

#237

Something Wild

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Dragon[®] MAGAZINE

WILDERNESS
Kits

*Magical
Arrows*

*Man's
Best Friend*



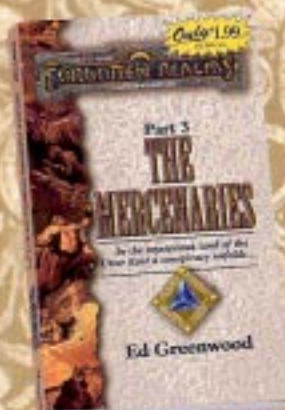
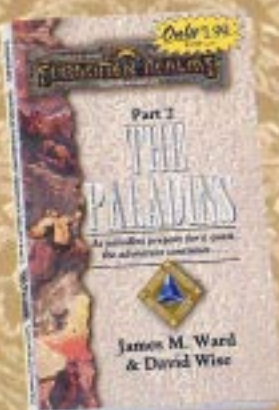
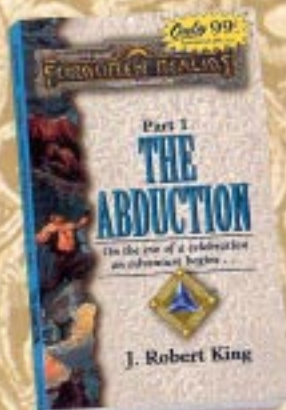


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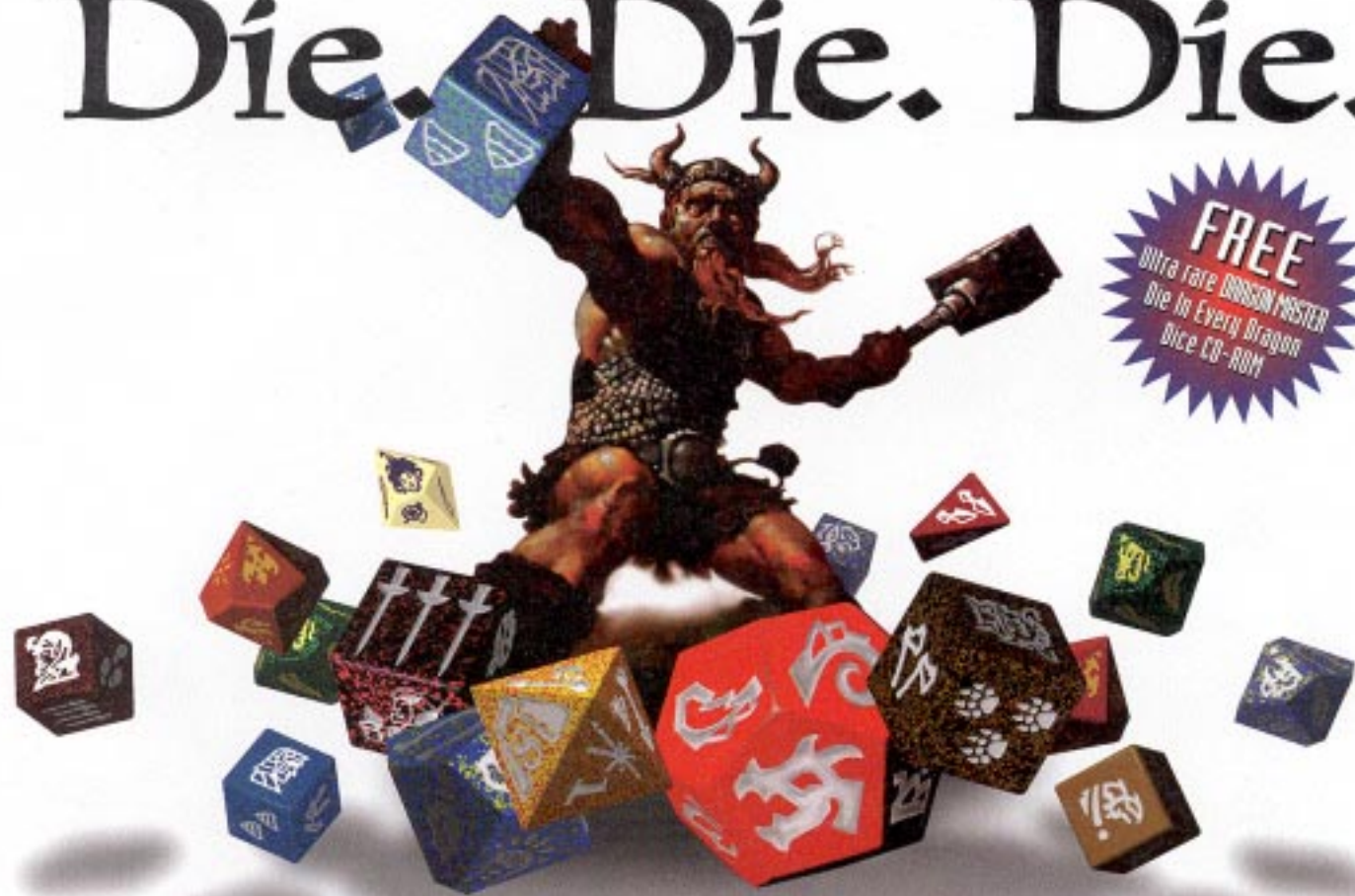
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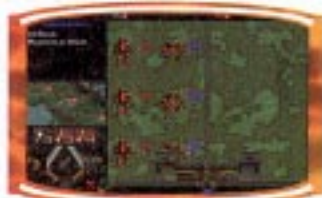
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The Wyrms' Turn™

Where's My Magazine?

The theme of the last *DRAGON® Magazine* to appear was, appropriately enough, "Faith and Hope." Since that issue, you have been waiting patiently, demonstrating faith that the next issue was forthcoming — and hope that it would be soon. Well, here it is, *DRAGON Magazine* #237. It has survived a long and grueling dungeon, emerging slightly battleworn but victorious.

The "next issue" previews are now incorrect. The "Cons & Pros" and "TSR Previews" sections are very much out of date. Its kind of like showing up at a wedding straight from a dusty campaign, smelling more like a moose than a wedding guest with hair dirty and unkempt. Well, this is the "Something Wild" issue, with new articles and fiction, and familiar friends like "Knights of the Dinner Table," "DragonMirth," and "Sage Advice."

So, the father of the bride says, "Why didn't you tell us you'd be late? And where have you been?" Well, we didn't realize we would be this late. We were certain there would be plenty of time to clean up and change clothes. We were wrong, and we apologize. If we had any idea that issue #237 would be this late, you most certainly would have been notified. What we do know is that we have survived many problems and crises over the past five months — have lost some hit points — but we are here.

Furthermore, we have built up experience points, and we promise that we will never go away again. Once a month, like clockwork, we'll be there, in your mail box, at the hobby shops, and in the bookstores. All subscriptions will be fully honored, and in November, with the publication of the *DRAGON Magazine* Annual #2, you will see us twice.

However, as in many campaigns, we came away with a new gaming buddy and friend. TSR, Inc. has been bought by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. What better ally could we have than a company named after an AD&D® campaign?

When undertaking an AD&D adventure, a mixed party is most viable. Clerics heal, warriors fight, and mages wield magic. Complementary skills enhance the group. One player's weakness is another player's strength.

Wizards of the Coast and TSR match up incredibly well. TSR produces the world's most popular role-playing games and books, and Wizards of the Coast produces the world's most successful trading card games. We are both different, but what we do, we do well. We complement each other. Of course, *DRAGON Magazine* is the periodical of AD&D game material for role-playing gamers, and we will continue to give you the best articles about role playing that we possible can.

We know that you have many questions about the current changes, so we're compiling a Frequently Asked Questions list about the sale of TSR to Wizards of the Coast. The answers to all those questions will appear with the next issue of *DRAGON Magazine*.

Under the Wizard's protection, we will grow and thrive. As positively as the relaunch of *DRAGON Magazine* was received, we anticipate giving you an even better *DRAGON Magazine* in the future. Join us on this new campaign. Who knows what wonders and sights are yet to come?



Pierce Watters

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DRAGON #237

Volume XXI, No. 8

Issue #237



Wild at Heart

Steve Berman

Four new wilderness kits for every class, including new wizard and priest spells.

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Man's Best Friend

Clayton R. Beal

What are you saying, Lassie? Timmy's being attacked by orcs?

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On a Waterless Sea

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Big wheels for the heroes of Athas.

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A simple skills system for the SAGA™ rules.

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Fun with reincarnation.

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and Rich Baker

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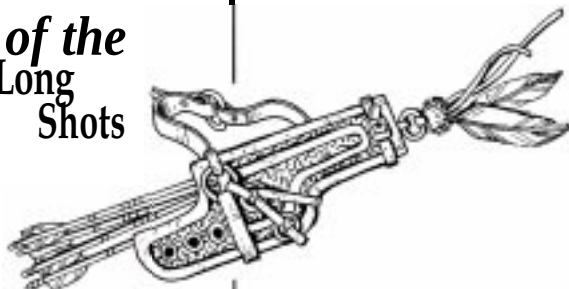


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Brian Dunnell

New magical items to set your archers aquiver.

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If you have a comment, opinion, or question for the editors of DRAGON® Magazine, write us a letter. We'd love to hear from you.

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"Shocked, I tell you!"

Dear DRAGON Magazine,

I, for one, was shocked by Rick Swan's review of the instant classic *Night Below* and of *Undermountain: The Lost Level* in DRAGON Magazine #234. It wasn't really the review that got me so much as the elitist attitude revealed by his comments. He says any AD&D® game veteran regards dungeon crawls as training wheels to be set aside when you're ready to play with the grownups.

Hello, Mr. Swan. My name is Steve Shawler. I have been DMing since 1980, and dungeon crawls are #1 in my book. I've had my players free Daggerdale, use

survival skills to make it through a cross-country midwinter trek, and try to catch thieves who steal their magic in towns, to name only a few of the non-dungeon crawls that have been part of my six-year-long campaign in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting. However, the adventures we all keep rehashing and never tire of discussing are the monster-bashing dungeon crawls! Whether we are talking about the running battle with the Triumvirate and their pet umber hulk who took the ground out from under their feet, or their near-fatal brawl with a small drow enclave deep in the Underdark, these are the adventures that live on in our minds long after they've forgotten their "thrilling" conversation with Elminster. I'm sorry, but nothing beats a well-designed dungeon crawl for sheer gaming excitement!

Mr. Swan's attitude makes me wonder if that is why there are so few dungeon crawls on the market today. What do my fellow players think? Is my group the only one that still enjoys dungeon crawls?! Is the game doomed to become nothing but war games (as in the BIRTHRIGHT® setting), horror stories (RAVENLOFT® setting), and slave rebellions (DARK SUN® setting)?

Say it isn't so, Joel!

Steve Shawler
3306 Radiance Road
Louisville, KY 40220

Thanks from down under

Dear DRAGON Magazine,

Greetings! I have received my copy of the first DRAGON Magazine annual. It's an excellent idea to have something like this. And to release it in November instead of waiting 'til December is tops. And to think that it cost U.S. \$5.95, and I got it for free. My deepest thanks!

It was nice to see a monster entry from the Philippines. The aswang in the "Vampires A-Z" article is just what William W. Connors described!

Thanks again!

Emmanuel L. Abary
Victoria, Australia

Online reunions

Dear DRAGON Magazine,

I have been playing the AD&D game for about five years now. Unfortunately our group has begun to split up due to some of the members moving to different cities and the like. However, since we all own computers and that we are all on the internet, we were wondering if there were rooms on the internet where we could continue to play. Any information that you could provide us would be greatly appreciated. Thank you

James Thornbrugh
via e-mail

For five years or more, the DMs in the TSR Online area of Genie have been running a variety of AD&D campaigns. As I type these words, the chat-based games in the TSR Online area on America Online are kicking into high gear, with more DMs starting new games all the time. While most folks who join these games end up making new friends rather than meeting old ones, this could be the perfect way for old gaming pals to reunite after the years and miles have grown long. (Hey, Bob! When're we going to start up a game again?)

Oops!

Dear DRAGON Magazine,

Congratulations on another fine issue, and the Annual to boot. I found a point of interest, though. While reading the "Mage on Deck" article, I noticed that the Wild Jibe spell on page 42 has a listing of "Components: V, S, M." In the description of the spell, however, there is no mention of a material component. Is this a typo for the components, or an omission of the material component?

While looking through the Dragon's Bestiary article on "Monsters of the Deep," I noticed that there is no Hit Dice entry for the octo-jelly. Instead the movement rate is reprinted in the column. What is the HD for the Octo-Jelly?

Dennis H. Groome V
via e-mail

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Ack! In our haste to put out both the November issue and the Annual on time, we made some embarrassing blunders. These two are easily fixed:

The Hit Dice value for the octo-jelly is 10.

While the original text of the wild jibe spell does not describe a material component, it makes sense that it should be the same as for a gust of wind spell, a legume seed.

Also, we omitted the last name of the cover artist for issue #235. Eddie Rainwater is the 3D artist animator who created the dragon that graced the cover. Before arriving at Interplay, Rainwater was classically trained as an artist from the Otis Parsons Art Institute in Los Angeles. He explains, "I've always loved art. . . . the earliest memory I have is drawing dinosaurs as a kid."

Six months in production for the Descent to Undermountain computer game, Rainwater's job was to create an animated dragon from concept to animation. He drew a concept of the dragon on paper, then molded it into a clay head. The next step was digitizing the head into the computer. Then he added textures and colors to give it a "real" look. The final step was the animation itself: "I created the dragon with TSR in mind," he says, "due to having been inspired by many of their talented staff growing up."

Finally, in the Annual, we mistakenly printed John R. Prager's name as Robert on the table of contents. Sorry, John!

Something old

Dear DRAGON Magazine,

I really enjoy the new format of your magazine. I do miss some of the old sections of DRAGON Magazine. I loved reading the "First Quest" articles. I enjoyed hearing about people discovering D&D® for the first time. I guess it was probably hard to keep finding new stories. I guess us sentimental folks just liked reminiscing about the old days. I know that we still try to get together with folks we met in college to game every few months, even though many miles and years separate our lives. We like to open our home for a weekend and let our friends escape from the real world and remem-

ber how nice it was to be adventuring for the first time in both the real world and the D&D® world. I just thought you would like to know that it is good to remember the DRAGON Magazine of the past and enjoy what is yet to come.

Ronda
via e-mail

One-setting issues

Dear DRAGON Magazine,

Have you ever considered doing issues that focus on the various TSR game worlds? I remember one such issue, long ago, that showcased the DARK SUN world when it was first released, but since then it seems that few (if any) issues have had three or so articles on a specific game world. I understand that not every reader would appreciate such an issue, but if some of the articles were done in the context of some of your regular columns (i.e., "Arcane Lore," "Bazaar of the Bizarre," etc.), then they could still derive some benefit from the issue. No doubt the legion of GREYHAWK® setting admirers would be overjoyed at seeing an issue focusing on Oerth (especially since Roger E. Moore's "Orbs of Dragonkind" article was so well received back in #230), and I personally would love to see a DRAGON Magazine issue specifically on the Forgotten Realms. The upcoming Annual will do a little to alleviate this wish of mine, but I just thought that you'd appreciate the suggestion.

George Krashos
via e-mail

Well, George, now we're dying to know how much the Annual fulfilled your wish. Our goal is to make most of every issue useful for everyone who plays the AD&D game, so we focus on articles that can be used in most or all settings. With "Wyrms of the North" in most issues, the Realms receive a good deal of attention. We won't rule out a world-specific issue in future, but in the meantime, let's hear how many other readers like that idea.

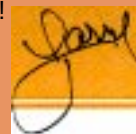


On the Cover

What about Bob? I first ran across this painting at David O. Miller's table at the GEN CON® Game Fair a few years back. It's a large, impressive painting and would have been nearly impossible to miss. There was no doubt that I wanted to publish it in DRAGON Magazine.

While making arrangements with Dave to get a transparency of the painting, I asked whether it had a title I could put on the contract. Dave responded dryly, "I just call it Bob." Well, we loved the painting even more with that, and hardly a month has since passed that we haven't made at least one reference or comment about Bob.

Dave, thanks for your patience in putting Bob before an audience. It was worth the wait!



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Van Camp

WILD AT HEART

New wilderness kits for every class

by Steve Berman

illustrated by Susan Van Camp

The mystique of the wilderness draws many to it, but few can survive deep in its heart. Those that can are well-suited for the dangers of a life of adventure. Here are four new wilderness kits, one for each class. Each is perfect for the next NPC your characters encounter in the wild, or for those PCs who are just a little wild at heart.

Feral

Description: Ferals are primitive warriors who have bonded their beings with those of their chosen animal spirits. This bond may occur at the warrior's choosing through a spiritual quest performed upon becoming an adult, or it may be the result of a ceremony performed by the village shaman at the feral's birth. Often, the animal spirit is also the totem of the tribe.

A feral warrior can call upon the strength of the animal spirit to help him defeat his enemies. He should choose his totem animal from one of the following types:

Raptor — birds of prey (eagles, hawks, owls, and so on)

Canine — dogs, wolves, and foxes

Ursine — bears

Porcine — boars

Feline — cats (ranging lynx to lions)

Equine — horses

Of course the player and DM may agree to modify this list depending upon the area in which the feral lives. So a feral from the arctic wastes could choose from Ursine (polar bear) or Feline (snow leopard), while one who dwelt in the mountains would probably be more apt to choose a Raptor (condor) or Feline (puma), or he may even ask the DM to add a category for mountain goats to the list.

As part of the acceptance of the animal spirit, the feral's personality slowly changes to resemble the animal's. A feline feral might become aloof, an equine feral could be driven to wander, and a porcine feral likely develops a quick temper.

A feral character must have a minimum Dexterity and Strength of 13, and a Constitution no less than 14.

Role: A Feral is a unique member of his tribe. He is the link between the world of the warrior and the unnatural world of the spirit realm. In effect, the feral is the bridge between the common folk of the tribe and the shamans, so he holds a position of great

respect. At times of war, the feral leads his people into battle, while in times of peace he may roam the countryside, driven by the animal nature within his heart.

Unless the campaign includes savage demihumans, feral warriors must be human. Most tend to be Neutral in alignment, like the animals themselves, but both noble and base examples have been known.

Weapon Proficiencies: *Required:* Knife. A feral's remaining slots must be spent on primitive weapons: club, dagger, short bow, dart, hand axe, sling, or spear. As the character becomes more exposed to the world, he may adopt new weapons.

Secondary Skills: Hunter, trapper/furrier. These skills would be useful ways of providing food and clothing for the warrior's tribe.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Required:* Hunting, tracking. *Recommended:* Animal handling, animal lore, camouflage, endurance, foraging, set snares, survival.

Equipment: Ferals wear clothing only for warmth and protection. They adorn themselves with fur and often the teeth, bones, or claws of their chosen animal. While some might consider this a strange irony, ferals believe that such remains are a link that makes channeling the spirit far easier.

Special Benefits: The binding of the animal spirit to the feral's soul gives him greater courage. Thus, a feral makes all saving throws against *fear* and similar effects at +2.

The feral can also call upon the heightened perception of the animal. This allows him to roll as if he possessed the alertness proficiency at +1. (Should the character already have this proficiency, he makes the roll at a +2 bonus instead.) This channeling can be performed a number of times a day equal to the feral's level, and the effect lasts only a single round.

At 5th level, a feral can call upon the bonded spirit to grant him temporary prowess in one aspect of the animal. He may choose to use one of the following abilities each day:

Increased agility (lowering AC by 1), increased fierceness (+1 to THACO), or **expertise** in one of the below traits (proficiencies), listed according to animal type.

Raptor — Awareness rolls are at +4; if the skill is not known then consider character to possess the proficiency.

Canine — Tracking rolls are at +4.

Ursine — Survival rolls are at +4; if the skill is not known then consider character to possess the proficiency.

Porcine — Endurance rolls are at +4; if the skill is not known then consider character to possess the proficiency.

Feline — Hunting rolls are at +4.

Equine — Running rolls are at +4; if the skill is not known, then consider character to possess the proficiency.





At 9th level, the feral can *shapechange* once per day into the form of the animal spirit. The transformation is not an easy one and requires physical activity; thus the character must be running hard, in the midst of combat, or performing some other physical exertion. Whatever the character is wearing, barring furs or skins, will not transform with him, so a feral wearing a suit of chain mail and trying to turn into a horse would injure himself in doing so. Thus, at this level, such characters rarely wear anything truly constricting. It takes two full rounds to transform and four to turn back to human.

Special Hindrances: Due to his wild mannerisms and dress, the feral character receives a -2 reaction adjustment from all NPCs except for members of his tribe.

Ferals are naturally susceptible to any magic that might provoke them to violence. They suffer a -1 on all saving throws against such magic (including such spells as *taunt*, or hate caused by an *emotion* spell).

Ferals are naturally superstitious and believe greatly in animal spirits. Should they ever encounter an unnatural example of their animal guide, they would be

entirely loathe to harm it unless in self-defense. Thus, the feral that has a horse as his guide would look upon a nightmare as something fascinating, even though the creature's evil alignment may differ from his own.

Finally, due to their close ties to the animals they worship, ferals are more prone to contract lycanthropy. They suffer a -2 on their saving throw against the arcane disease, but only if bitten by a werebeast of the same type as the feral's animal spirit (i.e., a canine feral attacked by a werewolf). If the feral warrior is of a higher level than the werebeast that attacked him, he may still contract lycanthropy, but he will not have his alignment changed by the disorder.

Wealth Options: 2d6 × 10 gp.

Greenfellow

Description: A greenfellow is not your average rogue. Now and then the fey folk who live in the wilds of the countryside are known to steal away

human babes and substitute their own children in their place. The human children are raised by the faeries as their own, often becoming greenfellows.

A greenfellow has strong ties to the fey folk that fostered him. Usually the faeries are brownies, leprechauns, or pixies. They know the language and ways of their fostering parents more so than humankind, and they seek to protect faerie interests both locally and abroad.

Though most greenfellows are human babies swapped with changelings, it is not unknown for half-elven and full elven babies to be taken by the mischievous fey folk. (In the later cases, the children are often raised as multiclassed greenfellow/enchanters.)

Greenfellows tend to be short for their age, for fey food and drink stunt their growth. Their features are often attractive and merry, with alluring, twinkling eyes.

Role: Greenfellows are a wily but good-natured lot. They mostly travel the countryside, rarely setting foot in anything more urban than local villages and hamlets.

Should they come across an instance where the fey are not honored as in the past, the greenfellow uses his thieving talents to ensure that enough mischief happens that the locals return to the old practices.

A greenfellow may take the road to adventure, hoping to see other fey cultures or perhaps to act as an envoy or courier between faerie courts.

As greenfellows are always raised by good-natured faeries, a character choosing this kit must be of good alignment.

Weapon Proficiencies: Required: Dart. Recommended: Dagger, short sword.

Secondary Skills: None. Due to their strange upbringing, greenfellows rarely learn human skills.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Required:* Alertness, fey lore (new). *Recommended:* Dancing, directional sense, fast-talking, foraging, set snares, spellcraft.

Skill Progression: Greenfellows tend to become more skilled with Move Silently and Hide in Shadows than the other thieving talents. This is simply because there is often more call for them to be hard to catch than to pick a merchant's pocket or evade a trapped lock in the king's vault.

Greenfellow thieving skill adjustments

Pick Pockets	Open Locks	F/R Traps	Move Silently	Hide in Shadows	Detect Noise	Climb Walls	Read Languages
-	-15%	-5%	+10%	+10%	+5%	-	-5%

Special Benefits: Thanks to their upbringing, a greenfellow learns not only the common human tongue but also the language of his foster fey race.

Because of their constant exposure to the magic and illusion of the fey realm, greenfellows all possess a +2 bonus on saves vs. Enchantment magic and a +1 bonus against Illusion magic.

When having any dealings with their foster race, a greenfellow gains a +4 reaction adjustment. As the faerie realm holds many allies, a greenfellow also has a +2 reaction adjustment when encountering any similarly aligned fey folk.

At 6th level, a greenfellow can summon some of his foster fey race. This can occur only when the rogue is in an area where such faeries are known to live. The summoning takes 1 full turn and 1-3 of the faeries then appear. There is no guarantee that the faeries will listen to the rogue's request, but bear in mind the reaction adjustment mentioned above.

At 9th level, the greenfellow becomes immune to *charm* and *suggestion* spells.

Special Hindrances: All the thieving skills of the greenfellow are meant to be used in rural and wilderness conditions. Stuck in an urban environment, the character would begin to feel edgy and uncomfortable. Skill attempts would be halved for the duration of the character's stay.

Much as the mortal world is split by factions and nations, so too is the fey realm. Greenfellows suffer a -2 reaction adjustment with fey folk of different alignment than the sort that raised the character. (This restriction includes even slight differences, such as that between Chaotic Good and Neutral Good).

And just as the character can call upon his foster kind for assistance, they too may one day need the greenfellow's help, to which refusal would strip the character of all special abilities.

Wealth Options: 5d4 × 10 gp.

New proficiency: Fey lore

1 Slot, Int -2

Greenfellows possess this special new proficiency, due to their upbringing in the fey world. Other characters may eventually learn fey lore, but they must either spend much time within that strange culture or gain it through weeks of reading about the faerie races.

Fey Lore: This is the knowledge of the fey folk and their ways. A character can use this proficiency to discern what sort of faerie would lurk in a specific area or terrain, whether or not an item was made by the fey folk, or simply to gather some clue in dealing with such creatures in a diplomatic manner.



Stridesman

Description: Stridesmen are priests who travel the countryside, never resting, as they make their way through the world. Often this life of wandering takes them into the wilderness, far from civilization.

As opposed to most wanderers — like bards, rangers, and tinkers — the stridesman cares little whether he becomes lost. All the world is to be seen, every corner visited at least once. So a stridesman never truly understands the notion of being lost; his god obviously meant for him to visit the place he ends up. If the deity had not, the stridesman would not be there. This sort of thinking tends to exasperate other travelers.

Most of these priests worship a god of travel, who they feel they must emulate from the time they wake to when they lay down to sleep. A few pay homage to deities of healing or comfort, and these are the stridesman who travel from village to village bringing relief to the suffering.

Role: Most stridesmen are of either good or neutral alignment. Due to their constant roaming, they rarely care about something so transient as regional

politics or conflicts; after all, they spend so little time in one area that they cannot bring themselves to worry about what tomorrow might bring. A rare lot of these priests are actually evil, and these are the condemned few who are doomed by their god to wander forever, their presence hated in many villages for what bitterness they sow.

Weapon Proficiencies: *Required:* Staff.

Secondary Skills: Farmer, forester, trader/barterer.

Duties of Priest: Guidance, Marriage.

A stridesman is vigilant against those who would bar passage along any highway or path; thus an enforced toll along a road by the local monarch would seem as blasphemous as a band of brigands ambushing merchants along their way. Though they are not a violent order, they will do what it takes to ensure that free passage is available to any traveler.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Required:*

Cartography, directional sense, foraging. *Recommended:* Distance sense, endurance, herbalism, local history, survival, trail marking, weather sense.

Spheres of Influence: *Major:* All, Healing, Protection, Travel, Weather. *Minor:* Animal, Elemental, Plant.

Special Benefits: Meeting a stridesman while traveling is considered good luck, so the priest receives a +2 reaction adjustment from bards, rangers, and traveling folk such as caravan leaders and gypsies.

The stridesman, when walking, adopts a trancelike state of relaxation. Thus, the character needs less sleep. At 1st level, the stridesman needs only six hours of sleep to function normally. This amount drops to five hours at 5th level and falls to only four hours of sleep daily at 10th level.

Special Hindrances: Stridesman care little for conflict and thus begin the game with only a single weapon proficiency with a walking staff (quarterstaff). However, in their travels they learn new cultures and languages much more readily than others. So stridesmen begin with an additional nonweapon proficiency that must be spent on either a local history or additional language.

Because they are constantly traveling a stridesman wears armor only when he knows his path passes through dangerous territory and he might encounter someone or something hostile. Even then, the stridesman would wear nothing more encumbering than leather armor, depending on the climate.

The stridesman's preferred means of locomotion are his own two feet. The DM can decide whether the character's patron deity views travel by horse, cart, or boat as sacrilegious or merely as a necessity under certain conditions. It is a sin, however, for a stridesman to be too lazy simply to walk somewhere, and the offending priest will suffer such penance as spells withheld, ill luck, or poor weather conditions.

Since they are constantly traveling, stridesmen never employ retainers, hirelings, or other followers, though it is certainly not unheard of for them to take acolytes along and train them in their ways. Stridesmen cannot own any more than they could normally carry alone, though they may take pack animals to bear supplies on their journeys.

Wealth Options: 3d6 × 10 gp.

New priest spells

Journey's Orison

(Conjuration/Summoning, Abjuration)

Reversible

Level: 1

Sphere: Travel

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 week/level of caster

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: 1 individual or object

Saving Throw: None

Using this spell, a stridesman can bless an individual about to embark upon a long trip, or he can bless an object that is being transported over a long distance. The caster places his hands on the person or object, intones the spell, and states the destination of the journey. For the duration of the trip to a specific site — which must be one that can be reached in a number of weeks equal to the level of the caster — the blessed person receives +2 on all saves from natural mishaps and a +1 on reaction rolls for any fellow wanderer. A blessed object gains a +2 on all saves as well.

The reverse of the spell, *journey's malison*, is rarely cast by good and neutral stridesman, though they may use it to punish brigands or unscrupulous merchants. Evil stridesmen might cast the spell and then demand that the only way for the affected person/object to survive is to have the priest accompany the traveler as a well-paid guide.

Easy Road

(Alteration)

Level: 1

Sphere: Travel

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 hour/level of caster

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: 1 mile stretch/level

Saving Throw: None

This spell is used to ensure that passage along one path or road is quick and without mishap. The stridesman can enchant up to 1 mile per caster level, causing all movement rates along the path to be increased by 50% without any noticeable spell effect. In poor weather conditions, this spell simply removes the movement penalty.

In addition, for the spell's duration, minor accidents, such as stones caught in a horse's hoof or a broken axle on a wagon, do not occur while traveling on an easy road.

The material components are the priest's holy symbol and a handful of dirt from the road, both of which are held in one hand a moment before the dirt is sprinkled at the feet of the priest.

Pass without Notice

(Enchantment)

Level: 2

Sphere: Protection

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 round/level of caster

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: 1 individual or object

Saving Throw: None

A stridesman makes use of this spell to avoid confrontations with brigands or other hostile characters while he makes his way along the road. The spell allows the caster to go unnoticed by any human, demi-human, or humanoid in the immediate area (up to 40'). While not invisible, the stridesman can walk past a person without being perceived.

For the spell to work, the priest must maintain a steady slow pace and cannot make any sudden movements. Thus such activities as running and engaging in melee are impossible. Also, the priest cannot make any sound louder than a whisper, so while *passing without notice*, the priest can cast no other spell.

For every three levels of experience, the priest can include an additional person under the affects of the spell, but all those to be affected must link hands for the duration of the spell. Any who releases his grip from the others is immediately revealed.

The material component is the priest's holy symbol. The spell is also cast with the stridesman's eyes closed.

Merlane

Description: Many an adventurer has given thought to where some of the stranger creatures encountered actually come from. Many a time these beasts are a weird combination of different animals that would seem a mockery of nature.

Remarks about such monsters would make a merlane chuckle. Creating new and strange life is his craft: a specialist mage who transmogrifies animals to fit his imagination and whim.

Adept at Alteration magic, the merlane learns how to transform normal animals or breed new life into the stuff of dreams — or horrors.

Only humans and half-elves may become merlanes. A minimum Dexterity of 15 and Intelligence of 13 is necessary.

Role: Merlanes are prone to spend much time traveling the world in search of new creatures and source stock for their experiments. Some may spend years holed up in a dismal tower until they discover that they need to find a certain beast, while others begin their lives amid the danger of adventure.

It would seem rare to find a good-aligned person so willing to transform animal life into what many would call

FORGOTTEN REALMS

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monstrosities. It is true; few merlanes are good-hearted. Such individuals tend to use their powers to create guardians and creatures that hunt down evil and protect the innocent.

More likely, a merlane is neutral or evil. Such mages enjoy playing with nature, twisting and experimenting. The evil ones usually are responsible for some of the more bizarre and fiendish creatures that can be found lurking about in dark corners of the world.

Weapon Proficiencies: *Required:* None. *Recommended:* Dart, dagger, staff.

Secondary Skills: Forester, groom, hunter, trapper/furrier.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: *Required:* animal handling, animal lore. *Recommended:* animal handling, riding — land-based, herbalism, spellcraft, survival, veterinary healing.

Special Benefits: Due to their ability to learn the nature of strange creatures, merlanes gain a +2 on all saving throws vs. any attack from a mutated animal with whose source stock the mage is familiar (i.e., he has had the opportunity to use his animal proficiencies on such a creature before). This includes gigantic versions of species, like giant crawfish, to

ones magically enhanced, like winter wolves.

Special Hindrances: As a specialist of the school of Alteration, a merlane cannot cast spells of Abjuration or Necromancy. Many merlanes have been slain by their creations, simply because of the lack of protection they can summon.

Because of their focus in warping animal life, a merlane cannot use any spells of Alteration magic upon humans, demi-humans, or humanoid races (even those that seem to have come from original animal stock, like bullywugs or lizard men). This power is rumored to have been possessed once by long-dead members of the kit and has never been regained. Plants also cannot be transformed by the wizard. However, for those appropriate Alteration spells (such as *alter self*, the merlane can still cast them upon himself without problem.

Because of their callous view of animal life, a merlane cannot have a familiar as per the normal wizard spell. Instead these mages tend to raise *lusus naturae* or alter existing pets to serve them.

Finally, there is some stigmata to being a merlane. All druids despise these wizards for what they do to nature

and will never have anything better than a Cautious reaction. So too will rangers and other sylvan races have a -2 on all reaction rolls.

Wealth Options: 3d6 × 10 gp.

New wizard spells

The drawback of the *polymorph other* spell is that no special abilities are truly gained. Yes, that lion you just transformed into a dragonne might be able to fly, but he cannot create that terrible roar. To achieve that end, the merlane must cast spells like *lusus naturae* or *teratism*. At the lower levels, their spells are used to alter a creature, either giving it additional strength or weakening it so that it may be more easily handled.

Enhance Trait

(Alteration)

Level: 1

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 turn + 1 turn/level of caster

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: 1 animal

Saving Throw: None

By means of this spell, a merlane can enhance one aspect of an animal. This trait can range from its ability to run fast, to the size of its claws, to its talent for stalking prey. This spell works only on normal animals.

The following traits can be enhanced: the animal can gain one of the following bonuses: an additional Hit Die; +1 to THAC0; +1d3 to damage inflicted; +2 to any single MR; +1 to a single saving throw; +1 to surprise rolls; +2 to Intelligence. Other special traits of an animal can also be enhanced, but these require adjudication by the DM.

By using this spell, the merlane could induce his horse to run faster, his guard dog to be more ferocious, and the like. Several traits can be affected at once with additional castings of the spell. For the magic to be made permanent, a *teratism* spell must be used.

Discern Sire

(Divination, Phantasm)

Level: 2

Range: 0

Components: V, S

Duration: 2 rounds

Casting Time: 2

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Saving Throw: None

This spell is very important to the merlane's craft, as it allows the mage to

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determine the origins of the most strange hybrid creatures he encounters. It is a dangerous spell to cast, as the target must be well within view; often it is performed on the remains of truly fearsome beasts.

When cast, *discern sire* causes spectral images to rise from the body of the creature. These phantasms are of the original source stock used to create the monster or found in its evolution. For example, when the spell is cast upon an owl bear, the merlane would see hovering over the creature a great horned owl and a grizzly bear.

If the merlane makes a successful Intelligence roll, he also learns some of the secrets in the creation of such a creature. In the above example, he might discern that the images slowly coalesce into a scene wherein an owl's egg is bathed in the blood of the bear, then wrapped in the pelt, all the while kept in total darkness. Now such practice alone will not hatch an owlbear, but with the right magic, a merlane may well succeed in generating such a creature.

Unbridle the Wild Beast

Level: 2

Range: 0

Components: V, S

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 2

Area of Effect: 1 animal

Saving Throw: See below

A merlane can use this spell to release an animal from the effects of domestication or training. Any mundane animal, ranging from a songbird to a bull to a hunting dog, is automatically affected with no saving throw permitted.

The only animals that are allowed a chance to resist the effects of the spell are those under the personal care and attention of a trainer, animals affected by an *animal friendship* or *charm mammal* spell, or followers of a druid or ranger. Familiars gained by the *find familiar* spell are immune to this spell.

An affected animal immediately seeks to flee the area and return to its natural habitat. If prevented from doing so it may become hostile. If the animal is hungry, injured, or frightened, it may lash out at the closest being.

The animal's keeper may try to help the animal resist the spell if he is present. He gets one opportunity to roll his skill at animal handling. For every point by which he makes the roll, the animal gains +1 on its saving throw. For those under the influence of a prior enchant-

ment, the animal has a bonus to resist equal to the level of the spell used to bind the animal (thus a mare that has been tamed via *animal friendship* gains a +1 on its saving throw). Followers of a druid or ranger resist the spell at the level of their master rather than their own Hit Dice (i.e., a puma follower to an 8th-level ranger saves as if it were 8 Hit Dice).

An animal that becomes wild by this spell may once more be domesticated though the DM may impose certain penalties to any attempt to do so.

Teratism I

(Alteration)

Level: 3

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: 1 animal

Saving Throw: None

As opposed to the more powerful merlane spell, *lusus naturae* spell, which allows the mage to breed unnatural animals and creatures, *teratism* transmutes an animal instantly with permanent effects.

The first version of this spell is the weakest, causing only minor changes in the animal. Some of the following aspects of an animal may be altered with a touch of the caster's hand:

- ❖ Minor changes to hide can be made. This will lower (or raise) a creature's natural AC by only 2 levels. But a tiger whose skin is like striped leather would be a remarkable sight. A shark whose skin is furred may fetch a great deal to some menageries.

- ❖ Strange coloration can be added to any feature of the animal. Thus the merlane can cause a hound's eyes to glow a sinister orange or endow a songbird with bright silver plumage.

- ❖ Unnatural sounds can be added. Though the animal is incapable of intelligible speech, it could be made to say a phrase over and over again. Or its normal cries would be changed into something different. Strange sounds can be linked to the animal's movements, so that when the hawk flaps its wings a resonance of thunder is heard.

Other minor changes can be made in accordance with the DM.

This spell has no effect on animals that have already been magically altered by anyone other than the casting merlane. So a giant insect cannot suddenly have its carapace changed to scales unless it was *enlarged* by the same

merlane. Of course the spell (or its more powerful variants) can be cast multiple times on an animal, the end result being something that rarely resembles its source stock.

This spell allows Alteration magic spells below 3rd level to be cast upon an animal (such as *enhance trait* or *enlarge*) with permanent effect.

The altered animals, known as teratisms, are sterile.

Note that in no way does the casting of this spell ensure that the creature will obey the merlane. If the wizard is wise he will only make trained pets into teratisms.

Degenerate Breed

(Alteration)

Level: 4

Range: 0

Components: V, S

Duration: See below

Casting Time: 6

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Saving Throw: Negates

This spell allows a merlane to degenerate a monster back to its source stock. Only those creatures that are based on a normal animal can be affected. As with most merlane spells, wizard familiars are immune to the effects of *degenerate breed*.

Should a targeted creature fail its saving throw against magic, it degenerates that round. Winter wolves transform into normal pale wolves. Giant-sized versions of a normal animal, such as spiders or snakes, simply shrink down two steps in size (so from L to S, and so on). The DM has final say when considering if some monsters may appear to be altered animals in form but are truly supernatural (such as shadow hounds) and thus unaffected by this spell.

The duration of the spell is dependent on how tough the affected creature is. Should the merlane be of higher level than creature has Hit Dice, then the change is permanent until dispelled. Otherwise, the effects last for a number of rounds equal to the caster's level.

Teratism II

(Alteration)

Level: 5

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: 1 animal

Saving Throw: None

This spell is a more potent version of *teratism I*. All the limitations of that spell

still apply. However, the merlane can now induce stranger changes in an animal's form and magical capabilities may now be imbued.

❖ An additional limb can be added. It is fully functional but can be placed wherever the character touches. However, while this may allow an additional attack, this also tends to hamper a creature's movement, at least, for several weeks depending on where the limb is located.

❖ A lesser special ability may be added. The merlane can grant the *teratism* an arcane trait equal to any spell of 2nd level or below. The merlane must cast the spell within the round following the *teratism* casting. Thus, he can imbue a trained hawk with the ability to *detect evil*, so that it might better stop foes of its creator. Or that large toad could breathe out foul vapors equal to a *stinking cloud*. Of course, since a merlane is unable to cast spells of the schools of Abjuration or Necromancy, a *teratism* cannot possess such abilities either.

❖ Special limbs can be added or existing limbs warped. Thus, wings or fins can be created, allowing the creature to move in another environment.

Lusus Naturae

Level: 6
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: 1 individual or object
Saving Throw: None

This is the spell for which a merlane is infamous. *Lusus naturae* allows the wizard to create new life and form new breeds, for good or ill. This is no easy task, and failure is common.

This is not a swift spell like *teratism*; rather it takes at least a month to attempt to fashion a *lusus naturae*. During that time, the merlane must be deeply involved in imbuing in his creation all the traits he desires, an effort that calls for painstaking research, careful administration of additional spell-casting or rare components (see below), and the casting of *lusus naturae* every third day to ensure that the source stock is affected.

Before the casting of the spell, much time should be spent in preparation. The player and the DM should meet and confer on what sort of life the merlane character wishes to create. The DM then can consider the proposal and suggest the means to that end in regards to

Lusus naturae modifiers

Situation	Modifier
Have studied a similar creature before	+10%
Have cast discern sire on specimen of creature to be bred	+20%
Have created a similar creature before	+25%
New species	25%
Creature is a combination of different animal classes (mammal, avian, insect, etc.)	-10%/class
Each Hit Die of creature	5%
For every additional spell that needs to be cast	-5%
For every additional week in experimentation spent in the past month	+5%

material components.

Such components should be either animal parts that will be related to the final result or actual living specimens.

The base chance of success is equal to the merlane's Intelligence plus five times his level of experience. Of course, there are modifiers, as shown in the table above.

Unnatural abilities can be imbued to a *lusus naturae* through the casting of similar spells and/or rare material components during the process. For instance, if the merlane wishes to create a gigantic scorpion with a stinger that can ignite into flames, he may need to cast *burning hands* around the source stock every day, and perhaps let it lie on a bed of rare charcoal specially imported from far-away lands.

If the spell fails to work, the DM then rolls the percentage chance again, secretly to see if something horrible and unexpected does come from the experiment. If that roll succeeds then a creature is created, but not the sort the merlane had anticipated let alone wanted.

Lusus naturae can breed amongst their own kind. Their ecology will vary, but is still dependent on the source stock from which they came. Thus, a creature made from canine stock will be easier to train, be a carnivore, and tend to travel in packs if let loose in the wild. Something fashioned from fish stock may be hard to control, dependent on water, and be omnivorous. A merlane can never truly be totally sure what the consequences of shaping new life may bring.

Much like *teratism*, this spell does not in any way make the created creature domesticated to the merlane's will. He must go through the slow process of handling and training the young creature if he is to be its master.

Teratism III

(Alteration)
Level: 7
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: 1 animal

Saving Throw: None

This is the most powerful version of the *teratism* spell to date. The traits listed below are only some of the possible transformations that can be induced in an animal. The DM has the final say in what other traits can be bestowed.

❖ An additional head can be created. This would allow for an additional bite attack, perhaps increased senses that would make surprising the creature near impossible, and so forth.

❖ Greater special abilities can be imbued. The merlane can grant the *teratism* a special trait equal to any spell of 4th level or below. Again the merlane must cast the spell within one round of the *teratism* casting. Thus he can have lizard's eyes burn with such brilliance equal to that of a *fire charm* spell, so that hapless victims will approach and be enthralled by the blaze until within reach of the creature's jaws.

❖ Speech can be given to an animal, but it will only be as capable of language as its intelligence allows. The usual means of granting greater intelligence is usually through *enhance trait*, though some have used *teratism*; the results of the latter are not always to be trusted, as insanity has occurred occasionally.

❖ Unnatural hide can be given to the beast. The skin can be radically changed to such materials as stone or metal. Some merlanes have even hinted that they have created dangerous raptors with feathers of silk but claws of glass. Such reports have yet to be substantiated. The *teratism* can benefit by an increase of up to 6 levels to its AC.



Steve Berman's last foray into the wilderness resulted in a case of poison sumac, several contusions, a threat from a park ranger, no "picknik" baskets, and a possum familiar named Thaddeus. He is currently recovering from the experience — thankfully, indoors.

New tricks for old dogs

Clayton R. Beal

illustrated by Stephen Schwartz

MAN'S BEST FRIEND

"Thunder rumbles as rain pelts down against the stony bluff. Below, an orc warband winds its way through the jumbled rocks, searching for the killers of their chieftain. Little do they realize that their prey, battered and exhausted, lie hidden but a stone's throw away. The warband is almost past when suddenly barking bursts out nearby. With surprising efficiency, the vengeful orcs douse their torches and quickly surround their quarry. They begin to move in . . ."

Groans erupt around the gaming table. Players grumble as they reach wearily for their dice. You watch helplessly as they turn their menacing glares upon you.

"Why'd you bring the stupid mutt, anyway?"

"Some hunting dog . . ."

"... ever does is eat and bark."

"If I weren't a druid, I'd roast the damn thing."

"Wait a minute!" you protest to the DM. "Rex wouldn't bark. I'd have trained him."

"A little while ago you said he'd bark at anything that came near the campsite."

"That's different, we weren't hiding then. Oh come on, dogs aren't that hard to train. I'd just —"

"Hey Bill," a fellow player interrupts, "Lucky just run off with my dice bag again."

With a resigned sigh, you push away from the table. You wince as the DM snickers and reaches for more lead figures.

On page 68 of the *Player's Handbook*, one can see that a "dog, hunting" costs only 17 gold pieces, or a "dog, war" only 20 gp. But what can the dog do? Who's to say it won't run away? With the lifestyle a typical player character lives, no ordinary dog is likely to last very long. A lasting canine adventuring companion would be more akin to today's K-9 police dogs than to your typical house pet.

This article provides a method for designing canine NPCs. Included are numerous skills and gaming suggestions to turn man's best friend into a furry adventuring companion.



Animal traits

The first step in creating a canine adventuring companion is determining its animal trait scores. Unlike human ability scores, there are only four animal traits, and their scores range from 1-10. These scores may be determined by a roll on a d10, or the Dungeon Master may simply select the scores for the animal. In either case, some scores may be adjusted according to the animal's breed (see Dog Types below).

During play, it will sometimes be necessary to roll trait checks for the dog. To do so, simply roll 1d12, add any applicable modifiers, and compare the result to the appropriate trait score. If the result is equal to or less than the trait score, the dog successfully passes its check. Note that a natural roll of "1" always succeeds, while a natural "12" always fails.

Below are the four animal traits and their descriptions. Table 1 shows all the trait-based variables for canine NPC adventurers.

Intelligence trait (IT) — Represents the dog's ability to learn new skills and behaviors. Note that this score equals the dog's initial number of training slots.

Loyalty trait (LT) — Represents not only the dog's devotion to its master but also its trust and faith in him as well.

Aggressiveness trait (AT) — Represents the dogs combativeness and determination in the face of adversity.

Strength trait (ST) — Encompasses the power, prowess, and overall hardiness of the dog.

Note that on the Table 1 there are no modifiers for the Loyalty Trait. The Loyalty Trait is used primarily for resist instinct checks (see Training Skills below).

As a final note, domesticated dogs do not make Morale checks as other NPCs or monsters. Rather, they normally make resist instinct checks. In certain circumstances (such as combat), an Aggressiveness Trait check may be rolled instead at the DM's discretion. In either case, if a domesticated dog should fail its "morale" check, it may still roll a successful Loyalty Trait check to remain near its master.

Dog types

Dogs come in all shapes and sizes, having been bred and trained throughout the years for various purposes. The end result of this selective process is the emergence of a wide range of distinctive breeds of dogs. For gaming purposes,

Trait Score	Intelligence		Aggressiveness		Strength	
	Training	Time Multiplier	THACO	Damage	AC	HP
10		× 1/2	+ 2	+ 4	- 2	+ 3
9		× 5/8	+ 1	+ 3	- 1	+ 2
8		× 3/4	+ 1	+ 2	0	+ 1
7		× 3/4	0	+ 1	0	+ 1
6		× 7/8	0	0	0	0
5		× 1	0	0	0	0
4		× 1	0	0	0	0
3		× 1	0	0	0	0
2		× 9/8	- 1	- 1	0	- 1
1		× 5/4	- 1	- 2	+ 1	- 1

these breeds have been generalized into five specific dog types: **tracking dogs**, **hunting dogs**, **working dogs**, **war dogs**, and **companion dogs**.

Tracking dogs. These dogs vary greatly in size, ranging from three to seven hands tall (at the shoulder). Most tend to be of the mid-range size. They are particularly adept at tracking and are almost exclusively used for that purpose. Canine NPCs of this type automatically receive the tracking skill (see Training Skills below) in addition to a +1 modifier to their Intelligence Trait. Breeds of this type include the Bloodhound, Basenji, Wolfhound, and Beagle.

Hunting dogs. These lively, athletic dogs are typically mid-sized, ranging from five to seven hands in height. Used primarily to flush and retrieve game, they prove to be energetic companions. Canine NPCs of this type receive both the water skills and retrieve skill at the outset. Furthermore, they receive a +1 modifier to their Loyalty Trait. Breeds of this type include the Golden and Labrador Retrievers, Pointer, Brittany, and the Irish Setter.

