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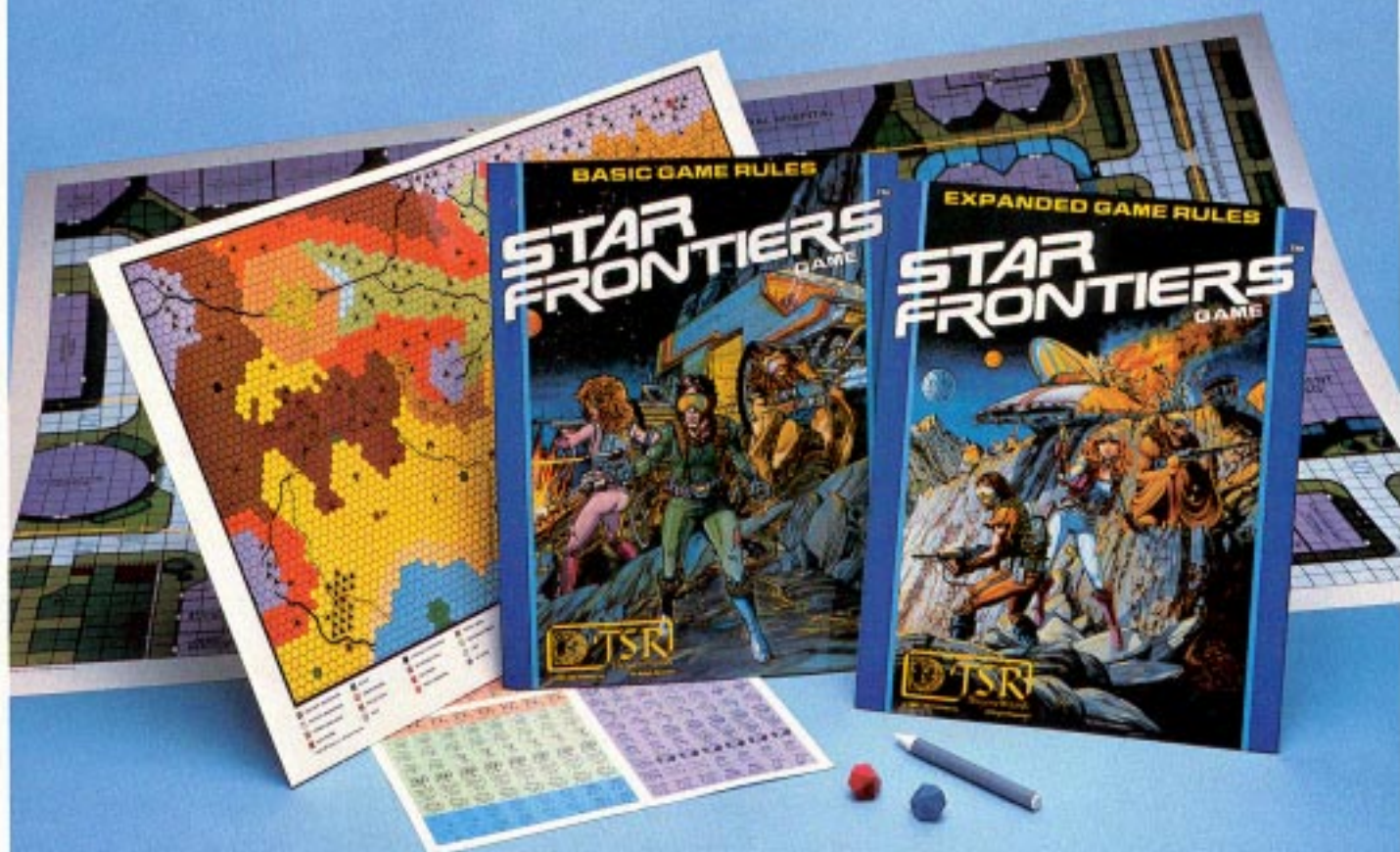
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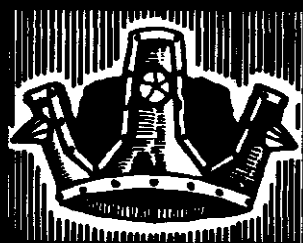
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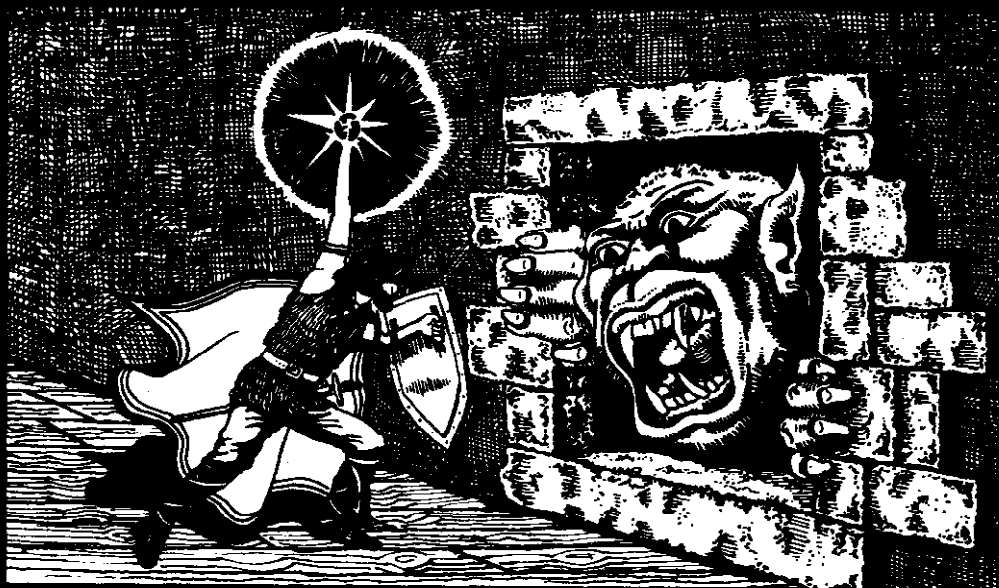
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In issue #61 of DRAGON™ Magazine, we quoted from a press release issued by Simulations Publications, Inc. (which we will call Simulations for brevity), that stated that TSR Hobbies, Inc., had "initiated a legal and economic chain of events to purchase SPI." In actuality, no purchase occurred. Hopefully the following information will set the record straight and dispel the many rumors currently circulating.

For the past several years, Simulations had been in increasing financial difficulties. The crisis came this past Christmas season, which for a variety of reasons was particularly bad for Simulations. It borrowed large sums of money from a group of three investors. By the end of January, however, most of the work on new products had come to a halt at Simulations and by March the company sought financial relief in the form of someone who might again lend money to, buy, or acquire, Simulations.

TSR was one of the companies approached by Simulations. TSR loaned Simulations about one-half million dollars to continue opera-

tions, and Simulations offered as collateral for the loan its copyrights to games, magazines and its trademarks. In April, Simulations totally collapsed. TSR, in an attempt to recover some value for its secured loan upon which Simulations defaulted, acquired Simulations' titles through a secured debt foreclosure. TSR did not acquire any of Simulations' liabilities, including unfulfilled magazine subscriptions. More on this topic in a moment.

TSR, which essentially substituted itself for other secured creditors of Simulations who were unwilling to keep their money at risk with Simulations, originally intended to work with Simulations, broadening its distribution network and revitalizing the company. Unfortunately, as final preparations for TSR's involvement were being made, the design staff at Simulations left to form a new game company. Thus, by the time TSR had the right to continue producing SPI-brand games and magazines, the staff had departed.

Despite the major setback of the loss of the design staff, TSR intends to continue to produce SPI-brand games and magazines. New

games that were in various stages of completion, such as BATTLE OVER BRITAIN and ANTIETAM, will be published as soon as they are complete. TSR will continue to publish the most popular of the SPI-brand line of games. In the near future TSR hopes to renovate some of the older, out-of-print games by adding more color to the maps and counters and perhaps reworking the rules.

TSR Hobbies, Inc., through its Dragon Publishing division, will continue to publish STRATEGY & TACTICS and ARES magazines. MOVES magazine will be discontinued as a separate publication, but its most popular features will be incorporated into S&T to make the magazine the most comprehensive historical gaming magazine on the market. Former subscribers to these three publications will be receiving letters from TSR in the next few weeks detailing their status and TSR's plans. The rights to the FOR YOUR EYES ONLY newsletter have been sold to Tiger Publications, P.O. Box 3012, Amarillo, Texas. (Former subscribers and/or interested parties may wish to contact the new publisher, Steve Cole, directly.)

Hope this clears the air.

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Return visits from a couple of old friends are the highlights of issue #64 of DRAGON™ Magazine. You've already seen the beautiful bronze cover painting by Tim Hildebrandt, whose artwork first graced our pages fifteen issues ago. In the middle of this issue is our first game from Tom Wham in a year and a month: PLANET BUSTERS, designed by Tom and Jim Ward, a way to conquer the solar system and have fun at the same time. May you never run out of fuel on the way to Jupiter. . .

Speaking of return visits, some of the words in *From the Sorcerer's Scroll* may seem very familiar, because we printed an article on new weapons for AD&D™ play in issue #61. When Gary Gygax saw that, he hastened to provide all you Gentle Readers with an *official* list of weapons destined for inclusion in the upcoming AD&D expansion volume. Some of the names are the same as in the first article, but in many cases that's where the similarity ends. Gary's contributions to #64 also include a couple of new *Featured Creatures*, the solar and the planetary, and a description of Raxivort, the xuart that all other xurts look up to, in this month's installment of *Greyhawk's World*.

It's about time we paid some attention to those masters of mayhem, the assassins; at least, that's what the anonymous letter we got the other day told us. So, without further ado (which could be hazardous to someone's health), we present laws for an assassin's guild, drawn up by Elizabeth Cerritelli and Lynda Bisson, plus a nasty obstacle course designed by contributing editor Ed Greenwood called *The Assassins' Run*.

Can we give you two games in one issue? Sure we can, as long as the second one is only a page long. The next time you've got a few honorable minutes to spare, get out some dice and try out Brian Blume's *Championship Sumo Wrestling*.

Gaming conventions play an important role in our hobby, a role you might appreciate more after reading Ken Rolston's essay on the subject. And you might *not* appreciate the meaning of the title of "The Next-to-Last Mistake" until you get to the next-to-last page of that story — but it's worth waiting . . . — KM

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'Of little worth'

Dear Editor,

I am happy to see DRAGON acquire its sixth birthday. I have been reading the magazine for the last three years. Overall I have been very pleased with the articles which are presented.

I was not pleased at all with the article (about spell books, DRAGONTM issue #62) by Mr. Gyax. Until now, the tomes which magic-users lugged around with them were something which made no other class envious. The magic book took up a lot of space, and it was only of use after the magic-user had a good sleep or in case of discussions. In a dungeon a magic book was of little worth.

There are magic items which allow the magic-users to cast extra spells. These magic items are lightweight, so a magic-user can carry several. These magic items are called scrolls. It must be noted that scrolls do have their disadvantages. A magic-user must be of at least 12th level before he or she can research a spell. Researching a spell takes a lot of time and money to accomplish. These disadvantages made already written scrolls found in the course of an adventure a pleasing sight.

The spell books of Mr. Gyax make scrolls not worth the effort. A magic-user can just write extra pages of a certain spell which he knows into his book for casting during an adventure. No need for expensive and time-consuming research. No need for waiting until one is high level. I must say here that I do not know what an *extremis* situation is. Mr. Gyax says that it is the only time that a magic-user can cast a spell directly from the book. A DM is supposed to run a consistent universe. Either a magic-user can cast a spell from the spell book or he cannot. It is easy to see third level magic-users running around the dungeons of Greyhawk with their books of Sleep and Magic Missile reading them unto the monsters. The books are lightweight and non-bulky. A magic-user can carry several (one under each arm, five in the backpack, and a few more in a sack at his side). This is not a pleasant sight to any DM.

I feel that Mr. Gyax did not think through his actions when he wrote the article. I hope he corrects the problems which he created.

Roby Ward
Baton Rouge, La.

'Incomplete'

Dear Dragon:

AD&D is an interesting game, but there is one problem with it: it is incomplete.

Yes, you have said many times that your DRAGON articles are only optional additions to the rule books; you even say in the rule

books that the books were compiled so that gamers needn't search through millions of magazines for this rule or that rule.

I am one of those people, however, who needs books of hard and fast rules: I need all those options. I would order all of your back issues if I could. I want and need all those articles. But that's impossible (and expensive).

There are articles you have published which excellently elaborated upon rules which were left to the DM's discretion. I'm not saying you should make dictatorial rules; just that those books should include some of these elaborations: for example, "These are the breaks" (DRAGONTM issue #54) was an excellent extension to combat. Your more recent articles on demi-humans should be in the books, too. Dragon's Bestiary has included some awesome additions suitable for the Monster Manual, Fiend Folio, and Deities & Demigods.

I'm certain you can look back after answering some questions in Sage Advice and see some of the points in the books that need clarifying. Sad to say, it seems some of the best articles in DRAGON appear after rule books are published.

If you wiped out this inconsistency from the rule books, do you think it would improve the game? You say in the books that we should add to and delete from the rules as is needed to extend enjoyment; I know I would enjoy it if these rules were offered from the people who put the game together, who know what they are doing. The common ground of the books should be extended, and by professionals in gaming as you have at TSR; edited as they see fit, to provide us hard-core AD&D fans with more of the options we would wish to see.

I suppose it would be a lengthy and expensive process, but, if you try, couldn't you reestablish and publish revised rulebooks for AD&D? Or at least find a way to make all of DRAGON's articles, past and present, concerning AD&D rules available?

I will leave the other problems seen in the game up to the others who see them to write about (for instance, putting the right rules in the right books); and I now encourage every other hard-core AD&D gamer to write letters like this one, and maybe we'll get great results.

Tim Henke
Plymouth, Mich.

'Thanks to all'

Dear Kim,

Sincere congratulations on DRAGONTM issue #62! I thought it was quite exceptional from its Elmore cover right through to the scurrilous "Wormy" (and I'll deal with Tramp for that in my own way!) and amusing "What's New?". Thanks to all the staff and the contributors for such an outstanding issue. It is going to be hard to top the work you are producing — not that it needs to be, but I know that all of

you are always striving to do more. I await future issues with great anticipation. A few comments on the contents are in order:

The various dragons were interesting. I particularly liked the "Faerie Dragon" — with a few modifications it could become a part of the AD&D™ game. Likewise, the article "Evil Dragon Armors" was well done, although the reason why armor from green dragon hide would protect one against gas, when no armor so does, is not stated. Can the Learned Author help us out there? **GANGBUSTERS** game is going just like its name from early reception. I can only say that I look forward to playing in someone's campaign.

From an AD&D game standpoint, I must say that Ed Greenwood's "Pages from the Mages" was outstanding! It is exactly the sort of thing which should be encouraged. Ed was quite careful to make spell alterations either less effective than the originals, or else he added some other complication to balance the change. Astute! Great work!

NPC classes never thrill me, for they typically end up as a class for player characters — especially when it is an NPC class purported to "balance" the game against powerful players. In my view, good DMing is what balances a game, and everything else is dressing.

Roger Moore shows flashes of real brilliance. His "Half-Orcs" and "The Gods of the Orcs" were good. Parts were very good. Roger's difficulty comes when he attempts to read things into the game which are not there, or when he bases his assumptions about some AD&D game race upon the works of an author not connected with the game. I feel it necessary to caution readers that Mr. Moore's work is interesting and well done, but it is by no

means "official" AD&D material. (Roger, if you'd clear this through us, that status could alter.) Overall, the whole series is outstanding, but a few flaws keep it from the status it could have.

TOP SECRET™ gaming is growing rapidly in popularity. I am a fairly recent convert myself. I haven't read the module you included in #62 "Chinatown: The Jaded Temple", because my Administrator would frown on that... Len Lakofka's answer for harassed merchants is okay, although I might suggest even stronger measures. The last feature, "Zadron's Pouch of Wonders," was an example of a fine idea improperly executed. The item is absolutely unusable as presented. Any sound DM will recognize that. There is far too much benefit to be gained from the item, too many aberrant magic items available, to allow the item into a good campaign. But, with a bit of reworking the Pouch could become a favorite — along with a *bag of beans* and a *wand of wonder*.

You fellows aren't kidding when you call the magazine a game aid. For that I thank you on behalf of RPG enthusiasts everywhere. Now, as I said earlier, what are you going to do for an encore?!

E. Gary Gyga
Lake Geneva, Wis.

'Highest quality'

Dear Editor:

I have been reading **DRAGON** and some other gaming magazines for the past several months in an attempt to familiarize myself with

FRPGs after a couple years of forced abstinence, and I have found your magazine to be of the highest quality, both in preparation and in content. Your articles are stimulating and entertaining, to the point of getting my wife interested in gaming (something I have consistently failed to do). I especially enjoy reading From the Sorcerer's Scroll and your feature articles such as the one in **DRAGON** #61 about unusual weapons.

Occasionally, however, I run across an explanation or statement, especially in Sage Advice, which appears to be blatantly incorrect, and tempts me to write in disagreement or protest, and herewith I succumb to the temptation. In **DRAGON** #62, a reader asks if a person may talk while under the Hold Person spell. The columnist replies that they may not, because talking or making vocal sounds requires movement, and the spell prevents its victim from literally moving a muscle. If this is the case, the victim of the spell cannot breathe, his heart cannot pump, and his capillaries cannot prevent blood from flowing backwards, and he will die within seconds from the damage caused by the subsequent drop in blood pressure. Obviously, the spell should only prevent the person from conscious movement, which will still prevent him/her from speaking, but will allow unconscious biological support functions to continue.

Of course, the exact interpretation of a particular spell's effects is really up to the DM whose universe one is in. I have played in one universe where the Hold spells put all biological functions in stasis, so that the victim cannot even think/feel/emote or use psionics. This was fine — in that universe — and one

(Turn to page 72)

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New weapons from another “great mind”

by Gary Gygax

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Sorry to relate, Understanding Readers, that this column is not the one beginning the enumeration of the scores of new spells which are being prepared for the expansion of the AD&D™ game system. Not only is time conspiring against me, but one Rory Bowman (“Stats and facts about strange new weapons for AD&D play” in DRAGON™ issue #61) seems to be out to get me, too! As you read this offering, you will note that quite a number of the weapons proposed for the game by Mr. Bowman are, in fact, included in the *official* list I prepared for the expansion some months ago. (Rory, don’t listen when the suggestion that “fools think alike” is mentioned; everyone knows that “great minds run in the same channel”!) In order to avoid confusion, I thought it best to get the official list into print quickly, so here it is.

The weapons typical of Japan and similar Far Eastern places are omitted from the AD&D game system for many reasons. They don’t fit in well with the others, I am not familiar enough with them, and they belong to another culture which is best treated as a separate whole. In this regard, I am looking for a skilled Japanese game designer who is fluent in both English and Japanese, plays both the D&D® and AD&D game systems, and is interested in working with Yours Truly to develop special versions of both games for the Japanese and allied cultures in the Far East. Any takers?

With introductory material aside, let’s get to the new weapons list:

AKLYS: The aklys is a weighted, shortish club with a stout thong attached to the butt. While it can be used as a hand-held striking weapon, its principal employment is as a missile. Once hurled, the aklys be retrieved by its thong. Of the hits scored with this weapon, 5% will be of the sort which entangle the target individual. If the target is man-sized or smaller, it will be dismounted or jerked to its knees or side (if not bipedal), at the wielder’s option. Conversely, if the target is larger than man-sized, its actions might well jerk the aklys thrower prone. The weapon is tied to the wielder by a thong or cord of about 10 feet

in length. When a hit is scored, a second roll of 20 indicates entanglement. This condition persists until a round can be spent disentangling the aklys and thong, the thong is broken, the thong is severed, or the wielder somehow manages to divest himself or herself of the fastened line. Since the thong is usually secured to the wrist or gauntlet, such action can prove to be difficult.

ATLATL: An atlatl is simply a throwing stick for a short javelin. Its leverage and track provide greater range and velocity as well as better accuracy. (Ancient javelineers wrapped their missiles with a cord to impart spin, for they retained one end of this cord when the javelin was hurled. This too improved accuracy.) The shorter, lighter javelins associated with an atlatl inflict the same amount of damage because of their velocity.

BLOWGUN: The blowgun is principally used by jungle natives. Because it is long and rather fragile, it is an impossible weapon on the normal battlefield. The slightest jostling of the blowgun or its wielder will destroy the aim and make a hit impossible. (In actuality, the blowgun is usually set upon a rest so as to avoid swaying.) Natives employ an insinuating poison on blowgun needles (darts) in order to inflict fatal damage against all but the smallest of targets.

CALTROP: A caltrop is a four-pronged or six-pronged metal device (which in its latter form resembles a “jack” from the children’s game of ball and jacks). It is about one-half foot in diameter, with three-inch-long, pick-like points radiating at about 70° or 90° from each other. It is tossed or placed on the ground to serve as an impediment to closing attackers. Intelligent creatures aware of caltrops in their path can usually move them aside or otherwise avoid them, although this will surely slow movement by one-half for a round. Unintelligent or unaware opponents will move through the field of caltrops at peril. Human armor class considers only footwear and is sans dexterity bonus. For each foot/paw/hoof of movement through an area of one square yard of caltrops, a check must be made to see if one is stepped on. Any hit has a 25% chance of slowing movement by 25% for four days; hits on two feet/paws/hooves indicate the possibility of virtually no movement for eight days while healing takes place. (Spell use will, naturally, mitigate this.) Caltrops of smaller size can be employed, but these are not particularly effective if under a two-inch prong length, and for game purposes they can be ignored. Because of their size and composition, it is worthwhile to note that it is quite difficult to carry caltrops; they tend to poke through packs and sacks, and falling while carrying them could be disastrous! A box or similar container is usually necessary to transport them. These instruments require no skill to use.

GARROT: A garrot is simply a strangling device. It is usually of cord, but it can be fashioned of cloth or wire. In order to be employed effectively, the wielder *must* strike from behind, and the victim must be either unaware of the impending attack or

CHARACTER CLASSES TABLE II (2.): ARMOR AND WEAPONS PERMITTED

Class of Character	Armor	Shield	Weapons
CLERIC	any	any	aklys, garrot, lasso, sap, staff sling, whip
Druid	leather	wooden	aklys, garrot, lasso, sap, staff sling, sword (khopesh), whip
FIGHTER	any	any	any
Paladin	any	any	any
Ranger	any	any	any
MAGIC-USER	none	none	caltrop, knife
Illusionist	none	none	caltrop, knife
THIEF	leather	none	aklys, caltrop, garrot, knife, sap
Assassin	leather	any	any
MONK	none	none	aklys, atlatl, caltrop, garrot, hook fauchard, knife, man catcher, sword (falchion)
BARD	leather, elfin chain, or magical chain	none	garrot, knife, lasso, sap, sword (falchion)

From the



Sorcerer's Scroll

else unable to take effective defensive action. The victim must have a relatively unprotected neck- even a stout leather collar will prevent successful use of a garrot. Any limb or instrument or weapon raised so as to prevent encirclement of the neck, or even to include the limb *et al* within the circle of the garrot reduces damage to 1 point. Naturally, the target must be below or no more than 1 foot above the wielder of the garrot. A successful hit inflicts the indicated damage and will absolutely

kill the victim on the next round unless the wielder is somehow caused to release the garrot.

HARPOON: This weapon is a form of throwing spear with the head socket detachable in most cases. The head is fastened to a line so as to secure the target creature to the wielder or some object, provided the weapon strikes home. Against most targets, the harpoon hitting indicates that the barbed head is buried or snagged. (See "aklys" for details of this entangling effect, unless the harpoon line is secured to some stout object.) Naturally, the line attached to the harpoon must be of sufficient length to allow hurling to the range needed. Furthermore, this line must be able to run freely when the weapon is hurled (and possibly subsequently moved away with at a great rapidity). In general, the following guideline can be used when dealing with harpoon hits:

If the target creature has an intelligence of not less than 2, and likewise has some means of effectuating dislodgement of the weapon head or severance of the line, a saving throw versus

WEIGHT AND DAMAGE BY WEAPON TYPE

Weapon Type	Approx. Wt. Damage vs. Opponent		
	in G. P.	Size S-M	Size L
Aklys	35	1-6	1-3
Atlatl and javelin	30	1-6	1-6
Blowgun and needle	15	1	1
Caltrop	2-4	1	1-2
Garrot	1	1-4	1-6
Harpoon	50-60	2-8	2-12
Hook Fauchard	80	1-4	1-4
Knife	6	1-3	1-2
Lasso	20	—	—
Man Catcher	80	1-2	1-2
Sap	10	1-2	1-2
Spiked Buckler	35	1-4	1-3
Staff Sling bullet	5	2-8	3-9
Staff Sling stone	4	1-8	2-8
Sword, falchion	60-80	2-7	2-8
Sword, khopesh	75	2-8	1-6
Whip	25-35	1-2	1

WEAPON TYPES, GENERAL DATA, AND "TO HIT" ADJUSTMENTS

Hand Held Weapon Type	Length	Space Required	Speed Factor	Armor Class Adjustment									
				2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Aklys	c. 2'	2'	4 (+1)	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	-1	0	0	+1	
Atlatl	c. 3'	1'	n/a	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Blowgun	4'-7'	1'	n/a	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Caltrop	n/a	n/a	n/a	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	
Garrot	c. 3'	1½'	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Harpoon	6'-8'	1½'	6	-2	-1	-1	-1	0	0	0	0	0	
Hook Fauchard	8'+	2½'	9	-2	-2	-1	-1	0	0	0	0	-1	
Knife	c. 1'	1'	2	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+1	+3	
Lasso	(10'-20')	8'+	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Man catcher	8'+	2½'	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	-1	-2	-3	
Sap	½'	1'	2	-12	-10	-8	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	0	
Spiked Buckler	1'	2'	4	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	0	0	+2	
Staff Sling	5'	6'	11	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Sword, Falchion	c. 3½'	3½'	5	-2	-1	0	+1	+1	+1	+1	0	0	
Sword, Khopesh	c. 3½'	4'	9	-5	-4	-2	-1	0	0	+1	+1	+2	
Whip	8'-20'	8'-20'	5-8	-10	-8	-6	-4	-2	-1	+1	0	+3	

Hurled Weapons and Missiles

Fire Rate	S	Range			Armor Class Adjustment									
		M	L		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Aklys (hurled)	1	1 *			-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	0	0	
(Atlatl) javelin	1	3	6	9	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	0	+1	+1	+2	
Blowgun needle	2	1	2	3	-10	-8	-6	-4	-2	-1	-1	+1	+2	
Harpoon	1	1	2	3	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	0	0	0	+1	
Knife	2	1	2	3	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	0	+1	
Lasso	½	1	2	3	+7	+6	+5	+4	+3	+2	+1	0	-1	
Staff Sling bullet	½	—	3-6	9	-3	-2	-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Staff Sling stone	½	—	3-6	9	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	0	0	0	0	

— 10' range only, not 10 yards

poison is allowed. Success indicates the victim has freed itself. Failure indicates continued attachment, 1 point additional damage, and the possibility that the victim will be dragged 1" closer to the harpooner if the wielder so desires and the victim is of a size, weight, and strength which enables the harpooner to do so. (Cf. Kuo-Toa in the FIEND FOLIO™ Tome.)

HOOK FAUCHARD: This pole arm is principally useful as a device to dismount or fell opponents. It is a normal fauchard with its tip hook greatly elongated and curved into a sickle shape. The wielder attacks by making a sweeping motion to encompass the target with the hook of the weapon. A successful hit will have a 20% probability of dismounting or toppling (to knees or prone position) the target. This assumes that the wielder is larger than his or her opponent, or at least over 50% of the target's height and weight.

LASSO: This weapon does no damage in game terms. A successful hit, however, effectively creates the same situation as does a successful harpoon hit, only the lasso must be broken or severed to detach it if the wielder is exerting force to keep it taut. There is a 75% chance that the victim will be dismounted, and/or a 25% chance that the victim will be pulled off its feet if the target is bipedal and of a height and mass not greater than +/-50% of the lasso wielder. Note that several creatures can combine to make this more probable, i.e. rider and mount, several individuals seizing the other end of the lasso line, etc. A lasso is severed by 2 points of cutting damage. Strength can snap a lasso, with a chance equal to that of bending bars, one try only allowed.

MAN CATCHER: A man catcher is a two-pronged pole arm. Each prong is curved to encompass a humanoid creature of man-size. Creatures larger or smaller by 50% or more will be unaffected by this arm, for it either will not encompass them or else they can simply drop out of its prongs. The simplest form of man catcher has inward-curving prong ends. These allow entry into the encompassing area, but their inward points prevent egress— especially when the wielder is actively employing the weapon. The more complex form of the device has movable arms which are spread in an open position but close somewhat when the target contacts the lower (shaft area) portion of the man catcher. Both forms have sharpened edges and spikes to both damage the opponent and prevent the use of hands to escape the weapon. Anyone caught in a man catcher loses all shield and dexterity bonuses. Furthermore, he or she can be pulled and pushed about. This pushing and pulling will automatically inflict 1-2 points of damage per round. There is a 25% chance for the victim to be pulled off its feet to either a kneeling or prone position.

SAP: A sap, sometimes called a blackjack, is typically a small leather bag filled with sand or a similar material (such as lead shot). The weapon is useful only as an instrument to concuss the target into unconsciousness, so any form of head covering makes it less effective. In fact, unless the head is uncovered, there is no chance that the sap will cause unconsciousness, although damage will still occur if a hit is made. An uncovered (or light-cloth covered) head struck by a sap has a 5% chance per point of strength of the wielder to cause unconsciousness. Strength over 18 means automatic unconsciousness; i.e., 18/01 strength is sufficient to cause this. Hits anywhere else but on the head inflict half damage only and have no other effect.

SPIKED BUCKLER: The spiked buckler is the only effective form of the armed shield, for larger ones are too difficult to move quickly, and their projections form too easy a hold for opponents. Well made spiked bucklers will have an edged spike, although the effective attack is by buckler thrust and seldom, if ever, a slash. When the wielder is fighting within arm's length of an opponent, the spiked buckler can be used for a separate attack during the round. Such attack is always made

BASIC EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY COSTS (2.)

Arms (2)

Aklys	2 g.p.	Lasso	5 s.p.
Atlatl	1 g.p.	Man catcher	25 g.p.
Blowgun	20 g.p.	Sap	1 g.p.
Blowgun needle	1 s.p.	Spiked buckler	10 g.p.
Caltrop	2 s.p.	Staff sling	2 g.p.
Garrot	1 e.p.	Sword, falchion and scabbard	10 g.p.
Harpoon	5 g.p.	Sword, khopesh	10 g.p.
Hook fauchard	6 g.p.	Whip	3 g.p.
Knife and scabbard	1 g.p.		

after the initial weapon attack, if any. Only one such extra attack per round is possible. If the spiked buckler is a second attack mode, the attack is made at -2 hit probability, this penalty cumulative with any others which are applicable.

STAFF SLING: A staff sling is simply a pole of four or more feet in length with a pocketed thong of some sort fixed to its top end. The missile to be slung is placed in the widest portion of the thong, the free end grasped, and the staff swung forcefully, either sideways on an ascending curve or from the rear to overhead. At the proper time the free end of the thong is released, and the momentum of the swing carries the missile to its target. Note that the staff sling is much the same as a miniature siege machine. Its principal use is the hurling of small, relatively heavy missiles over some intervening obstacle, such as a wall. It is slower to use and less accurate than a normal sling, but it throws heavier missiles on a high trajectory. It does not have the range of a normal sling. It is so difficult to hit targets near to the slinger that for all practical purposes, the staff sling always operates at medium or long range only. If combustibles or like materials are slung with it, the **Grenade-like Missile Table** in the DMG should be used to determine results.

SWORD, FALCHION: The falchion gets its name from its slightly curved, vaguely sickle-like shape. While it could be treated as a scimitar (which term generally encompasses such sword forms as sabre, yatagan, and tulwar), many medieval European falchions were much heavier and the point was actually used for thrusting. It has, therefore, been included in the forms of swords possible in an expanded AD&D™ campaign. The DM should assume that 25% of magic broadswords are falchions.

SWORD, KHOPESH: This weapon has no place in medieval warfare, for it is an Egyptian weapon which went out of use *circa* the Tenth Century B.C.E. However, it is so interesting and it fits so well into the concepts of the game that it can be added by any DM who chooses to do so. A khopesh has about six inches of handle and quillions. Its blade then is straight from the quillions for about two feet. The blade becomes sickle-shaped at this point, being about two additional feet long but effectively extending the overall length of the sword by only one and one-half feet. The curved portion resembles a squared-off capital letter "D", complete with upper serif, but with the back (left-hand) bar missing. This makes the khopesh both heavy and unwieldy (thus the high number for speed factor), difficult to employ properly and undoubtedly hideously hard and slow to recover, particularly after a badly missed blow. Nevertheless, the weapon will not only cause damage, but its sickle-like portion can snag an opponent or an opposing weapon. Unless the opponent is 50% smaller and lighter than the khopesh-wielder (deducting or adding 5% per point or category over 18 of strength difference to arrive at final mass), the weapon will simply make it impossible for the snagged opponent to get in an effective attack for 10 segments. If smaller and lighter, the opponent will either be pulled to the ground (25%) or impeded in attack (75%) when snagged.

A weapon can be snagged only if it has protrusions or indentations, but the only smooth weapons for this purpose are

daggers, swords, spears and the like. Just as with snagging an opponent where any hit has a 5% chance to do so, any miss also allows a 5% chance for snagging the opponent's weapon, if applicable. If an opponent's weapon is snagged, there is a 10% chance it will be torn from his or her grasp. Failing that, the snagging will either disallow the opponent the opportunity to effectively attack for 10 segments (80%), just as a body/equipment snag would, or else the opponent's strength and/or leverage tear the khopesh from the wielder's grasp (10%).

Because of this weapon's ancient origin and unusual shape, it is an ideal druidical instrument. The DM should consider placement of both normal and magical khopeshes in the campaign, aiming especially at druidical use. Of all magical scimitars discovered, 10% will be khopeshes.

WHIP: The whip is a dangerous weapon only in the hands of a highly skilled and well trained user. To inflict damage, the whip must contact exposed, or lightly covered, flesh. Heavy clothing or thick hair/fur will be of considerable protection until torn away by repeated lashing. (Thick hide, such as that of an elephant, rhinoceros, or hippopotamus, will allow a slight sting at best, with no real damage inflicted.) Heavily scaled or otherwise protected opponents will not even feel the lash of a heavy leather whip, even with a weighted tip.

However, the whip also has another use. It can entangle an opponent's limb(s) or weapon. Any hit scored on an opponent means that an entanglement of some sort can occur. If the whip is in non-proficient hands, the chance is only 5%. In proficient hands, there is a 5% chance per level of the wielder for entanglement, but only at the wielder's option. The entanglement will

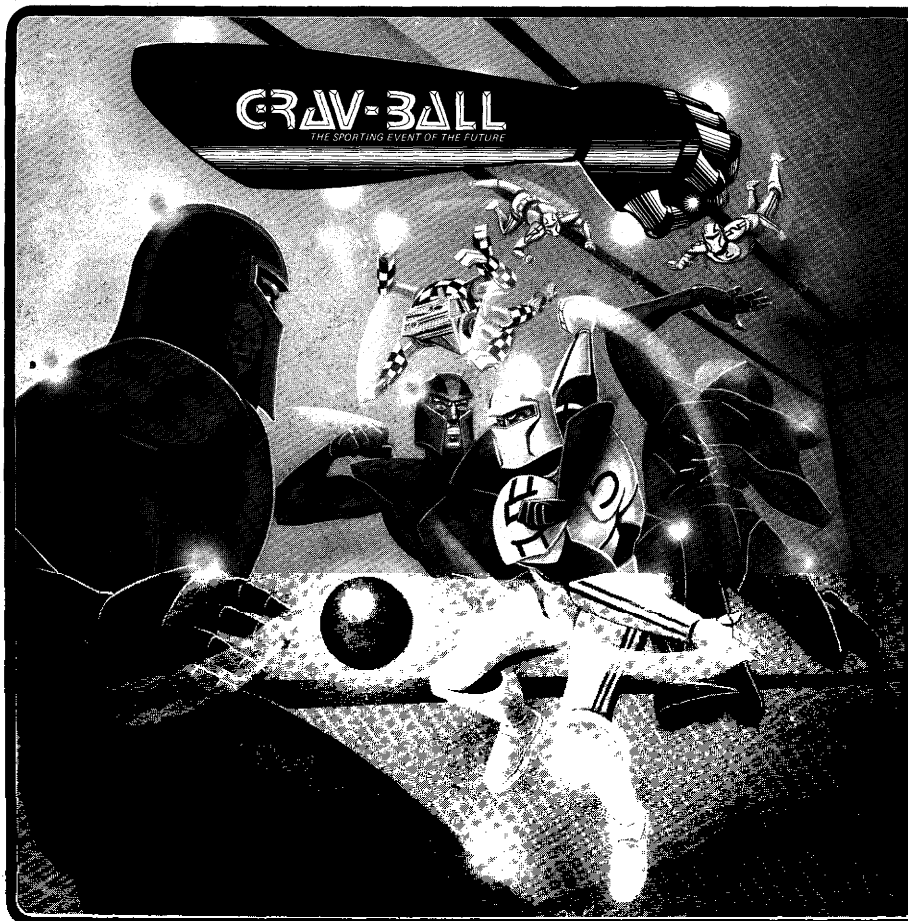
be one limb (50%), two limbs (10%), the weapon arm and weapon (20%), or the head (20%, or 40% in the case of an opponent not using a weapon).

One-limb entanglement indicates no effective attack for 10 segments. Two-limb entanglement indicates the same, with a 25% chance that the opponent will be kneeling or prone for that period and must thereafter recover its feet. A hit on the weapon arm/weapon indicates no effective attack for 10 segments and a 10% chance that the weapon will be lost. (If the weapon is edged, there is a 50% chance that the whip will be severed and useless instead.) A neck hit indicates the opponent can make no effective attack for 10 segments, and additional garrot-type damage will be scored if the opponent has no throat protection such as thick hide, heavy leather, armor, mane-like fur or hair, etc. A proficient wielder can disentangle the whip by rolling his or her dexterity or less on 3d6 minus 2. Otherwise, the whip remains entangled until it is broken or severed, or until the wielder pulls it loose, or until the opponent does so (the chance of this last occurrence is 5% + 1% per point of strength of the victim).

Readers should note that there are several new classes of characters not shown on the CHARACTER CLASS TABLE II (2.) which will be included in the actual game expansion book when it is issued. Otherwise, the weapons information is substantially shown as it will appear in the forthcoming volume.

Soon we will get to those spells— be patient, Gentle Readers. I am trying, but sometimes work must come before the pleasures of game designing and article writing.

Next issue: New character classes



Grav-Ball is a sporting event of the future. Played in a zero-G court, the game requires skill and courage. The two 6-man teams try to score with a five kilogram steel playing ball. In the meantime anything goes, body checks and even assaults, with intent to put a player out of the game, are all allowed and an expected part of the game.

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FEATURED CREATURES

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by Gary Gygax

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Last issue this column introduced itself with Devas, the proverbial right hand of the forces of Good. Following the same vein, here are two even stronger powers who faithfully serve the deities of the Upper Outer Planes, Planetars and Solars. Tremble, ye hordes of Darkness, at the mere mention of these shining examples of the Hosts of Justice and Freedom, the Great Servants of Good!

Planetar

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*
NO. APPEARING: 1
ARMOR CLASS: -7
MOVE: 15"/48"/24"
HIT DICE: 144 *hit points*
% IN LAIR: Nil
TREASURE TYPE: Nil
NO. OF ATTACKS: 3
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type*
(+7 *(strength bonus)*)
SPECIAL ATTACKS: See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES: See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE: 75%
INTELLIGENCE: *Supra-genius;*
wisdom 21
ALIGNMENT: *Good*
SIZE: L (8½' tall)
PSIONIC ABILITY: 288
Attack/Defense Modes: All/a//
LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: X/60,000 + 35/h.p.

A Planetar is one of a powerful spirit group numbering not fewer than 100 which serve the deities of Good alignment. One or more will typically serve as the right hand of a minor deity, while numbers of planetars will attend a major deity. These creatures inhabit the Upper Outer Planes of Good but can actually travel to any plane except the lowest (the Hells, Gehenna, Hades, Tarterus, the Abyss). If commanded by their deity, they can, in fact, enter even the lowest planes of evil. Only a *Solar* (see following page) is more powerful in the cause of good.



Planetars can be of any Good alignment, either lawful, neutral, or chaotic. Their specific alignment is determined by the master they serve.

Each planetar has three attacks per round, typically with a bastard sword (of a type usable only by planetars) equal to a +4 weapon with both *Defender* (q.v.) and *Wounding* (q.v.) qualities, the latter effective only against creatures of Evil. For purpose of attack determination, consider each planetar to have a dexterity of 21 and 17th-level fighter ability.

All planetars have spell-like abilities equal to those of a 7th-level cleric and 7th-level druid. In addition, they each have the following spell-like powers which can be used one at a time, one per round, at will:

Animate object (1/day)
Blade barrier (3/day)
Continual light (up to 10" rad.)
Control weather (1/day)
Dispel evil (3/day)
Dispel illusion (7/day)
Dispel magic (3/day)
Earthquake (1/day)
Etherealness
Feeblemind (1/day)
Fire storm (1/day)
Flame strike (3/day)
Heal (3/day)
Holy word (1/day)
Improved invisibility (up to 10' rad.)
Insect plague (1/day)
Limited wish (1/day)
Polymorph self

Raise dead (3/day)
Read magic
Remove curse
Remove fear
Resist cold (double effect)
Resist fire (double effect)
Restoration (1/day)
Shape change (1/day)
Speak with dead
Symbol (any) (1/day)
Teleport (no error)
True seeing (3/day)
Weather summoning (1/day)
Wind walk (7/day)

Each planetar casts a globe of *protection from evil* +2 of from individual to a full 40' radius, as desired. The maintenance of the area is automatic. A planetar can *commune* at need. Each can always cure (*blindness, deafness, disease or light wounds*) by touch. They automatically detect (*evil, illusion, invisibility, lie, magic or traps*). Each can automatically know alignment. A planetar can communicate by ESP or *tongues* as well as read any language. Each has infravision to 12" and ultravision of double normal range. Once a day a planetar can gate in the indicated number (1-3, 1-4, or 1-6) of the appropriate sort of deva (q.v.)—astral, monadic, or movanic. They can summon the following creatures once per day: lawful good, 1-4 couatl; neutral good, 1-2 baku; chaotic good, 1-2 androsphinx. (*Editor's note: The baku will be described in an upcoming column.*)

Planetars are affected by the attack

forms indicated for devas (*q.v.*). Only +4 or better weapons affect them. They are never surprised. They are immune to life level loss, from undead or magic. They can not be *beguiled*, *charmed*, *confused*, *dominated*, or *feeble-minded*. Their souls can not be imprisoned or trapped. They are immune to death spells.

