



# Knowledge **ARCANA**



**CONVENTIONAL WISDOM:**  
GEN CON, ESSEN, AND UNCON

**DECK BUILDING:**  
DIY DECKS ON THE CHEAP

**CREATURE FEATURE:**  
THE HOARDEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS

## Editor's Forward

Welcome to Knowledge Arcana, the new community Newsletter for the Wizards Online Community. The goal of Knowledge Arcana is to support, inform, explore and entertain the Wizards Online Community. It is for the community, and by the community. So that means we want to hear from you. Both what you want to see and what you have to offer.

It has been a long road getting to this point. Starting up a complete newsletter from scratch is no easy task and the number of people that deserve thanks for helping get this publication started are more numerous than fangirls at a joint Viggo Mortensen/Orlando Bloom LotR collector's set signing.

One of the first things you will probably notice about the newsletter is the split column formatting. We have separated the two primary areas of the community, Role-Playing Games (RPGs) and Trading Card Games (TCGs) into two sections, each with their own content and background graphics. This should allow you to easily concentrate on your preferred section while not missing out on other articles you may enjoy.

If you have any comments or questions regarding the newsletter you can post your comments on the Community Newsletter Forum on Wizards Online ([www.wizards.com/boards](http://www.wizards.com/boards)) or you can visit Knowledge Arcana's web site at [www.wizards.com/knowledgearcana](http://www.wizards.com/knowledgearcana). If you have any articles or other works you would like to offer for publication in Knowledge Arcana, you can find information on how to do this on the web site, as well.

But enough introduction. I am sure you are all wondering what's in our first issue. One thing we wanted to talk about was the gaming paradises known as gaming conventions. We have reports from GenCon, the Essen Game Fair, and our own community online convention, UnCon. We'll take a look at the world of Dragon Lance, and putting together frugal Magic decks. And we have gaming articles and reports from various areas of the community, gamer horoscopes, and even a section of games to play.

So pull up a chair and let's get started.

*Wizo\_Snark*  
Editor-in-chief

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## Thrifty Magic in T2

### The Future Frugality of Magic

by Weapon X

Everyone likes cheap stuff. I do, and I'm sure most of you readers do. It is just so much better to spend less money for things. This segment is going to discuss different strategies MTG players, and more specifically, T2 players (sorry T1 and Extended) can keep costs down on their decks. This is just a helpful tutorial, you don't have to follow everything by the letter; in fact, I encourage everyone to try out their own ways to stay thrifty with Magic.

#### Buy Singles

This might seem obvious to some of you, but many players still invest in Booster boxes. I am not saying that this is bad, Booster boxes give you a wider card range, that is for sure, but buying singles gets you the cards you want for specific decks without the chaff. Of course, as this is Thrifty Magic, I don't suggest just buying a playset of Wrath of Gods right now. This is just a common rule that should be followed when building any deck. Now that I shot that horse to death, that leads me to my next point.

#### Limit Your Card Pool and Make a Deck

This is probably the best thing you can do to reduce the price of any deck. One way to go about this is to, step by step:



When one thinks of the world of Krynn and

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the Dragonlance setting, one thinks of the works of Dragonlance authors Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman and their Dragonlance Chronicles and Legends series. The mind instantly conjures visions of the heroic Knights of Solamnia, the dark Knights of Neraka, dragonarmies, Wizards of High Sorcery, irrepressible kender, tinker gnomes, and a befuddled old mage who is looking for his hat. I think his name was Foozball, or perhaps it was Fizban.

Yet it wouldn't be Krynn without dragons battling in the sky, and the trademark symbol of hope for all the good peoples of Ansalon - the mighty dragonlance.

## Dragons of a Legend REBORN

by Trampas Whiteman "Dragonhelm"

Now fans of the Dragonlance saga can live out their own adventures in the world of Krynn with the Dragonlance Campaign Setting, written by Margaret Weis, Don Perrin, Jamie Chambers, and Christopher Coyle of Sovereign Press. The Dragonlance Campaign Setting, or DLCS for short, is the first product in the new Dragonlance gaming line. Wizards of the Coast produced the initial sourcebook, while subsequent sourcebooks will be produced by Sovereign Press.

Dragonlance fans have certainly waited a long while for such a sourcebook. In January 2001, Wizards of the Coast announced that they would no longer produce a Dragonlance gaming line. One group of fans, the Whitestone Council, came together to help



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keep Dragonlance gaming alive. In their efforts, they created the official fan site, the Dragonlance Nexus ([www.dl3e.com](http://www.dl3e.com)), a site "by the fans, for the fans".

With the release of the DLCS and the conclusion of the War of Souls series, Dragonlance is riper than ever for adventure. For the first time in Krynn's history, all four types of magic co-exist. The power of clerical faith will come into conflict with the mystic Power of the Heart. The Wizards of High Sorcery are reforming, yet will the sorcerers of the Age of Mortals find themselves branded as renegades? Three of the dragon overlords have fallen, yet other overlords remain, each vying for power. The minotaurs of the Blood Sea are ruled by a new emperor, and they control the ancient elven nation of Silvanesti.

Yet the rebirth of Dragonlance gaming doesn't end with the DLCS. Sovereign Press released the Age of Mortals campaign companion right after the DLCS, setting the stage for the current era of play following the War of Souls.



*The Dragonlance Campaign Setting*



1. Check the full spoiler of a given set.
  2. Either Print it out, or write it out
  3. Cross out all the rares
  4. Look for cards that you think are powerful or you like, and look for interactions.
- By doing this, you eliminate all chance of getting rares in your deck, and that decreases the price greatly. However, many of you are thinking, "That won't be a good deck". It may not be, yet.

Now Look at the Rares

OK, now is the time to check out the high dollar merchandise. Look at your newly designed deck of commons and uncommons. Now check its weaknesses. Is it:

- \* Weak in creature removal?
- \* Lack of speed?
- \* Has no hand/enchantment/artifact hate?
- \* Weak against mass destruction, or can't use mass destruction itself?
- \* Lack light creatures?

Here is the key that makes this entire deck work: All of these conditions can be met with common or uncommons. Maybe not to the degree that you are thinking, but it can be accomplished, and well. Here are some easy to acquire answers to some of these conundrums, in the same order as listed above:

For black: Smother (Onslaught), Dark Banishing (8th), Terror (Mirrodin). Red uses direct damage, like Shock and Volcanic Hammer to finish creatures off, and Blue uses counters especially Remove Soul, that targets creatures specifically and also uses bounce cards to return creatures to their owners hands, like Unsummon (8th). All of these provide very efficient removal for low mana cost and low monetary price.



For Green: Rampant Growth (8th), Red: Seething Song (Mirrodin) These are the most common forms of mana acceleration, however, there have been many forms of cards that do essentially the same thing as Rampant Growth. This can be accomplished easily

For black: No Artifact or Enchantments, but discard in Wrench Mind and Necrogen Spellbomb (Mirrodin) and Ravenous Rats (8th). Green Artifact and Enchantment hate comes in the form of Naturalize, and Reds comes in Shatter. White has little artifact destruction, but in Mirrodin it gains Altar of Light and the most common enchantment hate is Wipe Clean. Blue, although it lacks straight discard or artifact and enchantment hate, it does have counters that target specific cards, such as Annul (Mirrodin, artifacts and enchantments) and Flash Counter (8th, instants). All of these cards happen to be common.

One way to counter act mass destruction is to use cards that bring creatures back from the dead. Black uses this in Zombify (8th) and Raise Dead (8th). Some colors gain card advantage from destruction of creatures. Green has Fecundity (8th). Of course there is the counteraction of you using mass removal first, where cards like Infest (Onslaught) are king. Red also has answers in Pyroclasm (8th) and Tremor (8th).

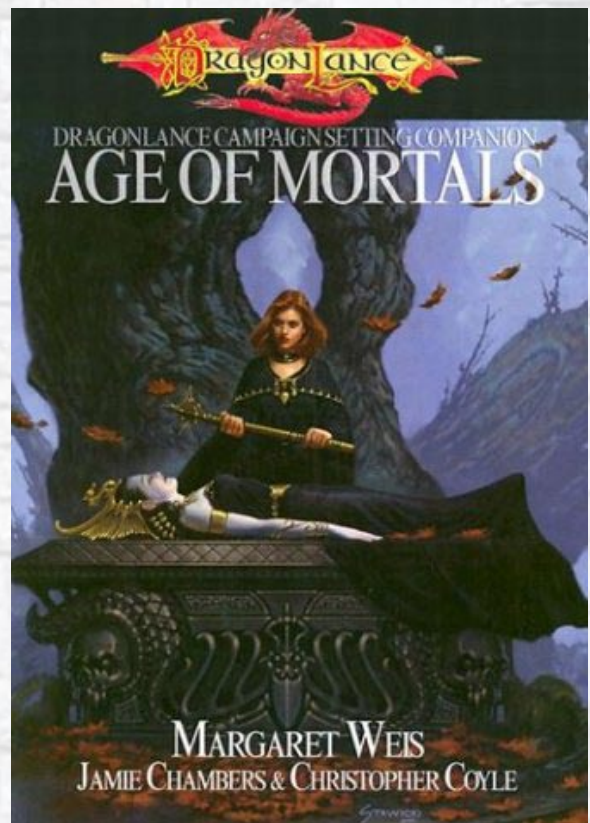
This is probably the most important. Creatures are usually the center of most decks, and finding man efficient creatures is a daunting task in some cases. Look for the strengths of certain colors, and find creatures to exploit those strengths. With red (direct damage) one choice is Spikeshot Goblin (Mirrodin). Green uses



So how did Dragonlance fans react to the new Dragonlance d20 gaming products?

