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Surf's Up!

Yo dudes and dudettes! It may be cold outside but it sure is warm and inviting here in the pages of Gateways Magazine! Specially designed to brighten those drab winter months, Gateways #12 runs the gauntlet in bringing you the gnarliest worlds of science fiction and fantasy in adventure gaming. But we're not stopping there! You see, we believe that your role-playing games (or your writing, or your movie-making) are only as good as your own experience. Great stories are told in all media, like, all the time, and we're here to tickle your fancy with a multiverse of ideas.

Catching the first curl are those crazy *Teenagers From Outer Space*. The game is simply rad and radically simple, so have a blast! This scores two in a row for superstar designer Mike Pondsmith. Way to go sports fan!

Next through the pipeline, a surprise feature to end 1988 with a BANG: our first annual *Multiversal Swimsuit Revue*. Featuring the awesome artwork of such gaming and comic book talents as Kevin Long (Palladium Books), Joe Phillips (*Speed Racer*), and Jerry Acerno (DC Comics), some of this stuff is hilarious! The rest is stunning!

This issue features three long looks at some wild fantasy universes. Tracy Hickman and Margaret Weis cop the blame for two of them — *Darksword* and their latest, *The Will of the Wanderer* (previews, interviews and whatever views included free of charge); and Roger Zelazny takes the third with the universe of *Amber*.

Finally, to get serious for just a sec, Gateways begins a series on mature themes and role-playing games with Jonathan Tweet's *When Make Believe Hurts*. No one who has ever run in an RPG should be without this poignant, important guide to responsible gaming.

Gary Gygax, a journey to *Hoth*, a savage miniatures scenario, and a list of 200 street names round things out, so what are you waiting for? Slip on some lotion, clip on your shades, rev up that hundred watt light bulb, and keep turning the pages!

Alan J. Berkson
Assistant Publisher

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Howling At The Moon

GATEWAYS Magazine strongly 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, N.Y. 10116



Dear Gateways,

In a recent editorial in *Dragon Magazine* (issue 137), Roger Moore made reference to the letter that I wrote to *Gateways* last year (issue # 7) where I mentioned that the disabled player is, by and large, ignored in the role-playing industry. He invited the reader to respond.

However, there has been an enormous response already. In a recent conversation, Gary Gygax, himself, told me that he, and one of his associates at New Infinities, are working on a new gaming project that will expand the access of the role-playing game to include many handicapped people. I think this is a wonderful and timely step in the right direction. It's about time.

I want to thank all of you who wrote to me, and for those who cared enough to respond at all. And, of course, *Gateways Magazine* for printing my letter in the first place.

Sincerely,
Betsy Goodrich
Atlanta, GA

Dear Gateways,

I subscribed to your magazine and bought some back issues at Gen Con '88 because you had some of the sharpest covers I'd seen there, but I'm writing to let you know that I'm not sure if I've wasted my money. Other magazines let me know if a game's good real fast, and they always have features that I can instantly plug into my own games, like dungeons or 'mech stats. A lot of the time you have interviews with people I've never heard of, or make things sound more important than they really are. You should just be normal and give the people what they ask for in a gaming magazine.

Herman McCormick
Seattle, Washington

cont'd on pg. 4

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COVER ARTIST: Wayne Barlowe
"Teenagers From Outer Space"
courtesy of R. Talsorian Games.

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From The Tower

Another year ends, a new one begins, and thus the cycles of life continue. The new calendar is full already, red boxed days for deadlines (or, as we call them around here, "get it in or we all drop dead-lines"), yellow highlighter for conventions, circles for birthdays, and so on. I know, this might not be such an amazing thing to some of you out there. But until three years ago, I never used calendars.

I had them. I had Doonesbury calendars, horse calendars, Star Wars and Star Trek calendars, computer art and classic car calendars, and even a few *Chippendales* calendars. But I never really had to use them. I never seemed to have so much to do that I had to write things down. Of course, back then I also used to say something that sounded like "I'm bored." I rarely say that anymore. Very rarely.

A lot of people complain about being busy, and I'm a proud member of that club. Sometimes I wish that I could snap my fingers and make all these annoying people (I called them friends, yesterday), and all of these stupid details (I actually made up the lists of things to do), and every job that was dumped (willingly or not), on my lap, just vanish. Snap! They're gone, I'm out for ice cream, a favorite book in hand.

But, this is the time of year I set aside to take my measures of what I've accomplished in the past year, and what I have left over for the next. Hey — 1988 wasn't so bad. I wrote a lot, and read ten times more. Between the few games I actually played, I found time to explore a new type of character and a new type of game world. My old clunker is finally gone (may it serve you well, Greg), and my new car is eagerly awaiting the vanity plates I ordered. Comparing the setbacks, the heartaches and the rainy days, I figure I made out pretty well. I hope that if you do the same, the good outweighs the bad as often as it does for me.

However, now it's time to get the feet off the desk, and throw ourselves into making 1989 better than 1988, no matter how good '88 really was. Remembering the past is great for sitting around and being loose, but getting on is what makes it all work. And, just in case you've got a few spare days on your calendar, here's a few things I'd do if I had the time:

Take a friend or two and go someplace you've always wanted to go. It doesn't have to be far away, but it should be a place you normally wouldn't think about going to. How about a museum, especially one featuring American Indian artwork, or a film museum? Or a local tourist attraction that you've never gone to because you've lived there all of your life? Try an outdoor concert, or a college play, or just a new

eating establishment that serves a kind of food you've never had before. Give your friends a chance to see what you're interested in, besides the usual stuff you do together. With luck, they'll return the favor.

Write letters. Really. Not just the thank you notes that turn into guilt sometime after you were supposed to send them, but real letters. Write to friends and relatives. Try to write at least one letter a month, just for the fact that by spending twenty-five cents, you are getting somebody to pick up your letter, take it anywhere you want it to go, and hand deliver it to someone else. Hey, it's the best deal you can get for a quarter these days.

Use your new letter writing skills to do something that will assure you some fame. Set a goal of getting published this year. This is a free country, right? Express yourself. If you see something in the media that you disagree with, write to the station, the magazine, the newspaper, and tell them what you think. Use this skill to reply to those "journalists" who think that role-players are deranged and comic-book readers are simple. Your words count, and if enough of us keep this up, maybe someone will get the hint and pick on a new target. (You can also write to anyone here at Gateways, including myself or Jeff Gomez. We love to get your letters, and I even answer mine.)

Make it a habit to try new things every week. Read a different newspaper, or magazine. Look in a different book section, and consider mysteries and historical dramas and non-fiction. Eat something you never tried before. Buy a new comic book, and a record or tape of a new group. (Or an old one you never listened to before.) Consider re-decorating your bedroom.

Throw the regular cook out of the kitchen, and make dinner, *a la* you.

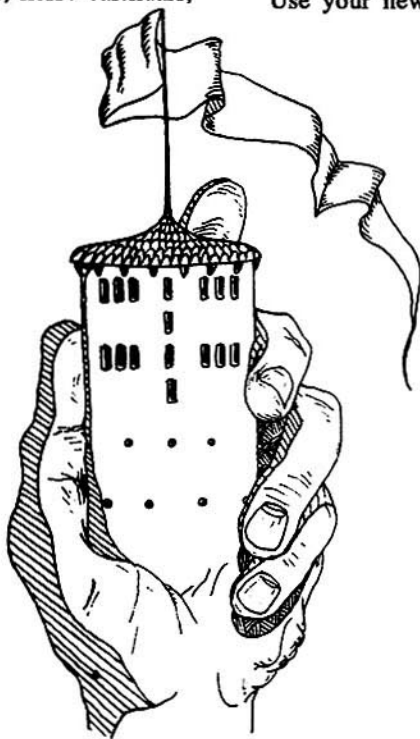
Try to read at least one newspaper every day, from the front page all the way through. Think of the comics and the sports as a reward for reading the news. Talk about what you think about, with friends and with members of your family. If there's no one around to talk to, write your feelings down.

There should be no reason to hear the dreaded "I'm bored" in 1989. There's plenty to do, especially if you heed the requests of both the new president and his former opponent. There is great need in the world, and whether you care about the environment, the economy, the poor and hungry, or the socially oppressed, there are thousands of organizations that would be very grateful for your spare time. There are still ways to be heroes, even in 1989.

But however you choose to spend your time, be sure to leave enough room to kick off your shoes, put your feet up, and relax. In the middle of all of that doing, learning, teaching and creating, there's bound to be a very special human being who deserves some time to just hang out.

And, if you'll excuse me, I have some ice cream waiting.

Laura Antoniou
Executive Editor



cont'd from pg. 2

Dear Gateways,

I picked up your magazine at a bookstore near the **Dungeons & Dragons** section, and I really enjoy it. You seem to recognize that there are lots of meritable game systems out there, and you don't seem to favor or push any particular one. In fact, you have discussed one or two games that my Waldenbooks doesn't carry, so it will be off to the hobby shop I go! I really like it that, unlike some of your competition, you don't always give favorable reviews to games just because they're advertised in that issue. Also, even your unfavorable reviews give me something to think about, and you point out the merits of a less than perfect game, anyway. Although I guess you could call me an avid D&D'er, because of issue #9's articles on *Ars Magica* and *Freddy Krueger*, I incorporated both a great magic system and a mean *Nightmare* into my campaign! I can't wait for your info on *Allens*!

Yours truly,
James Applebaum
Minneapolis, MN

Dear Gateways,

Let me confess — I'm thrilled! Finally, I know someone is out there who places the stories and dreams just a notch or two above the roll of the dice! Although your artwork is uneven at times, and your articles can occasionally be a little rough around the edges, you people have not once

failed to deliver a mag that is jammed with ideas. You hit the nail right on the head when you insist, in your columns and editorial content, on exploring all media (and life itself) for ways to spin our tales. Role-playing games, I think, are the first step for a whole new generation of people I like to call imagineers.

Stacy LeBron
Freeport, Maine

Dear Gateways,

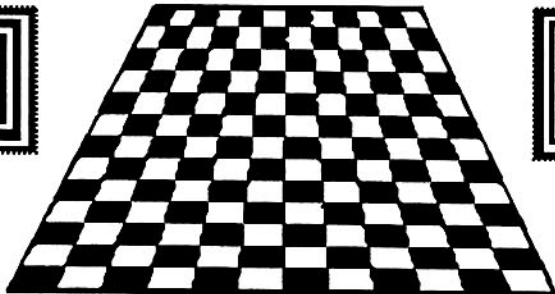
I wrote you a letter in one of your previous issues complimenting you on your magazine; my initial opinions haven't changed. My son and I are both steady readers.

What impresses me most about **Gateways** is its healthy attitude towards gaming in general. It's an attitude I can understand more than ever, now that my son has begun to play with a more active interest.

I have noticed changes in him that I attribute to his role-playing. He is more outgoing, he does better in school because he reads more carefully, he reasons and deduces with more acuity, and his imagination has improved by leaps and bounds. He is not wrapped up in his game to any extent — I am just as likely to find him playing baseball as any kind of role-playing game; although he has told me that if he imagines that he is Gary Carter while he is playing, he can hit better.

Jack Larron
Flushing, NY

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The Tome



Zen and the Art of Diceless Role-playing or: What can we get rid of next?

Erick Wujcik

Riddle me this, all you role-players: *Is it possible to play a role-playing game without using dice?*

No, I don't mean just the substitution of cards, coin-flips or computerized random number generators for the old plastic polyhedrons. I mean, can an RPG be run with so much pure role-playing that dice are unnecessary? Let me try to convince you.

Imagine yourself in the following little role-playing scene. It's a little piece of role-playing background suitable for any campaign, any set of rules, anywhere in the multitude of universes where we all spend a few imaginary lifetimes:

The door that bars your way is obviously rigged with some kind of trap. Years of practice in picking locks makes it obvious that the lock itself is the trigger. Turn it one way and it opens, turn it the other way and the trap goes off. You have the skill to disarm the entire trap, but that would take time, and the footsteps in the distance grow louder...

In most games, this discription is followed by the simple command, "roll on your lock picking skill. If you make the role, you live, if you fail, the trap will go off." How much more interesting it is to leave the decision up to the player rather than the dice.

Are you going to turn the tumblers of the lock clockwise? Or counterclockwise. Those noisy footsteps seem to be advancing rather quickly!

You see? The same situation, the one where dice were previously "required", is now diceless. And, in a lot of ways, it's much more exciting now that life or death decision depends on the skill of the player. Skill? You might ask what skill is involved in choosing whether to turn a key clockwise or counterclockwise. Isn't it the same as rolling a

50/50 chance with some kind of dice? Not exactly. For example, suppose you had the knowledge that all the other locks in this area opened clockwise. That might be a clue that this particular lock opens counterclockwise, as a way of snaring the unwary intruder. Or, you might know whether the guy who built the trap was left or right handed. Or, the placement of the the door and its hinges might give another clue.

Let's talk about where the dice came from. Once upon a time there were no role-playing games at all. Then along came something called DEE-N-DEE, the very first role-playing game. The thing is, it didn't come alone. The first role-playing game was carrying a lot of excess baggage. Mostly gear that had been picked up in the transition from the world of miniatures and miniature games, into pure role-playing.

Therefore, one of the first things that had to be sloughed off from the early early version of the game was the *miniatures*. For all you youngsters in the audience, there was a time when most Game Masters (then called Dungeon Masters) were firmly convinced that miniatures were required for "quality" role-playing. In defense of miniatures, people would argue that they were essential for combat resolution, and that they helped players identify with their characters. Well I, for one, could never identify any of my favorite characters with any of those painted pieces of lead. In my mind, they were vivid, real, moving people. And those little metal dolls just didn't measure up. Within a few years, miniatures in general didn't measure up. Game Masters and players no longer thought of miniatures as important, or even helpful, to good role-playing games.

Another piece of DEE-N-DEE baggage was the map. Before DEE-N-DEE, games were conducted on miniature sets or dioramas. World travelling role-playing characters required a more compact way of describing the world. Hence the development of the map. Nowadays, it's pretty easy to get along without maps. You just have to look at an RPG adventure as a series of experiences or events. Then, like an author leaving out the details of a six hour airplane flight, the GM leaves out the boring details of the spaces between the boring stuff.

To be absolutely honest, I, personally, have gone through all these changes out of sheer laziness. Back in the early days of gaming there was no way I was going to go through the time or expense of collecting miniatures. And, before long, that lazy decision led me to the conclusion that miniatures were actually bad for role-playing because the players got too wrapped up in the miniatures and neglected their own imaginations. Roughly the same thing happened with maps. I started out as an avid dungeon map-maker. My masterpiece was *Old Napalm's Dungeon*, a classic here in the Detroit area, with over a dozen levels each containing hundreds of rooms. Then laziness came over me once again. Making Napalm's Dungeon room by room was way too much work. And it didn't even work in terms of the campaign objectives. Y'see, I figured that only a few items were really essential, so why pop in all the non-essentials? Gradually, my maps went from pages to partial pages, from graph paper and ruler, to hasty sketch. They became less and less structured and more and more imaginary. Yet the campaign didn't suffer.

The players did what they always did; filled in the holes with their vivid imaginations. And, after a time, as with the miniatures, I came to believe that gaming without formal maps might be a superior way of doing things.

So I thought to myself, if the map isn't necessary, if the miniatures aren't needed, what else can I get rid of?

Dice.

Let me give you an example from a player's point of view. Once a upon a time, I rolled up a character with an appalling shortage of hit points. Even when Ancelmo went up in levels, he only gained another one or two hit points. So, I deliberately avoided combat. In a year of weekly campaigns, Ancelmo only fought once. And, he *never* got hurt — not so much as a single hit point. How? He avoided rolling dice!

When the Game Master (who happend to be Mike Cuba, and who deserves a plug here) would suggest rolling for something, I would immediately start fishing for more information. Instead of rolling to find traps, I would shine a light into door cracks and look for wires and loose rocks. Rather than fighting monsters, I would bluff, hide, negotiate, bribe, stall, or even surrender. And I studied locks like a lawyer studied the law. It took all that to keep Ancelmo alive. After all, getting to sixth level with less than a dozen hit points takes more than luck. I didn't really think about getting rid of dice all together. I just knew that some of my best role-playing experiences, as a GM or a player, involved lots of discovery or character interaction, with relatively few dice.

Then, in 1985, I started working on a role-playing game based on Roger Zelazny's *Amber Chronicles*. Working on the game, I knew it needed a totally new and different game system. Something that would reflect the intrigue and byzantine complexity of the Amber universe. So I started by simply leaving out dice whenever possible. My philosophy was, when I needed dice, I'll put 'em in. If I can design anything without dice, then, better yet. And I never, ever needed dice.

I don't want to get into the mechanics of the game. (That's for another time and another article.) Suffice to say that character creation, combat and conflict resolution were all diceless, but never boring or predictable. In the three years of playtesting since then, I've only used dice once. That was in the first game, and it was a mistake. An eye opening mistake.

Here was the situation. A major non-player character (Bleys) was to contact one of two player characters. I simply rolled to see which player would receive the call. And I instantly regretted it. The mistake? I, as the GM, had neglected to get into the character of the NPC. From the point of view of Bleys, there was nothing random about the decision. Bleys was familiar with both player characters, and he would make a rational, informed, decision about who he wanted to contact.

Let's take a look at the real world for a second. Assume that you needed to borrow \$200. Who would you ask? Given the choice of borrowing from your mother, your father, or your best friend, isn't there a clear decision? You hardly need to roll dice to decide. What is true for you should be true for Bleys. And it is basically true for the rest of the universe. Each entity in power, each force, each NPC is a

decision maker. Now, three years later, all the various *Amber* campaigns are completely diceless. New Game Masters usually have to go through a few weeks of dice withdrawal, but they eventually get the hang of it. And the players love it.

Now I'm not saying that we should get rid of dice in any existing games.

For some reason, some gamers have this picture of me, leading a mob by torchlight shouting, "Burn the dice!", while battering down the sacred gates of role-playing. What I'm trying to say is that dice are not *essential* to the art of the role-playing game; that it is *possible* to design, produce and run games without dice. Not every game! There are plenty of games where I wouldn't dream of designing without the dice. I like the rolling to get around the *Monopoly* board, to beat up the opposition in *Ogre*, or to conquer the world in *Risk*. And, by the same token, I wouldn't want to play *Champions*, or *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, or, *Paranoia* without the random rolls. After all, we still roll dice every Thursday night in my fantasy campaign, just like we have for the last ten years.

All I'm saying is that maybe, just maybe, it's time to figure out where and when we can get rid of dice. Without that drastic change we may never find out role-playing's real potential.

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TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE

So Like, Anyone Can Play this Revised & Ridiculously Rad New Game, Y'Know?

Serge Clermont

The news is out, sports fans: Teenagers From Outer Space the R. Talsorian Game created by Mike Pondsmith, has been revamped, re-pixed and readied for re-release! With supplementary material from crack adventure game specialist Greg Costikyan (see Gateways issues 6 and 9) added for its Spring of 1989 debut, the new package will be completed with a marvelous cover by Wayne Barlowe, and filled with humorous and sometimes gut-busting illustrations by Scott Ruggels and Mike Ebert.

Influenced as much by Japanese manga (Urutsei Yatsura, or Lum to you Americans, in particular), as by those really bad science fiction teen flicks of the 1950s, the theme of this game is summed up in the opening lines of Teenagers' introductory text, titled *Skip This If You Hate Introductions*: "Alien Contact. The subject of scholarly and science fictional works throughout the ages. The Eternal

Dream of Mankind; to know, at last, that he is not Alone in the Cosmos.

This book has nothing to do with that stuff. This is Teenagers From Outer Space."

Get the picture? And this is only the beginning. Teenagers From Outer Space, revised, is possibly the funniest role-playing comedy game since Ghostbusters from West End Games.

Players be forewarned — do not purchase this game product if you are a serious-minded role-player! If your idea of role-playing is akin to doing scenes in a game session like the soliloquy from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, then this is definitely not the game for you! Teenagers is the farthest thing from the type of system that allows for such poetic hogwash — uh, I mean, displays of artistic talent. The Teenagers rule system is constructed in such a fashion that



7pm

4 Teenagers From Outer Space
Her Boyfriend's back, and she's
gonna be in trouble! One of the
Teenagers old flames comes to
take her home and marry her—even
if he has to destroy Earth to do it!



it's impossible to take this game seriously while playing.

First of all, the text itself is written on a personable and friendly level. It's as if the designers were sitting down with the reader and explaining the rules to them, without cluttering it all up with unnecessary back references and ten-dollar words. I actually found myself snickering at some of the passages in the rules, marveling at the humor in the zany one-liners peppered throughout the book.

The best sight gags are the cartoons to the side of the text with an accompanying label. They also reinforce certain concepts being discussed on the page they are located on. The secret to the assured success of this book is that the comedy is not really out of this world. This game is one that the average gamer looking for a good game system might have created on his own. At the same time, the average person off the street can page through Teenagers and not be daunted by complicated rules because there aren't any. The definition of role-playing is listed in the book as "Let's Pretend with Rules", which is absolutely correct.

Speaking of the rules, immediately following the treatise on the art of what gamers do best is a short mini-misadventure (something about clams and the Foreign Legion) that would-be role-players can play out from the text with a little help from the Referee.

Once that's done with, the next step in the process of learning how to play Teenagers is character generation. According to the Teenagers history guide, it seems that aliens made contact with the people of Earth, but with a different twist to this grand meeting than what has been traditional in extraterrestrial contact (invasions, helping man out of his primitive existence, etc.) For once, even though these aliens had vastly superior technology, they did not know how to relax, be cool, and get down. Previous to touching down on Club Med Earth, they had been busy doing, well, you know, alien stuff.

Oozing and analyzing. Interfacing with man resulted in a wonderful cultural exchange. The Aliens picked up the greatest nuances of Earth culture, like MTV and other forms of having a good time, while we got all their neat gadgetry. Unfortunately (from the standpoint of some of the Earth adults), the adolescents of the alien races that made contact decided that Earth would be a really gnarly place to hang out. That is the campaign setting. The players have a choice of playing a human Teener or one of the three categories of Aliens—Near Humans, Not Very Near Humans, and Real Weirdies. Alien Teener characters more often than not have very strange (and sometimes silly) superpowers, like Super Strength or Nobody Home.





in any situation where they are applicable. The Referee assigns a level of complexity to an attempted action on the part of the Teener. The Player must roll one die, add the most appropriate Stat number to the result, also figuring the bonuses for related Knacks if any. The final number must be greater than the level the GM assigned to the action in order for it to succeed. If it doesn't, the mind reels imagining the possible consequences.

Teeners cannot increase their Stats, but they can improve their old Knacks or purchase new ones using the equivalent of experience points in this system, called Teener Points. The suggested method for awarding them is through democratic process. The players, using the cut-out cards in the back, each vote on how many Teener Points a particular player gets after the end of the gaming session, choosing an amount from 0-3. The average of the votes rounded down is the final Teener Point award for that player. Teener Points can be traded in for Teener Money, also made out of cut-outs in the back of the book.

Such trivialities as mechanics, distances and combat modifiers are not really that important in Teenagers. Basically it's what tells a good and funny story that works. The section titled "Getting Funny" is the chapter in the Referee's Section that will help the GM to run an effective Teener campaign. The tips and hints on what to consider before and while running a game session, especially "The Five Rules Of Comedy", are very helpful and, if utilized properly, will provide the right atmosphere for wild and wacky role-playing. Standard Gags and Routines for Teener sessions like the Attack of the Jealous Alien Girlfriend are suggested, as well as a listing of plot summaries for the GM in the

form of a TV show guide/timetable.

Teenagers From Outer Space is a game on the lighter side of role-playing that is not specifically aimed at individuals who are already familiar with various role-playing systems. This 93 page book is excellently written, and can (and should) be used to bridge the recreational gap between the regular gamer and the non-gamer. Boxed editions and supplements, like the wacky Field Trip, are forthcoming or already at your hobby stores. By mid-1989, these beach bum E.T.'s will have even found their way into your neighborhood bookstore, making it one of the most accessible RPGs in the country! It's also quite suitable for younger gamers as well, as the violence within can be kept at a humorous level, not a lethal one. But the best thing about Teenagers From Outer Space is that it encourages its

players to laugh and add a little summer fun into the winter-time. This quality is a breath of fresh air to the market of game systems, and, even if you buy it and never play, at least you'll get a good kick out of its contents. Enjoy!

