

Different Worlds

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THE MAGAZINE FOR ADVENTURE ROLE-PLAYERS

Special Post-Holocaust Issue

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Featuring:
The
**MORROW
PROJECT**

Different Views

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Comments, Comments

Issues 30 and 31 are excellent examples of what *DW* should be. In fact, try as I might, I couldn't find anything in them to complain about. For the most part, the articles were entertaining as well as informative. I especially liked the articles on superhero gaming in issue 30. I haven't been that interested in superhero games until now and, though I have been a comics collector for many years, I have never read *The New Teen Titans*. Thanks to *DW* 30, I'll probably be picking up *Superworld*, as well as *Titans*, in the near future.

I also would like to commend *DW* for making good on your promise to include a game supplement in each issue. Both of the detachable supplements were especially appreciated since I enjoy both *Stormbringer* and *Call Of Cthulhu*. I like the idea of getting a little something extra in every issue of *DW*. I hope you can continue with this practice.

I would now like to address a different subject, namely Mr. Rolston's review of Fantasy Game Unlimited's *Daredevils* and the subsequent letter by Tom Dowd.



Frankly, I agree with Mr. Rolston that *Daredevils* is a mediocre attempt at a pulp-adventure role-playing game. Still, I can sympathize with Mr. Dowd that perhaps Mr. Rolston's the wrong person to review this game. It is obvious from the review that Mr. Rolston simply does not enjoy the pulp-adventure genre. That's fine, not everyone likes chocolate cake either. Still, it is irresponsible for him to suggest that this type of fiction is a weak genre. Let me point out that there are 182 *Doc Savage* adventures, 24 *Avenger* novels (not counting the latter episodes written by Ron Goulart), 260 *Shadow* adventures, 24 *Tarzan* books, 13 *Fu Manchu* stories, and, of course, the incredibly popular *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Now, I wouldn't call that a genre without resources. A well-played campaign centered around a globe-trotting hunt for Fu Manchu could keep adventurers entertained for quite some time.

Apparently, Mr. Rolston has never considered the possibilities available in this genre. However, I do agree that *Daredevils* is not a fun game to play. Like most of FGU's products that I have examined, it seems to be far more complex than is really necessary. I've become increasingly dependant on Chaosium's *Basic Role-Playing* system. Unfortunately, it seems that Chaosium has put its *Reckless Adventures* project on indefinite hold. Oh well, maybe I can manage to find a copy of Hero Games' *Justice Inc.*; though I've yet to see it, it has to be better than *Daredevils*. I just hope that when *DW* reviews it, they will allow it to be done by someone other than who admittedly has no respect for the genre. Let Mr. Rolston review something else.

Don Wellman
Quincy IL

IN THIS DUNGEON, THE TREASURE IS BASED ON FEDERAL PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, THE LAYOUT ON FEDERAL BUILDING REGULATIONS, AND THE MONSTERS COME FROM THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT.



NOBODY NEVER WINS NOWHOW, EH?

Thank you, thank you. We could use more letters like yours.

—Editor

An Old Issue

Going over back issues of *DW*, I noticed a statement to which I'd like to take exception. Jane Woodward's "Cult Of Erlin" (*DW* 13) was very well done and much appreciated by the musically inclined in our group (though I question the choice of runic associations). However, in my limited experience as a musician, both alone and in groups, it is easier to perform in a group, not harder. Good playing on the part of others can cover up a multitude of musical sins. I would instead suggest the following system for group performances.

If over half the members of the group make their roll (and no one fumbles), roll listed amounts. For every fumble, someone will have

to make a critical roll to cover the fumbler's mistakes. If no critical is forthcoming, then no money. If less than half make their roll and someone fumbles without a redeeming critical somewhere, then the group gets the rotten vegetables. If over half the members "impale" their roll, then they get twice the listed amount, and if over half critical, they get triple.

Diane E. Grier
Port Angeles WA

Request for Special Elf Issue

I have an Einherjar Rune-lord character who is really a dishonest miser who has tried many a time to do his fellow adventurers in. He is an elf and I would like to see an issue of *DW* dedicated to elves to try to reform the little twit.

"Warlord"
Einherjar Rune Lord

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The Gamer

Editor's
Views

BRAVE NEW WORLDS OF ROLE-PLAYING

Presentations of adventure role-playing games, whether historical, mythological, or fantasy, come in many different formats and styles. Most role-playing games start with the character and give rules on what it can do, skills it can learn and use, magic and their effects, weapons it can buy, etc. Then the immediate world around the character is described, usually in terms of an adventure scenario: where you are, how to get there, and the scene of the adventure itself—usually a dungeon or a haunted castle. Such games generally concentrate on the rules and character-building, with little regard for background world information or for good adventure scenarios. It is easier for gamers to play these types of games because the player immediately identifies with the character, which becomes the focal point with the world revolving around it. Most good stories and novels work in this manner. However, without the background information, it is very difficult for the gamemaster to conduct an evening of play. If a scenario is not provided, the gamemaster must make one up. To make one up, the gamemaster needs a good background information or must develop his own.

Some gamemasters find it relatively easy to design their own scenarios for an evening's play. But for a role-playing campaign to be interesting, the game requires a detailed world-description. First you need a detailed map, usually of a continent or an important area, from which players can get an idea of the situation their characters are in. The map should have terrain, pathways, population centers, political boundaries, and other important features. The descriptions of the inhabitants of the area should include important persons, political activities, occupations, and motivations, usually derived by survival and procreation habits.

A short history is useful but not always necessary. Then must come the most important part of all: how a character interacts with this world. For a game to be more than simply an exercise in world-building, good motivations for a character adventuring in the world must be provided. The focus must now return to the



character. The game must be fun, interesting, and worthwhile for the player playing the character. A combination of an interesting encounter with an interesting character in an interesting setting must be either provided for specifically or easily obtainable from the world-description.

If the information for the world-description is derived from history, you must have the skill to pull the most interesting people, places, and things from the reference materials. Interesting situations must then be derived for the characters to adventure in.

There are already too many role-playing systems in the market. They will eventually congeal and evolve into a generic system with variants for different world-settings. There is still room, however, for many more world-settings. We do not need many more fantasy settings but we could certainly use one for Arabian Nights, one for King Arthur, and there is still a need for that ultimate science-fiction universe, as well as for the Old West, post-holocaust, Sherlock Holmes, and samurai. I am sure you could come up with more; after all, the realms of our fantasies are infinite.

Happy gaming,

Tadashi Ehara

□

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By Steve Purcell



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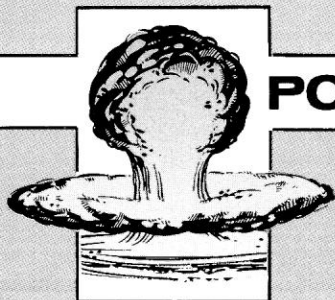
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Playtesting The **MORROW PROJECT**

An Anecdotal Report from Timeline

By Bill Worzel

Illustrated by Steve Purcell

In the past year and a half, Timeline has published four scenarios for the *Morrow Project*. Each has been playtested at conventions in the Michigan area. In general, one of us on the production staff will run a scenario as part of a convention to test different ideas and variations. Since the players at these conventions range from people who have never played role-playing games before to fanatics who do nothing but role-playing everyday, we always have a lively game.

In these sessions, some playtesters have amazed, surprised, and left us gasping with disbelief. This article highlights some of the more amusing events we have encountered along the convention trail. I hope you will find them as interesting and fun as we did.

CREATURES THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT

Our first scenario, *Liberation At Riverton*, was carefully playtested before it was published. Because the MP team in Riverton was up against a group of well-armed and vicious enemies, most teams planned their attack of the Imp camp very carefully. The exceptions to this rule were so stunning that we still laugh about them.

The most outstanding case was the team who laid an ambush for the Imps in the woods around Riverton. The idea was that when the Imps came into town, the team would catch them off-guard and easily take them. The only problem with this idea was that there was no reason for the Imps to come into town, particularly not during the middle of the night. As a result, the team spent most of the night waiting in the trees for people who were sound asleep eight miles away.

To trigger the ambush, the team leader had decided to go down the road out of sight of the rest of the team, and watch for the Imps. When he saw them, he would fire his revolver once as a signal to the team that they should open fire. The leader climbed a convenient tree near the road and waited patiently through most of the night.

Near morning, a raccoon showed up and began to climb the tree the leader was sitting on. The leader, hear-

ing the noise, pulled out his flashlight, and shined it on the raccoon's face. The raccoon, surprised by the light, hissed at him. Instead of using something like a branch to dislodge the animal, or even his knife to kill him, the leader took his revolver out and shot the poor beast.

His team, hearing the shot, took it as the signal for the ambush and began firing with their automatic weapons in the direction of the tree. In the dark, they managed to hit their leader several times, and he fell out of the tree. Meanwhile, the Imps, hearing the sound of automatic weapons, mounted a patrol in force from their camp to investigate the noise. They arrived just in time to catch the team by surprise in the middle of the road around their fallen leader, and in the brief firefight that followed, those team members that were not fortunate enough to be killed ended up prisoners of the Imps.

For some reason, MP teams often have a hard time with animals. Probably they assume that anything that goes bump in the night must be an attacker. Not a bad theory, but most players' response is to attack before they even know what they are up against. Time and time again, locals warn the teams not to go out after dark because there are "bears in the woods" and yet the teams always seem determined to go looking for trouble.

One of the most spectacular cases was when a team member was sent to investigate some snuffling sounds outside a barn in Riverton. In the dark, with his flashlight in one hand and a M-79 grenade launcher loaded with a stun bag in the other, he crept towards the sound on the other side of the barn. He got within about thirty feet of the corner when a large black creature with a black nose and a white stripe running down its head poked around the edge of the barn.

With a yell, the team member fired his stun bag directly at the creature and caught it square in the nose. The creature retreated around the corner of the barn and the character, wanting to make sure of his kill, ran after it.

When the spray from the mutated giant skunk hit him full in the face, the project director (gamemaster) expect-

ed the player to give up, but he, undaunted, asked whether he had "got 'im." When the flabbergasted project director finally found his voice, he announced that not only was the character blind, but that he had lost all interest in the skunk. In fact, it was many hours before the character's teammates would let him back inside the barn.

One of the best teams of players we have ever gamemastered for ran into a woodchuck while in the forest outside Riverton. Despite the team's best efforts at making the little beastie into lunch, the woodchuck persisted in begging for food from them. Finally, a disgruntled would-be hunter gave in and the team adopted the 'chuck as their mascot. H.N. Voss's drawing on page 36 of *Riverton* shows one of the team feeding their newfound friend. The "chuck-chuck" team is now a familiar sight at conventions in Ohio we go to.

ENCOUNTERS OF THE NUCLEAR KIND

Our second scenario, *Damocles*, involved exploring an underground computer complex in the upper peninsula of Michigan in the dead of winter. In many ways, we enjoyed playtesting *Damocles* more than any of the others.

The village of Wittsend, named for a fabled place in a computer game, was the setting for a lot of role-playing. The sauna behind the town lodge was the scene of many interesting conversations. The horror on some player's faces when the Ahos blithely walked from the sauna into the winter cold and then jumped into a cold water bath was worth the price of admission.

One player, whose character was an inner-city kid from Detroit, had a surprising encounter with Papa Aho in the sauna when the old man picked up a willow branch and started hitting the character with it. Used to fighting back when hit, the kid picked up another branch and began hitting Papa Aho back. To his surprise, Papa smiled, turned, and let the kid beat him on his back so that his pores would open more to the steam in the sauna. It was enough to stop him in his tracks. Papa merely looked over his shoulder and waited for the kid to keep going.

One of the additions to the rules that we have playtested from time to time is our "barf" rule. Most of the players, when faced with the remains of a non-player character or even a teammate, have totally ignored the fact that the guts of what was once a human being are sprawled across the countryside.

In an early playtest of *Damocles*, we had a team member who crawled up to the clear-zone and stood up in the open. *Damocles'* active defense cut him in two with a burst from the chain-gun in the guard tower, leaving his remains scattered over the snow. When another team member crawled up to the edge of the trees and saw the mess, we invoked the barf rule and, failing his roll, he was incapacitated for several minutes while he emptied his stomach of its contents.

The sound of this obviously inhuman torture that his teammates got over the personal communicators was enough to panic the rest of the players who drove the vehicle through the gate where it was destroyed by the mobile defense units.

REMEMBER THE ALAMO

Our third scenario, *Operation Lucifer*, was submitted to



Timeline by Paul Beckfield. Apparently, he had some doubts about the sanity of the people of Wisconsin because he added a number of "Napoleon's own" (wandering crazies who believe they are famous people from history) to the scenario.

We first became interested in the scenario while watching Mr. Beckfield run it at Winter Campaign II in St. Paul. The MP team was flagged down by a man wearing buckskins, a cap, a large knife, and an old rifle. One of the team asked him:

"Where you headed?"

"Texas."

"Well, we're not going that far, but we are headed south. Why are you going to Texas?"

"'Cause o' the war!"

At this, the team looked expectant.

"What war?"

"The war with Mexico."

The team began arguing over what the war meant and what kind of government there was or was not in Mexico. Finally they asked:

"Who's fighting Mexico?"

"The Republic of Texas! Ain't you heard?"

"Heard what?"

"Santa Anna's on the march! Sam Houston's sent out the call! I ain't a gonna miss a tussle like this!"

At this point, there was dead silence in the room that lasted for almost thirty seconds. At last one of the players said very softly and very earnestly:

"Fruitcake."

Meanwhile, Nick Voss and I, who were listening to this and trying not to bust up laughing, were quietly arguing

back and forth:

"Davy," said Nick.

"Jim," said I.

"Davy, he's got a cap."

"Jim, look at that knife."

Turning to Mr. Beckfield, I asked:

"Is it Davy or Jim?"

"Davy," said Mr. Beckfield.

"What about the knife?"

"Oh, he met Jim a few days ago and Jim gave him the knife."

The reactions of the locals to the appearance of uniformed people in a strange wagon and with strange weapons has often caused some interesting encounters. One of my favorites was a team in Lucifer who drove past a farmhouse where a boy was trying to catch some chickens. Seeing the team's vehicle, he turned and ran into the house. The team, continuing past the house down the track they had been following, discovered that the path dead-ended at a river so they doubled-back past the farmhouse. Passing by the barnyard, they saw the same boy rubbing the seat of his pants and carefully ignoring the V-150 as it rolled past him.

THE SMELLS OF CHICAGO

Our fourth scenario, *The Ruins of Chicago*, was originally the final round scenario for the *Morrow Project* tournament at Origins '83. In order to keep the details of the scenario secret, it was playtested in pieces as part of other scenarios.

One piece that produced some interesting results was the interrogation of the team by a more or less hostile group. In Chicago, it was the Snake Eaters of Ft. Morrow who did the questioning. When playtesting, we often used a local town mayor or a newly awakened band of Snake Eaters.

Since most players do not pay enough attention to what the Morrow Project is all about, explaining the team's existence can be rather difficult. One group, when questioned one at a time by the mayor of LaCrosse, Wisconsin, produced the following memorable answers about themselves:

"We're from a town up north named Morrow."

"At the town of Morrow, there are lots of vehicles and leftover relics."

"The town no longer exists because one day the people vanished." (But did not know how or why.)

"The weaver of Morrow could weave clothes like they had." (But did not know what they were made of.)

"We are trying to help people."

"We're searching for the lost people of Morrow."

"There are other groups like us, but we don't know where they are."

"We're not named after a town but after a famous person."

"We don't know how our vehicle work, but we do know how to drive it."

"We were frozen underground and just woke up."

The mayor had just about decided that these were obviously crazy folks who should be locked up and their guns confiscated when a group of Snake Eaters who had been tracking the team showed up and managed to convince the mayor that they could deal with these people. In

real life I doubt the devil himself could have convinced the mayor, but if the team was going to get a crack at finding the bomb, I had to figure out some way to shake them loose from LaCrosse.

When *Chicago* was played at Origins, the exchange between the players and the Snake Eaters was much different and as the Snake Eaters did not care for the team, they let them go. However, they "requisitioned" some of the team's antibiotics since they needed the drugs desperately for the locals they were looking after. Not wanting to steal from the team (and having a sense of humor), in exchange for the drugs, they filled the back half of the team's vehicle with fruit and vegetables grown at Ft. Morrow.

It was a hot Chicago summer and the produce soon began to smell. To make matters worse, the team discovered they could not get to the rear hatch to open it. When they were ambushed by a city clan on the way into Chicago, they started throwing food out the top of their vehicle in order to clear a path to the rear hatch so they could return fire.

The image of a V-150 armored personnel carrier rolling through the ruins of Chicago with corn, tomatoes, and pieces of watermelon flying out the top still makes me chuckle when I think about it. Even funnier is some ways is the thought of a city clan finding this trail, and like Hansel and Gretel, following it back to the team.

TIME AND TIME AGAIN

We have already begun playtesting our next scenario, and our experiences seem to show that we will have more stories to add to our collection before we are done. The new scenario is scheduled to be released by Origins '84 in Dallas. Without giving too much away, I will say that it is a combined MARS and Science team operation set near water.

In our first playtesting session, the team was awakened by the bolt hole computer because of an emergency situation. When the team came out of their freezing units, they found that the only lighting was the flickering red emergency lights. As they quickly put on their uniforms and went for the vehicle compartment, they noticed the whole bolt hole was swaying!

Opening the door to the vehicle, they discovered that water was leaking into the chamber. By the light of their flashlights, they also saw in the large chamber an SK-5 hovercraft. Climbing down to the floor, the leader, through a series of unlucky rolls, fell from the ladder into the water below. Stunned, he laid there while the next person scrambled down the ladder after him—and began climbing over the hovercraft examining it while the team leader desperately began trying to develop a set of gills.

Fortunately, the next person was able to get to the man before he ran out of air but I still wonder what the person who left him in the water was thinking of.

Before publication of the new *Morrow Project* scenario, Timeline should have an entirely new game out. *Time and Time Again*, a game of time travel into the past, has had good results with playtesting. We are confident that we will have many tales to tell by the time it reaches the market. We believe the inventiveness of players is one of the more enjoyable parts of role-playing—especially when things do not go quite the way they were meant to. □

The Expanding Universe of Traveller

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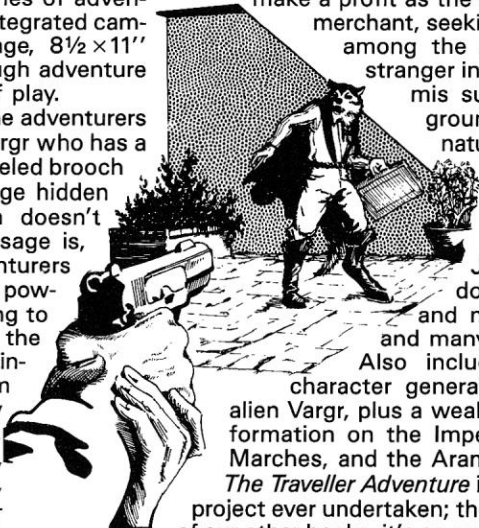
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It all starts when the adventurers meet Gvoudzon, a Vargr who has a stolen treasure: a jeweled brooch with a secret message hidden within it. Gvoudzon doesn't know what the message is, but soon the adventurers find that a great many powerful people are willing to kill to get it. Soon the party find themselves involved in a museum burglary, an attack by Vargr commandos, lanthanum smugglers, bureaucratic intrigues, kidnapping, and a full-scale megacorporate



tradewar. Meanwhile, they must try to make a profit as the crew of a subsidized merchant, seeking cargo and patrons among the strange worlds and stranger inhabitants of the Aramis subsector: the underground city of Leedor, the nature-worshipping dictatorship of Pysadi, the eugenic elitists of Paya, the alien matriarchy of Yebab, Junidy with its co-dominium of humans and native "Dandelions", and many others.

Also included is a complete character generation system for the alien Vargr, plus a wealth of background information on the Imperium, the Spinward Marches, and the Aramis subsector.

The Traveller Adventure is the largest Traveller project ever undertaken; the equivalent of 6 to 8 of our other books, it's an amazing bargain at \$12.

Murder on Arcturus Station

A corporate executive has been murdered on Station Three of Arcturus Belt. It's up to the referee to decide which of the nine suspects is guilty. Was it the executive's estranged wife? His mistress? The Solomani rebel? The Aslan noble? The adventure tells how to construct each of the possible crimes: motives, clues, alibis, even misleading clues pointing to the wrong suspect.

Then it's up to the adventurers to solve the mystery by questioning the suspects, discovering clues, and using their powers of deduction. But watch out: the murderer may strike again.

Murder on Arcturus Station is a classical mystery in the tradition of Agatha Christie and Dorothy Sayers—except that it takes place in an asteroid belt, one of the suspects isn't human, and several of the others are possessed of odd cultural quirks.

At 56 pages, *Murder on Arcturus Station* is longer than most Traveller adventures, but it's still only \$5.

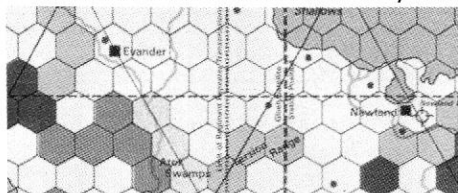
Tarsus

When a game takes in the entire universe, it's easy to forget how large and complex even a single world can be. *Traveller* boxed modules, of which *Tarsus* is the first, are intended as demonstrations of how much scope for adventure one planet, described in detail, can provide.

The 24-page world data book covers the world's history, geography, climate, flora and fauna, and the myriad other details that make this world unique in the universe.

Five scenario folders deal with a few of the possible adventure situations, including the maneuvers of various political factions and the megacorporation SuSAG, rumors of strange events deep in the tanglewald, and trouble on the family ranch. Also included are 3 maps and 12 character cards.

The entire world is available for only \$12.



Scouts

Traveller Book 6 offers expanded treatment of the Scout Service similar to *Mercenary's* and *High Guard's* expansion of the Army and Navy. It describes the organization and history of the service, including all its various component offices and branches. A detailed character generation system offers new skills and makes provision for service in all branches of the Scout Service.

In addition, the book contains new rules for generating complete planetary systems: number, spectral type, and temperature of stars, habitable zones, and the number and orbits of all the system's planets and their moons. Rules for generating factors affecting a world's climate are also included: albedo, orbital eccentricity, average surface temperature, axial tilt, and the greenhouse effect are all taken into account.

The new rules are fully compatible with the original *Traveller* world creation rules, and systems already generated under the original rules may be expanded easily.

As an example, two complete stellar systems are included: Regina and Sol.

Price: \$6.

Veterans

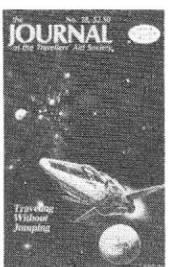
This supplement is a handy aid for the referee using Book 4, *Mercenary*. It contains over 200 pre-generated *Mercenary* characters from all branches of the Army and Marines, ranks from private to colonel, and tech levels from 7 to 15.

Veterans is especially useful when players are recruiting a mercenary unit. Each character is given a full resumé for the players to see; information reserved for the referee is in a separate section. Price: \$5.

The Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society

The *Journal* is a quarterly magazine crammed with new *Traveller* material. Each issue contains two ready-to-play scenarios, a description of an alien race, and much more. If you're serious about *Traveller*, the *Journal* is for you.

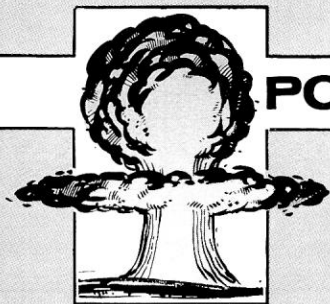
Issue #18 is now available. Single issue: \$2.50; subscriptions: \$9 per year in the US and Canada, \$18 (includes airmail) elsewhere.



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Playing Hints for The **MORROW PROJECT**

Advice for Players from Timeline

By Bill Worzel

"... advice is a dangerous gift, even from the wise to the wise, and all courses may run ill."

Although it is middling dangerous to try and it usually makes people angry rather than glad, I will try to spoon out a few pieces of advice from the pot of our experiences in playing and playtesting the *Morrow Project*. If the reader finds that he or she have made some of these same errors, be comforted in that you are not alone. Most of us at Timeline have made at least some of them and we have watched many other people make them as well.

From time to time at conventions, we get people who approach our table and with great passion give us a tongue-lashing for writing a game about guns. By now we are used to this, and after a few questions, we are usually able to point out to these zealots that in many ways hack-and-slash with swords is more bloody, if not more cruel, than guns. But more to the point is the fact that they have made a mistake that many of our fans have made as well; the *Morrow Project* is not about guns.

The game is about rebuilding civilization. That usually means talking to people, finding out how they live, what they want, and what they need. Of course, most scenarios are dramatic adventures that usually involve action and fighting. But in almost all cases (and certainly in all the scenarios we publish), the players must spend time talking to people in the post-holocaust world. The teams are waking up in a world they know nothing about and having to deal with all kinds of problems and situations. The people alive in this world are their main source of knowledge. Without that information, a MP team is literally shooting in the dark.

When we playtest *Morrow Project* scenarios at game cons, we often run into players whose attitude is "if you don't need to shoot 'em, run." This is generally a sign that the project director (gamemaster) is not giving his players an even break. It means that every hedge has a gun and everyone they run into, no matter how peaceful they seem, is

just waiting to find a way to attack and kill the MP personnel.

The other extremes are those people who seem to expect non-player characters to be wandering encyclopedias of information just waiting to spill their guts to anybody who wanders by on a strange horseless wagon and wearing funny clothes and hats. They seem to think that it is their right to get information no matter what they say to people.

Instead, the survivors who live in the post-holocaust world should be realistic people. Because the world they live in is dangerous, they should be cautious. They tend to avoid fighting if possible, but will fight with whatever they have if forced to it. Often, they have a very rural attitude, the Golden Rule and "mind your own business" are the standards. Above all, they will be careful not to endanger themselves, their families, or their friends. Talking to strangers about the local goings on may fall into this category unless they are convinced that the strangers are trustworthy. A good project director will use this as the basis of much good role-playing; under the cover of idle chatter, the non-player character may well be sizing up the team. Teams that talk in a reasonable way may be judged safe. People that spin a lot of obvious lies will not be trusted.

On the other hand, bad guys seldom wear I.D. badges. Even the most vicious and evil of people do not think of themselves as bad guys. Usually, they have some goal or ideal that they are following, even if it is just "I wanna do unto them first before they do it to me." But bad guys should be a relatively small percentage of the population. Most of them will be hunted outlaws that are scared of well-armed groups. The exception to this are obvious groups such as the Krells, or religious fanatics who usually make their presence known.

In playing a scenario, many players are overly elaborate in making plans of action. I have seen groups argue for over

an hour about the best way to attack the bad-guy camp and then make an involved plan that seldom fits the actual situation. Remember, first find out as much about the situation as you can, then make plans. Do not make plans because you "think" the situation is such and such, make plans based on what you "know." Keep the plans as simple as possible, the more complicated the plan, the more likely it is to fail. Base your plans on common sense, it is the most useful weapon in the game.

Nick Voss has a saying that he is very fond of: "The three things that get most people in trouble are Thinkin', Figurin', and Somebody"—I was Thinkin'... We were Figurin'... and Somebody said... This applies to gaming as much as to day-to-day life. Stick to the facts.

Above all, remember that you are playing to enjoy yourselves. Long debates about this plan or that plan are seldom useful, usually not much fun, and always guaranteed to put the project director to sleep. If you are the team leader, try and find a way to stop wrangles over different plans. Make a decision! You may not be right, but at least you will be able to get on with the game.

As a player you should try to use as much common sense as possible. Above all else, do not try to be John Wayne. Nick Voss may be big, and he may talk like John Wayne sometimes, but he got where he is today by keeping his head down and out of trouble! Remember that against automatic fire (or even single-shot weapons, since people using them must be very accurate), you are not going to get more than five yards by charging across an open space yelling. Somebody will shoot at you, and probably hit since it is hard to miss so obvious a target.

Another world of caution, the resistweave coveralls that are standard issue in the Project do not make you invulnerable. In the first place, they do not cover your head, your hands, or your feet. You can die just as from blood lost from the hands as from your chest. Secondly, while they may stop penetration and thus blood loss, they do not stop the force of the shot. You will take all of the structural damage done by the shot. And a broken leg will stop you just as much as a bullet in the leg. Take a look in the *Morrow Project* gamebook at the stats for sledge hammers, axes, and other blunt weapons. For close-in fighting, they are almost as deadly as guns and they are often easier to use.

Lastly, use gas weapons as sparingly as possible and make sure your teammates know you are going to use them. I have seen more teams CSed, BZed, or CNDMed by one of their own crew than is funny. Also, try not to use them inside buildings you are in. While you may not be incapacitated (assuming you are wearing your gas mask), you will not be able to see anything since gas grenades produce a lot of smoke.

Keeping track of the different equipment you have and knowing what to use may be difficult. The best approach to this (and incidentally, a good way to play) is to figure out what you want to do in a situation, and then look and see if you have anything that will do the trick. If not, see if you can figure a way to rig it anyway; as long as you are carrying all that stuff, you might as well get good use out of it.

I think I will leave it at that before wise J.R.R. Tolkien who wrote the quote I used at the beginning comes out of his grave and comes looking for me. Good luck! □

WHAT'S NEW

continued from page 42

object of this quest is to go to the castle of an evil warlord and rescue an elven ruler.

FANTASY FOREST BOOKS

These books are 80 page each (TSR, \$1.95 each). "Pick a Path to Adventure."

Book 1: The Ring, the Sword, and the Unicorn by James M.

Ward. The story involves adventure into an enchanted forest and the three items in the title.

Book 2: Ruins Of Rangar by Michael Carr. The object of this quest is to destroy an evil skeleton king whose magic has caused crop failures, loss of homes, and family separations.

Book 3: Shadowcastle by Michael Gray. This adventure involves following a halfling and a brave knight in search of a missing friend.

Book 4: Keep of the Ancient King by Michael Carr. This adventure involves leading a group of warriors to rescue a horse from an evil king.

HEART QUEST BOOKS

These books are 160 pages each

(TSR, \$2.25 each). "Pick a Path to Romance and Adventure."

Book 1: Ring of the Ruby Dragon by Jeannie Black. The object of this quest is to rescue a famed jeweler who has been kidnaped by creatures under the mystic spell of the evil red dragon.

Book 2: Talisman Of Veldegarde by Madeleine Simon. The object of this quest is to stop the monstrous forces of a summoner of evil from threatening a peaceful kingdom.

Book 3: Secret Sorceress by Linda Lowery. The object of this quest is to free a kingdom from an evil conqueror with the help of a wandering troubador.

Book 4: Isle Of Illusion by Madeleine Simon. The object of this quest is to destroy an evil illusionist who holds the future of a family in his hands.

BOOKS

Dicing With Dragons (New American Library, 1633 Broadway, New York NY 10019, \$7.95) by Ian Livingstone. This 224-page paperback is subtitled "An Introduction to Role-Playing Games." There is a solo adventure as well as descriptions of the major game systems, accessories, miniatures, computer games, and live-action games. □

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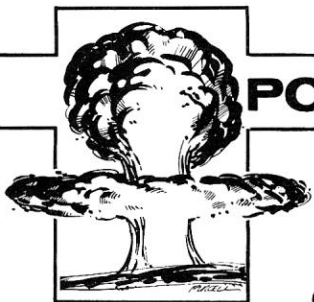
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FIREBREAKS

War/Peace Game

By Kevin J. Anderson

Q: *When is a game not a game?*

A: *When it is Firebreaks War/Peace Game, by Ground Zero.*

Why is that, you ask? I do not mean just because *Firebreaks* has no combat tables or battle markers for a war game—*Firebreaks* does not even contain certain basic things which all “games” must have. For instance, in a game the player should have some influence on the final outcome. In *Firebreaks*, you do not compete but merely participate. Nothing you do really counts.

