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SHADIS

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EDITORIAL

I've learned a lot of things about self-publishing in the few short months of SHADIS' existence. But July taught me a tremendous lesson! People take their vacations in July. Deadlines are missed or ignored. Phone calls are not returned. The roar of the beach is more compelling than a frazzled editor's pleas. (Ok, so I took a vacation too!) Everything seemed to be against this issue of SHADIS being launched on time. And wouldn't you know it? My REAL job even interfered with the magazine. Sheesh!

Well, July is history and with it a valuable lesson was learned. I'll be better prepared next year.

Self-Publishing is truly a paradox for those who decide to join the ranks. Most self-publishers begin their publications because;

- 1. they are extremely fond of their particular hobby(s), and,
- 2. they feel they have something to say or contribute to that hobby.

The paradox which quickly rears its ugly head is that once you take the plunge and launch your publication, you find yourself slowly becoming a recluse and cut off from participating in your hobby with the same freedom you once had. Putting out a magazine takes a lot of effort and time. Time and energy which once was spent enjoying your favorite past-times.

Now, the rewards are great! If your endeavor is well received, your ego will soar to unknown heights and the feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment will go far. You'll undoubtedly make new friends. I was just looking over the mailing list and realized that I have made nearly thirty new friends and correspondents since SHADIS was born.

What am I trying to say? Gee, I dunno, but I feel better now that I have it off my chest.

We have a lot to offer this issue. George Vrbancic's cover captures the spirit of our feature article, *"Delving into the Greater Magicks."* Our poor sorceress has apparently experienced a magical mishap of a catastrophic kind.

You'll also notice this issue is sprinkled with a little more artwork than normal. I would like to welcome, David Dixon aboard. David was kind enough to let me rifle through his stash of original art.

Daniel Giddings came through with some illustrations for the fiction and even got around to sending a double-serving of his Pozoe and Logo comic. If you take a close look at the SHADIS logo on the front cover you'll see some more of Daniel's handiwork. Daniel has also agreed to apply his artistic-wizardry to our various column-headings and logos. Maybe when he finishes that task, we'll let him out to get some sunshine and fresh air. Naaah!

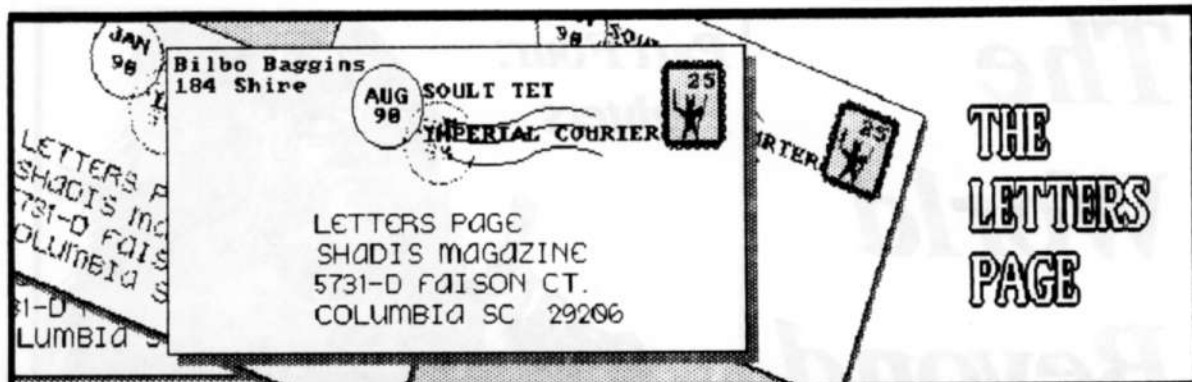
I've pointed it out before, but no one involved with SHADIS, including yours truly, is making money in this endeavor. Our budget is tight and all monies goes back into the magazine.

I mention this because, all of the artwork, and articles you see in SHADIS have basically been donated, by people who love to do what they do. If you enjoy what you read or see in SHADIS I would urge you to write to the authors/artists in care of this magazine and let them know. Besides making them feel that their efforts have been worth while, it might persuade them to stay with us.

Well, I suppose that's about it for this issue.

Jolly R. Blackburn

July 31, 1990



*Note: Due to space limitations and the many 'long' letters we've received, some letters have been edited. While praises and 'atta boy' letters are greatly appreciated letters containing constructive criticisms, complaints or suggestions are more likely to see print in the Letters Page. We love the praise but it makes boring reading for other readers. At any rate keep the letters coming!

Dear SHADIS,

A couple of comments on the first three issues of SHADIS. First of all, I love the HackandSlash series. This is the kind of material I would like to see in future issues. They are thought provoking, make good reading and are immediately useful to the DM and player alike. Hats off to Mr. D'amato.

The Equalizer character class in no.#2 was interesting. I think it would have been more appropriate to present the character as a fighter 'kit' as in the *Complete Handbook* series than as a separate unique character class. New character classes, regardless of how well presented are rarely allowed by DMs so I doubt such offerings in SHADIS will have a wide appeal. Just my opinion.

Just Spoils in Issue no.#2 was extraordinary. Fantastic! I especially appreciated the blank tables so that the DM could easily tailor the material to his own world.

I love the fiction! In fact if SHADIS went to an entirely all-fiction format I would not be disappointed. However I also love the RPG tie-ins.

Mark my words, other magazines are going to copy your format! But you had it first! I tend to agree with James Minton, there just are not enough of the stories in each issue. Expand the number of pages and raise the price a buck. Shadis is underpriced anyway and the additional material should quiet any would be protestors.

George Vrbancic's covers are sensational. Hang on to him! You should really tie him down and force him to do some illustrations for the fiction. I enjoy Daniel Gidding's artwork as well, he has a unique style.

Now to the real reason I've written. The resurrection debate was great. Our group abolished resurrection years ago and most DMs I know share the same feelings as well as their players. Still there are those bull-headed individuals who insist on resurrection. If you play in a campaign where the DM or other players insist on resurrection provisions then simply play your character to your own tastes. I write up a will for my characters stating that he or she does not want to be resurrected in the event of death. A strong warning in the will promises swift revenge to anyone who does not honor that character's wishes. That way you can demonstrate firsthand to other players that you live (or die) by your words.

By the Way, hats off to Mr. Blackburn and Mr. Vanhoose. Your arguments against resurrection were the best I've ever seen in print. You could have cut your entire position down to the last four paragraphs however, I've xeroxed that portion and carry it in my Dungeon

Master's Guide as a first line of defense.

Jeff Osmond
Casper, Wyoming

Dear SHADIS,

I want to respond to Dave Preston's letter in Issue number 3. Mr. Preston's opinions about live-action role-players are outdated and uninformed.

To be more accurate his arguments were just plain STUPID! I have been involved in several dozen live-action campaigns both local and regional for the I.F.G.S. We don't have problems because we DO everything in the open where people can check us out. Our groups include doctors, police officers, local military personnel etc. The reaction from spectators has always been very curious and open.

How much ground should we give up because a few narrow-minded idiots point fingers. Should we eliminate the evil-alignments? Should we eliminate Clerics? I refuse to alter or give up my favorite form of entertainment for anyone.

Jeff McDowell
Anderson, IN

Dear SHADIS,

I really enjoy Knights of the Dinner Table. It has a very unique point-of-view. Everyone regardless of what RPG they play can relate to the antics of these players.

Good work on the new columns! I love Rustlers! New monsters with depth and background like the Sturm-

Continued on page 62

The World Beyond 'HackandSlash'

Part Four: Fighters



By John K. D'Amato

In an effort to lift ourselves above the normal, run-of-the-mill, repetitive, hack and slash campaigns we've been playing, we've explored a different experience point system.

In the last three issues, we've looked at the thief, cleric and magic-user, designing a system which would award them points based on what they should be doing. Now, hopefully, we have clerics who are praying, magic-users enthralled with magic and thieves slinking around.

Once you institute a system like this, however, you may discover something strange — everyone wants to be one of those character classes who benefits from the new system and nobody wants to be a fighter anymore. "After all," asked one player who'd always preferred a fighter, "the other classes can get the same amount of experience points without risking their necks and are more interesting to play now."

Another player asked, "Why aren't there

additional ways of obtaining points for fighters?." It's a good question, especially if points for certain activities were limited to only that particular class.

The more I looked into it, the more I discovered that there were quite a few things that good fighters do that they never receive credit for under the existing experience point system.

So, here are some new ideas for fighters.

"We gain experience in our own lives by trying new and different things. The same is true for fighters."

Award fighters (and all subclasses of fighters, i.e. paladins, rangers, etc.) the normal points for killing monsters/beings. Give some points, but somewhat less, for wounding, scaring off or negotiating himself and his party past those same monsters. You shouldn't have to kill something to get

points, since experience you gain is through the encounter or the battle and not from depriving the monster of its life.

Experience is the key, so give a fighter 150 points for any man-to-man duel, regardless of outcome. "Man" in this case, refers to all human-

kind and demi-humans. As a DM, be careful here. The unscrupulous player may attempt to arrange duels with other party members. Both players will pull their punches and try to cash in on the points.

Make sure it's a legitimate duel, and that death or serious injury could be a possible outcome. If the player's character makes a good showing, award the points, even if they lose the duel. Again, it's the experience that counts.

We gain experience in our own lives by trying new and different things. The same is true for fighters. If the player characters are land-based fighters, award them 200 points for combat conducted on the high seas, underwater or while on a winged mount. Your fighters experience a big difference between galloping across a battlefield and the fighting that goes on in a ship's rigging or jousting on the back of a flying steed. Give them experience points for what they've learned.

"Practice makes perfect," is another way of saying the more you do something, the more experienced you become at that task. For that reason, award fighters 50 points for attempting to learn a new weapon or type of combat, such as jousting, chariotteering, siege operations etc. Limit these points to once a day and you may find your fighters out doing more practical things than just sitting around in their rooms or carousing the whole day at the local tavern between adventures.

Since fighting is their business, and probably the thing they like to do the best, fighters are more curious about and happiest with the things they know. Award the same points as the book suggests for normal treasure gained, but double the points if the treasure found is armor, swords or related fighting equipment. Amos, the dwarf, will probably be a lot more thrilled finding a good throwing ax than a half-dozen gilded mirrors. And, to a fighter, a decent helmet comes in handier in warding off the stray arrow than a tapestry of four peasants dancing with a unicorn.

Your fighter is probably going to need that helmet, considering the propensity that party

leaders have of assigning fighters to the most dangerous details.

"We need a point man!" says the leader.

"Send the fighter," everyone volunteers.

"We need a rear guard to protect us from the fifty orcs on our tail!" proclaims the leader.

"Send the fighter!" shouts the group.

Experience points? Nary a one, under the old system, unless the fighter managed to slay a beastie or two. This seems patently unfair to fighters, who risk their lives for our poor magic-users, clerics and thieves.

To correct this rules' oversight, award fighters 150 points when leading a party through a dangerous area, or 50 points when acting as a rear guard. The key here is that there must be some sort of real danger present. No points are awarded just because the fighter in the front or rear position while the party travels a forest road or an abandoned-tunnel complex.

If they're always in the lead, fighters are normally the ones who fall through trapdoors, trip the wire that looses a half-dozen arrows, or causes a rock to drop on someone. They're also the ones who jump forward to save the magic-user from the final slashes of the dastardly kobolds.

Award fighters 200 points for tripping a trap and taking damage, taking damage from a monster or single-handedly saving someone else's life. These points may have to be adjusted according to the situation and perhaps even according to the player character's alignment. As DM, you be the judge.

Fighters, in most campaigns seem to find themselves in the role of protectors, whether it's a friendly village, other party members or maybe even in the employ of some villainous overlord.

I've found one way to persuade them to stick their necks out, instead of hanging around waiting for an unguarded tomb filled with treasure. That is to award experience points for certain limited or extended actions.

Offer 250 points for saving a prince, king

Fighters

or any 9th level or higher character, NPC, or lady-in-distress from danger or impending doom. These points are awarded only once per day, and the character levels mentioned need to be adjusted in campaigns with lots of high level characters.

Another 1,000 points is available for the completion of a mission for other characters or NPCs twice the character's level. This 1,000 points ought to be for something akin to a quest, of a lengthy duration in time and travel, and for a character generally of the same alignment as the player character.

Again, all of these suggestions are just that, and you can throw out the ones you don't like, adjust them to fit your campaign, or take them the way they're listed.

My campaigns are generally for low-level 1st thru 5th level characters, so 10 experience points here, 50 there, (instead of 500), reflect my feelings that characters should not be awarded too liberally. My monsters are played pretty tough, however, and therefore the points described are my compensation for players not amassing a lot of kill or treasure points.

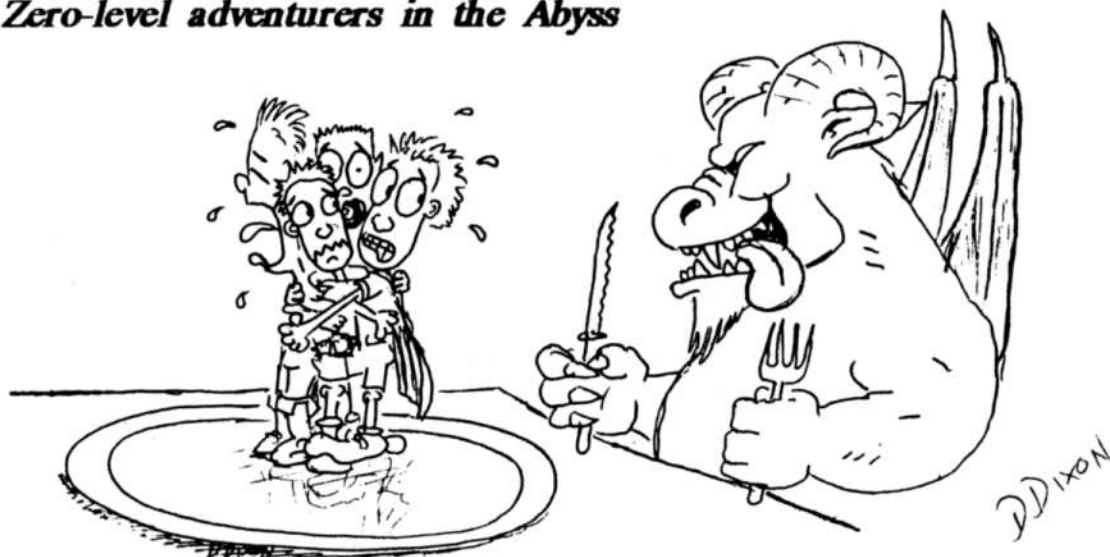
Finally, a word of thanks to Gary Gygax. My expansion of the experience-point system should not be taken by anyone to mean that the system he developed was in anyway short-sighted.

In fact, there are almost no AD&D rules that I can think of that someone hasn't tinkered with or attempted to improve upon. What Mr. Gygax gave us, I believe, was a foundation to build upon. AD&D is a wonderful game, and its immense popularity is a testament not only to how much fun it is to play, but because it is also a game-designer's dream. In my case, AD&D has afforded me the opportunity to take a great system, and play with the details, which is where my gaming pleasure and that of many other DMs is derived.

Thanks, Gary. To the rest of you -- good gaming, and I'll see you next issue.

Worksheet #4 provides a summary of the experience-point system for fighters. 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 fighter has earned. Modify the points as you see fit. □

Zero-level adventurers in the Abyss



EXPERIENCE POINT WORKSHEET # 4 FIGHTERS

1. Killing monsters/beings (wounding, scaring off, negotiating through) Points determined by DM, with appropriate sources as guide.

2. Gaining treasure, with double points for armor, swords or related fighting equipment found.

3. 150 points for leading party through danger.

4. 50 points for acting as a rear guard, as party passes through danger.

5. 100 points for discovering, or tripping a trap.

6. 200 points for tripping a trap and taking damage / taking damage from a monster / or single-handedly saving others from death or near death.

7. 50 points for attempting to learn a new weapon, or type of combat (i.e. jousting, charioteering, siege operations etc.) Once per day.

8. 50 points for man-to-man duel, regardless of outcome.

9. 200 points for sea/undersea or air combat. Once per day.

10. 250 points for saving prince, king or any character 9th level or higher, from danger. Good once per day.

11. 1,000 points for completion of mission given by character/NPC twice the character's level. (Generally of the same alignment.)

NOTES:

CHARACTER: _____
SESSION: _____

TOTAL:



"As he left the confines of the village and reached the open hills, Scav's heart seemed to be beating to the rythm of the horse's hooves striking the ground. He wasn't sure what had just happened. Has Faur had turned him loose. But why?"

The Bones of Ruin



By Jolly R. Blackburn

PART IV BLOOD AND ALE

"Then the Raven said to Saratar, 'Why do you grow faint of heart good master? Do you not know that from these bones of ruin there shall arise another! An untamed youth with uncombed hair and bare feet. He shall rise in your image with your sword in hand. And though the entire world will be set against him, he shall prevail.'"

Kaba-Troth Book IV

Day 234 Year 108

Scav Sagenthor nudged his horse in the ribs, encouraging the animal to pick up its stride. He'd broken onto a winding, muddy track earlier that morning which showed signs of being heavily traveled. Cutting cross country after his escape from the mines had caused him to lose all sense of direction. The Galon Hills were notorious for causing the unwary to lose their way. But Scav was quite confident now that the road he traveled led to Talert, his elusive destination and that the village would loom into view before the day was out.

Riding bareback did not suit the young usurper; his back burned with fatigue and his spine ached. He found comfort in telling himself that soon he would be sleeping in a real bed, feasting on a variety of meats and stews prepared by the hands of Gandle. He smiled at the thought and prodded

his horse to go a little faster.

Just as he was coming around a bend in the road he detected a flash of polished steel about twenty yards ahead. He immediately halted his horse and studied the road before him.

At first he could only make out shadows along the heavily forested roadside. Then he detected movement and two men stepped out onto the road, turning their attention toward Scav. One had an arrow readied in a long bow, the other brandished an enormous banner emblazoned with the crest of the Fifth Varnen-Caras.

"Hold fast there!" one of the men yelled to him.

Scav gripped the mane of his horse tightly. The Imperial Legions in this area?

"Come here you!" yelled the man again, "Easy now!"

Scav's mind flashed with a thousand options. Without hesitation he kicked the horse fiercely in the ribs and turned into the heavy foliage to the side of the road. Branches struck him in the face and arms nearly dislodging him from his mount. The horse took several heavy strides forcing its way through the thick undergrowth and then suddenly collapsed beneath Scav.

Horse and rider rolled and tumbled down the edge of a deep gully. Finally coming to rest in a smouldering heap of leaves and peat, Scav found himself laying on his back, his left leg pinned beneath the horse.

Groaning in pain he used his free leg for

leverage against the horse's back and pried his leg free. The horse lie quietly drawing deep, difficult breaths. Scav stood to his feet patting the horse on the back. "Come on girl, get up, quickly!"

Then he saw it. The broken shaft of an arrow protruding from the horses's neck.

"Sorry girl," whispered Scav with sincere regret. Above him from the road he could hear the thunderous sounds of cracking limbs and leaves being crushed under foot. He quickly scanned the area for an escape route.

Running as fast as he could, Scav headed up a spur on the other side of the narrow gully. Behind him he heard the excited shouts of several men and the metallic rattle of armor.

"Stupidity!" he thought to himself as he struggled through a wall of vines and gnarled limbs. This close to his destination and he'd nearly allowed himself to be captured.

Velnar Curstain sat quietly in the great vaulted gallery of the temple of Benyar. Staring idly at the mosaic floor he wrung his hands beneath the folds of his robes.

He hated coming to the temple. He always had, but of late it had become a torturous ordeal. So much was at stake now and tensions were high.

It was late into the evening and it seemed to Curstain that the whole world was on the brink of ruin. If not the entire world at least his own world was about to shatter.

Only hours before a messenger from the Temple had awoken him to inform him that the high priest was in urgent need of him. The elderly Rader-Keem knew what the summons meant. The Arden'Vas, high-priest of the Benyaran temple had lost his fight with the fever he'd been fighting for the past eleven days.

