

ADVENTURE GAMING

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Vol II No. 2

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IT IS SUMMER, 41 A.D.



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utilizes it. Perry has waded through all of the reference books for the GM already. It is the little detailing that adds texture and depth to good gaming.

In this issue we have a number of other goodies for your perusal and delight. First, I welcome The Fantasy-Smith back into the gaming publishing field, after an altogether too long absence. Those of you who collect, paint and/or game with miniatures will surely find this feature of interest in the months to come. The author will be providing how-to's on such things as figure converting and painting on a regular basis.

In this issue you will also find two examples of our commitment to mirror the hobby and serve as a speaking platform for anyone with something worthwhile to share.

The first is a response to a column by John Prados dealing with the Charles Roberts Awards. John had some pointed remarks to make, and the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts & Design felt compelled to set the record straight and reply. We are more than glad to give them the opportunity.

The second is also a response, this time to an article written by my friends and I about a game that we featured, questioned, altered and varied. In it, the designer answers all of our questions, as well as explains some of his motivations in the design. We were delighted that he felt good enough about it to send us a totally new variant for *OREGON TRAIL*®, which we present to you this issue.

If you really want us to get well quicker, don't let anyone else read all of this copy. Send them out to buy their own. See you all again next month, Good Lord willin', an' the crick don' rise....

Timothy Kask

Two issues ago, we announced our return from the grave. Just as one does not reasonably expect a stroke to jump up and polka right away, we hope you understand that we have been slow in recovering our balance and energies.

Judging from our mail, there seems to be more relief that we are still alive than anger at our slowing down. Thank you, each and every one that wrote sentiments along those lines. We feel that we are coming out of intensive care about now, and are in guarded condition. The prognosis is for a recovery and return to health.

We have persevered for a number of reasons, not the least of which has been the support of many of our readers. Also, we have benefited from a great deal of support from a number of companies in the business. It was their support that led us to discover our greatest strength - our independence.

We feel that this point is perhaps our greatest reason to keep bringing you *AG* each month (again, we hope). We wish to be *the* independent voice in the hobby. There are only three other magazines in the business that are not affiliated with, or part of, one of the game companies. We haven't seen a copy of one of them in so long that we're not too sure that it is still publishing. The other two are speciality magazines that cater to a select market.

We will continue to include articles and materials on and for all kinds of games, regardless of who the publisher may be.

As part of our internal reorganization we have drawn up the new crew's goals and objectives for *AG*. Most of them are not new. In next month's issue, we will share them with you.

Those of you reading this that are old comics or fantasy fans are probably familiar with the name Gardner Fox. I consider it my good fortune to have met and come to know the man, after the influence he had on my childhood. It was after I met him that I discovered that he was the creator of both of my favorite comics when I was young: *Green Arrow*™ and *Green Lantern*™. I had already known that he wrote the Kyrik and Kothar novels, and others, when I found out that he had had a whole other career with the old comics. He created a series of tales, and a main character, for me once before. That he chose to do it again for me is one of the thrills of my publishing/editing career.

Grimm is a great character, and the story premise enables him to spin an infinite number of yarns around him. His first tale concludes next issue, and I can't wait for the next one to arrive.

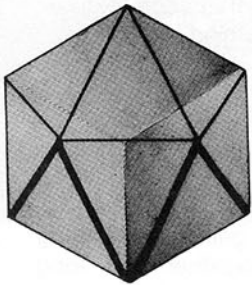
It has always been one of my strongest held beliefs that a gaming magazine should be more than just reviews and charts and tables, along with a few variants. Fantasy gaming requires much more in the area of background knowledge than historical gaming does. So much of fantasy gaming is supplied by the players that I have always felt that one couldn't read and assimilate too much. That is why, in the past, that I have published fiction, as well as other types of indirectly game related materials.

This month's issue contains the first part of another indirectly related article. I am referring to Perry Cooper's trilogy of articles on the reputed powers of metals, woods and gems. It is this type of gaming/ mythology trivia that adds a wealth of detail to FRPG's, providing the GM

ADVENTURE GAMING

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This month's cover is an interpretation of *Grimm of The Gameboard World* done by Dean Morrissey.

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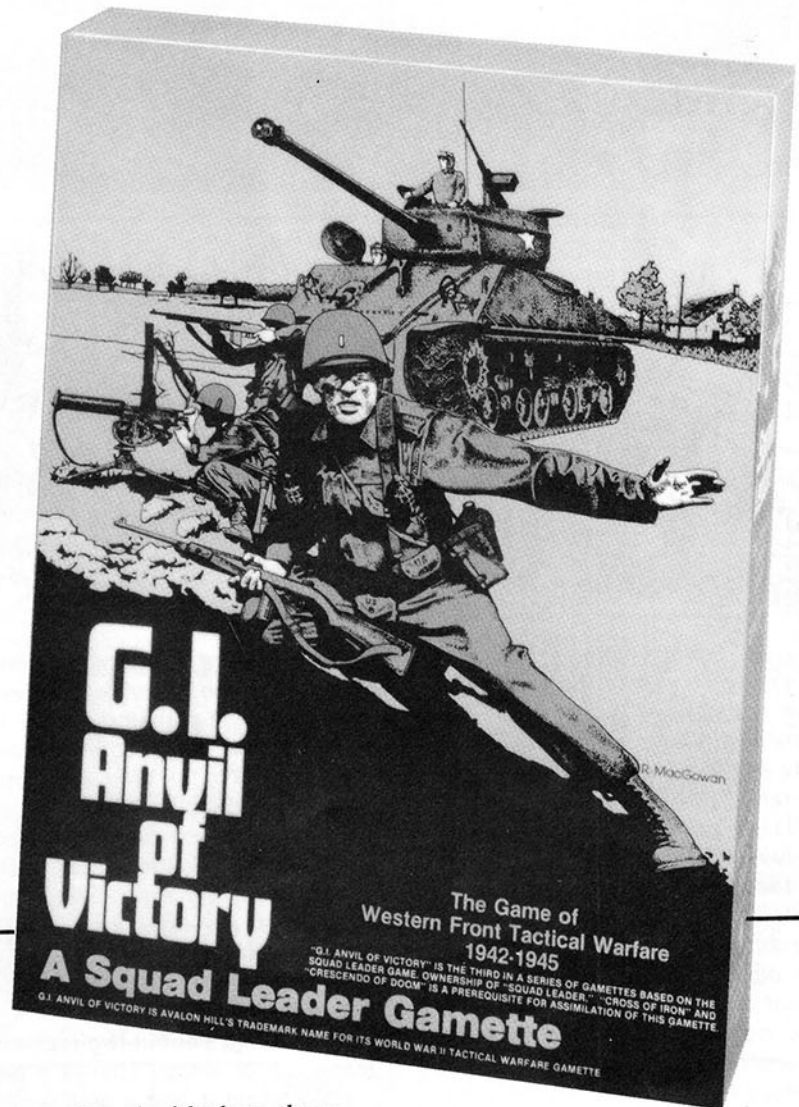
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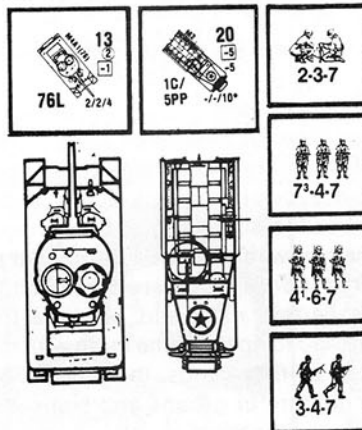


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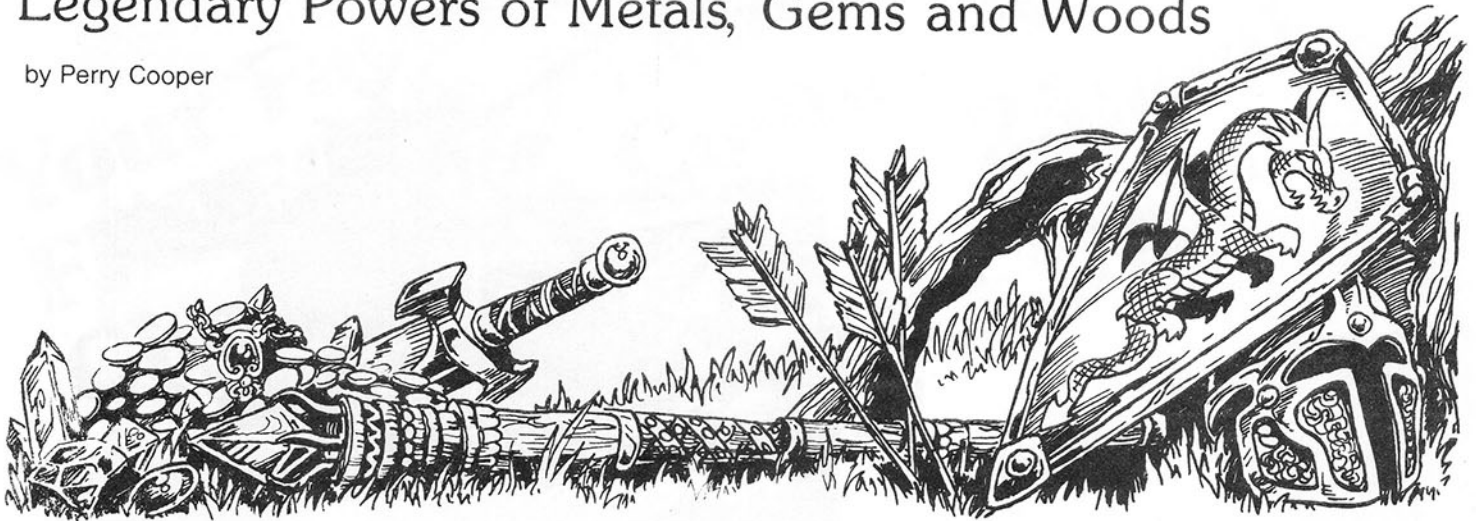


The Avalon Hill Game Company

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Legendary Powers of Metals, Gems and Woods

by Perry Cooper



Editor's Note

The very best campaigns do not share any one hallmark of greatness. Their very individuality is what makes sampling as many of them as you can (at cons, etc.) such a delight. Each "master" game-master has his, or her, own recipe of quality ingredients that in his, or her, hands become delightful mental confections.

Some of the ingredients would be hard to pinpoint, others obvious. The end result is a campaign of depth and texture, not another hack & slash, "monster of the week" extravaganza, nor a ponderous and cerebral exercise alone. Some gm's are simply better scripters/storytellers, weaving intricate and complex "story-lines". All great campaigns have many elements in their recipe. All are seasoned, each in their own way, with their own spices.

For this series of articles, the author has done a great deal of research and reading since we first discussed it. We don't claim any pretense of either originality or infallibility. Even minimal research into any area pertaining to or dealing with folklore or myth proves that every region, every country, and every ethnic people had their own variation on some substance or another. In many cases, just as in some of the "sources", what is presented is a "consensus" attribute.

We present this series of three articles to do with what you will, like a spicereck.

Creators of fantasy role-playing games are, of necessity, forced to limit themselves in their official game booklets to rules of play, descriptions of monsters and magic spells, role-playing tips and very basic descriptions of magic items.

At first, players and Gamemasters fail to even notice the lack of detailed information they have at their disposal; a party which has for the first time discovered a magic wand in the tomb of a long-dead sorcerer is ecstatic. But the fifth or sixth time such an item is chanced upon, the Gamemaster begins to nervously suspect that his players expect something more than just the same old "You've found a wand of some sort!"

"What does it look like?" a bored player is likely to ask.

"Well, uh, it's about two feet long. It's made out of wood. There's a band of metal around it, and a gem is set right above the band."

"What kind of wood? What kind of metal? What kind of gem?"

The Gamemaster fumbles through his rules book. "It doesn't say."

"Well, does it look like my wand of invisibility?"

"Not exactly. By the way, what's your wand made of?"

"We never heard."

"Oh." The Gamemaster senses that his players are conjuring up a you-didn't-do-your-homework-again spell. He's about to suggest that they simply test the new wand in the usual manner to see what it does, but since that method entails certain risks and because the players had to do the same thing with the last four or five wands, the GM knows that a mixture of groans and sighs will greet the suggestion.

This poor Gamemaster needs help, and *Adventure Gaming* is going to give him plenty of it. Starting in this issue, with the following article on the legendary powers of various metals, a three-part series will detail the powers of

materials from which magic items are commonly constructed: metals, gems and woods. While we can't claim that these articles will present every scrap of information available upon these subjects (space limitations make that impossible), we will present a variety of information pertinent to fantasy game systems. Myths, legends and historical data from all over the world have been reviewed in preparation for this series.

Since the material presented in these articles will help players figure out what a particular magic item *might* be capable of doing, some Gamemasters may choose to make the information "classified," allowing it to schooled wizards or experienced village craftsmen only. This is certainly the GM's option. But since most of the supposed powers of these metals, gems and woods have been taken directly from ancient folklore, it may be more fair for the GM to allow his players to consult these articles instead, since the fantasy characters they play would have been exposed from childhood to the myths and legends of their particular culture. (Besides, most materials have more than one legendary power, and the GM can logically assume that the powerful wizard who "magicked" the item in question could possibly have chosen a generally beneficial material simply in order to deceive future owners about the item's real nature.)

Of course, it should be mentioned that the *average* adventurer is not going to be able to tell at first glance whether a particular magic item is made from maple or hazel, whether a certain gem is a garnet or a ruby, whether that metal band is brass or bronze. Village artisans will have to be consulted, and they won't

give out information for free. So, by no means will the imparting of folk knowledge to players give them the keys to the vault of information about magic items. Giving them this folk knowledge will help them somewhat, and it will help greatly to add depth to a fantasy campaign, making it seem more lively and colorful, but it shouldn't upset any game system's balance or intrude upon any rules.

Readers who are familiar with mythology may notice some gaps in the information presented on particular materials. For example, there is an English legend about three clergymen in the 1300's who constructed a lead statue in the belief that it would speak to them once a month, giving them the secrets of alchemy and buried treasure. Unfortunately for these men, the statue was constructed under the wrong constellation and thus never spoke. In the following article on metals, there will be no mention of this legend under the section dealing with lead; the legend has been deleted because it gives the reader no information which would be useful in a fantasy campaign. A great deal of similar material, interesting but useless for fantasy role-players, has likewise been deleted from this series of articles. In other places there has been such an overabundance of information that some had to be pared away. And, since research proved that virtually every sort of wood has been said to have one form or another of curative power, some of that material has been condensed or discarded for fear of boring readers with repetition.

The information that remains, it is hoped, will be extensive enough to satisfy frustrated Gamemasters who want to add depth to their campaigns without wasting hours and hours in a library, doing research. The creative GM might note a gap somewhere (for instance, he may notice that no sort of metal is supposed to give a person the power to fly) and fill that gap by creating his own new sort of fantasy metal, one which has the appropriate power. And so the campaign can grow, becoming more distinctive, more colorful and, of course, more enjoyable for even the most discriminating players.

The Mythology of Metals

Metals have been used by mankind since the earliest days of civilization.



Metals have proven useful for farming, fighting, construction, adornment, protection, cooking — the list goes on and on. Certain metals, because of their beauty and/or usefulness, became precious enough to be employed as currency.

It was natural then, for the ancients to ascribe certain magical powers to each form of metal with which they were familiar. They saw that sturdy warriors preferred swords made of iron, while priests insisted that the altars to their deities be decorated with gold. From there it was a small step to the conclusion that iron gave one strength (else why would iron so frequently be found in the possession of warriors?) and that gold was sacred (else why would the priests make such extensive use of it?). In this way, the mythology of metals was born.

The legends surrounding metals are not so extensive as those surrounding gems or woods, partly because metals have frequently been taken for granted (there are more poems about gems and trees than metals) and partly because so few metals were known to the ancients. Many of the metals we know today came into existence, or were recognized as existing, only in fairly recent times. It is hoped that no readers will be surprised to find that there are no quaint Chinese folktales or old Germanic myths about metals such as uranium, cadmium or platinum.

Useful information for fantasy role-players has, however, been gathered for as many metals as possible, and these are discussed in alphabetical order be-

low. Magic items constructed of these metals will tend to have the powers ascribed to them in these descriptions, but it is up to the Gamemaster as to how often (if at all) these metals can be magicked in such a way as to give them a power not normally associated with that particular metal. Fantasy gamers should also note that not all objects made of a particular metal will exhibit the magic power discussed herein; instead it should be explained that items made of a particular metal have the *potential* to exhibit these ascribed powers, if these items are properly magicked by an appropriately powerful magician. A drinking cup made of bronze does not have any magic power at all until it has been subjected to the necessary spells and rituals known to veteran wizards; once subjected to those spells and rituals, the cup may begin to evidence the powers expected of a magical bronze item — possibly other powers, at the Gamemaster's option.

One further note: it is suggested that all magic items may carry curses, whether the materials from which they are made are generally considered baneful or not. If only objects made from, say, lead are cursed, players will quickly learn to shun such objects, making them virtually immune to what should be a common danger of dealing with magic items.

Brass

Brass is an alloy of copper and zinc. In common speech today, a person said to be "brassy" is supposed to be cheap, showy, insolent, loud and imprudent. Shakespeare used brass in many of his famous plays to symbolize hardness and permanence. In ancient times, however, brass was more often symbolic of the goodness of nature.

There is a curious legend from medieval Europe about a magician who sculpted a human head of brass, then went to sleep. He was awakened by the head, which began to speak to him. Inexplicably, the magician rose from his bed and angrily destroyed the enchanted head. There is no explanation given for the magician's behavior, nor any mention in the legend of what it was that the brass head said.

From this information, we can determine that magic items made of or with brass can have various powers. Such items are unlikely to be sacred, since brass is considered cheap and showy; but they might have some sort of power

dealing with nature (such as the power to summon a forest creature). Spells of permanence might come from a brass magic item. And since an ancient magician once fashioned a brass head only to hear it speak to him, might not a brass statue be capable of walking, talking, and even doing battle? Perhaps a magic wand banded with brass will allow any statue or sculpted object to "come to life" after being touched by the wand. Such are some of the suggested uses of brass in fantasy campaigns.

Bronze

Bronze is a reddish-brown alloy of copper and tin. It has long been associated with religion. In ancient Rome, a priest of the god Jupiter could have his hair cut only by a freeman who used bronze shears. Statues of the gods were most often sculpted in bronze.

In the Bible, bronze symbolizes judgment. When the resurrected Jesus appears in Revelation with "feet like glowing bronze," it indicates that He has come as a judge of all mankind. In the Old Testament, Israelites under Moses were plagued by poisonous snakes until Moses constructed a bronze serpent. All those who looked upon the serpent were miraculously healed of their snakebites.

For gaming purposes, bronze objects will often be holy. Magic items which "judge" a person (such as by determining that person's alignment, feelings toward the holder of the object, and so forth) might well be constructed of bronze. A bronze magic item may also have the power to heal those who have been poisoned.

Copper

This reddish-brown metal was once considered more valuable than gold, because ancient people found that copper had more uses. Many North American Indian tribes considered it as a part of the sun, and it was sacred to the Fire God of Babylonia and Assyria. In India, copper was considered sacred. It was used for decorative purposes, and sacrificial instruments were often made from it. In the Punjab region, earrings made of copper were supposed to ward off sciatica.

Europeans of the Middle Ages believed that a copper wire worn about the waist would prevent rheumatism. In Spain it was believed, as late as about 1750, that copper grew in the ground; thus a mine left alone would eventually be profitable

again.

