didn't think you could fool me much, did you?”

**Andrumir 17—Xerdon:** The ship has inexplicably broken her lines and set flight toward the southwest. I suspect she senses where the Admiral is. For lack of results from the maharajah's incompetent search of Jahore, I am allowing the Prince Ark to freely take us to wherever she wishes. I
am cloaking the ship to avoid further problems with the local population.

Andrumir 17—Haldemar: I should have been more alert. No recollection of what had happened after my last encounter with the rajah came to my mind—that is to say, nothing else than a searing pain in my head. I woke up in the citadel's dungeon, stripped, gagged, and shackled to the wall in a very uncomfortable position. I could not have done a better job of it myself.

The rajah showed up hours past my awakening. He came with a nasty grin and his dreaded topaz. "I didn't think you would cooperate, and as a fellow wizard I wished to spare you the commoner's fate," said he, while pointing at various instruments of torture across the cell. "The Fire Jewel is far more efficient in revealing someone's inner thoughts. And I am sure you will fully savor the refined magicks of Jaibul." The rajah's sinister laughter echoed in the dark dungeon. He began the Fire Jewel's incantation. I cringed.

Then a heavy cudgel landed on the back of the rajah's turban. He collapsed in a soundless heap. Someone stepped out of the dark. It was Ashari! The dear young woman had followed the rajah's lackey back to Jahore. Seeing that the gate had closed before me, she quickly "terminated" the river's poisoner and recovered the item he used to open the gate. By the time she had discerned its method of operation, I was already elsewhere in the rajah's palace. She had been looking for me ever since. Finally, Ashari had followed the rajah down here, and, as Glantrians would say, "Voilà!" A master stroke! And she smirked, "I also, urn, accidentally dropped the rajah's poison in the citadels well."

How thoughtful of her. This yeoman was due for a promotion.

After hooking the rajah to his own shackles, I was tempted to try the fiery topaz on him. After all, he, too, had many things to tell us about. Alas, a squad of guard entered the cell unexpectedly. A prompt reverse gravity took care of them, except for a runty fellow in the back who ran for help. We ducked from pillar to corner for some time while men-at-arms rushed down the narrow stairwells looking for us. This was an exhilarating moment, although I had some trouble keeping pace with the nimble Ashari as this delightful game went on.

It was during this "dungeonesque escapade" that I located the prisoner I had seen in the port of Jaibul. Ashari defeated the crude lock that imprisoned him with barely two twists of her wrist. Our man bowed slightly and swiftly followed us. We could hear the rajah's hysterical holler echoing up the hallways.

It took Ashari some doing to find an exit—a filthy sewer grate in a deserted street. Something was amiss, though. It was high noon and no one was around. As we slipped down the street under the shadows of colonnades, guards suddenly poured out from every corner. We were trapped!

The rajah had recovered his senses more quickly than I anticipated. Within moments, there he was, sitting on a flying carpet and hovering above us. "You will suffer for a thousand days and thousand nights, each of you!" said he, pale and trembling with anger.

I grimly turned to my compatriots and noticed, oddly enough, a very smile appearing on the face of the prisoner we had rescued. Enraged, the rajah raved on, "You will see your skin slowly ripped from your flesh and thrown to the dogs!" he cried.

Now the former prisoner displayed a very wide grin that infuriated the rajah even more. Perhaps he knew something I didn't. "You'll have each of your limbs ripped from your body!" spat the rajah. "You—" Suddenly the rajah jerked, his eyes growing very wide, and stopped in the middle of his speech.

"I doubt that very much, your highness!" came a voice behind him in the air. Slowly, the Princess Ark became visible just behind the rajah. And at her prow stood Xerdon, with his sword conspicuously jabbed into the rajah's back. The rajah's men fled at once in complete chaos.
wonderful timing.

Andrumir 18—Haldemar: With the rajah of Jaibul in our hands, I had no difficulty in retrieving my personal belongings and the antique Sindian tablets and the strange mirror. According to Raman, the clay tablets were an old treaty between previous rulers of Sind and Jaibul. It attributed the ruler of Jaibul legal rights to the Province of Putnabad, should the Ashupta family become extinct or be stripped of its nobility due to royal discontent. The rajah of Jaibul had found a way to discredit the Ashuptas by poisoning the people, thus causing their decadence. Jahore definitely looked like a mess. It was time to return to Jahore and finish a certain construction enterprise—and quickly so, before the king’s visit.

As we veered over the port of Jaibul toward Jahore, Ramissur came up to me, holding the rajah by his collar. “Sir, what do I do with him?” Ramissur asked.

This was an unexpected problem. The rajah was too dangerous to keep aboard, and I had a hunch that our new guest, the ex-prisoner Yarani, could shed more light on what had been going on than could the rajah. I told Ramissur to do as he pleased.

Ramissur gazed at me for a moment, looked at the rajah, then shrugged and unceremoniously tossed his prisoner overboard. I suppose that sank our diplomatic ties with Jaibul for many years to come.

Such is life.

Andrumir 19—Haldemar: Back to Jahore. The poison in the river has started to thin out. Already, positive results can be seen among the population. The building of the palace has resumed, and with a little magical help on my part, construction is literally progressing by leaps and bounds. The “Raj Tahal” might be done well within the royal deadline.

I spent some time with our guest, Yarani. He claimed to be a citizen of the Yavdlom Hagiarchy, far beyond Jaibul. This was one place I’d never heard of. Yarani was a holy man, a noble of sorts. He wouldn’t answer my questions regarding his uncanny ability to see invisible things, nor would he comment on the visions I’d had when I witnessed his compatriot’s murder at the hands of the rajah. He seemed very concerned, however, and invited the Princess Ark to visit the Great Prophet, spiritual ruler of Yavdlom. There, he said, would be many revelations—some good, some bad.

To be continued. . . .

The Kingdom of Sind

In the eastern region of the Great Waste lies a large nation under the rulership of King Chandra. His kingdom stretches from Lake Hast, west of Glantri, to the Asanda River delta on the Sea of Dread. The eastern border separates Sind from the Atruaghin Clans and Darokin. At its southwestern border lies the smaller but fiercely independent Rajahstan of Jaibul. The western limits lie somewhere in the Plain of Fire, a vast territory still unclaimed.

Sind’s notoriety comes from the extreme poverty of its people, some of the poorest in the Known World. The hardship of these destitute folk clashes with the fabulous wealth of Sind’s nobility, the many rajahs and maharajahs. Common Sindians get by, however, thanks to their great faith in a vast pantheon of Immortals and to the help given them by a powerful clergy. Foreigners often have difficulties traveling in Sind because of the incredible number of customs and beliefs that affect every aspect of the daily life. Ignoring a custom, deliberately or accidentally, can provoke anger among the population.

The nobility is clearly under the authority of the king. The rajahs control commerce, politics, and warfare. The history of Sind was fraught with wars among the various rajahstans until the great royal dynasties of Sayr Ulan pacified the Asanda plain. A series of bloody wars ensued during the conquest of the states of Peshmir, Gunjab, and Kadesh—fierce warriors by tradition. Those states still enjoy a relative autonomy from the king compared to the southern states. Today, the king’s army is often busy fighting off humanoid incursions from the Plain of Fire and banditry along its caravan trails.
Sayr Ulan is the nation’s capital and the historical domain of the royal dynasties. It began as a small oasis village; centuries later, it became a convenient stop for Darokinian caravans and a trading point. A new caravan trail was built around the northern states, toward Fort Sablestone in Glantri. Nowadays, Sayr Ulan is a major center of commerce between Darokin and the western city of Slagowitch. Sind is a major trader in silk, cotton, rice, salt, and tea. Merchant ships from Minrothad often anchor at Jahore.

The Rajabstan of Jaibul is an independent and chaotic magocracy that allows itself to be ruled only by a single, powerful wizard. Successive monarchs of Sind never could conquer it. Whenever Jaibul’s raja dies, the most powerful wizards of Jaibul compete for the throne. It is a cruel and unforgiving challenge, usually fatal for the weaker candidates. Jaibul’s biggest trade is in slavery, gold, and rare oils. Constant clashes take place between Jaibul and the Serene Hagiaarchy of Yavdlom to the southwest.

Letters

Continued from page 5

We are open to suggestions from gamers who have first-hand knowledge on this subject. Please send us your thoughts; the best advice will be printed in “Forum.”

As the Realms turn

Dear Dragon,

In his article, “The Game Wizards” (“Understanding Undermountain—the king of all dungeons”), Ed Greenwood mentions one Laeral. It is stated in the article that she is both the consort of Khelben “Blackstaff” of Waterdeep and the sister of The Simbul, Alustriel, Dove, and Storm (as well as the deceased Sylune). Looking through the FORGOTTEN REALMS® boxed set and all the FR supplements, I found no mention of her. Am I just missing it, or has she not been introduced before? This group of sisters is very important to one of my characters who adventures in the Forgotten Realms. Are there any other sisters not yet revealed? If so, where can I get information on them as well as on Laeral?

Michael Kellam
Mesquite TX

Dear Dragon,

I have some questions regarding inconsistencies appearing in an article, “The Game Wizards, in issue #167. In this preview of The Ruins of Undermountain, Elminster is unavailable for commentary thanks to a previous engagement with The Simbul. In his place, Laeral meets with Ed Greenwood. During the course of their conversation, Laeral claims kinship with The Simbul, Alustriel, Dove, Storm, and (though unmentioned) the late Sylune. As far as I can tell, isn’t Laeral supposed to be a member of “The Nine” and of no relation to these sisters? And if she is now involved with Khelben, I wonder if anyone has warned him of her “Crown of Thorns,” or has he something kinky in mind? Lastly, if Laeral had a hand in the notes describing Undermountain while she was under the spell of the crown, then she may be scheming to trap unwary adventurers in dangers beyond the reach of even the most powerful of DMs.

John A. Payawal
Toronto, Ontario

Your editors were completely lost when these letters came in, so, we turned this material over to Steven Schend, the editor of the massive dungeon boxed set, The Ruins of Undermountain. His reply on Laeral, confirmed by phone calls with Ed (and with editorial inserts in parentheses) follows:

Laeral (who first appeared in DRAGON issue #39, page 42, as the creator of Laeral’s Storm armor) was the former leader of “The Nine,” an adventuring group now in retirement (see FR5 The Savage Frontier, page 52, for details). She is indeed related to the aforementioned women, being one of seven sisters, one as yet unmentioned. (The relationship between these women is first mentioned in the DM’s Sourcebook of the Realms, from the FORGOTTEN REALMS boxed set, in the entries on Dove, The Simbul, Storm, and Sylune. Laeral and the unnamed sister were not discussed there, leading most people to believe that there were only five sisters.) As for the Crown of Thorns (its correct name, first mentioned in FR5, page 53, it has been destroyed; its hold on Laeral was broken by Khelben (her archmage consort; described in the DM’s Sourcebook, page 54, and in FR1 Waterdeep and the North, among other places).

And worry not about Laeral’s oft-innocent scheming: worry about your DM’s plans!
ONE STORMY EVENING an avid gamer had a dream...

He was standing in the middle of a forest surrounded by an evil dragon and its hungry brood. Suddenly, there was a sound (click) and a window opened.

He materialized on the Bridge of a Denebian research vessel facing a black hole. Ensign Tamurov, a look of satisfaction on her pretty face, reported, "All pre-trial tests complete, sir! Shall we commence Time-Lock?" He nodded his assent. The ship shook violently and upon entry, there was another strange sound (click), "ah, another window!" he thought.

Diving into the third window, he found himself face to face with four of the world's greatest strategists arguing over war plans. With the stroke of his hands he devised the perfect war strategy to defeat Unier's undefeatable armies. As the strategists were honoring his thoughts, a fourth window appeared and engulfed the young hero.

Scratching his head, he found himself in an immense shopping mall dedicated to countless games manufacturers. Excited by the many products, he went on a devilish hunt. Wiping sweat from his brow, "but you don't sweat in dreams," he realized. This was reality! He was playing 3 different games and shopping simultaneously. Confused, he peered at the corner of his desk and saw the SUMMIT GAMES NETWORK Manual. Opening with caution he read:

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ARTWORK BY LARRY ELFORD
The acrobats, adepts, and actors of fantasy

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D’SHAI
Joel Rosenberg
Ace  0-441-15751-3  $4.95
The world of D’Shai, magic is not a science, not a body of knowledge to be studied, from which its practitioners extract bits and pieces of wizardry to master and perform. Rather, magic is a state of mind, and by reaching for that heightened consciousness (called kazuh), one can achieve superhuman mastery of a single skill. The form of one’s kazuh is decided at birth; one cannot choose to be a kazuh warrior or runner if he has been born with the kazuh of an acrobat.

Kami Khuzud has the opposite problem. He’s the son of a kazuh acrobat and a member of his father’s troupe of traveling performers. Though he’s learned the skills of a juggler-acrobat, he doesn’t seem to have an acrobat’s kazuh—nor, for that matter, any of the other 51 forms of kazuh known to exist. That’s a problem, because someone has murdered a member of the troupe, and all signs point to Kami as the logical suspect.

D’Shai is one part murder mystery, one part political intrigue, and two parts voyage of self-discovery. All three elements are skillfully executed. The murder puzzle relies on the uniqueness of its milieu, the intrigues are seen from the distinctive viewpoint of an outsider, and Rosenberg makes superb use of kazuh as a metaphor for artistic genius and creative joy. Kami Khuzud is an appealing and well-chosen narrator; he’s observant, clever, and cynical, allowing Rosenberg to pass on a great deal of wisdom without sounding pretentiously wise.

There’s a great deal of juggling lore in the book as well, together with a solid portrayal of the interaction between low-born performers and their noble patrons. Traveling players are far from unique in fantasy, but we haven’t often seen such a troupe formed inside or acquired as thorough an appreciation of its work ethic as Rosenberg provides.

The back cover reveals that D’Shai is first in a series, but the novel stands firmly on its own merits—so much so that the very thought of a sequel is almost anticlimactic. But that remains to be seen. In the meantime, Rosenberg’s latest book should provide gamers with a rich source of ideas, only some of which have anything to do with building campaigns.

THE ADEPT
Katherine Kurtz and Deborah Turner Harris
Ace  0-441-00343-5  $4.95
Its dramatic premise and highly successful collaborators should have made The Adept an engrossing supernatural thriller. Instead, it’s a strange and frustrating novel with problems that should never have survived an editor’s scrutiny.

The confusion begins with the books title. The Adept implies a story focusing on a single protagonist, and the opening chapters seem to give that role to Sir Adam Sinclair, wealthy Scottish psychiatrist and secret master of arcane powers. But scarcely has that assumption settled into place when the viewpoint shifts toward artist Peregrine Lovat, who has the potential for superhuman greatness if only he can recognize and accept it. Thereafter, Adam and Peregrine share the adventure more or less evenly.

That creates a further problem, as the narrative jumps back and forth between the two characters’ viewpoints, not to mention taking occasional side trips to record the exploits of their opposition, a rival circle of occultists in search of an ancient book of spells. Neither Adam nor Peregrine gets enough attention to qualify for a starring role, and they don’t operate well enough as a team to compensate.

What’s worse, there’s a distant, formal quality to the writing that tends to keep the reader separated from the characters even when the viewpoint is in focus.

A tightly controlled plot might have made up for the thin personality work, but here again the authors have chosen breadth over depth. One major thread involves Peregrine’s initiation into the occult community, another pursues the black magicians’ conspiracy, and there are a host of minor tangents. Most notably, the reincarnated spirit of a medieval wizard is left suspended between lives at the novels end, a flagrant loose end even in a book labeled as first in a series.

Finally, collaborators Kurtz and Harris give only murky and unenlightening details concerning the brand of magic their characters practice. There are references to at least three separate mystical or mythological traditions: Adam’s arcane title, “Master of the Hunt,” recalls Celtic legends, while in past incarnations he seems to have been an Egyptian adept and a member of the Templars, an order of Christian knights devoted to mystical arts. And Adam’s discussions with and about his colleagues and superiors (apparently he belongs to a secret society of adepts) confuse more than they explain.

There’s no excuse for lapses of this magnitude, not from writers with Kurtz’s experience or Harris’s ability to maintain lightning-fast pace. Explanations or efforts to fix blame aren’t relevant. What matters is that reading The Adept is like assembling for a game session without character sheets, rules books, or a referee. There’s too little planning on which to hang this story, and that’s a surprise and a disappointment.

GOBLIN MOON
Teresa Edgerton
Ace  0-441-29427-8  $4.50
The distinctive feature of Goblin Moon isn’t that it’s a swashbuckler rather than a medieval tale. What’s intriguing about Teresa Edgerton’s latest fantasy is the books theatrical character; this is a story that doesn’t feel written so much as it does performed.

In part, Edgerton’s choice of period does help create the effect. While dates are unspecified and place names are invented, the elegantly sketched atmosphere recalls 17th-century England (though with sub-stellar influence from the Continent). We have elegant nobility, eccentric tradesmen, and the beginnings of modern industry—with a generous sprinkling of demihumans and subtle magic added for good measure. It’s the age where melodrama was born, complete with dashing swordsmen, deadly treachery, and high-flew romance, and Edgerton’s plot includes generous measures of each.

In this story, though, scene takes precedence over plot and setting. The characters of Goblin Moon behave like actors on a stage; they’re always in motion, always playing off something or someone, always acting and reacting as circumstances demand, never merely striking poses while the author paints their portraits.

And there are plenty of characters: two heroes, one earnest and one dashing; two heroines, one adventurous and one delicate; two villains, one driven and one inhuman; and a dangerous mastermind pulling strings behind them all.

The atmosphere is sheer costume drama, with rapiers keening against each other, carriage wheels clattering over cobblesones, and fabulous gowns rustling in elegant ballrooms. Edgerton has effectively filtered the classic styles of Charles Dickens and Alexander Dumas from modern stage and screen adaptations back into prose. It’s a fascinating accomplishment and makes for a reading experience with lots of sensory cues.

For some reason, there’s no hint on the cover that this is the first of two planned books, under the collective title of Misk and Dagger. Mind you, Goblin Moon stands quite well on its own—but with a novel as well written, and on their hands, you’d think the publishers would want to assure their readers that more in this vein is on the way.

INDIANA JONES AND THE PERIL AT DELPHI
Rob MacGregor
Bantam  0-553-28961-4  $3.95
It’s probably fair to say that the wild success of the Indiana Jones films was largely responsible for resurrecting the popularity of pulp adventure in general. Now, after a stream of pulp-related comics, TV series, and even role-playing games, the form has come full circle. And it probably isn’t surprising that this new incarnation of the pulp adventure novel is just as mediocre as many of the originals.

What’s unusual is the character of the book’s weaknesses. The old stories were often thinly plotted and narrowly focused on one daring hero, but author Rob MacGregor overcompensates in both areas. The Peril at Delphi comes from too many sources: artifact thieves, fanatical cultists,
foreign spies, a terrorist plot, and assorted romantic rivalries are all chasing each other around Greece in a mad caucusc race for which even a scorecard isn’t enough to keep track. The plot shifts from intrigue to intrigue without warning, and the viewpoint bounces from character to character just as unevenly. It’s as if three film crews had been set loose without a director on hand to keep them under control and to edit their footage into a coherent movie.

Indy’s female companion in this outing poses another problem. Dr. Dorian Belecamus is an exercise in contradictions. She’s sometimes Indy’s sidekick and sometimes his adversary, sometimes a clever manipulator and sometimes a mere pawn. In the first place, a well-written character this complex would be out of place in the action-oriented world of the pulps. MacGregor, though, doesn’t write Dorian well enough for the issue to arise; there’s no underlying sense of consistency in her behavior.

At best, however, the plot and character flaws are symptoms of the books real shortcoming. Unlike the original pulps and the Indiana Jones movies, Peril at Delphi lacks the sense of reckless fun that would make it entertaining rather than grim. By emphasizing grit and intricacy over spectacle and pace, MacGregor has sacrificed the charm of the pulp genre without gaining anything in return. And as a result, the series of books his novel begins is off to a less than promising start.

THE DAGGER AND THE CROSS
Judith Tarr
Doubleday 0-385-41182-0 $10.95

It can be dangerous to claim that a given book has “something for everyone.” Too often, it means that too many threads of plot, character, and theme have been spread too thinly and none of them are done well. The Dagger and the Cross is a pleasant exception to that rule. Judith Tarr’s characters are compelling, her secondary characters populate Aidan’s and Morgiana’s entourages, and these folk are rarely content to allow events to pass them by. Everyone has a place in the unfolding intrigues, and no one (not even Aidan’s enemies) is left a mere stereotype in Tarr’s capable hands.

If there’s a nit to be picked, it’s that the fiery Morgiana gets too little time on stage in this volume, which keeps chiefly to the Christian side of events and favors Aidan’s personal crises as a result. In this regard alone, readers of Tarr’s earlier Alamut may have an advantage, but for the most part, The Dagger and the Cross works equally well as a stand-alone novel and as the second half of a two-book saga. Given that it’s also convincing history and sweeping drama, gamers in all segments of the hobby should find ample reason to pore over its pages.

A BOOK DRAGON
Donn Kushner
Avon 0-380-70769-1 $3.50

There’s always room in fantasy for a story about another dragon or another unicorn, particularly when it’s as endearing as Peter Beagle’s much-praised saga of a lost unicorn down in the English countryside. Kushner’s sprightly tale of an unusual treasure and its well-traveled guardian. These two books are unique, though, in that their impact rests as much on their illustrations as on the text—and curiously enough, it’s the smaller of the two that comes out ahead in a comparison.

The Last Unicorn almost doesn’t need to be summarized, but for those who haven’t run across an earlier edition, it’s the story of a mild-mannered magician, a peppy outlaw woman, and a unicorn cut off from the rest of her kind. Beagle is one of the very few modern fantasists who accurately captures the air of fairy-tale in his writing, and he combines it, in this case, with equal parts of musical accompaniment and wry, fresh wit. It is at once a book for reading aloud, chapter by chapter, at bedtime, and for contemplating at quiet and thoughtful length with a far-away look in one’s eyes.

A Book Dragon is perhaps less transcendent, but Kushner’s style is at least a cousin to Beagle’s and no less pleasant to the ear. The dragon of the title is Nonesuch, who is distinctive among his declining race for his curiosity regarding humanity. While family members meet untimely and undignified ends at human hands, Nonesuch graduallydiminishes and hovers inconspicuously around the scriptorium of a country monastery. Before long, he has become both subject and guardian of a magnificent, illuminated manuscript. Kushner’s tale follows both dragon and book through generations of owners, concluding in a New England bookshop where Nonesuch finally exercises draconian powers to dispose of an obnoxious real-estate developer. It’s a clever, nealy executed story, with most of its wisdom plainly on the surface.