From the far end of the gallery a set of large cedar doors swung open and from the darkness emerged a young initiate dressed in red flowing robes. He walked directly in Velnar's direction

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• Velnar Curstain •

at a brisk stride carrying a flickering reed-torch.

Velnar stood to his feet and started to walk toward the young boy.

"Rader-Keem Curstain? The Arden'Vas will see you now."

Curstain nodded his approval and headed for the cedar doors. The Arden'Vas was a powerful man, some believed him to wield more power and influence than the Emperor. While the Emperor could call up armies and cast a spell of fear on those who served him, he was still considered to be a mere mortal man. The high priest of the Benyaran cult however, was a god. He commanded the heart and soul of the empire. It was a power the Emperor was jealous of and he made no attempt to hide his

lust for that power. Countless times he had badgered the Bin'Parta to beseech the Arden'Vas to transfer his title to the Emperor. A deified Emperor! But the wise Arden'Vas could not be shaken or intimidated.

Curstain came to the doors and paused. Few outsiders were allowed beyond these doors. The unclean were not worthy to stand in the divine presence of Benyar's worldly incarnation. But the Arden'Vas had bestowed Curstain with the right to have audience with him. It was an honor Curstain had not wanted or solicited.

He entered a dark corridor and headed for the soft glow of amber light at its far end. The sweet, warm aroma of incense filled his nostrils. His knees weakened and he could feel his breathing become more difficult. This was not going to be pleasant.

Finally he emerged into a great room skirted with extravagant crimson curtains trimmed in gold embroidery. At the center of the room on a raised platform of black marble lay the Arden'Vas on his great gilded bed, veiled in the crimson smoke of the burning incense. Two ancient attendants sat on either side of him chanting in hushed voices and applying their medicinal oils.

Curstain waited in silence, his head bowed. After a long moment the Arden'Vas stirred and looked toward him. A weak smile stretched across his lips. He motioned for the attendants to leave them alone. When they had gone, the elderly man leaned up on one elbow, "Come my friend," he said in a shallow voice "No formalities tonight. There isn't much time."

Curstain climbed the marble steps to the high-priest and knelted at his bedside. "My Lord, I don't know what to..."

The old man shook his head. "We knew this time would come. Listen to me Velnar. I had a dream tonight. Benyar came to me and spread his wings about me. He is to take me to the grand aerie this very night. I came into this world as a man, and I shall leave it as a man once again. I have

walked my allotted days on Alderac. It is time for Benyar to choose a new vessel and for me to pass through the great veil."

Curstain shook his head. "It can't be! The empire will be ripped asunder with your death! The Emperor will immediately proclaim himself Arden'Vas! A murderer masquerading as a god. What are we to do?"

The Arden'Vas took Curstain by the hand. "You've always had so little faith in the gods. How does one so great in years still remain such a child in spirit. Keep wide your eyes, and you will see what wonders Benyar shall perform." He smiled and looked deeply into Curstain's eyes. "Now, the reason I've summoned you here. My daughter Jesmar will be anointed the new Arden'Vas this very night."

"Jesmar?" said Curstain in astonishment, "A woman as high-priest? I don't..."

"Jesmar has just celebrated her eighth year of birth. In my dream, Benyar chose her to succeed me. I will not deceive you, I am very confused as to his choice, but I shall not question his wisdom. It shall be."

Curstain was bewildered, "But you have four sons in line to succeed you, my Lord. Surely Sartan your eldest will..."

"It SHALL be Jesmar!" snapped the high priest. The outburst weakened the elderly priest and he closed his eyes for several moments drawing his strength together again. "That's precisely why I've summoned you. You will be Jesmar's guardian. For one so few in years, she has great enemies. She will be as a young foal among wolves! She has enemies within these very walls as well as on the outside. You are charged with her safety. Benyar has not revealed to me fully what is to come, but I do know that it will be Jesmar who will anoint Scav Sagenthor as Emperor in the fulfillment of the Kaba-Troth."

Curstain was having difficulty breathing. "My Lord, please forgive me, but I am unworthy of such a charge. I have barely managed to keep my

own head on these shoulders. The Var'Rader-Keem's men have been following me for weeks. They know I visited Raventhorpe in Bowmar that last night! I've my own flesh and blood to look after. How can I possibly protect..."

"Look inside yourself Velnar!" snapped the Arden'Vas with a renewed vein of strength in his words, "Benyar has shown me that part of you deep within the shadows of your heart. Something you believe has died long ago. You've a great spirit within you. An ember awaiting the slightest wisp of breath so that it may erupt into flames. Find it!"

Curstain shook his head. He was too old for noble causes. Too old to be used as a pawn in a game between the Emperor and the gods. If only there were some sort of strength within him he could muster. During his campaigns he had led men in scores of battles. Against tangible enemies with faces and names. But this?

"These shoulders are much too narrow and frail to bear such a weight my Lord! I'm not a coward, I bare many scars to that defense. But Benyar was not there to stand between Raventhorpe and the Tandor's whip. And he was not there the night Scav Sagenthor attacked the Matra'Kar. How can I possibly believe it is his will when we've met nothing but failure?"

Curstain drew pale. He heard the words usher forth from his lips and could scarcely believe that he had said them. Had he suddenly gone mad? "I apologize my Lord! I AM a coward. I hold no

faith in myself or the gods. This is true. Can I be held accountable for my own lack of spirit?"

The Arden'Vas' face flooded with disappointment. "I have charged you! If you fail me, such calamity will befall this world as never seen before. Can you honestly walk away from it? If your neighbor's house caught fire you would help him put it out. For the fire would soon consume your house as well. If you fail me now, the troubles that are born from that failure will consume you as well. You harbor a great number of fears in your

heart Curstain. Fear of losing your properties, your rank and titles. Fear of losing wife and family. You hide behind these fears as a shield. Perhaps I was wrong about you."

Curstain moaned in despair. When would his service to the world be finished? "I don't have the courage to refuse you my Lord. You know my heart better than I. I will do as you ask to the best of my ability. If Benyar is willing I will not fail you."

"Excellent. Now, there is much to discuss and to prepare."

The old priest lifted the blanket at his side and revealed a long slender object sheathed in linen wrappings. "Here, take this and unwrap it."

Curstain, bewildered took the object. He tugged at its weight. It was fairly heavy. Unwrapping the cloth strips he quickly surmised what the object was. A great sword. As the blade was revealed to him, bit by bit, he detected the intricate engraving and runes which told him that this was no ordinary sword.

Finally, he revealed the entire sword and held it across his knee. It gleamed like burnished silver. The hilt was finely inlaid with precious stone.

"This is the sword, Thornbrim!" said the priest with great pride.

Curstain nearly dropped the sword and gasped in astonishment. "Thorn....the sword of Saratar? The actual sword of Thornbri...."

"The actual sword my friend. It has been within these walls for nearly seventy years now. Shortly before his death, Terac brought a great brick of baked clay to the temple and left it in our care. Offering no explanation, he instructed the temple priests to set the mysterious brick before the statue of Benyar in the High Sanctuary. There it lay undisturbed all these years until three years ago, when a great tremor shook the whole of Yistain Hill and the brick shattered, revealing the sword. Terac must have stolen it from the Great Wyrn Salamar'tey. A wondrous fulfillment of the oracle.

"Thornbrim which has been stolen by a thief shall be returned by a thief."

Curstain ran his hand along the flat of the sword's blade. He was in awe of the sword. His mind flashed with the names of the great Kings who had wielded this very sword. Suddenly the palm of his hand grew cold as if he had placed it on hoar frost. He snapped back his hand and examined his palm.

"The sword has great powers. That's why it must remain covered at all times. It has always wrought evil in the hands of the wrong men. It snaps the mind and makes a man insane, driving him to ruin if he does not prove greater than the sword. It was forged by the hands of Yi'Gor himself, the dark god, to destroy the tablets of motherstone. By destroying the oath between the great BattleLords he cast the world into chaos. For his crime he was blinded and cast into the great desert of Flamar."

Curstain was familiar with the story behind Thornbrim. Yi'Gor in his blind rage shook the land and created volcanoes making the deserts of Flamar a wasteland. Yi'Gor the great betrayer scattered the thirteen pieces of the shattered tablet across the vast face of Alderac. Thornbrim surfaced in the world of men. A powerful weapon coveted by all who learned of its existence. The object of great yearning and fruitless quests; to possess what cannot be possessed.

The old priest noticed that Curstain was holding the sword and staring at it in a trance-like state. "You'd better wrap it again. Unfortunately neither you nor I could hope to master it."

Curstain began to wrap the linen strips about the blade again and shook his head. "Why didn't you tell me of this? This changes everything! The Kaba-Troth states that the new Emperor will be ordained with the sword of Thornbrim. Thornbrim has been lost to the world for centuries. It was the one part of the oracle that baffled me. That it should appear again at this place and time...."

The Arden'Vas smiled weakly. "Faith that

is nurtured on facts is a weak faith my friend."

Curstain handed the sword back to the elderly priest. The Arden'Vas raised his hand to stop him. "No, you will take it with you and secure it. There are loose tongues within these walls. With my death, any loyalty that I commanded shall die with me. The sword represents power and there are many who would sell themselves to possess such power. You hold it until the boy returns to the city."

"Scav return here?" asked Curstain unbelievably.

"He has no choice. The fulfillment of the oracles will take place here in Soult Tet."

Curstain held the sword to his breast and stared at the Arden'Vas, his mind spinning with all that had come to pass. "How was I drawn into these terrible things? I shall never live the quiet life again. I know that now. All my life I yearned only for a quiet villa of my own. A few faithful slaves to tend to me in my old age. A small vineyard from which I could make my wine. And nearby a peaceful garden from which I could watch my grandchildren play at my feet. That dream has just slipped away and become vapor. What ever shall become of me now?"

"I can't tell you what shall befall you in the coming days my friend," replied the priest. "Surely they will be troubled and full of grief. Take comfort in knowing that you shall join me at the Grand Aerie in the next life."

Curstain was not comforted by the elderly priest's words. He knew nothing of the Grand Aerie and its vague promises of an afterlife. The pleasures of this life were the things he'd learned to love; the sweet taste of wine and the soft touch of a woman.

"Now Velnar, I want you to meet my daughter Jesmar. We will proceed with the ceremony."

Curstain looked sadly into the high-priest's eyes and noticed that they had grown dis-

tant and cold. "I will miss you" he thought to himself.

Scav emerged from the woodline and stepped out onto the road. He slowly walked toward the bend and slipped behind a large ancient oak. Cautiously he peered around the bend and sighed with relief.

Before him lay the first familiar sight he'd seen in weeks. An old decaying building that lay on the outskirts of Talert, the old smitty.

The winter-sun was just beginning to slip behind the hills to the west and Scav felt confident moving along the dark shadows at the road's edge.

He stepped back out onto the road and started walking briskly toward the town. As he passed the old smitty he gazed sadly at its dilapidated state. It was totally abandoned now. Old Bartran once ran the smitty. A giant man who loved to sing, although very badly, as he hammered out his horseshoes, pick-axes and swords.

Soon, the small clutch of Talert's remaining buildings came to view. Scav was shocked to see that the Old Lard Pale, was now a gutted pile of burnt timber. As he drew nearer he scanned the other stores and buildings. The town appeared to be dead except for the pale light coming from the Branded Ass and the wisps of smoke rising from the chimney atop Gandle's leather shop.

In front of Gandle's shop three horses were tied off and eating from a wooden trough filled with straw. Scav found his heart racing. "Falsnare, you'd better be here" he mumbled to himself.

He headed directly for Gandle's. As he passed the horses he inspected them quickly. They were lean and road-weary. Whoever owned them had either traveled long and hard or was in the habit of neglecting their animals.

He stepped up to the oiled-window of Gandle's shop and peered in. He could only make out the vague shadows of several men huddled

about a table. Holding his breath he placed his hand on the door latch and entered the shop.

As he stepped into the room he was greeted with the warm aroma of fresh leather. Four startled faces looked toward him. Scav was still trying to adjust his eyes to the dim light when the room filled with a round of cheers.

"Damn you to hell boy! You made it!" yelled Falsnare leaping from his chair so fast that it fell over and crashed to the floor.

Scav rushed toward his old comrade and the two embraced in a flurry of laughter and howls.

"I was beginning to believe our paths would never cross," cried Scav, his voice shrill with emotion. He slapped Falsnare on the back and looked about the room. He caught the cold piercing glare of Tasmarr the grevan. Scav hadn't expected to see him again. To his left was Brantar, his beard soaked with ale and a tight smile stretching across his yellow teeth. And there looking as if he'd seen a ghost was old Gandle, his mouth agape, speechless.

"What's the matter Gandle?" asked Scav laughing, "I hope you didn't place a bet that I'd never show."

Gandle shook his head, "In all my frost-bitten days I've never seen such foolishness. I was bettin' you had better sense than to head this way. Are you set on loosing that head of yers?"

Falsnare laughed and pulled up a chair for Scav. "Here have some ale and I'll throw some logs on the fire." He looked to Gandle and pointed his finger, "Like I was telling you old man you can't kill this little bearclub! The boy has the luck of the gods riding on his shoulders."

Falsnare moved to the fireplace and threw several logs into the flickering flames. Then he quickly rejoined the others at the table. He shoved the large jug of ale toward Scav.

"We've been growing fat here for about three weeks now. Gandle is getting a little tired of our company." Falsnare looked to Gandle and laughed. "We pretty much decided it was over by

now. When the thaw came I was thinking of riding north for good. But now you're here...Ah it's good to see you again lad."

"Speak for yourself!" protested Gandle, "By coming back here you've put all our necks beneath the axe."

Falsnare waved off Gandle, "No one knows he's here. You worry like an old woman."

"Like Hell!" snapped Gandle, "Sageem has everyone of his legions combing the land for Scav. Blood flows across the table you know! We'll all be done in if he's found here!"

Scav tried to ignore the remarks. He took the jug and drank deeply. It had been a very long time since he'd had a drink. At long last he lowered the jug. All eyes at the table were glued to him. He closed his eyes and opened them again. It wasn't a dream. He was sitting with old friends in a familiar place. Well, mostly old friends. He could feel the hot eyes of Tasmar burning into the side of his head. Tasmar had always frightened Scav. He could sense the well of hatred behind those grevan eyes.

"Well it wasn't my idea to come here," said Scav calmly. "When I missed you at Tingar I wanted to ride north myself and be done with it. I feel far older than my years and I've seen more of this Empire than I ever cared to."

Tasmar grunted, "And so have we. Until we arrived here, we hadn't slept more than one night in the same place."

Falsnare cast Tasmar a look of warning and then turned to Scav. "I guess ol' Scar managed to tell you about Raventhorpe?"

Scav nodded. He had hoped it wasn't true. "Raventhorpe forged this whole affair. He brought us together. Without him I'm not sure where to turn."

"Someone betrayed him you know," said Falsnare. "And I have a good idea who it was."

Scav looked to Falsnare in astonishment, "I refuse to believe that. Who could've.."

Falsnare hesitated for a moment and then

began to speak nervously, "Besides you and I, only two other people knew that Raventhorpe had chosen to hide in Abos. Rader-Keem Curstain was one and the other was..."

Scav began to shake his head in protest. "No, it couldn't have been Gart. I know him too well. Why he risked his life once to save me."

Brantar jumped in. "I read that bastard right the moment I first saw him at your side. I've seen his breed many times. Pigs who change their loyalties with the wind."

Falsnare leaned in closer to Scav. "You listen to me Scav. I've mulled over this matter for a good number of weeks now. Curstain had nothing to gain by betraying Raventhorpe. He's risked more than any of us. If anything, Curstain would have assassinated Raventhorpe to protect himself from exposure. Besides we've heard that Raventhorpe was betrayed for a bag of gold. Curstain is a wealthy man, I doubt he'd implicate himself for such a modest sum. Gart, on the other hand was always looking for enough coin to buy his next drink. You think on it and you'll come to the same conclusion."

Scav shook his head. "I refuse to think the worse of a friend, especially when he isn't here to defend himself. I wouldn't do that to anyone sitting at this table. Gart is one of us until I say otherwise."

Falsnare shrugged and leaned back in his chair. "Well, Gart hasn't shown up. He didn't meet us in Ventel, and no one has heard from him."

"Gart accompanied Raventhorpe to Abos. It's likely they were both caught at the same time," suggested Scav. "Are any of the others here besides yourself?"

Brantar laughed loudly at the question. "ANY OF THE OTHERS? This is it. You still haven't figured it out have you?" Brantar stood to his feet and leaned across the table till his face was but a hand's width from Scav's. "It's OVER! Finished! Everyone else has sailed for the Ginge and I don't think they'll ever show their hides in Ragea

again. Everyone knows it's finished but you and Falsnare."

Falsnare placed his hand on Brantar's shoulder and shoved him back into his chair. "Easy Bran!" he said sternly "You're letting the ale misdirect your anger!"

Brantar began to laugh. "Oh don't worry I'm not going to hurt the sciver. Though I've laid awake many nights stewing that thought in my brain, I don't blame the boy any longer. I was the fool to follow him in the first place. Such an educated man my father made me. Omens! Oracles! Ha!, to think I rode against the Emperor at the mad ramblings of this lot!"

Tasmar sneered at Brantar, "I see nothing funny here! We've all been cheated one way or another. I'll be running the rest of my days because of this boy-brat. And I didn't come here to give the Emperor a second chance at taking my head! I want the gold I was promised and then I'm gone."

Brantar nodded in agreement, "And since the rest have chosen to sail to the Ginge to save their asses, I think we should collect their shares as well."

Falsnare eased his hand to the hilt of his sword beneath the table. Things were getting ugly. He had managed to check the tempers of his two comrades over the past weeks by making false promises and telling his partners what they wanted to hear. "Everyone calm down! There will be no talk of splitting the gold until we've settled a few matters. I don't think we're through yet and I'll stand behind Scav until he decides if it's over or not."

The veins on Tasmar's forehead began to rise. "What does it take to crack that skull of yours? It is over! The only chance we ever had when we attacked the Emperor's residence was that the Imperial guard would rally behind us when they learned that the son of Relnus Sagenthor rode with us! Well, they didn't fall in with us as Raventhorpe promised. And why would they? Scav isn't a warrior! Hell, he isn't even a leader. He's nothing

but a scared pup. There's not a soldier in the Empire who would swear allegiance to him. Especially after he ran from a fight!"

Scav stood to his feet, his temper had been slowly building and had now broken. "THAT'S A LIE!" he screamed, "I didn't run that night, my men abandoned me at the first flash of steel."

Falsnare placed a hand on Scav's shoulder and eased him back into his chair. "What's the matter with us? Did we crawl all the way back here to tear out each other's throats?" He looked to Scav and motioned for him to take another drink. "It's fear talking here. We're all scared. What happened that night wasn't anyone's fault at this table. We all know that. There was a traitor in our ranks, perhaps more than one. The Imperial guard knew we were coming and they were ready for us. They bested us in combat and that's about all there is to it."

"You really believe we were betrayed?" asked Scav.

"For a long time something bothered me about that night. It's as if the guards had rehearsed our attack and knew exactly how to respond."

Tasmar spit on the middle of the table. "I still say the boy fouled things up by not taking command. And I'm not taking any more orders from him, or you Falsnare."

"You swore allegiance to him Tasmar!" reminded Falsnare, "Are you prepared to break that oath now?"

The grevan stared at Falsnare in silence. Scav had watched the exchange, slowly feeling his optimism being sapped and drained away only to be replaced by anger. Suddenly he could take no more. He stood to his feet and slammed his fist on the table.

"Enough!" he barked. "I didn't ask for anyone's allegiance. I never wanted any part of this. I didn't ask anyone here to follow me. I don't understand the Kaba-Troth. I don't see myself in these damned oracles. It was you here at this table that pushed and badgered me into this. Everyone here once served my father loyally up to his death.

Tasmar smiled. "So the pup's learned to bark! Well it won't put you on the throne and it won't win any battles. I'll take my gold and go."

Scav looked to Falsnare confused, "What is this talk of gold?"

Falsnare's face flushed. "Uh, well...you see Raventhorpe had promised every man who rode with us 100 serti a piece for attacking the Ma-tra'Kar. There were no conditions of success attached to that offer."