For gaming purposes, copper is likely to be employed most often in magic items which have some power of fire. It can appear in holy objects, and it has minor healing powers. Because so many people have doubtless been cruelly sacrificed over the centuries by copper instruments, copper magic items will always have some chance of being cursed, whether their creator willed them to be cursed or not.

Electrum

Though it is not familiar to many people today, electrum was an alloy of gold and silver that was employed in ancient times; it was sometimes referred to as "German silver." The name "electrum" comes from a Greek word for "amber," which is this metal's usual color.

Electrum seems to never have been particularly popular, and its use has died out. Because it was seldom used, no legends are available about it. However, since electrum is half gold and half silver, it is obvious that this metal can contain combinations of the powers of those two metals. This makes electrum a very versatile metal for fantasy use. See the discussions of gold and silver for further information.

Gold

Gold has always been one of the most highly valued of metals. It has often been associated with religion; idols have often been made of gold. The ancient Celtic druids used a golden sickle to gather their precious mistletoe. In Central America, gold was thought to have a soul of its own. Sumatrans had a long list of impure items which could not be carried into a gold mine, lest the offended gold should leave. These same people also felt that gold was offended by noise, and mining was generally done in complete silence.

Great healing powers are attributed to gold. The Chinese believed that an unguent containing gold was the most potent of medicines, one capable of giving renewed life to the human body. In the West, gold dissolved in acid was considered a cure for all ills.

Medieval alchemists went to great lengths to find a way of transmuting common elements into gold. None of them ever succeeded, but in a fantasy world, perhaps one of them could.

A magic item made with or of gold will often be holy, but it may also be a device enabling people to overcome injuries, ailments, perhaps even death. Since the presence of gold made the ancient Sumatrans fall silent (out of respect), it is possible that a magic item of gold could magically force a group of persons or creatures to be silent.

Iron

Although iron has come into use relatively late in human history compared with gold, copper and many other metals, there is an abundance of folklore available about iron. The most prevalent folk belief about iron is that it protects its possessor from evil and/or magical beings. In Europe, iron is considered a potent charm against witches. In India, genii and evil spirits were deathly afraid of iron. Dragons were said in China to fear iron so much that peasants often tossed iron into pools where dragons were thought to reside. An apparently universal belief is that iron will ward off elves, pixies and all other manner of "little men" except dwarves, who are the world's finest ironworkers. In Burma, iron charms are employed to keep crocodiles away. In other places, iron is said to protect one from lightning.

There are many taboos against using iron for religious purposes. Tools of iron could not be carried into any Greek



temple, and such tools were not used for construction of Hebrew altars or Roman temples. Roman priests were not permitted to shave with iron razors, and in Korea the king's body was never to be touched in any way with iron. Europeans say it is bad luck to put iron to the ground on Good Friday.

There are two legends about iron being feared by thieves. In Ireland it is said that thieves will never steal iron objects, while on the other side of the world, in northern India, a robber tribe known as the Dorns will expel any member employing an iron instrument in his thieving profession.

Perhaps the most universal superstition about iron is that it gives its possessor strength.

It is obvious, then, that a magic item constructed of or with iron can have a variety of uses. It may make its possessor safe from magic and/or magical beings. It might ward off reptilian monsters like dragons and crocodiles, perhaps basilisks as well. It may keep away lightning, mischievous elves and larcenous leprechauns.

Apparently it is unlikely that a thief will desire to employ an item made of iron, even if it is a magic item. By the same token, priests will probably shun such items. But since a magical iron weapon might increase a person's strength, warriors will no doubt seek after iron with an ardor usually reserved only for gold.

A final note on iron is that this metal is never found in a pure state except in the case of meteorites. Primitive people who have chanced upon such meteorites have been quick to make use of them. Commodore Perry found Eskimos using bits of a three-ton iron meteorite during his explorations in the Arctic. Indians living in the area that is now Mississippi likewise employed iron from a meteorite. The Aztecs had a few knives made of iron; these were prized above gold and were said to have fallen from heaven. Ancient Egyptians apparently thought all iron came from the sky, for they referred to iron as a "marvel from heaven," and the Babylonians spoke of the metal as "heaven fire." Gamemasters might want to make note of these things, as perhaps in a fantasy campaign iron from a meteorite could be much more potent than common iron. It is even possible that this pure iron could already be magical, without need of magic spells and rituals.



Lead

Lead has been employed for a variety of minor cures. In the second century, Galen recommended it to heal wounds caused by sea serpents. The Styrians used lead to cure toothaches. In Texas, lead was said to cure boils, rheumatism and even thirst. In various places, lead was supposed to heal nosebleeds and poison oak.

A superstition employed in many horror movies is that lead bullets will not harm witches, vampires, werewolves and demons. Perhaps related to this is the practice of employing lead charms on which curses and other destructive imprecations have been inscribed.

If a vessel constructed of lead is seen to "sweat," it is supposed to be a sign of immediate rain.

Magic items containing lead are thus likely to perform minor cures, unless of course they are cursed in some manner. Some leaden magic items might be useful in predicting the weather. Since lead is not supposed to be harmful to demons, witches, werewolves and vampires, a Gamemaster might logically assume that lead is in fact useful in summoning such creatures. Or, taking that a step further, a leaden magic item might enable its possessor to change himself into a witch, werewolf or vampire.

Mithril

This fantasy metal will be familiar to readers of J. R. R. Tolkien. The name comes from the Sindarin tongue, and means "grey-gleam." Mithril was found only in the mines of Khazad-dûm. The dwarves prized it above all other things. Indeed, mithril was a very handy metal: it was light and hard, it could be beaten and polished without weakening, and its silver color would not tarnish.

The dwarves of Khazad-dûm mined mithril eagerly until one day they delved too deep into the earth and accidentally released a Balrog which had been imprisoned there. After that incident no more mithril was mined, and the mithril which was available naturally became extremely precious.

Since mithril is a fantasy metal, there are no set properties for it. Like pure iron, mithril is likely to be magical even without the aid of an experienced magician. Dwarves will always seek this silvery metal, and most items found constructed from mithril will probably be sized for dwarves. Such suits of armor would no doubt provide better protection than normal suits of armor would. But as for mithril's other properties, each individual GM can best devise these as he pleases.

Silver

Silver occurs in a pure state in nature and has been known to mankind since the beginnings of history. Silver mines are known to have been worked since at least 2500 B.C., and silver joined gold and electrum (an alloy of silver and gold) as the metals employed at the first known mint, which functioned in Lydia in the eighth century B.C.

Because of its color, silver has often been associated with the moon. Silver is said to improve the tone of musical instruments. It is also said that crossing a Gypsy woman's palm with silver enables her to predict the future. Silver charms for keeping evil spirits at bay are known all over the world.

It is common knowledge that a silver bullet is needed to slay a demon, werewolf, vampire or witch. This is because silver is considered a metal of purity. But there are instances of silver being employed for impure purposes. The best

known of these is the story of Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus Christ for thirty pieces of silver.

There is an ancient Persian legend about a silver statue which always laughs upon hearing a lie. In Germany it is said that the king of the dwarves has a silver miner's lantern that is as bright as the sun.

Because of all these legends, silver is a very versatile metal and can have a number of powers in a typical fantasy campaign. Any magic involving the moon, music, seeing the future, killing and warding off evil spirits, detecting lies and producing light could be woven into an item by the use of magicked silver. But because silver has been known to have immoral uses as well, there is always the chance that a magic item made of silver could turn out to be cursed, whether its creator wished it to be or not.

Steel

Since steel is basically iron alloyed with a small percentage of carbon, legends concerning steel have tended to reflect those of iron. However, because steel is not "pure" iron, it probably would

not have the power to frighten away elves, fairies and so forth, and it is suggested that thieves, who will never willingly employ iron weapons, should be permitted to use steel.

* * *

Now, using this knowledge about metals, an adventurer has some idea of what use a magic sword may have when fashioned from a certain metal. But supposing there is a gem set in the hilt of the sword; mightn't that tell more about the weapon's powers? Might not the gem's powers combine with or modify the powers of the metal?

The answer is yes, it could; and in the next article in this series, we shall take a close look at gems.

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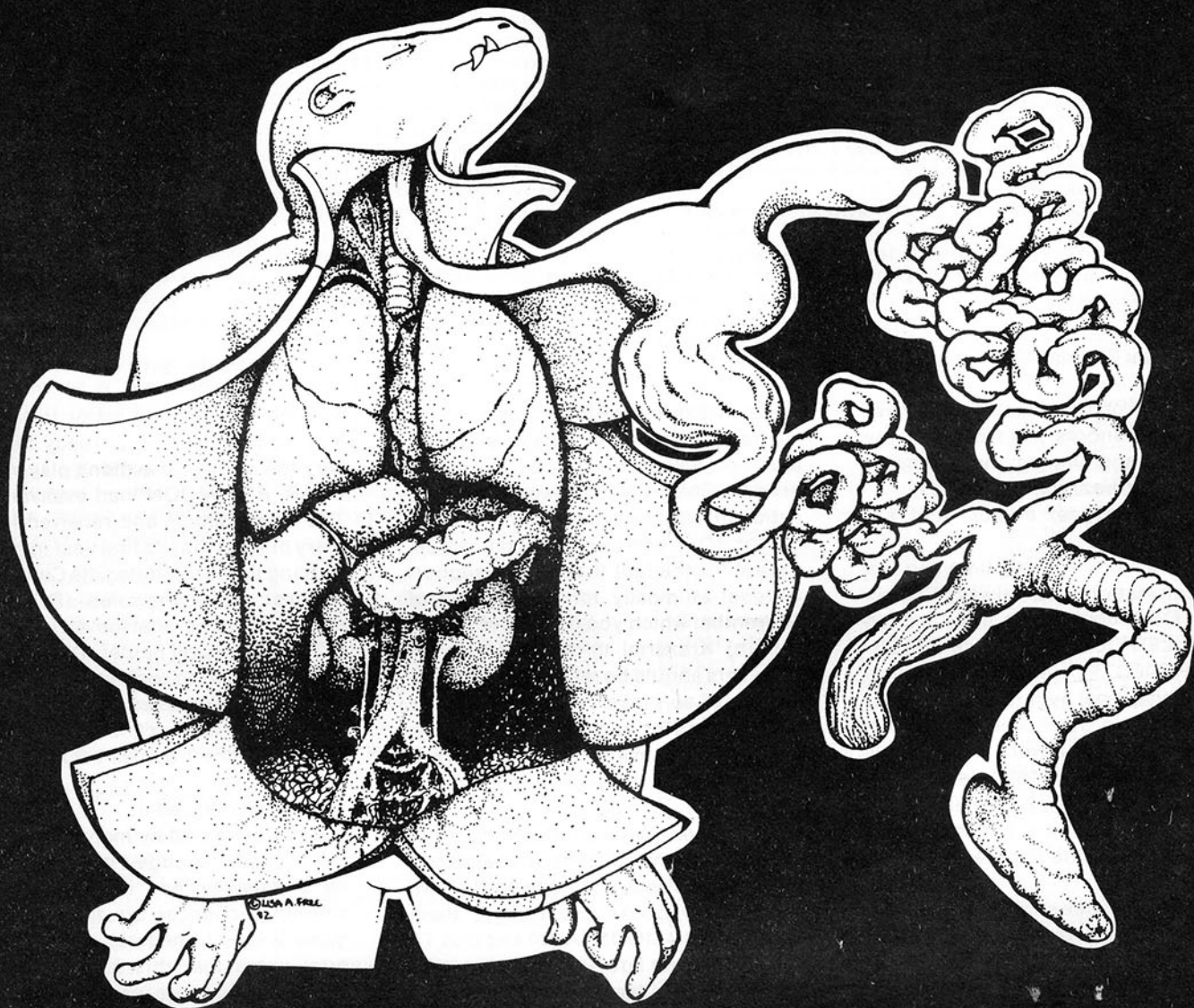
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In Search of Dragon Pass

RUNEQUESTING[©] can be a lonely business

by Thomas Smith

Kindly turn off the kleig lights, remove the bamboo shoots from beneath my fingernails, and unplug the reruns of *The Dukes of Hazzard*. I'll confess.

I'm a *RuneQuest* addict. And I'm lonely.

It's kinda funny — every time I go to a game convention, I can always find six million *D&D*[®]ers, two or three million *TRAVELLER*[®] folk, and a horde of *MORROW PROJECT*[®] personnel, not to mention an occasional hyperactive eight-to-twelve-year-old superfanatic who just has to tell me about every single magic item possessed by his 169th-level orcish Ranger/Paladin/Thief. But finding *RuneQuest* players is work — and the strangest thing of all is the final result of that work.

The process goes something like this: As soon as you get to the con, you check the open game board to see if anyone's planning to run an all-night *RQ* game on Saturday. Naturally, no one is — although there *are* notices for *TOP SECRET*[®], *Morrow Project*, *D&D*, *AD&D*[®] and *BUNNIES & BURROWS*[®]. Desperate for a good *RQ* game, you put up a notice indicating you'd like to get together with some other *RuneQuest*'ers early Saturday afternoon to set up a game for that evening.

When you arrive at the appointed hour, thirty-six people are there, characters in hand — and, since you put the notice up, you're obviously the Game Master, right?

Oy.

Several conventions' worth of this convinced me that there are at least several thousand closet *RuneQuest*'ers out

there. (Kraxerml, the mad nebbish in the left rear corner of my brain, suggests that their low profile may be due to the need for GMs with above-average imagination to handle all of the support material for *RQ* — and I would tend to agree, except for the fact that (a) the support material is mostly for *RQ*'s world of Glorontha, which you don't have to use, and (b) Kraxerml thinks closet *RuneQuest*'ers should be referred to as "traves-dice," so I take *everything* he says with a grain of salt.) So, I've put this piece together in an effort to encourage my fellow *RQ* players to spread the word.

If you do *not* play *RuneQuest*, consider this to be an introduction to that excellent system. It may not incite you to burn your *AD&D* books and replace them with *GRIFFIN MOUNTAIN*[®] and *CULTS OF PRAX*[®], but I do hope you'll give the game the consideration it deserves.

STALKING THE PERFECT COMBAT SYSTEM

RuneQuest, written by Steve Perrin and friends, was released upon an unsuspecting world by The Chaosium at Origins 78 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. It was barely noticed at the time — partially because TSR, SPI, Avalon Hill, and Park-

er Brothers *also* had major releases at that convention and partially because very few people who didn't play *WHITE BEAR*, *RED MOON*[®] had ever *heard* of The Chaosium — and received its primary publicity for its first year in print by winning the 1979 Strategists Club Award for best miniatures rules. (*RQ* has no miniatures rules whatsoever.)

Things got a bit hairier when die-hard gamers began to look at it. Those who liked complex games said *RQ* was too simple and abstract; those who liked simple, abstract games said it was too complex.

Until they played it.

It has been said by many gamers that the best way to judge a game is through its combat system; if the basics run smoothly, chances are the rest of the game will be ironed out as well. (Kraxerml notes that this attitude is often counter-productive, as game designers channel most of their creative talents into the combat system and spread themselves thin over the rest of the game.) Combat is indeed one of *RQ*'s strongest points.

To hit an opponent in *RQ*, you must roll equal to or less than your chance to hit with the weapon on 1D100. (Each weapon you use has its own chance; being a master of the greatsword hardly qualifies one to use a rapier.) Rolling 5% of your chance to hit or less indicates a

"It has been said . . . that the best way to judge a game is through its combat system . . . Combat is . . . one of RQ's strongest points."

"critical hit," which punches through any armor at all; rolling 5% of your chance to *miss* or higher (the exact number is found by adding your chance of critically hitting to 95) means you fumble, which can make you do anything from slip and twist your ankle to critically hit your nearest friend. The system also takes special weapon situations into account, such as an impaling spear sticking in your hapless body. (All of this information relates to the *one* roll to hit, and is on your character sheet.)

If you *are* hit, you have two possibilities of saving yourself: if you are sufficiently agile, quick-witted, or small, you may have a chance with the combat skill of Defense, said chance being subtracted from your opponent's chance to hit you — which can turn many a bloody swipe into an unimportant nick; or, if you have a shield or ready hand weapon, you can parry the blow. In fact, parrying is such an important part of the combat system that you have both an attack and parry chance with every weapon you use.

Next there's a hit location check (assuming the blow was not parried). Every being is broken down into major hit locations — head, chest, limbs, etc. — and a simple D20 roll resolves who hit whom where. (Humanoid hit locations are on the character sheet.) Damage is rolled; armor, which is rated for protection by how many damage points it can absorb per strike, takes what damage it can, the rest being subtracted from the target's hit points — and also from the hit points for the location. (Thus, it is possible to get a limb hacked off, yet still live; it is also possible to have all hit locations still functioning, *i.e.*, with at least one hit point per location, and die from bleeding from multiple wounds, internal injuries, and general system shock from all that knocking around.)

Admittedly, this is much more complex than the *D&D* Two-step of a roll to hit and penetrate and another roll for variable damage, and certainly a little more die-rolling than most other games; however, it has two major advantages over most other games: it is certainly more believable than most fantasy combat systems, and you can drop virtually any part of it without compromising the integrity of the system as a whole. Don't care about parries? Don't use them. Think hit locations are useless? Don't use them. While I tend to use the whole thing most of the time, I have run games with nothing more than the roll to hit and

the roll for damage. (Of course, once people realize they can parry if they wish, they almost always do.)

There are other details to combat — especially optional rules, such as aimed blows, knockbacks, and shield attacks — which add so much to the flavor of the game that many people who don't like anything else about *RQ* will incorporate the combat system into their existing campaigns.

WOULDN'T A PALADIN HAVE BEEN MORE SENSIBLE?

If combat were all that *RQ* had to offer, it would likely have received a small amount of attention from those gamers who are into Frankensteinian patchwork games, *i.e.*, a little bit from *D&D*, a little bit from *C&S*, etc. Fortunately, *RQ* had more to offer.

Pause for a moment, please, and try to think back to how many times you wished your mage wore armor — *any* armor. See if you can recall how many people got mangled because the cleric had used his last healing spell two hours ago. Remember how often you took an elf, desperately needing the combat proficiency *and* the magic spells. Reminisce about the times the thief got scragged, and nobody could open the bloody treasure chest.

"Training . . . allows the characters an opportunity to improve their skills without getting beaten on by trolls in the process."

There are no character classes in *RQ*. All skills are available to all characters. The primary metal is bronze, so that mages can wear armor and use magic at the same time. The gods of Glorontha live (*much* more about that to come), so that everyone can worship — and receive the benefits of worshipping — one god or another. Best of all, the world is so manna-rich that virtually *everyone* can use magic.

(Kraxerml points out that there are complaints about this, mostly from superfanatical fans of rigidly-enforced-character class games such as *D&D* and *C&S*, that having *everyone* using all skills, especially magic, upsets the game balance. Well, shucks, gang, it's *not* out of balance — after all, the monsters can use those skills too, if they've got the brains and the inclination; besides, how many skills do you, as a human being, possess? Ever think of it? Driving a car,

cooking, writing, reading, typing, computer programming, sewing, mathematics, climbing a tree, running for the bus, jumping over puddles, evaluating every piece of accumulated stuff in your garage, hiding Christmas presents from the kids, moving quietly to get that midnight snack without waking up your roommate . . .).

