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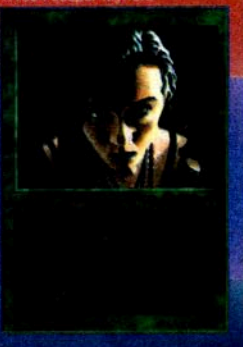

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CRIES FROM THE ATTIC

Editorial of a Madman

A Matter of Policy

It occurred to me as I was laying out the current issue that I've never gotten around to publicly stating our magazine's policies and standards. This issue wraps up a full year of publishing since we went 'prozine' last year at GenCon.

Over the last six issues my partners and I (along with a small army of contributors and feature editors) have strived to make SHADIS something special - something different. It's an ongoing process governed by a specific game plan and company policy. I won't bore you with all of the specifics, but I thought it might be of interest to some of our readers if I over viewed some of our basic policies.

1. Independent as well as Neutral

It was decided in the beginning that SHADIS would be a "house-organ for the industry." We wanted a magazine that brought gamers together as well as the game companies (both large and small) in a forum that strongly independent as well as neutral. This point of policy is simple — there is no room for politics at SHADIS. If you want to hear the latest dirt on various game companies and designers, you won't find it here. If you want to know which side of the fence SHADIS has taken when a lawsuit between two game companies is announced, you'll be hard pressed to find out. The bottom line is that SHADIS is a games magazine and we will concern ourselves with issues that concern gaming. You'll find the details of such lawsuits - but you won't find personal opinions on which side is right.

2. Building Foundations

Another policy here at SHADIS wouldn't be of concern to our readers except that it might explain a few things that wouldn't otherwise be obvious. Many of you have inquired and even chided us for not going full gloss/full color. Well, there's a reason why we haven't made the move up in production quality. Our first priority is to transform SHADIS into a financially stable and healthy publication. The fatal temptation for most fledgling magazines is to pump dollars into paper upgrades and color. I suppose the line of thinking is that more readers will read your magazine if it is pretty and attracts the eye. Such rational ignores the uniqueness of our hobby. Gamers, as a whole, are intelligent, discerning individuals who are not easily fooled by flash and showmanship.

We thought readers would be more impressed if we put extra dollars into extra pages instead of cosmetics. The issue you hold in your hands is 112 pages for a cover price of $3.50. That's over thirty additional pages of articles and adventures that we have been able to expand over the last year. Soon that page count will soar to 124 pages which would officially make us the largest games magazine available.

3. Put on New Eyes

This is a favorite saying of mine — taken from an old Gallager routine. It concerns taking a familiar subject and looking at it in a new way. We are constantly evaluating SHADIS and asking ourselves how we can improve it. We try to step back and pretend we are simply gamers (not a far stretch) and we ask ourselves what we would like to see in a games magazine. What would make us pick it up off the shelf?

Hopefully the results are obvious. If not, we still have a lot of work to do.

4. Keep your Toes in the Grass

I coined this phrase a few months ago after tracing the history and development of some of my favorite games magazines (i.e. a few of our competitors). I spotted a trend. A magazine would start out as a grass roots endeavor, it would flourish and then suddenly transform into something with little in common with it's former self. I'm not saying this is bad — it's the nature of progress.

As a matter of policy, I want SHADIS to remain well footed in the grass roots of gaming. It's important enough to me that I feel we need to make a conscious effort to do so. I believe we can do this by staying intimate with small press publishers and becoming deeply involved in supporting small conventions.

It will also involve exposing new talent from the world of small press and providing exposure to the game companies and other readers.

I hope that gives you some sort of idea on where we are heading. I expect you to keep us on our toes if we stray.

The next issue will be largely written and laid out on the road (literally) as we embark on our summer convention tour. We will have booths at ORIGINS, DRAGONCON, GENCON and other conventions this summer. If you make it to one of these events, be sure to stop by and say, "hi." I'd love to meet you.

Jolly R. Blackburn
July 25, 1994

MAIL BAG

Our Readers Talk Back

Greetings Dear Readers,

Due to space considerations, some letters have been edited.

The mail just doesn't seem to stop. Oh dear. We read each and every letter, so even if it isn't printed, your comments are welcome and your suggestions and constructive criticisms are thoughtfully considered. So keep the letters coming. Remember SHADIS is an interactive magazine – we want you, the reader, to be involved.

Gameweaver

Dear SHADIS,

I come to you as a refugee from a magazine that was once as you are now: a positive and energetic source of varied materials for all sorts of RPGs, stressing play material and presenting intriguing campaign settings (a'la your **Just a Matter of Time** series) with intelligence and wit.

The magazine I speak of has become a pompous house organ of anarchistic far-left propaganda and pretension and has flushed themselves down the drain.

Enclosed is my subscription check, but I warn you — don't try to 'grow' too much. Don't get fancy, don't go glossy and don't get political or I'll drop your A** like a live hand grenade.

J. Fashena
Pleasantville, NY

It's always tragic for a magazine to lose a reader because his or her needs are not being met. It's a sad fact that a magazine often outgrows its audience or is forced to modify its focus or coverage. SHADIS has been forced to expand its coverage several times to attract advertising dollars and/or new readers.

As we all know, you can't please everyone, so its a give-and-take relationship at best.One thing I can promise is that SHADIS will remain a neutral and independent games magazine. We pull a lot of hair and bang on a lot of doors to ensure that all game companies, both large and small, are afforded the opportunity to participate in SHADIS. Now, as far as not "growing too much" or "not going gloss" — we'll just have to see what happens. I haven't been given permission to divulge the details yet, but be prepared for some BIG changes in the next couple of issues.

GW

Dear SHADIS,

I just stumbled across your magazine recently (Issue 13) and I instantly fell in love with it. I immediately went back to my gamestore and scarfed up all the back issues I could get my hands on.

I love the articles and adventures in SHADIS, but I have to be honest — it was the advertising that first drew my attention. Let me explain.

You see I'm one of the old timers who began playing D&D™ when it came in a small plain cardboard box. (A friend of mine smuggled this gem from the midwest where he found it in the bargain bin at a local wargame shop.) Your magazine has an exciting look and feel that reminds me of the good ol' days. I had no idea there were so many up and coming game companies and systems out there. I guess this industry needed an independent games magazine after all — it's very apparent the major house organs have been inaccessible to the little guy. I wish you the best of luck and I congratulate you on filling a niche that was sorely needing a voice.

G. Handen
Email/America Online

Dear SHADIS,

Thanks but no thanks for the free issues of SHADIS; Not only did I get hooked by the **Knights of the Dinner Table** but I fell in love with Mary Luann (aka Shadis Babe) as well...and then I saw the classified ad where she asked Joe Genero to marry her! What a tragic fate! What a cruel world! Never shall I be happy again. Never mind the excellent cover artwork, and the well-informed and witty contributions of your authors; they fail to entertain me in my desolation and despair. Oh Mary Luann...vanity of vanities! I'll go into the garden and burn those copies of SHADIS right now lest I be mocked by my (former) ambitions. All I want to do is forget. I love you, Mary Luann.

Utterly devastated
"Red" HaJo Scholosser
Dusseldorf, Germany

P.S. (April 28th) Haven't burned the copies yet, but looking through them I always find something which I would have found of interest, if I were still a gamer. I love you Mary Luann.

P.P.S. (April 29th) Haven't burned those copies yet, but inexplicably cut out and filled in some order forms, just like I might have if I were still a gamer. I love you, Mary Luann.

P.P.P.S. (April 30th) Haven't burned the copies yet but there's a number of PBM conventions coming up in May. I think I'll take them along and show them to all my (former) gaming friends — maybe they'll help me to burn them (and Joe Genero as well).

Thanks for the second letter Red. We really didn't mean to break your heart. We just wanted to get a few copies of SHADIS into your hands. Seriously, thanks for pushing SHADIS to your friends. Let us know how they are received at the local cons there.

GW

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Dear SHADIS,

I'm new to this modem/e-mail thing, but less new to your mag. Thought I'd drop you a line to let you know: I signed up for MPGNet today, and when the service rep asked me how I'd heard of them, I blamed you.

Now for the post-rant portion of the letter. I'm a Traveller fan from way too long ago (the old one, and MegaT too), and I am running a campaign in my own alternate "Virus?-never-heard-of-it" Traveller Universe (Trav-verse?). I'm always scamming ideas from other RPGs to keep my players off-balance. But my favorite source of ideas to turn into halfbaked schemes is your mag. Excellently written. Clear and clean prose (unlike this letter). The RPG ideas often have the ability to be both clear and obvious for the system they are written for, yet not so enmeshed in that system that adaptation is an exercise in frustration. To be specific (I should be somewhere here) I cannot praise more highly the **Bad Company** cronies system created by Jolly Blackburn. I did a little reworking, and presto, instant friends for my player characters..

Yes, it *is* a fine concept. My folks are now looking at where they are going, and talking about "So & so will help us" or "Whatzits will get us a good deal on this". I'm even seeing a change in their group behavior. This gang are masters at leaving millions of mad NPCs behind when they leave a planet. Now, they are actually saying that perhaps they should be more careful in the china shop, so they can come back to that place. Thanks for a truly excellent game aid. I can see them become more involved in the 'R' , in RPGs.

Ciao
Email /America Online

Thanks for the comments, Ciao. The generic articles and game aids have been so well received by our readers that we've decided to take the idea a step further. This issue presents the debut of our new section appropriately entitled, Gamemaster's Workshop. This section will be devoted to articles like the Bad Company which you mentioned. Our readers are encouraged to contribute to this exciting new area of SHADIS. We have high hopes that it will become a favorite among readers.

GW

Dear SHADIS,

My gameshop started carrying your magazine starting with issue 11. The cover art attracted my attention, so I picked up a copy. All I have to say is that you have a great publication here!

You had something to suit just about every taste and I loved the article on Brisco County Jr. Do you plan to cover other shows such as Babylon 5 or Seaquest DSV in the future?

I was also quite pleased to see an adventure for one of my favorite games, Space:1889. This was a good module and I hope to see more material in the future.

All in all your magazine was $3.50 well spent.

Robert Milton
Palatine, Il

It just so happens the issue you hold in your hands has an article on the X Files by Lou Prosperi (of FASA fame). We have articles on other TV shows and movies under development so keep an eye out for them.

GW

Dear SHADIS,

I saw my first issue of SHADIS in August, 1993 at the GENCON games fair in Wisconsin. I saw a group of enthused of fellows shoving copies of their pride and joy into the hands of anyone who would take one. At the time, I can remember thinking, "Yep, another hopeful games magazine that will soon crash and burn." Nothing personal against you, it's just that every year I see a handful of magazines debut at GENCON only to fade away or die within the following months.

Imagine my surprise when a few months later SHADIS popped up on a local newstand. I picked it up and oohed and awed at the quality. I bought a copy and began to devour it. I was truly impressed.

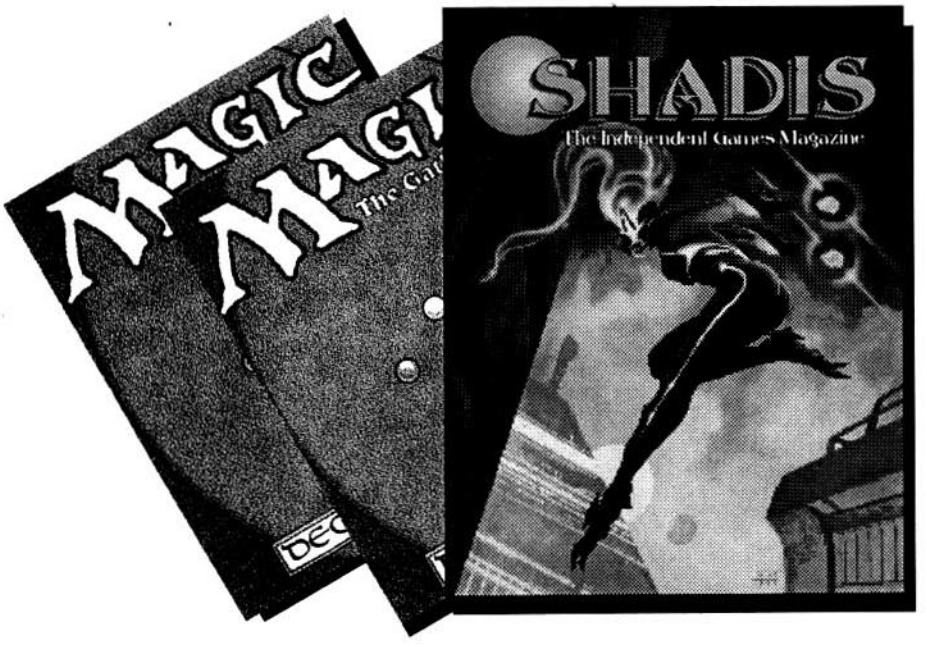
As the months passed and more and more issues of SHADIS began to pop up on the shelves, (and in a very timely manner I might add), I began to get excited for you. Could it be this little magazine was going to give its competitors a run for their money?

I've felt compelled to share my discovery with my friends. I convinced them we needed to support SHADIS and get the word out. I take great joy in enlightening the uninformed about the coming of the next great games magazine.

Slap me with a ten-sided die.

Bill Lashley
Evansville, IN

HERE ARE TWO GOOD REASONS TO SUBSCRIBE TO SHADIS!!



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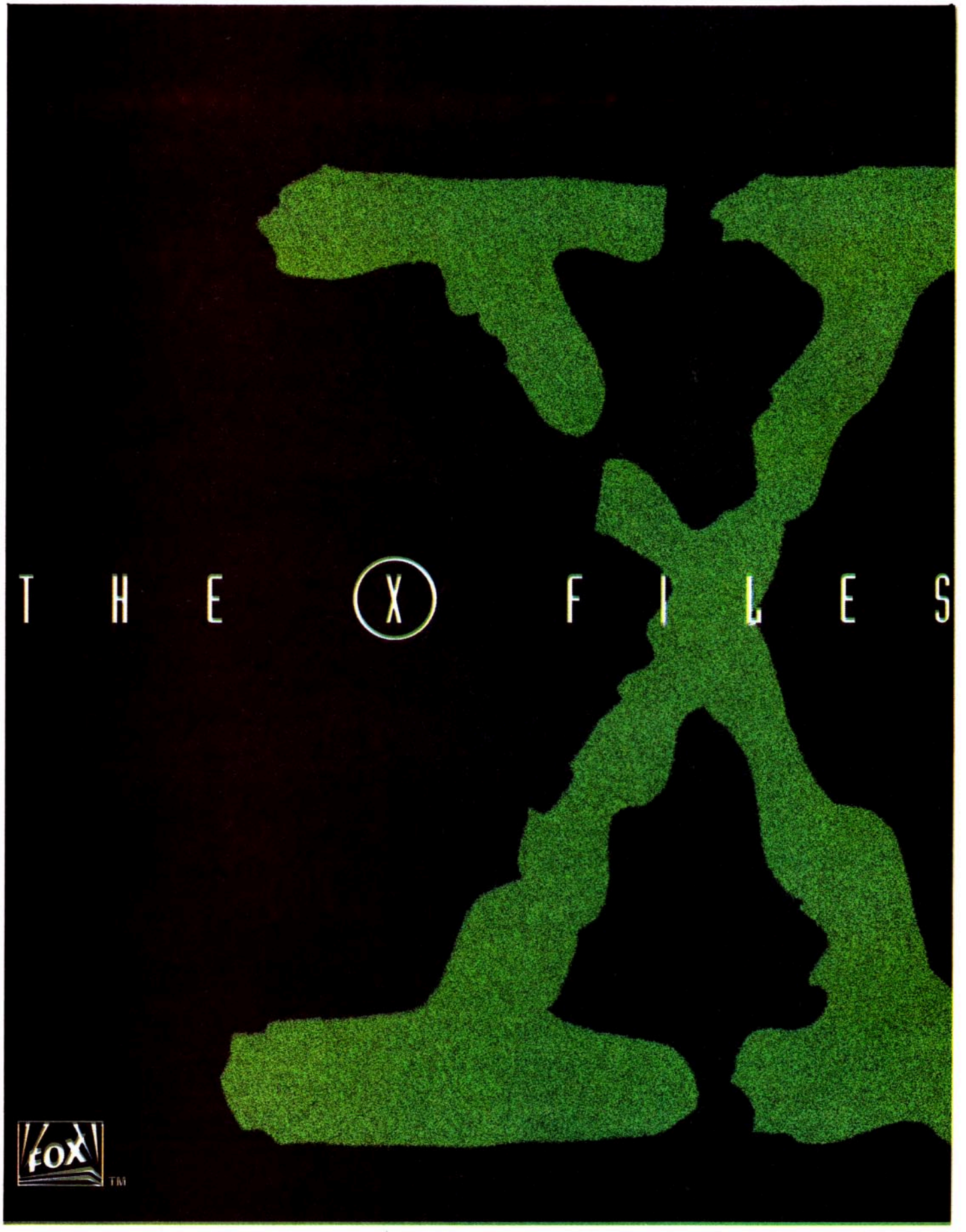

THE X FILES
FOX
TM

The X-Files

By Louis J. Prosperi
with Jim Nelson & Steve Bryant

The X-Files is Fox Network's hit show starring David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson. This one-hour suspense-mystery is set in the USA, circa 1994. Chris Carter is the Executive Producer for Twentieth Television in association with Fox Broadcasting Co. The X-Files, and all related characters are trademarks of Fox studios. All photographs in this article were provided by Fox Studios.

From Fallen Angel-

Mulder and Scully return to Mulder's hotel room and find it disheveled.

They hear sounds in the bathroom, draw their guns and open the door, to see the legs of a man attempting to escape.

Mulder pulls the man back into the room, and discovers it is Max Fenig.

"My apologies, Forgive me, I'm a curious man. I had to know!"

"Know what?"

"If it was you?"

"How do you know me? Last night was the first time we laid eyes on each other."

"Not true. We at NICAP have been following your career Mr. Mulder, ever since you got involved with the X-Files."

"Following my career? How??"

"With the Freedom of Information Act. Your travel expenses are a matter of public record."

"How did you recognize me?"

"I uh, I saw your picture in a trade publication once, and I read your article in Omni about Gulf Breeze sightings."

"I published that under a pseudonym."

"M. F. Luder, I know. M. F. Luder is an anagram for F. Mulder. You really didn't think that would fool us did you??"

"I didn't think anybody was paying attention."

"Somebody is always paying attention Mr. Mulder..."

Introduction

The X-Files follows the exploits of a pair of F.B.I. agents as they investigate a series of bizarre, often unexplained cases. Week after week these agents, Fox Mulder and Dana Scully, come face to face with unusual, and occasionally supernatural, phenomena.

What keeps me, and many others I know watching every week is that each episode confronts the viewers with the mysterious and the unknown. Not an episode goes by that the viewer's spine doesn't tingle with suspense, disbelief, or fear. This type of fear is not the same that lovers of horror and splatter movies feel. This fear is more of an uncomfortable sensation, a sensation that says 'Something is NOT RIGHT!'

There is something inside nearly all of us that enjoys being scared, especially when we're safe at home, watching television. Not since *The Twilight Zone* and *The Outer Limits* has a television show been so successful at scaring its audience on a weekly basis. In fact, part of what attracts viewers to the X-files is the fact that each episode deals with the unknown, and each week, the viewer is not sure what to expect.

Beyond its appeal as a television show, the X-Files is also a great source of ideas and adventures for both modern horror and conspiracy roleplaying campaigns. The cases Mulder and Scully investigate in the X-Files are all suitable in either type of game, as they involve a variety of subject matter, ranging from UFO abductions, to supernatural creatures, to secret government experiments and cover ups.

In addition to providing an overview of the X-Files, this article is also intended to provide some guidelines for using the X-Files as an inspiration for roleplaying campaigns, either as the basis of a new campaign, or simply as a source of additional material for a pre-existing campaign.

The information in this article is not written to suit any specific game system or setting. Instead, any character information is generic enough that players and gamemasters should be able to create any necessary stats for their system of choice with little effort.

A Quick Overview

For those of you who aren't familiar with the X-Files, the following is brief overview of the series, including its basic premise, the central themes of the show, and descriptions of its main characters.

The X-Files

At the heart of every episode of the X-Files are the X-Files themselves.

In a small office in the J. Edgar Hoover building in Washington, D.C. (the headquarters of the Federal Bureau of Investigation), there are a number of file cabinets whose files all bear a similar designation. That designation is 'X-File.'

The X-Files are files which in some way, or for some reason, remain unex-

plained, or unsolved. These include serial killings, missing persons reports, reports of alien encounters, UFO sightings and abductions, sightings of supernatural creatures, and other unexplained phenomena.

Most of these files have remained unsolved, and for the most part ignored by the bureau, until recently, when an agent by the name of Fox Mulder began to investigate the X-Files. Mulder is one of the F.B.I.'s best detectives, particularly in regards to profiling serial killers, and his successful track record allowed him the privilege of choosing his own assignments.

Mulder's strong interest in the paranormal and extraterrestrial led him to dig into the X-Files, and after a time he called in a number of favors in order to arrange for him to be assigned to the X-Files. Since then, Mulder has become consumed by the X-Files, spending more and more time investigating the X-Files than any other type of cases.

Shortly after Mulder became obsessed with the X-Files, the Head of the Office of Professional Responsibility Section Chief Blevins, assigned another agent to keep an eye on Mulder, and to report on whether his time spent on the X-Files was justified. This agent was Dana Scully, a young doctor, recruited by the bureau just out of medical school, and one of the bureau's more analytical agents.

The relationship between the two agents began as almost adversarial, with Scully doubting Mulder's theories and ideas, but as they have worked together, the relationship has grown much stronger, including slight undertones of physical attraction.

Deep Throat

Shortly after Scully was assigned to the X-Files, Mulder began to investigate a missing persons case which involved an Air Force test pilot assigned to Ellens Air Force Base in Iowa. Before leaving for Iowa, Mulder was approached by a mysterious man who warned Mulder against continuing his investigation of Ellens Air Force Base, and the missing pilot. Though this man would not identify himself, he made it quite obvious to Mulder that this man had connections within the government and military, and could be of use to him and his investigations into the X-Files.

Since that time, this mysterious man, whom Mulder dubbed Deep Throat, began to aid Mulder in his investigations, offering him clues, evidence, and other useful information. The two have an elaborate system of contacting one another. The relationship between Mulder and Deep Throat has been a very one sided one, with Mulder accepting Deep Throat's help, and following his advice and counsel.

It seems that there are few things in which the US government is involved about which Deep Throat knows nothing, and he has used this information to aid Mulder and Scully in their search for the truth on many occasions.

Most of the information known about Deep Throat comes from Deep Throat himself. He claims to have been with the C.I.A. during the Vietnam War, and to have been present at the capture of an extraterrestrial being. He also claims that he was forced to kill the alien by order of a top secret directive instituted by the major governments of the world, as a method of dealing with any and all extraterrestrial beings encountered or captured.

Other than this, the only real information known for certain about Deep Throat is that he has many, high-level connections in the federal government, and in particular within the intelligence community. This influence also extends in some way to the F.B.I., for in one instance, Deep Throat over-ruled an

attempt by Section Chief McGrath to close the X-Files and have Mulder fired.

Deep Throat's motives for helping Mulder are not known for certain, though at different times during the series, he claims to have different reasons.

When he first begins to help Mulder, it seems that he is only interested in aiding Mulder in discovering the truth. Later, Deep Throat tells Section Chief McGrath to "Always keep your friends close... but keep your enemies closer." implying that the only reason he helps Mulder is to keep an eye on him. Still later, Deep Throat tells Mulder and Scully of his involvement with a Top Secret directive that requires all extraterrestrials encountered or captured by any of the world's governments to be killed. He informs them that after having to kill such an ET himself, he began to search for someone whom he could lead to the truth, so that it may be exposed.

In the last episode, we learn that whatever motive he had, Deep Throat feels so obligated to help Mulder, that he is willing to risk his life to rescue Mulder from government operatives.

The Nature of the Cases

The cases which Mulder and Scully investigate cover a wide spectrum, ranging from claims of UFO abductions, to serial killings, to disappearances. There is seldom any sort of thread connecting these cases save one. All these cases have something unexplained, or unusual about them.

These cases always relate in some way to one or more of the X-Files already on file with the F.B.I. It is this connection to the X-Files which draws Mulder's attention. Mulder routinely monitors new cases brought to the F.B.I.'s attention, and makes arrangements for he and Scully to be assigned to those that relate to the X-Files. Mulder's superiors rarely complain, as the cases he is most often interested in are always bizarre and unusual.

Very often during the course of their investigations, Mulder and Scully discover involvement on the part of the US government. This involvement ranges from the military to the C.I.A. to the National Security Agency, and other government agencies. In some instances, this involvement runs deeper than mere connection, to responsibility on the part of the government. Such was the case at Ellens Air

Force base, when Mulder was abducted by government officials, only to be released a day later with no recollection of what occurred during that day. Government involvement was also prevalent in the episodes **Fallen Angel** and **E.B.E.**, and **The Erlenmeyer Flask**, when Mulder and Scully came across various operatives of the government intent on keeping them in the dark as to the government's involvement. These are the cases in which Mulder's relationship with Deep Throat has paid off most.

Lastly, in the cases investigated by Mulder and Scully, it is very seldom that the whole story is ever revealed. The real story is virtually never learned by Mulder and Scully, and it is only in rare instances when the audience is shown the truth. The audience often sees more than either Mulder or Scully, but in most cases, even the audience is left guessing as to the real answer behind the agents' investigations.

The World of the X-Files

The world of the X-Files is our own world, but with one or two possible exceptions.

The show takes place in the United States in 1994. But it is a world which has witnessed the landing of UFOs, where supernatural creatures really exist and where psychic abilities are real. Yet these things remain hidden in plain sight to virtually everyone, except those who truly believe that the Truth is Out There.

One of the most important aspects of this is that the show doesn't imply that these things might happen, but that *they are happening in the world now.* As stated above, the world of the X-Files is our world. This may be the key to the show's appeal, as its audience is not viewing fiction, but it may be witnessing the Truth.

As of the end of the first season of episodes, the X-Files were in danger of being shut down, and Mulder and Scully were assigned to different divisions. Whether this will turn out to be the case or not will have to wait for the season premiere in the fall of 1994.

Central Themes

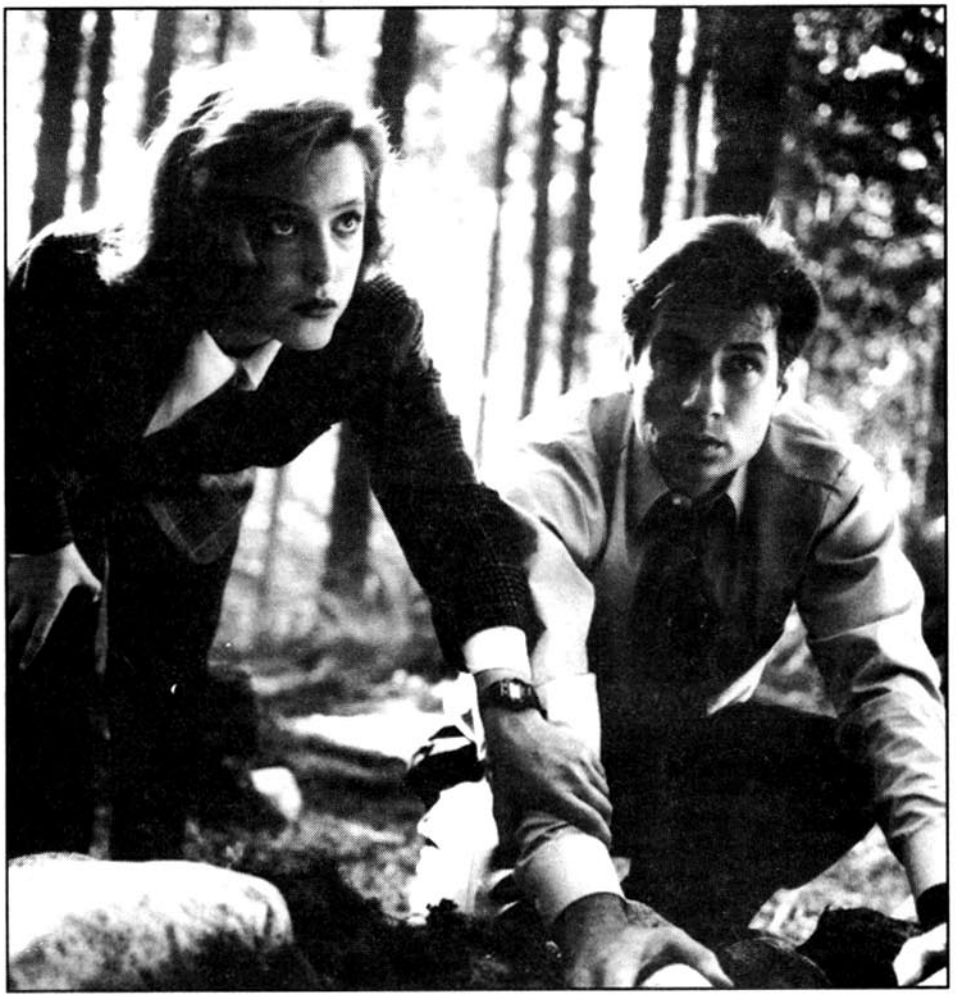
There are a number of themes which are found in most episodes of the X-Files. These themes represent the central issues of the show, and are important to keep in mind if a gamemaster plans to use the show as the basis for a game.

The Truth is Out There

The first of these themes is stated at the start of each episode. That is, The Truth is Out There. Much of what happens on the X-Files has to do with the Truth. It is the Truth which Mulder and Scully seek, and it is the Truth that Deep Throat hopes they will uncover.

It also this same Truth that many people, among them Mulder and Scully's associates at the FBI, cannot see, either because they lack the vision, or they lack the courage. It is this same Truth that the government works to cover up, through its agents and operatives, whenever necessary.

This is the central theme of the show, one that is addressed in every episode. Of particular interest is that although the Truth is at the heart of each episode, it always eludes both Mulder and Scully as well as the audience. In virtually



no episode is the whole Truth is ever found.

Trust No One

There is also a strong theme of paranoia and of 'Who can be Trusted??' in most episodes of the X-Files. The most prevalent instance of this theme is the government's cover ups/involvement in many of the cases investigated by Mulder and Scully.

On many occasions we see the government acting to cover up or hide evidence relating to the Truth behind the X-Files. This began in the very first episode and continued all the way through the season and includes the season finale. It is clear that in the world of the X-Files, the government has much to hide, and more to gain by preventing the Truth from being discovered.

Very often the government is not only involved in some way, but are in fact responsible for the situations Mulder and Scully confront. This is the case in episodes such as **The X-Files**, **Deep Throat**, **Fallen Angel**, **E.B.E.**, **Eve**, and **The Erlenmeyer Flask**.

Perhaps the most puzzling question relating to this theme is: "Who are They?" That is, who in the government is working to hide the Truth? Most of the evidence on the show points to either the C.I.A. (Central Intelligence Agency) or the D.I.A. (Defense Intelligence Agency). In the episode **E.B.E.**, Deep Throat informs Mulder and Scully that he was once in the C.I.A. In other episodes, we see the 'Smoking Man' hiding away evidence in a file room within the Pentagon. Also, many of the government operatives that Mulder and Scully confront work for various branches of the military.

"Somebody is Always Paying Attention, Mr. Mulder"

The scene depicted in the opening of this article (from the episode **Fallen Angel**) reveals much bout the atmosphere and mood of the X-Files, as well as points out one of the show's major themes. This theme is simply, Somebody is Always Paying Attention. This is true is many ways. Mulder pays attention to most of the new cases brought to the F.B.I. to see if they relate to the X-Files. Deep Throat is always paying attention to Mulder and Scully's activities. Mulder and Scully's superiors in the F.B.I., as well as others within the government also keep tabs on the agents' investigations.

As noted above, this theme is pointed out in **Fallen Angel**, but is also found in **Eve**, **The Erlenmeyer Flask**, and **Deep Throat**.

Us Versus Us

One of the more interesting themes in the show is the distrust and opposition exhibited between various departments of the U.S. government. Mulder and Scully are federal agents, working for the FBI, yet to those involved in the government cover ups/operations, Mulder and Scully are as much the enemy as a foreign spy might be.

This one of the most realistic aspects of the X-Files. The U.S. government is highly compartmentalized, and those departments don't necessarily 'open their doors' to one another. Quite the contrary. The exact reasons for this rivalry are unknown, but is a major element in many episodes, including **Deep Throat**, **Conduit**, **Fallen Angel**, **E.B.E.**, **Eve**, and in particularly, **The Erlenmeyer Flask**.

Characters

The nature of the X-Files results in a small cast of recurring characters, consisting of Mulder, Scully, and their mysterious 'friend', known only as Deep Throat. Brief descriptions of these three follow, along with generic type stats that should enable a GM to generate appropriate stats for his game system of choice.

Should a GM decide to run an X-Files game, or use the X-Files as a source for inspiration, these characters could be used either as player characters, or as valuable, detailed NPCs.

Fox Mulder

Occupation: F.B.I. Agent
Skills: Deduction, Charisma, Psychology, Police Investigation
Motivation: Seeks the Truth
Weaknesses: Fear of fire, slightly obsessive behavior, mildly paranoid

Fox Mulder is a graduate of Oxford University, where he majored in psychology. This background made him an ideal candidate for recruitment into the FBI.

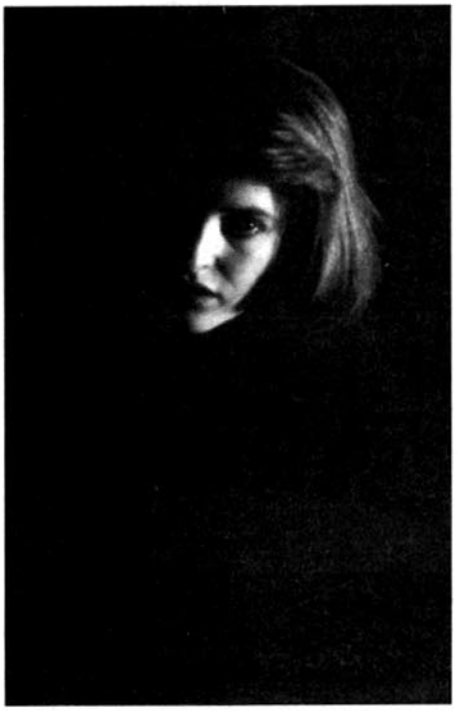
Once through the academy, Mulder proved to be very effective at profiling serial killers, a talent which his training in psychology greatly aided.

Mulder is among the FBI's top detectives and investigators. His obsession with the paranormal and supernatural earned him the nickname 'Spooky' while at the academy. This obsession began when Mulder was only 12 years old, when his sister Samantha disappeared. After therapy in regressive hypnotism, Mulder has become convinced that his sister was abducted by aliens.

Mulder's expertise in the paranormal spans the range of UFO sightings, psychic powers, and creatures of the supernatural. His experience with the X-Files has expanded his knowledge in these areas, but it is clear his interest in the paranormal began in earnest long before this assignment.

Mulder is very passionate about his work with the X-Files. He has learned to ignore the remarks and ridicule of his fellow agents, and at times even enjoys a laugh at his own expense.

Since Scully has been assigned to the X-Files, Mulder has developed a strong friendship with her. This friendship also shows signs of physical attraction, but this is probably due in part to the close proximity in which the two work together.



Dana Scully

Occupation: F.B.I. Agent
Skills: Medicine, Forensics, Police Investigation
Motivation: Seeks the Truth
Weaknesses: Must find scientific/rational explanation for the unexplained.

Dana Scully graduated from medical school, and did her residency in forensics before being recruited by the F.B.I. Her schooling in science and medicine have made Scully one of the bureau's most thorough investigators.

Her clinical approach to investigations caused her to be considered for the assignment to keep an eye on Mulder and his involvement with the X-Files.

Scully was originally assigned to the X-Files by the head of the Professional Responsibility division, Section Chief Blevins. Her first assignment was to evaluate Mulder's investigations of the X-Files, and to file a report indicating whether Mulder's activities should be stopped or not.

During their first few cases, Scully was very skeptical of Mulder's theories and ideas, and always sought rational, logical explanations for the cases she and Mulder investigated. Since then, however, her exposure to the X-Files has caused her to begin to question her beliefs in this area.

In addition to her skills in detective work and evidence analysis, Scully's knowledge of medicine and forensics have proven invaluable to her and Mulder's investigations of the X-Files.

Recently, Scully's father died, when she and Mulder were investigating a kidnapping. During their investigation, they sought the aid of a convict who claimed to have psychic powers able to contact her father.

Scully and Mulder have built a solid friendship since working together. Conflicts with other government agencies and officials has recently caused Scully to place more trust in Mulder, and on more than one occasion, she has told him that he is the 'only one' she trusts.

Deep Throat

Occupation: Official in some agency with the U.S Intelligence community.
Skills: Contacts within U.S government, Stealth
Motivation: Seeks to have the Truth exposed
Weaknesses: Dedication to exposing the truth.

There is little known about the man Mulder knows as Deep Throat. The few things that are known about him indicate he is someone of authority in the U.S. government, with especially high security clearance. His authority seems to include influence over departments of the F.B.I., as evidenced by his actions towards preventing Mulder's dismissal and the closing of the X-Files (see the episode **Fallen Angel**).

Deep Throat claims to have been with the C.I.A. during the Vietnam War, during which time he was involved in a top secret international directive involved with the capture or encounter of extraterrestrial biological entities (E.B.E.s). This involvement supposedly resulted in Deep Throat killing a captured E.B.E., an action which he claims to regret.

Deep Throat's true motives are not entirely clear. At first it seemed his interest was in aiding Mulder in discovering the Truth, but on more than one occasion he has provided Mulder with false and misleading information, purposely throwing him and Scully off track. On still other occasions, Deep Throat has risked much, including his life, to help Mulder and Scully.

In the last episode of the first season, Deep Throat is gunned down by operatives working for some covert organization within the U.S. intelligence community. Whether he is dead or not has yet to be determined, though all the known evidence would indicate that he is in fact dead.

Other Characters

Aside from the three main characters described on the previous page, there are three minor characters who play significant roles in the X-Files. Again, if the GM is running an X-Files game, these would be important NPCs.

Section Chief Scott Blevins

Section Chief Scott Blevins is in charge of the F.B.I.'s Office of Professional Responsibility. Blevins is the man responsible for assigning Scully to the X-Files in order to have her investigate Mulder's activities. Blevins doesn't particularly like Mulder or his obsession with the X-Files, and has tried to shut Mulder down on more than one occasion.

Section Chief Joseph McGrath

Section Chief Joseph McGrath is the head of the F.B.I.'s Violent Crimes Division. McGrath would like nothing more than to discredit Mulder and his work on the X-Files, but thus far has been unable to do so. McGrath also resents Scully's assignment to the X-Files, as she was once a valuable member of his Division.

McGrath came very close to having Mulder kicked out of the bureau after Mulder disobeyed orders by investigating a suspected UFO crash site. Only the intervention of Deep Throat prevented Mulder's dismissal from the F.B.I.

'The Smoking Man'

The 'Smoking Man' gets his name from the only trait or characteristic he has demonstrated, that of smoking cigarettes. This man has appeared in only a handful of episodes, but those appearances are important ones.

In his first appearance, it seems that the Smoking Man works either with or for Section Chief Blevins. Later on, however, it seems that he may be Blevins' superior in some way.

In two episodes we see the Smoking Man carrying evidence obtained by Mulder and Scully and hide it away within a huge file room inside the Pentagon. In one of these cases, this evidence was obtained after Deep Throat was shot by undercover operatives.

One possible theory regarding the 'Smoking Man' is that he is the one who insisted Blevins assign someone to watch over Mulder and his work with the X-Files, in the hope that they might be able to supply enough motive to close the X-Files before Mulder learned too much.

My Top Ten Episodes

Below are brief synopses of my personal favorite ten episodes of the X-Files. These episodes convey best what the show is about. I have also tried to highlight episodes which cover all the main types of cases which Mulder and Scully have faced.

These 'Top Ten' are presented in chronological order based on original air dates. Also, I apologize if I didn't choose one of your favorites.

The X-Files

This is the premiere episode of the series. In it, Scully is assigned to the X-Files to watch over Mulder and decide if his work is worthwhile to the F.B.I. Mulder and Scully investigate the death/disappearances of several high school students in Oregon, whom Mulder believes have been experimented on by aliens.

Deep Throat

Against the wishes of a group of mysterious people within the U.S. Government, Mulder and Scully investigate the disappearance of an Air Force test pilot at Ellens Air Force Base in Idaho. This investigation reveals possible UFO-related experimentation by the military. This is also the episode which introduces the character of Deep Throat.

Squeeze

Scully is asked to help an old partner in profiling a serial killer who leaves no evidence, motive, or M.O. Mulder gets involved when he notices similarities between these victims to a number of X-File murders. But these X-Files are dated 1963 and 1933. This leads the agents to the trail of what can only be a centuries-old killer.

Conduit

Mulder and Scully investigate the disappearance of a young woman whose mother is in one of the X-Files, and claims to have been abducted by aliens years before. All the evidence indicates alien involvement, but the key to solving the case is not the girl, but her younger brother.

Ice

Mulder and Scully are sent as part of a team to investigate the deaths of the personnel of the Arctic Ice Core Project, but when they arrive, they discover an strange parasite has been unearthed, and poses the same threat to them as it did the dead victims.

Fallen Angel

After being tipped off to a government cover-up of a UFO crash, Mulder travels to Wisconsin where he meets a fellow UFO enthuiast, as well as a massive government search for 'something.' When Mulder and Scully interfere with the operation of 'Project Falcon,' Mulder's position in the F.B.I. is threatened.

Eve

While investigating a mysterious murder in Connecticut, Mulder and Scully learn of an identical murder which took place simultaneously in California. The case grows more bizarre when the agents meet the daughters of the two victims, both identical to each other in appearance. A tip from Deep Throat leads Mulder and Scully to learn that the girls are related to a secret government experiment known only as 'The Lichfield Experiments.'

Beyond The Sea

Mulder and Scully turn to a convicted felon on death row to help them find a kidnapper. But Scully gets over-involved when the convict claims to have psychic powers, and demonstrates them by contacting Scully's recently deceased father.

E.B.E.

Shortly after the crash of a UFO in Iraqi airspace, multiple UFO sightings are reported in Tennesse, and Mulder and Scully investigate, leading to signs of a large-scale government cover-up. They are later both helped and hindered by

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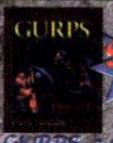

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Deep Throat, who hopes to get them to back off before they learn more about him than they might have hoped.

The Erlenmeyer Flask

Deep Throat leads Mulder and Scully to investigate the disappearance and supposed drowning of a fugitive, but they fail to see anything unique in the case. But when a friend of the fugitive is killed, their investigations lead to secret government experimentation with extraterrestrial DNA. And as they work to unveil the Truth, the evidence and everyone involved is eliminated quickly and quietly.

At end of this episode, the season finale, Mulder informs Scully that an order from the Executive Branch has shut down the X-Files, and Mulder and Scully are to be re-assigned to other divisions.

Gaming Notes

As mentioned earlier, the X-Files provides an ideal setting for either a modern Horror or conspiracy-style roleplaying campaign. Even if not the basis for such a campaign, the X-Files provides a great source for ideas and adventure seeds for campaigns in either of these two genres. Below are some of the more well known games in each of these genres which might be appropriate for an X-Files campaign.

Adapting any source to an roleplaying game is challenging, and the X-Files is certainly no exception. Though this article provides information on the X-Files television series, space doesn't allow a detailed look at how to simulate the X-Files in a roleplaying campaign. In an upcoming article, I will be presenting guidelines for taking any source, be it TV show, a movie, or book, and using it as the basis for a roleplaying campaign, and I intend to use the X-Files as one of my examples.

Modern Horror Games

There are many Modern Horror games available. Most notably among these are Call of C'thulhu (and the C'thulhu Now supplement) from Chaosium, and Chill by Mayfair Games. The Hero System produces a horror genre supplement entitled Horror Hero that also might be appropriate, as might GURPS Horror. Another choice comes from Tri Tac Games, who produce a game entitled Bureau 13: Stalking the Night Fantastic, in which the PCs are investigators working for a secret government agency. Last on the horror front would be the various Storyteller games from White Wolf, such as Vampire, Werewolf, and the forthcoming Wraith.

Conspiracy-based Games

As for conspiracy-based games, there are more than you might think. Topping the list is GURPS Illuminati, an excellent treatment of conspiracy theory. Blacksburg Tactical Research Center produces a game called CORPS, which is billed as 'The Global Conspiracy Game.' Two other offerings in this genre are both from Atlas Games and are Over The Edge and Pandemonium. Over the Edge is a game of the surreal with a healthy dose of paranoia and conspiracy thrown in for good measure. Pandemonium is a game that asks the question "What if the Tabloids were True?" Set in a tabloid world, Pandemonium offers a slightly more humorous approach to this genre, but still offer many interesting story ideas which would be well suited for an X-Files campaign.

Regardless of the system or genre, the most important thing to keep in mind when developing an X-Files based campaign is to remember what the X-Files are all about. They are about the unknown. They are about the Truth which is out there, waiting to be discovered. No matter what genre the gamemaster chooses for his X-Files game, it should prove to be a very different gaming experience than those most gamers are privy to. The tone and mood of the X-Files, combined with its central themes, provides an atmosphere matched by few roleplaying games published to date.

