

Back to BasiX



A quarterly Fanzine dedicated to the simpler time of RPGs—
covering the Basic and Expert editions of Dungeons & Dragons.

Future Issues — A Note from the Fanzine Creator

With the recent announcement of a D&D ESports concept by Hasbro's CEO, Brian Goldner, RPG gamers of all experience levels quickly voiced their opinions on the matter. Some expressed interest in the idea while others immediately proclaimed that such an option was not for them or their style of play.

Regardless of where one stands on the topic, it does resurface an old point once debated at tables years ago. "Is gaming, specifically D&D, a competitive game or one of cooperative storytelling?" We can probably assume that a competitive ESports league takes something like the Adventurer's league to the masses in a digital format, via Twitch, YouTube, or similar channels. Perhaps a real-time setting, much like a convention tournament adventure, broadcasted to viewers will be worth watching. My issue with ESports or competitive events is that it forces players to seek points and achievements instead of the bene-

fits of the storyline and/or characters. We know that point-seeking, power-leveling character play changes the way D&D and other classic role-playing games are designed and played. Many classic versions of our hobby, especially B/X D&D, are ill-suited to such a style of gaming.

Time will tell if this new concept will catch on with players. I suspect that many grognards will continue playing their games the same way as always, unaffected by a competitive league or new style of gameplay. Newer players to the game, used to watching professional actors playing D&D for hours online, or enjoying other ESports leagues such as Overwatch and League of Legends, will likely enjoy the new twist on competitive gaming.

I might add that this concept may be where role-playing moves squarely into roll-playing.

Thom Wilson

— Issue #7 Details —

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Upcoming Issues:

#8 — March, 2019 — print, PDF

#9 — June, 2019 — print, PDF

Not every product this fanzine reviews has to be an officially published, for-sale production. Sometimes, an interesting project comes along that isn't out there for sale and is a personal work of love and desire. The **Companion Supplement** by James Bobb is one such work. I watched his progress over a year or so more as he slowly worked through the development and digital publication of this 129-page supplement and was overjoyed when it was finished. You could feel his devotion to its completion in his many updates to B/X fans on the internet, and when it was done, the clamor of fans to obtain copies.

There are several other "Companion" supplements out there, both for free download and sale. James Bobb has clearly stated, for obvious reasons, why this particular version would never be for sale, at least in its current design. I won't dig into those particulars; those of you who have it, know what I mean. However, as a free supplement for GMs and players to use at the table, this is a great resource by an old-school B/X enthusiast. It—much like other "book 3" attempts—gives us the extensions we need for higher level characters and campaign options not covered in the first two rulebooks.

So, first the light stuff—James uses a retro font reminiscent of the originals found in the original TSR publications. It's not exact but it's pretty darn close. You can definitely feel it. Additionally, the tables are designed quite well, with alternating color

rows and good spacing. Readability is spot-on here. As is typical with works of this nature, the chapters are organized and ordered as the original books, making it easy to find what you need quickly.

Purists will immediately see some additions to these rules that will test their interest levels. Additional classes have been added to give players the option to try something new. Giantkin, Gnomes, Druids, Paladins, and Rangers have been included in the new book. Level "skills" have also been included, giving existing and new classes more crunch. For example, Clerics have the Theurgy skill at 2nd level, allowing them to craft magical items. This added skill ability progression is new to B/X and offers an interesting look into added depth in the class. At first, I wrinkled my nose at several of these skill options but as I read further, I found most of them to be well thought out and not overly powerful. Later in the book, Bobb offers additional "adventuring" skills to add even more flavor to the game.

Monsters and armor in the book are represented in both ascending and descending armor class—this is definitely a stretch from B/X but those that like a little variety in the system (or are just fans of OSR games) will find the double-stat helpful.

Conditions have been added to challenge the characters during long battles or at times when resting is impossible. The added conditions really make for more challenging situations.

As with other, higher level supplements, this book also touches upon mass combat, fortification building, and extra-planar travel. They are lightly covered but this seems acceptable—the book still keeps focus on character development and standard adventuring styles. A section near the end of the book offered even more fighting style options for fighters and some demi-humans.

I really couldn't find anything I disliked in this supplement. The information was neatly presented, important areas were covered fully, and added options were available throughout the book. I only wished that I had the physical book to read it more often.

Companion Supplement, James Bobb, free PDF by email—jamesbobb.rrg@hotmail.com.

Interview with a Legendary Artist—Erol Otus

As most of us B/X fans know, the covers of the Moldvay Basic and Marsh/Cook Expert boxed sets were illustrated by Erol Otus. Those covers may have single-handedly pulled me into the game, long before I knew what D&D was. I'd guess that many fans of the early game were inspired by those wonderful covers. I was fortunate enough to be able to interview Mr. Otus recently. Additionally, he has agreed to publish some early art of his for the first time in this issue of *Back to Basic!*

[Thom] What year did you get hired at TSR? Do you remember your first assignment there?

[Erol] Our group started playing D&D in '74 and I had been reading the "Strategic Review". Somewhere in there it was announced that a new magazine, "The Dragon" was coming. I started sending in unsolicited artwork to them in early '76. I had a subscription and when the 2nd issue arrived I was stunned to see my first published color illustration inside, "The Remorhaz". Over the next couple of years they published several more of my pieces

including "The Ankheg" which I designed and illustrated.

Dave Trampier had left the TSR art dept. and they were looking for a new staff artist. Out of the blue I got a call from Dave Sutherland, who asked me if I would be interested in joining them. He seemed surprised I was all the way in Berkeley, CA. I had a theory that because at the time the Berkeley area code was 415, and his was 414 he thought I was close by. They flew me out for an interview it was quite magical seeing the Dungeon Hobby shop and the rest of the offices. I moved to Lake Geneva and joined the TSR art department in the summer of '79.

[T] After you were hired, do you recall which of your pieces was first published in a TSR product?

[E] Whenever I try to think of the first pieces, my memory always goes back to my first months. At that time there was just Dave & I in the art dept. and he was teaching me how to make these monochrome color cover illustrations. Some of them

were for playing aids, like “Non-Player Character Records”. These were painstaking to create, as a separate black and white illustration was needed for each tone of color. These had to be carefully aligned with registration marks. You didn’t really know what it would look like until it was printed. It’s interesting, these days something like that is trivial to create using layers in a digital paint program. Similar to digital illustrations, there was no physical original that matched the final printed version.