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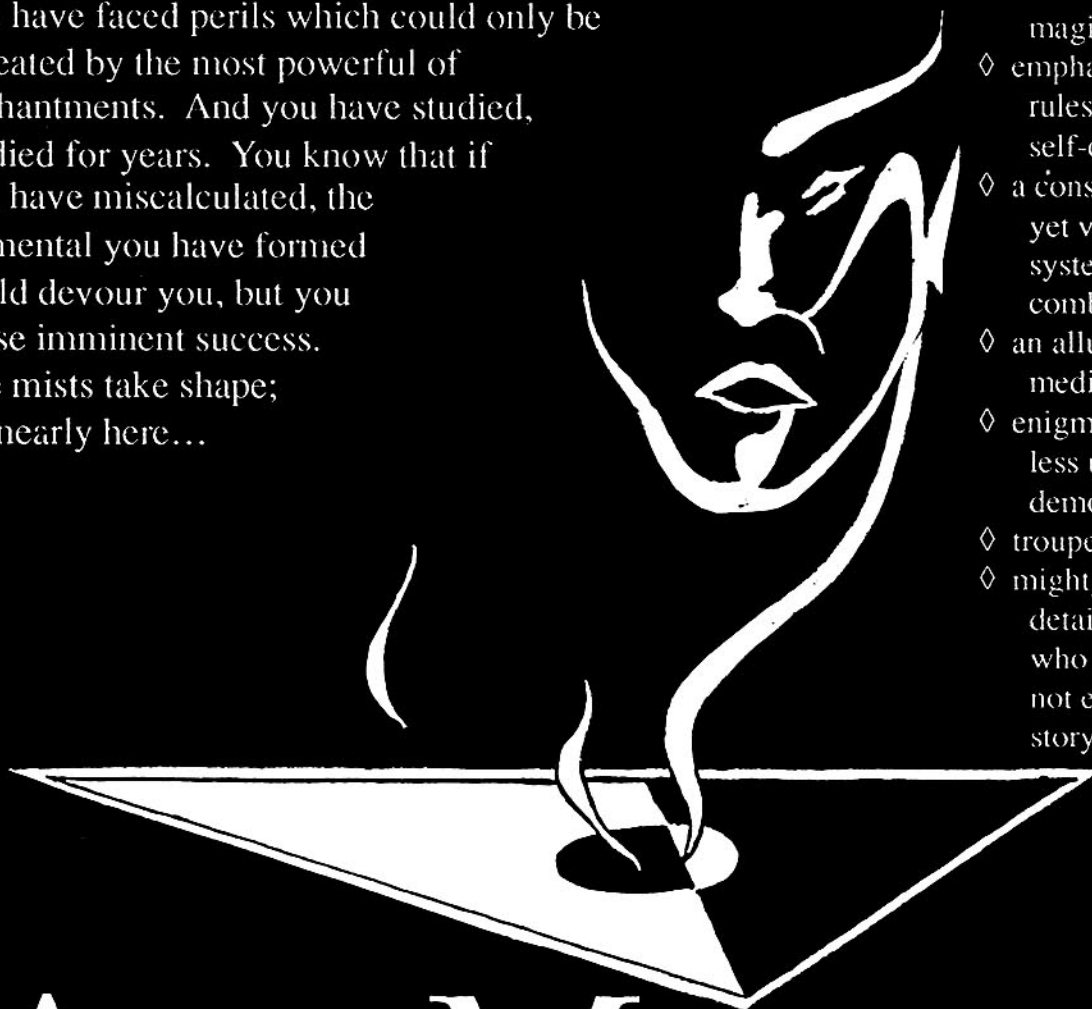
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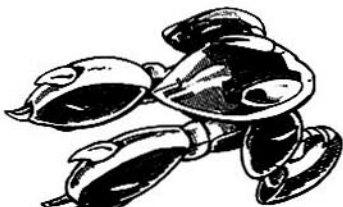
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Summer Books for those Winter Nights

Susan M. Kreider

ARABESQUES:

More Tales Of The Arabian Nights

Edited by Susan Shwartz

Avon, \$3.95, 258 pp.

Forget the bare trees and barren landscape of December. Forget the cold gray sky. Forget snow and ice. Think instead of hot desert winds and shifting sands, scheming sultans and wicked viziers, mysterious, veiled women and darkly handsome heroes. Think of Ali Baba, Aladdin, Sinbad. Think of Scheherazade spinning stories to save her life. Think of a place that was There and Then, not Here and Now: The world of the Arabian Nights.

This is the world of Arabesques. Subtitled *More Tales of The Arabian Nights*, this collection of thirteen new stories Scheherazade herself would envy is bound neatly together by editor Susan Shwartz in a framework that is, itself, a story. It is the month long feast of Ramadan. In the city of Kashagar, the young knight, Peter of Wraysbury waits to be ransomed from the house of a merchant prince. This merchant has graciously granted both a messenger and the space of a thousand days in which to obtain the ransom. The thousand days (and nights) pass, the tales are told, and gradually, Peter grows from honorable captive into honored guest and, ultimately, into treasured friend.

The tales themselves are as exotic and varied as the goods in Kashagar's bazaar. In *Foolish, Wicked Clever and Kind*, Tanith Lee offers her variation on the traditional theme of three brothers seeking their fortunes, William R. Forstchen touches a darker side when he writes of the revenge desired by *The Truthsayer*, and the sacrifice required to gain it. Esther M. Friesner counters with *An Eye For The Ladies*, a tongue-in-cheek tale involving a flying carpet, royal virgins and a spinster Djinna. But, for the sheer power and beauty of their writing, the stories by Jane Yolen and Judith Tarr stand out. Yolen's *Memoirs of a Bottle Djinni* is a short, but haunting, piece, wherein a slave ponders the kinds of freedom his one magic wish might hold, while Tarr's *Kehailan* finds the freedom of his heart's desire to be more of a prison than the duty he sought to escape.

Arabesques closes with a bibliography on the world of The Arabian Nights compiled by Sandra Miesel. Covering culture, religion, literature, art, and military life, this bibliography could be a boon to the Game Master inspired by the stories, either in designing a new campaign of spicing up a current one. Too often the Arabian Nights setting is neglected in favor of a medieval or oriental one. However, gamers might enjoy the change of pace it offers:

settings that range from the deserts of Egypt to the marble domes of Damascus and Baghdad or the high peaks of the Pamirs; and the new characters that can be created, especially among the many classes of demons, djinni and efreet.

THE WITCHES OF WENSHAR

Barbara Hambly

Del Ray, \$3.95, 339 pp.

Before it was destroyed, Wenshar had been a city of witches, cruel women who could summon and dismiss sandstorms, and part the winds with their hands, or call up demons and raise the dead. When Wenshar fell, the witches and their evil supposedly died. But their magic was not lost; in the fortress of Tandieras, Kaletha, the so-called White Witch of Wenshar, has found their spellbooks and is using them to teach others. Sun Wolf and Starhawk have come to Tandieras, hoping Kaletha can teach Sun Wolf how to control his newly-acquired wizardry. But Sun Wolf is uneasy about Kaletha's powers and her teachings. Despite her claims to use only white magic, someone in the fortress is using magic as the witches of Wenshar did — to kill.

Nominally a sequel to *The Ladies of Mandrigyn*, continuing with the characters of Sun Wolf and Starhawk, his lieutenant, *The Witches of Wenshar* is a separate novel and can be read alone.

With Sun Wolf and Starhawk, Barbara Hambly has created two of the most interesting characters in fantasy today. Sun Wolf is not just another young wizard or scholar discovering his powers and maturing in the process. As with other Hambly heroes, Sun Wolf is not young — he's forty, a man approaching middle age who already knows power of a different kind as the captain of a mercenary army.

He has always been a man of action, smart and quick thinking, but not scholarly or introspective. Wizardry was thrust on him, unlooked-for and unwanted, in *Ladies*, when he was poisoned with anid and survived, thus passing the Great Trial into power "full and wild as a dragon". Now, as he tells Starhawk, the power is "...Like a fire inside me, burning me up". He is torn between the fighter's instincts that he knows and trusts, and the new ones of a wizard that make no sense to him yet, but which he must develop to survive.

Starhawk, his lieutenant and now his lover, is not the usual fantasy swordswoman. She is *not* a plucky young princess-turned-swordswoman in defiance of all tradition. She is *not* dazzlingly beautiful and/or buxom. She doesn't wear the improbable chainmail bikini, and she doesn't seduce every man or woman, she meets. She is long and lean, thirtyish, and blessedly "plain as bread". She is also quiet, calm and deadly, a woman who can be "stark naked and still produce a concealed weapon at a second's notice". Unlike Sun Wolf, she is introspective. Her own intuition that comes from years of detached observation provides Sun Wolf with a balance to his erratic, mage-born powers.

In the roles of scholar and wizard's apprentice are the young royals, Jeryn and his sister Tazey, a very natural and appealing pair. Sixteen year old Tazey has Sun Wolf's and Starhawk's sympathies from the first; a young woman who can dance, ride or fight with equal ability, is being forced to

give it all up for an unwanted political marriage. Her bond with Sun Wolf strengthens when she, too, is revealed as a wizard. Nine year old Jeryn is less immediately likeable. Seen by most as sullen and sneaky, and thought to be a coward, even Sun Wolf has little use for the boy until Jeryn joins him in a search of the fortress library.

Some of the other characters are less convincing. Anshebbeth, Tazey's governess, is nearly a caricature of the shrill, prim, repressed woman. It's fairly obvious that she is someone's tool. Osgard, the king, is also a stereotype of the big, blustering ex-warrior; not too bright, turned to drink, and disappointed in his sensitive, scholarly son. Nanciomis, his brother-in-law, is the sort of too-smooth character who reeks of plots and schemes. His part in the murders is not unexpected.

Hambly uses a straightforward third person narrative that she carefully limits to Sun Wolf and Starhawk. There is no bouncing back and forth, even when the two appear together. All her characters speak naturally, with no attempt at artificial archaicisms. Sometimes she takes this a little too far the other way and there are occasional slips into modernisms; phrases like "gonna be sore" and "pretty sure" pop up enough to be noticed, and Sun Wolf's parting remark about Jeryn — "Kid's going to be hell on wheels when he takes over Wenshar" — is really jarring.

Although the culture of Wenshar seems to be Arab-inspired with the desert-bred *shirdar* in their long flowing robes and their worship of demons and wind-borne djinns, there are many echoes of the Painted Desert and Monument Valley in the scenery. The rocks and cliffs around the ruined city of Wenshar seems straight out of the American

Southwest: the muted colors of apricot and rose, narrow canyons, crumbling trails and scrub grasses. Hambly's descriptions effectively make the desert a character in itself. This idea seems interesting, but eventually overdone. There is hardly a scene where some aspect of the desert doesn't intrude. At first this adds to the oppressive mood of the story, but after awhile the constant references to the heat and the wind, grit and gravel all become distracting. Nevertheless, *The Witches of Wenshar* is a well-plotted and interesting fantasy adventure.

A series of books outside the science fiction/fantasy field, but still of interest to gamers, are Tony Hillerman's *Navajo Tribal Police* mysteries. Hillerman is an expert on Navajo culture and sets all his mysteries on the Navajo Reservation that spreads across Arizona and New Mexico. His detectives, Lt. Joe Leaphorn and Serjeant Jim Chee, are members of the Navajo Tribal Police, which is responsible for policing the reservation. The Navajo attitude towards criminal behavior is quite different from the white man's and it is quite fascinating to follow Leaphorn and Chee as they use an alternative line of reasoning to solve their crimes. Leaphorn and Chee are intriguing men, Chee in particular; he is studying with his uncle to become a *Yataalii* or singer — a kind of Shaman. Magic and witchcraft are part of Navajo beliefs and Hillerman uses both frequently in his books. An enterprising GM, tired of space opera or secret agents, could, with some research, create a really different sort of adventure for his or her players. Some titles in the series are *Dance Hall of the Dead*, *The Blessing Way*, *The Ghostway*, and the two newest, *Skinwalkers*, and, *A Thief of Time*.

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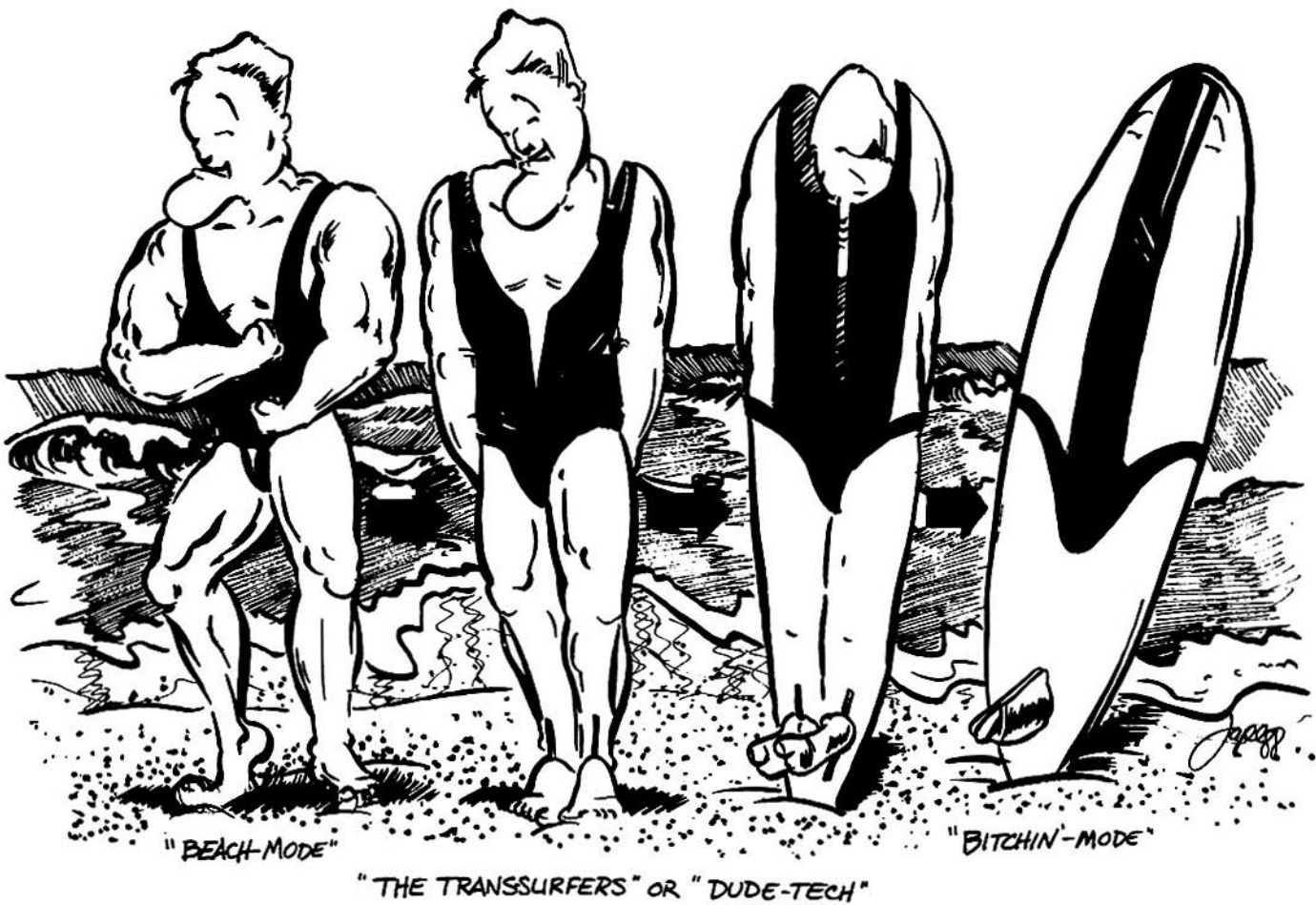
Welcome to the first annual Gateways Summer Fun in the Wintertime Revue! What exactly is this grand occasion? To explain, let's examine the gaming industry for a moment.

When the industry began, most of the gaming companies were located in the midwest, especially near a certain city in Wisconsin. And if you know anything about winters in the northern midwest, you know that it starts snowing just shortly after school begins, and the thaw doesn't seem to come along until sometime around Easter. That's one blockbuster winter!

What does that have to do with Summer in the Winter? Read on.

Gateways Publications is located in New York City. New York is supposed to be a temperate place, unlike the cold and snowy mid-northwest, and we're supposed to have nice mild autumns and winters. Do not be fooled by geography textbooks, though! Just as we New Yorkers start putting away our mournfully dry swimsuits (we can't even begin to tell you about the problems we have swimming around here!), we find ourselves rushing to cold storage to pull out the parkas and scarves for a blustering, icy, wet and freezing winter. So...

Both to stir up some cheer in the northern midwest and to have a little fun here in the frigid east, we asked some of our friends in the industry to show us how the characters and situations we love to game with would spend a day at the beach. (Or some reasonable facsimile thereof.) Now, some folk have taken to calling this a "Swimsuit Issue", which it would be if the only fun thing about summer was wearing swimsuits. But in these next pages, you'll see some industry favorites, both artist and characters alike, just having fun down at the surf. And for those of you who are sitting looking at the five feet of snow that has to be shoveled, we say "Surf's up, dudes and dudettes — take a minute and hang ten!"

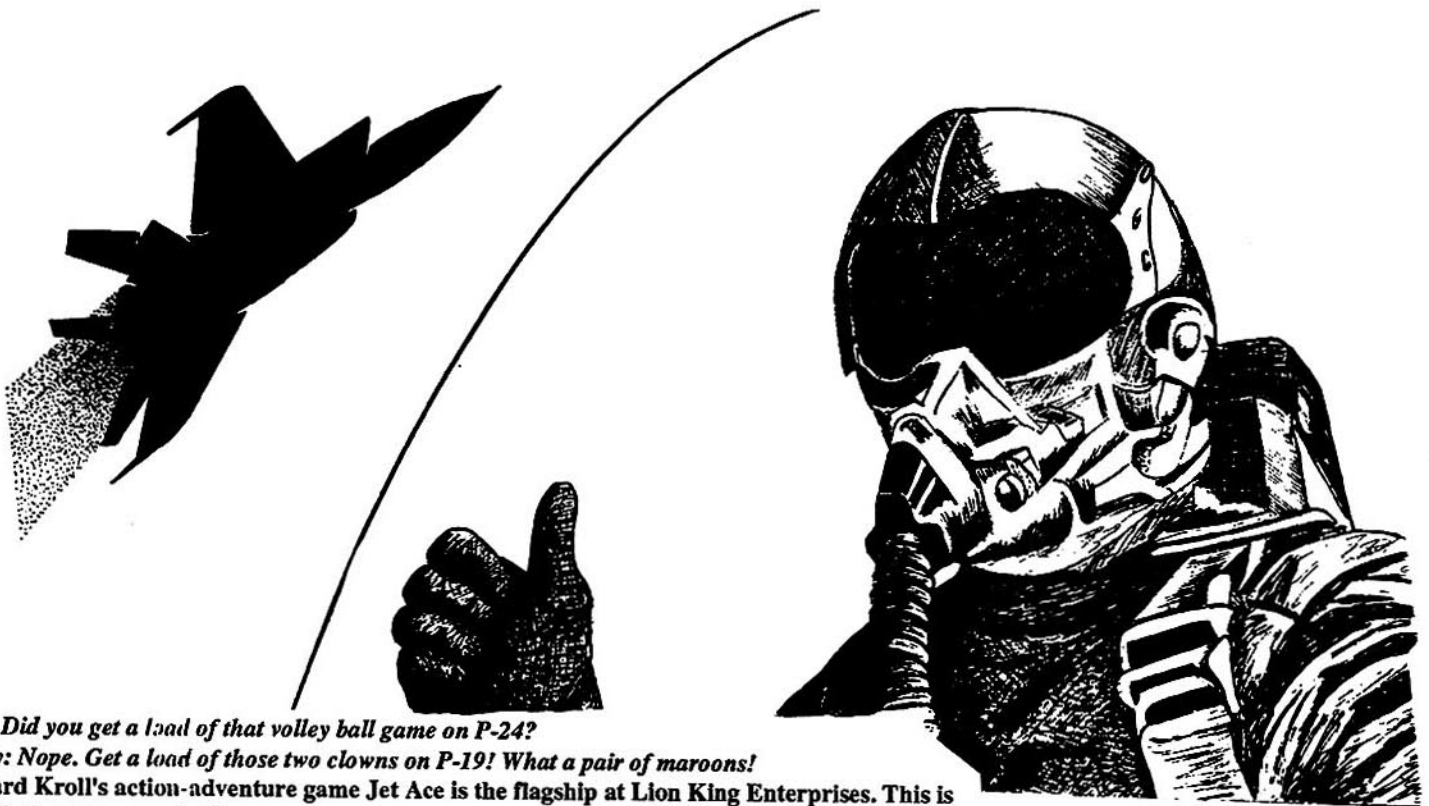


"BEACH-MODE"

"THE TRANSSURFERS" OR "DUDE-TECH"

"BITCHIN'-MODE"

Jape Trostle has established himself as Gateway's ace freelancer cracking issue #11's cover story with deft aplomb...and he draws, too!



Buzz: Did you get a load of that volley ball game on P-24?

Buddy: Nope. Get a load of those two clowns on P-19! What a pair of maroons!

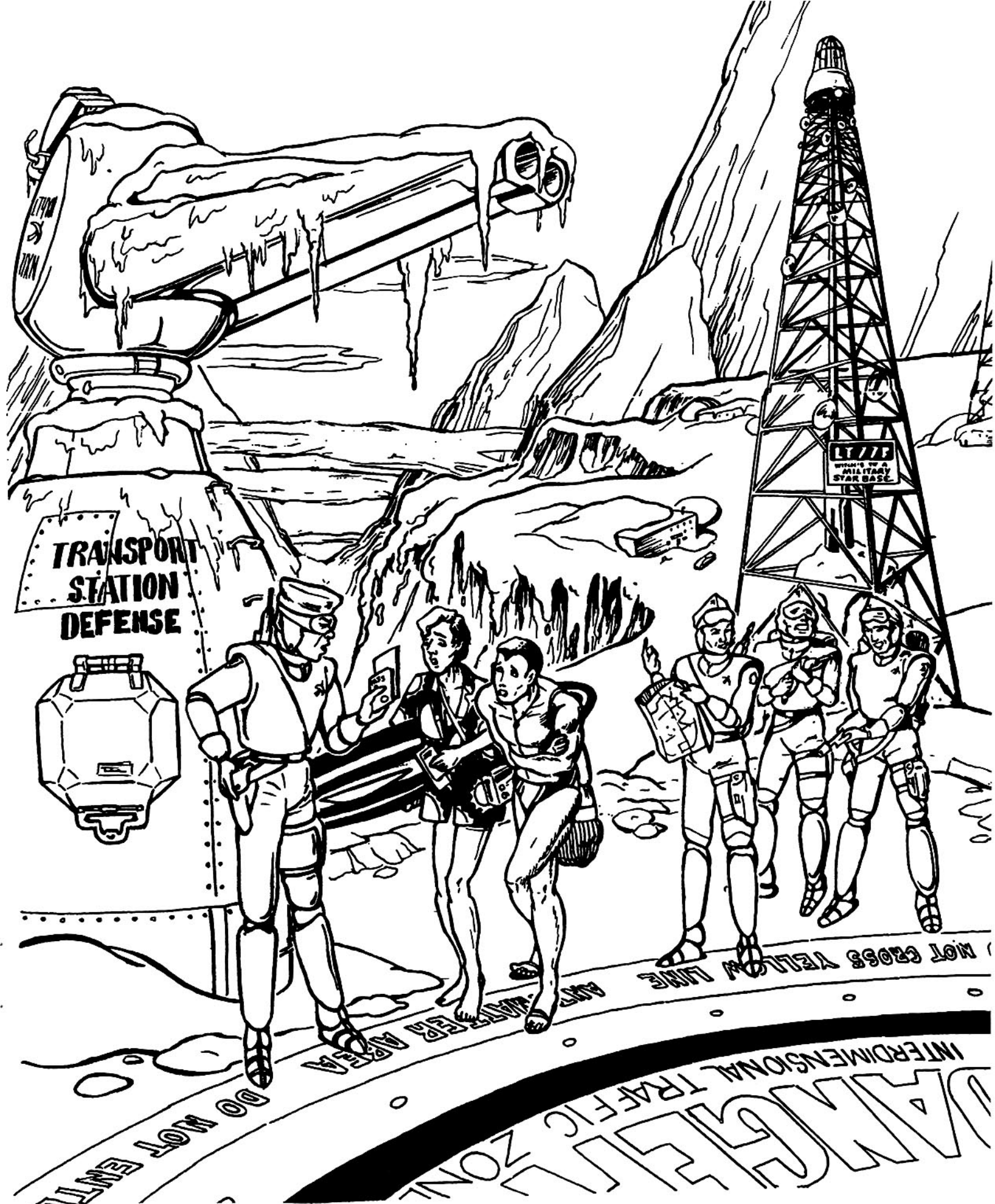
Leonard Kroll's action-adventure game Jet Ace is the flagship at Lion King Enterprises. This is their first appearance in Gateways.



