



Gateways

NO. 4

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GPI

WATCHMEN

• ELFQUEST

• ROBOTECH



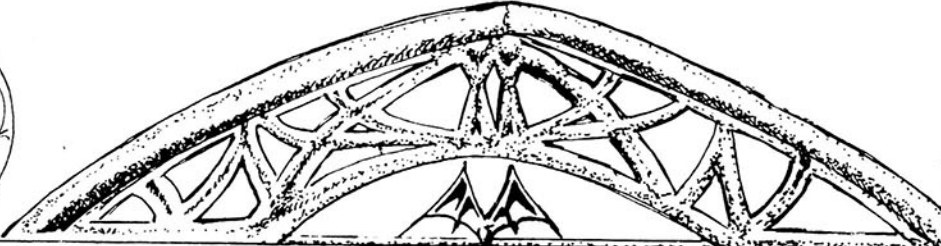
- **WATCHMEN**
The Conspiracy
The Sequels
The Movie!

- **ELFQUEST**
An Evening with
Wendy & Richard Pini!

- **ROBOTECH**
Defense Force Prepare:
The Zentraedi Arrive!

Characters & art by Allan Moore & Dave Gibbons, c. 1987 DC Comics, Inc.

**AND MUCH,
MUCH MORE!**



GPI Presents:

Gateways

Vol. II

No. 4 June, 1987

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Howling At The Moon

GATEWAYS Magazine always welcomes your comments and suggestions. Howling At the Moon is your regular forum for opinions, debates, discussions, cries and whispers. If you have something to tell us or to tell your fellow gamers, write to: Howling At the Moon, Gateways Publications Inc. JAF Box 965, New York, NY 10116.

Dear Mr. Gomez;

It gives me great pleasure to write you this letter. It has been a long time since I have seen a magazine as informative and creative as Gateways.

One thing I like about this magazine is getting in on the ground floor of it. I look forward to picking up your 100th issue in years to come.

The Cosmic Streetcorner is by far the best article that you print every issue. Articles such as *The Tome* and *From The Tower* are informative, but *The Cosmic Streetcorner* sums up the true spirit of gaming.

I may be sending you articles which have helped my campaign, and may help yours or your readers'. Someday perhaps my name will be in Gateways too.

I would like to know what kind of article you are short on and for what games. It would also be very helpful to have your regulations for writers on length of articles and submission formats.

There is however one thing I do not like about Gateways, and that is that it is published bi-monthly. If sales are good, which I am sure they will be, please consider putting it out more often.

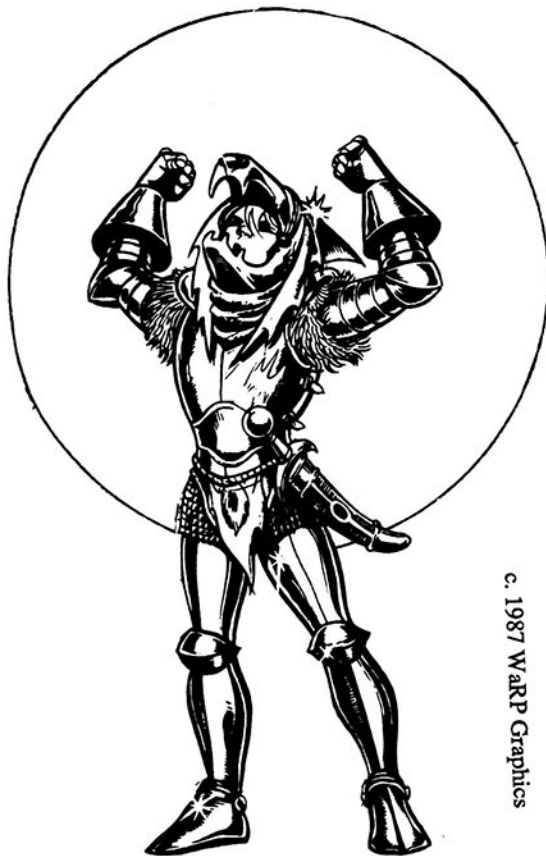
Your fan for life,
Wesley Crowell
Decatur, AL

Ed. reply: *Guess what, Mr. Crowell? Your name has appeared in Gateways sooner than you thought! Thanks for the kind words. Copies of our writers guidelines are on their way, and best of luck - we're waiting to hear from you again.*

Dear Gateways;

I just got the December issue, it's about time. Very nice magazine. I can honestly say that much of what I read really touched me. *The Cosmic Streetcorner* and *From the Tower* were lovely. Well done!

Have you considered doing some sort of advice column? I could be the Doctor Ruth of RPG! Anyway, if you do consider that kind of column, I'd love to answer all



c. 1987 WARP Graphics

the moral, emotional and philosophical queries. Let me know if you need the help. Your magazine makes me want to write for it. See you in the gateways.

Love and Honor,
Linda Hechtman
Brighton, MA

Dr. Ruth, huh? To tell you the truth, Gateways has a sort of contract with this shady guy who calls himself the Gatekeeper (watch for his return in the next issue), and he gets to take most of the questions our readers send. But seeing that you have connections within our executive board, perhaps there's a chance.....

Dear Gateways;

If there's one thing I like about your magazine, it's that it keeps getting better with each issue. I like seeing so many games covered in one place, and your "Star Trek" issue covers all of Star Trek, not just the latest movie or the latest module. That's something you really don't see in other magazines. I really like the fact that when I get a new issue, I'll always get to see stuff I've never seen before.

Michael Racine,
New Jersey

Thank you, Michael. We keep doing our best.

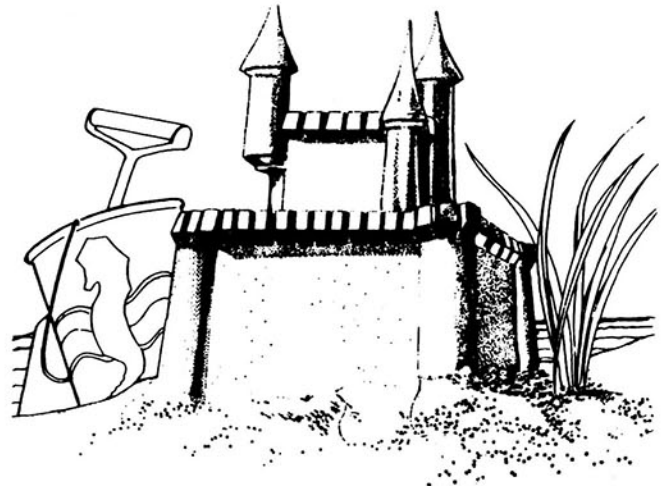
From The Tower

"A Different Kind of Reality"

Never think that dwelling in a tower is lonely or that I am imprisoned. As you can see, this month I've gone down to the Jersey Shore to welcome the warm weather back. It's very nice down here, kind of cool, and not too sunny, but the view is great. I have only two worries when I move into my summer place...high tides, and seagulls. Either one can easily destroy this lovely keep that my friends have so kindly constructed for me. Because no matter how nice this castle looks, it's just made of sand, and sand doesn't hold up well by itself.

But that doesn't stop me, no way! I just watched the workers put in a whole new computer system and new phone lines, and boy, this place is shaping up. The sound of fingers racing across keyboards fills the air (along with strains of Peter Gabriel) and everything falls into its proper place. I even have enough time to help out one of my gaming friends with a problem. (I sometimes run out of gamers, but they never run out of problems.) He called and presented me with the situations in his latest game, involving a storyline that he had been working on for some time. It seemed to him that his players...or himself, he wasn't quite sure...were losing touch with the events in the game. Not that he wasn't making things clear, or that they weren't listening, just that some things weren't having the proper *impact* any more. There were battles won and politics to unscramble, partnerships made and broken, treasure gained, songs sung...usual things for his usually high quality game, yet something was missing. So I told him to go out and play a game of football, finish the discussions he was having with his family about his job, and write those letters he had been planning to write for the past three months. Then, I suggested that he go to the movies, work on an idea for his term paper and read a non-fiction book. He thought that I was telling him to get his mind off the game and relax. But what I was *really* saying was "Get in touch with reality".

Whenever people talk about reality in Role-playing, it seems to mean a system of damage points and wounds that match "real-life" hurts. But I'm talking real life here. The life we live. *It is very important to be in touch with reality and to be concerned with your real life.* The problem my friend was having had nothing to do with the rules or the plotline of his game. It was that he had gotten himself so involved with his fantasy world that he wasn't relating to it in a realistic way. He was still himself, and he still functioned in the outside world, but he was no longer truly living in real life. His imagination is so incredible that to him, the PCs and NPCs of his world seemed to have more substance than the people around him. And that's where he lost his touch. Fantasy worlds cannot spring from nothing and neither can characters, and



without the vital input from every day life around us, we can easily lose ourselves in our games. They become a substitute *for* reality instead of an interlude *from* it. It's all right to play, it's great if you can really get involved and active, so much that your characters seem like real people. But if a player isn't in touch with his or her own life, of course the characters in the games are going to be lacking. Since that player is relying on the character to add dimension to their real life, the game will not have enough impact.

Fantasy characters improve, grow and are fascinating only when their players do so first. *The players or game masters who are most in touch with their own life and the lives around them will always play the best characters and have the most fun when gaming.* It takes an understanding of the rules to play any board game, right? So to play role playing games the right way, you have to know about *roles*.

You have to know about people, starting with yourself. Just as you can't build a lasting structure of sand, you can't build an exciting a lasting game on paper characters. It isn't, after all, the character who plays the game...it's the person. And if you can do what my friend did and see that his real life was full of diversity and responsibilities and rewards, you can carry that knowledge into the game and make it fascinating. The high points of a game involve emotions and feelings that must be learned in real life. If a player or GM hasn't learned them, they can't portray them or experience them properly, and that's where *boredom* and *confusion* will enter. Help me stamp those two words out of our lives and out of our minds. Live your own wonderfully interesting lives and never close your eyes to what is around and inside of you. Take your understanding back to the gaming table and add to it. That way, as each world progresses, you gain new knowledge. And when one world goes the way of gaming worlds, you can look forward to your next experience...in either universe.

Laurie Antoniou
Executive Editor

The Tome



The Finer Art of Character Generation - Part 1

Role-playing is a field where anyone who has put in any amount of time behind or before a judges screen can claim to be an expert on all the aspects of what makes a game work. In the past, gamers have been treated to countless decrees from manufacturers and their company-owned magazines about which character generation tables and methods are "official" and "permitted", which method of rolling the dice and which character statistics are "required", and which are "optional". We have been innundated with family charts, wealth charts, charts containing the morbid information about which of our fantasy siblings or parents have died, and what our fathers did to bring our fantasy characters to life. (Oh, you've rolled the third illegitimate son of a pickpocket. Hm. Wanna be an assassin or a thief? And oh, by the way...you're left handed, and you speak with a lisp, and your mother died in childbirth. My, isn't this fun?)

What has happened to the player's power and responsibility to create a good, playable, and enjoyable character? Power? Yes, the Player has the power here, and a responsibility just as great as the Game Masters' to contribute to any role-playing game. When you look at it, the creation, or generation of the character is the first series of game decisions that a player has to make. Whether your game is **AD&D™**, **Call of Cthulhu™**, **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles™** or **GURPS™** (Generic Universal Role-Playing System), the same series of decisions will exist for your character, and it may be one of the last times you will have very much to say about what that character will be, and what that character will stand for.

Let's look at the situation before us. A world has been created for you, the player. It has been populated with everything from gods to minor monsters, towers to dungeons, spaceports to merchant cities. The GM has knowingly or unknowingly given it a history, some anthropology, some political structure, and a system of ethics. Contained within will be an assortment of friends and allies, enemies and powerful forces. To all of this, the player can only

raise a sheet of paper with some numbers on it, and hope for the best...or the player can be prepared, ready to slip into the world with knowledge of the new character's limitations and aspirations, fleshed out and equal to any colorful non-player-character the GM can whip up. Equal, that is, in character.

The first step in liberating a new character is to take a hard look at those numbers. (By the way, this method is just as useful with older characters. Sometimes a second look at what might have been a boring character will yield a rebirth into someone new and exciting...remember that fantasy characters have the right to change just as people do in real life.) Numbers can fool you! This seemingly dull list contains the history of your character if you use it properly...or it can force you into a rut of playing whatever "everyone" says you should be. Assuming that you entered the game with a rough idea of what you would like to play, here is the GM (or fate) telling you how you may or may not. After checking with the rules of the game, eliminate the impossibles. That will get that paladin you wanted to play out of your mind. Of course, never discount a true desire; the GM might be persuaded to give in to what you really want, and more on that possibility later. Now that you have settled on a group of classes, professions, animal/mutant types or any such classification, you should take some time to consider the following: 1) What don't you want to play?, 2) What do you want to play?, and 3) How can you decide? The answers to the first two should come out of your experience or your gut feelings...it is perfectly fine to dislike the thought of playing any class which makes you feel uncomfortable or silly. The answer to the third can start with those numbers.

Separate your highest statistics, or stats, and consider what they mean in the game system you are playing. Not just the aspects like how much weight you can carry, and how many skills or languages you can learn, but how those stats compare with what would be the average in that game world. In true, honest **AD&D**, the average stats should hover around 7-10! You should check with your GM to determine just how this particular game is structured in terms of stats, and which of your character's stats would be considered higher than average. Here will begin your fleshing out of the character and the basis for several initial decisions. Using **AD&D** as a basic example, a strength of 16 is very impressive. Just how did your character get that strong? Was he a member of a military family, trained since youth for combat? Did he work on the family farm, cutting down trees, loading hay, harvesting wheat, etcetera? Did he endure forced labor at the hands of evil slave owners, like Conan did in the first movie? Any of these things can lead to an original and interesting origin, from the rise of a family bred warrior to a rebellious mercenary type, to a soft-spoken fighter with a massive chip on her shoulder. Turn it around, and the warrior bred youth may rebel against that strict upbringing and become a peace-loving (but very strong) cleric. Get the idea? Used this system of comparison with the average to determine exactly what your character chose to do or was trained to do in order to achieve this level of expertise. Is your character very smart, or do his

stats indicate a great deal of education? Determine how that intelligence was cultivated, and what he is good in. Don't worry if your list of numbers doesn't contain that many above average stats, just use your best and go on to the next. And if all of your stats are above average, face it, you're stuck with what may be a very boring character. Work at it, and hope for the best.

Take your strictly "normal" stats and consider what they mean in terms of your best ones. These numbers indicate those times in your

character's life when things were neither that great nor that bad. So you're not psionically gifted...at least you're not a mental midget either. These are skills and areas of your life where you hold your own. Be proud. Because now comes the best part. Those less-than-average stats. The ones that made you groan when you dropped those dice, the ones that are, perhaps...in single digits. (Please adjust percentages for games using d100 stats or open-ended 3-30 systems.) If these are your worst numbers, reflecting your characters' worst talents and abilities, why, you ask, do they represent the "best part"? Because this is the time that you have to consider what your

character has lost, what he or she has suffered, and what that character will be striving for. Think of each low stat as a handicap-one which must be understood, played, and perhaps, with dignity and perseverance, overcome someday. Many great fantasy characters have had flaws in their makeup which caused them to strive for more than what society offered them. Consider, for example, the character of Raistlin, from the *Dragonlance*TM series of novels by Tracey Hickman and Margaret Weiss. Here is a man with high intelligence, but an exceptionally low constitution...so low that his life was in constant danger. His struggle against the tuberculosis-type disease which tormented him and his struggles with a world which had no use for a frail young man *made* him the fascinating character he was! With just a little bit of thought, what might have been the worst thing to happen to the new character you have just rolled up can become the most memorable and vital aspect about him.

Of course, not every deficiency in character statistic

lists should have an entirely negative effect on a character's development. Fantasy history is full of adventurers who scored high on the courage chart, but came in close to the bottom in wisdom. (Indiana Jones: "I'm making this up as I go along!") And having a low intelligence or like score doesn't necessarily mean that your character is stupid; only that he didn't have that much of an education. Think of how a low stat might affect a character's behavior in the past.

A low strength would make a history of hard labor rather dif-

icult to believe, but opens up a world of professions and skills often ignored in fantasy role-playing games. A physically weak but intelligent character I created became a mage...rather predictable, I admit. But when I made her weakness part of her history, and determined that she never got a chance to develop those skills because of her family business (they were translators and scribes), she suddenly became a very valuable character to have around, and not at all self-conscious about her "weakness".



With less than a half hour's thought, a simple series of numbers can become a strong yet supple basis for a new role-playing character. This method is adaptable to every game which randomly assigns particular character traits, and to many games which allow the players to design their own character based upon a given total number or points allowed or a trade-off system of good traits and bad trait (eg. *Champions*). Since the GM has gone through the trouble of creating the new world the player will enter, the player has a responsibility to enter prepared. And I cannot stress enough the importance of speaking to the GM whenever possible, about the averages in their world, about the societies, about the political and social structure, about anything which might have an effect on the player character's development. A good GM will be a well of valuable information! (In fact, don't encourage them *too* much...they may never let you go!) And just think of the pride you will feel when Devrenos Nikonos of Accola, former innkeeper (he loved the

work, but somehow never got the hang of proper bookkeeping, and was driven out of business by smarter innkeepers than he) and current freelance adventurer (as well as party chef and wine taster) introduces himself after the usual round of Rodney the Ranger, Ithaloniasa the Cute Elvin Mage, Bor the Fighter, and Sneaky Lightfingers, the Thief. Having a history before joining a game will make it easier for both GM and player, and in part two of this series, I'll let you in on a method or two for expanding upon the basics, and creating an advanced character in the true sense of the word.

For now, one final word on basic development. Devrenos has another advantage over his rather boring companions, and that is his uncommon but not unpleasant sounding name. Whenever you create a new character, try to name them with respect. After lunch, it may seem rather brilliant to name your new character Fribble McFry, but wait until your GM throws you in front of the local Dread Lord, who glares down at you and asks what the name of this miserable worm is. The best you could hope for with a name like that is that he will spare you for making him laugh and keep you around as his jester. Or try to impress the merchant guildmistress that your proposed expedition to unknown territories will only succeed with her support when your name is Shifty Sam of Samoa. And for crying out loud, don't plagiarize! The world is full to the brim with fighters named Conan, or Elric, Rangers named Aragorn, Mages named Merlin, or Morgan, Thieves named Mouser (Gray or not) and racial names such as Bilbo for certain

hairy-footed gents. Not all thieves and assassins have tough, slimy or evil-sounding names - wouldn't that kind of give their identities away? And remember that most people tend to have two names, a given name, and a family name. Several gaming companies have attempted to pull together lists of "appropriate" fantasy gaming names, and they have succeeded to gather some of the ugliest and most boring Anglo-Saxon names ever heard. I heartily recommend that several gamers put their quarters together and invest in a children's naming book, one which lists international versions of popular or common names. Many such books are available in paperback, and the best of them will include what the names mean, which is a boon for anyone who wants to have a character destined for some particular fate, or just wants to have a reminder of how special each individual character is. One gamer I knew translated his own name into another language, and played several true alter-egos until people began to notice the trend. The world is too vast to limit yourself to what has gone before, or what has been acceptable before.

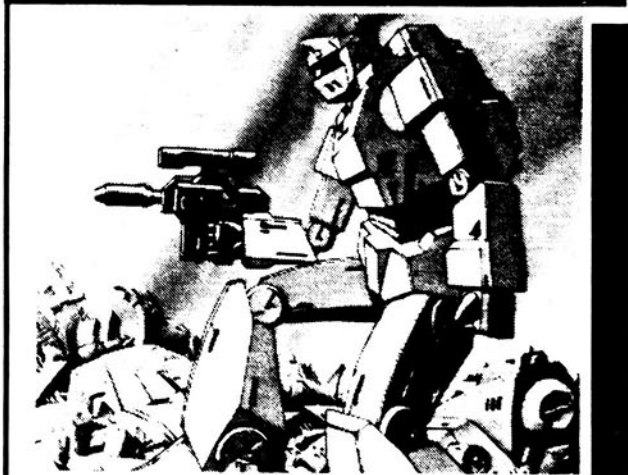
Laura Antoniou

Next issue: Advanced Character Generation for Anyone, including how to choose a class.



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The World According To GURPS

Greg Sherwood

Jay Sporn

Tasting thick copper, your Paladin lunges forward, nearly stumbling over to make a final desperate strike at the psychotically evil green dragon that has been your bane since you were third level. The Holy Avenger connects, you max out, sending the hideous sucker screaming! With a sickening flop it backs away, flapping its wings and taking to the sky. "Oh no you don't!" you cry, "Not this time!!" You sheath your blade and peer toward the clouds. You know that there's no way you're going to catch it on foot. The relic must be used!

You turn to make sure it's still there and it is, shining in the twilight. You hurry up to it, careful not to scratch it with a jagged edge of your tattered plate mail. You get in and do it just like the man in the Roundhelm taught you. You turn the key and feel the power of it coming alive all around you. "Yorn, sleek Turbo Trans Am with Eight Liter Multi-port Fuel Injection!" you shout as its heart roars, "Never shall my people be gassed again! Catch the beast!" Tires spin and you're off with a boom.