[T] Are there any particular pieces you created for the Basic and/or Expert D&D lines that you are particularly proud of?

[E] The cover of the Basic Box is one of my favorite color paintings and the Mad Hermit holds a special place. But the Three Wizards Dividing Treasure makes me happy whenever I look at it. It captures the sometimes not so glorious aftermath of the adventure with, I think, Vancian humor. I am still pleased by the three very different expressions on three very different faces. Anyone who plays a lot of D&D will see some truths there.

[T] Do you remember whose idea it was to put a portion of the Basic boxed set illustration into the Expert box set illustration?

[E] I actually don’t remember, other than it wasn’t my idea. We ended up photographing the first painting, I glued the photo to the illustration board, then painted around it.



The Mad Hermit in B2—Keep on the Borderlands

[T] Was there any work that you created during the TSR days that was never published?

[E] There was an idea for the cover of “They’ve Invaded Pleasantville” to reproduce Grant Wood’s “American Gothic” but change some elements: give the wife antennae and put a flying saucer in the background sky. When I finished the painting, TSR management decided not to use it because they thought I copied the original painting too closely and there could be legal issues. This was nonsense, of course, but the heads of the company were still smarting from their blunders with “Deities & Demigods” and so were overreacting. It was frustrating because the concept wasn’t my idea but I really applied myself to the task.

Fantasy Arts Enterprises produced “The Necromican,” a book of magic-user spells before “Booty & the Beasts”. Other products included “Magic and Technological Item Cards” and “Geomorphic Dungeon Modules”. I did the illustrations and

graphics for all of them. The business was formed from members of our D&D gaming group—including Paul Reiche III, who went on to create some of the greatest computer games of all time.

[T] What sort of things do you do to "recharge the batteries" or to spark artistic inspiration after a lengthy project or heavy workload?

[E] If I'm having trouble coming up with inspiration/concepts sometimes you just have to drop it for a while, don't actively think about it and let the part of your mind that keeps your heart beating help you out. Before making art it's often good to get some exercise, really helps the brain. I like tennis because it combines fun gaming competition with exercise.

[T] Are there any personal projects you'd love to work on if you had the time?

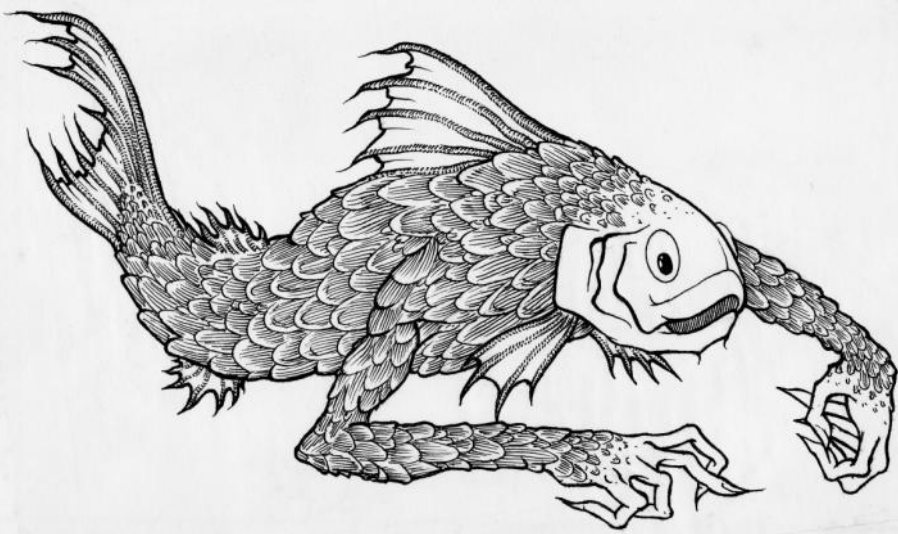
[E] Given unlimited resources, I'd like to create an online computer role playing game. Maybe not massively, but 'somethingely'. It would be fun to bring my aesthetics to that genre.

[T] Did you always want to publish your own adventures, or did that come later in your career (e.g. North Texas RPG Con)?

[E] Before joining TSR, as part of F.A.E. (Fantasy Art Enterprises), we did publish books of spells, monsters, and treasure but not complete adventures. I still haven't really, I did create modules for the North Texas RPG Con, but I only printed a handful of playtest copies and the Con produced a limited run "digest" edition. I'm not sure that qualifies as being published.

[T] What are you working on these days?

[E] Right now, I'm in the early stages of working on a cover for Greg Gillespie's latest project





The **Indulger**, by Erol Otus, found in both the New Monster section and Dungeon Crawl of this issue.

going over possible concepts. Also thinking about the next adventure for my AD&D 1st edition campaign.

[T] Are you very selective when taking on work from firms or is it a matter of timing?

[E] I think I'm fairly selective about projects. One of the main things is having creative freedom. I want to respect and follow the needs of the product, stay true to the content, but at the same time come up with the concepts myself.

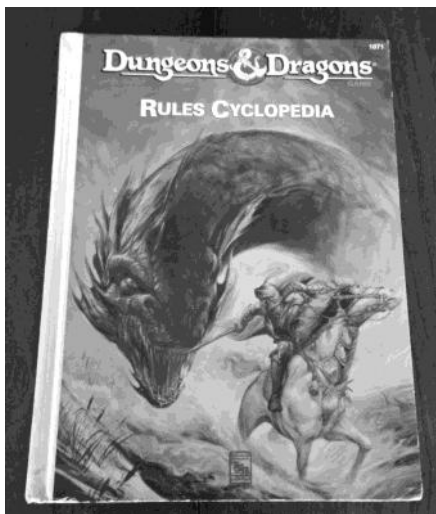
Note that the illustrations found on these pages were to end up in the sequel of "Booty and the Beasts", a book that unfortunately never materialized. The illustration on the back cover was work that was submitted to TSR but was never used.

Erol has allowed us to print these three "new" illustrations for the first time! Thank you, Mr. Otus!

Product Spotlight

Although this fanzine focuses primarily on B/X material, there's no reason not to review BECMI rulebooks—in fact, I've been trying to get a review of the mighty **Rules Cyclopedia** into *Back to BasiX* for some time.

