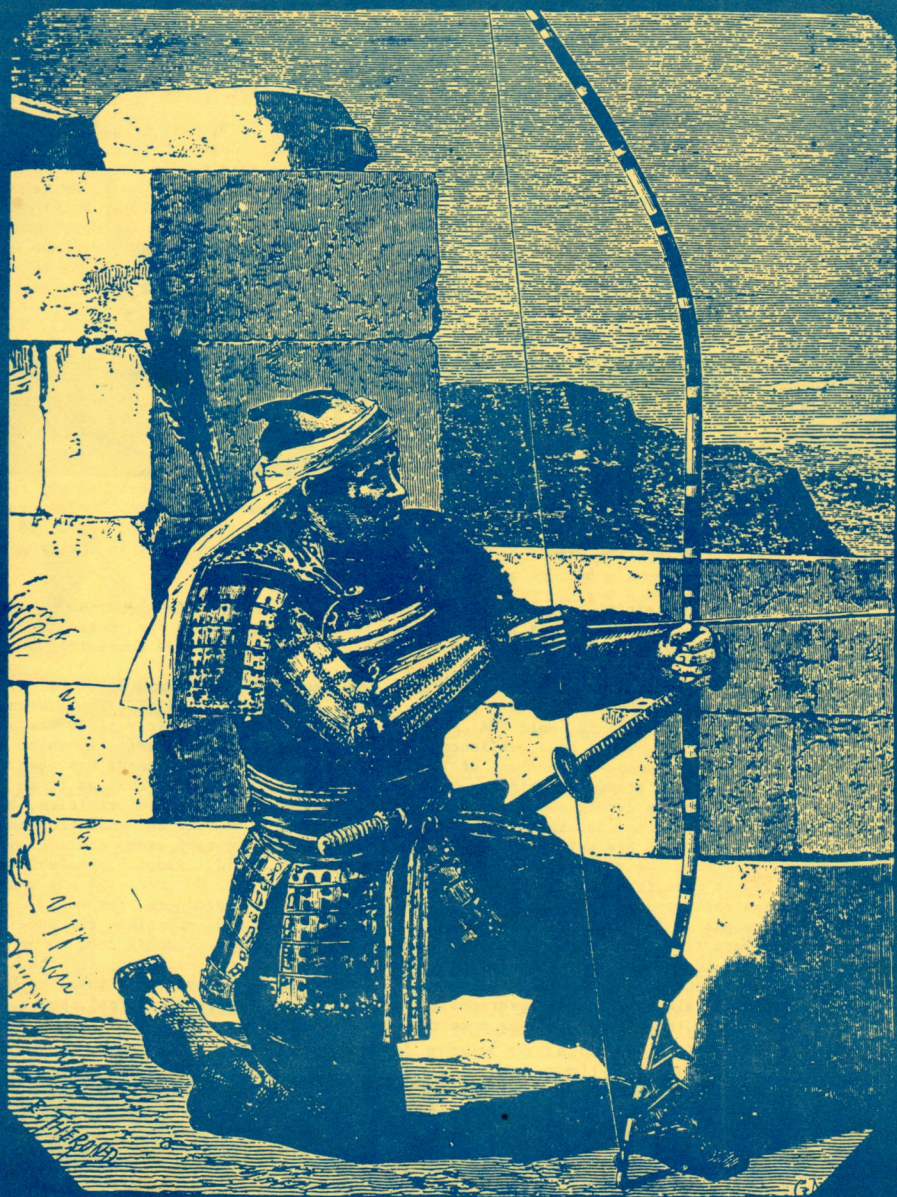


ABYSS 26

V5, N5

SEPT 1983



**Davies, Jones, Munchkin,
Nalle, Olson, & Others**

INSIDE

EDITOR/PUBLISHER: David Nalle
ASSISTANT EDITORS: Lew Bryson, Eric Olson
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS: Tom Curtin, David Hargrave, Jon Schuller, Mike Cranford, Ron Pehr, John Davies

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CONTENTS

CONJURINGS.....	D Nalle	2
BERSERKERGANG.....	J Schuller	3
IN THE SPECULUM.....		4
CHALLENGE OF CHAMPIONS 4.....	LB & TC	8
INFLUENCE & RENOWN.....	E Olson	9
WELCOME TO THE OBSIDIAN WOMBAT.....		11
ECHOES FROM THE ABYSS.....		20
THE WORLDS OF JOHN MORRESSY.....	JRD	22
YOU ASKED FOR IT.....	M Munchkin	24
LIABILITIES.....	C Jones	25
SURVEY.....		27
PRODUCT NEWS.....		27
FEEDBACK.....		27

ART IN THIS ISSUE

Nequi Dharsee(3,20,25), Alf Klosterman(26), Mike Cranford(25), all those other fellows from the 19th century(FC,8,9,21).

CONJURINGS

Promises mean less and less these days. You might as well get used to issues that may run a little late. That way, when one is on time it will come as a pleasant surprise. Now we are running about a set 3 weeks behind schedule. Nonetheless, this issue is here, back up at 28 pages, so be happy, send in your feedback, and let us know what's happening out in the broader worlds of gaming.

People have been complaining that I'm not making good enough use of this space, so I'm not going to ramble on about what's in this issue. You can read on and see that for yourself. From now on 'Conjurings' is going to be reserved for my own topical and reflective comments.

We get letters fairly regularly, most with praise, and some with criticism, often valid, but sometimes off the wall. One complaint I've seen several times is that ABYSS takes a stance especially in editorials, which is 'anti-TSR' or 'anti-D&D'. It should be fairly clear how a person could get this idea, as we have published a number of 'Berserker gang' articles which have been critical of products and policies of TSR. Sometimes attitudes we present may seem a bit abusive of TSR and its products. This may be true, but I have to comment that as it is the leader of the adventure gaming community, TSR should be expected to receive criticism, and should generally try to strive for the highest standards of quality as well as production and merchandising. TSR products are quite marketable and look nice, but in many cases content just doesn't stand up as well. We've criticized others for this (Judges Guild, Chaosium, Palladium), and no one is really free from the occasional attempt at profiteering. However, TSR has a position of the greatest responsibility to set high standards for gaming products, and while I know there are people at TSR who are conscientious and well intentioned, sometimes the pace they set is not very fast, and because of their leadership status their products tend to be rather conservative in concept, and certainly not innovative. We are not anti-TSR, for they are a fine company, perhaps the backbone of gaming, but we are pro-quality, as an ideal to be striven for, and will always encourage everyone to do their best. This is how I feel, but I write this in the hope that I will receive some response and comments, so keep in touch.

UTHERCON 2

UTHERCON is the premier gaming convention in Texas. It is a one-day convention with a broad selection of game tournaments, lectures and demonstrations for role-playing and strategy games of all types. The convention runs for 18 hours on Saturday November 12th at the University of Texas in Austin. There are over 70 gaming sessions already scheduled for such games as Dungeons & Dragons, Vysgarth, Field of Honor, Diplomacy, Kingmaker, Champions, Call of Cthulhu and Traveller, as well as demonstrations of the newest releases and seminars by noted guests. Advance registration is only \$3, but it will go up to \$5 after November 1. All events are only \$1 for each round. There are extensive facilities available for overnight accomodation and many other benefits of the university community. Write now for the pre-registration book which will be available in September. UAGS/UTHERCON, 3312 Red River #109, Austin, TX 78705. (512/477-1704)

BERSERKERGANG THE IMAGE OF GAMING

JON SCHULLER

Every group or organization has an image. The nature of that public perception can be very important to the group, as it determines the reception and reaction of the group by the society in which it operates. A good image makes a group seem desirable to individuals and other groups. A poor image makes a group seem threatening, troublesome, or just frivolous. When a group or activity has a large social element to it, its image in the larger social environment is still more important. People often fear what they do not understand, and it is easy to develop an image created by the media from half-truths and faulty assumptions which create a tenacious and damaging image, however false it may be.

If I had to pick a group in our society which suffered from an image problem, none would serve better than gaming and gamers. No group I know of has been so abused and misrepresented by ignorant members of the media, and no group has been so often and viciously attacked by self-righteous demagogues. What makes all of this worse is that with a few exceptions, gamers are notably unaware of the media and society around them and do little to promote or encourage a better image, maintaining a private perspective for their activities which does nothing but encourage media speculation and the fears of those who mistrust anything which is unknown.

Examples of such misrepresentation are dismayingly easy to find. Most recently my attention was arrested by a news report on the television (WRC TV: NBC affiliate in Washington DC) which described D&D as "a game in which the losing player dies." Much can be excused by the argument that there is only a bit of time for each story on the evening news, but any reasonably informed person should be able to put together eight words to make a more realistic and less sensational description. A newswriter could have made an easy phone call to any of a number of local gaming stores or experts to get a better description in a matter of seconds. Other examples of journalistic irresponsibility are numerous, most notably the now legendary New West article in which every dirty trick possible was used to make gaming notables such as David Hargrave and Deanna Sue White seem like drooling sociopaths. These problems of perception also crop up repeatedly in stories about the unfortunate James Dallas Egbert case and other similar incidents, where game-playing seems to stand out to the media as the character trait which motivated the subjects bizarre and self-destructive actions, although it was if anything a symptom of deep personal problems, not a cause of them. Perhaps the best example recently is Rona Jaffe's Mazes & Monsters fiasco, which misrepresented gaming both in print and on the screen.

The second problem is that of fanatical groups which seem to have it in for gaming, with a growing fervor as their rather limited selection of other issues seem to be fading from the public eye. There are elements in almost any game which some radical group can take exception to, be it demons in D&D, realistic warfare in Squad Leader, or the general perception that games are an escape from reality. It seems like everyone has argued over why these elements are present in gaming and what their real meaning is, but that is not really the point, whatever the answer may be. In this area again, lack of information and the insular nature of the gaming community have allowed vocal groups to latch on to limited information and extrapolate paranoid fantasies which are then applied to gaming and become a part of a pool of misconceptions which create a rather sordid image.

Gamers and gaming need a better image and these illusions need to be dispelled if we are to continue as a part of public life while avoiding scorn, harassment and prejudice. The best way to destroy ignorance is with information and understanding. If gaming and what it involves is out in the open people are far less likely to be afraid of it and if it is explained in easy terms it may come to be understood and even excepted by most of the public. Gamers must come out into the light of day and speak frankly about the benefits and problems of gaming and its viable role in society. Honesty is always a good program, and such openness can still save the image of gaming if we come out of the closet before too many people accept a false image as true and close their minds to us. We need not make them gamers, we need only teach them to accept us for what we really are. Explain your interests to relatives and acquaintances. Don't be secretive or ashamed and others will see nothing to fear or deride. It is up to each of us in our own contacts to create a new, more desirable image for gaming.

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IN THE SPECULUM

BOOKS RED SONJA SERIES

DAVID SMITH AND RICHARD TIERNEY

This new series is based on a minor character of Robert Howard, the creator of Conan, Soloman Kane and others. Red Sonja is a female warrior of considerable talent who lives in the same milieu as Conan. Her character was picked up and developed in the last ten years by Marvel Comics Group. For those of you who like Conan, this series will be a real pleasure. Sonja moves through familiar terrain, so the reader is not bogged by endless pages of explanation and meaningless maps. The books hope to draw from the Conan audience to achieve success.

This series has a number of strengths. One, the world is familiar to many. Two, the characters in the novels (unlike Howard's original short stories) are more developed than characters in the Conan books. Three, the series averages two hundred pages per book; allowing more complex and satisfying plot development.

On the negative side, this just isn't Robert E. Howard. The books use his setting, but don't have the same spirit that Howard's work had. The authors also tend to fall back on huge quantities of magic and god-like figures. None of the books to this point have pitted Sonja against a simple bandit warlord or border kinglet. These books also don't have the sense of purpose found in Howard, and after a while I don't really know which story comes before another. In Howard's stories the reader can find connections with other stories, or at least realize that Conan knows X because he travelled through Argos three years before. So far, Red Sonja has no strong time-frame.

All in all I would recommend the series. I enjoyed the straightforward seriousness of the books, and I enjoy any new story of Hyboria. The books are well written and move along easily. While they are clearer if you are familiar with Conan, they are good enough to stand on their own. The books so far are: The Ring of Ikribu, Demon Night, When Hell Laughs, Endithor's Daughter, Against the Prince of Hell, and Star of Doom. (Eric Olson)



STORM SEASON

ROBERT L. ASPRIN, ED

Storm Season is the continuation of the very popular Thieves World series. These are unique collections based in the community called Sanctuary, but with the stories written by different authors. This book contains stories by C. J. Cherryh, Diana L. Paxson, Andrew J. Offutt and others. Storm Season sees the return of such notable characters as One-thumb, Jubal the Gladiator, Illyra the S'danzo fortune teller, and Shadowspawn. Each story is distinct and has its own qualities, but the interrelationships are preserved quite well. As a whole, Storm Season is very good. While it may not be up to the level of Thieves World, the first book, it is better than the last one, Shadows of Sanctuary. All are worth picking up and reading. One warning, while the book will make some sense if read on its own, it is much better in the context set by the earlier books. Much of the history and personality of the main characters is left out of Storm Season on the assumption that readers have already read the previous books. The books in the series are Thieves' World, Tales from the Vulgar Unicorn, Shadows of Sanctuary, and now Storm Season. (Eric Olson)



KANE RE-RELEASE

KARL EDWARD WAGNER

With the ever-growing fantasy market, many older books are being re-released including such classics as works by C. L. Moore and Clark Ashton Smith. Among those being reprinted is the Kane series by Karl Edward Wagner. Kane is an immortal warrior based loosely on the biblical, fratricidal Cain. These books are best described as Dark Fantasy. If you like happy stories with beautiful elf princesses, they are not for you. Kane is what I consider serious, hard-core Heroic Fantasy (or anti-heroic). Wagner writes in a flowing style and cares little for happy or convenient endings. While I know that our editor-in-chief disagrees, I really enjoyed these books and think they give useful ideas to use in fantasy campaigns. They are well worth picking up. These books are: Bloodstone, Dark Crusade, Death Angel's Shadow, Darkness Weaves and Night Winds. (Eric Olson)



MAGAZINES



FANTASY NEWSLETTER

500 NW 20th St., Boca Raton, FL 33431

Appearance:6,Content:8,Value:5,Personal:7,Overall:7

FANTASY NEWSLETTER is a great news and information resource for the fantasy reader. It is published monthly with an 8 1/2 x 11 format and costs \$2.50 per issue and \$18 for a year. Each issue usually has about 50 pages of fairly dense text with functional illustrations. The layout and graphics are not particularly great, but the art itself is usually pretty nice.