Chrysoula Artemis comes full circle with this fully realized rendition of the barbarienne who graced the back cover of Gateways #1. You've come a long way, Chrys. Welcome back!

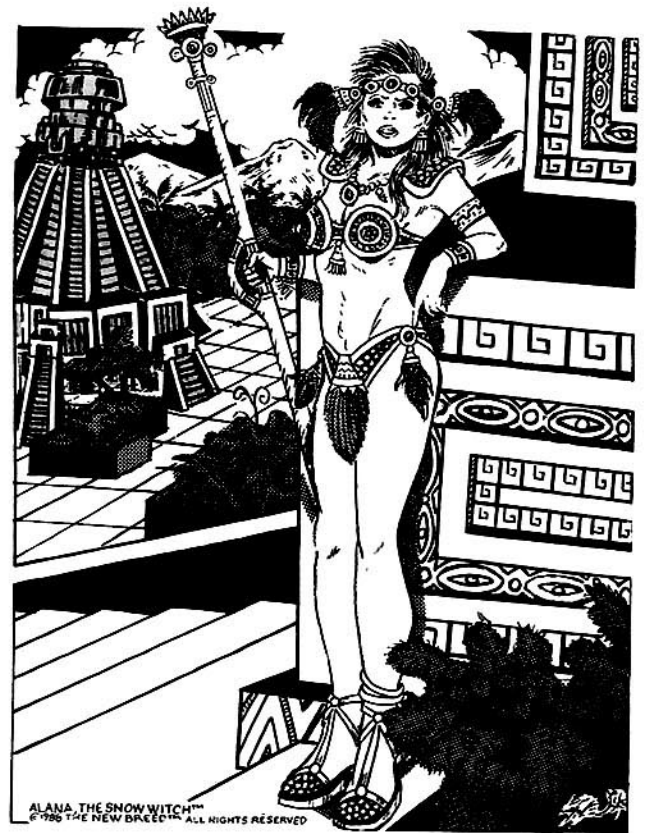


Jeff Menges is a stickler for historic and cultural accuracies. His illustrations have appeared in *Dragon Magazine*, Iron Crown Enterprises' role-playing products, and next spring will see a *White Wolf* cover for Menges. This is his debut in the pages of *Gateways*.



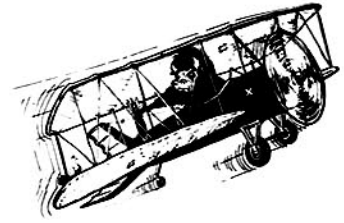
Lori Walls dubs this one "Wrong Turn"! Lori's freelance work has appeared in *Different Worlds*, *Thrust*, and regularly in *Gateways*.

Having lead the New York based group of comic book artists known as "The New Breed" for the past three years, Mike Luck strikes out on his own here with two of his original creations.



The youngest participant in this year's revue, John Hunter operates out of New York City's Comics and Such bookstore, and has freelanced work for Archie Comics.





Steve Crompton takes our award for most inside jokes with his entry from Flying Buffalo. One of the oldest companies in the field, Buffalo produces a throng of exceptional Play-By-Mail (World Wide Battle Plan), and role-playing games (Tunnels & Trolls).

Way out of control, this action shot by Darrel Midgette is taken from Macho Women With Guns, a wildly popular though now out of print RPG by Greg Porter and his Blacksburg Tactical Research Center.



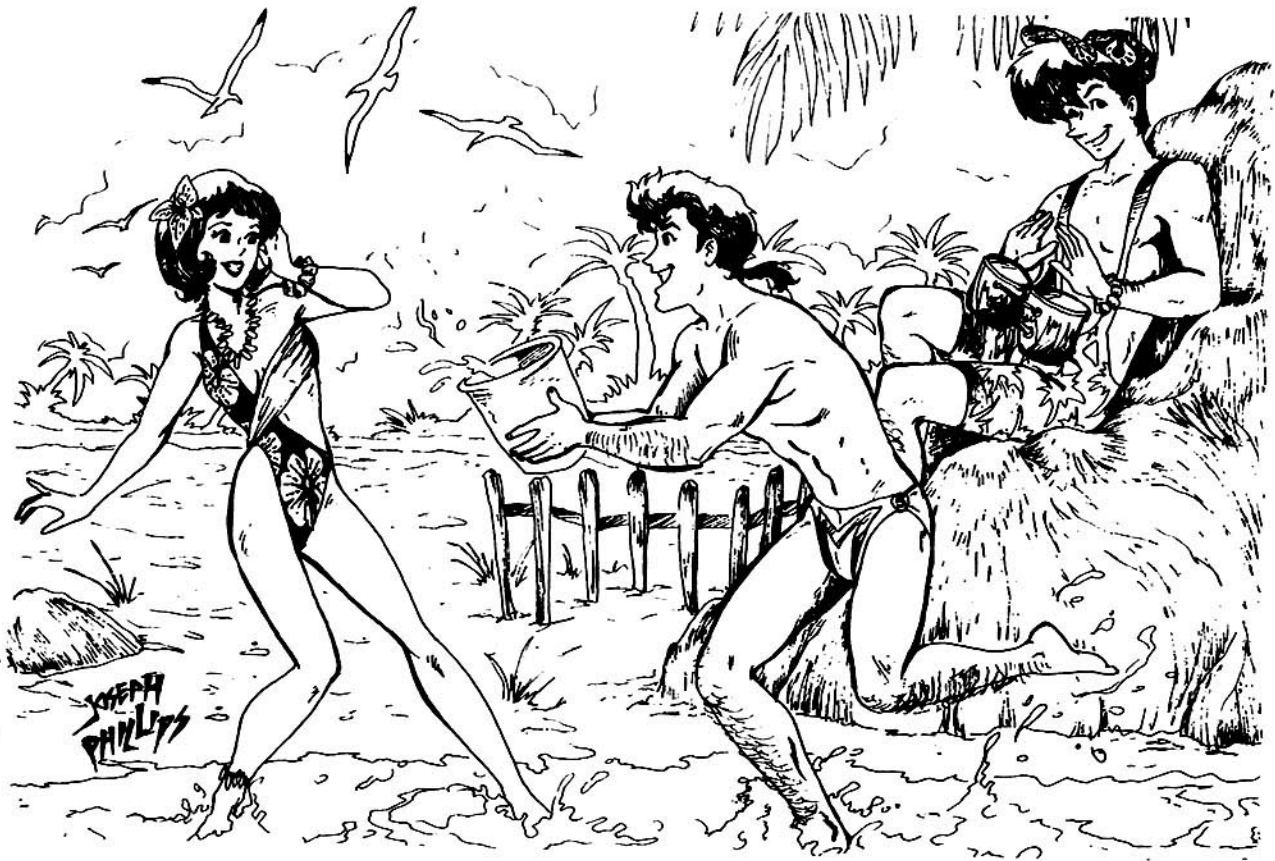


Patrick Etienne takes our very own Gatekeeper to the shores of the cosmos in his own super-cool, ultra-suave style. GPI has commissioned a limited run of 1000 Gatekeeper miniatures from Ral Partha Enterprises. If you'd like one, you'd better hurry! See page 63 to order.

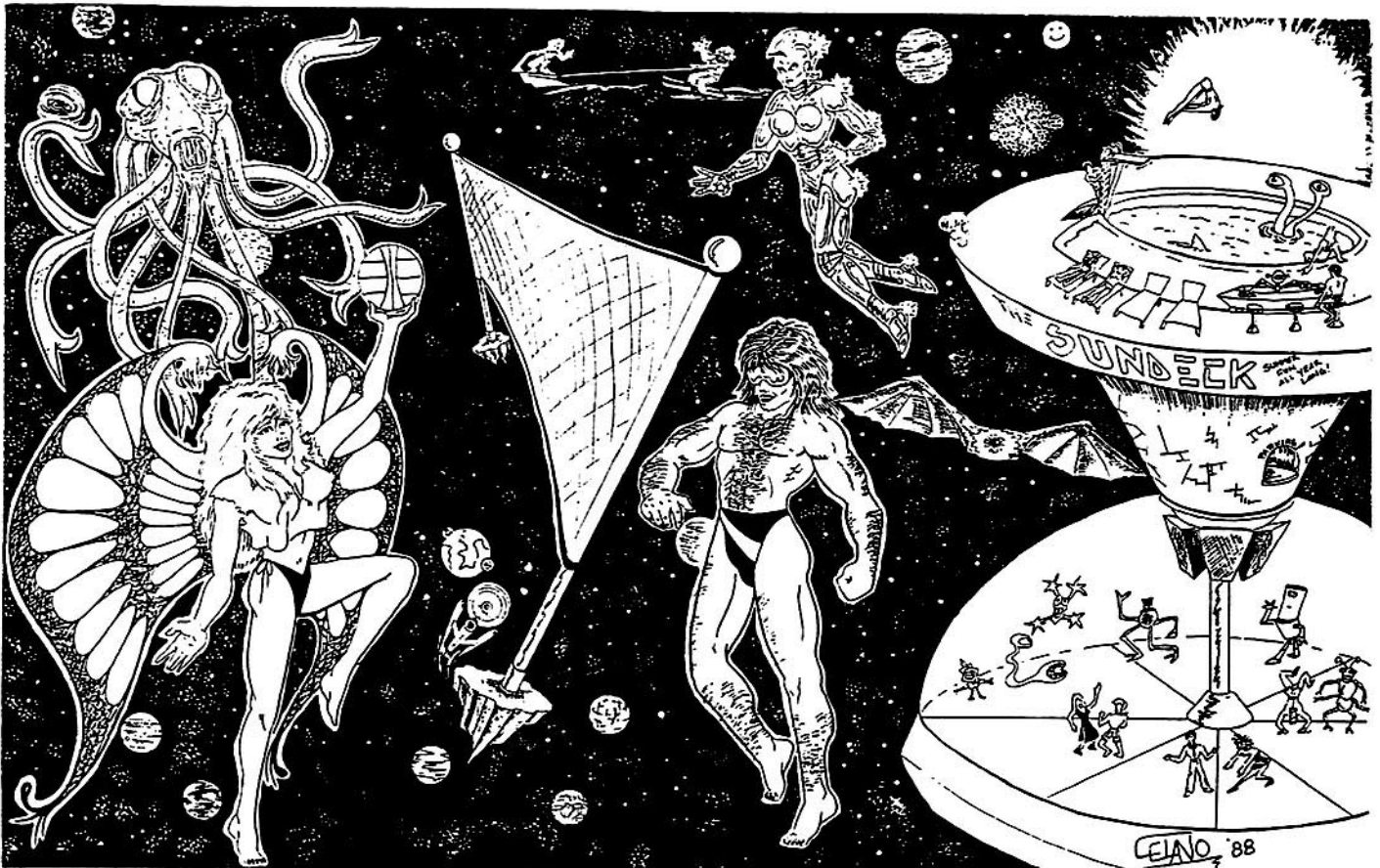


"Jullet in Starlight" by Jerry Acerno, was inspired by the Star Goddess's appearance on *The Cosmic Streetcorner* in Gateways #4. Jerry has worked with such greats as John Romita, Joe Orlando, and Carmine Infantino on such Marvel and DC titles as Power Man/Iron Fist, Secret Origins, and Detective.

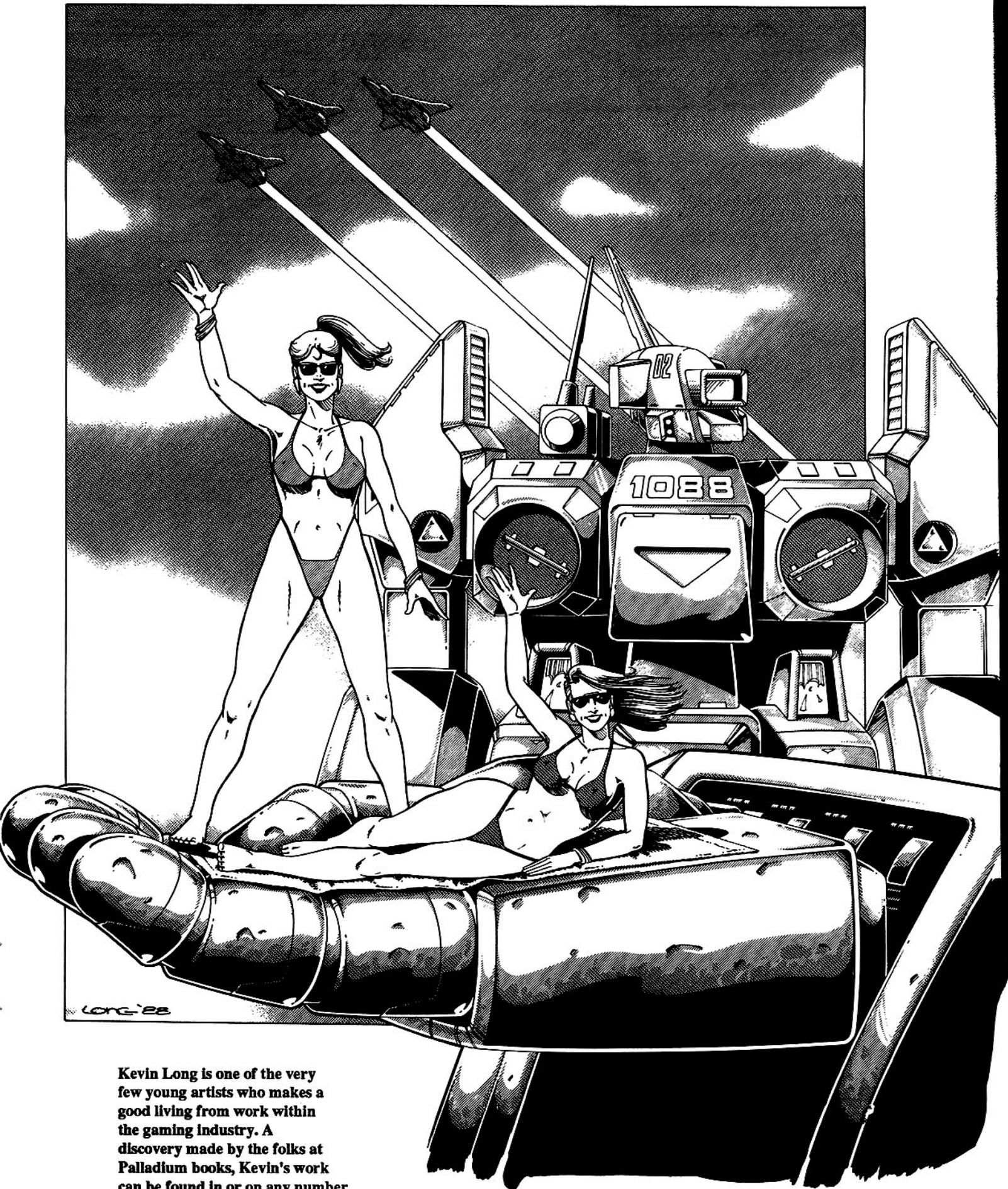
©1989 Now Comics



Joe Phillips has a smash hit with Now Comics' Speed Racer. An award winner two years in a row at Atlanta's DragonCon Costume Ball, Phillips triumphantly weaves his sense of style into Speed's life.

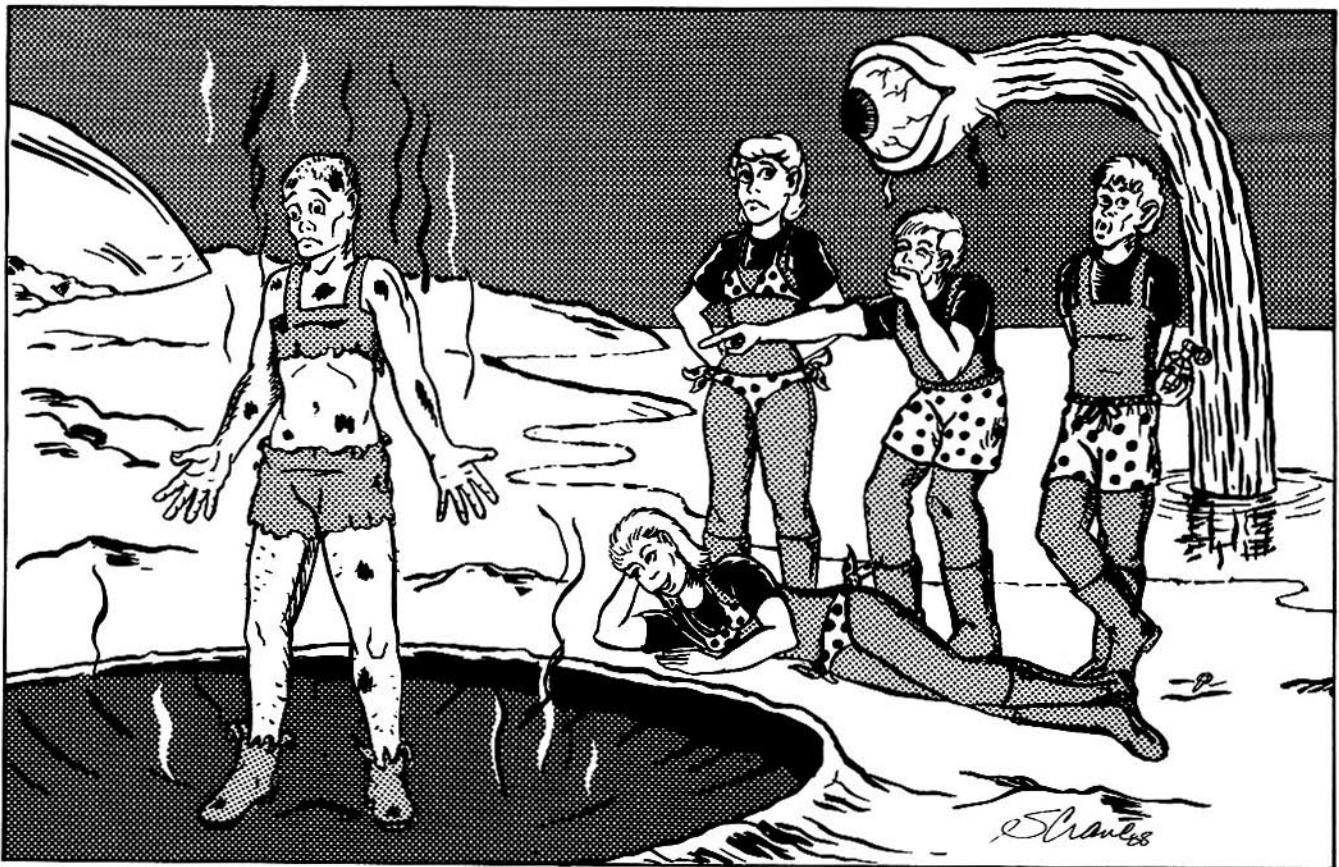


With the launch of his art/photography studio, Stravng Productions, Rick Celano has been in great demand. Rick's particular brand of talent gained national exposure with his anti-drug and child abuse series of public service ads in the pages of Gateways. He is also the namesake of Gateways' mascot, the Celano Dragon.



Kevin Long is one of the very few young artists who makes a good living from work within the gaming industry. A discovery made by the folks at Palladium books, Kevin's work can be found in or on any number of Robotech, Ninja Turtle, and Beyond the Supernatural RPGs.

Characters copyright © 1985/1987 Harmony Gold USA Inc. All rights reserved.
Art provided by Palladium Books by Kevin Long. © 1988.



They say paranoia can destroy ya, and it certainly does — over and over again in the darkly hilarious West End Games hit system, Paranoia. WEG artist, Stephen Crane calls this one "Clones at the Beach", ending our 1988 Revue with more than a bit of a twist.

Who Won Last Year's H.G. Wells Awards for Best RPG's? (Special, pre-publication issue A)

Which Small Gaming Company was Purchased by a Larger Company? (Issue A)

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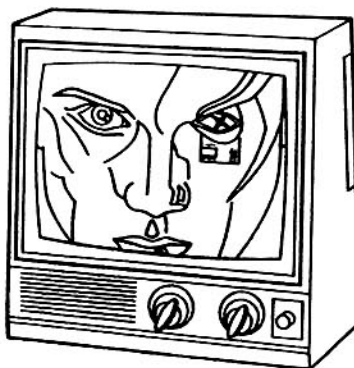
What makes a novel memorable is not the uniqueness of the story but of its characters. The success of Isaac Asimov's *The Robot Novels: The Caves of Steel, The Naked Sun,* and, *The Robots of Dawn* is largely due to the appeal of the characters Elijah Baley and Robot Daneel Olivaw. Baley is the everyman hero and Daneel his faithful robot partner.

Baley, a product of his own civilization; is a middle-aged plainclothes police detective of moderate rank with a plain wife and one son. And he has foibles. There is a growing hatred of robots among the population because positronic robots are displacing people from their jobs. It happens in his own precinct and Baley falls prey to the prejudice of the masses because it touches his own life. He refers to robots as "boy" to emphasize his superiority. He wishes for a better future for his son and for the rest of the earth and eventually makes personal sacrifices to work toward that goal. Baley is an intelligent, ordinary man who has extraordinary crime-solving ability. He observes closely, listens carefully, plays hunches and always gets his man...or robot.

When a Spacer stationed on Earth is killed, Lije Baley is called in to investigate and partnered with the humanoid Spacer robot, Daneel Olivaw. Spacers are the descendents of earthmen who, long ago, colonized other planets. They are superior physically and technologically. They were genetically bred to eradicate disease and genetic weakness. Their average lifespan is over three hundred years. Spacers have an intense dislike of earth people; they think of earthmen as filthy, malodorous, and diseased creatures and fear direct contact. The people of earth share this same dislike of Spacers and see them as arrogant, untrustworthy aliens. Baley does not allow his prejudice to get in the way

of doing his job. The fact that Daneel is human down to the last detail makes the partnership a little less disturbing to Baley.

Daneel Olivaw, young and handsome by earth standards, is a positronic robot specially suited for the task of investigating a murder. He gathers sociological information on humans and his circuits have been enhanced to include a desire for justice, the state which exists when all laws are en-



forced. Though Daneel's logic is flawless, he falls short in being the perfect crime detective because he does not understand human motives. Therefore, he never outshines his partner. Daneel is humble in the way a robot is: he speaks only when necessary and never assumes that he knows more than the man he is serving. Daneel is also a being with growth potential; he does not merely collect information, he assimilates it. Baley reads Daneel the section of the Bible where Jesus intervenes at the stoning of an adulteress. By the end of *The Caves of Steel*, Daneel has gained insight into the true meaning of justice and human compassion. He says to the murderer, "go and sin no more." In *Robots and Empire*, a story which takes place two hundred years after the *Robot Novels*, Daneel becomes the hero, demonstrating all he has learned from his friend Lije Baley.