Lifting your visor, you place a pair of tinted glass pieces on your nose that you found in the gauntlet compartment, and the glare is all but gone. You smile. The rest is easy. The dot on the horizon grows into a big green splotch as your Posi-traction Rear eats up the rubble and debris of the sylvan battlefield. Suddenly, Pea Soup snarls and turns into the wind, falling into a power dive that sights your windshield as its bullseye. "Zounds!" you mutter, but then you grin. Pushing a red button on the board of dash, a secret door slides open revealing a lever and a row of sparkling lights. Letting go of the wheel only long enough to genuflect, you pull it. It happens all at once. The T-tops blow and you can see the dragon's eyes bug out. The Stinger pops from the hearse and launches, leaving you to choke on the afterburners. You say, "Whoa!" and then--fffiiTHOOOM!!! The world is green.

With enough horde to finance that children's daycare center just outside of the castle grounds tucked safely in the trunk, you speed back to town. It's Moojuice time!

Impossible, you say? You'd need the **Advanced Dungeons & Dragons™**, **Recon™** and **Car Wars™** game systems all in one pile near the judge's screen just to be able to pull it off? Well, the people at Steve Jackson Games say "No!" They've put together a little set up which they call the Generic Universal Role Playing System (**GURPS™** for short), and sent it our way. Let's take a look...

GURPS endeavors to find its niche in adventure gaming as *the* comprehensive rule system that will allow you to play a game that can boast any background. Any means that **GURPS** can be used equally effectively to play a fantasy, science fiction, Old West, or super hero game. Well, Steve Jackson Games certainly boasts an impressive history of game designs upon which to base their latest effort. An SJG predecessor, **The Fantasy Trip**, produced a simple, stylized and beautiful looking system consisting of "Melee", "Wizardry" and their "Advanced" versions, was workable and a lot of fun. They are now sought after Jackson collector's items.

Proving they were not a "one hit wonder", SJG brought us **Illuminati**, with all of its conspiracy and world conquest, and **OGRE**, where giant robot tanks battled it out in 2085 (long before such things were fashionable). **Car Wars**, one of their most popular lines,

pits autos and cycles of the future against one another on the highways and arenas of a broken America, where the spoils went to the best and luckiest "Autoduelist".

Most new games feature one or two cute or novel twists that the designer believes will raise his or her "creation" out of the "kill the monster/grab the treasure/ get out before something stomps us" ghetto of systems. Fancy packaging and high quality die-cut features alone, (both of which the **GURPS Basic Set** has), won't cut it. In fact, the word **Generic** as splashed in bright green on the cover, can make you a little nervous. It brings to mind those white boxes you see in their own sections of the supermarket marked "Soup" or "Dog Food". Not bad, but potentially bland.

Good news. SJG has employed "generic" in terms of quality and versatility. As Mr. Jackson defines it, many gamers want a quick, easy to comprehend system where they are free to make nearly all the rulings. Others want one where rules are detailed and every contingency is covered in the books. Most, however, lie somewhere in between the two. **GURPS**, with its simple rules and combat system, allows you to generate as much detail as you like. Still, no matter how differently a ref runs his campaign in terms of complexity, it will always be compatible with the next one. On a "reality" check, the system

is clearly understandable (on its world 12 inches equals one foot, and there are 60 seconds in one minute--think about some of the old standard worlds you've played in). The rule-books are all straight-forward and employ a cross-reference system of side-bars and explanation boxes that actually make them a pleasure to use. Very few contradictions can be found when required information is placed in two different locations, and SJG has assured us that absolutely none of the tons of additional GURPS material that will be coming our way will contradict what you have already purchased of the system.

Skipping Universal for the moment and getting down and dirty with the system's Role-Play-ability, GURPS is actually a game that bends over backwards. The



game does not lay the entire responsibility of developing Player Characters to hapless novices who might otherwise see their barbarian-gunslinger as a simple mass of measurements and statistics. Veteran gamers, especially those familiar with superhero role-playing, will recognize the influence of Hero Games' **Champions** system on a closer look at character creation method used in GURPS. When you create a character, you start with 100 points to "spend" for your abilities. These points are used in *attribute* adjustment or

in buying special abilities called *advantages*.

GURPS is designed to create balanced characters; your strengths in one area are countered by your weaknesses in another (this may not be totally realistic, but some careful decision making should bring out some pretty tough dudes). The basic attributes used by the system are streamlined and flexible, consisting of Strength, Dexterity, Intelligence, and Health. (Physical damage, by the way, is measured in HTs or "hits"). Starting at a base of ten, you build upon your attributes with your 100, but you also have to save some for advantages or skills such as swordsmanship, judo, death spells or nuclear physics--not necessarily in that order....

In its most significant bid for better role-play, GURPS promotes the creation of a *Background* for Player

Characters. You are encouraged to come up with a history for your adventurer, as well as a personality with which you can react to the situation at hand. *Quirks*, such as nail-biting or going into a frenzy whenever the word "pizza" is uttered, can be loads of laughs. *Personal Wealth* places you into the scheme of your world, hence providing you with various motivations for risking your neck. And Reputation will discern from the start whether the sight of your mug will get you skewered or get you that Trans Am from ol' Roundhelm. This is all done with those points you're granted from the start, so, unlike a lot of other systems, the design of your PC is almost completely up to you.

GURPS is Universal in more ways than one.

You are free to use the number of players in any standard game of this type, or you can take advantage of the solitaire rules enclosed in the basic set. Flying Buffalo's **Tunnels & Trolls™** is credited generously by Steve Jackson for its influence in the creation of the single-player version of the system. Also, SJG is planning to produce specific supplements to GURPS that will "fine-tune" the generic system for any type of game world. Judging from this past year's releases, the company seems to be living up to its promise that each new piece will be compatible with the whole. "Man to Man", for example, expanded the *Fantasy Combat System* introduced in the basic set even before its release, providing the entire pre-gunpowder fighting system for GURPS. What makes "Man to Man" unique and worth the ten bucks is that it showcases the fact that the system also can function quite adequately as a *board game*!

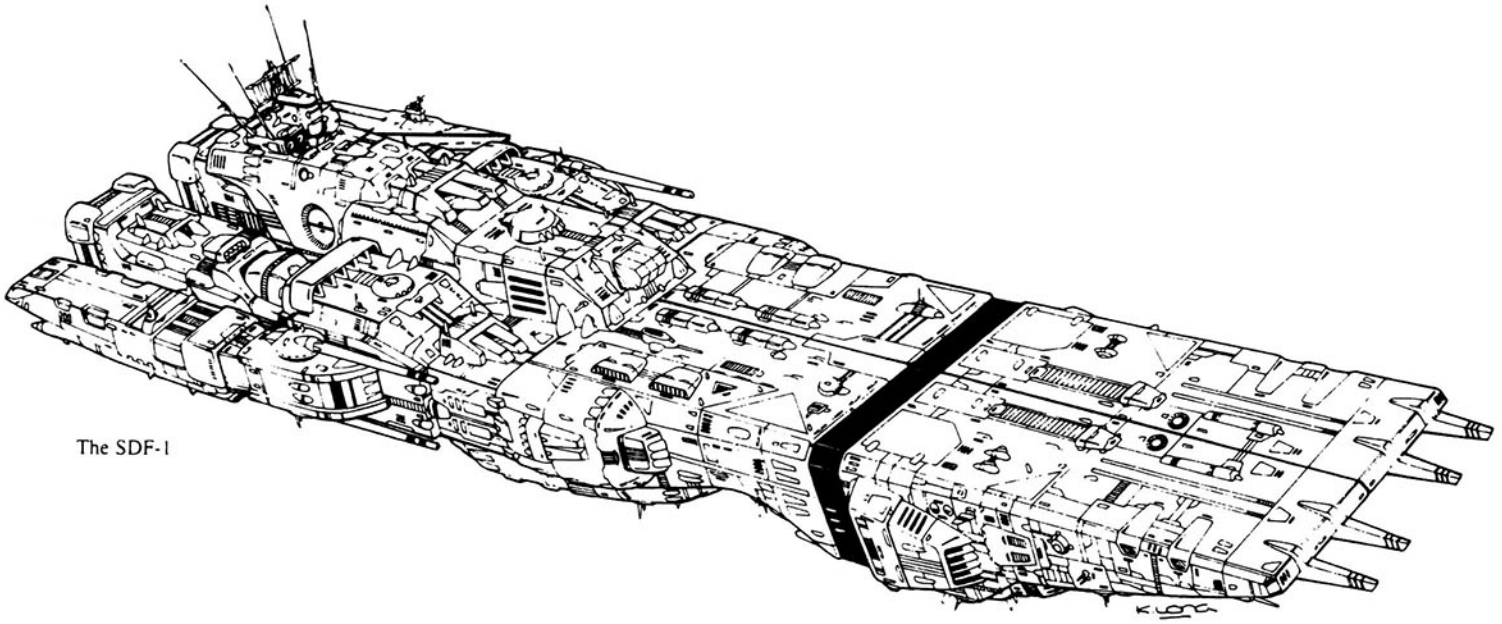
The GURPS "Fantasy" supplement widens the *Magic System* and *Game World* of the game's universe. The magic rules include details on 300 spells, and *Gith*, a fully realized fantasy world is showcased in color. (M. A. R. Barker's **Empire of the Petal Throne** is credited for its influence upon Gith's detail and richness.) Non-human, monster and magical generation charts are also included in the package.

With "Autoduel", SJG finally gives role-players a system for the world of *Car Wars*, taking the game a quantum leap forward for road warriors who really get into the board game but yearn to maraud on foot once in a while. Yes, it's true that it would have been a little tough to accurately portray our opening "Paladin 500" scenerio using only the basic set--it's somewhat expensive to start with and to have stuck *everything* in there would have cost potential players a fortune--but the addition of "Autoduel" can indeed pull it off.

The Bottom Line? GURPS is certainly worth a look at. The supplements continue to be released regularly ("Battlemaps" and a "Man to Man" module, *Orcslayer*, being popular), but you don't need them to enjoy the game as it stands (unlike certain outer space adventure systems we won't mention...). The entire system is sharp and clear in the reading and interpretation department, although picture lovers will be somewhat disappointed at their scarcity. With GURPS, Steve Jackson Games has proven that you don't have to have a game in circulation for ten years to have a potential classic on your hands.

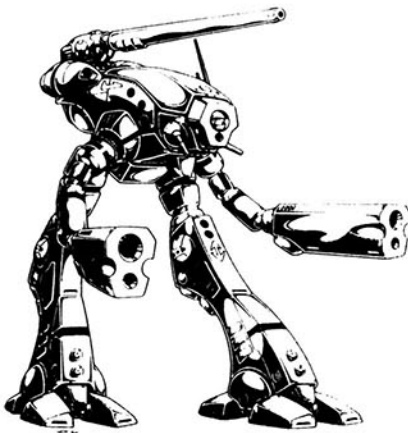
Robotechnology Lives On!

Jonathon Frater



The SDF-1

Remember about six months ago, when people started talking about this great, new cartoon series that was running on the tube every morning? You do? Well, remember how that cartoon was almost immediately followed by a plethora of comic books, toys, and a graphic novel, not to mention several reports of a soon-to-be-released movie and another series? Well, then, have I got great news for gamers everywhere! **ROBOTECH: THE ROLE-PLAYING GAME™**, by Kevin Siembieda, retailing for \$9.95, and published by Palladium Books is certain to be recognized as one of the few games which have been based on television programs that accurately depicts the cartoon's environment and characters while simultaneously presenting a well designed and playable RPG system. The first book, entitled **MACROSS**, is set in the approximate time as the cartoon series of the same name.



For those of you not familiar with the story, **ROBOTECH** starts in the year 1999, when a gigantic spaceship crash-lands on a small island in the Pacific. From this discovery, a new type of science is developed, known as **Robotechnology**, which enables the Earth's military forc-

es to design and produce weapons of incredible firepower and mobility. All of which comes in handy when ten years later, the aliens who built the spacecraft come looking for it. (For more information, issue #1 and #2 of **GATEWAYS** contains an article on the series.) The RPG is not given any specific time span in which to operate, for which I am grateful, since I believe that such a restriction would severely limit the game's potential. On the other hand, it *is* designed with the period of time that follows the destruction of the **SDF-1** and **SDF-2** in mind, which is sufficiently fluid to allow the GM to do whatever he or she wishes with the game.

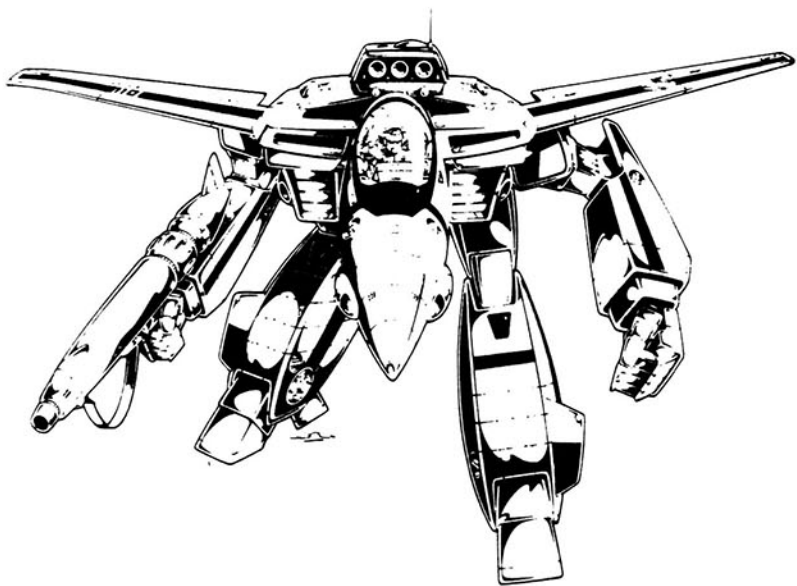
The nuts and bolts of **ROBOTECH: THE RPG** are quite similar to those systems which have been previously published by Palladium Books and every so often in the text, mention is made of several of them. The character generation system is fairly complete without becoming bogged down in massive details, which is another factor in its favor. The characters enter the game as recruits of the **Robotech Defense Force**, or the **RDF**, and each character has a choice of **Occupational Character Classes**, known in the game as **O.C.C.'s**, which are: **Destroid Pilot**, who are trained in the use of the huge, vaguely humanoid battle machines; **Veritech Fighter Pilot**, those who learn to fly the transformable pseudo-aircraft; **Communications, Electrical, or Mechanical Engineer**, who are the hi-tech whizzes that keep the world's equipment from falling apart; **Field Scientist**, who is a special breed of "Jack-of-all trades" (and master of none, unfortunately) type of character; and finally, the **Military Specialist**, who is specially trained in the use

of weapons, personal combat, and various types of intelligence work. Each O.C.C. has its own skills and abilities and restrictions, and all O.C.C.s can choose certain secondary skills as well (the skill list is more than adequate to provide as wide a selection as possible without redundancy). The rules are also written around an experience-point system, which is not unlike those used in many other games.

In any case, once the characters have been created, each is assigned equipment, money, and so on, and groups frequently find themselves toting around at least one of the huge **Destroids** or **Veritechs**. "Great!", you say, "I always wanted to try one of those things out!" Which inevitably brings us to the combat system of **ROBOTECH: THE RPG**, which in my opinion, is designed much like an action sequence in a cartoon or comic book (hardly surprising). Actions are timed in terms of **melees**, one of which is equal to fifteen seconds of real time and in that time, characters are able to perform several different actions, usually attacks. The whole idea behind Mr. Siembieda's combat system is this: the attacker and defender each roll a d20, and based on the result, the attacker will either miss, hit, or will have his attack dodged by the defender. It's that simple; there are no complex charts or rules, no difficult weapons proficiencies, or anything like that. Not only that, but both personal and mecha (the big destroids and such) combat are handled in much the same way. Obviously, the many different weapons systems that the average Veritech carries adds slightly to the complexity of the combat, but even greater is the way that such fights almost seem to handle themselves once you learn the system well enough, which is not difficult to do by any standards.

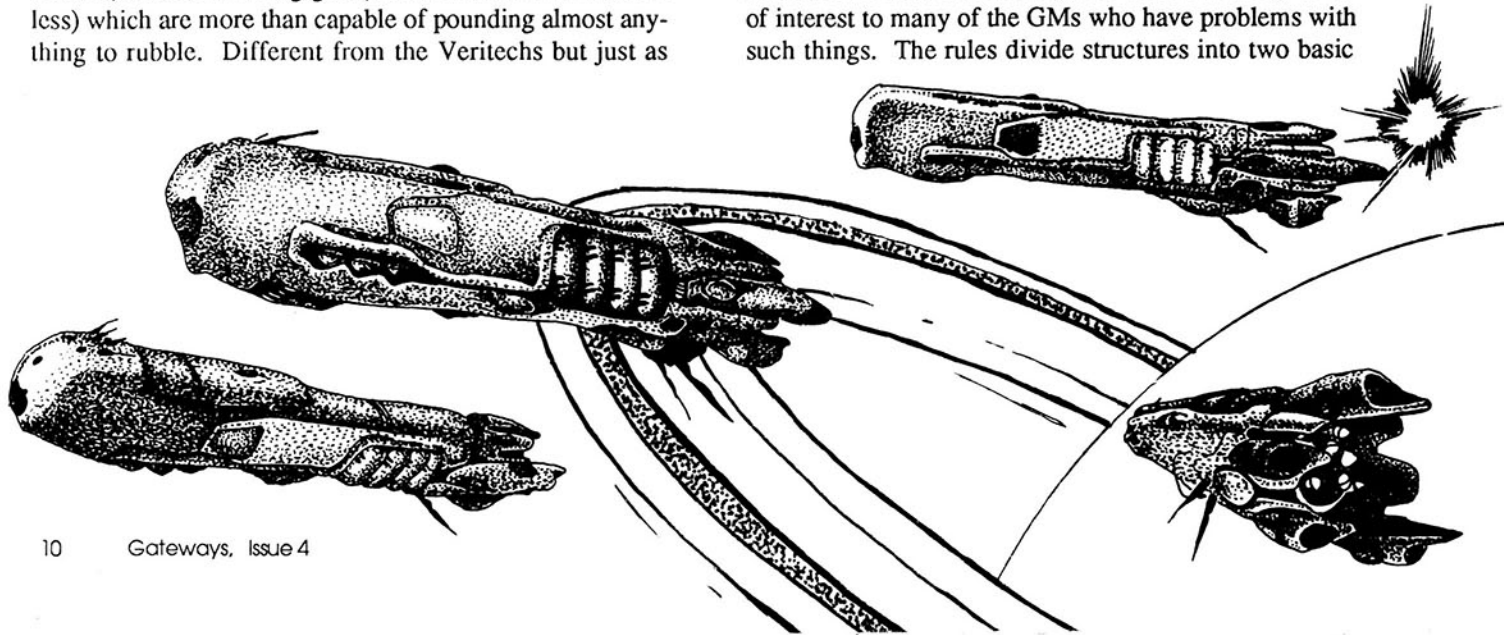
And what weapons! The rules go into great detail about just what these monster machines can do to both other similar machines and to the spaceships that are included in the game (more on spaceships a bit later). First of all, we have the widely known Veritech Fighter, which is able to transform from an airplane to either a humanoid configurations (termed the **Battloid** mode) or to a sort of airplane with legs and a big gun (known as the **Guardian**). All of these configurations have an assortment of missiles, lasers, and a big gun (a 55mm automatic rifle, no less) which are more than capable of pounding almost anything to rubble. Different from the Veritechs but just as

big and perhaps even more deadly, are the **Destroids**, which can't change their shape, but can and do pack a much larger punch. Of these, the largest is the **Excalibur**, which can best be described as a walking dreadnaught, able to walk through tall buildings in a sin-



gle stride. They have more ways to destroy various forms of property than I have room to write about, so let it suffice to say, if your GM decides to give your group one, be sure to thank him very warmly, and if you ever see one that's shooting at you, run away. Next is the **Gladiator**, which is just as large and tough, but has fewer weapons. On the other hand, the **M.A.C II** (a.k.a. the **Monster**) is nearly three times larger than the Excalibur, if you can imagine such a thing. Bringing up the rear, we have the **Raider X** and the **Spartan**, both of which are designed primarily for long-range combat.

And let's not forget our old friends, enemies, or allies, depending on your point of view: the **Zentraedi**. Complete rules are given for the **Battle Pods**, **Power Armor**, and personal equipment of the giant aliens. Which brings me to a point of fact about the way that mecha combat is run in the game which is likely to be of interest to many of the GMs who have problems with such things. The rules divide structures into two basic



types: normal and megastructures. Each type can be damaged, but only those weapons capable of doing mega-damage are able to damage mega-structures. Make sense so far? Good. All of the objects (including characters) in the game have a specified **Structural Damage Capacity (S.D.C. for short)**; characters have an S.D.C. in addition to normal hit points. Now, when someone uses a weapon, let's say a gun, on a normal object, the S.D.C. of that object drops, just like hit points do for characters. However since a mega-structure is by nature super tough, it has something called **Mega-Damage Capacity (M.D.C.)**, which is handled in the same way, except that only Mega-Damage will affect a mega-structure. (One point of Mega-damage is equal to one hundred hit points or S.D.C., in case you're wondering). Again, it's that simple.