FN runs a range of features of news and background on all kinds of fantasy by some well known writers who are tuned in to their subject matter. There is a fair amount of fan-oriented and rather limited material which detracts to a degree from the usefulness of the magazine, but what there is of this sort is sometimes much better than in other magazines like LOCUS. Some of the most useful features include the listings of books soon to be released, of magazines, and of small presses. Less useful are interviews and more personal, autobiographical sketches by some famous writers. Somtow Sucharitkul's articles are a regular feature and are rather interesting

in a curious sort of way, far more than his sometimes pretentious fiction. Other notable regular contributors include Fritz Leiber and Karl Edward Wagner, as well as Jack L. Chalker, whose role as a critic gives a rather less attractive view of him than one gathers from his fiction.

On the whole, FANTASY NEWSLETTER is quite good, and is a useful aid for those interested in small presses and who like to keep up with new releases and what is going on in fantasy publishing. It is a must for the really seriously involved fantasy reader in spite of a few weak points.

FANTASY BOOK

POB 4193, Pasadena, CA 91106

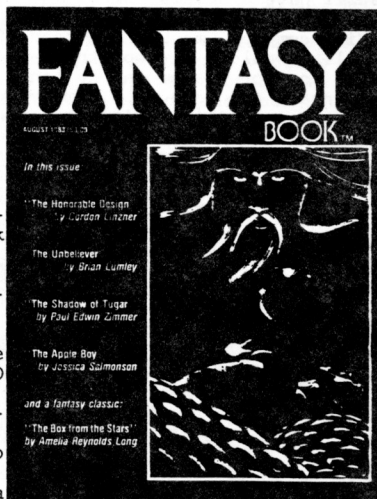
Appearance:7,Content:5,Value:6,Personal:5,Overall:5

FANTASY BOOK takes the name of a classic small press magazine of the '50s, and is trying to fill some of the voids in the market for short fantasy fiction. It is published quarterly at \$3.00 a copy or \$16 for six issues. It is a fairly attractively produced magazine and has about 80 pages per issue.

FANTASY BOOK provides some good fiction by major authors, though usually not their very best work as well as some interesting fiction by newer writers. There is some good art, but also some rather poor art, and the layout and design is not very inspired.

FB is trying to be a new serious professional market, but unfortunately, it is trying for the same market and stories as TWILIGHT ZONE and FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION, rather than the open void left by FANTASTIC. Thus, it is publishing light-fantasy instead of dark fantasy or heroic fantasy, for which markets are really needed. As a result, it seems to be getting second string stories, perhaps rejects from the slicker magazines. In addition, there is a general problem in the magazine of desiring a professional position and status, but a tenacious clinging to certain amateurish/fannish qualities which make this desired status unobtainable. Much of the art is of quality which shows effort but little talent, and there are various cutesey, unprofessional vignettes and features such as a maudlin and not particularly funny cartoon strip.

FANTASY BOOK is a magazine in search of an identity, and there is some question of how long it can survive in its current fairly expensive format without addressing some of its problems and really figuring out where it is going. Not that there isn't some good material here, there is. However, it is just too uneven.



GAMES/AIDS

NEW CHIVALRY & SORCERY

Fantasy Games Unlimited, POB 182, Roslyn, NY 11576

For years, Chivalry & Sorcery has been the system that everyone said had the most realistic background available. In the same breath was, 'too bad that it's totally unplayable. Old C&S was great except for the fact that it took too long to

do anything. The magic was so realistic it took forever to implement. While this is great artistically, the game background would have benefited more from no magic at all. The original combat system also took a long time to resolve. Because of this I have run C&S campaigns using the background aids and tables but with altered or borrowed mechanics. For two years at college, we tried to run straight C&S, but too often it bogged down. One good melee took the whole night. After years of complaints and suggestions and a growing reputation for megarules, FGY has finally done something about C&S.

The changes in C&S are visible as soon as you open the box(yes, sports fans, FGU has knuckled under and begun boxing things like everyone else). The new rules are in three books, the first on creating a character and on character classes, the second on the feudal society and combat mechanics, and the third on magic and monsters. This division of material makes it easier to find and use particular items and lessens the binding problems which everyone had with the old edition. The books are also indexed, which is ablesing. Information is right at your fingertips. Some of the major differences are: bigger print, better spacing, more explanation, more organization, and expansions. The authors have really tried to fill the gaps in the rules. A good example is in the thief section, which has more than quadrupled in size. Before, C&S was basically a game of armored knights and clerics bashing each others brains in. The new C&S is much more rounded and complete. Basically, the new C&S is a new game. FGU has gone from an unplayable but interesting game to a realistic and potentially playable system.

While I urge you to look at the new Chivalry & Sorcery, I can't say it doesn't still have problems. First and foremost, this is C&S and an FGU game, and let's face it, FGU likes complicated rules, and while these are streamlined, they are still complex, maybe more than it absolutely has to be. Next, the magic system is still unwieldy—perhaps that's how it should be, but most gamers aren't used to this sort of system and it isn't so unusual or attractive that it will draw their attention and keep it. In many ways C&S is different from almost any other game. In some ways this is its strength, but gamers used to more 'mainstream' games may have trouble adjusting. All things considered, I think the new C&S is one of the best games on the market(after Ysgarth and parts of some other systems). Even if I don't adopt the system, it is a treasure trove of useful information and ideas. The new Chivalry & Sorcery is well worth the investment.(Eric Olson)

Chivalry and Sorcery



C&S Symbolist
Bill Backhaus



C&S SOURCEBOOK #2

FGU, POB 182, Roslyn, NY 11576

While this is not a new product, it deserves a mention. Sourcebook #2 was written knowing that changes were coming in C&S. I picked it up at ORIGINS last year, and I've been meaning to review it ever since. While most of the material is of little use without C&S, there are two sections in the supplement I found very useful. The first deals with doors, portals and locking mechanisms. This section is very thorough and easily adapted to any game. The second section is an expanded strategic warfare system. For those of you who don't have the time or interest to run out a large scale miniatures battle, this system can be a way to save valuable time. This system also takes into account strategic naval warfare. I've adopted both for use in my campaign. Standing on its own the book is very useful. If you have C&S it can really be invaluable.(Eric Olson)

DEATH IN DUNWICH

Theatre of the Mind, 2706 Hamilton Dr., Kirkwood, NJ 08043

This is a fascinating and innovative scenario produced under license for use with Chaosium's Call of Cthulhu. The art is bad, the mapping and design fairly basic, but the idea and content of this scenario are first rate. As RPing scenarios go, this one really fits the term 'scenario' quite well, as it resembles nothing so much as an advanced pre-scripting scenario for a movie. It actually has dialogue interspersed with information and background, and useful visual aids. Lots of background is presented

and everything is fully fleshed out, so that it could be used with other systems and rules to avoid some of the mechanical problems of Call of Cthulhu.

The designers of this scenario clearly come from a background in drama, and it shows this in many ways. The strength of this is that, like Sherlock Holmes: Consulting Detective, the masking process involved creates a sense of mystery and intrigue (of course the GM must make sure he is not mystified as well). This is one scenario the GM must read over thoroughly before running, but which is so well worked out that it really runs nicely.

The limitations of the scenario are at least partly the result of the format. There is a lot of nice, but lengthy background and explication which they suggest should be copied or xeroxed to give to the players, as it is certainly too long to read to them. However, a player eager to start play may not be eager to read in detail, and some of that detail may be quite important. To run it really well, you might have to xerox almost all of the text to hand out piece by piece. Also, the possibilities are somewhat limited and if the players don't follow the intended course or get sidetracked too often, they may never get straightened out and on the right track. Some of the background is also a little bit confusing and so cosmic that it may start a bit of wild conjecture among the players. On the whole though, the way the scenario is presented makes what is a fairly straightforward Call of Cthulhu situation quite intriguing, adding a whole new dimension. Give it a try. (David Nalle)



PEDDLER'S FERRY

ECI, POB 13190, Charlotte, NC 28211

This is a scenario set up for use with the mechanics of the Silverdawn PBM, but easily adaptable to any system of D&D complexity or slightly more developed. It is essentially a passive village background with NPCs and major spots described in a simple and direct format. A bit of the background is confusing to those not involved in Silverdawn, but it is simple and general enough to fit into another context.

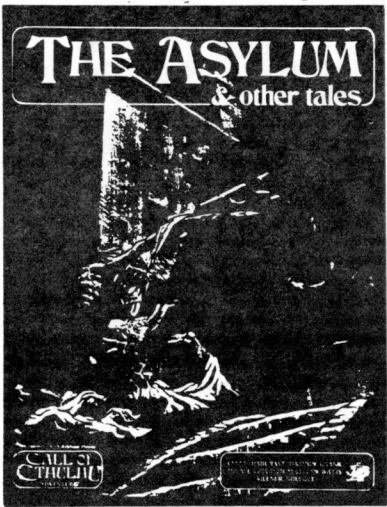
The background is pretty well developed and a few scenario and conflict possibilities are presented. It is well-crafted but neither unusual or particularly inspired. There are a number of other similar items out, small, inexpensive one or two shot backgrounds, for example, Cynfelyn: Prince of Prydein, and it follows the standards of the genre.

This is certainly an item worth looking over, but don't rush out and buy it unless you think you'll need it.

THE ASYLUM & OTHER TALES

Chaosium, POB 6302, Albany, CA 94706

This is a collection of Call of Cthulhu adventures in the tradition of Shadows of Yog-Sothoth, but a bit more of an anthology of independent adventures than a connected set of situations. As a result, the quality is not as even as in the previous collection, but this is both bad and good, as some of the scenarios are superior, although some are disappointing. There are seven scenarios all-told, by people who include David Hargrave and Mark Willner. Hargrave has what might be called the medium contribution, a nice traditional scenario with lots of detail, while John Clegg's "Gate from the Past" shows a brief but unusual alternative. I found "The Asylum" itself a bit disappointing, as it was a little too crowded with strange things, partaking of the 'let's search for weird things and read odd books' mentality. Overall, I'd say this is a good buy, better than Shadows. (DFN)



CHALLENGE OF CHAMPIONS 4

STRANGE INTERLUDE



This is a special interlude in the 'Challenge of Champions' designed at least in part to spur on the efforts of several of our somewhat delinquent writers.

An odious miasma oozed up from the banks of the Cynfael below the tanneries as the last sotted stragglers crawled, limped and staggered out of the Obsidian Wombat in the pre-dawn light. Humming to himself, Bavraz, the resident bard at the Wombat, picked his way carefully down the cobbled street, one hand out to feel his way. His bare feet splashed down the middle of the open sewer channel which guided him, as the crusted hem of his robe gathered a charming sampling of offal and refuse. With a splash and a grunt the blind musician tumbled to the ground, betrayed by an unexpected pair of feet extending from a doorway into his customary pathway.

He rolled over onto a lumpy form which smelled even more of wine than of sewage. Quick hands flew to his harp, feeling for breaks through the oilskin wrapping.

"Violators of virgin chipmunks, why must they collapse all along my route home?" He sat up on the broad, mailed chest of his unconscious assailant. "Hey, you, tin man, wake-up!" He felt around for the man's face.

"AYYIHH, get your finger out of my socket!" The sleeper stirred.

"Scalp-me, one-eye. Must be Pwyll. Who else has the brass or brainlessness to claim my road for a bedchamber. Stay put man-for-all-seasons, you may have found a calling as a stool." He strummed a few chords.

"There was a monocular Celt

Who feared that his privates would melt

He went to a surgeon

At Ogyane's urgin'

And now wears his parts on his belt."

"Telethor, get your notebook, Telethor. Damn, where is that boy when I need him. He always lets the best ones slip by."

"Say, what's..." Pwyll attempted to rise, only to be shoved back down as Bavraz rested the butt of his harp on his collarbone to push himself up to his feet.

"Look, mighty mercenary captain, oughtn't you get up. Your myriad enemies might find you." He nudged the reeking warrior with a calloused foot.

"Do I have to get rude? One word, boozehound, one word..." No movement came. "Right...URIZEN!!!"

"What, who, where?" The stunned mercenary staggered boldly to unsteady feet, his hands clutching for a sword which had slipped around to hang behind like a tail.

"Why you low crow-squaker."

"Yes, yes, if you could find your sword you'd spit me and then avenge the insult to your land, family and people. Really!"

"Your marital problems are almost a matter of legend. Gwyn wears horns, so can you."

Pwyll's one eye bulged and his face began to purple.

"Calm yourself. You wouldn't hit a blind man? An artist? We've one eye between us, maybe we could use it to find the way back to my rooms?" Bavraz clutched Pwyll's arm as they weaved up-town, their one-eye out for thugs and muggers.

"What were you doing out alone on such a night? Don't you usually lie about the gutters with that beady-eyed barracuda Girithaur?"

"A month ago you'd have been right," the permanent glaze in his eye cleared for a moment, "Now that pusilanimous paragon of pomposity just runs around with his high-flown sponsors scrounging up knick-knacks for his silly challenge. This time the peacock's price is liable to be the end of him.

"It does seem like an ill—"

"PSSSSSSHHHTT, over here." A gruff, accented voice hissed as they went past a dark alley.