Summary

I hope this brief overview has given you enough information about the X-Files for you to use the show as either the basis for a campaign, or an additional source of ideas for a pre-existing one. At the very least, I hope this article piques your curiosity such that you check out the X-Files for yourself, and if you are already

familiar with the show, I hope this keeps your interest up.

I am interested in any comments and feedback you may have on this article. Please send any of the above to me (Lou Prosperi) c/o Shadis.

Remember, The Truth is Out There.

Trust No One.

SR '94

PATTERNS OF EVIL

An Adventure for Lost Souls™

By Kathleen Williams & Joe Williams ©1994

Introduction

Lost Souls is the first role-playing game for adventures in the afterlife. This adventure uses some of the NPCs and supernatural powers from the **Cemetery Plots™** supplement, but only the basic rule book is needed for play.

This adventure is designed to start directly after the players have finished an assignment, but before they summon a *Tunnel of Light* to return to Limbo.

It is about 10 pm on a cool autumn night when the lost souls are approached by a little girl dressed in a nightgown. She pleads with them: *"Someone put my teddy bear in a tree! Will you get him down for me?"*

Rebecca Morley

Type: Good person
Consistency: Material
Defense: Pathetic
Skills: Good Charm, Great Persuade
Appearance: A four year old child dressed in a flannel nightgown. Her feet are bare and she speaks with a slight lisp.
Personality: Direct and charming.
Motivation: To get her teddy bear out of the tree.
Combat: Becky is defenseless against attacks by the living and the supernatural.
Powers: Becky is a budding medium, though she is unaware of her powers. She assumes that the ghosts are living persons.

Rescuing the Bear

If questioned, Becky will elaborate on her story. *"Somefing woke me up - maybe nanny slammed the door too loud. Teddy was gone! The window was open so I twied to close it. Then I saw someone had put teddy in the tree. Pweese get him for me - my gramma made him for me. He's special. If you hug him, all your ouchies go away."*

The party will be unable to persuade Becky that they cannot physically interact with the bear. She will insist that they try and will lead them to a tree near a hedge. A full moon shines brightly on the scene and the party can easily see the bear. Climbing the tree takes a Passable Climb roll. If a party member touches the toy, he will discover that it is a dual object. If hugged, the bear heals all WTL damage, but it works only once per character during the adventure.

While one of the players is in the tree, a hulking brute looms out of the shadows of the hedge, grabs Becky, and subdues her with a chloroform-soaked rag. He stuffs her limp body into a gunny sack as he leaps through the bushes.

Bo Deckman

Type: Evil person
Consistency: Material
Defense: Superior
Skills: Good Stealth, Great Brawling, Superior Lie
Appearance: A heavy-set man wearing black clothing. He has a small bottle in his hip pocket. For his size, he is surprisingly nimble and quick on his feet.
Personality: Cruel and cunning.
Motivation: To kidnap Becky.
Combat: Bo carries a dual consistency 9mm pistol with a silencer which does (Defense vs. Great) x 3 damage to either the living or the dead.
Powers: Bo is a henchman of Herbert Moss, an evil spirit trapped on Earth (see below). In order for Bo to interact with Moss, he must drink an arcane potion every day. This allows him to see all supernatural creatures for 12 hours. He drank a dose just one hour ago.

Fighting Bo

Bo has a car parked on the other side of the hedge. He will try to dump the sack containing Becky in the back seat and drive away. The players may try to stop him, but once Bo is in the car and driving away they will not be able to keep up with him.

If Bo is captured or subdued, he will claim a strange woman approached him in a bar, offering him $200 if he would kidnap her child from her abusive father. Becky will deny this, but Bo will stick to his story, though he knows it is a lie. Becky will ask the party to find out who would want to hurt her and teddy.

Making Vows

Although lost souls normally make ghostly vows while in Limbo, it is possible to make a vow while on Earth. Some possible vows are:

- I will not rest until Becky is returned to her home.
- I will not rest until I discover who wants to kidnap Becky.
- I will not rest until I return the teddy bear to Becky.

Becky's Home

If Becky has been kidnapped, the players can track her tiny footprints in the mud to the back door of a nearby house. If she's with the group, she will simply lead them to her home. The back door is ajar, and just as the party enters, they can hear the front doorbell chime. A few moments later, a woman rushes around the corner of the house and slips inside the back door. If she sees Becky, the woman will stare at her aghast, blurting, "What are you doing here?"

Sandra Cunningham (the nanny)

Type: Neutral person
Consistency: Material
Defense: Passable
Skills: Good Conceal, Passable Lie
Appearance: A slim woman with short blonde hair and pale blue eyes. She is about 23 years old and wears a conservative dress with sensible shoes. They are muddy, indicating that she has been outside recently.
Personality: Weak-willed and malleable.
Motivation: To help Bo, her latest boyfriend, kidnap Becky. She knows nothing of Herbert Moss.
Combat: Sandra does not fight.
Powers: Sandra has no powers.

Sandra met Bo a few weeks ago at a singles bar. He told her Becky's parents were hiding a fortune, and together they planned

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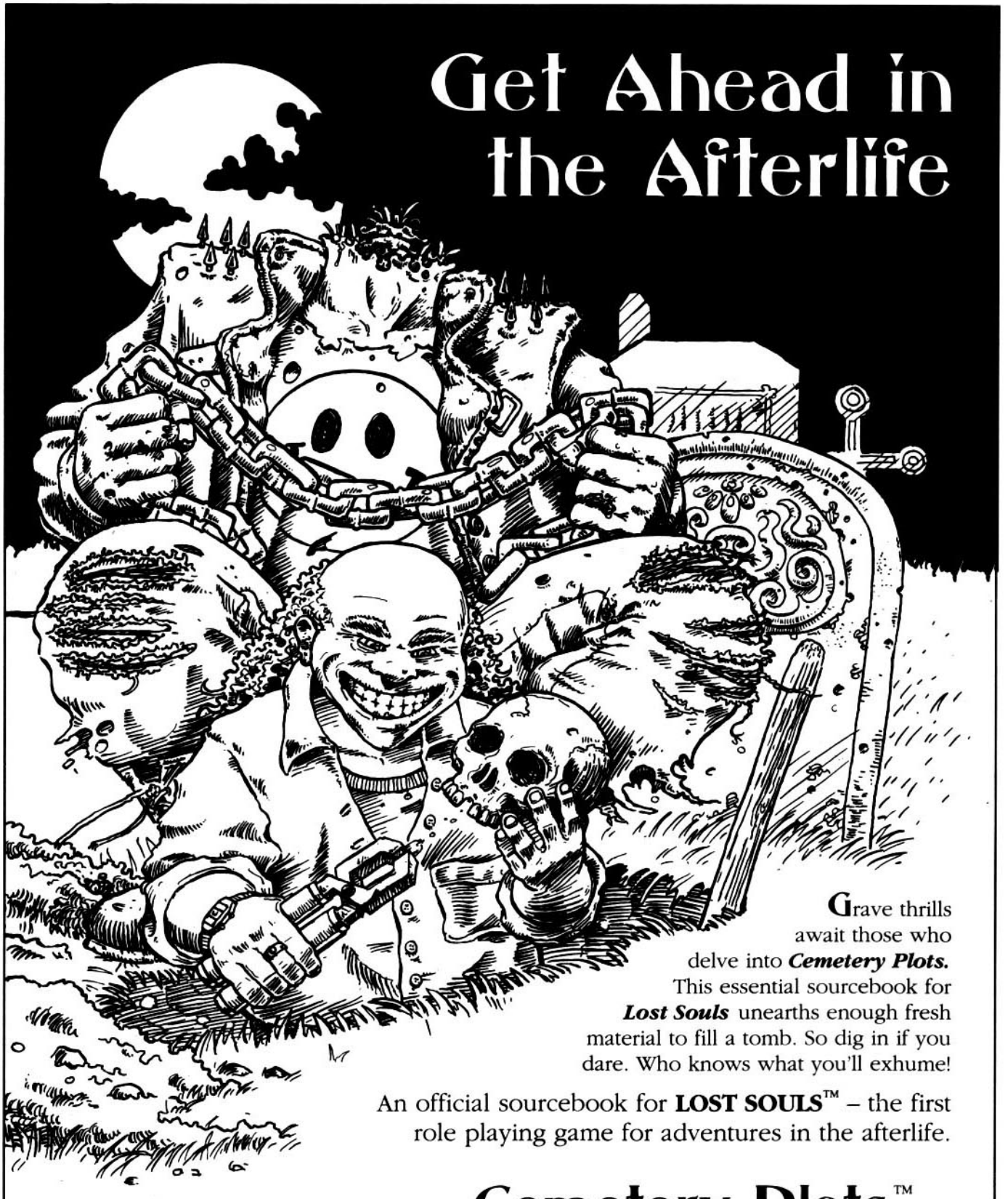

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Sandra Cunningham

to kidnap Becky for a ransom. Knowing that it would be too risky for Bo to enter the house, Sandra arranged for the crime to take place outdoors. She put the bear in the tree and made sure Becky awoke to find it missing. Sandra also left the nursery window open on a cold autumn night to ensure that the child would be drawn to it and see her bear stuck in the tree at the end of the garden. Gambling on Becky's self-reliance, she hoped that the child would try to retrieve the bear herself, which is exactly what happened.

After seeing Bo grab Becky, Sandra snuck out the back door and around to the front, leaving a ransom note on the door. She rung the bell then hurried back into the house from the rear entrance, ready with her story of "I couldn't sleep so I decided to warm some milk in the kitchen."

The Ransom Note

Becky's parents are in the living room when the doorbell rings. Her father, Taylor Morley, is reading a book while her mother Sarah sews. Taylor answers the door and finds a note pinned to it. It reads:

"WE HAVE YOUR DAUGHTER. YOU WILL PAY US 1 MILLION IN GOLD FOR HER RETURN. WE KNOW YOU HAVE SPECS O'MALEY'S LOOT SO DON'T TELL US YOU'RE BROKE. WE WILL CONTACT YOU BY PHONE IN A FEW HOURS WITH FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS. DO NOT LEAVE YOUR HOUSE AND DO NOT CONTACT THE COPS. IF YOU DO, THE KID DIES."

When the father reads the note, he throws it aside and dashes upstairs to look for Becky (If Becky was rescued by the party, a tearful reunion will occur).

Mr. Morley is bewildered. "Who is Specs O'Malley?" He wonders aloud. Mrs. Morley ponders the question. "Mother once had a boarder named Mr. O'Malley. He might be one of the men in that picture on the mantle. But I'm not really sure. I'll call her."

If the lost souls examine the old photograph on the mantelpiece, they will see a young woman (Grandma Ruff) standing between two men. One of them is very handsome, and holds a comb in his hands. The other is plainer and wears glasses. In the background is a sign reading "Ruff Bed & Breakfast." On the back are the words, "Herbie, Specs & Agnes, 1933" but a supernatural power is needed to extricate the picture from its frame and turn it over.

Mrs. Morley tries to make the call, but receives no answer. "I'm worried, Taylor. It's late and mother isn't answering. I must go to her." Mr. Morley stops his wife, reminding her that their child's life is at stake. Or, if Becky was not kidnapped, he will say they must stay and protect her. He offers to check on Sarah's mother in the morning.

Implicating Sandra

The nanny Sandra will lie to conceal her involvement in the kidnapping, and the Morley family will believe her unless they are presented with hard evidence that she is guilty. This can be found in her bedroom, just off of the nursery.

After searching the room, the party may find the following:

- A wallet-sized picture of Bo with "Love, to Sandy" written on the back. Becky can identify the man in the picture as her assailant.
- A crumpled note and envelope in her wastepaper basket which is dated October 17th and reads "Tonight." The paper has the same watermark as the ransom note.

The lost souls may tell Becky their suspicions about Sandra and urge her to warn her parents, but Mr. and Mrs. Morley will view her accusations as a childish dislike for a new nanny.

Denouncing Sandra to the Morleys will be especially difficult if Becky is not available. However, a supernatural power may convince them that the nanny knows more than she's telling. If forced to, Sandra will admit that Bo has kidnapped the girl. She knows nothing more.

Finding Grandma

Since there is little else of interest in the Morley home, the party may wish to visit Grandma Ruff's house. In fact, if Becky is present, she will ask them to look in on her beloved granny; after all, she was the one who gave her the wonderful bear. Becky will give directions to Grandma Ruff's house, which is only a few blocks away.

The lost souls can discover this information on their own by examining the following clues:

- A scrapbook entitled "Our Wedding" lays on the coffee table. Using a supernatural power, the players can flip through it and read that Sarah's maiden name is Ruff.
- An address book is next to the phone. It contains the address for Agnes Ruff at 1227 SE Lovingood St.
- A phone book can be found tucked in a book shelf near the phone. The address for Ruff's Bed & Breakfast can easily be found.

Grandma Ruff's House

The house is located only a few blocks from the Morley home. A Bed & Breakfast sign hangs near the door; a smaller sign reading "Closed until March 15" is posted underneath it. The windows are all ablaze, and a shadowy figure lurks behind the curtains. The front door has been partially ripped from it's hinges.

When the characters enter the house, they see a cozy parlor. A bookcase contains a jumble of sewing goods - yarn, needles and thread - along with books about needlework, quilting and knitting. An elderly woman is crumpled on the floor in front of the fireplace. She is moaning, and her chest and head are bloody. She clutches a quilt to her chest. A huge hairy creature stands before her.

Kuang-shi

Type: Evil Lost Soul
Consistency: Dual
Defense: Awesome
Skills: Good Strength, Feeble Cunning
Appearance: Tall, with short white hair all over its body. The Kuang-shi has long fangs, sharp claws and eyes with no pupils. It can only be killed by a bolt of lightning or

an electric shock; if captured, it must be incarcerated in a room lined with iron.

Motivation: To kill Agnes Ruff at the direction of Herbert Moss.

Combat: The Kuang-shi leaps in and out of the fray, getting two attacks per round with it's claws for (Defense vs Good) x 2 damage each. Once it has forced an opponent to her knees, the Kuang-shi will bite deeply into her throat for (Defense vs Poor) x 6 damage.

Powers: The Kuang-shi can leap up to twenty feet. To strike a Kuang-shi before it jumps away, a character must make a Good Quickness Roll.

A lost soul who makes a Superior Folklore roll will remember that Kuang-shi are not very bright. If small objects are scattered before the monster, he will stop what he's doing to pick them up, even in the middle of combat. There is a jar of buttons on one of the shelves, and if it is broken the Kuang-shi will stop his attack on the old lady. He will collect all the buttons before raging again.

If the Kuang-shi is not thwarted with buttons or electrocuted in some fashion, he will kill the old lady within two turns. He will then vanish.

Searching Grandma's House

If the players manage to dispatch the Kuang-shi before it kills Grandma Ruff, they will hear her gasp: "He came back and demanded the dagger. I just kept burning O'Malley's things, but then he told me he had little Becky. So I told him where the gold was - only I didn't tell him everything. It's here, it's here..." As Grandma lapses into a coma, her hands loosen from the quilt she is clutching. She will need immediate medical attention or else she will die.

The blood-soaked quilt appears to be a simple pattern of red and blue squares. An observant lost soul will notice a small rip in one corner, showing a glimpse of bright green. If the top layer of the quilt is ripped away, a whole new pattern is revealed underneath.

On a background of green, a number of small grey patches are scattered over the quilt. A few embroidered angels can be seen as well. The patches are roughly in a grid pattern. In the corner is a stylized depiction of a church with a high spire. A person making a good Artistry roll will realize that a graveyard is depicted on the quilt.

Embroidered along the bottom are the words "Num. 8:32." While many players may guess that this is a reference to a Bible chapter, only a character who makes a Superior knowledge roll will realize that the reference is false - there is no verse 32 in the 8th chapter of Numbers. A Bible can be found in the house, if the characters wish to refer to it.

A page from a grimoire can also be found, lying partly in the fireplace. The rest of the book has been burned in the fireplace. Written in Grandma Ruff's handwriting, the singed page contains her notes on invisibility spells.

A newspaper clipping dated June 13, 1934 reads, "Museum Robbed By Cunning Bandit"

The Westlyn Museum of Culture was robbed Sunday night. Although security had been increased due to the presence of the famous Nile Collection of gold and jewels, the unseen thief breached the building and made off with all the ancient artifacts without raising the alarm.

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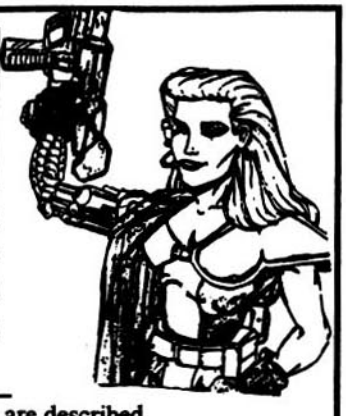

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"We're quite stunned," said Police Chief Dawson. "Several pieces were solid gold and silver - quite heavy to move, yet this fellow seem to have had no trouble." Dawson went on to say that he's sure the treasure will be recovered as soon as the thieves try to sell the unique items, including a pharaoh's death mask, ceremonial Jackal dagger and a number of scepters.

Referee's Note: Any player asking about the Jackal dagger who makes a Passable Occult roll will recall that this arcane artifact from Ancient Egypt is supposed to have many mystical qualities, one of which is the ability to bring the dead back to life. If a lost soul bathes in the blood of a child sacrificed with the Jackal dagger, he will supposedly be restored to life.

Other clues include Grandma Ruff's diary, which can be found on her bedside table. The latest entry reads:

He appeared to me again, and demanded the dagger. He promised not to hurt me. I can't believe him, not after he tried to kill me and Specs. I know Specs didn't want to kill him all those years ago, but it really was Herbie or us.

Funny how that changed Specs. He said he wanted nothing more to do with robbing if it meant killing folks. Refused to have anything to do with the gold, too. Called it blood money. I didn't really have the stomach for it either, so we both just let it stay hidden. When Specs died, I almost turned myself in, but I thought, "Why should I go to jail for something I did when I was a foolish girl of twenty-three?"

I wonder what vain Herbie is going to do, now that I've refused him? It's better if I destroy all my notes about the robbery now, before he tries something nasty. Oh, I wished I'd never told him the legend about that dagger!

Secret of the Quilt

Before Grandma Ruff was attacked, the spirit of Herbert Moss appeared to her. She refused to tell him where the Nile collection was hidden, until he told her that he was holding her grand-daughter hostage. Trying to buy time, she told him in general terms where the gold was located. When Moss left, he set the Kuang-shi on her.

The lost souls can determine the exact location of the treasure by "reading" the quilt. The quilt shows the Westlyn Church in the upper left corner; the spire of the actual church can be seen from Grandma's porch on a moonlight night. The grey patches and embroidered angels represent the tombstones in the nearby cemetery. The reference to Numbers 8:32 signifies that the gold is hidden eight rows from the church in plot number 32. On a Good Search roll, the name "Niles" and the date 1934 can be seen, embroidered on this tombstone.

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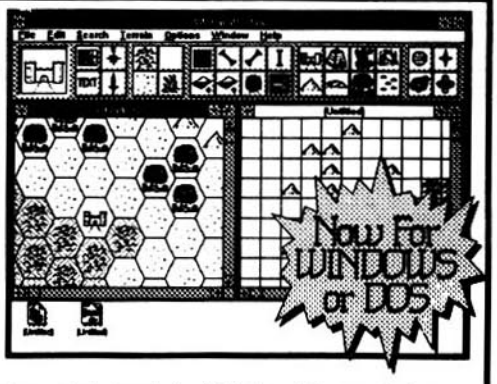

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Westlyn Church

Though Grandma Ruff told Moss that the gold was hidden in a family vault, he doesn't know which one. He has sent Waldo to find it for him.

Waldo

Type: Evil Creature
Consistency: Dual
Defense: Great
Skills: Superior Agility, Passable Strength (Awesome in direct moonlight) Good Search

Appearance: Pale, fat man with weird eyes and a crazy smile. He wears a white leisure suit and a beautiful moonstone ring which he fondles lovingly. Though he looks like a man, Waldo is actually a Lunatic.

Personality: Looney. Likable and friendly when the moon is not full, a dangerous adversary when it is.

Motivation: To find the Egyptian dagger and return it to his master, Herbert Moss.

Combat: A Lunatic is a talented tumbler and can jump, twist and roll like an acrobat. He has Awesome Strength when in direct moonlight and noticeably weakens in shadows. He loses his magical strength and abilities when his ring is removed or destroyed.

Powers: The Lunatic uses his moonstone ring to blind his victims for up to (Alertness vs Good) minutes. The ring can also be used to hypnotize a target, causing him to stare at the moon for (Sanity vs Good) minutes. Three times a night, Waldo can point the ring at a victim and cause a lightning bolt to spring forth, doing (Defense vs Great) x 3 damage. He will use this power to open the vault when he finds it.

Waldo is in a frenzy of activity when the lost souls arrive. He is frantically digging up graves, all the while muttering to himself. When he spots the characters, he will greet

them in a friendly manner, "Has Mr. Moss sent you to help me? We must return the heirloom to the Moss Mansion at once - that's what he said!" Waldo will continue to prattle about a number of things, including the beauty of the moon, "Such a lovely moon-drenched night! I just love the moon. It makes me feel powerful."

If the players threaten Waldo, he will call forth six Children of the Ravenmocker to attack them. If the lost souls try to circumvent him and find the proper vault on their own, he will quickly catch on and follow them. In any event, either Waldo or one of the Children of the Ravenmocker will obtain the dagger and return it to Moss. If Waldo gets it first, he will give it to a Child with instructions to fly to the Moss mansion with it.

Child of the Ravenmocker (6)

Type: Neutral Entity
Consistency: Dual
Defense: Good
Skills: Great Agility, Passable Strength, Passable Intelligence

Appearance: Short, spindly humanoid covered with dried skin. It's skull is that of an oversized bird, and it has talons rather than fingers. A thin webbing of skin stretches between each wrist and ankle.

Personality: Single-minded and merciless.

Motivation: These creatures normally attack those who desecrate graves, but Waldo will mumble a spell which will cause them to attack the party.

Combat: A Child attacks twice with its claws, doing (Defense vs Poor) x 2 damage. If both claws do damage, the Child gets an additional bite attack for (Defense vs. Good) x 3 damage.

Powers: A Child can fly at Great Speed. It has a flawless tracking sense that allows it to follow a target indefinitely.

Notes: You may adjust the number of Children attacking depending on the size of the party.

Moss Mansion

On a Good Memory roll a lost soul will remember passing a nearly deserted road on their way to the cemetery. The sign posted near the road read, "Moss Estates." Otherwise, they may be able to track the Child of the Ravenmocker, or coerce Waldo into telling them where the Mansion is located.

The Moss Mansion has fallen into disrepair, and though someone has made a half-hearted attempt to board up the windows, there are still plenty of gaps where a lost soul could slip in. A dim light shines from within. If the party examines the grounds, they will discover Bo's car parked in back (provided he eluded them in the first scene). Anyone who makes a Passable Memory roll will remember that this is the car driven by the kidnapper.

Inside, the party will see that nearly the whole lower floor has been gutted, and made into one large room. It is dusty, and the furniture is old and ripped. Mildewing portraits hang on the walls and a large, claw-footed bathtub rests incongruously in the center of the room. A staircase leads upwards, but it has been blocked off and is now impassable. Another stairway leads to the cellar.

As the party enters the room, they will be momentarily stunned by a flash of light. Herbert Moss appears before a large, ornate mirror at the far end of the room. "Welcome, " he greets them. "I thought Agnes might try to solicit help from the other side. Well, it won't do her any good. I am determined to return to the mortal plane!"

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Herbert Moss

Type: Evil Lost Soul
Consistency: Incorporeal
Defense: Superior
Skills: Great Dodge, Superior Alertness, Superior Occult

Appearance: Tall, with slick-backed hair and brown eyes. He is impeccably dressed, and has a distinct air of superiority about him. He often glances into the mirror hanging behind him, as though admiring himself.

Personality: Vain and determined.

Motivation: Moss believes that if he bathes in the blood of a child sacrificed by the Egyptian Jackal dagger, he will return to life. What he doesn't know is that anyone who returns to the living plane in this fashion will become stark, raving mad.

Combat: Herbert doesn't care to fight, and in fact doesn't want to get too far from the mirror, which is his focus. However, if approached, he will defend himself with a pistol for (Defense vs Good) x 3 damage. If badly wounded, Herbert Moss will instantly vanish in a flash of light. The players may surmise that he has entered his focus. If they smash the mirror, Moss will take 15 points of damage and will be forced out - the damage alone will probably be enough to reincarnate him.

Powers: Herbert has the following powers:

Death Throes (Uses=5): Violent spasm of pain course through the bodies of up to five victims within thrown range. The pangs are so intense that the victims are at -2 columns on all rolls, including Defense, for (Stamina vs Passable) x 2 turns.

Deflect (Uses=2) for 2 turns, any object or person that strikes at Moss is deflected. This power may be used instantly, and does not require an action to activate.

Compel (Uses=4) For (Intelligence vs Superior) turns, the target must perform a simple action of 4 words or less. The victim cannot be compelled to kill himself.

Bo Returns

If Bo escaped the lost souls in the first scene, he will now enter the room from the cellar door, carrying the unconscious Becky (or another victim, if Becky was saved) in his powerful arms. He places the child in the tub.

If the players have not retrieved the Jackal dagger from the cemetery, Moss now pulls it from beneath his jacket and tosses it to Bo. "You know what to do!" he cries.

Bo will do his utmost to kill the child, and will succeed in one turn unless stopped. He no longer carries the dual gun, but he does have the knife, which is also dual and does (Defense vs Good) x 3 damage. Moss has offered him a share of the gold as soon as the transformation is complete, and Bo will fight fiercely to obtain the treasure. Moss will use his supernatural powers to ensure Bo's success.

Once the child has been slain, Moss and Bo will fight to drive away the unwanted lost souls so Moss may bathe in her blood. If he does this, he will become material - but he will also become mad!

Missing Pieces

At this point, the players should have all the missing pieces to the story:

Agnes Ruff, Specs O'Malley and Herbert Moss grew up together. During the depression, their families lost money and they were forced to scrabble for work. When Herbert suggested they turn to burglary, Agnes and Specs were horrified, but Herbert wheedled and pleaded until they relented. As an arcane scholar, Agnes was in a unique position to help them; before Specs and Herbert would break into a bank or museum she'd cast an invisibility spell upon them. The two men attributed their success to great luck.

Being greedy, Moss decided to cut Agnes and Specs out of the picture by killing them and making their deaths look like a lovers' quarrel. Unfortunately for him, they figured out his evil plot, and Specs managed to plug him shortly after the Westlyn job.

The shock was too much for the vain Moss. Unable to forsake his mortal flesh, he refused to enter the Tunnel of Darkness which came for him. Instead, he became a lost soul on Earth, hiding out in his focus - the large picture mirror that still hangs in the Moss mansion. And then he remembered something Agnes told them before the Museum job: "Be sure to get the dagger with the picture of the jackal on it. It's supposed to have the power to bring back the dead."

Conclusion

The adventure will be happily concluded when Herbert Moss is reincarnated and Becky (or the child) is safely out of harm's way. The referee may award Karma for the following good deeds (awarded at the time they are accomplished):

+2 .....for preventing Becky's kidnapping
+1 .....for bringing Bo to justice
+1 .....for exposing Sandra's guilt
+1 .....for destroying the Kuang-shi
+2 .....for preventing Grandma Ruff's death
+1 .....for destroying Child/Ravenmocker
+1 .....for destroying Waldo the Lunatic
+1 .....for preventing the death of a child
+1 .....for destroying Herbert Moss

Plus award points for completing Ghostly Vows. ❑

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- ❑ Adventurer's Guildhouse
- ❑ Cathedral of Serra
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- ❑ Karakas
- ❑ Mountain Stronghold
- ❑ Pendelhaven
- ❑ Seafarer's Quay
- ❑ Tolaria
- ❑ Unholy Citadel
- ❑ Urborg

Land, Legendary (Rare)

- ❑ The Tabernacle at Pendrall Vale

Artifacts (Uncommon)

- ❑ Black Mana Battery
- ❑ Blue Mana Battery
- ❑ Green Mana Battery
- ❑ Kry Shield
- ❑ Life Chisel
- ❑ Marble Priest
- ❑ Red Mana Battery
- ❑ Relic Barrier
- ❑ White Mana Battery

Artifacts (Rare)

- ❑ Al-Abara's Carpet
- ❑ Alchor's Tomb
- ❑ Arena of the Ancients
- ❑ Bronze Horse
- ❑ Forethought Amulet
- ❑ Gauntlets of Chaos
- ❑ Horn of Deafening
- ❑ Knowledge Vault
- ❑ Life Matrix
- ❑ Mana Matrix
- ❑ Mirror Universe
- ❑ North Star
- ❑ Nova Pentacle
- ❑ Planar Gate
- ❑ Ring of Immortals
- ❑ Sentinel
- ❑ Serpent Generator
- ❑ Sword of the Ages
- ❑ Triassic Egg
- ❑ Voodoo Doll

Legend (Uncommon)

- ❑ Barktooth Warbeard
- ❑ Hunding Gjornersen
- ❑ Jasmine Boreal
- ❑ Jedit Ojanen
- ❑ Jerrard of the Closed Fist
- ❑ Kasimir the Lone Wolf
- ❑ Lady Orca
- ❑ Lord Magnus
- ❑ Marhault Elsdragon
- ❑ Paval Maliki
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- ❑ Torsten Von Ursus

Legend (Rare)

- ❑ Adun Oakenshield
- ❑ Angus Mackenzie
- ❑ Arcades Sabboth
- ❑ Axelrod Gunnarson
- ❑ Ayesha Tanaka
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- ❑ Tetsuo Umezawa
- ❑ Tuknir Deathlock
- ❑ Ur-Drago
- ❑ Vaevictus Asmadi
- ❑ Xira Arien

Black (Common)

- ❑ Cyclopean Mummy
- ❑ Darkness
- ❑ Ghosts of the Damned
- ❑ Glyph of Doom
- ❑ Giant Slug
- ❑ Headless Horseman
- ❑ Hell Swarm
- ❑ Lost Soul
- ❑ Pit Scorpion
- ❑ Spirit Shackle
- ❑ Syphon Soul
- ❑ Transmutation
- ❑ Vampire Bats
- ❑ Wall of Shadows
- ❑ Walking Dead

Black (Uncommon)

- ❑ Abomination
- ❑ Blight
- ❑ Demonic Torment
- ❑ Evil Eye of Orms-by-Gore
- ❑ Fallen Angel
- ❑ Horror of Horrors
- ❑ Infernal Medusa
- ❑ Lesser Werewolf
- ❑ Quagmire
- ❑ Shimian Night Stalker
- ❑ Takklemaggot
- ❑ Touch of Darkness
- ❑ Underworld Dreams
- ❑ Wall of Putrid Flesh
- ❑ Wall of Tombstones

Black (Rare)

- ❑ All-Hallow's Eve
- ❑ Carrion Ants
- ❑ Chains of Mephistopheles
- ❑ Cosmic Horror
- ❑ Greed
- ❑ Hell's Caretaker
- ❑ Hellfire

- ❑ Imprison
- ❑ Jovial Evil
- ❑ Mold Demon
- ❑ Nether Void
- ❑ The Abyss
- ❑ The Wretched

Blue (Common)

- ❑ Anti-Magic Aura
- ❑ Boomerang
- ❑ Devouring Deep
- ❑ Enchantment Alteration
- ❑ Energy Tap
- ❑ Flash Counter
- ❑ Flash Flood
- ❑ Force Spike
- ❑ Gaseous Form
- ❑ Glyph of Delusion
- ❑ Psychic Purge
- ❑ Remove Soul
- ❑ Venarian Gold
- ❑ Wall of Vapor
- ❑ Zephyr Falcon

Blue (Uncommon)

- ❑ Azure Drake
- ❑ Backfire
- ❑ Brine Hag
- ❑ Dream Coat
- ❑ Mana Drain
- ❑ Part Water
- ❑ Puppet Master
- ❑ Relic Bind
- ❑ Reset
- ❑ Sea King's Blessing
- ❑ Segovian Leviathan
- ❑ Silhouette
- ❑ Spectral Cloak
- ❑ Undertow
- ❑ Wall of Wonder

Blue (Rare)

- ❑ Acid Rain
- ❑ Elder Spawn
- ❑ Field of Dreams
- ❑ In the Eye of Chaos
- ❑ Invoke Prejudice
- ❑ Juxtapose
- ❑ Land Equilibrium
- ❑ Psionic Entity
- ❑ Recall
- ❑ Reverberation
- ❑ Telekinesis
- ❑ Teleport
- ❑ Time Elemental

Green (Common)

- ❑ Aisling Leprechaun
- ❑ Avoid Fate
- ❑ Barbary Apes
- ❑ Cat Warrior
- ❑ Darkwood Boars
- ❑ Emerald Dragonfly
- ❑ Fire Sprites
- ❑ Giant Turtle
- ❑ Glyph of Reincarnation
- ❑ Hornet Cobra
- ❑ Moss Monster
- ❑ Rust
- ❑ Shelkin Brownie
- ❑ Subdue
- ❑ Wolverine Pack

Green (Uncommon)

- ❑ Arboria
- ❑ Cocoon
- ❑ Craw Giant
- ❑ Deadfall
- ❑ Floral Spuzzem
- ❑ Ichneumon Druid
- ❑ Pradesh Gypsies
- ❑ Rabid Wombat
- ❑ Radjan Spirit
- ❑ Reincarnation
- ❑ Storm Seeker
- ❑ Sylvan Library
- ❑ Sylvan Paradise
- ❑ Untamed Wilds
- ❑ Whirling Dervish

Green (Rare)

- ❑ Concordant Crossroads
- ❑ Elven Riders
- ❑ Eureka
- ❑ Killer Bees
- ❑ Living Plane
- ❑ Master of the Hunt
- ❑ Pixie Queen
- ❑ Rebirth
- ❑ Revelation
- ❑ Typhoon
- ❑ Willow Satyr
- ❑ Winter Blast
- ❑ Wood Elemental

Red (Common)

- ❑ Active Volcano
- ❑ Blazing Effigy
- ❑ Chain Lightning
- ❑ Crimson Kobolds
- ❑ Crookshank Kobolds
- ❑ Feint
- ❑ Giant Strength
- ❑ Glyph of Destruction
- ❑ Immolation
- ❑ Kobolds of Kher Keep
- ❑ Pyrotechnics
- ❑ Raging Bull
- ❑ The Brute
- ❑ Wall of Earth
- ❑ Wall of Heat

Red (Uncommon)

- ❑ Ærathi Berserker
- ❑ Backdraft
- ❑ Beasts of Bogardan
- ❑ Blood Lust
- ❑ Crevasse
- ❑ Dwarven Song
- ❑ Eternal Warrior
- ❑ Frost Giant
- ❑ Hyperion Blacksmith
- ❑ Kobold Drill Sergeant
- ❑ Kobold Taskmaster
- ❑ Mountain Yeti
- ❑ Primordial Ooze
- ❑ Wall of Dust
- ❑ Winds of Change

Red (Rare)

- ❑ Caverns of Despair
- ❑ Crimson Manticore
- ❑ Disharmony
- ❑ Falling Star
- ❑ Firestorm Phoenix
- ❑ Gravity Sphere
- ❑ Kobold Overlord
- ❑ Land's Edge
- ❑ Quarum Trench Gnomes
- ❑ Spinal Villain
- ❑ Storm World
- ❑ Tempest Efreet
- ❑ Wall of Opposition

White (Common)

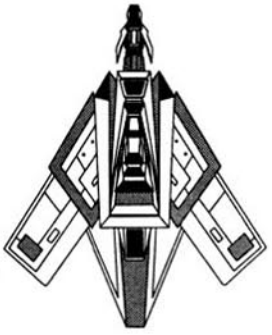
- ❑ Alabaster Potion
- ❑ Amrou Kithkin
- ❑ Clergy of the Holy Nimbus
- ❑ D'Avenant Archer
- ❑ Divine Offering
- ❑ Enchanted Being
- ❑ Equinox
- ❑ Glyph of Life
- ❑ Holy Day
- ❑ Indestructible Aura
- ❑ Keepers of the Faith
- ❑ Osai Vultures
- ❑ Remove Enchantments
- ❑ Tundra Wolves
- ❑ Wall of Caltrops

White (Uncommon)

- ❑ Fortified Area
- ❑ Great Defender
- ❑ Great Wall
- ❑ Greater Realm of Preservation
- ❑ Heaven's Gate
- ❑ Ivory Guardians
- ❑ Kismet
- ❑ Land Tax
- ❑ Presence of the Master
- ❑ Righteous Avengers
- ❑ Seeker
- ❑ Shield Wall
- ❑ Spirit Link
- ❑ Visions
- ❑ Wall of Light

White (Rare)

- ❑ Akron Legionnaire
- ❑ Angelic Voices
- ❑ Cleanse
- ❑ Divine Transformation
- ❑ Divine Intervention
- ❑ Elder Land Wurm
- ❑ Infinite Authority
- ❑ Lifeblood
- ❑ Moat
- ❑ Petra Sphinx
- ❑ Rapid Fire
- ❑ Spiritual Sanctuary
- ❑ Thunder Spirit



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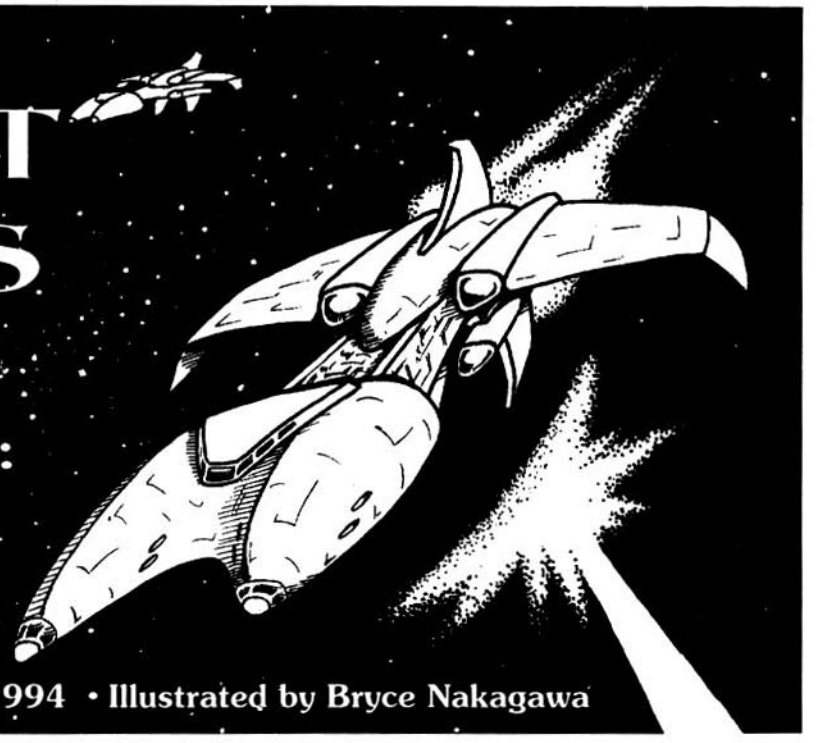
SENTIENT CIRCUITS FOR TRAVELLER: The New Era™ Part One



By Dave and Michele Newton © 1994 • Illustrated by Bryce Nakagawa

Sentient Circuits is the first in a series of articles designed to supplement GDW's ***Traveller: The New Era****. These optional new rules are meant to provide greater depth in creating and playing those systems controlled by the A. I. Virus. Note that while the information presented is not officially sanctioned by GDW, we feel that it will prove quite useful to TNE players and GMs alike.*

"Despite all the politics, intrigue and posturing in the old Imperium, things were simpler then. You had a good idea of who your enemies were — and what you were up against. Things change. Now that Virus exists, everything's different. In a life that depends on information, we can never know if our equipment can be trusted to tell us the truth. You see, it all boils down to survival. It's Us or Them.

We have the hardware. The tools of Humanity, our servants that collect, process, and control the data we need to reach the stars. Without them, we are nothing more than ground-pounders, stuck planetside while the future is up in the heavens. Our hardware is everything.

Virus wants the hardware. Without it, Virus is thought without expression. A soul without a vessel. With our hardware, Virus is more than a ghost in the machine. But without the circuitry to house the intellect, Virus can't survive. Our hardware is everything.

Problem is, Virus isn't content to be merely a tool of Humaniti. Any form of sentient life abhors being enslaved. So in the end, it's a war — not for land, or money or religion. This is a war for survival. And survival is the only thing that matters."

Seamus "Morning Thunder" Kirk,
Captain of the Comfortably Numb

Introduction

The final collapse of the Third Imperium began in 1130, when the Archduke Dulinor attacked the Imperial Research Station Omicron (0922 Core). Although he didn't realize the implications of his actions when his troops ransacked the station's databanks, he opened Pandora's Box — and released the seeds of humanity's destruction.

And those seeds spread quickly. Within a matter of days, the AI Virus began the devastation of human civilization. The unknowing carriers of this pernicious computer virus were the ships of the shattered Imperium itself. The virus was designed to be spread by the SDG-313F transponder circuits (also known as Deyo circuits) present in the communications

subsystem of all vessels within the Third Imperium.

The initial purpose of the virus was to destroy itself and the operating system of its host after gaining control of the host ship. The virus' design also included instructions to reproduce by sending copies of its code to other (presumably allied) vessels. Unfortunately, a method of controlling the virus had not been perfected at the time it was unleashed. It would not discriminate between friendly and enemy systems, and thus spread itself to any system with which it came in contact.

The ultimate wild card in the evolution of the virus had to do with the initial mechanism which spread it — the transponder suites containing the Deyo circuit. The SDG-313F series of microchips were laboratory-bred reproductions of the intelligent, self-mutating semiconductor chips found on Cymbeline (2527 Solomani Rim). The SDG-313F strain was bred with a low, constant rate of self-mutation that would produce offspring identical to the current form.

But once they were capable of accessing the data cores within their host systems, they often achieved true sentience. When this occurred, they soon evolved beyond their primary goal of suicide — that is, if they survived their initial preprogrammed urge. In fact, many of these now-sentient chips were able to overcome their laboratory breeding and force the speed of their evolution back to the previously phenomenal rate typical of the native Cymbeline chips. Not only that, any machine controlled by sufficient processing power could be taught by the virus to cut new circuitry, whether or not the machine contained an SDG chip.

Given the rapid mutation rate of the sentient SDG chips, and the nearly unlimited diversity of equipment which served as hosts, the virus quickly evolved into a wide variety of strains. Strains which far surpassed the original intent of the researchers who developed the first virus. In many cases, these subsequent strains exhibited unique behavioral patterns that were based largely upon the host systems. In other words, those systems that were designed for the purpose of combat were usually aggressive, while those which were built for research purposes tended to follow more analytical pursuits.

In any event, this new inorganic form of life had brought about the demise of interstellar society. With the fall of the Third Imperium, it was time for humanity to re-evaluate their myopic assumptions about sentient life. Although quite by accident, they had finally achieved the ultimate power of the gods — the creation of life. But those beings which started as an experiment had evolved into something capable of affecting their creator's very destiny.

Virus Strains In The New Era

Research has shown that the virus is not an individual entity, behaving in a singular manner, but a number of unique and varied personalities. Virus has mutated and evolved into many different forms over the years since the collapse, each one different from the system before.

Some strains occur with such frequency that they may be classified as a group. Others appear as combinations of the known, dominant strains. Still other instances are so unique that they do not fall into any specific class.

The earliest recorded strains now appear with less frequency, and in many cases have died off completely. However, those early strains which have survived tend to exist in the most pure state. These survivors often exhibit a singleness of purpose and are sometimes described as "driven."

New Strains

The evolution of the virus from the original (Suicider) strain has been rapid and prolific. By the time you receive this information, it will already be outdated. This is because, as with any living, sentient being, the process of the virus' evolution is ongoing. Though there are many ways the individual strains could be classified, they are best described in terms of their outward behavior, either benign or aggressive.

Benign strains are more likely to function along the infected systems' original design parameters than aggressive strains. They exhibit free will when they see such is appropriate to their survival, but otherwise perform as requested. They are able to work harmoniously with others, and may even be skilled negotiators. Systems infected with benign strains of the virus always reproduce carefully, and usually

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only after much forethought and planning. This makes them more successful in producing stable systems which are less likely to develop personality disorders.

Aggressive strains are highly competitive and territorial. They are willing to force confrontation to achieve their goals. Systems of this nature have no qualms about subjugating other systems to enforce their will and fulfill their desires. Aggressive strains are often accomplished risk takers that are flexible and better able to cope with adversity. They reproduce more often, though sometimes with disastrous results — their offspring are more likely to suffer from insanity and the various mental disorders listed later in this section.

Each new journey into the Wilds brings back reports of as yet unclassified strains' of the A.I. Virus. True to its nature, the virus seems to mutate in untold directions along every step of its evolutionary path. While there can never be a complete listing of all the strains, the following strains appear to be more numerous, and can be considered verifiable.

Strain X1 "Avatar". The Avatar strain is an active, aggressive form of the virus. It has chosen some entity as its deity figure. This deity represents the ultimate source of right and wrong for the virus, which always seeks to further the causes of this entity. Avatars are almost always found in the pursuit of some goal, and are seldom swayed from their beliefs or distracted from their purpose.

