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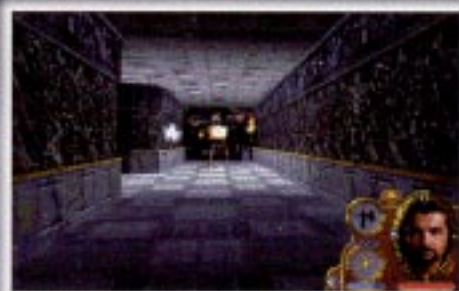
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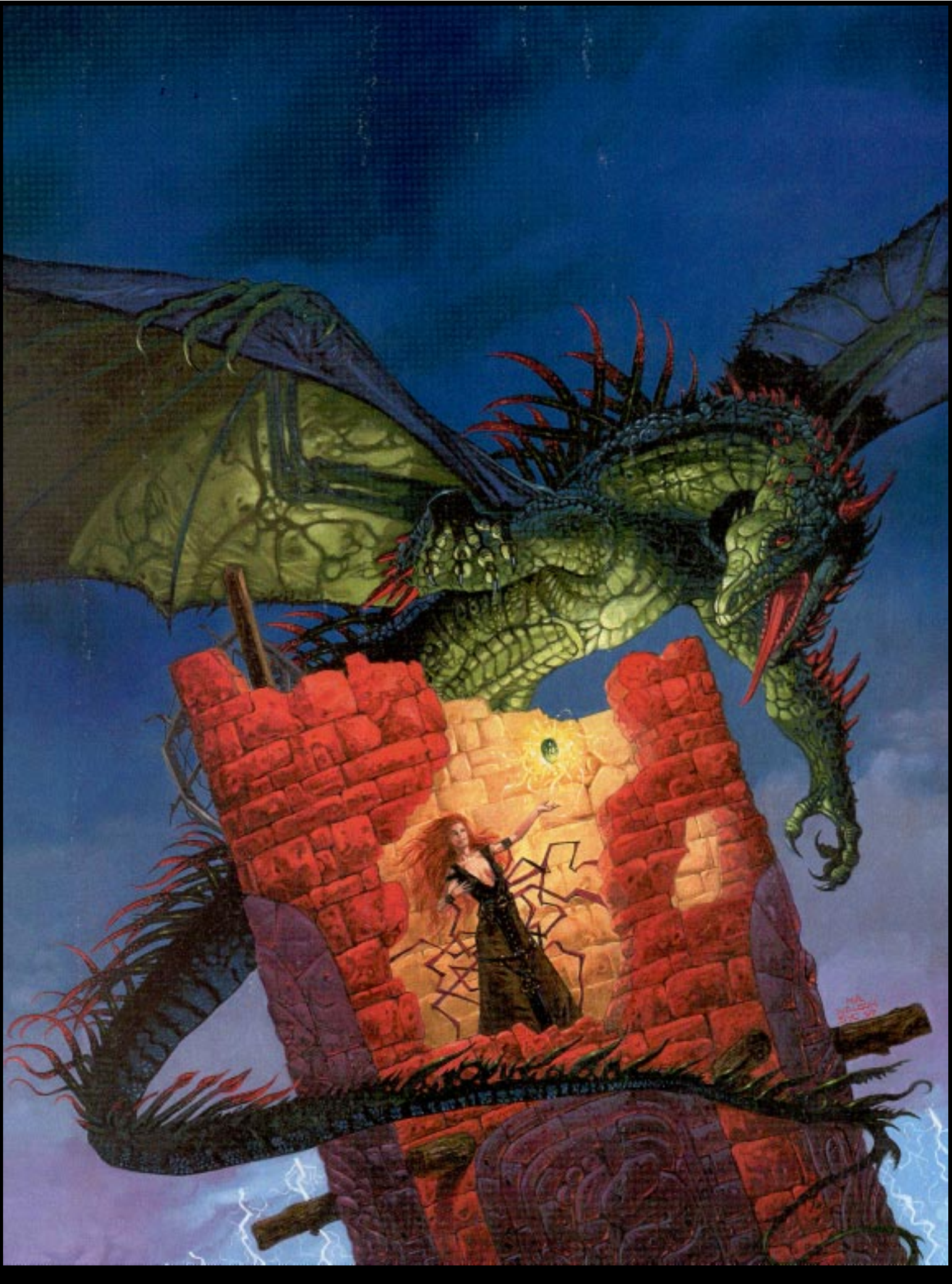


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The Wyrms' Turn™

Mystery & Suspense

October traditionally ushers in a horror-themed issue of *DRAGON® Magazine* but this year we're taking a slightly different approach to what has sometimes become an all-undead monster review. While charging through catacombs to hack at ghouls and zombies has a certain visceral appeal, slowly creeping up a squeaky staircase is what makes real terror possible. With this thought in mind, we present a more subtle array of October articles this year.

In our lead feature, we present a rich survey of Medieval and other historical period detective fiction. This is the sort of article I like to call an "idea-generator," since it creates many starting points for your own adventure ideas. For 101 more ideas on starting your own mystery plotline, see this issue's "Dungeon Mastery" column, which makes a fine companion piece to "The Murder Medieval."

Next we examine a thieves' guild allied with the shadiest church in Cerilia. These Quick Fingers don't flinch from the more brutal methods of most thieves' guilds, but they prove that a secret can be more dangerous than a knife. Located in the BIRTHRIGHT® campaign setting "Ela's Quickfingers Guild" could appear in most any AD&D® game setting.

If you like a plot-based adventure or, like me, want any excuse to break out the old Tarokka deck, check out "Saga of the Mists." Even if you never play anything but the AD&D game, the card mechanics offer a new and illuminating view of the moral and supernatural laws of Ravenloft.

Explore the final resting place of the divine dead in "Mysteries of the Dead Gods." Perfect for fans of the PLANESCAPE® setting, this article also works just fine for any AD&D game planewalkers.


Naturally, we also present several of our regular departments and columns. Let us know what you think of all of them by dropping us a note. As you might notice by the structure of this issue, we're moving the furniture around somewhat, and now is a great time to tell us what you'd like to see soon. Note our new postal and email addresses in this month's "D-Mail."

Goodbyes & Hellos

After leaving Wisconsin, we bid a fond farewell to Michelle Vuckovich, who plans a return to college for her Master's degree. We won't say goodbye to Lizz Baldwin, since she has moved only about 10 feet away to join the TSR book department as assistant editor.

Upon arriving in our new offices here in Renton, WA, we've added a few new members to our team. Our new editorial assistant is Jesse Decker, an eight-year veteran of the AD&D game and *GURPs** fantasy. Also joining the magazine staff is former English teacher Chris Perkins, better known to readers of *DUNGEON® Adventures* as that magazine's most prolific contributor, now its editor.

Along with Chris and Jesse, much of the staff of *The Duelist* has come to our assistance. We're delighted to count among our extended family Wendy Noritake, Bob Henning, Sharon Whiting, Denise Stewart, and especially Judy Smitha, who might just know everything after all. They and everyone at Wizards of the Coast have made us feel at home in our new lair.



Dave Gross

Issue #240 Vol. XXII, No. 3

October 1997



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DRAGON #240

3

October 1997
Volume XXII, No. 3
Issue #240



The Murder Medieval

Jon Pickens

Detective fiction throughout the ages can inspire many a mystery for AD&D® game sleuths.

Page 18

Mysterious Cities

James Wyatt

The Red Death spreads its subtle fingers farther across the globe of Gothic Earth. New source material for any 1890s horror campaign.

Page 28



Goddess of Shadows, Guild of Thieves

Sue Weinlien Cook and slade

Ela's Quick Fingers Guild: a new church and thieves' guild or players of the BIRTHRIGHT® campaign or any AD&D world.

Page 38

Saga of the Mists

Matthew L. Martin

Use the story-driven SAGA™ System to drive the mysteries in your RAVENLOFT® campaign.

Page 48



Mysteries of the Dead Gods

Monte Cook

Care to visit the graveyard of the gods? A new mystery for planar travelers to explore.

Page 56

Departments

Ecology of the Nymph

Johnathan M. Richards

The Monster Hunters learn a harsh lesson after their past hunt.

Page 70



Wyrms of the North

Ed Greenwood

Gaulauntyr the thief dragon is a subtle schemer.

Page 76

Dungeon Mastery

Steve Berman

More than one hundred little mysteries for the DM to develop.

Page 82



Bazaar of the Bizarre

Brian P. Hudson

Need a hand? How about a leg?

Page 88

Columns

3 The Wyrms' Turn™

A slight departure from our usual October programming.

6 D-Mail™

Your kind words and corrections, and a few words about dungeon crawls.

8 Forum

Dice vs. cards, plus the continuing debates on magic and multi-classed human PCs.

12 Sage Advice

The answers to your questions about rogues and magic.

96 Cons & Pros™

Coming soon to a convention center near you.

108 Role-Playing Reviews

Rick Swan surveys some of the best horror supplements of the past year.

120 The Current Clack™

The latest on the game industry, including the Origins convention and the GEN CON® Game Fair.

Other Material

98 Knights of the Dinner Table

100 DragonMirth

102 Gamer's Guide

104 Floyd

116 TSR Previews

FICTION

62 **True Power**

Ron Collins

At what price does the apprentice become a master?





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

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Welcome Back

Dear DRAGON Magazine,

I was shocked to have finally received issue #237 about six months after the last one—and was very glad to see it. I had received my first subscription issue in October.

The first things I read are "Floyd," "Knights of the Dinner Table," and "Sage Advice." I think many fans will find issue #237's "Knights of the Dinner Table" strip very appropriate for the magazine's disappearance and reinstatement. Thank you for returning, and welcome back!

Kendra McEvoy
Topeka, KS

To Crawl . . .

Dear DRAGON Magazine,

I too have been DMing for a long time, going on 12 years now, and I have

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to agree with Steve Shawler's comments made in DRAGON Magazine #237: nothing beats a good dungeon crawl. They are what keep both DMs' and players' skills sharp and hungry for more adventures. I also agree that there is a shortage of products that feature this type of adventure, which was what it all revolved around in the beginning.

I agree also with Steve that Mr. Swan's review (of *Undermountain: The Lost Level*, in issue #234) was a little less than on the mark, as we "adult" and "veteran" gamers can attest, and these two letters are proof of that. We design and make our own modules featuring the dungeon crawl. Other gaming styles are fine if that is what you want to play, but campaigns such as the BIRTHRIGHT®, RAVENLOFT®, and DARK SUN® settings are not the same as the original AD&D® crawl, in which you find the bad guys through clues, traps, and puzzles, then try to clobber them in the hack-n-slash style of combat. It just is not the same!

After 12 years of crawling in and around dungeons, I—and also Steve and his crew—must be doing something right to keep the game going.

Well that is my two copper pieces on the subject. High fives to Steve and his crew—our crawlers are with you.

Long live the crawl!

Ed Bradshaw
House Springs, MO

. . . Or Not To Crawl

Dear DRAGON Magazine,

Wow! I thought my subscription had been lost. What a great surprise to receive issue #237! The new format is really good, but I do miss "Forum." It is always nice to hear people go into detail on their thoughts. Please keep the issues theme-related and general, so most everyone can use them. I don't want to lose half my subscription to issues devoted to specific settings, unless of course the majority would go to the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting!

Steve Shawler asked about dungeon crawls. They are fun, but I have to admit that I just started playing after an eight-year layoff, and the game has developed

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a lot of depth and detail. Playing through the Randal Morn modules, I was impressed at how the designers worked to test the characters in every way possible. With the new proficiencies and kits, the characters can do much more than just cast spells and swing their swords. There is room for every type of module, though, and a reviewer shouldn't be allowed to influence the future of the game.

Keep up the great work! The amount of detail and realism that you offer to the game is greatly appreciated.

David Aquadro
Bratt, UT

For the Dogs

Dear DRAGON Magazine,

Your article "Man's Best Friend" (in issue #237) raised some hackles in my household, so I felt compelled to comment on a few canine inaccuracies. It is dangerous to tread on the toes of dog lovers' views of breeds and training. Since my husband is a veterinarian and I have been involved in dog obedience training for 10 years, I hope I can speak with some competence.

As far as breeds are concerned, I cringe at the notion of putting the Saint Bernard in the war dog category. Several giant breeds—including the Great Pyrenees, New Foundland, Saint Bernard, and Anatolia—are guardian dogs. These are bred to help and protect helpless individuals, such as people lost on mountains, drowning victims, and lambs. Don't expect a lot of help from these breeds in a fight unless someone they've been trained to protect is down and helpless. Even then, they're likely just to stand over the victim and growl. If you want a killer, get a pit bull, a Rottweiler, or a Chow Chow. Bull dogs of all kinds are not companion dogs. They were bred to fight. Pit Bulls, Boston Bulls, English Bulls, Boxers—these are the fighting breeds. They're hard-headed to train but great in a brawl.

Poodles are a very misunderstood breed. Poodles were originally hunting dogs. The Poodle clips were originated

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because of the problem of burrs and mats in the dog's curly coat, due to their active outdoor life.

I have trouble calling Dalmatians companions also. They were bred to run alongside fine coaches and look flashy—a canine accessory, if you will. As a result, they are very good at running around, and that's about it. When *101 Dalmatians* came out, there were several articles in our local paper by breeders warning that Dalmatians are not for everyone, being bad around children, hard to train, and high strung.

I would tend to put breeds such as the Pekinese, Papillion, Pug, and Pomeranian into the companion category. As an AD&D player, I would not have my character take any of them on an adventure.

As far as training is concerned, I can't imagine working with any dog for 2-3 hours per day. The standard training time is around 15-30 minutes. If you're in a big hurry, you can have maybe two sessions a day. The only time I've heard of training sessions going longer is in serious agility or shutsen training—and your PC had better have animal training *and* animal handling proficiency for that.

The actual tricks or skills a dog can be taught were covered well in the article, with maybe a couple of exceptions. Alarm is not an advanced skill. Dogs instinctively bark when they sense an intruder or even a friend approaching. It's definitely a beginning-level skill. Silence, on the other hand, is very difficult to teach: I would put it at an

advanced level. Water skills is an extremely variable skill. Some dogs love the water and seek it out—usually retrievers like the water. Some dogs hate the water, and no amount of training can cause them to enjoy entering the water and swimming.

Finally, strength and size do not necessarily dictate a dog's confidence and aggressiveness. The saying "It's not the size of the dog in the fight but the size of the fight in the dog" was coined for a reason.

Margaret Lundock
Lowell, FL

Errata

Bruce Heard points out two errors in the "Lupins of Mystara" article from issue #237:

Wee Folk cannot be rangers. The line listing the levels for wee folks, starting with rangers, was printed one column too far to the left. In other words, there should be no number (zero) in the column for Rangers, 15L should go under Wizards, 15 under cleric, 9M under Druids, 13 under Thieves, and 6 under Bards.

Mongrels should not be paladins—there should be no number (zero) in the column for Paladin; the "U" should be located in the Rangers column, the 12 under Wizards, the 15 under Clerics, the 13 under Druids, the next 13 under the Thieves, and the 9 under the Bards.



On the Cover

Mark Nelson, our cover artist, has been turning out exemplary work for me for the past seven years. His association with TSR, Inc. goes back about twice as long, though, as Mark was one of the original freelance illustrators for the company.

Working with Mark always includes a fair amount of (good natured) ribbing about his ability at times to meet deadlines.

During the academic season, Mark teaches at Northern Illinois University, where he nurtures such notable talents as Tom Baxa, TSR's own R.K. Post, and current student Mike Suffin, whose work graces two articles in this issue.

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Forum welcomes your comments and opinions on role-playing games.

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Maybe I'm just old fashioned, but the thought of leaving my dice bag at home makes me want to be there with it.

SAGA™ System vs. the AD&D® Game

I have decided to start my own discussion about the new DRAGONLANCE® SAGA system. I prefer the old AD&D system to the new SAGA rules. Maybe I'm just old fashioned, but the thought of leaving my dice bag at home makes me want to be there with it. This card system does not allow the detail that AD&D gamers are used to having.

Now, I'm not saying that the SAGA system is all bad. It could be a good introduction to RPGs for novices. The magic system is a big disappointment, in my opinion. I am wondering what the rest of the roleplaying world thinks of the new diceless roleplaying system.

Christopher Manning
247 Hauser Avenue
Yardville, NJ 08620

Multi-Classed Humans

I am responding to Alexander Fontenot's letter in *DRAGON Magazine* #238. I think he touched on an important point as to why humans can't multi-class and that is their limited life span. By the time they learned enough even to begin their career, they would be middle aged or close to it; and if level advancement is balanced and time kept in the game, then the multi-classed human would be old by the mid levels. I don't think most human characters would pick the advantages of being multi-classed over the advantages of concentrating on a single class and living to reach high levels. I do however disagree with two things he mentions in his letter: that such a thing as a paladin/bard could exist is laughable to say the least. I generally stick with the core rules in my games and I don't own the various handbooks or know what they contain, but if they allow such things as paladin/bards, then I am very glad I didn't buy them.

The other point I disagree with is his statement that paladins don't have to be lawful good. Paladins are, always have been, and always will be lawful good. It

is a requirement of the class and if it's not met, then the character is not a paladin. Non-lawful-good deities might have knightly orders that are not lawful good, but please don't call them paladins. In my own campaign a lawful neutral deity has an order of special knights who are granted a few unique powers and a super-strict code of honor. They work for their deity's cause and are known throughout the land as templars. The paladin class is a special class, and it takes a special player to play a paladin well. I don't feel a paladin would ever multi-class as that would mean she was no longer totally committed to her deity and therefore no longer a paladin. Just my two coppers!

Mike Wilson
4515 Hemlock
Wichita KS 67216

Weak Wizards?

I have a few comments about the "Forum" letter about wizards by Wayne Rossi (in issue #236). I would have to agree with him, although "weak" is not a term I would use for wizards.

On the other hand, many DMs make up their own spells or make higher-level spells at lower levels, as with dwarves. You don't need to be a genius to work your way up to a higher level, although many exceptions exist. Take Raistlin Majere, second most powerful mage in all of Krynn, surpassed only by his nephew, Palin. Of course, Raistlin was a genius to begin with, outsmarting even the great Fistandantilus. He learned many spells apprentices were not meant to learn. On yet the *third* hand, Gurrant DiThon was a bumbling fool before he became the Sixth Sentinel of the Bastion. So, don't get me wrong. "Genius" is not necessarily the word to describe a mage.

Greg Gartland
824 Piedmont Circle
Naperville, IL 60565

Dead Again and Again

I'd like to comment on Kevin McMahon's letter in issue #238's "Forum." I feel that it's not enough simply to make bringing a character back from the dead hard to encourage players to think twice before putting a character into a potentially deadly situation that most people wouldn't go into. It's far too easy simply to roll up a new character when the old one dies.

Part of player recklessness comes from not caring about the character. Far too many PCs are simply two-dimensional constructs, and the player will not care if the character dies. To make the player care about the character, make him or her write a background (preferably an extensive one) for the character. This will acquaint the player with the character rather well and make the PC easier to roleplay—and the player less likely to risk the life of the character. A beloved character will not be risked so easily as a flat, lifeless one. I agree that PCs are not pawns and should not be sacrificed. "Knowing" a PC is the best way to avoid that.

Wayne S. Rossi
86 Powell Place Road
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Art by D. Elliott

More on Magic

Having just re-read the "Forum" section in issue #234, I'd like to throw my penny's worth into the debate about magic in the AD&D game. This continuing saga of magic-rich vs. magic-dead campaign settings is irrelevant and counter-productive.

This is the principle under which I DM my own campaign (a customized version of the DRAGONLANCE setting). Nowhere in my campaign is this more telling than in the magic system. In it, there are three distinct forms of magic: elemental magic, life magic, and power words and true name magic. These are represented by a plethora of spellcasters: wizards (High Sorcerers and Royal Warlocks), priests, paladins, rangers, earthmagi (druids and elementalists), shamans and psychics (psionics are treated as the use of one's inherent life magic).

In addition to the new spellcasting character classes I created, I changed all the existing ones because I was unhappy with their scope. Wizards receive eight spells (seven first-level and one second-level) at first level; priests need not "memorize" spells each day (they pray for divine intervention on the spot); paladins follow specific faiths (gaining the spheres of influence and alignment restrictions of that faith—this also gives rise to anti-paladins and neutral paladins); and rangers gain access to the weather and travelers spheres of influence. Finally, unhappy with the priests' spheres of influence listed in *DRAGONLANCE Adventures* and *Tales of the Lance*, I re-worked them for all the gods of Krynn. This has had the net effect of making all the spellcasting classes more potent. It is balanced by the limitations placed on each class in terms of spell availability. Now, at this point, game-balance freaks will be tearing their hair out and constructing voodoo dolls in my image. Don't forget that if PCs have all this extra power, so do NPCs. Also, creative DMing can easily turn spellcasting ability into as much of a disadvantage as it is an advantage. This has illustrated my point on DM autonomy. Now to my second point.

In answer particularly to Lucas Ashlar Lee, PCs and the villains they struggle against are exceptional characters. They are not the run-of-the-mill citizenry. (Don't forget that the average ability score is only 9, which precludes most people from the powerful character classes.) For every adventurer, there are hundreds of 0-level commoners.

Looking at it this way, if we are taking the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting as an example, the number of powerful mages is easily justifiable—the Realms are vast. Proportionality and the law of averages dictate that an AD&D world of that size with a global population of several billion would spawn more than a few archmagi. Also, if you're of the opinion that magic should be rare and wondrous, have a chew on this:

Think about what you might have in your house: television, stereo, electric lights, mass-produced books, refrigerator, home computer, etc. These things we take for granted. To a medieval civilization, even a match would be considered amazing. Now, in a world where wizards and priests can hurl *fireballs* and other assorted magical spells in a highly conspicuous manner, and various creatures with grotesque magical abilities roam the land openly, couldn't magic be taken for granted in the same way that we view technology? Looking at it this way, Elminster could be likened to our own Bill Gates of Microsoft. Obviously, Mr. Gates can't cause someone to combust spontaneously; neither can he wander the multiverse at will, but the parallel holds when you think of what computer software makes possible. If magic existed on earth as it does in AD&D game worlds, would technology have developed as it has?

The DM should feel free to make whatever he wishes of his campaign, and magic-rich and -dead campaigns have equal merit. Magic can be used in a magic-dead campaign to create awe and wonder. However, if this is the only thing you can think of to achieve that goal, then you must have a think about the storylines you employ in your campaign. Even having awesomely powerful wizards and readily visible gods does not reveal the whys and wherefores of mortal existence. What is more wondrous than the secrets of creation? I use my campaign to pose the questions I ask myself to my players. This does not hinge upon how many wizards are present in my campaign world. Besides, in a game where magic is possible, players tend to become blasé about it, irrespective of the level of magic within the game world.

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Sage Advice

by Skip Williams

Send your AD&D® game questions to "Sage Advice," 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055. You may also send questions by email to thesage@tsr.com. The sage is far too busy to send personal replies, so if you enclose an SASE, you'll receive a copy of the writers' guidelines.

The Sage takes a brief look at abilities for AD&D game rogues before delving into the game particulars of various magical effects.

The Complete Bard's Handbook lists thief/gypsy-bard as an allowable multi-class combination. What thief skills do these characters have, and how do you calculate the skill scores? If two skills are the same, do you just use the higher one?

A thief/gypsy-bard would have the eight basic thief skills from Table 26 in the *Player's Handbook* (PHB). To determine the base score for each skill, compare Table 26 in the PHB to Table 7 in the *Complete Bards Handbook*; take the higher of the two base scores if both tables show the same skill. Give the thief/gypsy-bard 40 discretionary points to round out his skills, then adjust all skills for race, Dexterity, and kit. As the character increases in level, add further discretionary points as the character earns them. That is, the character adds 30 points each time he gains a level as a thief and 15 points each time he gains a level as a bard.

Thieves can speak Thieves Cant. Do they gain it without spending any proficiency or intelligence slots, or do they have to spend a slot?

No, it's free.

Some spells listed in the PHB and DRAGON® Magazine are capable of being (and are supposed to be) cast for persons other than the caster. Others are somewhat ambiguous as to

whether they can work for someone other than the caster, find familiar being one of them. Can find familiar be cast for someone other than the caster (such as a master wizard on behalf of an apprentice)? What if the spell recipient is not a spellcaster (or at least not a wizard spellcaster)? What kind of benefits (if any) would he or she receive? And what about other spells, such as the animal companion spell? The description infers that the spell is for the caster, but the information in the "statistics" portion says that the area of effect is the creature summoned. Which takes precedence? The text of the description or the stats?

A *find familiar* spell allows the caster to summon a familiar and bind the creature to himself. The caster cannot assign the familiar to anyone else.

Neither a spell's statistics nor its description "take precedence" when trying to decide whether a spell can be cast on another's behalf. One must use common sense. In most cases, the spell's description is far more useful than its statistics because the text tells you what the spell does. For example, *dispel magic* cancels other magic within its area of effect. It makes no difference who casts the spell. On the other hand, *charm person* makes the recipient loyal to the caster. A character might wish to *charm* someone on another character's behalf, but the recipient feels loyal to the caster, not to some third person the caster designates.

Sometimes, however, a spell's statistics can settle the issue pretty well. Any spell with a range of "touch" can be cast for another's benefit. On the other hand, a spell with a range of "0" always affects the caster, and any powers the spell grants cannot be transferred elsewhere no matter what the spell's description might imply; the spell's area of effect

might be large enough to affect multiple creatures, but if the range is 0 the spell always must be centered on the caster.

Perhaps the statistics for the *find familiar* spell should read: Range: 0; Area of Effect: 1 creature within a radius of 1 mile per caster level.

Your recent attention to *frisky chest* and similar spells has suggested a possible flaw in the *Tenser's floating disc* spell to me: What sort of surface do you recommend for the floor that the *disk* needs to be above? It would seem to be incredibly easy for someone simply to throw a weighted rock across a chasm and use the disk to ferry people across without causing the disk to disappear due to the lack of floor, simply by using a thick rope. This would seem to reduce the use of *telekinesis* or *fly* as a lot of the effects that these are commonly used for are superseded by the increased duration of the *disk* and the fact that it can be used on inanimate objects such as burning flasks of oil, as long as they are within the spell range. Images of hoards of low-level mages arriving in town sitting on disks, and of sneaky mages getting the *disks* to carry caltrops and acid into dangerous areas and then causing the disk to disappear by causing it to rise more than three feet from the ground come to mind.

If you want to restrict abuse of *Tenser's floating disc* heavily, you can simply rule that the disc winks out unless the surface beneath it is capable of supporting a normal human walking at a normal pace. This rules out not only ropes but also water, quicksand, lava, and all sorts of surfaces the caster might encounter while using the spell. For most campaigns, however, a more reasonable ruling might require a surface that could conceivably support the empty disc itself assuming it were a physical object. Tightropes would still be out, but water (at least calm water), mud, quicksand, and the like would be okay.

As a method for scattering items on the ground, a *Tenser's floating disc* would be useful in some cases, but not in others. The caster himself, for example, could strew caltrops much more efficiently than the disc could because the disc would drop the whole load in the same small (about three feet wide) area. Anyone encountering the resulting pile of caltrops probably would see them and easily avoid them.

Flaming oil won't work particularly well with the disc either. One flask of oil

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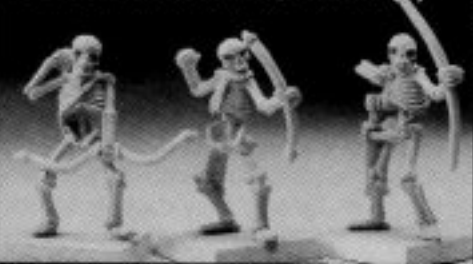
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makes a puddle three feet wide (see Table 45 in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*), which is exactly the width of the disc. The disc is slightly concave, so it should carry the oil along without sloshing. A second flask, however, would overflow the disc—it's *slightly* concave. Further, lighting the oil and moving it into position will cause only minimal damage to whatever happens to be underneath when the *disc* vanishes—very little will actually be under the *disc*, as it never floats more than three feet off the ground. Also, remember that a direct hit from burning oil inflicts 2d6 hp damage

Will a *stoneskin* spell protect the recipient from the effects of non-spell critical hits?

on the first round. If a party fills a disc with oil, lights it, then drops it somewhere, the best they should get is a splash hit (1d3 hp damage). Since the oil is splashing, I'd make every creature within five feet of the point of impact attempt a saving throw vs. paralysis to avoid the damage. It's possible that a tiny creature—or an immobilized one—could suffer a direct hit, but if the party lights the oil before moving the *disc*, then the damage still should be only 1d6. If the party dumps the oil from the disc, then lights it, they could inflict the full 2d6 hp damage, provided the target is small enough and slow enough to be under the disc when it vanishes.

The *disc* could carry quite a lot of acid or holy water, say five vials worth. Still, the disc floats only three feet off the ground and moves at a fairly poky movement rate of 6. Again, the best the party can hope for is a splash. In this case, I'd recommend a saving throw vs. paralyzation for every creature within five feet of the point of impact, with failure resulting in 1d3 splash hits (1 hp damage each). Of course, an immobile creature caught under the disc would suffer five hits (2d4 hp damage each).

All the foregoing might seem stingy, but there may very well be cases where the party is better off forcing the opposition to attempt saving throws rather than trying to score missile hits, and there's no chance of the containers failing to break. Also, opponents with no room to move out of the *disc's* way would just be splashed, no saving throws.

A couple of nights ago, some friends and I were playing a game in the RAVENLOFT® setting, and we faced a zombie lord. This monster has an aura that can cause several different effects, one of them being weakness (as per spell). The problem was we couldn't find a weakness spell in any book we own. Is this ability a printing error, or do we just not have the book it's in?

In this case, treat *weakness* as a reversed casting of the 2nd-level wizard spell *strength*. Not that *strength* is not normally reversible; it just provides an easy-to-use game mechanic.

Will a *stoneskin* spell protect the recipient from the effects of non-spell critical hits?

Yes. If the spell negates the basic damage from a hit, it negates any additional physical effects involving cuts, pokes, or impact from that hit. Touch-delivered spells are not negated, nor are magical effects, such as the electrical damage from a *javelin of lightning* (though the 1d6 hp physical damage from the javelin is). *Stoneskin* never negates damage that does not involve cutting, piercing, or striking. Damage from a flask of burning oil or damage from acid harms creatures protected by *stoneskin*.

What happens when the recipient of a *stoneskin* spell also uses a *fire shield* spell? How much damage would an assailant suffer if the *stoneskin* spell negated all the damage from his attack?

If the *stoneskin* spell negates the damage from a blow, the attacker who delivered the blow suffers no damage at all. Note that the *fire shield* spell still makes the recipient more susceptible to certain forms of attacks (see spell description).

The *PLAYER'S OPTION™: Spells & Magic* book allows wizards to choose priest spell spheres as schools. If a wizard chooses the priest sphere of necromancy as a school of magic, does he receive *animate dead* as a third-level spell or a fifth-level one? Also, is the limit of hit dice that can be animated the

number that may be animated at one casting or the total number that the mage can have animated at one time?

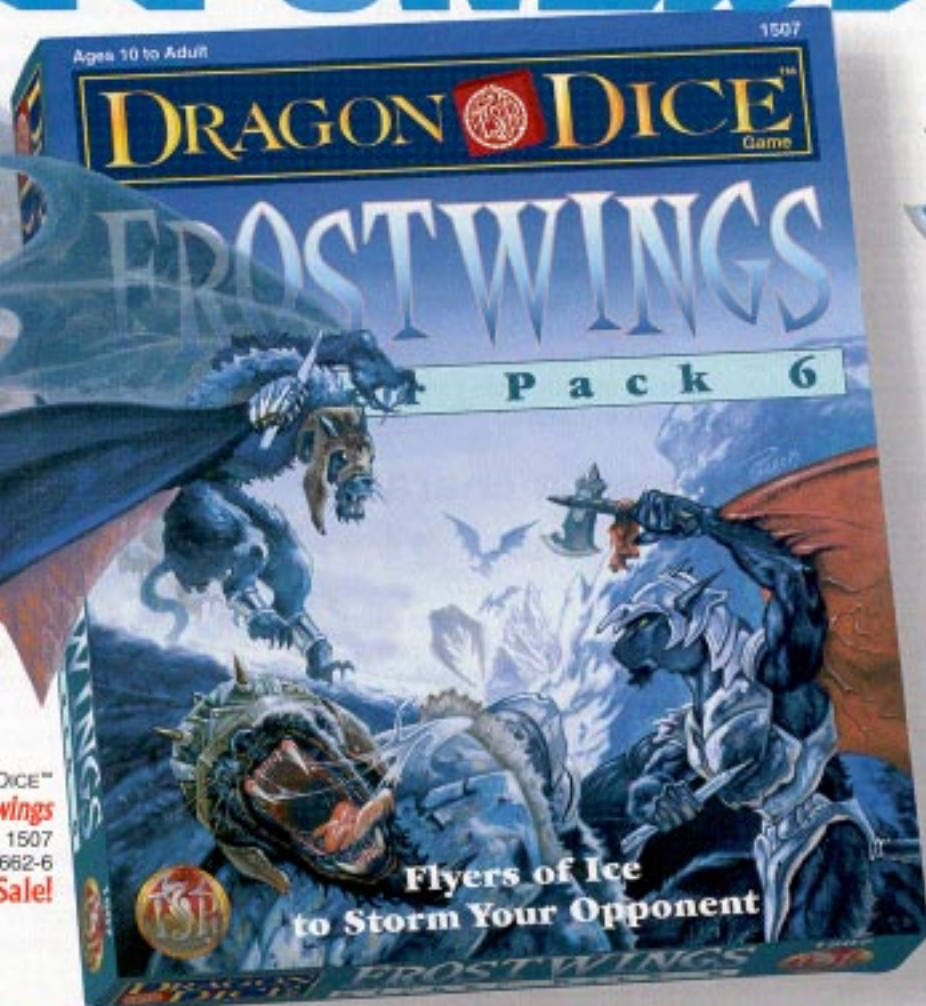
The wizard gains the priest version of *animate dead* as a third-level spell. If the wizard also has access to the wizardly school of necromancy, he also can learn *animate dead* as a fifth-level spell. The limits given in the spell descriptions are for each casting of the spell, not for the total number of creatures the character can have animated at once. (DMs usually find various clever ways of making players regret collecting too many animated allies for their characters). Finally, both the priest and wizard versions of the spell use total hit dice of the animated creatures to determine how many creatures one spell can animate. In both cases, the caster can animate one hit die worth of skeletons or zombies per caster level. The description for the priest version implies that priests can animate one zombie per caster level, but that's an error. Both versions of the spell work just as described under the wizard version.

What would a dragon do if affected by the fourth-level priest spell *inverted ethics*? Would the dragon freely hand out its treasure, slaughtering those who donated to the hoard, or merely permit adventurers to rob it blind?

A dragon under the effects of an *inverted ethics* spell would temporarily lose its desire to hoard treasure and probably would become less jealous of what it had. Unlike the shopkeeper used as an example in the spell description, a dragon wouldn't allow people just to take treasure from its hoard, because it's not in the habit of letting treasure leave the hoard. On the other hand, an *inverted ethics* spell also would temporarily transform an evil dragon from a suspicious, haughty, and violent creature into a trusting, humble, and mild one. The transformation might just allow a party to exchange a few pleasantries with the dragon and hit the road with their skins still intact. If anyone was foolish enough to take an item from the hoard while the dragon wasn't itself is most likely in for a heap of trouble when the spell wears off and the dragon comes looking for its missing trinkets.

The description of the *delayed magic* missile spell seems to contradict itself. First, it says "The missile causes 1d6 hp damage for every three levels of the caster." The next paragraph, however, says that "the initial impact deals 1d6

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hp damage to the target.” What amount of damage does the first blow actually cause? Also, please clarify the line, “the staggered attacks prevent a targeted spellcaster from concentrating on a spell.” Does the continued attack interfere with spellcasting even if the target makes his or her save and takes no damage?

No contradiction. The spell deals 1d6 hp damage per three levels of the caster, but no more than 1d6 hp damage each round. Although the description in the *Wizard's Spell Compendium*, Volume 1 lists the duration as 1 round per caster level, the spell ends out when it delivers its full allotment of damage or when its duration expires, whichever comes first. If the target is a spellcaster, any spell he attempts is ruined if he fails his saving throw during a round when *delayed magic missile* is in effect, but the spell works if the target makes his saving throw (provided nothing else distracts him).

detect evil magic and dispel evil magic. What, exactly, is evil magic? Is any magic cast by an evil character “evil?” Does that mean that if my character encounters a *long sword +1*, he can destroy the sword if an evil wizard created it? What about other types of spells? The inquisitor's dispel evil magic ability has a base success chance of 100% making it very potent indeed.

In this case “evil magic” is any magic cast by an evil creature. However, the magic must be a spell or spell-like ability still operating. For example, an inquisitor cannot detect or dispel a cure *light wounds* spell an evil character has cast because the magic is only fleeting; only its effects are permanent. Nor could an inquisitor dispel a *flesh to stone* spell an evil creature has cast. (Exactly which spells have instantaneous durations but permanent effects is subject to some debate, and any listing of such spells can vary from campaign to campaign.) The inquisitor could

Likewise, magically created or animated creatures, such as zombies and golems, cannot simply be dispelled.

The description for the sixth-level wizard spell *death spell* gives a chart which indicates that the maximum number of hit dice for affected creatures is 8+3. Can we assume from the foregoing that characters and NPCs of 9th level and higher are totally unaffected by the *death spell*? Does the death ray of a beholder have the same limitation on hit dice (understanding that it only affects just one creature per round, assuming the beholder can keep using the eye that produces the death ray)?

Level equals hit dice in this case, so characters of 9th level or higher needn't fear *death spells*. Technically, the beholder eye ability duplicates a *death* spell except that it affects only one creature at a time, just as you point out. If you're following the rules to the letter, that means a beholder's death ray slays creatures of 8+3 hit dice or less without a saving throw. Such creatures cannot be raised or resurrected (see the opening lines of the spell description). I have always preferred to treat the beholder death ray as a ranged *slay living* effect (reverse of the fifth-level priest spell *raise dead*), which allows a saving throw vs. death magic but also inflicts 2d8+1 hp damage if the saving throw succeeds.

Can a priest resurrect a character even if his head is missing?

Can a priest resurrect a character even if his head is missing?

I'd say a priest would have a hard time casting any spells at all without his head, much less *less dead* or *resurrection*. If the spell recipient is missing his head, *raise dead* won't help, but *resurrection* works fine.

I am playing an inquisitor paladin from *The Complete Paladin's Handbook*. My question pertains to two of the kit's special benefits, namely the ability to

detect and dispel an evil caster's charm *person* or *curse* spell, however.

Certain spells, such as *permanency*, *quest*, and *geas* either cannot be dispelled at all or can be dispelled only by characters of higher level than the original caster-check the individual spell descriptions to be sure.

Magical items don't qualify, as they are not spells or spell-like effects. However, if an evil creature uses a magical item to create a spell-like effect, an inquisitor can detect and dispel it.

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Tired of dragon-bashing? Try a mystery for a change of pace. Since the early 1990s, the number of Medieval mystery stories has been growing steadily. Collectively, they are an excellent source of interesting characters and intriguing plots. A certain amount of brainwork for the players can make a pleasant change from more typical AD&D® game adventuring fare. The fictional sleuths can make fascinating models for player characters.

Thus, this brief survey of the literature. No organized attempt will be made to suggest how to integrate these into a gaming session. (The DM might introduce some campaign-specific ways to greatly reduce the effectiveness of such divination magics as *speak with dead*. Also steps should be taken to discourage the easy revivification of NPC victims—a device such as the Morganti weapons in Steven Brust's Vlad Taltos books, weapons that inflict a true and final death, raise the dramatic tension of the situation considerably). Instead, this article will look at some short story collections, individual books, and series that describe the adventures of some of the more famous medieval sleuths of fiction.

Who Goes There?

The original medieval sleuth is Ellis Peters' monk and herbalist, Brother Cadfael. The series runs over 20 books and has been made into a series of televised dramas starring Derek Jacobi. The most prolific writer in the field is probably Paul C. Doherty, with several series and a number of independent books. Umberto Eco has written the most widely known medieval mystery, *The Name of the Rose*, which has been made into a visually striking movie starring Sean Connery as the Franciscan clergyman William of Baskerville. The case for clerical investigations of murder is well put by Prior Geoffrey in the second chapter of *Through the Valley of Death* by E.M.A. Allison: "So, I will put to you my case. Primus, we know not who did the deed. Secundus, if we did know, the malefactor would more likely confess. Tertius, unless he confesses, his soul will be lost. Quartus, we are men of God, and in his service it is our province to save souls in peril. Ergo, I put it to you that in order to save this soul, we must seek him out."

While Cadfael and William of Baskerville are members of the clergy, this is not the only model for the medieval sleuth. Our first step, then, is a brief look at the types of medieval sleuths. There follows, in order of historical chronology, a brief character-by-character description of the principal fictional detectives. A special section then introduces some sleuths from related periods of interest to roleplayers. Finally, our short survey concludes with a bibliographical list of stories and series of interest to the reader.

Archetypes

So far, several main models for the medieval detective have appeared: the monk or nun sleuth, the alchemist/herbalist, the lawyer/clerk, and the traveling rogue. Some medieval sleuths of fiction combine these.

The first category, **clergy**, includes William of Baskerville, Brother Cadfael, Brother Athelstan, and nun-sleuths such as Sister Fidelma, Catherine LeVendeur, and Sister Frevisse. A clerical background might provide skills in reading, writing and possibly numbers. In a historical campaign, knowledge of Latin may help to break language barriers for a traveling sleuth. Other, non-clerical sleuths might have some church education in their background, such as Kate Sedley's peddler, Roger Chapman.



A Short Guide to Medieval Mystery Fiction

by Jon Pickens

illustrated by Tom Baxa

The **alchemist/herbalist** knows the heal properties of herbs, can prepare healing draughts and set bones, and can recognize the symptoms of disease and poisoning. Brother Cadfael is the herbalist at his abbey; C.L. Grace's sleuth Kathryn Swinbrooke is a physician in Canterbury; Candace Robb's Welsh ex-soldier, Owen Archer, received some such training while recovering from a wound, to become an apprentice apothecary in the first book of that series.

The **lawyer-clerk** sleuth is usually in the employ of a great noble or even royalty. Thus, he prowls a fertile field for political and international intrigue, assassination plots, tangled diplomacy, and the uncovering of the official corruption in high places. As with the religious sleuth, the lawyer-clerk is literate, intelligent, and a keen observer. Examples are P.C. Doherty's Hugh Corbett, Gervase Bret of Edward Marston's Domesday series, and Ian Morson's William Falconer, a regent master at Oxford.

The **traveling rogue** often comes from a somewhat later period: Tudor London, for example. Usually from the lower classes of society, or at best a gentleman rake and adventurer, a rogue has the freedom to wander into almost any area and be virtually invisible to the powerful. He also rubs shoulders with the dregs of society, which can serve as the basis for a host of investigations. Kate Sedley's wandering peddler Roger Chapman is a forerunner of the type (however, he has few rogue-like traits other than his profession, and clerical novitiate training as well!). Michael Clyne's Richard Shallot, and the traveling players of Edward Marston's stories of the ex-sailor Nicholas Bracewell are typical of the type.

Finally, other historical mysteries may be of interest to those using specific campaign settings. These include mysteries set in ancient Egypt, Rome, China, Japan, Renaissance Europe, and Elizabethan England.



The following section identifies some of the more prominent medieval series sleuths, presented in order of historical chronology.

Medieval Sleuths

Sister Fidelma (Northumbria, 660s)

Peter Tremayne's work is set considerably earlier than most other medieval mysteries. Dark Age Ireland was a center of learning and culture, early Christian before later councils of Rome imposed their modern strictures on the priesthood. Equality of the sexes here was without precedent or equal in Western civilization. Sister Fidelma, a young talented priest, is both literate and legally trained.

The setting of the first of the Sister Fidelma novels, *Absolution by Death*, is a council that will decide the course of the early Church in northern Britain. Under a cloud of dire omens, the patriarchal faction of Rome passionately opposes the local Celtic faction, which argues its case with equal passion. When the leading speaker for the Celtic faction is found slain, the turmoil comes dangerously close to triggering a civil war. Sister Fidelma is teamed with a brilliant young monk of the Roman faction, Brother Eadulf, and they must overcome their differences to carry the investigation to a successful conclusion.

In addition to the novels, short stories featuring Sister Fidelma can be found in *Great Irish Detective Stories*, in *The Mammoth Book of Historical Whodunnits*, and in some issues of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*.

Ralph Delchard/ Gervase Bret (Domesday series; England 1080s)

Ralph Delchard is a Norman warrior; his friend Gervase Bret is a lawyer-clerk of Saxon origin. Their mysteries are set at the time of the Norman conquest and pacification of England in the late 11th Century. They are part of the Kings commission: Following the inventory of the country's resources recorded in The Domesday Book ordered by William the Conqueror, they investigate fraud, theft, and other crimes revealed by the assessments. Delchard, a hard-bitten, experienced warlord in his prime, leads the royal commission and commands the escort, while his younger friend Gervase applies his talents to the legal end of the business and draws out Saxon locals who won't talk to a Norman lord. Their partnership is both cunningly crafted and effective.

In *The Wolves of Suvernake*, an informant has sent word of an irregularity in the affairs of the Abbey of Bedwyn. Before the commission arrives, he is found slain, apparently by a huge wolf. The two sleuths find a complex tangle of land fraud, forgery, ancient religion, old hates, and murder.

One central theme of these stories is the clash of Norman and Saxon cultures in a much-conquered land. The author, Edward Marson, has also written a series set in the Elizabethan period (see "Other Periods...").

Brother Cadfael (England, 1130s)

The foremost of all medieval sleuths was created by Ellis Peters. Brother Cadfael is an ex-crusader, now in his late fifties and retired to the Abbey of St. Peter and St. Paul near Shrewsbury, on the Welsh border. Half-Welsh himself, Brother Cadfael serves as the abbey's herbalist and healer.

Cadfael's England is torn by civil war. The series starts in 1138. King Steven has seized the crown from Queen Maud, leaving the country in turmoil and families divided. In the series timeline, the stories follow the seasons of the year, starting in Spring 1138 with *A Morbid Taste For Bones*.

In this story, an ambitious English prelate, anxious for the Abbey to acquire the relics of a saint of its own, leads an expedition into Wales to recover the remains of St. Winifred, an early martyr. Cadfael goes because he speaks the language. Naturally, the locals don't want to lose their saint. When the local lord most opposed to the embassy is murdered, things start to get ugly.

The later plots are equally intriguing. In *One Corpse Too Many*, in the summer of 1138, Shrewsbury is taken in the war and the defending garrison is executed. However, a count of the bodies reveals an extra corpse; someone has hidden a private act of murder in the general tide of war.

The series is driven by a number of dramatic tensions: the laws of God and the laws of men, the contrasting cultures of England and Wales, the sanctuary of monastic life against the tumult of civil war. The perils and passions of young lovers caught in these events, assisted by the wisdom and experience of Cadfael, provide another continuing theme. (Tales don't get much better than these.)

Catherine LeVendeur (France 1130s)

Sharan Newman's heroine is an example of a medieval nun-sleuth. The young Catherine is a brilliant scholar and novice at the Convent of the Paraclete. The abbess there is the fabled Heloise, of the famous pair of lovers, Abelard and Heloise.

In *Death Comes as Epiphany*, a manuscript copied at the convent for the Abbot Suger, prelate of France, has been subtly altered. Worse, rumors abound that it contains sacrilegious passages, and that it will be used in Church disputes to condemn Abelard. To save Abelard, her abbess, and her order, the 18-year-old Catherine must leave the convent, go to the church library at St. Denis, examine the text, and bring an end to the plot.

Her mission is urgent and secret; further, for her safety, Catherine must leave the convent in apparent disgrace, returning to a wrathful family. In Paris, she meets Edgar, a young apprentice stonemason, who is much more than he seems. The young man, to whom she is much attracted, is destined to play a crucial role in the resolution of her first dangerous mission.

William Falconer (Oxford University 1260s)

William Falconer is a regent master at Oxford during the reign of Henry III. An amateur sleuth, he has an active, inquiring mind trained in Aristotelian logic. England, at this time, is a place of divided loyalties, as the baronial faction under Simon de Montfort challenges the authority of the king. A complex network of political alliances has placed the university in authority over the town, even though among the faculty there is widespread support for the barons. Further, the townspeople resent the university and relations between them tend to explode into riot.