"Wazzat," a bleary eye scanned the streetside.

Bavraz hummed a few mystic words and flickered a finger towards the voice. "It feels like a demon."

"Demons?" Pwyll followed the voice, dragging the reluctant bard behind him. Big feet shuffled back in the darkness.

In a corner stood a huge, stoop-shouldered figure dressed in bermuda shorts with a bright-colored pattern of palm trees, plastic sandals, and a plaid knit tie. "Say, boss...hey, that you Pwyll?" Two glowing red eyes peered down at his scarred face.

"Demian, not you? Bav, it's the trembling terror of Tartarus...Bav?" The bard had backed against a wall and was muttering in three languages at one, his nostrils flaring, and fingers groping at the strings of his harp.

"Excuse, please, why is he gesturing at me like that? Is he going to play his nasty musics?"

"Softly, imp-master, he had a nasty run-in with Zaedukrom the Eyeless."

"Oh, empty sockets." Demian winced reflexively.

"Before I run for cover, boss, please, where can I find a primo bookie?"

Bavraz' gnarled fingers stopped over the first chord, "A bookie?"

"Yeah, I've got to cover some really hellish action."

"Moving up in the world, eh, now you're running numbers for that eyeless psychopath and his sycophantic cronies." Bavraz moved closer, harp at the ready. "A guess, the Girthaur-Ormsson fight?"

"Got it, music man. Only the biggest, a whole team up of bets on both sides."

"Damn, I ran a nice little book on the side out in Talebolion, but I haven't got the capital now. How much is it?"

"Oh, three mil in pieces. Odds about 3:2 for Ormsson."

"Y'know, I used to do some betting at the spring hog rodeo back on Uttgart. I've still got some of the old crown jewels, too."

"Please," Demian looked about nervously. "we are getting somewhere?"

"Yes, incubus-breath, let me confer with my bright-eyed colleague" Bavraz grooped Pwyll to the far side of the alley and they put their heads together. Demian stood in the dark corner, shifting from foot to foot.

The conference ended with a handshake. Pwyll turned back to the demon while Bavraz put away his harp.

"You're covere, quivering questor. Go home, take bets, meet us back here in... say a week. Move it." Demian bobbed his head with a lopsided smile and vanished in a cloud of sooty smoke which left Pwyll coughing.

"You're money and my contacts, one-eye. All we need now is a good accountant and we can open book for all of Ptolemeias."

"What about Savak?" Pwyll scratched his ribs thoughtfully. "He's got a head for numbers."

"Not that maudlin pulp-writer? I thought I saw you reading his Throbbing Might of the Elder Worms."

"Well, it had an interesting plot. He has got a good head for numbers and must be pretty hard up."

"Certainly must be hard up if he's trying to make it as a writer. It's only a week until the challenge. Take my arm. I think he lives on Water Street."

Pwyll helped Bavraz around a heap of fish-heads and they headed west to find their unsuspecting future partner.

INFLUENCE & RENOWN ERIC OLSON

In general, the proliferation of statistics and numbers in role-playing games is to be avoided, but from time to time it is useful to establish concrete measures for some abstract concepts so that they can be handled more practically and precisely in a game context.

Such loose measures are particularly good for solidifying social relationships and status.

One situation much in need of measure is the level of influence and reputation a character may have in his society, dependent on various social and personal factors as well as his deeds and attainments. The two main elements involved here can be represented by Influence Points(IP) and Prestige Points or Reputation Points (RP). These derive from different aspects of the character and act in different ways in the course of play.



Basically, Influence Points show your ability to influence local bureaucracy and the wheels of government. For example, if you wanted to gain a special privilege in a newly acquired province, you would try to use your Influence Points to convince the appropriate official to lean in your direction, perhaps in combination with and augmenting appropriate bribes. A more common example might be in an attempt to swing a council or ruler towards ruling in a particular way on a law or motion under consideration. Reputation Points, on the other hand, represent fame and personal status. The effects can be quite different depending on the nature of the character. A thief and a hero might both be famous, but a famous hero is respected, while a famous thief is suspected, so RP are a two-edged sword. How RP work can be seen with such characters as Billy the Kid, who was sufficiently well known that no one in their right mind would get in his way. However, every lawman was also out to get him. As your 'rep' builds, there will be few places where you will not be recognized and respected or at least feared, but your actions will be watched and your life a matter of public comment.

Basic description out of the way, let's get down to the heart of the matter. Influence Points have to be earned, but a small measure go with status of birth or political or administrative position. Personal IP are gained in a career, and new honors and offices gained bring more set values. To gain influence, you have to have something people want and which they will trade favors for. Given below are offices and ranks with appropriate numbers of IP associated with them.

Title	IP	Rank	IP	Office	IP
Knight/Sieur	5	Mayor (Pop under 5K)	3	Guild Master	4-7
Baronet	10	Mayor (Pop 5K-15K)	5	Alderman	2-4
Baron	20	Mayor (Pop 15K+)	10	Warden	1-3
Viscount	25	Junior Military Officer (Lt/Capt)	2	(variable for guild size)	
Count	30	Military Unit Commander (Capt/Cmdr)	5		
Marquis	40	Military Staff Officer (Col)	7	Office	IP
Prince	50	Senior Field Commander (Gen/Adm)	10	Prior	1-2
Duke	60	Staff Chief Commander (Top Gen/Adm)	12	Abbot	3-5
				Bishop	6-10
				Archbishop	11-17
				Patriarch/Pope	18-26

Ministerial and appointed court offices should range from Archbishop 11-17 1-20 IP, depending on the structure of the state and the Patriarch/Pope 18-26 nature of the office, also dependent on how good he is at (variable for faith size) his job and how much power he gathers.

So, for a quick example, say your character is a knight (5IP) and a ship captain (2IP), and has served in a command position in several military expeditions (a variable amount, say 3IP). This would give him some 10IP, not terrific, but not bad either. If your knight tried to influence a situation without major support or opposition, he would have about a 10% increase of the likelihood of his desires being met. To determine the result in a major decision or determination, add up all of the IP for a decision on one side and subtract those being applied on the other side and use any other factors to find the percentages for each side in the matter. If your knight had another 30IP supporting him and 18IP against him, that would leave him with a 38% advantage in the matter. Note that IP are not really expended, and only go up rarely. Also, bribes can have a one-time increase effect on IP if used properly, at a cost per IP appropriate to your campaign. These figures should of course be adjusted and kept flexible.

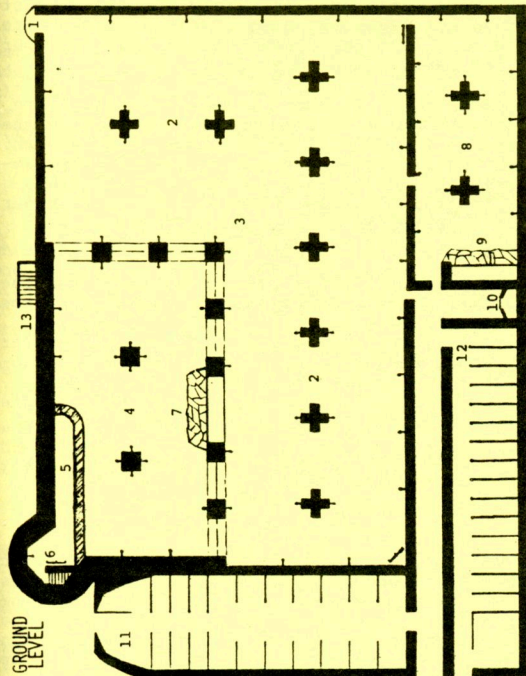
Somewhat simpler are Reputation Points. Basically, starting out you have little or no prestige. At the most a character should have RP equal to half his starting IP (a Duke will have some reputation even if he is only 1st level). It would not be realistic to give a non-noble character any pre-made reputation. RP are gained through deeds, achievements and associations. If you play D&D in any of its forms, you may even want to give out RP for levels as a base to work from. Give out RP for levels as shown in the table below and to the left. RP for specific deeds should be given by the guidelines below and to the right.

Level	RP	Achievement	RP
1-4	1/1vl	Successful military service in a campaign	1-10
5-8	2/1vl	Successful, well-known adventure	1-5
9-12	3/1vl	Acquisition and possession of famous artifact	1-4
13+	4-6/1vl		

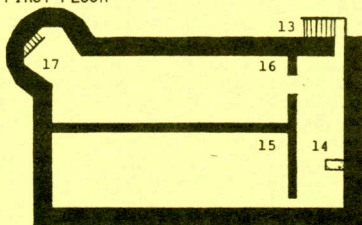
As for killing or otherwise besting a 'name' person in the world (someone with 20+RP) things get more complicated. If the person bested has less RP than the character he should gain 1/20th of the loser's RP. If the opponent has more RP, then subtract the characters RP from the loser's RP and add 1/5th of the difference to the RP of the character. Thus, if you have 20RP and defeat someone with 75, you would gain 11RP from it.

There are two limiting factors on RP. First, RP gained in a group effort are divided equitably among the participants (generally equally, although some may be a bit more distinguished and get a few more than others). Second, prestige is a somewhat localized phenomenon. By this I mean, you might be well known in New York, but virtually unknown in LA, as happens all the time in mundane life. This

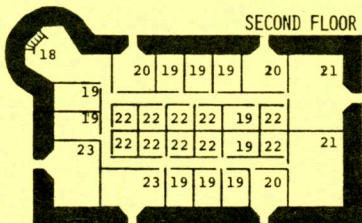
WELCOME TO THE OBSIDIAN WOMBAT



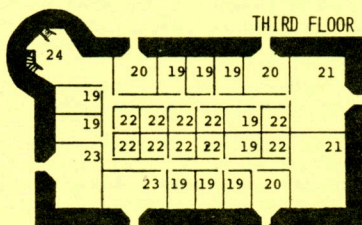
FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR



THE OBSIDIAN WOMBAT

The Obsidian Wombat is an inn and tavern frequented by the criminal elite and assorted adventurers of Ptolemeias. It is located in the heart of the Lower City, on Muircat St., where it meets Cob's Hill Alley. It is ideally situated, a block from Executioners Square, two blocks from the east wall of the Old Necropolis, and within an easy bowshot of several major and questionable guilds, including the Ancient and Sacred Brotherhood of the Block.

The Wombat is jointly owned by Walthere Kraso and Hrolf Mikruyr, two blood-brothers from the Magar-Gott borders in lands claimed by the Saexe Empire. They left their war torn land to start anew in the big city, and have developed quite a successful business, with a loyal clientele. They go out of their way to maintain an unusual stock and special services at a reasonable price, and to encourage good feeling and camaraderie, so that those who might be foes outside can drink together and enjoy some entertainment within the Wombat.

The clientele of the Wombat is richly varied, but some of the regulars are featured here with full descriptions. They have a strong sense of loyalty to the Wombat and all are committed to preserving its role as a safe and neutral meeting place for all dwellers in the lower city, though toffs from up-river are somewhat less well recieved.

The Wombat's actual tavern area is large, seating over 200 customers in comfort at any time. It is a low building with heavy beams built some hundred years before around an old tower/fortress which rises out of the NW corner of the present building. The tower is some 500 years old, from the period when Ptolemeias was controlled by warring merchant princes. It is sturdily built, and can be entered from the outside by the traditional second-story fortified door, or from the main bar where the walls have been opened to link it to the rest of the newer parts of the building as a semi-sunken barroom used by the most regular clients and somewhat separate from the common tables. Specific parts of the Wombat are described as keyed to the map below.

1/There is a step-up to enter the common room of the Wombat. One or two of the bouncers will be here at any given time. They won't stop people from entering, unless they are obviously falling down drunk, or seem to be dangerous in some way. Their main function is to stop people from leaving without settling their tab.

2/This is the large common-room of the inn. It has a series of large wood columns down the middle and a vaulted roof. It is a 'L' shaped structure with stone walls and a wooden roof built around the base of the old tower. There are torches on the walls and in sconces in some areas. The area is filled with tables of various shapes and sizes, including some booths along the southern wall, and some tables completely enclosed by movable partitions in the east end. Most of the tables are served by barmaids who bring orders from the bar(5), or food from the kitchen(8). At all times there are 2 barmaids available or as many as 25. There is an effort to keep a ratio of 1 barmaid to 10 patrons. This whole area is mainly for common customers, while the lower area(4) is reserved for regulars. Most of the business here is done during lunch and dinner, and the area is often closed off at less busy periods in the day. It is also rented out for parties and meetings.

3/This is a cleared area in the upper common-room. It has a tiled floor and there are wooden platforms available to put over it and make into a stage. Elsewhere the floor is packed clay and straw. This area is for special attractions, such as exhibitions by travelling players, acrobats, jugglers, dancers and magicians. Some regular features include the bard Telethor (Bavraz plays only in area 4), and dancing by some regular groups and individuals, including Metaxa of Korios (incognito under the name Retsina). At least some form of entertainment is scheduled here during major meals and special events are set-up according to their availability.

4/This is the main bar area under the old tower. It has a flagstone floor, and the walls have been cut out in places for better access. It is somewhat lower than the newer area around it, reached by three descending steps. It is full of tables and dimly lit, and access is limited (unofficially) to residents of the inn and regular customers. It is usually active all day long, and gets priority bar service, although food service is a little slow. Some of the areas between the pillars on the steps leading down to it are usually closed off by movable partitions. Most of the major characters from the appendix will be here. There are also booths.

5/This is the bar, usually manned by one of the two owners, or on some unusually busy occasions by a hired bartended, although h Walthere and Hrolf prefer to take care of the bar themselves (more often Walthere). There is a full selection of all kinds of beer and liquor available.