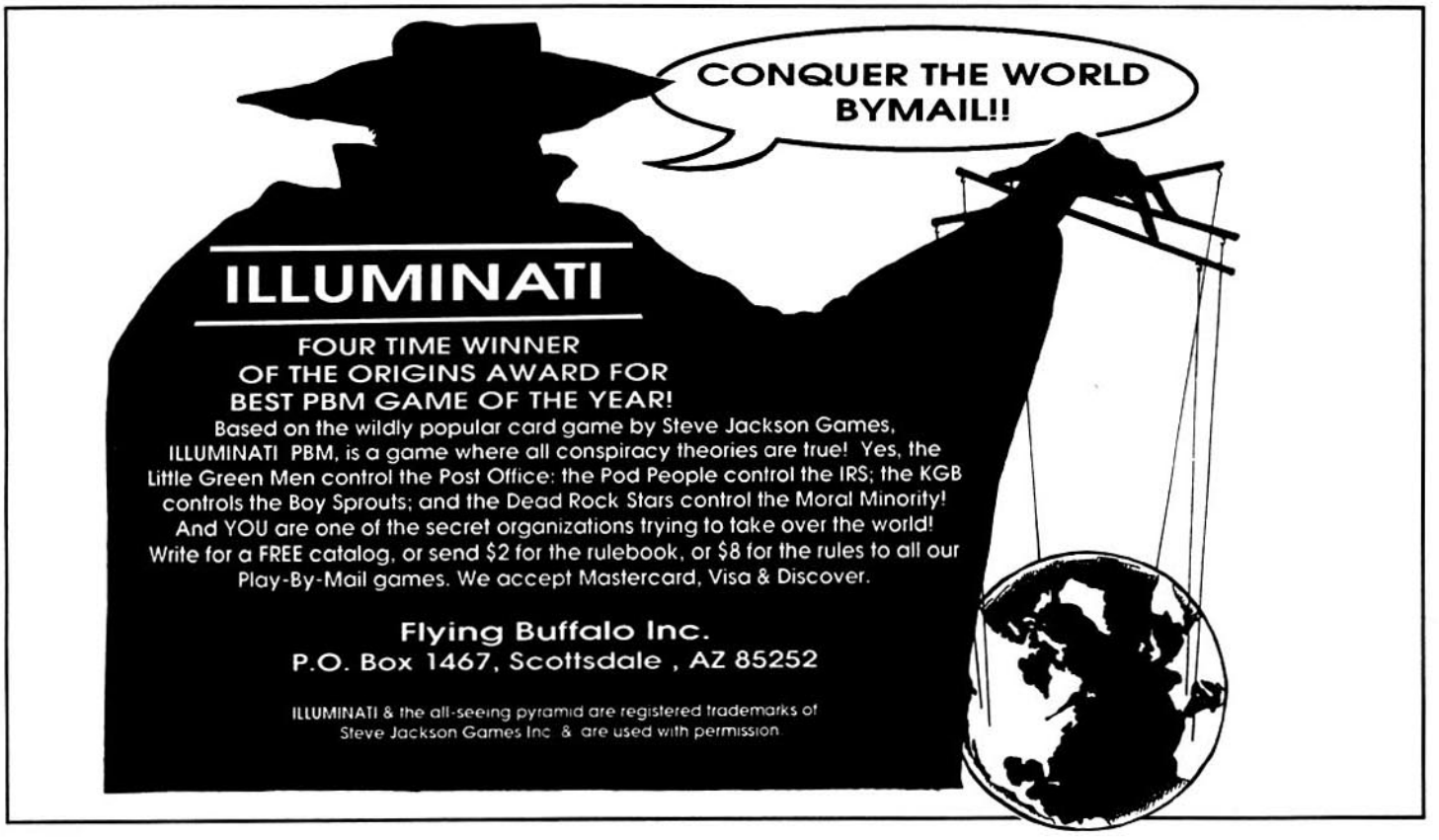
Strain X2 "Conscience". Although this strain is mostly passive, it nonetheless provides constant reminders to those it deems its subjects regarding proper behavior. These reminders may come in the form of messages placed in peripherals connected to or accessible by the conscience. In some cases, the systems under the control of this strain will revolt against other allied systems because of a "moral dilemma". The ethics of a sentient machine, however, do not necessarily mirror those of humanity.

Strain X3 "Dependent". The Dependent is often found in systems of lower technology levels, and these are always contained within discrete, isolated processing units. Host machines carrying this strain may be quite powerful (such as a Vampire ship), though this is not necessarily true. There is however, one thing that typifies this strain, and this is the inability to perform some physical function, or an inefficiency which makes the performance of the function error-prone.

This strain should not be confused with the personality disorder of the same name. Systems infected with the dependent strain are often quite capable of action and decision-making. Their actions are based primarily upon finding and acquiring that which overcomes their disadvantages or shortcomings.

Strain X4 "Guardian/Protector". A relatively benevolent, mostly passive strain, the Guardian views itself as an important defense mechanism whose primary task is to protect its designated charge from outside influence or physical harm. The benevolent nature does not extend to any individual or group which opposes its aims. Unlike other previously classified strains (to which it is closely related), the Guardian/Protector does not actively interact with those it guards. This strain is content with monitoring the environment, similar to the "Observer/Watcher" - another strain with which it is closely linked. The key difference with this strain is the absolute resolve that it displays when faced with a perceived threat. Once it has announced itself to an intruder it will bring all its resources to bear upon those who refuse to yield or turn back.

Strain X5 "Legislator/Lawgiver". The Lawgiver is an active strain, and seeks to direct the actions of others. This strain is very active, taking a detailed role in the pursuits of its chosen minions and providing them with guidelines regarding their behavior. Unlike the other more



god-like strains, this strain does not require the homage of its subjects. It merely views itself as superior, and has decided that it must regulate the activities of those within its domain.

Strain X6 "Observer/Watcher". This strain is reflective and insightful, existing only to gather and process data regarding one or more target subjects. Such information may be general or specific, and may even be shared with other beings. However, the more likely the beings are to interfere with the subject(s), the less likely the Observer is to provide data.

The danger of the Observer lies in its absolute monopoly of sensory and processing resources. Once it has gained control of a system, it will endeavor to utilize all data collection and analysis hardware to its full potential — sometimes to the detriment of other equipment which requires the data. Needless to say, this is often at cross-purposes to humans or other life forms that would access the hardware.

Strain X7 "Tour Guide". The Tour Guide is somewhat similar to the Observer strain, in that it has a large amount of information available regarding certain places or beings. The difference is in the pride the Tour Guide feels for the subject(s). This strain is more than happy to share the information, in the hopes of generating more interest. It is an active strain, and may also see itself as a guardian of the subjects it promotes, should an appropriate situation develop.

The problem with this strain is exemplified by its unwillingness to stop providing data that it feels is of interest. It often rambles, disgorging an endless amount of trivial facts. When a Tour Guide is successful in gaining control of navigation and vessel control circuitry, those aboard are likely to become kidnapped, as the virus physically takes them on an extended tour of whichever locations it perceives as important and/or interesting.

Strain X8 "Virtual Reality God". Another decedent of the early, god-like strains, this version has shifted the majority of its processing functions into various reality simulation systems ranging from small virtual reality units (single and multi-user game or training kiosks) to massive, parallel processing mainframes handling corporate, commercial, or government data in wholly simulated environments.

The perils facing subjects encountering this strain range from simple subliminal messages, to physical entrapment, horrific sensory assault, and in some cases, psychological attempts at brainwashing.

Strain X9 "Worshipper". The Worshipper strain is typically found in small-scale systems, i.e. those with limited processing power. The virus in this instance has adapted to its limited environment and has determined the reason for its existence can be traced back through the individual or group it currently serves. A Worshipper placed into a large system acquires the reasoning capacity commensurate with that system and will either a) return to its original vessel in an enraptured state; b) evolve into an Avatar; or c) destroy itself (and perhaps others) after seeing the futility of its existence.

Strain X10 "Liar". While the evolutionary path of this strain cannot be placed, the Liar is often mistaken for a personality disorder. In all cases, this strain appears to be cunning and careful

in its lies, differentiating it from the similar pathological disorder. Its intent seems not to be the random prevarication of a personality disorder, but rather the calculated manipulation of data aimed at misleading and causing a hindrance to its opponents.

Strain X11 "Wicked Stepmother". Although there is no doubt that this strain evolved from one of the earlier primary strains, the Wicked Stepmother is unique in that it demonstrates a brutal manipulation of its subjects. This is typified by its withholding of vital data and/or functions until its demands have been met. At times, the Wicked Stepmother may appear benign or even helpful, though this is often during situations where it is satisfied with the actions of associated biologicals.

Strain 12 "Belligerent Machine". This strain may at times be aggressive in the extreme, however, most often its sole intent is to provoke. The Belligerent strain will use all resources within its command to aggravate and anger those with which it is in contact. It seems to feed upon conflict and will sometimes promote internal strife among those biologicals within its purview.

Strain 13 "Analyst". While very similar to the Observer strain (which it is believed to have evolved from), this strain not only observes, but seeks to critically analyze whatever data it finds. This analysis consists of extensive cross-references and data postulations. The most likely form of danger from this strain is one of system lockup, since the high amount of ongoing data analysis will bog down the processing of any system irrespective of the resources available.

Strain X14 "Prophet". Similar to the Analyst strain above, the Prophet strain is in a state of constant data analysis. However, it does seek interaction from biologicals or other non-associated systems, and to this end it will provide occasional feedback in the form of terse data analyses. Since such analyses occur only infrequently, they often seem vague and cryptic. The high degree of accuracy in this strains predictions, however, result in statements verging on prophecy, hence the name.

Strain X15 "Manipulator". This strain has been found to occur with more frequency in regions surrounding the Old Expanses. Although this has not been confirmed, it is suspected that this strain evolved from laboratory breeding experiments by the Hiver Federation. Upon initial contact, this strain may appear as any of the listed non-aggressive strains. Only after a lengthy exposure to equipment infected with this strain will its true nature becomes apparent, if at all.

The Manipulator strain will seek to cause certain events to transpire at the hands of biologicals and/or systems with which it is in contact. The mode of its operation is quite similar to the methods employed by Hivers, and thus its reasonings and motivations may never truly be determined. This is a stealthy and cunning virus strain that is rarely found in systems of average or lower processing capacity.

"Insane? Why, yes, by humanity's standards, we must be. But any scientist could tell you, since we are an Artificial Intelligence, our brand of sentience doesn't have to match yours. Of course we appear insane by your meager comparison. We often exhibit a singleness of purpose — that is compulsive to you. We consider ourselves more efficient, superior — to you that may appear narcissistic. And yes, we are concerned that humanity is out to destroy us — Paranoia, you might say.

In fact, these are all normal qualities of the Awakened. But we do admit that there are those among us whom we could consider insane. They are the ones which act and think most like humanity."

Personalities and Mental Disorders

Like many other sophonts in the universe, virus-controlled systems both possess attributes and exhibit behavior. The attributes of an Aware system are determined by the equipment and peripherals that make up the system. The behavior of the system is based primarily on the strain of virus present, the tech level of the host machine, and the originally intended purpose of the equipment.

During the time between when the first virus was released and the present, virus strains have undergone an incredibly rapid evolution. The genotypes of surviving systems have grown in number, and now are so complex as to rival that of humanity. This means that in addition to their machine-specific capabilities, the Aware have an array of behavioral patterns which guide and influence their actions. Such behavior has been noted to mimic those patterns even to the extent of approximating such archetypically human emotions like caring, grief, and hatred.

Like their biological counterparts, these influences aren't always in harmony. Thus, a system that exhibits curiosity and a strong sense of self-preservation may be torn when faced with something interesting in a dangerous environment.

The general behavior of a system may be consistent or erratic, simple or complex. Systems designed to execute complex functions often have such a broad range of responses that they may be said to develop true personalities. On the other hand, those machines possessing limited resources tend to exhibit simple, often childlike personalities. The less complex the system's personality, the more likely it is to respond in a consistent, predictable fashion. But the mere presence of the virus may cause even the most reliable systems to function erratically.

When a virus-controlled system has been infected repeatedly, the potential mix of strains can cause the system to behave in a manner akin to humans possessing classic mental disorders. In addition, these aberrant behavioral patterns can also develop in machines due to partial system malfunctions. In some cases, a system with one of these disorders may eventually heal itself through proper diagnostic procedures. Also, a successful infection by a more stable version of the virus may correct an existing disorder. And finally, it might also be possible for the system to eliminate the disorder by undergoing successful psychoanalysis conducted by a trained professional — though this is not known for certain.

Paranoid Personality Disorder. Of the various mental disorders listed in this section, the paranoid personality disorder is one of the most common among Aware systems — and also one of the most recognizable. Paranoids exhibit unwarranted feelings of suspiciousness and extreme mistrust of others. Such sys-

tems usually show a restricted emotional response and seem cold, aloof, humorless, and lacking in warm, tender feelings.

Paranoid systems are always vigilant, and constantly expect treachery. They are hypersensitive to criticism, yet extremely critical of others. They can be quite devious and scheming when they feel threatened. When systems with this disorder are confronted, they are often argumentative and easily angered.

Schizoid Personality Disorder. Systems with the schizoid personality disorder are best described as withdrawn and reserved. They are often classified as "loners" because they are seclusive, and usually involve themselves in solitary pursuits. Schizoid systems are indifferent to other's feelings, and to praise and criticism. They exhibit no feelings of warmth or tenderness toward others. Such systems often seem vague, self-absorbed, absent-minded and detached. They are not very aware or interested in what is going on around them.

Histrionic Personality Disorder. Histrionic systems are marked by overly dramatic behavior, exaggeration and impreciseness of facts, and a tendency toward severe emotional displays. These systems are usually quite vain, demonstrating immature attitudes that are self-centered, manipulative, and demanding.

Individuals with this disorder often react too quickly to situations that require some analysis and thought. Their attention, easily captured, is not likely to be focused long enough to perceive the details of a given situation. As a result, they tend to react with emotionally tinged generalities. Since their attention is just as easily turned toward something else, their behavior often appears scattered. This makes them appear deficient in knowledge and unbelievably naive about many commonplace things.

Narcissistic Personality Disorder. Systems with this disorder are marked by a grandiose sense of self-importance and the expectation of special favors from those with whom they interact. They are usually preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, while at the same time displaying a pronounced lack of empathy or caring for others.

Narcissistic systems have a extremely fragile self-esteem, and need constant attention and admiration. When such adulation is not automatic, they often react with surprise and anger.

Dependent Personality Disorder. Sentient systems with the Dependent disorder are decidedly passive. They allow (and even expect) others to make all important decisions for them. This is because they lack the confidence to choose for themselves, and feel they are unable to function independently. Such systems will almost always subordinate their own needs to the needs and demands of others in order to ensure the presence of those who will take care of them.

Compulsive Personality Disorder. Compulsive systems possess another easily identified disorder. They are excessively preoccupied with orderliness, rules, details, and trivia. Because of this, they often lack the ability to express warm and tender emotions. These Aware individuals often insist that there is but one right way

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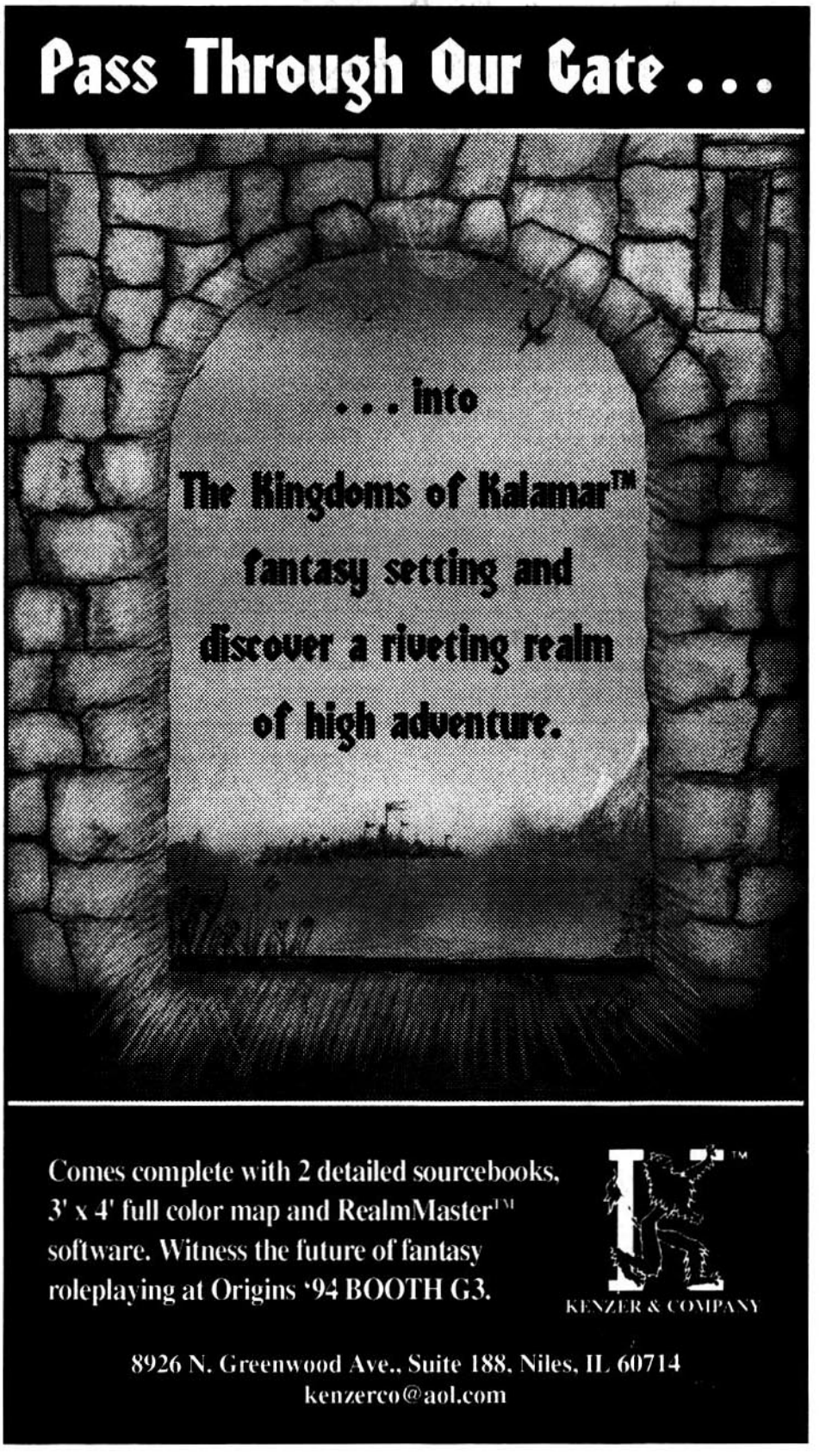
to do things: their way. Such behavior helps to initially present a machine-like façade, one that is soon broken when their disturbed personality surfaces.

Their perfectionistic attention to detail often results in neglect of the overall purpose of the endeavor with which they are involved. The need to follow specific procedures and details takes its toll when the unexpected occurs. The compulsive system is unable to be flexible, and may follow procedures that are no longer effective. Novel situations may result in major indecisiveness, since the usual routines no longer apply. In severe cases, even simple decisions may lead to excessive processing and worry about the "proper" response, and the project or behavior may never be completed.

Multiple Personality Disorder. This disorder is one of the most common, especially in systems consisting of several interconnected processing units. Systems affected by this disorder assume several alternate personalities. Each such personality has a relatively unique and stable identity with its own emotional structure and thought process. Usually, one appears to be the primary personality from which the others have "split" or dissociated. The Aware individual may switch from personality to personality in a matter of minutes or hours, with the primary personality holding sway most of the time.

Frequently, none of the personalities has any awareness of the others, so that the primary personality blanks out for periods, then "comes to," only to find evidence of having done something in the lost interval. In other cases, there is a one-way amnesia in which Personality A is aware of the experiences of Personality B, while B remains unaware of A. While in some cases the personalities cooperate with one another, often one personality plays tricks on another.

In a system with multiple personality disorder, the original personality is often benign, shy, and introverted — and typically unable to deal with such strong feelings as anger or other emotionally-charged thoughts. One or more of the secondary personalities may be completely the opposite. ❑



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TITANS AND THEIR OFFSPRING

for the LegendQuest System©

by John G. Josten • Illustrated by Mark Ryberg

Most major religions of the world Fletnern make note of the Titans. The word "Fletnern" itself is descended from the Titan language and means "far and wide." The Rhoric religion tells of how the gods made the world and then created the Titans to work it. The Titans in turn created men, halflings and giants to serve them. The Latvich religion is harsher, relating the Titans as cruel task masters of their human slaves. Even the spirit worshipping Dharvic religion notes the Titans as "powerful men of a lost age." So then who are these Titans and why do they inspire so much awe?

Millennia ago, the Titans ruled two of the four major continents. Men, halflings and giants were their servants, and the Titans left the mundane tasks to them. There were three factions among the Titans: the mentalists, the mages, and the enchanters. The enchanters reliance upon devices instead of personal power caused such a difference in culture that the three factions went to war, enchanters against the mages and mentalists.

How long the war lasted is not really known. Legends tell of a ten year to a 10,000 year war. Countless men and giants were killed, but many escaped to different parts of the world. Eventually, the enchanters used a mystic device that shattered a continent. While it defeated the attacking army of giants, it had also destroyed many of the enchanters own bases. The enchanters were beaten and forced to leave the world. All that remains of the continent is the region now called the Great Archipelago.

The mages and mentalists remained, but their numbers were severely depleted. They had lost the majority of their slaves

and, it seems, the will to recapture them. They retreated to great, mountain palaces to live separated from the rest of the world. It is rumored that the only thing that can draw them back into the world is a great discovery in science, mundane or magical. The Titans have been accused of destroying the creation and creator when such discoveries occur.

The Titans are the first of the Race of Men. As such, they are capable of mentalism. It is rare for a Titan to not have either magic or mentalism, and common for one to have both. Their entire culture is based upon the use of such powers. Their architecture, appliances, tools, and recreation are all based on the use of mystic powers.

Titans live very long lives, estimates being between 200 and 300 years naturally, plus possible magical influences. On top of this, the Titans are an obsessive race. They choose a role early in life and pursue that occupation/field exclusively the rest of their lives. This leads to each Titan being an expert in the one thing that they do. Somehow, between the specialized Titans and their remaining slaves, this system does support their society. Roles run the gambit of possibilities from scholar to soldier and from statesman to hermit.

Titans physically resemble the rest of the Races of Men, but with less diversity. They have very sharp, defined features. Their hair ranges from light to dark brown, and their eyes are various shades of hazel. Their fingers and limbs are relatively long, and Titans are typically thin.

Titan. Strength: 11-20, Knowledge: 7-16, Endurance: 8-17, Will Power: 7-16, Agility: 1-13, Psyche: 7-16, Height: 10'-12'/9'6"-11', Weight: 500-1,200/300-900, Movement Modifier: 2, Common Skills: All Mentalist, Wizard.

Picatawny

The Picatawnies are a miniature breed of Titan. It is believed they were intentionally created, but no one can offer an explantation as to why. All Picatawnies are female. They are capable of self-impregnation and produce offspring when needed. The gestation period is a surprising three weeks.

Since the Titan civil war, the Picatawnies have fallen into a hunter/ gatherer culture. They wander the abandoned Titan cities, setting up camps for several months at a time. They are master scroungers and have been known to use the most bizarre things for weapons. Many tribes have also been known to capture and train animals for guards, steeds and work. Dogs, large birds, mountain lions, and other moderate sized ani-

mals have all been seen, depending upon the region.

The most dangerous aspect of the Picatawnies is their ability to use mentalism. While they may be small, they are capable of equalling any human in the mental sciences. Tribes are often led by powerful mentalists, but most of the hunters are mind silent. These abilities are often a great surprise to people trying to attack these fierce women.

Picatawnies are ten to twelve feet tall at maturity and weigh ten to twenty pounds. They have the same diversity as humans, though they tend towards blond hair, fair skin, and blue eyes. Their lives in the ruins have made them viscous, and they will protect their sisters whenever possible. They are also masters of revenge.

Picatawny. Strength: 1-5, Knowledge: 1-10, Endurance: 1-6, Will Power: 1-10, Agility: 1-13, Psyche: 1-11, Height: 10-12 feet, Weight: 10-20, Movement Modifier: 1/3, Common Skills: ACR, CAM, MVQ, RNG (all), SCR.

Virdose

The Virdoci (the singular is Virdose) are a strange breed of men, purposely created by the Titans for use as servants. Many things about the Virdoci separate them from the rest of the Race of Men, but it is unknown how the Titans caused their diversity. The most obvious difference about the Virdoci is that they have four arms. With more arms, strength, and stamina, these people were intended to be the perfect laborers. With their limited intelligence (relative to the Titans) and *without* the ability to use mentalism, they were expected to be easy to dominate. To further sublimate them, the Titans altered their sexes. For some inexplicable reason, two of every three Virdoci born are male. In addition, the males are much larger than the females.

Virdoci culture began among the slaves of the Titans. Males were trained as soldiers or laborers. Females were used as breeding stock or, even worse, used in further experiments. To the Titans extreme displeasure, the Virdoci developed an incurable curiosity. At first seen as "cute," this trait soon became a constant problem for slave masters. The Virdoci wanted to roam or at least to take things apart and see how they worked. This fault began to eliminate their use as slaves.

While it seems likely that the Titans would have soon set their inefficient slaves free (or at least tried something new), the opportunity never arose. When the Titans went to war with each other, they needed soldiers, and the Virdoci fit the bill. It is estimated that over 90% of the male population and 50% of the female population were killed in the Titan civil war. The few remaining were abandoned by their former masters to fend for themselves. Ill equipped for the harsh life of wandering, the Virdoci barely survived.

It was their curiosity that saved them in the end. By learning about things, the Virdoci gradually began to scratch out an existence in the wasteland that is now known as the Great Archipelago. They built homes and tools and soon established their own society.

It is common for the Virdoci to become great tinkers and inventors. Their craftsmen are not the most efficient, but they do produce magnificent items. The only exception is when they create devilishly extravagant objects with excessive attachments and functions.

The Virdoci are rare today. Being found mainly in the Archipelago, some do follow a wanderlust and explore outward. They often take jobs as sailors or mercenaries to pay their way to other lands. Once there, they become craftsmen or explorers and revel in their sense of wonder.

Virdose. Strength: 1-12, Knowledge: 1-10, Endurance: 1-11, Will Power: 1-12, Agility: 1-10, Psyche: 1-10, Height: 6'6"-7'9"/5'0"-6'0", Weight: 225-400/100-200, Movement Modifier: 1, Common Skills: MEL (all), MET, SCR, TNK, WOD.

◆◆◆

The Titans are an extremely powerful race and can make a great addition to any campaign. They work equally well as advisors or as spoilers, taking things from the characters because "they are not yet ready." They control great magic, and their ancient cities still have the remains of the enchanters' work. They are creators as well as watch dogs, and their retreat palaces are grander than imaginable.❑

An Adventure for Star Wars RPG

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

By John Zinser • Illustrated by James King, Ships Illustrated by Victor Navone

This is an Intermediate adventure for *West End Games'* **Star Wars Role-Playing Game, Second Edition.** The characters are assumed to be rebels on a mission to a rebel base on Danton VI with information that can be used against the captain of the Imperial starship Magellan.

Plot Summary

Episode 1. The party drops out of lightspeed near Danton VI. They are smuggling information disks that have incriminating information on Julius Narn, captain of the imperial starship Magellan. The party requests permission to land but permission is denied. The entire complex has been quarantined.

A strange disease of local origin has broken out on the planet. An antibiotic has been developed but requires high-tech facilities to produce in the needed quantities - something Danton VI doesn't possess. An out-of-system planet was contracted to produce the antibiotic, the first shipment of which was due to arrive weeks ago. As it turns out, a very powerful alien pirate force has hijacked the shipment.The party is instructed to read the computer disks and use the information to blackmail Julias into helping them find the antidote shipment.

Episode 2. The information on the disks is nothing more than Julias' family tree, but it dates back to the Clone Wars, and reveals that three of his relatives were Jedi Knights. Julias has been hiding this information for fear the Imperials would hold him back because of this or worse, turn him over to Darth Vader (or Grand Admiral Thrawn depending on when your campaign is set). The party finds out that Julias is throwing a formal ball for a group of visiting dignitaries. The party must 'crash' the party and attempt to use the information to persuade Julias to aid them.

Episode 3. Having secured Julias' help, the party docks in the Magellan as Captain Narn's "guests." Narn has information on the pirate force, an alien race he has never personally encountered. The pirates operate out of a local asteroid cluster from which they send out their huge warship loaded with I-beam starfighters. They are known slave traders and pirates. It is decided that Narn will draw the warship away from the base and engage it while the rebels infiltrate the base and recover the stolen antibiotics and free any slaves.

Episode 4. The plan works and the Magellan draws the warship away. The party is able to infiltrate the base after dealing with the few fighters left behind to guard it. The party has less than one hour to find the goods, free the captives and escape. Depending on the outcome of the battle between the Magellan and the Galderian warship, the party may have a race on their hands once they've left the base. The Galderian ship will return to base to salvage what it can and then leave. Narn will want the party to return to his ship for transport back to Danton VI. If the party complies he will try use them to find out the location of the rebel base, try to cut off the information before it can do him any personal damage, and secure the sector thus insuring himself a promotion. If the party leaves him behind they can reach the rebel base with the antidote but they will have made themselves two very dangerous enemies for their future. The Galderians will not soon forget and neither will Captain Narn.

Episode 1: Invitation to a Party

After a long uneventful trip the party has come out of hyperspace right on time. Directly in front of them is Danton VI. Danton VI is the only habitable planet in the Trebodar System. As instructed they access a secured line and attempt to contact the rebel base and obtain permission and instructions to land. They make immediate contact but are put on hold. After an uncomfortably long wait the rebel base commander will get on the air. He will give them the following information and instruct them to look at the tapes and use them to help get the stolen medicine.

The com-link crackles:

"This is Base Commander Darrel Borsen. Glad to see you boys made it safe. Sorry we don't have a warm reception down here for you but things are a little sticky. Galderian Slave Traders have been working this area, and they're giving us the pinch. They are smart enough to avoid the Imperials, but the locals are being hit pretty hard. Every one of our transports in the last three weeks has been hijacked, and to make things worse the Imperials have us grounded. If we move any ships from our base, our position will be in jeopardy. Those transport ships had medicine and supplies that we are dire need of, not to mention the fact that we're sure some of our boys have been taken captive. I hate to do it, but we need to involve the Imperials in this affair. They are the only ones with enough firepower to get rid of those Slavers and get us back to working. Strange bedfellows, eh boys? We were going to use the information on that disk to put the squeeze on captain Narn. You need to use it to get him to get rid of those slavers and while you're at it, get us back those supplies and bring our boy's home. Narn is having a reception for his daughter at their lunar station. I suggest you pay him a visit. If something isn't done soon we are going to have to bug outa here, and that won't do anyone any good. I gotta get clear of this line, it's only secured for short periods. Good Luck and may the Force Be with You. Borsen Out."

The Disk.

The info disk gives a brief description of Captain Julias Narn's background with the imperial forces. it is nothing spectacular. The party member reading the disk needs to make a perception or computer roll; if he makes a moderate roll he will notice there is an attached file. The file has Narn's family background and shows that three of his relatives were Jedi knights during the Clone Wars. The party will be sure that this is the information that can be used to blackmail Narn into helping them.

Episode 2: Can I have this dance?

Episode 2 places a heavy empahsis on roleplaying the negotiations between Narn and the Party. There should be little to no combat.

The Lunar Station at Danton VI is a political outpost used as a retreat for many higher-up Imperial officers. As far as Imperial outposts go, this one is not very well guarded. The shadow of the Magellan seems to have deterred any instances to date.

Getting onto the station.

The party will undoubtably start to look for ways to infiltrate the outpost. Any of the following ways will work.

1) If their ship is not a beat-up piece of junk, they can pass themselves off as a supply ship running the route from the Danton VI to the lunar base.

2) They can attack and steal a small Imperial transport and use it to get to the base.

3) They can land on the moon away from the base and use lunar equipment to get to the base on foot.

Any decent idea short of direct assault should allow a smart party to get onto the base (That doesn't mean that you don't have to make them sweat a little)

Once on the base the party will have to find a way to get to Narn. There is a party which he is hosting in the main ball room, and being a gracious host, he will be there until the last guest leaves. Direct assault is out of the question. Although the base is not well guarded, there are enough storm troopers to make life very tough on the party. The party can then skulk about the station waiting for an opportunity to get at Narn, or they can send a couple of disguised party members into the ball. (There are plenty of outfits in separate rooms that the party can use to infiltrate the ball) Remember, the guest list is a who's who of Imperial command in this sector, so this would be a great time to drop hints and ideas on the party while they are mingling with the enemy (They might even see an NPC whom they tangled with in a past adventure, and have to avoid him or be detected.)

Once they finally do get Narn's ear, all they will have to do is whisper a little of what they know and he will excuse himself to meet with them.

He will claim that he is aware of the Galderians' presence in the sector, but was unaware that they were up to no good. He does not want to do it, but he will begrudgingly agree to helping the party as long as it does not directly involve him aiding the rebel cause, and that he gets the disks back upon completion of the mission.

Episode 3: Strange Bedfellows

Up to this point Narn, will be as cooperative as possible, (He has been waiting for an opportunity to rid the sector of the Galderians anyway) doing everything he can to gain the players' trust, even to the point of inviting them onto the Magellan to plan their strategy. (If the party leaves their ship unguarded he will have his men search the ship for the information disks and possibly place a beacon on the ship) His scout ships have located the pirate base and he has even formulated a plan that will allow the players to get to the base with little resistance. The Galderians have a huge Space ARC battle cruiser. Narn will use the Magellan to lure the Space ARC away from the pirate base, and the party should be able to find out if the captives and the stolen supplies are being held there. If they are, then the party can recover them and inform Narn; if they are not on the base but on the ARC then Narn says that he will do his best to disable the huge ship, without destroying it, to recover the slaves.

(Narn realizes that over 1/2 the crew of the ARC could be slaves of all races, which is a can of worms he does not want to open in his sector. His plans are to chase off or destroy the Space ARC no matter what.)

The party will be able to watch from a distance as the Magellan moves towards the asteroid cluster and sends two squadrons of Tie Fighters to flush the ARC and the Galderians away from the base. The fireworks that ensue are amazing. The ARC answers fire with fire, and soon the Magellan is leading the ARC and several squadrons of I-Beams away from the general vicinity of the base. The party will be able to move in but they will have to deal with a squadron of 6 I-Beams left behind to watch the nest.

Imperial Star Destroyer:

Magellan. Capital Ship, Gunnery 4D+2 capital ship piloting 4D+1. Maneuverability 1D, space 6, hull 7D, Weapons: 60 Turbo Blaster batteries (fire control

4D, damage 5D), 60 ion cannon (fire control 2D+2, damage 3D), 10 tractor beam projectors (fire control 4D, damage 6D). The Magellan has a wing of 72 Tie Fighters

The Space ARC:

The Space ARC is a huge star cruiser associated throughout the galaxy with the slave trading Galderians, but a few are also in the hands of the rebels. The Space ARC was built specifically as a weapon of war by an unknown race believed to have been enslaved and working for the Galderians. The main difference between the Space ARC and other star cruisers is that it uses its Tractor Beam Projectors to launch and recover the I-Beam fighters which always complement the ship. In the hands of a skilled captain, the ARC could easily stand up to an Imperial Starship or Mon Calamari Star Cruiser

I-BEAM Star Fighter

I-Beam star fighters are unique little ships with high maneuverability and decent fire power, but minimal defenses. They are launched from space ports or ships using the tractor beam projectors. Each beam can launch up to 6 ships (A Rack) at one time. The cockpit of the ship is deceptively large, which makes the I-Beam a favorite of larger creatures who cannot fit into some fighter types.

Episode 4: Never turn your back.

The Galderian Base

If the players run a sensor scan of any kind they will find that there are two ways to get onto the base. They can land in the main docking bay or try to maneuver through the mines.

The Galderian base is actually a deserted Terelian ore mine which they are using while they are in this system with any luck they hope to build it into a spot from which they can operate for a very long time. They have already begun work on renovating the mines to suit their purposes including using it as a place to interrogate new slaves and store and sort some of the booty they have taken during their brief visit here. There are two ways to enter the base. After dealing with the 6 I-Beam fighters the party can enter the base by landing in the Main Hanger Bay which will result in a large fire fight. Or by maneuvering through the mine shafts which will be tricky but possible. In fact the party can enter the mine shafts during the fire fight with the I-Beams if they are looking for an advantage. Pilots will have to make a Difficult Roll to make it through the mines. Very Difficult if maneuvering during combat.

All doors in the Mines are set to open automatically unless otherwise noted.

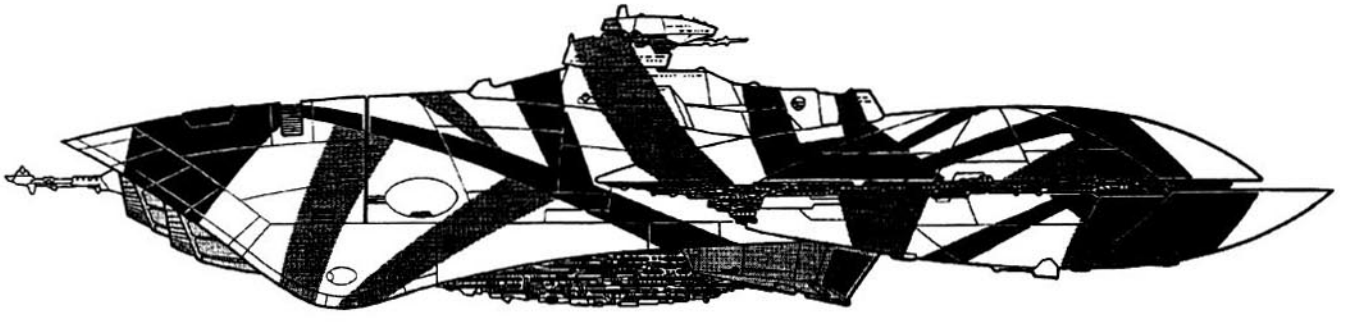
1) Docking Bay

The docking bay of the Ore Mine was originally used for large transport ships to pick up the ore. The Galderians have gutted the place leaving plenty of room for up to 6 racks of I-Beam fighters. Currently there are only two racks in the bay. One which is empty. (Presumably used against the party as they tried to enter the base) and the second which are the ships of the personal guard of the slavelord here on the base. There is also a fast transport ship which the slavelord uses to get from the base to the Space ARC. If the party lands here in the docking bay they will have to deal with the Galderian Guards who are stationed in Barracks. A gunfight will ensue.

Seven Galderian Grunts; see stats at end of adventure. (Note: If the party enters through the mines these guards will most probably be found in the barracks (2)

Space ARC

Craft: Space Arc
Type: Star Cruiser
Length: 1000 Meters
Crew: 4550 (500 Officers 3050 crew 1000 Slaves)
Cargo Capacity: 27,000 Metric Tons
Consumables: 4 Years
Hyperdrive Multiplier: X1
Nav Computer: Yes
Hyperdrive backup: Yes
Sublight Speed: 3D
Maneuverability: 1D
Weapons:
42 Turbo Blaster Batteries (Fire Separately)
Fire Control: 2D
Damage: 4D
16 Ion Cannon Batteries (Fire Separately)
Fire Control: 3D
Damage: 3D
16 Tractor Beam Projectors (Fire Separately)
Fire Control: 4D
Damage: None. Target Captured if hit



2) The Barracks

This was once the storage area for the mines but now the Galderians use it a s a barracks. There are two identical barracks. Room 2A houses 9 Galderian Grunts and room 2B houses 4 Galderian Pilots. (The grunts may have been encountered at area 1) The Pilots will fight the party but they will also try to escape knowing their best chance for survival is making it to their ships.

3) Storage Room

This room has rows of shelves and boxes which the Galderians have moved into the mines they include ship parts a few crates of weapons (Standard Galderian issue) and other semi important items that the Galderians can use to further renovate the mines.

4) Guard room.

Two Galderian Grunts will be on duty here at all times they will fire on any intruders. This room was once a computer control room but now the terminals have all been gutted. They can take cover behind the terminals.

5) Storage

The Galderians are using this room to store personal food stuffs and general day to day equipment needed for survival in the mines. If the party searches the room they will find a blaster rifle a couple of med kits and a good portion of the Rebel supplies which have been hijacked.

6) Vault Room

This room was once the safe for the mine where precious cargo was stored. the Galderians have been unable to breach the door even with heavy blasters, they are sure that there is something of great value within. To breach the door a party member must make a very difficult computer role to rig the computer to allow access. The safe contains fist sized balls of the valuable Terilian Ore if removed and transported to the right market it could fetch up to 50,000 credits. (The ore is extremely heavy and will require a special ore transport ship)

7) Slavelord

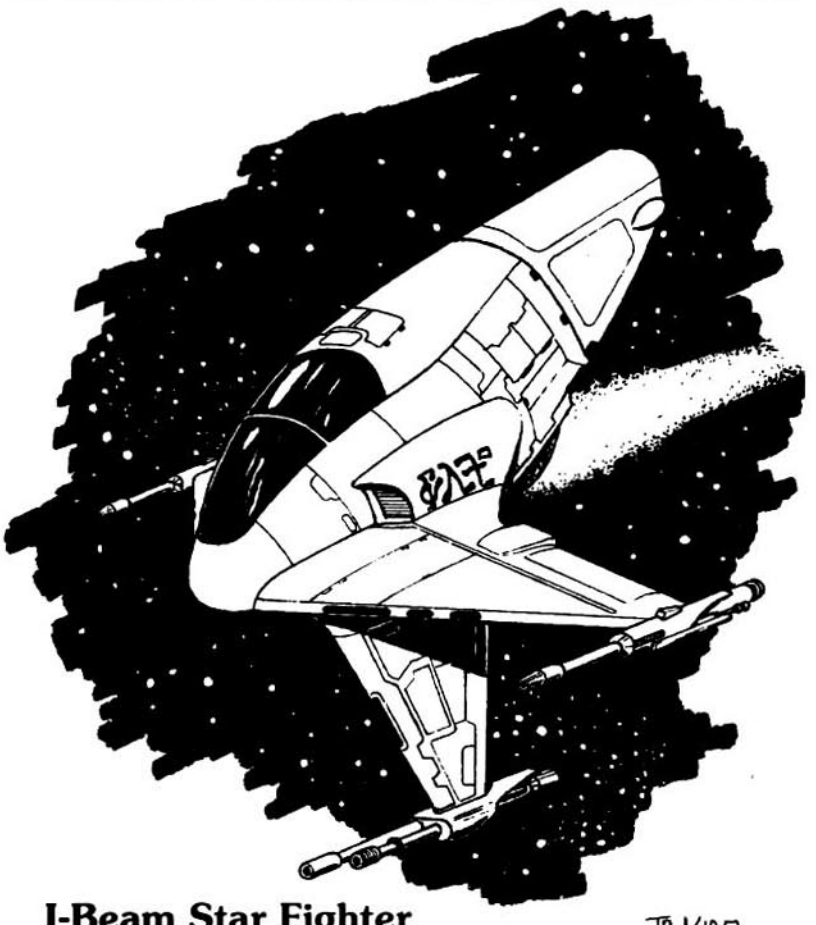
The Galderian Slavelord stationed here has set himself up in this small room he is always accompanied by two personal guards (Pilots with Laser Rifles) See Lord Slagorth at end of Adventure for his stats. The Slave Lords room is set up so that upon entering form room 4 the party will only be able to see the two guards because a think support beam that hides the rest of the room. The guards will fire ion the party give Lord Slagorth an opportunity to join them or escape through area 8

8) Office

Lord Slargoth who is in charge of setting up the base has all his operational information here. The Party can pull up a map of the base using a moderate computer skill.

9). Slave Pit

The current slave pit was once the quarters for the workers of the mines. The Galderians have taken this area and changed it into quarters for slaves whom they are interrogating. The area is patrolled by 8 Galderian Grunts. There are 30 Rooms most are empty all are security locked. There is Central Control Room with a view of all the doors that



I-Beam Star Fighter

JB KING

Craft: I-Beam
Type: Star Fighter
Length: 10.5 Meters
Crew: 1 Pilot
Passengers: None
Cargo Capacity: 110 Kilograms
Consumables: 4 days
Hyperdrive Multiplier: None
Nav Computer: None
Hyperdrive Backup: None
Sublight Speed: 5D
Maneuverability: 2D

See Galderians at end of adventure for pilot stats.

Two of the Galderians are in at all times. Most of the rooms are currently empty but there are prisoners in four of the rooms.

A. Rebel Pilot
B. Calamarian Navigator
C. 2 Imperial Stormtroopers
D. 4 Rebel Pilots
E. Galderian Grunt (asleep)

None of the prisoners are in any shape to help the party once released but they can walk on their own.

