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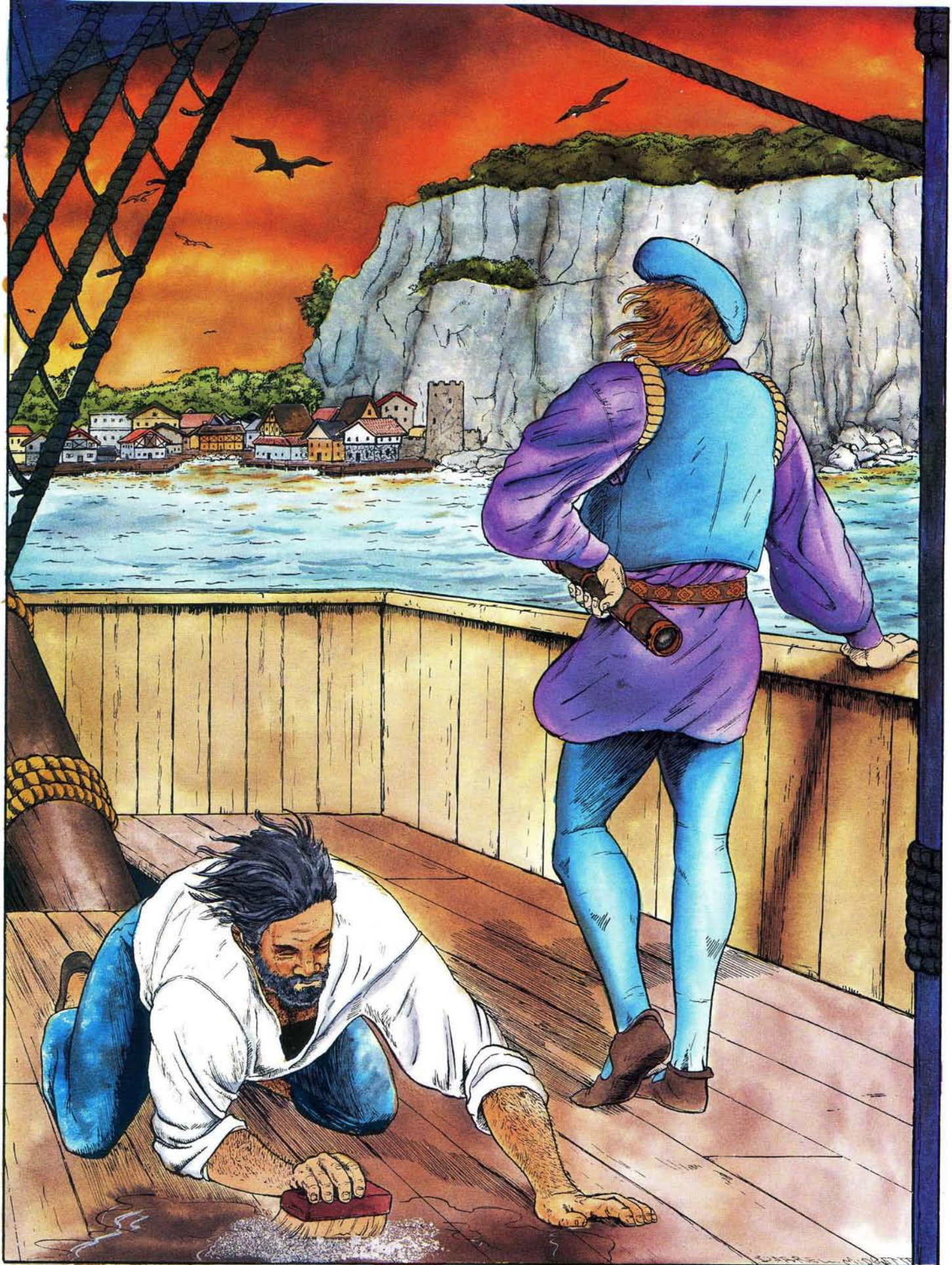
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In this illustration of the importance of socio-economic class, Antonio, a noble's son, watches the approaching port at his ease, while Gunther, a common laborer, works to pay the last of his passage fee.

Proto- Dimensions™



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Volume 1



The time machine has yet to be built in our world. However, in **Dark Conspiracy**, you can learn to walk through dimensions. The **Proto-Dimensional Compendium** provides you new dimensions to explore. Each new dimension is presented in adventure format, describing how player characters discover them, what they encounter within, and how they might get out again. Covered in this compendium are more than 12 dimensions to explore, as well as a multitude of information for the referee so that the dimensions can be used repeatedly within a **Dark Conspiracy** campaign.

GDW: 2109. \$12.

The logo for GDW (Game Designers Workshop), consisting of the letters 'GDW' in a bold, stylized font with a thick outline.



A Short History

of *Amber Diceless Roleplaying Part II*

An interview with designer Erick Wujcik.

by Lester Smith

Page 21

Free Lift-Out Poster

by Janet Aulisio

Page 24

It's Never a Good Day to Die

Sometimes, side trips are more dangerous than they seem. A *Mythus* FRPG adventure.

by John Langford

Page 28

The Winds at the World's Edge

A merchant with a mysterious cargo wants the PCs to escort him through the xenophobic nation of Pikarayd. For *Stormbringer* fourth edition.

by Steve Maggi

Page 32



Exclamations!

In order to have fun, GMs and players should learn to trust one another.

by Lester Smith

Page 4

The Gamemaster's Purview

The *Dangerous Journeys* designer discusses items of especial interest for GMs.

This month:

Created Castings into Standard Ones

by Gary Gygax

Page 5

Big Screen

The Phantom's Movie Madness and Video Views.

by Phantom of the Movies

Page 8

Slammin'

A train ride gets complicated when terrorists threaten to blow up the train and everyone aboard. For *GURPS Cyberpunk*.

by Wm. Stephen Todd

Page 12



Journeyer's Guide to Ærth

Since technology doesn't "work" on Ærth, find out what alternatives are used.

by Ernst Grumbold

Page 36

In Print

A look at the new *Ars Magica* third edition.

by Jimmie Pursell

Page 41

Comic: The Infinity Mirror

Monster hunter Decole investigates strange happenings in Mexico.

by Allen Nunis

Page 45

Billboard

Page 46

The Cover

When shopping on Ærth, be prepared for a bazaar of the bizarre as this humble snake charmer proves.

by Janet Aulisio

Issue 2 October 1992

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EXCLAMATIONS

by Lester Smith

game: one false move and your character was history. Or worse yet, we've seen characters die because their players misspoke somehow: "You didn't say you were going to open the door before you ran through, so you collide with the door, and while you're stumbling about, dazed, the ogre gets two free attacks."

Neither do I mean players who are more concerned with "winning" than they are with playing a role. Again, most all of us have gamed with people who identify the tens die of a percentile roll *after* they see what numbers come up; or whose characters routinely walk an imperial capital's streets in full plate mail, with a drawn sword in one hand and a cocked crossbow in the other.

As a matter of fact, I think each of these things encourages the other. That is, a deadly world causes players to act unreasonably, and unreasonable players lead GMs to create ever more deadly worlds. It's a vicious circle.

What I *do* mean by trust is a sort of cooperative play, in which the point is for everyone to have fun. I think GMs should be able to rely upon their players to play by the rules, and players should be able to rely upon their GMs to provide a sane story line. As one small example, in running the *Mythus* game, I trust my players to tell me what the base Difficulty Rating is for a Casting they're about to attempt, and what it's listed effects are. That takes some of the responsibility for game mechanics off my shoulders, freeing me to concentrate on running a fuller, more realistic session. By the same token, they trust me that the personas their HPs encounter all have a more reasonable purpose in their lives than simply to kill the HPs. As a consequence, our roleplaying has a much more satisfying feel to it; the player personas act realistically in a world that feels realistic to them.

Again, I think that each of these things encourages the other. The more I trust my players, the more they trust me, and the more that frees us both to create a deep and enjoyable adventure story.

There isn't a video game in existence that can compare with the satisfaction of that sort of play.

I'd like to take a moment to talk about trust, specifically in the context of roleplaying.

I believe that players should trust their gamemasters, and gamemasters should trust their players. And, of course, both gamemasters and players should be trustworthy.

What do I mean by all that? Well, let me explain in contrast with what I *don't* mean.

I don't mean confrontational gamemasters who delight in killing as many player characters as possible per session of play. At one time or another, most of us have sat through an adventure that was little more than a combat video

Our First Letters!

The following are a sampling of the letters we at GDW have begun receiving since the publication of the Mythus game and the first issue of Journeys magazine.

I must take this opportunity to thank all of you at GDW. For almost three years, I have missed Mr. Gygax's presence in the roleplaying world, not seeing anything from him (or his now-defunct New Infinities company) since the last *Gord the Rogue* novel. Since I noticed that the *Dangerous Journeys* line is owned by Omega Helios Ltd. (and that the full name of the game is "Gary Gygax's *Dangerous Journeys*"), I can only assume that Mr. Gygax owns the game itself and has full creative control over it. If so, I commend GDW further. By acting as a business partner and a publisher for this fine system, you have done fans of Mr. Gygax a tremendous service, and I will support this system above all other roleplaying games on the market today.

Once again, thank you very much. Please send me the first issue of *Journeys* as soon as possible. (By the way, was the magazine originally going to be titled, "Dimensions"?)

John R. Troy

Thanks for the kind words. We're gratified at the excitement of long time Gary Gygax fans such as yourself, and we honestly believe that the Mythus game is the best fantasy roleplaying game on the market. As for the name of the magazine, it has been Journeys from the very beginning.

I am a follower of Gary Gygax. I own all of his earlier works, and also I am interested in obtaining all of his *Dangerous Journeys* materials. Currently, I have two each of books one and two. I'd like to know if you intend to publish HP sheets and magick sheets. If so please let me know where I may purchase them. I would also like to know about the ROC books and modules coming out. And please put me down for a year's subscription to *Journeys*.

Charles W. Crabtree

P.S. I'm glad the master is back, for he was severely missed (Gary Gygax, of course).

We have sent a GDW catalog your way, which gives an overview of what we have planned for the near future. Also, we are currently working on a Players' Aid kit, which will include HP sheets and magick sheets among its materials. As to where you can purchase them, once they are available, we suggest asking your local hobby store to order them. If there is no hobby store near you, you can always order by mail directly from GDW, as our catalog explains.

At DragonCon in Atlanta, I spoke with Mr. Dave Newton for a long time concerning the *Dangerous Journeys* game. My hat is off to Mr. Newton, Mr. Gygax, and to the whole GDW staff on this superb accomplishment. Mr. Newton assured me that this game is a universal step forward for roleplaying games. Upon reading the rules and playing a few quick games, I see that Mr. Newton was more than correct. I hope to see the *Dangerous Journeys* line of games, software, and magazines to be full of life and longevity. To be blunt, I'm quite impressed. Keep up the good work.

Kevin S. Graham

Stop...you're making us blush. Seriously, though, thanks for the compliments, and rest assured that we're doing everything we can to support the system and enhance your enjoyment of it.



GAME MASTERS' PURVIEW

Privileged information for the gamemaster! What's this? Something more disallowed to players? Not at all. This is by no means confidential, let alone secret. If I have the attention of players not otherwise prone to read this sort of article, however, I consider it a valuable step. Do read on, and if you find the information such that you believe your GMs would benefit from it, tell them so.

by Gary Gygax

*The goal of this writing is to improve and enliven the many new **Dangerous Journeys** multigenre roleplaying game (MGRPG) system campaigns, and to do so it is necessary to reach the persons responsible for creating and conducting them, the gamemasters of the world. What is in this column, however, is in one sense privileged. It is assumed that the readers are all special, more knowledgeable, in some measure because they are readers. Therefore, what is contained herein will certainly benefit gamemasters, players and the latter's Heroic Personas in no small measure!*

Created Castings Into Standard Ones in the Mythus™ FRPG

The second in a series of

***Dangerous Journeys** system articles for GMs.*

It is certain that the gamemaster has had to bear the brunt of complaints from those players who are bent on developing their Heroic Persona into the most powerful Heka-wielder of all time and probability. This is not an aspiration to be disparaged, but I hardly need say that it should be a virtually unattainable goal. Nonetheless, each Heka-emplying HP with the ability to utilize Castings will quickly cobble up new ones of his own devising. Then, of course, he will begin to bemoan the cruel fate which makes him pay such exorbitant amounts of energy points for using the special Cantrip or Spell.

Well, once the campaign is under way for a sufficient period, there is hope for the beleaguered Mage, Priest or whatever.

Yes, there is a method by which the GM can allow a Specific Casting to be considered as Archetypal or Tutelary! The seven steps which the GM should follow in this process are listed here as a handy reference for the balance of this article and possibly as a clip-and-wipe file for attachment to the campaign.

Anyway, here goes:

1. The player determines his HP is going to create a Specific Casting, and thoroughly researches the rules to assure that he wastes neither his nor the GM's time in regard to his creation of a Specific Casting.

2. The player writes down all aspects of the Casting as if it were in the rules. (Using the worksheet on page 305 in the **Mythus Magick™** book is very helpful.)

3. The gamemaster examines the work with critical care, adjusting TAD, R&D, etc., so that the final version is correct and the approved cost of the Specific Casting is fair.

4. The gamemaster determines the Grade of the new Specific Casting, basing his rating on commensurate Archetypical/Tutelary ones. This will likely cause the Grade to increase from the number suggested by the player.

5. Both GM and player add the Specific Casting to their game material, so that when the HP attempts to use the Casting, both will have the necessary data.

6. When the HP successfully activates the Specific Casting in a setting which is applicable for the general use of the Casting, the ACE total of Heka is reduced by 10% when the Special Casting is next employed. This reduction can be doubled in the case of a Special Success. Each successful activation will continue to lower the Heka point cost of the Specific Casting until it is at approximately the Grade cost, or one higher, for Archetypical/Tutelary Castings of the same Grade. The GM might opt to keep it higher by a Grade or two or 20% above the lowest cost he will allow until a Special Success occurs, at which point it will drop to the base cost he has set.

7. At such time as the HP allows or otherwise cannot prevent a copy of the Casting to be held by another individual, then there is dissemination of the Specific Casting. In a year or so, it will be known locally. In 10 years, it will be known nationally, and in 100, it becomes common *Ærthwide*.

Discussion

Step one is the beginning, obviously. Also apparent is the likelihood of the player setting about creating a cheap Casting aimed at answering every dilemma the HP is likely to be confronted with. Why belabor so obvious a point? To discourage the attempt right away. A world-altering Casting is going to take tens of thousands of Heka points. Don't bother with the rest of the process if it is an exercise in futility save for a Greater or Higher deity! Players, pay attention. Be sensible in what you propose.

The second step has a dual purpose. First of all, by actually sitting down and writing up the Casting as if it were "from the book," the player gets a better grasp of exactly what he wishes to accomplish, and at the same time gains a better understanding of the rules. Be sure that you quantify the effect(s). If, for example, a missile is involved, how fast does it travel. What damage does it do, and if PD, what type? When the work is done to the player's satisfaction, the result should be something which might be included in the **Mythus Magick** book without being noted as aberrant and commented upon by an outside reader. If your Specific Casting passes the test in your eyes, it must then go to the gamemaster.

Step three is certainly the acid test, so to speak. The GM will look at the proposed new Specific Casting as if he were an outsider. By comparing and contrasting it with like Castings, especially within the same K/S Area, he can decide the merits of the matter with relative ease. Keep an eye on the Time, Area and Distance portions. Even if they are paid for properly, sometimes the desired factors can't be attained considering the end result. For example, a full-blown storm out of a clear sky can't be generated in a short time. If all seems right, it is then necessary to check the Heka costs. Do so carefully. Shaving a few points here and there is a likely ploy for the intelligent and creative player. Make certain that all applicable costs and adjustments are included in the total Heka. Pay attention to the plane/sphere costs attributed to the Casting, for allowing something to slip by here means a far-undervalued Heka energy cost.

The fourth step has a fair amount of subjectivity involved in it. By comparison and consideration of the cost, the gamemaster must place the Specific Casting into a Grade. Using the benchmark of the Archetypical/Tutelary Castings provided should be the major factor in determination. Actual Heka cost could be anywhere from just a little above such Grade cost to five or more times greater. Here is a rule of thumb for the gamemaster in regards to Heka cost.

- Up to 3× cost can be in the same Grade (i.e., a Grade V Specific Casting costing up to 300 points of Heka is probably okay).

- If cost exceeds Grade by more than a 3× factor, the Specific Casting should probably be bumped up one or more Grades (i.e., if it costs 400 points, move it from Grade V to VI, and at about 500, it might be Grade VII).

Now I know there are Archetypical/Tutelary Castings listed to which this rule of thumb doesn't apply. So what! *There are magickal works which are assumed to have been around for centuries and through time have been pared to the bone as far as Heka requirements are concerned. Got that? Good! You are the GM, and it is up to you, but there's the extra ammunition to use in this regard if you need it. Of course, you can simply ignore the above rule and make determinations based solely on your campaign.*

Moving on to the fifth step—it seems too elementary to mention, but think of this: What happens if the GM doesn't have a copy of the Casting when the HP employs it? The potential for abuse is great. The gamemaster must have an exact copy of the Specific Casting. His copy is the "true" one, and anything different on the player's is null and void unless it is reflected on the GM's own. This the gamemaster must insist on.

Step six is also one which should be quite self-explanatory. Until the Specific Casting is actually employed successfully in a situation which is commensurate with the usual application, it can't be known how well it works. That is, "laboratory" tests are fine, but until "field tested," it is experimental! The GM might rule that a Special Failure of any Specific Casting not previously successfully activated indicates that that HP will never be able to create a Casting of that sort, by the way. If the initial attempt results in a Specific Success, the bonus of 20% reduction to Heka cost on the next successive use of the Casting is quite sufficient. The gamemaster might

well decide that despite the HP's best efforts, he will never reduce the cost of his Specific Casting all the way to the same as that for an Archetypical/Tutelary Casting of the same Grade. Thus, cost is always one Grade above the stated rating of the Casting. For instance, a Specific Casting of Grade I difficulty will cost 35, not 20 points; one of Grade II, 50 not 35; and so forth. Final cost is strictly a matter for the GM to decide upon.

I have a rule of thumb for this too. *If the HP devising the Specific Casting is very highly skilled, then the cost will eventually be that of Grade.* He is a past master and knows his art. A highly skilled HP might get the cost to the Grade just one step above that of his Specific Casting; an initial-use Special Success indicating its cost is actual Grade. All others will pay a two-Grade penalty without a Special Success in the first attempt; that gains them a one-Grade penalty only. Again, these are my suggestions, not anything which the GM must follow.

Finally, the seventh consideration regarding dissemination of the Specific Casting must be considered. Let's face it folks, the HP creating the Casting has spent a lot of time experimenting and note-taking. When all is complete, he has a copy of the material pertaining to his Specific Casting. Whenever he employs it, any witnesses observing it know something about it. However, until the HP actually distributes written details, or until someone manages to get such documentation, the Casting remains personal and private. A good one will certainly elicit considerable interest and possibly an avaricious desire in some quarters. This can be a matter of considerable fun in the campaign. The slow-spread notation is simply a dry matter of fact.

Example

Following is an example of a Specific Casting in process. Let's assume that a certain HP named Magister Setne Inhetep decides he needs a unique bit of enchantment to employ against those of the Netherplanes. Here's what the finished Casting would look like when submitted to the gamemaster by the player to whom this HP belongs:

Priestcraft, Ethos of Balance: Casting Grade V Drain Negative Heka Energy Charm

Time: Instantaneous

Area: 1 Subject (up to 1 cubic chain)

Distance: Sight to 1 chain

Other Heka Costs:

R&D: 1:1 above 99*

Other: 1 pt./D6 add.**

*Specific to Inhetep. Otherwise, the caster's SM CATEGORY.

**Subject to a maximum number of D6 equal to the caster's SM CATEGORY.

E/F/M: When this Charm is employed, the caster automatically depletes the subject's supply of Negative Heka energy, whether personal or contained in reservoirs or both, by an amount equal to the caster's Spiritual TRAIT. An additional amount of Heka up to the caster's Spiritual Metaphysical Capacity in points of Heka can be expended to drain more energy from the subject. If additional Heka is invested in the

Charm, then it likewise drains away the subject's Negative Heka energy, each 1 point of Heka so invested draining 1D3 points of Negative Heka. The loss can be recovered by the subject only after a period of not less than one day and then only through means normal to that subject.

Now let's see what this will cost:

Costs	Points
Time (instantaneous)	1
Area (up to 1 cubic chain)	15
Distance (up to 1 chain)	15
TOTAL	31

Costs	Points
Charm	30
Canon employed=Darker Mysteries	100
Plane/sphere drawn from=Entropical	70
Entry cost to Supernatural place	20
E/F/M result=against subject's nature	5
Augmentation or reduction of nature consideration	5
Change of nature consideration=Moderate	15
Passive/Active Usage=Active Damage	10
TOTAL	255

Total cost of the Charm, without addition for Resistance and added Heka draining, is thus 286 points. This falls nicely into the Grade V limits, so the gamemaster agrees that it's fine. However, as Heka above the ACE level is 255, he rules that the HP must spend 1D3 weeks time, plus 26D3 days (255 divided by 10=26) doing nothing but working on this Casting. The player points out that his HP is very skilled at not only Priestcraft-Religion but also Dweomercraft-Magick, having K/S STEEP of over 80 in both! The GM grudgingly agrees that the time required will be one week plus 26 days, or 33 days total.

R&D cost is then negotiated. The GM finally allows, because of the canon and the plane considered, as well as the HP's STEEP, that the Casting "as is" should have some power built in. He rules that it will be equal to the HP's Spiritual Metaphysical CATEGORY, in Inhetep's case 99 points! Of course, because Resistance to be overcome will typically be equal to the subject's total Spiritual TRAIT, the player knows that in dealing with Netherbeings, he'll have to add a fair amount to be on the safe side—like about 101 points at least!!!

To really drain much Heka, a whole lot of extra points will likewise have to be cranked into the Casting. This will cost about 500+ points of Heka to be effective, but it should be well worth it. When successful, the total cost will probably drop to 300 or so (100 plus 101+R, and say 99 for that many D6 extra Negative Heka point drain) and be a real Netherbeing/malign item squelcher.

