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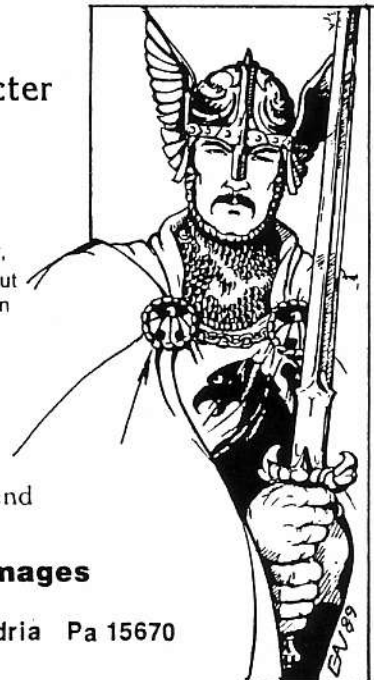


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SHADIS

Issue # 1
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Woodcuts in this issue were taken from 18th and 19th Century manuscripts.

BACKROOM MURMURING

EDITORIAL

...And the great adventure begins.

Welcome to the premiere issue of Shadis and what we hope will be a long-lasting relationship. Obviously, we want to make the best of this new venture, so let me try to explain what we are all about. I've only been allotted one page to throw my pitch, so here goes.

Shadis was conceived from our opinion that the Role-playing hobby is in serious need of more magazines, fanzines, newsletters, etc devoted to the cause. There currently are only two major magazines devoted solely to Fantasy RPGs.

As the cover states, we are a science fiction and fantasy magazine. More recent promotionals have mysteriously changed that blurb to 'the fantasy games magazine'. I tend to group sci-fi RPGs in with fantasy games. Our plans are to offer fiction in both of these areas, as well as the related gaming hobbies. This will entail reviews, fiction, articles etc.

A portion of each issue will be devoted to original fiction based in the fantasy milieu of Alderac. This fiction written by a variety of authors, will share the same time period, characters and backdrop. Characters may move from one author's on-going story to another's in the next issue.

Those familiar with the Thieve's World and similar anthologies will recognize this approach. The Alderac Anthology series will work much the same way, except the stories will run from issue to issue.

Enhancing the anthology will be articles detailing events, places and persons that are dealt with in that particular issue's stories. Occasionally a Role-playing scenario inspired from the stories will be offered.

We hope you enjoy the adventures of Orric, Scav, Arlora and all the other characters you will meet here.

Shadis will also offer a myriad of articles enhancing your role-playing and offering new rules, tips etc.

You'll also find several reviews in each issue

on new products and books. We also plan to take some indepth looks at various gamer-services. (See In the Spotlight in this issue.)

This issue was put together by our raving-mad staff without the benefit of your input. We greatly need any advice, suggestions and criticisms you may have. Only by telling us what you like and don't like can we hope to mold our new publication to conform with your needs.

Shadis will definitely be changing. We already have made arrangements to upgrade our printing and should be sporting laser-printed graphics and text next issue. We also have our eye on a Four-Color cover down the road. We plan to expand from sixty pages to one hundred as soon as distribution reaches the 'magic-number' and publishing discounts make it feasible. With expanded pages we will be able to offer a variety of indepth articles.

You should find a questionnaire form stuffed among these pages. We would greatly appreciate it, if you took time out to critique Shadis and send it in. As an incentive we've included a Trivia-contest on the same form. The prizes are listed on the form.

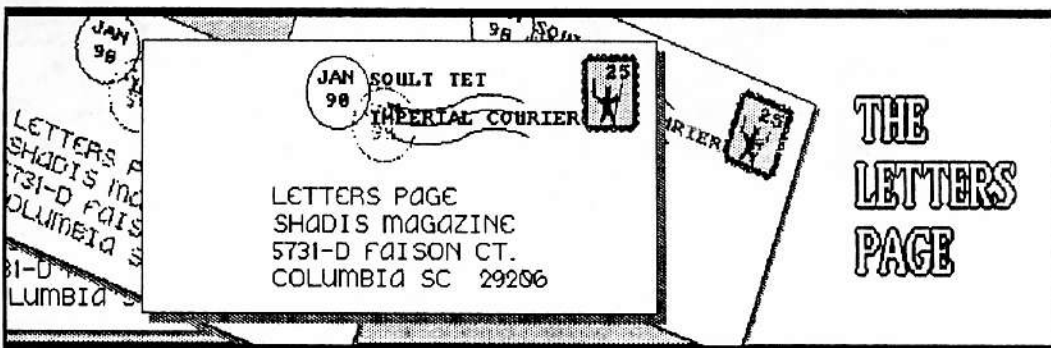
The questionnaires could have a dramatic impact on the future of Shadis. Primarily it will help decide if we narrow our focus to Fantasy RPGs only or encompass Sci-fi as well. As it stands right now we are leaning heavily toward a fantasy-only format. Your feedback could tip the scales either way.

And while we are on the subject, of feedback, we also need articles, artwork, letters, etc. from you. For the next several issues we will not be able to pay cash for such contributions, but we will give free issues, and or subscriptions, depending on the volume and quality of the work.

Other than that, we have to let this issue stand on it's own merits. Let me add that we all have taken a solemn vow to upgrade and improve Shadis each issue. Frank was the only one who declined to take the vow, but we've chained him in the basement until he comes around.

Jolly R. Blackburn
Editor

January 8, 1990



Dear Shadis,

I'm thrilled that a new FRG magazine is now available. I would like to contribute some art and game-related articles for publication.

How do I go about it?

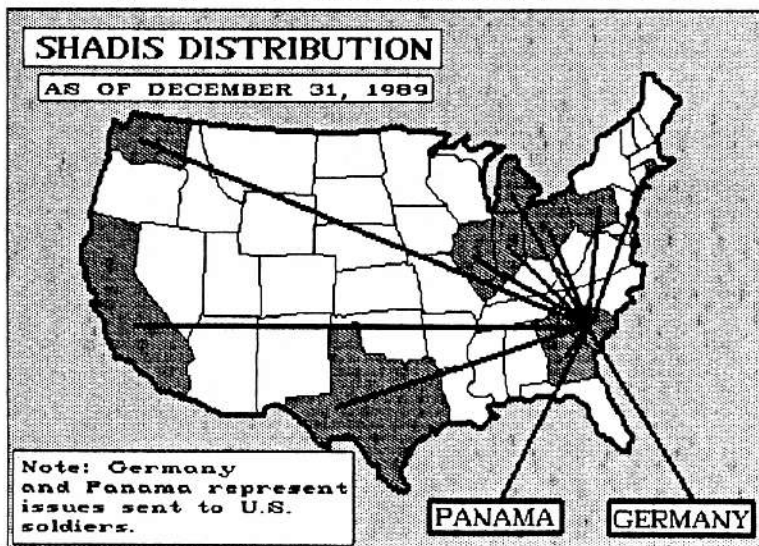
Mark Haines
Indianapolis, IN

Mark,

Glad you asked that question. We are in urgent need of artwork, articles, letters etc.

We've created the forum, now we hope gamers respond with submissions. (See this month's editorial for more information)

Where is Shadis going? The following map reveals all.



THE WORLD BEYOND 'HACKANDSLASH'

PART ONE

BY JOHN K. D'AMATO

The player's dilemma: your character is a thousand points away from reaching his next level and he needs to find someone to kill or something to steal.

It doesn't matter whether your PC is a fighter or not. He could be a lawful cleric, a magic user or a thief, but he'd better kill or steal something or he'll never reach that next level.

It's a shame that a role-playing system as finely-tuned as AD&D¹, which is so popular because of its differentiation of classes, has not developed a system for experience point attainment based on those differences.

As it stands right now, PCs can only gain points through combat or amassing some sort of treasure. The AD&D Second Edition rules have made some attempts to amend this situation, but offers the DM few guidelines for awarding points for other actions. Since few beings are going to give up their treasures without a struggle, this usually means a fight as well.

It's no wonder that many games, therefore, devolve into simply hack-and-slash sessions. There is no incentive for PCs of any class to operate in any other way, if moving up in experience levels is their goal -- and for most, that's how successful role playing is measured.

If you're tired as a DM of clerics, thieves, magic users, and others all acting like fighters, give your players some incentive to play those characters more realistically, but still within the bounds of the spirit of the AD&D game.

Take a look at the class descriptions and develop a new point system, commensurate with what

you're awarding a similarly-ranked fighter during an average session.

Prior to an adventure, you should come to an agreement with your players as to the amount of points that ought to be earned for given actions. In the next several issues, I'll give you some examples how I've awarded points in the campaigns I've ran.

The results have been very encouraging. New dimensions and DM options have opened up and the players seem to derive more pleasure from playing characters that are more fully 'fleshed out.'

The clerics are more devout, the magic users more intent on research and intrigued by items with magical properties and the thieves are far more devious and cunning.

Let's start with the cleric. Their main function should be to further their religion. They do this by spreading the word, creating new converts, and obtaining funds or materials necessary to keep the order going. History has provided us with a wide-range of clerical examples, ranging from unspeaking monks sequestered in monasteries, to military orders spreading their religion through force of arms.

Most members of clerical societies take up arms only in defense of the faith (either real or perceived), and some would not harm another human being under any circumstances.

I award full experience points for battles against beings which are either directly opposite that cleric's alignment or are enemies of 'the church'. Battles involving other types of creatures only earn the cleric half the number of experience points.

¹ AD&D, Advanced Dungeons and Dragons is the trademark for TSR's Fantasy Role-Playing Game

The end result of that decision is fewer indiscriminate battles involving the cleric. If the PC wanted to go around killing people, he should have been a fighter.

Treasure is treated in the same manner. If the cleric finds religious artifacts, books or instruments, I award full points. If it's any other kind of non-religious item or money, he receives only half the experience points.

Making up these losses in experience points are other, cleric-related accomplishments. Again, the points awarded can be decided by you and your players ahead of time. Mine are meant only as a guide.

I offer 1,000 points for completion of a non-religious mission and 2,000 points for a religious mission. The mission must be for a higher level cleric of the same religion.

The mission should be one that extends over several sessions and the higher level cleric should be several levels above that of the PC. In my low level campaign, the mission should come from a 7th-11th level cleric.

Since spell casting is so important to the cleric, give 50 points per segment needed to cast a particular spell, i.e. 200 points if the spell takes 4 segments to cast.

The spell should be successfully cast and fit the needs of a given situation. The provision that the spell be appropriate to the situation keeps players from simply casting one spell after another to gain the points.

Another important function of the cleric in any adventuring party is his or her ability to turn or eliminate the undead, especially if the undead are threatening the success of the party. Again, the situation needs to be taken into account.

Give the cleric normal kill points for turning the undead and double points for elimination.

The remaining points have to do with the cleric either furthering his religion or practicing it. These particular points are probably the most responsible for turning non-practicing clerics back into devout men and women in my campaigns.



I offer 500 points for each NPC or PC the cleric converts to his religion. Make the cleric work for the points, however. One on one conversions involving prayer, sermons or classes over some extended period of time, are one way.

Invariably, some sharp player is going to want his cleric to do a 'Sermon on the Mount' and attempt the conversion of 5,000 people or more. You can award points, but I'd set a limit of 500 points per session in this category, if I were you.

The same holds true for religious classes taught and visiting a church or a temple of one's faith. I give 100 experience points each per game week for these clerical efforts.

Prayer, daily rituals etc. are important parts of any religion. Give the player's cleric 25 to 50 points for each hour of prayer, another 25 points

for weekly rituals and 50 points for monthly rituals.

Finally, the cleric earns 500 points when he sees, touches or visits something central to his particular religion. These can be relics, buildings, springs, a mountain, a person, a city or anything else the player's imagination can come up with.

In the Islamic religion there is Mecca. Others have the Shrine of Buddha, the Talmud, the Ark of the Covenant, the Holy Grail, the Shroud of Turin, the Dalai Lama.

Be careful, however. You know your campaign and your world. Once the player comes up with four or five of these holy places, relics, people or whatever, work with the player in placing them around your world, so that he can't hit each one of them in two days.

They should require some sort of pilgrimage and effort to be meaningful to the player.

The end result of all of this is not only a player character who plays his cleric in a more religious manner, it is a cleric with a truly thought out religion.

It forces the player to flesh out his religion, to develop daily, weekly, monthly, yearly rituals that are consistent with the tenets of that religion. The important people, relics and places of that religion also must receive some thought, and your working with the player in their placement throughout the world also adds color and dimension to your campaign.

Of course, if you players don't have the imagination or time or come up with a religion of their own, complete with beliefs, rituals and important places, relics, etc., you can create those choices for them and present them when they decide to play a cleric character.

Doing this can add a lot to your 'world' and can be a lot of fun. That's really the point, isn't it? You want variety in your game and something that will challenge your imagination and that of the people you're playing with. This system gives you that.

Worksheet #1 provides a summary of the experience point system for clerics. Feel free to reproduce this form for your own use. It can be used during a gaming session to keep track of the points a cleric has earned. Modify the points as you see fit.



EXPERIENCE POINT WORKSHEET# 1

CLERICS

1. 50% experience points for found treasure, unless treasure is religious artifact, book, or instrument in which case points are doubled.
2. 50% experience points for killing of monster/being, unless it is exact opposite of character's alignment. (Then points are normal.)
3. 1,000 points for completion of a mission in the service of a 7th-11th level cleric, of same faith, non-religious mission.
4. 2,000 points for completion of a religious mission for a 7th-11th level cleric of same faith.
5. 50 points per segment needed to cast, for each spell which is successful. (minimum pts 100/Maximum pts 500)
6. 500 pts to see or touch 'Source of Power' listed for each religion. (Good only once per source.)
7. 500 pts for each convert to one's religion.
8. 100 pts for each class taught. (Only once per week.)
9. 100 pts for visting temple of one's faith (once per day.)
10. 10 pts for daily rituals, 25 pts for weekly rituals, and 50 pts for completion of a major ritual (i.e. sacrifice etc.
11. 20 to 50 pts for prayer (1 hr)
12. Normal experience points for turning undead and double for elimination of the undead.

NOTES:

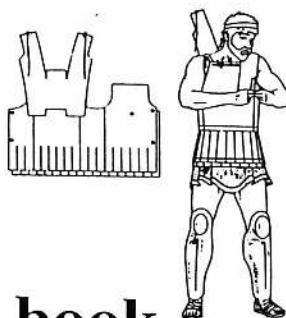
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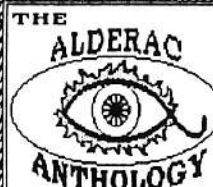
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FICTION

The bones of ruin

By Jolly R. Blackburn



PART I COLD STEW AND BRUISES

Day 175, Year 108

Scav Sagenthor gazed down the slopes toward the city of Tingar. There, hugging the rocky shores of Grey Eagle bay, the ancient city awaited. Its ancient limestone walls concealed much of its interior. From his position he could just make out the towers of the Benyanon temple and the crimson smoke from the sacrificial fires that lingered over them.

He moaned and sat down on his pack by the roadside. He hated cities. Cities bred disease, rats and cutthroats. He could scarcely remember a time when a city had not caused him all manner of troubles. This included his current dilemma. And worse, from the looks of all the ceremonial smoke it was apparently a holy day. That meant crowds, terrible stinking crowds who blocked your way, lightened your coin purse and insulted you.

"Damn it!" he said to himself, "The place looks like a festering wound!"

For six hundred miles and some seventy four days, he had been on the road. For the last twelve days he had been on foot. In his haste to escape one night, he had been forced to leave his grevan pony behind. He had a high price on his head and fewer friends these days. It seemed every bounty hunter and imperial officer within the Empire was after him. Lately they were on his trail like a



pack of wild dogs spurred on by the scent of gold and rewards. After narrowly escaping so many snares and ambushes, Scav had resorted to traveling at night and alone. He also had given up the warm beds of the roadside inns and the comfort of the women who were frequently found in those places.

He had never been to Tingar, but it was here that he had been struggling to arrive for so many

weeks. Here, he was to meet his men. They were loyal friends, the kind who had proven themselves in battle and hard times. At least he hoped he would find them here. He was already weeks overdue.

Scav could easily have escaped far to the south long ago. But it was Tingar, deeper within the Empire's interior and farther to the north where he had chosen to regroup. There was urgent business to take care of.

Suddenly, he scrambled to his feet grasping for his dagger. Someone was coming down the road. He moved into the tree line and slipped into the shadows. Lying quietly, he peered from his hiding place toward the road.

Soon, two men walking slowly and talking softly among themselves, approached heading down the slopes toward the city.

"...a horrible curse I would say," he overheard one mention to the other, "they call it the Shriek, and it has appeared every year since the Emperor took the throne. A terrible omen..."

"Not a bit of truth in it!" snapped the other, "Shriek? The Emperor's guard is more likely. They do the Emperor's bidding though it's thought to be the work of ghosts and demons."

"Ah! you'd deny the sun was shining overhead ..." he stopped cold, "Ey! what's this then?"

Scav cursed under his breath. The two men stopped at his backpack and were examining it.

"Someone's left it" said one.

"Aye, must've fallen off a wagon I suspect."

One of the men bent down and picked it up. "Hey now, it's right heavy too. Someone will be looking for this."

"We'd better be gettin' then. We'll search it later."

One of the men shouldered the pack and they quickly passed and slipped down the road. Scav stood and moved back out on the road. He watched them move down the hill and cursed them silently. It would be dark in an hour or so. He would have to enter the city before that. This far north, the city gates were always closed at dusk to strangers.

He walked at a slow pace, keeping a good distance from the two men. "The Shriek?" he thought to himself. He was familiar with those stories. How many childhood nights were spent shuddering at the thought of those tales?