I recall reading a review somewhere — it may have been *Consumer Guide's Complete Book of Wargames* — with a statement to the effect that *RQ's* systems mesh perhaps a bit too well; those gamers who cannibalize systems to find the best parts of each will have trouble with *RQ*, because each rule is logically connected to the next. My experience has shown that *RQ* is the second-easiest RPG to teach to new gamers (the easiest is *TUNNELS & TROLLS*®) because (a) all skills in the game are on a percentage basis, so you can quickly explain how to perform them; (b) the game is laid out so well, with so many detailed examples, that you don't have to spend time working up an explanation of how each tricky rule actually works — just let 'em read the book, and they'll be able to decipher it themselves; and (c) because there are no character classes as such, new players don't have to pester the GM so much about which profession has which advantages, ". . . what spells do I get if I'm a cleric as opposed to a mage . . .", how

many weapons can this class use, ". . . how many hit points do I get if I'm a ranger . . .", etc., etc., etc. *ad nauseum*. Everybody can build their character's skills the way they want to.

The last important mechanic is experience. There are no experience points; you only have the chance to increase your proficiency with a skill by using it successfully in stress conditions, which is light-years better than applying experience equally to all skills, used or not. Also, your chance to get better is decreased as the skill percentage is increased, so that it can take a long time to get as good as Conan or the Mouser. There is an out, however . . . training through the guilds. This has the dual advantage of allowing characters to do something with the money they accumulate and allowing GM's an easy way to get rid of all that money adventurers accumulate. (To paraphrase Gerry Klug,

if you're the GM who gave them all that bread, it's your own fault.) Training keeps the cash flow to a manageable limit, eats up lots of game time so that the players can actually see their characters getting older and wiser, and allows the characters an opportunity to improve their skills without getting beaten on by trolls in the process.

CALL ME WHEN YOU FIND GLORANTHA

The primary attraction of *RuneQuest*, however, is that it is the very first RPG to have a world connected to it. Not like THE FANTASY TRIP's® Cidri, not like T&T's continent of Rhalph, not even like TSR's WORLD OF GREYHAWK® or The Judges' Guild's *City-State* series; *RuneQuest* is set in the world of Glorantha — a feat of creation so remarkable that it even dwarfs Middle-Earth.

Greg Stafford has been working on Glorantha since about 1966. Steve Perrin, *et al.* wanted to use that world, first glimpsed in *White Bear, Red Moon*, as the basis for a fantasy game. Since then, several volumes of support material have been released, all of it excellent.

Glorantha is a world in the throes of change. It was created as a direct result of the Great Compromise, which bonds all of creation under the power of Time. Before time, all manner of beings had populated the world, including the gods, elemental powers, and beings of Chaos. The Compromise bound Chaos from Glorantha, and kept the gods from quarreling and competing directly (for such a conflict would rock the cosmos). The gods' worshippers occasionally fight proxy wars when two or more gods are at odds, but most are complementary instead, and only gods of Power, *i.e.*, miscellaneous abstract cosmic forces such as Truth/Illusion, Luck/Fate, Fertility/Death, *etc.*, actively oppose one another.

Deity worship is a way of life among the beings of Glorantha, as the god you choose to worship may influence all of your future activities — worshipping Found Child involves hunting and supporting your tribe; worshipping Mallia involves the spreading of disease; worshipping Humakt involves devoting your life to war; worshipping Chalana Arroy means you are bound to heal whenever you can, helping all more-or-less indiscriminately. (There are, of course, obvious exceptions, but the basic rule holds

true.) The cults are so intricately woven into the lives of the people that there is, in effect, a world-wide union of church(es) and state.

Within the cults, exceptionally devoted lay members may become Initiates, privy to more benefits and responsibilities. As characters progress, they may eventually become Rune Lords (primary representatives of the cult; in effect, the god's "tools") or Rune Priests (spiritual leaders of the cult), with even more benefits and attendant responsibilities. Characters may gain access to Rune Magic, powerful spells oftentimes performed with the aid of a god. Divine intervention is possible, and worshippers of Elemental Rune cults may gain elemental spirits.

"Nowhere in gaming — perhaps in all of fantasy and SF — is there as complete and as well-thought-out a world as [Glorantha]."

The rules explaining the handling, combatting, and binding of disembodied spirits are, to my knowledge, the first and best of their kind. The relationship between man, spirit, and god is thoroughly detailed, and is the best working explanation of living religions in RPG's I have ever seen. (When I was running a game store in Ann Arbor, I sold a lot of copies of *Cults of Prax* to people who were running D&D or TFT mechanics and used Glorantha's as a religious/social base. Many of them came back to get *RQ* at one point or another.) The history of the world, the interconnections of the various pantheons, the tidbits of nontrivial trivia such as detailed accounts of funeral services and ritual invocations, the vast mythological tapestry — it's a bit humbling to realize the amount of work and love that have gone into Glorantha. Nowhere in gaming — perhaps in all of fantasy and SF — is there as complete and as well-thought-out a world as this.

AN ESPECIALLY TRICKY PROSPECT

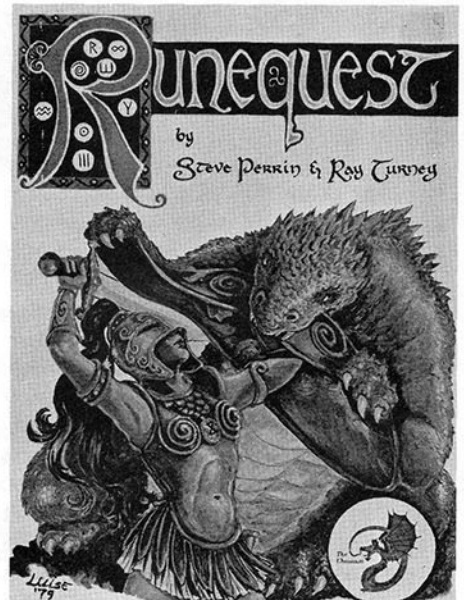
Most people who denigrate *RuneQuest* do so because they just don't understand. I've noticed that, if someone doesn't like a game for this or that reason, they haven't even played it about half of the time. Heck, I even thought the second edition of DRAGONQUEST® would be a bust — until I sat down and played with it. We're all guilty to one degree or another.

If you play *RuneQuest*, you know what I mean. You've gotten flack from friends who just can't understand why you care about hit locations, why your Rune Lord doesn't have four magic items if he's supposed to be so hot, how you can play a troll because trolls are evil unmitigated in other games, why aren't your characters using good steel, how come that guy in the plate armor is throwing magical spells. Bear with it, gang. We're having fun.

If you don't play *RuneQuest*, I urge you to at least look it over. It's not a difficult game to learn — and, who knows? Maybe someday your Rune Lord will have a drink with my Rune Lord and talk over old times.

[Editor's Note: *RQ* winning an award for "miniatures" rules was not as out of place as it might seem. In '78 and '79 (the award was for '78-released games) rpg's were often categorized as "miniatures" simply because they were demonstrably not boardgames, and could utilize figures in their play.]

Awards categories have been considerably shuffled in the past few years. Who can forget the year that GDW's lamentably out of print SYSTEM7® won a Chas. Roberts Award for best miniatures? System 7 was sets of counters (just like boardgame counters) meant to represent bodies of troops in a 7mm miniatures scale, to be used on table-top like miniatures are.]



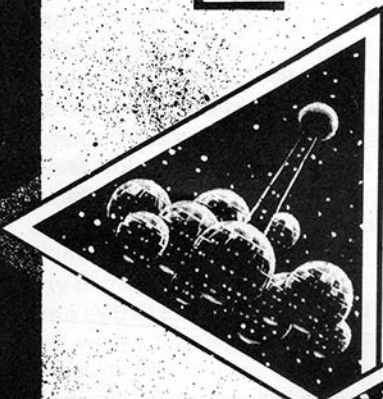
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Fighter Pilot of the Empire

by J. D. Webster

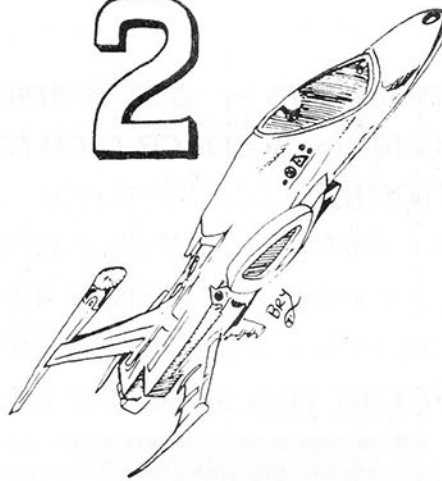
Pt. I: Eyewitness Report From the Frontier War

Glo-Worms

I stood silently on the bridge of the "Whirlwind", a 75,000 ton strike carrier, gazing into black reaches of space. With the naked eye I could see several shiny slivers of light in the distance. Each of these slivers was, in fact, another giant dreadnought coasting through space while holding perfect formation with the admiral's flagship. If I had cared to look closer, I might have been able to make out dozens of other little lights which drifted around the bigger ships or else lazily made their way across the formation. These would be the smaller service ships or destroyers which constantly roamed about performing those numerous yet vital tasks that bring order and cohesiveness to the armada. However, my interest was not in the big ships of the fleet, but rather, in the diminutive tiny fighters and the officers and men that crewed them. A young Imperial Ensign called me over to his scanner station. "Mr. Hanson, as a war correspondent, you might be interested in watching the fighters return." Trying not to show my obvious enthusiasm, I thanked the young officer and peered over his shoulder as he adjusted a computer enhanced imager. "They're just coming into range sir, I'm using the maximum magnification and . . . there they are!" I peered intently at the scope, "They look like glo-worms." What? Oh, glo-worms, never thought of them like that before". Indeed, they did remind me of glo-worms for, on the scanner, each fighter was only a sparkle of light surrounded by a fluorescent halo. "That's because the admiral's kissing their butts". "I don't understand . . .". "Sorry sir, but that's what I've heard the pilots call it; you see, the fighters are actually pointed away from us, . . . we're looking at their drives because they're decelerating to rendezvous with the fleet. For maximum decel, they turn backwards and the pilots call it . . .". I understood.

Fox

2



Life-giving coffins

There were hundreds of them spiraling into the fleet. They came in twos and threes and sometimes in large groups. All of them seeking their motherships. One squadron of fighters passed by in a perfect formation that depicted the Imperial Star Burst . . . (Beautiful!!!). This was the return of a system scouting mission. 12 hours before, over 600 fighters had departed to reconnoiter the quadrants ahead of the advancing fleet. There was evidence of action too. Many squadrons were missing fighters, and here and there a solitary fighter could be seen limping in. I saw a pair of destroyers heading out to where the fighters were coming from. That would be the search and rescue operation. Many people have read about the exploits of the gargantuan Imperial Battlecruisers, or of the valiant defense work of the heavyweight System Defense boats. But few of these same people realize that one of the main workhorses of the navy is the versatile little starfighter. In this fleet alone, there are almost a thousand of them. What is a

starfighter? One of the pilots told me; ". . . a starfighter is a precisely engineered marvel of science allowing a man to plug his life into a tiny capsule so that, for a short period of time, he can race out into a deadly black void and be free to experience the universe while he flies his very expensive, extremely vulnerable, weapons system into the teeth of battle; . . . where, if he is hit, he will almost certainly perish . . . but, until that time he will be on an adrenalin high and alive, . . . I guess, in short, a starfighter is a life-giving coffin." The pilot and his gunner failed to return from the next mission.

Sqdn. Ldr. Dirk Stanley

I was asked to describe a typical Empire fighter pilot. This proved to be a most difficult task. On the outside, the pilots and crew are much as you would expect them to be. They are highly motivated, well trained professionals with athletic builds and big egos. There is much rivalry between the Marine and Navy pilots, though both show equal disdain for the "artillery/close support" pilots attached to the Army units. However, it is on the inside that one can discern that there is something subtly different about starfighter pilots. The general citizenry of the Empire is not aware that to be trained for fighters, one must pass a certain psychological test. And that to pass, one must be slightly insane and a fatalist with a trace of wildness in the spirit. Why? Because every mission, whether it involves combat or not, is a delicate balance between life and death.

Lt. Dirk Stanley is probably a typical fighter pilot. He has survived 78 missions and has three confirmed kills against Zhodani fighters. While most Naval personnel spend their careers on the big dreadnoughts and may see one or two battles during a campaign, Dirk risks his life daily on patrols. His squadron has been involved in three skirmishes this

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week. Of the twelve fighters in his command, two have been lost in combat, one just vanished on patrol, another suffered a life support system failure, and three are still overdue from the last patrol. It is a grim business. Dirk does not show it, but the psychological strain must be terrific. It is a proven statistic that in a war zone, the life expectancy of a fighter pilot is 15 missions. Dirk explains that combat is only one enemy, and that boredom, vertigo paranoia, equipment failure, and general insanity are just as deadly. I asked him to explain vertigo paranoia. "It's a funny thing that occasionally happens to us out there. . . . one time, about a year ago, we were on patrol and under radio silence. I had the squadron in a cone formation. On the point of the cone, leading us in, was one of my best pilots. We were in deep space which means that any kind of relative motion is impossible to discern. Well, since he was on the point, he couldn't see anyone else and after about 5 hours he got a little paranoid. He began to wonder if he was really moving and if anybody else was really around. That can happen when you're all alone in a little capsule in space. So he called Red 3, who, of course didn't answer because we had to maintain radio silence. Then he tried calling some of the other guys. . . . same thing, no answer. I guess that kind of rattled him because he panicked. He used a broad wave transmission and yelled for somebody to answer him while he flipped his fighter around and turned on his active scanner to find the rest of the formation. At that point Red 3 blasted

him with his lasers, which was the right thing to do since an active scanner is the quickest way of letting the enemy know where you are and in any case, his broad wave transmissions had alerted them to the fact that we were around so they were probably looking."

Fighter Tactics

How should fighters be deployed? This is a good question. As mentioned earlier, starfighters are very expensive and extremely vulnerable. Fighters, however, are also extremely useful and versatile.

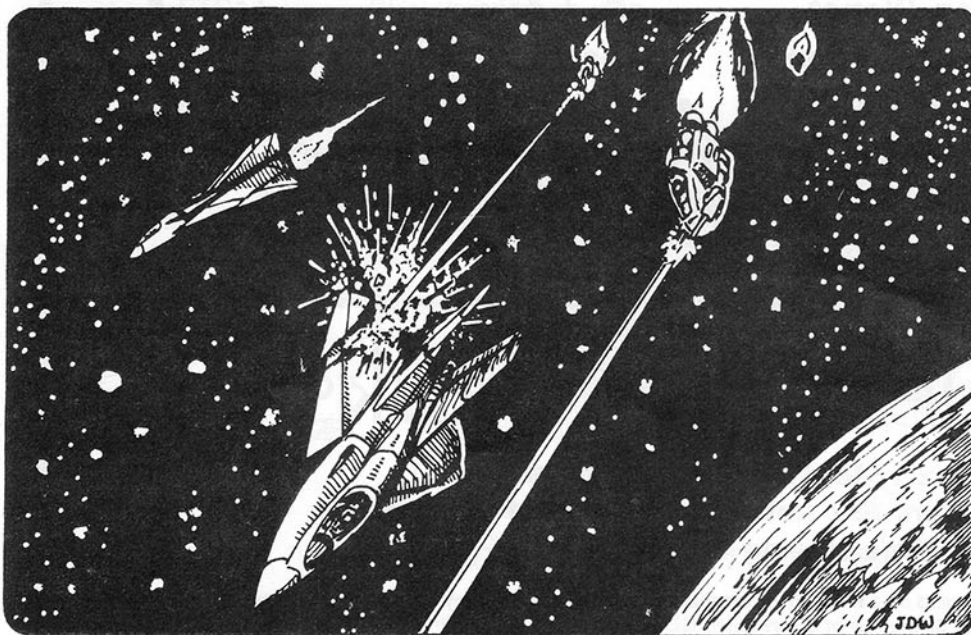
Fighters have several defined tactical missions. When available in large numbers, such as with this battle fleet, they are used as advance scouts or as a defensive screen. When on the attack, they are used for mass close assaults in an attempt to overwhelm enemy defenses, or as interceptors for checking out unidentified shipping. For planetary defense, fighters are an important link between the System Defense boats and the planetary defenses. They often sally forth to aid SDB's or to make small hit and run raids in areas that the planetary guns don't cover.

Scouting tactics are quite simple: you send a large number of fighters out ahead of the fleet and let them blunder into something. The fighters, if out-matched, will retreat and make a report. Otherwise, they will attempt to overwhelm the enemy. In any case, the responsibili-

ties of the fighters are to find the enemy and report him to the main ships of the line while sustaining the minimum possible casualties. Never send fighters in small numbers as they could be overwhelmed and eliminated before they can report.

Using fighters as a defensive screen is sometimes an abused privilege. Some admirals like to stick their fighters between them and the enemy when engaged in fleet shootouts. This "hide behind the cannon fodder" tactic not only minimizes the usefulness of fighters (as their weapons do not help significantly at long range), but tends to waste them needlessly. Fighter screens should be intermingled with the fleet where they will be able to engage incoming missiles and close assaulting enemy fighters, leaving the big ships free to engage enemy ships. By doing this, the enemy tends to engage the big ships right back and ignore the inconspicuous fighters. These screening fighters are thus preserved and are available for assaulting a weakened enemy or chasing down cripples during the later stages of a battle. Though not generally talked about, it is considered a viable tactic to sacrifice and leave behind a fighter screen to slow the enemy when a fleet must retreat and jump out of system.

Fighters are at their best when close assaulting. Close assaults work best when there are overwhelming numbers of fighters. Close assaults must also be timed well, for if fighters attack while the enemy is still strong, the assault will be repelled with excessive losses. Fighters are very effective at mopping up. Also, a properly executed assault during a closely contested battle could provide the catalyst needed for victory. During an assault, fighters will generally evade at maximum speed until they are at point-blank range where they cannot miss, then they will attack, concentrating on vulnerable areas of enemy ships such as the bridge, gun bays, and drives. Large groups of fighters will single out enemy ships in a formation and hit them like a swarm of wasps, striving to disable them quickly. To minimize casualties the swarming fighters will remain within a kilometer of the victim so that other



enemy ships cannot fire in support for fear of hitting their own ship.

Intercept missions are quite simple, once an unidentified target is spotted. The number of fighters required to subdue it is calculated and then two times that number are sent on the mission.

These tactics are only guidelines. The one thing that is certain is that there are no hard and fast rules. The uses of fighters in space combat are as variable as the situations encountered.

Finale

Just before I finished this report, a major action was fought against the Zhodane. The fleet won a major victory; losses were heavy but a desperate action by our fighters turned the tide. Fighter losses were 82%. The "Whirlwind" no longer has any fighters. Of the many pilots I interviewed, none survived. My heart is heavy. In Sqdn. Ldr Stanley's effects I found this verse:

Fighter Pilot of the Empire
that who the hell I am.
No braver, meaner, specialist
does more than what I can.

I'll fly my tiny metal ship
right to the battle scene
or stroll into a sordid bar
and kick a big Marine.