That's all until next time, Dedicated Readers. Please be there for my next foray into the realms of the **Dangerous Journeys** game system and the **Mythus** fantasy roleplaying game.

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THE BIG SCREEN

The Phantom's Movie Madness & Video Views
by Phantom of the Movies™

Two major martial-arts movies will be arriving at video stores by late '92: *Universal Soldier* (☆☆) and *Rapid Fire* (☆☆☆).

In Dolph Lundgren, screen kickboxing king Jean-Claude Van Damme matches (half)wits with the worst actor he's had to confront since he himself played twin brothers in *Double Impact*. And despite its bulked-up budget, this terminally mindless crunchfest represents a lateral move at best for the stretch-conscious "Muscles From Brussels." Indeed, Roland (*Moon 44*) Emmerich's *Universal Soldier* may well be J-C's least inspired outing since the last time he went syn-

thetic, in Albert Pyun's 1989 turkey *Cyborg*.

Here, Dolph and J-C portray a pair of scientifically revived army rivals who kill each other in the pic's 'Nam-set prologue. A quarter-century later, the apparently ageless enemies are key components in an antiterrorist bionic zombie commando squad (!) created on the sly by renegade colonel Ed (*Red Heat*) O'Ross and a skeletal scientific team, sans the knowledge of (as O'Ross puts it) "those wimps at the Pentagon."

When the evil Dolph tries to terminate feisty blonde investigative reporter Ally Walker (in an awful performance), Jean-Claude suddenly remembers his past beef with the bad guy. The latter, now mainlining muscle enhancers (!), takes over the psycho-cyborg squad and spends the rest of the flick in hot pursuit of the fleeing Ally and J-C.

For those who care, Jean-Claude bares his Belgian butt in loving closeup, and he and Dolph butt heads during the flick's fist-and-kick-crazed finale, one of several fairly strong action set-pieces that help relive the script's mega-predictable, cliché-ridden tedium.

RATINGS KEY

- ☆☆☆☆ Couldn't be better
- ☆☆☆^{1/2} Excellent
- ☆☆☆ Good
- ☆☆^{1/2} Not bad; worth watching
- ☆☆ Mediocre; worthwhile for fans of a particular thesp, director or genre
- ☆ Just plain bad
- ^{1/2}☆ Even worse than that
- 0☆ The pits

In more talented hands, *Universal Soldier* might have worked as a *Naked Gun*-styled genre parody. The film's best moments arise from its occasionally successful stabs at broad black humor (such as J-C's lengthy, fight-interrupted eating spree). Unfortunately, more cynical minds ultimately prevail, and *Universal Soldier* tries to have it both ways, aping its obvious models, *Terminator* and *RoboCop*, without remotely approaching the former's kinetic intensity or the latter's sharp satirical edge.

Both Van Damme fans and Dolph devotees can only hope the duo forsake a *Universal Soldier* sequel down the road in favor of a vehicle better suited to their thespian skills. A *Godzilla vs. Megalon* remake gets our vote.

Killing with a Brandon

After appearing in such unworthy fare as the *Laser Mission* and the Dolph Lundgren loser *Showdown in Little Tokyo*, Brandon (son of Bruce) Lee locates a sturdier vehicle in Dwight (Getting Even) Little's *Rapid Fire*. Lee toplines as college student Jake Lo, a combo sketch artist and kung-fu wiz unwittingly embroiled in a four-way war among Chinese smack suppliers, Chicago Mafioso, corrupt FBI agents and Windy City cops headed by Powers (*Extreme Prejudice*) Boothe and Lee's eventual screen squeeze Kate (*She Wolf of London*) Hodge.

While the plot's not exactly a paradigm of logic, straying from Tiananmen Square to Thailand, L.A. and some of Chicago's meaner streets, *Rapid Fire* amply delivers in the all-important mindless-action department—three major shootouts, a high body count on both sides of the law and several stunning kung-fu set-to's wherein director Little even works in a few John (*The Killer*) Woo-type moves, particularly during a spectacular stickfight/third-rail ballet atop Chicago's El track.

Rapid Fire proceeds at a sufficiently swift pace to leave larger-budgeted actioners like the above-mentioned Lundgren/Van Damme crunchfest *Universal Soldier* in the dust. Director Little is so determined to keep viewers awake that he even interrupts Hodge's and Lee's requisite slo-mo love scene with bursts of story-advancing violence.

While his looks may be a tad too delicately handsome to fit some fans' idea of a rugged action icon, Lee handles his role with impressive ease, taking some hard hits while displaying a distinct knack for droll humor. Mancuso is fun as the gleefully scurvy Mafia mogul, snarling lines like, "I'm an American, and we know how to take things." Tzi Ma lends an air of villainous dignity to his Chinese heroin honcho role; Hodge is effective as a two-fisted Rene (*Lethal Weapon 3*) Russo-styled fem; and Boothe scores as the tunnel-visioned top cop who advises our hero to "take those fists of fury outside."

Rapid Fire never strains the viewer's brain but offers an action eyeful that should set audience's pulses racing.

Violent Vals

On a light fright note, Fran Rubel (*Tokyo Pop*) Kuzui's *Buffy*

the Vampire Slayer (☆☆^{1/2}) stars Kristie Swanson (earlier seen as a killer bionic zombie in Wes Craven's *Deadly Friend*) as Buffy, an average dumb-but-proud Val gal who's suddenly thrust into the titular profession by multilived vampire foe Merrick (a bearded Donald Sutherland).

At first, Buffy is way bummed out by the news—it interferes with cheerleader practice, for starters. But soon the Buffster, with an assist by local rebel Luke Perry, eagerly sinks her teeth into her newfound role, specifically at the expense of 1200-year-old bloodsucker Rutger Hauer and minion Paul (Pee-Wee Herman) Reubens (looking a lot like his widely publicized mug shot).

Buffy kicks off to a fairly bright start. A flash card establishes the pic's terrain as "Southern California: The Lite Ages," and Joss Whedon's script proceeds to land several pointed jabs at So-Cal mall culture, as well as life at Hemery High, a school that boasts New Age Basketball coach Mark DeCarlo ("I'm a person; I have a right to the ball!") and an administrator (Stephen Root) suffering from decades-old acid flashbacks (!).

Unfortunately, the jokes grow increasingly predictable and (dare we say?) toothless as the reels roll on. While Swanson invests her role with (largely one-note) energy, *Beverly Hills 90210* heartthrob Perry adopts a somnambulistic posture much of the time. Hauer, though effective, contributes little more than a cameo, and Reubens' stock underlying part makes almost zero use of his genuine comic talents.

The film also fails to yield much in the way of either yoks or shocks from its climactic *Carrie*-inspired prom-carnage scene and is fairly bald on FX throughout, a drawback for fear-film fans. An excellent, variegated rock soundtrack helps provide some sonic distraction during *Buffy's* duller moments.

In the end, the movie may be too lite for its own good. *Buffy* would probably have benefited from more legit black humor and subversive bite.

Lovitz or Leave it

The *Bill & Ted* scripting tandem of Chris Matheson and Ed Solomon aim for even broader laughs in the hit-and-miss space spoof *Mom and Dad Save the World* (☆☆^{1/2}). Our aggressively stupid storyline sees Lord Tod Spengo (Jon Lovitz), unpopular ruler of a far-off "planet of idiots," temporarily abandon his plan to destroy Earth after falling in long-distance love with frumpy Woodland Hills, CA, housewife Marge Nelson (Teri Garr).

Lord Tod beams up Marge and her hapless 'burb hubby Dick (Jeffrey Jones) to Spengo, where he plots to marry Marge and dispose of Dick. Dick's prison encounter with dethroned king Eric Idle in turn leads our unlikely hero to undertake a slapstick mission to rescue Marge, depose Tod and spare Earth from the wrath of the Spengo death ray.

While *Mom and Dad Save the World* lags far behind Mel Brooks' 1987 *Star Wars* sendup *Spaceballs*, the movie's amiable, throwaway tone, mock *Flash Gordon* production design, frantic pace and brief running time make it far more bearable than it might have been.

Lovitz contributes the most mirth as the dumpy despot with a minibrain, massive ego and unruly inferiority complex. Garr and Jones execute their titular roles with self-assured sitcom aplomb, while Dwier Brown is appropriately earnest as a rebel leader who remarks to his dimwitted band, "What we lack in brains we make up for in...good intentions."

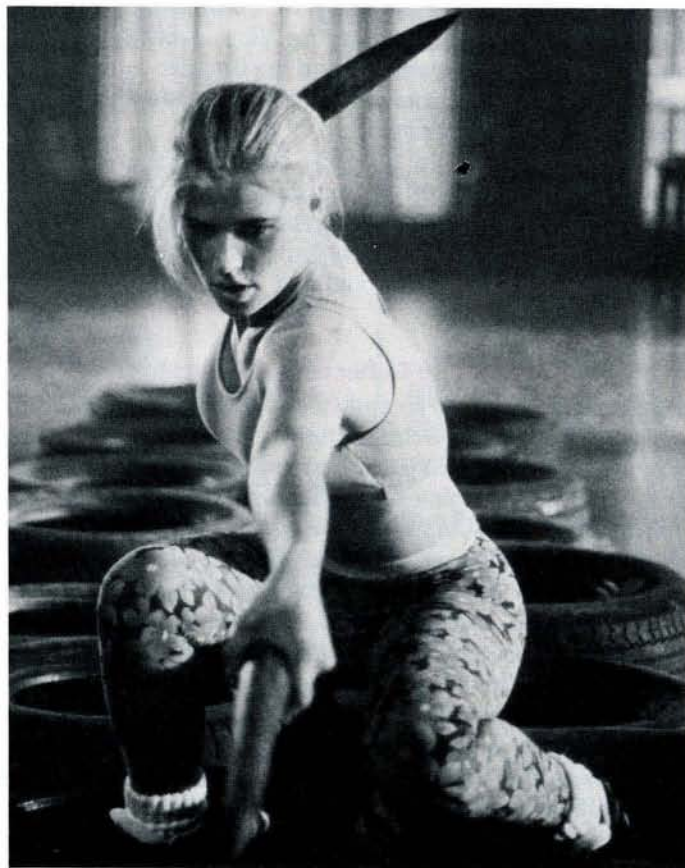
Good intentions, behind and before the camera, help carry this live-action space cartoon over the craters of its lamer conceits.

Mondo Cagliostro

Hayao Miyazaki's lively animation style outshines the oft-clichéd comic-book storyline in the "anime" import *The Castle of Cagliostro* (☆☆^{1/2}), due out on the Streamline video label. An uneven mix of crime motifs and slapstick, *Castle* chronicles the frenetic adventures of slick super-thief "The Wolf" and his hardboiled partner Jigen. The flick gets off to a fast start as our light-fingered duo pull a Monte Carlo job that nets them naught but a carload of counterfeit bills.

After tracing the funny money's source to the miniprincipality of Cagliostro, the pair come to the aid of endangered young Princess Clarice, battle her evil would-be fiancé The Count, evade the long arm of ever-pursuant Interpol inspector Zenigata and match wits with The Wolf's distaff rival Fujiko.

The Castle of Cagliostro works best during its breakneck action sequences—like our crooked hero's encounter with a



Kristy Swanson is Buffy, a high-school cheerleader who discovers she has been chosen by fate to slay vampires—which puts a crimp in her shopping and prompts her to fall in love with a rebel, in the romantic comedy Buffy The Vampire Slayer.



Paul Reubens is Amilyn, the demented henchman of the *King of the Vampires*, in the romantic comedy, *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*.

gang of spidermen and the lengthy, complex chase that caps the film—where Miyazaki gets to emphasize his vivid, ultracinematic animation strengths. Less involving are the movie's coy romantic moments and the broader comedy bits, some of which betray *Cagliostro's* origins as a durable prime-time Japanese TV cartoon series.

Cyberfreaks in search of a violent, cutting-edge exercise like Katsuhiro Ottomo's futuristic cult hit *Akira* (also Streamline) may deem the movie too mainstream and frivolous for their tastes. But anime addicts who don't mind their action leavened with conventional humor should find *The Castle of Cagliostro* worth a look.

Cassette Collector's Corner

Republic Home Video recently reduced the price (to \$19.98) on one of the best and weirdest fright features to surface in the '90s, Alejandro (El Topo) Jodorowsky's *Santa Sangre* (☆☆☆☆), a.k.a. *Holy Blood*. Imagine a mix of *Circus of Horrors*, Fellini's *The Clowns*, Bigas Luna's *Anguish* and just about any Dario Argento fear flick, and you'll have at least a faint idea of *Santa Sangre*.

The film was produced and co-scripted by Dario's bro', Claudio Argento—no stranger to blood, holy or otherwise—and exec-produced by Mexican horror vet Rene (Night of the Bloody Apes) Cardona Jr. (To balance the celluloid scales a mite, Jodorowsky also grants a credit to Marcel Marceau!)

An ambitious, at once deadpan and elaborately surreal fear-film sendup, this English-language opus chronicles the psychotic sufferings of young Phoenix (son Axel Jodorowsky), offspring of lecherous circus-owner Orgo (a bloated Guy Stockwell) and nutzoid religious fanatic Concha (Blanca Guerra). Years after Dad cuts off Mom's arms (!) before killing himself, our nearly catatonic hero reunites with his disturbed mater and serves literally as her absent upper limbs, both in private and in

their bizarre act at a Mexican burlesque house.

We lack the requisite space to catalog *Santa Sangre's* full gallery of geeks, freaks and grotesqueries here. Suffice it to say that the pic includes clips from the original *Invisible Man* (our tortured protagonist's personal idol), a cemetery-set "Night of the Living Dead Naked Ladies" scene, transsexual wrestlers, tattooed stripteasers and other imaginative hallucinations of the sort that oughtn't be missed. In sum, *Santa Sangre* is a compelling exercise in psychosexual Grand Guignol that offers more than its share of sinister surprises. We'd recommend the NC-17 version, which contains three extra minutes of celluloid excess.

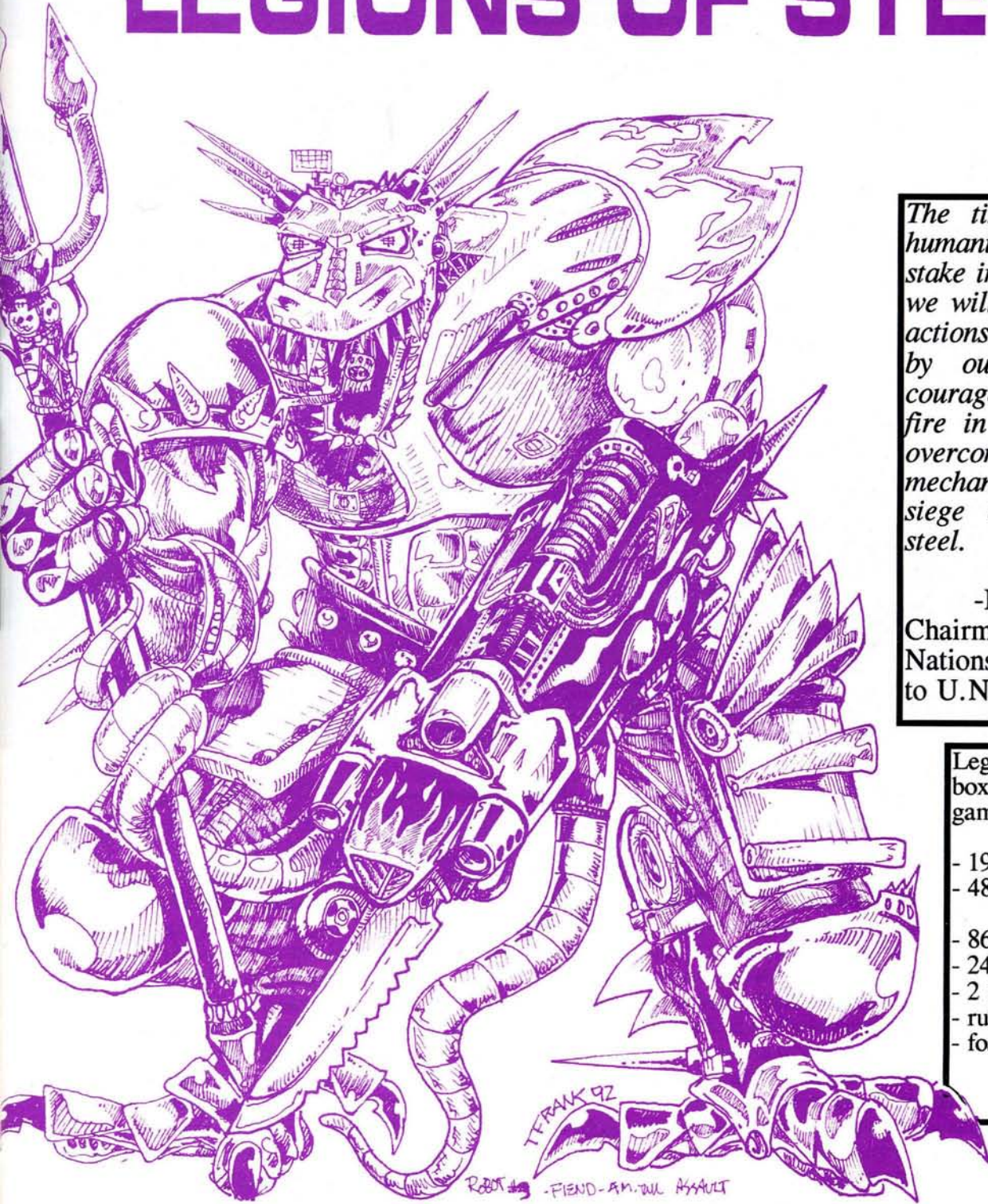
Creature Classics

On a final fright note, fans of classic horror films will want to pick up on MCA/Universal's new sell-through lineup—the atmospheric 1960 Hammer horror *Brides of Dracula* (sans Christopher Lee, alas), James Cagney as Lon Chaney in 1957's *Man of a Thousand Faces*, Ray Milland and Ruth Hussey in the 1944 ghost story *The Uninvited*, and 1931's super-rare Spanish version of *Dracula*, lensed side-by-side with the Lugosi edition.

Also new are Gloria Holden as *Dracula's Daughter*, Bela Lugosi in 1932's *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, Basil Rathbone and Boris Karloff in *Tower of London*, Henry Hull and Warner Oland in 1935's *Werewolf of London*, plus a trio of sought-after Universal sequels: Boris Karloff, John Carradine, Lon Chaney Jr. and J. Carroll Naish in *House of Frankenstein*, Vincent Price in *The Invisible Man Returns*, and Dick Foran and Wallace Ford in *The Mummy's Hand*. The videos sell for only \$14.98 each.

The Phantom of the Movies covers the genre movie and video beat for the New York Daily News and is the author of The Phantom's Ultimate Video Guide (Dell, \$12.95).

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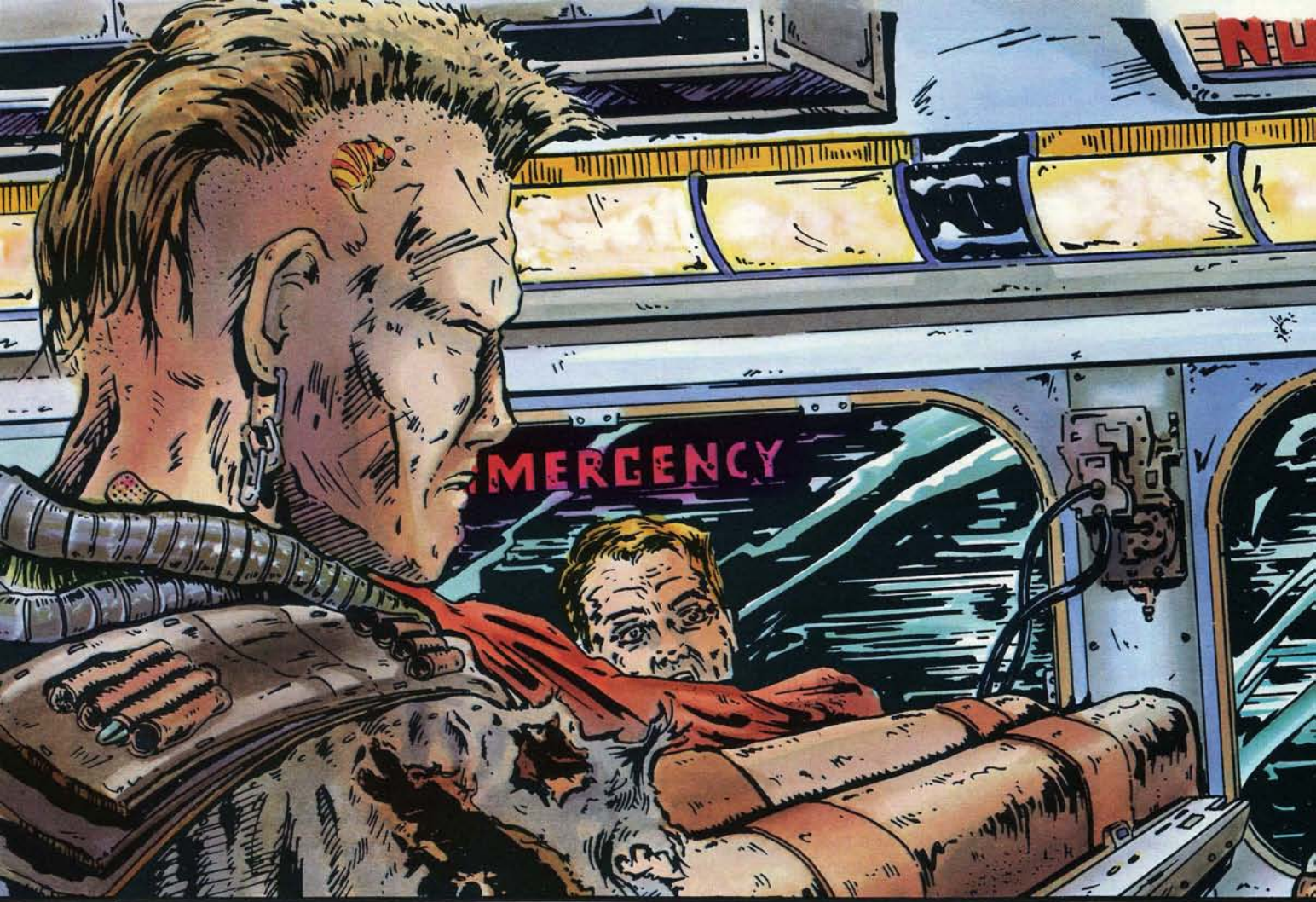
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Stammín'

A GURPS Cyberpunk adventure by Wm. Stephen Todd

The PCs are about to pick up an easy data drop assignment—or so they think. The drop is to take place on a maglev train owned by the Synco-Leer megacorporation. Once on the train, the PCs find that it has been hijacked by a group of terrorists who are threatening to blow it to pieces. The terrorists are demanding a \$20 million ransom from Synco-Leer—but they have no intention of releasing the train. The terrorists plan instead to turn it into a smoking heap of scrap metal after the ransom is transferred. As leaving a speeding train is not an option, the PCs must deal with the hijackers. Unfortunately, the terrorists are not wearing name tags. So how do you tell a terrorist from an ordinary, cyberenhanced passenger?