After about twenty minutes he had made the outskirts of the city. He found himself among a small cluster of shacks huddled on the outside of the city wall, skirting the main gate. As he passed by a street merchant's stall, several small children ran out from under a table and began tugging at his shirt tail.

"Oryan! oryan!" they cried in unison, "Guide, guide." He shrugged away from them and continued on. After several moments he had a curious feeling and looked over his shoulder. Sure enough, one of the small boys was still tagging along holding on to his shirt tail and grinning.

He caught Scav's glance and shrieked, "oryan! I your oryan! Very best!"

Scav stopped and turned around, "No oryan! No!" he said sternly. The youth's grin never wavered. He only stood waiting.

Scav turned and started to continue on, still feeling the tug of the boy's weight on his shirt tail. "Street Rat!" he uttered under his breath. He thought of kicking the wind out of the pest but decided it best to ignore the lad. Street Rats usually had a father close by, and Scav had seen

what irate fathers were capable of. He continued on for the main gate of the city.

Two lazy looking guards with large bellies stood on either side of the gate. As he passed between them, trying his best to become invisible, one of them placed a foot in front of him causing him to halt.

"Hey you!" he snapped, "What you up to?"

Scav shrugged, "I'm looking for a hot meal and a bed"

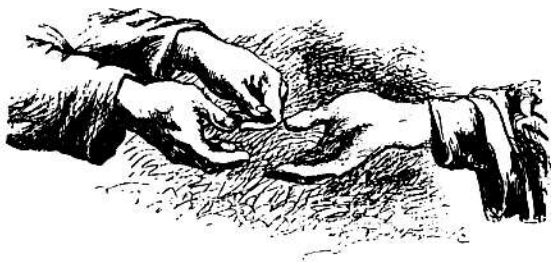
The guard looked toward his comrade and grinned, "He's lookin for a whore, that's what he's lookin for!"

The other guard stepped up to him and sneered, "You know what today is?"

Scav thought on it for a moment and shook his head, "I've been on the road for sometime..."

"Well it's Grongarfest!" the guard barked.

Scav assumed that he was supposed to have been enlightened, "I'm delighted for the information. If you'll excuse..."



The guard stuck out an upturned palm in a manner Scav was fully familiar with. "That means you pay five roolnair to enter the city!"

Scav immediately scowled, "Five roots!"

The guards nodded in unison. Scav dug into his pouch and produced the required amount of coin, he was nearly cleaned out now.

He placed the coins in the palm of the guard and started to proceed on his way. He was very alarmed when the guard again blocked his way, "Just a minute there!"

Scav's blood was beginning to rise rapidly, "What is it now?"

"How much you got on you there?" asked the guard.

Scav gritted his teeth and retrieved his pouch once more, quickly counting the three remaining coins. "Three coppers! Why?"

The guard turned to his comrade and grinned, "You hear that? He's only got three shorts on em!"

The other guard shook his head in disapproval. "The Vard'gra has given orders ya see. No beggars are allowed in the city today, on Grongarfest!"

Scav was beginning to shake visibly with anger, "Beggars! I'm no beggars!"

"Well ya see," explained the guard with a smirk, "Least you have five roots in your pouch there, your a beggar. That's tha law!"

"You mean I can't enter the city?"

"That's right now move along ya sciver!"

"But you can't..."

The guard stepped up and placed his face a hand's width from Scav's, "I said move along, or I'll bloody that pretty face of yers"

Scav pictured himself sticking the fat guard in the belly with his dagger, full to the hilt. Instead, he spun around and stormed off. He had

taken but a few steps when he stopped cold and spun around once again. "Hey!" he yelled at the guards, "What about my five rools for entering the city? I'll be wanting that back!"

The guards looked at each other and laughed. "What roolnair?"

Scav turned and started to storm away but tripped and landed full on his face. He was lying on the boy-pest who had been pulling on his shirt tail. He sat up and looked at the boy who was still grinning. Over his shoulder he could hear the guards having a good laugh.

"Oryan?" asked the youth.

Thoughts of kicking the boy entered his mind again but then a better idea came to him. "Ok, oryan, can you get me into the city," he pointed to the guards who were laughing quite hysterically now, "another way?"

The boy's face brightened and he leapt to his feet. "Yes, yes, come!"

The boy scurried off between a merchant's stall and the city wall. Scav jumped up and followed as best he could. They walked about two hundred yards and turned to follow a small brackish stream away from the wall. Finally they came to a large stone culvert. The boy stopped and pointed into it's yawning mouth. "There, no one see! Quickly!"

Scav looked at the culvert shaking his head in disbelief. The smell was gut-wrenching. He cursed as he watched the boy slip down the bank of the stream and disappear into the blackness of the tunnel.

As he followed the boy into the sewage he was reminded why he hated cities.

As he emerged from the storm drain, the real Tingar loomed before him. A wall of buildings and a swelling crowd stood before him. Narrow streets seemed to break off in every direction and the motion of the mob overwhelmed his senses. Maybe a guide would not be such a bad investment. He turned to the boy, "Ok, oryan, you take me to the Blue Cod?"

The boy's face brightened, "Oh yes, Blue Cod, ol' Scar."

Scav nodded, "Yes, old Scar's place. Take me there!"

The boy moved out through the crowd and Scav found himself pushing and shoving to keep him in sight. They moved across a market place into a narrow alley which wound like a serpent through the gut of the city's interior. Finally after a half hour's walk they emerged on a waterfront. Several old, decaying piers stretched out over the water, the waves slapping at their risers and against the tide wall. The boy pointed out into the water where a small gray building stood perched above the water on crooked stilts, a dark plume of smoke rising from it's stack. Beneath it a huddle of boats and skiffs were tethered to the pilings, where a rickety looking ladder led up to the tavern.



The only means of access by land was a precarious looking rope bridge stretching from the city wall to a small walkway on the side of the tavern.

"Blue Cod!" cried the boy holding out his hand.

Scav dug into his coin pouch and produced one of his three remaining coppers and dropped it in the boy's palm.

The boy frowned and looked back up, "Two!"

Scav cursed and produced another coin. The boy grinned, "I wait for you, take you more yes?"

Scav didn't hear, he was already heading toward the rope bridge.

The bridge was in bad need of repair. In the long shadows of early dusk, it was difficult to avoid the many gaping holes in the rotting planks. As he maneuvered his way along, he couldn't help but think of all the hapless drunks, coming and going, to and from the remote tavern and taking a bad fall.

Finally he reached the small building, its only window brightly illuminated. From within he could hear the notes of a flute over the yells and drunken laughter. As he opened the door he was greeted with the smell of sweat, stale mead and stew. About a dozen patrons were scattered about the tavern, some drinking, others amusing themselves with a game of dice and bones. He saw an empty table in the corner and headed for it. As he seated himself he caught sight of a paunchy bar maid, making her way toward him.

"Evenin' sir," she said through a toothless smile, "what will it be to night?"

"Ale, please and something to eat."

"Ta eat? We've sum feesh stew in back, if that suits ya?"

"That's fine, and could you tell me, is Old Scar here?"

The toothless smile vanished. "Whut's that sir?"

"I'm looking for Old Scar. I was told he owns the place."

"I'll be gittin your drink sur!" With that she spun around and headed for the bar. Scav watched as she moved up to the large barkeep and whispered excitedly in his ear. The barkeep gave a long hard stare at Scav and picked up a cudgel from the counter and moved toward him.

Scav couldn't help but notice that the barkeep was a large man and not a pleasant looking fellow at all. His left leg was apparently crippled, for with each step he had to pause and drag his left foot into position.

The giant walked up and stood in front of Scav, slapping the cudgel in the palm of his left hand. "You lookin' for someone?"

Scav swallowed the lump in his throat and nodded, "Yes, actually I was looking for an old friend named Old Scar."

"Old friend?" snapped the barkeep, "Not likely!"

Scav was beginning to sweat, "Well not a friend actually, but I do have business with him."

"I'm Old Scar! And I don't recall your face. Now what would you be wantin'?"

Scav glanced around the bar. Quite a few eyes were watching the exchange. He looked up at Scar and whispered, "Raventhorne told me I should come here, said I would be among friends."

The barkeep's face suddenly drew pale. He looked around the bar nervously and back to Scav.

"Are you mad, mentioning that name here?" He said in a hushed rasping voice, "You were 'spected weeks ago."

Scar leaned in closer, "Took you to be dead or captured. It's not safe here."

Then in a louder voice Scar bellowed, "Well if it's a room yer wantin, I can oblige ya. Four coppers up front!"

Scar palmed him four imaginary coppers and blushing stood to follow him. They moved behind the bar where a narrow set of wooden steps led upward. As he was about to climb up, Old Scar put a hand on his shoulder and whispered, "It's a right honor to have you here lad. Get some rest and I'll send ya up some stew."

Scar climbed up the steps and found himself in an extremely small and cramped room, barely large enough for the small pallet which lie on the floor. A small candle flickered from it's nook in the wall.

Stretching out on the pallet he sighed. There was a noise from below and the large bar maid emerged, "Cre's your drink and some stew ma lord."

He took the tray from her hand and smiled, "Thank you ma'am."

She smiled, "Scar says to sit fast sir. He'll be wit ya as soon as e's able."

He nodded and began to devour the cold stew.

Scar wasn't sure how long he had slept, he only knew it was late into the night when Old Scar nudged him awake.

"What's that...Who's..." he stammered in the dim light of the candle Scar was holding over him.

"Easy lad," Scar answered, "It's only me. Everyone's left for the night, we can talk now."

Scar sat up on the pallet, striking his head on a roof beam. "Awwwwwhhhh!" he cried, "...Yes...we have to talk. I need to get with my men. Gert and the others."

Scar sat down beside him. "Not so fast lad, there's no one here. Gert never arrived! A few of the others were here for a short time but news arrived that Ravenhorpe was taken captive and they fled."

"Fled? The fools! Fled to where?"

"To Shadlet I suppose. One of them, name of Falsnore talked of catching a ship to the Ginge."

"Falsnore? The bastard!" cursed Scar, "He's ruined everything!"

"He had good reason to make haste," said Scar softly, "You were weeks overdue. Everyone is searching for you. The first guard tore this place apart twice, and no more than two weeks ago. It's no great secret who your friends are. And one of them has a very loose tongue. The rumors of your plans to head here were widespread and well known."

Scar's jaw dropped in disbelief. He lay back down on the pallet. "How could they have known? All of my men are loyal, I'm sure of that...." He lay silently for several moments and then added, "How could anyone know of our plans to meet in Tingar?"

He began to sweat, "And Ravenhorpe captured? That's not very likely! A wild rumor I'd say. Now you tell me in all of Tingar I have no followers?"

Old Scar looked at Scar for a long moment, the slightest hint of concern in his face. Then finally, "You have me sir! I'm old and lame but I haven't forgotten your father. My pledge to him extends to you. Falsnore left a message for me to

give you. He said that if you ever showed up alive, to meet them at Talert. He said they would return there eventually. Ever hear of it?"

Scav nodded, "Yes, it's a village we used to operate out of. About two hundred miles east of here, near the Galon hills."

Scar frowned, "Is it wise to return there?"

Scav nodded, "It's nothing but a nearly deserted mining village, just a few wolf hunters and old men now. No one would think to look for us there."

Scar grunted in disapproval, "Oh yes, like they didn't think to look for you in Tingar is that it? I'm telling you boy, someone has been doing some whispering in the Rader'keem's ear!"

Scav closed his eyes. Things were not going well. Even now, his journey showed no signs of ending. Scav studied Scar for a moment. "So you served under my father?"

He shrugged, "Never met the man, but yes I did serve under him. I was in the Emerald Fleet for a time and took my oath to him same as the rest."

Scav leaned up on one elbow, "Tell me what you've heard of Raventhorpe's capture."

Scar shrugged again, "Rumors mostly. They've been fanning the breeze around here for months now. It seems he was captured in Abos, betrayed by friends. Most certainly he's been executed by now. And whoever betrayed him could very well have known you were to meet the others here."

"Well, if it's true..." Scav paused, "... the others were wise to move on." He shook his head and lay back down. "Raventhorpe was the life's blood behind it all."

He looked to Scar, hesitant to ask, "I don't have any money left, but do you think you could fix me with a horse and some provisions tomorrow?"

Scar thought on it for a moment and nodded, "That I can. Of course lad." He stood and started down the stairs. As he descended he paused and turned, "Raventhorpe was a good friend and he spoke highly of you lad. I've never known him to be wrong or hasty in his judgement. He must have seen something in you, to cause such a stir. We'll, I'll be leavin you to rest. You'll need it. It'd be best for you to get a start before daybreak."

"Thank you Scar, for everything"

Scar smiled, "For what? I haven't done anything yet."

The Rader-Keem, judges of the High Circle took their seats. Their great crimson robes billowed in the afternoon breeze. All twelve of them were in high spirits on this occasion and pleased to see that a large crowd had gathered for the day's proceedings. Today a former hero of the Empire would be sentenced to die and it should prove to be a very entertaining afternoon.

Of the twelve judges, Dantor Broutfar was the proudest. Only moments before, he had been appointed the Var Rader-Keem, high judge of the entire Empire. The Emperor had appointed him personally after a heated debate in the Council. It was an extremely proud moment and a political victory over his peers. The Emperor had always reserved the office of Var Rader-keem for himself and had been reluctant to give up the powers of the title. But these were dangerous times and the Emperor wisely had decided to separate himself from the purging of his enemies that would take place in the coming months.

Dantor gazed down from his elevated position and motioned for the Captain of the court to bring in the prisoner.

A short blast of the captain's horn and across the court yard the gigantic iron gates of the provincial prison slowly began to swing open. Four guards in white enameled armor emerged, escorting a rather elderly looking man who was having great difficulty dragging his set of chains.

Dantor studied the prisoner closely as he approached the foot of his pedestal. "This old man is the traitor? The one responsible for fanning the flames of civil war?" he asked in mock astonishment.

He was genuinely surprised at the man's appearance. By all the reports and gossip he had read and heard of the man, he had never pictured him to be any older than thirty.

One guard poked the prisoner in the back with the hilt of his sword and forced him to kneel.

Dantor looked to his comrades, "He hasn't the strength to wield a sword and he would make war with the Emperor?" There was a round of laughter from the judges.

"Captain, read the charges"

The Captain withdrew a scroll from his belt and began to address the assembly, "Behold great Rader Keem, the traitor Raventhorpe of Farrell! Accused of treason and of collaborating with enemies of the Emperor. Accused of taking up arms against the.."

Dantor smiled and motioned for the Captain to be seated. "That's enough Captain. We all know the charges only too well." He turned his gaze toward the prisoner who was staring blankly at the ground. "Well, well, you appear to be bored with these proceedings Raventhorpe!"

The prisoner showed no reaction.

"The renowned Raventhorpe! Such stories I've been reading about you. Quite an instigator you have been. Once a highly regarded officer of the Bin'Parta, you have come to this. You betrayed the fellowship of the Council, your people and most importantly the Emperor! You have violated one of the oldest laws of the realm, you raised an army with the intent to overthrow the Emperor. And why? To place the likes of Soav Sagenthor on the throne? Did you really think he could bear the Emperor's chain of office? Who would accept him? The soldiers? The people? The Dandrell-Caras would not even accept him in their ranks!"

There was a round of muffled laughter from the crowd.

"You sought to place a...bastard before the people and expected them to fall in after him like sheep! Senility has betrayed your senses. Surely you know that you have already been sentenced to die. Nothing I can do here today could change that."

He leaned down and pointed his finger toward the prisoner, "But if you were to tell me some names, and where they have fled, I could make your execution swift. Why, I would even leave the manner of death to you, if your answers were pleasing."

He waited, but there was no response, the prisoner refused to even raise his eyes. "Come now old man!" he snapped, "I am being most gracious in this matter. I would even ensure the safety of your family and their properties, if you will only tell me where this infidel, Sagenthor is hiding!"

The prisoner suddenly looked up, his eyes flashing with amusement. He broke into a smile, "So!, You haven't found him after all! You have eased my mind, for I can now die knowing he has eluded you. The oracles shall yet be fulfilled."

Dantor was furious. He leapt to his feet, "You are not dead yet old man!" he yelled in rage, "And a great many days may pass before you find such comfort!" He stood silent for several moments, the crowd buzzing with excited whispers. Finally he reseated himself.

He pulled a blue scarf from the pocket of his robe and wiped the sweat from his brow. "I find it hard not to loose my temper with you," he said sighing, "Oracles? Again the oracles. What are these oracles you and your followers constantly babble about?"

One of the other judges, old Curstain jumped in, "I believe I can enlighten you on this matter my lord. They have chosen to interpret the writings of the Kaba-troth in a peculiar manner. They believe that Relnus Sagenthor's reign of four months was foretold by the black ravens who came to Lord Sarator in a dream. They told of a great King rising from the bones of ruin. They seem to believe that the young Sagenthor is that king."

Dantor exploded once again, "Relnus Sagenthor was a murderer of widows and children! His four short months of rule were among the blackest of our city! Even now you can hire a guide to point out the blood stains throughout the market places! And I have read the Kaba-troth, numerous times. No where do I recall the foretelling of such a thing!"

Raventhorpe began to speak loudly, rising to one knee. "Yes, kind Curstain, inform the Var Rader-Keem what has been written down for over six centuries!"

Broutfar almost broke into a smile. "Ah I see your game. You would tempt us into holding a debate over these oracles is that it?"

Raventhorpe shook his head, "There is no wisdom in convincing stones that they are not stones! You fool yourself into believing you have the power to prevent what must happen. The lots were cast long ago."