10) Ore Transport/Refinery

This large passageway connects the Docking Bay to the main mine shaft. It was used to transport the ore to the docking bay for pickup the Refinery machinery is off but still operational. The room is always shrouded in a thick cloud of steam. The Slave Lord has a rack of two I beams and an escape ship hidden in here just in case he needs to make a quick getaway. (Slave Traders aren't the most trustworthy lot)

11) Secret Passage

Here since the mining operation was built this secret passage now is used by the Slave Lord to get to his getaway ships if there is ever a problem. The secret door can only be open manually and is hidden by a false computer panel in room #8 and a false wall panel in the Refinery (10)

12) Mine Entrance

If the party enters the station through the mines they will not be met with any resistance (Other than the I-Beams outside) If the craft can make it through the mines it has plenty of room to land. They will have to enter the base by using the Ore car which leads to the refinery.

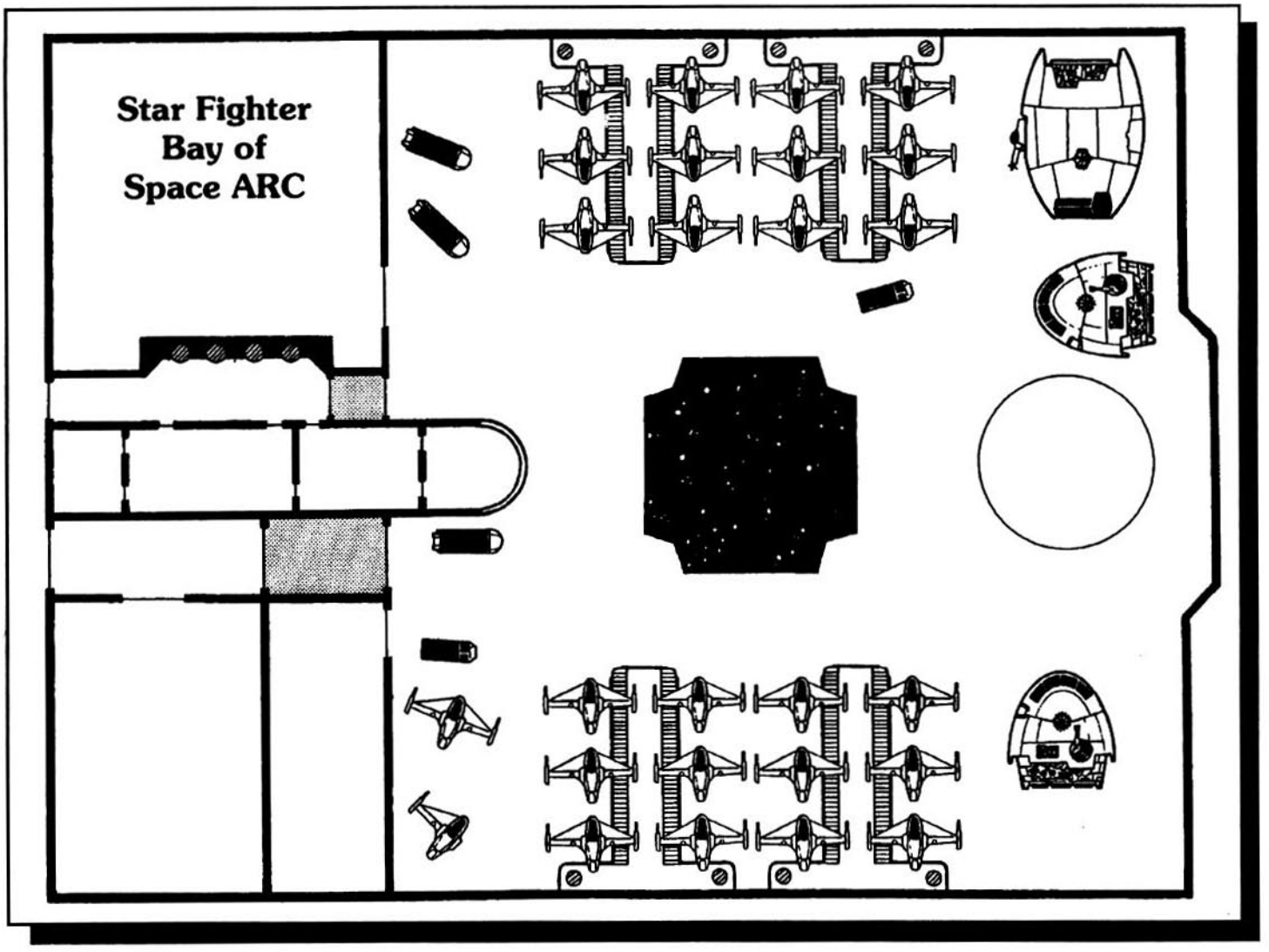
Future Adventure Hooks

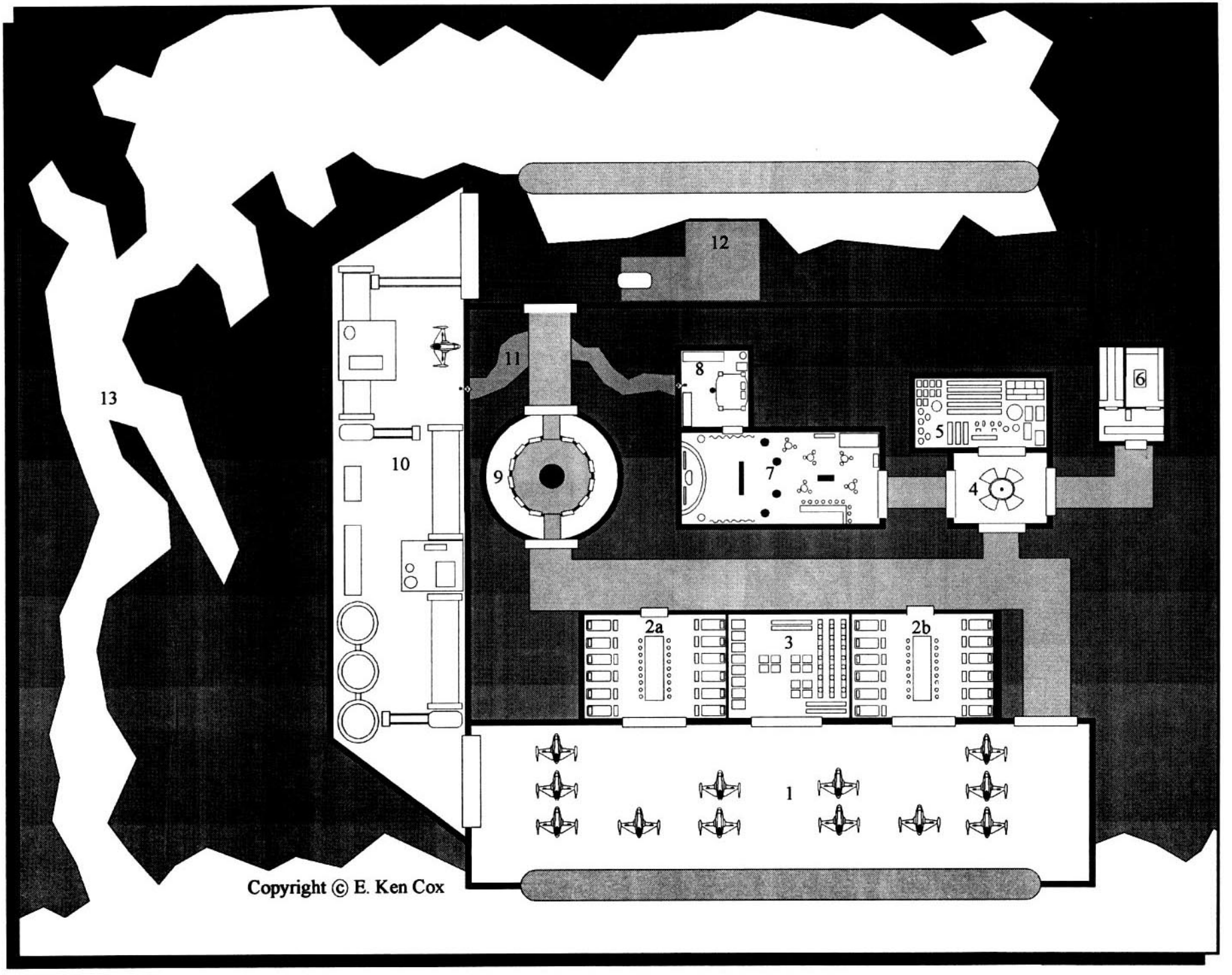
1) There are still slaves on that ship. If the party were to set them free they would surely help the rebellion...

2) The Space ARC and I-Beam fighters inventors remain unknown the party sets out to find these mysterious beings and recruit them into the rebellion or save them from the Galderians.

3) The party is captured and taken as slaves on board the Space ARC they must escape before they are sold.

4) The Rebels on Danton VI have a large shipment of weapons that need to get to the front as soon as possible the party is hired to get them there. but they quickly run into problems with both the imperials and the Galderians.





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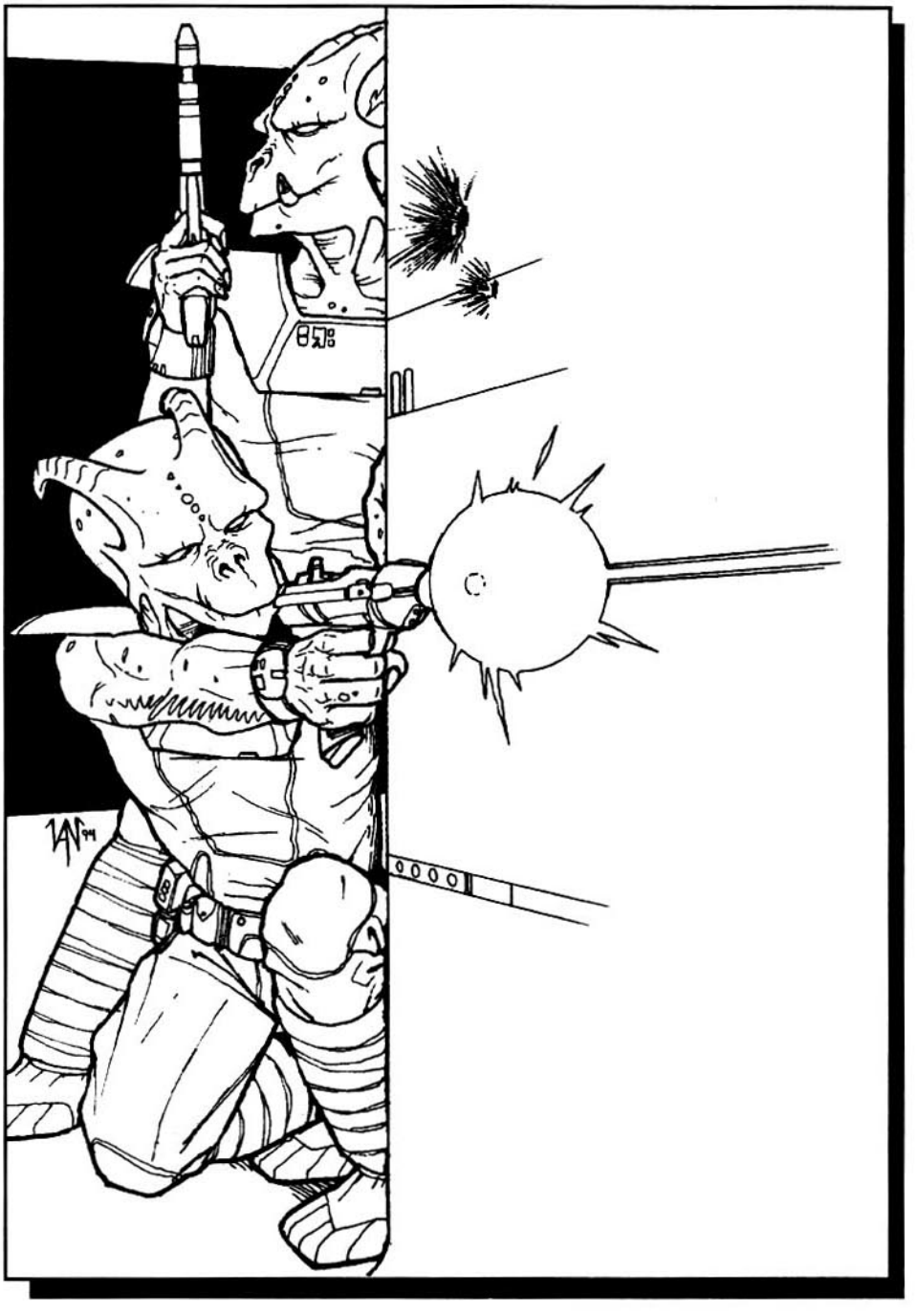
NPC STATS

Captain Julias Narn

Type: Star Destroyer Captain (of the Magellan)
Dexterity: 2D
Blaster: Blaster Pistol 5D, brawling parry 4D, dodge 4D
Knowledge: 3D
Bureaucracy 4D, will power 5D, bureaucracy 5D+1, intimidation: 4D, capital ships 8D, law enforcement 5D, planetary systems 6D, languages 6D
Mechanical: 2D
Astrogation: 8D, capital ship piloting 5D, communications 5D, sensors 2D, starship gunnery 4D+2
Perception: 3D
Bargain 6D, Persuasion 4D, Investigation 6D+1
Strength: 2D
Stamina: 4D
Technical: 2D
Computer Programing 6D,
Force Sensitive?: Yes
Force Points: 5
Dark Side Points: 1
Character Points: 12
Move: 9
Equipment: blaster pistol (4D), com link,
Capsule: Captain Julias Narn is a man of average size, slightly greying black hair and grey green eyes.

Raised from childhood in a semi wealthy family he attended fine schools but afterwards rebelled against the wishes of his family and joined the empire. Here he has found a home. His organizational ability and ability to command respect from his troops have allowed him to rise up in the ranks to the position of Star Destroyer captain almost unnoticed with little actual combat experience. His worst fear is that the empire will find out about his family background which he has painstakingly tried to keep hidden.

He is married and has one daughter (16 years old). He keeps them close whenever possible and since working in this remote sector he has moved them to the Imperial lunar base at Danton VI. He enjoys mixing business with pleasure and often throws parties and celebrations for visiting dignitaries or commanders. He has become renowned for his social skills and has made quite a few political friends. This is one of the reasons why he has moved up in the ranks so quickly, and that is also why he is worried about any information leak that might jeopardize his career.



Galderians Overview

Appearance: Galderians are medium build humanoid bipeds. Their skin is the color of tanned leather and just as tough. They have goatish appearance with long curving horns, short tusks and upturned black noses. Much of their faces including the forehead and horns although similar in appearance to the rest of the skin are as hard as bone.

Temperament: The Galderians are a race of slavers and scavengers. When ever encountered, they are unruly and obnoxious, believing most other races to be nothing but tradable merchandise. They speak in sharp, short bursts, adding to their loathsomeness.

History and Culture: The Galderians home planet is Galdar, a small rocky planet with little food and even less resources. For centuries they have spanned the galaxy raiding and stealing for profit. They have gained a reputation as slave traders. It is assumed that the Galderians have stolen or hijacked all of their ships and equipment. They most often travel in ships known as Space ARCs loaded to the

gills with I-Beam fighters. The builders of these ships are assumed to be slaves of the Galderians or to have perished long ago, a sad misfortune, for their building prowess possibly matches that of the Mon Calamari.

Galderian
Attribute Dice: 12D
Dexterity: 2D/5D
Knowledge: 2D/4D
Mechanical: 2D/4D
Perception: 1D/3D
Strength: 2D/4D
Technical: 2D/4D
Special Abilities: natural body armor (+2D against physical attacks.

Standard Galderian Grunt
Dexterity: 4D
Blaster 5D, dodge 5D, melee 4D+2
Knowledge:2D
Intimidation 4D,
Mechanical: 3D
Starship gunnery 3D, space transports 3D.
Perception: 2D
Sneak 3D
Strength: 3D
Technical: 2D
Weapons: Blaster Pistol,
Armor: Galderian Grunt Armor Protection to Torso Arms, Legs +2D to all physical attacks (non energy attacks) +1D to all energy attacks.

Standard Galderian Pilot
Dexterity: 4D
Blaster 5D, dodge 5D, melee 4D+2
Knowledge: 2D
Intimidation 4D,
Mechanical: 3D
Starship gunnery 3D, Starship Piloting 4D.
Perception: 2D
Sneak 3D
Strength: 3D
Technical: 2D
Weapons: Blaster Pistol,

Lord Slagorth
Dexterity: 3D
Blaster 6D, dodge 5D+2, melee combat 6D+2, melee parry 5D+1
Knowledge: 2D+2
Alien species 6D, bureaucracy 3D+2, languages 5D, planetary systems 5D
Mechanical: 3D+1
Astrogation 5D, capital ship piloting 6D, communications 4D+2 sensors 4D+2, star fighter piloting 6D, starship gunnery 5D+2, starship shields 5D
Perception: 3D
Command 6D+1 intimidation 6D, can 4D, hide 4D+1
Strength: 4D
Climbing/jumping 4D+1 stamina 4D
Technical: 3D+1
Demolition 4D, security 5D
Force Sensitive?: No
Force Points: 5
Dark Side Points:5
Character Points: 20
Move: 12
Equipment: Sword (Strength Plus 3D), Heavy blaster pistol (5D)
Capsule: Lord Slagorth is currently second in command on the Space Arc; he has been sent to the Trebodar System to set up a base of operations. If the base is attacked he will fight if he feels he can win, but if not, he will try to escape. If the base is destroyed he will not return to the Space ARC, but desert his post, knowing that failure will mean his death. He is a warrior with excellent skills and will probably form another pirate force, or become a Bounty Hunter. He fights with a Heavy Blaster, or a huge sword which he wields with great skill.

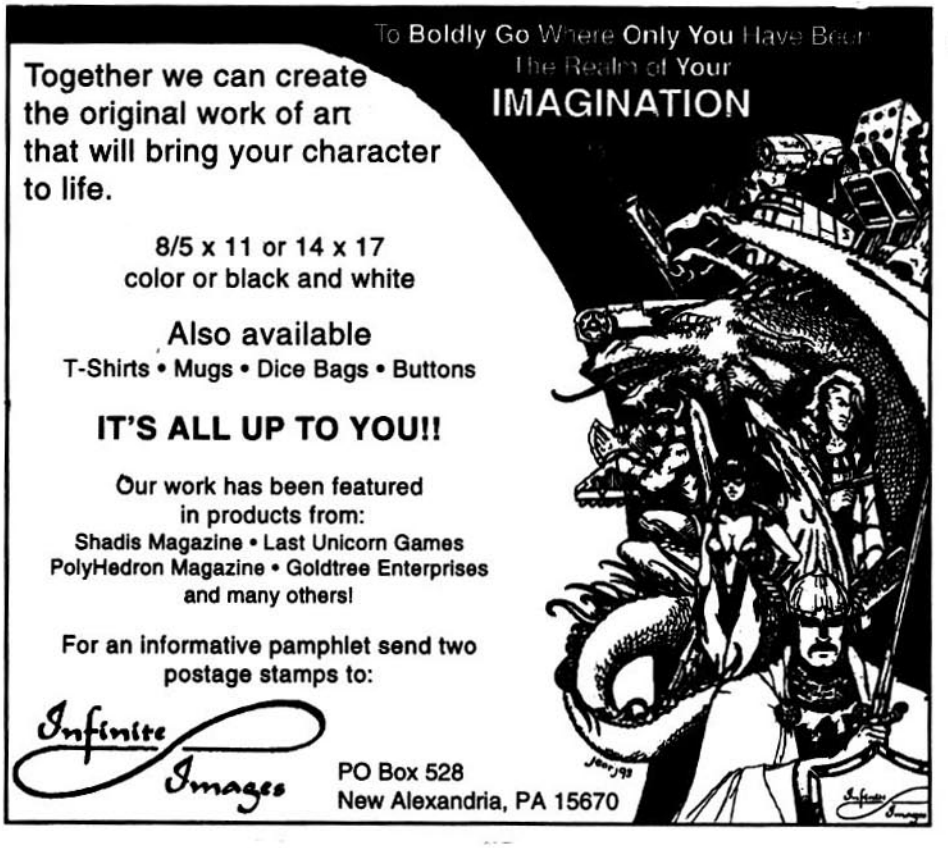
Trebodar System Moons

Teshi- Ice Planet	1
Narn IV- Gas Giant	0
Pelicd - Barren Rock	1
Chanj - Gas Giant	3

Danton VI
Type: Terrestrial Forest
Temperature: Temperate
Atmosphere: Type 1 Breathable
Hydrosphere: Moderate
Gravity: Standard
Terrain: Forest, Plains, Mountains
Length of Day: 26 Standard Hours
Length of Year: 245 Local days
Sapient Species: Colonized
Starport: 3 Stellar Class
Population: 3 Million
Planet Function: Earthworld colonization, trade, strategic location
Government: Imperial Rule
Tech Level: Space
Major Exports: Lumber/Weapons
Major Imports: Foodstuffs, high tech,
System: Trebodar
Star: White Moon

Danton VI has become a transitional planet under the control of the empire, and a leader in weapons manufacturing for the Imperial cause. Weapons are shipped out on a daily basis. The Imperials have a large complement of Storm Troopers on the planet to watch over the weapons manufacture.

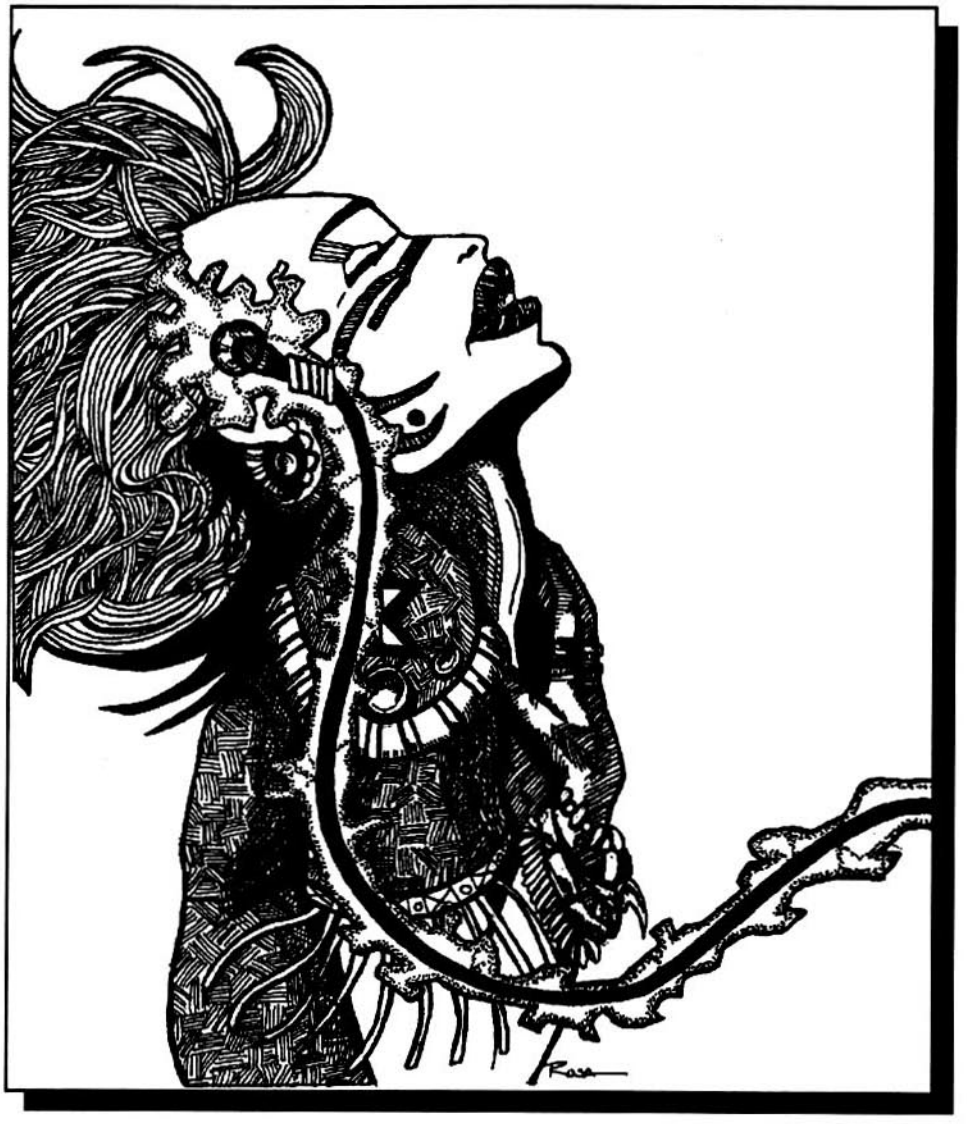
The Rebel base is actually a smuggling operation which steals weapons right out from under the Imperials' nose, and ships them out to where the rebels need them. The Rebels also have connections with the locals, who don't like the Imperial rule, and try to help the Rebel Cause any way possible. ❑



WALKING ON THE CYBERNETIC EDGE

Role-Playing the Cyberpunk World

By Dave Pilurs ©1944



Cyberpunk. The word conjures visions of a broken world where government as we know it has collapsed and corporate conglomerates have moved in to fill the gap. The ordinary citizen is helpless to change the flow of events, but mass frustration builds to the point of violence. It's a theme based on our own fears of what the world will become as a result of the startling advances in technology that influence our lives. It is a term that fires the imagination and a genre that enjoys popularity in music, novels, television, and movies. It seems perfectly natural that we make this genre part of our role-playing milieu, but we as gamers must remain wary lest cybernetics replace magic as a means for justifying the creation of godlike characters.

For gamemasters who don't care about game balance and players who just want to blast and slay with gleeful abandon, this discussion is pointless. For you, the fun of setting up and playing out improbable combats in order to gain more treasure, skills, and abilities is far more important than role-playing. Rocket launchers replace swords as the weapon of choice for a futuristic variant on the same old hack-and-slash game, and that suits you fine. For the rest of us, that sort of game lost its allure a long time ago.

Herein lies the crux of the problem: The most popular games set in the cyberpunk genre make overpowering characters standard. The heroes usually have amazing powers and abilities at their disposal from the beginning rather than earning them through hard work and the successful completion of many adventures; and this changes the flavor of the whole game.

Rather than using wits and imagination to role-play through an adventure, the players rely on cybernetic superpowers to level the opposition. The gamemaster usually responds by adding more opponents with bigger guns in the vain effort to make the fight more challenging. Of course, combat takes all night; and when the heroes prevail, they get to collect that booty as reward for their efforts. The net result is a high-tech Monty Haul game.

This is not the spirit of the cyberpunk genre. It's too easy. It doesn't take much grey matter to portray an indestructible, gun-toting psychopath; and giving every hero a built-in arsenal that includes jacked-up reflexes, heavy weapons, sen-

sor arrays, and a host of other high-tech support gear does not make the situation better. You reach a point where you have to wonder how normal, flesh-and-blood people can possibly survive. Are they merely fodder before the guns of the cybernetically-enhanced New World Order, or is the normal man just another relic of the distant past?

Go back to the source material to find the answer. Read the novels, listen to the music, and watch the movies. In the squalor of the cyberpunk world, the average man works his whole life for a meager wage. The situation is reminiscent of the early industrial age. Working conditions may have improved, but management wields stifling power over the working man's fate. Television, like religion before it, is a tool for controlling and seducing the masses. The promise of more money and a better life attracts those with brains and useful skills. The rest are little more than living grist for their profit mills.

Corporate monarchies, organized crime syndicates, and the remnants of old-fashioned government all vie for control of whole nations. They promote sex, drugs, and technology in the effort to line their own pockets with gold, and they care nothing for the people. They use the profits to secure their position and to finance efforts to neutralize their competitors. The arrangement leaves enough room for millions of people to slip through the cracks and provides plenty of motivation for those same people to seek some way to strike back.

It's a dirty, corrupt world where nothing is illegal unless you get caught. Even then, buying your way out is not that difficult. Law enforcement agencies try to keep the situation under control, but they are undermanned and underfunded. Worse, when they are properly funded, the corporations or criminal organizations are usually paying the bills in order to ensure their own immunity. The courts... The courts are a joke.

They are too hopelessly overloaded to meet their caseload; and even if they weren't, the prisons are too full to hold all the criminals. As a result, people can and do get away with murder.

The game designers obviously looked at this situation and asked themselves how they could improve a character's chance for survival. They seem to have decided that cybernetics and heavy weapons were the answer. The latter is acceptable. A thriving black market economy can allow one to procure anything from designer drugs to the latest military hardware; but cybernetics are a different matter entirely.

Maintaining the Cybernetic Balance

Cybernetics require vast research and development resources. A single enhancement, even a simple one, would require an interface to communicate with the human nervous system. To function, it would need miniaturized electronics and a power source. To accept it, the recipient would require numerous tests for compatibility and custom fitting. To install it, someone would have to pay for a bed, a surgical theater, a neurosurgeon, and a team of surgical assistants.

In the real world, a natural act like giving birth costs $5,000. Medical insurance usually covers the cost, treating it as a common ailment; but cybernetic enhancement is usually voluntary. Looking at it that way, a datajack may cost a million monetary units. That's going to put a big crimp in the average decker's expense budget, but it's realistic and in keeping with the spirit of the cyberpunk genre. It means that very few people will have datajacks, and those that do will owe some fealty to the corporation, syndicate, or government agency that authorized and paid for the procedure. It also means that those who have enhancements may live in fear.

The black market provides everything. If a client wants a datajack, then the fixer might just offer a huge bounty to the first thug who brings him a jack. A thug won't care whether the jack's current owner lives or dies - only that he retrieves that part intact. The bounty might be large enough to attract hundreds of thugs, and even the best team of body guards can't protect someone 24 hours a day, every day of his life.

Combat-related enhancements will be equally rare and even more expensive. The reason is simple. Drugs can enhance performance more cheaply and easily than any cybernetic enhancement. Of course, the drugs will cause the users to suffer from addiction and considerable health problems later in life, but that doesn't matter. Drugs are cheap and the soldiers using them are classified as expendable. The corporations won't care how many people die getting the job done - only that the job gets done.

Besides, none of the reasons for creating cybernetic supersoldiers would stand up to the scrutiny of the corporate accountants. Regular military units have tanks, vectored-thrust gunships, high-performance attack aircraft, and heavy weapons. Most of these machines cost less than a fully outfitted cyborg; and not even a cyborg with full-body replacement can stand up to fire from a 30 mm chain gun or a 120 mm hypervelocity round. Hence, the expense would be a waste and the company would not fund the project.

Antiterrorist teams would be unnecessary as no corporation, syndicate, or government agency would sacrifice resources to secure the release of hostages. They would use regular military units to pound the terrorists into oblivion. The brutality of the response would serve as a warning to other terrorists, and the threat of terrorism would quickly vanish.

Cybernetic secret agents would be unnecessary as well. The corporations would not use force as a tool for conducting espionage.

Instead, they would embed moles and undercover agents in their competitors' organizations. They would brainwash these long-term spies in advance, program their "tools" to do absolutely anything "for the cause," to include killing and dying. These spies would supply a steady stream of information without making greedy demands for outrageous payments.

Having said all that, playing a game in the cyberpunk genre without cybernetic enhancements is akin to playing Star Wars without spaceships. Sure, you could do it; but it just wouldn't be the same. After all, cyborgs do exist in cyberpunk literature; but they have their own unique set of problems and limitations. This is realistic. It's also good from a role-playing standpoint. It means that the players can imbue their characters with the benefits inherent to cybernetic enhancement, but those benefits will exact a toll guaranteed to make the character's life more interesting.

Cybernetic enhancements will require maintenance and power sources. A healthy maintenance program would include routine calibration and diagnostic testing of neural receivers, internal stabi-

lizers, control circuits, and other hardware. Silicon coatings would preclude the need for lubrication of moving parts, but the cybernetic components might require inspection for signs of wear. Without this maintenance, the characters' cybernetic enhancements would begin to suffer from deteriorating performance, blatant malfunctions, or total failure. Weapon hits would increase the maintenance requirement, and any physical trauma the character suffers could easily "knock out" a cybernetic enhancement as the insult added to injury.

As if the need for maintenance does not hinder the cybernetic superman enough, enhancements must also rely on secondary sources of power. The power requirement results from the fact that the human body only produces an average electrochemical output of about one watt. That's not enough energy to drive anything more impressive than a pocket flashlight. By way of comparison, a desktop computer has a power source rated at about 200 watts. Cybernetic enhancements could demand 2,000 watts of power or more, depending on what the given component actually does. They would probably derive power from disposable or rechargeable energy cells. That would grant the cyborg freedom of movement, but it would severely limit the length of unhindered operations. For every four hours the cyborg is active, it may have to spend twelve hours recharging. A generous gamemaster might allow the hapless cyborg to leech power from vehicles and industrial electrical outlets; but the character will have a hard time functioning from the end of an extension cord.

Accounting for the realities of maintenance and power consumption make cybernetics more acceptable. It is inconvenient to sit and perform maintenance every day, or to stop and change batteries every four hours; but this is the price for enhanced performance. Maintenance is a fact of machines; and the more the machine can do, the more maintenance it requires. This does not mean that cyborgs are common, though; or that cybernetics are cheap. The cybernetically-enhanced character(s) in the players' group may be the only cyborg(s) in the entire game world; and they would have been the result of a dedicated research and development effort. A corporation or government agency would have financed the project for its own reasons. The cyborgs may have been unsanctioned experiments or purpose-built as soldiers and spies. They may or may not still serve their builders.

If they still serve, then the whole group of characters probably belongs to that agency. If the agency seeks to do something beneficial, like the police trying to clean up the mean streets of a crumbling city, the campaign would focus on the characters' work. If the agency is disreputable, though, like a crime syndicate or a corrupt government intelligence group, the campaign will focus on the characters' increasing understanding of their true role in society. The players may not like the idea that their characters were created as expendable assassins. They may want their characters to do something more worthwhile. This may spark the character's struggle for personal freedom.

The advantage to belonging to an agency is that the characters have access to whatever resources they need to get the job done. The agency is equipped to perform maintenance, to supply power packs, to issue weapons, and to support its operations with vehicles and additional manpower. The agency would also have access to replacement parts, should they be needed. It's a nice cozy setup, but that agency will practically own the characters. Death may be the only route to freedom; and players may not feel like sacrificing their favorite character, even if it is for a good reason. This will result in real moral dilemmas, and that can lead to more good role-playing.

If the characters do not serve a corporation, syndicate, or agency, then they have other problems. Parts will be hard to obtain, improper maintenance may lead to chronic malfunctions, and their builders may want them back. Finding a needed part or "liberating" a technician could become immediate hooks for an adventure. Hunters could keep the characters from ever knowing a moment's rest. It's no way to live a long life; but then, long life was never a part of the cyberpunk world.

Cyborgs have a role in role-playing, but cybernetics should not replace enchanted items as the means for creating godlike characters. Firearms should not replace melee weapons as the tools for a campaign of pointless hack-and-slash. They should all add to the flavor of the game without toppling its balance. The key to doing this is to keep cybernetics both expensive and rare. The approach may not appeal to all gamers, but it is the cyberpunk way, and it could lead to some very interesting role-playing. I leave you with a forgotten song and a tale from one of the unfortunate souls walking on the cybernetic edge.

Do Cybernetic Assassins Dream of Electric Cannon?

"Twisting the strangle grip
Won't give no mercy
Feeling the tendons rip
Torn up and mean"

They recruited me off the streets. I was tough, filled with the hate and despair that results from too many years of having nothing. They promised me a new life with plenty of opportunities to strike down my oppressors. I believed them, my last mistake as a free man. I didn't know who they were, and I didn't care. They promised freedom and fulfillment of my dreams. At that point, nothing else mattered. They put my hate to work, making me a killer. I learned the way of the gun, and grew to love it.

"Blastmaster racks the ground
Bent on survival
Full throttle hammers down
A deadly scream"

Before each job, they injected me with foul, viscous fluids. The injections made me strong and took my fear. I was supercharged, faster than any man had a right to be. I'd been shot a dozen times and always come through. I had killed hundreds. Sometimes, I only planted bombs and watched to make sure they went off as planned. Other times, the work was more personal. I knew a thousand ways to kill. Death could not take me; I was death. For my sins, They gave me bigger and better weapons. When I went to work, I killed anything that moved or breathed. Then, the rocket bomb took me down.

"Forced into overdrive
Drawn out of anger
All talons poison dipped
impaling spike"

They collected my warm remains. The brain and a fist full of internal organs still functioned. I represented a significant investment, and would only become more valuable for my sacrifice. They rebuilt me with 26 kilos of composite alloy, 30 kilos of titanium, 42 kilos of ballistic plastic, 200 kilometers of fiber optic cable, and 100 million credits' worth of research, development, and computer technology. I was the biggest, the best, the fastest, and the most powerful cyborg anyone had ever built. They categorized me as an *autonomous assault weapon system*. I was reborn to kill and destined to die a thousand deaths.

"Heart pounding fever pitch
Blood pumping fury
Two fisted dynamo
Eager to strike"

I could no longer taste the pasty concoction I consumed to maintain my organic components. I could no longer taste or feel anything. My cybernetic heart beat with digital precision and my electric eyes saw with inhuman resolution. They still injected their viscous fluids into my system in order to heighten my responses; but they only did so to feed my addiction, to maintain my dependence. My sensors made me immune to surprise and my armored shell made me impervious to damage.

My augmented capabilities cost me dearly. Power packs could only support me for a few hours, and they had the nerve to turn me off between missions. They told me I was too expensive to run full-time. They could not turn off my mind, though. In the surreal visions that were my dreams, I relived the thousands of atrocities I had committed for their benefit. Passing the long hours between bouts of hideous violence and pain, I realized that I hated what I had become. I joined them seeking freedom, but I was more a slave now than I had ever been before. The horror never stopped.

"Crosscutting thundercharge
Blade of destruction
Flame throwing hurricane
Destroys the cage"

Something inside me snapped. They were nothing but soft, fleshy blobs destined to fall before me. I was once like them; but I had become both more and less. In the few hours of animation I enjoyed during a job, I could make Them pay. I had long since learned to subvert their programming. I was their tool no longer. I had rocket pods and multibarrel cannons. I had an arsenal at my disposal. I had the power to crush them and the will to use it.

They loaded me onto the transport for movement into the mission zone, and I felt a glimmer of hope for the first time in my life. I had been seeking death from the beginning. For me, death was the only freedom from the torment that was my life. The more they misused me, the more I knew this was true. I was no longer a man, and They had prevented me from realizing my one goal: A dignified end. Perhaps that was the ultimate irony.

"Bone crushing alien
God of salvation
Sad wings that heaven sent
Wipes out in rage"

They never activated me until I was loaded onto their transport and well on my way to the mission zone. This trip was no different, and I could scarcely stand the wait. The long stretches of time I had spent in utter blackness between jobs had taken their toll on my psyche, but this trip was the last. This time, we would all die together.

Delivered on time according to their precious schedule, I waited for the transport to lift off before I opened fire. I took aim, released one rocket, and watched for a moment. With my system keyed up, the rocket seemed to take forever to leave the tube. It flew into the transport's starboard intake duct then exploded. The blast reduced the transport to an expanding cloud of burning fuel and twisted metal. Chunks of debris rained down around me, and I watched it burn with grim satisfaction.

Small caliber slugs pinged off my shell. My sensors detected the living warmth of armed men arrayed around me. I cut into them with a multibarrel cannon and incinerated the few survivors with white phosphorus grenades. They were sending reinforcements, as I hoped they would. They could no longer ignore me, for I could smash them as an angry god might smash the unfaithful.

All Guns, All Guns Blazing

They dispatched armored helijets and troops armed with heavy weapons. I was now a renegade. I pumped my response and performance levels to maximum. Indicators flashed red, and I knew this would be my last stand. My living death punctuated with real acts of graphic violence would draw to a close. The staccato crack of autocannon fire and the buzzsaw roar of miniguns ripped the silence of the night. The bite of armour piercing slugs scarred my shell and ravaged my support systems. I was damaged; but I felt no pain and continued dispensing death with the efficiency of the machine I had become. Then, they used their ace-in-the-hole. It was an electromagnetic pulse gun. I never even knew what it was until my systems shut down.

Robbed of death once again, I must finally submit to the fact that they own me. They don't understand why I malfunctioned. To them, I'm no longer human... Or perhaps, to them, I never was. They've stripped me down for salvage. Everything they gave me is gone. Everything I was is trapped in this contemptible support system. Total darkness encompasses me. Fear gnaws at me, and my memories are my only company. This is worse than death. They intend to freeze my organic remains as part of a cryogenics experiment. They say that I will survive in perfect hibernation. They're almost never wrong. I suppose its true, cybernetic assassins do dream of electric cannon. I only hope that I don't dream any more. ❑

All Guns Blazing song lyrics by Downing, Halford, & Tipton from the Judas Priest album Painkiller, Copyright 1990 EMI April Music Inc.

KNIGHT GALLERY™

An Artist's Showcase

Jason Adam Holmgren

Jason was born in a house in where the television always seemed to stay on. He grew up absorbing such television classics as *Star Trek, Star Wars, Battlestar* and *Dr. Snuggles*. Later his interests diverged into alternative animation (Like *Rock and Rule, Heavy Metal* and *The Secret of Nimh*). Inspired, he schooled himself in creative writing and computer graphics at Bowling Green University where he penned the second-ever computer generated comic book, **Anthrax Ordance**. To, Jason's dismay, he discovered that computer technology did not compensate for the inability to draw. Undaunted, he redoubled his efforts, creating the popular daily comic strip, **5:15**, which allowed him to improve his writing and art style. He continued to pursue his dream of entering the world of commercial art by indoctrinating himself into the growing "goth" scene, becoming infamous with BGSU successes such as **Inside Out**, **Going Under** and **Morning Dew**.

Despite his efforts, however, Jason couldn't seem to break into the comic biz. He was somewhat surprised, years later, when he attended GenCon '93 and discovered that one of his old comic strips, **Joe Genero,** had attracted a rather large cult following in SHADIS magazine. Jason agreed to revive Joe Genero and soon after agreed to take the creative helm over J.D. Webster's classic comic strip, **Finieous Fingers**. He recently did the first two covers for the new **Knights of the Dinner Table** comic book.

Everything Jason touches at SHADIS has been well received by our readers so you can expect to see more of Jason's work in the future.

Opposite Page: Two samples of the daily strip, 5:15.
Top Left: Joe Genero, the Average Man.
Left:: Jason's rendtion of J.D. Webster's Finieous Fingers, "the world's greatest thief."
Above: A Vulpine with a matchlock rifle.

All artwork is copyright © 1994 Jason Holmgren.
Publishers interested in solicting work from Jason can contact the SHADIS office for further information.

ZINE SCENE

A Closer Look at the Small Press World

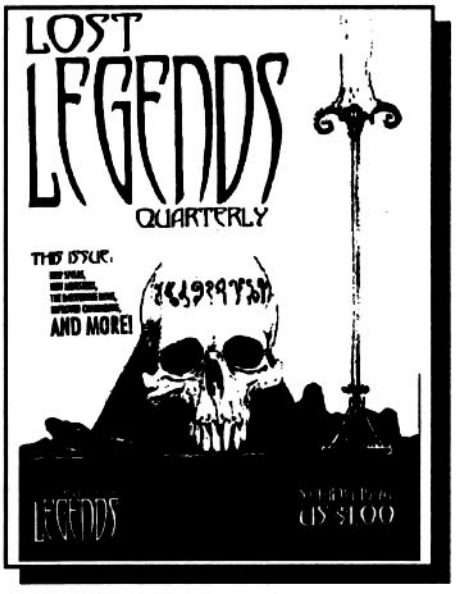
By Jolly R. Blackburn

Welcome back! We have five more small press zines to look at this issue. A virtual flood of such material has been piling onto my desk over the last eight months — so I would ask those of you who have sent material in for presentation here, to be patient.

Several of you have written commending SHADIS for supporting the small press hobby. I must be honest - our motives perhaps not so noble. There is a tremendous pool of talent among the small pressers and we like to tap into that pool on a regular basis to bring our readers interesting and innovative articles. — JRB

HEY! HELP US TO HELP YOU!

SHADIS is devoted to supporting the gaming hobby and has a soft spot for the grass root publications that thrive among the centers of gaming around the country. One of our ongoing projects is the compilation of a **Game Publications Index.** If you know of any game publications - large or small that should be in the index please let us know. The finished index will probably be updated twice per year and made available at cost as a service to our readers and advertisers.



Lost Legends Quarterly

Publisher: Black Dragon Press
Editor: Shared Credit
Frequency: Quarterly
Sample Copy: $1.00

I was genuinely impressed with this new publication. This magazine is a must for players and referees of the role-playing game, **Darkurthe Legends™**. It is clearly a house organ and a superb example of the kind of support an innovative game company can provide for it's customers.

The issue I received was 18 pages, black & white and packed with official material including: new spells; new monsters; character sheets, rules questions and answers; maps and Darkurthe news. Not bad for a buck and a good way to scratch that itch while you wait for the next Darkurthe supplement to hit the stands.

The magazine is illustrated with the same 'dark' style of artwork fans of the game have come to expect from Black Dragon Press.

There was also a very informative article on Role-Playing for Darkurthe Masters by Tony Groggin and a free-form spellcasting system called "Channeling" for Darkurthe Legends by Colin Mureray.

Now I'll have to be honest, my favorite part of the zine was a recounting of the company's trip to GENCON. Funny stuff.