Firebreaks is a scenario which depicts the events leading up to and possibly including a nuclear holocaust. Players form teams to act as advisors either to the U.S. President or the Soviet Premier, and from there they must make decisions affecting world events, decisions which inevitably lead to the brink of a total nuclear war.

The scenario is very detailed and thoroughly developed, and will be of greatest interest to those who closely follow current events. Before beginning *Firebreaks*, all players must look at a lengthy background sheet which explains everything that has happened from April 1983 up to the time of the scenario, April 1988.

The people of the U.S. feel frustrated and impotent; economically, the situation has not improved from the recession of 1982. It is an election year, and public opinion polls indicate that Americans feel they should act tougher in the world arena. In the Soviet Union, the leaders have faced

As the game opens, Cuba has suddenly sent 5000 troops into Nicaragua after a disagreement with the U.S. Here is where you enter the scenario as the advisor to the President. You are given three options to choose from: should the President begin a naval quarantine of Nicaragua, should he use diplomatic pressure, or should he send troops to Nicaragua? Team members are supposed to role-play the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of State, or the National Security Advisor by arguing for the options these men propose. The game kit includes instructions on how to role-play an advisor, and also includes many supporting arguments for each option given.

Meanwhile, someplace out of earshot of the U.S. team, the Soviet advisors have their own problems to add to difficult diplomatic situations, with world opinion of their actions souring even further. China is growing restive, making the Soviets nervous; in addition, the Soviets face problems in Eastern Europe, and their relations with the U.S. have faltered badly. Leftists are gaining more power in the Central American countries after having taken over El Salvador; Cuba is secretly supporting guerrilla action in Nicaragua. A movement called Unity, a throwback to Solidarity, emerges in East Germany, pushing for greater contact with West Germany. And India has gone to war with Pakistan, when the Pakistanis explode an atomic bomb in the Indian Ocean to test their nuclear capabilities.

tend to, in Yugoslavia, where a new pro-Western government is trying to oust the pro-Soviet leaders already in office. The Soviet advisors also have three options to choose from, and must pick one.

After both teams have decided, they come together and explain the problem they have been looking at and which decision they have chosen. Then each team leader takes a sealed letter from the game kit, supposedly from the White House or from the Kremlin, and opens it to find out which option the government has chosen.

Now you see the problem I was getting at before. The option has already been decided by the game designers long before the teams begin their debate. With all the arguing the advisors just went through, their efforts are unrewarded—regardless of the teams’ recommendations, the President has already made up his mind. And naturally for the game plan, each option chosen is designed to bring the game closer and closer to a nuclear confrontation.

For example, in the first move, our team chose a certain option after much discussion and thought; then we opened the envelope to see that the President has gone ahead and done something different. Players do this for four moves, until at the very end the teams are faced with a grim situation and must decide how to save the world.

But then, one must remember the purpose behind *Firebreaks*, and

Ground Zero. Ground Zero is not a game company out to make another role-playing game to compete with all the others. Rather, it is a non-profit group attempting to inform the American public about the dangers of a nuclear war and how easily one might come about. Their motto is "In a democracy, preventing nuclear war is everybody's business."

Ground Zero has printed up a great deal of literature concerning the possibility of nuclear war, and has also run ambitious educational campaigns, such as "Ground Zero" Week in 1982, and "What About the Russians?" Week in 1983. But, they have found after all, what better way is there to convince the public than by launching them headfirst into a scenario where a nuclear war is about to happen?

Dr. Roger Molander, who served on the National Security Council for seven years, designed *Firebreaks*. Apparently, national security experts play similar games to predict the outcomes of various decisions, and Molander has created *Firebreaks* with the intent to show how easily such a confrontation might come about. And he succeeds.

Firebreaks can be terribly frightening, even though it would be more so

if you had gotten yourself into the hopeless situation, without any help from Ground Zero's pre-selected choices. The player gets a sinking feeling in his stomach as things continue to go beyond his control in such a believable way.

Firebreaks would be ideal for high-school political-science classes, or even college classes, by playing one turn each class period. The game is designed to be played by sizable groups, and the game kit includes large instructive posters on all aspects of events which could lead to a nuclear war. The instructions suggest the game can also be played by church groups, community service groups, or other organizations.

Because Ground Zero is a non-profit organization, you can purchase *Firebreaks* at production costs. For \$15 you receive a large six-pound packet containing the game kit, plus a great deal of non-essential paraphernalia. The game kit consists of the materials for four moves, two large wall maps of central Europe and Central America, instructions and suggestions. You also receive eight posters detailing various aspects of a nuclear war, the front page of a world "newspaper" for April 29, 1988, as background material, plus little badges to

show which team you are playing on. Ground Zero includes a great deal of information about their organization and its aims.

Ground Zero has a shorter version of this game available for \$10, or \$5 to high schools. The shorter version can be played in only one or two rounds, and will not be as detailed.

The organization plans to release a revamped edition of *Firebreaks* to take care of various comments that have come in concerning their first version of the game. The most common comment apparently has been to make the players act as the real decision makers so that their choices matter in the outcome of the game. All the teams must do is find the correct path, or paths, which steer the world clear of nuclear holocaust.

Although at present it needs improvement as a game, *Firebreaks* accomplishes what it sets out to do—mainly by making the players terrifyingly aware of the realities of nuclear war, and how easily one can occur. The cost is low, and the experience is well worth the five hours spent playing it.

Order from Ground Zero, 806 15th St NW (Suite 421), Washington DC 20005. □

FILM REVIEWS

continued from page 45

want princess Teegra for ransom, wife, or anything else. He will destroy humanity on his own, with no such advantages.

To the rescue comes Larn, a warrior who wants to kill Nekron and marry the girl, seemingly for no greater motivation than that is what heroic warriors are supposed to do. Helping him every single time he gets into trouble is Darkwolf, a mysterious super-barbarian who shows up in the nick of time whenever the plot needs bailing out. It is fortunate that Darkwolf can do so for, sadly, the plot often needs bailing.

Comic book writers Thomas and Conway are out of their league on the wide screen. Using the simplistic tricks they learned at Marvel to constantly advance the story with action at the expense of logic, the film bounds from scene to scene, digging up a giant lizard, or an ambush, or a duel, or a battle, etc., whenever the writers find themselves against the storytelling wall. Questions are not answered, plotlines are held to their barest

minimum, and outside of the visuals, there is nothing of consequence within to hold one's attention, for there is nothing in the story of *Fire And Ice* which we have not seen before. Pulling together a band of good to mediocre ideas from popular modern fantasy, the pair have strung together a number of great scenes in the hopes of tricking the audience into thinking they have written a movie. It doesn't work. The audience enjoys each scene for what it is worth, but when the movie is finished, there is a sense of emptiness—that same 'is that all there is?' which plagued so many of the genre films of last year.

The most shameless of their steals, however, is in their characterizations. Nekron is Elric; Larn is Brak; Darkwolf is Conan. Of this there is no doubt. Nekron, the albino, warrior-sorcerer, facing blonde, excellent warrior Larn, with the help of uncontrolled, super-barbarian Darkwolf—the fact that Conan properties is not suing for the similarities between *Fire And Ice* and Howard's *Beyond the Black River* still surprises me.

But, despite the sheer awfulness of the story, the film is still a visual treat. When talking about the film, director Bakshi says, "In

thinking of the artist who could design the kind of film I had in mind, I immediately thought of Frank Frazetta. If you know American fantasy art, you know that was an easy choice." There is little disputing Bakshi here. Although the director has done little to advance the cause of animation in America since his first two films, there is no doubt that his choice of art directors was perfect. Frazetta is the driving force behind everything that is right in *Fire And Ice*.

"My whole objective was to direct a film for all ages," explains Bakshi. "The advantage of having the greatest living fantasy artist involved on your film is to make sure that the characters and the designs represent the highest standards available." Although what Bakshi's people did with Frazetta's designs waters them down greatly, you can still see the initial intent, the power and lightning, flaming drive which has made the artist's name veritably a household word around the world. And this, this is worth seeing.

Frazetta's fight scenes throughout the film are as explosive as his paintings; what they lack in finished quality, they make up in mobility. "Ralph and I had decided we didn't want conventional Hollywood fight scenes—

the 'you come at me, I'll thrust, and you parry' sort of thing. Forget all your flashy movie sword-play," says Frazetta. "This is a savage, primitive world. Smash, crush, hack, tear is what it's all about here!"

Dozens of clever tricks were employed in the filming to give it as much of an edge as possible. One that took place during the rotoscoping was the equipping of the actors with tightly rolled newspapers instead of wooden or plastic mockups of swords, axes, etc. They were then instructed to 'go to town,' and hold nothing back. "This allowed them to really hit hard," explained Frazetta, "with complete follow through. It gave a swiftness, solid impact, and a true recoil from the blows. When the animation takes it from there, you get the kind of fights no one could duplicate live."

The artist is correct. The fight scenes in *Fire And Ice* are so breathtaking, they almost make one forget the film's total lack of coherence. But 'almost' is not good enough. Despite Frazetta's influence, Bakshi has cut his usual corners, skimped on story, logic, and unity, to produce just another of his pointless animated mushes which looks good in spots, but in the end is not worth looking at in its total. □

Juvenile Non-Fiction Sourcebooks

Children's Books on Foreign Cultures

By Ken Rolston

Young readers are interested in the same dramatic features of unfamiliar cultures—alien atmosphere, violent conflict, magic, adventure, and exotic images—that fantasy role-playing gamemasters are looking for when they design a campaign world. Juvenile non-fiction provides a readily-accessible, concise, and well-illustrated source of models to adapt as the fabulous and unusual societies of a role-playing campaign.

Societies For Questworld

Glorantha, the closed-world creation of Greg Stafford and Chaosium, is marvelously detailed in the creation of its many societies and alien races. However, the very splendor of Glorantha restricts the freedom of the gamemaster's design if he attempts to make his campaigns compatible with the Gloranthan supplements. On the other hand, Chaosium's *Questworld* is designed to be used for *RuneQuest* gamers as an "open-world." *Questworld*'s topography and climate was carefully designed to be credible and flexible, relieving the gamemaster of the complex and laborious task of world-building, but the creation of races and civilizations are left open to the imaginations of the campaign designer.

The price of freedom, however, is the considerable effort necessary to people the continents with cultures. Further, the type of gamer who plays *RuneQuest* is particularly insistent on credible, complete, and self-consistent societies, since he has likely been spoiled by the encyclopedic expansiveness of Glorantha.

To ease this burden of populating the campaign world, and to assist the gamemaster in creating believable and stimulating adventure settings, I recommend the use of historical cultures as models for your campaign societies, and in order to reduce the amount of background research necessary, I suggest that gamemasters turn to juvenile non-fiction as reference. If you can endure the stigma that may attach to an adult rooting around in the kid's section of the li-

brary, there are no finer quick and entertaining sources for a quick introduction to a historical culture. Further, the very things that fascinate young readers, and are pointedly emphasized in juvenile non-fiction, are the features that will interest a gamemaster in preparing an adventure setting.

Five Features to Look For

These are the dramatic elements that will be particularly useful to campaign designers, and which are almost universally present in all juvenile books on historical cultures:

Alien Atmosphere: Strange and exotic settings are critical for fantasy literature and fantasy gaming, and there is often nothing stranger than fact. The unknown is an important part of adventuring, and a quick scan of a few juvenile books on ancient and modern cultures will quickly apprise the reader of how little he knows about the peoples of Earth.

Violence And Warfare: Action and conflict is at the root of most fantasy adventure, and the peculiar attitude a culture has toward war and heroism, and the trappings, technology, and tactics of combat are always of interest to the fantasy role-playing gamer.

Magic, Religion, and Supernatural: These subjects are central to fantasy adventuring, and juvenile writers usually give plenty of attention to these aspects of a society.

Potential Adventure Hooks: As you read through these books, you will invariably come across a phrase or an illustration which will inspire an adventure. It is this sense of adventure that draws juvenile readers to these books.

Visual Images: Juvenile books tend to be lavishly illustrated with colorful artwork and photographs; some even have reproductions of the art and craft of the historical period. These visuals are often more effective than the text—worth more than a thousand words. The distinctive garments, household items, dwellings, means of transportation, and particularly the faces of the peoples in illustrations and reproductions—these permit the gamemaster to fully visualize his campaign's cultures. He can describe the distinctive facial features of a native, or the special costumes of government bureaucrats, or the magnificent architecture in its natural setting.

Three Examples of Cultures for Questworld

The following three juvenile books are on cultures that could easily be adapted for *Questworld* campaigns. There is an example of a savage culture (the Amazon Indians), a nomad culture (the Mongols), and a barbarian-civilized culture (the Incas). Each illustrates the way a book can be used to provide material for fantasy adventures. Incidentally, the books are also examples from three excellent series which can be found in many libraries:

The Civilization Library (*Amazonian Indians*): Simple and well-illustrated. Other titles: *The Bedouin*, *Eskimos*, *The Plains Indians*, *Ancient China*, etc.

Wayland Sentinel Books (*Genghis Khan and the Mongols*): Excellent series; marvelously illustrated, with a literate text—no more "kid's stuff" than *National Geographic* magazine. Other titles: *Tourney And Joust*, *A Medieval Siege*, *The Samurai of Japan*, etc.

Modern Knowledge Library (*The Incas*): Well-illustrated, from the general structures of society to colorful details of

everyday life. Other titles: *The Vikings*, *Ancient Egypt*, *Rise Of Islam*, etc.

AMAZONIAN INDIANS

The following information comes from *Amazonian Indians*, Stephen Hugh-Jones, Gloucester Press, 1979.

Alien Atmosphere:

"The Basarana have no villages: instead, small groups of people live in a maloca, or communal house. . . From five to thirty people live in each maloca. The men are usually brothers. The women are their wives and their unmarried sisters. . . When the headman of the older generation dies, the house is abandoned. The people move together to a new site nearby."

The Basarana maloca is a family home, a workshop, a meeting place, a dance hall, and a place of worship; additionally it represents their whole universe to them, with the supporting posts as the mountains that hold up the sky (the thatched roof) which is speckled with stars (beams of light shining through the thatch). A whole village—a whole culture—under one roof. The Basarana are farmers and hunters; they skillfully make their own dugout canoes and travel along the river networks in them—fishing, hunting, carrying trade goods. They blend perfectly with the natural wilderness around them.

Violence And Warfare:

"In the past the Basarana were brave warriors. Today there is no more warfare, but men who are especially brave and tough are still admired."

Attacks on this culture, whether in raids for treasure or in open warfare, will find it ill-prepared, but their wilderness skills, their hunting weapons—the bow and arrow and the poisoned dart—and their memories of ancient warriors will permit them to stealthily track and ambush a more civilized culture's warriors, avenging any dishonorable assault on such a peaceful people.

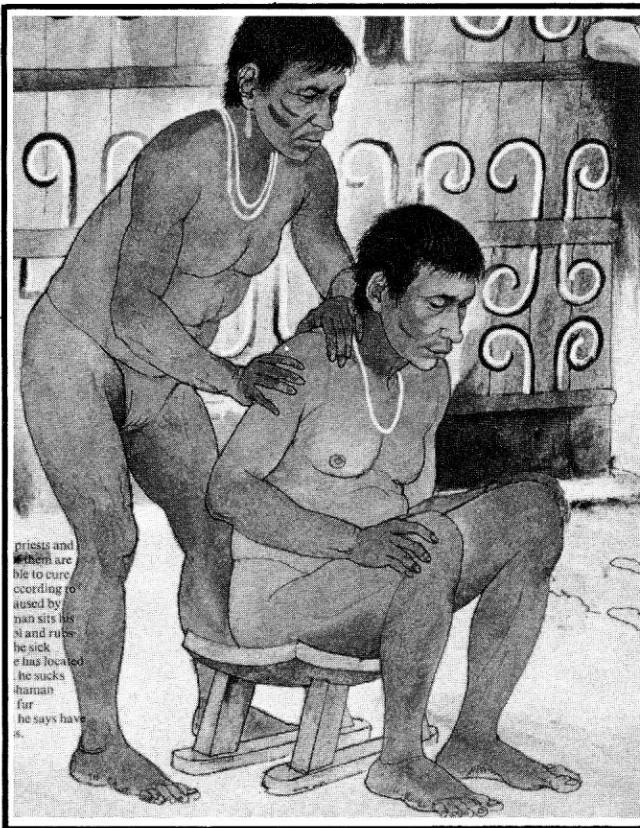
Magic:

"Since Indians believe that animals and people were the same in the past and that animals and spirits live together today, to go hunting is like going to war. When animals are killed, their spirits try to take revenge."

Imagine the surprise of an outsider who kills an animal and suddenly finds himself in spirit combat! Further, the Indians might call upon their ancient fraternity with the animals and enlist them in expelling an invader. The Basarana have shamans as priests and healers, and can call on the ancestral and animal spirits. The Basarana also use drugs which give them visions of their ancestral spirits.

Potential Adventure Hooks: The Basarana have all-day festivals in which they drink gourds of beer in one gulp, eat coca (the substance cocaine is made from), and drink yage, which makes them see visions. Afterwards they sleep all the next day. This would be a perfect time for a party to sneak in and steal something valuable—a powerful spirit mask, drugs, dart poisons, or any other appropriate treasure. Alternatively, a group of adventurers might come upon this festival and interrupt it by accident, with grave consequences.

The Basarana could be encountered along any river in a rain forest. They might be in their earlier warlike stage—dozens of dugout canoes filled with spear-armed savages, floating slowly downriver to meet the adventurers. Perhaps a party traveling through the wilderness would find itself beset by evil spirits, and have to seek a shaman to deliver a



character from a spirit possession (a disease or insanity). Or a group of characters could come across an abandoned maloca in the center of a clearing in the wilderness; inside are powerful spirit guardians, watching over the ruins, sullen and brooding, protecting some valuable ancestral heirloom.

Visual Images: The book is illustrated with colorful drawings of the almost-naked tribesmen, and each face is distinctive and personal. There are pictures of the maloca interiors and exteriors, with surrounding clearings for farming. There are depictions of tribesmen making canoes, hunting with blowguns, dancing in rituals with pan pipes and great flutes, their bodies painted and wearing special feather, stone, and wooden ornaments.

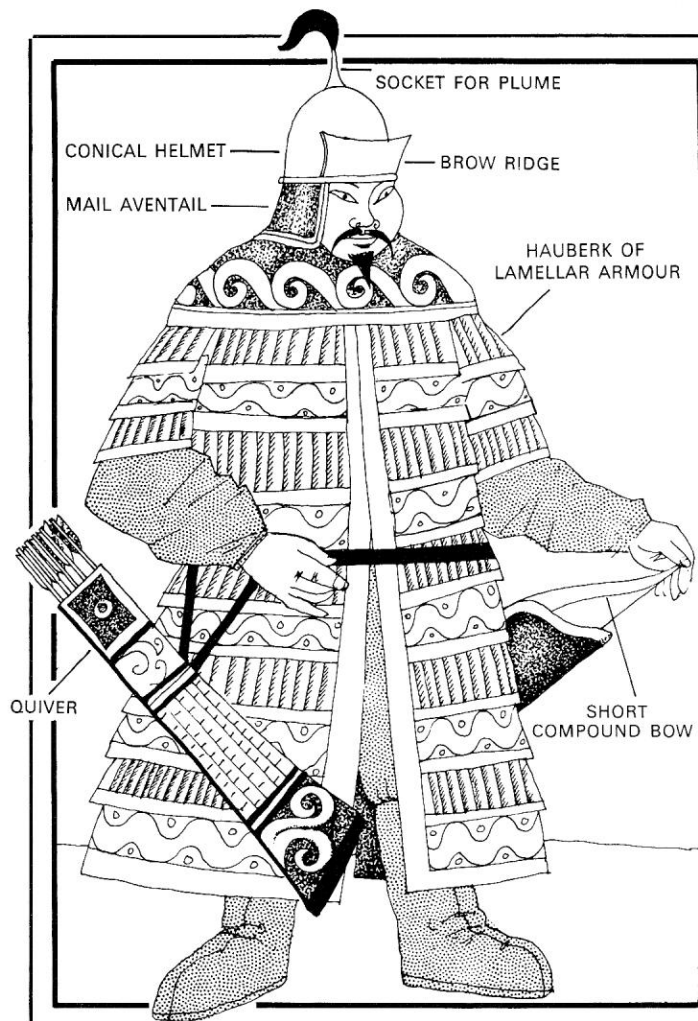
The Basarana could be adapted for any tropical rain forest with a major river system. One appropriate location might be the northeast corner of the Questworld continent of Kanos, to the south and southwest on the Greenwald map, along the Farran and Little Farran rivers and in the Barango Swamp and the Heather Wood.

"The governor was captured and sent to the Khan, who had molten silver poured into his eyes and ears before torturing him to death."

THE MONGOLS

The following information comes from *Genghis Khan and the Mongols*, Michael Gibson, Wayland Publishers, 1973.

Alien Atmosphere: According to Gibson, Mongol society was in a bad way before Genghis Khan. Rape, murder, and blood feud were common. There was apparently some law, for adultery, highway robbery, and sorcery were punishable by death. Oddly, however, though the Mongols did not lock valuables up, and theft was easy, Western visitors were said



to have been impressed at the honesty of the people and the lack of robbers. This may have been a result of the savage punishments visited upon thieves and receivers of stolen property.

When he came to power, Genghis Khan drew up a code of laws listing many new criminal offenses and prescribing severe penalties. For example, urinating into a river, or washing in one, was prohibited. Clothes could not be washed, and must be worn until they fell to pieces. Imagine a player-character being brought before the Khan under penalty of torture for washing his clothes in a river!

Violence And Warfare: The Mongols have a superior rating in this area of culture.

"Archery was so important to the Mongol's military tactics that boys started training in archery when they were only three years old."

Most fantasy role-player knows of the superb reputation the Mongols had as horsemen and archers. This book has numerous illustrations of Mongols in combat, even a diagram of a typical Mongol army on the march, with scouts, flankers, baggage and supply trains.

Although they were individually superior and fearless fighters, the Mongols also used clever tactics and technology to good effect in warfare. Light cavalry would dash up and pepper a flank with arrows, then wisk away before they could be engaged. The Mongols would feign flight, then counterattack in force. The infantry would advance with the prisoners-of-war in the first rank; if they tried to flee, they were killed. Troop actions were coordinated with flag and smoke signals. Heavy cavalry was used to smash through the center and disorganize opposing formations.

Those who fled were pursued and mercilessly butchered; hooked lances were used to drag enemy horsemen from their saddles. "Even the Mongol women fought, sorting through the piles of bodies and slitting the throats of the enemy wounded." It is clear that the Mongols were rough customers, and would provide plenty of challenge for the most determined fan of hack-and-slash action.

Magic, Religion, and the Supernatural: The Mongols are excellent sources for this kind of adventure also. Demons, shamans, totems and elemental spirits, seances and trances, speaking with dead spirits—all of these are in the repertoire of Mongol culture. There were witches and sorcerers, and a distinction is made between "white" and "black" magic. The Mongols were very superstitious, placing great stock in oracles and astrology. It is hard to imagine any aspect of magic that would not fit into a Mongol-based campaign.

Potential Adventure Hooks: The Mongols had substantial wealth (a product of their effectiveness in warfare), and chieftains were buried in great barrows filled with treasure. There is plenty of loot in such a society, if one is willing brave the dangers of getting caught. A worried lord in the path of the Mongol hoard might hire a group of mercenaries to scout out the secret of Mongol warfare, or even to try to buy off a potential conqueror. Another feudal lord might send a party to hire a group of Mongol horse archers for his own private guard; the skill of Mongol warriors is a substantial treasure in itself. The Mongols were also adept and well-traveled traders; as such, they might be encountered anywhere, even quite far from their homelands.

Visual Images: This book is full of photos, diagrams, paintings, tapestries, and manuscript illustrations from the period. There are portrayals of Mongols in armor and on horseback, frequently in warfare. There are illustrations of shamans whirling and chanting, of siegecraft, and even of spears propelled by rockets.

A culture based on the Mongols could be set on the continent of Kanos on the chaparral of the southeast coast or in the grassy plains to the east of the Bay of Narsay. In either case it would only be a matter of time before their empire began to threaten other cultures, and only physical boundaries like mountains or great forests would put a limit on their expansion.

"It is hard for us to understand the awe and terror felt by the Incas when they saw horses, and men riding on horses, for the first time. They may not have realized that man and horse were two separate creatures."

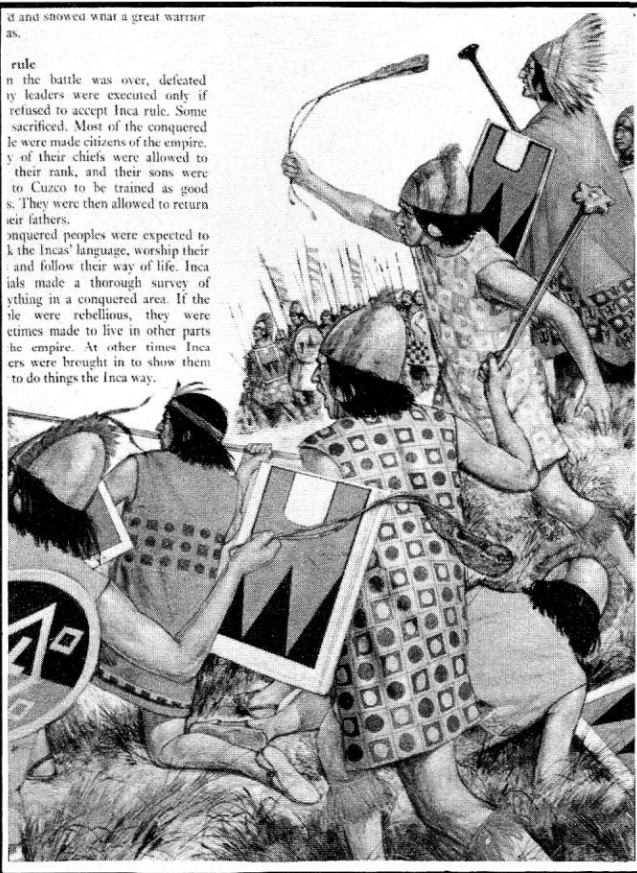
THE INCAS

The information below comes from *The Incas*, Anne Milard, Warwick Press, 1980.

Alien Atmosphere: The Incas had a very large and sophisticated culture—a vast empire with an emperor and nobles at the top of the social scale and a host of peasants, builders, craftsmen, hunters, and metalworkers at the bottom. The society was very structured, with an imperial bureaucracy similar to our own modern governments. Perhaps the most marvelous alien feature of the society was its setting among the rugged, towering Andes. There were 10,000 miles of roads, some of the paved, running along narrow gorges and

and showed what a great warrior
as.

rule
in the battle was over, defeated
by leaders were executed only if
refused to accept Inca rule. Some
sacrificed. Most of the conquered
people were made citizens of the empire.
Many of their chiefs were allowed to
keep their rank, and their sons were
sent to Cuzco to be trained as good
soldiers. They were then allowed to return
to their fathers.
Conquered peoples were expected to
speak the Inca's language, worship their
gods, and follow their way of life. Inca
rulers made a thorough survey of
everything in a conquered area. If the
people were rebellious, they were
sometimes made to live in other parts
of the empire. At other times Inca
rulers were brought in to show them
how to do things the Inca way.



across chasms by rope suspension bridges. Images arise of monolithic stone strongholds framed against a background of cloud-crested peaks. This civilization of high plateaus and narrow valleys features terraced farm plots that hug steep mountain slopes, and great ruined cities perched atop lofty elevations.

The emperor himself was a something of a demigod. Only a few favored subjects were allowed to come near him; most only glimpsed him through a screen. He traveled across his empire, borne in a fine litter, and he stayed in specially designed rest houses along the way. The society was rigidly stratified, but had a form of social welfare, feeding the old, sick, widows, and orphans. Every official was a judge, with severe punishments for crime, but there was apparently some notion of extenuating circumstances, for a theft motivated by greed might be more harshly punished than a theft of need, and youthful, or first-time offenders could expect some leniency.

Violence And Warfare: The Inca army was well-trained, well-organized, well-supplied, and well-armed. Serving in the army was a kind of tax paid to the emperor, so most men had some military training. Though they were familiar with bows and spears, the preferred method of combat was to loose slings or bolas at long range, then close to hand-to-hand combat with clubs, wooden swords, or axes. The Incas used shields, thick, quilted cotton tunics, and helmets for armor. Priests would accompany the armies, making prayers and sacrifices, and using magic against the enemy.

Magic, Religion, and the Supernatural: The Incas had gods of the sun, earth, thunder, and sea, among others. Sacred objects, whether a temple, a hill, or a stone, had spirits which must be kept happy with offerings of corn or chicha beer. The Incas made sacrifices, read omens, and had priest-

ly healers. In their temples were altars, images of gods, sacred objects, mummies of dead emperors, many solid gold objects, even walls decorated with gold. They used the coca drug for visions, and made sacrifices, even human sacrifices in times of great troubles. They believed in demons of disease, and if a sorcerer were found guilty of causing a disease, he would be executed.

Potential Adventure Hooks:

"Legend says that many llama loads of gold were still on their way to Cuzco when news came of Atahualpa's murder. It is said that this gold was hidden away, and the Spaniards surely believed this."

This quote alone could spur numerous expeditions in search of lost Inca gold; the Incas apparently had vast amounts of gold, evidenced by Atahualpa's offer to ransom himself by filling a room full of gold. (He made good his promise, though Pizarro murdered him anyway.) The brutality of the Spanish conquest of the Incas is a source for numerous adventures, with the players taking either the side of the Conquistadors or of the Incas; I personally would like to see Inca heroes arise and defend the empire from the murderous, "civilized" adventurers. Perhaps the visitors might come as traders or scholars instead of brutal conquerors. Another possible adventure would suppose the Inca empire as a vanished culture, and adventurers would search for the Lost-City-in-the-Clouds.

Visual Images: One illustration particularly caught my imagination; it shows a paved road skirting a deep gorge, with a rope suspension bridge in the background. A government official is being borne on a litter, preceded by colorfully-arrayed soldiers—perhaps a sort of tax collector. A relay runner dashes along with a *quipu* in hand, passing several groups of loaded llamas, presumably bearing trade goods. From that single illustration I can visualize a number of interesting fantasy role-playing encounters and adventures. Also, the book contains photos of gold-and-turquoise objects and colorful feather cloaks, warriors in full battle regalia, and above all, images of the magnificent and ghostly monolithic ruins against the backdrop of the high peaks of the Andes.

A culture based on the Incas could be set on the continent of Kanos in the Kanospine Mountains along the southern edge of the Bay of Narsay. The thousand-mile long valley that runs east-west along these mountains is perfect, making credible the prospect that such an advanced culture could remain in isolation for many years and suddenly be discovered by a group of adventurers. The valley would be the agricultural base, and the great cities and fortresses would be located in well-fortified strongholds high in the surrounding mountains. □

"Ma'am, could you direct me to the children's section?"