The SLAM

The Synco-Leer Ambassador Maglev Train is affectionately called the SLAM. The SLAM is the premier transportation for those people wanting fast, safe, comfortable travel between Los Angeles and New York City (or any other Eastern city of the GM's choice). Travelling at speeds approaching 325 mph, the SLAM makes the trip in about eight hours.

The SLAM has nine cars. The lead car is for the chief engineer and his staff, followed by the Maglev engine car, the baggage and kitchen car, a car of first-class suites, the dining car, and three cars containing various travelling compartments. The last car is Synco-Leer's corporate suite used by travelling executives. The area between each set of cars is enclosed in flexsteel sheets and contains an electronic exit door. These doors have computer-controlled electronic locks and are -4 on the Lockpicking skill to open.

Prices for travel are as follows: \$2100 for a first-class suite, \$900 for a two-person compartment, \$350 for a one-person compartment and \$140 for a seat in the common car.

All exterior walls on the SLAM are DR 8, HT 80, and exterior doors are DR 6, HT 30. Interior walls are DR 5, HT 20, and interior doors are DR 4, HT 10.

Setup

Wherever the PCs happen to be, they get a call on the vidcom from someone the PCs know and trust (at least halfway). By the look of it, their friend is laid up in a med center. After a few pleasantries, their friend gets down to business. "I've had a little trouble with some new



cyberimplants. Doc says I'll be here a week or more; that's why I called. Tomorrow I'm supposed to do a sweet little job for a corporate friend of mine. I'm to meet some guy on the SLAM to New York and drop some data to him. I wondered if you'd be interested in doing the job in my place. It's a first-class trip all the way, and the cabin on the SLAM is already paid for. I'll split the fee with you 70/30—you get the 70. He's paying \$10,000." Of course, the PCs may wish to negotiate the split. He'll end by saying he's at the Aruko Medical Center, room 132.

Aruko Medical Center: Their friend gives the PCs a small package wrapped like a birthday present. He tells them: "You'll meet the guy for the drop in the dining car sometime during the trip. You can't miss him. He'll be wearing a yellow carnation. I wasn't told the guy's name. You're supposed to tell him you have a present for his brother. He'll tell you his brother's birthday is in two days. After that confirmation, give him the package and enjoy the trip." The friend hands the PCs their boarding passes and tickets for the SLAM.

Boarding the SLAM

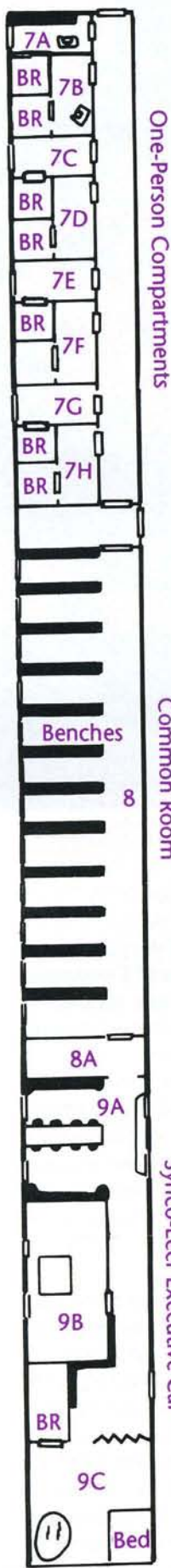
The PCs' only difficulty boarding the SLAM will be in the security area before entering the train. Here, Synco-Leer corporate security uses a large X-ray scanner and a chemsniffer to locate possible hidden and unregistered weapons or contraband. It's not that weapons are not allowed on the SLAM; it's just that Synco-Leer wants to be aware of them. Any small arms (such as a pistol or knife) may be carried onto

the train if they are registered with security. Larger weapons are stored on the train in a special cabinet in the baggage area. You must have the proper ownership authorization to have any weapon taken aboard the SLAM. Armor may be worn on the SLAM if it is discrete. Heavier armor may be stored in the baggage compartment. Implanted weapons, though not against SLAM policy, will still cause security to give the PCs a difficult time. Security will continue to question them until just before the train leaves.

Two Synco-Leer corporate security officers man the security area. A small, spindly fellow with stylishly sculpted pointed ears mans the X-ray scanner. He is obviously a subordinate of the other corporate cop, a six-foot Amazon of a woman with red cybereyes that only enhance her menacing gaze. She operates the chemsniffer.

Nothing but Trouble

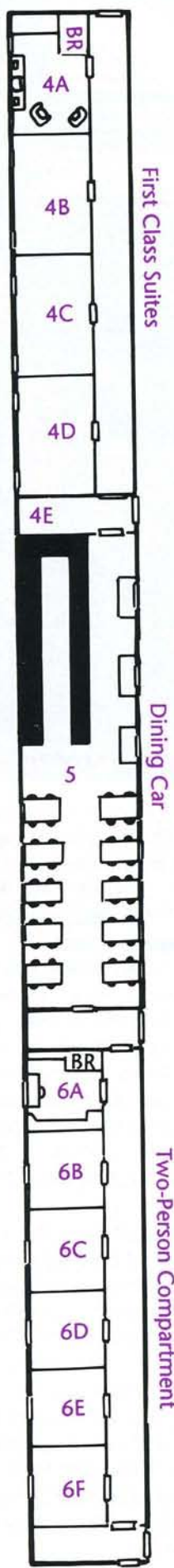
The train's departure is delayed a few minutes due to the late arrival of some last-minute "privileged" passengers. The train sets out as the PCs check out their room. Just as they are ready to leave for the dining car to find the guy wearing the yellow carnation, their in-room vidcom screen comes alive. The screen shows a tall man in tailored black fatigues, a black beret and dark sunglasses. "My name is Freland Bey," he says. "My associates and I now control this train. We represent the People's Deurbanization Front." (A fictitious organization that Bey is using to confuse Synco-Leer.) "We also hold as our prisoner Dr. Leonard Chin, chief executive technocrat



One-Person Compartments

Common Room

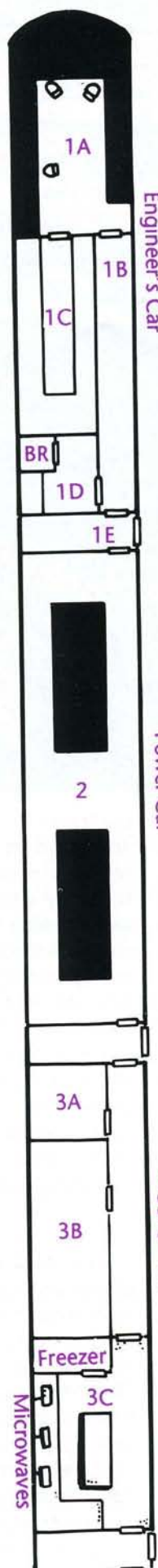
Synco-Leer Executive Car



First Class Suites

Dining Car

Two-Person Compartment



Engineer's Car

Power Car

Baggage and Kitchen Car

for Synco-Leer." Bey moves aside, revealing a bound man in his early thirties wearing unusually thick, black-framed glasses; adorning the man's head are more neural interface sockets and chip slots than you thought possible. Then Bey returns to view. "Usually, one man's life means little to the corporation, but this one is special, eh? In return for your precious train and the life of Dr. Chin, we are requesting the sum of \$20 million. The Synco-Leer Board of Directors has been told how to make the transfer. The board has two hours to make the transaction. If they do not, Dr. Chin, this train, and all on-board will cease to exist." The vidcom goes blank, then comes back on, showing Bey with two other people. Beside Bey stands a dark-featured woman holding a knife to the throat of the porter who showed the PCs to their room. Bey says, "Oh, one more thing. It would be in your best interest to stay where you presently are. No one shall be allowed to move among the cars. Anyone found wandering about will be eliminated." As if to prove his words, he nods to the woman, who cuts the throat of the porter. The vidcom goes dark again.

PCs' Choice

Now the PCs must decide what to do. They probably have most of their heavy weapons and armor in the baggage compartment—but how to get there without knowing where Bey's men are? If the PCs don't seem motivated to act, let it slip that Synco-Leer would be very grateful to the train's liberators. Maybe even to the tune of 1% of the ransom demand.

It all comes down to this: The PCs have two hours to get sufficient weapons and armor to rid the train of Bey and the hijackers. They must also find the bombs and remove or disarm them. But what about this guy with the yellow carnation? He'll stay out of harm's way, in his cabin (7g), until the ordeal is over. The PCs can run into him after the hijacking has been dealt with.

Details, Details

The following descriptions assume the hijacking has already taken place.

1. Lead Car

This car contains the work stations for the chief engineer, train technician and systems monitoring technician. The work stations sit among an array of vidcom terminals and computer decks. Also housed here are the SLAM's on-board computers and a small rest area for the crew.

1a. Train Controls: The chief engineer lies dead or unconscious on the floor by his station. Sitting in the chief engineer's station is a man in street clothes and leather jacket (HK Web). He is plugged into the system through an interface jack. The train technician's body is slumped over in his chair. His blood pools beneath him. The systems monitoring technician is tied and gagged. His skin is very pale, and his eyes are glazed over. A man with a needler is standing watch here (Abdul). His attention is split between watching the door and watch-

ing the man plugged into the system.

1b. Entrance Door: The door is DR 5, HT 20, and is secured with a voiceprint analyzer. The analyzer will recognize and open to any train technician or engineer, or the voice of Leonard Chin. The door also can be opened manually from inside the train control cabin.

1c. Computer Equipment Room: This is where the bulk of the electronic equipment is stored that runs and monitors the SLAM. A small access door allows entrance into this area for servicing the equipment. Here is where one of the two bombs planted by the hijackers is tucked away. To disarm the bomb, a Demolition skill roll must be made. Failure spells an end to the PCs' career and to everyone else on the train.

1d. Crew Rest Area: This room contains a couple of pull-down bunks, a microwave, a vidcom and computer terminal, plus a small bath. Lying here is the body of a Synco-Leer security officer. His pistol has been removed.

1e. Door to Car 1: The entrance door to the control car has an electronic lock that is -1 to the Lockpicking skill to open. Standing here is Wolverine, a street samurai living on the edge. He's not to let anyone into the control car.

2. Power Car

The two huge Maglev engines that power the SLAM reside here. Small access panels allow technicians to work on them. Behind one access panel is the second of the two bombs planted to destroy the train. A failed skill roll to disarm it will mean this car is obliterated by the explosion. Hiding between the two huge engines is Cowboy, a street samurai with a love for the Old West. He'll challenge the best among any intruders to a showdown. Both participants will draw and fire their weapons (a contest of Fast Draw skills, then firing weapons with a snap shot penalty if applicable). It's up to the contestants whether this is to the death or not.

3. Maintenance, Baggage and Kitchen Car

These areas service the passengers' needs.

3a. Maintenance Room: This room contains various cleaners, lubricants, brooms, towels and miscellaneous items. It also has a small tool shop. A cabinet filled with medical supplies (plastiskin patches, antiseptic creams, revive capsules, a pneumospray, two doses of Hypercoagulin and three doses of Morphazine) hangs on the wall.

3b. Baggage Compartment: The door to this compartment is DR 5, HT 20. It is locked with an Electronic lock that is -1 to Lockpicking skill to open. Inside, the shelves are filled with bags and luggage. Large metal crates with corporate markings lie on the floor. Against the side wall is a heavy locker with an electronic lock. Inside the locker will be any heavy weapons and armor the PCs have had locked up by Synco-Leer. Also here are the belongings of a few others: two heavy monocrys vests (PD 2, DR 24), a combat infantry dress jacket (PD 4, DR 40 torso; PD 2, DR 12 arms), a combat infantry helmet (PD 4, DR 18) with a HUD and multiview visor, two launch pistols and a laser rifle.

3c. Kitchen Compartment: Bustling between the microwave ovens and the freezer are two chefs preparing meals for passengers. A beautiful Brazilian woman (Hot Lanna) with a bright red cyberarm stands watching them. She wears a

leather jump suit that hugs her figure, and she carries a holstered pistol.

4. First-Class Suites

These suites can sleep four at night using the pull-down beds. During the day, there is a couch and two chairs. A small wet bar is provided, along with a vidcom and computer terminal.

4a. Suite 401, "Feelies" Star Samone d'Boure: In the room is Samone d'Boure, star of one of the most successful Dreamgame series on the market. The *Razorgirl* series has sold over 30 million copies to date. Though d'Boure is wealthy enough to have her own sub-sonic jet, she is afraid of flying. Besides, she likes the romance associated with a long, slow train ride. D'Boure is a Sin addict and has taken a dose recently. She is lounging on her couch, drinking champagne, wearing an outrageously expensive evening gown. She is bored, and any intrusion would be welcomed. Under the influence of the Sin she's taken, she may be difficult for the the PCs to get rid of. She travels with her manager, Big Ed Bates (suite 402).

4b. Suite 402, Manager Big Ed Bates: D'Boure's manager, Big Ed Bates, is just that—big! Weighing in at just under 400 pounds, he looks more like a sumo wrestler than a superstar's manager. Big Ed is a wheeler-dealer. He also knows his main meal ticket is tied to d'Boure and will do everything in his power to keep her out of harm's way. He is currently looking over some contracts for d'Boure's next "feelie."

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4c. Suite 403, PCs: This is the PCs' suite.

4d. Suite 404, Businessman Erik Rika: Businessman Erik Rika is a low-level exec for Mullet Breweries. He has decided to boost his career by selling the formula for Mullet Breweries' new "Nutri-Juice" drink to a rival corporation. This rival corporation has promised him a vice presidency plus a sizable cash bonus. He is paranoid and has been drinking. He's liable to shoot anyone who opens his door uninvited.

4e. Darkened Area, Wet Willy: This area is dark. That's because that's how Wet Willy likes it. Willy is crouched in a far corner watching the doors for movement. He's hyped up on Rage, so he's nervous, and sweat rolls down his face. His body is coiled up like a snake ready to strike.

5. Dining Car

The dining car is filled with people who would normally be enjoying a drink or pleasant conversation. Now the tone is subdued, and tension fills the air. Tending the bar is a tall, thin, young woman whose name tag identifies her as Lea Lords. She is doing her best to keep the conversation at the bar light and nonthreatening. Among the people here, two stand out. One is a short man dressed in a dull yellow rain coat, a large, black, wide brimmed hat and dark glasses. This is Necro. His ridiculous looks are offset by the cold, hard look on his face. He sits at a table near the bar. The other stand-out is a middle-aged woman in an ancient, bulky, electric wheelchair. She sits at the far end, away from the bar, sipping a drink with an umbrella in it. This is Mrs. Green. The GM should fill the rest of the dining car with business people, senior citizens, families and students.

6. Two-Person Compartments

Each room contains a very small toilet area, two small couches, a table, a vidcom and a microwave.

6a. Animal Trainer Peter Mishler: Mishler is a talented trainer of poodles. He recently won first prize on the TV talent show "Dreamstar Search." He is travelling with his three poodles: Poochie, Ricardo and Fee Fee.

6b. Unoccupied.

6c. Walter and Barb Brisket: This retired couple ran a 7-11 on the outskirts of LA for over 35 years. Now they like to travel, usually by train. Walter was a sergeant in the reserves and won't let anyone forget it. He still carries his old 9mm pistol, but due to his eyes going bad, his skill is only 9. Barb is extremely hard of hearing, yet pretends not to be.

6d. Robert and Madonna Waza: Robert Waza is a middle-aged middle manager who is going broke keeping up with his wife's expensive wants. Madonna is a platinum blonde with extreme body modifications to enhance her appearance. She has gone a little overboard, and the effect is a little overwhelming. Robert is completely devoted to her, though even he thinks she looks a little weird.

6e. Unoccupied.

6f. Dead Bodies: Thrown in here are the dead bodies of two train security guards. Both have their throats slit.

7. One-Person Compartments

Each room contains a very small toilet area, a short couch, a table and a vidcom.

7a. Unoccupied.

7b. Politician Joseph Chase: Chase is a low-level politician. He goes in for hand shaking, cocktail parties, smiling, engaging in small talk and anything else that will get him votes—anything except hard work.

7c. Dead Body: The body of a Synco-Leer porter lays here. He died from multiple needler wounds.

7d. The Iron Hood Gang: Five members of the gang are sharing this room. All wear black synth-leather outfits (PD 1, DR 1) showing their gangs' colors, an iron mask with a stiletto jammed into it. All look to be about 17 years old and carry vibroblade stilettos (2-2 impaling).

7e. Unoccupied.

7f. Assassin Meriko Murance: Meriko always wears a yellow carnation and, yes, this is the guy the players are to meet. Meriko illegally crossed the Mexican border into the US when he was 11. Since then, he has spent his time as a courier, loan shark, pimp, drug smuggler, bounce, and even a small-time Yakuza boss. Now he bills himself as an assassin. The package being delivered to him contains instructions for his next job. He will stay in his cabin and not want to get involved with someone else's problems—unless he's paid well for it.

7g. Unoccupied.

7h. Bloodhound: Bloodhound is a dog mage. He is a finder of lost articles and persons. Bloodhound is an American Indian whose father and forefathers were all medicine men. He is now meditating. He can be awakened from his trance by any physical injury (a slap on the face will do it). He dresses in traditional leather (dog skin) and wears a dog skull headdress. He also wears a gem-studded dog collar.

8. Common Room

High-backed bench seats fill this car, front to back. Each seat will hold about four to six people. There are about 35 people sitting throughout the room. Most are families or low-class individuals. There are also a few students, several elderly people and even two nuns.

These nuns are a special surprise for anyone who comes through this car looking like trouble. They are really the notorious Brewster sisters, a couple of sweet-looking ladies who specialize in abduction, theft and assassinations. Their skill with disguises is remarkable. They hired on with the hijackers as extra muscle, and also to visit their nephew who lives in New York (the SLAM's destination). Their stats for the game are identical. The sisters have no cybernetic enhancements, thinking this would only call unwanted attention to them.

8a. Leaning against the wall of the last car is a street samurai by the name of Shorty Allen. Shorty is a genetic dwarf and tops out at 3'7" in height. Though short in stature, Shorty has a rep for being one tough hombre. He is one of Freland Bey's lieutenants. His orders are to let no one get into the Synco-Leer executive suite.

9. Synco-Leer Executive Suite

The door to the suite is locked with an electronic lock that is -1 to Lockpicking skill.

9a. Lounge: There are several comfortable couches and chairs here, a wet bar and a few small tables. In one couch

sits a lovely woman in an evening gown, bound and gagged. Slumped over beside her is a large man in a business suit. There is a cut on his forehead, and his suit has a few small burn holes in it. The woman is Leonard Chin's travelling companion, Miss Westerfield. The man is Bill Bash, Dr. Chin's bodyguard. He has been shot a few times with a laser and is currently unconscious from his wounds. Watching them both is an ugly, thin, little man wearing a black hat and black fatigues. This is Mole. Mole is a master thief and cold-blooded killer.

9b. Entertainment Room: A leather couch is positioned to watch the large-screen television here. There are also a couple of vidcoms and a state-of-the-art entertainment center.

9c. Executive's Room: The room is split by an expensively carved room divider. Near the door is a small sitting room area with a couple of plush chairs. On the other side of the divider is the bedroom, which contains a small desk and chair, a large bed and a bubbling jacuzzi. Lying on the bed is a bound and gagged Dr. Chen. Crouched near the bedroom's entrance is Merlene, the dark-skinned woman the PCs saw kill the porter. Standing by the bed is Freland Bey.

NPCs

Typical Synco-Leer Corporate Security Officer: ST 11, DX 12, IQ 10, HT 11, Speed 5.75, Move 5, Dodge 6. *Skills:* Area Knowledge (Synco-Leer Facilities)-12, Beam Weapon-14, Brawling-13, Fast Draw (Pistol)-12, First Aid-10, Knife-12, Shortsword (Stun Wand)-12, Stealth-12. *Advantages:* Combat Reflexes. *Disadvantages:* Duty to Employer on 12 or less, plus one additional disadvantage of the GM's choice. All wear medium monocrys body armor with PD 2, DR 16. Each carries a laser-sighted heavy laser pistol (2 impaling) with an extra battery, a stun wand, a vibroblade knife (2D-1 cutting, 2D-1 impaling), a short-range wristband communicator and electronic handcuffs. One in four carries a tangler pistol and has a skill of 12 to use it. The officers in the security area have the following extra skill to operate the scanning devices: Electronics (Security)-13. Each officer will have one cybernetic enhancement. You can roll randomly from the choices below or add your own: (1) Cyberarm, ST 14, PD 2, DR 6; (2) two cybereyes, +2 vision bonus, polarization and light intensification; (3) two chip slots with high pain threshold chip and incapacity override chip; (4) two cyberlegs that increase Move and Dodge to 7; (5) large claws; (6) four extra Health points.