6/This is a back area of the bar with stairs leading down into a large cellar which runs the length of the tower, and has many wine and beer casks of various vintages and types. There are also several secret compartments here, a false cask, and other devices for hiding refugees, as well as tunnels leading to the catacombs under the city (all of these features are well hidden, as is the system of counter-mining tunnels from when the tower was in use, which give access to a few nearby houses, several parts of the inn complex, and the stables).

7/This is a fireplace, where some food is kept warm (usually a joint of some meat and a stew), and where Bavraz usually sets up to play for the guests in the area. He usually reserves a spot at the table nearest the fire. On the mantle above the fire are a variety of interesting nick-nacks, all with peculiar histories, including the obsidian wombat figurine after which the inn is named, which was found embedded in some of the foundation stone of the tower when the place was being expanded after the current owners bought it. As will become clear later, it is coveted by the priesthood of Sutekh (see Events section).

8/This is the kitchen, which has a full selection of food, tables for the staff to eat, and is usually bustling with activity. The core-staff of the cook and three assistants sleep here. Meals will be served upstairs by special arrangement.

9/This is the main cooking hearth, usually very busy.

10/This is the main well for the inn, also used by some of the neighbors with the permission of the Wombat's owners.

11/This is the new stable added on fairly recently. It has a dormitory built on top of it and shared by poor guests at only a Mark a night. There are also rooms for a few of the employees.

12/This is the old stable. On top of it are apartments used by Walthere and Hrolf and their families (who make up much of the staff, as they have 2 wives and about 12 children of ages 1-20 between them).

13/These stairs lead up to the elevated first floor of the tower, above 4 listed above, which is the old entrance to the tower/fortress proper. It is also clearly marked as the entrance to the inn/hostel.

SCENARIO #1: A BRAWL

A brawl is easy to stage with any of a number of possible scenarios. One good technique is to pick a topic, start a discussion, an argument and then a brawl. A good example might be religion, perhaps Scandinavian(Pool) versus Egyptian(Flame). With Garrulf, Implotius, Herulf and a few more on one side, against K'kwalnesh, Dirmadzj, and Anar Len(Coryn will probably join him). Another argument might be political/racial, with Coryn and Parddwyn leading Local Townsfolk against Saexe Rowdies led by Skodelus and Garrulf(for townsfolk and rowdies see Appendix B) You might add Dirmadzj on the local side and Tavmar with the Saexe, and others might join in as well.

Hand attacks and weapons of opportunity will be the rule, and the bouncers may try to interfere. Punch does 1D3 modified for DC. Mugs do 1D4 modified by DC as do bottles, either club or edge(when broken), chairs do 1D8 modified for DC, with an additional 1D10 overall and a save to stay standing. Benches do 2D6 plus 2D8 overall, all modified for DC, with a save to stay up. Tables do 3D8 overall with a save to stay up. This is all stun damage, and does ½ that amount as killing damage. City guards may also come in on this.

SCENARIO #2: MURDER IN THE WOMBAT

In the early evening a dour looking Magar merchant is noted alone at a table in area 2. Somewhat later that evening while he is still there, Metaxa(see Appendix A) comes in to dance in area 3. She enters into an intricate dance, which ends when she throws herself on the Magar merchant, who she stabs to death before anyone can get to her. She is a regular, and naturally some of the regulars try to hide her. It is up to the party and one regular rolled at random to hide her while the guards show up and search the place for her. If necessary they will have to protect her and smuggle her out of the city.

It seems that the Magar was one Alis Hojia, who took her from her family 12 years before in a raid and sold her into slavery, and that she swore years ago to slay him if she ever found him again.

Note that someone will go for some guards almost immediately and no effort will be made to hide the body, although most regulars will not rat on her. A total of D8+3 guards should show up to investigate, with one being a lieutenant in charge of the investigation.

SCENARIO #3: THE REVOLT OF THE JOURNEYMEN

Another interesting situation is a meeting held by the Journeymen of the Pyromancers Guild, who meet in the Wombat in secret, reserving a partitioned section of area 2, to discuss the inequity in wages and advancement in their guild and how the Masters are keeping them from advancing so that they can get more cheap labor, and taking ever more Apprentices to bloat their ranks.

If anyone listens in or overhears, a dilemma may present itself, as they make a few rather radical, even terroristic resolutions. Note that everyone in the place is curious about their meeting and they will pick someone to spy on them. The most important plan the Pyromancers form is that starting on the next evening they will begin to burn the houses of some of the Masters to prove their skill and bring a threat to bear.

A wise character may realize that most of these houses and shops are in the Lower City, which has many wooden houses built close together. Such a fire could easily spread, causing untold destruction.

Anyone who tries to point this out to the Pyromancers will be received rather hotly, and telling the Guild will lead to open war in the streets, and probably an even worse fire.

It is up to the characters and a few regulars to find a diplomatic and viable solution, or else join the bucket brigade.

APPENDIX A: MAJOR CHARACTERS

These are major characters mentioned above and usable as you feel necessary. They are of various levels of power and orientations.

SKODELUS			
AR:36	HP:100	LEV:13	Attacks:Quarterstaff(L&R/8/20) (20% Crush)
DC:8	FP:114	RAC:Gael/Vaen	or Sling(R&L/2/10)
MR:14	MP:81	DEI:Mannanan	
RC:7	MI:50	ALI:9/10	
DR:35/36/37	WR:30	HEI:5'10"	
AV:1/1/1	ST:9	WEI:162	

Skodelus is a crossbreed from the islands, the son of a Vaen noble and a Gael slave-girl. His upbringing has had some unfortunate effects on his psyche, and he is ridden by a number of obsessions. First, he is a pathological liar. In almost no circumstance will he tell the truth, even when there is no reason not to. He lies about the most trivial things on the slightest provocation. He is physically distinguished by having no ears and no left buttock(he limps a bit and has a facial tick). He owns the Iron Coracle, a relatively new tavern near the Obsidian Wombat, which attempts to compete, but tends to draw an even slimier crew. He is anti-religious, except regarding Mannanan, and has a rabid fear of vampires. His staff is unique, formed from the wood of Ygdrassil, and protects him from many forms of magic. He also has a limited ability to slow the flow of time for about 3 CR/day. He seeks out and slays vampires as a hobby. (Lew Bryson)

14/This is the entry area to the inn proper. There is a desk here with a ledger and some tables and chairs set out, as well as a schedule of rates and such and a listing of which rooms are occupied. The table is usually manned by Hrolf, and there are often a few guests about talking to him.

15/This is a back room for private meetings and for dinner for the guests, brought up from the kitchen.

16/This is a common-room for the inn, where drinks are served and there is occasional entertainment, as well as available reading material and comfortable space for relaxation.

	ROOM FEES			
	Room #	Daily	Weekly	Monthly
17/These steps lead up to the upper floors where the rooms are located. Room fees are on the list to the right. The first number is room only, the second room plus two meals a day (prices in Marks).	19	7/12	42/74	168/296
	20	10/15	60/92	240/368
	21	22/27	132/164	528/656
	22	5/10	30/62	120/248
18/This is the stairwell on the second floor. The steps lead up to the next floor and down to the entry area.	23	16/21	96/128	384/512
	25	14/19	84/116	336/464
	26	13/18	78/110	312/440

19/These are smaller rooms, with one bed, capable of sleeping 3. Prices are paid by room, not person, but specific occupancy levels are set.

20/These are somewhat larger rooms with variable beds and cots to sleep up to 5.

21/These are the largest rooms in the inn, with variable fixtures, capable of sleeping up to 10 persons, and divisible by partitions as well.

22/These are the smallest rooms with no more than 1 bed each for up to 2 people.

23/These are medium-large rooms with up to 2 beds, to sleep up to 7.

24/This is as 18, but with a ladder leading up through a trap to the garrett rooms

25/This is the lower garret room, which sleeps up to 6.

26/This is as 25, but both of these are usually rented together or lent to friends of the management. Bavraz currently occupies both in exchange for his musical performances downstairs.

ENCOUNTERS IN THE WOMBAT

At any given time a number of people will be present in the Obsidian Wombat as determined with the tables given here. The first table is used to roll for the total number of people present in the lower area(4). A die 100 is rolled, with an amount added depending on the time of day. At lunch add 20, at dinner add 30, and after dinner add 25. All other times roll straight. The number of people shown is split between general customers and major characters (general/major). For customers in the large outer area roll 1D100 plus the same roll modifier given above for the total number present at any given time.

Roll	# Present	
01-30	1D10/1D6	The second table given below,
31-55	2D10/1D8	and to the right you can roll
56-75	3D10/1D10	for specific major characters
76-90	4D10/1D10+2	present the number of times
91-100	5D10/1D10+4	indicated by the table to the
101+	6D10/1D10+6	left. Roll 1D100 when using

the table to the right. Hrolf and Walthera can be assumed to be in the logical places at the expected times as their work and the situation demands. General customers other than the major characters can be assumed to be of varied backgrounds and types, mostly fairly successful adventurer types, with a few merchants and tradesmen. The crowd in the outer area should be or more common stock.

Most of these characters know or know of each other, and will be interacting as is appropriate from their descriptions.

Roll	Character
01-03	Kais Nebo
04-08	Skodelus
09-13	Garrulf
12-14	Razaythe the Torturer
14-27	Bavraz the Blind
28-32	Coryn the Weaver
33-38	Anar Len
39-47	Implotius
48-51	K'kwalnesh
52-60	Parddwyn
61-67	Herulf Skjoldungar
68-75	Telethor ap Morthen
76-83	Metaxa of Korios
84-92	Dirmadzj the Archer
93-00	Tavmar the Swift

EVENTS IN THE WOMBAT

The Obsidian Wombat is an ideal sight for starting up adventures of all sorts. Given here are some suggested adventures to begin out of the Wombat and to develop from there, using many of the characters who frequent the inn. Many of these scenarios may need some additional development by the GM.

GARRULF

AR:31	HP:40	LEV:10	Attacks:Broadsword(R/2/24)
DC:14	FP:98	RAC:Lloegyrr	or Short Bow(R&L/2/6)
MR:24	PP:324	DEI:Heimdallr	
RC:9	PI:92	ALI:18/11	
DR:19/21/24	WR:8	HEI:5'4"	
AV:12/13/12	ST:10	WEI:121	

Garrulf comes from elevated Yeoman stock from Lloegyrr and is a skilled farmer, but since moving to the big city he has been enrolled as a Knight of Heimdallr by appointment of the King of Lloegyrr. He works as a fletcher in the order but is a bit of an outcast because of his humble beginnings. He is personable, however, honest, and forthright. His only holy power is Laying on of Hands, but he is unusually good at healing because of his high ZEA and the favor of the god. He has a holy sword, blessed by the god, which allows him to regenerate 1D3 points of damage per CR. His mail is magical, and he takes only half damage from club attacks. He also has a 20% chance of deflecting any blow. (Lew Bryson)

TELETHOR AP MORTHEN

AR:3	HP:59	LEV:8	Attacks:Dagger(L or R/2/4)
DC:4	FP:134	RAC:Kymri	
MR:2	MP:484	DEI:Zaedukrom	
RC:4	MI:202	ALI:2/2	
DR:5/6/9	WR:13	HEI:5'5"	
AV:3/2/4	ST:12	WEI:153	

Telethor is known as the 'Black Bard of Ptolemeias'. He is a rather scruffy looking middle-aged bard. He has a warped view of life, taking perverse pleasure in making life hard for those around him. He has a full selection of Bardic notes and patterns, plus several awesome unique powers, including the ability to summon a number of demons, phase, cause plague in a very large area, and speak a 'doom saying', which devastates an area for a 100 yard radius. He also has the ability to understand and speak all languages and alter his appearance to that of anyone he has seen, although only facial features, not physical size or form. He has a powerful lyre with a number of powers, including the power to shatter all metal in a 50ft radius, although it gets to save. He has a nasty temper and a vindictive streak, but can be fair and honest. He is quite good as an entertainer, and fills in for Bavraz the Blind at the Obsidian Wombat from time to time, although the two Bards don't get along particularly well. (Rick Buecker)

KAIS NEBO

AR:22	HP:42	LEV:7	Attacks:Scimitar(L&R/1/12) (40% Sharpness)
DC:8	FP:82	RAC:Oscan	or Heavy Cross Bow(R&L/1/18)
MR:16	MP:329	DEI:Eleusis	
RC:7	MI:154	ALI:2/9	
DR:13/15/21	WR:34	HEI:6'6"	
AV:2/2/2	ST:12	WEI:217	

Kais is a relic seller by profession, and spends a great deal of time in the Obsidian Wombat. He has a number of unique qualifications for his job, including a full selection of obscure, holy, and seemingly holy items. In addition, he is a skilled Conjuror and has the ability to make things seem magical or holy by imbuing them with temporary supernatural powers. He also has a large selection of innate supernatural powers, including ability to summon storms of ice and manipulate ice magically. He is also immune to the effect of most spells which would have a TAL or WIL save. In addition, he is immune to all detection and detection type spells in all of their effects. He is unusually charming, and can convince almost anyone of anything in the right circumstances, and uses his magic to augment this skill.