Planetars regenerate at a rate of 4 points per round. Unless they are on the

Upper Outer Planes, only the material body of these creatures can be harmed. The planetar's spirit will then return to its own plane to reform and become corporeal again. This process requires four decades.

Psionic abilities of a planetar are as follows: *Animal Telepathy* (14th level); *Aura Alteration*; *Body Control*; *Body Equilibrium*; *Body Weaponry* (9th level);

Mass Domination (17th level); *Mind Bar* (17th level); *Molecular Agitation*; *Precognition*; *Reduction*; *Telekinesis* (17th level); *Telepathic Projection*.

Description: A planetar appears as a tall and powerful humanoid. In material form the skin is opaline, the head hairless, and the eyes glowing blue. The wings are double and likewise opaline. Charisma effect is 21.

Solar

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*

NO. APPEARING: 1

ARMOR CLASS: -9

MOVE: 18"/40"/18"

HIT DICE: 177 *hit points*

% IN LAIR: *Nil*

TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*

NO. OF ATTACKS: 4

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type*
(+12 *strength bonus*)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *See below*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *See below*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 85%

INTELLIGENCE: *Supra-genius*;
wisdom 24

ALIGNMENT: *Good*

SIZE: L (10' tall)

PSIONIC ABILITY: 354

Attack/Defense Modes: *All/all*

LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: X/95,000 + 35/h.p.

A Solar is the most powerful of spirits, usually directly serving a greater deity of Good alignment, typically as his or her marshal, steward, or like office. On rare occasions, a solar will be found attending a lesser deity. There are at least 24 solars. They can go to any plane, but do so only in service to their deity.

As with devas (*q.v.*) and planetars (*q.v.*), solars can be of any Good alignment, either lawful, neutral, or chaotic. They are totally faithful and unswerving in their alignment and loyalty.

Each solar has four attacks per melee round. Each has a huge composite bow (36" range) and various *Arrows of Slaying*. Each also has a sword equal to a two-handed weapon (of a type usable only by solars) equal to +5 with qualities of *Dancing* (*q.v.*) and *Sharpness* (*q.v.*). The former function operates sans severing. For purposes of attack determination, consider each solar to have a dexterity of 24 and fighter ability of 17th+ level.

All solars have spell-like abilities equal to those of a 12th-level cleric, druid, magic-user, and illusionist. In addition, they each have the following spell-like powers which can be used one at a time, one per round, at will:

Animate object (3/day)

Antipathy/Sympathy (3/day)

Astral Spell (1/day)

Confusion (3/day)



Control Weather

Creeping Doom (1/day)

Drawmij's Instant Summons

(double effect)

Earthquake (3/day)

Finger of Death (1/day)

Fire Storm (1/day)

Holy Word (3/day)

Imprisonment (1/day)

Improved Invisibility

Mass Charm (3/day)

Permanency (3/day)

Polymorph Any Object (1/day)

Polymorph Self

Power Word (1 each/day)

Prismatic Spray (1/day)

Read Magic

Regenerate (1/day)

Restoration (1/day)

Resurrection (3/day)

Shape Change (3/day)

Symbol (any) (3/day)

Teleport (no error)

Vanish (3/day)

Vision (1/day)

Wind Walk (7/day)

Wish (1/day)

Each solar casts a globe of *protection from evil* +3 from individual to a full 70' radius, the size being willed but the protection otherwise maintained automatically. This sphere also serves as *protection from normal missiles* and a *minor*

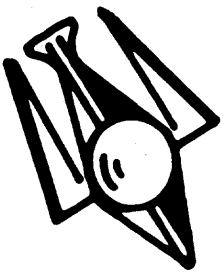
globe of invulnerability as well. A solar can *commune* as needed. Each can always *cure* (any sort) by touch, *detect* (any sort, automatically), and *dispel* (any) by gaze. When laying hands upon a creature, a solar can bestow perfect adaptation to any environment for up to as long as a century. Each solar can automatically *know alignment*. Each can communicate via *ESP* or *tongues*, as well as having the ability to read and comprehend any sort of languages. Solar infravision extends to 24" and ultravision to triple normal range. Hearing and normal vision is double human norm.

A lawful good solar can *summon* 1-2 ki-rin; neutral good, 1-2 phoenix; and chaotic good, 1-2 greater titans. (*Editor's note: The phoenix will be described in an upcoming column.*) Such *summons* can be made once every hour. Once per day a solar can *gate* in either a planetar or double the indicated number of the appropriate sort of devas, the option resting with the solar.

Solars are affected by the attack forms indicated for devas (*q.v.*), except that acid does not harm them. Only +5 or better weapons affect them. They are never surprised and always strike first against opponents with less than 22 dexterity. They are immune to life level loss due to undead or magic. They can not be *beguiled*, *charmed*, *held*, *confused*, *dominated*, *feeble-minded*, *paralyzed*, or *petrified*. Their souls can not be imprisoned or trapped. They are immune to death spells or death magic. They regenerate at a rate of 7 points per round. Unless on their own plane of service, only the material form of a solar can be destroyed. The solar's spirit returns instantly to its own plane to reform a corporeal body. This requires a full seven decades.

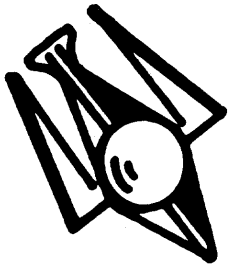
Psionic abilities of a solar are as follows: *Animal Telepathy* (14th level); *Aura Alteration*; *Body Equilibrium*; *Body Weaponry* (12th level); *Mass Domination* (24th level); *Mind Bar* (24th level); *Molecular Rearrangement* (16th level); *Object Reading*; *Precognition*; *Reduction*; *Telekinesis* (24th level); *Telepathic Projection* (24th level).

Description: A solar's skin is the color of molten copper, hair color is bronze, and eyes are glowing topaz. The form is beautiful and muscular, and the deep, resonant voice of a solar is commanding. The wings are double and of a coppery-gold color. Charisma effect is 24.



JUNE 3RD, 3026

The battle for the planet Tsu:



"... By 0900 hours, the battle had reached its critical point. Bataki cavalry, acting in conjunction with massive air attacks and several well-positioned Leviathans, quickly overwhelmed the defenders at Forts One and Two. The survivors evacuated in good order, and retired in the general direction of our gunboats, which were laying down a protective barrage. Unfortunately, a cluster of moles surfaced nearby, and a ferocious melee ensued. A few engineers, Sgt. Tient's team amongst them, made good their escape, and joined the garrison at Fort Three. I ordered continuous air strikes against the Berserkers exposed in clear terrain. However, at 1000 hours the Bataki forces were obviously regrouping for one final assault ..."

"... The dreaded moles burst into sight at the same instant that the warriors of Batak made their onrush. Several breaches were made in our defenses. Were it not for the Typhoons and sonic cannon firing in multi-burst dispersal patterns, all would have been lost. The moles were annihilated as they broke through the surface. The Bataki cavalry overran Tient's team in a bloody firefight inside the depot. A last-minute counter-attack by our survivors threw back the Berserkers into open terrain. The Typhoons shrieked down and slaughtered the fleeing troops. The remnants of men, beasts and machines were everywhere; but the battle was over. At 1600 hours we stood on the ramparts and watched the departure of the warriors of Batak ..."

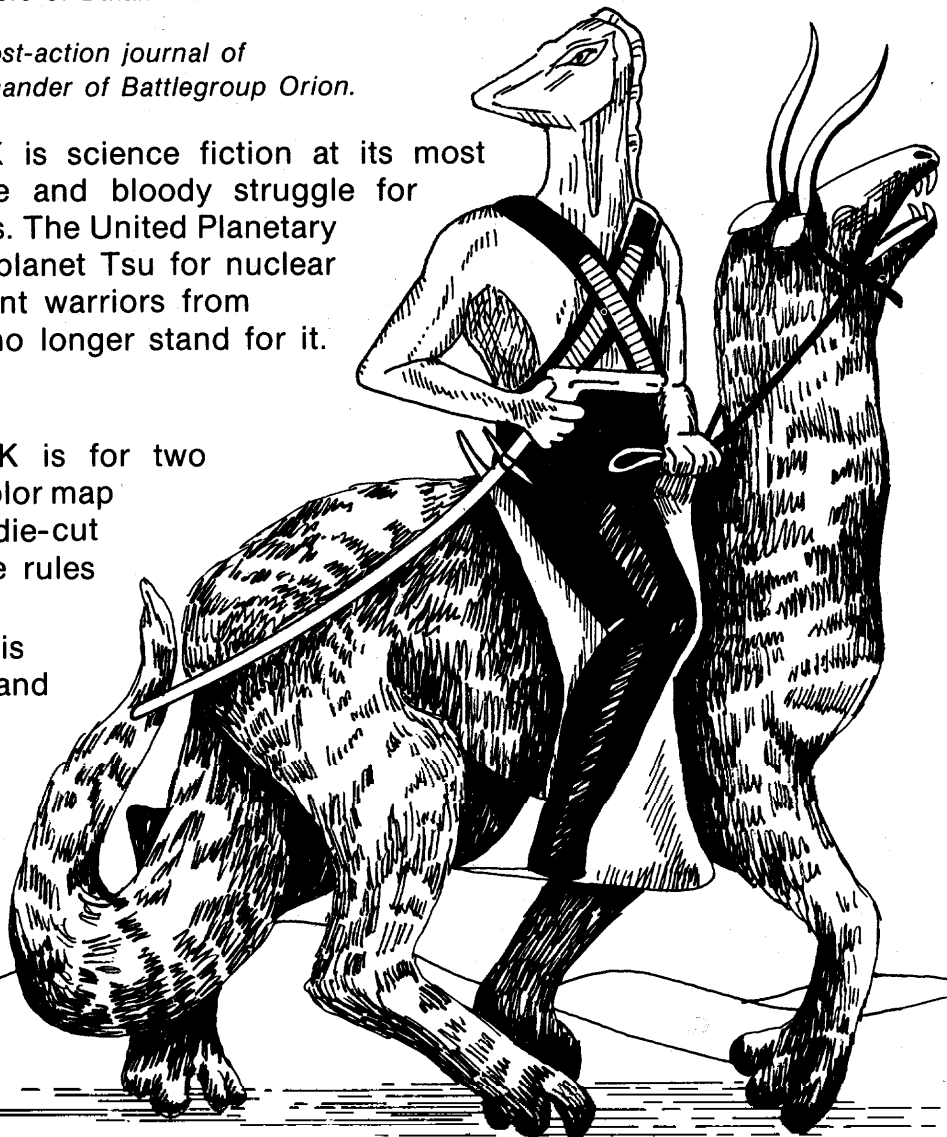
*—Excerpt from the post-action journal of
Lt. M. O'Neil, commander of Battlegroup Orion.*

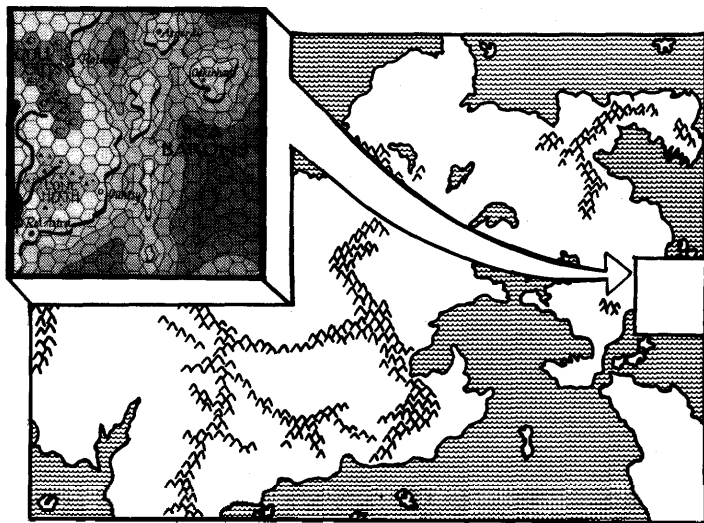
THE WARRIORS OF BATAK is science fiction at its most exciting, depicting the fierce and bloody struggle for the conquest of distant worlds. The United Planetary Congress has long used the planet Tsu for nuclear waste disposal; but the militant warriors from Batak, in Tsu's system, will no longer stand for it. And so they attack.

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GREYHAWK'S WORLD

NEWS, NOTES AND VIEWS
OF THE GREYHAWK CAMPAIGN

EVENTS OF THE EASTERN AND SOUTHERN FLANAESS

by Gary Gygax

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The pantheon of deities in the Flanaess is very broad, and many humanoids and demi-humans serve deities which do not have an aspect that exactly matches the race in question, be it dwarven, elven, orcish or whatever. However, for communities of demi-humans or humanoids outside human areas of settlement, or for large enclaves therein, some racial deities are needed. For such, you should feel comfortable employing the "Nonhumans' Deities" section of the DEITIES & DEMIGODS™ Cyclopedia, but with the following changes:

Maglubiyet's plane is Gehenna; Kurtulmak's plane is Acheron; Gruumsh's plane is Gehenna.

Treat flinds as gnolls, ogrillons as either orcs or ogres, and norkers as goblins for the purpose of selection of a deity of this sort.

Shaman maximum levels are: Ogrillons, 3rd level; Flinds and norkers, 5th level; Xvart, 7th level.

Witch doctor maximum levels are: Norkers, 2nd level; Xvart, 4th level.

There is only one addition to the list of deities which I would recommend. That addition is the xvart deity, Raxivort. The statistics and details of this deity are provided below:

RAXIVORT Lesser God

ARMOR CLASS: -1

MOVE: 12" (14" as mobat)

HIT POINTS: 246

NO. OF ATTACKS: 4

DAMAGE/ATTACK: By weapon type (+6 strength bonus)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: See below

SPECIAL DEFENSES: See below

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 40%

SIZE: S (4' tall)

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic evil

WORSHIPERS' ALIGN: Chaotic evil (xvarts)

SYMBOL: Hand of flames (blue)

PLANE: Pandemonium

CLERIC/DRUID: 8th level cleric

FIGHTER: 12th level

MAGIC-USER/ILLUSIONIST: 6th level magic-user

THIEF/ASSASSIN: 10th level assassin

MONK/BARD: Nil

PSIONIC ABILITY: VI

S: 18/00 I: 18 W: 18 D: 20 C: 18 CH: -4

It is told that Raxivort began life centuries ago as a normal xvart. Due to his superior capabilities, he rose to leadership of all xvarts, and because of great service to a demon (some say Graz'zt), Raxivort was granted certain powers and appointed Master of Slaves of the demon. Raxivort feigned gratitude and bided his time. Eventually, the cunning xvart gained sufficient knowledge and power to loot the demon's strong-room, and with this new arsenal attempted to wrest control of the Abyssal Plane from its lord. The battle was titanic and lasted for months, neither side being able to better the other.

At last Raxivort sought a truce and departed for the wildly changing planes of Pandemonium, giving up the portion of the Abyssal Plane he had taken, but carrying off great spoils. Raxivort now reigns in luxury, while demons shun him, and one (at least) plots a black revenge.

Raxivort is Lord of Xvartkind, Packmaster of Rats, Night Flut-terer. He can take the form of a xvart, rat, or giant bat (mobat; see different movement rate indicated above) — or use magic to take other human, demihuman, or humanoid guise. Raxivort's normal form is xvart, of course, with bright blue skin and burn-ing orange eyes. His features are gross and ugly in the extreme. Raxivort wears silken garments over blue mail, the whole shimmering as if aflame.

Raxivort favors small, bladed weapons such as knives, daggers, and short swords. He can hurl any such weapon with great accuracy (+4 "to hit"). He seldom has fewer than a dozen throwing knives and daggers, and when hurled by him they strike as +4 magic weapons. Raxivort also has a falchion of small size (equal to a short sword) but great magical power. In his hands it acts as a +5 weapon, with the power to paralyze one specific type of creature. Upon command, the power of the weapon is activated, and it remains active for 1-6 hours; then it is dormant for one day. The sword, "Azure Razor," can then be called upon to perform again.

In addition to his other powers, Raxivort has the ability to generate a *blue blaze* from his left hand. This flame combines the powers of both fire and acid. The *blue blaze* fans out from his hand to a distance of 2", with a maximum width of 2" at its terminus. Creatures caught in this magic acid-flame must save twice or take full damage—5-20 points of fire damage. Raxivort can use his *blue blaze* only once every four rounds and no more than six times per day. It takes but 1 segment to employ the power and reduces his attacks by only one-half, i.e. 2 per round rather than 4.

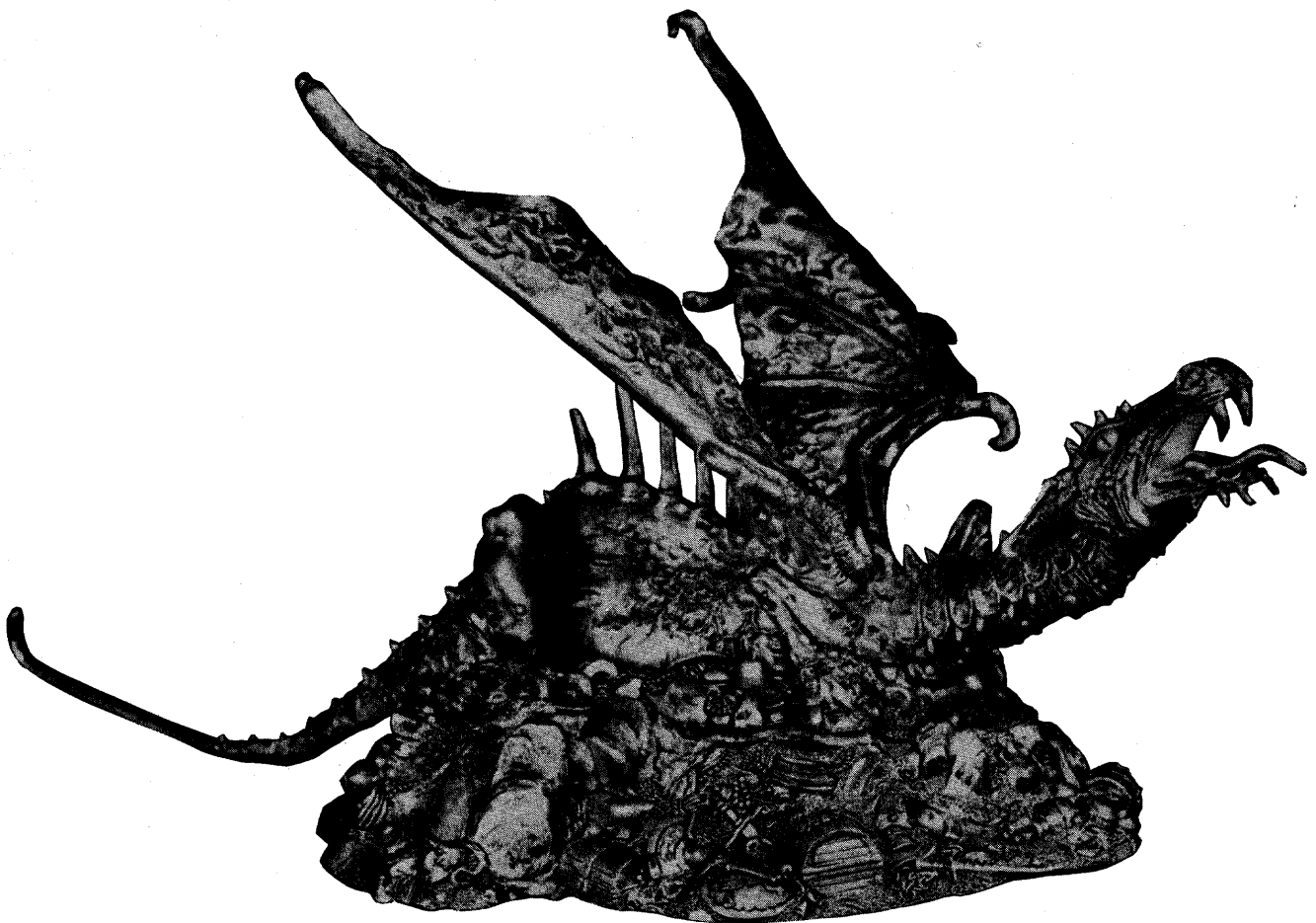
Raxivort has many companies of xvart fighters to serve and guard him. Likewise, he has packs of the largest giant rats and scores of mobats at his beck and call.

Shamans serving Raxivort always display the blue-flaming hand symbol of their deity. These shamans can attain as high as the 7th level of clerical ability. Magic-using witch doctors can attain 4th level. (Note that their spells are limited, but some have gained *burning hands* spell ability.)

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GIANTS IN THE EARTH

CLASSIC HEROES FROM FICTION & LITERATURE

Tanith Lee's
MYAL LEMYAL

9th-level bard

(5th-level fighter, 8th-level thief)

ALIGNMENT: *Chaotic neutral*

(good tendencies)

HIT POINTS: 62

ARMOR CLASS: 4

NO. OF ATTACKS: 1

DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type*

HIT BONUS: *Nil*

MOVE: 12"

PSIONIC ABILITY: 198

Attack/Defense Modes: *B/F,G,I*

STRENGTH: 15

INTELLIGENCE: 18(31)

WISDOM: 13 (See below)

DEXTERITY: 18(82)

CONSTITUTION: 13

CHARISMA: 17

CHARM %: 62% (See below)

LEGEND LORE %: 30%

THIEF ABILITIES:

Pickpocket: 75%

Open Locks: 72%

Find/Remove Traps: 60%

Move Silently: 72%

Hide In Shadows: 59%

Hear Noise: 25%

Climb Walls: 96%

Read Languages: 40%

Myal Lemyal is a wandering minstrel and pickpocket, a musical genius who manages to maintain himself precariously through his thieving talents. Myal was once employed at an earl's castle, but was forced to flee abruptly when the Earl's daughter became pregnant and the Earl sought to slay him.

In his travels afterward, he encountered a man named Parl Dro, who was seeking a legendary city of undead in an attempt to destroy it. As their adventures progressed, it became apparent that the two men were linked psychically in many ways; one seemed to require the presence of the other, or was able to locate the other without difficulty, in some unknown manner. Eventually it was learned that Parl Dro was the manifested spirit of Myal Lemyal's true father, who could be summoned by Myal's psionic powers.

Extraordinarily handsome by nature, Myal Lemyal has dark golden hair, pale skin, a thin, light build, and facial features best described as "princely." He dresses in red and green clothing, and at



best may wear leather armor. He rarely carries a weapon, but it is always possible he may have a dagger or two on his person, and may know a little swordwork as well. He dislikes violence intensely, however, and avoids personal combat except in extreme circumstances.

Myal is a gambler, and a good one; he may add a +20% bonus to his odds to win in most games of chance involving cards or dice. He prefers to pickpocket only those he feels can afford the loss.

By nature, Myal is subject to great changes in mood that seem to come and go in a flash; he can be either sad and depressed, trying to draw sympathy from all around him, or joyful and radiant, or princely and arrogant. He is unpredictable, somewhat irresponsible and emotional, but has considerable sensitivity for human feelings and sufferings. He has been known to be swayed by sympathy for someone into performing irrational and rash actions that get him into considerable trouble later.

Myal's stepfather, whom Myal had long supposed to be his real father, was a

brutal and abusive man who drank a lot; he was conned into buying a strange musical instrument shortly before Myal was born. The instrument was never supposed to be played, having been created as an elaborate joke to fool the man. Rather than admit he had made a mistake, Myal's stepfather forced Myal to learn to play it. Myal did learn to use it, and turned it from a joke into one of the most complex and beautiful instruments devised. Though the original instrument was destroyed at the city of the undead, Myal has since built another. The instrument appears to be a double-necked lute with a reed projecting from one side, so it may be played simultaneously as a wind and stringed instrument; only Myal is able to play it, and he does it so well as to add 20% to his charm percentage. Those persons listening to Myal play (even those who saved vs. charm) will take no offensive action and will listen entranced for 2-5 rounds. Long practice with this device has made Myal ambidextrous in its use.

Myal Lemyal has no objection to joining an adventuring party and will generally work for the good of the group. He will, however, be prone to pickpocket, avoid combat, and be a bit irresponsible though likable. Myal cannot learn any druidic spells due to his substandard wisdom score. The party may have trouble dealing with Myal's changes in mood, though for the most part he will be very enjoyable as a companion.

Should the party or Myal encounter any undead during an adventure, Myal may immediately try to summon Parl Dro (75% chance per round of appearing if summoned). Parl Dro (AC 1, HP 65, MV 12" or special) appears to be a completely human character, though of foreboding aspect. He has deep black hair and dark eyes, and wears (or appears to be wearing) black clothing and no armor. He is lawful good.

In his former life, Parl Dro was a ghost-killer, a travelling exorcist, and was extremely good at it. Even after his death, his soul managed to continue its existence on the Prime Material plane, though he almost became an evil ghost himself in doing so.

In his present form, Parl Dro can only be struck by weapons of +1 enchantment or greater, and may go *ethereal* at will (as

in the psionic power). He has a psionic ability of 300 and all attack and defense modes; should he run out of ability points, he will go *ethereal* until fully recovered. If Parl Dro is able to get his hands upon an item that formerly belonged to a now-undead creature while it was still living, whether part of its body or some personal belonging, he has a chance of destroying that undead being. Parl Dro will attempt to break, damage, or otherwise change the item, destroying the undead being's links with the Prime Material world, and sending the soul or spirit on to the outer planes. His chance of succeeding each round he works on the item may be taken to be the same chances a *Mace of Disruption* would have to destroy the undead being. The undead creature need not be present in order for the process to work, but the being will instantly realize what is going on regardless of its location, and will do everything possible to stop him from completing the task. Not all former possessions of an undead being may be

treated in this manner; usually there is only one item linking the being to this plane, and Parl Dro is able to tell exactly what item is the key one.

It should be noted that though Parl Dro is a spirit (sort of an "anti-ghost" or good ghost) he will at all times appear, sound, and feel exactly human. His personality is serious and reserved; he has a dry and somewhat sarcastic sense of humor. He is, like his son Myal, extremely handsome and intelligent, though more mature and dedicated than his offspring. He will never attack any living being physically.

Myal Lemyal has the minor psionic devotions of *Detect Magic* and *Sensitivity to Psionic Impressions*, though he uses them unconsciously. He also possesses two major sciences, *Ethereal Projection* and *Spirit Summoning*. The first of these functions like the power *Astral Projection*, only differing in that the Ethereal Plane may be entered. *Spirit Summoning* has a strength point cost of 20 per attempted summoning. Each attempt

takes one round and has a 75% chance of succeeding. As described earlier, Parl Dro is the only spirit Myal may call upon.

Just as other forms of undead have something that helps tie them to the Prime Material plane, so does Myal Lemyal serve as a "tie" for Parl Dro; should Myal ever be slain, Parl Dro will be released and the spirits of both will go into the outer planes. *Spirit Summoning* may be attempted at any time, but Myal Lemyal cannot perform *Ethereal Projection* unless he is placed in a trance-like state first, either through drugs, hypnosis, or some other medium.

There is only a 1% chance that Myal Lemyal will first be encountered in the presence of Parl Dro. The two of them genuinely like one another, despite their differences in views on life (which lead to arguments full of sarcastic remarks and insults).

BIBLIOGRAPHY: *Kill the Dead* (paperback, DAW Books), by Taniith Lee.

Written by Roger E. Moore

JOHN HENRY

7th-level fighter with special bardic ability

ALIGNMENT: Neutral good

HIT POINTS: 73

ARMOR CLASS: 8

NO. OF ATTACKS: 3/2 (3 when berserk)

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2-7(+6) or 4-10(+6)

HIT BONUS: +5 (with hammers)

MOVE: 12"

PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil

STRENGTH: 18(00)

INTELLIGENCE: 14

WISDOM: 13

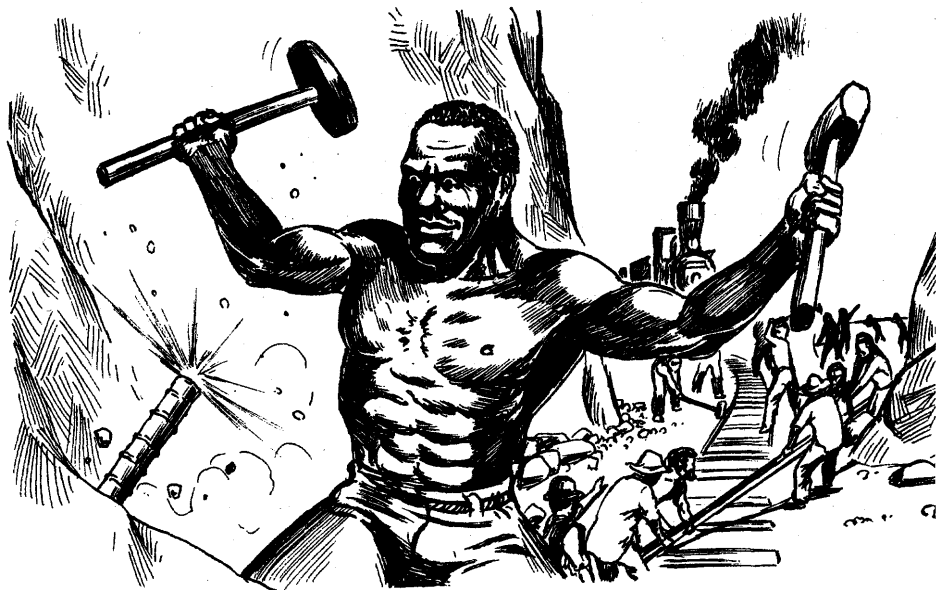
DEXTERITY: 16

CONSTITUTION: 18(68)

CHARISMA: 16

John Henry was born somewhere in North Carolina around 1835 or 1840. Little else is known of his life until 1870, when he was working with the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway Company. He quickly became a popular figure in his work crews, and was known to be lively, full of humor, and skillful at cards and the banjo. John Henry had the job of a steel-driver, pounding steel drills into solid rock with a hammer in either hand to make shafts for explosives. Of all the men in the C&O, John Henry was acclaimed as the fastest and most powerful of the steeldrivers.

Sometime in the early 1870's John Henry came to work on the Big Bend tunnel in West Virginia. Many remembered him as the "singiest man" of all the laborers, and he inspired them as they worked in the dim, foul tunnel. It was then that the C&O had a steam drill brought to the project. There arose an argument among the workers as to which was better, a human or a machine, at driving the holes for the explosives.



John Henry arose and called out that he could drive steel better than any mere machine, and a contest was arranged. The two began at the east end of the tunnel system, and all work ceased for the time as everyone crowded in to watch. With a 20-pound hammer (the equivalent of a large two-handed sledgehammer) in each hand, John Henry slammed the steel into the rock as the steam drill roared at his side. At the end of the contest, half an hour later, it was found that Henry had driven two seven-foot holes in the same time it took the drill to make a single nine-foot hole.

Reports that John Henry died from overexertion shortly after the contest seem to have been exaggerated. He was exhausted, but recovered in a short time and continued working. One day he was

walking through a completed tunnel, checking his work, when he somehow crossed over into an AD&D™ universe and exited through a dungeon. If encountered by AD&D characters, he will likely be somewhat confused by his surroundings and will be mainly interested in finding a way back to his own world, but will not be daunted by the difficulties he may face.

John Henry is a muscular black man, about six feet tall and 200 pounds in weight. His hair is cut short, and he will appear in the AD&D world wearing his working clothes. He carries a pair of 10-pound work hammers (each equivalent to a mace) that he uses in each hand in combat. His skill with hammers is such that he has a +2 bonus to hit, in addition to his normal bonuses for strength, when

using them. He also knows how to use a 20-pound hammer in a two-handed fashion that will do 4-10 (+6) points of damage per strike, also with the +2 bonus to hit. Once a week (at the DM's option), should he find himself in a battle for his life or in a desperate attempt to save a friend or loved one, John Henry is capable of seizing a 20-pound hammer in each hand and fighting at twice his normal rate (3 attacks per round). He can keep this up for a maximum of 3-6 turns,

after which he will be so tired as to require absolute rest for 1-4 days (excluding all combat or other actions except slow movement, never exceeding two-thirds of his normal movement rate).

John Henry also enjoys singing in combat or at work, and his singing will raise the morale of those within 60' of him by 10%. After two rounds of singing he can also inspire ferocity in nearby companions, adding +1 to their chances to hit for a full turn. Both the morale

increase and the ferocity occur only after the second round of singing in battle. This is the only bardic-type ability he has; while he is quite competent at stringed instruments, he cannot *charm* listeners as a bard.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: *A Treasury of Railroad folklore* (hardback, Crown Publishers), collected by B.A. Botkin and Alvin F. Harlow

Written by Roger E. Moore

FINN MacCUMHAL

**15th-level ranger with
bard-like capabilities**

ALIGNMENT: *Neutral good (with
neutral leanings)*

HIT POINTS: 118

ARMOR CLASS: 3

NO. OF ATTACKS: 2

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-6 (+6, or
+12 vs. "giant-class" humanoids)

HIT BONUS: +5

MOVE: 18"

PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil

STRENGTH: 18(56)

INTELLIGENCE: 14 (*See below*)

WISDOM: 9 (*See below*)

DEXTERITY: 18

CONSTITUTION: 17

CHARISMA: 16

In ancient Ireland there was once organized a number of the finest warriors and hunters, all swearing fealty to the King of Ireland and charged with defending the countryside from the ravages of evil goblins, giants, pirates, brigands, witches, and the like. This fighting force was known as the Fianna. Its members were (in AD&D™ terms) rangers, fighters, and bards of exceptional ability and courage. The Fianna came to know their greatest achievements and glory under their last captain, Finn MacCumhal, one of the greatest warriors of pre-Christian Ireland.

Finn's father was also a leader of the Fianna, but was slain by rebellious clansmen of the Fianna who sought his position as chief. His mother, who was related to the gods Lugh and Nuada by birth, gave young Finn to a druid woman to hide and raise in secret. Finn was taught all the arts of war and hunting while he was a boy, and learned much of poetry as well. While he was apprenticed to a sage for further learning, he accidentally touched a magical creature called the Salmon of Knowledge; this gave him special powers (described below) upon which he could draw when in extreme danger. He also drank water from the Well of the Moon, which gave him the ability at times to foretell the future. During an assault against the fortress of an evil lord, Finn recovered the Treasure Bag of the Fianna, formerly owned by his father; the Treasure Bag was equivalent to a *Bag of Holding* of the



largest size, and contained many jewels and magical items.

When he decided it was time to stop hiding from the clansmen who had slain his father, Finn went to the court of King Conn and offered his services as a member of the Fianna. He was accepted in short order, since word of his deeds had preceded him; not even the rebellious clansmen dared move against him. When a goblin armed with a magical harp began causing evil and grief to the people of a nearby town, Finn volunteered to go and slay the monster. He was given a magic spear by a friend of his father, and given instructions on its use in overcoming the *Sleep* effects of the goblin's magic harp. Finn sought out the goblin, and the enchantments of the spear saved him from being overcome by the harp's music. He slew the goblin easily, and upon his return to the King was made captain of the Fianna.

Finn MacCumhal is tall and fair-haired, about 6'9" in height. As a warrior he is exceptionally honorable and will not use trickery in order to gain an advantage over an enemy. Once having given his protection to any person or being (even giants or faeries) seeking his help in escaping evil pursuers, he will never break his word and will lead his men into battle against evil forces at a moment's notice.

Finn possesses a very lusty nature and is prone to fall for a pretty face, even though he is married. (His wife Maignes has much the same weakness, as do nearly all the rest of the Fianna and their wives.) Finn has accepted a number of neutral-aligned fighters into the Fianna, and even one with strong evil tendencies; this has given him a stronger neutral tendency himself, though all his men are basically faithful to him. He is extremely fleet of foot from his years of practice at racing as a boy, and enjoys hunts in which he can run down deer.

When Finn Mac Cumhal touched the Salmon of Knowledge, he gained the power to temporarily increase his intelligence and wisdom scores to 18 each by chewing the enchanted spot on his thumb that initially touched the Salmon. This power can be employed once a day;

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the increases in intelligence and wisdom only hold true for 1-3 turns, but there is also a more lasting effect: Invoking this power grants him the ability to know the answer to one question (that question which happens to be uppermost in his mind at the moment). He will usually only use this power when in extreme danger, and when combined with his power to predict the future (because of his drinking from the Well of the Moon), it will usually give him the opportunity and knowledge to defeat any opponent.

Despite Finn's normally substandard wisdom score (which does not meet the minimum requirement for a ranger), he can function as a ranger in all respects except that he cannot use any magic-user or druidic spells, and cannot use scrying devices as a normal ranger can.

Finn MacCumhal's skills at poetry and singing are equal to those of an 8th-level bard. His singing can inspire ferocity, raise morale, negate song attacks, and charm with a 40% chance of success. He will rarely, if ever, use these powers in battle, preferring physical combat.

In battle Finn wields a +3 spear with deadly effect, while wearing leather armor and a large shield. If the situation calls for it, he may have access to the *Spear of Bitterness*, also a +3 weapon (the one with which he defeated the goblin with the magic harp). Anyone holding this spear is thereby rendered immune to

Enchantment/Charm spells of any sort. The spearhead has a powerful bitter aroma that can cause the user to go berserk in battle (gaining an extra +2 to hit and damage) for 3-12 rounds. The user must raise the spearhead to within one foot of his face to activate the berserking; such an action will usually occur instantly when an Enchantment/Charm spell is cast at the user.

Characters in an AD&D campaign who somehow find their way to the shores of Erinn (as Ireland was formerly called) may find Finn and the Fianna to be either fun-loving and helpful allies or implacable foes of the most dangerous sort, depending upon how the characters conduct themselves. It may be possible for some of the adventurers to actually join the Fianna, but it should be noted that the entrance standards for this group were higher even than the requirements for knights trying to join King Arthur at Camelot.

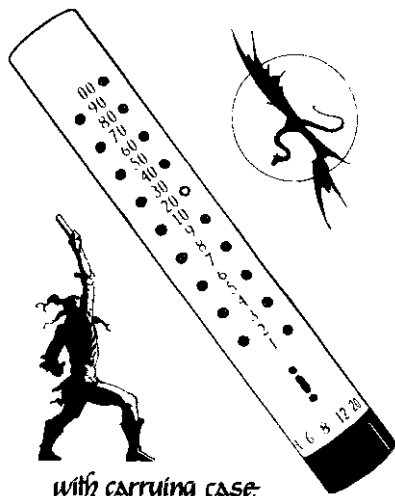
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Written by Roger E. Moore

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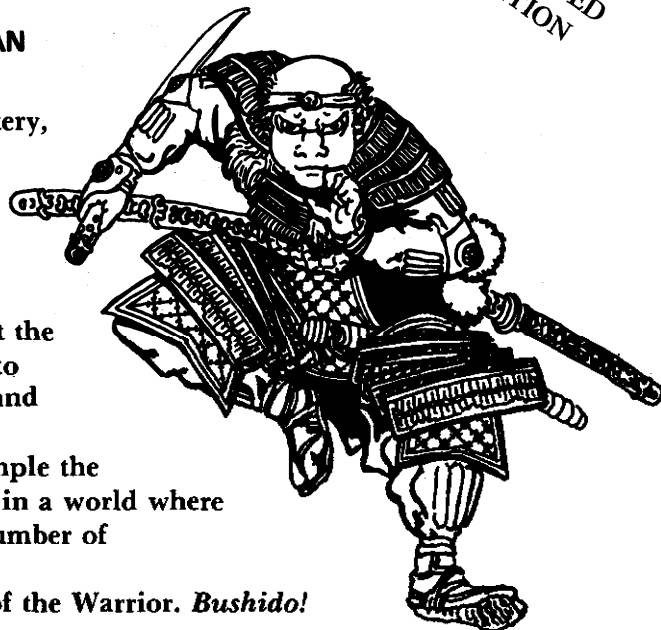
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How do you figure the chance to open doors if more than one character tries to do it at the same time?

That depends on what sort of door the characters are confronted with, how the DM chooses to define and describe the door in game terms, and what the capabilities of the characters are. There is no set of "rules" for such a situation that could apply in all possible cases.

The size of the door and the number of gripping places (handles) it has will help determine, first and foremost, whether two or more characters can even get their hands on it. If they can, and if the door is nothing more than an ordinary "stuck or heavy door" as described in the Players Handbook, then the chance for a pair of characters to pull or push open the door might be as great as a simple sum of their chances: Two characters each with a strength of 12 would have a 1-4 (on d6) chance together, while two characters each with strength of 16 or better would automatically be able to open such a door.

Or, the chance might not be quite that great if the DM reasons that the individual characters can't each apply all the strength at their disposal (for lack of good balance or leverage), so that perhaps the chance for two 12-strength characters would only increase to 1-3, and the pair of 16-strength characters might have an 80% or 90% chance (or at least something short of guaranteed success). If you want to get *really* particular, it would be more efficient for characters to work in tandem against a door that pushes open rather than one that is pulled.

The procedure used will vary according to the circumstances and the surroundings — and in cases where it isn't a matter of life or death for that door to be opened in the next round of action, it often doesn't really matter what the *exact* chance of success might be. A good DM won't make a big thing out of it if two characters want to "attack" a door at the same time, unless there's something really important about the door — or behind it — in which case the door would generally already be locked or magically sealed to prevent it from being breached by strength alone.

* * *

What is the chance for climbing walls, etc., for non-thieves?

The same chance thieves have of knowing spells or possessing 18/00 strength: none. (I can hear all the fighters saying, "But I can hide in the shadows: Watch this!") Even though the thief abilities have rather unimpressive, mundane names, they are indeed *special* abilities and can be successfully performed only by someone who has had, and continues to take, training in the thief profession.

In a standard AD&D campaign, there can be no deviation from this rule — and it is a fact of "life" as much as it is a rule of the game. Only thieves can employ abilities described as unique to that class, just as clerics can do only what clerics are described as being capable of. This is obvious, necessary (from a playability standpoint), and logical as well; it takes a great deal of introductory training — *specialized* training — for a

character to attain adventurer status (first level), and continuous review and training in the chosen class(es) if one is to rise in levels. The practice of an adventuring profession is a serious matter, often even a vital one, and each profession demands of its adherents all the interest, energy, and effort they can muster. Any DM who settles for less than this attitude from player characters and still allows them to rise in experience levels as if nothing was amiss is doing the playing group and the game a disservice.