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As with any game product (especially one of the magnitude of Dragonlance), reactions were mixed. Certainly, there was some disappointment at the lack of an index as well as a map of Ansalon in both products. There were some criticisms on the art and geography chapter in the DLCS as well.



*The Age of Mortals Campaign Companion*

Yet at the same time, there has been much excitement at the return of Dragonlance gaming, and many questions have arisen as well. For example, do wizards have to specialize to take the Wizard of High Sorcery prestige class? Age of Mortals answers this by saying that wizards can be "generalist wizards" who don't specialize, but also don't receive the benefits of enhanced specialization from the Wizard of High Sorcery prestige class.



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The mystic, noble, and mariner base classes have had some discussion as well, especially in regards to how Dragonlance is viewed. Mystics are to clerics what sorcerers are to wizards. One thing we discovered is that their access to a single domain helps to shape the character.

Several of the new prestige classes have had discussion, but the one that seems to stand out of late is the War Mage from Age of Mortals. Several fans have said that they prefer the Dragonlance version to the Forgotten Realms version in Magic of Faerun.

Perhaps the most interesting point of discussion has been the Knights of Solamnia. The Sword and Rose Knight prestige classes require the ability to cast 1st-level divine spells, requiring Sword and Rose Knights to have at least one level of cleric or mystic. Add to that the divine spellcasting ability of the Rose Knights, and many discussions ensued.

Have Knights of Solamnia become a clerical organization now, rather than a group of militant paladins? Is there a reason to continue as a Sword Knight now that Rose Knights have divine spellcasting abilities? Certainly, how we view the Knights of Solamnia has been challenged, and we have a greater understanding of the organization as we delve into it.

So yes, there are some criticisms, but fans are glad that Dragonlance gaming is back. A new era is dawning, and now fans can play Knights of Solamnia, Wizards of High Sorcery, Dragon Riders, and all the other character options that makes Dragonlance one of the best gaming worlds ever.

Long Live the Lance!

Trampas Whiteman "Dragonhelm"  
Whitestone Council, Dragonlance.com



their mana acceleration (Vine Trellis (8th)) to play massive beaters, like the Living Hive or a faster efficient beater, Troll Ascetic (both from Mirrodin). White can be advantageous with their wheenies (cards like Suntail Hawk (8th)) or with their damage prevention (cards like Battlefield Medic (Onslaught)). Blue of course, is the color of bounce, counter and card advantage, and three examples of these are Echo Tracer (Legions), Voidmage Prodigy (Legions) and Merchant of Secrets (8th).

All of the above cards are either common or uncommon, and provide good solutions for your decks strengths and weaknesses. These are, of course, not all. You can check the full spoilers of T2 legal sets (Odyssey Block, Onslaught Block and Mirrodin) to find more.

**Rares: What do you Need?**

I am by no means saying not to buy rares. If you can afford them and need them, get them. But that is the key word, "need". Examine cards that are needed. If it is the combo piece or you just can not find any replacement at all. Then go for it. But most cards have replacements if you just look hard enough. Most tournament decks will, unfortunately, require investment in rares. However, by finding replacements you will ultimately cut the cost and still make a good deck. But if you need that Wrath of God or Birds of paradise, then by all means, go for it.

### Examples of Decks

Here are three decklists of T2 decks that fare well with no or few rares. I am not including matchups or sideboards, just the basic deck.

### U/G Madness

Until Mirrodin became  
tournament legal, U/G Madness



was the king of cheap decks. With no rares at all, this deck is still a dominant archetype.

#### Creatures 20

4 Wild Mongrel  
4 Basking Rootwalla  
3 Arrogant Wurm  
3 Aquamoeba  
3 Cephilid Looter  
3 Wonder

#### Spells 18

4 Deep Analysis  
4 Circular Logic  
4 Mana Leak  
3 Careful Study  
3 Roar of the Wurm  
1 Ray of Revelation

#### Land 21

10x Forest  
11x Island

#### R/G Beats

This deck has been around forever, and the post-Mirrodin build is very rare-lite. It uses many common and uncommon creatures and pumps them up with many common creature pumps like Giant Growth.

#### Creatures 20

4 Troll Ascetic (*rare, you can substitute it with any uncommon creature with 3 mana casting cost*)  
4 Treetop Scout  
4 Spikeshot Goblin  
4 Tel-Jilad Chosen  
4 Hunted Wumpus

#### Spells 20

4 Giant Growth  
4 Bonesplitter  
4 Mass Hysteria  
4 Volcanic Hammer  
4 Predators Strike

#### Land 20

2 Forgotten Cave (*I actually use Wooded foothills, if you can get them*)  
2 Tranquil Thicket

8 Forest  
8 Mountain



## ISRP Insider Report

Join us for some in character chat with no DMs and an evolving setting. The ISRP Insider Report lets you quickly catch up with the most recent storylines...

#### Doings around the Multiverse:

For your consideration, here are highlights of various reports from around the Multiverse.

- Many fights have broken out in the Clearing of late; apparently it's getting its use. "I believe it has something to do with the weather breaking." Elodie said. "Gets the testosterone flowing and has men and women alike thinking of babies."
- Siani and Ka'yn have taken to dressing in fine silks and jewelry. Perhaps the newfound riches are what inspired Siani to propose to Ka'yn! The Tavern has been abuzz with their romance since the fateful evening when Ka'yn accepted.
- Theeb is concerned that he appears to be food for Thanriyon! Theeb was even drenched in gravy!
- Slavers have been a problem of late, with Jaxx and Gash'awn being but two of the names I've heard hinted at. Apparently one of them even went so far as to imply they torture their slaves!
- Somewhat disturbingly, the murder of Ms. Mulberry is not the only murder to be investigated. One of the magic vendors by the name of Samar Dirian was found bleeding to death behind his stall, viciously attacked



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with a rather distinctive dagger. He died before help could arrive and was unable to be revived due to him vanishing from the face

of the plane. All evidence points to a drow by the name of Rowen Ruanthel as the murderer, but upon interrogation he seems to be innocent of the charge. He has named another drow by the name of Re'shak as the true killer. People are wondering if there is a hidden connection to Ms. Mulberry's murder.

- Karalyn reported seeing a blue goblin, claiming it was one of the strangest things she had ever seen. Upon chatting with him she discovered his plans of conquest. Something called "psionics" was mentioned.
- The Apathy members are becoming active again, recruiting and meeting on Juxta quite often of late. Planning and plotting future schemes, no doubt.
- Theeb reported an odd looking woman, with the numbers 1337 tattooed on her arm, spitting on his shoe and trying to spike the fountain water with something out of her flask.
- A large variety of animals, or perhaps humanoids magically shapechanged into animals, have frequented the tavern lately. So far they are tolerated as long as they don't make a mess or cause trouble. It seems like Lady Pounamu is likely to wage a small war against them. A broom is quite the thing to be feared within her hands, especially for those furry, four-legged visitors to the tavern.
- Another note of interest is the influx of undead lately. It seems to have sparked a good bit of debate among the people.
- Miss Siani has left the tavern for a time without much warning, leaving it in Lady Ka'yn's charge. Nashira said that Ka'yn seemed very heartbroken over the news, and that Miss Siani spoke of "running away from things".



## Tribal

This deck uses the tribal mechanic from Onslaught to give creatures bonuses for being the same creature type. There are many, and they are cheap and easy to make, like Zombies, Clerics, Elves and Goblins, the most expensive being goblins. This list will go over one of the cheapest and best, Elves.

Elves, courtesy of Flaming Sword

### Creatures 29

- 4 Birchlore Rangers
- 4 Wirewood Symbiote
- 4 Elvish Pioneer
- 4 Wirewood Hivemaster
- 4 Wirewood Herald
- 4 Wellwisher
- 4 Timberwatch Elf
- 1 Caller of the Claw (rare, almost always needed)

### Spells 8

- 4 Wirewood Pride
- 4 Giant Growth (or Might of Oaks, for a rare replacement)

### Lands 21

- 3 Wirewood lodge
- 18 Forest

## Get Going!!

You've seen all the tips and decks I have to offer for now, so get to making your frugal decks! Hope you enjoyed this little guide, so until another time; remember, "cheap" does not equal harmless.





# Trollbill's Adventures at Gen Con 2003

by Bill W. Baldwin

Last year I reported on GenCon from a newbie's perspective, but with all the different experiences I had this year, I almost feel like a newbie all over again. But I will let the reader decide how wide-eyed I still am with wonder, as I recount this year's holy pilgrimage to the Mecca of gaming that is GenCon.

## Cast of Characters

This year's cast was same as the last. My GenCon 'adventuring party' consisted of myself, my wife Amy and our friends Hal & Yvette. All of us are Floridians and longtime gamers with at least 20 years' gaming experience each. It's hard to believe with all our years in gaming, we hadn't been to a single GenCon until last year. After having finally experienced GenCon, I find it hard to believe myself.

## WEDNESDAY 7/23/2003

This year, greatly lowered airline ticket prices allowed us to avoid the travel adventures...and misadventures...we experienced last year, and will thus spare you gentle readers from my retelling of them.

**Arrival:** First and foremost, the biggest change to this year's GenCon was the location, and the difference was obvious.

In Milwaukee, our hotel room was a 20-minute drive through construction detours to the convention center. In Indianapolis, our hotel room, while slightly more expensive, was a lot nicer and only 3 short blocks' walk from the convention center.