It’s also a compact yarn, filling not quite 200 pages with larger-than-average print—and that total does not include the generous stock of illuminations and illustrations scattered throughout the text. Artist Nancy Ruth Jackson has worked a mischievous modern variation on the idea of the illuminated manuscript: each chapter begins with a formal illuminated letter and border illustration, but there are also little marginal drawings throughout, some of which take a second look to appreciate properly. (Keep an eye out for the page number with the arrow sticking out of it.) And her style is nicely matched to the tone of Kushner’s prose, with just the right balance of smoothness and flourish.

The ingenious art in A Book Dragon is a delightful bonus in a book that most readers won’t have seen before. A different standard, though, applies to Roc’s edition of The Last Unicorn. In this case, the text is familiar and has been widely available in a variety of editions; what’s new here is the art, and the art therefore needs to be unique and compelling in and off of itself. Otherwise, readers might as well borrow a library copy or look for a first edition paperback in a second-hand bookshop.

Unfortunately, Mel Grant’s art doesn’t meet that standard. The cover painting is beautiful, true, but it’s an elegant, remote beauty with mist around its edges, and it doesn’t match the friendly intimacy of Beagle’s prose. Moreover, it’s utterly inconsistent with his 10 interior illustrations, whose rough character and stark lines are equally out of place when set against a narrative that’s polished to a weathered smoothness. And the proportion of art to text seems low, with less than one picture provided per chapter, and no illumination or enhanced design to mark the chapter openings.

It’s important to separate the illustrations from the text in making final judgments here. The Last Unicorn is arguably worth the $6.95 cover price for the story alone, despite the lackluster packaging. A Book Dragon, by contrast, is a rare bargain, with copious dragon lore, a cheerful story, and a bright basketful of art in one amiable, pocket-sized serving. And Donn
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Recurring roles

There are just two misfires to report in the latest assortment of sequels, continuations, and so forth. First is Thorarinn Gunnarsson's Human, Beware! (Ace, $4.50), and it's a real puzzler. Though nominally a sequel to Gunnarsson's lively Make Way For Dragons!, this odd tale forsakes California entirely for a fantasy realm in which human Jenny Barker is the focus of a very strange and irrational-seeming prophecy. The internal logic is confusing, Jenny grows up much too fast, and there's not enough groundwork to make Gunnarsson's universe convincing. It's a startlingly weak yarn from a writer who's capable of much better work.

And Viperhand (TSR, $4.95) seems to confirm the initial suspicion that Douglas Niles' Maztica trilogy is frying too many fish in one skillet. Between the replay of the Spanish conquest of Latin America, the machinations of a drow conspiracy, and the more personal exodus of Halloran and Erixitl, Niles has too many plots and too little space to develop them all evenly.

Simon Green's Hawk & Fisher series improves a bit with the second entry, Winner Takes All (Ace, $3.95); this time, there's a bit more consistency and a good deal more action as the two crack Guards become involved in a complicated electioneering adventure. Sword-and-sorcery mystery still seems like a rather odd premise, but at least it's getting smoother.

There's only one new Mercedes Lackey title to report this time, but then By the Sword (DAW, $4.95) is a substantial novel. Lackey finally draws the connection between her Valdemar novels and the stories of Tarma and Kethry, and does so in a lively adventure that takes in a great deal of territory. Protagonist Kerowyn is quite different from any of Lackey's earlier heroes and heroines, and her relentless pragmatism plays well against the sometimes remote-seeming idealism of the Heralds. This novel is self-contained and can be read independently of the books it connects, but the flyleaf promises another Valdemar trilogy to come.

The Wizardry Cursed (Baen, $4.95) finds Rick Cook recounting another adventure of Wiz Zumwalt, computer wizard turned spell-writing wizard. Now a pair of power-seeking programmers have gotten their hands on Wiz's software and are plotting conquest, with multiple worlds in danger if their scheme succeeds. Cook continues to find new ways to apply his premise rather than recycling the old, and the series is evolving nicely as a result.

Note: Correspondents and publishers should make a note of the following new address. Questions, comments, and material for review should now be directed to:

John C. Bunnell
6200 SW Hall Blvd. #118
Beaverton OR 97005

54 MAY 1991
Two ghosts with the most

As those by-line readers out there already know, the two most recent "MARVEL®-Phile" columns were written not by me, but by Steven E. Schend, an editor in TSR's Games Department. Steven was the in-house editor on MU6 The Gamer's Handbook of the MARVEL UNIVERSE™, 1990 Character Updates and will perform the same duties on this year's MU7, which is due to hit your stores in late November.

From here on, Steven and I will share the writing duties for this column, and I think we'll make a pretty good team. Steven knows the vast MARVEL UNIVERSE better than I do, but I am more familiar with the game system than he is; we should compliment each other well.

This month, I'll detail one spooky guy—the Ghost, a foe of Iron Man—and update you on the new Ghost Rider. I was tempted to wait until the Halloween issue to write up these two guys, but you have been clamoring for the Ghost Rider update, so here you go. Have fun!

GHOST™
Industrial Saboteur

| F | GD(10) | Health: 70 |
| A | EX(20) |
| S | GD(10) | Karma: 66 |
| E | RM(30) |
| R | IN(36) | Resources: EX(20) |
| I | GD(10) |
| P | EX(20) | Popularity: 0 |

POWERS: The brown-haired, blue-eyed man who is the Ghost has no powers of his own. All of his super-human abilities stem from his electrically powered battle-suit. Cybernetic circuitry in the suit's hood enables the Ghost to utilize his suit's various capabilities by mental commands. As a result, the Ghost must be able to concentrate to activate any of his suit's abilities, and he can be surprised normally. (I recommend an Intuition check to determine whether or not any individual can react in the same round as a surprise attack.) The Ghost's suit gives him the powers noted here. Unless otherwise noted, the powers below all operate at the Amazing (46) rank.

- **Phasing:** Circuity in his suit allows the Ghost to become intangible by putting his body slightly out of phase with this dimension. These circuits cannot operate at the same time as the suit's Invisibility circuits do, so the Ghost cannot be both immaterial and invisible in the same round. An evil businessman, Justin Hammer, has developed a synthetic material (perhaps a form of vibranium) that the Ghost cannot yet pass through. When the Ghost is immaterial, he is transparent. (See following note.)

- **Invisibility:** Certain circuits in his suit allow the Ghost to become invisible at will. The Ghost can easily switch between his invisibility and intangibility powers from round to round, but he can never have both sets of circuitry operating at the same time. The Ghost can control other objects invisible also, as long as he is in contact with the object. Note that the Ghost has improved these circuits to render himself invisible to most mechanical and electronic sensors. Have the Ghost make a FEAT roll using his power rank of Amazing (46) versus the rank of the sensor. A successful roll means the Ghost has avoided being detected by that sensor. For example, in his last meeting with Iron Man, the Ghost was completely invisible to all the sensors in Iron Man's armor. (See following note.)

- **Computer control:** Circuits in the Ghost's suit allow him to control and reprogram computers by touching the computers or the equipment that contains the computers, with a successful FEAT roll against the rank of the computer.

- **Weapons and equipment:** The Ghost also uses personal weapons that are not parts of his suit. He carries handguns that can inflict Incredible (36) Force or Energy damage with a range of four areas, and grenades capable of inflicting Amazing (46) Force damage to everyone in the area where a grenade explodes. The Ghost also carries "Anson grenades" doing Amazing (46) Force damage, but which also fly in random directions with Feeble (2) air speed. He can release three of these flying grenades in one round if he takes one round beforehand to prepare them (no other actions allowed). Otherwise, he can only release one per combat round. In addition, the Ghost possesses bombs (Amazing (46) Force damage) that can be activated by sound waves, and portable versions of his intangibility circuits that he can attach to people or objects.

NOTE: Phasing and Invisibility are difficult to judge with the power rank system in the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game. Is the Ghost, with Amazing (46) Invisibility more invisible than an individual with Typical (6) Invisibility? Is the old Red Ghost less tangible than the Ghost with Amazing (46) Phasing? Well, yes and no. In my own campaign, here’s how I handled powers like these.

An invisible person is just that—invisible to other people’s eyes. The rank only comes into play against other kinds of sensors (mechanical equipment, animal senses, etc.). Have the invisible person make a FEAT roll versus the rank of the sensor, with the following stricture. If the sensor’s rank is lower than the invisibility rank number of the person’s power, a green result will mean the sensor does not detect the invisible person. For sensors that are the same rank number as the person’s power, a yellow result is needed for the person to remain undetected. And if the sensor’s rank is higher than the invisibility rank number, the invisible person needs a red result to not be detected by the sensor.

Phasing or intangibility works similarly. Compare the rank number of the power with the material strength rank number of the substance to be passed through, then...
make a FEAT roll. If the phasing rank number is higher, a green result means the person can pass through the material. If the rank numbers are the same, a yellow result is necessary to pass through the material. If the material’s rank number is higher than that of the person’s power, then a red result is required for the person to pass through the substance.

I use this system any time the game calls for a “FEAT roll versus” a certain rank.

**TALENTS**

The Ghost has the Business/Finance, Engineering, Computers, and Electronics skills. He also possesses a Demolitions talent that gives him a +1CS for constructing and dealing with explosive devices.

**HISTORY**

Almost nothing is known about the man who is the industrial saboteur called the Ghost (see “Role-playing notes”). He was something of a legend in the electronics industry, but few who heard the story, including Anthony Stark (Iron Man), believed it—no one, that is, until Carrington Pax, a Roxxon Oil Corporation executive, hired the Ghost to drive Accutech Research and Development, an electronics firm in financial trouble, into bankruptcy. Roxxon had attempted to purchase Accutech, but that firm’s executives wanted nothing to do with the disreputable Roxxon. Pax hoped that the weaken the Ghost did would further damage Accutech’s financial standing, making it more amenable to Roxxon’s next offer of purchase.

Accutech was indeed going bankrupt but had just been bought by Stark Enterprises, Anthony Stark’s own electronics firm. It had cost Stark every penny he and his company had, but Stark thought that the beta particle generator that Accutech was developing could become a tremendous source of cheap, clean energy. No sooner had Stark signed the final purchase papers than the Ghost attacked. Stark, as Iron Man, forced the Ghost to flee, but as he was escaping, the Ghost vowed to kill the man he believed to be Iron Man’s employer, Tony Stark.

Pax was displeased that the Ghost had deviated from his mission of destroying Accutech by taking up a personal vendetta against Stark. Pax fired the Ghost and gave another operative, the Spymaster (see MU4 for his statistics) the mission to stop the Ghost and to destroy Accutech. This act enraged the Ghost and only made him more determined to kill Stark and destroy Accutech on his own.

The Ghost invaded Stark Enterprises and shot a man he thought to be Stark in Stark’s office, but his victim was Spymaster, impersonating Stark. Spymaster attached an energy siphon to the Ghost’s battlesuit, draining his circuits of the power to operate. Spymaster was about to kill the now-powerless Ghost but was stopped by Tony Stark, who shot the gun out of Spymaster’s hand. The Ghost accessed an electrical power supply, burned out the siphon, recharged his circuits, and tried to escape. Spymaster gave chase, as did Stark in his Iron Man armor. Stark, as Iron Man, saved the Ghost’s life again with a repulsor blast that struck Spymaster, who was still trying to kill the Ghost. Recovering, the Ghost placed a circuit panel on spymaster that rendered him intangible. The Ghost said that this way they could both escape from Iron Man. They fled through a wall. While Spymaster was still passing through the wall, the Ghost removed the circuit panel. The shock to Spymaster’s system, due to his body materializing within a solid substance, was instantly fatal. The Ghost escaped again.

Finally, the Ghost returned, this time determined to kill Stark and destroy the prototype beta particle generator that had prompted Stark to purchase Accutech in the first place. If successful, this attack would have driven both Accutech and Stark Enterprises into bankruptcy. Stark anticipated this, however, and set a trap for the Ghost. Stark knew that the generator gave off an intense energy field that overloaded any electrical systems within 100 yards of it. As the human brain operates on electrical impulses, this field could prove dangerous (or even fatal) to people exposed to the field for long periods of time. Iron Man warned the Ghost of the danger, but the fanatically driven Ghost entered the field anyway. Iron Man realized that he could save the Ghost’s life by turning off the generator. But if he did, the Ghost would destroy it, Stark Enterprises would go bankrupt, and all its employees would be out of work. After considering this and the fact that the Ghost was a cold-blooded murderer, Iron Man decided to not turn off the machine. Before the Ghost reached the generator, the overloading circuits in his suit melted the floor under him. When Iron Man went down to examine the remains, all he found were bits and pieces of melted plastic and circuitry. The Ghost was nowhere to be found.

As it turns out, the Ghost had escaped (of course) to plague Iron Man again. After destroying two more firms, the Ghost set his sights on Electronica Fabrizzi, an Italian company owned by the corrupt businessman and employer of super villains, Justin Hammer. Hammer knew that Stark wanted to rehabilitate one of Hammer’s super-powered operatives, namely Donald Gill, the second Blizzard. Hammer offered to turn over Gill and have nothing further to do with him if Stark agreed to send Iron Man to help Hammer combat the Ghost. Stark agreed.

Iron Man and the Ghost clashed. In the fight, the Ghost attached one of his portable intangibility circuits to Iron Man. Now, only the Ghost, with special circuitry in his suit, could touch the intangible circuit panel and Iron Man. The Ghost intended to let Iron Man slowly die of starvation and thirst, but Iron Man managed to escape by generating an electromagnetic pulse that dampened all electrical circuits nearby. This included his armor and the Ghost’s intangibility circuit. Stark’s associate, James Rhodes, then shot the panel off Iron Man’s armor.

Knowing they would clash again, Ham-
marvel sent Blizzard, the Beetle, and Blacklash (statistics for these villains appear in MU) to observe the next battle between Iron Man and the Ghost. They were instructed to aid whomever was losing the battle. At first, these three aided Iron Man and Rhodes against the Ghost, but soon switched sides. Iron Man and Rhodes managed to defeat Hammer’s operatives, but the Ghost planted some bombs and tried to activate them as he escaped in his intangible form. Iron Man produced another electromagnetic pulse that dampened the bombs’ circuits long enough for Iron Man and Rhodes to get Hammer’s operatives and themselves to safety. The bombs then exploded, destroying the Electronica Fabrizzi complex where the battle had taken place.

The Ghost then tried to infiltrate Hammer’s office to gloat over his accomplishment, only to discover that Hammer had lined his office walls with some synthetic material that the Ghost could not, at that time, pass through. The Ghost still managed to escape by blasting his way out, and has now sworn to kill both Hammer and Stark.

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES: The Ghost is a brilliant inventor who, for reasons unknown, attempts to destroy various high-tech electronics corporations. He appears to be motivated by vengeance, but what the electronics industry did to him to cause this feeling is not known. He has referred to the fact that he once was a business executive, and says that all such executives lie to people, but there are no other present leads pointing to why he acts in this manner. He is willing to destroy firms without financial compensation, but he does hire himself out to people or firms who wish to sabotage rival corporations.

In your campaign, the Ghost could attempt to sabotage some important local business or industry. He could also try to commit sabotage against local, state, or Federal law-enforcement agencies, or even SHIELD (if a version of that agency appears in your campaign). The Ghost could be hired by some villain to retrieve some well-guarded incriminating evidence or to kill a person currently in the hands of the law. Of course, your heroes are asked to protect that evidence or person. The Ghost could also be hired to steal some important new technological or electronic widget or weapon. With his portable intangibility circuits, the Ghost could be a very successful thief.

If you are feeling particularly nasty, have the Ghost learn the location of your heroes’ headquarters. The Ghost could access valuable personal information about the heroes via any computers they have, recover any items formerly belong-

GHOST RIDER™
The Spirit of Vengeance
(The statistics to the left of the slashes represent Daniel Ketch, the young man whose body the Ghost Rider currently inhabits.)

| F | TY(6)/EX(20) | Health: 32/190 |
| A | GD(10)/RM(30) | Karma: 40/80 |
| S | TY(3)/IN(40)  |
| E | GD(10)/UN(100)| Resources: PR(4) |
| R | GD(10)/GD(10) |
| I | GD(10)/EX(20) |
| P | EX(20)/AM(50) | Popularity: 0 |

POWERS: All of the following powers are usable only by this hero’s Ghost Rider form, with the possible exception of Motorcycle Control. On at least one occasion, the cycle moved without assistance to Dan’s location.
ALTER EGO: Ghost Rider physically transforms the body of young Dan Ketch into the flaming-skulled avenger of innocents that we all know and love. The transformation is triggered when the mysterious emblem on the gas cap of the motorcycle Dan found glows and Dan touches it.

-Motorcycle Control: Ghost Rider seems to have psychic control over his motorcycle. Use Ghost Rider’s Amazing (50) Psyche rank to determine the success of any attempted special maneuver with the motorcycle, or when Dan feels that he needs to transform into Ghost Rider but he, for some reason, cannot physically reach the cycle.

-Body Armor: Ghost Rider’s mystical hellfire body is resistant to most forms of injury. He has Amazing (50) protection from physical attacks and Class 1000 protection from fire, heat, poisons, and radiation. Ghost Rider is also immune to any attack that affects a human (living) soul.

-Hellfire: Called his “Penance Stare” by the Ghost Rider and usable only when in physical contact with the target, this mystical energy inflicts no physical damage. However, the victim of this attack suffers emotional pain equal to the most severe pain he has caused others and must make a Psyche FEAT roll or lose one rank off his Psyche score. This is a permanent loss, although the Psyche can be raised by spending Karma (as found in the “Vehicles.” Note

TALENTS: Dan Ketch is skilled in riding motorcycles. Give him a +1CS to his Agility for controlling any cycle. Ghost Rider has mystic control over his cycle (see above) that essentially replaces Ketch’s talent. The previous incarnation of Ghost Rider possessed the Occult Lore and Mystic Background talents; if this is the same Ghost Rider, he may have these talents, although he now seems to suffering from amnesia.

HISTORY: For the history of Ghost Rider’s previous appearances inhabiting the body of Johnny Blaze, see the “Ghost Rider III” entry in MU2, or “The MARVEL-Phile” in DRAGON® issue #110. A brief summary of the current Ghost Rider’s history is as follows.

Dan Ketch found his mystical motorcycle in a junkyard, and he transformed into Ghost Rider for the first time when his sister and some friends confronted a villain, Deathwatch. Deathwatch was seeking three canisters of a virulent biotoxin that could kill vast numbers of people. Ghost Rider prevented him from finding the canisters, although Ketch’s sister was seriously wounded by Deathwatch. Ghost Rider subsequently battled Blackout II, a partner of Deathwatch, who later killed Ketch’s wounded sister. Other foes that Ghost Rider has fought in his current incarnation are Scarecrow, Flag-Smasher, Zodiak, and Mr. Hyde. Ghost Rider has also appeared as a “ghost-ghost” in many popular MARVEL comic books.

Recently, Dan Ketch learned of the origin of Zarathos, the demon who was the Ghost Rider of Johnny Blaze, from Nightmare, Lord of Dream Dimension. No definitive link between that Ghost Rider and the current one have been made at the time of this writing. I’m personally willing to bet, though, that this demonic Spirit of Vengeance is Zarathos. (How many flaming-skulled motorcyclists can there be?)

ROLE-PLAYING NOTES: Ghost Rider is motivated by a desire to avenge wrongs done to innocent people. How a demon came to have this particular motivation is not known, as demons are not noted for caring about innocents. The Ghost Rider often appears as a reaction to some attack against innocents, be it from a super villain or common muggers. It is interesting to speculate on whether or not Ghost Rider would appear, for example, to get a kitten out of a tree—something most heroes would be reluctant to perform. The other times that this Ghost Rider has appeared to be combat some foe who escaped his vengeance in the past.

I’d recommend that, in your campaign, Ghost Rider remain an NPC. He’s an unusual hero with unusual powers that easily lend themselves to abuse. Unless there’s a player you believe can role-play him well and fairly, keep Ghost Rider in the GM’s hands. There are many things an imaginative GM could come up with to bring Ghost Rider into a campaign.

Ghost Rider is a great anti-hero who just doesn’t care about most things heroic. His “Penance Stare” is not a normal heroic attack where the hero pounds the bad guy; this mystical attack is nasty. Also, Ghost Rider has no compunction about killing. He’s killed several minor bad guys already, including several “ninja” employed by Deathwatch. Use Ghost Rider in ways that point out these philosophical differences with most heroes. Ghost Rider may wish to kill a minor villain that your heroes want alive, which could lead to an interesting confrontation. Since Ghost Rider often appears as a reaction to other events, he could show up to save your heroes’ bacon. How would your heroes like owning their lives to a flaming-skulled demon?

A note to those who read or collected the old Official Handbook of the MARVEL UNIVERSE series. Marvel has begun a new version, out for several months now, called The Master’s Edition. It has a new format: one character per three-hole-punched page, with color “three-view” art on one side and character information on the other. Although the art is high quality, I believe the “three-view” style to be a waste of space. But the character information is, for the most part, outstanding. Marvel has quantified its characters’ physical attributes, as well as giving more biographical data and notes on any weapons or paraphernalia the character uses.

All these changes have a price, however. The detailed “History” section for each character is gone, replaced with a functional but less usable bibliography section. Personally, I felt that the History section was one of the most important sections of the old Handbook series. The reason I bought the Handbook was because I wanted to learn about these characters without having to find and buy every issue the character appeared in. I can no longer do that, and I am disappointed. I appreciate the fact that Marvel is committed enough to its readers to publish the Handbook series and that it is working to improve it. I merely think it dropped the ball this time. If you are interested in some stats for your favorite heroes, I heartily recommend this series. Marvel is also selling a three-ring binder to hold the pages of the new Handbook.
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STRATEGIC SIMULATIONS, INC.
Running amok with Frodo, Elvira, and the Beast

Those who have complained about “The Buggies” being included in our column should rest assured that we did contact the companies regarding the specific troubles we’ve had, and we found their answers to be incorrect. The reason we publish “The Buggies” is to alert consumers that these troublesome areas in these games need to be addressed prior to the purchase of the game. “The Buggies” also allows readers to report similar problems and sometimes even the solutions. This is especially true of Broderbund’s The Dark Heart of Uukrul, where the Qs on the code wheel do look like Os to many gamers. In the time since this problem was published in a past column, many readers have written to say that not only have they had the same problem, but several have solved it. Communication—isn’t it great?