I believe I mentioned spaceships before, didn't I? Well then, let's talk. Simply put, if you can pick it out from the series, it's in this game book, with the strong exception of the Zentraedi space cruisers. Complete stats for the SDF-1, the A.R.M.D. space platform (known as Armor-1 and Armor-10 in the episode in which they appeared), the space fighters and special weapons used by both humans and Zentraedi are all presented in enough detail to enable any GM to provide whatever he needs for his players or game. A somewhat sketchy history of the post-holocaust Earth is provided, along with several of the main characters from the Macross series, such as **Commander Lisa Hayes**, **Captain Rick Hunter**, and **Lieutenant Max Sterling**.

But the fun hardly stops there! The second book to be released is entitled the **RDF Manual**, and I will give you three guesses as to what it's about. You got it, the trusty **Robotech Defense Force** is presented in all its glamour, glory, and dangerous missions (not to mention their equally deadly weapons!). This book takes on a more earth-bound scope of things in the Robotech universe; in fact, it deals primarily with the post-holocaust world that the cartoon series ends with.

For starters, new rules are given for several methods of recovering physical S.D.C. points, ways to increase your knowledge of various skills, there's a way for any traditionalists out there to determine a character's rank in the RDF, and there are even a few expansions of the mecha combat system, which is presented in the first book. As far as good old Mother Earth is concerned, let me just say that the world is not what it used to be; barren wastelands, ruins, desolation, death, hard radiation are all part of what used to be a living, thriving world called Earth. And because the homeworld needs so much help to get back on her feet, there are some new faces in the fields of robotechology, and a few old ones as well. We finally have full designs and details of the **Daedalus** and **Prometheus**, a pair of spooky super-subs that are better known as the SDF-1's arms (these things are incredible; besides being submersibles, they both have all the Veritechs and Destroids that it takes in order to conquer a small country. And, somewhere in the rules, it says that three pairs of these ships would be enough to engage and effectively destroy the entire 1987 U.S. fleet while suffering only a 60% loss on their side. Scary, huh?) An

entirely new set of rules (and vehicles) are provided so that the GM can now run mecha underwater without too much trouble.

But the real basis for this work is the way the world is presented; a troubled, bitter planet in the midst of a post-nuclear regression (all the more reason to have the RDF around, right?). A brief summary of the world situation is given, along with a complete Robotech timeline, which is something that we *all* need, just to keep track of all of the sub-plots. As I said, wastelands cover a significant portion of the Earth's surface (around 50%) and are home to Zentraedi, bandits, and other forms of no-goodniks, or are altogether avoided by the remaining population. The world's countries have been re-organized a bit, into the following major areas: the North American Sector, the South American Sector (also known as the Zentraedi Control Zone), the Northern Euro Sector, the Africa Sector, the Far East Sector, and the Eastern Sector, each of which is further divided into what major countries still exist (not too many do). Each of these sectors and their respective remaining powers are further detailed in the text, to a fairly complete extent, including the military power of each.

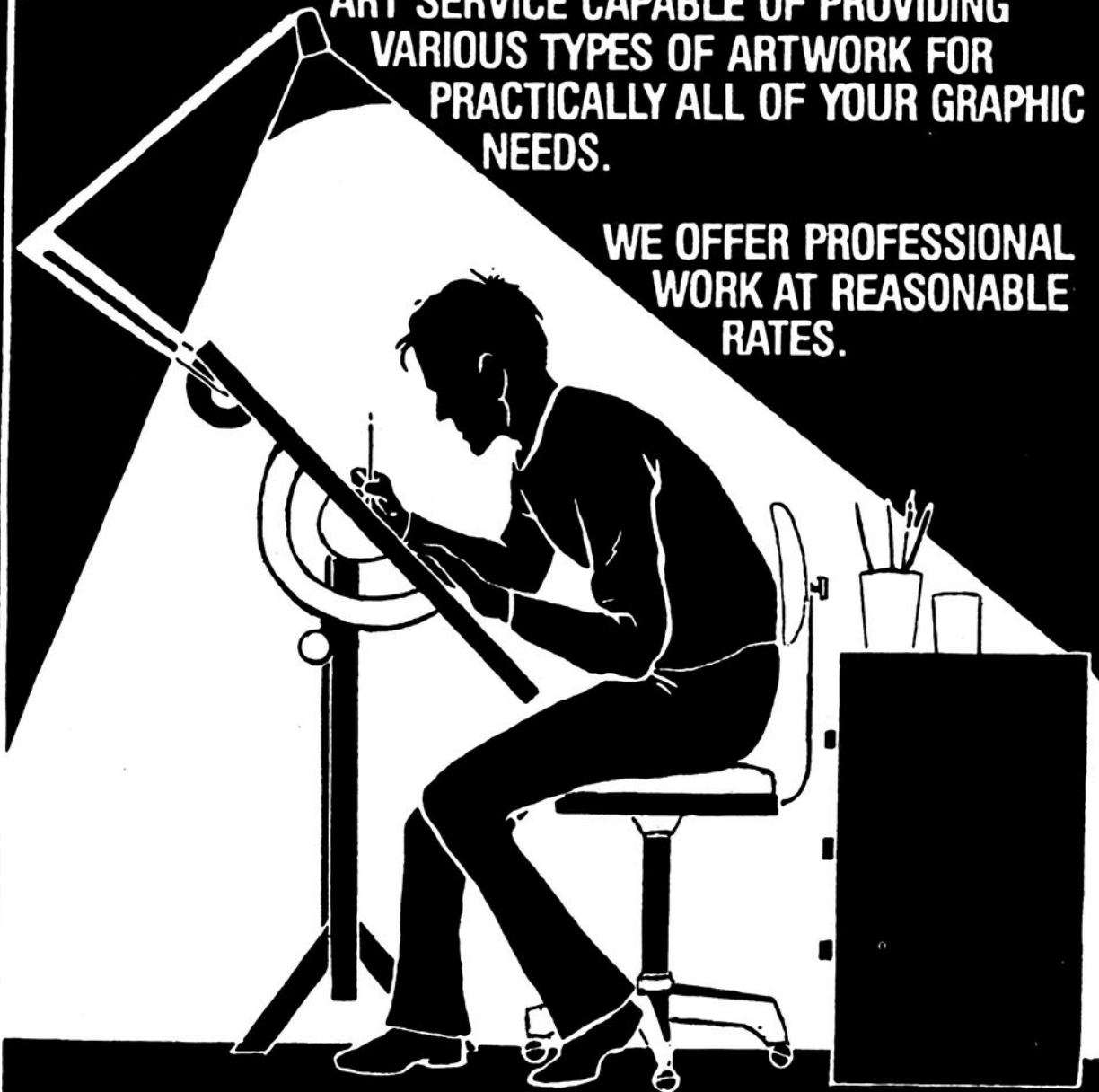
After that, there's not much more to say. The **RDF Manual** is every bit as good as **Macross**, and more fun things are in the works at Palladium, even as we go to press, such as **Book III: The Zentraedi** (Due date: April 20th, \$6.95, 48 pages boasting fantastic illustrations), **Book IV: The Mecha of Southern Cross** (in production, \$9.95, 100+ pages), **Book V: The Invid Invasion** (which is shipping out in August, \$6.95, 48 pages). There are also ideas about supplements for the **Mars and Moon Bases** and the SDF Fortresses. I, for one, am looking forward to the further adventures of the RDF, their friends and enemies alike.



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EVOLUTION AT ITS BEST

Elf-Questions

An Evening with Wendy and Richard Pini

Chuck Barouch

Sydney Barouch

The phenomenon of ELFQUEST has survived and thrived in a variety of printed forms over the past ten years. Beginning as a black and white, self-published comic saga running over two and a half remarkable years to climax in its twentieth issue finale, the adventures of Cutter, Skywise, and their noble-savage companions were an historical first within the independent comic book field. Wendy and Richard Pini, the creative and artistic drive behind ELFQUEST and WaRP Graphics, had always been fans of comic books and, in fact, met one another through a letter column correspondence begun in an issue of Marvel Comics' *Silver Surfer* in the mid-1970s. Together they have created a world which has taken a special place in the hearts of all fantasy adventure enthusiasts. The original run of the series (including fan-oriented Gatherums and a twenty-first issue celebration of the conclusion) were then divided into four full color volumes, graphic novels which are now prized collector's items. ELFQUEST is now in the process of winding up a reprinting through the Marvel Comics Group (under the Epic line), where it has gained an entire legion of new followers and fans. There is an ELFQUEST novel, comprising the first leg of the Wolfriders' odyssey, called *Journey to Sorrow's End*, as well as a collection of short stories which delve into the history of the World of Two Moons as seen through the eyes of the heroic young chieftan Cutter's ancestors, *The Blood of Ten Chiefs*. Of special interest to Gateways readers are the opportunities that the Pini's have granted such companies as Chaosium and Mayfair Games to adapt their world for role-players to enjoy and explore. When taken together or viewed in the separate incarnations, the world of ELFQUEST is a journey of self-learning. As pointed out by a letter-writing fan early on in the series, it takes the addition of only one letter to make it "selfquest". Yet with or without the deeper aspects of the journey, ELFQUEST remains enjoyable to children and adults alike, and the wealth of source material makes it a most attractive gaming universe. Gateways magazine has recently taken the opportunity to spend an evening with Wendy and Richard, and the following interview is its unforgettable result. Detailed here are the dreams of two people who wanted to bring their fantasy universe alive, and the enormous ongoing task of doing just that! For fans of ELFQUEST, revealed here for the first time is news on the ELFQUEST TV series, motion picture, and the new Apple Comic featuring the further adventures of fantasy's trailblazing sylvans..

THE COMPANIES

Gateways: What's the story with Apple Comics?

Richard: Well, round about June of last year I was for a number of reasons coming to the conclusion that I was getting tired of certain aspects of publishing, namely, the day-to-day hassles of distribution, printing, bookkeeping, administration, and all that stuff; while I could do it, I was also involved in the creative things like helping with the new ELFQUEST, and editing *Blood of Ten Chiefs* and writing a story for it, and managing the property itself in our attempts to get in animated, and I like these things than the day-to-day administration. So Mike Kattran, who was WaRP's employee as sort of Director of Publications, has always wanted to get into publishing. So between the two of us we came



up with the idea to have WaRP graphics bud off a new company, which is Apple Comics. The arrangement between the two companies, which are very closely interlocked at this point is that all the titles that WaRP used to publish, Apple now publishes. We are still responsible for making sure

that they're edited well, and so on and so forth, but Apple is now responsible for those day-to-day publishing chores.

Part of the deal is that the new ELFQUEST *Siege at Blue Mountain* series would be published by Apple. But the entire creative "thing" is done here. We are absolutely still independents doing our own publishing. While the two companies are closely interlocked now, the plan is to have them over a period of time, diverge, so that in the end Apple will be absolutely independent; WaRP will be absolutely independent; and then if we choose to continue the relationship we will do that. Or we might go back into publishing ourselves. It was a very good decision because it gave me a lot of time to devote to those creative things that I wanted to do.

GW: So essentially it



was a move to get your freedom back and to have an opportunity to do more in terms of new projects, and to give more time to the projects that are coming up?

Richard: Yes. And yet to still in a sense oversee those comics.

Wendy: Also Richard scouts out new properties, and keeps very well informed on the people who have ideas who might come to the conventions, or submit new ideas. And he keeps his eye out for new things to develop.

GW: So you have a healthy respect for things coming from the fans and moving into the marketplace then?

Wendy: I think that's what the independent comics should still be all about, as our original dream was to give new talent an opportunity. I think the wonderful thing about independent comics is that it gives unknown people a chance to strut their stuff.

GW: It lets people take

their dreams and turn them into realities, very much the way that you've had the chance to.

Wendy: Well, the market is completely changed now. It's much rougher to survive now. When we started we were practically the only people in town. There was just a couple of other small independents; the competition wasn't there. There were of course fewer outlets for our products; there weren't as many direct sales shops as there are now.

GW: You broke a lot of new ground, and a lot of people that are new there are benefiting from what Wendy and Richard did.

Richard: In essence.

Wendy: (laughing) Some of the people call us Grandma and Grandpa. We played our part. ELFQUEST has made history along the way. It was the first graphic novel of any kind to be introduced into outlets like Waldenbooks and B. Daltons. It is the first independently developed project to be licensed and written and drawn by a

woman on a continuing basis in this country. ELFQUEST has had a lot of firsts.

GW: How did it feel when Marvel decided to reprint ELFQUEST?

Richard: In 1977 when we took it to Marvel and DC they turned it down saying that it wasn't in their opinion commercial enough to succeed, and from their point of view, that might have been absolutely true. It was the best thing that ever happened to us, because then we were forced to do it ourselves. The reason it's at Marvel now is that Wendy and I were talking one day about the animated movie that we were trying to get done. At that time, we were courting a studio up in Canada called Nelvana. Nelvana had done one feature length film which didn't do well, but which Marvel had published as a comic adaptation. And I remember saying, "Well, wouldn't it be a kick if Nelvana does the ELFQUEST movie, and then Marvel has the right to do the movie adaptation. We'd finally have broken into Marvel." And about two beats later, I said, "Well, why stop there?" We both know the Director of Direct Sales at Marvel, Carol Kearling, we've known her for a long time. So I went in to talk to her and said, "We are coming to the end of things here, so would you be interested in reprinting ELFQUEST?" She had a big grin on her face as she told me that she was about to ask us that.

Wendy: Fans like to come up to us and say, "Wink, wink, nudge, nudge, you guys must really be laughing at Marvel now." We would like for all of them to understand that there was no animosity between us and Marvel when they turned us down. Gosh sakes, we were unknown, with



a really oddball project. We could understand why they were not willing to take a risk with us at that time.

GW: At the time, were you involved with Marvel?

Wendy: I had "co-scripted" an issue of *Red Sonja* with Roy Thomas. My involvement with Marvel at that point had been to do a few little freelance things like walk-in visits, where they would hand me a page to ink, or something like that. I did a piece for *Savage Sword of Conan*. Other than that, Frank Thorn and I gave Marvel a lot of free publicity in the mid-seventies for the *Red Sonja* comic. But that was the extent of my involvement. The first thing of mine that Marvel published that had to do with *ELFQUEST* was something called "Homespun"; it was published in the first issue of their *EPIC* magazine, which was their bid to compete with **HEAVY METAL**.

"Homespun" was a story about the Forbidden Grove and the Preservers, which fit in quite nicely with *ELFQUEST* #10 (I think at the time we did "Homespun", we were up to *ELFQUEST* #4).

GW: What happened to A Distant Soil?

Richard: At this point, the wisest thing for me to say is that I can't say anything. The problems that have arisen over that title are at this point in litigation. So I really can't divulge anything.

WOLVES AND RIDERS

GW: Why wolves?

Wendy: Wolves are a tribal pack animal. Their social system are so similar to human tribal ones that it's scary. They have rank and order; they have the high ones and the low ones; they have a close-knit family unit, and they can be good parents by and large. I don't mean to idealize them---they can also be crumb-bums. When I first started developing the idea of *ELFQUEST*, the concept of forest-born elves living with wolves seemed to be a natural thing, since they were living in a tribal system. It would seem to be natural that they had to have some means of traveling the amount of miles that I wanted them to

travel, but I didn't want to put them on horses or deer; that is sort of cliched. So I thought, "How about wolves?", and the symbiosis between the tribe of Wolf and the tribe of Elf just naturally grew because of their similarity. Initially I didn't know that much about wolves. It was around issue #4 that I met my first wolf. That's when I began to draw wolves a lot more naturalistically. The more I learned about them, the more I wanted to learn. The most



outstanding aspect of that learning took place for me this summer, at Wolf Park, where I spent a week studying the wolves. I kept sketching them, producing a portfolio of 11 of the wolves there and selling it to benefit the Wolf Park. All the profits from the portfolio go to the Park, which is in pretty bad trouble right now. The Wolf Park is an amazing place, because what they are doing is essentially raising a very large pack of wolves in as close to a natural environment as they can while still be-

ing able to observe them very closely. While the wolves are hand-raised, they are allowed to live their own lives with as little interference as possible once they reach maturity and are able to establish themselves with the pack. It was an amazing week for me. I touched them, I related to them in various ways, and I was pleased to find that many of my guesses concerning wolves in general were right. But I also had some misconceptions shattered, such as the wolves' fear of fire apparently, they're not, and in fact will play with it if they get the chance.

Richard: Also, I think out of all the animals of nature, there are very few that, in and of themselves, evoke something akin to mystery. Cats and all the other great predators related to them evoke that feeling, but cats have never been part of American Indian folklore. You get into *that* mythology, and it is the wolf and the eagle that predominate; *those* kindred spirits.

Wendy: One of my favorite Indian legends is that when the Great Spirit created the world, he made all the animals look like man, so that there weren't any differences. Later on, the Great Spirit decided to make them all different, and the wolf was the only animal that was allowed to keep his human eyes. Which is why the wolf retained that piercing stare. That is one of the things that Richard was talking about that gives man a special, spiritual interest in the wolf. There is just something amazing behind lupine eyes.

GW: But why Elves?

Wendy: Hmmm...I'm trying to think of an original way to answer this one. Well, they're humanoid, and therefore we can identify with them from the human perspective---their joys, their sorrows, their emotional make-up. But they are different enough, bent sideways, both physically and in their thinking and attitudes, that we can look at them and their world from a different point of view---through their eyes. They don't necessarily have the reactions toward certain things that *our* society has conditioned us to react to. They don't react to their own sexuality with the taboos and

hang-ups that our present society has. They don't react to Death(or the idea of Death)with the fear and foreboding we have. They don't have any conception of retribution, Hell, or a vengeful God pointing at them.

GW: Or any strong religious sense at all.

Wendy: Well, if Love itself can be a religion...They revere Love. They revere Family. They revere Life itself.

Richard: Nature, their environment...

Wendy: And out of that many tribal cultures have created a religion.

Richard: They are just about the perfect vehicle for symbolism. As Wendy said, because they look enough like us, they don't frighten us away. There is no chance than we can *not* identify with them like we couldn't identify easily with ten-foot purple caterpillars. At the same time, however, we know that they are not humans because of the differences in how they look. There is a kind of safety; we can look at them from a distance.

Wendy: Everything that distinguishes them from being human is an *animal* characteristic. Which is where the readers subliminally get the feeling of close ties with nature---the large pointed ears, the enormous, owl-ish eyes---everything we associate with feral creatures. It is what differentiates these Elves from man.

Richard: The image of Elves for a long time has been one that is a little lighter, a little sweeter, a little prettier; or in the case of the Tolkien Elves, very haughty and removed from man---and they don't eat at all! But these Elves are down and dirty. They're natural.

Wendy: I think the image of the Elf in history was changed during the Victorian era. Elves are a Nordic-European type of mythic creature. Each culture's legends they appear in has a different view of them. In the more Nordic cultures, Elves in some cases sometimes resembled our concept of Trolls. But there is also the idea of High Elves, which are very angelic. I think Tolkien borrowed heavi-

ly from this idea, and I think that's the view of Elves that has been held for a very long time. In the Victorian Era, everything got rather prissy and saccharin, and Elves began to be identified more and more closely with children---little people with wings. Elves and fairies were sort of interchangeable. I suppose Santa Claus and the idea of him having Elfin helpers contributed to this idea of tiny scrunched-over little people, trotting around on curly toes. I think one of the reasons for Tolkien's cult popularity is that he was able to evoke an "other-worldly" feeling of this almost-alien race of creatures that were so aloof and un-touchable. I am sure that it has appealed to fans ever since it has become available to them.

TELEVISION

GW: When you decided to go ahead and do ELFQUEST and make the jump to "independent", were you positive from day one that this was "the project"; that this would do it? Or were there contingency plans behind it in case the public didn't love the Elves?

Wendy: We weren't able to think that far ahead.

Richard: When we started, I was working as a teacher; a normal, everyday, 9-5 job supporting us. ELFQUEST was something that Wendy came up with, and it was something we both wanted to do. But we weren't hanging any security on it..

We knew that we had a good shot at distribution, because back then, there were only two direct market distributors. We knew them both socially, and they knew of Wendy's artwork from her illustrations in the science fiction field. So, they were willing to the risk along with us, and that made life a little bit easier, the gamble easier to take. But for a long time, we didn't think about pinning all of our hopes, income and security on this one project.