HK Web: ST 11, DX 11, IQ 11, HT 11, Speed 5.5, Move 5, Dodge 5. *Skills:* Area Knowledge (Cyberspace)-13, Brawling-11, Cyberdeck Operation-13, Drive (Car)-11, Drive (Truck)-11, Fast Draw (Knife)-12, Fast Draw (Power Holster)-13, Gun (Pistol)-12, Gunner (MG)-12, Holdout-12, Knife-12, Pilot (Helicopters)-11, Pilot (Small Jets)-11, Stealth-12, Survival (Urban)-11. *Advantages:* Luck, Strong Will +1, Toughness DR+1. *Disadvantages:* Delusion (believes he is invulnerable while in the Net), Impulsive, On the Edge, Overconfident. *Cybernetic Enhancements:* Neural interface and one chip slot. The slot currently has a four-point chip in it for driving (trains), giving Web a skill of 12. He also wears a leather jacket with medium



monocrys inserts, giving the torso PD 2 and DR 16, and the arms PD 2 and DR 2. He carries a machinepistol (3 crushing) in a power holster at his side. In his right boot is a small vibroblade knife (2-2 cutting, 2-2 impaling). He also has a short-range communicator and \$240 on him. He owes no allegiance to the hijackers. He is doing this job for a straight \$50,000 fee.

Abdul: ST 10, DX 12, IQ 12, HT 10/13, Speed 5.5, Move 6, Dodge 7. *Skills:* Brawling-13, Gun (Needler)-13, Fast Draw (Pistol and Knife)-12, Fast Talk-12, Holdout-12, Knife-12, Merchant-11, Running-10, Stealth-12, Throwing-12, Voice-12. *Advantages:* Combat Reflexes, Luck. *Disadvantages:* Fanatic follower of Bey, Impulsive. *Quirk:* Always seems jittery. *Cybernetic Enhancements:* Cybereyes, +2 to vision rolls, polarization, light intensification, Extra Health +3, silver tongue. Abdul wears a high-fashion, tailored black suit with light monocrys inserts in the torso, arms and legs, giving him a PD 2, DR 8. His gauss needler (1+2 impaling) is his weapon of preference. He also carries a vibroblade dagger (2D-3 impaling), three black-out gas grenades, a short-range communicator and \$2100. He is completely loyal to Bey and would consider it honorable to die in his service.

Wolverine: ST 10, DX 13, IQ 9, HT 11, Speed 6, Move 7, Dodge 8. *Skills:* Carousing-13, Climbing-12, Drive (Car)-12, Escape-11, Fast Draw (Claws)-13, Fast Draw (Knife)-13, Fast Draw (Needler)-13, Gun (Needler)-13, Gunner (MG)-13, Karate-15, Knife-13, Knife Throwing-13, Pilot (Helicopters)-11, Running-10, Sex Appeal-10, Sign Language-12, Stealth-13, Streetwise-11, Survival (Urban)-11. *Advantages:* Combat Re-

flexes, Reputation +2 on 10 or less. *Disadvantages*: Bad Temper, Compulsive Carousing, Mute, On the Edge, Zeroed. *Cybernetic Enhancements*: Two cyberarms of polished chrome, ST of 14, PD 4, DR 12, with large, retractable claws (2+3 cutting, 1+3 impaling), and a needler mounted in the right arm; one bionic eye; implant communicator; neural interface. Weapon link for needler adds +2 to skill. Wolverine took his street name from an old book of American heroes he remembered reading as a kid. He wears a heavy monocrys vest (PD 2, DR 24) and carries a vibroblade Bowie knife (3-2 cutting, 2 impaling).

Cowboy: ST 10, DX 13, IQ 10, HT 11, Speed 6, Move 6, Dodge 6. *Skills*: Armory (Guns)-11, Brawling-14, Carousing-12, Detect Lies-10, Fast Draw (Knife)-13, Fast Draw (Power Holster)-15, Gun (Pistol)-14, History (Old West)-11, Holdout-12, Knife-12, Stealth-13, Streetwise-11, Throw Knife-13, Tracking-12. *Advantages*: Ambidextrous, Reputation +2 to Street Samurai on 10 or less, Toughness DR+2. *Disadvantages*: Code of Honor (Old West), Delusion (believes he is the reincarnation of Billy the Kid), Overconfidence. *Cybernetic Enhancements*: Gyrobalance, implanted communicator. Cowboy wears the traditional cowboy hat and wears a long, weathered trench coat. Both the hat and the coat include light monocrys armor, giving him PD 2, DR 10 (includes his Toughness) protection. Around his waist are twin power holsters holding replicas of Old West six-shooters (two crushing, armor-piercing bullets). He prefers drawing both and firing both (-4 to Offhanded skill). In a leg sheath is a large vibroblade knife (2D-2 cutting, 2D-2 impaling). He also wears polarized goggles and carries \$460. For him, working for Bey pays the bills and gets him some excitement until the next job offer comes.

Hot Lanna: ST 10, DX 10, IQ 10, HT 10, Speed 5, Move 5, Dodge 5. *Skills*: Bola-11, Brawling-11, Beam Weapon (Laser Pistol)-12, Fast Draw (Bola)-12, Fast Draw (Claws)-12, Fast Draw (Laser)-12, Fast Talk-11, Holdout-11, Sex Appeal-12, Stealth-11, Streetwise-11. *Advantages*: Beautiful +2, Danger Sense, +3 Vision. *Disadvantages*: Greed, Major Phobia (Reptiles), Sadism. *Cybernetic Enhancements*: Flaming red cyberarm (ST 14, PD 3, DR 9) with claws (2 cutting, 1 impaling), stinger in tongue filled with "Sandman." Hot Lanna wears a leather body suit (PD 2, DR 2) with light monocrys (PD 2, DR 8) covering the torso. She carries a heavy laser pistol, with a bola wrapped around her waist as a belt. She has a short-range communicator and \$735. This is Hot Lanna's first run in the big time, and she wants to make a good reputation for herself.

Samone d'Boure: ST 9, DX 11, IQ 11, HT 12, Speed 5.75, Move 5, Dodge 5. *Skills*: Acting-14, Carousing-13, Sex Appeal-14, Savoire-Faire-12. *Advantages*: Alert +1, Beautiful +2, Reputation +2, Very Wealthy. *Disadvantages*: Addiction (Sin), Major Phobia (Flying), Stubborn. *Cybernetic Enhancements*: Cyberears with +2 to hearing and 2 levels of parabolic hearing, cellular link, neural interface (hidden). While under the influence of the Sin she has taken, Samone has the following additional disadvantages: Party Animal, Lecherousness and Overconfidence.

Big Ed Bates: ST 12, DX 10, IQ 12, HT 10/15, Speed 5, Move 1, Dodge 1. *Skills*: Administration-13, Computer Operation-11, Detect Lies-11, Fast Draw (Power Holster)-10, Fast Talk-14, Gun (Needler)-10, Law (Contracts)-13, Savoire-Faire-11. *Advantages*: Charisma +2, Luck, Reputation +2 on 10 or less, Wealthy. *Disadvantages*: Fat, Greedy, Low Pain

Threshold, Overconfident. *Cybernetic Enhancements*: Cellular link, Extra Health +5, neural interface. Though slow on his feet, Big Ed makes up for it with a fast and clever mind. His major talent is taking mediocre actors and actresses and turning them into *big stars*. He wears a heavy monocrys vest (PD 2, DR 24) for protection and carries a needler (1+2 impaling) in a power holster. He loves expensive jewelry and wears about \$35,000 worth of rings on his huge fingers. He also wears a top-of-the-line Chronos vidwatch and carries \$6500, plus a credcard with another \$85,000.

Erik Rika: ST 9, DX 10, IQ 12, HT 10, Speed 5, Move 5, Dodge 5. *Skills*: Administration-13, Beam Weapons (Laser)-10, Computer Operation-11, Cooking-12, Chemistry-13, Politics (Corporate)-11, Savoire-Faire-11. *Advantages*: Luck. *Disadvantages*: Cyberrejection, Gullible, Paranoid. Rika has both his holdout laser (1 impaling) and his bottle of gin close at hand.

Wet Willy: ST 11, DX 12, IQ 10, HT 12, Speed 6, Move 7, Dodge 8. *Skills*: Brawling-14, Camouflage-12, Carousing-12, Fast Draw (Sword)-13, Fast Draw (Gun)-13, Fast Talk-12, Gun (Shotgun)-14, Gun (Gyroc)-12, Running-10, Shadowing-10, Shortsword-14, Streetwise-12, Stealth-13, Throw (Grenade)-13. *Advantages*: Combat Reflexes, High Pain Threshold. *Disadvantages*: Addiction (Rage), Bloodlust, Bully, Mute, Odious (sweats a lot), Sadism. *Cybernetic Enhancements*: Bionic eyes (+2 to vision and night sight), one hour of internal oxygen, implant communicator. Wet Willy loves his Remington 12G shotgun (4 Crush). His reserve weapons are a Gyroc pistol and a vibroblade short sword (4 cutting, 2 impaling, while he is on Rage). He also carries three concussion grenades. He wears an old GI helmet (PD 4, DR 5), a heavy monocrys vest (PD 2, DR 24) and combat boots (PD 3, DR 15).

Iron Hood Gang Members: ST 11, DX 11, IQ 10, HT 10, Speed 5.25, Move 5, Dodge 5. *Skills*: Brawling-11, Carousing-11, Fast Draw (Knife)-12, Knife-12, Knife Throwing-12, Lockpicking-12, Pickpocket-12, Scrounging-10, Stealth-11, Streetwise-12. The gang makes a living by stealing. The members are really pretty harmless, but they might be stupid enough to try to pick one of the PCs' pockets.

Lea Lords: ST 9, DX 11, IQ 10, HT 10, Speed 5.25, Move 5, Dodge 5. *Skills*: Area Knowledge (Synco-Leer Facilities)-11, Brawling-11, Fast Draw (Pistol)-10, First Aid-10, Gun (Needler)-11, Knife-10, Shortsword (Stun Wand)-10, Stealth-10. *Advantages*: Common Sense. *Disadvantages*: Duty to Employer on 12 or less, Skinny. Lords began her training at Synco-Leer as a security guard, but finished at the bottom of her class. Not wanting to leave the corporation, she took this position as a bartender. Secured under the bar is a stun wand and a needler. The needler's normally lethal ammo has been exchanged for Morphazine needles.

Necro: ST 12, DX 10, IQ 12, HT 10, Speed 5, Move 5, Dodge 5. *Skills*: Brawling-11, Detect Lies-12, Fast Draw (Rod)-11, Fast Draw (Wand)-11, Fast Talk-12, Holdout-11, Jeweler-10, Shadowing-13, Shortsword (Rod)-12, Staff-12, Stealth-12, Streetwise-11. *Advantages*: Magery 2. *Disadvantages*: Bad Temper, Lazy, Odious (smells of body odor), Unattractive Appearance -1, Weak Will -2. *Grimoire*: Blur-12, Continual Light-11, Dark Vision-12, Flash-12, Hide-12, Light-11, See

Invisible-12, Spell Throwing-12. Necro's laziness has tarnished his street rep, yet he can still find work since mages are a rare commodity. He carries a telescoping staff (changes from rod to staff and back again at the touch of a button; rod's damage 1+2 crushing; staff's damage 1+4 crushing) and a wand of Ice Daggers. Necro also carries a 10-point powerstone tucked in his hat. He has \$1200, also in his hat. His hat is lined with monocrys (PD 2, DR 8), and he wears leather under the yellow raincoat (PD 2, DR 2).

Mrs. Green: ST 9, DX 10, IQ 13, HT 10, Speed 5, Move *, Dodge *. *Skills:* Acting-12, Computer Operation-13, Drive (Wheelchair)-11, Detect Lies-12, Electronics-13, Fast Draw (Shortsword)-11, Fast Talk-14, Gunner (MG)-11, Mechanic-13, Shortsword-10. *Advantages:* Strong Will +2, Toughness DR+1. *Disadvantages:* Cyberrejection, Legless, Jealousy, Sadism. Green was once a budding engineer for a large electronics corporation, until the day of the accident that caused her to lose her legs. Officially it was ruled as "technician error," but most everyone realized the accident would not have happened if the corporation had taken the necessary safety precautions. Knowing her body could not handle cybernetic replacements, Green fell into deep depression and was eventually let go by the corporation. She now harbors a deep hatred for corporations and what they stand for. She is also jealous of anyone with obvious cybernetic enhancements. Using her skill as an engineer, she designed and built her chair. Although it looks 25 years out of date, that is only on the surface. She uses the chair in her second career as a smuggler. She played a big part in getting the hijackers' weapons smuggled on board the SLAM. There is a vibroblade shortsword hidden in the chair where she can get to it quickly. She also wears a vest of medium monocrys (PD 2, DR 16). The vest is usually mistaken for a back brace.

Wheelchair: ST 14, HT 15, Move 6, Dodge 4, PD 3, DR 9. The chair can carry a fair amount of cargo in what looks like its engine housing. Green has also included dual machine-pistols (3 crushing) in the arms of the wheelchair. The chair is controlled from unmarked buttons on its arms.

Meriko Murance: ST 11, DX 12, IQ 11, HT 10/13, Speed 5.5, Move 5, Dodge 5. *Skills:* Beam Weapon (Laser)-13, Brawling-12, Carousing-11, Demolition-10, Disguise-12, Electronics (Security)-12, Fast Draw (Claws)-12, Fast Talk-13, Gun (Pistol)-12, Holdout-13, Interrogation-12, Research-11, Throwing-11, Savoire-Faire-13, Shadowing-12, Stealth-13, Streetwise-12. *Advantages:* Alert +2, Combat Reflexes, Rapid Healing. *Disadvantages:* Bad Sight (wears contact lenses), Greed, Overconfidence, Sadism, Trademark (Carnation). *Cybernetic Enhancements:* Both arms are cyberlimbs with a ST 14, large retractable claws (1 impaling, 2 cutting) and armor (PD 3, DR 9.) The right arm holds a laser pistol (1 impaling), and the left arm contains a machinepistol with APS rounds (3 crushing). He can use either weapon with no penalty. Murance also has three levels of audio damping. He wears a medium monocrys vest (PD 2, DR 16) and carries \$540 on him, plus another \$5000 in a credcard.

Bloodhound: ST 12, DX 11, IQ 12, HT 10, Speed 5.25, Move 6, Dodge 6. *Skills:* Brawling-13, Carousing-11, Climbing-11, Fast Talk-12, First Aid-13, Knife-12, Knife Throwing-12, Meditation-12, Running-10, Shadowing-12, Sign Language-12,

Stealth-13, Streetwise-12, Tracking-14. *Advantages:* Danger Sense, Magery 1, High Pain Threshold. *Disadvantages:* Gullibility, Odious (smells like a wet dog), Pacifism (self defense only), Stubborn, Truthfulness. *Grimoire:* Analyze Magic-13, Ancient History-12, Appotation-10, Aura-13, Detect Magic-12, History-12, Identify Spell-12, Keen Eyes-11, Pathfinder-13, See Secrets-11, Seek Food-12, Seek Water-12, Seeker-13, Trace-12, Wizard Eye-12. Bloodhound's leather is PD 2, DR 2. He carries a large knife (a gift from his father) that is enchanted with Accuracy +2, Puissance +3, Quick-Draw and Loyal (1+2 impaling, 1+3 cutting).

Collar: Bloodhound has one other enchanted item, one which he says the Great Dog Spirit gave him. It is his collar. It allows the person who wears it to cast a variant of the Shapechange spell. Instead of becoming the creature, the wearer gains the physical powers of the creature while retaining his shape and IQ (though those who have seen it in operation will say that the person sure resembles the creature). It costs only 3 points of fatigue to cast the spell, because the item is partially self powered. The item's power is 15 (for skill roll). The wearer gains a DX of 14, and HT becomes 12. Speed is increased to 9, and Dodge is 6. The wearer also gains PD+1 and DR+1. The change lasts one hour.

Brewster Sisters: ST 10, DX 11, IQ 12, HT 11, Speed 5.5, Move 4, Dodge 4. *Skills:* Acting-14, Detect Lies-12, Disguise-14, Escape-10, Fast Draw (Gun)-11, Fast Talk-12, First Aid-12, Gun (Needler)-12, Holdout-13, Lockpicking-11, Merchant-13, Savoire-Faire-10. *Advantages:* Luck. *Disadvantages:* Bully, Enemy (FBI on 6 or less), Hard of Hearing, Miserliness, Overweight. Both sisters wear full medium monocrys suits (PD2, DR 16) under their habits. Each also wears a credbelt (like a moneybelt) with D6x\$5000 in it, and both conceal a gauss needler (1+2 impaling) in the folds of their robes. The sisters got the Hard of Hearing disadvantage several years ago when a grenade landed a little too close to them. Both now wear exterior hearing aids. The FBI has a \$10,000 reward for their capture—dead or alive.

Shorty Allen: ST 12, DX 10, IQ 10, HT 12/22, Speed 5.5, Move 3(4), Dodge 3(4). *Skills:* Brawling-11, Carousing-11(13), Demolition-12, Electronics (Security)-12, Fast Draw (Grenade)-12(14), Fast Draw (Gun)-12(14), Fast Draw (Sword)-12(14), Fast Talk-12, Gun (Gyroc)-13(15), Judo-11(13), Lockpicking-11(13), Shortsword-11(13), Stealth-11(13), Streetwise-12, Throw Grenade-12(14). *Advantages:* Combat Reflexes, Toughness DR+2. *Disadvantages:* Addiction (Adders), Bully, Dwarfism, No Sense of Humor, Ugly, Zeroed. *Cybernetic Enhancements:* Bionic Reconstruction, Extra Hit Points +5. Shorty is armed with a gyroc pistol with SLAP rounds in it, a vibroblade wakizashi, and three fragmentation grenades. He wears a tailored, black jump suit with light monocrys in the arms and legs (PD2, DR 8) and medium monocrys in the torso (PD 2, DR 16). He has multiview goggles and \$3040. He is currently hyped on a DX Adder. The Adder's effect is shown in parentheses by the skills. He also has two more doses of DX Adders and one dose of a HT Adder.

Miss Westerfield: Her stats are unremarkable with the following exceptions: She is beautiful in appearance; she has the Voice Advantage; her best skill is Sex Appeal at 14.

Bill Bash: ST 14, DX 12, IQ 10, HT 12, Speed 6, Move 6, Dodge 7. *Skills:* Beam Weapon-14, Carousing-11, Electronics (Security)-12, Fast Draw (Claws)-12, Fast Draw (Gun)-12,

Fast Talk-11, Karate-13, Lockpicking-11, Stealth-12, Streetwise-12, Survival (Corporate)-12. *Advantages:* Combat Reflexes, Magical Resistance +2. *Disadvantages:* Honest, Miserly, Sense of Duty to Synco-Leer, Stubbornness. *Cybernetic Enhancements:* Claws (2+2 cutting, 1+2 impaling), cybereyes +2 to vision with polarization and night sight, weapon implant in left arm (a heavy laser, 2 impaling). He wears a medium monocrys vest (PD 2, DR 16). He is currently at -2 HT and will die soon from his injuries unless attended to.

Mole: ST 9, DX 13, IQ 11, HT 10, Speed 5.75, Move 5, Dodge 5. *Skills:* Acting-11, Acrobatics-12, Beam Weapon-14, Climbing-13, Demolitions-12, Disguise-12, Electronics (Security)-12, Escape-12, Fast Draw (Gun)-13, Fast Talk-12, First Aid-11, Holdout-12, Jeweler-10, Lockpicking-15, Pickpocket-13, Savoire-Faire-10, Sleight of Hand-14, Stealth-15, Streetwise-10, Traps-12. *Advantages:* Absolute Timing, Acute Hearing +1, Luck. *Disadvantages:* Appearance (ugly), Greed, Overconfidence, Sadism, Skinny, Weak Will -2. *Cybernetic Enhancements:* Audio Damping (two levels), two cyberhands with PD 1 DR 2, three flesh pockets, gyrobalance, implant communicator, internal oxygen supply one hour, sensitive touch, weapon implant (laser in right hand, 1 impaling). Mole is a slimy and despicable character. He is also an expert at breaking and entering. Bey used him to get through Synco-Leer's electronic locking systems. Mole will not hang around if things are going against his side of the fight. If pressed or cornered by someone, he'll use his hand laser to attack exposed areas on his opponent. Failing that, he'll just try to strangle the person (his hands have ST 12). He wears a light monocrys vest (PD2, DR 8) and carries \$2800 in his credcard.

Merlene: ST 10, DX 13, IQ 13, HT 10, Speed 5.75, Move 6, Dodge 6. *Skills:* Acting-14, Acrobatics-12, Disguise-11, Escape-11, Fast Draw (Knife)-13, Fast Draw (Katana)-13, Fast Talk-13, First Aid-13, Holdout-12, Katana-14, Knife-14, Knife Throwing-14, Savoire-Faire-13, Stealth-13, Streetwise-12. *Advantages:* Magery 3. *Disadvantages:* Bloodlust, Cyberrejection, Greed, Jealous of the Cybernetically Enhanced, Sadism. *Grimoire:* Apportation-12, Flight-12, Glue-12, Great Haste-12, Haste-12, Hawk Flight-12, Levitation-12, Poltergeist-11, Teleport-14, Teleport Other-13, Winged Knife-13. Merlene is bitter about her body's cyberrejection. So when she discovered she had magical talent, she threw herself into her studies of magic. She carries 10 daggers (1D-3 impaling) sheathed all over her body. She uses them with her Winged Knife spell (1 impaling) to have an effective range weapon. She also carries a vibroblade katana (2+2 cutting, 2 impaling) and a short-range communicator. She wears black leather with monocrys inserts to give her a PD2, DR 8. She wears a bracelet that contains a 15-point powerstone, and she has \$1250 on her.

Freland Bey: ST 10, DX 13, IQ 13, HT 13, Speed 6.5, Move 6, Dodge 7. *Skills:* Acting-13, Demolition-13, Detect Lies-12, Disguise-13, Escape-11, Fast Draw (Claws)-13, Fast Draw (Power Holster)-15, Fast Talk-14, First Aid-12, Gun (Needler)-14, Holdout-12, Karate-15, Knife-13, Knife Throw-

ing-13, Leadership-13, Savoire-Faire-15, Sex Appeal-13, Stealth-13, Strategy-12, Streetwise-13 Tactics-12. *Advantages:* Alertness +3, Combat Reflexes, Luck. *Disadvantages:* Bully, Fanatical, Intolerance, Megalomania, Stubborn. *Cybernetic Enhancements:* Cyberarm (the right one) with PD 2, DR 6 and large claws (2+3 cutting, 1+3 impaling), cybereyes with night vision, one flesh pocket, implant communicator, silver tongue. Bey's tailored, black fatigues are armored with light monocrys (PD2, DR 8). He carries a gauss needler (1+2 impaling) in a power holster at his side. He has a large vibroblade knife (2D-2 cutting, 2D-2 impaling) in his boot and carries a credcard with \$12,000 in it. Bey also has the detonator for the three bombs on the train—yes, *three* bombs. The first two will detonate 20 minutes after Bey presses the detonator. The third will detonate 10 minutes earlier and releases the Synco-Leer car from the rest of the train. This will cause the car's emergency braking system to engage. Bey has associates following the train's progress. They will pick up Bey and the rest of the hijackers by helicopter.