Curstain laughed loudly, "He is indeed an instigator and a very clever one. He tries to judge us when he is the accused."

Dantor was not amused with Curstain's remarks. He saw through his words. Curstain was hotly opposed to his appointment as Var Rader-Keem and nearly succeeded in undermining him. He was cleverly planting his seeds of discord.

He scanned the other judges for their reactions. "The traitor's words are meaningless! He is but a dead man choking on his own words!"

He looked back down toward Raventhorpe and shrugged his shoulders, "If I have allowed you the luxury of addressing this assembly it is because of amusement. You have shown the people what a fool you have become. I have been told that your father was Terac of the Galon Hills! How does one, spawned from such a glorious hero come to this?"

Raventhorpe said nothing.

Dantor continued, "It amazes me that the son of Terac would find himself in this court. Undoubtedly he would deny you as his own blood, if he were here today."

The old man struggled to his feet and spat at the high judge. "If my father were alive today he would slit the throat of your beloved Emperor like a grevan pig!"

One of the guards stepped forward and brought the hilt of his sword down on the back of the old man's skull, causing him to crash to the ground in a heap.

"He won't show so much insolence when the Tantor's axe is raised over his neck!" snapped one of the other judges.

Dantor shook his head, "No, he won't be so fortunate as that. No sharp axe and quick death

for him. We have an officer of the Bin'Parta here. Ravenhorpe once sat among the Council and dined and grew fat on the same bread he now scorns. I was hoping he would amuse us today, but he is a pathetic, revolting, senile man with a crippled mind! Yes Ravenhorpe, you shall die, but you will have some time to confess your crimes, with the persuasion of my best men!"

"My guards are loyal to the Emperor and will take much pleasure in drawing names from your foul lips! To appease the crowds who have gathered to see blood you will be flogged every day at noon, here in this court, until you have either given us the names of your allies or die. Then you will be cast from the Sulgan cliffs into the Soult river. If any man dares to pull your remains from the waters, I'll personally place his head on the city wall!"

Dantor motioned for the Captain to administer the sentence. The guards picked up Ravenhorpe and drug him to the pillory in the middle of the forum. There they bound his hands and ripped the back of his tunic to expose the flesh of his back.

The Captain pulled the leather whip from his belt and cast it's full length out over the pavement stones of the court. Looking to Dantor for an acknowledgment to begin he snapped his arm back and administered the first of many lashes.

The crack of the whip contacting Ravenhorpe's flesh echoed throughout the streets. The crowd watched in silence. Fifty two times the resounding crack of the whip was heard, and then the captain recoiled it and turned to Dantor.

"Remove the prisoner and carry out the sentence everyday at this time! And let no one tend to his wounds."

The Rader-Keem stood to their feet and Dantor motioned for the guards to remove the prisoner. They then reseated themselves and readied for the next case.

Curstain leaned over toward Dantor and whispered, "The Emperor will not be pleased to hear that Ravenhorpe still lives my lord."

Dantor gazed at the prisoner being led away. "I'm sure you will be swift to inform the Emperor of that fact." He turned to his old enemy and smiled deeply, "But you will be sadly disappointed, for the Emperor is well aware of my decision and complies!"

The crowd began to cheer wildly as Ravenhorpe was led back through the prison gates. As he passed through the iron doors he passed within a few feet of an old friend, though he failed to notice.

Gart felt as though he were paralyzed. He never figured Ravenhorpe to be treated so harshly, considering his position. Ravenhorpe had been a member of the Bin'Parta, a powerful man! Gart assumed he would be stripped of his property and titles and banished, but to be cast from the cliffs? Common cutthroats had found more compassion from the Rader Keem.

He turned and tried his best to disappear into the crowd. His primary concern was to retrieve his belongings from the inn. From there he could ride for Ventel. He turned down a narrow alleyway and made his way for the Parched Frog. He placed his left hand under the fold of his cloak and smiled. A full pouch of coin greeted his fingers. Betraying Ravenhorpe had caused him considerable loss of sleep, but it had been very profitable. Yet this was nothing compared to what Sagenthor's bounty would bring.

He had not always been such a treacherous character. No, once he had believed in the young Sagenthor. If any man deserved to be Emperor it was probably Scav. Had not his father, Relnus Sagenthor been Emperor? True it was a short reign with a tragic climax, but Scav's father was well remembered and well thought of. Assassins had cut him down before his image could tarnish in the

people's eyes. And for all the dedication of the new Emperor to chip away at that image, he had failed.

Gart had joined up with Scav in hopes of being rewarded, once the lad was in power. Some property perhaps or better yet a title and chain of office would be his. But then he had seen something in Scav that snuffed out those hopes. Yes it was one night in particular. They had stopped at a quiet village inn for a meal and a few drinks. A group of wolf hunters, real vermin, had taken a dislike for Scav. Scav had become very fearful of the situation and ended up buying his way out of a fight with several gold pieces and an admission of his mother's sleeping habits.

Gart knew at that moment that such a man could never be Emperor. He didn't know much about Emperors but he knew the gods had a hand in such matters and would never allow a coward to reign over the Ragean Empire. He only wished he had stuck with his instincts and washed his hands of the matter right then and there. No, he was too greedy. It wasn't until they attacked the Emperor's residence and were quickly scattered by the imperial guard that he realized the truth.

Turning in Raventhorpe was an opportunity he couldn't let slip away. Besides clearing himself of various charges, he had filled his purse and helped the Empire at the same time. As for sleep, he was quite sure it would find him again. He was convinced he would sleep even sounder with Scav's bounty in his pouch.

First, he had to hurry to Ventel and keep a very important appointment with the others before they left to meet Scav in Tingar. Once re-joined with Scav, he would wait for the right opportunity and deliver them all into the hands of the provincial governor.

Day 176 Year 108

Scav awoke with a start. A very loud argument had ensued downstairs and from the sounds of it, someone was being thrown about the room. He could see cracks of light breaking through numerous holes in the wall and ceiling, telling him it was early morning. Drawing his dagger he moved over to the stairs and slowly descended.

What he saw caught him quite by surprise. The large bar maid had Old Scar pinned in a corner and was thrashing him about the head and neck with what appeared to be a large herring.

"Stop it Damn it!" Scar was crying, "Damn you to Simpus woman!"

Apparently Scar's words held little import to the woman for she only intensified her thrashing. "Ya Bastard, You've been sniffin' round the Lower Quarter again! Haint ya?"

Scav sat down on the steps and replaced his dagger. The scene proved to be very amusing.

Scar pushed the bar maid back and hobbled away from her. He was carrying a small satchel and a waterskin. "Now woman, I'm gonna split yer skull if you don't let me be!"

He glanced up and caught sight of Scav. He immediately turned a deep shade of red. "Oh, mornin' Lad" He stammered, "Glad to see you're up. I had some trouble gettin' the horse, so I borrowed one for you."

He handed the satchel and waterskin to Scav and sat down beside him on a large keg of salted fish. "The woman caught me coming in this morning and figured I was out whorin' last night."

He laughed and slapped Scav on the back, "She's got it in her head that me and her is betrothed or something. Hell, she came in the tavern one night

'bout seven years back. I aint been able to get rid of her since."

Scav chuckled. He had not found a reason to laugh for many weeks now. He liked Scar. The old man appeared to be in his late fifties and there was no mistaking where he earned his name. His arms and neck were a web of scars and discolored tissue. It was obvious he had a few stories to tell.

Scar pointed to the satchel, "I put twenty roots in there for ya. You'll find a blanket, some flint and some of my alusian-root stew. I wish it were more."

Scav smiled and rose to his feet, "It's plenty. I'll never forget this Scar. If I'm ever in a position to...."

Scar shook his head, "No need for any of that. Hell, if I had me two good legs I'd be coming with you lad."

Scav slung the satchel and waterskin over his shoulder and headed for the door.

"You'll find your horse tied off at the other side of the bridge. Leave the city by Keefer's Gate. The old guard there will look the other way for a few Roots."

"You say you borrowed this animal?" asked Scav as he opened the door, "Should I be worried about meeting the owner?"

"A man who tried to bounce the Emperor down Yistain Hill is asking me that?"

Scar smiled and stepped out into the morning air.

Next Month:
Part II Wolves and Old Men





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UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

By B.A. Felton

Welcome to Spotlight! In this column I have been tasked to shed some light on various game companies and services, primarily the little guys who don't normally get a lot of exposure.

You've seen them, those little ads in the role-playing magazines advertising various products and services. Some of those ads have run for years. Others seem to be playing a game of musical chairs, appearing one month and then perhaps several months later, or perhaps never again. If you've been leery of risking your dollars without fully knowing what you're getting in return, I am here to help. If you have a company or game service you would like me to examine, drop me a note.

This month's column features Infinite Images. With the help of Infinite Images, you can immortalize your favorite character in an original piece of art.

After you send an SASE to the company you will receive your character description sheets and a brochure listing your options and prices.

You can have your character presented in a variety of ways:

Action/Adventure

This is a rendering, 14x17 inches, in which you have your choice of black and white for \$28.99, or color for \$34.99. I think the prices are extremely reasonable especially considering the detail of the drawings I received. When you consider that your artwork is a one of a kind, and drawn to your specifications I think you will agree that the prices are fair.

You are not limited to a stiff pose reminiscent of dad's polaroid snapshots. Did your character fight that one battle that highlighted his or her career? Here's a chance to capture that moment.

The Action/Adventure option allows you to have your two characters, (a primary and secondary character) fighting against two foes. The artworks include a background which of course you describe on your description sheet.

I didn't have the opportunity to examine any color artwork from Infinite Images, but if the black and white renderings are any indication, they should be exceptional.

Single Character

Another option is the Single Character portrait. These are 8.5x11 inches and feature one character in a 'non-action' pose. A black and white rendering runs \$16.99 and the color runs \$22.99. Again, the samples I received were exceptional.

People, Places and Things

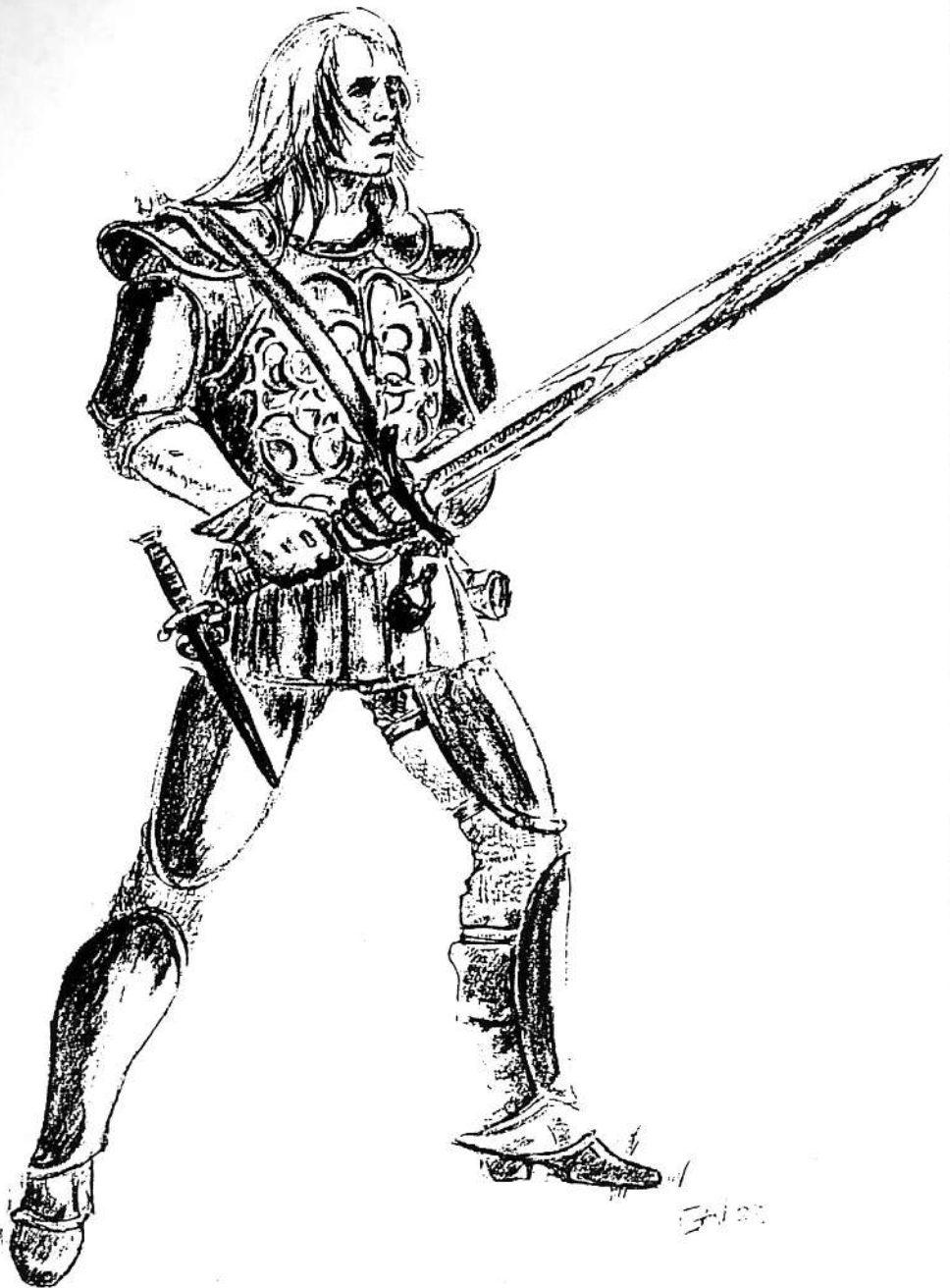
These are a series of fantasy scenes and characters offered in packages of five. You can pick any five choices from a list of 10, 8.5x11 inch B&W drawings. These are suitable for framing and cover a variety of topics such as: Ship in Dock, Elf Ranger, Dwarf Smith/Shop, Barracks etc. A clever DM could integrate the scenes into an adventure and show the drawings when they are encountered.

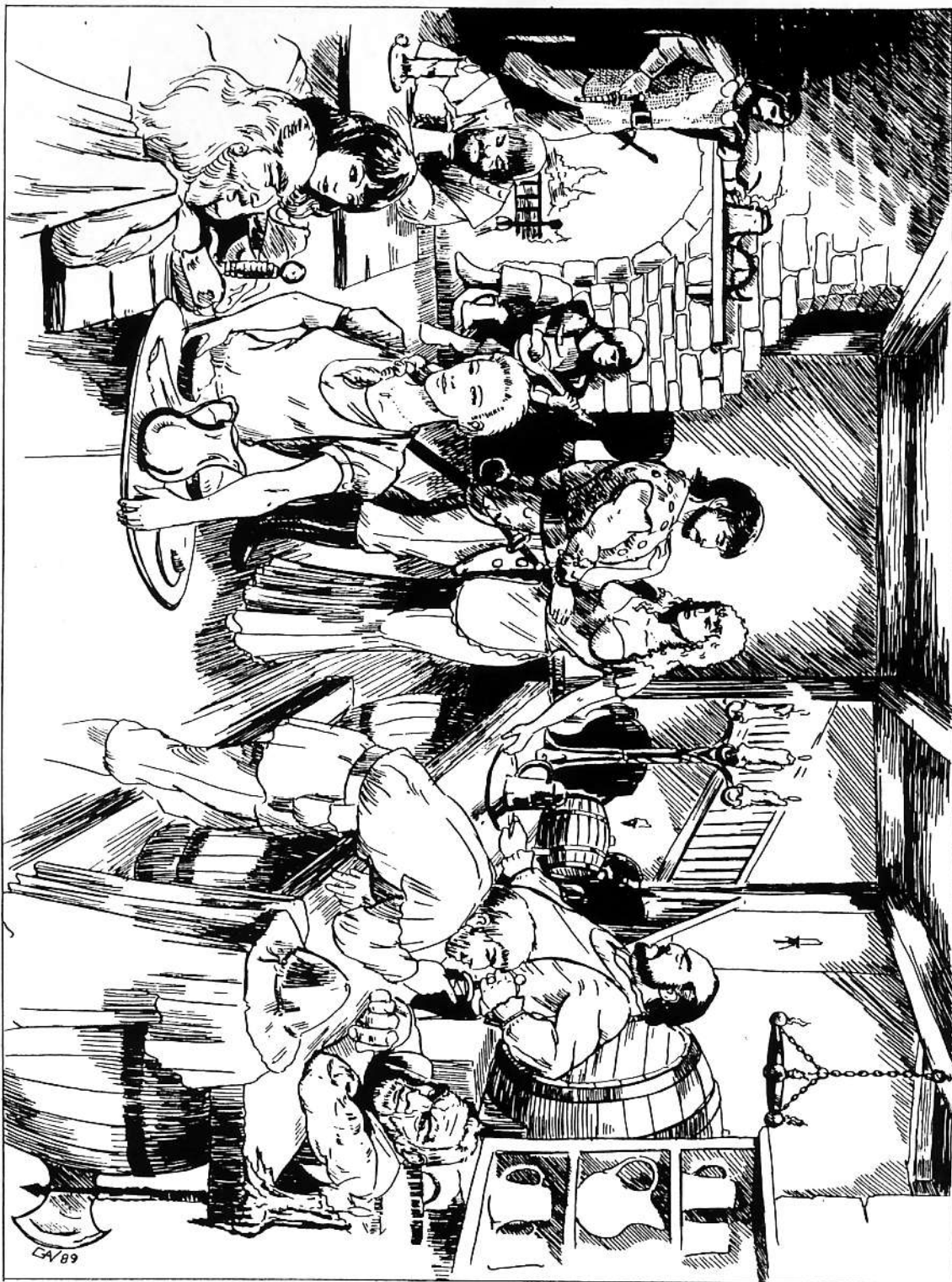
Infinite Images also sells stationary in a variety of styles. Future plans include the illustration of T-shirts, Posters, and calendars with fantasy/sci-fi themes.