IMPLOTIUS

AR:45	HP:45	LEV:12	Attacks:Miming(R/1/12) (35% Sharpness)
DC:15	FP:70	RAC:Achajan	Sling(R/2/3)
MR:10	MP:100	DEI:Mimir	
RC:7	MI:30	ALI:10/11	
DR:7/7/7	WR:15	HEI:6'6"	
AV:0	ST:9	WEI:220	

Implotius is an imposing warrior entering middle-age. He is a successful mercenary captain. Although he lives in Ptolemeias he has made no effort to learn any of the local languages, and thus will converse only in Achajan, much to the bewilderment of those around him. He is an accomplished mime, and can make his needs known. He works as a bouncer in the Obsidian Wombat in the off-season when he can find no work for his rather remarkable sword. Miming is one of the great swords of the North. It is a bluish rune-wrought blade with many magical powers, including making the wielder the equivalent of a 15th level Berserker, deflecting non-magical missiles, and the effect of killing a person permanently and draining away the victim's soul. Implotius is also immune to all detection, analysis and location spells. He can communicate telepathically with the sword, and it can translate for him in theory, but rarely actually does so. The sword has a number of additional powers known to it alone, and has free will to use them. He is an accomplished brewer and fisherman, having used these occupations to support himself in hard times. It should also be noted that he wears no more than a loin-cloth, and is an active, practicing homosexual. (Lew Bryson)

METAXA OF KIOROS

AR:35 HP:47 LEV:12 Attacks:2 Daggers(L and R/5/6) (60% Piercing)
 DC:6 FP:102 RAC:Magar
 MR:10 PP:529 DEI:Hecate
 RC:8 PI:206 ALI:7/8
 DR:30/31/32 WR:34 HEI:5'3"
 AV:1/1/1 ST:9 WEI:95

Metaxa was orphaned at the age of 4 and lived on the streets until she was 9, at which time she was taken in by the Temple of Hecate which saw potential in the dirty waif. She was raised as a celibate priestess in the church and groomed for great things. At 19 she is already in the inner circle of the temple in Ptolemeias and quite well respected for her high level of power. However, she is not looked on as ready for greater responsibility, as she needs to mature further. She is fascinated by the world outside of the temple, and since she was 12 she has been sneaking out and mingling with the people. She is attracted to this life, but is inexperienced and these impulses run contrary to her vows. Since the age of 16 she has taken occasional employment in the Obsidian Wombat as an exotic dancer. It is important to note that she has successfully avoided male advances by judicious use of the ritual castration favored by her cult. She bears extremely sharp sacrificial knives with which she is an expert, especially with vital strike technique as shown by the piercing ability above. She is attracted to men but does not understand or trust them. Her only sexual experiences have been with other women in the church.

K'KWALNESH

AR:57 HP:41 LEV:15 Attacks:Mace(R/3/20)(30% Crushing)
 DC:8 FP:88 RAC:Ukral Mace(L/2/20)(30% Crushing)
 MR:17 MP:20 DEI:Loviatar or Whip(R/4/3)
 RC:8 MI:40 ALI:11/4 or Heavy Crossbow(R&L/2/24) (25% Piercing)
 DR:26/27/30 WR:10 HEI:5'
 AV:8/7/9 ST:11 WEI:105

K'kwalnesh is a devout follower of Loviatar, and acts as her champion in Ptolemeias. He is afflicted by perverse and violent cravings, and has a number of serious personal problems, as he truly enjoys seeing other people suffer, as long and as much as possible. In battle he will always try to incapacitate foes so that he can torture them to his heart's content. He is particularly sensitive to comments about his flaws, notably an unhealable bruise on his left calf and his missing left eye which was given in offering to his goddess. Naturally he is almost immune to pain and poisons. He is phenomenally accurate with his whip and has a 100-TARGET DR percentage chance of entangling, either requiring a DEX save to hold onto a weapon or an AGI save to keep from falling down. He usually seems a nice enough fellow on first encounter. (Lew Bryson)

PARDDWYN

AR:29 HP:44 LEV:5 Attacks:Mounted Lance(R/1/24)
 DC:12 FP:88 RAC:Kymri or Greatsword(R&L/1/18)
 MR:15 PP:289 DEI:Nudd or PUNCH(R-3/L-2/5)
 RC:9 PI:105 ALI:22/8 or Longbow(R&L/2/10)
 DR:14/15/18 WR:63 HEI:6'2"
 AV:4/3/5 ST:12 WEI:189

Parddwyn is a lower order member of the Knights of Nudd. He is a tall, rather handsome youth in his early twenties of high breeding, the youngest son of the Duke of Cynleith. He lives on his own in Ptolemeias, as his family entered him in the order of Nudd at an early age. He has served his time as a page and has just become a full knight, but he is not very well respected and has not yet become attached to a lord, so he works in the Obsidian Wombat as a bouncer in the evenings until he can find a better and more appropriate position. They also let him have a room and stable his horse(a fine charger named Mawredd) for free.

HERULF SKJOLDUNGAR

AR:32 HP:152 LEV:9 Attacks:Greatsword(R&L/1/20) (35% Sharpness)
 DC:11 FP:226 RAC:Gael or Javelin(R/2/24)
 MR:22 MP:121 DEI:Odin
 RC:7 MI:78 ALI:3/14
 DR:20/21/24 WR:17 HEI:6'9"
 AV:5/4/6 ST:10 WEI:214

Herulf is a regular at the Obsidian Wombat. He is the third son of the King of Gaeldoch, the brother of Ghrazak and Unferth. Insanity runs in his family, and he is not untainted. His particular problem is two fold. First, he is Xenophobic, not only disliking non-humans, but also non-Gaels, and fairly rabidly. Second, he is obsessed with the concept of Wyrd, or fate, believing that he has an unknown but elevated destiny, tied into his own ultimate glorious destruction in a grand gesture. He is getting on in years, well into his thirties, and is an alcoholic as might be expected from his other problems. His sword has some unique powers including deflecting up to 3 rays or beams per day and absorbing up to 25 levels of spells and bleeding half of these off into the bearer's reserve. He has several spells designed to aid in combat, including Damage Control, Sleep, Negate Magic, and a full range of vision spells. His javelin becomes a lightning bolt when thrown, bypasses armor, does the stated damage, and returns to his hand the next round. He is also an accomplished wrestler. It should be noted that he has a super-humanly high CON, and is highly resistant to poisons, shock, blood loss, and other forms of direct physical adversity, as reflected in his HP and other qualities.

TAVMAR THE SWIFT

AR:30	HP:44	LEV:7	Attacks:Shortsword(R/4/6)
DC:10	FP:90	RAC:Saexe	Shortsword(L/3/6)
MR:15	MP:81	DEI:Cybele	
RC:8	MI:60	ALI:5/9	
DR:34/35/37	WR:15	HEI:5'11"	
AV:1/2/2	ST:12	WEI:140	

Tavmar is a former Saexe Legionaire who was discharged without honor for falsifying Legion records and is now a thief in Ptolemeias, working out of a room in the Wombat. He is famed in his home province as a runner, and is truly remarkable in this area, possibly one of the fastest runners in the West. He is quick to anger, and quite skilled with his swords, which he almost always carries. He can be a fairly pleasant drinking companion, and is usually not too dangerous unless provoked.

ANAR LEN

AR:46	HP:34	LEV:7	Attacks:2 Short Swords(R-2/16/L-3/20)
DC:7	FP:70	RAC:Etrua	or Javelin(L/5/6)
MR:14	MP:144	DEI:Ptah	
RC:9	MI:35	ALI:4/11	
DR:18/19/22	WR:13	HEI:5'3"	
AV:3/3/2	ST:11	WEI:121	

Anar Len is a frequent customer of the Obsidian Wombat. He does business there as well, as he is a small-time dealer in the most exotic drugs and spices, though his clientele is limited to friends and friends of friends. He is actually a warrior by profession, a champion of Ptah's temple. His swords are magical. One is +3/+3 and will glow in the presence of enemies. The other is -2/+5 and causes stylistic wounds 40% of the time. These may only be healed by priests of ZEA 23 or more. He is well known in the area and fairly well liked. He often drinks with his brother-in-law Coryn the Weaver. (Lew Bryson)

DIRMADZJ

AR:23	HP:60	LEV:8	Attacks:Broadsword(L/3/10)
DC:11	FP:104	RAC:Kymri	Longbow(R&L/4/8)
MR:30	MP:144	DEI:Gwyn	
RC:12	MI:70	ALI:16/6	
DR:18/20/24	WR:17	HEI:6'3"	
AV:3/3/2	ST:11	WEI:193	

Dirmadzj is a professional assassin/archer in the employ of his uncle Kasaman, who runs an elite corps of mercenary assassins who hire out to do the most difficult assassination jobs around. They work in groups of three, and include a large number of relatives. Dirmadzj is a lieutenant, in charge of a three-man squad, and also handles contact work on setting up jobs, which is why he is often in the Wombat. He is cheery and friendly in a general way, but rather cautious and a bit reserved. Occasionally he will drink much, much too much, but generally he is quite temperate.

WALTHERE KRASO

AR:35	HP:53	LEV:12	Attacks:Spiked Club(R/2/16)
DC:12	FP:96	RAC:Gott	Javelin(R/2/10)
MR:25	MP:100	DEI:Heimdallr	
RC:9	MI:70	ALI:12/13	
DR:25/26/27	WR:30	HEI:6'9"	
AV:1/1/1	ST:8	WEI:315	

Walther is half owner of the Wombat. He is in charge of the bar and kitchen and has the entire bar and kitchen staff under him. He still speaks with a heavy Gott accent after a score of years in Ptolemeias, but he understands local languages and is a very astute merchant. He rarely works the bar himself, and spends his time supervising and observing. He keeps the bouncers in line and on their toes and accepts no undecorous behavior from the staff.

CORYN THE WEAVER

AR:21	HP:30	LEV:6	Attacks:Quarterstaff(R&L/8/8)
DC:8	FP:66	RAC:Kymraeg	or Longbow(R&L/2/10)
MR:15	MP:144	DEI:Gwyn	or Punch(R-4/L-4/5)
RC:7	MI:55	ALI:2/11(1/4)	
DR:18/19/20	WR:17	HEI:5'10"	
AV:2/1/1	ST:13	WEI:149	

Coryn is the brother-in-law of Anar Len. The two of them are sort of ridden by guilt from the days when they lived in the same village in Marchwk, where they became blood-brothers and he married Anar's sister. The source of the guilt is an incident which happened when the two of them indulged in some recreational pharmaceuticals which went bad. In a fit, they slew Coryn's wife, cooked her, and ate her. When they recovered they saw what they had done, and fled to Ptolemeias. They are still friends and gather together to commiserate at the Obsidian Wombat. Coryn follows the profession of his fore-fathers, and is a member of the wickerers guild. His specialty is weaving sacrificial cages and baskets for temples, like that of Gwyn. He also has skill at carving, thatching and cooper, all relevant to his profession. He will take occasional work as a guard or warrior.

BAVRAZ THE BLIND

AR:41	HP:76	LEV:15	Attacks:Broadsword(R/2/20) (25% Sharpness)
DC:8	FP:128	RAC:Kymraeg	Longbow(R&L/2/8)
MR:18	MP:361	DEI:Hodr	
RC:9	MI:380	ALI:11/16	
DR:27/28/29	WR:13	HEI:5'8"	
AV:1/1/1	ST:8	WEI:137	

Bavraz handles all entertainment and bookings at the Obsidian Wombat, and is a covert houncer as well. He is an accomplished bard of the School of Rhydderch, and uses a harp. His eyes were ripped out in an encounter with the demon Zaedukrom a few years ago. As a result Bavraz is blind, and has an obsession with destroying demons. He is getting on in years, already in his early sixties, but his faculties and skills are still sharp. He is somewhat of an outcast of his school, which he feels has degenerated as shown by the Black Bard Telethor, one of their more recent graduates. He has a good voice, but is most renowned for his instrumental skills and wide selection of mystical tales. Soon after his blinding he spent several years of indenture to a spell research group and helped develop several sight related spells which make him more than the equal of a truly sighted person, at least for a limited period. He knows all of the common vision spells (Sonar Vision, Infra Red Vision, Mind See, Far See), plus a unique spell, Eyes of Argus, which lets him combine these spells and see in a 360 degree area. He is an accomplished swordsman and this can be quite a surprise to an opponent. He has a number of natural magic powers, including the ability to teleport, breathe water and fly. He is naturally immune to poison. His sword is magical, as described above. He has a large selection of bardic Songs and Patterns, including some not generally available. He lives in the garret of the Obsidian Wombat, and entertains in exchange for his rent and a large bar tab. He has several part-time students, and also lectures on playing technique at local schools. He is responsible for hiring Telethor as a stand-in, but he does not approve of his personal life, although he admires his skill. He is a nice fellow, broadly experienced, and glad to talk to any willing listener.

HROLF MIKRUUR

AR:42	HP:37	LEV:12	Attacks:Short Sword(L/4/10)
DC:8	FP:110	RAC:Gott	Thrown Knife(L/5/6)
MR:30	MP:144	DEI:Hodr	
RC:7	MI:94	ALI:10/13	
DR:36/37/38	WR:39	HEI:5'9"	
AV:1/1/1	ST:8	WEI:127	

Hrolf handles the accounts of the Wombat and is part owner, having been Walther's partner for as long as they have been in Ptolemeias. He generally mans the desk upstairs in the tower or supervises the tower staff. He is primarily responsible for the workings of the inn part of the Wombat, although he will be found in the downstairs regularly. It should be noted that both Walther and Hrolf have families, and live in two adjacent row-houses next to the Wombat.

APPENDIX B: GENERAL CHARACTER TYPES

These are general descriptions of types of characters which may be encountered as mentioned above, for application in a variety of situations in the Wombat as seems necessary

SAEXE LEGIONAIRES

AR:26	HP:50	LEV:7	Attacks:Short Sword(R/3/8)
DC:9	FP:80	ALI:15/9	
DR:16/18/24	ST:12	HEI:5'9"	
AV:2/2/2	MV:28	WEI:160	

These are soldiers of the Saexe Empire stationed in the northern areas, on leave in Ptolemeias with too little supervision. They are small-minded, intolerant, and rather snotty.

LOCAL TOWNFOLK

AR:15	HP:30	LEV:5	Attacks:Knife(R/3/5)
DC:5	FP:60	ALI:9/10	
DR:10/11/12	ST:13	HEI:5'6"	
AV:1/1/1	MV:25	WEI:140	

These are typical thieves and townfolk of all kinds who frequent the Wombat and may be useful.