In Milwaukee, the convention center seemed crammed.

In Indianapolis, there was plenty of room to accommodate the huge crowds, though this required a bit more walking (not that that's really a bad thing for us gamers).

In Milwaukee, the mall closed at 6:00pm on a weekday even though a large convention was taking place right across the street and most people in town didn't seem to know the difference between a gamer's convention and a Free Mason's convention, nor care. In Indianapolis, the locals were friendly and curious, and the bars even had signs offering open gaming tables into the wee hours of the morning. The only complaint I can make is that some of the restaurants didn't listen to Peter Adkison (GenCon's Owner) when he told them a swarm of ravenous gamers were descending on them and they actually started to run out of food. Next year they will know better.

So, after a pleasant unpacking at the hotel, we arrived at the new GenCon.

**Adventures of the True Dungeon, Part 1:** If you have a greatest time at GenCon, you must also have a worst. Strangely, both of these this year involved the same event. Like last year, we pre-registered for everything online and the Will Call line was a breeze. The only thing we couldn't pre-register for was a late entry, the True Dungeon. This event was new to GenCon and looked like a lot of fun, so we decided to get some generic tickets to sign up for it. The generic ticket line opened at 5:00pm and True Dungeon registration started at 6:00pm. Perfect! We stand in line at 5:00pm for the tickets and 6:00pm to register. Then again... maybe not. We start about 50th in line, 40 minutes later, we are only about 35th.

So...new plan. I go stand in line at the True Dungeon to save a place, while the others stay in the ticket line. It soon proved we weren't the only ones with this idea, so I stood in line with about a dozen others waiting for friends to bring the generic tickets...and we stood...and then we grabbed some chairs and we sat. Peter Adkison showed up with a group of friends as one of 3 test groups to try out the True Dungeon. They were one member short and asked everyone still in line for volunteers. I decided not to speak up because I didn't want to miss the chance to get tickets for my companions. The next group shows up, and guess what, they too are a man short and looking for a volunteer. I try to call my companions on my cell, but no luck, so again I turn them down. Needless to say, my companions all told me I

was stupid for not taking the offer, but I suppose that's why I always get stuck playing the Paladin whenever we have to divvy up pre-generated characters for an adventure.

They, of course, tell me this FOUR HOURS LATER when they finally show up with generic tickets! It seems Peter was having a bit of a problem with his new registration software. In fact, it got so bad, I watched as the hotel manager in whose ballroom the True Dungeon had been set up, have to go in and pull Peter out of the True Dungeon to attend to it.

Well, so much for visiting any restaurants we planned on that night.

## THURSDAY 7/24/2003

**Old Friends:** One of the great things about GenCon is that it brings gamers together from all over the country. This makes for a great opportunity to meet up with old gaming friends you might not have seen in a while. Last year we met up with Brannon, an old friend from my wife's childhood who now works freelance for Microsoft. (He was one of the storywriters involved in the much-ballyhooed X-Box game, Halo.) And we planned on doing so again this year. Unfortunately, due to business, Brannon had to cancel his scheduled trip and wasn't going to make it to GenCon this year. So it was a great surprise when my wife felt a tap upon her shoulder just outside the convention center, and turned around to see Brannon. Her response was to unabashedly pounce and wrap herself around him tighter than an Alien around John Hurt's face. After she finally disengaged, we chatted for a bit and decided we would meet up later, at his hotel room.

**The D&D Open:** This year we registered for the first slot in the D&D Open, which was at 8:00 am. So we had no time to check out the convention this year before we were plunged strait into an event. For those not familiar with this event, the D&D Open is a competitive adventure sponsored by the RPGA. Players separate into 8-person parties to take on the same adventures, with the best performing teams moving on to a second and third round. A very long time ago, back when they still had a GenCon South in Jacksonville, FL, my wife and I won this event. We are trying to repeat that performance.

This year's adventure, The Sword of Cuthbert, was extremely unoriginal, so much so I am sure it was deliberately done so. The adventure was so similar to a recent set of movies based on a well-known trilogy by J.R.R. Tolkien that, in some cases, only the names had been changed to protect the innocent (or perhaps, the copyrighted). We were given four other players to round out our group to the required eight, and I was quite satisfied with the playing abilities of our new companions. We divvied up the characters, and sure enough...as usual...I got the Paladin. This year, it turned out the Paladin was as pivotal to the story as Frodo is to The Lord of the Rings, as he is the holder of the titular sword, which has a mysterious background, was far too powerful for an 8th-level Paladin to be lugging around, could corrupt me if used too much, could bend the wills of those around it at the worst moments, and drew the attention of Nazgu...err, Undead Evil High Priest...when used.

The adventure started out better than last year, with us uncovering several 'hidden' options in the quest that we hadn't looked for last year. We did well and almost made it all the way to the end of the adventure by the time the sands ran out on our 4-hour time limit. I attribute this to one major mistake (we spent a lot of time creating a complicated diversion to make a hidden escape, when it turned out no one was actually watching), some bad dice rolling (not once, but twice, we failed to avoid an encounter because of a '1' being rolled on a skill check) and the rather questionable choice of giving us a 5-page back story at the beginning of the adventure. In regards this latter issue, we were presented with the choice of spending about 20 minutes reading the entire thing to everyone, or not reading it and missing out on some vital clues. We chose to read it, but I still don't know what the right choice was.

In the end, though we performed better than last year, competition was even greater (they had a LOT of teams competing this year) and we again failed to make the second round. We won once before, surely we could at least make it to the second round. Well, maybe next year.

**The Great GenCon Timewarp Puzzle:** Upon getting out of the Open, we got a chance to look around at things. New to GenCon last year was the Great GenCon Timewarp Puzzle. This game featured 36 puzzles (one for each year of GenCon) scattered about the convention in such a way as to make you visit every area of the convention to find them all.

The more puzzles you solve, the better the prize you win. We had participated in this last year and decided we would do so again. Only this year we had an ingenious plan. Rather than sit around at each puzzle until we solved it, thus wasting precious convention time, we would take digital photographs of the puzzles and solve them in our hotel room, at our leisure. Unfortunately, it turns out the in jack in the hotel room's TVs had been converted to except only input from the Nintendoes you could rent from the hotel, so we couldn't display the photos. Arrrrghhh...2 days of picture taking down the drain. This setback forced us to give up on the Great GenCon Timewarp Puzzle.

**The Exhibit Hall, part 1:** As it was last year, one of the most

impressive and awe-inspiring parts of GenCon was the exhibit hall. And, if possible, this year's was even more impressive. Here again were the rows upon rows of venders with new products trying anything to get you to look at them, including big discounts, contests, free give-a-ways, nifty displays, and chainmail bikini clad booth babes. This year they even had a Magic: The Gathering Museum in celebration of MtG's 10th Anniversary.

I collected bags of promotional materials and giveaway products, including some promos of the cool new D&D Miniatures. I also spent quite a bit of time meeting many online acquaintances since my wife and I volunteered to help out at the WotC online booth.

One noticeably missing item from the Exhibit Hall this year was the WotC Castle, a huge decorative set of castle-like walls and minarets that surrounded the large WotC exhibit area. I asked about this and was told it was sold to Peter Adkison as part of the GenCon package deal. Lucky, Peter! I'm sure he now has a nice huge Castle set up in his back yard for 'real life' adventures.

**How to Play the Game (or maybe not):** After

some time at the Exhibit Hall, we all attended a seminar by Tracy Hickman entitled "How to Play the Game." Tracy was entertaining, as always, and the seminar espoused his rather non-standard, proactive style of gaming. In a nutshell, Tracy believes that if the game starts to slow down, it is the player's job to liven it back up again. In the hands of a mature

and conscientious player, used in a campaign with a flexible DM, it can create some very memorable gaming sessions. But in the hands on a novice or selfish player, or with a rigid DM, it can cause a campaign to crash and burn. So I can't recommend his strategy to everybody.

**Adventures of the True Dungeon, Part 2:** After the seminar we headed straight to our much-anticipated

rendezvous with the True Dungeon. And as miserable as our experience was getting the tickets for this event, all I can say is, if I had to do it all over again, I would have still waited the 4 hours.

The True Dungeon is a life-sized, walk-thru dungeon that was set up in one of the hotel ballrooms, and it has to be one of the best events I have ever participated in. You are given a brief intro to the dungeon while you fill out waivers and divvy out the characters to your party. Parties are 6 people strong, so they added two college-age guys to our group to fill it out. Each player then gets 15 minutes to practice his or her class skills. While the standard D&D 3.0 rules apply to much of the game, some personal real-life skill is required for each of the 6 classes.

The Fighter, whom we chose to be one of the college guys due to the undoubted better hand-eye-coordination of youth, got to practice his combat skills. Combat is done on a sort of raised shuffleboard where combatants slide dice-like pucks onto a segmented torso with numbers.

The Ranger, my wife, also got to practice her combat skills, but unlike the Fighter who uses one big puck to



*The Exhibit Hall, one of Gen Con's big attractions*

simulate his Power Attack, the Ranger got two little ones that must be used simultaneously, to represent Two-Weapon Fighting. My wife's real-life job actually requires her to slide a lot of puck-sized items across a table and into bins, so she turned out to be quite adept at this.

The Rogue, our other college-age add-in, had to disarm traps by running a metal rod through a twisting groove without touching the sides. Failure to do so set off a buzzer, gave the Rogue a mild electric shock, and, of course, activated the trap.