First published in 1991, the **Rules Cyclopedia** was compiled and developed by Aaron Allston. The 304-page tome was printed in a triple-column format using a tiny font to likely maximize word count per page. Some of the text bleeds into the bottom border and the print coloring is unusual but this hardcover book is overflowing with information. With an original cover price of \$24.95, this book had great value for its cost. Although compiled into a single tome from previous BECMI books authored by Mentzer and others, owning the *Rules Cyclopedia* was a necessity for GMs.



The original printing of the Rules Cyclopedia

First, it was a great resource to find details about the two optional classes, the Druid and Mystic. Spells just for the Druid class are included as well. To further enhance fighters, the Weapon Mastery rules found on page 75 and their special effects on pages 78 and 79 are extremely interesting. Those wanting to add a little crunch to their fighting mechanics will enjoy this section. General skills start on page 81, giving characters many extra abilities—these feel very much like the early 2nd edition AD&D skills do.

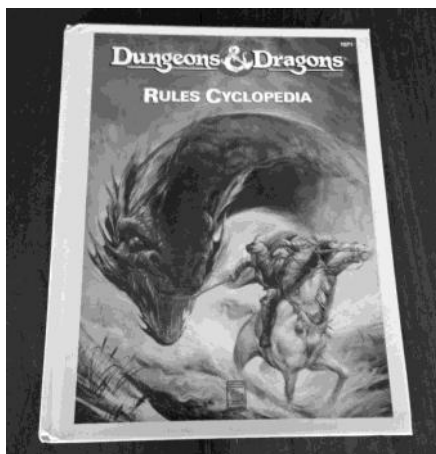
Combat information begins on page 102 and highlights a lot of information and expansions to the early game. Armor classes from 19 to -20 are shown and THACO, touched upon in an earlier section, reappears. Special combat (e.g. striking, unarmed), mass combat, and rules for aerial and naval battles appear in this section. These twenty-five pages cover a lot of fighting rules.

At right—The print-on-demand version of the Rules Cyclopedia, a slightly larger book in size.

A section for special GM procedures—including character conditions and resolution to complex situations—is found in Chapter 13. Topics like character aging, spell effects, and damage to magical items are found here and are extremely useful.

Chapters on the Planes of Existence and intelligent foes (e.g. spellcasting monsters) are worth the read. Appendices for Mystara, AD&D game conversions, and character and adventure sheets are great add-ons. The Mystara maps are in full color! The great part about this book is that it's a central resource to use when playing Basic through Immortals D&D. The compilation brings all the information into a single book and uses the space to fully detail both simple and complex topics. For example, the Wish spell detail nearly takes up one full page! The **Rules Cyclopedia** is an essential book for any D&D player or collector.

1071—Rules Cyclopedia, 1991 edition, ISBN: 1-56076-085-0, list price \$24.95. RPGNow.com reprint (print on demand) available, \$29.99, identifier: 2370009026539.



The Magic Shop

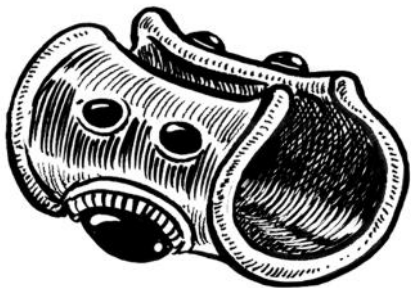
Finding new and exciting magical items is often what drives characters to explore and take risks in dangerous locales.

Bracers of Distortion

As soon as these brass and ruby-studded bracers are placed on the wrists, the wearer's image appears to distort and move as if there were several versions of them all slightly out of phase with one another. Those close to the wearer are less impacted by the strange distortion but attackers from afar will find it hard to pinpoint their foe's actual location. The wearer's armor class (AC) is four points lower (vs. missiles only) when wearing the bracers.

Note that the Bracers of Distortion cannot be worn over heavier armors (e.g. plate and chainmail).

Value: 7,500 GP.



Necklace of Spell Negation

Six black stones hang from a silver chain designed to be worn around the neck. These magical stones are artifacts of the Negative Plane and will absorb most any hostile spell cast at the wearer. Each stone can absorb one spell—once it has been used, it no longer works to absorb spells cast at the wearer.

The wearer cannot select which hostile spell to negate—each spell that targets the wearer has a 25% chance of being absorbed. Note that area of effect spells cannot be absorbed.

The necklace is found with 1d6 usable stones.

Value: 10,000 GP.

Staff of the High Priest

One of the most powerful staves known to clerics is the Staff of the High Priest. This highly coveted staff is difficult to identify due to its simple and unadorned design.

The staff has three main abilities: it can store one spell per spell level each day, can fully heal one injured or sick individual once per day, and can boost the morale of friends while demoralizing enemies.

When the cleric prays for spells, one “extra” spell per spell level also gets stored within the staff (may replace an existing spell, chosen by the cleric).

The staff heals an injured individual fully and cures them of any diseases or sickness. The staff cannot remove curses or other unnatural afflictions.



All friends of the cleric are Blessed within sight of the staff, and all foes suffer Bane in the same manner (as the reverse of the Bless spell).

Value: 40,000 to 50,000 GP.

Mythology

Erol Otus's two new creatures are this issue's Mythology section (and appearing the two Quarterly Dungeon Crawls too).

Kuklapi

The Kuklapi (pron. "kook-lah-pee") is often the horrific result of a failed reincarnation. When the deceased target has either drowned or died near water, a failed reincarnation spell may instead produce this semi-aquatic creature. Small populations of Kuklapi have been found in shallow fresh water. Sages believe that these creatures can produce Kuklapi offspring, sometimes mating with other aquatic species.

They are strong swimmers and use their ability to hold their breath underwater for long periods of time to drag victims to the bottoms of lakes and ponds. Two consecutive successful attacks indicates that the Kuklapi will attempt to drown their victim. They enjoy eating cold flesh, preferring that of humans and elves most of all.