Then, just as a wasp in combat
you'll never see me flinch.
I can force a battle cruiser
to give at least an inch,

and if he blasts my fighting ship
till it simulates Swiss cheese,
and knocks awry my laser guns
his problem will not ease,

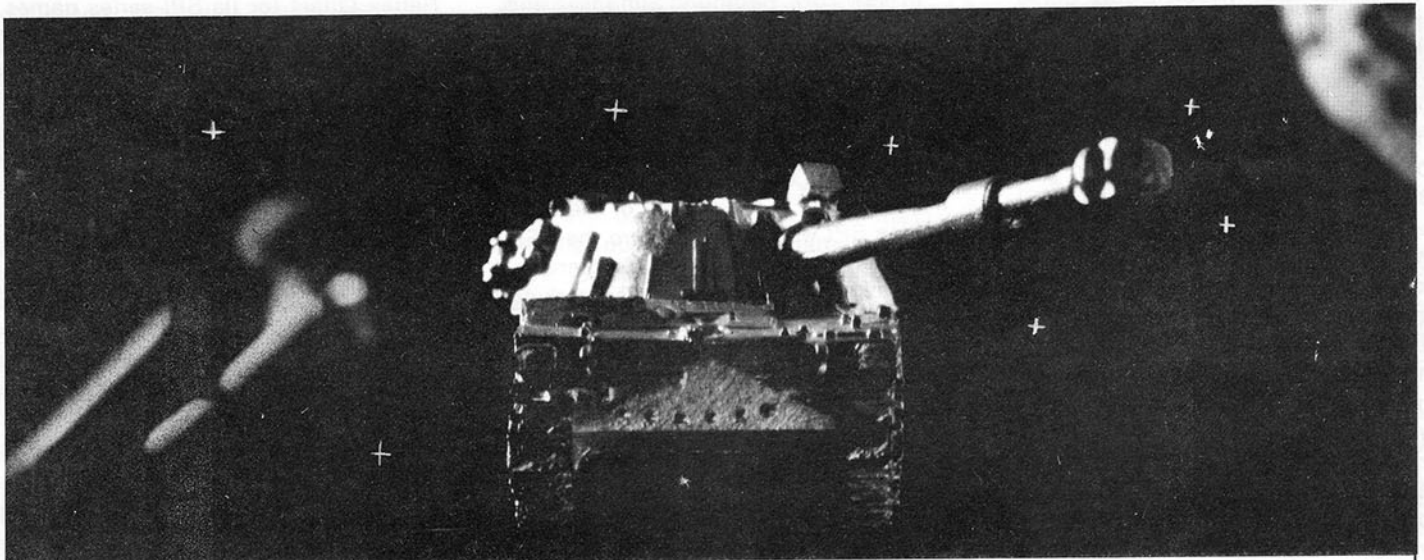
cause I'll ram him with my wreckage;
crash through his outer shell,
then leap out with my knife in hand
and raise a lot more hell.

Lt. Dirk Stanley 305th Sqdn.

Presented by — War correspondent
Jim Hanson



Part II of *Fighter Pilot of The Empire* will describe in detail how to use fighters in *TRAVELLER*® and *HIGH GUARD*® and how to simulate a space dogfight.



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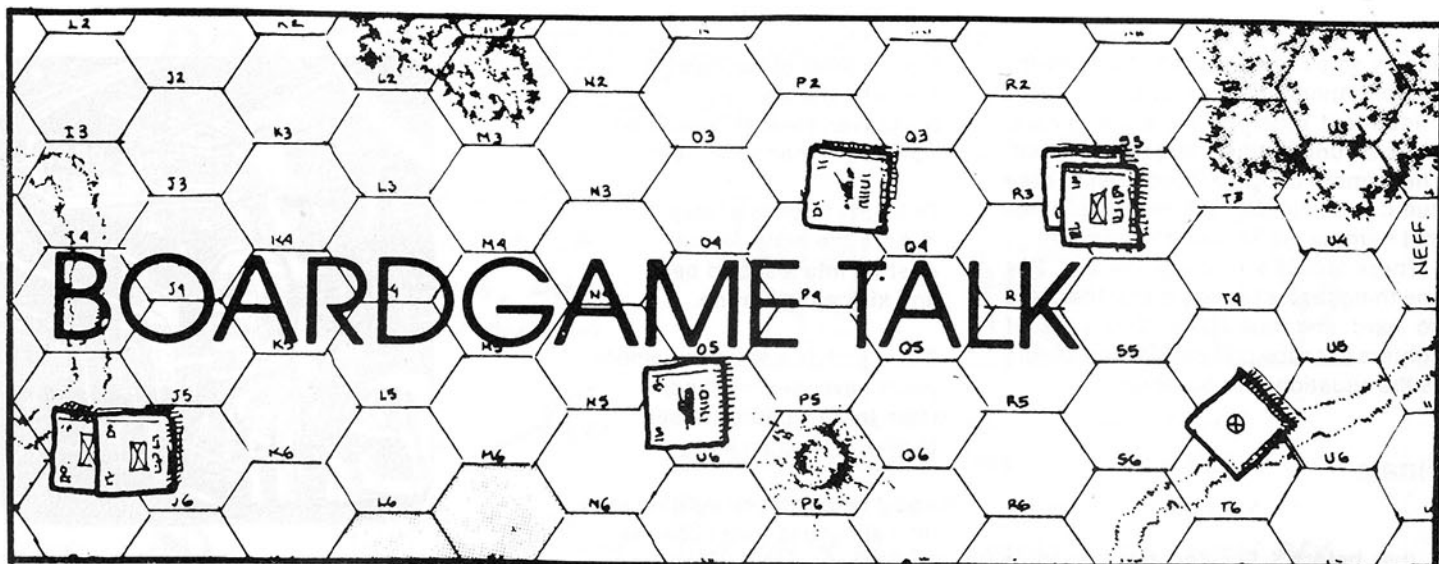
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by John Prados

Editors Note:

This column was written in July. Some areas of the subject matter were obscure at that time. I have updated where I knew there to be errors or obscurity. I may have missed some. In order to keep the continuity of John's column, we are publishing it now.

By now you have probably heard about the game deal of the year. If not, stay around and BOARDGAME TALK will discuss the take-over of New York's main house by none other than TSR Hobbies of Lake Geneva. The event was announced in a dry press release by Simulations Publications at the end of March that was remarkable for its brevity. Principals in the proceedings refuse any other comment beyond the *pro forma* quotes in the SPI release. Disappointment is widespread, not least among subscribers of *Strategy & Tactics*®, *Ares*® and *Moves*®, and fans of SPI games, who have received no new material since the first of the year.

For fans there is some good news and some bad news. The good news is that the magazines will begin to arrive again — editor Michael Moore is moving them out to Lake Geneva from which they will continue to operate. The *S&T* and *Ares* games will also go to Lake Geneva. A rump "SPI" staff which will handle research and development of the larger boxed games and east coast distribution

for TSR may be kept in New York. If all this sounds complicated, believe it, it is.

In New York, Redmond Simonsen and Brad Hessel first agreed to stay on and help the transition but they have since left as well. Foremost among the new TSR problems is the lack of a game design staff since most of Simulations Publications' R&D group resigned from the company in the course of the difficulties SPI was having before the TSR deal was concluded. From Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, TSR officials are also working hard to assemble a game design staff to handle at least the *S&T* and *Ares* games. There are various SPI games in production now, but new staffs will be necessary to design and develop subsequent games.

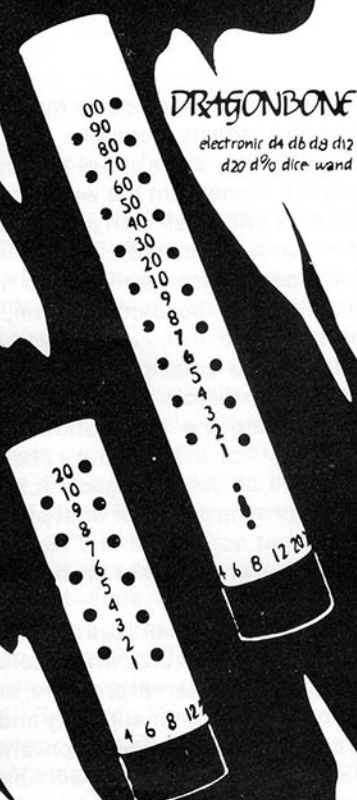
The dust is not yet all settled from the big doings in the Big Apple. Collateral casualties of the SPI tumble have yet to be assessed. Among the companies possibly affected is Reflex Offset, a Long Island City printer which has been supplying game maps and counter sheets to Simulations Publications for years. Indeed, Messrs Seymour and Banks of Reflex Offset have made an immeasurable and unsung contribution to this hobby by assisting not only SPI but a variety of other publishers including defunct OSG as well as the smaller Simulations Canada. Moreover, for some years Reflex Offset carried a huge cash-due account from SPI and to this extent helped the

New York publisher remain in business. Of course, TSR may continue to use Reflex Offset for its SPI-series games; indeed, it's hard to see how TSR could replace the production facilities and experience of Seymour and Banks.

How can all this have happened? Two years ago, in *S&T* 83 (November-December 1980), Simulations Publications was touting a bright future. It claimed to have done \$2.6 million in income during its 1979-80 fiscal year and there was an upbeat interview with new SPI chief executive Chris Wagner. Now, it's goodbye to all that. Wagner is gone too, his function presumably to be exercised by some committee in TSR's rapidly growing game empire. During the period of about eighteen months between recording his interview and the TSR acquisition of SPI, Wagner made a strong effort, primarily to diversify SPI. On the one hand the company tried to reduce inventory by cutting down on old titles in its line. At the same time there was a big move in new directions — *SF&F* with *Ares*, *FRP* with *UNIVERSE*®, *DRAGONSLAYER*® and *DALLAS*®, computer gaming, and general gaming with *SPIES*®. There was also increased subscription liability with the *RBROG* and *FYEO* newsletters.

Diversification was a good move. So was the appearance of open-ended games like *Universe* and *Dragonslayer*, which could be succeeded by virtually

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endless additions. The real problem, in my opinion, was to move on so broad a front while having a fragile cash flow base. In the event, what happened was that the cash suddenly dried up as the 1981 recession brought a reduction of orders in the latter part of the year. At the same time, retailers and distributors, long unhappy about SPI shipping policies, sharpened the effects of the general economic downturn by trading SPI products among each other rather than ordering from New York. The effect was that SPI's suppliers were not paid and Reflex Offset, Freeman Diecutters and others began to hold SPI jobs in lieu of back payments.

In the scramble for cash, Simulations Publications did what it had not done since Jim Dunnigan and Redmond Simonsen first entered gaming — sell games to Avalon Hill. In 1981, in fact, SPI sold the rights to five of its titles to the Baltimore publisher that had done PANZERBLITZ® in 1970. Other expedients were also attempted but nothing was quite enough.

Meanwhile, in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, TSR Hobbies had a different problem. Large as it had become, TSR was still essentially a one-product company. It too had a need to diversify. If you weren't interested in *Dungeons & Dragons*™, then TSR had nothing for you. The Lake Geneva publisher had already made some efforts in this direction. During 1978-79 they tried to start a historical game line but finally didn't print any of their titles. Later there was a marketing arrangement with Worldwide Wargamers of England. But an opportunity to acquire Simulations Publications was a whole new dimension. At one stroke TSR might get a whole game line including many fine historical, SF (and even FRP) titles, plus what was arguably the best game design staff in the business. The prospect must have been too tempting to pass up. Thus TSR's motivation is relatively easy to understand.

When things started to get really bad at SPI the New Yorkers began to talk not with TSR but with the Baltimore owners of Avalon Hill. Neither these negotiations nor those with another, smaller New York house, bore any fruit. It was then that New York and Lake Geneva began to talk to each other. Unfortunately the precise methods used in this business dealing were objectionable to some and probably will be disputed for a very long time. The uncertainty and other factors contributed to the decision of the Simula-

tions Publications R&D staff, and some of its editorial and art staff, to leave the company. Thus in the end TSR seems to have gotten only half of what it might have.

For the game fan this is not such a nice story, but one hopeful note out of all this is that the hiatus, during which things will be shaken out, represents a "window" in time for new game companies to step forward in the historical game area. We may see some interesting and innovative new games as a result. It remains to be seen if this will be the case. It will also be interesting to see the new material that emerges from the SPI-TSR conglomerate.

In the end this story seems to have lots of losers and no obvious winners. Simulations Publications loses its independence and a number of its job slots. TSR gets less of an acquisition than it wanted. The distributors and retailers lose one of their best sources of high quality products, in part because of the very deep discount rates from which they benefit. The industry may lose some of its most experienced and skilled suppliers. TSR does intend to move quickly to presenting new material, at least in the magazines which will begin appearing again this fall. Current word from TSR is that the *Moves Magazine* and *RBROG* will be merged into *Strategy & Tactics*. *Ares* will still be published. Some of the old SPI games will also be republished but new games still depend upon TSR's success in assembling material and qualified staff. Finally, the gamer in the street loses too, in the enforced wait before the emergence of any new designs from new and reorganized companies. This is truly a tale of woe.

Footnote:

Latest word is: that Ares and S&T will resume bimonthly publication soon. Every other issue will contain a game.

SPI is technically a hollow, bankrupt shell.

No existing subscriptions to SPI magazines will be honored, although special re-subscription deals have been offered.

No details concerning re-issue of any game titles have been forthcoming.

Gary Jaquet, who was my replacement at TSR, has left Dragon Publishing to pursue his own interests, leaving a serious vacuum in that division at the top.

TSR is still trying to assemble a staff capable of turning out enough titles. — Editor

THE ACADEMY REPLIES TO JOHN PRADOS

by Bill Somers

In John Prados' column Boardgame Talk which appeared in *Adventure Gaming* Vol. 1 #10 page 25-26, he discusses the Charles Roberts Awards. As chairman of the awards committee I'll take this space to reply to John, correct some inaccuracies and clear up some points about the awards system.

I've talked this over with John, and found that we share the same basic concerns for the awards. Our only serious disagreement, I feel, is over the interpretation and priority of stability for the awards. But we'll get to that later.

Three minor points that John made need correcting, though. He claims that (a.) there is no check on the Academy; (b.) that nominations are not made public, and (c.) that a game was arbitrarily excluded from consideration in 1981.

"... some 'checks and balances' that were instituted by the previous Charles Roberts Awards system do not exist under the Awards Academy arrangement. The most important of these is that there is no check on the Academy. Under the old system actual awards nominations went to each attendee at Origins. If there were any problems with nominations all who were at a convention would know about it. Now the nominations go only to members of the Awards Academy. Thus, for example, in 1981 a game which had received numerous nominating ballots was arbitrarily judged not eligible for a Charles Roberts Award nomination and no one knew anything about it because the list of games actually nominated appears in no public record anywhere."

Under the Academy system, the academy itself only votes on the final ballot, so it's misleading to speak of the academy *doing* anything. The decisions are made by the Origins Awards committee. (Officially the awards are called the Origins Awards and include the H. G.

Wells awards as well as the Charles Roberts awards. Still we find that everyone just calls them the Charlies.)

Each year's nominations are tallied and looked at by a screening subcommittee of the awards committee. Products may be excluded if, (1.) they were copyrighted after the calendar year being voted on; (2.) they are items that have been nominated before, or (3.) the screening committee judges that they do not belong in the category. They will not get nominated if they are not in the top five vote getters in their category after the ballot stuffing attempts are thrown out.

So, if any games were excluded from consideration in 1981, it was not "arbitrarily" done but done by set procedure. However, we note that in Richard Berg's Review of Games it was erroneously reported that John Prados' own *Campaigns of Napoleon* was excluded from the 1980 nominations on the grounds that it appeared in 1981. This may account for some of John's concern. John's game had, in fact, appeared in 1980, and was not nominated because it didn't make the top five. So an honorable mention to *Campaigns of Napoleon*.

Now the list of nominations is made public without a doubt. Whether the list goes to every attendee at Origins depends on who's running Origins, not on the awards committee. In some years, under the old system, the list, as a ballot, was supposed to go to every attendee yet failed to do so. This year the list doesn't have to go to each attendee, yet it will be included in the Origins program.

Furthermore, under the academy system, a press release is prepared. This lists the winners and all nominees in each category. The list goes to: Each exhibitor at Origins, all hobby press at Origins, the secretary of GAMA for further distribution to all GAMA members,

all major and minor hobby magazines and to all academy members.

Not all hobby 'zines chose to print the entire list. Some print the winners only; some only print their own products that won or were nominated.

Once people see that we have firmly established the academy system, that we will stick with it and make it work, you will find all the 'zines printing the list as soon as it's available.

Still, having the nominations made public does not, in itself, put a check on the system as John suggests it would, mainly since the details of what products failed to get nominated and why is not made public under either the new or old system.

Regarding checks or restraints on the awards committee, they are as follows: public pressure, internal pressure, financial limitations, higher authority and cooperation with the Origins convention. In each of these areas you will find the new system an improvement over the old.

Public pressure can be comments and criticism sent directly to the committee or appearing in the hobby press. In the old way with 2 or 3 committeemen any changes were either arbitrarily made or had to wait for the annual public meeting at Origins. So *if* the meeting was scheduled, and *if* anyone showed up, and *if* your proposal came up something might be done. With the new awards committee of 25, anything sent in or otherwise brought to our attention immediately goes into the committee proceedings. The proceedings is a newsletter containing reports, correspondence and ongoing by-mail debate and voting on any proposed changes to the awards system, categories or procedures, including proposals from the public. (Write Awards, P.O. Box 656, Wyandotte, MI 48192.)

Internal pressure is the influence of

the committee members on each other and on the system itself. The new system with 25 members from all areas of the hobby makes it more difficult for one or two persons to have their ideas dominate and makes the whole process much more representative of the many viewpoints within the hobby. And thereby more responsive to the hobby at large.

Higher Authority: the old system had no higher authority. It was forced to cooperate heavily with the Origins convention and allowed itself bound by the decisions reached at the annual public meeting. Whoever showed up could vote and whatever they wanted was it! If anyone took notes there might be some continuity to the next year. The new system has to answer to GAMA. It has the status of a formal division of GAMA and has written by-laws. The annual public meeting is retained but the committee alone makes any decisions. The committee relies on GAMA for its finances, which is another restraint. (Costs are running \$1,000-\$1,500/year.) The old system had to be voluntarily financed by the Origins convention. This meant that in the past there were two years when the bills went unpaid. (Costs then were much less, \$100-\$300.)

Cooperation with the Origins Convention: The committee needs certain things from the convention and the convention needs certain things from the committee. Under the old system what we needed and were often not supplied was critical and put severe restraints on our opera-

tions. (Like not having ballot boxes, for instance.) The new system eliminates much of our dependence on the convention, and we may try to further reduce it in years to come.

The major theme to John's criticism is 'change'. He states that the most notable thing about the awards is their history of constant change. That the changes have been the main source of dissatisfaction. That the creation of the academy has not stilled the demand for change and not led to a period of consolidation. He ends up by calling for less change and more consolidation.

True, the creation of the academy system has not stilled the demand for change. That's because the demand for change is always going to be there. At least as long as this hobby continues to grow and develop. What the new system has done is provide a means for dealing with that demand. Under the old system, methods of change were arbitrary and chaotic as discussed under public pressure above. This has produced a *pent-up demand* for change, in addition to normal evolutionary pressures.

In the first year of operation under the new system the awards committee looked at 35 specific proposals. With the variations to these counted there were 44 questions voted on. 18 of these passed, 18 failed; the others were withdrawn, referred to GAMA or otherwise disposed of. This second year looks like it will be just as busy.

The main cause for dissatisfaction

with the old system was not the changes, but perhaps too little change, along with the lack of accessibility, inept management and general chaotic nature.

There is nothing wrong with changes themselves. Look at the results of the changes. The changes are to keep the awards up to date. They are in response to the changes in the hobby itself. Where would we be if we still had the original five categories used in 1975? Then there was no mention of miniatures, role playing, fantasy, science fiction or computers!

To sum up, I feel that the awards committee is on the right track and doing a good job. We have an organization that will work successfully and with a little effort and help from the rest of the hobby can meet the need for a sound and respectable awards system.

One last comment about the composition of the committee. Originally the members of the committee were selected to balance geographical areas and hobby experience. In practice this has not proved to be important. Some members have dropped out and new ones added. New members come in by being nominated by a present committee member and voted on by the committee. We are finding that the prime consideration for a good member is a demonstrated concern and willingness to help the awards.

I am nominating John Prados, with his consent, to the committee, and look forward to working with him to improve our Origins Awards, the Charlies.