The Cleric, Hal, had to memorize a dozen or so physical items related to virtues. Whenever he casts spells or Turns Undead the DM asks for a virtue and the closer he gets to the correct item, the better the spell works.

The Wizard, Yvette, worked similarly to the Cleric, except that she had to memorize a planar diagram and pick the right location for a requested plane.

And finally, the Bard, me, had to memorize 24 glyphs and their meaning. These glyphs were scattered about the dungeon and provided vital clues to getting through each room.

After the 15-minute practice session, we were ushered into the first, dimly lit, beautifully designed room. The idea is that the dungeon has 8 rooms. Each room has puzzles and sometimes monsters to get past. You have 15-minutes to get through each room, ticked off by a cool, tempo-increasing, looped soundtrack. Failure to get through a room in time results in the whole party being teleported to the next room and taking damage. Make no mistake about it, as cool as the True Dungeon is, it is also just as tough. If you die, you are removed from the dungeon (no refund). If

you have to leave for any reason (like go to the bathroom) you are not allowed back in. And the puzzles are ingenious and very tough. Out of the many groups that started into the True Dungeon every 15 minutes, only SIX made it all the way through. I am grateful and happy that mine was one of them. We only lost the Rogue, and that was in the last room.

I spoke to many people about the True Dungeon afterwards, and none of them lacked for praise. Peter Adkison, himself, proclaimed it "The belle of the ball." If you consider yourself a serious D&D player, this is one event you should not miss.

**Afterwards:** Happy, but mentally exhausted from our 2-1/2 hour ordeal in the True Dungeon, we decided to blow off the Forgotten Realms Reception we had signed up for in order to bask in our victory and rest. I took my wife on a very pleasant horse-drawn carriage ride through downtown Indianapolis.

## FRIDAY 7/25/2003

**Tracy Hickman's Killer Breakfast:** Bright and early again we arrived for our second full day of GenCon. We had enjoyed the Killer Breakfast so much last year, we decided to once again participate in this long running GenCon event. I'll describe it for those not familiar with the event. Some 300 'players' are packed into a room where they are shuffled, eight at a time, up to the stage to participate in Tracy's tongue-in-cheek, hyper-deadly adventure. You are timed when your character is born (you get on stage) to when it dies (you are unceremoniously kicked off the stage),

### Short KNIGHTS



by Carlos Amaral

and seconds matter. You can survive by entertaining Tracy (or his wife) or by bribing him with food (or his wife). Failure to do either results in a gruesome, painful death. This year's adventure was entitled "X-side Story" which was a superhero based musical (so, yes, some people had to sing...badly). In the end, the Killer Breakfast is a 3-hour long, hilarious experience (that does not actually include any breakfast) that is worth a look to any gamer wanting a good laugh.

**The Exhibit Hall, part 2:** After the Killer Breakfast we decided to separate for some independent exploring of GenCon. I hit the exhibit hall again (you can never get too much of the exhibit hall) and worked at the Online Booth some more. The day before it was crowded, today it was packed and I knew that the next day, once the weekend crowd showed up, I would be lucky to exhale.

**The GenCon play, part 1:** This year I volunteered to help out with the annual GenCon play. I had missed it last year, so I didn't know much about it, but it sounded like fun. The GenCon play, as it turns out, is an amateur production where the actors read their scripts on stage. The plays are always tongue-in-cheek spoofs of gamer/fantasy/sci-fi geekdom. This year, the play was entitled "d20 Celebrity Deathmatch" and did an MTV style take on various d20 gaming icons, such as Elminster, from the Forgotten Realms, Luke Skywalker, from Star Wars, and Ronan Lynch, from Deadlands. This was the first and only rehearsal for the play.

**The WizO Reception:** This year, my companions and I were all invited to the WizO Reception Party. Normally, this is restricted to just the WizOs, but only a few made it this year, so Mel opened it up to some personal invitations. It was held at the Rathskeller, a Bavarian restaurant within walking distance from the hotel. The party was a blast, we all stayed up late playing party games and chatting with many people we recognized from the online community. WotC\_Mel is a gracious hostess.

## SATURDAY 7/26/2003

**Legacy of the Green Regent:** Bright and a bit too early for how late we had stayed up, we rushed to the convention center. We'd decided to try out an RPGA event other than the D&D Open. So we had signed up for a new RPGA campaign that was premiering at GenCon. Known

as Legacy of the Green Regent, this event is a limited run Forgotten Realms campaign set to end after 2 years. While LotGR had 3 events running at GenCon, we only signed up for the convention-exclusive Under Highlords Hall. Unlike the Open, LotGR lets you create your own characters or pick from a list of pre-generated ones. While the adventure was a basic dungeon crawl for starting characters, it turned out to be quite fun and challenging. We were all excited about LotGR and decided to play the home-play campaign with our regular group when we got back home.

**Diversity:** After LotGR, we all decided to split up and do our own things for a while. This is one of the great things about GenCon, since there are always so many different things to do under one roof, you don't always have to do the same things together. My wife and Yvette participated in a speed-painting contest (for painting miniatures), I hit the exhibit hall again, and Hal took in a seminar.

**The Costume Contest:** Having disappointed my wife last year by not getting to the costume contest in time to get in last year, I was obliged to make sure I did not disappoint her this year. Fortunately, the Indianapolis Convention center has a lot more room than Milwaukee did, so they easily accommodated everyone who wanted to participate and watch. In addition to displaying their costumes, contestants are allowed to put on a short, in character, 'performance.' Both the costumes and the performances ran the gamut of possibilities. Some were serious, some were funny, some were sexy, and many showed a good deal of imagination. The winner was actually a 10-foot tall (using stilts that almost killed him on the slippery stage) evil tree fairy. One other item of note was the hilarious pre and mid-contest performances by The Great Luke Ski. Luke can best be thought of as the Weird Al Yankovic of Gamer/Sci-Fi Geekdom, and he has several CDs out (which, of course, he was selling).

**The GenCon Play, part 2:** I showed up at the stage area in time to help set up for the GenCon play, but it seemed John Rhys-Davies and Sean Astin were a bit long-winded in their onstage meet-and-greets, so we had to wait. While I suppose I can bear being upstaged by Gimli and Samwise from The Lord of the Rings, it did put a serious dent in the time available to setup and perform the play, and some of it had to be cut short. All in all though, the play turned out to be hilarious. The script contained more gamer jokes than I could have imagined and the cast put

on a remarkable performance for only having had a single rehearsal. I can see why this has been a much-welcomed annual event at GenCon and represented a much-needed break from constant gaming.

**The Costume Ball:** I had managed to snag 2 free passes to a new event at GenCon, sponsored by Peter Adkison; a full blown costume ball. Perhaps it is the curse of being old gamers, but by Saturday evening, the hectic pace and excitement of GenCon had forced my GenCon adventuring party to make Constitution checks to avoid Fatigue. As per our group's usual luck, I was the only one that succeeded on my roll. So I attended the Ball solo. Many of the people from the costume contest earlier that day were there, as well as some less ambitious efforts. There was food, more performances by The Great Luke Ski, a costume contest for people who didn't participate in the official one earlier that day, and the usual music and dancing. I spent some time schmoozing with a variety of people I had met throughout this year's con but eventually failed my CON check also.

### **SUNDAY 7/27/2003**

We rolled out of bed casually on Sunday, as it was our Free Day. We had nothing scheduled and had to catch our flight early that afternoon, so we mostly hung out at the exhibit hall some more, shopping for some last day bargains and collecting all the free promotional items we could. We said our goodbyes to friends, both old and new, and pleasantly exhausted, we returned home. This year's GenCon was even better than last year's and we are wondering how next year might top it. We all had our favorite moments from GenCon, mine was the True Dungeon, Hal's was the GenCon Play, and Yvettes was Legacy of the Green Regent, but all were worth the trip. And next year, I fully intend to once again kneel upon my gamer's prayer rug, facing Indianapolis as the priests of gaming once again summon the faithful to make their pilgrimage to the holy land.



Every autumn, as the gaming industry winds down from a busy GenCon, Wizard's chat and forum moderators ramp up for their own big event - UnCon. Styled as "the unconventional convention," this weekend of chat events, contests, and online games debuted in 1995 when TSR's chat rooms moved off of AOL and on to the Internet proper. The online convention was part PR move, to say "We're over here now!" and part thanks to patrons who stuck with the site during its transition. That was nine years ago and we have been doin' it ever since.

When it comes to UnCon, my job as online community manager means I vet the things that the WizO moderators propose to run that weekend. I rain on people's parade by overruling ideas that present brand conflicts (Let's have a panel debate where the topic is how "Everything After Alpha In Magic Blows") and legal liabilities, (Everyone post your phone number and lets play "Real Time Telephone"! ) and make general reality checks (I have a short 100 item list of qualifications potential players will need to meet to be in my game). So, like a virtual Cesar, I give thumbs up or down on what event lives or dies.

While I eat grapes and bonbons, it is WizO Hydragon, the current UnCon Coordinator, who must attempt to not just get promises, but follow-through from WizOs who can be big on ideas but short on free time. The first UnCon meeting is scheduled for January while the North American WizOs are thinking about dragging out the electric blankets and the Australian - New Zealand WizOs are hitting the beach. Certainly, no one

is thinking about what his or her schedule is going to be during the last days of summer. Craftily, this is how he gets everyone on the team to agree that the 2003 UnCon should extend beyond a single weekend to a whole week for boards events, which operate at a slower pace than chat events.