In extraordinary circumstances or for the sake of experimentation, non-thief characters with exceptionally high dexterity might be allowed a chance of successfully performing certain thief-like abilities. This mutates the adventure or campaign, and this fact should be understood by the DM and all the players: what they're playing isn't an AD&D game any longer. But it might be interesting if, for instance, any non-thief with a dexterity of at least 16 (and any monsters with the same trait) was given a small chance to use that dexterity similar to the way the ability benefits a thief. In this hypothetical system, the "dexterity benefit" would only apply to those thief abilities that allow bonuses for high dexterity: picking pockets, opening locks, locating/removing traps, moving silently, and hiding in shadows. The percentage chance of success for a non-thief to perform a certain function would be a constant, related only to the character's dexterity and not to his or her level of experience. The percentage chance for success is the same as the number given as a bonus on Dexterity Table II (Players Handbook, page 12), and success is only possible when a number is given. Thus, a non-thief with 16 dexterity would have a 5% chance of using the *opening locks* ability, but no other thief-like abilities, and a non-thief would need 18 dexterity to have any chance of *locating/removing traps*.

In no case could it be justified for non-thieves to have the ability to *climb walls* using this same reasoning, however. First of all, the ability has no direct relationship to dexterity, or else it would be listed in Dexterity Table II. Second of all, climbing walls is a thief's bread and butter, his claim to fame, the one thing even a first-level thief can do with a decent chance of success. It stands to reason that a large portion of the thief's training goes into acquiring this ability in the first place; it isn't something a fighter-type can pick up over a weekend of rigorous wall-clutching. Climbing walls is like riding a unicycle: It takes forever to learn how, and once you learn the basics you don't ever get a whole lot better at it than you were when you started. Most people (except for thieves and diehard unicycle riders) will give up after taking a few spills, when it becomes apparent that the bumps aren't worth the benefits.

* * *

Can a two-classed fighter-cleric use edged weapons and mix the use of these with the use of clerical abilities (spells)? If this is not allowable, does that mean a two-classed character must follow the conditions of the more restricted class with regard to

the use of certain weapons, the wearing of certain armor, and other particulars?

In essence, being a character with two classes means you can do different things at different times, which makes "double duty" desirable for some players and their characters. But two-classed characters (always human) can't legitimately mix the abilities and benefits of different classes at the same time the way multi-classed (always non-human or semi-human) characters can.

Like it says on page 33 of the Players Handbook, "restrictions regarding armor, shield, and/or weapon apply with regard to operations particular to one or both classes." From that statement, and the example that follows it concerning a two-classed fighter and magic-user, we can see that the intent of the rules is to keep the class functions separate. The result is that a two-classed character must be played quite a bit differently than a multi-classed character who is practicing the same professions.

A fighter-cleric wielding an edged weapon can't successfully cast a spell, turn an undead, or perform any other cleric-type action. If the character wants to be able to hold a weapon and act as a cleric at the same time, it must be a weapon clerics are permitted to use. A fighter-MU can "carry (but not wear) armor and weapons not normally usable by magic-users," according to the Players Handbook.

Thus, a two-classed fighter-cleric ought to be allowed to carry (but not hold) an edged weapon and still use clerical abilities: It would be okay for the two-classed fighter-cleric to keep a sword at his belt and turn an undead, for instance— but if he tries to do the same thing with a sword in one hand and a holy symbol in the other, he'd better be ready to use that sword. A fighter-cleric carrying more than one weapon but not holding any particular one at a given time can perform as a cleric as long as one of the weapons he carries is permitted to clerics, and as long as that particular weapon is the one (if any) being drawn or wielded.

Are all of the attributes having required minimums to be construed as "principal attributes" for that class with regard to two-classed characters?

Yes, with two exceptions. For the purpose of determining whether a character is eligible to take up a second class, principal attributes for each class are considered to be these: cleric, wisdom only; druid, wisdom and charisma; fighter, strength only; paladin, everything but dexterity; ranger, everything but dexterity and charisma; magic-user, intelligence only; illusionist, dexterity and intelligence; thief, dexterity only; assassin, dexterity, intelligence, and strength; and monk, everything but charisma and intelligence.

This includes every ability for which a required minimum is given, except for the fighter's constitution, which must be at least 7, and the magic-user's dexterity, which the Players Handbook says must be at least 6. The first exception is made because "The principal attribute of a fighter is strength," but constitution isn't mentioned in the same sentence (PH, page 22). A "minimum dexterity of 6" is required for magic-users (page 25), but this is superfluous, since a character with a dexterity of 5 or lower is always a cleric (page 11).

Note that the principal attribute(s) for each class may include abilities in addition to those that apply toward a bonus to earned experience. To limit the definition of "principal attributes" to only those abilities that pertain to the experience bonus would make the system unbalanced and unplayable — unbalanced because then it would be easier to become a two-classed paladin than a two-classed ranger, and unplayable because the assassin and monk never get an experience bonus, and so by this definition would not have any "principal attributes."

* * *

If a follower gains a higher level than his master, does the follower continue to serve? Can a follower who has reached the

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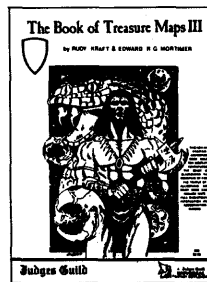
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proper level gain followers of his own? If so, are they under the control of the master or the master's follower?

The relationship between followers and their master is, on a smaller scale, similar to the relationship between clerics and their deities: So much depends on how the roles are played, and on the particulars of each campaign, that it's impossible to dictate in a set of rules how one side of the relationship will interact with the other.

With regard to followers and when (if ever) they stop being followers, a few general statements may be risked:

If a follower ever gains an experience level equal to or higher than the master's — and the DM has been fair about awarding experience when it is deserved — then the master probably brought about the "role reversal" by not actively adventuring or in some way causing a delay in his or her level advancement. Human (and humanoid) nature is such that a follower who gets close or equal to his master in powers and abilities will think about striking out on his own, and sooner or later he'll try to do something about fulfilling that desire.

Maybe the master will opt for a pre-emptive strike, hoping to subjugate or vanquish a follower who looms as a threat to the master's power and authority.

If a follower remains subservient to his master while both the master and follower keep rising in levels, it's possible to develop a hierarchy of followers beneath other followers, all of them ultimately beholden to the master who originally became eligible to have followers.

In any sort of master-follower relationship, it isn't possible for the boss to "control" his followers the way you control an undead (or vice versa). A follower's allegiance to his master may be strong, but it can't be expected to remain unshakeable for an indefinite length of time unless those who aid their master's cause are given credit (power and/or other rewards) when credit is due. And followers are just like you and me: the more they get, the more they want. . . .

How can the level of spell use be determined for a paladin or a ranger? Is a ranger required to carry a spell book? Do druids, bards, paladins, or rangers gain bonus spells for high wisdom?

An 8th-level ranger or a 9th-level paladin begins using spells as a caster of the 1st experience level in the appropriate class. When a ranger reaches 9th level, he or she will operate for spell-casting purposes as a 1st-level magic-user or a 2nd-level druid, depending on which category of magic is employed. The "level of casting" for paladins and rangers increases by one each time the character gains a new experience level, so that a 20th-level paladin would cast spells as a 12th-level cleric and a 17th-level ranger would have the spell-casting ability of a 10th-level druid and a 9th-level magic-user.

Is this fair? Sure — a whole lot more fair than the other obvious alternative, which would be to let a 9th-level paladin (for example) cast spells as a 9th-level cleric, by equating actual level with spell-casting level. This just doesn't make sense, in terms of game balance or for so-called realistic reasons. The Players Handbook describes the spell ability of both rangers and paladins as "limited," and the charts on pages 24 and 25 illustrate many of the ways in which that ability is so limited. One restriction not specifically mentioned is the one suggested above, "limiting" the effective level of a spell-casting paladin or ranger to the number of "spell-casting levels" the character has attained. This certainly follows the intent of the rules, and is logical and playable.

Yes, a ranger needs a spell book to cast magic-user spells, and mistletoe to make effective use of his or her druid spell ability. And a paladin won't get far as a caster of cleric spells without a holy symbol. The rules and regulations on how (and whether) spells are acquired and cast must be met for the spell-caster, regardless of class, to make the magic work.

The druid class should be allowed bonus spells for high wisdom, because it is a sub-class of cleric and thereby entitled to the bonus, the same way that the ranger and paladin can

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have exceptional strength since they are fighter sub-classes. But, bards should not be allowed bonus spells for high wisdom, first and foremost they are never truly members of that class. Second, nothing in the Players Handbook indicates that a bard was intended to get this bonus. Any bard needs a wisdom score of at least 15, so if the wisdom bonus were meant to be taken into account, every bard would start off with three druid spells — more than some 1st-level druids are capable of having.

Because they're not actually druids or clerics, rangers and paladins don't get bonus spells for high wisdom. As with the bard, their wisdom requirements are so high that any paladin or ranger would automatically get bonus spells upon acquiring spell ability, making those characters much more magically powerful than they deserve to be. Paladins, rangers, and bards should be allowed to cast their spells with a 0% chance of failure, just as a cleric or druid of equally high wisdom would — but that should be the only way in which wisdom affects spell-casting for those three classes.

The ranger's intelligence does, however, have an effect on how many magic-user spells he or she can learn. High intelligence doesn't give any direct benefit in the number of spells a character can use at one time; that ability, even for magic-users and illusionists, is tied to level of experience and not intelligence. Instead, intelligence is a measure of the character's capacity to learn a certain spell and store a certain number of such spells for future reference.

The rules state that a ranger "must check as to which spells he or she can learn, just as if he or she were a magic-user" (PH, page 25), and it follows that rangers would also abide by the minimums and maximums regarding how many spells can be learned. A 9th-level ranger with minimal (13) intelligence will have a 55% chance to know any particular 1st-level magic-user spell, and will be able to compile a repertoire of no fewer than six and no more than nine 1st-level spells — but the character can still only memorize (and later employ) one spell at a time.

How do racial limits apply to multi-classed characters?

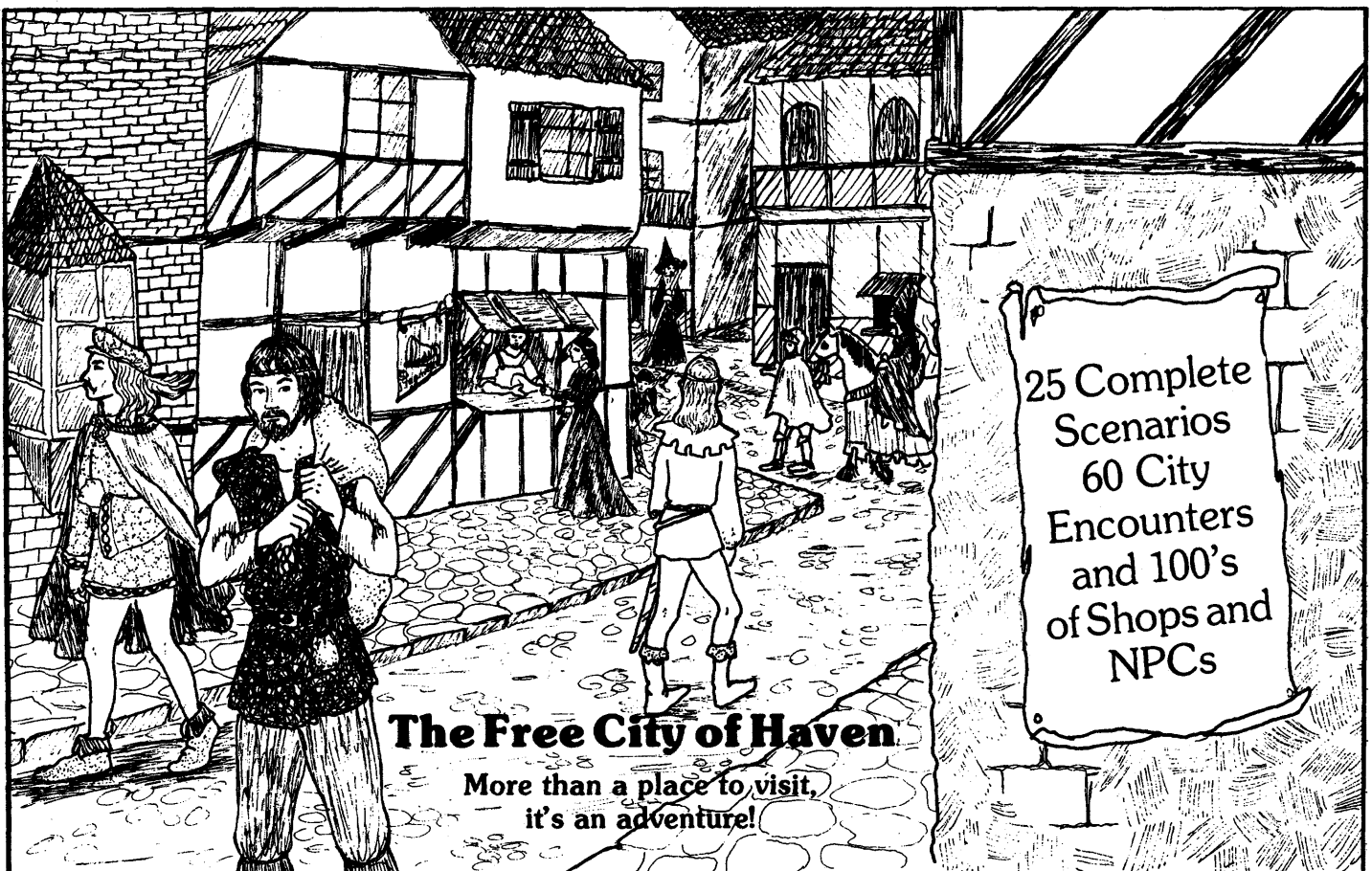
The same way they apply to everybody else: absolutely. Experience points are always divided evenly between all the professions of a multi-classed character, even if the character is not able to attain a higher level in one or more of those classes because of race. A half-orc cleric/assassin could become a high-level assassin, but would never achieve clerical expertise of higher than 4th level. A single-classed assassin needs 6,000 experience points to rise from 4th to 5th level, but this half-orc actually has to earn 12,000 experience points to get credit for 5th level, because half of everything he gets must go toward paying his dues to the cleric class. (Only a half-orc can be smart enough to be an assassin and still dumb enough to want to be a cleric at the same time.)

* * *

When a character has one ability score low enough to be "forced" into a class, what happens if the character's other ability scores are not high enough to qualify for that class?

Either you're rolling cursed dice, or the DM is using a strange, special system for generating ability scores. In either case, the most obvious solution is to crumple up the piece of paper with those six terrible numbers on it, take a fresh sheet, and pretend that character never happened.

How and why would a player get in this kind of predicament to begin with? The player decides (in most character-generation systems) which ability to assign to which number — so why would anyone knowingly saddle a character with a super-low score (one of those "here or lower" numbers) and thereby commit that character to a class it is not qualified for? If you're unlucky enough to roll a 3, 4, or 5 for an ability score, your choices become a lot more limited — but there still are choices. Assign the lowest of your six scores after you've figured out what to do with the highest rolls, not the other way around.



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The Assassins' Guild

by Elizabeth Cerritelli with Lynda Bisson

Sooner or later you're bound to run into them. They may ambush you in the forest; they may lie in wait for you in dark city streets; they may betray you from within your own party. At some time during your adventuring career, you're bound to encounter assassins.

These encounters can sometimes be less difficult for the victim than for the player who wants to portray the villain, or for the DM running a campaign that involves playing one or more assassins as NPCs in addition to his many other "monsters." Assassins can be complex and unpredictable characters; determining where, when, and how they will strike can be very difficult. What motivates them? What determines their priorities? How daring can they afford to be without putting themselves in danger of discovery and capture?

The key to dealing effectively with assassin characters is to realize they aren't necessarily as impetuous as they may appear to be when they strike. Even chaotics need some sort of loose framework of standards to live by; otherwise they'd eliminate their allies as well as their enemies, and nothing constructive would ever get done. Moreover, most assassination attempts take a good deal of careful pre-planning and waiting for the opportunity to make a move when the chance of being caught seems minimal. No sensible person is going to spend effort to achieve a goal that will gain him nothing and probably endanger his life into the bargain.

An assassin must be, if anything, even more organized than the average player character or NPC. This is where the Assassins' Guild comes in. Under the direction of the Guildmaster or Grandfather of Assassins, it protects the interests and safety of its members, insures that the effort expended in its activities will provide profit rather than loss, and trains its apprentices to think in the cunning and convoluted way that will allow them to stay one step ahead of both their victims and the law.

It is possible for unaffiliated assassins to operate under their own direction and for their own profit. But it's very unlikely they could have learned their intricate craft well through trial-and-error experience without making a fatal mistake. Besides, even the most free-spirited assassin-adventurer eventually has to stop in somewhere for supplies and employment; and no settlement, of any size or structure, is without its underworld.

"Organized crime" may be less brazen about its nefarious activities in a predominantly lawful area than it might be in a locale where such dealings are unremarkable; but it will always be there. Suffice it to say that the neighborhood professionals are not going to take kindly to an out-of-town freelancer usurping their business. One way or another, the guild will get involved.

Members of Assassins' Local 327 will be found in many logical places, watching out for newcomers of all sorts. There will probably be at least one ear to the wall of every inn and tavern in town, especially the seedier ones. Shops, guild halls, banks, and warehouses—particularly those storing the goods of traveling merchants—will also be monitored, both for careless mention of available booty and for strangers who seem to be listening for the same information. Guild members will also be posted in all the places one would go for the tools of the trade, such as weaponsmiths, bazaars, and apothecaries. There will be at least one spy in or near the households of each of the major figures in town, especially those concerned with law and order. And let's not forget the "at-large" assassins, prowling the streets disguised as everything from beggars to housewives. Thanks to such a pervasive network of information gathering, the guild is very likely to know the doings of everyone in the area, with special attention paid to travelers and newcomers.

Yet the assassins themselves will be difficult to identify. Most of them, or at least the highest-level ones, will have alter-egos: perfectly legal "front" businesses or jobs, in which they will use aliases and probably altered speech and appearance as well. Upper-level guild administrators may have several such disguises, with elements of each one interchangeable to provoke further confusion. Even their own apprentices may have trouble identifying these masters of disguise from one moment to the next. The more the surrounding populace leans toward law or good, the more likely that all the guild members will adopt a similarly lawful and/or good cover. It is very likely that no one of the assassins other than the administrators of the guild will know more than a few of his colleagues. If one is captured, the majority of the guild members would thus remain unidentifiable. Informants will deal only with a particular contact, identified by a password or code phrase, and meet only

at selected times and places. Their signals and rendezvous points will change from one meeting to the next, to keep them from being noted and memorized by the uninitiated.

The actual number of guild members is usually vague, because of the desire for secrecy and because the membership rolls change fairly often thanks to death, expulsion, or new recruits. The number of members the guild can support at its fullest will depend upon the size of the city or keep, the complexity of its social structure, and the amount of transient traffic. Spies will be needed at every level of society, with emphasis on those segments of the population that pose the greatest threat, provide the greatest profit, or are the most active and changeable. Spies observing permanent residents of the area are likely to be a permanent group themselves. Those keeping tabs on travelers and newcomers will belong to a different division within the guild. Still another faction will do the actual dirty work. A select few will do both types of work, as necessary or in particularly delicate situations.

The racial makeup of the guild should cover the full spectrum, so that no visitor or area of society will be overlooked. One is, after all, more likely to trust someone most like oneself, reveal more information to him, and allow him in closer proximity to oneself. In an area infested with monsters of reasonable intelligence, such as orcs or hobgoblins, it is perhaps not unlikely for the guild to make arrangements with them, guiding victims into their hands in exchange for the assassins' own safety, an odd bit of treasure, or information about those passing through the area. Certain intelligent, subtle, and/or easily controlled creatures may even be kept by guild members as assets to their trade; some species of snakes or insects, for example, are efficient instruments of death, and a well trained pseudo-dragon can be a good spy.

Should the surveillance network spot someone suspected of being rival or freelance talent, a high-level assassin will be notified immediately. If this administrator agrees that the newcomer is suspicious or a threat, arrangements will be made to shanghai the intruder at the first opportunity. After being led blindfolded through a bewildering maze of streets (or, more simply, knocked unconscious), the stranger will find himself in a dark room, staring into the stark light

of a bullseye lantern, with a number of dark figures dimly discernible around the perimeter of the room.

The newcomer's affiliation (if any) and level of ability will be determined at once. If the newcomer is established in an allied guild, he will be assimilated into the existing structure for as long as circumstances warrant. If he is established in a rival guild, and that information is somehow brought out during questioning or otherwise obtained, he is most likely to be eliminated immediately.

If, however, he turns out to be a novice just trying his hand in the business, and has not yet actively solicited or accomplished a task, his treatment will not be quite so summary. First, he will receive a gentle chiding, of the Didn't-you-expect-we'd-be-in-charge-here? variety, and he will be made an offer to join the guild that he can't refuse.

Once he has agreed, he will be read The Laws. These rules and regulations, spelled out in the accompanying text and further described and explained below, are given as an example of the sort of code an assassins' guild would require its members to adhere to. The Laws are intended for the eyes of player characters who have a reason to be made aware of them; the explanations are for the use of the DM, who will enforce The Laws in his or her capacity as master of the guild.

I. This law was established primarily to exempt from eligibility other player characters who, during the course of the game, might chance to kill one of the townsfolk or a member of their own party for one of the reasons mentioned. It also exempts those who may be assigned, or who take it upon themselves, to eliminate a monster or monsters terrorizing an area, since this threat is presumably as dangerous to guild members as it is to any other humanoid creature. If, however, the menace happens to be the assassins' guild itself or one of its monstrous allies, the guild is certainly justified in seeking revenge or preventing the attack in any way possible.

II. Here is dealt with the matter of paying one's dues, both literally and figuratively. An incipient assassin will have to scrape up those gold pieces any way he can, although whether he will be required to pay up before he is given his first assignment will be a matter for the Guildmaster's discretion. Established members will be required to be prompt and relatively truthful.

III. Like any other guild, the assassins' guild is a business. There is overhead to consider; the cost of specialized materials and equipment can be high, especially if these are imported from a long distance or obtained on the black market. However, if a member's assignment

I. No one may plan and enact a premeditated act of murder except a member of the assassins' guild. A murder by anyone else must be proven with all possible stealth by a member of the guild to have been accidental, self-defense, an unpremeditated act of passion, or the spontaneous result of a duel or argument. However, a nonmember who, wittingly or not, premeditatedly removes a threat to guild members or security may, at the Guildmaster's discretion, be exempted from punishment. If proven otherwise to the Guild's satisfaction, the murderer will be considered to have intentionally infringed upon the guild's field of operations and will be dealt with according to the Guildmaster's discretion.

II. No one shall consider himself an assassin until he has proven his worth to the guild's satisfaction in a trial appointed to him by the Guildmaster Assassin, and has paid an initial due amount of 50 gold pieces for his membership in the guild. Assassins who have previously proven themselves will be liable for dues consisting of a total of 30% of all monies and/or property owned by them, as selected by guild officials, and above and beyond any tithing from assignment fees, precisely every thirty days for as long as they remain in the area. A member in good standing of this guild or an allied guild who enters the area under jurisdiction of this guild, whether for the first time or after an absence, will be required to immediately render up payment of the above dues, or forfeit his property and/or freedom entirely to the Guildmaster.

III. No one shall enact a murder unless he can provide satisfactory evidence to the guild that he is being paid by an employer, or that the said murder will be of material benefit to the guild. No assassin will work without due payment or reward, and 40% of said payment, as well as 40% of any incidental booty removed from the victim's person or lodging, as selected by guild authorities, shall be rendered up to the Guild as a token of good-standing membership therein.

IV. No assassin shall enact a murder on his own behalf, or on the behalf of a friend or relation, unless it can be proven to the Guildmaster's satisfaction that the emotions involved in such a situation will not lead to rash actions or careless methods that will constitute a threat to the safety and integrity of the guild. If the Guildmaster feels that the assassin in question is emotionally unfit to carry out his intentions without seriously endangering other guild members or the guild as a whole, he reserves the right to order the said assassin to appoint a fellow member for the case, or to appoint one himself, regardless of the said assassin's wishes.

V. No one shall assassinate or attempt to assassinate any person of influence, high standing, or renown who is a permanent resident of the

comes directly from the Guildmaster, and/or involves the security of the guild (such as eliminating a snooping law officer or a renegade guild member), fee and tithe requirements may be waived.

IV-VI. These security measures may be more relaxed in a generally chaotic and/or evil area, but strongly enforced in a predominantly lawful and/or good region, where any fumbling will lead the bloodhounds straight to the guild. Above all else, the guild must maintain its secrecy and the security of as many of its members as possible in order to maintain itself as a functioning entity.

VII-IX. These three laws provide for a

combination of security and efficiency. Selecting the right person and tool for a job increases the chance of success without detection. Beginners disobeying orders here will put the entire guild in danger of discovery. Penalties for infractions of security laws will be severe, especially so in guilds established in predominantly lawful areas.

The laws governing the use and consequences of using poisoned weapons (Law VIII.A.) should be administered as per the rules on page 29 of the AD&D™ Players Handbook. The chance of poison rubbing off a metal weapon is 15% for each handling or contact with any object, including a sheath or scabbard. If the poison does not "take" on the first

area, except at the express order of the Guildmaster Assassin. Such an attempt would cause great and immediate danger to the guild as a whole; and guild members will immediately render such traitors up to the proper authorities in order to preserve themselves and the guild. If said traitors cannot for some reason be rendered up to the authorities, the guild will find it necessary to enact its own judgement in the case.

VI. All weapons and materials used by assassins must be supplied and/or previously approved for use by guild authorities. Any unauthorized or unskilled use of weapons or materials will be dealt with as a threat to guild security.

VII. Any poisons used in an assassination must be formulated by a guild member, supplied by the guild, and authorized by the Guildmaster Assassin for use by the assassin in question. Only a sufficient amount for the deed will be supplied, and it will not be replenished for that assassin for the duration of the case if the attempt is unsuccessful.

VIII. The use of poisoned weapons is discouraged by the guild, for a number of reasons:

- A. It is obvious, and therefore a threat to guild security.
- B. The poison does not adhere to metal, and there is a chance that it will rub off in the scabbard or on any intervening object during use of the weapon.
- C. If the poison is not injected in the first cut, its effectiveness lessens. It also evaporates quickly.
- D. There is a chance that the assassin will be nicked and poisoned by his own blade.

IX. The use of simple, well-set traps is encouraged, as they provide time to erase any connection with the guild. Members should keep in mind that traps can backfire, and should take precautions accordingly.

X. Members of the assassins' guild are not recognized as members of any thieves' guild, and will not be taught thieving skills by members of the latter brotherhood.

XI. Discovery while on a spying or assassination mission is always possible, even when the assassin is disguised. The guild expects all of its members to maintain the secrecy and security of the organization even under torture; and they will be punished according to the Guildmaster's judgement if they do not.

Any neglect or infringement of these Laws will be dealt with according to the Guildmaster's judgement by the true and faithful members of the assassins' guild.

hit, the victim will suffer half damage (at most) on the second hit, and no damage on any cut thereafter. Rules for the rate of evaporation of the blade venom are given on page 20 of the Dungeon Masters Guide. Also see this page for details of how an assassin sets traps (Law IX).

X. While they share some common abilities, assassins and thieves are different classes of characters, and their functions are not all interchangeable. It is likely that separate thieves' and assassins' guilds are both established within the area; or perhaps the assassins became a specialized branch of the thieves' guild. In any case, the thieves would probably be required to pay a regular fee

to the assassins for routine elimination of threats to their security. They may also exchange information gained while spying or while simply hiding in the right shadow at the right time. Occasionally, the two guilds may work together to pull off a large-scale venture, like robbing a caravan.

XI. Members' loyalty to the guild and its security is implicit. The guild's loyalty to individual members who may be captured, however, will depend upon several variables, among them being the amount of danger a rescue would involve for fellow guild members; the value, skill, and loyalty of the member in question; and the chance of that member

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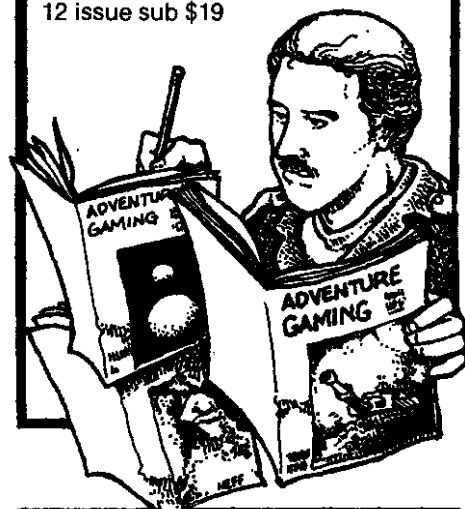
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turning informant under duress. If the Guildmaster suspects the captive is likely to give away too much information, there is an equal chance that he will order either a rescue or a quick, preventive execution before the beans are spilled. Which method he chooses is most likely to depend on the level and skill of the imprisoned assassin and his relationship with the Guildmaster. If the prisoner is especially important in the guild hierarchy, or is owed a favor by one or more fellow assassins, something on his behalf might be arranged. In most cases, however, assistance from the guild is not to be relied on.

Enforcement and punishment

Punishment for infractions of the Laws will vary. It will depend on whether there was a security breach, and the extent of that breach; the necessity for protective measures, and their extent and intensity; the amount of loss of material, equipment, or personnel involved; and, to a degree, the nature and whims of the guild administrator who passes judgment on the offender.

The punishment for a violation could be a stiff fine; virtual indenturement to the Guildmaster to repay lost funds or replace damaged or destroyed materials; physical penance not designed to be fatal; or, in the most extreme cases, summary execution.

First day on the job

Once he understands the framework in which he will be operating, the novice assassin will be given his first assignment — a simple, routine job, but one not without substantial risk. It may be a task of material benefit to the guild, such as a burglary carried out in conjunction with a thief, with whom he will divide the take. It may be a question of removing a minor threat to guild security, such as a low-level but prying officer of the law, an untrustworthy apprentice, or a bystander who happened to stumble onto a vital piece of information. He may even be called upon to do in one of his own companions as a test of loyalty to the authority of the guild. The task should be challenging, but not beyond his capabilities.

He will be equipped with the weapon(s) deemed most efficient for the case, and be told the method by which he will be able to contact the proper guild member. Commonly, he will be asked to bring back sufficient proof that the task has been fulfilled. At the Guildmaster's discretion, he may also be secretly monitored by one or more assassins in disguise who will see to it that there is no fumbling or double-crossing.

At the successful completion of his first assignment, the initiate will be given some token to mark him as an established member of the guild and exempt him from further trials. This token may

also be accepted as a sign of good-standing membership in allied guilds — and rival or enemy guilds will be looking out for it, too, for altogether different reasons. If the nervous novice fails his test, and somehow escapes alive to beg the forgiveness of the Guildmaster, he may, at the Guildmaster's discretion or under extenuating circumstances, be given a second opportunity. Otherwise, he becomes Someone Who Knows Too Much, the worst kind of threat to security.

The assassins' guild system can be particularly valuable for players and DMs who have never played assassin characters before, since it offers a framework of logic to work within and teaches players an appreciation for the importance of covering one's tracks while still allowing plenty of freedom for ingenuity and initiative.

As their experience grows, players can use the system to get in plenty of extra-curricular adventuring, while the DM can tailor the Laws to suit a particular campaign or vice versa. Indeed, it wouldn't be hard to build an entire assassin-oriented campaign around them. Even after players and the DM have become adept at handling assassin characters, the guild system and its Laws will continue to provide a foundation on which to base the reasoning for what assassins do and why they do it the way they do.

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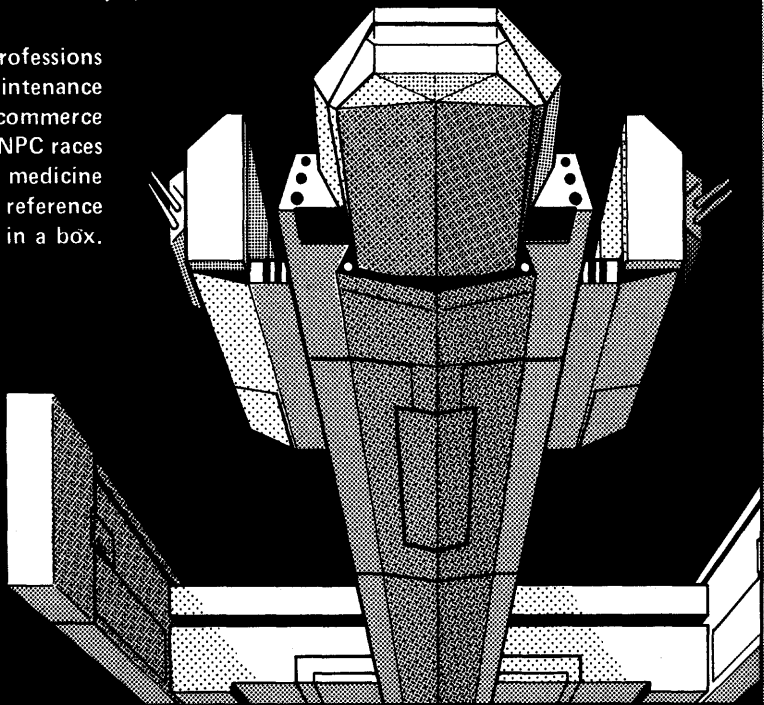
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The ASSASSINS' RUN

by Ed Greenwood

In the Forgotten Realms, the famed city of Waterdeep is ruled by a secret council, the Lords of Waterdeep. Great is the Lords' power, widespread their watch — and for those reasons, no thieves' guild exists in that city any longer. A handful of Waterdeep's former thieves survived under magical protection, but Waterdeep was not safe for them. The thieves moved to a nearby city and sponsored the formation of an assassins' guild there. The guild's purpose is to eventually cause the deaths of the Lords of Waterdeep — not an easy task. The Guildmaster, however, is a fanatic who trains even the novices with an expert, ruthless hand. Part of this training is an elaborate obstacle course, a testing ground in the cellars of the guild headquarters: The Assassins' Run.

Built at the expense of the guild's patrons, the Shadow Thieves, the elaborate facility serves many purposes. Primarily, the Run is a gymnasium for the practice of assassin's skills not easily performed repeatedly with discretion in public places.

By the use of a *Wizard Eye* (cast by a magic-user who serves as one of the guild's lieutenants), the Guildmaster watches those negotiating the Run. Also with the Guildmaster are clerics, ready to heal or raise the unfortunate. Novices must satisfy the Master in their Run before they achieve second level, and the experienced veterans of the guild continually use the Run to test themselves, challenging it while heavily encumbered, to beat a time limit, or both. (As the famed adventurer Steeleye once said of assassins, "In that profession, men must work to keep their status as survivors.")

If the guild headquarters is ever attacked, the Master has instructed all members to retreat to the Run and use its familiar traps to kill the intruders at a minimal loss to the guild. It is also said there are secret apartments at the center of the Run where the Master lives. . . .

And there may well be, as you the DM wish. Little of the guild headquarters is shown in this presentation, merely a few of the corridors and rooms that directly service the Run. These are included for using the Run in a party-attacking-the-guild scenario, or for using the Run as a stage for a one-on-one duel between rival player-character assassins, or a player character and a non-player character, or as you will. . . . (It is rumored that the guild has a hidden highway through the sewers of the city, and that the Run is connected to it.)

The multi-level nature of the Run requires the DM to study the layout before play, perhaps moreso than most dungeons. Although rumors within the guild say the Master has used the Run's traps and defenses to kill off those guild members he saw as rivals or traitors — and assassins have very definitely died in the

Run—the complex is not intended to be a killer. DMs should bear this in mind when adding to, or modifying, the Run's traps and encounters; these embellishments should disable by ensnarement or render unconscious the victims, but not slay or maim. (Players, of course, need not know this.)

THE ASSASSINS' RUN

All areas have roofs, walls, and ceilings of stone, kept in good repair, unless otherwise noted.

A) Entry Hall: The Run is entered by passing along a hall lined with trophies — mementoes of famous deeds and tales of the guild's past. These are intended to inspire both dedication and nervousness — and they work well.

B) Master's Chamber: In this room the Guildmaster and his attendants monitor the performances of assassins in the Run by means of *Wizard Eye* and *Clair-audience* spells.

C) Armory, Storage Rooms, and Sparring Room: Relevant facilities of the Guild headquarters are near the Run, behind the indicated doors.

D) Trainers' Quarters: Beyond these doors lie the apartments of the guild's trainers, all of whom assist in operating the Run.

1) Waiting Room: All assassins begin and end their journeys through the Run here, as do the trainers operating the Run. An assassin taking his first Run may well find the room brilliantly lit, with the westernmost door on the south wall ajar. Seconds after his entry, the room will be plunged into darkness. A voice, which a guild member will recognize as that of the Guildmaster, will seem to sound inside the assassin's head (this is the Guildmaster using a *Helm of Telepathy*), saying, "Go through the open door." Even though he is groping, blind, and perhaps unsure of the door's location (if he didn't see it before the lights went out), the assassin should nevertheless follow through, for he has been taught to obey that voice without question or hesitation.

2) Trip Step: This stone step is raised up from its fellows, rather than descending, so that the unobservant or unwary (or an intruder chasing an assassin down into the Run) will fall headlong down the stairs into area 3.

3) Pit Trap: At the bottom of the stairs is the Run's first lesson in mistrust. The floor here is illusory; the pit beneath it is 20 feet deep and has smooth-polished sides that have been oiled and are impossible to negotiate by normal means. The trap causes 2d6 damage (1d6 per 10

feet fallen) if one is caught unawares and falls, rather than jumps, into the pit.

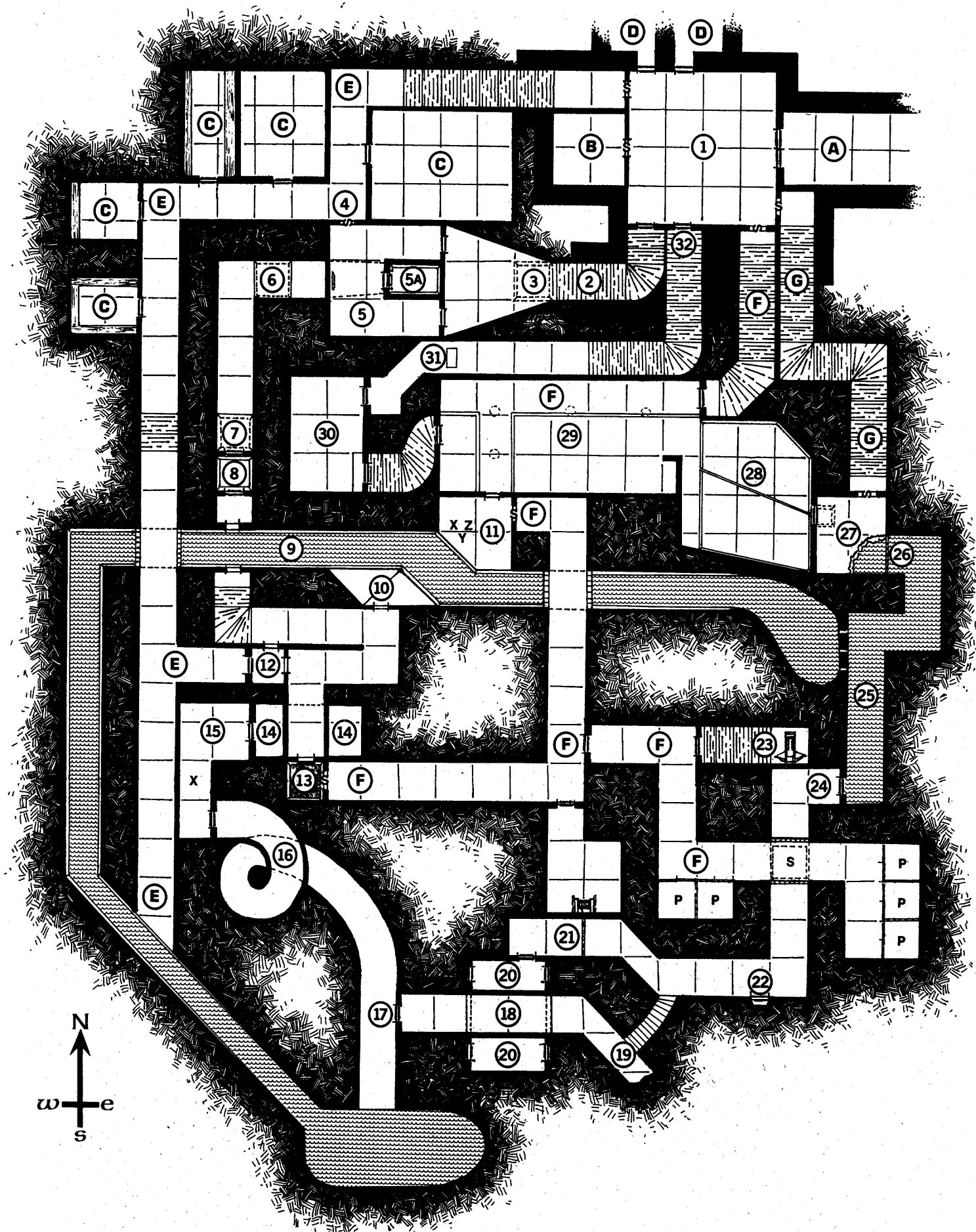
4) One-Way Secret Door: This portal allows trainers into the Run unseen to pursue or await runners. One trainer who always awaits novices is an experienced assassin armed with a short, weighted club, a grapnel and fifty feet of black silk cord, four darts tipped with sleep poison, and a soft leather strap used to simulate a garrote. "Red Champion" is the title given to the Guildmaster's right-hand man, the foremost active assassin. The Guildmaster has devised many practice routines using trainers in the Run.