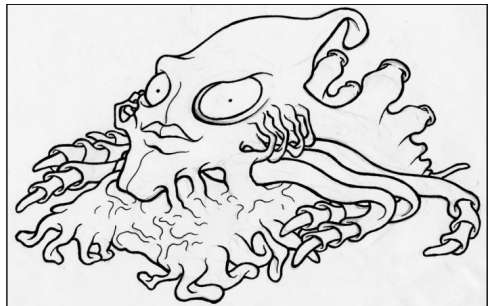
Armor Class: 7
Hit Dice: 3*
Move: 40' (40' swim)
Attacks: 1 Bite/2 Claws
Damage: Bite 1-6
Claws 1-4/1-4
Special: Drown (see above)

No. Appearing: 1-2
Save As: Fighter: 2
Morale: 10
Treasure Type: C
Alignment: Neutral

Indulger

No one is quite sure where the Indulger originates, but to cross paths with one is to face certain death. The horrific creature has a large head that sits upon a mass of tentacles, air tubes, and nodules. It uses the tentacles to move about slowly, or projects itself forward quickly with short yet powerful bursts of air from its rear air tubes. Foes making eye contact with the Indulger's mesmerizing gaze will be held like the Hold Person spell. During the time the victim is held, the Indulger will probe its mind to steal memories and knowledge, often leaving them only with their basic functions and nightmares of the mental invasion. For each round the Indulger probes a victim's mind, the victim must make a saving throw versus Spells or permanently lose one point of Wisdom or Intelligence. While charmed, victims will often sing in loud, high-pitched voices.

Foes of the Indulger subtract 4 from their attack rolls to avoid looking at the creature. Additionally, the Indulger gains a +4 on all saving throws. The Indulger often has one or more charmed minions to protect their lairs.



The air tube propulsion can be used as a ram attack doing 2-12 points of damage to a single man sized or two smaller than man sized adjacent targets and can be used 3 times per day. This attack is unerring with no saving throw.

Spells, each cast twice per day: Charm Person, Sleep, Phantasmal Force, Invisibility, Dispel Magic.

Armor Class: 0
Hit Dice: 10**
Move: 30' (60' Ram)
Attacks: 1 Gaze or
Ram (3x/day)
Damage: Gaze *charm*
Ram 2-12
Special: Spells
No. Appearing: 1
Save As: Cleric: 8
Morale: 10
Treasure Type: G
Alignment: Chaotic

Quarterly Dungeon Crawl #1

Giant Oak Retreat

by Thom Wilson. An adventure for 2-4 characters of 2nd to 3rd level.

Background: Two druids (Elilly and Ronndal) once lived within a secluded forest, choosing a great oak for their home. A small pond of cold, clear water nearby made the choice obvious for the pair. Later, they found that the water had slight healing properties.

The married couple was content with their habitat until one day when a group of hunters mistook the husband—who often wore a hat with large antlers—for a deer and accidentally killed him with an arrow to the neck. Elilly buried him in his favorite place, by a large rock near the edge of the pond.

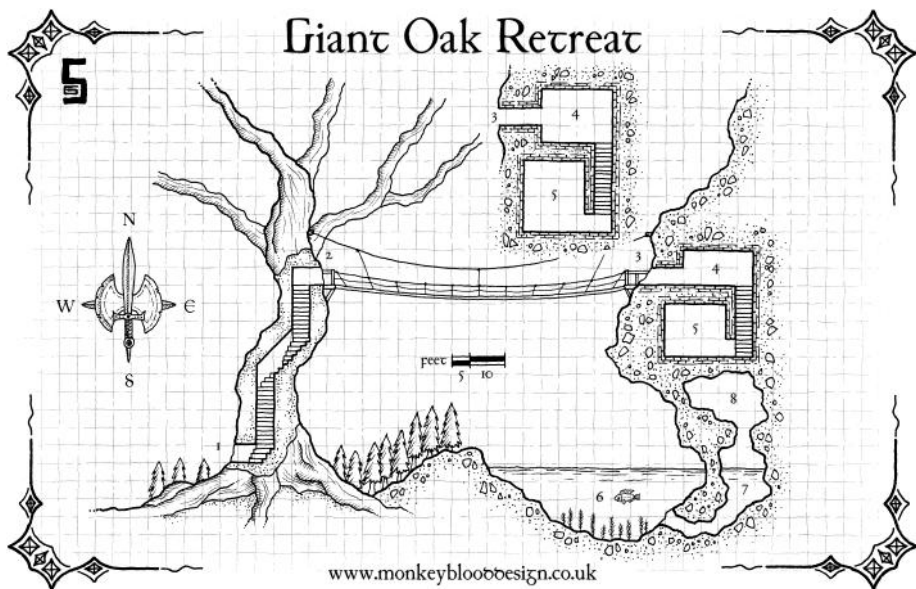
The distraught wife was lost without her partner until she found that he had a scroll of reincarnation stashed away in his nature books. Using the scroll improperly, the wife brought her husband back from the dead as a twisted, semi-aquatic creature that retained only a fragment of his memory of her and their life

together. Her husband slipped into the pool and now lives within its icy depths and the water cave beyond.

After many years, the druid's wife has become angry with her situation. Instead of helping visitors and travelers, she preys on them. She lures adventurers who hope to find the secret to the healing waters of the pond of the great oak retreat—so her mutated husband can capture them and feed upon their corpses.

1. Great Oak Retreat Entry

Once unlocked, welcoming visitors to the druidic retreat, the large wooden door at the base of the great tree now stands closed and locked. A large rusty bell hangs from the ancient tree near its entry. Ringing the bell summons the old druid who initially looks displeased to be bothered before giving visitors a large smile. She will offer to let adventurers stay in the retreat for 10 gp per night per person. A large room in the middle of the tree (between areas 1 and 2) is clean and comfortable and sleeps up to ten.



2. Old Bedroom

After Ronndal's death and transformation, Elilly stopped using their bedroom at the top of the tree. Instead, she sleeps in area 4, a converted storage area in the side of a hill. She now prefers the dark, cold place instead of the warmth of the outside. The room still has all the usual trappings of a bedroom, but covered in inches of dust and dirt. A search of the room will reveal several nature tomes (each worth 10-25 gp) and a magical cudgel once used by Ronndal (treat as a **club +1**).

3. Rustic Bridge

A simple bridge stretches between the great tree and the rock formation beyond. At the far end of the bridge, an opening in the rocky hill leads to a roughly hewn chamber, once used by the druids to store fruits and vegetables of the forest.

4. Converted Storage Room

Elilly has a small cot for a bed and crude box to store her meager belongings. A journal and two vials can be found at the bottom of the box—the poorly written handwriting of the old druid will reveal her husband's demise and her plans to feed adventurers to her flesh-craving spouse. The two vials contain a potent, black liquid that, when imbibed, paralyzes the victim for 1 hour per ounce used.