CITY GUARDS/BOUNCERS

AR:35	HP:60	LEV:8	Attacks:Falchion(R/3/8)
DC:10	FP:80	ALI:10/8	or Javelin(R&L/2/6)
DR:22/23/26	ST:10	HEI:5'11"	
AV:4/3/5	MV:30	WEI:185	

Everyone is afraid of Ptolemeias city guards, because they are vicious and have very little in the way of mercy or lenience. They are real hard-asses, and believe in getting the job done above all else. They fight hard, and give little quarter. They are unusually well trained and disciplined. These stats also serve for bouncers.

JOURNEYMAN PYROMANCERS

AR:15	HP:30	LEV:5	Attacks:Dagger(R/3/4)
DC:5	FP:80	ALI:7/9	or Magic
DR:10/11/12	ST:10	HEI:5'7"	
AV:1/1/1	MV:25	WEI:140	

These are a cantakerous and dissatisfied lot. On the average they will have magic indexes of about 150, and they will have a full selection of Pyromancer spells of up to 8th level available to them. They should each have about 225MP.

can be seen in the world of rock music. Robert Hazard & the Heroes are the premier band in the Philadelphia area (my home), while outside of that area they are only slowly gaining recognition. The further a character gets from his major area of operation, the less his effective RP are. As a rule of thumb, the character's RP should be reduced by a number of RP equal to $1/8$ th of the distance he is from his main base (in miles).

Another point that should be kept in mind is that RP are also a recognition factor. A big 'rep' might be very bad for a character who wants to get around in some secrecy. A high level of RP could be equivalent to suicide for an assassin or thief. While he would get lots of business, the authorities and his enemies would find it easy to catch him. RP also increase a character's earning potential. If a character has lots of RP he can command a higher price for his services than if he had low RP. Also, if you maintain a double identity you might have two separate sets of RP, although when both become high the two identities might be connected together. RP gained under one identity cannot be transferred to another. Thus, an assassin could be well known as 'Pwyll the Odorous', while having no prestige in his other identity as 'Lew the boring story hack', keeping him safe. How people will react to a high RP character depends very much on the nature and deeds of the character. A saint and a mass murderer could both have 100RP for their deeds, but they would certainly be treated quite differently as a result. If you use an adjustable alignment system as detailed in Ysgarth and elsewhere, you can use alignment as a guideline to the effects which high rep will have for a character in his society.

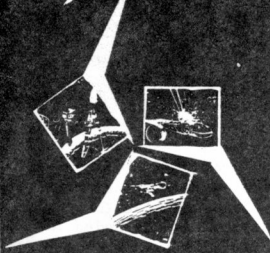
An offshoot of this system which might be mentioned is that of Deity or Piety Points, indicating one's standing in one's church, primarily in regards to the clergy, but also to some extent through them with the deity. This concept was originated by Wayne Mitten and was in ABYSS #1, and is also incorporated in Ysgarth. PP/DP can be gained by contributions to the church in goods or services, deeds, or clear manifestations of devotion. Characters should start with no DP with some chance of exception if they follow their parent's religion (say 2DP to start). DP can be gained by a donation of 500-2000GP/DP (depending on the economics of your campaign). These points can be gained from quests and other actions as well. They can be used more or less like IP in influencing clergy or even the deity through them. Points may be subtracted for sacrilegious actions or for whining too much, and should generally be a bit more flexible than standard IP. Note that the Paladin's tithe doesn't count as a donation.

Deity Points can be gained more easily by localizing their effects to regional clergy in a particular area or city. DP outside the area would be $1/4$ th or $1/5$ th the localized value. This is what major characters in my campaign have done. They now dominate the political and religious activity in a border city.

The concept of Influence Points and Reputation Points can also be extended to mercantile and guild situations. In these cases IP should increase 1 for every 2RP gained to symbolize popularity and common support. But enough on that or I'd ramble on for three more pages. So, to sum it up, run the point systems on a simple percentile roll based on the appropriate point type and modified for the situation and any support or opposition.

This system makes a character feel part of the society and decision making system of the campaign. The more you involve the characters in the culture/society of the campaign, the further you will move from the simple hack and slash games. Since we'd love to hear your comments, sent them to: The Lewser, PO Box 204, Paradise, PA.

TRIAD



TO CHALLENGE
TOMORROW
EXPANSION ONE

To Challenge Tomorrow has really caught on, and the following is growing, so a whole schedule of expansion sets is being established. Triad presents a far future background with 4 scenarios for SF adventures, and is available for \$3 on advance order. It will be released in November. London by Night is the second expansion set and will be released in December or January. It is an extensive examination of literary and historical London in the late Victorian period, with maps, plans and all manner of information, plus four scenarios. It will be a large packet, selling in advance at a reduced price of \$4.50. Future expansion topics include Superheroes (#3), Pirates of the West Indies (#4), Time Travel (#5), and many other topics. The basic rules of TCT are a unique, flexible system for use in any time period, and are also available. at \$7.95. Use the general form to order.

LONDON BY NIGHT



BACKGROUND
& ADVENTURES
1875-1900

ECHOES FROM THE ABYSS

Dear ABYSS,

I am writing to respond to some of Dave Hargrave's remarks in 'In Arduin...' in issue #23 of ABYSS. Dave has been in the industry of adventure gaming for a very long time, and has been more touched by it than most people in the industry. Still, his views are unique, and I hope I might point out some of the more realistic facets of gaming.

All fantasy gamers are touched by their games. All of us have thrilled to the sounds of our own voices recounting the adventures of our favorite characters. I do not really think there is a gamer who does not believe that his world really exists, or at least wishes it did. Still, suggesting sympathetic magical ties between this world and a fantasy world is nonsense. Any character I have closely identified with, or I have identified friends with has never caused his real world alter-ego to suffer pain or injury. And I sure wish I could share in some of the treasures my characters recover...

Dave notes that Arduin is different in that it relies upon word of mouth as opposed to advertising. This is not true. All of us have seen the ads for Arduin in DRAGON. Those of us in the industry have also seen the ads for Arduin in trade magazines.

Dave notes that Arduin sold 17,000 copies in the first year. What does he mean by that? Did each of the original three books sell

17,000 copies, or was that the total of all three books combined? If it is the latter case, that means each book sold 5,667 copies. This would be 1,667 more copies than the figure he cited for RuneQuest's first year, but then RuneQuest was a game meant to stand on its own, not a supplement to Dungeons & Dragons. In the beginning Arduin stood on the merit of D&D, not by itself. While it should be applauded as an innovation in gaming, a gamer publishing his own rules additions without a sanction, no one can deny that the game was unusable without an understanding of D&D.

Dave notes Arduin can be found in "any store" or at "any convention". Really? A quick tour of the Phoenix area stores carrying D&D, Traveller, T&T or RuneQuest brought me up empty in a search for Arduin. Dave also notes that he was the first person to support himself through his game, and that is a proud achievement. But reliance on a single game for one's sole support is not pride, but foolishness. I hope, Dave, the bottom never drops out.

You see, the gaming industry is a fickle mistress. A game which sells for \$9.95 nets the company producing it about \$3.28! Assuming the cost to print the game was \$1.09 this leaves a new profit of \$2.19. Out of this comes rent, wages, taxes, shipping and other hidden costs which may not be reflected in the pricing of the item. Most games are sold to a distributor who sells them to stores for, in this case, \$6. You, the gamer, get the product for the retail price.

Advertising can kill budgets. A full page ad in DRAGON costs over \$1,000. If you get 100 responses from an ad you'll recover your cost for the ad, but you still have to cover the items sold, order processing, shipping and packing labor.

To a certain extent I envy Dave and his ability to live in his fantasy world. I find myself spending too much time having to consider how to produce a dynamite product at a price both Blade and a gamer can afford. But I guess when you live in a fantasy world you can laugh at all of us crass capitalists who want to make a real living doing something we enjoy.

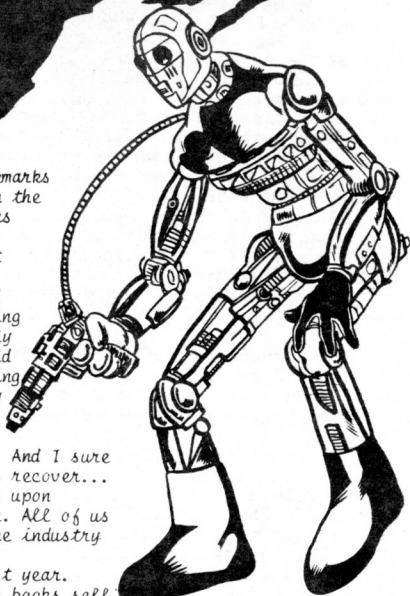
For your sake, Dave, I hope Arduin lives for a long time. You wouldn't like it out here...

Michael A. Stackpole
Phoenix, AZ

Dear ABYSS,

Your magazine has changed a lot since #19 (the last issue I read) and most of the changes are for the better. 'Echoes' is great, but I feel that Mr. Schuller (#24) is mistaken on one point. The fact that TSR has gotten a majority of the "negative quality" votes on polls has more to do with the exposure of the products than in the overall worth of them. The Game Wizards are bound to get panned more because their products are everywhere. They do produce some bad stuff, but they produce some good stuff too, and the "far below" rap is unwarranted.

While the "monsters and modules" syndrome is common in small fanzines, I don't feel it should be cut out entirely. The magazine seems to be cutting down on the number of articles pertaining to AD&D.



One last comment. The dark, out-of-copyright artwork is depressing. Stick with contributed art or find more pieces like the one on page four(#24).

Roger Cadenhead, Jr.
Garland, TX

Dear ABYSS,

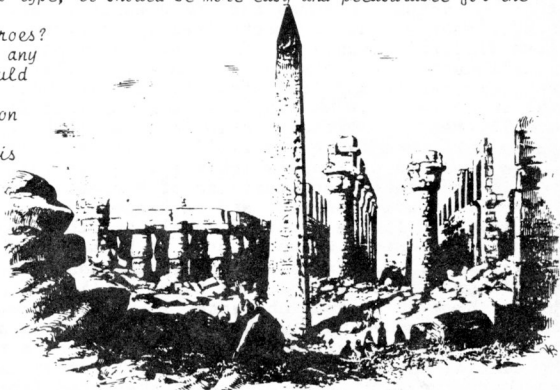
I'm a fan of your magazine and a player of *Dungeons & Dragons*. My friends and I have worked out a little system which greatly enhances our role-playing, and we would like to share it with some of your readers.

We all have ideas for characters. We have personalities and powers in mind. I think most of us would like a game that challenges us, intrigues us, and even makes us laugh, but how often do we really get the character we want. All of us, in our immature days, wanted characters that could tame the gods and make all the other characters cringe on seeing them. I'm not talking about that type of character or power, but the kind of character which brings real fulfillment.

In our campaign we discuss our goals for the embryonic characters before we begin to play. I, as DM, never promise anything except the reply of "you'll have to earn it." I don't say that someone who says "I want to be Elic!" will get Stormbringer in the second room of the first level. Nothing could be farther from the truth. We know there are greater heroes than ours out there, such as the Champion Eternal, but I wouldn't frown if someone said, "I really like Rollo, I want him to be the greatest Assassin ever!" I figure that if they are going to great lengths to reach a goal, and play their character true to type, it should be more easy and pleasurable for the DM.

Why not make your own story book heroes? If you aren't going to enjoy your game, any game, to the utmost, then maybe you should not be playing at all.

I hope that some of you will think on this. I feel that such an epic approach adds much to enjoyment of the game. It is also a good way to improve your skills, by creating different, more complex "people" and living them in your dungeon "world". Of course, It's not so easy to "grow" characters. There are the usual small details: death, maiming, curses, and even loss of magical items! What I do is, instead of having 5 totally bummed out players, is to have one of the rougher characters help them out. Thus creating another chance for them to run their new personalities, but also a chance to really understand the old adage that "There is no such thing as a free lunch."



Michael Szejbach
Madison Hts., MI

This is an intriguing letter, if a bit incoherent. We hope that other readers will write with the ideas which they have developed on role-playing, so that we can perhaps get an exchange of ideas going in this column, although this letter probably should not stand as a model.

Dear ABYSS,

I enjoy your magazine a great deal, and although I have two issues left on my subscription, you will find a check enclosed to renew for three more years. I have particularly enjoyed the work of David Nalle and John Davies, especially in background and mythological articles. You have a unique style among the gaming magazines I read, presenting some really unusual and imaginative material which is on a more mature and intellectual level than any magazine with the possible exception of *SORCERER'S APPRENTICE*, which is published too infrequently for me.

What I really want to know is why you don't publish many articles on some of the other progressive game systems (you cover *Ysgarth* quite well). I'd like to see more articles on *RuneQuest*, *Rolemaster*, *DragonQuest* and perhaps *Champions*. I have been pleased with your D&D material which has given me some good ideas for taking it beyond the usual limits so that when I play it more often than I'd like, it is a far better role-playing experience. General role-playing articles can only go so far. I'd like to see specific articles on some systems other than D&D and YRS.

Carter Thomas
Mobile, AL

We would very much like to run articles and variants for some of these other systems, and each of them certainly has its merits. For some of them we have already lined up a few features, specifically, *Call of Cthulhu* and *Champions*, and we have had a few in the past, but we would certainly be glad to see more, especially a few *RuneQuest* or *Rolemaster* related pieces. *Dragonquest* is a bit of a problem because of its unsure status with TSR's acquisition. We can only publish what we get, and right now most of our writers have *Ysgarth* or D&D backgrounds, so that is what we publish. I hope that some of you who read this and share these interests will set pen to paper to make our coverage broader, and we would certainly welcome new articles on these games.

THE WORLDS OF JOHN MORRESSY

JOHN R. DAVIES

John Morressy is a SF/Fantasy author who may not be familiar to most readers. Though his epic fantasy has achieved some success, his earlier SF novels are quite obscure. He has written quite a few novels in the last decade or so, and all of these contain elements of interest to readers and gamers.