5) Gong Room: Waiting just inside both doors leading from the east are guards, usually novices, armed with wooden bars or staves (the ends padded and covered with leather). The guards have orders to drive off and/or knock cold the runner. When the runner opens either door, he will be accosted by the guard behind that door and told that his Run will be ended if he takes one step into the room, and the guard is then able to ring the brass alarm gong on the opposite wall. (The gong can be rung by any blow from a part of the body or a hand-held object or weapon — not by a thrown object or weapon.) If the runner overcomes the first guard encountered and moves into the room, he will also have to contend with the other guard. The runner can prevent the ringing of the gong by disposing of both guards, or by picking or forcing open the locked portal leading to chamber 5A before a guard is able to sound the alarm. Chamber 5A is a shaft with a grab-iron ladder descending 10 feet into a corridor that runs west. (Most runners, especially when speed is a consideration, will elect to simply drop down the shaft and not use the ladder.)

6) Pit Trap: This is 20 feet deep. The corridor floor is a "teeter-totter" block which pivots on a central axle to flip over and close again, depositing the victim in a covered pit if he is not quick enough to jump back from the edge or get to the other side before the slab pivots. Most runners trapped here must wait for someone to come and release them. A victim will take 2d6 damage, as for the pit in area 3.

7) Pit Trap: Identical to area 6. If a near-miss at the earlier pit trap does not warn a runner to probe the flooring ahead (the "teeter-totter" block will sink at the slightest touch), he will almost certainly end up here. Again, 2d6 potential damage (as in area 3).

8) The doors to this 10-foot-square cubicle are unlocked, but the area itself is a 30-foot-deep pit; in other words, this is a floorless room. Before proceeding,



the runner must figure out how to reach and open the far door. (There are no spikes below and nothing to swing or hang on from above.) Both doors open inward, and they are heavy. They can not easily be struck from their hinges or broken through, nor swung without some force.

9) At this point the runner's corridor ends in a glassless window, a large opening (3 feet wide, 4 feet high, with a 4-inch-wide sill) that faces another glassless window across a chasm. The bottom of the chasm is 60 feet below the ceiling of this area, and contains an 8-foot depth of cold water because of its connections to the sewers (refer to area 17 for details of these connections). The target window (to the south) is 2 feet wide and 3 feet high. It is 10 feet away from the (ahem) "launch window," and its sill is 5 feet higher than the sill of the north window. Both corridor floors are at the same level, and the smaller opening has been known to be guarded on occasion by a scything blade, flames, or some other sadistic trick. A fall here will do 4d6 damage (water will break the fall somewhat), plus possible unconsciousness and/or drowning. The cold water flows west from here and then south to area 17. At times, archers with padded-tipped shafts will be waiting in the water to fire up at a runner at area 9 or 10, or an archer or trainer armed with a padded lance will wait on the bridge to the west of area 9 and attempt to strike down a leaping assassin.

10) & 11) After proceeding down and to the east from the small window at area 9, a runner looks out a window at area 10, down a sloping roof and across a chasm, to area 11, a gallery 20 feet lower than the corridor floor south of the window at area 10. Typically, x, y, and z are dummies (stationary or moved by means of control rods). The runner is required to hit the rearmost figure (z) with some sort of missile weapon, without touching the other two figures. In other practice situations, an armored archer may be at area 11, firing at a runner at area 10, who must "beat him to the punch" in missile fire, or even leap the chasm to grapple with him. There is usually a faint blue light, similar to a *faerie fire*, coming from the ceiling above the gallery.

12) A blindfolded archer in this cubicle fires "paint-bomb" darts — blunt rubber projectiles which split upon striking, splashing a dye or paint onto the target — out through slits at anything he hears. A runner is not usually allowed to strike in through the slits.

13) The passage ends here in a 20-foot-deep shaft (which may lead upward via chimney vents to the surface above, if the DM wishes) with a cushion of rotting

fabric and pine boughs (to negate normal falling damage) at the bottom. On the north wall of the shaft, directly beneath the end of the corridor, is a window or opening, 4 feet high and 2½ feet wide, with its lower sill resting 10 feet down from the corridor floor. The sill is only an inch above the floor of the chamber (area 14) it opens into, so that this room lies directly beneath the corridor. A runner must turn and drop off the end of the corridor, and catch hold of the sill while falling.

14) This room is usually empty, but is the favorite site for "attacks" of an illusory nature, or complicated lock-and-trap puzzles fashioned upon chests by the guild trainers.

15) This chamber usually contains a zombie, an automaton or a living trainer seated in a chair at x, facing the south wall. The runner must leap to the chair and knock it and its occupant over before the latter turns and fires a dart gun loaded with paint-bomb darts (see area 12). Sometimes this weapon is replaced by a *Wand of Paralyzation* — or, in another variation, the room is criss-crossed with many strands of fine silk attached to tiny bells, with a blindfolded dart-gun marksman in the northwest corner.

16) This lightless, slickly greased chute drops over 40 feet into a pool (see area 17). The speed (and violence) of one's descent can be controlled by exerting pressure against the walls of the shaft. A runner must do this quickly and correctly if he is to come to a stop in the shaft level with the door at area 17.

17) The locked door at this spot opens away from the chute, and its lock must be picked while the runner braces himself against the greased wall of the chute. The chute drops very steeply (see cross-section map) into the pool, a 12-foot-high chamber which has an 8-foot depth of water within. This pool is connected via the "canal" (the chasm at area 9) to the "waterway" (area 25) and drains into the sewers through an opening in the floor along the east wall. In the ceiling directly above the drain is an overflow pipe which also drains into the sewers. An inscription in Common is carved into the south wall, 2 feet above the 8-foot water level. It says simply, "Go back up the chute to the door," and is lit by a faint green radiance. Such a climb will not be easy, given the conditions in the chute. Most runners who miss the door are forced to wait for a rescue here or around in the "canal" by area 11. On one occasion an electric eel was found to have made its way into this area, perhaps with the aid of human hands.

18) This "teeter-totter" trap is identical

in construction to those in areas 6 and 7, but it is so large that it is difficult to avoid unless one knows of its location beforehand. It flips over to drop a runner into area 20, described below.

19) This 4-foot-wide curving flight of stairs exists to provide access to the (presently) unfinished end of the corridor. If a runner avoids the trap at area 18 and locates the stairway's concealed upper end, he will usually find the stair is equipped with one or more trip-wires (silken cords placed at varying heights above the steps), and the passageway occasionally contains a stirge or a volt.

20) In this chamber are two guard dogs, "de-barked" and with blunt-filed teeth. They are trained to disarm and harry anyone entering the room from above. All the doors opening into this room are false except for the one in the north wall; it is locked, and the mechanism contains a spring-loaded pin coated with sleep poison that will advance into the hand of anyone trying to pick the lock unless special care is taken and it is detected, or the lock is opened in such a way that no flesh is within reach of the pin. A dose of this poison will cause instantaneous lassitude, followed by the onset of sleep within 1-4 rounds thereafter. The slumber is deep (slapping, cold water, and the like are usually ineffective) and lasts for 3-6 rounds. Victims who save vs. poison are unaffected.

21) Five segments after the door leading from area 20 is opened, a portcullis here will fall from the ceiling with lightning speed. It is well oiled and almost silent, and its bottom consists of bars bent outwards in alternately opposite directions (so as to form an inverted "Y" in cross-section), trapping the slow or unwary between the diagonal bars. The tips of the bars have been bent back so that there are no points. The bars are closely spaced (only 6 inches apart), and the iron gate is heavy. If anything is pinned beneath it, or trapped within its "jaws" (where a fine sensor wire runs from end to end of the gate), it will lock in place, and a bell will ring in the winch room above. This bell can be heard by anyone in this area of the corridor. A trapped individual will find the gate's construction and iron composition aids his attempts to bend the bars (+10% to the usual chance). The winch mechanism, however, will prevent all attempts to lift the gate until it is itself destroyed or reversed (which things, magical means aside, can be done only from the winch room). The gate could do 1d6 damage and/or (20% chance) stun or knock unconscious a victim, if by chance it strikes him squarely while falling.

22) This door is a massive stone portal which can't be opened (it is held by a

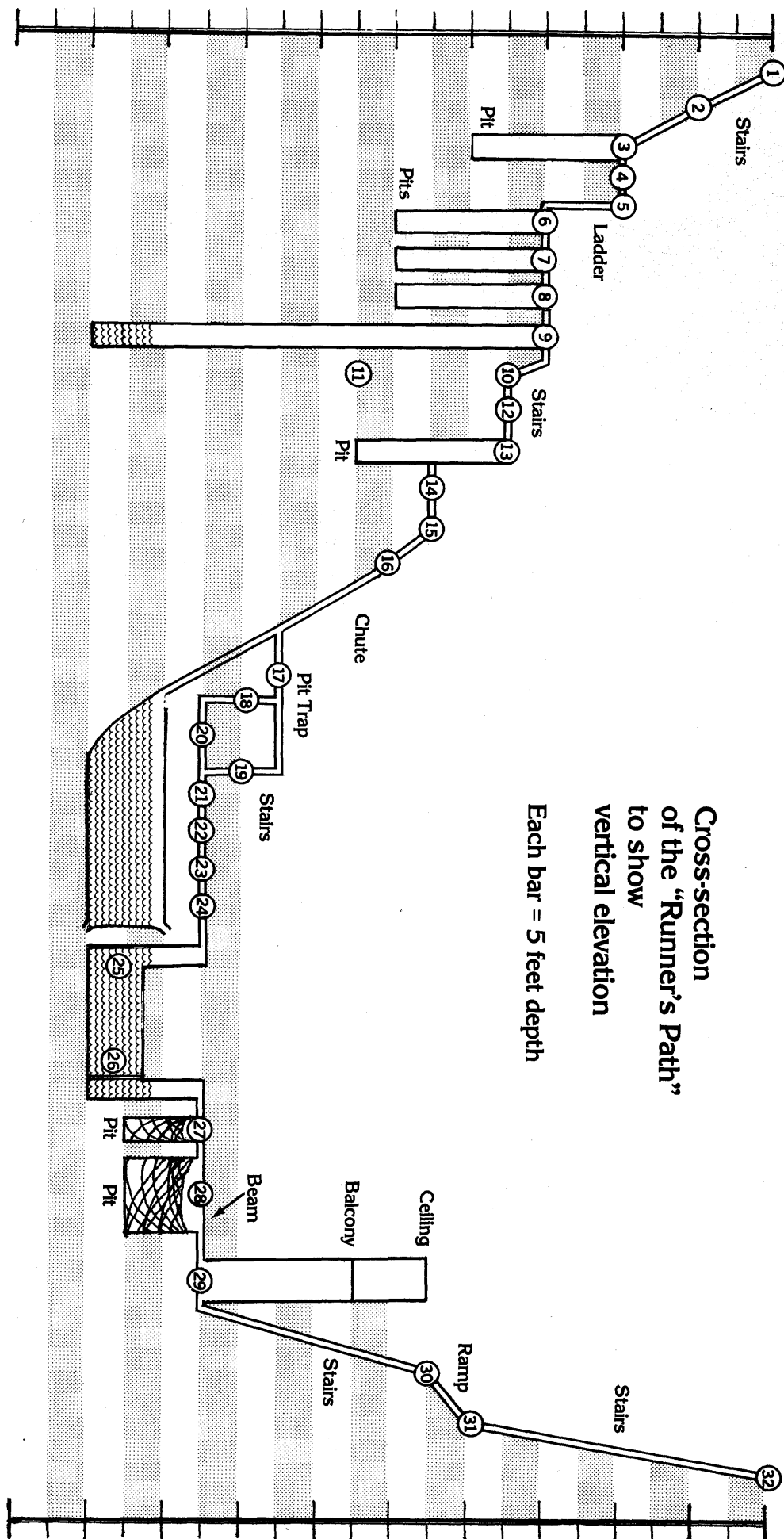
Wizard Lock spell). Behind it, a *Magic Mouth* spell speaks instructions. A runner is usually instructed to eavesdrop upon this faint muttering, and report what he can remember of it upon completing his Run.

23) A triple crossbow fires through three ports in the wall down the length of the hallway, 2½ feet off the ground. The crossbow fires a salvo rack of three bolts every two rounds, rotating to the next rack when one is exhausted. The present version is activated by the triggering of the portcullis in area 21, begins firing one round after the portcullis falls and has eight racks. (The mechanism will not operate automatically if the portcullis trap is not tripped.) These racks can be loaded with various projectiles: padded bolts, the aforementioned paint-bomb darts, sleep-poisoned darts (see area 20), standard "war bolts" (heavy crossbow bolts), even flaming bolts. These last two types of ammunition are used only in defense of the guild headquarters, during which time the crossbow would be manned continually (the operators can load empty racks as the machine fires full ones, can speed up the firing rate to two racks per round if they are nimble, and can keep the crossbow firing continually until its ammunition is exhausted). The weapon must be manned if it is to fire flaming projectiles, since someone must touch them alight just before the weapon fires. The firing ports are 2-inch-diameter holes bored through the 6-inch stone wall.

24) The door at this location is trapped; a runner who does not have a healthy distrust of doors by this point in his Run deserves all he gets. The door is of wood, sheathed and strapped with iron bolted on, and it is electrically charged (due to two metal tanks containing captive electric eels, and a clanging bar in each tank which is connected to the door and activated by the weight of someone stepping into the 10-foot-square area in front of it). The conducted jolt does 1-8 points of damage.

25) The Waterways: The electrically charged door opens into a shaft whose bottom is 15 feet down. Water just over eight feet deep overlies it, opening into a seven-foot-high, water-filled passage supplied through nine 1-inch-diameter holes in the ceiling with water from the sewers. This passage is connected to the "canal" (see area 9) via three 6-inch-wide pipes. The long, elbow-crooked passage must be swum in a single breath, unless a swimmer devises ways of storing air in helms, waterproof sacks, cupped clothing, or wineskins.

26) At the far end of the Waterways is a locked iron grating. The lock is large and simple to force open or pick, but a



Cross-section
of the "Runner's Path"
to show
vertical elevation

swimmer must locate it quickly and work deftly in the darkness to ensure survival. The grating swings away to the left when unfastened, allowing access to a rough-walled shaft (see area 27). Grating and frame are fashioned of greased steel; in the frame above the grating, nineteen grooves are scratched — one for each runner who has died here.

27) From the water, a runner must climb up 10 feet inside a wet, rough stone shaft to emerge in this chamber. An experienced or successful runner may encounter a barehanded human foe or a blunt-toothed dog here, with orders to keep the runner down in the water and not allow passage onward. Trainers can quickly reach an unconscious, drowning runner via this room, and it contains yet another trap for ongoing runners. The door to area 28 has a pull-ring to open it, and this ring must be turned twice around to the right to disconnect the trap. If this is not done, a pull outward on the ring will cause the floor in front of the door (a 4-foot-square area) to collapse downward, dumping the runner into a 10-foot-deep pit in which are suspended a net of criss-crossing, rubber-like cords. Anyone trapped here will be unhurt, and should (once he masters the art of movement in this springy, shifting environment) easily win free of the pit, the floor of which will swing back up into place when no weight is in the web.

28) This chamber contains a 4-inch-wide wooden beam stretching 20 feet from the entry door to a ledge, spanning a huge 10-foot-deep pit which is filled with criss-crossing, stretched rubber strands, as in area 27. A runner may have to get past a creature guarding the beam and/or firing missiles from the ledge. The beam is removable, and this room is often used to train or practice hand-to-hand fighting amid obstructions, firing missiles or catching objects on unsteady footing, and such activities.

29) This chamber serves as an arena for many combats between runners and trainers. It is always at least dimly lit by a light similar to *Faerie Fire*, and more often is brilliantly illuminated by a *Continual Light* spell cast upon the 35-foot-high ceiling. A balcony supported by four smooth stone pillars (indicated on the map by dots) stands 20 feet above the floor. From this platform, archers often fire down upon a runner with padded shafts or paint-bomb darts, while protected by a 3-foot-high parapet. Alternatively, target dummies or armored trainers may walk the balcony, impersonating sentries or street strollers, and a runner is ordered to “kill” one with a paint-bomb dart (see area 12) and escape before the target’s fellows can strike him with return fire. Various obstacles and common street objects are often

placed in this chamber so that the use of “cover” can be practiced. Teams of runners may be matched against other guild members who pose as guards, with orders to protect an object or a dummy in area 11 or elsewhere on the balcony, perhaps with a time limit on their success, or with an alarm gong present that the attacking runners must prevent the defenders from sounding. The Guildmaster has shown a devilish inventiveness in devising new encounters and uses for this room.

30) From area 29, a steep, twisting flight of stairs climbs 30 feet to a room which usually contains a chest or chests with intricate locks, poison-gas traps, and the like. Over the entry door is a ledge, which may support a tripwire-activated crossbow trained on such a chest, or the ledge may be the locale of a threatening encounter with a creature or group of creatures. Spiders, stirges, or other such beasts work well for this purpose. The far (exit) door of the room is often intricately locked.

31) From area 30, a corridor slopes upward 5 feet until it reaches a false trap — a stone block upon which a *Leomund’s Trap* spell has been placed rests upon several inches of woven matting, so that it will sink slightly when stepped upon. Nothing else will happen here, unless the Guildmaster has added something special for the Run in question; this toothless “trap” is sometimes used to train novices in recognizing and avoiding pitfall traps in various conditions (such as darkness). In this case, the novice and trainers enter the area by coming directly down the stairs (at area 32) from the Waiting Room.

32) From the corridor, stairs rise 40 feet to this door, which opens into the Waiting Room. Sometimes the Guildmaster will have a *Symbol* cast upon the portal (one of pain or hopelessness, usually — although it is feared that those who anger the Guildmaster may encounter the *symbol* for insanity here, or something worse), to test the runner one last time. The door is never locked, and opens into the Waiting Room (area 1).

E) Western access area: This and the other access areas described below are off limits to all but trainers or others who have reason (according to the Guildmaster) to occupy the passages. This corridor runs west from the northeast corner of the Waiting Room, dropping 15 feet and 10 feet in two flights of stairs before opening onto facilities related to the Run (refer to C above), and into the Run itself (via the secret door at area 4).

It then turns south, drops another 10 feet, crosses the canal on a low (3-foot-high) parapeted bridge, offers access to the archer’s cubicle (area 12), and ends

in a shaft connected to the canal, where a rope ladder is fixed to two iron rings set into the rim. This ladder is kept rolled up unless in use.

F) Central access area: This passage leaves the Waiting Room by a secret door in the southeast corner and drops 55 feet by stairs to a secret door opening onto the balcony above area 29.

The passage runs on and behind the balcony, turning south before meeting a door opening onto the gallery at area 11. From there it continues via a secret door east and south, crossing the canal with another 3-foot-high parapeted bridge, and turns west to enter the bottom of the “drop-shaft” (area 13) via a secret door. This allows access to trainers and workers for repair of the fabric-and-pine-bough cushion, and the rescue of unfortunate runners who missed the window. Often, if these are novices, they will be blindfolded and disoriented by lifting them clear of the ground and spinning or turning them about for part of the journey, to prevent them knowing too much of the “backstage” areas of the Run until they have gained more training.

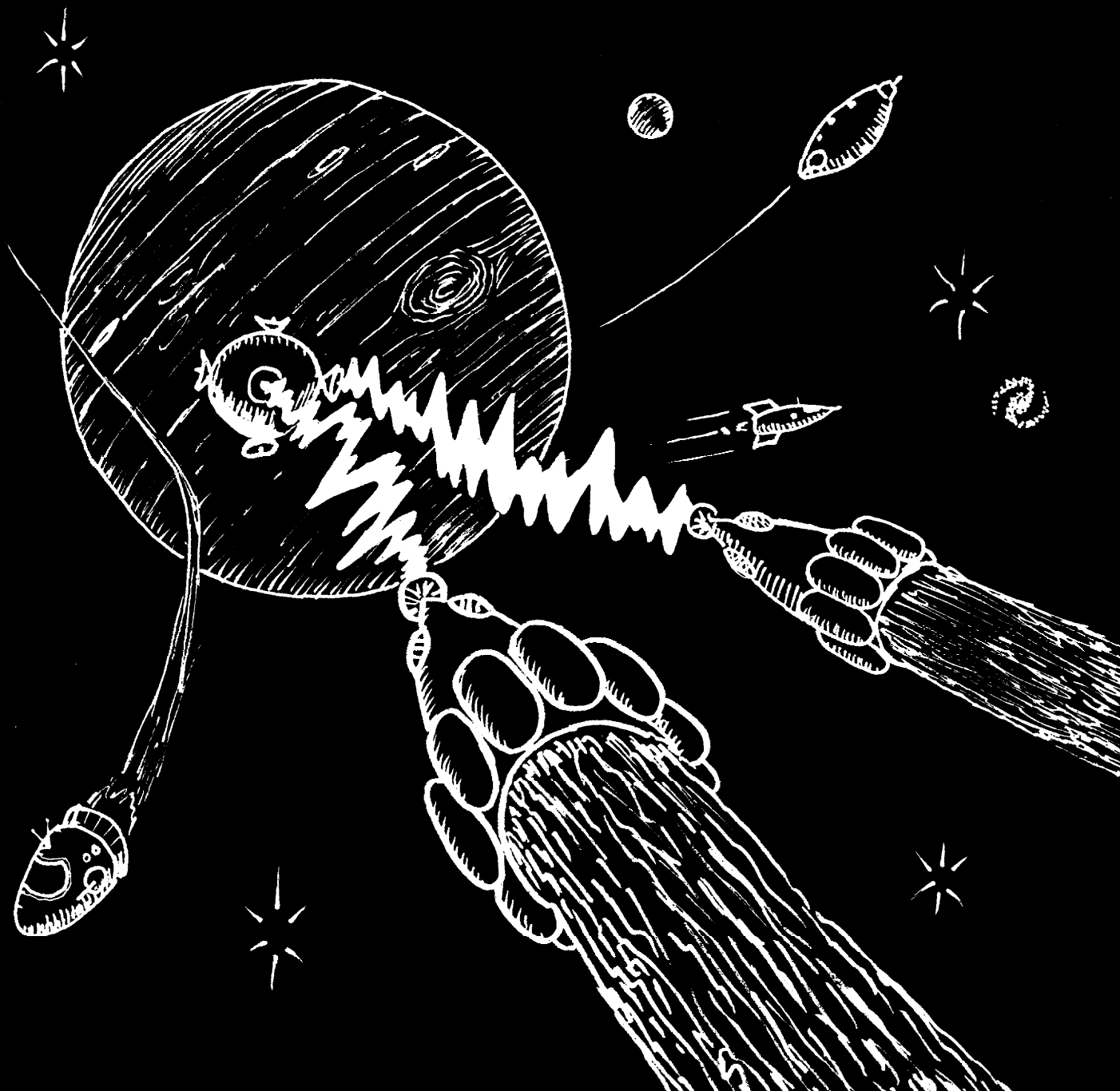
The Winch Room (see area 21) and another corridor open off this route; this other corridor leads to pens (marked “P” on the map) for creatures such as stirges and trained dogs that may be used in the Run. These, of course, can also be used as cells for prisoners or hideaways for hunted guild members.

A trapdoor with an overhead sling (marked “S”) opens 20 feet down into the Run corridor between areas 22 and 23 which lie below, serving to release or take up creatures or trainers from or into the Run. The corridor also opens onto a 20-foot-long stairway down into a 10-foot-square room containing the triple crossbow (area 23) and racks of its ammunition, affording room for two or at the most three operators.

G) Eastern access corridor: This is simply a stair leading from the Waiting Room (assassins sometimes refer to this latter jokingly as the “waiting tomb”) via a secret door, to a landing and then down 75 feet to a one-way, counter-weighted secret door (a block of wood is kept at the bottom step to prop this door open when necessary). This door opens into area 27 for rescues, the entry of trainers into the Run to serve as opponents, and so on.

The Run may have more or different features than those shown here, as a DM wishes. It would be a relatively simple matter to alter the configuration of some section of the Run to incorporate a favorite trap, and many such changes could be made without needing to alter the accompanying maps at all — an especially advisable tactic if players have previously examined this article.

PLANET BUSTERS





PLANET BUSTERS

Introduction

It is the far distant future. The planets around the sun have been tamed and colonized by humans. Unfortunately, the interplanetary government has grown corrupt and feeble. Power groups are marshalling their forces in efforts to gain control of the worlds and the warships with which to hold them. Players are the leaders of these factions... all seeking to bring the most planets under their control. It will be a desperate struggle, and no one knows who will win!

Game Parts

Your PLANET BUSTERS game should contain the following:

- 4 Sphere of Influence cards
- 1 rules booklet
- Several 10-sided dice (or 20's numbered 1-10 twice); the optional rules also require some 6-sided dice
- 98 cardboard playing pieces, or counters, consisting of:
 - 9 Planets (numbered 1-9)
 - 9 scouts
 - 6 Zersters
 - 6 Conicles
 - 3 Baycruz
 - 3 Dranauts
 - 2 Deathons
 - 3 Tugs
 - 5 Planet Busters (3,4,5,6,7)
 - 2 Armoured Satellites
 - 1 Tanker
 - 1 Fuel Station
 - 24 Fuel
 - (3 each, numbered 3-10)
 - 2 Spies
 - 2 Mutinies
 - 2 Sabotages
 - 2 Meteor Storms
 - 1 Halley's Comet
 - 1 Peace Treaty
- Advanced game pieces:
 - 2 Chaff
 - 2 Mines
 - 1 Blue Bolt
 - 1 Reflector
 - 2 Torpedo Stations
 - 2 Whirlers
 - 2 Colonies
 - 2 Screen Satellites
- 4 cut-and-fold racks for counters

A game for 2-4 players

by Tom Wham
& Jim Ward

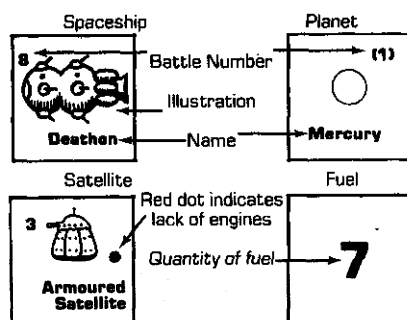
Preparation

Carefully remove your copy of PLANET BUSTERS from the center of this issue of DRAGON™ Magazine. Before you cut them out, glue the playing pieces to heavy stock (such as crescent board). You may also use self-adhesive vinyl (not asphalt) floor tile, which yields excellent plastic-backed pieces.

The Sphere of Influence cards and the folding racks do not need to be mounted; simply cut them apart. Fold the racks along the solid lines.

The pieces tinted light blue are for use with the advanced game. Do not use these when first learning to play.

Playing Pieces



The Battle Number is used when ships and/or satellites are in combat. If a Battle Number is in parentheses (), it represents a defensive value only: the piece may not attack.

There are also several special pieces which bring unusual events into play. These are described later.

Setting Up

Each player takes a Sphere of Influence card. During the game, the ships, satellites, and planets of a player are melded (placed) and organized within and around his or her Sphere of Influence.

Be sure to set aside the counters for the advanced game. Then take all of the remaining counters except the Peace Treaty, turn them face down in the center of the table, and mix them like dominoes. These counters are called the Deck. Place the Peace Treaty face up at the side of the table. This will become the Discard Area.

You may find it more convenient to place the Deck in a coffee cup or small bowl; this prevents experienced players from identifying the backsides of the pieces.

Each player draws 6 pieces from the Deck to form his or her hand. A player's hand is kept hidden from view, either in a rack or face down on the table, near his Sphere of Influence card.

Roll the dice. The player who rolls the highest number goes first. Play proceeds clockwise around the table.

Sequence of Play

PLANET BUSTERS is played in successive turns called Player-Turns. During a Player-Turn, the player draws 2 pieces from the Deck and adds them to his hand. He may then meld pieces from his hand into his Sphere of Influence. The player then has the option of sending his space fleet to attack the Sphere of one other player. After space combat (if any), the player's ships return to his Sphere. If, at this time, the player has more than 6 pieces in his hand, he must discard until his hand totals only 6. This completes a Player-Turn.

OUTLINE OF A PLAYER-TURN

1. DRAW
2. MELD (optional)
3. ATTACK (optional)
4. DISCARD (if necessary)

Play proceeds until all counters have been drawn from the Deck. At this time,

all pieces in the Discard Area, including the Peace Treaty, are turned upside down and mixed to form a new Deck. The game now continues as before, but ends as soon as anyone draws the Peace Treaty.

The Draw

At the beginning of his turn, a player draws two pieces from the Deck. When a player melds a planet into his Sphere of Influence, he may draw two additional pieces from the Deck. During the second half of the game (after the Peace Treaty is mixed into the Deck), a player may only draw one additional piece when he melds a planet.

A player may meld any number of planets in a turn and may continue to draw extra pieces until he stops melding new planets.

When the Deck is exhausted, all the discards and the Peace Treaty are reshuffled to form a new Deck. Any player who was unable to complete a draw does so as soon as the new Deck is ready.

How to Meld

After drawing, a player may meld some, all, or none of the pieces from his hand into his Sphere of Influence.

Space ships and satellites are melded face down. These must be placed in a single row around the outer edge of the Sphere of Influence.

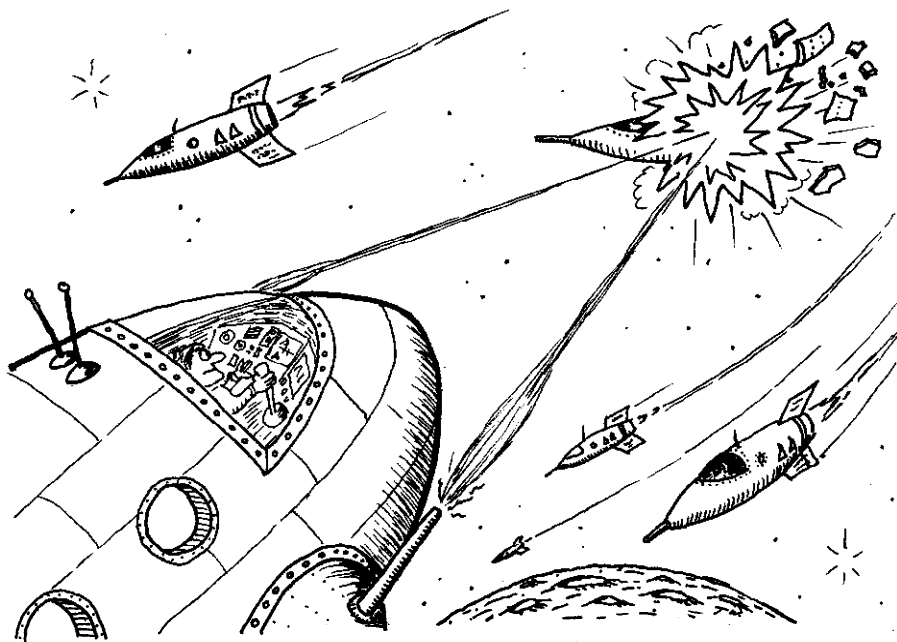
Planets are melded face up in the center of the Sphere. For each planet melded, a player draws one or two additional pieces; see "The Draw."

Planet Busters, Fuel counters, and special pieces are never melded. These must be kept in a player's hand until they are used or discarded.

Example of melding: It is Ernie's first turn. In his hand are 2 Scouts, 1 Fuel counter, 2 Planet Busters, and 1 Planet counter, Mercury. In the draw, he gets another Fuel counter and an Armoured Satellite. Ernie decides to meld Mercury, and places it face up in the center of his Sphere of Influence. Since it is the first half of the game, he now draws 2 more counters from the deck because he melded a planet. He draws another Scout, and the planet Saturn.

Ernie now has 9 pieces in his hand. To bring this number down to 6 (the most a player may keep in his hand at the end of a turn), he decides to meld two of his Scouts and the Armoured Satellite. He places these face down around the outer edge of his Sphere. He could, at this time, also meld Saturn and draw two more counters, but decides against such a move so early in the game.

Since no other player has melded anything, Ernie cannot attack. His hand now contains 6 pieces, so he does not need to discard. This ends his turn.



Attack

In his turn, a player may choose to launch an attack against the forces of one other player. The attack may be made with space ships, towed satellites, and Planet Busters. The following sequence describes the manner in which an attack is conducted:

1. For each ship sent to attack, the player must expend at least one unit of fuel. Once this ship reaches the defender, it requires another unit of fuel in order to fire its weapons. Planet Busters do not need fuel.

The attacker puts the Fuel counter (or counters) to be used face up, along with all attacking ships, in the center of the table. He then announces who is being attacked. Attacking ships may come from a player's Sphere, or may be played directly from his hand. Planet Busters must be played from the hand.

2. The defending player now has the opportunity to play special counters, such as Mutiny or Sabotage, against the attacking fleet. The defending player may not meld any additional ships or satellites into his Sphere at this time.

3. The attacker now places his ships, one at a time, next to the face-down ships of the defender. As the ships are paired up, each defending ship is turned over to reveal its strength (see "Scouts and Scouting"). Once ships are paired up, they are committed to fire only at each other. More than one ship may attack a single defender. Not all of the defender's counters need be attacked.

4. Once all attacking ships have been lined up against defenders, the defending player may play one or more Fuel counters to enable his ships to return fire. One fuel unit is required for each ship that fires. Only those ships which have been

attacked may return fire. The defending player places the Fuel counter(s) to be used (if any) in the center of the table.

5. The attacking player may now play special tiles against the ships of the defender.

Combat

1. Each pairing of attacking/defending ships is considered a separate battle. Combat is resolved one battle at a time. The attacking player determines the order in which battles are fought,

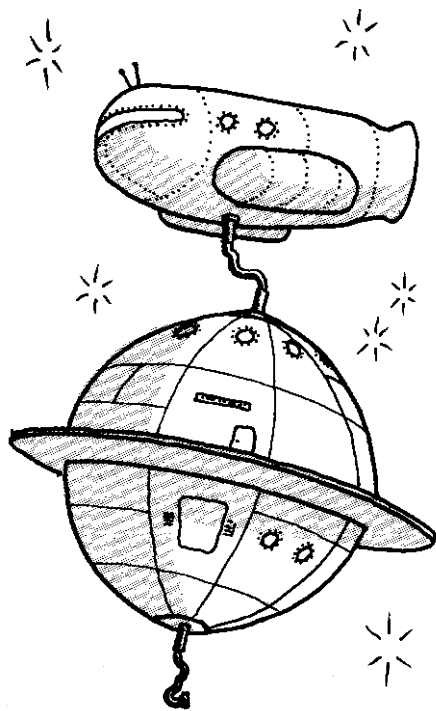
2. The effect of weapon fire is determined by a roll of the 10-sided die. A result of 1—5 eliminates the target. Each ship in a battle may roll the die once, provided the owner paid enough fuel points.

3. The combat die roll is modified by the difference between the Battle Number of the firing ship and the Battle Number of the target ship. If the number of the firing ship is greater than the number of the target ship, the difference is subtracted from the die roll. If the number of the firing ship is smaller than the number of the target ship, the difference is added to the die roll.

4. No matter how great the die roll modification, a result of "1" is always a hit (target destroyed), and a result of "0" (or "10") is always a miss. Thus, even a lowly Scout can wipe out the mighty Deathon.

5. Combat is simultaneous. If a ship is destroyed in a battle, it still gets to fire before it is removed from play. The defending player may choose his target if one of his pieces is attacked by more than one ship.

6. Once all battles have been resolved, the attack is over and all attacking ships must return to their home Sphere. All expended fuel is placed in the Discard Area, along with any ships destroyed during combat.



Capturing a Planet

1. If the attacking player eliminates all ships and satellites around the defender's Sphere — or if there were none to begin with — he may attempt to capture one planet from within the defender's Sphere. Each ship in the attack may roll one die against the target planet.

2. If the attacker has defeated enemy ships in this turn, he must pay additional fuel points to enable his ships to attack planets. He may pay more fuel from his hand if none remains face up.

3. Match the Battle Number(s) of the firing ship(s) with the point value of the target planet, as in ship-to-ship combat. Planets may not fire back. If a hit is scored on a planet, it is captured by the attacker rather than destroyed.

4. A captured planet is placed in the attacker's Sphere of Influence. Only one planet may be captured by a player in a turn. Once any planet is captured, the battle ends.

Planet Buster Attack

After all ship-to-ship combat is completed, any Planet Busters which the attacker revealed may now attack. If more than one Planet Buster is face up, more than one planet may be attacked.

Place each Planet Buster on a target planet. Compare the number of the planet with the number of the Planet Buster, and roll a die as in ship-to-ship combat. If a hit is scored, the planet is destroyed; place it in the Discard Area.

Once a Planet Buster has made its attack, it is discarded.

Fuel

Fuel is represented in the game by numbered counters. Each Fuel counter contains from 3 to 10 units of fuel.

Fuel must be expended for ships to move and for ships to fire their weapons. One unit of fuel enables one ship to move through space (to another Sphere). One unit of fuel enables a ship to fire its weapons in combat.

Fuel counters are kept in a player's hand until they are used. There is no "change." If a player uses a Fuel counter with more units than needed, the excess fuel is lost.

If a player has excess fuel face up and succeeds in eliminating all ships in an opponent's Sphere, the excess may be used by ships which fire on planets (see "Capturing a Planet").

The Tanker and the Fuel Station

One Tanker and one Fuel Station are provided in the playing pieces. When melded around a player's Sphere, they provide an unlimited supply of fuel.

A Tanker or Fuel Station must be revealed if it is to provide fuel for defensive fire (in the advanced game, this makes it vulnerable to torpedo attack). They may provide fuel even if they are fired upon by enemy ships. They have a defensive value of (1) and may not attack.

A Tanker may move with an attacking fleet and thereby provide all the fuel needed for that fleet to move and fire weapons. It need not be paired up against an enemy ship. (In the advanced game, a Tanker may be fired upon by defending torpedoes.)

A Fuel Station may provide fuel for ships to move to an opponent's Sphere, but may not provide fuel for the attacks made there. However, a Fuel Station may be towed to battle by a Tug, in which case it functions as a Tanker.

If a Tanker or a towed satellite is turned back by a special piece (such as a Meteor Storm) while providing fuel for an attack, other ships must also turn back if no other source of fuel is available. (In the advanced game, other ships may continue to the enemy Sphere to fire torpedoes). If a Tanker which was the source of a player's fuel is turned back, the attacker may play one or more Fuel counters from his hand to sustain his attack.

Rearranging After Combat

Once ships and satellites have been melded around the edge of a player's Sphere, they may not be returned to the

player's hand. Ships and satellites are normally kept face down, and their positions may not be changed.

After a combat, many or all of a player's ships will have been turned face up. Ships and satellites may be turned face down and rearranged around a Sphere on two occasions:

1. After a player's ships return from combat,
2. After a player's ships have been revealed by combat.

Scouts and Scouting

Scouts, in addition to being combat ships, are the only ships which can perform scouting missions.

When a Scout is paired up against a face-down ship in an opponent's Sphere, the enemy ship is revealed. The Scout may then reveal one ship on one side or the other of the ship to which it was paired. Each Scout may reveal only one additional ship.

If a ship revealed in this manner by a Scout is not otherwise attacked during combat, it may return fire at that Scout.

Tugs and Towing

Satellites do not ordinarily move. Once placed in the Sphere, they remain in place. A player may, however, use a Tug to tow a satellite into combat against another player's Sphere.

One Tug is required for each satellite to be moved. While under tow, the Tug and tow are treated as though they were one ship. They utilize one fuel unit when moving or firing, and are considered to be one target in combat.

To determine the defense value of a Tug and tow, total their Battle Numbers and divide by two (round fractions down). If the Tug and tow are hit in battle, the player must roll a die to determine which is destroyed. If the result is an odd number, the Tug is destroyed. If the result is an even number, the satellite is destroyed.

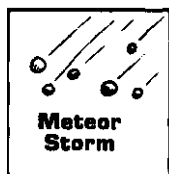
If the Tug is destroyed, the satellite can't move and is left behind (captured by the defending player). A newly captured satellite must be taken into the capturing player's hand (even if this increases the player's hand to more than 6 counters).

Special Pieces

There are 9 special pieces which may be used by players just before combat. The defender has the first chance to use special counters. They may be played after the attacker declares his attack, reveals the ships which are attacking, and commits fuel for the attack.

The attacker may use special counters after his ships have paired off against those of the defender, but before any battles are resolved.

Aside from the above restrictions, players may use any number of special pieces during an attack.



Meteor Storm

METEOR STORM — Only usable by the defender. Interferes with the navigation of attacking ships. Roll a die for each attacking ship. If the result is an even number, the ship may continue with its attack. If the result is an odd number, the ship must return to its home Sphere.



Halley's Comet

HALLEY'S COMET — Only usable by the defender. This cosmological event causes a stir. All attackers must return to their home Sphere for further orders.



Sabotage

SABOTAGE — Usable by both players. Your agents have slipped into the opponent's fleet, and will try to destroy the enemy ship of your choice. Roll a die; if the result is an even number, the attempt fails. If the result is an odd number, the enemy ship is destroyed.



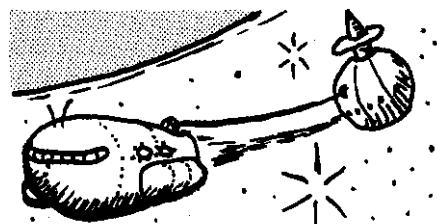
Mutiny

MUTINY — Usable by both players. Angry hot-heads attempt to take over the enemy ship of your choice. Roll a die. If the result is an even number, the mutiny fails. If the result is an odd number, the ship immediately joins your navy.



Spy

SPY — Only usable by the attacker. Prior to launching your attack, you receive a report on the enemy fleet. Roll a 10-sided die. The result is the number of your opponent's ships which you may turn face up before going in to attack. The Spy counter is an exception to the rule and may be played by the attacker before placing any ships in the center of the table. Any enemy ships revealed by the Spy that are not attacked are turned face down before combat.



The Advanced Game

Once players have mastered the mechanics of the basic game, they may want to go on to the advanced game. It introduces torpedo combat and some specialized ships which add zest to the game (no

detergent intended).

Add the following pieces (tinted light blue) to the game: 2 Chaff, 2 Mines, 1 Blue Bolt, 1 Reflector, 2 Torpedo Stations, 2 Screen Satellites, and 2 Whirlers.

Combat with Torpedoes

1. Laser fire is the type of weapon combat described in the preceding rules. In addition to laser weapons, many ships are armed with torpedoes. Some ships and satellites are armed exclusively with torpedoes. For every "T" printed on a piece, one torpedo may be fired at an enemy target.

2. Torpedo fire occurs after all laser fire has been completed. Any ships which survive laser fire may fire torpedoes.

3. Both players count the number of torpedoes they have available. Players should keep track of these numbers. Although torpedo fire is simultaneous, the attacking player fires all of his torpedoes first, and lost ships are discarded as they are destroyed.

4. Torpedoes are fired, one at a time, at any ship which is face up (this includes Tankers). A player does not have to declare all of his targets in advance. If one ship is destroyed, he may shift his aim to a different ship.