Elilly (druid): (AC 7, HD 4**, HP: 16, #AT 1 or spell, D 1-4+1 (club) or spell, Save C4, ML 9, Spells: Bless, Cure Light Wounds, Hold Person, XP 175)

Elilly carries a matching, **magical cudgel** (as found in area 2). It provides her a +1 bonus to attacks and damage. She wears a special ring that summons and controls forest animals (see box on next page).

Ring of the Forest: Use as a Ring of Animal Control with the added benefit of summoning 1d6 1HD forest creatures three times per day. Cannot be worn with armor, but provides a +2 armor class bonus.

5. Second Storage Area

After leading visitors and travelers to their deaths at the pool below, Elilly takes their gear and stores it here for later sorting. Clothing, armor, weapons, and other gear are found in this room in separate piles.

Items Found in Area 5 (roll 1d8)

Result	Reaction
1	Leather pants, gloves, dagger
2	Chainmail +1 , helm
3	Shortsword, dagger, 50' rope
4	Backpack, wineskin (full)
5	Dagger +1 , new boots
6	Leather armor, small sack
7	Pint of mead, silver ring (20sp)
8	Longsword +1 , 1d10 rubies

One result per party member (unique)

6. Ronndal's Pond

In happier days, the two druids spent much of their time in and around the pool. They cataloged creatures, cultivated roots, planted medicinal herbs, and frolicked in the cool, healing waters of the pond. Elilly now only ventures here to lead visitors to her husband who is always hungry for more victims.

Elilly will tell visitors that when tossing a silver or gold coin into the pond, it summons water spirits to work their magic, enriching the waters with healing and purity. Hundreds of silver and gold coins line the bottom

of the pond, reflecting off the sunlight as it streaks through the clear water.

The pond is only 20' at its deepest point and is perfectly clear and clean. If the sun sneaks between the great oak boles of the forest and shines upon the pond, its entire contents are visible. Ronndal typically prefers to hide in his lair (area 7) and only ventures out when he can "sense" approaching victims.

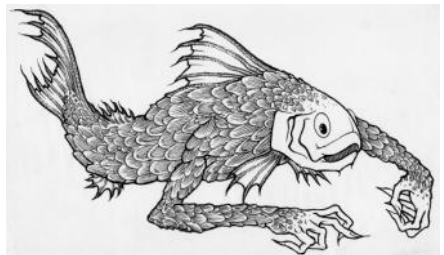
Adventurers will notice that little water life can be seen in the pond. Tiny fish and bugs are present but larger aquatic creatures are strangely missing. Ronndal feeds on fish once they grow big enough.

Ronndal (Kuklapi): (AC 7, HD 3*, HP: 15, #AT 1 bite or 2 claws, D 1-6 or 1-4/1-4, Save F2, ML 10, Special: Drown, XP 50)

(see more information about the Kuklapi on page 9)

7. Ronndal's Lair

Remnants of dozens of skeletal remains of humans and forest animals lie upon ledges and in cracks along the sides of the cave. Gear is stripped from victims and given to Elilly for sorting and identification, then stored in area 5.



8. Hidden Room

Not even Elilly knows of this secret room beyond Ronndal's lair. Although Ronndal has some memories of his previous life with his wife, his current nature and desires have made him more of a beast with the treasure cravings of a monster. Before giving Elilly gear from slain visitors, Ronndal searches their bodies for shiny trinkets and valuables. He stores these items in this secret room above his lair.

Use the Kuklapi's treasure type ("C") to determine the hidden valuables here.

Adventure Conclusion

Elilly will do anything she can to feed her transformed husband, feeling guilt for his current state. Ronndal barely hangs on to the memory of his wife, understanding only their current arrangement (she brings him food, he gives her items in return). However, at any time, Ronndal could kill and eat his former wife.

Quarterly Dungeon Crawl #2

The High Crypt

by Thom Wilson. An adventure for 3-5 characters of 5th to 7th level.

Background: The reward of immortality is rarely achieved by great wizards of necromancy and never attainable before mortal death. Powerful mages and priests have occasionally sacrificed their lives to cruel gods or succumbed to their evil studies to return in undeath. But to be gifted with immortality before death -- this is the ultimate prize of any hopeful man or woman.

Eoclises, the high priest of a long-forgotten god, was a man that once searched for a way to extend his life indefinitely. Unhappy with just simply being mortal, he searched ancient texts and lost scrolls to piece together a ritual that would bring him immortality. After decades of travel, searching, and study, Eoclises found a way to pause the aging process. Unfortunately, the final spell completely transformed his body and bound his soul to

the location of the ritual. He is unable to leave the High Crypt, instantly reversing the anti-aging process if he passes beyond the entry hall to his lair. Bound to the few rooms of the crypt, Eoclises continues to search through his library of books for a way to escape his fate.

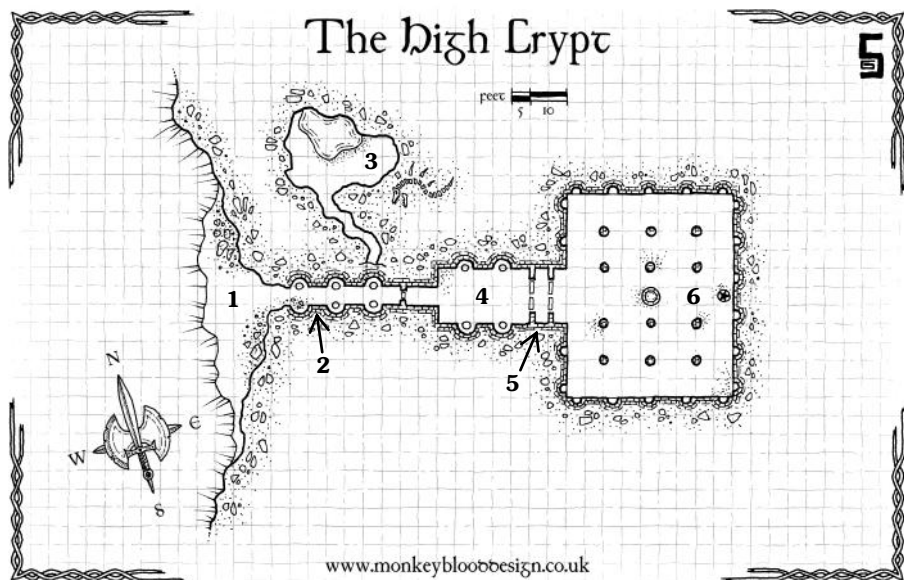
Enlisting the services of a troll named Grolgolbar, the high priest has managed to stay fed and supplied. He often sends Grolgolbar out to retrieve spell components and other items. In return, he provides the troll with small trinkets of moderate power and treasure from his vast wealth.