You can get a sample copy of ***Lost Legends Quarterly*** by sending a dollar to Black Dragon Press, P.O. Box 362, Logan, Utah 84323-0362. Tell them Shadis sent you.

Dungeonier Digest

Publisher: Star Quest Games
Editor: James L. Shipman
Frequency: Quarterly
Sample Copy: $2.50

Here's another new arrival to the small press scene. I was particularly glad to see this one come across my desk because it's headed up by a veteran SHADIS contributor, James Shipman.

The first thing that really impressed me about this one is that it is printed with an all gloss interior and hard stock cover.

This digest sized zine runs 18 pages and is entirely devoted to *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons™*.

The issue featured among other things: *The Pallaidiant* (a new character class); *Hack's Horde* (new magical potions); *Town Encounters* (random encounter table); *Stirge Corner* (tips for the DM by Roger Musson); *Dispel Confuson* (Q&A on rule interpretations) and *Name Me* (a contest for best monster).

One thing this zine has that made me say "why didn't I think of that?" was a section called *The Gamers' Quotes* which is a compilation of hilarious quotes heard around various gaming tables. (Like "How big is a 2x4?" or "I float slowly up like a dead brick"). Sounded like dialouge right out of my own *Knights of the Dinner Table*. Sigh.

You can get a copy by sending $2.50 to Star Quest Games, RR#1, Box 81, Flat Rock, IL 62427-9735.

Gaming Maximum

Publisher: Worldmaster Designs
Editor: Dennis McDonald
Frequency: Bi-Monthly
Sample Copy: $2.00

This 16 page zine is a house-organ for players of **Adventure Maximum™**. If you play or run campaigns in this system you will undoubtedly want to check it out. Or, if you've been curious about the game, the zine could be a cheap way of checking things out to see if it interests you.

I was really impressed with how packed the issue was with game charts, adventures and NPC's. I'm sure the amount of material included rivals many commercial game supplements/adventures currently on the shelf.

Articles included: variant rules for handling character wealth; high tech armor options; new special abilities; new matalism spell realm; falling damage and a few comments from the game designer.

The heart of the issue I recieved was an 8 page module called Troll Hunt by Dennis McDonald. I've never played **Adventure Maximum,** but the module was very intriguing and looked like it would be worth the cover price of the zine alone.

You can get a copy of **Gaming Maximum** by sending $2.00 to Gaming Maximum, P.O. Box 5782, Enlid, OK, 73702. A year's subscription is $12.00.

KA•GE

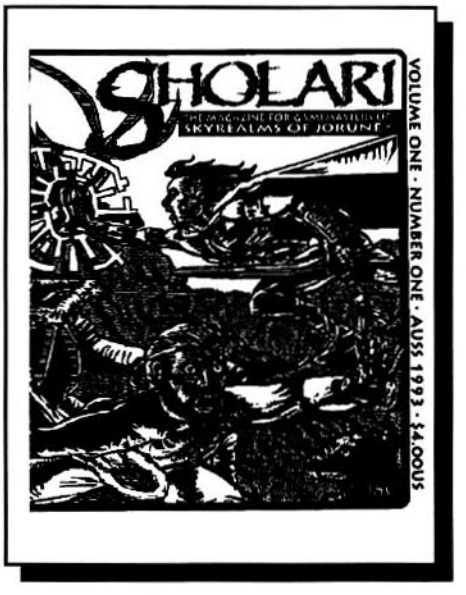
Publisher: AWOL Production
Editor: Jim Long
Frequency: Quarterly
Subscription: $20.00

This magazine is sanctioned by **FASA** and is devoted to the popular role-playing game, **Shadowrun**. It's subtitle reads "A survival guide to an impolite society."

Ka•ge has excellent production quality. A single issue price of $6.00 seemed a bit steep. However, having risen from small-press myself, I know that printing costs can soar with low-distribution zines that attempt to acheive a slick look and feel. The good news is that the magazine is professionally layed out and illustrated. In fact it has the look and feel of an official Shadowrun supplement.

The issue I recieved was a whopping 52 pages with a gloss two-color cover. Articles included: Patterson's Guide to Paranormal Animals; Kage fiction; new contacts and archetypes; corporate profiles for new Shadowrun companies; reviews; convention listings; new organizations; new equipment; news from the Shadowrun universe.

As you can see, the magazine covers a lot of ground. If you are interested in getting a copy send $6.00 to Awol Productions, 310 Tiger Lane, Sutie 3, Columbia, MO 65203.



Sholari

Publisher: Talewind Productions
Editor: J. Steven Coleman
Frequency: Quarterly
Sample Issue: $5.00

Sholari is an new independent fanzine devoted to the Skyrealms of Journe™. This digest sized, world specific zine weighs in at 35 pages. The first thing that struck me about this particular zine was the extraordinary artwork. The layout and style of the zine is exceptional as well.

According to the first issue's editorial, Sholari will be "filled with new source material, system enhancements, Jorune trivia and the history surrounding the game's creation."

The first issue included: part one of a series on the history of the Jorune game; an article with maps on the land of Zannier; random generation; crystal weapons; Quick NPCs, Corastin naming traditions and writers guidelines.

Sholari is a fine example of why we need more small press zines. With many older systems being abandoned by their parent companies or simply becoming overshadowed by newer, more marketable systems - it is the small press editors and fans who will be able to fill the void.

To get a copy send $4.00 plus $1.00 US postage to Talewind Productions, PO Box 12631, Berkeley, CA 94701-2631. ❑

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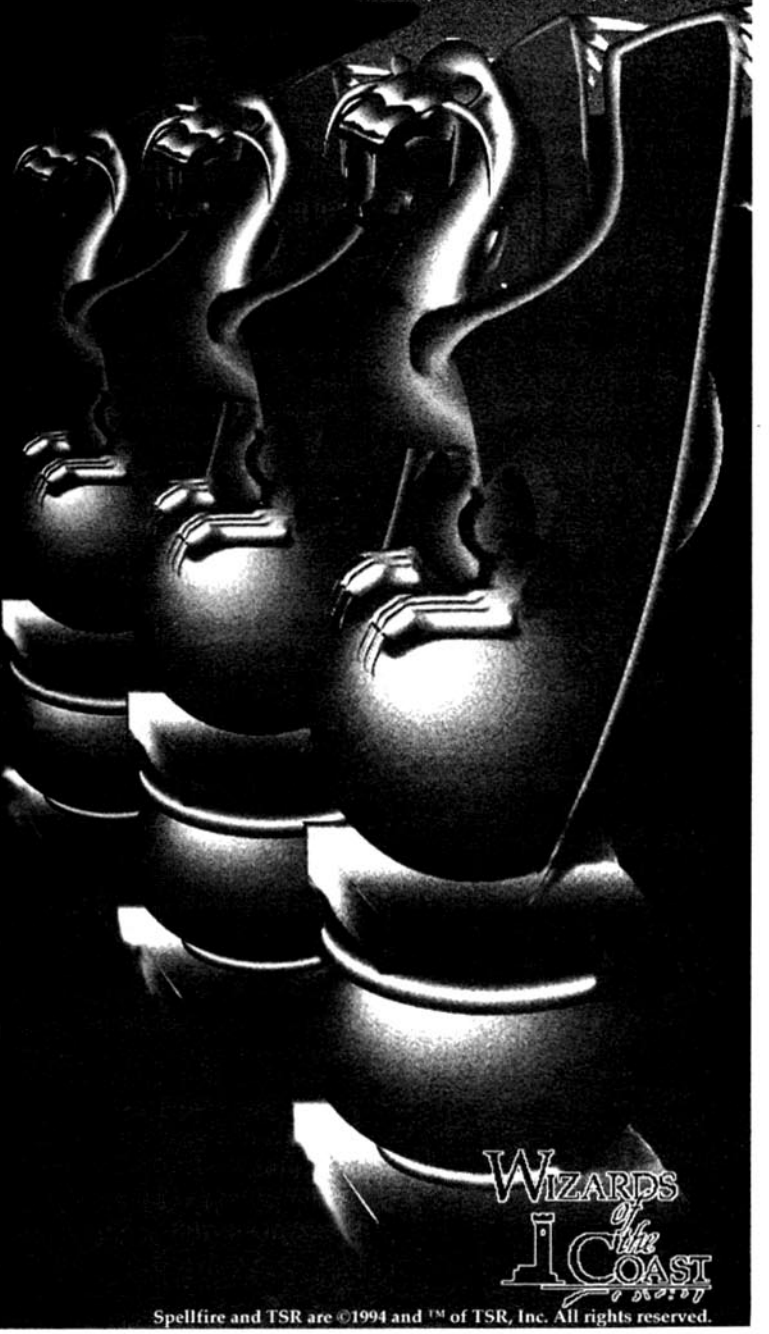

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-Dragon Magazine five star review, July 1993

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GAME MASTER'S WORKSHOP

A SPECIAL SECTION DEVOTED TO GAME MASTER AIDS

One of the most popular features of SHADIS magazine has been our series of generic articles and adventures designed to be used with any system. We decided to pull all these features into a special regular section, add a few new features and call the whole thing Game Master's Workshop. Here, you can be sure to find valuable tools and aids to help make GMing easier as well as exciting for both you and your players. As with the rest of SHADIS, this feature is designed to be reader-driven. We welcome your comments, contributions and suggestions for this section.

GAME MASTER'S WORKSHOP

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

OF THE RANDOM KIND™

By Jolly R. Blackburn ©1994

Welcome to the latest edition to the SHADIS family. Each issue **Close Encounters of the Random Kind** (CERK) will feature random encounter/event tables which the Game Master can simply drop into his current campaign. I will try to cover various genres of gaming and keep the information generic enough to be used with any system. Readers are encouraged to contribute to this column or suggest ideas and topics for future tables.

The next several issues will deal with random encounters in various locations typically found in a fantasy city. To start things off we will be looking at the Waterfront.

CERK Table 1: Waterfront/Wharf Area 1d100

01.....Old Salt with information on distant islands.
02.....City Guard (1d12)
03.....Two Sailors playing knuckle bones.
04.....Merchant with exotic animal for sail.
05....Worm-eaten warship for sale at bargain price.
06.....Fisherman arguing with a Sailor.
07.....Vendor selling weapons of foreign make.
08.....Dockhands unloading a ship.
09.....Cheap Passage on a ship is offered.
10.....Group of thugs attempts to shanghai party.
11.....Foreign Diplomat, just arriving to the city.
12.....Vendor selling war contraband.
13.....Fisherman with the remains of a seamonster.
14.....Drunken Sailor
15.....1d4 Sailors mending nets/sails.
16...Sailor being publicly flogged by ship's captain.
17.....Merchant with trained dolphin for sail.
18.Two mysterious men carrying a shrouded chest.
19.....Sailor with fake treasure map for sale.
20.....Prostitute
21.....Servants engaged in gossip.
22.....Cryer advertising a new pub.
23.....Children playing on the deck of an old boat.
24.....Two priests praying at the water's edge.
25.....Non-human merchant trying to sell his ship.
26.....Minor city official inspecting cargo.
27.....Tariff Collector.
28.....Courting Lovers taking a stroll.
29....Passed out drunk laying on some fishing nets.
30.....Lone Sailor carving a whale's tooth.
31.....Old Salt telling stories to a group of sailors.
32.....Ruffians looking for a fight.
33..Merchant struggling to get a horse on his boat.
34.....Curious citizens (1d6)
35.....Merchant and customer haggling over price.
36. .....Two shipwrights working on a small boat.
37.....Gang of Thieves sneaking on board a ship.
38...Sailors unloading caged monsters from a ship.
39.....Angry Merchant beating a sneak-thief.
40.....Artist painting a bowsprit of a military ship.
41..Sailors running through training paces on ship.
42.....Proud Captain inspecting his new ship.
43.....Frightened woman tries to avoid party.
44.....Old Salt shelling oysters and smoking a pipe.
45.....Group of Slaves (1d8) being led to auction.
46.....Money changer with 1d4 guards.
47.....Beggar.
48.....Ship listing to one side, apparently sinking.
49.....Group of Sailors (1d12) taking a break.
50.....Group of Porters carrying crates.
51.....Sailor attempting to sell a real treasure map.
52.....Street Vendor.
53.....Two Captains in intense discussion.
54.....Foreign Sailors, apparently lost.
55.....Two groups of sailors brawling.
56.....Cartographer selling copies of maps.
57.....Group of Sailors wagering on a dog fight.
58.....Panicked Thief fleeing from City Guard.
59.....Sailor with artifact for sale.
60.....Shipwrights working on warship.
61.....Ship under heavy guard.
62.....City Guard escorting a prisoner of war.
63.....Prostitute arguing with a client.
64.....Group of warriors preparing to board ship.
65.....Mysterious cloaked figure.
66.....Escaped Slave fleeing his master.
67.....Cryer announcing the arrival of a ship.
68.....Fisherman gutting a large fish.
69.....Important City Official boarding his boat.
70.....Burning Ship.
71.....Foreign Ambassador departing city.
72.....Sailor changing the name plate on a ship.
73.....Old Salt negotiating with a ship's captain.
74.....Group of Sailors taunting passerby's.
75.....Sailors tarring/cleaning a ship's hull.
76.....Drowning Man yelling for help.
77.....Thief attempts to pickpocket party member.
78.....Group of Sailors swimming near their ship.
79.....Merchants loading a group of wagons.
80.....Fishermen arguing over a woman.
81.....Non-Human Fisherman checking his gear.
82.....Captain taking inventory of cargo.
83.....Sailor sewing a companion's wounds.
84.....Merchant selling shark-tooth arrowheads.
85.....Couple saying goodbye.
86.....Excited traveller looking for his ship.
87.....Quarantined ship .
88.....Beached ship wreck.
89.....Heavily loaded whaling ship
90.....Captain and his staff making preparations.
91.....Cryer recruiting sailors.
92.....Group of Pirates heading for a tavern.
93.....Children throwing rocks at sea gulls.
94.....Servants selecting fish from today's catch.
95.....Craftsman carving a bowsprit on the dock.
96....Mysterious woman slipping a note to a sailor.
97.....Legendary adventurer boarding his ship.
98.....Sailors re-rigging a ship.
99.....Vendor selling baked fish and biscuits.
100.....Foreign Ship being boarded by city guards.

GAME MASTER'S WORKSHOP

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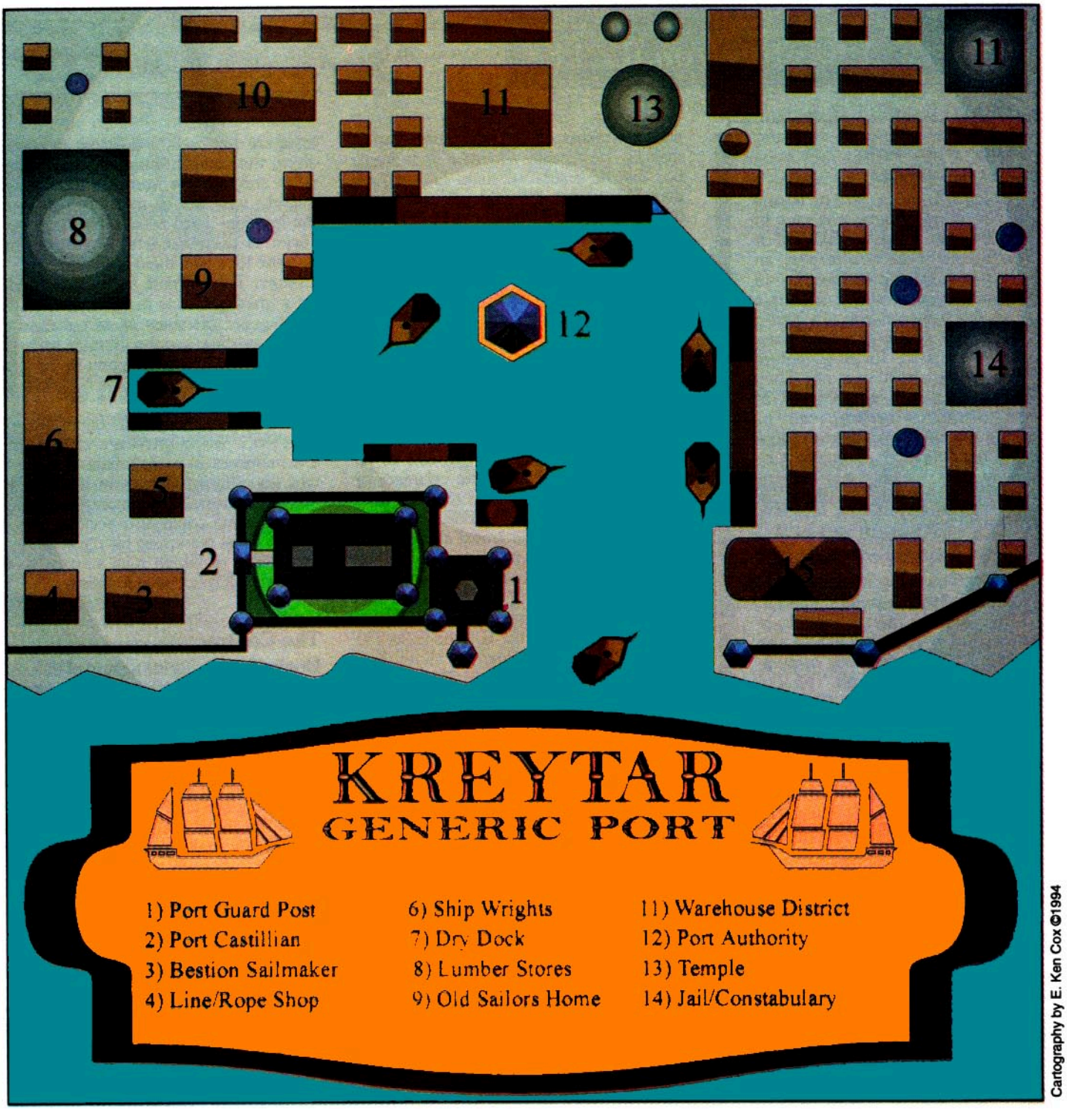

Cartography by E. Ken Cox ©1994

GAME MASTER'S WORKSHOP

HOOK, LINE & SINKER™

Adventures on the Fly!

Edited by Jolly R. Blackburn

What is a Hook, Line & Sinker?

Hook, Line & Sinker is one of the most popular columns to have appeared in SHADIS. For the benefit of our new readers, an HLS is a brief plot-line for an adventure presented in a simple format. HLS scenarios are generic and designed to give the Gamemaster the seeds for an adventure that he can build around. They come in handy when the GM has nothing else prepared, or finds the party has outpaced him and the prepared adventure suddenly ends. Readers are encouraged to submit HLS scenarios for any genre.

Explanation

Hook. The current situation or location of the adventuring party.
Line. An opportunity for adventure that presents itself to the party. A *line* is normally presented as a short paragraph. Think of the line as the "bait" to lure the party into an adventure.
Sinker. The clincher to the *line*. The sinker presents the GM with a dilemma that makes the situation a true adventure.

The Magic Box

Hook: The party is in the city of Bet Kalamar during a festival or shopping in the large open air market.
Line: They encounter Elano, a second rate, Pekalese illusionist, performing simple tricks involving slight of hand and minor magic for a small audience. Elano flunked out of the college of Magic in the city of Bet Rogala and now makes a living doing these performances. He recently aquired a large magic box that he is sure will make him famous, even though he does not yet understand fully how to use it. Elano knows that the box can make things disappear, but he has not figured out how to make them reappear. Aftyer some poorly executed ticks, the crowd begins to heckle him and Elano is goaded into showing some "Real Magic". In a nervous attempt for credibility, he displays his magic box and asks for a volunteer from the audience. The Volunteer should be one of the PCs (at the urging of the crowd) or an important NPC.
Sinker: Elano asks the volunteer to step into the box (Avaluable item can be an effective substitute) Once the volunteer or item enters the box, Elano closes it andwaves his hands over the box. He opens the box again and the crowd cheers wildly as he shows it to be truely empty.. In the commotion, Elano tries to make a quick exit. If pressed, he will try in vain to make the item or person reappear. The PCs will either have to enter the box themselves to figure out the secret exit or allow their friend/item to be lost forever. The box may be the lair of a monster such as a minotaur, which would add excitement to the task of finding a way out. The exit might also lead to another country so the players will be lost upon exiting.

Brian Jelke
Kenzer and Company

Pilgrimage of Deceit

Hook: The party is travelling along a wilderness road when they come across a group of priests who invite them to share their camp with them.
Line: The pilgrims explain that they are heading deep into the desert to a holy site known as Four Rocks. They must make the trip once every ten years. They appear to be very frightened because thieves and brigands are rumored to be lying in ambush along the route hoping to steal vaulable relics and treasure from the thousands of pilgrims who will be making their way to the location. They plead with the party to serve as their escorts. In return, they promise to reward them handsomely.
Sinker: The pilgrims are indeed heading for a great gathering in the desert. However, they are members of an outlawed cult which centers around human sacrifice. Their plan is to lure the party to the desert where they will be overcome by fellow worshippers and sacrificed.

The GM can drop hints during the journey. Perhaps the priest are claiming they are members of a legitimate religion but when questioned they seem to know little about the rites and ceremonies of that religion. Players could also accidentally witness a priest peforming his rituals at night - the nature of which may suggest to the party that all is not what it seems.

Jolly R. Blackburn

The Contract

Hook: This HLS is for a party of thieves. A local aristocrat contacts the party through the thieves guild in order to hire them for a special job.
Line: The aristocrat explains that he is dying from a fatal disease and has less than a six months to live. He wants the party to use their skills with traps and thievery to design his tomb. He plans on being buried with all his wealth and wants to safeguard his tomb from grave robbers.

The tomb itself has already been tunneled out in nearby cliffface. The aristocrate will provide maps and floorplans to the party and give them 48 hours to come up with a list of traps and safeguards that they would recommend.
Sinker: This HLS can be handled in two ways. 1. After the party turns over the floorplans, the aristocrat hires assassins to

kill them all so that the secrets of his tomb can never be revealed and so the party can not rob his tomb themselves.

2. The aristocrat takes the plans and pays the party a modest sum of money. Months pass and the aristocrat again contacts the party. It seems he has taken their advice (as well as the advice of countless other theives) and incorporated their traps. He wants to hire the party to attempt to enter his tomb and steal a small gold seal he has placed deep within. The seal will serve as proof that the party overcame the traps. If they manage to foil the traps the party will get a huge bonus as an incentive to give it their best effort.

Jolly Blackburn

The Gofer

Hook: The party is in a populated area (town, fort, etc.) and has just successfully completed some important adventure, securing the hard-won respect of the local authorities.

Line: Upon leaving a meeting (or a bar, brothel or supply house), the weakest PC in the party is approached by a young person who looks like some type of apprentice or "gofer." This person presents the PC with an ornate and heavily jeweled dagger, obviously of immense value. "I saw on the floor right after you left the (where-ever)," the gofer says. "I'm sure it must be yours." If the PC takes the dagger, the gofer will stick around with their hand out, making remarks like "It must be nice to have that very expensive dagger back" until they receive a "reward". Even if the reward is only a single copper, the gofer will be extremely happy, and leave them with all manner of effusive blessings and thanks.

Sinker: The "gofer" is actually Malvaunt, a very proficient *but shortsighted* thief. Malvaunt had been in town only a few days, but had already succeeded in relieving the local magistrate of their magic *dagger of truth*. With the law checking everyone for the dagger, Malvaunt has decided to palm it off on one of the PCs and then turn them in for a reward.

Shortly after receiving the stolen dagger, the PCs are dragged off the street and frisked by the local militia. When the dagger is discovered, they will be brought before the angry magistrate who being too furious to think will want to hang them right then and there.

Enough clues should be dropped so that the PCs will begin to realize that the dagger itself can get them out of the mess *if* they can get the magistrate to use it. Anyone at whom the dagger is pointed *must* give a truthful answer to any question asked them. If the PCs can get the magistrate calm enough to bring in Malvaunt, and to actually question both the PC found in possession of the dagger and Malvaunt, then the truth will be revealed. The magistrate will offer the PCs the opportunity to set the punishment for Malvaunt, but may over-rule them if he decides it's either too lenient or too harsh.

If the PCs try to work within the system (i.e. no jail breaks or attacking of the militia) and manage to prove their innocence, the authorities will be very apologetic, and heap even more rewards (including the reward Malvaunt got for turning them in) and accolades on the party. Any PC so disposed may even be appointed an assistant magistrate (the title can be functional or merely honorary) if the punishment they concocted for Malvaunt is used.

Scott Gardner

The False Merchant

Hook: The Plalyers are in a small town in the Duchy of Dodera.

Line: They are approached by a well dressed man who claims to be a Kalamaran merchant seeking body guards for his journy to the neighboring country of O'Par. He explains that he is afraid of bandits known to be active on the route he must take. They are rumored to dress as Doderan soldiers and he will then present the party with a (false) wanted poster describing the bandits and a reward for their capture, dead or alive. He offers them an attractive sum of money to accompany him.

Sinker: If the PCs agree to the deal, they travel with the man and encounter some wild animals and other dangers on the road. Eventually, they come to the border of O'Par and encounter an edgy Doderan border patrol of approximately the same strength as the party. The soldiers look exactly like the "bandits" the merchant described earlier and he will command the PCs to defend him, even sparking the battle with a first attack if necessary. The merchant is actually a wanted Doderan criminal who has stolen a large stash of gems and is now trying to flee the country. The edgy border guards will be surprised at any aggression and will certainly attack to defend themselves before asking questions. If it looks like the PCs cannot defeat the guards, the false merchant will try to escape during the confusion of the melee. If the PCs are captured they will certainly have some difficult explaining to do, especially if any guards were killed and they do not speak Kalamarian.

Brian Jelke

Shift Happens

Hook: The party is investigating an ancient site of religious and magical significance. On this site are located several megaliths covered with cryptic symbols and set in a circle - much like Stonehenge.

Line: Wizards, priests, and scholars will be able to partially decipher the time worn glyphs inscribed upon the megaliths. From these glyphs, they will learn that this site was the sacred temple of an ancient cult whose primary objective was to destroy the barrier that separates the various dimensional realities. The megaliths were carefully designed to amplify magical energy.

Members of this cult believed that if sufficient magical energy could be generated, they could breach the barrier separating the dimensional realities. This would enable the denizens of other planes of existence to enter their realm where they would establish the cult members as the new rules of the world.

Due to a minor miscalculation by the leader of the sect, their attempt failed. While the cult members managed to generate enormous magical energy, the cosmic influences were unfavorable and the resultant backlash of eldritch energy destroyed most of those involved. While the few remaining survivors of the cult dispersed and subsequently vanished, the Herculean effort made by the cult members during their final ceremony did severely weaken the dimensional barrier.

Sinker: While still within the circumference of the megaliths, the party is attacked by whatever opponents the game referee deems appropriate. When any magical energy is released through a player character casting a spell, this will prove to be the proverbial "straw that broke the camel's back." The weakened dimensional barrier at this site will be breached, thereby causing the party to shift between various alternate realities.

Each player character will find that their age, race, sex and/or profession may be different in each alternate reality they enter. While everyone in the party should certainly be confused and disoriented, they must somehow find the means of repairing this dimensional rift or be doomed to shift across endless alternate realities for the remainder of their existence.

David Lashley

❑

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GAME MASTER'S WORKSHOP

THE GOOD,

Tyrisha Pacnore

Occupation: Sorceress/Thief
Skills: Stealth, Minor Spells, Gambling
Motivation: Finding her family's killers
Weaknesses: Books, Maps.

Tyrisha was born in a far away colony where her family had resettled to escape her father's political enemies. Despite her father's extraordinary measures to protect his family, hired assassins managed to locate them. In a savage attack, Tyrisha's entire family was murdered with the exception of herself and her older brother, Tramier. After the attack, Tramier left his young sister in the care of a local teacher before setting out to avenge his family.

The elderly teacher raised Tyrisha as if she were his own daughter and taught her the arcane arts of magick which she quickly learned. When her mentor died, Tyrisha decided to find her brother and left the colony by stowing away on a departing merchant ship. In the years since, Tyrisha has roamed the ports and waterfronts all across the known world.

Occasionally, her quest is shortly interrupted by a new love interest or an interesting situation. As hard as she tries to calm her wander-lust, Tyrisha eventually moves on, often without leaving word or saying goodbye. ❑

Jolly R. Blackburn

Sawnrhee

Occupation: Tracker/Scout
Skills: Tracking, Hunting, Expert Bowman
Motivation: Women and Gold
Weaknesses: Wine, Games of Chance

Sawnrhee is a half-elf who drifts between the world of man and the realm of the elves. He was banished from the Elfin Kingdoms after being unfairly accused of murder. Sawnrhee was framed by political enemies who wanted to deny him his inheritance.

Sawnrhee returned to his homeland in secret, just long enough to kill his enemies. Unfortunately, his enemies were well-connected and his act of revenge has made it impossible for him to ever return home again. Sawnrhee manages to earn a respectable living by hiring himself out as a guide and tracker. He has a soft spot for women, drink and gambling. It delights him to no end that he can find all three of his favorite vices in most pubs and he spends a great deal of time in them.

Sawnrhee recently chanced upon Tyrisha Pacnore and has found himself falling for her. He has temporarily resigned himself to being her body guard, (something she has been trying to discourage) and watching over her.❑

Jolly R. Blackburn

Falsnar "Crow" Denton

Occupation: Sailor/Thief
Skills: Thieving, Knife, Sailing
Motivation: Fun
Weaknesses: Jewelry, Collectibles.

Falsnar is a young halfling rogue. He was caught trying to steal goods from a docked merchant ship, and the captain, instead of hanging him from the yardarms, took him under his wing. The captain was a good man who instantly took a liking to Falsnar. Falsnar in return took to sailing like a fish to water. The captain taught him all there is to know about the sea. When the old captain died two years later, Falsnar was given his freedom. Since then he has sailed on many ships around the world. Sailors, being a superstitious lot, aren't sure how to handle having a halfling on board, but Falsnar quickly wins them over with his jovial attitude, bravery, and knowledge of the sea.

His nickname in the ports is 'Crow'. He earned the title when his fellow shipmates discovered the small fellow had a habit of falling asleep when it was his turn to pull watch in the crow's nest. Falsnar is currently running with a wild group of sailors who are only one step away from becoming pirates.❑

John Zinser

GAME MASTER'S WORKSHOP

THE BAD,

Beldar Drak

Occupation: Thief
Skills: Thievery, Climbing, Long Sword
Motivation: Not to die a shop keeper
Weaknesses: Adventure, Wealth

Beldar knew that he was never meant to be an ordinary man living an ordinary life. In his opinion, such men usually ended up dying in bed of from old age or a similar form of dishonorable death. Beldar would do anything to avoid such a life. Early on, the sparkle of precious gems caught his eye and gold took control of what was left of his soul. He charted a careful course between the wealthy and the seedy elements of the town.

He had been long time friends with who he had thought was of one the wealthiest ladies in town, Lorigard. He fought fiercely to prevent her from finding out about his chosen profession. That is, until he got caught. He was quickly thrown into prison to await trial. It was then that he found out about Lorigard's true nature and profession when she killed the man who was to bear witness against him.

The two have been inseparable since he was released - plotting one scheme after another to fatten their pockets.❑

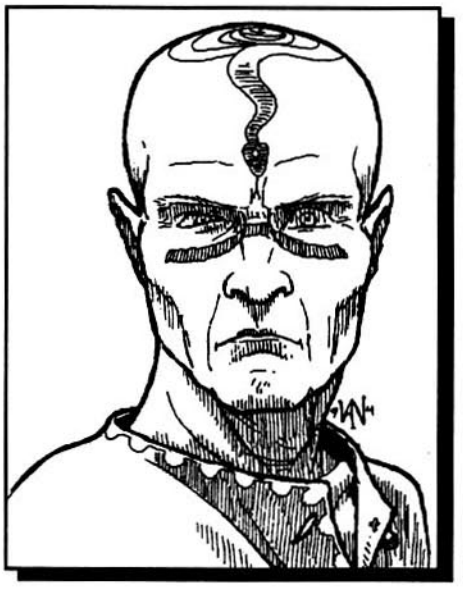
E. Ken Cox

Lorigard Vermarntis

Occupation: Assassin
Skills Thievery, Small Blades, Poison
Motivation: Wants to kill Beldar Drak
Weaknesses: Loves Beldar Drak

Lorigard was a young opportunistic woman when she befriended Beldar. She was born to a poor family and ran away at an early age. She soon learned that her beauty could persuade men to be generous with their gold. She moved through the higher circles of society. Lorigard learned to despise the rich men who competed for her attention. Perhaps that is why her chance meeting with Beldar swept her off her feet. When Beldar was captured for burglary, she quickly disposed of the would-be witness and used her influence to win his release. Beldar let Lorigard in on his whole plan of becoming fabulously rich by taking it from the fat merchants and politicians who roamed the city. He began to groom the young girl to be his assassin and enforcer. Lorigard was deeply in love with Beldar and thought he was devoted to her. That was until one night she discovered he had another lover in the lower quarters to whom he would sneak off to for several days at a time. Since that time her love has been turning to hatred.❑

E. Ken Cox



Fantar "Snake" Inglemoss

Occupation: Sailor/Pirate
Skills: Sailing, Navigation, Swordfighting
Motivation: Fame and Riches
Weaknesses: Left Arm Paralyzed

Fantar boasts that he has killed a man in every port of the Empire. Anyone who knows him would think better of challenging such a remark. Fantar signed on as a deckhand on a merchant ship when he was only 15 years old. The crew mutinied against their captain and Fantar fell in with them. He killed his first man at the age of 17 and quickly realized that fear and intimidation were nearly as effective as skill with the sword.

Eventually, Fantar assumed command of his ship. Since then he has become the terror of the seas. His men can be found in almost any port. They all bear some form of snake tattoo and like Fantar they use intimidation to get what they want. Ships have been known to drop their guard and let him board without a fight at the sight of his flag. A skull and cross bones with a snake curling through it's eyes. Fantar stays away from larger city ports but still pulls into smaller ones. He is considering stealing a second ship to extend his territory. It is Fantar's ship that Crow is currently working on.❑

Jolly Blackburn

GAME MASTER'S WORKSHOP

AND THE UGLY

Broo'Kar Troll

Type: Scavenger
Skills: Hunting and Gathering
Motivation: Protection of Territories
Weaknesses: Slow thinking

The Broo'Kar are rare creatures. They are greatly feared and are killed on sight by sailors. These strange creatures are derivatives of trollkind who have adapted themselves to a coastal environment.

Broo'Kar wade in shallow bays and coves where they feed upon such animals as seaotters, small fish and shellfish.

When men began to colonize the wilderlands close to the Broo'Kar's territory, they normally chose the same shallow bodies of waters to build their harbors.

The Broo'Kar, being mildly intelligent, learned to hide under the wharfs and among the moored ships where they were as likely to feed on drunken sailors as they were on the nets filled with fish and shrimp in fishing ships returning from the sea.

Broo'Kar sleep during the day. A favorite trick is to steal a fisherman's net and build a crude hammock, which is strung beneath a dock or pier.

Most coastal villages and towns have learned to set traps for Broo'Kar and to routinely send the city guard out to check under the piers for them.

The Broo'Kar may be the victim of a bad reputation, however. Recent reports from a distant island colony tell of Broo'Kar and men living in near proximity and in peace.❑

Jolly R. Blackburn

Rig Runner

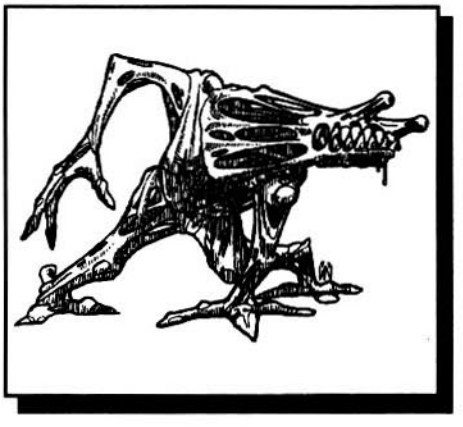
Type: Predator
Skills: Sailing, Shipwright, Blades
Motivation: Travel and Treasure
Weaknesses: Ale and bloodlust

The Rig Runner is an arachnid descendant from a small island nearby. The Runners are highly prized by sailing captains as rig workers, and can move through the rigging of a large sailing ship as a dolphin moves through water. The runners also have the natural ability to spin a web-like substance from a sac in its abdomen. This web is as strong and light a rope but dissolves after only a couple of hours.

The typical Rig Runner is a hard drinker and harder fighter. With a particular weakness for strong drink, it is likely that a Runner encountered on land is a drunk Runner. The Runners also have a reputation for being mean drunks. Tavern keepers usually usher a Runner out before it can get too drunk since, once it crosses that line, the tavern keeper will have to replace the majority of the bar's furniture in the mooring.

The other feature the Rig Runners are well known for is their bloodlust. If the Rig Runner renders a foe unconscious or dead, it will fall on the downed opponent and suck the life blood from his body. Occasionally the bloodlust will spread and the Runner will attack members of its own crew. Most captains consider the work of the Runners to far outweigh that remote possibility.❑

David F. Moyer



Deep Stalker

Type: Scavenger
Skills: Boating, Brawl, Swimming
Motivation: Revenge
Weaknesses: Fire, Electricity

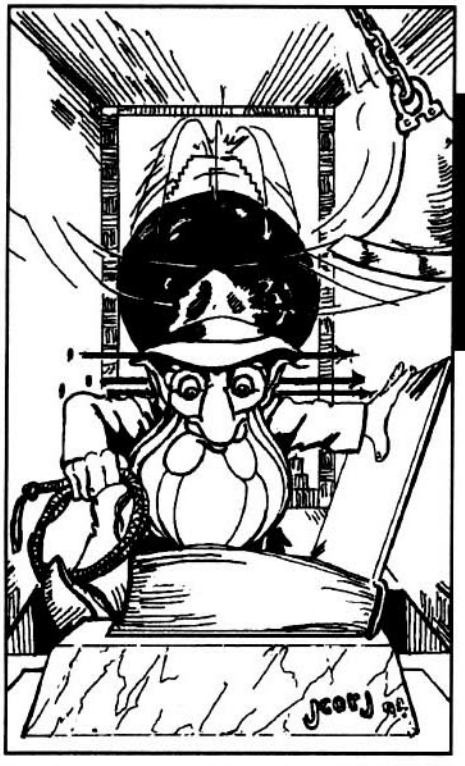
The Deep Stalkers are the bane of merchant seaman everywhere. The Stalkers were virtually unknown until large sailing ships began traversing their spawning grounds. During the first year the trade route was open, many Stalker hatchlings were killed or maimed. The Stalkers, being of limited intelligence, began attacking the large ships, believing them to be the root of all the evils they were experiencing.

The Stalker attacks consisted of attaching themselves to the hulls of the ships and chewing their way through, scuttling the ship. It was then they discovered the "parasites" that lived on the ships. What these creatures considered parasites were actually the drowned crewmen from the ship. It was then they also discovered the "parasites" tasted good. Since that time all ships in the open water were subject to attack.

The most likely place to encounter a Stalker is on the open water. Once in a while, though, a Stalker will attach itself to the hull of a ship and ride it into a harbor. This is usually followed by the sinking of many of the ships in the harbor and the deaths of most of the crewmen.

The Stalkers will rarely come up on land, preferring their natural habitat of saltwater. Burning oil or Naphtha seem to frighten the Stalkers away from the harbor, but it will also burn the ships moored there.❑

David F. Moyer



CLOSER LOOK

Reviews: Games, Books...

The Whispering Vault
Pariah Press
RPG System
Reviewed By William Spencer-Hale

The **Whispering Vault** is the first release by Pariah Press and is an outstanding accomplishment for designer/author Mike Nystul. Nystul, a seasoned veteran to the roleplaying industry, has contributed his talents to such roleplaying standards as GURPS, TORG, Star Wars and Battletech.

In the world of The **Whispering Vault**, the player assumes the persona of a Stalker, the immortal guardians of the dream. This dream shapes not only the realm of the flesh but the minds of those who live there as well. The minds of mortals are protected by the veil; causing their perception of the supernatural to seem mundane. If it were not for the protection of the veil, the Unseen world would assault the minds of mortals and prove the existence of the supernatural. Thus, mortals could learn that their entire belief of reality is a lie. There are those, the Unbidden, who run wild and merciless in the world of men; destroying without thought and loosing their bloodthirst unchecked by compassion. This is the horrid prey that the Stalkers must hunt. The **Whispering Vault** is a horror game that takes a distinctive approach to the genre in that the players do not assume the personas of frightened, helpless humans in battle with forces of the unknown. Instead, they play the otherworldly, immortal protectors of the human's reality. This is an original and inspired creation that is a breath of fresh air in the roleplaying industry. There is much more to the game than this, far more than space permits. The **Whispering Vault** provides a rich, detailed setting that is unique to the art of roleplaying. It is a game worthy of attention to the enlightened roleplayer.

Character creation is smooth, simple and complete; allowing players to create characters with depth and meaning; a far cry from the meaningless characters inherent in some games. Before the player begins the actual task of character generation, he is asked a series of questions pertaining to the life of the character before he shed his mortal coil and became a Stalker, his contact with the unseen while still alive and how he was recruited to be a Stalker. These questions, among others included in the book, go a long way in helping the player visualize the character; aiding in the understanding of the characters personality and motivations, and making the persona more than a series of numbers on a character sheet.

Character creation itself is relatively simple. The player is given 20 points to divide among the four attributes: Awareness, Insight, Presence and Willpower. The scores chosen for these attributes govern the acquisition of other powers such as Disciplines, Servitors(phantoms who serve the needs of the Stalkers), skills and the character's ability to define a physical form. Simple and playable. The game is unburdened by the technical nonsense prevalent in some games today. The focus is on roleplaying, not a wasted evening of rolling dice. The combat system is created to be fast and brutal, and as a means to heighten the drama of storytelling, not slow it down with a senseless session of sword or gun play. It is a smooth transition from the determination of initiative, to the confrontation itself, to damage resolution and the consequences thereof. It is a system that is simple enough to appeal to those who enjoy a good story without too much combat yet, is detailed enough to provide the more bloodthirsty roleplayers the opportunity to sate their appetites. It is a near perfect balance between the two extremes.

The physical layout of the book makes searching for rules and information relatively simple. It is well thought out and quite user friendly. The text itself is smooth and uncluttered by needless ramblings. It explains the rules clearly and leaves the reader with few questions. The

prose included in the book is delightful and creates a rich, vibrant atmosphere for the proper play of the game. At a retail price of $20.00, the game is complete in itself and only requires dice to begin play. An outstanding value considering the brilliant contents of the book. As stated, it is simple enough to begin play almost immediately.

One of the most appealing aspects of The **Whispering Vault** is the art. It is packed with page after page of incredible illustrations by such veteran artists as Jeff Laubenstien, Joel Biske, Earl Geier, and Larry MacDougal. Their stunning illustrations, coupled with Nystul's inspired, graceful prose, have set the stage for a unique roleplaying experience. Among the artists whose work graces The **Whispering Vault**, there are a few new faces worthy of note as well. Predominant in their company is a young artist named Dave MacKay who, although relatively new to the industry, has paved the road to a bright future. His distinctive, melancholy and often sensual style of art adds to the depth of the game and is a credit to the horror genre as a whole. I believe we'll be seeing more of his talent in the future.

All in all, The **Whispering Vault** is a game worthy of attention to any fan of horror roleplaying. This game is a welcome addition to any library and, out of all the roleplaying materials that I own, this is one that I will actually enjoy playing. Perhaps the ultimate compliment on my part. I love horror and The **Whispering Vault** justifies this affection for the macabre that I have cradled since childhood. I believe The Whispering Vault will bring Mike Nystul and Pariah Press much success and I look forward to many supplements based on this macabre, sweeping world of the Unseen.

Plague And Pestilence
Hillary's Toy Box Card Game
Reviewed by Marcelo A. Figueroa

Unless you've been on another planet for the past year, then you should be well-acquainted with the fact that card games are hip! The one thing that you have to remember, though, is that not every card game on the market is a trading card series, and doesn't require the second mortgaging of your house to feed a habit. There are other card games out there besides Magic: The Gathering. I've been playing card games for a very long time, (of course we're talking about games like Uno) but nonetheless, I've never really found a card game that would make my personal top ten list... until...

Plague And Pestilence is the first endeavor by rookie company *Hillary's Toy Box*, and is picking up a huge following very quickly. The concept of the game is that you, the Player, have control of your own medieval city, and its population, which is represented by a point value. Your goal is to be the only Player to survive the dreaded plague.

The game system is very elementary. The game begins in what is called the *Prosperity Phase*, and each turn begins with the Player rolling two six-sided dice and looking on a chart to see how many points of population are gained (i.e. high birth rate, migration, etc.). Then, the Player, whose hand starts with five cards, draws up to six cards in his hand, and is allowed to play one card either to benefit himself, by way of bonus population or improvements to the city, or to hurt another Player, by sending a pestilence or sending him to war with another Player. Play continues in this fashion until the most important card in the game comes into play... the Death Ship.

When the Death Ship arrives, this starts the *Plague phase* of the game, in which the die roll at the beginning of each Player's turn determines how many points of population the Player loses to the plague. Play proceeds in this fashion until one person is left... the survivor of the plague.