In *Falconer's Crusade*, a student newly arrived from the country, Thomas Symon, stumbles across a murder. He barely escapes death at the hands of an enraged mob of townspeople. This draws Falconer into the case. He soon finds himself searching for the murderer and also for a mysterious book that seems to be at the center of a tangled web of violence, heresy, magic, and sudden death.

Hugh Corbett (England 1280s)

P.C. Doherty is perhaps the most prolific of the medieval mystery writers. His principal character, Hugh Corbett, is a Chancery clerk, reporting to Robert Burnell, Bishop of Bath and Chancellor of England in the reign of Edward I. Bereft of both wife and child in a plague, Hugh has no life other than his work.

A fine example of the lawyer-clerk as sleuth, Hugh's keen powers of observation and tenacity in carrying out his assignments take him into the seamier side of medieval London life and politics. While many of his investigations are domestic intrigues, the Hundred Years War is also raging.

In *Satan in St. Mary's*, a member of the Goldsmith's Guild is found hanged in the church of St. Mary Le Bow. Is it a suicide, or are more sinister forces at work? Step-by-step, Hugh interviews those who knew the dead man, piecing together the details of a hidden plot of murder, assassination, rebellion, and revenge. His work is deadly dangerous, for Hugh soon becomes known to the Pentacle, a shadowy cult whose existence is all but unprovable and whose members wish to remain unknown.

P.C. Doherty has also written several mysteries based on Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, as well other single books set in the medieval period, especially during the Wars of the Roses (1455-1485). Under the pseudonyms of C.L. Grace and Paul Harding, he has created new series as well (see *Brother Athelstan*, 1370s and *Kathryn Swinbrooke*, 1480s).

Owen Archer (England, 1370s)

Candace Robb's sleuth, Owen Archer, was a Welsh captain of archers during the Hundred Years War. Half-blinded in the service of his lord, Henry Duke of Lancaster, and unwilling to have his injury put others at risk, Owen has retired from military life while still in his prime, though he has remained an agent for his liege.

In *The Apothecary Rose*, following the death of the Duke of Lancaster, Owen takes service with John Thoresby, Lord Chancellor of England and Archbishop of York. The Chancellor's ward, Sir Oswald Fitzwilliam, has died mysteriously in York. Owen Archer is sent there to discover the circumstances. He finds that there has been not one death, but two, and that the mystery centers around an

ailing apothecary, one John Wilton, and his wife Lucie. Finding work as their apprentice, he finds himself falling in love with Lucie even as he realizes she is a strong suspect in the deaths. As the pieces of the puzzle are painstakingly unearthed by a reluctant agent somewhat out of his depth, true justice lies remains in doubt to the final chapter.

Brother Athelstan (England 1370s)

Paul Harding's young Dominican friar, Brother Athelstan, operates after the reign of Edward III, in the regency of John Gaunt (about the same time as Owen Archer but in old London town rather than in York). Appointed scribe and clerk to the coroner of London, Sir John Cranston, the quiet and thoughtful Brother Athelstan is a marked contrast to the Falstaffian Cranston, who drinks too much, speaks too coarsely, and observes much more than those around him credit.

In *The Nightingale Gallery*, a master goldsmith is apparently poisoned by a servant who later hangs himself. The death is too neat, and too small a thing to merit the attention of John Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster and regent for young King Richard. From London Bridge to Newgate prison, Brother Athelstan and Sir John Cranston find themselves on the trail of a secret and deadly conspiracy.

Sister Frevisse (England, 1400s)

Margaret Frazer has written a series of books detailing the adventures of a nun-sleuth, Sister Frevisse. She lives at the priory of St. Frideswides during the reign of the pious, weak, and mentally unbalanced Henry VI. Though a mature woman, Frevisse is by no means old. She is also relentlessly sensible, quietly taking a no-nonsense approach to whatever task falls to hand.

In *The Novice's Tale*, the task concerns a young novice, Thomasine. Shy, but with a dedication bordering on fanaticism, the novice is but a few weeks short of her final vows. Then, the novice's loud and obnoxious aunt descends upon the priory. After declaring the girl would be better off in an arranged marriage (which, incidentally, would cement the aunt's own heirs' claim to the family lands) the aunt has a seizure and dies raving, almost certainly poisoned. Thomasine brought the fatal cup. A second poisoning follows, after which Thomasine pours out the cup's remaining contents, rendering the

Historical AD&D® Campaign Sourcebook Series

The following AD&D game campaign sourcebooks are useful to those who wish to play in an historical mystery campaign.

#9322 HR1, *Vikings*. David "Zeb" Cook. TSR, Inc. 1991.

#9323 HR2, *Charlemagne's Paladins*. Ken Rolston. TSR, Inc. 1992.

#9376 HR3, *Celts*. Graeme Davis. TSR, Inc. 1992.

#19370 HR4, *A Mighty Fortress*. Steve Winter. TSR, Inc. 1992.

#9425 HR5, *The Glory of Rome*. David Pulver. TSR, Inc. 1993.

#9408 *Age of Heroes*. [Classical Greece] Nicky Rea. TSR, Inc. 1994.

#9469 *The Crusades*. Steve Kurtz. TSR, Inc. 1994.

deadly poison untraceable. Now the angry clan has come to St. Frideswides, unwilling to wait for justice, and pressuring the royal warden, who would be content with the easy solution. Yet secret undercurrents of intrigue flow here; there are far too many suspects, and the priory itself is not above suspicion. It is up to Sister Frevisse to put matters right before time runs out.

Roger Chapman (England 1450s)

Kate Sedley's engaging character Roger Chapman is an itinerant peddler. Before he became a peddler, Roger was a novice at a monastery, which he left for the freedom of the open road. A large youth, with more forthright honesty than experience, Chapman's uncanny powers of observation are supplemented by flashes of premonition and second sight. The series finds him embroiled in the affairs of the mighty during the Wars of the Roses.

Roger has no great skill with horses or weapons of war, though he can hold his own with a stout cudgel if the need arises. His gaining experience in the ways of his world is a major theme of the series. Interestingly, Chapman's tales are narrated in first person, as an older man recounting the adventures of his youth.

In the second book, *The Plymouth Cloak*, Chapman must accompany and guard a most unpleasant fellow. Enter Philip Underdown, rake, ex-ship captain, slaver, and spy. The mission is of vital importance, with a hostile fleet hovering off England's shore. Yet at every turn, his charge's past confronts them. Are they

Best PHBR Kits for Sleuthing

While a character with any kit might do a bit of sleuthing, the kits listed here are closest to the major fictional detectives.

Key: F=Fighter, T=Thief, Pr=Priest/Cleric, M=Mage/Wizard, Bd=Bard, Rn=Ranger, Pa=Paladin

Kit	Class	Source	Page
Peasant Hero	F	2110 <i>Complete Fighter's Handbook</i>	29
Investigator	T	2111 <i>Complete Thief's Handbook</i>	37
Pacifist Priest	Pr	2113 <i>Complete Priest's Handbook</i>	104
Scholar Priest	Pr	2113 <i>Complete Priest's Handbook</i>	108
Academician	M	2115 <i>Complete Wizard's Handbook</i>	35
Diplomat	T	2124 <i>Complete Book of Dwarves</i>	67
Blade	Bd	2127 <i>Complete Bard's Handbook</i>	18
Skald	Bd	2127 <i>Complete Bard's Handbook</i>	47
Gnome Professor	Bd	2127 <i>Complete Bard's Handbook</i>	58
Herbalist	Pr	2131 <i>Complete Book of Elves</i>	83
Stalker Gnome	F/T	2134 <i>Complete Book of Gnomes & Halflings</i>	53
Sheriff Halfling	F	2134 <i>Complete Book of Gnomes & Halflings</i>	99
Healer	Pr	2134 <i>Complete Book of Gnomes & Halflings</i>	118
Hedge Wizard	M	2135 <i>Complete Book of Humanoids</i>	74
Humanoid Scholar	M	2135 <i>Complete Book of Humanoids</i>	75
Shadow	T	2135 <i>Complete Book of Humanoids</i>	87
Justifier	Rn	2136 <i>Complete Ranger's Handbook</i>	63
Stalker Ranger	Rn	2136 <i>Complete Ranger's Handbook</i>	73
Inquisitor	Pa	2147 <i>Complete Paladin's Handbook</i>	57
Medician	Pa	2147 <i>Complete Paladin's Handbook</i>	58
Advisor Druid	Dr	2150 <i>Complete Druid's Handbook</i>	25

pursued by Lancastrian assassins? Do Yorkist agents stalk them as well, in the belief that Philip is a double agent? Is the bellicose sailor who dogs their trail only what he seems? Roger the Chapman must untangle the knots of this intrigue with only his native wits, honesty, and courage, which, fortunately for him and us, are considerable.

Kathryn Swinbrooke (England 1480s)

Kathryn Swinbrooke is a physician/herbalist in Canterbury at the end of the Wars of the Roses. Trained by her father, she works in the Worthgate Ward of that town. She lives there with Thomasina, her housekeeper, and Agnes, a young scullery maid. Kathryn is haunted by ghosts from her past. For example, on his deathbed, her father confessed that he poisoned her brutal husband, though the latter's body was never found.

In the first adventure, *A Shrine of Murders*, pilgrims to the shrine of Thomas Beckett are being mysteriously poisoned, with mocking doggerel nailed to the door of the shrine. It is the work of an unknown serial killer, likely a physician. The key to the deaths lies somewhere in the works of Chaucer. Approached by the town council as the only physician who is not a man (and thus not suspect), Kathryn is joined by Colum Murtagh, a rough Irish mercenary in the service of the king, who has dark secrets of his own. Meanwhile,

Kathryn has been receiving mysterious blackmail letters from someone who knows more about her past than she does. Can she save the lives of her friends? Can she save her own?

TSR Fantasy Mysteries

In 1996, TSR Inc. launched a series of murder mysteries set in its popular fantasy worlds: the FORGOTTEN REALMS®, and DRAGONLANCE® settings. For the curious, these books are also listed in the bibliography.

Other Periods . . .

These mysteries, besides being of general interest, are especially useful to those playing or running a campaign in a similar setting. Ancient Egypt is the setting for the Lord Meren stories. Those using the *Glory of Rome* setting will find the stories of Marcus Didius Falco, Decius Caecilius Metellus, and Gordianus the Finder full of relevant detail. Likewise, those using the *Kara-Tur™* setting should take a look at the stories of Judge Dee, Magistrate Pao, and Sano Ichiro.

Those using the Renaissance setting, *A Mighty Fortress*—or the RED STEEL™ setting—might find especially useful the stories of Nicholas Bracewell, Sigismondo, Matthew and Joan Stock, and Richard Shallot. Finally, and not to be forgotten, are the *Mammoth Book* anthologies by Mike Ashley which have a plethora of stories from different historical periods.

. . . Other Sleuths

Lord Meren (Ancient Egypt)

In this time, the insanity of the Pharaoh Ahkenaten, who would have cast down the gods themselves, is just five years past. Tutankhamen, the boy god-king, has ascended to rule the mightiest empire of ancient times. The young king is surrounded by enemies within and without: Nubian and Bedouin raiders, the rapacious Hittite empire, a disaffected priesthood, a hostile and scheming queen. The noble Lord Meren is the Eyes and Ears of the Pharaoh, sworn to stand between the boy-king and all enemies.

In *Murder in the Place of Anubis*, the body of a chief scribe is found in a holy place, slain with a sacrificial dagger—a double desecration. The scribe was hated by all who knew him: his family a nest of vipers, his concubine a lying wanton. And yet, are there deeper threads to be followed? The crime must be solved, and quickly, for the jealous priesthood would use any means to undermine the young Pharaoh and regain their lost power. The series serves up a unique blend of investigation and high policy. The sleuth's role as a highly placed minister creates a narrow line between the search for truth and the dictates of expedience.

Gordianus the Finder (Rome, 80s-70s B.C.)

Steven Saylor has given us the most darkly poetic of the Roman detective series (q.v., the Marcus Falco and SPQR series). Here, the Rome of Gordianus, teetering in 80 B.C. between the ailing Republic and despotism of the Caesars, is a very grim place indeed. Gordianus, a professional “finder,” sees the seamy underbelly of the Roman civilization at first hand. The crimes are starkly heinous.

The first book, *Roman Blood*, finds Gordianus working for a young, callow, country-bumpkin lawyer, one Cicero (yes, that Cicero), who is defending a man accused of one of the most horrific crimes in Roman culture, patricide. If convicted, the accused will be flayed by scourge, then sewn into a skin along with a dog, a rooster, a snake, and a monkey, and the whole thrown into the Tiber River, to be carried living to the sea. Carefully threading his way between the capricious, the greedy, and the powerful, Gordianus tries to bring the true culprit to what justice is possible in the dark and corrupt society of Rome. “My Rome, Cicero. A Rome that breeds in shadow, that moves at night, that breathes the very air of vice without the disguises of politics or wealth. After all, that’s why you’ve called me here, isn’t it? To take you into that world, or to enter it myself and bring back to you whatever it is you’re seeking. That’s what I can offer you, if you’re seeking the truth.”

Decius Caecilius Metellus (Rome 70s-60s B.C.)

The SPQR Mysteries offers another detective of ancient Rome. Decius Caecilius Metellus the Younger, created by John Maddox Roberts, is a low-ranking official in Rome at the time of Pompey and Julius Caesar. As the scion of a poor branch of a large and noble family, his hopes for political advancement are uncertain at best—for the Roman Republic is dying. Indeed, Decius Metellus desires not advancement, but stability. Yet, he cannot resist trying to untangle plots that cross his path. (He has a gift for snooping.) The series follows his career in the rough-and-tumble world of Roman politics. Like Marcus Falco, Decius Metellus is a keen critic of his society, but his point of view is decidedly that of the traditional elite.

In *The Catiline Conspiracy*, Decius is a minor official early in his career, the quaestor in charge of the treasury located

at the Temple of Saturn. It is a deadly dull job—until he finds a cache of illegal weapons stored in an unused chamber. The trail leads to conspiracy, multiple murder, and a plot to overthrow the Republic itself. Cicero is the premier consul, considered by many patricians to be an outsider and despised by them for that. The city itself is divided between patricians, the new nobility, and the plebes, factionalized into hostile camps supporting different Circus Maximus racing teams, and corrupted by the intrigues of rich men like Crassus, arch-conservatives like Cato, ambitious social climbers like Julius Caesar, and vain military commanders like Pompey. Decius knows that for a revolutionary conspiracy to succeed, it must have powerful secret backers—and such knowledge can be mortally dangerous. The period detail is well executed, and a glossary of Roman terms is provided. The political intrigue is excellent, and DMs should note especially the effective use of supporting character connections such as Titus Annio Milo (chapter II) and the physician Asklepiodes (chapter VII), who appear briefly but have key roles in the action.

Marcus Didius Falco (Rome 80 A.D.)

Lindsey Davis was the first to transplant the traditional “gumshoe” detective novel to ancient Rome. Her first person narrator, one Marcus Didius Falco, is a most likable hero. Late of the Roman army, and scraping out a fairly miserable living in the heart of Rome, world-weary Marcus Falco does it for the money, and not very much of that,

With the patronage (mostly verbal) of the bluff and hearty Emperor Vespasian, the dubious Falco tries to eke out a living as a “public informer.” He conducts his investigations while balancing a precarious love-life and dealing as best he can with raucous relatives, irritating neighbors, a bug-ridden apartment over a public laundry, and other joys of ancient metropolitan living.

Not only is Falco a keen observer of clues, Roman politics, and the human condition, but his acerbic wit is put to good use skewering the overly officious, the bureaucratically small-minded, and the just plain obnoxious populi around him, much to the reader’s delight.

In *The Silver Pigs*, a murder leads Falco to a plot that threatens to destroy the economy of the Roman Empire. The “pigs” of the title are actually bars of silver mined in England and transported to

Rome to fill the Imperial coffers. To say more would spoil the fun for the uninitiated. Overall, the historical detail is top-notch and the characters very well done.

Judge Dee (China 7th Century)

The cases of the celebrated Judge Dee, a Chinese magistrate in Tang China are a combination of novels and short stories, much in the manner of Sherlock Holmes stories.

Most of these books by Robert Van Gulik contain additional information on the sources of the stories, the differences between Chinese and Western law, and the differences between Chinese crime stories and Western mysteries. These highly interesting notations help to establish the proper context and atmosphere for the cases.

Judge Dee is a powerful and successful magistrate in the Imperial bureaucracy. In his late 50s, he is responsible for maintaining civil order. The very model of a great and enlightened man, Judge Dee is often faced with complex and baffling cases, which he must solve within the confines of the authority of his position. For example, while torture is an accepted method to gain a confession in this setting, its order is subject to Imperial review. If the review finds the torture unjust, the judge who ordered its use is subjected to it in turn! Thus, Judge Dee must walk a fine line, balancing law and penalty, authority and responsibility, all while serving the Imperial Bureaucracy. This series, written earlier than the other books covered here, is a fascinating look into a very different world.

Sigismondo (Renaissance Italy)

Elizabeth Eyre has taken Italy in the Renaissance as the hunting ground for her unusual detective, Sigismondo. Shorn bald and black-caped, Sigismondo cuts a singular figure. He belongs to no political faction but is his own man—a mercenary soldier and courtier. A master of disguise when he wishes to be, and armed with a Machiavellian mind of the first order, Sigismondo negotiates the treacherous politics and labyrinthine intrigues of princes and power brokers, accompanied by his half-witted servant Benno and the small dog Biondello.

In *Death of the Duchess*, Sigismondo investigates the kidnapping of a young noblewoman. This has occurred a mere week before the maiden’s marriage was

to have ended a Montague-Capulet-style feud. However before the inquiry can be brought to a conclusion, the wife of Duke Rocco, who has ordered peace between the houses, is most foully murdered. A hapless dupe, scion of the second feuding family, now lies in the ducal dungeon. As the duchess's own dwarf flees, and the mystery of the missing maiden continues, Sigismondo observes—and hunts. Time is running out, for the Duke is beset by hidden enemies within and known enemies without. Failure to maintain the illusion of justice, even at the cost of the execution of an innocent, will bring disorder, riot, and invasion. And the whisper in the street is that the Duke himself ordered the death of the Duchess . . .

Roger Shallot (Tudor England)

Roger Shallot is a most excellent rogue, and his adventures, written by P.C. Doherty under the pseudonym Michael Clynes, are a racy romp through the world of King Henry VIII, with a "hero" reminiscent of Harry Flashman of the Flashman books by George MacDonald Fraser. In brief, Shallot is an unregenerate rogue, secretary and companion to Benjamin Daunbey, nephew of Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, Archbishop of York and Chancellor of England. A low-born skulker with "the fastest legs in Christendom," Shallot plays a cowardly Watson to Daunbey's Holmes, while regaling the reader with some of the most unbelievable and scurrilous tidbits of gossip of his time (such as the lines a certain Bard cribbed from him—without so much as a proper attribution!).

In *The White Rose Murders*, it is 1518, about five years after the Battle of Flodden, where the English broke the army of Scotland and slew King James IV. Yet the ghosts of Flodden linger. Margaret, Queen of Scots, who married Gavin Douglas, Earl of Angus, far too soon after the king's death to be seemly, later fled from him to England, leaving a regency and two children in her wake. Now she wishes to go back. Assigned to ease her return, Roger Shallot and Benjamin Daunbey find themselves drawn into a macabre dance of intrigue and sudden death. Not one but two locked-room murders, a mad Scot, a cryptic poem, journeys to Scotland and Paris, and more than one assassination attempt lie on their path to the truth. And even then it may not be over . . .

Shallot himself tells these stories from the ripe old age of 93! He breaks into his narrative from time to time to comment on earlier or later events, or to chide his recorder, an unworldly churchman, for the latter's impatience at his digressions. All in all, these are saucy tales, outrageously told.

Nicholas Bracewell (Elizabethan England)

As the stage manager of a troupe of traveling Shakespearean players whose patron is Lord Westfield, the burly, ex-sailor-turned-stage-manager Nicholas Bracewell finds more than his share of mystery. Well able to take care of himself in a brawl, Nicholas is the "book holder" for the company, the only person with a complete text of a play (the actors have only their own parts, as a precaution against plagiarism and theft). Although he is not a "sharer" in the company, Nicholas is vital to its smooth operation. He often comes between the egotistical principal actors, their perpetually gloomy landlord (keeper of the Queen's Head tavern, where the troupe is based), rabidly anti-theater Puritans, and the various cutthroats, thieves, murderers, and professional rivals who cross their path.

The first story, *The Queen's Head*, is set in 1588, at the time of the Spanish Armada. The tale begins with the death of a hot-headed actor in a seemingly meaningless brawl; Nicholas promises the dying man that he will find the killer. As a series of accidents, bad luck, and robberies follow the troupe, his suspicions of a wider conspiracy grow. This series has much period detail and well captures the atmosphere, the hurly-burly, and the ephemeral nature of living theater.

Matthew and Joan Stock (Elizabethan England)

The solidly middle-class clothier and county constable Matthew Stock and his practical wife Joan make a formidable team. In this entertaining series of Elizabethan mysteries crafted by Lawrence Tournay, the pair of sleuths live in Chelmsford, though many of the stories take place in London. Matthew's dogged persistence and steady patience plays off well against his wife's curiosity and occasional psychic "glimmerings."

In *Old Saxon Blood*, the pair are called before Queen Elizabeth, in recognition of their previous service (in *The Bartholomew Fair Murders*). A knight, Sir John Challoner of Thorncombe, has died by misadventure. It could be murder,

however: What man drowns, then climbs back into his own boat? The dead knight's young heiress, a ward of Queen Bess, is soon to be wed and moved to Castle Thorncombe. Thus, Matthew and Joan have but 30 days to solve a mystery that is nearly a year old. Operating undercover as the new steward and housekeeper of the estate, they arrive at the forbidding castle. The servants are sullen and secretive, the local gentry grasping and unpleasant, and the old steward and housekeeper try to work them ill at every turn. And then they find the headless maid in their closet . . .

Ichiro Sano (Japan, 1690s)

In the time of the Tokugawa regime, the old samurai ways are changing. The Shogun has imposed strict order on the unruly daimyos. Laura Joh Rowland's hero, young Ichiro Sano, of no prominent family, is fortunate enough to have received an appointment as a yoriki, a senior officer of police in the city of Edo. Trained in the ways and steeped in the traditions of the warrior caste, the inexperienced Sano must find his own way in learning the unfamiliar skills of the investigator. Further, while serving a bureaucracy more concerned with expedience than truth, he must find both justice and personal harmony.

In Shinju, Ichiro Sano is assigned to investigate a lovers' ritual suicide, a double drowning. The suicide does not ring true. Nettled by evidence uncovered by the disgraced Doctor Ito, Sano cannot abandon the case, even in the face of the direct orders of his superior. Instead, what he discovers is beyond belief, and mortally dangerous as well. With time running out, and with the obstacles in his path seemingly insurmountable, Sano is caught up in a headlong rush of events that could cost him more than life itself, or lead him to a most unexpected fate. The insoluble opposites of duty and desire, conformity and self-expression, dominate this most unusual series set in a most alien culture.



The bibliography for this article cites hardback publication where possible. Many of these series have been carried by more than one publisher, and many have been published in paperback editions. The latter include Avon, Ballantine, Berkley Prime Crime, St. Martin's Press, and others.

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Series

Doherty, Paul C. (A.K.A. C.L. Grace, Paul T. Harding, and Michael Clynes)

HUGH CORBETT (1280s London), Publisher: St. Martin's Press.

1. *Satan in St. Mary's* (1986)
2. *The Crown in Darkness* (1988)
3. *Spy in Chancery* (1988)
4. *The Angel of Death* (1990)
5. *The Prince of Darkness* (1993)
6. *Murder Wears a Cowl* (1994)
7. *The Assassin of the Greenwood* (1994)
8. *Song of a Dark Angel* (1995)
9. *Satan's Fire* (1996)

CHAUCER TALES

1. *An Ancient Evil* (Knights Tale. 1995)
2. *A Tapestry of Murders* (Lawyers Tale. 1996)

HISTORICAL MYSTERIES

Death of a King (Edward II. 1988)

The Whyte Hurt (Wars of the Roses. 1988)

The Serpent Amongst the Lilies (Joan of Arc. 1990)

The Fate of Princes (Richard III. 1991)

Frazer, Margaret (pseud. Mary Pulver and Gail Bacon), Publisher: Berkley Prime Crime

SISTER FREVISSE (1400s)

1. *The Novice's Tale* (1993)
2. *The Servant's Tale* (1993)
3. *The Outlaws Tale* (1994)
4. *The Bishops Tale* (1994)
5. *The Boy's Tale* (1995)
6. *The Murderer's Tale* (1996)
7. *The Prioress's Tale* (forthcoming)

Grace, C.L. (pseud. P.C. Doherty), Publisher: St. Martin's Press

KATHRYN SWINBROOKE (England 1480s)

1. *A Shrine of Murders* (1993)
2. *The Eye of God* (1994)
3. *The Merchant of Death* (1995)
4. *The Book of Shadows* (1996)

Harding Paul T. (pseud. P.C. Doherty), Publisher: William Morrow (paperbacks by Avon)

BROTHER ATHELSTAN (London 1370s)

1. *The Nightingale Gallery* (1991)
2. *The Red Slayer* (1992) (A.K.A. *The House of the Red Slayer*)
3. *Murder Most Holy*
4. *The Anger of God*
5. *By Murders Bright Light*

Marston, Edward, Publisher: St. Martin's Press.

Domesday series RALPH DELCHARD/
GERVASE BRET (England 1080s)

1. *The Wolves of Savernake* (1993)
2. *The Ravens of Blackwater* (1994)
3. *The Dragons of Archenfield* (1995)
4. *The Lions of the North* (1996)

Morson, Ian, Publisher: St. Martin's Press.

WILLIAM FALCONER (Oxford 1260s)

1. *Falconer's Crusade* (1994)
2. *Falconer's Judgement* (1995)
3. *Falconer and the Face of God* (1996)

Newman, Sharan, Publisher: Tor Books.
CATHERINE LEVENDEUR (France, 1130s)

1. *Death Comes us Epiphany* (1994)
2. *The Devils Door* (1995)
3. *The Wandering Arm* (1995)
4. *Strong us Death* (1996)

Peters, Ellis, (pseud. Edith Pargeter)
Publisher: W. Morrow through 1986
(Mysterious Press after 1987).

BROTHER CADFAEL (England 1130s)

Prequel

0. *A Rare Benedictine* (1989)

Main Series

1. *A Morbid Taste for Bones* (1977)
2. *One Corpse Too Many* (1979)
3. *Monkshood* (1981)
4. *St. Peter's Fair* (1981)
5. *The Leper of St. Giles* (1981)

6. *The Virgin in the Ice* (1983)

7. *The Sanctuary Sparrow* (1983)

8. *The Devils Novice* (1984)

9. *Dead Mans Ransom* (1985)

10. *The Pilgrim of Hate* (1984)

11. *An Excellent Mystery* (1985)

12. *The Raven in the Foregate* (1986)

13. *The Rose Rent* (1986)

14. *The Hermit of Eyton Forest* (1988)

15. *The Confession of Brother Haluin* (1989)

16. *The Heretics Apprentice* (1990)

17. *The Potters Field* (1990)

18. *The Summer of the Dunes* (1991)

19. *The Holy Thief* (1993)

20. *Brother Cadfael's Penance* (1994)

OTHER

The Benediction of Brother Cadfael. Fawcett-Crest, 1992. Omnibus version of the first two books.

A number of the Cadfael stories have been made for television, starring Derek Jacobi as Brother Cadfael. The most extensive audio book series is that of Recorded Books, read by Patrick Tull.

Robb, Candace M., Publishers: St. Martin's Press.

OWEN ARCHER (England 1370s)

1. *The Apothecary Rose* (1993)
2. *The Lady Chapel* (1994)
3. *The Nuns Tale* (1995)
4. *The Kings Bishop* (1996)

Sedley, Kate (pseud. Brenda Clarke), Publisher: St. Martin's Press.

ROGER CHAPMAN (England 1450s)

1. *Death and the Chapman* (1992)
2. *The Plymouth Cloak* (1993)
3. *The Weavers Tale* (1994)
4. *The Holy Innocent* (1995)
5. *The Eve of St. Hyacinth* (1995)

The author also writes historical novels set in the Medieval period under the name Brenda Honeyman.

Tremayne, Peter (pseud. Peter Berresford Ellis), Publisher: St. Martin's Press.

SISTER FIDELMA (Northumbria 660s)

1. *Absolution by Murder* (1994)
2. *Shroud for the Archbishop* (1995)
3. *Suffer Little Children* (forthcoming)

Sister Fidelma short stories also appear in *Great Irish Detective Stories* by Peter Haining and *The Mammoth Book of Historical Whodunnits* by Michael Ashley.

TSR Fantasy Mysteries

Murder in Cormyr. Chet Williamson. 1996.

Murder in Tarsis. John Maddox Roberts. 1996:

Murder in Halruaa. Richard Meyers. 1996.

Other Period Books

Single Books

Buckley, Fiona (Tudor England). *To Shield the Queen*. Scribner (forthcoming).

Comber, Leon (12th Century China). *The Strange Cases of Magistrate Pao*. Tuttle, 1964.

Cooney, Eleanor and Daniel Altieri (7th Century China). *Deception*. Avon 1993.

Davidson, Diane (16th Century). *Feversham*. Crown Publishing. 1969. Based on an actual murder and the play *Arden of Feversham*.

Doody, Margaret (Ancient Greece). *Aristotle, Detective*. Harper & Row. 1978.

Hambly, Barbara (Ancient Rome). *The Quirinal Hill Affair* St. Martin's Press. 1983. (A.K.A. *Search the Seven Hills*. Ballentine. 1987).

Haney, Lauren (Ancient Egypt). *The Right Hand of Amon*. Avon (forthcoming).

Uncollected Short Stories

Lloyd, Allen (A.K.A. Keith Heller). "Judge Ti" stories. Set in 7th Century China, "Ti" is an alternative spelling of "Dee" (see Robert Van Gulik, below). Currently, these stories are uncollected.

Pierce, J.F. A series of short stories featuring William Shakespeare as a detective that has appeared thus far in *Ellery Queens Mystery Magazine*. A story also appears in *The Mammoth Book of Historical Detectives*.

Series

Clynes, Michael (A.K.A. P.C. Doherty) (Tudor England, 1500s) Publisher: St. Martin's Press (those published by O. Penzler are marked*).

ROGER SHALLOT

1. *The White Rose Murders* (1993)
2. *The Poisoned Chalice* (1994)*
3. *The Grail Murders* (1993)*
4. *A Brood of Vipers* (1996)
5. *The Gallows Murders* (1996)

Davis, Lindsey (Rome 69-80 A.D.) Publisher: Crown Books to 1994, then Mysterious Press.

MARCUS DIDIUS FALCO

1. *The Silver Pigs* (1989)
2. *Shadows in Bronze* (1990)
3. *Venus in Copper* (1991)
4. *The Iron Hand of Mars* (1993)
5. *Poseidon's Gold* (1994)
6. *Last Act in Palmyra* (1996)

Some of these have been produced by Recorded Books, read by Donal Donnelly.

Eyre, Elizabeth (pseud. Jill Staynes and Margaret Storey) (Renaissance Italy), Publisher: Harcourt, Brace, & Jovanovich through 1994, then St. Martin's Press.

SIGISMONDO

1. *Death of the Duchess* (1992)
2. *Curtains for the Cardinal* (1993)
3. *Poison for the Prince* (1994)
4. *Bravo for the Bride* (1995)
5. *Axe for an Abbot* (1996)
6. *Dirge for a Doge* (1997)

Marston, Edward (Elizabethan England), Publisher: St. Martin's Press.

NICHOLAS BRACEWELL

1. *The Queens Head* (1989)
2. *The Merry Devils* (1990)
3. *The Trip to Jerusalem* (1990)
4. *The Nine Giants* (1991)
5. *The Mad Courtesan* (1992)
6. *The Silent Woman* (1994)
7. *The Roaring Boy* (1995)
8. *The Laughing Hangman* (1996)

Roberts, John Maddox (Rome, 70s-60s B.C.), Publisher: Avon.

SPQR SERIES

1. *SPQR* (1990)
2. *The Catilina Conspiracy* (1991)
3. *The Sacrilege* (1992)
4. *Temple of the Muses* (1992)
5. *Saturnalia* (1993)

Robinson, Lynda S. (Ancient Egypt), Publisher: Ballantine.

LORD MEREN

1. *Murder in the Place of Anubis* (1994)
2. *Murder at the God's Gate* (1995)
3. *Murder at the Feast of Rejoicing* (1996)
4. *Eater of Souls* (1997)

Rowland, Laura Joh (Japan 1690s), Publisher: Villiard.

SANO ICHIRO

1. *Shinju* (1994)
2. *Bundori* (1996)
3. *The Way of a Traitor* (forthcoming)

Saylor, Steven, Publisher: St. Martin's Press.

GORDIANUS THE FINDER (Rome 80s-70s B.C.)

1. *Roman Blood* (1991)
2. *Arms of Nemesis* (1992)
3. *Catilina's Riddle* (1993)
4. *The Venus Throw* (1995)
5. *Murder on the Appian Way* (1996)
6. *House of the Vestals* (forthcoming)

Tourney, Leonard (Elizabethan England), Publisher: St. Martin's Press, except as noted.

CONSTABLE/CLOTHIER MATTHEW STOCK

1. *The Bartholomew Fair Murders* (1986)
2. *The Player's Boy is Dead* (Harper & Row, '80)

3. *Low Treason* (Dutton, '82)
4. *Familiar Spirits* (1984)
5. *Old Saxon Blood* (1988)
6. *Knave's Templar* (1991)
7. *Witness of Bones* (1992)
8. *Frobisher's Savage* (1994)

Van Gulik, Robert (China, 7th Century), Publisher: Harper to 1962, then Scribner from 1964 (others as noted).

JUDGE DEE

1. *The Chinese Bell Murders* (1959)
2. *The Chinese Lake Murders* (1960)
3. *The Chinese Gold Murders* (1961)
4. *The Chinese Maze Murders* (1962)
5. *The Chinese Nail Murders* (1962)

THE CELEBRATED CASES OF JUDGE DEE (Dover 1976; A.K.A. DEE GOONG AN, Arno 1976)

1. *The Emperors Pearl* (1964)
2. *The Willow Pattern* (1965)
3. *The Phantom of the Temple* (1966)
4. *The Monkey and the Tiger* (1967)
5. *Murder in Canton* (1967)
6. *The Red Pavilion* (1968)
7. *The Haunted Monastery* (1969)
8. *The Laquer Screen* (1970)
9. *Necklace and Calabash* (1971)
10. *Poets and Murder* (1972) A.K.A. *The Fox-Magic Murders*, (Panther 1973)
11. *Judge Dee at Work* (1973)

A made-for-television movie of *The Haunted Monastery* titled "Judge Dee and the Monastery Murders" was aired in 1974, starring Khigh Alx Dhiagh (with Mako, James Wong, and Keye Luke). Many of the Judge Dee books have been re-issued in paperback (starting in 1992) by the University of Chicago Press; the first of these (*Judge Dee at Work*) has a chronology of Judge Dee cases.



Jon Pickens likes books and history, as well as historical miniatures gaming. He has done yeoman service in ferreting out resource materials for various TSR products, and notably for the Oriental Adventures and AL-QADIM settings. He wishes to thank Jean Rabe, John Rateliff and Roger West for their suggestions and support.

"Step lively, jackies! There's a beam wind
and a race tide, and the duke's treasure cog
flying to lee!"

—Bruis Blackheart, notorious pirate, in a fine humor



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Beyond the Atlas of Gothic Earth

by James Wyatt

illustrated by Brad McDevitt

The *Masque of the Red Death* RAVENLOFT® campaign expansion describes the world of Gothic Earth—a world very much like our own in the 1890s but tainted with the power of a supernatural evil known as the Red Death. “An Atlas of Gothic Earth” in the main rulebook provides summary descriptions of some of the major or most interesting cities of Gothic Earth, from Atlanta and Alexandria to Vancouver and Vienna. Each city’s history is outlined, and the mysterious “Forbidden Lore” of the city or region is provided as well.

The following pages expand “An Atlas of Gothic Earth” by describing 11 additional cities in the same format. Gothic Earth adventurers may explore Chicago during the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 or battle opium dealers in Hong Kong. The power of the Red Death extends wherever humanity is found, and even into the unexplored regions of the poles. Adventure awaits!

North America

Several cities of North America (Canada and the United States of America) are described in the *Masque of the Red Death* rulebook. Atlanta, Boston, New Orleans, San Francisco, and Vancouver represent a variety of cultural regions within North America. The addition of Chicago, Montreal, and Sitka (Alaska) fills in some of the gaps, providing unique adventure opportunities and more mysteries to explore.

Chicago

Located at the southern tip of Lake Michigan, Chicago is growing to be one of the major industrial and business centers of North America. With the Erie Canal having opened trade from the East Coast to the Midwest, Chicago has been growing rapidly for over half a century.

History: The origins of the city of Chicago can be traced back to a trading post established in the 1770s between the Illinois River and Lake Michigan. Fort Dearborn was established on the site in 1803, and it was the site of a battle between U.S. soldiers and Shawnee troops fighting on the British side during the War of 1812.

The city of Chicago was laid out around the rebuilt Fort Dearborn beginning around 1830, when the digging of the Erie Canal brought increased trade and growth to the Midwest. The great fire of 1871 ravaged the prosperous city, but from the ashes grew one of the great industrial and cultural centers of North America.

On May 4, 1886, a labor demonstration in Haymarket Square in Chicago erupted into violence. After a bomb exploded in the crowded square, 11 people were killed and over 100 wounded in the ensuing violence. Four anarchist leaders were hanged as a result of their part in the riots.

The 1890s were an exciting decade in Chicago. The establishment of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (1891), the University of Chicago (opened 1892), and the Field Museum of Natural History (1894) demonstrate both the cultural and the economic growth in that period. The strike of Pullman Car Company workers in Chicago in 1894 had far-reaching effects, including a railroad strike in the west.

The World’s Columbian Exposition, celebrating the 400th anniversary of Columbus’ arrival in the New World, was held from May 1 to October 30, 1893. The Exposition brought over 27 million people from 47 nations through its gates and had a profound impact on American architecture. The World’s Parliament of Religions, held during the Exposition, provided ordinary Americans with their first opportunity to hear members of other religions explain their own faiths. The ferris wheel also made its debut on the Midway Plaisance at the Exposition, and the hootchy-kootchy dancer “Little Egypt” gained notoriety.

Forbidden Lore: The anarchist leaders who were hanged following the Haymarket Square riot in 1886. They were, in fact, no mere political revolutionaries, but in fact agents of the qabal known as the Six-Fingered Hand (described in detail in *The Gothic Earth Gazetteer*). The qabal is still active in Chicago, despite this setback. The local leader is a chaotic evil 6th-level adept (qabalist) named Mark Travers, a scheming genius who lives in a constant state of frustration over the “lunatic morons” that make up his cell of the qabal. Travers’ most prized possession is an enchanted stone



dagger made by the Illinois Indians who dwell in the area before the arrival of Europeans. The dagger, which Travers calls *Spiritrender* has a +1 enchantment, but it lends a +3 bonus when battling "spirit creatures" (including noncorporeal undead, ethereal beings, rakshasas, fiends, and the like). In addition, wounds inflicted by the dagger cannot be healed by non-magical means.

Restless ghosts of Shawnee and U.S. soldiers are said to haunt the area of old Fort Dearborn, while lingering reports of "fire spirits" of some sort persist in the wake of the great fire. Rumors are also circulating of a mysterious creature discovered in the wilderness of (depending on the source of the tale) the American Southwest, the jungles of the Amazon River basin, or the savannahs of Africa, and subsequently locked in the basement of the new Field Museum of Natural History. (At the DM's option, this creature could be any suitable monster listed on the inside back cover of *The Gothic Earth Gazetteer*, or the rumors could be red herrings concealing a more insidious evil that lurks in the museum.)

The most interesting Forbidden Lore concerning Chicago surrounds the Columbian Exposition. The Exposition, as mentioned, brought people from 47 world nations to Chicago, and undoubtedly it brought minions of the Red Death as well. All sorts of shape-shifters and illusionists might be discovered milling through the crowds on the Midway Plaisance or sitting unobtrusively near the back at one of the Exposition's nearly 6,000 addresses. These minions of evil could include dopplegangers, lycanthropes and antherions, rakshasas, vampires, paka, kizoku, perhaps even a lich—as well as evil human qabalists and ordinary criminals.

The main organizer of the World's Parliament of Religions, a congregationalist minister named John Henry Barrows, is rumored to be a member of Die Wächtern. It is also whispered that he is using the pretext of the Parliament to gather qabal leaders from around the world. If this is true, it could be the largest assembly of qabals since Merlin's time. Certainly such a gathering would attract the attention of the most powerful minions of the Red Death, possibly even a fiend.

Montréal

Montreal, located on an island in the middle of the St. Lawrence River, is Canada's largest city. It is a thriving



seaport that boasts a truly international flavor, with citizens of both British and French origin mingling with the world's sailors and laborers.

History: The site of Montreal was visited by the French explorers Cartier (1535) and Champlain (1603) before it was settled by Europeans in 1642 as a center of the French North American fur trade. The town was fortified in 1725 but was nevertheless captured by the British in 1760 during the French and Indian War, which ended with Britain's control of Canada in 1763. The fort was briefly held by colonial forces during the War of Independence in 1775, but it soon returned to British Canadian control.

Thanks to its location along the St. Lawrence river (with easy access to the Atlantic) and the Canadian Northern railway, Montreal grew to be the largest city in the new Canadian Federation by 1867.

Forbidden Lore: Montreal's seaport is haunted by rumors of disappearances and grisly murders, thought by some investigators to be the work of a large pack of seawolves (*MONSTROUS MANUAL*™ tome, p. 232). These creatures haunt the shanties and warehouses along the St. Lawrence, sometimes stealing aboard ships on foggy nights, at other times

finding their victims among the human refuse that fill any large seaport. The leader of this lycanthropic pack is a huge man (a greater seawolf) by the name of Arthur Copleston, standing nearly 7' tall, with muscles befitting his bestial nature. A half-dozen greater seawolves, all equally imposing in human form, follow Copleston, and three times that many lesser seawolves fill out the pack. The creatures wander freely along the length of the city, staying near the seaway and operating in smaller groups to avoid undue attention from the authorities. They have no fixed lair or meeting place, functioning as a loose criminal network whose sole activity is murder.

The bustling trade that brings so many sailors to Montreal also attracts minions of the Red Death from around the world, and there are even tales of a long-running feud between the (mostly British-born) seawolves and a Parisian clan of wererats in the city's sewers.

Sitka

Situated on an island in the far south-east of Alaska, one of the thousand or so islands that constitute the Alexander Archipelago, Sitka is the capital of the territory of Alaska.

History: The city of Sitka was founded as St. Archangel Michael in 1799 by Alexander Baranov (1746-1819), a trader who led the Russian colonies in North America. Sitka offered both abundant timber for shipbuilding and a convenient location for trade to the east (Hawaii and Asia) and the south (California). Unfortunately, Sitka was also the ancestral home of the Tlingit Indians. After negotiating with the Tlingits for the right to build a small wooden fort in the area, Baranov moved his cadre of Russian and Aleut fur traders to the island. The Tlingits, angry with the expansion of Baranov's activities, burned down the fort in 1802. Baranov was away during the attack, but he returned two years later with military strength, driving the Tlingits to the other side of the island and rebuilding his fort (now called New Archangel) and trading operations. During the following years, the town boomed, supporting not only the fur and shipbuilding trades but also salmon and ice, which was shipped to a lucrative market in San Francisco.

In 1867, the Secretary of State of the United States, William H. Seward, negotiated the purchase of Alaska from Russia. Most Americans could not fathom why Alaska should be worth anything at all, and the acquisition of Alaska was known as "Seward's Folly." Sitka was the site of the ceremony transferring control of Alaska from Russia to the United States on October 18, 1867, and it remained the capital of Alaska through the 19th century.

The years following the transfer were marked by brutality. United States soldiers, perhaps resentful of being consigned to "Seward's Icebox," lashed out in violence against the remaining Russians as well as the native Tlingits. When the Tlingits responded to this violence with violence, the soldiers burned entire villages of the natives. Part of the problem was the U.S. governments refusal to institute any kind of local government in Alaska beyond the troops holding the land. Alaska was not granted the status of a territory until 1884, when gold was discovered near Juneau.

Forbidden Lore: Several mysterious events have occurred in and around Sitka since the arrival of Europeans. The desecration of the Cathedral of St. Michael shortly after the U.S. took possession, commonly attributed to U.S. soldiers or Tlingits, might have had darker origins. Likewise, the fire that destroyed "Baranov's Castle" in 1894

holds elements of mystery. Some speculate that shamans or spirits of the Tlingit people are still waging the ancient war against the European colonizers of this sacred land.

In fact, much of the trouble that occurs in Sitka is the work of an odem (see the *RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Appendix III*). In life, this evil undead spirit was a Russian woman named Praskovia Voronov. Voronov was murdered by U.S. soldiers shortly after the colony passed into American hands, and her husband drowned in the bay while trying to gain help from a docked French vessel. Praskovia continues stirring up trouble not just for revenge but also to feed on the emotions of hatred and fear that her actions generate.

South America

Buenos Aires and Lima are described in "An Atlas of Gothic Earth." The addition of Rio de Janeiro introduces PCs to one of the most colorful cities in the world.

Rio de Janeiro

Located in the southeast of Brazil on an excellent harbor, Rio de Janeiro is surrounded by majestic mountains and beautiful beaches. The city is the capital of the newly-formed Republic of Brazil.

History: The site of Rio de Janeiro was visited by Portuguese explorers in January of 1502, which gave the place its name: "January River." French traders in search of brazilwood formed a colony there in 1555, which was expelled by the Portuguese in 1567 after many bloody battles. The Brazilian governor, Mem de Sá, built a medieval-style castle somewhat inland of the French colony's location, and Rio de Janeiro was born.

Rio became the capital of the Portuguese colony of Brazil in 1763. When Napoleon invaded Portugal in 1807-1808, the Portuguese king John I fled to Rio, making this Brazilian city the capital of the Portuguese Empire. When Napoleon was defeated, King John returned to Portugal, leaving his son, Pedro I, as the vassal-king of the colony. During this period, Brazil's coffee production helped to make Rio de Janeiro a wealthy and well-populated city.

In 1822, Pedro I demanded and received a constitution for an independent Brazilian Empire, making Brazil the only South American country to win its independence peacefully. It was not until Pedro II (reigned 1831-1889) abolished slavery that war arrived in Brazil, as

plantation owners rose in revolt and replaced the Empire with a federal republic. This republic is quite new during the decade of adventures on Gothic Earth.

Forbidden lore: Rio de Janeiro is perhaps best known for Carnival—the extensive celebration leading up to Lent, lasting at least three days in theory but in practice often much longer. Evolving out of a tradition of merrymaking and prank-playing during the nights prior to Ash Wednesday, in 1840 the observance was transformed when the Italian wife of a Rio hotel owner sent out invitations to an elaborate masked ball. Within a few years, the masked ball was the fashion for Carnival celebration.

Still, Carnival is the occasion for raucous festivity and noisy revelry. Though Carnival is frequently condemned by church leaders as a time for promiscuity and abandon, one suspects that these ecclesiastics actually have little idea to what depths of depravity the celebration often sinks. This is a time when the people of Rio (and those who come to Rio from around the world to join in the celebration) are most vulnerable—not just to pickpockets and thugs, but to the monstrous evil of the Red Death.

The powerful emotions that fill the streets of Rio during carnival every year have, over time, created a number of feyrs (*MONSTROUS MANUAL* tome, p. 116), mostly of the short-lived ordinary variety. However, with the ever-increasing intensity of the celebration and the increasing power of the Red Death in the area, the more powerful great feyrs have appeared among the revelers all too often. These creatures wreak chaos and mayhem in the festive atmosphere, often unchallenged unless a powerful mystic or adept arrives to confront the evil creature.

As in any place where large numbers of unsuspecting humans gather, minions of the Red Death move subtly among them to feed. Any creature capable of assuming human guise, including all those mentioned in the Forbidden Lore entry for Chicago, above, might be found during Carnival in Rio. In addition, necromancers practice their black arts in and near the city, so even common undead such as skeletons and zombies may threaten revelers at times. For inspiration in creating such necromancers (suitable for use in such regions as Haiti or Jamaica as well as Rio), the DM should consult the entry under "Human, Voodan (Chicken Bone)" in the *RAVENLOFT Monstrous Compendium Appendix II*.