Scav looked to Brantar. "And you feel the same way?"

Brantar hesitated, looked to Tasmar and back to Falsnare. "I just want what was promised to me."

Scav leaned back in his chair and crossed his arms over his chest. "You'll get paid. In fact I'll give every man here double what was promised to him. But there's a problem."

"And what would that be?" growled Tasmar.

"Raventhorpe placed our treasury in the safest place in the Empire. Someplace he knew that even the emperor could not get his hands on it."

"Where?" asked Brantar.

"In Forcar'Remius, the temple of Benyar in Soult Tet."

There were several moments of silence. Falsnare winced at the words and shook his head slowly. If he managed to save Scav from taking blows this time it would be a miracle.

Finally Tasmar picked up the jug of ale and threw it toward Scav. It whizzed past his temple, barely missing, and shattered against the wall behind him. The grevan exploded with rage.

"You bloody bastard! I should deliver your head to Sageem myself. What in Vaarch's six hells were you thinking of?"

Falsnare drew his sword and leapt to his feet. He had known Tasmar long enough to read him. The barbarian was on the fringe of becoming berserk. If the grevan went over the edge he would no longer be a friend, but a formidable enemy.

"THAT'S ENOUGH TASMAR!" he screamed, "I won't allow this go any further."

Tasmar stood to his feet and gripped the hilt of his sword. The two men stared into each other's eyes for what seemed an eternity. The muscles in Tasmar's neck twitched as he gritted his teeth. Finally he relaxed, removed his hand from his sword and half-smiled.

"You know I won't go against you Falsnare! It shall go no further." he growled, "I'm through with it, through with all of you."

The grevan grabbed his pack and headed for the door. He paused and turned toward Scav. "He won't always be there to fight your battles pup." He looked to Brantar, "You coming or staying? I don't care which."

Brantar looked to Scav and then to Falsnare, his face expressionless. After several moments of silence he shook his head slowly. "No, I'll stand by my word to the boy, for now. If I was a fool when I made that oath, I suppose I'm still the same fool."

"Then I'm through with all of you!" snapped the grevan. He exploded from the doors. A few moments later the sound of his horse being rode at a hard gallop echoed in the street.

Falsnare breathed a sigh of relief and replaced his sword in its sheath. "We just lost our best fighter."

Gandle stood up and grabbed his broom. Moving to the shattered jug he began to sweep up the mess. "You're better off without 'im. No good ever came out of anything with grevan hands on it."

Brantar buried his head in his arms on the table and emitted a long guttural groan of frustration. "I wish I had the courage of that grevan bastard. I would have been right behind him."

Falsnare sat down once again and slapped Scav on the back. "So, do you have any notions on what we should do?"

Scav wiped the perspiration from his brow on the back of his sleeve. How many battles had

Falsnare fought for him? And yet the veteran warrior always stood behind him.

"Well...I've been thinking that we should head back south. To Soult Tet."

Brantar whistled and looked up. "You are courtin' to have your head lifted aren't you son?"

"Is that what seems right to you?" asked Falsnare sincerely.

Scav nodded quickly. "I need to see the Arden'Vas at the temple. He has our treasury and he believes in me. If anyone can tell me what must be done, it will be him."

Gandle was just finishing sweeping the shards of clay into the street when he overheard the comments and turned. "Sure, that's it! The whole of the empire is after your heads and you're going to go within a stone's throw of the Emperor's garden."

"I don't like the idea myself," commented Scav, "But I feel compelled to return to the capital. I can't explain why, but I know it's the right thing to do."

"Now I'm beginning to see some spirit," laughed Falsnare. "When do we leave?"

"Tomorrow," answered Scav, surprising himself with his own answer. "Time is against us. We must keep moving."

Gandle nodded in approval and returned to his sweeping. "Now you're making some sense."

The Arden'Vas picked up a small brass bell by his bedside and rung it several times. He turned to Curstain and patted him on the hand, "You will stay during the ceremony. I want Jesmar to know that I trust you. She's a very peculiar child and does not make friends easily. You will have to win her trust."

Curstain nodded. The two elderly attendants who had been at the high-priest's side earlier, emerged from the dark corridor and bowed respectfully. "Your Lordship!" they said in unison.

"Bring the child. We are ready to begin."

They immediately turned and disappeared again. Curstain rose to his feet and straightened out his robes. He was tired and longed for sleep. He hoped the ceremony would be a short one.

After several minutes, the sounds of footsteps echoed from the corridor. Four young men emerged carrying a wooden litter on their shoulders. Perched atop the litter was a young girl, her eye's full of sleep and confusion. She was a beautiful child, with long locks of blonde hair crowning her head.

The litter was set down at the base of the marble platform and its bearers knelt in silence. Behind them, the two attendants stood, each holding small scroll cases.

The Arden'Vas patted Curstain's hand again, "Help me sit up," he whispered. Curstain placed a hand on the priest's back and eased him to a sitting position. The high-priest wavered for a second from side to side then finally found his balance.

Curstain stepped back and turned his attention to the small girl below him. He blinked and looked again. He had thought his eyes were playing tricks on him at first, but then he saw that clearly, the young girl's legs were twisted and withered. It appeared to Curstain that the child had been born in such a state and that her condition was not as a result of injury.

The Arden'Vas cleared his throat and began to speak, "Jesmar, do you understand what we are about to do child?"

The wide-eyed girl moved her lips and said something but her words were inaudible.

"Speak up child. This is important," said the father sternly.

"Yes...father," came the answer, still faint, but this time she was heard.

"A great honor is about to be bestowed on you Jesmar. I am about to pass onto you the living-spirit of Benyar."

Curstain stared at the young girl in awe.

Could she possibly grasp what was about to happen to her? He could not help but feel a great flood of regret overcome him. Her childhood would be cruelly snuffed out this night and replaced with the melancholy world of a god trapped among mortals, a sentence of solitude within the temple walls for rest of her life.

The Arden'Vas suddenly groaned in pain, his head snapping back as he fought to regain his composure. Finally he straightened and looked toward his attendants, "We must complete the ceremony, quickly," he whispered.

One of the attendants removed the scroll from its ivory scroll case and prepared to read from it. Curstain closed his eyes and prayed that the wisdom of Benyar was indeed infallible.

Somewhere in the Salamar Mountains, Salamar'Tey awoke with a startled snarl. He swished his great tail, raking it through the piles of coins and gems that surrounded him in great flowing heaps resembling ocean waves.

He yawned filling the cavern with tremors. Startled bats squealed and fluttered overhead. The great Dragon stirred slightly in the darkness and yawned. He rested his head on one of his great talons. Something was wrong. Something had awakened him before it was time. But what?

He raised his great scaled belly and looked beneath. He smiled with relief. The two stone tablets were safe. He looked about his lair carefully studying the various piles of assorted treasures. His keen memory told him that everything was present. All, but that damned sword the man-thing Terac had stolen. The terrible, foul sword. Why hadn't he destroyed the blade when he had his chance?

The sword? Salamar'Tey closed his eyes and drew his thoughts. "Yes!" he roared, "Yceesss! Thornbrim, you've been unmasked at last!" He rose to his feet and spread his wings, bellowing

with laughter. The mountain seemed to shake about him. "So the sword surfaces once again!"

He settled back down onto the two stone tablets carefully, like a great mother-hen sitting on her precious eggs. He closed his eyes in concentration, once again drawing on the powers of the tablets. The magics were very weak; unusually weak. Someone, somewhere had been tapping the greater magics. He would have to punish such selfish hoarding of power. For now, though, he must sleep a bit longer. The magics hadn't drawn strong enough just yet. But when they had, he would emerge to the surface, retrieve the sword and continue his quest. Then, he would teach a new generation to fear the name of Salamar'Tey.

Next Issue: Tooth and Nail



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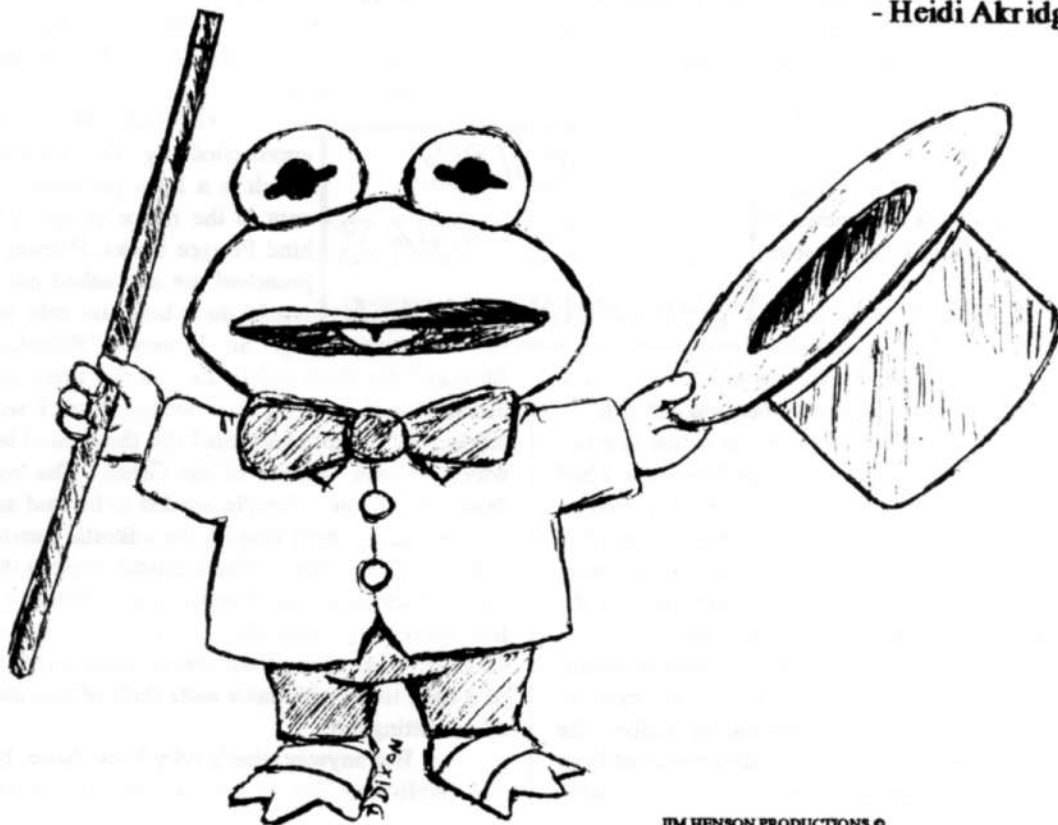
Jim Henson was a prince who dreamed of being a frog, and then became one. He was the heart of a down-to-earth frog named Kermit who led a colorful band of muppets to Hollywood, New York and stardom. He always maintained his common sense, even in the midst of hysteria and chaos brought on by an adoring pig.

Jim Henson served up small helpings of ethics and wisdom to children who never listened when it came from the mouths of parents, but heard gospel when it came from the lips of a floppy green frog.

A pure heartland-of-America morality and sense of innocent fun drove the Muppets into prime time television and skyrocketed them to movie fame, proving sex and violence aren't required to make a good movie.

Some talented people will undoubtedly carry on the torch Jim Henson lit, but in some ways Kermit died too when Jim Henson took his last breath. His voice may be copied, but Kermit's heart will never be replaced.

- Heidi Akridge



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SHADIS

INTERVIEWS

When we first decided to feature a regular interview column in SHADIS there was one name that immediately came to mind as a 'Must-Have.' And that name was E. Gary Gygax! We were amazed and delighted that Mr. Gygax agreed to give us an interview so readily.

Most role-players are very familiar with the history of AD&D and it's humble beginnings. So we decided to dispense with the standard questions. Mr. Gygax has been frequently interviewed on the role-playing phenomenon and how AD&D came to be. Instead, we thought we'd focus on his own views of the industry, and his current projects.

SHADIS: *The question that I think is in the mind of most gamers when it comes to you is where have you been and what happened when you left TSR.*

GYGAX: What happened is that as a minority shareholder, although a significant one, I had largely been forced out of active participation in the major decisions of TSR's corporation after about 1983 on. I had set up the Dungeons & Dragons Entertainment Corporation, pretty much at the suggestion of major shareholders. And when I discovered the deplorable state of the financial condition of the corporation in '85, I returned to Wisconsin and with a presentation before the board, had the majority shareholders removed from office as far as acting control of the corporation

was concerned. In turn they sold their interest to an outside party and eventually, after a considerable length of legal wrangling, I settled by selling out my shares in TSR.

Thereafter, I have been basically an independent author and game designer.

SHADIS: *We're big fans of your book, "Master of the Game" which was a big factor inspiring us to launch SHADIS. What prompted you to write the book?*

GYGAX: Well, I was approached by the publisher, which is a large publisher, Putnam is the major company behind Perigee books. Putnam approached me and asked me if I would do a book on role playing. So I wrote "Roleplaying Mastery," for them and in the contract there was a clause that if I would do a second book I would publish it through them. So I did the second book which became "Master of the Game." The books dealt with things I thought needed to be said and I enjoyed doing them despite the editorial hassles I had with them. There were a couple of parts that I really resented being chopped out. I felt that the first book they particularly butchered. As far as, "Master of the Game," the few criticisms I've read of it have to do with those parts their editors insisted on cutting out.

But anyway, that's why I did those, but I quit publishing due to the fact that they stopped

FOCUS: GARY GYGAX THE GRANDMASTER

paying me for the books.

So for the past two years or so I've been working on a massive project that will combine several genres and forms of media; adventure scenarios, novels, roleplaying books, board games and so forth. We're presently in discussions with a number of corporations. Probably in 1991, we'll start releasing it.

SHADIS: *In the book Master of the Game, you talk about the need for someone to take up the cause role-playing games combatting critics and bad-press. How well do you think this is being done right now?*

GYGAX: Well, there are two or three things that are working in favor of roleplaying games.

For one, the news media doesn't give a lot of time to detractors anymore. We don't hear too much about Satanic cults sacrificing people or other ridiculous things like that. From a lack of sensationalist air time given to the people who make their living pointing the finger at "Bugs Bunny" cartoons, rock music or whatever, have gone to look for a new whipping boy. And those claims and contentions are absolutely idiotic. If one looks into the major arguments of people like the Coalition against Television Violence, you'd think we'd lived in a crime and violence-free society prior to the invention of the television or radio, or comic books or whatever, which is patently stupid. I mean, these mediums no more promote violence than anything else in our society. It's somewhat in the nature of the beast. I know that many folks were disappointed to see how badly chimpanzees behaved on their own when studies revealed them making war on other bands of chimps and killing and eating small baboons.

Still, there are some people whose religious beliefs continue to activate attack due to basically groundless fears.

One can't argue with someone's religious beliefs regardless of how, sometimes foolish they might be, like those that say, "the devil wrote

it." (referring to D&D) But the people who are of that persuasion are in fact only a small segment that would probably never play roleplaying games anyway. And things like the need for cooperation and education of the populace point toward more activities of the nature of roleplaying games.

By and large I'd say the climate is favorable although there is still the underlying current of campaign-caused suicide, and other really ignorant accusations, I mean it reminds me of witch-burnings and book burnings.

Evil is not in the object, it's in the person that uses it, like a knife. A knife is not innately evil or good, it's just an object, it has no innate characteristics whatsoever, other than being a tool.

SHADIS: *OK, so how would you suggest the reputation of rpgs be best protected or cleansed?*

GYGAX: One of the things I've been careful to stress, I think is to stay away from questionable areas in role-playing. I mean let's not deal with too much sex or violence, or evil, whatever. All players will go through a phase when they're going to want to play the bad guy, and that happens naturally when children play make-believe games like "cops and robbers," sometimes they're going to want to play the bad guys. But that does not mean that's what they want to do with the rest of their lives. It's a part of society that they hear about.

I think that basically the roleplaying community has done very well at its conventions with its public image and public relations. The people that play are basically a group of hard-working or otherwise intelligent, active people.

As the members of a group move away from role-playing because they are too busy with the normal pursuits of life, family, jobs and so forth, they will not give much credence to the foolish assertions of those who say it something wicked or dangerous. The lies have given in to reality.

So now we have an active community that

more or less is left on its own with no particularly good or bad publicity. Which is fair enough I suppose.

As far as questionable activity, I don't think there is anything wrong with dressing up in medieval costumes if you're a fantasy gamer. Although most of the time people will point their fingers and say, "Look how far detached that guy is from reality!" It's hard to loose touch with reality and convince yourself you are living in the middle

"I thought that after spending three years working on AD&D that I NEVER wanted to do that again. That's because I really spent three years of my life in solitary confinement, working ten hours a day, seven days a week"

ages when there are automobiles whizzing around you. (laughs)

SHADIS: What is your latest project?

GYGAX: Well, I have in readiness several novels and several others outlined.

I am currently working on a multi-genre game which will be presented in a series of modules. The game will have a core of rules which will be common to each genre-module. Each module or segment of the game will detail various genres, Sci-Fi, Horror, Fantasy, etc. The first module is basically finished and another is in the works with several others planned. Tied in with this game will be a series of board game applications, adventure scenarios, novels etc.

The first phase of the game we playtested, in its first draft, in October of 88. We are now working on polishing it up. It deals with the Horror genre. The next module which we are working extensively on at the present time deals with the Fantasy genre and will tie in with the same core rules.

The third segment we will work on is a

toss-up at the present time, but two or three more will eventually be designed.

We have not reached an agreement with a publisher for the game though we have been approached. We have a publisher for the books but we don't want to publish anything until we get the game finished, and we don't want to do anything solid in game publishing until we've released something in another media.

At any rate there should be an announcement later this year or early in 91 as to the publishing. But I'm afraid I can't reveal any titles of my projects because they are either working-titles and likely to change or we simply do not want to reveal them at this stage.

SHADIS: Are you currently affiliated with any game company?

GYGAX: No. I was under contract for a time to New Affinities which lapsed when they ceased paying me as they should.

Since my involvement with TSR, I only have a desire for the creative end of this business and not 'business' itself. I can do one or the other but I can't do both.

SHADIS: What do you see in the future for role-playing games.

GYGAX: I think its a well-established market. It's certainly not huge, but it's there. There are probably 10 million gamers world wide. The interest in role-playing is still good, though the market is not growing particularly. Applications of role-playing are seen in everything from He-Man cartoons to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle spinoffs.

The computer-game application will definitely be a major form in the coming years. But I don't think it will replace the published role-playing game form anymore than film replaced books.

SHADIS: Ok, if you could start from the beginning all over again, would you have done anything differently?

Well, Knowing what I do now of course! (laughs) Very frankly, what I feel caused the down

fall of the corporate approach I had hoped to see in TSR was the untimely demise of my original partner, Don Kaye in 1976. Because at that point, he owned a third of the corporation, I owned a third and our other partner, Brian Blume owned the remaining third. With Don's death, things were thrown in the air and because of the difficulties that occurred, I emerged with roughly a third of the corporation. However, control was lost because of the need to sell equity to raise enough capital to produce. Of course, that's something I had no control over and I couldn't change. But beyond that, many of my actions and decisions would have been different. I would have been less of a team-player and less starry eyed. I'd have been a lot harder about defending my own rights as an author and creator.

But overall I think I did a good thing with D&D and an even better job with AD&D. I am hoping my efforts on my current project will sort of put a cap on what I have done creatively. By that time, I will be damn well ready to retire.

I thought that after spending three years working on AD&D that I NEVER wanted to do that again. That's because I really spent three years of my life in solitary confinement, working ten hours a day, seven days a week. But after that I had a nice five-year vacation to recover. (laughs)

SHADIS: What would you say to parents who worry about their kids playing role-playing games?

GYGAX: Well, consider the alternatives. When your child is playing D&D or whatever, you pretty much know where that child is, who he is with and what he's doing. It's not as if the kid is roaming the streets or cruising around in his buddy's car.

This is a very sociably acceptable and stimulating, educational activity. As long as the child's participation is a normal one, there is nothing to worry about. An educational psychologist, Dr. Snow who worked for TSR at one time had a parent ask him, "How do I get my son out of this doggone game?" And Dr. Snow answered, "Why

don't you introduce him to women and liquor?" That'll make a parent rethink real quickly, "Oh, I see what you mean. Perhaps this isn't so bad after all!"