Reviews
The Lord of the Rings, Volume 1
Interplay Productions (714-549-2411)
PC/MS-DOS version $54.95

Three or four software publishers have attempted to bring Tolkien’s fantasy adventures to your computer screen, but only Interplay Productions can boast of presenting the most realistic as well as the most entertaining version of all such games. The world of Middle-earth is huge, and gamers could make their way through over 9,000 screens while enjoying this adventure.

This fantasy role-playing game is suitable for players of all levels of gaming experience. PC/MS-DOS versions with support for VGA, MCGA, EGA, and CGA graphics have been released. A VGA board is highly recommended, as is a computer that runs at 10 Mhz or more. A number of sound boards, including Roland and AdLib, are supported.

This game features superior graphics, color, and sound. The number of mini-quests makes for a highly appealing adventure, and the animation is smooth. This game can be replayed even after a successful conclusion, due to the various “paths” Frodo and his party can take.

Computer games’ ratings

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Most readers have probably read *The Lord of the Rings*, so we needn’t delve into the adventure too far. In brief, Bilbo Baggins, a hobbit of no small renown, acquired a Ring of Invisibility from a creature named Gollum. Upon his retirement, Bilbo gave the ring to his nephew, Frodo. Then the wizard Gandalf found out that the ring was actually an instrument of great evil, forged by Sauron, the Dark Lord. Called the One Ring, it would corrupt anyone who used it. It was decided that Frodo should travel to Rivendell in the east, to meet with the elves and determine what to do with the ring. But Gandalf had also learned that Sauron knew someone named Baggins had the ring. Your software adventure starts at this juncture. You are warned of the Dark Riders. Talk to everyone you can, and perhaps even take on a miniquest or two. (For those two lost kids in the East Woods, be certain to carry ration. Perhaps Frodo’s old home at Bag End or the Great Roads Goods can help in that regard.)

We used the mouse to control the game, but you can use the keyboard as well. The computer screen shows an overhead view of the action. The view is quite similar to the game *Faery Tale Adventure*. To order different actions, you press the right mouse button. The bottom third of the screen reveals 10 icons as well as a portrait of the group leader (usually Frodo).

You can change the leader of the group at any time simply by selecting the Leader icon, which is represented as a group of people standing on a hill—a somewhat nebulous icon, but at least you can get a leader who may have more appropriate skills to confront a specific set of circumstances. You can also select to run another miniquest or two. (For those two lost kids in the East Woods, be certain to carry ration. Perhaps Frodo’s old home at Bag End or the Great Roads Goods can help in that regard.)

When an NPC or a location has something special to reveal, you are directed to a specific numbered paragraph in the user’s manual. You read the paragraph and must sometimes make a selection based upon what you’ve read. We highly recommend that you often use the O key for Options to save your game. When you press O, a submenu pops up that enables you to save to one of the two save-game files, load one of your previously saved games, quit to DOS, or pause the game.

We did encounter one fatal crash when loading a previously saved game. It occurred after we had defeated a spider but forgot to duck, with Frodo taking too much damage during the encounter. We entered the Options menu, selected “Load game two,” and received a “Range Error” and a dump out to the DOS prompt. However, this happened only once.

It is also rather strange to encounter someone on a roadway or in a building in *LOTR* and note that this NPC never leaves that spot—ever. You can come back four game-days later, and that person is still there awaiting you with the same response. It would’ve been preferable to code the NPCs so that, once spoken to, they go about their business.

The game requires your party to do a lot of walking, which can be rather slow and offers little activity between destinations. Some form of time compression would have been a nice addition, so that once you decided where you wished to go, movement proceeded at a faster pace.

The user interface is not perfect. A lot of
cates the direction selected. You then press the left mouse button, and your adventuring party travels in the selected direction until you release the button.

Food is critical in *LOTR*. It is one of the only ways that you can heal your hobbit friends, as it restores lost life points. And you will be losing life points as you learn the game. Various foods offer greater life restoration but can be used only once per day. Edibles include rations, red beans, mushrooms, hot food, Dwarffort, and Lembas. Rations restore two life points per day, while Lembas recovers six life points. Now, guess which is harder to find!

To prevent injury, think before you act. If you want to take on a spider, make certain you get in the first blow. But if you move your character too close to the creature, it will move and strike first. Await its first move, perhaps suffer the loss of a few hit points, then crowd it and attack. You should succeed even when you think all is well, such as when Hawkeye takes you to his cave to rest after the defeat of an orc, a couple of Black Rider nasties will pop up and decimate your party. Running away isn’t a bad thing to do! Some of the nasties that populate *LOTR* include Sauron, the Dark Lord himself; Ring-wraiths, also known as the Nazgul or The Nine; orcs; wolves; trolls; spiders; evil spirits; barrow wights; sorcerers; dragons; and vampires.

The game does not follow the plot found in Tolkien’s trilogy, and that’s good! Now we used the mouse to control the game, but you can use the keyboard as well. The computer screen shows an overhead view of the action. The view is quite similar to the game *Faery Tale Adventure*. To order different actions, you press the right mouse button. The bottom third of the screen reveals 10 icons as well as a portrait of the group leader (usually Frodo).

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The user interface is not perfect. A lot of
activity is required to move an item from one person to another, for example, and your mouse clicks must be firm. We noted that simply tapping the right mouse key does not ensure that the activity is under taken. Listen for the “click” through whatever sound device you’ve selected for special effects to make certain your command has been carried out.

*LOTR* is a fine fantasy role-playing game and expands upon Tolkien’s original storyline. In spite of slow action and the less-than-pleasing NPC retention on screen, this adventure is worth its purchase price. With smooth animation, fantastic VGA graphics, and true character personalities *LOTR* will certainly be one of the most popular fantasy role-playing games released this year.

**Elvira**

Accolade (408-985-1700)

PC/MS-DOS version  $59.95

Combining graphic adventure and role-playing into one game, Accolade has published *Elvira*, with highly entertaining results. Elvira, the infamous horror-movie hostess whose television show originated in southern California, has inherited a castle from her grandmama, Emelda. The castle is complete with 800 rooms and numerous monsters. You have been hired to clear the castle of these goons so Elvira can live a peaceful life.

The action takes place from a first-person perspective. To the left of the main screen are icons for movement and inventories, while to the right are the commands to open, close, lock, unlock, look, examine, mix, consume, use, throw, and save the game. Below the main screen is the statistics and inventory window that shows the items you currently possess. Items can be viewed by clicking on the main screen. Movement is accomplished by clicking on a movement arrow located to the left of the main screen. Once you have picked up an object, you can examine it further, look in it, keep it, or drop it. Other items can be used to help you later in the adventure.

The statistics at the bottom of the screen reflect personal traits that start at a low level but can be raised through experience and magic. Strength affects how much damage you can do to an opponent in combat as well as the number of items you
can carry without being affected. Resilience determines the amount of damage you can take, while dexterity is the ability to gain the advantage at the start of a fight. Skill is how good you are with the particular weapon you are carrying. The skill level for the weapon increases as you gain experience using it. Life force is your hit points; lose them all and you die. Finally, experience represents the percentage of the game that you have solved.

Combat is well animated, but it takes some time to become experienced enough to knock off a belligerent nasty. When you encounter an enemy, you'll see the gruesome foe in front of you with its weapon drawn. The computer automatically switches you between an offensive and defensive mode, based on how well you or your nemesis aimed his last thrust and how effective the hit was. During the defensive mode, you can block or parry a blow; on offense, you can lunge or hack the foe. As you slice the enemy, you see the slash and hack marks. You'll also wince at the sight of your own blood when the enemy hits you. If you get scared, you can run away, but you might take a hit from the enemy as you leave combat.

During the game, you can find items in the castle that help Elvira concoct potions or create scrolls. When you find the materials needed to create a magical item (as described in the magic book), you take them to the kitchen. There, you hand the ingredients to Elvira, who makes the item for you.

The only problem we had in creating magical items was that the magic books lists of ingredients needed for the spells are covered by red letters. This makes the lists very difficult to read without the red cel until the necessary spell was found. This type of copy protection slows down the game enormously. Accolade has used the copy-wheel method of game protection before, and such a system would work far better for Elvira.

Elvira is well worth its purchase price. The 800 rooms are sure to keep you occupied for a long time, and the graphics and sound will have you clinging to your seat for many a day. A warning on the box alerts you that the game contains some blood-curdling graphics-true. With VGA, we saw bodies with torn throats, heads in soup, and other disgusting things. This game is not for the weak of heart or stomach.

We liked the combat system, which is similar to Sierra's Hero's Quest system, and we also enjoyed the magic system. Elvira is a very good game, mixing adventure, role-playing, and graphics into a not-so-easy adventure challenge.

Eye of Horus

Archipelagos

Fanfare (Britannica Software)
(415-597-5555)

Amiga versions $39.95 each

The first of Fanfare's latest releases is Eye of Horus. You become Horus and must find the pieces of your father, Osiris, and assemble them in order to defeat the evil Set. The pieces of Osiris are contained within a labyrinth where hieroglyphs come alive to prevent you from completing your task. A life bar at the bottom of the screen shows how much damage Horus can take before he loses one of his three lives.

Horus possesses papyrus darts to deliver the evil that attacks him. He also has the ability to turn into a hawk to fly over certain enemies and to help him complete his mission. Along the way, Horus picks up amulets that can increase his weapons' powers or assist him in other ways. For example, the Amulet of the Steps maps the labyrinth as Horus explores its many passages. Elevators can lower or lift Horus to new corridors, but many of these require keys to unlock them first.

The Amiga graphics were not used to their full potential. The action was challenging, but we became bored running from cavern to cavern while being chased by hieroglyphs. We turned the game off after a few hours of running around in similar caverns while killing the same creatures over and over again. This game didn't hold our attention.

Archipelagos, the second game, is a first-person perspective, 3-D game that is very well designed. Earth has become a wasteland. Environmental purifiers are sent to Earth to cleanse the toxic mess by destroying the obelisk that spreads radioactivity over the planet.

The player must destroy things called nodes before the obelisks power system can be deactivated. This is not easy, for viral trees, eco-eggs, necromancers, and alien enemies can turn your environmental purifier into junk. You might even have to create a land bridge to reach and destroy a node.

The graphics are crisp and smooth on the Amiga. With 9,999 different parts of the planet to purify, this game challenges any player. The joy-stick controls are easy to master; you move around and eliminate the poisons of Earth, receiving more disinfectant by destroying the sand pods that grow around the planet. We liked this game and highly recommend it.

Secret Missions Expansion Disk for Wing Commander

Origin (512-328-0282)

PC/MS-DOS version Price $a

For those wanting to continue the excitement after completing the missions for Wing Commander, Origin's expansion disk, called Secret Missions, fills the bill. The Kilrathi have created a new weapon that has destroyed an entire colony. Your ship, the Tiger Claw, must enter Kilrathi territo-
try to destroy this device. “This expansion disk will keep you glued to your seat, with 16 hard missions and four new Kilrathi ships to face. Any pilot can be transferred from the main disk into Secret Missions, retaining his rank and kills. A program is also included on this disk that allows players to fly any of the 40 original Wing Commander missions in any order. Our review was made using a VGA board and a Roland sound system. This is a great expansion, with a new story line and equally challenging missions to complete. We highly recommend it to anybody who loves Wing Commander as much as we do.

**Shadow of the Beast**

**Shadow of the Beast II**

*Psychosis*

Amiga versions Prices n/a

These games are two of the best Amiga arcade-action games. Both fully utilize the Amiga’s graphic potential.

In Shadow of the Beast, you were metamorphosed from a child into a messenger beast by Zelek, the Beast Lord. You served Zelek well until the truth about your form—morphosed from a child into a messenger human life was revealed to you. Knowing this information, you become the beast on the trail of the Beast Lord.

The directions for Shadow of the Beast are simple; moving the joystick causes the professionally animated on-screen persona to move left, move right, jump, or crouch. Pushing the joystick fires button makes the warrior punch, kick, or use any weapon found during the game. The backgrounds are beautifully created, and 3-D scrolling really makes this game a programming masterpiece. Your enemies are also animated very well. When leaving a scene, a still graphic appears with text to keep you occupied while the game loads the next part of this game’s 3.5 megabytes of code. Shadow of the Beast is not an easy adventure to master, and you will not finish it without some sweat on your part. It is certainly well worth its cost.

But Psychosis really outdid itself when creating Shadow of the Beast II. From the beautifully cinematic introduction to the finish, this game is great fun. The Beast Lord wants revenge for the traitorous actions of his former messenger (you) and gets it by your human sister. You, once again, become the messenger beast who must travel through perilous terrain and encounter deadly creatures to rescue your sister. This game is still heavily arcade style, but it has elements of an adventure game as well.

Not all creatures need to be killed; you can talk and obtain information from some of these odd inhabitants. Gold becomes a prize for killing certain creatures, and it may be used to buy powerful weapons or food to restore lost energy, or to gain access to forbidden places. Puzzles in this game might require interaction with and help from other creatures.

Shadow of the Beast II is as difficult to conquer as its namesake. Fans of the first game will not be disappointed by this sequel. It is a superb buy for Amiga gamers.

**Blazing Lazers**

NEC Turbograpx-16 video game Price n/a

This classic arcade game was designed for those who want nothing but a fierce, mindless shoot-em-up. You fly through eight game stages in various attempts to defeat the Dark Squadron, thereby preventing the destruction of Earth.

As you battle against the well-animated backgrounds, don’t forget to pick up weapons and other enhancements left behind by your vanquished foes. Among such great finds are homing missiles that chase after the enemy, shields that offer protection from crossfire, a multi-body that mimics your ship’s movements and adds extra firepower, and equipment that strengthens the power of your ship’s weapons.

The power of your ship’s main weapons can also be increased by picking up balls left behind by defeated enemies. Not only do these increase the destructive potential of weapons, but they might also change the type of weapon your ship has as well. With so many weapon possibilities, it’s fun to go out and watch millions of enemies crumble underneath your weaponry. We first saw this game when it was released for the Turbograpx-16 about a year ago, but we didn’t really sit down and enjoy it until now. This game is a must buy for any arcade enthusiast.

**Command H.Q.**

MicroPlay (301-771-6717) PC/MS-DOS version $59.95

This is a fun, easy-to-learn, strategic global-conquest game designed by Ozark Software. Unfortunately, it has one fatal flaw: its copy protection.

The game can be played during World War I, II, III, or IV Players must capture the enemy’s capital cities by using infantry, armor, aircraft, cruisers, transports, carriers, or nuclear war weaponry. Foreign aid also plays an important role in determining the winner of these wars.

Modern capability enables two gamers to wage war over the telephone lines. The game’s simple command structure allows even novice gamers to give complicated orders such as amphibious assaults, air strikes, dogfights, air transport, and foreign aid, as well as to destroy and control satellites. A bar beneath the selected unit reflects the strength of that unit. When the bar disappears, the unit is destroyed. Capturing cities, oil fields, docks, and bases replenishes a unit’s strength.

We really enjoyed this game, especially the short animation clips that show units attacking ships, planes, and cities. The only problem, as noted earlier, was the copy protection. Even after we had typed in the correct word from the game manual, we couldn’t access the game. This occurred three out of five times when booting Command H.Q.

A call to MicroPlay’s support line confirmed that users might need to go through the copy protection ten to fifteen times before getting into the game. This is absurd! In MicroPlay’s defense, it was stated that not all copies of this game have this bug. So, if you want to risk your money and hopefully get through the copy protection, you will find Command H.Q. a game that definitely lives up to past Dan Bunten successes such as M.U.L.E. and Seven Cities of Gold.

**Clue corner**

**The Dark Heart of Uukrul**

(Brodberbund)

1. Make certain to have TALIS cast if you can, and check for secret doors often. This will sometimes turn up sums of money.

2. Spend money on improving your armor first, as in the beginning you won’t often find weapons. If you can’t use an object because you are not high enough level, don’t sell it right away unless you need the money. Store it in a sanctuary, and check again when you reach the next level. Give the weapon to everyone in your party in turn, as there are some weapons only one person can use.

3. Check for secret doors in the temples to the gods, Ufthu especially.

4. To the east of Urran is a 5’ X 5’ room with doors in every section of the wall. As soon as you enter the room, turn left to the leftmost door on the top wall (as viewed on the computer-screen map). Follow the passage behind the door; it will bring you to a large room. If you manage to find your way through to the other door, you are rewarded with the Medall of Escape, which brings you back to that exact spot when you rub it.

5. Casting spells is the only way for mages to improve their ring types. Clerics improve slowly over time if they don’t cast spells.

6. Read all signs and maps if you can. Copy the maps; they come in handy later.

7. If you find something interesting, such as an unmarked altar, label the spot so you can find it later.

Ben Russell
Milford CN

Another month gone, another column done. We hope you continue to find this information helpful in your gaming. Please, don’t forget to mail your hints, tips, and other worldly advice to us, the Lessers, at: 521 Czerny Street, Tracy CA 95376, U.S.A. Until next time, game on!
The door of the Swordfish Inn banged open, startling Ilsimar as she scrubbed the bar for the expected noon crowd. “Dent my door, will you?” she called, throwing down her cloth and smoothing back a strand of rust-colored hair from her eyes. “As if I have money to replace doors constantly!”

She stopped as the silhouetted figure stumbled inside. It was Jace the miller, her erstwhile suitor from the town of Crossings. Thick chest heaving, he tried to speak, but no sound came.

“What in the name of Sorwe is the matter with you?” she asked as he sank into a chair.

Face flushed, he gulped for air. “Tarvin’s crossed the border!”

Ilsimar laughed. “Again?” King Tarvin of Lassa was notorious for failed attempts to enlarge his tiny realm.

Jace pounded his calloused fist against the table. “No! You don’t understand! This time he’s brought a couple of sorcerers with him!” He paused, sucking in a breath.

“They stripped Crossings of everything valuable, and the people are being sent to the slave markets in Nisra! I barely escaped to warn you! They’re coming here next, and they won’t stop until they’ve conquered all of Aldagar!”

Surprised and suddenly afraid, Ilsimar said nothing but fetched a large mug of mead for Jace. He guzzled the pale red-gold liquid and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

“When did they attack?” she asked.

“Yesterday morning. I rode all night.”

She chewed her lower lip. Yesterday. Tarvin might reach Rosedale tomorrow, depending how many men he had and how fast they could travel through Farrup Woods. She called the two boys who worked for her. “Ben, find Master Cal and tell him to come immediately, then go to the chapel and ask Healer Vivianne to join us. Tullee, take care of Jace’s horse. Quickly now!”

The boys dashed out the door like hounds on a rabbit trail, past a pair of curious girls and into the early summer morning. Ilsimar refilled Jace’s mug and took a cup of wine herself. Lady Sorwe, what can we do? she wondered as she downed the wine.

Cal the blacksmith arrived moments later. “What’s so important, Ilsie?” he asked with a wide grin as he strode to the table.

“Tarvin’s at Crossings.”

He grinned. “Made it that far before his men decided to go home? Must be a record.”

“This is serious, Cal! The villagers are being sent to Nisra!”

“Slaves?” Cal’s dark eyes bulged, and his jaw dropped. “Tarvin’s taken slaves?”

Ilsimar nodded.

The blacksmith shook his head. “We’ve got trouble.”

“Trouble? What trouble?” Healer Vivianne stood in the doorway, leaning on her staff. Her plaited hair glowed sunlight yellow, but her eyes were storm-cloud gray. She joined them at the table.

Ilsimar turned to Jace. “Tell us exactly what you saw—

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Illustrations by Drew Pardner
everything. Any detail might make the difference.”

Jace squeezed his eyes shut for a moment, forehead drawn with tight lines. “I was on my way back from delivering flour, and everything was fine, peaceful. Then I saw them—hundreds of men and horses landing on the riverbank from rafts. I know they hadn’t been there a moment before. They mounted on shore and attacked.”

Cal looked incredulous. “How in the name of Sorwe did that bunch of farmers-turned-soldiers take out the border garrison?”

“They didn’t. The sorcerers hit the barracks with something—fire, lightning, I’m not sure. The building just exploded and killed most of the guards. I saw a few everything. Any detail might make the difference.”

Jace grabbed her arm. “But you have to do something! Tarvin’ll be here tomorrow, maybe sooner!”

Ilsimar scrunched her lips and stared at the table. “We can’t run fast enough to avoid Tarvin. Not enough wagons and horses. We can’t fight, not against trained soldiers. Vivianne, are there any Cold Ones running around you haven’t sent back to the grave? If you could turn them toward Crossings, they could cause some havoc and delay Tarvin a while.”

Ilsimar frowned, pulling more lines in his round cheeks, then raised a sandy eyebrow. He turned to the snow-blond sorcerer on his left and mumbled something. The sorcerer looked straight at Ilsimar, then whispered back to Tarvin.

Ilsimar watched the clouds of dust betraying Tarvin’s approach, and when she felt the second alarm spell, she signaled the musicians. Flutes and pipes, lutes and drums, mandolins, rattles, and tambourines, all played a lively tune. Young women with flowers in their hair and bells on their ankles danced in the road while girls scattered petals in the dust. Boys waved pennants; men, their hats. And everyone cheered as Tarvin, flanked by two middle-aged men in purple and silver, halted before Cal, Vivianne, and Ilsimar.

Cal bowed with a grace that surprised Ilsimar. “Welcome, Tarvin, King of Lassa, mighty warrior, great conqueror. How blessed is Rosendale that you favor us with your presence. We beg you to enter our village and accept our hospitality.”

Tarvin frowned, pulling more lines in his round cheeks, then raised a sandy eyebrow. He turned to the snow-blond sorcerer and climbed on the inn roof to see what was happening. Everyone was rounded up and held in the market square, except the innkeeper and his family. Tarvin and the two sorcerers made Old Barney put them up at the inn. I waited ’til dark, then crept away and came straight here.”

“The sorcerers,” Ilsimar interrupted, “what did they wear?”

“Purple and silver robes.”

“Great,” she muttered. “Masters. We are in trouble.”

Cal raised a soot-colored brow. “You know magic, don’t you? You went to Volyn’s school.”

“But I didn’t reach master rank. I’m no match for them.”