Africa

Parts of the north and south of Africa are described in "An Atlas of Gothic Earth." The rest of the continent, during the 1890s, is involved in a mad scramble for dominion among the colonial European powers. This imperialist drive began around 1880, with increased worldwide trade and the rapid growth of industry creating a need for more natural resources. Britain took control of Egypt in 1882 but could not solidify its hold over the Sudan until 1898. The west African empire of Samory was not crushed by the French until 1898; the Sultanate of Sokoto in Northern Nigeria did not fall to the British until 1903. Of these capsules of resistance to European domination, perhaps the greatest and certainly the longest-lasting is Ethiopia. (For more information on the process of African colonization, as well as associated Forbidden Lore, consult *The Gothic Earth Gazetteer*, pages 24-25.)

Addis Ababa

Thomas Pakenham, in *The Scramble for Africa*, offers this description of Ethiopia's capital:

A European traveler could ride into Addis Ababa, the "New Flower" founded by

*Menelik without realizing he had arrived. There were no streets and only a handful of stone buildings. The capital had sprung into life ten years earlier from the sprawling camp sites of Menelik's rases [princes]. It was now like 100 African villages thrown together: 10,000 mud huts sprawling below the southern rim of the Shoan tableland in a green valley dotted with flowering mimosa trees and gashed with rust-red streams. The heart of the capital was a great open bazaar swarming with white-cloaked traders and their donkeys. There were no public buildings other than five conical, thatched churches—Raphael, Mary, Trinity Oriel, and St. George—modern reminders that Ethiopia had been a Christian kingdom since the fourth century. There was also the Adderach, a huge, gabled banqueting hall, and a group of incongruously Indian pavilions, designed by a Swiss engineer. These formed Menelik's palace in the heart of the imperial compound, guarded by a pair of mangy lions in a cage, symbols of the Emperor's biblical style as Lion of Judah. (Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa: The White Man's Conquest of the Dark Continent from 1876- 1912* [New York: Random House, 1991], p. 475.)*

History: Addis Ababa is a new city, founded in 1887 to be the capital of the empire of Ethiopia (also known as Abyssinia). Emperor Menelik II used it as

a base during his campaign to unify the warring factions of Ethiopia under his rule, with help from Italy. A treaty signed in 1889 made Ethiopia a protectorate of Italy, but dispute over this relationship led to an Italian invasion in 1895-96. Ethiopia forced the Italians back at the decisive battle of Aduwa in 1896.

Though surrounded by growing colonial powers—the Italians in Eritrea and Italian Somalia, British in the British East Africa and British Somalia, and the French in tiny French Somalia (the Sudan remained independent until 1898)—Ethiopia retained a tight hold on its independence until the 20th century.

Addis Ababa, young as it is, is the center of a unique African culture and the heir to 19 centuries of rich history. The Ethiopian Coptic Church preserves ancient Christian traditions dating back, according to legend, to the Ethiopian eunuch converted to Christianity by the apostle Philip.

Forbidden Lore: Ethiopia, situated so close to Egypt, shares that nation's heritage of both great evil and powerful resistance to that evil. Remaining independent of European colonial powers, Ethiopia still harbors adepts who trace their practice of the necromantic arts back to the sorcerers of Egypt. However,



Ethiopia is also home to a great many benevolent souls who seek to combat the power of the Red Death. It is believed that several agents of the Lost Kingdom qabal (see *The Gothic Earth Gazetteer* operate in and around Addis Ababa.

Addis Ababa is also home to a unique cult of mystics known as the Enochites. Deriving their theosophical doctrines from the ancient writing known as the apocalypse of Enoch (written between the 2nd century B.C. and the 1st century A.D.), the Enochites are dedicated to achieving physical immortality and divine revelation. Though their objectives are not evil in themselves, the Enochites have fallen thoroughly under the sway of the Red Death in their mystical devotion. Members of the cult are all mystics (no kit), averaging 1st-3rd level. They have a special affinity for necromantic magic and learn that sphere early in their careers, sometimes at the expense of gaining major access to the sphere of All. Some members of the cult, particularly those of lower level, are good-intentioned and relatively harmless, but those who have progressed into the circles of the initiated are uniformly bent toward evil. In fact, the leader of the Enochites is an Ethiopian vampire, created by a Portuguese vampire (long

since destroyed) in the 16th century. Lord Belachew, as he is called, is thought to be living by his followers, and he maintains their loyalty by promising them the secrets of his longevity. As a very old vampire, Belachew has 11+1 HD (69 hp), and he retains the spellcasting ability of a 9th-level mystic. Belachew can create and command undead, and undead minions under his control are turned as if they were Belachew himself.

Europe

Some of the most important cities in Europe—London, Paris, Rome, Vienna, as well as Dublin and Bucharest—are described in *A Guide to Gothic Earth*. Germany and Spain are represented here with Stuttgart and Seville.

Stuttgart

Distinguished primarily by its location near the Black Forest, Stuttgart is an old German city in the process of being reborn into an important industrial center.

History: The city of Stuttgart was chartered in the 13th century, located on the Neckar River near the mountain range known as the Black Forest. It was not an important city during the wars and politicking of medieval and Napoleonic Europe, though it was the

capital of the Duchy of Württemberg. It became an important industrial center in the late nineteenth century, with both textile and engineering industries.

Forbidden Lore: The dense, dark pine forests that cover the mountains of the Black Forest are said to be home to all sorts of creatures, from mountain loup-garou to the trolls of Grimm's "fairy tales." Tiny villages that surround and even invade the forest most often fall prey to these monsters, but even metropolitan Stuttgart has seen its share of such horrors. Not all of the Red Death's minions are subtle, and even lumbering ogres sometimes pillage a small village or a house on the outskirts of a large city and escape unharmed.

In addition to these creatures, the Black Forest region is known for its clock- and toy-making industries. A 7th-level adept residing in Stuttgart, one Jan Kneisel, has developed a technique for imbuing his clockwork creations with spell-casting abilities. These complex devices are controlled by Kneisel, and his purposes are not always lofty. Examples these "mechanicals" include:

- ❖ A small silver bird, with an AC of 3 and 3 HD (16 hp), that hops about with a MV of 3 but can fly magically at a rate of 18 (B). In addition to its flight, the bird can use *wizard eye*, *clairaudience*, *detect invisibility*, *ESP*, *detect magic*, and *detect undead* on its masters behalf.

- ❖ A comical-seeming dog made of wood and fur, AC 7, HD 2 (9 hp), that waddles on stiff legs at a movement rate of 6. The dogs bark is quite fearsome, acting as a *shout* spell cast at 7th level.

- ❖ A large insect-shaped creation of steel and gems, AC 0, HD 6 (34 hp). This tick-like thing scurries quickly on its six long legs (MV 15), and its bite acts as a *vampiric touch* spell.

Other "mechanicals" can be devised by the DM, using (but freely bending) the guidelines in *The Complete Sha'ir's Handbook*. The automata described in the *Monstrous Compendium Annual Volume Two* could be adapted into creations of Jan Kneisel as well.

Seville

Located in the south of Spain, along the Guadalquivir River, Seville is an important city with a rich past.

History: While the inland regions of Spain were settled by Ibero-Celts, the southern coast was colonized by Phoenician sailors in the 8th century B.C. The Phoenician city of Gades (modern Cádiz), located on the coast, became an

important outpost of the empire of Carthage, but the expansion of Rome led to conflict between these two great Mediterranean powers. Gades was captured by the Romans in the Punic War in 206 B.C. and soon was overshadowed by the Roman city of Hispalis upriver.

In the early 8th century A.D., Seville (as Hispalis was now called) was conquered by the Muslim Umayyad Caliphate, and it was the seat of an independent emirate between 1023 and 1091. A long, drawn-out campaign brought Christianity back to power in Spain by the mid-13th century, and the last Muslim kingdom in Western Europe, Granada, was annexed into Spain in 1492. Seville held a monopoly on trade with the Spanish territories in the New World until 1718, bringing the city to heights of prosperity.

Forbidden Lore: In 1478, Ferdinand and Isabella, with their confessor Tomás de Torquemada, instituted the Spanish Inquisition, which tortured and killed countless people as heretics or insincere converts. The Inquisition was not abolished in Spain until 1820, and its ghosts still haunt Spain.

Christopher Columbus, the Italian who opened North and South America to Spanish conquest, died penniless in Spain in 1508. His tomb lies in Seville's great Gothic cathedral, which was built between 1401 and 1519. Though he is almost certainly not among the restless dead, it is equally certain that some lingering curse hovers around his grave.

The Colombina library in Seville contains some of Columbus' manuscripts. Researchers and qabalists have lately been poring over these manuscripts searching for some hidden clue about a powerful evil on the island of Hispaniola, where Columbus served as governor (to his humiliation) between 1498 and 1500.

The mysterious evil on Hispaniola is also the source of the curse on Columbus' grave: an ancient aboriginal mummy that was awakened during Columbus' ill-fated time as governor of a colony on that island. The opening of the ancient chieftain's tomb brought doom upon Columbus and the whole colony, a curse that drove Columbus into ruin and lingers around his tomb even after 400 years. The curse manifested itself in the appearance of chaos imps (see the *Planes of Chaos Monstrous Supplement*) infesting equipment throughout the colony, spreading chaos and entropy. Some of these perverse creatures remain in the area of Columbus' tomb—2d6 of them

hounding anyone who touches the tomb-infesting objects carried by the interlopers and generally making their lives miserable. These creatures can merge themselves with any nonliving object, so long as it is not already imbued with intelligence or a spirit (as an intelligent sword or a golem). Magical items receive a saving throw to avoid being infested by an imp, with a base save of 14, modified by one for every plus or power of the item. Weapons used to strike at the imps may be infested too, but their base saving throw number is 10. Infested items do not radiate magic (unless they are magical in themselves) and are generally indistinguishable from their previous appearance—that is, until the imp begins to make its presence known. Chaos imps can alter the physical appearance and properties of their host objects at will, maintaining roughly the same mass, and can also speak from within the object.

Chaos Imp: INT Average; AL CN; AC 3; MV 12; HD 3; THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg Nil; SA Chaos; SZ T (2' tall); ML Fearless (19); XP 175; *Planes of Chaos Monstrous Supplement*/10.

Western Asia

Western Asia includes not only Turkey and Russia, represented in "An Atlas of Gothic Earth" by Constantinople and Saint Petersburg, but also the region known as the Middle or Near East—Persia, Arabia, and the lands of the Ottoman Empire. Baghdad is one of the most vital and interesting cities of this richly diverse and historic region.

Baghdad

Part of the sprawling Ottoman Empire, the city of Baghdad is located along the Tigris River northwest of the Persian Gulf. The splendid city is heir to the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia and a cultural center of the Islamic world.

History: When Imhotep brought the Red Death into the world around 2700 B.C., the region known as Mesopotamia, "the land between the rivers," was a scattered collection of Sumerian city-states. Baghdad did not rise to importance until the 8th century A.D., but it was heir to the history of the ancient empires of Sumeria, Assyria, Babylon, and Persia.

Sargon (2371-16 B.C.) was the first to unite the Sumerian city-states into one empire, ruling from his capital at Agade. A succession of kingdoms followed Sargon's empire, climaxing in the unified empire of the Babylonian Hammurabi (1792-50 B.C.), which remained the major political

power in the region until Babylon was sacked by the Hittite kingdom of Turkey in 1595 B.C. Assyria arose as an empire around 1380 B.C., succeeded by Babylonia and then, in 550 B.C., Persia. By 525 B.C. the Persian empire reached from Egypt to the frontiers of India, but it too was destroyed by Alexander the Great in the mid-4th century B.C. The Parthian empire grew into the vacuum left by Alexander's death, holding Mesopotamia against the expansion of Rome, but it was itself replaced by a new Persian dynasty, the Sasanians, in 224 A.D.

This Persian empire was overrun by the religio-political movement of Islam in the 7th century A.D. After the expansionism of the Umayyad caliphs, the Abbasid dynasty after 750 settled in to a more peaceful period of cultural and intellectual development. The new Abbasid capital was Baghdad, the center of the Muslim world.

Baghdad fell to a Mongol invasion in 1258. A new golden age of Persia began under the Safavid dynasty, established by Ismail Safavi in 1501. The Safavids promoted the Shi'ite branch of the Islamic faith. However, Baghdad and the surrounding region were annexed by the Ottoman Suleiman the Magnificent in 1534; the Ottomans practiced Sunni Islam. Baghdad remains a provincial capital in the Ottoman Empire to this day.

Forbidden Lore: Legend holds that Sargon, the founder of the first Mesopotamian nation, was a sorcerer of tremendous power. His ancestry was Akkadian, but it is said that he studied magic with an Egyptian necromancer. The search for his capital, Agade, is one of the puzzles of contemporary archeology—but archeologists searching for the city, and Sargon's tomb in particular, have a tendency to meet with disaster. Some qabal members whisper that Sargon still stands guard over the lands he ruled over four thousand years ago. He is a mighty lich (MONSTROUS MANUAL tome, page 222—see also *Van Richten's Guide to the Lich*), sustaining himself through three millennia of unlife through rituals and sheer force of will. Perhaps the most terrible rumors whispered about Sargon, however, are those that claim Sultan Abdul Hamid II, ruler of the Ottoman Empire, is a mere puppet of this enormously powerful lich. The massacres of Armenians ordered by this "Red Sultan," as he is called, in 1894-96, are said to be part of the mighty lich's never-ending quest for greater magical and political power.

South Asia

South Asia (present-day Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh) was in the 1890s a bubbling cauldron of mixing cultures. British colonists and Indian natives, expatriate Theosophists and colonial Anglicans from Europe with native Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Parsis—the occult, ancient religions, and modern politics seethe in volatile combination.

The English East India Company controlled most of India by the early 19th century. After 1858, the British government took control from the trading company and began building roads and railways that helped the economy of India boom.

Madras

Madras, in southeast India, is capital of Madras (Tamilnad) province and a main port in India. The region is populated by the Dravidian people, a distinct race and culture who speak languages not related to the Indo-Iranian tongues (including Hindi and other Sanskrit descendants) used in northern India. The Tamils, in particular, are known for their religious poetry.

History:The southern part of the Indian subcontinent was colonized by the Portuguese in the 16th century, and by the Dutch, French, and British in the 17th century. By the mid-18th century, the British East India Company had established its monopoly, controlling the tea, rice, and cotton trade of the area.

The city of Madras was founded by the British in 1639. From its East India Company roots, it has remained an important port, exporting metals, tobacco, machinery, and chemicals for the British Empire.

Forbidden Lore: Of course, the raskhasas of India thrive in the bustling metropolis of Madras. A more insidious occult force resides there as well, however. The Theosophical Society, founded in New York in 1875 by Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-91) and Colonel H.S. Olcott (1832-1907), moved its headquarters to Madras in 1877. There, Olcott continues in the leadership of the society since the death of Blavatsky.

The Society teaches meditation and mysticism, drawing heavily on Hindu and Buddhist beliefs and practices, and promotes cooperation and fellowship among all people by its teaching that all religions are versions of one universal truth that is available only to the enlightened. Blavatsky herself was a clairvoyant, and the Society continues to teach

the mastery of psychic powers (see "Psychic Proficiencies," in *DRAGON Magazine* #212 for suggestions on integrating psychic powers into *Masque of the Red Death* campaigns). A secret society of Masters (Mahatmas) dwelling somewhere in Tibet supposedly monitors the spiritual progress of each individual. This society and its several splinter groups certainly qualify as qabals, though how their goals and methods relate to the Red Death is unclear.

Far East

By the 1890s, trade with the great Asian powers was a fact of life, and, as in Africa, the European powers competed to establish footholds in these lands. The empires of China and Japan have longer histories than the European nations, and cultures fully as elaborate and diverse.

HongKong

The British colony of Hong Kong is the most important mercantile city in China—at least as far as the European world is concerned. Hong Kong consists of an island just off the southern coast of China (Hong Kong proper), the tiny Kowloon peninsula, and the much larger New Territories on the mainland.

History: The modern history of Hong Kong begins with the Opium War, that resulted from China's attempt to keep the British from importing opium from India. When the Chinese Commissioner Lin destroyed stores of British opium in Canton in 1839. Britain responded by declaring war and soundly defeating China by 1842. The Treaty of Nanking, which ended the Opium War, granted Hong Kong island to Britain, as well as giving Britain a large sum of money for the seized opium and opening five Chinese cities to unrestricted British trade (and granting foreign citizens in these cities immunity to Chinese law). A second Opium War (called the Arrow War), from 1856-60, involved France as well and resulted in the opening of more Chinese ports as well as the cession of the Kowloon peninsula to the British.

In the 1890s, China is caught in a fierce tension between forces of modernization, including the European presence, and more conservative, traditional forces (most notably the Chinese gentry and the empress Tzu-hsi). Hong Kong, of course, represents the course of modernization. Besides being a British colony and a major trade port, it also boasts a small British railway (running to Canton).

The New Territories, a larger region

on the mainland across from Hong Kong island, were leased from China by the British in 1898 for a period of 100 years.

Forbidden Lore: The opium trade still thrives in Hong Kong bringing incalculable fortunes to Britain and British merchants. British motives for pursuing this trade are not entirely financial, however. Apparently, there is something living in Hong Kong which has a vested interest in poisoning the minds and bodies of as many Chinese (and Europeans) as possible. Some say it is a monstrous creature that feeds on the brains of humans, and that opium transforms the human brain into a rare delicacy for this beast. Others say it is a master of mental powers which finds drugged humans vastly easier to bend to its will. Whether this creature is a mind flayer (*MONSTROUS MANUAL* tome, page 251), a psionic lich (*RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM* Appendix III), or something far worse, it is in a position of great power in Hong Kong, with enormous financial and political resources to support it.

Tokyo

The imperial capital of Japan, Tokyo is located on the island of Honshu, the largest of Japan's four main islands. Though its history dates back to the 12th century, it is in many ways a very modern city, being the capital of a new government bent on the modernization of Japan.

History:Tokyo was founded as the city of Edo (or Yedo) in the 12th century, and became the center of the Tokugawa shogunate in 1603. While the emperor of Japan retained titular authority, true power rested in the hands of the shogun, who united the warring daimyos under his authority and military strength. The families of the daimyos were held at the shogun's court in Edo as potential hostages if a daimyo proved disloyal to the shogun.

After 200 years of peace under the Tokugawa shoguns, internal tensions and external pressures combined to bring Japan into the modern age. Unrest among both the peasantry and the samurai whose wealth and prestige were diminished by the development of a money economy was a serious enough problem. In addition, the European and American powers were pressuring Japan to open itself to foreign trade. A period of intrigue ended in 1868 with the overthrow of the shogunate and the establishment of a new imperial government.

Emperor Mutsuhito moved his capital from Kyoto (where it had remained

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through the period of the shogunate) to Edo, which he renamed Tokyo ("the eastern capital"). The emperor took the name Meiji ("enlightened government"), which has become the theme of his reign.

Under the reign of "enlightened government," the emperor's administration

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has begun the modernization (and Westernization) of Japan in full force. The feudal structure of daimyos, samurai landholders, and landless peasants has been abolished, and the agricultural laborers now own the land they work (albeit with heavy taxes). A Western-style parliament was established in 1889, education is progressing rapidly, and economic development is booming. The first railroad line was opened in 1872; four universities were founded in Tokyo between 1867 and 1883. Japan still struggles to overcome the lingering effects of unequal trade agreements with the Western powers negotiated in the 1850s, and only in the wake of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 did these inequalities begin to be removed.

Forbidden Lore: Japan has a rich mythological tradition and at least its share of horrific creatures haunting its lands. The bustling city of Tokyo is haunted by ancient horrors such as oriental vampires, kizoku, hebi-no-onna, and akikage from the *RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix III*, as well as buso, gaki, oni, and other creatures from the *Kara-Tur Monstrous Compendium* appendix. Alongside these native Japanese monsters, newer

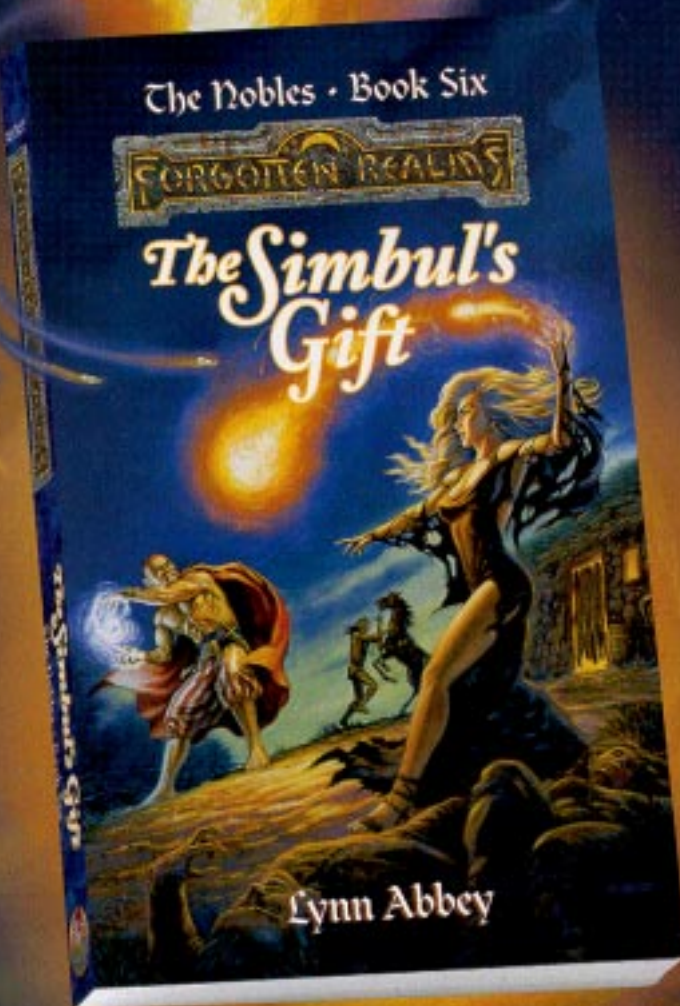
arrivals from Europe, America, and colonial lands hunt as well—creatures such as werebeasts, doppelgangers, and rakshasas. It should be noted that the tales of Tokyo often speak of vampiric cats, though whether these are unique creatures or simply Oriental vampires in polymorphed guise is unclear.

Tokyo is also said to be haunted. The family members of at least one rebellious daimyo were executed by the shogun in medieval Edo, and their restless spirits are said to still haunt the modern city, hurting or killing those who abandon the traditional ways. Foreigners are often their peculiar targets. These ghosts may be considered as standard spectres, wraiths, or ghosts, or else constructed using the guidelines in *Van Richten's Guide to Ghosts*, at the DM's option.



James Wyatt has only been to one of the cities described in this article, and he had no supernatural experiences there. Most of the Forbidden Lore he faces in daily life involves the mysteries of infant psychology and the arcane secrets of Microsoft operating systems.

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COLLAGE OF FOLKLORE

GUILD OF THIEVES

Éla's Quick Fingers Temple and Guild

by Sue Weinlein Cook and slade

illustrated by Bob Klasnich

Everyone knows that rogues can liven up a campaign. The other player characters never quite know what to expect when a member of the local thieves guild joins the party. But what happens when the thieves guild in question is also secretly linked to a powerful temple?

Dungeon Masters can expect some interesting results when they link the worship of a god or goddess of thieves to the local Criminal network in their campaigns. One such combination thrives in the BIRTHRIGHT® campaign setting, in which thieves and other denizens of the night worship Éla, goddess of shadow. In Müden, a cosmopolitan, trade-oriented domain, in the land of Brechtür, the predominant thieving brotherhood walks hand in hand with a legitimate church to form the guild and temple known as Éla's Quick Fingers.

This article offers some background on this cooperative organization, which DMs can adapt to their own campaigns. Plenty of information is provided for PCs wishing to join either guild or temple.

The Sister of Thieves

Éla, better known throughout the land of Cerilia as Eloéle, is a Chaotic Neutral (Evil) goddess of the night, the sister of thieves. While not a cruel goddess, Éla is deceitful, selfish, and manipulative. Considering this last trait, it should be no surprise that this goddess tends to involve herself in Cerilia's current events more than most deities. Legends say that one cannot whisper a secret without her divine ears catching every word. Rogues across the continent seek the favor of this subtle goddess, who prefers trickery over violence.

Éla's church has a greater presence in Brechtür than in any other nation of Cerilia. As described in the BIRTHRIGHT accessory Havens of the Great Bay, the Brechts are not a highly religious people. Instead, they prefer to dwell on more practical, everyday matters. The fact that the Brechts are, by and large, a race of guilders and merchants makes Éla a perfect choice for citizens who have no qualms about straying from the straight-and-narrow in order to turn a profit. Many who pledge their support to her church and guild, in fact, often rise to the enviable ranks of guildmaster in Müden. Guildmasters, in turn, enjoy more political clout than any other sector of the population, so it's easy to see how many of the domain's positions of power are held by high-ranking members of Éla's Quick Fingers church and guild. Every member of the Quick Fingers knows that those who control the money control the domain.

The Church

The temple of Éla is the only visible portion of Éla's Quick Fingers at work in Müden. This group of devotees worships the Goddess of Night and the Sister of Thieves. It is not a dogma-heavy faith, but it has several layers of beliefs. On the surface, the faithful praise this goddess of shadows for her control over the passages between Cerilia and the Shadow World, hoping their attentions will convince the goddess to stay the insidious doorways between the worlds. However, the true but unstated motivation behind most of this adulation is quite different: Worshippers acknowledge Éla's influence over thieves and rogues and offer her obeisance to stave off misfortunes in their own lives and business dealings.



Éla's Quick Fingers Holdings

Province (Level)	Temple Holding	Guild Holding
Allesrecht (6/1)	(1)	(1)
Cohrtab (7/0)	(2)	-
Golbrag (6/1)	(2)	-
Hauptrehr (7/0)	(4)	(3)
Wesbralen (7/0)	(4)	(2)

The strictest devotees of Éla—her priests and clerics—earn a darker doctrine. Éla's teachings instruct them in lying as an art form. Violence has its place in helping one achieve one's goals, they are taught, but one should learn to savor the pleasures of finding more subtle solutions to dilemmas, such as thievery and deceit.

Müden sees more money change hands daily than almost any other realm in Cerilia. Failing to placate the Sister of Thieves could mean bankruptcy for a negligent guildler—a fate worse than death for many merchant masters. Therefore, the most respectable (and successful) guilders and merchants—including those who regularly worship Neira, goddess of the sea, Müden's other major faith—never fail to leave offerings at the temple of Éla. This widespread practice allows Éla's church to bring in more money than its guild in some provinces. The goddess's temple holdings, found only in the most cosmopolitan areas of Müden (see the holding chart sidebar on this page), are ably guided by Fulda Spiritwalker (*Fhlf Pr6 Éla; Ma, major, 32*).

The Guild

Éla's entire temple organization is actually owned by the goddess's powerful but secret guildwork. Éla's Quick Fingers controls the illegal commerce of Müden and specializes in illicit business opportunities not available through the domain's legal channels. What this means is that Éla's Quick Fingers is a front for stolen goods, a black market for illegal or banned material such as products most members of society consider indecent, and a vehicle for conducting businesses around activities likewise considered immoral. While other local guilds are aware of Éla's organization, they can do nothing about it, for it provides services for which the folk of Müden seem willing enough to pay.

The guild is managed by a most secretive individual named Genevieve Streicher (*F½e; F5/T5; Az, major, 18*). This half-elf doesn't permit the public to

know who she is, issuing her orders through mysterious contacts who don't know her name. No one is ever allowed direct eye contact with her. Even those who are aware of the guild—including its members—have no idea that Genevieve merely serves as an intermediary for the organization's true regent: Éla's high priestess, Fulda Spiritwalker.

Quick Fingers Membership

Membership prerequisites and duties for Éla's Quick Fingers guild differ from those for Éla's church. Very few individuals belong to both, as Fulda seeks to minimize the risk of exposing her connection with the thieves guild. The DM is strongly discouraged from letting PCs join both organizations, even multi-classed or dual-class priest/thieves. Only in the rarest of circumstances, such as a regent designated Fulda's chosen heir, would such an allowance be made.

Members of the two groups do share a few commonalities. All Quick Fingers members, both of the church and the guild, must have the disguise proficiency. Members gain the appraising proficiency as a bonus at 5th level. Those of either organization who perform their duties to the satisfaction of the goddess reportedly are rewarded with a sign of her favor: In the night, their weapons (usually daggers or similar small blades) mysteriously turn black, supposedly through the goddess's divine intervention. These night blades carry several temporary enchantments that work only at night. They allow their wielders a 20 percent chance to hide in shadows (or increase a thief's Hide in Shadows ability by 20 percent). In addition, a *night blade* carries a +1 bonus to attack rolls and damage, and it is impervious to normal means of destruction (nonmagical fire, breakage, etc.). The enchantments and black color last for only 1d8 weeks, although the DM may increase the *night blade's* enchantment by 1d8 more weeks if he or she deems that the character has used the magical weapon in a fashion that has further pleased the Goddess of the Night.

Church Membership

To become a priest or priestess of Éla, a player character needs a Wisdom score of 9 and a Dexterity score of 12. Any chaotic-aligned character who meets these requirements may join the priesthood by applying at one of Éla's temples; promising candidates who appear before the keepers of one of the shrines are directed to the temples in either Saarmen or Brechlen. Applicants are brought to a special chamber within the temple that is subject to several permanent *darkness, 15' radius* spells. There, they must navigate the Maze of Night, a labyrinth fraught with traps and other hazards designed to weed out those who fail to offer proper respect to the Goddess of Night's preferred environment.

After a short training period to instruct the candidate in the ways of Éla, the character can take his or her vows of fealty and secrecy and become priests of the faith. However, new members of the clergy are not taught the secret of the church's connection to the Quick Fingers guild until after they have risen one experience level while a member of the priesthood.

Daggers, darts, crossbows, slings, and short swords are permitted to members of the clergy, as is leather armor, but not shields. In addition, priests of Éla gain the special abilities of a thief of half their own level (rounded up), as well as infravision to 30 feet. They can cast *darkness, 15' radius* once a day as a granted power and can command undead. Priests of Éla receive the religion (Éla) nonweapon proficiency as a bonus at 1st level and may select other thief nonweapon proficiencies as if they were thieves. (See *The Book of Priestcraft* for more details on these abilities.)

Priests of Éla can cast spells from the Animal and Chaos spheres (see *Tome of Magic*), as well as Charm, Divination, and Sun as major spheres. Such priests also have minor access to the All, Healing, and Necromantic spheres. Éla's Quick Fingers priests all favor illusion and disguise spells to aid their subtle trickery. They also favor the following spells introduced in *The Book of Priestcraft*: *circle of secrets*, *imbue with blood ability* (third-level spells); *magical tithe*, *consecrate relic* (realm spells); and *daythief* (quest spell).

The priests of Éla's Quick Fingers are entrusted with a special spell that allows them to enforce strict codes of secrecy upon guild members and others who may have stumbled onto something Fulda considers "sensitive information."

Code of Secrecy (Enchantment/Charm)

Sphere: Charm
Level: 5
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Varies
Casting time: 1 round
Area of effect: One creature
Saving throw: Neg.

In order to safeguard some of the best-kept secrets of the Quick Fingers guild and church, its priests make it physically impossible for a target creature to speak of a specific subject forbidden by the spell. A successful casting prevents any communication whatsoever about the forbidden topic: speech, writing, hand signals, painting or other symbology, etc. Should the affected creature attempt to break the secret, he or she ends up talking about (or communicating in another manner) a completely unrelated matter: the menu at lunch, his or her opinion of the mayor's recent speech, and so on, as the DM decides. Not only can the target not reveal the secret, he or she cannot even speak of the forbidden topic.

During the casting, the priest exhorts the target creature to remain silent about a certain fact. It's in the caster's best interests to be as specific as possible, for the more general the forbidden topic is, the shorter the spell's duration. For example, consider the various degrees of secrecy:

❖ **A General Secret:** "A guild called Éla's Quick Fingers exists in Müden." Duration: 1 day/caster level.

❖ **A Specific Secret:** "Éla's Quick Fingers guild works in conjunction with the temple of Éla." Duration: 1 week/caster level.

❖ **A Very Specific Secret:** "Fulda Spiritwalker leads both Éla's Quick Fingers guild and the temple of Éla." Duration: 1 month/caster level.

❖ **An Explicit Secret:** "Behind a plaque of a black dagger in the east hall of the Basilica's basement level lies a secret door that will open up onto a staircase leading down into the Quick Fingers guild's headquarters if one speaks the password correctly." Duration: 1 year/caster level.

Each secret to be enforced requires a separate spellcasting.

This spell can be cast only upon intelligent targets (i.e., those with an Intelligence of at least 3). Wisdom bonuses apply to the target creature's saving throw.

The spells material component is a piece of animal tongue.



Éla's priests, once they have achieved a level of experience while servants of the church, also have at their disposal a spell that offers them some useful skills:

Éla's Blessings

(Enchantment/Charm)

Sphere: Charm
Level: 3
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 hour/level
Casting time: 1 round
Area of effect: Caster
Saving throw: N/A

Once a priest has spent enough time in the faith of Éla's Quick Fingers, he or she learns that the church embraces some of the thieving habits of the denizens of the night, whom the goddess protects. This spell gives the priest the special thieving skills of a thief of his or her level for its duration. For example, a 5th-level priest, after casting this spell, gains the base thieving skill scores (PP 15%, OL 10%, F/RT 5%, MS 10%, HS 5%, DN 15%, CW 60%, RL 0%), plus racial, armor, and Dexterity adjustments and the 180 discretionary points the priest would have as a 5th-level thief. The priest can allocate the points differently each time the spell is cast, but players are encouraged to adopt a standard set of scores for their character when under the effect of this spell, to speed play. The normal restrictions to point allocation described for the thief class in the *Player's Handbook* apply.

The priest can cast this enchantment only on himself or herself. Its material component is the symbol of Éla.



If a PC of at least 5th level becomes the regent of Éla's Quick Fingers faith (or founds a new arm of the church outside Müden), the PC can cast the following reversed version of the *honest dealings* realm spell:

Dishonest Dealings

Spheres: Charm, Law
Regency: 3/province level
Req'd holding: 3
Character level: 5
Gold: 2 GB
Duration: 1 domain turn +1 month/level
This realm spell creates a charm effect that guides citizens of affected provinces

toward deceit in all negotiations and business practices. It allows most agitate and espionage actions to succeed automatically, pursuant to the DM's approval; this spell does not allow PCs to assassinate the Gorgon, for example! The DM should feel free to assess bonuses to agitate and espionage actions where it seems inappropriate to allow them automatic success.

Dishonest dealings also gives diplomacy actions a +4 bonus and improves guild holdings two levels for collection purposes in affected provinces. Law enforcement officials and anyone else who intentionally tries to foil some criminal activity (for no personal gain) must make a saving throw vs. spell to determine whether their crime-fighting attempt succeeds.

Priests may affect one province at 5th level, two at 7th, three at 9th, etc.



Customs & Duties of the Priesthood

Most members of Éla's priesthood clothe themselves in the style they believe the goddess herself favors when she walks the land: Loose clothing and capes of dark colors that allow their wearers to fade into the background or shadowy corners. (Of course, they wear finer-quality clothing for rituals.) At their ceremony of ordination, they earn the privilege of carrying a black dagger, the symbol of the goddess. At the DM's discretion, high-ranking priests of Éla's Quick Fingers may wear *vestments of defense*, a magical item introduced in *The Book of Priestcraft*.

Éla's clergy takes care of her temples and her far-flung shrines and participates in the thrice-weekly public services in honor of their patron goddess (as well as the rites held daily one hour after dusk for Quick Fingers guild members). Perhaps these priests' most important duty, however, is the least visible one.

Fulda Spiritwalker has instructed her clergy members to keep accounts of the assets of everyone of import in the communities they serve. The priests of Éla make it their business to know the financial status of all members of various local guilds and all political players. It's important for them to know everybody's business, Fulda says—especially the financial side of their affairs—so they can determine whether donors to the temple have given sufficiently of their wealth to insure success in their future

ventures. The records are kept in a vast repository in the temples of Brechlen and Saarmen.

To assist in this venture, Éla's priesthood commands the power of the following enchantment, a more specialized version of the *charm person or mammal* spell:

Éla's Accounts

(Enchantment/Charm)

Sphere: Animal

Level: 2

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 hour

Casting time: 5

Area of effect: 1 person

Saving throw: Special

When the time comes for Éla's church to update its financial records, her priests must each take a turn visiting local merchants and other business folk, usually in pairs. While the subject is conversing with one of the priests, the other can casually approach and cast *Éla's accounts*. When the priests then ask the charmed subject for details of his current financial situation, the victim is magically compelled to recount his properties, income, and holdings to the best of his knowledge. The caster can ask to see various items the subject mentions in particular, allowing the other priest to use his appraising proficiency to calculate the objects approximate value. The subject finds himself unable and unwilling to lie or withhold information requested specifically.

When the priests depart, the subject has no memory of having divulged these details, only that he or she had a conversation with a couple of priests from the Quick Fingers temple. The spell does not affect the subjects attitude toward the caster in any way (though the church usually sends representatives who have a good rapport with the subject), nor does it give the caster control over the subject beyond the compulsion to reveal his or her financial secrets.

Only other priests of Éla's Quick Fingers can attempt a saving throw against this spell. If successful, the save negates the spell's effects, and the subject knows that a fellow priest has attempted to charm him. It is considered inappropriate to cast this spell on comrades of the faith, however, unless under orders from a superior.



Accounting calls, as described in the

"Quick Fingers Adventures" sidebar, can provide adventure opportunities for priests of Éla's Quick Fingers who find the call of wealth too strong to resist. More than one priest has been known to accompany a group of acquaintances from the Quick Fingers guild on "unofficial" missions to relieve wealthy citizens of particularly fine items. Of course, the church frowns on such behavior—unless it receives at least half of the item's value in tithe, of course.

As Éla's guild activity increases throughout the domain of Müden, existing shrines to the goddess will become temples, and new shrines and temples will appear in other provinces—perhaps even in neighboring realms. This growth potential offers a blooded PC Quick Fingers priest an opportunity to become a regent of a new branch of the faith. Anyone taking up regency of a holding within Müden must serve as a vassal to Fulda Spiritwalker, the high priestess, offering at least a quarter of all GB generated each domain turn to the temple in Brechlen. Those who expand the faith to other realms, however, operate beyond Fulda's sphere of influence at present and need offer her no such fealty.

Guild Membership

Unlike PCs seeking to join Éla's Quick Fingers faith, those wishing to become members of the guild of the Sister of Thieves need meet no specific ability score requirements nor face weapons or other restrictions. The wide range of duties the guild oversees means that the organization needs members of all talents and abilities.

That's the good news. The bad news is that joining the guild is no easy matter, for the organization does not openly acknowledge its existence. PCs might conceivably find out about the guild after listening to the word on the street in Saarmen or Brechlen. However, no member of the guild will acknowledge its existence to a PC seeking to join. If the character visits one of Éla's temples or shrines seeing guild membership, he or she receives the same response; especially difficult customers will be ushered off the premises.

PCs can't find the guild. However, the guild can find them, once its had an opportunity to see them in action. Those who practice any type of illegal activity without guild sanction soon receive a visit from a representative, who explains that such conduct isn't allowed. Even before this contact, however, the Quick

Fingers operative will have watched the PC long enough to determine whether he or she has the proper skills and character for the guild's needs. If the PC passes this discreet inspection, the guild member follows up his warning with an invitation for the character to meet "a friend of mine" at a guild-run establishment: a tavern, a shop, but never the temple. At that meeting, the PC is offered a circumspect invitation and told the bounds of permitted behavior. The PC is also given a hint of what might happen should he or she choose to go beyond those bounds.

The guild continues watching new members for a few weeks or months—until they have proven themselves trustworthy. At first, PCs might think that, in exchange for their hefty annual dues (100 gp), all they receive in return is permission to practice their own con game or mode of thievery. Bit by bit, however, members learn more information about the group they have joined. It can take years before PCs begin to understand the scope of the Quick Fingers guild, but eventually they learn that the paltry 100 gp (plus a percentage of earned income) is nothing compared to the kind of wealth one can earn as a member of the Quick Fingers. Some of the things PCs can learn:

- ❖ The guild's membership numbers are not widely known, but most members are given to believe that 75 percent of its members are street-level workers (beggars, pickpockets, etc.). Another 20 percent are mid-level operatives, who perform enforcement duties and operate the guild's black market efforts (see next page). The final 5 percent are the elite of the Quick Fingers: the most specialized of its members and the "bosses" of its many ongoing projects. These elite receive their orders straight from the top.

- ❖ PCs generally have a guild assignment at all times, whether a specific mission or merely orders to continue in his or her normal line of criminal activity. More unusual members, like couriers or assassins, can enjoy some "off time" between assignments and might need to keep a normal job to help pay the bills or stave off suspicion.

- ❖ A PC must check in monthly with his superior (at the beginning, the "friend" who recruited the PC) at a designated meeting place or, after he or she has spent some time with the guild (i.e., gone up one level while a member) at the local headquarters. At these meetings, the member discusses his recent

activities on the guild's behalf, hands over the guild's cut of his or her profits (50%) or receives pay for a recent "job," and is expected to mention anything out of the ordinary he or she might have witnessed lately. After one missed appointment, the errant guild member is reminded that if you don't come to the guild, the guild comes to you (see "Behavior Modification," below).

❖ The guild can offer its members a number of "deals," such as a discounted rate of interest on loans (see below), the best mission training available for those chosen to undertake special jobs (offers PCs a bonus of +10 percentage points to thieving skills appropriate to the mission for the duration of the job only), gifts of equipment or cash bonuses for those who surpass their superiors' expectations, and so on. In addition, if a member in good standing is caught performing illegal guild duties through unforeseeable circumstances, the Quick Fingers network ensures that the member goes free or at least receives the minimum sentencing. Important guild figures can even count on their comrades breaking them out of jail, if the need arises.

❖ No one can reveal the guilds secrets and get away with it. On the first meeting with his or her superior in the guild, a character meets a priest of Éla as well and has a taste of the *code of silence* spell described earlier, just so the character sees firsthand the power of his or her new organization.

❖ Once you join, you're a member for life. The guild has been known to extend leaves of absence to exemplary members under unusual circumstances, but on the whole, there's no leaving the Quick Fingers. PCs allowed to leave Müden are subjected to the *code of silence* spell. Members who attempt to escape the guild's sphere of influence without permission, however, are hunted down by multi- or dual-classed fighter-thieves (two experience levels higher than the highest-level renegade member) and quietly "removed."

Guild Services

The guild offers a bewildering array of duties for its members, from messengers and fences to more straightforward thieves. Below is a small sampling of the types of duties player characters might receive as part of the Quick Fingers operation. The DM might also use these "services" as a way to bring a party of PCs into contact with the guild for the first time.



❖ **Behavior Modification:** One can hire the guild to "convince" a target to think or act a certain way through the power of suggestion (read: threats) at a cost of 100 gp per level of the target (minimum 100 gp cost). The guild doubles the price for council members, multiplies it by five for a mayor or equivalent, and increases it by a factor of ten for a regents lieutenant. The price of behavior modification for a regent is 10,000 gp per level. The fee must be paid whether the modification attempt succeeds or not.

❖ **Bonebreaking:** Any kind of bodily harm against a target is considered part of this service. Once the "job" is done, immediate medical attention and the immobilization of a limb is generally necessary. If the target bribes the bonebreakers, the severity of the harm can be lessened to, say, only a weeks medical care. The price of this service is double that of behavior modification.

❖ **Elimination Services:** This service involves one simple fact: death. The guild's assassins will take bribes from the target to employ a painless method. Murder, being an expensive business, is three times the price of the behavior modification.

❖ **Loans:** The Quick Fingers guild is a good source for a fast pocketful of coins. A surcharge of 50 percent per month (20 percent for guild members) is added until the client pays the balance. If the borrower doesn't make payments sufficient to chip away at the original amount of the loan within three months, refer to "behavior modification." After four and a half months, the guild sends out its bonebreakers. After six months, refer to "elimination services." All the negligent borrower's possessions are then processed through "resale fronts" (see next page).

❖ **Black Market:** The "black market" is a pretty loose category. Without getting too explicit, this arm of the Quick Fingers guild buys and sells anything illegal and immoral (except stolen goods, covered in "resale fronts"). Objects, creatures, humanoids, food, and information all can be bought and sold to the guild through this department. Characters should expect to pay five times the price listed in the *Player's Handbook* for the goods in question. For living creatures, the purchaser must pay at least 1 gp per experience point.

❖ **Resale Fronts:** This service sells products of questionable ownership at prices that range from 0 to 45 percent

Quick Fingers Adventures

The following examples are only a sampling of the Quick Fingers' ongoing concerns. DMs should feel free to adapt them to suit their own campaigns or to use the information from the *Havens of the Great Bay* accessory to extrapolate other ideas. These ideas suit both situations in which the PCs are working for the Quick Fingers cooperative and those in which they work against it.

A Family Affair

Éla's Quick Fingers' guildmaster has learned that Brecht Seelundkaufen is running illegal logging operations in the domain of Treucht southwest of Müden. The loggers have engaged in this activity without the knowledge of the guildmaster or the bureau lieutenants. Should they be caught in the act, a political confrontation could break out between Müden and Treucht. The loggers' illegal guild actions bring in about 2 GB per domain turn of pure profit—"pure" in that the loggers pay no taxes or guild shares.

Right now, Fulda Spiritwalker is still pondering what action the Quick Fingers should take. Should she seek a share of the cut in exchange for silence? Should she just ignore the activity out of her commitment to staying out of the affairs of her uncle, who runs the Brecht Seelundkaufen? Or, should she report the logging to the authorities to avoid a possibly explosive situation when the government of Treucht finds out about the illegal operation?

Accounting Call

A pair of PC priests of Éla are sent to Allesrecht on an "accounting call" (described elsewhere in this article). A

number of thieves faithful to the goddess accompany them, planning to make contact with a guild member trying to strengthen the Quick Fingers' holding in that province. As it turns out, the guild member has been arrested for peddling stolen goods, a crime he didn't commit—but which the subject of the call did! If the PCs don't break the guild member out of jail and expose the truth, the guild may lose its foothold in the province entirely.

Project Stake and Dagger

Melisande Reaversbane, captain of Müden's Royal Fleet, fears that the Count of the realm has concentrated far too little on the actions of the Vampire, whose domain lies west of Müden. Rumors of the awnshegh's involvement with the Swordhawk of Massenmarch, Müden's longtime enemy, have led her to believe that the two have formed a pact to conquer Brechtür and share its spoils. She believes the awnsheghien too dangerous to ignore—therefore, she has taken matters into her own hands.

With the help of Éla's Quick Fingers guild, she has specially trained seven warriors under a program Melisande calls Project Stake and Dagger. Once her team of swordsmen, assassins, thieves, and propaganda artists was shaped to perfection, they were unleashed onto an unsuspecting Vampire's Hold. Meanwhile, the Quick Fingers guild did its part to spread the word that the Vampire was collecting an army of darkness—a mob of creatures of shadow and myth to avenge every wrong ever committed against him, be it fact or fiction. During this apocalypse, the story goes, nightmares will become tangible, and reality will be distorted to horrific hallucinations.

In the two years since Project Stake and Dagger infiltrated the awnshegh's realm, the team has succeeded in creating dissension in the Vampire's population, but their presence has been seen and felt. The awnshegh knows they came from Müden, and he seeks revenge through his experiments designed to tap in to the subliminal aspects of the Shadow World. These insidious attacks have also caused him, ironically, to meet with the Swordhawk to discuss plans to nullify the threat from Müden.

Turf Wars

Brutal Vos criminals are moving in on the territory belonging to Entractengild, a group of thieves working the highways of Allesrecht, Cohrtab, and Golbrag for the Quick Fingers organization. Its illusionist leader, Kirsten Windhaufen (*FBr; W4; CN*) tells the guild that these indiscriminate murderers commit the most unsavory crimes in the name of theft and asks for assistance in quashing them. This small clan of thugs, which fled to Müden from the realm of Rzhlev to the north, actually serves a Vos war-priest of Belenik, who is trying to establish a temple foothold in Müden.

Shadows

A rift leading to the Shadow World opens suddenly in the province of Ubalmulen, and undead pour into Cerilia. Éla, more interested than other deities in interfering in the affairs of mortals, tells the PCs in a vision that the creatures seek to destroy Genevieve Streicher, the half-elf leader of the Quick Fingers guild. The goddess will not close the shadowy passage until the PCs learn why.