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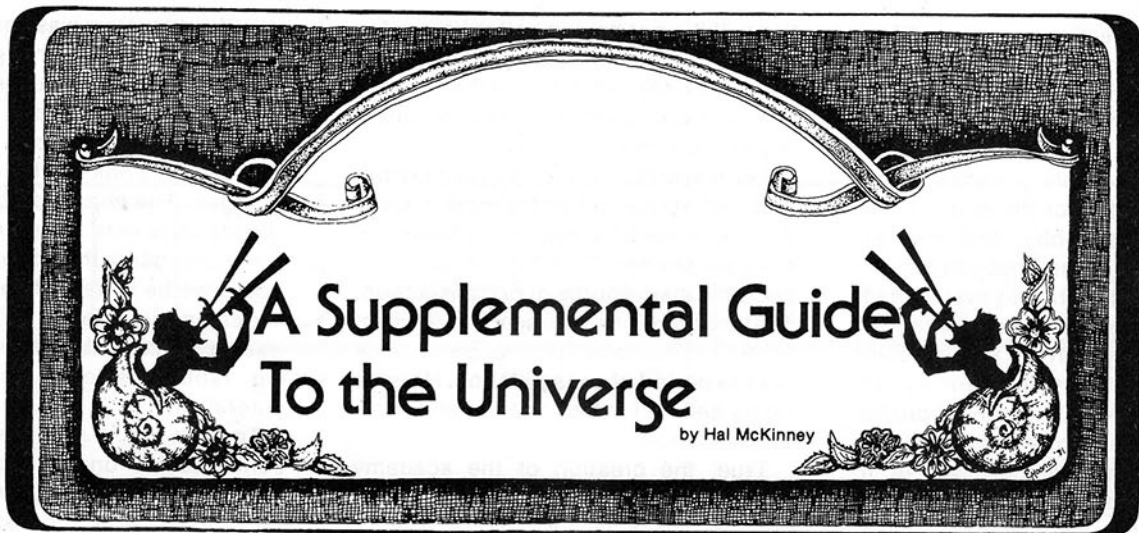
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I can't believe it's been a month since the last column, but Tim "Mr. Wizard" Kask says it has and wants another column sparkling with wit and clear thought.

Well, he'll just have to settle for one half of the sparkling part.

Let's start with some answers to last month's question, "What action do you take when your thief has just gotten his hand caught in the high level mage's pocket while in a crowded tavern?" Strange as it may seem, there are several solutions to this dilemma.

Unfortunately, the most popular method of handling this conflict is as follows:

"I, uh, reach for my dagger, strike him three times in the heart, slash my way through the patrons, and jump on my horse.

"Do I have to make a saving throw to get on the horse?"

Oddly enough, this same player will become extremely angry and indignant when the Gamemaster:

- A) turns him into a toad (assuming the Mage has a kind heart);
- B) has the tavern patrons incensed at this insane act; they attack the thief at 30 to 1 odds; or
- C) organizes a rope dance with the thief as the guest of honor at the vigilante ball.

This player will blame the Gamemaster when caught even though he was heard to mutter, "I sneak up and pick his pocket" only seconds before.

Now, let's look at a few alternative solutions that could possibly save our thief's cheese.

Very quickly, grasp the mage's free hand, *i.e.*, the one that isn't holding yours in his pocket. This will make it

difficult for him to use his "Change Moron to Toad" spell. Notice I used the word difficult, instead of impossible. Look him right in the eye and speak loudly in your best indignant village idiot voice: "Oh, no, yer don't, too late, too late, I got me 'and in yer pocket, fair and square. Look, everybody, don't I got me 'and in his pocket? See, I got witnesses, so pay me the two gold pieces you promised to the first "imbecile" who could get a 'and in yer pocket. Don't I qualify? What's a imbecile? Now, don't try to cheat me. The fellow right over there in the black robe with a skull on it . . . huh? Where'd 'e go? Well, 'e said you had this bet of 2 gold pieces that no imbecile would put a hand in yer pocket and my 'and's in yer pocket."

Now, this is the important part; look disappointed and mumble, "You mean he told me a fib? People is always tellin' me fibs. Does this mean I don't get no two gold pieces? 'E was a real nice man, he even 'ad a little doll that looked just like you, sir."

If you play this approach properly, you will make the archmage a bit paranoid of a stranger in black robes, and you may avoid spending the remainder of your life singing on a lily pad.

Besides, everyone knows it's bad karma to kill a fool.

Another approach is to act very official and state: "Excuse me; I seem to have been discovered with my hand in your pocket. Well, sir, I can tell you this just isn't done. Allow me to introduce myself, I am Number 3, the pocket inspector; surely you have heard of me? Well, you must realize that no one is allowed to discover my true identity. It is my solemn duty to inspect pockets and leave my tag "Inspected by No. 3" wherever I go, and,

were my true identity known, sir, why, the very foundations of our society would crumble, and I would become the target of any villain. No one, sir, must know of this incident. I rely on your discretion. Oh, here is your tag, and, if anyone asks, your pocket has been checked and certified. Good day, sir."

I've noticed that it's hard for a laughing Gamemaster to kill a player character. While I can't guarantee you will survive using these methods, if you do draw your dagger and strike, remember "I toad you so."

* * * * *

The next time you're at a club meeting or weekend get-together, look around you. Do the other players seem inattentive, listless and unconcerned with what's going on? No, this isn't an ad for some new product to cure irregularity, although on second thought, it just might. Are your fellow players:

1. starting to memorize the rule books, monsters, and treasures?
2. encountering an alarming number of insidious man-killer traps, *i.e.*, when you step on the stairs a blue bolt shoots out and kills the high level magic user, no matter where he is in the party?
3. becoming paranoid of losing their high level character in a dungeon or adventure?
4. starting to chant "Dungeon, Room, Monster, Treasure" over and over?
5. spending more time fighting each other than attempting to solve the scenarios?
6. more interested in the experience points than in the experience?

Well, my friend, you've got trouble with a capital T and that rhymes with B and that stands for Bored. The greatest

destroyer of any regular campaign or club is boredom. Remember that exciting feeling when you entered your first adventure? What happened to it? The old saying "familiarity breeds contempt" should supply the answers. If you're in a regular campaign, the Gamemaster must bear most of the blame. This doesn't mean the players don't share a great deal of the responsibility in making an evening enjoyable. On numerous occasions I have spent weeks working out an unusual, interesting adventure only to have my players comment, "That sounds pretty difficult. We'd rather hack'n'slash on someone half our size." If this occurs regularly, put a stake in the campaign's heart and bury it at a crossroads. No gamemaster can force his players to enjoy themselves and think creatively.

However, the simple fact that the players are showing up for the game shows they are interested and want to have a good time. The gamemaster can educate his players by providing them with role models. NPC's are an excellent way of showing players how a gamemaster expects to see a particular class or type of character played. Players will tend to copy examples of brilliant play just as readily as they will pick up bad habits if they see such behavior being rewarded by the gamemaster.

There are numerous ways to resurrect a dying campaign short of starting over. Try a city adventure. The encounters are different and the monsters unrecognizable as such. Give the players clues to some ancient mystery that will tie their adventures together. Nothing creates boredom quicker than popping players from dungeon to dungeon. Combat fatigue can ruin even the best player if he is faced with an endless line of monsters.

Be a miser with levels and experience points. When the advancements occur slowly, the players gain a better understanding of their character's abilities. Each small magic item becomes a treasure that the players appreciate, and the slow advancement allows the players to develop the personality of their character. Granted, it is intriguing to have a character who can absorb large amounts of damage and cast awesome spells, but isn't this type of character in reality only a crutch for the bad player who thinks a character with enormous hit points can afford to make enormous mistakes?

Think about arriving at solutions creatively and let me know what you come up with. Incidentally, if your club or group is becoming bored, try a "hair of

the dog" solution — board games offer many exciting challenges and may create new fantasy scenarios.

Oh, the situation of the month:

Your high level fighter has survived numerous confrontations to reach the cave he is now standing in. He drank his last healing potion two days before, after an attack by orcs. His chipped sword and dented armor are almost useless but

the evil MU is dead. The cave is filled with gold as far as the eye can see. "I'm rich! I'm rich!" you cry. Then you ask the Gamemaster "Did I go up eleven levels?"

"Excuse me," rumbles the tremendous voice of a hitherto sleeping dragon. "I know that I am rich, but what is eleven levels?"

What do you do? Help, Mr. Wizard . . .!

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LETTERS

Dear Editor:

As the designer of *OREGON TRAIL*® I am writing this letter to thank you for your (mostly) kind words about the game and respond to some of the points you made in the article about the game.

The points you make about errors in the map and rulebook are right on target. They were largely postproduction errors. For example, the desert was *supposed* to be light tan, but the half-tone tint came out more a brownish purple. The Indian Area boundaries are vague; as a rule of thumb, when they're not on the map, they follow the line of impassable mountain hexsides.

I think the idea about rolling the dice *first* and then assigning points to determine your scores is brilliant, and wonder why I didn't think of it. The system employed was designed to balance the elements of player input into character construction with random-chance in a manner superior to that of many role-playing systems (which tend to rely more exclusively on one or the other).

The concept of "voluntarily" getting lost was to allow greater player control over the encounters, rather than just having the player be passive, a victim to game events beyond his control. While I still stand by the concept, in practice the penalty for getting lost is not sufficient for allowing players to avoid unpleasant encounters. This is especially true in short scenarios. A player can take a small party, move quick-march every turn, and get lost to avoid any adverse result; he's got plenty of MP's to burn even if he can't find the trail right away. Rather than going with your system of keeping track of how many times a party has gotten lost (because I hate any more bookkeeping than absolutely necessary), I would just automatically double the morale penalty for getting lost, to 10

points. I love the idea of scouts, to be used for avoiding Indians and prairie dogs.

The reason you don't roll for a "Stream Crossing" on the major river hexes automatically is that generally you are following the *banks* of the major rivers rather than crossing them. What you have to cross are the tributaries. (This is why I called the encounter "Stream", not "River" crossing.) I decided it would be too complicated to try to specify rules for crossing major rivers, because that would force players to keep track of which bank of the major river they were on, much as the early Avalon Hill games did.

The ability to trade for rations was set up as a "safety net" to prevent parties from starving under all but the most extreme conditions (e.g., Donner Party). I feel that the rule to roll against Indian Lore (for Indians) or Military (for forts) is very reasonable. I also feel a limit on stock is necessary, for the reasons you outlined; I must shamefully admit it never occurred to me to trade all your rations for stock to get a "better than perfect" score. I would simply say you may never have more stock than you start the game with, as you can start the game with more than 5 stock above your minimum for the wagons (remember you get the number you need for the wagons plus 1d6, plus any you purchase for resource points).

The use of Military and Indian Lore skills also helps restore the balance between the value of the abilities in the game.

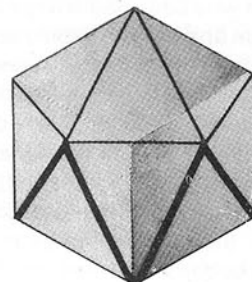
I agree with all your suggestions about the winter rules. The winter rules were essentially added as an afterthought, to allow for a Donner-type scenario. As can be derived from the starting times, the

trail bosses did their best to insure that the trip would be started soon enough to allow completion before winter. What happened to the Donner party was an incredible combination of unusual circumstances and bad luck, and was definitely an *exception* to the usual course of events for wagon trains. (It took the Donners 28 days — four turns — to cross the 2 mountain hexes between Ft. Bridger and Salt Lake City, and another month to reach the Humboldt River from there; in the desert, they lost 100 oxen, and had to abandon many of their wagons; they didn't reach the Sierra Nevadas until late October, when the passes were closed by an early snow.)

I am enclosing, for publication in your magazine, a cattle drive scenario for Oregon Trail, which would take place in the late 1860's-1870's, and substitutes cowboys, horses, and cattle for covered wagons and emigrants. (See elsewhere this issue. — Ed.)

Leonard H. Kanterman

Glad you liked the article. We had great fun playing OT, and even more writing the article. We would not have bothered to write it if the game hadn't been worth the effort. — Ed.



Git Along Little Dogies -

Variant Scenario for OREGON TRAIL[®]

by Leonard H. Kanterman, M.D.

Introduction: In 1981, Fantasy Games Unlimited published *Oregon Trail*, a game of my design which combined elements of role-playing and board-games to portray the journeys of wagon trains across the West, during the period 1840-1860. After moving to Kansas — less than an hour's drive from trail's end at Abilene — I became interested in adapting the system to portray the cattle drives of the 1860-1880 period. This scenario is the final result.

All normal play rules for *Oregon Trail* apply except where specific changes are outlined in this scenario.

Assembling the Party: The player assembles his party by assigning his initial 80 Resource Points as follows:

Livestock (cattle): 100 stock/resource point. At least 10, but no more than 26, points may be assigned to stock (so the herd will vary between 1000 and 2600 head).

Trail Boss Attributes: The Trail Boss is a character who represents the player. His attributes are referred to during the resolution of various encounters, much like the attributes of a character in a role-playing game. In this scenario, the Trail Boss' character has 4 attributes: Nature Lore, Animal Lore (replaces Hunting), Indian Lore, and Military Skill. The usual 5th attribute, Popularity, is dropped; Section 6, Party Morale, is completely ignored in this scenario.

The player must assign at least 7, but no more than 12 resource points to each skill. The final attribute score is obtained by rolling 1d6 for each rating and adding the result to the resource points allotted to each attribute. Thus, all attributes will range from 8 (7 points plus d.r. 1) to 18 (12 points plus d.r. 6).

Cowboys: 1/resource point.

Horses: 5/resource point. There must be at least 5 horses in the *remuda* for each cowboy for that cowboy to be considered mounted.

The number of cowboys affects the trail boss' attribute scores as follows: There must be at least 1 cowboy/200 stock. If the party has less than this ratio, 1 must be deducted for *each* cowboy below the ideal ratio from each of the Animal Lore and Military attributes. Conversely, if the party has more cowboys than this ideal ratio, 1 may be added to each of the Animal Lore and Military attributes for each cowboy above the ideal ratio.

Cowboys must be mounted (that is, at least 5 horses/cowboy) to be counted towards the Animal Lore bonus. If, due to loss of horses, cowboys must be dismounted, 1 for each cowboy dismounted must be deducted from Animal Lore; the Military bonus remains unchanged. For this reason, it is recommended that the player allot more horses than the minimum needed to allow his cowboys to remain mounted should horse losses occur.

Example: A herd of 1800 head has 12 cowboys and 70 horses. All cowboys are thus mounted, and the ideal ratio of 1 cowboy/200 head accounts for 9 cowboys. The player may add 3 to each of Animal Lore and Military attributes for the 3 extra cowboys.

Unlike the standard *Oregon Trail* rules, there are no wagons and no rations. Section 7, Supply and Rations, is completely ignored.

Starting Point: The player(s) may start on any of the 5 easternmost hexes along the southern edge of the map (east of the

Pecos River). One of the following destinations is chosen:

a) Pueblo, Colorado: 3 hexes south of Denver, on the Arkansas River.

b) Dodge City, Kansas: site of Ft. Dodge.

c) Abilene, Kansas: 1 hex southwest of Ft. Riley, on Smoky Hill River.

d) Ogallala, Nebraska: site of Ft. Sedgwick.

e) Cheyenne, Wyoming.

If two are playing, it is suggested that each choose one town from the following two pairs as a destination: Pueblo/Dodge City; Abilene/Ogallala.

Movement: The following movement rates apply, regardless of herd size. These replace the *Oregon Trail* standard movement rates, although as in *Oregon Trail* the Trail Boss must choose one of three Travel Status modes each turn. Travel Status will affect encounters as well as movement rate.

Cautious: 7 MP; *Normal:* 9 MP; *Quick-March:* 13 MP.

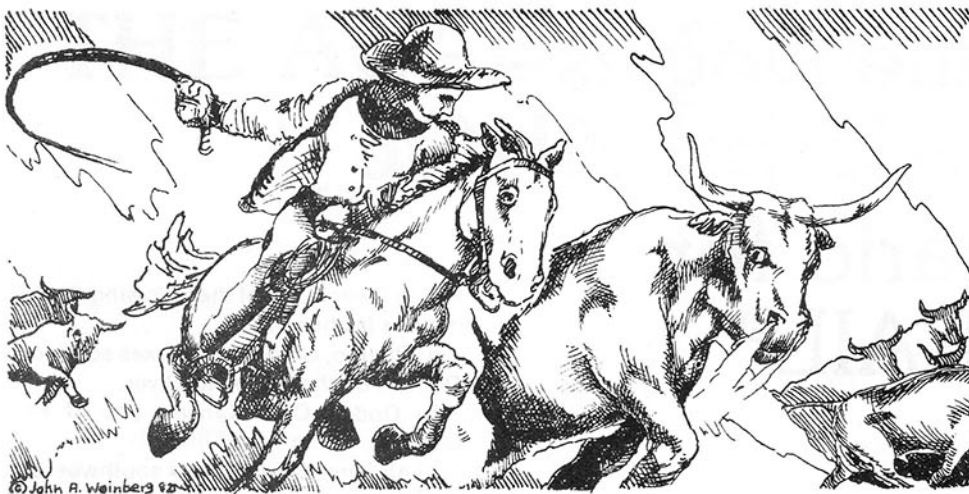
Strays: Each turn, after the Travel Status has been chosen but before moving, the Trail Boss must determine how many strays have been lost in the normal course of events (as opposed to the more dramatic *encounters*). The Trail Boss rolls 1d20 and compares the role to his Animal Lore. If he rolls less than or equal to his score, he must roll once on the Casualty Table; if he rolls greater than his score, he must roll twice on the Casualty Table. The losses from the casualty table are multiplied by 5 in both cases for the number of head actually lost.

The trail boss may subtract 2 from his roll if moving cautiously; he must add 4 to his roll for quickmarch. (Modifications apply to roll against Animal Lore, not casualty rolls.)

Encounters: The standard encounter tables based on terrain type are referred to.

a) Lost: resolved as in standard game.

b) Stream Crossing: resolved as in standard game except for losses. "S" and "W" losses are taken against stock, with losses multiplied by 10 after the casualty roll. "R" losses are taken against



horses, and "P" losses against cowboys, using the standard casualty roll.

c) Rockslide: resolved as in standard game except for losses. The same formula given for Stream Crossing is used for losses.

d) Drought: resolved as in standard game, except that there are no rations to "set aside" to try to minimize losses. "S" losses are taken against stock, with the casualty roll multiplied by 20. "P" losses are taken against horses, with the usual casualty roll.

Animal Encounters: The Bison and Deer encounters are deleted.

a) Stampede — occurs when "Bison" would. Trail Boss must roll against Animal Lore. If he rolls less than or equal to his score with 1d20, he loses 1d6 x 10 head; if he rolls greater than his score, he loses 1d6 x 20 head.

b) Rustlers — occurs when "Deer" would. Trail Boss must roll against his Military score. If he rolls less than or equal to his score with 1d20, the rustlers have been driven off with no loss to the herd; if he rolls greater than his score, the rustlers have taken/driven off 1d6 x 20 head, and the party must suffer 1 roll on the Casualty Table against the cowboys.

c) Prairie Dog: resolved as in the standard game except for losses. "S" losses are taken against stock, casualty roll multiplied by 5; "W" losses are taken against horses, usual casualty roll.

d) Coyote: resolved as in standard game.

e) Wolf: resolved as in standard game.

f) Grizzly Bear: resolved as in standard game except for losses. "S" losses are taken against stock, "P" losses against cowboys, "R" losses against horses, all with the usual casualty roll.

g) Mountain Lion: resolved as in standard game, except for losses. "S" losses taken against horses, "P" against cowboys, usual casualty roll.

h) Snakes: resolved as Mountain Lion above.