Wendy: We moved to Poughkeepsie in '79, and at that time, Richard was working at IBM. I think

we got up to issue #8 of ELFQUEST before he made the extremely difficult decision to quit the security of that job and make ELFQUEST our bread and butter. Or, rather, I should say publishing, because I think he always had in mind to eventually try other projects. But he did make the choice, and things just kept flying from there. It was the right decision. Fortunately, ELFQUEST had a large following, which is still growing to this day. It is spread by word of mouth---we don't do a heck of a lot of advertising, it doesn't seem to be necessary. So...we're still doing the Elves. When I finished the 20 issue series in '84, I plunged immediately(with practically all of my time)into developing ELFQUEST as a show for network television. An opportunity had become available to us to pitch ELFQUEST to CBS for its '87 fall season---I beg your pardon, it was '86. '87 was for Rankin Bass. But that's another story.

GW: Feel free to tell it!

Wendy: Well, various animation studios from time to time have contacted us and wanted to work with us. First, there was Nelvana, of course. Rankin Bass, the people who did *The Hobbit*, had been interested in ELFQUEST since about '82. In fact, as we were pitching it to CBS, Rankin Bass put a great deal of pressure on us to think about turning the property over to them for a syndicated show and a film. They were singing a very sweet song, but basically what they were saying to us was, "Look, give us ELFQUEST, and don't worry about it. We'll make your T.V. show for you, and we'll make a film, too. All you have to do is sit back and rake in the licensing money."

GW: In other words, they weren't willing to give you any element of creative control?

Wendy: Exactly. They knew best, and they didn't want to work with us as a creative team. Of course, a contingency of our working with any animation studio has always been that I would be the equivalent of the supervising Art Director. It only makes sense, in terms of continuity,



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Wendy Pini, 1986

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Tornado



in terms of just keeping things *whole*. If it goes into other hands and gets altered, then it's a big mess between what we've already done and what we've interpreted. I don't see the logic in that---for them *or* us. Anyway, Rankin Bass offered us a great deal of money, and they were talking like we stood to make more. A great deal more. We spent several nights talking about. Frankly, at that point, we were tired. We had worked very hard, and it dawned on us that it would be nice to have someone else take over for a change. We *could* just sit back and relax. But then we asked ourselves if we could live with that decision after having seen what we had seen done to other projects. And, so, finally, we told them no. The arrangement with CBS looked like it was going to be much better, because I came with the deal. We had a control group, Sanders Animation,, here in N.Y., where we would provide the story board *and* the direction. The scripts would be done, with our approval, in Hollywood, by a couple of really terrific writers, and the animation would be finished in the Far East. A very complicated process, but this is how most animated shows get done. Networks always have to let the various project proposals know by April 15 whether they're on or not. Right up to the last minute, it looked like we were on, but then we got a lot of hemming and hawing and fudging.

We found out then that we'd been bumped out of our timeslot---by Pee Wee Herman. Originally, it had been slated for 9:30, where you could introduce a plotline for a slightly older audience. Instead, we got the 8:30 slot, the "Muppet Babies" crowd. CBS wanted us to re-work the entire project so that it would be aimed at this crowd. Essentially, they wanted "Elf Babies"! At which point we and the writers said, "This is *not* workable", and the directors said, "This is *definitely* not workable". So they all said goodbye.

GW: Otherwise, Suntop and Ember could have had their own show!

Richard: They *were* leaning in that direction

Wendy: As a matter of fact, even the "bible", as we developed it had a great deal of focus on the younger characters in the show, because we knew we would be getting an audience around the age between 8 and 11. If ELFQUEST ends up being a syndicated show in the afternoon, we have the opportunity to tell stories much closer in feel to what we had been doing in the comic---minus the sex, of course! I'd love to go up against the **Thundercats!** Now, there's an interesting thing about **Thundercats!**: It's more popular with young girls than a lot of other shows, like **G.I. Joe**, or the **Transformers**. We suspect it's because the way the characters are drawn---very animalistic, like our Elves. ELFQUEST is very, *very* popular with the female audience. It probably still has the highest female audience of any comic book.

GW: I think we have to respect the fact that there is a lot more going on in terms of real depth of story; there is a certain amount of logical progression, and a tremendous amount of consistency.

Richard: The consistency aspect of it is very very important. I think that what gets a lot of people interested in comics. It's what got me. You can follow a series for a given amount of time, and 20 issues down the line, you can refer back to something that happened then, and *it works*;

it's consistent. That is something which we have been obsessively careful about in the ELFQUEST comics.

Wendy: And if we do mess up, the fans let us know. Then, we have to come up with an excuse for why we did it.

Richard: That's right. That's when our creativity gets exercised. "Well, of course we knew that all along, and this is the reason for it..."*(laughing)* So far they've bought it.

Wendy: This is why ELFQUEST essentially has been redeveloped for television. Richard and I had an interesting discussion the other day, because I was saying, "Gee, what's going to happen when ELFQUEST does appear on television, and suddenly, there's a juvenile line of toys, coloring books, and all sorts of things like that?" And yet we have done the story the way we wanted to, aiming at more mature audiences and dealing with more mature themes. Suppose some little 3-year-old sees the color volumes on the shelf and says, "ELFQUEST! Just like on T.V.!", and mommy buys, and, in perusing it, hits the orgy scene in issue #17! I imagine the network getting a mountain of mail asking if this is what is going to be on television! Richard pointed out to me that **Superfriends** is still going strong on television after years and years of existence, with the **Batman** character. Which is now being depicted as the **Dark Knight**. Talk about



adult themes! In other words, it is a character that can exist in an adult milieu or a juvenile one. That quieted my feelings a little bit; ELFQUEST will simply be reinterpreted.

Richard: What happens then is that the comics purists don't pay any attention to the Superfriends version of **Batman**, or the version of **Spider-man** on television. I have a feeling that those that watch television don't pay attention to the comic books, either. Just from what I understand of the demographics of the two groups, I don't see them overlapping that much. If there's a problem, we'll face it, meet it, and bludgeon it to death. We'll see what happens.

Wendy: Well, one thing I will be adamant about, no matter who we end up working with, is that I don't want to sacrifice the ambiguity of the characters---or the ambiguity of the story, for that matter, because I think out of that a lot of other important questions arise. I think a great deal of what is wrong with children's television is a team of psychiatrists deciding what correct moral view to pump into children. And there can be no deviation, and questions can't be asked. This is *not* what we will settle for. One of the most important things about ELFQUEST is that while it is a story which can be read at many different levels, it gets the readers to ask questions. It gets you to *think*..

BLOOD AND SIEGE

GW: What can you tell us about the creative process behind ELFQUEST?

Wendy: When we first started to do ELFQUEST, I proposed the idea to Richard. I had had the idea in different incarnations from time to time; the characters had existed in my mind in different shapes since I was a little girl. In the mid-seventies, there was such a high demand for fantasy (Tolkien was really popular then) that it just seemed the right time for an attempt at a fantasy story. Elves seemed to be the way to go. So Richard and I sat down and plotted the whole story ahead of time, then proceeded from there. With **Siege at Blue Moun-**

tain, it's kind of different. I have in my head an overall idea of the direction in which the story is going and I will write out a treatment for each issue. Richard then looks at the treatment. We discuss it, and Richard puts in some creative input, like, "So-and-so character wouldn't do this" or "let's add this".

Once the treatment has been agreed upon (this is where word processors are lifesavers) I simply break down the paragraphs. I do my breakdowns on the word processor, so that I can do my layouts and know what goes on each page. That's how it's done. Really,



Richard and I are always over each other's shoulders. I get the dialogue down on paper, and Richard edits it. When the drawings are actually done, sometimes they will provide their own editing for the writing---a facial expression might say something you don't need to say in a balloon, so we take the balloon out. Or, alternatively, we add something in case further explanation is required. That's largely Richard's department. It's still the same. We've been around doing this for practi-

cally eighteen years now. We're still here, and ELFQUEST is still here. It is, essentially, the same energy exchange that had started the project that's keeping it alive now.

GW: And this is also in addition to the continuation of **Blood of Ten Chiefs**, which is very conspicuously marked "Volume 1"?

Richard: Oh yes! We are working on Volume Two right now. We're hoping that goes for many, many volumes. I wrote a story for the first volume and edited it.. I'm kinda hoping that Wendy has time to write something, or, if not an actual speech, then the skeleton of a story. As busy as I am, she's *twice* that. We don't have much trouble filling in our days.

GW: How was **Journey to Sorrow's End** received as a novel?

Richard: It sold well, and it still does. Of course, it's been out now for a number of years. The commentary we received on **Journey to Sorrow's End** was polarized in two opposite directions. One, which was by far the overwhelming comment, was that people really enjoyed the depth to which some of these characters were written, because in the comic they had been done shorthand; we were unable to go inside their heads to examine their thoughts and motives to any great degree. Then, there were a few people who thought that **Journey** had been *too* personal. That it was so much more intimate than the comic that it was troubling. But in the main, the novel had been received well. And, so far as we've heard, **Blood of Ten Chiefs** is doing quite well also. It's just out, so we don't have any numbers on hand.

GW: What was it like making the decision to compile **Blood of Ten Chiefs**?

Richard: It's a project whose roots go back alongways.

Wendy(to Richard): I don't know if it was you or Bob (Asprin) who suggested it first.

Richard: Well, in its current state, it was Bob. In its original state, it was us. As you will recall, you first introduced the concept of "Ten

Chiefs" in issue 4 at the Howl, where we named these figures. Then people said, "Who are they? We want to know more!". People's curiosity really flared up when Wendy introduced a bit more on the origins of the Wolfriders in issue #13. We began to talk about a project we'd do, writing a story about each chief, ten stories in all. Wendy would illustrate it. It would be in storybook form---a block of text here, then a page of illustrations. And we started to talking with Bob Asprin and Lynn Abbey, who are friends of ours, and who had been doing **Thieves' World** for several years now. A successful shared universe. We told them of our idea for **Ten Chiefs**, and they said, "Why don't you consider in the **Thieves' World** format?" That looked better to us as we were getting more and more busy and the idea of writing and drawing whole books was looking more and more dim. We talked about it amongst the four of us, involving them because they had the experience in managing a bunch of different authors. So, they became co-editors; they manage the authors, we manage ELFQUEST. It just snowballed from there. Once we got the basic idea of what we wanted to do, we had no trouble getting a publisher interested. Then it was all done but the doing. We lined up the authors, who were interested and enthusiastic about it all, and they wrote their stories. We then edited them, submitted them, and there it was.

Wendy: It came out quite faithful to the spirit and they (the co-editors) had apparently paid a great deal of attention to the guidelines we had issued the writers.

GW: Well, it was a very impressive list of authors.

Richard: Most of them will be there for the second volume, and we'll get a few more, too. I have great hopes for the series.

GW: Did you have much direct contact with the authors?

Wendy: The ones that I didn't know previously, I had the pleasure the meeting for the first time at the World Fantasy Convention this year in Providence.

Richard: I probably met all of them at one time or another at conventions, but mostly, the initial handling was done by Bob and Lynn, who had worked with these people on **Thieves' World** and therefore had established channels of communication and methods of working with these people. Which is not to say that we couldn't communicate with them, but it's just that the present situation worked very efficiently. Now as things progress, I have the feeling that we may be dealing with some of the authors more than they do, because we have known them previously, as opposed to Bob and Lynn. It's all going to work out.

GW: So you have a lot of high hopes in seeing **Blood of Ten Chiefs** doing some very nice things in the future?

Richard: I hope so. I'd like to see it go as many volumes as **Thieves' World**.

THE MOTION PICTURE

GW: What's the story about the ELFQUEST movie?

Wendy: Well, the story of the ELFQUEST movie is one of highs and lows, ups and downs. Our original dream *was* to do a film based on the Quest story you find in issues #6-20 of ELFQUEST. That's still a primary goal where animation is concerned. The idea of doing a network or syndicated T.V. show sort of came of the hat a couple of years ago. We hadn't been thinking in those directions before. When the opportunity arose, we jumped at it. Richard and I tend to do that, being aware that opportunity doesn't knock twice. If I had my Druthers, I'd Druther be working on a film! The idea of working on a syndicated show where I could have a good deal of creative control is exciting, appealing, and certainly is a new avenue to explore. I will say that doing comics is an exhaustive process---for me. Some people thrive on it all their lives, but I find that I don't have the same drive and energy to do a complete project as I did ten years before. I'm doing the pencils for **Siege**, but I'm working with an excellent inker,

Joe Stanton; in addition I have a letterer, and this takes a lot of pressure off of me.

Richard: Also, the fate of a movie is pretty tightly tied to the fate of an animated television series, since the economic climate of Hollywood is such that any studio that gets interested in one part of ELFQUEST is going to want *all* of ELFQUEST. The easiest thing to do on a relative, not absolute, scale is to go for T.V. first.

Wendy: We don't know the outcome of the battle. We have no idea. Roll the dice---it could be anything! But we are going to try for what our vision is. We are going to try to get as many elements of that as possible to become reality.

THE SECRET

GW: If you had one message that you can state to all of the people who have ever read ELFQUEST, what would it be?

Richard: Get ten of your best friends to buy a copy!

Wendy: I don't know how to top that! (A pause) Seriously?

GW: Seriously. You have **GATEWAYS** here, going to reach over thousands of people, most of whom have heard of you. What do you want to say to them?

Wendy: Open your minds. Don't lock yourself to an attitude about our characters! Or anything else you are interested in. Give us the freedom with our characters the way you would want to play with our characters that you like.

Richard: I would say: Read it again, and read it deep. Because however deeply you have read ELFQUEST, there's another level below that. What I hear from a lot of people is that they loved ELFQUEST to whatever extent they have patterned themselves after it. Or, they try to act in ways which they perceive ELFQUEST is suggesting to them, but there's always a little more. You could always look at it superficially, like the Golden Rule of doing unto

others as you would have them do unto you: You won't shoot someone because you don't want to end up being shot. But there are also psychological applications on a deeper level. So dig.

Wendy: I think there are aspects of the story that makes you, the reader, uncomfortable. Rather than representing the direction that we have taken the characters, saying in effect, "That's wrong", turn it inward and say, "Why am I uncomfortable?"

GW: In other words, ELFQUEST is a starting point for exploration of self.

Wendy: *SELFQUEST*. That's what a lot of fans call it. For instance we have gotten I don't know how many different interpretations of the scene with Leetah and Nightfall dancing together in the first issue of *Siege at Blue Mountain*.

Richard: Are they just having fun? Are they doing this for a specific reason?

Wendy: From younger readers, we get: "Why are they doing that?" They don't understand its significance.

GW: Yes, dancing in the woods doesn't mean a lot to people who grow up in the Bronx.

Wendy: Uh-huh. We also receive reactions along the borders of, "This was a dumb move. We can't show *this* to our children!" Our response: "Why can't you show it to your children? What's going on there that bothers you?"

Richard: That bothers them even more!

Wendy: You get many interpretations of a scene like that where I, as the artist, am literally demanding that you put in your own interpretation of what you are seeing. I don't want to put it in captions what's going on: "*Leetah and Nightfall are dancing because they really love dancing, and the moonlight is streaming over their naked bodies, and the dew is shining...*" I suppose we could have done all of that in captions...

GW: And end up with a written novel instead of a graphic novel.

Richard: And a badly written one, at that.

Wendy: Now for me, they're Elves. Dancing in the moonlight to me goes with Elves.

GW: Do you feel that you are bringing a different level of sophistication or maturity to *Siege*, as opposed to the original ELFQUEST? Or do you feel it's really exploring the same concepts, only to a greater degree?

Wendy: It is the same thing, only deeper. I think technically it is more sophisticated, but as far as the storytelling goes, we will again be dealing with very mature and complex things. This might sound like paradox, you might get the feel out of *Siege* that you would have gotten from what we had originally planned for the T.V. series. A crisp, fast-paced feeling.

GW: Does every Elf represent a person or an aspect of someone you know?

Richard: ELFQUEST, at least, the original series, was very autobiographical. Most of the characters are fragmentary reflections of either of us. Major characters were major expressions of personality.

Wendy: There are two characters who are representative of me in the story: Cutter and Kahvi. Skywise is Richard's personal Elf.

GW: Is there anything else that you would like to add? Anything you feel should get a nice plug?

Wendy: Well, I'd like to plug Joe Stanton's inking on *Siege*. He's great. We first teamed up on a *Johnny Quest* issue for COMICO. His style is so natural that we didn't just ask him to ink *Siege*, I put mascara four inches thick on my

eyelashes and batted them all night: "Please ink ELFQUEST!"

Richard: There are probably rumors floating around that *Myth Adventures*, based on Robert Asprin's books of the same title, is dead. But it was merely a hiatus. The comic is coming back in June, with a fantastic artist named Ken Matroni working on it. It's going to be good. Another project will be a Vietnam-type comic called *Vietnam Journal*, being done by the artist of *Captain Obese*. There's also *Unicorn Isle*, and a lot of others I can't name off the top of my head.

GW: Is there anything else?

Wendy: Well, I see us a sort of dinosaur now. We don't reflect as a company what is now going on in the Black and White industry, or even the Color Independent market. There are new independent companies right now that certainly outstrip us in terms of the number of titles they put out.

Richard: But that's not the point as I see it. The point is survival. Yes, there are companies like that, but we started in '77 and we're still here. The crash is coming. Can you hear it? At least one distributor that we know is failing and a lot of retailers are in very big trouble. Six months from now we'll still be here, the strong companies. Those that were a flash in the pan won't be here six months from now. So we're a dinosaur? That's fine with me. They lived for 63 million years. We have been around as a species for 4. So let's not discredit the dinosaurs, shall we?

Wendy: I like this guy's attitude!



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How's Your Reptile?

In attempting to explain the world of Elfquest to the many non-readers who have entered the lives and business of the Pini's, they have found that several subjects are difficult to explain "in 25 words or less". Some of them, in fact, take several repetitions to get the point across to people who are not quite ready to accept the complex fantasy elements of the world. In order to make things easier and eliminate any confusion about what seemed to be a greatly misunderstood condition, Richard treated the Gateways interviewers to a rendition of an Elfquest "stand-up comedy routine".
The subject: Recognition.

Recognition was first proposed way back when Cutter first met Leetah in issue #2, and WHAMMO! At the time, we hadn't developed it very far, because all that it needed to be was a very strong urge. It was more than Love At First Sight however, because attached to it was the need to mate-reproduce. We had developed Recognition as a genetic imperative to produce superior offspring. And that is as far as we had taken it originally. As the series progressed, we got more and more deeply into what Recognition is, how Elfin biology works, their genetic structure, and so on and so forth.

Finally there came a time when we had to determine well, it exists; so where does it come from? Nothing in Elfquest is Deus Ex Machina...as far as we're concerned, there's a reason for everything, so where's the reason for Recognition? I came up with the idea that well, human brains essentially exist in three layers. Outermost is the cortex, which is the rational, thinking brain. The second one is the mammal brain, wherein lay the instincts of taking care of children and so on. The innermost and oldest section (in evolutionary terms) is the reptile brain. The reptile brain is concerned with finding food, staking out a territory, and getting sex.

So taking that as a starting point, remember that the Elves originally descended from the individuals we call the High Ones. And the High Ones were those tremendously evolved creatures who could take on any shape they wanted, who could in fact leave their bodies if they wanted, and who were tremendously telepathic. But even as evolved as they were, they still came from the Primordial Ooze...they went through the reptile, mammal, and "human" progression. So even in their great brains there had to be (buried way down), this reptilian brain. And the only thing this brain knows from is SEX. So, we crash on the planet, the Elves get stuck in the forms that they're in, and the reptile stirs. See, they hadn't bothered with sex for hundreds of thousands of years because they were tremendously long lived. Who needed children? The urge had just gone away.

Now, there they are on this world, and boy is it a hostile place. I imagined that there were all these sleeping reptiles way down in their brains waking up because there was



now a threat to survival. But these reptiles have been out of it for so long that they're not getting through! They just don't have any influence with these bodies, and so they're jumping around, trapped, yelling and screaming "Dammit, mate with somebody or we're all gonna die!!" Remember that the only thing they know how to do is survive, and the reptile is a crafty little bugger. So the Elves would have died off, except that they are still telepathic. And they are still subconsciously telepathic. So there's this reptile who has now gained control of this high-frequency telepathic radio station ("Radio Free Sex"), and he's broadcasting for all it's worth. But since the antenna has been out of commission for a while, the reptile has to try to boost the signal, which he can only do when he's shouting real loud. And the messages he sends tend to sound like personal ads. Have you ever read the personals in a newspaper? ("Great body, blue eyes", Wendy puts in.) This is what the reptile is screaming. It wants to have sex, and this "great-body-blue-eyes" is the one he wants.

The Elf is usually not aware of this. Yet all the while, the reptile is advertising to other potential mates about the genetic character of the Elf he is occupying. He makes deals: "Well, you know, I'm not that strong, but I've got great eyes, you know I see real good. Is there a Female out there who's strong? I mean, I don't really care about her eyes..." And so, unknown to all these Elves, there are all these reptiles screaming and listening, trying to find the perfect pairing. And that's when they get really excited. That's when they get very insistent.

So these poor unknowing Elves are suddenly aware that they find each other interesting, so they go off into the bushes, rediscover what certain parts and feelings are for...hey, five million years can make you forget!...and WOW! It works, and an Elf child is the product created, and the reptile says "Aaaaahhhhhh! Survival of the species, all right, it's about time. Now, we can exist." And that's how Recognition started.