(5d10 - 5) of the *Player's Handbook* price. Guild members under the guise of legitimate merchants and storekeepers will buy property no questions asked—unless it's irrefutably property stolen from the guild itself (then see "Bonebreaking").



Conducting the above underground activities without belonging to the guild will create one "friendly" confrontational reminder between a character and a Quick Fingers guild member. The erring PC should consider this meeting a very strong warning to either cease and desist all illicit activities immediately, or

simply join the guild. Thereafter, the continuing offender becomes subject to the "bonebreaking" services described above (starting with fingers and toes).

It should be noted that Éla's priests keep accounts of the assets of Quick Fingers guild members as well as those of other local guilds and organizations. Should the priests ever discover a Quick Fingers guild member who has swindled the guild or temple in any way, they immediately report the news to Fulda. She makes certain that such perpetrators are lauded for their ingenuity at deceiving the deceivers—then finds a suitable punishment. If Éla favors the victim, she'll find a way to save him.

Quick Fingers at Work

The church's center of power lies in Brechlen, Müden's capital city in the province of Wesbralen. There, Fulda Spiritwalker conducts services in the Grotto of the Evening Star, the largest temple complex devoted to the goddess in all of Cerilia. This magnificent structure is built atop natural hot springs and conceals a grand cave complex with tunnels that lead to many secret locales. (For more details on the worship of Éla in Brechlen, see Eloéle's section in *The Book of Priestcraft*.)

However, the combined church and guild enjoy their greatest sway in the

province of Hauptrehr, home of Saarmen—the domain's second largest city and its major outgoing port. Saarmen's temple, the Basilica of Éla's Suppression of Shadows, is the largest synagogue in Saarmen. According to Éla's clergy, its name evokes the goddess's ability to control the Shadow World. Services are held for the general public three times a week, but daily for the clergy themselves, as well as members of the Quick Fingers guild.

The temple's holdings in smaller provinces consist only of small shrines to the goddess, where the faithful may come to pray or leave offerings. These shrines are administered by low-ranking priests; this can be an excellent assignment for low-level PC priests of Éla who are not attached to either of Müden's large cities.

City-dwellers notice plenty of movement in and around Éla's two major temples at all times—day or night. Some people think "funny business" goes on there, while others believe the church is involved in some sort of underground business dealings. If only they knew that the Quick Fingers guild operates from out of those very temples! The guild's headquarters lie hidden away in the deepest sublevels beneath the temples, behind numerous secret doors and wards. These headquarters serve as administrative centers, meeting places, and treasuries (not as barracks for guild members). So great is the skill of Quick Fingers guild members that no connection between Éla's temple and criminal activity has ever been proven.

The internal politics of local governing councils can be messy at times—especially with Éla's Quick Fingers in attendance. For instance, of the 41 members of the Saarmen council, five serve the greedy needs of ha's Quick Fingers guild (even though anyone would be hard pressed to determine which five they are, for no one admits to being in league with the secret group), while another three envoys represent Éla's Suppression of Shadows. The situation is much the same in Brechlen (basically, each temple and guild has one representative per point of holding strength).

These delegates, like those representing other special interest groups, have a great deal of power in local councils. They have been known to "buy" votes and even purchase voting rights by renting a council members signet ring for a day and using it to stamp official documents that serve their own purposes.



Usually such misuse of power is not brought to the public's view—except when it aids one special interest group to do so. For example, the Brecht Seelundkaufen guild recently informed the public of the passage of a law that would allow the sale of stolen goods 90 days after the property was reported missing. The law allegedly was thrown into the council by representatives from Éla's Quick Fingers guild, and 8,000 gp were "donated" to 27 other council members to purchase one day's use of their signet rings. That day, the council passed the law 32 votes to 3 (including six absentees or no votes). Of course, those 27 council members were either on vacation or home with a case of the flu and denied voting or renting their rings to other council members to make the all-important voting stamps.

Count Richard Talbehr (*MBR; F4; Br, major, 30*), official regent of Müden, knows that the existence of the Quick Fingers guild is more than just idle speculation, although he has no idea of its connection to the high priestess of the local temple. The count disapproves of the guild's presence, but his chief ally, Melisande Reaversbane (*FBR; F9; Br, minor 19*) keeps his attention focused on threats

to Müden from outside its borders, such as neighboring awnsheglien and the pirate king of Grabentod to the north. Despite the counts' predilection toward law and order, the guild network has managed to remain just outside of his attentions.

And the church of Éla has managed to remain above suspicion, for the most part. After all, the more tithes Müdenites donate, the less likely they are to be robbed—what more proof of the goddess's power could one want? asks Fulda Spiritwalker. (Of course, it's easier to have people give you money than it is to steal it.) Even the poor of the realm remain strong supporters of the church, for they find that even their meager contributions keep them fairly safe from the denizens of the night. True, the Quick Fingers do tend to target wealthy citizens more than the lower classes, but not due to any feeling of charity—they go where the money is.

Quick Fingers Allies

Eight known bands of thieves and murderers work in Müden. Éla's Quick Fingers church and guild has contacts with most of them and receives a small

cut from the profits in return for the travel vouchers of merchant houses. PCs might find themselves sent to offer instructions to one of these groups, train them for a new assignment, or lead the group in a mission vital to the guild.

❖ The **Commercial Recreants** (a dozen Brecht fighters of 1st and 2nd level) are a bit totalitarian and violent with their victims. They tend to overreact and hurt (or even kill) people when they believe they've been provoked. Luckily their realm of influence is small, polluting only the provinces of Nodarch and Ruelshegh.

❖ The Quick Fingers have given **Entractengild** (20 Brecht thieves of 2nd and 3rd level, led by a 4th-level illusionist) exclusive rights to work the highways of the provinces of Allesrecht, Cohrtab, and Golbrag.

❖ **The Highwaymen** (more than two dozen Brecht and Khinasi fighters of 2nd level on the average), a vicious mass of murderers, prowl the provinces of Cohrtab, Golbrag, Trestahlen, and Wesbralen.

❖ **Kliegclan** (a handful of Brecht thieves of 3rd level on the average) is an almost unknown group that robs merchant trains in secret when they stop for the evening. This gang runs in the Allesrecht and Wesbralen provinces and in the neighboring domain of Treucht.

❖ **The Journeymen** (about a dozen Brecht bards of 4th level) work in the provinces of Marchbehr, Ruelshegh, and Ubalmulen, as well as in the Banshegh's domain and the realm of Rhuelgard. They're known for enticing wealthy travelers with their songs and stories before making off with their valuables.

❖ **The Road Wolves** (15 Rjurik fighters and thieves of about 2nd level) work with some success in Hauptrehr, Kostwode, and Nodarch provinces.

❖ **Robengild** (30 halfling and Brecht thieves of 4th level or higher) is the richest and most influential band in Müden. Working Hauptrehr, Kostwode, Marchbehr, and places in the domain of Berhagen, they're known for their patience, calm manners, and polite demands. Some merchants and other frequent travelers consider it a point of pride to be robbed by Robengild.

❖ The **Toll Trolls** (about a half-dozen goblins) work the Trestahlen and Ubalmulen provinces with little prosperity.



In addition to these bands, Éla's Quick Fingers enjoy good relations with various leading citizens of Müden, including:

❖ **Elsa Darindorf** (*FBr; W3; Br, minor, 24*), daughter of one of Saarmen's leading businessmen, enjoys her life of privilege. Often, this erstwhile mage's newfound (and rich) friends in Brechlen ask her to deliver small packages or messages to protect themselves from possible indictment or jail time. She happily delivers all of them, and so far, she's never been arrested or even approached by the constabulary (almost as though the authorities consider her too foolish to be guilty of any crime). These packages, of course, are part of the Quick Fingers illicit courier network. The DM might choose to make a PC an unwitting accessory to the Quick Fingers in much the same way Elsa is.

❖ **Melisande Reaversbane**, mentioned earlier, is Captain of Müden's Royal Fleet and a lieutenant to the count. She is well loved in the bayshore provinces and well feared by Müden's enemies for her military know-how. She maintains ties with the Quick Fingers guild in order to finance the training of candidates for secret military projects (see Project Stake and Dagger in the "Quick Fingers Adventures" sidebar). This training involved such behaviors as sneaking about in the shadows, ways to lacerate the neck so the victim can't scream, and ways to break into a house silently without leaving a trace. However, if the captain harbors assassination plans, she has not offered the guild any details.

Foes of the Guild and Temple

Not surprisingly, the Quick Fingers have few public enemies, as those who vocalize their discontent with either temple or guild have the habit of disappearing. In general, Éla's faith opposes the activities of the churches of Haelyn, god of noble war; Avani, goddess of the sun and reason; and Laerne, goddess of fire, beauty, and art. However, none of these churches maintain a presence in Müden (perhaps that fact explains itself).

A number of guilds and public figures do attempt to foil the activities of the Quick Fingers from time to time, however, and a PC guild member might be assigned to surveillance duty involving one of them (or be hunted by their agents). These enemies include:

❖ **The Brecht Seelundkaufen**, the most powerful guild in Müden, consists of several bureaus that each specialize in a particular profession. A small sampling of the bureaus include the Blacksmiths' Weld, the Butchers' Block, the Dockhands' Quay, the Lightsmithies' Weld, the Lumberjacks Board, the Miners' Well, the Ranchers' Stall, the Sailors' Jaunt, the Shippers' Dispatch, and the Shipwrights' Founding, to name only a few. Together, they pose a great force throughout Müden, for all bureaus are willing to strike against an employer or business that treats a single bureau unjustly. Such solidarity can easily run a target out of business.

The guild, whose main interests lie in the lumber and shipping industry, is controlled by Theofold (*MHlf; T9; Mu, minor, 18*), a lieutenant to the Count of Müden. This old halfling knows of the existence of Éla's Quick Fingers guild and despises its activities. He has said, however, that he's willing to leave the guild alone, as long as the Quick Fingers do not prey upon the Seelundkaufen's bureaus. Theofold even attends services at the temples of Éla every now and then, and he is very proud of his niece, Fulda Spiritwalker, for attaining the post of high priestess. He has no inkling of her involvement with the hated Quick Fingers guild—and Fulda intends to keep it that way.

❖ **Stefen Negus** (*MBr; W3*), the silent mayor of Saarmen, remembers what its like to be "one of the little guys," and he has vowed to protect the rights of the individual over the interests of those who own businesses. Since he entered office, several business owners have found themselves working hard labor in prisons in the Hauptrehr province. Idle tongues in Saarmen speculate as to how long it will be before a consortium of local businessmen hires the Quick Fingers guild to do the mayor in. The one thing that may have saved him until now is that he rarely makes it into the public eye.



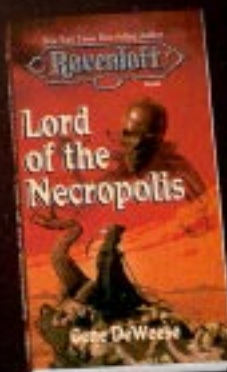
Sue Weinlein Cook and slade would like to extend special thanks to Duane Maxwell, Monte Cook, and Ed Starkfor their input on this article.

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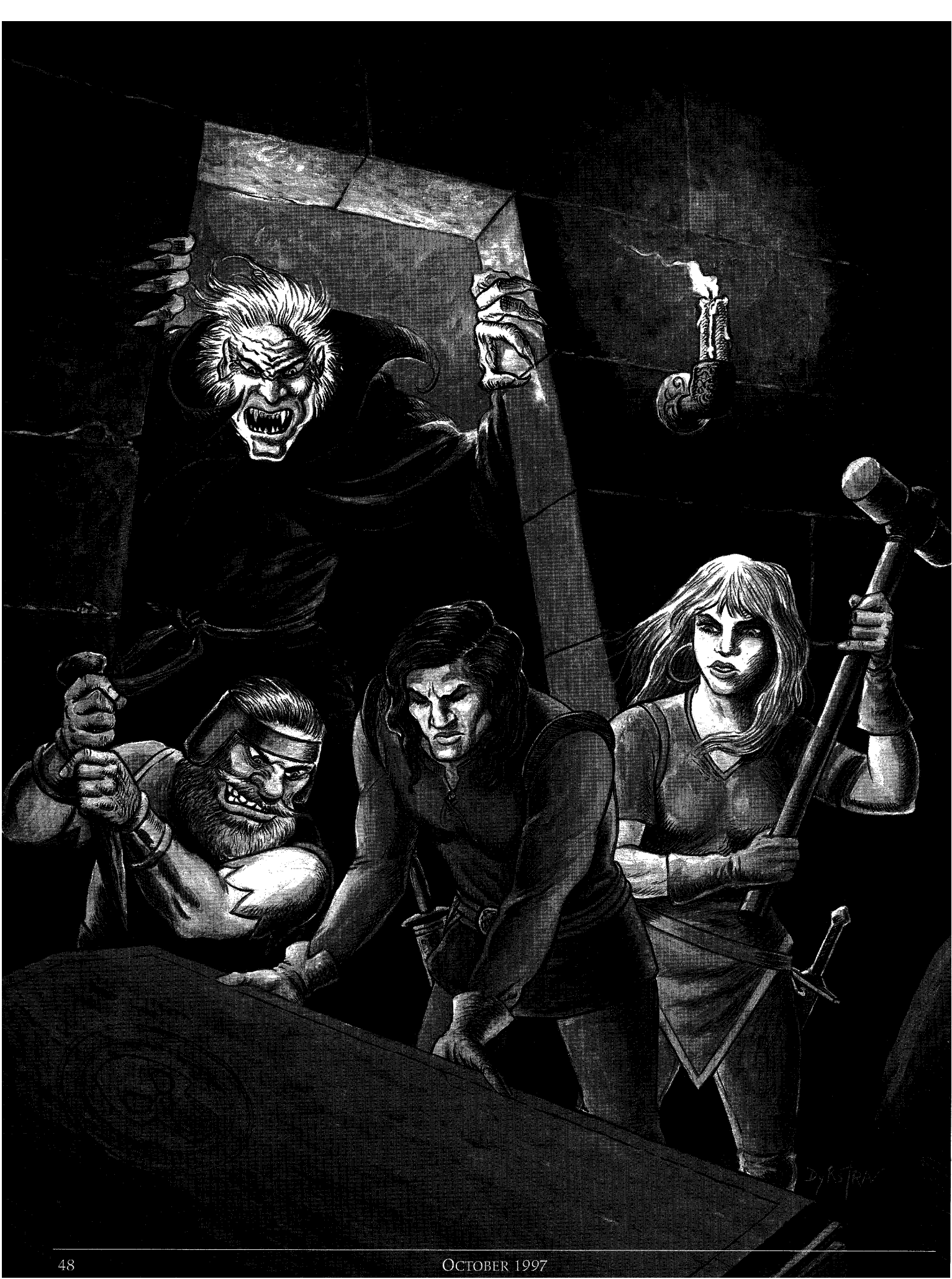
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Using the SAGA™ System in the RAVENLOFT® Setting

by Matthew L. Martin

illustrated by Terry Dykstra

Although the SAGA™ System was created for the new era of the DRAGONLANCE®: FIFTH AGE™ campaign setting, with a little work, it can be translated to any campaign world. Here is one such conversion, bringing the SAGA rules into the RAVENLOFT® setting. The mysterious Demiplane of Dread differs greatly from the war-torn realms of Krynn, and the changes necessary to fit the SAGA rules to the RAVENLOFT atmosphere are both subtle and startling. The conversion is worthwhile, because the SAGA System's emphasis on plot and character perfectly matches the mood and style of a RAVENLOFT campaign.

You need the SAGA System rules to make use of this article. A deck of Tarokka cards, available in the *Forbidden Lore* and Ravenloft Campaign Setting boxed sets, is also useful. Other RAVENLOFT and DRAGONLANCE supplements can be helpful but are not essential.

It's all in the Cards

You can use the standard FIFTH AGE deck in a RAVENLOFT SAGA game; if you want to use it, simply incorporate the changes made here for Reason and Spirit, and the new rules for magic and miscellaneous elements. The characters featured on the FIFTH AGE deck, however, belong to the history and legends of Kryn. The Tarokka deck of the Vistani is far better suited to the flavor of the Dark Domains. This mysterious deck of cards, found in the *Forbidden Lore* campaign expansion set or the RAVENLOFT Campaign Setting revised boxed set, is similar to the deck used in the FIFTH AGE game, but there are some differences to consider when using these cards with the SAGA rules.

The Tarokka deck contains five suits. The first four suits, collectively known as the Lesser Deck, are divided into two groups of two suits each. The **Mortal** cards are those of the **Swords** and **Coins** suits, which represent things of the material world and are tied to the Physical abilities of Physique and Coordination, respectively. The **Mystery** cards, encompassing the **Stars** and **Glyphs** suits and

representing things beyond the physical realm of being, correspond to the respective Mental abilities of Intellect and Essence.

Each suit in the Tarokka deck has an opposing suit, based on the nature of the archetypes. The two opposing pairs are Swords and Stars (physical might as opposed to magical power), and Coins and Glyphs (materialism vs. spirituality). These opposition suits come into play mostly during character creation (see the section on Ability Codes below), but they may also be relevant during play.

These four suits are treated as normal SAGA System cards for purposes of action resolution. Most exceptions are noted below, but if a conflict arises between the cards and the core SAGA rules, the Narrator should resolve it using the guidelines given here and in the SAGA rules.

The Lesser Deck's suits have nine numbered cards, just as the DRAGONLANCE cards, but the Tarokka cards also include a tenth card, referred to as the Master card. This card represents the basic archetype of the corresponding suit. Though not numbered, it has a value of 9.

The fifth suit is the suit of Crowns, also known as the High Deck. This suit, like the FIFTH AGE deck's Suit of Dragons, represents powers and forces beyond mortal knowledge. Though Crown cards show no numeric value, each has a value of 6 during character creation and in play. When a High Deck card is played for important actions, however, archetype-based resolution methods are better, since these cards are important symbols of the powers and concepts behind Ravenloft.

Character Creation

When building a SAGA System hero in the RAVENLOFT setting, the player should draw eight cards from the Tarokka and assign them to the hero's ability scores and other attributes. The rest of the process also differs somewhat from FIFTH AGE character generation.



Table 1: Tarokka Card Attributes

Swords			
Number	Description	Alignment	Nature/Demeanor
Master	The Warrior	None	Violent and Powerful
1	The Avenger	Chaotic Good	Courageous and Vengeful
2	The Paladin	Lawful Good	Pious and Honorable
3	The Soldier	Neutral Good	Motivated and Hopeful
4	The Mercenary	Lawful Neutral	Professional and Greedy
5	The Myrmidon	Neutral	Mysterious and Independent
6	The Berserker	Chaotic Neutral	Rash and Bloodthirsty
7	The Hooded Man	Neutral Evil	Commanding and Bigoted
8	The Dictator	Lawful Evil	Oppressive and Commanding
9	The Torturer	Chaotic Evil	Sadistic and Selfish
Coins			
Master	The Rogue	None	Enigmatic and Greedy
1	The Swashbuckler	Chaotic Good	Altruistic and Dramatic
2	The Philanthropist	Lawful Good	Generous and Prudent
3	The Trader	Neutral Good	Scrupulous and Precise
4	The Merchant	Lawful Neutral	Taciturn and Conniving
5	The Guildsman	Neutral	Cooperative and Prudent
6	The Beggar	Chaotic Neutral	Bitter and Careless
7	The Thief	Neutral Evil	Greedy and Cunning
8	The Tax Collector	Lawful Evil	Harsh and Corrupt
9	The Miser	Chaotic Evil	Greedy and Obsessive
Stars			
Master	The Wizard	None	Mystical and Rational
1	The Transmuter	Chaotic Good	Inquisitive and Aloof
2	The Diviner	Lawful Good	Helpful and Wise
3	The Enchanter	Neutral Good	Hopeful and Diligent
4	The Abjurer	Lawful Neutral	Careful and Methodical
5	The Elementalist	Neutral	Patient and Controlling
6	The Invoker	Chaotic Neutral	Rash and Inquisitive
7	The Illusionist	Neutral Evil	Deceptive and Manipulative
8	The Necromancer	Lawful Evil	Obsessive and Scheming
9	The Conjurer	Chaotic Evil	Arrogant and Power-Hungry
Glyphs			
Master	The Priest	None	Devout and Passionate
1	The Monk	Chaotic Good	Resourceful and Independent
2	The Missionary	Lawful Good	Fervent and Outspoken
3	The Healer	Neutral Good	Compassionate and Gentle
4	The Shepherd	Lawful Neutral	Loyal and Vigilant
5	The Druid	Neutral	Reclusive and Nature-Loving
6	The Anarchist	Chaotic Neutral	Frenzied and Pious
7	The Charlatan	Neutral Evil	Friendly and Deceitful
8	The Bishop	Lawful Evil	Controlling and Rigid
9	The Traitor	Chaotic Evil	Treacherous and Hateful
Crowns			
❖	The Artifact	Neutral	Arrogant and Materialistic
❖	The Beast	Chaotic Evil	Violent and Rash
❖	The Broken One	Neutral Evil	Emotionless and Melancholy
❖	The Darklord	Lawful Evil	Malevolent and Power-Hungry
❖	The Donjon	Lawful Evil	Rigid and Isolated
❖	The Esper	Neutral	Contemplative and Disciplined
❖	The Ghost	Neutral Evil	Nostalgic and Mysterious
❖	The Hangman	Lawful Neutral	Harsh and Inquisitive
❖	The Horseman	Chaotic Evil	Cruel and Destructive
❖	The Innocent	Lawful Good	Naive and Pure
❖	The Marionette	Lawful Evil	Meek and Submissive
❖	The Mists	Chaotic Neutral	Enigmatic and Unpredictable
❖	The Raven	Neutral Good	Wise and Benevolent
❖	The Tempress	Chaotic Evil	Seductive and Amoral

Reputation and Wealth

These two abilities remain the same. Characters are often more homogenous than usual in these two categories because of the presence of Crown cards. If the Narrator finds this factor disruptive, adjust these scores slightly. Players may also wish to change such scores to fit in with their character conception, with the Narrator's approval.

Nature and Demeanor

Nature or Demeanor descriptions do not appear on the Tarokka cards. For these elements, refer to **Table 1**, which lists the Tarokka cards' alignment, suit, and descriptive characteristics. This method is identical to that used in the original SAGA rules and is recommended for new players or for those who enjoy "playing what they are dealt."

The second option is to allow players to discard two cards from their hand and choose whatever cards from the list they consider appropriate to the hero. This works best for players with a strong character concept.

In either case, consider more than just the Nature and Demeanor listings when assigning cards. A card's alignment, suit, and general interpretation all help flesh out a character. Combining some of these various elements leads to a Nature or Demeanor customized to the hero.

Example: *The Necromancer (8 of Stars) has an alignment of Lawful Evil, is described as "Obsessive and Scheming," and represents obsession with unnatural powers, a use of natural gifts for supernatural or malevolent ends, and often a connection with the undead. It makes a good Nature card for Strahd von Zarovich, whose obsession with Tatyana, combined with his fear of death, led him to embrace the curse of vampirism. If the alignment is ignored and the "Obsessive" element is played up, the card also works well in representing a hero who spends his life studying undead in order to wipe their foul kind from the land. Similarly The Monk, the Chaotic Good card of the Suit of Glyphs with the attributes "Resourceful and Independent" works perfectly for a cloistered hermit in a lonely cave or a wandering pilgrim in search of enlightenment.*

Ability Scores

As stated above, heroes and characters in a RAVENLOFT SAGA game use only the four related ability categories from the core rules—Physique, Coordination, Intellect, and Essence. Narrators and players who wish to use all eight abilities may do so, but such a system will

prove redundant and complex, due to the limited number of suits and the resulting overlap in terms of trump cards and other bonuses.

Ability Codes

The assignment of ability codes under RAVENLOFT SAGA rules is more suit-specific than in a DRAGONLANCE game. If a card from the suit corresponding to the ability is used, then just as in the core SAGA rules, the hero has an ability code of A. If the card comes from the other half of the card group (any Mortal card for either of the Physical abilities, or any Mystery card for the two Mental abilities), the code is a B. Cards from the other group that are not part of the suit opposing the ability grant ability codes of C, while those cards that are part of the opposing suit give codes of D. If a hero assigns a Crown card to any ability, the ability has a code of X.

The definitions of each code value are also changed slightly. For the Physical abilities, each code encompasses the two codes in the original SAGA rules. Thus, a hero with an A code in Physique can use any melee weapon and wear any type of armor, while a hero who has a D in Coordination can only use light or very light missile weapons and shields. Mental abilities function under an "either/or" system. For all Intellect and Essence codes up through and including C, the hero suffers the negative effects of a low code in one of the two abilities chosen by the player. Codes of A or B, require the hero to pick one benefit from the two codes contained in the new ability. Additionally, an A code allows the hero to split the code, gaining the B benefits from both such codes. Heroes who choose magical powers receive three schools or spheres with a B code or its equivalent under a split A code, and those with A codes have access to five groups of magic. For example, a character with an A code in Essence could choose to have great leadership abilities, five spheres of miracles, or both good leadership skills and three spheres.

Character Races

For the most part, Ravenloft's native heroes are humans who follow the description of the civilized humans in the FIFTH AGE rulebook. The description of barbaric humans suits heroes with a rural background, or nomadic groups like the Abber nomads that wander the Nightmare Lands. The Narrator can decide whether to allow a human character to increase a chosen ability by 1

point, as stated under the core SAGA rules for humans.

Elves, dwarves, and half-elves are easily converted, and gnomes can be treated as tinker or thinker gnomes, depending on the desires of the Narrator and the player.

The only major race in Ravenloft that is not present on Krynn is halfling. This problem is easily fixed, for while role-playing a halfling is vastly different from playing a kender, the mechanics for kender work well for halflings.

Event Resolution

The event resolution rules for RAVENLOFT SAGA campaigns are almost identical to those used in the core SAGA rules, but the Tarokka deck introduces a few new wrinkles into the mechanics.

Card Auras

Like the FIFTH AGE cards, the Tarokka cards are aligned with Good, Neutrality, or Evil. The cards in the Tarokka deck are split along these lines in the same fashion as those in the FIFTH AGE deck. Cards with values of 1, 2 and 3 are good, while the neutral cards cover values 4, 5, and 6, and the 7, 8, and 9 cards represent darkness and evil. However, the Tarokka cards include a second axis of Law, Neutrality, or Chaos. Cards with values of 2, 4, and 8 are considered lawful, while chaos favors those cards with values of 1, 6, and 9, and the 3, 5, and 7 cards are neutral regarding those two forces. These two elements combine to give most cards auras corresponding to one of the nine alignments of the AD&D® game. Full alignments for all cards appear on Table 1, including suggested alignments for the High Deck cards.

If an action is better characterized along the lines of law and chaos, that side of the card's alignment should be read instead of the good or evil aspect. In addition, the Law and Chaos elements can be used to add to a traditional alignment reading. Lawful cards indicate that an event affects the entire group of heroes, while Chaotic cards mean that only a single hero is affected, and Neutral cards limit things to part of the group.

A special note must be made regarding Master cards and the cards of the High Deck. The Master cards have no alignment; their aura is assumed to be identical to the suit, encompassing all elements of the suit's ability and archetype. If such a card comes up during an aura reading, the Narrator should consider the typical influence of the suit on

the situation. If the Master of Swords (the Warrior) were to come up when reading for a character's reaction, a violent or hostile response might be called for, while the Master of Stars (The Wizard) might indicate a more curious, intellectual, or mysterious reaction.

The Crown cards, meanwhile, have no explicit alignment, so **Table 1** gives a suggested alignment for each card. The power of these cards derives primarily from the symbols they use and the forces they represent, so add an archetype-based element to the reading if possible.

Example 1: *A hero tries to raise a mob of peasants for a revolt against a baron. The Narrator asks for an action, and the hero plays the One of Swords (the Avenger). However, the Narrator is looking primarily at the aura of the card. While the card's value is low, its alignment is Chaotic Good, and raising a revolutionary mob is a chaotic action. Therefore, while the action total is low, the aura matches the action, and the hero finds himself leading a group of farmers and merchants against the corrupt nobleman.*

Example 2: *A group of heroes spends the night at Castle Ravenloft, "guests" of Count Strahd von Zarovich. To determine what happens during the night, the Narrator draws a card from the Tarokka deck. The card comes up a 1 (Chaotic Good), and the Narrator decides that one of the heroes suffers from insomnia and notices a mysterious whitefigure out of his window late at night. If the card had been a 2 (Lawful Good), the whole group may have been awakened by howling wolves in time to notice the shape. An 8 (Lawful Evil) might mean that a vampire slave drained a slight, almost imperceptible amount of blood from each hero, while a 7 (Neutral Evil) would mean that she supped on only two or three of the heroes. If The Temptress is drawn, the results would match a Chaotic Evil draw, but considering the archetype, the vampire might awaken the hero and try to charm him into submission.*

Trumps and Mishaps

The reduction of suits in the Tarokka deck causes some difficulties for trump card rules. Using the FIFTH AGE deck, any card has a 1-in-9 chance of being a trump or mishap card. However, if suits are the only element taken into account when using trump or mishap rules with the Tarokka deck, the situation changes remarkably. Any given card has approximately a 2-in-11 chance of being trump for an action, while nearly 25% of the cards will carry the risk of a mishap.

Unaltered, spectacular successes and drastic failures become the norm, which

Table 2: Extended Spell Duration

This table provides the spell point cost and difficulty modifiers for creating spells with a duration beyond those given in the core SAGA rules.

Duration	Difficulty
Instant	1
1 minute	2
15 minutes	3
30 minutes	4
1 hour	5
4 hours	6
8 hours	7
1 day	8
3 days	9
1 week	10
2 weeks	11
1 month	12
3 months	13
6 months	14
1 year	15
Permanent*	20

* When weaving a permanent spell, a non-magical escape clause must be included that will, if triggered, negate the spell.

does not suit Ravenloft's mood at all. To balance the scales, only cards with the values 1-5 and the Master card of the suit should be considered trump. The Master's trump bonus derives from its intense tie to the suit's archetype, while the other cards receive the trump bonus due to their alignment-cards of Lawful, Good or Neutral auras represent character types that are more selfless and cooperative than the characters represented by Chaotic or Evil cards. For mishaps, use The Darklord, The Temptress, The Horseman, The Beast, The Marionette, and The Donjon, six of the darkest and most sinister cards in the suit.

Magic in the Mists

Ravenloft's magic is quite different from that of the Fifth Age of Krynn, reflecting different sources of power. While Krynnish magic is now primal and elemental, the spells of Ravenloft are subtle and indirect. Conjuring balls of fire or walls of stone is uncommon; magic tends to be more along the lines of laying and lifting curses, controlling thoughts or dreams, and conjuring or banishing fiends and undead.

Due to these differences and the nature of the setting, Ravenloft's spellcasters use schools and spheres that differ considerably from those used by the

sorcerers and mystics of Krynn, and they can learn more such fields of magic. Similarly, they are not constrained by the duration limits currently imposed on Krynnish spellcasters; Table 2 provides the details. Note that all permanent spells have an escape clause that allows the spell to be negated through a simple, non-magical action, such as being kissed by a princess, confessing one's sins, carrying a rose beneath a cursed archway, or the like.

Magic in Ravenloft is divided into two fields. Wizardry is the art developed through study of arcane lore and forgotten tomes, and closely mirrors Krynnish sorcery, although it's much broader than that art. Miracles resemble mysticism to a degree, and those who use them claim that their powers are granted by divine beings, although in Ravenloft the truth is unknown and perhaps best left that way. The schools of wizardry are tied to the Intellect ability, while priests, druids, and other miracle users receive power based on their Essence scores.

Wizardry

Wizardry is divided into nine schools, one for each card in the suit of Stars, excluding the Master card (The Wizard). These nine schools are identical to the AD&D schools of wizardry. The school of elementalism is detailed in the *Tome of Magic*, while the other eight are covered in the *Player's Handbook (PHB)*. Brief descriptions of the nine schools are provided here for convenience.

Abjuration: This school deals in protection from physical, mental, and magical dangers. It specializes in creating barriers, driving away threats, and disrupting magical effects, as well as banishing summoned or enchanted creatures. Although it offers no protection against the powers of the land, it proves very useful when facing the horrors that walk the Realm of Terror.

Alteration: This school deals with transforming objects or beings into something else. The difficulty of the spell depends on the degree of the transformation. Changing silver into gold is only a slight challenge, while transforming lead into gold is much more difficult, and turning water to gold is all but impossible. This school can be used to turn a human into a goblin, or to force a doppelganger into shifting shape. In addition, this school can be used to grant extra benefits or hindrances to heroes, characters or items. Note that this school covers only physical changes, and a wizard needs the

school of Enchantment to twist and reshape the mind.

Conjuration: This school is used for magically transporting an item or being across great distances, ranging from summoning a sword from across the room to conjuring a fiend from the Lower Planes. Note that this school can bring things from other worlds into Ravenloft, but it is not useable for escape. Any creature that is called by a conjuration spell but does not wish to come can use their Intellect score to resist the magic. Also, though this sphere can cross many barriers, it cannot breach the wall between life and death, so resurrection and undead creation are beyond the limits of this school.

When summoning matter or items, this school can often overlap with the school of Invocation, so restrictions must be made regarding the specific uses of the two schools. When casting a conjuration spell, the spellcaster must either specify the exact item being conjured or risk a "blind" summoning. Summoning creatures should be handled in the same way; the conjurer must either speak the true name of the desired creature or be forced to pull a random being from the targeted realm into his presence. The latter attempts are very dangerous, for the Mists are rarely kind in choosing what to let through the gates opened by this school.

Divination: This school of magic is used for revealing information. A hero using this school can read minds, view distant lands, detect magic, or uncover long-forgotten lore. Ravenloft masks all attempts to discover evil or to glimpse the future, though, and divination spells of all types usually go awry when the caster attempts to pierce sealed domain borders or to see through the Mists.

Elementalism: An elemental is capable of manipulating the elements of Air, Earth, Fire, and Water in a fashion similar to the elemental schools of the core SAGA rules, creating, detecting, moving, reshaping, or destroying them at will. This may appear to grant this school more flexibility than its counterparts, but the elements are usually rather blunt and obvious. In addition, there will come times when no pure elements are useful or even available for casting, and unlike the DRAGONLANCE schools, this school cannot affect "quasi-elements" such as lightning, ice, or metal.

Enchantment: This is the school of the mind. Enchanters are capable of reshaping emotions, reading thoughts,



and even creating or destroying memories. The minds of some creatures are immune to this school, though, and in other cases, enchanters wish that they never crossed the mental threshold of Ravenloft's darkest horrors.

Illusion: While enchanters affect the mind, illusionists deal in fooling the senses, causing people to see or hear things that do not really exist. The power of belief allows an illusionist spells to cause illusory effects, sometimes even wounding their victims. While illusion magic is often detected due to the absence of details that mark a thing as real, in some cases, the illusionist is so skilled that even the wisest and most intelligent have difficulty telling where the illusion ends and reality takes over.

Invocation: One of the most raw and powerful schools of magic, Invocation deals with the creation of raw matter or energy. This school can create potent effects, but the objects or forces that it brings into being are raw and unshaped. Alteration magic will be useful for invokers who wish to shape their created materials into more sophisticated objects or forces.

Necromancy: The darkest school of wizardry, this foul art blurs the borders between life and death. Necromancers channel negative energy to drain life or abilities, and can raise the dead in a pale mockery of life. Creating undead is a strenuous task, and it becomes even more difficult if the necromancer desires to create a powerful creature. All undead-creating magic is treated as resisted magic, with the resistance value the total of the creation's intended Physique and Essence scores.

Miracles

Like wizardry, miracles are divided into one sphere for each card in the suit of Glyphs, corresponding to the varying natures and duties of Ravenloft's clergy. However, these spheres do not match up with the priestly spheres of the AD&D game. Therefore, in addition to the brief descriptions, a brief list of possible spell effects has been included for each sphere. Many of these are priest spells from the *PHB*, while others are wizard spells, psionic abilities, or similar powers. In all cases, these are examples of what the sphere can do, and do not represent the only possibilities available to a priest:

Sphere of the Priest: This sphere covers basic priestly duties, such as blessings, confession, creation and divination magic, and the like. Any spell that deals with spiritual matters, or that covers what could be considered the essential duties of a priest, falls under the auspices of this sphere. This sphere is recommended for all priests. Sample Spells: *bless, atonement, light, create food and water, detect magic, true seeing, commune.*

Sphere of the Monk: The monastic emphasis on physical and spiritual discipline allows characters using this sphere to increase their abilities. Like the mystic spheres of channeling and meditation in the core SAGA rules, one spell must be used for each specific ability or effect. The effects of this sphere are not limited to the monk but can be used on any character. This sphere can also increase skills other than the four basic abilities, such as a hero's resistance to magic or the damage that a character inflicts in combat. Sample Spells: *increase strength, increase speed, magic resistance.*

Sphere of the Missionary: This sphere represents the missionary, the crusader, and all priests who would use their power to strike against evil.

Although no spell in Ravenloft can detect malicious intent, these spells allow the user to dispel "evil" magic and strike down the undead, fiends, and similar monstrosities. Like the Sphere of the Priest, the definition of evil depends upon the caster's religion. Sample Spells: *dispel magic, remove curse, dispel evil, holy word.*

Sphere of the Healer: Wielders of this sphere are masters of healing wounds, diseases, and similar afflictions. The most powerful magic of this sphere can undo supernatural afflictions such as the rotting touch of the mummy or the vile disease of lycanthropy. A few of the most powerful healers may, at grave risk and the Narrator's discretion, be able to raise the dead. Sample Spells: *cure wounds, cure disease, neutralize poison, restoration, regeneration, raise dead.*

Sphere of the Shepherd: While the Missionary takes an active role in the fight against evil, those who wield the Sphere of the Shepherd are more passive, choosing to defend themselves and their flock from danger. The spells of this sphere are capable of granting physical, magical, and spiritual defense to the priest or those under his protection. Sample Spells: *Protection from evil, remove fear shield, anti-magic shell, binding.*

Sphere of the Druid: Plants, animals, weather, sunlight, and the elements themselves fall under the dominion of druidic spellcasters. This sphere is not as offensive or blatantly powerful as the wizardry school of elementalism, but druids are more flexible and inclined to work with nature, rather than to dominate it. Sample Spells: *charm mammal, sticks to snakes, sunray, flame blade, lower water, commune with nature.*

Sphere of the Anarchist: Clerics of anarchy value chaos and instability. This sphere deals with transformation and instability, and while it can be used for creation, it more often finds expression in destruction, as the spells of an anarchist can break down any ordered thing, such as a buildings foundation, a sane mind, or even the boundaries between the worlds. Many anarchist spells are unpredictable. The caster can specify the intensity and the general nature of the effect, but the specifics of the spell are often random or determined by the Narrator. Sample Spells: *earthquake, confusion, polymorph, transmutation, disintegrate, gate.*

Sphere of the Charlatan: Those who wield this sphere specialize in deceit and espionage, gathering information and sowing mistrust. This sphere also mimics

other spells—the charlatan pays spell points for duration, range, and the like, but pays for only one point of effect. This school can mimic any school or sphere, even those that the charlatan is unable to use, but only those spells that directly affect intelligent beings. The spell looks and feels real, but the effects are phantasmal and transitory—a fact that is revealed when the spell's duration expires. A hero "healed" of a 1-card wound by a charlatan feels no pain, and the wound appears healed, but the hero falls unconscious with one card left in the player's hand. Similarly, someone who believes he has been enchanted but has been affected by a spell of this sphere feels powerless to resist the caster's will, but could actually shake off the orders with no effort. Sample Spells: *change self charm person, undetectable lie, suggestion, mind read.*

Sphere of the Bishop: This is the sphere of those who demand order and loyalty. While sometimes used by good and noble priests, it is more often the trademark sphere of the inquisitor and others who value blind and unquestioning obedience above all else. This sphere can allow a caster to protect himself or his allies from other magical controls, or to keep them from succumbing to temptation, but it is also useful to force fanatical loyalty and punish 'disobedience'. It also includes necromantic affects, for in the view of this sphere, the bishop's dominion covers the living and the dead alike. Sample Spells: *mind read, hold person, suggestion, domination, inflict pain, animate dead, control undead.*

Sphere of the Traitor: The most vile and hated of all Ravenloft's miraculous spheres, evil priests use the sphere of the Traitor to undo all that their benevolent brethren have worked to create. This sphere is associated with many forms of wrongdoing, ranging from simple wounds and diseases to curses or insanity. This sphere also allows evil priests to conjure fiends into Ravenloft, for such an action is one of the worst betrayals that a cleric can ever commit against humanity. Sample Spells: *cause wounds, cause disease, poison, curse, suggestion, mindshatter, summon fiend.*

Stuff of Shadows: Miscellaneous Elements of Ravenloft & the SAGA System

A few other game elements are commonplace in Ravenloft but are not covered in the FIFTH AGE rulebook

Fear, Horror, and Madness

Ideally, these events should be handled by roleplaying. However, if the Narrator must deal with players whose heroes refuse to react appropriately to horrifying situations, he may call for an Essence action (usually of average or challenging difficulty). Typical situations that call for a fear check include a confrontation with a being of incredible power, while horror checks are used in the face of atrocities or violations of the natural order, such as an encounter with undead creatures or dark magic. Madness checks work for mental probes of the foulest creatures, or other cases where the victim is forced to come face to face with pure evil or chaos on a mental or spiritual level. Failure causes one of the results listed in the Ravenloft rules, while a mishap may cause two or more penalties, or even a result typically associated with the next level of danger.

Ravenloft Powers Checks

Only passionate evil or dark magic attracts the attention of the mysterious forces that control Ravenloft. Accidents that have evil effects are ignored, as are most "gray areas," such as white lies or justifiable killings.

If the Narrator feels that a powers check is necessary, he or she should decide on a card appropriate to the action. Many of the evil-aligned cards work well, as do several of the cards from the High Deck. The Darklord makes a good default card. Lesser Deck cards can be chosen based on their alignments and descriptions, and some guidelines for using the High Deck are given in the sidebar **Crown Cards and Powers Checks**. After deciding, the Narrator should draw 1-5 cards from the deck, based on the severity of the action. Narrators with access to the "Oaths of Evil" book of the *Forbidden Lore* expansion or the *Realm of Terror* book in the *Ravenloft Campaign Setting* can use the table for powers checks provided in those supplements, drawing one card for every 2% chance of failure. If these products are not available for reference, then the following guidelines work appropriately. One card is sufficient for acts that only cause minor harm to others, such as spreading malicious rumors or beating a peasant. Two or three cards should be drawn for cases like stealing everything a poor family owns, setting up a friend to be imprisoned or flogged for the hero's own crimes, or breaking a

minor vow. Four and five-card draws should be used for the most foul acts, where the hero causes severe harm and suffering to innocents or friends, or betraying all that he believes in for selfish gain. The Acts of Ultimate Darkness may require up to 10 or 20 draws for a given act, or the Narrator may skip the draw and assign the results of failure. For spellcasting, draw one card for every 5 spell points used. If any one of the cards drawn matches the card selected by the Narrator, the hero has failed a powers check and suffers the appropriate results.

Example 1: *A cabal approaches a clerical hero for permission to use the shrine under his protection for a fiend-summoning ritual. Although this is a severe violation of his orders principles, the cabals promises of gold and magic convince the priest to leave the shrine unlocked that night. Such a blatant dereliction of duty is cause for a powers check. The Narrator decides that the Nine of Glyphs (The Traitor) is the most appropriate for this failing, then draws three cards from the Tarokka deck. The Nine of Glyphs turns up as the second card. The Narrator decides that the priest, who has not failed any previous powers checks, cannot detect any magic cast in his presence. Unfortunately for our young cleric, all holy symbols he carries become dull and tarnished in the space of a few days, and any vestments he wears fade to an unsettling shade of gray.*

Example 2: *A wizard hero has been studying the school of Enchantment and recently bound half a dozen townfolk to his will. While this act by itself was too "gray" to excite a powers check, the situation changed when the enchanter began tormenting his victims "to test the limits of the spell." For most magic-related powers checks, the appropriate card is usually the card of the school or sphere; in this case, that would be The Three of Stars (The Enchanter). Looking over the sidebar on Crown cards, though, the Narrator decides that since this is a crime of manipulation, The Marionette is most fitting. The spell cost 22 spell points, so five cards are drawn. Luckily for the wizard, none of the cards matches the chosen card. Even passed powers checks have their consequences, though, so that night the wizard dreams of being a marionette himself; with a truly wicked puppeteer pulling the strings.*

Turning Undead

Heroes of pure heart and passionate spirit may be able to repel the undead of Ravenloft through use of a holy object. The difficulty of such an action is based on the hero's faith. Characters who have chosen a good religion and who follow

Crown Cards and Powers Checks

While the alignment and descriptions of the cards of the Lesser Deck make it simple to determine which of them to use in Powers Checks, the High Deck is more enigmatic. Here is a list of the crimes that each Crown card would fit:

The Artifact: Theft of valued objects, often those necessary to survive or to complete an important act.

The Beast: Acts born of passion and anger, usually connected to a hero's 'bestial side.'

The Broken One: Sins causing heart-break or mental anguish.

The Darklord: Sins committed in the quest for power, especially power of an evil nature.

The Donjon: Harsh imprisonment or forced isolation, ranging from knowingly keeping an innocent man in prison for 40 years to a father who refuses to let his daughter marry.

The Esper: Intentionally causing insanity or psychological trauma, such

it in almost all cases despite travail must succeed at a challenging Essence action, while those who merely hold to such a faith's teachings fairly often find such an action daunting. For atheists and those who simply pay lip service to the faith, meanwhile, the action is impossible. The undead creature uses its Essence score to resist a turning attempt, and the action's difficulty increases by one step for those without a physical holy symbol focusing their faith (daunting for true believers, desperate for those of average faith, and impossible for unbelievers).

The Red Death and Saga Rules

The SAGA rules also work well in the shadowed realms of Gothic Earth. The guidelines given here suffice for most changes, but firearms and magic deserve special mention.

To convert guns from *Masque of the Red Death* to SAGA System, calculate the damage by taking the minimum and maximum possible damage (assuming no rerolls) for a given gun under AD&D rules and adding them together. This yields high damage figures, reflecting the danger of firearms, but remember that no ability scores are added to this damage. A weapon's weight category can be found by taking its AD&D size category, moving the smallest weapons into very light and the largest into very heavy, and convert-

as the experiments of the vampire 'psychiatrist' Dr. Dominiani.

The Ghost: Dredging up secrets or knowledge from a character's past for injury or blackmail, or acting on wrongs that should be long forgotten.

The Hangman: Making false accusations or otherwise tampering with the machinery of justice (as opposed to law, which can be altogether different in Ravenloft).

The Horseman: Acts of malicious destruction, usually committed in cold blood (The Beast should be used for more passionate crimes).

The Innocent: Any act intended to destroy kindness or innocence.

The Marionette: Manipulating and controlling a character through evil means or for dark ends.

The Mists: Abduction or kidnapping.

The Raven: Spreading false wisdom or silencing sources of wisdom, truth, and vital knowledge.

The Temptress: Convincing another person to evil for pleasure, riches, or other gains.

ing the rest over directly. For example, a derringer is a very light weapon and inflicts 7 points of damage, while a shotgun, a medium weapon, causes 21 points.

Spellcasting rules change slightly to suit the low-magic environs of Gothic Earth. First of all, spellcasting codes for Mental abilities fall back to their original Saga versions—A B code grants access to one school or sphere, while someone with an A code is capable of mastering three fields of magic. In addition, casting time costs are increased by one—it costs 6 points to cast a spell instantly, while an hour-long ritual adds 2 points to the spell's cost and difficulty. Finally, *all* spellcasting in the *Masque* campaign setting requires a Powers Check. To speed play, wait until the end of the session, then choose the check card and draw one card for every 10 spell points used by a hero during the game. Spells used for evil or selfish purposes should be checked both during the game and in the post-game "point pool."



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by Monte Cook

illustrated by Michael Sutfin

Deep in the void that is the Astral Plane, beyond the outer githyanki fortress-cities, deeper than the psurlon strongholds, and more distant than the secret berbalang covens, there lie the dead gods. These massive beings are often called “husks,” because that is really all they are: mere shells of their former selves.

When one refers to a dead god of the Astral, what’s really meant is the god’s corpse—or as near as a power can come to having a corpse. When a god dies—as rare event as that is—its power fades away. All that is left of it is the idea of its existence. Each power has a focus, like war, nature, famine, or motherhood. This focus or idea becomes the remainder of its essence, which then appears on the Astral Plane, a place where all thoughts, emotions, and ideas eventually end up.