Working dogs. Bright and alert, these dogs are used for tasks ranging from the herding of flocks to household protection. They typically stand from four to seven hands high. Canine NPCs of this type receive a +2 modifier to their Intelligence Trait and a +1 to the Strength Trait. Breeds of this type include the German Shepherd, Old English Sheepdog, Collie, and Shetland Sheepdog.

War Dogs. These dogs are used predominantly as a means of protection and defense. Dogs in this category are generally large and sturdy specimens, standing six to nine hands tall. Canine NPCs of this type receive a +2 modifier to their Strength Trait and +1 to their Aggressiveness Trait. Breeds of this type include the Great Dane, Mastiff, Rottweiler, and the Saint Bernard.

Companion Dogs. These dogs have not been bred for any specific duties

other than companionship. Of all the types, companion dogs show the greatest diversity. They range in size from two to seven hands high. Canine NPCs of this type receive a +2 to their Loyalty Trait. Breeds of this type include the Bulldog Chow Chow, Dalmatian, and Poodle.

When considering the above dog types for canine NPCs, remember that they represent groups of purebred animals. These types have received specific bonuses in certain areas because that is what the animal was specifically bred for. This by no means implies that any individual purebred dog will turn out to be a better companion than a mongrel or a "mutt." All a pedigree will tell a potential master is what he can expect from the dog — though devious DM's may have other ideas.

If the player desires a particular breed, the DM is encouraged to consider the request. Obviously, certain restrictions must be made in consideration of the campaign setting. (It may be difficult to find a Boston Terrier on Krynn or an Irish Setter on Faerûn.) Allowing for appropriate modifications, choosing a particular breed results in easier visualization for all involved.

The DM should also be aware that purchasing a purebred dog is no inexpensive matter; prices can range from two to ten times normal cost. Additionally, certain breeds of dogs may not be found in all parts of the globe. Purchasing an exotic dog could involve either a great deal of travelling or expensive shipping costs, or both.

Training skills

Training a dog is simply the systematic modification of the animal's behavior. In game terms, this is handled by a system similar to that of the character's non-weapon proficiency system. Each animal has a number of training slots equal to its Intelligence Trait. These slots may be used to "buy" specific training skills.

Anyone can train a dog for its initial training. Once the animal's initial training slots have been "spent," however, only a

character with the animal training proficiency (for dogs) may train the animal for additional (or "acquired") skills. To do so, the trainer must make a successful proficiency check for each desired skill.

The time it ultimately takes to train an animal in a given skill is called the final training time. To find this, first determine the initial training time. The initial training time is based on the complexity of the skill being taught and can be determined as outlined in the skill descriptions below. After determining the initial training time, multiply it by any applicable training time multiple(s). This yields the final training time. Any resulting fraction of a day is rounded up to a full day (i.e., a quarter of a day would result in a full additional day). Note that more than one training time multiple may apply; the effects are cumulative. In no case can the final training time be less than three days for any skill.

Characters with the animal training proficiency (for dogs) receive a training time multiple of ($\times 1/2$) for Initial skills only. Additionally, characters with the animal lore proficiency receive a ($\times 3/4$) multiple as do characters with the animal handling proficiency. Characters with both receive both multiples. These two multiples apply to all training (initial or acquired).

A skills training time assumes that 2-3 hours will be spent per day in training the dog. If the daily training time is lessened, the duration of training is correspondingly lengthened. Increasing daily training time, however, does not shorten the duration of training; the animal can handle only so much training at one time. Training may continue during normal travel providing time is set aside daily for that purpose. Training can not be conducted during forced marches. Four Basic or two Intermediate skills can be taught at the same time. Advanced or Complex skills must be taught one at a time.

Note that only the Dungeon Master should know at the outset exactly how long it will take a given animal to learn a skill. The trainer knows only once the animal is performing the skill as desired.

Below are descriptions of the separate skills that may be taught. The name of the skill is followed first by its cost in

training slots. Next is the skill's complexity, followed by the initial training time. Skills marked with an asterisk (*) may be taught to the animal only if the previous prerequisite skill or skills have been learned. The training skills are as follows:

Alarm: 1 slot, Advanced, 10-21 (1d12+9) training days

The dog remains in a given area and alerts its master (bark, whine, and howl) when strangers enter that area. The dog can monitor any area that is well-defined (i.e., a room or chamber). If no such boundaries exist, such as in a field or forest, the dog alerts its master of intruders within a 50' radius. Alarm can also be used to cover a party's rear during movement.

Attack: 1 slot, Advanced, 10-21 (1d12+9) training days

The dog attacks any creature designated by its master. If no creature is indicated, the animal attacks the stranger closest to its master. If the master is attacked while commanding the dog to attack a different target, the dog must successfully pass a resist instinct check. Failing that check, the dog disregards the command and attacks its master's assailant. If the dog is ordered to attack a friend, it must again pass a resist instinct check. Failing that, the dog does

not attack, instead returning confused to its master's side.

Guard: 1 slot, Advanced, 10-21 (1d12+9) training days

The dog closely watches the target (usually a prisoner). Should the target move, the dog growls menacingly as a warning. Should the target continue to move, the dog barks furiously and nips at it. If the target attempts to escape, the dog attacks until the target ceases its attempt.

Heel: 1 slot, Intermediate, 7-14 (1d8+6) training days

With this command, the dog remains close to its master. Unless ordered to remain alongside the master's leg, the dog will remain within a 3-5' radius of its master.

Mounted heel*: 0 slots, Basic, 3-6 (1d4+2) training days

Same as above except the dog remains within a 6-10' radius of its master's steed. This advanced form of heel costs no additional training slot. It does require, however, some time for the dog to grow accustomed to its master's steed. Note that the dog must be trained for each type of steed (i.e., horse, camel, griffin, etc.)

House skills: 2 slots, Complex, 16-35 (1d20+15) training days

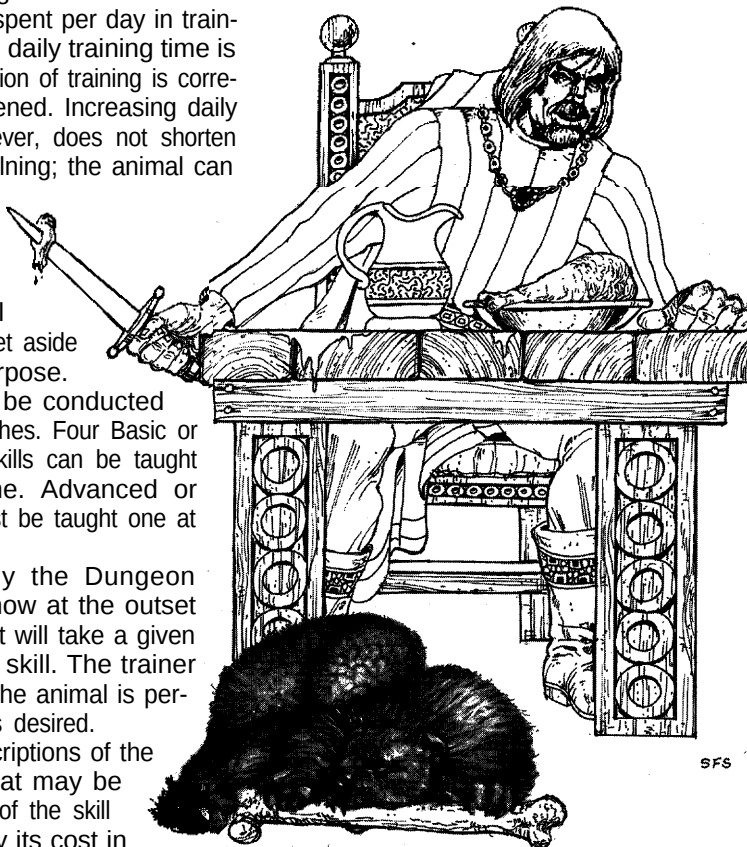
This training modifies the dog's behavior so that it is a compatible living companion. It corrects problems such as housesoiling, excessive barking, and other destructive behavior. Note that without these skills, the dog will not be allowed in most establishments. Furthermore, this ensures the animal interacts civilly with strangers regardless of standard animal behavior (see Handling Canine NPCs).

Jump: 1 slot, Intermediate, 7-14 (1d8+6) training days

With this skill, the dog can be commanded to make exceptional leaps. With a 10' running start, the dog is capable of making horizontal jumps equal to $2d4 + \text{Strength Trait}$ in feet, and vertical jumps of $1d4 + (\text{Strength} \div 2)$ feet. If the dog is unable to run, it can jump horizontally $1d4 + \text{Strength}$ feet, and vertical jumps of $1d3 + (\text{Strength} \div 2)$ feet. Without this skill, dogs receive no bonus due to their Strength Trait, and must first pass a resist instinct check before jumping.

Protect: 2 slots, Complex, 16-35 (1d20+15) training days

The dog remains close by the target (be it a person or object) and allows no strangers to approach within a 5' radius. If a stranger approaches, the dog growls



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menacingly and interposes its body between the intruder and its target. If the stranger penetrates the safe zone, the dog barks and snaps viciously. If the intruder persists or attempts to touch the target, the dog attacks. If the target moves away of its own volition, the dog whines and attempts to keep the target in its place by nudging it with its nose. If the target continues to move away, the dog alerts its master (if present) with a bark. The dog remains with the target, continuing to protect it as they travel. It is up to the DM when the animal will give up and return to its master.

Recall: 1 slot, Intermediate, 7-14 (1d8+6) training days

This command is an advanced version of "come." On this command, the dog will return to its master's side. "Come" may be learned as an individual trick, basic (see below) or as part of house skills. If the command "come" is given while the dog is engaged in an activity (such as chasing rabbits, eating, etc.), the dog returns only if it makes a successful resist instinct check. The "Recall" version of this command obviates any check; the dog returns immediately to its master regardless of activity.

Resist instinct: 2 slots, Complex, 16-35 (1d20+15) training days

In training for resist instinct, the dog learns to trust its master fully. The dogs response overrides its instinctual urges and fears. When the DM calls for a resist instinct check, a d12 is rolled. The die roll is then compared with the dogs Loyalty Trait. If the result is equal to or less than the dogs loyalty, the dog passes the check and behaves as desired. A natural "1" is always successful; a natural "12" always fails. Animals who haven't been trained in resist instinct must make these checks, though at a -5 penalty. Resist instinct checks should be made any time a dog must perform an action against its nature. Note also that resist instinct checks replace Morale checks for domesticated dogs only.

Retrieve: 1 slot, Intermediate, 7-14 (1d8+6) training days

The dog recovers any object it sees its master drop or throw. Upon recovery, it returns to its master and drops the item. If the item is dropped or thrown into an area where it can be lost (i.e., water, tall grass, etc.) the dog must make a successful Intelligence Trait check to recover the lost item. This takes 1d3 rounds. If unsuccessful, the dog returns to its master without the item or with the wrong item (DM's discretion).

Advanced retrieve*: 1 slot, Advanced, 10-21 (1d12+9) training days

As above, though it allows a dog a second recovery attempt for lost items. Additionally, it teaches the animal a basic vocabulary of four items (selected by its master) which it can identify and recover. Examples would be "stick," "ball," "book," etc. The dog will search the area within a 50' radius of its



master for the desired object. Upon finding the object, the dog immediately returns to its master with the item.

Herd animal*: 1 slot, Advanced, 10-21 (1d12+9) training days

Dogs trained in herding, upon command, chase down any animal within sight. Upon catching the animal, the dog attempts to herd it back to its master by barking and nipping at it. Should the animal attack, the dog must make a successful Aggressiveness Trait check to attempt to herd the animal. The dog must make such a check every time the animal attacks.

Should the animal the dog is herding be lost from sight, the dog must make a successful Intelligence Trait check. Likewise, if there is a chance of the dog being confused as to which animal to herd, a successful Intelligence Trait check must be made to herd the desired animal.

Retrieve specific*: 2 slots, Complex, 16-35 (1d20+15) training days

With this skill, the master simply points at an object, which the dog then attempts to recover. The dog picks up an item in the designated area. It then looks to its master for a visual signal, such as a nod or shake of the head. If correct, the dog returns the item to its master; if incorrect, it drops the item and select another, repeating the process. Clearly, this could be a tedious process.

Silence: 1 slot, Intermediate, 7-14 (1d8+6) training days

The dogs natural urge to bark and howl can be repressed temporarily with this command. The dog, when excited, still emits a low growl or quiet whine. This skill is especially useful when master and dog are setting an ambush or laying low. Note that this command may be used in conjunction with other commands. An example of this would be silent alarm; the dog only whines and growls instead of barking upon detection of intruders.

Stay: 1 slot, Basic, 3-6 (1d4+2) training days

The dog remains where it is until recalled by its master. Should something distracting occur nearby, the dog must pass a resist instinct check to remain in place. The maximum time limit for the dog to remain in place is one hour. After that, the animal reacts according to its normal behavior (DM's discretion).

Improved stay*: 1 slot, Intermediate, 7-14 (1d8+6) training days

As above, except maximum time limit is six hours. Resist instinct checks to ignore distractions are made at +2.

Advanced stay*: 1 slot, Advanced, 10-21 (1d12+9) training days

As above, except maximum time limit is one day. Resist instinct checks are made at +4. Note that both stay and improved stay are pre-requisites to this skill.

Long-term stay*: 1 slot, Complex, 16-35 (1d20+15) training days

The dog remains in an area for up to a week, awaiting the return of its master. This skill differs in that the dog is free to roam about, forage for food, and seek shelter. Throughout the waiting period, the dog remains in the same general vicinity. Resist instinct checks do not apply, as the dog is free to move about. Note that stay, improved stay, and advanced stay are all pre-requisites to this skill.

Track: 1 slot, Advanced, 1-21 (1d12+9) training days

The dog, upon finding a scent, may track the creature leaving the trail. Treat this skill in the same manner as the Tracking non-weapon proficiency. If the scent is lost, the dog must make an Intelligence Trait check to regain the scent.

Trick (Basic): 1 slot, Basic, 3-6 (1d4+2) training days

These are any common tricks designed primarily to impress viewers with the animal's Intelligence and/or obedience. This becomes useful when trying to convince skeptical innkeepers to allow the animal inside their establishments. Common tricks include such behaviors as "speak," "shake hands," "play dead," etc.

Trick: 1-2 slots, Intermediate—Complex, variable training time

This is any other behavior the trainer desires the dog to learn. The DM must adjudicate the complexity of the trick, determining the training cost and length of training. Examples of advanced tricks include chewing through ropes binding masters hands (Intermediate), leading a horse by reins to a safe area (Advanced), untying a knot (Complex), etc.

Water skills: 1 slot, Advanced, 10-21 (1d12+9) training days

This trains the dog to enjoy entering the water and swimming. Normally, without water skills, a dog must make a successful resist instinct check to enter water over its head. No such check is made for dogs with this skill. Furthermore, dogs with water skills may dive and swim beneath the waters surface with a successful resist instinct check. Dogs without this skill may never be enticed to voluntarily submerge.

Handling canine NPCs

Before play, the DM should look at the dogs animal trait scores and make certain decisions regarding its personality. For example, a highly aggressive and

loyal dog may be devoted to its master but threatening to any stranger who draws near. On the other hand, a dog with a high strength but low aggressiveness may prove to be a gentle giant.

When determining a canine companion's personality and standard behavior, consider the following factors. Higher intelligence may make training easier but could also result in the dog being easily distracted or mischievous. A dog with strong loyalty will be faithful to its master — perhaps overly so. Low loyalty, on the other hand, could make the animal unmanageable and unreliable. Highly aggressive dogs may be hostile and high-strung, whereas less aggressive dogs may be overly trusting or playful. Finally, strength will largely affect the dogs confidence. Stronger dogs may be more domineering while weaker dogs may prove to be more shy or skittish.

During game play, when gauging the dog's reaction to given situations, the DM should keep in mind the canine perspective of life. Essentially, the dog categorizes anyone it meets as its "alpha," fellow pack member, friend, or stranger. In the wild, a dog will normally run in a pack that serves as the dogs "family." The dominant dog in the pack, usually the strongest and most aggressive, is known as the "alpha." All other members of the pack follow the alpha and generally obey its wishes. In the case of a domesticated dog, its alpha is usually its master. The master's family, pets, and steady long-term adventuring companions serve as the dog's "pack." Anyone else the dog classifies as either a friend or stranger.

When the dog meets a character (player or otherwise) for the first time, roll on the Encounter Reaction Table (Table 59, p. 103, *DMG*). Any result other than "friendly" means the character is treated as a stranger. After 1-3 weeks, or on an initial "friendly" reaction, the character will be considered a friend. After an additional 4-6 weeks of close daily contact, a character may achieve the status of "pack member." If by some unfortunate circumstance, the dog's master dies, another pack member may "adopt" the dog. It takes from 4-6 months, however, before the dog regards the new master as its alpha. Note that dogs commanded to alarm, guard, or protect do not roll on the Encounter Reaction Table. In these circumstances, all newcomers are treated as strangers.

In unusual circumstances, the dog may actually consider itself the alpha. This often troublesome and sometimes embarrassing situation is normally found only with a dog with high intelligence and aggressiveness, and low loyalty. While such a situation is not impossible, it is always interesting.

Canine NPC records

When designing a canine adventuring companion, the player or the DM should maintain a separate sheet (a 3" x 5" index card serves nicely) for the animal. On the front of the sheet record the following information: Dogs Name, Master, HD, hp, THACO, Movement, Intelligence Trait, Loyalty Trait, Aggressiveness Trait, and Strength Trait. Also list on the front of the sheet all skills the animal has been taught, as well as a brief physical description of the dog.

On the reverse side of the sheet, maintain a list of the dogs "pack members" and friends. Notes can also be made here of particularly memorable events in the dogs life which could later affect its behavior (i.e., near drowning, attack by a strange monster, etc.).

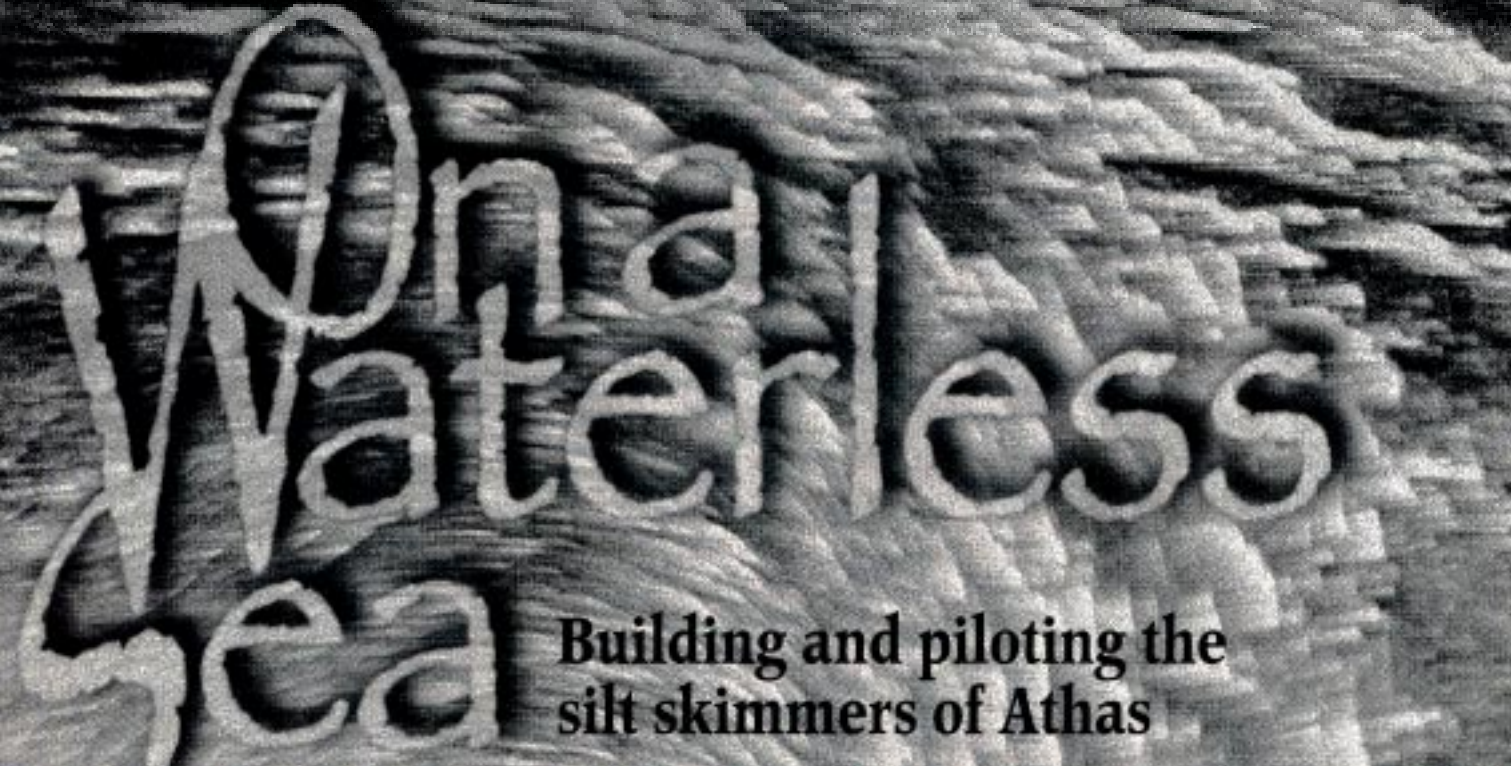
This card can then be kept with the player character sheet. It provides a handy reference and prevents later frustration when puzzling over undecipherable notes scrawled in the margins of some obscure papers.

Prevent animal abuse

Finally, the DM should be wary of the mercenary use of canine companions. Granted, the very nature of the adventuring life will often leave both dog and master fighting tooth and nail (no pun intended) for their lives. Canine companions should not, however, be treated simply as an extra attack roll. Characters who mistreat or abuse their animals should quickly find themselves on their own, preferably with the animal leaving at an especially critical moment. Even if such behavior doesn't lead to desertion, it surely will attract the unfavorable attention of local druids and rangers.



Clayton R. Beal has just returned from Guatemala, where he was in the service of the Coast Guard. This is his second appearance in DRAGON® Magazine.



Building and piloting the silt skimmers of Athas

by Todd Stigliano

illustrated by Rob Lazzaretti

On Athas, home of the DARK SUN® campaign, the Sea of Silt is a nearly impassable expanse that covers the entire Eastern half of the Tyr Region. Few attempt to cross it; those few who do are either native to the Silt Sea or possess powerful magic or psionics. A third group of daring travelers exists, those who pilot and man silt skimmers. Silt skimmers are vehicles that ride either on the shallow shoals beneath the silt or on the very surface of the silt itself. With regards to this second method, however, silt does not have the displacement and buoyancy of water — so craft cannot simply “float” on the surface. In this respect, silt shares more of the properties of quicksand — anything set upon its surface quickly sinks. The only way a skimmer can stay afloat in deep silt is through the channeling of psionic power through the ship. There are two types of silt skimmers: those driven by conventional means and those powered by psionics.

Conventional silt skimmers

These skimmers are essentially huge wagons that roll across the shallow parts of the Silt Sea. In many places under the silt, there are “paths” of rock and hardened silt that can safely support those who can find them. Skimmers of this sort are sometimes powered by sail; the huge wheels of the skimmer can also be hollowed and slaves made to “walk” in them to provide movement (see *The Valley of Dust and Fire* and *City by the Silt Sea* accessories). Many of these vehicles have both of these methods of power at their disposal so that if one fails the other can be used as a backup.

Psionic-powered skimmers

The disadvantage of conventional skimmers is that deep-silt travel is essentially out of the question — unless the captain is able to find a shallow path that just happens to lead where he wants to go. Though a great deal more expensive, psionic-powered skimmers solve this problem. These craft work by either a wild talent or a psionist channeling psionic energy through an enchanted, symmetrical piece of obsidian that distributes the energy

throughout the ship. The silt then supports the ship and moves the skimmer at whatever speed the pilot desires. This way, silt at any depth can be crossed. Many of these types of skimmers also have slave wheels or sails for backup.

Movement

Both conventional and psionic skimmers have a Movement Rating (MR). This number is roughly equivalent to the creature Movement Ratings described in the *Player's Handbook*. Skimmers that are moved by creatures walking in the hollowed-out wheels of the ship have a Wheel MR of 6. This number means that this type of skimmer can travel 60 yards through the silt in one round or minute (as in the *PHB*). In 10 hours, this skimmer can travel 6 miles. Note that this statistic is different from the *PHB* explanation. If the ship has no cargo, add 2 to its Wheel MR.

The creatures inside skimmer wheels can be subjected to a forced march, driving the skimmer 2.5 times its Wheel MR (15). At the end of each day's forced march (10 hours), however, a Constitution check must be made against the average constitution of the wheel-driving creatures (10 for typical slaves). Add a bonus of +1 to the Constitution score for each open sail. If the check is made, the forced march can be continued for another day. A cumulative -1 penalty is applied to the average Constitution score for each additional day spent in forced march. If a check fails, then forced marching stops, and no more forced marching attempts can be made until the slaves rest for 12 hours per full day of travel. Even if a check fails, though, normal movement can still be continued (although normal movement does not count as rest). Most of this information is on page 120 of the *PHB*.

Skimmers that are strictly wind-powered are not popular, as the wind on Athas is very unpredictable. Still, those who have the skill, knowledge, and patience can indeed go where they desire with the



wind. Here, the seamanship proficiency comes into play (call it "silt seamanship" or "siltmanship" if you like; such a proficiency applies to an area of knowledge about traveling on the Silt Sea). If the captain wishes to move on windpower only, then he can attempt to "catch the wind" by making a seamanship proficiency check. First, 1d10 must be rolled (when using the *PLAYER'S OPTION™: Skills & Powers* rules, substitute a roll of 1d8); the number rolled on this die is a negative modifier to the captain's seamanship proficiency score; it represents the availability of the days wind. A roll of 1 is the best, for it means high winds; a roll of 10 is the worst, for such a roll indicates practically no wind at all (the essence of this roll is the same as AC; lower is better). This roll can also indicate the amount of "wind-blown" resistance from the silt, so a roll of 1 would indicate low silt resistance from all the wind "tossing it around and "thinning it out, while a roll of 10 would be associated with high silt resistance and thick, "dead" silt that results from having hardly any wind. So, if the result of the 1d10 roll is a 5, the skimmer captain must make his proficiency check at a -5. The captain can attempt to make one of these checks per sail opened on the ship, although the modifier remains for the entire day. If any roll is successful, then the skimmer gains a Wind MR equal to one-half the captain's proficiency score (drop fractions). A captain is able to keep the wind

(and MR) for a number of turns equal to his whole proficiency score.

Example: *Rin, the captain of a skimmer, has a seamanship proficiency score of 14. His skimmer has one sail, which means he has one chance to make his proficiency check. A roll of 1d10 results in a 4, which means that Rin has a -4 penalty to his Seamanship score. The windskimmer moves at a maximum speed or Wind MR of 5, because his seamanship proficiency score is 14, less the -4 penalty from the wind for a modified score for 10, and half of 10 is 5. This modified score means that Rin can travel 50 yards a minute. He can keep up this movement rate for 14 turns (his regular seamanship proficiency score).*

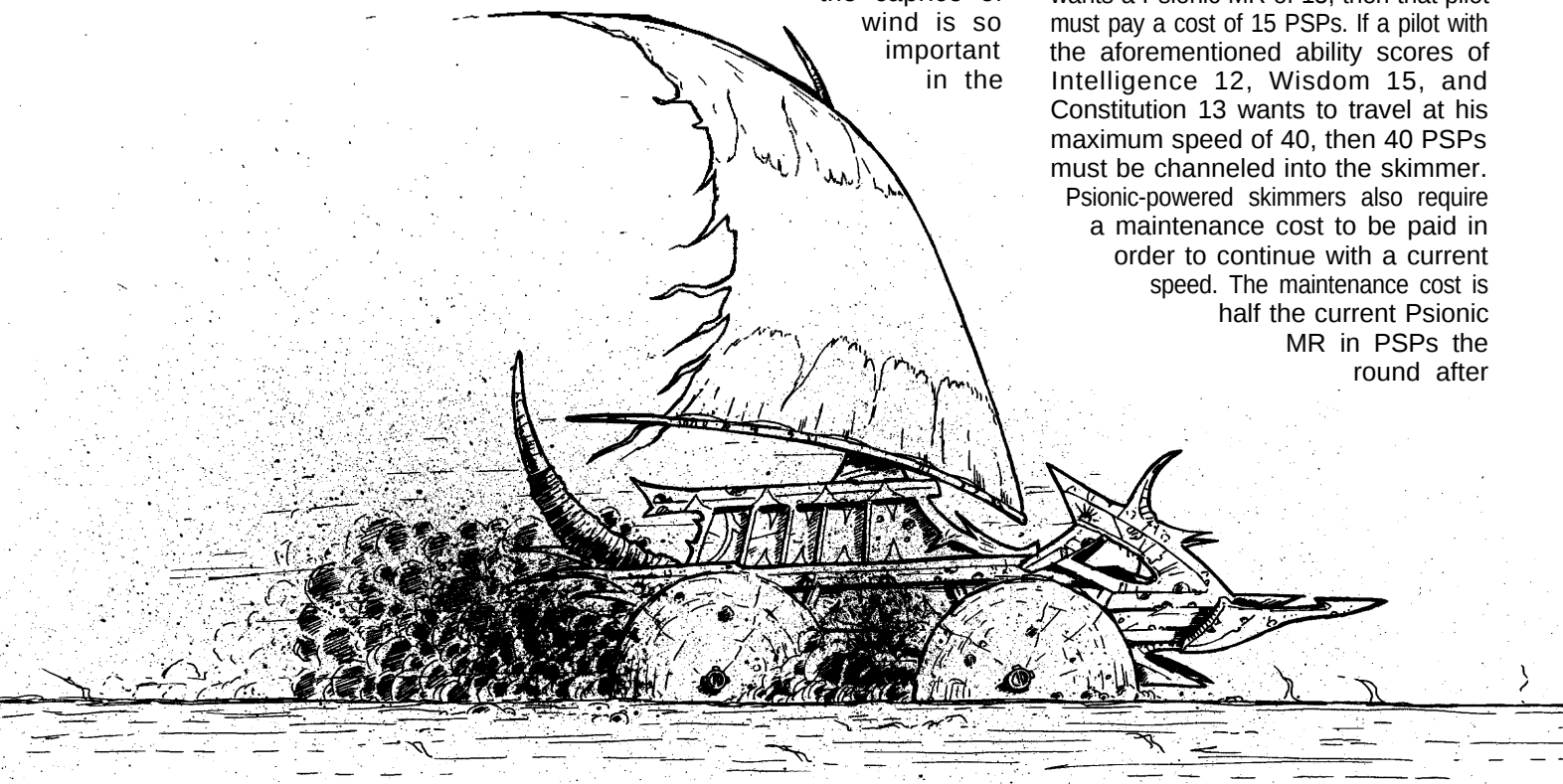
As long as Rin continues to succeed on his proficiency checks, his movement rate can be maintained for quite a while. If he could continue making "good" proficiency checks and keep up his Wind MR of 5 for 10 hours, he could conceivably travel 5 miles that day. However, the maximum number of times that Rin can "catch the wind" is equal to his experience level in his chosen class. Also, if any proficiency check fails, and the captain is unable to make any more attempts (no more sails are left to try with), then the skimmer is "dead in the silt," and no further attempts at catching the wind can be made until the next day (when a "new" 1d10 is rolled) — regardless of experience level. Because the caprice of wind is so important in the

Silt Sea, many skimmers have at least two means of power.

According to the *City by the Silt Sea* accessory, most skimmers have only one main sail. The addition of a foresail adds 1 to that skimmer's Wind MR in addition to providing another chance at catching the wind. Captains who are clerics of the Air add 1 to their Wind MR as well. The maximum number of sails that a skimmer can have is a function of its Size, which is described later. If a wind-driven skimmer is without cargo, add 2 to its Wind MR.

Psionic-driven skimmers are by far the most costly, yet many who traverse the silt feel that these skimmers pay for themselves with their speed and maneuverability. Skimmers of this type determine their Psionic MR depending on who is powering the ship. If the "pilot" (the person using psionics to move the skimmer) is a wild talent, then that ship's Psionic MR is equal to the pilot's Wisdom score. If, however, the pilot is a psionist, then that ship's Psionic MR is equal to the sum of the pilot's Intelligence, Wisdom, and Constitution scores. So, for example, if a pilot who is also a psionist has an Intelligence of 12, Wisdom of 15, and Constitution of 13, then that ship's Psionic MR is 40 (this skimmer can move at a maximum rate of 400 yards per minute). However, the psionic pilot must pay a PSP cost to gain such an MR. Each PSP channeled into the skimmer provides 1 point of Psionic MR. So, if a pilot wants a Psionic MR of 15, then that pilot must pay a cost of 15 PSPs. If a pilot with the aforementioned ability scores of Intelligence 12, Wisdom 15, and Constitution 13 wants to travel at his maximum speed of 40, then 40 PSPs must be channeled into the skimmer.

Psionic-powered skimmers also require a maintenance cost to be paid in order to continue with a current speed. The maintenance cost is half the current Psionic MR in PSPs the round after



the first (round fractions up) and one-quarter the current Psionic MR every round after that (the longer the pilot stays in contact with the ship, the easier it is to control). So, with the earlier example, in order to keep up a MR of 40 for longer than one round, an additional 20 PSPs must be expended at the beginning of the next round, and 10 PSPs would need to be expended at the beginning of every round after that. Naturally, then, such speeds are extremely tiring and are usually used only in an emergency.

Example: Resa is a wild talent who pilots a skimmer. Because she is a wild talent, her Psionic MR is equal to her Wisdom score only — which is 16. She has 30 PSPs. Now, she could start off at her maximum MR of 16 if she channels 16 PSPs into her skimmer, but doing this would mean that she could only travel 640 yards before she would begin to run short on PSPs (the first 160 yards cost 16 PSPs; the next 160 would cost 8 — half of 16 —; the next two rounds at 160 yards/minute — would cost 4 each — one-quarter of 16. The total amount of yards covered would be 640 at a total PSP cost of 28: $16 + 8 + 4 + 4 = 28$. Resa would have to stop and rest in order to regain her PSPs before she could pilot the skimmer again. Realizing this problem, she decides to pace herself by starting with a Psionic MR of 6. She channels 6 PSPs into her skimmer the first round, which makes her ship move 60 yards. The next round, she can keep her current speed by paying only 3 PSPs (half of

6). At the beginning of the next round and each round after that, Resa must expend only 1 PSP (one-fourth of 6, rounded up — the minimum PSP cost for any amount of movement is 1) in order to —continue her current movement of 60 yards per minute. Resa can move at this rate for a total of 24 rounds and cover 1,440 yards — about 300 yards short of a mile — when she paces herself this way (the first 60 yards cost 6 PSPs, the next cost 3, and each 60 yards after that costs 1 PSP per round for a total of 30 PSPs used: $6 + 3 + 1 (\times 21) = 30$).

If a pilot starts off at one speed, say, 15, and later decides to go faster (the skimmer cannot have reached its maximum speed yet), then that pilot must pay the difference between the skimmer's current Psionic MR and the pilot's desired MR. So, if a pilot is travelling at a Psionic MR of 15 and wants to go 17 (the ship's maximum Psionic MR), he simply needs to pay a one-time cost of 2 PSPs extra in the next round (in addition to the maintenance cost) in order to attain the new speed (if the ship has attained a MR of 15 by other means — like slave wheels or wind — the psionic pilot still needs to pay regular "first-time" costs and regular maintenance costs as if the ship was starting from a full stop — in order to "prime" the ship psionically for the pilot's use). Psionic-driven skimmers are the only other skimmers besides the slave-driven ones that can exceed their maximum MRs. If a pilot wishes to

exceed his maximum Psionic MR, additional PSPs need to be spent for each point of movement above and beyond the maximum movement rating on a one-for-one basis *plus* the initial MR cost. If a skimmer has a maximum Psionic MR of 17, and the pilot wants to increase speed to a figure above that MR — 20, for example — then the pilot must expend 20 PSPs in order to reach this speed — even if the skimmer was already moving at a MR 17 (exceeding Psionic MRs is very difficult and requires a great deal of mental energy). To maintain such a speed for more than one round, the same PSP cost needs to be paid at the beginning of the next round and each round after (in this case, the cost per round would be 20).

Example: Resa's skimmer encounters a silt spawn and she wants to get away — fast. She has been travelling at a Psionic MR of 6 for only two rounds — and so has 21 PSPs left (she used 6 PSPs the first round; 3 PSPs the second — she has used up 9 of her 30 PSPs so far). Her maximum Psionic MR is 16, yet, as mentioned earlier, she wants to flee from the silt spawn as fast as possible. So, Resa immediately channels 21 PSPs (everything she has left) into her ship and in one round her skimmer is 210 yards away (her movement has been increased to 21 which = 210 yards/round). Now, this move would have been unintelligent in deep silt, for the skimmer would have started to sink as soon as psionic energy ceased to be poured into it. However, since her skimmer is in shallow silt and possesses wheels and a sail, the skimmer's wheels simply sink until they touch bottom; her captain, Rin, opens up a sail, and now the skimmer is safely moving along at a Wind MR of 5.

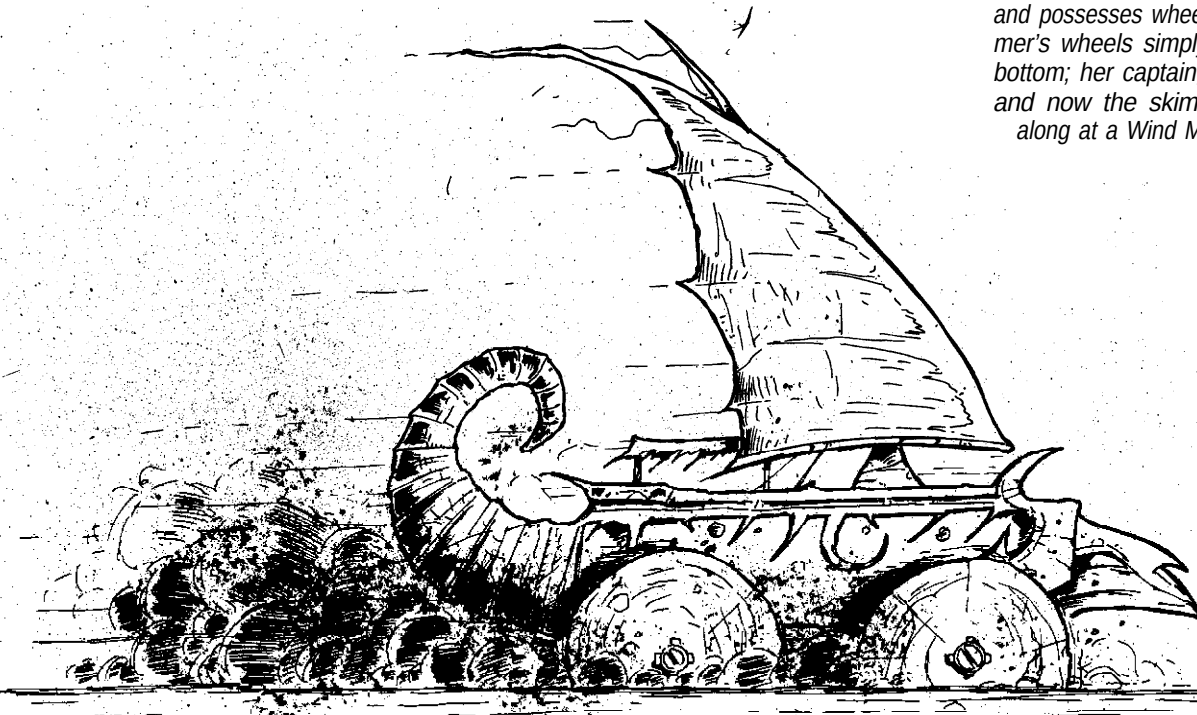


Table 1: Silt skimmer sizes

Size	Category	Ship Size	Cargo Limit	Maximum No. of Sails	Deepest Silt Level	Minimum Crew	Wheel Size
1		40'×20'	1,000 lbs.	1	11'	5 + captain	20' diameter
2		50'×25'	2,000 lbs.	2	12'	6 + captain	25' diameter
3		60'×30'	3,000 lbs.	3	13'	7 + captain	30' diameter
4		70'×35'	4,000 lbs.	4	14'	8 + captain	35' diameter
5		80'×40'	5,000 lbs.	5	15'	9 + captain	40' diameter

Because of their superior knowledge of energy and movement, Psionic-kineticists add 1 to their Psionic MR. Anyone with some degree of psionic talent can pilot a skimmer, provided that he possesses the Seamanship proficiency. Psionic-driven skimmers with no cargo add 2 to their Psionic MR. As mentioned in the beginning of this article, most silt skimmers have at least two means of power, which means that, in game terms, most silt skimmers have at least two MRs. What must be remembered is that only one type of movement (and MR) can be used at a time. A skimmer with a sail open and slaves moving two wheels doesn't combine its Wheel MR and its Wind MR. About the only advantage a slave-driven skimmer with an open sail has is a bonus to the Constitution check of the slaves when rolling for fatigue during a forced march (as mentioned earlier). Indeed, a typical journey in the life of a silt-skimmer captain might go something like this: a captain may be force marching his slaves to get a Wheel MR of 15; after three days he orders his slaves out of the wheels so that they can rest. He then opens up a sail and continues at a Wind MR of 7 (a roll of 1d10 resulted in a 2, so this captain has a 2 to his Seamanship proficiency score — his score being 16, minus 2, equals 14; half of 14 is 7) for about an hour when suddenly the skimmer is attacked by giants. The captain hastily helps take down the sail and orders his psionic pilot (who happens to be a psionist with the following ability scores: Intelligence 15; Constitution 17; Wisdom 16) to get the ship out of danger. The pilot hastily pours 48 PSPs into the skimmer and the ship quickly zooms away at its maximum Psionic MR of 48 ($15 + 17 + 16 = 48$). In one round the pilot has put 480 yards between his skimmer and the giants. He continues at this MR for 4 more rounds until the giants are safely out of sight, at which point the captain relieves the exhausted pilot and allows the wheels to touch bottom in the shallow silt. He opens the sail back up but is unable to catch any wind now (he has failed his Seamanship proficiency check). So, in

order to keep his schedule, he has his tired slaves crawl back into the wheels; and now his skimmer is moving at its Wheel MR again — this time at 6 (his slaves cannot force march now due to a lack of adequate rest).

Maneuvering

Slave-driven and wind-powered skimmers can turn in two-mile arcs — as mentioned in the *City by the Silt Sea* accessory. This accessory also states that the addition of an aft sail for steering reduces that turning arc to one mile. Such a sail provides another chance at wind-catching as well. When playing in yards instead of miles, however, consider the two-mile turning arc to be a 170° obtuse angle; and consider a one mile turning arc to be 160°. Speed is in no way decreased when turning in this fashion. As far as stopping goes, both of these types of skimmers can stop immediately by either ordering the slaves to stop walking or by folding the sails. Psionic-driven skimmers can turn as much as 110° without losing speed. Any turns sharper than 110° require the pilot to make a Seamanship proficiency check with a penalty equal to the skimmer's current Psionic MR. So, if a pilot is travelling at a Psionic MR of 8 and wants to make a 90° turn, then that pilot must make a Seamanship proficiency check at a -8 penalty to his proficiency score. Success means no speed is lost in the turn; failure means that the skimmer's current Psionic MR is halved; more PSPs need to be spent in order to get back up to the original speed. The advantage that psionic pilots have, though, is that this roll can be modified. If a pilot wants to, additional PSPs can be channeled into the skimmer to reduce the penalty and give a better chance for a successful proficiency check. Each extra PSP spent on making the turn provides a +1 bonus to that pilot's Seamanship proficiency score for the roll.

Example: *Resa needs to make a 90° turn in order to avoid an outcropping of rock. Her Seamanship proficiency score is 13 and she is travelling at a Psionic MR of 10,*

so her proficiency score needs to be rolled at -10 penalty (which leaves her with a chance of 3 in order to make the turn — not a very good chance). in order to improve her chances, Resa expends 5 extra PSPs into her ship — which lowers the penalty to her proficiency score to -5. Now, a roll of 8 or lower indicates that Resa has cleared the rock ($13 - 5 = 8$) — still not a very good chance but much better than 3.

Turns sharper than 90° are impossible without first stopping the skimmer and then pivoting it in the desired direction. Psionic pilots can stop in a variety of ways: many pilots simply let go of the *obsidian engine* that they are required to keep in physical contact with. This way the skimmer loses half its speed the first round and comes to a complete halt in the second. After the second round, the skimmer also begins to sink unless more psionic energy is spent into it or the skimmer itself hits "land" in shallow silt. For an immediate stop, the same procedure is used when making a sharp turn: the pilot must make a Seamanship proficiency check with a penalty equal to the skimmer's current Psionic MR (extra PSPs can be used to modify this roll).

Building skimmers to size

All skimmers are classified in size on a scale of 1-5 (smallest to largest). Table 1 illustrates ship Size and how it relates to other aspects of a silt skimmer.

Both wind-powered and slave-driven skimmers require wheels and can only travel in shallow silt at the maximum depths indicated under Deepest Silt Level. Only psionic-powered skimmers that are driven purely by psionics can avoid having wheels (although such a skimmer would need a core team of pilots to run a sort of "shift duty" in order to keep the skimmer afloat). Also, psionic pilots do not count toward the minimum crew requirements listed above.

Psionic pilots do have certain requirements when it comes to skimmer size. In order to operate a skimmer of a specific size, a pilot needs to have reached that same level in his or her chosen class. So, in order for a pilot to operate a Size 4

Table 2: Ship and engine costs

Ship Size	Skimmer Cost	Obsidian Engine Cost	Cost Per Sail	Enchantment Cost (for Obsidian Engines Only)
1	150 gp	15,000 sp	5 gp	10 gp
2	250 gp	16,000 sp	6 gp	15 gp
3	350 gp	17,000 sp	7 gp	20 gp
4	450 gp	18,000 sp	8 gp	25 gp
5	550 gp	19,000 sp	9 gp	30 gp

skimmer, that pilot must be at least a 4th-level character. Multi-class characters use their highest level class; dual-class humans use the level of whatever class they are currently working on. No matter what the size, slave-driven skimmers always have a Wheel MR of -6.

Costs

Psionic-powered silt skimmers need what is called an *obsidian engine*, which is basically a large, enchanted, symmetrical piece (any shape) of obsidian that pilots use to control a skimmer and keep it afloat. Such engines must be flawlessly crafted; they are also very expensive. An *obsidian engine* costs 15,000 sp + 1,000 sp for every Size level beyond 1; these engines weigh a great deal as well. An engine weighs 600 lbs. for every Size level (this weight, however, doesn't count toward cargo limits as the skimmer is designed to compensate for this weight when it is built and when a previously non-psionic skimmer is "converted" into a psionic one). Table 2 lists the standard ship costs and the costs for *obsidian engines* (a separate cost) as well as costs for enchantment.

Skimmer integrity

Skimmers have their own version of Hit Points which fall under a category called "Integrity." Integrity is basically the ship's Hit Dice (d20), and it's rolled when the skimmer is first constructed.

No matter how much money is spent on "making the perfect ship," Integrity levels cannot exceed the maximums listed above (the randomness in rolling Integrity represents getting good or bad craftsmen to do the job and how much extra it costs to "get the job done right").

When a skimmer is hit by a ballista, boulder, spell, or any other damaging weapon, points of Integrity are lost — just as in person-to-person combat. If a skimmer is hit by a ballista that inflicts 2d6 hp damage, then that skimmer loses 2d6 points of Integrity. When hit by spells or psionics, skimmers use the Item Saving Throws table from the *DMG* and save as either bone (chitin) or thin wood — depending on the majority of

materials of which the ship is constructed. A successful save indicates half or no damage, depending on the spell or power.

When a skimmer suffers damage, there is also a chance that its Movement Rating is affected as well. Every time a skimmer is hit, roll percentile dice. If the result is equal to or less than the skimmer's current Integrity score (after the Integrity point loss) then the rate of movement is not affected. If the result on d100 is greater than the Integrity score, then any MRs that the ship has are halved. If the skimmer fails its Integrity roll again when damaged, then any ship MRs are halved again — and so on until the ship can no longer move.

Psionic MR are now halved until repairs can be made. Resa can now only push the skimmer (psionically) to its new maximum of 8 (half of 16).

Combat is resolved using the normal combat rules: the person firing one of the ship's weapons uses his THAC0. Also, consider the AC of all skimmers to be 0. Table 4 lists common skimmer weapons and their rates of damage.

Weapons

A skimmer can have a number of weapons equal to two times its Size rating. However, many skimmers have no weapons at all, as most captains would like to keep the ships they defeat — not

Table 3: Skimmer integrity

Skimmer Size	Integrity	Cost for Higher Integrity	Maximum Integrity
1	4d20	1 gp/point	80
2	5d20	2 gp/point	100
3	6d20	3 gp/point	20
4	7d20	4 gp/point	140
5	8d20	5 gp/point	160

Example: *Rin is travelling at a Wheel MR of 6, and his skimmer has 70 Integrity points. Unfortunately, Rin doesn't realize that he's being followed. Suddenly, a bolt of green lightning hits the aft of the ship. The skimmer suffers 14 points of damage (it now has 56 integrity). A roll of percentile dice results in 50, so the ship can still continue at its present Wheel MR of 6. Rin wants to get away with as little damage as possible, however, so he has his psionic pilot Resa drive the ship. She pushes the skimmer to its maximum Psionic MR of 16, but, unfortunately, another lightning bolt cracks into the ship — this time into the skimmer's port side. The skimmer takes 20 points of damage to its Integrity — leaving only 36 points left. A d100 roll gives a result of 64, which means that the ship's Wheel MR, Wind MR, and*

destroy them. Furthermore, all weapons are considered to be on fixed, immovable mounts. Triple the cost of any skimmer weapon if a swivel-mount is desired.