There was that scurrilous bit done by '60 Minutes' with Ed Bradley, (that was a piece of yellow journalism and I did not hesitate to say that to Mr. Bradley.) They liked to move my answers around, they'd ask one question and plug in the answer from another.

Anyway, two of the parents who were featured on the show called me and stated that rather than being a cause of their child's suicide, D&D was one of the few things their child lived for and found pleasure in.

It's worst danger is making someone of a particular age neglect the things they should be doing, namely devoting themselves to their school-work and learning. But other than that, it is about as harmless a passtime as you could ever hope to find. I'm really pleased to see live-action role-playing being developed because it involves some healthy exercise as well. The best of both worlds, stimulating the mind and the body.

SHADIS: *Who do you see as the innovators in the role-playing industry?*

GYGAX: There are bits and pieces of things put out by various people that are interesting, but I haven't seen anything that...well....how do I say this without stepping on some toes? (laughs)

I haven't seen anything new or original, quite frankly since AD&D appeared. It had a skill system built into it. The thief used skills, and I had secondary skills listed. So these skill-based systems that are appearing are nothing new in that regard.

The multi-genre systems, I also suggested in AD&D and I intended to move towards that but never had the chance.

As far as AD&D is concerned, what I'm seeing done with the second edition isn't very earthshaking either.

There is some neat stuff out there. I like

SHADIS INTERVIEWS

Paranoia but it's a very frustrating game because everybody dies all the time. It's not a campaign-oriented game. You put it on the shelf and pull it down like you would 'Monopoly' and play one or two sessions when you are tired of what you usually play.

Other than that, I can't think of anything that has come out since AD&D that I would call particularly innovative or unique.

SHADIS: *Do you have anything you would like to say to our readers on any subject?*

GYGAX: A lot of the things I would like to say as I've sat back and been forced, in fact, to write the two books, "Role-playing Mastery" and "Master of the Game" pretty much sum up my views on what role-playing is about, what they could be and should be and so forth.

I'm going to try with my new game-system to address a lot of the things I think were missing or are short-comings. I'll admit I suggested some real dumb things, one of the things I would change in the D&D system for example is the application of magic. D&D sort of tacks magic on a medieval setting and creates an unrealistic world. I'm going to try to address that in the new system. With D&D of course, we were doing it for

the first time and in retrospect you can look and see your mistakes.

I wrote an article for Gateways Magazine and it was never published as far as I know, in fact I've lost my copy of it and I wish I had it, but it addressed the problems of working magic into a society or a global setting. That is an important part of a fantasy campaign. If magic works, it should be pervasive in all cultures and it generally isn't. Unless of course it's a limited form of magic, in which case there are too many damn magic-users running around the campaign. Usually there are darn few of them with limited power, or if there are a lot of them, there are a bunch of hedge-practitioners who are second rate but can do a lot of different things. But if magic is real, it should affect history and culture in general.

There are lots of other things I would love to discuss but they probably wouldn't be too interesting to your readers. (laughs)

I would urge you to get your magazine out there and push it. I think it's well done and you have a good core of talent. But you need to get it to the conventions, such as DragonCon in Atlanta and get some exposure. □



**"Hi! I'm the head of
SHADIS Customer
Complaints.
You got a problem with
this Rag??
Then quit your whining
and let us know about it!
Tell it to the Letters
Page!
Now get outta here!"**



TITLE: *Adventures in the Northern Wilderness*
Company: *Palladium Books*
Category: *Supplement/Accessory*
Reviewer: *B.A. Felton*

One of the most satisfying aspects of role-playing games for me as a DM, is designing and breathing life into a world of my own creation. However, as the years have passed, my real-life commitments have eaten away at the ample free time I once cherished. As such, I have been forced more and more to turn to those who have the luxury of such time to flesh out new horizons for me.

So when I received Palladium's *Adventures in the Northern Wilderness*, I approached it from a Gamemaster's point of view. How useful was this supplement going to be in my Palladium campaign?

The fact that a large portion of the book centers around the Wolfen was very intriguing. In my opinion, the Wolfen are one of the most fascinating races to have been developed for any RPG system. Orcs and Kobolds pale next to the Wolfen.

One of the dangers that writers of all mediums face when fleshing out a major villain is removing the shroud of mystery about them that allows them to strike fear in others.

This is not the case with the Wolfen. The more one learns of

the Wolfen culture, the more intrigued one becomes. Here we learn how the Twelve Tribes

came to form the Wolfen Empire. Each Tribe is detailed. However, I found myself wanting more than what the thumbnail sketches of each tribe offered. With names like Iron Claw, Dark Step, etc.; each tribe screams out to be detailed in full. With future releases in the Northern Wilderness series promised, I expect we'll see more detailed descriptions of these tribes.

We are also given a run through on Wolfen government, their views of the other races, history etc. The authors have done a very competent job of presenting a truly 'non-human' view of the world.

The sections on the Wolfen military and the Wolfen Imperial Army were particularly revealing and excellent reading. Such things as ranks and army titles were nice touches.

The section on Wolfen covers religion, magic, education, writing, taxes etc.

Keep in mind that the entire Wolfen section of the book spans only 12 pages, but it's packed and provides a tremendous base on which the Gamemaster can build.

The bulk of the book deals with six adventures set in the realms of the Wolfen Empire. I won't give away any secrets here but it will suffice to say that they were all well written and interesting. Our group played *The Forest of the Broken Wing* and enjoyed it tremendously.

My only complaint with the book is that I would have liked more source material, even if it meant a few adventures would have to be axed.

In closing, I highly recommend *Adventures in the Northern Wilderness*. At \$9.95 it's a

real bargain. I can still remember paying six to eight smackers a piece for single RPG adventures back in 1980.

TITLE: Further Adventures in the Northern Wilderness

Company: Palladium Books

Category: Supplement/Accessory

Reviewer: B.A. Felton

Further Adventures is the companion volume to *Adventures in the Northern Wilderness*. Palladium RPG fans such as myself have been crying for more supplements for Palladium's fantasy role-playing game for quite some time. These latest two offerings go far to appease our craving.

Further Adventures gives some additional source material for the Northern Wilderness, namely Monster Mountain and the surrounding area. We are introduced to the Algor Frost giants and various nomadic tribes.

This book gives us some random-encounter tables and a very detailed description of the village Wrijin.

Further Adventures includes four pre-generated adventures ready for use. The book is generously illustrated with the artwork of Larry MacDougall.

I highly recommend *Further Adventures*. Combined with the first book in the series, the Gamemaster is armed with a sizeable portion of source material and ten adventures. This book goes for

\$7.95, well worth the price.

***Title: Complete Fighter's Handbook
Complete Thief's Handbook***

Company: TSR

Reviewer: Jolly R. Blackburn

Category: Rules Expansion, Accessory

I'll be very honest at the outset. When I first received *Fighter's Handbook* and *Thief's Handbook* I thought they were quite useless. At first glance, they looked little more than material taken from the Player's Handbook and fluffed up with art and filler material. I can't help it, I'm a cynic at heart.

Add to that, the price of \$15.00 each, which is just three dollars less than the DM guide itself, I was really put off.

Now, I did say at first glance. After reading the two books, I came away with very different feelings. The handbooks actually are packed with extensive new rules that expand the 2nd Edition Rules.

Thief's Handbook

Let's take a quick look at what the Thief's Handbook includes:

- **proficiencies** pertinent to the thief character,
- **Thief Kits.** Rules for building specialized thieves such as the Acrobat, Assassin, (see, the assassin isn't dead after all), bounty hunter, etc.,
- **Thieves Guilds.** Over forty pages of valuable information on Thieves Guilds, everything from joining a guild, its activities, structure, as well as instructions for designing your own guild. For me this was the real treasure in the book,
- **Tools of the Trade.** Provides a wealth of items any thief would give his eye teeth to possess. Blinding Powder, Silenced Armor etc.
- **Arts of Deception, Classic Cons.** Gives the players the classic con games, Short-change swindles, Robbing the Robbers, etc.
- **New Rules.** You'll find some new rules for the thief as well, such as advanced locks and traps, (something players and DMs have been asking for for quite some time). There are also rules for building locks, multiple locks, and for Animal Assistants, Poison and Antidotes, Mugging, and Armor.
- Finally, the book helps the DM with run-

ning a thief campaign.

Fighter's Handbook

Now let's take a look at the Fighter's Handbook.

- **Warrior Kits.** As in the Thief's Handbook rules for creating specialized fighters such as, Barbarian, Gladiator, Savage, etc. Plus rules for creating your own kits,

- **Role-Playing.** Ideas for fleshing out your warriors with various mindsets such as the Brash Youth, Merry Showoff, Natural Leader, etc.,

- **Combat Rules.** Here lies the meat of the book; over forty pages of everything you ever wanted to know about combat and melee. This section offers such things as Hit Locations, Called Shots, Temporary Damage, Tournaments, etc.,

- **Equipment.** Finally, the book covers equipment of the fighter, including effects of armor on various factors, variant armor, damage to armor etc.

Both books offer a wealth of information. Are they worth the price? I would have to say it depends on the individual and the campaign he is playing in. If you find yourself playing certain

character classes to the exclusion of others, then these books would probably be greatly appreciated. The addition of 'kits' allows players to customize a character, so they can find that perfect blend of attributes and skills.

A Cleric's Handbook has been released, as well as one for Magic-User's. In the same format, are two new books Catacombs, and Castles. I can scarcely remember those lean years between the release of the 1st edition AD&D rules and the 2nd edition. The floodgates have definitely opened at TSR.

I'm not one to complain about too much material. Everything I've examined so far has been well edited, generously illustrated and generally useful. My only gripe is that TSR didn't carry the 3 Ring Binder concept (As in the Monstrous Compendium) a bit further and provide the same option for the DM's Guide. A series of expansion packets would have allowed players and DMs to pick and choose items as they were needed or wanted.

It would also allow DMs to pull those rules they don't like and substitute their own home-brewed versions. Oh well, maybe with the 3rd Edition... □



*Uh huh, You're confused aren't ya?
Well, if you had subscribed to SHADIS
like you're buddies you'd probably be 9th level by now.
(or maybe not)*



NEWS FROM AFAR

NEW PRODUCTS, RUMOURS,

Mayfair Games

Mayfair's Role Aids line has been expanded with the *Witches* supplement just released.

This 96-page sourcebook introduces the witch as a new character class.

These Witches adhere to the many different and distinct traditions of witchcraft, each with its own strengths and weaknesses, new spells, unique magic items, and a sample witch character. Each tradition has its own view of the world. The various traditions of witchcraft included in the sourcebook are: Classical, Dianic, Faerie, Golden Dawn, Wiccan, Voodoo, Animistic, Elemental and the Deryni witches from the Katherine Kurtz novel series.

Suggested retail price is \$10.00

Palladium Books

Nostrodom: Agents Against Darkness.

This sourcebook includes listings of the world's covert organizations, combat training against supernatural beings, new monsters, heroes, villains, places of power, and dozens of adventure ideas.

Nostrodom presents a new game setting for characters from the Palladium Books Megaverse.

For the past ten years there has been an organization which has been extracting favors of powerful people, employing meta-humans, super-spies, and those with 'wild talents' in an all-out effort to take the planet Earth away from the brink of

self-destruction. Michael Walker and his Agents of Nostrodom have powerful enemies! Corporate magnates, religious cults, horrors that walk the shadows of our cities and towns: for there is big money in war...and immortality in the fulfillment of the darkest prophecies.

Anyone who has ever been fascinated by conspiracy theories, the New Age movement, the eternal struggle of Good and Evil, and some darned good role-playing are sure to enjoy Nostrodom: Agents Against Darkness.

Suggested retail price is \$7.95 (48 Pages)

• MISSING •
B.A. FELTON
"B.A. PHONE HOME!"



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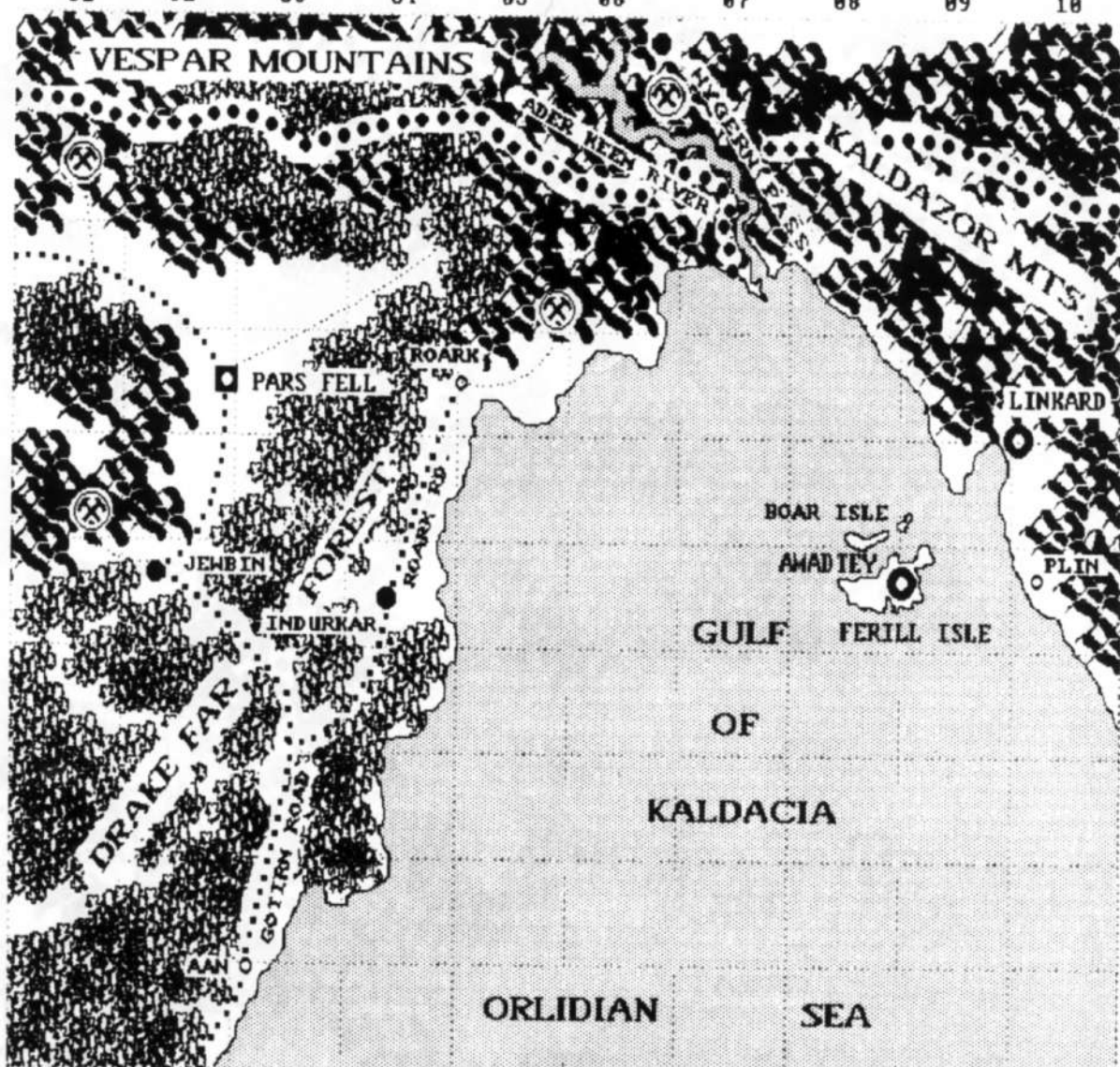
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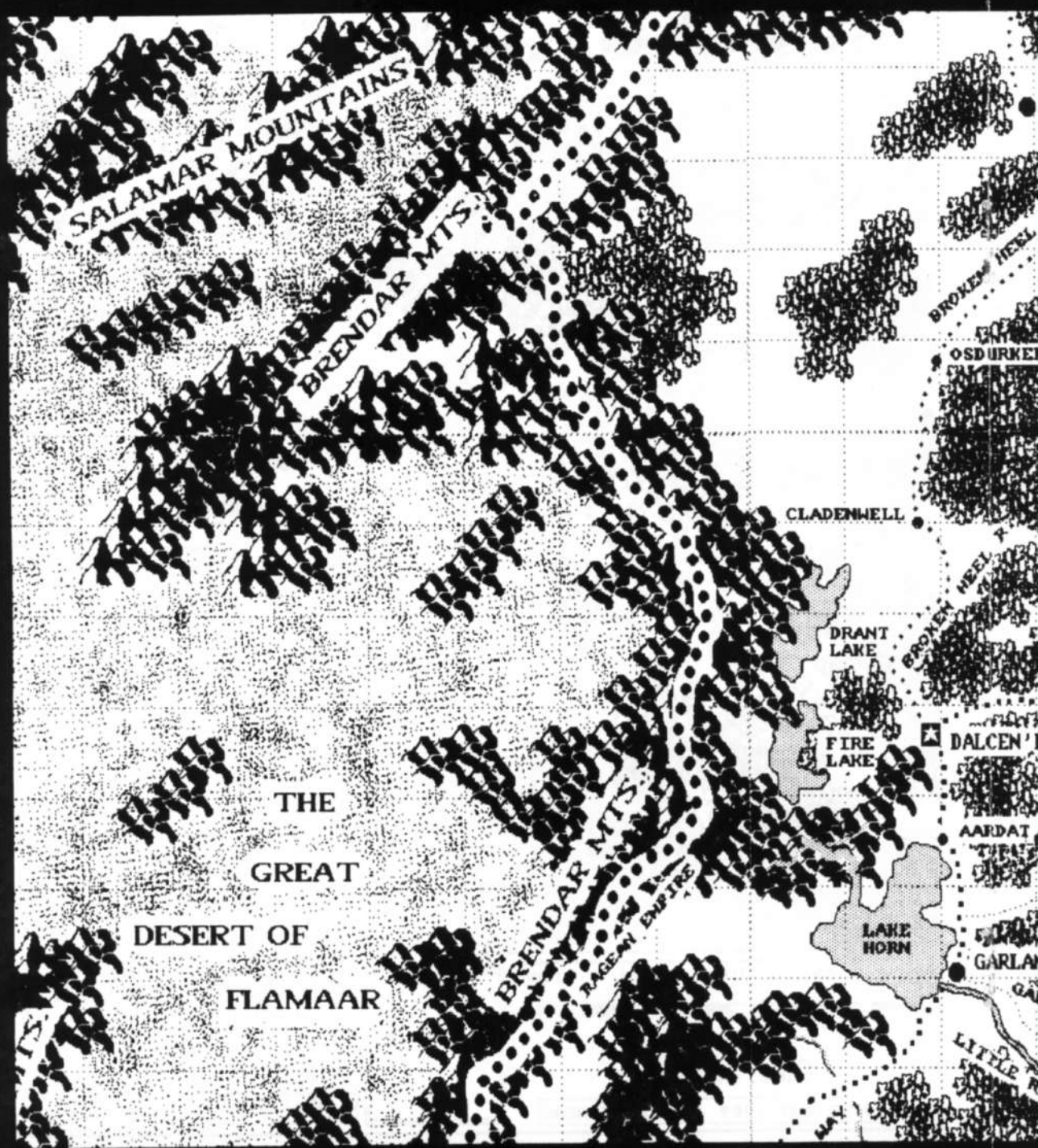
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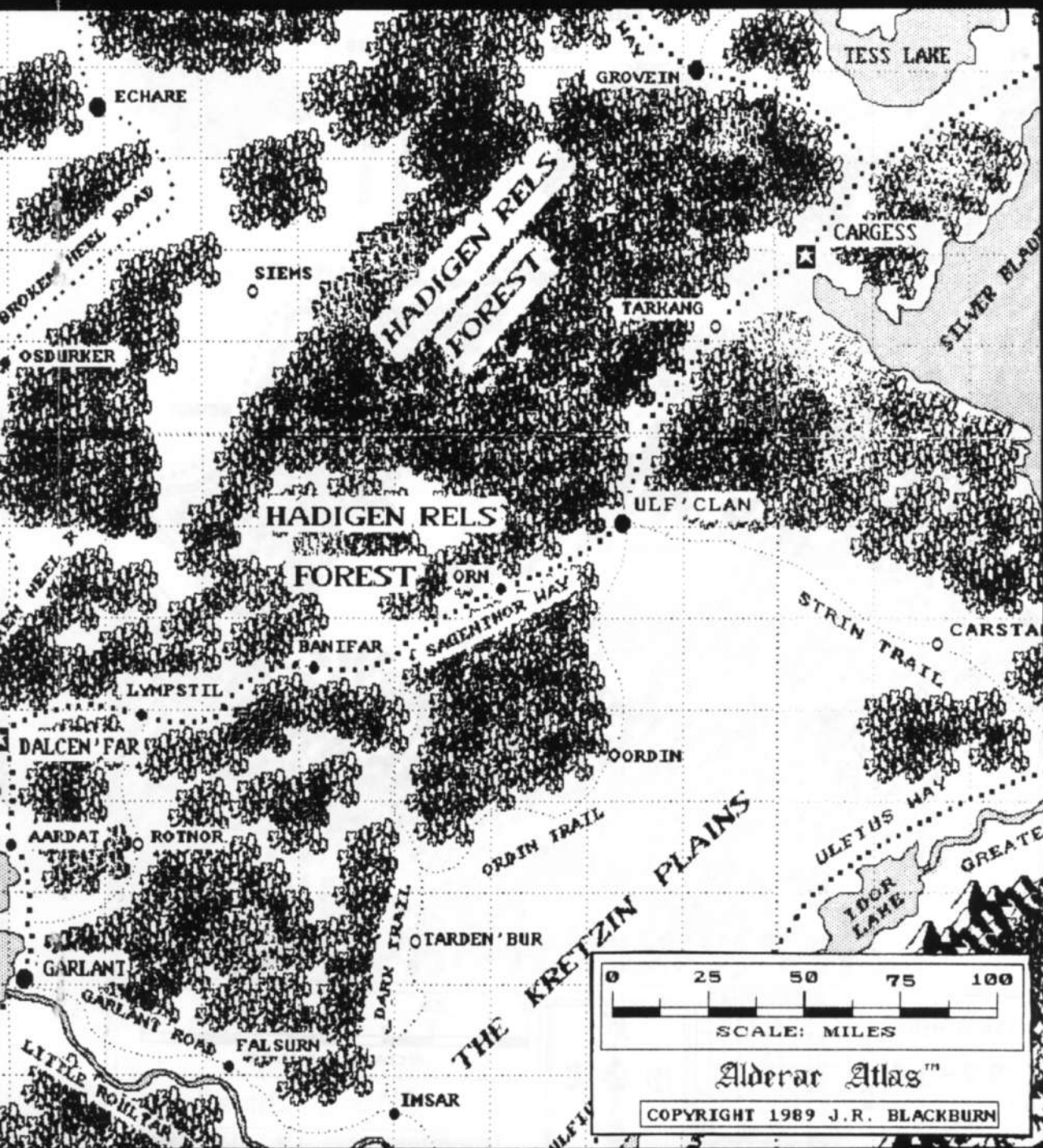
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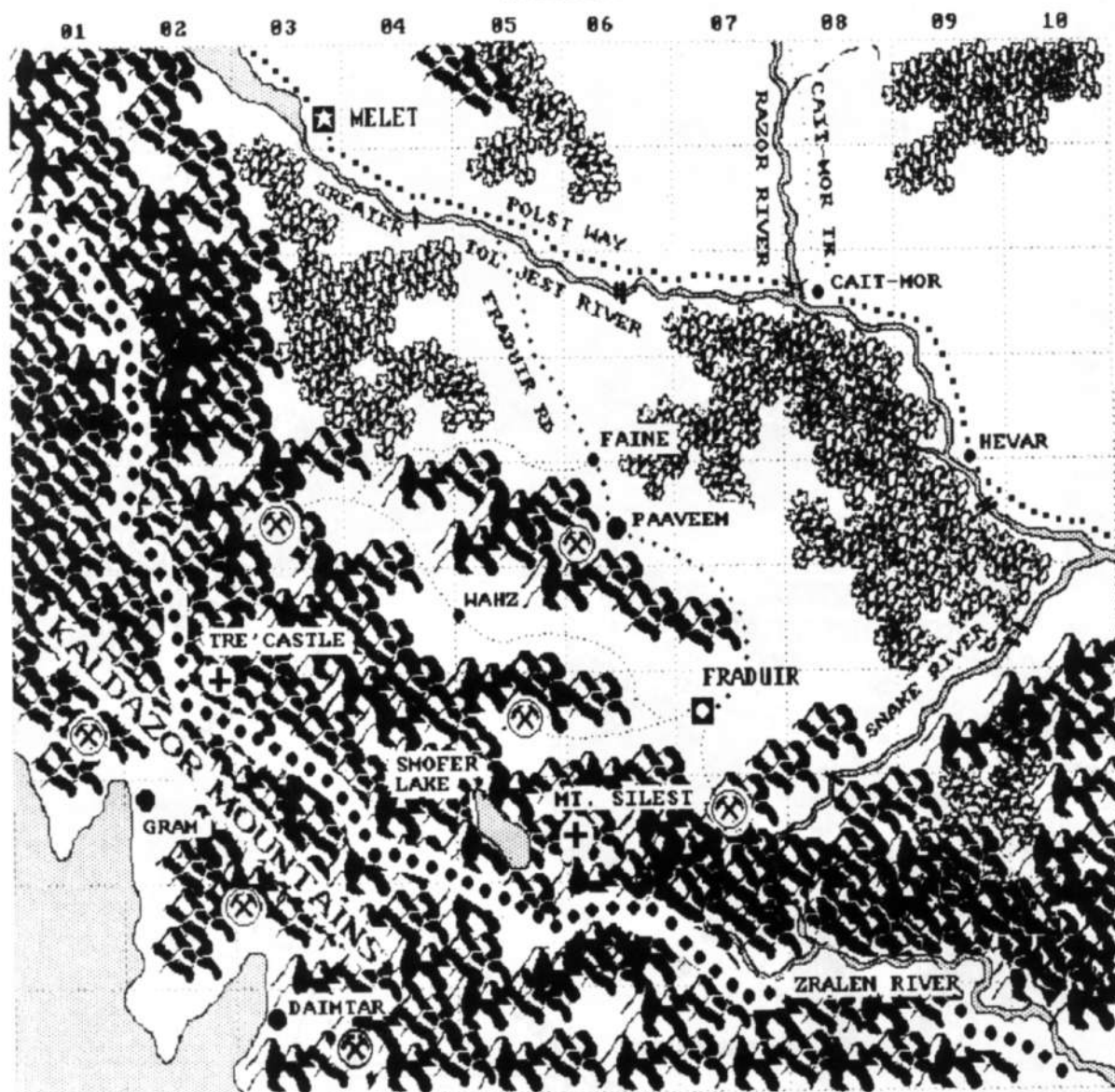
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Delving into the Greater Magicks