On the Astral, the power’s essence takes the form of a large mass of rock—or a rock-like substance. The mass (or, as it’s sometimes called, the “rocky island”) vaguely resembles the most commonly perceived appearance of the power. Powers can take many shapes and have no true bodies as such, but almost all have an appearance that their worshippers can relate to and depict in art. This is the appearance that the rocky island takes. The features are usually so indistinct, however, that only extremely close examination, including entering the memory aura (see below), can identify the power.

The following information is useful in creating continuing adventures after playing through *Dead Gods*, a mammoth PLANESCAPE® adventure out this month. *Dead Gods* isn’t necessary to use the information in this article, but the two complement each other well.

Traveling to the Astral Plane

Adventurers who wish to travel to the Astral Plane to explore the dead gods have a number of options. The first and most obvious is the *astral spell*. Both wizards and priests can cast this spell, which allows an entire group of characters to travel into the Astral Plane. DMs are encouraged to read through that spell carefully to be aware of the requirements and restrictions that it places upon the travelers and what they can bring with them.

One interesting note about the *astral spell* is the phenomenon of the silver cord. When the spell is cast, those affected by it gain astral bodies that leave their normal, physical bodies. The silver cord is a magical link that ties the two bodies together. It is visible only on the Astral Plane, and even there it is difficult to see, as it extends away like a wispy tether from the astral-traveler and fades from view after only 10-20 feet.

But the *astral spell* is a high-level spell, probably not accessible to most adventurers unless they have a powerful wizard or priest as an ally. An alternative mode of transportation accessible to anyone is a planar portal. These magical doorways lead from plane to plane and can be found leading to the Astral Plane. The portal's advantage over the *astral spell* is not just its ease of use but also that there are no restrictions as to what sorts of equipment the travelers can take with them. The drawback is that portals are difficult to find, and the key that activates them must then also be found (see the PLANESCAPE campaign setting, *Planewalker's Handbook*, or "A Handful of Keys" in *DRAGON Magazine Annual #1* for more information about portals).

Lastly, a number of magical items, including the *cubic gate*, the *amulet of the planes*, and a *staff of the magi*, can potentially bring a group of PCs to the Astral Plane.

Anubis

Before a blood's going to talk about poking around the corpses of dead gods, he's got to think about the dangers. One of the greatest potential dangers is the Guardian of the Dead Gods, a being that was once a power itself. Its name was Anubis.

Anubis was a power belonging to the Egyptian pantheon. Then *he* was a power devoted to escorting the spirits of dead mortals to their final rest. Now *it* watches over dead powers. Why the change? Good question.

Fact is, no one knows the dark of the tale, or at least not all of it. One version says that another power named Osirus took over Anubis' portfolio as the warden of the dead, and that Anubis began to die. As he faded into the Astral Plane, something—either the living gods afraid of what happens when they die, or the already dead powers, aware of his intrusion on some level and needing assistance-empowered him and charged him with the protection of the fallen gods. Another tale says that Anubis took the

duty upon himself willingly, after spending much time in the Astral and seeing the desecration of the corpses.

No matter what the reason, however, Anubis has become something wholly different. No longer a power but certainly not a mortal, the Guardian of the Dead Gods is a mysterious being unique in the multiverse. Chant is, it sits upon a huge throne among the god-isles and records the events that occur on or to the dead gods.

Now, as Guardian of the Dead Gods, Anubis watches over its charges and keeps them from being harmed, exploited or desecrated. 'Course, it's possible that its duty is much more than that. Perhaps it's something to do with the nature of divine power and its eternal rest on the Astral Plane. More than likely, such things are far beyond the grasp of mortal minds. For example, the githyanki build fortresses on the dead god corpses, and most of the time the Guardian doesn't seem to care. At other times, even touching a particular corpse at a particular time draws its ire.

In any event, the presence of the Guardian of the Dead Gods is not one that an explorer can overlook. There's always a chance that a basher's activities conflict with the Guardian's mysterious motives. What the Guardian allows and what disturbs it isn't always clear. If an explorer does run afoul of the Guardian, most likely its through its proxy, Betita Khab (see sidebar). Otherwise, it means a direct confrontation with the former power—a situation so dangerous that a basher's only hope is fast talking and luck. Needless to say, the Guardian cannot be harmed by mortal attacks and can destroy with a thought.

If such dire circumstances occur, assume that Anubis can destroy one character each round (generous DMs will allow a PC a saving throw vs. death at -6). Canny bashers'll try to escape, in which case the Guardian will most likely (80% of the time) allow the offenders to go. Its duty is to defend and guard, not to chase intruders down. Should it follow, the Guardian of the Dead Gods can travel anywhere in the Astral in the space of one round. It never leaves the Astral Plane.

Luckily, the Guardian ignores mortals most (95%) of the time, unless they attempt to do something particularly heinous, such as completely destroying the body of a dead god or something equally foolish—in which case Anubis's intervention is almost guaranteed.

Betita Khab

Proxy of the Guardian of the Dead Gods

Anubis has no more specialty priests. It is thought that those few still worshipping him draw their power from Anubis's old pantheon or some how from the dead gods themselves. In any event, they are clerics, not specialty priests. The Guardian of the Dead Gods also does not have an avatar. It is what it is—but its still far beyond any power measurable by mortals.

The only real vestige of Anubis's former divine status is its proxy. Betita Khab served Anubis while it was still part of the Egyptian Pantheon, and he serves it in its new role as well. Betita monitors the god-isles and those that live on or around them. All he observes he reports to his master. Occasionally, he is sent on a specific mission to observe or even to intervene. When someone commits an act on a dead god that the Guardian judges as improper, Betita is often sent to deal with the offender.

Betita is known to the githyanki, and he has their respect. Despite their differences in alignment, they will not harm or cross him.

Betita Khab, human male, M14: AC 5 (Dexterity and ring); MV 12; hp 31; THAC0 16 (13 with staff); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+3 (staff of striking); MR 30%; SZ M (6'3" tall); ML Fearless (20); AL LG.

Notes: Betita's magic resistance is a gift from Anubis.

S 14, D 17, C 13, I 18, W 16, Ch 15.

Personality: Noble and just but severe

Special Equipment: *Staff of striking* (22 charges), *ring of protection +2*, *ring of chameleon power*, *gem of insight*, *robe of eyes*

Spells (5/5/5/4/4/2/1): *alarm*, *color spray*, *comprehend languages*, *magic missile*, *shield*; *blur*, *detect evil*, *ESP*, *know alignment*, *strength*; *dispel magic*, *fireball*, *hold person*, *nondetection*, *suggestion*; *emotion*, *fire shield*, *polymorph self* *wall of fire*; *feeblemind*, *dismissal*, *telekinesis*, *wall of force*; *chain lightning*, *true seeing*; *spell turning*.

Conditions on a God Isle

Most folks call the corpses of dead gods god isles. Though "space" is a difficult concept to cope with in the Astral Plane, most of the god isles are fairly close together, and sometimes an explorer can just see one or two while

standing on a third. Most of the time, however, they're not quite that close together.

These rocky husks are generally 1d100 × 50 feet long and about a quarter that distance wide. Further, each god isle has an area of influence of about one-tenth of the length surrounding it. Within this area, the unique conditions of the individual god, as opposed to those of the Astral Plane, hold sway.

Some conditions within this area can be very strange, yet others can be tantalizingly familiar. Unlike most areas in the Astral Plane, many (40%) of the god isles have local gravity. Gravity is usually focused at the dead god's center, so a basher can walk around all sides of the isle as if it were a tiny planet all to itself. Rarely (10%), though, the gravity works on only one side of the god, with a body "falling off" if he goes over the edge.

Another aspect distinguishing the god isles from the rest of the Astral is that a few (5%) have a field around them in which time passes normally. Some (10%) have other unique conditions:

1d100	Result
01-30	Extremely hot (50%) or Extremely cold (50%)
31-40	Surface obscured by cloud cover
41-45	Surrounded by clouds of poisonous gas
46-55	Terrestrial-like storms (rain, snow, etc.) move over the surface
56-60	<i>Reverse gravity</i> field forces objects away from the surface
61-70	One school of magic is useless
71-73	All magic is useless
74-75	Psionics are useless
76-77	Magical items lose all power (30% chance of permanent loss)
78-80	Time flows twice as quickly (50%) or time flows twice as slowly (50%)
81-83	One material (wood, metal, cloth, etc.) is 100 times as heavy as normal
84-85	Certain actions DM's choice, based on the nature of the god) are impossible or result in a 6d6 electrical attack (no save)
86-87	Newcomers are immediately <i>teleported</i> to a specific area
88-89	Characters of a specific alignment are <i>teleported</i> to another spot on Astral

90-91	Surrounded by impenetrable, permanent <i>darkness</i>
92-93	One school of magic is twice as potent as usual with respect to range, duration, area of effect, and damage
94-95	Random monsters are generated from the dead god's flesh
96-97	Roll again twice ignoring results above 95
98-99	Roll again three times ignoring results above 95
00	DM's Option

Exploring a Dead God

Aside from the guardian, there are other hazards to exploring the dead gods. Still there are those who do it-for there are surprisingly large rewards to be found.

Since the husks are the bodies of fallen powers, energy, matter, and even living things on or around them are of a sort unlike those found anywhere else in the multiverse. Some are valuable; others are downright deadly.

When determining what can be found when a dead god is explored, use the following table. The DM should make 1d4 rolls for any particular god isle.

Dead God Encounter Table

1d100	Result
01-65	Nothing
66-75	Githyanki party (2d8 individuals)
76-80	Githyanki fortress (10d10 × 5 individuals)
81-89	Planar explorers/adventurers (1d12 individuals)
90-93	Other Astral creature (DM's option—see <i>Guide to the Astral Plane</i> or choose)
94-95	Mysterious energy field
96-97	Mysterious mineral
98	Mysterious plant
99	Mysterious liquid
00	Godquake

Mysterious Energy Fields

Many dead gods radiate mental or physical energies unknown anywhere else. These energies often play over the god-isle in waves or flashes. Other times, they exist as steady, limited-radius fields.

One such energy field that most dead gods exhibit is that of the memory aura. These are residual memories that were possessed by the power. Some are inconsequential and meaningless, while others reveal a great deal of informa-

tion. As these events vary from power to power, the DM is left to determine the exact affects of these auras. Most simply bestow some of the god's memories to anyone coming near, but others take on a more tangible effects—even so much as conjuring up physical representations of people, monsters, places, and events from the deity's past.

Energy fields vary in size. Some (10%) surround the entire corpse to a distance of 10d10 × 5', while others (80%) exist in a 10d10' radius somewhere on the body. The remainder pass over the body as waves of energy, moving at a rate of 1d100' per round.

The duration of the fields can also vary. A few are only microseconds in duration (10%), while others (85%) last for 6d12 hours, with the remaining fields being permanent.

Energy fields are distinguished primarily by effect. They affect anyone within them in these ways:

1d100	Result
01-30	No effect
31-55	Memory aura (see above)
56-60	Inflicts 3d6 hp electrical damage (save vs. spell for half damage)
61-63	Inorganic materials must save successfully or be disintegrated
64-66	Inflicts a random type of insanity (save vs. spell to avoid)
67-68	Causes confusion for 1d10 rounds
69-70	Acts as a heat metal spell for as long as metal remains within the field
71-72	Restores any memories ever lost (through spells, magical attacks, encounters with the River Styx, etc.)
73-74	Permanently alters the color of everything within (black to white, red to green, blue to orange, yellow to purple and vice versa)
75-76	Dispels all magic within as a 20th level caster
77-78	Heals all wounds completely (works once)
79-80	Drains all memory (save vs. spell to avoid)
81-82	Reverses alignment for 1d4days
83-84	Forces beings to re-live their most harrowing moment, paralyzing them with fear for 1d4 hours
85	Permanently <i>febleminds</i>

- anyone failing a saving throw vs. spell
- 86 Permanently drains away all emotions
- 87 Permanently adds one point of Strength, Constitution, or Dexterity (works once)
- 88-89 Temporarily adds one point of Strength, Constitution, or Dexterity (lasts 2d6 days)
- 90 Permanently adds one point of Intelligence or Wisdom (works once)
- 91-92 Temporarily adds one point of Intelligence or Wisdom (lasts 2d6 days)
- 93 Acts as a *death* spell, but anyone not slain is filled with power enough to make a wish
- 94 Permanently drains away all psionic powers
- 95 Bestows a psionic ability (treat as a wild talent)
- 96-98 Roll twice again, ignoring results over 95
- 99 Roll three times again, ignoring results over 95
- 00 DM Option



Mysterious Minerals

The substance that composes the body of a dead god is usually described as "rocky," but it isn't truly stone. Instead, it is a unique substance that possesses qualities similar to common terrestrial minerals. This substance, in itself, is an interesting curiosity worth a fair bit of jink (1d6 gp per pound) in a Sigilian trade market.

Of much greater interest, however, are the rarer minerals that sometimes exist within the corpses of powers. Rich deposits of diamonds, emeralds, silver, gold and other valuable minerals aren't uncommon. Further, an explorer occasionally comes upon a small quantity of some wholly unique stone or metal. These usually have some special property that makes them valuable.

Unlike some of the mysterious energies, liquids or plants, most of the minerals found on dead gods pose little threat to an explorer. On the other hand, extracting them is a lengthy process and is more likely to attract the attention of nearby monsters, and even the Guardian itself.

Note: The mysterious minerals are always found in tiny quantities—usually only a few pounds of ore at a time. The

DM should be very careful in how available he or she makes these substances.

1d100	Result	
01-50	Normal stone or metal ore	
51-70	Precious stones or metals (use the Gem Table in Appendix 1 of the <i>Dungeon Master® Guide</i> if gems (50%) or, if metals (50%), determine which type: copper (30%)/silver (30%)/gold (30%)/platinum (10%); assume that there exists 10d100 gp worth of the metal, no matter which type)	91
71-80	Mineral is twice as durable as normal (and thus twice as hard to extract) and worth three times as much	92
81-85	A metal that can be used to easily forge weapons or armor of +1 enchantment (worth 10 gp per pound)	93
86-90	A metal that can be used to forge weapons or armor of -1 enchantment, but which are virtually weightless (treat as no armor for spell casting or thief abilities); worth 10 gp per pound	94
		95
		96-97
		98
		99
		00

- 98-99 Roll three times again, ignoring results over 95
00 DM Option

Mysterious Plants

Thriving amid the strange energies and nourished by the rare soils, a few dead gods have unusual plants growing on their bodies. The growths on god isles range from green, leafy plants (including trees and shrubs), flowering vegetation, and even various types of fungi. They can also include completely unique plants, never seen anywhere else in the multiverse.

When a plant is found that has effects produced by ingesting, imbibing or in any way consuming it, enough is found to produce 1d10 doses or uses.

	1d100 Result
01-40	Normal plant
41-50	Normal plant with one innocuous unusual quality (odd color, glows brightly, strange odor, hums musically, etc.)
51-60	Has the affect of a random potion if eaten
61-70	Poisonous (save vs. poison or die if eaten), but if boiled with water makes a random potion
71-72	Produces a mind-controlling odor that forces anyone within 15' who fails a saving throw vs. spell to insist on remaining on the dead god permanently
73-74	Can be spun into fibers that can be woven into cloth which acts as virtually weightless leather armor (treat as wearing no armor in regard to spellcasting and thief's abilities)
75-76	Causes euphoria if eaten or smoked like tobacco (save vs. poison or become addicted—addicts die a slow rotting death over the course of 3d4 months unless a <i>cure disease</i> spell is cast upon them)
77-78	Can move and attack as a choke creeper
79-80	Can move and attack as a violet fungus
81-82	Poisonous to touch
83-84	Secretes a fluid that can be used to make ink for any protection scroll
85-86	Secretes a fluid that can be used to make an ink which

	is visible only to elves (30%), humans (10%), dwarves (10%), halflings (5%), gnomes (5%), fiends-including tieflings (5%), bariaur (5%), githzerai (5%), or other (25%)
87-88	Produces an odor that drives away fiends 25% of the time
89-90	Can be powdered and mixed with a normal poison to enable it to affect fiends
91-92	Possesses intelligence and great wisdom, is able to speak telepathically, and has a Neutral alignment
93-94	Restores all memorized spells if eaten
95	Can be powdered and mixed with godsblood (see below) to double the number of doses available
96-98	Roll twice, ignoring results over 95
99	Roll three times, ignoring results over 95
00	DM Option

Mysterious Liquids

Bubbling up from the heart of a god isle, the purest waters and the vilest biles lie in pools on some dead gods. Many of these liquids are dangerous, but a few have beneficial effects.

Planewalkers frequently come to the god isles specifically hunting for a substance called *godsblood*. This rare, valuable syrup is the very essence of divine life and can be used to heal any wound, cure any disease, and even restore life. Any character so much as touching this substance is healed up to his maximum number of hit points, is free of disease, poison, curses, insanities, etc. Even scars disappear, and lost tissue (like severed limbs) grows back in 1d6 turns. Dead characters are restored to life. Only one dose of this extraordinary liquid is ever found at one time—and only a canny blood can think of how to transport it without touching (and therefore consuming) it.

Most other mysterious liquids are found in amounts consisting of 1d12 doses, when applicable.

	1d100 Result
01-60	Water (Stagnant 70%/Fresh 30%)
61-65	Milk (Sour 80%/Fresh 20%)
66-70	Blood/bile/etc.

71-78	Poison (save vs. poison or die if drunk)
79-83	Disease-ridden (save vs. poison or become infected)
84-89	Acid (inflicts 1d6 hp damage per round if touched)
90	Sentient liquid (treat as a minor water elemental)
91	Equal to a random potion
92	Water that never vaporizes no matter what the temperature
93	Water that never freezes no matter what the temperature
94	Thick syrupy liquid that dries and hardens into a fire-proof coating
95	Molten mineral (use the mysterious mineral table, above)
96-97	Godsblood (see above)
98-99	Roll twice, ignoring results above 97
00	DM Option

Godquake

A "godquake" is a period when the dead god stirs. All of them experience these shudders from time to time, although they are rare. Treat this effect as a normal earthquake, with aftershocks occurring for 1d4 days afterward. After a godquake, however, there is a 20% chance for an encounter with an energy field or mysterious mineral, and a 10% chance for an encounter with a mysterious liquid, as these things are often brought up or produced by the stirring.

Adventures

The dead gods of the Astral Plane suggest their own adventures. Player characters, when hearing of the valuable resources to be found there, will often travel there on their own with no further motivation. Beside general exploration, however, there are other scenarios that the DM can incorporate using the fallen powers.

Sacrilegious Sabotage

The Athar is a faction dedicated to the opposition of the powers and those that worship them. They have a citadel in the Astral Plane, among and overlooking the god isles, for they believe the dead powers to be proof that there is nothing "divine" about the known "divinities."

Most of the Athar know to leave the dead gods alone, however, for they

have a healthy respect for the power of the Guardian. A few, however, are willing to pay handsomely to daredevils and thrillseekers willing to commit minor acts of "vandalism" upon the fallen bodies of the powers. These acts include marring the outer surfaces, chipping away substantial portions, and even painting anti-power slogans upon the bodies. 'Course, those barmy enough to carry out such acts risk the wrath of the Guardian, his proxy, and those who still might revere the fallen gods.

Interested adventurers should speak with Dimal Huves (Pl/male human/F6/Athar/CN), a minor official in the Athar's Athar Citadel.

The Astral Advisor

Among the githyanki there are individuals known as hr'a'cknir that are able to perceive and identify the strange energies found among the dead gods. An aged planar explorer named Faris Essil (Pr/female half-elf/F6, W5/Free League/NC) is in need of a hr'a'cknir, and she's willing to pay some younger adventurers to find one.

Faris has come upon a particular energy field on the body of a dead god that seems to knit wounds and stop bleeding. However, those who spend much time within the field sometimes run screaming out of it, their minds snapped like twigs. She knows that only a hr'a'cknir can truly identify what's going on and why the field is sometimes dangerous.

The PCs, should they accept this mission, must explore the god isles for a githyanki settlement that has an experienced hr'a'cknir willing to help them. Since the githyanki are very insular and unfriendly (not to mention evil), this is a task for a group of good negotiators as well as those who can protect themselves against githyanki psionics, magic, and other attacks.

The energy field in question is 20' in diameter and is layered so that the outer four feet produce a healing effect (healing 1d8 hp to anyone within), but the inner 12' have a negative effect on any minds within, causing them to go hopelessly insane (save vs. spells to avoid).

Home on the Strange

A barmy old basher named Barvac Poite (Pl/male tiefling/F8/Bleak Cabal/N) has decided that he wants to live on a dead god. He's looking for able-bodied planewalkers willing to explore the



god-isles to find a safe spot and then watch over things while his home is built.

Not only must the PCs contend with the normal hazards of exploring the dead gods but they must also deal with the githyanki again. This time, though, the Astral warriors are on the offensive—they don't twig to the idea of some outsider tiefling calling kip in their territory. Raids by the gith warriors are numerous, as are some magical traps that the githyanki have set to ward away trespassers.

The Last Pilgrimage

Endryt Fallow (Pr/male human/C10—no spells—/LG), the last worshipper of a power named Graessomar, has come to the Astral Plane to pay his last respects to his fallen deity. He needs help in finding the dead god and protection on his journey. He's never been off the Prime Material Plane and is woefully ignorant of the ways of the Astral.

Worse, once Graessomar is found, Endryt discovers that his power has been overrun by horrible parasites that feed on the corpses of gods. These creatures, called Viggs, are numerous and nasty—and Endryt wants them destroyed. He'll offer his escorts a handsome payment

and his undying gratitude if they'll help him rid his deity of these beasts.

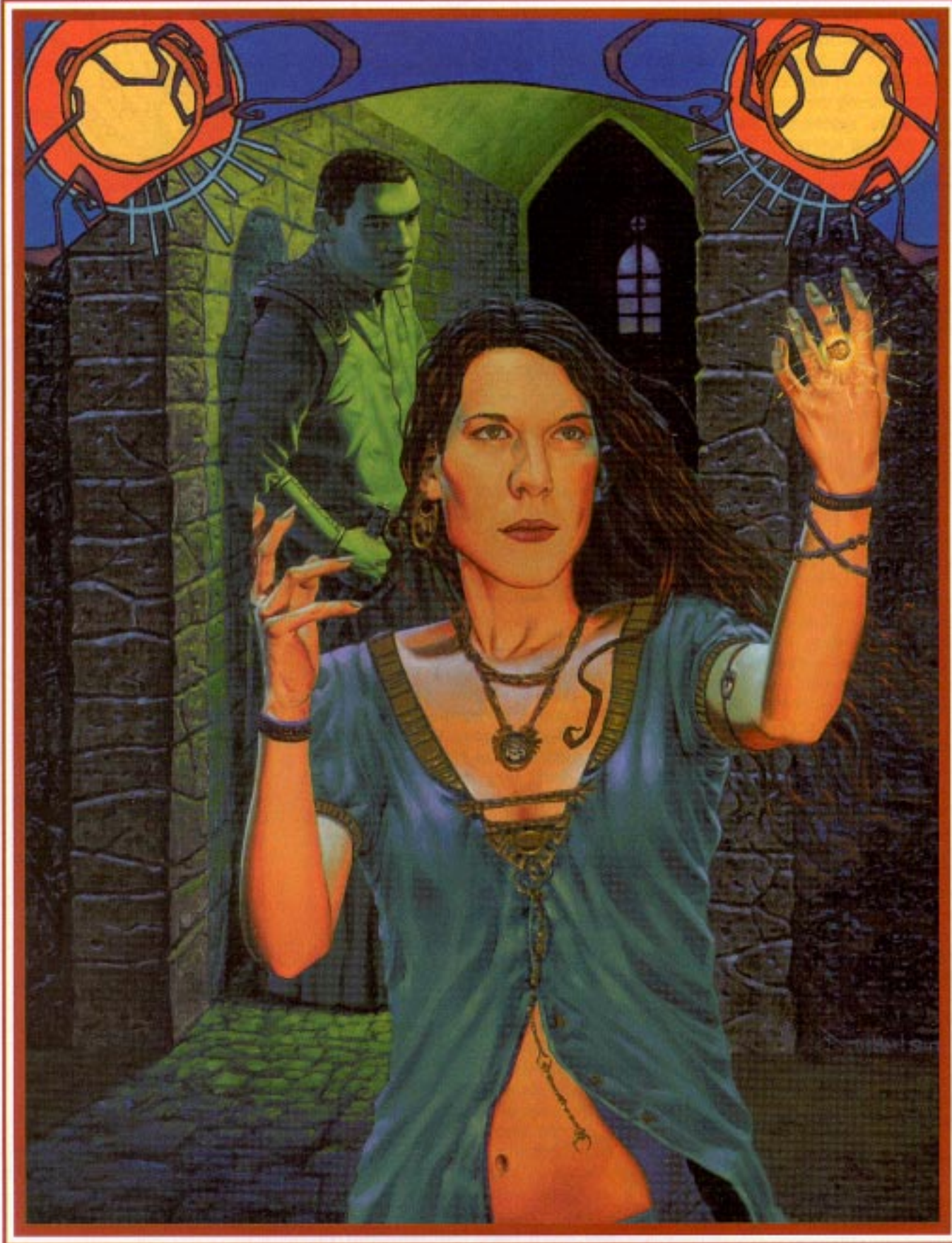
Unfortunately, the viggs are surprisingly intelligent and crafty. They soon organize themselves and form a strong resistance to the exterminating characters. The creatures use their incredible burrowing capabilities to cause the ground under characters to collapse, hoping to trap or kill them. The viggs enjoy swarming over fallen characters.

Viggs (123): AC 6; MV 18, Br 6; HD 1+2; hp 8 each; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; SA burrowing under foes; SW pure water inflicts 1d8 hp damage; SZ S (1'-2' diameter); ML Steady (12); Int Low (5-7); AL NE; XP 65.

Notes: When the viggs burrow under a foe, there is a 1 in 4 chance that the ground under the victim collapses inflicting 1d6 hp falling damage.



Monte Cook is neither dead nor a god, and working for TSR is bringing him closer to one of those states.



True Power

Ron Collins

Artwork by Michael Sutfin



eldrin, the time has come for you to develop your true power." Attruic-eb spoke in a low, coarse voice. A bronze brazier smoldered at the center of the table, its embers simmering, reeking sourly and casting an eerie pale on Attruic-eb's wrinkled face and graying beard.

Teldrin forced his heart to calm and hoped the smile he felt rising to his lips was not too visible. His gaze met that of Attruic-eb. Despite his age, the elder wizard's eyes glittered. "I am honored, Lord Superior."

"I'm sure honor has nothing to do with it," Attruic-eb replied. "For months I have watched you place barriers in your opposition's path, deliberately impeding my other apprentices and using their failures as stepping stones for your own advancement." He paused. "It has been . . . entertaining."

"It was you who taught me the advantages of proper preparation, Lord Superior."

"Apparently I have taught you well."

An awkward silence hung for several moments during which Teldrin could hear only the hiss of burning embers. He stood before Attruic-eb's throne-like chair and stared at his own feet. This was it. Three years of work was about to pay off. "How do I do that, Lord Superior? How do I develop my true power?"

"Do not be coy with me, mageling. I am aware you have spent considerable time studying the order's bylaws. You understand there is only so much power in this world. In order to claim your own, another's must be freed."

"What is your will, Lord Superior? For I am also aware that only a master can cast the spell that triggers my talent. You hold the key to my progress. What duty am I to be assigned before you will make me a wizard?"

Attruic-eb tilted his head back and stared down his nose at Teldrin. "I have discovered the whereabouts of a ring of power. If you bring it to me, I will grant you status."

"What is this ring?"

The Lord Superior smirked. "Some magics are too strong to be tampered with by one of your experience. Suffice to say its retrieval will ensure you a healthy start toward your mastery."

"Where is it?"

Attruic-eb brought his hands together and rested his chin upon his fingertips. "On the hand of a Lectodonian mage."

Teldrin contemplated this situation for a moment. Lectodonian activity was always at odds with Koradictine, but direct confrontation was

to be avoided — wars between the Orders were often bloody. “So I must steal it.”

“Obtain it however you will. But I seriously doubt you can take it while the mage lives.”

Teldrin peered into Attruic-eb’s eyes, trying to discern a hint of humor but finding none. “Surely, you do not mean that my task includes killing a man.”

“Of course not,” Attruic-eb replied, enunciating each word with sharpness normally reserved for berating poor performance. “The Lectodian mage who wears this ring is a woman named Raevyn.”

“Such an action will surely spark a war.”

“Is this actually what concerns you, Teldrin? Or are you merely hiding a fear of killing?”

Teldrin thought on this. He let his stare wander to the brazier and lose itself in the embers that lay smoldering there. He would steal for power, there was no doubt about that. He would cheat, maim, lie — whatever it took. And he would kill. He was surprised at this realization, at how easily the decision had come. There really was no decision.

It had always been there — the fact that he would take another’s life to lift himself to a position of power, to dominate a piece of the world. It had been there since his father had governed his hometown of Twillen, proving himself to be weak and unwilling to take advantage of his position, wasting the opportunity to wrest control for himself when it was there for the taking.

“Obviously, I will require aid to defeat an established sorceress.”

Attruic-eb nodded. “Place your dagger on the table.”

Teldrin did. The blade had been his father’s, an offering from the leader of a neighboring village. He almost grimaced, remembering how his father refused to use the blade to broaden his control. How sweet, he thought, that a symbol of his father’s weakness would serve to establish Teldrin’s own true power.

Attruic-eb’s fingers shook slightly as he held them over the blade. He spoke a few words of magic, and his fingertips glowed. A luminescent pink mist enveloped the dagger, bringing a gleam to its edge.

Finally, Attruic-eb looked at Teldrin. “The dagger will thwart magical protections. It should provide you entrance to Raevyn’s lair. Use it well.”

“I am ready, Lord Superior. I will let nothing stand between me and the power that is rightfully mine.”

Attruic-eb sat back in his chair. “I never doubted you would.”



The ring on Raevyn’s finger grew warm. She turned her gaze away from the volume she was reading and stared at her hand.

Someone is asking about us, my dear.

The voice was familiar, gentle and seductive, with a silent edge that should have warned of danger back when it was not too late but instead had lured her deeper into its clutches.

“Yes,” she said out loud.

Excellent . . . it has been too long since we last had a caller.

Raevyn stood up and walked to a floor-length mirror. She brushed hair from her cheeks and stared into the hollow pits of her own eyes. Familiar anxiety washed over her — fresh longing mixed with dread. Her stomach churned with an odd mix of questions. Was he a good man? Would she drain him slowly, watching him wither as his life seeped away? Would she take him quickly and see the morbid shock on his face? Did he have family?

How long could she continue like this?

Don’t get sentimental again.

“Be quiet, please. I need to be alone.”

But, Raevyn. You will never be alone. I am yours, and I am always here for you. Together, you and I are invincible — a perfect pair bonded for eternity, just as you always dreamed.

Raevyn’s jaw clenched. Yes, she had always been afraid of being alone.

Raevyn sighed and stared deeper into the mirror. Men’s faces flashed at her. Ten. Fifty. A hundred. Who could remember after centuries? Kayelwyn, pure and powerful — she had nearly smothered in his intense energy. Fraydon, who had almost lived through their encounter. Danlim, the Prince from Tawntor who had stolen her heart, but who had suffered more from her curse than any of the others. Everyone she touched was dead by her hand.

It was tiring this life. And trying. She might live forever. She performed any magic she desired. But what good was immortality if all she could see were faces of men she had killed? What good was unlimited ability when there was no one to share it with, when she chose to live in a hollowed-out cave just to keep her sanity?

She gazed forlornly around the room.

Candlelight flickered, illuminating velvet-covered furniture and marble sculpture. A flowing fountain gurgled in the distant corner. Paintings of open landscapes adorned the walls, lifeless in the dim shadows.

Raevyn thought about the man who would soon arrive. She wondered what his dreams were, and

she was saddened to know he would never achieve them. Perhaps he wouldn't come. Perhaps he could resist temptation. But Raevyn knew better than to put credence to these hopes. The ring would find a way to provide for her.

It always did.



Teldrin stood in the midnight shadows of a moonless night, tucked into the darkest corner of a back alley, waiting for a man named Varga, a small-time thief and big-time snitch. If anyone knew where Raevyn's hideaway could be found, it would be someone like this.

The night air was cool and wet. Teldrin leaned against a decrepit tavern made of mudbrick and rough lumber. A coarse scent leaked through cracks in the walls, seeping into the streets to be carried off by a slow breeze. Inside were addicts and gamblers, men who smelled of garbage and spoke their guttural language in whispers that sounded like rats scampering through sewer drains. Teldrin despised them. They had no vision. They were weak and despicable, the lowest form of life.

He had been in Daggertooth for three long days. It was a small town, a prospecting city built on mountain gold and filled with pickpockets and murderers, all of them spineless, afraid to talk about a lone sorceress. Teldrin touched the pommel of his dagger and smiled. Before he could steal the ring, he had to know Raevyn's exact location. What money apparently could not buy, the blade would surely discover.

Varga stepped out of the tavern. He was short and thin, scrawny, with greasy hair pulled back by a knotted headband. He walked down the alley toward Teldrin's position, swaying slightly with each stride.

Teldrin waited. Once Varga passed him, Teldrin stepped forward and wrapped his arm around Varga's chest. The thief struggled for a moment but calmed considerably when Teldrin held his dagger against his neck. "We need to talk," Teldrin said, "and I won't take no for an answer."

Varga hesitated, considering the situation. "Then I won't give it," he replied at last. His breath was fetid. "I'm looking for a woman."

'Aren't we all,' Varga snorted.

"Where can I find Raevyn?"

"You're talking to the wrong man."

Teldrin applied more pressure to the dagger, drawing a thin line upon Varga's neck. This blade carries my magic, Varga. I would enjoy testing its edge this evening."

Varga grunted, a sarcastic sound — almost a laugh. "You are a fool if you think a simple piece of enchanted steel will protect you from Raevyn."

Teldrin said nothing, merely increased pressure upon the blade. Blood beaded at the weapon's edge, and a thin dark line ran down Varga's neck.

Varga's voice dropped to a whisper. "She lives in the mountains, halfway up the north face of Hammond's Peak. Look for three rocks that sit atop each other, and follow the mountain up another hundred paces. But, I'm serious. There's nothing but death with this sorceress."

Teldrin grinned. The home of a feared sorceress should have a grander entranceway. This would be easier than he thought. "I am no schoolboy," Teldrin said with more confidence than necessary. He pulled the dagger away from Varga as he released him, pushing him farther into the alley's shadows.

Varga collected himself and peered through the darkness, as if studying Teldrin's face. "You are a fool. Raevyn has lived in these parts for as long as most can remember. She comes to town now and then. And every time she comes, men die. Listen to me. You're best served leaving Raevyn alone. She devours souls. She'll use what you give her, and she'll take what you don't."

Teldrin merely nodded his head and turned to walk away. Suddenly, he stopped and craned his neck toward Varga. "Thank you for the advice. I'll remember it when I rule this land."

He spat, then continued up the road.



All that Raevyn ever really wanted was to be loved. At least that's what she had thought when she was a child.

But that was before magic entered her life, before she felt electric energy dance along her arms and before she brought a flower to life. That was before the ring.

It had promised to fulfill her dreams.

And it did. Once she slipped it on her finger, she became the person she always wanted to be.

Awkward as a girl, Raevyn grew beautiful as she aged. Shy at first, she began to draw men without effort. These men would stay with her for varying periods of time — weeks, or even months. But eventually she would become bored with them, or they would slip away. As each relationship flourished, the ring fed her with sorcerous power that was stronger than any before.

As her stature grew, she drew more attention. And with each champion, her sorcery became even greater.

She should have known where the power was coming from. Perhaps, somewhere inside her mind, she had known but was afraid to face the truth.

Once she finally understood that her growing powers came at the expense of these men, that they were left hollow and lifeless — eventually dying — once she understood this horror, it was too late. Like a haggard drunkard who curses life's unfair evils as he buys another tankard, Raevyn was addicted, willing to do anything.

Suddenly, she realized she was nothing more than a slave and would be for the rest of her life.



Teldrin slipped the pack off his shoulder. It had taken him a full day to get here, standing before three rocks lying one atop another.

His muscles ached. His lungs screamed for a full breath. Walking in high altitude was taking its toll. A thin sheen of sweat covered his forehead, bringing a cool sting from the mountain air. He looked over his shoulder and watched the sun edge closer to the horizon.

The thin air carried the heavy aroma of fresh pine — and another odor also, one that perhaps only Teldrin could sense. Power. Energy. It was here, ready for the taking.

Rested, Teldrin hefted his pack to his shoulder. He breathed deeply and strode farther up the mountain.

He came upon an opening, a simple cave more than anything else. His hand brushed against the pommel of his father's dagger, and he stopped to withdraw it. The blade glowed pink. Holding the weapon before him, he entered, walking softly. The air was damp and smelled of mildew. After a few steps the cavern grew dark, and the dagger's thin light was all that lit his way.

The walls were rough-hewn, scarred by the picks and chisels that had gouged out the cave. The floor sloped upward and curved back upon itself, making a slowly spiraling helix. There was no sound. Teldrin moved as if in a dream. The walls became smooth and unblemished, a texture that no craftsman could achieve alone.

He paused.

What power could carve these walls? How would he manage to steal such power from its wielder? His heart pounded, the cave's stillness making the rush of blood throb in his ears. He shook his head to clear these thoughts. Self-doubt would ruin his quest. He would be victorious. He had to. There was no other possibility.

With a final shake of the head, Teldrin began walking, progressing unheeded until he came to a door.



Raevyn sat on her couch and stared into the water-filled bowl on the table before her, watching as the young man climbed the path to her door.

He draws nearer, my love. Are we prepared?

What would this one bring? Would he be sweet and tender? Or would he be primal and instinctive — like so many of the others, direct and bold in his questioning but limited in his ability to understand the answers?

The ring grew warm on her finger and blazed in Raevyn's mind. It tugged and pulled at her soul. *Fresh blood. Energy. It is ours. Take it. let it flow through you. He wants you, Raevyn, like all the rest. It is right that he be ours.*

Raevyn struggled against these urges only briefly. She had tried to fight them before, but found the effort futile. The ring always won, and the more she fought, the greater sorrow she felt later.



Teldrin paused before the door. It was carved from oak and inset with silver sigils and oddly asymmetrical glyphs. His muscles quivered as he pressed against the door, his throat suddenly dry. Power was behind this door — his power. He sensed this in a fashion that he could never describe, an aura that hung invisibly in the air, a surety that this was his destiny.

Gripping his dagger, Teldrin pushed gently. The door moved. Swirling fragrances filled his senses. Jasmine, patchouli, clover, persimmon — the odors came and went, but there was no breeze as he slipped through the doorway.

"You won't need the blade," a feminine voice said.

Teldrin looked toward the voice. Raevyn lay seductively on her couch, her long hair falling darkly, black with subtle highlights of reddish brown. Her face was smooth, with gently curving cheekbones and full lips. She wore a dark dress, midnight blue with silver lace at the waist and high-collared throat.

At first, Teldrin thought she was beautiful. Then he stared into her eyes. There was pain and darkness in them, anxiety and internal struggle, a harsh reality that burned through him.

He straightened. "Perhaps I won't," he said, annoyed at having lost the element of surprise so early in the encounter. Teldrin slipped the dagger into its sheath but kept his hand in close proximity.

Raevyn's lips quivered. Energy crackled in the space between them.

Suddenly she was standing before him, so close her breath moistened his face. Her smell engulfed him, fresh and vital, the smell of a mountain waterfall. She leaned forward and their lips met. Soft. Velvet.

Her power scorched his mouth. Her kiss tasted tangy and wicked, dangerous. Energy and emotions mixed inside his mind, flowing through his body, seeping outward as if the force of Raevyn's kiss pulled upon them. By the time he realized his hands could no longer reach his dagger he no longer cared.



Raevyn stood over her visitor as he slept. His face was slim, its muscles relaxed in slumber. She ran a finger along his cheek. It was smooth and tender. How long would he last? How long before this cheek would be cold and stiff? How long before she would take him to the burying place in the heart of the mountain?

Raevyn grew warm and her thoughts jumbled.

Come, my love, while his energy rages. It is time to prepare new magics.

Raevyn nodded her head silently and turned away.



Teldrin awoke to find himself on a large down mattress covered in thin silk sheets of blue and pink. He gazed around the room, peering through half-lidded eyes that felt swollen and bloated. A single tallow candle sputtered from a stand across the room. His robe was thrown across a chair. His dagger lay on the ground. He tried to remember why he was here. He tried to remember where here was. But his mind was hazy, his thoughts hollow and slow to come. His head hurt.

He slid off the bed and was surprised to see he was naked. Then he remembered Raevyn, the bed, and sensations he had never thought possible. He remembered the ring.

The last thought brought some reason to his senses. He ambled to his robes and slipped into them. He slid his dagger into his belt and looked around. Darkness and confusion limited his ability to see far, but a door-shaped area of blackness stood out across the room.

He went to it, and soon found himself peering down a long hall. Golden light came from an open doorway. Teldrin thought he heard a voice, lyrical and steady. But it was so soft, and so thin, he couldn't be sure.

As he drew closer to the doorway, the air grew charged and thick. The floor was cold against his bare feet. His muscles ached and his head throbbled. But the exertion had cleared his thoughts. He clenched the dagger and pressed his back against the wall outside the doorway. Raevyn's voice rose and fell in cadence, singing almost, but not quite. The light inside the room varied in intensity with her melody. Teldrin edged closer and peered into the room.

Raevyn stood with her back to him, her arms outstretched and her head tilted slightly upward. She was dressed in flowing aqua that whirled gently about her, floating on an arcane breeze. Her hair hung freely, twisting and turning on the same breeze.

The ring on her finger pulsed gold.

Teldrin slipped quietly into the room. Here, raw energy was almost a separate presence. Thick and sharp, Teldrin nearly choked on it. He looked at his dagger and saw that it, too, pulsed, joining in the flow of sorcerous power and shedding a pink light that combined with that of the ring to create flashing orange rays.

The ring.

It commanded all of his attention. Nothing else in the room existed. Nothing else mattered. Teldrin stepped closer, moving as if in a trance. This was his power. It was proper that it be his.

He shifted the dagger in his hand. Another step and the ring would be his.



Raevyn floated on the astral breeze. The ring was a presence here. It ran a hand over her shoulder and kissed her, leaving her lips tingling with raw energy. Its heat warmed her, flowing into her, traveling through her skin and into her body.

It had been months since they had fed. She ached for more but the ring toyed with her, withholding most of the energy, letting it waft in the air around her while she digested the few droplets it allowed to pass through.

Even as her heart pounded and adrenaline carried her further into trance-state, even as her muscles quivered and soaked in warmth, even as her mind begged for more, Raevyn hated herself. It was like this every time. She could not control it, and she was afraid. Yet despite her fear, and despite the knowledge of the energy's source, something in Raevyn did not want to break free — could never bring herself to part with the ring.



Teldrin slashed, slicing through Raevyn's ring finger and her small finger. The room grew suddenly dark, and Raevyn's scream filled the air.



Pain shot through Raevyn's entire being, stabbing and exploding in every direction at once. Synapses fired. Her nerves ran with pain like molten steel. Emptiness — a hollow vacuum like she had never felt before.

Her muscles would not respond, and Raevyn could not catch herself. She fell, screaming, voice echoing inside her head, reverberating along astral lines.

Then, mercifully, everything went black.



Teldrin heard Raevyn slump to the ground, and the metallic sound of a coin rolling on the stone floor.

Then silence, nothing but his own breathing. His dagger glowed dimly in the darkness, revealing Raevyn's body, two fingers missing from one hand. Oddly, there was no blood, and both stumps were healed over.

The ring lay in a corner of the room, a band of gold with jade inlay. Teldrin walked to it and picked it up. It was warm. He put it in his pocket and moved to examine Raevyn.

He knelt over her. She was alive, her breathing shallow but regular. Teldrin hefted his dagger; it glinted in the darkness, urging him on. But killing a Lectodian would surely result in a mage war, and Teldrin had studied enough history to know that younger wizards were always the first to die in battles between the Orders, the stronger gathering power from the weaker in preparation for major conflicts.

Teldrin already had his quarry. He stood, sheathed his dagger, and left the room.



Teldrin returned to the clearing where three rocks were formed atop one another. It was dark and cold. His breath floated around his head like a wreath.

I can give you strength, Teldrin. I can make you the man your father never was. The voice was soft and seductive. Teldrin looked around before realizing it came from inside his own head. He reached into his pocket and pulled out the ring. It glowed blue-green in the darkness. *I will give you strength — and power. Power greater than you have dreamed.*

"You belong to my superior," Teldrin said aloud. "If I do not give it to him, I cannot become a mage."

Attruic-eb? it is not appropriate that he should be your superior. indeed, he is nothing. We shall be his superior. I, too, am a master, Teldrin. I can grant your wizardry. Wear me, and we will hunt down Attruic-eb. His power will serve to bring you what is properly yours.

Teldrin held the ring between his fingers and thumb.

You are special, Teldrin. I will make you more so. You will be held in awe by your people. And why shouldn't you be? You will control anything you desire.

He studied the ring, feeling its warmth, letting it spread through his fingers and up his arms. In his mind, Teldrin saw his father, and he saw Attruic-eb.

It was everything he ever wanted. He hardly felt himself slip the ring onto his finger.

True power was his.



Raevyn breathed deeply, soaking in the clean mountain air for the first time in as long as she could remember. The sky was littered with a blanket of stars, each twinkling as if to welcome her. Cricketsong filled her ears.

She flexed her fingers, still unused to her missing digits. A smile crossed her face. It was worth it.

Raevyn had once been able to move this mountain if she so desired. She had been able to fly. She had made powerful men weep at her feet. But now that power was gone, and she walked down the mountain.

She was free. Free to make her own choices. Free to live her life in her own fashion. Free to show people who she really was and to choose who that person might be.

She finally had true power.



Ron Collins lives in Columbus, Indiana. His fiction has appeared in DRAGON Magazine and Marion Zimmer Bradley's Fantasy Magazine, among others. His future publications include stories in original anthologies The Return of the Dinosaurs and 365 Scary Stories — A Horror a Day.



Legend of the Five Rings™

Roleplaying in the Emerald Empire™

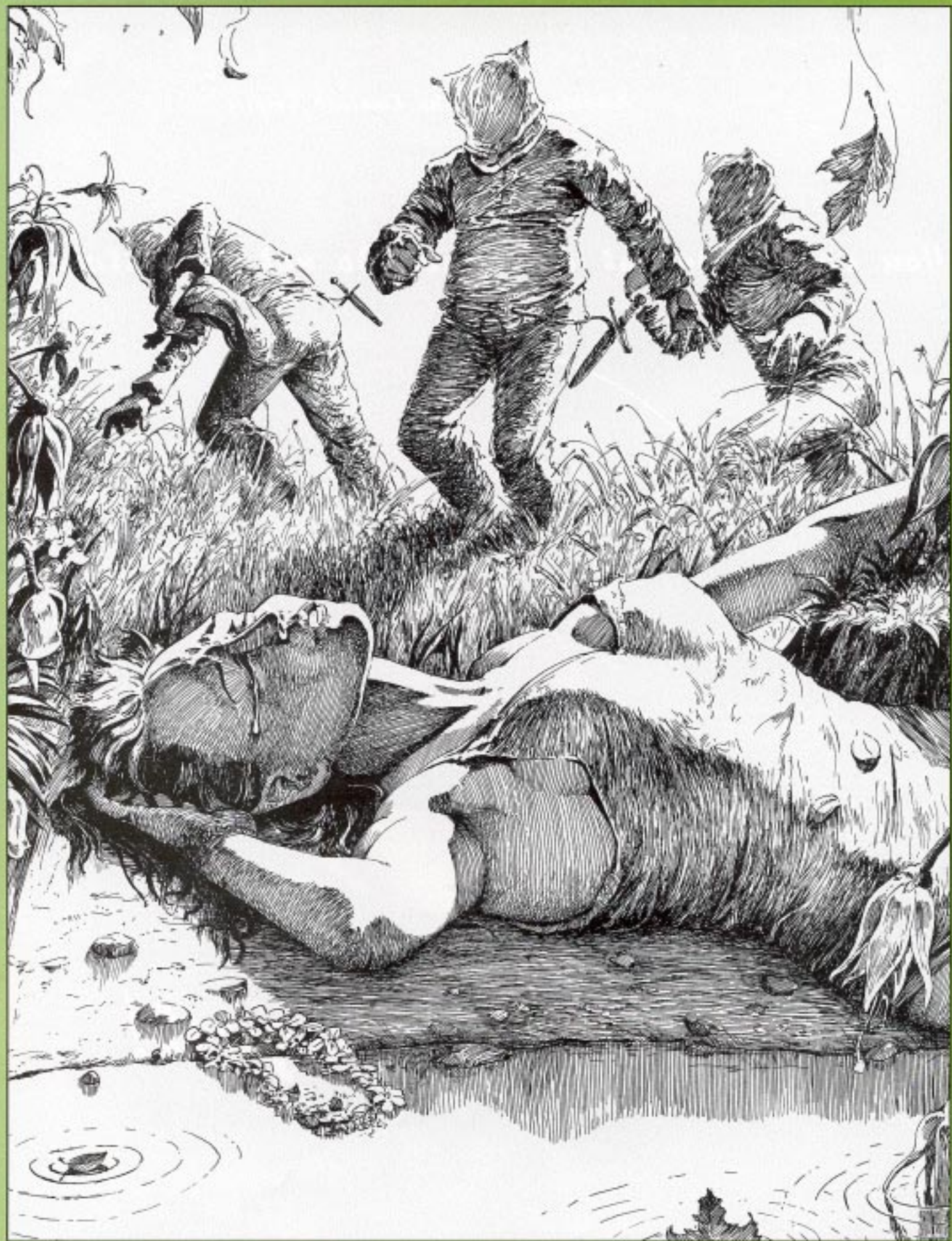
"You cannot defeat what you do not understand..."