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Elf-Games

Two Ways of Gaming With Pini Elves

Wendy: I still don't know that much about gaming, but what feedback I've gotten from fans who've played the game is that they feel that they are able to enter the ELFQUEST universe and make different choices. I find that rather interesting.

GW: Do more fans like playing your pre-existing characters? Or do they just play Elves?

Wendy: Most of them want to create their own characters, I think. It's just like the fan clubs, the holts, there are hundreds of them. Literally.

GW: How actively involved were you during the production of the games?

Richard: I, more or less, served as final arbiter on everything. Both Chaosium and Mayfair were very good about sending materials as they developed. They both have very good development teams, who were able to take every single bit of material on ELFQUEST that we could give them, and translate them into the particular rules and scenarios for those two games. The only things I would not get involved with trying to edit were the tables. When they said Cutter has so many points of Strength, so many points of Dexterity, and so on, I took their word for it. But the scenarios, the maps, and the world I was fairly strict about. People are very understanding about the flexibilities that we have accepted and allowed. When we received messages from people that players would like to do something different than fighting humans fifty different ways. So I opened up a line to Chaosium and asked them, "What can we explore now?" We tend to look at the seeming limitations in the ELFQUEST game (where, for example, you can't really bring back characters from the dead except through very hard trial) as not limiting at all. We think of it as providing a lot of potential for more intimate role-play.

GW: The emphasis on role-play as opposed to roll-play.

Richard: Exactly. That's the direction I'd like the games to go in. Not just a Knock-'em-down, Raise-'em-up-again, Slam-Bam-Thankyou ma'am. Let's develop a game based on depth of character instead.

The two games referred to above are the board game by Mayfair Games, and the role-playing game put out by Chaosium. Both are good examples of how games should be made.

The board game is a wargame for people who don't play wargames. After reading the introductory rules, it was as easy to play as most board games. even though it made use of "sophisticated" ideas, such as movement costs, terrain factors, and dice-resolved combat. The advanced rules bring you further into the wargaming realm.

The design itself is good. Each time you play, the

"board"(really 49 cardboard tiles)is shuffled and laid out face down. The players then "explore" the "world" of the board by turning up tiles as they move. You can amass clues to the location of the original Elven Home, fight Trolls, and challenge other Elves. Our only real complaint is that the board pieces are hard to shuffle.

The Chaosium Elfquest role-playing game is an excellent system. A first impression upon opening the box is that it is very "pretty"---jam-packed with Wendy Pini's illustrations. Upon closer examination, one would discover two softcover books(a Worldbook, and a n Elf-book), a booklet of character sheets(with blank pictures of basic body types to help the player to design his Elf or Troll or Human), a nice map, reference sheets, an example of play, and 5 dice(3d6 and 2d20). Sprinkled throughout the books are filled out character sheets of the popular characters found in the comic series.

The basic rolled stats that this system uses are: Strength, Constitution, Size, Intelligence, Power(magical), Dexterity and Appearance. There are numerous charts all throughout the books, such as: height and weight, age, recognized mate, etc.

There is no level advancement. Skills are improved through training and experience. It is easier to raise Skills than to raise Stats. In this game, it is possible to raise a Skill percentage above 100%.

There are many interesting features to character creation. Some characters can gain magical abilities, like Plant-Shaping or Astral Projection. And there are charts for obtaining bonus abilities or disabilities. There is also a Glossary of Elf sayings in the back, and a Glossary of Elf culture. The list goes on, but it is too numerous. Suffice it to say that the tables contained within will encourage a depth of character development rarely seen in games today.

To go with the game are three supplements, currently out on the market. Elfwar gives complete rules on how to handle inter-racial conflicts, and also provides players with a simplified combat system to replace the original found in the Boxed set. Sea Elves is a detailed dissertation upon the culture and lifestyle of these creatures, including three scenarios run in their area. The Elfquest Companion contains two additional scenarios, and helps with finding Elf names for characters, character design, and provides a description of Wolf ecology. A new Holt is also included.

The whole feel of the game can be summed up in a quote directly from the Gamebook: "There is an inevitable temptation to make combat the entire activity in a role-playing game. This is contrary to the spirit of the story which this game attempts to emulate and unnecessarily limiting to everyone involved. Combat provides a seasoning which in turn provides an occasional thrill, while the main emphasis is in on role-playing." All in all, the ELFQUEST role-playing game is a good value, both for the art and the game content. The Mayfair Boardgame is \$17.00, and the ELFQUEST role-playing game by Chaosium for \$20. -- C.B. & S.B.

Royal Entertainment

A Review of Chaosium's Pendragon

D. Quartermain

In the creation of **Pendragon**, Chaosium has established a jewel among the crasser metals of the role-playing market. The game is different and innovative, yet is supported by a history and cast of characters that nearly everyone is familiar with, even people not very familiar with role-playing games or fantasy. **Pendragon**, unlike every other fantasy game on the market, relies on the classic, archetypic and true theme behind all this role-playing we do; the legends of Camelot, of magic and mystery and chivalry...the Arthurian myths. Game designers should take a good look at **Pendragon**, because this is what a great game should look like.

The quality is first hinted at in the packaging. The cover art is absolutely breathtaking, and the interior art is classically beautiful. I definitely want to see more of Lisa Free and Tom Sullivan in the future. Their distinctive styles made the game rules even more of a pleasure to read through. Once inside the box, you will find a Player's Book, Gamemasters Handbook, several d6's and a d20, blank and NPC character sheets and the usual set of reference tables and combat charts. (Hint: A Gamemaster's screen with some of that artwork on it would be very nice...)

The Player's Book is set up in a new format, with the actual text of the book centered around the spine, leaving a two inch border on the outside of each page. Within this border are brief essays on certain terms and sections of the rules which deserve more examination. These essays, often excerpts from Malory or similar sources, give the reader a better feel for the game, the history, and in a smaller way, the mechanics. The introduction explains how the game chronology deviates from actual 6th century events, and manages to do so without swamping the reader with dates, names, and typical history class drivel. There are notes on what type of people the players will be creating and playing, and minor details like pronunciations [a Celtic (sel-tic) from Boston as opposed to a Celtic (kel-tic) from the British Isles], all of which add flavor to the game.

It is within the section on Character Generation that **Pendragon** really shines. The game mechanics allow for true *role-playing*, encourages it, even demands it on occasion. After the Personal Data has been filled out, and the five statistics rolled and modified according to culture, a series of matched attributes called Personality traits come into play. There are 24 traits all together, twelve pairs. Examples of these pairs include Energetic/Lazy, Forgiving/Vengeful, Modest/Proud, and the misunderstood Chaste/Lustful. The traits mentioned first in the pair are rolled for on 3d6. If the trait in question is favored by the character's

religion, it is given a +3. If the trait is not highly prized by that character's faith, there is a -3 penalty. The maximum for any trait is 19 since the total value for both matching traits must equal 20. The player is allowed to modify these numbers with 6 player's discretion points in order to make the character more like what the player would like.

During an adventure, a character may be called upon to make a check versus a particular trait. For example: Morgan Le Fay tries to seduce a player character Knight whose Chaste value is 16. He must then roll below a 16 on a d20 to resist her wiles. If he gets a 7, he is free and clear, and safe. If the die comes up a 19, he is swept away by her beauty and charm, and the temptations of fairyland. Too bad -- we might not see him for another ten years or so. If ever.

The system can get more detailed and complex than that, especially when players make opposing trait checks or when mass failures occur. But these checks aren't allowed to control the game! The rules clearly state that they are to be used only when the GM feels that an extreme action or reaction is called for, or when the players themselves are unsure of what the character might or might not do. Why, a system like this may very well put an end to player indecision!



Lisa Free, Pendragon

Traits aren't the only things which help detail and outline a character's personality. Passions are those intense emotions typically felt by Pendragon characters, the most common being loyalty to one's liege. There are also love, hate, and fear, each identified by their powerful and often uncontrolled surges. Within the game, as within Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, they can inspire feats of great heroism, base and despicable acts of evil or glorious, poetic acts of love. (There is an entire section devoted to courtly love and romance included in the *Player's Book*, a subject I feel has been neglected in gaming systems until now.) And best of all, these traits and passions aren't fixed; they can be raised or lowered during experience checks, and characters can seem to grow, mature, and change just like real people do. Thus, what may have started out as a brash and hot-headed youth may could very well cool off over the years of gaming time and develop into a steady and calm knight.

After the character's traits and passions have been determined, Skills and Combat Skills are decided upon. Most or all of the characters are knights or knights in training. Magic is not available as an option. It is left solely in the hands of Merlin and Morgan Le Fay, along with their various representatives. However, the creators of Pendragon had a couple of very good reasons why magic is not a player character option. For one, the use of magic was never part of the courtly life of the Knights of the Round Table, (although frequently their adversary), and two, the popularity of magic-using characters would have upset the structural hierarchy of an Arthurian campaign. With so many other systems which detail magic *ad nauseum*, I agree with the decision to leave it out this time.

Women in Arthurian tradition acted mainly as cata-



Lisa Free, Pendragon

lysts, not as agents of the good guys, and Pendragon notes this. However, instead of making some unrealistic ruling that all player characters must be male, the rules advise the GM to make a gaming environment that is comfortable for every player in the game. Female characters are slightly handicapped in initial roll-up, but the GM is free to ignore these handicaps if they seem unfair. In the long run, since females in Pendragon have options not open to knights, such as Elaine's healing capability, playing a woman has its advantages.

Since knighthood is assumed, there is a section on heraldry and coats of arms so that players can choose or design their own shields. Arthurian figures are depicted throughout the *Player's Book* as NPC's, used in stories which illustrate how the rules work. Pictures of famous shields are scattered throughout as well, so that there will be no duplication, and so the players can recognize celebrities when they see them.

The object of the game is glory, which is exactly what the Arthurian tradition is about. Glory is accumulated in points through the completion of romantic and chivalrous deeds, the mounting of heroic tasks, the slaying of monsters and the winning of contests and tournaments. A character may gain glory by becoming a landed knight and obtaining an office. Glory offers more chances for role-playing (everyone wants to see the knight who bested Sir Lancelot...especially Sir Lancelot!), and it also offers a player the chance to bend or break certain game rules. Statistics may be raised, passions lowered, traits altered...even if the change is against the rules at the beginning of the game. Glory buys privileges, and provides a wicked incentive for a player to collect as much as possible.

The *Player's Book* contains everything a player needs to know to become familiar with the society and customs of the game. Nobility is discussed, and the feudal system is broken down to easy to understand concepts of respect and honor. I have rarely seen such a well documented, organized and complete player's reference.

The *Gamemaster's Book* is almost an addendum to the *Player's*. It simply provides the information needed to set up and run a Pendragon adventure. Fantastic and mundane creatures alike populate this book, and it is adequate to the task. But it is nothing compared to a later released pair of supplements; *The Pendragon Companion* and *The Noble's Book*.

The Pendragon Companion is basically a dictionary of Arthurian literature for use in a Pendragon game. Within its 173 pages lie almost 700 entries of famous weapons, artifacts, geographical locations and famous personalities. There is also a full chronology of Arthur's reign, and Malory is quoted liberally and well. At the end of the text is a break-down of characters into groupings such as Britons, non-Britons, Magic Workers, Lovers, etc., plus the inevitable bibliography. For anyone who would like to gain a better insight into the world of King Arthur's Britain, this is the book to feast upon.

The Noble's Book is a must for any Gamemaster who wishes to know more details about handling the sub-

jects covered earlier in the Pendragon Players' Book; heraldry, war-making in a feudal campaign, and, of course, nobility and social class. It is 76 pages of absolute godsend, because it is a wealth of information compiled in the fashion of the main books---with essays located on the edge of each page to explain any phrase or reference mentioned in the text.

Compared to other gaming company systems, Chaosium is somewhat lacking in modules for Pendragon. Recently released however, is **The Grey Knight**, by Larry DiTillo. This adventure involves conflict between King Arthur and the mysterious title figure. Merlin has foreseen that Sir Gawaine, the King's Champion, will die unless one of the Thirteen Treasures of Britain can be found. A typical quest, but hardly a typical module. Laid out in the same format as the Player's Book, with beautiful illustrations and side essays, it also includes playing hints and reminders for the GM, encouraging continuity and pacing, two important elements of mastering any game. The GM is left very little to guess about, but a lot to play with.

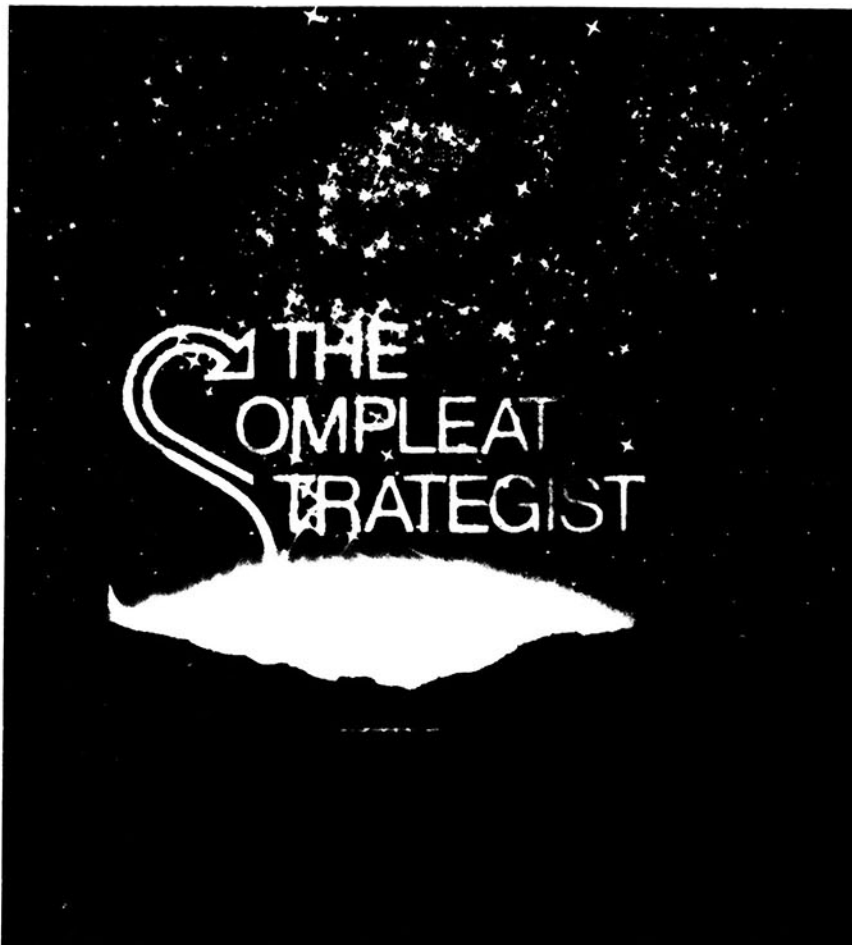
What Chaosium has accomplished is a symphony between role-playing and game mechanics. Pendragon is the quintessential romantic high fantasy game, and quite a change from the over-written sword and sorcery games populating the market. For a change of pace and an introduction to what makes fantasy worth while, The Pendragon System and components are well worth the money.

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I remember the third night in Ganymede quite dearly...

...Instead of the harsh orb that had battered away at my vision all that human day period, there was the cool, wonderful light of what the Dayworlders called the Moon; our Drowic sun. I am constantly amazed when I am reminded of the humans' inability to see more than one color to the star that gives them light and life. I almost pity them. They cannot appreciate the beauty that lies past their means to see. In that, as in many other ways, the Dark Faer, my people, are blessed.

I moved amongst the Dayworlders as if I were one of them, disguising myself with a minor glamour; I knew that it was not safe for my kind to travel in this almost surrealistic city populated by the likes of Dwarves, Men, and my benighted cousins. I took refuge from the sunlight in the darkness of my cloak, heightened as it was by the magic that belongs to all those who are of the Royal Blood like myself. What those who passed me by saw, was what I wanted to them to see; a traveler who seemed quite harmless.

But, on with the tale.

I left the city at Drowic Noon, which in our language translates to "Whispertime" in the common tongue. I wasn't departing for good; I simply could not tolerate the Dayworlders' penchant for making noise, which appeared primarily at night and around their taverns and inns. I had journeyed into the forests surrounding the city, surprised that they hadn't been cleared to make room for farmland when my ears caught the sound of someone moving in the brush, over to my right. I had not left unarmed. My dagger flashed in the moonlight as I waited for the skulker to move again so that I could pinpoint his location.

Suddenly, something leapt out at me, and I cursed as I strove to get out of its way. When I saw that it wasn't moving, I approached cautiously, a blinding spell on my lips should the intruder be playing me false.

I saw that it was a young noble dressed for travel. I could tell he was dark-haired and that he carried a longsword at his waist, but I could not distinguish his features. He was also quite unconscious, with a nasty cut under the left lowest rib. He had

probably fainted with that last exertion to get upon the main road.

But, who had attacked him?

I then caught the sound of his pursuers, not too far off. The voices spoke in the human tongue. One of them said, "D' you think he came this way?"

His companion hawked and spat. "Aye, I reckon so," he replied. "He couldn't have gotten far, the way he was bleedin' and all."

The first speaker laughed. It was more like a cough, a very rough sound. "Aye, you stuck 'im like a pig, y' did! Now, all we has to do is finish the job, and get the purse!" They both chortled in self-satisfaction, and continued to blunder their way to-

wards us. The two bandits were following the trail of blood my newfound charge had left, and they would be upon us soon.

I thought fast. I owed this human nothing, yet something in me was revolted by the idea that I would leave another sentient being in the hands of those butchers. Besides, they had disturbed my night walk, so it would be up to me to teach them a lesson they wouldn't forget. I stood up to face them, hooding myself as I did so.

When they appeared, they looked just as ugly as I had expected from their voices. They faltered when they saw me, but then attempted to

bolster their courage by challenging me. "Well, well, well! Looks like we gots us a *nosy*, we does!" the first one sneered, drawing his weapon. "We knows what to do with *nosies*, doesn't we, mate?" They started forward.

I drew myself upward, surrounding myself with a glamour that halted the men in their tracks as I whispered in what I hoped was a chilling voice: "*Get thee back, mortal, lest thee too are taken before thy time.*" I then drew back my hood.

The magic worked; my visage, changed as it was by the spell, sent them fleeing into the night. I hooded myself again, in case that the young noble regained consciousness before we returned to the city. I didn't want to reveal myself to him...just yet.

Luckily, I didn't have to carry him far. We encountered a patrol of rangers on the way back, and they took my burden from me. Disguised as I was as a young human female, there was no difficulty. How-

A MEETING OF TWO MINDS

By
Serge Clermont



ever, the young noble regained his senses during this exchange long enough to espy his "rescuer". As we all rode back to the city, I chuckled---perhaps in the morning, I would pay this waylaid traveler a visit at the Healers' House, just to find out what his reaction to his timely rescue was...

When I visited him, it was this time in the form of an older, darker male. It was a cloudy day, and it was easier to maintain such a disguise in the dim morning light. I entered his room wearing the same clothes I had worn last night, to see just how perceptive he was.

We were alone. He was propped up in one of their beds, looking much better than he had last night.

His hair, though long, had been combed back to reveal a very serious, sardonic face; handsome enough by human standards, I suppose, but alas, cursed with that silly facial hair most lesser races seem to have. It looked like he had shaved, though, and he gazed at me curiously with dark, wine-colored eyes as I sat down beside him. I noted that he had not protested this liberty on my part.

"Good morning, sir," he said politely. "Should I know you?"

"Good morning. No, I don't believe you should, but perhaps we can remedy that. My name is Kadaran."

"Dyan of the House of Kolos." We shook hands, a custom I had struggled to become used to doing while associating with Dayworlders.

"Forgive me, good Kadaran, but would you happen to---"

"---know where the young lady who rescued you last night would be?" I finished, cocking an eyebrow at him. He nodded. "What makes you think I would know where she is?" I asked.

"Well..." Dyan paused. "I noticed that you were wearing clothes similiar to the ones she was wearing last night. I am very eager to seek her out, Kadaran," he added. "I owe her a debt."

"Why?" I asked. "Do you intend to marry her?"

"Why---no," he replied, startled. "Why do you say that?"

"Because," I said, "It would do any woman honor to marry into a noble house, not to mention assuring her of security for the rest of her life. And what kind of woman would be found wandering about the forest late at night unless she had no home and no ties?" I concluded.

Dyan thought about that for a moment. "Yes, I suppose you're right. But I can't marry her. I wouldn't be a good husband because one, I'm a wanderer by nature, and two, my house is a poor one. Besides, she might not want to marry me anyway." He

leaned forward, resting his chin upon his palm.

"Lord Dyan---" I began.

"Dyan, please, Kadaran."

"All right...Dyan. Perhaps this young woman only rescued you for a monetary reward," I suggested.

Dyan shook his head. "If she had wanted money, she could have taken my purse."