Morressy has not developed a large following, a problem which might be blamed on the awkwardness of some of his early fantasy, but most readers will see the strength of his imagination in his original ideas of world/melieu design and his rare grasp of alien societies and beings. A clear understanding of motivation and situation comes through clearly in all his work. His novels are characterized by an unusual and often disturbing sense of atmosphere and mood.

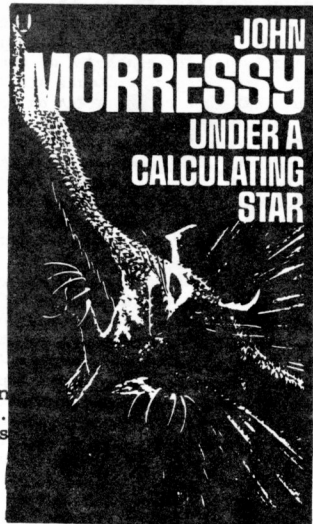
Although Morressy's recent fantasy novels (*Kingsbane*, *Graymantle* and *Ironbrand*) are better known, I'd like to concentrate on his less familiar, but far more interesting Science Fiction novels which were mostly published in the early '70s, with the exception of *The Mansions of Space* which was released this year.

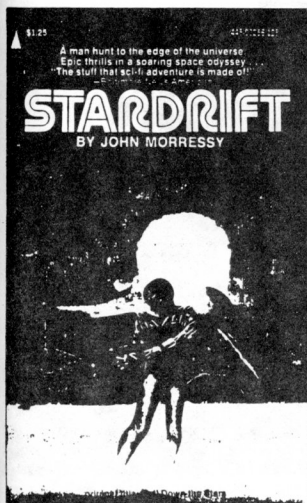
One important characteristic of Morressy's work is a detailed weaving of plot and characters in a common background to link a group of novels together in a series, a technique which he uses in both his SF and fantasy works. Morressy is probably the most innovative writer of serial SF around today. While most connected novels are linked by a common theme or central character, Morressy uses a unique technique of meshing his novels together so that while they all have the same general background, the philosophical and emotive subject matter and the central characters are different, but the central character of one novel will appear as a secondary character in another, and there are little shared scenes presented from different perspectives in each novel which link them together. If you can find all of Morressy's SF novels and

sit down and read them this forms a really interesting reading experience, a sort-of metanovel with a rich and varied cast of characters. This technique figures far less in his fantasy works, which have their own strong points. The use of this meshing technique is something I have never seen before on this scale, and it is really fascinating, and drives you to read every one of his books you can get your hands on. This is unfortunately rather difficult as they are mostly out of print (I spent a desperate month searching everywhere for *Starbrat*). Of these SF novels, *Frostworld* and *Dreamfire* and *Starbrat* are surprisingly easy to find in used bookstores, while *The Mansions of Space* should still be in print. *Under a Calculating Star* seems only to be available in a British edition from NEL, and *A Law for the Stars* is one of the rarer Laser books around. With luck and some demand, a few of these should be getting reprinted. Right now your best hope is to go rooting through used bookstores for whatever you can find.

All of Morressy's SF books share a common general background in a relatively distant, interstellar future where travel at faster than light speeds is fairly easy through the use of the Wroblewski Drive. Unfortunately, one effect of the drive is to trigger high-tech weapons in a localized area, often destroying the ship, making the transport of nuclear weapons and the like impossible.

In addition, technology has deteriorated since the exodus from Earth, so most ships are old relics, barely maintained, and no new ones are being built. Morressy also presents a universe in which almost all races are descended from the same stock as man, and even capable of interbreeding, differing mostly in social and environmental adaptations. Some of these races are quite fascinating, like the honor-obsessed Lixians or the enigmatic Quespodons. Morressy takes considerable trouble to make sure that races and societies are well thought out and fully developed in a believable way and as fully as possible.



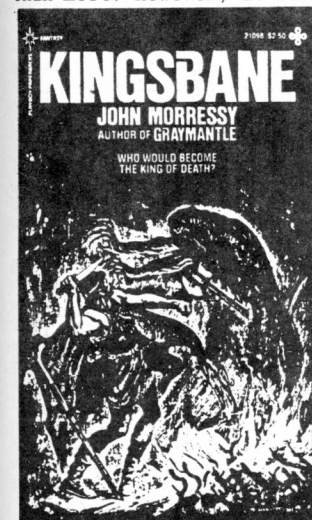


One of the many interesting ideas which Morressy employs in his SF writings is the distortion of time in faster-than-light travel, so in many of his later works the fact that spacefaring characters hardly age as generations pass at home becomes a fairly important element, often putting events in a curious historical yet anachronistic perspective. Another interesting theme in his work is that of the Sternverein, his only attempt at an interstellar government, which is essentially a trading organization which becomes dominated by its military arm and develops into a government when there are no pirates left to fight, and is eventually overthrown. In a number of the novels his heroes fight against the growing might of the Sternverein. One continuing theme through all of these books is that of identity and understanding of oneself, and many of his characters search through the galaxy to come to terms with their destiny. Some find their answer, some find a false answer, some find it but never recognize it, and some search forever without reward. All of Morressy's SF works have elements of the tragic in them, although many also have a strong strain of dark humor. In many cases he is able to rouse really strong reactions in the reader because of the depth of the characters and situations which he creates.

On the whole, Morressy's SF is dominated by a dark mood, created by the decadence of the societies which he presents and the doomed quests which his characters tend to undertake. There is something very Germanic, sort of Goethian, in his style, but while this keeps him from being easy reading, it adds a great deal of depth and feeling to the works.

In essence, Morressy's SF series is really just a single novel of linked situations and characters, presented as a number of different books. I think that you may find, as I did, that once you read one of the books in the series you will want to go out and find the rest to get a complete picture of Morressy's universe. There are still some questions left unanswered and situations to be resolved, and I think that we will be seeing more SF from Morressy in the next few years, as he begins to hit his stride. We should also be seeing reprints of the older, supporting works.

Morressy's fantasy fiction has been his main product of the last 5 or so years, and should at least be mentioned here. Morressy's three fantasy novels share a common background world and a number of continuing themes. These novels are *Kingsbane*, *Ironbrand* and *Graymantle*. They are set in what seems at first to be a traditional fantasy world, though perhaps a bit smaller and more provincial than most. However, it soon becomes clear to the reader that despite superficial



similarities, there is an underlying alien element which adds a fascinating original flavor. The strongest points in these books are in Morressy's vivid depiction of magical and inhuman elements, but they are far weaker than his SF books on plot and characterizations, and some of the societies and situations seem almost intended to ape a traditional fantasy standard. However, the startling images of power and evil are worth the price and some stiff sections of reading.

John Morressy is still developing as a writer, moving out of his early SF forms and into a promising and improving fantasy style. Morressy has a great and dark vision, and a good sense of adventure, and his books are some of the best potential sources for fantasy or SF campaigns which have been published in the last few years. New ideas abound here and are worth the time it takes to find some of the older books.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Stardrift (Nail Down the Stars; 1973), *Under a Calculating Star* (1975), *Starbrat* (1972), *The Extraterritorial* (1977), *A Law for the Stars* (1976), *Frostworld & Dreamfire* (1977), *The Mansions of Space* (1983), *Kingsbane* (1982), *Graymantle* (1981), *Ironbrand* (1980), *The Humans of Ziax II* (Juvenile; 1974), *The Windows of Forever* (Juvenile; 1975)



YOU ASKED FOR IT... MORT MUNCHKIN

Hi, Mort again. I can't wait to tell you the great new ideas I have for making your dungeons more exciting and more lucrative. Before I move on to tell you about my 73rd level Paladin/Magic-User/Thief/Cleric/Druid/Illusionist who I rolled up last week(oh, and more Plant Deities), I've got some special suggestions which I think you'll like.

DESIGNING AND PLAYING IN SOLO DUNGEONS

I've been working hard and have figured out an easy way to really develop and round-out characters. I sort of cut out the middle-man. First, I design an easy, low-level dungeon, about 5 or 6 from the 1st level encounters, adding only half of the magic items in the DMG, plus a few artifacts from Deities and Demigods. Then I DM, while I run a party of 8 of my own 1st level characters through it. After quickly doing in a few orcs, zombies, halflings and giant rats, we collect our 3 million GP and 7 magic items per character and each character gets about 400,000EP, so they are about 9th level, ready to start my next dungeon, with 2nd level monsters and twice as much treasure. This system is really great, because it takes only about 2 hours to run a dungeon, I can play and DM it all myself, and I don't have to worry about anyone else and get slowed down by talking to the monsters, working out personalities for the characters, or taking risks with complicated rooms. I do this about once a week.

PLAYING WITH MINIATURES

We always play AD&D with miniatures, because we can use them to keep track of what our characters look like, because they already have equipment and clothes on them(we usually buy them pre-painted). I have bought all of the Official AD&D miniatures(3 sets of each), so I can paint them while I watch the 'Dungeons & Dragons' cartoon show on Saturday morning and make them look like the characters and monsters I see on TV(I wish they had Mr. T and Smurf miniatures too!). We especially like to use our miniature figures to keep track of movement exactly. We have a 25mm scale map of my entire 32(actually 34 now) level dungeon and the 500 mile radius of wilderness around it, so we can use the miniatures to follow every step of their travels exactly, unrolling more map as we go. If we run out of map there's no problem, because the map is geomorphic, and is really just a half-dozen identical segments which we re-arrange as we go to get a really varied terrain(one segment has a mountain just like Mount Doom, and another has a forrest sort of like Mirkwood, but with bigger spiders and more elves, but the rest are all woods and fields with a few streams). I like miniatures and suggest that everyone use them so that they will know what their characters are doing and what they look like. It is just too much trouble to try to think up what your character is like and picture him in your mind.

NEW MONSTER: ACOTAUD(Awesome Creature Of Total And Ultimate Destruction)

FREQUENCY: Common

NO. APPEARING: 5-50

ARMOR CLASS: -10

MOVE: 30"

HIT DICE: 200+1

% IN LAIR: 3%

TREASURE TYPE: Illusory Type J

NO. OF ATTACKS: 3-60

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-20

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Acid for 3D12

SPECIAL DEFENSES: +4 weapons or better to hit

MAGIC RESISTENCE: 240%

INTELLIGENCE: 20+

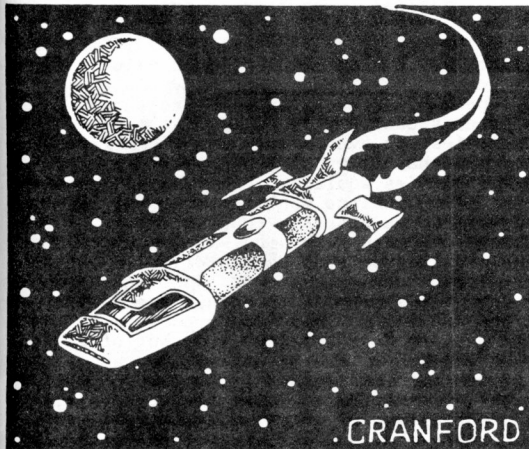
ALIGNMENT: Chotic evil

SIZE: L

PSIONIC ABILITY: III

Attack/Defense Modes: All

Acotauds are a common creature in my campaign, and are a great treat to surprise your players with. The Acotaud appears as a small hill or grave-mound, easily identified as an entrance way to a rich dungeon, with a clear entrance(the mouth of the Acotaud) ringed by rocks(teeth). Inside there is a rocky cavern with many stalagmites and stalagmites, and in the middle of the cavern is a huge pile of treasure(type J, but illusory). Once the characters are inside, fondling the treasure, the mouth/entrance closes, the treasure turns to acid, and the rock-hard walls and roof contract swiftly, crushing the party and impaling them with the sharp stalagmites and stalagmites. There is no save against the illusion of the treasure. This is a great way to kill off an obnoxious party. They can live in water or air, and are highly mobile. They seek out likely parties, and sometimes travel in families.



REVIEW: SOLO-MODULES M1 & M2

TSR has done it again, another brilliant idea just suited to my role-playing campaign. I'm talking about Dungeon Module M1: Blizzard Pass and Dungeon Module M2: Maze of the Riddling Minotaur. These excellent aids are another trend-setting innovation from the leaders of the gaming industry. Imagine! Secret material in invisible ink, revealed by the magic stroke of a pen. This adds a whole new aura of mystery to the dungeons. These two modules are great, but the potentials of this new idea are what really intrigue me. On the whole, the idea doesn't work that well for solo modules, because you can't look ahead to see which encounters to go for or avoid. Where this would really be a winner is with regular modules, so the DM won't be able to see anything until he reveals the invisible ink.

This can add some real mystery and intrigue to a dungeon. If the DM can't tell anything about what is in the module, it will really be a surprise when he reveals the description for the first time. They could even leave the cover of the module blank, even the title, just giving it a number. The maps could even be invisible, so the corridors and rooms would be revealed as the characters come upon them. The great benefit of all this is that it would remove some of the arbitrary human factors from the dungeon, so that the DM would have to run it just as he sees it bit by bit. This will remove the risk of improvisation or any straying from the right way of running the dungeon. I hope that TSR will get this idea and start publishing completely invisible modules.

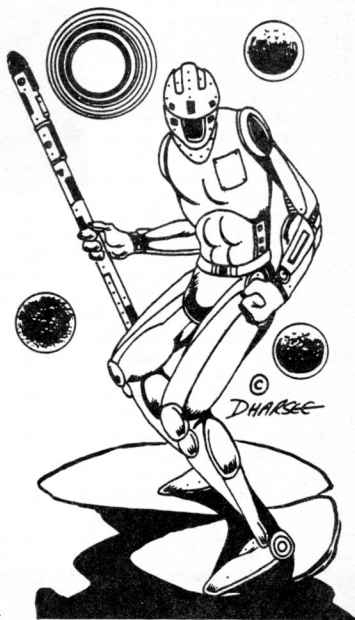
LIABILITIES

CARL JONES

Champions and other recent role-playing systems feature many interesting ideas, some of which might fare well if adapted to use with other systems, to work to mutual advantage. One such idea is that of disadvantages or liabilities, a particularly useful concept, which can be adapted to any 'new generation' game quite easily, to second generation games with a bit of work, and even to first generation games like D&D under certain circumstances.