Option: If you are using the *PLAYER'S OPTION™ Combat and Tactics* supplement, feel free to utilize the weapons and rules from Chapter Eight in that book — entitled "Siege Warfare."

Some exceptions are of note, however, in that only ballistae, catapults, and trebuchets "fit" the DARK SUN campaign world. Also, the crew of the skimmer is able to fill the Minimum Crew requirements needed to operate these weapons — as stated on the Bombardment Engines table, p. 155 — provided that no more than half of the

Table 4: Silt skimmer weapons

Weapon	Speed	ROF	Range	Minimum Ship Size	Damage	Cost
Light ballista	8	1/2	30/50/70	1	1d12+	10 gp
Heavy ballista	15	1/3	70/90/110	3	3d6	20 gp
Catapult	—	1/2r	—	3	—	8 gp
Boulder	13	—	40/50/60	—	3d6+4	—
Debris	10	—	30/40/50	—	varies	—

ship's crew is allocated to firing the gunnery — setting more than half the crew to the task of discharging weapons causes all the ship's movements to be set *behind* one phase, regardless of current MR or initiative. The cost of these weapons on the Bombardment Engines table mentioned earlier can be converted by multiplying the listed gold piece cost by 5 and using the resulting number as the cost in ceramic pieces. Plus, the respective weights of these weapons take up cargo weight. Finally, consider the number in the Spaces column as the minimum ship Size needed to have such a weapon installed.

"Ship-stopping" darts

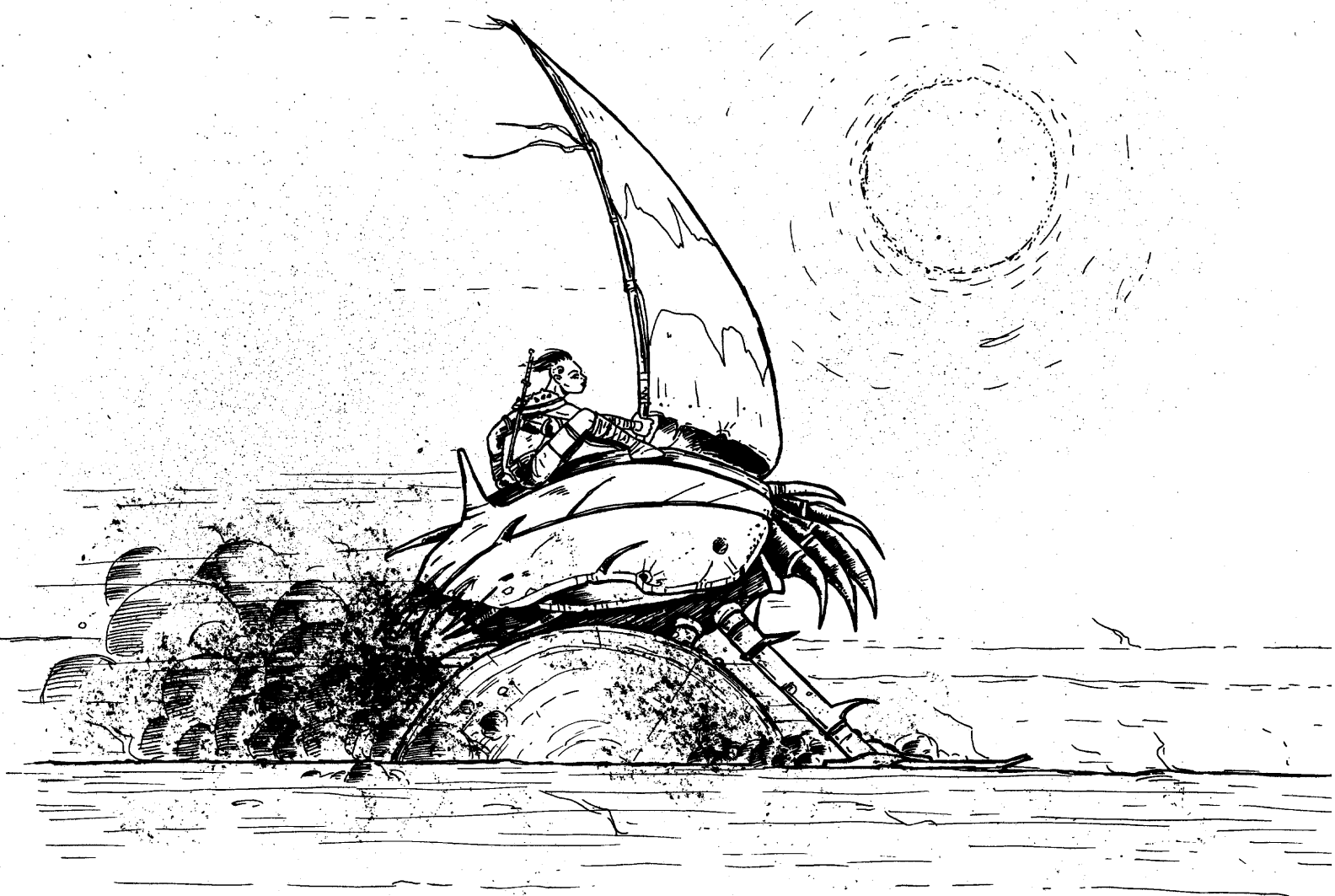
One difficulty in using an Integrity system that is equivalent to the Hit Point system of characters is that skimmers therefore lose Integrity in much the same way as characters lose Hit Points. So, say a DM were to put the information in this article to use, and while "run-

ning a silt-skimmer scenario, one of the characters throws a dart at an offending skimmer; causing that ship to lose 3 points of Integrity — going from 56 to 53. Now the DM checks that ship's Integrity by rolling d100 and the resulting roll turns out to be 54 — all the ship's MRs are halved. Does this result mean that a dart thrown from one PC can stop (or even slow down) a 50' × 25' vehicle? A reasonable way to adjudicate a problem like this is to assign a "minimum damage" number for any attack on a silt skimmer — 10 is a good "minimum damage" number. What this number means is that any single attack that hits the ship must be able to cause at least 10 hp damage for that skimmer to have to check its Integrity — so in the above example, that skimmer hit with a dart would lose 3 points of its Integrity, but would not have to roll to see if its MR was halved. (Such a weapon is too small to cause any significant reduction in speed.) However, a *lightning bolt* spell

(that can cause 4d6 hp damage, for example) that is cast at a skimmer and results in a 4 (all "1s") for damage causes the skimmer to lose Integrity and requires that ship to "check" its Integrity on d100 to see if its respective MRs are halved (the *lightning bolt* spell cast by this particular magician is capable of inflicting 10 hp damage, enough to have a chance of causing the ship to slow, regardless of whether the materials of the ship made their saving throws).

Creating an obsidian engine

As stated earlier, an *obsidian engine* must be a flawless, symmetrical, enchanted piece of obsidian. Because the use of magic is required, most psionic-powered skimmers were in the Royal Fleets of the sorcerer-kings and illegal anywhere else. Trading houses, however, could secure high-priced "licenses" from templars — which would at least allow these houses to hire a magician to create the engine for them. Now, in the absence of most of



the kings, trading houses and even individuals such as nobles are causing the demand for psionically driven skimmers to rise very slowly.

The creation of a psionic skimmer requires that either the *obsidian engine* be blessed by an Earth or Fire cleric; or that the ship itself be blessed by a cleric of Silt. Afterward, the following 9th-level spell must be cast on the engine:

Psionic Channeler

(Enchantment, Alteration)

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 1 day per Size level

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

This spell creates a magical web of thread-sized conduits that covers the entire ship and culminates at the *obsidian engine*. These conduits are invisible and have no truly physical substance, yet they can be seen with either the wizard sight or *true seeing* spells. This spell is cast on a flawless, symmetrical piece of obsidian (of the appropriate size) for one day per Size level of the skimmer. The wizard must keep in constant physical contact with the obsidian during the casting time, as these psionic conduits "grow" slowly from the engine itself and eventually cover the entire ship. The material component is the piece of obsidian to be enchanted.

Before his untimely disappearance, King Andropinis of Balic had ordered research into this spell so that air could be channeled around a skimmer (i.e., the skimmer could fly). Unfortunately, all attempts proved fruitless due to the extreme weight of the *obsidian engine* itself. Furthermore, silt, for some reason, is more of a conductor of psionic energies than air (many scholars postulate that the Sea of Silt's origins have something to do with this fact).

Skimmer design

As long as a skimmer fits into the rules about ship construction, practically any design is possible. Skimmers have been built from materials ranging from wood from the Crescent Forest to the chitinous bodies of dead giant beetles. Be creative.

Below are two "sample" skimmers that are presented in order to give the potential captain an example of what a skimmer's chart looks like.

Balican Silt-Runner

Size: 1 Wheel

MR: 6

Wind MR: varies

Psionic MR: 18

Integrity: 65

Captain's Seamanship proficiency score: 17

Pilot's Seamanship proficiency score: 13

The Balican fleet served as that city's only protection against the giants that threatened its walls. The strength of the fleet under King Andropinis's reign was in its simple organization: each skimmer in the royal armada was fitted with an *obsidian engine*; and no skimmer was ever to be allowed to travel alone. Such a move cost the city hundreds of thousands of gold pieces in phenomenal taxes, yet trade routes remained open because of this move and giants continued to be outmaneuvered by the faster, psionic-powered skimmers. Indeed, this fear of attack by giants was so successfully instilled in the citizens of Balic that these taxes were paid two times over.

Balican skimmers are divided into three classes: Silt-Runners (Size 1), Wanderers (Sizes 2-4), and Drakes (Size 5). When Andropinis was king, Balic remained uncontested among the other city-states with regards to the size and strength of its fleet. Now, unfortunately, Balic's royal armada operates at a mere fraction of its former power. When news of the king's disappearance reached the fleet, many captains took their ships and were never seen again. Some, however, did return to find positions with House Wavir: the trading house that now controls most of Balic (including the harbor) in the king's absence. At any rate, citizens fear that, in its weakened and divided state, Balic remains at a constant danger from giants — even with rumors of a peace treaty underway.

The Amestine

Size: 3

Psionic MR: varies from pilot to pilot

Integrity: 79

Pilot's Seamanship proficiency score: varies from pilot to pilot

The Amestine is a skimmer that is piloted by eleven renegade psionics.

This skimmer has no wheels or a sail and is strictly powered by psionics. These individuals were fleeing the psionic organization known as the Order when that organization split due to some inner turmoil caused by one of



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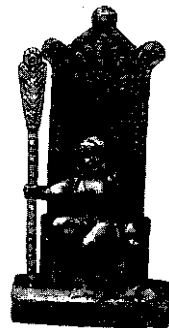
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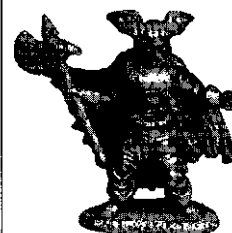
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its members (see the *Dragon's Crown* module). Now the pilots and crew of the Amestine have been able to come out of hiding (cautiously doing so, of course) and are currently aiding Draj's House of the Mind in leading silt-based commerce for the city.

Alternative methods of power (tricks of the trade)

Owning slaves is considered an evil act, and any character who persists in doing so should be subject to an alignment adjustment by the DM. Having said this then, how do those who are against slavery use skimmers powered with a Wheel MR? Well, many captains have been known to use beasts of burden such as inixes.

Earlier, this article stated that only slave-driven and psionic-powered skimmers could exceed their maximum MRs; this isn't necessarily true. A captain moving via sail power with an Air cleric on board is a lucky captain indeed. Clerics of Air can *gate* in a sheet of gail-force wind 2' wide for each level they possess above 6th. This wind can travel about 1,000 yards in one round and can be *gated* right into the ship's sails — causing the skimmer to travel at its current Wind MR plus 10 points of Wind MR for each level the cleric has above 6th. The skimmer, however, must check its Integrity (d100) with a penalty to the roll equal to the extra points added to the skimmer's MR. So, for example, if an 8th-level Air cleric summons these winds and add 20 points to the skimmer's Wind MR, then that skimmer must check its Integrity at a -20 penalty. Success means that the new speed is achieved; failure means that the sails have either snapped off at the poles or been ripped in two — this skimmer no longer has any Wind MR until repairs are made. If the skimmer makes its Integrity check, the captain can attempt to keep the wind by making a Seamanship proficiency check every round. The new speed lasts until the captain fails a proficiency roll or 1,000 yards are covered — whichever comes first.

Some mages have been known to use undead or elementals as motive power (although animating dead is also considered an evil act if used too often). What is important to remember is that, no matter what creature walks inside the wheels, the Wheel MR of any skimmer is always 6 — with a force march rate of 15 (when checking for fatigue in a force march with creatures that don't have any

Constitution score, use a saving throw vs. death instead — undead and elementals do not have to make this roll).

Air clerics aren't the only ones that can aid a wind-powered skimmer, however. Any weather or wind affecting spell or psionic power (such as *control wind*) allows the captain one extra chance at making a seamanship proficiency check (as if the ship had another sail) to catch the wind (1d10 is rolled again, although, to determine the strength of this "new weather").

A group of psionic pilots who each possesses the telepathic devotion, Convergence, can do amazing things. When two or more psionists use Convergence while piloting a skimmer, the highest Psionic MR and Seamanship proficiency score of the group is used. If any of the psionists is a psychokineticist, then that bonus is used as well. Finally, every psionist's individual store of PSPs is combined into a group pool — as stated in the description of the Convergence power.

To run a campaign based in the Sea of Silt, it might be good to secure a copy of the *Valley of Dust and Fire* and *City by the Silt Sea* accessories, as both of these

resources detail islands and cities not located on the original map of the Tyr region. The *Dune Trader* accessory provides a look at the major trading houses of the land, and the new Expanded and Revised DARK SUN boxed set nearly doubles the size of the Sea of Silt.

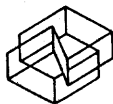
Because of the cost of skimmers, many players who want to be in a Silt Sea—based campaign might find themselves disappointingly short of the needed funds. This isn't as much of a problem as it might first appear. Psionists and powerful wild-talents are in constant demand as pilots by both trading houses and cities (and even powerful individuals such as nobles). Crew and captains with the proper experience are also needed to man these ships. The only important point to remember in these work-for-hire situations is who actually owns what — or whom . . .



Todd Stigliano is currently studying English, Linguistics, and Music Composition at Youngstown State University. He is a complete fanatic about the DARK SUN campaign world.

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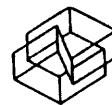
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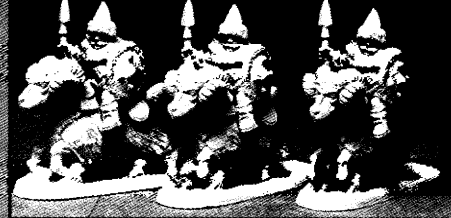
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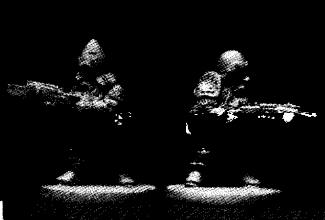
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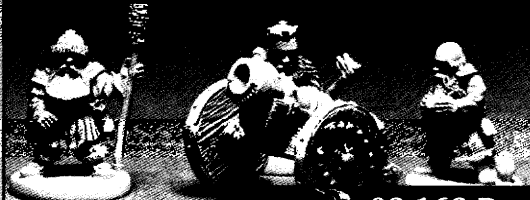
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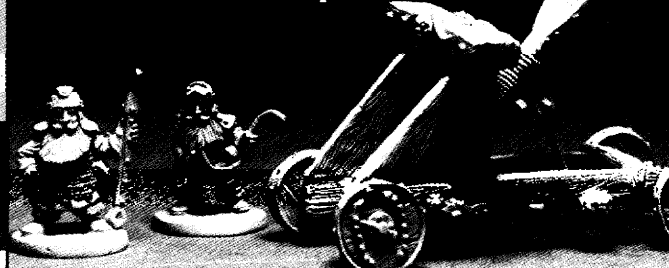
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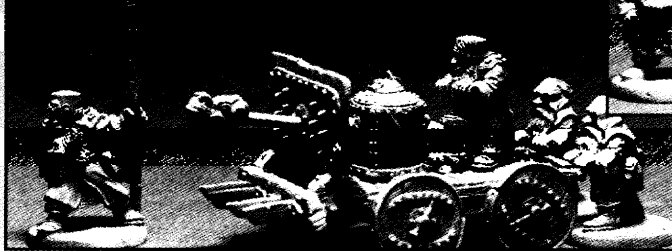
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ELDENSER

The Worm Who Hides in Blades

by Ed Greenwood

illustrated by Storn Cook

This time around, Volo has uncovered one of the most unusual and interesting dragons of the North: Eldenser, the Worm Who Hides In Blades. Whispered of in obscure legends of the North for some six centuries (and described as frail with age even in his earliest mention), Eldenser is an amethyst eider wyrm of decrepit, weary-wise appearance. Long ago he mastered magic that allows him to leave his withered, wasted body in a secure hideaway (reportedly a crypt in Waterdeep's City of the Dead), and transport his sentience into the blade of any tempered, edged metal weapon.

In this way, Eldenser has cheated death down the ages, preserving his slowly-crumbling form as much as possible by leaving it unused and walled away from air and elements, as he passes from blade to blade, able to see, hear, and speak freely out of the metal — and all metals in direct contact with a blade he currently inhabits.

Authorities unanimously refer to this dragon as a male, and the few that make mention of his true draconic body

say that his wings are little more than tatters hanging between the structural spines, and that his scales are almost white in places, paling with age in the same way that the ancient black dragon of Cormyr became "the Purple Dragon." He is said to have tufted eyebrows and an extensive 'beard' of spines on his chin, both white in hue, and to have very wise large eyes whose customary appearance is "twinkling with inner amusement."

In younger days, Eldenser was said to be a solitary wanderer among dragons, who flitted about Faerûn (the Sword Coast North wilderlands in particular) without apparent rhyme nor reason, following his own whims. It's now clear that he was enjoying his first love: the observation of all living things, and learning how they appear and "work" in all stages of life. The deep knowledge of this sort that he's acquired down the ages makes him both less proud and more formidable than most dragons — he knows the causes and effects of deeds and events more than most living beings of Toril.

It's also clear from the historical record that Eldenser tends to avoid other dragons — but to reveal himself as a wily, enthusiastic, and savage fighter when attacked. Three women of the household of the long-ago nomad lord Tharnor of the North saw Lorrageuth, a black dragon of some reputation, swoop down to attack Eldenser when the Lurker was intruding into Lorrageuth's territory. As Lorrageuth spread his wings to slow and aim himself for a devastating pounce, Eldenser calmly snapped his wings once, rolling to rise sharply under Lorrageuth's right wing — and the Lurker burst up through it, tearing one of his foe's wings almost right off the wyrm's body, sending the luckless Lorrageuth "cartwheeling across the rocks and sky, to a broken and splintered death against a mountainside some way off to the south."

Eldenser is also said to have snatched up a fishing boat while in full flight from a gigantic red dragon, and looped in the air to use the vessel as a crude spear, piercing his foe's eye and slaying him before the racing red wyrm could slow

down or duck aside. Most of Eldenser's exploits preserved in Realmslore, however, concern his deeds while lurking in various swords — such as the time he caused the death of the notoriously cruel and destructive mage Arnaglym of Arrabar by unexpectedly reflecting a *fireball* that Arnaglym had cast at Eldenser's wielder, hurling it back at the mage, who stood in a hall with a massive hammerbeam ceiling hung with huge old tinder-dry tapestries — which became a smothering inferno from which even the fell Arnaglym could not escape.

There are a score of similar surprising tales of surprising powers bursting from blades that Eldenser is known to be the cause of, and many more that he isn't connected to by present-day bards and sages — but for which he may in truth be responsible.

It's important to remember that Eldenser fights only when battle can't readily be avoided; he prefers to observe and remain undetected or at least ignored. He likes just to watch silently, and this habit has given him a rich range of experiences and knowledge, from how to cook certain complicated recipes to the configurations of sewers and back alleys in many cities, to where certain treasures lie hidden. It has been said (and repeated by some elder Harpers) that "Eldenser sees much, and never forgets anything from an expression on one face glimpsed in a crowd to the position of gaming pieces on a board seen through a doorway while passing in haste." The Lurker will never do anything as crass as sell such information, but he'll often trade a service from some of it, to get adventurers or others to do something he doesn't want to take a hand in directly — but wants to watch.

Elminster has corrected many of the suppositions about Eldenser's powers that follow, but he stresses that adventurers shouldn't trust in what is said here; the Lurker's true abilities may be more potent. All of what immediately follows refers to the dragon's powers while he is within a metal object, almost always a sword of fine make.

Eldenser knows Common and several human and elven tongues. He can speak with perfect telepathy at the same range as his maximum vocal "shout" (a booming voice audible up to a mile away). He prefers to speak in a dry, calm, much quieter voice. When operating out of a blade he can see and hear as well as a human with keen senses.

The Lurker can be hurt by all attacks that harm the blade. Breaking a blade he's inhabiting deals him 4d12 hp damage instantly and frees him to "drift" (see below). There are two exceptions to this rule: both natural and magical electrical and heat attacks cause Eldenser no harm. Furthermore, he can at will draw their effects into himself to protect his wielder from all damage, though he tends to do this only reluctantly, as it renders most blades he inhabits brittle. Note that this power steals half the damage inflicted by such attacks on their initial round, negating any additional damage on subsequent rounds.

Eldenser doesn't augment the physical damage caused by a blade he inhabits but does render it a +2 weapon for the purposes of determining what sorts of creatures it can strike, without conferring an actual bonus on the blade.

Eldenser can jump invisibly from one blade to another if they are within six feet of each other and remain so, immobile, for at least three consecutive rounds. During this time, he can't speak or cast spells.

Otherwise, he travels by "drifting," becoming a wraithlike apparition that looks like a human-sized amethyst dragon head of great age and bewhiskered attached to a dwindling "tail" of wispy substance. In this form he is AC 4, MV FI 8 (D), and can speak and work magic. When drifting, he singlemindedly travels in search of a new metal item to inhabit. (Once he has left a particular blade, he can never return to it.) As he drifts in this wraithform, Eldenser "bleeds" 1d4 hit points per round. If he reaches 6 hp or less before the round in which he silently melds into a new blade, he vanishes, transported automatically, as a *teleport without error* spell, back into his true body, where he remains until time heals.

Eldenser dislikes the "feel" of metal items that have alignments not at least partially neutral, and he won't remain in them for more than a minimally necessary time to bring about a likely transfer to a more suitable home (i.e., until he perceives other metal items near; he never likes to go "drifting blind"). He won't manifest any of his powers or cast any spells when in such a situation except those that are likely to bring about an immediate possibility of transfer. (He might spit out lightning to attract an adventurer's attention, for example, to allow him to move into a weapon or piece of armor of the adventurer's.)

Eldenser also dislikes inhabiting intelligent weapons of any sort, but he can absolutely control the actions and powers of any weapon with an ego of 5 or less (weapons of 6 or greater ego, or artifacts, typically repel him into wraithform upon contact). His entry into an intelligent weapon causes both he and it to go dormant for 1d4+1 rounds while Eldenser learns its abilities and establishes control. If the weapon has an ego rating, add its ego points to the number of rounds of dormancy (as Eldenser wrestles with it and examines its intellect and memories for things of interest). Note that the Lurker has the ability to make magical items temporarily usable by beings that the items are normally unable to aid (by reason of class, race, alignment, level, or personal skills).

Eldenser is sometimes called "the Lurker" in the lore of the North because he reveals himself only if he chooses, often spending much time silently observing those who wield him (or rather, the blade he currently inhabits) before speaking to them or exhibiting his powers. About 1277 DR, he told a daring Harper who questioned him about this: "I prefer to watch the strivings of others and act only when I must. From time to time something within me stirs, and I rise up to work my will on Faerûn with vigorous energy . . . but those risings come seldom now; I must be growing old."

When within a weapon, Eldenser can cast his spells by silent act of will, either by touch (of the blade), or by causing them to erupt out of the blade. He does this independently of the will and knowledge of the blade's wielder, who may not even be aware that the sword in his hand is anything out of the ordinary until it spits a *lightning bolt* or a stream of *magic missiles*.

While inhabiting a blade, Eldenser gives the weapon his Armor Class, saving throws (use either the metal item saving throw or his draconic saving throw, whichever is better), and hit points.

The Lurker's relationships with other dragons have been, in the words of the human sage Velsaert of Baldur's Gate (fast becoming recognized as an authority on the history of dragons up and down the Sword Coast), "A parade of friendly hidings — but ready deadlines." Put into everyday words, that means that Eldenser prefers to conceal himself from other dragons, reacts with calm friendliness if he is discovered — and is quick and savage in battle if forced to defend himself (or his wielder).

The key to Eldenser's character could be said to be his interest in the rich variety of the Realms, as it unfolds all around him. He is patient, good-natured, and wise, able to draw on far more experience than most mortal beings, to outwit foes who plan ahead. He can cast prudence aside in an instant if he must, bursting into bold action, but he has no interest into luring or trapping others (though he may manipulate beings to aid his wielder, or merely to observe the result — particularly if it is likely to reveal the character of someone he's interested in, perhaps as a possible wielder of the blade he's currently inhabiting).

Eldenser is said to be an accomplished mimic and to have a taste for riddles and puzzles. In recent years, he has become increasingly fascinated by love in all its forms, and what it can make beings do.

The Worm Who Hides In Blades is said to be a foe of whoever's pestering him right now — he doesn't bother pursuing anyone on an ongoing basis, though he'll certainly thwart the Cult of the Dragon whenever he can.

Eldenser's lair

The Lurker has no known servants, willing or unwilling, but he is thought to enjoy an alliance with The Simbul, Witch-Queen of Aglarond, and possibly with her sisters Syluné and, surprisingly, Dove (who has wielded him from time to time in big battles against Zhentarim, Thayans, or other magically-powerful menaces). He seems to have no true lair but rather a dozen or more inaccessible sea-isle or mountain-heart caverns in which to 'stash' his immobile, stasis-ruled body.

For most of the time, this body lies in a crypt in the City of the Dead, a tomb that is reachable only by correctly passing through several trapped gates that fling the unwary to random destinations (e.g., a deep level in Undermountain or the outskirts of ruined Myth Drannor) unless a user utters the correct passwords while traversing them.

The crypt is rumored to contain wardmists or similar protective magical barriers, including helmed horrors or similar automaton guardians, but no precise details of such defenses are available.

Eldenser's domain

Inside blades, Eldenser roams all of Faerûn, considering none of it his "territory" but all of it his to traverse. He ignores nearby dragons of any breed — unless they discover him, whereupon he

cheerfully defies any attempts to establish authority over him (or anyone wielding the blade he currently inhabits). Eldenser usually has little interest in slaying other dragons of any sort, but he dislikes fleeing from them. He prefers to best other dragons or outwit them and then leave at his leisure, rather than allowing them to consider themselves victorious over him.

The deeds of Eldenser

The favorite prey of the Lurker is a great cat of any sort, though he usually feeds on cattle — and of course derives nutrients from any gore he spills while inhabiting a blade. He is said to enjoy good wine and sharp cheeses, too, drawing them into the blade when it touches them.

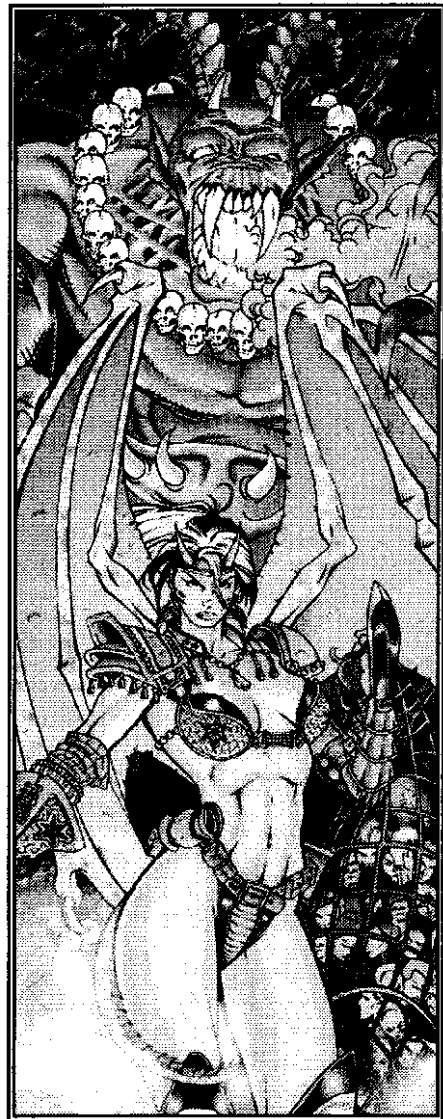
It's not known if Eldenser has ever mated with another dragon. He is known to have accompanied several human females — and at least one elven lady — for most of their lives, and to have formed friendships with heroic individuals of both genders and most intelligent races. At heart, though, he seems that rarest of things, even among dragons: a contented loner.

Eldenser spends his days in three pursuits: observing the beauties of Faerûn and the entertaining strivings of its inhabitants (half-elves, humans, and elves in particular), trying to influence events in the same way that rulers and archmages do, and to follow Ossavitor's Way to fruition.

Ossavitor was — or is (it is now either dead or dwelling on another plane) — a dragon of forgotten breed, who achieved something very important to all dragonkind some 20,000 years ago: his Way, or magical process for achieving immortality.

Humans are warned that betrayal of any knowledge of this process (even mentioning its name in "confidential" inquiries at Candlekeep, for example) will attract the attention of both the Cult of the Dragon (who are anxious to eliminate rivals in their bid to influence dragons into achieving dracolichdom) and powerful dragons of all sorts.

Ossavitor's Way is a long, exacting, and difficult process, the details of which remain secret to this writer (i.e., Volo couldn't discover anything more about it, and Elminster refused to). Khelben "Blackstaff" Arunsun, the Lord Mage of Waterdeep (and presumably certain other powerful mages of his acquaintance, such as his consort Laeral and



INFERNO

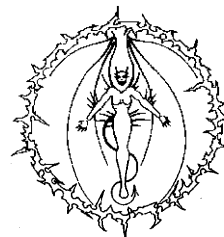
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perhaps others of the Chosen of Mystra) has the entire process somewhere in one of his hidden libraries. Ambitious adventurers should take note that dragons — after a long and increasingly impressive death-toll mounted alarmingly — long ago gave up any hope of getting the secrets of Ossavor from the Blackstaff.

What I have learned thus far is the end result of the process, and certain of its ingredients. The end result is practical immortality: it gives the dragon's sentience three bodies to inhabit (the unused two are in stasis, and typically hidden away in remote mountain caverns, buried under sand in the hearts of such vast deserts as the Plains of Purple Dust in Raurin, and so on), and allows the dragon to select the size and 'age' of these bodies. The dragon retains its magic resistance and spells regardless of the apparent age of its form, but its size, hit dice, breath weapon, and the like vary with the age chosen. All of these newly created bodies are vigorous and have the power of regeneration (3 hp per round). How the dragon's sentience can move from one body to another also remains a mystery as of this writing, but the written evidence suggests that this can be done as often as desired, and with ease.

The process itself has been the hardest thing to unearth. I suspect that dragons or their agents, and folk of the Cult of the Dragon, have set about stealing or destroying as many references to the Way as possible. I'm confident that it involves gathering many draconic components, including: the talon of a topaz dragon, a scale from a silver, some blood from a bronze, and so on. (Note: this confidence is Volo's, but Elminster did not correct this statement.)

Eldenser can be presumed to know (or to believe he knows) the entire Way, and to be pursuing the collection of components in a patient, almost leisurely manner. Certainly he has often influenced individuals who are wielding a blade he is part of to attack and slay dragons — and if they are successful, to sever certain of their body parts which vanish at the blade's touch (presumably teleported away by a magic launched by Eldenser, to some secret hiding place).

Eldenser's magic

The Lurker is thought to have learned and practiced many rare and strange spells. He has all of the spell roster and psionic abilities of an amethyst great

wyrm, but his precise mind-powers remain mysterious; Elminster believes that one of Eldenser's achievements is the ability to duplicate the effects of certain high-level spells (beyond his normal casting ability) as psionic effects, which he can unleash once per day. Apparently this is an exhausting process that involves hit-point loss.

Three of Eldenser's magics in particular are sought by other dragons (and by ambitious mages of Thay and the Cult of the Dragon), and these follow. (These spells are drawn from the books of Khelben "Blackstaff" Arunsun, who apparently received them from Eldenser long ago in trade for other magics).

Just Not There

(Abjuration)

Level: 5

Range: Touch

Components: V

Duration: 12 days

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

This spell affects Eldenser or a creature under the effects of a *steelsteal* spell (q.v.) who is touched by him. It affects both the blade Eldenser inhabits or is touching and about to enter and Eldenser himself. It has only one function: to hide him — or any trace of a dragon, intelligent entity, or anything out of the ordinary at all — from all "seeking" magics.

To all known detection, divination, and contact spells, Eldenser is "just not there," unless he desires to be found. This spell doesn't affect psionics per se, but it does foil minor psionic effects that are the equivalents of widely-known detection magics. A *just not there* spell has no effect on attacks, only on searching attempts. A spellcaster or psionically-gifted character who suspects that something sentient is within a given item or weapon, and who attacks it, suffers no changes in the chances of success — unless the attack attempt requires that the caster sees or makes contact with the being hidden in the blade.

Steelsteal

(Alteration)

Level: 5

Range: 0

Components: V

Duration: Special

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: The caster

Saving Throw: Special

This spell transforms the caster into a misty, wraithlike form that can drift about and enter a metal (or primarily metal) object, existing within it indefinitely. While inside the metal, the caster retains all normal senses (which function normally) but doesn't need to breathe, eat, drink, or sleep. Natural recovery of lost hit points continues, however, as does aging.

As a *steelsteal* spell takes effect, it drains 1d6+1 hp from the caster. It lasts until the caster speaks a certain phrase aloud. This ends the spell, strips the caster of another 1d4+1 hps, and forces him out of the metal item back into a wraithlike form.

This misty, intangible existence is AC 4, MV FI 8 (D), and can carry nothing solid. It lasts for 1d3 rounds before melting back into the caster's normal, solid form (unless additional magics have been cast that cause the failing *steelsteal* to place the caster into another form; in Eldenser's case, he remains wraithlike). Use of a *steelsteal* avoids any necessity on the caster's part for facing system shock survival rolls.

Bright and Deadly Ring

(Evocation)

Level: 6

Range: 60 yds. + 10 yds./level

Components: V

Duration: Special

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

This spectacular spell brings into being a glowing ring around the caster or a chosen focal point. Such a point must be something solid, like a door, throne, or plinth, but it need not be stationary — so a willing creature could be chosen. The magic fails, collapsing into fading, harmless motes, if cast around a hostile or unwilling creature.

The intangible *bright and deadly ring* gives off light equal to a *faerie fire* spell of blue-white hue. (One can see to read by it, and/or unlock doors and perform other exacting tasks.) The *ring* lasts indefinitely until triggered. It collapses harmlessly if the caster dies or leaves the plane of existence in which the spell was cast, but not if the caster merely sleeps, falls unconscious, or undertakes other spellcasting. It may be of any size, is unaffected by intervening solid objects or the limbs and movements of a focal point creature, and moves about with the focal item upon which it has been cast.

Once triggered (by the caster's silent act of will), a *bright ring* emits one pulse of magical energy for each level the caster possesses (or in the case of dragons, age category; for Eldenser, this is 12) on its first round of awakening, one fewer on the next (11 for Eldenser), and so on, until it can emit no more.

All of these emissions of the ring behave as *magic missiles*; they are glowing blue-white pulses of flying light that deal 1d4+1 hp damage when they strike and can't miss opponents the caster can see, within range, and on the same plane of existence.

Bright ring missiles strike silently but with bursts of light; they may swoop at multiple targets if the caster desires. Even if a *bright ring* is cast to appear around a living creature, the missiles remain under the caster's control — not that of the protected creature. The caster may choose to end the spell early by willing it into dissolution and may choose to strike with fewer missiles in a round than need be — but may not "hoard" unused missiles for subsequent rounds; the "one less" countdown continues regardless of actual performance. (Note that it is possible to allow no missiles to fly during a given round, or even for several rounds, without ending the magic.)

The caster may not hurl extra missiles in any round and may gain additional harmful power in only one way: if a hostile creature blunders or charges into contact with the *bright ring* itself, the caster can choose to let it pass through without suffering harm or may end the spell instantly and blast the victim with all of its raw unused magical energy. This blast causes damage equal to 1d12 hp per unused round remaining in the spell (not counting the round of contact).

If the charging creature was already the chosen target of *bright ring* missiles sent flying on the round of contact, those missiles still hit and cause their normal damage, in addition to any damage their target may suffer from a collapsing bright ring.

If multiple hostile creatures strike a *bright ring* at the same time (and its caster decides to let it collapse and harm them), divide its collapsing damage between them. Otherwise, the first being to come into contact with the ring suffers all of the damage. Any creature within range who desires to strike a *bright ring* can do so; it has no Armor Class.

Eldenser often uses this spell as a protective ward around his bearer and companions. It provides them with light

and is a ready line of defense for as long as necessary until activation (several nights, perhaps).

Eldenser's fate

Though his pursuit of Ossavitor's Way can fairly be described as leisurely and almost unconcerned, with a high value placed on enjoying the full range of experiences Faerûn has to offer a patient observer, it seems likely Eldenser will achieve the near-immortality of the Way. He has been working on it for so long and taking such care over the details that (in Elminster's estimation, at least) he's only a last grace note or crowning touch away from being able to enact the Way.

It's possible that Eldenser has achieved this state already and is simply reluctant to leave his present lifestyle. Perhaps he is trying to craft or discover magic that will enable him to inhabit blades and travel between them and his three new bodies as freely as he does presently between his old, original body and the various weapons of which he has been a part. It is certain that he's spent a lot of time in and around Candlekeep and the Herald's Holdfast in recent years — after having scoured both places centuries earlier for all references to the Way.

Against this rosy likelihood of success must be placed Eldenser's often dangerous lifestyle. More than most dragons, he places himself at risk often, and for extended periods of time. Only the gods can decide if ill fortune will find him before he enacts the Way — and that brings to mind Volo's last note about the Worm Who Hides In Blades: that there are many and persistent, but admittedly entirely unsubstantiated, rumors as to Eldenser being an ally or servant of this or that Faerûnian deity.

Elminster only smiled and shook his head when he read those lines, refusing to confirm or deny the truth of this. Instead, he pointed silently to Volo's very last words: "Bears watching. Keep an eye on this one — if possible."



Ed Greenwood is a Canadian writer who first appeared in the pages of DRAGON® Magazine in issue #30, back when it was "The Dragon." He's found the time to write more than a hundred articles for us since, and unleash his home campaign world, the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, on us all — but in all those years (though he's moved thrice) still hasn't found the time to clean up his room.



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Hidden Talents

An optional skills system for the DRAGONLANCE®: FIFTH AGE™ game

by William W. Connors

illustrated by Valerie A. Valusek

With the release of the DRAGONLANCE®: FIFTH AGE™ campaign setting, TSR, Inc. unveiled the SAGA™ rules system. Designed with an eye toward streamlined role-playing and story telling, it strives to capture the pacing and style of a novel in game terms.

To expand on the simple rules without adding unnecessary complexity, here is an easy-to-use skills system that reinforces the character-driven elements of the game. There are no complicated tables associated with any of these skills, no skill points to be spent or accumulated, and no limits to the expandability of the system. If a Narrator wants to add a new skill to his game, he can do so without much effort at all.

Starting skills

Skills are selected by players in the wake of the normal hero generation process. The number of skills that a hero begins with is equal to the number of cards in the player's starting hand. Thus, an adventurer (who holds a 4-card hand) has 4 skills and a champion (who holds a 5-card hand) has 5 skills.

Additional skills

As the hero adventures, he has the chance to acquire new talents and learn new skills. Immediately after the hero's starting skills are selected, the player should pick another skill and note it on the Additional Information block of his hero record sheet. The hero is now assumed to be training in that skill while

he is not adventuring. There is no actual game effect to this, but it can be worked into stories and otherwise add role-playing flavor to the campaign.

When the hero completes enough quests to increase his reputation, from adventurer to champion for example, he is assumed to have mastered the skill that he is training in. At that time, a new training skill is selected. When the hero again increases in reputation, he masters that skill, and so on.

Optional Rule: Dragons and Trump

It is recommended that Narrators adopt a house rule used during our playtests at TSR, one that we never actually incorporated into the SAGA rules system. This rule states simply that cards from the suit of dragons are never trump. Thus, if someone with the armorer skill plays the five of dragons, he loses his trump bonus and cannot turn over another card.

Using skills

The use of skills during play is very simple. Whenever a player wishes to attempt an action to which one of his skills pertains, the card he plays to resolve it is automatically trump.

The normal rules for trump cards apply. Thus, trump bonuses apply only to the actual card played, not to those turned over from the top of the deck.

In cases where a hero might have two skills that apply to an action, only the normal trump bonus applies. There is no such thing as a "double-trump." A card is either trump or not trump.

Skill descriptions

The remainder of this article comprises brief descriptions of the most common skills available to heroes and characters in the DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE game. This list is by no means exhaustive. Both Narrators and players should feel free to add to it.

Each entry begins with the name of the skill followed by a parenthetical prerequisite. While most skills have no prerequisite, some require the hero to know another skill before selecting them. For example, a hero cannot have the alchemist skill unless he has first mastered the art of the herbalist.

Alchemist (herbalist): An alchemist is a person who has studied the properties of various chemicals and elements. Given time, resources, and the proper equipment, an alchemist can make poisons, acids, and other dangerous chemicals.

Architect (scribe): Architects are able to design buildings and other structures. The length of time required depends upon size and complexity of the edifice.

Armorer (blacksmith): An armorer is a specially trained blacksmith who is skilled in the creation of armor and shields. Making armor is a time consuming task. For shields, three days are required per point of defense (thus, a buckler takes three days to make). Armor takes longer, requiring one week per point of defense (so chainmail takes 3 weeks to make).

Artisan (none): This is a very general skill that requires the player to select an area of expertise for his hero. Possible examples of artisans include painters, sculptors, poets, and musicians. Depending upon the choice, prerequisites might be required. For example, a poet should probably have the scribe talent.

Astrologer (scribe): An astrologer is familiar with the stars, their movements in the heavens, and the importance of such transits in the world of men. Use of this skill may allow the hero to get a glimpse of the future, but certainly is no replacement for divination magic.

Blacksmith (none): A blacksmith is skilled in creating common metal items like pots, pans, horseshoes, and tools. A skilled blacksmith can generally find employment anywhere he travels.

Boatsman (none): A boatsman is a freshwater mariner, skilled primarily in the handling of small craft and rafts. Boatsmen work the barges and rafts that ply the rivers of Ansalon as well as the canoes and rowboats that fish the lakes and ponds. This skill also applies to small craft carried on larger ocean-going vessels, like launches and dingies.

Bowyer (none): A bowyer is a talented individual who is skilled in the creation of straight bows (as opposed to crossbows) and the arrows that they fire. Fashioning a bow takes two days per point of damage that it inflicts. Thus, a great bow takes 16 days to make.

Brewer (none): A brewer is skilled at the making of beer, ale, and other such beverages. For the purposes of this game, such a person is also assumed to be a skilled vintner (or wine maker) and distiller (a maker of spirits).

Carpenter (none): A carpenter has the ability to work with wood in many ways. He is skilled with a hammer and saw but is also assumed to be a talented wood carver.

Cartographer (scribe): A cartographer is a maker of maps and, at least for the purposes of the game, other diagrams. This talent enables the hero both to create his own maps and decipher those of others.

Cartwright (carpenter): Cartwrights are highly trained carpenters who are able to build and repair wagons, carts, and other conveyances. This ability does not, however, mean that they can operate such vehicles — a groom is needed for that.

Clerk (none): Clerks are the mainstay of business and government. They are

skilled in basic math, know enough writing to get by, and are excellent at taking orders. A skilled clerk can run a store or office fairly well during the absence of the proprietor.

Clockmaker (none): Experts in working with intricate mechanisms, clockmakers are noted for their attention to detail and the complex devices that they make or repair.

Cook (none): There are as many different types of cook as there are kinds of food. In game terms, however, a cook is assumed to be proficient at just about any sort of food preparation, assuming a recipe is at hand.



Diplomat (scribe): As a skilled negotiator, diplomats can be very valuable when the heroes are called upon to settle disputes between two factions (or even within their own ranks). A trained diplomat can do anything from halting a war to patching up a failing marriage.

Engineer (scribe): Engineers are skilled in the design, construction, and repair of large machines, like windmills and catapults. Their talent can be invaluable to an army which must maintain siege engines and similar artillery.

Farmer (none): In game terms, farmers are assumed to be knowledgeable with all manner of crops and agriculture. They can tend fields, care for ailing crops, and otherwise oversee anything from a garden to a sprawling plantation.

Fisherman (boatsman or seaman): A fisherman is assumed to be skilled at all

manner of catching fish. They can use a line, a net, and even a spear. Fishermen know which spots, times of day, and other things are likely to produce the greatest harvest.

Gambling (none): A gambler is skilled at the playing of games of chance. He has a better chance than most to beat the house and may even depend upon his luck to make a living. A skilled gambler may be able to cheat and get away with it or spot others who are not playing fairly.

Gamesman (none): A gamesman is a master of chess, checkers, backgammon, and other games that emphasize skill over chance. A talented, but unscrupulous, gamesman can cheat with a minimal chance of being caught.

Groom (none): A groom is someone who has learned to care for horses and other such animals. In addition, a groom is assumed to be able to drive a team and operate a wagon or carriage.

Healer (herbalist): A healer has a limited knowledge of the medical arts which makes him more skilled at first aid than other characters. Whenever a healer plays a card for a First Aid action (see the combat section of the Book of the Fifth Age), that card is assumed to be turned.

Herbalist (none): An herbalist is someone with a knowledge of the medicinal uses of plants, spices, and herbs. This allows him to treat the victims of poisons, disease, and other such maladies. Successful treatment by an herbalist can halt (but not reverse) the loss of cards due to poisoning and infections (as described in the Bestiary section of the Book of the Fifth Age). The difficulty of the action should be based on the nature of the ailment and the resources available to the herbalist.

Historian (scribe): A historian knows much about the past that has been forgotten by others. In game terms, anyone selecting this skill should select one of Krynn's five ages as his area of expertise. Thus, a given historian might specialize in the Age of Starbirth or the Age of Despair.

Hosteler (valet): A hosteler is a skilled innkeeper who can make his guests feel comfortable and pampered. This skill is similar to that of the valet, but can be applied to many people at once.

Huntsman (none): A huntsman is skilled at the tracking and killing of game in the wilderness. In game terms, a huntsman is also skilled in the use of snares and other traps.

Jeweler (none): A jeweler is assumed to be skilled at cutting gems, fashioning adornments, and determining their worth. An honest jeweler can be a valuable friend and skilled merchant while a crooked one can be a fence or confidence man.

Lawyer (scribner): While there are many varieties of law, a hero with this skill is assumed to be familiar with all but the most esoteric ones. A good lawyer can help avoid trouble with the law, draft enforceable contracts, and otherwise make sure that everything the heroes do is on the up-and-up.

Mason (none): Masons are to stone what carpenters are to wood. A skilled mason can build or repair structures, roads, or otherwise work with stone. For game purposes, a mason can also be assumed to have a knowledge of quarrying and other related fields.

Mathematician (scribner): The science of mathematics is a difficult and demanding one. A talented mathematician can serve as an instructor, book keeper, or even a numerologist. In the latter case, the hero should be able to gain some basic information from his talent, but not nearly as much as he might with magical divination.

Merchant (clerk): A merchant is skilled in the appraising, purchasing, and selling of a wide variety of goods. In game terms, any card that a merchant plays when attempting an action using his wealth rating is assumed to be trump if it involves the buying or selling of something.

Miner (none): A miner is talented in digging new tunnels and exploring those that already exist. He is familiar with cave-ins, natural gas explosions, flooding, and other hazards of the underground world.

Navigator (scribner): A trained navigator is able to keep a true course over land or sea by use of maps, compasses, and careful study of the stars and their positions. A skilled navigator can almost always find employment on ocean-going vessels or with scouting expeditions into unexplored places.

Philosopher (scribner): A philosopher is a student of the human heart and a seeker of true enlightenment. In game terms, these people are often able to provide useful insights into the actions or thoughts of others.

Physician (healer): Physicians are skilled in the medical arts, including surgery, bleeding, and amputation. As a rule of thumb, a wounded person under

Master skills list

Skill	Prerequisite
Alchemist	Herbalist
Architect	Scribner
Armorer	Blacksmith
Artisan	none
Astrologer	Scribner
Blacksmith	none
Boatsman	none
Bowyer	none
Brewer	none
Carpenter	none
Cartographer	Scribner
Cartwright	Carpenter
Clerk	none
Clockmaker	none
Cook	none
Diplomat	none
Engineer	Scribner
Farmer	none
Fisherman	Boatsman
Gambler	none
Gamesman	none
Groom	none
Healer	Herbalist
Herbalist	none
Historian	Scribner
Hosteler	Valet
Huntsman	none
Jeweler	none
Lawyer	Scribner
Mason	none
Mathematician	Scribner
Merchant	Clerk
Navigator	Scribner
Philosopher	Scribner
Physician	Healer
Potter	none
Rancher	none
Scribner	none
Seaman	Boatsman
Shipwright	Carpenter
Tailor	none
Tanner	none
Valet	none

the care of a physician regains two lost cards every week instead of one. If the hero undertakes moderate activity, the normal action must be made to see if his health improves. Even a physician cannot heal someone who undertakes major activity.