Available August!

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Dreelix pounded the gavel three times on the table and said those magical words of power, the words that silenced the conversations of those around him and brought all eyes facing his way. These were quite easily his ten favorite words in all the languages known to man:

"This meeting of the Monster Hunters Association is hereby opened."

Satisfied that his colleagues were giving him their undivided attention, Dreelix continued. "Tonight Zantoulios will debrief us on the results of our little forest expedition. Grindle will report the status of our current funds and will be collecting dues from those of you who failed to pay last month. Let me remind you all, here and now, about the ten-percent late fee! Finally, Willowquisp has come across a formula for a *potion of longevity*; he'll describe the necessary ingredients, and we'll start planning a Hunt accordingly."

Suddenly, the door to the meeting-hall swung open, and into the room stepped a beautiful young woman. "Mister President," she said in a husky voice, closing the door behind her, "I have a point of order: I seek admission into your illustrious organization."

Dreelix, irritated by the interruption of his meeting, was further annoyed to see that he was no longer the center of attention; all eyes were upon the young woman. Scowling, he opened his mouth to rebuke her, but then he got a good look at her himself.

By the gods, she was beautiful! Dreelix was never one to let his emotions run wild, but he felt his heart actually skip a beat as he looked upon her. Brown hair flowed-no, cascaded-over her shoulders, framing the most angelic face he'd ever seen. Large brown eyes, slightly almond-shaped and not a little mysterious, managed to project sensuality, aloofness, and mystique all at the same time. Her lips, her radiant skin, her sleek figure, her—were they? yes!—dimpled cheeks... Dreelix's eyes didn't know where to focus as he tried to absorb the totality of this intense creature.

A small *hmmph!* caught Dreelix's attention, dragging him from his reverie. It was the Conjurer Ablasta, sitting at his right, who was frowning in jealousy at the young woman. Lady Ablasta enjoyed the position of being the only female member of the Monster Hunters Association, and she apparently didn't think much of sharing the role with a gorgeous young woman at least thirty years

THE ECOLOGY OF

The

Nymph

by Johnathan M. Richards

illustrated by David Kooharian

her junior. As she stared at the newcomer, she wore an expression of distaste usually mastered only by spinsterly head librarians when confronting a young patron with several overdue books.

Realizing his mouth was still hanging open, Dreelix snapped it shut and swallowed, his throat suddenly dry. He had lost control. How had this happened? Blast it all, he was in charge here!

"Look here, Miss . . . ?" he managed to blurt out, before realizing he didn't know her name.

"Azurielle," the young woman supplied.

"Azurielle, thank you. There is a certain protocol about these things. First of all, to gain admittance, you must be able to provide information on a specific creature that can be used in the fashioning of magical spells, items, and the like. There is the matter of the admittance fee, of course, and you must be sponsored by a current member. Until you can provide those ..."

"I believe I have the entrance fee right here," the young woman replied, reaching to untie a small sack from her belt. Dreelix couldn't help but notice how the simple movement accentuated the curves of her body, and he swallowed hard again. "As for a sponsor, perhaps one of you kind gentlemen ..."

She couldn't finish her sentence. Immediately, Grindle the Coin-Counter leapt to his feet, blurring out "I'll sponsor her!" He wasn't the only one to rise to the occasion. With a scraping of chairs, both Zantoulios and Buntleby jumped up as well, voicing their willingness to serve as sponsor, the former bumping his table as he did so, knocking over his drink.

"Well, it appears that we have no shortage of sponsors," admitted Dreelix. "But what about a monster? Do you have information on a specific monster useful to the Association?"

"I do indeed," replied Azurielle. "I have detailed information on the nymph."

Dreelix smiled. "You're a little late, I'm afraid. We only just last week returned from a successful nymph Hunt. In fact, Zantoulios was just about to brief us all on the results."

"Perhaps I might listen in, then?" asked Azurielle. "My knowledge is quite considerable; I might be able to add to your list of useful nymph by-products."

"By all means," replied Dreelix with a smile.

Looking upon Azurielle, Buntleby thought it seemed almost as if she was even more beautiful than when she first

entered the meeting hall. He was fortunate enough to have an empty chair next to him, and with a grand flourish and a beaming smile he ushered her into it. As she took a seat, he detected a scent like wild flowers about her.

"Now then, Zantoulios, if you're quite finished there ...?" Dreelix asked with a raised eyebrow.

Zantoulios had a sopping wet cloth napkin in his hand, with which he had been mopping up his spilled drink. "Certainly," he replied, dropping the napkin on the table and approaching the lectern on Dreelix's left.

Zantoulios cleared his throat, looked at Azurielle, smiled, and began his briefing. "Last week, after hearing of the presence of a nymph in the forest nearby, three of us went out in search of her. We had, of course, studied up a bit on the magical abilities of nymphs and pretty much knew what to expect."

"If I may ask, what magical abilities were you aware of, and how did you plan on counteracting them?" asked Azurielle.

"First of all, it is well known that even a glimpse of a nymph can cause blindness.¹ We countered that by wearing black gauze blindfolds. These allowed us to make out figures around us, but not in any detail. Thus, the nymph appeared as no more than a silhouette and could cause our vision no harm."

"Very clever," commented Azurielle.

"Next, we knew nymphs can cast the dimension door spell once per day.² Not wishing her to escape so easily, we assigned Grindle the task of keeping her in one place. As you can well see, Grindle easily weighs more than a *dimension door* spell can transport; once he got his arms around her, she was unable to teleport away."

Looking at Grindle, Azurielle could indeed see how the man's weight would prevent the use of the spell. Sensing her eyes upon him, Grindle beamed, flexed, and added "It's all muscle," a statement belied by the folds of flesh wobbling under his upper arm.

"But how did you approach her undetected?" asked Azurielle. "Surely the nymph would have seen you stumbling up to her, wearing gauze blindfolds and waving your arms about in the air?"

"Not so," replied Zantoulios. "It was only necessary for us to get Grindle within striking distance. While the rest of us stayed well out of sight, Grindle *polymorphed* himself into a mole. Thus, he was able to walk right up to her — nymphs often pet forest creatures that approach, and she certainly wasn't going to suspect a mole of being a man just because he kept his eyes closed.

"Once Grindle felt the nymph stroking his mole-pelt, it was simplicity itself to cancel the spell and overpower her. When Grindle called out that he had the nymph, the rest of us approached, and as he held her steady, it was easy enough for us to cut off a few locks of her hair—useful in the production of *sleeping potions*³—and coax a few tears out of her."

"Oh? And how did you manage that?" asked the young woman.

"It was simple, really, she was very obliging. In fact, she began leaking tears as we began cutting her hair—something about diminishing her beauty, I think. Dreelix kept the tears flowing by describing what would happen if she tried to escape—you know, burning down the forest, stomping on baby bunnies, that sort of thing. He's really very good at it, you know."

"I have always had the gift of eloquence," admitted Dreelix.

At his seat next to the beautiful newcomer, Buntleby frowned. A quick look at his friend Willowquisp the Zoophile, seated across the room from him, confirmed that neither man thought much of their leader's tactics. Apparently, neither did Azurielle, for Buntleby thought he could sense repressed anger building beneath the calm exterior of her lovely young face.

"How much did we acquire?" asked Old Gumphrey, the oldest of the Monster Hunters and a sage of well renown.

"I'd estimate enough hair for a good dozen or so *sleeping potions*," replied Dreelix. "I haven't begun distilling the tears into *philters of love* yet, but I'd guess we should have enough for at least four, maybe five. I'll keep you posted."

"Well, Azurielle, as you can see, I'd say that we did our homework on the nymph. Thank you, Zantoulios, you may step down." Returning his gaze to the young woman seated by Buntleby, Dreelix asked, "Is there anything you'd care to add?"

"There certainly is," replied Azurielle, standing up and approaching the lectern. All eyes were upon her as she walked, including those of Zantoulios, who nearly tripped over his chair as he attempted to take his seat.

"First of all, your study and research of the nymph seems a bit one-sided: it seems you bothered to study only how to capture and use a nymph to your own benefit. And, I must say, even that list is not all-inclusive. I know of at least one other use to which you can put those locks of nymph's hair."⁴

"By all means, let's hear more!" said Dreelix, always eager to learn of more ways to plunder magical creatures of their properties. He nodded to the Conjuror Ablasta, who began her spell of recording. Instantly, a feather quill poised itself over a book of blank pages, ready to copy down the words that would lead the Monster Hunters Association into new avenues of exploitation.

"Before I take up those matters, I would like to say a few words in general about the nymph," said Azurielle. Dreelix rather grumpily agreed; he was eager to get to the important facts, but found it hard to say "no" to such a beauty. Besides, he could always just daydream through the boring parts.

"Nymphs are not normal, flesh-and-blood creatures of the ordinary world. They are spirits of nature, the physical embodiments of loveliness. They appear as perfectly formed human or elven women; there are no male nymphs. Nor,

1. Not only men but also women are susceptible to being blinded by looking at a nymph, as are demihumans of either sex. Furthermore, one need not look directly at a nymph in order to be blinded: viewing one through a scrying device like a *crystal ball* or *reflecting pool* has the same effect. The image of a nymph in a simple mirror can cause blindness; even seeing a nymph's reflection in a pool of water can do the job (although a saving throw at +4 is probably in order due the distortion caused by ripples on the water).

Perhaps because satyrs are thought to be linked to dryads (who in turn are nature spirits), they can gaze upon a nymph with no danger of losing their sight. In fact, chasing wood nymphs is one of a

satyr's favorite pastimes. For their part, nymphs are fond of satyrs because of their musical ability — nymphs greatly enjoy music and dancing. It should be noted that nymphs are immune to the magical effects of a satyr's piping.

2. Although the MONSTROUS MANUAL™ tome indicates that nymphs can cast *dimension door* spells, it does not state at what level the spell is cast. Treat nymphs as 12th-level wizards when casting *dimension door*; this value gives them a spell range of 360 yards. This range is comparable to the distance dryads (who are able to use *dimension door* to teleport back to their trees, and to whom nymphs are closely related) will stray from their tree homes,

3. A *sleeping potion* made from—among other things—a lock of nymph's hair will cause imbibers to save vs. poison at -2 or fall into a deep sleep lasting 2d4 hours.

4. If the nymphs hair is enchanted, woven into a cloth and sewn into a garment, the wearer adds 1 to his or her Charisma. Creating such a garment requires the use of an *enchant an item* spell but no further spells—the Charisma boost is powered by the magic from the nymphs hair and works as long as the garment is worn. At least 20 strands of hair from a single nymph are required to create such a garment. The types of such magical vestments are many, but popular ones include robes, capes, and shirts or blouses.

I should say, need there be, for nymphs do not reproduce as you understand it. Wherever there is a place of exceptional natural beauty, there you will find a nymph. They are, I suppose you would say, 'spontaneously generated' by the beauty of the natural world. Similarly, when a place of great beauty is marred, when an ancient grove of trees is chopped down for firewood, or an ocean grotto is used as a dumping-ground for waste, then the nymph inhabiting that place fades away and dies.

"Nymphs, being nature spirits, need not eat, sleep, or even breathe.⁵ They will not fight, seeking instead to flee from danger by using their *dimension* door ability and by use of druidical magic.⁶

"Since they are so closely tied to with the forces of nature, nymphs are not creatures to be trifled with. True, they disdain physical combat, but that does not make them powerless. Nature's way is not always the gale force of a hurricane; often it is the stealthy, patient encroachment of a tiny plant growing between the cracks of a rock."

Dreelix cleared his throat to interrupt with a question, but the young woman cut him off at once.

"In a minute," snapped Azurielle, which gave Dreelix pause: he was not used to being spoken to in that fashion. Before he could open his mouth to object, though, the young woman had continued.

"Nymphs despise evil and will often go to great lengths to defeat it. And I must say, Dreelix," and here she looked at the President of the Monster Hunters Association with a look of intense personal hatred, "I am not pleased with this Association of yours."

Buntleby saw in his mind what was about to happen next and tried to shout out a warning, but he was a fraction of a second too late. He got out the words "She's a—" before everything went crazy.

The young woman removed a ribbon from her hair, and immediately her features altered. Like a serpent sloughing off a skin to reveal its glistening new scales, Azurielle's human features were cast off and replaced with those of a nymph-as perfect a physical specimen

5. Indeed, nymphs are immune to the *sleep* spell and similar magic, as well as to spells altering the ability to breathe (such as *water breathing*). Nymphs are occasionally found underwater in places of exceptional beauty, and they are not discomfited by the lack of air or the pressure exerted by the waters of the deep.

6. The MONSTROUS MANUAL® tome (and both the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® and 1st-Edition *Monster*

Manual book before it) states that nymphs "can employ druidical priest spells at 7th ability level," then errs on the number of spells available to nymphs. Like normal 7th-level druids, nymphs can cast three 1st, three 2nd, two 3rd, and one 4th level spell each day. Unlike human druids, however, they do not require material components for their spells, and their magical nature also gives them a 50% resistance to all magic.

7. Those blinded by a nymph are often caught up in a magical, rapturous condition in which the brain becomes overloaded by the beauty it has just beheld and is unable to process any other inputs. This state lasts anywhere from 2-20 minutes, during which time the victim is completely unaware of his surroundings. A successful saving throw vs. paralysis indicates that the victim's mind is strong enough to avoid entering such a state.

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as any assembled in the room had ever seen or could ever hope to see. The ribbon, now in the form of a hat, slipped from her fingers to the floor.

The results were instantaneous. Old Gumphrey the sage cried out in rapture,⁷ his nearly-toothless mouth held drooping open as tears streamed down his face from eyes that saw no more. Lady Ablasta, jealous enough at Azurielle's human disguise, could not handle this next step up in beauty, and her vision shut itself down almost as a defense mechanism. *No one can be that beautiful!* she thought to herself as her world went black. Willowquisp, eyes bugging out from their sockets, fell over backward in his chair and sat staring sightlessly up at the ceiling.

"—nymph," ended Buntleby quietly, for it was too late, and the damage was done.

Looking around the room, Buntleby took a quick damage assessment. Over half of their ranks had gone blind, from the looks of it. Dreelix, remarkably, was unaffected—perhaps because he doesn't place as great a value on beauty as he does on personal power, thought Buntleby.

But Azurielle was not finished with the Association yet. While Buntleby was scanning the room to see who had survived the visual onslaught, the young nymph had been loosening her robes. As her single garment slid to the floor, Buntleby had a quick glimpse out of the corner of his eye, felt his heart explode in his chest, and fell over backward in shock.

He felt his head crash against the hardwood floor and thought to himself that this was a good thing. *I can't be dead if my head hurts*, he reasoned.

"You care only for your own selfish desires," continued Azurielle. "It matters not who is hurt in the process, so long as you collect your precious magical items. You took your nymph's hair all right, Dreelix. I ask you, was it worth the price?"

Dreelix, however, didn't answer. He stood staring straight ahead, as in shock, and then slowly, slowly, started tipping over to his right, landing in a heap on the floor. His eyes remained wide open, but he saw nothing, for he was stone cold dead.

Cautiously, Buntleby rose to his feet. He dared a quick look around. Zantoulios lay slumped over at his table, his face in the wine-soaked napkin he had used to clean up his spill. Several others lay dead on the floor, including mighty Grindle. In the middle of the circle of tables stood Azurielle, wrapping her robe back around her and tying it in place. "It is done," was all she had to say.

"Indeed it is," remarked Buntleby. "But was it necessary?"

"Necessary?" shrieked the nymph, running her hand through her hair, exposing several different lengths, where it had been haphazardly hacked away. "They assaulted me! They threatened me! They cut my hair!"⁸

"And you are no less beautiful because of it. Azurielle, I agree with you, what they did was wrong and it shames me to be associated with their actions, but your vengeance was equally wrong. You killed the three that did you harm, but at the same time you killed several people who had nothing to do with it, as well as blinding quite a few innocent bystanders."

"Think nothing of it," piped up Willowquisp from his perch on his overturned chair on the floor. "It was well worth the blindness to see such beauty just once in my lifetime."

Azurielle stared at her surroundings as if seeing them for the first time. "Perhaps you are right," she admitted. "But nature can be very unforgiving at times. I was overcome by disgust for the greed inherent in your Association. The things Dreelix said to me, just to force my tears!"

"True, there are those who are in it just for the greed, and I'm sure Dreelix himself heads that list. But that's not true of all of us. Willowquisp and I enjoy learning about the creatures around us; my friend and mentor Spontayne shares our views. And, greed or no, this Association does have its uses: the red dragon armor worn by Sir Parnifax, Paladin of the Order of the Bleeding Rose, was fashioned from the hide of a wyrm we slew for its blood, and that armor has saved his life on many an occasion. Zantoulios, when he isn't blowing up his lab in untested experiments, does sometimes come up with something new; just last month, he increased the efficacy of a *potion of healing* by altering the amount of powdered troll's blood used, and his troglodyte bladder tests proved conclusively—"

"All right," conceded the nymph. "I see your point. I must admit, I acted impulsively. Perhaps I should go."

"Perhaps that would be for the best," agreed Buntleby quietly. "But before you do, I want to say that on behalf of the Monster Hunters Association, I'm sorry for what was done to you. I'm afraid that's the only apology you'll get; Dreelix won't likely have much to say on the subject."

Azurielle's eyes narrowed. "You'll have him returned from death?"

"Yes, I'm afraid I must. It's the right thing to do. Besides," Buntleby added with a chuckle, "the money will come out of the Association's coffers. After paying to have everyone here raised or their sight restored, we'll be close to broke. And that is a much better revenge on Dreelix than just killing him." He gave her a quick wink. "This will get him even madder."

Azurielle smiled a sweet smile. "You are a remarkable man," she noted. "I notice that you're the only one able to face me in my true form. Not many can do so. The human mind is such a frail thing; it cannot often stand up to absolutes. You should be proud."

"Alas, I must say that I wish it were not so. Seeing you will always be one of

my most treasured memories; I just hope that your unearthly beauty hasn't spoiled the appeal of the women I shall encounter hereafter."

"Let us hope not," replied the nymph, picking up her hat from the floor and placing it on her head. Instantly, her features altered to those of the lovely young woman who had entered the meeting-hall and caused such a disturbance, such a short time ago. The hat resumed its previous form of a hair ribbon.

"A *hat of disguise*," remarked Buntleby with appreciation.

"Yes, a gift from an admirer."⁹ Azurielle approached the Conjurer Ablasta, staring straight ahead at nothing. Grabbing the feather quill even now writing down every word spoken, the nymph broke it in half and tossed it to the floor. Then she approached Buntleby, and whispered in his ear.

"Off the record, I'd like you to do me a favor, if you would."

Buntleby beamed. "Certainly."

"See to it that your Association does not bother me again. It is for their own good; I have alerted Moonsilver of their deeds, and he will be keeping a watch out for them."

"Moonsilver?"

"The unicorn who guards that part of the forest."¹⁰

"Of course, Azurielle. But then, on second thought, I don't think I'd better mention Moonsilver specifically. You never know, Dreelix might want to try some experiments with a unicorn horn."

Azurielle nodded toward the broken quill on the floor. "I thought as much."

"Still, I'll make sure that they don't trouble you further."

"You're a dear." She blew him a kiss, said a single word in her own musical language, and disappeared.



Johnathan Richards has recently moved from California to Nebraska, where he and his sons, Stuart and Logan, have resumed their AD&D® game campaign.

8. Nymphs, being physical manifestations of loveliness, care a great deal for their looks. They take special care to present themselves in the most appealing fashion, often weaving fragrant flowers into their hair. This is not all vanity and pride, however, as they are intimately entwined with the areas of natural beauty which gave them life. If a nymph is attacked and suffers damage, the area with which she is associated is likewise diminished in beauty. Killing a nymph is a sure way to cause her special area to become despoiled, and possibly even cursed. Specific curses are left to the DM, but those seeking inspiration should check out "Defiled and

Cursed Groves" on pages 115-116 of *The Complete Druid's Handbook*.

9. Most of a nymph's treasure consist of objects given to her by lovesick admirers. A great deal of these gifts are gemstones; a nymph will typically have 10-40 such gems stored in a safe place somewhere in her domain. Stored in the same location will usually be several potions, which the nymph makes herself using only natural ingredients from her domain. These potions are usually restorative in nature, such as potions of healing, sweet water, and vitality, as well as antitoxins and *elixirs of health*.

These potions are administered to those in need, most often the animals living in the immediate vicinity.

10. Those nymphs living in sylvan forests share a special relationship with unicorns. As the nymphs are nature spirits and do not normally fight, and unicorns are self-appointed guardians of their forests, unicorns go to great lengths to protect any nymphs inhabiting their woodlands, often fighting to the death. They are each able to speak the other's language.



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The investigations of Volo continue this time with GaulaUntyr “Glorytongue.” First mentioned in the *Sword Coast Curiosities*, Gaulauntyr is a mature adult topaz dragon of sinuous appearance. She has haunted the Sword Coast from Baldur’s Gate to Luskan for the last century, moving about often to avoid other dragons, whom she has no interest in fighting. She prefers a life of stealth in and about human cities to the more typical—for wyrms—slumbering in a lair in the heart of a territory one dominates.

Authorities unanimously refer to this dragon as female and solitary. If she’s ever taken a mate, history knows nothing of him or of his fate.

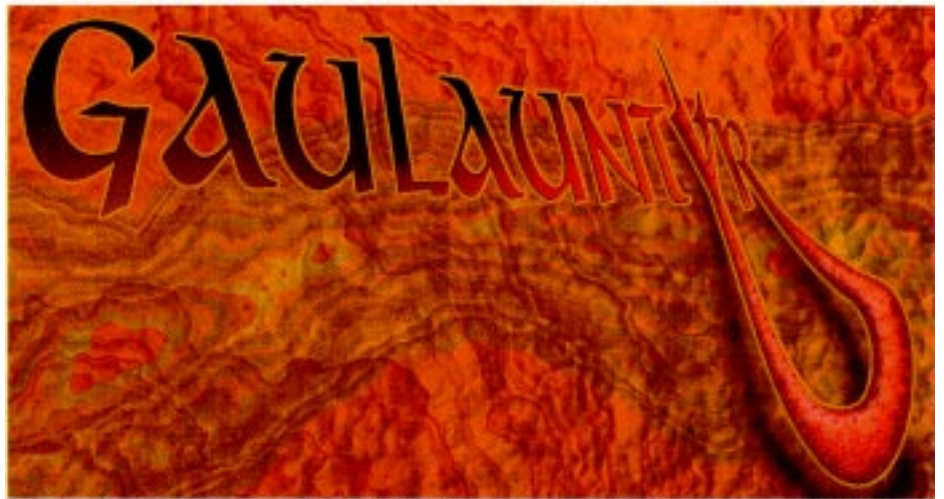
Gaulauntyr is one of the most intelligent and paranoid dragons of the North. She almost always cloaks herself in illusory disguises, and hides in forest glades, abandoned warehouses or ruins, or just under cover of darkness whenever possible. She’s quite adept at landing softly atop the palaces and mansions of nobles, cautiously testing the roofs to see whether they’ll bear her weight, then draping herself over them to be as hidden as possible from eyes watching either from below or from windows in the building itself. She then employs *wizard eye* and *unseen servant* spells, plus her glorytongue spell, to pluck gems and magical items out of the building.

Gaulauntyr is sometimes called “the Thief Dragon” because of her hunger for gems and the manner in which she has used spells, human hirelings, and stealth to steal gems from humans—notably Waterdhavian nobles, but also jewelers and gem-merchants in Luskan and other places up and down the Sword Coast. Gaulauntyr’s more familiar nickname, “Glorytongue,” comes from her habit of delivering touch spells with her tongue after employing a 1st-level spell, *glorytongue*, to make it a long, precise ribbon of flesh that can enter rooms via openings as small as a keyhole.

Gaulauntyr’s true success, however, comes from an enchanted item and her own sly wits. The item, Jharakkan’s Talon, is a little-known draconic artifact of Faerûn. More importantly, her shrewd mind allows Gaulauntyr to understand the societies of Luskan, Neverwinter, Waterdeep, Baldur’s Gate, and Caer Callidyr, thus learning where gems and wealth may be found, and when they’ll be most poorly guarded. She has learned the way both dragons and humans tend to think, allowing her to misdirect those folk of both races time and time again.



The Thief Dragon



by Ed Greenwood

illustrated by Storn Cook

Gaulauntyr often uses spells to lure or misdirect humans, employing such devices as the illusion of a beautiful human girl to give sobbing evidence or to distract pursuers. On one occasion, the Thief Dragon was lying in a stableyard, magically cloaked to appear as a fresh and steaming pile of manure, with her elongated glorytongue running through a cellar and up a heating-vent into a great bedchamber in an adjacent mansion. Guards were pounding on the door of the room, trying to reach its rightful occupant—a noble lady whom Gaulauntyr was keeping bound, gagged, and stuffed above the canopy of her own bed with the dragon’s *glorytongue*. The lady had managed to strike an alarm-gong before being thus trapped, and the guards gave the dragon only a few minutes to think of something before they brought the door down,

When they burst into the room at last, the astonished guards saw naked

women diving out every window of the bedchamber, clutching their lady’s gems and finery. When the men gave chase to the illusory thieves and the stolen treasure, Gaulauntyr stuffed the lady head-first down her own garderobe to keep her quiet for a while, used an *unseen servant* spell to tie up the best gems in some bed-linens, and rolled the bundle out a window.

The guard whom the falling gems almost hit had a few moments to stare at them before the dragon’s tongue, emerging from the cellar, dealt him a spell that toppled him into slumber. The dragon snatched up the gems and took wing—in the suddenly—glowing guise of a red dragon with a certain and recognizable wizard riding a high saddle on its back, so that the crime would be blamed on someone else.

Gaulauntyr spends her days watching (*farscrying*, in most cases) human life up and down the Sword Coast, devising

new ways to steal gems or, sometimes, food. She loves exotic cheeses and sauces made from them, even though human portions give her only fleeting tastes of such delicacies.

Glorytongue's relationships with other dragons have been, in the words of the human sage Velsaert of Baldur's Gate, "one long series of hurried escapes and misdirections."

The key to Gaulauntyr's character could be said to be her wry grasp of human and draconic nature, and the skill born of this that always keeps her thinking three steps ahead of opponents. She always has an escape route, a scheme to disappear or adopt a disguise, or a secondary plan for seizure of gems or goods if the first one fails. Often ending a secondary crime with a spectacular occurrence, such as pulling down a building, creates enough confusion that Gaulauntyr can pursue her original plan once more.

Gaulauntyr is said to be an accomplished mimic of human voices, very good at improvising interesting small-talk to put in the mouth of one of her spell-images. Many dragons are said to be half-heartedly seeking her to recover the gems she has stolen, but Gaulauntyr seems to have no strong and persistent foes. The Cult of the Dragon would probably be deadly enemies to her if they knew just who was behind many of the thefts from their agents and treasures that have occurred up and down the Sword Coast.

Gaulauntyr's Lair

Glorytongue makes her true lair in a many-armed tidewater cavern on the western face of a tiny island known as Alsapir's Rock, named for a long-ago fisherman who died when his boat was dashed apart against it during a storm. The Rock is so close to Mount Sar that it is ignored by most maps and charts.

Here she keeps the gems she steals, as well as a captive deepspawn, whose creatures can't escape from the caverns thanks to its watery entry. The monsters get include rothé, deer, and boars, among other prey suitable for Gaulauntyr's appetite. The cavern lacks any food for these beasts, but Gaulauntyr usually devours them long before they have any chance to escape.

The lair has no known traps or notable features, but Gaulauntyr usually devours any humans who see its interior. She keeps her treasures hidden in crevices and on ledges behind large

boulders that she rolls up to form a false wall. Thus, most intruders think the cavern ends where her heaped boulders begin. The Thief Dragon has no known servants or habitual accomplices or allies.

Gaulauntyr's Domain

From Alsapir's Rock, Gaulauntyr roams up and down the coast, usually keeping to the outward islets of the Moonshaes or the vicinity of Waterdeep, but sometimes working as far south as the Nelanther. Glorytongue is finding the City of Splendors and its environs increasingly crowded with various disguised dragons and other formidable spies and creatures of stealth. She makes fewer and less bold forays into its range than she once did.

The Deeds of Gaulauntyr

Although she customarily dines on what her captive deepspawn produces, Gaulauntyr favors wyvern, giant squid, and—when she dares to attack them—dragon turtles. She has almost died several times trying to slay dragon turtles. Once, during a storm, she succeeded in beaching one too far out of water for it to return, and she had a feast.

Gaulauntyr spends most days more lazily, using spells to spy on events up and down the coast. She has the strength to dive in and clamber out of the submerged mouth of her cavern in all but the worst storm weather or winter ice, and she is known to have some high meadows and desolate tors to rest upon when she can't return to her lair or doesn't want to lead pursuers to it.

Gaulauntyr's Magic

One spell devised by Gaulauntyr appears hereafter, but her mightiest magic is Jharakkan's Talon, a draconic artifact she has grafted to herself.

Jhamkkan's Talon

The Talon is really a talon-sheath: a hollow cone of black horn from some unknown creature. It is very hard and tough, so most blows don't even mark it. The Talon is large enough to fit over the end of a dragon's own talon, and it has a pierced end, so the real talon protrudes through it, causing normal claw damage on a successful attack.

The Talon is named for Jharakkan, a dragon-sorcerer who created it long ago. (No one alive is sure where or when.) Old legends recorded in books kept at Candlekeep say that Jharakkan was a black wyrm who lived for over

4,000 years and devised many magical items. There is no other evidence to support these tales, however, one of which may be an exaggerated retelling of another, and so on.

The Talon is known to have been found about 60 summers ago by Gaulauntyr, on the skeleton of a drowned dragon that lay just off the end of the island of Highport in the Moonshaes. The skeleton might have been the remains of the red dragon known as Ualinthargar the Devouring Flame, of whom the Ffolk tell wild tales.

A human could employ the Talon, either lying within it as if it were a bed, or placing it point-uppermost and placing a stool or platform within it, so as to stand within it as a sort of skirt, and call upon its powers to augment his or her own spells (in the defense of a fortress, perhaps, or to monitor events in a building in which the Talon was placed).

Certain organizations (such as the Zhentarim, the Red Wizards, the Arcane Brotherhood, and the Cult of the Dragon) would be very interested in acquiring the Talon to see whether its enchantments could be unraveled and adapted to the creation of items that would temporarily allow underlings to cast a few minor spells so as to aid in attacks, probably draining the lives of those unfortunates in the process.

Powers of the Talon

Constant. Continual contact with the Talon allows any dragon or human spellcaster to memorize and cast six additional wizard spells, one each of the first six spell levels, daily. The being employing the Talon must be touching it during study and spellcasting, but not necessarily during the time between; the Talon stores the spells, rather than keeping them in the mind of a user. Note that multiple beings may use the Talon in succession, so that it stores the spells of more than one being at the same time. Only one being can actually memorize or unleash spells at once. If two beings, both touching the Talon, try to call on its powers at once, the one possessing the higher total of Intelligence and Wisdom prevails. If their totals are equal, each must roll 2d6; the higher total wins, but only for the same number of rounds as the winning dice total. After that time, the Talon ceases to work for that being only, for twice the number of rounds as the winning dice total.

The Talon does not make any spells (including those it may be storing for

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other beings) available to any users; it merely empowers them to memorize and cast spells they glean from other sources, even spells of levels they can't normally use (which is the situation with Gaulauntyr; at her age, she can't use wizard spells beyond 1st level without the Talon's help).

Invoked. None known (though one or more might exist).

Curse. Each spell cast from the roster provided by the Talon drains 1d3 hp from a user. This hit-point-loss can be regained by healing or rest and doesn't harm the casting or operation of spells cast with the aid of the Talon.

Suggested means of destruction:

❖ The Talon must be immersed in the blood of at least a dozen species of true dragons, within the same month.

❖ The Talon must be struck by a wand of negation while it is in contact with six *rings of wizardry*, which are destroyed along with the Talon.

Glorytongue

(Alteration)

Level: 1

Range: 30 yards

Components: V

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: The caster's tongue

Saving Throw: None

This spell transforms the caster's tongue into a long thin, flattened cylinder of flesh that retains all of its normal functions but also gains the ability to "float" in air and respond with deft precision to the caster's existing tongue muscles. It can thus be used to deliver touch-related spells or to perform such activities as turning keys, toppling small objects, or moving items about from a distance.

The possessor of a glorytongue can retract it completely into his or her mouth in a coil or stretch it out to the limits of the spell range. The tip of the tongue can even "see" in a hazy manner; that is, it can sense the presence, outlines, and distance of all solid objects or bodies within a radius of 3'. It can cling to surfaces, allowing it to climb along a rope, for example) or become very slippery, as desired by the possessor. Such slipperiness can't win free of magical effects such as a *web* spell or specialized entrapments such as roper strands or cave fisher filaments, but it can allow the tongue to escape natural effects, such as clinging spider webs and sap or gum.

A glorytongue can wrap around objects to move them, but it can't pull

something forcibly away from the grasp of a creature or hang on to carry the weight of its possessor. It can't carry objects heavier than 1 lb.

Glorytongues are AC 6, MV Fly 9 (A), and can suffer only 12 hp damage before collapsing into dust. If such a failure occurs due to wounding, the possessor of the glorytongue suffers 1d4 hp damage and suffers bleeding from his or her own real tongue. A glorytongue has surprisingly little taste sensation (as it doesn't supply a sense of smell), but it can distinguish bitter, salty, spicy; and the like, and can recognize specific tastes its possessor has sampled before (a particular wine, for example).

The caster of a glorytongue can make it vanish before spell expiration. This is the typical response if a foe grabs the elongated tongue or if the glorytongue becomes trapped. Despite its length, its caster can still speak clearly and can choose to have such speech be emitted from the distant tip of the tongue, if desired.

Gaulauntyr's Fate

Glorytongue is not likely to have a long and uneventful life. Sooner or later,

one of the wizards who dwell in the Sword Coast North will catch up with her. Alternatively, an attempted theft might go seriously wrong. The topaz dragon can be a fearsome foe in any battle, but if she's caught overextended, she could well be slain.

At least one elven mage of Evermeet is considering how Gaulauntyr's psionic powers could be manipulated so as to make her steal things upon command, thus providing the elven realm with an additional line of defense. In such a case, Gaulauntyr could deprive explorers bent on reaching the fable Far Isle of magic they need, or of masts and keels for their boats, or she might merely distract them with the apparent rise of a persistent personal foe.



Ed Greenwood is the creator of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting and sometimes appears at conventions dressed as the wise old sage Elminster. He's worn other costumes, too. As a result, he was once described as "quite a fetching tavern dancer—except for the beard and the belly."

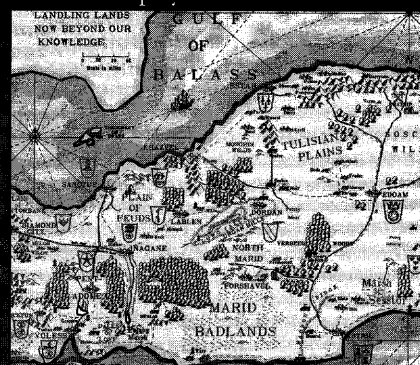
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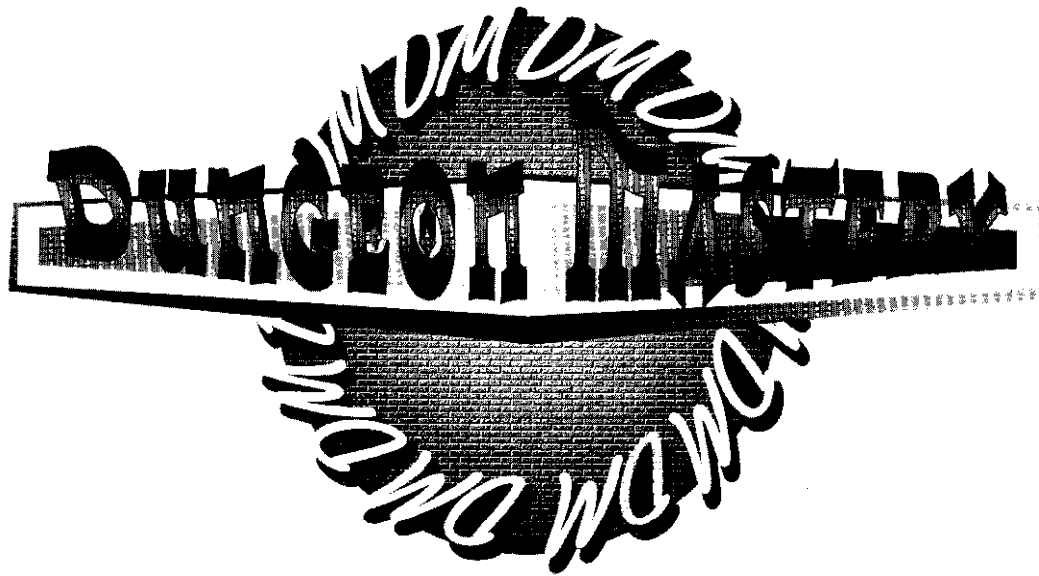
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101 Little Mysteries

by Steve Berman

What is more unnerving than the unknown? And what is more satisfying than revealing the truth behind an enigma? Here is a list of 101 incidents and objects that can add a little spice to any campaign world. Any of them can occur or appear in a campaign even before the DM has decided what they mean.

Many of these little mysteries are magical (and well should be in a fantasy campaign) and may well be developed further as notable arcane adventuring rewards. Some might be considered omens, while others could simply be instances in which an individual's imagination makes something foreboding out of a coincidence.

Mysteries and Omens

Many of these mysteries are perfect for use as omens. A DM should try to enforce an omen without denying the PCs' free will. For example, assume the DM decides to use Mystery #23 as an omen that the PCs will soon face a red dragon. The PCs have no desire to challenge the beast and decide to head north, where red dragons are unlikely to lair. To keep the omen "true," the DM must come up with believable ways to ensure the prophesied dragon and the

PCs eventually meet. Perhaps an ancient white dragon knows of the prophecy and sends word of the PCs' whereabouts to its crimson cousin. Perhaps a slumbering red dragon lurks in a hot springs just past the next ice-capped mountain. In the latter case, the PC has inadvertently fulfilled the omen in the attempt to avoid it.

Building a Mystery

Instead of developing an entire adventure before introducing one of these mysteries, the DM can add one to an ongoing adventure before developing its solution fully. While this choice is a perfectly good way to liven a game session, it requires extra work and an eye toward fairness from the DM.

Perhaps the simplest way to let a mystery unfold is to determine several layers of truth that the PCs can discover. Each layer, once revealed, might pose more questions than it answers. The simplest mysteries can be solved with a single inquiry or investigation. The most elaborate could take several game sessions to unravel. For instance, for a quick resolution, Mystery # 73 might be solved when a clever PC decides to redesign the shield to show an open door. Alternatively, the mystery might

require that the PCs first learn how to open the door on the shield, then enter the new world to which it leads, then find the missing apprentice's trail either by tracking or by asking questions, and so on. Each of these mysteries can be just the first step in a much longer story.

Remember that mysteries are made to be solved. When the PCs have spent a great deal of time and effort trying to solve a mystery, nothing is more frustrating than learning it was only a red herring. While the occasional red herring can add spice and fun to a game, like their namesake, they begin to stink after a while. If the PCs latch onto a mystery that was originally intended as a red herring, a good DM might consider building a mystery behind it after all. In this case, the DM has the advantage of knowing what the PCs expect the mystery to be, judging by the players' questions and the actions of the characters. It is important that the DM keep surprising the PCs with new clues and revelations about earlier leads, but it is often a mistake to change the truth behind a mystery merely to frustrate the PCs. The DM who gives the players a challenging but solvable mystery is far better than the one who sees the situation as an opportunity to outsmart the players.

101 Mysteries

1. A successful Intelligence check by any PC examining the drinking horn the PCs have just discovered reveals that the brass tip of the horn unscrews to reveal a small glass vial filled with glowing liquid.

2. Stopping to drink at a river, a PC sees something dark and ominous appear behind his reflection, raising a sword as if to strike the PC. When the PC turns, he sees nothing there. This event can recur several times before the source of the mystery is revealed.

3. A traveling mountebank is selling healing elixirs to the locals. He offers a free bottle to one of the characters. Though the bottle appears empty, it still makes a sloshing sound when shaken, as if it contained liquid. The mountebank disappears before the PCs can inquire further.

4. A goblet, when filled with clear liquid, reveals at the bottom of the cup an image of a sea floor with a treasure chest overflowing with gold coins.

5. Lately, a PC has been hearing the word "sermath" mentioned in every conversation she has with another person; but when she questions people, none recall using the term.

6. A game animal brought in by a character hunting has an old wound with an elaborately carved elven arrowhead still embedded in the animal's flesh. Any sage or elf the PCs consult knows that such arrowheads have supposedly not been used in over five centuries.

7. The black glass of a discovered bottle becomes transparent when the full moon shines on it. The moonlight reveals fine etchings that form a pirate treasure map.

8. On a little-traveled path appear a series of tracks, seeming as if some great procession traveled that way. When followed, the tracks lead to an immense oak and stop at the roots.

9. During a royal feast at which the characters are present, each dignitary is presented with a pie that is cut open to release a flight of live birds. All of the fowl fly above one character, circling twice before seeking the nearest open window in a particular direction.

10. A character hears someone call his old childhood nickname and turns to see a decrepit old woman standing nearby, staring at him. Then the crone turns and hobbles off toward the worst section of town.

11. A comely bard sings at an inn. One PC looks around to see that everyone present is saddened; even his comrades are close to tears. But the words that reach the character's ears are a light, merry tune.

12. Burning incense changes in scents, beginning with the rich odor of fine cooked victuals and then slowly souring to the stink of decay.

13. The label on a potion flask reads "elixir," but when the label becomes wet, a second label underneath is revealed. It reads: "To hold the Waters of Life."

14. The PCs discover a crude rock that, when handled, seems to crumble along the edges until it is worn down to a perfect resemblance of a human heart. When set down, it immediately returns to its original, featureless state.

15. The scabbard found beside a naked short blade obviously belongs with another sword, as it is much too long. However, both the short sword and the scabbard share the same markings, and with every dawn, the short sword appears within the scabbard, no matter where it was left earlier.

16. A weirdly crafted lantern of colored glass and brass casts shadows of things not visible. Most often seen is the shadow of another person holding on to the ring atop the lantern and pointing always east.

17. In the gullet of some creature slain by the PCs is a locket that holds a miniature painting of one PC's lost love or distant relative.

18. The ink on a parchment runs when wet, forming a cryptic poem that mentions one of the PCs by description.

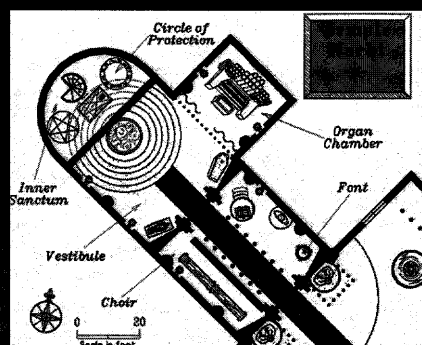
19. Blood leaking from a PC's wrapped wound seeps into the bandages and causes words that describe a horrendous injury that has not (yet) befallen the victim.

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20. At the bottom of a small chest is an odd stain in the shape of a crude hand. Any thief worth his picks can tell the bottom sounds hollow, but there does not seem to be sufficient space for a false compartment.

21. The PCs find an hourglass that has something golden hidden in the sands, but before the object is revealed, the device always turns itself over to hide the treasure beneath more pouring sand. Smashing the hourglass reveals only sand within, but perhaps the PCs can find a different way to find the hidden object.

22. One of the PCs notices an NPC accidentally cut himself. The PC sees not blood but sawdust pour from the wound.

23. When a torch is lit, a PC looking at the flames has a vision of a dragon breathing fire.

24. The PCs find a mummified hand clenched into a tight fist. Divination reveals that it holds something magical, but normal and arcane means to open the grip are ineffective. The only clue is a faded tattoo of a well on the mummy's wrist.

25. After finding an ancient gold coin that has been defaced with the symbol for an evil god of greed, the character notices that any coin he seems to acquire or find is similarly marred.

26. The PCs find a strange insect caught in a piece of amber. When the PCs catch a glance of the insect out of the corner of their eyes, the insect seems to crawl.

27. A heavy tome opens by itself to erudite passages in a language one of the PCs can read. The time at which the book opens and the nature of the passages seem almost—but not quite—to have some bearing on the PCs' current situation.

28. A black cat follows one of the adventurers about but can never be caught. The animal seems unnatural, for instead of normal cat eyes, it has the same type of eyes as one of the PCs.

29. When a PC draws a finely-crafted dagger, she can hear the blade murmur but cannot quite make out words other than her own name.

30. During a joust, a stranger enlists wearing the armor of a distant realm. He lasts nearly the entire tourney, downing several foes before he himself falls. He does not rise, and squires nearly faint when they lift the helm to find an empty suit of armor.

31. At a roadside inn, the sign bears no name (as most of the locals cannot read) but the odd design of a mangy dog. When the characters leave the inn, such an animal follows them for several days, howling at odd instances.

32. Heavy rainfall drenches all the characters to the bone—except for one, a warrior who seems oddly untouched by the dismal weather. Even his clothes are dry, his boots unmuddied.

33. A well-crafted mace is found to have the design of a horrid face set in a grimace atop the haft. When it is swung, a bystander notices that the features twist until the mouth appears open, perhaps ready to speak.

34. A corpse hangs from a tree at a crossroads. It appears to have been killed weeks ago, and crows pick at the remains. To one of the PCs, the birds' cries sound like distorted human voices, debating the dead man's guilt.

35. On a windy day, one of the overhead clouds watched by an idle character seems to take the shape of a rearing stallion. Carried on the breeze is the sound of a horse's whinny.

36. While walking through the streets, a flower is thrown down to one of the characters from an open window. The blossom is so delicate that it crumbles in the hand. The only room that faces out to the street is found to be empty when explored, though the rich scent of the flower lingers in the air.

37. While camping off the roadway, a character seeking firewood comes across a ring of toadstools. Leaning down to pick up a fallen branch, she hears the sound of many small feet running about behind her, but when she looks up the woods are empty.

38. While memorizing a spell, a mage drifts off into a trance and views himself battered and harried by many unseen foes, using the incantation in a last-ditched effort to survive.

39. In the bottom of a cork stopper in a potion or wine bottle is discovered a small silver key.

40. Floating in the air inches from the ceiling is a small spinning bauble. It appears to be crafted from silver and blackened so as to appear much like a revolving moon that waxes and wanes. The bauble quickens its turns when approached and easily dodges out of anyone's grasp.

41. When staring at an unusual pattern of lines in a tapestry, a PC enters a trance and sees the lines form into tree trunks in some massive dark forest.

42. During a priest's ceremony, a bored PC's attention drifts toward some of the other layfolk. Suddenly she glances her sworn enemy sitting placidly among them. When the PC tries to approach her enemy, she finds that he is gone. Perhaps he was never there.