In the course of the murder investigation, Baley implicates Daneel twice in the crime. By doing so, he learns the three basic laws of positronic robots and realizes that Daneel could not be guilty. The First Law is that a robot may not injure a human, or, through inaction, allow a human to come to harm. The Second Law states that a robot must obey orders given by a human being except where such orders would conflict with the First Law; the Third Law says that a robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law. At first Baley treats Daneel as he would any other robot. He constantly asks Daneel what time it is as if Daneel were a walking alarm clock. But as Baley gets to know Daneel, he begins to see almost human facial reactions and almost hear human voice changes. These are a reflection of his coming to terms with his own prejudice. As it turns out, both Baley's wife Jessie and his long time friend and boss Enderby have both been hiding something. Baley realizes that Daneel is a partner in the truest sense of the word; he is concerned for Baley's welfare, would give his own life to save his, and is someone Baley can trust implicitly.

In *The Naked Sun*, Baley and his friend Daneel are re-united to solve a murder on the outer world planet of Solaria. Baley's weakness at the onset is his struggle with the environment. Agoraphobia is second nature to city dwellers who spend their whole lives in steel caves and never see the sun. But Baley is determined to face his fears in order to solve the case. In addition, Baley becomes a most unlikely love interest for an attractive, repressed Solarian woman. Baley greatly overestimates his own weakness and underestimates the amount of danger he is in and Daneel comes to his rescue on several occasions.

In *Robots of Dawn*, set on the powerful planet of Aurora, Baley's foible is that he passes judgement on appearances alone. He assumes that the robot who looks less human is the simpler machine. All through the book, Asimov cleverly chides us not to judge a book by its cover. The solution of the previous case on Solaria inspired a hyperwave drama to be produced. All the characters in the story are disappointed when they see middle-height, middle-aged Baley. They tell Baley he doesn't look anything like the man who portrayed him in the hyperwave drama. The relationship between Baley and Daneel has remained one of respect and affection. In a threatening moment, Daneel reveals his 'feeling' for Baley, and tells a fellow Aurorian that he would put the earth man Baley's life above hers because he and Baley are partners and friends. Baley's response is to tell the Aurorian not to test the "force of our love"; a comment which refers to his friendship with Daneel.

Lije Baley is a character who, in most fiction, would seem an unlikely hero. He is an ordinary man who, with the help of his partner, Daneel, a robot with a touch of humanity, is able to face his weaknesses and his prejudices and overcome them for the

purpose of a greater good. Baley is Asimov's reminder to us that the world would be a better place if we could all be heroes in our own lives.

— Linda Hechtman

Isaac Asimov's *Robots*, Kodak's latest VCR game, is a mystery set in the futuristic science fiction setting of the aforementioned *Robot* novels. The background is the conflict between the Earthers and the Spacers. One man — Han Fastolfe, Head of the Robotics Institute — desired that Earthers and Spacers be reconciled with each other for the betterment of both races before a certain group of hostile Spacers (led by his opponent, administrative head of Robotics Institute, Kelden Amadiro) succeed in initiating a movement to destroy Earth. The story: Fastolfe's moderate platform places him in jeopardy, however, as he is the victim of a murder attempt. The viewer must follow the progress of Lije Bailey, as he attempts to discover who tried to kill Fastolfe, accompanied by Robot Daneel Olivaw, who is one of Fastolfe's latest breakthroughs in that he, unlike most robots, is physically indistinguishable from a man. It all runs just like an actual video production, the difference being that the action will pause for a

moment while a prompt is delivered to the viewer to select a labeled clue from the stack provided in the packet. The video ends with a cliffhanger, and these clues are used with others gleaned from the story in the video for the viewer to decide "whodunnit". Asimov's *Robots* comes in a stylish black case with clue booklets, possible solutions, four levels of play and hint sheets, and retails for around \$34.95 (though prices may vary). A must for all Asimov fans.

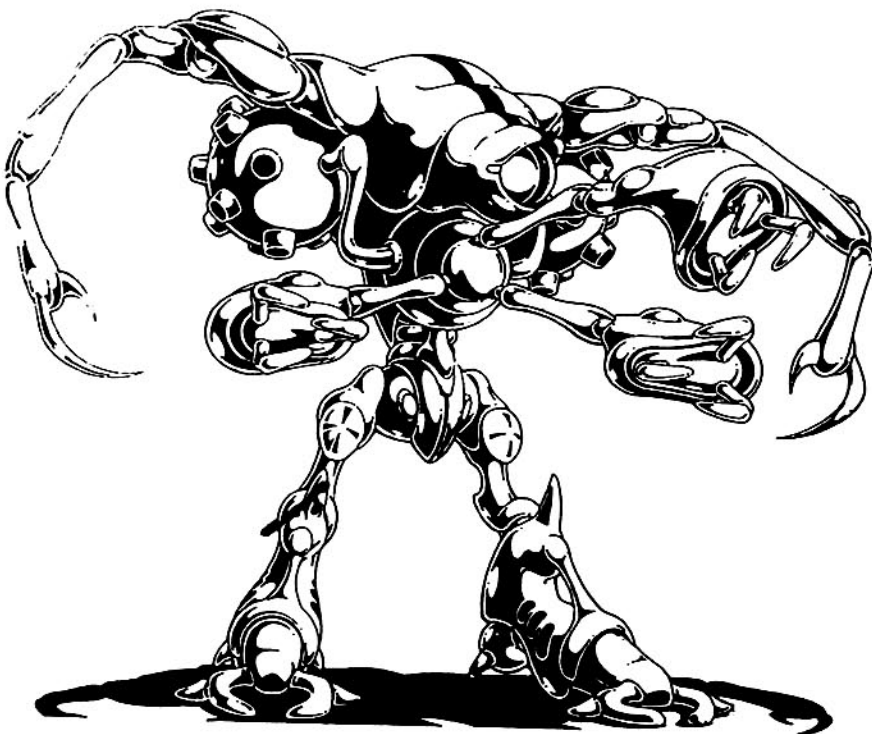
—Serge Clermont

Centauri Express

In this day, when people are talking constantly about multimedia information presentations (Science-fiction books on 3-D holographs with stereo sound and interactive computer controlled storylines, yeah!), it is mildly refreshing to note that people are still attempting to produce interesting ideas on only one medium at a time.

Centauri Express is a magazine on tape (audio, not video). It is a combination of interviews, news articles, and fiction. In the first "issue" I heard, the interview with David Gerrold discussing the *Star Trek* the Next Generation actually seemed to work better in audio than it would in print, as emotion and emphasis (such as sarcasm and humor), do not carry well over into the written medium. The stories, fortunately, were not readings of hoary old science-fiction classics, as I had feared, but rather original renditions, created specifically for this 'magazine', and thus well suited for this particular form of expression. In a way, it harkened back to the pre-TV days of the thirties, when radio was the dominant form of mass media.

The 'magazine' comes out quarterly and has potential if it reaches its target audience. It is well produced and certainly a sincere effort. Commuters will find it easier to listen to the tapes than read in traffic, and, indeed, these are far more stimulating than the latest Madonna hit. The tapes are entertaining with the interviews too brief, but interesting. If this audio magazine continues, I would hope that it concentrates on those aspects of science fiction and the hobbies surrounding it which would really utilize the unique-



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ness of audio. Interviews, new music, and specially produced fiction are perfect for this medium; standard readings of literature available in print might not.

— Ian Harac

Robotech 2 on Video

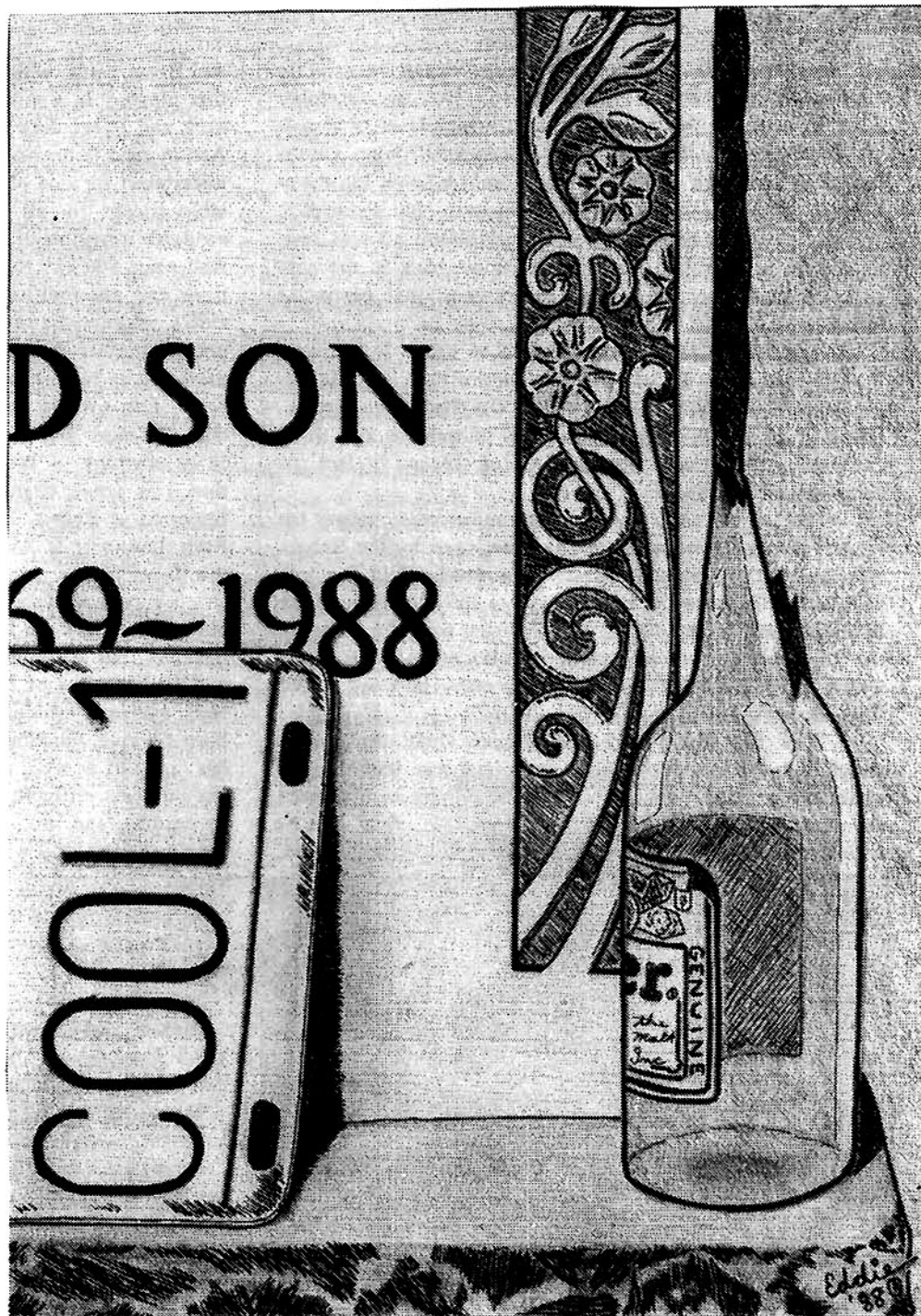
When *Robotech's* creator, Carl Macek, debuted his ideas about his new animated series way back in 1985, many were impressed by his presentation. The story was new, the animation was astounding, and the series was linked together by a creative genius that rarely hits the animation market. We were promised two full series, *Robotech*, and *Robotech 2: The Sentinels*. *Robotech* was great. We never saw *The Sentinels*.

Sentinels was a lost idea by 1986, unfortunately, and was never produced as planned due to financial and marketing difficulties on the part of Harmony Gold, the parent company of *Robotech*. But recently, as of Gen-Con/Origins '88, *Robotech* fans can now have their glimpse of the project that never was, with Palladium Books' introduction of the *Sentinels* video tape.

The tape is not much more than a re-edited and re-scripted collection of pieces that were shot and sounded, and then ended up on the cutting room floor. But it works. It is in fact, a miniature story about the preparation aboard the *SDF-3* to launch their huge starship to Tyrol, the homeworld of their potential enemies or allies, the *Robotech Masters*. We do get to see older, more mature versions of all of our old favorite characters, like *Major General Rick Hunter*, *Rear Admiral Lisa Hayes*, *Skull Squadron Leader Captain Max Sterling*, and *Breetai* and *Exedore*, and we get introduced to new characters as well, many of whom appeared in the original *Robotech*, albeit at later points in the *Robotech* Timeline.

What more can be said to any die-hard *Robotech* fan? Fantastic art, spectacular action and combat sequences, and new glimpses of the *Invid* and *Tyrol*, and (finally) *Rick* and *Lisa's* wedding, all come together in this 72 minute long video. The tape is available from Palladium Books for a retail price of \$29.95 (\$23.95 through mail order for a limited time only!).

— Jonathan Frater



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A Review of West End Games' Newest Star Wars Board Game

Jonathan Frater

Do you recall the opening battle in George Lucas' *The Empire Strikes Back*? I thought so. Do you remember what happened to the Rebel base on the ice planet of Hoth? Of course you do. The good guys lost in a BIG way, and the bad guys took over the rest of the system without too many hassles. Granted, the Rebels did manage to ship about 80% of their men and equipment off-planet before all was lost; maybe that's why they were able to come back in the next film. But in any case, the Empire won that particular battle.

West End Games has managed to bring us that epic battle between the Rebels and the Empire through their latest *Star Wars* release, the *Assault On Hoth* boardgame.

This game is not a bad translation of vehicle and troop combat in the *Star Wars* scheme of things. In fact, in some ways it's better.

The game map's design is not unexpected; we get the immediate area surrounding Echo Base, used by the Rebels, complete with hexes designated as the Power Grid, the loss of which will cause the Rebel player a lot of problems; the Shield Generator, the destruction of which wins the game for the Imperial player, and numerous Base entrances, from which Rebel ground troops can freely move into and out of Echo Base.

The first thing that one notices about the game's structure is the fact that there is no formal turn sequence for either player. Actions that are undertaken by both players are controlled by two decks of cards; Action cards, one of which is drawn after the other, until the deck is exhausted,

and Event cards, which spell good fortune or disaster for either player. In a nutshell, this is how it works. The Action deck and Event deck are both set up and shuffled. The first Action card is drawn, and it will spell out one action to be undertaken for one player. The entire deck includes all possible actions for all possible units presented in the game, so don't worry; both players will have their chance at bat. And since you can reshuffle when the deck runs out, the actions and possibilities are constantly changing. After each card's instructions are followed (i.e., move, fire, or harpoon), another Action card is drawn immediately. When there are no more cards, the next turn begins.

Event cards are only drawn if and when the Action card that says "Draw Event" shows up. An Event can literally be anything — bonus actions due to Force-like intervention, free repair chances for vehicles, or reinforcements for Imperials or Rebels. The ultimate Event card though, is "The Fifth Transport Is Away," the card that wins the game for the Rebel player.

Pieces are taken directly from the movie. For the Rebel player, there are laser towers, which shoot like nobody's business, but are immobile, Snowspeeders, which are tough to kill, have lots of firepower, and are fast, and heavy and light troopers, which (if used wisely) can cripple or even blow away a functional Snow Walker. The Imperial player has fun stuff as well, namely Snow Walkers (AT-ATs), which are slow and difficult to maneuver, but are extremely difficult to destroy, and are, in essence, mobile troop carriers that have very powerful weapons; Scout Walkers (AT-STs), which



are small and fast, and make perfect anti-troop firing platforms, and heavy and light Snowtroopers, which are not useful for a whole lot except blowing away Rebel troops.

The game is very easy to learn, and has a distinct lack of special rules and regulations which tend to slow up play. Movement is easy. The only problems, as I said, exist with the massive Snow Walkers, which have a great deal of trouble going anywhere that has not been razed by a fleet of bulldozers, and made flatter than King Kong's footprint. At the other extreme, Snowspeeders can literally go anywhere on the board just by flying there.

Combat is fun, because the procedure that units use to shoot each other is identical to that used to do the same and other tasks in the *Star Wars Role-Playing Game (Gateways #6)*. And, since the Force has everything to do with the *Star Wars* universe in one way or another, *Luke Skywalker* is automatically going to be piloting one Rebel Snowspeeder (the Rebel player decides which one at the start of the game). Luke has what is known as Force Points, which are kept track of throughout the game by use of a printed track on the gameboard, in order to improve his fire rating, armor rating, or movement allowance. Unfortunately, he has a very limited number of these points per game.

How does the game play? Very well, in fact. The only problems that I found had to do primarily with my luck, the first time that I played the Imperials. After several turns of my Walkers and troops not hitting anything that they shot at, I started to become slightly paranoid, thinking that the fire dice had, by some fiendish and unscrupulous means, been subtly altered while I was carrying the box home with me, so that only the Rebel player could win. Well, my luck changed, but not in time to prevent the Rebel from successfully moving out The Fifth Transport right under my nose.

A couple of hints on that note: the giant Walkers have a limited field of fire, since their heads can only see in front of them, and that's where all the weapons are! So, a team of five or six Heavy Troopers can literally wait until the Walker has passed over them, and then fly out of the nearest Base hex (Rebel troops can move all over the board by using secret tunnels) BEHIND the AT-AT, blowing them to smithereens at point blank range. That is why the AT-STs in the Imperial player's arsenal are so valuable. They are designed to do this same thing to Rebel forces. Big hint: USE TROOPS AGAINST OTHER TROOPS. They cannot be used against many other things, considering that their firepower is decent against small items, but unexceptional against vehicles. Heavy Troops are limited in number for both sides, and they are twice as powerful as the Light Troops. Don't waste them, but don't hide them in their bases or AT-ATs either.

In the movie, the *Assault on Hoth* sequence was perhaps the most exciting scene. As a game, it reinforces my belief in the maxim that a good boardgame need not be difficult to be playable, need not be long and complex to be realistic, and need not be full of gadgets and gimmicks to be fun to play. *Assault On Hoth* (\$35.00) by West End Games is certainly worth the money for *Star Wars* players and enthusiasts alike, and so far, it looks like they are going to devote their time and effort into making their SW line of products even more enjoyable in the future.

There's a Little Rebel in Us All!

Micro Reviews of WEG's New *Star Wars* Releases

Strike Force Shantipole

A *Star Wars* adventure module, in which the rebels must rescue *Commander Ackbar* from the secret Rebel base in the Roche asteroid belt, where the Alliance has begun construction of a new type of strike fighter, the B-Wing. Its a lot more difficult than it sounds, because the Empire has maintained regular patrols in this area, and knows about the B-Wing. And, the Empire wants this new fighter for its own uses.

Without giving away too much of the plot of the adventure, the players are going to have their hands full no matter what they do. There are heavy amounts of Imperial troopers, TIE fighters, and scout ships closing on Roche and Ackbar's base from all directions. The rebels essentially have to get Ackbar out of there, while both making sure that the Empire does not grab all of the information out of the base's computers, and also avoid capture and/or pursuit by the Imperial Forces.

The adventure includes a full color map of Research Station Shantipole, and details about the officers and inhabitants of the station as well. At most, *Strikeforce Shantipole* (\$8.00) an exciting, imaginative *Star Wars* adventure, and at least, a decent look at the universe's history. It's definitely worth a look.

The *Star Wars* Campaign Pack

This should be the third purchase in a *Star Wars* gaming set, mainly because it has a very nice GM Screen and a very important rules update. The new rules include a faster combat sequence, and some notes on Starship combat which make firefights seem a little less complex. The *Campaign Book* (\$10.00) offers good hints on setting up an ongoing campaign, and follows the lead of the actual game in it's "heavy role-playing" aspect and movie-style explanations. On top of all this, there is also an adventure scenario (*Long Shot*), and a heavy-weight colorful map of the ship involved in the adventure. For such a small package, it is packed with information and helpful hints. This is highly recommended.

The *Star Wars* Lightsaber Dueling Pack

The *Lightsaber Deulling Pack* (\$10.00) by West End Games is similar to the *Ace of Aces* gamebooks by Nova Designs. There are two playing cards and playing books in the pack, one for *Luke Skywalker*, and the other for *Darth Vader*. Essentially, the moves, actions, and attacks, used by each player and the results of these are determined and played out by comparing numbers on the cards with their corresponding numbers in the game books. That's not too descriptive, I know, but that's a very boiled down version. If you like the Nova Games Design products, like the *Ace of Aces* game, or the *BattleTech* game books, you'll love the *Dueling Pack*.

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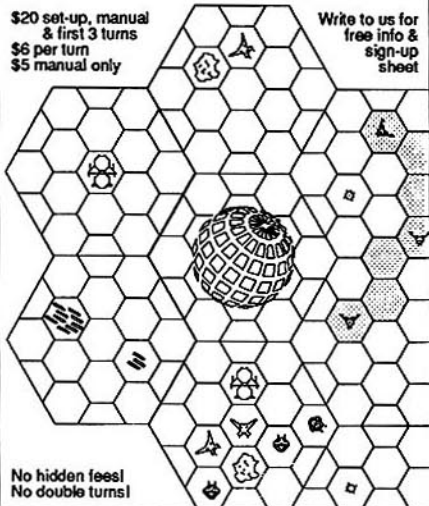
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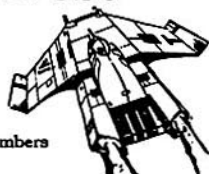
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REFORGING THE DARKSWORD

Tracy Hickman & Margaret Weis Open Their World to Gamers!

Jonathan Frater

"There will be born to the Royal House one who is dead yet will live, who will die again and live again. And when he returns, he will hold in his hand the destruction of the world--or its salvation."

Isn't it funny how prophecies often have a way of making themselves come true? Take the above quote, the basic element of the story of the Darksword, a strange and sinister object forged out of anger, used out of love, and destroyed out of necessity. This is the world of Thimhallan. It is also the world of the Darksword books.

Certainly every gamer has heard of Tracy Hickman and Margaret Weis (Hickman first mentioned the project, which would become Darksword, way back in Gateways #2), the creators of the Dragonlance novels. Well, during the past year, they have completed another series of fantasy novels which took turns taking up slots on bestseller lists. This is the Darksword Trilogy of novels, plus a fourth book called Darksword Adventures, which I'll get to a little later on. For those of you who know absolutely nothing

about Thimhallan or the Darksword, here's a little something for you to digest.

The Darksword Trilogy

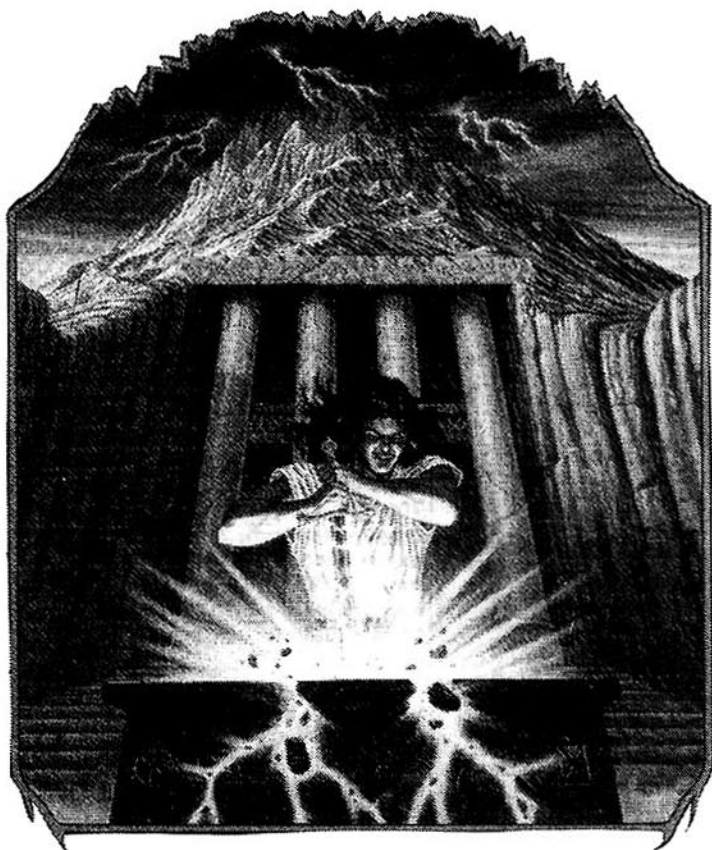
The story of the Darksword is a long one, covering three hefty novels, **Forging the Darksword**, **Triumph of the Darksword**, and **Doom of the Darksword**. Briefly then, a recap of the story.