Potter (none): A potter's knowledge includes not only the making of simple clay vessels, but also the proper operation of a kiln and the manufacture of porcelain or ceramics. If combined with skill as an artisan, the work of a potter can be nothing short of a masterpiece.

Rancher (none): A rancher is someone who oversees the raising of cattle, sheep, and other domesticated animals. In addition, a rancher is skilled at slaughtering animals for market.

Scribner (none): Most DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE heroes and characters are assumed to be functionally literate. In order to pursue higher education, and qualify for many of the more advanced skills, a hero must be a trained scribner. Those with this talent are able to write quickly and legibly, coherently expressing his ideas. Any card played for an attempt to write detailed instructions, understand complex texts, or otherwise use higher level reading and writing skills is assumed to be trump for a trained scribner.

Seaman (boatsman): Seamen work the great craft that travel the oceans of Ansalon. They are skilled in all aspects of seafaring, including the tying of complex knots, the mending of sails, and the handling of cargo.

Shipwright (carpenter): A shipwright is a specially trained carpenter whose talent allows him to build or repair boats and ships. Work is always available for these folk in harbor towns or on ocean going vessels.

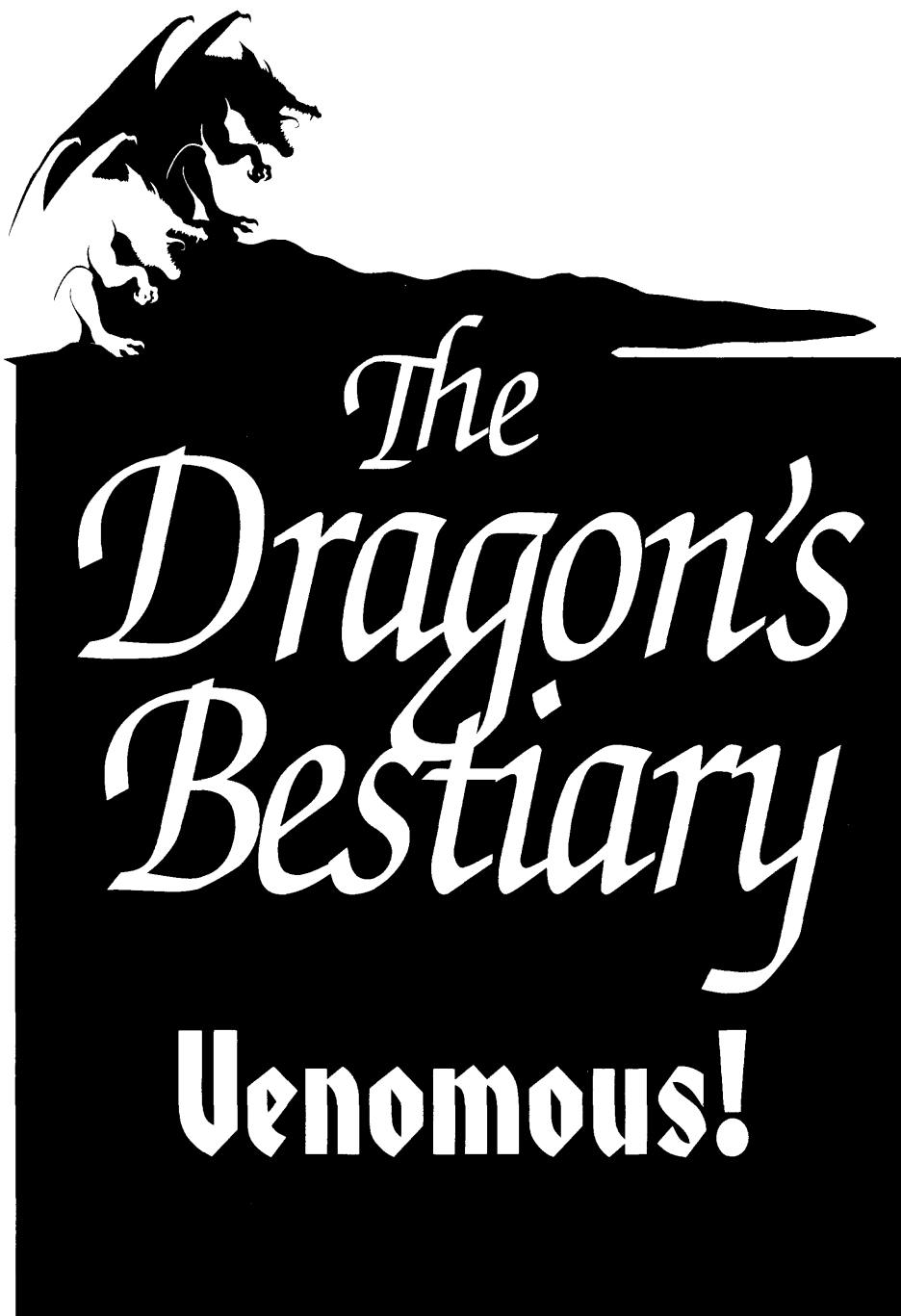
Tailor (none): A skilled tailor's knowledge of needle and thread allows him to craft or repair any manner of clothing or fabric. Like blacksmiths, these folk can almost always find employment.

Tanner (none): This skill allows a person to make and work leather. It includes the skinning of animals, the act of tanning itself, and the crafting of goods from the resulting leather.

Valet (none): A valet is a highly trained servant charged with making his master's life as comfortable as possible. A hero with this skill can become the steward of another hero provided that his would-be master agrees and has a wealth score of at least 6 (that is, a social standing of "gentry").



William W. Connors (Bats R/Throws R/Infld) has been with TSR since October of 1989. He was the co-designer of the DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE role-playing game and creator of the SAGA rules system. His current projects are all meager attempts to while away the winter until baseball season starts again in the spring.



The Dragon's Bestiary

Venomous!

by Kevin Melka

illustrated by Valerie A. Valusek

Table 51a: New poison types

Class	Type	Method	Onset	Strength
Q	Neurotoxin	Injected	1-6 minutes ²	Death/Paralysis ³
R	Hemotoxin	Injected	1-4 minutes	Death/0 ⁴
S	Cardiotoxin	Injected	1-4 minutes	Death/Debilitative ⁵
T	Tetrodotoxin	Contact	1-4 minutes ²	Death/0

1. A combination of these venom types incur a cumulative saving throw penalty of -1 to -2.
2. Symptoms such as swelling, dizziness, and numbness of the affected area occurs within one round.
3. An additional saving throw vs. poison is required to avoid permanent nerve damage (loss of 1-3 points from a random ability score).
4. Unless *neutralize poison* spell is applied, another saving throw vs. poison is required in 1d4 hours to avoid death, since the venom remains in the victim's system.
5. Unless *neutralize poison* is applied, additional saving throws vs. poison are required when the victim is excessively active for the next 1-4 days. Failure results in death from heart arrest.

Many reptiles of the jungle are as dangerous as they are exotic. Standard entries in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*™ tome of poisonous snakes, lizards, and amphibians do not reflect the true nature of these real-world creatures. In most cases, death caused by the venom of poisonous reptiles can be a long and painful process, with terrible side effects for those fortunate enough to survive.

The venom of the most lethal reptiles falls into one or more of the following categories: neurotoxic poison, hemotoxic poison, cardiotoxic poison, and tetrodotoxic poison. Neurotoxins affect the nervous system, hemotoxins alter the flow of blood, cardiotoxins inhibit the functioning of the heart, and tetrodotoxins hinder various bodily functions. Two different neurotoxins may have different specific results, but only these general categories are used for game effects.

Only reptiles indigenous to jungle and temperate regions are presented here, though there are many other venomous reptiles in the world. While those described on the following pages have unique poison effects, DMs can create their own new venomous creatures using the new Table 51 a (an appendix to Table 51: Poison Strength, in Chapter Nine of the *DUNGEON MASTER*® Guide).



Snake, poisonous

	Bushmaster	Fer-De-Lance	Gaboon
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Tropical Forest	Temperate/Tropical Forests	Temperate/Tropical Forests
FREQUENCY:	Rare	Uncommon	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary	Solitary	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Nocturnal	Nocturnal	Nocturnal
DIET:	Carnivorous	Carnivorous	Carnivorous
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)	Animal (1)	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	N	N	N
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1	1	1
ARMOR CLASS:	5	6	5
MOVEMENT:	12	9	9
HIT DICE:	3+3	3+3	4
THACO:	19	17	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1	1	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2-5 (1d4+1)	1-3	2-7 (1d6+1)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Poison, surprise	Poison	Poison, ignore armor
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil	Nil	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	M-L (6-12' long)	M (5-6' long)	M-L (6-9' long)
MORALE:	Average (9)	Average (11)	Average (10)
XP VALUE:	420	420	650

Bushmaster (*Lachesis mutus*)

The bushmaster is a deadly, powerful viper sometimes mistaken for a member of the boa constrictor family. The average bushmaster reaches a slender 12' long, making it the longest member of the viper family. Rare individual bushmasters have been known to grow larger.

The bushmaster has pronounced dark, diamond-shaped reddish-brown blotches on a gray or brown background. The tail of the bushmaster ends in horny spikes, much like the tail of a rattlesnake, though without the characteristic rattle.

Combat: The bushmaster strikes quickly and without warning, imposing a -4 to surprise checks and +4 to all initiative rolls. The snake has a reach of nearly half its body length (45%), allowing it to strike victims that may believe themselves to be out of reach. Because of the viper's extremely long fangs and the ability to deliver massive doses of venom, encounters with it are often fatal. Victims of the bite must immediately save vs. poison at -2, and even those that make their save suffer ill effects. The venom of the bushmaster is hemotoxic, attacking body tissues and the blood of the victim. Victims failing their saving throws experience intense pain around the bite, followed by numbness in the area, swelling, and severe discoloration. For 10-30 minutes after the bite, the victim drifts in and out of consciousness, feverish and vomiting when conscious. Death resulting from a loss of blood pressure occurs within one hour.

Should a victim be lucky enough to make an initial save vs. poison, he is not safe yet. Over a

period of 1-4 hours, the victim suffers from weakness, fainting, sweating, thirst, high fever, and terrible nausea. After this period, the victim must make a second saving throw with no penalty to survive the more deadly symptoms of the venom. If the saving throw succeeds, the victim's fever breaks and he is safe. If not, death (as outlined above) occurs in one hour.

Habitat: The bushmaster is found in remote mountainous jungle regions. These nocturnal vipers are extremely bold and dangerous, often stalking anyone intruding into their territory, regardless of size. The bushmaster never appears in broad daylight.

Ecology: The bushmaster is an egg-laying viper. It uses heat-sensitive pits on the sides of its head rather than eyes to detect prey. The venom glands of the bushmaster are exceedingly large, and it is possible to extract its venom for other uses. However, the nasty disposition of the bushmaster makes this a difficult task at best.

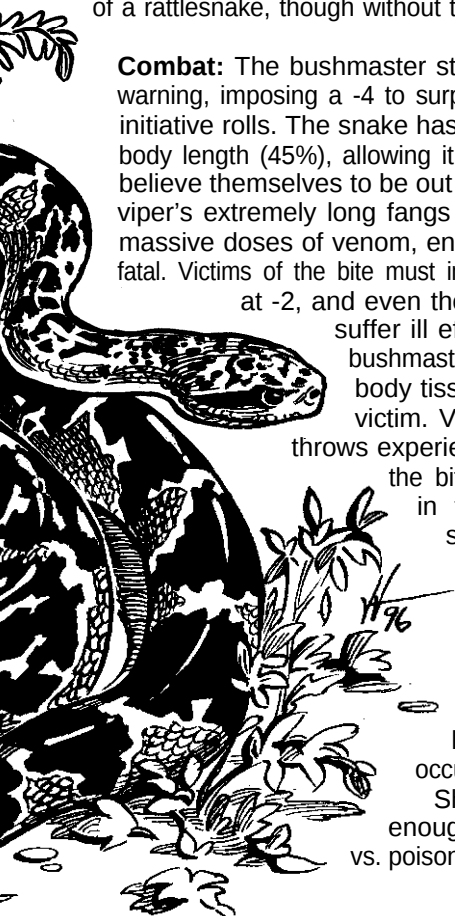
The bushmaster feeds on small rodents and can often be found in the abandoned burrows of small mammals.

Fer-De-Lance (*Bothrops asper*)

Often called the "spearhead" viper, the fer-de-lance is a particularly aggressive pit viper and a formidable adversary. The fer-de-lance goes by many other names, depending on the locale, such as "yellow beard" (because of a yellow belly) and "velvet viper."

The fer-de-lance can grow to a length of 8', though this occurs rarely. More often they range between 6' and 7' and are often thicker than a man's arm. The fer-de-lance has gray-olive or gray-green colors, with diamond-shaped blotches that mark it as a viper.

Combat: When initially encountered, the fer-de-lance raises its head and coils itself in preparation, then attacks with a venomous bite. The poison of the fer-de-lance is both neurotoxic and hemotoxic, attacking both the nervous system and destroying red blood cells. The bite itself is not overly painful, but it soon causes localized bleeding, intense pain, and



Bushmaster



swelling around the wound. Victims of the fer-de-lance's bite must make an immediate saving throw vs. poison at -2 to determine how much venom has actually been injected. The more venom, the more deadly the poison's effects.

If the saving throw is failed, the bitten area painfully swells to twice its normal size in 1-4 minutes. The venom inhibits the clotting of blood, and bleeding occurs from the internal organs, gums, nose, mouth, eyes, ears, and other locations — anywhere except the bite itself, which is usually too swollen to bleed freely. Hemorrhaging soon follows, and the victim progresses quickly into muscular and nervous system shock, followed by respiratory distress, paralysis, and death. While death occurs within 10-20 minutes of the bite, the victim can do nothing after the first few minutes due to bleeding and intense pain.

If the victim rolls a successful saving throw, he still suffers from wracking pain for one hour. The bitten appendage still swells to excess and cannot be used for 1-4 days afterward or until magical healing is applied. If magical aid is not applied, there is also a chance (an additional save required) that the victim contracts tetanus in the bitten limb, possibly requiring its eventual amputation.

Another dangerous aspect of the fer-de-lance's venom is that cutting or sucking the snake bite is extremely dangerous. The poison can enter another person's bloodstream if swallowed or through small cuts or abrasions.

Habitat: The fer-de-lance is found on the floor of deep and light jungles. Like all pit vipers, they hunt prey with the aid of heat-sensing organs on either side of their head and hollow fangs that inject large amounts of venom.

Ecology: The fer-de-lance is a prolific breeder, giving birth to as many as 70 live young at any one time. The venom of a young fer-de-lance is more potent than that of a full grown adult (apply an additional -1 to the saving throw). The fer-de-lance's diet consists of small rodents, which may cause it to be drawn to jungle villages where garbage attracts its favorite food.

Gaboon (*bitis gabonica*)

Not only is the gaboon one of the largest (by weight) vipers, it has the largest fangs of any snake in the world — up to 2" long. While most snakes move in an S-curve movement, the weight of the gaboon causes it to use ribs movements to carry it forward; hence, they crawl in a straight line.

Colored like the jungle in varying shades of brown, cream, and purple, the gaboon viper blends in perfectly with the leaf-covered jungle floor. Their markings make them virtually disappear in the different shades of the jungle foliage.

Combat: The gaboon is a puff adder. It can inflate its body to nearly twice its normal size when threatened. Unlike creatures who use such a tactic to avoid combat, this viper can deliver nearly instantaneous death with its venom. The gaboon viper's long fangs can bite through a limb, but in most cases they serve to inject venom deeper into the victim's body. These fangs also allow the gaboon to ignore leather, padded leather, or hide armor. The snake's concealing coloration also imposes a -1 penalty to surprise rolls when encountered in the wild.

The venom of the gaboon viper is both neurotoxic and hemotoxic, affecting the nervous and circulatory systems. The poison saving throw vs. the bite of this snake is made at a -2 penalty, or a -4 penalty if the attack roll is a natural 20, indicating an extremely deep bite.

If the saving throw is failed, the bite turns the victim's skin red-violet around the wound as the long fangs deliver a dose of poison deep into tissue full of blood vessels. Swelling appears all over the body, as well as at the site of the wound. This is accompanied by immediate cold sweating, internal bleeding, depressed heart action, and difficulty breathing. The victim is immobilized by the venom after one round, and death occurs 1-6 rounds after.

Even if the victim makes his saving throw, tissue death and gangrenous infection may be extensive around the bite and the limb may need to be amputated. A second saving throw vs. poison with the same penalty as the first is required to avoid this effect. Regardless, a surviving victim must rest 24 hours before being able to resume normal activities. Victims of gaboon bites who know of the snake's virulent poison have been known to amputate their limbs immediately rather than risk death.

Habitat: Gaboons are nocturnal and can be found in any jungle environment, preferring ground to tree activity.

Ecology: Gaboons are egg-laying vipers, whose females stay with the eggs until they hatch. Their heat-sensing pits aid them in the hunting of small mammals, and gaboons have been known to eat small monkeys or even young antelope.

Snake, poisonous

	Black Mamba	Boomslang	Cobra
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Temperate/Tropical Forests	Tropical Savannah	Varies
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon	Rare	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary	Solitary	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any	Diurnal	Nocturnal
DIET:	Carnivorous	Carnivorous	Carnivorous
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)	Animal (1)	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	N	N	N
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1	1	1
ARMOR CLASS:	6	4	5
MOVEMENT:	18/30	12	12
HIT DICE:	5	2	3+3
THACO:	15	17	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2	1	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d4+1/1d4+1	1-2	1-4
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Poison	Poison	Poison
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil	Nil	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	L (8-14' long)	S-M (3-6' long)	M (5-7' long)
MORALE:	Average (12)	Average (9)	Average (9)
XP VALUE:	650	270	420
			975 (King Cobra)

Black Mamba (*dendroaspis polylepis*)

The black mamba is one of the largest poisonous snakes known, reaching lengths of up to 14'; even young black mambas are larger than most full grown vipers. At any age the black mamba is probably the most aggressive, and feared, snake of the jungle.

This snake is actually not black, but a combination of dark grays and browns that make it appear black when viewed in the shade of jungle trees. Its scales are smooth and are arranged in diagonal rows. Young black mambas are dark green and are often mistaken for various non-poisonous snakes rather than members of this deadly family.

Combat: The black mamba is highly aggressive, attacking repeatedly in a series of lightning-fast bites, gaining a +2 to initiative rolls. It also strikes up to a distance of 40% of its body length, giving it an average reach of 5" or more. The mamba can also raise itself straight up to a height of nearly half its length, as well as slither across the ground with its head 2' from the ground.

The initial bite of the black mamba requires a saving throw vs. poison, with each additional bite receiving a cumulative -1 penalty. This directly reflects the amount of venom introduced into a victim's system (see below). The venom of the black mamba is neurotoxic and hemotoxic, affecting the circulation of the blood through the body by attacking the nervous system.

If the save is missed, a high concentration of venom has been introduced into the victim's bloodstream. Such a concentration acts as a coagulant, clotting the blood. This plays havoc with the victim's circulatory system, but death from respiratory failure usually occurs before the victim goes into circulatory shock. There is no initial pain or swelling after a bite, but there is profuse salivation and dizziness followed by restlessness and psychological disturbances. Then there is difficulty breathing, followed by a drop in blood pressure, coma, and then death from respiratory failure. This occurs over a 20 minute span; however, the victim's lack of regular breathing and dizziness makes him incapable of actions after the first 1-6 minutes.

A successful saving throw indicates that a low concentration of venom has been introduced. This has the opposite affect on the victim, causing the venom to act as an anti-coagulant, thinning the blood. This causes wounds on a victim to continue to bleed after several minutes. After a few minutes this also affects wounds other than the snakebite. For 4-5 turns following a successful save all wounds on the victim bleed a number of points equal to half the original damage for 2-8 rounds before the blood finally clots.

Habitat: The black mamba is an arboreal (tree dwelling) snake, though it can be found on the jungle floor as well as in small burrows or decaying trees. It always lives in the thicker portions of the low-lying jungle (below 4,000') where food is abundant. On open ground the mamba's movement increases to 30.

Ecology: The black mamba feeds on tree dwelling birds, lizards, and frogs. They are extremely territorial, more often attacking from anger than from hunger. The mamba hunts by sight, and one can sometimes remain perfectly still to avoid its attention.

Boomslang (*dispholidus typus*)

Though the boomslang is small and relatively docile, its bite is not only fatal but deals a gruesome death. This species is difficult to identify and is often mistaken for various other types of non-poisonous snakes.

The adult boomslang ranges from 3' to 6' long, varying color from brown to bright green with smooth narrow scales and a thin build. Unlike other poisonous snakes, the boomslang has rows of grooved teeth instead of fangs. However, it only takes one bite to deliver its lethal poison.

Combat: The boomslang would rather flee than confront something not a part of its normal diet. If cornered, it inflates its neck to twice its normal size. If this doesn't frighten off the opponent, the snake strikes.



The boomslang is an opisthoglyph, or rear-fanged snake, and has its venomous teeth at the back of its mouth. Though not the most effective way to deal poison, it only takes a small amount to cause death. Drop for drop the venom of this snake is more toxic than a cobra or a viper. Though the venom of the boomslang appears to be hemotoxic, the actual method in which it brings about a victim's death is not fully understood.

Saving throws vs. the venom of the boomslang are at a -3 penalty. If the saving throw is successful, the rear teeth of the boomslang failed to poison the victim.

The most outstanding characteristic of the boomslangs poisonous bite is the illusion of complete recovery, followed by a sudden relapse and death. If the saving throw is failed, the bite produces swelling and discoloration, and causes open wounds across the body to instantly clot. About a half hour afterwards there is dizziness followed by severe headaches, nausea, vomiting, and acute abdominal pain. One turn after that symptoms disappear for 1-8 hours as the venom spreads throughout the body. The original clotting then reverses itself and there is profuse bleeding from open cuts (1-4 hp damage from all banded wounds), and then from all body openings — mouth, eyes, ears, etc. At this point, the victim suffers from a severe drop in blood pressure, and death follows within moments.

Habitat: The boomslang is found in temperate savannahs, light jungles, and areas with plentiful trees. They are not found in deep rain forest jungles or near desert environments. In its arboreal habitat (though its also found on the ground as well) it has the ability to disappear quickly into the trees at its normal movement rate.

Ecology: Active only during the day, the boomslang feeds on birds and their eggs, along with an occasional frog or chameleon.

Cobra (genus *naja*)

One of the most famous poisonous snakes, the cobra is often the center of superstition in various primitive cultures. The word cobra actually means "serpent" in more than one different language.

There are several sub-species of cobras, though most have the expandable hood that is commonly associated with the species. Arboreal cobras tend to be different shades of green and brown, while others range from a pinkish-tan to black. Their heads are broad and flat, and several species have decorative formations on the scales of their hoods.

Combat: Cobras can either spit (actually squirt) or bite to use their venom. Only 40% of cobras can actually spit their venom, and this should be determined prior to any encounter. In either case, the venom is extremely toxic (one gram of dehydrated cobra venom can kill 165 people). The attack of a cobra is always preceded by a fearful hiss.

Cobras that spit their venom can do so from up to 7' away, aiming specifically for the eyes. A saving throw vs. paralyzation is required to see if the victim is able to turn their head away in time to avoid the venom. If the save is missed, the venom enters the eyes and begins to painfully destroy eye tissue like an acid. Blindness occurs in 2-5 rounds unless the eyes are irrigated with water or some other liquid.

Victims bitten by a cobra must make a saving throw vs. poison with a -2 penalty. To be fully affected by a cobra's venom, the snake must have its teeth firmly implanted in the victim's flesh and its jaws firmly pressed together. Hence, if the save is successful it means the snake only dealt a glancing blow that is not considered deadly.

If the saving throw is missed the victim instantly begins to feel pain radiating from the bite, along with swelling and numbness. One round later there is progressive paralysis of the facial muscles, tongue, and larynx. Within 2-3 rounds the eyes cease movement and begin to drop, and the victim can only speak with great difficulty. Within five rounds the muscles of the victim become paralyzed, from which they ultimately die of asphyxiation accompanied by violent vomiting. Death occurs in 2d4+2 minutes depending on the severity of the bite.

Habitat: Cobras are found in a variety of tropical environments depending on sub-species. Those that are considered to be spitting cobras are never arboreal, preferring tall savannahs and light jungles.

Ecology: Cobras are egg-laying snakes that are active only at night. They feed on small rodents, reptiles, and insects, and have been known to go for several months without food or water. Contrary to popular belief, cobras cannot be "hypnotized" by music. Those that are used in this manner usually have their fangs removed.

King Cobra

This rare variation on the cobra reaches a length of 18' and dwells exclusively on the ground. These cobras deliver greater amounts of venom with effects detailed above, but with a saving throw penalty of -4 and with all onset time halved. They are 6 HD creatures and their bite delivers 1-8 hp damage.

Lizard, poisonous

	Gila Monster	Rough-skinned Newt
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Temperate Forest/ Savannahs	Temperate Savannahs
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Nocturnal	Diurnal
DIET:	Carnivorous	Carnivorous
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	N	N
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1	1-2
ARMOR CLASS:	8 day/4 night	7
MOVEMENT:	6 day/9 night	3
HIT DICE:	2+3	1-1 (1-2 hps)
THAC0:	19	20
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2-7 (1d6+1)	Nil
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Poison, latching bite	Poison
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	S (2-3" long)	T (2-4" long)
MORALE:	Average (9)	Average (9)
XP VALUE:	270	65

Gila Monster (*heloderma suspectum*)

One of the few poisonous lizards, the gila monster is a slow, sluggish creature with a terrible, painful bite. Though small in stature, the gila monster is incredibly strong for its size.

This lizard has a massive head, tiny legs, and a short, stout tail. It has brightly colored, bead-like scales that form gaudy patterns across its body. The gila's scales do not overlap like those of a snake, and are rough in texture.

Combat: The jaws of the gila monster are extremely strong, and it can hold its tight grip for up to 15 minutes. An Open Doors roll is needed to remove the creature — or its death. The gila monster has 35 poisonous teeth that it uses to introduce lethal doses of venom. The teeth are not hollow, but grooved. Venom flows from sacks in the mouth, down the grooves, and into the victim.

The longer the gila monster is attached, the more chance there is for a victim to become poisoned. Following an initial saving throw vs. poison a penalty of -1 is applied for every round the gila monster remains attached, saving each round as more venom is introduced. The poison of the gila monster is hemotoxic, elevating the victim's blood pressure.

Failing a saving throw means the venom has entered the bloodstream, causing extreme pain followed by sweating, vomiting swelling, and an unbearable ringing in the ears. Symptoms become gradually worse until death in 1-2 turns.

Habitat: The gila monster is found in temperate zones ranging from savannahs to light jungle regions. This creature is shy by nature, and does not attack humanoid creatures unless provoked. They seek shelter under rocks or in small burrows, which it often takes over from other animals.

Ecology: Gila monsters are nocturnal and very sluggish during the day. They feed on birds, eggs, and small mammals. The gila monster can go for months without food, living on fat stored in its tail.



Rough-Skinned Newt (*taricha granulosa*)

This newt is often mistaken for a small lizard, salamander, or other non-dangerous creature. The rough-skinned newt has warty skin, four clawless toes, and a tail that is longer than its body.

Combat: The rough-skinned newt is non-aggressive to all but its natural prey, and its small teeth could barely scratch a normal human's skin. What makes the newt dangerous is its touch. The creature's embryos, skin, and eggs contain a powerful poison. This poison is tetrodotoxic, a contact poison that acts on the nervous system of the victim to prevent nerve cell functions. The poison is a milky substance secreted in the tail region. One newt contains enough poison to kill a grown man unless he makes a saving throw vs. poison.

Failing a save against the newts poison causes numbness and weakness throughout the body within 1-4 rounds, incapacitating the victim. Unconsciousness occurs 1-2 rounds later, with death occurring in 1-4 turns. There is no known natural antidote to this poison (making the herbalism proficiency useless against it); it is curable only by magic.

Habitat: Males prefer wooded areas, while females remain near the water, where they lay their eggs.

Ecology: Like many amphibians this newt can regenerate amputated parts such as a tail, leg, or even portions of their head. They feed on worms, slugs, snails, insects, and frogs. Unlike other newts, the females lay only one egg at a time, rather than large masses.

Amphibian, poisonous

	Frogs	Neotropical Toad
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Tropical Forest	Temperate/ Tropical Forests
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon	Common
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any	Any
DIET:	Carnivore	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	N	N
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1	1-2
ARMOR CLASS:	8	8
MOVEMENT:	3, hop 3	3, hop 3
HIT DICE:	1-1 (1-2 hps)	1
THACO:	20	20
NO. OF ATTACKS:	Nil	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	Nil	Nil
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Poison	Poison
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil	Nil
SIZE:	T (1-2" long)	T-S (3-9" long)
MORALE:	Average (10)	Average (8)
XP VALUE:	65	120

Poisonous Frogs (physalaemus)

Though there are several sub-species of poisonous frogs, all are brightly colored with vivid streaks of pink, yellow, green, red, or orange. The brilliant colors are usually a warning sign that the secretions of the frog are fatal. There is no known natural cure for this venom.

Combat: Frogs pass on their poison to others through touch, most likely someone steps on one with bare feet or picks one up because it looks "pretty." Its poison glands are found on either side of its head, and when the frog feels threatened it secretes a creamy substance from its skin.

Anyone touching a poisonous frog must make a saving throw vs. poison for every round they remain in contact with the creature. If there is an open wound in the general area there is a cumulative penalty of -2. The venom of poisonous frogs is both cardiotoxic and neurotoxic, containing a variety of chemicals that affect the nervous system in different ways. If a saving throw is successful, it means the poison was not absorbed into the victim's system that round.

Failing the poison save means the toxin has been absorbed into the bloodstream in some measure. If the poison was not introduced into an open wound (such as a cut on the hand or the tip of a dart), the victim suffers from nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and inflammation of the area. If introduced into the bloodstream the toxin causes instant paralysis, severe convulsions, and death in 1-4 rounds.

Habitat: Poisonous frogs are only found in tropical environments where water is plentiful. Male frogs scent mark their territories in an effort to attract females, and "chirp" loudly when their territory is threatened by other frogs.

Ecology: Tadpoles are born in a pool of water inside a bromeliad plant. They then wiggle onto the back of their father, who carries them to deeper water, where they are left to fend for themselves. The venom of the poisonous frog can be extracted by roasting it over a fire, causing the poison to flow out of the glands as the skin contracts.



Neotropical Toad (genus bufo)

Also known as the giant or aga toad, neotropical toads are characterized by horizontal pupils and enlarged poison glands located behind the eyes. They measure 6-8" long and can weigh up to 1 lb., while a marine sub-species can grow up to 9" and weigh 5 lbs.

Combat: Like poisonous frogs, neotropical toads secrete a venom when irritated or threatened. The venom of this toad is cardiotoxic, disrupting normal heart rhythms if ingested or introduced in the blood stream. If simply touched, the victim suffers from stinging, burning, and numbness in the exposed area for 1-6 hours. If this is a hand, nothing can be held for that period of time due to irritation.

A poisoned victim must make a saving throw for each round of contact with the toad, with a -2 penalty if the poison is introduced into an open wound, swallowed, or delivered via an envenomed weapon. If this saving throw is failed, the victim suffers from tightness in the chest, convulsions, salivation, and seizures, followed by death in 1-4 minutes. A successful save indicates only irritation as outlined above.

Habitat: Neotropical toads can be found in most temperate environments from deserts to jungles. They live in areas where insects, the toads' only source of food, are plentiful.

Ecology: The neotropical toad can be helpful to farmers, feeding on crop-destroying insects. When mating there is fierce competition for females, who may have to contend with up to 12 suitors at one time.

1997
TSR PRODUCT
LINE
Preview

*TSR starts the new year
with an advance look at our 1997 products!*



Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

HOT PICKS

Wizard's Spell Compendium Volume 2

Accessory
TSR 2168
ISBN 0-7869-0664-2
On Sale in April

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ISBN 0-7869-0686-3
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TOMES™ Deluxe Adventure
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ISBN 0-7869-0732-0
On Sale in August

CD-ROM Supplemental Rules

Rules Supplement
TSR 2176
ISBN 0-7869-0793-2
On Sale in September

Wizard's Spell Compendium, Volume 3

Accessory
TSR 2175
ISBN 0-7869-0791-6
On Sale in January 1998



For over 20 years, game players have enjoyed the adventure and excitement of role playing in the worlds of the **Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®** Game. Inspired by myths and legends from around the world, the AD&D® game continues to set the standard by which all other role playing games are judged. As players portray mighty heroes battling against evil in all its forms, they learn to work with other players in pursuit of a common objective, and enjoy the camaraderie and fun that comes with any successful team effort.

In 1997, AD&D takes to the high seas to test players' seafaring skills on the waterways of distant realms. A new rules supplement, *Of Ships and the Sea*, provides everything players need to go offshore with an AD&D campaign. The **MONSTROUS ARCANUM™** series follows suit with its second series of products, starting with *The Sea Devils* accessory, which documents the sinister world of the loathsome fish-men known as the sahuagin. Three **MONSTROUS ARCANUM** adventures will draw players into a horrific sahuagin plot to overrun the coastal realms.

1997 promises great things for landlubbers as well, with new additions to two incredible rules supplements. Two new volumes of the **Wizard's Spell Compendium** supply a complete listing of every official wizard spell for the AD&D Game, with material from all relevant rulebooks, **DRAGON®** Magazine, **POCHEDRON®** Newszine, and more. This year also features the newest CD-ROM rules supplement, **Supplemental Rules**. This newest CD-ROM has over 2,500 pages of material compiled from 20 different volumes, plus a NPC generator, a castle builder, a dungeon builder, and other accessories to make gaming even easier.

NEW RELEASES

Title	TSR Stock	ISBN	On Sale in
<i>The Sea Devils</i> MONSTROUS ARCANUM™ Accessory	9539	0-7869-0643-X	February
<i>Tale of the Comet</i> FANTASTIC ADVENTURES™ Novel	8041	0-7869-0654-5	February
<i>Tale of the Comet</i> Campaign Expansion	1143	0-7869-0653-7	March
<i>Evil Tide</i> MONSTROUS ARCANUM™ Adventure	9542	0-7869-0678-2	May
<i>Knorrman Steel and Charont Bone</i> FANTASTIC ADVENTURES™ Novel	8254	0-7869-0686-3	May
<i>Jakandar: Island of War!</i> Campaign Expansion	9501	0-7869-0371-6	June
<i>College of Wizardry</i> Accessory	9549	0-7869-0707-7	June
<i>From the Dragon's Mouth</i> Novel	8258	0-7869-0804-2	June
<i>Character Generation Dice</i> Accessory	1155	0-7869-0511-5	June
<i>Of Ships and the Sea</i> Rules Supplement	2170	0-7869-0706-1	July
<i>A Thief in the Tomb of Horrors</i> Hardcover Novel	8042	0-7869-0674-X	July
<i>Night of the Shark</i> MONSTROUS ARCANUM™ Adventure	9550	0-7869-0718-5	August
<i>Sea of Blood</i> MONSTROUS ARCANUM™ Adventure	9560	0-7869-0772-X	December
<i>MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM®</i> Annual, Volume 4 Accessory	2173	0-7869-0783-5	December

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Powers & Pantheons

Accessory
TSR 9513
ISBN 0-7869-0657-X
On Sale in April

Lands of Intrigue

Campaign Expansion
TSR 1159
ISBN 0-7869-0697-9
On Sale in June

Cormyr: A Novel

Novel
TSR 8572P
ISBN 0-7869-0710-X
On Sale in June

Cult of the Dragon

Accessory
TSR 9547
ISBN 0-7869-0709-6
On Sale in August

Cormanthyr: Empire of Elves

ARCADE AGE™
Campaign Expansion
TSR 1165
ISBN 0-7869-0761-4
On Sale in October

Crucible: The Trial of Cyric the Mad

Novel, Avatar 5
TSR 8577
ISBN 0-7869-0724-X
On Sale in October



The FORGOTTEN REALMS® is the largest active world in the AD&D® Game. Classic swords and sorcery role playing is at its finest in the Realms, where high magic and high adventure combine to create the richest and most widely varied campaign setting in gaming today. Heroes adventuring in the Realms have the unique possibility of meeting some of the most legendary characters in all of fantasy: the dark elf Drizzt Do'Urden, the mischievous traveler and scribe Volo, and of course the great mage Elminster.

In 1997, the Realms continue to grow in rich diversity as new regions become open to adventurers. Due west of the Sea of Fallen Stars, and south of Waterdeep, the kingdoms of Amn and Tethyr are primary areas on the map of Faerûn, as significant as Cormyr, the Dalelands, and other key adventuring areas. The *Lands of Intrigue* campaign expansion details the volatile intrigue that will greet heroes who travel to this area of the Sword Coast. *Cormanthyr: Empire of Elves* takes players back to the majestic elven kingdom which prospered in the forest of the Dalelands during the Arcane Age.

But heroes need not travel far to find new mysteries! The *Cult of the Dragon* accessory details the twisted agenda of the dragon undead's society of servants. The *Villains' Lorebook* gives histories, game statistics, and personality notes on every major villain to ever terrorize the Realms!

And King Azoun IV's reign hangs in the balance as a nation's future is determined in *Cormyr: A Novel*. In the campaign world of the FORGOTTEN REALMS, adventure awaits!

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Title	TSR Stock	ISBN	On Sale in
<i>Realms of the Arcane</i> Anthology	8574	0-7869-0647-2	January
<i>Four from Cormyr</i> Adventure	9531	0-7869-0646-4	February
<i>Finder's Bane</i> Novel, Lost Gods 1	8576	0-7869-0658-8	February
<i>Elminster in Myth Drannor</i> Hardcover Novel	8575	0-7869-0661-8	February
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<i>Tangled Webs</i> Novel	8557P	0-7869-0820-3	April
<i>Prayers From the Faithful</i> Accessory	9545	0-7869-0682-0	May
<i>The Simbul's Gift</i> Novel	8581	0-7869-0763-0	May
<i>Evermeet: A Novel</i>	8578	0-7869-0713-4	June
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<i>Shores of Dusk</i> Hardcover Novel	8580	0-7869-0741-X	August
<i>Villains' Lorebook</i> Accessory	9552	0-7869-0723-1	August
<i>Passage to Dawn</i> Novel	8571P	0-7869-0750-9	August
<i>Tynara's Luck</i> Novel, Lost Gods 3	8583	0-7869-0726-6	September
<i>The Fall of Myth Drannor</i> Adventure	9558	0-7869-0762-2	November
<i>The Lost Library of Cormanthyr</i> Novel, Lost Empires 1	8579	0-7869-0735-5	November
<i>Hellgate Keep</i> Dungeon Crawl™ Adventure	9562	0-7869-0876-X	December

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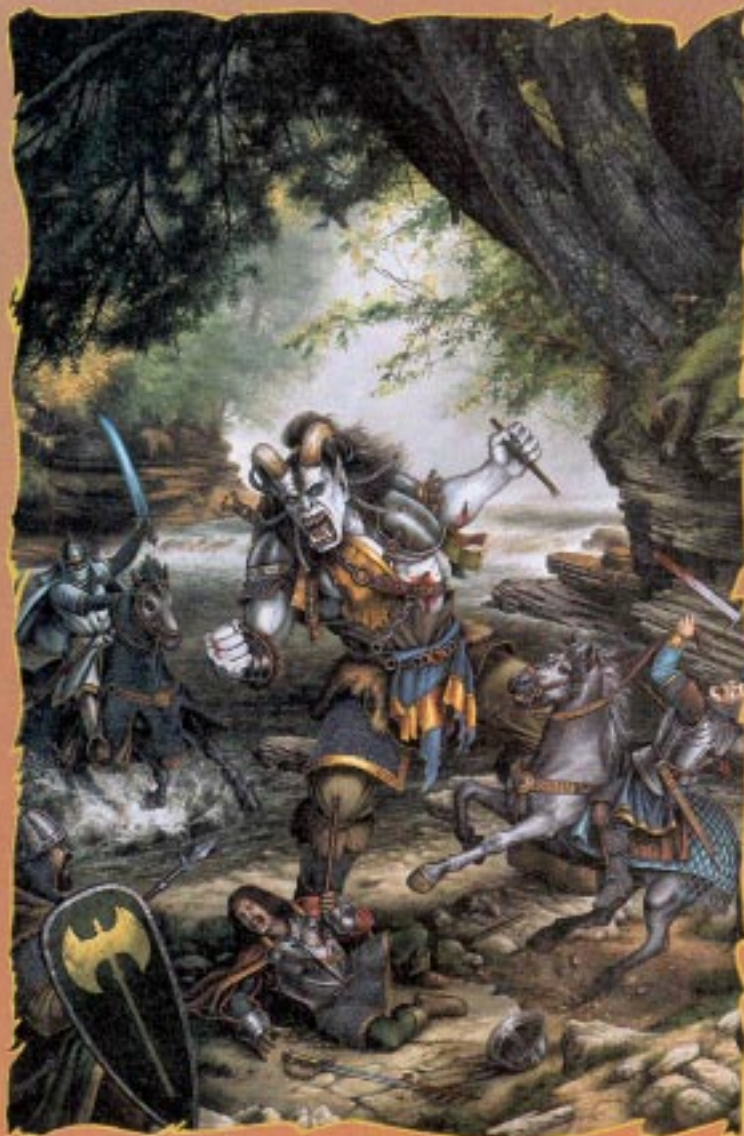
Accessory
TSR 326
ISBN 0-7869-0655-3
On Sale in August

**Aquitania**

Hardcover Novel
TSR 3150
ISBN 0-7869-0768-1
On Sale in
November

**Tribes of the
Heartless
Wastes**

Campaign
Expansion
TSR 3147
0-7869-0773-8
On Sale in
November



Over 1,500 years ago, the gods destroyed themselves to save the land of Cerilia from the encroaching evil of Azrai, the Shadow. In the wake of their sacrifice, their essences rained down upon the battlefield, forever altering the continent and its people.

That event, the battle at Mount Deismaar, forms the foundation of the BIRTHRIGHT® setting. Those present at the cataclysm absorbed the gods' essences, becoming imbued with special powers and ties to the land. They passed their divine bloodlines down through the ages, to the heroes of today.

In a BIRTHRIGHT campaign, player characters live in an epic world where the fate of the continent lies in their own hands. Their bloodlines grant them unique powers, such as the ability to regenerate, teleport, or instill terror in an enemy. Bloodlines also bestow heroes with the right to rule great kingdoms, wield realm magic (the most powerful spells in the AD&D® system), head grand temples, and build mercantile empires.

Bloodlines, however, do not fall to heroes alone: Azrai's essence also scattered upon the continent. Those with his blood flowing in their veins became the awnsheghien (awn-SHAY-lin), villains whose moral corruption renders them more monstrous-looking with each heinous act. Only the bravest heroes dare to battle one of these abominations, for many have died trying.

In 1997, the BIRTHRIGHT line will continue its series of character-class-specific rules supplements and complete its exploration of the continent of Cerilia. The *Book of Priestcraft* offers new spells, strategies, magical items, and rules for BIRTHRIGHT priest characters, as well as details about the new deities who replaced the old gods who died at Deismaar. *Hogunmark* explores a wild frontier domain in the Rjurik Highlands, while *King of the Giantdowns* is an adventure in which heroes can carve out a Rjurik kingdom of their own.

Tribes of the Heartless Wastes, the last Cerilian campaign expansion, provides an overview of the harsh, brutal region of Vosgaard—and an adventure no hero worth his bloodline will want to miss. For the ancient land of Cerilia may be steeped in history, but not all of it has yet been written. And your player character will prove crucial in the next chapter.

NEW RELEASES

Title	TSR Stock	ISBN	On Sale in
<i>Hogunmark Domain Sourcebook</i> Accessory	3035	0-7869-0644-8	February
War Paperback Novel	3033P	0-7869-0720-7	March
<i>King of the Giantdowns</i> Accessory and Adventure	3042	0-7869-0719-3	May
<i>The Shadow Stone</i> Novel	3038	0-7869-0666-9	July
<i>Siege</i> Novel	3045	0-7869-0759-2	October

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RAVENLOFT:
Domains of Dread

TSR 2174
ISBN 0-5869-0672-1
On Sale in March



RAVENLOFT® originally began as a single adventure. Written by Tracy and Laura Hickman in 1983, player characters chased Strahd von Zarovich, a Dracula-style vampire, and unraveled the threads of a centuries-old curse. The adventure soon proved to be the single best-selling role-playing adventure ever written. Enter the RAVENLOFT Campaign Setting, where characters from any campaign world were trapped in a land of ultimate terror—and they had to find a way to escape, or died in the attempt!

RAVENLOFT is being completely reworked this year. The new *Domains of Dread* Campaign Setting turns RAVENLOFT into its own permanent campaign world, instead of the transitional demi-plane it has been. New rules will enable players to create characters native to the Land of Mists, and enhance the feelings of dread PCs already feel.

Domains of Dread presents a stand-alone starting point for the RAVENLOFT fan, encapsulating the basic variant AD&D rules. This is a complete compilation of all RAVENLOFT rules so that gamers need not reference several books in order to play. This is the RAVENLOFT bible.

From there, several adventures will keep PCs busy. In *Servants of Darkness*, the Alchemist begins a witch hunt that begs the question, which evil is greater—the witches' plotting or the fanatical hunt itself?

Later, *The Forgotten Terror*, a crossover adventure, matches RAVENLOFT to the FORGOTTEN REALMS® *Castle Spulzeer*. *The Shadow Rift* features the apparent escape of the Unseelie Court during the metamorphosis of Il Aluk into the Necropolis (1996). *Children of the Night: Ghosts* details 13 spirits doomed to wander the mortal plane of existence for a time before they can know their final rest. And the year ends with *Champions of the Mist*, presented as a rogues' gallery of champions and villains in the Domains of Dread.

NEW RELEASES

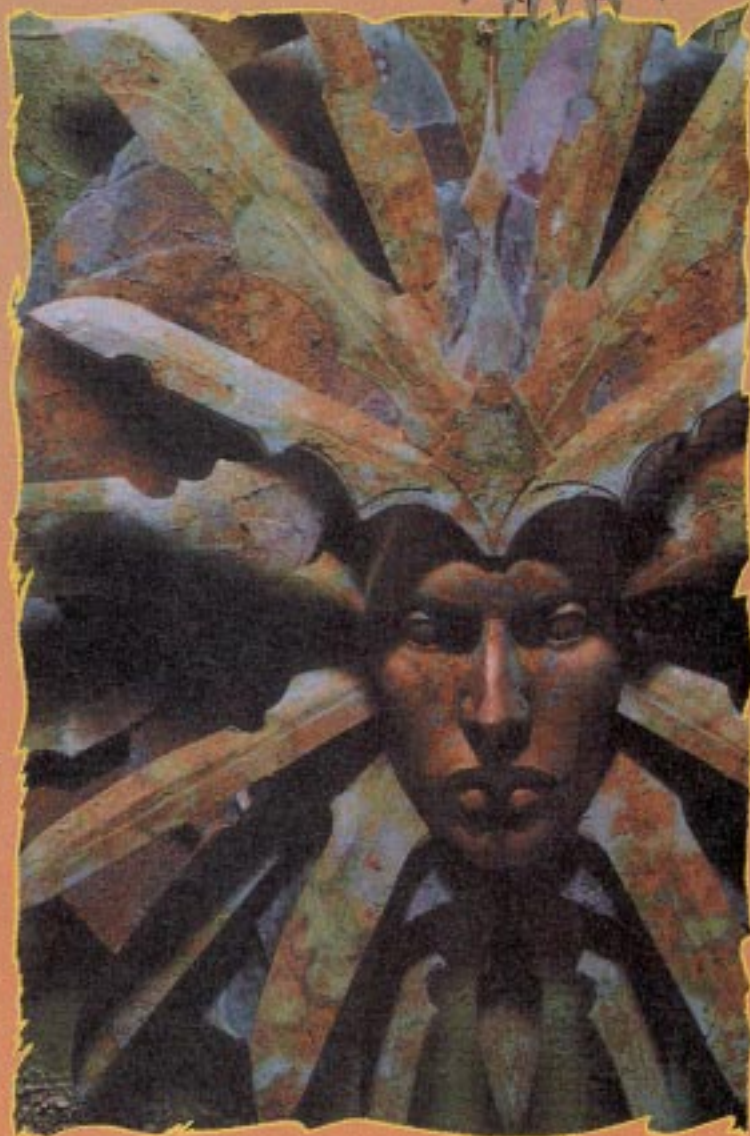
Title	TSR Stock	ISBN	On Sale in
<i>Lord of the Neeropolis</i> Novel	8073	0-5869-0660-X	February
<i>Servants of Darkness</i> Adventure	9541	0-5869-0659-6	June
<i>Forgotten Terror</i> Adventure	9537	0-5869-0699-5	July
<i>The Shadow Rift</i> Adventure	1163	0-5869-0737-1	September
<i>I, Strahd: The War Against Azalin</i> Hardcover Novel	8075	0-5869-0754-1	September
<i>Children of the Night: Ghosts</i> Accessory	9555	0-5869-0752-5	October
<i>Champions of the Mist</i> Accessory	9559	0-5869-0765-7	November
<i>Shadowborn</i> Novel	11074	0-5869-0766-5	October

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ISBN 0-7869-0671-3
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NEW RELEASES

Title	TSR Stock	ISBN	On Sale in
<i>Faces of Evil: The Fiends Accessory</i>	2630	0-7869-0684-7	February
<i>The Great Modron March Adventure Anthology</i>	2628	0-7869-0648-0	May
<i>MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Appendix III</i>	2635	0-7869-0751-7	October
<i>The City of Doors Accessory</i>	2629	0-7869-0670-7	November

Most of TSR's game lines are set in a place called the Prime Material Plane, an infinite universe made up of many Earthlike worlds and civilizations. On each of these worlds, heroes have long been intrigued and menaced by creatures from other planes—other realms of existence vastly different from their own.