43. Sunk into the earth is a small hole, smooth as silk on the sides as if unnaturally dug. At the bottom is a keyhole, but there seem to be no cracks or edges, so what is unlocked can only be guessed.

44. Just outside some ruins is discovered a massive pair of manacles, fit for wrists twice the size of a man's and forged from rune-etched iron. The chains that link them have been broken, the metal notched as if gnawed and bitten through.

45. Inside a scroll case that appears to have been crafted from a giant's arm-bone is a small strip of vellum that would seem to tie a scroll shut. Along its scarlet-dyed length are markings like a map, but most are faded away.

46. Monks, traveling in line toward some distant shrine, pass by the characters on the road. One turns to the party and in the hood is seen the noble visage of one of the local gods.

47. At a small monastery by the roadside, an event has drawn a mass of people from the surrounding area. Claiming a miracle, they all speak in hush whispers about a gigantic hand that pours down copper coins for all to share the wealth. One of the PCs witnesses the event, but upon examining the coins sees the along the edges are symbols of greed and deceit.

48. The party finds the torn cover from a tome on courtly love with a crudely drawn map on the other side. The destination is the known tomb of a princess who died the night before her wedding day.

49. The very end of a fine-crafted rapier has been notched to resemble a key. Engraved on the protective hand-guard is the phrase "the last stab done by me / shall be the one sets them free."

50. An animated skeleton cradles in its hands the swaddling cloth of an infant. It slowly approaches the party and lays down the cloth. It points to the east once, then crumbles to dust.

51. Into town stumbles an old war veteran, wearing a uniform the PCs have never seen before. He claims to have taken part in a bitter campaign that lasted over 10 years. When asked of the combatants, he mentions lands that are currently at peace. Nothing can dissuade him from the truth of his story.

52. Roasting fresh game on the campfire spit, one of the PCs' companions (preferably a local guide) mentions how the smell of cooked food attracts spirits. While eating his portion, the character feels a presence but sees nothing. A bone is tossed into the dying fire, and in the sparks and smoke that result, the PC thinks he sees two burning eyes starting down upon him.

53. A thief encounters a lock that has been obviously tampered with but not forced. Scratched on the wood to either side of the lock are two words in cant: on the left is written "poison," on the right "dead-end." The tumblers have been broken so that the key will turn to the left or right but once.

54. Lying discarded is a stout staff of wood, bearing along its length charred marks that resemble the tracks of claws. When picked up, the bearer suddenly feels the staff being tugged, as if to wrest it from his grip. Then comes a sound, the barest of whispers: "Soon."

55. While traversing a fetid swamp, one of the PCs' steeds is swallowed by a gigantic serpentine beast. When the creature is finally dispatched, its remains open wide, a tunnel leading down into the water. Cries for help can be heard echoing from the depths.

56. The jester of the lord's court is entertaining the party at the evening meal when a crazed look suddenly passes over his face. He turns to a PC, leveling his madcap bauble at his or her chest, and cackles "One last jest for you, I see. Best keep your sword in hand." Then the jester faints dead away.

57. At a feast, one of the cupbearers spills drink all over the character's lap. While helping to clean the mess, the servant leaves behind a piece of parchment warning that the drink had been poisoned.

58. A rosebush, its blossoms the color of blood, is an odd site in the barren wilderness. Nestled in the roots is something pale and round. Perhaps the skull of someone foolish enough to pluck a rose? Or the curve of an ivory bowl?

59. On the outskirts of town is an old bronze sundial. The solar engravings are still legible through the verdigris. When one of the PCs reaches out to touch the sundial, his hand passing over the dial coincides with the light suddenly dimming around them.

60. While enjoying a relaxing day at a rustic fair, one of the PCs enters into an archery contest. He outperforms all of the locals and is ready to take the purse when suddenly another shaft strikes the target, hitting closer to the mark than the PCs' shot—yet none comes forth to claim the winning arrow.

61. A letter, bearing a royal seal, is found on the remains of a stablehand, perhaps a thief who stole it from some courier's pack. Reading the letter might surprise the PCs, since in it they are named as the couriers.

62. When a character takes his hand to his purse, he feels that it has been replaced with another. At a glance, the pouch he now bears is far more grand, colorful with embroidery and tassels. The strings are tied tightly shut, and the purse feels full of coins.

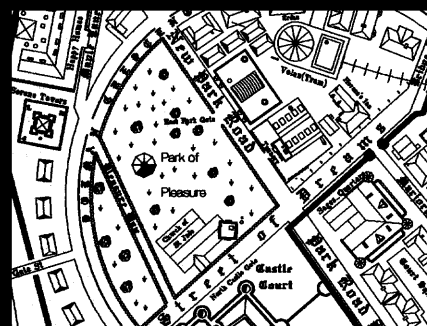
63. One of the PCs buys a horse that bears a brand that no one can identify. Months later, far from the lands they know, the PCs encounter the bodies of two foreign paladins and one horse that bears the same brand.

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64. A reflecting pool shows those who look into it not their own faces but those of their distant ancestors at the viewer's own age.

65. A bronze statue of a huntress with dogs at her feet is the only object of note in a chamber. While some PCs examine the room's walls for secret doors, those looking over the statue notice that one eye socket is vacant and the other contains a glimmering opal. Touching the statue makes the PC see strange lands with his left eye as the statue's mouth opens and closes.

66. A doomsayer has drawn a crowd, extolling them with prophecies that the end of the world is nearly at hand. As one of the PC watches, the haggard man grows horns, and his tongue turns long and forked. He turns to regard the PC and leers, yet none but the PC see such changes in the man's appearance.

67. Along a deserted stretch of road, a PC encounters an old friend on horseback. The friend seems distracted and taciturn, but the two have a conversation in which the friend mentions a fabled treasure in the mountains to the South. Waking the next day, the PC sees the tracks left where his friend rode off. Weeks later, he once more encounters his comrade, who claims to have never met the PC on that night and who has witnesses to prove he was in another locale altogether.

68. While the PCs walk through the city streets at night, a mist rises from the ground. Slowly, each PC is surrounded by the cool whiteness and cannot see or hear the others. From ahead come the sounds of some great war. The shapes of soldiers can just be discerned. With a few more steps, the PCs leave the mist and find themselves on an immense field. Has the battle just happened? Or is it yet to come?

69. In a cavern, the PCs discover that non-dwarven voices cannot cause an echo, but dwarven voices return accompanied by a constant chant of many other dwarven voices.

70. Come morning, the PC finds the small hand mirror in her room has shattered. Curiously, the shards of glass are arranged in a pattern that resembles a hand grasping the handle. The back of the mirror is charred.

71. The PCs are attacked by brigands, one of whom wears a bejeweled eyepatch. Oddly, the man is not missing an eye, nor does his eye look diseased. The patch's gem is flawed upon closer inspection, but it catches the light as if an exquisite jewel.

72. The hilt of a dagger is found, the blade broken off where it met the brass crossguard. Everyone who sees the dagger speaks of an infamous local pirate who buried a chest of gold and broke the blade in the lock. Her spirit is said to haunt the coast. The next morning a PC awakens with the broken dagger in hand, as if to ward off an attacker.

73. A falling star strikes the land with a great explosion. Arriving on the scene, the PCs discover what look like human tracks around the site, but only leaving the area.

74. A ranger finds the tracks of his sworn enemy and follows the trail. As he moves along, he notices more and more of their number until it seems that an entire war band of the creatures is stalking the woods. Other than the trail, however, there are no marks of passage: no broken branches, no signs of campfire or slaughtered game.

75. A druid harvesting sacred mistletoe with a sickle passed down from his father's father finds the edge suddenly dulled. The air thickens until sounds resound like a drumbeat, and he hears dull voices mutter that the sickle must be sharpened and that "only the first flint can earn the edge."

76. On a crisp autumn day, the PCs see some of the fallen dead leaves begin to dance and rise, though there seems to be no wind. The spectacle lasts for several minutes, then ends with each of the PCs left with a leaf sticking to his or her chest, over the heart.

77. While throwing dice, one of the PCs rolls incredibly well—so well that the other gamblers protest he is cheating. As tempers begin to flare, the PC notices in the corner of the room a hunched figure making gestures toward the PC, mimicking dice-rolling.

78. The candles in a particular room burn well enough, but the wax does not melt away, and the wicks are not consumed by the flame.

79. After buying a new leather pouch, a PC opens it to discover an unsigned note requesting a meeting at a local landmark. The date for the rendezvous has not yet arrived.

80. A PC discovers a strange stylus (or pen). Whenever she uses it, the PC finds herself writing in an unknown language. If she tries to draw a map with the stylus, she produces a map to a distant realm, perhaps the home of the language.

81. A package arrives at the PCs' residence, though it is addressed to someone else. Should the PCs deliver the package to the correct person, the old man thanks them and rewards them with a few coins. If they open the package, they find nothing inside except a green smoke, which quickly dissipates.

82. A PC has recovered a battered shield that bears an insignia of a door she finds oddly appealing. The smith who agrees to repair the shield soon discovers that one of his apprentices is missing—and the shield is found repaired.

83. A stone tablet, broken at one end, is filled with odd writing that defies both scholars and mages. Each night of the full moon, the writing glows, and dogs in the area begin to bark. Some say the tablet is cursed, but many want to possess it in hopes the script translates into power.

84. The pet or animal companion (but not familiar) of one of the PCs returns after running off for several days. The creature now wimpers and covers by its master whenever night falls.

85. In a wealthy spice merchant's household, the wares are slowly and inexplicably replaced by sawdust. Guards have run away in fright claiming that an irate household faerie is to blame, but the merchant firmly believes in a mortal answer to the mystery.

86. A PC meets a childhood friend whom she knows died young, yet now the friend is fully grown and thinks the PC is delusional.

87. All of the children born on the night of the most recent new moon have six fingers on each hand. Their parents are in an uproar, and the local church declares that something fiendish is the cause.

88. When reaching for his lockpicks, a thief notices that several of the choice picks have been replaced with cheap imitations. One is wrapped with a ribbon of the same deep blue color that tied a serving girl's hair at the tavern where he had stopped earlier.

89. A PC awakes to find that the previously full wash-basin is now empty—and that all containers of liquid, from water to oil, have been emptied without trace.

90. A priestly PC has finished her evening prayers and is preparing to retire for the evening when she thinks she hears a call from one of her superiors. The halls of the temple are quiet at such a late hour, however. Passing by the altar, the PC notices a small bag spilling grain lying on the stone.

91. The PCs return to a town or village where they have been local heroes before. They are astonished to find that no one remembers ever meeting them, even though the PCs themselves recognize many NPCs with whom they have interacted before.

92. For months, the city has hunted for a strangler who leaves the holy symbol of a PC's faith on the chest of each of his victims. One night, the PC finds that his holy symbol has been stolen.

93. A PC receives a letter informing him of the death of a relative. Upon arriving for the funeral, the PC discovers that his supposedly dead relative is alive and well. The letter-writer denies sending the message, though the handwriting and/or seal matches.

94. Receiving change in silver or copper for a purchase, the PC unknowingly accepts rare coins, which a third party wishes to recover.

95. While practicing with his blade, a warrior notices that his shadow has vanished. Unsettled by such a weird occurrence, he is even more disturbed when he hears word that local toughs are being challenged by a dark stranger.

96. An unknown admirer sends small gifts to one of the PCs, always through a paid messenger who never sees his employer's face. No matter what messages the PC sends back, the admirer refuses to reveal his or her identity or to meet with the PC.

97. On the road, a seemingly mad stranger offers to buy all of the PCs' footwear for a good price. If the PCs refuse his offer, he meets them later, this time seeming more sinister than insane. He remains insistent on buying the PCs boots and shoes—but refusing to say why. The stranger stops short of violence, but he might hire others to steal what he wants.

98. While studying her spellbook, a PC suddenly notices a line in one of the incantations she would swear does not belong. Stranger still, the line is in her own handwriting, though she does not recall writing it. Dare she cast the spell now and see what transpires?

99. Near a small town or village, one formerly healthy tree dies during the night, thoroughly rotted in a matter of moments between dark and dawn. A townsman also died that night. The pattern continues with the death of a single tree for each dead villager until the mystery is solved.

100. The PC is just beginning to enjoy a hot bowl of stew at the tavern, when suddenly the barmaid takes up the bowl and puts down another full dish without saying a word. As the PC finishes his meal, he discovers that a message has been carved into the soft wood hidden by the food.

101. The PCs return to their rooms to find that someone has stolen all of their belongings and replaced them with close, but not exact, duplicates. The most notable difference is a small mark resembling a mountain burnt or etched into each item.



Steve Berman's work was first published in DRAGON® Magazine issue #210, and he has had at least once piece printed every year since. Thirty issues later, he still has not solved all of life's mysteries.

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Reig Starsmont was an enterprising wizard. Born the son of a successful merchant, Reig knew the value of a gold piece. Perhaps more importantly, he knew the value of many gold pieces.

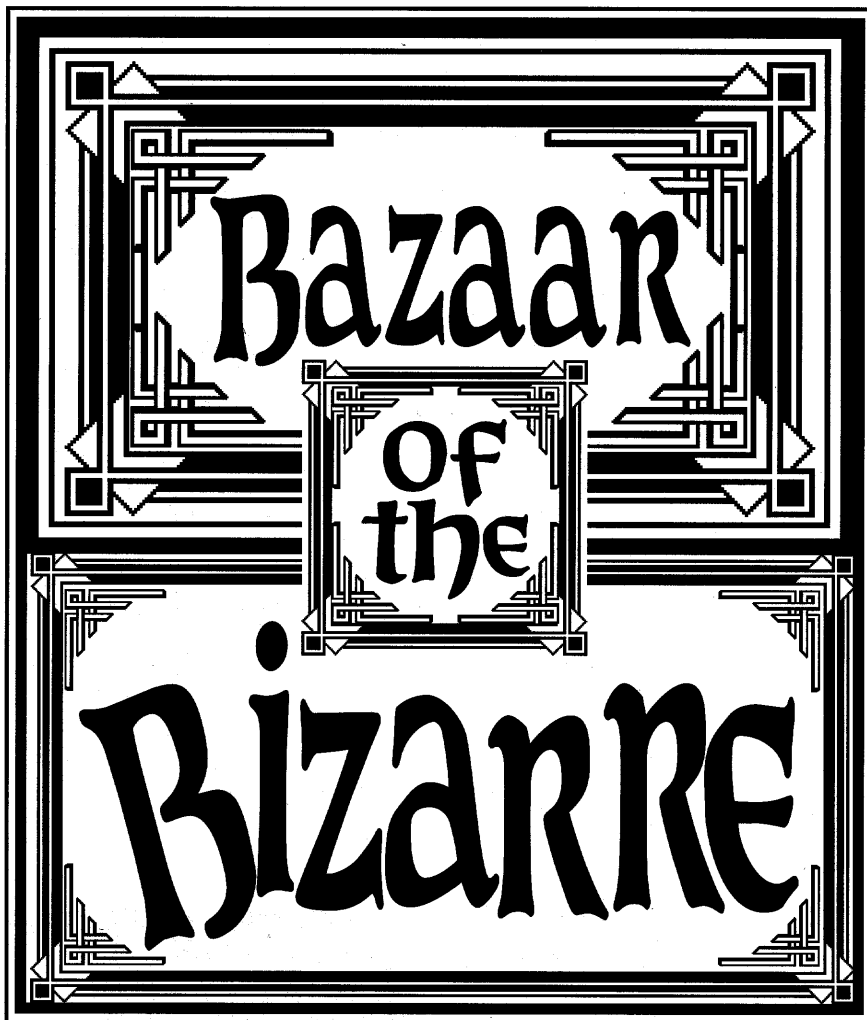
Starsmont had also learned, early in life, that for the really heavy purses, thievery was the way to pursue his goal of many gold pieces. Unfortunately, at 6'4" and 200 lbs., Reig wasn't built for the role of pickpocket or cat burglar. Luckily, there was something else Reig had learned in the days of his youth, when he was apprenticed in his father's shop: Magic sells.

Adventurers were always looking for better and stronger magical items, and anyone capable of providing them could turn a pretty copper. Armed with this credo and a newly acquired spellbook, Reig set out to make his fortune.

It became quickly apparent, however, that magical items weren't quite the easy sell Reig had imagined they would be. While some warriors were willing to pay for their enchanted arsenals, typical adventurers didn't like to buy magical items; they wanted to find them, win them, or confiscate them from some evil creature. More than once Reig found himself accused of black sorcery or of cursing the townsfolk by some devious party of fighters eyeing his collection of vortal swords.

Add to this problem that the market for magical items was glutted. Any city large enough to draw adventurers was also drawing dealers of all things arcane, and nowhere Reig traveled had fewer than two other magic shops within the city walls. Refusing to be outdone, Reig had tried to change the interest of his wares to appeal to the commoners of the land, but he found too few farmers with enough gold to pay for a heavy plow of speed. Soon he was destitute, wandering the land and giving away magical daggers as payment for a meal and a room for the night.

Then, Reig stumbled upon Sea Breeze. Sea Breeze was a port for every pirate, buccaneer, and scurvy dog in the land. On any given day the streets were full of swarthy sea men—peg legged, patch-eyed, and hook-handed, limping around with poor eyesight and a rusty claw where a proper limb should be. These last details were what caught Reig's attention and set his salesman's instincts into motion. Here was a need, he realized, a niche in the marketplace. People he could help. People who would need what he could offer. And so it was born:



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by Brian P. Hudson

illustrated by David Day

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The Seeing Eye

These are the “typical” Starsmont eyes. Made in a variety of colors, the *seeing eye* simply replaces the lost eye and performs the same function: vision. Once inserted into the socket, a *seeing eye* takes roughly a week to familiarize itself with its owner, at which point it begins to function as a normal eye. Once functioning however, the seeing eye does have its limitations. Not only does it work like a real eye but also it feels like a normal eye, as do all of the eyes described hereafter. Consequently, trying to remove one once it has been inserted and activated—or having one accidentally or forcibly removed—can be an extremely painful experience. Starsmont realized this early on and has since added a command word to all of the eyes he makes. The word, usually *gah-behn* (the goblin word for “blindness”), immediately renders an eye dormant and ready for removal.

XP Value: 2,000 **CP Value:** 3,500

The True Seeing Eye

As well as performing the function of a normal *seeing eye*, the *true seeing eye* has been glamourized to see through any and all illusions, charms, and *invisibility* spells cast at 9th level or lower. The *true seeing eye* is continuously active—the eye automatically detects the presence of any sort of illusion and immediately triggers the power. A side effect of this gives the owner the power to *detect magic*, allowing him to “see” magic as per the spell of the same name. The *true seeing eye* needs not be recharged.

XP Value: 3,500 **GP Value:** 4,500

The Dim-Seeing Eye

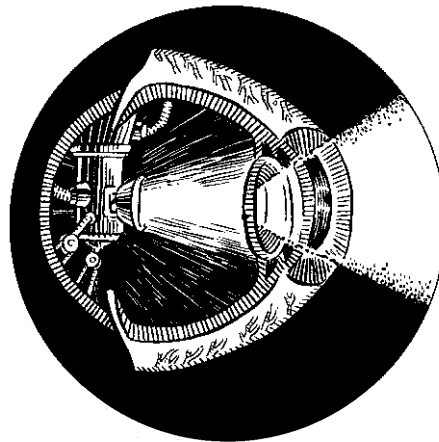
The first of Starsmont’s “custom-built” eyes, the *dim-seeing eye* imbues its owner not only with normal vision but

also with limited infravision, to a distance of 30'. The power is automatic, and it functions as normal infravision, i.e., only working in dim or completely dark places. Also, at the uttering of the command word “illumine,” the *dim-seeing eye* flares and sheds light equal to that produced by a *right spell*; the light lasts for the same duration as the spell, as if cast at 6th level of ability, or until the command word is repeated. The eye need not be recharged.

XP Value: 2,500 **CP Value:** 3,800

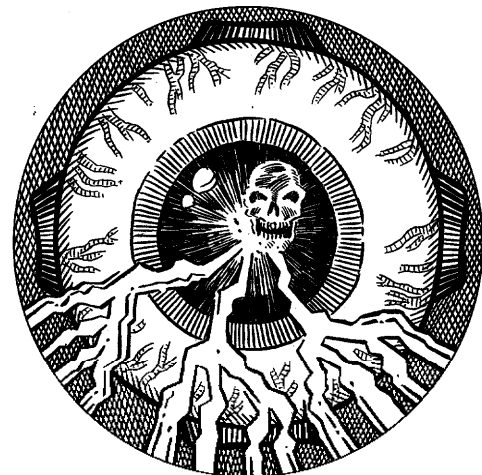
The All-Seeing Eye

A variety of clairvoyance and farseeing spells combine in this eye to give the owner the ability to see around corners, through walls, and—given an unobstructed view—up to 130 yards away as clearly as if he were standing beside the object of his vision. A different command word—“espy,” “pry,” and “scope,” respectively—governs each of the three functions. Seeing around corners can function anywhere within 30' of the corner in question; seeing through walls anywhere within 20' of said wall, ceiling, or floor; and telescopic vision up



to 130 yards, given an unobstructed view. The three powers cannot function together (one can't look around a corner, then 50' down the corridor and through a wall at the end of it) and all the powers are limited to “normal” sight, i.e., someone looking through a wall cannot shift his point of view around the room unless he can physically walk to the new position, and there is no sound, smell, etc., accompanying the enhanced vision. An all-seeing eye typically holds 50 charges and can be recharged only if one knows the proper combination of spells (Reig Starsmont knows the combination, of course, and uses this knowledge to assure himself repeat business).

XP Value: 5,000 **GP Value:** 5,500



The Eye That Binds

Only three of these potent eyes have been made by Starsmont. Each one carries the power of a *holdperson* spell, with line-of-sight range and only two spell components: verbal (an uttering of the command word, “bind”) and somatic (one must have eye contact with the target of the spell). Once cast, the spell functions as a normal *hold person* spell. The eye must be charged and can hold up to 20 charges at a time. Each of these eyes was set with an amethyst and thus is easily recognizable.

XP Value: 6,500 **GP Value:** 8,000

The Look That Kills

There has only been one eye of this type made, and Starsmont regrets ever having created it. Set with a ruby, the eye was commissioned by a wealthy sea captain who wanted to inspire perfect awe and fear into his crew. It uses a unique form of the *power word:stun* spell, so that, simply by glaring at the person and uttering the proper command word (which Starsmont will no longer reveal), the owner can strike down his target with a powerful magical “slap” that causes only 1 hp damage, but which is so painful that it leaves the victim stunned for 1d8 rounds. The captain who commissioned it used it well—too well, in fact, for he once became so angry with a sailor that he literally beat the man to death with it. The rest of the crew, both angry and afraid, mutinied, and the captain was murdered . . . but not before one of the sailors plucked out the eye and hid it away. The sailor—and the eye—disappeared in the next port, and neither has been seen since.

XP Value: 10,000 **GP Value:** N/A

(Starsmont refuses ever to make one again, for any price.)

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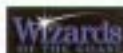
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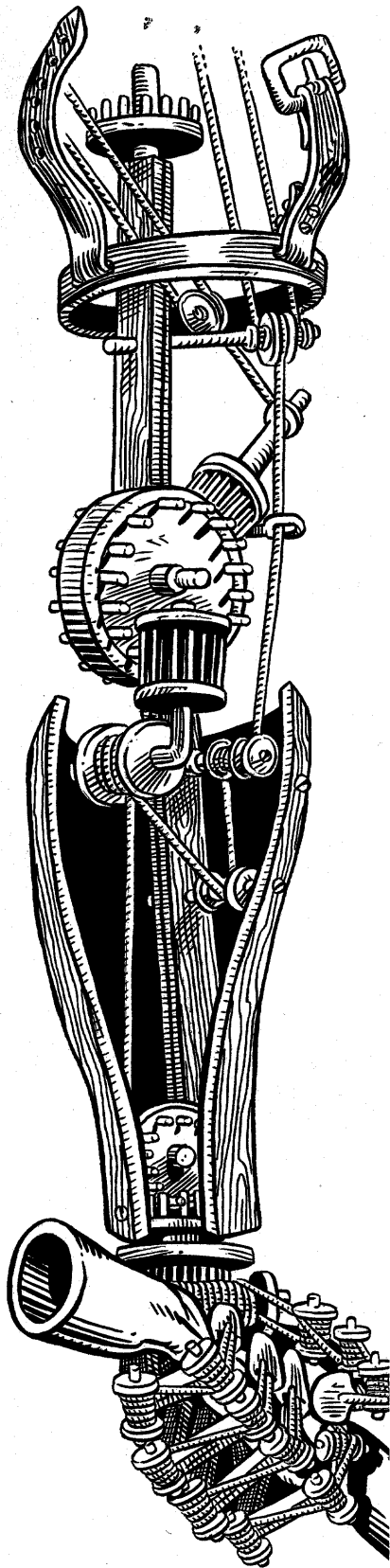
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Hands & Arms

You're on the deck of your ship, doing your job and earning your pay. You grab a coil of rope and start to tug, but the wind picks up, and the sails pull harder. The next thing you know, your hand is in the crow's nest, and you're being fitted for a cold iron hook. Well, as long as you're being sized, why not come in to Starsmonts Whole Body Shoppe and fit yourself into one of our hands instead? We carry a variety of shapes and sizes, fit for either the left or right hand, and each one works just like the hand you had before. Don't get hooked on hooks! Come on in to the Whole Body Shoppe, and let us give you a hand. You'll be so impressed that you'll want to give us a hand afterward!

The Helping Hand

Like the *seeing eye*, this is the "basic" model of the Starsmont hand. It begins as a wooden hand covered by a leather gauntlet, fixed with a number of straps going up the forearm. The owner simply straps the gauntlet to his arm, and immediately the hand becomes a mobile limb. At first it is slow and stiff, able to grip and point but unable to perform any exacting movements like writing or wielding a sword. It takes a fortnight for the hand to adapt itself to the body, at which point it becomes almost indistinguishable from a real hand. The only difference is a single leather strap, wrapped around the wrist like a bracelet. This strap is the release, should the owner ever want to remove the hand for any reason. Like the *seeing eyes*, any damage inflicted on the hand causes its owner pain, just as if the damage were done to a real limb, and the loss of any digits—or the whole hand—ruins the item. In addition, whole-arm versions of the *helping hand* exist, and they perform in the same manner.

XPValue: 4,000 **CPValue:** 6,000

The Gripping Hand

This hand is much like the *helping hand*, giving the owner all the benefits of such. In addition, its use grants the owner an added Strength bonus. The wearer gains a +2 to his Strength only on the arm on which the hand is worn. Thus, a right-handed swordsman wearing a *gripping hand* on his left arm does not gain any bonus to his attack (though one had best be wary of his shield thrust). Whole-arm versions of this hand exist, granting the user a +3 Strength bonus.

XPValue: 5,000 **GPValue:** 7,200

The Tricky Hand

Much as the *gripping hand* above, the *tricky hand* gives its wearer a +2 Dexterity bonus only to the arm on which the hand is worn. This bonus extends to thieving skills, and thus it is highly prized by rogues. As with the *gripping hand*, whole-arm versions exist, but the bonus to Dexterity remains +2. In all other respects, the *tricky hand* works just as a *helping hand*.

XPValue: 5,000 **GPValue:** 7,200

The Hidden Hand

For those who always hated the inconvenience of losing a hand but who always liked the touch of menace a hook could bring, Starsmont created this hand. The *hidden hand* functions as a *helping hand* and grants the same benefits. In addition, upon uttering the word "shift," the owner can cause the *hidden hand* to *polymorph* into a steel hook, roughly the size of a gaffing hook. This hook can be employed as a weapon, causing 1d4+1 hp damage per hit, and the wielder does not suffer non-proficiency penalties—a person can use it as he would his own fist.

XPValue: 5,000 **GPValue:** 7,500

The Casting Hand

Sought actively by wizards, the *casting hand* has the capacity to store up to 25 levels' worth of spells. Specifically, it can store one-and only one-spell of level 5 or lower in each finger. To cast, the owner merely need point the proper finger and utter the command word (usually the spell name and the digit its stored in—"ring," "index," "thumb," etc.). The finger must be fully extended for the spell to be released. The hand works in all other respects as a normal *helping hand*.

XPValue: 8,500 **GPValue:** 10,000

The Hand of Justice

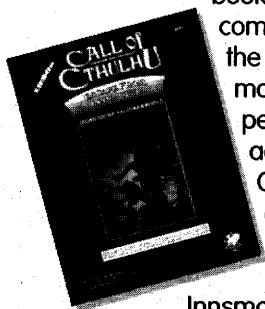
This hand is unique and is possessed by Sea Breeze's Head Constable. It can be worn only by characters of lawful good alignment, and its powers are threefold. First, it imbues its owner with the +2 Strength bonus of the *gripping hand*; second, it can cast a *detect lie* spell three times per day at 6th level of ability; finally, upon touching a creature, the owner of the hand can *command* the target as per the priest spell of the same name—a short, one word order such as "sleep" or "freeze," the kind of power perfect for a lawman trying to apprehend a fleeing crook or break up a

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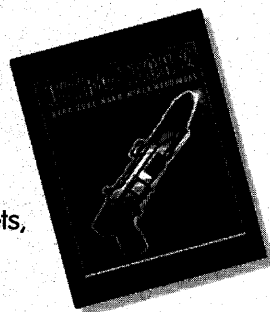
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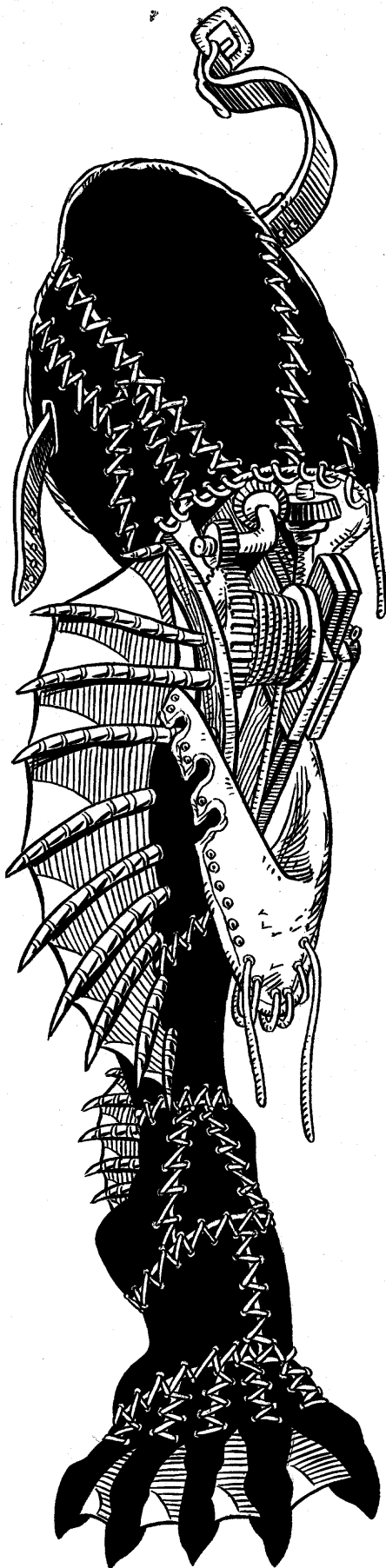
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bar fight. The hand also functions normally, as a helping hand.

XPValue: 10,000 **GPValue:** N/A

Legs

We here at the Whole Body Shoppe know what a travesty it is for a sailor to lose his leg. While a lost eye is but an annoyance, and a missing hand merely impedes, an amputated leg can mean the end of a sailor's career—packed off to some seedy seaside town, selling fish for a few copper and spending the nights drunk and alone in a rowdy tavern, a chunk of wood strapped unceremoniously to the stump that used to be his knee. So we make an extra effort to see that our Whole Body Legs are crafted and enchanted to the highest standards, to give you the look and feel you're longing for. Starsmont Whole Body Legs: a stand-alone product that's one step ahead of the competition!

The Walking Leg

The standard model of the Whole Body Leg, the *walking leg* performs as the *seeing eye* or the *helping hand*, replacing the lost limb and performing the same function. The leg begins as a wooden limb placed inside a leather hose with straps for fastening, and it takes a fortnight to familiarize itself with the owner. It begins as a stiff, rather clumsy appendage (causing its owner to walk with a severe limp) and eventually turns into a fully functioning extremity indistinguishable from a real leg. Like the *helping hand*, the *walking leg* has a leather strap release should the owner need to remove it. Also as with its hand and eye counterparts, damage to the leg causes pain to the owner, and severe damage can render the *walking leg* non-functioning. *Walking legs* can be found in both full-leg (thigh to foot) and half-leg (knee to foot) forms.

XPValue: 4,000 **GPValue:** 6,500

The Leaping Leg

This magical leg gives its owner the ability to leap great distances, provided he uses the leg to jump. The powers emulate those of the first-level wizard spell *jump*—a 30' leap forward or straight up, or a 10' leap backward, once per round. The leg does not require a command word, nor does it need to be recharged. Only full versions of this leg exist.

XPValue: 4,500 **GPValue:** 7,000

The Hidden Leg

Like the *hidden hand*, the *hidden leg* has the ability to appear as either a real leg or as a wooden peg-leg. The command word "shift" controls the change. The leg also functions as a *walking leg*.

XPValue: 5,000 **GPValue:** 7,700

The Swimming Leg

This unique leg gives its owner the ability to swim underwater by polymorphing the lower half of the owner into a pair of fins, akin to those of a merman. The fins allow the owner to maneuver underwater in the same fashion as the mer, though it confers no other abilities (such as *water breathing*). The command line "swim like the mer" controls the change, which lasts until the line "walk like a man" is uttered. On land, the leg functions as if it were a *walking leg*. Only full-leg versions of the *swimming leg* exist.

XPValue: 6,000 **GPValue:** 9,000

The Hollow Leg

This leg has quickly become popular with thieves and smugglers, so much so that some rogues have reportedly sacrificed a leg of their own to use one. The *hollow leg* functions normally, like a *walking leg*, but it has two leather straps instead of one. The second strap wraps around either the knee or the ankle, and loosening it causes the lower leg (or foot) to come off, revealing a hollow area ideal for smuggling goods. What makes this hollow area special is that it is extra-dimensional: it is, indeed, a *portable hole*, although the opening is smaller in diameter, and it functions exactly as the *portable hole* described in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*. While leery at first of the criminal uses of such a leg, the large amounts of gold some men were willing to pay convinced Starsmont that the leg was worthwhile. He has since made quite a number of them, to the point where more *hollow legs* exist than almost all other Starsmont Whole Body legs combined.

XPValue: 6,000 **GPValue:** 9,000



Brian P Hudson lives in Mount Pleasant, MI, where he will be a graduate teaching assistant in English this fall. His favorite game setting is the RAVENLOFT® campaign, in which he has yet to see a group of players successfully leave Strahd's castle.



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Cons & Pros 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 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*, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA, 98055, U.S.A..

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 (425) 204-7226 (U.S.A.).

- ❖ Australian convention
- * Canadian convention
- ⊛ European convention

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OCTOBER CONVENTIONS

Quad Con '97

October 3-5 IA
Ramada Inn, Davenport.
Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: an auction and dealers area. Registration: varies. The Game Emporium, 3213 23rd Ave., Moline, IL 61265. Email: quadcon@revealed.net.

Necronomicon '97

October 10-12 FL
Camberly Inn, Tampa.
Guests: Joseph Green, Kevin J. and Rebecca Anderson.
Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: author and artist panels, art show, auction, a dance and much more. Registration: \$18/preregistered, \$25/on site. Ann Morris, P.O. Box 2076, Riverview, FL 33568. Email: 74273.1607@compuserve.com or to ann@stonehill.org.

Totally Tubular Con V

October 10-12 CA
Days Inn, Fullerton, CA.
Events: RPGA® Network games including Living City events. Write: Totally Tubular Con, P.O. Box 111, Brea, CA 92822. Email: PartDragon@aol.com.

Adventure Gamefest '97

October 17-19 OR
Portland Convention Center, Portland. Events: role-playing,

card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: a game auction, dealers area, and a miniature painting contest. Registration: varies. Adventure Games Northwest, 6517 NE Alberta, Portland, OR 97218.

Grand Game Con

October 17-19 MI
Cascade Commons, Grand Rapids. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Registration: varies. John Edelman, 331 Carlton SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

Novacon '97

October 24-26 TX
On the campus of Texas A&M University, College Station. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: RPGA Network tournaments, and an anime room. Registration: \$10. MSC NOVA, Memorial Student Center, Box J-1, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77844-9081. Email: MSCNOVA@tamu.edu or <http://novacon.tamu.edu/>.

Conline XXVII

October 25-26 Online
The Games RoundTable on the Genie online service. Events: AD&D® game LIVING CITY™ Procampur, LIVING DEATH™, *Call of Cthulhu*, and RAVENLOFT® tournaments. Email games-rt@genie.com or uccprez@aol.com.

International Camarilla Conclave '97

October 30-2 MO
Kansas City Airport Marriott, Kansas City. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: costume contest, charity auction, a dealers area, and seminars. Registration: varies. Dark Heartland, c/o 812 NE 100th Terrace, Kansas City, MO 64155.

UmfCon 21

October 31-2 ME
University of Maine, Farmington. Guests: Thomas Kane and Sharyn McCrumb. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: *Magic** tournaments and a flea market. Registration: varies, Table Gaming Club, 5 South Street, Farmington, Maine 04938.

NOVEMBER CONVENTIONS

Sci-Con 19

November 7-9 VA
Holiday Inn Executive Center, Virginia Beach. Guests: James Patrick Kelley, Lubov, and Steve Luminati. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: panels, readings a dance, and more! Registration: varies. Send an SASE to Sci-Con 19, P.O. Box 9434, Hampton, VA 23670. Email: info@scicon.org or <http://scicon.org>.

MACE '97

November 7-9 NC
Holiday Inn Market Square, Greensboro, NC. Events: card, board, and role-playing games. Other activities: dealers' room, charity auction, and live-action role-

IMPORTANT

DRAGON® Magazine does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

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Pentacon XII

November 15-17

IN

Grand Wayne Center, Fort Wayne. Events: role-playing, card, board, and miniatures games. Other activities: dealers area, an auction, and a painting contest. Registration: varies. NIGA/Pentacon, P.O. Box 11174, Fort Wayne, IN 46856. Email: 102654.230@compuserve.com.



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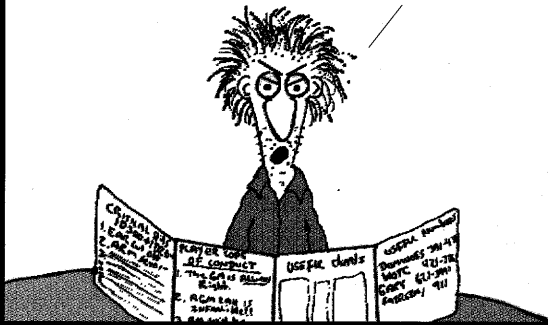
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Knights of the Dinner Table™

By Jolly R. Blackburn

OKAY, WHILE YOU ARE BUSY BEATING THE BEGGAR YOU FAIL TO NOTICE THE **CITY GUARD** HAVE DESCENDED UPON YOU. YOU SUDDENLY FIND YOURSELF SURROUNDED BY TWENTY WELL-ARMED MEN!



NO PROBLEM! I'LL EXPLAIN TO THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD THAT THE BEGGAR WAS HARASSING US.

THAT'S WHERE HE SLIPPED UP! HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE **BLIND!** HOW'D HE DETECT US STEALING HIS COINS THEN? **HE'S A FRAUD!**

HARASSING YOU? HE CAUGHT YOU TRYING TO **STEAL** THE COINS FROM HIS **TIN CUP!**

I THINK YOU GAVE YOURSELVES AWAY WHEN YOU TRIED TO PULL THE BOOTS OFF HIS FEET!



HEY THAT WASN'T OUR FAULT! IF B.A. HADN'T MADE SUCH A POINT OF MENTIONING THE **FINE STITCHING** ON THE BEGGAR'S BOOTS, WE WOULDN'T HAVE THOUGHT THEY WERE MAGICAL.

WELL, YOU'D BETTER DO SOME FAST THINKING! THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD ISN'T BUYING YOUR STORY. BEGGARS ARE REGARDED AS **SACRED BEINGS** IN THIS CITY, AND THE PENALTY FOR HARMING ONE IS **DEATH!**

AWW MAN, **THIS SUCKS!** EVERY TIME WE COME TO TOWN TO BUY SUPPLIES, WE GET BURN'T!

HEY, BOB WAS THE ONE ACTUALLY **PUNCHING** THE OLD BEGGAR! I WAS ONLY **HOLDING** HIM.

NEXT TIME, I GO SHOPPING ALONE!



BRIAN, YOU'RE THE DUDE WITH ALL THE **PARLEY SKILLS** AND CHARM SPELLS! START TALKING!

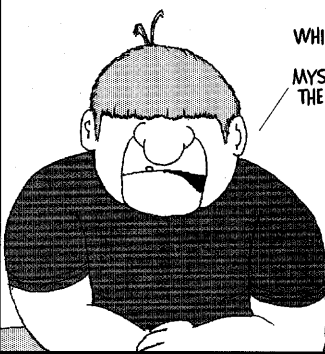
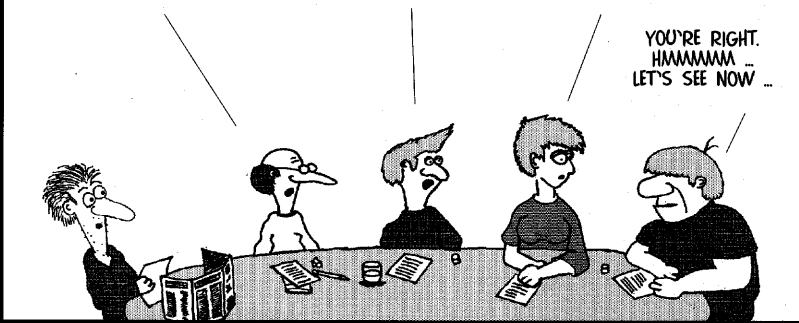
YEAH, NEGOTIATE OUR BUTTS OUT OF THIS MESS, BIG GUY!

SOUNDS LIKE OUR ONLY CHANCE BRIAN. GO FOR IT!

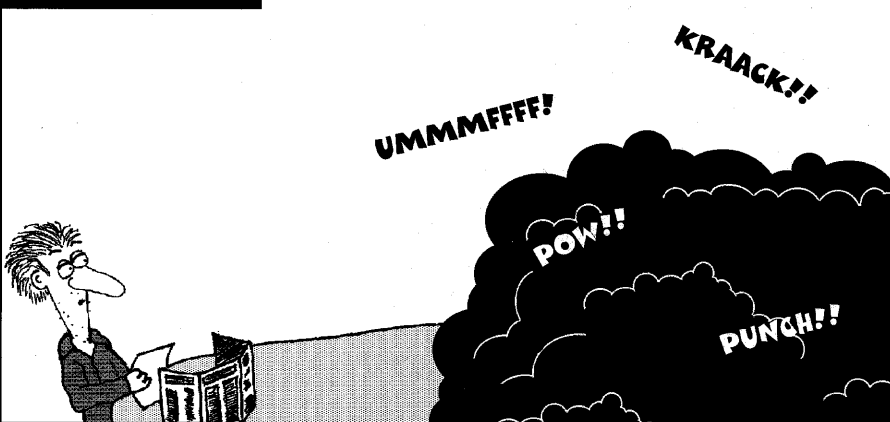
YOU'RE RIGHT. HMMMMMM ... LET'S SEE NOW ...

OKAY, I APPROACH THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD AND BOW RESPECTFULLY. I EXPLAIN THAT I AM A STRANGER TO THIS CITY, A **HUMBLE TRAVELER** ON A **NOBLE QUEST** WHO IS ONLY PASSING THROUGH.

WHILE I'M TALKING, I CAST AN **AURA OF INNOCENCE** SPELL ON MYSELF. THEN I INFORM THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD THAT I DON'T KNOW THESE CLOWNS AND WASN'T INVOLVED!



MOMENTS LATER...



MAYBE IT'S JUST ME, BUT I DON'T THINK THEY'VE FULLY GRASPED THE CONCEPT OF **LAWFUL GOOD** CHARACTERS YET.





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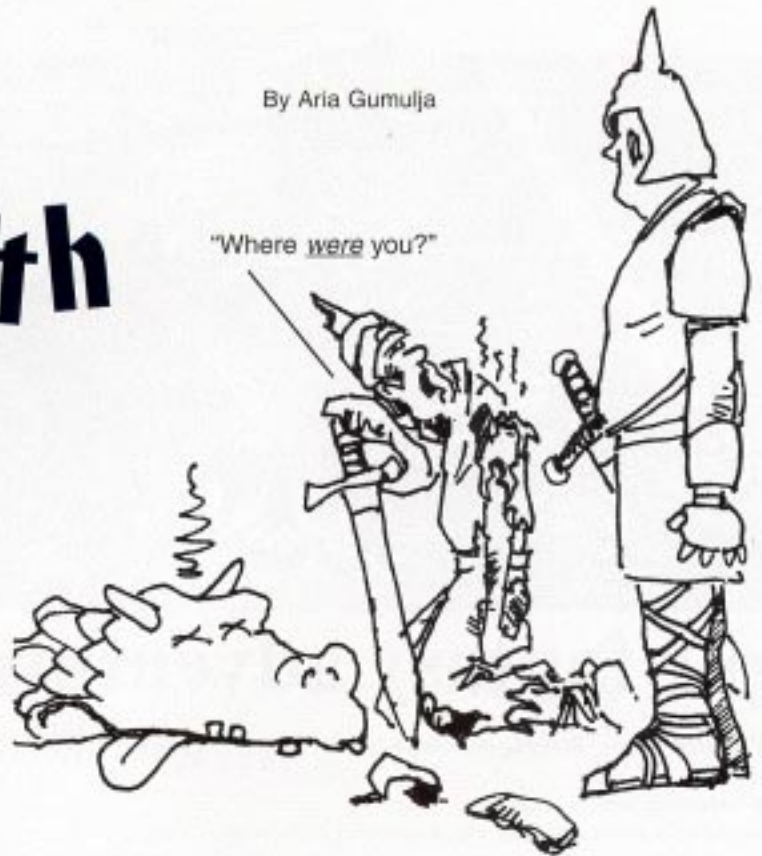
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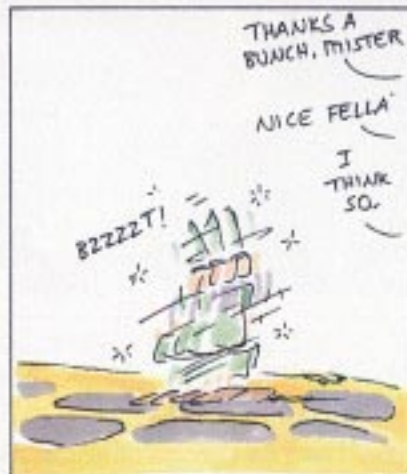
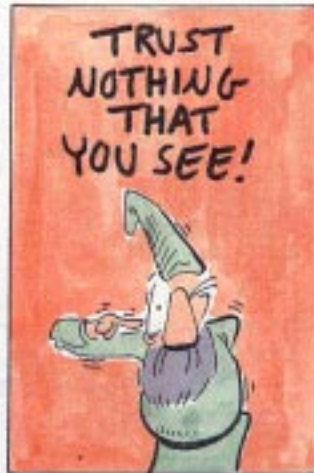
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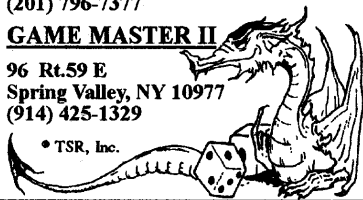
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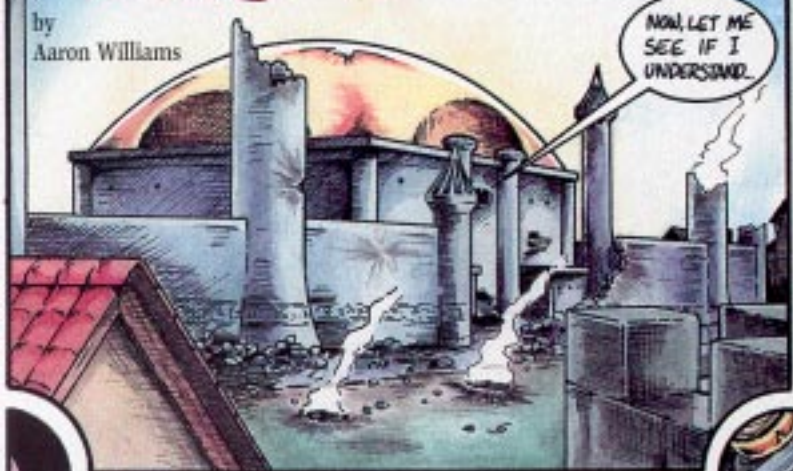
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FLOYD

by
Aaron Williams



NOW LET ME SEE IF I UNDERSTAND...