Fast forward eight months and suddenly we are in countdown. It is thirty days until UnCon, do you know where your event is? I scan my checklist:

- Follow up with Spine Design — Wizards in-house art department — to create website art and a logo for the UnCon site. Check.
- Go begging Magic, D&D, and Novels for prize support for the contests. Check.
- Play bad cop by systematically shaking down WizOs for them to represent their area well in the festivities. Check.
- Reaffirm all chat guests timeslot and make sure they have tried to get on chat at least once. No really, have you tried to log in yet Mr. Strazynski?

But hey, experimentation is high on my list of watchwords for our community and UnCon is no exception. How else would one propose to R.A. Salvatore that he be part of a chat that ends in his roleplaying the “Bard Salvatore” and being “murdered” so that a site wide, in-character, man-hunt can commence? WizOs are tasked to actively push the boundaries of what can be done on chat and forums just by using ingenuity. As a result, they’ve developed a scavenger hunt that has you search for virtual items across the internet, an in-character “masquerade” where your description is your costume for the evening, and a debate club style moot court where you may have to argue a point of view on gaming that you don’t necessarily support. TCG Boards lead WizO Atog recalls “The hardest part, for me, was Magic Jeopardy. It took me months to come up with the thousands of questions.”

WizOs Atog and Iyala set the pace for enthusiasm and commitment. The Magic boards patron’s vocal appreciation for UnCon events really makes them want to give a good show. As a result, they personally get a commitment for some amazing Magic artist support. Pete Venters and Kev Walker autographed oodles of cards and personal items like artist proofs and convention nametags and donated them to be used as prizes. Matt Cavotta and Ron Spears joined Venters to hang out with chat patrons and discuss how they personally became professional artists and what novice artists should do. Wizards’ Mark Rosewater and Brady Dommermuth put in after work hours to talk with fans and reveal upcoming set art. You can still find Brady’s chat transcript on Mirrodin on the UnCon page ([www.wizards.com/uncon](http://www.wizards.com/uncon)).

On the role-playing side, events are design-focused in an attempt to acknowledge all the energy that patrons put into building on the official material throughout the year. WizO Snark ran contests for character design, magic item and spell creation, while in the chat rooms, one room statted out a monster while another room took the resulting creature on in-game. WizO Ettin — a husband and wife team who split their moderation duties under one name — ran their annual short adventure in chat. Ettin says a surprising side effect is seeing their regular site chatters who “have such different personalities work together so well [in-game] even if in the chatroom they always seem to clash. They picked up the personalities of their characters and it was difficult to remember that they had not played together before.”

“...ONE PUZZLER VENTURED THAT IT WAS A VENEREAL DISEASE. UMM, NO, COUNTERFEIT MONEY WAS THE ANSWER WE WERE LOOKING FOR”

Like a “F2F” convention (that is face to face” for all you chat noobs), we try to make sure the weekend offers a number of seminars. But our UnCon seminars cater to online issues. Games WizOs Bastion and Shadow co-host a workshop promoting online RPG gaming, particularly on Wizards chat site. Bastion recalls he, “cleared up a few misconceptions. No, Tim isn’t being

rude . . . he's a dicebot!" There's nothing sadder than someone trying over and over to have a conversation with the dicebots.

Perhaps the most experimental events take place in the in-character rooms. Being a participant in ISRP requires an active imagination to begin with anyway, so what's a little more? Over the weekend, characters lined up to "run the gauntlet" of physical challenges with the aid of dice-bots or pitted their wits against our bard's riddling contest. I particularly liked the method of the patron who steadfastly answered "fire" to any riddle they couldn't figure out. After all, fire has to be the answer to at least one riddle in a contest worth its salt, right? Or maybe not, as one puzzler took a look at this classic riddle:

Whoever makes it, tells it not.  
Whoever takes it, knows it not.  
And whoever knows it wants it not.

and ventured that it was a venereal disease. Umm, no, counterfeit money was the answer we were looking for, but thanks for playing!

So, in the aftermath of UnCon 2003, I counted WizOs to see if we lost anyone and riffle through various public email addresses to see if any patrons got their virtual feelings trampled in the chaos. It does happen. I discover that a few WizOs have pranked each other by changing a colleague's forum avatar on the sly. Among others, Atog is now "The Flowery Guy" and Karalyn is "The Streaker" complete with a nude girl prancing in the flowers. But, to my relief, the 2003 events have gone over well; one patron writes "UnCon was a great idea for all of us frequent Board posters! It really let people who usually stick to a single board (like myself) get around and see what the other ones have to offer, and meet and greet new posters." That is music to my ears as a manager on a site that often asks users to tolerate strange bedfellows a la Pokémon and Magic. Or Pokémon and, and well, anything else we do. And the note that was complimentary, but gave me heartburn nonetheless, "Make it longer, instead of

1 week, make it 2 or 3 weeks." \*happy cough\* And though the WizOs are now done, now my drudgework begins--mailing out contest winner prizes. I turn my cubicle into a mini-shipping room and send my coworkers for their headphones to hide from the screech of the tape gun. An acre of foam peanuts, two dozen customs declaration forms, and one ghastly paper cut later and I call it quits, too. Sure, I would have to send contestants Kerrick and Baloo's prizes three more times before it gets to them, but aside from being sure that a customs agent in Sweden and a post office worker in North Carolina are eBaying Draconomicon and Magic posters, I am happy.

Looking ahead to this fall's UnCon, I am already brainstorming ways to incorporate patron participation into the creation and running of events, not just attending them. Aside from wanting patron's to take more ownership of how their online convention runs, the bigger concern is the question of scale. The 15-20 WizOs who actively work on UnCon got the job done when the community was just a chat site for those few who had 56.6 modems. But we've gotten bigger--lots bigger--and reaching you, the community, isn't always easy. Running events at times Europe is awake has become a real concern. So has judging the slew of entries in our various "Design-a-Thingy" contests. And of course, we always need fresh ideas for what events to hold in the first place.

Last year, Nugan from chat, Squee's Main Squeeze from the Magic boards, and the whole Terisian game forum helped run events to great success so this year I am looking to expand upon that success. I plan to ask each WizO to take on a patron apprentice of sorts; each WizO partnering with someone from their area of the community who could both offer fresh perspective and share in the division of labor. So, if you "have ISP will travel," I hope you will reply to our UnCon 2004 planning announcement this summer. Now if you'll excuse me, I need to stock up on paper cut bandages, WizO...err Cattle prods, and start practicing nerve soothing mantras in preparation for UnCon 2004.



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# Essen Gamefair: Kingdom of Games

by -Ras Pechuel

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Every October gamers from around the globe gather in Essen, Germany for the largest gaming event on the planet: The Essen Game Fair (Spiel 2003). This year about 600 exhibitors from all over the world were on hand to present their products and sell thousands of games. With more than 150,000 visitors, the Essen Game Fair defends its title as the Biggest Game Fair Ever!

I was lucky enough to arrive in Germany just in the nick of time to attend the game fair. Though I have attended this event several times before, I never get tired of this gaming industry extravaganza! At past Essen Game Fairs I have been busy running events or helping present games, but this time, with the exception of a few business meetings, I finally had enough free time to really soak up the atmosphere.

And plenty of atmosphere there was for any hardcore gamer. Though at Essen Game Fair the board game is king, there is still an entire hall dedicated to mostly RPG material. Essen is the place to go to try out new games that are sometimes not even available in the shops. It's also a great place to put a dent in your wallet. I saw many people leaving the exhibit hall loaded down with heavy bags, and my co-designer was one of them. We drove back to our hotel with a car overflowing with games and gaming supplies. He even suggested we empty it all out so we could buy more stuff the next day, which, being the hardcore gamers we are, we did. I still don't know how we managed to take it all with us after the game fair was over.

The fair only lasts four days, and there is so much to do there that I never got a chance to do everything I had planned. Of course I couldn't resist the hypnotic allure of the rows

upon rows of new dice. Chessex, Koplow and Crystal Caste all had booths, with the Crystal Caste Dwarven Stone line being particularly difficult to tear my gaze away from. I was fortunate enough to test a few new German board games, like Alhambra (published by Queen Games), winner of the "Spiel des Jahres" (Game of the Year) award 2003. I played too many games to detail in this space, but I will say that I didn't encounter any unenjoyable games during those four days. So I suggest taking a good look at the latest board games and doing a little "playtesting" of your own.

There's more to the game fair than just playing and buying games. If you search the exhibit hall, you can find interesting industry celebrities. I had the pleasure of meeting the people behind Midnight Syndicate ([www.midnightsyndicate.com](http://www.midnightsyndicate.com)). They produce CDs with great background music for setting the atmosphere for a party or gaming session. This year they were selling a very inspiring CD specifically for D&D (an officially licensed product).

I also met Brian Jelke, one of the creators of the popular gaming comic Knights of the Dinner Table. He's a pretty funny guy (Big surprise there, huh?) and always eager to talk to the fans.

I met Brian again when I went to the party of Pegasus (a publisher) with a few friends. Many publishers have parties at night, and some are open to the public. So even when the fairground closes its gates for the night, there is still something to do. Teen readers might find it an interesting fact that the legal drinking age in Germany is 16, so it really might be worth saving your money to attend next year. Anyway, our Pegasus party had a band playing medieval rock and my co-designer took a few pictures of us that turned out to look really weird (and that's why you don't get to see them here!).

The four days went by so fast that I was a little sad when the Essen Game Fair 2003 was over. However, I know that I will probably be back next year, and maybe I will meet some of you there.