The planes are not just places that strange beasts come from, but wondrous lands ripe for exploration that hold heroes can journey to. Instead of serving only as the playground of powerful wizards who know the secrets of jumping from one reality to another, the planes are open to everyone.

The PLANESCAPE® setting encompasses all worlds, all realities, and heroes are often thrust into difficult situations where they must confront philosophical and moral issues. It's a setting that encourages players to focus less on dice and rules and more on the development of their characters. It's a setting that engages the imagination in surprising and entertaining ways. It's a setting, in the end, that takes full advantage of the rich possibilities of the AD&D game system.

1996's *Hellbound* boxed adventure, featured the eternal, infernal battle between fiends known as the Blood War. This year opens with *Faces of Evil: Fiends*, one last look at the lives and deaths of fiends, and sows the seeds for 1997's main theme: the death and resurrection of gods.

In a desolate, silvery void known as the Astral Plane, gods who have lost their worshippers or met with other untimely ends float helplessly like gigantic islands of stone. These "god islands" have served as interesting backdrops or teasers in past PLANESCAPE products. In 1997, however, *The Great Modron March* and *Dead Gods* involve an astonishing event: One of the so-called dead gods returns to life and kicks off a campaign of murder and mayhem that threatens to shake the planes to their core.

The year wraps up with *The City of Doors*, a fresh and close look at the core of the PLANESCAPE setting: the teeming city of Sigil, which lies at the center of all things.



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DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE Bestiary
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TSR 9564
ISBN 0-7869-0795-9
On Sale in October



NEW RELEASES

Title	TSR Stock	ISBN	On Sale in
Vinas Solamnius Classics Novel, Lost Legends	.8388	0-7869-0787-8	January
Heroes of Defiance Dramatic Supplement	.957	0-7869-0656-1	March
The Day of the Tempest FIFTH AGE™ Novel	.8384	0-7869-0668-5	March
Heroes of Sorcery Dramatic Supplement	.9543	0-7869-0680-4	May
Flautandilus Reborn Classics Novel	.8384	0-7869-0708-8	May
The Wayward Knights Classics Novel	.8383	0-7869-0696-0	June
Heroes of Hope Dramatic Supplement	.9546	0-7869-0707-X	July
Wings of Fury Dramatic Supplement	.9551	0-7869-0722-3	August
The Eve of the Maelstrom FIFTH AGE™ Novel	.8385	0-7869-0749-5	September
Citadel of Light Dramatic Supplement	.9554	0-7869-0748-7	November
Tales of Uncle Trapapringler Classics Novel	.8387	0-7869-0775-4	November
The Doom Brigade Classics Novel	.8380P	0-8969-0785-1	December
Murder in the Tower of High Sorcery Classics Hardcover Novel	.8659	0-7869-0780-0	December

The DRAGONLANCE® Saga, celebrating its 10th anniversary, is a timeless tale of heroic adventure, poignant romance, and legends reborn. DRAGONLANCE books consistently appear on *The New York Times* and international best-sellers lists and have sold over 16 million copies worldwide in 16 different languages. Last year's hardcover novel, *Dragons of Summer Flame*, sold over five times the volume of most hardcover best-sellers. It also set the stage for the new DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE™ Dramatic Adventure Game.

DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE is not AD&D®. It is based on the new SAGA® Rules, a game system specifically designed to enhance the drama and adventure that is so much a part of the DRAGONLANCE epic. Set in the magic-ravaged world of Krynn, the FIFTH AGE Game depicts an epic struggle of Good versus Evil and the triumph of the heroic spirit.

There's action and adventure, romance and humor, tragedy and courage. And throughout it all shines the human spirit determined to somehow win in the face of overwhelming odds and to prove that one man or woman can make a difference!

The 1997 game line continues the *Dragons of a New Age* plotline started in 1996. Players can take on roles as freedom fighters in *Heroes of Defiance*. *Heroes of Sorcery* details how man has managed to make magic work during the FIFTH AGE after the gods have taken back their precious gift. *Heroes of Hope* explains the newly discovered power of faith and the strength of one's spirit to perform priestly miracles. *Wings of Fury* takes a look at the Dragons, the mightiest force on the face of Krynn. The DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE *Bestiary* is to the FIFTH AGE game what *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUMS®* are to the AD&D game. And *Citadel of Light: Godtrouched* examines the mythology of the ancient world and its impact on the FIFTH AGE.

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In 1997, three new booster pack sets will be released: Dungeons, which will contain mystical treasures and unique dungeon cards that change the flow of play; Fiends, where a trip to the planes brings tanar'ri, baatezu, aasimons, and other fantastic creatures into the game; and Incantations, with new spells for clerics and wizards, unarmed combat cards for dragons and undead, psionic powers, blood abilities, and thief abilities. Master the Magic in '97 with the Spellfire card game!



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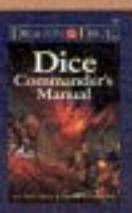
Fiends
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ISBN 0-7869-0715-0
On Sale in July



Incantations
Booster Pack 14
TSR 1164
ISBN 0-7869-0742-8
On Sale in December

DRAGON DICE

HOT PICKS



Dice Commander's Manual

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On Sale in April



Dragon Dice
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MARVEL SUPER DICE

Collectible Dice. They're here to stay. DRAGON DICE® made a gigantic splash at the Gen Con® Game Fair last year. Several tournaments sold out in pre-registration, and administrators had to add one more on-site! TSR's niche-creating DRAGON DICE game continues, and the battles that have been raging intensify with three new kicker packs, one new expansion, a comprehensive reference manual, and two new novels! TSR is also putting a tournament system into place. Watch for more information on DRAGON DICE tournaments coming to a convention near you!

HOT PICK

And if the craze wasn't already big enough, the new MARVEL Super Dice game will push it over the top! Imagine all the super heroes and super villains featured in MARVEL's comics battling to control the streets of New York City. That's the Super Dice Game! The basic game features the Uncanny X-Men and Excalibur members, and also includes "just plain folks" like policemen, paperboys, and little old ladies! Kickers 1 and 2 bring the Avengers and the Fantastic Four into the game, and Kicker 3 adds more X-Men from X-Force, X-Factor, and Generation X. Get ready to play for keeps—it's clobberin' time!



MARVEL Super Dice Game

TSR 6920
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Army of the Dead Novel	3509	0-7869-0652-9	January
Kicker Pack 6: Frostlings	3507	0-7869-0662-6	March
Kicker Pack 7: Scalders	3510	0-7869-0687-1	May
Kicker Pack 8: Treefolk	3515	0-7869-0703-7	December
The Time of Champions Novel	3514	0-7869-0755-X	December
MARVEL Super Dice			
Kicker Pack 1: Avengers	6921	0-7869-0700-2	July
Super Dice Power Pack	6922	0-7869-0701-1	September
Kicker Pack 2: Fantastic Four	6924	0-7869-0739-8	September
Kicker Pack 3: Featuring the X-Men	6925	0-7869-0779-7	November

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Eye of Pain
Monstrous Arcana
Adventure
TSR 9522
ISBN 0-7869-0405-4



Eye of Doom
Monstrous Arcana
Adventure
TSR 9530
ISBN 0-7869-0427-5



A first look at the ALTERNITY™ Science-Fiction Roleplaying Game

by Bill Slavicsek and Richard Baker

Science fiction is the mythology of the modern age, built with girders of technological wonders, riveted with ideas and morality plays, and decorated with facades of "what ifs." What if we discovered a way to travel faster than light? What if we really could travel through time? What if alien spaceships appeared in the sky over Washington, DC.? You get the idea. Just ask the question "what if?" — suddenly the possibilities are endless. Of course, not just any "what if?" will do. It needs at least some element of technology and how that technology relates to the human condition to make it science fiction.

A while back, we asked our own "what if?" questions. What if Inc. decided to expand its role-playing market beyond the traditional fantasy genres for which it's famous? What if we tackled science fiction with the same dedication and enthusiasm we've demonstrated on the AD&D® lines? What if we did it with a new, modern game system that was simple and

elegant at its core but infinitely expandable, with layers of complexity that could be added as players and gamemasters saw fit?

In just a few short months, the answers to these questions will be ready for everyone to see in the pages of TSR's new science-fiction role-playing game. Until then, here's a preview of what you can expect.

SF and TSR

TSR, Inc. invented the role-playing game about 20 years ago and has been

busy producing the definitive fantasy role-playing rules and settings ever since. Today, ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® is the model to which all other RPGs are compared. There are other fantasy RPGs out there, but none can match the scope, majesty, or variety of the AD&D® family of products. Fantasy is great, and when we want to create grand sword-and-sorcery epics or magical dungeon crawls, AD&D is the game we turn to — just like most of you reading these words. But fantasy is only one aspect of roleplaying. It's time for TSR to expand its horizons and look to the future. And the future is science fiction.

The ALTERNITY game is one of unlimited possibilities and exciting potential. The game system is flexible, allowing for many different styles of play in a variety of sf settings. Think of it as the AD&D game of science fiction, with lots of campaign settings building upon the core rules. These rules are presented in the time-tested TSR tradition. They come in two hard-cover books — one for players and one for gamemasters. The two books combine to create a complete and dynamic role-playing game.

Is ALTERNITY just the AD&D game with ray guns and spaceships?

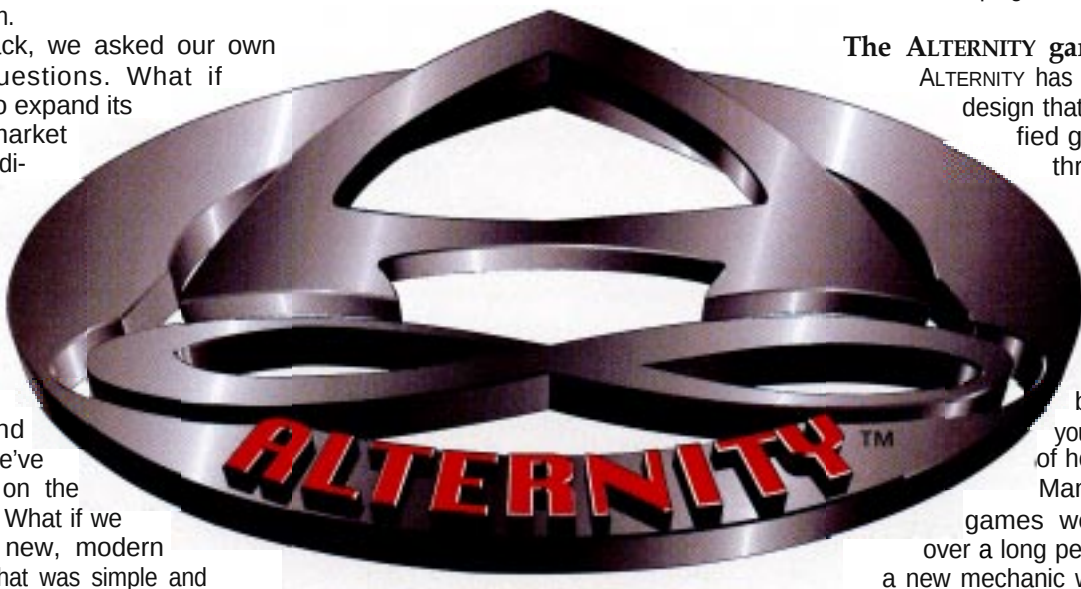
No. Not even close.

The rules use terminology similar to that of the AD&D game, but the mechanics are completely different. Game play is faster and more intuitive, characters are more than just the sum of their ability scores, and the philosophy behind the design opens up more possibilities for campaigns.

The ALTERNITY game mechanic

ALTERNITY has a sleek, modern design that employs a unified game mechanic throughout. This makes it easier to learn and faster to play. It's still too early for us to show you the specifics, but we can give you a general idea of how it works.

Many role-playing games were developed over a long period. Every time a new mechanic was required for



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these games, the designers added one to do the job that was required, but they often didn't address the rest of the game system. This made for rules that were harder to learn and harder still to remember, as every mechanic worked differently from every other.

With ALTERNITY, we developed a simple core mechanic that handles everything in the game. Engaged in combat? Looking for a scientific solution to a problem? Seeking to charm a hostile alien into not using its rather large and deadly looking weapon? The same mechanic works in every situation.

In addition, we incorporated a modular design that allows levels of complexity and detail to be layered on top of the core mechanic. So, if you're more interested in the story and role-playing aspects of the game, stick with the basic rules. However, if you're into heavy-duty power gaming at its finest, you can add as many layers as you see fit to the basic game. Do the more complex rules work differently? No, they just provide more guidelines and modifiers for those players who want to know exactly how far away an opponent is, for those interested in the exact difference between two top-of-the-line computer programs, or for those who require more realistic rules for radiation and the effects it has on characters.

Alternity heroes

If the dice mechanic is the heart of the game, then the heroes are its soul. Players can build exactly the type of hero they want to play, using a skill-based character generation system that incorporates level advancement. Players can literally create any kind of hero they can imagine, then watch that hero become better and more skilled with each adventure.

In ALTERNITY, every player character belongs to a specific Profession. A Profession is a general category that explains a character's background and training in very broad terms. Depending on the Profession of a character, he receives certain benefits that set him apart from characters of other Professions. For example, a player whose character belongs to the Tech Op Profession starts with a general idea about that character — he's comfortable around high-tech machinery, he works with his hands and his brains, and he's considered a professional in a technical field of the player's choosing.

That brings us to the next step in creating the character concept — the Career.

Every Profession has a number of Careers associated with it. The Career defines the player character in more concrete and specific terms by placing a label on exactly what this hero is good at. A Tech Op Career, for example, can be scientist, doctor, pilot, hacker, or engineer. Once you've selected both a Profession and a Career for your hero, you go about designing his game statistics to match the concept you've come up with.

In the ALTERNITY game, a hero isn't a random assortment of numbers. Every character has a number of ability points and skill points to use to build exactly the kind of hero you want to play.

The game uses six abilities to define a character's statistics. These abilities are Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Will, and Personality. Heroes receive 60 ability points to divide among these categories. Human minimums and maximums are 4 and 14, and the human average is 9. Every ability has a number of skills associated with it. Depending on a hero's Intelligence score, he receives an allocation of skill points to use to purchase skills. Skills related to the character's Profession are less expensive than those related to one of the other Professions. A character isn't restricted to skills in his Profession, but to go outside the group costs a bit more than staying inside it.

For players who prefer a more random method for creating player characters, one is provided in the ALTERNITY game. It allows you to generate random ability scores, but you still must select skills and make choices about your hero, as with the build-from-scratch method.

The ALTERNITY game philosophy

Science fiction is experiencing a renaissance of astonishing proportions as we race toward the year 2000. It wasn't all that long ago that science fiction was the poor cousin of the publishing trade and the top of the "B list" in the movie business. But right now, we're experiencing a tremendous upswing of interest in speculative fiction. There have been strong science-fiction films coming out every year for the last decade, and science-fiction novels top the bestseller lists with surprising regularity. Even prime-time TV, the medium that has traditionally churned out science-fiction shows that barely survived a single season, now supports a half-dozen popular and well-produced series — with more appearing all the time.

You might wonder what this has to do with the ALTERNITY game. The time is right for TSR to release a multigenre science-fiction role-playing game. Epic space operas, invasion stories, edgy cyberpunk, alternate histories, technothrillers, time travel, tales of exploration — everything is flourishing today. It's clear to us that we need to come up with a game engine that can support just about any kind of sf universe our players might want to create. In short, the time is right to build the science-fiction equivalent of the AD&D game.

Just as different fantasy genres are served by different product lines under the AD&D banner, in the coming years game universes that reflect a wide spectrum of classic science-fiction themes will carry the ALTERNITY game logo. Therefore, the ALTERNITY *Player's Handbook* and *Rulesmaster Guide* aren't tied to a specific sf setting. You can run a variety of wonderful and detailed campaigns, from modern espionage to superheroic science fantasy, just using these two books. With this in mind, we took a long look at what makes science fiction work, at what each of us loves about this amazing field, and incorporated it into the game system.

While many of the grand old ideas of science fiction have been around for a long time, we seem to have matured greatly as readers. We demand flawed heroes, cynical megacorporations, and examples of how it isn't always bright, shiny, and morally superior to be human. A new science-fiction role-playing game simply has to embrace the character-driven, story over the science-driven story in order to be relevant to today's audience. After all, most science-fiction readers and role-playing gamers are normal humans, and they want to know what it's like to be normal humans in the future.

So, our philosophy is simple. Provide a set of game mechanics that allow you to play any type of story, from contemporary times to the far future, then provide you with examples of these stories in a variety of campaign settings.

Why you'll want to be an ALTERNITY player

The ALTERNITY game was purposely designed for players who like to have complete control over the heroes they create. From the initial character creation system to the mechanics for improving heroes, every decision is left in the hands of the players. And,



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because its a skill-based system, there are a lot of decisions to make. Career packages and professions are included to provide players with plenty of ideas, but you can create and play the exact hero you want, and you can guide his improvement in the manner that makes the most sense to you.

Another aspect of the ALTERNITY game system that should appeal to players is the simplicity of the game mechanics. Once you master the basic dice-rolling scheme, you'll know how to accomplish everything in the game. Simplicity doesn't equate with simplistic, however. The rules have so many levels of play built into them that it will take players a very long time to learn how to best make use of them. They're straightforward for those players who prefer to get right to the roleplaying, but the complexity is there to take advantage of if you're a strategy and numbers kind of player.

Finally, the ALTERNITY *Player's Handbook* is written for the player. It starts with how to create heroes, and subsequent chapters add layers of detail to that basic information. The rules, examples, and advice are all set down to help a player perform his role in an ALTERNITY adventure or campaign.

But we haven't left out the gamemaster. In the ALTERNITY game, we call the gamemaster the "Rulesmaster." A good Rulesmaster needs to know what's in the *Player's Handbook*, but he also has

his own volume to help him accomplish his role in the game . . .

Why you'll want to be an ALTERNITY rulesmaster

We've given Rulesmasters a wonderful variety of tools in the ALTERNITY game. It starts with the game's core mechanic, which handles everything from ability checks to attack rolls. You don't have to dog-ear page after page of special tables and new rules; once you've got a handle on the basic system you can run the game without ever looking at the books. This is a game that can be played from the character sheet and the Rulesmaster's notes alone.

The core mechanic is a surprisingly potent tool for running a game. As you might expect, we play a lot of games here at TSR, and we cover the whole spectrum of role-playing styles. We've found that the ALTERNITY system runs equally well for the Rulesmaster who just eyeballs things or the Rulesmaster who likes to run a tighter game.

While the mechanic is simple, the game doesn't have to be. We've layered in special game options (mutant powers and psionics, to name a couple) that you can incorporate into your game or ignore as you see fit. The options you have at your fingertips for creating heroes, guiding their advancement, and choosing special powers and talents easily exceeds the variety of the AD&D

game. You won't outgrow this system or its possibilities for a long, long time.

This game system has gone under more intensive scrutiny and received more comments and suggestions than any release since AD&D 2nd Edition. It's a great engine that can handle just about anything in the spectrum of science-fiction roleplaying. If you want a cutting edge, top-notch sf role-playing game that gives you lots of detail and choices without immersing you in an existing universe, we think ALTERNITY is the game for you.

In the future . . .

Before its summer debut, more articles covering different aspects of the ALTERNITY game will appear in *DRAGON® Magazine*. For example, we have a lot to tell you about the first campaign setting. It's a great place to play your initial ALTERNITY adventures, and as with the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, a lot of you will decide to make it the place to set your science-fiction campaign.

Beyond that, the ALTERNITY game is designed to let you create and play any kind of science-fiction adventure you can imagine. It all depends on your answer to an important question — a question that's the key to exciting sf worlds of our making . . . and yours.

Which future do you want to play? Think about it, and let us know.



"Stop! Don't move! It's a tourist trap!"

Bill Slavicsek's work on Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game and Torg: Roleplaying the Possibility Wars fills a large room in his home, and his Guide to the Star Wars Universe is in its 11th printing. As the coordinating designer of the ALTERNITY game, he keeps busy churning out pages for the *Player's Handbook* and guiding the direction of the line.

Richard Baker, primary designer of the Rulesmaster Guide, loves classic sf. He names among his favorites Doc Smith's *Lensmen* books and Robert Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*. Before joining the ALTERNITY team, Rich helped launch the AD&D *PLAYER'S OPTION™* series and the *BIRTHRIGHT®* campaign setting.



When your PC becomes a real animal

by Lachlan MacQuarrie

illustrated by Valerie A. Valusek

After a heroic battle (or a really stupid mistake), the player character has perished. The death of a PC is usually a pretty traumatic event, but now (thanks to a kindly high priest) he's back in action.

Sort of.

The surroundings are the same, but everything looks a bit larger. It's all in black and white, too, and it's hard to focus on things. He tries to stand, but can just get to a crouch — anything more feels way too wobbly. He calls out for help, but all he can manage is a coughing or shrieking sound. When he looks up at his friends, they're all staring at him...

Uh-oh.

But look on the bright side — at least he's retained enough of his own mentality to keep adventuring. The claws might come in handy, too.

The 7th-level Priest spell *reincarnate* is better than a *raise dead* because it automatically succeeds and it's fun to watch the player's expression when he realizes his PC has become a pixie.

However, the spell has a good chance of returning the PC in the body of an animal or bird. Although the original *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide* says, "... allow the new form to progress as far as possible ..." Little else was given in the way of guidelines to allow the experienced player and DM to enjoy this new role-playing challenge.

Animal PCs

Humans, demihumans, and humanoids may all become intelligent animals through magic. In addition, some DMs may allow animals as an interesting optional character class.

Abilities and ability modifiers

Animal PCs have ability scores (Strength, Dexterity, etc.), just as any other character, with the same effects. That is, an animal PC makes an ability check just as any other PC does, and determines specific game effects based on the tables in the *Player's Handbook* (i.e., a dog with a Strength of 7 suffers -1 to his THACO, can lift 20 lbs., move 55 lbs., opens doors on a 4 or less, and has no chance to Bend Bars), with the following exceptions (see Note 3):

Table 1 (Strength): An animal PC's weight allowance may not be more than twice his own body weight, and maximum press becomes maximum towed (with proper harness), quadrupled if the weight is on wheels or rollers.

Table 2 (Dexterity): Animals do not have a Missile Attack Adjustment.

Table 3 (Constitution): No modifications.

Tables 4 and 5 (Intelligence and Wisdom): Number of languages becomes number of languages *comprehended*. Animal PCs do not normally learn or cast spells, so references to the chance of learning a spell, number of bonus spells, and so on, should be deleted.



Table 6 (Charisma): Animals do not attract henchmen and receive Reaction rolls from a character only if they can somehow communicate for a time. The Charisma of an animal PC is largely a measure of how "well-kept" it looks, with the DM deciding how a particular NPC should react to a mangy-looking wolverine or a sleek, well-fed wolverine.

Generating the scores: Since animal PCs keep their original mind, they also keep their Intelligence and Wisdom, while rerolling new Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution scores for their new body (see Table 3 for specific notes). Charisma is also rerolled, but PCs with a Charisma of 15 or more before death gain a +1 on this roll.

Size and weight guidelines are given in Table 4. Hit points are gained as per character class, with a one-time modifier given in Table 3.

Allowed classes

Like all characters, the animal PC has a class and a level. If he qualifies for a class he held previously, he may take that class (fighter, ranger, or thief), but loses half his levels (round up), with corresponding losses in hit points, saving throws, proficiencies, and so on. If he does not qualify for a class he held previously (for example, if he was a mage), then he must choose a new class and start over again at first level. However, he

may retain half his old hit points (round up), to a suggested maximum of twice the usual hit points for that species. Since animals can't talk and don't have hands (with the partial exception of the raccoon), no animal may be a mage, priest, or bard (see Note 1). Since only humans can be paladins, no animal may be a paladin, although the DM may allow the character to revert to a fighter of the same level. Since all animals can fight, all can be fighters (although none may wield weapons). Many are at ease hunting and tracking in the wilderness, so can be rangers (without the spells). Finally, some are naturally sneaky, so may be thieves (but see Table 5 for additional penalties). Table 1 shows which classes are allowable.

Common combat abilities

Animal PCs, having the mind of a person but the claws of an animal, use the THACO and saving throws of their class, but do damage according to their natural attack modes (claw/claw/bite, or whatever, with no "off-hand" or nonproficiency penalty).

"Fighter" animals may use weapon proficiencies to "specialize" in one attack (bite, right-claw, or whatever). This replaces whatever weapon specialization they possessed previously. "Ranger" animals get one extra attack every 2nd round, and rogues may "backstab" with one attack mode, multiplying damage as usual. Otherwise, animals do not gain or expend weapon proficiency slots.

It is possible for an animal PC to wear armor. This is called "barding" (after horse armor) and gives the PC an improved armor class (even if the PC's natural AC is better than the barding's AC, the PC still gains a +1 bonus to AC for wearing something). All other effects of armor are as per the *PHB* (thieves and rangers should wear studded leather or less, and so on). Barding has two main drawbacks: in most cases, someone else has to put it on and take it off the animal; and cost. Regardless of size, all non-standard barding costs 2-5 times what horse barding costs, and takes 2-5 times longer to make, assuming one can even find an armorer with the skills necessary to make such an odd item. The given weight (see individual entries) is for chain barding. Leather weighs half this, and plate 150% more than this.

Common advantages

All animals have natural weapons of some sort or other, and most have natural leather armor (see Table 1). In addition,

Table 1: Combat and classes*

Animal	AC	Damage	Move	Initiative	Classes
Badger	4	1-2/1-2/1-3	6, Br 3	+3	F, R
Bear, black	7	1-3/1-3/1-6	12	+3	F, R
Bear, brown	6	1-6/1-6/1-8	12	+6	F
Boar	7	3-12	15	+3	F
Cat	6	1-2/1	5	0	F, T
Dog	7	1-4	15	+3	F, R
Eagle	6	1-2/1-2/1	1, F30(C)	+3	F
Fox	7	1-3	15	0	F, T
Hawk	6	1-2/1-2/1	1, F30(B)	+3	F
Horse	7	1-6/1-6	18	+6	F
Owl	5	1-2/1-2/1	1, F27(D)	+3	F
Raccoon	9	1-2	5	0	F, T
Wolf	7	2-5	18	+3	F, R
Wolverine	5	1-4/1-4/2-5	2	+3	F, R

*There are no level limits for animal PCs. They've got enough problems.

-tion, their sense of smell is usually superior, making detection and tracking of monsters a breeze (give a +4 to any Tracking chance where a scent is involved, with an additional +4 for foxes, dogs, and wolves). Most importantly, an animal PC may be seriously underestimated by casual observers. A guard who would sound the alert for a human intruder might toss a small stone at a wandering cat, or ignore it completely.

Common disadvantages

Or he may decide to have the cat for lunch.

Social handicaps

The major disadvantage all animals share is their status — in most worlds, animals are either pets, “varmints,” or food. The DM must decide which of these three categories a given NPC will choose, depending on the type of animal and the type of NPC (to a human, a cat is a pet. . . to a kobold, it’s lunch). A “pet” may be ignored, shooed away, or even befriended, while “food” will either be captured or slain outright if the NPC is hungry enough. A “varmint” is any dangerous or pesky animal . . . NPCs will take immediate action to either drive the animal away, or kill it outright.

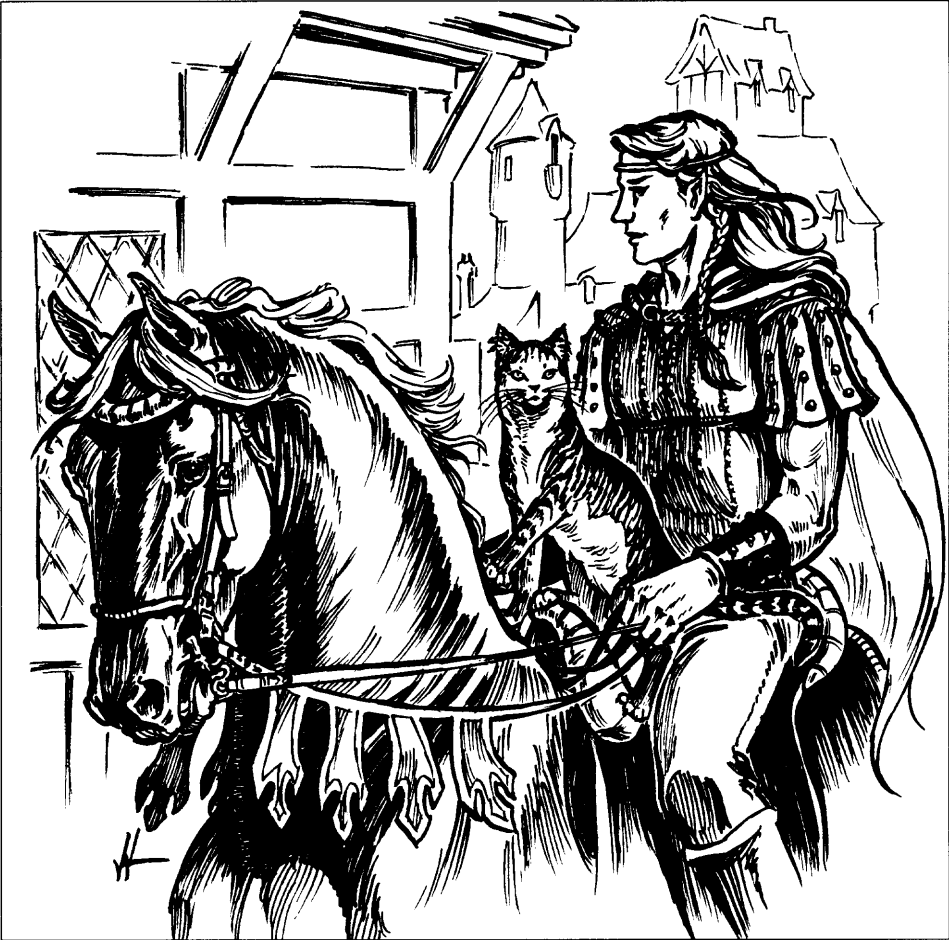
In any case, the animal PC will experience considerable social prejudice (“I don’t care how quiet it is, no pets in the inn!”), and restrictions on his movement (“Zeke! Somebody’s prize pig is wandering around loose! Let’s get it!”).

Note that an animal that acts too intelligent is either a curiosity or a threat and may attract a lot of attention. Intelligent NPCs may know about wizards, familiars, or shapeshifting monsters.

Physical handicaps

Animals don’t have hands or speech, which stops spellcasting (and the use of scrolls and magic items with command words), social communication, and the use of weapons and lock-picks. Many proficiencies become useless (see Table 2 for useful ones), and the PCs will have a tough time communicating with anyone, even other party members (see Note 2). Many magic items will not fit the new body, and are thus useless.

In addition, most animals (with the exception of birds) have worse eyesight than humans and demihumans. Poor acuity, shades of gray instead of color, and less range will all plague the PC (reduce all ranges of vision by a factor of two, and a factor of four for bears).



Animals by category

The animals listed under *reincarnate* (P7) fall into five main categories: tiny animals, small animals, medium animals, large animals, and birds, each with its own advantages and disadvantages.

Since the lynx and the stag are missing from the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM®* tome, they have been replaced by the housecat and the horse, respectively. In tribute to Lassie, the dog is included. DMs with favorite animals are encouraged to use them, as well, using the examples given here as guidelines (see Note 4).

Tiny animals

These very small creatures (the housecat, fox, and raccoon, etc.) are the weakest of the animals, rolling 3d3 for their Strength, and losing a hit point from their first Hit Die (see Table 3). However, their size makes them maneuverable (+1 Dexterity, initiative modifier of 0), and allows them to hide in small places. Tiny creatures can walk tightropes by making a simple Dexterity check (raccoons can use the rope use nonweapon proficiency, too).

Cats are socially acceptable just about anywhere in human domains. Cats may rake with both rear claws (roll to hit, dmg.

1-2/1-2) if their front claw attack hits (dmg. 1-2). Raccoons have forepaws with amazing Dexterity; allow any reasonable “use of hands,” but with a -2 penalty to Dexterity. Foxes can move quickly and have the “canine” bonus for tracking).

Tiny animals weigh 10-20 lbs. and consume less than one-eighth normal rations. Their barding weighs about five pounds (and the author has seen cat barding).

Table 2: Usable nonweapon proficiencies

General	Priest
Direction sense	Ancient history
Heraldry*	Local history
Reading languages	Writing (with difficulty)
Rope use**	Religion
Swimming	Spellcraft
Weather sense	
Rogue	Warrior
Appraising	Animal lore
Read lips	Endurance
Tightrope walk***	Hunting
Running	
Survival	
Tracking	

* -4 penalty for color-blindness
** raccoons only
*** size T animals only

Note that comprehension is not affected by the loss of speech and hands. A fox PC with the Armorer NWP can still recognize a good piece of armor, even if he can’t work on it. Similarly, animal PCs have no trouble understanding people’s speech, although they might have to work out a system of signs to communicate their own wishes.



Small animals

These dog-sized animals (including the badger, wild boar, dog, wolf, and wolverine) are physically weaker than a full-grown man, but not by much (roll 3d6 - 2 for Strength), and make up for it with their natural weapons (the wolverine, especially, is a real killer).

Badgers are excellent burrowers, and have a good AC. They are avoided by most predators because their flesh is greasy and unpalatable. Boars are fairly tough, but have a hard time "passing" as pets. True omnivores, they can eat almost anything (+4 bonus to save vs. ingested

poison). PC boars, however, do not have the ability to fight at negative hit points mentioned in the MC. A thick layer of fat and hide also protects them from any sort of insect venom — unless the insect has a stinger more than 6" long.

Dogs are socially acceptable everywhere (perhaps a wolf could wear a leash?), and are excellent trackers. Wolves track as well as dogs do, and can howl, which has a 50% chance of panicking any herbivore within earshot which is not being held and calmed by its owner.

Wolverine PCs do not gain the +4 to THAC0 mentioned in the MONSTROUS

COMPENDIUM volumes but are otherwise very dangerous fighters. The wolverine musk attack is not gained by a PC until he attains his 3rd level as a wolverine, and is usable once per day. The effect causes all in a 10' x 10' x 30' cone to the rear of the wolverine to save vs. poison. Failure causes blindness for 1d4 hours, while success still causes loss of 25% of Strength and Dexterity for 1d4 turns due to disgust. All hunters know of the wolverine's musk, and take precautions.

Small animals weigh up to 75 pounds, and consume half what a full-size human would. Their barding weighs about 20 pounds.

Medium animals

Roughly man-sized, medium-sized animals (including the black bear) are small enough to come indoors but big enough so they don't get stepped on. They have the same effective strength range as humans (but with a minimum of 12), and are roughly as maneuverable, but do have better natural armor.

The black bear has good combat capabilities, and can often be passed off as part of a circus act. If it rolls 18 or higher when attacking with a paw, it has hugged its victim for an additional 2-8 hp damage.

Medium animals weigh up to 400 pounds, and eat as much as a full-grown man (and sometimes more). Their barding weighs as much as human armor of the same type.

Large Animals

Large animals (such as the brown bear and horse) enjoy tremendous strength (roll 3d6+2, with a minimum of 14, and always roll for Exceptional Strength regardless of class). Note that this is their "effective" strength — they can move much heavier loads with proper harness. On the down-side, they are rather bulky (-1 Dexterity, +6 initiative).

Brown bears have good armor and combat capabilities, but are not allowed to wander around in town. Their hug causes an additional 2-12 hp damage, but PC brown bears do not have the ability to fight at negative hit points mentioned in the MC. Horses aren't so deadly, but fit in anywhere (outside of china shops). PC horses do not panic at unexpected noises or smells (unless the player wishes to). In addition, packs, harnesses, barding, shoes, and other tack for horses are readily available and reasonably priced.

Large animals weigh up to half a ton, and consume four times what a

Table 3: Ability scores and size modifiers

	Strength	Dexterity	Hit Die	Bonus*	Size
Badger	3d6-2	3d6		0	S
Bear, black	3d6 (min 12)	3d6		+3	S
Bear, brown	3d6+2 (min 14)	3d6-1		+5	L
Boar**	3d6-2	3d6		+3	S
Cat	3d3	3d6+1		-1	T
Dog	3d6-2	3d6		0	S
Eagle	3d6-2	3d6		-2	S
Fox	3d3	3d6+1		0	T
Hawk	3d6-2	3d6		-2	S
Horse	3d6+2 (min 14)	3d6-1		+2	L
Owl	3d6-2	3d6		-2	S
Raccoon	3d3	3d6+1		-1	T
Wolf	3d6-2	3d6		+2	S
Wolverine	3d6-2	3d6		+3	S

*This bonus/penalty is applied to the die rolled to determine hit points for first level. Animal PCs who kept their old hit points apply this to their total hit points once, during the conversion process.

**In addition, a bonus of +1 to Constitution, and -2 to Charisma.

full-grown man does. Barding is given in the *PHB*, but bear barding is non-standard and costs 2-5 times as much horse barding.

Birds

The birds are all size S (barely) and thus roll 3d6 -2 for Strength. Their major advantages are their wings and their keen eyesight. The DM should quadruple all vision ranges and award surprise bonuses (bird PCs are surprised only 5% of the time, though eagles and hawks lose this advantage at night, and owls lose it during the day). The birds in this section can all dive-attack, gaining a +2 to hit and doubling damage (claw only: beak attacks are not allowed in a dive).

Eagles and hawks can dive to attack (both must dive at least 100', unlike the owl, who only has to dive 50'). Owls have excellent hearing and nightvision, able to see perfectly in anything short of magical darkness, but they are effectively blinded during the day (-4 penalties to surprise rolls, attack rolls, saving throws, and armor class). Owls fly silently (-6 penalty to opponent's surprise roll).

Note: Flying is a novelty for most PCs, so it takes two weeks of falling out of trees, short hops, and glides, before flying becomes as natural as walking.

In addition, their frail construction causes them to subtract 2 from their first hit die. Finally, their deficient sense of smell means that they do not gain the +4 Tracking bonus mentioned above.

The social status of birds varies from culture to culture. Some barbarian tribes actively revere them, but other cultures might hunt them for their plumage.

Leaving the animal form

Eventually the PC is going to get tired of growling, dodging kicks, and wearing a pack-harness (and well he should), and he will start looking for the wish (or other magic) necessary to regain his old form. Naturally, this will be hard to come by, and the quest can fill many adventuring sessions. Alternatively, the deity who granted the original *reincarnate* may impose additional requirements before it will release the PC.

Whichever path the DM chooses, the PC will eventually regain his old form (with a considerable sigh of relief, no doubt). This will be identical to his old body (dig out the old character sheet), but with some loss due to the shock of transformation. The PC reverts to his old character class, regaining all of his former experience, minus two levels (reduce

Table 4: Size and weight

	Length (inches)*		Weight (pounds)	
	Base	Modifier	Base	Modifier
Badger	20	2d6	30	2d10
Bear, black	60	2d6	200	2d100
Bear, brown	60	4d8	400	4d100
Boar	30	2d8	75	2d10
Cat	18	2d4	9	2d8
Dog	30	3d10	20	3d20
Eagle	24	2d4	12	2d8
Fox	20	2d4	9	2d6
Hawk	18	d6	10	2d6
Horse	96	6d6	800	10d100
Owl	20	d10	10	2d8
Raccoon	20	2d8	16	2d8
Wolf	36	2d8	40	2d20
Wolverine	24	d20	30	2d20

*For animals, this is length from nose to rump. If the animal has a tail, it will be 5d8% (5-40%) of this length. In addition, the wingspan (wingtip to wingtip) of a bird is approximately three times its length.

XP total to the minimum necessary to qualify for the reduced level).

The character has learned something from the experience, however, and may add all XP earned while in animal form to his new XP total. Any proficiencies gained while in animal form are lost, although the character will have a new empathy for others of that species (the equivalent of the animal lore NWP for that animal only).

General notes

1. DMs who use psionics must decide if the new animal form will have any of the psionic abilities of the old. Since psionics are based on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Constitution — two of which stay the same — it seems reasonable that animal PCs can be psionists. However, since the body (Constitution) is different, the animal PC must start again at 1st level, and requires double XP to advance to 2nd. From then on, advancement is normal, as the PC has learned to compensate for his differences.

Wild Talents may be kept, but any PSPs the old form earned after first gaining the Talent are lost (the animal must start over again).

If the PC wasn't psionic before the *reincarnation*, the DM may allow him to roll for a new Wild Talent, as the shock of transfer opens up previously-unused portions of the character's intellect.

2. Many works of fantasy include "talking beasts," either using human

speech, or their own special animal languages DMs who allow this are again taking the sting out of being an animal PC, which may be a good or bad thing. For example, with some research into alternate somatic methods, mages who are turned into talking beasts may be able to cast spells. Players should remember that a talking cat will attract a lot of attention.

Animal PCs who can talk to other animals of their species will notice immediately that other animals of their species are cooperative, but rather stupid . . .

3. Any bonuses/penalties due to high or low attributes are in addition to the animal's normal abilities and bonuses.

4. The animals used in this article are all from the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM* volumes. When adding new animals, the DM should read the guidelines for creating new character races in the *DMG*. Classify the animal by size, and compare to the animals presented in this article. For play balance, it is advisable to avoid converting creatures with too many special powers.



Lachlan MacQuarrie is a freelance writer living in New Brunswick, Canada. This is his third appearance in DRAGON® Magazine, but not his last. He dedicates this article to the memory of a certain raccoon thief.

Table 5: Thief ability modifiers (supplement to Table 27 in the *PHB*)

Skill	Cat	Fox	Raccoon
Pick Pockets*	-45%	-50%	-10%
Open Locks*	-40%	-40%	-10%
Find/Remove Traps*	-40%	-35%	-5%
Move Silently	+30%	+15%	+10%
Hide in Shadows	+20%	+15%	+15%
Detect Noise	+25%	+35%	+10%
Climb Walls	+15%	+5%	+15%
Read Languages	+0%	+0%	+0%

*In these cases, the cat or fox is using his forepaws and mouth to grip — clumsy, but better than nothing.

Campaign Classics

Lupins of the MYSTARA® setting

by Bruce Heard

illustrated by Bob Klasnich

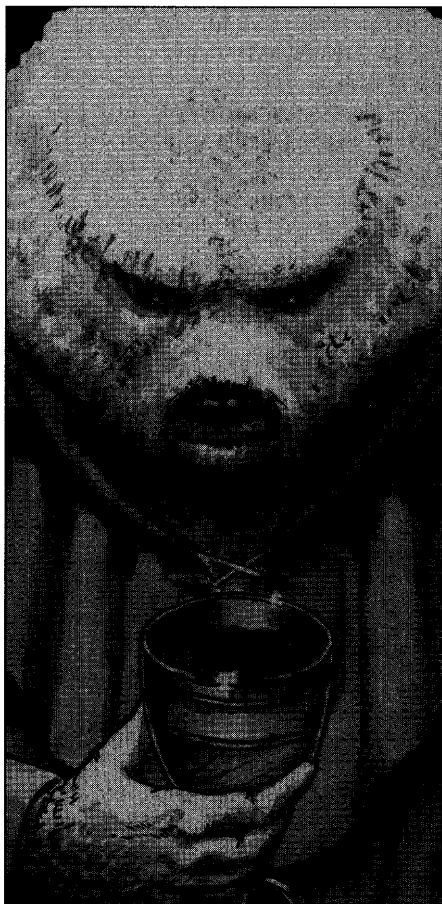
This is a sequel to the *Princess Ark* episode titled "A Glass of Wine & a Shaggy Dog Story," originally published in *DRAGON Magazine* issue #179 and later in the *Champions of Mystara* boxed set. Raman Nabonidus, the ship's sage, provides a supplemental entry to the ship's log as he attempts to describe lupin breeds of Mystara, from the Known World to the Savage Coast.

Nyxmir 9, AY 2001

As His Highness, Prince Haldemar, was off to research the whereabouts of a fine wine vintage, I, Raman Nabonidus, endeavored instead to enrich our knowledge of the creatures in this world. Thus would the Imperial Libraries of Alphatia gain from the journeys of our illustrious *Princess Ark*.

I received an invitation from Sire Museau d'Aboisfort, the Kings sage, and took this opportunity to go ashore and discover for myself this wondrous Kingdom of Renardy. To properly *mispronounce* his name without offending anyone, as I did numerous times, I would suggest the following: *seer mew-zoe dah-bwah-for*. It appeared that lupins, dog-faced humanoids, made up the vast majority of the local population. I had expected gnoll-like primitives but instead discovered a clever and sophisticated culture, almost as advanced as the nations of the Known World. What struck me most was the variety of the people in the streets. Everything about them was different, their demeanors, their wealth, social standings, and especially their physical appearances.

I finally reached the Aboisfort Manor. Sire Museau welcomed my arrival in a courteous and pleasant manner. He demonstrated great curiosity about the ways of Alphatia, and after many questions promised himself to visit us one day.



We spent the rest of the day in his comfortable study, exchanging our experiences of this world, sampling this outstanding Renardois wine, and poring over countless tomes from his shelves. Sire Museau quickly proved a well-learned person and gained my respect and appreciation.

Much later during that night, he began explaining some of the problems of being a lupin nowadays, and how they affected the secular Kingdom of Renardy. This is what he said.

In the Beginning, most human sages I spoke to believed us lupins to be an offshoot

of the gnoll breed; however, this isn't exactly true. According to ancient scriptures unearthed a few years ago, gnolls, like Pflarr himself were ancient Nithian creations.

Pflarr rose to Immortality and created the Hutaakans, a race of jackal-headed humanoids. Pflarr truly liked the Hutaakans; brilliant and refined, they were created in his image. Hutaakans established control over the Traldar, the ancestors of today's Karameikos, getting most of Pflarr's loving care and attention. Meanwhile, the gnollish population exploded. These ravenous and brutish hordes ran out of control and eventually invaded Traldar, causing the Hutaakans to hide in a secluded valley.

Ancient legends, which I suspect were true, say that as a result of the Hutaakan demise and of the mysterious disappearance of the old Nithian empire, Pflarr was offended and lost interest in surface world affairs.

Over the following centuries, gnolls and Traldars practically annihilated each other. It is also said the stagnating, inbred Hutaakan race also dwindled while elements of their original civilization were relegated to a mythical Hollow World preservation land — if such a place truly existed.

Not all Hutaakans stayed in their valley, however. Some travelled the Known world and beyond, eventually creating new families. New blood, including some pervasive gnollish blood, was brought to the weaker, original Hutaakan stock, which created several initial breeds of lupins. To human observers, lupin breeds appeared soon after the gnollish invasion; thus, humans believed them to be directly related — an unfortunate and disparaging misconception I might add.