***"So you want to be a Magic-User!
Do you really think you have what it
takes to master magic? I ain't
talkin' about parlor tricks, kid. I'm
talking about the Greater-Magicks.
Powers so dark and sinister that
they'll rip your sanity and destroy
you if you show the slightest
weakness. You still want to learn?"***

Old Mage to his Apprentice

By Jolly R. Blackburn

Greater-Magicks is an alternate magic-system devised for use with AD&D. This system was designed originally to simulate magic as it is portrayed in the Alderac milieu. However, it can be incorporated into any existing campaign.

Magic in the Alderac universe is vastly different from the standard magic of AD&D. The magic system that follows was inspired by several conversations I had with Frank Vanhoose on magic and some of the problems it presented. We both felt that magic by its very nature should be mysterious, unpredictable and dangerous.

When designing our new magic-system, we came up with two primary objectives:

- 1. To create a simple system that could replace the standard magic system without disrupting the core rules of AD&D, and
- 2. To capture the uncertainty and mystery of magic as much as possible.

The ending result meets both these objectives. It can be immediately transplanted into an AD&D campaign with minimal effort on the part of players and DM. It also comes very close to simulating magic as presented in the Alderac Antologies. Even if you choose not to use the new rules in your own campaign, it will prove to be very useful as a reference for the Alderac fiction.

Before jumping into the system itself, it will be necessary to explore the origins of magic and its nature.

The Origins of Magic

Most magic-using player characters do not have the slightest inkling as to why magic works or how. They resemble the stereotypical house-wife who drives the family station wagon. She knows how to start the engine and apply the gas pedal so she can speed off to do the errands, but ask her why or how the car works and she's likely to shrug her shoulders and reply, "I dunno."

I've always felt that magic-users all have one thing in common; voracious curiosities and a

lifelong devotion to the study of magic and lore. As John D'Amato pointed out in Part II of his HackandSlash series, magic-users are keenly interested in magic and will search far and wide to learn more about their trade. Any mage worth bearing his title would be a virtual storehouse of knowledge on magic, schooled in its theories, origins, nature etc.

To fully understand the Greater-Magicks we will have to briefly delve into Alderac mythology and discover its origins. The origins of magic in Alderac help to explain its peculiarities. So, quickly, here's a crash-course in Alderac mythology and the origins of magic.

Alderac has twelve major gods and forty or so minor deities and agents. (The major gods are frequently referred to as the 'BattleLords' in the Alderac fiction.)

According to popular mythology, everything in the universe, including the gods was created by Zelaure the head-honcho of the BattleLords. Zelaure's own origin is very vague. The sacred books of the Menus-Kai offer a creation story that opens with Zelaure drifting in the great void in a deep slumber. It suggests that Zelaure was the sole-survivor of a major war among an older race of gods countless eons before. This war apparently destroyed creation and the gods with it. Zelaure was rendered powerless and drifted within the great void for thousands of years. Upon awaking, the dismayed god discovers that the world he knew is completely destroyed.

However, caught in the tangle of his great beard, Zelaure finds a single small fragment of his former world. The piece of debris is mother-stone, or Natra-Kor the source of magic and creation.

With the Natra-Kor Zelaure creates the stars, universe, Alderac, the other gods, etc. Virtually everything in existence is said to have been created from this single fragment of mother-stone.

After an initial period of peaceful coexistence, the gods are soon at each other's throats. The Menus-Kai goes into great detail on the bickering

and feuding among the gods. The primary cause of hostility is Alderac and its precious pool of worshippers.

Zelaur, attempts to restore order by creating various races and tribes on Alderac so that each god may have his or her own worshippers, but the jealousy only seems to increase. Zelaur is forced to constantly intervene to prevent a major war among the BattleLords.

Ever mindful of what happened to the Elder-gods, Zelaur summons the BattleLords together for a great conference. After lengthy debate and brow-beating, the gods reluctantly agree to the swearing of an oath and the declaration of a truce.

Using the last of the mother-stone, Zelaur creates a great stone tablet which bears witness to the oath. He explains that as long as the tablet exists the gods are compelled to obey their oaths, thus ensuring peace. The oath itself is very vague in the Menus Kai, but it is generally believed that the major element of the oath prevented the gods from directly interfering in the lives of men and prohibited the gods from directly confronting one another in hostility.

But then the BattleLord Yi'Gor enters the scene. Yi'Gor, is the son of Zelaur and the source of countless tragedies and misfortunes in the world. Extremely bitter towards his father for denying him the high status among the gods he had been painstakingly plotting, Yi'Gor seduces his own mother Castonda and convinces her to betray Zelaur.

With the aid of his mother, Yi'Gor creates a great enchanted sword. Forged from a hair stolen from Zelaur's beard and tempered with human blood, the infamous blade Thornbrim is created. With the magical-sword Yi'Gor shatters the tablet into twelve pieces (other accounts suggest thirteen pieces) and scatters them across the face of Alderac.

By the shattering of the tablet, Yi'Gor renders the oath made by the gods void. Chaos breaks out among the gods once again.

Zelaur, in a terrible rage, blinds Yi'Gor and binds him in chains. Yi'Gor is buried beneath the deserts of Flamar on Alderac, where his eternal struggles are said to cause earthquakes and volcanoes in the region.

The remaining gods withdraw into various opposing factions and the world is cast into turmoil. Any control Zelaur had over his subordinates is now lost and Zelaur is removed from his position of supreme-god.

The mortals of Alderac had no access to magic prior to the tablet being shattered and thrown into their world. With the pieces of mother-stone now on the face of Alderac, men are soon able to tap into the magical aura they create. Thus, Greater-Magicks are born.

So, that's the backdrop for why magic exists in the world. The gods had not intended for mortals to have access to such powers. The gods, as chaotic and meddlesome as they may be, are still very reluctant to confront one another. They choose to use the mortals of Alderac as pawns to achieve their aims. They are artful masters at persuading, scheming, manipulating coercing mortals to do their will.

How Magic Works

Tolkien once said that there is always the danger of destroying the lure of fantasy by 'studying the bones' too closely. In other words, explaining how magic works in detail would work against our second objective, capturing the mystery and uncertainty of magic. So we will tread lightly on the subject of how magic actually works.

The Twelve Tablets

When the tablet was shattered, it was broken into twelve pieces. Each piece is now considered a separate tablet. (Each tablet is now a major relic. Many tablets have names and some are intelligent, similar to intelligent swords. A future issue of Shadis will cover the tablets in detail.) When the

original Great Tablet was intact it covered a vast array of subjects, men, beasts, weather, kingship, etc. When the tablet was shattered each piece became a unique magical relic, taking on specific spheres of control or influence based on the subject matter it covered when part of the original Great Tablet.

Thus, one tablet is identified with kingship and power while another tablet is associated with controlling weather and so on.

Each tablet emits a magical aura which contributes to and builds up a pool of magical force, permeating Alderac. This pool of magic can be tapped into by any magic-user for his own purposes as in normal AD&D. However, depending on the number of magic-users and the power of the spells being cast, this pool ebbs over time like the tides. Sometimes there will be a glut of magic while at other times the magical aura will be very weak or even depleted.

Because of this pool of magic, many magic-users in Alderac are extremely hostile to others of their own kind. (It also creates some interesting situations. Kandraas for example, who made an appearance in Part II of the Bones of Ruin, was once a powerful mage. When the pool of magic dried up for several years, he became defenseless. His only recourse, to hide in the wilderness waiting for the magical-pool to rebuild itself.)

But there are other ways of tapping into magic besides the pool. If a mage possesses a fragment of mother-stone than he or she can cast spells as normal without regard to the strength of the pool. The only problem is that mother-stone is scarce, extremely scarce. This is why the lost tablets are so highly sought after. Ownership of a tablet can make one very powerful.

Magical spells in Alderac fall into two categories, those derived from the magical-pool, and those derived directly from mother-stone.

The Use of Magic

This is where Greater-Magicks truly departs from standard AD&D magic. Practitioners of magic in the Alderac milieu are only certain about one thing pertaining to magic; it's dangerous!

The arcane arts are closely guarded and knowledge of them is passed on with great reluctance and trepidation. Magic, the apprentice is taught, is self-seeking. A mysterious, dangerous power which will quickly destroy the mage if his mastery proves flawed.

More goes into the casting of a spell than mere gestures, or precise phraseology. With each spell, depending on its potency, a part of the mage is spent, sometimes temporarily, often permanently. The greatest danger in the use of magic is that there is always the temptation to delve deeper than one's level of mastery, thus risking becoming consumed by magic and losing one's identity. Such poor souls become Dark Mages, slaves to magic.

If you decide to use this system in your campaign and also allow standard AD&D mages there shouldn't be any problem. Just assume that standard magic-users are crippled with limiting-beliefs. A limiting-belief is something that prevents a person from doing something merely because he believes it is not possible. And so it is with standard AD&D mages. They have been schooled in a different theory of magic, which limits their spell casting power. On the other hand, their schooling has taught them a more disciplined form of magic and the chance of mishaps is greatly reduced.

The Greater-Magicks System

Incorporating Greater-Magick-users in your campaign will be very simple and painless. They will use the same experience-level tables for progression and for the most part, the same standard spells.

The result of a successfully cast spell is the same as in standard AD&D. The process of casting the spell is what has been altered in this system.

Starting Out

Magic-users have a base chance of successful spell casting based on their Intelligence (Table I).

Table I. Base Success Ratings

INT Score	Base Chance
09	05%
10	10%
11	15%
12	20%
13	25%
14	30%
15	35%
16	40%
17	45%
18	50%
19	55%
20+	60%

This base chance can increase as the mage gains experience, much the same way hit points are increased. Each time a mage goes up an experience level he rolls percentile dice. If he rolls his Base-Success rating or less, then he may add 1d6 points to his Base-Success Rating.

To cast a spell, the mage must have the spell in his spell book or on a scroll as in standard AD&D. Spell components, gestures etc. are still required as stated in the Player's Handbook. In addition, spells must still be memorized or read from a spell book in order for a spell to be cast.

When a magic-user attempts to cast a spell, he adds his Success Rating (SR) to the Spell-Level modifier as shown in Table II.

The Greater-Magicks are unique, in that a mage may attempt to cast any level spell regardless of his level of experience. The only requirement is that the mage has memorized the spell, or is reading it from a spell book or scroll. For example, a first-level mage with 16 Intelligence would have a Base-Success Rating of 40 percent. This means he

Table II. Spell-Level Modifiers

1st Level Spells	- +40
2nd Level Spells	- +30
3rd Level Spells	- +20
4th Level Spells	- +10
5th Level Spells	- 0
6th Level Spells	- -10
7th Level Spells	- -20
8th Level Spells	- -30
9th Level Spells	- -40

could cast any first-level spell with an 80 percent chance of success, second-level, with a 70 percent chance and so on. The discerning DM is probably arching an eyebrow at this point. As stated before, magic is dangerous. If the mage is unsuccessful at attempting to overstep his mastery, the results could be disastrous to himself and the party.

There are additional means of modifying the Success Rating for casting a desired spell. The mage, in dire circumstances, may opt to sacrifice either *Strength* or *Constitution* points to raise his chances. For each point of ST or CO the mage sacrifices, he raises his Success Rating five percent. After the spell is cast, regardless of success or failure, the Mage must roll 1d20 for each Ability point he committed and consult Table III.

Table III. Sacrifice Results Table

01-05	Ability Point is regained in 1d10 days
06-10	Ability Point is regained in 1d6 months
11-20	Ability Point is permanently lost

If the Success-Rating roll is made, then the spell takes effect as normal. If the player fails his roll, then a possible mishap has taken place.

Let's illustrate the sacrificing of points. Durka, a second-level mage with 17 Intelligence, finds himself trapped along with his comrades in a room. Someone has set off a trap and the room is quickly flooding. Durka decides the only spell he knows that can save the party is the seventh-level spell, Transmute Water to Dust. However, the spell

is well beyond his mastery and the chance of success is slim. His base chance is 45 percent for his Intelligence, minus 20 percent for casting a seventh-level spell. This means, he has only a 25-percent chance of success. Realizing it's a life or death situation, Durka decides to draw upon his own life-energies to strengthen his chances. He commits four points of his Strength to the casting process. This will temporarily raise his Success Rating to 45 percent ($5 \times 4 = 20$). Durka rolls the dice and rolls a 39, the spell is successful and no mishaps occur. However, he must now determine if the strength he committed to the spell is permanently lost or not. He rolls a 20-sided die four times, once for each point committed. He rolls a five, 13, 11, and a three. Referring to Table III, we find that Durka has permanently lost two points of strength. The other two points will be regained in 1d10 days. He has saved the party, but it has cost him dearly.

The Great Risk

Every practitioner of the magicks knows that the greatest danger is losing one's identity and being consumed by magic. Sacrificing Strength or Constitution to the spell process is meant to simulate the pouring of a mage's life-energies into the spell. He is willingly lifting his resistance to magic in order to derive more power. This makes him very vulnerable. As stated before, magic is self-seeking and unforgiving. When a mage attempts to cast a spell, he is tapping into magic and partitioning a portion of it to serve his purposes, namely to successfully cast the desired spell. Every mage has a limit on the amount of magic he can control and this amount is approximated by the level of the attempted spell. Thus, a first-level mage with 17 intelligence has an 85-percent mastery over first-level spells ($40\% + 45\% = 85\%$). As he attempts to cast higher level spells, his mastery is reduced and the risks increase. By draining himself of his innate energies, he weakens his resistance.