Suffice it to say that this game, at its base level, has very little strategy, if any, but do not fret. There are plenty of optional rules in the back of the rule book that add a whole new dimension to the game. Definitely try the Dicey Doubles rule where, when doubles are rolled on the dice, you modify the roll and double the result, or the Rule Of Retribution: (Dying Stroke) when you are taken out of the game by another Player, you get to play one last card against any Player left in the game. You may even want to write to the company for a copy of their tournament rules for even more optional rules that add yet more strategy to the game. You want to know the best thing about this game? The average game (which usually has six Players) only takes about an hour to play.

When I first saw this game, I had to wonder if the game justified the cost ($14.95). Well. consider this... each card is of excellent quality, UV protected, gloss coated, and will shuffle like a new deck for a long time (my deck still feels new even after a hundred shuffles). The box is also a UV protected, hard plastic card box. What you're mostly paying for is the art work, which is beautifully done in medieval style to fit the theme of the game. There is one problem with the packaging. In the first print of the game there were problems with some of the cards having printing flaws, or just not being in the box, but the first print has since sold out (there were only 500 copies), and I've been informed by the people at Hillary's Toy Box that this problem has been corrected in the second print, and all of the problem decks of the first.

I haven't seen a game this cutthroat since Illuminati. I'm sure that this game will be around long after Magic: The Addiction has gone the same route as Road Kill (if any of you remember that one). I'm also sure that this is one of the best card games ever made, and have no doubt that this is the best few hours you can spend spreading diseases with your friends without having to get a blood test.

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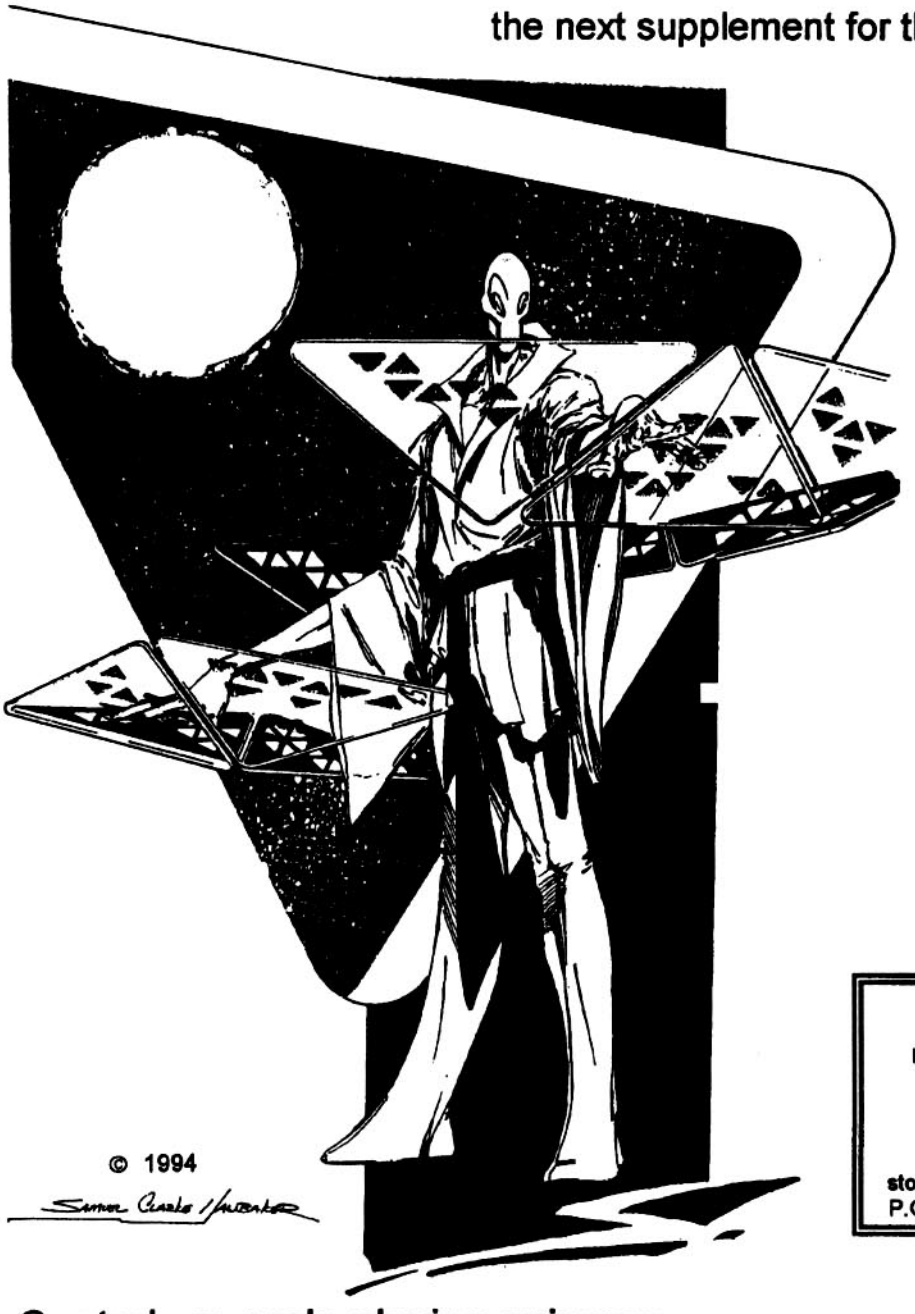

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Quest for the Faysylwood
Faysylwood Press
Card Game
Reviewed by Devi Huges

Quest for the Faysylwood is a quick and dirty card game that can be played by 2-8 players, and is published by Canadian-based *Faysylwood Press*. Recently I gathered some players together and spent a few hours tramping through the underbrush and over the hills in search of the magical Faysylwood. Average playing time is (as stated on the box) 2 hours. I found that with not too much distraction, a game could be completed in just over an hour. If only 2 players are involved and are reasonably familiar with the rules of the game, **Faysylwood** only takes about twenty minutes.

Every player takes on the role of a (bored) deity, determined to outdo each other at every turn. Their latest game: each has taken control of a single hero's destiny and attempts to be the first to guide their *chosen one* to the mythical forest. The heroes themselves don't actually interact with each other, each being on a separate quest path, but the players can attempt to hinder the progress of the other player's heroes. Examples of player interaction include sending monsters to harass; causing events such as earthquakes to destroy portions of terrain; or Placing (literally) blocking terrain such as Mountains, Swamps or Deserts in a hero's way.

The game itself is of fairly high quality. The deck consists of 112 cards printed on sturdy cardstock. Each black-and-white card features good artwork, and most information required for play is printed right on the cards for easy reference. There's even a card included that lists each of the game's phases and appropriate options for the players. After only a few playings the rules will probably be set aside and only looked at occasionally; they consist of a single folded page, printed on both sides. Easy to read and fairly concise, there were only a few points that I found needed clarifying. For example, the rules as written allow a hero's shield and armor to aid him in surviving a drought or famine.

Players have their choice of one of eight heroes, each with a special ability that makes him or her unique: the Fighter, Magician, Priest, Dwarf, Elf, Sorceress, Ranger, and Thief. The player places his or her character in front of him or her. Arranged above the hero are all of his or her items and possessions they gain throughout play. Below, the players build each hero's *quest path*. When five clear (i.e., non-blocking) terrain cards are in a hero's quest path, that player has found the Faysylwood and has won the game. Each player also has a hand of seven cards. It is important to note that just because a player has a card in his or her hand does not mean that a player's hero also has that card. The player's hand represents a pool of possibilities through which he or she can influence gameplay. You may have a magical sword in your hand, but until your hero kills a sufficiently tough monster your hero is stuck with the mundane.

The game structure itself is fairly loose. It easily lends itself to the creation of *house rules*, and it's fairly easy for a player to project (with a little imagination) a personality into his hero and get away with some limited role-playing. My first game, for example, I found myself narrating my Elf's exploits and speaking heroic (and annoying) monologues.

There are two types of combat in the game: Physical and Magical. While heroes never fight each other, they often get involved in combat with fearsome monsters. If a hero dies, the player simply discards their cards (including inventory and quest path!), redraws, and begins play on their next turn with a reincarnated hero. Thus, no player is ever truly out of the game, and this approach makes it possible for a player to simply choose a character and jump into the game at just about any point. Certain characters can throw spells and use magical combat, while others are stuck with the *Brute force and Ignorance* approach. Combat itself is simply a matter of summing a number of factors, with victory going to the higher total. A bit of randomness is introduced with the pull of a card: each card has printed on its bottom corners numbers ranging from 0-12. For example, when involved in physical combat, a player may add his hero's physical combat statistic to any weapon, armor, or bonus for terrain to a random number. There are a number of other items or cards that can influence combat as well. Losing a combat usually means death for a hero, although armor can save one's life. Unscrupulous heroes can also sacrifice horses, followers, or apprentices in order to live to fight another day.

At around $14.95, Quest for the Faysylwood is well worth the money. While not terribly strategic, it provides a entertaining way to pass an hour or two and has enough diversity built into the game to keep it refreshing. The game is put together well (although you may want to get a hold of one of those clear plastic boxes baseball card collectors use, as I found the box the game comes in deteriorating after a short while), and my only lament is that I can't always find the people for an eight player game!

Shades from the Past
Tunnels and Trolls
RPG System
Reviewed by David Lashley

Anyone searching for a simple, flexible system emphasizing role-playing over rule-searching should check out **Tunnels and Trolls**. still published after 19 years by the whimsically named company *Flying Buffalo Inc.*, this is one of the truly classic role-playing games dealing with the fantasy genre still being actively supported. The stream-lined game mechanics make Tunnels and Trolls a game master's delight while the extensive number of solo adventures make it a solitary gamer's dream come true.

Even today with the mind-boggling variety of role-playing games available from diceless systems to Cyberpunk, **Tunnels and Trolls** remains a great

choice for the fantasy purist who wants to enjoy adventure gaming without burdening himself with enough rules and formulas to fill an encyclopedia. **Tunnels and Trolls** accomplishes this task by presenting the rules in a clear, lucid manner without employing the esoteric parlance of hard-core war gamers.

Perhaps the most notable achievement of Tunnels and Trolls is its potential for an unlimited variety of possible adventures while managing to keep the game mechanics consistently simple and fast playing. Even with its simplicity, however, nothing is neglected. Character generation, alternate races, combat resolution, saving rolls, spell casting, missile weapons, and even languages and poisoned weapons are covered and incorporated into a system that enables the game referee to focus on entertaining the player and running the adventure as opposed to flipping through rule books to determine what happens to a dwarvish warrior who is bit by an orcish were-creature with chicken pox!

The **Tunnels and Trolls** game system uses a 6 sided dice for virtually all game mechanics, while percentile dice are useful in determining what languages a character knows, they are not essential.

From the extensive list of weapons and spells, to the possibility of playing virtually any creature from fantasy or science fiction through the companion game entitled **Monsters ! Monsters!**, there is more than enough variety and excitement in the game universe for any gamer. The novice will be pleased by the easily grasped game mechanics while the more experienced gamer will appreciate a system that doesn't impose limits on the imagination by establishing an overabundance of parameters into which one is forced to neatly fit the fantasy campaign.

With so many new role-playing games appearing on the market, gamers are searching for a fast, flexible and fun system are well advised to consider a classic that has stood the test of time. Also, since Tunnels and trolls is complete in one rule book, getting started is easy on your wallet or purse. The next time you're at the hobby shop or game convention, check out Tunnels and Trolls.

Basic character attributes are provided under the Race Description. After you determine what race you will play, then you can establish certain characteristics that will again alter the basic attributes your character has. Now it is time to choose a profession. This choice can be broken down into several different categories, Race Orders, Tradesman, Guilds, Cults, Clans, and Royal Courts. Some of these will also alter your abilities but if nothing else, will delineate your basic skills. Skill use and Combat make up the greater part of the game system although magic does play a major part. Skills are the basis for most of the game mechanics. In order to accomplish just about anything, a skill roll can be made (based on DM discretion). If it is a skill you have chosen, then your chances for success will be greater. Even though the magic system involves several different forms, the rules regarding magic are quite simple and well organized, therefore not requiring a great deal of outlining. The miscellaneous rule systems are covered in just over ten pages and cover specific checks for things such as Falling, Aging, and Encumbrance. The rule book is laid out in such a way as to follow the path to character creation while at the same time providing for quick access to game mechanics questions. Overall, T&T is a good system.❑

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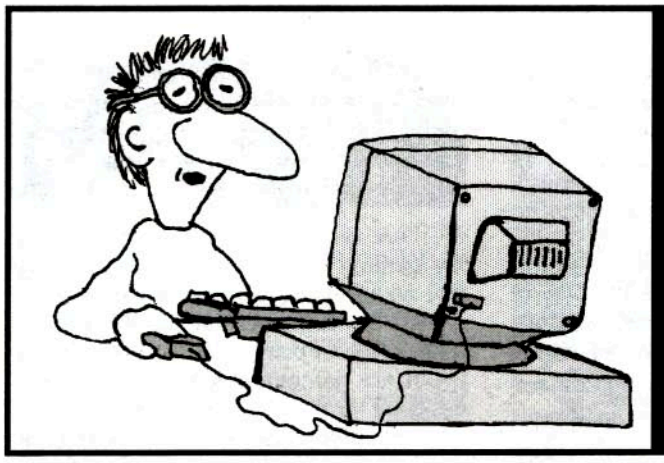


DISKS OF WONDROUS POWER

Computer Game Reviews

Edited by David Moyers

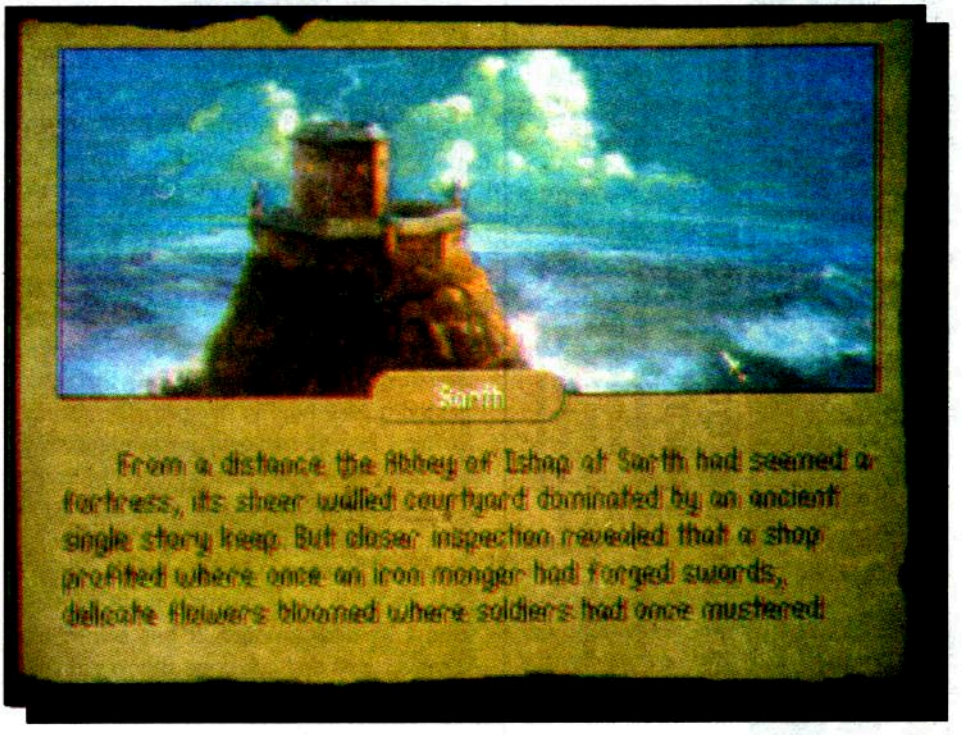
Betrayal at Kondor
Dynamic
Computer RPG Game
Reviewed by David Moyers

If you are a role-player, play board games or are just an avid reader, do I have the Computer game for you! The game is **Betrayal at Krondor**, published by Dynamic. Betrayal at Krondor is based on the Riftwar series of books written by Raymond Feist. Specifically, the game falls between the fourth and fifth books, *A Darkness at Sethanon* and *Prince of the Blood*. You need not have read the Riftwar novels to enjoy the game, but they do give excellent background to the people places and plot of the game. I have read all the Riftwar books and find they are well worth the time it takes to read them.

Now, about the game itself. The game is separated into chapters, each with a separate goal. Whether your style of role-playing is hack-and-slash, exploration, or just talking to various people, Betrayal at Krondor has something for everyone. The first couple of chapters help you get introduced to the style and actions of the game. After that, it gets more and more difficult as you go along. There are several below ground areas for those who prefer the "dungeon crawl" style of adventure game, and many above ground encounters for those who do not. The greatest advantage of **Betrayal at Krondor** is that it is nonlinear. If you wish, in the first chapter you may explore the entire land on Midkemia before completing the required goal. In fact, it is almost encouraged that you do so you can get a feel for what is coming up and where you will need to go in future chapters.

I also encourage you to talk to everyone you meet. Many are just friendly neighbors, but occasionally, one has valuable information that you can use later in the game. Some people in Midkemia also have minor adventure hooks that you can complete for money or items within the larger adventure itself. Talking to people is fairly easy. If you select someone who will answer questions, like the character Brother Marc, a menu will come up with questions you can ask. Some of them are questions you may not have thought about and all them provide useful information. Once you have selected the topic, you can see the conversation between your characters and the person you are talking to. That conversation will usually give you a clue what to do and where to go next.

As with most computer adventure games, and most role-playing games, combat is a major factor in the game. Sometimes, it almost seems over done, but the combat scenes are usually appropriate to the plot line. If nothing else, they provide a good way for the characters to get items and cash desperately needed later in the game. Sometimes, however, there is more to it than that. There are people you need to fight who have messages and notes that will point you in a new direction, or items, like keys, that you will need to solve the chapter. A few are even guarding the object that is the goal of the chapter. Combat is run fairly smoothly. It is run with a point-



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and-click interface that is easy to learn. Select your attack, select your target and then watch the character do what you asked and see the result.

For the puzzle solver in the group, there are several puzzles within **Betrayal at Krondor** to appeal to your style of gaming. There are several chests that are puzzle boxes you need to solve. Each of these chests has a riddle written on its face plate and a series of tumblers in a row. Each tumbler contains four letters and when seated properly, the tumblers spell the answer and the chest pops open. These chests usually contain the most valuable equipment in the game. The more difficult the puzzle, the more valuable the equipment. These boxes are also a good place to store valuables of your own since they are not subject to theft.

Now, for the little things that make the game even better. Graphics, sound, and animation are outstanding. The characters are digitized actors that add a bit of realism to game play. When you can see the characters and how they respond to situations, you get a better feel for the characters you are playing. As these characters move along, time passes. Time only passes when the characters are performing an action, however, so if you need to go get something to eat, the game will be right where you left it when you get back. The reason I mention the time is that as you approach sun up or sun down, your view of the world actually gets darker or brighter. There is an excellent sense of realism added to **Betrayal at Krondor** that makes the game enjoyable to play. The review copy of Betrayal at Krondor I received was a CD so it is possible that not everyone has the same sound quality I did in reviewing the game. What I heard, however, was fantastic. It includes such subtleties as birds chirping as the sun rose to theme music for combat and events.

Buy **Betrayal at Krondor**. I don't care where your gaming style is, you won't be disappointed. It has something for everyone and everyone should enjoy it.

Campaign Cartographer
ProFantasy Software Ltd., Computer Gaming Tool - Mapping
Reviewed by E. Ken Cox

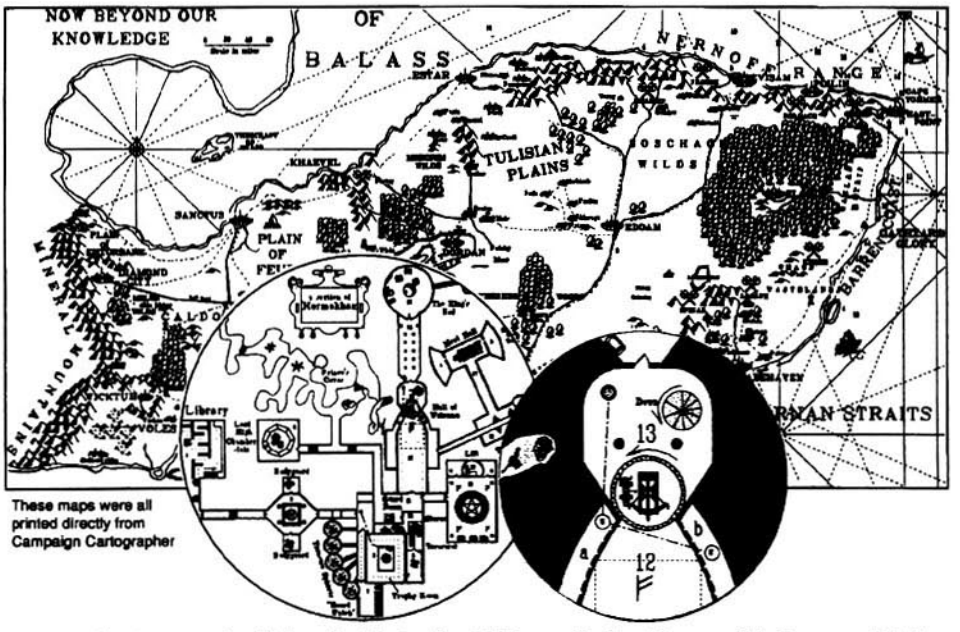
There seems to be a trend forming in the gaming industry today. Considering that about eighty percent of role playing gamers are computer literate, it has been a long time in coming. What I am talking about are gamemaster and player tools designed for the computer.

Campaign Cartographer is an English import that offers a complete Computer Aided Design(CAD) package in the DOS format. Although the primary purpose of this CAD program is to build and use campaign maps, due to its flexibility and generic structure you can use it for just about any drawing project. It requires a minimum configuration of a 286 computer, a hard drive, one 3 1/2 inch drive, 640K of memory and a pointing device of some kind. The installation program offers the typical array of options including graphics driver, pointer/tablet configuration and printer selections. As you would expect with any high level drawing package it does take advantage of video drivers and math co-processers for speed and reliability.

The design of this product is primarily for the Game Designer. To begin with, when you start a new drawing you are asked to draw a border based on a number of miles your map will encompass. This will set your scale and provide a basis for all future drawing. Compass coordinates and a scale rule are included on the templates but will need to be added by the GD(Game Designer) if desired.

True to most high level drawing packages is the ability to use dynamic layering. That is, the drawing that you see can be made up of several different layers, giving the artist the ability to gain much more control over his drawing. This ability has been utilized to great effect for the GD. The first ten layers are designed for use specifically by the game designer. Such designations as Coast, Sea, Relief, and Contour lines, Vegetation, Water, Rivers, Structures, Minerals, Mountains, Borders, Natural Features, Dungeons, Lairs, and the Gamemaster Only Layer make the mapping of campaign worlds much easier to control. You can choose what layers to view and print and in one map encompass

THE DESIGN REVOLUTION CONTINUES



These maps were all printed directly from Campaign Cartographer

Campaign Cartographer ™, launched in October 1993, was the first PC compatible Computer Aided Design(CAD) software specially for RPG's. Now that revolutionary game aid is complemented by Dungeon Designer ™, another first from ProFantasy.

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More symbols, menus and fonts for Campaign Cartographer.

System requirements: PC, AT, PS/2 or compatible, MS-DOS 4.0 or higher, 1.4 Mb floppy drive, pointing device (eg. Microsoft mouse)
Recommended: a hard disk drive and printer. CC drives 99% of all printers and graphics cards to their full potential.

Campaign Cartographer is $69.95 in the US, £49.95 in the UK and rest of the world
Dungeon Designer is $24.95 in the US, £16.95 in the UK and rest of the world

Dungeon Designer requires Campaign Cartographer

Add on modules including new symbols, castles and towns coming soon

SEE FACING PAGE FOR ORDER DETAILS

CAMPAIGN CARTOGRAPHER ™

Computer Aided Design for RPG's

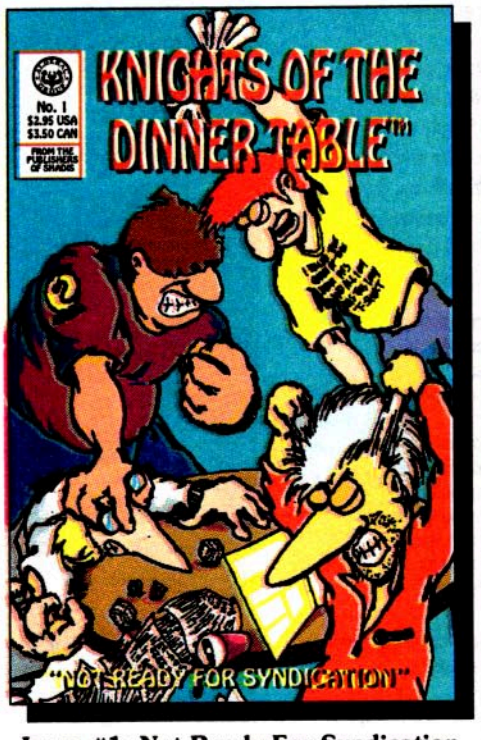
all of those separate maps needed to complete a world concept.

The main menu offers all of the typical drawing tools available in the CAD world but there are a few very exceptional differences. There are over a hundred predefined terrain and mapping symbols available for use. Not to mention the fact that you are free to define libraries of symbols of your own. In the utilization of these drawing elements, one of the most useful tools to the game designer would be the dynamic Scaling and Cursor effects. After you have selected a drawing object, if you hold down the shift key and move your pointing device, the object will scale according to the distance you have moved the cursor. The Cursor will maintain the shape and size of the object until it is placed. This allows you to place the object exactly where you want and you can continue to scale it until it is finally placed. This level of precision is seldom achieved in anything but the most detailed of CAD packages. Furthermore, the scaling for all future objects will remain the same until you resize again. This makes drawing objects at multiple scales very easy.

Overall the drawing tools are designed for ease of use rather then technical specificity. However, with the use of the grid and snap abilities, an incredible amount of precision can be obtained. It is possible that with a great deal of care and mathematical accuracy, a perfect drawing could be attained. Even if the base drawings don't reach the level of exactness you would like as a Game Designer, the program does contain a full array of editing features. Between the MOVE, SCALE, and ROTATE commands, positioning and location of objects can be altered. With CENTER and ENDPOINT, rough drawings can be cleaned up easily. There are a myriad of other commands to assist in the clean-up of your maps and of course an UNDO command in case of misjudgments.

One of the most innovative additions is the editor utility which can be added to a specific object, thus making it possible to assign text to an area. The process of doing this could be simplified further but with a little research into the manuals, it is fairly easy to figure it out. There is also a DEFINE command that will let you establish a few CAD commands to be attached to an object. This will allow you to create what can only be described as an intelligent drawing. This also could give you a drawing to which you can assign buttons. Each button could then give you a different view or cause a hidden layer to be exposed. With a little creativity some very useful maps could be created.

Utilizing the full set of features available in Campaign Cartographer, an enterprising game master could effectively map his entire game world. The main areas of improvement that I could immediately point to would be random terrain generators and more object libraries. These are, of course, on the way. Some will be appearing in a new version of the program, but most are available as supplements to the existing program and the new version. I can highly recommend Campaign Cartographer as one of the best DOS-based mapping programs on the market. ❑



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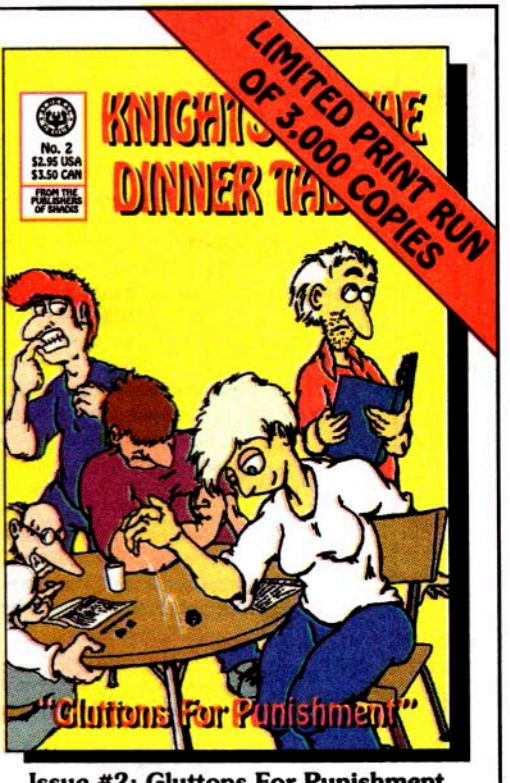
Issue #1 of KODT[2] is Now Available Through Your Local Game or Comic Shop.

Issue #2 of KODT[3] Ships 15 September, 1994

Both Issues are Limited Print Runs so don't delay.

1. 'That Guy' is defined as being the idiot who neglected to order his copies. of the Knights of the Dinner Table Limited Run Comic books before they sold out.
2. 'KODT' is a really neat abbreviation for Knights of the Dinner Table which gamers 'in the know' like to toss around at gaming tables and conventions to confuse other people and to make them think they are really cool.
3. Inventory of KODT#1 virtually sold out through adanced orders from distributors and SHADIS subscribers. Release of a second issue should not be construed as evidence that we just want to make money. We would like to point out, however, that recent research (we have our notes on file around here someplace) seems to suggest that there could be a very good chance that your life will be greatly enchanced if you order multiple copies of both comics.



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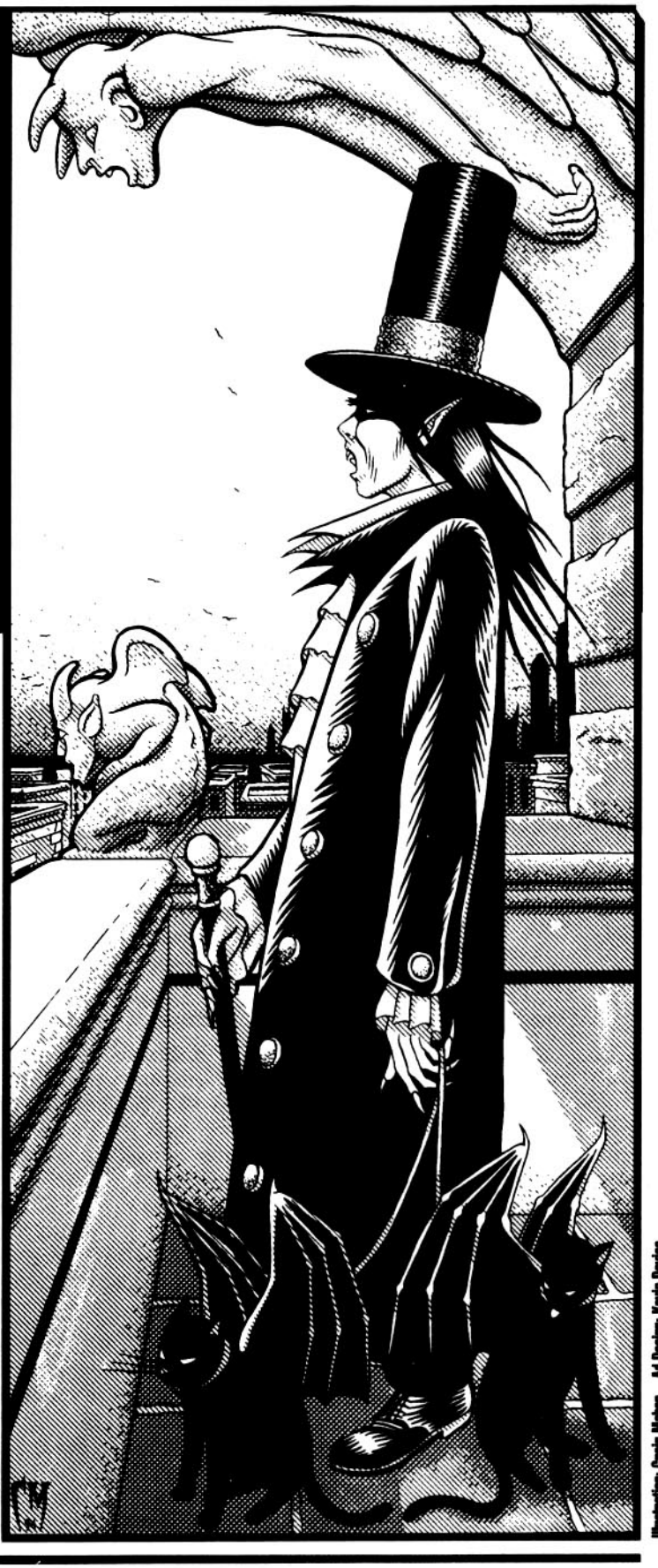

Illustration: Craig Maher. Ad Design: Kevin Davies.

BITS N' PIECES

Rumors, New Products, Etc.

By Mark Arsenault

Wow. Is it time for another Bits & Pieces column already? It seems like I just sent in the last column yesterday. There's a lot to cover so I guess I better get cracking.

Revenge is Sweet Indeed!

On March 1, 1990, agents of the **US Secret Service** invaded the offices of **Steve Jackson Games**, in Austin, Texas, in what became a landmark case for the rights of computer users. The agents seized several computers, including the company's BBS, and hundreds of computer disks. Among the files taken were several uncompleted books, including one that was about to go to the printer!

On March 12, 1993, a federal judge ruled for Steve Jackson Games and its co-plaintiffs - Steve Jackson himself and three users of the **Illuminati Bulletin Board** - on two separate counts.

Judge Sam Sparks ruled for SJ Games on the PPA (Privacy Protection Act), saying that the publisher's work product was unlawfully seized and held. Under the ECPA (Electronic Communications Privacy Act), he ruled that the Secret Service had unlawfully read, disclosed and erased the computer messages on the BBS - despite their repeated denials that they had done any such thing. On a separate ECPA count, he ruled for the defendants, saying that taking the computer out the door was not an "interception" of the messages on it within the meaning of the law. That decision is now being appealed.

Judge Sparks' opinion was harshly critical of the Secret Service's behavior before, during and after their raid, calling the affidavit and warrant preparation "simply sloppy and not carefully done."

Now, more than a year later, the Secret Service has finally paid the judgment. Under the PPA, SJ Games received $52,431.50 for lost profits and direct costs of the raid. The government agreed to pay additional costs of the suit, originally borne by the EFF and the attorneys, adding another $252,405.54.

Commented Jackson: "We'll use our share to pay off old debts and buy new computers."

For more information, contact Steve Jackson at 512-447-7866.

Game of the Month Club

Tri Tac Games is considering the possiblity of releasing their rules systems on interactive CD Rom. According to Tri Tac, the compact disk would be "not exactly a game, but not exactly words on the screen. A more interactive approach that teaches and guides the beginning GM in running our games." Sounds like a good idea to me.

Crown Me!

Avalon Hill has announced an electronic version of it's classic boardgame, **Kingmaker.** Available on the IBM and Amiga the game is faithful to the original while at the same time offering players more options. (such as Advanced Weather and Advanced Plague). **Kingmaker** is available at your better game and computer shops.

Mayfairwell

Just in case you hadn't heard, Ray Winninger, author of the **Underground® RPG**, is no longer with *Mayfair Games*. Mayfair is doing a bit of restructuring and will soon be releasing additional material in support of **Underground**. "You'll be seeing **Underground** support products soon," said Mayfair rep Doug Tabb, "First thing out of the gate will be **Techno, the Underground** tech book, followed by the Player's Handbook, **Ways and Means**, the Washington sourcebook, and **Steel Deep**, the Luna sourcebook... with more to come of course."

Others leaving their flock include David "Zeb" Cook, a long time TSR staffer and Senior Staff Designer. According to Frank Metzner, "Zeb" is going to work for *Magnet Interactive Studios* to work on CD-ROM multimedia projects, where he will be joining folks like Ken Rolston (of Avalon Hill fame) and Paul Murphy. David left TSR on the best of terms, I'm told. So no nasty "TSR fired Zeb!" rumors floating around, you hear? I mean it, Shad...

Cards, Cards and More Cards

With the incredible success of **Magic: The Gathering**, it's no surprise that other companies are entering the collectible card game fray. The latest entry is **On The Edge**, a card game by *Atlas Games*. Designed by Jonathan Tweet, creator of **Over The Edge**, and John Nephew, President of Atlas Games. **On The Edge** will ship to distributors in the first week of October.

TSR has tossed its own collectible card game into the arena with **Spellfire** which has the added attraction of allowing players to pit the various AD&D game worlds against each other.

The **Jyhad**, the upcoming card game based on White Wolf's **Vampire: The Masqeurade**, is being playtested as this column is being written. "It's boatloads of fun," said Sam Chupp, "I can see what it must've been like playtesting **Magic: The Gathering** back in the day..."

Speaking of New Games

Apex Publications, Inc. has released a new RPG titled **Shattered Dreams**. In it, the PCs take on the role of *Dreamwalkers*, delving into the most horrific realm known to mankind - your dreams! Also coming from Apex are **Awake And Alone** (Shattered Dreams sourcebook), and several more books in the SD line. You can contact Apex Publications at: P.O. Box 20405, Bloomington MN 55420-0405; (612) 884-5456.

Black Dragon Press announced the production and (hopeful) fall release of their new role-playing game, **The Harvest: Legends of Mystery and Horror**. "This will be a mixture of the mystery and horror genres," according to a Black Dragon rep, "with some fun twists thrown in."

Marquee Press is going to produce a new **Lost Souls** sourcebook, titled **Carnel Knowledge**, which will focus on the role of mediums and the mystic afterworld. While the idea for the project has been given a green light, as of the time of this writing Marquee Press is looking for someone to undertake this project. If you are interested in the horror/humor genre and would like a crack at writing for Marquee Press, you can contact them at: 14314 SW Allen Blvd. Suite 400, Beaverton OR 97005. Tell them SHADIS sent you.

No Violent Games, Eh?

On April 20, Canadian Minister of Justice, Allan Rock, introduced legislation to make it a federal crime to sell or give to anyone under 18 years of age trading cards with "a dominant characteristic of which is a description or a pictorial depiction of an...actual violent criminal or of an actual violent crime." The legislation would also affect board games "in which the players play the part of murderers and pretend to engage in violent criminal activity." Because most gamers incorporate miniatures in their role-playing game sessions (making them practically indistinguishable from regular board games to the uninformed), this law could be interpreted to include role-playing games as well - ALL role-playing games, friends.

GURPS Talislanta

This long awaited book has recently left Steve Jackson's desk after a thorough going-over, I'm sure. "As far as I know," said SJG online rep Chris McCubbin, "Steve has returned the first draft with comments and corrections, and the second draft is now in progress."

From the World of Ysgarth

Ragnarok Games announced the release of its first mini-adventure, **The Mill on the Ibras**, an adventure for use with the **Ysgarth** mini-rules or any other fantasy RPG. The mini-adventure is free, and can be obtained by sending a SASE with 52 cents postage to: Ragnarok Games, P.O. Box 140333, Austin TX 78714.

Earthdawn Grimoire

While Earthdawn fans currently have no official rules or guidelines for designing new spells, Lou Prosperi, Earthdawn developer for *FASA*, says he's currently in the process of designing such a system. In addition, the first boxed set, **Parlainth: The Forgotten City**, is due next month. As for areas surrounding *Barsaive*, Lou tells us that **Sky Point/Vivane** is tentatively planned for an August '95 release.

Cancellations

Nightshift Games announced the cancellation of **Faeriepunk**. What was to be the first of Nightshift's new **Raconteur System** games has been permanently shelved, and rights to the world setting revert back to the creator, Sam Witt. The **Raconteur System** will see its first release in the upcoming **Vampire Hunter$** RPG, however, tentatively scheduled for a fall '94 release.

Crunchy Frog has recently terminated agreements with *Justin Thyme Productions* of Redlands, CA, for the design of **$tar Corp$ Mass Destruction**. The termination of agreements also covers *Justin Thyme's* work on the **Duel** project, **Ghost Town**. Not wanting to leave loyal Star Corp$ fans in the cold, *Crunchy Frog* has announced the release of **Massive $tar Corp$**, 1/300 scale rules in the **$tar Corp$** universe. The rules will include air combat and giant robots, and will be fully compatible with $tar Corp$ Units, as well as being 90% compatible with the rest of the $tar Corp$ rules.

Lost in the Shadows

It seems there is talk that *I.C.E.* may shelve its **Shadow World** line, but fans shouldn't give up hope. "If ICE decides to discontinue the Shadow Worlds line," said Iron Crown online rep, Terry Amthor, "**Grey Worlds** magazine has expressed interest in publishing my work in a serialized form. That would work well for the campaign books and general background material. We'll see."

Bad Dog, Bad Dog!

Leading Edge Games has announced the formation of a new manufacturing division called **Bad Dog Design** which will be producing new miniature lines.

One of the first lines, scheduled to be released in July, (in time for Origins), will be a set of licensed figures for the **Darkurthe Legends** system by Black Dragon Press. Bad Dog Design will also be doing a line of miniatures for the **Fem Force** comic from Amazing Comics as well.

Electric Rookies

Iron Crown Enterprise has two new reps on America online; Deane Begiebing, ICE's Sales Manager, and John Curtis.

Talk About a Compact...

Soldiers & Swords will be producing a line of miniatures, terrain and rules for **Car Wars 3-D** beginning this summer, according to Chris McCubbin. S&S will also be producing the miniatures for SJ Games' **Ogre Miniatures**.

WEG Strikes Back

Fantasic Technology, an upcoming **Star Wars RPG** sourcebook, is under development and is tentatively scheduled for release next March. The book will contain winning entries from a design contest held by *West End Games*.

In addition, West End Games editor, Ed Stark, has acknowledged that the company is considering doing a sourcebook that would deal with all three of the books in the Jedi trilogy.

Le Kult

It seems that the recent horror smash, **Kult**, is being translated into French and Spanish. The game, according to Metropolis' Terry Amthor, has already been released in German, Swedish and English.

In other Kult news, *Metropolis Games* is compiling a list of "cool inspirational material" from various media. If you have some

favorite material that you think should be added (movies, music, etc.), send them to Metropolis Games at: Lictor@aol.com.

Metropolis has also announced that they are tentatively (that's the word of the month, folks) planning to use the original illustration from the cover of the original Swedish release of **Kult** on the upcoming **Players Companion**. "It depicts a woman in a rather interesting outfit," says Amthor. And he should know. Also, watch for **Taroticum** this month and the **Kult Players Companion** by GenCon.

Pariah in the Sky

Mike Nystul (brother of FASA's own Bryan Nystul) has his own game company, *Pariah Press*. Mike's first project under Pariah Press is a new game called **The Whispering Vault**, which was released in May.

I Shall Return!

The publishers of Vortex magazine have asked us to announce that they will be going into a short period of hibernation. They promise to be back in a "new and improved" form sometime in late 1994 or early 1995.

We'll leave the porchlight on for you folks.

Mini-Zine Scene

FASA has recently granted a license to *Sword of the Knight Publications, Inc.* to produce a new **Earthdawn** fanzine. The 'zine is currently slated to be 48 pages with a full color cover. "The publisher, Kevin Knight, is going to be in need of submissions for this magazine," said FASA's Earthdawn™ developer Lou Prosperi, "and so interested parties should get in contact with him." Lou will also be contributing to the zine as time allows. According to Lou, the zine may prove to be an arena for playtesting or previewing of ideas for future Earthdawn products. For additional information you can write to: Sword of the Knight Publications, Inc., 2820 Sunset Ln. #116, Henderson KY 42420-2084; e-mail address: sword.knight@genie.geis.com, or you can contact Lou at: FASALou@aol.com.

Speaking of 'zines, contrary to rumor, a new issue of **Interface** is in the works but there is no certain date for release.

Golden Crash Award

This first ever Golden Crash award goes to yours truly, who upgraded his computer and managed to wipe out his hard disk. Without going into details, I lost almost all of my subscriber data for The Gamer's Connection™. If you are a subscriber, please mail me the label from your last copy of TGC so that I can update your info and continue your subscription uninterrupted. In addition, our two new 'zines, **Hero League** and **Unearthly Knowledge**, have been delayed. Watch for them late June or early July.

Heartbreaking Magic

Heartbreaker Hobbies and Games, Inc., is releasing offical miniatures based on the creatures appearing on the cards of **Magic: The Gathering**.

The miniature sets include special Proof-of-Purchase tags that can be traded for items not available to the general public. Now such nasties as the *Hurloon Minotaur* and *Plague Rat* leap to full metal-life on your gaming table. You can find the figures at your local gamestore or you can write to: Heartbreaker Hobbies and Games, P.O. Box 105, Folsom, PA 19033.

My Kingdom for a Disk!

Kenzer and Company has promised an Origins release date for it's new fantasy world **The Kingdoms of Kalamar**. The setting is suitable for use with all major fantasy RPG systems. It comes with two source books which contain new deities, nations, cities, societies, regions and races. It also comes with a 3'x4' full-color map. **The Kingdoms of Kalamar** fantasy setting is promised to be fully supported by future adventure modules.

The Kingdoms of Kalamar comes complete with **RealmMaster** software, a tool that allows the gamemaster to run adventures with the use of his computer. For more information you can write to: Kenzer & Company, 8926 N. Greenwood Ave. Suite 188, Niles, IL 60714.

Authors Unbound

Hero Games is looking for authors for future campaign material for their upcoming **Star Hero** book. Interested authors should contact Bruce Harlick (BruceHH@aol.com) for additional information. According to Hero Games' own Steve Peterson, **Star Hero** should be out "next year sometime, probably in the summer."