High Crypt Location

The open entry to the ancient crypt is found within a small ravine. Grolgolbar uses his clawed hands and feet to climb the ravine walls to enter and exit. There are no ladders, ropes, or stairs down to the wide ledge just outside the high crypt entry. Any who look down into the ravine will see light spilling out onto the ledge from the opening to the crypt.

The High Crypt

5



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1. High Crypt Entry

Light streams out of the open archway, illuminating the ledge outside the crypt. Dried blood stains and bone fragments are visible in several areas of the ledge. A **magical spell** (trap) has been cast upon the open archway that—when triggered (by passing through the opening)—rings a bell deep within the crypt. The bell ring can be heard by anyone within the ravine and crypt, including Eoclises and Grolgolbar.

Find Magical Trap: Roll under Intelligence (add +4 to roll result).

2. Hallway

A thirty-five foot hallway terminates in a wooden door at the southeastern end. Six alcoves in the hallway are filled with inanimate statues of nameless and faceless gods of ages past. One statue has been reduced to rubble, leaving an alcove open. A search of the rubble will reveal two rubies worth 250 gp each. A secret door behind the statue

at the far end of the hallway leads to Grolgolbar's lair (Area 3) beyond.

If the entry spell-trap was triggered, there is a 50% chance that Grolgolbar will emerge from the secret door to attack the adventurers. Otherwise, he may instead let the group pass and attack from behind.

3. Grolgolbar's Lair

A narrow tunnel descends to a troll-hole that Grolgolbar uses for his home. A small pool of brackish water is fed by a small, trickling overhead stream (the water from the stream is clean, but the pool is used by the filthy troll for bathing). Bearskin rugs and leather mats cover most of the floor near the pool. A large chest sits against the eastern wall. An iron rod, embedded at both ends in the cave wall and floor, covers the chest. A massive padlock keeps the rod locked over the chest lid, preventing it from being opened.

If Grolgolbar is surprised here, he will be enraged that intruders entered his lair—add +1 to his attack rolls while he is within his lair. He wears two of the magical items given to him by Eoclises—**Bracers of Distortion** and a **Necklace of Spell Negation** (see the *Magical Shop* section of this issue).

Grolgolbar (Troll): (AC 4, 0 versus missiles, HD 6+3**, HP: 39, #AT 2 claws/1 bite, D 1-6/1-6/1-10, Save F8, ML 10 (8), Special: regeneration, see page X41, XP 950)

The troll wears an iron key around his neck that opens the chest in this room. The chest contains payment from Eoclises for the troll's services. Once the chest is opened, adventurers will find **1,300 sp, 987 gp**, a bag of mixed gems (fifty in total, each worth 2d20 gp), a gold-inlaid, ivory horn (worth 250 gp); a necklace of emeralds (worth 1,000 gp), a set of silver plates and cups (4 of each, worth 25 gp each piece), a **Dagger +1, +2 vs. Undead**; and **Gauntlets of Ogre Power**.

A search of the room may reveal a bag of diamonds hidden in a bearskin rug (twenty small gems, each worth 50 gp) and a submerged steel box in the small pool. The steel box holds **100 pp** and a **Ring of Protection +1, 5' Radius**. However, prolonged exposure in the foul waters of the pool increases the chance of catching a water borne disease (e.g. Giardia, leading to diarrhea and a penalty to actions until cured).

4. Workshop

Eoclises occasionally tinkers here, working on projects to keep his mind active. His latest work is dabbling in golem creation and control. After mastering wood golems, the high priest has moved to bone golems (as evidenced by the many human body parts on several work tables). He has yet to create a successful bone golem but will likely master the spells and creation process within weeks.

Four wood golems stand quietly in their alcoves in the walls in this area. They will move to attack after one minute if any intruders enter this area.

(4) Wood Golems: (AC 7, HD 4+4, HP: 20 each, #AT 2 fists, D 1-8/1-8, Save F2, ML 12, Special: see page X33, XP 125 each)

Dozens of valuable tools and devices are found in this area, each worth 5 to 10 gp in value.

5. Trapped Hallway

An area between two sets of double doors is activated when the doors adjacent to area 4 are opened and other doors are touched. A trap releasing poisonous gas fills the small area after the doors on the western side lock, closing one or two adventurers in the small space. Failed saving throws versus Poison result in a 24-hour, deep sleep followed by death (second saving throw is applicable).

6. The Library of Eoclises

The large room at the end of the high crypt is now the eternal home and lair of Eoclises, the transformed high priest. A once gaunt and tall priest now

appears as a mass of tentacles and a giant head that slides about the room. (Note: the high priest is an Indulger, found in the new monster section of this issue.) Eoclises has adapted well to his form, mastering his transformation and new abilities. When not tinkering with the current fixation in his workshop (area 4), he spends his time here in his library, studying old texts and ancient scrolls filled with forgotten knowledge.

Thousands of oversized books, vellum parchments, and cloth maps fill shelves, cabinets, and tables throughout the room. However, the room's previous purpose can be determined after a long look around. Pillars carved in the shape of serving acolytes and a statue of a warrior-god hint to an old temple or crypt. A well in the middle of the room provides clean water but looks to have once been a donation well where visitors dropped coins in prayer.

Eoclises will toy with smaller groups, sure that his power easily overmatches the few intruders. He wastes no time with larger groups, instead using his greatest powers to weaken them quickly.

Eoclises (Indulger): (AC 0, HD 10**, HP: 60, #AT Gaze, Ram, or spell, D special, Save C8, ML 10, Special: see pages 9-10 of this issue for abilities, XP 2300)

In his human-form days, the high priest Eoclises amassed a hoard of useful magical items. In his current form, he is unable to use many of the items. A secret niche in the back of the statue holds his greatest items -- a **Staff of the High Priest** (see

Magical Shop section of this issue), **Staff of Commanding**, **Rod of Cancellation**, and **Wand of Fear** lie atop three boxes. The first box contains a **Ring of Telekinesis** and a **Ring of Teleportation** (as the spell, once per day). Two portions (each) of **Healing, Gaseous Form** and **Invisibility** fill the second box. The third box contains the Serpent's Eye, a fabled green emerald the size of man's fist (worth 25,000 gp or more).