Whenever a mage commits Strength or Constitution to the casting of a spell, and as a result permanently loses one or more of those points, the mage must immediately make a system-shock check. If he fails to make his saving-throw, then there is a chance he has been consumed by magic, or that his mind-set has been altered taking him further down the path of becoming a Dark Mage.

When a mage fails his system-shock check, consult Table IV.

Table IV Magical-Resistance Check

01-25	No effect.
26-45	Magic-User becomes terrified from the experience. Will refuse to use magic for 1d20 days.
46-70	Magic-User drifts one step closer to becoming Dark Mage
71-80	Magic-User drifts two steps closer to becoming Dark Mage
81-90	Magic-User drifts three steps closer to becoming Dark Mage
91-00	Magic-User is totally consumed by magic. Loses identity

There are ten transitions, or steps, on the way to becoming a Dark Mage. The player records his current transition-step on his character sheet. Each step brings the Mage closer to being a Dark Mage and closer to losing his own identity and taking on a new mind-set. The DM should allow the player to play his character as long as he is able to role-play the character properly. The Mage will become an NPC at any point that the DM feels the player is no longer able to correctly play the character.

The Ten Transitions

- I. No apparent changes in behavior.
- II. Magic User becomes withdrawn. Is less approachable by friends and acquaintances.
- III. Magic User becomes increasingly short-tempered. Loses interest in his favorite recreations and pastimes and spends spare time alone, further-

ing his knowledge of magic.

IV. Magic User withdraws for short periods of time with no explanation, (will disappear for periods of 1d3 days). First signs of paranoia begin to set in. Only extremely close friends will be tolerated.

V. Magic User will begin to feel that he is superior to those around him. His friends are bumbling-fools who are trying to use his powers to further their own interests. He becomes increasingly withdrawn and suspicious.

VI. Magic User views no one as friend. Everyone is out to get him. He will continue to adventure with a party only if there is the prospect of furthering his power acquiring new magic. If other Magic-Users are encountered, including party-members, he will be openly hostile toward them.

VII. Thirst for magical knowledge becomes insatiable. The temptation to overstep his mastery becomes uncontrollable.

VIII. Mage begins to question his beliefs. If not already possessing an Evil alignment the Mage has a 40% changing alignments to Evil.

IX. Mage becomes an utter recluse. Will withdraw as far as possible from other people, possibly setting up a private lab in a remote area to pursue his studies. Mage now has a 60% chance of changing to an Evil alignment.

X. Mage begins to lose his own identity. There is a 30% chance per month that the Mage will become totally consumed by magic and become a full Dark Mage. If not already of an Evil alignment, the Mage immediately becomes Chaotic Evil. All the Dark Mage's energies will be directed toward the pursuit of magic.

Dark Magics

Dark Magics are those poor individuals who have been consumed by the forces of magic. Dark Magics are evil, bent only on drawing as much magic unto themselves as they can gather. This naturally means that ownership of the Twelve Tablets is of paramount interest. Humans are not

the only creatures who can become Dark Mages, any magic-using creature can become consumed with magic. Salamar'tey the dragon, for example, is obsessed with magic to the point of near insanity.

Dark Mages, above all else, hate other magic-users. Other magic-users consume valuable magic and compete for possession of magical items and mother-stone. They should be destroyed.

If a player character is unfortunate enough to become a Dark Mage, it will become virtually impossible for him to play that character again, much the same as it is difficult for a player to play a character that has become a Vampire.

Saving a Dark Mage?

By their very nature, Dark Mages will have no desire to be cured of their affliction and will resist with every power at their disposal any such attempts. It is doubtful that a full Dark Mage could be cured at any rate.

A mage in the Transitional steps 1 thru 5 can voluntarily seek to save himself by abstaining from the use of magic. For every thirty days a mage abstains from spell casting he moves down one transitional step. Once a mage passes step 5, however, he no longer has the mental capacity to resist.

Mishaps

Whenever a mage attempts to cast a spell and fails his Success-Rating roll, then a Mishap has occurred. Mishaps can range from causing annoying quirks in the outcome of a spell, to complete disaster. In order to determine the outcome of a magical mishap, you must first determine the margin of error. Simply calculate the number of points he missed his roll by and compare it to Table V. This will give you a modifier. Roll 1D20, applying the appropriate modifier and consult Table VI.

*Note: If a mage is in the process of casting a spell and is interrupted for any reason, for ex-

Feature

ample he is struck during combat, the spell is an automatic mishap. When interrupted while casting a spell, the Margin of Error is automatically Catastrophic. This is because the mage has accessed magic which has suddenly been released and is no longer under control.

Table V Mishaps: Margin of Error

Points Over	Margin of Error	Modifier
01-05%	Marginal	-2
06-10%	Minor	-1
11-15%	Significant	0
16-20%	Major	+1
21+	Catastrophic	+2

Table VI MISHAPS 1d20

- 00 Spell has no effect
- 01 Spell's Power is halved ¹
- 02 Spell's Power is halved. Random Target affected. ²
- 03 Random Spell is cast (2 levels lower than intended spell) ³
- 04-07 Magic-User ages 1d3 years
- 08-10 Magic-User ages 1d6 years
- 11-13 Magic-User ages 1d10 years
- 14-18 Reverse of Intended Spell is cast ⁴
- 19 Spell's Power is doubled ¹
- 20 Spell's Power is doubled. Random Target effected. ²
- 21 Random Spell is cast (2 levels higher than intended spell) ³
- 22 Random Spell is cast at random target. (2 levels higher than intended spell)

NOTES:

1. *Spell's Power* refers to *Range, Duration, Amount of Damage, Area of Effect, etc.* All attributes of the spell are increased or decreased as indicated.

2. As in 1. If the spell is being targeted on a person, then the spell is retargeted on a random person/creature. Determine the number of possible targets within the spell's adjusted range and roll an appropriate-sided die to determine who is targeted.

3. Roll appropriate dice and determine what new spell was cast. The target of the spell will remain the same if applicable. If there are no spell levels above or below the intended spell, then roll for a random spell of the same level.

4. If there is no reverse form of the spell being cast, then spell has no effect.

Table VII is a summary of the spell-casting procedure which should make the process a little clearer.

TABLE VII Casting Procedure

1. Spell Caster announces that he is going to cast a spell. Spell must either be memorized or read from a book or scroll per standard AD&D rules.

2. Spell Caster takes his base Success Rating and adds the Spell Level modifier. If Strength/Constitution points are to be committed, the Magic-User must announce how many points he is going to commit prior to rolling the dice. He rolls percentile attempting to roll his Success Rating, or lower, to successfully cast the spell. is resolved per standard AD&D rules.

3. If the spell was successfully cast, then the spell is resolved per standard AD&D rules. If ST/CO points were committed, the Magic-User rolls on Table III to determine if they are lost permanently or temporarily.

4. If casting attempt was unsuccessful, then the Magic-User consults Table V to determine the Margin of Error. Using the appropriate modifier he then rolls on Table VI to determine the Mishap.

Design Notes

The system presented here is a compromise. It does not fully simulate magic as I perceive it to exist in Alderac. To do it as I would really like, would require a total reworking of the spells themselves, a task that would demand a lot of work and play-testing. Something I'm not prepared to deal with at the present time. Besides, such a massive undertaking would undermine our first objective, to allow the system to be easily incorporated into a standard AD&D campaign.

There are many aspects of this system that scream out to be further developed. Dark Mages are particularly intriguing for me.

We mentioned that the magical-pool flu-

cuates over time. Space restrictions would not allow me to include the rules covering this area. I will offer them in a future issue.

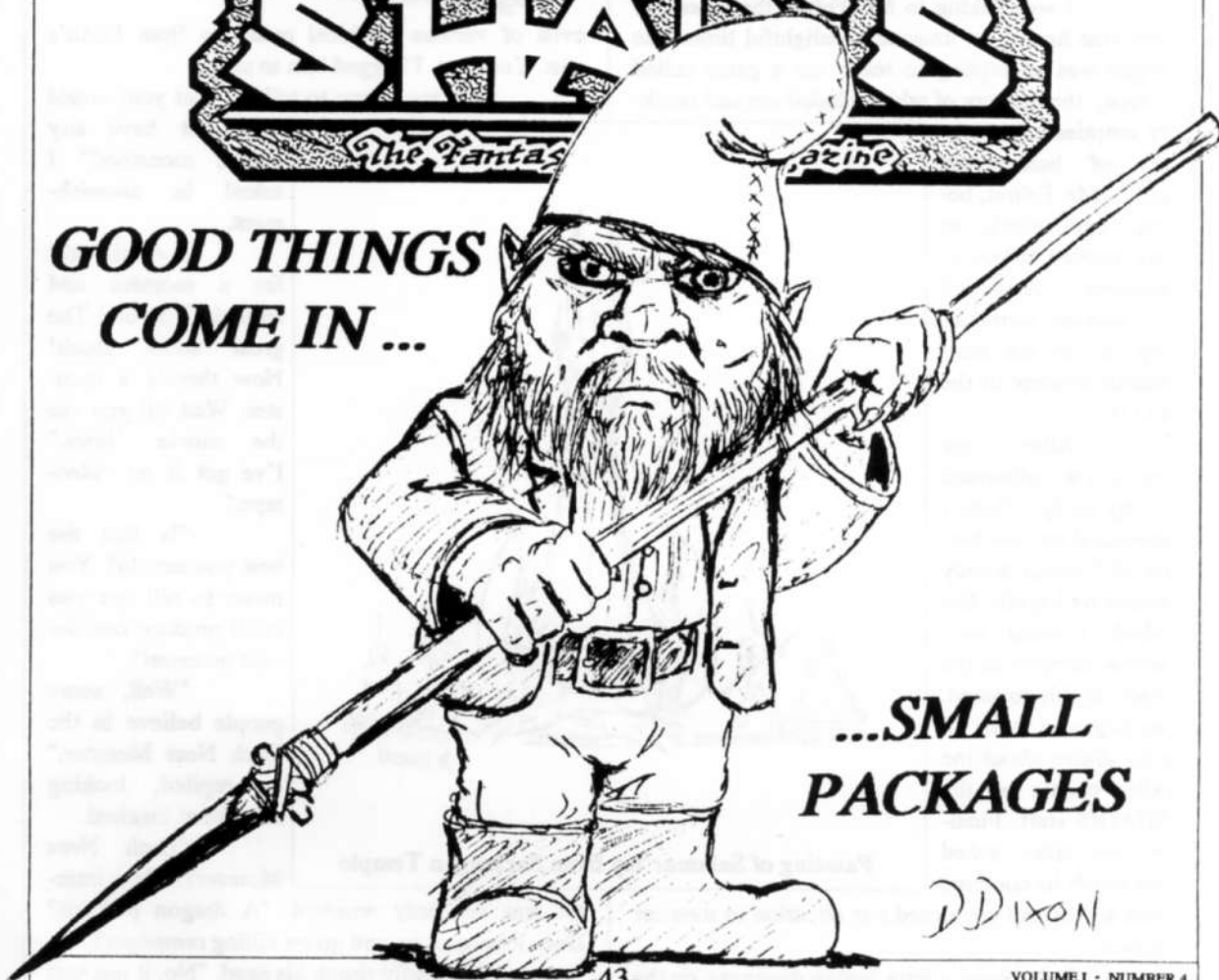
I would like to see a series of tables that would list physical and mental effects such as maiming, and phobias. I would also love to develop, (or more ideally, see someone else develop), a new list of spells. I see magic in Alderac as being less rigid. Spells would be much more flexible and the magic-user would be able to greatly modify the

spell to fit the situation. For example, once the mage had learned a fireball spell, he could alter the spell to provide a wide range of uses, from simply lighting a campfire, to using it as a powerful weapon.

I encourage you to modify and/or enhance this system as you use fit. I would be interested in seeing any improvements or suggestions your own group comes up with. □



**GOOD THINGS
COME IN ...**



**...SMALL
PACKAGES**

DDIXON

FROM THE SCROLLS OF GREYTAR

By Jolly R. Blackburn



Greetings, young readers,

I was talking to Mr. Felton the other day and was having an unusually delightful time. The rogue was attempting to teach me a game called 'craps,' the mastery of which eluded me and quickly emptied my pockets of hard-earned gold. Mr. Felton, being sympathetic to my sudden impoverishment continued my lessons, introducing me to the marvelous concept of the I.O.U.

After my lessons, we adjourned to my study, where I produced my last bottle of Orluian brandy which we happily finished. Finding ourselves slumped on the floor, unable to stand, we began to make up silly ditties about the other people on the SHADIS staff. Finally, my sides ached too much to continue such antics and we turned our attention to monster stories.

B.A. began a long boring discourse on the

evils of various mythical creatures from Earth's past. Yawning, I begged him to stop.

"Do you mean to tell me that your world does not have any REAL monsters?" I asked in astonishment.

B.A. thought for a moment and smiled. "You bet! The great white shark! Now there's a monster. Wait till you see the movie "Jaws." I've got it on videotape."

"Is that the best you can do? You mean to tell me you can't produce one decent monster!"

"Well, some people believe in the Loch Ness Monster," he replied, looking somewhat insulted.

"Loch Ness Monster?" My interest was suddenly renewed. "A dragon perhaps?

Does it burn crops and go on killing rampages?"

B.A. sadly shook his head. "No, it just sort



Painting of Salamar'tey from Sarlangan Temple

of pokes its head out of the water every once and a while. But I think it killed some sheep once."

"Sheep?"

We sat in silence for several minutes. Then B.A. asked the fatal question.

"So, are there any monsters in Alderac?"

I smiled. "Far too many to relate. I'm afraid Alderac is host to hundreds of such evils."

"So, what's the worst one! The one that gives you nightmares!"

I immediately thought of Salamar'tey, the most famous member of dragonkind from my native world.

The more astutely-learned scholars of Alderacian history fondly refer to the great dragon as 'Old Sal.' Regardless of your feelings for the old dragon, he has made many a lad's history lessons more tolerable with his terrible deeds.

The noted Alderacian historian, Eslar Sulain, theorized in his book, "The Book of Shadows," that Salamar'tey was the same dragon of legend known as Gaava. Gaava was a mythical beast, whose name is mentioned in the written text of the Haagans as far back as -978 TR.

Gaava terrorized the Haagan tribes of the Soult river basin for centuries. Legend held that the evil Gaava was finally slain by Lord Saratar with the magical blade Thornbrim. It was said that after his death Gaava descended into the deserts of Flamar, where he tended to Yi'Gor as his agent.

A hundred years later, the first mention of a dragon in the Salamar mountains near the desert of Flamar was recorded. Eslar maintained that Salamar'tey was none other than Gaava, who had returned to Alderac to do the bidding of his master, Yi'Gor. The name Salamar'tey, in fact, is Haagan for 'Serpent of Salamar,' so the theory holds some weight.

The name, Salamar'tey, first appears in historical reference in the Sarlangan epic poem '*Nortra Fas*' written about -300 TR. It tells of a great dragon rising from the Salamar mountain range and terrorizing the Dark Staud Forest.

Thereafter, Salamar'tey seems to appear every seventy years, terrorizing the land in four-to-six-month long rampages.

To the unlearned, there seems to be no logical reason for Salamar'tey's bloody rampages, other than the fact that the beast derives pleasure in the wanton killing of innocents. But, if one accepts the '*Nortra Fas*' as an authority on the subject, then many answers are revealed.

For in the twenty-sixth stanza of the '*Nortra Fas*,' we are told that Salamar'tey stumbled upon two of the twelve lost tablets. These tablets drove the dragon insane, compelling him to begin his long search for the remaining tablets.

Not much else is known about the dragon. One interesting thing of note is the prophecy that Salamar'tey will be slain by a warrior wielding the sword Thornbrim.

Well, I've been told that I have been neglecting part of my assigned duties. In issue no.#1, you may recall, I began the first installment of a glossary of Alderacian terms. We will now continue our studies with the second installment.

GLOSSARY

Arden 'Vas

The high priest of the Benyaran Temple. By tradition the Arden'Vas is a male but there have been three women to hold the position over the last thousand years. It is believed that the Arden'Vas takes on the living spirit of the god Benyar. The title of Arden'Vas is frequently assumed by the Emperor of the Ragean Empire.

Arlora

One of two moons orbiting Alderac and the largest. Arlora's composition gives it a light turquoise hue. The moon appears in the sky about the same size as Earth's moon. The Ragean month is based on Arlora's cycle which was originally 28 days. In the year -342 TR Arlora's revolution about Alderac was dramatically slowed. (Linked to the

From the Scrolls of Greytar

first gravitational shift of Alderac) By the year 108 TR it takes 26 days for Arlora to complete one cycle.

Benyar

The patron god of the Ragean Empire. A major god of the Zelaurian mythos, Benyar was the first god created by Zelaaur. Benyar is always portrayed as possessing a human appearance with the wings of a falcon. The god is closely associated with birds of prey. Benyar is thought to bring swift victories, good hunting and wisdom.

Bin'Parta

The backbone of the Ragean Empire's political structure. The Bin'Parta is an assembly of officials from which the majority of powerful Imperial positions are filled. Members of the Bin'Parta are elected into the assembly by the standing members or directly appointed by the Emperor himself. Legal qualifications demand that a member of the Bin'Parta own a residence in Soult Tet and that he owns a minimum of 10,000 Serti worth of property. No one can hope to go far in the political arena of the Empire without starting off in the Bin'Parta.

Flur'Mar

The Alderac year is comprised of 394 days. The Ragean calender accounts for 392 days, broken into 14 months of 28 days each. This keeps the calendar nicely balanced with a particular day of the year always falling on the same day of the week. The Ragean calendar ignores the last two days of the year. These two days have come to be known as 'days of ill conception.' The two days are considered unlucky. Business transactions, weddings, and festivals are shunned on the Flur'Mar. So deep is the dread of these two days that many Rageans feel compelled to kill any child unfortunate enough to be born on the Flur'Mar out of the belief that the child will only bring grief to himself and his family.

Forcarans

The Forcarans were the predecessors of the Rageans. The Empire the Rageans now rule once belonged to the Forcarans. The city of Soult Tet, originally called Forcar was the seat of their empire. When the Ragean Wars ended with the city of Raga inheriting the vast territories of its enemy, the Rageans were forced to move their capital to Forcar, (renaming it 'Soult Tet'), in order to centralize its control.

Forcar Remius

The temple of Benyar. Forcar Remius stands on Yistain hill and is the third temple to Benyar to stand on the sight. Preists of the temple enter as iniates and once ordained are never allowed to leave the temple again.

Ginge

Refers to a wide area scattered with rocky islands, north of the Ragean Empire. The area has become a place of refuge for pirates, thieves and anyone hiding from justice. The Ginge Pirates have long been a sore point with the Imperial fleets.

Grand Aerie

1: The large building on Yistain Hill where the Bin'Parta meet in their daily sessions.

2: The mythical dwelling place of Benyar and his loyal followers.

Patroll

Military Title. Equivalent to the rank of general.

Saratar

Legendary hero. Saratar was the last king of the Aldesian Kingdom. The libraries are filled with his exploits and adventures. As Saratar lay dying on the banks of the Soult River, two Ravens came to him (Agents of Benyar) and delivered promises of a 'future king' in the image of Saratar.



Shadis

One of two moons of Alderac. Shadis is the smallest of the two moons. Shadis' orbit is further out than that of Arlora and appears to be one-fifth the size of Arlora in the night sky. Shadis' cycle runs for 50 days. It appears as a very dark shade of grey with a greenish tint. It has one large remarkable white patch on its surface which is not always visible from Alderac.

Soult Tet

The capital city of the Ragean Empire. Originally known as Forcar, Soult Tet sprawls across the Soult River basin where the Soult River meets the Ginge River. The Imperial Census of 105 TR estimated the city's population at 850,000. This figure is undoubtedly much higher.