Jace squeezed his eyes shut for a moment, forehead arched her back slowly to stretch her tight muscles. “And what I’d be doing. But then, they might not.”

Cal threw up his arms and said through gritted teeth, “What are you talking about?”

Ilsimar stared absently at the table. “Something simple. Tarvin’s sorcerers might not expect that.” She stood and arched her back slowly to stretch her tight muscles. “And now, we have to make plans.”

“So,” Vivianne said, “what do we do?”

Ilsimar winked at Jace, then smiled. “We make a feast for Tarvin.”

It was just after midday when the first of Ilsimar’s alarm spells, set about a mile from Rosendale, was tripped. Ilsimar watched the clouds of dust betraying Tarvin’s approach, and when she felt the second alarm spell, she signaled the musicians. Flutes and pipes, lutes and drums, mandolins, rattles, and tambourines, all played a lively tune. Young women with flowers in their hair and bells on their ankles danced in the road while girls scattered petals in the dust. Boys waved pennants; men, their hats. And everyone cheered as Tarvin, flanked by two middle-aged men in purple and silver, halted before Cal, Vivianne, and Ilsimar.

Cal cocked his head and looked puzzled. “I said, I wish we could make ’em homesick. You know, make ’em want to go home. Why?”

She drummed her fingers on the table. “I . . . I’m not sure, but . . . great Sorwe . . . if it could work.”

“You know how to stop Tarvin?”

She drummed faster, then stopped. “Maybe. I can’t promise: If the sorcerers are masters, they might detect
companions will follow me . . ."

Turning to a lean man in a studded black leather vest, Tarvin said, “Captain, set up camp around the village. Confiscate all weapons.”

“We’ve gathered all our weapons in a pile at the edge of the village,” Ilsimar said quickly, “to save you time and trouble. And we have food and drink in the square for all your men—and dancing.”

“Later, yes, perhaps later,” Tarvin said, waving his hand to dismiss her.

With Cal and Vivianne beside her, Ilsimar led the way back to town, the musicians still playing, women dancing, girls scattering petals before Tarvin. Garlands of flowers hung from poles and draped windows. The aroma of whole pigs, roasting slowly over pits of glowing coals, filled the air.

Ilsimar stopped at the inn door, opened it, and bowed. “Enter and be welcomed, King Tarvin.”

He stared at the sign over the door for a moment before he dismounted. “A swordfish. Most unusual, most unusual.”

“My father was a fisherman, and he was especially fond of swordfish.” Ilsimar told Ben and Tullee to tend the horses, then she escorted the king, the sorcerers, and ten guards toward their rooms. “Would you like to bathe, Your Majesty? The road is dusty and hot.”

“Yes, I would.”

“And you, also, masters?” she asked.

Galt and Keld nodded.

“Hot water will be brought in a moment. After you have refreshed yourselves, please come to the common room. There will be feasting, music, dancing, and other entertainments. I hope that you will be pleased.”

Tarvin smiled, and his eyes were cold and hard. “We shall see, yes, we shall see.”

She bowed and hurried to the kitchen to inspect the meal.

The common room had been cleared of all but three tables, two placed perpendicular to the other. The center table was covered with an embroidered linen cloth and set with pewter plates and mugs. Finger bowls, with rose petals floating on the water, sat beside linen towels just as Ilsimar had seen at a banquet once. A platter of sharp cheeses was flanked by bowls of summer fruits and early vegetables. Chairs had replaced the usual benches. Things looked as elaborate as she could make them in the short time she’d had. “Now, if everything else is ready . . . ”

“Ready?”

Ilsimar started as Galt spoke behind her, almost in her ear. She caught herself before she called out a plague of lice on him, and she smiled as she faced him. “Y-yes, Master Galt. The meal . . . if the meal is ready, I’m ready to serve you, King Tarvin, and Master Keld.”

He returned a disarming smile; but his aqua eyes showed no hint of friendliness. “His Majesty and Keld will be down shortly. But I’d like some wine right now.”

“Oh, of course, master.” She went to the bar, took out a bottle of spring wine, and filled a mug.

“Join me,” Galt said as he took the wine.

“If you wish.” Ilsimar took another mug and filled it from the same bottle. She raised it and said, “Sorwe’s blessing.”

Galt copied her action but hesitated until she took a sip, then he tasted it, too. “Quite good,” he said, “and not the least bit poisoned.”

Ilsimar looked shocked. “Master Galt, why would I try to poison you?”

He just smiled back at her. “Cherry wine, isn’t it? But I taste something unusual.”

“Jasmine flowers and almonds. It’s a specialty of Rosedale.”

Galt raised his mug to her, then finished the wine. Tarvin, Keld, and his guards joined them moments later. Ilsimar showed them to the table, then called Tullee.

“Fetch Healer Vivianne.” The boy scurried out the door.

“Do you expect someone to be ill?” Galt asked, eyes narrowed.

Ilsimar laughed. “No, of course not. Vivianne is very skilled at the lute. I thought His Majesty might enjoy some music while he ate.”

“Yes,” Tarvin said, “yes, I would.”

“Wine, Your Majesty?” Ilsimar filled his mug from the open bottle. “Master Galt has already sampled it for your protection.” She flashed a sweet smile at Galt.

Tarvin sipped the wine, then took a long drink.

“Ah-h-h, I haven’t tasted spring wine like that in ages.”

“I’m honored you enjoy it.” Ilsimar bowed, hurried to the kitchen, and came back with two more bottles, of the wine. One of the girls she’d hired to help serve followed with a plate of flat bread rounds. Two other girls brought more bowls of fruit and vegetables to the side tables. After serving the king, Ilsimar poured wine, and the girl served bread to the others.

Vivianne arrived with her lute, and so did two young men who could juggle and do tumbling. Cal came soon after, carrying a yoke to entertain with feats of strength. Ben and Tullee carried the roast pig from the outside pit to the spit in the common room, where several chickens, a leg of lamb, and a quail already dripped basting fat on the embers. Ilsimar put a final glaze of honey on the quail before she slid it onto a plate and presented it to Tarvin. A spicy, sweet chutney and a rhubarb relish were served with the meats. Fruit and vegetables were replenished; mugs were kept full of wine. Vivianne played; the jugglers juggled; and Cal lifted four men, holding onto ropes at the ends of the yoke, off the floor. The guards cheered, and Tarvin clapped. Even Galt smiled his pleasure.

After filling the mugs again and serving honey-glazed shortbread for dessert, Ilsimar stood before Tarvin and curtseyed. “And now, Your Majesty, I ask permission to entertain you with my simple skills.”

Guards sprang from chairs and drew swords. Galt and Keld mumbled spells of warding against harm.

Tarvin glared at her and said in a quiet, threatening tone. “Beware, little sorceress. I am well protected, very well protected. You shall die if you try to harm me.”

Frightened by Tarvin’s cold gaze as much as by the glint of cold steel, Ilsimar sank to one knee and stared at the floor. “Your Majesty, I swear by Sorwe, I wish you no harm. Even if I did, I know that with a wave of the hand
Master Galt or Master Keld could shatter any spell I’d weave.” She raised her gaze slowly until she looked straight at Tarvin. “I wish only to entertain you.”

Half a smile twitched the corner of Tarvin’s mouth. “Then do so—carefully.”

With a glance and nod to Vivianne, who began playing a Lassan ballad, Ilsimar stood and made a graceful curtsy. “Your Majesty, masters, soldiers of Lassa, I am no sorceress, but I have learned little magics: how to season a special sauce, how to make venison as tender as lamb, how to grow the sweetest fruit and to keep wine from turning sour.” She waved her hands. “And... how to call fireflies in the daytime. Come, little night lamps.”

Through windows and door came tiny blinking lights, zipping around the room until they formed a circle of glittering light over Ilsimar’s head. She put her hand near the apple, muttered something, and slowly drew them apart. The globes of light stretched and shrank to a tiny golden flower. She handed it to Keld.

“Master Keld?” Ilsimar asked.

Keld looked thoughtful a moment. “A butterdrop. Near my home there are meadows filled with that wild flower.” Ilsimar touched the yellow light, which filled her hand and shrank to a tiny golden flower. She handed it to Keld. “It reminds me of home,” he said softly. “I haven’t been there in many years... many years.”

Galt started and rested his chin in the crook of his hand while he stared at Ilsimar.

“And you, Master Galt?” she asked.

He didn’t answer for such a long time, Ilsimar thought he hadn’t heard her. “Master?”

Galt looked straight at her, and a slow smile bowed his mouth. “A shadow lily.”

Ilsimar shivered but reached up to the very edge of the purple light. A mist so dark it was almost black churned in her hand, coalescing to a lily, soft as velvet, dark as midnight. Shadow lilies grew in the darkest part of dense forests and were used in conjuration of ill and distillation of poison. “Beware, master,” she whispered as she placed the flower in Galt’s hands.

His eyes glittered as he leaned close to her. “As always sorceress.”

Ilsimar stepped back, worried. Did he know what she had planned? No, surely. No one could, no one but the Sorcerer Lords. Galt wasn’t one of them. She touched the blue light. Bluebells, the most common flower of Lassa, appeared in her hand. She gave them to the captain and the guards.

“And your favorite flower?” Galt asked her.

Ilsimar jumped, startled by his question, but caught herself before she cried out. “Uh, the trumpet flower.”

Out of the air he plucked a trumpet flower, orange as carrots and as large as his lily. “For you, Ilsimar.”

His voice was a caress; his touch, an invitation. Blood flowed hot through her; heart pounded against her ribs. She shook off the effect, gulping for air.

Swallowing to relax her throat, Ilsimar began to chant softly:

“Jasmine-almond-cherry wine,
Honey sweet, refreshing mint,
Silver apple—magic fruit,
Homeland flower, lively lute.
Though you wander, though you roam,
All these things will draw you home.”
“No-o-o!” Galt’s eyes widened with panic; his jaw dropped. “No! Stop! I can’t . . .” He struggled to his feet and reached for her. “You . . .” he gasped, “you did this. I should’ve known . . . I should’ve known.” He dropped back to his chair and closed his eyes. The same contented smile that appeared on all the other guests at the feast tugged at Galt’s mouth.

Ilsimar’s chest hurt. She let out the breath trapped inside. Her knees buckled, and she collapsed on the wooden floor. She felt chilled, in spite of her heart pounding, and worn out. Too much magic at one time, and especially the last spell. Cal and Jace grabbed her arms and lifted her to her feet.

“What did you do to them?” Jace asked as she sank into the chair Vivianne had vacated.

“Home Wish,” Ilsimar whispered, leaning back against the cool stone wall.

“What?” Jace and Cal asked together.

“Home Wish. The spell I created for my Master Test.

It could create a desire to go home or remain home. The lords of the Sorcerer Council didn’t think it was good enough to grant me master rank. Foolish, simple magic, they called it.” Ilsimar gave them a weak smile.

Cal looked worried. “Will it last?”

Ilsimar nodded. “Galt and Keld might find a way to break it in time, but the others won’t. When they wake, Tarvin will take his army back to Lassa and stay home from now on.”

Cal whistled a sigh. “Not bad for simple magic. I didn’t know you were that powerful.”

Vivianne prayed away Ilsimar’s fatigue. “Will you go back to Volyn to try for master rank again?”

Smiling, Ilsimar shook her head. “I don’t want to leave my inn or Rosedale.” Her smile broadened. “You see, I drank the wine and ate the honey. I tasted the mint and the silver apple, and I took the trumpet flower. When I cast the Home Wish, I cast it on myself, too.”
Before we go to this months reviews of fantasy role-playing game magic systems and supplements, let me whack on the chalkboard with my pointer and lecture briefly on the historical development of FRPG magic systems.

In the beginning: Your fantasy campaign probably uses spell-list magic. All the best-known FRPG systems use spell lists, such as the D&D® and AD&D®, DRAGONQUEST™, MERP®, WARHAMMER®, PALLADIUM RPG®, ROLEMASTER®, HARN®, RUNEQUEST®, and TUNNELS & TROLLS® games. The magic a character can perform is limited to a number of specific spells that produce specific game effects. There are no theoretical limits or game-system rules governing the effects produced by magic. Spells are typically arranged in hierarchies according to how powerful an effect they have on a game. A spell is restricted to use by high-level mages primarily because it has a powerful game effect, not because it logically seems like a difficult magic effect to produce. No one asks inconvenient questions like “But how does magic actually, uh, work?” or “Shouldn’t there be some kind of coherent logic behind all these weird effects? You know, like in physics?”

The virtues of spell-list systems are numerous. Spell-list magic is simple, flexible, and open ended, since there are few setting or mechanics restrictions on the effects it can represent. Any mythic or fiction-based magic effects can be introduced to a game. Because magic is mysterious, nobody feels obligated to answer any questions about logical or game-system
contradictions. Spell lists successfully produce the magical effects seen in most heroic fantasy fiction and film, which are rarely called upon to provide the underlying rationale for the magic effects they feature.

Most fantasy role gamers—myself included—have little need for anything more sophisticated than a spell-list system. However, you can often find many useful ideas in more ambitious game mechanics and conceptions for magic.

**Primitive sophistication:** In the ancient, obscure, out-of-print-and-mentioned-only-to-bring-a-wistful-smile-to-old-veterans-and-to-assume-a-haughty-air-before-young-whippersnappers department, several early game systems for FRPG magic are particularly noteworthy. Though FGU’s CHIVALRY & SORCERY* game was basically a spell-list system, its lovably clumsy and unplayable rules featured oodles of flashy medieval historical chrome. My oldest AD&D game character still carries around vials of Great Water of Ruby and True Lead from a campaign where the GM pirated wizardly widgets from the C&S game, and C&S books are still an excellent source for magic ideas with a properly medieval flavor. The AUTHENTIC THAUMATURGY game—an obscure, marginally playable, and out-of-print system for “authentic” magic spellcasting—is most notable for the fact that its author, P.E.I. Bonewits, actually managed to get a degree in magic from U.C.L.A. or U.S.C. back in the Gay Sixties. The MELANDA game, by John Corradin and Lee McCormick, another obscure system privately published and still to be found in dusty corners of venerable game stores, uses a clever method of combining runic elements into magical sentences to achieve a wide variety of magical effects.

In the venerable-but-still-in-print category, Chaosium’s SRD MRBRINGER* and The Avalon Hill Game Company’s RUNEQUEST 3rd Edition games have especially interesting magic-system conceptions. All sorcerous effects in the STORMBRINGER game system are based on the summoning and binding of elementals and demons, thus neatly sidestepping the question of what a mage actually does when he performs magic. Thus, a wizard summons up a sylph (air elemental) if he wants to send an air-mail message, or a fire elemental if he wants to bake some goblins. If he wants magical armor, he just summons up a demon and persuades it to get into armor form and do useful magical things. This narrative conception of a wizard has its own logical consistency and plausibility, particularly in Moorcock’s fantasy settings, and the magical effects have a lot of personality because elementals and demons have lots of personality. However, this approach isn’t appropriate for most other heroic-fantasy settings; the GM and players often end up in long discussions about what specific game abilities an elemental or demon should have.

The RUNEQUEST 3rd Edition Sorcery rules, one of the game system’s three parallel magic system options, introduced an early attempt to permit a certain amount of custom spell design. The Sorcery mechanics themselves are still worthy of study by students of game-magic systems, but the mechanics are not particularly well suited to the Glorantha setting, and there’s little point in playing the RUNEQUEST game except in Glorantha.

**Magic today:** Back in DRAGON* issue #147, July 1989, I reviewed several examples of fancy FRPG magic systems. Two of them, I.C.E.’s FANTASY HERO* and Steve Jackson Games’ GURPS* games, are well-engineered conceptions with plenty of bells and whistles, but both are comparatively weak in specific setting tone and flavor. The third, White Wolves ARS MAGICA* game (formerly by Lion Rampant), focuses on the setting and adventure aspects of a magic campaign, and features a narrative rationale underlying the magic, though it sacrifices some of its war-gaming appeal in the process. Not far behind there is also West End Games‘ TORC* game system, which successfully combines clever, flexible spell effects and spell-design mechanics with a semi-coherent, glib rationale for magic. In this review, we’ll look at Aysle, the heroic-fantasy supplement for the TORC game, and The Complete Wizard’s Handbook for the AD&D 2nd Edition game. (We’ll save the ARS MAGICA game’s supplements for next month.)

But first, let’s take a look at a noteworthy FRPG magic supplement in the venerable spell-list tradition.

**Elemental Companion**

ROLEMASTER supplement 144-page softbound book

Iron Crown Enterprises $15  
Design: Mike Carlyle  
Development/editing: Coleman Charlton

**Elemental Companion** is an elaboration of ROLEMASTER game spell lists, professions, skills, magical beings, and magic mechanics with a notion-sparking conception of magic as fantasy elemental forces.

**Elemental theories:** The niftiest feature of Elemental Companion is its medi eval scholastic style of rationalizing the interactions of elemental forces to produce the magical effects encountered in a fantasy world. This scheme has lots of charm and also has interesting implications for adventuring in a fantasy setting. The prime material plane, see, is a nice place where all the elemental substances are in equal proportions and are in balance. Scholars have produced a list of known pure elemental substances. The Lesser Basic Elements are Air, Cold, Light, Vibration, and Water. The Greater Basic Elements are Gravity, Heat, Dark, Inertia, and Earth. Compound elements are those composed of two or three basic elements; the compound elements are Electricity, Fire, Ice, and Wind. Super compound elements are compounds containing some of each of all the basic elements; the super compound elements are Plasma and Vacid. The complex elements are, well, complex; they are Aether, Chaos, Nether, Nexus, Spirit, and Time. Each of these essential elemental substances has its own realms where there is way too much of the elemental substance for a mundane person’s comfort. And each realm has its own denizens, which right there starts the fantasy campaign GM to musing, “Say, I wonder what a time elemental looks like? Wouldn’t that be fun to stick in a magic wand?”

This supplement also introduces other entertaining fantasy magic notions. For example, did you know it was possible for mundane beings to crossbreed with elemental beings, producing offspring with some really funky magical features? For instance, the child of an elf and a water elemental might sweat a lot or be thirsty all the time. A pure elemental being may display fancy magical effects like being surrounded by a layer of its component elemental substance (e.g., fire, water, electricity). It also may absorb elemental substance from its surroundings, growing larger and more powerful, and as a pure source of its element it may be a conduit into its own elemental plane through which a shrewd wizard might draw more elemental substance.

My favorite bit of theoretical magic jargon is “proto-elemental poisoning.” Proto-elemental poisoning is what happens when mundane substances (which are balanced mixtures of various elemental substances) get infected with proto-elemental matter (the pure, unmixed elemental substance). The example given is a fighter who slices into a dragon and gets sprayed with dragon blood. The dragon’s magical nature comes from the presence of proto-elemental matter in his blood, you see, so this cold drake naturally has protoelemental Cold matter in his blood. The poor fighter has only a moment to savor his triumph over the cold drake as he listens to a roaring in his ears and watches the sparkle of his flesh freezing solid. (Anybody remember “ice-nine” from Kurt Vonnegut’s Cat’s Cradle?)

By the way, the kiss or bite of a pure elemental being or an elemental crossbreed might cause proto-elemental poisoning. That sort of thing might affect PC dating habits, yes?

**Elemental spell lists:** The Spell lists follow the ROLEMASTER model (of course) and are extensive and pretty neat, particularly when they extrapolate some aspect of elemental theory into a magic effect. For example, consider the spell “Disperse Type A Element.” The specified element in the spell’s area of effect produces that element’s distinctive effect—light, for example, glows in that area. An ultrafine covering of elemental material is deposited on objects and beings in the area of effect, and it remains active if the
objects or beings leave the area of effect. I'm not at all sure how such a spell works in a fantasy campaign, but it would be interesting to find out. Such spell concepts encourage, nay, demand that players and GMs exercise their magical imaginations. If dispersed light is easy to conceptualize, what about air? Can a character walk out of a Dispersed Air Effect and breathe water? Maybe not; if there's not enough air, but it might keep an object from getting wet from rain for an instant. I love the idea of spells that have lots of improvisational potentials to be discovered only through playing sessions and late-night player and GM scheming.

Among the other spell effects represented here are glyphs (which store and trigger spells on an in-flux material like air or water), symbols (which store and trigger spells on a large immobile stone surface), runes (which permit the casting of spells by AD&D spell description from scrolls), wards (which store and trigger spells when an area is entered), lesser elemental missile and area attacks, elemental environments, summoning, elemental missile and area attacks, elemental walls and barriers, elemental spirit binding, weather mastery, elemental cursing, commune with elementals, elemental walls and barriers, elemental spirit binding, weather mastery, elemental cursing, commune with elementals, elemental characters, and so on. For a spell list, it's a pretty impressive array of elemental magical applications.

Other features: Elemental Companion's treatment of elemental creatures is extensive and encyclopedic, and it provides lots of nice new monster types, but I was a bit disappointed that all the creatures were essentially suitable, nasty, psychologically uninteresting monsters. (Why aren't there more Joe Average, silent-majority-type citizens in the other elemental planes? Or is it that we really only have the nasty ones to visit our plane?) It's only a minor issue; given the multiplicity of attack effects supported by ROLEMASTER mechanics, a lot of monsters is really what's wanted here, I suppose. With Elemental Companion you also get... lots of new tables! (De gustibus non est disputandum.) The "Elemental Interaction Guidelines" are clever, effective guidelines for handling the interaction of various elemental substances (always tricky fantasy magic feature), and the treatment of cone effects is similarly sharp. The supplement also introduces some interesting new character classes.

Evaluation: Very nice, very nice indeed. This is a lovely supermarket of fantasy magic concepts and mechanics. Admittedly, the Elemental Companion adds a lot of detail and mechanics to an already rather elaborate ROLEMASTER system, and even those who play ROLEMASTER games may have grave reservations about introducing all of the Elemental Companion's new features. But as an example of intelligent, entertaining, and imaginative extension of spell-list magic systems, Elemental Companion is a good read and a promising source of fantasy ideas.

ROLEMASTER products are available from Iron Crown Enterprises, Box 1605, Charlotteville VA 22902, U.S.A.

The Complete Wizard's Handbook
AD&D 2nd Edition supplement
128-page softbound book
TSR, Inc.
$15
Design: Rick Swan
Editing: Anne Brown

All AD&D 2nd Edition game players and Dungeon Masters ought to have a copy of this. Some material is bland and unexciting, and some is of doubtful utility, but two elements—the wizard kits and the new spells—are excellent examples of what can be done from the AD&D game.