George A. Urbanic is the sole artist at the present time and impressed the staff of Shadis so much we are trying to persuade him to produce a future Shadis cover.

In my humble opinion Infinite Images provides an excellent service to the hobby and at fairly decent prices. Of course, a picture is worth a thousand words so we've decided to run a few samples of Mr. Urbanic's work, with his kind permission.

You can write to Infinite Images, PO Box 528, New Alexandria, PA 15670 to receive a brochure and character Description sheets. Enclose a large SASE.







Greetings Fair Listeners! Welcome to the Parched Frog. I am Nica, lowly bard from Rigid Crest. I'm pleased that you could join us. On cold, wintry nights, a few of us sit here in front of a roaring fire and entertain ourselves. Great tales are told, and draughts of ale are quaffed. Come, join us and warm yourselves. And don't forget to leave a few coppers in the hat on the way out.

Tonight, we hear a legend of special interest to hunters. Sit and enjoy.

THE LEGEND OF THE GREAT MOSS BEAR OF SARAKA LAKE

Stories have been told throughout the land of a great moss bear living in the woods surrounding Saraka Lake. The legends first gained substance when a young Sarakan hunter claimed he spotted the bear drinking from the lake.

Kree, the young sarlangan, told of how he was amazed at the size of the creature. According to the boy, while on all fours, the bear was the size of a Sarakan home. These are a good eight feet tall.

He also described the bear as being covered with moss, which hung down and swayed when he moved.

Kree, of the family of Grolent, was very frightened of the animal, but hid and watched him at length, unable to keep his eyes from gazing on the amazing creature.

Legend has it that after Kree sighted the beast, he continued hunting. His aim was flawless and he killed each prey with just one arrow.

Kree's tale spread throughout the village, and because the village had visitors from different

lands, his story became known throughout most of the Empire.

No one had seen such a bear anywhere else but in the Sarakan forest, and soon many were calling Kree's story a fantasy, claiming that what he had seen was probably a bush or tree of some sort. However, those in his village could not deny that the game he brought back from that day's hunt was far more abundant than he had ever caught in one day. In fact, it was more than he had ever caught in an entire week. He was a skilled hunter, but was young and lacked the experience to make so great a kill on his own merits.

Soon, hunters flocked to the Saraka woods near the lake. Some hoped to sight the bear and gain luck on their hunt. But others planned to slay the mythic creature. Those reasoned that such a kill would be a great feat, while perhaps the coat would bring them continued good hunting.

Those that went seeking the legend were, for the most part, disappointed. There were a few who claimed to have seen it and supported Kree's story. However, those going after the bear for evil purposes were surprised. Most found no trace or sight of the beast. Those who saw and drew weapons against it were said to have ended up fighting against themselves. The offender's own weapon would turn against him.

Soon, the villagers of Saraka began worshipping the bear. They began ritual hunts and left the first part of every kill on a great stump near the lake hoping to gain favor with their new god.

And, as ages have passed, the story of the moss bear continues to mystify the curious. Sightings have tapered off, but every now and then, a hunter will come back from those woods with game a' plenty and claim it was all due to the luck of the great moss bear.

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FROM THE SCROLLS OF GREYTAR

By Jolly R. Blackburn



Greytar only recently agreed to do a monthly column for Shadis Magazine. He has asked only free reign and editorial immunity, along with a bottle of Orluian Mead for his services.

For the benefit of those unfamiliar with the elderly sage, Greytar served for twenty-six years as the Imperial Chief of Scribes for the Emperor Sageem. In addition to those duties, he served as the Master of Antiquaries for the Soult Tetian Library.

Being personally appointed to translate the histories of Alderac into one set of books, Greytar is the foremost authority on Alderac history.

Each month he will illuminate, entertain and amuse with his many accounts of Alderac.

The Editor

Greetings young students,

Attempting to delve into the vast volumes of Alderac history is very much like starting a long journey on foot. The immense task ahead is both exciting and intimidating.

My job here will be not to make you scholars of antiquities but to assist you in beginning your journey.

I tend to ramble and drift from subject to subject, but never mind. We will reach our

destination all the same, so why not enjoy the trip?

I thought I would start my lesson discussing this Sagenthor business. It's an interesting bit of history and has quite a lot to do with the state of things in Alderac at the present moment.

In the 93 TR, Relnus Sagenthor who served brilliantly as the Patrell of the Guard, (Commander of the Legions) did a most unorthodox thing.

With the aid of his soldiers, he captured the Imperial treasury and executed the Emperor, Arden'Kangeem IV. Proclaiming himself the new Emperor he executed over 400 loyalists to the old Emperor and set his own friends and allies in critical positions about the Empire.

Various Patrell Commanders around the Empire began to march on the capital city. It has never been clear if these commanders were set on liberating the Empire from the clutches of Sagenthor or throwing in with him in order to stake a claim on the spoils. At any rate, Relnus attempted to buy them off by promising to give them various provinces for their own domains.

But alas, Relnus overlooked enemies within his own ranks and was taken prisoner, tried and executed. His reign lasted just over four months.

But what a grand four months they were. At least in the eyes of the citizens of Soult Tet.

Reinus in his short time in command made sweeping gestures toward the citizens. Free lands were given away. The city graineries were emptied to feed the poor. Public Baths were made available to all classes. Certainly these reforms were aimed at winning the people over and strengthen his position. For at the same time, mass executions were carried out against political enemies, wealthy land owners, etc.

When Reinus was put to death he immediately became the embodiment of 'sainthood' to the people, much to the frustration of the new Emperor who had taken control of the Empire after two years of rule by council.

In 107 TR. Scav Sagenthor, under the guidance of Ravenhorpe, attempted to seize control of the Imperial Residence and kill the Emperor Sageem. The ill-conceived plot quickly smothered and the would-be usurper was forced into hiding.

But Scav will appear on the pages of history again, and for an altogether different reason.

I noticed there has been quite a few raised eye-brows over the mention of various words and terms from my native Alderac. So I've started a glossary to help ease the confusion. It's not complete but it's a start.

GLOSSARY

Abgreer: A derogatory Sarlangan term for humans. The root 'ab' is the same as the Sarlangan word for cattle. Sarlangan despise the city dwellings of humans.

Abos: The provincial capital of Abos Fretera. This large city of 128,000 citizens lies on the Soult river. It is the center of several trade routes and enjoys a very prosperous economy.

Currency: The currency of the Ragean Empire is known far and wide. The Roolnair is a basic silver piece. The Shart is a copper piece. The Kiver, or

Serti'Renius is a 5 gold-piece coin.

Curstain, Velnar: (b. 48 TR. - ?) Velnar Curstain is one of twelve Rader-keem, (High Judges). A brilliant military leader, Curstain worked his way up through the legions and into politics. His aggressive ambitions for the position of Var Rader-Keem has made him many enemies.

Fretera: The Ragean Empire's provinces. Freteras are largely self-governing

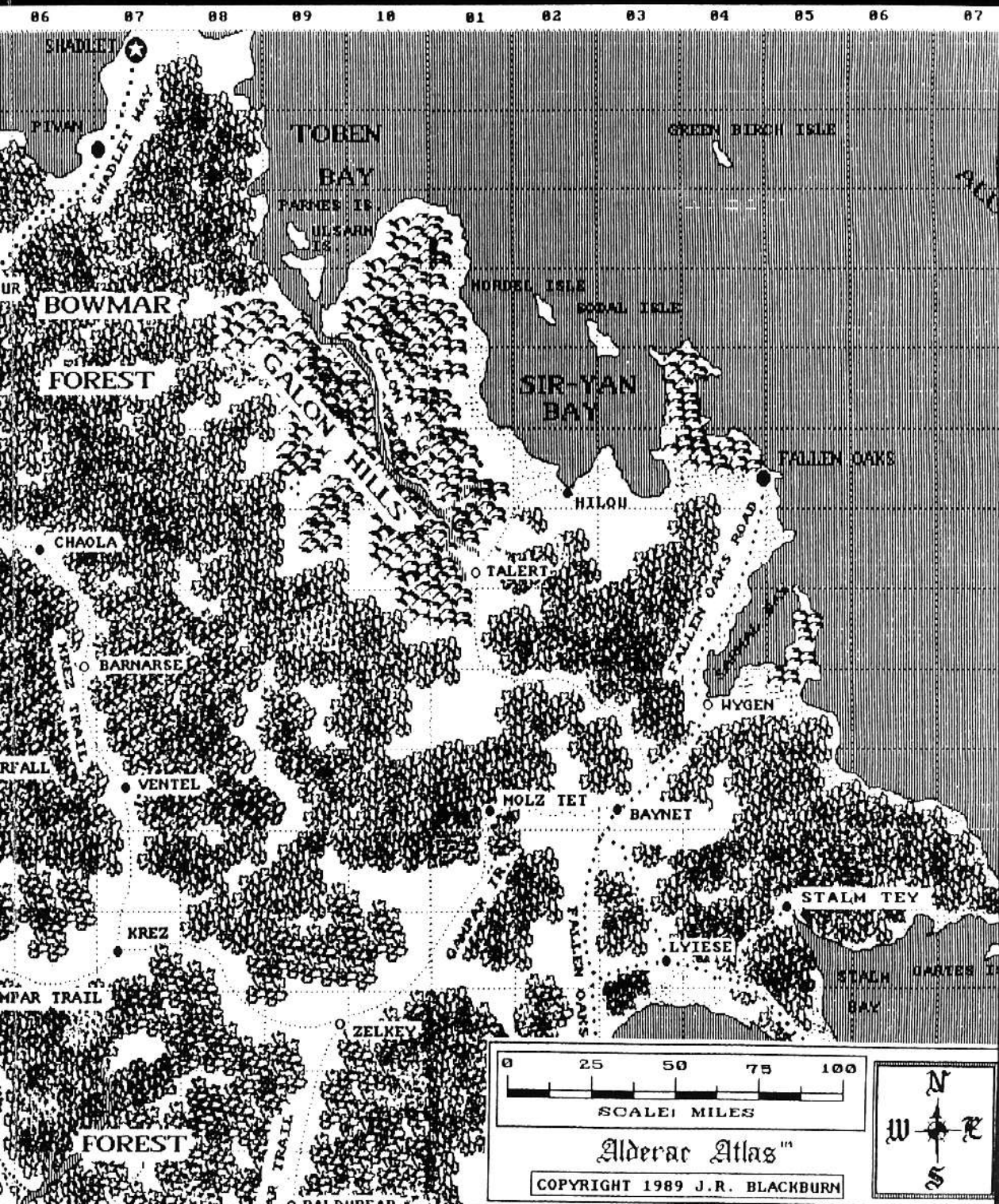
Ginge: The Ginge are a grevan-speaking people who inhabit the wild coastlands north of the Ragean Empire. The 'Ginge Pirates' have been a serious problem to imperial shipping and trade for years. The Ginge territories are a haven for fugitives from Imperial justice.

Grongarfest: A festival of the Benyanan faith. Celebrates the victory of Benyar over the god Ygor. Grongarfest is a time of festive parties and rejoicing.

Kaba-Troth: The Kaba-troth is an ancient tome of prophecy and history. Numerous faiths hold it as a sacred work. Among other things, it deals with the origins of the gods, man and the universe. It is a mystical work and it is commonly believed that only those 'touched' by the gods can understand it's meaning.

Rang Taw: Rang Taw is an extremely charismatic leader of the grevan-speaking barbarians. He has succeeded in forming a bond among the fragmented tribes of the Star'Grewa. His newly formed league is fastly becoming a threat to the northern realms of the Empire.

Rader'Keem: (Judge of the High Circle) Twelve men hold this office with one being the Var Rader'Keem. They are directly appointed by the Emperor and are normally chosen from the ranks of the Vardleem. They have the highest authority over the criminally accused in the Empire.





pushing your Luck!

New games of chance for your
Fantasy Role-Playing Campaigns

PART ONE

By Jolly R. Blackburn

Hothar knew he was being had. No one, not even a Grevan, was that lucky at playing Fourbaa. Yet he had lost too much silver, to walk away from the table now. He watched the large barbarian with an unblinking eye as he took the dice and rolled them.

All eyes in the tavern were transfixed on the game. As the dice tumbled across the table and came to rest before the barbarian, there was a wild round of cheers. Hothar began to breathe again and a broad smile stretched across his yellow teeth.

"Let's see ya beat that! Ya sciver!" he screamed, his large belly shaking with laughter.

The barbarian gazed at the dice for several moments in silence. Hothar reached across the table and began to collect his winnings. In a rage, the barbarian flipped the table. Coins, dice and tokens flew into the air.

Games of chance are as ancient as money itself. They can be found in almost any culture both ancient and modern. While there is no limit to the degrees of variation and complexity among these games, they do have one common trait. They are designed to empty the pockets of the losers and fill those of the fortunate winners.

Some of my fondest memories of past role-playing sessions have centered around some form of these games. Any able-bodied adventurer who hates a sword and occasionally frequents the taverns is quick to jump into such games should he stumble upon them. Some fancy themselves blessed by the gods who guard the luck of the die, while others choose to rely on their own stealth and cunning to swing fortune their way. In this series, which will include games by other authors in future issues, I will be discussing a wide range of games popular in the lands of Aldaraa. Of course these games will be presented in a generic-format so that they can be placed in any fantasy milieu.

To begin the series, we will start with the basics. These are the games involving dice and/or cards that are played in most every tavern or inn, on any given night.

KEEPS

Keeps is an extremely popular game and has a long history. Graytar in his book, *The Forever*

Sage, wrote of Forcaran troops playing Keeps to pass the time during the siege of Malaf.

The game has been passed down to the current age with the help of the Ragean Empire's wide-spread legions, who have introduced it throughout the empire and it's provinces. Thousands of local variations and house-rules have arisen.

There are two major versions of this game and both share equal popularity. This issue will be concerned only with one version.

Fourbaa (Also known as 'Bloody Nose')

Fourbaa is played among any number of players, though it is normally played by two players at a time with the winner taking on any new challengers. This is a very rough game and it's nickname, 'bloody nose' attests to it's reputation of causing barroom brawls as the result of a contested die roll.

Components: In order to play Fourbaa you will need the following items:

- Six coins per player. Or an amount agreed upon by all players. These are gaming pieces and are not used for gambling. Some taverns provide tokens for this purpose. (Poker Chips, or real currency should suffice.)

- A dagger. This is referred to as the *Strandum*. A single-edged dagger is preferred. It is used to indicate who is the lead player during a round. (For role-playing purposes, a pencil or pen laying on the table will serve the same purpose.)

- Two 6-sided dice per player. Some variations of Keeps use knuckle bones.

- A cup or mug with one 6-sided die inside. The cup and die are referred to as the *Gantaur*. (The 'Snake'). The purpose of the cup is to roll the *Gantaur* and conceal the resulting die roll.

SETUP: To setup the playing area, the dagger is embedded in the table with it's sharp or leading edge facing the lead player.

The leading edge is referred to as the *'Strandum'* and the leading player is referred to as the *Strandum*.

PLAY:

1. The *Strandum* places some item of value on the table as his stake. This may be money, a prized weapon, armor or any reasonable item of worth.

2. The other players now bid for the opportunity to play Keeps for the item(s). Starting with the player to the *Strandum's* left, each player announces his bid by offering money or an item(s).

3. The **Strandaur** listens to each bid and selects the bid of his choice. If none of the bids are acceptable or if no bids are offered, the **Strandaur** either:

- 1 Begins another round of bidding, or
- 2 Adds another item to his stake and starts the bidding again.

Normally the **Strandaur** plays against one player at a time, the person's whose bid he has accepted. However, it is common for the **Strandaur** to play against several players at a time.

4. The competing players sit on opposite sides of the table, facing one another. Each player places his six coins or tokens before him. This pile becomes his **Bandara** or 'pouch'. The **Bandara** is always kept on the table immediately before the player. The **Bandara** must remain in full view for the duration of the game.

5. Each player transfers one to six coins from his **Bandara** to another pile, next to the **Straundum**, (**Dagger**) in the center of the table. This pile is the **Vordur** or 'the risk'.

6. The **Strandaur** now shakes the **Gantaur**, (The cup containing one die) and places the cup upside down on the table without looking at, or revealing the resulting die roll.

7. Each player now has the option to:

1. Roll two dice and keep those results or;
2. Roll two dice and add the unknown results of the **Gantaur** to that roll.

Each player must announce his intent before rolling the dice. The **Strandaur** may choose his option before or after the other player(s).

8. If a player's roll is 12 or greater then he has busted, or in game terms been 'bitten' by the serpent. A player who busts, automatically loses the round unless all other players bust.

9. The player with the highest dice roll without busting is the winner. If two or more players tie, then the player who committed the most dice wins. (i.e. included the **Gantaur** in his roll.) In a two-player game, if both players tie and have rolled the same number of dice, then the round is a draw and another round begins.

If more than two players are playing, and two or more players tie then only those players pick new options and reroll the dice among themselves. The highest total without busting wins the round.

10. The losing player(s) must drink a number of 'lorbens' (the equivalent of 4 fluid ounces) of strong drink. The number of lorbens each player is required

to drink is equal to the the total of the number of coins in his **Vordur** and in the **Vordur** of the winner of the round. Thus, if a player lost the round and he had risked 5 coins in his **Vordur**, and the winner of the round risked 6 coins, that player would have to drink 11 lorbens of alcohol.