Anyone who goes to his local library, sits down in the aisle near the J900 section, and pages through these or any other similar books will realize what a treasure trove of information they represent to anyone interested in fantasy campaign building. I have become addicted to these books; I get seven out at a time and leave them all around the house—the kitchen, the bathroom, the living room—and pick one up and page through it when I have a few minutes to kill. Try it yourself; I will guarantee you will be fascinated.

The Underworld

Some Shadier Interstellar Services

By Jon Mattson

Illustrated
by Steve Purcell

The following provides four new "services" for the *Traveller* system: Assassins, Bounty Hunters, Intelligence Agents, and Thieves. All of these "services" have one thing in common: they tend to either operate on the wrong side

of the law or operate in such a way that no one can tell which side of the law they are on. In any event, whether they are used for player- or non-player characters, they add a bit of spice to the seemingly "martial-ruled" *Traveller* universe, and are just plain fun to have around!

Assassins: Individuals who have been trained to exterminate other intelligent beings for material benefit. Obviously, most sentient species outlaw this practice. Assassins may enter service at age 22, provided that their service prior to this (if any) was in the Bounty Hunters, Thieves, Army, or Rogues.

Bounty Hunters: Individuals who have been trained to track down other intelligent beings to bring them back to the Hunter's employer. Although this may sometimes involve killing the intended target person, the Hunter is usually required to bring the person back alive. Bounty Hunters may enter service at age 22, provided that their service prior to this (if any) was in the Army, Hunters, Pirates, Other, or Assassins.

Intelligence: Individuals who have been trained as spies or secret agents (detectives). They may work for a given government, company, or similar organization, or may be military agents. Intelligence Agents may enter service at age 22, provided that their service prior to this (if any) was in Other, Bounty Hunters, or military in nature (Army, Navy, Marines, etc.).

Thieves: These are individuals who are trained in methods of stealing material objects, and may be anything from common thugs off the streets to high-paid industrial spies/thieves. Thieves may enter service at any age, but receive a DM penalty to Enlistment and Re-enlistment equal to their number of prior terms of service past the age of 14, minus 13 (i.e., minus 1 at age 26, minus 2 at age 30, and so on). Thieves may begin service as early as age 14.

Note: As with all other services in *Traveller*, a character can enter any of these services at age 18: entering at age 22 (perhaps later or earlier for thieves) is optional, not mandatory.

ACQUIRED SKILLS TABLES

Personal Development Table

	Assassins	Bounty Hunters	Intelligence	Thieves
1	+1 Stren	+1 Stren	+1 Intel	+1 Stren
2	+1 Dext	+1 Dext	+1 Educ	+1 Dext
3	+1 Endur	+1 Endur	+1 Endur	+1 Endur
4	+1 Intel	+1 Intel	+1 Dext	+1 Intel
5	+1 Dext	Brawling	+1 Stren	+1 Dext
6	+1 Intel	+1 Endur	+1 Intel	Streetwise

Service Skills Table

	Assassins	Bounty Hunters	Intelligence	Thieves
1	Blade Cbt	Gun Cbt	Recon	Fencing
2	Gun Cbt	Gun Cbt	Survival	Open Locks
3	Carousing	Blade Cbt	Bribery	Pickpockets
4	Streetwise	Survival	Brawling	Stealth
5	Recon	Hunting	Streetwise	Recon
6	Survival	Jack-o-T	Jack-o-T	Streetwise

Advanced Education Table

	Assassins	Bounty Hunters	Intelligence	Thieves
1	Gun Cbt	Gun Cbt	Interrogation	Gun Cbt
2	Assassination	Streetwise	Forgery	Blade Cbt
3	Demolitions	Recon	Gambling	Brawling
4	Electronics	Vehicle	Gun Cbt	Carousing
5	Gambling	Carousing	Blade Cbt	Survival
6	Jack-o-T	Bounty Hunting	Recon	Jack-o-T

Advanced Education Table (allowed only if character has Educ of 8+)

	Assassins	Bounty Hunters	Intelligence	Thieves
1	Medical	Bounty Hunting	Demolitions	Electronics
2	Open Locks	Medical	Admin	Bribery
3	Stealth	Vacc Suit	Gun Cbt	Forgery
4	Martial Arts	Pilot	Blade Cbt	Gambling
5	Bounty Hunting	Navigation	Streetwise	Open Locks
6	Assassination	Gunnery	Electronics	Stealth

Bounty Hunters with Intelligence, Dexterity, and Strength of 8+ may also use the following Bounty Hunter Advanced Skills Table.

Bounty Hunter Advanced Skills Table (Intel, Stren, and Dex of 8+)

1	Assassination	3	Bounty Hunting	5	Interrogation
2	Martial Arts	4	Survival	6	Jack-o-T

PRIOR SERVICE TABLE

	<i>Assassins</i>	<i>Bounty Hunters</i>	<i>Intelligence</i>	<i>Thieves</i>
Enlistment	8+	8+	9+	6+
DM +1 if	Stren 9+	Dext 8+	Educ 8+	Stren 8+
DM +2 if	Dext 8+	Stren 9+	Intel 8+	Dext 8+
Survival	8+	7+	8+	7+
DM +1 if	Endur 8+	—	Endur 8+	Intel 8+
DM +2 if	Intel 8+	Endur 8+	Intel 7+	Dext 8+
Position	7+	6+	7+	7+
DM +1 if	Dext 8+	Intel 8+	Educ 8+	Dext 9+
Promotion	7+	8+	8+	6+
DM +1 if	Intel 9+	—	Intel 8+	Intel 8+
Reenlist	6+	7+	5+	5+

TABLE OF RANKS

	<i>Assassins</i>	<i>Bounty Hunters</i>	<i>Intelligence</i>	<i>Thieves</i>
Rank 1	Thug	Mercenary	Agent (SC 1)	Rogue
Rank 2	Cutthroat	Seeker	Agent (SC 2)	Cutpurse
Rank 3	Hitman	Tracker	Agent (SC 3)	Pickpocket
Rank 4	Executioner	Hunter	Secretary (SC 3)	Robber
Rank 5	Assassin	Hunter	Administrator	Thief
Rank 6	Master Assassin	Bounty Hunter	Director (SC 5)	Master Thief

Intelligence agents have a security clearance (SC) of 1 to 5, with 1 being the worst and 5 being the best. Note that an administrator is SC 4.

BENEFITS TABLE

	<i>Assassins</i>	<i>Bounty Hunters</i>	<i>Intelligence</i>	<i>Thieves</i>
<i>Die Roll</i>	<i>Material Benefits</i>			
1	Weapon	Mid Psg	Security Watch	-1 Social
2	+1 Intel	+1 Intel	+1 Educ	+1 Intel
3	Weapon*	Weapon	+1 Intel	Weapon
4	Travellers'	—	Blade	Blade
5	Disguise Kit	Suit & Cape	Gun	Lockpick Set
6	High Psg	High Psg	+1 Endur	Mid Psg
7	Henchman	Ship	Travellers'	Henchman

*At the gamemaster's discretion, this should be a weapon of unusual nature (i.e., poisoned, custom-made, rare, traditional racial weapon, etc.). In all other respects, it is treated as a normal "Weapon" result.

Characters of rank 5 or 6 may add 1 to rolls on this table. Second and subsequent occurrences of "Travellers'," "Ship," "Security Watch," "Disguise Kit," and "Lockpick Set" are treated as no benefit. Each occurrence after the first of "Suit & Cape" adds one defensive or offensive ability of the player's choice to the suit (see description for a more complete explanation).

<i>Die Roll</i>	<i>Cash Benefits</i>			
1	1000	2000	2000	500
2	2000	5000	5000	1000
3	5000	10000	10000	2000
4	10000	20000	20000	10000
5	20000	30000	30000	25000
6	50000	50000	50000	50000
7	100000	75000	100000	100000

A maximum of three rolls are allowed on the Cash Benefits table; all remaining rolls must be made on Material Benefits table. Individuals with Gambling skill may add 1 to this roll, as may those who meet the following requirements:

- Bounty Hunters with Bounty Hunting skill of 2+
- Bounty Hunters or Assassins with Assassination skill of 2+
- Thieves with Intelligence and Dexterity of 9+
- Thieves with skill of 3+ in any one of the following: Fencing, Open Locks, Pickpockets, or Stealth (only one bonus is allowed for this)

Although these bonuses are cumulative, they cannot exceed a DM of +2, and modified rolls of 8 are treated as 7.

AUTOMATIC SKILLS

The following skills are received automatically upon reaching the rank noted in each given service:

Bounty Hunters

Mercenary Gun Combat-1
Tracker Recon-1
Bounty Hunter Bounty Hunting-1

Assassins

Thug Blade Combat-1
Hitman Combat-1 (Gun or Blade)
Master Assassin Assassination-1

Intelligence

Agent (SC 1) Recon-1
Agent (SC 2) Streetwise-1
Secretary Jack-o-T-1

Thieves

Rogue Streetwise-1
Robber Recon-1
Master Thief Fencing-1





MATERIAL BENEFITS

ASSASSINS

Weapon: Discussed in Supplement Four.

Travellers': Discussed in Book One.

Disguise Kit: The character receives a disguise kit (see Book Three) at no cost. At the gamemaster's discretion, each roll of "Disguise Kit" after the first may be taken as a skill level of 1 in either Stealth or Assassination (otherwise treat as no benefit).

High Psg: Discussed in Book One.

Henchman: Each roll of "Henchman" indicates that the character gains one non-player character follower, who will help the player as much as possible for a small share of the loot, upkeep, and so on. The henchman will be rolled up by the gamemaster, spending 1 to 4 terms in a random service:

Dice Roll	Terms	Dice Roll	Service
1-2	1	2-3	Pirates
3-4	2	4	Military*
5	3	5	Other (Book One)
6	4	6	Rogues
		7	Thieves
		8	Assassins
		9	Bounty Hunters
		10	Military*
		11-12	Gamemaster's Choice (from Supplement Four or similar addition)

*From Book One:
Roll 1D6, using the
"Draft" column to
determine the exact
service.

BOUNTY HUNTERS

Mid Psg: Discussed in Book One.

Weapon: Discussed in Supplement Four.

Suit & Cape: The player receives a special suit and cape which indicates his status as a Bounty Hunter. The cape is usually black with a red dagger emblem on it (traditionally, the cape is worn with the dagger showing when the wearer is presently on a hunt). The suit is much the same as a chameleon-type Combat Environmental Suit and functions as one in combat (see Book Four). The suit will also have the player's choice of two of the following modifications (one from each category, defensive and offensive):

Defensive Abilities

1. Extra -2 protection versus all laser attacks. (Cr500)
2. Full visual chameleon powers (good camouflage: extra -2 protection versus all attack forms at night or in shrubbed/wooded areas). (Cr1500)
3. Metal exoskeleton: extra -1 protection versus all attack forms; subtracts 1 from Dexterity while worn, but adds 2 to Strength and 1 to Endurance. (Cr 3500)

4. Null-Grav Footpads: allow wearer to jump up to 6 meters vertically from a standing position and up to 4 meters forward (possibly in the same jump), or up to 20 meters downward without sustaining injury. (Cr 4500)
5. Image Projectors: can create one or two holographic images of the wearer which are indistinguishable from the wearer in most cases; a built-in computer allows the image(s) to move in a slightly different manner from the original and from each other (range from wearer to image is 6 meters). (Cr2000)

Offensive Abilities

1. Built-in Laser Pistol on one arm: counts as Laser Carbine, but damage is 3D6+1. (Cr 2500)
2. Built-in Flame-Throwers on both arms: count as Laser Carbines but with only close and short range; damage is 1-3 D6 per thrower (roll ½D6 for each hit to determine how many dice of damage are done). (Cr 1500)
3. Electrical Touch: hand hits, including Martial Arts, do extra 1D6 damage. Other unusual effects must be determined by the gamemaster. (Cr 1200)
4. Large Metal Claws: allow wearer to attack with "Claws" (see Combat Tables) with a hit probability bonus of 1; also allow the wearer to climb vertical surfaces which are reasonably soft and/or rough. (Cr300)

Provision is made in the suit for building in more of these features at the costs given in parenthesis (above). Also, each additional roll of "Suit & Cape" after the first allows the player to add in another defensive or offensive ability of his choice at no cost (if all abilities are possessed, treat the roll as "no benefit").

High Psg: Discussed in Book One.

Ship: The ship gained will either be a corsair (as per Supplement Four), on a roll of 7+ (2D6), or a scout (as per Book Two). At the gamemaster's discretion, each roll of "Ship" after the first may be taken as a "Henchman" result (see Assassins' Material Benefits for an explanation of this: these men are considered to be crewmen of the ship) —otherwise, treat each subsequent roll as "no benefit."

INTELLIGENCE

Security Watch: This indicates that the player will be secretly watched by 1-3 Intelligence Agents (of rank 1-3 each) for 1-6 months: either they do not really trust the player (if he is rank 1 or 2) or they wish to protect him from danger (if he is rank 3 or more). The exact effects of this must be determined by the gamemaster. This result may only be obtained once: second and subsequent rolls are treated as "Mid Psg" (as per Book One).

Blade: Discussed in Book One.

Gun: Discussed in Book One.

Travellers': Discussed in Book One.

THIEVES

Weapon: Discussed in Supplement Four.

Blade: Discussed in Book One.

Lockpick Set: The player receives a lockpick set (see Book Three) at no cost. At the gamemaster's discretion, each additional roll of "Lockpick Set" after the first may be taken as a level one skill in "Open Locks" (otherwise, treat as "no benefit").

Mid Psg: Discussed in Book One.

Henchman: Discussed under Assassins' Material Benefits.

SKILLS

Admin: Discussed in Book One.

Assassination: The individual is skilled in various means of assassinating other human and humanoid beings (poisoning, etc.).

In assassination attempts, this skill is used as a favorable DM for poisoning attempts, backstabbing, and so on. It can also be used as the chance (on 1D6, modified as the gamemaster sees fit) of successful assassination of or by non-player characters in a game situation which is not played out. If the character's skill level is 4 or more, he receives a bonus equal to Level-3 to all forms of Blade and Gun Combat.

Blade Combat: Discussed in Supplement Four.

Bounty Hunting: The individual is skilled in tracking and hunting other intelligent beings.

This skill is similar to Hunting (Supplement Four) but applies to intelligent beings instead of animals. This is treated as a favorable DM when attempting to find/track down a wanted person, and so on.

Brawling: Discussed in Book One.

Bribery: Discussed in Book One.

Carousing: Discussed in Book Five.

Demolitions: Discussed in Book Four.

Electronics: Discussed in Book One.

Fencing: This individual is skilled in selling hot (stolen) items and will know locations where such sales can be made.

This skill is treated in a manner similar to Admin (Book One) when dealing with people who buy and sell stolen merchandise. It also acts as a favorable DM when attempting to locate such people.

Forgery: Discussed in Book One.

Gambling: Discussed in Book One.

Gun Combat: Discussed in Book Four.

Gunnery: Discussed in Book Five.

Hunting: Discussed in Supplement Four.

Interrogation: Discussed in Books Four and Five—Book Five should govern.

Jack-o-T: Discussed in Book One.

Martial Arts: The individual is skilled in specific forms of hand-to-hand combat (i.e., karate, judo, etc.).

The character's Martial Arts skill level is used as a favorable DM for both hit probability and damage when using hands and feet (i.e., no weapons) in combat. Half of the level (round fractions down) is used as a favorable DM to hit probability with the following weapons: dagger, blade, foil, staff, and any other unusual weapons the gamemaster wishes (shurikens, nunchakus, etc.). The character's skill level cannot exceed one-half (round up) of his Dexterity score.

Medical: Discussed in Book One.

Navigation: Discussed in Book One.

Open Locks: The individual is skilled in picking and foiling locks and similar mechanisms.

This skill should be treated as a favorable DM when attempting to open locks and foil small traps and similar mechanisms. As noted in Book Three, the chance of opening most normal locks with a lockpick set is 8+. If a lock-

pick set is not used, but some similar tool is on hand (credit card, bobby pin, etc.), the roll to be made is 12+. DMs apply: no expertise, -2; per level of expertise, +1.

Pickpockets: The individual is skilled in filching small items out of pockets, folds in garments, and similar holding places.

This skill should act as a favorable DM when attempting to pick the pocket of another being, and to the chance of being detected doing so.

Basic throw to pick pocket, 7+. DMs apply: no expertise, -2; per level of expertise, +1.

Basic throw to avoid detection: 9+. DMs apply: no expertise, -3; per level of expertise, +1. This roll must be made whether the pickpocket attempt is successful or not. Other gamemaster-imposed DMs may apply.

Pilot: Discussed in Book One.

Recon: Discussed in Book Four.

Stealth: The individual is skilled at hiding his presence by moving silently and keeping undercover.

This skill should be used as a favorable DM when checking to see if a character can avoid observation or detection. The exact throw required must be determined by the gamemaster, based on the situation in question (usual throw to hide successfully is 7+ in the dark, or 11+ in daylight, with a DM of at least +1 if cover is present in adequate amounts).

Streetwise: Discussed in Book One.

Survival: Discussed in Book Four.

Vehicle: Discussed in Book Five.

Vacc Suit: Discussed in Book One. □



ARE YOU SURE THAT TRANSLATES
AS SUMMON NIGHTGAUNT?

Shields and Weapon Parrying

Variant for Villains And Vigilantes



COMMON WEAPON PARRY FACTOR TABLE

Weapon	Parry Factor
Fist	—
Knife/Dagger	1
Club/Bludgeon	2
Sword	3
Big club	2
Hand axe/Hatchet	2
Battleaxe	2
Spear	3
Shield	5

BRAWLING WEAPON PARRY FACTOR TABLE

Weight in Pounds	Parry Factor
Up to 30	1
31 to 120	2
121 to 480	3
481 to 1920	5
1921 to 7680	5
7681 to 30720	6
37021 to 122880	7
122880 to 491520	8
Etc.	Etc.

By Jeff Dee

To simulate the defensive capabilities of shields and melee weapons in *Villains And Vigilantes*, the following system has been devised.

Each weapon, shield, or other parrying object is assigned a Parry Factor which is cumulative with the wielder's normal minus to be hit while evading. It has no effect unless the wielder is using the evasion option, and may be ruled ineffective by the gamemaster depending on the situation; a shield will not help against a poison gas or gravity attack, and so on. The defender must be aware of the incoming attack in order to effectively parry. Only one parry is allowed per phase per parrying object used. Evasion without an object to parry with is assumed to employ empty-handed parrying attempts when applicable.

Parry Factors for common weapon types are listed in the Common Weapon Parry Factors Table. Brawling weapons can be used to parry as well, as shown in the Brawling Weapon Parry Factors Table.

Since parrying consists of intercepting an incoming attack and deflecting it away, the parrying item may sustain damage when a parry is successful. This can be resolved as follows: total the defender's Damage Modifier, Accuracy, Heightened Expertise/Defense, and other applicable superpower bonuses, and item's Parry Factor or its Structural Rating, whichever is higher. This is the amount of damage the superhero can parry with that item per phase without the object being significantly damaged. If the item is damaged, apply the number of excess damage points scored over and above the number which can be parried per phase, to both the parrying item and its wielder. Rolling with the punch, Armor, Invulnerability, and other after-the-fact sort of defenses still apply.

Fifty pounds of weight (in the case of brawling weapons) or one structural/hit point are lost per point of damage absorbed by a parrying item. When reduced to zero hits or zero weight, the object is smashed/broken and effectively useless. □

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This Complete
SUPERWORLD and CHAMPIONS
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Superheroes and Supervillains
For Both Systems

Magic:

The Law of Similarity

Metaphor Made Manifest

By Greg Costikyan

Part of the appeal of fantasy is its medieval setting; individuals can be more heroic when weapons of mass destruction do not exist. More important is the appeal of magic. Magic allows the individual to work his will on the universe with a flick of his finger. Magic is individual power, and eminently appealing to those who live in an increasingly collectivized society like ours.

We treat technological devices as "black boxes"—mysterious things which work under mysterious principles. Few people know how their cars work; they only know what the controls do. As long as the car works, we are not concerned. Most games treat magic the same way—as a "black box." *Dungeons & Dragons* is the worst offender; its spells have little internal justification. The mage chooses his spell from a list, and casts it; it has a single, specified effect. This is simplistic magic—many have commented on its basic similarity to technology. The magic-missile wand is a non-jamming SMG; the fireball spell is a portable, one-shot flamethrower.

Magic, however, is based on different principles from technology. The basic principle of magic is the *Law of Similarity*. Like physical laws, this law can be stated in a number of different, equally valid ways. The simplest way is: similar causes produce similar effects. Another is: events in the world can be altered by manipulating things which bear a fundamental similarity or association with the event to be changed. More poetically: metaphor is reality.

Technology is based on a dichotomy between mind and physical reality. Physical reality exists, and is manipulated only physically. The mind can think and conceive, but humans cannot affect reality by mind alone: they have to use their hands.

Magic denies this dichotomy. Its existence implies that ideas can become reality; that perceptions can alter the physical world; that reality and our perceptions of it are mutually intertwined and self-reinforcing.

The Law of Similarity allows us to work magic by manipulating symbols. To cause a piece of wood to burst into flames, we construct a magical ritual which uses things similar to the desired result. Fire is similar to heat, so anything producing heat can be part of the ritual. Fire makes crackling and snapping sounds, so making such sounds could be useful. The sun is a fiery globe, so it or a sun-gold should be called upon. All of these things are associated with fire. Their manipulation can result in the manipulation of fire.

But similarities and associations do not exist in a vacuum: they exist only because an intelligent mind sees the similarity. The elements used in a magical ritual are symbols for the thing the ritual is intended to affect; but symbols are created by and perceived by the conscious mind.

Since symbols are created by consciousness, and since magic is worked by manipulating symbols, it follows that magic is created by consciousness, and cannot exist without it. If a mole bursts from the top of his molehill, he will not cause a volcano some distance away to erupt, despite the similarity between the two events. However, an intelligent being might see that similarity, and construct a ritual to cause the volcano to erupt which might use the mole's eruption as a symbol. A mole is not a sapient (intelligent) being, and cannot work magic, because magic requires the intelligent and purposeful manipulation of symbols, which are conceived only by intelligence.

Words are symbols. In fact they are "arbitrary" symbols, because a word

has a given meaning only by convention. Other conventions might use the same word (sound) to mean something else, or use a different word to mean the same thing. This is why many different languages can exist; if a word has an innate, specific, non-arbitrary meaning, there could be only one "True" language.

Since words (and other arbitrary symbols) have a meaning only because those meanings are assigned by convention, words are symbols only because intelligent beings make them symbols. In this case again, symbols, and hence magic, require consciousness.

Some symbols, however, are not arbitrary. They bear a unique relationship to the thing they represent, and cannot be replaced by other symbols. A map is a good example. The notations used on a map may be arbitrary, but its basic shape is not. A coast line must be drawn in such-and-such a manner; if it is drawn in a different manner, it is incorrect, and ceases to be a symbol for the real coast line. Even non-symbols are the product of consciousness, however. A cat cannot recognize a map, even if he is familiar with the area the map represents. Some primitive humans cannot recognize photographs, because they have not been trained to recognize flat, two-dimensional images as symbols for three-dimensional reality.

A metaphor is a word or phrase that normally describes one thing, used to describe another thing that it can describe only by comparison or analogy. An example is Blake's classic line, "Tiger, tiger, burning bright." The poet is not referring to a tiger which is literally burning; instead, he is referring to the similarity between the orange-and-black stripes of the tiger and the flames of a fire, and between the voracity of the tiger and that of fire. The phrase is a metaphor.

In the same sense, magic uses symbols to replace real things by analogy or comparison: magic is metaphor made manifest. Metaphor is restricted to the imaginary world of words: magic eliminates the restriction and allows metaphor to affect the real world.

If magic exists, conceptions are not limited to the world of ideas, but can directly affect the physical world. There is no definable dichotomy between those two worlds: physical reality and the conceptions of intelligent beings are intertwined. But to what extent are they intertwined? In our world, not at all: the physical world can be affected only by physical action. Physical reality can exist without intelligent beings (as indeed it did

for most of the history of our planet).

It may be that physical laws, or something like them, hold in a magical universe. If this is so, the universe happily goes its own way, and magic which affects it is an exception to the normal rules. Life and consciousness might arise by the same sort of random process which created consciousness in our universe. Once such life is created, it begins to affect the universe through magic.

On the other hand, it may be that physical laws do not hold, and the only laws which work are the laws of magic. If this is so, things can happen in the physical world only through magic, and magic requires the existence of consciousness. In the past, either the physical world and consciousness came into being simultaneously; or else a conscious being created the universe. The continued existence of the universe depends on the manipulation of it by intelligent beings. It is maintained only by the subconscious working of magic by intelligence, and/or by the conscious working of magic by gods or other powerful beings. A magical universe can exist only through conscious intervention, and hence the existence of a magical universe requires a Creator (or creators). The creator may no longer be around, but he must have existed at one time. To restate the argument: the real world is a function of magic; magic is a function of consciousness; therefore, the real world is a function of consciousness, and consciousness must pre-exist the real world.

In either sort of magical universe, the existence of magic leads to what might be called multi-ego solipsism. Solipsism is the philosophical belief that the self is the only reality. Those who accept Descartes' dictum, "*Cogito ergo sum*" (I think therefore I am), but who refuse to accept the reality of the external world are solipsists. In a magical world, the self does indeed exist, but the external world is simply a manifestation of the self—and the selves of others. A magical world is one in which many different intelligences manipulate and create the external world with their minds alone; it is therefore a universe in which multi-ego solipsism reigns.

The essence of role-playing is wish-fulfillment: "I want to be a barbarian hero; I want to be a cowboy in the Old West; I want to be the Gray Lensman." Magic is the very essence of wish-fulfillment, because the wishes of the mage directly affect reality (though not always in the way he desires). That, perhaps, is why fantasy seems the genre best-suited to role-playing. □

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My Life & Role-Playing

Famous gamers reveal
their experiences
in role-playing.

EX-WARGAMER REVEALS ALL

By H.N. Voss

Nick is usually seen manning Time-line's booth at game cons in the Michigan area.

It seems longer ago than it was.

I had just left the army to enter a university; I had never heard of role-playing. I had wargamed for years. Boardgames I knew about; I had purchased my first copy of *Panzerblitz* while I was still in high school. But what was this role-playing? The descriptions were confusing, further explanations even more so. It sounded a bit *outré*, strange, and possibly communist-inspired. I had to be tricked into my first role-playing session.

I was then enrolled in ROTC (the former sergeant was bucking for officer), and I knew that some of the other cadets had an interest in wargames, but there was nothing like a wargaming club or group. I could not just canvas a few of them to get up a game, since it was rumored some of them were role-players. These were people who consorted with colored dragons, giant bugs, half trolls, volumes of rules, and other absurdities. Now to my mind, role-playing was on par with jumping without a parachute; you did not have to try it to know it was not a good idea. However, one of my friends had other ideas.

I did not know that Herb was a role-player and I certainly did not know he was a "dungeon master." He, on the other hand, had heard me wax eloquent over a few beers about "that weird role-playing stuff." One evening, in the midst of another alcoholic declamation, Herb nodded in sympathy and told me that he had devised a solution. He had rounded up a small circle of hardcore wargamers who were going to meet the following night. Would I like to come by?

I suspected nothing. Herb was, among other things, a former Marine. Marines are known for their clean-cut, All-American, narrow-minded attitudes. I would suspect my mother of being a closet role-player before I would suspect it of a Marine.

I showed up late, ignorant that I was being set up. Pausing before the door, I was fascinated by snatches of almost comprehensible screaming coming from within the room: "I

rolled an 11 with a bardische! Does that hit?" "... and I'm throwing a sleep spell at the nearest boat..." "I broke his trident! I broke his trident!" "I just took 32 points. Am I dead?" Standing there, listening, I wondered whether or not I had heard Herb correctly. Had he actually said game?

Knocking, beating, then pounding on the door produced no result, but trying the knob revealed the door was not locked. Entering the room was to behold a scene described by Dante, painted by Dali. The tiny dormitory cubicle had no less than a dozen people packed in it. There was a cloud of smoke so thick the far wall of the cell (all of 15 feet away), was hidden. Cartons of Coke, pizza boxes, beer cans, pizza crusts, and liquor bottles concealed the floor. Among the carnage, the dozen or so persons present were perched on beds, desks, chairs, and each other, completely surrounding a terrified card table in the center of the room. The table was laden near to collapsing with hundreds of sheets of

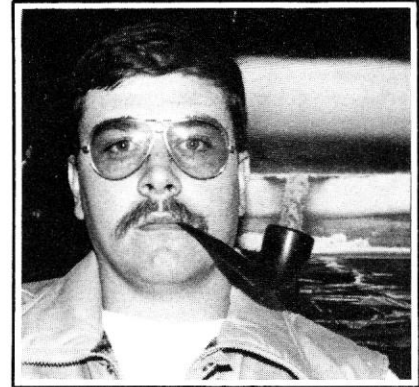
*"... to my mind, role-playing
was on par with jumping
without a parachute..."*

paper, books, elbows, glasses, cups, pens, pencils, ash trays, markers, maps, tiny metal figures, and scores of oddly shaped dice. I watched, transfixed with horror, as those people threw the dice about with passion, then searched for the dice among the debris on the floor with frustration. The impact of fists on the card table vibrated through the floor.

I reached several immediate conclusions: if there was a game being played in the room, I could not detect it; and whatever it was that they were doing, I wanted no part of it. No one seemed to have noticed by arrival, and no one noticed by quiet departure.

Suffice it to say, I was eventually shanghaied into playing. I was, after all, truly desperate for some gaming, any gaming. That was when the trouble began.

Typical situations found our party in "dungeons" (which was never my fault, I knew better than to crawl into holes), standing in a corridor, outside a door. On the other side of the door we could hear a multitude of bad guys who knew we were there too. Momen-



tarily, they would boil out of there and have us for lunch.

Okay, I can deal with that. But I was always troubled with our glorious leader's plan for handling every situation: "Everybody with a missile weapon will fire one round at the horde, fall back, join your buddies and we'll hack at them until they are all dead or we are all dead." This is a plan?

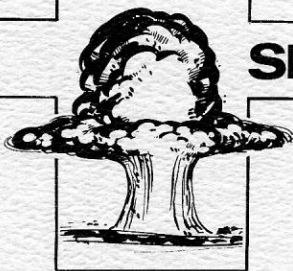
Now, I thought, this is when you back down the corridor, set up your machine gun, and let them come out. Or, perhaps leave altogether, but do let us leave some claymore mines behind, just to slow up the pursuit and add excitement to their lives. However, if we must go in there, why not chuck a couple of grenades in there first, close the door, and wait for the rattling to stop? We could not, of course, do anything like that.

The Morrow Project brings a modern-tech combat system to role-playing that works. Some of the fantasy crowd have had a hard time getting used to it, but it really is not all that different—just think of a white phosphorous grenade as a "fireball-in-a-can" and you are on your way!

Writing for *The Morrow Project* is worthwhile, and I prefer it to writing for any "fantasy" system. Fantasy is a good thing; in some hands, it is magnificent. However, fantasy writing or fantasy role-playing becomes a "why bother" proposition when it is poorly done. There has been far too much of both lately. Fantasy is too precious to waste in mediocrity.