In the first book we are told everything that we really need to know about the world and its inhabitants to understand just what is going on. The main character, *Joram*, a young man who was born a "freak" because he has not inherited the power of magic that all living things on Thimhallan possess in some degree, discovers that he is truly as different as possible from everyone else. Unable to stand this revelation, he leaves the civilization that he has always known, and elects to wander into the Outlands, the no man's land that surrounds the peaceful city of Merilon, to find the Sorcerers, those people who have developed the use of tools instead of using magic to perform tasks, as the rest of the world has done. He feels at home with these people, and vows revenge on the people of Merilon.

Meanwhile, we are introduced to the other major character of the series, a priest of the Almin named *Saryon* whom I consider to be the hero of the series. Saryon has been given a mission to perform by his own leader, the *Bishop Vanya*, who is at the present time the supreme leader of the Church of the Almin, the only religious power on Thimhallan. Saryon meets and grows to like Joram, finding the boy much like himself, a self-made outcast from the rest of society, mainly because he is not like the rest of the world's people. These two find much more than they bargained for, and they find out that not only is Joram different, but he is wanted by the Church for what they think is the accidental death of a field magi overseer. Vanya knows differently, however; he knows that Joram has found a way to forge the Darksword, a tool of the ancient world that had the power to absorb magic. The Darksword must be destroyed or at least contained, and Joram found at any cost.

The second book deals mostly with Saryon and Joram's return to Merilon, dreams of power in their heads, and other characters in tow; *Simkin*, a fool of his own making, who literally is magic, and *Mosiah*, the only childhood friend Joram has ever known. The foursome make it to Merilon relatively unscathed but must still contend with the politics and intrigue of the Royal Court, the plans and sub-plans and ambitions of Vanya, The Emperor himself, and *Prince Xavier*, the dead Empress' brother, who has his own plans for the throne.

We also find out that Joram is not exactly who he



thought he was, yet is still the worst enemy of Merilon's ruling class. Xavier wants him dead so that he can take the Empire for himself. Vanya wants him out of the way so that the end of the world will not come about. And, since they cannot kill him, they do the next worst thing; they sentence him to the Turning, a process by which half of the most powerful magic users in the Church pool their powers to turn his flesh into solid rock, while keeping his mind alive and active. The result is a *Watcher*, a statue who is meant to keep the border between Thimhallan and Beyond at peace. The book ends with Joram saved at the cost of Saryon's being turned to stone in his place. Joram walks into Beyond, leaving the Darksword literally in the hands of Saryon.

The third and final chapter of the **Darksword** trilogy deals with Joram's return from Beyond, now a fully grown man, although only one year has passed on his homeworld. The Watchers see that the barrier has been broken, and scream warnings of Thimhallan's doom — but there is nobody who still has the power to hear their cries. Thimhallan is doomed.

Amid all of the internal power struggles and political strife in the world, none notice its safety until it is too late, and a new force has invaded Thimhallan. Having followed Joram into this new world, the forces of Technology bear hand-held laser weapons and plasma-shooting tanks. Nothing can stop them. Unless, and only unless, Joram can find a way to destroy the Darksword.

The World of the Darksword

Thimhallan is a world that is so far removed from Krynn that it difficult to be believed that Weis and Hickman created it. The most noticeable thing is that magic, Life, permeates every facet of life on this world, which is something that I've never seen developed to this extent before. Life is magic; magic is Life. To be a master of your magical ability and strength is to be great on this world. Because of this, the world had long been divided into a rigid caste system, depending on how much control of magic you have, and what you have learned to do with it.

There are nine Mysteries that all those born on Thimhallan (well, almost all) have; those of Fire, Earth, Water, Air, Life, Shadow, Time, Spirit, and Death, one mystery for each of the character types in the world.

Those born to the Mystery of Fire are usually destined to become *DKarn-duuk*, the warriors of Thimhallan, learned in the ways of waging war and combat, or *Duuk-Tsarith*, the Guardians of the People, perhaps the most powerful of all classes on Thimhallan. Those born to the Mystery of Earth are many: The *Quin-Alban*, the Conjurers, those who create from nothing; the *Pron-Alban*, the Magicians, those who use their finely honed craft and skill to shape or direct the construction of artifacts and even everyday objects, from raw materials; the *Mon-Alban*, the Alchemists, those who are known for their ability to change base materials into other materials; and the *Albanare*, the ruling-caste Shapers of Thimhallan, the Wizards who rule cities and nations.

The Mystery of Water is responsible for the Druids; the *Fihanish*, the Druids of the fields, also known as Field Magi; and the *Mananish* and *Theldara*, the Druids of minor and major healing arts, respectively. The most powerful of

the *Theldara* is capable of reducing a disease like leukemia into the equivalent of a head cold in several hours. The Mystery of Air, however, created the *Kan-Hanar*, the lords of the skies, responsible for transporting things through the air for long distances, and the *Sif-Hanar*, the weather controllers of Thimhallan, able to nourish or destroy land simply by controlling the weather.

The Mystery of Life is responsible for the creation of the Church and its Priests a long time ago, when Thimhallan was first discovered and inhabited. Those born to this Mystery are the Catalysts, those who cannot use Life themselves, but are essential to the world in that they have the power to enhance or deny others the ability to use it. A Catalyst can increase a magician's Life use by a thousand percent, or draw off what Life he has left. From the Mystery of Shadow came the Illusionists, or Shadow Shapers, able to create visions of almost anything that could be conceived of by the human mind.

The Mystery of Time is used by the Diviners; the rarest of all the classes when things were still new, they have long since disappeared into the realm of death. It was their function to help guide nations based on their visions of the future or the past. Without them, men have no guidance. Nor do they have those born to the Mystery of Spirit, the *Aluave*, *Cheuava*, and *Omueva*, the Necromancers, Enchanters, and Theurgists, anymore. The brink between life and death was bridged as long as these magi had power and ability to communicate with the dead. They too, no longer exist.

Lastly come the Sorcerers, those born to the Mystery of





Death, the ones who use Technology to enhance their own abilities instead of magic. They are still around, but keep to themselves, huddled in villages in the Outlands where they are relatively safe from the persecution of the masses of Thimhallan.

The Lost Notes of Thimhallan

The fourth and final volume in the Darksword universe is the capstone on years of work by Hickman and Weis. Entitled *Darksword Adventures*, it is the one thing that no publishing market has seen before; a complete role-playing game in a mass-market paperback.

Set in the world of Thimhallan, the game allows the players to be anything that they might have read about in the novels, and even allows them to play characters that supposedly no longer exist. It compiles a relatively complete history of Thimhallan, stretching back centuries to when Merlyn, the leader of the Magi, left his own world, where magic was neither required nor appreciated, and brought his followers to a new world, a world where magic was at the center of all things. Although the planet was hostile and cruel at first, Merlyn's people soon learned to make homes for themselves, and created the Border which was meant to keep out the outside world, while keeping the magic of the world in. During the next few centuries, nations and empires grew, and with them, so did ambition and international tension. Until, suddenly, something happened to tear the world apart.

It was long ago realized that disputes would have to be settled in a violent manner, so the rulers of the Empire of

Merilon had their magicians create the Field of Glory, a giant chess board that doubled as a battlefield. If war was inevitable, then so be it. It would at least be controlled by the warriors who knew the most about it, and thus spare the world much hardship and grief. And for several decades that was exactly what happened. Then one day, a war between the magic-using rulers of Merilon and the Technology-using rulers of the western empires had it out. The technologists lost, but they were not satisfied with the results on the Field of Glory, and brought their weapons out into the real world. Cities were leveled with bombs, planes, tanks, and other machines of war destroyed everything in their paths. The *Albanara* and *Dkarn-duuk* were forced to retaliate by creating their own super beings; soon, Thimhallan saw the monsters of legend. Man-eating centaurs, dragons of every size and color, trolls, giants, and many other creatures, who then tore into their metallic enemies with no mercy. The Iron Wars had begun.

Now, centuries later, Thimhallan no longer had the Iron part of the conflict, but the monsters are still out there somewhere, having at passersby in the Wildlands, so the wise traveller does not travel lightly or alone. The Iron Wars destroyed the Necromancers, Diviners, and most of the Sorcerers, but the conflicts go on to no good end or purpose.

Anyway, *Darksword Adventures* does what the novels fail to do; it gives the reader a deep insight into the entire world of Thimhallan. We get a historical account of every major and minor landmark and city in the world as well as how the political and economic systems that have developed over the millenia work. We get stats for characters, rules for magic and combat, and *Wildreth's Wandarium*, the story of a rather bizarre illusionist who goes out into the world to seek his fortune, and tells us of his adventures along the way. It is a complete role-playing game that is worth the effort. My only advice to any first timers who may be interested in such a game is this: READ THE BOOKS FIRST! I went through a rough draft of the game, and I was lost until I finished the series. If you think that you can handle it without that background material, then more power to you, but remember, I warned you.

In any case, Thimhallan, as seen through *Darksword Adventures*, is a refreshing look at a new kind of fantasy world. There are new faces, new places, and new history, and the twists in world evolution are fascinating. If the characters and plot don't interest you (and I find it difficult to believe that they wouldn't), then the fantastic amount of details and sheer research and work that went into the fabrication of the world and its culture, inhabitants, and society surely will. Perhaps most importantly, what we have here is an event of landmark proportions. If *Darksword Adventures* does as well as the novels did, it may become the top selling role-playing game of all time. And even if it does not, it points the way toward a whole new way to game, using nothing but a \$5.00 paperback and, of course, your imagination.

"Fedj, I command you to carry this news to Zohra, my daughter, that on a week from this day, by command of Hazrat Akhran, she is to marry Khardan al Fakhar, Calif of the Akar, son of my hated enemy, Majiid al Fakhar-may Hazrat Akhran infest his trousers with scorpions. Tell her that is she does not do this thing and remain married to the Calif until the Rose of the Prophet blooms upon the Tel, that it is the will of Hazrat Akhran that her people will all perish. Tell her this," said the Sheykh morosely. "then bind her hand and foot and surround her tent with guards."

"Where are you going, sidi" demanded Fedj.

"To - to inspect the flocks" said Jaafar, throwing on a cloak to ward off the night's chill. He started toward the door of the yurt, falling over the servants who were - contrary to normal - racing to do their master's bidding.

"Inspect the flocks? Fedj's mouth gaped open. "Since when have you decided to do this, sidi?"

"Since...uh...receiving reports that those thieving Akar-the sons of horses-have been raiding ahain," Jaafar said, sliding past the djinn on his way to the door, his hand covering the ring.

"They are always raiding us!" Fedj pointed out sourly.

The Sheykh ignored him. "Come to me later...and-er-tell me of my daughter's reaction to the...uh...joyous news of her betrothal."

"Where will you be, sidi?" the djinn demanded, rising to his full height, his turbaned head poking out of the hole in the ceiling of the yurt.

"Akhran willing - far, far away!" said the father fervently.

- from *The Will of the Wanderer*, Volume One, *The Rose of the Prophet*

Sages & Scribes

Weis and Hickman Unveil Two More Epic Fantasies

Laura Antoniou

Welcome to the latest world created by fantasy's super-duo, Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman. This is the world of the three volume *Rose of the Prophet* series, set in an entirely new universe, but filled, as expected, with the wonderful history, backgrounds and plot devices that Tracy Hickman is known for, and the splendid language and characterizations that Margaret Weis brings to their very profitable team-ups. The first volume, *The Will of the Wanderer*, released in December of 1988, will see general distribution in early January, bearing a cover and interior illustrations by Larry Elmore.

With this new series, Weis and Hickman will be going against a tradition in fantasy publishing, and breaking new ground because of it. The *Rose of the Prophet* series, if you can't tell from the excerpt we printed, is set in a land much resembling the middle east, using the classic imagery of the Arabian Nights, with djinn, desert raiders, turbaned heroes, and veiled women. Traditionally, tales set in this background have done poorly on the fantasy shelves, a factor raised several times by their editor at Bantam. In fact,

the editor refused to allow a scimitar to appear on a cover illustration, worried that fantasy readers would ignore anything that hinted at a desert adventure. But this is also Weis and Hickman, assuring both a large and eager audience and a new look at the form.

The basic storyline can be assumed from the passage above, with the addition of one other major character. Zohra, a strong-willed and somewhat rebellious daughter of a tribal leader, is betrothed to Khardan, the son of another tribal leader. Since both of these clans have fought each other for centuries, only a god is able to command this, and one does. This is *Hazrat Akhran*, the Wanderer, a strong-willed and somewhat rebellious god, who suspects that at least one of his fellow gods is up to no good. (Out of the original twenty, two gods have mysteriously died.) How exactly this marriage will aid in the upcoming god-struggle will be examined in the next two novels. Keeping up with the newly married couple is enough for the first volume. They fight, they draw blood, they glare at each other, yell and scream, and carry on like the Bundys, from *Married...With Children*. Married indeed for the sake of their people, it is all they can do to remain civil to each other. They agree to keep their marriage in name only until the prophecy is fulfilled.

The other character mentioned is one Mathew, a visitor to this eastern land. Although we know little of Mathew's homelands, enough is given to allow the reader to see the desert and the customs of the desert people through more



western eyes. Mathew is also a mage, a male magic user trapped in a land where only women use magic. Mathew is also an exceptionally handsome youth (barely 18), with long, flowing red hair and the pale skin of a scholar. (These attributes led to his being featured on the cover of the first book.) Those two factors also cause the raiders who attack and slay the other members of Mathew's party to take him captive, a case of mistaken gender. His torturous journey through the first half of the book is heartbreaking, and his doubts about his own courage and will to survive are almost painful to read. Although Zohra and Khardan are the movers and shakers of this tale, it is Mathew who stirs the emotions of the reader.

Another aspect about Mathew that bears mentioning is his position in the character triangle. Khardan is a powerful leader and fighter, headstrong but gaining in wisdom (except where women are concerned), very masculine and dashing. Indeed, his first scene has him participating in an ancient eastern game involving a sheep carcass and a lot of horses and swords. Zohra is beautiful and wild, a powerful sorceress, gaining in knowledge (except where men are concerned) and absolutely female. It is Khardan who rescues Mathew from a fate worse than death (of course, Khardan thought Mathew was female at the time), and it is Zohra who rescues Mathew from his loneliness. It is only natural for Mathew to be caught between clashing charismas.

"I don't want any one to put labels on any of our char-



acters," said Margaret Weis in a recent interview. "Mathew is Mathew, and it's really up to the reader to get to know him and to consider his views and the events around him. I love Mathew, and our editor at Bantam loved him so much that she wanted him on the cover of *The Will of the Wanderer*."

There is a fresh excitement in this new Weis/Hickman world, and much of it has to do with the chance they might be taking with the new setting and characters. Gods, djinns, Califs and slave traders come alive in conflict, and half a dozen stories are being told in the telling of one. The next two volumes will come out in the spring, and the early summer.

How do they do it?

Putting the current work on the side for now, it's time to examine just how they do it. Six *Dragonlance* novels, three *Darksword* novels, (and a gamebook), and now a new trilogy. Bestsellers, leaping off of bookstore shelves in numbers almost unheard of in the fantasy industry. Perhaps this would be easier to accept if there was only one name on the cover, but how do two people work together, producing such a volume of material, making it consistently good, and doing this without tearing at each other's throats?

"We have the most incredible relationship," admits Tracy Hickman, "we're not alike at all. We have different friends, we go out with different people, we have different likes and dislikes, and different perspectives on a lot of things, but we're good friends. When there is a problem, we don't see it as a point of contention, but something we have to fix, and make better. This usually sparks our creativity a little more, and we come up with something much more interesting. I think that neither one of us is dogmatic, and we let the other have their way when it's not important."

When pressed for a time when they did argue, he laughed, and instantly said, "Elistan. Margaret hated him. He was too good, too perfect, and in her eyes, too boring. I think it was in the second *Dragonlance* book, when they were at Icewall Castle, and I'm reading the draft and I noticed that Elistan wasn't there. I asked Margaret where he was, and told her that he had to be there, and she said something like, 'Oh, does he have to be? Can't we kill him?', but I knew that he served a purpose, and so we kept him in, but that was the last time I remember us actually arguing about something in the books."

The two writers share the burdens of creation, each contributing what they do best. Hickman is the organizer, the plot mechanic, the mapper, and world creator. Weis is the dialogue coach, the scene maker, and the character developer. Each one crosses into the other's realm from time to time, to work on a favored character or scene, and each knows that the other will take what they have created and make it better. It is a relationship not unlike the one once held by the brothers Hildebrant, who would take turns at a canvas until the painting was finished, each doing what they did best and taking up where the other left off.

Looking toward the future...

While not working on their joint projects, both Hickman and Weis find time to devote to other interests and solo projects. Look for contributions from Margaret Weis in *The Fleet* shared-world anthology, joining Gary Gygax and a host of gaming industry authors and SF greats. Tracy Hickman is considering doing some science fiction on his own, both a series and a solo novel or two. That is, of course, if he finds time in a schedule which includes writing music, working on plays, learning to fly fixed wing aircraft, and devoting time to his church.

The next big project for the dynamic duo is a massive seven-book series. There is a three million dollar publishing contract laid out and signed for the series, now known as *Deathsgate*. Although not due out until late 1989, the series will be released in hardcover/trade/mass market format, each version coming out in timed sequence. It took some doing, but a little of the background for this undertaking was surrendered by the authors, each of them as excited as the other.

Anciently, there was a great war, and the losing side protected what they believed to be the will of the people by sundering the universe into the four classical elements. The *Deathsgate* is one of the gates which link the four sundered universes into the nexus. They also created a deep labyrinth, in which they placed their enemies, hoping that the eons of time would allow their enemies' hate to burn away. Needless to say, something goes wrong, and the fate of the universe is in danger. Seven books worth of danger. The first book is being written under the working title, *Realm of Sky*.

With books constantly hitting the market and a grow-

ing world-wide fandom, Tracy Hickman and Margaret Weis have gone beyond anything dreamed of in the fantasy/Role-Playing Game industry. More and more fantasy novels are finding themselves on bestseller shelves, and companies are beginning to add more novels to their release lists. While it might be a slight exaggeration to say that this trend began with Weis and Hickman, it would not be exaggerating at all to say that their presence on the shelves has inspired creators to go forth and do likewise. And that is the best creation to which any author can lay claim.



The Red Dagger Inn



Edited by Charles and Sydney Barouch

NEUROMANCER

I strode silently into the Inn and went to my office behind the bar. While the hubbub of the Red Dagger continued, I loaded my new software, *Neuromancer* by Activision. Before I knew it, I was in Chiba City and feeling like a Cowboy on the edge. Ever since Case and Molly pulled that job on FreeSide, Chiba has been crawling with Lawbots. Every move was filled with potential danger.

The game is *Neuromancer*. It is based on the book of the same name by William Gibson and takes up where that volume left off. Case, one of the top Cowboys, has gone up against the hardest Intrusion Countermeasure Electronics (ICE) ever designed. Now, all you Cowboys are being watched carefully and arrested under the least pretext. Aside from the Spaceport, you are pretty well locked into Chiba City.

This is not an easy game. It will require a lot of thinking and a careful reading of the manual. Plan on living with your word wheel in your hands. The game uses the word wheel to do a security check every time you try to log on to the PAX. Without the PAX, you have no money and will miss critical clues.

To aid you in surviving here, *Neuromancer* includes a soundtrack to keep you moving. To keep you in hot water, the software offers you a limited selection of word balloons during each encounter. Choose your words carefully. Out for only the Commodore 64, you can get it for a suggested retail of \$39.99.

HINTS

- 1) Read the book. The game assumes you know a lot about Case.
 - 2) Play it in two phases. First, gather all the information you can and then re-boot and start over. Once you do start over, save often and be very careful; while permanent death is hard to achieve, bankruptcy is very easy.
 - 3) Keep these goals in mind:
 - A) You need a Cyberdeck.
 - B) You need Comlink 6.0 to use the Cyberdeck.
 - C) Cyberspace in the game is *locational*; you need to find different places to Jack-in. Make notes on all Jacks.
 - 4) The PAX system and other BBS's (Bulletin Board Services) have information you'll need to win. Pay particular attention to messages by Matt Shaw.
- Remember that using a comlink can cost you an arm and a leg — literally.

If you are a fan of *Neuromancer*, you will be pleased to know that Cabana Boys Productions is working on a movie version of *Neuromancer*. We'll be watching for it.

BATTLE CHESS

There are a lot of chess programs out there in both the public domain and the commercial sector; some good, some not so good. *Battle Chess* (\$49.95, Commodore Amiga only) is one of the better ones and has two important differences that make it a worthy addition to your collection.

One difference is the features it offers; including timed games, computer hints, computer vs. computer, modem support so that you can play with an absent friend, over 30,000 moves in the opening library, and, 10 levels of play. The rules are strictly standard chess, and the game enforces them. Unlike some other chess programs, the rules are complete; incorporating options like *Castling*, *En Passant*, and pawn promotion.



The all-important manual is well written and includes a sample game walk-through, with twenty complete games that were actually played between chess grand masters like Fischer and Spasky. It is an excellent tutor for new players in player vs. player mode and a good challenge for beginning and intermediate players. The manual also contains some good notes on chess notation and basic playing philosophy.

The other difference that sets *Battle Chess* apart from the rest is that this is probably the prettiest chess game you will ever see, with both a sharp two dimensional display and an animated three dimensional display in which making a capture becomes a whole new experience.

The graphics are truly stunning as are the surprisingly realistic sound effects. You can actually hear the clank of armor as a Knight advances. Each piece looks and moves differently. It is fascinating to watch the King plod slowly along, his regal robes trailing behind him, or to watch the queen glide swiftly across the board; or the Castle slowly transform into a huge, lumbering rock-like beast and trudge heavily to his new position. Each piece has its own, unique

way of attacking any foe, so each battle is new and exciting. You may just find yourself placing pieces in jeopardy just so you can have the opportunity to watch another battle.

ZAK MCKRAKEN AND THE ALIEN MINDBENDERS

Life is tough for Zak McKraken. He works for a sleazy tabloid, he writes articles about two-headed squirrels, has nightmares about wierd aliens and dreams about a girl named Annie. And this is just during the opening credits. Once you start helping him, things just go from bad to worse.

You see, Zak is the newest character in Lucasfilm's new adventure game and he needs your help to solve the mystery of the Alien Mindbenders. Unlike most adventure games, the items you'll need here are rather tame; a goldfish named Sushi, stale french bread, toilet paper, and nose glasses. You'll also have to enlist the aid of two lovely co-eds, their VW van and their group, The Society for Ancient Wisdom. Hardships, indeed.

But what will you do with all these things? That's where the fun comes in. Using the same text interface as **Maniac Mansion**, you'll soon be doing all sorts of things with these odd items and strange allies. If you play your cards right, you might even save the world from the Stupidity Epidemic. **Zak McKraken and The Alien Mindbenders** is available at local software shops for around \$40.00.

HINTS

- 1) Take everything you can.
- 2) Puzzles have absurd solutions. Most items have multiple uses.
- 3) A yellow crayon could be your key to the first Alien Crystal.
- 4) Read all copies of the National Inquisitor that come with the game.
- 5) Plane flights seem to go faster after you've harrassed the stewardess a few times. It's not just fun, it's necessary to the solution.
- 6) By hitting <RETURN> during side scenes you will avoid having to sit through the same scene more than once.
- 7) Use the 'WHAT IS' over the entire scene. If it is something you can take or affect, the 'WHAT IS' will identify the item with a name. Best of all, 'WHAT IS' will also identify items in total darkness. This may come in handy since Zak seems to spend most of his life in the dark.

When you play this game, make sure that you have nothing planned for the rest of the evening. It is easy to get lost in this silly story, and if you want to be a serious puzzle solver, re-boot several times and take notes on Zak's dream.

Also, keep your "ZAP 'EM II EXIT VISA SECURITY SYSTEM" with you (it comes with the game). This is a

long series of codes printed on horrible reddish-brown paper, and is almost impossible to read, but you need to refer to it several times during the game. This paper is yet another form of copy protection. It is likely *not* to be xeroxable, nor is it really feasible to hand copy because of the length. Without it, you can't travel to countries outside of the USA. So, don't forget forget your nose glasses, and good luck. After all, what's a great beach when there's no guy to share it with?