The basic concept of liabilities is to balance social, situational and personal limitations of an unusual nature against parallel advantages in specific other areas. There are a number of ways that this can be done. It is generally a desirable addition to most systems because it gives characters a bit more flexibility, involves them more in their world, and generally rounds them out more.

Liabilities can be divided into three general groups, Social, Physical and Psychological. In most cases these are of variable application depending on game and campaign type. Social liabilities can be such things as being a criminal, being involved in a feud, being a member of a subject race, or any other exceptional and limiting social status. Physical liabilities can range from something as simple as poor vision to loss of limbs or other gross physical disability, in general any unusual physical incapacity. Psychological liabilities can also be of many types, from mild personality quirks to major psychological disorders which are beyond the normal vagaries of personality. All three types of liability can be of varying severity, with corresponding variation in benefits. A major liability will yield benefits commensurate to its severity.



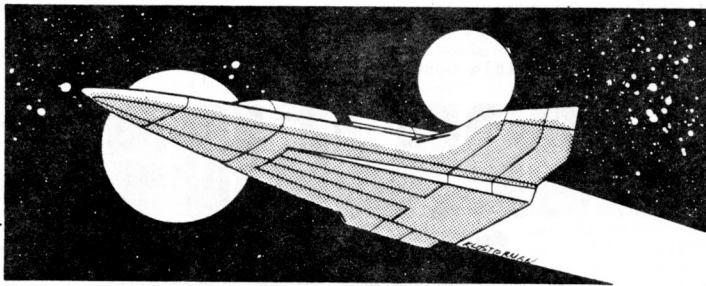
The application of a liability system is easiest in a 'new-generation' game, because they are skill-based systems using some form of skill points. In these systems benefits for liabilities can be given directly in Skill Points or the equivalent. For example, a character who is a criminal in an Ysgarth campaign might gain 5-7LSP for it. There have to be limits in these exchanges, and generally the total points gained for liabilities should never add up to more than half what a starting character would have without liability benefits. Also, what value different liabilities will have depends very much on the campaign and game. As a general guideline, severity should increase benefits. Physical liabilities should be the most profitable, with Social liabilities second and Psychological last. I cannot give specific point values for liabilities for every game, but I can give an example. In *To Challenge Tomorrow* an average character has 80 or so Training Points to use. About the most severe physical liabilities would be loss of a leg or of vision. This might be worth 15-20TP, and other problems would have lesser values. Generally 50% of average starting points should be possible to give out as liability benefits. Specific benefits might break down thus: Physical-10-25% of average starting points, Social-5-15% of average starting points, Psychological-3-13% of average starting points. This type of pattern requires some GM adjudication of the nature and severity of disadvantages. Some games fitting into this group would be *Champions*, *Espionage*, *DragonQuest*, *Ysgarth* and *To Challenge Tomorrow*.

Second generation games usually have some sort of skill system, but often not point-based, although usually scaled. In such games, the GM has to play an even larger role. Liabilities in the three groups should gain set percentage increases of capacity in a limited number of skills, the specific skills to be chosen by the player, but the number increased and the percentage of increase set by the GM. In general, here no more than 100% total increase should be allowed. The breakdown should follow that given in the previous section. Double the percentages given as total points of skill aptitude increase for a liability, divided among the skills to which it is applied. These increases are percentage increases of the base amount already had in that skill. For example, in *Call of Cthulhu*, if a character had a deformed appearance, worth say 20%(10% above, doubled), and a base of 40% on Fast Talk, he could use it all to increase the Fast Talk by 20% to 48, a minor increase.

The same general pattern can be applied in other skills and liabilities. In general, this system is viable for *RuneQuest*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Space Opera*, *Stormbringer* and other similar games.

The final group is that of first generation games, which generally have no real skill systems. In these cases an artificial skill substitute is probably the most viable answer, but not the only one. For a skill substitute, treat benefits as bonus points on particular rolls, saving throws or the like. Generally, use the original distribution, but instead of percentages, divide the percentages given by 7 and use them as bonus points. Give them out in more or less the same patterns. Thus, a character could have as many as a total of 7 bonus points to distribute, for example, as +2 to hit, +3 on defense and +2 on location rolls. In those cases where percentages rather than D20 rolls apply, make each bonus point worth 5%. These could also translate into percentage increases of magic or the like. A simpler but less satisfying alternative is to translate liabilities into free experience points, at a rate of EP equal to 200EP times the base percentages given above for the different groups. Some GM limits may help here, especially in areas of application of bonuses, but it can work well. This version works for all forms of *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Chivalry & Sorcery*, *Arduin*, and other early games.

Try the liability concept in your game. It can make characters more playable and interesting as they start out. Just remember to take their disadvantages into account, and let them put their benefits to good use. These guidelines should be easy to extend and apply in almost any context.



ADVENTURES FROM THE ABYSS ISSUES 1-22

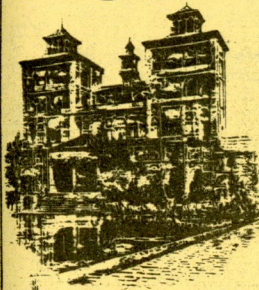
EIGHT ADVENTURES



Adventures from the Abyss is a special offering for a limited time only. It is a single book with 8 mini-adventures published in *Abyss* over the last five years. It includes such excellent adventures as 'Jortaksholt', 'Lovers of the Grave' and 'The Trial of Ptah', plus 'Dome of Dwargel' from *Abyss* #1, which is generally not available.

The adventures mostly run for 2 to 6 hours, and are described in terms of D&D and other systems as well in some cases. *Adventures from the Abyss* is now only \$3.95 plus 50¢ postage and handling.

UTGARTH 4



THE PRIDE OF OGYANE

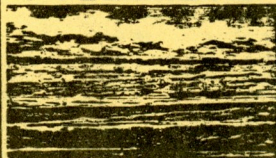
Two new adventure scenarios are scheduled for release from Ragnarok before the end of the year. These are the latest in the Utgart and Ysgarth adventure sets.

Utgarth #4: The Pride of Ogyane is a intriguing adventure for characters of mid-levels at the open house party of the new palace of Ogyane Pyromancine, the postmage of Utgart.

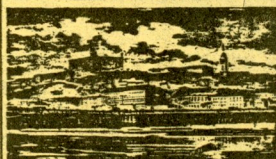
Ysgarth #5: Street Shadows is the first of the second series of Ysgarth adventures. It is set in the city of Ptolemeias, and is for new characters, an introduction to the series and to the world.

Each adventure is \$1.50, and they are set up for VRS and D&D. Order now in advance.

PTOLEMEIAS



STREET SHADOWS



YSGARTH 5

SURVEY RESULTS

These are the results to the survey in #25 which have been gathered so far. A surprisingly large number of responses were received, so the results should be fairly accurate. The items are listed below with the PERcentage of the total responses which rated them, their average RATING, and an ADJusted rating (based on average and percentage rating). Those marked with * had too few responses to be statistically significant. RAT and ADJ are on a potential 1-100 scale.

ITEM	PER	RAT	ADJ	ITEM	PER	RAT	ADJ	ITEM	PER	RAT	ADJ	These statist-
Dragon	96%	66	65	Rail Baron	42%	74	51	Traveller	75%	67	62	ics present some
SpaceGamer	62%	65	57	Machiavelli	9%	76	27	Espionage	12%	71	50	interesting infor-
Gameplay	12%	30	21	Circus Maximus	25%	67	53	KABAL	11%	29	21	mation, both about
Sorcerers App.	46%	77	63	Field of Honor	38%	82	65	TCT	55%	85	72	various games and
Abyss	100%	84	84	Duel Magical	30%	67	51	C&S	32%	64	49	magazines and our
A&E	61%	74	65	Diplomacy	32%	86	66	Daredevils	7%	75	52	readers. The infor-
Nexus	31%	46	36	Middle Passage	35%	88	69	MS & PIs	10%	74	52	mation on other
Pegasus	50%	48	40	Car Wars	42%	67	55	Bushido	15%	66	48	magazines has its
Dragon Lords	39%	73	58	Ogre	43%	77	63	Lands/RS	14%	55	39	uses, but the valu-
Phantasy	19%	48	35	Kingmaker	46%	83	68	SpaceQuest	23%	72	54	uable facts to us
Netherworld C.	11%	63	45	Cosmic Enc.	45%	80	65	Top Secret	38%	68	54	are the ratings on
The Wild Hunt	23%	63	47	Dune	31%	69	53	Fantasy Trip	53%	54	46	various games, a
Autoduel Quar.	10%	68	48	Borderlands	27%	85	65	Gangbusters	16%	65	47	good guideline for
Interplay	15%	51	37	Nuclear War	47%	79	65	Star Frontiers	29%	63	48	future articles
JTAS	38%	64	51	Judge Dredd	30%	90	69	Boot Hill	31%	53	41	and subjects for
S&T	27%	57	43	Sherlock H.	20%	76	56	Recon	13%	52	37	ABYSS.
Ares	23%	61	45	Illuminati	50%	81	67	Man,Myth/Mag.	10%	38	27	The success of
Journal 20c WG	*	*	*	Star Fleet B.	31%	60	46	Star Trek RPG	10%	40	28	Ysgarth and sever-
Fire & Movement	11%	62	43									al other RE games
The General	23%	81	60	Original D&D	88%	59	57					was a bit surprising
The Explorer	7%	25	17	Adventures IF	15%	48	35					and quite gratifying.
The Spell Book	15%	41	29	Advanced D&D	92%	59	57					A few other surprises
Wyrmfire	15%	57	41	Heroic Fantasy	19%	39	29					also presented them-
Phantasy Net.	8%	43	29	Rolemaster	42%	67	54					selves such as the
Polyhedron	10%	16	11	RuneQuest	46%	58	48					dead heat between
Beholder	*	*	*	Worlds/Wonder	8%	33	23					OD&D and AD&D.
Fantasy Herald	9%	75	52	Arduin Grim	23%	64	48					Generally, expect to
Olympus	14%	44	31	Call/Cthulhu	50%	82	67					see articles on a
Necronomicon	19%	58	42	Ysgarth	77%	88	81					few high-rating
Deck of Many..	*	*	*	Swordbearer	*	*	*					games sneaking in,
Necromancer	15%	31	22	DragonQuest	31%	67	51					such as <u>Call of Cthulhu</u>
Stormlords	*	*	*	Champions	42%	75	60					and <u>Traveller</u> , plus
Trollcrusher	6%	38	26	V&V	20%	68	50					perhaps a few of the
Quasits & Quas.	*	*	*	Space Opera	19%	78	57					high rated games
												are already get-
												ting some space in
												ABYSS. On the same
												basis, you probably
												won't be seeing
												articles on such
												games as <u>KABAL</u> ,
												<u>Man, Myth & Magic</u>
												or <u>Worlds of Wonder</u> .
												We missed a few
												things on this sur-
												vey, so you'll find
												them on the Feed-
												back form. If you
												haven't sent in
												this survey we
												still want it.

FEEDBACK RESULTS #25

ARTICLE	RATING	CHANGE	ARTICLE	RATING	CHANGE	ARTIST	RATING	CHANGE
Conjurings	70	-19	Echoes...	74	-22	S. Koehler	84	-5
Illusion & Reality	96	+23	Berserkergang	87	-10	Nequi Dharsee	82	+20
In the Speculum	90	+15	Braving Middle P.	91	+3	John Mortimer	56	+9
Mission of Intemp.	83	+4	Convention Report	77	+3	Mike Cranford	68	-24
Worlds of Swann	83	-9	Wicked Weeds	90	--	Other Artists	94	+2
Graphomancy	74	-8				Cover/Graphics	93	-4

(The overall rating for this issue came out to be 83, about 3 less than #24, but not really too bad)

YOUR FEEDBACK ON THIS ISSUE
 Rate on a 1-100 scale, with
 100 outstanding and 1 awful

Conjurings _____
 Berserker gang _____
 In the Speculum _____
 Challenge of Champs _____
 Influence & Renown _____
 Welcome/Obsid. Wom. _____
 Echoes... _____
 Worlds of Morressy _____
 You Asked for it _____
 Liabilities _____
 Nequi Dharsee _____
 Alf Klosterman _____
 Mike Cranford _____
 Other Art Guys _____
 Cover/Graphics _____

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#	Item	Price	Post	Total
—	Abyss (6)	7.00	_____	_____
—	Abyss (12)	13.00	_____	_____
—	Abyss (16)	18.00	_____	_____
—	Dragonlords (6)	7.00	_____	_____
—	Advent./Abyss	3.95	.50	_____
—	TCT	7.95	1.00	_____
—	Triad	3.00	.50	_____
—	London by Night	4.50	.50	_____
—	Uttgart #4	1.50	.50	_____
—	Ysgarth #5	1.50	.50	_____
—	Ysgarth Rules	11.95	1.00	_____
—	Ysgarth Sup. #3	2.50	.50	_____
—	Middle Passage	4.95	.50	_____
TOTAL ENCLOSED _____				

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____

SUPPLEMENTAL SURVEY QUESTIONS

Rate all of these items on a
 1-100 scale as in the previous
 questionnaire and send in ASAP.

Variant _____
 White Dwarf _____
 Different Worlds _____
 Oracle _____
 Tunnels & Trolls _____
 Arduin Adventure _____
 Superhero 2044 _____
 Aftermath _____
 Morrow Project _____
 Universe _____
 Stormbringer _____
 Gamma World _____
 Metamorphosis Alpha _____
 Droids _____
 Thieves Guild Series _____
 Thieves World _____



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