Writing for *The Project* is, I hope, taking action against mediocrity. Placing a role-playing game in a "real-time, real-people" format provides the medium in which better "fantasy" role-playing can grow.

How? There is fantasy, and then there is fantasy. *The Morrow Project*



SPECIAL DIFFERENT WORLDS MODULE

A MORROW PROJECT Scenario For Post-Holocaust Earth

Operation Link-Up

Illustrated by Steve Purcell

Map renderings by Tadashi Ehara

By Barron Barnett and William A. Barton

"Operation Link-Up" concerns the efforts of a Morrow Project Recon team to link up with a Science team in the town of Washington, Indiana, and to save the town from a marauding band of Bikers and Gypsy Truckers and the ravages of a mutated disease. The scenario may be played one of three ways: As a mission for a 6-8 man Recon team, for an 8-man Science team, or as a two-team game, with two groups of players and two project directors (gamemasters). If the latter method is utilized, the project directors should take special care to coordinate the relative times and movements of the teams, allowing them contact only by radio until they actually manage to link up in Washington. Until such time as that, the two teams should be kept in separate rooms, with radio communications carried on by message or intercom. The teams should only be allowed face-to-face contact once both are safely in town.

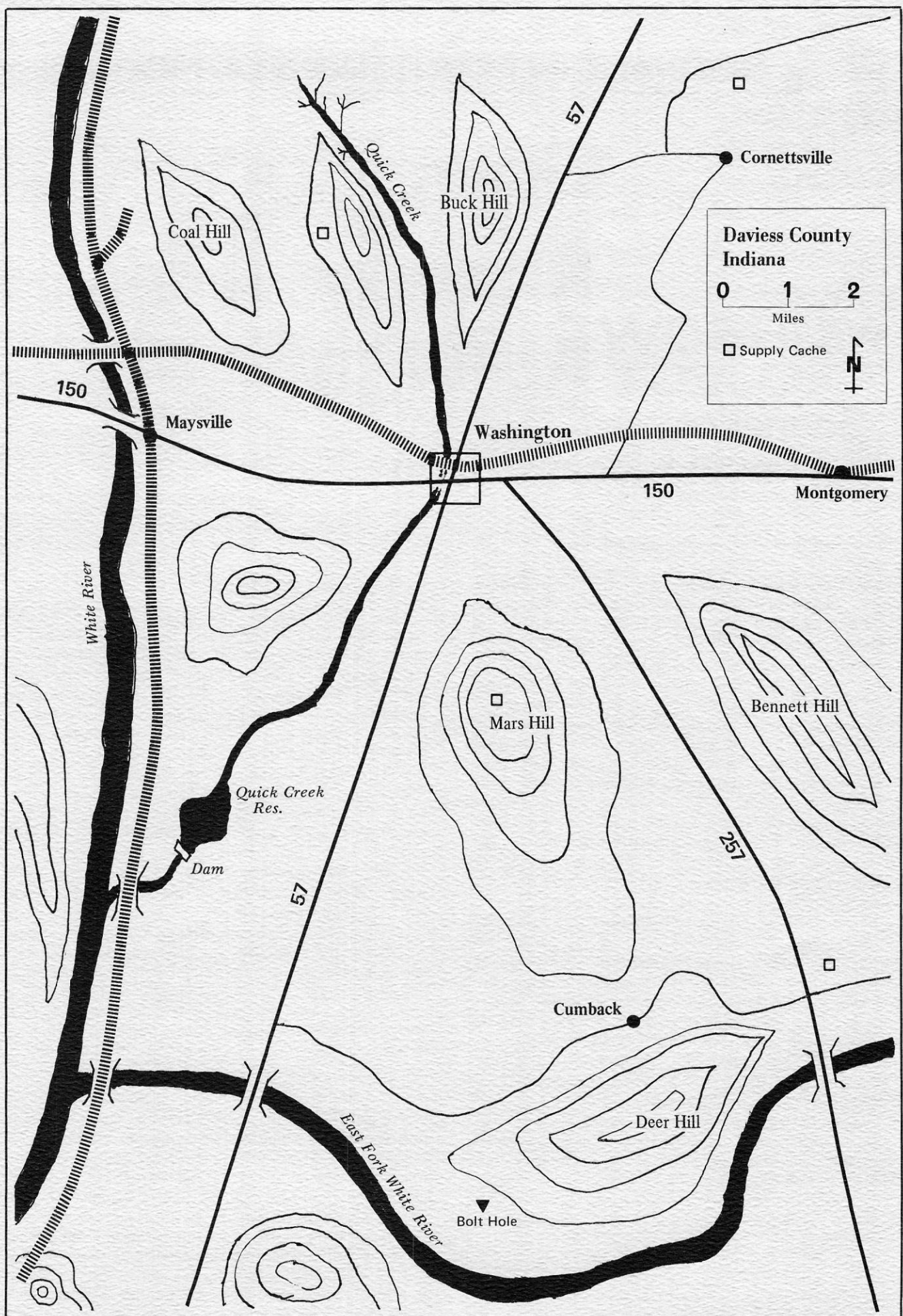
If running only one team of players, the other MP team, Recon or Science, should be played by the project director as non-player characters, drawing the team of players into Washington and the scenario. The non-player character team and their vehicle(s) and equipment should only be of minimal aid to the players, requiring them to successfully complete the scenario using their own resources rather than relying on outside help. Please note that a successful conclusion to this scenario can only be reached through thorough investigation and deductive reasoning on the part of the players, rather than through force of arms, though a less-satisfying conclusion can be reached through firepower alone. A team of players more inclined to thinking than shooting their way out of situations would best be cast in the role of the Science team; those who prefer combat solutions would fare better as the Recon team.

OUT OF THE BOLT HOLE

If playing the Recon team, or two teams are in action, MP Recon team F-18 will awaken in their bolt hole south of Washington, Indiana (see Area Map). They will soon realize that all is not as was planned and that rather than awakening a few years after WW III, a lot more time has passed. To give them somewhat more of a shock than the usual team wake-up process, the project directors may impose an immediate encounter while the team is still in the bolt hole in the form of a minimoose (*TM Handbook*, p. 59) butting their periscope, requiring them to emerge blind. Of course, all radio bands will be silent beyond background static until immediately after the team emerges. At that point, team F-18 will receive a radio message from Morrow Science team S-4. The Science team, which has been out of their bolt hole several days, is currently in Washington, Indiana. They are requesting assistance from any MP teams in radio range; their science vehicle has been disabled and they are under siege by a particularly aggressive group of Bikers (*TM Handbook*, p. 50). Furthermore, several members of the team, along with a number of the local townspeople, seem to have been stricken with a strange disease. Weakening, the team is having a hard time holding off the Bikers. Can F-18 come to their assistance?

Recon team F-18 should be equipped as the project director sees fit in terms of basic personal loads, etc. If six players, the team will have a Commando V-150 (see *TM Handbook*, p. 31, or MP scenario *Liberation At Riverton* for more information on this vehicle). If more than six players, an additional vehicle, either a Commando Scout or an XR311 (*TM Handbook*, pp. 30-31), may be added.

If playing the Science team, or two teams, MP Science team S-4 will emerge from their bolt hole some distance west of Washington, exact location and distance at project director's discretion, though no more than two days travel away (road maps or atlases of southwestern Indiana and



southern Illinois would be useful in this case). The team may be lured to Washington by several means—they could receive a radio message from Recon team F-18, already in Washington, under siege, sick, and requesting assistance, or perhaps a fleeting message from Washington radio station WXTG, repaired and held together long enough to get off one fleeting message for assistance against the ravaging Bikers.

The Science team will have a Scientific-One vehicle, though once they reach Washington, it will be immobilized for the remainder of the scenario, as a fully mobile Scientific-One mounts more than enough weaponry to easily deal with the Bikers and their allies. The team will have to rely on their secondary vehicles or the Recon team's vehicle(s) once they link up.

If playing two teams, the project directors may alter the sequence or times of the two groups' emergence from their bolt holes however they wish, though generally it should be the Science team who reaches Washington first, with F-18 attempting to run a Biker/Trucker "blockade" to reach them.

If the project director owns MP scenario *Project Damocles* and following scenarios, he may wish to have the teams awakened by Damocles for a specific mission, this scenario being an obstacle that must be overcome in order to proceed with that assignment. Information on the MP bolt holes may be found in the *TM Handbook, Liberation At Riverton*, and following scenarios published by Timeline.

FIRST ENCOUNTER

F-18: While the project directors should continually roll for encounters to keep the team busy, especially if attempting to delay them long enough for the Science team to reach Washington first, the first planned encounter should go as follows: Somewhere along the way to the town, the team will encounter a group of Bikers who have just attacked an outlying farm. The team could be attracted by a column of smoke arising from the burned-down farm buildings. When they arrive on the scene, they will find several Bikers raping a farm girl. If they open fire or attack the Bikers, they will find themselves under fire by other Bikers hidden in the trees around the farm. These Bikers will be armed with what seem to be rather sophisticated weapons—autorifles, SMGs, and perhaps a rocket launcher or two. The team should still manage to route the Bikers without too much difficulty, killing most of them and rescuing the farm girl. At least one Biker should manage to escape, however, to alert the rest of the gangs to the team's presence in the area. The girl will be alive but badly injured and frightened into incoherency. The rest of her family will be dead. Upon examining the bodies of the dead Bikers, the team will discover them to be in possession of MP issue weapons, some with the stamp of Recon team F-11, and some with those of team F-18!

This encounter serves two purposes—to alert the team to the threat of the Bikers and establish them as villains in the eyes of the MP personnel, and to inflict the team with a deadly, highly virulent disease carried by the Bikers and passed on to their victim and, through her, to the player-characters. Thus the team's efforts will become a race with time to find a cure for the disease before they succumb to its effects, meanwhile having to deal with the menace of the Bikers and their Trucker allies.

If playing the Science team, the team will first encounter the disease in the burned-out ruins of Maysville, west of Washington. Here they will find several survivors, mostly older women and young children, who will tell of the town being attacked by "raiders on small metal animals." They will be asked by the survivors to take them to Washington for refuge. The team will contract the disease through contact with these survivors. As the team travels the remaining distance to Washington, they will be spotted by Biker lookouts or, if using their radio to talk to F-18, will be overheard (see below). The Bikers will take no offensive action against the Scientific-One until it is stationary inside the city, making it an easier, more vulnerable target. They will wait until the crew is leaving the vehicle and launch an almost suicidal, blitzkrieg-like attack. While the MP team should manage to beat them back at this time, one Biker will manage to get close enough to catch the team by surprise and toss a crude pipe bomb into the vehicle. The resulting explosion will damage the interior of the vehicle enough to immobilize it. Most of the scientific and research equipment should remain intact, so that the team will have a chance to analyze the disease that is attacking them and attempt a cure. However, the vehicle will not be going anywhere for at least three weeks, the minimum amount of time it will take the team to repair it, provided the disease does not get them first.

While the Science team's problems will be minimal until they actually reach Washington, the Recon team will find themselves hounded by raiding teams of Bikers all the way to Washington. Should they attempt travel along a road, they may also encounter several Gypsy Trucker semis, which may mount a mortar or two. They will also pick up snatches of radio talk from nearby, giving short, terse orders and directions. This will be the Bikers trailing them, calling in other raiding teams in the vicinity over capture MP radios. It should not take the team long to realize this, though preventing it may be more difficult once the Bikers are on to them. The exact extent of the opposition dogging the team should depend on how long the project director wishes to delay their arrival in Washington and the team's capabilities.

Once the two teams have managed to reach Washington and link up with each other, the real challenge will begin—that of isolating the disease that is beginning to ravage them and finding a cure while fighting off the Bikers' raids on them and the town. If playing only one team, the players should find several members of the other team already stricken when they reach town. If both teams consist of player-characters, the disease will run its normal course.

THE OPPOSITION

The Bikers and Gypsy Truckers (*TM Handbook*, p. 51) who oppose the MP teams are two separate groups who have formed an uneasy alliance based on the personal charisma of their individual leaders "Duke" and "Wild Bill," and have joined together to "run the area." The Bikers moved into the area from the northeast, the Truckers from the west. Both found the old mining campsite where they have established their base at about the same time, three months earlier. The two groups were about to fight it out for the site when the two leaders decided to meet for a pow-wow. Both were smart enough to realize that a fight could be disastrous to both sides and that, by working together, they could accomplish a lot more than either



could separately, especially with those left after a deadly battle. Through sheer force of personality, Duke and Wild Bill managed to talk the other clan and gang leaders into going along with the alliance, pointing out the spoils in the area that could be shared by both. Both realize that the alliance can only last so long, but for now, it is more profitable to cooperate with each other than fight. A clever team, however, might be able to exploit the natural enmity between the Bikers and Truckers, held just below the surface by the efforts of the two leaders, to their advantage.

The Bikers consist of three gangs, lead overall by Duke. The individual gang leaders are Harry, Joe, and Slugger. The Truckers consist of four clans lead overall by Wild Bill. The clan spokesmen are Jimmy, Crasher, Bandit, and Black Knight. The Duke's stats are STR/CON 18, DEX/ACC 16, and H&M 11. Wild Bill's stats are STR/CON 17, DEX/ACC 18, and H&M 12. The gang and clan leaders can be considered to average 14 in STR/CON and DEX/ACC, and 10 in H&M, with all other Bikers and Truckers as average non-player characters of their type. The Bikers are armed mostly with knives, crude crossbows (see *MP* scenario *The Ruins of Chicago* for a sample), chains, and clubs. The Truckers possess a few crude flintlock rifles, tire irons, knives, and axes. Both have a number of modern firearms (project director's choice of what kind and how many) captured from Recon team F-11 and stolen from F-18's Mars Hill cache. Altogether, the Bikers and Truckers number about 150 individuals (70 Bikers, 80 Truckers), about a third of whom are women and children, mostly from the Truckers. The Trucker clans are all close-knit, while the Biker gangs are more individualistic, held together only by Duke. Most of the Bikers' women are those they have captured from raids on town they have passed through and who were tough enough to live through the Bikers' initial attentions. The unequal distribution of women is one source of tension between the two groups, with occasional fights breaking out due to this. However, the Duke has promised his men plenty of women from the nearby town soon. Up to now, they have just been raiding the outlying areas, but are beginning to move in on Washington. In the three months since they found the abandoned camp, they have managed to establish a number of vantage points from which to spy on the town and will have regular information on the actions of

the MP teams and the townspeople as a result.

The Bikers and Truckers are already somewhat knowledgeable about the Morrow Project. Soon after establishing their camp, Recon team F-11, recently awakened, entered the area. The Bikers feigned friendship until they were able to catch the team unawares. They killed all but two of the team, finally torturing one of the survivors to death for information on the Project. The other team member, a woman, has been kept by the Bikers as a sex slave and is being held at camp. The team's vehicle was sabotaged by the commander before he was killed. The computer, power system, and 20mm cannon on the V-150 are totally useless and its undercarriage burnt out by a demo charge, though the coaxial machine gun still works. The Truckers have mounted the vehicle on a flatbed trailer, as noted in the section on the camp. Several team weapons and radios were captured and are used by the Bikers and Truckers. Learning from their prisoner of the MP caches concealed under U.S. Benchmarks, the group managed to find and recover one of F-18's caches, giving them more weapons and ammunition.

THE DISEASE

The disease inflicting the MP teams and townspeople of Washington is a mutated viral infection. It developed from a normally harmless variety subjected to radiation from the Soviet missile targetted on Crane Naval Depot to the northeast. It lay harmless for decades until picked up by the Bikers, who contracted it when drinking from a small pool about 25 miles to the north-northeast of Washington. Fortunately for the Bikers, they found the old mining camp and began drinking from the water of Coal Creek. As often happens, nature quite accidentally developed its own counterbalance to the new disease in the form of a fungus growing in the waters of Coal Creek. It is especially concentrated in the water lillies that grow in a pond near the source of the Creek. The water lillies, themselves mutated, released a weak toxic substance into the systems of those who eat them. In conjunction with the fungus, this toxin completely arrests the development of the virus. The fungus itself will only stave off the symptoms for several days. While arrested in those who partake of this natural "serum," the virus remains highly virulent and may be contracted by any sort of close contact with those who



carry it—by touch, by breathing the same air, etc. Thus the Bikers gave the disease to the Truckers, who were also protected by the waters of their campsite, and to anyone else they contacted. Protected by the arresting agent, the Bikers and Truckers are unaware they have the disease at all. The Science team picked it up from the survivors of Maysville, infected by close contact with the raiders and each other. The Recon team picked it up from the rape victim they saved from the Bikers. The townspeople caught it from the MP teams entering town, a fact the teams may wish to conceal once they discover it.

Once infected with the disease, a victim will develop a fever within 24 hours, followed shortly by a nosebleed and severe coughing. Within 48 hours, the victim will be reduced to at best 50% effectiveness. By the third day, he will be bedridden and completely incoherent. By the fourth day, he will be dead. (Alternately, if he wishes to express the deterioration in game terms, the project director may roll D100 each day and subtract that amount from the characters' total of structure points plus blood points. When both reach zero, the character is dead. The combination of fungus and lilly toxin will stop the loss of points but not restore them. To do this, the disease must be cured completely.)

To discover the arresting agent, it will be necessary for the team to autopsy the body of a Biker or Trucker (or, if they wait too long, a team member—provided anyone is capable of such action at that point). However, finding the source of the agent will require capturing one of the marauders and forcing him to reveal the location of the camp (a difficult task at best). Such a course may also reveal the presence of the captured MP member at the camp, making a rescue necessary (and requiring the team to proceed with more caution than they might otherwise in any assault on the Biker/Trucker camp). Once they have the arresting agent, the disease will be checked, though not cured. If the arresting agent is not constantly consumed, the disease will reassert itself within 24 hours. The only way to cure the disease is to isolate the virus, grow it in culture plates, kill it (intense radiation will do the job), and inject the dead virus into the victim along with the arresting agent. This will effect a complete cure. To last long enough to do so, the team may need to secure enough of the arresting agent to keep going. The lab equipment on the Scientific-One will enable them to

develop the vaccine if they manage to stay alive long enough. In any event, they will eventually have to assault the Biker/Trucker camp to secure the agent so they can develop the cure for themselves and the townspeople. (Note: MP Universal Antibody, if tried, will prove ineffective against the disease; the virus will only mutate again and reappear within 24 hours of each injection.)

THE AREA

The Area Map centers on Washington and shows the location of Recon F-18's bolt hole and supply caches (the Mars Hill cache has been looted by the Bikers). The shaded area to the northeast is an area of desolation with some residual radiation from the bombing of Crane Naval Depot. The other towns marked around Washington are nothing but ruins, Maysville being recently burned out by the Bikers on one of their raids. The area immediately surrounding Washington is farmed, with most of the rest of the surroundings being forested. The roads are rubble with foot and cart paths next to them. The railroads are mostly overgrown, though they could be used if one had a locomotive. The small spur off Coal Hill is not known to the townspeople and will not appear on any crude map of the area (though it might on MP maps). There is occasional contact with towns to the east, west, and south, and traders pass through the area periodically, though news of the outside world is limited at best.

THE TOWN

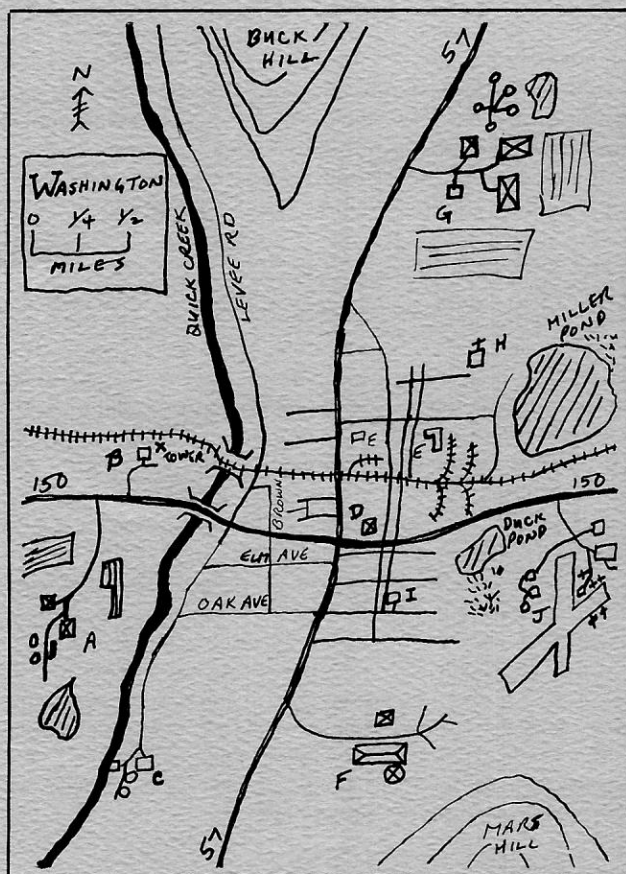
About 75 families live in Washington. Of them, most will be of little interest or help to the MP teams. The exceptions will be the Owens family, Mayor Todd Scott, Sheriff Bernard Taylor, and Old Man Miller. Mayor Scott is the decision-maker of the town, holding the community together in his hereditary office. Sheriff Taylor, with the help of the Owens, keeps the peace. Once these men begin to deteriorate, either from the effects of the disease or Biker attacks, the unity of the town will start to crumble and the teams will find themselves without allies—except Old Man Miller, if they have dealt with him fairly. Miller can be a wild card for the project director to play in any way he sees fit.

A. The Owens Farm: Brad and Martha Owen and their seven sons and daughters are the only family in Washington that can be considered well-to-do, this from the fact that they have three working .30-06 rifles, one with a scope, and approximately 60 rounds for them, kept intact and passed down in the family since the war. They also own a .38 handgun with five rounds left. The Owens assist the sheriff as deputies, organizing patrols, etc., whenever outsiders come through town—"just in case."

B. Radio Station WXTG: Unless the project director has used it to broadcast a message to lure the Science team to Washington, it will be in ruins. If used, Old Man Miller will have cobbled together enough parts for one last broadcast before burning out the last bits of surviving equipment, leaving it useless.

C. Water Company Pump Station: This area is a worthless dump. It was electrically powered, and when the power went, it was abandoned.

D. City Courthouse: This is where the Mayor keeps his office. It also holds the sheriff's office and jail (Sheriff Taylor lives here as well). The mayor is a gracious, yet



decisive man. He will greet the first team to arrive with the keys to the city. Thus he will be the first in town to contract the disease. The sheriff will be cool and detached, watching the teams warily until convinced they are here to help, not harm the town. Once assured of their good intentions, he will support them in any way he can until he, too, succumbs to the sickness. He carries a .38 handgun, similar to that of the Owens. He has only one round, however, which he keeps in his old uniform pocket until needed. There is a bell tower in the courthouse, which could be used as a lookout post.

E. Abandoned Warehouses: These were formerly for storage of materials coming through town by rail.

F. Power Station: It is in a condition similar to the water station. No one ever goes there (a Maggot currently has taken refuge there, though no one in town knows it).

G. The Browns' Farm: The Browns will be the first victims of the Bikers' initial raid on the town, just as the first MP team has entered Washington and is meeting the townspeople. This will be part of a small raid on the town's north side, to feel out its defenses and to draw out the newcomers and eliminate them as a threat. By the time anyone gets there, Brown and his two sons will be dead and his wife will have been captured by the Bikers. During this raid, the pipe bomb may be thrown into the Scientific-One.

H. The Town Church: It is called just that and is kept intact by the citizens. It is still attended, though not on any regular day or basis—just whenever the people want to. Mayor Scott doubles as a town preacher.

I. The Mayor's Home: When not at the courthouse, Mayor Scott can be found here—usually at night.

J. Owens Airport: Though it shares their name, the airport

has nothing to do with the Owens family. Actually, it is the property, by way of his having lived there since anyone can remember, of Old Man Miller (if he has a first name, no one remembers it, including himself). Most of the buildings are abandoned, though one hanger doubles as Miller's home and as a storage area. Around the runways, which Miller keeps cleared, are the cannibalized remains of several old bi-winged crop dusting planes. None have more than half their parts and would be impossible to get into the air. Inside the hanger, however, is an intact plane, kept together by Miller from the parts of the others. It currently needs a piece of gas line pipe to get into readiness (a piece of copper tubing, etc., would work). Miller has only one such piece left, which is at the moment attached to his still. He will be very grateful to anyone providing a piece of tubing so he can get the plane flying again without having to sacrifice his still (a gift of whiskey would also get him on the team's side). Miller can actually fly the plane (his daddy taught him, he'll recall), and can thus greatly assist the group by providing an aerial recon of the area—if they get on his good side. Flying with Miller could prove a harrowing experience, however, as he is constantly inebriated. On the surface, Miller is a cantankerous old coot, generally left alone by the townspeople except when they need something tinkered back together, but he will fight for the town if it appears threatened. He seems to have a natural immunity to the disease, but this will not help the team. If it appears Miller is assisting the team, the Bikers will carry out a raid on the airport to take him out, requiring the team to go to the old man's aid (Miller will be holding them off with an ancient shotgun in incredibly good working order). The hanger is stocked with dozens of drums of aviation fuel; a good hit from an explosive weapon could set it off.

THE BIKER/TRUKER CAMP

A. Main Bunkhouse: See following description. The tents north of this area represent where the Bikers camp. Several bikes are parked at this location.

B. Several Flatcars: They are rusted. On the southernmost car sits the burned out V-150 captured from Recon F-11. One Biker or Trucker sits inside this at all times manning the machine gun.

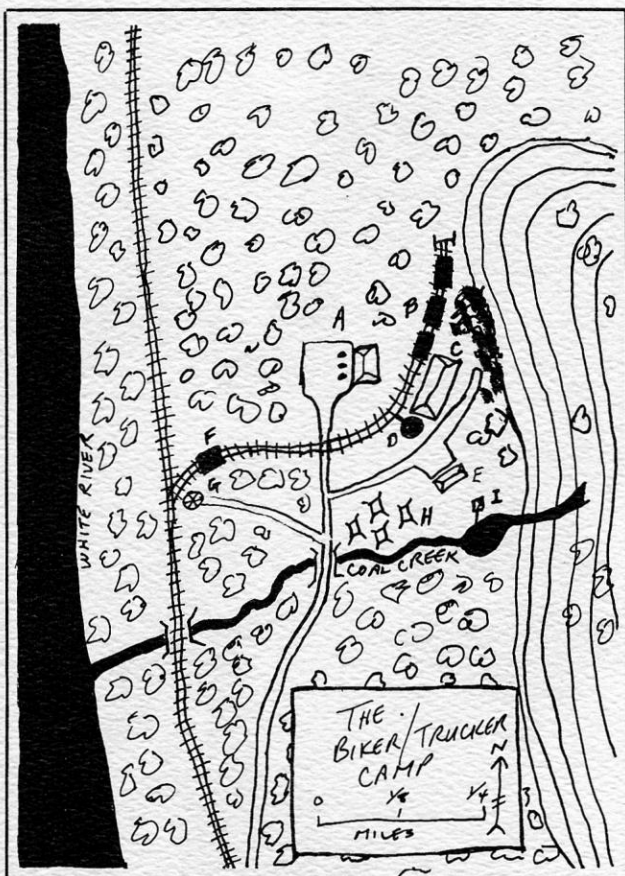
C. A Shed: It is full of rusted digging equipment for the coal mines just east of this location.

D. Water Tower: It is filled by a pump at location I. Most of the Bikers drink from the water stored here.

E. A Pumper Station: Just west of it is an underground 50,000 gallon tank of diesel fuel. It was half full when the Bikers and Truckers found it. Near it is a 55 gallon drum where the Bikers boil down the diesel fuel to get a cheap, but usable, gas for their bikes. Several bikes are parked in front of the pump station.

F. Diesel Engine: Small and working, it was originally used to move the cars of coal to the main line. The Truckers managed to get it back into working order only recently. Plans are to use it to tow the flatcar with the V-150 into the town to shoot up the place and show the townspeople who is really in charge. The plans may be accelerated if the MP teams prove to be much of a threat to the marauders.

G. The Old Switch Tower: It is used as a lookout tower by the camp.



H. Main Camp Area: This is the area where most of the Truckers and their families camp.

I. The Pumper: The pumper over the creek here pumps water to the tower and the main bunk house. Once or twice a day, the Bikers hook up a bike to it to get it working to send water to the two areas. The pond here is where the water lillies grow and where the fungus thrives. The Truckers generally drink from it directly, while the Bikers use the water in the tower.

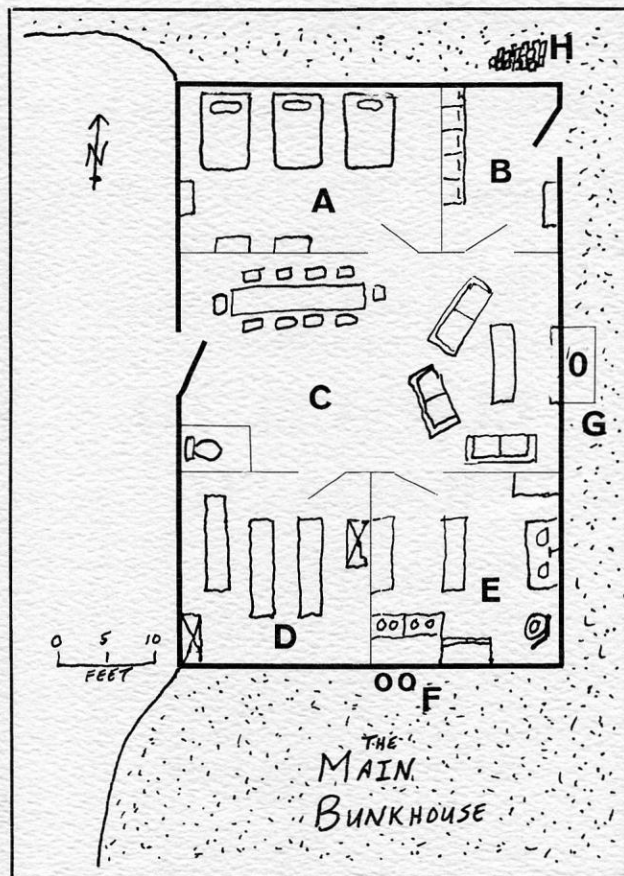
THE MAIN BUNKHOUSE

This is where Duke and Wild Bill live, along with the gang and clan leaders and their women. Usually several bikes and Wild Bill's truck are parked in front of the building.

A. Main Bunkroom: Wild Bill and his wife, and Duke and his current woman sleep here.

B. Storage Room: Currently, the only survivor of MP Recon team F-11 is being held prisoner in this room. Her name is Maura McAhab. She is a pretty, slim redhead in her mid-20's. She has been badly abused by the Bikers, but her strong spirit and hopes for rescue has kept her going. The Bikers have played on her hope cruelly, once dressing in the ragged clothing of the F-11 personnel and staging a fake rescue. Since Maura, who is nearsighted, lost her contact lenses during her capture, she could not see clearly enough to discern the truth until the Bikers led her into something quite different from a rescue. As a result, she will be somewhat suspicious of the team when they do attempt to rescue her.

C. The Main Living Room: The other clan and gang leaders and their women sleep here. All eat here, more or less sociably—as long as Duke and Wild Bill are there. There is a small, working (when the pump is hooked up) bathroom



in the southwest corner of this room. A foul odor drifts from the bathroom whenever the door is opened.