11. If the losing player(s) successfully drinks all the lorbens he is required to drink and remains conscious, then he remains in the game and goes on to the next round. If the player passes out, vomits, or is unable to drink all the lorbens, then he forfeits the game. If more than one player remains, after all losers have drunk their lorbens, then another round begins. If, however, one player remains at the table, that player wins the pot and the game ends.

12. A common variation of this game makes it mandatory for losers of a round to add another item of value to the pot before the next round begins.

This is how the 'real' game of **Fourbaa** is played and I have described it as such. For role-playing purposes, the drinking aspects of the game are 'simulated' and no alcohol is involved. Let me state my disclaimer at this point that I am not advising 'real-life' play-testing of this game. Nor am I advocating the use of alcohol. (At least not intentionally!)

For role-playing purposes all drinking is simulated with the roll of dice using the following procedure;

The losing player(s) must save vs. 2x his constitution to remain conscious and continue the game. We'll call this number the **Intoxication Factor**. (IF)

The **Intoxication Factor** is modified as follows;

Per lorben drunk in that round:	-1
Per previous round lost:	-1
Player began game intoxicated:	-1
Racial modifiers:	varies

* A natural 1 is always successful, regardless of modifiers. Likewise, a natural 20 always fails.

I have left racial modifiers up to the DM. For example, some might argue that a dwarf could handle his drink better than his human counterpart.

Let's run through an example of a round of **Fourbaa** to clarify the rules using **Hothar** and the **Barbarian**.

1. Since the barbarian was the first to suggest playing keeps he becomes the **Strandaur**. He unsheaths his dagger and imbeds it in the table with

the leading edge facing himself.

He takes a fine wolf's pelt from his satchel and throws it across the table, challenging the patrons of the tavern to play keeps for it.

2. Hothar who fancies the wolf's pelt and who feels lucky, decides to get in on the game. Three other men in the tavern also express an interest to play and they gather around the table.

3. The bidding begins. One man offers a silver necklace against the pelt. The Barbarian scoffs and turns to the next man.

The next man offers a pair of doe-skin boots. The Barbarian looks them over and declines.

The next man smiles and lays an engraved short sword on the table. The barbarian arches an eyebrow at this one. He accepts the bid, but he wishes to see what Hothar has to offer as well.

Hothar pulls out a throwing-axe with a beautiful inlaid handle. The barbarian howls in delight and accepts his bid as well.

4. The losing bidders decide to place some side bets. They favor the barbarian who looks like he could drink a giant's share. The three men sit down at the table. They arrange their Bandars and Vordurs in their respective places and prepare to play. They all transfer a secret number of coins from their Bandars to their Vordurs. (stop snickering)

5. The barbarian picks up the Gantaur and rattles the die. He then flips the cup and places it upside down on the table, concealing the resulting die roll. The barbarian, being the Strandaun, demands that Hothar and the other player roll first.

6. Hothar decides to roll only two dice. He rolls and comes up with a six and four totaling ten points.

7. The other player who has decided to add the Gantaur to his roll, rolls his two dice. He rolls a six and three totaling nine. The Gantaur die cannot be revealed until all players have rolled, thus he must wait for the barbarian to roll his dice.

8. The barbarian decides to add the Gantaur to his roll as well and rolls his two dice. He rolls a three and a four totaling seven. With shaking fingers he reveals the Gantaur which is a four. The barbarian has a total of 11. $(3+4+4=11)$. The other player can now add the Gantaur to his roll and now has a 13. $(6+3+4=13)$ He has busted and automatically loses the round. The barbarian's score of 11 beats Hothar's 10 so Hothar has also lost the round.

9. Hothar's Vordur is five coins. The other losing player reveals three coins in his. Laughing, the Barbarian boasts that he has risked all six coins. That means that Hothar must drink 11 torbens of Ale and the other player must drink nine torbens.

10. Hothar's constitution is 10 so his Intoxication Factor is 20. This is modified by -11, one for each torben drunk. Thus Hothar must roll a 9 or less on 1d20. Keep in mind that a roll of natural 1 will always save. Hothar rolls a 10 and passes out. He wakes up several hours later to find someone has used his helmet for a spittoon.

11. The other player was somewhat intoxicated when he entered the game and must modify his IF by an additional -1 for a total of -10. His constitution is 12 for an IF of 24. A 14 or less will save. He rolls an 18 and slides under the table.

12. The barbarian collects his winnings. Because he hasn't had to drink at all, he offers to play another game of keeps.

FOURBAD AND ROLE-PLAYING

A profitable scam is run by many Tavern owners involving Keeps. They pretend to be strangers to the players involved but actually are giving their 'partner' in the game watered down torbens, thus ensuring his victory. When the other players pass out, the Tavern owner will have them moved to a back room, (along with their belongings) so they can 'sleep it off'. Later the barkeep and his partner strip the drunken sods of their belongings and dump the victims along a road outside of town. If the victim is lucky, he lives to learn from the experience.

I also like to use Keeps as an introduction when starting new campaigns. Players who haven't adventured together quickly become involved and the likelihood of a good fight breaking out helps work the rust out of things. In addition an interesting NPC can challenge the players to a game of Keeps and offer 'a map to wonderful riches'.

If the players win the map they can set off on their new adventure. If they lose, they may decide to settle the score, and thus a new avenue of adventure is opened.

Alternate games of chance allow Bards, Thieves and other characters to utilize some of their stealth skills and gaming proficiencies. Keeps is extremely flexible and easy to modify. Let me know if you come up with any interesting modifications.

Well, that's it for this issue. Next issue we will look at some card games and the other version of Keeps.

Barbara Blackburn
Presents

SHADIS

INTERVIEWS

Alfred and Jackie lay silent and motionless as they waited. Their investigations had led them here to a lonely hilltop in Jennings Vermont.

A debased ritual was planned for this night. Beneath the cloudless evening sky, a repugnant being was to be summoned and they were going to stop it.

They had buried sticks of dynamite beneath the altar. When the diabolical fire was lit, cultists and monster would be blasted into molten nothingness.

Soon, the inhuman band of worshippers approached. The fires were lit as a writhing sacrifice struggled for freedom.

As planned, the fiery blast destroyed the altar and its beastly users. Yet, from the inferno something enormous arose.

Alfred buried his head in his hands and refused to look. But Jackie, who had been taking photographs saw the profane presence in full-view. The sight was too much. Screaming, the woman ran through the thick woods, and kept running.

She was found days later, clutching a tree and sobbing. Her mind was fractured and would never be the same.

If that sounded like a horror novel, it's not. It's part of a scenario from a very popular and unique role-playing game called "Call of Cthulhu."

It's creator, Sandy Petersen, set the game in the worlds of H.P. Lovecraft, a horror-story writer who created the Cthulhu Mythos. The hideous creatures he created were pure evil, and awesomely powerful.

Anyone who has played the game, whether they've read Lovecraft or not, can attest to its creepy atmosphere.

Mr. Petersen allowed Shadis magazine to ask him about his creation. Here is that interview:

Q. What made you decide to invent a role-playing game based on the works of H.P. Lovecraft?

A. Well, I've been an H.P. Lovecraft fan ever since I was about ten years old and I got into role-playing gaming in the early seventies. At that time, I became a big fan of a game called "Runequest." I wrote to the company president, I actually phoned him as well a couple of times and we became regular correspondents.

I told him that I was interested in doing a Lovecraft variation on the Runequest game which would have been based on Lovecraft's "Dream Lands". It would have been more of a sword and sorcery type thing.

He wrote back and said that he had already gotten an agreement to do a Lovecraft game based in modern times. He offered me the job of writing it for him, which I was enthused about doing.

On my own, I had already invented sort of a modern horror/gothic role-playing game. It was quite rudimentary compared to "Call of Cthulhu".

But it was kind of natural for me to put together horror and Lovecraft which I'd been reading for 15 or 20 years. Add that to role-playing which I'd been enjoying for three or four years at the time. It kind of fell into place. It was almost like it wasn't an original idea to come up with. After we had the idea, that was the difficult part.

Q. How long did it take from your first inspiration until the work was complete?

A. Almost exactly a year. That's pretty much the norm, it's a pretty common time for role-playing games to take.

Q. How well did you think the public would receive such an unusual game?

A. I wasn't sure. I thought it was fun. Everyone I played it with thought it was fun but we were all horror fans. So I thought that it would probably be popular among a small, elite group of guys. And I was surprised when it turned out to be much more popular than that. I know people for instance, who dislike Lovecraft's writings but like the game. And everyone I know who likes Lovecraft and likes to role-play, likes the game, so it has gotten all the cult guys that I hoped it would reach and it has an expanded audience, which frankly surprised me. The game is now available in a number of different languages, in Japanese, German, Spanish, and French. I suppose Lovecraft's available in most of those languages but I have no idea how widely read he is. I don't imagine for instance that Lovecraft is very easy to get in Japanese or Spanish.

Q. Had you had any experience designing games before this?

A. I had played games and messed around with it ever since I was 12 or 13 but I hadn't ever tried to design an entire game, especially a role-playing

game from scratch. I'd done a few things. I'd done one supplement to a game before Cthulhu and a couple of articles. I'd messed around with board games but it was really my first plunge into trying to do an entire game by myself. It was the baptism of fire so to speak.

Q. Can you explain how you went about turning your idea into an actual product?

A. I looked at other games and said, ok, the first thing we need to do is have the player generate a character. I wanted to start from there and kind of flow naturally into the game. So the first thing I had to do was sit down and think of an outline, more or less, of what had to go in. And I said, alright, we need the basic stuff. We've gotta have generating characters, and we've gotta have advice to the game master too. And then, after putting out the basic stuff, hashing out, you know, what creatures I'd want to have in it and what kind of magical books and things like that. Then after getting all of the features that I wanted to have go in the game, I then sat there and said ok, now how do I give this thing the feel of a horror game instead of one of eighteen other billion games that are out there? I was stuck for a long time. I'd write the game for a couple of months, then I'd sit and for a month I'd say, I don't want to solve this problem. How do I have it seem like a horror game? How do I make guys run away from monsters instead of bravely facing them like they do in every other game? Then I came up with the sanity idea at that point which has worked out very well. It makes guys cover their eyes when monsters come. Sanity really became the heart to the game. I sort of based the game on that theme and that gave it a feel that no other game has managed...I mean other games have other feels which are good for them, but I think its a standout among horror games because of that feature.

Q. What kind of awards did Cthulhu receive?

A. At the time it was released, there were three awards given in the U.S. for role-playing games. It won all three in that year. There was the Game

Designers' Guild Select Award, which is no longer given out. They used to give them to the top five games. A group called the Game Designers' Guild, which is now defunct, would pick the five best games of the year. We won one of those. We won the Strategists Club award which is an award given by TSR or a group they set up. I was kind of proud of winning that one for most creative role-playing game of the year. Then there was the H.G. Wells award, they give it out at the Origins convention for best role-playing game of the year and we also won that. Since that time it has gone on to win other awards. The supplements have won awards. In England they have Games Day awards for best role-playing games awarded by the players and it's won that a couple of times. I was gratified by that. And it's won other awards at conventions.

Q. How did you feel about winning awards?

A. I don't want to sound like I'm this egotistical guy with this huge swollen head, but I felt good. It's as good or better even, to see the game get published in other languages. It's kind of neat to see something that I made almost eight years now, still around. Most role-playing games, as you know die before their eighth birthday and "Call of Cthulhu" hasn't shown any signs of dying yet.

Q. How popular is it?

A. There's like four editions in America, two British editions, the French edition, the German, Spanish, and the Japanese edition. I notice that it's impact is bigger than its numbers. For instance, obviously D&D has sold a great deal more. It's probably sold as many copies as every other RPG put together or more. But, there are some role-playing games that are bought and they sit on the shelf and they're more or less collected. For example, the Dragonquest game. I own a copy of Dragonquest, most guys I know own a copy. No one ever plays it, they just have it. It's not a game so much as a thing you have, a game ideas thing. But with "Call of Cthulhu", a very high percentage of

guys who own Cthulhu are out there playing it. I think it's percentage of players is one of the highest in the world.

Q. Why do you think the game has had such a following?

A. It's different obviously. But as much as I like Lovecraft, I don't think it's entirely based upon him, because a lot of guys play the game who have never heard of Lovecraft. I mean Lovecraft is very hard to find. The only reason I'd ever heard of him is because my dad had this book which was published in World War II and it was a collection of Lovecraft stories printed for the boys overseas. Soldiers were supposed to be reading this. But I had this book, and it was the only copy of Lovecraft I knew of anywhere from the time I was ten 'til I was 16 or 17. And then when I was at that age, I got a library card for the liberal college library which is very large, has a billion books or something. And it had the old books by Arkham House, like "The Outsider and Others." They didn't know they were valuable so they had them out on the regular bookshelves. Since then, they've moved them to the valuable books collection so you can't get to them. But I had to go to the library to find these and it was just a nightmare to find Lovecraft. I think because of that, the game has managed to do one of my goals, which is to expose Lovecraft to more people.

But I think I've lost track of what your original question was, which is why the game appeals to a lot of people. I think it appeals to a lot of people because first off, it's a game in which the hero's aren't stereotypical, huge, macho guys with swords. I've noticed that with gamers of "Call of Cthulhu", there's a higher percentage of women, for instance, than there is in Dungeons and Dragons or other games like that. I think that's partly because with most role-playing games, the solution to solving most problems is violence. In "Call of Cthulhu", that's very much not the case. You can do it, but even in a very violent "Call of

Cthulhu" game, most of your gaming session is not spent fighting things. It's spent doing other stuff, role-playing, talking to other players, talking to the game master, setting things up, pondering possibilities, being scared, and I think that is part of the draw, having a game that's intellectual rather than physical.

I think that the horror genre has a lot of fans. People like horror movies, they like ghost stories. There is no other game, especially at the moment, which has managed to reproduce those things. For example, there's been a couple of games that have attempted to. There was "Chill", a few years ago. It was a fun, simple little game, but I think that one of the reasons it didn't make it as good as "Call of Cthulhu", is because they missed the reason that "Call of Cthulhu" is successful. In "Chill", they set you up as part of a government agency, and you'd go out, seek out enemy guys and blow them up. Whereas "Call of Cthulhu" was trying to emulate horror movies and ghost stories.

You never had that in a horror movie. You don't have government guys doing things, you have these poor sods, out by themselves who suddenly come across the unknown or it comes across them and it kind of intrudes upon their life in a way that they can't ignore. I think that appeal, the appeal that you have when you're reading a horror novel, or something, leads you into the game. And also, it has the draw that if you've read Lovecraft, or seen one of the movies based on his stuff, and you see his name, you'll say, "Hey, those are neat stories, I want to do that." And because the game lets you do it, it doesn't explode your theory of how it should work and it does give that feel, so that's the appeal. That's my theory.

Q. How do you think your game has affected the popularity of Lovecraft's works?

A. I'd like to believe that it has made them more popular and that because of it, more people are familiar with Lovecraft. I'd like to think there are people who read Lovecraft who wouldn't have, if it

hadn't been for the game. That's only what I'd like to think, which may or may not be true. I know it has helped in one respect, which is that the royalties given by Chaosium to Arkham House, I understand have been fairly significant. And, I don't know this for a fact, but I wouldn't be surprised if the new printing of the Lovecraft things that has come out, is not at least partially, if not primarily, funded by those royalties. I could be wrong, but that's kind of the impression I've come up with, which means we've funded a whole new edition of Lovecraft.

Q. What other authors do you like?

A. I really like Lovecraft a lot. He's probably my favorite horror author.

I think that probably my favorite horror story writer after H.P. Lovecraft is M. R. James. He was a British cleric who wrote about the turn of the century. He was one of the world's leading authorities on medieval manuscripts. He was an antiquarian. He was the kind of guy that Lovecraft would have liked to have been. He had this habit, every Christmas, of writing a ghost story and reading it to his friends, and his ghost stories are the best written in the English language. Don't get me wrong, I think Lovecraft's are the best horror stories, but M.R. James' are the best ghost stories. They're really fine ghosts. M.R. James wrote a little bit about what makes a good ghost story and I think he hit the nail on the head. He suggests for instance, that the ghost has to always be evil, or the story's not scary. He also suggests, that the horror story take place in an area in which the reader could reasonably imagine himself to be. In other words, not in a lost Transylvanian castle but somewhere out in the open which is where Lovecraft set his. His would take place where he lived, New England.

And when he made reference to a strange place, "Beyond Space and Time", for instance, he'd talk about the Dholes laying out there in Tibet, but the horror of the story was not that evil things

happened out there in Tibet, but that those things that are out there in Tibet are coming here.

In addition to that, I'm an avid movie watcher. I consider good horror directors to be the equivalent of a good horror author. I value David Cronenberg and John Carpenter a lot. I can't forget Stuart Gordon, he did *Re-animator*.

Mr. Petersen is no longer with Chaosium, although both parties have stated that the parting was amicable. He is now a game designer for Microprose.

We are looking forward to seeing his work in this area, and although unable to divulge details, he said the atmosphere of the game he is working on should please Lovecraft fans.

In answer to our question on the future of Cthulhu, Lynn Willis of Chaosium was kind enough to send us an answer. Several new products are scheduled to appear in the 1990s. Among these are "Arkham Unveiled", which offers investigators additional background as well as four new scenarios set in and around Arkham due out in Jan. of 1990. "Mansions of Madness" and "At Your Door" both offer new adventures and are scheduled to be released in April or May of 1990. Also, a full-color book by Tom Sullivan, tentatively called "Horror at Insmouth", explores the history of that dire place. Other titles are planned for appearance later in the year.