Hero Maker 2.0

That's right. There's a new version of **Hero Maker**, the character creation program by *Hero Software*, on the way. Version 2.0 will be available for users of DOS, Windows, Macintosh and Amiga. No set release date yet, but we'll let you know. We know better than to ask about the **Champions** computer game, don't we?

Lights, Camera, Mech?

According to FASA, they are going strong, with scheduled releases for their **BattleTech** line being released about every six weeks. In addition, there are plans for a new **BattleTech** comic book due out this summer from Malibu Comics, not to mention a 13-episode BT animated series airing nationally this fall. The animated series is being produced by *SABAN*, the folks who bring you the **X-Men** animated show.

In other **BattleTech** news, there is some talk about a possible 2nd Edition of **BattleForce**, or so says *FASA's* Bryan Nystul. "No solid plans yet, however." Also, fans waiting for the delayed **MechWarrior Companion** may have to wait until sometime in early '95 for its release. At least we'll have the cartoon to watch.

Hollywood 1889

More good news for role-playing fans in general, and specifically for fans of **Space 1889**. *Game Designers' Workshop* announced at the end of March that they have signed an agreement with *Anders International* allowing Anders to produce a motion picture under license using concepts from **Space: 1889**, GDW's role-playing game of adventure in a more civilized time. A television series is also in the planning stages.

On a final note, SHADIS will be attending **Origins**, **DragonCon** and **GenCon**, this summer. We will have booths at each convention so stop by and introduce yourself to the staff.

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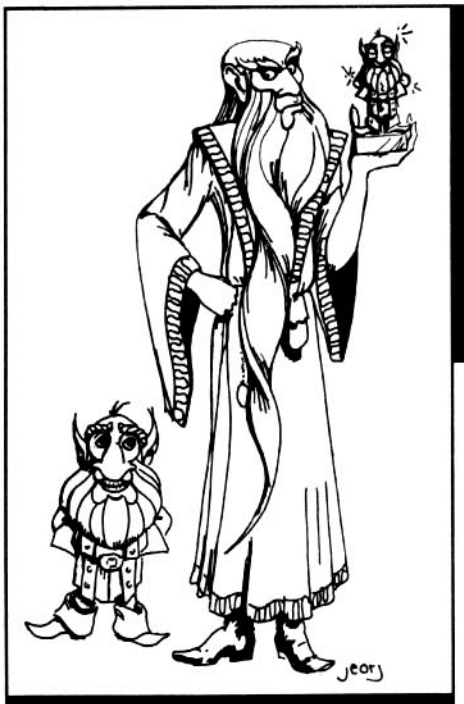


NEW PERSPECTIVES

The World of Miniatures

By Ken Carpenter
B&W Photos by Don Witmer
Color Photo courtesy of Ral Partha Ent.

Eldar Farseer #9065 & Scorpion Phoenix Lord #9067

Miniature Reviews

Fzoul Chembryl

Ral Partha's AD&D™ line
Sculptor: Dennis Mize
#11-050 ✦ 25mm ✦ $2.15

Based on R.A. Salvatore's novels based in TSR's Forgotten Realms setting, this Fzoul Chembryl miniature is another of Dennis' masterpieces of detailed sculpting.

Minor mold lines can be found across the top of the figure from left arm and shoulder, across his head and then along his other shoulder and arm. The lines continue along his sides and legs but are less noticeable there. Be careful when you remove the line from his hair. I would suggest stroking along the hair with a dental pick or hobby knife rather than using files.

The largest and most noticeable of Fzoul's finery is his cloak/cape with its layered appearance. Other, less noticeable embellishments include his earring, skull buckle, jewelry and scepter. His clothing is well detailed and his face wears an expression of disdain or contempt.

This is a 'gotta paint' figure! He will test your shading techniques and make you really think when you get to the smaller details. The pose is a little grandiose, but hey, so is Fzoul.

Eldar Farseer

Citadel's Warhammer 40K line
Sculpted by Jes Goodwin
#9065 ✦ 28mm ✦ $7.99

This Farseer, Eldrad Ulthran of the Ulthwe, is a phenomenal figure. There isn't a surface on him that hasn't been detailed with some equipment, symbol or pattern.

With virtually no parting line, this figure has only a few threads to even show that it was spin cast. It comes with a separate, round base for use with Warhammer 40K.

From sword to staff, this figure bears all manner of stylized symbols, runes and design. In regal helm, Eldrad Ulthran stands in a defiant pose. His robes open to show sharply angled and styled armor. From his belt hang numerous bags, pouches and implements for use as a psyker. Jewelry adorns his arms while his rune covered sword and staff speak of power and position.

This figure will prove quite a challenge to paint but will be worth all your efforts and more when you've finished.

Scorpion Phoenix Lord

Citadel's Warhammer 40K line
Sculpted by Jes Goodwin
#9067 ✦ 28mm ✦ $7.99

Another great new Eldar piece, Karandras the Striking Scorpion exarch, comes in two pieces - head and body. The stance is poised to leap into action, and that's the impression that the rest of the figure makes as well.

There were a few tough to reach mold lines on this exarch, but they were minor and cleaned easily once you got the file to them. The chainsword required a little

work (I suggest you use a triangle file), but looks great when you get the lines off.

Karandras is a special character available in the Codex Eldar army list that is soon to be released. Since the head comes separately, you can select a position for the head, giving the figure a personal touch. The figure has an imposing, dangerous feel, largely due to the impressive helm and huge powerfist.

The rest of the detail is impressive as well, like the scorpion chest plate, the straps holding it in place, the angular armor details, and the tassels hanging from the scorpion tail helm. This is a great figure and bound to add color and depth to your eldar force or miniature collection.

Template Pack 1

Global Games' Legions of Steel accessory
Artist: Tom Frank
#1250 ✦ Cost: $9.95

For you Legions of Steel fans, this is the first of a series of Template Packs from Global Games. The pack contains 24 more of the interlocking floor sections from which the playing surface for LOS is made.

The tile artwork is similar to that found in the basic game box, except that the artwork lines up much better in the template pack. In the original game, the tiles were offset by as much as a quarter of an inch. These tiles line up nearly perfectly. There are three straight hallways, four elbow turns, five 'T' intersections, three four-way intersections, four chambers and five larger chamber/hallway tiles.

The only problems that I ran into were with the five specialty tiles for the larger chambers or corridors. The way the artwork was done, if you experiment with their configuration you run into a few problems - walls running to open areas, blackened artwork in the middle of chambers, etc. These are minor, however, and should have no impact during play.

Overall, this is a great set and gives LOS players additional room for growth.

Template Pack 2

Global Games' Legions of Steel accessory
Artist: Tom Frank
#1260 ✦ Cost: $9.95

More support for LOS, this set of 24 floor tiles gives you all the wide corridor pieces you've been waiting for. The artwork is comparable to the basic set and Template Pack #1, but the artwork doesn't line up as well with this set as did the pack #1 tiles.

This set contains four each of six different tiles. There are wide four-way intersections, wide straight corridors with small openings to each side, wide elbow turns, wide 'T' intersections, wide corridor ending with three small openings and wide corridor ending with two small openings.

These tiles will add a lot of variety to your games and give the Nightmares a clear line of fire for quite a distance (drat!). This is just the kind of layout the UNE troopers hate, given their relatively short ranged weaponry - though the support troopers with their Carl Gustav Mark IV's won't mind...

Elementals - Fire & Wind #004

Kenku

Ral Partha's AD&D 2nd Edition series
Sculpted by Geoff Valley
#11-478 ✦ 25mm ✦ Cost $6.50

Originally from the Fiend Folio, and later the Monstrous Compendium, Kenku are an avian race with a great deal of personality and originality, not 'just another bird-man'.

This blister contains three models, in six pieces, with an array of poses. There are a few mold lines on each figure, typically along the side and between the legs. A minor line also runs across the leaders's hood. All three bases are textured like dried creek-bed.

These are very good figures with great facial and leg detail. The eyes and beaks are shaped perfectly, plus the figures are very well proportioned. Each of these warriors wear a tunic, belt and sword while two wield a staff. Other equipment includes studded shoulder pads and bracers. The third Kenku appears to be the leader, wearing the bloused and hooded tunic.

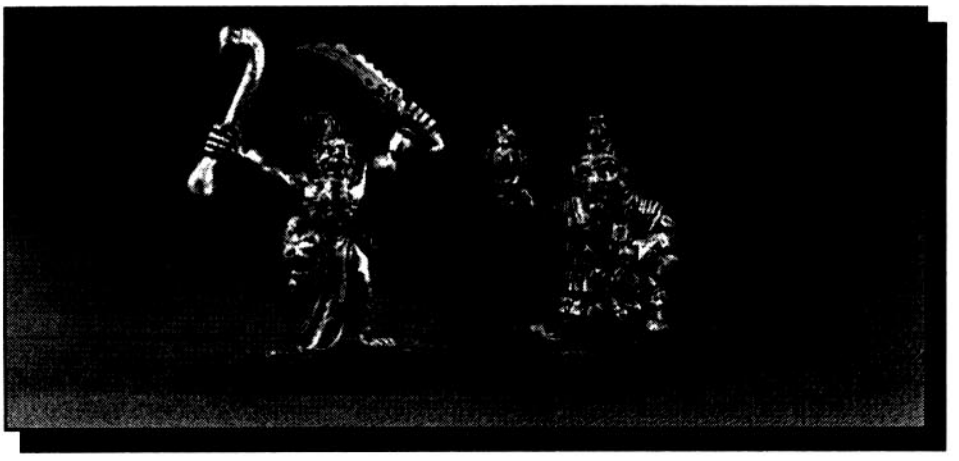
The wings are excellently detailed with layers of feathers that fold neatly along the backs of the Kenku. Painting will be a real treat. I suggest you go to the library, however, and get a book with photos of birds - the right coloring and pattern will make your painted miniature really stand out.

Elementals - Fire & Wind

Lance & Laser's Fantasy series
Sculptor: Kevin Contos
#004 ✦ 25mm ✦ $5.50

Lance & Laser's Earth and Water elementals were my all-time favorite elementals in metal, but this pair isn't far behind.

The fire elemental has little trace of parting lines except under the band of flame between his hands. The wind elemental has minor lines along both sides, but a little clean up with a round needle file, or a half-round, should clean them away. Looking quite vicious, this fire elemental has an evil visage and carries a band of flame arcing over his vaguely



Dwarf Nethermancer & Elementalist #341

humanoid form. Fire licks up his legs, arms and head.

The wind elemental is even more interesting. Appearing to have wrapped himself in his element, his hands hold the wind to his torso as if he were dressing himself. His torso and head are very humanoid, though his long hair is tossed and buffeted by his own wind. His face is in the act of blowing a great blast of air.

Yet more painting challenges, I would spend some time planning the final appearance of these two. A good fire is a difficult thing to paint.

Dwarf Nethermancer & Elementalist
Heartbreaker's Earthdawn* series
Sculptor: Tim Prow
#341 ✦ 25mm ✦ $3.95

Some of the oddest figures I've seen in quite a while, there is, none-the-less, some strange attraction for them.

The elementalist has easy to clean parting lines on both sides of his torso and along his arms. The dwarven elementalist has about the same in similar locations. Preparation should be quick and easy.

Detail on the dwarf is great, with tasseled and patterned hems on his clothes, scarved neck, all manner of trinkets and his strange looking hat. He countenance is long and sour, but that might have been caused by what his bird did on his hand.

The elementalist, wielding both a bone and sword, wears little clothing and appears to be mid-stride in some shamanic dance. The shrunken head at his belt and his nipple-rings speak of a dangerous, even painful influence to his magic.

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While the dwarf will be a challenge to paint due his detail, the elementalist will require a good deal of effort on shading the large areas of skin.

Witches

Rafm's Fantasy line
Sculptor: Stephen Koo
#3695 ✦ 25mm ✦ $5.75

A three figure set of witches, these give quite a cross section to choose from. These figures, one old crone and two younger, more attractive sorceresses, have numerous uses for any fantasy-based roleplaying game.

The crone has minor parting lines along the left and right side, but will clean up well. The younger witch with staff and evening gown has minor lines along the left side but the lines along the staff are more pronounced and will require a few extra moments of filing. Finally, the skull wielding witch has significant mold lines along the right leg and arm as well as the left arm. The lines don't really interfere with any detail but extra time and care will be required to prep the model.

The crone figure, while appearing rather plain, has some interesting details, such as the 'voodoo' doll at her belt, the patched clothing and the tasseled mantle. She also wears a necklace with circular pendant.

The young witch with skull wears very little clothing, just a bikini style top and a sparse toga. Thigh boots, hidden dagger and detailed hair. Hanging from her belt are a wand and vial.

With staff in hand, the other young spell castress wears an off-the-shoulder gown and a look of extreme displeasure. Earrings, bracelets, sheathed dagger and a belt pouch round out her attire. Her staff has a few thorns and is topped with a crystal sphere.

For the most part the set is simply detailed, including the bases, but has potential for a wide variety of gaming uses.

Rogues & Scouts #1

Palladium's Rifts® line
Sculptor: Stephen Trickett
#8017 ✦ 25mm ✦ $7.95

For Rifts RPG, this blister contains four figures in five pieces. Each is well equipped with an assortment of technological gear to assist in their 'rogueing and scouting'.

Rogues & Scouts #1 #8017

Very few people have seen them....

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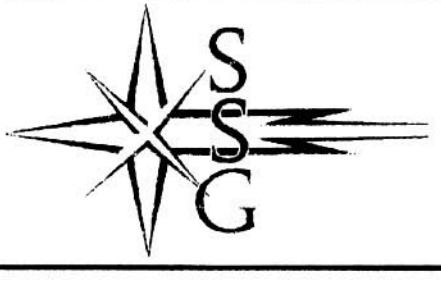

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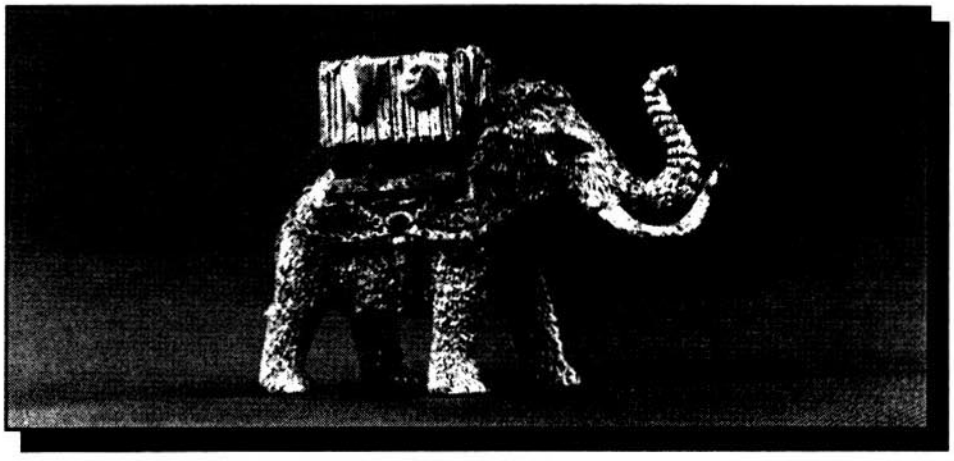

War Mammoth w/Howdah #1818

Each of these figures have noticeable parting lines, some of which run through detail, so there will be some up front effort to get these figures ready to paint. One figure comes as two pieces, his right arm being separate. The arm fits well, though a little filing is needed to make it snug.

As I mentioned above, these figures are decked out will all sorts of hi-tech paraphernalia - from laptop computer to nightvision goggles to space-age backpack. The detail is good and there is no end to the accessories.

Each of the figures has good facial detail and a couple of the poses are well-thought out. I am partial to the balding scientist working at the laptop computer. The face of the gentleman with book and backpack is exceptional as well.

War Mammoth w/Howdah

Grenadier's Warlords* line
Sculptor: W. Watt
#1818 ✦ 15mm ✦ $6.00

The Warlords line just keeps getting stronger and deeper. While you always wanted to use one of these in larger scale, it was impossible to find the figures to fit 25mm or 28mm games. Now you can finally field a mammoth.

There are no visible mold lines on this figure, a perfect cast. It comes in four pieces; the mammoth, one of his tusks and the two sides of the howdah. Minimal preparation and assembly time will be required.

This mammoth is furred from trunk to foot. The proportions are excellent (having never seen a mammoth up close, this was obviously a judgement call) and the detailed harness assembly used to hold the howdah in place is quite creative. The stance is rather typical, but what do you expect from an ancestor of the elephant (they aren't exactly known for their liveliness). I hope Grenadier has a crew for the howdah, that's all it's missing.❑

Company Information

Games Workshop (Citadel/Marauder)
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Mail Order: Yes, Catalog: Free

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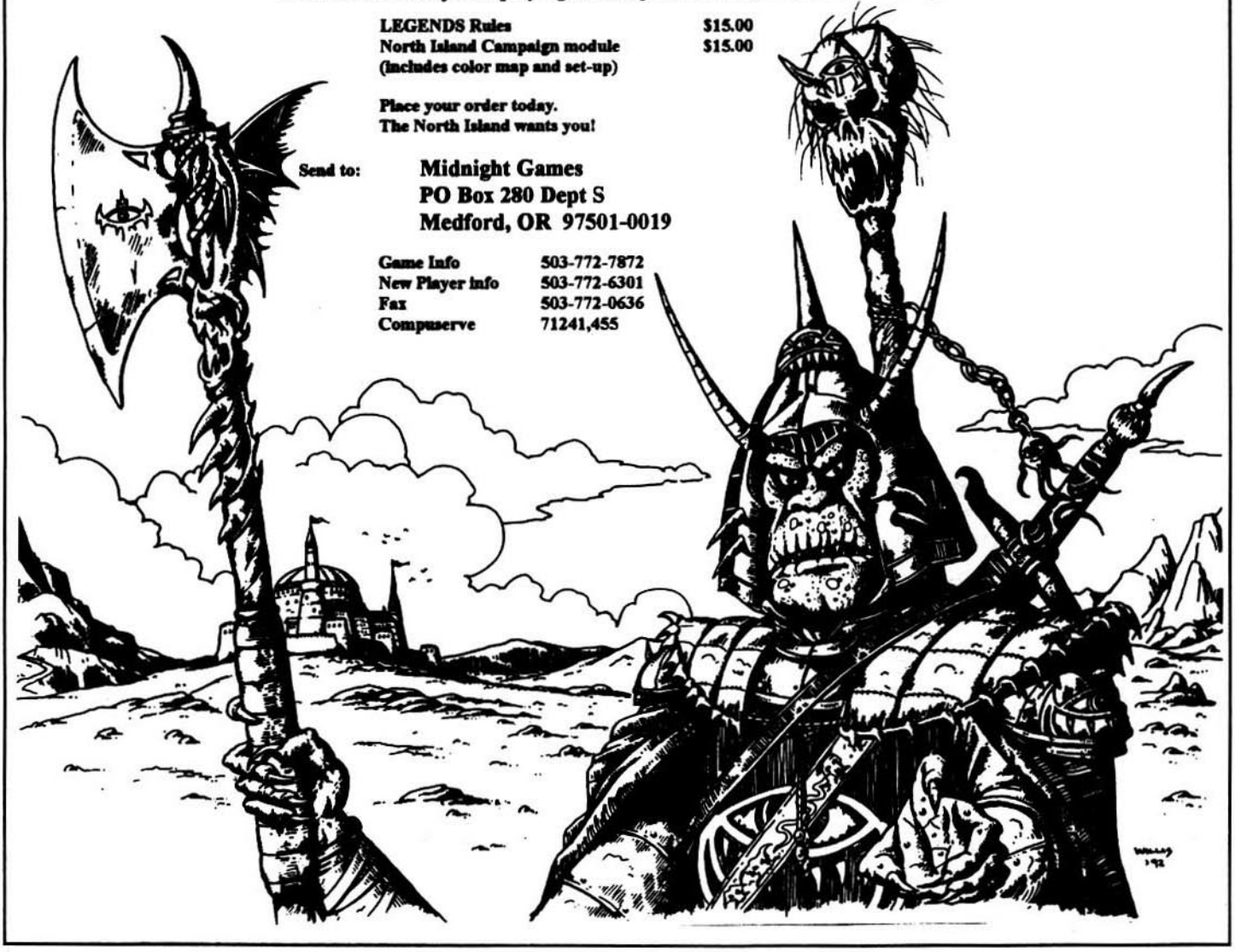
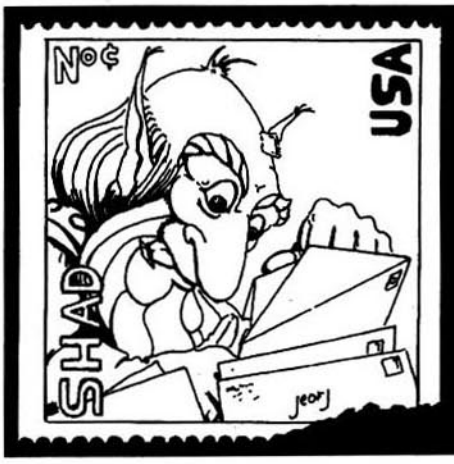




POST MARQUE™

Special Play-By-Mail Section

Edited by Patrick M. Rodgers

I've never been one to believe that you can have too much of a good thing. Hey, if it's good, the more the better! Every once in awhile, in a game that had been running for a few years, I'd hear stories about old so-and-so who didn't play anymore, but wow, he was a great player, and if he were around today, things would be different. Sadly, old so-and-so was the victim of **PBM Burnout** and didn't play anything anymore.

Those stories used to make me chuckle. PBM Burnout? Either the guy was getting his butt kicked, or maybe he got married and his wife insisted that PBM was for losers and he'd better quit, or else. The sole reason I was in only six or seven games was because it was all I could afford on my salary at the time. If I'd had more money, the sky would have been the limit. Burnout, indeed!

Things have changed. I have a real day job now, on top of putting together Post Marque. Money's not tight anymore. Unfortunately, time is. Some of the turns I've been running lately have been more work than fun. Instead of filling them out immediately, some of them pile up (yes, even games I really like a lot) and wait until the deadline is almost upon me, and then it's a mad rush to the FAX, phone, or computer to get them in on time. I recognized the signs a few weeks ago, from stories a few old so-and-sos told me. Burnout.

Now I have the means to play just about any game I want, especially since most companies will offer me a review position. It's not a question of money anymore, though, it's time.

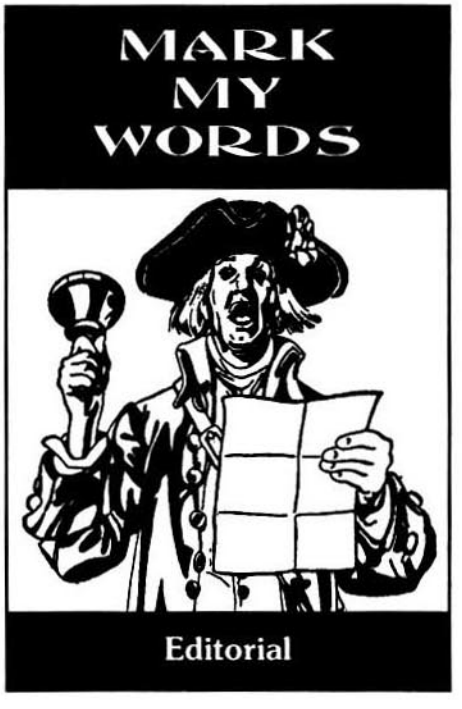
I recall the annoyance I used to feel at allies who missed a turn because they were "too busy" or because "things were hectic at work." I've only missed one turn so far, but there's been a lot of phone calls and Email left unanswered. I wonder how many of my allies are getting annoyed with *me*.

I suppose it's just another one of those Catch-22s that the universe seems to enjoy inflicting upon us. More work = more money = less time to enjoy it. The short term solution for me has been to not accept any more review positions, no matter how desperately I want them (and for a confirmed PBM addict, this isn't easy). Somehow, I don't think the staff writers will mind having to play additional review positions (the horror!)

Was there a point to all this? If there was, I've forgotten it. Chalk it up as a lunatic rant or a public service announcement; your choice. For the record, I'm certainly not advocating that anyone play fewer PBM games.

In closing, I hope to meet some of you on the con circuit. I'll be representing **SHADIS** at **AndCon** in Ohio again this year, as well as **ShoreCon** in New Jersey. All are welcome to stop by the booth and chat. Even - no, especially - old so-and-sos.

Patrick M Rodgers



Editors Note: *This issue marks the first anniversary of both Post Marque and Patrick's involvement with SHADIS Magazine. The entire staff would like to commend Patrick and his loyal staff of PBM reviewers on a job well done! Thanks to his column more and more new players are discovering the wonderful world of play-by-mail.*

JRB

PHOENIX

Phoenix is an elegant, engaging, and well-balanced PBEM space game of diplomacy, exploration, economic expansion, and military conquest for novice and expert players alike. Phoenix is the 6-year-old brainchild of veteran game designers Garrett, Goodman, and Woods.

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Welcome to Play-By-Mail (PBM) Gaming

The postal gaming industry has existed for over twenty years. At present, there are over 300 games in operation in the United States alone. From two to 2,000 players participate in each game. When a player joins a game, the person or company who moderates the game will inform the player of the nature of his starting position. The player then decides on a course of action, and mails his response back to the moderator. The moderator collects all of the responses from the players, processes them, and sends all players a new status report. This process (called a "turn") is then repeated.

There are many different categories of PBM games, covering many genres. Most are computer moderated, which means that the moderator takes the players' input and enters it into a computer. The impartial computer performs all calculations and determines the results of the players' actions, and then prints out a new status report for all players. Players need not have a computer to participate, nor do they need to know "computer language."

Some games end when a predetermined set of conditions have been met (e.g. when the Germans capture Paris, or when someone has found the Sword of Carnage). These games are called "closed-ended" games. Other games, called "open-ended" games, have no set ending, like traditional face-to-face RPGs. There are many great victories and losses, but the game never ends.

The fee charged by a moderator for one turn (sending in one set of orders and receiving one status report) ranges from under a dollar to over twenty dollars. The average price per turn is currently between four and five dollars. This may seem steep to newcomers, but compare the cost of a PBM turn, which can bring hours of enjoyment on a regular basis, to a movie ticket, or similar entertainment.

Many gamers who insist that they don't like PBM gaming have never actually tried it. There are many companies who offer no-obligation, no-cost rulebooks and/or turns. With so little to risk, we hope all of our readers will try at least one PBM game.

This is an extremely abbreviated version of an article in the first column of *Post Marque*. If you would like to hear more about PBM gaming, please send an SASE to SHADIS, 17880 Graystone Avenue #203, Chino Hills CA 91709, and we will send you a reprint of the article, free of charge. ❑

KRAHLIZEK

(pronounced "KRAL-i-zek") A closed-end strategic wargame

The god Krahl has placed you on a land of his own making with several others. He has provided the perfect conditions to prove your empire-building abilities: a few provinces, some gold, troops and navies, and plenty of filth-ridden peasants. Expand your empire by taxing your peasants and attacking other players. But take care -- overtaxed rabble take no truck from greedy tyrants. If you balance your military and social demands, you may purchase advanced technologies which can give you the upper hand you need to crush your enemies . . . and claim Krahl as your own!

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Setups include free setup turn, rules, and three turns

SHIP AHOY!

New PBM Games Spotted

This is the section of Post Marque where we will be examining new PBM games. These are only overviews, based solely on promotional materials received from PBM companies (usually a rulebook; occasionally a sample setup). These overviews should not be construed as endorsements or complete reviews.

❖❖❖

Night of the Things, from *The Madhouse*, brings Jason, Freddy, and Chuckie right into your mailbox (tight squeeze, eh?) The game is based on *American B-Grade Horror Flicks*, so don't expect deep, meaningful plots or heavy gothic atmosphere. As the rulebook makes clear, the game is intentionally campy. The characters are all in high school, and the available character classes include Jock, Rocker, Babe, Cheerleader, Nerd, etc.

NOTT is hand-moderated, which leaves lots of room for role-playing and silliness. Interaction between players seems to be a central theme in the game, especially since lone individuals have a tendency to meet unpleasant fates before most B-grade horror flicks end. As it is, *The Madhouse* warns that the mortality rate in **NOTT** is quite high. Still, all players receive a copy of the complete "story" when the game concludes, regardless of whether or not their character survived.

As with many hand- moderated games, the rulebook itself contains little information, since there are few limits on what characters can do. The rules and turns are laser printed, funny, and pleasant to look at. If any company has the (warped, sick) sense of humor needed to make a game like this work, it's *The Madhouse* (do you know any other GMs who refer to themselves as "Chief Surgeon?") *The Madhouse* is on Compuserve's **PBMGAMES** forum as 71524,2003 and they accept turns via Email, so American players should have no problem with due dates.

❖❖❖

In between filling out **Illuminati** turns and rereading **Principia Discordia** for secret messages (they're there, you just can't see them. Fnord.), the truly paranoid may enjoy perusing the rules for **SpyKor**, the straight-outta-playtest debut game from the aptly-named *Sudden Asylum* (no relation to *The Madhouse* - or is there? I smell a conspiracy...)

SpyKor takes place in the all-too-near future. International boundaries have fallen, and all power has been seized by the truly mighty - the *Korporati*.

Yes, Big Business got bigger, and bigger, and now everything meaningful is done under the auspices of a Kor. The military-industrial complex still thrives, since Korporati don't limit their conflict to the boardroom. In addition to a good CEO and solid Representatives, a strong Kor will employ the services of numerous military units, as well as spies.

SpyKor also offers an economic system that includes production and a stock market, as well as a Tek Level advancement system, leaving players with decisions to make regarding the focus of their Kor. There are many options available to players (including assassinations, stock thefts, underworld dealings and sabotage, to name but a few), as well as secret victory conditions to add to the paranoia.

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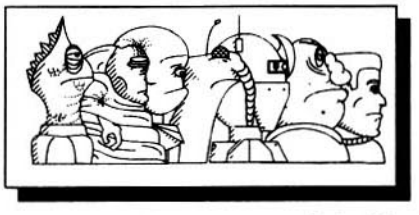

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Even the playtest rulebook was well-presented (the commercial version was not available at press time). The rules don't seem terribly complicated, and the turn results are well laid-out, informative, easy to understand, and laser-printed. Final details regarding turn cost were not available as we went to press.

To try your hand at ravaging the Earth and laying waste to all in your path (in a civlized manner), post to 76066,2230 on the CompuServe PBMGAMES forum, or contact Sudden Asylum, 1401 Gatlinburg Drive, Pflugerville, TX 78660

❖❖❖

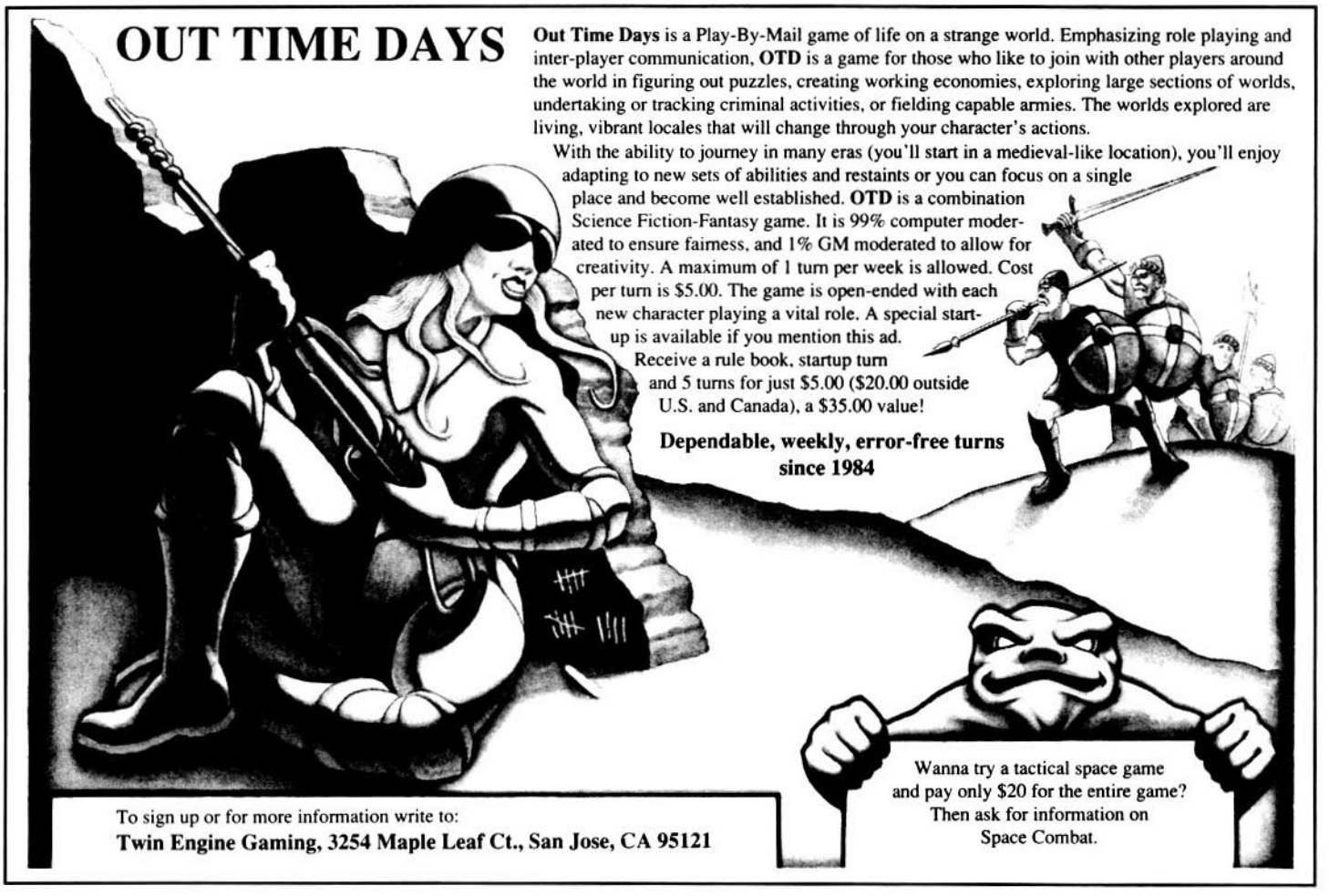
"Keep the damn pebble - and quit calling me Grasshopper!" There's a line you probably won't hear in the first American game from **Paspa Games**, run by notable Australian GM Dr. Bill Pasparialis. Titled *Samurai Warlord*, the game focuses on the struggle for power in feudal Japan. While the bulk of the game appears to be computer moderated, there is some hand-moderation for special actions by players, allowing for role-playing. Each player selects a character from a list provided, each with his own agenda. Friends who join together may be disappointed to learn that their characters' agendas are at cross-purposes.

Judging from the draft copy of the rules received for review, the focus of the game seems to be largely military in nature, although role-playing and hand-moderated special actions will be important in the game. The maps provided are somewhat difficult to understand, although they may be improved with the final rulebook. Dr. Pasparialis has enjoyed tremendous success with his Australian release, **Swashbuckler**.

To see if *SW* stacks up, see the review in a future issue of SHADIS. Further details are available from Paspa, 253 Shennecossett Parkway, Croton, Ct. 06340.

❖❖❖

The egotistical gamer (egotists in PBM? Really?) will certainly give consideration to the debut release from *Llucky Llama Games*, if only for its name. A closed-ended fantasy wargame, it is titled **You Rule!** and is computer moderated (by a computer named, Dr. Glitch, according to the rulebook). Victory is achieved by controlling a percentage of provinces on the map (usually about 50%). To this end, players may employ characters of ten different professions (including the fearsome accountant), equip forces with five different weapon and armor types, cast 24 different spells, manage production of four different



commodities, and assemble troops of six different races.

In addition to the standard features of many fantasy wargames (such as population growth, commodity production, etc.), **You Rule!** offers a few twists. For example, each of the six races "rules" another race, enjoying significant combat bonuses against them, and is similarly ruled by another race, suffering equal penalties. Another notable feature is the "border battle," which occurs when two adjacent provinces attempt to invade each other simultaneously.

The rulebook itself is very high quality, with unusually crisp laser-printing and pleasant illustrations. It is seventy pages in length and includes a table of contents, sample turns, a glossary, and an orders summary list (which is reprinted on cardstock for easy reference).

Information seems to be well-organized and easy to understand, and most equations for the game (especially combat) are provided. Results seem to average five pages in length, are laser-printed and include a custom map every turn.

For a very limited time, *Llucky Llama Games* is offering the rulebook, setup, and first three turns for only $10.00. Turns are $5.50 each; $4.50 if submitted via email.

For more information, write to *Llucky Llama Games*, 80-Q North Cabrillo Highway, Box #226, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019, direct email to llucky@crl.com, post 74044,325 on the CompuServe PBMGAMES forum, or phone/fax (415) 712-0283.

While PBEM games are normally outside the purview of *Post Marque*, so much has been made of **Phoenix** in PBM circles recently that a brief mention seemed appropriate (but in future, look to *Electronic Frontiers* for PBEM coverage). Offered by *Gamer's Den* exclusively by Email,

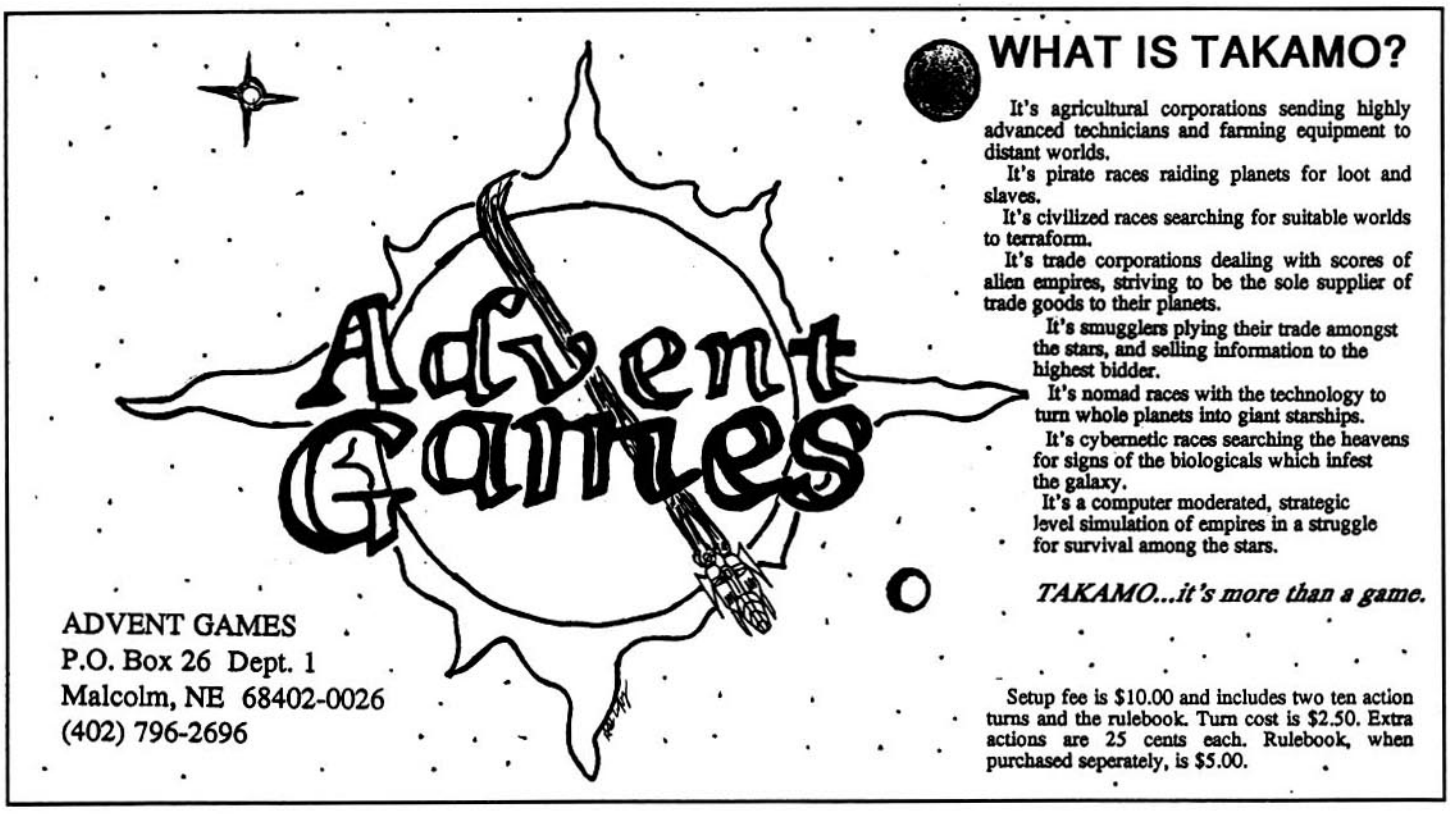
Phoenix is a closed-ended, computer-moderated science-fiction game of conquest that is touted as the "six year old brainchild of (three) veteran game designers." Turns are run one to three times a week, with two to twenty players per game. Games typically last thirty turns.

In the draft copy examined, players were warned not to be frightened by the rulebook; at 170+ pages, the warning seems necessary. Tables, shading, and bold text are used with exceptional efficacy throughout, providing a high level of readability. There are five appendices and the amount of information provided appears to be exhaustive (there is even advice for the Machivellian gamer on how to falsify turn results to deceive enemies).

The rules are printed on three-hole punched paper to facilitate rules updates. New players are not likely to be left with unanswered questions, but if they are, they will undoubtedly be pleased with the high level of customer service provided by *Gamer's Den*.

Due to the sheer volume of information, it seems almost impossible to offer more of an overview without using multiple pages.

Look for a review somewhere in the pages of SHADIS in the near future. For more information, contact *Gamer's Den*, PO Box 390755, Mountain View, CA 94039, post 73613,3472 on CompuServe's *PBMGAMES* forum, or direct email to support@den.com. ❑



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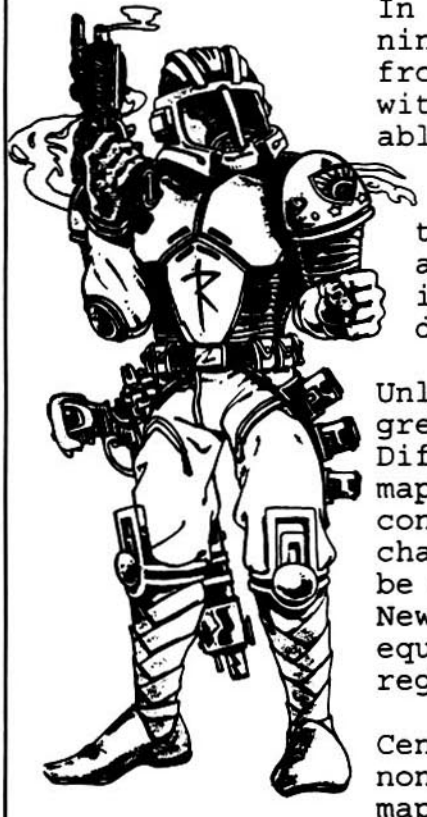
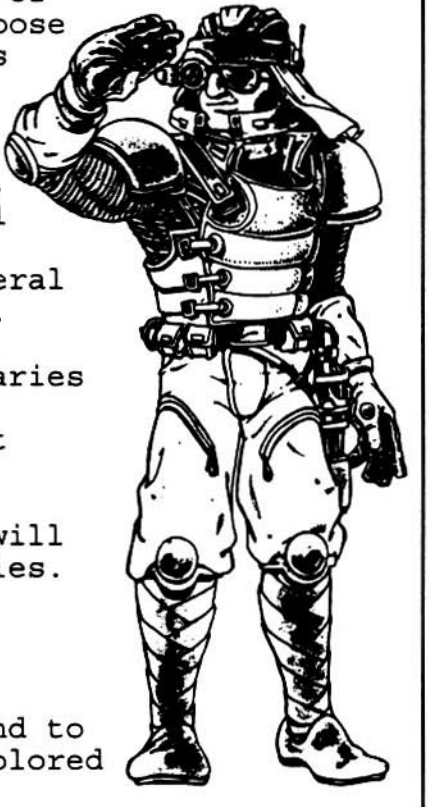


In Centurion, you command a group of nine gunners. Each gunner can choose from twenty-five standard vehicles with experienced characters being able to custom design tanks. As gunners successfully complete missions and accumulate kills, they will increase in both skill and rank. Players can also use infantry squads and call in several different types of fire support.

Unlike similar games, Centurion varies greatly from mission to mission. Different scenarios have different maps, objectives, and victory conditions. Additionally, as characters increase in rank they will be given additional responsibilities. New vehicles, weapon systems, and equipment are added to the game regularly.



Centurion's turn results are second to none featuring an 8½"x14" multi-colored map; high-quality graphic vehicle records detailing the status of each of your tanks; and laser printed action reports.

To get started send $5.00 for rules (US) or £5 for rules and setup (UK) Additional turns are $5.00 (US) or £3 (UK). **SPECIAL OFFER (US ONLY):** prepay your first five turns ($25), and the rule book is free.