D. Another Storage Room: It has three standing shelves in the middle and two large boxes, one in the southwest corner and one on the east wall. The shelves contain generally useless odds and ends. The boxes contain dynamite used in the mines. There is a 40% chance that a stick will not explode due to old age, despite the fact it was remarkably well-preserved.

E. Kitchen: The cupboards contain 150-year-old cans of food (so far untouched). The sink works when the pump is hooked up. The stove works, too, when it is fueled up. The Bikers and Truckers have made a mess of this area and it smells almost as bad as the bathroom.

F. Propane Gas: There are two large bottles.

G. Fireplace: It has a chimney also.

H. Woodpile: This is for the fireplace.

FINAL NOTES

If attacked at the camp, the Bikers will fight almost suicidally. The Truckers will do everything possible to defend their women and children, but if the opportunity arises, will withdraw rather than die defending the camp (dooming themselves to eventual death from the disease, along with anyone else they contact—a fact the team should not overlook if any escape). To prevent the spread of the disease beyond this area, the team will have to either kill or cure all the Biker/Trucker members, possibly a morale dilemma in itself. Once the disease and the Biker/Trucker menace are dealt with, the team might try using the small engine to link up the city with other communities, furthering the goals of the Project in rebuilding civilization in the area. □

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bears small resemblance to what most consider fantasy. There is a dearth of swords, magic, trolls, gods, and what have you. On the other hand, the characters, the organization, the events, and the universe in which they exist is not "real." This is fantasy. In this sense, *The Project* is a fantasy role-playing game.

Fantasy is the essential element of any role-playing game, and the best role-playing game or campaign is the one which can manifest its fantastical nature most clearly, the one which can most consistently provoke a sense of wonder in the players. Alien environments, different races, magic, and all of the other trappings of popular fantasy do not create fantasy themselves. These props have become popular, and have gotten in the way of the plot. The props began obscuring the plot and the plots got mundane. There is no sense of wonder any more, or at least, not as much.

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FROM KHAZAN TO MELNIBONE . . . AND BACK AGAIN

By Ken St. Andre

Ken is the designer of Chaosium's Stormbringer and Blade's Tunnels & Trolls. A member of the Game Designers Guild, he lives in Scottsdale, Arizona.

It is hard to believe that *Different Worlds* is only five years old—it seems like it has been around forever. On the other hand, it also feels like I wrote my first article for them just a few weeks ago.

I would like to have some truly incredible tale of enlightenment to share about my last five years, but I don't. The time has been, however, a time of accomplishments—things that seemed difficult at the time, but don't seem like much now. For example, in 1979, I was chairman of my first-ever science-fiction convention. It was LepreCon V, right here in Phoenix, and a good time was had by all. When it was over, I dropped out of convention fandom—too much work, and I had learned my lesson. n.

1979 was important to me for a couple of other reasons. On May 23 of that year my one and only offspring, a

*"Day after day, week after week,
month after month, I slaved
over that manuscript . . ."*

daughter named Jillian Charmaine St. Andre, came into the world by Caesarian section. She is four years old now, and is both my greatest joy and the greatest drain on my energies. Believe me, folks, you would have seen a lot more in the way of new games, scenarios, magazine articles, and fiction out of me in the last two years if there had not been a miniature monster monopolizing my typewriter, and sitting in my lap for long periods of time every day. Kids are great, but they are also a real hassle.

In 1979, I also finished my last major design project for Flying Buffalo. The one that is mostly mine is *Arena Of Khazan*, solo dungeon 12. It is one of the largest of the *Tunnels & Trolls* solitaires, and is my personal favorite. With a great deal of help from Liz Danforth, I also got the fifth revised edition of *T&T* done. In saying that, I take too much credit. Liz got it done (and did most of the actual writing) with some help from me and a few others. Since then I have tossed off several articles and a few minor solitaire *T&T* adventures for *Sorcerer's*



Apprentice, but nothing worthy of a royalty. I am beginning to feel really guilty about that, especially in view of my work for other companies.

By 1980 I was starting to get interested in personal computers, and then a certain red-eyed albino came into my life. No, I don't mean Paul O'Connor—I already knew him from the halcyon days of the *Amber* game in 1977-78. I mean Elric. If there was ever a sword & sorcery character that I loved better than Conan, it was Elric. I followed Elric from the beginning. The first *Diplomacy* variant I ever invented was based on the Young Kingdoms, and had special rules for the Elric player. I had published my own fanzine, devoted to play-by-mail *Diplomacy* variants, for five years, and called it *Stormbringer*. When Rudy Kraft told me that Chaosium was going to do an Elric role-playing game, I knew that the project had to be mine. I thought about it a lot, and then sent Greg Stafford a multi-page outline for a proposed *RuneQuest* variant to be called *Age of the Young Kingdoms*. When Greg gave me the go ahead and sent me a contract, that began some of the most intensive writing I have ever been able to do. Day after day, week after week, month after month, I slaved over that manuscript—inventing new systems, testing them, scrapping them, modifying them, writing them down, rewriting for clarity. First I read the entire known Elric series, taking notes of every mention of weapons, money, deities, magic, customs, classes of people, geographical details. Then I worked out a world view and a character creation system. Somewhere along the line, it was decided by the staff at the Chaosium to make the title *Stormbringer*—not a bad decision as it turned out. While I was working, I received a lot of input from people at Chaosium—for one thing, Greg decided that the game needed more religion—something analogous to the cults of *RuneQuest*. Such was the birth of everything in chapter 6. If Greg wanted cults, by Arioeh, I'd give him cults that fit the spirit of the age! That's one thing I

really like about Chaosium—they care about their products.

Then when I thought I was finished (about April of 1981), my editor, who, by this time, was none other than Steve Perrin, told me that they wanted a major rewrite, and began suggesting ideas for things he would like to see added to the structure of the game. What could I do? The ideas were both logical and good. They were added, and Steve got a by-line on the credits. And while I'm giving credit where credit is due, let me not forget Lynn Willis who was helping with the editing by this time—now that Steve was co-writer, how could he maintain his objectivity? Lynn and I had some real fights about what went in and what stayed out, but looking back on it, I can see how the project really benefited from his professional attitude. For a complete list of people who helped make *Stormbringer* the success it is, see the rulebook. (Oh, I get by with a little help from my friends!) Incidentally, the Chuck Perrier listed in the dedication doesn't exist—it's just another touch of chaos in a truly chaotic game!

It was something of a minor miracle that Chaosium managed to get *Stormbringer* published in time for Origins West in July of 1981. They didn't have the box done yet and had to sell the rules in a ziplock bag. God, was I ever proud, when I finally saw the finished product with the illustrations by John Brunner. I still love that game. In terms of design and playability I think it is a better job than *T&T*! (And nearly everything else on the market!)

1982 was a year for writing articles and other minor pieces. By my count I had 13 articles, solitaires, poems, short stories, etc., published during 1982 (and one that was written in 1982 came out early in 1983 in *Olympus* magazine)—that's an all-time high for me. Some of my fantasy fiction has finally seen publication—namely "Mandrikor" and "Murder at the Ruptured Troll." Maybe this year I'll get another two stories into print.

At the instigation of Edward and Loel Schoonover, I finally managed to produce another major *T&T* solitaire in 1982. It is called *Agent Of Death*, and it has a couple of important firsts in it. It is the first real adventure designed especially for megacharacters (if you're not a megacharacter for part 3 of the adventure, forget it!). It is the first anthology-style adventure whose three parts fit together to form a sort of gaming novel. And it is the first *T&T* solitaire to be published on newsprint in tabloid form. It is definitely part of my personal Khazan mythos for *T&T* (hence the title).

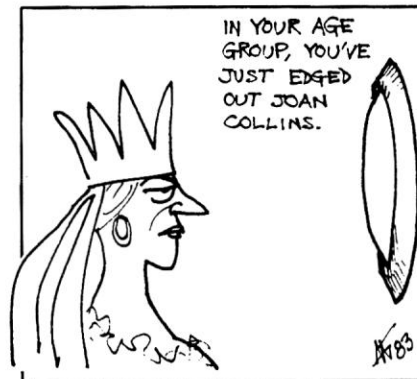
Another long-time dream of mine came true in 1982. I bought my own pinball machine, which now lives at the Flying Buffalo game store and brings in a lot of pin money for me. The theme and backboard of the machine are pure heroic fantasy, of course. It's great to be able to play as much pinball as I want whenever I want, for free.

I've made a lot of friends in the last five years (and only a few new enemies). So here's a tip of the hat to some of those people: John T. Sapienza, Jr., Yurek Chodak, Sandy Petersen, Carolyn Schultz, Chris Harvey, Steve Peterson, George McDonald, Chris Carlson. And here's a list of regrets for things that I wanted to do, but didn't. I never wrote my epic detective solitaire *T&T* adventure, *Murder In Khazan*. I didn't manage to finish *Pendragon* for the Chaosium—Greg and I just had too different ideas of how the game should go. I haven't finished my own *T&T* variant of a superhero role-playing game. I haven't written a novel, or a decent computer game. I'm slowly losing my hair.

And the "Trolls"—the indoor soccer team for whom I have sometimes played—have never had a winning season.

And here's an idea of some things that might be coming up—they are being worked on but have not been finalized: some collaborations between Rockland Russo (author of *Mustangs And Messerschmidts* and *Space Patrol*) and myself, a comic strip based on my solitaire adventure *Naked Doom* with the art done by the extremely talented Chris Carlson, and a trip to England for Games Day next November. Whether you see my name in print or not, you know I'll be busy on something. Best wishes to gamers everywhere, and may you always make your saving rolls—at least as well as I have. □

Ken St. Andre caricature rendering by Carolyn Schultz.



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Game conventions are the best place to meet new gamers. Organizers should send details of the convention at least six months prior to the event for announcement in this column.

If you wish to see your convention announced in Different Worlds, provide us with the name of the event, dates, location, who to contact, number of attendees expected, and number of attendees you had last year. There is no charge for this service, but please, game cons only.

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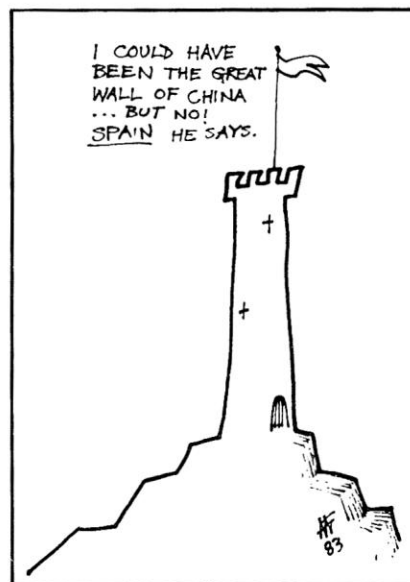
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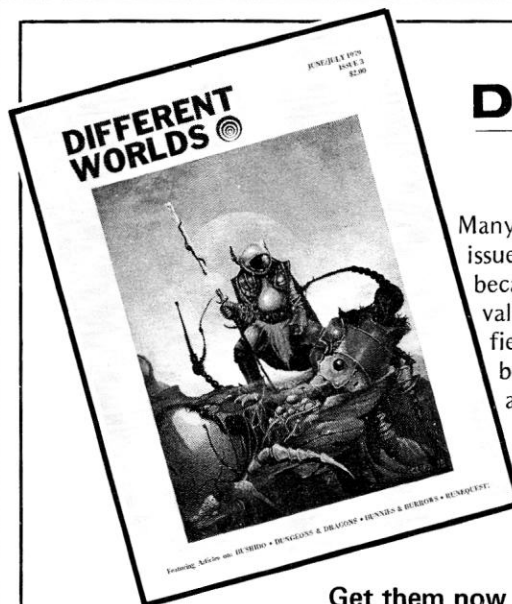
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Books & Gaming

Reviews of books with interesting world settings useful for creating imaginative role-playing campaigns.

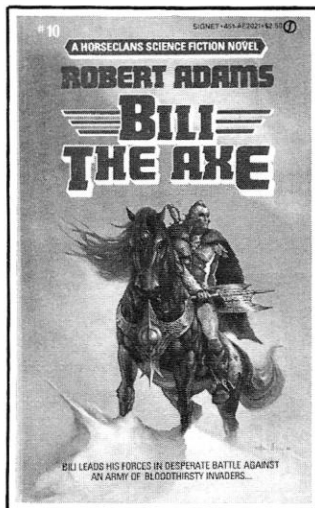
BILI THE AXE

By Robert Adams
(Signet, \$2.50)

Reviewed by John T. Sapienza, Jr.

This is the tenth novel in the highly popular horseclans series, set in a post-catastrophe North America populated by small landholders, tribes of varying degrees of savagery, and remnants of a Greek-speaking culture that are the descendants of an originally successful invasion and conquest. Most of the area east of the Mississippi River is feudal states at a medieval level of weaponry and tactics. This is complicated by two outside forces. The first is the horseclans, nomad barbarians who moved east under the leadership of human mutants whose self-healing rates and extremely long lives cause them to be known as the Undying. Their partnership, including mindtalk at a distance, with their horses and their feline scouts from the plains contributes heavily, I suspect, to the popularity of these novels.

The other force is the witches, whose long lives are due to their ability to seize the body of normal humans, wear that body until it is near death, and then move on to another carefully-selected victim. These are the survivors of the catastrophe, scientists who from a secret base in Florida seek to re-establish the United States as a nation, under their control. What we have here, in fact, is very much the traditional noble barbarian versus the evil sorcerers setup of many fantasy novels, but set in the far future instead of prehistoric past.



I find the horseclans books exciting adventure stories, but I sometimes wonder whether it is proper to call them novels. Adams handles characterization and pacing well, but he never seems to get around to finishing the story at the end of the book. *Bili The Axe* is really a middle section of an extended story begun in book eight of the series, *The Death of a Legend*, and there is no telling how many books the reader is going to have to purchase to get to the end of it. In any case, you should either begin at the beginning of the series, or at least with *Legend*, before you read *Bili*.

One feature that will warm the hearts of those who plan to use the horseclans books as game material is an insert comprising the second half of chapter four that describes how everything got that way, from just before the catastrophe to the present. It includes the clearest view of the Greek invasion yet in the series, and covers the background and personalities of the "witches" and the methods they have used to extend their power. Until Fantasy Games Unlimited releases their game based on the horseclans and their world, this volume will be a key source of data for doing your own version.

The Oswald Bastable Stories

THE WARLORD OF THE AIR

THE LAND LEVIATHAN

THE STEEL TSAR

By Michael Moorcock
(DAW, \$?, \$?, and \$?)

Reviewed by David Dunham

What if Michael Moorcock's grandfather had written science fiction? The result might be *The Warlord of the Air* (the introduction does attribute the book to Moorcock's grandfather). The story is about a young British officer, Oswald Bastable, who is flung from his own time, 1902, into 1973. There he finds himself with a group of revolutionaries trying to break the power of England, Russia, Japan, and America, and liberate China in the process. The book really has the feel of having been written in the early part of the century.

With the second book, *The*

Land Leviathan, things begin to repeat. Bastable again travels through time, this time ending up in a shattered world, where he helps the Black Attila gain revenge on the whites of the world. Bastable begins to get used to the idea of the multiverse (many alternate yet similar realities), meeting familiar characters like the enigmatic Miss Una Persson.

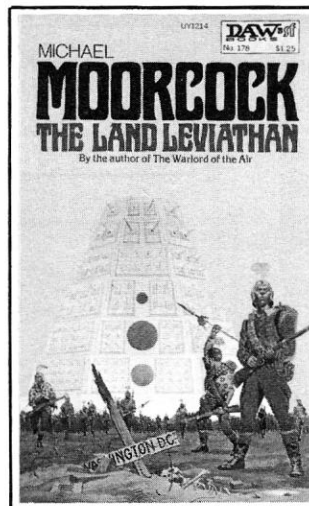
In *The Steel Tsar*, Bastable travels to yet another alternate world, once more winding up in the midst of a cataclysmic struggle. He again meets Una Persson, and they play a major role in a communist Russia facing internal rebellion.

These books share many elements with Mr. Moorcock's *Eter-*

nal Champion stories. Like them, these books show the constancy of human nature. The same characters keep popping up, though they are not quite the same each time. Each is set during an immense, confused conflict, and includes a single object of immense power. But Oswald Bastable is decidedly not the Eternal Champion. He considers himself more as an eternal spectator to the struggle between chaos and order. I identify Bastable with the Champion's Eternal Companion, while the role of Eternal Champion is played by Una Persson.

Eternal Champion cycle or not, I enjoyed these stories. There were lots of subtle ironies, such as Ghandi's pacifistic republic, and the identity of the Steel Tsar himself. The alternate histories were all relevant to our own—at the root of each conflict was a struggle for freedom and justice. My biggest complaint is that they are rather short.

How can the gamer use these books? The fantasy gamer can probably get more out of one of Mr. Moorcock's other stories, the *Elric* books for example. But a creative gamemaster could be inspired to run a time/possibility traveling campaign. There are certainly three imaginative worlds here. Any one of them could be used as the setting for an early 20th century game such as *Call Of Cthulhu* or *Daredevils*. And they would serve as interesting places to visit from practically any game.



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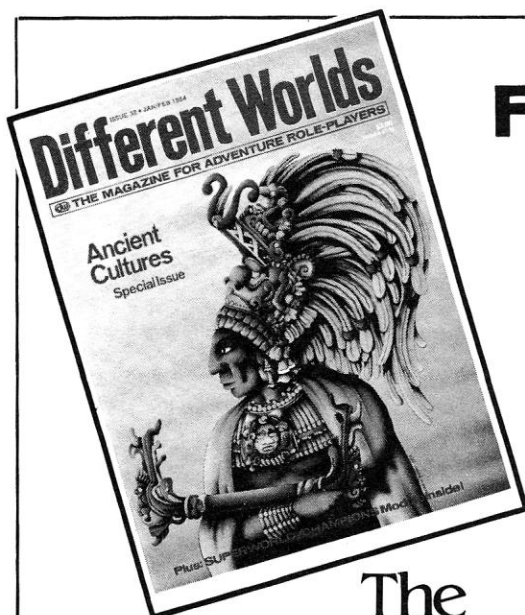
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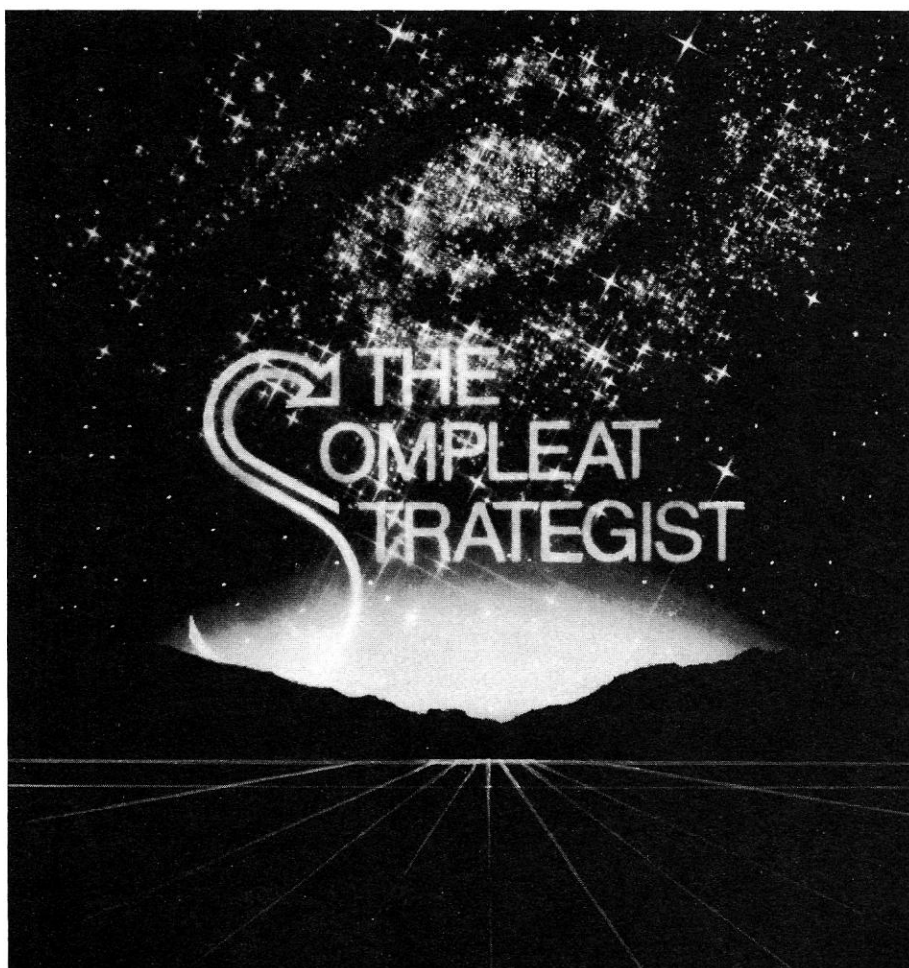
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Metal Marvels

This column reviews die-cast metal miniatures used to represent characters in role-playing games.

ELFQUEST

By Ral Partha

Reviewed by John T. Sapienza, Jr.

Elfquest is one of the extraordinary success stories in popular fantasy. Wendy and Richard Pini had a story to tell and the talent to do it in illustrated form.

Elfquest first appeared as a black-and-white comic book series. The elves were interesting personalities, and their plight caught the imagination of thousands of fans. Increasing sales made possible the upgrading to color of all twenty issues which will appear in four volumes.

The Elfquest story was also told in prose, the novel published first in hardcover, and then in paperback. Another incarnation is planned in the form of a full-length animated film. And the form most interesting to Different Worlds readers will be the role-playing game from Chaosium to be released this year.

For use in gaming, Ral Partha's Julie Guthrie has sculpted five boxed sets of Elfquest personalities. The sets are to Ral Partha's usual 25mm scale, but in keeping with the Pini's vision, the elves are shorter and more slender than humans, and the young elves are tiny folk, indeed. Adult elves average about 22mm from head to foot. Each boxed set retails \$8.

Sets 96-001 and 96-004 complement each other neatly. *Wolf-riders I* gives you standing figures of Cutter, Moonshade, Pike, and Strongbow, and mounted figures of Dewshine, Scouter, Skywise, and Treestump, with wolf mounts (two each of two different

wolves). *Wolf-riders II* gives you standing figures of the previous four riders, and mounted figures of Cutter, Nightfall, Pike, and

Strongbow, plus their wolves.

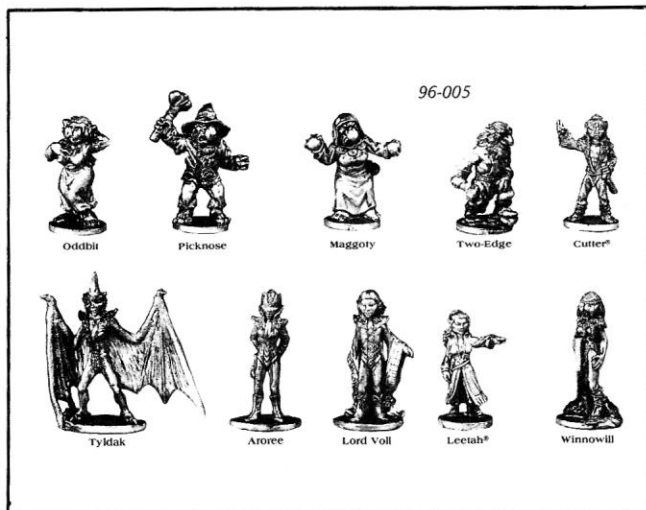
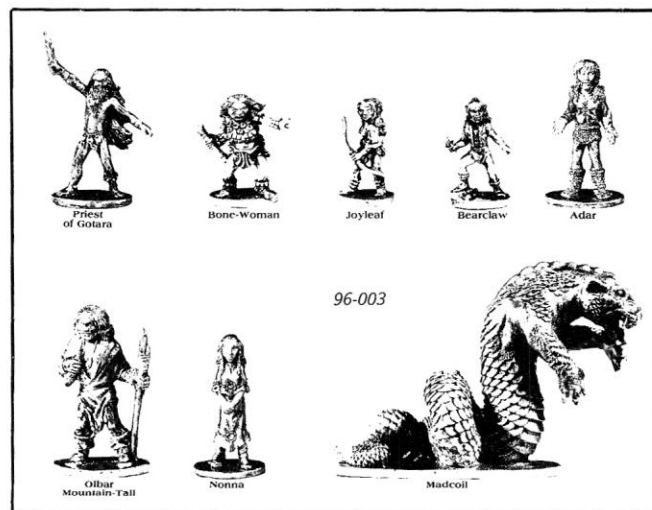
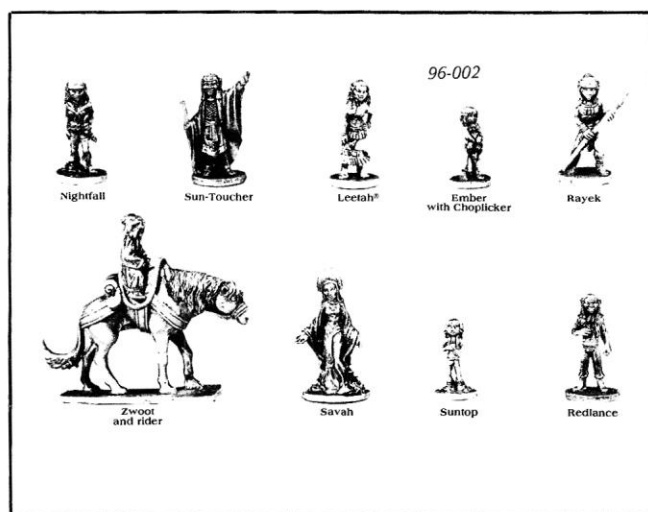
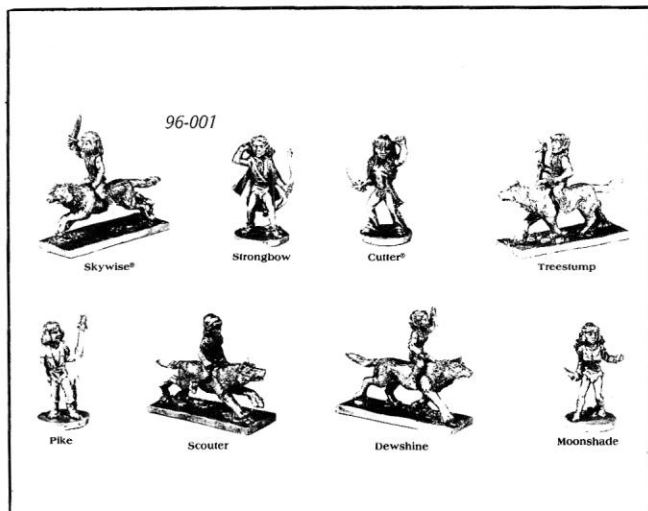
Set 96-002, *Journey to Sorrow's End*, introduces the people of the oasis that the wolfriders meet

after their trek across the desert. These are Leetah and Rayek, around whom much of the plot revolves, Nightfall, Redlance, Savah the Mother of Memory, the seer Sun-Toucher, the twin children Ember and Suntop, and a zwoot and its rider.

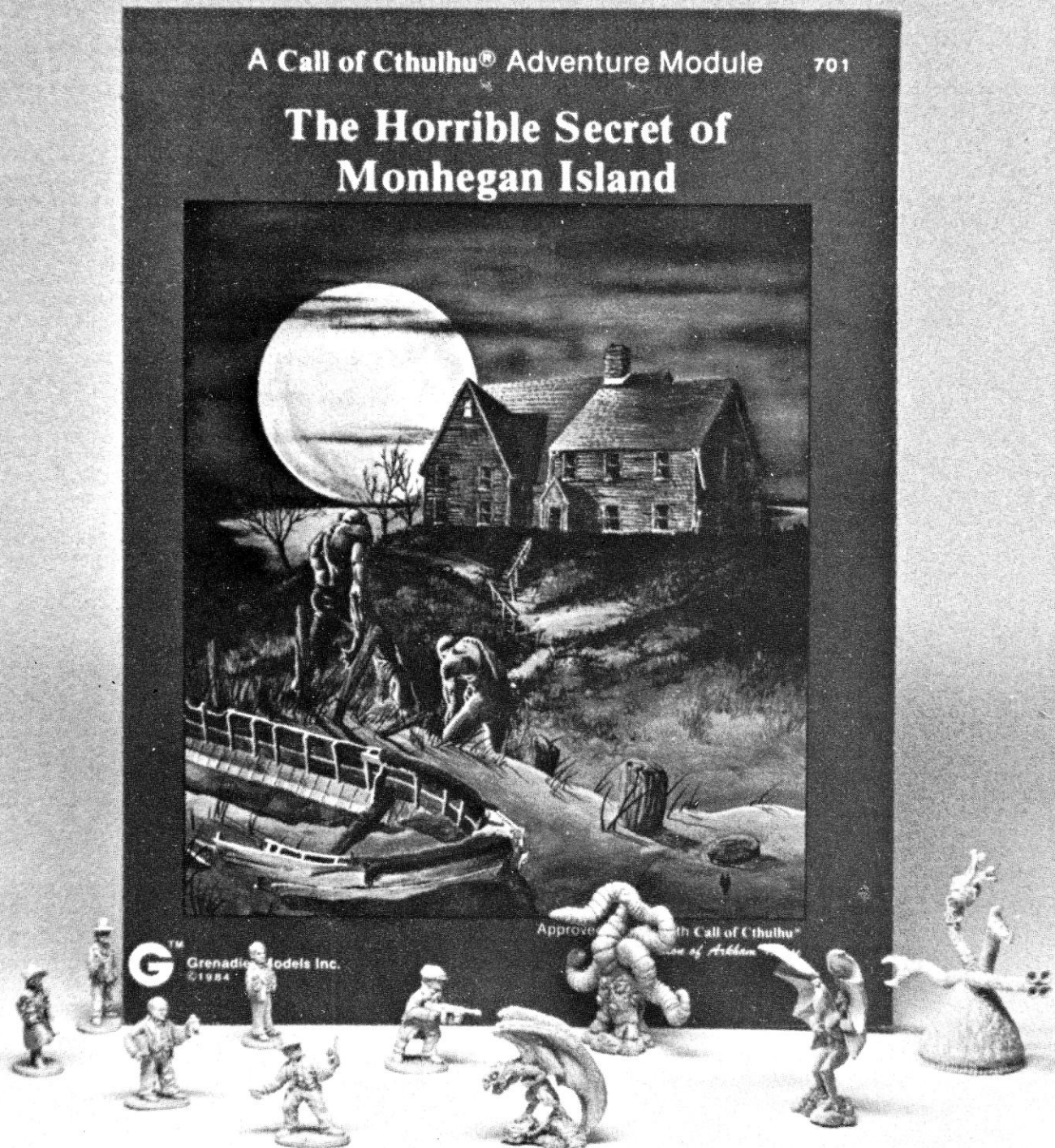
Set 96-003, *Personalities*, is from the very beginning of the series. Here are Bearclaw and Joyleaf, the parents of Cutter, and Madcoil the monster created by twisted elvish magic that killed them, making Cutter suddenly chief of the tribe. Other enemies here are the priest of Gotara and the bone woman, fanatical humans who fear and hate the elves, and Olbar Mountain-Tall the superstitious. Also included here are the first well-meaning humans the wolfriders ever encountered, Adar and Nonna.