Shadis would like to thank Mr. Petersen and Chaosium for their kind assistance.

NEWS FROM AFAR

NEW PRODUCTS, RUMOURS,

FANTASY WRITER DIES - Barry Sadler, 49, died November 6. Sadler was shot in the head in Guatemala over a year ago and had been suffering from complications since then.

Best known for the 1966 number-one hit song he composed and recorded, *The Ballad of the Green Berets*, Sadler authored nearly 30 fantasy-adventure novels. Most of his books centered on the immortal Roman soldier, Casca. While hospitalized he spoke of writing another Casca book. -B.A. Felton-

ROLEPLAYING GAMES - BAD RAP?

Fantasy RPGs have been drawing bad press for several years now. An organization called B.A.D.D. (Bothered about Dungeons and Dragons) has even been formed to combat them. Shadis is planning on presenting a point-counter point discussion on the subject in a future issue between a prominent figure in the Role-Playing community and a prominent opponent.

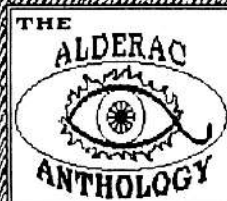
If anyone has any information on B.A.D.D. and how to get in touch with them please contact us.

We request all readers to keep an eye open for articles, news-spots and literature that focuses on the 'evils' of RPGs. Clip the article or write a summation and send it to us. The results will be published in a future issue of Shadis.



of embers born

By Frank R. Vanhoose



PART ONE

Day 394, Year 99

"Don't take it so hard, Reman. We know it's hard to say farewell to your only child. But you know as well as I, that were she allowed to stay here, sooner or later she would turn her unnatural lusts on our own people. Everyone is better off now that she's leaving our forest for the human lands. Vaarch knows that the world will be better off with a few less abgreer. Let Seychelle take her pleasures with them. Maybe she'll get her fill eventually and return."

The two Sarlangan Elders watched the lithe figure of Reman's daughter stride confidently into the forest shadows and disappear. Reman placed his arm on his old friend's shoulder and together they turned from the forest edge and returned to their village.

Seychelle's gliding stride took her south across the border of the Kalinor forest where the Ara-Sarlanga ruled supreme and into the human lands where she felt her destiny lay. First she'd travel the borderlands where Rang Taw's tribes held sway and then the Ragean Empire where a Sarlangan woman with a quick tongue and even quicker fingers could do quite well for herself. And in a world filled with humans who would miss the few she needed to satisfy her needs? All in all it was a quite light hearted Sarlangan woman who moved southward through the Kalinor and into her own future.

Andos Sagenthor hated the forest. Of course he hated anything beyond the city walls of Soult Tet. He knew Scav needed all the help he could get if he were to succeed in taking the Emperor's throne and a company of Sarlangan archers would be invaluable, but why had he been chosen to be the one to ride all the way to this gods forsaken forest several hundred miles north of anything? He hadn't slept well since he left the Fretera of Shadlet. Now he tossed and turned in his blankets dreaming of Sarlangan assassins, torture and murder practiced in various sordid ways. Lost in his own nightmare world he never noticed Seychelle enter his camp and sit quietly beside his smouldering fire.

A ray of sunlight penetrated the forest canopy and struck Andos' face bringing a halt to his troubled sleep. Groaning curses at the hard ground, the seemingly endless forest and the political ambitions of relatives, he threw his blankets aside and rose to his feet. The sound of a feminine giggle nearly made his heart stop as his head jerked to stare at the beautiful Sarlangan girl sitting cross-legged on the other side of the now dead fire. A repeat of the giggle and the direction of the gaze of those lively green eyes made him recall his habit of sleeping nude even while camping in this miserable hell-hole of a forest.

The giggle turned into peals of silvery laughter as he dropped flat on his butt and dragged his tumbled bedding across his bare middle. "Who the hell are you? Where did you come from and what in the vurch are you laughing at?"

"It's going to be all right pretty man," the girl crooned as she slowly drew her leather shirt over her head and dropped it on the ground beside her. "Seychelle is here to make you happy" she moaned as both doe-skin boots joined the shirt on the ground. "Such a pretty human all alone in the forest needs what Seychelle has for him," she breathed as her breeches completed the pile of discarded clothing. Andos could only stare in disbelief as the now nude figure moved across the little clearing and knelt at his side. Nimble fingers deftly moved the blankets aside from their hastily assigned position at his waist and hot lips sought his. As he sank back to the ground with the Sarlangan's body cemented to his, one thought finally managed to enter his numbed mind. "This might not be such a bad job after all."

Seychelle hummed happily to herself as she finished tying the last of the laces of her boots and straightened to look around her. "Not a bad way to start the day," she mused. "Such an amusing man. So generous too!"

She retrieved her knife from the neck of the amusing man as he lay sleeping exhausted by their love making. Cleaning it on his discarded clothing, she returned it to her boot sheath. Still humming, she rifled her newly acquired belongings and packed everything she felt would be useful. Saddling her new horse, she mounted and headed south feeling vibrantly alive and anxious to see what else the day would bring.

Orric F'mrick contentedly swung the heavy hammer down on a hot piece of iron. He was fashioning a horseshoe for one of the Varren Caras soldiers garrisoned in Emberton. They were there to protect the Narellian mountain passes from Rang Taw's barbarian raiders. Since the Imperial legions had begun using Emberton as a garrison, Orric's business had been very good. So good that Orric had saved enough gold to give the bride-gift required by Ailene's father. It was good enough to

buy a small cottage to take her to after tonight's ceremony of joining. Tonight marked the old year's death and the beginning of the new. For Orric it would also mark the death of his old life and the beginning of a new one. Year 100 Tre'Catrobium began tonight. It was the one hundredth year of the Ragean Empire's dominion over the land. Midnight marked the new year's birth. It was then Orric and Ailene would be joined as one.

Lost in his dreams, Orric never heard the first screams of terror as Rang Taw's barbarians poured into the town from the north and south.

Orric was an essentially gentle man. At six foot eight, the three hundred and seven pound man could afford to be. Nobody had ever questioned Orric's ability to fight. Nobody wanted to be the one to prove he could. Even the Imperial soldiers, who were normally contemptuous of the Fretera's inhabitants, treated Orric with respect. The sight of his mountainous form just seemed to take the bravado from any sane man. Orric himself had never given any thought to bravery. Since the problem had never risen he had not given it any thought. Now, the anguished screams of the dying mingled with the barbarian's war cries. The sound broke through his reverie and signalled that the huge man would finally be tested. It is a lesson we should learn early, life's tests are rarely fairly given.

Orric's first thoughts, when he realized that Emberton was being attacked was for Ailene's safety. He flung the horseshoe aside and grabbed a sword he had repaired for one of the soldiers. He turned for the door of his smithy. His foot came down on the tongs which hooked over the toe of his boot. This caused him to lose his balance. He thrust his other foot to the side, attempting to keep from falling. Stepping in a fresh pile of horse dung, his foot slid out from under him. Completely out of control, he lurched backward and sat down in the brazier of hot coals he was using to heat the horseshoes.

The intense pain in the ass caused by the hot coals drove him to his feet once again where his head broke off the bellows handle. The jagged wood sliced a large gash in his forehead, blinding him with a copious flow of blood. The force of his massive body rising, sent the brazier back and emptied it's fiery contents into a small stack of hay Orric kept to appease unruly horses while they were being shod. The hay erupted into a flame which rapidly spread to the the dry logs of the smithy wall.

Blinded by blood and driven by the sounds of pillage and rape coming from outside, Orric staggered determinedly toward the door. His foot once again came down on his carelessly discarded tongs. This time, his momentum carried him forward where the point of his anvil caught him squarely in the groin. Dropping the sword and all thoughts of valiant deeds, he doubled over and gripped his latest injury.

After an agonizing eternity the haze of pain subsided. The thought of helping his neighbors reasserted itself. Dimly, through a fog of blood and tears he could see the door and staggered grimly through it and out into the street.

As he emerged from the smithy a mounted horse came running at full gallop and struck Orric from the side. The surprised rider bounced twice in the street, slid to a halt and twitched a few times before lying still. The rider's neck was bent at an angle never seen in a living man. The horse was momentarily knocked to it's knees by the collision but regained it's footing and disappeared into the shroud of smoke now covering the town. Orric went reeling back into the smithy where he tripped over the borrowed sword he had dropped. This time his head struck the anvil and he went down, lying motionless.

the Varnen-Caras garrison as she entered Emberton from the north.

All eyes and not a few whistles and obscene suggestions followed the pert Sarlangan figure as she rode down the small town's one street. The thoughts of those soldiers who were left as rear guards were centered on the possible joys to be had with the young woman rather than the imminent danger from the north when the Grevans attacked.

The Grevans swept through the camp and into the town leaving only dead men behind. They rode their horses at a full run, sweeping all life from the street as they passed. The raiders from the north met their counterparts from the south at the center of town and split into smaller groups. These spread like a cancer, leaving dead men and burning buildings behind. The women along with the rest of the loot were brought to the market place in the center of town and placed under guard for later distribution.

Hearing the ring of steel and the yells of the raiders, mixed with the screams of the dying behind her, Seychelle kicked her horse into a gallop. Straining her neck, she looked back over her shoulder to see what was happening. When she heard the sound of more war cries to the south, her attention switched to what was ahead of her charging mount. Seychelle jerked brutally on the reins, causing her horse to slide to a halt and rear up on it's hind legs. Before she could bring her horse under control, the lead barbarian reached her and drove a lance through her horse's neck. The second rider passed on the other side of the dying horse and looped his arm around Seychelle, hauling her from the saddle. In the same movement, the Grevan flung the girl face-down on his saddle in front of him.

When the Grevans reached each other and stopped, Seychelle was dropped in the street. Stripped of her bow and knife, she was placed with the now growing group of captive women that were part of the barbarian's haul. When she tried to

Seychelle passed by the nearly deserted camp of

run through the guards, one casually knocked her to the ground where he and another raider tied her hands behind her with leather thongs, also tying her ankles to ensure she couldn't run.



Rang Taw absent mindedly stroked the scars on either side of his neck. The arrow which should have ended his life had instead raised him to be the sole leader of the Grevan League. Each time he led a raid into Ragean territory, he remembered the pain of the arrow striking. The fury he felt at the thought of dying now returned. Rang Taw did not believe in the gods or oracle's prophecies, but was perfectly willing to take advantage of an apparent miracle when one presented itself.

"The arrow that should have killed, but does not will decide the Grevan's fate!," the oracle had spoke, over a century before.

Again, Rang Taw stroked the twin scars. "I don't rule all the Grevan yet, but when I do, I will make that oracle a prophet of truth!" he thought. "Once I rule Stor-Greva, then we will turn to these southern maggots."

Rang Taw's party of raiders halted just to the north of the ruined camp of the Varmen-Caras. All the loot had been divided among the surviving barbarians. Now was the best time for the raiders. The women would be stripped and the men would roll the stones to see who would get to be the first with each. The losers would take what the winners left and hope to be luckier the next time. Rang Taw, as leader, would of course get first choice before the gambling began.

Still mounted, he moved slowly among the cowering women until he spotted hair the color of sunlight. He dismounted and grabbed Seychelle by the hair, jerking her head back so he could see her face. Then, he pulled her head to the side so that her slightly pointed ears were uncovered. "Sarlangan!," he grunted in surprise. "What in Vaarch's six hells is a Sarlangan bitch doing in this pig sty? No matter, my little forest maiden, Rang Taw never refuses the gifts of the gods."

"This one is mine," he told the party. "Choose your firsts quickly and lets be off before the rest of the Ragean scum return."

Rang Taw pulled Seychelle along by the hair till he came to the burned remains of a wagon. He pulled her down on her back across a fallen wagon wheel and wrapped her hair around the rim, and tying it with a leather thong taken from his belt. With another thong, he tied her already bound wrists to one of the spokes and cut the thongs binding her ankles. Quickly, he tied her ankles to the wheel rim after jerking each as far to the side as they would go. When he stood to admire his work, Seychelle struggled violently but to no avail. Rang Taw could tie knots that a Ginge sailor would envy. It would never do to have a woman he was

raping get loose and grab a knife. Having the mandate of the gods was one thing but stupidity was another.

Rang Taw drew his knife and cut Seychelle's breeches apart at the seams of each leg. Then he sliced her shirt from tail to neck and flipped it open. "One day, I'll go to the Kallinor and take a hundred of you Sarlangan for my lodge. But today, you'll have to do all by yourself."

Because her hair was tied to the wagon wheel, Seychelle couldn't see the knife Rang Taw used to remove her clothing. But she could feel the cold steel slide up the inside of each leg and hear the rasp of leather as the seams separated. Then the knife slid under her shirt, moving coldly up her stomach and between her breasts, until her garment was completely severed. Seychelle could hear the sounds the other women were making. The village women were crying, screaming or begging for mercy. There was the sound of laughter from the Grevans who had lost the roll of the bones. And from the animal-like grunts and groans, she knew the winners had wasted no time claiming their spoils.

Her hands were tied to the wagon wheel, so she couldn't rake out her attacker's eyes as he lowered himself over her. Because she was well gagged, she couldn't even scream the hatred or curses she felt at being helpless. All she could do was endure, and promise to avenge herself. "Endure. Revenge....."

When the Grevan leader had finished, he stood and pulled his breeches up, tying the leather cord that served as a belt. Nimble, he mounted his horse and surveyed the surroundings. When he felt that his men had sufficient time to enjoy the women, he called for them to mount their horses. His command met with no little grumbling, but was obeyed. When all the raiders had mounted, he drew his bow and notched an arrow. All his men followed suit.

"Ladies of Ragea, we thank you for your kind hospitality!," he said jovially to the naked, crying,

knot of women huddled together on the ground. "We would love to stay longer, but a wise guest knows to leave before his welcome is gone. Farewell."

"Deliver Vaarch his tribute!" he ordered without turning. Drawing the already notched arrow back next to his ear, he smiled at Seychelle. "Good-bye, pretty Sarlangan whore."

Seychelle heard the sound of many bowstrings snapping forward with release. She heard the dull thuds as those arrows struck home. More screams and cries filled her head as those around her died. Finally, Rang Taw released the bowstring and Seychelle felt a blow to her torso. She saw the arrow shaft emerging from her body as she tried to force one last sound past the gag, but failed. There was very little pain as her body grew numb. Before the darkness took her, she saw Rang Taw turn his horse and ride north with his men falling in behind.

Heat. Like that rushing from an oven when the door is first opened. Heat and pain. Someone was inside his head with a hammer trying to break out. Someone had put bands of iron around his chest so he could hardly breathe. Heat and smoke. Smoke robbed his lungs of what little air he was able to force into them. Sounds. Someone was coughing and choking.

Another round of coughs racked Orric's body and cleared his head enough for him to understand that he was in danger of being burned alive. He could make out the shadowy outline of his anvil in front of him. The door must be at his back. He rolled onto his stomach and pulled himself toward where the door must be. His legs didn't want to move. His lungs felt as if they were filled with molten metal. He put his hands in the dirt again and pulled. Again.

He put his hands out and felt solid wood. Unbelievably the wood felt damp. Orric raised his head. The smoke was thinner here and the heat

less fierce. He was out of the smith! Here was the water trough by the smithy door. Painfully he dragged himself around to the other side of the trough. Grasping the top, he pulled himself to his knees and thrust his head into the water. The lukewarm water felt wonderfully cool in the intense heat and drove more of the cobwebs from Orric's brain. He lowered his head again and drank from the trough.

After he had drunk enough water to take the edge off his thirst, he became aware of sounds. He heard laughter that seemed out of place in the burning remains of his village. Then he heard a woman's scream and more laughter.

Burning village? The events of the day rushed back into his mind. Grevans! Another woman screamed. The barbarians! Ailene! Orric pushed himself to his feet. He again heard laughter and an occasional woman's cry. He tried to orient himself as he stood in the smoky street. "That way!" his mind screamed. Orric tried to run but his legs wouldn't cooperate and he fell in the street. Desperately he forced himself to his feet again. He heard no more laughter, but many more screams. Grimly Orric staggered toward the north end of town. Now there were no more screams. There were sounds of many horses fading away to the north. Again Orric tried to run and again he fell. Sheer determination brought him to his feet once more, but he realized he couldn't run. In the unnatural quiet he found himself reluctant to move faster than a walk. He was afraid of what he would find when he finally reached the north side of the village.

Strength slowly returned to Orric's massive body as he made his way down Emberton's one smoke-filled street. Before he reached the Varren-Caras camp, a north wind had risen and helped clear Orric's lungs and head. Orric hadn't counted the bodies he passed as he moved up the street. All but two he had recognized as friend and neighbor. Two raiders seemed small payment for the destruction of an entire village. Unknown to

Orric, he had actually killed another one, as the rider who had struck him earlier had died. Still, three Grevans were not enough. The Imperial camp was a shambles. Bodies lay strewn about the camp as if discarded by a passing giant. Everything flammable had been burned. The smell of scorched leather, overheated metal and burnt human flesh was sickening. Even more sickening was what Orric could see at the edge of the camp.

A forest of arrows grew out of the piled bodies of the village's women. All were naked. Some were bound. All were dead. Orric recognized them all. There was Smerga the leatherworker's wife. Here was Taniia, sister to Ailene. And here was Ailene. Four arrows sprouted from her naked form. Dried trickles of blood ran in a line from her mouth down her chin. The arrow that had pierced her lungs had taken her life slowly.