Dr. Leonard Chin: ST 10, DX 10, IQ 14, HT 11/16, Speed 5.25, Move 5, Dodge 5. *Skills:* Area Knowledge (Cyberspace)-19, Cyberdeck-18, Electronics (Cybernetics)-18, Gun (Pistol)-10, Mechanics (Cybernetics)-18, Physiology-16. *Advantages:* Eidetic Memory. *Disadvantages:* Bad Sight, Epilepsy, Pacifism (abhors killing). *Cybernetic Enhancements:* Five chip slots (with the following chips: incapacity override, clock chip, amp chip, math chip and high pain threshold), two neural interfaces, remote datalink, tangler pistol in arm. Dr. Chin is one of the leading cybernetic researchers in the country and one of Synco-Leer's most valuable resources. He wears thick, black glasses of his own design. Besides correcting his sight, the glasses act as multiview goggles and include televiewers.

After the Smoke Clears

If the PCs fail to remove the bombs and still happen to be on the train when they detonate, their careers are over. There will be no survivors, and the heirs of the deceased will bring multiple suits against Synco-Leer.

If the player characters successfully deactivate the bombs but fail to catch Bey, they will have a long and hot time explaining to Synco-Leer Security that they were not part of the hijacking team. Eventually, however, they will be released with no reward other than their freedom and their lives.

If the player characters neutralize the hijackers, capture or kill Bey, save the train, and possibly make the switch with the carnation man, Synco-Leer will be very appreciative. The PCs will reap a Cr200,000 reward, plus an invitation to a private party of Synco-Leer executives. The GM can use the party as a way to continue their association with Synco-Leer, or as a setup for the PCs' next adventure.

A Short History of AMBER

Diceless Roleplaying

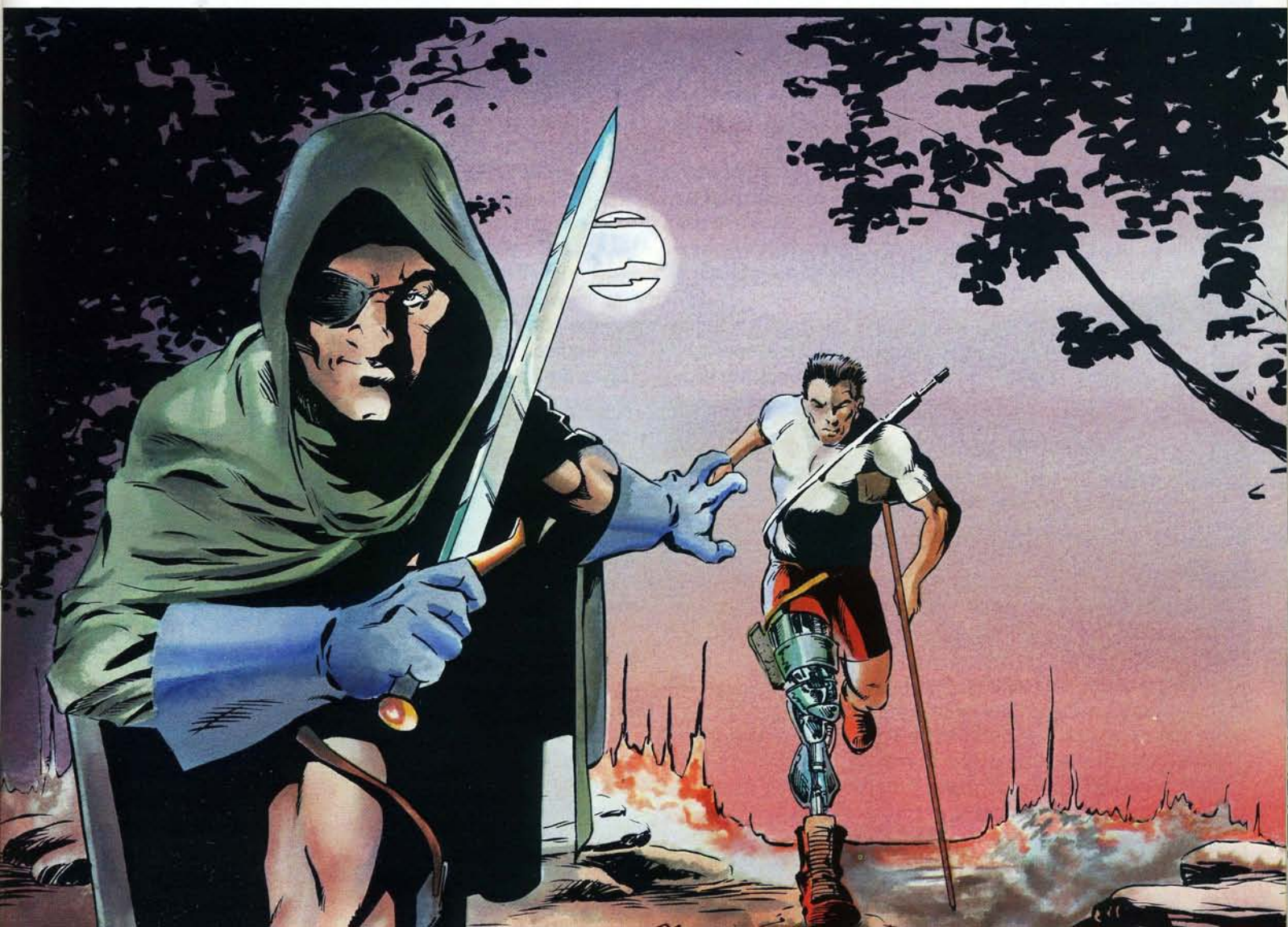
Part II

Last issue, in the prelude to this article, we discussed the history of the Amber Diceless Roleplaying game in an interview with its designer Erick Wujcik (author of numerous other titles, including Palladium Books' Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, and RECON). In this issue, we conclude that interview, discussing such things as the Amber game's multigenre suitability.

For those who might not be familiar with the Amber RPG, it is based upon a series of novels by Roger Zelazny, involving the ruling family of the one true world, of which all others (including our Earth) are but "Shadows." Players create junior members of that family and go adventuring across all imaginable worlds.

Lester Smith (hereafter "LS"): "At what point did you say to yourself, 'Gee, this diceless thing can be a real advertising hook'? I mean, let's face it, there are lots of new roleplaying games coming out every year, and, especially for a new publisher, there has to be some way of grabbing public attention. Certainly you would gain a lot of people who like Amber. But I know that right now there are many people playing the game who have never read any of the Amber novels."

Eric Wujcik (hereafter "EW"): "Well, I have to give credit where credit is due. Kevin Siembieda was the guy who said—I think the exact quote was—'I can sell 10,000 copies of anything that says *diceless*.' He was the one who



looked at it and had that sort of intuitive marketing insight that said, 'People will buy it because it's different. If you do it, it'll probably be great, but that's not the point. The first diceless system will sell very well.' So I had some confidence, hearing that from him."

LS: "Of course, with *TMNT* and such under your belt, there would be quite a few people who would buy it on the basis of the designer as well. And I'm not saying that just as a matter of politeness; as we both know, there are some companies in the industry that put designers' names on the cover of products, and rely upon those names to some extent for sales, and there are others who don't..."

EW: "...and I've been very fortunate in that Palladium is one of those companies that puts people's names right up front. I've probably published less than some other designers in the industry, but the fact is that, in my case, my name has always been prominently displayed, with associated with certain products such as *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, and I suspect that has made a difference. Yes."

"Okay. Let me ask a question about multigenre, I think a kind of tough question. It strikes me, in reading through the Amber novels, that the flavor is for modern Earth to fantasy settings, and that science fiction or superhero aspects are not really involved, particularly science fiction. I'm wondering if there isn't a problem in that when moving from the world of Amber out to the Shadows, you're always staying on a single planet—at least until you get to some places in Chaos where the "world" is just floating rocks, and such..."

EW: "I wouldn't agree with that. That's not necessarily true."

LS: "What I'm wondering is, how do you fit in something like the *Star Trek* or *Star Wars* universe, or something similar to that?"

EW: "Well, as an example, I had a guy in an Amber scenario go out and get the equivalent of a *Star Wars* Death Star and start moving it from Shadow toward Amber. He didn't quite make it, but it certainly presented some wonderfully interesting possibilities, and we had a very interesting battle on a Death Star."

"There's really no reason why you can't use whatever science-fiction elements people like. I have seen various campaigns in various parts of Amber (as you may or may not know, people have been running Amber since long before it was actually published, since '85 and '86), and virtually any science-fiction idea/concept/technology you can think of has been incorporated in one way or another. Amber tends to be—because of the limitations of Amber itself, as imposed by Oberon—limited to the Medieval. But when you get out in Shadow, you can pretty much do whatever you want. Unfortunately of course, in the Amber roleplaying book that I wrote, I could only cover so much! One of the supplements I'd like to do is called *The Engines of Bright*, which deals with my version of Corwin's Pattern, which was highly technological. In Zelazny's write-up of Corwin's scribing that initial Pattern, he talks about automobiles in Paris. Corwin is thinking of cars as he's walking that Pattern, so in my mind, there's quite a bit of technology wedded with the Pattern and Trump."

LS: "An interesting thought. I mentioned the superhero genre as missing as well, and, of course, the comic strip in the

most recent edition of *Amberzine* shows the fallacy of that supposition. I found that very superheroic, and honestly Amber-like as well.

"But science fiction is still a troublesome topic, I think, in leaving the planet's surface. It brings up several questions: What is the rest of the Amber universe like? What other planets are there? Is Amber so central that it really is a sort of Medieval view of the Earth at the center of the universe?"

"I know that in the fiction Zelazny mentions some other corners of the world, some islands where manticores are found, and things like that. But stepping off the planet into space...it just opens up a lot of troublesome questions, I think."

EW: I quite agree with you that it opens up an enormous number of questions, but these are questions that I think gamemasters each have to answer for their own campaign. When I start to think about those ideas, my mind starts swirling with the possibilities. On Amber, the stars come out in the sky; we're told that. We're told that there is a moon. Amber is part of a real universe, presumably. But on the other hand, if Oberon or Dworkin drew the Pattern in a particular place, and if, when they did that, they established certain ground rules for that place—for example, technology doesn't work there; gunpowder doesn't work there; certain chemical reactions don't work—why couldn't they at the same time say "There will be no threatening extraterrestrials"? They had the ability to mold the place, so they could mold it in whatever way they liked.

"However, when you get out into Shadow, all bets are off—you can do whatever you want to. And of course you can walk out into a Shadow where there are intergalactic civilizations. Many players have based their characters on such ideas, and have built up strong campaign elements based on those characters."

LS: "Okay. Well I'll look forward to seeing more of that sort of thing in future support product."

"Turning to another subject, I have refereed a lot of different things, and I read roleplaying games like novels, looking for...I don't know if it's the 'essence of roleplaying,' or just new and strange ways of doing things. But different roleplaying games put the gamemaster/referee/whatever in different positions. The traditional one is that the referee is the world that you, as player, are up against. As the years have gone by, many people have begun to see the referee more as sort of a master story teller who fits together what everyone else is doing. When running Amber, I've felt in a very different position. I initially set up the campaign based on character-design decisions of the players, then sat back as really *the* mechanics of the system. I felt that I couldn't do anything until and unless the players had done something, and then what I did was strictly as a result of what they had done. In some ways, I felt more dispassionate toward it. Am I making sense?"

EW: "Not 'dispassionate.' Do you mean that you were in less of an adversarial role with the players?"

LS: "That's part of it. But part of it is that there was a definite feeling, to my mind, of a more passive role."

EW: "Ah. What you're saying is that you don't have to build in as many sort of machine-like plots, because you can rely on the players to sort of create the world as they move through it."

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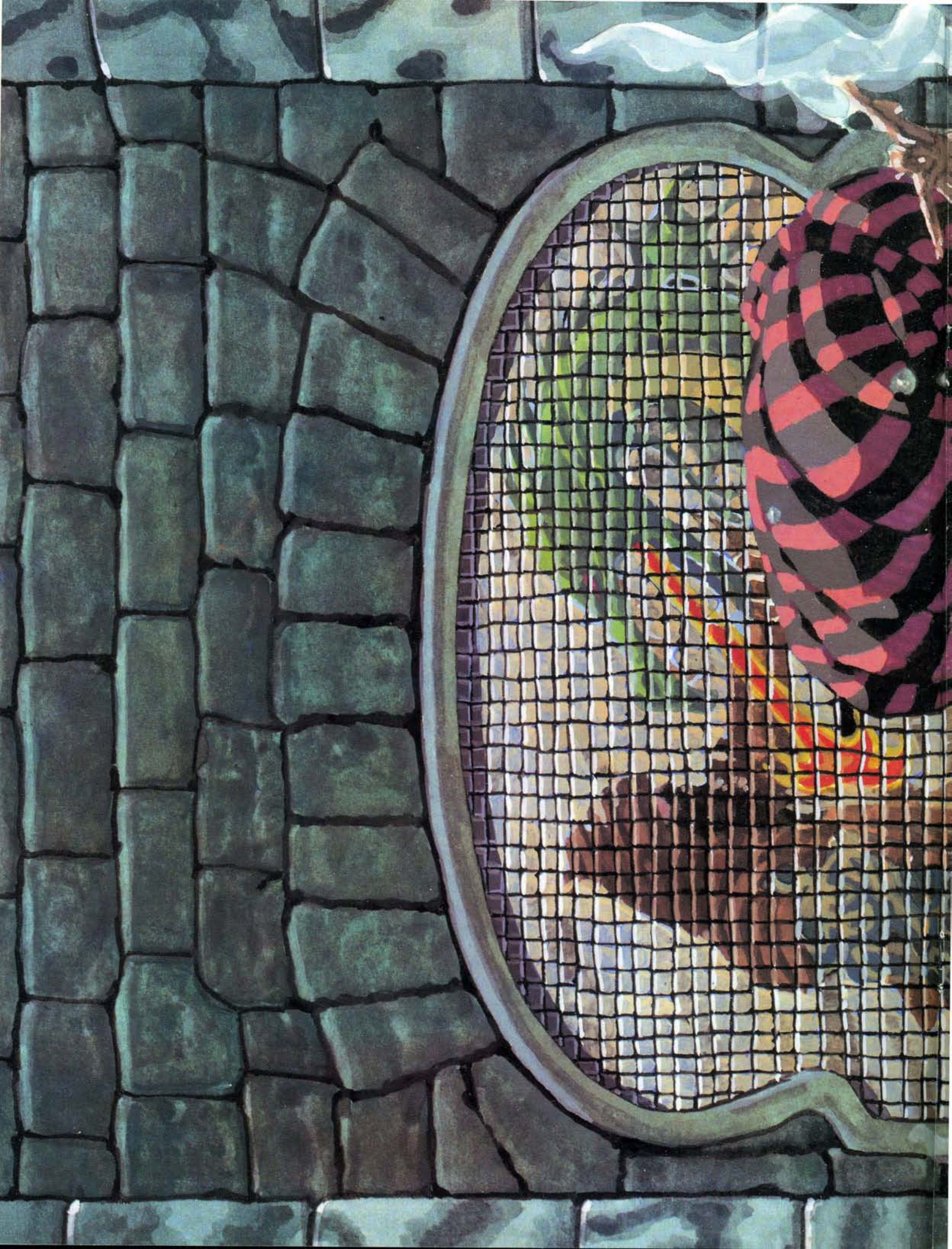
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LS: "That's one side of the coin, I would say. The other side is that, because there are no dice to point to and say 'That's why such-and-such happened,' the referee ends up judging things entirely on their merit. What's your rating; what's his rating; and what are the two of you doing? How does what you're doing interact with what this other person is doing? That's what I base my decision on, and not upon a plot that I have to carry along. Instead, I *am* the universe, and I'm just reacting to you."

EW: "Right. One of the things that people are new to the diceless thing are thinking—I guess because of the older model—is that the gamemaster without dice is going to become some kind of threat. They don't understand that when you take away the dice the gamemaster has to become more of a fair arbitrator; the gamemaster has to reason out what happens. Gamemasters can no longer just fall back on random chance and say, 'Well, this happened, and that's the way it goes. Like it or lump it.' A good *Amber* gamemaster starts looking at all the various factors that come into play. It becomes, I think, a much more intense experience for both the players and the gamemaster."

"I agree with you, it's a different experience, because you're just trying to moderate the universe, as it were. But the other thing is—I think moreso than in a lot of roleplaying games—you really have more responsibility for playing non-player characters a lot more deeply and more intensively. When you're playing an *Amber* campaign, and you've got one of these epic characters—an elder Amberite, or even a character that you've introduced yourself—you have to put a lot more time and effort into figuring out what they're doing at any given time."

"By the way, just to give you an idea of how I feel about this, I need about a month's gap between any *Amber* session I run and the next one. Because the way I see it, I play a session, and the players totally screw up the universe, completely mess up my view of things. And it takes me about a month to figure out where it's all going, and how all the elder Amberites and other NPCs are going to react to all this, and how they're going to react to each other."

LS: "So then, just as the players are driven to really act out their characters, the referee is really driven to act out the world, and there aren't the dice to interfere. On the other hand, in an example of combat from my own play, no one cared what the names of the guards were, because they were dead too fast to matter. There are a lot of other nameless, faceless people as well. What's your thought on that and the reality of Shadow. Just how real are Shadow people?"

EW: "I had a really interesting conversation with a fairly young gamemaster, and he said that there was such a sense of shock on the faces of his players when they ran up against some army of monsters, and within minutes all of their enemies were dead, dying, or fleeing. They suddenly realized that their characters had this awesome power, and that they, as players, didn't have to deal with the trivia any more. So later on, when they ran up against someone who turned out to be one of the elder Amberites, and the battle lasted for more than a few minutes, all of a sudden, all of the players' attention was focussed in a way it had never been before. This was *important!* This was *real!* When the Shadow people are so easily disposed of, the real people you encounter become far more important. And I think that works well."

"How real are Shadow people? That depends upon the player character, I guess. From the point of view of a gamemaster, you have countless numbers of disposable Shadow people. Let's face it, a player character can go to a version of Earth, set up a nuclear holocaust, wipe out every living creature on the planet, then walk

next door to a Shadow that's just like the one he left. As far as any observation is concerned, everything is unchanged."

LS: "Okay. Let's talk for a minute about *Amberzine* and *Ambercon*."

"I know that—like the roleplaying game, which contains what, 100 to 150 pages of referee examples—*Amberzine* is pretty much a book full of examples. The first issue includes "Bronwyn's Tale," an extended, in-depth look at how one of the adventures in the RPG was played, and a comic strip that's an example of how a character in a superheroic world plays out an Amber heritage, as well as an article about Zelazny's Santa Fe, and a few other things."

"But what can you tell us about *Ambercon*? How did it start? Is it primarily a place to go and just have fun, or is it specifically a place for gamemasters to share how to run *Amber*?"

EW: "It's a place where you get to walk into *Amber*, basically. It's a roleplaying fest. Here's how it came about. Back in 1986, I went to GenCon and started the campaign that "Bronwyn's Tale" is based on, and that generated such excitement that people wanted to come back year after year. And we made so many contacts at GenCon and other conventions across the country that it became obvious that everyone wanted to get together in Detroit—well, anywhere really, but most of the *Amber* players are from Detroit—so back in 1990 we decided to do an *Ambercon*, and people came from all over the place. Ever since then it's been a yearly event, and the whole point is to come play *Amber*. The roleplaying there becomes very intense, and an *enormous* amount of fun."

LS: "Do people play anything other than *Amber* there?"

EW: "No. I'm afraid it would be hard to get people to play anything else there. I mean, they're all there pretty much as *Amber* fanatics."

LS: "Could you give us information as to when it's held, for readers who might want to get involved?"

EW: "Yeah. We're probably going to be starting up a couple of other *Ambercons*. We've got people on the East Coast who want to start an *Ambercon* East; people in Washington state, Spokane and that area, who want to start an *Ambercon* Northwest; there are rumors of an *Ambercon* West in California. Your best bet is to get on the *Amber* mailing list, which you do by writing to Phage Press, PO Box 519, Detroit, MI 48231-0519. Once you're on the mailing list, you'll be notified of all these various things. I suspect that within a year or two we'll have *Ambercons* springing up all over the place."

"I should point out that these are very small conventions—50 to 100 people, where most people spend Friday night through Sunday night just roleplaying. There's not much else to them other than that."

LS: "Do you think that diceless roleplaying is the wave of the future for roleplaying?"

EW: "Yes. That's not to say that I think there's no place for other types of roleplaying. I'm writing other games that certainly use dice. On the other hand, since *Amber* I've worked on at least half a dozen other roleplaying games without dice. Phage Press is currently negotiating with Matt Howard, who publishes *Those Annoying Post Brothers*, which is a really interesting comic book, and James Wallace, who is a game designer over in England, to do another diceless roleplaying system which will probably be out next year, called *Bug Town*, something which will be even looser than *Amber*."

LS: "Okay. Well, thank you very much for taking the time to talk, and we wish you continued success."

EW: "Thank you."



Grant G. 0112

It's Never A GOOD DAY TO DIE

This particular journey was not supposed to be a dangerous one. Your group had unanimously decided to make the side trip to the Pool of Purification. It turned out to be a visit with Death itself.

A Mythus adventure by John Langford

This adventure can be added into an existing campaign or run as a stand-alone adventure. The print in italic type below is meant to be read or paraphrased to the players, with any additional "colorization" you might wish to add.

Tepid, pulsating surges wash over your grimy, battered and bruised body. The water has quite an invigorating effect: Your wounds seem to heal right before your very eyes.

Crash! Reality suddenly awakens you from your daydream, as a flash thunderstorm rains forebodingly upon your happy parade. Fortunately, the sacred pool you seek should just be over the next rise, about 15 minutes more travel.