Disease encounters: "S" losses are taken against horses, with usual casualty roll; "P" losses are taken against stock, with casualty roll losses multiplied by 10.

Indian encounters: There are significant changes to the Indian encounters, as the activity and nature of interactions

between whites and Indians had changed substantially by the time period of this scenario, largely due to the railroads and the settling of the West by whites.

a) Indian Area 2 — ignore all Indian encounters; treat as "None". (This area of eastern Kansas was largely settled by whites, with the Indians removed to reservations.)

b) Indian Area 3 — use the following table to determine which tribe is contacted. Note that a new "tribe" is added — "Reservation Indians" — as this area includes the entire Indian Territory (later Oklahoma), where many eastern tribes had been resettled. 01-05: Comanche; 06-08: Kiowa; 09-18: Reservation; 19-20: Apache. Reservation Indian tribal option will be chosen as follows: 01-04: Raid; 05-20: Parlay.

c) Indian Area 4 — roll the die when an Indian encounter is called for: on 1-3, the encounter is ignored; on 4-6, use the standard table for this area.

The Attack and Ambush options are treated as Raids instead in this scenario. The Guide option is treated as Parlay.

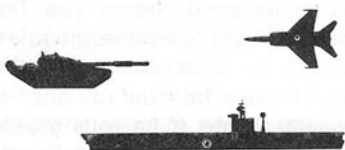
Raid: The Trail Boss rolls against his Military skill first. If his roll is less than or equal to his score, the raid has been driven off without loss. If the roll is greater than his score, the Raid Combat table is referred to. "S" losses are taken against horses, "P" losses against cowboys, and "R" losses against stock (stock loss casualty roll multiplied by 10).

Parlay: The Trail Boss must offer at least 10 stock as a "toll" to allow the parlay. Additional groups of 10 stock may be offered as gifts, each gift allowing an additional roll against the Indian Lore for the Parlay. If the Trail Boss declines to offer the 10 stock "toll", or the parlay fails, the party is considered Lost, as the Indians have refused the party access rights to cross their territory, and the party must find an alternate route; the usual procedure for Lost is followed. This takes the place of the usual reroll for tribal option in case of a failed parlay.

Victory: Victory is judged by the Trail Boss' profit for marketing his herd at trail's end. The profit is \$22/head minus \$1 for each turn the drive has been underway. (For a 10-turn drive, the profit would thus be \$12 per head.) The Trail Boss must pay off all his cowboys from his profit, at the rate of \$6 each per turn.

The Trail Boss with the highest profit is the winner. For solitaire games, a profit over \$15,000 should be considered a success.

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From the Fantasy Smith's Notebook

REFORMING KOBOLDS

"Smite them, chop them! Twist their arms and tails!" That advice from an ancient gnome tome rings true for reanimating kobold figures into more active poses: re-forming them, if you will. This article and those that follow will give ideas and gratuitous advice to fantasy gamers who like to use miniatures in their games. The author expects to generate wild enthusiasm among the assembled multitudes and show the very few serious modellers how to accomplish small things. Here and now some standard reanimation techniques will be demonstrated — the methods will be useful for all fantasy figures. Now that you've struggled your way through the first paragraph, why not relax and enjoy the rest of the article?

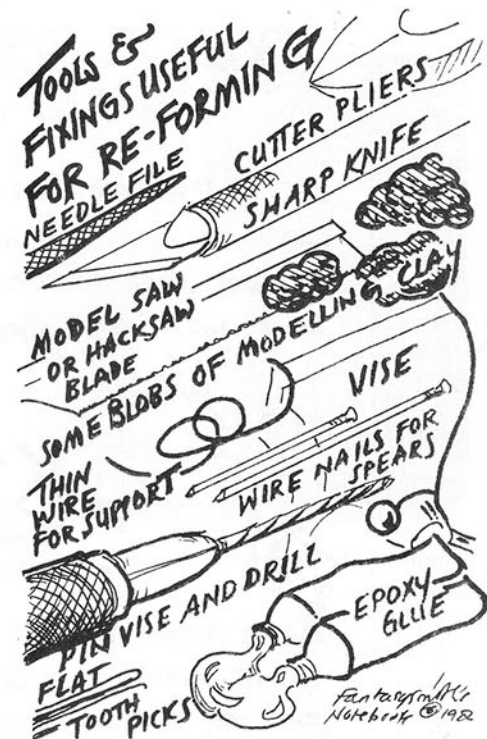
Why, you might ask, should kobolds be the first public victims of arm twisting and head chopping? There are so many less trivial fantasy creatures to use. I can almost hear the jeers of derision normally aimed at kobolds by stalwart adventuring parties: "Which came first, the kobold or the egg? Haw Haw. Hey! D'ya know what dwaves do to kobolds? Snigger, snigger. How many light bulbs does it take to screw in a kobold? Heh, heh, heh." Of course, as a concerned role playing citizen, you may wonder at the brashness of using mere kobolds as the center of attraction. But you'll be interested to know that the reason I used kobolds is also the answer to the question: "WHY ARE KOBOLDS LIKE MOUNT EVEREST."

Because they are there. Yes, folks, it's

true. Hillary's answer to "Why climb Mount Everest?" applies in this case. The vile miscreant that brought them out is HERITAGE, whose pack #1244 is quite logically called "KOBOLDS". It contains six ludicrously ugly 17mm tall figures that are so disgusting that I purchased a pack for \$4.00 plus tax and took them home fully intending to pound them into less offensive blobs of metal. When I returned to my workbench, however, I relented. I almost felt sorry for the figures, with their monotonous sameness, their flat pose, and their static appearance. Undoubtedly employees of the Internal Revenue Service posed for the artist who made the original models.

The solution to the static looking figure follows in glorious prose. There are a few illustrations, also. Unlike the claim of my vainglorious illustrator, however, there are some points that can only be made in words. What follows is a running commentary on the process, and it is keyed to the illustrations. The photos of finished pieces that accompany this article can vouch that someone actually *did* all the things suggested in this article. For the time being, dear reader, you can use these proofs to maintain your belief that such things are possible. Later, after you've made your own re-forms, you'll be able to convince others by the beauty of your handiwork . . .

To reanimate figures, you must start by taking them apart. This prospect will be daunting for some, since 25mm standard fantasy figures normally come as one piece, rather than many. That means



DON'T BOTHER READING THE ARTICLE (IT'S ALL RIGHT HERE)

DECIDE WHAT YOU WANT, THEN CUT OFF PARTS TO MOVE. IF YOU'RE JUST STARTING, DO SOMETHING EASY LIKE AN ARM



Snip the pin only after testing and trial positioning the arm.

USE A SMALL DRILL TO PUT HOLES IN BOTH ARM & SHOULDER. GLUE A BIT OF WIRE OR "PIN" INTO THE BODY SNIP PIN + CLEAR EXCESS GLUE WHEN DRY

SWING ARM + SHIELD USING PIN AS A PIVOT. FIND THE POSITION YOU WANT



USE PLASTECENE TO HOLD ARM IN PLACE WHILE GLUE HARDENS. MOLD CLAY BEFORE MIXING GLUE.



The epoxy will harden with a blob or two where you don't want it.

SPEARS & STANDARDS

Note: Paint the figure before gluing in a standard



cut or file the excess away after it has fully hardened.



EITHER drill right thru the hand to the base OR glue the haft into a "V" cut.

TIME: A LOT LESS THAN YOU THOUGHT⁺

EVEN DETAILED REANIMATION IS FASTER THAN SCRATCHBUILDING - AND LESS DEMANDING

- CUT : 2-4 minutes/part
- DRILL : 1-2 min./ hole
- GLUE, PIN, + TRIM : 2 minutes per hole *
- POSITION PART + SETUP MODELLING CLAY = 2-3 min
- APPLY + TRIM GLUE = 3-4 minutes/part

Head pin was drilled at an angle to get proper position

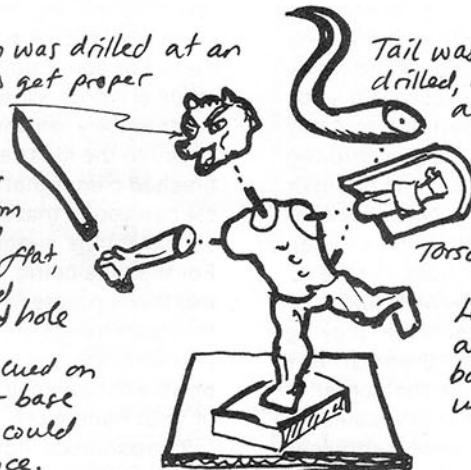
Sword was made from wire braed pounded flat, then glued into drilled hole

Figure glued on larger base so it could balance.

Tail was cut off, bent, drilled, then glued on again.

Torso bent forwards

Left leg cut away from base, then bent upwards.



* Glue mixing & drying times not included.
+ FantasySmith estimates: your times may vary.

you have to literally destroy the piece before you can reanimate it. This is best done by sawing off parts rather than snipping, breaking, or cutting. The saw is faster and will give you a smoother working surface with the minimum possible deformation of the metal. Clamp the model's base into a small vise to speed the sawing and make it more accurate. Don't bother to file down the sawed surfaces — those irregularities left by the saw will help the glue to hold later. You might best decide what you want the finished piece to look like before you begin. Once you start the process of reanimation, it will be harder to change your mind.

After sawing, the next step is to give the newly separated part some support for its new position. Support is given by glue and a bit of wire. This wire will serve as a pivot to determine final position before gluing, an anchor for support while gluing is in process, and an additional support after the glue dries. A #60 drill or one slightly larger will do well for the holes, and small wire is available from model train/hobby shops. Drilling is the trickiest operation of all described here. Once arms and other parts are cut off, they are too small for gripping with a vise, and are easily crushed if you try to grip them in vise jaws. You will probably decide to hold the small pieces in your fingers. Just be careful, and slow or stop if you begin to feel extreme cramps. It will go faster than you think, with both holes for an arm, for instance, taking about 3 minutes. Try an easy one for starters, and quit after that if the whole process seems too difficult.

When both holes are drilled for each piece being reanimated, glue about 1/2" of wire into the body hole and epoxy it down. I've never had any luck trying to



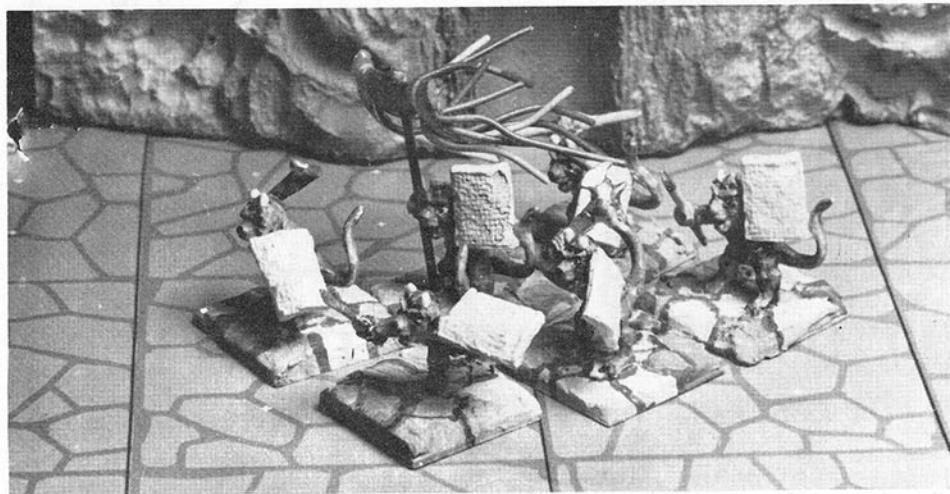
glue an arm directly to the figure, nor has it ever been feasible to glue wire and arm at the same time. In the long run, the project moves faster using several small steps than trying to get it all done at once. Whenever I've tried to omit the wire, my figures have fallen apart during normal transport and play. Those that served as the test pieces for this article have survived several far flung gaming sessions with no problems whatsoever.

After the epoxy hardens, the wire can be clipped to size and bent to position. The part to be repositioned is used as your guide for bending the wire. Shave off any excess epoxy from the first gluing, insert arm to shoulder, and add more epoxy. I find that using modeling clay to hold the desired position while the glue dries gives the best results. You can forget about the project for a while, and return without thinking that any slippage will have occurred. Also, you don't get a lot of nasty glue on your fingers. Epoxy, while tough for holding things together, is easy to cut away with a sharp knife. So don't worry about using too much. The glue can even be carved to emphasize figure shape if you want to do that. It

might be noted, in passing, that the metal of the particular HERITAGE pack that I purchased was pliable enough to bend a bit. This was particularly useful for the tails. But bending was not possible after gluing — the bond broke in enough situations to make it seem unlikely that anything bent after gluing would survive normal rigors of campaigning.

Reanimation sometimes calls for rearmament also. In many cases, a weapon from another figure can be added to the reanimation by the same drill and glue method described above. Sometimes, tho', you may want a banner or another weapon that is not available. Spear and javelin points can be pounded out of small bits of wire or wire nails. These will then be painted up to differentiate the point from the haft. Banners, standards, and flags can also be added. Using various scraps found around the home and workshop for these specialty items is one of the most interesting and also rewarding parts of fantasy modelling. It's usually needed since banners and flags are hard to cast, and often are unavailable from manufacturers, or are not good looking enough to use. A special article on these items may be forthcoming if readers want to hear about it. In the meantime, two alternative ways to attach spear and banner shafts to models are shown in the illustrations.

If any readers were expecting an article on reformation as used by clerics, they were sorely disappointed. The fonts of baptism are all dry, and who would want to reform a kobold, after all? But reformers will now have a good idea of what can be done with miniatures. The kobold models are as good as any for examples. After all, dear reader, if you don't use 'em, you won't have Wretched Noxious kobold to kick around anymore.



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Bombs Away

BOMBER

Yaquinto, 1982

Designed & Developed by S. Craig Taylor

Boxed

\$16

BOMBER® is an operational scale game on the USAAF daylight bombing of German strategic targets, covering the period from late July 1943 into March 1944. At a scale of ½ hour per game turn, each of the 25 scenarios covers only one day's missions. A "campaign game" rule is included to allow play to begin with any of the scenarios and continue for as long as the players like, though a limit of 1-2 weeks is suggested. It would be impractically long to stretch it to cover the period encompassed by the game, let alone the entire bomber offensive, as is done in the older Avalon Hill game LUFTWAFFE®. But the latter is an abstraction, with each of its missions being representational of activity over three months of time. In BOMBER, each mission is an entity, and success is not based solely on the ability or failure of the USAAF to lay bombs on cities. While that is, of course, a key element, at least as important are the aircraft losses suffered by each side in the course of it.

Map scale is approximately 40 miles per hex, and the map itself extends from SE England and NE France to Poland and Rumania, north as far as Namsos in Norway and south almost to the toe of Italy. Depicted on the ground are cities and airbases, mountains, the air defense zone around Great Britain (which German units may not enter), and neutral territory (which neither side may enter). While the names of nations are printed on the map, their borders are not. What are shown are the boundaries of the weather zones (used with an optional rule) and the successive position of the front line in Italy, which determines possession of certain bases depending on the time the scenario takes place. Combat units are represented in two ways.

"Plane units" are historically designated Groups (US) and *Gruppen* (German), i.e., an organization consisting of two or more squadrons. Each plane unit begins a scenario with a certain number of strength points (typically 2 or 3 but going as high as 6 for US fighters) which each represent 8-12 actual aircraft. Each unit is classed as a Bomber, Fighter, Night Fighter or Destroyer, and has the aircraft type and movement factor printed on it. However, these are essentially bookkeeping pieces. They are placed on an Air Status Display card in an "Air Box" corresponding to a numbered "Air Unit" which is what is actually placed on the map. An air unit may contain any number of plane units (up to 12 strength point worth) as long as they are all the same model and type (e.g., the German could not mix Me-110 Night Fighters and Destroyers in the same air unit).

Each air box has seven compartments, four on the ground and 3 in the air. The ground compartments are labeled A — Just Landed, B — Refuel, C — Rearm/Ready and D — Loaded/Ready. A plane unit in the C box may fly, but it must progress to the D box to acquire drop tanks or air to air rockets (permitted to a few German units). The in-flight boxes represent altitude levels: 0 (low), 1 (medium) and 2 (high).

While this system resembles the one used in Taylor's aircraft carrier games, many new elements are added. Each plane unit in a box is considered to be a distinct "formation" unless they join up. This can be done only over a friendly base and at the cost of movement points. Gaining altitude may also cost movement points, depending upon aircraft type. Bombers in formation must be specified as being in Tight or Open formation. Open is required for bombing and when flying close to the ground, but it reduces the effectiveness of defensive fire. Tight formation increases vulnerability to rockets. Bombers must always be in formation, but others need not be.

The game is structured as a Basic Game and a passle of optional rules, with no Advanced Game, *per se*. The sequence of play given below may have

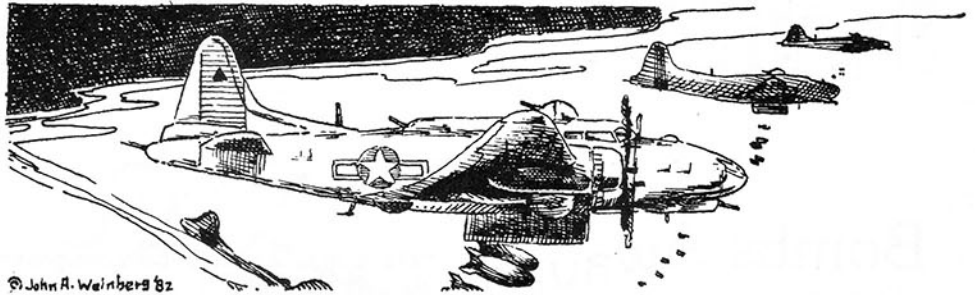
additional phases if certain optional rules are used. Within a game turn, play proceeds: Plane Readiness Phase (both sides ready aircraft); Initiative Roll Phase (high roller becomes "First Side"); First Side movement Phase, subdivided in Landing, Normal Movement and Take-off Steps; First Side Combat Phase, subdivided into Air, Flak and Bombing Combat Steps; Second Side Movement Phase (as above); Second Side Combat Phase (as above); Turn Record Phase.

Air combat takes place in any hex in which opposing units are present at the same altitude except that bombers may not initiate attacks and American fighters can initiate attacks only in a hex in which air combat took place on the previous Combat Phase. Since the Germans should never attack US pure-fighter formations, this effectively precludes the tactic of the "fighter sweep". In general, the Germans are untouchable until they attack the bombers; then the American can counterattack only if he strips the escorts away from the bombers (or makes them wait in the hex while the escorts do battle) unless he has set up roving fighter formations for this purpose (in which case the bombers are probably inadequately escorted). In general the American must choose between using his fighters defensively to reduce bomber losses or offensively to increase German losses. He seldom has enough to do both well.

Flak combat takes place in the Basic Game only immediately preceding the bombing of a target (an optional rule allows flak to fire at all formations which pass through their hex at less than high altitude), while bombing combat, of course, occurs only when the bombers are over their targets. An optional rule allows US fighters to strafe German planes on the ground, which is resolved essentially as a form of bombing.