Wizard kits: A wizard kit is a character package for a wizard with role-playing hooks linked to game benefits and limitations. Each kit is built around one recognizable stereotype of a fantasy spell-caster. For example, the Academician is your basic chalkdust-on-the-labcoat, Coke-bottle-bespectacled bookworm; he suffers a -1 attack penalty on his first hand-to-hand attack because he lacks the killer instinct. But his scholarly reputation earns him positive reaction bonuses when he meets other fellows in his field, and he gets a +1 bonus to Intelligence and Wisdom checks because he does his homework like a good boy and keeps up to date with all the professional journals.

The role-playing hooks in these kits work especially well in the AD&D game because they are linked to minor but satisfying game benefits. Even though the benefits are small, they are most significant at the most crucial point of character development: the beginning stages of character play. At 1st level, even the tiniest advantage is significant. In selecting a package, the player accepts the associated limitations and colorful chromo that will distinguish his character for life.

I like the selection of roles offered in the kits, too. In particular, two strong female roles—the Amazon Sorceress and the Witch—are well developed and have very appealing game benefits. My favorite, the Anagogok, is deliciously obscure and distinctive. The Anagogok is a primitive wizard from a frigid or equatorial climate. He suffers penalties when in a hostile environment (e.g., when he travels in a steamy jungle), but in his home climate he is masterful, capable of finding food and water in even the most desolate lands, and hardy enough to endure the most brutal weather conditions. This kit brings to mind the Laplander wizards of the Norse sagas, who tie knots in magical cords to decrease or increase the speed of the winds. Another feature of these wizards is the option to specialize in one of eight schools of magic from the Player's Handbook. Specialists accept limitations on the variety of spells they can learn in order to gain benefits in casting spells in their areas of specialization. The role-playing charm is most mod here, since the different schools are not clearly distinguished in abilities and personality, but the game benefits, especially for beginning characters, are very attractive. In particular, specialists always have one more spell slot than specialist mages, so long as the extra spell slot is occupied by a spell from the wizards area of specialization. Anyone familiar with the AD&D game will immediately realize that two spells at 1st level are immeasurably better than one.

Here, Rick Swan discusses the pros and cons of selecting a specialist mage or a specialist wizard, and he rightly observes that in short campaigns with slow advancement the specialist benefits are most significant. At higher levels, the specialist benefits are overshadowed by abilities gained by level advancement.

The wizard kits and, to a lesser degree, the specialized schools of magic are examples of AD&D game design at its best. While maintaining careful control of play balance, the designer uses small but colorful game-mechanics advantages to involve the player in an interesting fantasy character role.

New spells: Here's the beef of any spell-list system: new spells to play with. And the spells here are especially colorful and useful.

For example, chromatic orb is a sort of one-target mini-fireball, conjured into the hand of the wizard and then thrown at a target. But the chromatic orb suffers the limitations of a missile weapon, in that the wizard has to throw the orb at his target and hit it to affect it. Further, the chromatic orb is not limited to one effect like a fireball; instead, there are nine different varieties of orb, each with its own magic effects. As the wizard advances in levels, he gains the ability to use new and more powerful forms of the orb. For example, when the caster is 1st level, the white orb does 1-4 hp damage, wraps the victim in a ball of bright light that reduces his attack and saving rolls by -4, and penalizes his armor class by four. At the 3rd level, the orange orb does 1-8 hp damage and ignites all combustible materials within 3' of the victim. The caster gains new powers with the orb at each new class level, not at new spell levels, so the character gets something new to play with every time he advances. Now, that's my ideal of a satisfying spell: modest but colorful powers, regular payoffs for advancement, and lots of different effects from one spell slot.

Other notable new spells found here include death recall, a second-level spell, which replays the last 10 minutes of a recently dead creature's life; divining rod, a scaled-down version of locate object available as a first-level spell; ghoul touch, a weak second-level paralysis spell just
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**Disappointments:** Other sections of* The Complete Wizard’s Handbook* are less successful than the wizard kits, schools of magic, and new spells. For example, an entire chapter is devoted to a discussion of role-playing and various wizard-character stereotypes, but the treatments are not effectively dramatized. Since these personality templates are not linked to any game benefits or limitations, they will have little appeal to players. Another sign of incomplete and careless development is the “Wizardly Lists” miscellany at the end of the book. Some of the ideas found there are charming enough, but any ideas worth printing are worth developing as complete concepts rather than dumping them together in an undifferentiated grab-bag as an exercise for the diligent reader.

More appropriate here would have been detailed discussion and commentary on specific cases of variant spell applications and common refereeing problems. The tantalizing promise of the “Combat and the Wizard” and “Spell Commentary” sections is never quite fulfilled. After decades of enthusiastic field testing of AD&D game spells in combat, there’s a wealth of practical wisdom and cheap tricks that might be passed on to schmeking wizard players. Bits of the handbook hint at this, as when Swan notes that though according to the rules the possessions of an invisible character are visible, perhaps the inclusion of a 30’ pole carried by that character in the invisibility effect is too much to swallow. The handbooks guidelines for judging disbelief of illusion spells and for judging limited wish and wish spells are lucid and practical, as is the discussion of selecting certain classes of spell effects for specific tactical purposes. But while skimming chapters that seemed to me to be bland filler or disorganized, undeveloped ideas, I wished instead for the sort of nuts-and-bolts tech talk that I hear at conventions, tournaments, or local gaming skull sessions; when you think carefully about things in a fantasy campaign. There is one brief note about the economic significance of wizards who can cast mage light to light the streets, but beyond that there doesn’t seem to be much about how a flexible magic system would be turned to commerce in an arcane industrial revolution. I forgive *Aysle* this approach, because this is the standard FRPG ploy—to ignore anything that doesn’t have to do with adventuring applications of magic. But, in setting terms, it is a less elegant and satisfying solution than the *ARS MAGICA* game’s approach that rationalizes the low impact of magic on medieval society because magic is so rare and so carefully isolated from the culture at large by its practitioners. The *Aysle* approach is probably the more pragmatic game approach since, no matter how fascinating and magical a world transformed by commercial magic might be, most gamers are most interested in blasting the epidemics off green-skinned bad guys.

The *TORG* campaign setting itself also features an interesting balance of magical premise, the other dimensions called “cosmic” and their links to our world. In addition to the predictable travel between dimensions this provides, there are colorful “reality storms” at the boundaries of these dimensions. Individual earthly regions are transformed by the superimposition of the reality axioms of other dimensions on the axioms of our own dimension. Good and evil have a metaphysical reality that may be physically manifested in the lands where *Aysle*’s axioms have invaded Earth. Places where nice people are light and fertile, while places where nasty folk and monsters live are dark wastelands. Magical stelae mark the points along which the borders between pure and mixed axioms meet. Some regions remain dominated by 20th century axioms, and people can continue to use boom boxes, video decks, and Nintendo games, while other regions are controlled by medieval axioms, so only primitive entertainment devices will operate, like torture racks and faeries.

Unlike the *ARS MAGICA* game, the *TORG* campaign setting has a clear bias toward heroic role-playing. The Storm Knight PC heroes are definitely good guys out to save the world from corrupt, power-mad, extradimensional supervillains who want to conquer our dimension and, if possible, kill a lot of people and destroy a lot of stuff while they’re at it. As such, the PC heroes have heroic stature and abilities to match. Gamers uncomfortable with the anti-heroic tone of cyberpunk RPGs and the *ARS MAGICA* game may find a more congenial campaign setting in the *TORG* game.

The cosm of *Aysle* has all the necessary
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The magic system: Here we have something definitely interesting and obscure. Part of the problem and the charm may be the presentation of the introduction to magic in the form of a narrative account of some Storm Knights receiving an introductory lecture by a veteran Aysle magic professor. The story is smoothly told, so it distracts from the sense of loose jargon and incoherence in the wizard prof’s glib presentation.

The basic concepts are interesting. The ARS MAGICA game reduces magic to five verbs and ten forms. The TORG game follows a similar strategy in that it defines all magic as the action of one of four basic magical skills: conjuration (bringing into being); alteration (changing something already in being); apportionment (moving something); and divination (knowing something about something). With these four basic skills, you can magically manipulate “things.” The TORG game has a complex and hierarchical classification of “things” (the equivalent of the ARS MAGICA game’s “forms”). At the bottom of the hierarchy, and easiest to manipulate magially, are the six elements: air, earth, fire, metal, plant, and water. Next up the scale are the seven kindred: aquatic, avian, earthly, elemental, enchanted, entity, and folk. (Classifications of various beings might be a bit puzzling in the abstract, but they are wisely specified by list in the text.) Next up the scale, and correspondingly more abstract, are mixed forces (sinanimate and living forces), which are combinations of the next higher level, the principles (darkness, light, and magic), which are combinations of the ultimate foundations of reality (Death, Life, Time, and True Knowledge).

The TORG game has a complex and easiest to manipulate magically, are the six elements: air, earth, fire, metal, plant, and water. Next up the scale are the seven kindred: aquatic, avian, earthly, elemental, enchanted, entity, and folk. (Classifications of various beings might be
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looked like a lot of game work. I found it disappointing that I was going to have to do all the work if I wanted cool new spells.

Now, a big question: The TORG magic system looks powerful, flexible, dramatic, and cleverly rationalized, but is the TORG magic system playable? The answer is a qualified "yes" for most gamers used to spell-list systems. The spell-casting provisions in the boxed TORG game are only moderately complicated and simply conceived. Though the list of spells is fairly short, it provides most of the effects you’d want in a fantasy campaign.

I don’t have quite so much faith in the spell-design system of Aysle —not because it won’t work, but because it is too much work to find out whether it will work or not. The presentation is so abstract and wordy that I have a hard time figuring out what part is rules and what part is just magic. The systems seem simple enough, but in practice they’ll require the same sort of player and GM arbitration that any more informal spell-creation system requires. The only folks who’ll ever find out whether the system works will have put a lot more work into the process than most of us are willing to expend. Note, however, that designing your own spells in FANTASY HERO games requires roughly the same amount of work, and the Aysle system has a number of neat features like spell theorems and the narrative rationale of magic that the FANTASY HERO game lacks.

Evaluation: I have been generally skeptical about the basic campaign premises of the TORG game, uninterested in its new and complicated game system, and unimpressed by the campaign and adventure supplements I’ve seen. But Aysle overcomes many of my initial reservations about the TORG systems and campaign setting. This campaign is satisfactory, perhaps even superior, as a heroic fantasy setting. The adventure material is uninspiring. But the systems are intriguing, powerful, and not quite as obnoxiously fiddly and slow-paced as I had anticipated. Fantasy role-players, particularly those with an interest in magic systems, should admire the style and effects of the TORG game’s implementation of magic theory, spellcasting, and spell design in Aysle.

TORG products are available from West End Games, RD 3, Box 2345, Honesdale PA 18431, U.S.A.

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In Harm’s Way—At Home!
Danger rooms for MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ campaigns

by Michael Hollinger

The Uncanny X-Men had the first one. Just about every super-hero group with a base now has one, yet very few groups use one to its full potential. I am speaking of the danger room, a training arena that is one of the most useful, if seldom used, tools that a MARVEL SUPER HEROESTM game Judge has. With the system presented in this article, Judges will be able to make their own danger rooms for their crime-fighting groups, ready for super heroes to use within half an hour.

Before the procedure for creating a danger room is laid out, a few things should be said about running a danger room. First, heroes should take only one-fourth normal combat damage in a danger room (robotic opponents pull their punches, etc.). I have my gamers’ groups immediately sent to the clinic at their base after a danger-room workout, then decree that all damage taken has been healed (it saves on paperwork). Second, I have my danger rooms divided into small areas called tiles; one floor tile is equal to one MARVEL SUPER HEROES game area for determining a hero’s movement, range, etc. Third, a floor tile is activated when any weight is placed on it. If a Judge wishes, the pressure necessary to trigger a tile can be so sensitive that a character flying overhead can set it off due to the slight change of air pressure above it. Once activated, a tile presents a hero with a crisis (an attack robot or a trap) that must be confronted and overcome.

A danger room should not be so difficult that the heroes have no chance to “pass” it, but neither should the heroes be able to pick off crises with ease, one at a time. The best solution I’ve found is to start with easily triggered tiles until the heroes are up against impossible odds, then have whoever is controlling the danger room decrease the sensitivity until running across the tiles alone will activate them. As a last resort, if the heroes are overwhelmed, turn off the sensitivity of the tiles completely. The tiles cannot usually differentiate as to what causes the pressure on them, so the results of activating one tile could conceivably activate one or more other tiles.

It helps to assume that a non-player-character hero, one who doesn’t go out adventuring very often, is in charge of the danger room and can design its horrors without the knowledge of the other heroes. An enthusiastic scientist/technician (something like Q from the James Bond movies) works best for the danger room’s manager.

Danger-room construction

The first step in creating a basic danger room is to draw the grid of tiles on which the characters will play out the scenario. (The design here is quite basic; more unusual designs may be developed, too.) I suggest the use of a manila folder on which to draw out the danger room. By folding the map up, you also have a handy folder for keeping all danger-room-related forms. In addition, the folder is the right size for play and is much sturdier than normal paper.

With a pencil, first draw out a large rectangle or square, about 10” across, centered on the unfolded folder. This is the outside wall of the danger room. The room’s walls are ¼” thick on paper. On the left side, draw in the control room, where the danger room’s activities are monitored, and mark it as such (computers and control consoles may be added as well). On the right side, draw in lockers...
and showers for the heroes to use after their workout. The ceiling height in the danger room itself is assumed to be about two stories. The material strength of the danger room’s walls, ceiling, and floor is assumed to be Monstrous, though the Judge may alter this.

Next, mark along the top wall of the danger room itself, between the control room and the showers, in 1” segments, using a pencil and ruler. Starting in the top left corner, make the first tile (called A1) 1” long by 1” deep. Tile A2, moving right, should be the same size, and so on to tile A7. Row B, just underneath, is composed of six tiles; B1 is 1½” x 1”, B2-B5 are 1” square, and B6 is like B1. Row C is like Row A, Row D is like B, and so on down to Row J, which is like Row B. (Optionally, the room may be lengthened by having the center tiles be 2” long by 1½” wide.) This produces a bricklike layout of tiles.

It is much easier on the eyes if you put the outlines of the tiles and the outlines of the walls in different color pens, or have the walls in pen and the tiles in pencil. I can almost guarantee that if you don’t do this, at some point a character will try to walk through a wall.

The danger room is specifically made with 10 rows and six active columns so that any location may be rolled with 1d10 to determine row and 1d6 to determine column (tiles A7, C7, E7, G7, and I7 are left inactive as “safe zones”).

A sea of crises

Now that the danger-room map is complete, it is time to fill the danger room with things to make the heroes jump, fall, get knocked unconscious, or what have you. The first step in filling a danger room is to determine the number of tiles that contain crises during a particular scenario. You can either select a number (start with 10-15 crises for introductory scenarios), or else you can generate a number. In the latter case, roll 1d6 for the tens’ digit and 1d10 for the ones’ digit, with a roll of 0 = zero, not 10. This die roll will generate a number between 10 and 69. Do not be alarmed at the fact that it is possible to have more active tiles than exist in the room; a tile can have more than one crisis on it. It is recommended, however, that no more than three crises be placed on any one tile. Remember: The more tiles that produce an effect, the longer the process takes to fill out the danger room.

Danger rooms present crises in two basic ways: robots and traps. A danger room can arbitrarily hold a maximum of only five different types of robots and five types of traps. One specific robot type and one specific trap type have special programming, as detailed later, and usually only one of each of these will appear in the danger room at any one time. All other robots and traps have “generic” programs and are assumed to be unlimited in number. Each “generic” robot and trap should be designed before the game begins, using the section “Traps & robots” herein.

The special robot is an emulation robot, which is designed to look and act as though it is a real costumed hero or villain. All of its statistics come directly from criminal files (in game terms, the Advanced Set Judge’s Book or any game module), and it is programmed to respond in a reasonably complex, “intelligent” manner, though the robot is not itself intelligent. Note that the real hero or villain copied by this robot might have powers not known to the super heroes, and these powers won’t appear in the robot (surprise!). The special trap simulates a natural disaster. Once set off, this trap presents the effects of a volcano, tornado, blizzard, or the like over an expanding area of the danger room.

The method for determining what type of crisis is activated by a tile is rolled on the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1d10</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>Robot (type 1-4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Emulation robot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-9</td>
<td>Trap (type 1-4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Natural disaster</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robots and traps are created using the section “Traps & robots” herein. Secondary die-roll encounter tables should be created for the four robot and four trap types, with one of each appearing per tile activation. Results from this table need not be assigned to each tile prior to its activation, but assignment will let the Judge better control the scenario. Once a tile has been activated and its crisis dealt with, it becomes “safe” for the rest of the scenario if no other crisis has been assigned to it.

If an event is selected for a tile that has already been activated and is now presenting a crisis, the Judge has three options. He can either reroll the location, use the second crisis for the second time the tile is activated, or place the crisis on an adjacent tile. Again, allow no more than three active crises per tile per scenario.

Your mission is...

Now the Judge should determine the mission that must be completed in order for Karma to be awarded for the scenario and in order to have the danger room turned off, unless the team wishes to admit defeat. (Of course, the danger room can be shut down by the controller if the heroes look like they’re about to be killed!) For random mission determination, roll on the following table using 1d6. If the Judge wishes to make the mission slightly harder or easier, merely add an appropriate modifier. Note that the Clear mission is usually so hard that it cannot be randomly rolled without a modifier. Also, the object of any mission will always be a nonliving thing; to use living victims would be cruel. The table to generate the object of a mission is given later on.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1d6</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Recover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Destroy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Protect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Assemble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Survive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7+</td>
<td>Clear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transport: Roll for or select two tile locations, the first being where the object starts and the second being its destination. The heroes’ objective is to move the object from the starting point to its destination. Because this mission is usually easy, the Judge is encouraged to assign extra complications or crises.

Destroy: Roll one tile location; this is where the object is originally situated. The objective of this mission is to bring the object in question outside the danger room. On this mission, a robot always guards the door. (Roll up the robot’s statistics as per a normal robot player character in the game; do not count this one against type allotments for the danger room.)

Recover: Roll for the tile location of the object. Next, give the object either body armor or a force field. Roll 1d100; the rank in which the number falls is the rank of the armor or field. For instance, if a 53 is rolled, the rank is Amazing (53). The object of the mission is to bypass the defenses and destroy the object. Certain rolls may be disregarded and rerolled if the armor or force field is too strong or too weak to challenge your heroes, but always allow the heroes a chance at victory.

Protect: After placing the object in question on a randomly rolled tile, roll up two robots (using player-character rules for the game) for every three characters in the group. The players must prevent the robots from destroying the object. The PC robots will not move until they are attacked or until a hero activates the tile on which the object is located. Once this happens, no more tiles that activate robots will function; however, traps and currently active robots will remain active. The players must clear all remaining robots from the danger room.

Assemble: After creating an object using rules given later in this article, have it be disassembled, then roll a random location for each piece. The objective of the mission is to put all the pieces together again. It takes one turn to put two pieces in the same area together, or two turns if the object is deemed awkward by the die rolls in the following section.

Survive: Do not select an object for this mission; the mission is hard enough as is. Roll 1d20 + 10 to generate a number between 11 and 30. This is the number of turns for which all the heroes must remain conscious. Generate two robots, using player-character rules, for every character entering the danger room. Make all powers for the robots combat related (e.g., don’t take Plant Control), and have one of the robots for each hero possess a power geared to take advantage of that hero’s greatest weakness or to confront his strongest power. The rank on this power should be equal to the hero’s power that it is working against, with a bonus of + 1CS. For example, Iceman, with Ice Generation—Remarkable (30), is going into the danger room; a robot specifically designed for him might have Fire Generation. (If the Judge is unsure of what a good opposing power would be, find out what its nemesis is in MA3 The Ultimate Powers Book, a volume most certainly worth its price.) The Judge should start off with all tiles active but, in all probability, will soon have to turn them off.

Clear: In this mission, no object is created, as the players will not have time to deal with one. The players must deactivate every single robot in the complex. Each turn, a number of robots equal to three times the number of the characters is automatically activated. In addition, one emulation robot per turn activates. Again, this is a very difficult mission. Use it sparingly but threaten characters with it often.

Next, use Table 1 to generate the characteristics of the object of the mission. Roll once each for the object’s size, weight, and material strength. If the mission is “Assemble,” roll for the number of pieces. The term “object” is deliberately generic so as to let the Judge throw in an interesting twist. For instance, the heroes will treat a glass figurine much differently than a lump of tin.

If the term “awkward” is rolled, make a note of it and reroll for its weight. In addition to the Strength FEAT, the character attempting to move an awkward object must also make an Agility FEAT vs. Remarkable intensity. Should the term “awkward” be rolled again, increase the intensity of the Agility FEAT by + 1CS each time.

After determining the mission and its object, roll for complications. The exact number is left up to the Judge, but the suggested number is six minus the number of the mission rolled. This allows the Judge to balance out the danger room. Thus, if you’ve consistently rolled up easily beaten opponents, you can still challenge the players with complications. Conversely, the “Survive vs. Godzilla’s Five Cousins” mission can be made playable by having one or two of the creatures explode on the eighth turn.

Roll 2d6 on the following table to see which complications come into play. With the exception of “May self-destruct” and “Will self-destruct,” any repeat rolls are cumulative. The complications are explained in the following section.

2d6 Complication
2 Timed (1d6 turns)
3 Stay 1d6 extra turns
4 Combine two missions
5 Object is hostile
6 Object moves
7 Object is hidden
8 Timed (3d6 turns)
9 Object is protected
10 Object moves quickly
11 May self-destruct
12 Will self-destruct

Timed: The mission must be completed within the allotted amount of turns or else one random tile per turn will be activated at double-normal potency. If the random tile activates a robot, double all its ranks (by number) to a maximum of Monstrous. Traps will automatically move beneath the hero and have doubled effects. If the tile rolled was unoccupied, no effects are felt.

Stay 1d6 extra turns: After the mission is completed, the group must set off half the tiles and overcome them all. Should they succeed before all extra turns are up, keep sending things at them one at a time.

Combine two missions: Roll for another mission but keep the same object, then
The characters must catch an emulation robot and transport it to a giant garbage disposal or “prison” on a certain tile, standing by to ensure its destruction or capture. The possibilities are limitless.

Object is hostile: The object has a weapon for use against anything that comes into its area.