Finally you reach your destination, only to feel gut-wrenching horror at the ghastly remains of lifeless bodies strewn about the shore of the pool. The lightning flashes only worsen the effect, as it is quite dark now and very menacing. Bones thrust through rotted clothing; putrid, grayish flesh adheres to ashen bones here and there. It is a scene out of a nightmare, far from what you'd expect of a holy spot.

Background

About three weeks ago, an elderly necromancer named Horace Quintell—in a desperate search for some means of prolonging his life—happened upon an artifact of immense but unstable power, buried in an ancient sepulcher. It was an ebony chalice. The first time he touched it, the Heka flood that ensued nearly killed him. Obviously, the artifact was not something with which to be fooled; studying it would require very delicate handling. The next time Quintell scrutinized it, he was well prepared to defend himself from its Pandemonial energy. What he began to learn about the artifact both thrilled and frightened him, and after two weeks of mindful, delicate analysis, he decided that he had better destroy the chalice before it possessed him.

The chalice entombed an exceedingly malign entity that if released would wreak considerable devastation on the world. Quintell was never able to learn its name. It took amazing resolve for him to hold to his purpose of destroying the chalice, for the entity within constantly pleaded to be set free, promising great gifts if he obeyed it and great suffering if he did not. Quintell knew that if only he could find a way to control the being, he would reap much power from the

alliance, but he also knew better than to trust it. The necromancer was well versed in many subjects, but controlling such an entity was out of his primary area of expertise. He did, however, learn through extensive research that the being could be banished back to its own plane. To do so required a holy spot, however, such as a nearby pond known as the Pool of Purification, a pond which had long been revered as a site where many saints had been blessed by visions, and which had a reputation for mystical (though infrequent) healing powers.

So Quintell packed up his belongings in a wagon, hitched up his team, and set out for the glade in which the pool rested. Once there, he went to the side of the pool, paused, chanted a brief prayer he had uncovered in his recent studies and hurled the chalice into the pool. At first it appeared that nothing was going to happen, that he would just have to go in and retrieve it. But just as he was about to enter the water, there began a thunderous, ear-splitting howl, as of a demon in horrible torment. Suddenly, about 30 feet above the pool, a swirling, chaotic blackness materialized, and a hole was opened to another plane of existence. The howl was stretched and thinned over the space of many minutes as the entity was sucked into the void. Then silence was restored, and the morning turned tranquil once again.

It seemed as if the entity had been dispelled, but Quintell had a nagging feeling that all was not right, as if the job were unfinished. And he thought there remained something to be learned about the events, something he might yet turn to his own advantage. He decided that he had best keep an eye on the pool for a while, so he set up camp in a nearby cavern, using a few Specific Castings of his own design to protect it and make it something of a home (the necromancer was used to dwelling in such out-of-the-way places). After two days of constant surveillance, he finally saw proof that his hunch had been correct. A group of six journeyers looking for a night of relaxation came upon the pool. Before long, they were all bathing and frolicking, their mounts helping themselves to a thirst-quenching drink as well. The horses were the first to show the water's ill effects, but it was not long before the humans were suffering as well. Within minutes, the horses collapsed where they stood, their flesh decomposing nearly before they had hit the ground. The humans were barely able to get out of the water before their flesh also dissolved from their bodies, leaving only small blotches of putrescence on glistening bones.

Quintell was delighted at this demonstration of power. He began thinking that perhaps there was some way of putting it to use, and to that end he collected some for thorough

examination. He filled two skins, being very careful not to touch the water in any way. With a spring in his step and a wicked smile on his face, he hurried back to his equipment in the cave.

Enter the HPs

The Heroic Personas arrive upon the scene the same evening as the untimely death of the travellers. A successful "Moderate" DR Hunting/Tracking roll will tell a persona that the group of travellers whose bones lie along the shore arrived here only this morning. If Detect Heka is cast successfully, the pool will radiate faintly with Conjunction and

Sorcery magick. A "Difficult" search roll will locate Quintell's observation point, then an "Easy" tracking roll can be made to follow him back to his cave entrance.

The pool is still very dangerous: Anyone who even touches the water will decompose in 1 AT. Most of the previous travellers' gear is still lying about intact and in fairly good shape. (Equip the victims with weapons, armor and provisions suitable to your campaign.) Anyone touching any of the bodies, be it human or beast, will slowly start to decompose as well. But it will take a period of 20 ATs duration for the process to complete. The only way to stop the process is to somehow retrieve the chalice from what is

Horace Quintell, Necromancer

M: 103; EL: 82	SEC: 5	Joss: 6	Move (yds/BT): 84	Heka: 672
MM: 47	MR: 56	P: 84; WL: 63; CL: 75	S: 118; EL: 94	
MMC ap: 18	MRC ap: 20	PM: 39	PN: 45	SM: 59
MMP ow: 16	MRP ow: 18	PMC ap: 14	PNC ap: 16	SP: 59
MMS pd: 13	MRS pd: 18	PMP ow: 13	PNP ow: 15	SMC ap: 20
		PMS pd: 12	PNS pd: 14	SPC ap: 20
				SMP ow: 20
				SPP ow: 19
				SMS pd: 19
				SPS pd: 20

<i>K/S Areas</i>	<i>STEEP</i>	<i>Heka</i>	<i>Max CG</i>
Necromancy	69	89	VI
Dweomercraeft (Black)	59	106	V
Magick	59	115	
Exorcism	54	74	V
Demonology	54	72	
Survival	50		
Toxicology	55		
Witchcraeft	48	68	IV
Mysticism	41	61	IV
Ecology/Nature Science	42		
Biology	40		
Chemistry	40		
Alchemy	35	55	III
Apotropaism	31	50	III
Influence	39		
Literature	47		
Foreign Language, Arcane Magickal	38		
Combat, HTH Lethal	30		
Native Tongue (GM's Choice)	50		
Etiquette/Social Graces	31		
Trade Language (GM's Choice)	46		
Ride	25		
Perception, Mental	41		

Weapons: 1 dagger (STR 30 Insinuation Poison).

Armor: None but a Ring of Hardiness (10 points protection versus all attacks).

Physical Description and Notes: Horace Quintell is 91 years old and 5'6" tall, and he weighs 131 pounds. He has an extremely pale complexion and a withered look about him. You might think he were dead if his eyes did not burn so intensely. At one time, he was a top scholar, but by the time the Heroic Personas meet him, he is nearly insane. His latest discovery has pushed him over the edge of what might be considered normal human behavior.

Skeleton Guards

The stats for Quintell's two personal guardian skeletons are per page 313 of the **Mythus** book. They are each equipped with a two-handed sword, and for protection they have been enchanted with the Stoneskeleton Formula Casting (page 254 of the **Mythus Magick** book).

now the Pool of Decay and ascertain the true name of the entity (Ridnax) which is polluting the pool with its very existence.

Necromancer's Lair

The glade of the pool is sheltered in a rocky valley. To the north is a small pass leading to an east-to-west ravine that extends for many miles in both directions. Quintell's cavern is to the east. Once the HPs are in the ravine, they will need to make another Hunting/Tracking roll at a DR of "Hard" to continue following the necromancer, due to all the loose rubble. If successful, the HPs will be able to follow his tracks right up to an apparent avalanche sight.

Upon further investigation of these rocks, the HPs will notice that all of them are stuck to one another; they are actually "glued" together by a Specific Casting of Quintell's design. A search roll at DR "Hard" will find a section of rocks that actually form a concealed door. It will open noiselessly and easily to reveal a two-square-yard opening that stretches into a long, dark and gloomy corridor.

There are torches in sconces every 10 yards or so, all unlit. The tunnel extends north for about 160 yards, then dead-ends at another door made of "glued" stones. The door hinges on the left, and there is an empty torch sconce above it. This door is trapped—unless a torch is placed into the sconce, the trap will be activated. On the other side of the door is a three-foot-wide by 20-foot-long corridor which, in actuality, is a "covered bridge" of sorts, again composed of "glued" stones, and spanning a great precipice. When the door is opened without a torch in the sconce and the corridor floor is stepped upon (with a weight of at least 35 pounds), the tunnel will come to pieces, dropping the stepper into the precipice. A Physical Avoidance roll of DR "Hard" is required for that person to avert a plummet of approximately 100 feet. Damage taken from the fall is equal to 10D6 times a 1D6 exposure roll. The corridor crosses a dry underground riverbed which is covered with a littering of sharp rock fragments. The riverbed runs in an east and west direction and winds its way up to an exterior crevice toward the east after approximately 1500 yards.

There is a door at the far end of the suspended corridor, identical to the one at the southern end. This door is not trapped and leads into a roughly square room, 30 feet on a side, with lit torches on each of the four walls. A sickly sweet smell seems to be emanating from four decayed corpses sprawled out on the floor. There is another "glued" stone door in the far (north) wall. The skeletal corpses will remain inactive until the door on the opposite wall is opened, revealing nothing but a blank stone wall, and triggering the Casting effect.

The skeletons will animate and fight until they are destroyed or the HPs flee the room, deactivating the enchantment.

A description of these skeletons can be found on page 313 of the *Mythus* book. They are armed with hand axes and long swords, and are protected by breastplates and shields.

Bearding the Lion

If the personas are victorious over the skeletons, they can attempt to locate the concealed opening in the northwest

corner of the room, hidden beneath a boulder that can be tilted upward with very little effort. A search roll of DR "Very Difficult" must be made to find it. Once this "door" is opened, the light permeating from behind the personas will illuminate a long, unlit tunnel. It slowly curves its way back to the north and terminates at another stone door apparently identical to the previous doors. A DR "Extreme" hearing roll will reveal that the room is currently occupied; a shallow breath is ever so slightly detectable.

When the door is opened, the first view the HPs will have is of a horrible visage. Two rather large and ominous-looking skeletons flank a cloaked figure standing behind an ebony desk as dark as a starless sky. The cloaked figure seems to draw the HPs' gaze, for the only part of his face they can see is his eyes, which burn with an intense redness. The blood-red pentacle on his black cloak also appears to glow with an intense fieriness.

"Now I shall watch you die for interfering with matters that are no concern of yours," the necromancer howls! "Cleave these interlopers in two and bring me their hearts," he shouts to the skeletons! A fight ensues, unless the HPs decide to run for it. Important statistics for Horace and the guardian skeletons can be found in the sidebar.

The room is quite spacious. The east wall is covered entirely by a bookshelf crammed to overflowing with books, parchments and various other odds and ends. The west wall has a bench lining it, covered with a variety of alchemical apparatuses. A mural occupies almost the entire northern wall, a swirling mass of black chaotic shapes that appear to move ever so slightly. On the floor next to the bookcase is a pile of furs, obviously Horace's sleeping area. His desk is rather unusual in that the legs of it form into lion paws at the bottom, and when seeing it from behind, viewers would swear they could see a lion's face formed by the desk's shapes and contours. None of the drawers are locked, and in the top center one, a journal detailing the necromancer's study of the chalice can be found.

Other items of note in the room include three grimoires found with careful examination of the bookshelves. Quintell has grimoires on Necromancy, Dweomercraeft (Black) and Witchcraft. Books on various other subjects are located here as well, everything from demons to ancient civilizations.

The samples from the pool are on the workbench in four vials, along with other apparatuses and materials.

Should his skeletons be defeated, Quintell has a magickal ring on his left index finger, which confers a 10-point defense versus all forms of attack. He also has a dagger with a Strength 30 insinuation poison coated onto the blade; it is good for two more uses.

If things are not going well, the necromancer will attempt an escape through a hole in the floor behind the desk, a hole plugged with more magickally "glued" stones. When Quintell speaks a dispelling word, this stone plug loses its adhesion; the rocks fall away; and he slides approximately 100 feet to a small chamber below which leads out into the dry riverbed. Horace has his wagon and team waiting there, ready for just such an emergency escape.

Of course, if he has to flee, he is sure to return to wreak vengeance on those who chased him away!

Notes For the GM

The PCs in this adventure shouldn't be Pan Tangians (unless exiled), or Agents of Chaos in the service of the Lords of Chaos that the Pan Tangians worship. Also, it would be helpful, but not necessary, if one of the PCs is a sorcerer. Other useful playing aids for this adventure would be a copy of *Sorcerers of Pan Tang* by Chaosium, Inc.

The Offer

The PCs are visiting Menii, the capital of the Isle of the Purple Towns, looking for work, when they are approached by a merchant named Septus Malqt. Septus is a well-respected merchant who is one of the few merchants allowed to trade with the xenophobic people of Pikarayd. He needs the PCs to act as his escorts from the city of Menii to his final destination in the Dead Hills. Most of the journey will have to be over land for reasons he does not care to explain. As long as the PCs are willing to handle any "emergencies" they might encounter and not ask questions, he will pay the PCs double the standard wage for mercenaries—GM's discretion.

The PCs' journey will start from Menii by ship to the port of Chalal. From Chalal the PCs will proceed across the countryside of Pikarayd until they reach the northeast edge of the Dead Hills. In the Dead Hills they will rendezvous with some people from the mysterious southern nation of Dorel. Then, after all their business has been conducted, they will escort Septus to the city of Cadsandria in Argimiliar, where one of Septus' trading vessels will be waiting to take everyone back to Menii. Septus has covered all the travel arrangements and he's figured out how long this trip will take—approximately 100 days. He will pay the PCs but half their fee in advance, and that only if they insist. Otherwise he will not pay anyone but the survivors upon their return to Menii.

Anyone who is skeptical of this expedition's success will be shown Septus' "insurance policy." Through an arrangement with the Hierophant and the king of Pikarayd, he was given an icon of Chaos (a piece of wood one foot long, four inches wide and an inch deep, bearing the symbol of Chaos) that allows him and his caravan safe passage through the country. However, few people believe such an icon really keeps the vicious Pikaraydians from attacking. But Septus assures the PCs it works, as long as nobody provokes the Pikaraydians. Anyone who is a sorcerer or has any affiliation with a cult will feel magic radiate from the icon if they pass a roll against POW $\times 5\%$.

After the PCs agree to undertake this voyage, Septus shakes hands with all of them to seal their agreement. He then tells the PCs to meet him tomorrow morning at the docks, where they will board his ship *Shrewd Dealer* and sail right away.

Sailing, Sailing

Next morning, the PCs meet Septus at the docks and the *Shrewd Dealer* with its crew of 50 sailors leaves port on its merry way to Chalal. Three uneventful days pass, but if any PCs make a roll against their INT $\times 4\%$ ($\times 5\%$ if the PC is from the Sailor class) they will notice how tense the crew is. When a crew member is asked about this, he answers, "There were rumors back in Menii about a squadron of Pan Tangian galleys patrolling the Eastern Ocean. They're pretty far from their usual territory, but wherever the corrupt Pan Tangians go, death and destruction follow in their wake."

On the fourth day, the sailor on lookout duty alerts the crew to a Pan Tangian galley on their starboard side. Septus does not

appear nervous since he has faith in the captain. The captain barks out orders and the sailors move about rapidly as the Pan Tangians start to move in on the *Shrewd Dealer* from the starboard rear. If none of the PCs are sailors or have any useful skills (Tie Knot or Navigate), the captain will order them to stay in the cabins where they will be out of his crew's way. Those with the skills that are useful on the ship will be pressed into helping. The captain will threaten to throw any troublesome PC overboard, with Septus' consent.

After two really intense hours of worry, a favorable wind will fill the *Shrewd Dealer's* sails and the ship will rapidly outrun the galley. The Pan Tangians will then fall out of view within an hour. Everyone aboard the *Shrewd Dealer* breathes a collective sigh of relief when the galley disappears in the horizon.

On the fifth day, the coast of Pikarayd is spotted by late morning, and the ship docks in Chalal by mid-afternoon.

What's Going On?

Soon after the *Shrewd Dealer* drops anchor in Chalal, Septus gathers the PCs together and leads them to his house in the foreign corner of the city. The residents of the city give the PCs and Septus contemptuous and suspicious looks. They are even stopped several times by soldiers, but every time the icon of Chaos is shown, the soldiers let them go about their business.

Upon reaching Septus' house, they are immediately led by his servants to the stables. In the stables, each PC has a fully equipped horse—with saddlebags of food, skins of water, a small tent, flint and steel, and two torches—prepared for their long journey south. There are also two unmanned horses for every PC, carrying saddlebags filled with ordinary trading goods—spices, perfume, herbs, some tools, etc. Any players who do not specifically think about it should roll their PC's INT $\times 3\%$ to notice that none of the saddlebags are filled with goods from the ship. Septus orders everyone to saddle up and follow him to the southern gate of the city.

The guards let the caravan pass when Septus flashes his reliable icon, and then he starts to gallop his horse out of the city. He yells to the PCs to follow his lead and explains that they need to cover as much ground as possible before sunset. The land of this country is rather wild and untamed looking. The horses gallop for half an hour, then slow to a steady trot. Three hours later, it's sunset and Septus orders the group to set up camp for the evening. He advises that at least two people should be on watch duty per shift, because the natives are smarter than they look. Septus is even willing to take a shift on watch duty, but only if asked.

If anyone questions him about what they're really doing here, he answers that asking no questions was part of their agreement. Insistence will only irritate him, and he will remind the interrogator of his possession of the icon; without it, a foreigner as good as dead.

The PCs move on toward their destination shortly after sunrise. From this point on, until they reach their destination in the Dead Hills, there is a 25 percent chance of a random encounter (1 on a 1D4). Check once in the morning, once in the afternoon and once at night (GM's discretion as to when exactly and under what conditions). What the PCs encounter can be determined by the table in the sidebar with 1D8.

Whenever the group has an encounter, especially one involving people or creatures of Chaos, Septus will immediately clutch a large pouch in his left saddlebag. He will remain adamant against telling the PCs what he is protecting.

The Winds at the World's Edge

By Steve Maggi



ALIEN NUNIS '92

Encounter Table

1D8 Roll	Result
1	5-10 (1D6+4) baboons (see page 106)
2	1 panther (see page 107)
3	5-15 (2D6+3) wolves (see page 108)
4	5-15 (2D6+3) wild dogs (see page 109)
5	1 poisonous snake (see page 110)
6,7	8 Pikarayd warriors/nomads (see below)
8	Extraplanar encounter (see table below)*

*The borders of this reality are worn thin in the southern half of this country, so many beings of Chaos (and other planes) wander the land.

Pikaraydian Warriors/Nomads

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8
STR	15	16	14	20	13	17	21	19
CON	15	11	10	10	16	13	13	14
SIZ	12	10	12	14	13	10	16	14
INT	8	13	10	7	9	10	9	5
POW	8	9	9	9	8	11	13	10
DEX	11	11	13	8	12	10	12	9
CHA	8	11	13	10	7	9	7	8
HP	15	11	10	12	17	13	16	16
DB	+1D6/+1D4							

ARMOR: Leather (1D6-1)

Weapon	Attack	Parry	Damage
Battle ax	55%	40%	1D8+2
Throwing ax	35%	—	1D8+2
Dagger	30%	25%	1D4+2

SKILLS: Ride 60%

DESCRIPTION: These Pikaraydian Warriors are overzealous worshippers of Hionhurn, seeking sacrifices to their deity. They will back down when Septus brandishes his Icon of Chaos at them, unless they are subsequently provoked.

Extraplanar Encounter

1D6 Roll	Result
1	2-8 Clakars (see page 113)
2	2 Air Sharks of Xerlerenes (see page 116)
3	8 Granbretanians from the Order of the Hound*
4	1 Chaos butterfly (see page 117)
5	1 Oonai (see page 120)
6	The PCs wander into another plane for a mile or two**

*Use the stats for the 8 Pikaraydian warriors/nomads, above, but give them Plate Armor with Helm (1D10+2) for armor. They will fight to the death.

**The plane of the Young Kingdoms/Pikarayd is still visible in the background. The GM can determine what the nature of the plane is like (whether or not it leans more toward Law, Chaos or matches this one) and if there are any encounters—all at the GM's discretion.

Note: All page references are to the *Stormbringer* (4th edition) rulebook.

The "Dorelians"

The Dead Hills are in sight. Septus will give the order to set up camp at the base of the hills. He explains that the people he is meeting have arranged their deal to occur at night, so everyone should rest up for later.

Evening falls across the land and it's time for the rendezvous with Septus' customers. The merchant draws out a map and leads the way up the hills, but he will insist on a warrior-like PC to ride point for the group. After an hour of travel, the group reaches a plateau (with a diameter of 100'), but there is no one waiting for them. The plateau appears easy to defend as there is only one trail up (the one they took). Septus tells the PCs to be patient, the customers will be arriving any minute.

The sky begins to cloud up; lightning starts to flash; and the colors of the landscape change. The horses become nervous, but the PCs manage to keep their mounts calm. Then a column of smoke billows like a geyser from the center of the plateau, and several people emerge from the smoke.

The first person to emerge is a barbaric-looking warrior armed with a two-handed sword, but any PC who passes a roll against INT x2% will note that he doesn't appear to be from any place in the Young Kingdoms. The second visitor is obviously a sorceress, due to her robes being covered with sigils and the metallic owl on her shoulder. The third and final emergent is a black man wearing chainmail armor and carrying a mace.

The sorceress immediately apologizes for the dramatic entrance, but the "barrier between the lands" is getting more difficult to cross. Septus asks if she brought the money, and the barbarian hands him a small bag full of jewels. Septus then unwraps the pouch he has protected throughout the journey. The contents of the pouch turn out to be a large book, and he hands it over to the sorceress. Any PC who is a sorcerer or priest, or who makes a roll against INT x3%, will recognize the book to be a grimoire.