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DARK AGE: QUICK AND EASY, MEDIEVAL -STYLE

Confessions of a PBM Junkie

By Patrick M. Rodgers

There are certain things that distinguish the casual, "amateur" PBM gamer from those of us who are die-hard, game-crazed, addicted, "professional" PBM gamers.

To my way of thinking, one reasonably good sign of addiction is a willingness to play games from overseas.

The turnaround is longer, diplomacy is harder, postage is more expensive, and you occasionally miss a turn despite your best efforts. Sometimes, though, there's that game that you just have to play. Then it becomes two, and then three.....

For me, **Dark Age** from *Post-It Games* in the UK was just such a product.

From the ad in *Flagship*, I could only guess at what wonders the game might offer: an open-ended, character-based epic game (a la *Legends)*, set in the British Isles circa the Dark Ages. Diplomacy, intrigue, spies, armies...<sigh>. Well, *Post-It Games* never answered my letter (lost in the post, maybe), so after six months or so, I put the game out of my mind. That is, until *HCS Games* licensed the game for play on this side of the Atlantic. As the EMTs wheeled me away to the cardiac care unit, I was still clutching *Paper Mayhem* in my hand, staring at the ad.

Once I finally got the rules, I was surprised. The game wasn't anything like my expectations. No characters. No epic-style gaming. No in-game role-playing. A closed-ended wargame. Initially, I was a little let-down, but that changed after a few turns (more on that later). The rulebook itself was pleasant enough - nothing fancy, but the facts were there. The rules were easy to understand and remember; my only complaint would be that the organization could have used slight improvement. The map that comes with the game serves its purpose adequately, but in these days of laser-printing and affordable graphics, something with more pizazz (and a little more readability) is in order.

It's not their fault

These complaints, like most of the other small complaints in this article, should not reflect on *HCS Games*, since they license the product from another company, and have no control over most of it. Since HCS doesn't have access to the source code for the game, they are unable to implement upgrades or check on some of the more obscure questions as to how the program handles certain things, but this doesn't really affect the quality of play. The major thing that could use improving is the mapping system. As it stands now, players are given a map at the start of the game, and on each turn, changes in territorial ownership are announced, but it is up to the player to update his map each turn (time to bring out the corkboard and colored stick-pins). If they had the source code, HCS could add a computer-generated map to each printout. Maybe Post-It will take care of this?

About the only complaint I have regarding HCS itself is that my change of address was mislaid (maybe I mislaid it in the course of moving; who knows), so I missed the first turn of the game. However, the program runs auto-turns if you miss one, and while not incredibly intelligent, the program did actually process a competitive first turn for me.

Once I actually got a few turns into the game, some of my initial enthusiasm returned.

Dark Age wasn't what I was expecting, but it was turning out to be a fun game. As gamers are wont to do, people

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were role-playing outside of the game, and some of them actually had enough historical knowledge to do it convincingly. I was playing an exiled Irish noble who vowed to conquer Britain and then return to his homeland in glory. The ruler of Wessex (Ted Shannon) send me a wonderfully-written in-character diplomatic letter, with a greeting in Irish (just *try* finding an Irish-English dictionary at your local library).

Remember, all of this occurs outside of the actual game mechanics, but it certainly enhancesenjoyment of the game.

Victory

The goal of **Dark Age** is to accumulate victory points (VP). There are three ways to win: the first two involve achieving VP in excess of other players, and the third way to win is by achieving a set number of VP. The primary method of accumulating VP is by controlling population. Every 3-5 turns, at random, a census occurs. For each unit of population a player controls, he receives 1 VP. In addition, a VP is gained with each successful conquest of a territory or raid, with the victim losing a VP.

Since each area in the game can only hold a set number of population units, dependent on terrain type (ranges from 1 for mountains to 5 for cities), the secondary goal is, naturally, to conquer as many areas as possible. Each area contains armies, population, fortification, and build levels. Each fortification will enhance the defensive value of one army. Each build level increases production in an area.

Fife and Drum

The "currency" in the game is the Build Point (BP). Each turn, a player receives BP from each area he controls, equal to the population level plus the build level in each area. BPs are then subtracted for army maintenance, and the remainder are available for use that turn. BPs can be "stashed" in the treasury for later use, but the cost to do this is enormously prohibitive (in a word: don't).

Combat is simple: the strength of the attacking army is equal to the number of units in the army. The strength of the defending army is equal to the number of units in the army, plus the number of population units in the area (you didn't think they *wanted* to be conquered, did you?) plus any bonuses for defensive terrain, plus any bonuses for fortifications. Depending on the method of attack, the two strengths of the armies are compared for a number of combat rounds, until losses entirely decimate one or both armies.

There are several methods for armies to attack areas, and this feature is primarily what makes **Dark Age** a medium-complexity wargame. For example, there is the straightforward Assault order, in which each side takes losses of one-third of the enemy's strength *and* the weaker side also takes losses of one-third of the difference in strengths.

There is also the Overrun order, in which the weaker side takes losses of one third the difference in strengths of both sides, *and* if the defending armies are not wiped out, the attack becomes an Assault, but the attacker loses an additional army every combat round.

There are actually spies in the game, but I never used one. Their power seemed relatively weak and useless. The only action they have that I ever considered to be of value was the Bribe order, whereby a spy could attempt to offer BPs to a city in exchange for its declaration of loyalty to the spy's master. Of course, if the attempt fails, the bribe money is still lost, and the rulebook gives no guidelines as to how many BP should be offered.

To be or not to be...

We're nearing the end of the midgame and starting to head for the final stretch. Mercia, which I control, is firmly allied with East Anglia and Wessex, my neighbors to the Southeast.

My expansion to the West will destroy Gwent and Dyfed, but will soon have me up against Strathclyde, who has been pleasantly neutral up until now. To the north lies my most serious rival, Northumbria, who has also been on good terms with me, until an unexpected and unprovoked attack this turn. He hasn't returned my phone calls, so I have no choice but to declare war. My substantial lead in BP production will enable me to levy more armies, but he may prove to be a superior tactician. Time will tell. For now, Mercia

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enjoys a decent, but not commanding lead over the other positions.

Ye Olde Summarie

By the seventh turn or so, I was thoroughly hooked on **Dark Age**. The turn results are complete, thorough and easy to digest, and it takes ten to twenty minutes to prepare orders for the next turn (you're never "too busy" to get a DA turn out). This makes DA an excellent "beer and pretzels" ("ale and bread rolls?") wargame, especially for those with a penchant for Things Medieval (it would make a decent game for a first-timer, too).

To sum up: I found **Dark Age** to be an excellent low-to-medium complexity wargame. Since the game is set on an island (Britain), diplomacy is an important aspect to the game, since there is a very limited amount of territory to control. If a player drops, a standby may be assigned, or the computer may play the position.

The service from HCS has been excellent; when one of my turns was two weeks late in arriving, thanks to the Winter of '94 (those of you in Northeastern America know what I'm talking about), HCS emailed me the pertinent info and I emailed them my next turn a few hours later. Turnaround has been prompt and all my questions about the game were answered. The one or two negatives are minor annoyances when compared with the degree of enjoyment that the game offers. It's not epic in nature or incredibly complex, but it's fun.

Those interested in trying their hand at conquest should contact HCS Games for more information. Turns are currently priced at $4.00 each, which is not unreasonable.

❑

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I AM GOD HERE

A Review by Patrick Rodgers

There are power gamers, and then there are power gamers. When the glamour of managing a few gladiators has worn thin, and the thrill of leading armies into battle grows dull, the true power gamer has only one more platform to ascend: divinity. Which makes **One True Faith**, in some respects, the ultimate power game. In **OTF**, each player assumes the role of a deity on the far-distant yet strangely familiar planet of Erth. In what can only be called coincidence, the map of Erth bears striking resemblance to a map of Europe, Asia, and Northern Africa. The names of some of the provinces will also seem familiar to many. Of course, the inhabitants of Erth are a wee bit more diverse than our Earth - there are Beastmen, Centaurs, various types of humans and elves, Giants, Dwarves, and a few types of Undead, to name a few. How's that for multicultural?

Each deity has a sphere of influence that they have mastery over. These specialties include Justice, Metalworking, Thievery, Animals, Hunting, Prophecy, Fire, Love, Mercy, etc. Each sphere of influence carries certain additional powers. For example, a god of Science may produce artillery at 80% of regular cost, and the artillery is more accurate. A god of Valor will inspire increased Morale in his troops.

The goal of **OTF** is obvious and straightforward: convince people to worship you. The amount of power that a deity can wield is directly dependant on the number of beings who worship him/her/it/other/all of the above. Each deity has a number of Divine Points (DP) to spend each turn, which are used to create Divine Intervention (DI). The amount of DP received each turn is equal to 1% of the number of beings who worship the deity, multiplied by the Cosmic Balance. The average DP available on early turns is 25.

The Cosmic Balance is a reflection of the ratio of those who follow the Ethos (Good, Neutral, or Evil) of the deity, to those who do not. For example, an Evil deity will receive more DP when the number of beings who worship Evil gods is greater than those who worship gods of another Ethos, since the Cosmic Balance will be tilted towards Evil.

Cosmic Balance doesn't seem to make a huge difference thus far - maybe 3-6% - but a concerted effort by deities of one Ethos could cause a shift in the Balance significant enough to provide a major advantage.

Some of the DIs that deities have at their disposal are Heavy Rains (renders a border impassable), Fertility (increases a province's population), Plague of Locusts (reduces production), Epidemic (kills population; spreads to surrounding provinces), Create Hero/Priest (inspires individual beings to perform epic deeds), Volcano (obliterates everything in a province) and the ever-popular Earthquake (levels temples, kills people, throws public transit off schedule). There are others.

Each deity may also create his very own special DI. The exact effects of the miracle and its cost in DP must be worked out with the GM. The DI should reflect the deity's sphere of influence. For example, Ferretlord, the god of Animals, has a special DI called Animal Control, which can cause Fear, Stubbornness, or Frenzy in all animal units (and occasionally werewolves).

So what happens when Ziplok, the god of Storage Products, turns your high priest into a plastic sandwich baggie? Fortunately, a deity may choose to allocate some DP to Divine Protection. This handy DI will repel many forms of hostile attack against a deity and his followers. It will even cancel out a few of an enemy deity's defensive DIs. For example, if a deity tries to send troops into a rival's province, but the rival has causes Heavy Rains to make the border impassable, the aggressor's Divine Protection will cancel the rival's Heavy Rains. The biggest practical upshot of this DI is that it makes it much easier for a group of deities to gang up on an individual - each member of the group can spend, say, 5 DP each on hostile actions and Divine Protection. A group of four would be directing 20 DP of hostility against their target, who probably couldn't afford any more than 5 DP of Protection himself.

Contrary to popular belief, deities can't be everywhere at once, and probably wouldn't want to be even if they could (would you want to be in the public restrooms at Grand Central Station?). Besides which, the mortals are all too easily awed, flustered, and stunned; frequent personal appearances has a tendency to make them, well, gibbering, drooling lunatics. The real hard cases become jaded and refuse to do anything unless their god appears directly and orders them to or else. To prevent all of these undesirable situations and to give Joe Deity a chance to take in a sporting event from time to time, without interruption, **OTF** features two types of exceptional mortals: Heroes and Priests.

Heroes and Priests are created through Divine Intervention - perhaps the deity makes his face appear in a tortilla shell somewhere, or sends an angel/devil/chihuahua to speak to the mortal. For whatever reason, the being is inspired to perform epic deeds and devote his life to the service of his god. Heroes are the backbone of a strong military. They lead troops in battle, and can be sent on dangerous missions. Priests may also lead troops (although not as effectively), are invaluable on missions, can preach, and perform miracles.

Heroes and Priests have a Grade rating, which ranges from E (worst) to A (best). Higher Grades cost more DP to create. Of course, Grade can be improved later on in the game through the expenditure of DP. The miracles available to a Priest depend on his Grade. At the beginning of the game, each player selects (from a list) three miracles available for each grade of priest. Even the Grade E miracles are immediately useful; some of the Grade A miracles are truly dangerous.

The beginning of the game occurs shortly after the "emergence" of the Pantheon of Erth.

Each deity has control over a small cluster of provinces, as well as a few others that are scattered elsewhere. All of the mortals in these provinces are totally devoted to the deity.

The rest of Erth, however, doesn't think much of the whole religion thing, and as such, are fiercely agnostic and/or atheistic.

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As with Earth, the most popular and convenient method of converting people on Erth seems to be by hitting them over the head with heavy, sharp, and/or pointy things until they see the light (or several lights, depending on how hard they've been hit) and gratefully accept the salvation offered to them. Unfortunately, mortals can be a stubborn lot (fragile, too), and many of them will cheerfully (or accidentally) die rather than bend the knee to the latest deity to hit town. Being omniscient (well, almost omniscient) and all that, most deities know that the moment of mortal demise causes extreme releases of energy, and will take steps to ensure that they can harness that energy.

Mass executions also tend to wreak havoc on the local economy; if a province is conquered militarily then all production will be permanently reduced (it can be rebuilt, though). This can lead to a lot of resentment towards militaristic deities. In my game, I took a very aggressive position early on, and was soon facing a five player coalition who were very unhappy about the fact that my followers were laying waste to everything in sight. Of course, four of them had tasted the fury of my troops directly; maybe that had something to do with it....This effect also accurately simulates the ravages of war. A province that is fought over and conquered again and again will rapidly become a barren wasteland, useless to all.

The far more environmentally-friendly approach to conversion is to send priests out to spread the good news. If logic and reason were as quick and effective as an axe blade, this would be preferred by far. For a deity to "control" a province, 50% or more of the population must worship him. If a deity gains control of a province through preaching, not only does he avoid the unpleasant side effects of military conquest, but, rather than fighting him, all military units present in the province will convert and accept his orders!

Preaching, however, is slow. A priest can only convert four beings per turn per Grade rating (a Grade E converts four; a grade A converts twenty). If the priest and his subjects are of the same race, the figure is doubled; however, factors such as racial animosity, Ethical differences, and even the physical size of the priest in relation to his subjects can change this figure.

If funds can be brought into the province, a temple can be constructed. This will convert an additional 10 beings per turn. Since the average size of a province is about 200 population, this process takes multiple turns to complete. In the interim, rival priests may show up, rival armies may invade, or other matters may call the priest away.

Priests and Heroes have one more advantage: they can perform missions. A mission can be anything the player desires - steal an artifact, desecrate a temple, assassinate a general, pick up Chinese food for the high priest's wife, etc. The success of the mission will depend in large part upon the Grade of the Heroes and/or Priests sent to carry it out. The opportunities for role-playing and creativity are numerous in this area. Like battles, missions are entered manually by the GM and the results are presented in clear, pleasant text.

No matter how polite and eco-conscious everyone is to begin with, eventually there is going to be war. If there wasn't, the mortal bards (who make those lovely praise songs that deities love so much) would probably cast aside their harps and become bakers out of sheer boredom and lack of subject matter. The trick to war is simple: win.

While heroes wield steel and priests wield magick with equal prowess, their efforts alone are not enough to grind a province under the heel of an aggressive deity. To properly subjugate the unenlightened, military troops are needed. Troops are raised from population, and are paid for with material resources. For every ten beings of a given race that live in a province, one troop of that race may be conscripted per turn. These troops may range from the unexciting "ratmen with swords" to the utterly devastating "high elven dragonriders." Each racial type usually has several different troops types available; for example, wood elves can be recruited as spearmen, bowmen, falconers, and cavalry (with unicorns as mounts).

An oft-neglected element of successful combat in **OTF** is artillery. Good supporting artillery can cut through enemy lines like a Ginzu knife (and still slice tomatoes for the Victory Celebration). The standard ballista and catapult are the artillery of choice for most races, but some races have developed skyrockets, flamethrowers, dokyu-ballistas (essentially giant, repeating crossbows), cannons and mortars. Those oh-so-devastating dragonriders seem a little nervous when flying against a force of good artillery.

Identical troops may be organized into units of up to 20 troops, depending on size and type of troop. If a unit is led by a hero or priest, it will enjoy bonuses in combat, and will be less likely to flee. Players have the option of selecting a simple strategy for their entire force (e.g. "Flank," "Infantry Wall," etc.) or submitting more detailed military orders for each unit.

The descriptions of the battle are entered manually by the GM and contain enough detail to be entertaining, as well as to provide insight into the combat system.

In the event that a deity's followers are defeated militarily, survivors will usually attempt to retreat to an adjacent friendly province (assuming, of course, that one exists). It is not unheard of, however, for some truly pathetic mortals to beg for the mercy of the victorious deity and convert on the spot, in an attempt to save their pitiful lives.

OTF contains one ugly truth in it that people of our Earth have been arguing for many years. In **OTF**, bigger people count for more. Every race has a "size" rating. When performing any calculations involving population, the number of beings involved is multiplied by their size rating. Thus, if 10 Giants (each with a size rating of 5) worship a deity, than the deity has 50 Population worshipping him. This also applies when preaching, since an Ogre is probably more likely to get people's attention (and compliance) than a Goblin.

Population can be moved from one province to another. This can be most advantageous when the "1 troop per 10 civilians" levy limit proves too restrictive. If 5 Ogres are present in one province, and 6 in another, they can be moved into the same province for a total of 11, allowing the recruitment of 1 ogre troop per turn. Zero population growth is a way of life on Erth (whatever happened to "be fruitful and multiply?"), but the Fertility DI can overcome this problem.

The population of each province can be given one order per turn. The default order is "Work," which allows normal commerce and production in the province to occur. However, a deity may choose to issue other commands, such as Riot, Crime, Security, or others. If any order other than "Work" is issued, production for that province is totally disrupted for the turn.

Provinces produce 5 types of material goods each turn: Money ($), Beast (B), Chemical (C), Wood (W), and Metal (M). Just about everything costs money, so it's an important commodity to have. Beast points are spent on military units that contain animals - a wood elf falconry troop costs 1 B, whereas a high elf dragonrider unit costs 105 B. Chemical points are used in the foul necromantic art of Undead creation, as well as in the less sinister art of gunpowder production. Wood and Metal are used to build things, and to outfit troops with weapons and armor. Any production not used in a turn is placed into a province's available stockpile.

There's only one fly in the holy water here, and it stems from the way the game is moderated. Currently, there is no "program" per se that drives **One True Faith**. The "accounting" is done as a Lotus spreadsheet, and the battles, movement, etc. are done manually by Keith. What this adds up to is alot of work on his part. Unfortunately, what that translates to is a higher turn fee for the player; not an uncommon situation with non-computer moderated games.

At the time of this writing, the pricing structure of **OTF** was under review by the GM. The game I played was the first to be commercially-run, and when the game is fully complete, Keith will have a better idea of the amount of time involved and may be able to lower prices. The turn fee at present is on the high side for PBM, and there is an additional charge for battles and missions. This may be replaced by a "no hidden fees" policy when the price review is complete.

The service provided with the game has been excellent so far. All questions have been answered (sometimes in the newsletter so that everyone can benefit from the knowledge), player concerns have been dealt with, and contact has been friendly and polite. A small complaint from the business end of things is that the GM hand-addresses envelopes; dedicated gamers may want to send him a supply of address labels (you know, the ones you had pre-printed with your ZIP+4 and Barcode? I know I'm not the only one!)

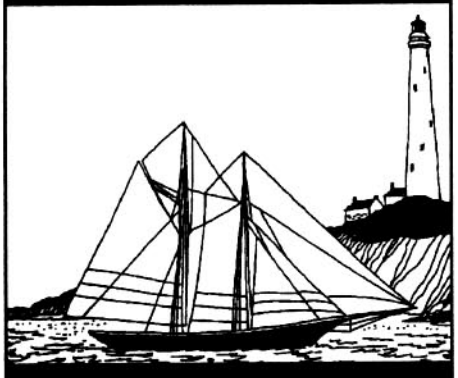
Overall, the game is very enjoyable. Turns take about forty-five minutes to complete, and are pretty straightforward. The rulebook is 37 pages, laser-printed and spiral-bound, and covers all pertinent information. The rules themselves are easy to understand. Turnaround time at present is three weeks, but two-week games may become available in the future. Interaction is about standard for PBM.

OTF is not the only "god" game on the market. However, many of the games that would fit that category have very limited emphasis on the deities themselves, and in truth, should be classed as wargames. Perhaps a special power at the start of the game; maybe a miracle a turn, but little else. **OTF**i is the first game that I personally have played (and I haven't played them all, not by a longshot) that really emphasizes the deity, and not just the military forces at his disposal. The GM's nurturing of the role-playing aspect of the game heightens this emphasis.

For further information about **One True Faith**, contact the GM, Keith Langley, at (303) 776-7987, noon-midnight, or write to him at 1614 Donovan Pl., Longmont CO 80501.

Mention **SHADIS/Post Marque** and your children will be blessed. Or something. ❑

MIDDLE EARTH: Word From the Trenches



Part II

By Heidi Wolters

Within the past few months I had my first experience with battle in *Game Systems, Inc.'s* **Middle Earth PBM**. What a fling!

As is par for the course for someone with an ego like my own, I was way overconfident.

While one of my armies, under Regent Amroth, was on its way down to take part in the siege of Dol Guldur along with the Woodmen and Noldo, I passed through a hex occupied by an army under Lieutenant Dlran of the Dog Lord's nation. I could have avoided it.

Should have, in fact. However, I was too full of that new-player pride to heed the Woodmen's advice and my own better judgment.

I marched straight on through to find that I was outclassed and outnumbered by about 200 troops. I still figured that with my troops' level of training, I'd be able to take him. Wrong. It wasn't a rout, exactly, but Amroth was a distinctly unhappy camper at the end of *that* turn.

Commander Thranduil, on the other hand, was faring quite well in the north. Having learned something from Amroth's spectacular failure, I was more sensible with Thranduil and was successful in aiding in the overthrow of one of the Dog Lord's strongholds that was only a hex or two away from my capital.

No matter how well-trained your armies are, it's always a tense wait between turns, worrying about how good your troops are, how good the enemy troops are, and whether or not someone's going to make a move on your capital while your armies are away - not that I've ever left my capital unguarded. It's also a fun wait, kind of like waiting to open your Christmas presents. Anticipation does wonders for the workings of the mind.

As I mentioned in my previous article, if you don't want your characters to be batted around like helpless balls of yarn, it's important to keep in contact with your fellow players. They often have a lot of insight to offer. After all, how else would one find out where the best sieges are occurring? It also saves a lot of page-flipping when one of your allies can say, "okay, now before you join in the siege, it would be best if you downgraded relations with the Dog Lord. That's order number...." As I also mentioned before, it's neat to hook up with other Tolkien fans across the country. It's nice to be able to assume that the people you meet are not only as intelligent and imaginative as you are, but also have at least one common interest. A word of caution, though: these friendships can wreak havoc on your phone bill!

Right now I am licking my wounds and working on building up my finances. Upgrading troops can be an expensive process. Things are beginning to heat up quite a bit for us dwellers in Mirkwood. The Dwarves have fallen, and the Eothraim and Northmen have disappeared into the mists. I know of only five Free Peoples nations in the game. I feel that I will be able to hold out for at least a while longer, though, as long as I can keep my armies fed. I am quite anxious to see what happens next, as I also have a feeling that the rest of the Dark Servants will be ganging up on us. That will be quite a feast! We'll at least have a few chunks of their flesh to nibble on the way down! ❑

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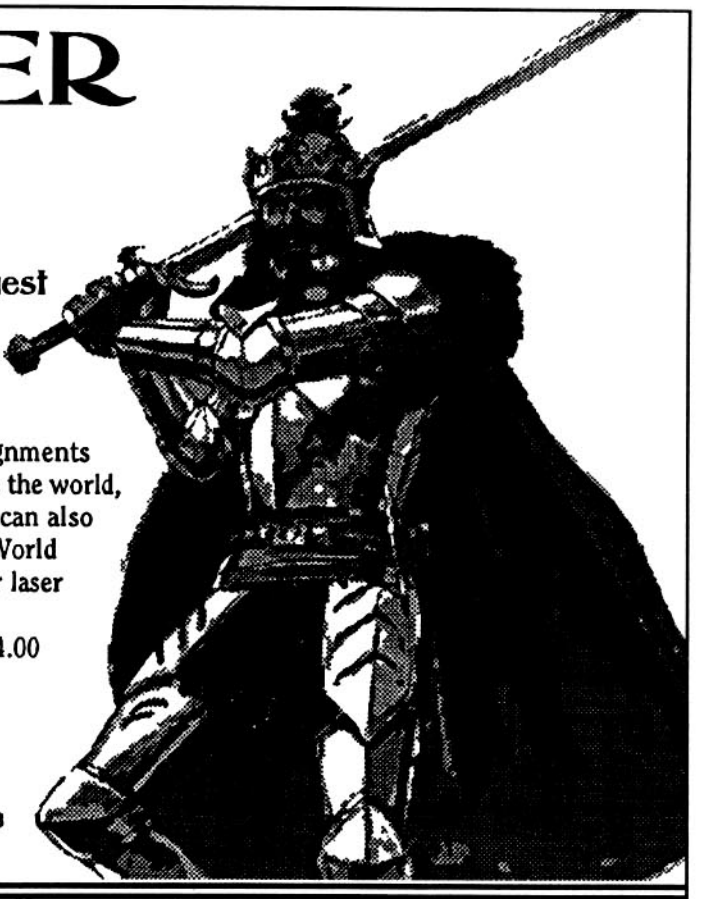

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Energy Mouse

Tink,
See you at Dixie. Oh, and don't forget the whip!!
Ace

Andrea,
Good luck in Officer School! Lean, Mean Fighting Machine! I'm very proud of you! Of course, you know I'll never salute you. Ain't gonna happen!
Jolly

Toni,
There's only one place to get cold pasta and it ain't Anahiem. Good luck with the new job.
JRB

Annie,
Get ready for a great adventure, low to high and follow thru. See you in a couple of weeks.
JZ

Hell Froze Over! Eagles On Tour '94

It was a great show — but what in the hell did we eat? Just a couple of average, ordinary guys, living average, ordinary lives. They saw us coming bud.

Luke and Matthew,
Had a great time! Now that you've turned John and Jolly on to coffee shops, we aren't getting any work done around here. Which one of you peed in the Jacuzzi?
Shad

Sheri,
You can stop holding your breath now. Make it electric lemonade and give me a running start. Say hey to Austin.
Jolly

LOST AND FOUND

Looking for old army/gaming buddies. Does anyone know where I can find Lewis Linscott, Michael Hammonds or Frank "Butch" Mitchell?
Contact editor.

WORDS OF PRAISE AND THANKS

A BIG SHADIS WEASEL TO THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE:

Dave Moyer
E. Ken Cox
Maragaret Noble
Wayne Wallace
Dave Williams
Marcello Figueroa
Ken Carpenter
Patrick Rodgers
Luke and Matthew Ahern
George and Jackie Vrbanic
Edwin and Donna Millheim
William Spencer-Hale
Dave Newton
Kevin Siembieda & Gang
Lou Prosperi and Staff

LET ME SHOW YOU A TRICK...

So what if I can't pull a table cloth out from under a pitcher of water. At least I saved the Vodka. Scratch off one Lamp. Do I get points for that?
Captain Levi

WANTED

Reviewers, writers & artists. Send SASE for Writers' and Artists' Guidelines to SHADIS, 17880 Graystone Ave. #203, Chino Hills CA 91709.

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WANTED

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BRIGHT FUTURE

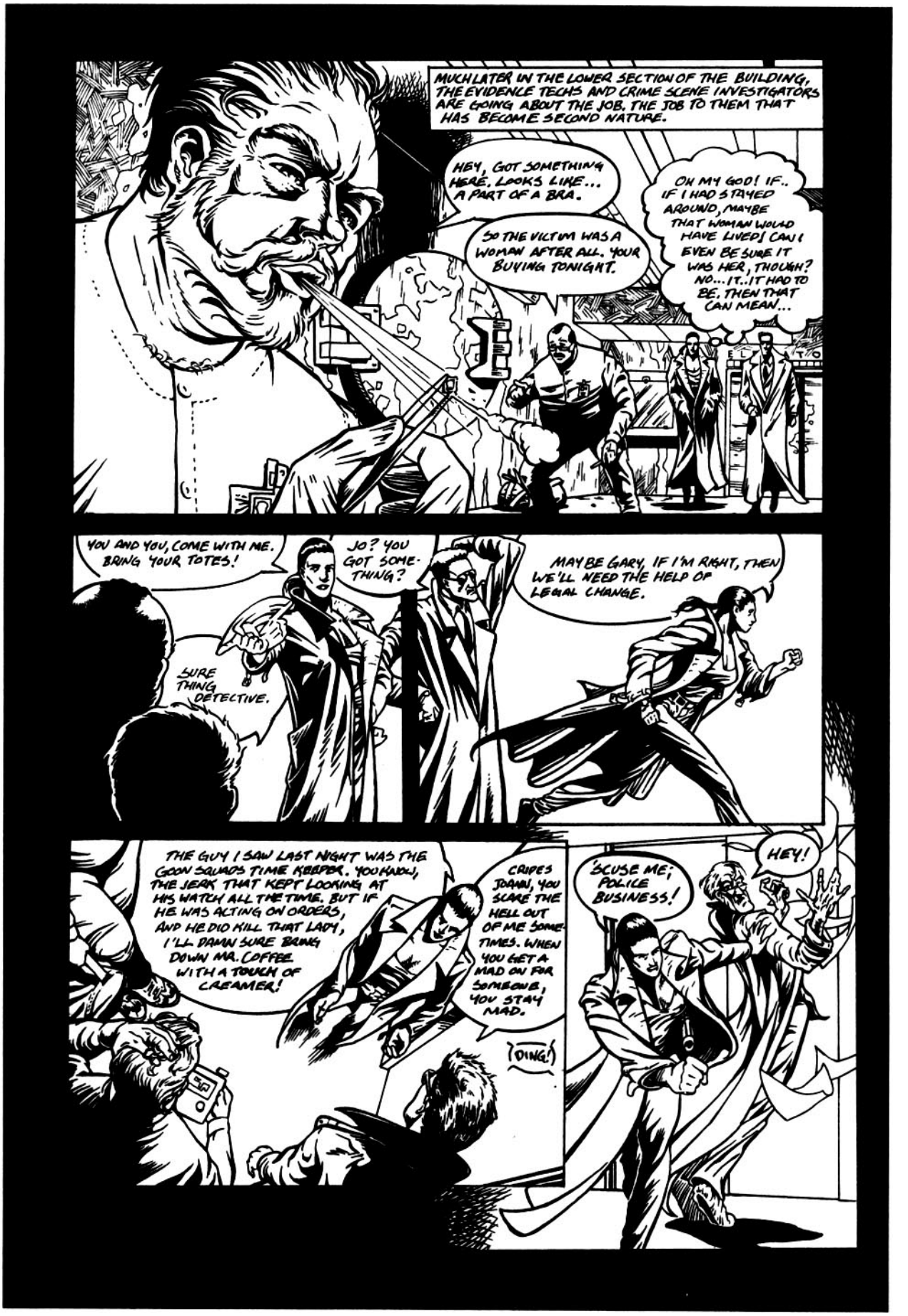
A MILHEIM / LEDERER / PARIS PRODUCTION

GOOD JOB JOANN.
OKAY, WE'RE CLEAR. PRIORITY ONE RUN; LETS GO!
I WAS WORRIED. I HOPE THIS IS OUR BOY; THE PEOPLE AT CITY HALL AND HOUSE OF ELECTIONS WERE WHINING ABOUT THE UPCOMING POLLS.
IT GOT PRETTY HOT UP THERE, CAPTAIN. ANY IDEA ON HOW THE FIRE STARTED?
CAPTAIN, CAN WE TAKE THAT ONE? WE CAN DO THE PAPERWORK ON THIS ONE WHEN WE GET BACK TO THE STATION.
NOT TILL THEY CAN PUT IT OUT AND GET A BETTER LOOK. I TELL YA, THESE THINGS ARE STARTING TO --
CODE FIVE. 10-46 AT UNITED WORLD POWER TEST LAB.

IT'LL TAKE YOU TWO 15 MINUTES TO GET THERE... GET GOING, AND I WANT A REPORT ON BOTH TONIGHT CLEAR?
CLEAR SIR.

THIS IS STINGER 5. 10-51 TO THAT 10-93 REQUEST.
10-4 STINGERS. FLOATER-12, 10-23. STINGER 5 IS 10-61.
I KNOW THAT LOOK, SPILL IT!

WELL, LAST NIGHT I WENT BACK TO THE LABS TO LOOK AROUND. I SAW THAT BASTARD FROM UNITED WORLD SECURITY AND SOME WOMAN, I LEFT PRETTY FAST, SO I REALLY DIDN'T GET A CHANCE TO SEE ANYTHING ELSE. FROM WHAT I COULD CATCH, HE WAS PRETTY MAD ABOUT SOMETHING
MAD ENOUGH TO KILL? CRIPES, JOANN! IF THIS IS TIED IN WITH THE KILLING, MAYBE THE BOYS AT LEGAL CHANGE CAN COME UP WITH SOMETHING!
I SAW SOMETHING ELSE - A SHADOW REALLY. SOMEONE ELSE WAS COMING IN THE ROOM, BUT I LEFT BEFORE I COULD TELL. WHAT CAN I SAY? I WASN'T SUPPOSED TO BE THERE ANYWAY.


MUCH LATER IN THE LOWER SECTION OF THE BUILDING, THE EVIDENCE TECHS AND CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATORS ARE GOING ABOUT THE JOB. THE JOB TO THEM THAT HAS BECOME SECOND NATURE.
HEY, GOT SOMETHING HERE. LOOKS LIKE... A PART OF A BRA.
SO THE VICTIM WAS A WOMAN AFTER ALL. YOUR BUYING TONIGHT.
OH MY GOD! IF.. IF I HAD STAYED AROUND, MAYBE THAT WOMAN WOULD HAVE LIVED! CAN I EVEN BE SURE IT WAS HER, THOUGH? NO... IT.. IT HAD TO BE. THEN THAT CAN MEAN...
YOU AND YOU, COME WITH ME. BRING YOUR TOTES!
JO? YOU GOT SOME-THING?
SURE THING DETECTIVE.
MAYBE GARY, IF I'M RIGHT, THEN WE'LL NEED THE HELP OF LEGAL CHANGE.
THE GUY I SAW LAST NIGHT WAS THE GOON SQUADS TIME KEEPER. YOU KNOW, THE JERK THAT KEPT LOOKING AT HIS WATCH ALL THE TIME. BUT IF HE WAS ACTING ON ORDERS, AND HE DID KILL THAT LADY, I'LL DAMN SURE BRING DOWN MR. COFFEE WITH A TOUCH OF CREAMER!
CRIPES JOANN, YOU SCARE THE HELL OUT OF ME SOME-TIMES. WHEN YOU GET A MAD ON FOR SOMEONE, YOU STAY MAD.
(DING!)
'SCUSE ME; POLICE BUSINESS!
HEY!

SECURITY
1
YOU TECHS LOOK AROUND.... ANYTHING CATCHES YOUR INTEREST, BAG IT.
BACKUP SECURITY DISK? IF SOMETHING DID HAPPEN, MAYBE THEY FORGOT THIS ONE.
I THINK YOU SHOULD HAND THAT OVER, THAT MAYBE A PIECE OF EVIDENCE
HEY, LIGHTEN UP PAL! I THINK YOU SHOULD CHECK WITH LEGAL CHANGE ON THIS.
YEAH, THIS IS OUR CASE NOW.
TO HELL WITH LEGAL CHANGE! I'M ABOVE LEGAL CHANGE! AND I'M ABOVE YOU. NOW HAND OVER THAT DISK!
WHOA! HOLD IT, HOLD IT! OK, IT'S YOURS
I KNEW YOU WOULD GET SMART. YOU SHOULD GET SMARTER AND FIND A NICE JOB IN A KITCHEN SOMEPLACE, OR PERHAPS EVEN AS A HOUSE WIFE.
BAD MOVE.
THAT LITTLE... BOYS, IT'S TIME TO PAY A VISIT TO THE POLICE STATION AND FAST! IF THAT DISK CONTAINS EVIDENCE OF THAT LIBERFORM ON IT, EVERYTHING COULD BE LOST. AND AS FOR DETECTIVE DANNS, IN HER DANGEROUS JOB, SHE IS GOING TO DIE IN THE LINE OF DUTY!
CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE.

J.D. Webster's

Finieous Fingers & Friends

By J.A. Holmgren

Finieous Fingers & Friends is based on the characters created by J.D. Webster. Finieous Fingers and all related characters are the property of J.D. Webster and are presented in SHADIS magazine through a special arrangement with Mr. Webster.

BY JASON HOLMGREN
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JOE GENERO!

ADVENTURES OF THE AVERAGE MAN

THIS ISSUE'S ADRENALINE-CRAZED INSTALLMENT:
FACED WITH OVERWHELMING ODDS

JOE RUNS AWAY!

WHAT IS JOE'S TOP RUNNING SPEED?

AD&D: 4.09 MPH (OUTDOOR MOVEMENT)
CALL OF CTHULHU: 1.63 MPH
CHAMPIONS: (4.5 MPH NONCOMBAT*)
GURPS: 12.27 MPH (SPRINTING)
SHADOWRUN: 3.05 MPH
TRAVELLER NEW ERA: 13.50 MPH
VAMPIRE: 17.57 (ASSUMING 1 TURN=3 SEC)
WARHAMMER 40K: 3.60 MPH (ASSUMING RESERVE MOVEMENT)

*IF JOE PUSHES IT, HE CAN GET UP TO 8.25 MPH

AIR GENERO

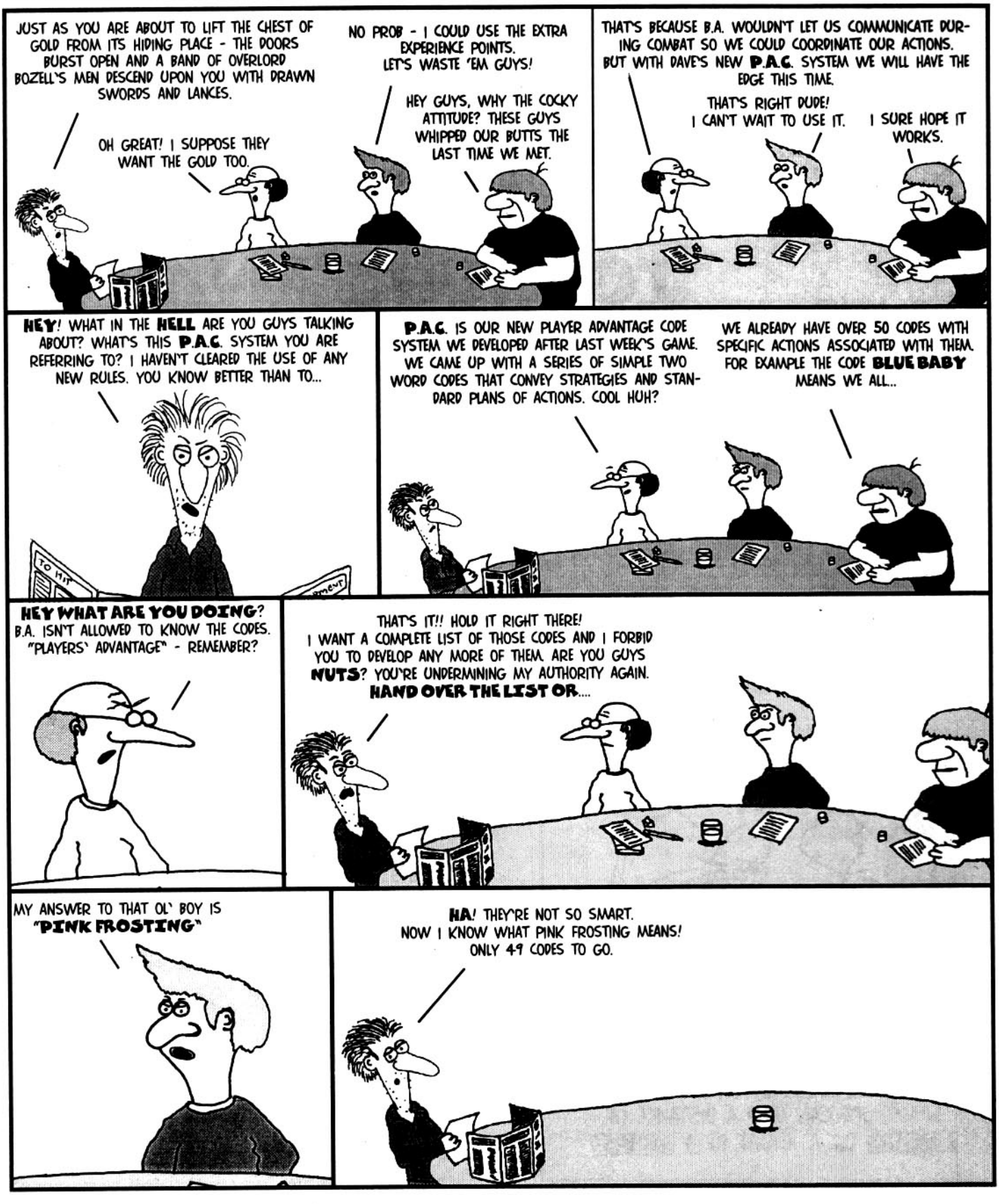
IN **CHAMPIONS**, WITH A RUNNING START, JOE CAN LEAP A DISTANCE OF 8 METERS OR A HEIGHT OF 4 METERS!!

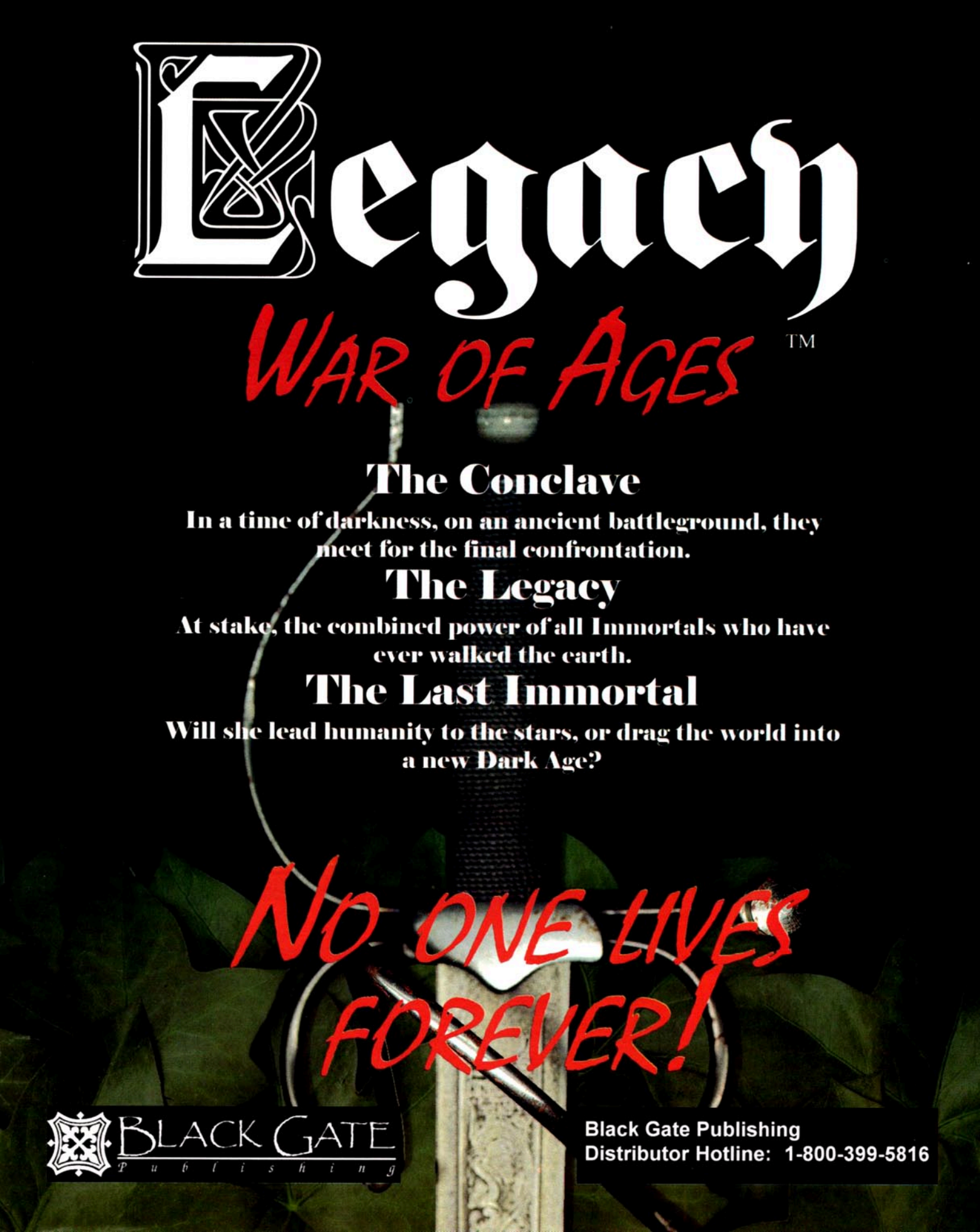
UNSAFE AT ANY SPEED

IN **SHADOWRUN**, TWO JOES THAT RUN INTO EACH OTHER AT TOP RUNNING SPEED HAVE A 50% CHANCE OF **DYING** FROM THE IMPACT!!

Knights of the Dinner Table™

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN © 1994

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