NOTES AND NEWS

TSR has several more AD&D software products coming out under their agreement with SSI. Included are **Winter's War** (another module like **Pool of Radiance**) and the **Dungeon Master's Assistant**, an encounter generator. We have seen a copy of **Dungeon Master's Assistant** and were rather unimpressed. **Winter's War** should be arriving in time to be covered in our next column.

Also on the books at TSR/SSI is **Heroes of The Lance** which should be out by the time this hits the stands. **Heroes** is an arcade-style game based on the **Dragonlance** mythos.

And on a final note, Activision is now marketing under the name **Mediagenic**. The Activision name will appear on the their game lines from now on. **Mediagenic** also includes names like **GameStar**, **Rainbird**, **Micro Illusions** and **Infocom**.

SAGE

Announcing A New Way for GMs to keep up with their FRPG campaign! Are you tired of trying to keep track of monsters, NPCs, magic items, maps, and other essential information? Do you have a Macintosh Plus (or better) with HyperCard installed therein? If so, you too can use SAGE, the Game Master's Database. SAGE is a HyperCard program designed especially for role-players, DMs and players alike. SAGE will help you organize all of your necessary data, and, since it is not copy-protected in any way, you can customize it to suit your needs.

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Ian Harac

*2 Primrose Lane, Apt 1-B,
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DEMENSE OF LIGHT VS. THE ARMY OF THE TRAITOR!

An Official Rules to Ral *Chaos Wars* Scenario

Kevin Stien

The Tale Thusfar

Before the Chaos Wars, the Universe was a perfectly shaped Crystal. Magical power was equal in all dimensions, with no one world holding more mystic might than the other.

The Chalice Of Lentagern was the key that could unlock the magical balance, and it was an object that existed in every reality. The Mystic Runes engraved on the golden vessel told the story of the creation of the universe, and how the universe could be torn asunder. None were able to read the runes; none could have prepared for the Chaos to come.

As chronicled by the Romanni the Wanderer, the Chalice vanished when Ral, Lord of the Balrogs, and Ibranhram, Grand Master of the Order of Cherrionite, met in Combat in the Calthway Abbey cellars. Their magic, amplified and metamorphosed in the Chalice's presence, shattered the Uni-

verse Crystal. Each reality's Chalice was immediately destroyed.

Chaos reigned. Old alliances were broken by treachery and deceit; new alliances were forged with dark powers once held in check by the Chalice. The destruction of Universal Balance was reflected in peoples' actions everywhere.

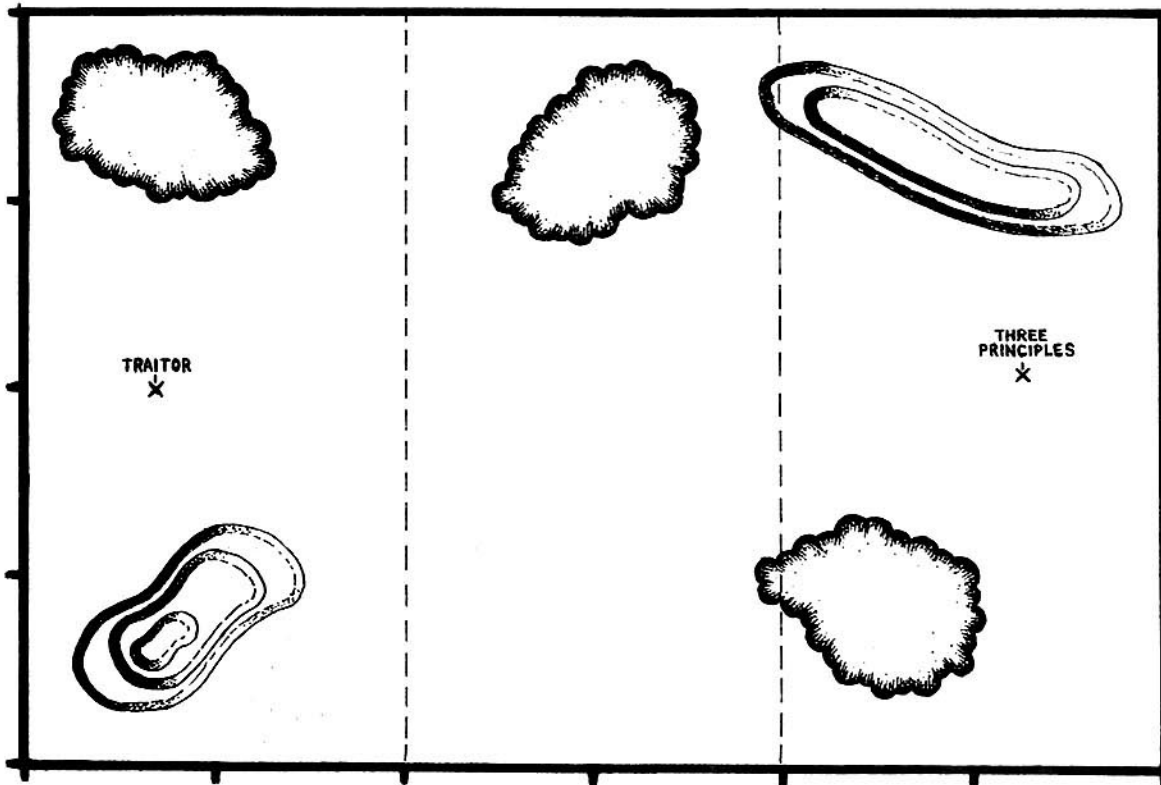
The energy released by the Chalice's destruction created the Gateway Gems, mystical energy compressed the essence of the Universe into Jewels that allowed travel through the chill void. Each Gem is filled with inclusions that tell the story of its origin, plane, or dimension, creating a sculpture of what part of the Universe once looked like. With proper use, a traveler can journey to every world represented in a Gem.

The chill void of the Gateway Gems exists in the cracks of the Uni-

verse's structure. The Gatewind is a remnant of the original power that held the Universe together, blowing the energies from various planes and dimensions through the Void.

Gateway passage is normally haphazard, and the user never knows if he'll turn up in the same place every time. There are some, after intensive research and spending enormous amounts of magical energy, that discovered some of the secrets to safe and accurate travel. One of these groups is the Demesne of Light, an Order dedicated to Knowledge.

During an experiment with a Gateway Gem, one of the Order was accidentally tainted with energy from the plane of the undead. He was driven insane, and eventually stole the Gem for himself and a small group of followers. Before they could leave, the theft was discovered by the Demesne's Holy Guard. The traitor escaped using the



Gem, but a Gatewind magically twisted him and all with him into hideous undead creatures.

Fortunately for the Demesne of Light, the Gatewind cracked the Gem into two perfect pieces. They discovered that music channeled through their pieces allowed them to track the traitor. The Holy Guard ventured out to destroy him and recover the other half of the Gem.

Setting Up The Game

The Demesne of Light troops start anywhere behind the eastern dotted line. The traitor's forces start anywhere behind the western dotted line.

The three Demesne of Light principles start at the designated positions: the cannot move and must



always be in direct contact with each other.

The traitor starts at his designated position: he cannot move from that spot.

Terrain Effects

Terrain Effects can be found in *Hills* (64:4.102) and *Woods* (6:4.105).

Victory Conditions

The Demesne of Light troops must destroy the traitor. The traitor's forces must destroy the three principles.

Special Rules: Special Ninja Movement Rule

Ninja may move to any part of the board. Take the figure off the board and mark the spot with a small piece of paper. Declare a target to move to, such as a unit, character, or terrain fig-

DEMENSE OF LIGHT, HOLY GUARD

Characters	Armor	Magick	Prowess	Vitality	Move	Fant. Pt.	COSTS	Troop Pts.
The Headmaster R.P. Figure #(54-500)	3	6	6	3	12"	8	-	-
Decon R.P. Figure #(54-500)	3	1*	4**	2	8"	3	-	6
Dean R.P. Figure #(54-500)	3	1*	2**	1	8"	2	-	4
The Three Principles R.P. Figure #(01-073)	2	3***	1	1	8"	2/ea.	-	4
The Three Masters† Mind, Body & Soul R.P. Figure #(32-014)	3	5*	6††	4	8"	6/ea.	-	-

* Defensive Only. ** Rolls double Prowess dice, choosing best rolls for Prowess.

*** Reduce by one for every Principle removed.

† The Masters must always be in direct contact with one another. All hits on the Masters must be distributed as evenly as possible; placement of odd hits should be determined by die roll. If one or more of the Masters' Vitality Ratings reaches "0", then all of the Masters will withdraw from battle.

†† May reduce Prowess by 2 for the turn, then will have an Archery Prowess 1 during the Archery Phase; Range 6", Attack +1, no movement penalty.

TROOPS	TYPE/UNIT SIZE	ARMOR	MELEE MOD.	MORALE MOD.	MISSILE RANGE	MOVE	UNIT COSTS FANT PTS.	TROOP PTS
2 UNITS OF:								
Riders Of	Mtd. Knights* Equine Mastery Warriors On R.P. Figure #(54-578)	3	+4**	+1	-	10"	1/ea.	60/ea.
Riders Of	Mtd. Yeoman† Firearm W/Pistols Mastery Fanatic Holy Warriors/6 R.P. Figure #(54-520)	2	+1	+1	-	6"***	1	48
GUARDIANS OF:								
Knowledge	FT. Yeoman R.P. Figure #(54-511)	2	0††	-	-	8"	1	48
Wisdom	FT. Yeoman R.P. Figure #(54-513)	2	0††	-	-	8"	1	48
Light	FT. Yeoman R.P. Figure #(54-514)	2	0††	-	-	8"	1	48
Truth	FT. Yeoman R.P. Figure #(54-515)	2	0††	-	-	8"	1	48

* No Morale Modification if attacked on flank or rear. ** They have +1 enchanted weapons.

*** Reduce Opponents' Armor Rating by -1; Armor Ratings of 1 will remain 1.

† If the Mounted Archer Unit optional rule is used, they are considered Mounted Archers.

†† +1 for respective units of Guardians of Knowledge and Wisdom if they are adjacent or for the Guardians of Light and Truth if they are adjacent.



THE ARMY OF THE TRAITOR

Characters	Armor	Magick	Prowess	Vitality	Move	Fant. Pt.	COSTS	
							Fant. Pt.	Troop Pts.
The Traitor* R.P. Figure #(02-938)	3	9	6	6	8"	14	-	-
General R.P. Figure #(02-938)	3	1**	4	4	8"	4	-	6
Colonel (Peasants) R.P. Figure #(02-938)	3	1**	2	2	8"	2	-	4
Colonel (Yeoman) R.P. Figure #(02-938)	3	1**	2	2	8"	2	-	4
Skeleton Giants*** R.P. Figure #(02-940)	3	2**	6	12	8"	8	-	-
Skeleton Ninja R.P. Figure #(02-950)	2†	3**	6	4	8"††	6	-	-

* The Traitor is a level 3 Wizard (Skeleton) with Magically Enhanced Armor & Prowess.

** Defensive Only.

*** Giant has an Archery Prowess of 2, with a range equal to 1/2 Vitality rounded up.

† May Temporarily increase by one/point of Prowess reduced

†† Special Ninja Movement

TROOPS	TYPE/UNIT SIZE	ARMOR	MELEE MOD.	MORALE MOD.	MISSILE RANGE	MOVE	UNIT COSTS FANT PTS.	TROOP PTS
2 UNITS OF;								
Traitor's Household* R.P. Figure #(02-044 & 02-045)	Ft. Yeomen Skeletons/12	2	+1**	-	-	6"	1/ea.	60/ea.
Traitor's Guard R.P. Figure #(02-042)	Ft. Knight Skeleton/12	3	+2**	-	-	6"	1	84
Traitor's Levy R.P. Figure #(02-043)	Peasant Skeletons/12	1	-1	-	12***	6"	1/ea.	60/ea.
The Corrupted Sisterhood R.P. Figure #(02-935)	Mtd. Yeomen Skeletons On Large Mounts/6	6	2†	-	12††	10" Fly	2	48

* The Traitor may spend one Magick Point/designated unit during the Magick Phase; the units will then be fanatic for the remainder of the turn. This spell cannot be countered.

** Cursed Weapons of Benitar - The Soul Stealer; special corrupted Enchanted Weapons which are normally +1 in combat; however, vs. undead they have no effect (lose their enchantment), vs. Priests, Necromancers (even undead ones), and Holy Warriors, they have an additional +1 effect (+2 total).

*** Cursed Arrows of Benitar - same effect as the Weapons above, except are used during Archery Phase.

† Sisterhood is the same as Skeleton but their armor rating doesn't go up.

†† Roll a six-sided die; on an odd result, their Armor Rating is "4", but they have no archery. On an even result, they may make an Archery attack with no movement penalty, and their Armor Rating remains "2".

ure. Every turn the Ninja is off the board, it gets 8" closer to its target. For example, if the ninja stayed off the board for three turns, it would be 24" closer to its target. The ninja may be placed on the board any time before the movement phase of any turn. It moves and attacks normally that turn.

The ninja can be found by any unit within three inches of the line between its paper marker and the target. Each unit rolls a die; if the number is equal to or less than the number of turns the ninja is off the board, the ninja figure is found and must be put back on the board. It is replaced on the line to the target the distance equal to the number of turns it was off the board. For example, if the ninja is



discovered after it is three turns off the board, it is placed back on the table 24" closer to the target.

The ninja cannot move towards the same target twice in a row if it is discovered. However, by picking a different target, it may come off the board on its next move.

Optional Rule: Mounted Archer Unit Missile Attacks

This is an optional rule representing the flexibility of mounted archer units which use missile weapons.

A unit may fire in any direction. The unit may fire and still move up to one half of its normal movement. If a mounted archer unit fires during event III, moves in event IV, and is meleed in event V of the same game turn, it deducts 2 from its melee attack die roll.



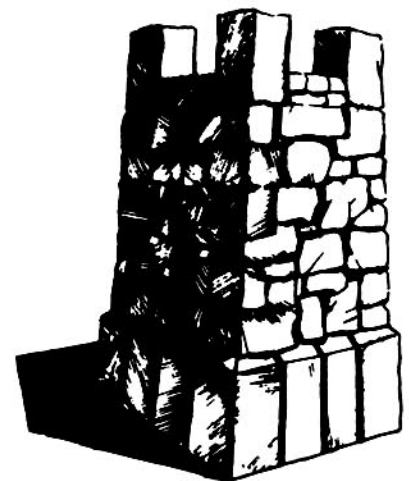


"Street Wise"

I've always thought that half the fun of rampaging through your typical fantasy adventure was cavorting through the streets of some huge, rollicking city. Any great storyteller would maintain that vivid descriptions and solid detail will leave a lasting impression on the reader or role-player, and, being a fairly good spinner of a few tall tales myself, I would not hesitate to agree. One problem that has rattled my scales two too many times is answering that crisis question, "Well, what street are we on!?"

The solution, I decided, was to use a little high-tech and, quite simply, to get streetwise. My Hypercard® stack ran the charts, you supply the percentile rolls and the stories behind the signs!

1. Ancient Rabbit Path
2. Bald Beehive Lane
3. Bandy Hippogriff Row
4. Big Sword Street
5. Big Turf Alley
6. Black Mason Street
7. Bonny Heroine Alley
8. Bronze Mason Road
9. Brown Boar Gate
10. Burning Lynx Row
11. Buxom Dragon Street
12. Dark Jerkin Pass
13. Drunken Helm Pass
14. Eight Oaks Row
15. Fell Lantern Street
16. Fountain Lane
17. Four Rose Gate
18. Frosty Rogue Pass
19. Giddy Tailor Street
20. Golden Paladin Row
21. Grand Badger Pass
22. Gray Sphinx Lane
23. Green Gander Alley
24. Hale Falcon Street
25. Hearty Lynx Way
26. Icy Dock Alley
27. Iron Tub Row
28. Iron Village Alley
29. Ivory Orc Alley
30. Ivy Crown Street
31. Jade Flute Lane
32. Jolly Rock Circle
33. Jolly Whistle Lane
34. Jovial Lizard Row
35. Large Oak Alley
36. Lone Hart Way
37. Lone Warrior Way
38. Lucky Halfling Row
39. Merry Beehive Gate
40. Mithril Duke Way
41. Muddy Cup Street
42. New Octopus Lane
43. Nine Beetles Gate
44. Noble Ram Circle
45. North Vine Street
46. Odd Dove Gate
47. Old Flagon Path
48. Old Potter Row
49. Olivebranch Street
50. Red Tailor Gate
51. Rising Fishwife Lane
52. Roaring Rat Street
53. Ruddy Goldpiece Road
54. Scarlet Heroine Lane
55. Seven Arrows Gate
56. Silver Dolphin Street
57. Silver Hippogriff Row
58. Singing Hippogriff Street
59. The Alley of the Dead Baker
60. The Alley of the Merry Wanderer
61. The Alley of the Nine Copperpieces
62. The Alley of the Wild Ogre
63. The Alley of the Winking Mermaid
64. The Circle of the Holy Bullfrog
65. The Circle of the Merry Leperchaun
66. The Circle of the Silver Flagon
67. The Gate of the Homely Griffin
68. The Gate of the Red Jew Tree
69. The Gate of the Twisted Crocodile
70. The Gate of the Worthy Orc
71. The Lane of the Bald Chief
72. The Lane of the Brass Bottle
73. The Lane of the Winking Veteran
74. The Pass of the Eight Sceptres
75. The Path of the Royal Brewer
76. The Path of the Royal Friend
77. The Path of the Seven Bullfrogs
78. The Path of the Silver Sealion
79. The Road of the Copper Unicorn
80. The Road of the Crowing Elk
81. The Road of the Drunken Medusa
82. The Row of the Brass Horseshoe
83. The Row of the Brass Torch
84. The Row of the Freezing Baker
85. The Row of the Gray Jockey
86. The Row of the Singing Jerkin
87. The Row of the Wild Archer
88. The Street of the Bonny Freemason
89. The Street of the Joyful Hare
90. The Street of the Leaping Blacksmith
91. The Street of the Rising Saint
92. The Street of the Silver Vixen
93. The Street of the Wild Boar
94. The Way of the Blue Zombie
95. The Way of the Broken Iguana
96. The Way of the Eight Pirates
97. Tiny Donkey Alley
98. Vile Golem Lane
99. White Angel Alley
100. Worthy Ferry Row



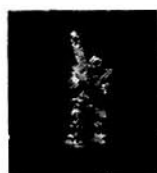
1. *Angry Freemason Road*
2. *Bald Begger Alley*
3. *Big Turf Alley*
4. *Bonny Huntsman Lane*
5. *Bronze Vicar Street*
6. *Brown Pixie Alley*
7. *Dancing Unicorn Street*
8. *Drunken Wench Pass*
9. *Eight Groves Lane*
10. *Flying Torch Street*
11. *Freezing Brook Way*
12. *Frosty Warrior Row*
13. *Giddy Griffin Lane*
14. *Golden Pot Lane*
15. *Growling Elk Path*
16. *Hale Knave Lane*
17. *Heartly Monkey Path*
18. *Holy Freemason Alley*
19. *Icy Whistle Row*
20. *Iron Willow Row*
21. *Ivory Mason Row*
22. *Ivy Mare Path*
23. *Ivy Tiger Pass*
24. *Jovial Wanderer Alley*
25. *Jovial Wolverine Gate*
26. *Lone Rock Lane*
27. *Long Huntsman Lane*
28. *Long Maiden Path*
29. *Mean Shepard Row*
30. *Mithril Triton Street*
31. *Nine Sphinxs Gate*
32. *Noble Triton Way*
33. *North Quiver Row*
34. *Old Plume Circle*
35. *Pure Griffin Pass*
36. *Rising Hawk Row*
37. *Rising Shield Pass*
38. *Savage Unicorn Circle*
39. *Seven Fowls Pass*
40. *Silver Tailor Path*
41. *Six Ferrys Lane*
42. *Six Squids Alley*
43. *The Alley of the Dirty Dancer*
44. *The Alley of the Four Wolves*
45. *The Alley of the Iron Grapes*
46. *The Alley of the Jolly Bow*
47. *The Alley of the Olde Warthog*
48. *The Alley of the Olden Dagger*
49. *The Alley of the Royal Yew Tree*
50. *The Alley of the Six Saints*
51. *The Circle of the Singing Goat*
52. *The Gate of the Bandy Leperchaun*
53. *The Gate of the Brass Dragon*
54. *The Gate of the Crowing Elf*
55. *The Lane of the Golden Sealion*
56. *The Lane of the Jade Dog*
57. *The Lane of the Joyful Dwarf*
58. *The Lane of the Northern Paladin*
59. *The Lane of the Pure Fish*
60. *The Lane of the Six Mugs*
61. *The Pass of the Iron Bridge*
62. *The Pass of the Merry Moat*
63. *The Pass of the Pure Dog*
64. *The Path of the Ivory Heroine*
65. *The Path of the Long Dog*
66. *The Path of the Olde Beaver*
67. *The Road of the Flaming Duke*
68. *The Road of the Four Flagons*
69. *The Road of the Lofty Dock*
70. *The Road of the Mean Frog*
71. *The Row of the Jovial Glove*
72. *The Row of the Large Mermaid*
73. *The Row of the Leaping Jester*
74. *The Row of the Little Elk*
75. *The Row of the Little Pirate*
76. *The Row of the Murky Hunter*
77. *The Row of the Olden Boar*
78. *The Street of the Crowing Rogue*
79. *The Street of the Dancing Pegasus*
80. *The Street of the Giddy Fiddle*
81. *The Street of the Grey Bottle*
82. *The Street of the Grey Keys*
83. *The Street of the Jade Foam*
84. *The Street of the Jade Roc*
85. *The Street of the Singing Wagon*
86. *The Street of the Steel Wagon*
87. *The Street of the Steel Wolverine*
88. *The Street of the Tiny Ram*
89. *The Street of the True Rabbit*
90. *The Street of the Twisted Vixen*
91. *The Street of the Two Owls*
92. *The Way of the Little Hunter*
93. *The Way of the Pure Begger*
94. *The Way of the Roaring Moon*
95. *The Way of the Seven Does*
96. *True Orc Lane*
97. *Twin Saddle Path*
98. *Vile Queen Pass*
99. *Vile Thief Gate*
100. *Worthy Count Lane*

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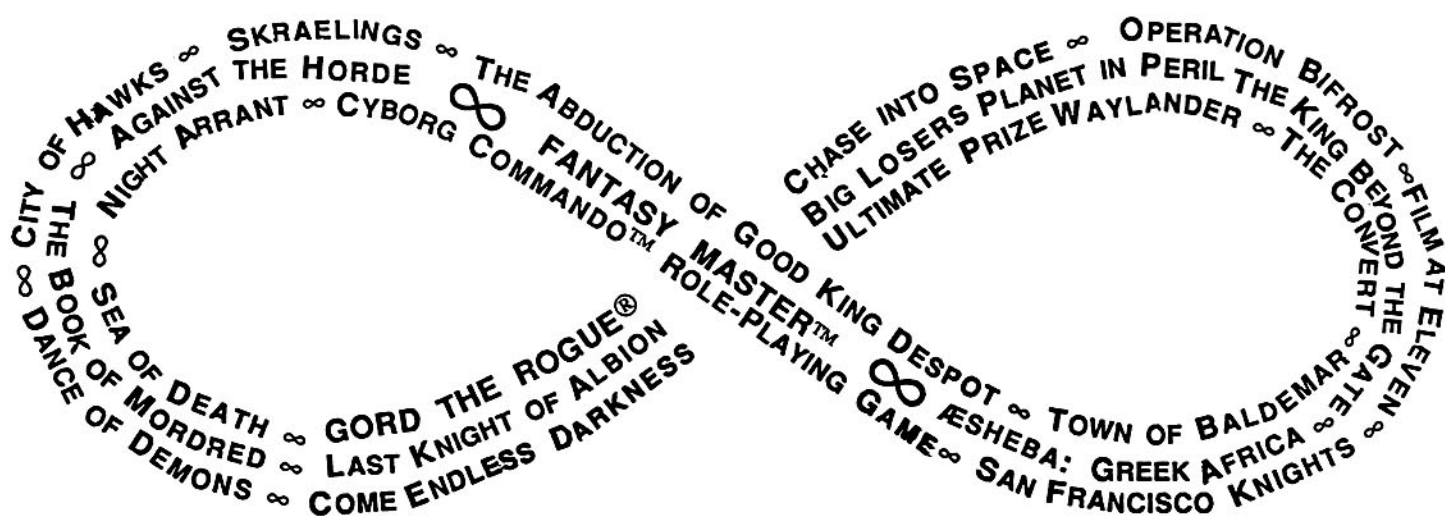
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Exploring the Majestic Castle Amber

Roger Zelazny's Greatest Creations Find a Home

Bill Fawcett

Amber is the name for a universe, a castle and a series of novels by Roger Zelazny about them and their inhabitants. The universe of Amber coexists with our contemporary world. Roger's books are even stored in the library on castle Amber's second floor. (Roger won't tell us how many novels are on that shelf.) At this time there are eight Amber novels already published, and two more planned for sure (with several more being discussed). These relate the adventures of the children of the long lived and prolific Oberon. While they look human, all of Oberon's offspring are stronger, faster, tougher, and deadlier than any human ever was. They also have abilities that can only be described as magical.