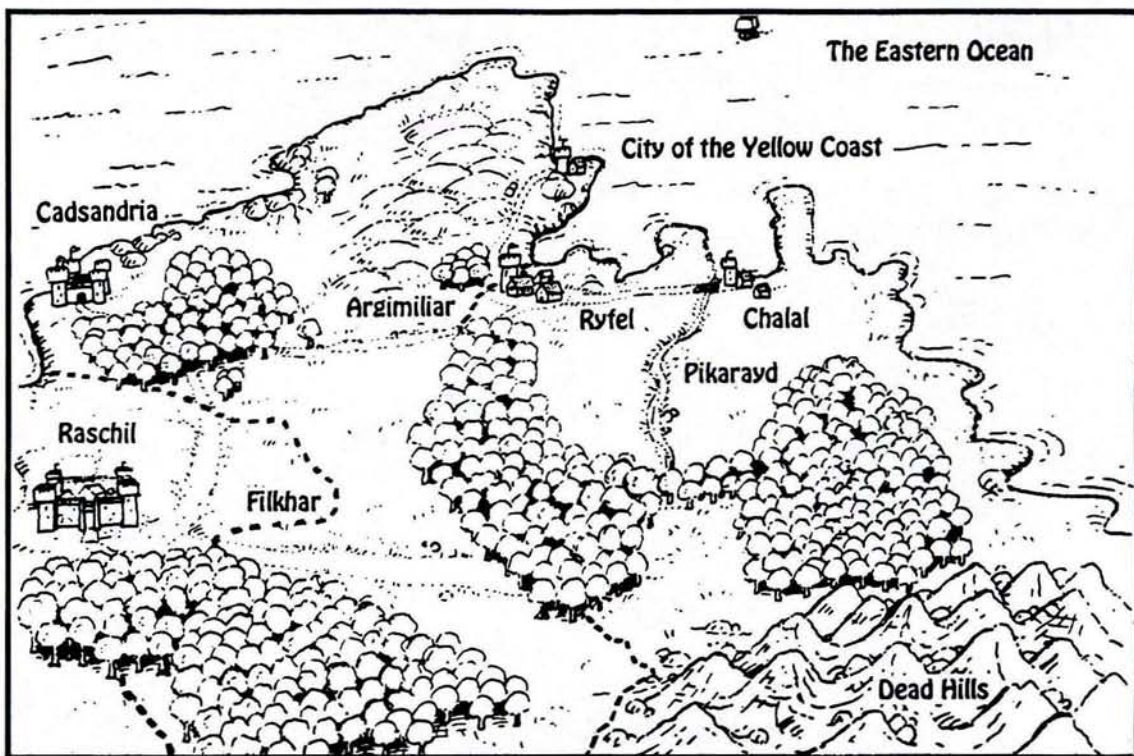
The sorceress thanks everyone for risking their lives, and says she and her allies must be going now. This grimoire will definitely aid their cause against the Pan Tangians' cousins—the Mabden—in their home plane, which is under attack by Xiomborg.

Before the sorceress begins her ritual, the mechanical owl (a Virtue of Knowledge/Warning) on her shoulder starts to whistle and click rapidly. Septus becomes nervous and demands to know why the owl is making noises. The sorceress informs everyone that a dozen people are approaching the plateau and they strongly emanate Chaos. She and her companions would love to help out in the coming conflict, but they are more urgently needed by their own people. She quickly throws a second bag of gems (total value 1000 LB) onto the ground, and tells the PCs it is theirs if they cover her departure. If the PCs refuse, the gems are still theirs, as she is too busy beginning her departure ritual to retrieve them.

Within a minute (5 combat rounds), four Pan Tangian warriors (see below for details) appear and cut off the only way down from the plateau. Two combat rounds later, five more Pan Tangians (four warriors and the sorcerer-priest and leader of their group) materialize in a circle on the plateau. Upon materialization, each warrior fires his bow at the nearest target he sees. Three combat rounds later, the sorceress and her companions finally disappear, leaving Septus and the PCs to fend for themselves. (GMs who wish to involve the sorceress and her companions in the combat will have to generate stats for them all.)

Should the combat go poorly for the PCs, the Pan Tangians will stop fighting at the orders of their leader within 3 combat rounds after the sorceress disappears. They will walk away, and the priest will inform the PCs that the entire country of Pikarayd will be hunting for them. Thus, it is not worth Pan Tang's efforts to kill such worthless foes.

Should the battle go well for the PCs, the Pan Tangians fight to the death and the PCs will find three more warriors lying in ambush at their camp.



To Argimiliar and the Aftermath

Septus will not hesitate to flee for Argimiliar immediately—actually, he'll be insistent; he might even leave the PCs behind in his fright. The trip to the western border of Pikarayd will be even more treacherous than the trip in, with an encounter happening on a 1 or 2 on a roll of a 1D6. Use the same encounter table as previously, but the Pikarayd encounter will also replace the appearance of the baboons and the panther. Chaos encounters will now be servants of Xiomborg carrying out a mission of revenge for her, and these beings will selectively attack Septus first.

Once the PC group has crossed the border into Argimiliar, the remainder of the journey—from the border to Cadsandria to Menii—will be uneventful. At Menii, Septus will square up the remainder of his deal with the PCs and wish them good luck. It seems everyone is going to need it, because they have now made personal enemies of Pan Tang, Pikarayd and probably Xiomborg. If Septus died at any point during the return journey, the PCs are on their own, and they will not get the remainder of the money promised by him.

Conclusion

Over the next several months, Septus will be the focus of revenge by Xiomborg and the Pan Tangians. Besides losing his rights to trade in Pikarayd, he will lose his fleet of trading ships in a fire caused by an Agent of Pyaray, and his personal fortune will be stolen by thieves hired by Pan Tang. Within three months, he'll be a broken man, begging on the streets of Menii to survive.

The PCs will be attacked (GM's discretion as to how) once in a while by Xiomborg and Pan Tang. But within a year, these efforts will cease, as it's Septus they want. Perhaps in a later adventure the PCs will again visit Menii (or another large port city) and the beggar who approaches them will be Septus—demonstrating the wrath of Chaos.

Septus Malqt

STR 14 CON 10 SIZ 10 INT 17 POW 9 DEX 11 CHA 15

Hit Points: 10 Armor: Leather (1D6-1)

Damage Bonuses: None

Weapon	Attack	Parry	Damage
Broadsword	41%	36%	1D8+1

SKILLS: Dodge 12%, Ride 92%, Credit 46%, Persuade 56%, Evaluate Treasure 85%, First Aid 49%, Common Tongue 70%/70%, Low Melnibonéan 22%/22%, Listen 60%, Search 36%, See 44%

Pan Tangian Sorcerer-Priest

STR 12 CON 11 SIZ 14 INT 18 POW 20 DEX 13 CHA 8

Hit Points: 13 Armor: Demon Half-Plate (15 points)

Damage Bonuses: +1D6/+1D4

Weapon	Attack	Parry	Damage
Battle ax	65%	57%	1D8+2

Summoning Chance: 45%

Summonings: Water Elementals, Earth Elementals.

Demons: DEMON HALF-PLATE (breed Hurtines)

Pan Tangian Warriors

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8
STR	12	13	12	10	14	13	12	12
CON	16	9	10	10	10	14	13	16
SIZ	16	12	13	15	13	12	13	17
INT	13	13	11	7	14	12	13	12
POW	12	17	16	15	15	10	16	18
DEX	13	11	12	11	9	16	13	12
CHA	14	6	12	16	13	10	11	10
HP	20	9	11	13	11	14	14	21
DB	+1D6/+1D4							

ARMOR: Leather (1D6-1)

Weapon	Attack	Parry	Damage
Battle ax	60%	50%	1D8+2
Throwing ax	45%	—	1D8+2
Dagger	40%	20%	1D4+2



Although we are unfamiliar with the author of this article, Gary Gygax informs us that Mr. Grumbold is a well-educated fellow as well as an inveterate traveller and a keen observer. Gygax also relates that the author is familiar with Ærth, in particular western Æropa, and in this capacity was employed as an advisor and consultant for the *Dangerous Journeys* project in general and specifically in regard to the *Mythus* fantasy roleplaying game, the *Mythus Magick* book and the *Epic of Ærth* companion volume. Thus intelligenced, we could not reject the article manuscript submitted by Mr. Grumbold, for it contained a fascinating variety of information. So you have before you his narrative regarding the "nuts & bolts technology" which underlies the workings of the parallel world to our own, that planet upon which so much of the action of the *Mythus* game takes place, Ærth.

Please read on.

A Journeyer's Guide to Ærth Everyday Life in Æropa: The Energy, Devices and Structure to Provide Necessities of Life and Services for the People

by Ernst Grumbold

Much of the material offered to those interested in Ærth is aimed at the adventurous and exotic. This is only natural, considering that readers are studying the planet so as to be aware of the aspects which pertain to great persons and events, action, and the dangers of the world. This is all well and good, but to ignore the everyday matters, those things upon which so much relies, is to be critically deficient in knowledge and understanding. Because of the unique nature of Ærth, the magical forces in operation must always be considered, but there are far more mundane factors which also affect the world. To understand Ærth, it is needful to be apprised of such things as power, light, heating and cooling, water, services such as sanitation and protection, and even the amenities for entertainment.

Because my sojourns to Ærth are of relatively small number and my travels around that world not as extensive as some might have you believe, what I relate applies generally to western Æropa, most particularly Francia. My most recent and detailed observations have been there. In order to illustrate this article, then, I will give examples from time to time which compare and/or contrast the particular aspect of everyday life in question to what occurs in the marvelous capital city of Francia and in a small village, Lorrez le Bocage, near the Neustrian border, some 30 leagues distant from brilliant Paris. There are indeed many interesting sources of power and the rest which will be familiar to the reader. Devices employed in Earth's Ancient and Medieval periods are sometimes still commonly employed on Ærth, as you will see.

The differences, though, are manifest, not only because of the centuries they have had to refine and perfect such things, but also because of the pervasive influence of magical energy. In the final solution, it is usually Heka which enables what must be done, even as regards to many petty things.

Types of Power

Power use on Ærth differs radically from that on Earth for two major reasons. Neither the combustion engine nor the dynamo functions there. There are no motor vehicles for transport, no

electrical ones either. There are no great ocean liners, let alone airplanes. Neither is there a network of power lines supplying electrical energy to the corners of the world. Of lesser import, but certainly noteworthy, is the lack of typical chemical explosives, for reactions of such on the parallel world differ from what occurs here. Still, Ærth manages quite well indeed in regard to power for its needs.

Treadmill: The most primitive device for supplying power is the treadmill. It is little used in Æropa, save perhaps in places where some other form of cheap power is unobtainable, or for convict labor. On other continents, there is evidently

more use made of the treadmill, the applications of which will become apparent later on. Readers not familiar with the construction should picture a huge wheel with steps or treads outside or inside of it. The wheel is turned by a person or persons treading on those steps. In devices constructed for an animal, the wheel is replaced by a continuous treadway. Either the turning of the wheel itself directly accomplishes the task desired, or the rotation of its axle provides torque, and that energy, geared or otherwise, accomplishes the task. Several of either type can be used in conjunction for mighty tasks. Typical uses of the treadmill include water movement (for draining or irrigation), milling, and other low-energy-requirement tasks. Outside of hearing rumors of its use in Paris "sweat shops," rumors passed on to me by my guide and companion, Marcellus François, I never saw a treadmill in operation in Paris. Such devices are still occasionally employed in the countryside, and I indeed saw a mule-powered one operating a grist mill near the village of Lorrez le Bocage.

Capstan: The capstan is another device for harnessing the energy produced by human or animal to accomplish some task or lend power to some other engine. On Ærth, and particularly in Æropa, small capstans are generally operated by ratchet-wheeled crank rather than by levers, larger ones almost exclusively by the latter means. Humans or animals use a crank or lever to turn the capstan, its shaft then imparting torque to accomplish the desired work. With the addition of pulley, block and tackle, winch, hoist, crane (with net, hook, or forceps), derrick and the like, this device accomplishes much or the hauling and lifting needed. Outside of crowded spaces, such as on shipboard, most power provided by the capstan is gained through the employment of animals.

Animals commonly used to turn a capstan are the donkey, mule, ox, buffalo, horse, camel or elephant. Readers not familiar with animal power will be served by the following table converting the various sorts to a known measure, horsepower.

A JOURNEYER'S GUIDE TO ÆRTH

<i>Creature(s)</i>	<i>Horsepower (hp)</i>
10 humans	1
1 donkey/ass/llama	0.25
1 ox	0.5 (slow speed, but cheaper to feed and maintain than a horse)
1 mule/quagga*	0.75
1 buffalo	0.75 (speed rather than power is the determinant here)
1 camel	1 (not as efficient at working thus as is a horse)
1 zebromega**	1.25
1 elephant	10

*Reportedly used in northern Afrik.
**Said to be used to a small extent in Ægypt.

Typically, besides oxen or buffalo, perhaps, only very low-value animals will be put to work thus for extended time periods. Raising and lowering of weights (cargo, freight, building materials, etc.) are usual employments of the capstan and associated machinery. Drilling and ærth-moving operations are also often accomplished by means of capstan-obtained power.

Water Power: Water power is extensively utilized on Ærth, but of course it can be harnessed only where there is running or falling water available. It is assumed that all readers are sufficiently familiar with the general principles of the water wheel not to need any detailed explanation. Generally speaking, water is used to turn wheels, which in turn operate many sorts of devices such as grist mills, saw mills cutting lumber and stone, various machines for fabricating things from wood, bellows, etc., or power machines for forging and working metal and so forth. Sometimes the energy of falling water is likewise used. In other cases, water's weight is employed to store energy and use it in various ways. Water is used to drill and sluice mine. But hydraulic power for lifting, lowering or other work is rarely available. However, this source is currently being studied in Paris, with an eye toward development as a useful tool.

Wind Power: On Ærth, wind is first and foremost the main power source for waterborne vessels on ocean, sea, lakes and even some rivers. The student is alerted to the fact that improvements in ships include both hull designs and sail plans. In truth, the average vessel plying the waters of western Æropa might be a copy of some craft seen on Earth during the 15th or 16th century. However, newer designs are similar to our 17th-century ships, and visionary naval architects are certainly moving ahead, so that in due course, great merchant vessels and ships of the line of battle like those of Earth's early 18th century will be seen in the Lantlan Ocean of Ærth.

Wind is also another power source used extensively on land in those places where there is generally sufficient steadiness and strength of air movement to turn the vanes of windmill devices. Again, readers are surely sufficiently aware of such constructions to need no further description from this writer. In addition to the uses already mentioned for water wheels, windmills are often harnessed to pumps so as to move water—whether to be rid of it where there is flooded mine or field, or to bring it up for irrigation. Very limited use of wind is made for land transport, although some experiments continue in this regard.

Of late in Francia there has been some development of small "household" windmills to generate power for minor labor-saving and convenience devices, such as pumps to fill upper water storage tanks, and revolving cooling fans.

Steam Power: Steam power expertise on Ærth is virtually in its

infancy. Most experimental work is being done in the Grecian nations, I am given to understand. With the recent developments leading toward more reliable engine components—namely boilers, cylinders, valves and pistons—it is expected that more use of this means of obtaining harnessable energy will be made. It was difficult indeed for me to restrain myself regarding the use of the steam engine in regard to rail and water transportation. However, as an "outside observer," I could not speak. It seems likely, however, that over the next few decades, steam-powered drills, machines, catapults, cars and trucks, railroad engines, and ships will begin to proliferate in the more advanced states of Ærth, particularly from Ægypt and the Phoenecian lands in North Afrik through Atlantl, and certainly in Æropa.

Gas Power: In this same category I must mention gas production. By that I speak of hydrogen and helium to a minor extent, not natural or coal gasses, such as methane or propane, for instance. Ballooning has recently become quite popular in Francia, and there are proponents of this activity in many other parts of Ærth, I am told. While the technology is very much in its infancy, lighter-than-air balloons, propelled by Heka-engendered Power, might well become a factor in years to come. That is, such devices will likely be used in warfare and exploration, if not for general transportation, rather than merely for amusement and sport.

Heka Power: Heka is, quite naturally, the greatest power source available on Ærth. Through its manipulation, just about any desired work can be accomplished. However, able practitioners are uncommon, and the Castings to perform tasks frequently demand considerable specialized skills. Nonetheless, virtually everything which is done here on Earth by explosives, combustion engine or electrical power is managed, if in a less general way, through the employment of Heka energy. In truth, magical forces are often used to create torque, water and wind for their imparted energy, and so forth.

Lighting

Lighting is again quite different on Ærth than we are used to on Earth. In many places activities are very much regulated by the amount of sunlight and full moonlight available. Where such natural illumination is lacking or insufficient, there are many sources used to bring light to an area. The most primitive means are firelight, rushlight, torches and oil-fueled cressets. Such sources of illumination are still fairly common in nonurban places, but in almost all cases they are augmented with somewhat less-primitive means. Fat and oil lamps are only a little step removed from the most primitive. Next are the tallow and wax candle, both of which are quite generally employed everywhere, the former by the poorer because it is far less costly. Even vegetable wax candles are beginning to become less rare as developments in extraction of such substances from oils continue to improve in efficiency. Beeswax tapers are certainly the finest candle and the most costly to burn. Many of the gentry and aristocrats use them, in fact, in place of less dear means of illumination, simply to display their wealth!

Wicked lighting fixtures burning refined oil such as kerosene are fairly common in better places everywhere, and more so still in urban communities.

I have previously mentioned the use of gas. Location of gas wells or production of flammable gasses in sufficient quantity to be sold commercially has started in several places in Æropa. This availability of gas has seemingly begun a trend. This is certainly true in Paris where much use of the gaslight is made for street lighting, in commercial establishments and many better private

residences as well. While this is fashionable, even so good a system for illumination cannot replace that enabled by magickal means.

Heka-engendered lighting need have no wasted energy in production of heat accompanying its illumination. "Witchlights," for such seems to be the near-universal name for Heka-engendered illumination on Ærth, serve in many roles. This form of light, in fact, is superior to our own neon, fluorescent, incandescent and all the rest of the electrically powered systems combined. It can be affixed to some area or suspended in air, or can even make the atmosphere itself become illuminated.

Heka-engendered illumination can be steady or intermittent, flashing, illuminate in series or sequence, even actually move about independent of outside agency. It can be colored and shaped to suit need or desire. Similarly, it can be made to give off illumination brighter than day or so pale as to seem ghostly.

With such power and potential, why then isn't it all-pervasive? Again, because of the particular requirements of Heka manipulation, only a limited number of persons can actually utilize the energy to create such light. Furthermore, the cost is high.

In truth, Paris is aglow with various forms of witchlights. Some commercial streets' enterprises combine to give special illumination to their active portion by this means. All of the largest and finest commercial establishments advertise their presence thus with very special and unusual witchlighting. Certain very wealthy freemen, and most aristocrats, use simple Heka-engendered lighting in their residences, more complex forms around their grounds. Religious edifices too utilize such Heka-engendered illuminations to enhance the visibility and attractiveness of their places of worship.

Finally, in this regard I include my translation of an excerpt from a travel book written in Francian, published in Paris, and supplied to me by the good M. Marcelus François.

Memphis, Ægypt

Population: 2,000,000 (not counting those who don't want to be noted in the census!).

Memphis is not merely the capital of the Lower Kingdom, but it is the largest and most cosmopolitan city in the land—perhaps on all Ærth. Who can say, for so much of that sort of thing is pure preference and taste....

...Outstanding features of the city are the witchlights, for various sections of Memphis are illuminated in different ways and with varying dweomers. Thus, there are:

Rainbow District: A quarter of wealthy sort where the villas are set off by the different colors of Heka-engendered light surrounding them in pastel or pale radiance.

Festival Way: The street of that name which is lit by colored lanterns in fantastic shapes, animal form, etc. Light here is from flame and Heka, too.

Rose Quarter: This is the principal red-light district and is awash in sultry reds, dusky scarlets, crimsons, hot pinks, and passionate violets and purples. The air above glows with a rosy hue from the exotic witchlights here.

Undersea Court: Several ultrawealthy families whose properties adjoin compete in extravagant show during certain holiday festivals. The short, dead-end street is then lit in a pure blue light, as if one were immersed to a depth of about 30 feet in clear, tropical sea water. There are greens and paler blues from some locations, while the edifices themselves are kept bright through "rays of sunlight piercing the water," colored "coral reefs," moving "shoals of fish" (-shaped light), and the radiance shed by singular marine "denizens" as well, from "whales," "sharks" and "rays" to "jellyfish,"

"turtles," "eels" and "sea snakes." Occasionally, "mermaids," "tritons" and like Phæree creatures will appear.

Temple of Hapi: The deity of the River Nylle has lighting of Heka-induced sort which is as if one were submerged in a green river. There are brighter forms of "hippopotami," "crocodiles," "turtles" and "fish," plus illuminated banks of riverine flora to bring moving illumination along the walks adjoining the precincts of the temple. This is, however, no match for the spectacle of undersea display done on special occasions noted previously.

Despite such glowing words, I myself believe that the auidial and olfactory enchantments so frequently combined in Paris with the visual of witchlighting makes the city one of the most exciting places on all Ærth. When Heka-practitioner artists send their work into the sky above MontMarte, not even such a place as described above can compare.

Heating and Cooling

Only the most primitive of places still use the fire pit and open smoke hole for heating. Similarly, fuel such as dung is not generally used anywhere but in remote places in which better ones are unavailable or too costly. With respect to heating, simple fireplaces are most common. These are of masonry, brick and lately of forged metal as well. Some are now being augmented with metal for improved conduction of heat. They are meant to burn wood, wood and coal, or charcoal or coal. Occasional use of braziers with charcoal fuel to augment heating is not uncommon. In colder regions, brick ovens are used by the common folk for all purposes, including the warmth needed in their dwelling places. Recently introduced in advanced countries, metal heating/cooking



THEY SAID IT WAS A DARK FUTURE, BUT THEY DIDN'T COUNT ON US. AFTER ALL, WE ARE CHILDREN OF THE DARK, SO, FOR US TO BE PRESENT IN THIS "DARK" TIME IS ONLY... LOGICAL, NO?

SOME CALL US LEECHES, VRYOLAKLAS, MONSTERS OR SIMPLY VAMPIRES. BUT WE KNOW WHAT WE ARE: MASTERS OF THE NIGHT, CHILDREN OF THE DARK, FOREVER PRESENT IN THE MIND AND HEART OF GENERATIONS.

WE'LL ALWAYS BE THERE, HIDING IN THE NIGHT. COME PLAY WITH US, WON'T YOU?

By Justin Schmid

An Alternate reality sourcebook for

CYBERPUNK

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and heating-only stoves are proving very popular with those able to afford such luxury. Pipes and register openings can be used in connection with such stoves to distribute heat throughout several rooms. Also of note is the coupling of improved boiler systems to such devices, and not only those fired by conventional fuels. Experiments are supposedly under way to test petroleum oil and gas in this regard. If steam can be used for power, why not for heat? Likewise, why necessarily steam? Hot water is efficient. However, the cost of producing the necessary metal piping leaves this very much in question. Indeed, it seems likely that in a decade or so, Ærth will begin to have some fair amount of central heating in those states of Æropa which are coldest.