5. To resolve torpedo fire, both players

secretly select a number on a six-sided die and place it face up on the table (but hidden from the opponent's view). When both are ready, the numbers are revealed. If the numbers are the same, the target ship is destroyed. If the numbers are within 1 of each other (i.e., 3 vs. 4 or 5 vs. 6), the torpedo is a possible hit. Any other result is a miss.

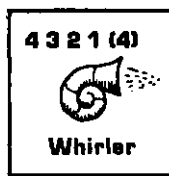
6. After a possible hit, the shooting player rolls a die. If the result is an even number, the torpedo misses. If the result is odd, the target ship is destroyed.

7. This procedure is followed until all the attacker's torpedoes have been fired. Then the defender does the same, using the number of torpedoes counted before the torpedo fire began.

8. Each attack in the advanced game consists of one round of laser fire, followed by one round of torpedo fire. If lasers destroy all defenders around the opponent's Sphere, only one round of torpedo fire is allowed against any defending planets (see "Capturing a Planet").

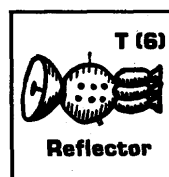
Strange Ships and Satellites

The following pieces are part of the advanced game, but need a bit of explanation for you to understand their use. You may leave them out of the game if they seem too complicated.



Whirler

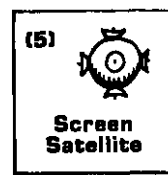
WHIRLER — This ship is able to make four separate attacks while using only one fuel unit. The decreasing numbers (4, 3, 2, 1) indicate the Battle Numbers under which these attacks must be made. The Whirler may only fire at ships with which it is paired. It has a defensive value of (4) at all times.



Reflector

REFLECTOR — This ship carries a giant parabolic dish with which it reflects all lasers that are fired in its direction. A ship which fires its laser at a Reflector also fires at itself. The Reflector can be destroyed by laser fire, as it has a defensive value of (6). However, most ships that roll a number that would destroy the Reflector end up destroying themselves as well!

Example: A Scout is firing at a Reflector. The Scout's Battle Number is 5 less than that of the Reflector, so it can only destroy the Reflector on a roll of 1. Firing at itself (the reflected beam), the die roll is not modified (1 vs. 1), and it will destroy itself if it rolls a 5 or less.



Screen Satellite

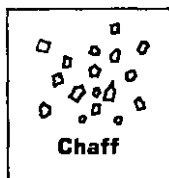
SCREEN SATELLITE — This device creates a strong force field around a player's Sphere. It is only in effect if it is kept face up, or is revealed by an attacking ship. If the screen is in effect, no attacks may be made on any of the defender's ships or satellites until the Screen Satellite is destroyed.

This is only a defense system, and does not fire lasers. An attacker may set up attacks against other targets at the same time as he attacks the screen. If the screen is destroyed, the other attacks may be made. If not, they are wasted and the attack is over. While the screen is in effect, the defender's ships may not fire through it.

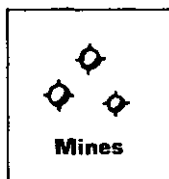
Planet Busters attempting to pass a face-up Screen Satellite must first test

for penetration. Roll a die as though it were a normal laser attack. If the Planet Buster rolls a number that would be a hit, it may pass the screen and go on to attack a planet. The screen itself is not harmed. If the Planet Buster fails the test, it is destroyed.

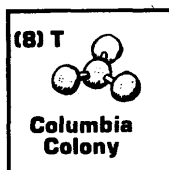
A player may have both screen satellites face up around his sphere. In such a case, Planet Busters would have to test both screens to get past.



CHAFF — Tiny particles of a strange substance are ejected into the combat area. No lasers may be fired during this attack. Chaff does not affect torpedo fire.



MINES — These devices are melded face down along with ships and satellites. When an attacking ship reveals mines, play is halted and the attacker must test for their effect. Roll a die 3 times. If any result is an odd number, the ship is destroyed. Whether or not the mines hit anything, they are discarded after going off. If the attacking ship survives, it may not be repositioned or do anything further during this attack.



(8) T
Columbia Colony
COLONIES — These pieces are melded face up around the outer edge of the sphere, like ships and satellites. Colonies may not be attacked until all other defending ships and satellites have been engaged by at least one enemy ship. Colonies may not move, nor may they be towed by a Tug. A colony cannot be captured. A colony may be attacked by Planet Busters.

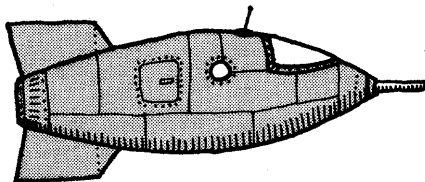
THE COLONY BONUS: For each colony that a player has face up at the beginning of his turn (before the draw), he may draw one extra piece from the deck. Thus, a player with two melded colonies would draw four pieces from the deck during his turn.

Credits

Design: Tom Wham & James M. Ward
Art: Tom Wham
Editor: Kim Mohan

Development, playtesting, and other venerable aid: Rodney Anderson, Mike Bell, Tom Christiansen, Crazy Don Dillulo, Olliver J. Dragon, Ernie Gygax, Rob Kuntz, George Marino, Marc Mohan, Will Niebling, John O'Neill, Roger Raupp, Gali Sanchez, Craig Schumacher, Eric Shook, Marty Smith, Chris and Robert Wham, and some people whose names have disappeared.

SPACE SHIPS OF



MW SCOUT

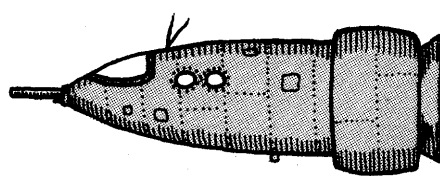
Built between 2257 & 2289 at Moonwerk, some built on Phobos, the rest on the Moon.

STANDARD ARMAMENT: 1 Sedge-wick Laser Projector (obtainable thru the 2303 Edmund Scientific Catalog)

POWERED BY: Avan Knuden's Rocket Gyros (vintage 2202)

BASIC THRUST: 1.28×10^7 N.

SERVICE: Moonwerks Scouts have been purchased by several of the major corporations and Planetary Governments for the exploration of the Asteroids, and in some cases, for use as police patrol vehicles. Three MW Scouts, under the command of the pirate Magolo, gave a good account of themselves in the 2290 rebellion on Titan. They disintegrated an Earth Federation Conicle, and nearly destroyed a Martio Corporation Dranaut, before they were captured.



ZERSTOR

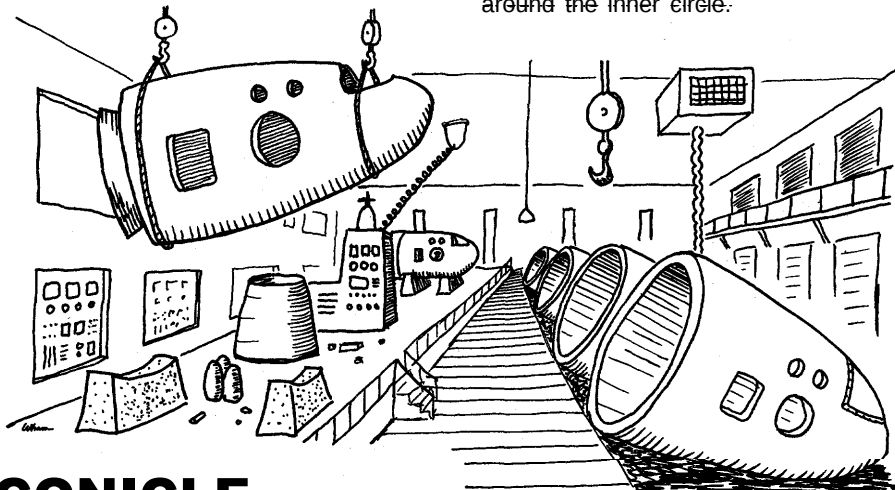
Built in the late 23rd century beneath the great Arconos Corporation Dome on Mercury.

STANDARD ARMAMENT: 1 MK III Laser Cannon (very deadly), 1 RCE-7 Energy Torpedo Launcher.

POWERED BY: Arcono IV Rocket Engines (3 of them), each of which produces 6.4×10^6 N of thrust. Developed under a Mercurian government grant in March of 2225.

BASIC THRUST: 1.92×10^7 N.

SERVICE: Zerstors were built in response to the attempted occupation of Mercury by the right-wing government of Beta Colony at Venus. The Arcono Corporation judged that their fleet of MW Scouts was inadequate for the job of both police patrol and border protection. None have been used in combat, but their mere existence has so far kept the peace around the inner circle.



CONICLE

Built at Moonwerk for the United Earth Federation from 2280 to the present, in answer to the Arcono Zerstor of Mercury.

STANDARD ARMAMENT: 1 MK IV Laser Cannon (modified).

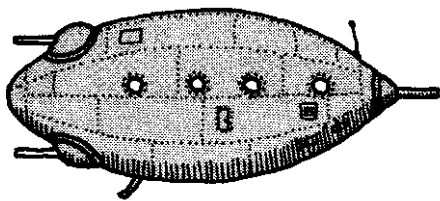
POWERED BY: 2 hybrid Avan Knuden gyros in parallel.

BASIC THRUST: 2.05×10^7 N.

SERVICE: The Conicle was an inevitable development in the ongoing arms race that existed in the 22nd century.

Once the Arconos corporation had the Zerstor, the Earth Government demanded a more powerful ship, and the Conicle was the result. Conicles were first used in anger during the Titan rebellion, where a design flaw was quickly discovered after pirates destroyed the Governor General's flagship. Recent models feature an improved shield, and better damage control procedures. They most recently have served as the standard escort on all ore shipments from the Asteroids to Earth.

THE EARLY 24th CENTURY



BAYCRUZ

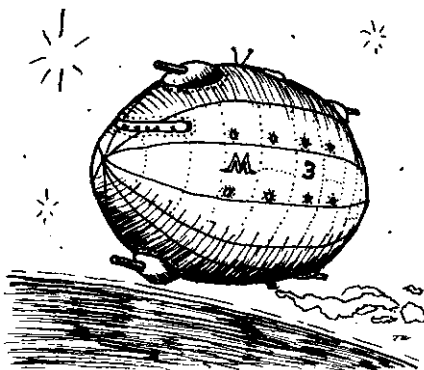
Built from 2280 to the present, at the two major shipyards on Phobos and Demios.

STANDARD ARMAMENT: 2 MK III Laser Cannon and 1 MK IV Laser Cannon (none fitted with torpedoes).

POWERED BY: Systvyent AR-3 Gravity Disruptors (Martian design).

BASIC THRUST: 3.62×10^7 N.

SERVICE: Martio Corporation began construction of the Baycruz once their role as the major protector of law and order in the Belt was clearly established by the Peace of Olympus (2279), which ended the Fourth Solar War. Handy sailers, they are admired most for their dependable engines and uncrowded crew spaces.



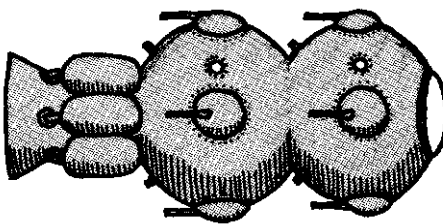
DRANAUT

Built from 2288 to the present at Demios Shipyards.

STANDARD ARMAMENT: Early models, 4 MK III Laser Cannon; after 2290, 4 MK IV Laser Cannon.

POWERED BY: Systvyent AR-4 (two AR-3's in series) Gravity Disruptors.

SERVICE: Alarmed by the increase in pirate activity in the late 80's, the Martio Board of Directors unanimously ordered a more powerful version of the Baycruz. The result was the Dranaut. Despite protests from the other corporations, the program was rushed to completion, and the first unit was of great assistance during the Pirate Rebellion of 2290.



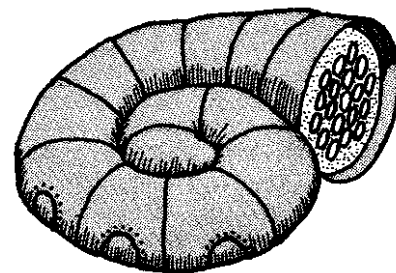
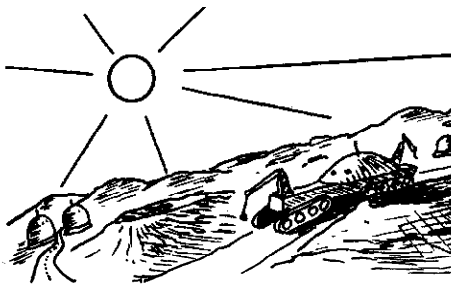
DEATHON

Built under a veil of secrecy, at Moonwerk, unknown to the Earth Federation government.

STANDARD ARMAMENT: 2 ECCL Matter Disassemblers, 1 MK IV Laser Cannon.

POWERED BY: ECCL Gravity Disruptor (copied from Martian designs).

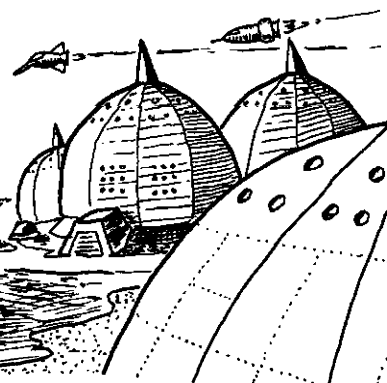
SERVICE: The Deathon was conceived by the design board of Moonwerk, and authorized as a Top Secret project by its president, M. J. Ward (also the designer of the subsequently famous starship Warden, which disappeared without a trace). Moonwerk hoped, that by building the nearly invulnerable Deathon, that the Earth Federation would come in line with the political views of the Moon, and at the same time destroy the Martian superiority in warships. No Deathon saw service before the current war.



WHIRLER

The origin of the Whirler remains a mystery to this day. Two of them were discovered on the frozen surface of Pluto by the Columbia Colony when it first arrived there in 2130. Apparently built for human-sized creatures, the Whirlers powered up and responded to the thought patterns of those who explored them.

SERVICE: Once the operation of the Whirler was understood, the Columbia Colony made good use of them in protecting their own interests. Because of their Whirlers, and the remoteness of Pluto, the Columbia Colony has achieved virtual independence. It managed to stay out of planetary affairs until the current war.



Major Powers as of 2305

Martio Corporation: Government of Mars and its moons; most powerful force in the asteroids; rulers of Titan; makers of the Blue Bolt, Baycruz, and Dranaut.

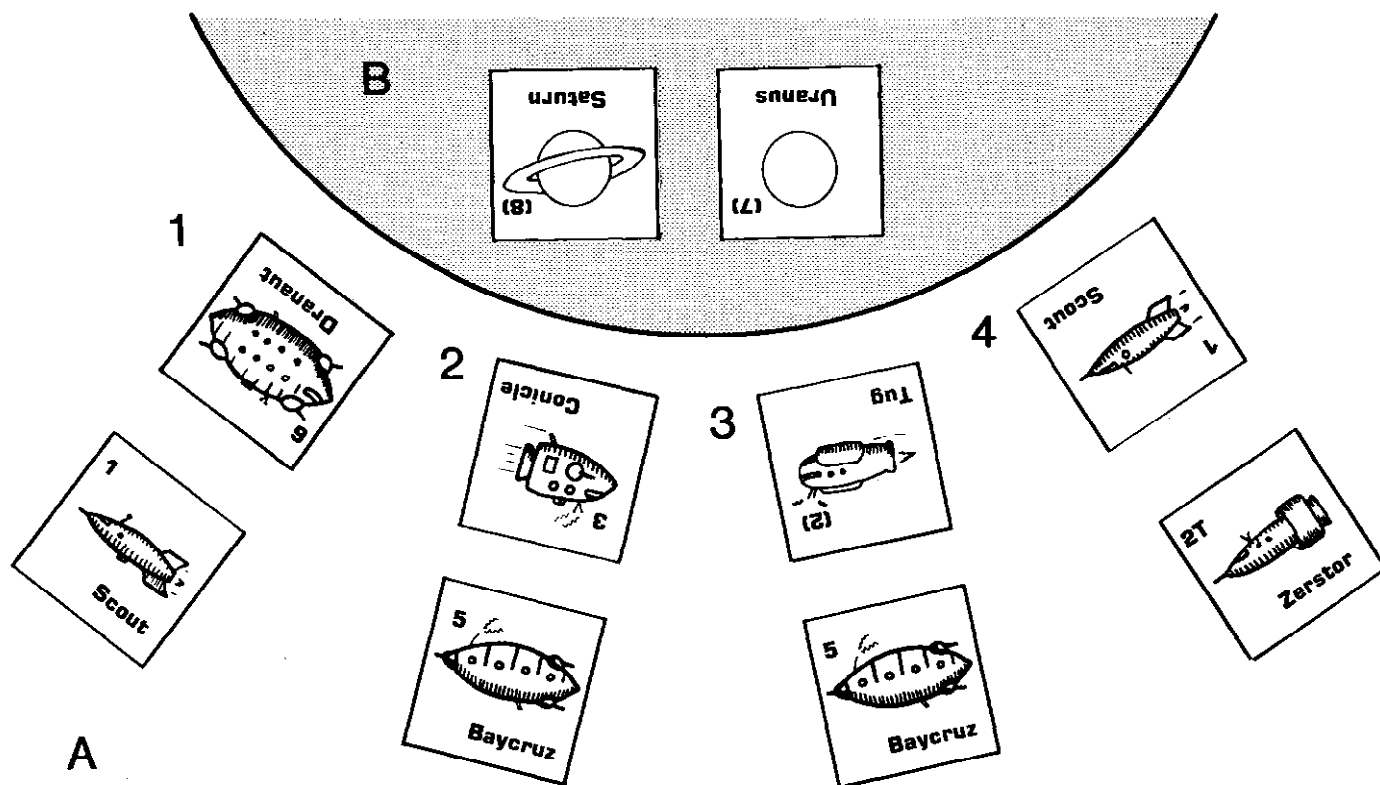
Earth Federation: Reformed government of Earth and the Moon, somewhat weak in the fact that it does not have total control of its component factions; manufacturers of the MW Scout, the Conicle, and secret constructors of the Deathon (a project of Moonwerk).

Arconos Corporation: The powerful holders of all the domed cities of Mercury, where the Zerstor and the Blue Bolt are manufactured.

Beta Colony of Venus: The great orbiting stations of Venus were banded together under the iron hand of Emperor Napoleon of Beta Colony, in the mid-22nd century, and have been a menace to all other organized governments in the solar system ever since.

The Asteroid Pirates: At various times during the exploration and exploitation of the Asteroids, bands of unincorporated squatters have occupied lesser-known regions of the Belt. Though the major corporate governments seek to eradicate such states, the sheer size of the belt serves to make such efforts difficult if not impossible.

Example of combat



The illustration shows an attack by player A against player B. Player A has decided to send all ships in his sphere against those of player B. Player A revealed 2 Fuel counters from his hand, a 2 and a 7. This provides a total of 9 fuel — enough to move four ships and to fire four ships with 1 fuel left over (there is no “change”).

Player A first moves a Scout against ship #1, turns it over, and discovers a Dranaut. The Scout (see Scouting rules) uses its special ability to discover the identity of ship #2, which turns out to be a Conicle. Player A sends his Zerstor to investigate ship #4, turns it over, and finds a Scout. Player A now sends a Baycruz against the Conicle at #2, and another Baycruz against ship #3, which turns out to be a hapless Tug.

Player A was not required to attack every ship in player B's sphere but opted to do so in an effort to capture a planet. Player A is ready for battle. Player B now has several options. He may decide to play a Chaff counter from his hand. If this is done the battle is over, all expended fuel is lost, and player A's ships return to their sphere. If player B has no chaff and no fuel, he can do nothing and must sit anxiously while being fired upon. Finally, player B may play at least a 3-point Fuel counter (he has three ships capable of firing) and return fire at player A's ships. It turns out that player B has a 3-point Fuel counter and plays it at this time. Combat is ready to be resolved.

Battle #1

Player A's Scout is to fire on a Dranaut. The Scout's attack value (1) is compared to the Dranaut's defense value (6), leaving a difference of -5. Therefore, 5 will be added to the Scout's attack die roll. Since a target can only be destroyed on a roll of 1 thru 5 it would seem impossible for the Scout to hit the Dranaut. But a roll of a 1 is always a hit in this game, so the Scout can destroy the Dranaut by rolling a 1. Conversely, the Dranaut can only miss the Scout by rolling a 0. In this example, the Scout rolls a 4, which becomes a 9, and misses. The Dranaut rolls a 7, which becomes a 2, and destroys the Scout.

Battle #2

Here the Baycruz (attack value 4) attacks the Conicle (defense value 3), rolls a 5, which becomes a 4, and destroys the Conicle. The Conicle returns fire (3 attack vs. 5 defense), rolls a 4, which becomes a 6, and misses (a roll of 1 thru 5 would have been a hit).

Battle #3

The Tug cannot fire. The Baycruz subtracts 2 from its attack die roll because of the difference between its attack value and the Tug's defense value. It rolls a 7, which becomes a 5, and destroys the Tug.

Battle #4

The Scout, with 1 added to its die roll, rolls a 1, which is always a hit anyway, and destroys the Zerstor. The Zerstor, with 1 deducted from its roll, rolls a 6 and so barely destroys the Scout.

This concludes combat, since all ships have had one round of fire. Player A must return his ships to his sphere. He has not destroyed all ships around the edge of player B's sphere and does not have a chance to capture any planets. If player A's Scout had destroyed player B's Dranaut, player A would then have been allowed to expend the 1 fuel he had not yet utilized and, if he desired, to play another Fuel counter so that all three of his surviving ships could attack planets for capture.

Sequence of Play

1. DRAW
2. MELD (optional)
3. ATTACK (optional)
4. DISCARD (if necessary)



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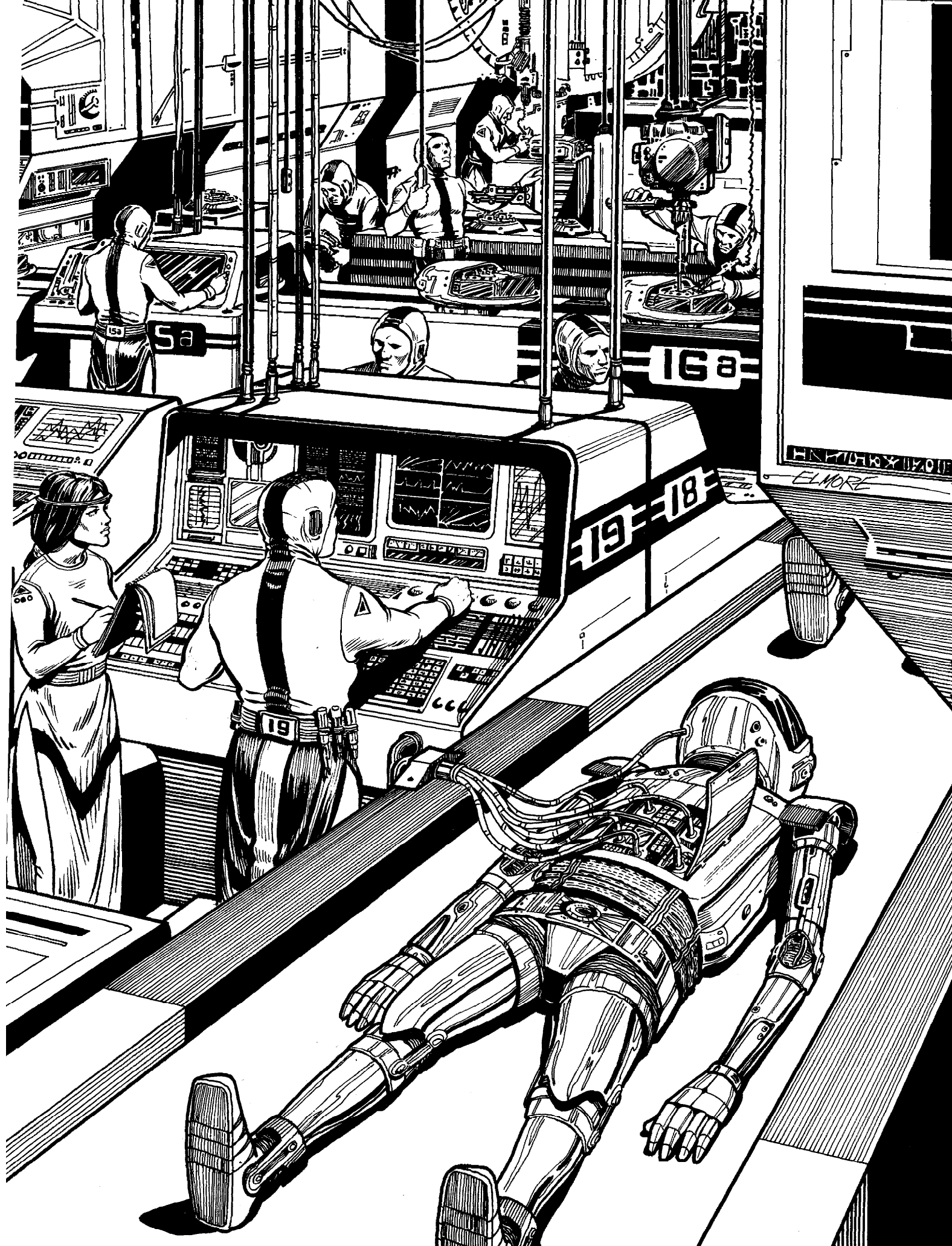
Tom Robertson

Tom Robertson
RPGA President



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ROBOTS

Mechanical sidekicks for TRAVELLER™ players

by Jon Mattson

The TRAVELLER™ game system thoroughly covers many aspects of technology. However, there is, surprisingly, no procedure in the rules for creating robots, androids, and similar computerized companions. Robots play an integral part in many science fiction stories and should, logically, be equally important in a science fiction game. This article suggests a way to create custom-designed robots for use in a TRAVELLER campaign.

The Universal Robot Profile

Like humans, robots are described by a string of digits and letters that differentiate them from each other, using hexadecimal (base 16) notation. This code is known as the *Universal Robot Profile*, or *URP*.

The first six digits of a robot's URP represent its basic characteristics, which are the same as the six characteristics in a human character's UPP: Strength, Dexterity, Endurance, Intelligence, Education, and Social Standing. Unlike humans, robots do not generate these characteristics by rolling two six-sided dice. Instead, each score is calculated by totalling a number of other factors in the robot's URP (size, number of limbs, programming, and so on). The following table indicates which factors affect each attribute and shows the minimum and maximum scores a robot can have in each characteristic.

Category	Factors	Min	Max
Strength	Shape; Size; Material	1	18(I) ¹
Dexterity	Shape; Size; Limbs	1 ²	15(F)
Endurance	Shape; Size; Material	1	18(I) ¹
Intelligence	Computer Brain	2	20(K) ¹
Education	Programming	0	21(L) ¹
Social Standing	Base score of 2	2	8 ³

¹ — Dexterity lower than 1 indicates that the robot cannot move.

² — Scores above 15 (F) simply follow the same letter pattern; 16 is G, 17 is H, 18 is I, and so on.

³ — This may vary in robot-oriented societies at the referee's discretion.

Some characteristics, particularly Social Standing, may be further modified by the robot's programming.

Other characteristics

The remainder of a robot's URP lists other characteristics such as size, shape, and material. These other characteristics are explained in the following tables, along with costs, minimum Tech Level for manufacturing, and their effects on the six basic characteristics.

Note that the base cost of a robot in credits (CR) is determined by its size, and is modified by size and material. The system will become clear as one progresses through the various tables and reads the checklist at the end of the charts.

1. SHAPE

Code	Shape	Base cost	Tech Level	Str	Dex	End
0	Box/Tank	800	5	+1	-2	+2
1	Cylinder/Bullet	850	6	+1	—	+1
2	Cone	850	6	+1	-2	+2
3	Sphere	900	6	+1	—	+1
4	Plane/Disc	800	7	-1	+1	+1
5	Human top, Box bottom	1500	7	+1	+1	+1
6	Humanoid	1200	7	—	—	2
7	Human ¹	2000	8	—	+3	-1
8	Animal Shape ²	Variable ²	8	—	—	Variable ²
9	Unusual Shape ²	Variable ²	8	—	—	Variable ²

¹ — These robots are commonly known as androids. At the referee's discretion, an android can be made to look exactly like a certain person; however, this will drastically increase the cost of the 'droid (usually at least 200%), and may require a higher Tech Level for manufacturing.

² — This should be fully explained on the robot's design sheet; the cost, Tech Level, and attribute effects of these forms may vary widely, and it is up to the referee to decide what effects each specific form will have.

2. SIZE

Code	Size (ft/meters)	cost Modifier	Tech Level ¹	Str	Dex	End
0	Less than 1'0.3 m	1.0	+2	+4	+3	-4
1	1'0.3 m	0.8	+1	+5	+2	-3
2	2'0.6 m	0.5	—	+6	+1	-2
3	3'0.9 m	0.6	—	+6	+1	-1
4	4'1.2 m	0.8	—	+ 7	—	—
5	5'1.5 m	1.0	—	+ 7	—	—
6	6'1.8 m	1.2	—	+ 8	—	—
7	7'2.1 m	1.5	+1	+9	-1	+1
8	8'2.4 m	1.8	+1	+10	-1	+2
9	9'2.7 m	2.0	+2	+11	-2	+3
A	More than 9'2.7 m ²	2.5	+2	+12	-3	+4

¹ — This is added to the base Tech Level found for Shape.

² — Cost, Tech Level, and attribute effects may vary in extreme cases; the referee must calculate the exact effects of this.

2A. WEIGHT

Although the weight of a robot is not especially important (and it has not been given a space in the URP code), it may be determined by using the following formula:

$$\text{Weight (in kg)} = (\text{Size Code} \times 12)^3 \times \text{Material Code} \times \text{Shape \%} \times 0.000048$$

The Size and Material codes are taken from the URP. The

Shape % is a function of the Shape Code, and is determined by referring to this table:

Shape Code	Shape %
0 or 1	150%
2, 6, or 7	100%
3	125%
4	80%
5	140%
8 or 9	Variable

Thus, a humanoid robot (Shape Code 6) standing 1.8 meters tall (Size Code 6) and having a Material Code of 7, would weigh roughly 125.4 kg. Any weight figure arrived at using this formula is approximate and can be modified as the referee sees fit.

3. MATERIAL

Rather than list all the possible materials a robot could be made from, different codes are used to indicate the relative strength and endurance of a given material, with "0" being the weakest (aluminum, ceramic, and the like) and "9" being the strongest (titanium, for instance). The material a robot is made from may give it "skin" equivalent to armor in some cases, as indicated on the following table.

Code	Armor Equivalent	cost Modifier	Tech Level	Str	End
0	None	0.25	1	-3	+3
1	None	0.4	1	-2	+4
2	Jack — 1	0.6	2	-1	+5
3	Jack	0.8	3	-1	+6
4	Jack	1.0	4	—	+7
5	Mesh	1.2	5	—	+7
6	Mesh	1.4	6	—	+8
7	Cloth ¹	1.6	7	+1	+9
8	Cloth ¹	1.8	8	+2	+10
9	Battledress	2.0	A	+3	+12

¹ — Except where Mesh would be better, in which case use Mesh.

3A: BASIC COST

Once the robot's Shape, Size, and Material have been determined, its basic cost can be calculated by multiplying the Base Cost (for Shape) by the cost modifiers for Size and Material. Thus, a robot with a Shape Code of 4, Size Code of 7, and Material Code of 6 has a basic cost of CR 1680 (800 x 1.5 x 1.4). This basic cost will be further modified by limbs, programming, and other attributes explained hereafter.

4. LIMBS

Code	Limb Type	Number	Tech Level	Dex Cost
0	None	0	—	+1—
1	Interface ¹	1 or 2	7	+3 CR 500/Attachment
2	Interface ¹	3 or 4	7	+3 CR 500/Attachment
3	Interface ¹	5+	8	+3 CR 500/Attachment
4	Tentacle	1	8	+4 CR 750/Tentacle ²
5	Tentacles	2	8	+5 CR 750/Tentacle ²
6	Tentacles	3 or 4	9	+7 CR 750/Tentacle ²
7	Tentacles	5 or 6	9	+9 CR 750/Tentacle ²
8	Tentacles	7+	9	+9 CR 750/Tentacle ²
9	Arm/Leg	1	8	+5 CR 1000/Limb ²
A	Arms/Legs	2	8	+7 CR 1000/Limb ²
B	Arms/Legs	3 or 4	9	+9 CR 1000/Limb ²
C	Arms/Legs	5+	9	+10 CR 1000/Limb ²
D	Wheels	1 or 2	4	+4 CR 50/Wheel ³
E	Wheels	3 or 4	3	+6 CR 50/Wheel ³
F	Wheels	5+	4	+7 CR 50/Wheel ³
G	Combination ⁴	(See below)		

¹ — For plugging into other robots, computers, terminals, and so on (mainly used for transmission of information or energy).

² — Modify by the Size Cost Modifier as for the rest of

the basic form. Note that a tentacle is considered to be about two-thirds of the robot's size, and this length can be increased for CR 150 per foot per tentacle.

³ — Modify by the Size Cost Modifier as for the rest of the basic form. Treads can be added at a cost of CR 200 per tread (this facilitates all-terrain travel).

⁴ — Combination robots have two or more types of limbs— for example, tentacles and wheels. Of course, the exact types and number must be listed on the robot's design sheet. The Tech Level is equal to one number higher than the level of the highest-level type included; a robot with two wheels and two tentacles, for instance, would have a Tech Level of 9. The Dexterity bonus is equal to the bonus for the best limb type, plus 1 for each additional limb of another type included (excluding "interface" limbs), up to a maximum additional bonus of +4. The cost of a combination robot is equal to the combined cost of all limb types plus an additional 20% of that number.

5. COMPUTER BRAIN

The computer brain of a robot is perhaps its most important feature. In addition to affecting its Intelligence score, the computer brain also limits the number of programs that the robot can store at one time. The following table lists the program capacity (the number of programs the brain can hold), equivalent Intelligence score, cost, Tech Level, and size requirement (the minimum Size Code a robot must have to contain that brain) for each of the Computer Brain Codes.

Code	Program Capacity	Equiv. Int.	cost	Tech Level	Minimum Size Code
0 ¹	0	2	250	5	0
1	1	3	500	6	0
2	2	4	1000	6	0
3	3	5	2000	7	1
4	5	6	3000	7	1
5	7	7	5000	7	1
6	10	8	7500	8	2
7	12	9	10000	8	2
8	15	A	15000	8	2
9	18	B	20000	9	2
A	20	C	30000	9	3
B	22	D	40000	A	3
C	24	E	50000	A	3
D	26	F	60000	B	3
E	28	G	80000	C	3
F	30	H	100000	D	4
G	32	I	125000	E	4
H	35	J	150000	F	4
I	40	J	200000	G	4
J	2	K	300000	H	5

¹ — This "robot" will have only automatic, pre-programmed functions: it can open cans, toast bread, or something similar, but not much more.

² — A Code J robot brain has artificial intelligence and is not programmed per se; instead, it learns skills just as a character would and has a virtually unlimited programming capacity. It is considered to have a normal Education score (see below); however, when it has attained 41 or more points of programming, its education is considered to be 21 (L).

6. PROGRAMMING

The robot's URP Programming Code is equal to one-half (round fractions up) of the programs *presently* stored in the computer brain. The hexadecimal letter system is still used for numbers above 9. Thus, a robot with 8 points of programming stored would have a Programming Code of 4, and one with 21 points of programming stored would have a Code of B, and so on. If more than 72 points of programming are stored (a highly unlikely occurrence, and only possible in a robot with artificial

intelligence), the Programming Code is considered to be Z.

The robot's Education Code is also based on the programs presently stored in it, and is determined in the same manner as the Programming Code. However, a robot's Education Code cannot exceed 21 (L), so if it has 41 or more points of programming, its Education Code is automatically L.

6A. Basic Command & Vocabulary Programs

Basic Vocabulary: Allows the robot to speak and understand one language for each "loading" of the program. The language must, of course, be specified for each application of the program. Audio sensors are required for the robot to hear the language, and speakers are required for it to be able to emit sounds in that language. Program Capacity Point Cost: 1 per application. Cost: CR 5000 per application. Tech Level: 8.

Basic Command: Allows the robot to understand and obey simple, one-word commands—"Come"; "Go"; "Bring"; and so on—in as many as three different languages for each application of the program. It does not require *Basic Vocabulary* (in fact, the loading of that program makes this one obsolete), but does require audio sensors. Program Capacity Point Cost: 1 per application. Cost: CR 3000 per application. Tech Level: 7.

Advanced Command: Allows the robot to understand and obey complicated instructions such as "Call me if another ship appears or if we get too close to a planet." Requires the *Basic Vocabulary* program and audio sensors. Program Capacity Point Cost: 1. Cost: CR 4000. Tech Level: 9.

Advanced Reasoning & Ego: Allows the robot to do things independently and act on its own initiative (though it will usually obey its master), and gives it a self-preservation instinct. It takes the place of *Basic Command* or *Advanced Command*, and does not require *Basic Vocabulary* (although the robot will doubtless have this program as well so that it can communicate verbally). It is the closest thing to artificial Intelligence below Tech Level H, and all robots with artificial Intelligence are

considered to have this program naturally. Program Capacity Point Cost: 2. Cost: CR 20000. Tech Level: 12 (C).

6B. Attribute Control Programs

These programs can be used to increase some of a robot's basic characteristics (all of them except for Intelligence and Education, which are based on programming anyway). Specifications for each of the four types of programs in this group are as follows:

Strength can be increased a maximum of 2 points, with a Program Capacity Point Cost of 1 for each point of extra Strength desired and a Cost of CR 800 per point of increase. This program is Tech Level 9.

Dexterity can be increased a maximum of 4 points, with a Program Capacity Point Cost of 1 per point and a Cost of CR 750 per point. Tech Level 8.

Endurance can be increased a maximum of 3 points, with a Program Capacity Point Cost of 1 per point and a Cost of CR 1000 per point. Tech Level 9.

Social Standing (considered to be training in protocol, etiquette, and the like) can be increased a maximum of 6 points, with a Program Capacity Point Cost of 0.5 (round fractions up) per point and a Cost of CR 500 per point. Tech Level 8.

6C. Skill Programming

These programs enable a robot to perform skills at various levels, just like a human character; a robot can have Pilot—2; Gunnery—1; Medical—3; and so on. Robots incur the usual penalty of five when using a weapon they do not have skill with.

The costs, Tech Level, and other characteristics of these skills must be set by the referee, since there are far too many to list here, but the Program Capacity Cost will always be 1 point per level of skill in each skill. The average cost will be between CR500 and CR 1000 (for a skill level of 1), and the average Tech Level will be 7 to 9. As a rule of thumb, skills involving the use of

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Side: Unknown!
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Level: 2

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2. Power Blast: Range = 30', PR = 1 per shot, 1d20 damage
3. Heightened Senses, Vision: Magnifies up to x100
Weakness, Special Requirement: Needs exposure to stellar radiation to regain Hit or Power points.

Weight: 170 lbs.	Strength: 14
Endurance: 16	Agility: 18
Intelligence: 12	Charisma: 12
Damage Mod.: +2	Hit Points: 19
Accuracy: +3	Healing Rate: 1.6
Carrying Cap.: 370 lbs.	Basic HTH Dam.: 1d6
Movement Rates:	Power: 60
48" Ground, 986" Flying	Detect Hidden: 10%
	Detect Danger: 14%
	Inventing Points: 2,4
	Inventing: 36%

a technological weapon or vehicle will be one Tech Level higher than that of the device in question. The minimum Tech Level for implementation of any of these programs is 6.

The cost of each program increases by an increment of 25% plus the base cost for each level of skill beyond the first. Thus, a skill which costs CR 1000 for level 1 would cost CR 2250 for level 2 (1000 + 1250), CR 3750 for level 3 (1000 + 1250 + 1500), CR 5500 for level 4 (1000 + 1250 + 1500 + 1750), and so on.

Examples of how some skills might be rated are given below:

Program/Skill	Cost	Tech	Program/Skill	Cost	Tech
Pilot	1000	10	Medical	1200	8
Ship's Boat	800	8	Survival	900	8
Vacc Suit	500	8	Jack-of-Trades	1500	9
Fwd Obsv	800	8	Gambling	1000	8
Gun Combat	750	6-10+	Brawling	800	7
Blade Combat	750	6	Vehicle	800	6+
Gunnery	800	8-10+	Tactics	1200	9
Mechanical	900	7	Administration	800	7
Electronic	900	7	Steward	800	7
Engineering	1000	8	Streetwise	1000	8
Computer	1000	8+	Forgery	1200	8
Navigation	1250	10	Bribery	1250	9
Demolitions	850	8	Combat Engineer	1000	8
Instruction	1000	8	Interrogation	800	8
Recon	900	7	Recruiting	900	8

7. EXTRA FEATURES

The URP Code for extra features is simply equal to the number of extra features the robot has (three extra features would be Code 3; 11 extra features would be code B). The particular features are listed on the robot's design sheet. Some basic features, with costs and tech levels, are listed below. The list given here is by no means exhaustive. Individual features of the same type are counted separately for the URP Code (i.e., three visual sensors would count as three features).

Feature	cost	Tech Level
Visual sensors (eyes)	500/eye ¹	7
Telescopic eyes (about 50x)	1000/eye ¹	8
IR or LI eyes	+250/eye ¹	9
Audio sensors (ears)	250/ear ²	6
Increased-sensitivity ears ³	+200/ear ²	7
Olfactory sensors (nose)	1500 ¹	9
Taste sensors	1750 ¹	9
Touch sensors	1500 + 200/Size Code ¹	9
Voder (speaker)	500 ²	8
Built-in weaponry	Weapon cost +20%	4
Built-in armor	Armor cost +10%	4
Built-in lights	30/Light	5
Grav pads	10000	12
Hover-vents	5000	9
Electrical protection circuit	200 ¹	7

¹ — Includes all costs for necessary circuitry and so on.

² — Includes all costs for necessary circuitry and so on.

Note that these items require the appropriate Basic *Command* and/or *Basic Vocabulary* programs to be of much use.

³ — A robot with these audio sensors cannot be surprised in most normal situations.

⁴ — Equal to one number higher than the Tech Level of the device in question.

8. POWER SOURCE

The power source of a robot is very important, since it limits the number of things a robot can do at a given time. There are three basic power source types:

Low: Must be recharged or refueled at 24-hour intervals. Will fail to function in emergency situations on a roll of 10+ (2d6).