An immobile skeleton is at the bottom of the prayer-well, bound to the bottom by Eoclises long ago. If Eoclises dies, the skeleton is freed from his paralysis and begins to climb up the well.

Large Skeleton: (AC 7, HD 8, HP: 32, #AT 2 claws, D 1-8/1-8, Save F4, ML 12, Special: none, XP 650)

A vast treasure of coins lies at the bottom of the well -- **25,691 cp, 9,745 sp, 4,602 gp** and **299 pp** are found at the bottom of the 50' well. Getting to the coins will be a challenge for most adventurers.

Adventure Conclusion

If Eoclises dies in his lair, his entire library engulfs in flames. A magical fire ward on each pillar of the room ensures that no one can take his work after he is gone. Characters may be able to grab an armful of books and scrolls before safely exiting the burning library. Note that the fire does not spread beyond this room and that the contents of the secret niche in the statue remain unharmed after the fire consumes the room.

Spellbound

Some players have discussed the merits of subclasses in B/X, extending the four main archetypes to include variants as AD&D once did. Fans of AD&D played illusionists, druids, paladins, rangers, monks, assassins and other niche classes. However, B/X remained loyal to the seven classes, four human and three demi-human. Other systems like Labyrinth Lord and BECM added additional classes to extend the main system for players looking to change up their game somewhat. We're not going to argue RAW versus homebrews or alternative rules here, but adding a roleplaying element to the game to alter your main class is slightly interesting. In this issue of Spellbound, we'll take a look at altering the low-level cleric into a druid, mainly through spell choices.

It's important to note that we're not making a druid class for B/X -- that's been done elsewhere. But if your player wants their cleric to be more druidic in style, this article may be for you.

Druidic types have always served nature and nature-revering deities. Some would say that they don't serve a god at all but only Mother Nature herself. Regardless of how your pantheon or polytheistic system is set up, you can easily allow clerics who serve nature.

The B/X system already has included many spells that are druidic in nature -- I'm guessing Gygax and his editors of the system intended to keep that flavor within the cleric

class in this manner. Spells like Speak with Animal and Speak with Plants are clear indicators of this nod to druids.

Since this article focuses on spells and spell behaviors, we'll only look at new spells for the cleric that wishes to have a few more druidic abilities.

Additional 1st Level Spells (cleric)

No.	Spell
9	Animal Whisper
10	Find Plant
11	Restore Plants
12	Move Plants

In addition to the eight spells in B/X

Animal Whisper

The cleric whispers a simple, short message to nearby animals. All animals within range (50' times caster level) may hear and understand the message. The animals may save versus Spells to ignore the message.

Find Plant

At a range of 50' per caster level, the cleric may automatically detect the location(s) of the desired plant.

Restore Plants

When the cleric casts this spell on damaged or dead plants, they may restore 1d6 per caster level plants to healthy, thriving growth.

Move Plants

The cleric may move 1d6 plants (or 1d6 feet of plants, e.g. vines) per caster level out of the way to clear a path or doorway. The plants are not destroyed or damaged, only moved aside.

Additional 2nd Level Spells (cleric)

No.	Spell
9	Find Water
10	Plant Growth
11	Plant Resistance
12	Summon Woodland Creatures

In addition to the eight spells in B/X

Find Water

At a range of 50' per caster level, the cleric may automatically detect the location(s) of water. Note that this spell does not determine the quality or cleanliness of the water found.

Plant Growth

This spell increases the overall size of plants by 1d6 feet per caster level. Note that the cleric can affect several plants at once, splitting the sizes amongst all of them (in total).

Plant Resistance

When cast upon one or more plants, the cleric gives the target plants resistance to all elements for 1 month per caster level. The number of plants affected are 1d6 per caster level.

Summon Woodland Creatures

For each caster level, the cleric may call 1d6 woodland creatures to assist him or her. The woodland creatures are typically non-combatant and found in glades, forests and plains, e.g. rabbits, deer and squirrels. Their level of assistance is limited to their physical makeup and is never combative.

Note that any of these spells could be known and used by the druid in this issue's adventure, *Giant Oak Retreat* (pg 10).

Crimson Abbey of the Broken God — Part 7

Completing their search of the secret room at the hallway split (area A7), the group of brave adventurers continues to search for the ruined temple in the Crimson Abbey.

Hallway from Eastern Areas

At the split in the hallway near the secret room (A7), an unused passage leads back up to the ground level of the abbey.

Highly revered monks, deceased centuries earlier, have been buried in secret tombs in this ancient hallway. Finding the first secret door is challenging but each one thereafter becomes easier to discover.

Secret Doors Check: subtract -1 to the chance for the first door. Add +1 to each check after finding each additional secret door in this hallway.

A11. Burial Crypt #1

The skeletal remains of an old monk lie on a white marble slab in the center of this small room. A ruby headband (like those from area A3 from issue #2) rests upon the head of the deteriorating skeleton. Removing the headband has the same effect to the skeleton, awakening it from its eternal slumber.

Venerable Skeleton: AC 7, HD 2+2*, HP: 10, #AT 2 claws, D 2-5/2-5, Save F2, ML 12, Special: immune to charm, sleep and fire, XP 35)

Besides the magical, ruby headband, the only treasure in the room can be found in the base of the marble slab. A **scroll of Protection from Magic** and a purse of **15 pp** are found in a secret niche.

A12. Burial Crypt #2

Most of the skeletal remains of the dead monk have turned to dust, leaving only bits and fragments of bones behind. A search of the room will uncover a rusty, iron club and a box full of ivory game pieces for a long, forgotten game (20 pieces, each worth between 5-10 gp).

A13. Burial Crypt #3

A blackened marble slab at the opposite end of the room appears to have once been engulfed in fire. A skeleton lies strapped to the slab with iron chains and restraints, its bones also blackened by hot fire. Although the skeleton is inanimate, stepping within 5' of the remains has a 5% chance per point of Wisdom to project a brief image of a restrained, elderly monk being burned alive.

A14. Burial Crypt #4

Empty of bones, this burial chamber is the home of a distraught **Wraith**. Unlike most undead creatures who seek to destroy the living, this creature desires to be free of its confines. It only attacks those that first attack it. If the door to its prison is left open, the wraith will try to exit the area.