Our early ancestors eventually forgot about their Hutaakan heritage. They begun forming clans and spread throughout Mystara. The heads of the clans were those who could show proof of a certain lineage, Hutaakan blood, without really knowing why. It had simply become clan tradition by then. As centuries passed, the tradition grew

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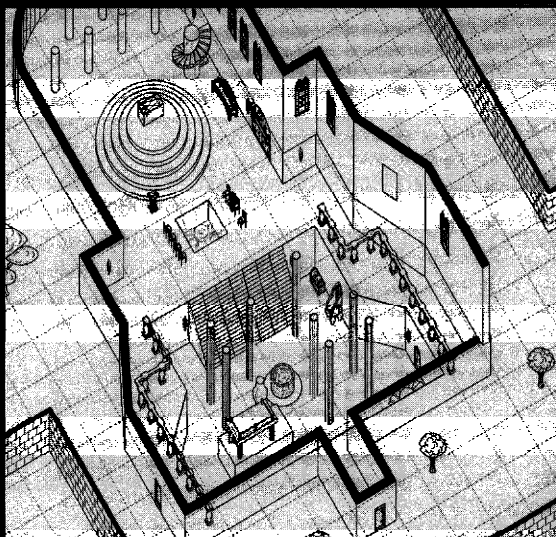
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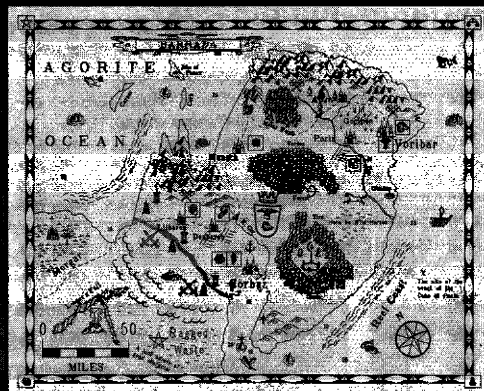
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Table 1: Racial modifiers and other statistics

Breed	Statistics						Height	Weight	MV	Bite	Senses	NPC Generator (Roll two d20's)	
	S	D	C	I	W	Ch						Known World	Savage Coast
Guardians (min. 12 Strength, max. 16 Intelligence)												1-3	1-3
Doggerman	+1	-	-	-1	-	-	57 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 3.8	12	d6+1	Med.	1-6	1-2
Maremma	+1	-1	-	-1	-	+1	57 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 3.5	12	d6	Med.	7	3-6
Mastiff	+2	-1	+1	-1	-1	-	62 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 2.8	12	d6+2	Low	8-1	17-10
Pit-Bull	+1	+1	+1	-	-2	-2	52 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 3.8	12	d8	Low	12-13	11-14
Shar-Pei	+1	-	+1	-	-	-2	54 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 3.5	12	d6+1	Low	14-16	-
Wolvenfolk	+1	-	+2	-1	-1	-1	58 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 3.2	12	d6+1	Med.	17	15-17
Ye Great Dogge	+2	-1	-1	-	-	+1	66 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 3	15	2d4	Med.	18-20	18-20
Hunters (min. 12 Intelligence, max. 16 Strength)												4-6	4-5
Basset Hound	-1	-	+1	-	-	-	46 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 4	9	d4+1	High	1-3	1-2
Beagle	-1	-	-	+1	-	-	47 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 4	9	d4+1	High	4-7	3
Bloodhound	-	-2	+2	-	-	-	55 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 3.5	9	d6+1	High	8-9	4-7
Chow Chow	-	-1	+1	-	-	-	51 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 3.8	12	d6	High	10-13	-
Foxfolk	-1	+2	-2	-	+1	+1	47 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 4.2	12	d4+1	High	14	8-10
Golden Retriever	-	+1	-	-	-2	+1	56 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 3.8	12	d6	High	15-17	11-12
Ispan Pistolero	-	-	-1	+1	-	-	48 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 4	9	d4+1	High	-	13-15
Nithian Rambler	-2	+1	-2	+1	+2	-	56 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 4.5	15	d4+1	High	18-20	16
Renardois Folk	-	+1	-	-	-1	-	55 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 3.8	12	d6	High	-	17-20
Shepherds (min. 12 Wisdom, max. 16 Strength)												7-8	6-8
Heldann Shepherd	-	-	-	-	-	-	57 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 3.8	12	d6	Med.	1-12	1-3
Shag-Head	-	-1	-	-	+1	-	54 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 3.8	12	d6	Med.	13-19	4-9
Stagovich Herder	+1	+1	-	-2	-	-	58 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 3.5	12	d6	Med.	20	10-20
Workers (min. 12 Constitution, max. 16 Intelligence)												9-11	9-10
Eusdrian Bulldog	+1	-	-	-	-	-1	55 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 3	9	d4+1	Low	1	1-7
Glantri Mountaineer	+2	-1	-	-	-	-	57 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 3	9	d6+1	High	2-8	-
Gnomish Snoutzer	-2	+1	-	-	+1	-	50 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 4	12	d4+1	High	9-15	8-13
Norwold Malamute	-	-	+2	-1	-1	-	56 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 3.8	12	d6+1	Med.	16-19	-
Zvornikian Sentinel	-1	-	-	-1	+1	+1	55 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 3.8	15	d6	Med.	20	4-20
Vermin Hunters (max. 12 Strength and 19 Dexterity)												12-13	11
Blue Bandit	-	-	-	-	-2	+2	56 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 4	12	d4+1	Med.	1-4	1-6
Burrow Bandit	-	+1	+1	-	-2	-	53 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 4	6	d4+1	Med.	5-12	7-16
Das Hund	-	+2	-2	-	-	-	47 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 4	6	d4	Med.	13-16	17-20
Fennec	-2	+2	-	-	-	-	31 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 4.2	6	d2	Med.	17-18	-
Hound of Klantyre	-	-	-1	-	+1	-	45 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 4	6	d4	Med.	19-20	-
Wee Folk (min. 12 intelligence, max. 10 Strength)												14	12-13
Bouchon	-	-1	-	-	-	+1	47 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 4	9	d2	Low	1-5	1-7
Carrasquito	-	+2	-2	-	-	-	31 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 4	6	1pt	Low	6	8-14
Cimarron Hairless	-	-	-1	+2	-	-1	50 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 4	9	d2+1	Low	7-9	15-16
Ochalean Houndling	-	-	-	-	+2	-2	37 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 4	6	d2	Low	10-13	-
Ochalean Crested	-	-	-1	+2	-	-1	47 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 4	9	d2	Low	14-17	-
Papillon	-	+2	-1	-	-1	-	47 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 4	9	d2	Low	18-20	17-20
Nomads (min. Dexterity 12, max. Strength 16)												15	14-15
Long-Runner, Borzoi	-	+1	-	-1	-	-	59 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 4.5	18	d4	Med.	50% either breed	-
Mongrels (min. 8 Strength for basic Lupins, else all other statistics min. 3 and max. 18)												16-20	16-20
Basic Lupin	+1	-	+1	-1	-1	-	64 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 3.3	12	d6	High	-	-
Random Breeds	*	*	*	*	*	*	64 + Strength	(Size × Strength) ÷ 3.3	12	d6	Med.	Roll NPCs individually	-

Ability adjustments for random mongrel breeds

Roll 1d20 for each statistic. A roll of 1 indicates a -2 adjustment for the ability. A roll of 2-5 indicates a -1 adjustment. A roll of 16-19 indicates a +1 adjustment. A roll of 20 indicates a +2 adjustment. If the total of all adjustments is +1 or more, the mongrel is afflicted with a short life span (-10 years for each point above +1). If the total of all adjustments is -1 or worse, the mongrel has high senses (see Table 2). Specific racial adjustments and other features only have a 25% of being passed on to the mongrel's progeny (roll d%: 1-25 father's, 26-50 mother's, 51-100 random).

weaker and more obscure, to the point of being almost completely forgotten. By then, scores of new lupin breeds had adapted to widely different regions of Mystara and formed varied and thriving species. They also endeavored to incorporate elements of human or demi-human civilization, as shown with our Fair Kingdom of Renardy, for example.

The issue of the Hutaakan ancestry, however, is now coming back to haunt our kind. With civilization came the age of reason, and some of us began to wonder about our true origins. Almost regrettably, some found out, and the result is now a sensitive issue. There are the ones who believe nobility lies in ones

ancient Hutaakan blood lineage. Then there are the others who adopted human-style nobility based upon feudal rulership. The problem became worse when some of our people openly questioned the legitimacy of the Clairvault Dynasty over the throne of Renardy, since clearly the Clairvaults show no such bloodlines. Although it has remained a quiet one so far, Renardois remain evenly divided on this issue.

The problem grows even worse when the clergy becomes involved. Some people also have begun questioning the legitimacy of Saimpt-Renard as the long-established head of the lupin Immortal pantheon. They believe the only true lupin Immortal should be Pflarr

This thinking has sparked an underground religious movement to re-establish Pflarr. It makes no doubt in my mind they are the unwitting pawns of pflarr himself. Since he first turned from the Hutaakans, pflarr has finally noticed our success as a race. Now he wants to reclaim our kind, just as a parent would his lost children. In response to this, high priests of all our established temples branded the honoring of pflarr a heresy, following the wisdom that pflarr had abandoned the Hutaakans and thus relinquished all rights over lupin flesh and spirit. This, my friend, is our quandary, and I fear things may become quite unsightly before this issue is ever resolved.

The Sign of Pflarr

Sire Museau went on about some of the more obscure lupin theology:

Hutaakan clerics and later clan shamans knew ancient Nithian rituals related to Pflarr's bloodlines. It is said that, with the proper incantations and a pinch of sacred incense from Ylaruam, a few drops of Hutaakan blood trickling over glowing embers would invoke the image of Pflarr's head among the fumes. The more vivid and longer-lasting the image, the purer the Hutaakan bloodline. I sheepishly must admit that unscrupulous lupins would consider a vague jackal face enough to claim a tie with the great spirit. Others still show pure enough a bloodline for a recognizable image to appear, regardless of well-breeding or mongrelhood.

Believers ought to beware, however: blasphemous spell-casters resort to illusions to manipulate the result of the ritual. Great care must therefore be taken to avoid such perfidious trickery.

Creating lupin PCs

Lupin PCs are generated much as any other kind of character, using the racial ability modifiers given in Table 1. Unless stated otherwise, racial minimums and maximums are 3 and 18. Size and weight comes next since they are largely based upon the lupin's breed and Strength score. Should you decide to make female characters a bit smaller, a 1" difference is recommended for lupins up to 60" tall, 2"-3" if taller. A lupin's weight requires a bit more calculation, but it is also based upon size and Strength.

Example: The doggerman is listed as 57 plus Strength. A 13 Strength doggerman would then stand 70" tall. Its weight is listed as $\text{Size} \times \text{Strength} \div 3.8$. This means multiply the lupin's basic height in inches time its Strength score. Then divide the total by the indicated number. This doggerman should therefore stand $(57 \times 13) \div 3.8 = 195$ lbs.

Table 1 provides unencumbered movement rates for each breed, the damage caused by a bite attack, and the general keenness of their sensory skills. The latter are detailed in **Table 2**. Table 1 also provides a random NPC generator for both Known World or Savage Coast encounters. Roll one d20 to determine what lupin group is involved and a second to determine the specific breed.

Note: The basic lupin statistics are included here as a comparison with the

Table 2: Lupin senses

Not all lupins have perception senses as good as the basic lupin's (listed as high — in the Racial Table). The following table compares the various sensory abilities of lupin breeds.

Ability & Description (High Senses)	Medium Senses	Low Senses
Infravision: 60'	60'	30'
Detect Werewolf: 99% chance	83%	66%
Detect Invisible & Ethereal Beings: +4 bonus (see chapter 13 in <i>DMG</i>)	+2	+1
Blindfighting: Free proficiency	Free proficiency	No free proficiency
Tracking: At one-half Wisdom score (rounded up). A lupin Ranger tracks at one-half Wisdom score +6.	Tracking at one-third Wisdom (rounded up). Ranger tracks at one-third Wisdom +3.	Tracking at one-quarter Wisdom (rounded up). Ranger tracks at one-quarter Wisdom +1.
Recognize Smell: Automatic success to recognize a race. To recognize an individual person, Intelligence check.	Race, Intelligence at +2; for a person, -2.	For a race, Intelligence check; for a person, check at -4.
Detect Noise: 35% chance, +2%	30% +1%/level	25%, no bonus
Special Weakness: -2 penalty to saving throws vs. odor- or sound-based attacks (a stinking cloud, a banshee's wail, etc).	-1 penalty	No special weakness

other breeds. It is assumed the basic lupin (originally developed in the SAVAGE COAST™ campaign) is only one of the many mongrels. Should you decide to use this material, the basic lupin should then no longer be available. Instead, roll up a random mongrel.

Table 3 lists the classes available to the various lupin groups. Although lupins cannot be multi-classed, they can be dual-classed following conventional game rules for human PCs.

Furthermore, lupins cannot be wizards, only mages of the following schools: Divination, Abjuration, Invocation, and Necromancy.

Table 4 provides thieving skill adjustments. Be sure to know the size of the character, since it makes a difference here, and also later for armor and weapon limitations.

Finally, **Tables 5** and **6** delve into the possibility of determining a lupin's lineage and its game effects.

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Table 3: Class level limitations

	Fighter	Paladin	Ranger	Wizard	Cleric	Druid	Thief	Bard
Guardians	15	12 ^A	12	9 ^B	15	9	9 ^C	9
Hunters	9 ^D	9 ^E	U	9	15 ^F	13 ^G	-	9 ^H
Shepherds	13	-	12 ^J	9	U	9	-	13
Workers	13	9 ^I	15 ^K	9	15	U ^L	9	9
Vermin H.	9	-	9	9	15	9	U	6
Wee Folk	13	-	15 ^M	15	9 ^N	13	6	-
Nomads	13	-	15	9	15	13	6	13
Mongrels	13	U	12	15	13	13	9	-

- A. Maremma only
 B. Wolfenfolk only (necromancer only)
 C. Pit-Bull only
 D. Renardois Folk have no level restriction as swashbucklers
 E. Golden Retriever only
 F. Nithian Ramblers have no level restriction as clerics when worshipping Nithian Immortals; no Foxfolk clerics allowed.

- G. Foxfolk have no level restriction as druids
 H. Beagles have no level restriction as bards
 I. Zvornikian Sentinel only
 J. Glantrian Mountaineer and Norwold Malamute only
 K. Norwold Malamute only
 L. Ochalean Crested can reach 18th level
 M. Carrasquito only

The merry lupin gallery

Sire Museau was generous enough to give me one of his beautiful tomes. I was awed by the number of different types of lupins populating our world and by the extent of their geographic expansion. I must admit these pages revealed more than I could possibly describe here. Sire Museau had classified his kin into main groups. Many centuries ago, these groups acquired specific specialties and traits, but with time most lupins grew in different ways. The classification remains, however, a simple way to organize their countless pedigrees.

I found the following groups, most of which where self-explanatory: the **Guardians** (mostly warrior types, big, strong, but not geniuses), the **Hunters** (an important group as one would guess, with some of the most colorful and talented creatures to set a paw on

this world), the **Shepherds** (these are the quieter types on whom everyone relies), the **Workers** (who found a niche for themselves in this old world), **Vermin Hunters** (I smiled when I ran across this entry; these are quick and adroit fellows who once made a life of scouring rats and other rodents), the **Wee Folk** (frail but diverse; these are gifted ones), the **Nomads** (now a very small group of tall, lanky characters, although fairly important in this region), and finally the **Mongrels**, listed last, but by no means the tail end of lupinkind.

Here are just a few for your perusal. I hope you'll enjoy my pale summary as much as I enjoyed discovering this new people myself.

Basset Hound, Royal: This ancient lupin breed once specialized in hunting close to the ground, mainly for rabbits. Some of the more imposing lupin breeds tend to look down on the royal bassets, as humans do halflings. They are, however, quite capable as hunters. They mastered the ability to hide in high grass or heavy vegetation when motionless (90% chance), and developed keen sight comparable to infravision, allowing them to see through vegetation as if it were mere darkness. Royal bassets have a free outdoor survival and hunting proficiencies. **AL:** Any Good.

Beagle, Greater: This is one of the most adventuresome lupin breeds. Like the royal basset hound, the greater beagle originated from rabbit-hunting clans. Many wandered away for years to discover the world. One actually joined up as a pilot on the gnomish flying city of Serraine. Specially talented for howling, called "singing" among lupins, beagles make excellent bards (no level limitation). Beagles also have a free exploration proficiency. This Intelligence-based skill allows the greater beagle accurately to

map and record discoveries, to communicate through sign-language, and to interact with natives naturally (+3 bonus to encounter reaction checks). Greater beagles also have an uncanny talent for stumbling onto interesting places (forgotten tombs or lost temples) or to witness unusual events (religious and other taboo ceremonies) often likely to get the greater beagle into some trouble. **AL:** Any non-Lawful; generally Good.

Bloodhound, Grand: Rumored to be the finest trackers, they make up for their generally placid temperament with an unusual tenacity. Grand bloodhounds proved very successful investigators for the King's Gendarmes in Renardy. People say bloodhounds never give up on a fugitive of any sort. Twice a day, bloodhound characters may reroll a failed attempt to track or recognize a scent. Once per adventure, they also may follow a hunch with a successful Intelligence check. This allows them to come up with a new course of action when a party runs out of ideas to solve a problem. The solution may not necessarily make sense at the time. For example, a bloodhound may suddenly think that investigating a particular place or person overlooked earlier could help solve a problem. Although this may not be true, it could bring the party to witness useful events or discover other leads putting the party back on track. **AL:** Lawful Neutral to Neutral Good.

Blue Bandit: The blue bandit gained its Mystaran name from its short and curly dark blue fur. Contrary to the connotation of its Vermin Hunter classification, the blue bandit often remains an elegant lupin, often a gambler or a speculator. The breed's most notorious individual, Arsäne Lupin, is a debonair thief

Weapon and armor limitations

In addition to normal restrictions character classes impose on weapon proficiencies, lupin sizes also have an impact. Up to 40" tall, a lupin is limited to Medium or Small weapons of 5 lbs. or less, regardless of Strength (long swords are not allowed, but the blowgun is). Between 41" and 50" tall, a lupin suffers no limitation on weapon weights but still cannot use a Large weapon of any sort (bastard swords are still not allowed).

Generally, lighter-built lupins stay away from heavy armor as a matter of racial preference. Lupins listed with a weight divider of 4 or more (see Table 1) avoid armor whose standard encumbrance exceeds 25 lbs. Lupins with a weight divider of up to 3.8 avoid armor whose standard encumbrance exceeded 40 lbs. Lupins with a weight divider of 3.5 or less have no armor restrictions, other than those usually imposed by the chosen character class.

Armor weight should then be reduced or increased, as appropriate to the lupin size. Here are summarized guidelines:

For lupins up to 40" tall, armor encumbrance is 60% of normal listed weight. For every extra 4" size (or fraction thereof) add another 10% (retain fractions).

For example: normal plate mail is listed at 50 lbs. For a 40" tall lupin this armor would weigh only 30 lbs. For each extra 4" size add +10% (+3 lbs.). For an 80" tall lupin, this armor should weigh 30 + (10 × 3) = 60 lbs.

Life span

The basic life span of a lupin is 90 years (maximum longevity is 90 + 2d10). A few lupin breeds, such as the Foxfolk, Glantrian Mountaineer, Great Dogge, and unusual mongrels, however, have shorter life spans. The basic life span of the Foxfolk, Glantrian Mountaineer, and the Great Dogge is only 80 years.

Middle age for a lupin comes at about half its base life span (45 years for a basic lupin). Old age comes at about two-thirds of its base life span (or 60 years, minimum 40 years), and venerable age at its base life span (90 years, minimum 60 years). These ages should be readjusted for breeds with shorter life spans. A middle-aged lupin loses a point of Strength and Constitution but gains a point of Intelligence and Wisdom. An old lupin loses two points of Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution but gains a point of Wisdom. A venerable lupin loses a point of Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution but gains a point of Intelligence and Wisdom. A venerable lupin's senses also drops one category (from high to medium, from medium to low, from low to no better than a human of comparable age).



by a borzoi. When reaching a Constitution of zero, a lycanthrope reverts to its normal shape and passes out. Borzoi are immune to lycanthropy. A borzoi family that has reached noble status among Nova-Svoga society heads a secret werewolf-hunting sect. **AL:** Any Lawful.

Bouchon: This small lupin breed gained its notoriety on the Savage Coast as prestigious wine makers, thus the nickname *bouchon* (cork). A happy folk, this white powder-puff of a lupin easily gets along with anyone. Bouchon have developed a special resistance to liquor (treat as 19 Constitution), which they often use to fool others, and over the years the ability to resist poison as well (save vs poison as a dwarf). Bouchon PCs gain a free wine-making proficiency (similar to the brewing skill). **AL:** Any Chaotic, mostly Good.

Bulldog Eusdrian: This is a rather large and heavy lupin version of the common bulldog. The Eusdrian bulldog is a burly worker, often with some degree of authority over common people (an innkeeper, a foreman on a construction site, a city official, the captain of a merchant ship, etc.). Usually strong and



with charm and flair, and a weakness for rich ladies. Arsäne, wanted by the Kings Gendarmes for years, has consistently managed to outfox the King's bloodhounds — a remarkable feat. The blue bandit can mask his scent to send pursuers after the wrong lupin (automatic against any lupin tracker except bloodhounds, who suffer a 50% penalty instead). A blue bandit may have one of the following proficiencies free: gambling, forgery, or finances. The latter is an Intelligence-based skill for dealing with investments, banking, and business transactions. **AL:** Any Chaotic.

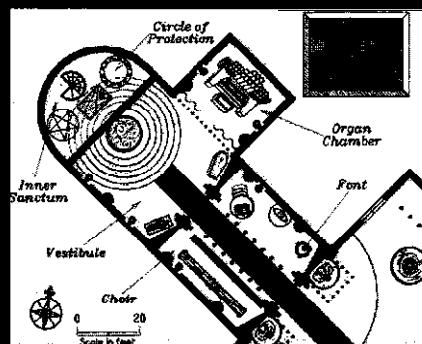
Borzoi, Nova-Svogan: This lupin, a shaggier long-runner, originated from a clan devoted to hunting werewolves in the great northern wastelands. To all lupins in general, lycanthropy remains an aberration, one that they perceive as an insult to their own natural origins, and which must be scourged from the world. The borzoi is the best suited for this task, since its saliva is harmful to all lycanthropes. As a result, Nova-Svogan borzoi fangs are equivalent to silver weapons when fighting lycanthropes. In addition, lycanthropes must succeed a saving throw vs. poison or temporarily lose a point of Constitution when bitten

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Table 4: Thieving skill adjustments

Skills	Guardians & Nomads	Vermin Up to 55"	Hunters Taller	Workers	Wee Folk	Mongrels
Pick Pocket	-5%	+5%	-	-	-	-
Open Locks	-5%	+5%	+5%	+5%	-	-
F/Remove Traps	+5%	+10%	+10%	+10%	+5%	+5%
Move Silently	+5%	+10%	+5%	-	+10%	-
Hide in Shadows	-	+10%	+5%	-	+10%	-
Detect Noise	-	-	+10% to +20%*	-	-	-
Climb Walls	-	-	Dependent upon physical size**	-	-	-
Read Languages	-5%	-	-	-5%	+5%	-

* A lupin with high senses could start at 1st level in any class with a 35% chance to hear noises (Base 15% + 20% bonus, +2% bonus per experience level thereafter). Comparatively, a lupin with low senses would start with a 25% chance (base 15% + 10% bonus). If they are thieves, they can further increase this ability by spending the usual extra thieving points.

** Lupins up to:
 40" tall: -20%
 50" tall: -15%
 60" tall: -10%
 Lupins taller than 60": -5%

downright intimidating to many, it isn't as tough or mean as it wants others to believe. The bulldog has a free intimidation proficiency (see the doggerman entry). Its thunderous bark also instills fear within a 30' radius for 1d4 rounds (save vs. paralyzation to negate). **AL:** Any.

Burrow Bandit: Clans of burrow bandits are best at vermin hunting (foxes in particular, but also rabbits, moles, rats, and the like). They gained unequalled talent among lupinkind at finding their way through burrows, tunnels, and other underground lairs. They can sense

depth and direction underground much as gnomes do. Melee combat within the confines of a small burrow should normally entail a -1 or -2 penalty to attack rolls, to which burrow bandits are immune because of their ability to fight in this manner. **AL:** Any.

Carrasquito: This lupin breed gained its name from its native land, El Grande Carrascal, a cactus wasteland near the Ispan Baronies. The tiny carrasquito developed the natural ability to move easily through overgrown areas (as a 3rd-level druid). The carrasquito also causes gnolls and humanoids of equal or greater size to attack it with a -4 penalty to hit, due to the lupin's small size. Despite its relatively high intelligence, however, the carrasquito sometimes shows excessive bravery for its physical size and requires a Wisdom check to break away from a fight willingly. **AL:** Any non-Evil.

Chow-chow, Ogrish: Ochalean ogre-magi had originally bred the chow-chow lupins as slave hunters, but also for their thick, red fur and their flesh. With help from foo-dogs and clans of friendly lupins (shar-pei mercenaries and Ochalean crested) ogrish chow-chow rebelled and gained their freedom. As a result, chow-chow do not take kindly to slavers, especially ogre-magi. Chow-chow have a 50% chance (plus their level) of recognizing *polymorphed* creatures, or 90% for ogre-magi. Furthermore, they benefit from a +1 bonus to initiative in combat due to their ferocity. **AL:** Any.

Cimarron Hairless: Also known by shadow elves as Xoloitzcuintli, this ancient, dark-skinned breed relates to the original followers of Atzanteotl. They were notorious for being sacred guardians of Atzanteotl's inner temples. After the Immortal had betrayed and abandoned them and their shadow elven masters, most of these lupins resettled northwest of the Broken Lands. Some however did remain with the shadow elves since. Because of their inherent vulnerability to sunrays, they often wear garments covering their faces and entire body. Like shadow elves, they have 90' infravision and they are immune to paralysis from ghouls and other undead. They can also spot secret doors and other details with a 1-2 score on 1d6. **AL:** Any.

Das Hund: This short-legged but long-bodied critter has become an adroit rogue, excelling as a thief or spy. Several have gained enough notoriety

Table 5: Random lupin lineage

A 5d10 dice roll indicates the lineage of a lupin (if any at all) and the strength of this heritage, as shown on Table 5. Remember that the strength of a lupin's lineage has no bearing on its breed or physical appearance.

Roll 5d10	Ancient Lineage
4-5 tens	Strong Hutaakan bloodline
3 tens	Weak Hutaakan lineage
2 tens	Faint traces of Hutaakan blood
2 ones	Faint traces of gnollish blood
3 ones	Weak gnollish lineage
4-5 ones	Strong gnollish bloodline

It is possible to have mixed heritage (rolling 2 or 3 tens and 2 ones for example). Rolling anything other than tens and ones or different numbers would indicate a total lack of a clear bloodline, other than the lupin's own breed.

Lineage generally is hereditary (it stays in a family) but can be weakened or strengthened through successive family generations. If either of the parents has no clear lineage at all, then roll 5d10 on Table 5 for each child. If both parents have at least a trace of a bloodline, roll 1d20 for each child. An odd result relates to the father's lineage, an even number to the mother's. With a score of 19-20, lineage is strengthened by one category. On a roll of 7-18, lineage is passed on as is. On a roll of 1-6, lineage is weakened by one category. If either parent had equal traces of two different bloodlines, then choose one at random (50%) as the one passed on to the child.

Feel free as a DM to assign different dice numbers to additional bloodlines for use with Table 5, as appropriate to your campaign. Foo-dog blink-dog, or wolvenfolk lineages could exist as well, assigning for example nines, eights, and sevens to these bloodlines. As an option, here are effects inherent to these bloodlines (faint bloodlines of any sort have no game effect whatsoever). Effects are otherwise cumulative. Table 6 shows the effects of the stronger bloodlines; however, these may not necessarily prove to be entirely desirable.

Table 6: Effects of bloodlines

Lineage	Strength	Effect
Hutaakan (tens)	Strong	You are blessed by Pflarr for He now gazes upon you. You derive no supernatural powers from your heritage, only fame or a deadly hatred if your secret were ever unveiled. Gain +1 Wisdom (max 19) regardless of original lupin breed.
	Weak	Your heritage is strong enough to warrant a claim to ancient lupin nobility, should you unveil your lineage. No special abilities.
Gnollish (ones)	Strong	Your ultimate faith now lies in the hands of Yeenoghu, a pawn of darkness (NPC only). Roll up a new character at once! Your alignment must now be utterly evil, regardless of the original lupin breed.
	Weak	Gain +1 Constitution (max. 19) -2 Intelligence, regardless of racial minimums (see Table 1).
Foo-dog (nines)	Strong	The Grandees of Ochalea will honor the path upon which you tread. May you live in interesting times! You age (no saving throw) unnaturally if failing to perform a good act: 1 year for merely ignoring an opportunity to do some good, 5 years if actually causing harm. The loss is permanent. You gain a +2 bonus to all saving throws (except vs. poison) and naturally radiate a <i>protection from evil</i> once per day (as the wizard spell, cast at half the lupin's experience level, rounded up).
	Weak	Your basic life span is only 70 years, compared to 90 for most other breeds. Your alignment must be good, regardless of the lupin breed. You cannot be a thief.
Blink-dog (eights)	Strong	You can <i>blink</i> once per experience level, per day, with an 80% chance of success. Each blink temporarily weakens you; treat as a point of stun damage (see Mastiff description for stun mechanics). Failing an attempt to blink with a roll of "00" causes the permanent loss of a hit point.
	Weak	Your alignment must be good, regardless of your original lupin breed. Gain +2 to AC due to your innate dodging ability.

within noble circles of the Savage Coast that several different rulers actually compete to acquire their services, including the Heldannic Order. Das Hund either gains 90 discretionary points for its initial thieving abilities instead of 60 or, with a successful Wisdom check, it can guess someone's next immediate course of action provided it can stare into the other person's eyes for at least a round. The DM must limit such information to six words or less. **AL:** Any.

Doggerman: This black-and-rust Hattian breed originally specialized in guarding palaces and military barracks. It can often be found working as a career soldier, an officer, a professional bodyguard, or in a secret police caste. Many found permanent employment with Thyatis's Hattian legions and the Heldannic Order. Its natural senses are not as keen as those of hunting breeds for example; however, it has sharp memory, observation, and deduction skills (+2 bonus to Intelligence checks in this regard). The doggerman also benefits from a free intimidation proficiency. This Strength-based talent allows the doggerman to force NPCs into submission. The doggerman does receive a penalty to this check equal to a third of the NPC's experience level (or HD), rounded down. **AL:** Any Lawful.

Fennec, Fighting-: This tiny, sand-color critter is about the size of the caracarasquito. It looks like a miniature fox with very large ears. A native of Ylaruam, the fighting-fennec relates to nocturnal hunting clans living from small desert prey and furtive raids on human caravans. Nomadic Alaysians know the fennec is a follower of Al-Kalim and respect it for that. Most importantly, a fennec joining a party is believed to be a good omen, a sign of goodwill from Al-Kalim. This is because the fennec is a lucky fellow with the ability, once per day, to reroll anyone's single die, including a foe's or a friend's. Very keen of hearing, it can Hear Noise with a 40% base chance + 2 per experience level. **AL:** Any non-Evil.

Foxfolk: This reddish lupin, as can be expected, is perfectly at ease among woodland beings. Unlike to other hunting breeds, a foxfolk cannot be a cleric, however, it can attain unlimited druidic level. A Norwold cousin exists, with white fur, but otherwise no game difference. A foxfolk benefits from an innate ability to smell a trap this is a danger sense alerting it of an impending danger (the DM must score a 1-2 on 1d6 for the

ability to be activated). The foxfolk, however, knows neither where the trap lies nor its nature, just that danger lurks nearby (a mechanical trap, a hidden pit, a magical snare, or even a foe waiting in ambush). **AL:** Any Chaotic, usually Good.

Glantri Mountaineer: Where else but in the Glantrian Alps could this placid lupin feel best at home? Sturdy, slobbery, but loveable, this benevolent character knows every corner of its native mountain, even in the worst blizzard. This lupin has free mountaineering, orienteering, and yodeling proficiencies. It also has the ability to lay on hands, exactly like a paladin. **AL:** Lawful Neutral to Neutral Good.

Gnomish Snoutzer: Just as gnomes pride their nasal appendages, so do the schnauzers their snouts. Their sense of smell is so good they can accurately predict natural weather for up to 6 hours in advance (wind speed & direction, temperature, and precipitation). These workers became good friends with forest gnomes. In exchange for benefitting from the snoutzers' natural abilities, these gnomes taught them how to pass through wooden terrain without leaving a visible trace and how to become invis-

Howling

If outdoors, lupins may use their baying to communicate simple messages to others of their kind (1d4+1 words per round). Their ability to do so depends on their physical sizes (assuming the larger the lupin, the more powerful the voice), weather conditions, terrain, and the hearing ability of the receiving lupin.

A lupin must succeed a Hear Noise check to comprehend the message. If the attempt misses by 30% or more, the lupin doesn't even hear or notice the howling at all. For each inch in size above 40" of the howling lupin, add a bonus of +1%. If the howler is a bard, add another +10% bonus. If the howler is a beagle, add another +20% bonus. For each full mile of distance between the two lupins, apply a 10% penalty (under half a mile, add a +30% bonus instead). If there are trees, hills, winds, loud noises (a river for example) near the one listening, or other relevant obstacles, add penalties as appropriate or disallow the attempt altogether. If the listener is sleeping at the time, allow a 10% chance waking up.

ible in woods when motionless (80% chance of succeeding either attempts).

AL: Any non-Evil.

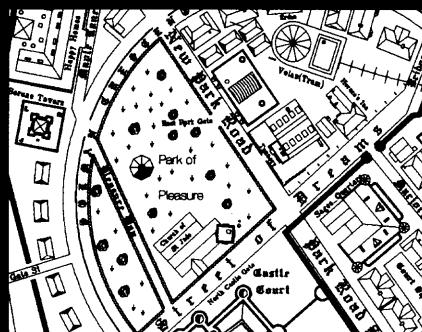
Golden Retriever, Greater: This lupin relates to an ancient hunting breed that became very skillful with archery and, as the name implies, at retrieving its quarry from whence it fell. As a result, the golden retriever benefits from a +1 bonus to hit with bows and slings (non-mechanical weapons). Its peculiar background gave the retriever an unusual trait, however.

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Hound of Klantyre: This small lupin is an archetypal vermin hunter. When launched against rat-sized creatures with no particular defenses or magic except their great numbers, the "scottie" can make an additional attack per experience level (short sword or smaller hand-held weapon only). Furthermore, because of its origins, the hound of Klantyre has a particular understanding of undeath. When confronted with undead creatures, this lupin has either an innate *protection from evil* or, if a cleric, the ability to turn undead as if two experience levels higher. Klantyre and Boldavian nobility, notorious Glantrian undead, generally treat hounds of Klantyre with suspicion at best, unless the latter unequivocally demonstrate their will to serve them. Some have become powerful minions of these undead, others skillful undead hunters. Hounds of Klantyre can recognize the smell of undeath (i.e., its type) as they would a common race. **AL:** Any.

Ispan Pistolero: This small, drooping-eared lupin relates especially to Ispan woodcock-hunting clans. Most of their clans migrated to the Ispan lands where they managed to acquire unusual respect for their kind from the human population. In so doing they developed a singular attraction to firearms available on the Savage Coast, which earned them their present name Ispan gun-dogs. They can use firearms, from pistols to arquebuses, with a +1 bonus to their initiative and attack rolls. They also have a free gunsmith proficiency. **AL:** Any.

Long-Runner: This tall and skinny lupin draws its notoriety from the ability to run fast and far. Its origins go back to nomadic clans that roamed the vast steppes, peddling their goods from one settlement to another. As a result, the long-runner gains free endurance and appraisal proficiencies. As far as the long-runner's ability to run or move quickly over long distances are concerned, its Constitution score should be modified in the same way the golden retriever's Dexterity is altered (see earlier entry). The long-runner has the natural propensity to run after small prey suddenly darting away (unless consequences involve obvious death). A successful Wisdom check can prevent this from happening. The chase lasts 1d6+2 rounds or until the prey is captured. **AL:** Any.

Maremma, Narvaezan: Dubbed the Serene Master of All He Surveys, this tall,



Any time a hand-held object is thrown at or away from the retriever, it must succeed a Wisdom check to avoid running after the object (unless consequences involve obvious death). The DM may assign bonuses to the Wisdom check, as dictated by the situation. When failing a Wisdom check, the retriever can temporarily increase its Dexterity for the next two rounds. It does so in the following way: subtract half the retrievers present Dexterity score from 10; add the result rounded up to the retrievers Dexterity score. Despite this unusual trait, some retrievers have been able to become paladins because of their benevolent demeanor. **AL:** Any Good.

Heldann Shepherd: The original clans of this proud and versatile lupin breed relied on their talent as sheep and goat herders. Over the centuries, this lupin has expanded its fields of knowledge commonly to include the duties of constable, soldier, guide, and guard. Because of its versatility, the Heldann shepherd starts with an additional two non-weapon proficiencies, plus one more every time new proficiencies are normally acquired. Furthermore, the Heldann shepherd gains a +1 bonus to its initiative rolls. **AL:** Any Good or Any Lawful.

snow-white lupin is as brave as it is amiable. It draws its origins from sheep-raising clans whose members were praised for their guarding and fighting skills. As such, the Maremma stands as one of the very few lupins that can become a paladin of significant level. The maremma can be surprised only on a roll of 1 on a d6. Furthermore, this lupin's visual senses allow it to notice details that could give-away the presence of hidden foes with a successful Wisdom check (footprints on the ground, grass and shrubs disturbed, a branch bending unnaturally, an abnormal rustle of leaves, an odd shadow, a sudden movement in a crowd, someone staring, etc). **AL:** Lawful Neutral to Neutral Good.

Mastiff, King-: Generally of great strength and dignity, this lupin can be a most formidable guardian. The king-mastiff generally devotes its life to a master or to a cause. As a result, the mastiffs determination in combat remains unequaled among lupins. Anytime it suffers damage of any type that is a third or more of its current hit point total, half of this damage (rounded down) counts as stun damage only. The mastiff passes out when it reaches zero hit points due to combined stun and

physical damage, and dies if it reaches -10 hit points. If not slain, the mastiff wakes up 1d6+4 rounds later (minus its Constitution bonus to hit points), shrugging off all accumulated stun damage. Furthermore, the mastiff is immune to natural or magical fear. **AL:** Any.

Nithian Rambler: One could be tempted to think that Pflarr's blood flows through the hearts of these Pharaoh hounds than in any other lupin breed, but in truth they only preserved through the centuries a spiritual and cultural affinity with ancient Nithia. Nithian rambles desperately cling to shreds of their ancient ways and to a devotion to Pflarr (or Thanatos), as if to atone for (or avenge) the loss of their true bloodlines. Nithian rambles either do not reveal their background or remain in secluded communities, away from other lupins. Clerics of Pflarr are sometimes involved in breeding schemes planned out over centuries, to try to purify their bloodlines and bring back a true Hutaakan whom they would revere as some sort of envoy from Pflarr, possibly a prophet. Clerics of Thanatos would instead try to eliminate such a creature. When succeeding a Wisdom check with a -2 penalty, a Nithian rambler can smell whether another lupin has any trace of Hutaakan blood. **AL:** Any.

Norwold Malamute: This northerner is accustomed to roam the icy reaches of Norwold. It has free running and orienteering proficiencies the latter of which it developed to an unparalleled degree. The Norwold malamute naturally knows its way through the dark, polar rim leading to Mystara's Hollow World. Early on, malamute clans learned to follow migratory paths across the frozen Nentsun Channel and the Hyborean Ice Pack. Fast and tireless, an unencumbered malamute can move across snow at a normal speed; it also saves against all cold-based attacks with a +2 bonus. **AL:** Any.

Ochalean Crested: Almost entirely hairless, this small lupin has a dark brown to black skin, with a long tuft of white hair flowing from the top of its head to its shoulders. Long white hair also grows on its feet, the back of its hands, and the end of its tail. It often occupies positions of authority (mandarins, magistrates, governors, or Ochalean nobility) or those associated with erudites (sages, wizards, scribes, etc). Magic generally fascinates Ochalean crested lupins, much like it does with elves. They developed a natural ability allowing them, once a day, to switch one

memorized spell for another of a lower level, duplicated from among other memorized spells. In other words, the lupin can decide to forfeit its *fireball* spell, and duplicate another lesser spell already memorized, like a *feather fall*. It also has a free spellcraft proficiency. **AL:** Any.

Ochalean Houndling: Thanks to their wrinkled faces, pushed-in noses, and undershooting jaws, these Beitungese are thought truly ugly by human standards. Nevertheless these tiny lupins evolved to become the most common lupin breed in Ochalea's capital city. They are the workers, merchants, shopkeepers, servants, artists, and everyday folk one could expect to find in the streets, had Ochalea been a lupin setting. Numerous houndlings live at the palace in Beitung either as servants or as courtesans. The houndling has the unique talent of eluding trouble when adopting a meek and submissive countenance. Whenever two people face any kind of trouble (anger from an important person, a foe in combat, etc.) this Beitungese may beg and kowtow, prompting the source of the trouble to ignore the houndling and focus its attention on the other fellow instead.



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For this, the houndling need only succeed a Wisdom check and move away from the source of trouble at MV 3 until completely out of its sight. Houndlings have a free etiquette proficiency. **AL:** Any.

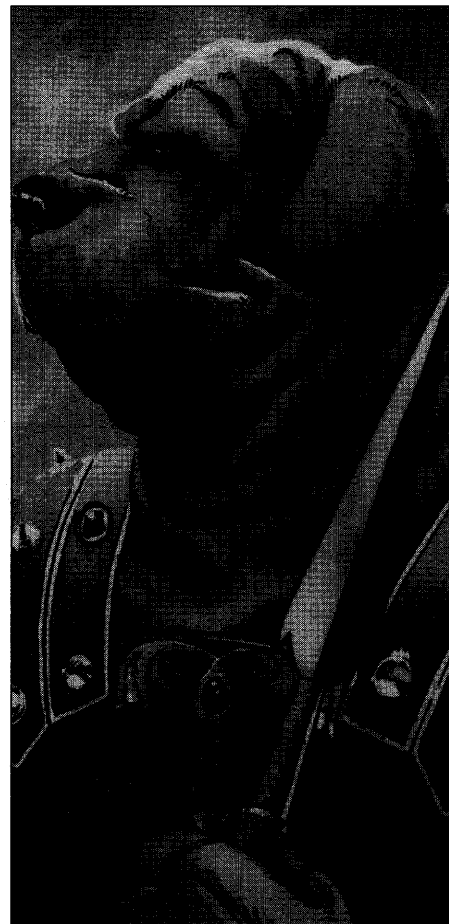
Papillon, Neo-: Despite its large, hairy ears, this lupin learned to use its small size to its own profit, namely that of being an escape artist. It can slip out of non-magical bonds with a successful Dexterity check (-5 penalty if magical). It can also squeeze through very small spaces to escape a prison, bending past tight corners in the process. The escape route can measure as little as a foot in diameter for a neo-papillon to crawl through (MV 3). As a thief it also has a +15% modifier to its chances to Open Locks. The most famous of these lupins, a Renardois called Papillon, was wrongfully deported to the penitentiary in the Fortress of Boa Vista, far away at the tip of The Horn. It has escaped several times in the past 20 years, only to be recaptured in the swamps and deserts of this desolate peninsula. **AL:** Any non-Lawful.

Pit-Bull, Torreón: This breed early on made it a specialty to fight in Thyatian arenas as professional gladiators. A few individuals earned their modern breed

name after becoming illustrious tore-adors in the bull-fighting arenas of Torreón (+1 bonus to attack rolls against all bull-like creatures, including minotaurs). These pit-bulls are excessively aggressive, proud, impatient, and unpredictable by nature. Other than professional arena fighters, pit-bulls unfortunately often end up as hired-hands, thugs, and other shady characters. These lupins are so ferocious that they behave as berserkers when involved in combat (either a +2 to attack rolls or an extra attack per round, and immunity to *fear*). Furthermore, a pit-bull requires a successful Wisdom check to break from combat once it has started. Recent rumor has it that pit-bulls have strong gnollish bloodlines, but there is no proof of such. **AL:** From Chaotic Neutral to Neutral Evil.

Renardois Folk: Typical hunters, Renardois folk appear as medium sized lupins, with short brown, black, and white fur. The most common lupin breed in Renardy, they naturally gather in groups of 4-10 at any opportunity, a strange habit going back to the times they roamed the steppes in great hunting packs. They sit by, quipping about passersby, whistling at ladies, and otherwise acting a tad obnoxious, if generally harmless. Renardois folk make the best lupin swashbucklers (no level limitation). They excel at causing others to enrage, which earned them a free taunting proficiency. With a successful Wisdom check, this proficiency causes a victim to become outraged for 1d4+2 rounds. An outraged victim's Wisdom and Dexterity scores are temporarily halved (round up) and the victim must then succeed its own Wisdom check to avoid immediately charging into combat. **AL:** Any Chaotic, usually Good.

Shag-Head: This bob-tailed lupin earned this affectionate nickname because of its big and hairy appearance. If one could see its eyes, their gaze would betray unfathomable intensity and spiritual depth. The nickname also comes from this lupin's propensity to wander the trails of Mystara dishevelled and somewhat confused, in search of Immortal Truth. Shag-heads often perform the functions of sooth-sayers or mystics due to their ability to sense emanations from beyond. This ability is not under the shag-head's control (it is a DM's tool only). The shag-head can sense events happening elsewhere (the death of an important person or someone of significant relation to the party, the crowning of a monarch, a battle, a



storm, a building collapsing, a sinking ship, the anger of an Immortal, the awakening or birth of a creature of great good or evil, an approaching peril, etc.) at least once per adventure. While uttering auguries, which takes 1d4+2 rounds, a shag-head enters into uncontrolled trances during which it levitates and an aura of light surrounds its body. The light renders the lupin totally immaterial albeit still visible (then existing partially in the ethereal plane) and cures any of its wounds. The shag-head can suppress the urge to enter into trances with a successful Wisdom check, which delays the prophecy as follows (roll 1d4): 1 — a round, 2 — a turn, 3 — an hour, 4 — a full day. Such omens, either specific to the adventure or totally unrelated, should remain fairly obscure but solvable with some clues. The shag-head can remember what was said with a successful Wisdom check. Shag-heads are a perfect outlet for powerful entities to communicate with the rest of the party. Shag-heads also have any two of the following proficiencies free and with a +1 bonus: religion, spellcraft, astrology, ancient languages. **AL:** Any Lawful.

Shar-Pei, High: Another illustrious lupin from Ochalea, this one is most

famous as a warrior and a mercenary which has been an ancient tradition with high shar-pei clans. Some under-employed mercenary clans also gained notoriety by resorting to piracy on land and at sea. They excel with pole-arms, for which they have a natural +1 bonus to their attack rolls. Because of their superior combat techniques with pole-arms, Shar-Pei warriors can forfeit all their attacks in a given round to try to keep multiple foes at bay. For this effect compare the Shar-Pei's attack roll to its THACO, the difference indicating the number of subsequent melee attack automatically missing. For example, if a Shar-Pei warrior with a THACO of 14 rolled an 18, the next 4 melee attacks would automatically miss, regardless of the attackers' scores. If an attacker's score was naturally insufficient to hit a Shar-Pei (for reasons other than the defensive pole-arm tactics), the attacker would also suffer a point of damage (plus Strength and magical adjustments). **AL:** Any.

Slagovici Conic: Pronounced "Slagovitchi gonitch," also known as the Slagovich Goat Herder, this large and powerful lupin cannot be mistaken for any other because of its very long white coat falling in thick, felt-like cords resembling a string mop. Several clans of these lupins live in the hills around Slagovich, mostly raising goats. Naturally suspicious of strangers, they also have an 80% chance of detecting evil intent toward them, their immediate party, or their flock; they cannot, however, pinpoint its location or its nature. These lupins have free appraisal, animal handling, and animal lore proficiencies, although all three remain strictly limited to goats and sheep. **AL:** Any Chaotic, mostly Chaotic Neutral.

Wolvenfolk: These hardy creatures have an innate tie to Saimpt-Loup, the Immortal of death, mercy, and survival of the fittest. Contrary to natural lupin evolution, Saimpt-Loup created original wolvenfolk bloodlines. It gives them the ability to sometimes conjure death itself. Whenever they meet an untimely death (poison, magic, exceeding 10 hit points, etc) wolvenfolk can make a Constitution check. If they succeed, they lose two experience levels and a point of Constitution, but awaken 1d4+2 rounds later with one hit point left instead. Furthermore, the wolvenfolk's alignment moves one notch closer to Saimpt-Loup's (lawful evil). Once a wolvenfolk reaches this alignment future use of the ability is forever negated. As a result of

their special bond with Saimpt-Loup, wolvenfolk can neither be raised from the dead ever, nor have any other bloodline (see Tables 5 and 6). They can become mongrels after successive generations, at which point the magical bond with Saimpt-Loup is broken. Other breeds, however, could eventually gain wolvenfolk bloodlines but would then fall under the powerful Immortal bond as well. **AL:** any except NG, CG, and CN.

Ye Great Dogge: Locally known as the Ostland Stövare this huge lupin is an ancient and proud warrior among lupinkind. Its origins relate more to a hunter of large predators and a gentle giant. It often surfaced in lupin history as the breed of local heroes. Once a day and for six rounds, the great dogge can radiate a 25' radius aura of inspiration comparable to a bless spell. The great dogge has a free leadership proficiency. This Wisdom-based skill allows the great dogge to *remove fear* (one attempt per person, singly or in a group). **AL:** Any Good.

Zvornikski Gonic: The Zvornikian sentinel is a short-hair and all-white lupin with black dots. A branch of this clan is famous for staffing the fire squad in Zvornik. They prevented a major disaster

in the capital, directing a desperate effort to stop a raging fire from engulfing the entire city. Of their clan of 20, four died in the disaster, but the city was saved. Their entire clan was knighted and earned the hereditary charge to control the Order of the Ember (a brotherhood of knights comparable to real-world Hospitaliers). They also have a permanent +2 bonus to saving throws against all fire-based attacks, natural or magical, +3 if a knight of the order. Sentinels can also smell fires larger than common campfires with a +2 bonus to the attempt (+5 bonus for a blaze; 1 penalty per mile away). **AL:** Any non-Chaotic.



Bruce Heard has a knack for creating races and cultures for the MYSTARA setting. He occasionally finds the time to type at his computer, sitting among fossils, ancient artifacts, and dusty skeletons leaning over his shoulder, but otherwise hasn't a mean bone in his body.

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The logo for RPGA Network News. On the left is a square emblem with a circular design inside, featuring a dragon and the letters 'RPGA'. To the right of the emblem, the word 'Network' is written in a stylized, blocky font, and the word 'NEWS' is written in a larger, bold, sans-serif font below it.

RPGA Network NEWS

by Carla Hollar, Jackie Cassada, and Nicky Rea

After the rush and bustle of the holiday season, the WINTER FANTASY™ convention offers a refreshing, economical vacation. The convention takes place February 5-9 at the Wisconsin Center in Milwaukee, WI, taking advantage of the off-season rates to garner rockbottom hotel prices for attendees. This year starts with something really new! WINTER FANTASY convention attendees have come to expect a slew of their favorite gaming genres; this year two special events have been added to the feast. The first of these features a game available for the first time as a sanctioned RPGA® Network tournament. The second explores an old world through new eyes and a new game system.

Werewolf howls

Those who have perused the schedule (to judge or play events) for the WINTER FANTASY convention may have noticed a game tucked away among all the others. Their hearts may have beat a little faster, or they may have believed they were seeing a typo, but the information is correct. After clandestine midnight meetings during the GEN CON® Game Fair last year, White Wolf and the RPGA Network have arranged the first ever sanctioned *Werewolf: The Apocalypse** game tournament.

Set in the World of Darkness and capturing the flavor of the game while maintaining RPGA standards, "Road Warriors" was written by Nicky Rea and Jackie Cassada, whose work has appeared in many White Wolf products. The network is looking for more judges familiar with the game system to help out at the convention. Player demand will determine how often White Wolf games are offered in the future.

Visions of destiny

Heralding an alternative approach to tournament gaming, the Visions of Destiny campaign is set during the Age of Mortals on Krynn. Using TSR's new SAGA™ system, this DRAGONLANCE®: FIFTH AGE™ tournament game is the first in a continuing series of ten. Scheduled to unfold over a three-year period, the tournaments will initially run at major regional conventions, then be released for play at local cons, allowing everyone a chance to follow the storyline. For those who can't attend enough conventions to keep abreast, the character sheets will be updated between each tournament, with notes on their important actions, as well as information on magic, spells, or special equipment they have accumulated. Further, a precis of the prior game appears at the start of each new tournament.