Object moves: The object moves 1–4 tiles every turn in any direction the Judge chooses.

Object is hidden: The object in question is hidden beneath a tile (the Judge might not tell where), and the tile covering it must be activated in order to gain access to the object. Any traps or robots lying in wait are also sprung when the tile is activated. If the Judge decides not to tell where the object is, the heroes must search for it. While Penetration Vision or other powers will work, the easiest and most fool-proof searching method is still the Accidental Mine Detector routine (i.e.: pray, step, pray, step, etc.).

Object is protected: Four robots are already protecting the object from any type of outside interference.

Object moves quickly: On each turn, roll 1d6. On a 5 or 6, the object moves to a totally random location (roll location on 1d6 for the row, 1d10 for the column) either by flight, teleportation, running, or some other form of locomotion. If the object moves by any means other than teleportation, the characters must make an Agility FEAT vs. Amazing intensity to catch it while it is in motion. Any tiles the object runs across, flies over, or lands upon are automatically activated.

May self-destruct: Each turn that the characters occupy the same tile as the object, there’s a 50% chance that a timer will be set off, allowing 1d6 turns to pass before the object explodes, doing Incredible (40) force and Excellent (20) edged attack damage. The heroes should be informed of this complication but should not know the number of turns before it explodes. The longer the heroes hold on to the object, the more exciting this complication gets.

Will self-destruct: The timer is set for 1d20 +5 turns and starts when the first tile is activated. Any character on the same tile as the object (or on an adjacent tile) in the turn in which the object explodes takes Incredible force and Excellent edged attack damage as before. The heroes should be informed of this complication but should not know the number of turns they have before the object explodes. Again, the longer the scenario, the more suspenseful this complication gets.

Enjoying the scenery
After the mission and all its complications are finalized, the Judge should add 1–3 landforms to vary the room’s topography. Roll for the location of one tile as a starting point for each landform, then expand the landform’s size to a minimum of three tiles. The following table is intended for use only if the Judge is unsure of what to put in.

### Table 1: Mission Object Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1d6</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Strength to lift</th>
<th>Pieces</th>
<th>Material strength</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Very small</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>FB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>TY</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>GD</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>GD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>RM</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>EX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Very large</td>
<td>IN</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>IN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Awkward</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>AM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2: Robot FASE Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1d10</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>TY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>GD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>EX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>RM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>IN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3: Robot RIP Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1d10</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>FE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>TY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>GD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>EX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>RM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4: Robot’s Number of Powers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1d10</th>
<th># powers*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(0,1,0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(0,1,1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>(1,1,1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>(1,2,0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(0,2,1)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>(1,2,1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>(1,2,2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>(1,3,1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>(2,3,1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>(2,3,2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The first number is the number of detection/movement powers; the second number is offensive powers; the third is defensive powers.

Any variation in height is usually one story high or deep. If a character falls off a ledge, treat it as a charging attack against the ground. Short-circuiting robots in water is a very common ploy in my scenarios, so add a pond at least.

In no case should a topographic feature interfere with an active tile. For instance, a robot that emerges from a tile beneath a lake would be resistant to water. A trap at the same place might indicate that the lake is really made of poisonous water or acid.

### Traps & robots

The last step in creating a danger room is to give identities to the various traps and robots that infest the room. Emulation robots should each be assigned a personality as noted previously (Doctor Doom is the best!), and all disasters should be worked out.

A trap is easy to describe but often hard to design. Some ideas to get you started would include:

- power-nullification traps
- web-casting traps
- logic traps (the character must solve a riddle to escape)
- pit traps
- spike traps
- moving-wall traps (walls move in at the rate of one area per round)
- character-specific traps
- acid traps
- power-lowering traps (-2CS power drop)
- traps that use a character’s power against him
- illusion traps
- traps that cause a character to fight his group
Because you demanded it...

REVISED Ninjas & Superspies™

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TMNT Adventures provides several new adventures that will send your characters around the world. Includes the infamous "Death Trials" scenario. $7.95. Please add $1.00 for postage.

TMNT Guide to the Universe gives you never before revealed data on the Triceratops, and dozens of other aliens which have appeared in the TMNT comic book. Plus rules for space and aerial combat, four adventures and comic strip. $7.95. Plus $1.00 for postage.

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

TMNT Sourcebook: Road Hogs™: An "After the Bomb" companion of post-holocaust mayhem on the highways of the shattered West Coast. Vehicle combat rules, 20 new animal mutations and four adventures complete this package. $7.95. Plus $1.00 for postage.

TMNT Sourcebook: Mutants Down Under™: An "After the Bomb" companion of post holocaust adventure in Australia. Over 20 new mutant animals, man-eating plants, the Dream Time Sorcerer, adventures and more. $7.95. Plus $1.00 for postage.

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

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

King Arthur is back!
And he's a mutant

Mutants in Avalon™

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

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

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

Available at Hobby Stores and Comic Book Shops everywhere!
Disasters: A natural disaster is very similar to a trap, except that its area of effect keeps expanding by one tile per turn in all directions. Starting on the fourth turn, the Judge should roll 1d10 on the following table to see the progress of the disaster. If “No change” is rolled as the first result, the expansion of the disaster’s area of effect continues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1d10</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>No change from previous roll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>Expansion/retreat halts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-0</td>
<td>Area of effect retreats one tile in all directions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some ideas for potential natural disasters include:
- Volcano: blinding ash, lava (TY (6) force, IN (40) heat), poisonous gas of RM (30) intensity
- Forest fire: blinding smoke, heat (TY (6) + 1CS per turn, max. AM (50)), poisonous gas of EX (20) intensity
- Nuclear explosion: instantaneous RM (30) force, AM (50) heat, AM (50) radiation optional
- Monsoon: winds, flying debris and water doing EX (20) edged attack damage
- Sea wave: water with AM (50) force and triple speed (no halt/retreat)
- Blizzard: RM (30) intensity cold, blinding snow doing EX (20) edged attack damage.

Robots: A normal robot is generated by a series of 1d10 rolls on Tables 2-4. Roll four times on the first table for each of the FASE scores, then three times on the second table for each of the RIP scores. If any three of the mental statistics is FE (2), this type of robot has no on-board intelligence. As such, the robot takes a -3 modifier on the number of powers it possesses, but it is invulnerable to all mind-affecting powers. No danger-room robot is truly self-aware; they are simply well programmed.

After determining the robot’s statistics, roll for its number of detection/movement powers, offensive powers, and defensive powers, then select them at your discretion from the Advanced Set booklets or The Ultimate Powers Book. Ranks can be determined by using the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game tables or by rolling 2d20 + 10 and using the rank number so indicated (i.e., for 42, the rank is Incredible).

Roll up a danger room and show your heroes how much trouble they can have without ever leaving home!

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Editorial

18. We look for unique and interesting plots (a) in module proposals for DUNGEON Adventures before all else, though a proposal had better have a good length, game accuracy, and an interesting setting, too. There are lots of other things we look for, too, like distinctive characters, but plot comes first. Does the module tell a story? If not, out it goes.

19. An article that takes up 25 pages in DRAGON Magazine is far too long for our tastes these days, so answer (b) is important. But (e) is important, too, because there’s absolutely no point in replacing a brand-new official game system until that system has been tried and tested. The AD&D 2nd Edition Complete Psionics Handbook deserves a fair shake. None of the other reasons given make any difference. Note in particular that DRAGON Magazine has published unofficial additions and changes to official rules hundreds of times; it’s our stock in trade.

20. You’re best off starting with (b) to make sure you aren’t publishing something lifted word-for-word from a copyrighted source. A game inconsistency (a half-elfen magic-user in the D&D game) was mentioned, but this might have been easy to fix on the editor’s part. Sillier ideas have been published and have proven to be quite popular, and sometimes it’s okay to railroad the characters into an adventure, so long as you’re careful about how you do it and so long as you don’t do it very often.

So now you have an idea of what goes through your editors’ heads as they look over your article, module, or game submission. **And you thought anyone could do this.**

Next month, another topic—but no test. Enjoy!

* And don’t send us a module with a dungeon in a dead brontosaur, either. The Avalon Hill Game Company has already published one of those in a RUNEQUEST® module. I am completely serious.

** If you were about to send us a module in which a tinker gnome in battle armor must fight a goliath-monster with a Bohemian ear-spoon +5 that has taken over a planetoid shaped like a klein bottle inhabited by a shirokukatsukami, think again.
FANTASY MINIATURES GAMING...  ...IN A DARK CHAOTIC WORLD

BLADESTORM IS HERE!

The Bladelands are a wild, chaotic area shrouded within a mantle of ferocious magical gates called Bladestorms. Bladestorm is a skirmish-style fantasy miniatures game. Each figure represents one person or creature. Simple rules regulate small-scale miniatures battles and mass battles in any fantasy world, but we provide a sourcebook and set of scenarios to get you started in the Bladelands. Bladestorm contains: a 64 page rulesbook, a 160 page sourcebook, a 32 page color guide, two full-color maps, and set of 8 dice. Miniatures available separately from Grenadier Models, Inc.
A dozen deadly daggers from the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting

by Ed Greenwood

There was a sudden collective gasp, almost a roar, among the merriment—then deathly silence.

In all that high-timbered hall in Ruathym there sat no more beautiful lady at the feast than Princess Saerthae, and many an eye had turned her way again and again, captivated by her beauty.

So, almost all there had seen it. One moment a courtier leaned over the princess to pour her some wine—and in the next moment, his livery flickered and shifted horribly, and a yellow-white doppelganger was upon her, snarling and clawing, goaded to attack by some unseen, magical hand. The First Axe was not present; his empty chair could raise no sword to save his princess from a bloody death.

Nobles and war captains of Ruathym alike roared in fear and anger, blades hissing out and chairs toppling as they charged toward the high seat, all knowing with cold horror that they were too late.

And then the mottled, hairy shoulders of the beast slumped, sagging down upon the high seat. From beneath its bulk the princess emerged, uninjured, a bloody dagger in her hand.

Pale but calm, she wiped her blade on the doppelganger’s hide, and returned it delicately to its sheath in her bodice. Then she looked around at the glittering blades that could not have reached her in time, took up her wine jack, and smiled. “My lords and ladies, be seated, and eat, I pray! This danger, at least, is past—and once again, I fear, a dagger proves a ruler’s most pointed argument.”

Only after she was seated again in a new chair, and the talk and mirth had begun anew, did Princess Saerthae allow herself a shudder.

Elminster told me that tale of the Realms, and many others, in which a humble dagger had meant the difference between life and death. Then he allowed that some daggers were less humble than others, and soon I’d heard of half a hundred magical blades, each with its own tale. I tried to slow this torrent of Realms lore by inquiring if there were any common magical daggers (beyond those already known to us all); that is, types of daggers that were not unique weapons, but that a traveler was unlikely to see.

I should have known. He started right off naming and describing blades as fast as ever. I’ll spare you all but the first dozen; Elminster does take some getting used to!

Here follow details of those magical daggers of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting. Elminster bids me remind you that the experience value for each weapon is awarded only to those making, or at least enchanting, a weapon, as per the AD&D® 2nd Edition Dungeon Master’s Guide, page 135. In addition, busy magical-item makers are warned that each successive weapon of the same type enspelled earns its enchanter 100 fewer experience points, until a minimum of 25 points is reached.

Blade of banishing

This dagger +2 twists awry magical barriers, protections, and illusions that it touches. Whenever it touches or impinges on a being or an area under an illusion, protective magic, or magical barrier, there is a percentage chance that the dagger will destroy the magic. The weapon has a base 60% chance of success, plus a random bonus of 1d20%, and minus 10% per level of the magic contacted (e.g., a shield spell is a first-level spell and gives a modifier of -10%). Percentile dice are then rolled. If the roll is less than or equal to the modified chance of success, the dagger destroys the magic. If the roll is higher than the modified chance of success, the dagger does not destroy the magic. The DM may choose to consider all unknown defensive magicks to be seventh or eighth level, and all artifacts to be 12th level or greater.

To act, this dagger need not be drawn or wielded. Its destructive nature is constant, regardless of the caster’s wishes, and need not be activated or invoked. If thrown or...
thrust through a barrier that it does not bring down, the blade (and wielder, if in contact with it) suffer the magic's full normal effects. If the blade destroys the barrier, no damage is done to the wielder.

XP Value: 4,500

Chill blade
Up to three rounds in any turn, this dagger's magical chill power can be activated, causing the blade to glow with a pale, ghostly white radiance. When so empowered, a chill blade does an additional 1d4 hp cold damage per strike and forces the struck being to save vs. spells. If the save fails, the victim's attack rolls are made at -1 for the next hour. Further successful attacks by the dagger will cause a greater penalty, as follows: three strikes cause a -2 penalty, five strikes a -3 penalty, and so on.

Any chill blade strike that is successfully saved against does not count in this number. Undead suffer no chill damage from a chill blade strike but must save vs. spells each time they are struck, or be forced to flee for 2-5 rounds.

Activation is instantaneous, by will of the wielder. Activated or not, a chill blade itself saves against normal and magical cold, ice, and chill effects with a +2 bonus. It does not confer such bonuses on its wielder.

The enchantment of a chill blade requires a finely made dagger with a blade of ferrous metal, a piece of rock crystal, a snowflake or piece of ice, some sort of lightning or electrical discharge, and the casting of a chill touch spell.

XP Value: 2,000

Dagger of defiance
This dagger is of normal appearance and damage, but anyone grasping it is instantly aided against certain magical effects and attacks. The wielder of a dagger of defiance becomes immune to all forms of fear and repulsion. A +3 bonus to saving throws against all enchantment/charm attacks is also gained, as well as a +3 bonus to saves against all polymorph and petrifaction effects. These protections last as long as the dagger is touched and cannot be exhausted, but they can never extend to more than one being.

The enchantment of a dagger of defiance requires doppleganger blood and a distilled essence of xorn flesh. The process also involves the casting of fear and repulsion spells.

XP Value: 3,500

Dagger of doomwarding
This dagger has seven charges when first enchanted. It cannot be recharged; once the charges are used, it will be only a dagger +1 thereafter. A charge is drained whenever the being grasping the dagger's hilt so wills it. The number of charges left can be known at all times.

Using a charge from a dagger of doomwarding allows its wielder an extra action or chance in bad situations: an additional attack in a given round; an additional saving-throw attempt against a dangerous effect; another bend bars/lift gates roll, and so on (the DM's decision as to what actually occurs is final). Only one charge may be expended per round. The wielder must have been holding the dagger when the initial failed saving throw or missed combat strike was made; the newly gained action or failed chance is assumed to occur almost immediately after the failed one.

The enchantment of this type of weapon is said to require a powdered alicorn (unicorn horn) or—even better—the touch of a living unicorn's horn to the blade.

XP Value: 4,000

Dragonfang
This dagger can emit a straight-line, 1'-wide, 90'-long lightning bolt from its tip four times a day, but only twice in any one turn. In addition, it causes the victim to suffer +1 hp damage. The bolt does 2d8 + 1 hp damage to all beings in its path (save vs. wands for half damage). If the lightning bolt is invoked as the dagger strikes a victim, no bolt is produced, but the victim takes the full lightning damage in addition to the dagger's physical bite. No saving throw is allowed to the victim. Creatures resistant or immune to electrical attacks take partial or no damage from the bolt.

Any dragonfang dagger attack does double damage to all dragons, including Oriental dragons, spacefaring and extraplanar dragons, and dracoliches.

XP Value: 3,000

Fang dagger
This sort of dagger is rare indeed in the North, but it is a favored weapon of evil thieves and wizards in Thay and in places south and east of there (the lands of Murghom, Semphar, Raurin, and Durpar). When sheathed, a fang dagger appears as a normal weapon. When drawn, it becomes a small, coiling emerald-green snake head and torso up to 6" long. This "blade" has no cutting edge and cannot be used to sever ropes, parry other weapons, or the like. Its use does not alter the wielder's THAC0. A successful attack does only 1 hp piercing damage, but the struck victim must save against poison or suffer the snake's venom effects. A being who successfully saves against the poison of a fang dagger is forever immune to the poison of that particular dagger.

The poison effects of a fang dagger vary with the type of snake used, and may be of injected types A, B, C, D, E, F, or O (see the DMG, page 73). The venom is never exhausted, no matter how often the blade is used, unless the blade's head is destroyed. The snake head is itself AC 6 and will be destroyed if it suffers 4 + hp damage. It makes all saving throws as a 1-HD monster.

The making of such a blade requires a live snake (of the poison type desired), an intact dagger, and a secret ritual involving the powdering of gems, the casting of a temporal stasis spell, and the use of a drop of sovereign glue.

XP Value: 2,500

Grimwald's dagger
First popularized by High Lady Alustriel of Silvermoon, these amusing and effective daggers +1 emit a continuous snarling noise, like a small and angry dog, when drawn and grasped. The snarls rise into barks whenever the blade actually strikes a living target.

Opponents touched but not wounded by the blade of a Grimwald's dagger must save vs. spells or shudder helplessly with laughter on the following round (-2 on saving throws, strength checks, armor class, and attack rolls). This effect lasts for one round but may recur each time contact is made with the blade.

Once per day, the wielder of this type of dagger can cause it to savage an opponent. This causes the blade to emit a shrill, ululating screaming noise (audible up to half a mile away in good conditions) and grants the wielder two rounds of hasted attacking (double attacks, -2 initiative bonus, and no aging). During this time, the dagger functions as a +2 weapon and its base damage is doubled.

This sort of dagger is named for its inventor, the wizard Grimwald, who delighted in teasing his cats.

XP Value: 2,500

Invisible blade
This weapon does normal damage but appears only as a hilt; its blade cannot be seen. Blood or dirt can outline or betray the location of its blade, but even striking a creature does not make the metal itself appear. An invisible blade can therefore be concealed in a man's grasp and carried where weapons are not permitted.

An invisible blade is always silent in striking, even if it falls or is thrust against stone or metal. It never reflects light, but it can be normally affected by huit metal and similar spells, and it can be readily seen by creatures able to see invisible objects. When grasped (it need not be drawn), an invisible blade allows its wielder to see as if using a detect invisibility spell.

Detect invisibility, invisibility, gaze reflection, and some form of magical silence are required for the enchantment of such a dagger. The magic must be worked on the blade as it is forged and tempered.

XP Value: 1,000

Jump dagger
This magical weapon looks and functions as a normal dagger, but it has three special powers. One operates automatically, affecting the blade and any one creature grasping it as if by a feather fall spell. This power is negated only during the use of the next power described.

The wielder, at will, makes one jump (as per the first-level wizard spell) every other round, so long as the weapon is
"Relativity, Black Holes, Unified Field Theory – it's all crap. I'm convinced that the true underlying structure of space-time is actually Dreamtime."

DREAMTIME
Imagination is More Important than Knowledge.

A new concept in roleplaying from ICE.
grasped (it need not be drawn). The weapon must accompany the wielder.

The wielder can also move small nonliving objects about by pointing the blade at the object and willing the effect to occur. An attack roll is required, and the object will jump up to 30' away, its distance and direction set by the wielder of the jump dagger. The objects cannot be larger than 3' in any dimension and must weigh less than 100 lbs.

This property is often used to pass weapons, keys, and valuables to another being, or to snatch them away from an enemy, such as a mage reading spell components. If it is used to launch an attack (even indirectly, such as a lit torch being directed at a flammable object), the DM should require a successful attack roll to ensure that the object reached its intended target.

If this power is directed at an opponent's weapon or other firmly held object, the opponent is allowed a strength check on 1d20 to retain hold and break the dagger's attempt (for that round, at least). If the check succeeds, the opponent retains full control over the weapon, and is not penalized in any attack rolls launched during the round. If the check fails, the weapon is snatched out of the opponent's grasp; magical weapons are allowed a save vs. spells to be unaffected, with a bonus equaling any "pluses" they possess. The opponent cannot ever be overbalanced or pulled along by the affected item.

The making of jump daggers requires feather fall, jump, and levitate spells, in combination with a special tempering. The oil for the quenching of the tempering process must contain blink dog or displacer beast blood or beholder ichor, stirred and mixed well.

XP Value: 2,000

Rust blade

These rare weapons have a constantly operating involuntary power. Whenever the naked blade of a rust blade directly touches metal (a successful attack roll is required), the metal rusts, crumbling to useless shards and flakes in one round.

Magical metallic items contacting a rust blade have a chance of escaping destruction equal to 10% per plus (e.g., a dagger +1 has a 10% chance of being unaffected). Special powers or abilities may, at the DM's option, be considered equivalent to additional bonuses. A rod of lordly might, for example, has 10 powers or forms and functions, and could be considered to have a 100% chance of escaping a rust blade's effects, if the DM deems it so. Consider all magical items that are not weapons or armor of some sort to have a 20% base chance of being unaffected.

Note that such a weapon cannot be carried in a metal scabbard, and it is as much a hazard to the wielder and allies as it is to enemies. The making of such weapons requires some of the flesh of a rust monster's antennae.

If a rust monster smells such a blade, it will attack it over all other possible metallic meals. A rust blade touched by a rust monster antennae collapses into a hot, sparkling gray liquid that a rust monster will immediately devour, thereafter falling into a contented doze. The liquid takes 2-5 turns to digest but acts as a healing agent and growth stimulant, giving the affected rust monster its full possible (40) hit points. In rust monsters already at full hit points, the devouring of a rust blade awakens a strong urge to mate—and causes them to wildly attack all sources of metal in the vicinity, ramming any creatures in the way and bowling over any creatures wearing or carrying metal, for 2-5 hp impact damage per charge (one charge per round, normal attack roll required, in addition to tentacle attacks).

XP Value: 1,000

Speaking dagger

When thrown, this otherwise normal dagger's special power is unleashed. It is +4 to attack, only when thrown, and upon impact, it emits an audible message. This spoken "sounding" cannot be a spell incantation, nor can it trigger any delayed spell or activate any item or effect by utterance of a command word. It can, of course, convey passwords or instructions. Such a message reproduces the accent and tone of the speaker, can be up to 50 words in length, and is repeated each time the dagger is thrown. (The irritation that a mocking comment can produce makes it a favorite of Calishite torturers, who throw it near the arms and legs of bound prisoners in the darkness, without warning and at irregular intervals.)

Only one message can be spoken over the dagger in a day or any 144-turn period. A code word (not part of the message, nor counted in its word length) begins and ends the dagger's "recording" of a message, that may be emplaced by any being knowing the word and having the power of speech. If the word is spoken twice over the blade with nothing being said in between, the blade will bear no message.