I appreciated the logic. Here was a mind of some worth saving, I thought. "Well, then you might as well leave it alone," I said.

"No. I would like to find her and thank her." He looked at me. "*Do* you know where she is?"

"Unfortunately, I do. She is long gone from here, but she sends her hopes that you feel better in the days to come. With that, my purpose here is done." I got up to leave. "Good-day to you, Dyan Kolos."

"Wait." I stopped, curious. What could he want from me now? I wondered. I turned back to face him.

Dyan folded his arms. "You are hiding something from me, Kadaran. Something about the girl..." He closed his eyes.

Mother Darkness have mercy! I swore. He was a Seer!

He opened his eyes again, and gazed directly at me. "What are you, Kadaran?"

I let my hand fall to my hidden dagger as I slowly replied, "Give me the same respect I have given you, Dyan, and let me go in peace."

The moment stretched into a minute before I realized that I could not kill him and leave this House undiscovered. I sighed, and removed the glamour.

He sank back into his pillows, stunned.

"A Drow," he breathed.

I cursed the fates that had spurred me into the path of a Seer...

...I felt like a fool for indulging my curiosity the way I had. Now, it seemed that I would pay the price for my indiscretion. I waited.

Dyan exhaled slowly. Then, after a moment or two, he reached over to lift a wine decanter and two goblets off of his nighttable, wincing in pain as he drew back, keeping his eyes on me at all times.

"Be careful," I admonished. "Would you make all the trouble I went through to bring you here in one piece for naught?"

Leaning back, he gasped, "Which forces me to ask: why save *me*? Drow aren't supposed to care either way for surface dwellers. There's nothing that I had that you could possibly want, so why..?"

"That's true," I replied. "I should have just kept walking. It would have been the least you would

have expected from one of the Dark Faer." I seated myself again, reaching forward to pour wine for the both of us. To his credit, Dyan did not flinch. "But," I continued, "I must remind you of something that you Dayworlders have forgotten in judging us as a whole. Just as there is diversity amongst your kind in personality and individuals, the same yardstick may be applied to us as well." I smiled. "Which may be why it *hasn't* been; it would make us seem too...identifiable? Too sympathetic? I don't know." I sipped at my wine. "But, in any case, it seems that you have me at a disadvantage."

"Kadaran, I will assume that you had the best intentions when you rescued me." Dyan's voice held a note of relief. "I thank you. I am in your debt."

I was surprised. "Really? Then I will assume that you are still grateful for your life," I said.

"I am," Dyan said.

"Therefore, I will take my leave of you and hope that our paths never cross again. I have endangered my purpose in moving about in the Dayworld by this circumstance, and I should not have anything more to do with you."

"Wait, Kadaran," Dyan said as I made to leave once more. "My debt to you is not paid yet. I would ask something of you." I hesitated, then nodded for him to continue. "I am a wanderer, as I have said before. What you said earlier about there being diversity...You sound like a--Faer with a lot of education. May I ask if your purpose here is to learn about the Dayworld?" He seemed quite excited as he talked.

Again I hesitated. There would be no harm in telling him, since it was clear to me that he did not intend to reveal my presence within the House. "Perhaps," I replied.

"Very good! I have a proposition for you, Kadaran."

I was on my guard. "What did you have in mind?" I inquired.

"I propose that I keep your secret as payment of my debt----" here he suddenly turned sly, "----and that I travel with you so that you may learn about the Dayworld directly from the horse's mouth, as it were."

I was startled. "Why would you ever..." I began, then I thought about it. It *would* facilitate my mission to have a source of insight on the everyday doings of the Dayworlders. Then again...

"I'm afraid not, Lord Dyan," I said, shaking my head. "Having been exposed as I have been...it would be too much of a risk. I have already proven myself not as circumspect as I would like to think, although your idea did intrigue me---which is why I must leave now in order to remove the temptation for both of us."

"Temptation?" he said as I opened the door.

"What do you mean?"

I halted. "I do not profess to understand the reason for my rescuing you, save that it was something I felt I *had* to do. Nor do I understand why we have been afflicted with a remarkable ease between ourselves that disproves the animosity between our races. Were circumstances different, I might have called you...*friend*. But, sadly enough, I cannot allow personal desires to possibly endanger the reason why you are able to speak to me now."

"But Kadaran---" he started to say.

"Good-bye, Dyan."

I left.

"Back, you fools! Get back!" I shouted. "If you dare touch me again, you will not live to see another night!" I meant it...

"Lots of fancy words, elfling," one of my attackers sneered as he began to flank me, waving a wicked-looking sabre back and forth. "Too bad they won't be enough to save you!" His companions began to close in...

I had been ambushed two days out of Ganymede. My preoccupation with my encounter with the young human known as Dyan Kolos had excluded all else as I sought to analyze my own feelings about the matter. What had caused me to save him? Did I truly regret doing so, given the likelihood of discovery and subsequent mischief? Why had I been interested in the thought of traveling with a mere human? So many questions! And now, it seemed that I would not have the chance to answer them.

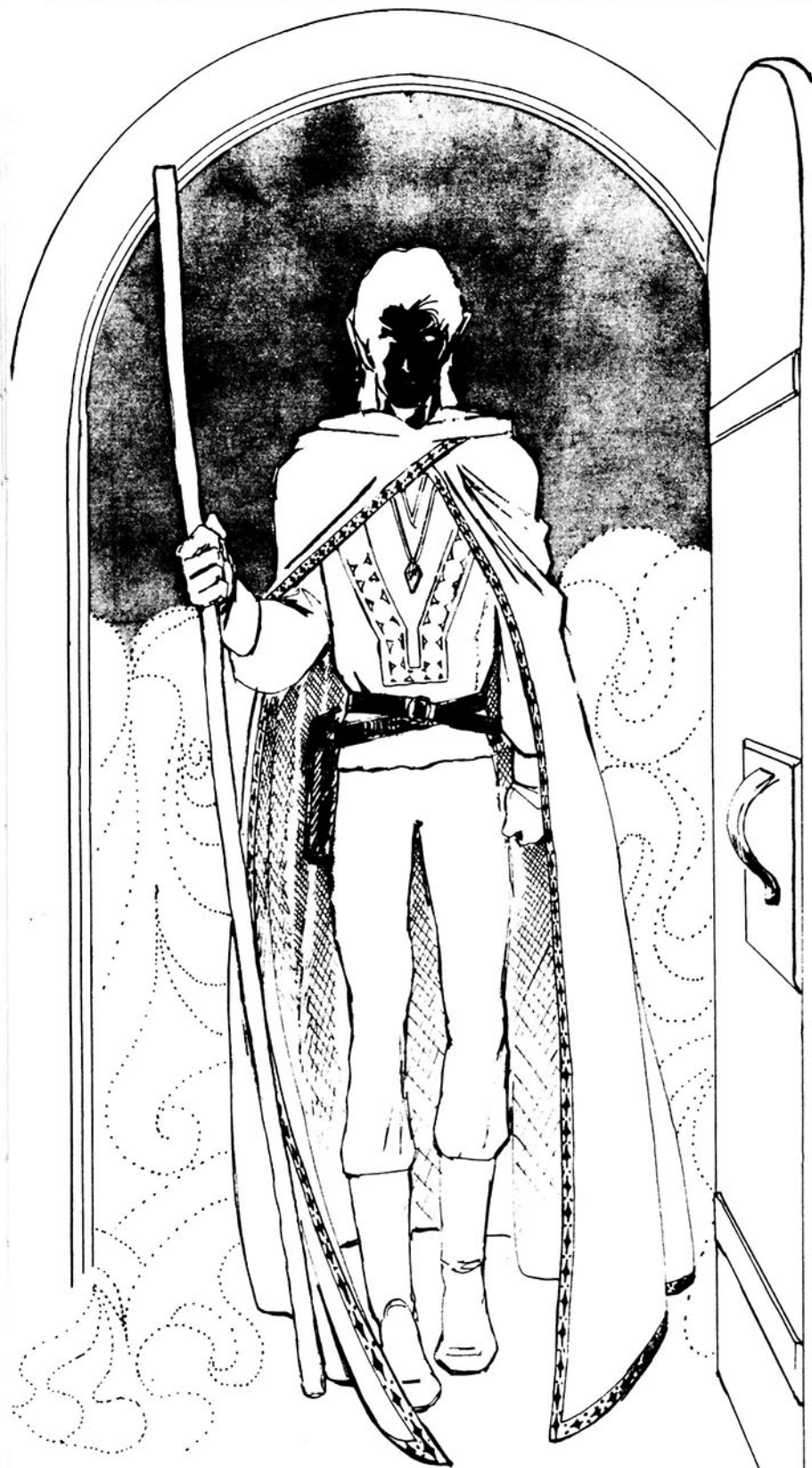
They were beginning to close the circle they wanted to trap me in. I dashed between two of them when I saw the opportunity, and, palming a small prism from my pouch, I whirled to face them.

"You were warned, scum!" I raised the prism before me as I felt the energies build. "Now, pay the price!"

The magic sprang forth from the prism in a kaleidoscope of color, bathing them, blinding them. They were dazzled by the force of the conjuration; dazzled into unconsciousness. Not one was left standing. And I would not make the same mistake twice. I drew my dagger, and advanced to bend over their prone bodies...

After I wiped the blood from my hands, I heard the sound of an approaching horse. Not having the time to seek cover, I cloaked myself in invisibility and waited.

Into the clearing rode Dyan Kolos atop a gray



riding horse, sword bared, apparently healed of his wound. "Kadaran!" he called. "Where are you?"

Now what is he doing here? I thought. I dispelled the invisibility and answered. "Right here, Dyan."

He dismounted. "I saw that you would be in trouble this morning, so I rode as fast as I could, hoping..." The sentence faded as he looked around at the carnage.

"Yes, Dyan, I killed them," I remarked matter-of-factly. "Slit their throats as they lay unconscious, too. You still have that notion of traveling with one of the Faer of the Night?" I gestured at the bodies. "This is what we're like when threatened. Think you could live with that?"

I gathered my things off the ground without waiting for him to respond. "You tell me, Dayworlder."

"Now that you mention it..."

"What?" I turned to look at him in astonishment. "Are you joking?"

"No. I am deadly serious." Dyan sheathed his sword as he began to speak. "Kadaran, don't pass up this opportunity because you fear that I might betray you. I won't, you have my word on that." He grinned. "First lesson in humanity." Then he sobered. "Listen, I want to learn---that's why I left home. You said to me two days ago that you were 'up here' to learn as well. Why can't we travel together and learn about each other in the course of our adventures?"

"Adventures?" I blinked. "What do you mean?"

Dyan grinned again. "I mean that it doesn't seem like either of us can travel without encountering some mishap along the way---and our luck won't last forever. So what say we team up and encounter them together?" Dyan got on his horse.

"Adventure..." I repeated, savoring the word as I called a steed out of the shadows of the trees. "Hmm...I suppose..."

"After all, isn't that what life's all about?" he called out as he spurred his horse down the path toward the setting sun.

I suddenly smiled, pondering the folly of human nature, and riding to catch up.

"I really wouldn't know," I answered when I reached him. "But teach me, human!"

He laughed, and we rode off toward...adventure.

End.

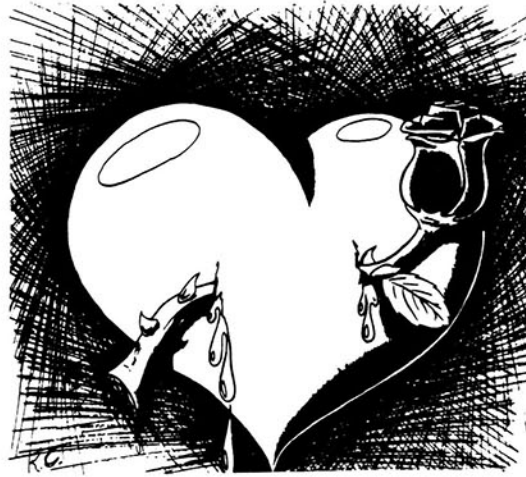
Hearts In Armor

Gamers Speak Out On Romance In Role-Playing

From the Tower to the Cosmic Streetcorner, romance has taken over here at Gateways. Perhaps it's the perfect springtime weather that has swept across the country of late, or maybe it's the spring fever that's been keeping us away from our word processors and drawing boards that's done it. But whatever it may be, love and the romantic notion is our very first theme, and we have discovered that it can be quite an exciting one at that! By the state of the art in role-playing games, the world has realized that the dungeon, the hack and the slash are not the end-all of our adventures. Each week, games and supplements which emphasize plot and character development hurtle from manufacturers to hobby shops: TSR's *Dragonlance*, Steve Jackson's *GURPS*, and Chaosium Games' entire line just to name a few. Game referees are learning not simply to describe gouts of blood and fabulous treasure hoards, but to tell good stories and get their Player Characters deeply involved. Well, with all this love in the air, we had no choice but to hit the streets of our native New York City to find out some more! The Big Apple boasts probably the most diverse and progressive talent in adventure gaming this side of Wisconsin (prove us wrong!); GMs and players alike all seem to have definite ideas on the best ways to run scenerios and campaigns here. What follows is the first of four very different opinions by gamers whose names may already be familiar to readers of Gateways magazine. Freelance writer Anne Staszalek starts things off by reminding us that it takes two....

WOMEN AND GAMING

Relationships. Any good gaming group naturally has good ones, at least amongst the gamers. But where are they between their characters? If the group is all male, there's about a 90% chance of their character groupings being all male. That might make it easy for them, but for a long running game this can get really dull. Have you ever heard of an entire land populated by serving wenches? That would mean that there are no intelligent women anywhere. Even worse is when this GM sees what's going on. He immediately introduces a female character that's either a mousey cleric or a super-



tough fighter.

Believe it or not, guys, women can act in more than the two traditional fashions. We aren't always quiet and meek, nor are we always tough, butt-kicking women who seem more male than female. Tough fighters can be quiet, meek clerics can turn around and turn you into sterno. Maybe you think I'm over-reacting, but let me ask you something: When was the last time you saw an adventuring female dressed sensibly in a picture? Some

of them look like they haven't been out of their homes in their lives. If women cannot carry themselves competently in pictures, how are they going to be treated in GAMING?

Clothing aside, it is the image that has to go. Women can lead parties, be helpful members, defend the party and still remain female. Relationships can be developed with the other characters while still continuing to adventure. Case in point: There is a character in my running campaign named Athena, a 17th level thief after four years of gaming sessions, our time. She's traveled all over my world, gotten very wealthy, married a Non-Player Character, and has raised 3 children. She still goes out questing, sometimes leaving her husband at home.

You don't have to get as deeply into it as I have, but I do think all Game Masters, young and not-so, should take a serious look at the role of women in their worlds. Are playing them as people with their own strengths and weaknesses, or just as paper dolls from a book? Changing this could just improve your game.

The problems are many, the solutions not easy. But if you want female characters with character, you can try.

It's only a matter of relationships, isn't it?

Our next seminar takes a more sanguine approach to player-GM relations, as romance at this point can either boil to a passion--or be squelch with a hasty fire extinguisher! We turn to lower Manhattan for an essay that student writer Joe Mendoza calls....





FALLING FOR THE QUEEN OF BLOOD

When I was first turned onto role-playing games at Stuyvesant High School in Manhattan, all I could think about was how great it would be to act out the kind of adventure stories that truly excited me. *Excalibur! The Lord of the Rings! Star Wars!* These kinds of games were the closest I could have ever gotten to being there among the swords, jewels and galaxies of those fantasy universes. Heck, I can even remember my party's first great arch-foe: Velenna, the Queen of Blood, leader of this super-cult of vampires that was plaguing one of our world's largest cities. Our Game Master was quite talented and could describe precisely how the gorgeous Velenna can proceed to cause the collapse of our city's socio-political-economical structure. As a rag-tag mess of Player-Characters with mathematically defined powers and abilities, my party continued to battle the nasty vamps to a series of standstills for several weeks. So there I was in the middle of all that chaos and mayhem, an elven cleric of lawful good alignment, just dying to do something really smashing, something really heroic, something that would really test my mettle--something with the *romance* of all of my favorite books and movies--so I allowed my character to fall in love with Queen Fang herself, Velenna!

Wouldn't it be wild, I thought, to have my goody-two-shoe elf fall for his darkest enemy? Think of the conflict!

- A common ground for our characters and NPC's to meet without trying to slaughter each other,
- A chance to role-play choices to be made between good and evil.
- A potential for everyone to really get riled about what's going on.

I ran to my ref, ready to negotiate the role of a life-

time!

"No."

And he gave me fifty-two technically accurate reasons why not.

Well, the undead moved on, and the party got itself into other kinds of trouble. Having no real love or regard for my fellows, my character got bored, and so did I. Why? I did a little research and found out why...

When a GM runs a series of sessions that really count, a game in which a whole lot of time and effort are spent creating an exciting, enjoyable storyline, the aspect of Romance cannot be ignored. Now, romance doesn't necessarily mean that a love story must be spotlighted or that mushy soap-opera plotlines have to be followed. You don't need a single "dark and stormy night". A romance is an adventure story that is both exotic and extravagant. Characters go after their goals with zeal and passion---they are well-developed and have definite feelings about what is happening. *Lancelot, Aragorn, Han Solo*---each of these was a member of a party a-questing, and yet you can't deny their romantic roles.

For a player who wants to do more than blow off steam with role-playing games, the romantic notion's the trick! Players should really look for chances to use emotion, to look into the plot of the story on a gut level and run with it. While a GM should never be fought, it doesn't hurt to provoke him a little! I say if you're bored, confused, or just simply want something more from a game, go ahead and ask for it. Both during and outside of game-time. "Wouldn't it be great if...." can be incredibly helpful to a GM who maybe just can't figure out what to do with your character. And listen, give your ref a couple of chances on this, it's probably not easy for new ones who are still learning about the concept of role-play, or for old ones to break out of the mechanical by-the-book mold. Remember, the only excuse for a role-player to sit bored at a table for hours on end is sheer stupidity. Something better to do can al-

ways be found.

Referees should measure their player-characters by the romantic notion. If my earliest GM had, he would have realized that the PC's---outside of a gory emergency situation---continued to share nothing in common and couldn't have cared less about one another. We would have also noticed that our most bloodthirsty foes were becoming little more than robots to be chopped and skewered, leaving all of us few opportunities to have outrageously cool confrontations. These are fantasy games, and logic can only be pressed so far! Faraway places and passionate encounters, when bogged down with rules, statistics, and superstructure, become simply variations of our own world---the one we wanted to leave behind for a couple of hours in the first place. (Hey, you'd think Velenna, Queen of Blood, would need a break, too!) Finally, he would have plainly seen that his excellently detailed, grimly plotted action story threatened to overwhelm and sink our swashbuckling quest for fun and romance. And what would *Merlin*, *Gandalf* and *Obi-wan* have to say to that?

While the genres of fantasy and science fiction certainly have their good share of standards and cliches, adventure gamers will agree that the familiar trappings of an all-night session can be twice as excruciating in their boredom potential--mainly because they have a personal stake in the time spent! Cedric Ambroise, a popular Game Master from Queens, seems to have a remedy for those of you who believe that atmospheric gaming means that the pizza left overnight on the kitchen counter has started to mold....



THE BARREN NIGHT

"Ignorance is a night of the mind, a night without moon or star."

Confucius



I am a GM whose world was created solely for the benefit of one NPC I had been dying to play as a Player-character. He was a dark, passionate figure, a tragic hero who was held suspended between the Powers of Good and Evil. When the two clashed, it threatened to engulf and destroy him in an all-consuming fire. Thus, I named him Meridian Flint.

Now, up until the time I actually conceived of running my own game as a GM, Meridian had appeared in earlier incarnations, under different names for different campaigns. Whether or not the other GMs compared notes between themselves and discovered what I had been up to is irrelevant. All I knew was that I kept bringing back Meridian whenever I could because he had a lot of potential. He was all I wanted in a character, and I would not be satisfied until his story was told.

So, every time I rolled up for a game, I brought a piece of Meridian with me into the character creation. The characters themselves turned out well on their own after a while, as they developed within their respective campaigns. But I was still unsatisfied. Why? Because I wanted the entire thing; otherwise, Meridian would just be a fancy thing that would soon die unused---unless I did something about it.

And I did. Every story has a setting, and I resolved to have one for Flint's tale. I went about creating a world upon which Meridian could travel, a history in which he could take part; something that would be suited to his character, his personality, his style. I hadn't realized that I had just about created a campaign world by the time I was done. Then I thought, well, what am I gonna do now? I'm done, but where is it going? Who's there to see the tale unfold? I was notorious for being a writer who never finished a story; scattered manuscripts all over my room proved the case. And I was positive that I didn't want this particular epic to go the same way. *Q.E.D.*, run this "Meridian World" as a game---let the players of such a game help me write the story through their ability to role-play. I knew that it wouldn't be too cool if I revolved the game around an NPC at the onset. But "Meridian World" (which was called by another name later on in its genesis) could stand out on its own, because the world that Meridian had as his setting was as detailed as Meridian himself. I collected the players and began to run the campaign.