Medium: Must be recharged at 72-hour intervals or be exposed to a suitable power source (solar energy, heat, etc.) at all

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times so that it does not have to use its own power supply. Will fail to function in emergency situations on a roll of 12+ (2d6).

High: This source has a semi-regenerative power supply, and it will function for at least a month before requiring recharging (a bit of power is lost in each regenerative cycle). After a month without a checkup or recharging, +1 is added to the "failure roll" for each additional week spent without such an overhaul. It will fail to function in emergency situations on a roll of 13+ (2d6, modified as explained above if overdue for recharging).

Each type of power source has a rating of 1 to 5, which indicates how many functions the power source can handle at one time. The various functions and features a robot has are defined on the following table as to how much power they use. These figures are totalled, and the robot's Power Rating Code (see following text for how to determine this rating) must be at least equal to this amount for it to use all of the available features at one time.

Function/Feature	Power required
Per limb (excluding wheels)	0.2
Motor for movement	0.8 + 0.1/Size Code over 6
Grav pads ¹	0.5 (while functioning)
Hover vents ¹	0.6 (while functioning)
Computer brain	0.2 plus 0.1/Int pt. over 10
Per program stored	0.01
Per sensory unit (each ear, eye, etc.)	0.1 ²
Electrical protection circuit	0.4 (while functioning)
Built-in energy weapons	0.05/dice of damage
Other features	As decided by the referee

¹ — "Motor for movement" cost is 0.3 plus 0.15/Size Code over 4 for these features.

² — Plus an extra 0.1 for coordination if three or more different senses (ears, eyes, odor sensors, touch sensors) are possessed.

Once a figure for the power needed to operate a robot's features and functions has been totalled, subtract it from the robot's Power Rating Code. The remainder is applied to determine the robot's effective Strength, at a rate of 0.05 power unit per point of Strength. Thus, if a robot could normally have a Strength score of 10, but had only 0.4 power unit left over for Strength, its effective Strength score would be 8 instead of 10. (it could be increased up to, but not past, the maximum normal score of 10 if the robot took power from some other purpose — movement, for example — and applied it to its Strength. A robot will always have a minimum effective Strength of 1, regardless of its available power, as long as every other characteristic of the robot (size, shape, etc.) permits this.

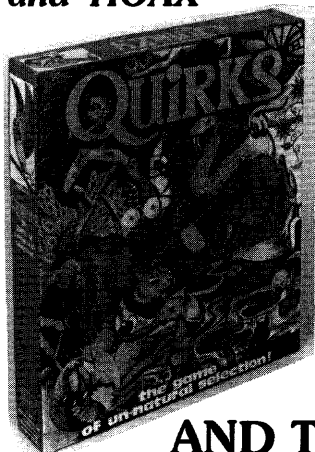
Example: A robot with four arms, normal mode of movement (no grav pads or hover vents), a computer brain with an Intelligence of 12, seven programs stored, plus eyes, ears, and taste sensors, and a built-in 4D laser carbine would require 2.87 units of power, calculated as follows:

$$0.8 (\text{limbs}) + 0.8 (\text{motor}) + 0.4 (\text{brain}) + 0.07 (\text{programs}) + 0.6 (\text{senses}) + 0.2 (\text{laser}) = 2.87$$

Such a robot would require a minimum Power Rating Code of 3. If it had a rating of 4, for example, it would have 1.13 power units left over, which would easily cover its Strength requirements (since this would be enough power to supply a Strength of 22).

Recharging: Robots can be recharged at proper terminals set up for this purpose, or at any ship or similar power source if the robot has at least one interface limb. Recharging, regardless of the Power Code Rating of the robot or the amount of power being charged into it, usually costs about CR 250. (A robot — or its owner — can, of course, try to steal power, especially with an interface limb.)

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POWER RATING CODE TABLE

Power Code	Type	cost	Minimum Size ¹	Tech Level
0	None ²	0	0	—
1	Low Power—1	500	0	5
2	Low Power—2	1000	1	6
3	Low Power—3	2000	2	7
4	Low Power—4	3000	3	8
5	Low Power—5	5000	5	8
6	Medium Power—1	1000	1	6
7	Medium Power—2	2000	1	7
8	Medium Power—3	3000	2	8
9	Medium Power—4	4500	3	9
A	Medium Power—5	6000	5	A
B	High Power—1	2000	1	8
C	High Power—2	3000	2	9
D	High Power—3	5000	3	A
E	High Power—4	7500	4	B
F	High Power—5	10000	6	C

G Multiple³ — (See note below) —

¹ — Minimum size may be reduced by 1 factor for every 2 Tech Levels of the basic robot unit (round fractions down), but cannot be reduced below one-half of the usual minimum size (a minimum of zero in any event — again, rounding fractions down).

² — Must be hooked into an outside power source to function (interface limbs are necessary for this).

³ — A robot can have more than one power source if desired. In this case, Minimum Size is determined by totalling the Minimum Size Code needed for each source. Cost is equal to the combined Cost of all power sources, plus 5% of that figure, and Tech Level is equal to that of the highest-level source.

URP CHECKLIST

As explained previously, robots have URP codes, just as players have UPP codes. A robot's URP code is a string of 15 digits and/or letters: the six attribute digits, the eight robot feature digits, and the Tech Level of the robot, which is equal to that of the highest-level component used to manufacture the robot; higher-level bases can manufacture lower-level robots more cheaply, as described on page 43 of *Mercenary*. In summary, the order of listings in a robot's URP is:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Strength | 9. Material |
| 2. Dexterity | 10. Limbs |
| 3. Endurance | 11. Computer Brain |
| 4. Intelligence | 12. Programming |
| 5. Education | 13. Extra Features |
| 6. Social Standing | 14. Power Rating |
| (followed by dash) | (followed by dash) |
| 7. Shape | 15. Tech Level |
| 8. Size | |

Example: A sphere-shaped, four-foot-diameter robot made of average material (5) and having four tentacles, space for 10 points worth of programming in its brain, loaded with two programs (+1 Dexterity and Ship's Boat—1), plus two special features (one IR eye and a built-in Laser Carbine), and a Medium—4 power source, would have this URP:

888812—34566129—9

Construction time: If all materials required are on hand, a robot will usually take a number of days to build equal to its Size Code (0 and 1 count as 2) plus 0.05% of its cost. Thus, a Size Code 5 robot worth CR 30,000 would take 20 days to build. This duration is increased by 1 day for each Material Code point higher than 7 and for each 4 programs beyond the first 8 (round fractions up).

Construction time can be reduced by spending more money, or by building at a factory with a higher Tech Level than the robot being built. For every additional 1% of the robot's Cost which is spent to speed things up, the time required is reduced

by 1%, with a maximum decrease of 25% possible by this means. If the factory is of a higher Tech Level than the robot being manufactured, time is reduced by the difference in Tech Levels multiplied by 5%, with a maximum reduction of 50% possible in this manner. In either of these time-reduction methods, fractions should be rounded down.

Example: The robot described above, costing CR 30,000 with a base construction time of 20 days, could be built in 19 days (5% less time) for an additional expenditure of CR 1500 (5% of the base cost). If the robot being constructed is Tech Level 5 and the factory being employed is Tech Level 7, the construction time would be decreased by another 10% of the original 20-day figure, or 2 days, so that this robot could be built in only 17 days under these conditions.

Robots can be constructed either at special factories designed for this purpose, or at Type A starports.

Repairs and Overhauls: Occasionally a robot will need a complete overhaul in addition to minor repairs. "Overhaul time," the number of years between each major repair job, is calculated using this formula:

Overhaul time (in years) =

$0.5 \times (\text{Endurance} + \text{Material} - \text{Power Rating Code} - 4)$
Treat Power Rating Codes of 0, 1, and 2 as 3, and Power Rating Codes of D (13), E (14), and F (15) as 12.

The minimum overhaul time for any robot is half a year. Thus, a robot with Endurance 6, Material Code 5, and Power Rating Code 7 would need maintenance once every half a year. One with Endurance 12 (C), Material Code 8, and Power Rating Code 10 (A) would need maintenance once every three years.

An overhaul costs 0.5% of the robot's initial Cost. If it is not performed within the required time, the robot may malfunction. The initial chance of a malfunction due to lack of maintenance is a roll of 12+ (2d6). This roll is made at the deadline time, if an overhaul is not immediately forthcoming, and other "malfunction rolls" are made every two months thereafter, with +1 added to the roll each time it is taken until the maintenance is done.

Over and above the need for regular maintenance, there is a chance (12+ on 2d6, with appropriate DMs made by the referee, rolled once every two months) that the robot will require minor repairs costing anywhere from CR 10 to CR 60. Of course, situations may arise in which much more extensive repairs are required — if the robot gets damaged in combat, falls off a cliff, or suffers some similar calamity. The referee must decide the cost of these repairs, based on the extent of the damage.

Longevity: A robot will typically last 80 to 100 years before being beyond repair — and even in such a case, its memory circuits (the computer brain) can be installed in a new body so that it does not actually "die." To find the maximum "lifetime" of a robot in years, compute its Endurance Factor and Material Factor (defined below) and use this formula:

Maximum lifetime =

$100 + \text{Endurance Factor} + \text{Material Factor} - \text{Power Rating Code}$

A robot's Endurance Factor = $5 \times (\text{Endurance} - 8) \times 5$. This number can be negative.

A robot's Material Factor = $(\text{Material Code} - 5) \times 10$. This can also be a negative number.

Robot design sheet: Referees and players will find it particularly useful to make "character sheets" (called "robot design sheets" in this article) for their robots, just as they do for characters. At least one sheet should be made for each type of robot (for the prototype model), and many players will no doubt wish to have character sheets for their "one-of-a-kind" robot companions. These sheets should include room for the URP code, plus space for notes to elaborate on some of the information given in the Code (features, programs, and so on). It should also have room for noting the robot's general condition and overhaul requirements. The *Ship's Data* sheet on page 35 of *High Guard* is a good framework to use for a robot design sheet.

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The Next-to-Last Mistake

Fiction by
Paul McHugh

The thin girl sat down on a haybale and piped a few notes from her flute into the gathering darkness.

Ye Olde Elizabethan Faire was over for the day. Crowds which had packed the 16th-century streets only hours earlier had disappeared. Craftsmen had cleared their wares from the rough counters, actors had turned in their flamboyant Renaissance garb for sweaters and jeans, swapped their courtly phrases for 20th-century chit-chat. Bursts of laughter echoed from small groups gathered around alcohol stoves and propane lanterns. The magic realm of the Faire, inflated into total reality by day, seemed to vanish like a pricked bubble at sunset. Still giddy from the transition, people wandered around in the colored, drifting mist of its fall . . . somehow trusting that they would find the roots of fantasy within themselves and create it all again on the morrow.

Across the narrow dirt street from the place where the girl played her flute, a giant harlequin leaped suddenly out of the dark. The harlequin was quilted onto a white canvas that hung as a wall for one of the toy booths. When the toymakers lit their lantern within, light bleeding through the cloth shot the image of the harlequin out into the night.

Music erupted like a flickering flame at the end of the girl's flute. She began to play to the harlequin wildly, spontaneously, with ornaments that spun and danced round the simple theme.

Then, abruptly, she stopped. The final notes drifted off under the trees. The girl stood up and walked slowly down the road. As she passed through the soft circle of a lantern's glow, the yellow light struck a face of strongly chiseled beauty, a face that had within it a touch of something sad and wistful. It was the face of someone looking for a little more than a patchwork harlequin could give.

At length, she wandered to a booth in the Faire's far corner, tucked into a tiny glen. The booth was a chunk of Brigadoon, a small piece of a dream made solid. There was a cottage with

walls made of white stucco and brown beams, that had leaded windows, a thatched roof, a yard with a low fence that surrounded swans, ducks, geese, and a pool for them to splash in. During the day, a big woman with grey hair sat at a wheel under the eaves, spinning wool and quoting poetry to the geese. Tonight she sat enthroned in a mound of straw with a pewter mug in one hand, guffawing at someone's story. She was encircled by people of various descriptions, whose manners of dress trailed across four centuries, sometimes mixing elements from all of them. They sat in the straw, or on benches and stumps. Most of them looked half-crooked and very pleased with themselves.

"She wins! She wins!" a hawk-nosed boy was shouting. "Give 'er the prize, Mother Goose!"

"Wait a minnit!" the big woman said. "No one's calling a winner until we've heard from Ramon! When most people tell you a story, you're lucky to get the appetizer, much less the gist of it. Ramon'll give you a seven-course meal and your choice of desserts. So, nobody's won until he's said his piece."

A short man, who sat to one side wrapped in a cloak, threw back his head and laughed. "You flatter me, madam," he said, "but I would like to give your game a try."

The thin girl with the flute quietly unlatched the gate, entered the yard, found a place for herself in the straw. She studied the man who had spoken as he hitched his stool up closer to the lamplight. His face was smooth and olive-colored, framed by a closely trimmed black beard. Something in the way he held himself suggested he was older than he looked. His voice was rich, resonant with controlled power, as if he were an actor or professional singer.

"All right," he said, looking around the circle. The girl felt a brush of electric contact as his gaze drifted briefly across hers. "This takes place here at the Faire, some years ago. Since the Faire is always the same moment in 1598, it's silly to ask which

year. Anything that happens here always occurs in 1598. This Faire is a suspension, an exercise in the extraordinary. We grant ourselves more permission to sprout fantasies here than we do outside in the Big One, eh?

"The leading men in this tale are Alex and Eric, who had become roommates in college after meeting one day on the archery range. The art of bow and arrow was their bond. In most other respects, they were quite different. Alex was short, muscular, square-faced. Eric was tall, slender, and story-book handsome. Alex was a gruff, intense political major with a burning, but buried, romantic flair. . . illustrated by the fact that after he broke up with his girlfriend, he stormed off to the Sierras to build a cabin with hand tools and make his living off the land.

"Eric was a liberal arts dilettante and a popular theatre major. After graduation, he went off to Los Angeles, perhaps to break into films, but at least to have a good time.

"They would reunite from time to time to celebrate their friendship . . . when Alex saw fit to descend from the hills, or when Eric felt a need to go into the country and detoxify. At one of these meetings, while they nursed cold cans of beer in a Placerville bar, they hatched an idea. They both needed money. Why not go into partnership on an archery booth at the famous Elizabethan Faire? It was soon agreed upon and executed.

"Though not quite as fast as it takes to say it. Even fantasies have their logistics. Eric had to exert his charm, which was considerable, and his smarts, which were not to be sneered at, in order to secure a place for them at the Faire. Alex scrounged old barn lumber, tools, and the spare time of friends. So it came to pass that on the first day of the Faire that year, Eric strode out onto the balcony of their own archery booth. He was in his glory. He was also in a velvet jerkin unlaced to display an expanse of blond chest hair; a tooled leather belt with an elk-horn buckle, from which dangled a tin dress sword; glossy, high-topped riding boots; and a slouch hat sprouting ostrich plumes that arched over his shoulder.

"Eric stretched, scratched, yawned, and made his first attempt at hawking to customers.

"Behold! How the sun doth ope his day
with fiery display! So also shouldst thou,
before thee doth go on thy way!"

"The first pair of patrons to enter the Faire gazed up at the balcony in bewilderment.

"You, sirrah! If thee wouldst prowess
to thy lady show,
drop thy pence
and pick up a bow!"

"Drop my pants?!" the man repeated with some alarm. He gripped his wife by the elbow and hurried on. Eric laughed and turned to look down on the longbow range where Alex was shooting. Alex, dressed in deer and coon skins, looked like the Barbarian from the East . . . particularly in contrast with Eric's suave and dignified charm. But when it came to shooting, Alex left Eric far in his wake. Eric used his bow for sport. Alex had been shooting for survival, and he had gotten very good.

"So when the Faire requested they put on a show for the Queen, Eric coaxed Alex into re-enacting a bit from the legend of William Tell. After the other archers had shot, Alex and Eric would walk out together. Eric would put an apple on his head, and Alex would shoot it off. There was less risk than it sounds. Not only was Alex a dead shot, but to cover the outside chance of a bad miss, Alex had a hard rubber ball that fit snugly over the tip of a target arrow, and he would use a light bow. Even if he hit Eric square between the eyes, he'd give him only a splitting headache and a severe case of mistrust.

"But watching Alex draw to his cheek and release in one motion, almost not seeming to aim, Eric had to laugh at any doubts. The bullseye on Alex's target was so thick with arrows it looked like a porcupine pelt stretched out to dry.

"That first day went quickly. Selling tickets, hawking marks, pulling arrows, eating on the run, putting on the show, giving directions in elementary bowmanship. . . all flowed together,

swirled madly around the booth, inundated Alex and Eric. This stream of activity dried up abruptly went the Faire closed. They ate a weary, silent meal. Then Alex went to sleep, and Eric went out on the prowl.

"It was nighttime when Alex awoke, feeling refreshed but still a little disoriented. It had been months since he had mingled with as many people as he had today. Usually, he avoided it. But the Faire was starting to lure him with a sense of renewed possibilities. . . He took a bottle of wine out of his pack, cracked the seal, and pulled the cork. The liquid filled his mouth with dry, musty warmth. He smiled under his beard, tucked the bottle under one arm, and strode off to check out the scene.

"It was already midnight by the time he wandered to the Turkish stage. A piece of moon sailing overhead highlighted everything faintly in mother-of-pearl. The stage was alive with a rhythmic, elemental music that was still light and free, evoking exotic Moroccan fantasies. Alex picked out a spot near the musicians, and sat there nursing his wine. Suddenly, gracefully, a woman got up to dance. Her features were hidden in the interplay of shadow, lamplight, and moon. All that Alex could make out at first were the motions of her dance.

"Imagine . . . the golden lustre of the lamps, the distilled radiance of moonlight, both cascading across folds and gathers of shadow, while enchanting music weaves bright threads through all of this. . . ."

Ramon's teeth flashed in the dark. His hands sculpted the scene in the air so that the characters became nearly visible in front of him. One of the men in the circle of listeners leaned over to the thin blonde girl and whispered that they were in the clutches of an actor. She nodded, but kept her eyes fixed on Ramon.

"In the midst of all this music and confusion of light," Ramon said, "this woman rose. Supple, sinuous, moving to more than the music, she danced the dance of womanness itself, forever anciently young. Long black hair, brushed straight, undulated in waves around her face. Smooth planes of brown skin spilt, over high cheekbones. Her eyes, lustrous with the intoxication of rhythm, were heavily accented by kohl and by tattoos drawn on her cheeks and between the brows. These delicious barbarisms were enhanced by a long skirt, a fringed black shawl tied around her hips as a girdle, and a leather anklet with tinkling brass bells. The air was full of the odors of hay, of wine, Turkish coffee, and incense. . . ."

This man's speaking is music, the thin girl thought as she stared at Ramon. He is making that dancer a goddess. He is spinning a realm and leading us. . . Where? Why?

"The woman moved in celebration of all that was female, feline, serpentine. She became the dancing medium of some astral ichor flowing through her, moving from one hieroglyph to the next. . . ."

One of the men listening, spellbound by Ramon's oratory, clawed at his beard, threw back his head, and fell off his bench. He struggled back up, laughing unabashedly at his own carelessness. "Wow!" he said. "You're hot! Go for it, Ramon!"

Ramon saluted him with a chalice of wine, drank from it deeply, and continued his story.

"Now, Alex had just come from a year of solitary, subsistence living in the mountains. He'd gotten a bit bored with being a backwoods loner, and as I said, under his gruff shell beat the intense heart of a true romantic. No matter how many of their fond hopes die, romantics can always be tempted to believe in a dream again, if only because they think that by believing in it strongly enough, they will be healed. Perhaps sometimes that even proves true.

"But, in any event, if any one quality about that dancing woman should be singled out, it would be her ability to inspire



dreams. So it would be wrong to say that Alex fell in love. Actually, he wavered on the brink for about half a minute and then dove right into the middle of love.

"The music stopped; the dancer stopped. Alex could almost see solidity return to the bones and flesh as she became mortal again. A trace of her exaltation lingered in the corners of her smile as she welcomed a man from the shadows. He was applauding silently with fingertips as he walked up to her. The man wore a burgundy velvet jerkin, a black slouch hat with long plumes. It was Alex's best friend, Eric.

"Alex swung his head in denial as the realization sank into him. This houri had not danced in a private dream, for his allurements. She was a real woman, watched by many men, any of whom stood an equal chance of ever fully tasting her magic. But most galling of all, it was his friend who walked up, whom she welcomed. And it was his friend who now, with familiar fingers, unknotted the shawl from her waist, threw it casually around her shoulders, and led her off into the night.

"His desire for her was shot through by a hot feeling of betrayal. Alex was unused to violent emotions, but tonight in an hour he'd been crammed full of more of them than he'd experienced in the past six months. He gripped his empty wine bottle and flung it far out over the moonlit trees. Even before the sound of a distant crash, he was striding out into the night.

"It had all been a very telling little piece of drama. It might have gone unnoticed, unappreciated, were it not for another man who observed it all intently from the shadows of the Turkish coffee booth — the Chessmaster.

"Unlike most others at Ye Faire this Saturday eve, the Chessmaster was as sober as granite. He'd spent his day sidling between chessboards like a black cat, suddenly and ruthlessly pouncing on a weakness in an opponent's position. He'd broken fast only for bread and cups of thick Turkish coffee. He transcended what most call their sobriety: a mental clarity sufficient to either balance their checkbooks or walk and chew gum at the same time. His sobriety contained a passion for the geometries of human behavior. He cultivated a precise understanding of the forces behind and beneath what he observed. He was not only a chessmaster, but a philosopher and psychologist whose sensitivity to the human soul and mind approached the mystical. His play in the realm of what he understood about people at times almost made him feel like their puppeteer.

"As I say, he'd been standing, watching Santura dance . . . watching her with a possessive, predatory air, as if she were attached to him by invisible leashes of a relationship that only he could grasp. When the brief scene unfolded between Alex, Eric, and Santura, those piercing eyes saw and glittered, first with anger, then with understanding. He may have smiled.

"His smile was like this: When an opponent made a fatal error, a smile of amusement, not untinged with faint contempt, played across his face as he raised his eyes from the board and transfixed his opponent with a mocking stare. One hand would make a smooth pouncing motion, and the game would be over. Perhaps not in that move or even in the next three, but decisively won from that point on. I sometimes thought the unnerving smile and stare were themselves the moves that won the game, in a play that no one but a person of equal subtlety and insight could survive.

"If the Chessmaster did smile that night, the events that followed would've been much more predictable. As it was, Eric vanished with the beautiful Santura, Alex ran away with his stricken love and fevered jealousy, and the Chessmaster strolled away with his thoughts.

"How it happened in the days that followed that Alex began and pursued a friendship with the Chessmaster, I do not know. Perhaps the Chessmaster's powers exceeded even his own knowledge of them. But it's not hard to imagine Alex disoriented, first yanked from mountain solitude to the chaos of the Faire, then from a posture of relative inner peace to a riot of jealousy and love. It's easy to see him quitting the archery booth for a while, going for a walk. . . .

"By day, the Faire streets were then as they are now. Actors

portraying washerwomen, earls, fools, strumpets and beggars mingled with the customers, snaring them in a tangled web of Elizabethan jokes, wordplay, and — in corners protected from the crowd — even swordplay. Musicians along Alex's route sang medieval lays and laments, ballads of the broken heart that all seemed mockingly directed at him. Then he came to a small glen where the crowd did not seem so dense. A few potters, spattered with clay, sat before their spinning wheels. A serving wench, mugs of ale in hand, flirted with passersby.

"And there. . . a white tapestry bearing a black horse's head swung slowly in the breeze. No other sign or symbol announced the nature of this booth. Alex walked toward it. He saw a circle of haybales, each with a chessboard on top. A placard tacked to an oak tree read:

'IN CHESS, THE WINNER IS HE
WHO MAKES
THE NEXT-TO-LAST MISTAKE.'

"Alex noted that, of the ten games in progress, nine players seemed to lack an opponent. Suddenly he realized that one man was playing them all. This man stood on the inside of the ring, dressed elegantly in black doublet and hose, trimmed sparingly in gold. He had a well molded European face, a bit pale in complexion, but sporting a carefully trimmed black beard. If that face suggested hedonism, and it did, it was the hedonism of the epicure rather than the pagan.

"From lace cuffs emerged large, square, powerful hands. They lacked the sinews or calluses of the laborer. They were soft, manicured, clean; their strength was latent, civilized. On the ring finger of both hands winked polished onyx, set in silver.

"These hands had been idly twisting a piece of straw. They flew apart, and the right hand shot out to move a piece on the board. Then the Chessmaster walked up to the board in front of Alex. Their eyes met. The Chessmaster, of course, had total recall of Alex from the night at the Turkish coffee booth.

"Alex's recognition of the Chessmaster, unimpeded by information, was intuitive. In some ways, it was deeper. As he gazed into the dark space behind the man's eyes, he felt a thrill of recognition that told him this man, too, was a hunter. But a hunter in a fantastic realm, one of his own devisement.

"The Chessmaster extended one huge, beringed hand. With a gesture and a smile, he invited Alex to play.

" 'Nice,' Alex grunted, almost under his breath, a short time later when the game was over.

" 'Better than most,' the Chessmaster replied.

" 'Lose much?' Alex asked.

" 'Hardly ever,' the Chessmaster said, with a smile that did not even hint at self-deprecation.

" 'See ya.'

" 'Of course.'

"In truth, it became harder for Alex to be at the archery booth with the crowds of strangers. He found himself endlessly repeating the fundamentals of archery to people he grew inwardly to despise. Eric floated above the turmoil on his own brand of elegant extroversion, while Alex became increasingly mired in it. He'd rarely envied his friend before, but it was obvious that Eric was all the things Alex was not. It became acutely obvious when Santura dropped by the booth.

"Daylight only enhanced her beauty, changing its cool and luminous mystery to a glow of vitality and laughter. She and Eric would burlesque classical love scenes on the booth's balcony until the crowd below practically rolled in the streets. At such times Alex would grit his teeth and loose a fury of arrows at the targets, then be last seen shouldering his way through the crowd as he strode off to a place where a white banner bearing a black chesspiece rippled in the breeze. When he got there, he would lose himself in a series of games with the Chessmaster. Then they would go in back of the booth for a quiet drink. Gradually at first, and then in one blind sudden rush of trust, Alex shared his sorrows. The Chessmaster nodded in sympathy.

" 'Santura is a tease,' he said. 'I know her, I know her type very

well. She's the kind that lures a man only to drop him. It's a poisonous way of getting power. Your *friend* Eric seems much the same. Perhaps they deserve each other. You should let them be while they find that out.'

"Alex knotted his fists. 'I can't,' he said bleakly.

"The Chessmaster stroked his beard. 'Ah, well then. You might consider doing something that will teach them both a lesson. Something to show them you're not as weak as they think you are. And that they can't abuse you without certain. . . consequences.'

"Alex looked at him. All he could see was the Chessmaster's comprehension. He couldn't see further back within him, where something powerful squatted, darkly amused. 'What do you mean?' he asked.

"As the Chessmaster carefully led Alex down the long and twisted path of his logic, Eric and Santura cavorted throughout the Faire. They weren't blind, but they were so wrapped up in each other that it took them much longer than it should've to note that something strange was happening to Alex. Santura was the first to see it. 'Poor Alex,' she said. 'We've got to do something about his crush on me before it wrecks your friendship.'

" 'My friendship with Alex,' Eric informed her, 'is astral. It is as untrammelled by petty jealousies as Everest's snows are by mediocre climbers. If he does have a crush on you, it is a rare and special treat for him, and I do not propose to distract his attention while he wallows in it.'

"Was there cruelty in Eric's refusal to take Alex's plight seriously? Possibly. Perhaps he experienced some sneaking pleasure at being one up on his friend. But whatever fabric selfishness was made of, Eric used it to raise a veil so that he could concentrate on Santura in private. That veil was soon rent in half.

"Alex and Eric had a special tradition on nights of the full moon. Whenever possible — and it had not been possible often since college — they would get together and shoot their bows by moonlight. For then, when the senses are deprived of knowledge of the success or failure of each shot, the archer has to rely on a deeper intuition. He has to tune into a sensuality of the spirit, and pay more attention to that than to the whereabouts of the bullseye. And if he does tune into it, he does the best shooting of his life.

"But that night, Eric found himself having to shoot alone at their traditional target — the faint gleam of a silver dollar he'd tucked under the wire of a haybale. A score of disturbing



thoughts buzzed through his skull, and he did not shoot well. It was very unlike Alex to miss out on this ritual of their friendship. Eric suddenly realized that his friendship with Alex had deteriorated to terse encounters on the subject of running the booth. Something was going very wrong; he'd been mistaken to think that it would just blow by.

"As Eric stood there, sunk in thought, there came a faint reverberation from the other side of the street. Something whizzed within inches of his ear, and there was a loud *plink* from the bale where he had mounted the coin. Eric spun around. It was indeed Alex, coming across the street now with his bow dangling from one hand. With him was a short, cloaked figure that Eric didn't recognize.

" 'Had I tongue and had I lute

I'd sing the tale of how well you shoot,' Eric said.

"Alex grunted by way of response, and climbed over the rail to retrieve his arrow. When he returned, he put it in his quiver and unstrung his bow.

" 'Hey, buddy,' Eric said. 'Quitting? You just got here!'

" 'That's all right. I've made my point,' Alex said in a surly voice. 'You know, I could take someone's ear off about as easily as I hit that coin.' Beside him, the man's teeth gleamed in the dark.

" 'What?'

"As Eric stood there wondering what Alex was talking about, a woman's tipsy voice came ringing out of the night.

" 'Eric, Eric, wherefore art thou not a cleric?

What's in a game? That which we call a nose
by any other name could smell sweat. Whoop! Ha Ha!'

"Santura stumbled up, bent over with laughter at her own wit. Eric felt the psychic atmosphere go thick, charged with tension. Santura's foot slipped on a rock, and she grasped the cloaked man's arm for support. She raised her eyes and looked him full in the face. Then she gave a sharp cry and drew back. The human cauldron formed by their small circle boiled over. Alex swore under his breath, turned and bolted off into the night.

"Santura turned quickly to Eric. 'Come to my tent, I need . . . There's something I have to show you! Eric!' She tugged his sleeve, pulling him away. That left the Chessmaster leaning against the rail of the longbow range. He threw back his head and laughed soundlessly.

" 'Would you mind telling me what's going on?' Eric demanded as Santura dragged him up to her tent.

" 'What? Oh. That strange man. . . he just frightened me! I'm a bit inebriated, you may have noticed. My *real* reason for dragging you here was to get you alone for a while. . . .' She leaned against him, fiddled with his jerkin, dragged her fingernails lightly across his sleeve.

" 'You're lying,' Eric said flatly. He pushed her hand away and gripped her tightly by the shoulders. 'Tell it straight! What's going on?'

"She stared at him for a moment as if fascinated. Then she twisted out of his hands and sank down onto a pile of fringed pillows. 'Okay,' she said softly. 'All right.' Her voice was that of someone who had decided to be calm, without being altogether sure that it was possible. 'I used to be attracted to older men. He was one of them. . . .'

" 'Who?'

" 'That man with Alex. Years ago. I left him because he frightened me. A lot! I felt like. . . like he'd taken over my mind, just reaching into me. He knows too much, too well! Can't you feel his power? It's like tides swirling around your feet, tugging you off balance. I don't know how I even managed to get away from him. But as soon as I was free, I started dancing. I needed something *real*, something tangible. Anything but that relentless logic of his!' Her face struggled for composure. The muscles around her mouth and eyes twitched slightly. 'It really scared me when I found out he was at the Faire this year. He hasn't been here for a couple of years. I was able to avoid him, until tonight. But I'm not worried for myself; I'm free of him now.'

" 'No, you're not,' Eric said sourly. 'That, for sure, you are not.'

"She sagged and laughed nervously. 'Can't fool you, can I? You're like him in some ways; you see a lot. But you don't see it all, believe me! You can't see him maneuvering for his revenge!'

" 'Revenge?'

" 'Yes! He would call it a simple lesson for me, a move in some bizarre, abstract game. But whatever he calls it to justify himself, it'll be revenge, because when I ran away from him I hurt the only thing in him that can be hurt — his pride. He had such plans for me!' she said scornfully. 'And he's got plans for me now, I can tell. And for you, and Alex! Don't you understand?'

" 'Comprehension flooded into Eric, and he suddenly felt very tired. He sat down beside Santura and began plucking at the fringe of a pillow.

"Meanwhile, Alex had run out to the Faire parking lot. He stood, panting, for a moment beside his truck. He jumped in, started it, and tore out of the lot, to the sound of clashing gears and wild over-acceleration. He careened nearly eighty miles through the foggy night before the truck sputtered, running out of gas. He pulled off the road, got a sheepskin coat, a sheath knife, and a canteen out of the tool box in the bed, and disappeared into the hills.

"Alex stayed out in the woods for seven days. The weathered rocks, creeks, groves, windfalls, were his chessboard — one without edges. Here he knew how to make his moves without worry or strain. Here perhaps he could find again some of the peace and clarity that the Faire had destroyed.

"Late one afternoon, he watched a duel between a huge red-tailed hawk and a rattlesnake. The hawk won.

"*No mercy*, Alex thought that evening, as he sat watching the sunset with his back to a tree. *That's the way the natural machine works*. Very clean, clear, and direct. Outcomes were determined by relative strengths, or chance, or simple blind fate. Why did part of him rebel against that? What special blessing or curse made humans complicate the situation? Why shouldn't he just follow through on his rage and his hurt, let the chips fall where they may, and be done with it? What force in him really chose actions, and why? *What really controlled him?* Now *there* was a thought that made his scalp tingle.

"Alex closed his eyes and let his attention drift through the pattern of events that had landed him where he was. A scent of something strange. He explored a place in the back of his mind where he'd felt something nudging him during those rare moments of actual emotional choice. And there he found a surprise. Trying to pin it down, to identify the alien presence clearly, was a lot like moonlight archery. . . . With a deft, swift precision born of years of marksmanship, Alex reached into his unconscious. And the surprise became even more surprising. *So the game went on in here too*. . . . Ah. That made it much easier to figure out what Eric and the others had coming to them.

"The Alex who walked back into the Faire on its last weekend was different from the Alex that Eric had seen before. He seemed too deliberately casual. Almost — somehow — dangerous. Eric watched as Alex strung his bow and took up his old position on the longbow range, then strolled over.

" 'Hey, buddy boy! Where the heck you been? You had us all worried, the way you up and disappeared.'

" 'I'm all right,' Alex said brusquely.

" 'Yeah,' Eric said. 'But I can see something's changed for you. I've changed, too. While you've been gone, I've had a lot to think about. Santura has, also.'

"Alex's eyes glittered. He remained silent. Eric hooked his thumbs in his belt buckle and took a deep breath. 'We came to some conclusions I think you ought to hear.'

"Alex calmly pulled a shaft from his quiver, drew it to his cheek. The thing was, he told himself, he had to remain absolutely focused on his objective, yet relaxed. Then just go ahead and do it. Give no sign beforehand — that way it would have more impact. He released the arrow and his breath at the same time, blowing the shaft gently on its way. Bullseye.

" 'Hey, Alex,' Eric tried another tack. 'Do you know who the Chessmaster. . . '

"Alex turned and stared at Eric. 'Don't worry about the Chessmaster,' he said. 'He and I have an understanding.'

"Eric shrugged. His pride would only let him extend himself so far. He wasn't used to begging and didn't plan on getting used to it. 'Okay, buddy,' he said coldly. 'Keep to yourself as much as you want. I tried.'

"The Faire bulged with a record crowd that day. In an hour, Eric was far too busy organizing, acting, and making maladroit Elizabethan puns to stay worried. Still, a vaguely nagging premonition would surface from time to time.

"But the day passed without incident. The high point, as usual, was the Queen's show, with its William Tell overture. Eric had a queasy moment after he placed the apple on his head, waiting for Alex's shot, but it was perfect. Then the hot afternoon continued through its long denouement until the bell-ringers came and the Faire was closed. Eric looked for Alex to try to talk one last time, but he was not to be found.

" 'Your play is improving,' the Chessmaster said. 'You've gotten considerably more ruthless since last time. I think you're beginning to understand now.' He indicated the edges of the board. 'Within these borders, everything, anything, is permitted. You are limited only by the power of the pieces and your own relative position. You can have only one goal: to win. And only one method: by any means necessary. Do you need to get the black queen? Then you take her. Perhaps you'll find it's necessary to rip through the pawns, pin a bishop or skewer a knight, but if you really want the queen, these are things you must do. There are things you *will* do, even if you must expend a man or two to gain the advantage.'

"Alex nodded.

"The Chessmaster settled back in his canvas chair, lacing his fingers across his stomach. 'If one is attentive, one can learn much about a man by playing chess with him. I have to say, I like you, Alex.' He picked up a piece from the board. 'You're like this rook. Strong, dependable, forceful. You may not get to use your power until late in the game, but when you do, it's frequently decisive.' He casually placed the white rook down on the same file as the black queen. 'You can engineer any kind of victory you want, as long as you don't hesitate and thereby pass up an opportunity that must be seized.'

" 'Now, I can tell you that your friend Eric resembles a more devious piece. I choose the knight to represent him, because its approach is always oblique. That's an actor's way, isn't it? All pretense and illusion, and getting at you from behind. Concealing true motives and intentions behind a glib facade.' The Chessmaster placed the knight so that its attack threatened Alex's rook. Then he added other pieces, building up the tangled, complex possibilities of a chess problem. 'What do you think ought to be done in this situation?'

"Alex's arm rose slowly, hovered over the board. Suddenly his hand plunged downward, seized the queen. His other arm came up and swept all the other pieces off the board and into the straw.

" 'Unorthodox,' the Chessmaster said. 'But effective.'

"Alex stood up, gazing down at him. 'I've played your game for a while now,' he said in a thick voice. 'Why don't you come tomorrow and watch me play mine?'

" 'Where?'

" 'The range. Come for the Queen's show, at three.'

" 'What are you going to do?'

"Alex took his time answering. His expression was blank. 'Whatever I want.'

"The Chessmaster nodded and sighed. From the shadows that hid his face came the gleam of a smile.

"The last day of the Faire! A nostalgia for the departing magic of this life, and a last Dionysian celebration of it, were the moods that mingled in an air suddenly grown crisp with the first hints of autumn. The crowds were especially sad and gay, the Faire folk played their roles with more abandon than ever before. It was one of those days when a person's every word and gesture, somehow larger than itself, becomes etched in the

memory, to appear years later when one is drowsing in front of a fire, trying to figure out whether one has ever really loved this life. . . .

"Even though Eric and Santura were on pins and needles concerning the effect of their romance on Alex, they were unable to restrain themselves and walked about visibly and patently in love.

"The magic of the day seemed to affect Alex adversely. He pointedly ignored Eric and Santura. His face was pale, and his jaw was set as he passed the morning making a new bowstring and refletching his arrows.

" 'What's up, buddy?' Eric asked. 'How come you're not working on the range?'

" 'Because I don't want to, because I'm not needed, and because I'm thinking. All right?'

"Afternoon came. Trumpets flourished in the distance, and the Queen's litter swayed through the crowd, parting the people like brightly colored waves. The longbow range was cleared for the show. The Queen alighted and spread her arms in welcome. 'Greetings, good folk. What awaits us here?'

"Eric doffed his hat with a flourish and made a sweeping bow. 'As it please your majesty, the archers of the Shire have devised an entertainment for you!'

"As Eric went into his spiel, Alex observed the Chessmaster making his way through the crowd. He shouldered to the front, found a good spot along the rail, and leaned nonchalantly against a post. Their eyes met for an instant, then Alex looked away.

"The first targets were thrown or hung, duly punctured, and retired. Then came the William Tell trick. Eric walked out on the range and removed his hat, while Alex took up his usual position ten paces away. Eric placed the apple on top of his head, and one of the Queen's retinue began a drum roll. The crowd drew its breath as Alex drew his bow.

"Eric sensed something was wrong. Alex never held his draw for so long without shooting. What . . . ? Eric looked more closely, then his jaw dropped and his eyes widened in fear. The bow that Alex held was his hunting bow, and the arrow drawn in it was no rubber-tipped target arrow, but a small, razor-sharp broad head!

"In that unbreathing instant before Alex shot, Eric's mind raced even while his body remained frozen. He realized that he was utterly at his friend's mercy. He knew his selfishness and indifference to his friend's pain were about to reap a terrible harvest.

"Eric was right. But he was mistaken about the target.

"Alex spun on the ball of his foot just before he released. The arrow glittered across the crowd and bit deeply through the Chessmaster's hand, pinning it to the post where it rested. There was an instant when the Chessmaster began to scream, when the astonished crowd began to react, but these things occurred in slow motion compared to the speed with which Alex seized another broadhead from his quiver, set it in the bow, and drew it to his cheek. 'Mate, you elegant thug!' he said. He released again. The second arrow grazed the top of the Chessmaster's head, actually cutting a few hairs, and buried itself in a knothole on the post.

"In a matter of seconds, Alex had flung down the bow, vaulted the rail, and vanished into the bush. He left behind a crowd that was just beginning to roar, and Eric, open-mouthed, absently catching the apple as it fell off the top of his head, at an utter loss for words for the first time in his life."

Ramon chuckled and settled back with the air of a man who has just finished his story. He held his chalice out to Mother Goose. She filled it from a jug of burgundy.

"Then what?" the hawk-nosed teenager demanded.

Everyone was alive with interest, except the bearded man who had earlier fallen off his bench. He had taken another tumble and was now stretched out behind the seat, his face pushed into the straw, snoring blissfully.

"Epilogue in a minute, dear hearts," Ramon said. "As soon as



"I oil the pipes." He tossed his head back, and most of the wine along with it. He looked around the circle of his listeners. His gaze lingered for a moment on the thin girl. Her eyes were half-closed as she looked back at him, with an expression of shrewd, careful evaluation.

"To resume," Ramon said. "No, Alex did not get away. Then, as now, the perimeter of the Faire was patrolled by radio-equipped, horse-mounted guards. Alex escaped from the 16th century only to be nabbed by the 20th. He was an exceptional woodsman and could, perhaps, have made it, but as he was lying in the brush one of the horses came by and stepped on his hand — which he felt compelled to point out to the horse and rider in no uncertain terms.

"He was grabbed, frisked, handcuffed, and hauled off to the county jail to face charges. And then a most interesting development took place: the Chessmaster refused to press charges. By that time, he had fully recovered his demeanor. He sat, with cloak, doublet, hose, and bandaged hand, in the District Attorney's office, and faced that incredulous worthy across an expanse of polished desk.