## Living Web Enhancement

How the Wizards.COMmunity helped enhance my role-playing game experience.

by Steve Russell

When I first came to the Wizards.COMmunity, I joined the Forgotten Realms discussion list looking for an answer to a question about The City of Splendors boxed set. Answers came from everywhere. One even came from Steven Schend, the game designer of The City of Splendors. Shortly after that first experience with the Wizards.COMmunity I realized that I had been ignoring a powerful tool that could easily strengthen my role-playing games. Now, having taken a hard look, at the community I realize it will always have something to offer me as a Role-playing hobbyist. The Question is how is it able to be such a vital tool for me as well as for others? The answer for me was so simple I felt stupid for not seeing it.

Whether it be a chat room, a message board, or a discussion list the power of the Wizards.COMmunity is in the rapid communication of questions, answers and ideas that my entire role playing group could never have developed on our own. It is a treasury of free information and ideas that has helped me to expand not only my own role-playing experience, but that of the people I play with as well. The Wizards.COMmunity is constantly exposing me to a myriad of different points of views. There are many rules experts, excellent GMs and players who have superb imaginations I find new and fantastic game aids every day. The Wizards.COMmunity's power has helped me to think both outside and inside the box of my favorite hobby.



## Life in the Magic Online Community

by Programmerman

The misconception: we don't have one among us. Seems fair enough, to fit in, one has to sit in front of a computer long enough to play games of Magic. To be any good or regular, one has to sit in front of the computer a lot. How, then, do we have time to do anything else?

Well, that may be true for some of us, but this isn't about that kind of life. It's about the life inside the community.

(For those of you not familiar with some of these terms, Magic: the Gathering, or Magic for short, is a game originally created by Richard Garfield. Originally released in 1993, it quickly catalyzed an entirely new genre of game: the trading card game. More information on Magic: the Gathering can be found at its official website at [www.magicthegathering.com](http://www.magicthegathering.com). Magic Online is just that: the game transposed into an on-line based environment. To keep the game more focused, and to save the sanity of the programmers from old rules issue cards, Wizards made the decision to limit Magic Online only to cards printed since Invasion, the expansion released in the fall of 2000. That set represented a landmark in Magic itself, returning many old players to the game as well as graduating many players



of other trading card games, so it seemed a fair starting point for the on-line version. Nearly every aspect of the physical game has been reproduced on-line: from collecting and trading to the rules and tournament formats themselves. About the only thing the on-line environment can't replicate is the complete face-to-face interaction the physical game provides. This shortcoming is acceptable for all the game's benefits (such as the program handling all rules issues; the players can't make a rules-illegal play). For more information on Magic Online, visit its official website at [www.wizards.com/magiconline](http://www.wizards.com/magiconline).)

I'm relatively new to the community. I joined back in June, but have become accepted amongst my peers. I participated in our 1000 worse ways to waste time than posting in these boards thread, which finally wrapped up a couple weeks ago, when we somehow managed to get 1000 different things up there. I started showing up in our in-game side of the community. I've tried to put myself in the front, or at least near the front, of discussions beyond the game itself. And the game becomes much more when attached to a community as broad as ours.

Our members stretch the globe, but that's not the type of diversity I'm talking about. We've got people working in most lines of work (from student to model to technology professional), people of most ages (teens to significantly older), people with vastly varying opinions on most any topic we can think up to discuss. We've discussed everything from keyboard layouts to board color schemes, from world politics to our local weather.

Recently, our in-game presence has been diminished. Those waiting for the new expansion



## Persistent Questions

*Knowledge*  
ARCAEA

I had a player who always wanted to play a psionic character. I knew the new 3rd edition version of psionics was coming out and I had despised psionics in every previous incarnation. So I went to a little chat by the designer before I bought the book. Bruce R. Cordell's understanding and grasp of my prejudice helped with many of my issues about psionics.

Questions like these and other dealing with balance, appropriateness, rules errata and simply not understanding the designers' intent persistently arise and trouble any game. I could take a great deal of time, researching and developing my own solutions, but time is my hobby's enemy. No matter how much I have there is never enough for my games. Yet I am also lazy, I want things to be efficient and easy. When a question arises often it has already been asked and answered by the community, thus saving me that precious time and effort and I can get back to the business of the Dungeon of Death.

I can search for an answer to nearly every single question I have about role-playing and the d20 system no matter how general or specific. In every case I have had an answer well before my next gaming session. The feedback from the members of these forums helps me everyday to solidify and balance original and variant role-playing game ideas I have developed for my gaming group. The Wizards.COMmunity even helps me to find the detail that I have overlooked.

## Enlightened Answers

I was starting to design my own world, a vast place of high fantasy with extremely different twists on the old clichés, a huge amount of new material that would even turn the heads of my veteran players.



## Knowledge ARCA NA

However with a campaign launch date looming I needed places that would criticize and review the large number of creations I was turning out because I realized I could not be impartial about my own creations. I found what I needed at the Wizards.COMmunity. I also found something more.

The Wizards.COMmunity has been and continues to be a great teacher. I have learned how to critically look at the mechanics of a system. I have learned how to build characters within that system, that can carry out exactly what I envision role-playing. This has helped make me more confident about characters or encounters that I design. I have found many a new way to skin a cat, and discovered that there are in fact an infinite number of ways to do so. It has trained me to look beyond the literal interpretation of the rules and helped me to find the spirit of what mechanic that rule represents. Some forums have even helped enlighten me well beyond mere mechanics and into the nature of the game itself. To name just a few message boards like Character Development, Character Optimization, Prestige classes, Feats and Skills, Spells and Magic items and Home-brew where balance and copper counting are just as important as originality and flavor.

It has also allowed me to both discover and incorporate new and diverse races, character classes, feats, skills, skill uses, prestige classes, settings, magic items and monsters. Throughout the boards I have been shown links and downloads that have made my gaming experience all the more enjoyable. I have also found a surpassing desire to give back to the Wizards.COMmunity and that if I can give something to another member that makes their playing experience better, then I truly know the joy of giving.



Mirrodin are in one of three categories: waiting off-line (not participating in anything), waiting on-line (participating in one half of the leftover community), or beta testing (participating in either the beta half only or in both halves). It's the huge delays between real-life release and on-line release that drive away some of our community. Back in July, our systems went through thorough failure. The systems that run our game were hardly stable when on at all, the "new features" we were promised seemed less than promising (most of them have been removed now). It wasn't for about a month that the system was deemed stable enough to continue regularly.

To celebrate, our brand managers and system administrators and such planned a party: many tournaments, each with prizes and no real entry fee. For those non-Magic Online players, we purchase boosters and such from our on-line store then we can either open the stuff or use it in tournaments. One such way to use the stuff in tournaments is called "Sealed." Each player opens a certain number of packs of cards then builds a deck out of it. They get to keep their cards afterward. Prizes are awarded to the players who won the most, usually after a final single-elimination tournament of eight people. To pay for these prizes, we usually pay "event tickets" to the bots.

So, what was the difference for these party tournaments? No tickets required to enter, and everyone gets something. They also gave us each one set of packs so that we could play in one completely for free. It set new records for users logged on at once, then the server crashed again. The party was cancelled. To try to make up for it, they gave us the tickets we would need to enter a tournament as well



as the prize that everyone was supposed to get, so we could enter a tournament on our schedule.

They finally told us what the real problem was (the initial architecture of the servers supported one main server, when it was overloaded, the entire game crashes down), and that they now are going to work on it. They've come up with a decent solution for the time being to keep the crashes from plaguing our release events in a couple of weeks (fully two months after the real-life release, and two and a half after the real-life prerelease), as well as allowing a select few to beta test the set to make sure the cards don't have huge bugs.

A little over a month ago, the sets Invasion, Planeshift, and Apocalypse cycled out from the on-line store. The community still tries to hold on to its memory, trying to get a weekend 8-person tournament going with the leftovers that haven't been opened, but that can't last forever. The most present change noticed from its absence is the spike in prices. Formerly 8-10 ticket cards are now around 15, the cards that nearly couldn't be given away are now worth a ticket each. Once again, for non-players, we can buy event tickets in the store for one US dollar each, then either use them in trades as a form of currency or use them to enter tournaments.

Mirrodin entered the on-line world, and shortly afterward, the servers proved the pessimists right: we crashed, again. The "higher powers" came out and told us they had no idea what the problem is, and that they'd be working on it. Naturally, this caused the standard rant wagon to grow new wheels.



## Evolving Ideas

*Knowledge*  
ARCAEA

I was running a Wheel of Time campaign and I wanted more gaming material that Wizards had left me begging for. There was nothing on the publishing schedule about any more products. I quickly discovered the Wheel of Time message board and a literal mountain of fan based material designed by people who were dedicated to keeping a game alive.

When I come to the Wizards.COMmunity with a concept, they help me find a way to make that concept a reality. Discussions of different twist and new concepts in these forums fire my imagination as both GM and Player alike. It often can help to get and keep my creative juices flowing, showing me that there is always more to strive for in my games. Almost every one of my personal designs would have gone nowhere without some help from one of these forums.

And I am not the only one who gets ideas from these forums.

"I GET IDEAS FOR ADVENTURES HERE. I GET RULES CLARIFICATIONS, AND IDEAS FOR HOUSE RULES HERE. AS A PUBLISHER, I GET IDEAS FOR WHAT PRODUCT PEOPLE WANT TO SEE." --Rich Redman of The Game Mechanics and co-designer of D20 Modern

Every time I think all the good ideas have been used, someone comes along with an idea I wish I had thought of.