Orric knelt beside Ailene's body in numb silence. While he knelt beside his betrothed, Rang Taw's band tallied another casualty in their raid on Emberton. The man who had been Orric's friend died. The gentleness that had characterized the blacksmith disappeared as if it had never been. What remained was his great strength. But something was added. That something changed him forever. Along with his great strength he now had a great purpose. It was well known that Rang Taw controlled these Grevans. All the barbarians from this part of bordering Star-Greva fell under him. But Orric did not know that Rang Taw himself had led the raid against Emberton. Somehow, he would find these raiders and extract a satisfactory price for his village.

Maybe it was fate, or perhaps the gods provided a miracle. Maybe it was sheer chance. The lone arrow that Rang Taw sent into Seychelle's body entered just below her breasts at the V formed by her ribs. It passed through her body without severely damaging any major organs and emerged just to one side of her spine. Though the wound was serious, it was not instantly fatal.

Orric never knew what distracted him from the ravaged form of his betrothed. Perhaps a passing breeze ruffled Seychelle's golden hair. Whatever the cause, Orric found himself staring at the female figure bound across the wagon wheel. Slashed remains of leather clothing hung from her body and a single arrow protruded from her chest. Then he noticed the faint movement of Seychelle's shallow breathing.

Alive! This strange woman still lived! Orric jumped to his feet and crossed the short distance separating him from the injured woman. Blood still seeped from around the arrow's shaft and the pale chest rose and fell.

Since the arrow had completely penetrated the body Orric gently grasped the shaft just above Seychelle's body and broke off the feathered end. Then he gripped the arrow head and slowly pulled the now bare ended shaft through her body and out the back. He raced back to where the raiders had dropped the ruined clothing they had torn from the women of Emberton and grabbed a handful of the cleanest undergarments. He returned to kneel by the wounded girl's side. Orric folded the scraps of clothing into two pads which he used to cover the arrow wounds. Then he used the longest strip of cloth to wrap around Seychelle's body binding the pads in place.

Orric pulled the leather thong that was holding Seychelle's gag in place down around her neck. He pulled the knots even tighter than Rang Taw had tied them. Orric knew his large fingers would never untangle them.

Now he needed something to cut her bonds. He had no knife and had lost the borrowed sword back in the smilthy.

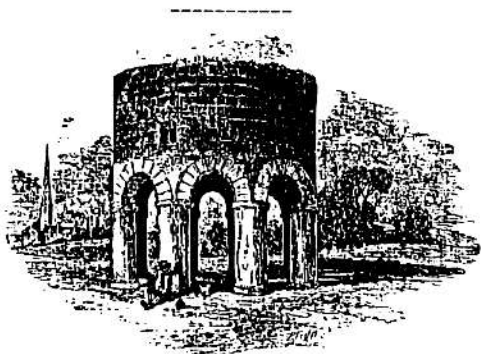
He moved through the destroyed camp desperately searching for something with a sharp edge. Underneath a dead Imperial soldier he found a broken sword the Grevans had found unworthy of stealing. He hurried back to the north edge of the

camp and used the ruined weapon to slice the thongs on Seychelle's wrists, ankles and hair.

Now that the woman's wounds were bound and she was free of the wagon wheel, she would need shelter. Orric looked toward the village. Smoke formed great clouds over the now mostly smouldering remains. There was nothing left to use for shelter. The wrecked Varnen-Caras camp was equally useless. But there was a large cabin in the hills north of the village used by the village providers for laying in a winter's supply of meat. It would be deserted now, and would provide good shelter. Besides who knew what might have been left there by the last party of hunters.

Orric thought of remaining at the ruined camp to await the return of the absent patrol. The Imperial soldiers hadn't protected his village this day. Now, with the village gone, the soldiers would probably move on to gods knew where. No, Orric would take the wounded woman to the hunter's cabin. There, when she was able, she would tell Orric about this particular group of Grevans. She had seen them and could mark them for Orric. Yes, it would be best to go north to the cabin.

The large man gently picked Seychelle up and off the wagon wheel. With her cradled in his arms he moved north out of the ruined camp and away from his past. What Orric had been was now dead. As lifeless as the corpse of his betrothed and the shell of the village he had left behind.



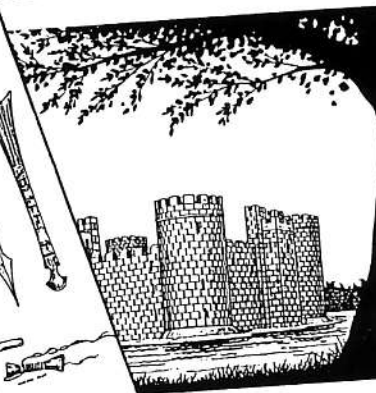
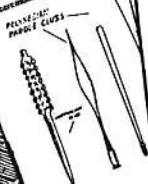
DESCRIPTIONS OF WEAPON GROUPS AND TYPES

HAFTED WEAPON GROUPS

Hafted weapons represent some of the earliest and most widely used arms. These weapons usually consist of some sort of striking head attached to an incorporated shaft or handle. The two major groups of hafted weapons are clubs and axes, but also include war hammers, picks, and whips.



Clubs
Clubs are the oldest, as well as the most common, weapons. Clubs range in form from simple wooden sticks to ornate works of art. There are three basic types of clubs: simple, fluted, and fluted with barbs. Simple clubs are made usually of wood and fluted clubs are made usually of metal. Fluted clubs with barbs are made usually of metal. Sample clubs reached their highest development in Polynesia where they were used as ceremonial props.



Roman Aquilifer
c. 50-200 A.D.
Standard Bearer

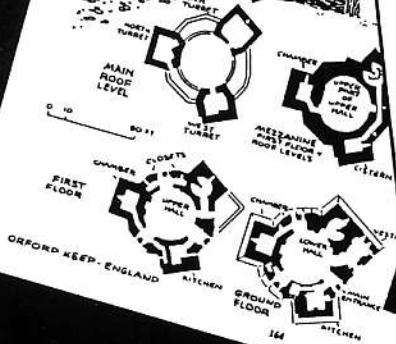


"Gladius" short sword
"Pugio" dagger

Armored Vest
Metal Tassels
Cut RF: 9
Chop RF: 8
Thrust RF: 8
Impact RF: 1
Mass: 20kg

Metal harness shirt with lion headpiece worn over a standard iron helmet.

Carries a small circular shield on back.



TITLE: TALISMAN CITY
COMPANY: GAMES WORKSHOP
CATEGORY: SUPPLEMENT/EXPANSION

Talisman City is the latest of many expansion sets for the Talisman fantasy board game by Games Workshop. Talisman City expands the city space on the main game board and allows the characters to actually enter the city to meet new danger and seek new rewards.

The release of TC raises the question of how far Games Workshop can take the Talisman system and retain the playability of the original game. One of the major strengths of the basic Talisman game is it's flexibility. That seems to be the hallmark of the classic boardgames such as, Monopoly, Risk etc. (Including some recent favorites such as Empire Builder and Axis and Allies). Such games thrive on the ability of players to come up with unique house-rules and variations.

For those of you uninitiated into the Talisman phenomenon, let me explain the basic game briefly before diving into TC. Talisman is a fantasy board game for two to six players. Each player takes the role of one of numerous characters and struggles to be the first player to cross the Valley of Fire and obtain the Crown of Command, thus winning the game. In order to obtain the Crown of Command however, you must raise your abilities to sufficient levels in order to overcome the many perils guarding the crown. You must also possess a Talisman which protects you from the flames in the Valley of Fire.

Talisman has attracted such a following that six supplements have been released for it. Each supplement adds new spells, items, random events and characters to the basic game. They also throw in some new rules. For example, Talisman the

Adventure expansion set changes the overall game by adding six additional endings. No longer do players win once they reach the Crown of Command unless that particular ending comes up.

My favorite moment in a typical game is what I call the 'Fire Fight'. One Player will zap another with a spell and the victim retaliates with a counter spell. This is followed by another player intervening with a spell of his own. A whole series of backlashes ensues in which no one is safe. This normally happens when one player is making the 'run' for the Crown of Command and all other players join forces to stop him.

Talisman has quite a following among the RPGer circles which is not surprising. Game Workshop's games are overpriced in general, mainly because they are imported from England. The fact that players are willing to shell out upwards of thirty dollars for the basic game alone testifies to it's popularity.

Talisman is not a game for nice, quiet people. I say this because our first few games left us wondering what all the fuss was about. While it was generally an entertaining game, we couldn't understand why so many players were fanatical, working themselves into frenzies at the news of a new expansion in the works.

It was only after several games that we realized we were taking the wrong approach. Players would end their turn on the same space as another player and decline their option of attacking or stealing from that player. We were far too nice. Only after the nasty aspects of the game began to surface did I begin to like Talisman. This is a game that warrants several play sessions, or at least one with some veteran players before you make the decision of condemning the game to your closet.

With that said and done, let's look closer at Talisman City itself. In our sessions, the City expansion seemed to double the normal playing time of an already time-devouring game. The game dragged on and on. Players became disinterested after a few hours and we were finally relieved when someone finally managed to claim victory.

To be fair this isn't fully attributable to the game. These problems were due to players exploring the new city board and creating havoc on each other, instead of seeking out a Talisman and striving for the Crown of Command. Players were frantically running around the city and all of them managed to get arrested and thrown in the dungeon. I expect that as the newness of TC wears off, the game will return to it's normal pace.

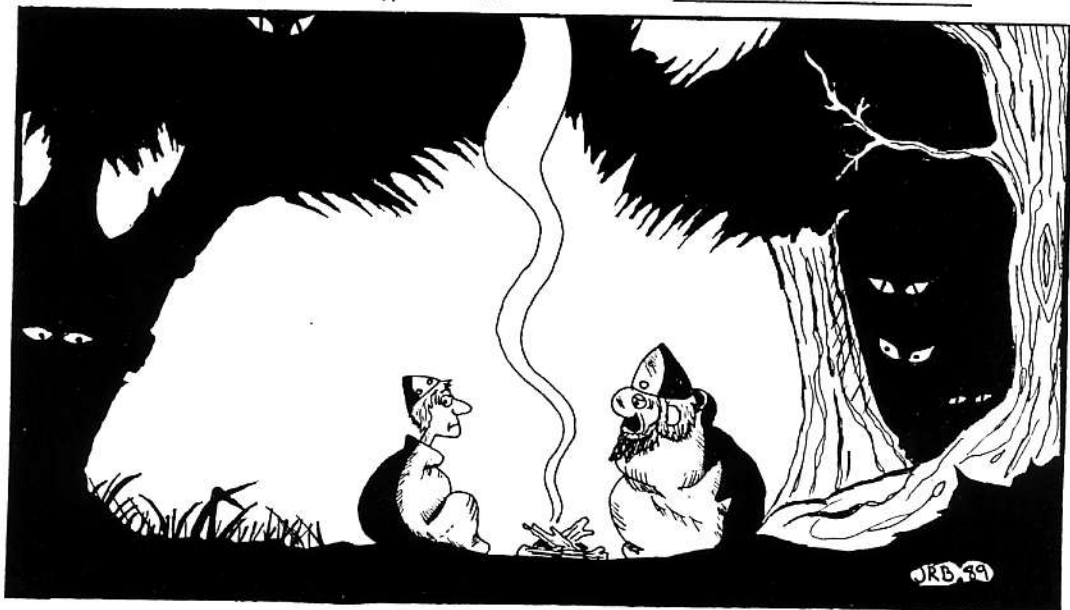
Talisman City, besides adding the new board, adds six new characters. Two of these characters are of the normal variety like those in the other sets the Valkyrie and the Minotaur. The other four however represent 'titles' or positions the players can acquire. For example, you can be appointed the

Sheriff, the Arch Mage, King's Champion or Master Thief. Once accepting an appointment, the player turns in his character card and takes the card of the appointed position adding that card's attributes and abilities to his own.

Our group is renowned for it's backstabbing sessions of Talisman and TC has only fueled our nefarious gameplay. The presence of the dungeon and the ability to frame other players has become our bread and butter and most of us have spent our share of time staring at the dungeon walls.

If you are an avid Talisman player you will no doubt enjoy this new offering. If, however, you only moderately liked the basic game, you will probably find that the expansion has only heightened the qualities of the game you didn't like. Those drawbacks are mainly the time requirements needed to play and the length of time before your turn comes around.

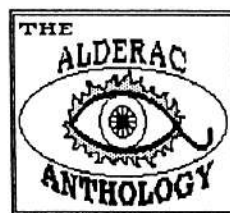
B.D. Felton



"It's your turn to get the firewood!"

THE SHRIEK OF SOULT TET

By Barbara Blackburn



PART ONE

a Cold Flur' Mar

The streets of Soult Tet are empty.

If this night were not Flur' mar, the streets would be bustling with activity.

But, on this night of ill omen, the citizens have drawn their shutters tight and refuse to come out.

Yet, in a lonely corner of the frightened city, a shriek rises up and splits the silence.

Beneath the low-hung bloated moon, in its garish orange glow, something hideous rips a young woman apart.

Within minutes, her dismembered corpse lies silent. Blood streams from her lifeless limbs and bathes the cobblestone in its eery red hue.



Above, a shadowy figure slithers away into the

blackest corner of the heavens.

The next day, after a merchant finds the body, the rumors begin.

Some say it was a jealous lover, others say a mad dog. Yet, most say what they think in whispered warnings and drunken stupors.

Most would admit the damage done to the body was much too extensive to have been done by a man or dog.

In the corner tavern, the conversation is lively.

"Maybe it was a stray bear that wandered into town sick with hunger," an old man proposed.

"But," said the man next to him, "that woman was not eaten. Besides, did you see the slime and blood that trailed up the side of that building? I tell you, it was the 'Shriek'! He'll be back, you never know who'll be next..."

The barkeep interrupted, "Hush! I don't want to hear that talk in here. No such thing as a 'Shriek' either, except maybe for the one you'll make when I throw you out of here on your backside. Just keep it up!"

Still, for centuries mothers and fathers, priests and poets have passed the legend down.

"Every once in awhile," they say, "the terrible

creature's voracious bloodlust is aroused."

On these nights, usually Flur' mar, the streets of Soult Tet ooze with slimy, monstrous secretions and blood.

Old men, crazy with prophecy, or wine, will stand at street corners and proclaim, "Soult Tet, city of abominations. Turn back from your wicked pleasures and escape the wrath of the Shriek! Beware, lest in your revelry he finds you and swoops down upon you!"

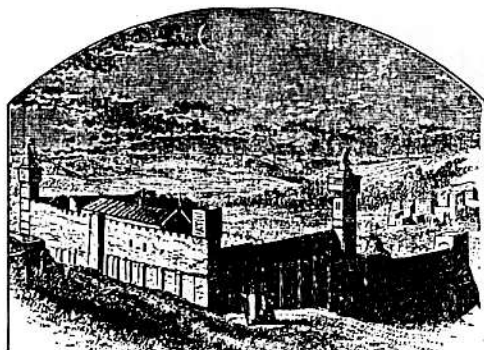
The citizens of Soult Tet have named their monster the 'Shriek', because of the spine-chilling cry that one hears during an attack. People say, these cries are not only the screams of the dying, but also, the orgasmic, squeals of the demonic creature delighting in its blood-feast.

One elderly lady, a woman of some wealth and status in the community says, "It was some fifty years ago, when I was just a young girl. I saw the

hideous attack of the beast. It was the Flur' mar, and we were in the temple praying. We heard the terrible sounds echoing in the street outside the sacred walls. We ran to the windows. To our amazement, the strong brick building across the street was a complete rubble! The roof had been torn off, and a poor young boy lie in the street in a pool of blood. I will never forget it. It took only a second from the time we heard the screams until we were at the window. That monster had done so much damage in the wink of an eye."

Forlean Undigo, a retired patrell of the guard recalls, "I was ordered to investigate the death of a wealthy town official found dismembered in the street on a cold Flur' mar evening. The walls of the surrounding buildings were bathed in slime. There were also trails of blood and flesh from the victim all the way up to the top of the buildings. For some reason, the creature seems to single out one individual to kill, and relentlessly hunts them down. It's odd that there have not been any reports of the creature attacking outside the gates of Soult Tet."





Gar Tharlflax and his sister Shindar drove their mule the last weary leg of their long journey. The gates of Soult Tet looked so welcome.

They had come from their home in West Fork to visit their eldest sister Jerar. She had left for the capital a year ago to take work as a nursemaid for a wealthy uncle who had taken ill.

After great difficulty in convincing the guards at the main gate to allow them to pass, they wound their way through the maze of streets. They were searching for their uncle's house with the aid of the crude map their sister had sent them.

"I can't wait to see Jerar. Uncle Brakis must have the most wonderful house! It will be good to sleep in a soft bed."

"We're almost there. I hope he has some food, I'm famished!"

As they rounded the corner, a fret guard stopped them. "Halt! What are you doing out this time of night? It is forbidden to be on the streets at this hour!"

Gar swallowed hard, "Forgive us, we have travelled a long way to visit our sister. We were unaware of the curfew. We are looking for the house of Brakis Tharlflax. He is our uncle and our sister Jerar is his nurse. My map shows this street to be theirs."

"Brakis Thar...Oh, sir, I'm sorry to uh...inform you. He has met his end I'm afraid. He expired the morning after his maid was found murdered outside of his home. It was the shock I'm sure. Such a tragedy!"

Shindar let out a scream of sorrow, "Gar! No! No!" She cried and slumped into unconsciousness. Her brother grabbed her as she began to fall from the wagon.

"Here, let me take you to an inn for the night," said the guard. "Come down to the fret hall in the morning and you can talk to the fret Master."

Gar thanked him and followed him to the inn.

That night he didn't shut his eyes, though weak with exhaustion. He remembered the day they'd bid farewell to Jerar.