" 'For the third time: No, I'm not going to press charges,' he said. 'I lost. Can't you understand that? To dissect the game in a roomful of dullards to make that obvious point even more glaringly apparent would be absurd. The least that any player of the game can do is to lose gracefully. Whether Alex gets to rot in a cell for one year or seven is utterly beside the point.'

" 'But you could've been killed!' The D.A. was practically shouting. This case would have been good for a lot of publicity.

"The Chessmaster sighed. 'You are totally without insight. Don't you know anything about the game? The king can only be threatened, never taken. Alex pinned me, then said 'Mate' as he made a second shot. He obviously won. To kill me into the bargain would not only have been gauche, it would've been horribly redundant.'

" 'What's this game you're talking about?' the D.A. demanded suspiciously.

" 'Good day,' the Chessmaster replied. He threw his cloak about his shoulders and stalked back into the 16th century.'

"What about Eric and Santura?" Mother Goose prompted.

"Ah, yes, Ramon continued. "Well, it was a profitable year for Eric. He not only won a lovely woman and kept a friend, but the archery booth made him several thousand dollars. . . and he'd learned a lot about sensitivity, love, and selfishness. He and Santura waited until Alex was released and they all took off for Mexico. The three of them were last seen walking into the sunset at Mazatlan.

"I presume someone will inquire about the Chessmaster's fate, so I'll spare you the trouble of asking. He took the loss to heart and learned what he could from it. He noted that the vices of arrogance had severely impaired his game. Worse, he had been playing without compassion or heart, which meant his game was illusory and irrelevant to the higher levels of a somewhat larger game. On the advice of Alex, whom he consulted, he forsook chess and nearly everything else he was used to, and hitchhiked up to the forests of Oregon. He disappeared for two years. When he returned, he went around telling the story of Alex, Eric, Santura, and himself . . . and many other stories like it, as if he were some new kind of Ancient Mariner."

"How come you know so much about this?" a man asked.

Ramon belched and smiled at him, not unkindly.

Then the thin blonde girl, the girl with the flute, spoke. "Some astute moves there," she said, "in the larger game. By the way, would you tell us how much of that really happened to you?"

"No." He grinned at her and saluted her with his chalice. "But you *have* just won yourself a free 'small' game. Come by the place, at the end of the glen. You'll recognize it by the banner. I've just gotten around to setting it all up."

She looked down at the ground, and her short blonde hair swung forward to conceal her face. She rubbed her cheek with the end of her flute. When she looked up, she was smiling. "Why not tonight?" she asked.

Why gamers get together

70 ways conventions help the hobby and those who keep the hobby healthy

by Ken Rolston

Schedules of upcoming game conventions, printed in most FRP magazines, are testimony to the increasing frequency and variety of such events. It's not surprising that conventions are popular, given the current attraction of the hobby itself; yet, what is the significance of these events? Of course, they are entertaining, but there also are a number of specific positive virtues in conventions that make for a more knowledgeable and sophisticated gamer. What are these virtues, and how do they contribute to the advancement of the hobby?

1. Conventions make gamers more aware of the varieties and intricacies of the hobby, and inspire them to become better informed and more creative.

2. Players may view and experiment with new styles and techniques.

3. Competition and ceremony help establish the models of superior play a player may measure himself by.

4. Conventions may provide an introduction to games that can not be easily managed in local circles.

5. Conventions justify the elaborate effort of event preparation for adventures too complex or laborious to be prepared by an individual or a small game group.

6. Conventions provide opportunities to observe other styles and systems of gamemastering.

7. Stimulating new ideas for scenarios and characterizations are often conceived in the free-for-all of events, demonstrations, and discussions.

8. Attending conventions provides opportunities to make contacts among other similar-minded fanatics for purposes of communication, commerce, and confraternity.

9. Dealer displays provide fans an opportunity to review current developments in game design and refinement.

10. New FRP ideas and approaches are often showcased and tested at conventions. Here tournaments, events, and seminars are practical proving grounds for various philosophies of gaming.

1. The birthplace of the fan

The first encounter with an FRP game is often enough to create an addict. An FRP addict is simply a person inspired with the wonder of the hobby; he plays frequently, but often within a limited circle. On the other hand, it is the convention that may create the fan. The FRP fan

is as deeply committed to the hobby as the addict; however, the fan has a larger sense of perspective, a broader awareness of what other players are doing and of how other styles may contrast with or complement his own playing style. Simply put, he is more sophisticated.

At the first convention I attended, I arrived with the cocky assurance of the guru who introduced FRP games to my local area. I accounted myself a rare and talented gamer — a seasoned veteran; within a matter of hours I realized that, though I was relatively knowledgeable within my own circle, I was quite a tenderhorn in the more cosmopolitan society of the convention. Many of the ideas that we imagine to be our original inspirations are simply traditional and conventional ideas taken for granted in the eyes of the larger gaming community. Playing and chatting with players and fans in the games, corridors and eateries at a GEN CON® convention, one realizes that a great deal can be learned from fellow gamers. This sense of fraternity, this awareness of the potential sharing of knowledge—this becomes the core of the first fannish experience.

Additionally, there is something important about being confirmed in your enthusiasm. As with science fiction (once an adolescent ghetto, now a respectable literary genre), the FRP hobby may sometimes doubt the dignity of its calling, as friends and acquaintances outside the hobby peer with distaste at you upon the discovery that you are a "DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®" freak." It is fortifying to find yourself at a convention among the mad throngs who share your devotion to the hobby.

2. New styles and techniques

No matter how clever and sophisticated your own gaming circle may be, it will seem small and parochial in comparison to the larger gaming community. As the gamer wanders among tournaments, events, demonstrations, and seminars, he will encounter many novel approaches to familiar problems and procedures, while discovering unanticipated puzzles and issues.

For example, I had no idea how much fun a wilderness campaign could be until I ran in a scenario at a PrinceCon where the wilderness aspect of the scenario was handled masterfully by the judge. Of course, the ease with which he ran the event concealed the hours of labor he invested in preparation of the scenario,

not to mention the months or years expended in perfecting his technique; nonetheless, his performance inspired me to embark on my own series of wilderness campaigns in my own circle, patterning my content and game systems on his model.

Another technique I learned at a convention was the use of a written personal background sheet to help a player focus on the role-playing of his character. This experience convinced me that a player could focus on factors from his character sheet other than the damage and hit point figures. I now incorporate character sketches into my local campaigns and tournament events; this simple improvement has increased the emphasis on the development of player and non-player characters.

In one scenario I participated in, I recognized that masterful individual play is worthless if the strategic plan selected is weak to start with. With gamemaster Len Lakofka at a GEN CON tournament several years ago, I saw a group of essentially capable players bollix a job unbelievably because they didn't understand the importance of a carefully considered plan. After the debacle, Lakofka debriefed us and evaluated our performance in detail, helping us learn from our errors. In this same scenario I also picked up a number of little tricks for speeding the rapid organization of a party before an adventure.

These personal examples are typical of the experiences of most players at conventions; from each event attended, gamers will bring away a couple of new plot and character ideas. Players may in fact reflect on the total philosophy of their ongoing campaigns: often an attendee will come home and present his local gamers with a whole new system or campaign after a particularly inspiring convention. Though these periodic upheavals may cause the local circle to dread the return of a GM from a convention, fearing a new round of revisions and embellishments, such renewals from time to time will help keep a campaign fresh and challenging for all of the participants.

3. Models of superior play

We often learn and develop in whatever we set out to do by imitating superior examples of the skills or behavior we hope to achieve. This may be as simple as hero worship, or as complex as generalizing principles from the playing

styles of acknowledged experts. Not surprisingly, the local circle is usually small, with a limited number of models to choose from; on the other hand, a convention presents examples of many superior gamers and gamemasters.

When the addict first enters a tournament at a convention, he discovers there are far more ideas about what good play might be than are represented in his local circle — and also, if he is lucky, he will find himself in the company of some unusually clever players. I marveled at the efficiency displayed by my fellow gamers in organizing our large and disparate group on the eve of my first AD&D™ Open Tournament. I was appalled at how unsophisticated I was in the use of higher-level magics. In short, I was in awe of the experience and facility of my fellow players, and I paid close attention to their tricks, so I could return home to my local group and regale them with my new-found wisdom. (They were, by the way, suitably impressed.)

In a tournament run at D-Con, a small convention organized by the Wilmark Dynasty, I had the opportunity to run druids and illusionists, character classes that don't get a lot of action in my local circle. We were required to play a new character class in each session; I was able to play familiar character classes in the opening sessions, while watching experienced players use the resources

of the more unfamiliar classes. By observing the models of play they demonstrated, I was able to run a pretty fair druid by the end of the convention.

At conventions players may also meet and be impressed by luminaries in the field. These celebrated game designers, commentators, gamemasters, and players may be encountered in seminars, as tournament judges, and as event participants. Apart from the glamor of rubbing elbows with the rich and famous, celebrity often indicates a real expertise and creativity, and frequently these people can offer many useful ideas and perspectives on the hobby, as well as present models of gaming philosophies from which we may select to add to our own personal styles.

4. Introduction to unfamiliar games

Conventions may provide an introduction to games that cannot be adequately developed in most local circles. I would never have played a BOOT HILL™ or TRAVELLER™ adventure in our local gaming group, because none of us have the time or materials to work on designing a scenario using a whole new set of rules. On the other hand, I can go to a convention and enjoy a session of one of these games with a GM who has ample time and resources to produce an entertaining scenario. He can run the scenario smoothly and uninterrupted, even

with players unfamiliar with the rules, because he knows the game so well.

For example, the BOOT HILL game is one of the FRP games that may most entertainingly be played using a large set-up of miniatures with a detailed layout of scale model buildings. One tournament BOOT HILL scenario I played in filled a giant table with an entire Western town, complete with a railroad, small ranches, hitching posts, and families in wagons on their way to church. The mammoth scale of a project like this is certainly beyond the resources of most serious BOOT HILL players, much less the resources of a complete beginner. In this scenario I played a well-known Western outlaw, and without even a passing acquaintance with the rules, I managed to have a marvelous time playing my role, finally meeting my ignominious end, shot down from behind in an alley behind the saloon. Though I will probably never play BOOT HILL adventures regularly, this session gave me an intimate appreciation of the pleasures this system offers.

Such experiences are available at conventions, in all types of games, from FRP games to elaborate board games, all the way up to massive table-top miniature engagements. One charming event was organized and run at the GEN CON® XIV event by a small gaming group which arranged to referee a large miniatures battle between two fantasy armies. This battle was designed particularly for FRP players who had never even seen a set of rules for miniatures battles. Often I have wished I could marshal large armies of orcs and goblins in an epic clash with the forces of law and justice; however, I have always been intimidated by the complex rules and imposing requirements for equipment implied by miniatures battles. This event, which obviously required a good deal of preparation and resources not available to the average FRP gamer, is a perfect example of how a gamer may find experiences open to him at conventions that he could never hope to enjoy at home in the smaller compass of his gaming circle.

5. The super scenario

Conventions also permit scenario designs for familiar games that are on a much larger scale than the typical local adventure. These large-scale events are not possible as a steady diet; the amount of work that goes into them would sap the resources and spirit of even the most dedicated gamer. But as a special treat, large-scale adventures may be remembered long after the fact as the finest of gaming experiences.

One example of the large-scale event is the series of TRAVELLER scenarios run by Mark Swanson for the MIT Wintercons and Summercons in Boston. The episode I participated in was vast in scope and conception. Seven teams of

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three or four players each competed against each other and against time to get a disabled leisure-cruise vessel to a safe destination. No one group had the resources to achieve its goals without cooperating with other groups. Much of the evening was devoted to negotiating and scheming in character, as each faction struggled to gain the aid of another group in achieving some mutually beneficial goals. At the same time, we had to deal with the hostile environment of a planet with an unfriendly citizenry, unpleasant monsters the size of riverboats, and an invading alien race that was trying to maintain the anonymity of its operations on the planet.

The amount of time and effort necessary to prepare this scenario was monumental. Each character had his own description and goals, and each group had its own particular characteristics and motivations, along with a detailed overall summary of conditions and cultural notes that served each player as his basic text. The complete cruise ship was mapped in detail, as was a large section of the planet. This overwhelming amount of preparation can only be justified for the large group of players that were involved.

A game with such a large number of players presented an unusual and interesting challenge to the formulation of strategies and the maintenance of up-to-date information. There was always more going on at any one time than a single person could possibly comprehend. This confusion was the true obstacle to success; instead of battling goblins, we were struggling against shifting and treacherous alliances and situations, usually changing faster than we could change policy.

This unique role-playing problem, along with the ingenuity and detail of the background materials, made this event a very memorable one. However, Mark has indicated that, no matter how entertaining and popular these scenarios might be, he couldn't stand to run more than a few a year, so players have to go to a convention to get this kind of experience.

Another example of a large-scale event is the Wilmark Dynasty Invitational tournament I attended this year. Here the thirty-odd players were all in a single FRP adventure. The large group was broken up into three parties. Each party received different tasks, but the accomplishment of each party's task was understood to be a necessary preparation for the tournament's final round on Sunday. Each party played together with one gamemaster on Friday night and then with another gamemaster for a marathon session Saturday morning that ran into the afternoon. Then, on Saturday evening, the three groups gathered together in a great hall, in character, for a medieval feast, complete with serving wenches. During this feast, the groups were to try

to share the information they had acquired, while avoiding the scrutiny of spies (additional role-players not involved in the tournament) who circulated surreptitiously amongst the eating and reveling gamers. This combination of gaming and improvisational theater is clearly beyond the resources of the Sunday-evening-get-together groups; a great deal of planning and staffing was involved, which could only be justified for such a large-scale operation.

6. Models of gamemastering

Much can be learned by observing a gamemaster in a convention tournament.

Here a judge has a responsibility to be scrupulously fair, but also to be efficient in his use of time. The various methods each judge uses to manage the minutiae of game detail are helpful to the developing GM. The systems by which the GM keeps track of spell use and hit points, the way he manages order of action, his initiative procedure, his maps and notes — all these things will be of interest to even the experienced GM.

Even more important, the player may view models of different philosophies of gamemastering. By example, a player may observe and judge whether he likes an adversary role or facilitator role as a



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gamemaster. He may decide whether he prefers an elaborate story-telling style, or a sparse, impartial perspective on events, or a strong emphasis on role-playing. He can consider whether he wishes to play a humorous role, or whether he would rather adopt a dry and serious attitude in his refereeing. Such experiences may broaden a GM's perspective on his own style of play, and often will suggest new techniques and approaches to be incorporated into his personal style of gamemastering.

From watching tournament play I have learned to employ an orderly sequence of receiving specifications of actions from players in combat situations. Before I became familiar with tournament methods, I permitted players to specify their actions in more or less any order they wished. The result was a disorganized chorus of panicky screams, with each player eager in his anxiety to be the first heard and thereby saved from an imminent death. I discovered that to require the players to specify their intended actions in order of the dexterity of their characters created an organized atmosphere in which the players recognized the right of each player to say what he intends to do without interruption and to have the GM's full attention as he speaks. There is now almost a calm efficiency with which players set about a round of combat.

I have also learned more subtle skills from observing other GMs at work. For example, it is not necessary or desirable to give a quick answer to every player's question. I have often felt the pressure of time in the urgency of a player's query, and many times I've given answers I should have considered more carefully. I know now that it is no sin to sit quietly and insist on no distractions for a minute while I consider a player's question or request. I have learned by watching experienced GMs that it is better to give a safe and reasonable answer at the cost of some playing time rather than gain playing time and risk giving an answer that may later turn out to be impossible to live with.

7. Stimulating new ideas

Convention events have the promise of new and unusual adventures, from which I often get creative inspiration for my own scenarios. Invariably in the car rides home from conventions, I come up with some of my most interesting FRP scenarios, and for weeks afterward I am unusually prolific in generating ideas.

It is not simply a matter of borrowing ideas that you encounter at the convention, though that certainly is an important source for developing your campaign; I also find that the atmosphere stimulates my thinking about scenarios. There is something about the communal

atmosphere of ingenuity and creativity at a convention that both inspires me and challenges me to come up with even greater ideas. At a convention my friends and acquaintances immerse me and totally involve me in the flow of ideas, and as we chatter on the long rides home from Wisconsin, we plan marvelous new tricks and traps, clever and unusual situations to bedevil our players, and some new vast and detailed backgrounds for our campaigns.

8. Contacts with other fanatics

It is quite entertaining to discover yourself in the community of people with similar interests. This pleasure is akin to the pleasure one finds at science-fiction conventions, where people converse pleasantly with total strangers, drawn together by the commonality of interest in a relatively exotic area of cultural experience. Aside from being valuable hobby contacts, these persons may often become close social contacts; it is not surprising to find that people with common interests often discover they enjoy one another's company. It is, I suppose, the dream and hope of many a player that he or she will encounter a member of the opposite sex who shares the obsession of this hobby. The prospect of such marriages of true minds admits not of impediments; the unexcelled bliss of a couple growing quietly old along with

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their favorite gaming characters is too romantic to consider without a wistful sigh of longing.

9. Dealer displays and current design

Another valuable feature of conventions is the opportunity given to gamers to examine the latest items in game design and refinement, often in the presence of the designers and refiners themselves. The unfortunate individual who lacks a good vendor of FRP games in his locale will get a particularly valuable chance to see what new ideas and products are being marketed. Even the gamer who routinely has access to a well-stocked and sophisticated dealer will often find new products by unknown designers that fill a need or strike a fancy. The items are open to examination, and exhibitors will usually have a more extensive and carefully displayed selection of their products than you could expect to find at even the best hobby store.

Miniature manufacturers in particular bring a variety of their products that permits a hobbyist a wide choice; these manufacturers also offer demonstrations of painting at their booths. I learned all I know about miniature painting at a booth demonstration a few years ago, and I have found the information and demonstration quite helpful in permitting me to produce acceptable miniatures in a relatively short time.

Many games and game aids are scheduled to be released at large conventions, and certainly it is fun to be the first boy on the block to have a particular item. I can remember many an envious and covetous comment on my *Dungeon Masters Guide* and my copy of *Cults of Prax*, both of which I bore home with me from a GEN CON gathering before they were available to the wretched masses. Such triumphs may be small; they may, nonetheless, be quite satisfying.

10. New FRP ideas and approaches

Not only in the dealers' displays will the gamer find new FRP ideas and approaches: a manufacturer may arrange for his products to be showcased in a scenario or event where he demonstrates their virtues. Manufacturers and designers are not the only ones demonstrating new approaches to the hobby; each event organizer may have some new idea to add to the developing culture of FRP gaming. In fact, tournaments, events, and seminars provide forums and practical proving grounds for the various philosophies of gaming.

Particularly in seminars a gamer will find discussions that focus on the different concepts and directions that are developing in FRP gaming. Some seminars simply discuss familiar topics, like how to build a better trap, or how to interpret an obscure rule, but just as often they entertain questions about the popular styles and approaches to FRP gaming,

and sometimes they offer new perspectives on the hobby as a whole.

Events and tournaments, on the other hand, do what the seminars only talk about, and these practical applications of gaming philosophy often have far greater effect than the discussions of the abstract issues do. New game systems make a practical criticism or comment on existing systems; simply by their being marketed, they imply that the existing systems are inadequate. New approaches in tournament judging or scoring reflect an increasing interest in recognizing role-playing, rather than racking up points by slaughtering small, primitive creatures. Scenarios emphasizing more thinking tests and puzzles indicate a disenchantment with the violent obsessions of the hobby. Each individual event has variant rules that are felt to achieve some specific value of FRP better than the existing rules.

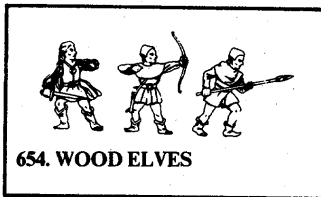
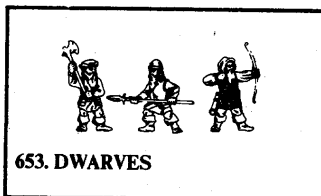
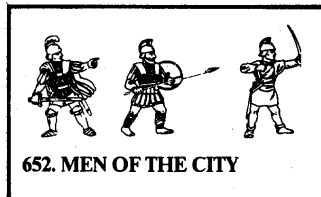
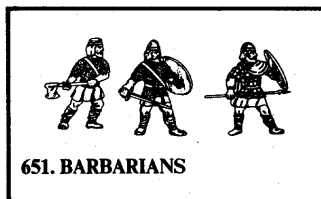
These positive features of conventions have a significant effect on the development of the hobby, in the ideas and practices adopted and adapted by gamers, and in the experiences and values that the gamers encounter and internalize in the process of having a thoroughly good time. Each participant leaves the convention with new ideas and attitudes which he will carry home and integrate into his own style and the styles of his fellow local gamers. This process of communication of ideas might take place if there were no conventions, but clearly at a much slower pace and with a much more limited group of players. It is only at the convention where critical mass is achieved, where the creative and emotional energies of devoted gamers interact and combine to stimulate the growth and refinement of our gaming culture.

More simply and concretely said, a lot of people get together and have a great time. Perhaps that is the simplest proof that the convention encourages the growth and development of the hobby. Gamers keep coming back. They go home and tell all their friends about what a good time they had and what neat ideas they picked up. They bring their friends with them when they return to the next convention, where they once again throw themselves enthusiastically into the banquet of events, tournaments, and seminars. As conventions continue to grow in size and popularity, they will serve more and more as a testing ground and communication center for the ideas that have transformed the hobby from a small and obscure pastime into a pervasive and familiar part of our culture. And the growth of the hobby will depend on the new ideas and approaches that are communicated, discussed, and developed at conventions.

But I suppose I needn't press the point so hard. I will see you at the next convention, won't I? Let's sit down there and talk it over. In the meantime, play nice, eh?

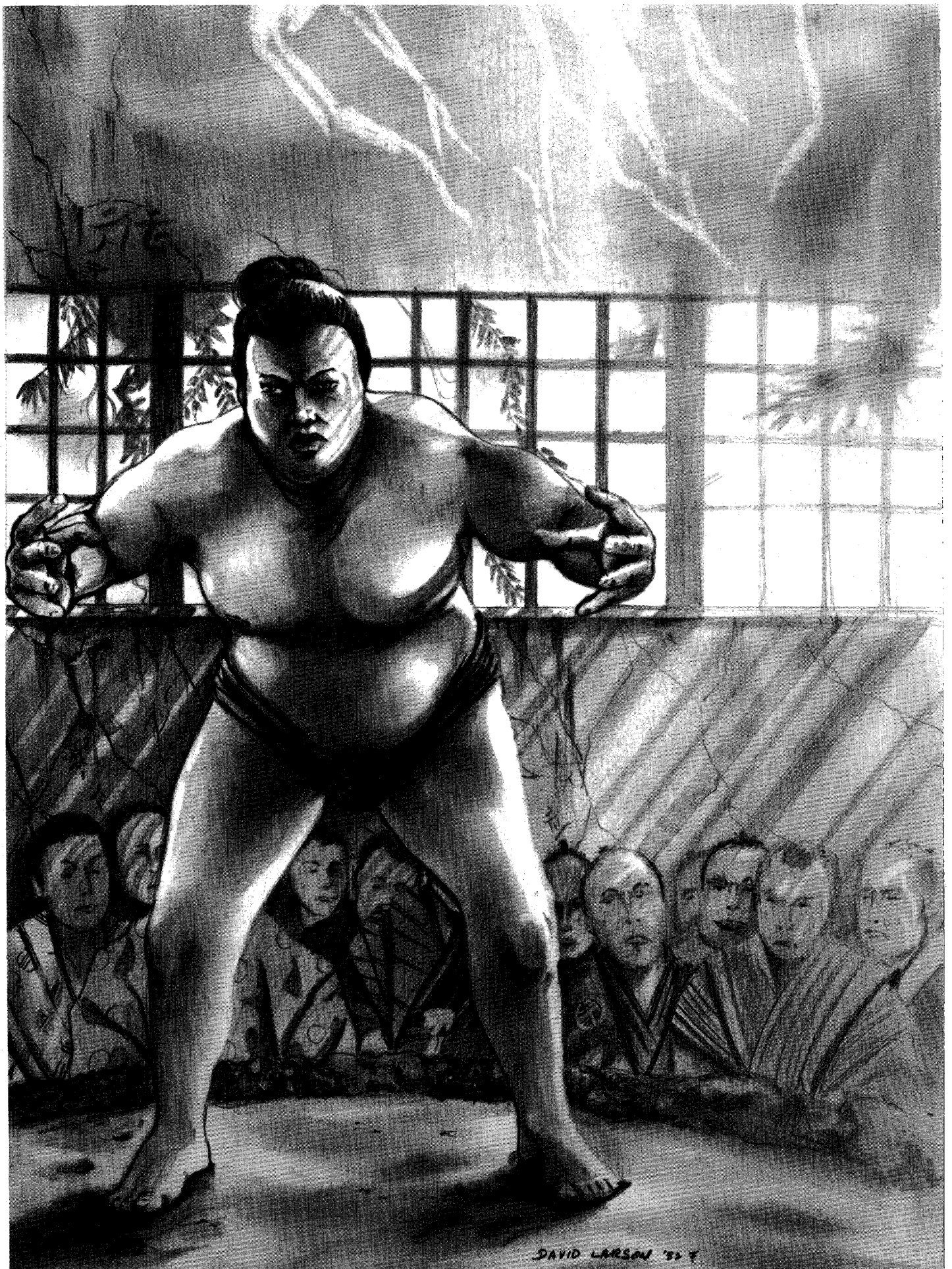
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Championship SUMO Wrestling

by Brian Blume

Championship Sumo Wrestling is a short, simple game simulating Japanese wrestling. Sumo wrestling is a sport in which the object is to either force your opponent out of a circular ring or to force him to touch the floor with any part of his body except his feet. Action is fast and furious, and typical bouts seldom last more than thirty seconds. A good way to play is for each player to generate several wrestlers and fight a series of bouts at one sitting.

Generating characters

Each wrestler has five characteristics: Speed, Agility, Strength, Weight and Balance. Roll one six-sided die for each of these characteristics for each wrestler and record the results.

Each wrestler can perform eight different moves while wrestling. A wrestler's characteristics influence how well he is able to execute these moves. Compute modifiers for each move based on the relevant characteristics of the wrestlers involved in a bout. Since each characteristic can be a number from 1 to 6, modifiers will range from -5 to +5.

Charge:

Speed minus opponent's weight.

Attack:

Strength minus opponent's strength.

Step Aside:

Agility minus opponent's speed.

Slap:

Strength minus opponent's weight.

Lever:

Agility minus opponent's strength.

Lift:

Strength minus opponent's weight.

Push:

Weight minus opponent's weight.

Pull:

Strength minus opponent's agility.

Starting each match

When all calculations have been made and recorded, each player secretly selects one of four moves for his wrestler to execute to begin the match. Charge, Attack, Step Aside and Slap are the possible choices for an opening move, and may only be employed at this time.

Both players then simultaneously reveal their choices, and each wrestler has one opportunity to throw his opponent based on their selections for opening moves.

To determine the chance to throw an opponent, consult the "Opening the Match" chart and compare the moves selected by the wrestlers. The number shown on the chart must be equalled or exceeded on a roll of a 20-sided die for a throw to occur. The die roll will be altered by the modifier the wrestler has for the selected move.

Example: You have a Speed of 6 and your opponent has a Weight of 2, giving you a modifier of +4 for Charge. On the beginning of the bout, you secretly select Charge. On revealing your choices, you find that your opponent has chosen Slap. The chart shows the number 9, which is the modified die result needed for a throw in these circumstances. If the die result is 5, and is then altered by the +4 modifier to 9, you have successfully thrown your opponent.

Action is considered to be simultaneous, so that each wrestler has a chance

to throw the other regardless of who makes the first die roll. If neither wrestler is thrown, go to "Continuing the match." If one or both wrestlers are thrown, go to "The throw."

Continuing the match

If no throw occurred at the opening of the match, each player then secretly chooses a new move. From this point onward, only Lever, Lift, Push and Pull may be selected. The players then reveal their choices simultaneously and check on the "Continuing the Match" chart to see if a throw occurs. If one or both wrestlers are thrown, go to "The throw." If neither are thrown, repeat "Continuing the match."

The throw

If a wrestler is thrown, he is entitled to a saving roll on a 20-sided die. If the number is less than or equal to the wrestler's Balance characteristic, then the wrestler saves himself from falling and is able to continue the bout normally. If one wrestler is thrown and is not able to save himself, the bout is over and he loses.

If both wrestlers are thrown and unable to save themselves, the players must determine who fell first. Each player should roll a 20-sided die and add the result to his Balance characteristic. The wrestler with the lower total falls first and loses the bout. If the results are equal, roll again, but this time do not add the Balance characteristic to either roll. Roll as many times as necessary to break ties.

If neither wrestler loses his balance and falls, go to "Continuing the match."

OPENING THE MATCH

	Charge	Attack	Step Aside	Slap
Charge vs.	13	6	18	9
Attack vs.	18	13	6	12
Step Aside vs.	6	18	13	15
Slap vs.	15	12	9	13

CONTINUING THE MATCH

	Lever	Lift	Push	Pull
Lever vs.	13	18	6	9
Lift vs.	6	13	18	12
Push vs.	18	6	13	15
Pull vs.	15	12	9	13

Convention schedule

GEN CON® XV Convention, Aug. 19-22 — The granddaddy of all role-playing game conventions, sponsored by TSR Hobbies, will again be held at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside campus between Racine and Kenosha. Preregistrations are not accepted after July 1; however, those who did not preregister can sign up for some events at the convention site. Admission at the door is \$15 for the weekend or \$7 for one day. Details are available from the GEN CON XV office, (414)248-8050.

DRAGONFLIGHT '82, Aug. 27-29 — Located on the Seattle University campus (on-site housing available), with events to take place in Campion Tower. For registration information, write to Dragonflight, P.O. Box 417, Seattle WA 98111.

PACIFICON, Sept. 4-8 — The convention that has become a Labor Day tradition, to be held again at the Dunfey Hotel in San Mateo, Calif. Information on the convention is available from Pacificon, P.O. Box 5548, San Jose CA 95150.

SUNCOAST SKIRMISHES '82, Sept. 18-19 — At the Holiday Inn Convention Center in Tampa, Fla., sponsored by the Florida Historical Gamers. Contact: Suncoast Skirmishes '82, 4006 Wallace Ave., Tampa FL 33611, phone (813)831-1762.

MASSCON 1982, Sept. 18-19 — The fourth annual gaming event sponsored by the University of Massachusetts Strategy Games Club. A wide variety of board games, miniatures, and role-playing events are planned, plus computer games and a figure-painting contest. For more information, contact Dennis Wang, 11 Dickinson St., Amherst MA 01002, (413)253-9472.

BABEL CONFERENCE '82, Sept. 24-28 — A science-fiction convention to be held at the Holiday Inn East in Grand Rapids, Mich. Among the offerings will be an art show, a costume contest, films, panel discussions, and a dealer area. For registration information, send a SASE to Babel Conference '82, c/o Dave Marshall, 1160 36th St. SW, Wyoming MI 49509.

AUGURY I, Sept. 25 — A gaming event to take place at Ashland Community College in Ashland, Ky. Admission is \$2 at the door, and there is a \$3 gaming fee. Contact: Jim Thompson, 2304½ Sanders Rd., Ashland KY 41101, (606)324-1801.

TOL-CON '82, Oct. 2-3 — The Scott Park Campus of the University of Toledo is the site for this gaming gathering. Admission is \$2 at the door. For more information or to pre-register, send a SASE to Mind Games, 3001 N. Reynolds Rd., Toledo OH 43615, or call (419)531-5540 weekdays between 4-8 p.m.

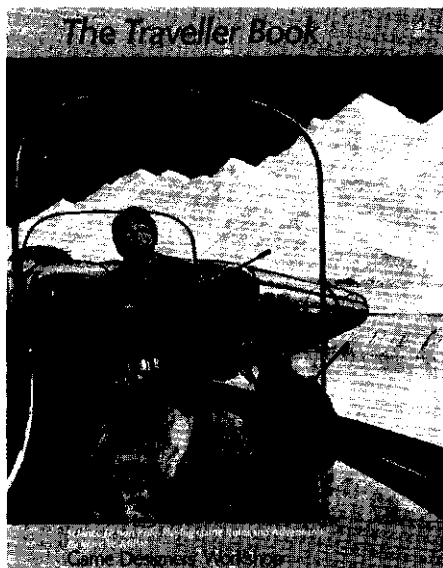
WIN GAMES II, Oct. 8-10 — For details of this convention, write to the Univ. of Manitoba Wargames Club, Box 80, University Centre, Univ. of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

OCTOCON IV, Oct. 9-10 — Author Roger Zelazny and artist Ralph McQuarrie will be the guests of honor at this SF and fantasy convention for charity, to be held at the El Rancho Tropicana Hotel in Santa Rosa, Calif. Other famous personages expected to be in attendance include Poul Anderson, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Terry Carr, Richard Lupoff, and Larry Niven. Advance registration is \$15 for both days, \$10 for one day. Contact: OctoCon, P.O. Box 1824, Santa Rosa CA 95402.

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OGRE roars back onto the scene

Reviewed by Tony Watson

About five years ago, Metagaming produced a new type of game in a new format. The MicroGame™, as it was called, offered a quick-playing, simple game in a no-frills physical presentation. The idea caught on; Metagaming still produces MicroGames, and a number of other companies have imitated the packaging and design style. The success of the first MicroGame was not due solely to the new format, however; the game itself has gone on to become something of a legend in the ranks of SF gamedom, and deservedly so. That game is *OGRE*.

OGRE is set in the year 2085, on the slag-strewn, nuclear battlefields of Europe. The game pits a single, but massively powerful, cybertank against a variety of human-crewed tanks, hovercraft, artillery and armored infantry. Using its various guns, missiles, and anti-personnel weapons, and its ability to ram and crush enemy vehicles, the Ogre attempts to fight its way to the opposing command post, destroy it, and return to base. The situation was elegantly simple and the game's mechanics were both appropriate and uncomplicated. *OGRE* is an excellent game and a fair piece of science fiction. As well as being a lot of fun to play, it's an interesting extrapolation on high-tech armored warfare.

OGRE went through two editions at Metagaming; the second edition was a fine tuning of the system, making some very important and necessary rules changes. Its success spawned a sequel, *G.E.V.* This game expanded on the basic mechanics, adding rules covering such things as terrain and overrun combat, and adding some new unit types. *G.E.V.* concentrated on non-Ogre battles between armored units and infantry and had a broader range of scenarios. It was a worthy addition to the *OGRE* "future history."

When Steve Jackson left Metagaming to strike out on his own, the question of ownership of the game came up. During the litigation that followed, *OGRE* was taken off the market. When the dust cleared, Steve Jackson Games held title to *OGRE* and *G.E.V.* This brings us to the present, and the new SJG editions of the games.

Owners of either of the first two editions of *OGRE* and the first edition of *G.E.V.* will first want to know about changes in the games. To sum it up, there are no changes in the mechanics; all the rules are essentially as they were in the last Metagaming editions. The physical quality, however, has been improved considerably. (More on this subject later.) For those who have never



purchased the games, a brief description of play will be helpful.

As mentioned previously, *OGRE* pits a powerful, cybernetic tank against a more conventional force of armored vehicles and infantry. The game's 14"-by-9" map is covered with craters and rubble. The Ogre must fight its way across this rugged terrain and destroy the defender's command post.

The defender chooses his force from a mix of heavy tanks, missile tanks, GEVs (ground effect vehicles, i.e. hovercraft) and howitzers. The basic scenario allows the defender a dozen armored units; the advanced 'game, in which a tougher Ogre model is the opponent, grants him twenty. Howitzers, due to their greater attack strengths and range, count as two units each. The defender also receives infantry strength points. Each vehicle counter represents one machine and each infantry point one squad. Defense, movement, attack, and range factors appear on each unit, as well as a silhouette of the vehicle in question. The Ogre, however, must have the status of its systems recorded on a control sheet. Ogres have missiles, main and secondary batteries, anti-personnel weapons, and treads; each is rated separately for attack, defense, and range, as applicable. Whereas regular armored vehicles are destroyed with a single solid hit, Ogres are chewed up bit by bit, losing a gun here, taking track damage here, and continue to keep chugging along. The Ogre player only has one unit, but it's certainly a match for the defending forces.

OGRE's mechanics are simple. Movement allowances equal hexes moved, with terrain restricting the movement of some types of units. GEVs have the distinctive ability to move both before and after combat, allowing them to "shoot and scoot." The Ogre, by virtue of its

size, can ram enemy units during its movement phase, possibly destroying them. Combat is essentially just as simple. Attacks are resolved by comparing the attack strength of the unit(s) to the defense of the target. Attacking units and Ogre weapons can combine their factors, while each unit or Ogre system on defense is a distinct target. The CRT uses odds ratios and gives the results, which are either no effect, disabled, or destroyed. Disabled armored units lose their next turn; disabled infantry units lose one strength point. Destroyed results are just that, and are the only results that affect an Ogre system.

OGRE is more than just Ogres attacking GEVs and the like. Scenarios are included for Ogres on defense, and for duels between Ogres. The countermix is extensive enough to allow players to devise their own situations.

G.E.V., the accessory game to *OGRE*, expands on the basic system and situation. The game concentrates on combat between conventional armored units and infantry. Although a new class of Ogre is introduced, the Mark IV, no rules for Ogres are included; a player must also have *OGRE* to use the cybertanks. *G.E.V.* adds considerably to the *OGRE* system. The larger map (16" by 14") has more varied terrain — water, forests, towns, swamps and so forth — which provides for more realistic effects on movement. Stacking, forbidden in *OGRE*, is allowed, though not often recommended due to a "spillover fire" rule. The game also has a more complex overrun rule, allowing for some truly nasty in-hex fighting. In its scenarios (which offer greater variety than those in *OGRE*), *G.E.V.* proves the versatility of the system; even when no Ogres are used, *G.E.V.* is a good standalone game, as well as a fully compatible sequel to *OGRE*.

The two games are essentially the

same as their last Metagaming incarnations when it comes to design. The major improvement has been in the physical quality of the games. Let's start with the counters. While the previous graphics have been retained (a good choice), the counters are larger (half-inch squares) and thicker, though they are still not die-cut and must be separated with scissors. Counter sets for both games are printed in black and white, so that counters for one game can be used in the other with no problem. This is useful, since Ogre Marks III and V appear only in *OGRE*, and light tanks and mobile howitzers appear only in *G.E.V.* I'm sure many players have wished to try an *OGRE* defense using mobile howitzers, or wanted to try a Mark V in one of the *G.E.V.* scenarios.

The maps are also improved. The new ones, painted by Denis Loubet, are printed on slick paper in full color. They constitute a major, and very eye-pleasing, change from the older editions.

The first change that purchasers will notice is in the packaging. In a note included with each copy, Steve Jackson Games states the opinion that the new box is "the best new idea in game pack-

aging in years." This just may be right. The Pocket Box (as it is called) is a little over seven inches high, four inches wide and half an inch thick. It is made of hard plastic and opens on hinges. A pair of snaps keeps the box closed. The only possible problem I can foresee is the ability of the snaps and hinges to hold up under repeated openings and closings. The boxes have full-color covers, in keeping with the generally attractive artwork used throughout the games. SJG should be especially commended for retaining Winchell Chung's illustrations for the rules books; no one draws a GEV or Ogre like Mr. Chung.

The OGRE Book, the third element of this pleasure package, is a 40-page, illustrated compilation of articles dealing with *OGRE* and/or *G.E.V.* The 19 articles herein have been culled from back issues of *The Space Gamer* magazine, from 1977 through 1980. The articles are a varied lot. They include three selections by designer Jackson himself, offering notes on the design of the two games and some new information (including Ogres Marks I, II, and VI, and a unit called the Paneuropean Fencer). Also

included are tactical articles, covering topics such as the allocation of shots so as to use the odds tables to best advantage, recommended defensive tactics, and a suggested defense against Ogres based on howitzers. Other articles add new units to the game (subs, aircraft), or can be used to graft *OGRE* to other games. New scenarios for both games and a couple of pieces of fiction round out the volume.

The book is a good idea (though not a unique one, as Jackson states in the introduction; Avalon Hill did a similar thing for *Panzerblitz* a couple years ago). Even if you have the back issues in question, it's nice to have all these articles assembled in one place. SJG has promised a second volume to follow soon.

The *OGRE*/*G.E.V.* universe offers exciting and interesting play. The games are easy to learn but still challenging, and can be played in around an hour. Either or both would make a fine addition to any gamer's collection. *OGRE*, *G.E.V.* and *The OGRE Book* sell for \$5.00 each plus 50¢ per item postage from Steve Jackson Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin TX 78760.

The name says it all: WOW!

Reviewed by John T. Sapienza, Jr.

WORLDS OF WONDER is three role-playing games in one box, produced by Chaosium Inc. and selling for \$15.95. The 9¼x12¼x1-inch box contains a page explaining the contents; a 4-page leaflet called "A Portion of Wonder"; the four rule books; a 4-page booklet of play aids consisting primarily of tables reprinted from the rule books for easy reference; four blank character sheets for each of the three game worlds in *WOW*; a sheet of playing figures divided into a section for each of the three games; a Chaosium catalog and response card; plus 3d6, 1d4, 1d8, and 1d20. In short, the box contains everything needed to play the game, and then some.

Worlds of Wonder is either a set of three role-playing minigames for the novice gamer, or an ambitious attempt by Chaosium at creating a modular master game system from which specific games can be created to meet the specific needs and desires of the gamers. I can recommend the game as it stands as a beginner's set, but I believe that at the same time, it represents the next generation of Chaosium's game designs and will be added to until there is a fully developed set of rules for each of the worlds the designers build. I say that because the basic rules module, *Basic Role-Playing*, has already been used in another recent Chaosium game: *Call of Cthulhu*, derived from the tales of H. P. Lovecraft.

If you appreciated the rules design of *RuneQuest* but weren't very enthused about the world of Glorantha for which it was designed, you should feel right at home with the *WOW* rule structure, which applies the same basic skills system to govern the determination of results in each of the worlds it is applied to here. *Magic World*, in particular, is the *RQ* design approach minus the cults and social structure of Glorantha, making it easy to use the basic rules while designing your own world to use them in.

Basic Role-Playing is much the same book reviewed earlier (in *DRAGON*™ issue #52), and needs no extensive discussion here. It is a 16-page booklet that introduces the gamer to the basic concepts of role-playing and how to create a living character out of mechanical game rules. This edition does not come with the battleboard and playing pieces included with *BRP* as a separate product. I miss the battleboard, which is a useful product to regulate movement during combat, but the playing pieces are provided in a different form in *WOW*. These are 25mm scale standup pieces printed on heavy stock, which you cut out, fold to provide images on both sides of the piece and glue together, and then tape to a weight such as a penny.