Set 96-005, *Quest to Blue Mountain*, is a mixture of personalities from early and late in the saga. Here are new poses of key characters Cutter and Leetah. Then there are the three trolls Maggoty, Oddbit, and Picknose, and the half-troll smith Two-Edge. And from the elves of the high mountain there are Lord Voll and Winnowill, Aroree and Tyldak the flyer.

Transferring beloved characters from two dimensions to three was a tough assignment, and one Julie Guthrie succeeded with very well. Anyone familiar with the series will have no difficulty identifying personalities in these sets. And considering the popularity of the series, I suspect a lot of non-gamers will be buying these figures simply for the pleasure of painting and displaying them. □



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Game Reviews

The Morrow Project/Monster Manual II/Superworld/Privateers And Gentlemen/Timeship/Pavis/Traitor/Nomads of the World-Ocean/Heart of Sunken Lands



THE MORROW PROJECT

By Richard Tucholka, et al
(Timeline, \$12)

Reviewed by Barron Barnett

The Morrow Project is a realistic post-holocaust role-playing game that is designed for the serious player who takes pride in his gaming and enjoys the art of role-playing.

The background is as follows: In 1962, Mr. Bruce Edward Morrow, an ESPer, gathered nine of the country's leading industrialists to form the Council of Tomorrow. Bruce Morrow and the council founded an organization dedicated to the survival of the human race beyond the point of self-destruction. Their plan was to cryogenically freeze special teams and equipment to help in the reconstruction of the United States after a nuclear war.

On November 18, 1989, the world as we know it came to a fiery end. The next six months of radiation, lethal diseases, famine, and total chaos killed over ninety percent of the world's population. The rest of the nations joined in the exchange of nuclear warheads using the U.S./Soviet war as an excuse to finalize age-old disputes with each other. It appeared that this was really the end of the world.

However, a year after the war, the personnel of the secret prime central base ventured out to see if they could establish a viable community. Unfortunately, a madman named Krell and his warriors used an unexploded nuclear warhead to blow up the small struggling community and followed up with a deadly biological agent on the central base. As a result the

Morrow Project teams scattered throughout the country never received their wake up signal. When the MP teams do wake up they find that the world is completely different and that they have slept much longer than planned.

With the MP teams pledged to help humanity recover in whatever way they can, the role-playing game begins. You and your fellow teammates enter into a hostile world of self-centered survivalists. Genetic mutations and radioactive hot spots are waiting for you along with bold adventures and mystery.

The Morrow Project game book is labeled "Confidential TM-1-1 Morrow Industries Training Division." It consists of over 65 pages of player information and drawings. There is a complete table of contents in the front of the manual and a good bibliography at the end. The drawings and reproduced pictures are good but could be better. The meat of the book is excellent and all you need is a very small amount of imagination to get into the spirit of the game.

Among many points of interest is the section on effects of radioactive contamination, which is good and to the point. The MP personnel generation system is complete, and if the numbers representing a character's attributes are kept average or lower, the game system really turns on. The use of body structure and blood points instead of hit points is just about as real as you can get and still stand the pain during the game when you take an injury. During a game you can actually feel the life fluid dripping from your wound while your team member fumbles around with a dressing.

To determine the values for the character attributes, use 4D6-4 which will give you a number from 0 to 20 inclusive. I personally use 5D6 and remove the highest dice and then subtract 4 to bring the team members into a highly motivated and responsive team. The personal attributes are strength, constitution, dexterity, accuracy, charisma, psi, luck, and the skill percentage tables (not in the original edition).

To calculate the character body structure points and the blood points, use the following formula: $Str \times Con + 100 = SP/BP$. The SP value gives the maximum amount

of damage a character may receive while the BP is representative of the total amount of blood in the character's body. To calculate the total endurance of a player's character, you multiply the constitution score times the dexterity score. The section on travel movement can be tricky so use of one's own judgment is needed.

The types of MP teams are as follows: The Reconnaissance (Recon) teams seek out the condition of the countryside and do other types of special missions as needed. The Scientific teams have specially designed mobile laboratories to handle anything from biological to nuclear problems and situations. The crew are all trained scientists and technicians. This type of MP team can be most interesting to the intellectually discriminating role-player. The MARS teams (Mobile Assault Rescue and Strike Forces) are the military or warriors of the Morrow Project. This type of team is really bad news. The specialty teams such as Engineering, Agricultural, and Psychological are only touched upon and requires more background.

The section on equipment and weapons runs the gambit in all practical needs and then some. The types of Morrow Project installations are fairly well covered but again I wish there was more information and detail. The game operation of such things as firearms, grenades, explosives, medical equipment, damage tables, diseases, hand-to-hand combat, vehicular damage—and the list goes on—is covered very well, and with just a little reading, *The Morrow Project* game system is ready to be played.

The Morrow Project manual also covers many aspects of the post-holocaust world such as weather, technology, human encounters, natural environment, and the dreaded mutant types that might be encountered. Last but not least, *The Morrow Project* manual also has a respectable collection of conversion scales, a glossary of abbreviations, and a character copy sheet.

Overall, considering the size of the company, Timeline, this critic believes *The Morrow Project* manual is more than worth small price it sells for.

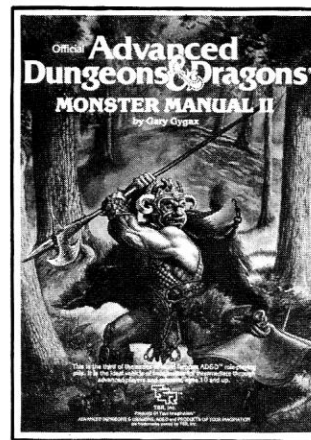
What does *The Morrow Project* need? I can sum that question in one phrase; character personalities. I generally run my *Morrow*

Project adventures with each role-player knowing a little about his character's personality in the game as well as a little of his character's background as to why he or she is here in the first place. I think that sometimes a little past for the role-player lets them act out their part in the adventure to a more enjoyable fulfillment.

Where could *The Morrow Project* go from here? I wonder if Mr. Bruce Morrow only visited the U.S. Maybe he visited other countries in Europe or south of the equator. This could open up *The Morrow Project* game system to other adventures in different environments.

One item of prime importance to keep in mind when playing *The Morrow Project* game is that the system must be adhered to. Do not turn the game into a shoot-'em-up, rape-and-pillage type of a decadent game as some have been tempted to do. If that is the kind of game you like, you would be better off not playing the game at all.

You should try *The Morrow Project* out for yourself and see what a great role-playing game it really is. □



MONSTER MANUAL II

By E. Gary Gygax (TSR, \$?)

Reviewed by Adam Benowitz

Monster Manual II is the latest and finest in the series of 'monster' books for *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* game.

Like many other AD&D enthusiasts, I feared *MM II* would be a redundant book. That is, either another overview like the original *Monster Manual*, or even worse, a silly farce like the *Fiend Folio*. I was very pleasantly surprised. Not

only is *MM II* useful and informative, it is also well-written.

One of Mr. Gyax's main problems in the past has been his confused style of writing. The past *AD&D* books have been plagued with loopholes and unexplained items. These problems, so evident in the earlier books, are almost totally absent in the *MM II*. Most monsters, especially the complicated ones, are explained fully and carefully, not in a quick or slipshod manner.

Another great plus of *MM II* is the types of monsters included in it. Instead of being content in just adding to existing categories of monsters, this manual breaks new ground. Joining the demons and devils are several new outer-plane societies. These are all well done and fleshes out the outer planes nicely.

Especially deserving of accolades is the job Mr. Gyax did with the Modrons. In five and a half pages Gyax creates a complete society, everything about Modrons is explained. Hierarchy, army, numbers, succession, even how rogue units of this Lawful-Neutral plane are dealt with.

Do not get the idea that the old standards are ignored though. Many things are explained and clarified in the section on demons. The real improvement though, is in the devils. The remaining four arch devils are introduced along with several of their consorts. There is also a large amount of space devoted to the politics and armies of hell. Lastly, several descriptions of the particular planes are provided.

Many new quasi-humanoid races are included in the *MM II*. These include ant-men, snake-men, and fungus-men, among others. Many long-awaited monsters are finally *AD&D*ized in this volume. The kraken, the phoenix, and best of all, Charon (the boatman of Styx) are all included.

But alas, what goes up must come down, and *MM II* has one very weak point. Dragons have been every players' favorite monster ever since Smaug torched his first town. *MM II* has almost no dragons. Only four dragons are presented in the new book. Only one of these, the Faerie Dragon, is in the least bit interesting. This follows an appallingly bad dragon section in the *Fiend Folio*. After six years, *AD&D* players are getting tired of the same standard ten dragons. They need some new blood. Unfortunately *MM II* does not fill this need.

Aside from the dragon shortage though, *MM II* is excellent. It triumphs over old problems without creating new ones. I cannot wait for *Monster Manual III*. □



SUPERWORLD

By Steve Perrin
(Chaosium, \$20)

Reviewed by Russell Grant Collins

Before I played any role-playing games, I used to play superheroes, using a mixture of the comic book characters and our own creations. There were no fixed rules other than the fact that the heroes would win and that no one ever died. Now that superhero role-playing games have caught on, I have spent a lot of time searching for the perfect game for recreating those past adventures, as well as today's comics.

Chaosium's *Superworld* is one of the most complete superhero role-playing game systems on the market. It comes boxed with three books: the superhero book, the superpowers book, and the gamemasters book. It also comes with playaids, character sheets, and dice.

Superworld has all the obvious powers as well as some of the less obvious ones like the ability to split into more than one body and the ability to copy someone else's powers without robbing him of them. In fact, the only more-or-less common power that *Superworld* does not have is the ability to transmute one element to another (and if you have that power, why bother to commit or solve crimes—you can easily become rich).

Of course, even with all these powers, you cannot build Superman with *Superworld*—he is just too powerful. Unfortunately, you cannot build Spiderman either. Spidey's "spider sense" is the problem—it is too powerful. *Superworld*'s superpower Danger-sense is limited (as are certain other powers in the game) by how high a certain characteristic (in this case POW) is rolled. I dislike this sort of artificial restraint. No player can afford more than about twenty levels of Danger-sense (nor need that much), but someone with a POW of 8 or 9

might want ten levels (a 50% chance).

The seven characteristics (STRENGTH, CONStitution, SIZE, INTelligence, POWER, DEXterity, and APPearance) are rolled on 2D6+6, avoiding really low scores while maintaining the standard range used in *RuneQuest* and *Call Of Cthulhu*, which this game is theoretically compatible with (I have not tried, but how much does Super Sanity cost?). The sum of these seven characteristics is the number of points the character uses to buy powers and skills, although he may take extra points with disadvantages and handicaps. He also gets the average of his characteristics as points to buy pre-game skills, dependent on his profession before he began fighting crime.

It is, of course, possible to increase the characteristics through experience or through the appropriate Super Characteristic, although the latter is limited by the rolled value. My question is what do we take as limits on powers (probably the rolled score) or as skill levels when characteristics determine them? The rules are not clear on this.

The combat system is a modified *RuneQuest* system. Each character has two or three action ranks (possibly four or one) corresponding to his DEX, DEX minus ten, DEX minus twenty, and so on until zero or lower is reached. In his action rank, the superhero can do just about anything that he chooses, subject to percentile dice rolls for success. There are rules for knockback and other peculiarities of the genre. The system uses a breakdown of every action into one of four categories, depending on the time it takes. These categories are melee round actions, full actions, semi-actions, and quartermoves. The main problem with this is the misleading names—a semi-action takes 3/4 of a full action, and the superhero can do at most two quartermoves in the time it takes to do a full action. There are also instantaneous actions, which can be combined with any other action, although it is unclear how many such actions are allowed (most are automatic defenses, but can a character drop a weapon, pick it up, drop it, draw a second one, drop it, pick up the first, drop it, pick up the other, drop it, pick up the first and then the second, and then take a full action?).

Many actions require a roll on the Resistance Table to succeed, including one form of defense and figuring knockback. There is no problem with this—the entire idea of having a Resistance Table is to avoid having separate charts for everything. The problem is that

the table is too small. It extends from 1 to 21 on each axis. Five levels of the power Resistance (costing only 15 points) is enough to go beyond these limits. In fact, I have a computer-generated expansion to this table which goes up to 60 on each axis and occasionally it is not large enough.

I am used to *Champions*, so perhaps this is only a personal quirk, but I do not care for the fact that a person's STR has no effect on his damage in a smash attack (like a Move-Through in *Champions*). As the system stands, a fast but weak person can do more damage than a slower Musclemans, but you do not see Quicksilver smashing through things, you see the Thing or the Hulk do it (both are admittedly of greater SIZE, the other factor determining smash damage, but still. . .). Perhaps allowing the damage bonus would make this attack too strong, but something should be worked out.

The reference sheets included with the set are useful, but I could have used the Crucial Rolls Table and the Fumble Table during play both of which I had to look up in one of the books.

There is a pretty complete archaic weapons list, at least for this sort of game, where the difference between various swords is not important. I cannot quite accept all of the other weapons lists. If it really takes 288 points to know how to use a 105mm howitzer well enough to hit 50% of the time, how come people in our non-super world can use them? Also, it is not made clear whether paying seven points for a bow provides you with unlimited arrows (I suspect yes) or whether you pay energy to use it or any other weaponry (I suspect yes again). Also, another warning to prospective players—do not arm your hero with these conventional weapons as they seldom get through the villain's defenses. If you must have a sword or bow, build it from scratch, taking appropriate advantages and limits on an Energy Projection.

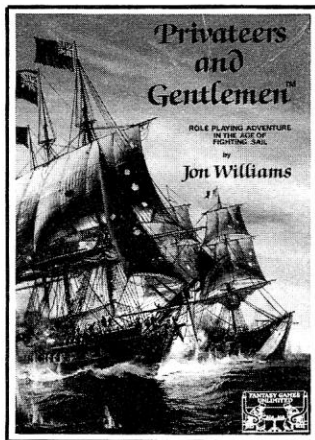
The Gamemasters Book contains one multi-part, typical comic-book-style adventure, featuring the villainous Dr. Dread and his cohorts, using a couple of the organizations also introduced in that book. It plays pretty well, but there is an occasional area where the heroes can do something to drastically alter a scenario (such as discovering one trap before it is sprung) and the gamemaster is forced to play it by ear because the book does not even have suggestions about it. A few more options at various places would have helped immensely.

The other scenario is a super-

natural adventure, which features some pretty nasty creatures and an evil tome of magic. It could easily be used as a transitional device to a *Call Of Cthulhu* crossover, if you go in for that type of thing (I tend not to enjoy the mixing of genres, although this adventure is interesting as a change of pace). One villain appears to have a power not permitted players (a permanent Reduction), but it works out to over 150 days duration, which is permanent enough for all practical purposes.

Aside from my earlier gripes, there are a few trivialities that rankle mainly because they work in a manner differently from *Champions*. This game is quite enjoyable nonetheless. Any game that permits Sidekicks can't be too bad (although you are still better off building a second superhero if the gamemaster permits it—sidekicks are expensive in their own way).

I am going to use *Superworld* as the main game I run, although if I had not been between *Champions* universes, I might not have switched. If you are looking for a superhero role-playing game, this game is worth looking at. If you are running a campaign using another system, you should probably buy this game as a reference, even if you do not think that you will use it as your main system. Now, Chaosium, how about some support material, like a villain book or some modules? □



PRIVATEERS AND GENTLEMEN

By Jon Williams (FGU \$17)

Reviewed by Steve List

Amid all the role-playing games extolling sword & sorcery, science fiction, comic-book heroes, and even pulp-era soldiers of fortune, FGU has bestowed on us a relatively rare item, a historical role-playing game. *Privateers And Gentlemen* is set in the "age of fighting sail," specifically from 1755

to 1815. Players take the roles of naval officers or privateers in the best traditions of heroic fiction as written by competent historians such as C.S. Forester.

P&G consists of a boxed set of three booklets, a cardstock, double-sided example of a character sheet, and a gamemaster screen printed all over with most of the tables found in the text of the rules. All three booklets are revised editions of previously released material, here gathered together to make a role-playing game. "Heart Of Oak" is a set of rules for fighting naval engagements with 1:1000 miniatures. "Promotions And Prizes" contains the core of the role-playing system, and "Tradition Of Victory" serves as a sourcebook on the period as well as adding rules for encounters on land and the fitting out of privateering vessels. All are extremely well written, and fascinating to read just for the information contained and opinions expressed.

However, that begs the question as to how *P&G* is as a game. "Heart Of Oak" is a wargame independently of its function as the naval combat module of a role-playing game. The expressed intent of the designer is to emphasize the sailing of vessels rather than the nit-picking details of fighting them. Hence things are somewhat abstracted, with ships being rated with quantities of hull, crew, and gun factors, very much like *Wooden Ships & Iron Men*, rather than being depicted as precise models as in *Ironclads*. More attention is given to sailing and ship handling, though here some curious abstractions are incorporated. For instance, all square-rigged vessels tack with the same agility, and all ships of the line sail at the same speed under identical conditions. But the result is a playable game which can resolve single-ship or fleet engagements with reasonable accuracy and without taking up too much time. As a game, "Heart Of Oak" lacks scenarios, but as a combat module it does not need them.

"Promotions And Prizes" includes a fairly complex and lengthy character generation procedure. Primary abilities are rolled with 3D6 and are Strength, Sense Acuity, Mass, Constitution, Intelligence, Dexterity, Intuition, and Charisma. Intelligence essentially determines how many languages a character can speak, and determines the starting levels for the character's Gunnery, ship quality and seamanship ratings, which serve to modify various dice rolls in the play of the game. Intuition is sort of a catch-all that gives the gamemaster a handle on how much information to feed a char-

acter during play. The abilities further go to determine modifiers for the character's Strike, Parry, and Shoot ratings, and assorted other skills (such as astronomy, swimming, first aid, and weather prediction). Another important characteristic, especially for British and European characters, is Social Level. This encompasses the father's status, the character's position and legitimacy in the family, and not lastly, his allowance and patrimony.

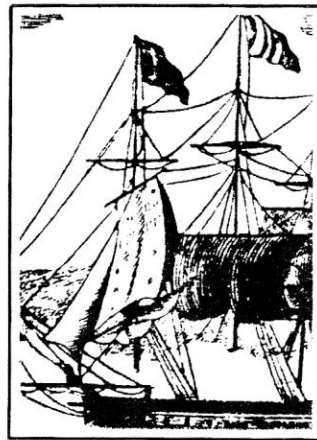
The player must decide if his character is a serving naval officer or a privateer, and then determine his background. Naval officers will have been midshipmen for a variable number of years, and during those years have a chance to improve their skills and pick up some prize money (in addition to becoming disabled from wounds or disease). The various privateer backgrounds generally confer some unique set of positive and negative features. For instance, a background as a smuggler will be rather the inverse of a background as a revenue service officer. (Incidentally, the rules allow players to be only officers, unless they should decide to do things the hard way and start as midshipmen. Further, they should be white males of whatever religion is dominant in their country—gamemasters are admonished to severely penalize players who wish to buck the system.) Players may also complicate things by taking into account politics.

Having settled all these aspects of the character, his employment must be determined. Privateers are left to the discretion of the gamemaster, but naval officers must go through a die-roll gauntlet to find if they are employed at all, in what capacity and on what type of ship, and the current duty for the ship. The remainder of the rules cover subjects such as disease, prize money, combat (as in boarding actions or ashore), wounds and recovery (or lack of same—there are no healing spells in this game), press gangs, encounters at sea, and the creation of "cardboard characters," the non-player characters who flesh out the world.

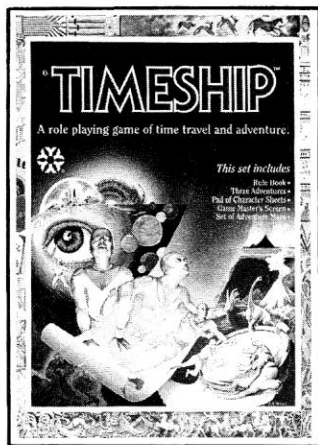
The virtues of *P&G* lie in its historical accuracy and attention to detail, the clarity and organization of its rules, and the unusual subject it covers. Its defects are to some extent embedded in these same features. For all its detail, players are sort of locked into being American or British, as no real data on other European backgrounds, or any non-European, for that matter, is given. Further, the normal player-character starts his active playing career as a newly commissioned lieutenant, if he

is not to be a privateer. Lieutenants have a 10% chance of being in command of a vessel; otherwise they are considered to be the junior lieutenant on whatever ship assignment is rolled. This could place him as high as second in command of a sloop or a brig, but it could also put him down as 6th officer on a battleship (U.S. first-rate ships, which saw service after 1815, are included in the listings and carried as many as twenty lieutenants). This puts quite a few cardboard characters between him and the decision making position. Further, a naval officer character almost has to be played in a one player-one gamemaster situation, unless player-characters are available to fill the higher ranks on the vessel, which may still leave a cardboard captain in charge. Yet when it comes time to resolve a naval battle using "Heart Of Oak," the players and the gamemaster will have to step in as ship, squadron, and even fleet commanders, something completely outside of their nominal roles. It is far easier for the gamemaster to accommodate several characters aboard a privateer. In the same way, groups on shore activity of some kind, or special actions, such as a cutting-out party, can be used to get around this. Unfortunately, except for a few encounter tables and some off-hand references, there is nothing in the game to guide a gamemaster in setting up such a scenario, since no scenarios at all are provided.

Privateers And Gentlemen is a well-written game that suffers from a lack of scenarios, and further from a built-in lack of sex appeal except for those interested in the period. A gamemaster setting up a campaign will have to do a lot of work on his own, and will have to have players who are willing to learn enough about the period to be able to play their roles. Playing this game will not be easy, but the rewards for persisting will be enjoyment of a different kind of adventure. It is not a game for the masses, but for the discerning



few for whom interest in the subject combines with an interest in role-playing rather than in power gaming.



TIMESHIP

By Herbie Brennan
(Yaquinto, \$12.00)

Reviewed by Ian R. Beste

Yaquinto's third entry into the role-playing market, *Timeship*, is the first commercially produced role-playing game to use time travel as its "topic." It is a game that could be the broadest in scope of any role-playing game available, providing nearly endless adventures through world history. It is also a game that could require a massive amount of rules. *Timeship*, by using a minimalist approach to rules, manages to have a short, if badly organized, set of rules that still retain a fair degree of flexibility. Unfortunately, one of its basic assumptions, that players play themselves and not some arbitrarily rolled-up character, only weakens the game.

Yaquinto has high production standards and *Timeship* is no exception. The box cover is an undisguised mocking of the cover of *Time* magazine. While there is nothing flashy about the graphic production, there is nothing to sneer at either. Inside the box is an 8½"x11" 48-page rulebook, complete with a table of contents, a 24½"x11" Timelord Screen, a pad of 50 personal data sheets (printed both sides), a 17"x22" fold-out sheet with maps, floor plans, and illustrations for the three scenarios, or "Time Capsules," included in the rulebook, and two twenty-sided dice. The illustrations are useful for setting the scene in each scenario, and artist Johnny Robinson deserves mention (I will, the game does not). The maps given could be larger, and the one of Gomorrah needs to be more than just a collection of unlabelled buildings that appear far too neatly arranged for an ancient city.

The best way to describe the rules in *Timeship* is, as mentioned above, "minimalist." Out of a 48-page rulebook, the actual rules cover 13 pages, plus another two or three devoted to applying the rules to the actual play of the game. In addition, the Timelord Screen has the equivalent of three pages of rules on it, as well as several charts and tables not found in the body of the rules. Rather than writing comprehensive rules to cover the thousands of situations the players could conceivably find themselves in over the course of thousands of years, designer Brennan has chosen to write general rules to cover the basic essentials of any game system—character creation, movement, and combat, plus the game's unique energy system. There is also an "Anything Table" for everything else the Timelord (or gamemaster) wants to roll dice for. Brennan falls solidly into the *Tunnels & Trolls* camp of gamers who feel that too many rules cramp a player's role-playing style. Considering the breadth of the game, this is probably a most workable approach, but, as I will demonstrate, not without drawbacks.

The "setting" of the game assumes that archeologists have discovered an ancient alien device called the Timeship that allows travel through time, forwards and backwards. In order to do so, the travelers must expend personal energy to move themselves and their equipment. Different equipment requires different amounts of energy, and many objects cannot enter the Timestream at all (the Timelord is the final judge on this). The personal energy of each player is determined by rolling 3D100. Each player also has a Combat Reserve of 2D100. Energy is expended within each Time Capsule in order to do various tasks, such as combat. Damage from combat is taken first from the Combat Reserve, then from Personal Energy. Energy can also be expended to modify a player's appearance. Energy can be increased by surviving Time Capsules, and Combat Reserve can be increased by expending Personal Energy. The personal energy limitations force the players to concentrate on their mission, carefully considering every action, and eliminate the problem of over-equipped parties traipsing about in the wrong period. In all, a clever and elegant game function.

In *Timeship*, players play themselves. This is not as easy in practice as the game designer would suggest. One player disliked the entire concept, stating "I thought the idea of role-playing was to take you out of this miserable world." That is certainly a valid

point: quite a few gamers like to play characters that are unlike themselves. The actual character development presents practical problems. First, the process of adapting a player to the game system is not covered in the body of the rules, but on the back page of the rulebook, titled "Completing the Timeship Personal Data Sheet." The instructions assume that the average player has a rating of 50 in each of six Physical Abilities: Speed, Endurance, Intelligence, Strength, Dexterity, and Agility. No specific definition of these abilities are given; how does Dexterity differ from Speed and Agility? The player can modify any of these scores by distributing up to a maximum of 50 points among the abilities to raise them. This system could result in two players, one a 25-year old Green Beret, the other a 15-year old high-school wrestler, giving themselves similar ratings. Such a situation requires Timelord adjudication, adding to his workload. The players also calculate their To Hit Numbers (THN) for the various weapons in the game. The base THN for all weapons is 60, modified by whatever real-life experience the player has, and by a process of subtracting from one weapon's THN and adding to another. The real difficulty to all this is the statement in the rules: "When filling out the Data Sheet players should attempt to make an honest and sincere evaluation of their own abilities as related to the categories listed on the sheet." This gives the Timelord the job of carefully scrutinizing each Data Sheet, making sure that each player is not being overly optimistic in his personal evaluation. This requires the Timelord to have a pretty good personal knowledge of his players. What would he say to his 9-year old brother who insists upon an Intelligence of 90 because "I know lots of things"?

From the information on the Data Sheet, the Timelord can refer to the Timelord Screen to determine "Physical Activities." The rules in this section cover only four sorts of physical activities: walking, running, standing jumps, and running jumps. There are no rules covering such activities as climbing, crawling, swimming, digging, lifting, and dragging. There are not even any rules on fatigue or sleep. As for running and jumping, there are two tables filled with numbers that give the Timelord distance and times. Are these numbers taken directly from real-life data, or are they simply numbers that worked in playtesting? If these are indeed taken from real-world data, they are of immense value to any role-

playing game. If not, then it seems a bit much to ask the players to honestly and sincerely evaluate themselves when the resulting numbers are going to be treated so arbitrarily. If these running and jumping numbers are arbitrary, why not just roll up characters as in any other game?

Combat is simple: the player modifies his THN by considerations of range, body target area, and other situations listed on the combat modifiers table and missile fire modifiers table. The player must roll his modified THN or greater to hit. To determine the amount of damage done, the difference between the modified THN and the actual roll is added to the weapon's damage modifier. The combat rules are there to cover combat when it happens but are not meant to be the core of the game system as they are to some extent in *RuneQuest* or clearly are in *Aftermath!* Unfortunately, understanding the combat system requires several careful test plays; the rulebook does not tell the reader that the crucial combat rules are to be found on the Timelord Screen. Further, there are no examples of combat. I can appreciate the designer's intent to keep the players uninformed of the exact details of combat (thus adding to the uncertainty in the game) but rules organization suffers for this. Another annoyance is to be found on the Armour List. Here is listed such commonly-known items as "cuise, and jambe . . . Pauldron, rerebrace, coude and vambrace . . . sollires . . ." The same information could have been much more easily written as "Thigh, Knee, and Calf Armour . . . Arm Armour . . . Foot Armour . . ."—a little too much historical detail here. The weapons lists cover most general types, including the usual assortment of medieval melee weapons, plus some useful types from various centuries. Unfortunately, Mr. Brennan has neglected to describe some of them. What exactly was a 14th century "tripod gun" (does it shoot tripods?). Can one suppose that what is listed as a "flickknife" would be called a "switch blade" out here in California? An interesting exercise at this point is to divide a weapon's damage modifier by the energy required to carry it through the Timestream. From these calculations it can be seen that the most energy-efficient weapons are the staff, club, sling, bow, and pike. Conversely, the least efficient are firearms. An interesting design point that subtly discourages carrying more modern weapons.

Beyond this, there are no more hard and fast rules, except for

some general guidelines on "wild talents" to be found on the Time-lord Screen as well as in the rulebook. The rest of the rulebook contains a 4½-page "Timelord's Book of Secrets," a handy guide for the Timelord in running the game. This section also contains some ludicrous remarks that point up some weaknesses in the game. For instance, "*Timeship* has been very carefully designed to make things easy for the Timelord." If this is so, why are the rules so poorly organized, with some of the basic concepts of personal energy written in a pretentious "ancient" style? The rules describes how one determines personal energy: "Within the *Timeship* are two coloured spheres of many facets. . . The spheres must be rolled together for the energy to generate. . . Thus, throughout the digits, many differing energy quanta may be generated. Each member of your Group must roll the spheres three times. The energy thus generated is his alone." This could have been rewritten more simply as: "Each player determines his personal energy by rolling 3D100 and adding the results."

Another claim the game makes is, regarding the Time Capsules, "Historical Capsules are, in the main, dramatic recreations based on painstakingly accurate research into the period culture and characters involved." The "Assassinate The Fuhrer" capsule supports this claim, but not the "Destruction Of Gomorrah" which has some very anachronistic elements. The "Murder at the End of Time" is fun, but sort of silly.

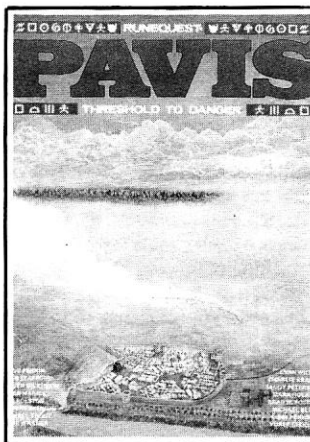
The comment by Mr. Brennan I disagree with the most is the manner in which he defends his philosophy of gaming. He claims that in your "run of the mill role-playing system" you have far too many rules and exceptions. . . until you can hardly spit in a scenario without looking up the rules to find out how." Oh, bull. Any competent (and nearly-competent) gamemaster will, to save themselves and their players time and effort, simplify or ignore rules that get in the way. Players often complain, no matter what the game, that the rules do not cover enough, the exception being obvious monstrosities like *Chivalry & Sorcery*. Good gamemasters pick and choose rules to fit their campaigns. Brennan goes on to say that "There's none of that nonsense in *Timeship*, because it isn't needed. Your Voyagers aren't pretending to be giants or elves. . . They are going on an adventure as themselves. So if a Voyager steps forward and announces he's about to pick the lock, you can decide right away

what chance he has of succeeding. . . In *Timeship*, with real players going on realistic (sic) adventures, you don't need a book of rules to guide you every time they want to scratch themselves: all you need is your own good judgment." That is a dangerous statement. What if the players find themselves in a nasty firefight in the midst of World War II; can the Timelord really use his "good judgment" here? How can one ensure that the Timelord has "good judgment"? All this "gamemastering by the seat of your pants" philosophy puts a heavy load on the Timelord. There is merit to Mr. Brennan's view of gaming as fun and not rules consultation, but this does not make it easy to do successfully. Gamemasters who are totally arbitrary are as bad as ones who are totally "by the book."