The making of such blades is known to require the crushing of certain gems, the casting of a magic mouth spell, and the utterance of the code word! which can never be changed thereafter.

XP Value: 1,500

Spider fang

This dagger +3 is always black or dark purple in hue. Its touch causes all nonmagical ropes, bindings, and magical or natural webs to part in an instant. Despite the name, this weapon has no effect on poisons and does not itself employ poison.

Once every six turns, a spider fang can emit a web from its tip. Such webs are in all respects identical to those created by a spider fang, and it causes all nonmagical missile attacks (excluding those from siege engines) against the wielder to be launched at -1 to hit and damage.

A curtain of cobwebs acts in all other respects like a shield spell, except that it has no effect at all on magic missiles. It lasts for seven rounds, moving as the point of the dagger is moved, and may be positioned over a window or portal and left there, if the wielder leaves the dagger on a table or jammed into a crevice and moves away.

If a curtain of cobwebs contacts any living being who is not at the same time also touching the spider fang that created it, it collapses instantly all over the being, doing 1d3 hp corrosive damage. A curtain of cobwebs is destroyed instantly by any contact with flame, being consumed with a flash and a roar. If this occurs at the same time that the curtain contacts a creature, the creature suffers an additional 2d4 hp fiery damage (save vs. spells for half flame damage).

The creation of spider fangs is known to involve the ichor and web silk of driders or certain monstrous types of spiders, shield and web spells, and a complicated brew of strange ingredients in which the blade must be submerged for several days.

XP Value: 2,000

Looking for a game convention?

If your gaming group is too small, or if you've just moved into the neighborhood, finding friends who are also gamers can be a problem. However, your local hobbies and games shop may have a bulletin board where gamers can advertise their groups and meeting times. The hobby store may also know of local game conventions where you can meet dozens of other gamers with the same interests. The Convention Calendar in this issue may also be of help. Don't sit at home and wish you knew more gamers. Go out and find them today.
The world of Rifts™ is waiting for you!

Rifts™, the Role-Playing Game

Rifts™ is a multi-genre role-playing game that captures the elements of magic and the supernatural along with science fiction and high technology.

The Palladium mega-damage system applies to both magic and technology, creating super powerful characters of all kind. The fact that the same basic RPG system links all of our games, means that players can bring in any Palladium character from any Palladium game.

The Earth has been inadvertently transformed by a cataclysmic event that nearly obliterated humankind. It is approximately 200 years later (nobody knows for sure). Human beings are emerging out of a dark age to reclaim the planet. A strange and alien Earth inhabited by unimaginable, and sometimes terrible, creatures.

Earth is brimming with what ancient man called “magic” energy. Ley lines criss-cross the planet. Where they intersect, the energy is at its peak and trans-dimensional rifts tear open the fabric of space and time, releasing unspeakable horrors.

Highlights Include:

- Nearly 30 exciting and unique Occupational Character Classes including the Cyber-Knight, Borgs, Glitter Boys, Psi-Stalkers, Dog Pack (mutant humanoid dogs), Crazies and many others.
- Supernatural creatures. Some, like the Dragon are actually player characters, other are horrifying menaces from the riffs.
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Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles®, ROBOTech™ RPG books and videocassettes, Heroes Unlimited™, Ninjas & Superspies™, and the Palladium Fantasy RPG are still hot, hot, hot!!!
I am writing to express my opinion on two subjects constantly debated in "Forum": role-playing and alignment.

I agree with Troy C. Jennings (issue #158) that DMs should run their campaigns as they want, but I don't agree about restricting evil characters' actions in the game. I also don't agree with John Patrick Wall (issue #159) when he states characters in the game role-playing when the correct role-playing of a character will prejudice other characters.

Since I became a DM (for the AD&D 2nd Edition game), I have heard there is only one rule a DM should obey: "Be fair!" Is it fair to permit a paladin character to do good and bring order as much as possible, and not permit a chaotic-evil assassin to do evil and bring chaos too? Doesn't seem very fair to me!

If you permit evil characters in your campaign, you should let them act evil! What's wrong with an evil outback killer getting to make off with all of the loot? If the party is not useful to him any more, why keep it alive? Evil acts like betrayal are part of a role-playing game, as are good acts like saving a poor girl without expecting any reward.

I think the heart of this discussion relies in how you face the AD&D game. Is it a game of heroic fantasy with magic, dragons, dungeons, etc., that has role-playing as a part of it? Or is it a role-playing game lived in a world of fantasy with magic? Which do you consider to be more important: dice-rolling or role-playing? I and my players believe that the role-playing is the most important part of the AD&D game, and so our game is much more fun because no one gets angry when his character is killed by another, or when a ranger character uses the party's only wish left in a ring of three wishes to stop a fire in a local forest. The characters can get angry (and you bet they do), but the players never will. After all, it's all part of a role-playing game!

I don't like evil characters. I don't have an evil character. And sometimes I don't permit evil characters in my game, and when I do, they can be as evil as they wish!

If you think evil actions are bad for the enjoyment of your game, then you should not permit evil characters. It is not right to permit a player to play an evil character without permitting him to do evil actions. It is not fair.

Fabio Luis De Paoli
Sao Paulo, Brazil

In response to Toby Meyers' letter in issue #164, I have to hand it to him. He does know what he is talking about.

However, my original remarks were apparently misunderstood. When I said, as Mr. Meyers puts it, "The idea that computers as GMs are equal to or even better than humans," I believe Mr. Meyers did not follow the point I was attempting to establish. My point was that the computer will be the GM for you, whereas humans could argue over who has to GM. Better than humans? Not really. This remark I didn't make either. I simply said that computer RPGs are going to be interesting and exciting for years to come. Computers are helpful tools that you can also use for recreation.

When you play a computer RPG, you guide your party through some sort of dungeon where everything can become monotonous. The walls all look the same. The endless stream of monsters seems impossible when you are in a 10' × 10' room. The magical items come readily. But, if this is the type of game you desire, this is the type of game you buy. The challenging part is the game you buy. The challenging part is the game you buy. The game master, the little character whose functions you cannot guess, and the funny-looking green thing you just fought—all are on the bright side of the argument.

When you play the game, you have to imagine that you, as your paladin at the front of the party, are going to roll up his character and who-knows-what toward the huge iron-bound door at the end of the tunnel. You don't know what is beyond it, so the sound of your sword rasping from its sheath alerts your party of possible danger. If you don't imagine these sorts of thoughts, the game would be more like this: "Okay, let's go down the tunnel and through the door." The same thing can be said of an AD&D game campaign. For example, you sit in your house, your friends house, or wherever you play, and you listen to the droning voice of your DM. When he finishes attempting to describe whatever he was saying, you tell him that your character goes to the door and opens it.

It is tough to sit in a place you have lived in or seen on many occasions and still let your mind wander and think in the rhythm of the game.

The same goes for sitting at your computer.

Dan Howarth
Holbrook AZ

This letter is addressed to all those people who feel that their campaign is lacking some "between-player mystery." I've played a number of role-playing games for about 3½ years, including the AD&D game, and I've noticed that the AD&D game differs a bit from most others. I'm not talking about the game system or about combat complexity, but about the way the game is most commonly played. AD&D game players tend to roll up their characters as a group, then as a party they're off on an adventure. This is a bit of a shame, as you miss out on a lot of the role-playing between the players, which is great fun as many undoubtedly know.

So, try this instead: When starting a campaign, let each player roll up his character alone and who-knows-what toward the GM. That'll mean that the player keeps his stats, profession, and abilities a secret, at least in the beginning. (Quite a few players, including myself, like to keep a few secrets about their characters, or may even want to appear as someone completely different than who they are, but more about that later.) Then let the player or the DM make up the character's background; play a little pre-game with the player and direct him to a suitable place in the campaign where he might meet another PC. Then do the same with all the other players, doing each character separately.

Example: "The son of a peasant girl and a sailor, Jodyni Xon was born in the year AC 979. Since his mother died in childbirth and his father never returned to claim him, Jodyni grew up with a nearby peasant family. He was treated as a member of the family and was quite..."
content with his lot. One day, when Jodyni was about 18, his host family and the nearby farms were attacked by bandits. Jodyni himself was knocked out in the ensuing battle, when he woke up, he found himself in the vicinity of the capital city, Specularum. He wandered in, and now that he has recovered from the worst shock, he has decided to try to become a city guard. That would give him some weapon training (sorely needed if he contemplates revenge) and also some cash."

This is the sort of pre-game you can run with each player, preferably role-playing it, though it can be decided without role-playing by the DM, the player, or both. Now for bringing some characters together: "Garvin of Shackleton was a young man of 24, born in the city of Kelvin. There, as a street urchin, he learned the skills of a thief, as well as those of bargaining and evaluating things. Growing up, Garvin got into larger and more serious crimes, but after one particularly large heist that brought him quite a lot of cash, he decided to give up thieving and instead become a merchant. He had quite a bit of fighting experience from fighting in back alleys, so if anybody asked, he pretended to be an ex-fighter. Anyway, he bought a wagon, a horse, and some merchandise, and then was off toward the capital, Specularum. There, in a tavern, he got into a brawl after a few too-quick words with Bren of Danmaddern, a young er, he got into a brawl after a few too-quick words with Bren of Danmaddern, a young ern, he got into a brawl after a few too-quick

Garvin of Shackleton (the merchant/thief) goes along. Our fiery priest, Bren of Danmaddern, is assigned by his church to see to the spiritual, and possibly healing, needs of the caravan, according to an agreement between the church and the Guild of Caravans. In the meantime, a friend of Jodyni Xon’s has quit the city guard to become a mercenary instead. He asks if Jodyni wants to join him, as he’s heard that there’s a caravan leaving soon. At this point, you might introduce another PC, such as a mage named Garth. Garth is an apprentice to an old wizard who desperately needs to send a message to a colleague/friend in Darokin, a distant city. He decides to send his apprentice. However, the wizard has enemies who might want to get at the message, so he suggests that Garth disguise himself to fool anyone trying to intercept him. Garth buys a sword (which he can carry but cannot use) as well as some other equipment, and decides to pretend to be an adventurer, "Garth the Brave." And there just happens to be a caravan leaving for Darokin soon.

There is room for some interesting role-playing aboard that caravan: a merchant who pretends to be an ex-fighter but is actually an ex-thief; and a disguised mage who cannot use the sword he carries and might not want to reveal his powers, and who also carries an important message! What you have are four PCs of different backgrounds, and nobody knows very much about each other. After many days together on the caravan, fighting off bandits and monsters, you hope they’ll get to know and respect each other. Even if the characters continue to adventure together after the caravan has reached its final stop, it may well take a while before Garth the Brave has to reveal his magic, or before Garvin of Shackleton is discovered to possess certain nonwarrior skills. Of course, double-identity characters shouldn’t be used often, as then everybody will probably suspect everybody else of having a double profession. But it’s lots of fun to play a character who has a secret profession or secret goal. Also, it’s fun for the DM to watch the PCs tell other characters about themselves without giving away any secrets. Then, of course, everybody’s in for a surprise when the secrets get out.

What I’m trying to say is this: You don’t need to keep all the players together all the time, so that everybody knows everything about everybody else and about what’s happening. You can keep the characters in groups and just let them meet up once in a while, or at least let each PC do some things on his own now and again. Certainly, a campaign such as this may not please everybody. Some may have groups too big to make it practical, and some DMs may not be willing to make the extra time and work (for it does increase the DM’s workload a bit) These are just suggestions that have worked well in my D&D game campaign. Also, for “once-off” adventures, it might not be worth going to the trouble of giving each PC a separate background, but you can always try to give some PCs a different lead-in to the adventure. It does add a bit to the role-playing.

Kristian Teglbjaerg
Fagersta, Sweden

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SAGE ADVICE

by Skip Williams

If you have any questions on the games produced by TSR, Inc., “Sage Advice” will answer them. In the United States and Canada, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom. We are no longer able to make personal replies; please send no SASEs with your questions (SASEs are being returned with writers’ guidelines for the magazine).

This month, the sage looks at the theory and practice behind the skills, spells, and equipment in the AD&D® 2nd Edition game.

Is the survival nonweapon proficiency useful only for extreme climates such as tundra or tropical jungle, or can it also be used for the temperate forests where most AD&D game campaigns are set?

The survival proficiency can be applied to any combination of terrain and climate. It is entirely possible for a ranger or druid to starve in the woods if the character is lost in unfamiliar terrain at the wrong time of the year. For example, food and water can be pretty tough to find in a deep forest in high summer when very few nuts and berries are ripe. On the other hand, even an unskilled character could do very well at the right time in familiar terrain.

Is a character illiterate in his native tongue if he does not have the reading/writing proficiency? If this is so, isn’t reading/writing absolutely required for wizards and priests?

If you’re following the rules strictly, one proficiency “slot” must be spent for every language to be read or written. All wizards learn how to read magical notation, which is a highly specialized symbolic language, something like musical notation. This does not necessarily mean the character can read and write in other languages. Likewise, priests learn to recite prayers, catechisms, and the like; they might never learn to read anything. Individual DMs may hand out a few free reading/writing proficiencies to characters who might need them.

Is the seamanship proficiency required to operate a small boat such as a canoe or kayak? How much do kayaks cost, anyway?

Seamanship includes the ability to handle small boats and serve as a crewman on larger craft. Whether or not seamanship is absolutely required to use a small boat is up to the DM (see the next question). The DM might also choose to limit seamanship to large craft and create a new proficiency, boating, to cover small craft. Kayaks, when available at all, cost about the same as canoes of similar size, 30-50 gp.

Isn’t it silly to require a proficiency check every time a character wants to do something unusual or complex? Doesn’t everybody have at least a slight chance to succeed at anything? How would such chances be calculated?

It would indeed be silly to roll the dice every time a character attempts a task. However, nobody can try to do everything and succeed all the time. To stay between these two extremes, the DM must decide how difficult a task is and decide what skills are necessary to complete it. There are some things just about anybody could do; for example, it doesn’t take the rope use skill to tie one’s shoes, nor does it take the carpentry skill to nail two boards together. However, some skills look a lot easier than they really are. Canoes, for example, have a nasty habit of moving in circles when improperly paddled. Likewise, rowboats also are fond of orbiting or not moving at all when an inexperienced oarsman tries his hand. While a character with seamanship probably shouldn’t have to roll to control a boat or canoe on a calm lake, unskilled characters are in for a hard time even under such favorable conditions. Also, there are some tasks that unskilled characters cannot complete. Only a carpenter has enough knowledge to build an entire house, and only a seaman can hope to control a boat or canoe through a dangerous rapids or during a windstorm.

When adjudicating attempts that fall into the middle ground, the DM should decide how difficult the task is and how much specialized knowledge is needed for success. A skilled character probably can automatically complete an absurdly simple task even under poor conditions (perhaps failing only on a roll of 20), while an unskilled character might have to try harder. For example, a character with rope use might be able to tie his shoes with one hand or while hopping on one foot, while an unskilled character might have to make a roll. A good rule of thumb in such cases is to use the normal proficiency score reduced to one half or one quarter (round fractions down); the more difficult the task, the less chance there is for success. Consider the circumstances carefully. The world-record long jump currently is 29’2”, but this does not mean that every adventurer can leap a 10’ pit with ease; encumbrance, damage, footing, lighting, even ceiling height will affect any attempt to jump. The DM should decide on a case-by-case basis using common sense. The DM should try to avoid making the campaign a slave to the proficiency system, but making the players think their characters out of a predicament is better than allowing them to extricate themselves by calling on skills the characters don’t have.

I have a dual-classed fighter/thief whose thief level finally has exceeded his fighter level. If he uses two weapons, can he still get weapon specialization bonuses? Can he use weapon specialization bonuses while backstabbing? Which saving throw chart does he use?

A character can use a specialized weapon with another weapon; see the “two-weapon style” question in “Sage Advice,” issue #165, page 91 for details. Neither dual-classed nor multiclassed characters can combine class abilities. If your fighter/thief backstabs, he must use his rogue THAC0 and must forgo specialization bonuses; he can, however, use his warrior strength bonuses. Strength and magical bonuses to a thief’s damage are applied after the backstab multiplier. A multi-classed character (and a dual-classed character whose active class level has surpassed his original class level) uses the best applicable saving throw.

Can a spell caster have two mirror image spells running at the same time? If so, is there a limit to the total number of images the caster can have at one time?

I can’t think of a reason why multiple mirror image spells cannot be used, but note that each additional spell creates 2-8 additional images of the caster, not of the caster and all previously existing images. I strongly suggest that you limit the total number of images to eight. If an additional spell would bring the total to nine or more images, the excess images from the new spell are lost.

According to the magic jar spell description, the host life force is held captive in the receptacle if the...
spell caster gains possession of a body. What happens to the host life force if the receptacle is destroyed while the caster is still in the host body?

*Magic jar* creates all kinds difficulties for DMs. Here’s an answer to tide you over until something official comes along: Any life force held in a *magic jar* receptacle is slain if the receptacle is destroyed (see the *Player's Handbook*, page 170). However, unwilling victims of *magic jar* spells are not irrevocably slain as the caster would be if the receptacle is destroyed, as the captive life force is not an integral part of the spell as the caster's is. Note that the caster's life force must return to the receptacle before returning to his own body. If the DM feels the need to discourage player characters from using *magic jar* as a cheap way to slay opponents, it’s fine to set a high value on the crystal or gem required for the receptacle, to prohibit the caster from replacing receptacles when they are destroyed (thus trapping the caster in the host body), or both.

How are the fiery bolts created by the second version of the third-level *flame arrow* spell used? Can the caster hurl them all at once? Does he have to roll to hit his targets? Will the bolts affect creatures harmed only by magic weapons?

The caster need not hurl all the bolts on the round of casting, but unused bolts are lost when the spell’s duration expires at the end of the round. The caster must make a to-hit roll for each bolt; range modifiers do not apply to the roll, but dexterity adjustments do. The DM might wish to allow an additional +2 to-hit bonus as in the *Melf's minute meteors* spell. The fiery bolts are a magical attack and can affect just about any creature. Note that the bolts inflict minor piercing damage (1d6) and fire damage (4d6, save for half); creatures that are immune to only one of these forms of damage still suffer the other form of damage if struck. If the caster directs one or more bolts at a magic-resistant creature, the creature makes one magic resistance roll for the volley; if it succeeds, the entire volley is negated. Bolts from multiple casters constitute separate volleys.

What happens to creatures that are partially or completely submerged in mud when a *mud to rock* spell is cast in the vicinity?

A creature completely submerged in mud will be trapped in the resulting rock. Creatures walking or wallowing on the surface might escape entrapment if they save vs. breath weapon.

Will a *wall of iron* stand up on its own, or does it always tip one way or another? Will it tip if placed directly against an existing wall, or will it insert itself into the wall and reinforce that wall?

An unsupported *wall of iron* will fall over unless it can insert itself into adjacent nonliving material. The wall can be placed face-to-face with another nonliving surface to reinforce it. Note that a *wall of iron* is always created vertical. Also, a *wall of iron* is very heavy, and the DM might rule that even a supported wall will tip if the adjoining material is very weak (such as a thin wooden or plaster wall). In such cases the magical wall probably will bring the supporting material tumbling down with it.

Are undead, constructed beings, or plants affected by the *polymorph* other spell or a *wand of polymorphing*? Why or why not?

Most creatures, including undead and simulacra, can be polymorphed with the fourth-level *polymorph* other spell or a *wand of polymorphing*. (As a side note, golems are creatures, but all of them are immune to *polymorph* spells.) Generally speaking, a creature is an entity that can move and react without outside aid. A creature need not be alive. On the other hand, magically controlled creatures still are creatures even when not acting independently. Animated nonliving objects...
do not. The latter have abandoned or suppressed any warrior potential while training to become members of their own classes. Game balance demands that there be distinct differences between classes. Class specialization in the AD&D game helps to insure that all characters are not near-clones trying to achieve the same menu of skills and abilities. Clearly defined character classes also make teamwork necessary, since one or two characters cannot do everything that might be required for successful adventures. This also promotes role-playing and campaign longevity. Most magical items that duplicate class abilities are class specific. Otherwise, class distinctions would disappear and a typical party would become a homogeneous mix of wizards turned healers, wandslinging fighters, sword-swinging priests, and scrying rogues.

When using Table 8 (on exceeding level limits) from the DMG, which ability score is the prime requisite for a ranger?

The prime requisites for a ranger are strength, dexterity, and wisdom. The prime requisite for each character class is listed at the beginning of the class description in the PHB, immediately after the class's ability requirements.

How should ability score checks be handled for monsters with no defined abilities? For example, how do I determine the dexterity score for a horse or a hill giant?

If the question comes up during play, it's best to decide quickly. Keeping the game moving is more important than making a precise calculation. I suggest that you assume that any monster has average ability scores (about 10). Just roll a 1d20 for ability checks; if the result is 10 or less, assume the creature passes the check.

If the roll is higher, start figuring: Roll 1d3 to get the base ability score. In the case of dexterity, add one or two to the base score if the creature is described as agile, quick, or sure footed (subtract one or two for clumsy creatures). You might add a point for a high movement rate and one point for every multiple of three that the land or water movement rate rises above 12 or every multiple of six for air movement above 18 (you can subtract points at the same rate for exceptionally slow creatures). Generally, creatures with multiple legs are more sure footed than bipedal creatures, allowing one point for each pair of legs after the first two. The situation will exclude some modifiers; a horse might get modifiers for speed and legs when determining if it can jump a fence, but it might get none for deciding if it slides down a rocky slope. On the other hand, a basilisk probably couldn't jump over a matchbox but would get credit for its eight legs when negotiating slopes. Giants are notoriously clumsy, but their sheer size allows them to simply ignore most obstacles.

When calculating other ability scores, consider the following: Strength generally equates to size; tiny creatures might receive a -2, small creatures a -1, man-sized creatures no modifier, large creatures a +1, and so on. Creatures especially noted for strength, such as draft horses, might get an extra point or two. If a creature has any damage modifiers from strength, use Table 1 in the PHB to estimate its strength score. Wisdom generally equates to intelligence, with an extra point or two if the creature has priest spells or is noted for its cunning or guile. Most monsters have higher than normal constitutions (say 11-13), modified for size as per strength. Most monsters have low charisma (say 8-10) with extra points added for high intelligence and times when a creature deals with other monsters of the same alignment. Needless to say, it's always better to go through this process before play begins when possible.
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DANG! I KNEW I Didn’T PUT THOSE HINGES ON RIGHT!