Now, to prove a point. What's the difference between the first and second way the same scenario is presented below?

A) DM: You three (addressing his players) are riding along the road when three orcs attack. Roll initiative. (Clack-clack) You win. What do you do?

Player #1: I attack with my sword.

Player #2: I pull out my mace and attack.

Player #3: I'm casting *magic missile*.

DM: Okay, roll "to hit" and do your damage, magic-user. (Clack-clack) You kill one. Next round...

B) DM: You three are traveling along the road headed toward Damaris. It is nighttime. The moon shines bright and full upon you as you enter forestland, the light gilding the leaves of the trees in silver. The air is warm, and scented with the aroma of nocturnal blossoms wafting in a soft breeze. Yet, for all this beauty, you are uneasy...

Player #1(to other players, in character): "My friends, prepare, something rotten's going to happen.

Player #2: "Yes, I feel it, too." (Mock shudder) "Let's hurry out of this wood, the sooner the better.

DM: Suddenly, there is a sound in the brush by the road!

Player #3: "Watch it, gentlemen! I fear---"

DM(interrupting): Before you have time to finish your warning, three figures leap out in front of you! Roll your initiative! (Clack-clack) You have time to see that these are hideous mockeries of man that are commonly known as orcs! Pig-faced and bestial, they rush upon you, with bared weapons and feral eyes! But you have the initiative---what do you do?

Player #1: I draw my trusted blade Foefist, and yell, "Have at you, villains!" as I strike the closest one!

Player #2: (Grimacing) "When you must, you must." Gathering my clerical robes about me, I palm my mace and respond in kind..

Player #3: I summon a spell from the depths of my knowledge, unleashing the power of *magic missile* at one that isn't engaged by my friends.

DM: With a word and a gesture, darts of light streak from your fingers to impact upon one of the orcs. Roll your damage. (Clack-clack) Its body flies back, shattered and burned by the power of your spell. (Addressing the other players) Attack, warriors! (Clack-clack) Next round...

Can you see the difference? Example A is what I believe many game campaigns are like, for those who'll settle for them. Example B is what *romanticism* in gaming should be like; descriptive, captivating, and enjoyed by all involved. That was the way I ran "Meridian World" because Meridian was a romantic character, and nothing less would do for the world he would hail from. Nothing less should be accepted by those who pursue the romantic aspect of role-playing. It is what all the epics in fantasy, myth and legend are made of. Romance in role-playing is emotionalism and catharsis, racing hearts and shining eyes both in and out of character. It should pervade all aspects of the campaign, even simple combat. As you can see, a little time taken out to role-play on the part of the players as a

response to the GM creating an open-ended story, makes for a beautiful memory later on as well as for excitement during actual play.

In conclusion, "Meridian World" became a successful game because I chose to present it in the tradition of romantic literature. Otherwise, you get a night barren of the light of adventure...or life.

Uptown we fly under sunny skies, to reach the holt of freelance writer Patricia Travis. Ms. Travis brings it all home for us as she ties together and sums up the romantic notion and adventure gaming by locking it into the world around us. Seek out and you will find....

ROLE-PLAYING AND PRIME-TIME

What does romance mean to me, as a game master and as a player? A simple question, but one that had me rushing to my dictionary in a panic. I knew that romance was a necessary part of any good role-playing game, and I knew why. But how could I explain it to players and GMs who didn't know? How could I let people know that romance does not mean love story? Easy. Look it up in your Websters.

ro - mance 1 a): A medieval tale based on legend, chivalric love and adventure, or the supernatural b): a prose narrative treating imaginary characters involved in events remote in time or place and usually heroic, adventurous, or mysterious.

Romance isn't just something you can and should add to your game...it is by definition what makes the games fun to play. Romantic tales are tales of substance and sweeping adventure. Romance is what separates **The Lord of The Rings** from **Conan the Barbarian**. You can add romance to your game by making it a continuing saga with characters striving to reach a goal, complete an epic quest, establish history in your world.

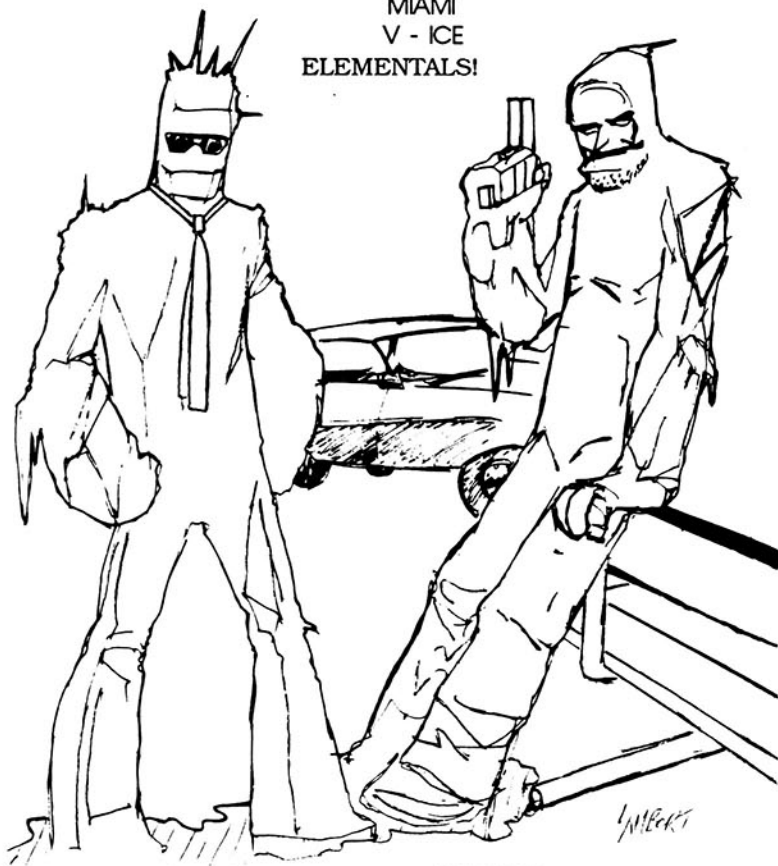
Star Wars is romantic, and it has little to do with who's kissing *Leia*. Take a look at *Darth Vader*...he is a classic romantic villain! Black cape swirling in the air around him, a man of dark past and a man of complexity and mystery, *Vader* almost makes the movie. You can add romance to your game by adding larger-than-life NPC's and villains who have chances to interact with the player characters, to talk, argue, threaten, capture and even to possible sympathize and (gasp) befriend the player characters. Add romance by encouraging players to do things they only see in the movies.

Romance is **Miami Vice**, with flashing colors, striking music and complex plots that cross over from time to time, bringing old villains back and letting new ones escape. Big cities at night are dangerously romantic, and a meeting with a wealthy but shady character dealing in smuggled goods and funny money can lead to inner city wars or alliances with NPC's who operate above society and

above the law. You can bring romance into your game by using special effects (the torches of the city glow yellow-orange, and by their flickering light, you can just glimpse the trailing of a scarlet silken robe vanish into an alley...), and by setting the players against non-player-characters instead of monsters, monsters, monsters.

Romance can also be love, of course. But avoid the standard "If you kill the Dragon, I'll give you my daughter." or worse, "Oh, gee great hero, you killed the Dragon, and I've fallen in love with you so I guess I'll marry you." styles of fantasy relationships. At least in the first, she doesn't seem to have a choice...in the second, she'd marry old *Darth* if he had stomped the beast. Use your imagination, and if that fails, take a cue from night-time soaps, like *Dynasty* and *The Colbys*. Add romance by making love a challenge for your players, and encourage them to seek it on their own. Once, a PC opened a conversation with one of my NPCs by telling her that he loved her. It was so unexpected, I stuttered and had to take a moment to decide what she would say. To this day, I enjoy the memory...that was real role-playing! Have someone fall in love with a player character who doesn't seem to be doing much. Sometimes, a little attraction can go a long way when you're trying to inspire someone.

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WHO WATCHES THE WATCHMEN?

Jeffrey Gomez

It is the mid-1980s and America has won the Viet Nam War. President Richard Nixon is enjoying his third term in office, and cars run quickly and smoothly on electricity. People exist whose powers and abilities are beyond those of mortal man, but the use of such powers has been banned with the passing of the Keene Act ten years ago. The **Comedian™**, the **Silk Spectre™**, **Rorschach™**, **Ozymandias™**, the **Nite Owl™** and **Dr. Manhattan™** were once popular, world famous super-heroes who had taken it upon themselves to make the world better. (With his omnipresence and ability to manipulate molecules, **Dr. Manhattan** was easily the cause of many of the country's greatest victories.)

But the world grew more and more nervous with those whose capabilities set them above the law. Super-heroes, once heralded as the nation's **Minutemen™** in the '40s and briefly as **Crimebusters™** in the '60s, became objects of suspicion upon their pedestals in the '70s. The words *Who Watches the*

Watchmen?, spray-painted on back alley walls, became a common phrase as rioting flared in every city. Who, indeed, monitored the super-beings who claimed their pledge to watch over us all?



The unstable **Rorschach**, continuing to defy the Keene Act, is investigating the ugly murder of one of his fellow masked men, the super-patriot **Comedian**. In so doing, he comes to believe a conspiracy has been launched to destroy the retired avengers and thus leave the world vulnerable! A second hero, the ultra-genius **Ozymandias**, is nearly shot. **Dr. Manhattan** falls victim to a plot which sends him into exile on the planet Mars. This "conspiracy" takes on world-wide dimension, as the absence of **Dr. Manhattan** means the U.S.A. has lost its near-omnipotent protector, forcing the nation into a nuclear face off against an emboldened and mobilized Soviet Union. As **Rorschach** slowly proceeds, time ticks steadily away....

Such has been the state of the world in the recently concluded twelve issue DC comic book limited series, **Watchmen™**. As with the ferocious (and some say ultimate) **Batman™** story, **Darknight™**, the **Watchmen** is an attempt to re-examine heroism and the heroic traditions we have grown so used to in

books, films, comics, and yes, role-playing games. British writer Alan Moore (best known in the U.S. for his highly acclaimed, horrific work on DC's *Swamp Thing*[™] and his vicious *Miracleman*[™] import) has dared to pull off what DC's mainstream superhero *Legends*[™] mini-series could only dabble with, and what the on-going "Mutant Menace" situation in Marvel's *X-Men*[™] books can only truly portray in some alternate future scenario -- *Watchmen* shows us a society in which superheroes have altered the course of human history, and have since become outlawed.

Watchmen comes to a stunning conclusion wherein characters are either dead or changed forever. Moore has been able to tell his story and move on without worrying about characters who are liscenced onto beach towels and lunch boxes and who therefore must appear in some series somewhere 'til doomsday so the copyright can be protected. Since the summer '86 release of the series' first is-

sue, however, it has become one of the most popular direct sales (to comic book stores only) productions of all time. Readers of all ages have been begging store owners for the book's next shipping date so that they can keep up with their favorite character's role in the powerful and complex plotline. The menacing inkblot face of *Rorschach's* mask has found its way onto *Watchmen* buttons and t-shirts. Everyone had a pet suspect in the "mask-killings", and, interestingly, thousands readers chose favorite heroes despite the fact that none of the *Watchmen* were shown to be very heroic. This was when freelance writer Daniel Greenberg and the people at Mayfair Games took hold of an historic idea....

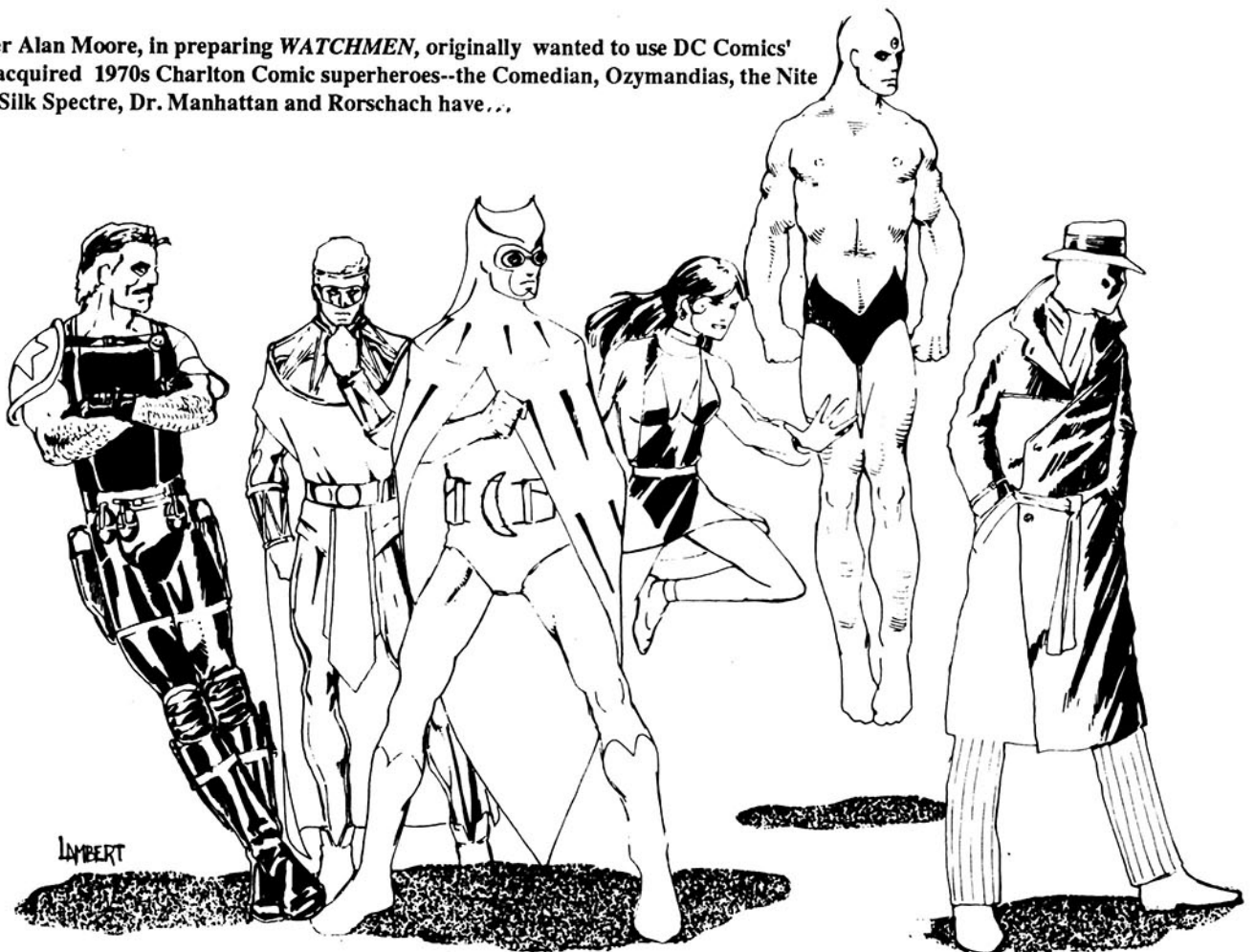
THE MODULE

"They said it couldn't be done, and we proved them wrong," stated Mayfair Games President Darwin Bromley. "We saw that the *Watchmen* was going to be hot and

immediately asked DC to let us do a module under our *DC Heroes Role-playing Game*[™]. Greenberg was hard at work on it before we knew it, and we aimed to have it in stores before the maxi-series was finished. We got laughed at, the rough draft was done by issue six, and the game was in comic and hobby shops all over the country by issue ten. No one's ever done this before."

DC Heroes is a game designed for every person who's ever wanted to portray *Superman*[™] but was neither a Reeve(s), nor able to raid the linen closet for capes after the age of nine. Its rules center around two charts (Action and Results) that are used for everything from combating the ultimate evil of *Darkseid*[™], to the chances of the *Batcomputer* has of finding certain data. With some study, the system is not hard to master and, although its "gadget" rules are clumsy and some arithmetic is necessary to keep things flowing, it can come to be quite playable. In its "death is almost impossi-

Writer Alan Moore, in preparing *WATCHMEN*, originally wanted to use DC Comics' recently acquired 1970s Charlton Comic superheroes--the Comedian, Ozymandias, the Nite Owl, the Silk Spectre, Dr. Manhattan and Rorschach have...



c. 1987 DC Comics

ble" philosophy during combat situations and its insistence that player characters have an automatic code against killing, the game holds very true to the style and spirit of DC comic books. Also, **DC Heroes** emphasizes role-play, its rules making it easy to act out what you think your character would do in a given (violent, or especially non-violent) situation. This would be important in the creation of the **Watchmen** module, as according to Dan Greenberg, "this story is going to be about characters who are people--not about knocking down walls...."

What is immediately striking about the content of the Mayfair module, *Who Watches the Watchmen?*, is that it fits. Almost every effort has been made not simply to place the actions and characterizations of its plot into the world of the comic, but to expand upon Alan Moore's original story. From its' first page, the module captures the spirit of the book with an alarming intensity. Its' plot is provoc-

ative and frightening, making Dan Greenberg (best known to gamers as the author of Mayfair's *Elves* role-playing supplement, and for his spectacularly hilarious *Hot Rods of the Gods* module for West Ends' *Ghostbusters* game) an excellent choice in writers.

Thus, an all-important question will spring to any watcher's mind: *Did the events that happened in the module happen in Moore's Watchmen universe?*

"Though I haven't really spoken about this with Dan or Alan Moore, I think that what happens in the module is suggestive as to what other **Watchmen** adventures may have been like," said Mayfair editor Thomas Cook. "It's a hypothetical situation that echoes what may happen in the series."

"Everything that happens in the module was heartily endorsed by Alan," said Greenberg, who ran up a stunning trans-Atlantic phone bill with Moore during plot preparation. "Its continuity runs comfortably into

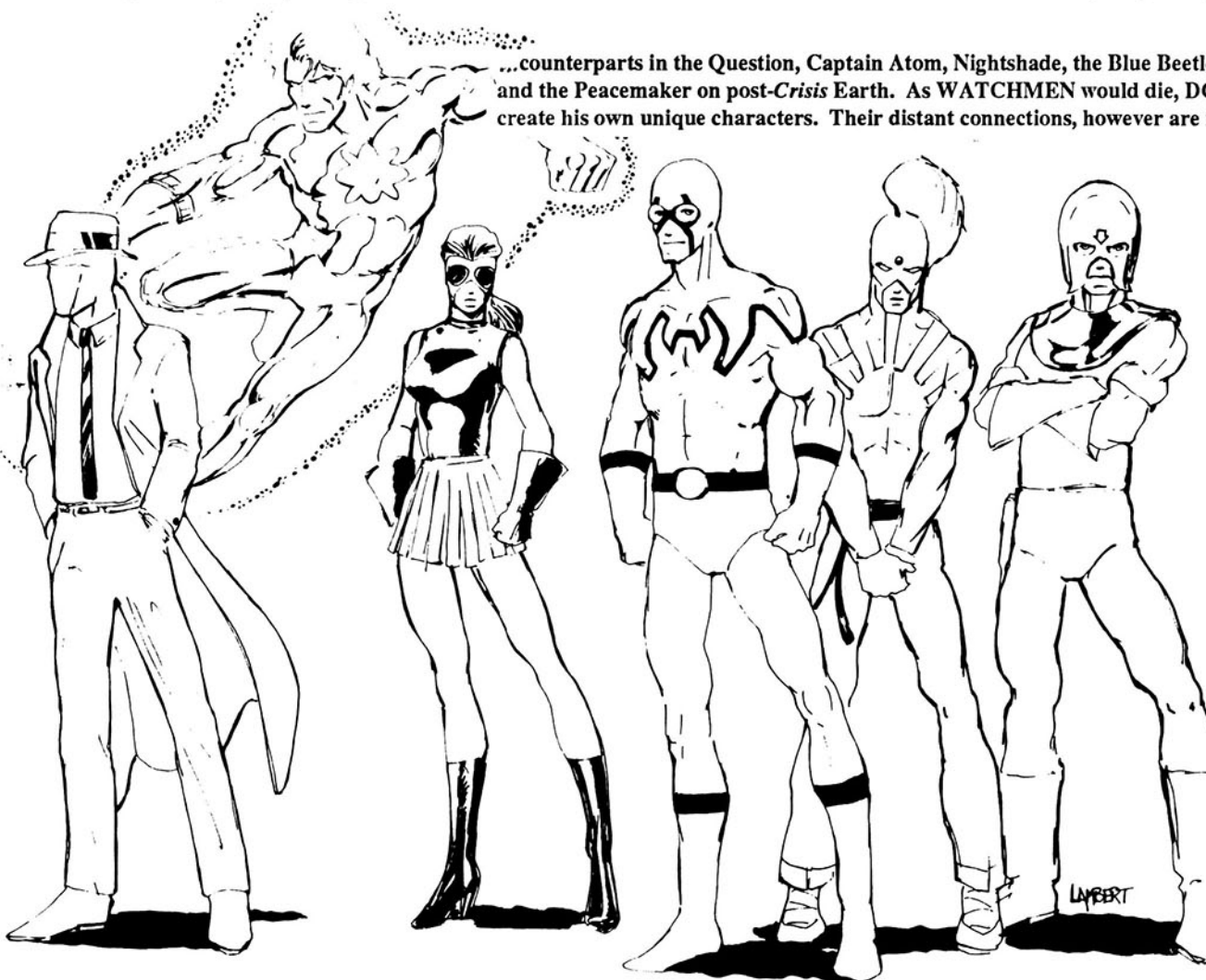
what occurs in the series."