Combat is resolved in a similar manner in each case. The number of strength points of the appropriate type of aircraft or flak is looked up on a table to determine the Basic Hit Table on which the attack will be resolved, with various modifications to the BHT number possi-

ble before the die is rolled. The main exception is for bombing, in which not only the number and type of bombers counts, but their altitude and the number of turns spent in the air up to that point as well. Each formation within an air unit must attack (and be fired on defensively) separately. This may be an advantage in that more attacks can be made (usually at less effectiveness) by a given number of plane units, but it increases the chance of casualties in turn. Casualties to air units are shown by placing Hit Markers in the air box, with each representing the loss of a strength point. A nasty sidelight to this is that all air units suffer a hit automatically when they land, presumably due to wear and tear. This hurts the German particularly as he must get multiple sorties out of his aircraft. In contrast, the US bombers may fly only once per scenario, and US fighters seldom fly more than one or two missions because of the distance of their bases from the bulk of the targets. But yet another optional rule mitigates this a bit. The Germans may "stage" units from one base to another without suffering landing hits if they take no part in combat while

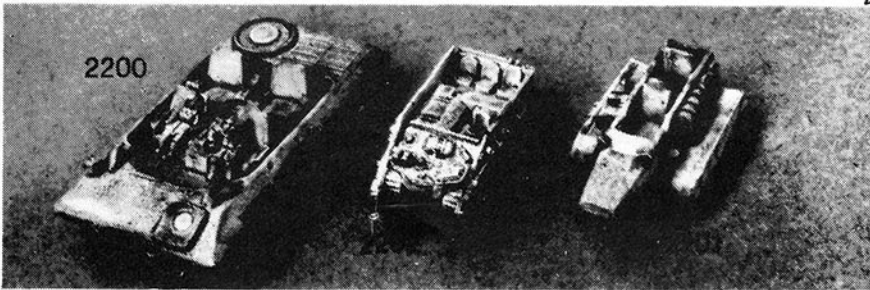


flying. A number of limited intelligence features are built into the game. Foremost is that neither player can see the other's Air Status Cards and so can't tell how many, if any, aircraft are in a given air unit. The closer an air unit is to an enemy land hex, though, the more information is available. The Germans are generally poorly informed about English based formations until they reach the coast, but then enjoy almost perfect information while the US player doesn't know what a German unit has until he fights it. On the other hand, bombers from Africa are not even placed on the map until they are only one or two turns away from Italy, so the German has

virtually no warning of raids from that quarter.

Each scenario lists a number of historical targets and tells how many target cards to draw from the deck of 48. The cities on the cards and given as historical are the primary targets for the day's operations (an optional rule allows plotting secondary targets as well). Each bomber air unit must have a target designated for it (as well as bombing altitude) when it takes off, and can attack only its designated primary (or secondary) target. Since the target cards, which are unknown to the German player, are from 2 to 6 times more numerous than the historical targets in any scenario, the

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German has little to go by in guessing what will be attacked. Inbound bombers need not go straight to their targets, either, so decoy routing can add obfuscation. Once the bombs are dropped, the bombers must head for home by the fastest route possible, though, making them much easier to intercept outbound. This gives the German a decision he doesn't like, whether to concentrate on returning rather than attacking bombers, or try both and suffer the extra losses from multiple sorties.

Victory conditions are based on points. Each side gets them (varying with plane type) for hits on, and for completely destroying, enemy plane units. The German gets bonus points for completely destroying large numbers of bomber units. The American gets points for successful bombing missions which the German fails to intercept, and of course for bombing. Hits scored on cities are multiplied by the Target Value of the city to get points scored. These can then be doubled or tripled depending on the number of primary targets which are hit. However, the US player will typically get only from one-third to one-half his points from bombing. This reflects the consideration that the bombing offensive was intended not so much to directly destroy German industry as to destroy the Luftwaffe by forcing it into a battle of attrition.

Many of the optional rules in the game serve to increase the level of tactical detail. Some, like bombing and strafing German bases, increase the options available to the players. The one with the most impact is the weather rule. Since a run of bad weather can seriously unbalance a single scenario, its use is recommended only with the campaign game. This, in turn, is simply a succession of scenarios with modifications. Replacements for plane unit losses are available each day, so the rather bloody combat system doesn't cripple either side quickly (less than half of the planes knocked out by a "hit" are complete losses — the rest can be returned to duty in a short time). Target selection is also different. There are 8 target industry categories (e.g., ball bearings, oil, armaments); two of these are picked at random by the US player. He may only target cities in one of these categories until an industry is at least 50% destroyed, when a new target card is picked (however, the V-weapon installation at Peenemunde can always be attacked). Victory points are calculated for the

results of each day scenario in the usual manner except that a different method of calculating bonuses is used.

The game plays well, and reasonably quickly, given that a scenario can go for 25-30 turns. The work load on the players is a bit asymmetric. The US player has a great deal of pre-planning to do, allocating his bombers to various targets and scheduling their flight times, and deciding how best to employ his all too few fighters. Once the bombers are *en route*, though, he has little to do but move them and his few independent fighter units, and roll dice for return fire when the German attacks. The German has a lot of setting up to do as well, but since most of his bases will handle only 1-2 plane units each, his choices are how to scatter his planes (likewise all too few) rather than how to concentrate them. Once the bombers have entered his airspace, he becomes extremely busy. The vast bulk of his aircraft have only 3-5 turns of endurance, and must be juggled carefully. Taking off too early takes them out of the fight too soon, while a late commitment prevents them from contributing at the best time. Using them too many times inflicts extra landing losses, and

using them in small rather than massed formations dilutes their impact and increases losses, though it does save the time needed to form the masses. He must also be careful of which units he commits. The Destroyer and Night Fighter units have more endurance than single seat fighters and are generally better bomber killers as well, but they are more vulnerable to enemy fighters, and give the enemy 2 and 4 times as many points per hit respectively. Any use of these planes other than staging (if that rule is used) gives the American a lot of points just due to the landing losses.

WW II air games are pretty rare, and those devoted in any form to the bomber offensive are almost non-existent. So just for the historical content, BOMBER is well worth acquiring despite the simplifications and abstractions it has incorporated. But more importantly, it is a good playing game. It is well worth the while of those whose concern is more for the play value than the historical content. Try it; you'll like it . . .

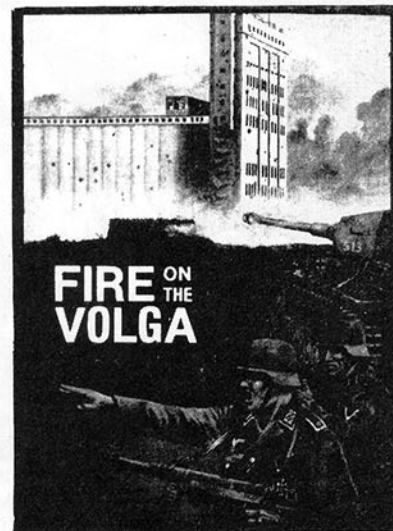
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Grimm of the Gameboard World

The Return of Dargoll: part one

by Gardner F. Fox



Grimm found the game board in the ruins of Tiahuanaco in Peru. At least, he thought it was a game board, at first glance. It was a marble flat, one yard square, of multicolored stone with a raised edge an inch high about what appeared to be its playing surface. It was only when he got it home to the United States and unpacked it, that he realized it was something unique.

Grimm was an adventur-

er. A mercenary soldier for a time, an amateur archaeologist, always a wanderer, he had roamed the corners of the globe searching for a Grail he could not name, a goal that was both personal and nebulous.

He was a big man, tall and mightily muscled. Always, he had led an active life, taking part in football — an all-Conference tackle at a Big Ten University — he had done some boxing and a bit of weight-lifting.

There had seemed, at times, as though there were some inner force in him that compelled him to do these things.

Now he stared down at the marble board, having set it atop a table in his den. He frowned as he stared, for there was sand on that surface now — and a tiny figure!

The figure was that of a girl — or woman. She was running as if in terror, her head turned backward and

upward toward an apparent something which was pursuing her. She did not move, she was seemingly caught in mid-stride, and the thin garment she wore was plastered to her skin by her running.

There were ruins, too, off to one side. Standing columns of pinkish stone framed what appeared to be a little altar. It was a temple of sorts, Grimm gathered, but he was far more interested in the tiny

human.

He picked up a magnifying glass, held it just above the girl. Her face was lovely, even distorted as it was with horror. Long yellow hair flew out behind her to the speed of her running, her red mouth was open as if to aid her breathing. The beauty of that face tugged at something inside Grimm. Somewhere — somehow — he had seen that face. Or dreamed of it!

Now — from behind and above her — something moved into view. It was a bird of some sort, but a bird the like of which he had never seen. Huge, with a mighty wingspread, its beak open in a cry of fury, it came downward toward its victim.

Grimm swung about, leaped to a weaponrack and tore free a high-powered hunting rifle. Back he came to the board, aimed at that toy bird — pulled the trigger . . .

The sound of that firing exploded in his head.

Vaguely, he was aware of heat, aware also that he was naked, that he no longer held the rifle. His room was gone from about him, he was being baked by an enormous, hot sun. All about him stretched a desert, and his back was pressed against a broken pillar.

The girl lay crumpled at his feet.

Coming for that girl was the most enormous bird he had ever seen. At sight of him it veered upward, startled, swept off to one side. Grimm leaped for the girl, caught her up in his arms, carried her inside the roofless temple.

The bird gave a raucous cry and dove.

Grimm caught up a chunk of fallen pink stone, balanced it in his hand. The bird came downward, wings fanning the air, claws extended. He paused, waiting — then hurled that pink stone upward.

It caught the bird on the side of its head, drove it sideways. Even as it hit, Grimm was lifting another stone, hurling it. This time he hit its wing. The bird screeched as though in pain and swung off to one side, and the man could see that it was having trou-

ble flying.

He watched as it went off, wobbling as it flew.

There was a sudden silence.

"Who are you?" a voice whispered.

Grimm looked down into an elfin face, a face of exquisite beauty. Long golden hair framed wide eyes and a quivering red mouth. The girl knelt on the broken flagstones of the temple, staring up at him.

He did not know how he could understand her. The words she spoke were not in any language he knew. Yet deep inside him, there was a wisp of memory — memory of another time, another land, of another lifetime perhaps, when he had known such speech.

He shook his head, spoke to her in English. "I'm not sure just who I am," he grinned. "I seem to understand what you said, but I can't speak your language."

The girl frowned perplexedly even as Grimm caught her by the arm, helped her to her feet. She said something he did not understand, though the words she used were tantalizingly familiar. When he did not reply, she shrugged and moved away from him toward that altar.

Her hands came upward to that marble shrine, touched its carving, pressed. Nothing happened. She tried again, her hands moving this way and that upon those sculptings. She seemed to slump, to feel despair moving within her.

Grimm came to stand beside her.

Obviously, she was trying to find a way to do something to that sacrum. His own hands went to the stone carving, pressed and twisted. What she wanted, he did not know, could not guess. Yet if she were alone out here on this desert, her need for whatever it was that the altar would give her was very urgent.

He felt movement under his fingers, pressed harder. A faint rumble was his answer. Then the top of the altar slid sideways.

Grimm stared down into the hollow interior. A sword lay there, its steel blade bright and shining. To one side was its ornate

scabbard, and both sword and scabbard lay nestled in what appeared to be red silk.

His hands went to that sword, drew it upward into the sunlight. The girl said something protestingly, but Grimm paid no heed to her. He swung the sword, felt its perfect balance. It seemed almost to fit into his hand.

Once — long and long ago — he had known this sword! He had used it in battle! Its name was — was . . .

"I can't remember," he growled.

He grew aware that the girl was staring off to one side in something like fright. Words came flying from her lips, questioningly. Excitement made her tremble. Her hand shot out, tried to take the blade from him.

Grimm chuckled, shook his head. "No, no, girl. This isn't yours. It's mine! I don't know how I understand that, but I do. A long while ago, this sword hung at my side. I ought to know its name, but —"

Grimm grew aware, after a time, that the girl never looked directly at him. After one brief examination of his big, strongly thewed body, she had turned herself almost sideways to him. He realized, with a grin, that he was stark naked.

He would have to do something about that; but where, in this desert, would he find any clothes? The weight of the sword in his big hands made him remember the hollow altar. There had been a red velvet strip beneath the sword and its scabbard.

He moved now to the shrine, reached inside it, caught hold of that red velvet and lifted it up. As he did so, he saw that it had held other things, too, beside the sword. A jacket of dried, mouldy leather, some sort of undergarment, something that resembled a short kilt. His hand touched them, one after another, discovering that they were not as crumbly as he had thought; apparently, the dry desert air had preserved them. There were boots too, which would reach up-

ward almost to his knees if he donned them.

In moments, he was dressed. The jacket would not close over his deep chest, and the undergarment was rather snug about his loins, but he could make do.

"All right. You can look at me now."

She turned and her eyes went wide. For an instant, her mouth opened to gasp at air. Something in those green eyes made him catch his breath.

"What is it?" he growled. "What's wrong?"

"You look like pictures I have seen . . ." She swallowed nervously, added,

"Pictures of — Dargoll . . ." Dargoll! He knew that name. Somehow, it was very familiar to him, or to a part of him. Another word was swimming up from the depths of his memory, a word that —

"Klarvan! That's it! The sword's named Klarvan — which means in my language — the Conqueror! And — and my name was —"

He sat down on the edge of the altar, suddenly weak. What was happening here? He was an American, he knew nothing about this world into which he had stumbled. And yet —

The girl was shrinking back, away from him, her eyes very wide and fear-filled.

"Talk to me," he begged. "Teach me your language!"

He put his hand on the altar, said, "Altar."

For an instant, the girl seemed puzzled. Then understanding dawned in her eyes. She smiled weakly, said, "Fraylet."

Of course! Now he remembered. Yet — how could it be? How could this language be as his own tongue, forgotten for a time?

No matter! The thing to do was learn all he could, and quickly. He pointed at the pillars, the sky, the desert. Eagerly, the girl responded.

Grimm found that memory was coming back to him in a flood of understanding. It was as though he needed only a hint, a suggestion, for the doors of his mind were opening, and he seemed almost to

know, after a time, the words the girl would say.

Slowly, the immense sun of this world began to set. Hunger stirred in Grimm, though he knew well enough there was no food to be had. Right now he must devote all his energy into — remembering.

The language came back to him, swiftly enough. After a few hours of coaching, he could carry on a conversation. The girl was named Florella, and she was a priestess of some sort, priestess to a god named Minoton.

"Those names are familiar to me — vaguely," he muttered. "Now how in the world could I know them? I've never been in this world..."

Wait! The doors of his memory were opening further, just a bit. He said, more slowly, "That name you mentioned a while back. Dargoll! No wonder it sounded so familiar. It's my own. I am Dargoll! I was a king once here, or a ruler of some sort..."

Florella hooted laughter. "You? Dargoll? Nonsense! Dargoll lived centuries ago. He's almost a folk hero. No, no. Dargoll the Mighty is dust these past five hundred years!"

He grinned down at her. "But I'm alive, now. Don't ask me how or why, or even when I came from. But there has to be a reason!"

"There is, Dargoll! But now is not the time for revelation!"

The words burned in his brain. He straightened at

their impact, staring off across the sands. Was he going mad? Insane people heard voices inside their heads. But he was not insane! Or — was he?

Grimm shook himself, knowing that the girl was eyeing him with terror in her green eyes, backing away from him slowly.

"Now what's wrong?" he muttered.

"You were — different — just then! It was as if — you glowed!"

"Well, I'm not glowing now, if I ever was. All I know is that I'm Dargoll, that I carry my sword Klarvan, that I'm here in your world for a purpose!"

Her eyes glittered as she stared up at him, breath indrawn, hands clasped between her breasts. "If you were! It would be wonderful! Then you could save the people of Marralene from Yukaghir — and what he means to do!" She hesitated a moment, then shook herself, forcing a cold smile to her mouth. "Forget I said that! If a word of what I said ever reached Yukaghir —"

Florella shuddered.

Grimm looked about them. The sun was disappearing beyond a bluish line to the west, which he assumed were mountains. They were far away, those mountains; it would take days to reach them. There would be no food nearer than there, either, he guessed. He let his eyes touch the girl. She did not seem unduly alarmed.

"Might as well start walking," he said. "It'll be better walking at night than in the daytime. Cooler."

He started off, not waiting for the girl. She cried out, ran to him. "Not that way," she told him, "but there," pointing northward, "there where Marralene City is!"

Grimm scowled, aware that suspicion was rising up inside him. Now why should that be? He knew nothing of this land. Yet northward meant danger. How he knew that, he could not tell. Yet there was a tiny voice deep inside him, whispering its doubts.

"Please," begged Florella. "I know this world. You — do not."

Grimm shrugged. One way was as good as another, he guessed, though that voice was still whispering away within him. Holding the sword, he aimed his footsteps after those of Florella.

They walked a long time through the night. Overhead, there were no stars, no moon. It was as though they moved through utter blackness. Grimm wondered how Florella could find her way. When he asked her, her voice came ghostly from the darkness.

"I can. Everyone can, here in Cyclaria. Why it is, I'm not sure. All I know is that we all have that ability."

Grimm shrugged. Maybe he too, had that ability, though he had not as yet tested it. Back on Earth, now that he thought about it, he had never been really lost. Always, he had known just where he was.

It was dawn when the riders came, loping along on splendid horses. At sight of Florella, they changed directions and came galloping toward them.

"Who are they?" he growled.

Florella laughed happily. "Friends. They are the servants of the high priest, Yukaghir."

Grimm frowned. Was there a catch in her voice? A smothered sob of regret? He did not know, but suspicion was alive in him and he put a hand on Klarvan's hilt.

The riders drew in. One of them, obviously an officer because of his decorat-

ed jacket, smiled down at the girl. "Well done, Florella. Yukaghir will be pleased. You have the sword."

Florella gestured at Grimm. "He carries it. He says it belongs to him."

The men looked at him and now there were no smiles on their faces. Rather, there was a sudden grimness. The officer said, "Hand it over. Florella, take it."

Grimm chuckled and drew the blade. "Come take it yourself, if you can."

Three of the riders dismounted, hurled themselves at him. Grimm met them with Klarvan, discovering that his body seemed to know how to use this sword as though it were a part of it. He had fenced, back on Earth, but this was more than fencing. He knew he was fighting for his life.

His parries were controlled, sliding the swords past him when they thrust or were swung. His own blade stabbed out, cut through a neck, slashed a throat, hammered the third man to his knees, bleeding from a gash in his belly.

The officer snarled and came off his mount, running toward him, the remaining two warriors joining him. Grimm ran to meet them, glorying in his combat. Something deep within him was bubbling up to life, crying out in sheer delight. This was what he had been born for, this interplay of steel blades locked in combat, this fighting to the death.

One man was down already, the other was backing up before the savage thrust and cut of Grimm's steel. The officer was dancing about, naked sword in his hand, seeking an opening through which to attack.

When his last foeman went down, Grimm swung toward the officer who was glaring at him with wide eyes, backing up slowly toward his horse. Grimm did not go after him, he stood breathing deeply, aware that he lacked the stamina to do more than wait for the next attack. He was hungry, thirst was a torment in his throat; he had no energy to waste running



after the officer.

The officer leaped into the saddle, spurred — not toward Grimm but toward Florella. His arm swung down, scooped her up, lifted her behind him on his stallion. Like that he galloped off, northward.

Grimm would have gone after him, but he was tired. All he wanted now was sleep. All night long he had walked through darkness, he had not slept in close to twenty hours. But first —

He moved toward a big roan stallion. To his eyes, that horse looked to be the strongest of the five remaining. His hand caught its reins, he brought it with him as he walked to the other horses. He discovered winesacks and saddlebags that held meat, cheese, bread.

Seating himself on the sand, Grimm ate his fill. Then, using a leather thong he found on one of the saddles, he tied the roan to his leg. He lay down and slept.