Forming an epic quest, the "Visions of Destiny" tournaments follow the careers of six fledgling heroes who travel across the twisted landscape of a greatly changed Krynn. Led by visions and dreams while growing in experience and power, they seek the magical might they must have to defeat a horror returning from the Age of Dreams.

"Visions of Destiny" is not the first serial tournament. The Star/Rats tournaments of previous years have also used repeating characters. An advantage of most of the Star/Rats scenarios is that they were designed to be played alone. Likewise, it is possible to play each of the "Visions of Destiny" tournaments as a separate, discrete game with its own victories and accomplishments, but they all come together in the end as part of an ongoing quest.

Filled with the spirit and atmosphere that DRAGONLANCE fans have come to love, and showcasing the new diceless SAGA system, the "Visions of Destiny" campaign tournaments are character-intensive. The SAGA system's simpler rules and use of cards encourage players to bring strategy and skill to their heroes' actions. The fluidity of sorcerous and mystical magic allows the creation of one-of-a-kind spells, while the spell point system enables beginning heroes a chance to cast more than a single, first-level spell. The challenge becomes all the greater, as magic has almost fled the beleaguered world.

The most exciting aspect of the campaign is its response to player actions and decisions. While there is an overall storyline that forms the backdrop for play, development and advancement of the characters and the plot is in the hands of the players. The heroes' decisions have consequences that determine the future direction of the campaign. In essence, the players become part of the creation process.

So, how does this work? Much as with LIVING CITY™ games, the Narrator must complete a questionnaire: Did the heroes finish the quest? Did they defeat the villain? Questionnaires will be compared, and whatever occurs at the majority of tables at the first-run convention, becomes "reality" in the campaign world. Welcome to "Visions of Destiny," where your decisions help create the world.

Editor's Note: As we go to press, the WINTER FANTASY™ convention has been cancelled. Watch for updates on the first appearance of the "Visions of Destiny" tournament campaign in an upcoming issue.

Want to join?

The RPGA® Network supports conventions all over the world with tournaments designed for many different roleplaying systems, especially the AD&D game.

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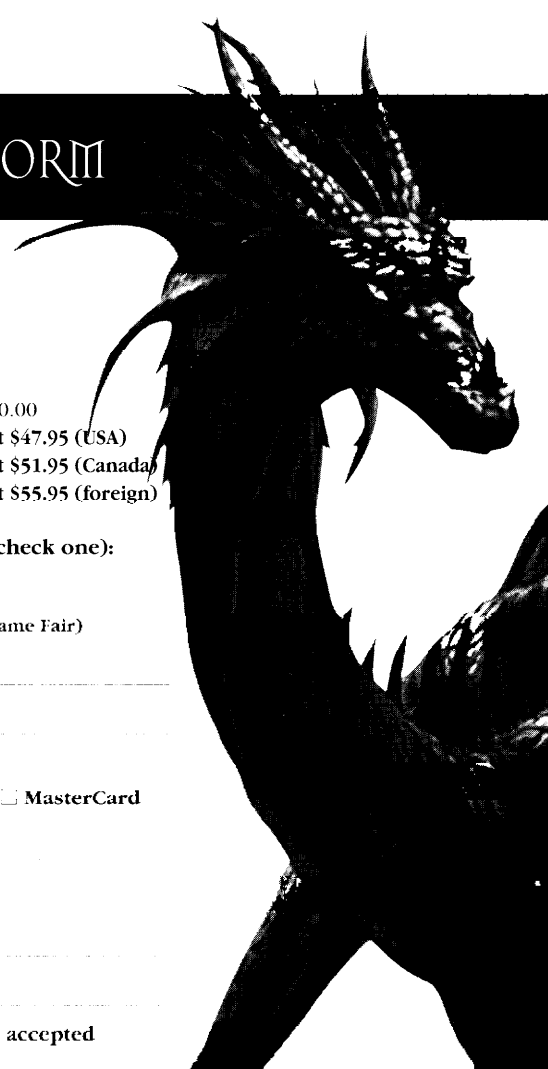
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The Arcane Challenge

ANSWERS REVEALED!

by Steve Winter

Editor's Note: Last winter, DRAGON® Magazine printed the AD&D® Triviathlon contest. Since the contest concluded, many have sent us letters asking for the answers to particular questions. Here, then from the Creative Director of the AD&D games line at TSR, are the first 25 questions and answers, with notes explaining the more complicated solutions. The rest of the solutions will appear in sidebars throughout the coming issues.

1. What type of animal is most often found guarding a gnome's lair?

Answer: Badger

2. What is the percentage chance to burn through a rope with a candle?

Answer: 25%

Note: This is a simple conversion from one number to another. A candle produces normal, nonmagical flame. The Item Saving Throws Table shows that a rope has a saving roll of 6 or higher vs. normal fire. That translates to a 75% chance of success, which is the same as a 25% chance of failure.

3. I just cast a spell at my enemy, who was then pelted with red flowers. Where am I?

Answer: A wild magic area.

Note: This is the result of a modified roll of 24-27 on the Effects of Wild Magic table from *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Adventures*.

4. What being is the source of Pluma magic?

Answer: Qotal, the feathered dragon.

Note: Qotal received the gift of Pluma from his mother. He, however, is its source.

5. If a drow says to you, "Oloth plynndos," what does he mean?

Answer: It is a curse meaning, "darkness take you!"

Note: As explained on page 95 of *The Drow of the Underdark*.

6. A specialist wizard in the School of Abjuration cannot cast spells from which schools?

Answer: Alteration and illusion.

7. Who is worshiped at the Silent Hall in Iriaebor?

Answer: Eldath (Goddess of Singing Waters).

Note: Another obscure fact from *FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures*.

8. What bonus proficiency is granted to a metaphysician?

Answer: Academician.

Note: Metaphysician is a character kit from the *Masque of the Red Death* setting.

9. What level of spell is tentacle walls?

Answer: Seventh

10. A PC drinks half of an enlarged *potion of diminution*. What happens to her?

Answer: She shrinks 50%.

Note: Anyone who read the spell description got this one right.

11. According to the *Player's Handbook*, what is the maximum number of hit points a 1st-level thief can have?

Answer: 8.

Note: 6 for maxing out the roll, plus 2 for Constitution 16 or higher.

12. Doommasters are specialty priests of what deity?

Answer: Beshaba (Maid of Misfortune).

Note: *FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures* again.

13. What damage bonus does a character gain when wearing a *girdle of storm giant strength*?

Answer: +12

14. What potion ages its user by a year?

Answer: *Potion of speed*.

15. What is the proper name for polar halflings?

Answer: Furchin

Note: Because they have beards, as pointed out in *The Complete Book of Gnomes and Halflings*.

16. The first impression one has of these is of "a writhing mass of fur and flesh in the distant moonlit darkness." What are they?

Answer: Gibberlings

Note: We got a lot of funny answers to this one, but we can't reprint them here.

17. A 3rd-level fighter (Str 17, plate mail, *boots of speed*, two-handed sword with specialization) battles a hook horror: statistically, who is most likely to win, and in which round?

Answer: Whoever wins initiative in round 4.

Note: The answer should be found by assigning average values to everything and stepping through the duel. In the question's original form, the answer was clearly fighter, 3rd round. A small editing change (the original question specified how many hit points each combatant had, and the hook horror was below par) muddled the water so that the answer became whoever wins initiative in round 4. However, because of some confusion in the AD&D rules, we also accepted fighter, round 3, and hook horror, round 4.

The confusion is two-fold. First, we never specified whether any optional rules could be used, and weapon speed factors can influence who wins initiative in the 4th round.

But greater confusion exists over the timing of three attacks per two rounds. We discovered, when double checking this answer, that the rules never actually state whether you get the second attack



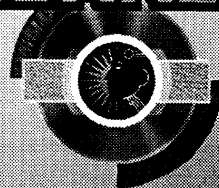
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in even or odd rounds. A quick survey led us to believe that most DMs give the bonus attack in the even-numbered rounds — 2nd, 4th, etc. — the same way we do, but there's nothing in the rules about it. It's just as valid to give the bonus in the 1st, 3rd, etc., rounds. And for the purpose of this question, it makes a big difference.

Aside from that, the answer is fairly easily derived by using average values for everything, but things like weapon speed modifiers and that pesky 3/2 attacks issue pretty well defanged this question.

18. According to the *Player's Handbook*, what is the minimum level a priest must be to have a chance at turning a vampire?

Answer: 6th

Note: Straight off the Turning Undead Table.

19. In what AD&D game campaign setting could you find hadozees and rastipedes?

Answer: The SPELLJAMMER® setting

20. The only thing I won't eat is an elf, although I don't like the taste of dwarves. What am I?

Answer: Bulette

Note: This seems like a pretty straight-forward question, except that the answer, for some unfathomable reason, is in the Combat section of the bulette description, rather than in the Ecology section where it belongs. (And, by the way, it's pronounced boo-let, not boo-lay.)

21. How many fen equal one yuan?

Answer: 5 fen = 1 yuan.

Note: A simple question, if you have access to a copy of *Oriental Adventures*.

22. Which character races can be demi-bards?

Answer: Elves, dwarves, halflings, gnomes

Note: That's all the demihuman races that can't be bards. It's all explained in *The Complete Bard's Handbook*.

23. "Goblinsticker" is a special fighter kit for what race?

Answer: Gnomes

Note: Most people instantly think, "Dwarves." It's from *The Complete Book of Gnomes and Halflings*.

24. At what level can a sha'ir call upon a jann for aid and protection?

Answer: 5th

Note: As explained in *Arabian Adventures*.

25. Who or what are korobokuru?

Answer: Oriental dwarves.

Note: As described in *Oriental Adventures*.



Steve Winter started working as an editor for TSR, Inc. in 1981. In the years since then, Steve has been involved in the launch of more cancelled product lines than anyone else at TSR. For the last several years he has been the Creative Director in charge of the AD&D® game; so far it seems to be doing OK, but he's keeping his fingers crossed.

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Convention Calendar Policies

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

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

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

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

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

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

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, *DRAGON® Magazine*, 201 Sheridan Springs Rd., Lake Geneva, WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, *DRAGON Magazine*, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

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



January Conventions

Sunquest '97

January 2-5 FL
Marriott Orlando Resort, Orlando. Guests: Timothy Bradstreet, Michael Stackpole, and Jay Tummelson. Events: role-playing card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: LIVING CITY™ tournaments, art show, charity auction, *M:tG** tournament. Registration: \$30/on site. Sunquest, P.O. Box 677069, Orlando, FL 32867-7069, or e-mail: sunquest@sundialnet or <http://www.sundial.net/~sunquest>.

Necrocon

January 3-5 OH
Harley Hotel, Columbus. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: *Vampire*: LARP, art demos and, dealer room. Registration: varies. Ravenstone Games, 6825 Flags Center Drive, Columbus, OH 43229.

Jonescon IV

January 17-19 FL
Coung Nhu Karate Health Center, Gainesville Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: *Battletech** and *Warhammer 40K.** Registration: \$7/preregistered, \$10/week-end. E-mail jonescon@afn.org.

The Mage's Festival

January 18 PA
Best Western Inn, Montgomeryville. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: dealers room. Registration: \$10/on site. The ALPHA Gaming Network, P.O. Box 102, Doylestown, PA 18944.

Glorantha Con IV

January 24-26 IL
Ramada Hotel O'Hare, Rosemont. Guests: Greg Stafford, Sandy Peterson, and others. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: auction, art show, and a troll ball. Registration: \$40. Andrew Joelson, 1330-D Gifford Ct., Hanover Park, IL 60103-5227, or e-mail: joelsona@cpdmfg.cig.mot.com.

Hurricon

January 30-Feb. 2 FL
Okaloosa Island Holiday Inn, Fort Walton Beach. Guests: David Bishop, Barbara Hambly, George Alec Effinger, Margaret Weis, Don Perrin, and Fraser Sherman. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other events: *M:tG* tournaments, *Rage** demos, computer gaming, workshops, panels, and a dance. Registration: \$30. Hurricon, 1840 N. Miro St., New Orleans, LA 70169.

WarCon '97

January 31 -Feb. 2 TX
Texas A&M University Memorial Student Center, College Station. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: *M:tG* tournaments, network computer gaming, guest panels and a dealers room. Registration: \$16/pre-registered, \$20/on site. MSC Nova, Memorial Student Center, Texas A&M University Box J-I, College Station, TX 77844-9081.

February Conventions

Genghis Con '97

February 13-16 CO
Red Lion Inn, Denver. Guests: Elaine Cunningham and Keith Parkinson. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$13/day \$20/weekend.

Legends & Legions '97

February 14-16 FL
Collegiate Village Inn, Tallahassee. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: charity auction and a painted miniatures contest. Registration: varies. David Glenn, 217 Columbia Dr., Tallahassee, FL 32304.

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February 14-17 CA

L.A. Airport Wyndham Hotel, Los Angeles. Events: role-playing card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: Auction, exhibitor area, seminars, and demos. Registration: \$27.50/ preregistered, \$33/on site. Strategicon, 333 N. San Fernando Blvd., Burbank, CA 91502.

BASHCon

February 21-23 OH

The University of Toledo Student Union, Toledo. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: RPGA® Network events. Registration: \$3/day, \$6/weekend. Attn UT-BASH, University of Toledo, 2801 W. Bancroft St., Toledo, OH 43606-3390.

Gamicon Eta

February 21-23 IA

National Guard Armory, Iowa City. Guests: Aaron Allston and Lester Smith. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: RPGA Network Events, *Vampire*, LARP, free soda, *M:tG* tournament, auction, dealers room, demos, seminars, and more. Registration: varies. Gamicon Eta, P.O. Box 525, Iowa City, IA 52244-0525 or, e-mail: gamicon@sflis.org.

Jaxcon '97

February 21-23 FL

Ramada Inn, Jacksonville. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: dealers room, painting contest, and flea market. Registration: varies. Jaxcon, P.O. Box 14218, Jacksonville, FL 32238-4218, or e-mail: jaxcon@aol.com.

March Conventions

Paradoxicon V

March 1-2 *

Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures

games. Other activities: RPGA Network events, *LIVING CITY*, *Monopoly** tournament, *M:tG* tournament. Registration: \$6/day \$10/weekend. Mark Templeton, 37 Laurie Court., Kanata, Ontario K2L 1S2 Canada.

Cy-Con

March 1-2 IA

Memorial Union, Iowa State University, Ames. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Registration: \$9/day. Owen Rhoden, 2862 Monroe Dr., Ames, IA 50010-4364.

Prezcon '97

March 6-9 VA

Best Western Mount Vernon Hotel, Charlottesville. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: *Battletech**, *Talisman** and *Star Wars** miniatures. Registration: \$25. Justin Thompson, PO Box 4661, Charlottesville, VA 22905.

Concentric

March 13-16 IL

Clarion Hotel, Rosemont. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Registration: varies. Heather Josten, 114 Euclid Ave, Park Ridge, IL 60068.

Magnum Opus Con 12

March 28-30 GA

Radisson Hotel, Atlanta. Guests: Simon Bisley, Keith Giffen, Alan Grant, Phillip Xavier, Dr. Robert Price, Sharon Greene and others. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: panels. Registration: varies. Magnum Opus Con, P.O. Box 6585, Athens, GA 30604. website <http://www.negia.net/~rgb/moc>.

April Conventions

ATSea '97

April 5-12,

This event is a cruise sponsored by the Gamers of

Austin. Stops include Playa del Carmen, Cozumel, Grand Caymen, and Montego Bay. Guests: Jean Rabe and others. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: seminars, costume party and a benefit auction. Registration: varies. G.O.A.T., P.O. Box 3116, Austin, TX 78764.

Spring Offensive VII

April 11-13 IL

Illinois Central College, East Peoria. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: a dealers room. Registration: varies. The Tri-county Gaming Association, 1293 Peoria St., Washington, IL 61571.

Madison Games Con

April 19-20 WI

Downtown Arts and Activities Center, Madison. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: an auction. Registration: \$5/day \$8/weekend. Pegasus

Games, 6640 Odana Rd., Madison, WI 53719. e-mail: pegasus@msn.fullfeed.com.

Rein-Con-Ation

April 25-27 MA

Radisson Hotel, Hyannis. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: LARP's, painting contest, charity event, and RPGA Network events. Registration: \$20/preregistered, \$25/on site. Rein-Con-Ation, P.O. Box 326, Hyannis, MA 02601.

NoahCon

April 26-27 OH

Aqua Marine Resort, Avon Lake. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: *Warhammer**, *M:tG*, AD&D, and *Vampire* tournaments. Registration: \$5/day. Matrix Games & Diversions, 5384 East Lake Road, Sheffield Lake, OH 44054.



By Joseph Pillsbury



Sage Advice

by Skip Williams

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This month, the Sage answers questions straight from the mailbag. The AD&D® game's wall of force spell proved popular this time around. Readers also sought advice about several other magical effects.

The Player's Handbook says the area of effect for the 5th-level priest spell flame strike is a cylinder with a radius of 5' and a height of 30'. Can the caster position the cylinder sideways? If not, what happens when the caster is indoors or underground and the ceiling is less than 30' high? Does the spell still work?

A flame strike spell's column of flame must always be vertical. If cast into an area too small to hold it, the column of flame simply ends at the area's boundaries and does not extend beyond them. If created in a chamber 100' square and 10' high, for example; the column will be only 10' high. Its radius of 5' remains unchanged. The column of flame does not reshape itself to fill the chamber as a fireball effect would. Most spells in the AD&D game work this way unless their descriptions say otherwise.

The description for the dispel magic spell says each effect or potion in the spells area of effect is checked to see if it is dispelled. Does this mean that 1d20 is rolled anew against each effect, or is

1d20 rolled once and the results applied separately against each effect?

Either method works, but most people I know roll once for each effect — that's the method I prefer.

I have a player in my group who insists that the animate dead spell is not evil. I have argued that casting this spell disturbs the dead creature's spirit. The player scoffs and says the spell merely imbues the corpse or skeleton with life. Who's right?

Which one of you is the Dungeon Master? The rules are definitely on your side (check the final sentences in the descriptions for each version of the spell). You've put your finger squarely on the reason why casting *animate dead* isn't "good"; the spell disturbs the dead, and good folk let the dead rest in peace. The semblance of life the spell bestows does not come from a wholesome source. A character with a good alignment who starts memorizing this spell regularly should find his alignment slipping toward evil, even if he does not cast the spell.

What sort of spell effects can pass through a wall of force? Can you teleport through one? A lightning bolt creates a stroke of electricity at a range specified by the caster. Can a lightning bolt be cast through a wall of force if the stroke itself doesn't pass through the wall?

A wall of force blocks matter, physical force, and most forms of energy (visible light being the most important exception). Spells that do not require the caster actually to see the target point usually remain unaffected by walls of force. Such spells don't actually pass through the wall but bypass it entirely. Walls of force don't interfere with teleport spells, but they block lightning bolts. Spells with purely visual effects usually ignore walls of force as well (see next question).

Would a wall of force stop infravision? Will it defeat clairvoyance or a wizard eye spell? What about divinations such as detect evil, detect magic, find traps, or detect lie?

A wall of force does not block vision of any kind. Clairvoyance spells ignore walls of force because they are visual effects and because there's no direct channel between the caster and the sensor the spell creates. Certain conditions can block clairvoyance spells, but walls of force aren't included on the list. A wizard eye's mobile sensor cannot pass through a wall of force, but the caster can see through the wall via the sensor just as if he were standing at the wall himself.

Physical barriers block most divination spells. As the ultimate physical barrier, wall of force blocks most such spells. Divinations that simply render things visible, however, such as detect invisibility and true seeing, work through walls of force.

If a wall of force is cast horizontally, what happens to creatures who run into the edge? Because the wall has no thickness (and is therefore infinitely sharp), I'd say the collision slices the creature in twain. What do you think?

I think if a wall of force had no thickness, it wouldn't have any "edges" to run into. I've never liked the idea of treating walls of force like monomolecular cutting edges. If that were the case, a wall of force would be a great addition to any sawmill or stone quarry; just shove the material against the wall and you get a nice, clean cut. Of course, wall of force carries a price tag of 5,000 gp per casting. That and its short duration (1 turn plus 1 round per caster level) make it too expensive for "industrial" uses. Nevertheless, a wall of force is a barrier. It keeps things from passing through it. Now, running into a wall of force at full speed might hurt, but it shouldn't matter where one strikes it. One merely comes to a sudden stop when one strikes the wall, flat or edge.

As it happens, the spell description makes no mention of the wall's thickness or lack thereof. However, the spell fails if its surface is broken by any object or creature when formed. For practical purposes, I'd suggest you treat the wall as though it were about as thick (and sharp) as a finger when deciding what might break the surface at the time of casting and its effect on creatures or objects once it's in place.

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The rules say a paladin can be turned by an evil priest, who rolls on the undead turning table at three levels lower than his actual level. If the turning attempt succeeds, what happens to the paladin? Does he leave his companions? (It's hard to imagine a high-level paladin abandoning his companions and leaving them to face an evil priest alone.) How does this work exactly? Why can't paladins turn evil priests?

While we're on the subject, how long does a paladin or undead creature remain "turned" after a successful turning attempt? How long do undead controlled by an evil priest remain controlled?

If successfully turned, the paladin must flee from the evil cleric, moving away until the priest is out of sight. If unable to flee, the paladin cannot come within 10' of the priest. If the priest forces the paladin to move closer than 10', or moves within 10' himself, the turning is broken, and the paladin can act normally.

In the case of an evil priest turning a paladin, the priest calls upon his deity to lend him power. If successful, the priest receives enough power to create an aura so repulsive to the paladin that the holy warrior just goes bonkers and flees the vicinity. It is not a fear effect but a form of spiritual revulsion. Paladins and undead are susceptible to the power of turning because of their special modes of existence (unholy in the case of undead, holy in the case of paladins). Priests, though connected to their deities, are normal mortals and not subject to turning attempts.

Technically, once a turning attempt succeeds, the affected creature stays away indefinitely, provided the priest who turned the creature maintains his turning effort (that is, the priest must make additional turning actions, but no further rolls, he simply turns the creatures automatically). Undead under an evil priest's control remain controlled until destroyed or turned by another priest. If that's too general for you, I suggest the following numbers:

Paladins remain "turned" for 3d4 melee rounds. After that time their heroic spirits reassert themselves and they can face their nemeses again, though they might be turned again.

Undead that have been turned or befriended remain that way for 24 hours minus the minimum turning score the priest needed to affect them. If a 10th-level priest turned or controlled a vam-

pire (required turning score of 10), the vampire remains under the priest's influence for 14 hours. In the case of a good priest, who must maintain his turning efforts, I'd suggest that "maintenance" be required every 3d4 rounds. For example, Derah, a 10th-level cleric enters a dungeon and turns a vampire. The creature avoids Derah for the next 14 hours. If Derah and the vampire meet each other elsewhere in the dungeon an hour later, Derah must perform a turning action (automatically successful) again to send the vampire away. If Derah and the vampire later become locked in a chamber together, Derah must perform a turning action every 3d4 rounds (again, automatically successful) to keep the vampire at bay.

Derah's turning actions during this period have no chance for failure, but they consume Derah's attention for the round in which they occur. The DM should not feel obliged to tell the priest when a new turning action is necessary, but a character observing a turned creature might notice a change in its attitude toward the priest.

Do paladins and rangers have access to spells in the All sphere?

According to their character class descriptions, no. Dungeon Masters who wish to give paladins and rangers a little more spellcasting punch often allow them access to the All sphere with no detrimental effects on the campaign.

Multi-classed priests must abide by their class's weapon restrictions. Does this also apply to armor?

In the current edition of the AD&D rules, multi-classed characters are stuck with the most stringent armor restriction among their classes. Warrior/wizards and priest/wizards, for example, aren't allowed armor. If you're inclined to follow the rules to the letter, warrior/wizards (only) can wear elven chain mail, but I strongly recommend allowing priest/wizards to wear it, too.

Do psionic powers allow saving throws? Some powers list saving throws, and others do not. If a saving throw is allowed, what saving throw category is used? One of my players insists that the saving throw number is equal to the psionist's power score roll. Do adjustments for high Wisdom or Dexterity apply to the saving throw?

A psionic power allows no saving throw unless the power's description

specifically mentions one. If a power allows a saving throw, the number required is determined by the saving throw type (listed in the power description) and the targets class and level. For example, Psychic Crush allows a saving throw vs. paralyzation, which the DM should treat as any other paralyzation saving throw.

If a power's description mentions a saving throw, but does not mention what type, assume it's a saving throw vs. spell (but heed the rule on saving throw priority in Chapter 9 of the *DMG*).

Magical and class-based saving throw bonuses (such as the paladin's general bonus of +2 to all saving throws and saving throw bonuses from *rings of protection*) apply to saving throws. Saving throw bonuses from high Wisdom scores apply to most psionic attacks because they are purely mental in nature. Dexterity bonuses apply only when a psionic power involves physical force. The detonate power, for example, creates an explosion whose effects can be reduced with a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon; Dexterity bonuses apply to the saving throw (but Wisdom bonuses do not). Racial bonuses to saving throws against magic never apply to saving throws against psionic attacks, even when the attack uses the saving throw table's Spell column.

Can a thief wearing a ring of invisibility use the ring to become invisible and then attempt a backstab during the same round? The backstab, of course, will make the thief visible. Can the thief use the ring again that round to become invisible before foes can strike?

In a word, no. Using a magical item (or drinking a potion) counts as a character's sole action for a round; see the What You Can Do in One Round section in Chapter 9 of the *Player's Handbook* for details. It's okay for a character who has just used a magical item to exchange a few words with someone or make minor adjustments to his position (a move of 5' or less), but major actions such as attacks, spellcasting, or significant movement have to wait until the next round. It would take the thief in your example at least three rounds to disappear, deliver a backstab, and then disappear again, as follows:

Round one — Disappear. No other actions allowed except negligible ones (as defined in the *PHB*).

Round two — Move up to half the

current rate and deliver the backstab. The thief is now visible and must remain so until the next round. If the thief had to move more than half his current movement rate to reach his foe, he cannot attack until next round. Note that charging allows a character to make a full move (plus a little extra) and still attack, but many DMs balk at backstabbing while charging.

Round three — Disappear again. The character can take no other actions except negligible ones. If the thief wins initiative, any attacks made against him suffer a -4 penalty for the invisibility. If the foes win initiative, however, they attack before the thief becomes invisible and suffer no penalties. In some campaigns, a successful hit might even disrupt the thief's attempt to become invisible (depending on how the DM decides the *ring* works).

One of my players wanted his character to parry a two-handed sword with a rapier. I warned the player that the rapier probably would break. The player wanted to have his character make the parry anyway, so I had the rapier save vs. crushing blow at a -2 penalty. Should I have just said the rapier

broke, imposed a larger penalty, or just let the parry work normally?

The "correct" answer here is whatever makes you, the DM, feel comfortable. A crushing blow saving throw with a -2 penalty seems severe enough to me. On the other hand, the core AD&D rules use an abstract combat system with hostilities proceeding at the glacial pace of one set of actions every minute. In such a system, a "parry" might not involve the two weapons touching at all. The character with the rapier might just stick the weapon's point in his opponents face. Then again, you can treat the one-minute increment as just an arbitrary way to keep track of time in the game (combat really proceeds much more quickly). In that case, a "parry" could be considered an attempt to physically block the attacker's blow. In that case, a more substantial item saving throw penalty might be in order, say -4. I don't recommend that the rapier break automatically.

The *Tome of Magic* says wild mages are not specialists in the traditional sense. Does this mean they can become dual-classed characters? The *Chronomancer* accessory specifically says

chronomancers can become dual-classed characters but raises the ability score requirements if a character starts out as something else, then becomes a chronomancer. Does this mean a character can become a dual-classed chronomancer/wild mage or vice versa?

Though wild mages don't pursue a specialty, per se, they get enough specialist-type benefits that I recommend you treat them as specialist wizards — no dual- or multi-classing. Your campaign probably won't crash and burn if you ignore my advice. (If you're allowing both wild mages and chronomancers into your game, dual- and multi-classed wild mages will be the least of your worries.) On the other hand, both wild mages and chronomancers are members of the wizard group. The dual-class rules (see *PHB*, Chapter 3) allow characters to have only one class from each group.



When not plumbing the depths of the AD&D game, Skip often can be found dabbling in photography or burning shoe leather on the hiking trails near his Lake Geneva home

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Long shots

by Brian Dunnell

illustrated by Stephen Schwartz

No fantasy archer's quiver is complete without a few magical accouterments. Here then are a dozen remarkable arrows, bows, and other archery accessories for your campaign.

Arachne arrows

XP Value: 100 **GP Value:** 150 each

These slender arrows have a curious head with four outward-facing prongs. The notch of the arrow is usually crafted of metal and appears to be a styled spider. When the arrow is fired, it trails a thin, strong, light-weight twine behind it. The thread is equivalent in strength to silk rope. The magic of the arrow prevents the twine from impeding the arrow's flight. Up to 200' of twine is created. When the arrow's four prongs impact on any solid, non-living surface, they hold the arrow fast. The magic of the arrow prevents it and the rope from breaking, or the arrow from pulling free when the rope supports any weight up to 500 lbs. Each of these arrows can be used only once.

Arrows of Bilarro

XP Value: 150 **GP Value:** 200 each

Arrows of Bilarro appear to be normal flight arrows, except for a large, conical, iron head. On a successful hit, the arrows head explodes, binding its target with a series of iron bands that act just as *iron bands of Bilarro* (see the *DMG*). The arrow inflicts no damage otherwise. The arrow can be used only once.

The arrow of endless archery

XP Value: 550 **GP Value:** 5,000 each

This arrow was created by an elvish craftsman for a Darfolkian ranger who was tired of running out of arrows at inopportune moments. Dozens of these arrows were created by the fletcher before he died. They seem to be normal flight arrows and have no magical attack or damage bonus. When placed in a quiver, however, they multiply at a rate of one arrow per round until they fill it with up to 12 arrows. The magically created arrows are exact duplicates of the *arrow of endless archery* but operate as normal arrows; they do not have the ability to

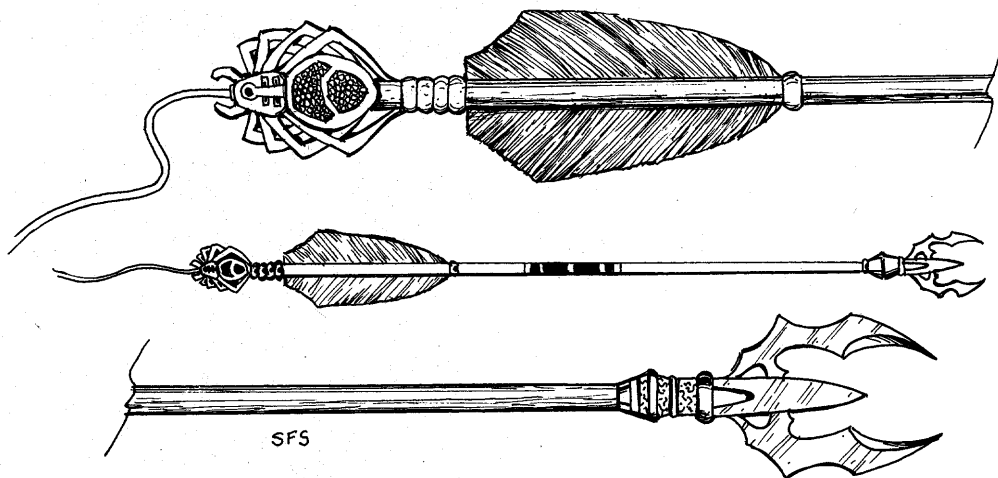
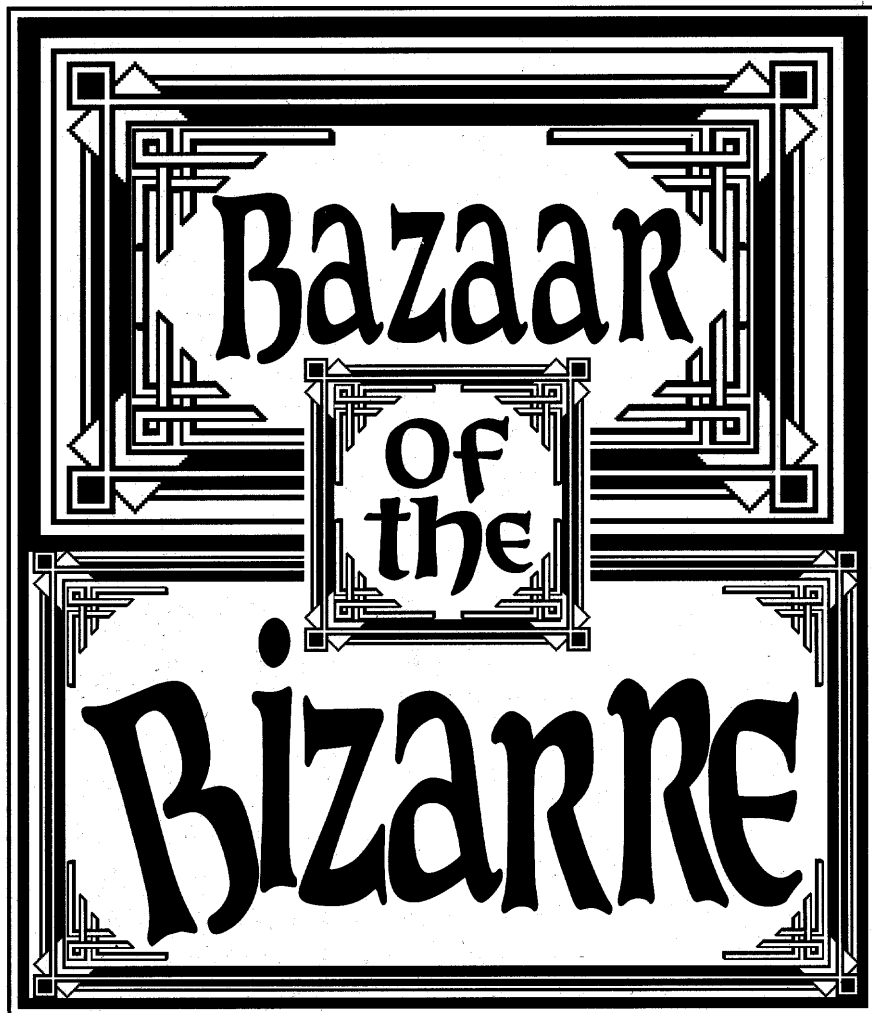
multiply. The archer instinctively knows which arrow in his quiver is the multiplier and cannot draw it accidentally, if he understands its nature. The arrow's power remains intact until it has been fired. If fired even once, it loses its enchantment.

Arrows of Pyros

XP Value: 150 **GP Value:** 300 (Minor)

XP Value: 200 **GP Value:** 450 (Major)

These magical arrows appear in minor and major varieties. Both kinds seem to be normal arrows in all respects. On impact, however, they explode into flame.



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LORD SOTH NOVEL

A minor *arrow of Pyros* causes damage as a normal arrow, plus 4d6 hp flame damage (save vs. breath weapon for half damage).

A major *arrow of Pyros* explodes on impact, blossoming into a 6d6 *fireball*. Both minor and major *arrows of Pyros* can be used only once.

Arrow of the thunderstike

XP Value: 200 **GP Value:** 400 each

An *arrow of the thunderstike* can be used only once. It appears to be a normal arrow with lightning symbols inscribed upon it. When fired, the arrow has two effects. The location the arrow hits is struck by a 6d6 *lightning bolt* (save vs. spell for half damage). Any creature within 15' of the point of impact is also affected by the bolt. The bolt is followed almost instantly by a loud thunderstrike. All creatures within 30' of the point of impact must save vs. paralysis or be stunned for one round and deafened for 1d4 rounds. In addition, all creatures within the 30' area must make a Morale check.

Arrows of withering

XP Value: 250 **GP Value:** 1,000 each

These shafts are rumored to have been the gift of some malevolent power to his most trusted followers, most likely a god of disease or a denizen of the lower planes. In any case, these arrows always have a dull black shaft, a serrated, razor-edged head, and gray fletching. Occasionally they'll be inscribed with runes of the appropriate deity. Any creature struck by this arrow is affected by a 10d8 *Albi Dazem's horrid wilting spell* (see the *Tome of Magic*). Thankfully, these arrows are very rare, and each can be used but once.

Diamond tipped arrows

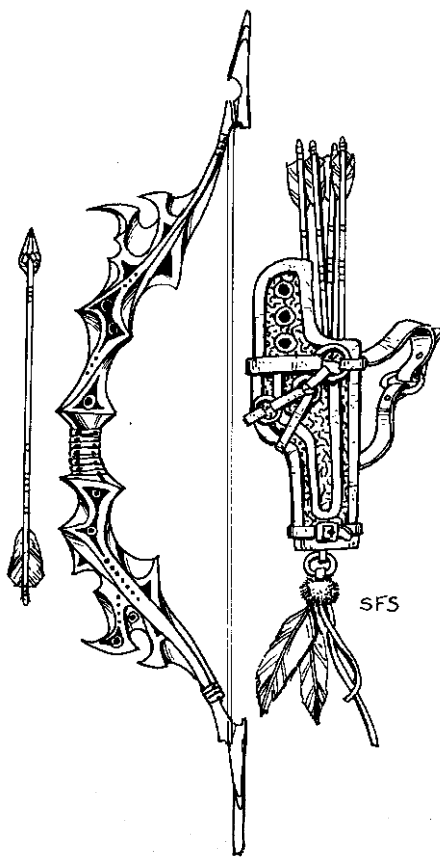
XP Value: 450 **GP Value:** 5,000 each

Diamond tipped arrows are thought to be the creations of either gnomish or gray elven craftsmen. The latter seems most likely, as gnomes aren't generally known for their skill with the bow. The arrow appears to be normal, except the head is crafted from diamond and is razor sharp. These arrows have a +4 attack bonus and cause twice the normal damage. Each time they are used, a saving throw vs. crushing blow is necessary to see whether the head is shattered. The arrow may be used until its head is destroyed in this way. These arrows are rare, and usually no more than 1d6 are found at any one time.

Ruby-tipped arrows

XP Value: 200 **GP Value:** 4,500 each

A *ruby tipped arrow* appears to be a normal flight arrow, except the head is crafted from a ruby. Each such arrow can be used only once. Any creature struck by a this arrow is affected instantly by a *teleport without error* to his home. If the creature in question is of extra planar origin, it is returned to its home plane. If the area it would be returned to is hedged in some way, the creature is teleported to the closest safe location. If the creature is already in an area considered to be its home, the arrow shatters, causing normal damage, but with no other effect.



Emerald-tipped arrows

XP Value: 200 **GP Value:** 850 each

These arrows appear to be normal, except they are usually green, with a conical head made of emerald. On close examination, the arrowhead appears to be hollow, with swirling vapors trapped inside. On impact, this arrow shatters, releasing a cloud of highly corrosive green gas. This gas cloud is equivalent to the effect generated by an *incendiary cloud spell*. This arrow can be used only once.

Gnimshian oil

XP Value: 500 **GP Value:** 750 per flask

This liquid appears to be normal lantern oil. However, any arrow dipped in *gnimshian oil* ignites when fired from a bow, setting combustibles afire and dealing an additional 1d6 hp damage. One flask of oil is sufficient to coat up to 50 arrows in this manner.

The bow of Ehlonna

XP Value: 1,500 **GP Value:** 7,500

This ashwood bow is as strong as steel, making any saves as hard metal. The bow is crafted of one piece; even the string seems to be part of the bow, miraculously crafted of ashwood, though flexible. The bow can take advantage of exceptional Strength bonuses and has the range of a long composite bow. The magic of the bow prevents it or its string from breaking under normal use (fumbles, if used, miss their target but have no further effect). In addition, the bow provides a +2 attack and damage bonus.

Duell's iron bow

XP Value: 2,500 **GP Value:** 11,500

This weapon appears to be a long bow crafted from iron. Even the string is made from a thin metallic weave thread. These bows are thought to have been the invention of Fletcher Duell, a gnomish craftsman working for the Rangers College of Bay Hold. No one is certain how many of the original Duell's bows were made, but about a half dozen are still known to exist. After Duell's death, the secret of crafting these bows was lost.

When the command word is spoken, the bow collapses to form a 1' rod of solid iron, 1" in diameter. Speaking the command word a second time causes the bow to expand to its full size. The folding and unfolding of the bow takes one round. The bow is extremely durable, and its string is virtually unbreakable. The bow is capable of taking advantage of exceptional Strength and is of such quality that it provides a +3 attack bonus.



Brian Dunnell is a long time role-player who lives in Arlington, Virginia, about a bow's shot away from the nation's capital.

Knights of the Dinner Table™

By Jolly R. Blackburn

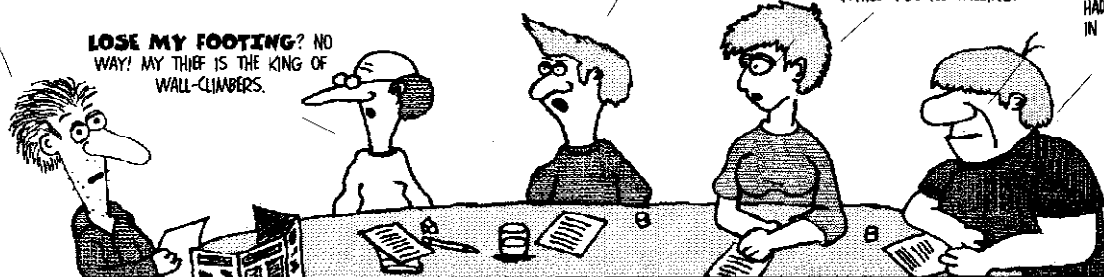
SORRY, BOB, AS YOUR THIEF TRIES TO CRAWL BACK DOWN THE CASTLE WALL HE LOSES HIS FOOTING AND FALLS. LET'S SEE ... LOOKS LIKE IT'S A 1,200 FOOT DROP TO THE BEAUTIFUL MARBLE-PAVED COURTYARD BELOW. THE CITY GUARDS SCOOP UP THE PUDDLE OF GOO THAT REMAINS AND DUMPS IT IN THE MOAT. THE GATORS FEAST ON THE TASTY SUBSTANCE, AND LIFE IN THE BIG CITY MOVES ON, TURNING A BLIND, UNSYMPATHETIC EYE TO THE PATHETIC DEATH OF YOUR THIEF.

AW, DUDE, YOU WERE ROBBED. THAT SUCKS. I'M GONNA BUY A KEG OF DWARVEN MEAD AND POUR IT IN THE MOAT IN HONOR OF MY POOR DEAD FRIEND. CAN I ROLL TO SEE IF I CRY? ANY EXPERIENCE POINTS FOR GRATUITOUS MOURNING?

GO OUT IN STYLE BOB. SCREAM **HASTUR** OR SOMETHING WHILE YOU'RE FALLING.

I WANNA WATCH AND SEE WHICH GATER EATS BOB'S REMAINS. BOB HAD A POTION OF POLYMORPHING IN HIS BACKPACK. THIS COULD BE INTERESTING.

LOSE MY FOOTING? NO WAY! MY THIEF IS THE KING OF WALL-CLIMBERS.



I CAN'T BELIEVE IT. KNUCKLES IS REALLY **DEAD**? THIS IS SO TRAGIC. HE WAS THE BEST CHARACTER I EVER RAN. (SNIFF) I'M GOING TO LAMINATE HIS CHARACTER SHEET AND FRAME IT. I'LL NEVER FORGET KNUCKLES - **NEVER!!**



OH, COULD YOU PASS ME ANOTHER CHARACTER SHEET?

WEEKS LATER

SORRY SARA, YOU'RE UNABLE TO PICK THE LOCK. THAT'S YOUR THIRD ATTEMPT. YOU JUST DON'T HAVE THE SKILLS TO DO IT.

SIGH - KNUCKLES COULD HAVE PICKED THAT LOCK IN NOTHING FLAT. WHAT A GUY. I SURE MISS HIM.

COME ON, DUDE. KNUCKLES HAS BEEN DEAD FOR WEEKS. LET HIM GO. HE WAS **JUST A CHARACTER**, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD.

BESIDES YOU HAVE **BARREL-FIST** THE DWARF NOW. HE'S A WONDERFUL CHARACTER.

LET THE DEAD REST IN PEACE, BOB.



JUST A CHARACTER? I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU WOULD EVER SAY SUCH A THING, DAVE. HOW COULD YOU FORGET THE TIME KNUCKLES BELLY-CRAWLED INTO THAT DRAGON'S LAIR TO RETRIEVE YOUR BODY SO WE COULD RAISE YOU BACK UP? **HUH??**

AND YOU SARA ... IT BREAKS MY HEART TO HEAR YOU GO ON AND ON ABOUT MY STUPID FIRST-LEVEL DWARF, BUT YOU NEVER HAD A KIND WORD FOR KNUCKLES. NEVER ANY PRAISE FOR THE KING OF WALLCLIMBERS WHO SAVED YOUR BUTT FROM THAT RABID WEREGOAT ON THE HIGHLANDS THAT ONE TIME.



AND WHAT ABOUT YOU, BRIAN? **YOU UNGRATEFUL WRETCH!** WHO WAS THE GUY WHO SHIMMIED UP THE **DARK MAGE'S** STORMDRAIN TO STEAL THAT **RING OF HEFTY SPELL CASTING** YOU PRIZE SO HIGHLY?? AND WHO TRACKED DOWN AND BACK-STABBED THAT SAILOR WHO MADE YOU WEAR A DRESS AND DANCE WITH HIM ALL NIGHT?

I'M JUST GLAD KNUCKLES ISN'T HERE TO WITNESS THIS PATHETIC LACK OF RESPECT OF HIS GOOD MEMORY. **HMMRRRRFFF!**

NEXT WEEK

AS YOU OPEN THE CASKET YOU ARE STARTLED TO SEE **KNUCKLES THE MASTER WALLCLIMBER!** HE WEEPS WITH JOY AT THE SIGHT OF HIS OLD FRIENDS. HE EXPLAINS THAT THE IMPACT OF THE FALL CAUSED THE MAGICAL POTIONS IN HIS BACKPACK TO SHATTER, HAVING UNEXPECTED AND POWERFUL RESULTS. APPARENTLY, JUST AS THE GATOR WAS ABOUT TO DEVOUR HIS REMAINS, HE FOUND HIMSELF TELEPORTED MILES AWAY, WHERE HE WAS IMMEDIATELY CAPTURED BY THE **LIZARD MEN** THE GROUP JUST KILLED, AND MADE A PRISONER. BOB, YOU CAN PULL OUT KNUCKLES' CHARACTER SHEET AND RESUME PLAYING HIM.

KNUCKLES!! (SOB) I CAN'T BELIEVE IT. HE'S BACK. OH HOW BEAUTIFUL. KUDOS, B.A., FOR COMING UP WITH SUCH A MOVING AND TOUCHING PLOT DEVICE.

THANK GOD! PLAYING WITH KNUCKLES ISN'T **NEARLY** AS BAD AS HAVING TO HEAR ABOUT HOW GREAT HE WAS EVERY FIVE MINUTES.



NORMALLY, I NEVER BACKPEDAL ON A CHARACTER DEATH. BUT POOR BOB WAS EXHIBITING THE CLASSIC SYMPTOMS OF **ADVERSE CHARACTER-LOSS SYNDROME**.

WHO KNOWS **WHAT** MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED IF I HADN'T INTERVENED?



DragonMirth

By Jeff Geraci



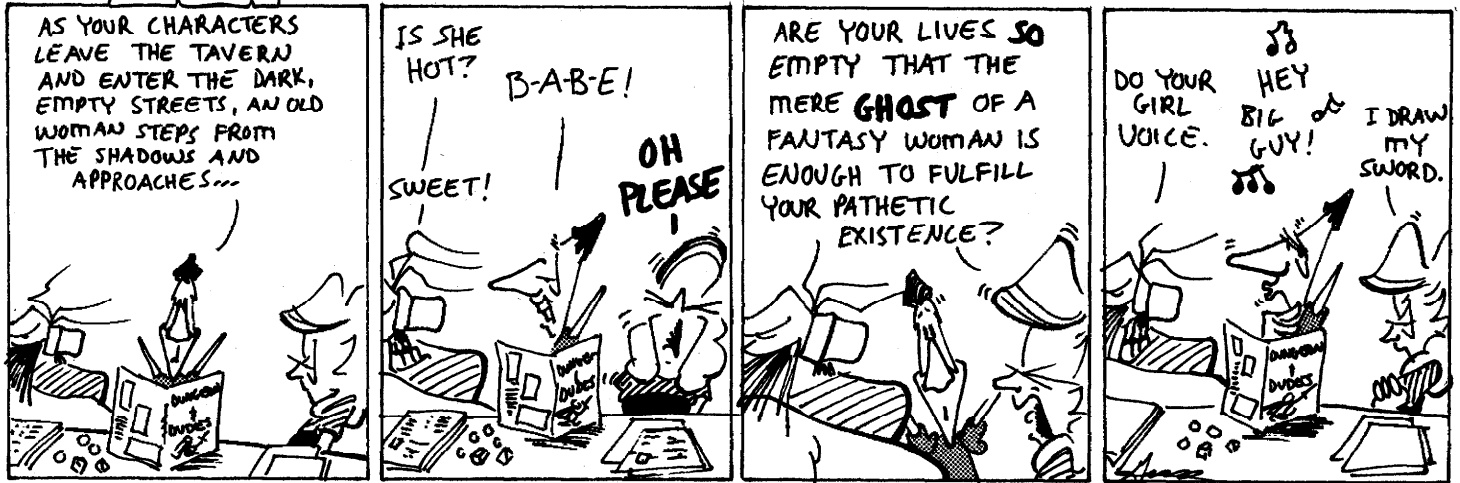
Marilyn Monroe?