Terac

Hero of the Ragean wars. Depending on who you are talking to, Terac is either considered a great hero or mass-murderer. When Terac captured the city of Shadlet at the outset of the wars, it is recorded that he had 17,000 citizens put to death because the city's treasury had been secreted away prior to the city's surrender. Terac's many exploits, (and in my opinion many of his deeds were fabricated), include battling the great wyrm Sala-

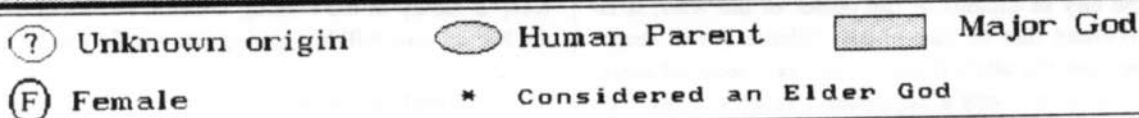
mar'tey. Perhaps the most famous exploit associated with Terac is the building of the huge warship the Behemite. Terac was born in the Galon Hills and began his military career by leading a small army into the hills to rid them of the hordes of thieves and cutthroats who lived there. Thus Terac earned the famous title, *Defender of the Galon Hills*. Terac died an old man in his native Galon Hills and it is rumored that he was buried with his vast wealth and magic.

Tre'Catrobium (TR)

When the Ragean Empire captured the City of Forcar, the city was renamed Soult Tet and a new reckoning of time was established by the new Ragean Emperor. Tre'Catrobium refers to the burning of Forcar and the raising up of a new city. Thus, 108 TR, is 108 years after the capture of Soult Tet.

Before I close this issue, I've included a chart which lists the major gods and their origins. Keep it handy in the coming months, for many of the BattleLords will be figuring into the fiction.

Until next issue. ☐



- 1- There are many conflicting accounts of Kager-Sterz's birth. Adorja however is consistently identified as the father.
- 2- Warven'Mar was created from an encounter between Aknar and a mysterious 'wandering spirit'. The spirit is never identified in any of the religious works.

Of Embers Born



FICTION

By Frank R. VanHoose

PART IV

Day 265 Year 108 TR.

Var'Taw did not pay a great deal of attention to his surroundings as he rode his horse through the shadowy Kalinor forest. He had ridden this way many times before and was quite familiar with the scenery. Besides, he had other things to think about.

His arms bore cuts which hadn't quite healed and their constant dull ache were reminders of his failures. While most grevan males inflicted the scars of their warrior caste on themselves by the time they had seen sixteen summers, Var'Taw had not acquired his until he was twenty. Then, he still had not found the courage to cut his own flesh. His father, Rang Taw, had bound him and made the cuts. Bitter shame filled his mind as he remembered how he had cried and begged for mercy.

Though no one dared openly suggest that the son of the grevan warlord did not have the courage to make his own manhood scars, Var'Taw knew that many whispered tales passed between warriors behind his back. But the worst of it all was that even with his scars, the girls still would have nothing to do with him. Most of the other grevan men his age had sired several bastards with

the camp's women and a few of his peers had even taken one or more women to their tent on a permanent basis.

Not only would none of the tribe's daughters consent to move into his tent, even the camp's most desperate widow would not walk out on the plains with him, much less consider marriage to him.

At the ripe age of twenty, Var'Taw was still a virgin. Now, his father had stuck him out in the middle of nowhere in charge of a wood-gathering party. Or, at least, he was supposed to be in charge. The men who were supposed to be taking his orders openly mocked him or completely ignored him. He had begun to spend much of his time alone in the forest. He had found a small quiet pool in a forest stream where he would sit for hours in silent contemplation of the many injustices he had been forced to bear. He was headed there now.

Gradually the sound of splashing water intruded on his brooding. He stopped his horse and looked cautiously about. That many grevans had been killed while gathering wood in the Kalinor he knew, but he had never even seen a sarlangan while his party had been there. His pool was only a mile or so from camp, so he had not ever considered

himself in danger. He sat on his horse for several moments listening to the sound of someone or something splashing in the water of the pool for which he was headed. He was torn between his cowardice and his curiosity. Just when he had decided to head quietly back to camp, another sound joined that of splashing water. The sound of a voice singing. A female voice.

Var'Taw decided that this was too good an opportunity to miss. He slid off his horse and tied the reins to a bush. Quietly, he slipped through the screening bushes until he had a clear view of the quiet woodland pool. As he suspected, the combination of splashing water and singing meant someone was taking a bath. No twenty year old virgin, no matter how great his cowardice level, could pass up the opportunity that now presented itself to Var'Taw. He sank to his knees and let his eyes drink in the sight before him.

On the ground, safely away from the edge of the water where it would not get wet, was a neat stack of leather clothing. Carefully placed on top of this was a knife, a bow and a quiver of arrows. Var'Taw's eyes barely paused as they passed over this display. What drew his undivided attention was in the center of the pool. Standing with her side turned to him, knee deep in water, was a naked sarlangan woman. As he watched, she bent down to grab a handful of clean sand from the bottom of the pool. Straightening up again she continued to wash herself using the clean sand to remove the dirt and grime of a hard day. His eyes worshipped the clean lines of her body as she extended her hands over her head and stretched before diving in to the pool to rinse the sand from her body.

Like steel to a magnet or a moth to a flame, Var'Taw was drawn from his hiding place in the brush at the stream's edge. As he reached the water's edge, the woman burst up through the surface of the pool and brushed the water from her eyes. She whipped her hair back across her shoulders and turned to look directly at Var'Taw. He waited for the scream. It never came. Nor did a

mad dash for the clothes and weapons on the bank at his feet replace it. Instead, the woman smiled like a ray of sunlight breaking through an overcast sky and motioned the young grevan to join her in the water.

Not taking time to undo the various ties that held his clothing together Var'Taw removed shirt and breeches by brute force leaving several scrapes on his body which went completely unnoticed. This would be a day Var'Taw could remember for the rest of his life. His bare foot entered the water and a hand the size of a horse's hoof clamped down on his shoulder. Reality returned.

Var'Taw turned his head to look over his shoulder at the owner of the hand which held his shoulder in an unbreakable grip. Then his eyes climbed skyward up the length of the arm that was attached to the hand. At the massive shoulders, his gaze stopped. It didn't want to climb higher. Nothing that walked on two legs should grow that big. Grevans didn't. Sarlangans didn't. Even those pig Southrons didn't get this big! Down, his vision begged. Down has to be better. Down his eyes went. It wasn't better. Now he could see the other hand. It held the biggest sword he had ever seen. He tried to run. His feet dug holes in the sand but his body stayed firmly in the grasp of The Hand.

Var'Taw only knew two ways to handle trouble. Running hadn't worked. That left only begging. He tried to drop to his knees. The Hand wouldn't let him. It just held him there with his knees bent and his feet drawn up in the air. Somehow begging didn't seem like it was going to be the answer this time. But the mind is very resourceful and devised a third method of dealing with The Hand. It quit. Var'Taw fainted.

Seychelle prodded the unconscious grevan youth with her toe. "Little bastard looks a lot like Gicha, doesn't he?"

Orric stared interestedly at Var'Taw. "Yea, they could well be two seeds from the same tree. If that's true, that means that this little plains rat's sire is the one we want. Since we can't very

well go out there after him, maybe we can use this carrion to bring him to us. And I know just the way to bait the trap."

Before Seychelle could move to stop him, Orric dropped to his knees, drew his knife and castrated the unconscious grevan who instantly awoke screaming. Orric calmly sent him back to dreamland with a swift kick to the head.

"After this little rodent draws Rang Taw to us, I'll let you kill him. Now get dressed. We have work to do."

When Seychelle had dressed she followed Orric into the brush to find him tying Var'Taw across his horse. Untying the reins from the bush, he cut them off at the bridle and pointed the horse in the direction of the grevan camp. Then he walked around to the side where Var'Taw's head and upper body lay limp. He jerked the young grevan's head back by the hair and slit Var'Taw's throat with a practiced stroke. Maddened by the smell of the fresh blood spurting from the gaping wound, the horse ran blindly toward the camp of the wood-gathering party that had been Var'Taw's first command.

Day 315 Year 108

Rang Taw stared at the smoke from the funeral pyre as it wended its way skyward bearing with it the soul of his only son. On its way to the bosom of the gods, the shamans had told him. Rang Taw did not pay much attention to the shamans. Powerless, old, toothless men who clung to past glories. The gods had betrayed Rang Taw many times in the past so he quit worshipping them. He forced himself to attend the formal festivals and ceremonies to ease the complaints from his war-chiefs, but in his heart he despised the gods.

Rang Taw did not really grieve for his slain offspring for, in truth, the little bastard had always been far more trouble than he was worth. Now that the fool had gotten himself killed, Rang Taw would be forced to delay his plans for step-

ping up the pressure of his raids to the south to take time to deal with the forest-dwelling dung in the thrice-cursed Kalinor. He hadn't actually cared if his son lived or died. But his hold over the fragmented tribes of Greva was somewhat weak and he was now forced by tradition to avenge the death of his son. To fail to do so would surely shatter his precarious position. The grevans would not understand if he did anything else but ride in force to the Kalinor and take Sarlangan lives. When the pyre had burned down to an acceptable level, Rang Taw mounted his horse and led the assembled grevan warriors northwest toward the Kalinor forest.

For many weeks the far scattered grevan tribes had been gathering at Blazing Forks. Such a gathering of the grevan-speaking peoples had never been witnessed before, the valley floor was blanketed with grevan camps. Now Rang Taw sent out his War-chiefs, who had been carefully instructed on the order of battle.

Hard-riding grevan horseman sped before the main body led by Rang Taw. They split north and south around the Kalinor forest and rode swiftly until they had reached their appointed places. The main body of grevans, meanwhile, slowly spread in a long line around the northeastern edge of the forest and made camp. At dusk, on the appointed day, all the lone warriors crept to the edge of the forest and carefully built a fire. Not a small one for cooking, but a great bonfire, carefully placed to devour the surrounding forest in its ever growing hunger. As the many fires moved north and west, they converged to form one long wall of flame. The furious blaze commenced pushing those animals and men able-bodied enough to flee before it into the hands of the waiting grevan horde. Left behind were only the charred remains of those too old, injured, or ill to flee. No one knows for sure how many perished in the Kalinor forest in the fire or at the hands of the Rang Taw's grevan warriors, but the known survivors of this great conflagration can be counted on the fingers of one man's hands. Orric's plan had worked. Rang Taw had come to

the Kalinor forest.

Reman and Gicha were camped by a small stream in the southeastern Kalinor. At eight, Gicha was showing the first small signs of what he would look like as an adult. He was a handsome lad with the thinly-chiseled features of his mother's people but the darkness of skin and hair that characterized the grevans. He had also demonstrated a quickness of mind and body that was surprising for one of his few years. Because of this, Reman had overlooked the boy's years and allowed him to go herb gathering with him. With Orric and Seychelle gone much of the time, Reman had raised Gicha and loved him greatly. He was leaning contentedly against a tree watching Gicha sort through his herb sack when he first smelled smoke.

Then his sharp hearing focused on a sound that had lingered unnoticed in the background. It was the rushing, crackling roar of a great forest fire. Quickly Reman and Gicha packed their gear and headed away from the sound of the fire. But it soon became apparent that eight-year-old legs could not move fast enough to stay ahead of the fire, which was quickly gaining on the fleeing pair. Reman dropped all their gear and swung the boy up on his shoulders as he jogged off through the forest at the best pace he could manage.

The fire was faster than Reman. Soon, he saw that there would be no way to outrun the flames. He must try to find some kind of shelter. A cave, a deep cliff, a wide stream. Just ahead was the top of a small knoll. From the top he could gain a better view of the area and decide which way to go. He set Gicha down on a stone at the base of a large tree and tiredly climbed up through its branches. The fire was close on their heels. But it was also ahead of them. From his vantage in the treetop, Reman could completely survey his rapidly shrinking island of unburned forest. And that is what it was, a small island in a large sea of flame. And nowhere in that small haven could he see any

sign of shelter that would protect them against the coming fires. Reman knew he was doomed. He turned all his attention to finding a way to save his grandson.

"Gicha, help me dig a hole here." Reman worked to keep his voice calm. The boy knew they were in danger from the fire, but in his childish confidence believed that Grapa Reman could make everything all right. Reman would do his best to protect the child as long as he could. They would dig a hole as deeply as they could in the short time remaining. Reman would put Gicha in the bottom and protect him with his own body. It might not be enough, but it was all that Reman could think to do.

The hole they had managed to dig was very shallow when the flames started their rapid climb up the knoll toward the two. Reman brushed off Gicha's questions, pushing him flat on his face inside the hole and then he laid on top of him. Watching the oncoming flames, Reman knew he had done all that he could. He also knew that it wasn't enough. The fire was too hot, the flames too hungry. As the smoke choked the breath from him and the heat began to blister his skin, Reman raised his voice in an appeal to the gods, for only the gods could help now, that is if any happened to be listening.

Reman's appeal was heard. But not exactly by a god.

His benefactor was more like a wizard who had dreamed of godhood and had gotten himself about halfway there. Since he was closer to human than god, the affairs of humans attracted his attention more readily than they might a lofty god. Plus, since his unfortunate accident while casting a spell, which went awry at the utterance of the wrong key word, Auros had developed a keen sensitivity to humans who act out of love. So, Auros tried to help Reman and Gicha escape the fire.

But a halfway god doesn't have much power to expend in the flashy way some of the more popular gods do. He couldn't transport both

from the forest deathtrap. He couldn't even take Reman by himself. But he could barely manage the boy.

Amidst his anguish, Reman felt a tingling at his stomach and saw a silvery glow reflected in the dense smoke that filled his world. Then, the hole beneath him seemed to deepen as he fell the few extra inches to its bottom. Nearly mad with

pain, Reman realized he had gotten his miracle. The boy was safe in the hands of the gods. Then flames roared across the top of the knoll where Reman lay and he disappeared behind a curtain of fire. Auros couldn't save Reman, but he could hear the screams as they faded into the omnipresent roar of a forest world coming to an end. □

No, a game master
with an over active imagination.

A Space Game?



POZOE & LOGO

BY DANIEL GIDDINGS

S ET AMIDST THE HUB-BUB OF THE LOOP TOWN SCOOTER-PORT, WE MEET OUR WONDERING DUO. OUT ONNA LARK...



A NIMATED CONVERSATION, DOWN RAMPLWAY INTO APART-MALLS. "Must be cool inside!" RHYMES POZOE. EASY FOR A BOT TO SAY.....



P ERHAPS NOT. PURPOSE INTRUDES ON PLEASANT RAMBLINGS. LOGO SPIES THE SHADAW OF THINGS TO COME.....



L OGO EXITS ON IMPULSE DRIVE AND FOLLOWS THE CRY - NON STOP INTO OBLIVION!!!!!!...OR...



I NTO INTERFACE! CURIOSITY THEN PROPELS THEM THRU.



S EEMS A BIT OF TIME-FOOLERY, IS THIS SCREEED HE'S PAINTING SOME SORT OF TRANSIT OR JUST A DESERTSEEN?



O R JUST DESERTING ALTOGETHER?! HI-JINK 'N HOODWINKED? MAROONS MAROONED?!?!... NO TIME TO WONDER!!!



POZOE & LOGO

"FIGHT OR FLIGHT?"

O-KAY!-THENK-YOU WONDER-DOG!!!
NOW FOR OUR NEXT NUMBER COMING UP
-MAYHAPS OURS IS UP-
I WILL PERFORM A SINGULAR ACT OF INGRATIATION.....
WHY, YES-Y-YES, YOU COULD EVEN SAY WE ARE DAY-VO-TEEZ!!

YOU-R SUBJECTS OF THE ALL?

SIM-SIM S'ALLAH BHIM!
ARE THEY FRIENDLY SPIRITS?....

OKAY LOGO, BEFUDDLE THEIR BRAINPANS WITH YOUR DOG TRICKS, WE'RE OUTTA HERE!

NEVER TALK TO STRANGERS

AND SO, CAJOLED INTO JOINING THEIR MERRY BAND FOR A TOUR OF DISTANT HORIZONS, POZOE AND LOGO MAKE CONNECTIONS...

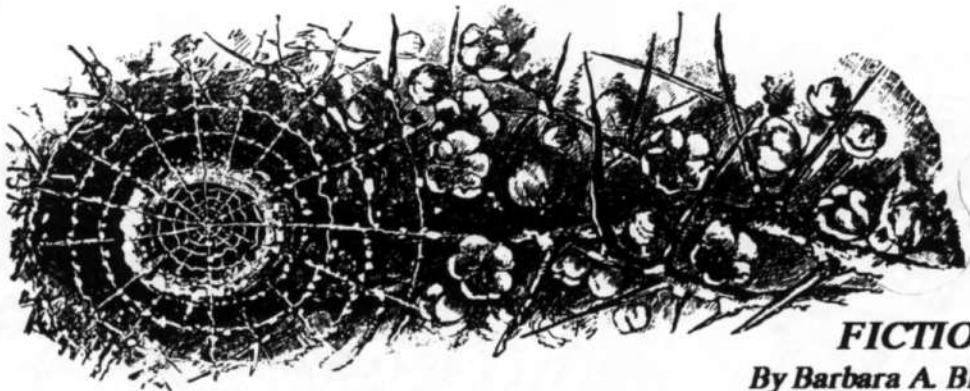
"I'M GONNA KILL HIM..."

NOT 'ALLAH' YOU FUSE TUB!!
OLLIE! OLLIE!!!
... Rather popular species of a person....

AAAAARRNTH!
The Hooded No-Way,
TONGUEYED EVIL-
SORCERER ROGUE!
"ALL-EE" IS OUR ENEMY OF EONS.
ARNTH!!! So nice of you to drop by.

AD

The Shriek of Soult Tet



FICTION

By Barbara A. Blackburn

PART IV WANTED

Day 203 Year 108

Humoz leaned over his drink and sulked. "Well, looka here. What happened to you? Been messin' with the patrell's wife again, eh? Poor baby, can hardly see outta those puffy eyes, can ya?"

The garishly made-up waitress laughed and tousled his greasy hair.

Furiously, Humoz swiped at her hand, stood up and glared.

"Keep your wrinkled claws to yourself."

He didn't like to be reminded of the beating he had taken. It was humiliating having been whipped like a schoolboy. If his assailant had been anyone but the emperor, he'd have cut him open, no regrets. He still dreamed of knocking Sageem's teeth down his throat, what sweetness that would be.

Knocking the stool over, he grabbed his drink and moved over to a table.

The woman was now bellowing with laughter.

Humoz was trying to think. Sageem had made it clear what would happen if he failed to find the Tharlflax's.

"Draya must've helped them find a place to hide," he thought. "She's smart, knows her way around. Damn! Why did she have to get involved? I'd have had no problems keeping track of those brats if she hadn't come along."

His mind revelled at the thought of making her pay for all the grief she'd brought him.

His thoughts were interrupted by a tap on the shoulder.

"Hey, you Humoz Naril?"

"Yeah, what ya want?"

"Heard you were paying for some information, is that true?"

"Depends on what ya got, I don't pay for garbage."

"You lookin' for Draya Rist'lin? I know where she might be."

Humoz grabbed the small man's collar and spat, "Tell me!"

The little balding man shivered and stutered, "H-how m-m-much will you give me?"

Humoz shoved some coins his way and repeated his demand.

"She has a lover. He works in the inn where she used to work. He's the barkeep. I used to stay over there and I saw them kissing in a corner. They seemed real close, know what I mean? I

mean, maybe he's hiding her."

Humoz frowned, "I already been over there, the owner don't know a thing, nobody does. I searched evry room, under every bed...nothing."

"Well, this guy ain't gonna tell ya he was foolin' around with Draya, not in front of Obar. That fat innkeeper would kill him if he knew they had been seein' each other. He kind of had a sick mind about that girl. Anyway, if you can get him alone, you might be able to persuade him to tell ya about Draya."