The work required of the Timelord is increased if he wishes to create Historical Capsules that are "dramatic recreations based on painstakingly accurate research." A fantasy role-playing game scenario can be lifted from a book or set up as some form of a "dungeon crawl," but historical research takes time. A group of players whose historical specialties vary may want to rotate the job of Timelord for diversity (samurai Japan one week, ancient Ireland the next, the Old West after that, etc.). Another solution is for the Timelord to adopt an historical novel as a scenario—imagine your gaming group landing just outside Tara, Georgia, kidnapping Scarlett O'Hara, and carrying her off to Japan in time to meet a stranded English navigator named Blackthorne. . .

Probably the best use of *Timeship* can be made by gamers who like to "tinker" with game systems. *Timeship* can be a useful device for transporting characters between campaigns. An inventive gamemaster could fit a "Time Patrol" into an ongoing *Space Opera*, *Traveller*, *Star Frontiers*, or *Champions* campaign. Time travel could also explain how those champions suddenly popped into your *Stormbringer* game.

Overall, I must give *Timeship* a guarded recommendation. Its approach to role-playing follows the idea of minimum rules, maximum fun. It suffers from poor organization, incomplete rules, and too much self-advertisement. Yet, the subject is unique, and can be added to other games with a little work. The three Time Capsules included are interesting and fun, and Yaquinto can only add to the game's appeal by producing more. *Timeship* may not be exactly what you are looking for, but it is worth looking at. □



PAVIS

By Steve Perrin and Greg Stafford, et al (Chaosium, \$18)

Reviewed by Erik Gunderson

Pavis is a scenario pack for Chaosium's *RuneQuest* role-playing game. The campaign is set in Greg Stafford's world of Glorantha, on the Plains of Prax. The package describes the only city on the plains, surrounded by nomadic tribes and occupied by the Lunar Empire. It is a boxed product with three books, and two large fold-out maps. The box cover is an aerial view showing the city of New Pavis in the foreground, with the Spike and the Paps on the horizon. The back of the box has a useful aerial close-up of the city streets, giving a better feel for the city.

The box has two maps. One is an 8½"x44" map that shows the path of the Zola Fel River (River of Cradles) from its headwaters in northern Desolation Hills south to the mouth of the Rozgali Sea. It is useful for plotting the overland progress of out-of-town adventures. The second map is a table-sized street map of New Pavis. This map allows players to plot their path around the city during a scenario or investigation. Used in conjunction with the drawing on the back of the box, I find that it helps visualization and role-playing while in the city.

The most public of the three books provided is "Common Knowledge." It is a 40-page book with information known to most residents of New Pavis (with the exception of some cult secrets). Page 3 has a compact version of the large Pavis street map. Pages 4-16 contain an extensive interesting history of the city of Pavis, with informative asides on zebras and current prices for adventuring goods in the city. Next comes a description of prominent individuals, including the Lunar military and temple, the Pavis temple priests, Yelmals, and a few

others. Also, there is a description of Gimpy's, the most popular adventurer's tavern. Finally, there are four cult descriptions: Flint-nail, Lanbril, Pavis, and Zola Fel.

Flintnail turns out to be a small independent mason's cult, rather than a subcult of Pavis as described in *Cults Of Prax*. However, Flintnail is still firmly allied to Pavis and politically dependent on the Pavis cult. The Pavis description supercedes earlier versions, but is little changed.

Lanbril is the thief cult, and includes several new skills: Street-wise is an urban perception skill, knowing where to find goods or information. Fast Talk can get you out of a sticky situation, or dig you in deeper. Shadowing is an urban version of Tracking. In addition, there are some new, specialized alchemical products, some new battle magic, and several odd devices.

Zola Fel is the god of the Prax river. His cult is concerned with promoting and defending the river. The cult description includes the new skills of Swim Quietly and Limnology (the study of bodies of water). Zola Fel could be a very interesting adventuring cult, because defenders of the river may range up and down its length, providing adventure settings from the mountains in the north to the insect ridden delta to the south.

Secondly, there is the "City Guide for the Gamemaster." It is a 40-page book with extensive background information for the campaign gamemaster. There are 18 pages describing "civilized Prax," essentially the river floodplain which can be farmed. Included in this area are descriptions of the Sun County Yelmals temple (with floor plans) and the town of Corflu, as well as notes on smaller hamlets.

The New Pavis discussion begins with some population stats, and a useful summary of religions, particularly a chart showing the current resident Rune levels. Next comes a description of the various city neighborhoods, with many buildings keyed for type of business. There are also many unused buildings, providing the gamemaster with a useful but flexible start in populating the city. Also, there is an encounter table for persons wandering around the city, some political groupings, and extensive information about adventurers living in New Pavis. This discussion includes housing, non-temple training available, and various types of employment. Finally, there is a page of rumors intended to act as scenario hooks. The back cover of this book has a useful index to subjects discussed in all three books.

The third and last book, "Episodes for the Gamemaster," contains three scenarios. It also contains several forms used by the Lunar bureaucracy to regulate and harass adventurers. However, several of the adventures described on the back of the box are not included; this omission was caused by the huge size of the "Cradle" scenario, which more than makes up for the lack.

The first scenario, "Welcome to the City," is intended to acquaint players with the city of Pavis. It is divided into several separate sections. The first section describes entry to the city for the first time, with the swarming beggars and guards at the city gates. The second part introduces the adventurers to Pavis' street gangs and the third section to the city's justice. Lastly, there is a short raid into the troll lands. This scenario is quite flexible, and parts are easily adapted from the whole.

The second adventure is a burglary designed for one or two thieves. The servants have left Duke Raus's townhouse unguarded, and the adventurers attempt to make a quick profit. This adventure is skills-oriented. While not much role-playing is involved in the scenario itself, the consequences could provide for a long-term adventure.

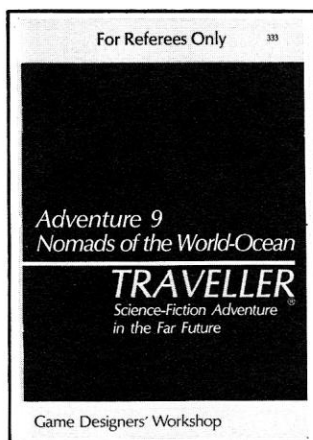
Finally, there is the "Cradle" scenario. For the first time in centuries, a cradle carrying a giant body, and laden with treasure, is floating down the Zola Fel River. The Lunars are determined to rob the cradle, and everyone else is trying to stop them. This scenario is heroic, both in size and concept. It occupies 40 pages and is divided into four parts, each of which will take at least one gaming session. It is the type of story that sparked the role-playing hobby, and I look forward to playing my characters in it.

Overall, the *Pavis* scenario pack is of excellent quality. However, I perceive one problem and one omission. As its full title implies, *Pavis: Threshold to Danger* is one of a pair of scenario packs, its companion being *Big Rubble* which describes the ruins of the old city of Pavis. A gamemaster who desires to run an ongoing campaign based in Gloranthan Pavis will have to buy both items in order to allow Rubble adventuring, the primary reason crazy adventurers sojourn in Pavis. Gamemasters trying to adapt the *Pavis* scenario pack to another campaign without the *Rubble* may find this difficult, as much of the background and history, thus the current situation, hinges on the presence of those old ruins.

The omission is something of a

personal preference. The background item I have found most interesting about a *Pavis* campaign has been the tensions created by the Lunar desire to "marry" Pavis and join the cult to the Lunar pantheon. This idea was first mentioned in the original *Balastor's Barracks* scenario, and has fascinated me since. I was very disappointed to find no mention of this idea, both as a political issue and a religious ritual, anywhere in the scenario pack. I had hoped it would form one of the major background tensions of the campaign.

In review, *Pavis* is an excellent value. It is of high physical quality, the writing is excellent, and it is full of information for either an episodic or continuous campaign. Chaosium is once again setting the standards for the industry. □



NOMADS OF THE WORLD-OCEAN

By J. Andrew Keith and William H. Keith (GDW, \$5)

Reviewed by Tony Watson

Bellerophon is a water world located in the Solomani Rim sector of GDW's setting for *Traveller* adventures, the Third Imperium. Though a part of the Vegan Autonomous District, the planet is almost entirely human, ancestors of eastern Aegean Greeks and Turks who colonized the world during the Terran Confederation's long series of interstellar wars with the First Imperium. The few islands that poke their way above the ocean's surface are completely built up. However, most of the population of two billion lives in majestic pylon cities, towers thrusting up from the sea shallows. A significant segment of the people are "sea nomads," living aboard large city ships which follow, and depend upon, herds of giant marine creatures.

These giant animals are the daghadasi—gigantic, whale-like sea dwellers that form a crucial link in Bellerophon's ecology, and, as

it turns out, the economic life of two competing groups. The daghadasi, whose name means "mountain-island," can grow to be as long as ten kilometers. The beasts begin life as small buds on the side of their parent, and then become independent, voracious, daghsharks, often eating one another. As they grow older, and larger, the creatures become less aggressive, switch their diets to swarms of small shrimp-like "skreekers" and develop much thicker and convoluted hides. Eventually, the creatures attain such great size that their wrinkled and rugged epidermis forms an environment roughly similar to coral reefs on Earth. A number of creatures live in the underwater folds of the daghadasi's side while its back is like an island, providing a place for plantlife and birds, most notably chimearocs which transfer daghadasi genetic material when they eat protein rich material secreted by the great beasts.

On Bellerophon, the daghadasi are hunted by both natives and off-worlders. The "Dunyacan Aramakilar" are seagoing, technological, nomads, living in large ship-cities that follow the daghadasi herds. The nomads depend on the sea creatures as a source of food, building material, clothing, lubricants, and paper; in short, the daghadasi are the key element in nomad economic life.

Similarly, the giant ocean-going beasts are of great importance to Seaharvester, a subsidiary of the SuSAG mega-corporation. Seaharvester is using sophisticated factory ships, armed with lasers, to hunt down and butcher daghadasi. Unlike the nomads, Seaharvester is not interested in the various commodities that can be rendered from the creatures, but are after something that is ultimately more valuable. The daghadasi are the only known source for the chemical PDPT-beta, the base for a number of antibiotic that can be used to selectively attack viruses and cancer. But even the largest daghadasi yields but a few grams of the substance and only about ten percent of the animals carry any of the vital chemical.

Thus, where the nomads are highly efficient in their use of daghadasi taken, Seaharvester's methods are extremely wasteful. The nomads are very much concerned with the concept of "muzane," or balance, and regard themselves as both parts of, and protectors of the ecology of Bellerophon. Seaharvester's wasteful practices, on the other hand, are a direct threat; mass slaughter of the daghadasi will seriously alter the ecological balance of the planet.

This is the setting for the latest

of GDW's adventures for *Traveller*, *Nomads of the World-Ocean*. It is certainly one of the most imaginative in the series. Bellerophon is an intriguing setting for adventure and the daghadasi are a fantastic concept, wildly exotic, but logical and consistent in their own way. Master *Traveller* scenarists William and Andrew Keith have once again created a solid adventure in an innovative setting.

The plotting for the adventure is something like "*Traveller* meets *Save the Whales*," or perhaps, "*Traveller* develops a social conscience." In the past, many *Traveller* adventures have required of the players that they perform morally questionable and often times illegal deeds. *Nomads of the World-Ocean*, however, asks the players to take an active part in the investigation of possibly illegal hunting of daghadasi, to take the side of the ecology-minded against the greedy mega-corp.

The scenario begins with the player group being contacted by the Pan-Galactic Friends of Life, a group dedicated to the protection of extinction-threatened species and imperiled ecologies. Seaharvester, under public pressure to curtail its operations on Bellerophon, had daghadasi kill quotas imposed upon it by its parent corporation, SuSAG. The Friends of Life feel that despite these limitations, Seaharvester is circumventing the quotas. Strangely enough, after the group speaks with the Friends of Life, they are approached by an agent of SuSAG, who tells them that the mega-corporation has heard similar rumors and is concerned. She offers to employ the groups to make an independent investigation of Seaharvester's operations and conveniently provides the group with an ideal cover.

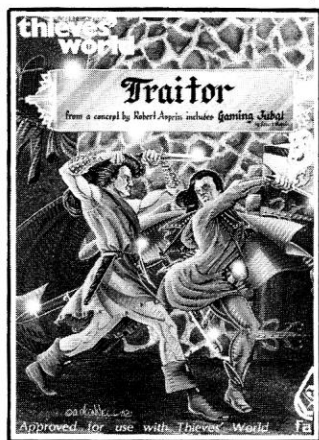
Once on Bellerophon, the group is taken on a tour of a Seaharvester factory ship, views their operation, and is exposed to their viewpoint. The adventure is so plotted that the players will eventually fall into the hands of the nomads and get their perspective on the controversy. While Seaharvester's operations are fully explained and a well fleshed out cadre of non-player characters are introduced, it is the segment devoted to the players' time among the nomads that really stand out. Notes on nomad culture and language are included, as well as text on how nomad society is organized. Particularly impressive is the information on nomad politics, including a system for handling the meetings of the nomad assembly, the "Hukurmet Baslica." The nomads are broken into factions with differ-

ing views on how Seaharvester should be dealt with. The positions are outlined, a chart of attitudes is provided and a method for determining the vote and player influencing of voting are given as well.

The players will have to earn the respect of the nomads, and the best, as well as the most dangerous, means of doing so is to participate in a Daghadasi hunt. The nomads hunt daghadasi in small, two-man hunterfoils. Eight pages of the booklet are devoted to a system for playing out the daghadasi hunt, covering the aspects of combat, movement, damage, and events. This system can be extended to combat between nomad hunterfoil fleets and Seaharvester factory ships, should the situation come down to that.

Nomads of the World-Ocean is an extremely well crafted and fascinating adventure for *Traveller*. The daghadasi are amazing creatures and the system provided to simulate the daghadasi hunt is a great deal of fun to play out. The nomads are an interesting culture, a curious mixture of the advanced and the unsophisticated. My only complaints with the adventure are the fact that it is too tightly plotted, offering the players little choice at some very important junctures. Secondly, the authors seem to borrow from themselves in some regards, their *Uragyad'n of the Seven Pillars* adventure by FASA specifically, in the way the nomads are set up and handled.

Overall, though, *Nomads of the World-Ocean* is a fast-paced, imaginative adventure for *Traveller* and certainly ranks among the best to appear from GDW. It manages to effectively combine action with a meaningful social purpose. □



TRAITOR

By Bill Fawcett
(FASA, \$7.50)

Reviewed by Paul Ryan O'Connor

Traitor is a 60-page scenario de-

signed for use with Chaosium's excellent *Thieves' World*. Despite the stiff cover price, *Traitor* contains enough information to make it worth it. The booklet also features a page and a half of previously unpublished information about Sanctuary's foremost crimelord, Jubal, by *Thieves' World* anthology editor/writer Robert L. Asprin.

The book is layed out reasonably well. For some reason I found the brown ink used throughout to be annoying. The maps are clearly drawn, but would benefit from some sort of grid overlay, as opposed to the scale-by-inches system used. The artwork is certainly nothing to get excited about, but it is not exactly bad, either. The ditorial standards are low. The manuscript is nearly submerged beneath an ocean of poor grammar and run-on sentences.

Stats are provided for thirty characters and non-player characters. In most cases, the stats are accompanied by an adequate amount of character description. Stats for the characters are defined by a generic system of percentages and skill levels, neatly side-stepping the need to publish individual numbers for all nine of the game systems the original *Thieves' World* was written to supplement. Unfortunately, this system is poorly defined, and prospective gamemasters will have to stat out each of the characters for whatever system they use. There is not much margin space in this book, so this sort of notation will have to be stored under separate cover.

The scenario provides background for five different characters, the roles of which the players are more or less forced to assume. This is not as bad as it seems, as the characters are well-developed, but is likely to cause some problems if forced into an existing *Thieves' World* campaign. Players are each provided with the background of a character at random, one of which is a predestined traitor to the rest of the party. All the characters are members of Jubal's Hawkmask, the most respected criminal organization in Sanctuary.

The scenario gets under way after severely manipulating the characters. The players are assigned to guard the transaction of an important stolen document. The players are forced to sit idly by while the gamemaster reads a canned description about how they are ambushed, two non-player characters are killed, and then run off into the Swamp of Night Secrets in search of a red herring. Experienced role-players will turn blue at this sort of heavy-handed-

ness, but the way the scenario is written demands that the adventure begin this way. When the players return empty-handed from the swamp, they find that (surprise!) both their assailants and the document they were supposed to protect have disappeared. The players are then expected to dutifully trot back to Jubal's estate and tell their boss that they blew it. Jubal is, of course, furious, and states that the only way anyone could have found out about the transaction was if they had been tipped off by a traitor within the player group. Jubal gives the players three days to recover the lost document and expose the traitor in their midst, or face his wrath.

The players are then pretty much on their own as to what they should do next. One of the players being a traitor adds a certain flair to what is already a well-developed investigation scenario, provided that it does not cause the players to cut each other's throats in the first dark alley they find.

The clues leading to the people behind the ambush are of the "bend over and pick them up" variety, and an experienced party should not have too much trouble finding their way to the heart of the scenario. Distrust will slow the players down a little, along with the constant need to bribe everyone in sight (quite in character with Sanctuary). The only real weak point in this adventure is that no clues are provided as to who the traitor is—only about who actually sprung the ambush in the swamp. The identity of the traitor is not revealed until the last act, when the true villain of the piece singles him out amongst the player-characters.

Bill Fawcett should be commended for writing an investigative scenario with *Traitor*, and thus reinforcing the basic character of *Thieves' World*. There is ample opportunity for swordplay and bloodshed here, but characters who insist on bludgeoning their way through the scenario will get nowhere fast.

A reasonable amount of Sanctuary is detailed during the adventure. Floorplans and descriptions are provided for the Golden Lion, a middle-class tavern near the bazaar. A well-off villa in the Jeweler's Quarter is detailed, should the players decide they want to rip it off. One of the more interesting sections of the book details how a temple to Savankala is being built by Molin Torchholder, including the specifics on where the disgruntled work force is housed. Some bland personalities of the bazaar are introduced. The Lily Garden on the

Street of Red Lanterns receives some attention, and introduces four bouncers and a lady of the night. A Rankan estate is described, along with a few dives in the maze. This new information about Sanctuary is the strongest feature of *Traitor*.

In summation, *Traitor* gets a guarded recommendation. The presentation is so-so. The price might not be worth it, depending on what you are used to. The stats offered for the characters are largely useless. The booklet can be difficult to read. The scenario is clever. The detail and development added to the city of Sanctuary is worthwhile. *Traitor* is not bad, but it is by no stretch of the imagination a "must buy" either. □



HEART OF THE SUNKEN LANDS

By Rudy Kraft
(Midkemia, \$?)

Reviewed by Anders Swenson

Heart of the Sunken Lands is an adventure game scenario book which combines the breadth and scope of an outdoor wilderness campaign with the greed motive of a classic dungeon crawl. The book itself is 78 pages long (62 numbered pages plus 16 unnumbered pullout pages in the center) plus a 17"x22" foldout map. The product comes sealed in a plastic bag to reduce shop wear and keep the loosely collated map from being lost.

This scenario pack ties in elements from previously released Midkemia books. The cities of Carse, Tulin, and Jonril are all located on a general map which includes the Sunken Lands, and purchasers of *Jonril* will know that the reason for that town's prosperity is the exportation of exotic goods from the Sunken Lands. In addition, the Sunken Lands themselves are an important occurrence in Raymond Feist's novel *Wizard*, which describes the historical background to the current Midkemia cam-

paign world.

So, with all this build-up, what do you do with *Sunken Lands*? Well, remember the good ol' days when *Dungeons & Dragons* came in three booklets and a good way for a character to make money and get experience was to go on random overland expeditions looking for dragons to slay and loot? Well, in a refined 'realistic' way, that is what you do in the *Sunken Lands*.

The *Sunken Lands* are a magical area where plants and animals have evolved to develop odd properties, many of which are of commercial importance. Expeditions leave from Jonril to enter the *Sunken Lands* to find either anything that looks valuable, or to seek specific treasures, such as exotic honey, or rare and valuable wood. In traversing the *Sunken Lands*, the explorers will have many strange encounters.

The game system for *Heart of the Sunken Lands* depends on repeated entering of tables with random numbers from die rolls. The players are presented with the foldout map from the book, on which the *Sunken Lands* are blank. As the adventuring party crosses the *Sunken Lands*, the gamemaster tells the players what the terrain is that they cross, and the player map is filled in appropriately. The gamemaster is given

a complete map showing the terrain types that the players will cross so no random throws are needed for this part of the game. However, for each hex of travel, the gamemaster must determine the time of travel, taking into consideration the terrain type, and the actions of the expedition during travel. This gives the information on how many encounters will occur that day, and then the serious table entry begins.

The basic encounter table gives the choice of animals, gems, humans, insects, monsters, non-humans, plants, trees, or water encounters. Each of these tables can refer to sub-sub tables, until the definition of a single encounter type is reached. The individual encounters are well-defined, and most gamemasters will have no difficulty integrating the notation into their preferred game system. The recommended procedure is to roll up a list of encounters in advance of play.

The final pages of the book describe some fixed human and humanoid encampments, including the mandatory complex of underground works. Encounters with the denizens of these encaves are integrated into the main encounter tables, so things move smoothly.

There is a lot of detail in this

adventure system, and both the gamemaster and the players should be ready to put up with a busy jungle crawl. To support the gamemaster in scheduling the encounters (and encounters are the name of this game), a log sheet is provided with instructions for arcane-looking notations and calculations.

Philosophically, there are many arguments against the reliance on random tables for the construction of an adventure. Many gamemasters look on a session of adventuring as an opportunity to entertain a group of friends and acquaintances, and to do that they will prepare a scenario, balancing the difficulty of encounters with the expected prowess of the players and their characters. The evening's entertainment will have an introduction, an exploratory phase, the climax of the adventure, and perhaps an aftermath. With the full-blown table following of the *Heart of the Sunken Lands* system, there is little that one can do to adequately control the progress of the adventure to guarantee either a rewarding expedition or the avoidance of disaster. Also, the encounters come so frequently that an expedition will progress slowly in terms of ground covered per evening. An unmodified use of the *Sunken Lands* encounter

system may not be suitable for every gaming group.

The encounters themselves consist of special animals, plants, and minerals defined for the *Sunken Lands*. Some of the encounters are too precious or cute for words, and some encounters are rather subtle and involved. The former turns up with a greater frequency than I appreciate, and the latter can make the game drag. To counterbalance the cumbersome game system, the encounters themselves need to be crisp and well-defined, so that the player party may deal with each one cleanly, and most of the *Sunken Lands* encounters meet this requirement. The combination in this game of a 'realistic' complex encounter system with 'realistic' set of unpredictable, subtle, and differing encounters could make for a total bog-down and game-failure under some circumstances.

Heart of the Sunken Lands is perhaps the ultimate expansion of the random overland adventure from early *D&D*. This game will not appeal to all of the gamemasters who use other *Midkemia* modules, especially the cities. It is a good buy for the *Midkemia* completist, and for those gamemasters who definitely prefer the table-oriented random overland adventure. □



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TRAGEDY OR MELODRAMA

By Ken Rolston

tragedy "... a series of serious and important actions which turn out disastrously for the chief character."

melodrama "The credibility of both character and plot is sacrificed for violent effect and emotional opportunism. . . The adjective 'melodramatic' is applied to any literary work or episode that relies on improbable events and sensational action."

from *A Glossary of
Literary Terms*, M.H. Abrams

"To be or not to be. . ."

Clearly fantasy role-playing adventures would usually be classified as melodramatic. Most of us would cheerfully acknowledge that improbable events and sensational action are the backbone of our fantasy adventure. However, we are less enthusiastic about embracing the part about the sacrifice of credibility of plot and character.

Further, though we may fancy our adventures as containing serious and important themes, we seldom intend that things turn out disastrously for the player-characters. In fact, it is generally tacitly understood that the main characters will eventually triumph, that there is little likelihood of a tragic ending. Players (and gamemasters) generally have a low tolerance for failure—the foundation of tragedy—and given a choice between serious and important actions and a happy ending, you know what they will choose.

I have experimented with tragic fantasy role-playing scenarios. They are characterized by high tension and emotional involvement during the session and a lasting impression in retrospect. I doubt that a steady diet of tragedy would suit most tastes. Tragic scenarios are most appropriate at conventions or for one-shot adventures where the player/player-character identification is least developed and where experimentation and challenge is anticipated.

Melodrama, the standard mode of fantasy role-playing adventures, offers plenty of thrills and action while maintaining relative security for the player's cherished possession—the life of his charac-



ter. Only when his character is secure can he really enjoy the excitement. There is often a veneer of suspense, a pretense that the character is really in peril; this suspense is usually most acute in campaigns with a strong wargaming bias, where the gamemaster attempts to impartially award death or survival on gaming merit (and hot dice). Well-designed narrative campaigns are often ironically weakest in suspense because of the high investment in the continued lives of the player-characters.

The Tragic Element in Fantasy Role-Playing Adventures

Tragedy is the possibility of player-character failure. A common minor tragedy is the failure to achieve a short-term goal—for example, being beaten and forced to flee by an opponent, or being frustrated in attempts to advance a character. A rarer circumstance is failure of a major objective, like a campaign culminating in the triumph of the forces of evil. The ultimate failure is player-character fatality—certainly a serious and important disaster from the player's perspective. Gamers have a limited tolerance for failure; it is no fun to lose, and repeated losing will discourage the player from risking his time and participation. For this reason, tragedy is not popular in fantasy role-playing.

Some gamemasters manage to introduce tragic elements through non-player characters, permitting serious and important themes without risking the central characters. One method is to utilize the tragic allies, the friendly non-player characters who are doomed to disaster, and through whom the players can vicariously appreciate the anguish of a tragic fate.

Another method is the establishing of sympathetic, tragic antagonists—evil opponents who are nonetheless noble and honorable within their own standards. An example would be a mission to exterminate a tribe of raiding goblinoids, barbarians who have never known any other code than rapine and tribal warfare, who rely on raiding to feed their families, who must nonetheless be destroyed to protect their innocent and defenseless victims.

"Whether 'tis nobler. . ."

On one hand serious and important action is admirable, and credibility of plot and character is a standard to strive for. We can be

justly proud when we design such adventures, and praise published examples when we read them. But in doing so, do we run the risk of taking games too seriously?

Perhaps the best literary models for fantasy role-playing adventures would be comedy or farce. In comedy "materials are selected and managed primarily in order to interest and amuse us," where "we feel confident that no great disaster will occur, and usually the action turns out happily for the chief characters." Most recent fantasy role-playing games explicitly recommend this approach rather than an impartial gaming philosophy that regards success and failure with equanimity, with the player earning success on merit, and bearing poor luck with resignation. Farce, too, has its virtues in fantasy role-playing games, with its exaggerated and caricatured characters in improbable and ludicrous situations, full of broad humor and horseplay. Farce is a central element of the primitive "dungeon" adventure—a genre now out of favor with sophisticated gamers. Beware of dungeon chauvinism! Do not turn your back on the silliness of monster motels without realizing that they are *bona fide* examples of real fantasy gaming unfettered by logic or realism—pure fun. □

HOLLYWOOD

continued from page 44

most heroes in vampire film, is ready for those vampires. He is not a meek-professor type, like Peter Cushing in the *Dracula* films (I realize Cushing is not all that meek, but he is more of a scholar than a hero), but a rather a hard-edged, two-fisted swash-buckler who actively seeks out vampires to destroy them. For this purpose he carries two razor-sharp samurai swords in a harness, as well as a pack full of the basic vampire-hunting equipage (your garlic, your crosses, etc.). The story of the good Captain goes that he is part vampire himself, having survived the dreaded bite. He still carries the mark and he seeks never-ending vengeance because of it. For those of you who read the Marvel Comic *Tomb Of Dracula*, you might find some resemblance to the

character of Blade. And while Kronos is much like that vampire hunter, he works in the more traditional gothic period, rather than in modern day. The picture even gives us a more heady twist, the particular vampires whom Captain Kronos hunts down are atypical of the general breed in that they are immune to much of the normal anti-vamp equipment and function quite well in sunlight. Needless to say, they give the good Captain quite a tussle, but he survives in the end and goes on into . . . oblivion? Yes he does, sad to say. The film had "series" written all over it, but I guess the box office was poor. No further Kronos pictures have surfaced, and I have yet to see the picture reappear anywhere.

That's it, fade out, action over. Until next time, keep them dice rolling and take in a movie. Have fun! □

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What's New

New products and publications for the adventure role-player.
Game companies are encouraged to send samples of their new releases for announcement in this column.

NEW SYSTEMS

Gamma World (TSR, Box 756, Lk Geneva WI 53147, \$?) by James M. Ward, et al. This new edition comes boxed with a 64-page rulebook, a 32-page adventure book, a 34"x22" double-sided map, six polyhedral dice, and a crayon for dice marking. The main adventure involves traveling to a dead city and bringing back a souvenir of the trip as a personal totem.

FOR AD&D

L2: The Assassin's Knot (TSR, \$?) by Len Lakofka. This is the second part of the "Lendore Isle" series. For 6-10 characters of levels 2-5, this 32-page adventure comes with a 17"x11" double-sided map. The adventure involves exploring a city of assassins to find the murderer of a rich baron.

I5: Lost Tomb of Martek (TSR, \$?) by Tracy Hickman. The last module in the "Desert Of Desolation" series, it is 32-page and comes with a 17"x11" double-sided map. For 6-8 characters of levels 7-9, the adventure involves releasing an ancient sphere of power from a tomb to stop an evil efreeti from destroying the desert people.

I6: Ravenloft (TSR, \$?) by Tracy and Laura Hickman. For 6-8 characters of levels 5-7, this 32-page adventure comes with a 17"x11" double-sided map. The adventure involves an invitation to dinner from a vampire count in a castle with 88 places to explore.

U3: The Final Enemy (TSR, \$?) by Dave J. Browne. This 32-page adventure is for 8-12 characters of levels 3-5. The final module in the "Saltmarsh" series, the main part of the adventure involves clearing a fortress with 61 places to explore of its evil, cruel creatures.

FOR CAR WARS

Expansion Set 3: East Midville (Steve Jackson Games, Box 18957, Austin TX 78760, \$3.50) by Steve Jackson. Comes with a rules folder, two 32"x21" maps, and 31 vehicle counters. Rules include four scenarios that take place in Midville, "the toughest little town in America."

Expansion Set 4: Armadillo Auto-duel Arena (Steve Jackson Games, \$3.50) by Steve Jackson. Comes with a rules folder, two 32"x21" maps, and 16 wreck counters. Takes place in a condemned shopping mall that has been converted into a professional dueling arena.

There are seven scenarios, one for each day of the week.