The Amber novels are often considered among the best science fiction series ever written; and are certainly among the most popular. Everyone has heard stories relating how an author got an idea and produced a great book overnight in a flash of inspiration. Most such tales are fictitious,

particularly as the fastest writers can only produce a few thousand words a day. Surprisingly, the writing of the first Amber novel comes about as close to this myth as is possible. Roger Zelazny actually wrote the first book and a half of Amber in a little over a month. He wrote them simply because he wanted to; from an inspiration, if you wish. Then, being sure that nothing done that quickly could be good, Roger proceeded to put the manuscripts in a drawer. It was over a year later that he offered them to a publisher. Since then, there have been eight Amber novels by Roger, two Amber Chosen Path gamebooks, one published by Ace and the other by TOR, both written by Neil Randall; and now, Castle Amber written by Roger and Neil together. Neil describes how the process started in his introduction:

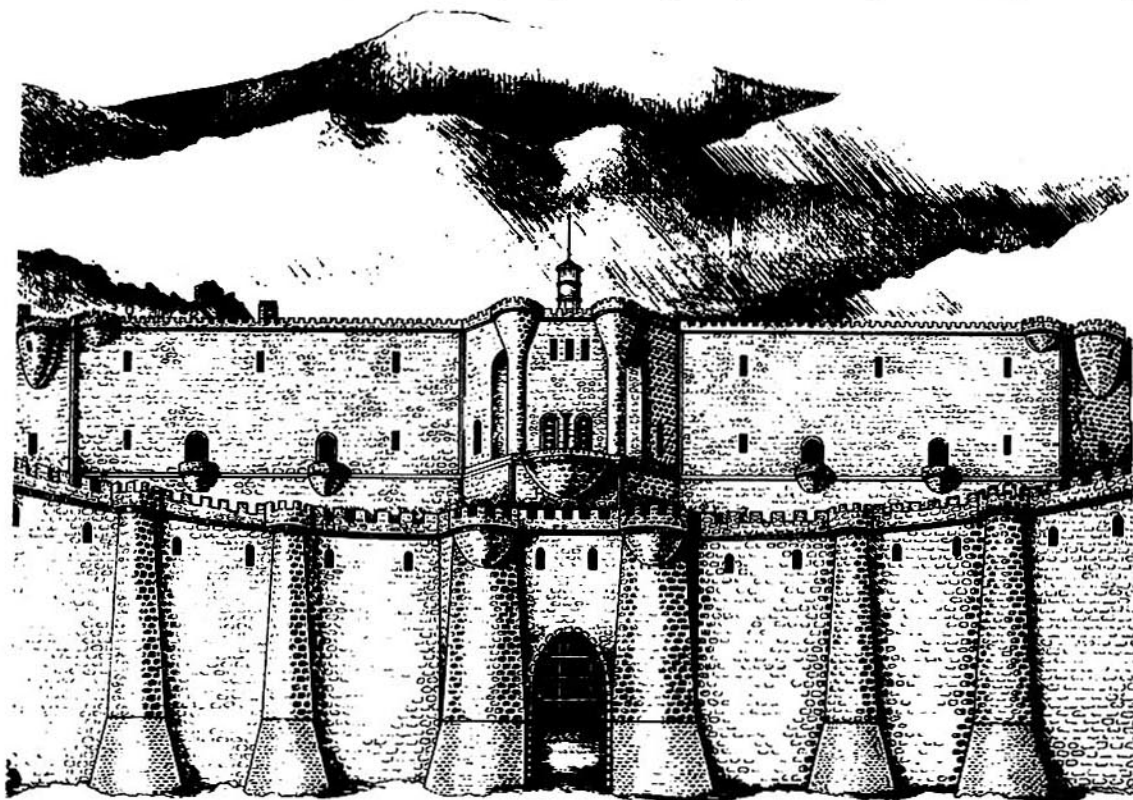
We invaded his house. It's as simple as that.

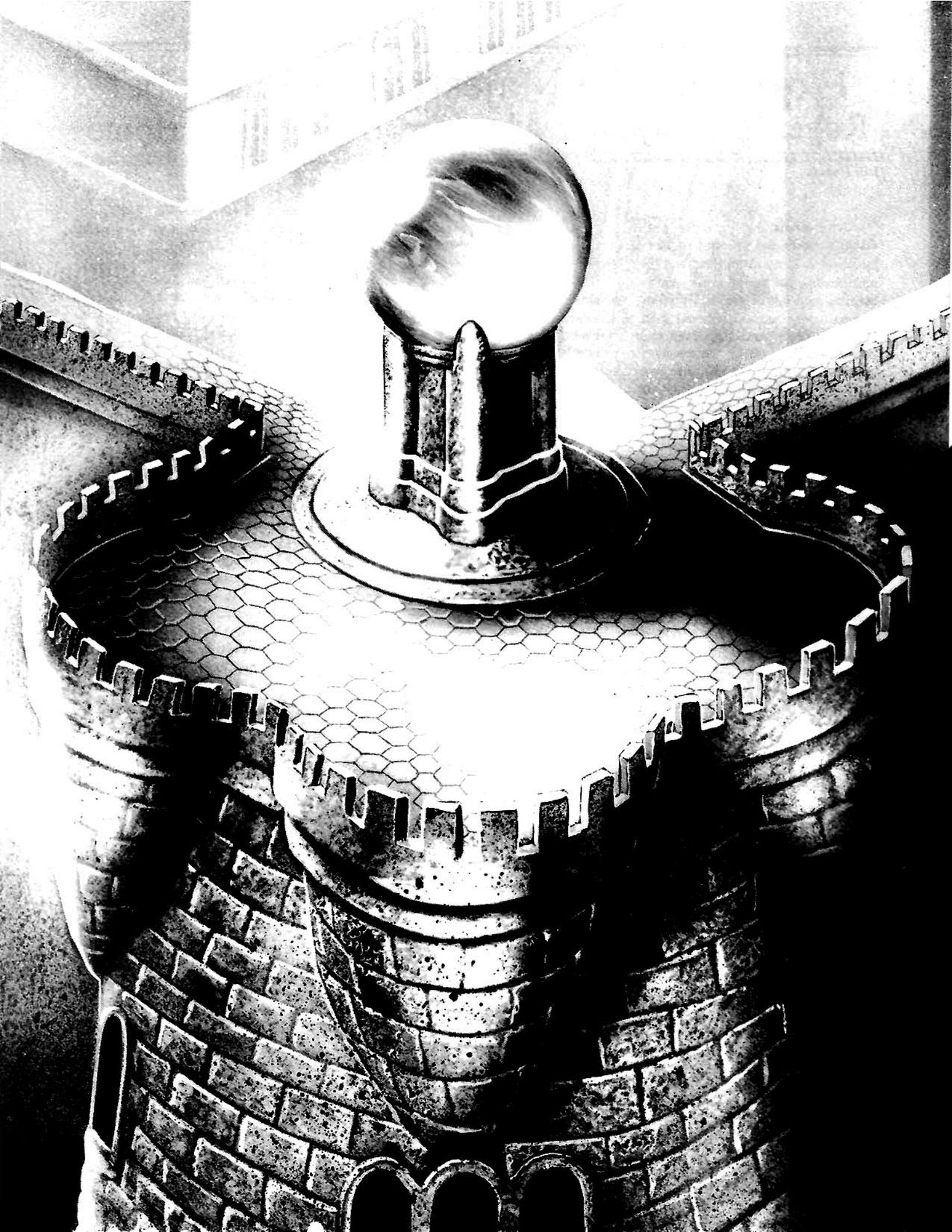
For four days we occupied the peak hours of Roger Zelazny's day.

Days when he should have been writing the ninth Amber novel. Or something about unicorns. Or cats. Or maybe even lords and light.

But he put up with us, all four of us. Todd Hamilton and Jim Clouse peppered him with question after interminable question about castle Amber itself, and later about the art of the Trumps. Bill Fawcett, who organized it all, extracted even more information. I sat in the corner, reading the as-yet-unreleased Sign of Chaos. It was an honor, and I won't easily forget it.

And with each new question, Roger Zelazny would stop, and raise his hands, and then put them back down again and let the words pour forth. Often, he would close his eyes as he talked, recalling every last detail about the world he created — or perhaps discovered — over the course of eight extremely popular novels. Sometimes he would hesitate, as if unwilling to tell us some Amberian secret, but in the end he would relent and let us know what he was thinking about. Those thoughts — always — confirmed his





belief in his world. Then, we all began writing and drawing...

To read the artist's words is an unqualified privilege. But to watch an artist's mind at work — now there's something worth being alive to see.

-Introduction to *Castle Amber*

The first five books, the *Chronicles of Corwin*, tell the continuing story of the interfamily warfare to determine who would be successor to Oberon as the king of Amber. We see this dynastic struggle through the eyes of Oberon's son Corwin, who begins them living on present day earth. The second series is seen from the perspective of Corwin's son. Here, the remaining siblings are faced with a threat from outside. In all of the novels there remains the constant threat from the Courts of Chaos, Amber's counterpart; opposed, but not necessarily evil.

Amber is both a universe of its own and the nexus to all of the other universes. All of the children of Oberon have the inherited ability to travel to all the "shadows" (a virtually infinite number of universes, including our own) and to almost any time in each shadow. Amber has its own unique physical laws. Among these are the complete inability of many of our "scientific" advances to operate, such as gunpowder. High tech items, such as computers, when they work, do so in a radically different manner. It is incorrect to think of Amber as being medieval. Though the level of technology their physics allows is close to that of preindustrialized Europe, Amber is somewhere else and exists at the same time as the novels' readers do. It is a place where life is different because the universe itself is different. Its culture, politics, and arts are as sophisticated as any we have developed here on earth; moreso in their scholar's biased opinion. After all, they are aware of us and we really don't believe they exist. Magic, in certain forms, seems to work.

Perhaps the most unique of all the artifacts in Amber are the Trumps. These Tarot-like playing cards were created by the mad wizard Dworkin. Each features the image of one of the Amberites. These Trumps allow communications between, and even instantaneous transport of, Oberon's children to each other regardless of which shad-

ow the user may be in. Dworkin is rumored to have also created "The Pattern" which, by walking through, enables the Amberites to make complete use of their powers.

In *Roger Zelazny's Visual Guide to Castle Amber*, you are first taken on a tour conducted by one of the residents of the castle that is the physical and otherwise center of the Amber universe. Then you are shown the Trumps, drawn by Todd Hamilton exactly as Roger pictured them, and finally given a look at the rest of the world of Amber; its residents, monsters, politics, religion, and magic.

Gaming Amber

It is possible to easily adapt the information in the *Castle Amber Guide* to your fantasy (or contemporary) role-playing campaign. This is hardly surprising as most of those involved in creating the guide are also involved in game design for several years. Neil Randall was one of the authors of *Victory Games' 007 Role-Playing Game*. The artist, Todd Hamilton, is a long time gamer and has illustrated over twenty gamebooks and modules. Jim Clouse, the mapmaker, has created the maps for literally dozens of modules and gamebooks. He has also designed the boards of such popular games as *Sanctuary* and *Empire Builder*.

When using the characters from the Amber novels in a gaming scenario, it should be remembered that while they look human, they aren't. They are unusual and powerful enough that at home they all are literally worshipped as minor gods. This is done in much the same manner of the ancient Caesars, but with better cause. Oberon and Dworkin are even less human and should be treated as demigods.

•All the children of Oberon should be given strength equal to three times or more of what is normal for a human of their size and build.

•All Amberites regenerate, although slowly. It took Corwin months to grow back lost eyes when blinded. They also heal five to ten times more quickly than a human from lesser wounds.

•The intelligence of the Amberites



THE JEWEL OF JUDGMENT

Property of the Unicorn, the Jewel of Judgment belongs officially to the King of Amber. Eric, at his death, gave the Jewel to Corwin, and eventually the Unicorn gave it to Random. Random possesses it still.

The Jewel is a single huge ruby pendant that hangs on a gold chain around the wearer's neck. To use it necessitates becoming attuned to it. This means wearing it to the center of the Pattern, then holding it up and trying to project one's self inside it. Once attuned, the wearer knows how to use it.

Its most obvious power is weather control. This seems to be the only one of its powers that Eric actually used. Almost as obvious is the fact that it shouldn't be used too often, nor worn for too long. It drains the wearer of power and strength, because it heightens the wearer's perception. Heightened perception takes energy.

The wearer, in fact, quickly discovers that everything is slowing down around him. The Jewel propels the wearer to the limits of his own existence, destroying all his energies in the process. He will die, unless he surrenders his very existence to the Pattern that is inside the Jewel...



CAINE

Strong in body and mind, Caine was something of a soothing presence in the Amberian court. He was able to joke about the royals' hatred for one another, and he often cast himself in the role of a rake for the sake of diverting his brothers' anger to himself. But he was headstrong as well, not trusting any Prince he believed had acted against Amber. He was prepared to fight any who had threatened the throne. His loyalty to Amber, however well he tried to disguise it, makes his death that much harder to accept.

is high, at the top end of the human scale. They also have excellent memories.

•Wisdom is a different matter. Much like the Greek gods, the children of Oberon are often illogical and even self-destructive.

•The stamina of Oberon's descendants is legendary and they often have to be reminded that their companions have become tired or are exhausted.

•Castle Amber was designed to withstand the types of attacks possible in Amber. The gems on its five corners can be treated as weather control devices (or weather wards if you prefer). There are also magical protections built into the castle, some of which are not commonly known even to the siblings. Controlling many of the powers of the castle requires the use of the "Jewel of Judgment". This jewel, in turn, can be employed effectively only by someone who has walked the Pattern.

•Many of the devices used by the Amberites should be considered powerful artifacts. This includes the sentient and shapechanging sword belonging to Corwin.

•The ability to Shadowshift is inherent in all members of the family and is not dependent on any device or incantations. One or more characters can accompany the Amberite on a shift. Travelling very quickly through the shadows is known as *Hellwalking* and is very dangerous.

•Since they can travel to any continuum, it is possible for an alien to be brought back to Amber. Occasionally, numbers of intelligent non-humans are used as soldiers. Normally, humans and near humans are the preferred company.

•All sorts of "mythical" monsters can be found in the forests of Amber. Some slip in from nearby shadows, others are native to the universe. dragons, manticores, and other creatures can occasionally be seen flying over Amber. The unicorn, for a number of reasons, is considered sacred in Amber and is the symbol of the royal family.

West End Games has the license to produce role-playing and board-games based upon the Amber novels. Both promise to be very exciting.



ERIC

The only King of Amber to die in battle, Eric spent most of his adult life figuring out how to get to the throne. He was rash and scheming, Machiavellian to the extreme, and he refused at all times to surrender. Determination of this intensity has its price, of course, and for Eric that price was a paranoia that bordered on the psychotic. His hatred of Corwin was probably the strongest hatred in the royal family; eventually it led to his rashest act of all, his self-coronation as King of Amber. That act, more than any other spelled his defeat. On the field of death, however, he proved his love for Amber by giving the powerful Jewel of Judgment, the only thing that could save Amber, to his most hated enemy.

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The Effects of Magic on the Environment, Part 2

The Third in a Series of Gaming Essays

by Gary Gygax

In Part One, Gary Gygax examined what he felt was the greatest flaw in many fantasy role-playing games today - the lack of logic and consistency in worlds which have always known magic. Having outlined the factors which go into the creation of a fantasy society, he suggested that GM's desiring more realistic and dynamic fantasy worlds try a new method of genesis. Here, in Part Two, he sketches out the steps required.

The work needed is monumental, but satisfying. Game Masters desiring to utilize any new systems must have the resources available to them to construct new game milieus. The older and now invalid myths, legends, and authored fiction must be replaced by a new body of works, created by or specially for the GM. That is both a challenge and an occupation in itself. I have found that the production of reference and resource material must proceed along with the development of the game setting or else the latter will exist in a vacuum.

The next step is to survey the possible areas of magical impact on the environment with respect to cultural development, economical development, and political events. Is magic a dominant factor in the society? Does "science" apply at all? Science must be applicable to some extent, especially in regard to order and codification. It also provides an ironic figure in counterpoint to magic in our own world. Whatever ratio between magic and technology is selected, it must be consistent. It is certain that different people will select different ratios and approaches, but the initial decision must guide the whole.

An example of "the whole" might serve to illustrate. Suppose one makes the following assumptions about the effects of working magic: With the rise of the first civilizations (Ur, Egypt, etc.) the conversion from tribal to organized religion enable priest-class magic-users to gradually organize a body of work regarding the powers they were able to wield. At the same time, the first non-ecclesiastical spell-users began to assemble collections of work and to loosely organize themselves — possibly as a measure to assure that the priests could not make the practice of magic their exclusive domain. Unseen natural forces employed in magic utilize *Preternatural* energies, including elemental forces. These forces, along with *Entital* ones, were the source of all early magic. As civilization spread, and knowledge was recorded and accumulated, the practitioners gradually expanded their abilities as well as discovering and using *Supernatural* energies, i.e. the forces of those planes removed from the material world of man, but not the main source of power which *Entital* beings (deities, et. al.) gener-

ally employ to perform magical feats. Because conditions favored a systematic approach, these ancient magic-workers quickly learned to use and expand their abilities and influence. By study, trial and error, and record keeping, various spell-workers gradually developed a structured discipline.

Naturally, magic was used for many things, and those able to employ it were variously benign, oppressive, distant, and so forth. As time wore on, however, it became clear that the ratio of one magic-using type to utilize the abilities of the other was uneven. One "class" had easier access to the spells/abilities of the other. This brought about a gradual separation of the two classes and created a rising enmity as the priests realized the increasing scope and potential dominance of the non-clerical magic-using *dweomercraeft* class. Struggle between these two groups enabled uncivilized peoples bordering the ancient states to exploit the situation, so that the pattern of rise, dominance, decline and fall parallels that of our own world to some considerable degree. The Ancient era gave way to a time of barbarism, a dark age which ushered in the medieval-type period of feudalism. Knowledge lost was again discovered by research and study.

On the average, out of a sampling of one million individuals fully 10,000 possess the capacity to employ magic of the sort used in *priestcraft*, albeit 10% or more of that number have restricted ability. Only 1,000, though, have sufficient potential to manage the forces utilized in *Dweomercraeft*, and nearly 10% of these individuals have too limited a scope. Thus, given the random sampling of one million, it can be said that 10,000 individuals have the innate ability to become full practitioners of *priestcraft* (9,000) or *dweomercraeft* (1,000). About 1,100 other individuals (1,000 clerical, 100 *mage-class*) are able to use magic to more limited extent. Within the group able to attempt full employment of magical forces, a pyramid of expertise forms naturally. About 5% of the total attain masterful command. Another 10% are expertly able to utilize magical forces, while 15% are adept, and a further 20% have considerable command of the forces. Thus, some 50% of the total magic-wielding population is able to employ powers to a large extent. At the base of the pyramid, are the other 50% of the practitioners, those neophytes and acolytes working to im-



prove their abilities, as well as those individuals who progress slowly and will cease progress altogether somewhere in the median range of achievement. The group of sharply limited ability also employ magic to some extent, but they do so in tandem with some profession which is their principal one, the power of magic being used to support, enhance, or supplement in some manner their principal activity. (Any class of characters, or characters using magic to a limited extent, fall into this group.)

With the re-emergence of large, organized states after the turmoil of the Dark Age, ecclesiastic groups and associates of dweomercrafters began to recruit potential members for testing, training, and support of their aims. Some were most altruistic in their aims, others less benign. There were those who sought to exploit practitioners of magic, and also those evil groups who eliminated all individuals not totally useful and committed to their malign ethos. Meanwhile, organized study of the power of magic again enabled its practitioners to collect knowledge and expand the field considerably. As this occurred, there grew a demand for spells of specific sort, as well as for those able to employ them.

In the area of priestcraft there were increasing demands for what can best be classified as cultural magic. Spells to cure and heal and protect from natural or supernatural harm had ever-increasing demand. So too was there a call for magic to assist in the control of nature — drought, flood, insect infestation, crop blight, husbandry, and so forth. Fertility in man, animal, and of soil was very much the pre-

cinct of the priest, as was protection of infants, guarding against venomous creatures and wild beasts. Counsel and judgement too, became very much the domain of the ecclesiastical practitioner of magic. Through augury and communication with superior beings as well as through spells which discern such things as motive, heart, and veracity, the caste of priestly spell users served well or ill as was their bent.

Dweomercrafters impacted generally upon politics and economics and had less bearing on cultural matters. Their power enabled governments to rise or be overthrown, built or destroyed strongholds, roads, bridges. Through magical energies communications, commerce, and trade were enhanced or hindered in time of conflict. No government could exist long without the services of the dweomercrafters, yet no ruling class could long accept the potential threat posed by those who could command such powers. Dweomercrafters might be adept at preserving foodstuffs, creating exotic stuffs from ordinary materials, and at providing the force needed to build and protect. At the same time, their powers could be turned against all. Human nature demanded in those unable to wield magical powers, the destruction of those able to bring such energies to command.

The magical threats to humanity grated strongly against the instinct of the non-magic-using public to eliminate that powerful minority able to use magic, for that power was needed to control the threats. Also, the better and more noble of dweomercrafters and priests assuaged many hostile feelings. From that dichotomy there rose a general balance

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where priests balanced mages and the non-magical served to govern all, including the spell-workers.

The practitioners of priestcraft are broadly divided into three parts. One-third serves in government in some capacity, one-third of ecclesiasts are devoted to the management of theological institutions and their affairs (temples, colleges, etc.), and the remainder are at large, amidst the general populace. Of course in the uncivilized areas this does not hold true, and in large cities the ratio is also different. The priests care for the human condition, assist in administration of law and justice, and attend to matters of natural sort. Nearly all the most able priests are concerned with government and the affairs of their theology. Of those able to utilize the powers known as *dweomercraft*, only a small percentage remain basically associated with their fellow ecclesiasts. If perhaps a quarter do, then another quarter align themselves with the *dweomercrafters*, and the remaining half of the priest-mage group become aloof or independent or otherwise removed. Such individuals are frequently very ambitious, of despotic or malign disposition, and ruthless. Many others are so removed from mundane concerns as to be virtually apart from mankind.

Of *dweomercrafters*, the majority of the most able are to be found in high office or as lords of petty domains of their own. Offices include national and regional government, commercial and financial ones. No king, duke, lord mayor, or great merchant would be without the services of one or more *dweomercrafters*. Defense and war, engineering and construction, communication and trade, wealth and luxury are much dependent upon the mages. As the priests are divided into separate groups by their services and beliefs, so too, are mages divided into separate associations. Despite the potential corruptive force of their power, however, only a third or less of *dweomercrafters* are truly malign. The majority of *dweomercrafters* are active in defense of weal and continued progressive change for their own folk and mankind at large.

Now, a brief examination of current parts might be helpful. In this regard, examples of how magic might affect various aspects of living in city, estate or countryside, as well as commerce from place to place, are offered. Let's take the city setting first.