That was an understatement. Boasting a Dave Gibbons cover and taking place in the summer of 1966 (pre-Keene Act), nearly twenty years before the calamities depicted in the series, *Who Watches the Watchmen?* reads like an Annual; an intriguing supplementary issue to the series. Many sharp fans who picked up the module before finishing the books' twelve issue run, have claimed the game actually provides dozens of clues in better understanding what's happening in the comic! Indeed, it does....

THE CONSPIRACY

It is only a few short months after the **Comedian** set a match to aging **Minuteman Captain Metropolis™** battle plan to stamp out societal evils in America. **Metropolis** is desperate to unite his fellow heroes to form the *Crimebusters*, and force them to face what he perceives as a massive conspiracy to topple the

...counterparts in the Question, Captain Atom, Nightshade, the Blue Beetle, Judomaster and the Peacemaker on post-Crisis Earth. As **WATCHMEN** would die, DC asked Moore to create his own unique characters. Their distant connections, however are fascinating!





switch," said Greenberg upon learning of the name change. "As in the comic book series, the whole point of the ANA, and Lopez being where they were was because it was the *hero* who had set them there in the first place. The *Watchmen* shows us the dark side of human nature, the potential is there for even heroes to slip past the boundaries of their times. **Captain Metropolis** engineered this whole thing, and his personal taste comes through in his choice of perpetrators. In realizing what's going on, the other Player-Characters' reaction to this is what makes the story interesting."

(Perhaps Greenberg will be gratified to learn that Stevens' name mysteriously switches to "Jose" due to a copy error close to the end of the module!)

ENDS AND MEANS

Dan Greenberg is correct. If anything, *Watchmen* is about the conflict between viewpoints and approaches to being heroic. In *Who Watches the Watchmen?*, **Captain Metropolis** (an ultra-conservative right winger) goes to all lengths to achieve what he believes is justice. He compromises his ideals to fulfill his vision of a better world. Who but the great and powerful *Ozymandias* could take such a germ of an idea, digest it over the next two decades, and forge it into a conspiracy of planetary proportions?

The heroes of the *Watchmen* are extraordinary in that they're all too human. They prove that great power does not equate great responsibility. **Rorschach** is emotionally

American way. It seems he has no choice--the **Captain** kidnaps several people who are close to his fellow masked men and proceeds to set up a series of clues which would not only place the "Crimebusters" up against their old foe **Moloch**, but also against such organizations as the "American Negro Alliance", the "Peace Front", as well as '60s rock music! Tension builds and time is of the essence as the heroes are made to play detective, and scenes such as the concert rally in New York City's Battery Park and their final confrontation with **Metropolis** himself, boil with potential bloody violence.

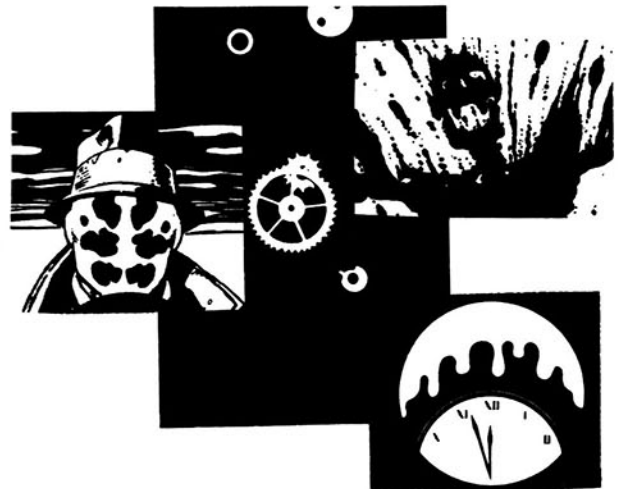
"The module does not encourage characters to kidnap or kill, and nowhere in it are they forced to do so. Both **Dr. Manhattan** and **Captain Metropolis** are (referee-run) Non-Player Characters at least in part for this reason," said Tom Cook. "In the series, drugs and prostitution were both on **Metropolis**' hit list, but they are not covered in the module. Although the comic can be very violent, we wanted to give players of the game a choice."

Though not marked or "rated," the *Watchmen* series was

written for mature readers; people who cannot accept more than a few flawed characters or bizarre twists in plot and narrative could well wind up hating the book. The names and events that did and didn't wind up in the module prove fascinating:

"Moore shocks his readers by using stereotypes, familiar events, things we all know about, and then placing them in a weird perspective. The American Negro Alliance is a group affected by both **Moloch** and **Captain Metropolis**, but neither is shown to represent it," continued Cook. "The name Kitty Genovese was struck from a reference to her true-life murder that supposedly caused **Rorschach** to become a vigilante. The kid who holds the hostages at the climax of the module was called Jose Lopez--I think both Mayfair and DC agreed to change that, 'cause with the ANA it would have been a little much. His name is now Billy Stevens."

"I'm disappointed with the





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disturbed, the Nite Owl is frustrated in more ways than one, Dr. Manhattan knows everything that ever will happen and therefore is paralyzed until what he is going to do comes to pass (?), and Ozymandias would perhaps end the world in order to save it.

The *Watchmen* prove that the will of the *Batman* or the morality of *Spiderman*TM are truly the stuff of myths. Readers who have criticized the comic book for showing costumed crime fighters to be stupid, deviant, even psychotic, are not getting the point. With Alan Moore's tale, DC and, daringly, Mayfair Games, have allowed readers and role-players to explore the depths of what being a super-hero would be like, in the real world, where even your best intentions would still be your own and no one else's.

THE MOVIE

You do not have to be a gamer to enjoy *Who Watches the Watchmen?* DC Heroes game mechanics take a back seat to plot and

role-play ability in the module. (A good knowledge of the series helps in playing the game, but things are made clear for the novice.) That Moore has taken such an interest in the production makes it perhaps one of the most important of its kind. *Ziggurat of Death*, a fictional role-playing game referred to by Ozymandias in the notes in back of *Watchmen 10*, is Moore's way of acknowledging the new importance games of this kind have in expanding other universes. Moore himself has used Mayfair's *Batman Sourcebook* as a reference guide during the *Swamp Thing*'s notorious rampage through Gotham City.

Though there may have been pressure for Moore to change the ending of *Watchmen* so that more (if not all) characters may survive for sequels and marketings, the writer has remained steadfast and no "happier" alterations have been made. However, though missiles may have wreaked devastation and *Cthuloid* dimensions ripped open, we have certainly not seen the last of our tarnished heroes. The twelve issues which comprise the series read like a novel when brought together--the more deeply read, the richer it becomes. They will be bound into a single volume by DC this fall and placed on the mass market, where millions (young and adult alike) will be able to judge the controversy for themselves. Although a production date has yet to be set, 20th Century Fox has purchased the rights for a live-action *Watchmen* motion picture with principal photography to be done both in Hollywood and at England's famous Pinewood Studios. Sources indicate that George Lucas' Industrial Light & Magic will be employed in the creation of the breathtakingly altered New York City of Moore's universe. The film will depict a relatively simplified version of the original series, and is certain to be either a mega-flop or masterpiece.

PREQUELS & SEQUELS

Finally, Mayfair editor Troy Denning will oversee the creation of *Who Watches the Watchmen's?* first sequel, tentatively titled "*Harlot's*

Curse"TM. Taking place in and around the National Republican Convention, 1968, the module will be written by freelancer Ray Winninger and set firmly in the *Watchmen* universe. Any concern that such a sequel may herald a drop in quality can be pushed aside as, once again, Alan Moore will not only have a say in its plot, but is scheduled to write an introduction to the module, as well as contribute background information and a detailed timeline of *Watchmen* history. Little more could be said about the plot of "*Harlot's Curse*" save that presidential candidate Richard Nixon is involved as is an assassination attempt.

The *Comedian* has "big reasons to be involved", and the artwork of Dave Gibbons will be even more prominently featured. A *Watchmen Sourcebook* is not out of the question as a follow-up to the second module from Mayfair, and as Moore continues to be "passionately involved in his work", neither is a prequel series from DC!

Stay tuned: In-depth coverage of the *Watchmen* continues in upcoming issues of *Gateways!*



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Lost in the Woods: A Review of TSR's **Wilderness Survival Guide**

Patricia Travis

So you have the original DMG. Over the years, you have accumulated the **Players' Handbook**, the three monster books, the new player's reference book, the Eastern adventures book, and maybe the book about the gods. You might have even gotten the book that finally, after ten years, taught you how to survive those awful dungeon adventures that the original DMG taught you how to play.

Then...just when you thought it was safe to play AD&D again, a new \$15.00 hard-covered rule book breaks the calm surface of the gaming market, **The Wilderness Survival Guide**. You can't go back to playing old-fashioned AD&D now! After all, if we had to be taught how to survive in caves, how can we expect to survive in the nasty outdoors? Opps! I must have assumed that this book was for players: I mean, it does say that it's a **Survival Guide**, and it's generally up to the *players* to survive. The book is written by former Dragon editor Kim Mohan, who I expect, was quite a killer DM in his day. Because there is no reason whatsoever for a player to own this book...except that forewarned is forearmed. So now, for the Killer DM point of view: **The Wildernes Survival Guide**.

Say that you're a fair DM, a damn good DM, and over the past couple of months you've finally used up the last monsters left in all the monster books. Yes, you've sent those players to all the planes, and you've had them

sat upon by every crawling, creeping, flying and thumping thing in them! Let's say that you're running dangerously low on dangers; that several characters actually survived that last adventure you ran. Well never fear! Now, with these new, improved rules, your players can sit by as their characters freeze to death, or die of heatstroke! Or, if that doesn't suit your fancy, do what you've been threatening to do all these years, and just hit them with a lightning bolt. Too boring? Starvation is now a viable alternative in AD&D, even though there are now charts for foraging and hunting. Yes, no longer will you be forced to admit that seasoned adventurers know how to hunt and pick berries! In fact, you can now include (*snicker*) the possibility that they will gather the wrong things and poison themselves! Wow! Instead of wasting your time allowing the players to follow a storyline, go up in levels, advance in character development and other such things, you can watch them gather dinner, set up their complex shelters (while taking into account factors like moisture and wind resistance), purify their water, and presumably take care of each others nutritional deficiencies, like scurvy, rickets, and dysentery. (Well, at least I assume so. The book doesn't get *that* graphic.)

Unfortunately, the book devotes an entire three pages to medicine and first aid! But, as if to make up for that obvious lack of logic, rules are included to allow for the injured party to ingest (*giggle*) the wrong plant! Of course, the DM is warned not to allow the players to actually gather medicinal plants before someone is injured. In fact, the book clearly states that "the DM is free to disregard any dice rolls indicating success and simply rule that no medicinal plants are found during a long period of searching." I love it, I love it! DM's are finally encouraged to alter dice rolls in order to make the players suffer!

Of course, what book of outdoor survival would be complete without discussions of tidal waves, earthquakes, different types of floods, rockfalls, mudslides, and similar natural disasters? After all, it takes a lot of time for a DM to make up a lich. Why bother when you could deliver the same damage by having the party succumb to the poisonous gasses released by a volcanic eruption?

A section on Magic in the Wilderness will give the players just what they needed: another list to consult before casting their spells. This is followed by an attempt to follow Douglas Niles' example (as set in the **Dungeoneer's Survival Guide**) by a chapter called "Starting from Scratch", which describes how to set up a fantasy world. Like Niles' feature on the art of DM-ing, it is a matter of too little and too late. Since this book is hardly for the novice DM, comments like "Water flows downhill; you can't go from a swamp to a desert without passing through some other type of land..." are rather wasted. All together too much space is devoted to the weather, AD&D's favorite dead horse topic. So all nastiness aside, unless you really are a DM out to eliminate the players and cause them as much discomfort as possible, this is a book you can feel comfortable without.

Gateways Classifieds

Gateways introduces a regular feature for fantasy role-players, Game Masters and all fans of the Genre...Gateways Classifieds! Every issue, on this page, you may insert or peruse messages which will reach gamers throughout the known world. It's very simple! Find the category your message belongs in, write your words down, mail them to us, and we'll print them! And remember--to help gamers keep in touch, **Player/Game Master Wanted** Ads are free!

The categories are: **Merchandise for Sale** -- please include your telephone number with your ad. No dealers, please. **Merchandise Wanted** -- be specific. Don't say "old Dragons wanted", say "Dragons 35 through 58 wanted". **Events** -- you can advertise conventions, tournaments, concerts, special screenings, etc. **Personals** -- have fun! Anything goes under personals: secret messages, congratulations, gloating, rave raves, announcements, even challenges! **Services Offered/Needed** -- Model painting, mapping, drawing, arts and crafts, module design, any service of use to gamers. And finally, those free ads, **Player/Game Master Wanted** -- please be specific! Mention 1) Type of game 2) the location at which it will be played or how far you can travel, and 3) age/level of experience required.

And remember, **Gateways Classifieds** are cheap! At one dollar per twenty words, this will be an offer limited to our earliest issues. Take advantage of it while it lasts! Write to: Gateways Classifieds, JAF Box 965, New York, N.Y. 10116.

PLAYERS WANTED:

Experienced GM wants experienced or talented novice players for either: a high-quality Marvel Superheroes campaign, or a romantic-style AD&D variant game, both with a heavy emphasis on role-playing and emotionalism. Should be 17 or above, familiar with the milieu involved, and able to travel to Queens, N.Y., on a regular weekly basis. Write to: Serge F. Clermont, 134-20 218th Street, Laurelton, NY, 11413 or leave message at (718)353-4881.

SERVICES OFFERED

Need a world? No problem, big or small! D&D, Traveller, or just maps. Send info or races wanted to: Martin Bingham, 3892 Daffodil CV, Memphis, Tennessee 38128

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About to start a play-by-mail game in the Traveller GDW system; all need now is a line to tell about the games and rules. Write to: Martin Bingham, 3892 Daffodil Cove, Memphis, Tennessee 38128

WANTED:WRITERS

Gamer/Author is looking for first hand knowledge of the popular Dragonlance series...DM's especially welcome to share their views on the hottest seller of the past two years. Is this the future of gaming? Does it work? Can it be played with other PC's? Does it have a good ending? Selected views

will be used in a giant Dragonlance retrospective which will appear in Gateways. Write to Gateways Publications, c/o Assistant Editor.

PERSONALS

To Wendy, Richard, and all at the main Holt--an exuberant thank you!--GPI

Ed Giaid--Fungus and Billy miss you. Dr. Giveaway has been crying on Irving the Dummy-God's shoulder for years now---Please write (Even if you didn't get work!) Charles & Sydney Barouch, P.O. Box 957, NY, NY 11354

Mukluk: As the dragon flies, 200 miles is insignificant and we've got flower-lightyears to go before we sleep. Sara

"He who masters the gray everyday is a hero." Fyodor Dostoyevsky

All the GM really wants is for her game to be remembered. The meanings may be forever obscured, but the feelings should live forever. I know that mine will. Thanks to all the players who stuck it through.

Amado; I love a man *out* of uniform, Diane.

The next time I get involved in a major war, someone please remind me that I left the water running...

Attention all GENCON XIXer's: Does anyone remember a young black man with gold-rimmed glasses who ran

around like crazy trying to assemble a decent super-hero game? He ran a Dark Phoenix vs. the Silver Surfer scenario involving various guest stars (Thor, Mr. Fantastic, Spider-Man, where are ya? The DM is looking for you guys!) All those who do please write to: Serge F. Clermont, 134-20 218th Street, Laurelton, N.Y. 11413. I want to tell you what I'm running at the next GENCON so you can sign up for it! Hell, screw the Prime Directive, let's run something!

Devon, you did me proud. Forth the Warriors Three! (Oops, is that copyrighted?)

To the Avatar Seven: *Assemble*, dammit, *assemble*!

Zemindarians to God: What time is it *now*?

Warriors do it with two hands, and paladins only one. Either way, we still get screwed.

Aren't paladins *supposed* to have a sense of Huma? Ar-ar, humor----Jarvik Crystobal

In darkest despair, I always remember the dream...and I go on. Morgan
In the end, that's all we have...Kris

Look out world--the Dark Driver of the flying Blazer HANGMAN has arrived!

Sara--showin' faith is contribution enough now. The rest'll be easy--Rex

The Cosmic Streetcorner

Hey look everybody, it's my very first visitor on a Gateways flyby. Her name is Juliet of the Spirits, "Yo Juliet! Howzit goin'? Want somethin' a eat?" Juliet, see, is what I call a Star Goddess. She's got a lot goin' for her: she's fabulously beautiful, she'd love you without question, she can fill your life with magic. She could even look into you; know your spirit, *know* what you wanna say so you don't have to worry about speaking the wrong words.

You know, when I was a little younger I wanted to meet this lady so badly that it hurt? Heh, I used to take walks out at Flushing Meadow Park real late, and I'd look for some light in the sky, wondering where this super special Lady was and whether she'd ever get here. Well, I gotta confess, no saucers ever did land for me in the Shea Stadium parking lot! No elfin girls rose out of the crowd at parties to look into my eyes and have what the Elfquest people call *recognition* with me. In fact, I've only been able to catch a glimpse of Lady Juliet as she passes by, off the curb of the Cosmic Streetcorner.

You see, she lives in a place I call the multiverse, and, though you might encounter her in movies or role-playing games, there she will stay. Star Goddesses are make believe.

When you sit down and contribute to an imaginary adventure, when you let your mind just go go go and you really get caught up in the fun of it, that's a special kind of freedom. Now I'm not talkin' so much about the clod freedom to smack other characters around, swig mead and just be some kind of dinghead. What I'm driving at is that chance you get sometimes to let your spirit show through as you play, wave your true colors if you know what I mean. You can bow to a lady, kiss her hand without getting laughed out of the room. You can earn the love of a nobleman by being a woman of skill, courage and conviction, and not have to worry about high heels or whether your make-up's been smeared.

Look, we can carry it even further. How often do you see acts of chivalry and heroism on any given day? Deeds of knighthood in the hall at your junior high school? Laser firefights in defense of the shopping mall? Is there really anybody out there worth doing such deeds for, anyway? One thing's for certain, if your referee is any good at all, there sure are such people in your game world! You joust for the hand of the princess, quest in the name of the queen, that frog that's been hoppin' around will turn out to be the duke for whom you've been waiting all your life. These people are pure and honored and often they will gaze down at your unworthiness from their pedestals and catch your drift. If you've been heroic, they notice you, reward you, and maybe even fall in love with you. Romantic recognition by some kind of royalty is a fun part of the game.

But that is where the pedestals must stay.

People who enjoy explorin' imaginary universes, can sometimes feel out of place living in this complicated, ordinary, real-life world. We want to live exciting lives where we can stand by codes of honor, be true to an alignment, adhere to a religion, defeat threatening forces--and be recog-



nized and loved for doing this. But then there are the times, especially at night, where you think, *is there anyone out there lookin' for a person who feels this way?* Under all that kevlar and mithril plate can beat some pretty lonely hearts, huh? And maybe, if you stick with it long enough, acting as noble and unworthy in your hometown as you do in the multiverse will get you friends and even dates. Me? I'd get itchy.

There's really no question about it when it comes to people like us. In this world you're being heroic by simply tryin' to uphold the things that you believe in yourself without forcing those beliefs on anybody who doesn't want them. You're also being heroic by working and not sitting on your butt waiting around for something or someone who may never arrive. Sure, you can holler at me and say I'm wrong; that Star Goddesses do exist and there's one out there in the world for you. Prove it by goin' out and finding her. I'll tell you how you won't find her.

You certainly won't find your Juliet standing alone in a park at midnight. Slouching around pedestals won't get you very far in this day and age either. This "unworthy" aspect of romance really burns me up. You're not "unworthy" of *anybody!* Don't care how pretty she is, how rich he is or how much brains they have--you look 'em straight in the eye and say what you have to say. Period. We live in the modern world, well we take advantage of its better rules, especially the rule about equality. If he's cute and popular and you're not, then you do everything you can to make yourself an attractive person--without making yourself feel lousy; listen to yourself if you feel that way 'cause feeling lousy is the pits.

The person you fall in love with should really have a lot goin' for her or him: fabulous looks, a certainty about their feelings, a magical quality. Sometimes they'll be able to tell you exactly what you're thinking! Yeah, all right, things like this can really happen, they do every day. If it happens to you only during an adventure in a darkened theater or around an adventure gaming table, well then you're not groomin', dressin' and gettin' on out there enough! Even royalty had to go to school. If you don't try, it certainly won't come prancing though your gateways. "So I'll be seeing you, O Juliet of the Spirits, maybe in a game some time. Right now, I've got a date..."

Jeffrey Gomez
Publisher



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