## Essential Community

That sense of excitement and passion about my favorite hobby that I can share with the members of the Wizards.COMmunity is often incredibly inspiring. It has helped, on more than one occasion stop my game from becoming stale and stagnant. I've also



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established a good number of new acquaintances and even a few strong friendships among its membership. Even the people who get paid to be here enjoy it.

"I FIND THESE BOARDS USEFUL BECAUSE I HAVE TO DO VERY LITTLE ACTUAL WORK HERE AND STILL GET PAID." --WizO\_Sith, Wizards.-COMmunity moderator

### In Conclusion

I recently started a Netbook project that draws upon the vast array of talents and abilities I now have at my fingertips. Without the Wizards community I would never have been able to conceive of this project, contact with so many like-minded hobbyists, and even the basics of organization would have been nearly insurmountable. I believe The Wizards.-COMmunity to be the ultimate free living web enhancement that continually helps me to improve not only my own role-playing experience, but that of my gaming group as well. I hope that everyone who reads this will come away realizing how valuable a resource it truly is, I hope you tell every person who plays Role-playing games that the Wizards.COMmunity is a community totally at your disposal. I know my games would not be the same without it.



With all these problems, is it any wonder the game stays played at all? Not really, when you take the game as a whole from my point of view. Considering when I total it all up, I've spent more on four cards for the real life game than I've spent in the entirety of my time playing Magic Online, and I've got more enjoyment out of Magic Online than I've gotten out of those four cards, it's a pretty good spending opportunity. I mean, for roughly \$12, I can go to a movie, or I can play a draft. If I go to the movie, I grow slightly larger from the tub of artificially buttered popcorn and sitting on my rear for three hours. If I stay home and play a draft, I get the fun of playing a tournament combined with getting to keep the cards I draft to play with later. I like repeatable enjoyment.

I genuinely have fun exploring new avenues with the on-line cards: certain interactions I never realized off-line I see on-line from new players and from cards I don't own off-line. Plus, I've had the opportunity to help people with various in-game issues as well as some odd ones like tech support on a laggy computer. And I love helping people.

Our game also offers 24-7 uptime (when some major event like a release didn't just happen :-). During that time, there's always someone playing something. The slowest I've seen the whole of the casual room is slightly less than 1000 players. 1000 players don't show up at the local hobby shop on a Magic night. I always have new players to play against. Sure, some old decks won't die and show up in any environment, but as the number of players increase, so increases the total creativity of the group. I will see new and interesting things. I love seeing new and interesting things.



There's one more thing our community offers over some of the "free Magic Online alternatives": the community itself. Sure, I can find someone to play one of those clunky "games," but the total interaction isn't there. A large number of us congregate in one room in-game. We can discuss anything and nothing. I love random discussions, especially when the people know how laugh. Even the Wizards employees that grace our community from time to time join in some of our random discussions. Intelligent discussion can interest me in any topic.

Clearly, the game has its issues. The techs are working (some of them from home at night as well as at the office during the day) to remove the problems. The game has plenty of upsides to counteract the issues, at least for me. I'm still playing. Most the players are still playing, and the community is still having discussions, so we've weathered the storm. Feel free to join into our on-board discussions, or join the game and join our in-game discussions. There's always somebody in the bbs room. In-game, just type "/join bbs" and hit enter.

Time to go back into the community,

Programmerman



## Creature Feature

### The Hoardevil

The Creature Feature was conceived as a monster creation workshop. The goal was to create one new monster as a group and then use it in an encounter during a later event. Former Managing Editor Penny Williams (also known at WotC as the Monster Maven during her tenure there) lent her expertise to guide the process. Then it was monster design time, when the group discussed ideas for the monster's purpose and habitat. When everyone had settled on a concept, Penny opened discussion on one statistic at a time—type, size, physical abilities, mental abilities, special abilities, and so forth. At each step, she explained what needs to be decided when, and how professional designers usually make those decisions. At last, the modifiers were calculated and the monster was declared finished.

**Male Hoardevil:** CR 3; Large animal; HD 5d8+10; hp 32; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 15; Atk +7 melee (1d8+7, bite); Space/Reach 5ft./10 ft.; SA powerful charge 2d8+7, rage; SQ low-light vision; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 21, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 7.

Skills and Feats: Hide -2, Jump +15, Listen +8, Spot +2; Improved Natural Armor, Power Attack.

Powerful Charge (Ex): A hoardevil typically begins a battle by charging at an opponent, trying to slam with its bony chest. In addition to the normal benefits and hazards of a charge, this allows the creature to make a single slam attack with a +7 attack bonus that deals 2d8+7 points of damage.



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**Rage (Ex):** A hoardevil that takes damage in combat flies into a berserk rage on its next turn, clawing and biting madly until either it or its opponent is dead. It gains +4 to Strength, +4 to Constitution, and -2 to Armor Class. The creature cannot end its rage prematurely.

**Skills:** A hoardevil has a +4 racial bonus on Listen checks and a +8 racial bonus on Jump checks.

**Female Hoardevil:** CR 3; Large animal ; HD 5d8+10; hp 32; Init +2; Spd 40 ft., fly 50 ft. (poor); AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 15; Atk +7 melee (1d8+7, bite); Space/Reach 5 ft./10 ft.; SA powerful charge; SQ low-light vision; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 21, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 7.

**Skills and Feats:** Hide -2, Jump +15, Listen +8, Spot +2; Flyby Attack, Improved Natural Armor, Power Attack

**Flyby Attack:** The female hoardevil will use an altered Slam attack, flying past, picking up its prey and on a successful grapple, will drop its prey into the trunk of a tree before landing and continuing in melee attack.

**Note:** The Female hoardevil does not get the Rage ability of the male counterpart.

**Description:** The Hoardevil has the legs, tail and torso of a kangaroo, and an insectoid head and neck, most notably, the mandibles with which it will tear the meat of its prey. The tough hide of a Hoardevil lends itself to its Improved Natural Armor, both genders of the Hoardevil have a bony breastplate which is used in Slam Attack.

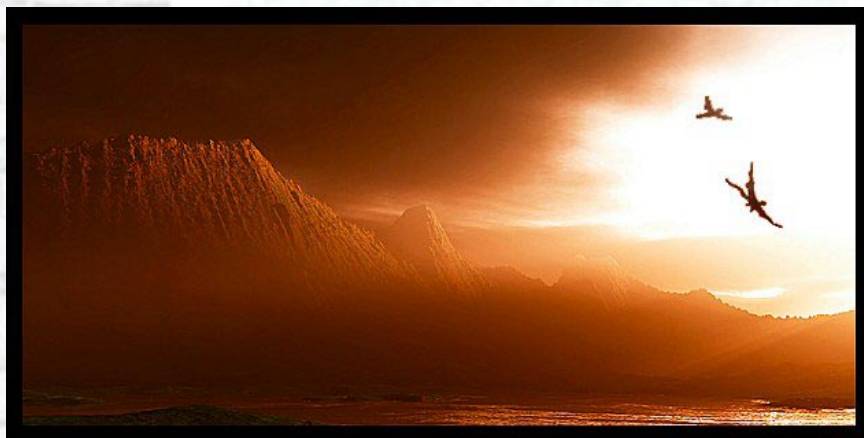
The female Hoardevil has fly like wings and a pouch which it carries its young in, much like a kangaroo. The bony breastplate on the female Hoardevil covers the pouch's opening.



# UnCon 2003

## art contests

UnCon 2003 featured several art contests. Some of the most talented members throughout the community submitted their work for judgment - and what a difficult judgement it was! There were so many creative and interesting pictures offered, we wish we could have given out more prizes. But since we only had a limited number of prizes, we subjected our artists to the toughest, most discriminating audience around - the Wizards Community itself. We are pleased to here present the best of the best, as voted on by the Wizards Online Community.



*light bulb's basic land*

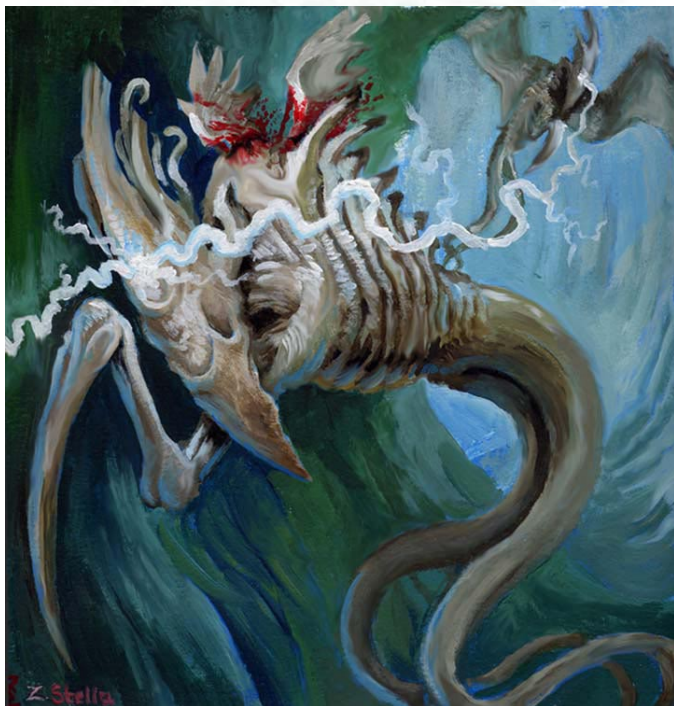
### light bulb's basic land:

The first art contest of UnCon was one of the hardest, to create an illustration that might appear on a basic land, the most common cards in





Magic. Light Bulb rose to the challenge with this breathtaking mountain which got almost half the total votes cast!