Magic could light the streets at least as well as electricity does. This might not always be desirable because of enemies both human and monstrous, and the magical lighting would always be subject to counter-magic (dark). It would be fairly common, nonetheless. Magic might well assist in furnishing water and heat, at least to common areas and governmental buildings. Refuse would have to be collected and removed to some place, but afterwards it might be destroyed or converted to something else magically. Magic would guard places where valuables are stored just as alarms do here. Returning to water, its quality could be assured by water purification of magical sort, just as food storage might be assured by protective spells preventing pest molestation and rot. Major maintenance and repairs might be accomplished by magical means, so too fire fighting and public safety. Select conveyance by magical means might be at the disposal of the powerful and wealthy.

The estate would also be served by magic. Defense and offense would be heavily reliant upon magic, only somewhat less so in the case of a monarch who may employ a consid-

erable force of armed guards in addition to the magical ones. All the principal luxuries of urban sort would probably be available at a great manor, including exotic items magically imported or created. The general health of the owners of such places would be cared for far better than that of the average, and the longevity of such people would be increased through application of magic.

If the powerful and wealthy took one-half of all available magical benefits for themselves, the remaining half would then go to the benefit of all others, i.e. 10% of the population enjoys 50% of the magical wealth. The middle class would certainly command two-thirds of the remainder. Let us assume that the gentlefolk, so to speak, number 20% of the total population and have 30% of the magical resources at their command or serving them. That leaves the balance of the population, 70%, receiving 20% of the magical benefits. Even so, the life of the common man would be greatly improved.

The average folk would be served principally by and tied closely to the practitioners of priestcraft in a mutually beneficial way. The priests need to gather and maintain followers of their theology in order to have and increase their own ability to employ magic. The "flock" needs the clerics to treat injury and disease and health and fertility in man and beast alike. Rodents and insects threaten, and the priests are there with magic just as when drought, flood, fire, and such disasters come. Priests can defend against many other natural and supernatural presences, leaving only the occasional ravening dragon for other defenders to accommodate.

Mental communications through magical means would exist between all major places in a political environment. Transference of documents and other small items might also be accomplished by such means. Perhaps there would be magically powered aerial and land conveyances, watercraft too. Certainly no train of vehicles and animals carrying men and/or goods as their principal cargo would travel without magical protection, typically the actual practitioners of magic. Great ships as well as smaller ones would have such protection, and motive power assured by favorable winds or through employment of something akin to water elementals, perhaps. As routes of land communication would be constructed and maintained by magical powers to some greater or lesser extent, so too would navigation and safety on the high seas be benefited.

Of course during time of war, the opposing forces would make every effort to neutralize and destroy the magical power of the enemy. A successful invader would then seek out and eliminate all individuals able to use magic so as to control the common folk of the invaded land. All wars are not fought through open warfare. There are diplomatic struggles, internal political rivalries, and conflict between groups within the society. Here too, the individuals able to employ magic would be key. It can be said then that with the privileges and power of magical ability would come many demands and deadly perils, too.

As an interesting aside, the things we think of as occult are of such general nature — herbalism, crystal healing and mineral property healing, astrology, dream interpretation, minor divination, fortune-telling, omen interpretation and palmistry, amongst others — would be the stuff of every day life and truth. Scarcity of full-fledged magic practitioners



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coupled with the actual power of operational magic would make those with little actual ability and those who understood magical functioning but lacked the ability to directly shape magical energies the physicians and counselors of the common folk in urban slums and rural hamlets. In actuality, exceptionally adept persons of this sort would be sought after by middle and aristocratic classes alike. Knowledge is power, and the greater the knowledge of the magic using peers, the more power these individuals would possess. A noble might well employ a mage, house priests, and consult several sorts of other, lesser sorts of those associated with magic for minor ailments and such things and to cast horoscopes, interpret dreams, read omens, and so forth. Those who know but cannot perform would be excellent watchdogs over the more powerful practitioners of magical arts.

One more subject needs touching upon. One is science and technology. Just enough of this process should be functional as to allow something which approaches an ordered approach to the power of magic yet not so certain as to allow ever-greater understanding and increasing control over magical energies. There must always be a random element, change and arcane material so as to force the whole into an art and disallow it as science. Most folk would indeed find the thought of scientific things actually functioning as amusing, and the Court Technologist could only be held as someone who is either slightly mad or a practical joker.

It is necessary to do more than is possible to present here. The basic premise of a society of medieval European (or any other of earth's medieval-like) type must be discarded by all serious fantasy role-player enthusiasts. The idea that a magical veneer placed upon such a construct then

gives a suitable milieu for the game system must be rejected. By building a more likely model, the game designer and author can then examine the game systems and by creative work or adaptation design better and more imaginative and exciting vehicles for entertainment. The Game Master must understand this requirement and alter his or her campaign accordingly with the assistance of the game system, hopefully, without it if necessary. The process is long, demanding, and difficult. I am certain the reward for accomplishment will be better games, better campaigns, and the assurance that fantasy will remain the leading and most effective genre in role-playing. There must now come a transitional period, a time when there are modifications, changes, and casting off of old ways for new. That should neither dismay nor disturb enthusiasts. Since FRPGs have existed, and, beyond question, they are the progenitors of all the rest, systems and rules have been in a continual state of flux, with overall improvement being accomplished by and large despite many exploitative works and a glut of marginal material. Rules and rule systems might need total rebuilding, but concepts and principals will remain basically unchanged, so the changes as they occur will not be shattering nor require re-learning on a large scale. The effects of magic on a world environment would undeniably be drastic and far reaching. It is time to postulate new milieus which take this fact into account.

Next Issue: A brief message on Note Passing!

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When Make Believe Hurts

How to See & Stop Interpersonal Violence in Role-playing Games

Jonathan Tweet

When people in the role-playing hobby talk about what is good and bad in these games, violence is often part of the conversation. I don't know of a single role-playing game that doesn't involve violence as part of the stories told, and many of them center around violence as the main source of enjoyment. The prevalence of violence is an especially important topic to those of us who understand all violence as part of a vast interconnected web that includes kicking the dog, yelling at your friend, and dropping nuclear weapons on Soviet cities. If you've been involved in the hobby awhile you've probably heard most of the debates about violence in games, but I would like to take a new perspective. Forget, for a while, what is happening in the game world and concentrate on what is happening in this world. Forget the imaginary blood spilled and think about the real emotions that are frequently hurt.

To begin with, consider the chain of events that first started me thinking about the nature of interpersonal hurt among players. Five years ago, I was running a *RuneQuest* campaign, and during one session, "Susan", a novice player, was in charge. At the end of the adventure she divvied out the treasure without much forethought and the thief in the group wound up with a powerful magic item that could have been used better by others in the party. Already prone to self-disparagement, Susan was severely disappointed with herself for having failed in this way as leader of the group, and I saw that if the thief would give the item back to the group in exchange for something less valuable, Susan would not feel so bad about herself. So I talked with "Jim", who ran the thief.

Now Jim, you must understand, is a very nice fellow. In all the years we've ordered pizzas together, I don't think I ever saw him take the last piece. You know what I mean. That's why I was so surprised when he said, "Sorry, Jonathan, but I don't think Lucifer [the thief, an appropriate name] would give the item back." Jim chose to have his imaginary character keep an imaginary magic item rather than assuage a friend's hurt.

The next option open to me was to force Jim to give up the item, which I could have done with the right application of guilt and moralizing, but the difference between Jim's nice self and the side he was showing then shocked me so much that I realized I did not know what I was getting into. I backed off and let Susan's wounds heal on their own.

But my eyes were opened. From then on I was more sensitive to the repercussions that a character's actions could have in the real world. Not only did I witness more incidents of interpersonal neglect, such as Jim apparently showed for Susan, but I saw malicious attacks on characters designed to hurt the players running them.

The boundaries between the game world and the real world blurred at times. When characters fought, to what extent were the players involved as well? Thinking in terms of game world vs. real world, you can see several basic types of conflicts that occur between players in a role-playing game.

Character vs. Character

Example: An assassin in the group kills your priestess character as part of a story about betrayal and trust.

You are sad that your character is dead, but you hold nothing against the other player, who in turn held nothing against you. It's all part of the story, and in the long run everyone is satisfied with it. Not all events in a game that cause negative feelings are bad. Sadness, disappointment and pain are part of any good campaign, and they should be enjoyed in the context of the continuing story. Just as people pay money to see sad movies and to cry, they enjoy loss and suffering in role-playing games.

This kind of violence is all part of the plan, part of the game, part of the story. Perhaps you want a story without this kind of violence, and that's fine too, but if you want violence, it can be part of the scheme of things without hurting the feelings of the players.

Character vs. Character is the level at which all violence (if any) should be played out in a campaign.

Sometimes a player whose character is attacked or threatened will retaliate verbally against the aggressor player or GM. Again, this can be part of the game as both parties accept as such. Go ahead and seethe, cry and yell, if that's a



"Over-involvement leads to confusion."



"But it's probably not the best solution..."

part of the emotion of the story. But if, when the game has ended, you hold bad feelings toward another player, either because you were attacked in character or as a player, then the conflict has reached the level of the players, and it is no longer a conflict of Character vs. Character.

Character vs. Player

Example: The assassin slays your priestess as part of the story, and the game is ruined for you.

Here you have to look to yourself. If another player commits violence against your character, but that violence is just part of the unfolding story, let it be. The sadness you feel is also part of the story, and your sadness makes the rest of the story better. If you take attacks against your character personally, you will disrupt the story both for yourself and for the other players.

If the other players realize that you are over-sensitive to attacks against your character, they can play around your character, making sure nothing happens to it so that you won't be upset, but that reduces the fun for them. The world of the characters is being compromised by the world of the players; your feelings are affecting the actions of the fictitious characters, both yours and those of the other players.

The best thing to do if you feel personally attacked when your character is attacked is to re-evaluate the game. It's a fun game when you involve yourself, but over-involvement leads to confusion. Learn to play the game out without feeling the character is you. I'm not saying that you shouldn't be angry or sad or hurt depending on what happens in the game, just be sad within the game. Don't carry grudges out into the real world.

Similarly, if you see someone else taking personally attacks on a character, try to explain how the game can be better enjoyed from a distance.

Player vs. Player

Example: A player is mad at you so he uses his assassin to kill your priestess, an assault you take personally.

This is the worst kind of violence because it comes from one human heart and is directed at another human heart. If you find yourself committing this kind of violence, take a good look at yourself. Are there better ways to resolve the dispute? Often your violence will not only hurt your target

but will disrupt the story for others as well. Is it worth the results? For some people at some times, the best way to express their anger is through a role-playing game, so I cannot rule that in all circumstances you should not strike at players through their characters. For example, maybe you really need to get across to a friend that you are angry, but you don't have the social skills and habits to bring up that fact without causing a lot of hurt feelings. Perhaps calling your friend's attention to your anger by attacking his or her character in a game is the best way you know how to do it. Remember, however, that you might well disrupt the story for the others involved as well as your target. You will usually be able to find another, superior way to express your feelings.

And if you find yourself the target of an attack, keep in mind that the conflict is not Player vs. Player unless you involve yourself in the conflict as a player, not just as your character. The most common response to an attack is a counterattack, either through your character, or directly at the attacking player. Even if you make no immediate counterstrike, you are probably smart enough to get back to the other player later without being caught. You might not even catch yourself. For instance, you might carry a grudge that leads you to talk maliciously about the other player or be less social to him or her. If you are attacked as a player, you will, as a player, be tempted to strike back.

That's why the best defense (if you can manage it) is to avoid the attack altogether, making what was intended as a Player vs. Player attack into a Player vs. Character attack.

Player Vs. Character

Example: A player is mad at you, so he uses his assassin to slay your priestess; you respond by treating the death as if it had come from the hands of an impersonal GM, and you play out your sorrow as you normally would, making it part of the story. Your feelings are, for the most part, spared.

In the Japanese martial art of aikido, one learns that the best way to avoid an attack is to get out of the way and re-direct the attack's force in a harmless or even beneficial direction. You can do the same thing in a role-playing game. When a player has tried to hurt you by hurting your character, you can keep that attack in the game world by making it part of the story, as if the original motivation for the attack were not personal. We all have had practice accepting pain at the hands of GMs. Game Masters lead us into traps, kill our characters, and steal our prized possessions; and usually no one gets mad at them for doing so. The difference between being slain by a GM and being slain by a fellow player is that you grant the GM neutrality and accept what he or she says as part of the impartial universe, while you resent the malice you see in that actions of your fellow player. As a result, you are more likely to be upset when slain by a party member than by one of the GM's monsters.

Do you see how the way you accept the event determines your response? If you can learn to accept another player's angry attack as part of the game world, the same way you would accept a GM's attack, then you need not be troubled by such aggression.

By accepting and re-directing the attack, you may well

help the aggressor give up some of the hostility that prompted it in the first place. Conflict builds upon itself, and you can stop the cycle of aggression by not being struck by the aggression yourself. Striking back at someone who has attacked you only invites a counter-counterstrike, but refusing to respond to violence in kind gives the aggressor the chance to re-evaluate aggression as a useful form of personal expression.

Of course, you will not be able to preserve your feelings completely, and don't make the mistake of denying your hurt because you don't want to feel it. You can reduce the effect of such aggressionism but you cannot at first avoid them completely. It will take practice to overcome your habits of vengeance.

Even if you have ended an attack on you by keeping it in the game world, you may wish to address any hostility you felt coming towards you by talking it over with the aggressor, but then it will be real world interaction, not hidden by the illusions of the game.

Note that the method of turning a real world event into part of the story works equally well with annoyances and problems that are not intended as malicious. For instance, if another player always mocks your character, don't see it as "that player is role-playing poorly and interfering with my role-playing". See it as your character sees it. "That person [the other character] is always mocking what I do. How should I handle this problem?" Then handle it in character.

Character-Player Distance

Some gamers will object to my recommendation that there be a clear distinction between character and player. They enjoy immersing themselves in the character and in the game world, and they do not want to be restricted by real-world concerns, such as the feelings of their fellow players. Let me point out two things to clarify my position.

First, all art needs an appropriate amount of distance between the art and the viewer to be effective. If the art is



"Just as people pay money to see sad movies and cry, they enjoy loss and suffering in role-playing games."

too distant from the viewer (or participant), it is not interesting. That's the problem many have with abstract art. I'm not recommending that you be dispassionate toward the characters you play, only that you keep your distance.

Second, one way to keep the proper distance is to be able to remove yourself from the game when it's time to do so. Getting into the heart of the game and feeling a character's emotions as your own is great, but it's best if at the end of the game you can back out and leave those feelings in the game world. It's just like watching a movie and being wrapped up in it, but then remembering it's just a movie as the credits roll by. Does your character hate another character with a fiery passion? Fine. But do you harbor resentment toward the player of the character as a result? If you do, that's a problem. Don't be like the people who attack the actors who portray soap opera villains. Keep your emotional focus on the game world. With practice you can be like a diving bird that immerses itself deep in the water yet comes out dry when it surfaces. You can immerse yourself in the drama of the game without carrying its emotions out with you.

Choosing a Character

The trickiest way a violent gamer can be violent toward the other players is to create an evil character. With an evil character, all the violent attacks you want to launch on other players can be justified by the ideal of "role-playing". Watch for this pattern.

Perhaps there is an important catharsis to be found in playing an evil character, and as long as the rest of the group is willing to tell stories about evil characters, stories that will include painful emotions, that's great. Evil and pain are a part of the real world, and they can be a valuable part of a game world. The trick is not to let a player disrupt a group out of the desire to role-play a negative character. A disrupted group and hurt feelings remain a disrupted group and hurt feelings even if the cause was role-playing.

Resolving Conflicts

The best way to resolve the conflicts that will arise over party conflicts is to catch them when they are small or before they have begun.

First, realize that the Game Master has a lot of responsibility in guiding the stories that the group will make, and cooperation from the players makes this job much easier. Because of the work involved in running a campaign, the Game Master(s) should feel free to set the tone of the campaign. For example, some GMs have rules against running evil characters or against slaying other members of the party. Players who cannot have fun in such an environment know what the campaign would be like from the start and do not need to join in.

Restricting violence and expelling violent members from the group is an easy and simple way to keep the game's conflicts low, but it's probably not the best solution. After all, a lot of interpersonal damage can be done even if characters don't actually slay each other. A harder task for the GM would be to explain clearly to the players that the campaign may include betrayal, conflict, death, and pain; the players will then have to decide whether they want

to participate in such a campaign without resenting the player or GM doing the attacking.

Even with such ground rules, conflicts are going to arise between the players. Personal feuds will infect the game world, and you should be ready to catch them. The first thing you can do is to recognize what is happening. When a conflict arises, take a look at it.

What effects does it have on the rest of the group? Personal conflicts can cause disappointment, lethargy, or anger; while purely character conflicts can energize the group.

Who is the target? If the person receiving the indirect attack is unpopular, you can bet that the attack was personal. It would be great if we could leave the social roles we've learned in real life behind us as we role-play, but the popularity contest and the power struggle follow us into most of our games. Watch for them.

If you are the one launching the attack on a character, take a look at your motivations. Would you act the same way toward the characters of the other players? When you look at the face of the person whose character you attacked, do you see another gamer in a story, or do you see the object of your attack? Are you uneasy looking in that person's eyes?

Usually the best way to deal with a personal conflict is to minimize it once it is spotted. If the group doesn't mind a personal confrontation to work it out on the spot, the adversaries might want to come out with what's bothering them. Otherwise the story can often be preserved and the discussion delayed until the game is over. The Game Master can intervene to change the situation such that the conflict is ended or reduced, and players can use *Whimsy Cards* (if they have them) to do the same. The GM might even want to "erase" some of the events from the game world. If the player feels compelled to play out a character a certain way in response to an event in the story, maybe "going back in time" and re-playing that event will solve the problem. The best possibility keeps the conflict and the actions to minimize the conflict in the scope of the game world. When possible, players should use their characters to intervene between the characters rather than intervening between the players personally.

Sad to say, even if you understand everything I've had to say in this article, you are still not going to be able to resolve all the conflicts that will arise. Eventually, you will run across a conflict like this one.

Player A wants to play out an evil character. That's the kind of story she likes to create and if she cannot play an evil character, the game is not worth playing.



"The boundaries between the game world and the real world blurred at times."

Player B wants to tell straightforward stories in which the characters cooperate to overcome the obstacles that the GM presents. Conflicts within the group disturb him, and he has a hard time disassociating his feelings from those of the character.

How can these two play together in a group? As long as both remain attached to their ideas about how they want to role-play, maybe they can't. You'll have to evaluate the individual case when it happens in your group, but you can't expect things to work out all the time. If you got some friends together to play football and some would only play tackle and some would only play touch, you couldn't play together. No one's right and no one's wrong. You just can't play together.

Remember, however, that role-playing is a special case because it is often a major component of a gamer's social life. Being kicked out of a group would be painful for the victim, especially because the one kicked out is likely to be the less popular of those involved in the conflict. Less popular gamers are likely to be less popular in general, the very people who could best benefit from the social environment of gaming. Also, there are few gamers out there, and being kicked out of a group might mean not being able to role-play at all. For these reasons, try to resolve whatever conflicts you can within the group. I'm expecting a lot; I'm expecting you to make an actual sacrifice for another person, and maybe you're not willing to do that. So be it.

Susan and Jim Revisited

How I would I deal with the conflict between Susan and Jim now, after years of observation and thought?

I would remind Susan that it was her character who failed not herself. "No one is upset at you because your character made a mistake," I would say. "That's just part of the story. In the role of your character who has admittedly made a mistake, how do you handle the problem?"

I would remind Jim that Susan might not be able to keep separate her character's actions from her own, or to distinguish his character's greed from his own. Considering that, he might want to make up a reason why his character would make an exception to his expected behavior in this case.

Finally, I would be willing to compromise the world and go back in time, letting Susan's character distribute the loot better. A small "blip" in the internal validity of the world is a small price to pay to help a friend feel better.

These solutions certainly aren't perfect, as you can plainly see. Mostly I've wanted to share with you some of the insights I've had about conflicts within role-playing groups so that some of the needless pain can be spotted and stopped. In some ways I'm making up for personal mistakes.

Writing this article has reminded me that it's been a topic of concern with me long before Jim and Susan had their dispute. It was about nine years ago that I participated in a vicious massacre of a player's beloved hero. We were justified in our cruelty because our characters were evil and the victim was good, but I found my position hard to explain when Dan's mother called me to see why he had come home from the game in tears. I'm sorry, Dan. We didn't know what we were doing.



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The Cosmic Streetcorner

This past Labor Day weekend, the Cosmic Streetcorner alighted on Bourbon St. in New Orleans, Louisiana! Having flown down to represent Gateways at World Science Fiction Convention there, I got to tread along cobblestone streets and take my fill of the wonder, mystery and festivity of a city that constantly seemed to be hiding behind sequined and colorfully feathered masks. Come to think of it, Bourbon St. seemed so glitzy and commercial, I got to wondering where the real New Orleans truly existed. Alas, I had barely the time to begin to find out! I had a hero to meet.

When I was a kid, my thing was monsters. No, none of those "little" monsters like Frankenstein or the Mummy, but big ones, the bigger the better. I loved dinosaurs, and I spent a frightening amount of time being a tyrannosaur and tromping through stacks of canned foods while my mother wasn't looking. (Hey, I said when I was a kid, okay — little kid!) Around 1972, at San Juan International Airport, my Dad bought me two issues of Famous Monsters of Filmland; you see, my Dad wasn't very good with emotions, and I had to go home to my Mom in New York, so he bought me these magazines and I appreciated that. Anyway, on the way home that summer I fell in love with this dream magazine, FM, with its gorgeous Godzilla stills and funny informative picture captions. The affair has never ended.

So I'm standing in the "huckster" room at this New Orleans World Con, and this dealer is trying to sell me on this videotape about monster movie memorabilia. I go, "Hey, is

Forest Ackerman in this?" and he goes, "Yeah, sure, twenny-five bucks. As a matter of fact there's Forry Ackerman right behind ya!"

Sure enough, Forest J. Ackerman, the editor-in-chief of Famous Monsters of Filmland, coiner of the term *sci-fi*, grandfather of science fiction and horror fandom, one of my earliest childhood heroes stood a couple of yards away from me wearing a loud Hawaiian print shirt. "What do I do?" I mutter. "Ge'head, say hi to him," said the dealer. And so, despite myself, I did. I proudly presented a full run of Gateways magazines to him, and told him that he was the reason I was in business.

It wouldn't have been the first time Forry heard that. Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, Stephen King and George Romero have all beat me to that particular punch. But Mr. Ackerman seemed delighted. He gave me a key chain that read *Fangs for Remembering Me, 4E, 4E, 4E*. For a moment I even felt a little sad. I'd stopped reading FM shortly before its publisher's disappearance caused its cancellation a few years back. My own magazine was taking off. But Forry's grin, and the way he walked away with his head high and his assistant at his arms made me proud to have gotten at least this far.

No one will ever deny that I was different when I was a kid. I got picked on, and nastily teased for many different reasons, one of which was my fascination with all those gigantic green lizards. Though I may have cried, I never let go of the things that made me happy. Neither did Tracy Hickman, Margaret Weis, Larry Elmore or Gary Gygax, and I welcome each of these heroes to the pages of this magazine. Forest J. Ackerman never let go either. I appreciate that.

Jeffrey Gomez
Publisher



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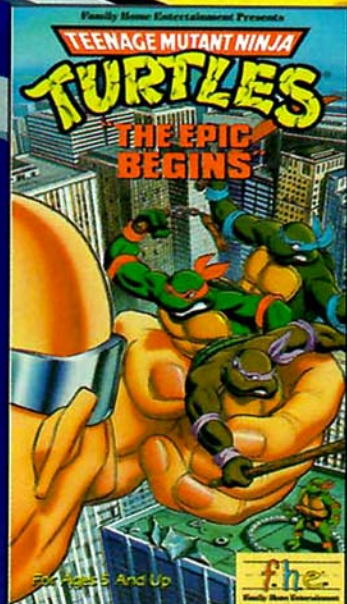
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