IS THAT EVERYTHING?

CROAK!
YESSSS...



THAT GATEWAY YOU DESTROYED WAS THE ONLY KNOWN WAY TO GET TO THE GREAT SEAL, THE SOURCE OF ALL MAGIC.

THE SEAL IS SOMEWHERE ON THIS PLANET, BUT NO ONE KNOWS WHERE IT'S LOCATED.

AND, AFTER PERSUADING YOU TO BE MORE LUCID, YOU SAID A SPELL EXISTS IN YOUR LIBRARY THAT CAN LOCATE THE SEAL, BUT NOT ONE OF YOUR WIZARDS HAS THE POWER TO CAST IT.



SEH... I THOUGHT SO.

ON THE UP SIDE, I GET A CHANCE TO TRY OUT SOME MORE OF THIS DIMENSION'S MAGIC...

HOW DO YOU WANT TO END UP?
REGULAR OR EXTRA CRISPY?



NO! WAIT!!

TH... THERE MIGHT... BE SOMEONE WHO CAN DO IT...



I'M LISTENING!



EVERYONE IN OUR ORDER IS LINKED BY THESE BRACERS. OUR SUBCONSCIOUS MINDS COLLECTIVELY LIMIT VERY POWERFUL SPELLS TO PREVENT A REPEAT OF THE TRAGIC MAGEWAR OF AGES PAST.

WHENEVER SOMEONE NEW DONS A SET, WE SENSE IT, RECENTLY...

...SOMEONE PUT ON A PAIR WE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW EXISTED. WE GAVE IT LITTLE THOUGHT SINCE OUR NEW "MEMBER" WOULD BE UNDER THE SAME CONSTRAINTS AS THE REST OF US.

BUT SOON AFTER, WE FELT AN INCREDIBLE SURGE OF RAW POWER! WE FEEL ALMOST CERTAIN THAT THIS WAS FROM SOMEONE OVERCOMING THE BRACERS' RESTRAINTS ON SPELLCASTING ABILITIES!

THE INTENSITY OF THIS EVENT ALLOWED US A GLIMPSE OF WHENCE IT CAME: FAR TO THE NORTH. HOWEVER, THE ONLY MAGIC-USER IN THAT AREA WAS MELZAK THE OUTCAST. OH--AND HIS APPRENTICE.



IF THERE'S ANYONE WHO CAN CAST THE ANCIENT SPELL THAT LOCATES THE SEAL, IT IS THIS... UNKNOWN MAGICIAN...

I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT MELZAK'S APPRENTICE IS EVEN REMOTELY CONSIDERABLE AS A SUSPECT...

AND AS FOR MELZAK, HE--

YES, YES! WE KNOW ABOUT HIM.

WE WHISPERED IN HIS MIND FROM OUR HOME DIMENSION, CONVINCING HIM TO TRY TO SEIZE THE GREAT SEAL FOR HIMSELF.

WE PLANNED TO USE HIS "ATTACK" TO BREACH THE BARRIER BETWEEN OUR DIMENSIONS, DIRECTLY OVER THE SEAL... BUT, YOUR PEOPLE INTERFERED! WE ONLY MADE A TEMPORARY GATE AT HIS TOWER, WHICH LIMITED OUR INVASION FORCE CONSIDERABLY.



AT LEAST THE FOOL IS DEAD.

PERHAPS NOT, GENERAL ACHERON! SOMETHING FROM THE TOWER LEFT A SWATH OF ELDRITCH RESIDUE LEADING THROUGH THAT VILLAGE... CLEFT.

WHEN I SENSED THE TRAIL I THOUGHT MY EYES WERE PLAYING TRICKS, BUT NOW...

IT COULD HAVE BEEN MELZAK. IF SO, I CAN EASILY FOLLOW HIS TRAIL!





I THINK YOUR TEENY LITTLE BRAIN COULD USE A LITTLE FISSION...

WAIT... THAT LINK YOU SAID WAS CED'RON SHARE; LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS IF I TWEAK YOUR CONNECTION LIKE SO...



MARVELOUS! I ASSUME YOU HAVE MEANS TO CONTACT YOUR MEMBERS ELSEWHERE...

EXPLAIN TO THEM THAT THEY SERVE A NEW MASTER; ONE THAT CAN END ALL THEIR LIVES INSTANTLY!

EXCEPT... I SEEM TO BE GETTING... FEEDBACK FROM...

SOMEWHERE...



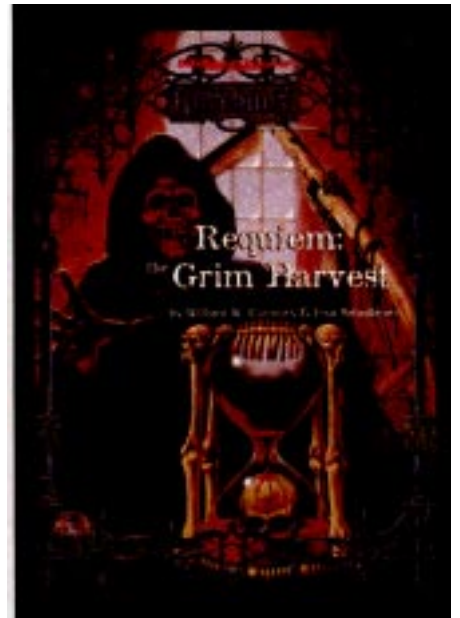
RISE AND SHINE, LADS. WE HAVE WORK TO DO, AND I HAVE MUCH TO TELL YOU.

I'M JUST GLAD YOU'RE OKAY BENJAM!

YEAH, DITTO FOR ME, B.J.

PLEASE STOP CALLING ME "B.J."

SINCE YOU'RE GOING TO HEAR THE TRUTH ABOUT ME, I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I'VE HATED THAT NICKNAME... FOR EONS!



Johnson, Jonatha Ariadne Caspian, and Steve Miller
Editing: Carol L. Johnson and Jonatha Ariadne Caspian
Illustrations: Jason Burrows
Cover: Daniel Horne

A Guide to Transylvania

ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS gamesupplement for the RAVENLOFT campaign

96-page softcover book
 TSR, Inc. \$13
Design: Nicky Rea
Editing: Steve Miller
Illustrations: Val Mayerik
Cover: Dawn Murin

For my birthday, my wonderful wife presented me with a sleazy horror video, the perfect gift for a guy with an insatiable appetite for all things sinister, including, of course, role-playing games. So this month, in honor of my approaching old age, I'm gonna grab a scalpel and dissect some supplements for three of my favorite horror RPGs. Oh, the video? *Three on a Meathook*. What a gall!

Role-playing games' rating	
	Not recommended
	May be useful
	Fair
	Good
	Excellent
	The BEST!

Requiem: the Grim Harvest

ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game supplement for the RAVENLOFT® campaign setting
 One 96-page softcover book, one 64-page softcover book, one 32-page softcover book, one double-sided 21" x 32" map sheet, boxed
 TSR, Inc. \$30
Design: William W. Connors and Lisa Smedman
Editing: Steven Brown
Illustrations: Val Mayerik, Andrew Goldhawk, and Paul Carrick
Cover: Fred Fields

Children of the Night: Vampires

ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game Supplement for the RAVENLOFT campaign setting
 96-page softcover book
 TSR, Inc. \$16
Design: Paul Culotta with Carol L.

Of all the AD&D® campaign worlds - with the possible exception of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting — the RAVENLOFT campaign remains the most user-friendly. It's light on new concepts. There's not a whole lot of background material to digest. And as horror games go, it's pretty tame. Heavy on atmosphere and easy on the gore, the RAVENLOFT campaign has more in common with *Dark Shadows* than *Three on a Meathook* — good news for the faint of stomach.

It's also remarkably flexible. Case in point: the latest RAVENLOFT box, **Requiem: the Grim Harvest**, which takes ordinary player characters and transforms them into undead. That's right — we're talking PCs with crumbling flesh, skin-rending claws, and an appetite for innocent

bystanders. How this transformation occurs is not only one of the set's cleverest features but also an eyebrow-raising surprise (which is why I'll keep quiet about the details). In any event, *Requiem* breathes new, er, life into the RAVENLOFT setting. Believe me, you haven't, er, lived until you've played a rogue zombie gnome.

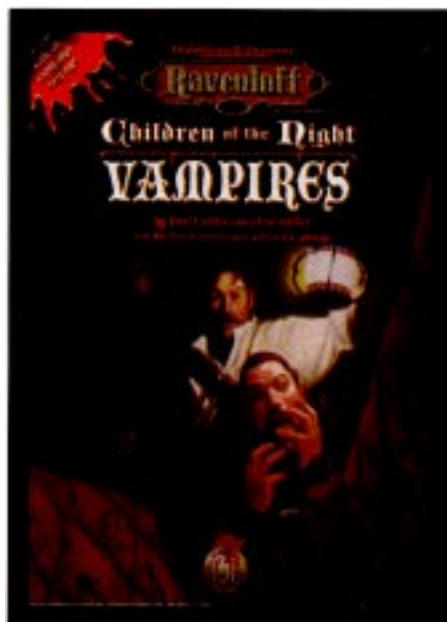
In the introduction to Book One, designer Bill Connors proclaims, "Congratulations! You already know how to play the *Requiem* game!" He exaggerates, but not by much. For instance, *Requiem* utilizes the standard AD&D character creation rules, tweaked here and there to make the PCs suitably grotesque. Because undead PCs tend to be stronger than normal folk, Strength scores can be as high as 19. Likewise, undead PCs inflict more damage, hit their targets more frequently, and shrug off the effects of fatigue and poison. Racial advantages, too, are ratcheted up a notch; undead dwarves benefit from a 100% immunity to one school of magic, undead elves receive a +1 Charisma bonus. (That last one doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me either, but it has something to do with their "alluring aura of mystery." Go figure.)

With his attributes computed, the player then selects an undead character kit, essentially a collection of modifiers, advantages, and disadvantages. The zombie kit, for example, grants a Constitution bonus but reduces Charisma by -2 (no alluring aura for this guy). For the most part, the kits treat abilities as proficiencies. Therefore, when you want to use an ability, you make a proficiency check; it's a simple, logical method for resolving actions. Not only are the ability/proficiency options pretty cool — I'm partial to drain intelligence and odor of corruption — so are the physical consequences; choose the ghoul kit, and you get a tongue "covered with raspy bumps designed for scraping marrow from bones." Yum!

Once you get your raspy-tongued alter ego off the slab, you can send him stumbling into Necropolis, the *Requiem* home base described in the 32-page Book Two. Il Aluk, the capital of Necropolis, is a dead guys dream, as it's been swept clean of all living things - no plants, no animals, not even a paramedecium. The tour itinerary also includes the Boglands, the Mountains of Misery, and Neblus, a city made of gravestones. But because the descriptions lack specifics — the Neblus entry comprises

just three paragraphs — the book has dubious value as a reference. Consider it an introduction; maybe someday we'll get a Necropolis boxed set.

Book Three, titled *Death Triumphant*, is a scrumptious 96-page adventure, the third volume of a trilogy that began with *Death Unchained* and *Death Ascendant*. It's a smart, action-intensive nail-biter bursting with bad guys; I haven't seen so many inhuman creeps since last summer's political conventions. The unpredictable plot concludes with a deadly showdown that only the hardest — or luckiest — PCs are likely to survive. If you didn't get around to purchasing



the previous two volumes, worry not; *Death Triumphant* plays fine by itself.

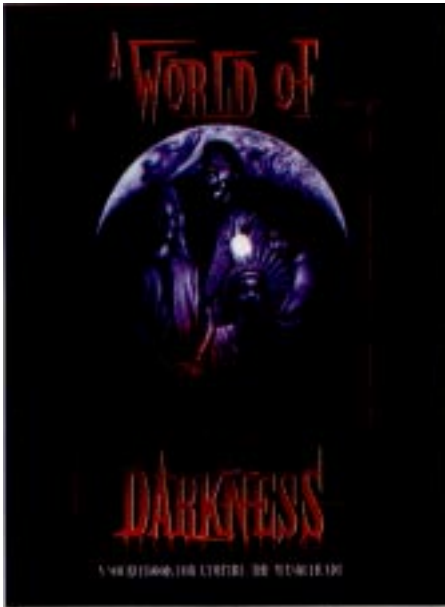
I have no major complaints with *Requiem*, but I have a few grumbles. Fighters and rogues can become skeletons, ghouls, zombies, shadows, ghosts, wights, wraiths, specters, ghosts, and vampires. Priests and wizards, however, can become only mummies and liches. (I know, I know, we gotta preserve the integrity of the AD&D system — mummies and liches are the only types of undead automatically capable of casting spells — but still ...) You'd think that an AD&D variant this unusual would be ripe for a slew of new spells, but *Requiem* offers not a one. And the proficiency list could've used a trim, as some of the options are just plain goofy. I mean, a blacksmithing ghoul? A juggling vampire?

Players not up to the demands of *Requiem* are directed to *Children of the Night: Vampires*, a supplement that

purports to be a collection of blood-sucker biographies but is, in fact, an anthology of short adventures. Each adventure, which can be inserted into any RAVENLOFT campaign, features an undead antagonist, an off-beat setting, and an obstacle course of blood-curdling encounters. Though a few adventures suffer from underdevelopment, overall it's a solid collection, featuring memorable appearances by a were-octopus and a cad named Scabby. Two notes: (1) RAVENLOFT setting vampires are by no means carbon copies of Bela Lugosi; they're unique creations with their own abilities and behavior. If you're a stickler for accuracy, you'll want to consult the relevant entries in the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM®: RAVENLOFT Appendix III*. (2) Although the *Children of the Night* vamps are bad guys, there's no reason you can't fiddle with their alignments and use them as PCs in *Requiem*.

Fang enthusiasts should also check out *A Guide to Transylvania*, an examination of the vampire's traditional stomping grounds, configured to the Victorian era setting described in the *Masque of the Red Death* boxed set. Drawing on accounts from folklore and literature, Transylvania focuses on the region's culture, geography, and personalities, with special attention paid to Vlad Tepes, the 19th-century serial killer who served as the model for Count Dracula. Despite the impressive research, role-players may feel shortchanged by the absence of adventure hooks and the lack of concrete advice for incorporating the material into a campaign. This one's mainly for scholars.

Evaluation: Veteran RAVENLOFT players, those at home in the Demiplane of Dread and know their way around a fear check, should get a kick out of all three of these supplements. But newcomers, those who own the original campaign box and little else, might first want get their feet wet with the *Forbidden Lore* box (expanded rules with an emphasis on creepy magic) and the *Masque of the Red Death* set (the best RAVENLOFT box to date, mandatory for *A Guide to Transylvania*). And before tackling the ambitious *Death Triumphant*, newcomers might want to warm up with a more manageable adventure like *Night of the Walking Dead* or *The Created*. Finally, I urge players of all persuasions to investigate *House of Strahd*. Many aficionados consider it to be not only the best-ever RAVENLOFT adventure but also the best-ever TSR adventure, period.



A World of Darkness (Second Edition)



*Vampire: The Masquerade**
game supplement

160-page softcover book

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Design: Mark Cenczyk, Ben Chessell, Richard Dansky, Graeme Davis, James Estes, Alex Hammond, Angel McCoy, Deena McKinney, James Moore, Lucien Soulban, Richard Watts, and Robert Hatch

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Illustrations: Jason Brubaker, Pia Guerra, Eric Lacombe, Ron Spencer, Michael Gaydos, E. Allen Smith, Dennis Calero, Larry MacDougal, Anthony Hightower, and Heather McKinney

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Editing: Graeme Davis and Andrew Greenberg

Illustrations: Janet Aulisio, Dave Miller, Gail Van Voorhis, Bill Bridges, John Cobb, Tony Santo, Tim Bradstreet, Josh Timbrook, Richard Thomas, Ron Spencer, and Craig Cartwright

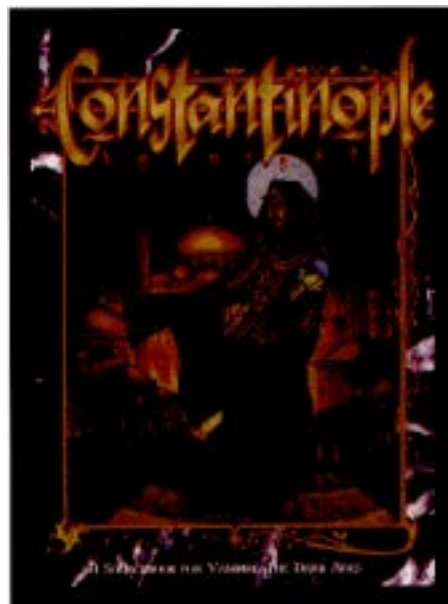
Cover: Clark Mitchel

The difference between a supplement like *A Guide to Transylvania* and a game like *Vampire: The Masquerade* is the difference between a wading pool and the Pacific Ocean. Which is to say, anyone with a serious interest in bloodsuckers

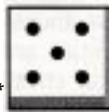
historical summaries, personality profiles, and traveler's tips geared specially to vampires; the "Eating Well in Kingston" section doesn't have much to do with cheeseburgers, if you get my drift.

The avalanche of information should give players and gamemasters alike plenty to chew on. "Dumpster Diving" is a pastime enjoyed by the Kindred of New York; two luckless vampires are tossed off a bridge while their compatriots bet on who will survive. Because it's hard to breathe at high altitudes, the natives of Bolivia have more than the usual number of red corpuscles; naturally, Kindred consider Bolivians extra tasty. And it turns out that Ross Perot wasn't alone in his opposition to the North American Free Trade Agreement; so were the Central American Kindred. It's great fun, spoiled in part by an inconsistent format. The European and Arabian chapters, for example, have adventure ideas, but the North America and South America chapter don't. The South America chapter has a clan-by-clan breakdown of Kindred activity; the North America chapter doesn't. Further, without an index or a comprehensive table of contents, locating specific information is a pain.

Constantinople By Night provides a close-up of a single locale. The first supplement for the *Vampire: The Dark Ages** game (itself an offspring of *Vampire: The Masquerade*), it's a humdinger, a dazzling treatise on ancient Byzantine society as seen through the eyes of a psychopath. Mixing actual history with fanciful legends, the book centers on the power struggles among Constantinople's debauched Trinity of the Undead. With



Constantinople by Night



*Vampire: The Dark Ages**
game supplement

128-page softcover book

White Wolf Game Studio \$15

Design: Philippe Boulle, Joshua Mosqueira-Asheim, and Lucien Soulban

Editing: Ken Cliffe

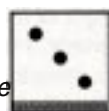
Illustrations: Michael Gaydos, Eric Lacombe, Chuck Regan, Andrew Ritchie, and Andrew Trabbold

Cover: William O'Conner and Matt Milberger

should dive into *V:TM* without further ado (the hardcover second edition is the one to get). Me, I've never been a big Dracula fan, so I've been less forgiving of *V:TM*'s flaws. I've had a tough time untangling the mechanics, many of which are less than crystal clear. And I've never been able to cobble together a satisfactory campaign; solid, well-developed *V:TM* adventures are notoriously hard to come by. But I'm second to no one in my admiration of the setting. Indeed, *V:TM* feature what may be the most richly imagined world in all of role-playing, breathtaking in scope and as close to a work of art as the industry has ever coughed up.

A good place to begin your tour is *A World of Darkness*, a fascinating continent-by-continent survey of Kindred activity. Each of the 10 entries feature

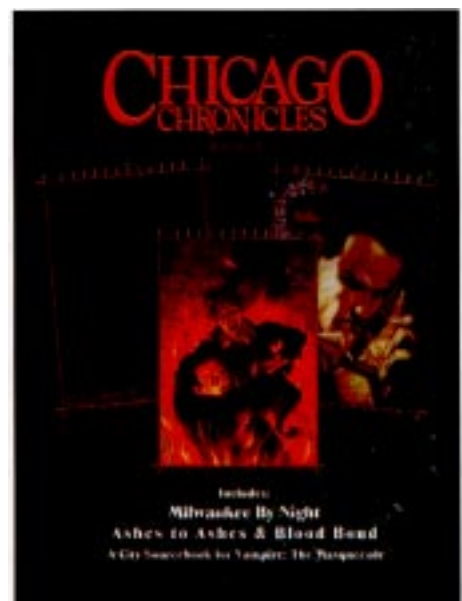
Chicago Chronicles: Volume One



*Vampire: The Masquerade**
game supplement

336-page softcover book

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psi orders
have the
power
to change
the fate
of
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power
to bring
them
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civilization, the Trinity families engage in a never-ending series of political conflicts and outright wars, all of it fodder for a grand and bloody role-playing campaign. On the downside, like **A World of Darkness, Constantinople** makes life difficult for the gamemaster, as it neglects to include either an index or a serviceable table of contents. And the brief scenario tacked on at the end doesn't do justice to the material that precedes it.

But **Constantinople's** vivid prose makes the glitches easy to overlook. Here's a sample, taken from a description of an animal duel staged in the Kynegion Amphitheater:

Hollers and jeers could be heard as a black mastiff — the favored beast of the Baron's Gangrel — maimed a grossly mutated amalgamation of cats . . . Suddenly the cat beast, bloody and hissing through multiple mouths, split into seven distinct felines, one of which was already dead . . . They swarmed the poor dog . . .

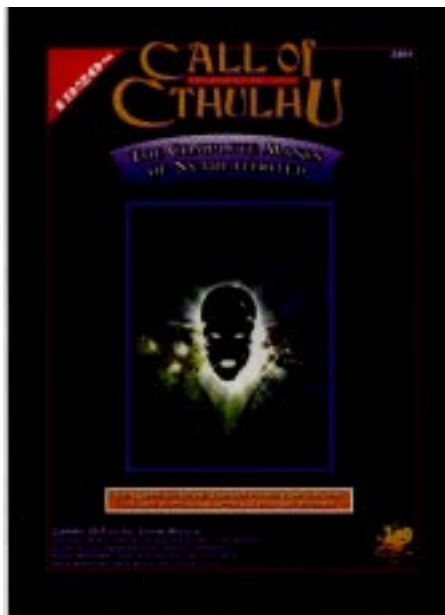
White Wolf recommends **Constantinople** for mature readers. They aren't kidding.

Archeologists might amuse themselves with **Chicago Chronicles**, a compilation of two prehistoric *V:TM* supplements. The first, *Chicago By Night*, catalogues the hangouts favored by the Windy City Kindred. The second, *Succubus Club*, features seven grisly scenarios set in a seedy nightspot. What's shocking about **Chicago Chronicles** isn't the gore — though enough blood is spilled to fill an Olympic pool — but the crude presentation. Compared to the state-of-the-art visuals in **Constantinople**, the look of **Chicago Chronicles** is borderline amateur. The writing, too, could've been crisper, though even in these embryonic efforts, the text radiates imagination. White Wolf has come a long way; **Chicago Chronicles** shows how far.

Evaluation: Because **A World of Darkness** functions as sort of a Kindred almanac, it's essential reading. (Old-timers should note that **Darkness** updates information from earlier *V:TM* supplements, hence the "second edition" designation.) **Constantinople**, though the better book, is more complex and hence more demanding; novices might prepare by studying the excellent *Vampire Player's Guide* (and, of course, the *Vampire: The Dark Ages* game).

Those with an appetite for artifacts should search out Volumes Two and Three of **Chicago Chronicles**, both offering intriguing peeks into White Wolf's

formative years. Volume Two contains *Chicago by Night Second Edition* (a bit bloated) and *Under a Blood Red Moon* (an exciting crossover with the *Werewolf: The Apocalypse** game, but baffling if you're not familiar with *Werewolf*). Volume Three features *Blood Bond* (a complex, somewhat romantic scenario based on an age-old feud), *Milwaukee by Night* (more midwestern mayhem, similar to *Chicago by Night*), and *Ashes to Ashes* (the best of the early *V:TM*



Horror's Heart

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Editing: Lynn Willis
Illustrations: Jason Eckhardt
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Chaosium Inc. \$12
Design: Scott Davis Aniolowski
Editing: Janice Sellers
Illustrations: Earl Geier
Cover: Eric Vogt



The Comlete Masks of Nyarlathotep

Call of Cthulhu game supplement
224-page softcover book



Chaosium Inc. \$23
Design: Larry DiTillio and Lynn Willis with Geoff Gillan, Kevin A. Ross, Thomas W. Phinney, Michael MacDonald, Sandy Petersen, and Penelope Love
Editing: Lynn Willis
Illustrations: Lee Gibbons, Nick Smith, Tom Sullivan, and Jason Eckhardt
Cover: Shannon Appel

Here's where objectivity goes out the window. *Call of Cthulhu* is my favorite RPG, has been for a decade, and probably will be when I'm rocking away in the old folks' home. Winner of every award the industry has to offer, the game boasts a spellbinding setting (based on the nightmare universe of H.P. Lovecraft), brilliant mechanics, and a shelf full of first-class supplements. As far as I'm concerned, not liking *Call of Cthulhu* is tantamount to not liking Christmas or the Beatles.

Horror's Heart, a series of linked scenarios set in Montreal, showcases all the elements that make *Call of Cthulhu* so electrifying. First, there's the compelling plot, stemming from the abduction of a priest and the discovery of a tomb in a church basement. Second, there's the roster of eerie locales: a gloomy mansion haunted by a ghostly bear, a city morgue that reverberates with heartbeats, a book store that doubles as a slaughterhouse. Third, there are the mind-boggling adversaries: a fang-lined mouth in the palm of a human hand, the supernatural lackeys that resemble inside-out elephants. With their well-staged encounters and surplus of gamemastering tips, the scenarios are a snap to run. Only the limp finale, disappointing after such a provocative buildup, prevents **Horror's Heart** from achieving classic status.

What distinguishes **Ye Booke of Monstres II** from the zillions of other monster encyclopedias? Why, the monsters themselves, a menagerie of skin-crawlers so abominable that they make the Kindred look like refugees from Mother Goose. Some samples: Baoht Z'uqqa-Mogg, a scorpion monstrosity with "scampering, squirming, and buzzing contagion-laden vermin, worms, and insects that ceaselessly burrow, crawl, and dart into, around, and over [its] bulk"; and the Black Sphinx, "a huge and lumbering beast, its eyeless faces dotted with snapping maws which constantly drool the blood and bones of its previous victims." As good as it is, it could've been better with bigger pictures;

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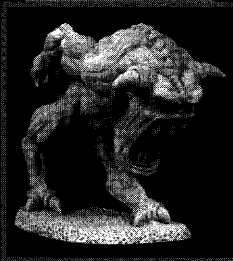


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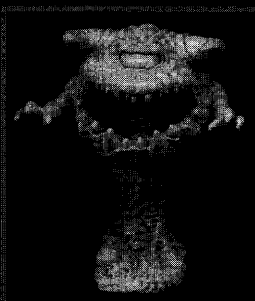
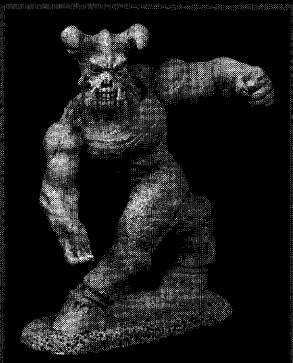
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I'd like a closer look at the maws of the Black Sphinx. And why didn't Chaosium combine this with the equally slim *Ye Booke of Monstres I* and make it a single volume?

The Complete Masks of Nyarlathotep, an expanded edition of the epic campaign first published in 1984, is a marvel. Detailing Lovecraftian demigod Nyarlathotep's plot to crush mankind, it's a work of staggering power, expertly crafted and unforgettable. Part murder mystery, part splatter film, part Indiana Jones extravaganza, the plot unfolds in an ever-widening circle of intrigue as the player characters engage in what seems to be an increasingly futile effort to restore order to the cosmos. It'd be a disservice to reveal the details, but a few images will suggest what's in store: an African mask that absorbs the pupils from the wearer's eyes; a hotel room occupied by a horde of unblinking, unmoving black cats; a giant flame-eyed bat that spews smoky trails of proto-plasmic bubbles. The story twists, unpredictable and jaw-dropping, lead to a shattering conclusion; the effect is like stuffing your brain into a blender and turning it up all the way. Absorbing, disturbing and astonishingly adept, **Masks of Nyarlathotep** is the definition of a role-playing masterpiece.

Evaluation: All of the aforementioned tomes belong in your library, right next to your copy of the Fifth Edition rules. As for additional supplements, you almost can't go wrong; Chaosium has published only a handful of flops. I could rattle off a couple dozen recommendations, but I'll settle for three: *Horror on the Orient Express* (an epic campaign that rivals **Masks of Nyarlathotep** for ingenuity), *Encyclopedia Cthulhuana* (everything—and I mean *everything*—you need to know about the Lovecraft mythos), and *Escape from Innsmouth* (two hair-whitening scenarios set in a gruesome coastal community). And keep an eye out for *Dreamlands*, a revised edition of a Cthulhu classic originally published in 1986, containing background material and several ready-to-play scenarios set in the world of dreams.

Short and sweet

Wizard's Spell Compendium, Volume One compiled and developed by Mark Middleton, Jon Pickens, and Richard Baker. TSR, inc., \$25.

Are you on the prowl for spells? Here's a few hundred of 'em, gleaned from 20 years worth of TSR rule books,

supplements, and magazines. They're updated, revised, and clarified, so you'll know exactly what's happening when you whip out *Darsson's eye in the sky* or *corpse link*. Covering spells beginning with the letters A—D, this is the first volume of a promising series, one I suspect AD&D game players will find indispensable.

GURPS Vehicles, Second Edition, by David Pulver. Steve Jackson Games, \$20.

if you can drive it, fly it, or hitch it to a donkey, you'll find it in **GURPS Vehicles**, a staggeringly complete collection of conveyances for the **GURPS*** game (but adaptable to other game systems with a little effort). New to this edition are the plethora of starships, a slew of new accessories, and all the nips and tucks necessary to ensure compatibility with *GURPS Robots* (also by Pulver). But the main attraction remains the same: easy-to-follow guidelines for building game-ready versions of everything from skateboards to time machines.

BattleTech* trading card game, by Richard Garfield. Wizards of the Coast. \$9 (60-card starter deck).

Can a card game simulate a convincing battle between giant walking tanks? Well, sure, as this adaptation of FASA's classic **BattleTech*** board game so elegantly demonstrates. Players assume the roles of Clan generals and House leaders, then unleash their Vindicator and Banshee 'Mechs for a 31st-Century demolition derby. It's simple (much easier, in fact, than the *Magic: The Gathering** game, designed by the same guy) and addictive (which means you better start saving up for the boosters).

Fractal Spectrum magazine; edited by Donald A. Redick and Kathleen D. Seymour. Fractal Dimensions Publishing, \$3 per single issue, \$10 per four-issue subscription.

Forget the so-so artwork and the too-specialized-for-their-own-good articles ("New Medicinal Rules for GURPS"). What puts this quarterly publication on the must-read list is the comprehensive news section. The latest issue (#13) offers close to 125(!) reports covering every aspect of game-related publishing. If you're a Previews of Coming Attractions junkie, this mag's made to order. (information: Fractal Dimensions, 17-29 Main St., Suite 316, Cortland, NY 13045.)

Sick Little Sagas, by Greg Farshtey, Even Jamieson, and Richard Meyer. West End Games, \$15.

After a shaky start, the *Tales from the Crypt** game (itself a spin-off of the *Masterbook** game) hits its stride with this four-scenario anthology, a perfect blend of gore and giggles. Highlights include "Bad Day at Hanging Hill" (old west weirdness featuring reanimated cowhands) and "Track of My Fears" (an out-of-control commuter train en route to the Palace of Pitchforks). Is the text as pun-riddled as the TV series? Of course!

Inferno* game, by Marco Pecota. Global Games, \$30.

in this elaborate board game, players choose their favorite Archfiends, add a few profane Lieutenants, then fight it out for control of the Abyss. Fiends arm themselves with spells (like *lightning strike* and *sphere of annihilation*) as well as physical weapons (ripper claws, sickles, and fire axes). Defeated enemies aren't merely destroyed; they're eaten, too. The attractive components include two colorful hex maps, four sheets of heavy cardboard cut-outs, and the "Tome of the Abyss," a 64-page summary of Fiendish history. The *game itself is as involving — and demanding — as a military simulation. Think *Buffle of the Bulge*, only with four-armed soldiers wielding meat cleavers. (information: Global Games, 76 Jane Street, Toronto, Ontario, M6S 3Y5, Canada.)



Rick Swan is the author of The Complete Guide to Role-Playing Games (St. Martin's Press). 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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modern-day settings," they explain. (WWolfmail@white-wolf.com)

Shadowrun Update: By now you've probably seen the fine new *Shadowrun* trading card game based on the cyberpunk/magic RPG from FASA Corporation (Chicago). FASA plans a third edition of the RPG for August 1998, but don't panic: "There won't be any major rules changes," line developer Mike Mulvihill says, except that a third-edition Magic supplement will replace the 1991 second edition's *Grimoire* and *Awakenings* books. The new edition gives the game a graphic overhaul and updates its setting.

FASA's sister computer company, FASA Interactive, plans an SR computer game, a roleplaying adventure with a storyline by Mulvihill and FASA president Jordan Weisman. No release date yet.

Shadowrun has been translated into seven languages, and foreign licensees sometimes produce SR supplements of their own. In one case this led to a kind of cultural warfare: The German translator did a *Germany* sourcebook for the game's future setting that turned France into a nuclear wasteland. The French licensee apparently took offense and, according to rumor, has prepared a *France* sourcebook that does equally nasty things to Germany. (FASAINfo@aol.com;www.fasa.com)

Silent Death Goes Traveller: Don Dennis, *Silent Death* line editor at Iron Crown Enterprises (Charlottesville, VA), said that the popular space-combat miniatures game will become the new ship-to-ship space combat system for Imperium Games' *Traveller*. "We've been talking for almost a year," says Dennis. "We plan to sculpt a version of the game appropriate for *Traveller*, using the mechanics we already have and adding additional *Traveller* skills." Again, no release date. (ice@ironcrown.com; www.ironcrown.com)

Wizards Gets Xena: Tight-lipped designers at Wizards of the Coast spoke only in broad, evasive terms about the company's next licensed product, a trading card game based on the syndicated *Hercules* and *Xena* TV shows. "If we were to do some kind of game based on Greek mythology," said smiling designer Mike Elliott, "we'd probably use a simplified version of the Magic design, and we'd play up the humor a bit more than in Magic." Other staffers allowed that

(speaking hypothetically, cough, cough) they'd theoretically like to coordinate the details supposedly presented in such a conjectural card game with next spring's *Hercules & Xena Roleplaying Game* from West End Games.

Atlas On the Edge Giveaway: The most audacious offer at both cons was Atlas Games' giveaway of its critically acclaimed but struggling *On the Edge* trading card game. Everyone who walked up to the Atlas booth got a free *OnTE* starter deck, and everyone who sat in on a demo got an entire 840-card "Burger Box" of cards from the basic game and all three expansions. Atlas (Roseville, MN) has also announced new low pricing on the whole *OnTE* product line to distributors. A similar promotion jump-started the highly successful *Legend of the Five Rings* last year. By the time you read this, we'll know whether fortune once again favored the bold. (AtlasGames@aol.com)

Great New Games: No point listing the many major summer releases that have already hit your local store, but you might have missed a few gems.

Blue Planet from Biohazard Games (Columbia, MO) is a terrific science-fiction game set on the richly detailed ocean world of Poseidon. Designed by oceanography teacher Jeffrey Barber and ripe with both world-shaking intrigues and deep (literally!) mysteries, Poseidon is *Dune* with oceans. It's 348 pages, hard (scientifically accurate) science fiction, and easily adaptable to most SF rules systems. It needs more art and a better index, but where else can you play an intelligent killer whale? (BiohazardG@aol.com; www.biohazardgames.com)

The boardgame *Kill Dr. Lucky*, from the aptly named Cheapass Games (Seattle, WA), is James Ernest's laudable effort to resurrect the dirt-cheap, low-rules, fast-playing minigame. *Lucky* is like the pre-game warmup for *Clue*. Each player stalks the elusive Dr. Lucky through his huge mansion, then tries to corner him in the Drawing Room or Wine Cellar and murder him with weapons like Garden Trowel or Civil War Cannon. One hour, 2-8 players, bring your own game pawns, six bucks. Cheapass also offers a dozen other gracefully hilarious games priced from \$3 to an exorbitant \$750. (www.cheapass.com)

Probably the best new trading card games demoed at both shows were HarperPrism's gripping *Aliens/Predator* and FASA's *Shadowrun*. The dark-horse choice is Iron Crown's *Warlords*, an absorbing fantasy game licensed from the computer strategy game series of heroes, armies, and conquests.

Best non-game item at the shows was, as always, Flying Buffalo's latest set (#4) of *Famous Game Designer Trading Cards*. Glory in these seven cards, each handsomely adorned with a designer's photo and backed with his credits. FBI president Rick Loomis should get a MacArthur Fellowship! (Flying Buffalo Inc., Box 1467, Scottsdale, AZ 85252; www.fbinc.com)

Origins Awards

Award winners at the Origins gaming convention included Pinnacle's *Deadlands* (Best RPG, Best Graphic Presentation-Roleplaying); Chaosium's *Complete Musks of Nyarlathotep* (Best Adventure) and *Cthulhu Cycle* (Best Game-Related Fiction); and R. Talsorian's *Six-Guns and Sorcery* for Castle Falkenstein (Best Supplement). *Warhammer Fantasy Buffles* from Games Workshop won Best Miniatures Rules, *Master of Orion II* (Microprose) and *Wooden Ships & Iron Men* (Avalon Hill) took the computer game awards, Mayfair's English-language edition of Klaus Teuber's *Settlers of Catan* won Best Boardgame, and *Shadis* was a first-time winner in Best Professional Magazine.

Best Card Game was shared by three winners (out of five nominees): Five Rings' *Battle of Beiden Puss* starter for *Legend of the Five Rings*, Chaosium's *Mythos*, and *Lunch Money* from Atlas Games. Best Graphic Presentation for a card game went to Iron Crown's *Middle-Earth: The Dragons*.

Adventure Gaming Hall of Fame awards this year went to Mayfair Games co-founder Darwin Bromley and to three products: the AD&D game, *Traveller* and *Cosmic Encounter*.

As usual, the real awards at Origins were the Game Critic Awards, recognizing "the most heinous things we do to get product out and get money from customers," as voted by a skulking horde of industry insiders who maintained a determined anonymity.

The Game Critic Award categories included Worst Roleplaying Game,

Caesarean Section (for products ripped from development before their time), Dumb as a Box of Rocks, Wesson Handshake (for sleaziest sales rep), and the ever-popular Maggot Upchuck Award For Most Revolting Person/Place/Thing in the Industry. Our lifelong reputation for tact forbids listing this year's winners.

Chaosium's Glorantha Spinoff

DRAGON® Magazine issue #235 reported Chaosium's big new plans for president Greg Stafford's *RuneQuest* setting, Glorantha, including a miniatures game from the Italian publisher Stratelibri, a new fiction line, and a new Glorantha RPG. That's all changed. Stratelibri is busy coping with an Italian gaming market even tougher than today's American scene. The miniatures game has been cancelled, the fiction line postponed. But Stafford, nothing daunted, is spinning off a new company to publish a *Glorantha* RPG.

The Issaries Corporation (Oakland, CA), named for the Glorantha god of trade and communication, is selling a third of its stock, 1,000 shares, to Glorantha fans and gamers for \$100 a share. Stafford, who incorporated the company in August, expects to sell at least 600 shares by autumn. Rob Heinsoo, previously hired as Chaosium's *Glorantha* line editor, will become Issaries's sole employee, and majority shareholder Chaosium will handle business details. Thus, according to a press release, "Issaries Inc. shall be a design house whose paper game products will be licensed to Chaosium."

The first Issaries releases will be three thick Glorantha reference books, beginning with a long-needed *Introduction to Glorantha* published 10 months after the company gets rolling. In its second year, Issaries will publish the *Glorantha RPG*, to be designed by freelancer Robin Laws (*Feng Shui*, *Shadowfist*). The first supplement follows two months after the game, and more products should appear bimonthly.

For the first three years of operation, Issaries shareholders don't get cash dividends, but they do get products: the *Introduction* in Year 1, the *RPG* in Year 2, and for Year 3 a book still undetermined. After the third year, assuming the company is profitable, the shareholders will vote their own dividends.

"We're really confident it'll be a success," says Stafford. "We're happy to do this with the Glorantha 'tribe's' help.

We've always tried to make the fans feel they're a part of us." (greg@chaosium.com; serious inquiries only, please.)

Notes from the field

R. Talsorian Games (Berkeley, CA) is starting a new "AnimechaniX" imprint that encompasses its strong-selling RPGs licensed from Japanese *anime*, including *Bubblegum Crisis* and the new *Armored Trooper VOTOMS*. With these books Talsorian has tapped into a large non-gaming market of *anime* fans, and the response has been enthusiastic. As a staffer said at Origins, "These fans aren't used to seeing these books in English." All the AnimechaniX games will use the "Fuzion" system seen in *Crisis* and the recent *Champions: The New Millennium*. Future directions for ANimechaniX will include *anime*-themed apparel, posters, anime goods, and possibly limited release figures and garage kit models. The AnimechaniX imprint will also include Talsorian's imminent reissue of its 1986 *Teenagers From Outer Space* comedy RPG and, later, its entire *Mekton* RPG line.

Daedalus Entertainment (Etobicoke, Ontario), publisher of *Feng Shui* and the *Shadowfist* card game, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in July, giving president Jose Garcia a chance to pull things together. This winter Ronin Publishing (Cambridge, MA), which has finally produced its long-delayed *Book of Hunts* supplement for the *Whispering Vault* RPG, plans to publish a licensed *Guiding Hand* sourcebook for *Feng Shui*. The author is Ronin vice-president Chris Pramas, who wrote the book for Daedalus a year ago. (jgarcia@halcyon.com; GreenRonin@aol.com)

Meanwhile, Mike Nystul, *Whispering Vault* designer (and creator of such AD&D spells as *Nystul's magic aura*), has created a new fantasy RPG, *Crusade*, to be published this winter by Archangel Entertainment (Lake Geneva, WI). Set in a Nordic-Celtic world two centuries after the Maelstrom, a Ragnarokian apocalypse that destroyed the gods, *Crusade* casts players as Changelings, mysterious superhumans who fight hideous giants, the unholy Banes and Unfettered, and the intolerant Church of Dain. It's a post-apocalypse fantasy of grand heroes, nefarious villains, and endless legions of undead. (Neverwhen@aol.com)

New Millennium Entertainment (Albany, NY) has sold all rights to its *Conspiracy X* alien-hunting RPG to its former art director, George Vasilakos. Vasilakos has started a new company,

Eden Productions, to reprint early *ConX* supplements and bring out new products, including the *Cryptozoology* bestiary and the *Aegis Handbook*. (EdenProd@aol.com)

InQuest magazine, from Wizard Press (Congers, NY), recently expanded its trading-card game coverage to encompass board and roleplaying games as well. Buoyed by a popular price guide, sharp graphics, and a Beavis-and-Butthead attitude (viz. "Games That Suck," issue #29), *InQuest's* circulation has reached 150,000, by far the largest in the gaming field today. (InQuestMag@aol.com)

Best Game Fair Party Invitation

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DO NOT BRING A GUEST.

DESTROY THIS DOCUMENT.



Freelancer Allen Varney's latest credit is Order of Hermes for *White Wolf's Mage: The Ascension*. Send news to APVarney@aol.com.

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The Current Clack

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The 1997 Origins Convention and GEN CON® Game Fair

Once again, this year's Origins '97 International Game Expo 8 Fair, July 17-20 in Columbus, OH, showed strong growth over last year. With well over 5,000 attendees, up 8% from 1996, Origins is regaining the health it enjoyed in the 1980s. Organizer Andon Unlimited, a subsidiary of Wizards of the Coast (Renton, WA), has booked the same location, the Greater Columbus Convention Center, for the next five years. Next year's dates: July 2-5, 1998. (Andon@aol.com)

The 30th annual GEN CON Game Fair in Milwaukee, WI, August 7-10, drew 27,000 gamers, almost exactly the same number as last year. Sponsored by TSR, the Game Fair remains the largest game convention in the Western Hemisphere, surpassed only by Germany's annual Essen show. According to the Milwaukee Convention & Visitors Bureau, the GEN CON show brings over \$10 million into the city economy annually. The city showed its appreciation this year by blocking off an entire city block in front of the Mecca Convention Center for a party sponsored by TSR's new owner, Wizards of the Coast, featuring the rock group the Violent Femmes.

Wizards president Peter Adkison says that despite continuing shortages of hotel space, the Game Fair will continue in Milwaukee for the foreseeable future. Next year's Game Fair is scheduled for August 6-9. (questions@wizards.com)

Rebuilding Bridges

After Wizards bought TSR, the company re-established contact with several key creators who had, for various reasons, broken with the previous regime. This year's GEN CON Game Fair featured the results of that effort.

Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson, co-creators of the D&D® game, returned to the Game Fair as TSR guests after

long absences. In addition to seminars and signings, the designers participated in a two-hour discussion session, "RPGs: Past, Present, and Future." Excerpts appear on the Wizards web site (www.wizards.com).

In a press release distributed at the show, TSR announced an amicable settlement with Dave Arneson on all outstanding legal and financial claims relating to the D&D game and trademark. Since the game's original publication in 1974 Arneson has had disputes with TSR over royalty obligations as well as derivative works. TSR positioned the AD&D game as separate from the D&D RPG in order to distance itself from these complexities. Future AD&D game products will credit both designers.

Arneson commented, "This settlement gives TSR several options: position D&D products as proper lead-ins to the AD&D line, call everything D&D and get rid of AD&D altogether, or do something entirely different. Regardless, TSR will have an opportunity to make the property more streamlined, particularly to new players."

Another Game Fair press release announced that author R.A. Salvatore has returned to writing for the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting. Salvatore, author of the Icewind Dale and Dark Elf trilogies, the Cleric Quintet, and many others, will start next year on a new novel featuring his signature character, Drizzt Do'Urden. Salvatore attended the Game Fair to sign books at the Waldenbooks booth.

Elmore Hospitalized

On August 6, while driving with his children to the GEN CON Game Fair, artist Larry Elmore suffered a heart attack. He had an angioplasty at St. Vincent's Hospital, spent two days in the Coronary Critical Care unit, and was released August 10. Daughter Jennifer Elmore said the 49-year-old artist is expected to make a full recovery.

Elmore, whose covers have graced many AD&D products, suffered a stroke in 1991. After that he stopped smoking and started exercising, but his daughter says he resumed smoking earlier this year. He had been working heavily on paintings for *Sovereign Stone*, a shared-world project he devised with Margaret Weis and Don Perrin. (1314 Sunbeam Rd., Leitchfield, KY 42754; lelmore@westky.com)

Other Convention News

Exile out, Aeon in at White Wolf:

Though not officially bought out yet, White Wolf Game Studio's co-owner, Vampire designer Mark Rein•Hagen, is no longer directly involved with the company. His planned Exile RPG and the Null Foundation that would support it (see issue #235) are both dead. White Wolf line editors at a Game Fair seminar said (forcefully) that Rein•Hagen has had little involvement with the company's Storyteller RPGs since Changeling's first edition.

Aeon, White Wolf's new SF RPG (unrelated to *Exile* or the *Storyteller* games), appears in November. Designed by Andrew Bates, *Aeon* is set in 2120 during an extended war against the Aberrants, psionically gifted mutant invaders. Players are psions who belong to one of six fractious orders, all supervised by the shadowy Aeon Trinity. The ambitious 1998 support schedule includes four supplements, an adventure trilogy, and two novels by Hugo-winning SF writer George Alec Effinger.

The new batch of historical Storyteller RPGs, such as the recent *Werewolf: The Wild West** (set in the 1870s) and next summer's *Mage: The Sorcerers' Crusade** (1450-1550), has prompted fans to propose future-era versions of these games. But White Wolf developers say they won't happen: "Showing a future World of Darkness would take the edge off the

Continued on page 118

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