The creature's loathsome wail is enough to frighten even the toughest adventurers.

Lonesome Wraith: AC 3, HD 4**, HP: 19, #AT 1 touch + special, D 1-6 + energy drain, Save F4, ML 12, Special: level drain, fear-causing wail (as Blight spell), XP 175, see page X42)

If the characters prevent the wraith from exiting without attacking it, they can get it to an-

swer a single question in exchange for freedom. It can only answer questions that relate to the abbey when it was operational centuries earlier. Note that questions regarding the Broken God and the demise of the abbey will be met with hostility and ambiguous responses.

A search of the chamber will reveal a tome under a hidden, removable piece of the slab (at the top). The tome is written in ancient language only used by the monks of the abbey, decipherable only with the translation text found in the abbey library (found in a later issue). A **scroll of Cure Serious Wounds** is found tucked into the back of the tome.

A15. Stairs to Ground Level

Wide stairs lead up to a locked door at the end of the hallway. The locking mechanism is complex and rusted, the door unused for many years.

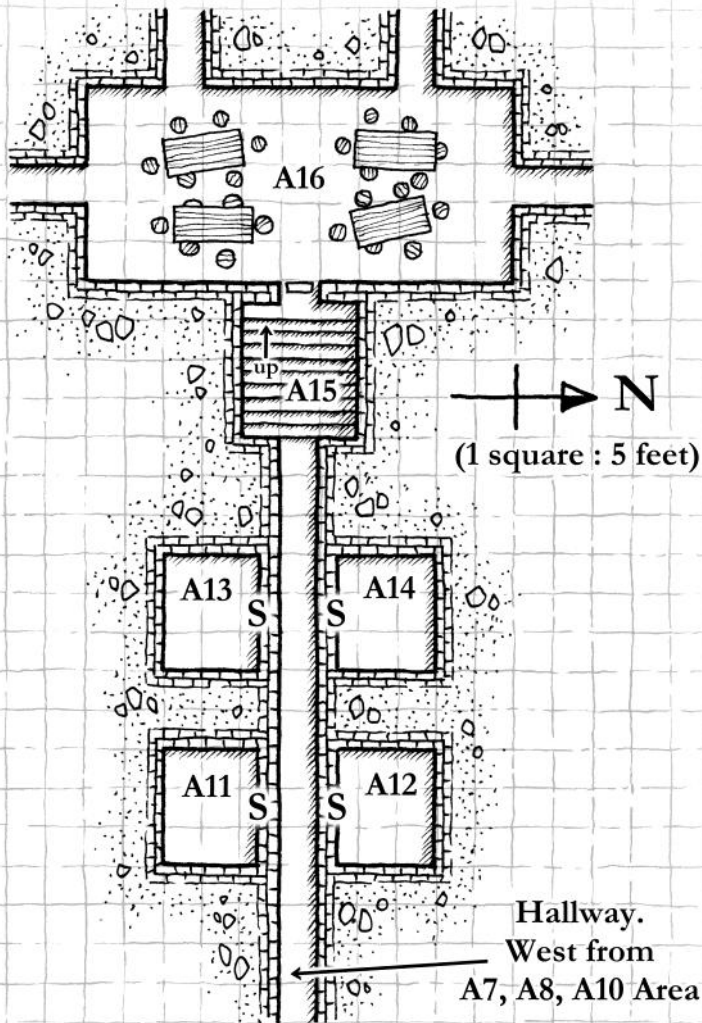
Open Lock: Thieves work at one or two levels below their current skill level (50% chance).

A16. Dining Hall

Four large tables and dozens of stools fill this large chamber. Four hallways lead out of the room (see map). Half a dozen human skeletal remains lie in various parts of the room and remain inanimate. However, a large creature resembling a skeletal minotaur rises from the floor at the first noise made here.

Skeletal Minotaur (undead): AC 7, HD 3+3, HP: 18, #AT 1 gore/1 bite, D 1-6/1-6, Save F3, ML 12, Special: ignores sleep and charm, XP 50)

The room is otherwise empty of anything valuable.



Crimson Abbey of the Broken God Map 4

The hallway to the south leads to the kitchen, the two halls to the west lead to monk bedrooms, and the hall to the north will take adventurers to the library, prayer rooms, and temple.

Special Note: After *Whystal* consumes the potions of Healing in area A7, he is healed to full HP.

What Comes Next?

After their battle with the undead minotaur, the stalwart adventurers will again, luckily choose the right direction to go—they will head north and find the more interesting parts of the abbey...and maybe its forgotten secrets.

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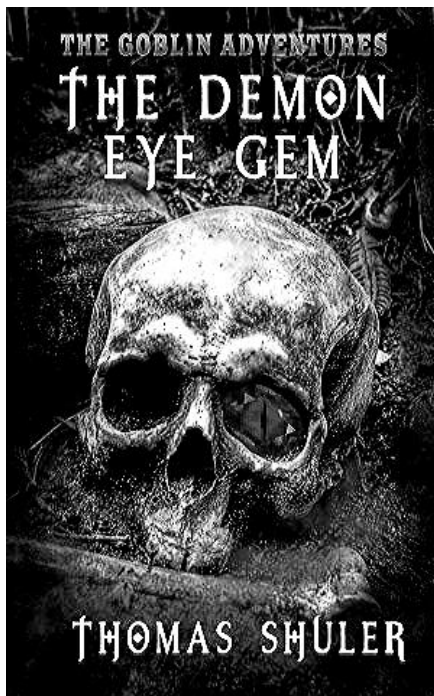
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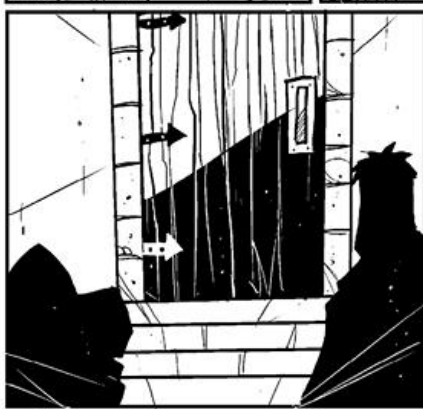
Convention	Date, Location
SnowCon 11	Jan. 19th—20th, Bangor, ME
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Gen Con 2019 (52)	Aug. 1st—4th, Indianapolis, IN

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