"My brother, and sister, today I leave for a new adventure. The city is far and much unlike West Fork. I will miss you so, yet I know this is best. Uncle Brakis is wealthy, and has offered me a good salary. I will send you most of it each month. Here is the carriage now! It is so beautiful. I must go now; I will write, please write me. I will miss you my dears. Drelltar's blessings on you!"

She embraced them, her brown eyes flowing with tears.

The last they saw of her, she was waving goodbye as she drove away, her long dark hair blowing behind her.

Tears came to Gar's eyes as he remembered. He glanced at Shindar tossing fitfully beside him. Golden hair framed her face. Suddenly her slight frame jolted into a waking nightmare. "Jerar! Jerar! Look out! Look out! Oh no!"

Gar put his long arms around her. "Shindy, It's

alright, I'm here, I'm here. It was a dream."

Looking into his blue eyes, she asked, "You mean Jerar is alive? Oh, it was awful. I dreamed she had been murdered. Thank Dreltar, she's alive!"

Gar threw his head on her shoulder and sobbed, "She died, she did die! I don't know what happened. We never should have let her come to this stinkhole! What kind of place is this?"

Brother and sister sat up until morning clinging to each other in grief.

The next day, when Gar saw the sun rise, he stood and stretched. "Shindy, come on. We must go to see the fret master."

"Why? Let's just leave, no one will help us here."

"I want to find out what happened to her. Whoever took the life of one so innocent must not go unpunished!"

The two left for the hall together and vowed not to leave until someone answered their questions.

They entered the old building and approached an elderly gentleman sitting at a desk with his eyes shut.

"Hello. Sir. Sir, can you help us?"

The man grunted, stirred and opened his eyes reluctantly.

"What do you want? We don't 'ficially open fer another hour."

As Shindar spoke, her angelic voice caressed the ears of the gruff official.

"Sir, my brother and I have come a very long way to visit our sister, only to find that she has

been foully killed. A guard informed us last evening that we should see the fret master. We would like some answers about who could have done such a despicable thing. She never hurt anyone, oh please, can you help us?"

The girl broke down and began to weep.

"Come now dear, don't cry. I'll see what I can do. I'm afraid Bandar, the fret master is away on business today. But here, you and the lad take a seat. Now what was the name of the dead girl?"

Gar spoke as he helped his distraught sibling to a chair. "Her name was Jerar Tharliflox. She hadn't lived here long. She was working for our uncle Brakis Tharliflox, who has also recently died."

Gar noticed that when he spoke his sister's name, the color drained from the rather obese man's face. The gentleman sputtered and said, "Oh...oh yes, the unfortunate who was killed on last flur' mar. I believe we have some of her things right here."

The man went into a backroom where Gar could hear him rummaging about. Finally he emerged, "Let's see...there was this gold chain, a small purse with the sum of five roolnair, a dress and a pair of leather sandals. Oh yes, and here is a small silver ring and a sewing bag. That's everything. Of course I'll have to verify your relationship to the poor girl before I can release them to you."

"Your uncle's estate, however is no small inheritance. No one has made a claim to his properties as of yet. There's been considerable difficulty in locating any of his relatives. You may be the sole inheritors if no one contests. There is the house and grounds, the bakery, not to mention a wealth of money and fine possessions. I understand he even has an original Bre'fa among his art collection and an actual Adorjan ceremonial robe."

The two stroked the dress of their slain sister and began fingering her jewelry when they noticed something strange.

"Sir, this necklace is torn in two, and the ring is nearly smashed flat. How did this happen?"

"Well," the startled man gulped, "she was wearing them, the night she ...she was killed. Her b...body was not in the b...best condition ...when they f...found her."

The man wiped the perspiration that was now rolling down his face with a ragged cloth and fell into his chair exhausted.

Gar stood, "What do you mean? What happened to her? My god! Tell me, what type of beast could have done something so cruel?"

Shindar was now slipping out of consciousness, and slid limply to the floor.

The stammering man scooted away as Gar approached him angrily.

"Young man, control yourself! Attacking me will not undo the deed. Now, attend to your sister, and I will try to explain what happened as best I can."

Gar turned and saw the girl lying on the floor. Rushing to her side, he continued prodding, "What happened here that night?"

"It was Flur' mar, the night of ill omen. Everyone knows to stay inside their homes or so we thought. Some say they heard the horrible screams. The next day, your sister was found in the streets outside your uncle's home. Her body had been badly mutilated. If your uncle had not identified her, no one would have been able to tell who she was. The shock of seeing her was much too great for him, the poor old chap. His heart gave way the next evening. No one knows exactly what happened to her. The damage was so great, that it doesn't seem to have been anything...natural, that we know.

Some say, although I could lose my job for telling you this, that it was the Shriek, a monster who according to legend has killed countless times over the eons. They have hauled a nameless drifter before the courts and accused him. It's likely he'll be executed by."

"Who was in charge of the investigation? I want to make sure the guilty pays, not the innocent! Tell me where to go to demand justice!"

"Sir! I know this is a trying time, but you must be cautious. Making trouble by asking a lot of questions could get you just as dead as your sister. The Emperor himself has made it clear, he doesn't want this matter brought to light. The "Shriek" is a sensitive subject, and the officials don't want any talk of it. They will not like anyone questioning their judgement."

"I am not going to rest until I avenge the murder of my sister. Her sweet life will not be swept away like a pile of rubbish. I will see to that!"

"I will find the truth," he told himself. Yet even as he formed the thought, he wondered how he could begin.

Walking into the street with Shindar in his arms he felt a shiver crawl across his skin. And as he looked into the morning sun, he wondered how many others had tried to rid the city of its blackest curse. If he failed, he somehow knew his shredded corpse would be found in a dark alley. That day would be a cold Flur' mar.

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EDITED BY FRANK VANHOOSE

Welcome to Disks of Wondrous Power! Most Role-Players also seem to have an attraction to computer games so we have opened this little corner of the magazine for software reviews.

What I want to point out here at the very start is that a review is only an opinion and therefore shouldn't be accepted as gospel. What our reviewers hate, you may love. Hopefully these reviews will help you in your decision on which games to buy, and which to avoid. Our reviewers comprise many different age groups and preferences. Some are avid arcade 'shoot-em-up' fans while others lean toward the war game arenas.

Presently we will be reviewing software available on the IBM/MSDOS and Amiga machines. Owners of other systems are free to submit reviews of games on those machines. Also if you have any hints/tips on popular games, send them in.

SSI has been cranking out a lot of games lately, and we decided to take a look at three of their offerings. Ratings are based on a system of one thru ten. With one being the pits, and ten being excellent.

TITLE: Sword of Aragon
Company: SSI
Computer: IBM/MSDOS
Retail: \$39.95
Category: Fantasy/War
Rating: 7.5
Reviewer: Frank Vanhooose

I have a pretty good collection of SSI's computer games as well as a representative sampling of those of other manufacturers. A large number of those games have never been completed because I've found them quite boring after the newness has worn off. I'm not saying I'm hard to please but I do expect certain things from a computer game. I need acceptable graphics, a difficulty level that's neither a 'gimme' or a test in nuclear physics and

a high level of pure entertainment.

Sword of Dragon by Strategic Simulations meets all the requirements I've listed. I'm satisfied that I've gotten my money's worth and would certainly purchase another game along similar lines.

The basic story outline is familiar to those of us who have played almost any fantasy computer role-playing game. "Young hero must unite ancient empire and return it to it's former glory while overcoming many treacherous humans and hundreds of monsters." However, rather than recruiting a band of heroes to go back and slay the evil monsters, we need to think on a much larger scale. This job is going to take armies. Heroes are always welcome, of course, but good infantry and cavalry soldiers are what we need to get the job done.

Those of us who've played SSI's war game simulations are familiar with their realistic but, sometimes, slow and complex combat system. Sword of Dragon marries a much easier to use combat system for it's actual battles with a traditional fantasy RPG background. Throw in a double handful of economic and political decisions and you have a multi-dimensioned and highly entertaining game.

This game also supports a mouse. (Both Microsoft and Logitech). Keep up the good work. I didn't pay beaucoup bucks for this rodent just to have it sit on my desk and look good.

Graphics: This game supports most graphic adapters. I played it on an XT clone with an EGA board. The graphics aren't going to leave you staring at your monitor in awe but are more than acceptable.

Features: You may select a Warrior, Knight, Ranger, Priest, or Mage for your main character.

Each class starts with different army types and

offers different advantages when it comes to building future armies. The three difficulty settings make the game playable for all levels of leadership ability.

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of this game is the economic factors that the prospective world conqueror must take into account while planning his/her world dominance. Armies don't just fall from the beneficent heavens. They must be recruited or drafted and equipped. All of this costs money. Sometimes the choice between that new cavalry troop or necessary city improvement can be dicey.

Weather is taken into account as is the ravages of random groups of monsters. Sometimes one wonders how this continent manages to support such large hordes of monsters. Not to worry though, only a small portion of them are truly nasty.

Copy Protection: This game requires information from the game documents. While I like this type of copy protection better than 'key disk' or 'code wheel', I feel that SSI got a little too complex on this one. First you must match a city icon pictured on the screen with the corresponding icon on the large poster provided with the game to learn the city's name. Then you must look up that city's listing in the game book to obtain the requested word. SSI needs to realize that we want to PLAY THE GAME, not do constant research in the game documentation.

TITLE: STAR COMMAND Company: SSI Computer: Amiga Category: Adventure/Sci-Fi Rating: 7 Reviewer: Lew Herring
--

Star Command is a role-playing game that gives you command of eight characters that you develop and then send on missions assigned by Star Command, the galactic peace keepers.

You begin with a small amount of money to buy a ship and then arm it with weapons and shields. Your squad also needs weapons, armor, and equipment such as medkits and laser targeters. You then must complete missions ranging from pirate patrol to thwarting an alien's attempt to rule mankind.

The development of your eight-member squad is the key to being successful at Star Command and also the most enjoyable part of the game. There are four different character classes available and they are: pilot, marine, soldier, and esper. Each class has its own strength and weaknesses. Putting together a well-balanced squad with each class represented is recommended. As you decide what class each squad member should be, you then send them to training for eight years.

Each character, based on his class, picks eight skills to be trained in (one for each year). A soldier for instance, can choose from medical, hand weaponry, light arms, heavy arms, explosives, chemical weaponry, officer's school, survival school, or special forces. If the character is successful in his training he will receive a skill level in that area. If unsuccessful he will be given an assignment by Star Command. Survival school and special forces increase the characters ability scores such as strength and accuracy. All characters start out as privates, but by outstanding achievement in training or officers' school they can be promoted and receive more pay.

Marines excel in light and heavy arms and should have high scouting/recon skills. Pilots, in addition to piloting skills, need code breaking and ship repairs. Espers are great astro gunners and should develop their esper skills so they can mindshock and communicate with your enemies.

Just as you should have a balanced squad, your squad's skills should be balanced. Have each character with a specialty, and then one or two minor skills. Develop light arms skills for your pilots and espers so in a firefight they can pitch in. Marines and soldiers should have heavy arms skills, as these are the weapons which deal out the big damage. Medical skills are also needed and it never hurts (no pun intended) to have an extra medic.

After training your squad you must equip each member, buy a ship, and then equip it. The wide range of equipment to choose from is mind-boggling. There are 54 personal weapons, 16 types of armor, 6 hand-to-hand weapons, and 15 pieces of miscellaneous equipment and sighting hardware. Ships come in 9 different types, with 25 weapons to choose from, 5 types of shields, 5 defensive systems, and 3 different missile killers. Pouring over the equipment charts, looking for the best

item for your money is entertaining and rewarding.

Star Command headquarters then gives you an assignment and upon successful completion of the mission you receive pay and possible promotions. The missions become more difficult as you proceed but your squad should be able to afford better equipment and ships.

There is a lot going on in the galaxy and random encounters with pirates, as well as private crafts are frequent. Unfortunately, after playing several times, these random encounters become a hassle when you are trying to complete a mission.

Star Command is a good adventure/role-playing game with a few drawbacks. The biggest drawback is every time you save the game you must look up a line in the manual and key in the appropriate word. I know this is protection against piracy but it's still a pain in the butt. S.S.I. did not use any of the Amiga's capabilities, which is a shame. The game is a great idea but the poor graphics and sound as well as the slow combat, makes a good game only average. The keyboard is used instead of the mouse for input and this is awkward as I could not lean back in my chair with my feet up, but had to sit attentive at the keyboard. After "enjoying" the sound of combat for a few sessions turn the sound off on the options menu to speed up combat.

Star Command could have been a great game and if you can overlook the minor drawbacks, it's worth the purchase price and your valuable gaming time.

Lew Herring

TITLE: HILLSFAR Company: SSI Computer: AMIGA Category: Adventure/Fantasy Rating: 6 Reviewer: Lew Herring

The premise of Hillsfar, a Forgotten Realms Advanced Dungeons and Dragons adventure from TSR, is that the city of Hillsfar is under tight control where weapons and magic are not allowed. Your quick thinking and abilities are needed to solve your quest instead of brute strength and mystic powers.

Hillsfar, the town, is full of buildings to explore: pubs, haunted mansions, the arena, guilds, the archery range and many more. Fortunes can be made and quickly lost if you cross and anger the Red Plume guards, who will take your treasure and may throw you into the arena to fight for your life. Sounds like your kind of city, right?

Wrong! Your movement about the city is hampered by the disk being accessed everytime you move out of one of the four sectors of the city. Going from the stable to the mages tower-disk access. How about from the cemetery to the Rat's Nest Pub-disk accesses twice. This is unbelievably frustrating, so you had better plan your movement throughout the city carefully. I hate to always gripe about graphics and sound, but if you have a machine as powerful as the Amiga why not make games to utilize the power.

The one saving grace offered by Hillsfar is the many play sessions to be had. If you begin and complete all the quests for fighters, create a new character and attempt the quests for thieves, clerics or magic-users. There is plenty of adventuring to be had in the town of Hillsfar and the surrounding countryside.

If you want to play Advanced Dungeons and Dragons on computer play Heroes of the Lance (also S.S.I.). Heroes of the Lance offers great graphics and even better great game play.

Lew Herring



THE MARKET PLATZ

The Market Platz is a meeting place to pass along information, barter, trade and gossip. Readers are invited to place classified ads, announce group meetings, seek other players etc.

Subscribers may place classified ads free of charge with a limit of one ad per issue and 25 words maximum. Non-subscribers can place ads for 10 cents per word with a limit of 25 words.

Convention announcements, Group meetings and public service notices can be placed free of charge.

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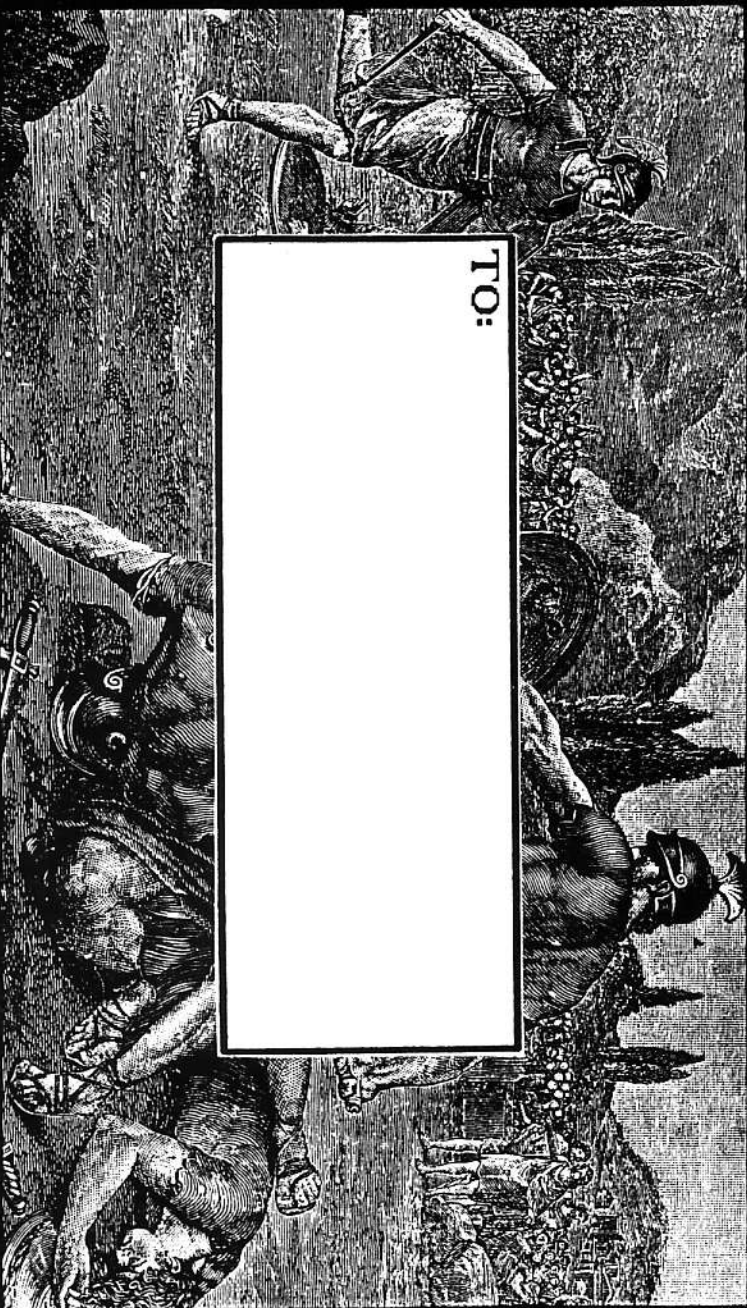
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