Worlds of Wonder provides three worlds to choose from: the future, an alternative present, and an alternative medieval or ancient past. Let's look at them in that order: Like the other two

game-world rule books, *Future*World* is 18 pages of text, which means that the rules are necessarily presented concisely and with much room left for the gamer to invent other details. While one might complain that each of the three games could use expansions of various sorts, such as more races and types of planets to explore in *Future*World*, more superpowers to choose from in *Superworld*, or more spells in *Magic World*, for example, one should also bear in mind the short lengths of the rule books. As long as the basics are included in each game, the fact that there is room for additions is simply part of the fun. (And an opportunity for Chaosium to publish supplements to the game later, one might add.)

*Future*World* is a game of planetary exploration, rather than one of space-ships. Prospective Horatio Hornblowers of space will find this a disappointment, but as a matter of game design it is rather elegant. Instead of spending a lot of time on the methods of transportation, *FW* puts you right into the surface action on the planet you decided to explore. (Perhaps a later supplement to *FW* will add ship designs for special purposes, but the game is carefully designed so that the main focus is away from space and on the planets instead.)

The cultural setup in *FW* postulates a system of gates from world to world, and an elite body of specialists that maintains them, the Imperial Corps of Engineers. Your character spends a career in

the ICE, or with the Scouts or the Army (note that there is no Navy career), or in Science, or as a Civilian, or as a Criminal. In each career the character gets beginning training in several skills areas, and it is possible to shift careers over the six years of background development to equip the character with the skills of your choice.

This may remind you strongly of the TRAVELLER™ system, but there are several important differences in approach between the two games. One is that in *FW* there is no chance the character will die during background development. Another is that while skill areas are fixed, the skill levels are not fixed at what you start with in *FW*. Each term of training in a given skill gives you the base skill plus 15% in that skill. If you end up with, say, a 45% skill in Heavy Laser Rifle skill, you can improve your skill through experience, unlike in TRAVELLER. This encourages the *FW* player to go for more diversity of training, but the optimum strategy in both games is still to concentrate on getting a specialty up to a useful level of skill, with side interests added to the extent you feel you can afford the time they require. In both games, you end up with a character whose personality is formed according to the careers chosen during this character background development.

*Future*World* has an elaborate setup of weapons and counter-weapons systems, most of them keyed to the Tactical Combat Pack every sensible character carries as standard equipment. This is a combination of energy screen, electronic warfare generator, sensor unit, power pack, and information computer. You can shift actions of the TCP between sensors, attacks, and defenses of various kinds, and the tactics of the game lie in choosing which combination is best calculated to save your hide under the circumstances. A bad choice of tactics gets you killed or captured in *FW*, for the weapons are highly deadly and the defensive systems are vital. Several races are included in *FW*, including the humans, catfolk, and bearfolk, not to mention the robots within the Terran Empire, and their enemies, which include a reptilian race and an insectoid hive-mind race. Like the other two games, *FW* concludes with several pages of sample scenarios to get you started.

Superworld takes us to a parallel world very much like our present world or that of the recent past, in which "costumed crimebusters fight powerful supervillains in the never-ending battle between good and evil," as it says in the introduction. This is, of course, the world of comic books, where the heroes and villains are larger than life, where secret identities are the order of the day, and where superheroes travel around in bright colors that proclaim their heroic status. The generation of a superhero character

starts with determining how the character got where he or she is, and in deciding what powers and limitations are reasonable.

Powers are determined by "buying" them with Hero Points (equal to the total of the personal characteristics of the hero). The cost per power depends on how much energy the power requires in use, and the number of levels you want in each power. There are 31 superpowers listed, and several are actually made up of a number of specific subcategories, so the list is really longer than it seems. Superpowers can be inherent abilities of the hero, or they can be special equipment that gives the hero those abilities, but regardless of how you build the character you have to choose within the limit of the points available. Accepting disabilities gives you more Hero Points to work with, and often a more interesting character to play.

The combat rules state that the atmosphere the game is trying to simulate is the flamboyance of the comics, in which superheroes grapple each other, knock each other through brick walls, and so forth. In addition, since none of the superheroes or villains gets seriously hurt in the comics (disabled and captured, but not killed), the rules on life and death are more relaxed in *SW* than in the other games. This does not apply to the mere humans around the heroes and villains, however.

Magic World is the closest to a traditional rolegaming subject of the group, since it deals with a relatively primitive world in which technology has not developed nearly as much as that of the present world. Instead, weapons and armor are those of the Middle Ages or earlier times, and the major means of manipulating the environment is magic. Unlike most other games, *MW* expressly provides for some use of magic spells and equipment by any character. Each magic spell is a specific skill, studied and practiced until the user has learned it to a basic minimum level of skill in return for his initial training money. After that, it takes successful uses of the spell to become better with it, with a die roll determining whether the character learned another 5% skill with the spell at the end of the adventure, as with any other skill. Spell use is limited to the character's POW points each day, unless the character has a power staff (which makes him a sorcerer by definition).

One of the most interesting parts of the magic system is the absence of a saving throw or luck roll for most spells. The question of having a spell which throws conjured energy at you succeed in its intent is purely a matter of whether the mage made his or her skill roll, just as with any other physical attack such as an arrow. The only exceptions are those spells that cause a change in the nature of the target, such as a magical control

over a person, a change in the person's position through a teleportation, or a change in the health of the person through a healing/wounding spell. All of these must overcome the resistance of the person (assuming he is resisting, that is), with a die roll on the resistance table. Since there is always a chance the mage will fail to get the spell off successfully, there really is no need for a saving throw concept here, and *MW* quite logically discards it in favor of a skill system approach.

Although *MW* allows the use of magical spells by any character, the rules still provide basic choices of skill specialties. These role models include the magic specialist, or sorcerer, on whom most of the *MW* rules are concentrated. There are three other primary role models provided, each of which is presented as arising from the character's background experience after emerging from the *BRP* development. The player must make an "admission" roll to become a warrior, sorcerer, or sage; otherwise, the character starts life as a rogue, with skills appropriate for one who has had to live by his wits since leaving the farm.

The basic role models of warrior, mage, and thief (rogue) should be familiar to experienced rolegamers, but remember that these are only what you start out with. What you do after this depends on what you want. You will only get better with those skills you actually use, and you can always elect to switch to another career, such as becoming a sorcerer after spending some years as something else, if you make the qualifying roll.

The sage is an interesting new role model for beginning characters. Every sage starts with literacy and one other skill from the sage skills list at INTx5%, and three other sage skills at INTx3%. The sage skills are healing (a sage specialty); lore knowledge, which includes pieces of legend, genealogy, history, geography, heraldry, and law of the area the sage is from; philosophy knowledge, which covers both the natural sciences and the arts; linguistics skills, which gives three languages; mechanical arts, which includes both architecture and general construction knowledge; and the mercantile art, a skill that can not only be a career in itself but an excuse to travel and become rich (or at least make the attempt). The sage starts with skill in only one weapon, and like the sorcerer depends on hired guards for physical security. (There is a problem with the rule book, which states that sages start with *all* sage skills. The *MW* play-aid sheet states the limits as I gave them above, which I believe was the intended system since no other career category is given an entire list of skills, but rather a list to choose from.)

In writing the monster description section of *MW*, the authors tried to make life easier for the referee by reducing the

number of die rolls needed from seven to four by discarding CHA and making SIZ serve also for CON and STR. This produced an unintended problem, however, by making the hit points for certain races different for player characters than for NPCs. For example, dwarves roll 4d6 for CON and use this number for hit points if they are player characters, while for NPC dwarves, hit points come from their 2d6+3 SIZ roll. This means PC dwarves have almost twice the hit points of NPC dwarves in *MW*, which is clearly unreasonable. This will probably be modified in a future edition, but for the first edition the referee ought to roll all specifications for NPCs to keep the game balanced.

Magic World suffers from proofreading lapses more than the other two games. Chaosium has done a generally excellent job of proofreading for spelling and grammar throughout *WOW*, but there were a number of critical proofreading errors on numbers in the magic spell descriptions. Several spells had their ranges reduced from the standard 120 meters to 12, and one spell had its duration reduced from 15 minutes to 5, which seem to be problems of dropped digits that weren't caught in the proofing.

There is also a "missing rule" problem in *MW*. In the section on magical treasures on page 15, the description of magic potions (which allow the user to cast a specific spell within two hours) states that the odds of success with the spell are the user's POWx5%, "with the usual reduction of 10% per level after the first level." The problem here is that there is no such rule in the spellcasting descriptions earlier in *MW*. Was there supposed to be? Or was it there originally, deleted in the final editing, and missed on page 15? This is an important question, for the only limit on the level of force in a spell is that it cannot exceed one-half the user's INT (as for superpowers in *SW*), and there is a slight time delay within the melee round per level used. If the chance of success is also affected by the level attempted, then the power of the mage is correspondingly reduced. And if this is true for mages, we then must consider

whether it should be the rule for super-heroes, too. (Note: I understand Chaosium plans to delete the phrase quoted above from future editions.)

The reason such comparisons can — and should — be made is that the three games in *WOW* are really special cases of the same game, it seems to me. Each of the games is an illustration of applying overall designs to specific needs with the intention that the worlds being built within the system would be sufficiently systems-compatible that a character could wake up in another world, adapt, and survive. Thus, we discover that the Blast spell in *MW* is essentially a laser effect, and the spell that protects against that will also protect a mage against a *FW* scout shooting a laser pistol.

I like this approach, although I'd like to see it applied with a bit more consistency in the various parallel rules. There seems to be some oddity in the *MW* spell descriptions, which have spells that protect against two of the three main energy types at a time, instead of the approach taken in both *FW* and *SW* of having specific defenses to single specific attacks. There's a similar oddity in *SW*, where the superpower of Absorption recognizes six types of attack, while the superpower of Armor recognizes only three types of attack by folding the first six into three. Perhaps in a future edition, the authors will smooth out this kind of thing.

Another example of the carryovers between the three games is the similarity between superpowers in *SW* and magic spells in *MW*, even if the mechanics of acquiring them are very different. A superhero seeing a sorcerer on the loose in *SW* would think her merely a newly-arrived superheroine, while a sorcerer seeing a superhero on the loose in *MW* would think him merely a person with a powerful wild talent for certain magics. A lot of the superpowers in *SW* could be added to the somewhat restricted spell list in *MW* with very little adaptation.

If I have been critical of details in the various pieces that make up *Worlds of Wonder*, it is because I think very highly of the design goals, and want to see all

the imperfections straightened out. A review should answer three questions about the thing being reviewed: What is it supposed to do? How well was it done? Was it worth doing? I believe that *WOW* represents an attempt to develop a set of basic operating rules that can be applied to any gaming world. I think that Chaosium carried this out with considerable success, although I think there is room for improvement in applying the same rule in parallel situations. And I consider this an advancement of the state of the art in game design, and the beginning of a new generation of games, and well worth the attempt. *Worlds of Wonder* is more than a set of minigames, it's a major game system, and well worth exploring for both the novice and the experienced rolegamer.



(From page 5)

creative mage was able to use that spell to save the lives of two badly wounded fighters, putting them into a state of stasis until they could receive medical aid. The DM permitted this because she realized that her interpretations of D&D rules and spells, though free, had to be consistent in her particular universe. That is all that is really important, for playability's sake.

A topic which I have not seen any articles on, and which I would like to find out more about, is Play by Mail gaming. What and where are the companies? What games do they run? At what cost? How do you rate their various services, products, and reputations? Before sending off money to the companies advertised in your magazine, it would be nice to see some articles describing what to expect from PBM fantasy and science fiction gaming, reviews of the games, and so forth.

Richard P. Davis
Stanford, Calif.

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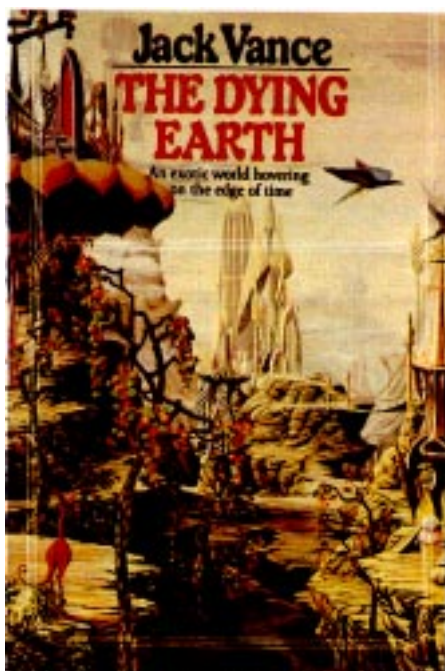
Reviewed by Chris Henderson

THE DYING EARTH Jack Vance
Timescape Books \$2.25
0-671-44184-1

The world ever seems posed on the brink of illiteracy — right? No one reads anymore — right?

Wrong. A lot of books are still being printed by somebody; each month brings more reissues of classic works than the one before it.

First off, Timescape is doing its part, reprinting Jack Vance's all time winner, *The Dying Earth*. One of his top three books, it sparked one of the most popular continuing epic series in the genre.

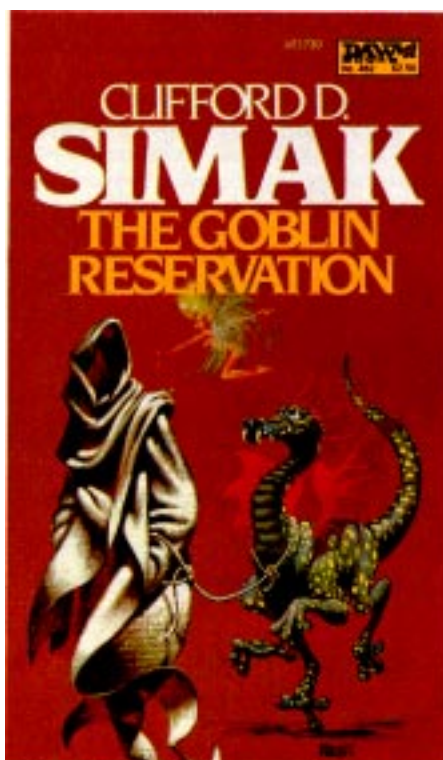


THE GOBLIN RESERVATION
Clifford D. Simak
Daw Books \$2.25 0-87997-730-2

Without spending too much time on reprints, Simak's *The Goblin Reservation* has been too long unavailable to not merit a mention. Simak's hero is Prof. Peter Maxwell, a man who leaves the Earth and returns with great knowledge. He is eager to share his wonderful news with the rest of humanity, but no one wants to listen. The reason, he discovers, is that no one believes that the original Peter Maxwell really existed.

As is typical of this Simak romp from

the late '60s, the story is humorous, but still filled with the somber side of life the author understands so well. It is not a serious novel, but it is a greatly enjoyable one.



HONEYMOON IN HELL
Fredric Brown
Bantam Books \$2.25 0-553-20752-0

Despite the title (or the cover graphics, which have nothing at all to do with the contents), *Honeymoon in Hell* is a volume to be picked up by anyone who enjoys good laughs, terrible puns and happy endings. This collection from the '40s and '50s is filled with Brown's best shorts, including a liberal dosage of his famous, punnish short stories.

Never more than a page in length, these super shorties are sometimes packed with as many as twenty puns, all playing off the same theme. The rest of the stories, all light hearted in nature, make excellent reading. Outside of the title story, none of the twenty-one tales within this volume are more than ten pages long, making it the perfect book for those who like their fiction in bite size pieces.

THE COMPLETE ROBOT
Isaac Asimov
Doubleday \$19.95 0-385-17724-0

At this late date in Asimov's career, it would be pointless to begin raving about how well he has outlined the world's future history of robots. He laid the groundwork for at least 80% of all the robot stories which came after him. Science fiction owes him a debt, and knows it. Although many of his novels are ponderous and juvenile, his short stories are infinitely better than his longer works, especially the tales that feature robots.

Doubleday has collected *all* of Asimov's robot shorts in one 550+ page monster. The over thirty stories are arranged in logical groupings (the Calvin stories, metallics, humanoids, immobiles, et cetera). After all, how else would one arrange stories about computers?

BLADE RUNNER (Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep) Philip K. Dick
Del Ray Books \$2.75
345-30129-3-275

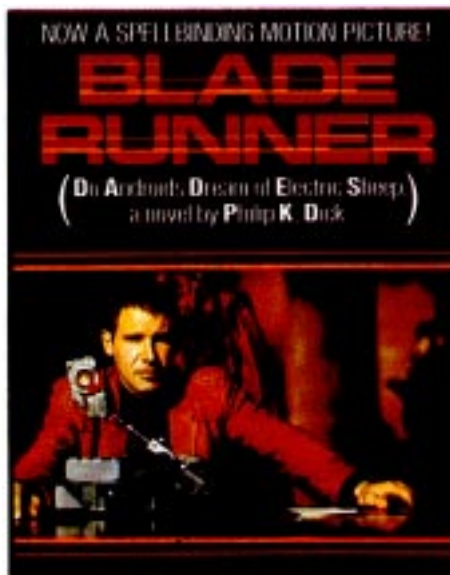
Blade Runner is the movie title for one of the late Philip K. Dick's best novels, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*. The book follows law officer Rick Deckard, in a time when androids have been built that can pass for human beings. The ultimate crime is for an android to slip out of his second class citizen's caste and seek acceptance as a full human being.

The novel concerns itself with Deckard's assignment to track down and "retire" a number of rogue androids. It is



a powerful, social science fiction story. Dick's future is a bleak, despairing place, his protagonist one whose wife hates him almost as much as he hates himself. It is a grim shock of a book, one which will never go out of print until our world is as lousy as the one in the novel.

Out of everything is this month's column, *nothing* is better than this one. Indeed, outside of *A Scanner Darkly*, Dick never wrote a better book than this one. It is one of the best science fiction novels ever written, and worthy of everyone's attention.

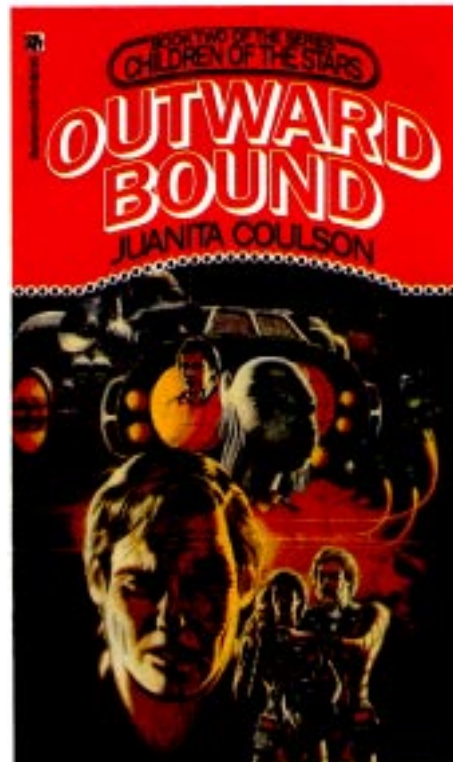


OUTWARD BOUND Juanita Coulson
Del Rey Books \$2.95
345-28179-9-295

Juanita Coulson rocked the world of science fiction with her sweeping, almost mainstream novel *Tomorrow's Heritage*, a novel about the Earth's first alien contact, and how it is handled, manipulated, misused, and misunderstood, all as seen in relationship to the power wars raging in the all-powerful Saunder Dynasty. It was an interesting, epic saga, one seemingly aimed at the housewives, not science fiction readers, of America. It was a huge book, fat and filled with tiny print, all of it quite enjoyable reading.

It was also a book left wide open for a sequel, something Ms. Coulson has provided. *Outward Bound* again pulls us into the affairs of the Saunder family, this time concentrating on Brenna Saunder and her drive to reach the stars without the need for wasting away the decades in cold sleep. She turns her back on safety, her family and her lover, meaning to conquer the light barrier, even though the world has already turned its back on faster-than-light travel after the first disastrously fatal experiments.

And, even though it all sounds like *DALLAS IN SPACE*, it isn't. Coulson writes with a sure, modernistic hand. Her continuation of the Saunder family story is a good one, one tailor made for those who enjoyed "Tomorrow's Heritage."



CASTAWAYS IN TIME
Robert Adams
Signet Books \$2.25
0-451-11474-4

Occasionally, Robert Adams takes a

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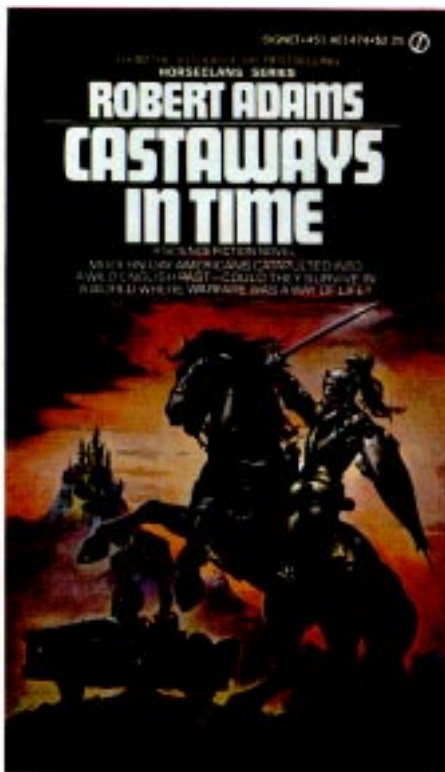
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little time off from writing his Horseclan series to relax. Sometimes he goes riding, sometimes he loosens up with a little fencing. Sometimes, however, he sits down to the typewriter and cranks out a non-Horseclan adventure. *Castaways In Time* is one such novel.

Allowing himself his usual device of acceptable anachronisms, Adams has this time taken people from our present, and our future, and swirled them back through time, to a past which is similar to ours, but which also exists in another dimension. Once again, Adams can weave any tale he wishes, intertwining history with fancy, making a world perfectly suited for the kinds of fantasies he tells so well.

In *Castaways*, a number of Americans, caught in a terrifyingly harsh storm are swept back to ancient England. In the dimension they have landed in, however, the Church controls all gunpowder, and has risen to be a seemingly unstoppable power. When Bass Foster and his party arrive, they find the Church waging holy war against England in an attempt to depose Arthur III and make his nephew the king of England and Wales.

It is a bloody, moody book, one which understands the horrors of personal combat. Adams' characters are a curious collection this time; people who have never been exposed to war fall into it quite readily, playing with battles and the combatants within like chess pieces. Those who do understand war wish only for the bloodletting to finally come to an end. Indeed, Adams may have created his most memorable character in Bass Foster. He is a man who fights only

because he has to, praying for the time when he can finally stop. He is not a preachy, phony creation, one who bemoans his fate, and then goes out to slaughter with glee; he is, instead, a passionate man, hoping to live through the mindless havoc he has been dropped into. He continues on, because he knows not how to stop. He is a true hero, and the focal point around which another fine fantasy novel has been wound.

For those waiting for Adams to finally fail, the wait will have to continue. "Castaways In Time" is one of his best.

WARLOCK'S GIFT **Ardath Mayhar**
Doubleday \$10.95 0-385-17359-8

Occasionally, you finish a book and wonder why you bothered. One such novel is Ardath Mayhar's *Warlock's Gift*. It concerns Karas Lantir, prince of Lantirion, who wishes to regain his father's kingdom, stolen from him by an evil warlock. Armed with the typical barbarian amount of muscle and sword skill, extraordinary mental powers, a sorceress fiancée, and the most boundless good luck ever seen outside of an E.R. Burroughs novel, basically unbeatable Karas sets out after the warlock, a fairly incompetent, bumbling type it is hard to imagine really scaring anyone.

Besides the fairly boring action line, the novel is crammed with little confusions which distract the reader at every turn. If you're still interested, wait for the paperback version, instead of shelling out \$10.95 for this one.



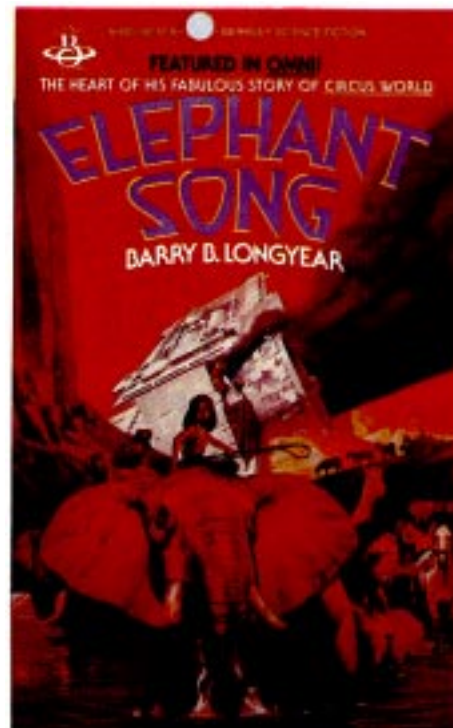
ELEPHANT SONG **Barry B. Longyear**
Berkley Books \$2.50
0-425-05167-6

First Barry Longyear wrote *Circus World*, a group of short stories about a

planet peopled by acrobats, fortune tellers, animal trainers and freaks. The book was a howling success, inspiring a novel, *City of Baraboo*, which told how the circus worlders went into outer space and got to their unique planet.

Now comes *Elephant Song*, which tells how the troupes built the societies described in *Circus World*. Trapped on a planet where they are only sure that they can breathe the air, they must plot their coming history, and begin to act upon their plans quickly.

Motivating the stranded performers is not an easy task for those luckless enough to be placed in charge. They are more than stranded. They are cut off



from the universe, a broken-backed show with no one to entertain. For the circus people, it is a living hell. They know nothing of building towns, or of setting up permanent dwellings, growing crops, or even of getting on day to day without the next show to look forward to. They know the last curtain has drawn on their careers, and they are more than bitter: Most of them are heart-struck, lifeless against the prospect of having to settle down and become town dwellers, never again to hear applause, to pack up the tents, or fleece a rube of his credits.

It is a sad book, one without easy answers or much happiness. Longyear's circus novels have been consistent in this. Despite the lively atmosphere of the books, and the grim humor of the characters within them, the mood is constantly one of gain through loss.

Elephant Song is supposed to bring the circus world stories saga to an end. One can only hope that somewhere in-between *Song* and *World* there is perhaps room for just one more.

Dear Dixie

© P. Foglio '82

HI! THIS MONTH I'M GOING TO ANSWER QUESTIONS FROM SOME OF OUR FEMALE READERS, WHO, WHILE SLOGGING ABOUT IN THE DUNGEONS HAVE ENCOUNTERED SOME PROBLEMS NOT COVERED IN THE RULE BOOKS.



YOU SAID YOU WERE GOING TO LET ME SOLO THIS MONTH!

I AM! HONEST, YOU WON'T EVEN KNOW I'M HERE!



DEAR DIXIE - MY PROBLEM IS WITH MY DUNGEONING PARTNER. HE IS TOO POLITE. WHENEVER WE COME TO A DOOR, HE ALWAYS INSISTS ON HOLDING IT OPEN AND LETTING ME GO IN FIRST.



AS A RESULT - I'VE BEEN KILLED 15 TIMES IN THE LAST MONTH. WHAT SHOULD I DO?
- DONNA S./KALLAMAZOO, MI.

DEAR DONNA - IT IS POSSIBLE THAT WHAT WE HAVE HERE IS MERELY A LACK OF EDUCATION. YOU MUST EXPLAIN TO YOUR PARTNER THAT THERE IS A TIME AND A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING - WHAT MAY BE CORRECT BEHAVIOR ONE PLACE IS TOTALLY INAPPROPRIATE IN ANOTHER.



THERE IS ALSO A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY THAT HE'S NOT AS STUPID AS YOU THINK...

...IT'S GREAT! I OPEN THE DOOR AND IN SHE GOES! I HAVEN'T DIED YET!



IF THIS IS INDEED THE CASE, DO NOT HESITATE TO REACT ACCORDINGLY.

FIRE ANTS? YEAH, SURE, WE GOT SOME... LEVEL 6 - THIRD DOOR ONNA LEFT.



DEAR DIXIE - MY PROBLEM IS THAT MY CHARACTER HAS BECOME PREGNANT. OUR DUNGEON-MASTER DIDN'T MENTION THAT THAT COULD HAPPEN. NOT ONLY IS IT STARTING TO SLOW ME DOWN, BUT IN ANOTHER MONTH OR SO, I WON'T BE ABLE TO FIT INTO MY ARMOR! SUGGESTIONS?

- CAT M./ROCHESTER, NY



DEAR CAT - AT THIS POINT I DON'T THINK YOU HAVE MUCH CHOICE IN THE MATTER. I'M AFRAID THAT THE TIME HAS COME TO RETIRE THIS PARTICULAR CHARACTER, AS FEW DUNGEONS PROVIDE PROPER DAY-CARE FACILITIES. YOU CAN, HOWEVER, HIT YOUR DUNGEON-MASTER UP FOR CHILD-SUPPORT.



DEAR DIXIE- MY PROBLEM IS WITH **CHARISMA**. I'VE GOT TOO MUCH OF IT (18) AND THE MEN IN OUR PARTY ARE ALWAYS TRYING TO PICK ME UP. **HELP!** - MARTHA S./CHICAGO, IL

HEY, DREAM-BOAT, PICK A CARD - ANY CARD!

GOT ANY LOCKS YOU WANT PICKED? DOOR? VAULT? BELT?



DEAR MARTHA- THE BEST YOU CAN DO IN A SITUATION LIKE THIS IS MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR THEM. WE RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING...



ITCHING POWDER UNDER THEIR ARMOR,



PORCUPINE PELT JACKETS,



OR A RELIABLE INVISIBILITY CHARM. GOOD LUCK!

DEAR DIXIE- I'M WHAT YOU'D CALL A **FRPG** WIDOW. I DON'T PLAY, BUT MY HUSBAND DOES. I'VE JUST FOUND OUT THAT HIS CHARACTER IS HAVING AN AFFAIR WITH A SORCERESS. HOW SHOULD I HANDLE THIS?
- ALICE I./MUNCHKINLAND, OZ

ALICE- THEY'RE **ONLY** MAKE-BELIEVE CHARACTERS, AND ONES WITH LOUSY LIFE-EXPECTANCIES AT THAT! LOOK- EVENTUALLY I'LL GET EATEN BY A DRAGON OR SOMETHING- AND IT'LL BE **OVER-HONEST!**



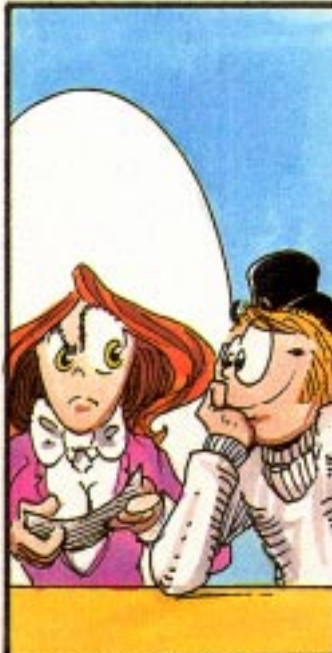
DEAR ALICE- YOU MUST REMEMBER THAT THIS **IS** ONLY A GAME. RELAX, YOU HAVE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT. IF, HOWEVER, YOU DISCOVER SOMETHING-SUSPICIOUS- LIKE LIPSTICK SMEARS ON HIS MINIATURES- THEN YOU WOULD BE JUSTIFIED IN TAKING STEPS...

WELL MIKE- I FOUND OUT WHY YOUR CHARACTER KEPT DYING... THESE DICE WERE GIMMICKED TO ONLY ROLL LOW.

WHAT?! NOW WHO WOULD DO THAT?



DEAR DIXIE- MY PROBLEM IS WITH **UNICORNS**. WHENEVER I GO INTO A DUNGEON, IN NO TIME I'VE GOT DOZENS OF THE PESKY THINGS FOLLOWING ME. WHAT **CAN** I DO TO STOP...



SEND YOUR PROBLEMS TO "DEAR DIXIE" % DRAGON MAGAZINE!



WHAT IS YOUR BUSINESS HERE?



IT REALLY WASN'T NOTHIN' IMPORTANT.

YEAH. WE CAN COME BACK LATER.

YOU ARE FRIENDS OF THE DRAGON?



NO! NO WAY!

Y'SEE WE WUZ PLAYIN' SOME POKER THIS MORNING... AND...

AN' WE GOT HORN-SWOGGLED BY A BUNCHA LOUSY LITTLE DWORVES!

YEH, AN' WE THONK WORMY MIGHTA CAUGHT EM, BUT HE WUZ'N HOME. SO WE WUZ FUGG...

WORMY



HO HO HA, YAH HA!

HE THINKS IT'S FUNNY.



FOOLS.



NOT WORMY!

WHY THAT NOGOOD SLIMY SONOVA...

HE ALWAYS SEEMED LIKE A NICE GUY...

WE SHOODA KNOWN.

...FER A DRAGON THAT IS.

HEY! WAIT A MINUTE!

THERE WERE NO OTHER DWORVES! IT WAS THE DRAGON WHO STOLE YOUR GOLD!



HOWDAHELL DO YOU KNOW ABOUT IT, BUSTER?

HEY! BE COOL, OTIS!



FLOOM!

SILENCE!



Now there is no need for us to be at such odds *mlir' dylh*



when in fact we are in *jilz lmyaby* alignment..



O-mhy-ll' l' rufvny thuz
Do you follow me?



YEAH... SURE.

DUH WUD HE SAY?

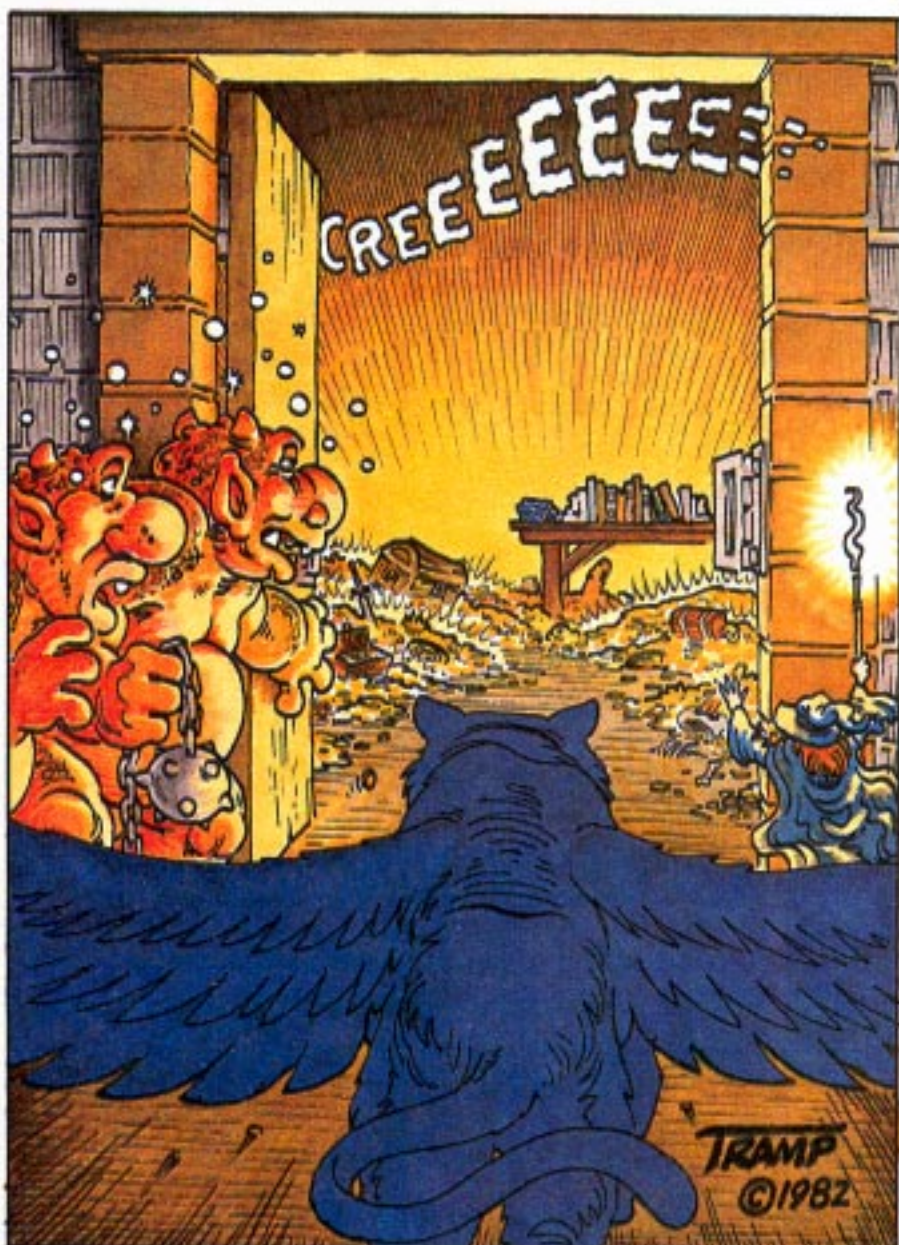
I DUNNO!

THERE THEY ARE.

WUD'ERE THEY DOIN'?

IT MUST BE WORMY'S VAULT. (HERE!) GIMME YER CLUB. I'LL BUST THAT LOCK OFFA THERE.

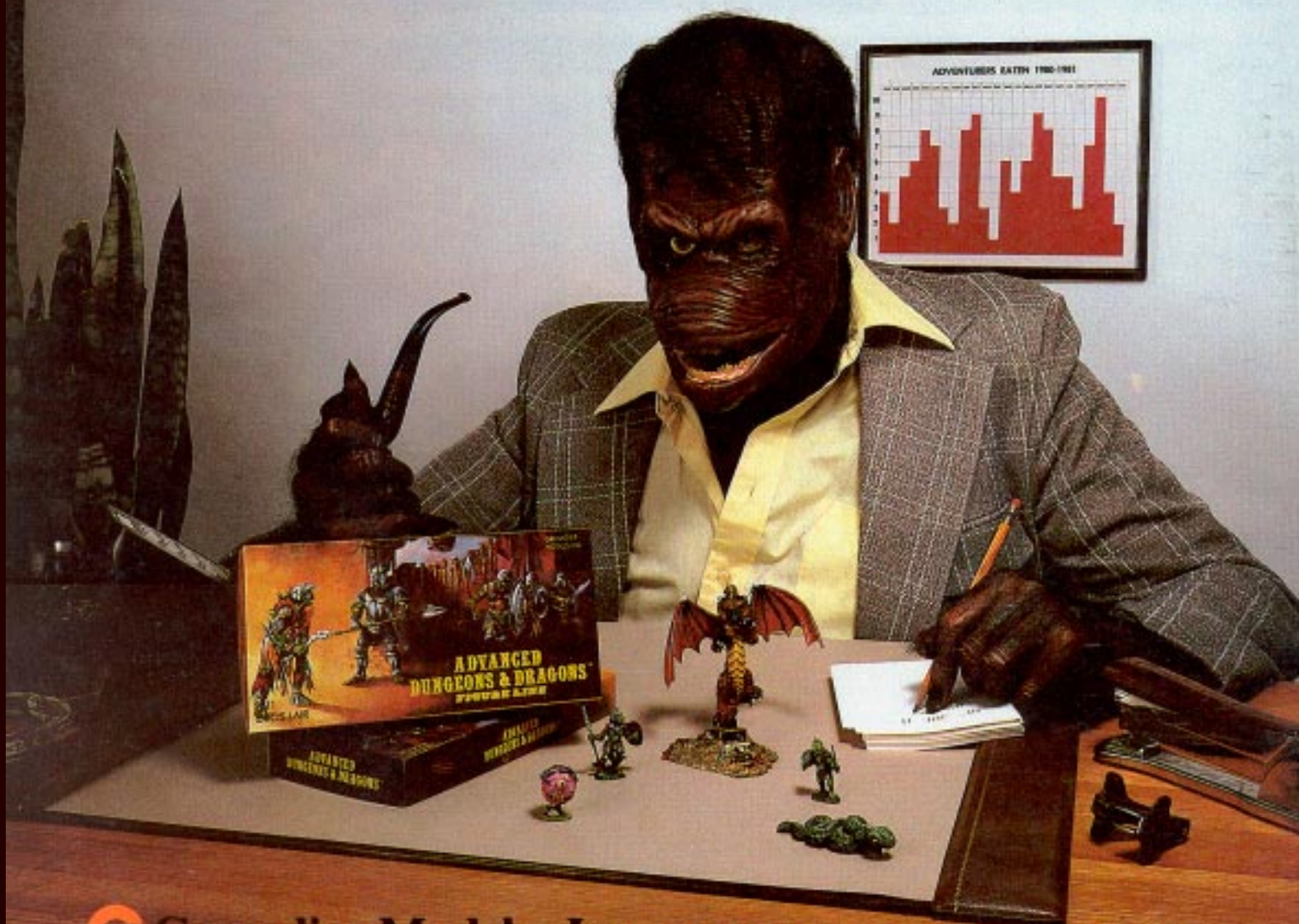
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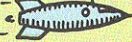
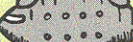
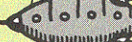
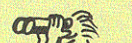
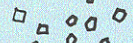
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 Meteor Storm	 Sabotage	 Sabotage	 Mutiny	 Mutiny	 Spy	 Spy	10	10
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(8) T  Columbia Colony	7 T  Beta Colony	(5)  Screen Satellite	(5)  Screen Satellite		4 3 2 1 (4)  Whirler	4 3 2 1 (4)  Whirler	(3) TT  Torpedo Station	(3) TT  Torpedo Station

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cards**

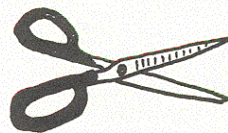
**PLANET
BUSTERS**

**PLANET
BUSTERS**

**PLANET
BUSTERS**

**PLANET
BUSTERS**

HOW TO
MAKE FOLDING
RACKS TO HOLD
YOUR PIECES:



CUT OUT THE
CARDS ON THIS
PAGE ALONG
THE SOLID
LINES . . .



FAN FOLD
EACH CARD
ALONG THE
DOTTED LINES
SO THE NAME
IS FACING YOU
AND THE THIN
FLAP IS FOLDED
UP TO HOLD
PIECES IN RACK

DON'T LET
OTHER PLAYERS
SEE YOUR HAND!

PLANET BUSTERS

PLANET BUSTERS

PLANET BUSTERS

PLANET BUSTERS