Buildings which are set deeply into hillside soil or covered in part by a berm of soil so as to take advantage of the near-constant, if cool, temperature encountered a foot or so below the frost line are being constructed in a few of these cold countries. This concept is treated hereafter as well in regard to cooling.

Elsewhere, in those regions where there is much sunshine and warm weather, the energy of the sun is being collected and transferred to water. While having hot water to wash and bathe, warm for swimming and the like, is not considered a major concern, this step is noteworthy. It saves other fuels, makes the provision of hot/warm water easier, and even assists in what small amount of heating is needed in such climes.

Industrial establishments everywhere rely on charcoal, coke, gas and Heka to produce the heat needed for their work.

Again, where needful, Heka is employed to produce warmth or great heat such as is required in Heka-forging, alchemical operations and commercial use.

Cooling is often more a matter of comfort than necessity, save in regard to preservation of foodstuffs. In hotter regions, the buildings are now not only thick-walled and high-ceilinged, but insulating materials are being included wherever possible to help maintain a constant temperature. Southern exposure walls are seldom pierced with windows. Natural air currents and shading are always considered where they are possible factors. Soil subterranean temperature conduction is employed in the construction made of rammed ærth, as well as in those partially buried in soil. Special cooling devices include the fine-spray water fountain where evaporation cools the surrounding air and the mechanical fan operated by windmill or other means. Most cooling fans are placed on the ceiling, of course.

Cooling by means of snow or ice is also common in regions where winter temperatures drop below freezing or where there are snow-capped mountains nearby. Generally, though, such use is restricted to very small and select areas or for special foods and drinks. Snow is collected and packed into blocks, or ice is cut. In regard to the latter, it is generally cut by saw from frozen lake or river, hauled by animals on a sledge, then packed in straw-separated layers. Snow or ice blocks collected thus are stored in insulated constructions (double roofed and walled, the space filled with sawdust or some like insulation) called ice houses, or else kept deep below ground in caves.

Heka-engendered cooling is generally reserved for special circumstances such as large-scale food preservation, laboratories or the dwellings of the wealthy. Of course, enchantment can freeze oxygen, produce dry ice, or even engender snow or ice—all provided there is a capable practitioner and that individual is willing to provide a Casting and expend the Heka

energy to accomplish what is desired.

Water

Water is a necessity everywhere, of course. Its basic sources on Ærth are almost the same as on our Earth, the only exception being that the former place can, in need, draw that liquid from the Elemental Sphere, a distinct advantage indeed!

Most large communities, as well as many not so large, obtain water from some nearby river or lake. Some few communities also have or rely solely upon collection of precipitation in reservoirs constructed for that purpose. Similarly, some communities have natural wells (possibly artesian) and/or springs to supply their needs in this regard. In rural communities and isolated dwellings, the reliance is on, in descending order, water courses, bodies of water, springs, wells, wells and cisterns, then cisterns.

Water is commonly drawn by bucket and rope only in very isolated places or by the very poor. Large communities have a water distribution system, now typically piping, but some aqueducts still function. From the main water pipe (main) run auxiliary conduits to supply the needs of the community. These generally break down into three groups: (1) public wells, pools and fountains; (2) baths, natatoriums and street sanitation; and (3) private users whose structures have running water supplied. Reservoirs, where applicable, are also divided thus to assure that each group receives its allotted quantity, the first being the largest, naturally.

Water is usually moved up or along by means of a screw pump, drum pump, force pump, vacuum pump or Heka operation. In backward communities or where there is some special consideration, such devices as the bucket lift lever, treadmill-operated wheel and buckets, the advanced design bucket wheel or a chain and buckets lift will be employed.

Paris, of course, being on the River Seine, has a main system, plus separate wells, along with various other means also utilized by individuals, generally cisterns for rainwater collection, although there are also private wells. Lorrez le Bocage, contrarily, must rely principally on a central well, although, again, many places have rainwater cisterns.

Purification of water is accomplished by many means: Sun and air, that is, natural action, is most common. Alchemical additives and even Heka-engendered purification techniques are employed in advanced communities such as the Francian capital, where water in the collection reservoir is so treated daily. Distillation is used broadly only where water must be obtained by desalinization of seawater. However, small quantities for various purposes are also distilled by many means.

Water obtained through Heka use from its Elemental Sphere can be of just about any sort, according to the specifics of the Casting employed. Normally, production will be of sweet water. The very wealthy rely on such for their use. Some commercial enterprises bottle such water and sell it in competition with those purveying spring water, aiming at the better-off freemen able to buy it.

Next issue will continue the exposition and cover not only sanitation and safety provisions, but also provide us with information on public works and the typical amenities. We hope you'll join us then.

Ars Magica (3rd. Ed.)

White Wolf. \$25.

392-page book.

Designed by Ken Cliffe and Mark Rein•Hagen.

Review by Jimmie W. Pursell Jr.

*Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire, burn; and cauldron bubble."
Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the cauldron boil and bake;
Eye of newt, and toe of frog,
Wool of bat, and tongue of dog....*

William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*

The third edition of *Ars Magica*, the popular fantasy roleplaying game from White Wolf, became available in July. The 392-page softcover book is more than double the size of the second edition and of much better quality. Those who liked the second edition will love the third.

Physically, the game is stunning. The first 16 pages are done on glossy paper, with several full-color pictures. These pages contain the introduction, which includes an explanation of the game and the world. This introduction is filled with quotes and narratives, setting the scene nicely for the

experience to come.

The remainder of the game is illustrated in black and white. While a few of the diagrams leave a bit to be desired, most are clear and distinct, assisting greatly in setting the mood and "feel" of the game.

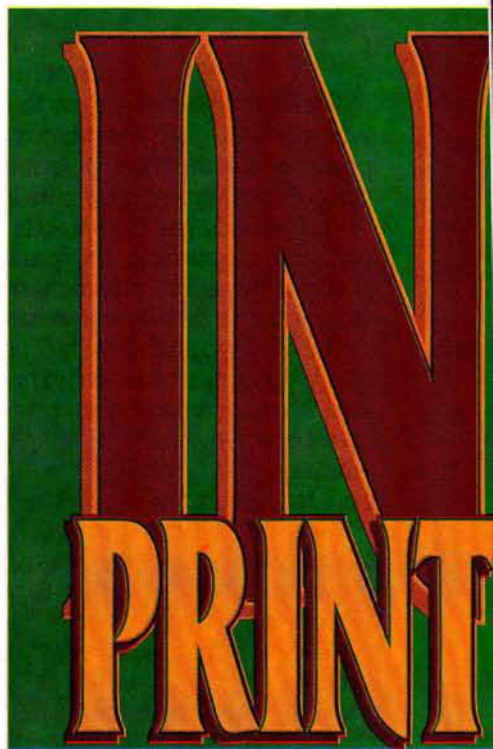
For those not familiar with previous editions of *Ars Magica*, the world is that of Mythic Europe. Many games are set in worlds similar to Medieval Europe, but *Ars Magica* goes all the way with the idea. The setting is Europe circa 1197. The only difference between Mythic Europe and historical Europe is that the world really exists the way the superstitious common people perceived it. Magic, faeries, dragons

and ghosts all dwell in, on, and under the realms of Earth.

Goblins plague miners. Giants exist. These supernatural dangers, plus more mundane events, such as the plague and the Crusades, challenge players.

While the setting is interesting, this is not what makes *Ars Magica* unique. The originality of *Ars Magica* lies in its concept of magic and the magic-using character. In most roleplaying games, the concept of character balance forces artificial restrictions on all character types. For everyone to have a good time, everyone must be equal, lest a powerful character becomes the center of attention, shoving lesser characters into subordinate positions. This idea places severe restrictions on magic-using characters, who can never hope to emulate the mages and wizards of fiction and legend.

Ars Magica discards the concept of character balance. In this game, Magi (magic using characters) are the most powerful player characters. Period. While this may not please the warriors and thieves in the party, would-be Magi all over the gaming world are rejoicing. But, one might ask, "Won't everyone want to be Magi, balancing the game again, negating the whole idea of being powerful?" The answer is no. The *Ars Magica* system encourages what it calls "troupe-style" play. To understand this concept, one must first understand the three character types contained in *Ars Magica*.



Character Types

The first character type, and by far the most important, is the Wizard or Magus. The Magus wields tremendous magical power and is the most potent character in the game. Every player has a Magus as his principal character.

The second type of character is the companion. The companion is a supporting, nonmagical character roughly equal in power to the typical player character of other fantasy roleplaying games. Every player also has a companion character.

The third type is the lowly grog. The grog is the grunt of the party. A grog can be anything from a foot-soldier to a maidservant. They are typically cannon-fodder for the more important members of the party. Every player has two or three grogs, which go into a "grog-pool." All players may draw from this pool for a character to play during a particular session.

When all characters for all players are grouped together, they form a covenant, the central instrument that holds the group together. A covenant is a group of Magi who band together for self protection and power. The haven for the covenant is typically a castle or fortress, though it can, in reality, be any location.

During any one adventure session, players will each play one of their characters. Generally, one player should play a Magus, one should play a companion, and the remainder should be grogs; smaller groups may allow playing a grog along with one of the more powerful character types. The beauty of this type of play is that the characters can change from session to session, allowing all players to experience playing, as well as running, the game. Through all of the changes, the covenant remains a constant bond and maintains the cohesiveness of the group.

Characteristics and Abilities

Though the character types differ in power level, they are all defined in the same manner. Each character has eight characteristics: Intelligence, Perception, Strength, Stamina, Presence, Communication, Dexterity and Quickness. These characteristics are given numerical scores from -5 to +5, with 0 representing average human ability.

In addition to the characteristics, every character has a number of abilities. Abilities represent skills, talents and knowledge that the character possesses, and they define what the character is capable of doing. Arcane talents such as penetration and finesse complement

mundane skills like track and ride, to provide a diversity of abilities to flesh out player characters.

Though these abilities and characteristics explain what the character can do, the heart and soul of the character lies in virtues, flaws, passions and personality traits. These provide the background and personality of the character, making the character more than a series of numbers. Virtues, such as "higher purpose," offset such flaws as "sense of doom" and "cursed." When the virtues and flaws are combined with passions such as "vengeance," characters come to life, driven by their own individual desires and motivations.

Rules

"But, what of the rules?" you ask. Players familiar with previous editions of *Ars Magica* will find the basic concepts intact. In fact, all previous supplements are fully compatible with the third edition. Each action, be it combat, spellcasting or skill use, is assigned an Ease Factor; the more difficult the task, the higher the Ease Factor. A D10 is rolled, and the appropriate skills and characteristics are added to the result. If the roll equals or exceeds the Ease Factor, the skill use is successful.

Two types of rolls are used: simple and stress. A simple roll is made under normal circumstances where there is little pressure



to succeed, and consists of a straight D10 roll with 0 being 10.

A stress roll is used in stressful situations, such as combat, and is executed a little differently. On a stress die, a 0 is a 0 and represents the possibility of a botch (fumble). A second D10 is rolled, and if it is also a 0, a botch has occurred. Not only does the action fail, but something bad has happened.

To offset this potential for catastrophe, a roll of 1 is treated specially. If a 1 is rolled on a stress die, the die is rolled again and the result doubled. This effect is cumulative. Thus, if the die roll is 1, 1, 4, the result is 16 (four doubled twice). This creates the possibility of some really high rolls.

Combat is resolved using one of two systems. Both require an attack total to be generated and compared to a defense total. If the attack total is higher, the attack hits. In the simpler action system, some of the die rolls are streamlined. The defense totals are pregenerated by adding six (the average roll on a D10) to the figured total, so only the offensive totals must be rolled during play. This speeds play, but sacrifices some realism and variability. The more detailed "dueling" system, which players of previous editions will recognize as the original combat system, requires all rolls to be made, but gives many tactical options for greater realism.

The magic system is effectively the same as earlier editions. Magi are skilled in techniques and forms which can be combined to make spells. The techniques are ways to manipulate substances, and the forms are the substances themselves. For instance, the technique *Creo* (create) and the form *Igmen* (fire) can be combined to cast a *Pilum of Fire*. The five techniques and the forms given provide 50 different combinations. Each of these combinations has a list of spells of various levels associated with it. In addition to the set (formulaic) spells, spontaneous magic is possible. Using spontaneous magic, Magi skilled in techniques and forms can create magic which does not fit perfectly into the mold of one of the formulaic spells. These spells are incredibly flexible, but lack the power of formulaic spells.

Evaluation

While the rules are complete and the game system is terrific, the heart of the game is the storytelling aspect. A good portion of the book is devoted to advice concerning storytelling. The emphasis is placed on drama, character development and excitement, not on hack and slash. The hints are useful and, if followed, can make a night of *Ars Magica* unforgettable.



While earlier editions of *Ars Magica* had a few important omissions, requiring the purchase of supplemental material to be complete, the third edition contains all the necessary information to play a full campaign. The rules are complete, well thought-out and easy to understand.

However, the game is not perfect. A few incorrect cross-references occur, such as the repeated reference to magic resistance on page 174, which is actually on page 177. In addition, some of the index entries are incorrect.

These problems are, of course, minor; the most important "problem" with the game is tied to its biggest strength. The emphasis on storytelling over combat makes the game hard to run for inexperienced gamemasters. "Find it; kill it; take its loot" does not work well in *Ars Magica*. Additionally, some players may not like the importance placed on magic and magic-using characters. The game can be played as a conventional roleplaying game by making all the characters of the companion variety, but this tends to diminish the appeal and purpose of *Ars Magica* by ignoring the very foundation of the system.

Though tastes vary and *Ars Magica* may not be for everyone, the game is well worth a look. For the willing, enough preparation for an *Ars Magica* saga will reap great rewards in the roleplaying experience.

For more information contact your local hobby store or GDW P.O. Box 1646 Bloomington, IL 61702-1646

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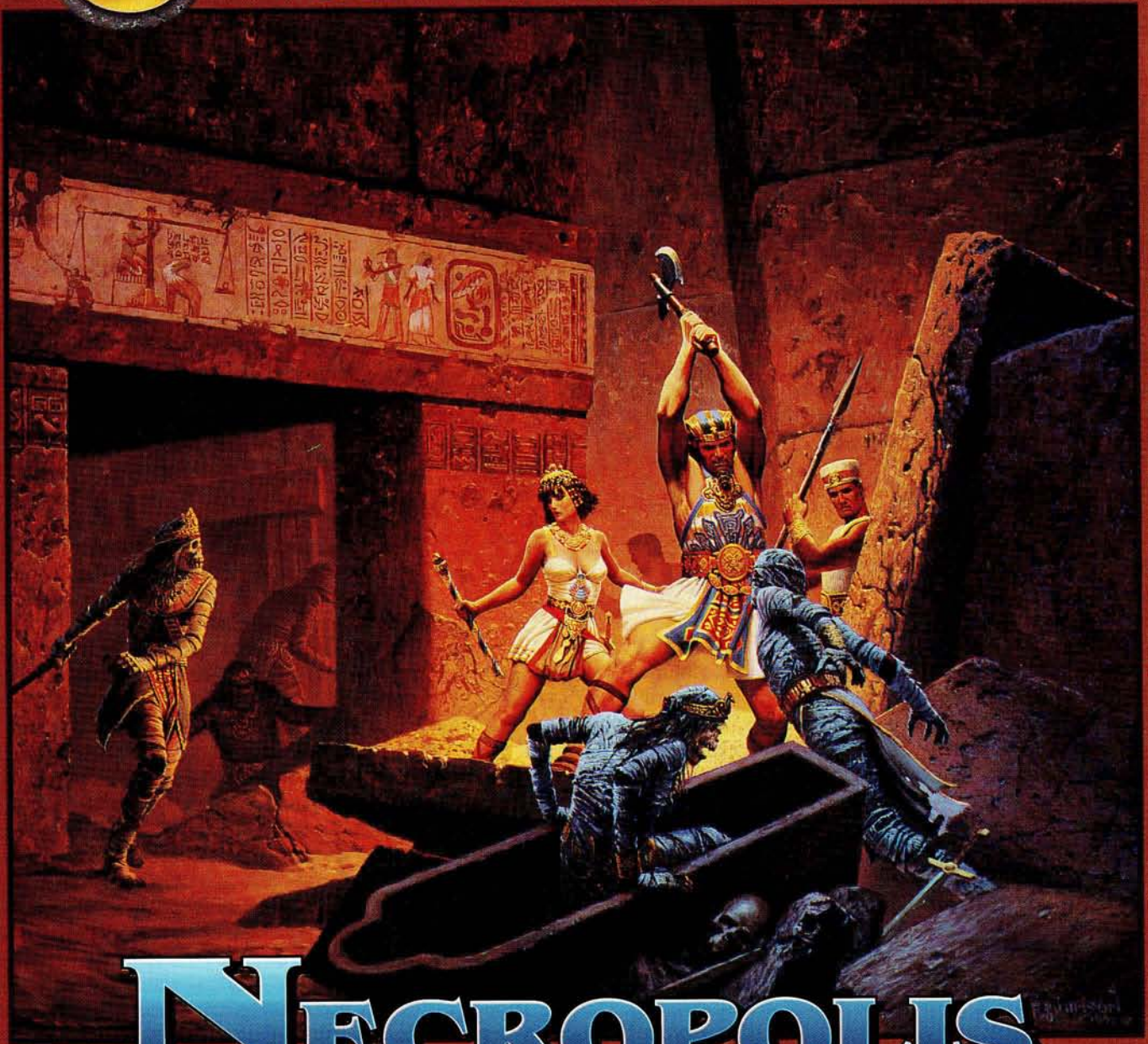
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Part 2

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MONSTER HUNTER FOR HIRE — FREELANCE

GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, GORDIE

LIKEWISE, MR DECOLE THIS IS MAC BRIGGS, EX CIA. HELPED ME ON THAT GHOUL JOB IN BOGOTA.

GET THE HARDWARE, GORDIE?

GLAD TO HAVE YOU WITH US BRIGGS.



IN THE BACK — I.R. GOGGLES, AIR DENSITY SENSORS, GALIL ARMS... THE WORKS.



OKAY. THIS THING CALLS ITSELF DALGORAS — A SHAPE SHIFTER. SLICED UP THE SENATOR'S DAUGHTER IN MEXICO CITY THREE DAYS AGO...



...AND LEAPS RIGHT INTO THE JUNGLE. BRANDT FINAGLES SIX HOURS ON A RECON SAT, TRACKS IT TO TWELVE MILES DUE EAST OF US.

NEXT MONTH: TEMPLE OF DEATH

ALLEN NUNIS

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CALL OF CTHULHU magazine articles for bibliography I am writing. Have all

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MOTIVE: An Amateur Press Alliance (APA) which covers all aspects of the RPG hobby, is looking for new members. Members contribute to and receive a (+/-) 200 -page, bimonthly APA. RPGs most often covered are *MERP*, *HERO* System, *Twilight: 2000*, *CoC*, *Shadowrun* and *BattleTech*. Please write to Wayne Peacock, 190 Reed St., Athens, GA 30605. (2)

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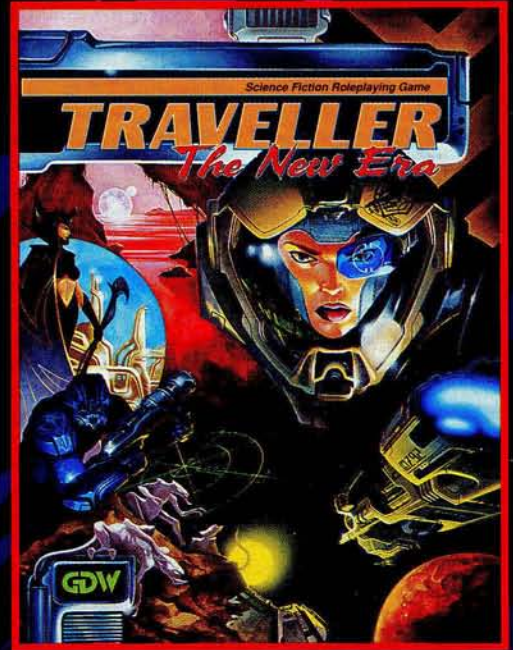
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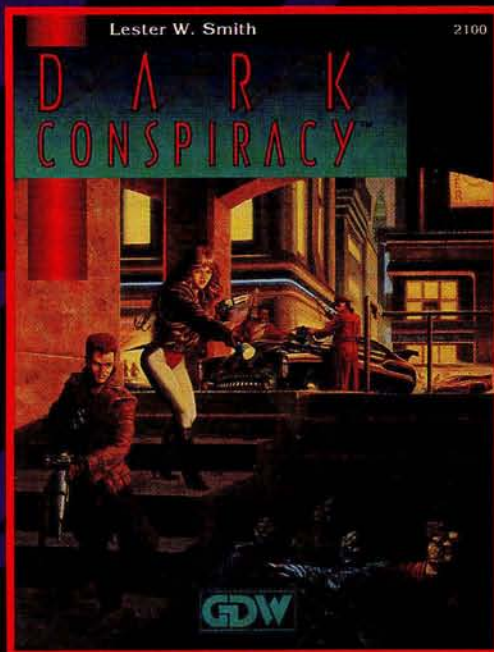
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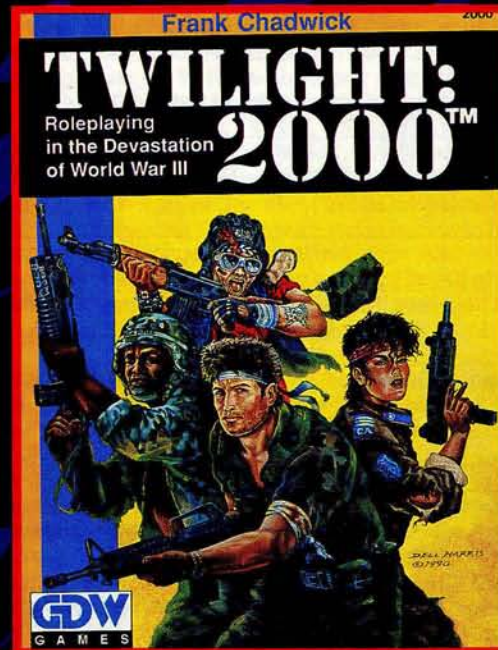
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