It was past midday, as near as he could judge, when he woke. He rose, stretched, began again to eat and drink. When he was done, he stepped into a stirrup and swung up on the roan.

Westward. That was where he would go, as his first instincts had told him. He would have gone after Florella to get her back from that officer, but she had known him — they probably both worked in the pay of Yukaghir — and had gone off willingly enough.

Grimm sighed. He did not know where he was in this new world as yet. But he would learn. He toed the stallion to a canter.

2.

Two days later he came into the mountains. He and the roan had covered many miles together, when he found an oasis — the stallion found it, actually — and while the horse swallowed grass and drank the sweet water in the pool, Grimm leaned his back against the bole of what looked to be much like a palm tree, and scowled.

He was alone in an al-

most unknown world. He had come here — or been brought — for a reason he did not know. Someone or something had whispered in his mind, speaking of a revelation. He grunted. He was not at all averse to being where he was, always he had sought adventure, looking ever for trails over which few men had ever trod, answering an unknown need in his big body.

Well, he was here now. Alone. Friendless.

"Na, na! Not friendless! I am your friend, Dargoll the Mighty."

"And who are you?" he asked aloud.

"One whom you worshipped, long and long ago."

"I don't remember."

"You shall, in time."

The voice went away. Grimm sighed and rose to his feet. He mounted into the saddle and rode westward, toward the mountains.

All that day he rode, until the setting sun made long shadows from the trees past which he moved. By now he was in the lower foothills of the mountains, working his way upward along a narrow trail. His food was gone, the winesacks were empty, and there was no sign of anything to be eaten.

It was fully dark before he saw the fire. It was a glint of red at first, no more, but by then he was used to looking between the trees, and he could make out the flames. Fire meant humans, and where humans were, there would be food.

He swung aside from the trail, worked the roan between the trees and through the underbrush. He did not hide his coming. Whoever was at that fire would have heard him, long ago. Besides, he was not afraid of being seen. He had nothing to hide.

He reined in when he was still a little distance away. "Hello, the fire!"

A voice came out of the darkness to one side of him, and Grimm chuckled. Whoever was here had scattered at the sound of his voice. Good. He liked cautious men.

"Who are you? Where do you come from? What are you doing in the Tharateen

Hills."

"I'm a stranger who just came off the desert. I'm hungry and I'm thirsty. None of you know me, just as I know none of you."

There was a silence. Then: "Come on in."

He toed the stallion forward. A man came out of the trees and stood there, leaning on a bow. He had an arrow in his hands, but it was not on the string. He was a young man with long red hair and freckles across his nose. There were other men around here. Grimm knew. The man who had first spoken to his left, at least.

Grimm eyed the fire and the iron cooking pot that gave off such savory smells. He allowed a smile to widen his mouth. "That food really gets to me. I could eat a horse."

The redhead laughed. "It's not horse, it's wild pig, with some vegetables thrown in."

"All right if I swing down?"

He dismounted, went to stand at the cooking pot, to smell its spicy odors. He heard other men moving through the underbrush. Four of them, all told, unless one was still out there among the trees. Grimm swung around, still smiling.

One of the men was older, he could be the father of the redhead. The other one could be the redhead's brother. Ah, but the fourth man was different. He was old, bent a little with age, and his hair was white. But there was strength still in his body, in his long arms and big hands. His eyes, black as pitch, were bright and clever.

It was the old one who spoke. "Now what will you be calling yourself?"

Grimm hesitated a moment. Then he said, "Dargoll."

The old man started and came a few steps closer, peering intently at the sun-bronzed face Grimm showed him. His tongue came out to run around his lips. It seemed to Grimm that the man was suddenly frightened.

One of the two young men hooted laughter. "Dargoll the Mighty! Dargoll the Unconquered!"

Grimm said, "Once, yes — long and long ago. Right now I am only Dargoll. And I'm hungry."

"Na, na. Not so soon," exclaimed the old man. He came very near to Grimm, peering up into his face. His eyes fell to the sword, and he started.

"Aye, it's Klarvan," Grimm told him.

"Where have you come from?" the old man whispered.

"From a faraway land. I came because — something or someone — sent for me, brought me here."

"Let me put an arrow in him, Sedron," the freckled youth cried.

The greybeard whirled, crying out angrily. "All your wits are in your arms, Nestran. Be quiet, all of you!" He swung back to Grimm. "Who was that someone? Do you know?"

Grimm shook his head. "His or her voice was in my mind, once or twice. He or she spoke of a — revelation. And yet, I ought to know who it was. There is a name in my mind, a name that —"

His eyes widened. "Serenal! Of course! I worshipped her in my other life. She has not forgotten me!"

To his amazement, the old man fell to his knees before him.

Grimm scowled. There was worship in the attitude of Sedron, as if he were a god. He saw that the others were kneeling also, heads bent.

"Get up, the lot of you," he growled. "Even if I am Dargoll, returned to this land in some way I don't understand — still! I'm only a man."

"You're more than that," growled the redhead whose name was Nestran. "You're the Liberator whose coming has been foretold!"

"What I am is hungry. Do we eat or don't we?"

The old man rose to his feet, gesturing at the others, who also rose. "You remind us of our duty, Dargoll. Be seated. Let my grandsons serve you."

In moments, he was sitting on a fallen log beside the boys' father, whose name was Ander, a bowl of steaming, savory stew before him, a wooden spoon

in his hand. He ate first, letting the questions in his mind wait; there would be time for those. The others were eating too, giving him surreptitious glances in which delight was mixed with awe.

"Now then," he said at last, setting his empty bowl on the ground, "who is Yukaghir? What does he want? And — what is Florella to him?"

Sedron gasped, leaning toward him, the better to study his sunbrowned face. "Yukaghir? Yukaghir is high priest to Minoton. Yet — how have you heard of Yukaghir?"

Grimm talked, then, telling them of all that had happened to him since finding himself on this world called Cyclaria. They were enthralled, hunching ever closer as they hung on his words. Approval swam in their eyes, and when he spoke of slaying the five warriors who rode up on him, Nestran and his younger brother, Phorl, cried out in delight.

Grimm chuckled. "Something kept telling me to come westward. Now I'm glad I did. But what of you? Who are you? Hunters, of course. I can see that. But why do you call me the Liberator?"

Sedron nodded slowly. "To us, the name of Dargoll is merely a legend. Long ago he lived, ruling a great empire of this world. When he died, his empire continued for several hundred years under his sons and grandsons. Yet when his line died out — his great-grandson Xorkon died in battle before he was wed — his empire fell apart.

"Little kingdoms grew up where there had been one vast empire. Yet there was a prophecy, made by the seer Akandal, that Dargoll would return one day, and when he did, he would bring his great sword and his battle-might to help his

people."

In a soft voice, Sedron added, "Now he has returned."

"And the people? Will they rise to support me in that effort?"

"The people, yes. But the people have not the arms and the skill at arms possessed by the warriors, all of whom follow Yukaghir."

Nestran burst out, "Only because Yukaghir holds the Sigil!"

Dargoll scowled. He ought to know the Sigil! Yet what it was, its meaning, eluded him.

Sedron saw his bafflement, smiled wryly. "You could not know the Sigil. It came to us on the day you died. It was found in your bed, beside your dead body. And it was regarded as a promise from the gods that someday you would return." The old man sighed. "Yukaghir has it now. With the Sigil, he is all-powerful. For the warriors follow the Sigil."

"Then I'd better take it away from him," Grimm chuckled.

Young Phorl shifted uneasily. "It is protected by enchantment. No man may touch it save Yukaghir! The high priest carries it when he makes his pronouncements to the people. Though his hands are wrapped in a bit of material when he holds it."

"If Yukaghir can touch it, why can't I?"

"Perhaps you can. No man knows that. But no ordinary man may. It is whispered that Yukaghir can hold it only because he adores Minoton, and it is Minoton's power which permits him to handle it."

"Yet Minoton would not have left the Sigil beside dead Dargoll. I know that, somehow."

Dargoll stared at the glowing fire. He could do nothing without the Sigil, if it was the Sigil that the warriors followed. Aye! Steal the Sigil! Lift it in bat-

tle against Yukaghir! Then the warriors would flock to his standard, abandoning Yukaghir! At least, he hoped they would.

He looked at the others. "Tell me of Cyclaria. Help my memory, let me understand this world once again, as once I knew it so well."

It was Ander who answered, smiling slightly. "Cyclaria is a beautiful world, for the most part. A land of high hills and vast forests, of lovely lakes and mighty oceans. Its fields are fertile, its lakes and rivers filled with fish that make good eating, just as its forests hold deer and wild pigs. Herds of cattle roam its grasslands.

"We hunt for a living, taking the skins of wild animals like the spotted lanx and the dorgan, who furnish the flesh of edible animals to the marketplace at Marralene City, live a good life. Yet Yukaghir threatens our livelihood. If he comes to power, only those who obey Yukaghir will be permitted to hunt. If we hunt without his permission, we will be slain.

"Our fathers, our forefathers, have always hunted. Without it, we would die. That is why we are opposed to Yukaghir, we and the farmers, and the poor of the cities like Ashgan and Tinarol."

Grimm frowned. "Dargoll did not issue licenses. He allowed every man to be his own lord."

"Dargoll was the greatest ruler who ever lived on Cyclaria! If you are he, in truth — if you can defeat and slay Yukaghir! — then all our world will hail you!"

Rather a large order, Grimm thought. And yet —

He had been brought here for a reason. Perhaps by Serena herself, if what he felt to be the case were true. Serena would not cast him off. She would help his endeavors. But it was up to him to give her something to work with.

"Tomorrow, I ride with you while you hunt. I want to familiarize myself with the ways of Cyclaria. You can help me, refresh my memory. Some things I can recall, some I can't. You'll help."

For five days, Grimm lived with his new friends,

learned their ways, the habits of the animals they hunted. He borrowed a bow from Nestran, discovered that he was pretty accurate with it. But most of all, he learned about Marralene, about Ashgan, about Tinarol, their people, their habits, their likes and dislikes.

He learned also about Yukaghir who worshipped Minoton and who wanted to be supreme ruler of his land. Once he asked about Florella. It was at a noon stop, where they met to discuss the animals they had killed and those they had seen at a distance.

"Florella? Oh, she's high priestess to Minoton," Nestran told him. "Sometimes I get the idea, from what people tell me, that she isn't so eager to help Yukaghir as he seems to think. But she can't do anything to stop him or hurt him, so she doesn't even try."

Grimm found himself happy to hear that, though he could not understand why; the girl meant nothing to him. She was beautiful, he gave her that; sometimes now he dreamed of her, and always in his dreams, she proved sweet and loving.

On the morning of the sixth day, they set out for home, laden down with furs. These furs they would sell in the marketplace at Marralene City to the shopkeepers who dealt in such things. After that, they would head back to their mountain cabins.

Grimm walked now, for the furs were piled high on the roan. He did not carry the sword; that too, was on the roan, hidden under the furs. Only a dagger hung at his belt, a gift from Sedron.

He thought as he walked, making his plans. If he were to fight Yukaghir, he was going to have to start soon. Yet he was one man, lacking an army, lacking even gold with which to hire mercenaries. It seemed a hopeless task. Ah, but there was a way — at least, a way to make a start.

He would have to go alone on his mission. He dared not even breathe a word of what he meant to do. The less who knew about it, the fewer chances he would have to take.

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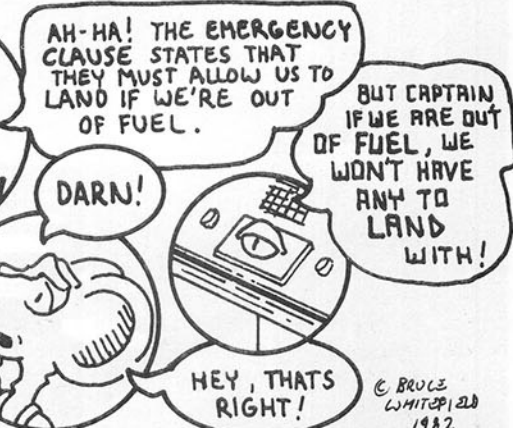
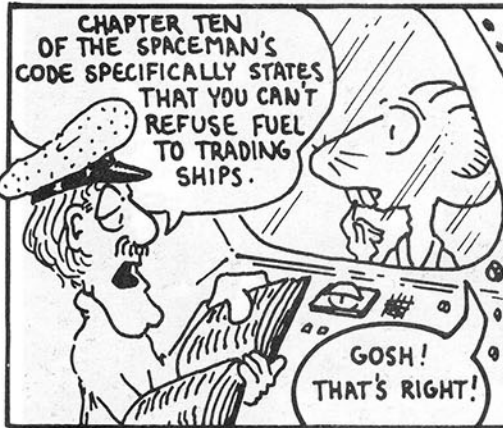
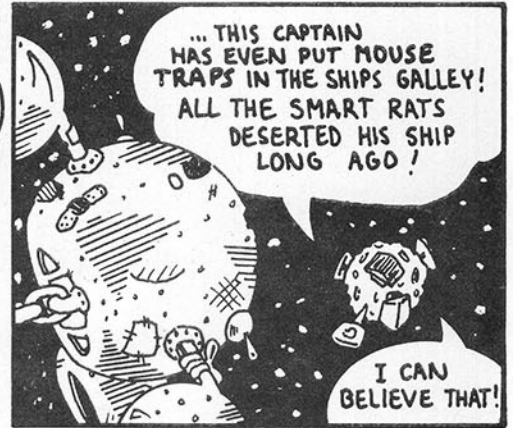
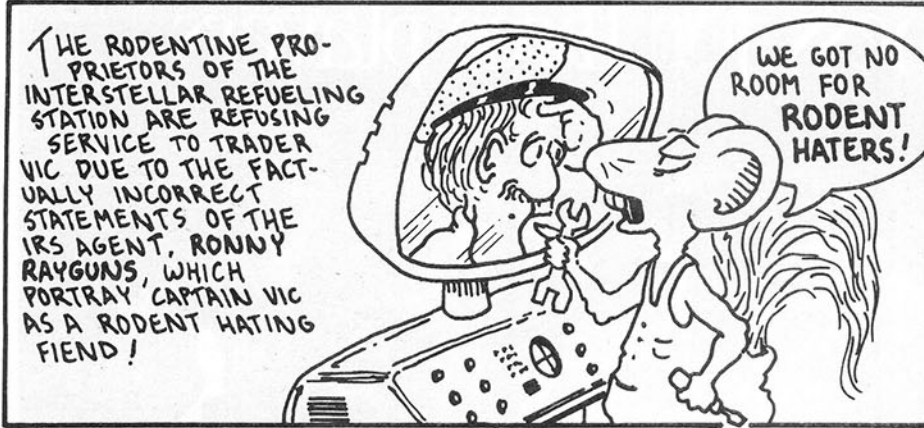
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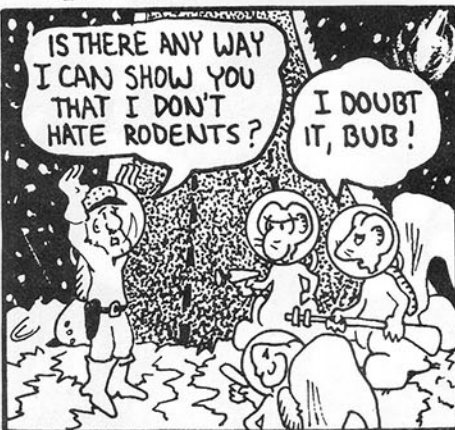
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AHG!

SONIA... YOU FOOL! YOU'VE LET FEAR PANIC YOU... NOW MY HAND MAY BE TIPPED!

WOW...

GLAD TO HEAR THAT HROLFE,...

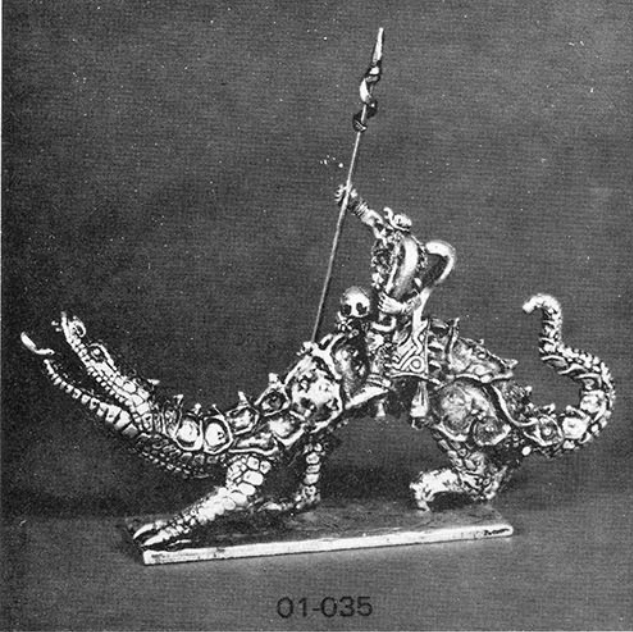
THAT WAS SOME DRINK FINGERS, ... BUT I'M OK NOW... JUST A LITTLE CHILLED IS ALL... (PHEW)

EXCEPT THAT I ONLY HAD STOCK ALE IN THAT CHALICE... I WONDER,

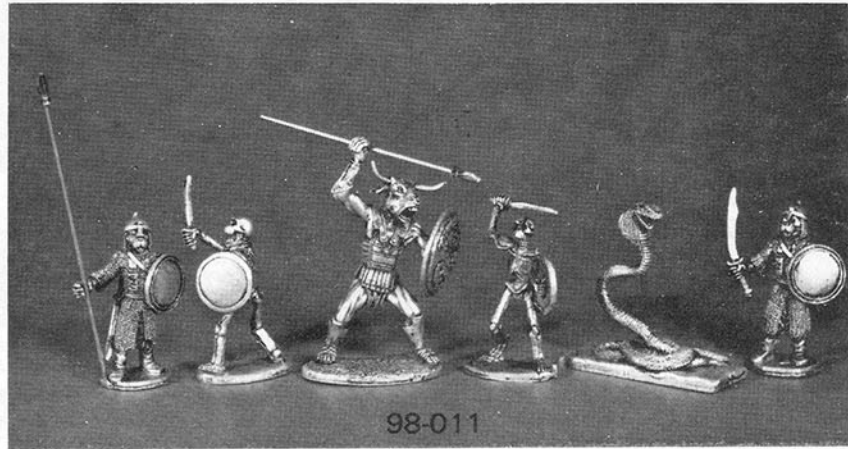
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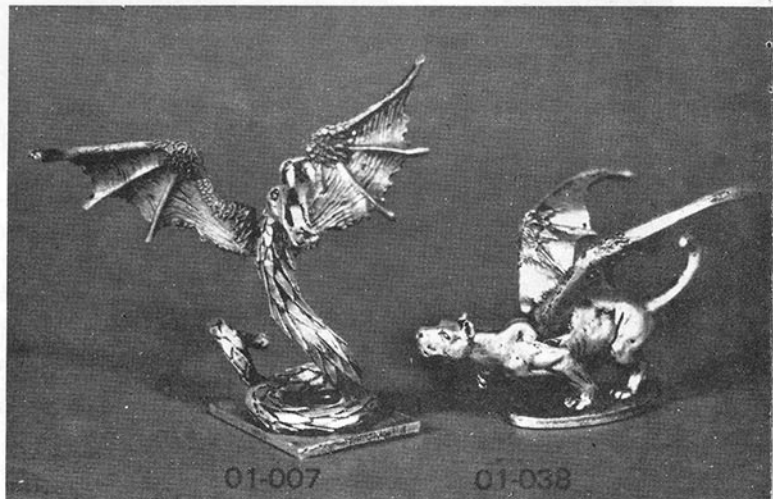
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