Map Sheets (Steve Jackson Games, \$5). This is five 21"x32" gridded mapsheets for gamemasters to create their own arenas, towns, military bases, etc., or to cut apart for making customized road sections.

FOR D&D BASIC SET

B5: Horror on the Hill (TSR, \$?) by Douglas Niles. For 5-10 characters of levels 1-3, this 32-page adventure involves a hill, with 101 places to explore, rumored to be filled with monsters and an evil witch.

FOR D&D EXPERT SET

O1: The Gem and the Staff (TSR, \$?) by John and Laurie Van De Graff. For thieves level 8, this module is designed for one player and one gamemaster. It contains two scenarios, so participants can switch roles after the first adventure. Comes as a 16-page adventure book and a 16-page map book.

FOR GAMMA WORLD

Referee's Screen (TSR, \$?). This is a 24½"x11" cardstock printed with charts and tables on both sides. Also comes with an 8-page mini module "The Albuquerque Starport" by Paul Reiche III featuring descriptions of a starport, a shuttle, and a space station.

GW3: The Cleansing War of Garik Blackhand (TSR, \$?) by Michael Price & Garry Spiegle. Designed for 3-8 players, the adventure is divided into nine scenarios that take place in the Yellowstone and the Grand Teton National Parks area. The players play nomadic hunters that migrate every few years.

FOR GANGBUSTERS

GB4: The Vanishing Investigator (TSR, \$?) by Marc Acres. For character levels 4-7, this 32-page adventure involves a senator's family that has been kidnapped, a "surprise" underworld witness that requires protection, and a search for the senator himself who has mysteriously disappeared.

FOR MS&PE AND ESPIONAGE!

Stormhaven (Blade, Box 1210, Scottsdale AZ 85252, \$9.95) by Michael A. Stackpole. Comes in a folder, it consists of a 56-page scenario book, an 8-page map book, and 23 Cardboard Heroes. The

module describes three scenarios that take place in a mansion located on a large island in the middle of a lake.

FOR MORROW PROJECT

Vehicular Blueprints (Timeline, Box 11051, Lansing MI 48901, \$6.95) by ?. This is new packaging for an earlier edition. There are eleven 11"x17" sheets all but one double-sided with vehicle blueprints and interior layouts.

FOR THIEVES' GUILD

Thieves' Guild 9: Escape from the Ashwood Mines (Gamelords, 18616 Grosbeak Ter, Gaithersburg MD 20879, \$?) by Bob Traynor, et al. This 32-page book comes with two scenarios: part 2 of "The Secret of the Crystal Mountains," continued from *TG8*; and "Escape from the Ashwood Mines."

FOR TRAVELLER

Book 6: Scouts (GDW, Box 1646, Bloomington IL 61702, \$6) by Marc Miller. This 56-page booklet describe the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service whose duties include exploration of the frontiers, on-going mapping and surveying, and the maintenance of interstellar communications.

Adventure 11: Murder on Arcurus Station (GDW, \$5) by J. Andrew Keith. This 56-page booklet describes a murder mystery, in which the adventurers seek to unravel clues to discover the murderer of a wealthy businessman.

FOR TUNNELS & TROLLS

The Esgaroth Herald (Andrew McLaren, 98 Titiraupenga St, Taupo, New Zealand, \$?) by Andrew McLaren. This 28-page book describes the city of Esgaroth, its people and places, as

well as supplementary rules for the game system including new weapons and magic.

FOR ANY SYSTEM

Isengard (ICE, Box 1605, Charlottesville VA 22902, \$?) by Christian Gehman. This 48-page book describes Northwest Gondor in J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle Earth. Comes with a 17"x22" double-sided map, it describes its flora and fauna, towns and fortresses, history and politics, etc.

PLAYAIDS

Flextiles (Hero Games, 92-A 21st Ave, San Mateo CA 94402, \$3.95 each) by Doug Herring. These are 25mm map scenery printed on 5"x8" electrostatic plastic that are reusable. Each sheet contains about a dozen illustrations. Set 1 has vehicles, set 2 has street scenery, set 3 has laboratory scenery, and set 4 has landscape.

MAGAZINES

Tortured Souls! No. 2 (Beast Enterprises, Divinity Rd, Oxford OX4 1LR, England, £1.95) edited by S.M.A. Goodman. This issue consists entirely of *AD&D* scenarios: two are standard scenarios, another two are campaign modules, and one is a solo adventure.

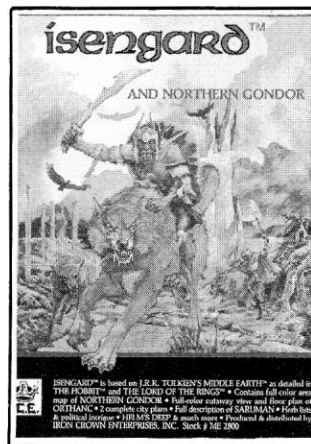
ENDLESS QUEST BOOKS

These books are 160 pages each and are based on the *Dungeons & Dragons* game (TSR, \$2 each). "Pick a Path to Adventure."

Book 13: Dragon Of Doom by Rose Estes. The object of this quest is to stop an evil magic-user from setting a dreaded black dragon on the world to spread death and destruction.

Book 14: Raid on Nightmare Castle by Catherine McGuire. The

continued page 9



Designer's Notes

Game designers who gives us the games we enjoy reveal their methods and techniques on designing games.

MAN, MYTH & MAGIC

By Herbie Brennan

There are two major differences between *Man, Myth & Magic* and the majority of role-playing systems. One lies in the formatting of the system rules, the other in the styling of the scenarios.

As a novice role-player, I was brutally confused by the complexity of rules I had to absorb before I could actually start play. All other novices seemed to be in the same boat. As a result, hours were spent in preparation for the first game, so that by the time actual play began, the group was exhausted and enthusiasm noticeably on the decline.

Of course, familiarity with one system helped experienced players to find their way more easily through another, but the absolute newcomer had a hard time indeed. Since games are about fun, not having a hard time, I decided to format *Man, Myth & Magic* in such a way that anyone, including those with no experience at all with role-playing games, could begin playing the game from the moment they opened the box.

This was done fairly simply—so simply I'm still quite surprised other systems do it the hard way—by allowing players to absorb the rules in the course of play. Each rule, in the basic version, was inserted only when it became necessary to the continuing action. As the basic game progressed, more and more rules were fed in.

Playtest results of this approach were interesting. First off, players seemed to understand and remember a rule far more easily when it was introduced to them in this way. Secondly, quite a few of them didn't actually realise they were learning rules at all!

Initially, I was quite prepared to follow through on this approach into the advanced version of the game. But the advanced version had to be treated differently, since a new and unexpected factor arose. It seems that while novice gamers dread learning rules, experienced gamers love them. The difference seems to be that, with experience, you can judge the flavor of the game by studying its rules, with the result that rule-learning becomes a thing of pleasurable anticipation.

So the rules of *Advanced MM&M* were formatted in a fairly traditional way. The mixture works better with

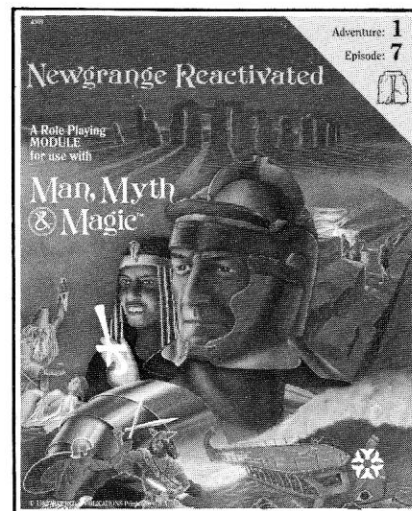
players than reviewers, some of whom like the programmed approach of the basic game and wish it had been carried all the way through, while others complain that the basic rules are not formatted logically like those of the advanced section!

The second major difference lies in the scenarios. *MM&M* has several times been called a scenario system as much as a game system. Frankly, I'd be hard put to disagree. A huge amount of effort was put into blending historical reality with the sort of mythic fantasy most gamers demand.

To give only two examples: The map and layout of Stonehenge, a setting which played a major part in the "Apollo's Temple" scenario, was based directly on the official British Board of Works plan of the site. The Great Pyramid at Giza, another scenario setting, was detailed from definitive engineer's measurements and described using a compilation of sources by various historical travelers to the site.

The storyline of the scenarios remains, by and large, as much a fantasy as the wildest dungeon, but it is a fantasy set against a background of detailed realism. There were some who worried that players might find the mixture unacceptable, but it seems to be one of the most popular aspects of the entire game. And those who would complain most bitterly if a single stone of Stonehenge was misplaced, accept the appearance of Leprechauns with delight.

Unlike any other system with which I am familiar, the scenarios of *MM&M* are presented serially. *AD&D* edged close to this concept in the Giant/Drow modules, but each of



these is complete in itself and may be played without reference to the others. In *MM&M*, by contrast, the scenarios are actually chapters in an ongoing fantasy adventure novel which begins in Ancient Rome and ends on the planet Venus! Each scenario ends on a cliff-hanger note to carry interest through until the beginning of the next. Credit for the idea of creating scenarios of this type must go to Stephen Peek, the president of Yaquinto, who publishes the game.

Serial scenarios are not easy things to write—at least not if players are to retain their illusion of free will during the adventure—and I doubt if the style will be widely duplicated, however popular it becomes.

And I'm delighted to say, the combination of learn-as-you-play format of the rules and the dramatic narrative of the scenarios have helped make it very popular indeed. □



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Sword Of Hollywood

Cinema news and reports
of interest to
adventure role-players.

By Larry DiTillio

Merry X-mas film fans (I know, I know, it's well past X-mas, but I'm writing this well before), and a game-filled '84. So much for salutations, onward to the news and such.

Ye Ol' Sword swallows the bird: Back in summer of '83 I wrote about the *Dungeons & Dragons* animated series with some doubt. However, having hauled myself out of bed several Saturday mornings and caught the show, I must say I like it. I don't love it, but I like it. The animation is good, the stories I've seen have some nice twists and substance, and there is a very real quality of role-playing in it. It's also kind of fun to pick the monsters out of the *Monster Manual* and watch them in action. So, there, I have eaten my crow, don't let anyone tell you that Ye Ol' Sword never admits he was wrong.

And yet more on cartoons: Don't tell anyone I told you, but I happen to know that Ruby-Spears is currently developing an animated series based on Don Bluth's *Dragon's Lair*, the interactive videodisc game that turned the vid-game world on its ear. If you like the game, you'll probably want to tune into the adventures of Dirk the Daring and Princess Daphne when and if (these things are always chancy) it reaches the air. Best bet is next September.

I also hope you cartoon fans are catching Ye Ol' Sword's script-work on *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*. I did nine of the shows currently airing and will probably do a passel more next season. Gald to say we are a big hit, with huge ratings and, believe me, the show is lots of fun to work on.

The Saint returns: Before he was James Bond, Roger Moore played the title role in a stylish British series called *The Saint*. The Saint is a roguish modern-day outlaw, created by British scribe Leslie Charteris, who roamed the exotic places of the world meting out his own brand of vigilante justice to "the ungodly." I always liked the series and the character (whose name is Simon Templar), therefore I was pleased to learn that *The Saint* is returning to both British and American TV in a series of two-hour teleplays. There are two twists however: The series won't be starring Roger

Moore and will be set in the 1930's, rather than the present as the old series was. The books on which *The Saint* is based was set in the 30's and I applaud the return to the concept. The first picture will be called *The Saint's Getaway* and will go into production soon; its success or failure will determine if *The Saint* truly does return for more than one appearance. Watch for it.

King of the private eyes: Starting January 7, 1984, network TV will be showing *Mickey Spillaine's Mike Hammer* with Stacey Keach starring as the hard-boiled hero. The Hammer series has long been a staple of detective fiction, though its sleaziness and ultra-violence are a bit much for younger fans. Still, it might make good fare for all of you running bang-bang games such as *Espionage* and *Mercenaries*, *Spies and Private Eyes*.

On to the movies: I promised you more info on upcoming movies of interest to gamers in last month's column and without further yoo-hoo, here are the scouting reports. *Escape From Beyond:* A fantasy flick in "Wonder-Vision 3D," this one stars the forgettable Reb Brown and the ultra-villainous Richard Lynch (he was the villain in *The Sword and the Sorcerer*, and a good nasty he was). *The Power:* You got yourself this evil demon see, and he/she/it is capable of turning people's thoughts and desires into hideous, destructive behavior. This one's for the Cthulhu fans. *She:* Yet another remake of the H. Rider Haggard novel concerning a realm of women ruled by a beautiful, immortal goddess. In pops two men (!!!), adventurers who stumble upon the realm and wreak the usual havoc there. I have a perverse fondness for *She*, and this new production stars Sandhal Bergman (Valeria from the *Conan* flick) so that is reason enough for me to put it on my go-see list. You decide for yourself. *Scared To Death:* This one is supposed to be an action-adventure but sounds more like horror/science fiction. The plot is that the human race is threatened by Syngenors, non-human life forms created out of man's desire to push modern technology to its most terrible potential. Maybe you'll get a new monster or two out of it. *Robin Hood:* Well, they've gone and done it. They've taken dear old

Robin of Sherwood and decided to clown him up. This spoof of the classic hero stars George Segal, Morgan Fairchild, and Roddy McDowell. There could be a lot of amusement or we could choke on the whole thing. We'll see. Now here's a title for ya—*Bloodbath at the House of Death:* Would you believe it's a comedy? Will you see it? Well, it stars Vincent Price, and he's always fun.

Best Revenge: Action in the Indy Jones mode, this flick features fast-paced, non-stop adventure in exotic settings such as Spain, Morocco, and North Africa. It even boasts John Rhys Davies in the cast. (Who? He's the companion of Indiana Jones in *Raiders*. You know, the burly guy who lowers Indy into the snake pit. I like him a lot, he's the perfect movie sidekick.) *Screamtime:* This is an anthology picture, ala the *Twilight Zone* movie, presenting three scary tales to make your hair stand on end. *Buckaroo Banzai:* Don't you dig that title? It's a magical adventure about a very strange hero in a very strange world supposedly chock full of rapid-sequence action. Watch for it, it's directed by W.D. Richter who wrote the screenplay for the remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. *The Never-Ending Story:* Sounds like a role-playing campaign, but is yet another magic adventure in which a boy is drawn through the pages of a book he's reading into a timeless realm of fantastic beings whom only he can save from certain destruction. It's from a book that was a world-wide bestseller. It boasts a large, large budget so we may be in for a treat. *The Instructor:* Karate action with an "all black-belt" cast. This means acting is nil, and action the word. Use your judgment. And that's the upcoming report, but...

Revenge of the sequel: Not yet in the production phase, but being developed, are a staggering amount of sequels to popular motion pictures. The concept behind sequels is of course, big bucks, but I don't mind seeing my favorite heroes again and again, and I suspect neither do you, so long as the pictures are good. Here's what the old major studios are planning in the sequel genre: *Love at Second Bite:* George Hamilton gives us more fangs. *Mad Max III:* *Mad Max II* was of course known as *Road Warrior*

(though overseas it was called *Mad Max II*) and while I eagerly anticipate it, I have doubts as to whether they can recreate the experiences of *Road Warrior*. *The Magnificent Seven:* This would be the fourth sequel to one of the greatest westerns (and for you who know, one of the greatest samurai flicks) of all time. *The Lost World:* Look out you dinosaur fans, this would be another fourth time around. *The Illegitimate Son of King Kong:* I think somebody's pulling our limbs on this one, eh? *The Day the Earth Stood Still:* One of the best science-fiction films, a classic, but given today's technology, a remake would be welcome. *Batman:* I would love to see this superhero detective done right instead of camp, but I am not holding my breath. *The Little Shop of Horrors:* Given the success of the Broadway play based on Roger Corman's cult B-flick, this picture would seem to be a good bet. And *Dick Tracy:* You young fans might be mystified but the fact is there were a lot of Dick Tracy pictures made in the 40's and 50's, so it counts as a sequel. There are also very, very tentative rumors about a sequel to *E.T.*!

Phew, that's a lot of movies, wouldn't you say? We should have lots of reasons to go to the cinema in 1984, but whether they are good reasons or not, only time will tell. And speaking of time, here's yet another installment of:

From the past: I am going to go way, way out on a limb and recommend a picture I think is damn-near impossible to find. The picture is a stylish horror flick from Hammer Films of London, England (you know them, they gave us all those wonderful Chris Lee *Draculas* and Peter Cushing *Frankensteins*), called *Captain Kronos: Vampire Hunter*. I had a long talk about horror movies and such with Sandy "Mr. Cthulhu" Petersen on a recent visit to San Francisco, and in the course of this talk, *Captain Kronos* came up. We both agreed it was a classic in the Hammer line, while both despairing of ever seeing it again. I saw it in the movies about nine years ago, I believe, right as Hammer's great period was coming to a close. The beauty of *Captain Kronos* lies in its very odd hero. Captain Kronos, unlike

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Film Reviews

Reviews of outstanding feature films of interest to adventure role-players. Good movies are indispensable sources of gaming ideas.

Reviews by John Nubbin

ANDROID

Director Aaron Lipstadt
Producer Rupert Harvey
Screenplay James Reigle/
Don Oppen
Photography Tim Suhrstedt
Music Don Preston

CAST

Dr. Daniel Klaus Kinski
Max Don Oppen
Maggie Brie Howard
Keller Norbert Weisser
Mendes Crofton Hardester
Cassandra Kendra Kirchner

Fifty years in our future, a lone, illegal researcher, Dr. Daniel, struggles to finish his greatest experiment—the construction of a perfect android—before he is discovered and stopped by the authorities. His only companion/helper/lackey is Max, a near-perfect android himself. Max runs the isolated space station, helps Daniel when possible, and amuses himself with video games, cartoons, blue films, and music from the mid-twentieth century.

As one might expect, Max is fairly bored. He wants to go to Earth, leaving the life of a companion/helper/lackey behind. He sees his chance when a captured prison ship arrives at their station, pleading for assistance. Max allows them to dock; when Daniel finds out what has happened, he is furious, until he discovers there is a woman in the crew. He needs a human female to activate his ultimate android, and thus does an about face when he realizes he has one within reach.

Thus, *Android*, an extremely surprising New World picture, becomes a web of lies as everyone in the movie begins deceiving one another. The convicts, all wanting different things, lie to each other

and Max and Daniel. Max, wanting to go to Earth, pleads with the convicts to 'steal' him, not telling then he is an android, going so far as to destroy a police ship which has traced them to the station. And on and on.

An android is not a robot. The word android means 'artificially constructed human; one resembling a human being in all ways save that its origin is artificial and not one of human parentage.' As other androids are introduced into the story, we see they are indeed totally human. The bite to *Android* is that none of the androids present is any different from us; they lie, cheat, steal, kill, destroy, allow themselves to be manipulated, and manipulate others in turn.

This is not to imply that *Android* is a downbeat film. There is a lively sense of humor at work throughout, making even the grimmest scenes lighter. The violence within is down played to the extent that the film received a PG rating instead of New World's usual R. There is a lightness in the direction and the acting which allows us to condone much of the violence within, a witty stabbing at the audience on the part of writers Reigle and Oppen. Before we know it, we the audience are going along with the slaughter of police, fist fights, and the grossest of deceptions in order to see cute little Max saved.

At the end of the picture, however, cute little Max is turned into a mindless, raging killer with the change of a single transistor, and then back again. He kills humans, and his own kind, and then is changed back to cute little Max. It is a neatly tucked away little statement, not overly moralistic or heavy-handed. And, that is the way of things in *Android*.

The film, made in twenty days

with the usual Roger Corman low-budget resourcefulness, was shot on leftover sets from New World's *Forbidden Planet*, *Battle Beyond the Stars*, and *Galaxy Of Terror*. In 1982, Corman began the film's release as part of a double bill with the fatal dud *Inchon* in Las Vegas. Not wanting their film to be brought out as a standard exploitation picture, director Lipstadt and his colleagues bought the rights to the film back from Corman in early 1983. They opened the film in London where it was a great success, *The Observer* calling *Android* "the sleeper of the year." The film then went on to receive similar acclaim at the Los Angeles, Seattle, and Chicago film festivals.

It did this for good reasons. Although an extremely short picture (the running time is under 90 minutes), it is one which delivers, a statement one cannot make about most of the fantasy and science-fiction fare of 1983. With films like *Star Trek III*, *Indiana Jones & the Temple of Doom*, and a number of others, 1984 is looking to be a better year. *Android*, with its clever dialogue, tight plotting, and clever twists looks to be a part of that good year. Filled with a wide range of humor, from slap-stick to black comedy, it is aimed at a mature, thinking audience, just the kind of picture the genre, and its weary audiences (after last year's *Jedi*, *Krull*, *Superman III*, *Yor*, and all the rest), not only need, but deserve.

FIRE AND ICE

Director Ralph Bakshi
Producers Ralph Bakshi/
Frank Frazetta
Screenplay Roy Thomas/
Gerry Conway
Music William Kraft

CAST

Larn Randy Norton
Teegra Cynthia Leake
Darkwolf Steve Sandor
Nekron Sean Hannon

For those who missed *Fire And Ice*, and a lot of you did, due to its incredibly short run, the verdict has to be that while you did miss some really great scenes, you didn't miss much of a movie. Visually stunning at dozens of points throughout, and a more consistent movie than almost any of Bakshi's previous attempts, it still has its troubles, ones which it unfortunately could not surmount.

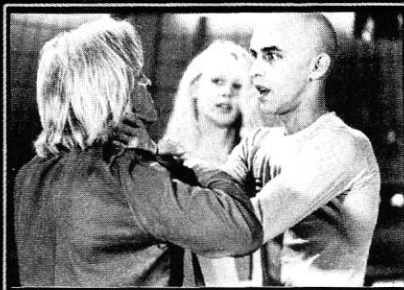
Fire And Ice is the story of a savage, primeval world teetering on the edge of its own armageddon. The north is controlled by the evil sorcerer Nekron. In ever increasing waves, he sends forth his ice and glaciers to destroy all of humanity. Why? We are not told. Is Nekron human? We are not told. Is his mother human? Are his followers human? Why does his ice obey him; how does it stay frozen at the equator? We are not told. There are always answers one can pull from logic to answer such questions, but *Fire And Ice* does not make it easy.

As Nekron's ice advances, humanity makes a feeble stand against it, but is easily routed (men with spears facing a 50 mph glacier is only one of the movie's little silly treats). As the plot begins to unfold for the audience, we see that man's last chance rests within the volcanic lands of King Jarol. With his dams of lava, he alone might be able to stop the ice. But, his daughter has been kidnapped by Nekron's mother's henchmen. Mon has done this to procure a bride for sonny Nekron, not to threaten Jarol with, though. However, sonny doesn't

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Scene from *Android*: Cassandra (Kendra Kirchner), Dr. Daniel's perfect android, comes to life as Max (Don Oppen) watches. Photo by M.J. Elliott.



Scene from *Android*: Max intervenes on behalf of Cassandra and rudely stifles Dr. Daniel's (Klaus Kinski) ardor. Photo by M.J. Elliott.



Scene from *Fire And Ice*: The fearsome and mysterious Darkwolf (L) wages battle against Nekron in a climactic duel. ©1982 Polyc International, B.V.

A Letter from Gigi

Adventure gaming news and gossip
from the nosiest gamer-reporter
in the world, Gigi D'Arn.

Dear Tadashi,

Sad story: A gamer-friend of mine recently went home one late night from an evening of game-playing. Upon arrival, his wife asked him for a divorce; he did not know or understand why. Could only happen to a gamer.

Victory Games announces two new additions to their *James Bond 007* role-playing game line: *Dr. No* adventure module and *For Your Information* gamemaster supplement. The former is based on the very first James Bond movie and will contain a map of Jamaica and floorplans to Dr. No's fortress. The latter will have sections on brainwashing, undercover assignments, and real-world intelligence agencies. Both are due early this year.

Genesis Gaming Products has acquired Texas Miniatures. They will be soon coming out with *Bushido*, *Sword Play*, and *Superhero/Supervillain* figure lines.

Things I did not see in 1983: GREG STAFFORD and SANDY PETERSEN's *HeroQuest*; TSR's bankruptcy; *Thieves' World* miniatures; ERIC GOLDBERG's *Stormbringer* review; DAVE ARNESON's induction into

gaming's hall of fame; JOHN T. SAPIENZA, JR.'s wedding.

Things I did not see in the past two months: DAVE ARNESON's latest button; an issue of TIM KASK's *Adventure Gaming* magazine; the dissolution of Coleco's computer game design staff.

As soon as my report appears, that AARON ALLSTON resigned from the *Space Gamer* to edit FASA's new *StarDate* magazine, do I hear that he has also resigned from that magazine. I hear he now strictly freelances from his home in freezing Texas. No reason heard about the resignations, but Gigi hypothecates either a burn-out or a swollen headache.

Chaosium's next *Call Of Cthulhu* module will be *Curse of the Chthonians*, formerly *Fragments of Fear*. ("But they aren't fragments!" Was that *Call Of Cthulhu* collect?)

Confirmed: DAVID RITCHIE and his wife have quit TSR and moved to Connecticut to work for Coleco.

Also confirmed: Avalon Hill's new role-playing game magazine will be titled *Heroes (and Heroines)*—in subtitle) and will be edited by WILLIAM PESCHEL, formerly of ECI. First issue is due



in June of this year.

Is it true? Is Fineous Fingers going to appear in *DW*?

TriTac's *Stalking the Night Fantastic* has a disclaimer in the back saying that it "does not support witchcraft, devil worship, or the people who practice belief in such things." Is this necessary?

Ha! Ha! Ha! In a recent *White Dwarf* poll, when asked what readers loathed the most about that magazine, the Howard Cosell of gaming, LEW PULSIPHER, came in sixth. Ha! Ha! Ha!

In the same poll, *Imagine* came in first as the magazine other than *White Dwarf* that its readers bought most often. I have never heard of the magazine, have you?

It seems that a deal between Marvel and TSR has been struck. It is reported to be in five figures and includes the lucrative miniatures licensing rights. The designer is reported to be comic fan JEFF GRUBB and the game is due by the end of this summer. I guess this means their secret "*Boot Hill* revision" is finally going to get published.

Funny illo in *DW 32*: In the *Superworld/Champions* module, the president is smoking a cigar. How presidential.

Congratulations to LEE GOLD for the 100th issue of *Alarums & Excursions*, a milestone in game magazine publishing. *DW* is also showing its age, it has past its 30th issue.

A November issue of the *Wall Street Journal* has the latest report on TSR. It quotes E. GARY GYGAX as saying "To

play a game intelligently, you have to know the rules."

News from Schubel & Son: The fabled Southern Galaxy is now open in their *StarMaster* game. Work has begun on *StarMaster II*, an overhauled and updated variant to *StarMaster*, it should be ready for players by end of this year. *Tribes Of Crane* now has a new world, Crane III. The company will have two new play-by-mail titles this year: *Horizon's End*, a post-holocaust survival game on a distant colony world; and *Intrigue*, a game of spies and espionage.

Is there a French edition of *Tunnels & Trolls* in the offering? Is there going to be French edition of *Call Of Cthulhu*?

Ever wonder why KEN ST. ANDRE doesn't have any new games out? Rumour says it's because Blade won't accept them!

TSR announces that they are quitting publication of their *Ares* magazine. It is planned to be a 16-page supplement to their *Dragon* magazine.

Guess what my aunt said when I said "Dee-And-Dee"? One guess. She said "Gesundheit!"—I thought I had all the good lines.

Thanks to all my admirers for sending me the X-mas cards.

Love,

Gigi



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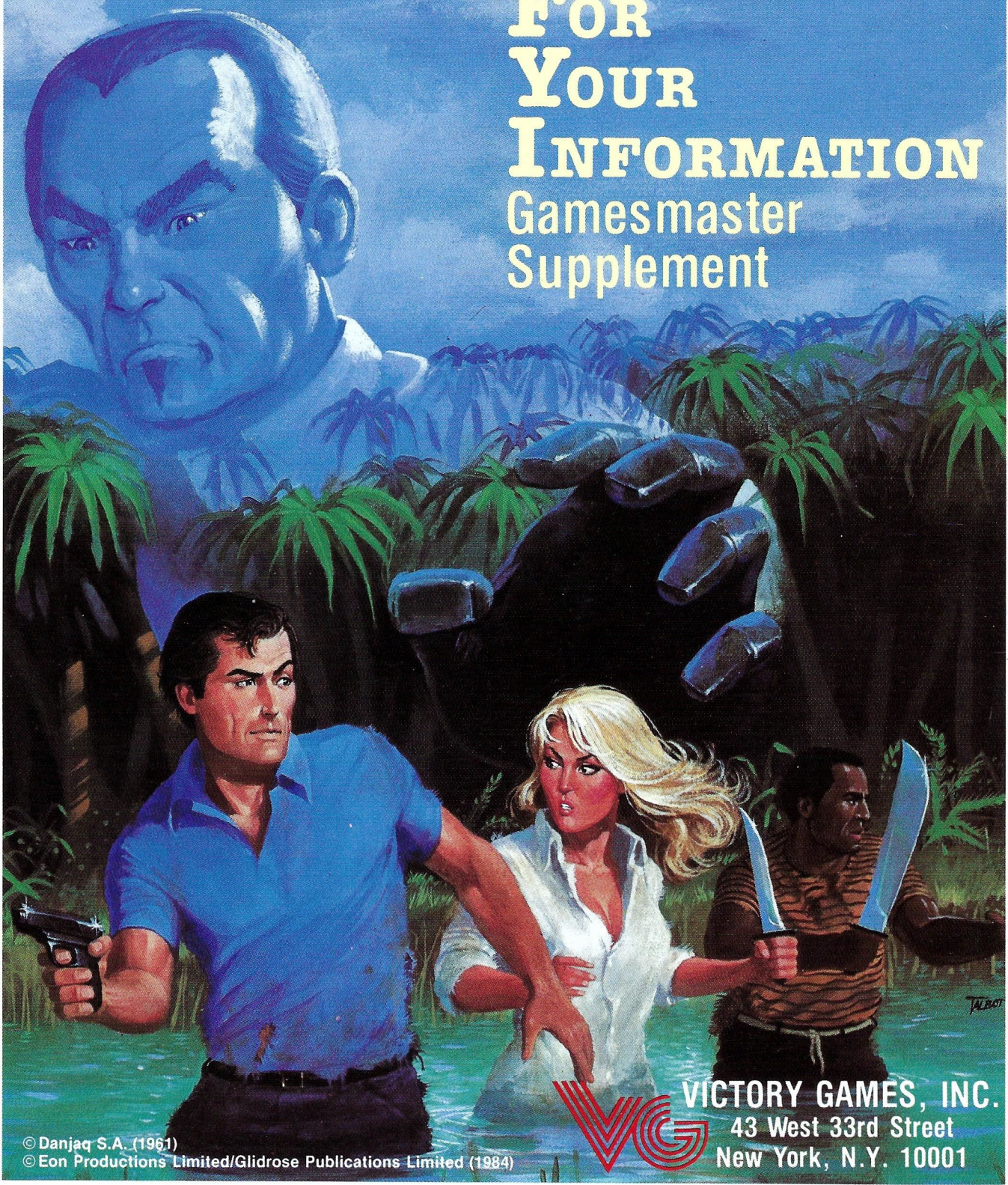
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