By Joseph Pillsbury

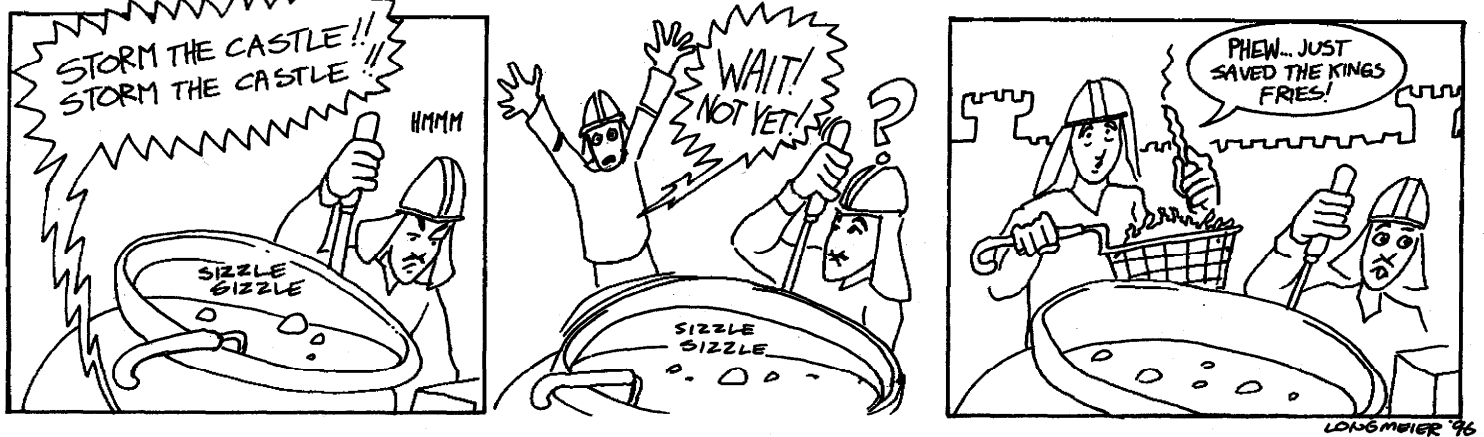




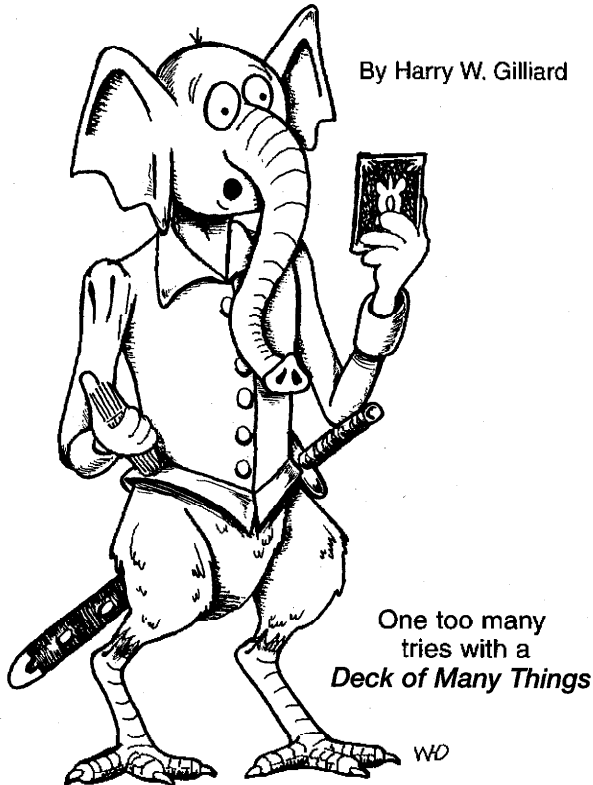
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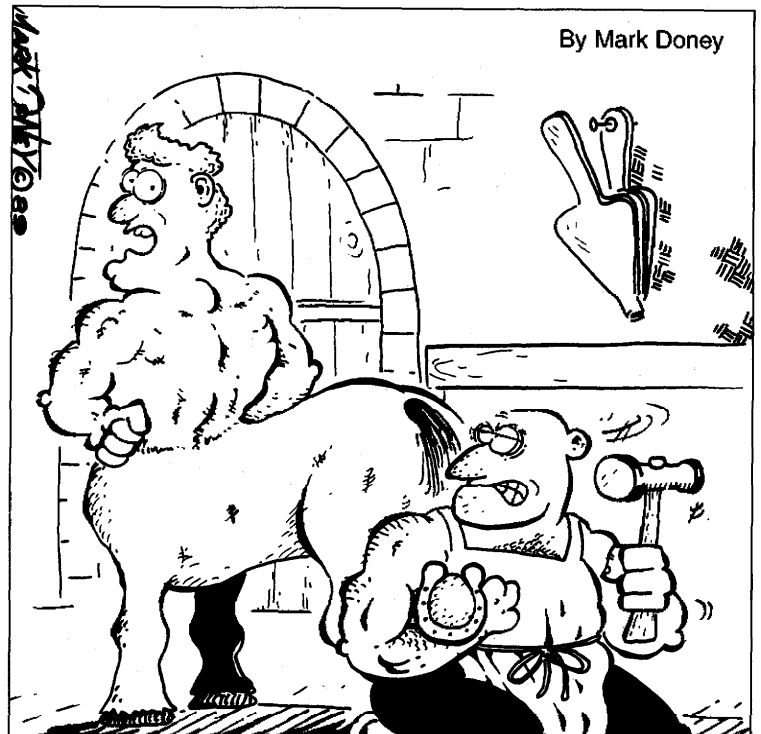
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- February — *Rifts*[®] World Book 13: *Lone Star*[™]
- March — *Rifts*[®] World Book 14: *New West*[™]
- April — *Rifts*[®] World Book 15: *Spirit West*[™]
- May — *Rifts*[®] Sourcebook 4: *Coalition Navy*[™]
- May/June — A new *Rifts*[®] Portfolio (tentative)
- June — *Rifts*[®] World Book 16: *Federation of Magic*[™]
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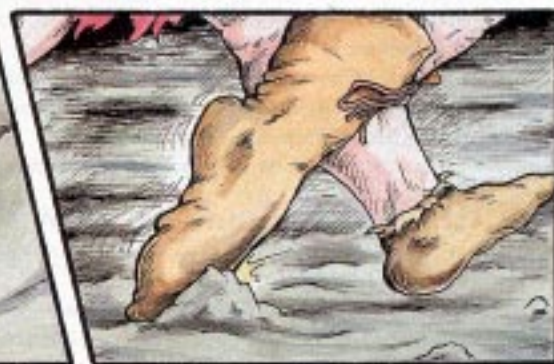
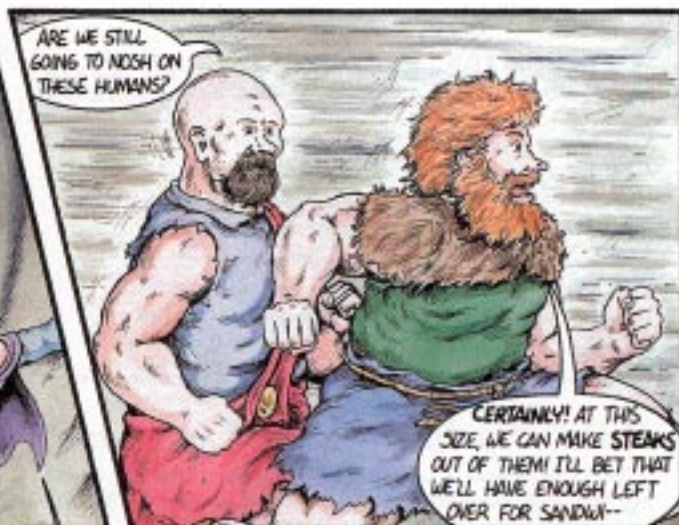
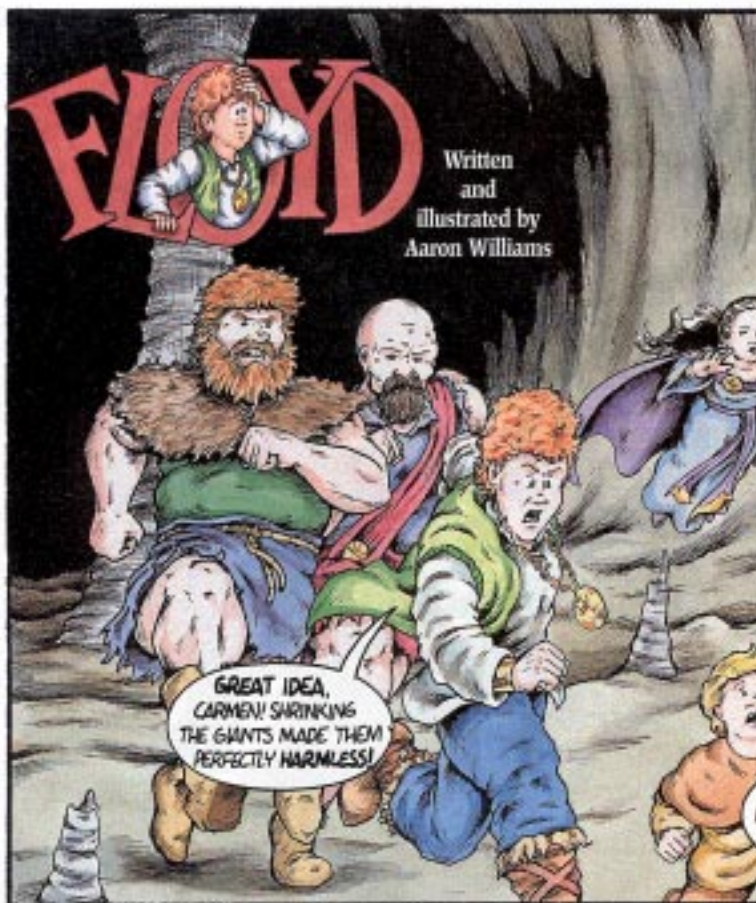
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This past August, I staggered out of the 1996 GEN CON® Game Fair with a back-breaking stack of new products. In last month's column, I lightened the load by peeling off a few of the niftiest small press offerings. This month, I'll be telling you about some of the best new fantasy games. (And next month, science fiction.)

So let's get at it. My backs *killing* me.

Role-playing games' rating	
	Not recommended
	May be useful
	Fair
	Good
	Excellent
	The BEST!

DRAGONLANCE®: FIFTH AGE™ game

One 128-page softcover book, one 96-page softcover book, one 48-page softcover book, 100 playing cards, one double-sided reference card, one 21" x 32" map sheet, boxed

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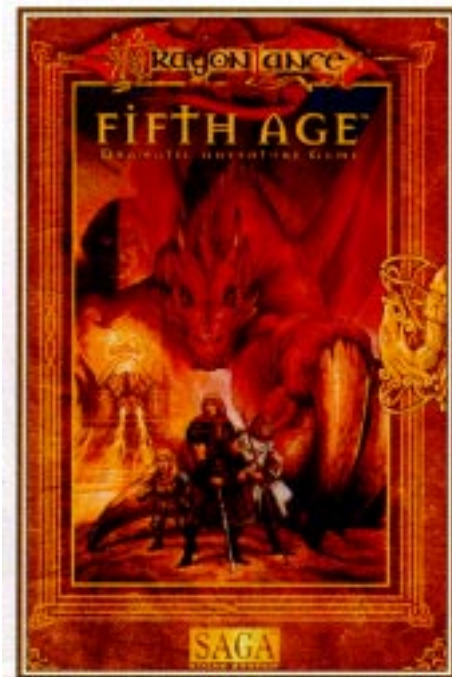
Design: William W. Connors and Sue Weinlein Cook with Harold Johnson and Skip Williams

Editing: Sue Weinlein Cook

Illustrations: Clyde Caldwell, Jim Crabtree, Jeff Easley, Larry Elmore, Mark Forrer, Todd Lockwood, Keith Parkinson, R.K. Post, Walter Velez, Paul Daly, Dan Davis, Allen Nunis, Ken Frank, William O'Connor, and Brian Schomberg

Cover: Jeff Easley

I swear, you live long enough, you see everything: men on the moon, computers the size of phone books, Brooke



Shields in a sitcom. And now, disrupting what's left of my belief system, along comes a TSR role-playing game that doesn't use dice.

In addition to traumatizing players who've invested their life savings in multi-siders, the FIFTH AGE game fulfills three functions: (1) to pump life into the DRAGONLANCE setting, which in recent years has taken a back seat to glitzier settings like the PLANESCAPE® and BIRTHRIGHT® campaigns, (2) to lure new players into role-playing with an easy-to-learn set of rules, and (3) to road-test a revised version of the AD&D® game, one that jettisons Armor Classes, the Charisma attribute, and other elements that nitpickers have been griping about since Lord Toede was a tadpole. (I'm guessing, of course, about number three, as "AD&D" appears nowhere on the game box. Still . . .) It succeeds in all three areas. Which, by the way, doesn't necessarily mean you're going to like it, but we'll get to that in a minute.

The imaginative package — a cardboard treasure chest with a Velcro latch — is loaded with goodies: a deck of Vegas-quality playing cards, a colorful map of Ansalon, a trio of well-rendered rule books. The handiest component isn't even listed on the box cover: a reference card big enough to double as a gamemaster screen. One side of the card contains game tables; the other has conversion formulas that enable players to import AD&D characters into the FIFTH AGE game. Much has been made of TSR's improved graphics — compare any

PLANESCAPE product to any, and I mean *any*, AD&D game product prior to 1990 — but the improved writing has been underreported. For the record: sentence for sentence, paragraph for paragraph, TSR's RPG books are the among the most lucid and readable in the business. The FIFTH AGE game is a sterling example.

The FIFTH AGE game can't lay claim to inventing diceless role-playing. Among the diceless pioneers are the *Amber** and *Everway** games, both of which feature innovative, playable systems. But the FIFTH AGE game, though not as ambitious as *Amber* or *Everway*, is more fun than either, owing to its easy-on-the-brain mechanics. To create a PC, a player begins with a hand of 12 cards, each displaying a number and a couple of descriptive words. He selects two cards to define the PC's personality, which is where the descriptive words come in; a PC might be Careful and Unimaginative, or Brave and Commanding. The numbers on the remaining cards are assigned to the PC's Reputation score, his Wealth level, and eight Ability scores (Agility, Dexterity, Endurance, Strength, Reason, Perception, Spirit, and Presence). Ability scores generate a batch of Ability Codes, which in turn determine the PC's aptitude in a variety of skills. Racial choices include the standard elf, dwarf, and human, along with a few oddballs like centaur, kender, and minotaur. Add some weapons, maybe some armor, and you're pretty much finished. Though the PCs lack detail — I didn't know the height or age of my elf — they're perfectly adequate for the game.

The numbers on the cards are also used to resolve actions. A player's Reputation rating determines the number of cards he holds in his hand; a beginning player might hold four or five cards. When a PC tries to do something, the gamemaster announces which of the PC's abilities is relevant to executing the action, then secretly assigns a difficulty rating from 4-24 (the higher the rating, the harder the action). The player chooses a card from his hand and adds the value of the card to the value of the relevant ability. If the total equals or exceeds the difficulty rating, the PC has successfully accomplished the action. Despite a few whistles and bells — certain card suits generate bonuses, resisted actions involve opposition numbers — that's all there is to it, and it's as fast and simple as it sounds. Yes, the game lives or dies on the basis of the gamemaster's facility at generating diffi-

culty ratings. And yes, players can be paralyzed by lousy cards; there's not much you can do when you're staring at a hand of 1s and 2s. But for players who don't insist on precision, the system works fine.

Combat comprises a series of attacks and counterattacks, which, like action resolution, involves difficulty ratings, ability numbers, and card values. Interestingly, when a PC suffers damage, he doesn't lose hit points; instead, the player loses cards. When he forfeits his last card, his PC falls unconscious, and any subsequent attack kills the PC outright.

Magic, also card-driven, is the game's least satisfying element. The problem isn't the system, based again on the action resolution rules, but the absence of spells. The FIFTH AGE game expects players to design their own spells from scratch, following an intricate menu of steps to determine invocation times, ranges, durations, and effects. Some of the steps are ambiguous; to determine the area of effect, for instance, you need to consult the Area of Effect Table, which lists incantation costs for areas equivalent to Small Rooms, Large Rooms, Small Houses, and Large Houses. But the distinctions among the categories could be clearer. Is a barn the size of Large Room or a Small House? How about a ballroom? A cave? In any event, spell creation eats up a lot of time, making it a pothole in a road that's otherwise pretty smooth.

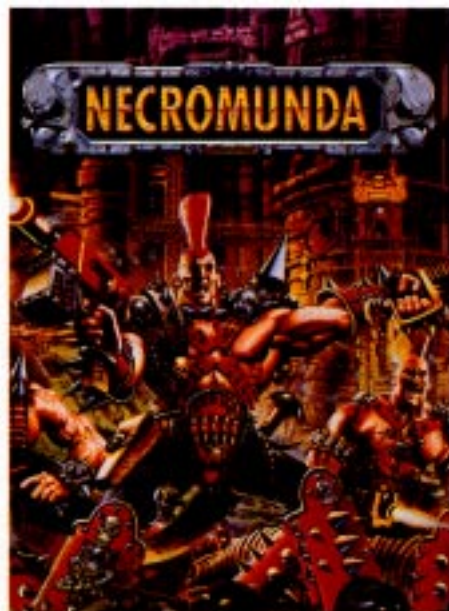
Elsewhere, a chapter at the end of the rule book delineates some of Ansalon's more memorable creatures, such as the draconians, thanoi, and death knights. The "Dusk or Dawn" booklet provides a comprehensive and entertaining history of the DRAGONLANCE mythos, drawing on material from *Dragons of Summer Flame* and other recent novels. And to wrap things up, we have "Heroes of the New Age," a first-rate adventure that not only gives the rules a good workout but also shows off the setting in all its fairy tale splendor.

Evaluation: Assuming an experienced gamemaster is at the helm — a guy who can assign difficulty numbers honestly and quickly — the card-driven FIFTH AGE game rockets along at a breathtaking clip. With number-crunching and chart-checking kept to a minimum, you feel like you're in the middle of an Arnold Schwarzenegger movie. (Hold it — this is the DRAGONLANCE setting. Make that an Arnold Schwarzenegger version of the *The Wizard of Oz*.)

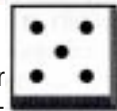
But what the FIFTH AGE game gains in storytelling it loses in tactical flavor. Resolving combat with cards is neither as challenging nor as exciting as resolving combat with dice. I found that my interest in combat encounters was directly proportional to the number of cards in my hand; when I got down to a couple of cards, I started wondering what was on TV.

So do I miss the dice? Not really. I miss holding them, fondling them, whispering sweet nothings into their little pips, but in the context of an RPG as fundamentally sound as this, I can live without 'em. Truth to tell, I'm not a tactical combat kind of guy. When I want a dose of warfare, I don't turn to an RPG. I turn to a military simulation like the *Squad Leader** game or a miniatures extravaganza like the *Necromunda** game (discussed below).

I suspect that hard-core roleplayers, those, say, who've been with TSR since the beginning, aren't going to flock to the FIFTH AGE game. Not only will they have to abandon their dice collections, they'll also have to abandon their notions about how RPGs are supposed to work. For them, I have a bulletin: Get used to it. As roleplaying continues to drift from its wargaming roots, I'll bet the RPGs of the 21st century are going to look a lot like the FIFTH AGE game.



Necromunda* game



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Design: Rick Priestley with Jervis Johnson and Andy Chambers

Editing: uncredited

Illustrations: John Blanche, Wayne England, Mark Gibbons, Des Hanley, David Gallagher, and Richard Wright

Cover: Geoff Taylor and Mark Gibbons

Buy this, and you'll never have to buy another game for the rest of your life. Okay, I'm exaggerating, but not by much. **Necromunda** is a hobby in a box, a symphony in plastic, Christmas and your birthday all rolled up into one spectacular package bursting with . . . well, go back and look at the list of components. Specifically, **Necromunda** is a game of bloodthirsty thugs who duke it out on a three-dimensional landscape of decaying buildings and precarious walkways. It took me a weekend just to put the battlefield together, another weekend to stop drooling over the cool miniatures. Forget the rule book; you get your money's worth in toys alone.

The battlefield is a work of art, a meticulously rendered labyrinth of ominous nooks and mysterious crannies; if you can resist maneuvering the little soldiers through the tunnels and over the bulkheads, then brother, you're in the wrong hobby. The "Getting Started" booklet gives detailed instructions for putting it all together. Although the instructions are reasonably foolproof, I offer two amendments. First, though the buildings are designed to snap together, I suggest using glue. Second, if, like me, you're too lazy to paint the miniatures, put a dot of fingernail polish on their heads so in the heat of battle you can tell them apart.

The rules derive from the time-tested *Warhammer 40,000** game, meaning that *Warhammer* vets will be toasting soldiers within a half-hour of assembling the buildings. The main difference is scale; *Warhammer 40,000* features mass combat between large squadrons, **Necromunda** features man-to-man skirmishes, typically involving a dozen or so individuals. Although **Necromunda** players have to

fuss with ammunition supplies and fallen soldiers — concepts essentially irrelevant to *Warhammer 40,000* — overall, **Necromunda** remains the more elegant design, one that rolls out the welcome mat for novices.

To begin the carnage, players choose one of seven scenarios, all of which are set in a desolate urban graveyard drenched in toxic waste. Options range from a straightforward street fight, where victory goes to the last man standing, to a tricky rescue mission requiring the liberation of a prisoner of war. After settling on a scenario, players round up the figures representing their thugs. Each thug has a name, like Ratskin Scout or Underhive Scum, and nine ratings: Move, Weapon Skill, Ballistic Skill, Strength, Toughness, Wounds, Initiative, Attacks, and Leadership. The figures are deployed in designated areas of the battlefield. Player One moves his figures (using a ruler to measure distances), shoots enemies within range, engages in hand-to-hand combat with adjacent figures, then attempts to rally panicked figures. (A figure is subject to panic if he's within two inches of a companion who takes a hit. If a die-roll is less than or equal to his Leadership score, he's okay. If the roll is greater than his Leadership, he panics and runs for cover. He remains panicked until he makes a successful Leadership roll in the rally phase of a turn.) Player Two repeats this four-phase sequence. Turns continue until one of the players fulfills the scenario's victory conditions.

Even within the confines of a turn sequence this rigid, **Necromunda** allows for surprisingly sophisticated tactics. To simulate the effects of an explosion, the attacking player places a cardboard blast marker over the target; any figure who lies wholly inside the marker is affected by the blast. Further, the attacker might be required to roll an artillery die; a misfire result means the weapon explodes in the attacker's hands. The Overwatch rule empowers a figure to counterattack during the opponent's turn, providing he's willing to forgo moving and shooting altogether on his owner's next turn. Figures carrying oversized weapons can attempt to hit multiple targets by rolling a special sustained fire die; if the jam symbol turns up, however, the weapon may disintegrate. The advanced rules cover building damage, battle frenzy, and — my favorite — stupidity tests (which can temporarily turn a pair of cannon-wielding killers into Beavis and Butt-head).

Necromunda is not without its problems. Topping the list is the line of sight rule, which requires an attacker to "see" his target before he can shoot it. That's fine in theory, but in practice, it's difficult to tell how much of a thug squatting behind a bulkhead is actually visible. In a complex scenario, tracking the status of all the figures can be daunting; I had a hard time remembering which of my guys were blasting and which were bleeding. And once you get this humongous battlefield all put together, where the heck are you supposed to store it?

Evaluation: I'm hesitant to say this is Games Workshop's best-ever effort, mainly because I haven't seen them all. I will say, however, that it's more fun than the *Warhammer Quest** game, which I loved (and reviewed in *DRAGON® Magazine* issue #225) and that it makes the *Space Marine** and *Titan Legions** games look like rough drafts. Intense, dizzying fun, **Necromunda** is a whirlwind of activity, a blur of running, hiding, and blowing stuff up. A sourpuss might complain that **Necromunda** is about as realistic as a Road Runner cartoon. He'd be right. And I'd consider it a recommendation.



Blood Dawn* game

One 240-page softcover book

Optimus Game Design Systems

\$25

Design: Lawrence R. Sims

Editing: Nick Vasi, James Carlton, and Louis Norton

Illustrations: James Carlton

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Blood Dawn is punk fantasy, post-



Untap all creatures that attacked this turn. You may declare an additional attack during your main phase this turn.

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apocalyptic DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game with a soundtrack by the Sex Pistols. It's ambitious but unfocused, lurching between cynicism and whimsy. On one hand, we have passages like this, describing what's left of the United States after the Second Dark Age: "I've seen human bonfires broiling on the wharves of San Francisco, tasted the honey putrid smell of leprosy festering in the bowels of New York." On the other hand, we have wizards doing bootlegger reverses in dune buggies. But though **Blood Dawn** is kind of a mess, it's a fascinating mess, rife with possibility for players willing to sift the gems from the junk.

To create a PC, called a Prophet in **Blood** - speak, the player distributes 130 points among eight attributes: Strength, Manual Dexterity, I.Q., Agility, Constitution, Guts, Intuition, and Charisma. He then spends 2,000 points on skills like Animal Husbandry, Fiber Optics, and Weather Prediction. If the PC aspires to be a mage, he's required to invest at least 750 points in spells. Leftover skill points may be spent on armor, weapons, and equipment. The system couldn't be simpler; I cranked out a character, complete with spells, in about 20 minutes. For the unmotivated, the book also supplies a set of ready-to-go archetypes, among them the Gunslinger, Primal Warrior, and Snake Charmer. I had a hard time coming up with characters more interesting than the archetypes; the Primal Warrior, for example, is a brooding albino giant skilled in medical diagnostics, smoke signals, and cooking.

Action resolution uses difficulty ratings, ability values, and random numbers; essentially, it's FIFTH AGE with dice. The player announces the action his PC is attempting (breaking down a door). The gamemaster determines the relevant ability or skill (Strength, which the PC has at 19) and difficulty modifier (-10; the doors reinforced with metal). The player must roll less than the target number to succeed (the target number is 9 [19 - 10]; the player rolls a 7, and the door bursts open). It couldn't be cleaner.

Combat, unfortunately, is burdened with a host of variables and nitpicky calculations. For example, to determine the base chance of hitting a target, you must first determine the range bracket, then "add in the operators skill level on a point for point basis, and his Manual Dexterity attack bonus to obtain the unadjusted percentage chance . . . then

subtract the fire penalties for cover and concealment, bracing shot, etc." Armor is rated for integrity, threshold, and continuous absorption; an excerpt from the armor rules, explaining what happens if an attack causes more damage than the threshold rating: "The armor integrity is lowered by the appropriate amount (as determined by weapon type) and the amount of damage that actually penetrates to the absorption layer is calculated by taking the total amount of damage rolled and subtracting the threshold." All this clutter, I guess, is supposed to enhance realism. But it just made me reach for the aspirin.

Magic, in contrast, boasts clever rules that foster expedient play and dramatic effects. A spell-casting PC is assigned to a category (analogous to an AD&D school), such as Healer or Energy Witch. Spells are cast by expending points from a renewable pool. At the gamemaster's option, spell-casters may increase the potency of their spells by drawing energy from metal pylons of extraterrestrial origin, found in remote forests and deserts. The imaginative spell list includes *buzzard watch* (a buzzard directs the caster to the nearest corpse), *body worms* (the victim is infected with parasites), and *bombardier* (a flock of birds dumps doo-doo on an unlucky target).

As for the setting, it's pretty much your standard Kentucky Fried Earth, a sprawl of barren plains, ruined cities, and wretched settlements. The "Life in the Waste" chapter gives a compelling overview but doesn't provide enough detail to get a campaign off the ground. There's no suitable home base for the PCs. There aren't any maps. There are a handful of adventure hooks, but no complete scenarios. In fact, were it not for the inspired juxtaposition of the mundane (motorcycles, pipe bombs) and the fantastic (healing potions, pain spells), I might have been tempted to walk away.

Evaluation: The upside: solid characters, interesting magic system, good presentation. The downside: clunky combat mechanics, sketchy game world, no developed adventures. The verdict: a qualified thumbs up. Recommended for fans of White Wolf's World of Darkness series (like the *Vampire: the Masquerade** game), players interested in a grittier version of the *Shadowrun** game, and would-be wizards who'd like to take a spin in a dune buggy. (Information: Optimus Design Systems, P.O. Box 1511, Buffalo, NY 14215.)

Short and sweet

Mythos* standard game set, by Charlie Crank, Chaosium Inc., \$13. **The Art of Playing Mythos**, by Scott David Aniolowski, Charlie Crank, Eric Rowe, and Lynn Willis. Chaosium Inc., \$9. **Mythos Investigator Cards** (no credits given). Chaosium Inc., \$5.

You say you're interested in the *Mythos** game, the collectible card version of Chaosium's magnificent *Call of Cthulhu** role-playing game, but you're put off by the price? Chaosium comes to the rescue with this new standard set, a handsome box containing two 52-card decks, a pair of investigators, and a 32-page rule book, all for less than the cost of two 60-card starter decks (which will set you back \$18). Serious players should also consider investing in **The Art of Playing Mythos**, a 160-page book that expands and corrects the original rules, lists every card in the game by type and title, and answers dozens of frequently asked questions (no, you can't play Zadok Allen at an Inside location). But skip the **Investigator Cards**. If you're a *Mythos* collector, you already own at least a couple of investigators; after all, one comes in every deck. And \$5 for nine cards isn't what I'd call a bargain.

Sages & Specialists, by Matt Forbeck. TSR, Inc., \$20.

Tired of the same old wizards and rogues? **Sages & Specialists** — an AD&D® supplement intended for Dungeon Masters but in my humble opinion, perfectly fine for everybody — serves up 10 alternative classes complete with statistics, personality notes, and role-playing tips. Among the newcomers are the Engineer, Seer, Guide, Historian, and Healer. Designer Forbeck warns that "due to the supporting roles of these classes, few players will find it rewarding to run a specialist." I disagree. I can see a Historian PC in a *DRAGONLANCE* campaign, gathering material for a comprehensive history of Krynn. And a Guide PC should find plenty to do in the *PLANESCAPE* setting. As for the Seer, maybe you could cook up a beholder PC and . . . oh, never mind.

City of Chaos* game, by Martyn Oliver and Colin Thornton. Monocle Games Ltd., \$50.

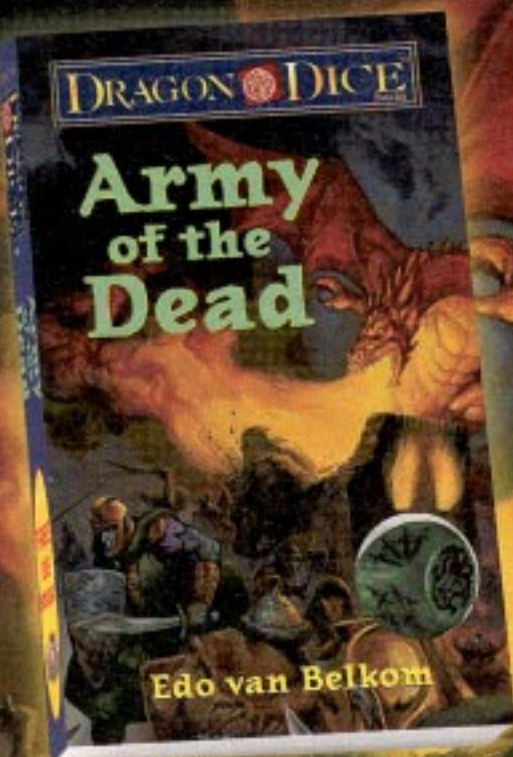
Board game translations of RPGs are almost as old as RPGs themselves. Recall, for instance, that DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, which entered the world in

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1974, preceded the DUNGEON!® board game by a mere year. Trouble is, even the best RPG board games, like *Warhammer Quest*, boil down to tactical combat games, failing to deliver the story elements that make RPGs so compelling. *City of Chaos*, however, redefines the genre, effortlessly infusing a clever set of board game mechanics with the rich characterizations and plot twists of an RPG.

The premise, similar to that of *Warhammer Quest*, casts the players as explorers in a randomly generated environment; *Warhammer Quest* drops them in a dungeon, while *City of Chaos* turns them loose in the crazy-quilt city of Byronitar. Each section of Byronitar is represented by a colorful tile. When a player approaches the edge of a tile, he draws a new one and places it next to the tile he currently occupies. He then draws cards that generate a variety of monsters, treasures, and characters — in that sense, it's no different, really, than the DUNGEON! boardgame.

What distinguishes *City of Chaos* from its brethren is the "Tome of Chaos," a fat volume of clues and obstacles, each formatted as a role-playing encounter keyed to a particular location. Say you run into a sobbing guard outside the Grinning Rat Inn; you can flee, offer him a handkerchief, or call him a wimp. Stepping onto the mausoleum tile plops you in the middle of an engaging narrative involving a princess and her zombie orchestra; you might flirt with the princess, be attacked by the zombies, or uncover a clue that'll help you restore order to Byronitar. The sheer number of encounters (hundreds of 'em) and quality of the puzzles (in a half-dozen plays, I've yet to come close to saving the city) keep the game fresh. As further incentive to separate you from your wallet, the box contains a bonanza of quality components: enough tiles to cover a dining room table, a 4-inch stack of playing cards, a sheet of skull-head tokens, and a bag of pewter miniatures. An English import, *City of Chaos* may be hard to find, but it's worth the hunt. (Information: Monocle Games Ltd., Unit 1, Queens Buildings, Queens Road, Keighley, West Yorkshire, United Kingdom, BD21 1ED.)

Nightmare Chess* game, by Pierre Clequin and Bruno Faidutti. Steve Jackson Games, \$15.

I haven't won a game of chess in, oh, about twenty years, so any revision of the rules that gives me a fighting chance

I welcome with open arms. In **Nightmare Chess**, each opponent draws a hand of five lushly illustrated cards, then plays one every time he makes a move. To say that the cards affect the flow of the game is like saying the Hoover Dam affects the flow of the Colorado River. The "Dungeon" card confines an enemy piece to a corner of the board. "Panic" forces the opponent to make his next move within 15 seconds. "Cowardice" causes a pawn to turn chicken and head for the hills. Laugh-out-loud nuts, it's a game the Mad Hatter might've played between tea parties. Does conventional chess strategy apply? Absolutely not. Is this good news for me? Absolutely.

Steel Deep*, by Sam Witt with Reynolds Jones. Mayfair Games, \$18.

Luna, the near-future setting described in this *Underground** game supplement, seems awfully familiar, replete as it is with hacker gangs, corporate killers, and punkish attitude. Yep, aside from a few off-beat touches — a prison that's become a tourist resort, eccentric organizations like House Dirtboy — we're in territory that's been thoroughly explored in the *Cyberpunk* and *Shadowrun** games. I like *Underground's* humor and energy, and I wish it well. But if Mayfair wants to fish for new players, they'll need better bait than this.

Rifts Game Shields and Adventures, by Kevin Siembieda, Patrick Nowak, Julius Rosenstein, James Osten,

Palladium Books, \$13.

Anybody with a photocopier, a bottle of glue, and a hunk of cardboard can manufacture their own gamemaster screen, so why spend good money on an "official" version? These two screens for the *Rifts** game — containing combat summaries, salvage rates, equipment costs, and magic mechanics — are well-done but nonessential. What makes this package worth the money is the generous number of bonuses: two lengthy adventures, 18 enticing scenario hooks, and a set of character sheets so crammed with detail, you'll need a magnifying glass to read the tiny print.

Battle Cattle* game, by Aldo Ghiozzi and Matt Stipicevich. Wingnut Games, \$8.

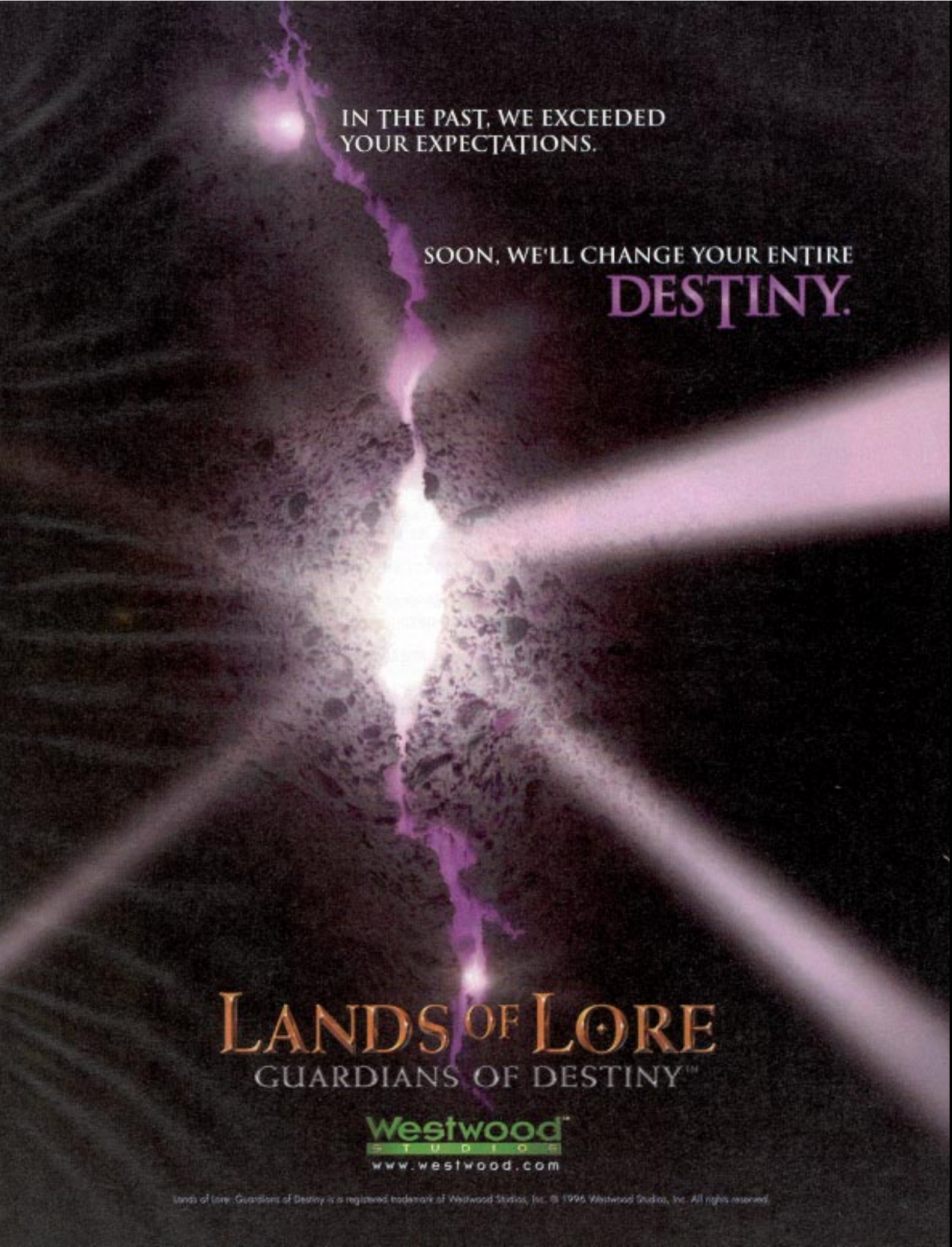
This game of battling bovines takes place in a near-future world where mutant cows armed with serrated horns and cattle-pults attempt to turn each other into hamburger. Players choose from a menu of cow types (Texas Longhorn, Hungarian Gray, Australian Charbray), then determine Health Points, Weight Allowances, and Tipping Defense Numbers. Despite the udderly stupid premise, it's a credible miniatures game, albeit one that's easy to win if you choose the right accessories. With Methane Implants, for instance, you should be able to stink your way to victory. (Information: Wingnut Games, PO Box 1714, Burlingame, CA 94011.)



Rick Swan, the author of *The Complete Guide to Role-Playing Games* (St Martin's Press), has designed and edited nearly 50 game products. You can write to him at 2620 30th Street, Des Moines, IA 50310. Enclose a self-addressed envelope if you'd like a reply.

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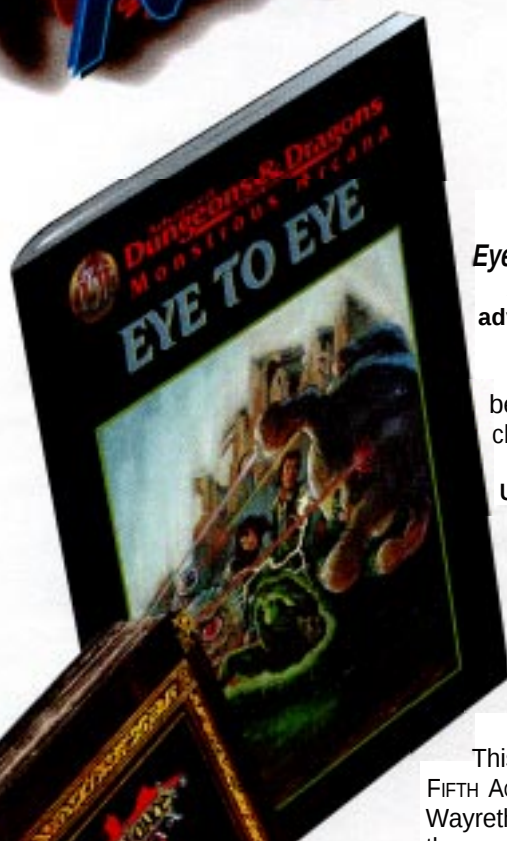
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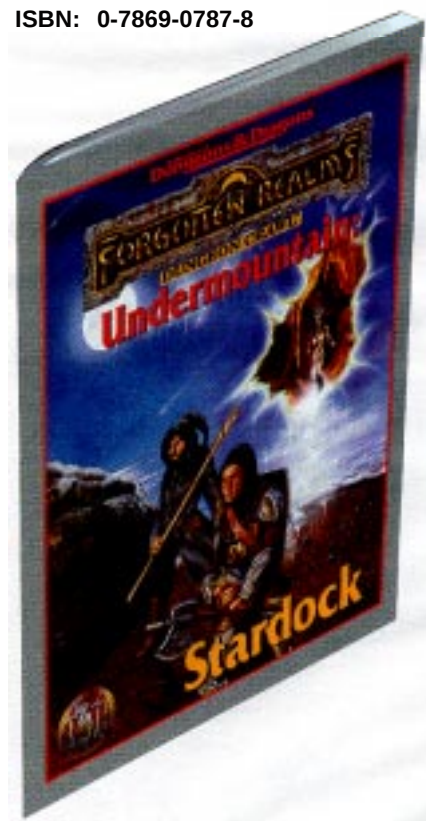
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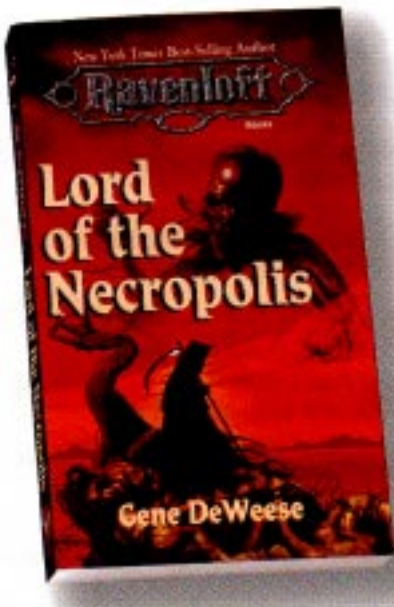
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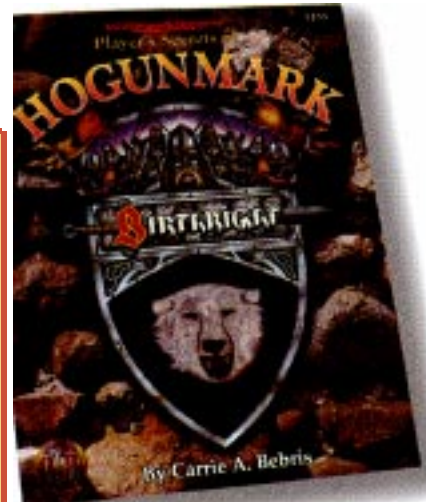
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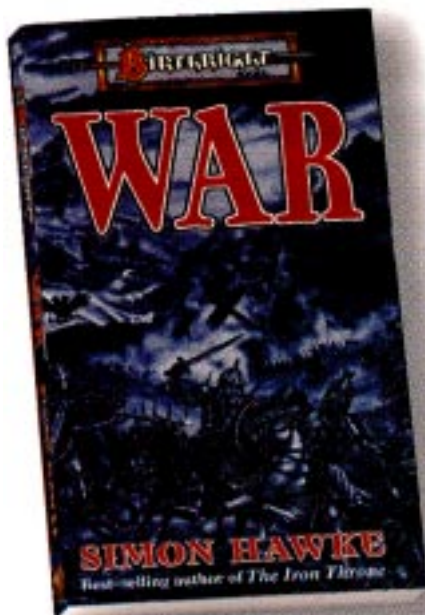
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The Current Clack

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1996: The year in review

In 1996, after two years of drift, the role-playing hobby started to find solid footing. Half drowned by the trading card game craze, tossed by the tempests of speculator-driven financial euphoria, the industry at last reached an uncharted isle of stability. Now gamers, like the Skipper and Gilligan — well, enough metaphor. The outlook is improving.

The year began badly as GDW shut down after 23 years and White Wolf laid off a dozen employees. But within months CDW's flagship *Traveller** RPG reappeared in a new edition from Imperium Games, and White Wolf's cash-flow crisis subsided. Meanwhile, perennially cash-poor Chaosium found unprecedented wealth with its *Mythos** trading card game and used the proceeds to reprint classic *Call of Cthulhu** and *Pendragon** adventures.

The year brought many new RPGs: the *Vampire: The Dark Ages**, *Feng Shui**, *Deadlands** *Fading Suns*, *Bubblegum Crisis**, and *Babylon 5* games, as well as TSR's ambitious DRAGONLANCE®: FIFTH AGE™ game using its new SAGA™ system. Most publishers of these games reported unexpectedly high sales. The *Vampire: The Dark Ages* initial shipment set a White Wolf sales record, and Daedalus Entertainment president Jose Garcia says, "*Feng Shui* sold surprisingly well. The whole first printing went in eight weeks."

TSR had a remarkably good year. A sales representative from the company said: "TSR has achieved double-digit growth each year for the last five years, and I expect we'll see the same again" from 1996. Growth this year benefited from huge sales of the DRAGON DICE™ game (currently over a million dice a month) and "very pleasing sales" of the SPELLFIRE™ card game and its many expansions. "Our role-playing sales are about as strong as the years before. We haven't seen much change in role-playing volume at all" in the last few years, even during the card-game boom.

The coming year already holds promise for role-players: New editions of the *RuneQuest**, *Kult**, *Ars Magica**, and *Chill** games are due, and TSR releases a science-fiction RPG, the ALTERNITY™ game, this August. In a welcome convergence, several publishers of trading-card games plan RPGs set in the card games' worlds. The *Feng Shui* game (designed simultaneously with its companion *Shadowfist** game) was first, but 1997 should bring RPGs based on the *Legend of the Five Rings*: *Highlander**, *Dark Age*: and (possibly) *Heresy: Kingdom Come** card games. FPG's *Dark Age* design lets gamemasters use the cards (arrestingly illustrated by former TSR staff artist Brom and others) as nonplayer characters; card statistics work seamlessly in the RPG without conversion.

Residual weakness: Still, the last two years hit role-playing hard, and small publishers still feel bruises. Atlas Games president John Nephew said in a November Internet post, "Many game companies have been quietly trimming their payroll, doing all they can to cut costs, et cetera. If we'd had to survive on RPGs alone this past year, we would have closed down and gone out of business; that would not have been enough sales even to pay the rent." Atlas also publishes the *On The Edge: Lunch Money**, and *Once Upon a Time** card games.

"There may be lots of quality material in the market, but fewer copies of each item are selling than was the case five years ago," Nephew says. Many small companies are being hurt by upheavals in the distribution system that brings games to retail stores. Until 1993, established distributors offered good service and a wide selection to their clients. When Wizards of the Coast's *Magic: The Gathering** game arrived, many small entrepreneurs moved in solely to capitalize on the craze. Under Wizards' policy, a distributor who sells large quantities of the *Magic* game is rewarded with greater allocations for later expansions.

Because *Magic* sales still drive the industry to a great extent, distributors compete to give the greatest discounts, often by cutting back on sales staff.

Garcia says this policy "rewards those with narrow inventories, or who don't know their own inventory except for the top-selling products. Short-staffed distributors have streamlined to the extent that their sales people can't do their job effectively. It destroys diversity in this industry." He says distributors have been known to refuse direct orders for new games from their client stores — that is, guaranteed sales — because of "fear, paranoia, not much working capital — and a lot of [the reason] is just sloppy business."

Aaargh

In *DRAGON® Magazine* issue #235, "Current Clack" quoted Null Foundation founder Mark Rein•Hagen as saying, "We, the pioneers, should push in a way that evolves [role-playing] so that people who come later can screw it up." As you might guess, Rein•Hagen actually said "so that people who come later can't screw it up." Sorry about that.



In 1996, freelancer Allen Varney's work appeared in seven role-playing supplements, 31 magazine issues, and the DRAGON DICE™ novel *Cast of Fate*. This issue marks his one-year anniversary writing DRAGON Magazine's news column, which he calls "a very good gig." Send news to APVarney@aol.com.

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