“They all say ‘Good For One Free Drink at the Golden Crown Inn!’”

By Jon Carter

By Johnson - Parker

I'M CONVINCED THAT THESE TREASURES I'VE PLUNDERED FOR YOU WILL ABSOLUTELY, POSITIVELY MAKE YOU FALL IN LOVE WITH ME.

THE WAND OF MILDEW REMOVAL. AMAZING. WHEREVER OGRE WOULD FIND IT.

WHAT THE—??! OH, DID THEY WRAP THAT? HERE, LET ME SEE.

WHY OGREK, YOU'VE TURNED MY HOME INTO A LOVELY GARRISON. WHAT MORE COULD A WOMAN ASK FOR.

“POTION OF HALFLING CONTROL”??

WE LAUNCHED AN ASSAULT ON BORTON DEPARTMENT STORE.

THEY GIFT-WRAP.

OGREK! THAT'S KINKY!!

HONESTLY, I THOUGHT IT WAS A MAN'S COLOGNE.

By Barbara Manui & Chris Adams
By Jerry Fuchs

IF I ONLY HAD A HEART...

By Aaron Williams

"Memorized too many spells again, dear?"

"...I THINK IT'S BROKEN... ALL IT DOES IS KEEP FLASHING: 12:00... 12:00... 12:00..."

By Joseph Pillsbury
LAST TIME, NAIL gave an ultimatum to Lord Udo. Our heroes began searching for the wizard Malik Magnus. Their journey takes them through an area known as the Highlands.

Think they'll put us up for tonight? The Highlanders are renowned for their hospitality. Maybe they'll feed us.

Sorry, invited guests only. We can pay for our beds.

So much for hospitality.

Angus, you old bear.

This is a time of celebration.

I'm sure Laird Cameron wouldn't want you turning away needy travelers.

Tell me about yourselves. Who are you? Where are you bound?

I'm Aalindria, an advisor to Randal, Laird Cameron. This is the midsummer celebration of his first year as chief of the clan.

Your horses and griffon can stay in the stables.

Wha'-at?

Now Bill, don't make a fuss. I'll sneak you some good food later.
I'm Rob... Robin of Hampshire.
These are my friends Finella Carland Brenna Du Dejan.
And Galen the Owl.

I'm Gillian... House Gillian... myself. Our peoples have always been great friends.

There's a grand ball tonight.
Of course you'll attend.

Donnie, find these good folk some rooms. Help them prepare for the ball.

Yes, ma'am.

I'll take care of this one myself.

What's eating you?

Most elves don't discuss their lineage so informally, Rob.

And soon you dance well.

It's funny... I vaguely remember dancing at my wedding long ago.

But, I'm not wearing a wedding ring.

What happened? Did she die? Were we divorced? What? I just can't seem to remember.

Give it time.

Her Royal Highness...
...THE PRINCESS FINELLA CIRIL, OF HOUSE CIRITH.

PRINCESS...??

I THOUGHT YOU KNEW.

MAY I CUT IN?

CERTAINLY.

CRASH
BANG

...YOUR HIGHNESS, I...

OH, CUT IT OUT, ROB!

I'M TWENTY-SEVENTH IN LINE FOR THE THRONE AND THE BLACKSHEEP OF THE FAMILY.

NOW SHUT UP AND DANCE WITH ME.

SHE DIDN'T HAVE A THING TO WEAR. I INSISTED WE BORROW SOMETHING SUITABLE TO HER STATION.

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Rating (not berating) the ratings

Fifty years ago this May, the British navy took the backbone out of the German surface fleet. The sinking of the battleship *Bismarck* was a major event in World War II and will be talked about later in this article. But first we have a topic that needs to be addressed not only for my sake but for all other reviewers in this magazine.

Recently, an effort was made by one of the companies whose figures I review to make me change both my rating on a particular figure as well as the way I review figures in general. An individual from this company made some comments about my being bought off, then tried to influence me by putting pressure on DRAGON® Magazine and the officers of an outside organization of which I am an officer. This organization is miniatures oriented and needs the support of all miniatures companies, so this threat was especially problematic. The gist was that, unless I was persuaded that I was wrong in my reviewing methods, the company would cease its support of the organization.

I want to thank Roger Moore and the staff of DRAGON® Magazine for their support, and I thank the other officers in the organization for their support. I am not going to change my rating of any miniature already reviewed, as I have done my utmost to be perfectly fair. But I am going to put part of my decision-making process before you, the readers, so you know how I review miniatures and so I can air some ideas for your response.

My reviews are based on the following:

The figures sent in for review must be sent by either a manufacturer or a distributor. This ensures that each figure is either new or is currently available on the market. I will not knowingly review a figure that is out of production or unavailable, as that is fair neither to you nor to the company that put the figure out. The figures must be in their original packaging, as sold to the public, and should come from a common shipment.

I check the figures I receive against those at my store to ensure that the quality is the same and that I did not get "sterilized" pieces. I will not do a review from a photograph, a prepped model, or a painted miniature, as these allow for hiding defects through cleaning or retouching and do not assure you of getting the same product that I received.

I also frequently check with distributors as to any current or long-term problems that point to decreased quality control. Such problems include getting two of the same figure in a pack instead of two different figures, or a long run of multiple-piece figures with two left or two right legs instead of one of each, or even figures missing major parts such as heads. Several companies have had some quality-control problems lately, and I have contacted them as a result.

After I have checked the packaging, out comes the magnifying glass. I check figures for flash (how much and how thick), for mold lines, and for incomplete filling of molds. Flash is a common occurrence when the mold halves don't seal tightly or when they get old (and sometimes when they are very new). Usually, manufacturers clean away light flash before the figures leave the factory, and major flash should be caught by quality control. Several companies have given gamers the impression that no flash is found on miniatures at their factories, so great shiny webs of flash on their figures are especially noticeable. Mold lines will always be present, but this defect must be judged on whether one side of a figure is higher than the other (which means that the mold halves didn't line up) and whether one side is raised in such a way that repairing it endangers the figure's features. Incomplete fills are usually because of overheated lead, incorrect metal composition, or simply running out of lead. These figures should be caught by quality control.

If the reviewed miniature is a single-piece figure, I'm just about done. I explore the detail to make sure that it is good. In some cases, I prime the figure to bring out hidden details as well as flaws. If none are noticeable, I then write the review.

If the miniature is a multiple-piece figure, I test-fit all of the pieces to make sure they join correctly. If they fit perfectly, I often glue the pieces together, check the details, and review the figure. If they don't fit well, I find out why. If it's an easily fixed problem, I fix it and keep track of the time and effort required to do so. Sometimes large pieces shrink and therefore don't fit properly. I try to fix that as best I can, usually with putty, and I keep notes on the process.

The star rating each figure gets is based on many points, including all the considerations just mentioned. I also take into consideration the figure's utility, detail, price, quality, completeness, and clarity of instructions (for multiple-piece figures),

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**Miniatures’ product ratings**

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The *Bismarck* anniversary: friends and foes (GHQ)
conformance to accepted scale, labeling, company claims, and other products. If a company continually states that its products are the best, then the standards for that company’s products should be slightly higher than for other companies. I also judge on whether a product conforms to its billing. If it is labeled as being for skilled modelers, then that is how it is judged. If there is no labeling and it is a skilled kit, then points are lost immediately to reflect the disappointment of someone who got in over his head without warning. I’ve modeled for over 30 years in plastic, lead, wood, and other materials for both model railroading and gaming, and I have frequently cursed manufacturers when a supposed 40-minute job took hours to complete due to misrepresented instructions. I’ve received letters from gamers whose levels start at rank amateur and go to skilled kit-basher (those who can take several products and combine them to make an object not otherwise available). I aim my columns at all levels of hobbyists and grade accordingly.

An exception to this rule involves pewter products. Pewter is rarely if ever used for gaming, and such pieces rarely have the precision found in gaming pieces. Most people who collect pewter do so for its beauty and form rather than each figure’s details. Pewter pieces tell stories, set moods, and tickle fancies. I grade pewter on its uniqueness, its “story,” how it gets its idea across, visible flaws, and the safety of the product.

I have been considering adding to my rating system by issuing a skill-level rating for each miniatures set requiring assembly, to better reflect the suitability of the set for any particular buyer. I am interested in getting feedback from all of you and will make my decision by the end of the year.

Every person who reviews products for DRAGON Magazine writes with the good of the readers in mind. We are not perfect, but we stick by our standards and explain how we reach our decisions. Speaking for myself, I don’t rate on product flow but I do on quality, and this is the way it will be.

Reviews

The Bismarck anniversary

One of the most famous battles of World War II happened 50 years ago this month. It began on 23 May 1941, the day that the German battleship Bismarck and the heavy cruiser Prinz Eugen steamed into the north Atlantic through the Denmark straights. The battle’s roots extended back to 1928, with the reemergence of the German navy and the appointment of Admiral Raeder as the naval Commander-in-Chief. Raeder believed that Germany needed a strong navy to pursue its aims around the world. He was restricted by the armistice of World War I as to the size, weight, and quantities of his ships and even the number of men he could have under arms. Raeder oversaw the building of new light cruisers and Panzerschiffs, or pocket battleships. These were the ships that were to lead to a new, well-balanced navy.

By 1934, the navy had decided to build raiders that could disrupt and destroy standard sea lanes. Merchantmen were purchased for conversion into raiders, and two triple-turreted ships—actually battle cruisers—were being built. In 1936, Germany began building the Bismarck and the Tirpitz under heavy security. The battleships’ design was based on a late World War I battleship layout but was to have more compartmentalization, more armor, and more weapons of every type. The engines were meant to propel the ships at speeds of 31 knots for over 8,000 miles. Unfortunately, these battleships took years to build; by the time the Bismarck was completed, Germany had been at war for over a year, and the German navy had been reduced to sorties in the Atlantic to disperse and destroy the convoys bearing the lifeblood of the United Kingdom. The German battleships worried the British, as they were comparable to the best of Britain’s operational
battleships. The battleships would also force Britain to stretch her forces very thin, as all convoys would have to be equipped with a battleship or heavy battle cruiser escort to fight off the big German ships.

The Bismarck and the Prinz Eugen were originally slated to be part of larger group attacks on shipping lanes. Unfortunately, the other attack ships were still dock—cases when the Bismarck and the Prinz Eugen were set to leave. The German High Command wanted operational capital ships at sea to confuse the British, so they dispatched the Bismarck and the Prinz Eugen to their destinies.

The Germans charged into the north Atlantic under cover of a storm but ran smack into a patrol of cruisers. One was the H.M.S. Suffolk, which had the only radar set on the Arctic patrol. The captain of the Suffolk had the set installed less than a month before at his own behest, so his ship shadowed the Germans and guided the battle cruiser H.M.S. Hood and the battleship H.M.S. Prince of Wales. On 24 May, British vessels fired on the Prinz Eugen, which had steamed ahead of the Bismarck during the night. This error gave the Germans plenty of time to retaliate. Within minutes, the Hood blew up and sank, and the Prince of Wales withdrew from the battle, heavily damaged and on fire. The Bismarck had received some hits, and one hit on its fuel bunker forced the ship back toward France. At some point, the Prinz Eugen slipped away from the Bismarck and found her way back to port. The Bismarck almost slipped away but was found on 26 May by a British Catalina aircraft. Shortly thereafter, a group of 15 Swordfish planes scored a hit on the Bismarck’s rudder, forcing the ship to sail in circles. Destroyers pressed the attack until the H.M.S. Rodney and the H.M.S. King George V appeared and began firing on the Bismarck. On 27 May, the Bismarck sank after taking heavy damage and a multitude of torpedo attacks, including two torpedoes from the Rodney (these two torpedoes did no significant damage but were the only torpedo hits ever scored on a battleship by another battleship). The Bismarck’s crew finally scuttled her; she sank with flag flying at 10:40 A.M. The British had had the threat to their shipping on their own, and this basically ended the sorties of the German battleships into the Atlantic.

My gaming club has developed a quick-playing miniatures war game to see if we can stop the Bismarck. Our version of this battle requires a copy of The Avalon Hill Game Company’s BISMARCK* game (now out of print); a copy of the SEAPOWER* I & 3, SEEKRIEG*, or any other World War II naval rules; and miniature ships.

Some of the ship figures you can use are briefly reviewed here, as these 1/2400-scale miniatures were sent for review by GHQ. The ships pictured are all from GHQ. All GHQ ships include deck planking, and all are available at this time.

GHQ
2634 Bryant Ave.
Minneapolis MN 55408

UKN-2—Suffolk
This was a heavy cruiser of the Kent class. It had eight 8” guns, plus torpedoes and radar. The model is well detailed, with little flash at ends of gun barrels. Five of these heavy cruisers patrolled the Denmark straights and between Greenland and the top of Iceland.

UKN-5 & 6—“H” and “J” Class DD
These are generic destroyers; eight were with the Rodney convoy.

UKN-9—Rodney BB
This ship was the most heavily gunned ship in the British navy at this time, with nine 16” guns, but it was also strange looking and was vulnerable from the rear. This ship, the King George V and two heavy cruisers of the Norfolk class were with a convoy when the Bismarck was discovered.

UKN-10—King George V BB
This ship had ten 14” guns plus secondary guns. This figure can be used as either the Prince of Wales or the King George V. The Prince of Wales was with the Hood, south of Iceland, when the Bismarck was discovered. Be careful of the secondary guns on this model during assembly, as they are prone to breakage.

GEN-5—Bismarck BB
The second most powerful ship in the German navy (the Tirpitz was larger and slightly better armed), the Bismarck tied up almost half of the British navy in trying to contain the raider. With eight 15” guns and optics far superior to British equipment, the only surprise in store for its crew was the British ability to track it with radar. She was almost invulnerable to torpedoes, except in the rudder area. This miniature is excellent and makes a good display piece as well as a gaming piece.

GEN-6—Prinz Eugen CA
One of a class of five planned heavy cruisers that were each more than a match for any British cruiser in armor or guns, this ship had eight 8” guns as its main armament. The main problem these ships experienced was with their propulsion systems, which frequently broke down. Luckily, the miniature doesn’t have this problem.

Lance & Laser Models
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T-009—Cymrillian Magician
Bard Games’ Chronicles of Talislanta glossary defines Cymrillians as a green-skinned, green-haired people enamored of all things magical. The lead figure submitted for review represents one of these magicians. The figure is scaled for use with 25 mm figures. Although the description in the glossary did not include height for any of these magicians, the figure is 36 mm in height, putting it at just under 8” tall, and has a slender build.

The figure is dressed in a long, flowing robe bundled in a pleatlike manner around his body. The robe billows out bell-like at the cuff and reaches from shoulder to floor; an interwoven embroidered edge at the front, where the robe joins and extends around the neck and head guard, acts as a wind break. The robe is held together by a wide woven belt that is knotted and cinched on the right side. The magician is further protected from the elements by a long cape, held on by a multiringed clasp on the center of the chest. The left hand holds a thick, open book in a position to be read, while the right hand grips a long staff cut in a spiral design. The staff is topped by a creature that could either be a carving or a familiar; it looks like a cross between a bat and a pseudodragon.

The figure’s face is uncovered, with his expression easy to see. The magician is quietly chanting a spell, as his face bears a look of concentration and his mouth is open slightly. Facial detail is good, with well-formed features and good hair. Some
detail is shallow, so be careful when you paint. Also note that a chain hangs from the metal crown and gem, around the guard. This will take some extra care and work when you paint the figure.

The figure makes a bit of a “ting” when tapped. This usually indicates that slightly more tin has been used than usual, so the figure will be brittle. The detail is good, and I can see several uses for it not only in AD&D games but even as an army magician in BATTLESYSTEM™ or GW’s WARHAMMER® miniatures combat. This is a good buy at $1.75.

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ENGLAND SO2 OAX

### FA-70—Gallinir the Elf Knight

This lead, 25 mm scale figure is a little large for an elf (at 25 mm tall), so he could be used as a half-elf. The figure has a rounded base textured to resemble ground. He wears supple boots, skin coverings on his legs, and chain mail. From neck to waist he wears overlapping plate; the armor is joined by a hidden clasp on top and by a belt at the waist. He wears gauntlets, with his right hand holding a sword and his left holding a great V-shaped shield with raised edges on both top and bottom.

His head is bare and his long hair is in a pony tail that drops to his belt. His hair is held up in front by a headband. His face bears a serious expression and features pointed ears that are well defined, but also short enough to be a half-elf’s. His face resembles that of an old movie star, whose name escapes me.

This is a well done figure and can be used as a leader figure. This is recommended at $1.50.

### Grenadier Models
P.O. Box 305
Springfield PA 19064

### Grenadier Models UK Ltd.
19 Babage Rd.
Deeside, Clwyd, Wales
UNITED KINGDOM CH5 2QB

### #1320—Metahuman Samurai

Everyone wants and needs fighters. They defend, attack, and act as cannon fodder when the occasion demands. Be they the barbarians of fantasy lands or the street samurai of FASA’s SHADOWRUN® world, they are the troops who bail you out with their berserk attacks and brave actions. Two packs of Grenadier figures share this heritage.
three metahuman figures: an ork, a troll, and a dwarf.

The ork figure stands 29 mm tall and has his left arm folded over his body, supporting what looks like an Ingram smartgun held in his right hand. He is dressed in a waist-length jacket; upon close examination, you see that he has a shirt and tie. He wears long pants and boots, and sashes adorn his upper thigh. The ork’s face is well done, with visible canines in his sneering open mouth. His hair is brushed back and falls to mid-shoulder. His wrinkled forehead is pronounced. Flash must be removed from the left ear, the groin, and shoulders.

The troll measures 37 mm in height. His jaw juts out, with his lower tusks reaching the base of his nose. Twin horns curl back from his high forehead; the top of his head is covered with warts, curls, and other engravings. He appears to be snarling. He wears fur boots. His right hands clutches an axe, and his left hand holds an automatic pistol with stock. His pant legs have rolled cuffs, armor, and spikes at the left knee and thigh. The armored vest is partly covered by a fold-over jacket. An additional armor plate covers his right shoulder, and a deaths head pin leers from his left lapel. This figure was relatively flash free, with only a little flash on the pistol.

The dwarf is armed with a maglock pass key in his left hand and a holstered pistol on his right side. He stands 23 mm tall with his neatly trimmed hair, beard, and mustache. His expression is one of near boredom. He wears a fully armored jacket, complete with spikes on his right shoulder. A web belt circles his waist and supports spare ammo pouches as well as what looks like a scroll tube. The jacket has no visible front closures. The dwarf has knee pads and buckle boots. There was flash between the left arm and the pass key, in the groin, and in the crook of the right arm. All these figures have small faults that can be fixed with care. You need to work on the bottoms of the bases, as each had a molding ridge line that prevented it from standing straight. If you play the SHADOWRUN or another dark-future game, these will make good opponents. Cost is $3.50 per pack.

**#1411—Barbarians With Hand Weapons**

These barbarians, designed by Mark Copplestone, come from Grenadier Models UK and are packaged in yellow blister packs. These lead figures are meant to be used in 25 mm scale, but the figures measure just over 33 mm in height, which means they are over 7’ tall. All figures except one are bare chested and bare legged. There are five different figures in this pack.

Figure #1 is a barbarian with his sword thrust out in a challenge or as if leading. His mouth is open, and his face is slightly pinched. His hair is gathered behind in a pony tail and goes down to his belt. His right hand has a chain necklace from which hangs a talisman, and his right wrist has a bracer. A studded shield on his raised left arm is his only armor. He wears a set of fur boots wrapped with cloth bands and a fur loincloth secured by a belt. There is some flash along the mold line, but very little.

Figure #2 has stepped back and is preparing to chop at a foe with his axe. He has a smooth wood-backed shield on his left arm. His hair flows to either side of his shocked-looking face and is pulled back in the rear. He wears a girdle and loincloth, with a chain crossing his chest. He also wears a small locket. There is no obvious mold line or flash on this figure.

Figure #3 wears a fur vest and shorts, cinched with a belt and buckle. His feet are clad in smooth, fur-cuffed boots, and a necklace with bear teeth circles his neck. He has a single-bladed war axe in his right hand and a smooth, wood-backed shield on his left arm. His chin juts out as if to say “hit me.” His hair is parted in the middle and swept back. The fur detail is excellent; the only bad point is an obvious but easily fixed mold line on the left leg.

Figure #4 stands with his legs spread, challenging anyone to pass him. He is armed with a two-edged broad sword in his right hand and a saucer-shaped shield on his left arm. He wears a studded leather belt with a skull buckle. Around his neck is an obvious but easily fixed mold line on the leg.

Figure #5 looks like Arnold Schwarzenegger as Conan, complete with bear-claw necklace. Armed with a double-bladed battle axe with a wood shaft and a saucer-shaped, wood-backed shield, he also wears a studded leather belt with a hook, a fur loincloth, and fur-topped boots with leather bindings. This figure has a mold line running completely around it, but it will clean up easily and disappear.
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Dwarf Crossbowmen (Viking Forge)

with painting.

These figures would fit well with any Games Workshop figures but might be a bit large with Ral Partha or other smaller 25 mm figures. They are well done, by a designer who once worked for Games Workshop and was probably influenced by it. At $4.95 per pack, these figures are an excellent value.

The Viking Forge
1727 Theresa Lane
Powhatan VA 23139

#5004—Dwarf Crossbowmen * * * *½
Dwarves are one of role-playing gamers' favorite choices for characters. These dwarves are scaled in 25 mm, standing 19 mm tall, and have stout and hefty builds. Each figure is dressed in a waistcoat covered by chain mail that extends from shoulders to waist. The elbows and forearms are covered by cloth. The hands are exposed; detail here is very good, right down to the knuckle joints. Each figure’s left hand holds a heavy crossbow that has sights and a visible spring mechanism, while the right hand grasps the trigger. A studded leather doublet covers the upper chest and back. The chain mail is secured at the waist by a wide belt, and criss-crossing straps support two quivers of bolts, complete with feathers.

The feet are clad in boots, and leggings are visible. On each dwarf’s head is a wide-brimmed, floppy hat with a button that supports a wide feather that is just a bit too thick. The face is well done, with a large nose, a well-detailed beard and mustache, and high cheeks. The only fault in this figure is a mold line across the top of the hat that can be fixed with very little work.

These figures come four to a pack for $4 and are a good deal to provide a fire team or missile base for your fantasy army groups. They are highly recommended.

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