Humoz stood, laid some money on the table for his drink and turned to leave. He took a few steps and spun on his heels, "You better be tellin' me the truth or I'm comin' back for my money, and a little extra from your hide as well."

Turning to the barmaid he threw a coin at her and said, "Here's a little something. Take it and buy yourself a new face, you need it."

Draya awoke with a start as a large rat crawled across her chin.

Swiping the creature off, she jumped to her feet and groaned. It would take time for her to recover from her injuries, and sleeping on the ground had stiffened her joints, bringing pain with each movement.

She gazed over at Gar and Shindar, who still slept peacefully.

Something would have to be done about this place. The smell was overwhelming. The walls dripped with a greenish slime, the mixture of every sort of filth from above. Draya had heard about this place, but still never pictured it like this.

Draya's rat had now made its way over to Shindar. Draya scurried to knock the rodent off as it climbed up the sleeping girl's foot. But Shindar awoke screaming and kicking. The rat went sailing overhead, landing on a yellowish blob of something, and now Gar was awake as well. He rubbed his eyes and looked around, "What's going on?"

Laughter erupted as they all considered

their ridiculous plight.

"Well," Draya broke in, "what're we gonna do about this dump anyway?"

"We could always move," Shindar interjected, "I don't know how much of this I can take. The pigs on father's villa lived better than this."

"Listen," Draya said, "wouldn't you rather put up with a little dirt, than wind up dead?"

"Dead? What are you talking about?" asked Gar. "We haven't done anything that bad. I'm beginning to wonder if we shouldn't go back up, I can't believe that we're the most-wanted criminals in the city. Soult Tet has enough scum to keep the guards busy forever without picking on us."

"Look Gar, I hate to tell you this, but that gutter rat that was following us doesn't work cheap."

"I appreciate your help, but how do you know about him?"

Draya looked down at the ground and scraped a foot through the dirt.

"I guess I might as well be honest. I won't blame you for hating me after I tell you. I..uh..I know the man from my days among the Sadoks."

Shindar and Gar looked at each other in shock. Everyone knew that the Sadok thieves were the most skillful and dangerous of bandits in the empire. They terrorized travellers from Saraka to Abos. The group was so hated that a shortened form of their name was used as a term of derision. Calling someone a 'dok was often the catalyst for violence.

"You...were a Sadok?" said Gar in disgust. "How? Why?"

"I was a child. My mother and father were 'doks, what of it? I was born to the life. But there was always somethin' inside of me that hated it. My shiftless parents made things uncomfortable if I complained. Goin' without supper makes a kid think twice about protestin' too much."

Shindar's gaze softened, "Did you have to steal, kill and do all those things? I could never

have done that, no matter what."

"I...I did have to help the sorry lot of 'em, it was

the only life I knew. Besides, there's plenty of upstandin' people here, even high officials who kill and steal in the name of law and order. They're no better than me.

"My folks sold me to Humoz Naril, the man who's been following us. He was a low, mean snake with no sense of decency. I'd have to lay in the road and act dead. People would stop and he'd jump 'em."

Draya's face drew pale and tears formed in the corners of her eyes but she brusquely brushed them aside and continued. "He was ruthless. He liked to cut people's throats, sometimes, he'd even..." she choked, "he'd, torture 'em. And, he'd laugh, as the screams of his victims echoed through the forest. Sometimes, all he'd get would be a horse, he didn't care, he loved it.

"I hated him, so once when he was busy counting his loot, I snuck away from camp and jumped in the back of a passing caravan. It came here and this city's been my home ever since. You may think this town is a den of iniquity, but to me, it's a refuge."

She stared at the trash-strewn floor, afraid to look at the faces of her friends, afraid to endure their looks of contempt.

"So, if you want me to leave, well, I'll understand. I'm sure you can find better company than a 'dok."

Wading through the piles of garbage, she headed for the exit.

Shindar shot a glance at her brother who ran and took Draya by the arm. "Don't go, we need you."

She looked up into Gar's face, his deep blue eyes locking her gaze. A lanky finger reached out and gently brushed a wisp of dark hair from in front of her eyes.

Grasping Gar's hand with hers she was flooded with strong emotion. For an instant, she

drew her body close to his. Just as quickly, she pulled away. "I'd better go."

She turned, "I'll be back, I'm just gonna go up and scout around. Maybe you two aren't in as much trouble as we thought. I'll be back before dark. If I'm not, well, don't come and look for me, 'cause that'll mean something's happened and it won't be safe."

"Wait!" Gar shouted. "Take my sword, just in case."

He extended the weapon toward her, and as she grasped it, he drew close. "Be careful, 'cause if you don't come back, I WILL look for you and I WILL find you." Stooping, he planted a soft, lingering kiss on her mouth.

Draya returned his kiss and embraced him. Finally breaking free, she walked backwards toward the hole that led to the upper world, the real world. As she inched toward her exit, the two were unable to break their gaze. Finally, the girl turned, and in a few swift movements, was on her way back up to the city streets.

Yet even as she headed for the light of day, her mind lingered on that kiss.

Humoz strode into the Brass Bear and took a seat at the counter.

A tall, hulking man turned toward the new customer, "What'll it be, fella?"

Humoz eyed the man, "Well, friend, I was passin' by and noticed some smoke spewing out from your stable. I think you better grab a bucket, 'fore it turns into nothin' but a heap of ashes."

The man leapt over the bar and ran out the door to the stables. Humoz followed, grasping the handle of his most prized possession, a shiny knife.

"Where's the fire, mister, where is it?"

Humoz pointed down, and when the man knelt to look, he was knocked unconscious. Peering down on his helpless victim, Humoz smiled with delight. "This is gonna be fun," he muttered.

Grabbing a handful of water from the

horse trough, Humoz splashed the man's face until he came to.

Angrily, the giant man attempted to lunge his attacker. Humoz laughed and pulled out a knife with a six-inch serrated blade.

"I don't think you want to make me mad mister, I've had a bad day, and I'm just dying to use Old Jawclaw here." He patted the knife hilt with affection as he spoke of it.

The man paled and asked, "W-what ya want? I got no gold, b-but if ya g-give m-me a chance, I can get you s-some."

Humoz laughed so hard the horses were startled.

"Why friend, do you think me a mere robber? I have no need of your pitiful purse. What I do need is something very important. In fact, you might call it a matter of life and death, if you get my drift. Tell me where I can find Draya Rist'lin."

When Draya hit the surface, she scanned the alley for signs of life. No one seemed to spy her as she emerged and made her way to the Brass Bear.

She snuck up to the side of the building and peered in through the grimy window. She saw no one she knew, in fact, there was but one drunken bum sprawled out over a table.

Slipping into the room, she approached the man and nudged him. After several more nudges, increasing in intensity until the last was more like a punch, the man looked up.

"W-what?"

Draya bent down and whispered, "Where's the barkeep? Where did he go?"

The man shook his head and fell back onto the table unconscious.

In rage and panic, Draya dug her fingers into the man's hair and pulled.

"Listen, you drunken sot! You'd better tell me now, or I'll break your skull!"

The man mumbled something that sounded like, "owlsigh, owlsigh.."

Draya, furious with the situation picked the man off of his chair and drug him out to the horse trough.

The man's arms and legs flailed violently as she pushed him into the dirty water. "Tell me! Tell me where is Jogar?"

Sputtering for air the drunk spat, "He went outside, outside!"

Draya raised a fist in disgust before she was stopped by a familiar voice.

"You're not a bouncer here anymore my girl. Hear tell there's a price on yer pretty little head. Looks like I just became a rich man."

The drunk, now sober, scurried away as Draya whirled about in place, sword in hand.

"Obar! You jackal! Crawl back to your hole and do everyone a favor."

"My dear, hostile to the end. But then, that's what I love about you. Come inside, let's talk about old times. Perhaps we could see about getting your old job back."

Draya stepped back, nearly falling into the trough.

"Come, my girl, don't be afraid, I might just be the best friend you have. I have news of interest to you and your new friends."

Draya's expression changed. "What have you heard?"

"The news is much too delicate to air in the streets. Come, we can talk in my back room."

Draya eyed the fat man who had beaten her so badly before and wondered if the risk was worth it.

"Leave me alone, fat man!"

The innkeeper's face reddened. "Listen to me, I am risking my neck to be seen with you. I should turn you in on the spot and receive a reward. If you want to be a stubborn ass, so be it, I shall call for the guard and forget you."

The man turned.

"Alright I'll do it, I'll come. But if this is a trick, I will repay you somehow!"

She followed him within the walls of the

inn.

"Sit down, have a drink Draya. We used to be friends. It was I who saved you from a life of poverty, living on the streets, unwashed, like a cur, begging for food. Don't betray me now."

Draya began to back away, "Betray you? I owe you nothing! My payment for unending hours of slavery to you was to be accosted. Your drunken approaches sickened me. The price you asked for your 'kindness' was too high for anyone to pay. Now, tell me what you know, or I will repay you for the beating you gave and for all the trouble you've given me over the years."

"Fine, relax. I have interesting news."

As he talked, the man paced slipping behind her, placing his hands on her shoulders.

"My girl, tonight, when the moon is high, come to the stables and meet Grayga. He is someone who can tell you all about the recent events. He knows about the Thariflax's and their dilemma."

Shrinking from his touch, Draya turned and looked him in the eye. "How do I know I can trust you?"

"You could always trust me. I never wanted anything but the best for you. All you can do is show up and take your chances."

"And what would happen if I get up, slap your face and leave right now? You'd call the guards wouldn't you? What I don't understand is why the city is in such an uproar."

"I have no knowledge, but Grayga does. As for calling the guards, that's always possible, I'll not lie. I wouldn't mind collecting a reward, even if it does mean your pretty head. But then I wouldn't have the pleasure of your charming company. My price for the information you need is what it was for your services as a bouncer, just a little affection."

Draya stood and raised a hand to strike his massive face. Catching her arm, he grasped it firmly and bent it behind her back.

"I'm about to lose my patience with you, you ungrateful wench! Guards! Guards!."

Draya squirmed trying to free herself from his grasp. With her free hand she withdrew her sword and brought the hilt down hard on his skull. The man dropped to the floor with a thud. Draya ran toward the door but stopped dead in her tracks when she heard a chilling voice.

"You'll lose yer head fer killin' that man, now that's a fact. But 'fore I take ya in, I'm gonna make ya pay fer all the trouble you've caused me."

It was Humoz Naril. He stood in the doorway with a grin on his face, flicking the wooden doorpost with a blood-drenched knife.

"I didn't kill him, you slimy dog just knocked him out. Now, leave me be 'fore I slice you with this sword."

Humoz stepped toward her and threw his knife. Zinging past Draya's side, it pierced the throat of the unconscious innkeeper. Showers of blood splattered Draya's boots and leggings.

"Looks like you're a murderer after all."

Humoz ducked as Draya swung her sword at him and screamed in fury.

As he moved, he taunted the girl, "you're no match for me. You never could stomach the killing. I on the other hand, rather enjoyed it."

Draya raised her sword for another strike. But, Humoz rolled and kicked at Draya, knocking her legs out from under her. She stumbled backwards.

Humoz struggled to pull his knife out of the dead man.

Draya fell against a table and lost her grip on the sword. It clanged loudly on the floor.

Humoz smiled and lunged at the girl. His blade nicked her arm as she rolled backward over the tabletop.

Humoz chuckled, "you're doomed girlie, give it up, I promise I'll be gentle."

Draya slipped under the table and reached out to grasp the sword. Humoz stomped on her hand. Draya howled in pain but gripped the sword hilt and refused to let go.

"Draya, don't struggle so, it'll only make

it worse. Remember all the adventures we had together? We made quite a team, didn't we? Let's say you tell me where to find the brats and I'll leave you be, just for old times' sake. What do you think? Who knows, maybe we could be partners again..."

As Humoz was talking, Draya grabbed his leg and pulled with a swift, strong movement. The greasy man fell, landing atop the dead man.

The small dark girl snatched the sword and scurried out from under the desk. Humoz regained his footing and soon they were both facing each other, blade in hand, hatred on their faces.

"This is it, my girl. Make your peace with the world, for now you die."

Draya remained silent. Her expression of resolve was so firm that he shivered.

"What's wrong Naril? I guess you prefer sneaking up on your victims, don't you? I'd wager you've never faced an opponent nose-to-nose, weapon-to-weapon before, have you?"

Humoz grimaced and gestured with his knife. "I can take you anytime, anywhere."

Draya smiled, sidestepped and slashed. Humoz screamed and sunk to his knees. Blood poured from a wound across his chest. Draya raised her sword to take his head when he stood with a sudden burst of strength. He shoved her, pinning her against the wall and placed the blade of his knife on her throat.

"Now, tell me where I can find the brother and sister, or I'll cleave the head from your shoulders."

Draya winced. She contemplated trying to kick Humoz away but wasn't sure she could do it and still keep him from cutting her throat.

Suddenly, a tall, lanky figure strode through the doorway.

"Here I am you scoundrel, let her go!"

Draya gasped in astonishment. Humoz grinned and turned his head toward the boy. "My, my! So YOU'RE what all the fuss has been about. Well, I guess I'll take care of you with ease, but

where's that precious sister of yours? Don't tell me you left her alone? My boy, awful things can happen to pretty girls who are left alone in this city. Perhaps I can show her a few of them."

Gar lunged in fury. Humoz stepped aside and slashed with his knife but missed. Gar swung a fist and caught the greasy man on the chin with a powerful blow. Humoz fell back and went limp. Draya's sword had pierced his body from behind and now he slumped to the floor alongside Obar.

Draya and Gar stared at the scene of carnage in disbelief.

Then they looked up at each other.

Draya then fell exhausted into his arms and asked, "What are you doing here anyway? You could have been killed."

Gar whispered softly, "I'm here because I said I would come." Then, with a twinkle in his eye he added, "Besides, that place was really starting to stink." □

StarSong

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Fantasy, Science Fiction & Horror



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We Have Tomorrow's Stars
Today
Submissions Welcome

Letter's Page Continued

wolf are sorely needed in this hobby. By the way, the Sturm-wolf illustration was superb. It drove home the fearsome nature of the Sturm-wolf.

The cover art is steadily improving in leaps and bounds. George Vrbancic's artwork outshines most work I've seen in other small press, and even some of the big name rags.

I missed the interview column in Issue no.#3. I enjoy the interviews and was disappointed to discover it missing. I guess the promise of a Gygax interview in no.#4 will make up for it.

Greg Kistler
Indianapolis, IN

Dear SHADIS,

Ok I'm hooked. The fiction leaves me wanting more. Please increase the offerings in each issue! I want to find out what the Shriek is and I want to see Scav become Emperor! But at the rate you're going we could be talking a few years before I get to see it in print. The gaming articles are ok, but the fiction is great. And cut Greytar some slack! Give the ol'man some more space. Every issue he starts to get into some really neat trivia about Alderac and then has to cut it short. I want to party with this guy. He's an animal.

Please pick up Curstain's storyline again. I love the old geezer even if I wouldn't trust him for a second. I would love to see more of his background revealed. Hints have been tossed around about him once being a general or something. What ever happened to Rang Taw?? You can't have someone like that walk through a story, burn a village and then fade away. Bring him back!

Finally, one last suggestion. How about an occasional all fiction issue or at least an expanded issue with more fiction. Give us a break.

Cory Anderson
Lake Geneva, WI

** Ok, Ok, we are trying to make everyone happy. Frankly, when we launched SHADIS our greatest fear was that the fiction would draw the largest portion of complaints. It has! But from readers such as yourself who want more. This issue will reveal more tales of Curstain and Rang Taw. As for Greytar, don't listen to the old man's complaints for a second. We provide him ample space for his column, he just spends more time sleeping and exploring the Five-Points dance-clubs here in Columbia, then he does writing.*

Perhaps you'll be interested in learning that a SHADIS Annual is in the works, scheduled for a January 91 release. The Annual will pull all the fiction and related source articles into one book and will be packed with bios of the characters, time-lines, maps etc. A limited number will be printed. Advance orders will be taken in October, price and more details will be announced in SHADIS #5.

Dear SHADIS,

Are you guys natural sadists or what? That mini-module is a KILLER! Our group decided to put up barbed-wire around the whole damn rock and post it with 'No Trespassing' signs. We all had a good time 'attempting' to clean it out though. Thanks for the scare!!

Things are really shaping up with SHADIS. I picked up issues 2 & 3 from a friend. I am enclosing a check for Issue no.#1.

Dale Stevens
Springfield, MO

** Hate to announce it, but Issue no.#1 of Shadis has sold out! Currently we have plans to reprint Issues 2 and above as long as there is a demand. There are still some copies of Issue no.#1 floating around in a few stores. You can check our Ad in this issue to see if one is close to you.*

If there is enough demand we could change our minds and do a second printing of No.#1. If you are wanting Part one to one of the articles or stories, I can xerox a copy of the article if you send a self-addressed stamped envelope. If you request more than one article or story please enclose a buck to cover postage and copy charges.

Dear SHADIS

I know what you are thinking. Oh no, it's another praise letter. Our backs are getting sore from all of the patting. Well, I do have a complaint this time. The first two issues were right on time each month. I would receive them on the 15th. But this time I did not get my issue until the 17th. So there, a complaint! Who knows, maybe some constructive criticism will appear soon. Seriously, you have put out another good issue. It is truly amazing how hard you work to put out a consistently good magazine. Some people would just sit around and say 'let it run a few issues and see if it needs any changes.' Not you guys. You say, 'Hey! Last issue was good, but we can do better this issue.'

Well I did enjoy Issue no.#3 and I thought the new columns were great. I hope you get a lot of input for these columns.

HackandSlash was good and as usual, loaded with good ideas for such a small article. I've never played a Thief before and I would like to know how many points should be awarded for a straight con? (You see I've always admired that wonderful thief on GREEN ACRES who always conned Sir Douglas, the noble knight who jousts at fields of weeds.) I'm not talking about a few convincing lies. I am thinking a con that has a great deal of thought and some preparation.

Well, I enjoyed the stories as usual. I can't wait to put them all together and read the whole product when each of the stories are finished. The cartoons are very enjoyable. The Hungry Undead was a nice short module.

Can't wait for Issue no.#4 and the featured interview.

James Minton
Gaston, SC

THE MARKET PLATZ

CLASSIFIEDS

Brick, Remember that in order to advance from 1st level boob to 2nd, you have to hold on to the money! No matter what happens, you have to hold on to that money!!! You have control as long as you have that money. Now go out there and make me proud.

Dredger

There was young dwarf from Soult Tet,
Who went out to look for a pet.
When he'd searched far and wide,
he surely did decide,
Dragons and homes don't mix,
Should've had that serpent fixed.

• WANTED •

*Lead Miniatures, (fantasy, military) made prior to 1980.
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Mark Aimes 1507 Lisbon
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• WANTED •

*Green Hornet items. (TV)
Comics, toys, books etc.
Send list c/o SHADIS magazine.
Also looking for mint copies of RPGs published prior to 1982.
Pirates and Plunder, Bunnie and Burrows, En Garde! etc.*

*Shimarey is a wimp, Lizard is a geek,
Lord Dratan is a unendowed farmboy.
Zaran could handle any of these fags with one hand and a hang-over!
BTW long live SHADIS magazine!
Go out there and kick some ass!*

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• If you know of any self-published/small press magazines dealing with fantasy or RPGs they can be posted under 'Other Rags' free of charge. •

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

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By Jolly R. Blackburn



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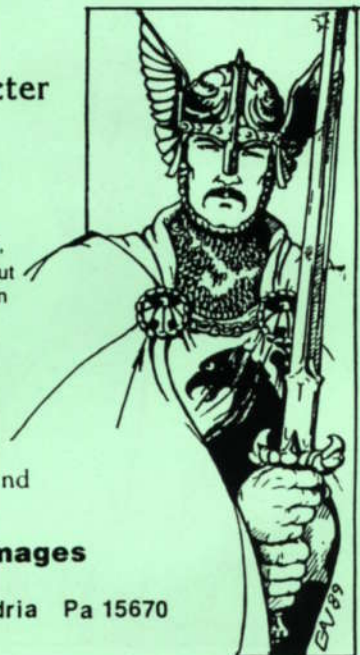


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