DrEaMwEaVeRz32's Sliver token

**Sliver token:**

DrEaMwEaVeRz32 entered this art of a Sliver in our UnCon contest to illustrate a token that might be used to represent a creature in a Magic game. Despite some close competition DrEaMwEaVeRz32 won the contest, we were

*Knowledge*  
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**Climate/Location:**

The Hoardevil is mostly found in cooler climates, where there is snow for most of the year. They like to live and hunt in forested areas.

**How the Playtest went:**

I had six players with level 2 characters. To even out the challenge, I had planned to pit the players first against the Male version of this creature, and then the female version, mate of the one they just killed, would attack, first with a flyby attack. We ran out of time, however, they still were challenged rather effectively, as the AC 17 was difficult to hit. The group came across the male hoardevil feeding on a creature it had previously slain. One of the characters attempted to sneak up on the creature, but when this character had closed half the distance, the creature heard one of the other party members (making its Listen roll) and attacked the character that was closest. I believe this was the rogue. The Powerful Charge (and subsequent Slam Attack) took the character down to approximately a quarter of his hit points. When the ranger closed into melee, and finally succeeded in landing a hit, the creature became enraged, making it easier to hit. The critical hit on the ranger's next turn finished off the creature. If we hadn't already taken an hour and a half to run this much of the playtest, the female version of the hoardevil would have attacked, and at least one of the party surely would have died, making the combat a serious challenge for 6 level 2 characters (the challenge rating of a creature is based on a party of 4 characters in combat).

**Sentimental Horde**



by Jason R Kirckof

## Knowledge ARCAEA

ONE OF THE MOST COMMON COMPLAINTS THESE DAYS IS HOW SOME DMs DON'T

HAVE TIME TO WRITE ADVENTURES. FOR THE MOST PART, MANY OF US HAVE GROWN OLDER AND TAKEN ON MORE RESPONSIBILITIES. SURE, THE 17 YEAR OLD HAS HOURS ON END TO COME UP WITH GAME MATERIAL, BUT FOR THE REST OF US WHO HAVE LIVES, FINDING THE TIME ISN'T EASY ANYMORE. HOWEVER, IT MUST BE SAID THAT SOME TIME MUST BE SET ASIDE FOR THE MOST MINIMAL AMOUNT OF PREPARATION FOR A GAME. THAT SAID, THIS GUIDE IS FOR EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITIES OF ON THE FLY GAMING.

## THE QUICK AND DIRTY DM A GUIDE TO A QUICKER GAME PART 1: NPCs

by WizO\_Paradox

### Instant NPC: Just add water

Well, not really. But you will need a notebook or even a collection of index cards. When creating NPCs on the fly, the first thing to remember is that the characters will not be able to even get a whole detailed history of the NPC. When you make up some facts about an NPC, and determine things such as name, and where they can be found on a regular basis and what their job is, be sure to note the information on note cards or a notebook.

The first thing to ask is what is the most noticeable thing about the NPC? The things you can immediately determine are race and sex. "You see a male dwarf sitting at the table." "You watch as the nimble female elf crosses the room."

Keep in mind as to what the characters see and what the NPC appears to be. A dryad has "elf like



so impressed with the piece that it made it to the front cover of Knowledge Arcana!



### Kyvyn's Stasis:

In Magic there are cards that have art some players just love to hate, once of these is Stasis. In an attempt to really mess with the minds of our artists, we challenged them to create a new version of the stasis artwork. Kyvyn was the clear winner with this great representation of one of the most infamous cards of Magic.



# Gamer Hoaryscopes

by Monica Shellman  
and WizO Loki

Look up into the stars in the heavens. Are they merely balls of ignited interstellar gas, or oracles of the future? Science says just the gas thing, but what do those guys know? Ok, perhaps a lot. But the hell with them, let Madame Monica divine your future and the future of your beloved character, while WizO Loki reads the cards (Magic Cards, of course) to guide your future as a TCG player. Don't say you weren't warned.

## Capricorn (December 22 - January 19)

Role-Player: Stop being such a mooch. Just because people invited you to play doesn't mean that they wanted to take you to raise. The stars think you could maybe bring some chips, or how about a nice crudite platter?

Your character: How many times do the stars have to tell you not to trust pretty girls? They bet those knots are going to be hard to undo, especially in that position. The stars mock your pain.

Card-Player: Loose change will soon become a thing of the past when bringing your pre-teen child to the gaming store with you has more consequences that you realise. Expect to learn much about (and spend much more on) Petpets, Charms, Asparagus and Neopets in the coming weeks.

## Aquarius (January 20 - February 18)

Role-Player: Next session you will learn a valuable life lesson about mouthing off to the DM. Apropos of nothing, the stars want to know if they can have your character's stuff.

Your character: Look, maybe reincarnation will actually be an improvement, have you thought about that?

Card-Player: Two good things will happen as you awake from a dream today. You will find stuck to a picture frame on your desk the foil Pristine Angel you thought you lost. The picture of your girlfriend beneath will remind you that you haven't talked to her for nearly three weeks. Oh... maybe that's only one good thing.

## Pisces (February 19 - March 20)

Role-Player: Jupiter is in the house of the Moon ascendent, with Mercury rising. No, the stars don't know what that means either. They just think it makes them sound cool.

qualities", so when describing the creature, refer it as an "elf" until the players learn otherwise.

*Knowledge*  
ARCAEA

Next up are physical characteristics and what the NPC is doing at the time the characters first spot them. "The man walks with a limp." "The female gnome stretches the laundry out on a line to dry." "The dwarf scowls at you, turning his scar on his cheek up on an angle."

Once you've established what the characters see and hear (and smell...) about the NPC, you can move on to the information they will most likely ask. First up is the NPC's name. Once the name is chosen, be sure to write it down for future reference. If they don't ask for a name, they don't need to get one.

What does the NPC do? Is he a farmer or an adventurer? What sort of work does it look like the person does? A barmaid is obvious as to what she's doing, so she won't be decked out in mage robes. (Unless that's the theme of the tavern she's working at.) Describe how the person is dressed, and what sort of obvious items/weapons the person carries. Alternately, you can just come out and let the players have preconceived ideas about what the person is and what they do. "That fellow is obviously a wizard." "The cleric is praying at the table to his god for a blessing of the meal." "The roguish looking fellow is sitting with his back to the wall."

Let's put it all together now. A group of heroes walks in to a town. You decide that the town is a typical generic fantasy setting. You start off with describing the scene. "You enter the busy town. The smells of baking bread, horses, hay, and the sharp tang of fire crackling assaults your nose. You hear the clang, clang, and clang of the town's forge off a bit down one of the many twisting roads. Is he making armor, or perhaps a sword? Or it could be as mundane as a horseshoe. You see before you a



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human female hanging up the wash, her blonde hair matted against her sweaty face. Two young children, a boy and a girl run circles around her, and you can see the anger and frustration in her eyes. A male dwarf rides by on a cart. He is smoking a pipe, and his cart is filled with all sorts of goods. They rattle and clang together as the pony clops along, hitting a hole in the ground. The dwarf bounces and swears."

From here, the players will run off in many unpredictable directions. If they ignore either the human and her children or the dwarf, they may or may not ever see them again. You don't need any more details, stats, or other information on them. But, let's say they talk to the human. Take a look at her situation. She's aggravated, and not going to be pleasant, even though it's not the character's fault.

Player: "Hi. What's your name?"

DM: "What? What do you want?"

Player: "I just want to know who you are and if you need any help?"

DM: "I'm sorry. I'm Becca. And unless you strong heroes are up for babysitting, I don't need any help. Jess! Josh! Knock it off this instant!"

So, the human female's name is Becca, her son is Josh, and daughter is Jess. Make note of it, as you can bet the characters will at some point meet up with them again. Even if they have no interest in meeting them again, perhaps years down the road they meet up with a fighter named Josh traveling with a wizard named Jess, a brother and sister team who look out for each other.

From here the players may take her up on that babysitting offer, to which you can really mess with them by having the kids get in all kinds of trouble. Your players may know what you're up to, and decide to take a pass.

Either way the point is that Becca and her kids didn't need any stats. They didn't need any feats or

Your character: The stars would like to point out that your mother did tell you to study accounting, just to have something to fall back on. But hey, maybe that sword arm will grow back. Weirder things have happened.

Card-Player: In front of your boss, the people you work with will attack you seeking to gain favor. This is a Test of Faith for you. Accept these attacks with good grace. When the boss isn't around feel free to mix it up. Your quick wit and dry humor gained from playing Magic Online for hours and hours has equipped you well for any battle of wits.

### Aries (March 21 - April 18)

Role-Player:...Huh? What? Oh, sorry. The stars sort of dozed off there for a second. Let's be brutally honest, your life is a little boring.

Your character: You will discover the limits of your party's loyalty when you try to make a pet of a vargouille because it "followed me home."

Card-Player: Your struggles to become more financially independent will pay off over the next three weeks. Though trying to get your Darksteel boosters for free by putting down a Mindslaver next to the register, saying "I get to control your next turn" doesn't bode well for improving your credit at the gaming store.

### Taurus (April 19 - May 20)

Role-Player: Your spouse called. If you don't come home at a reasonable hour tonight, with the stuff from the store on the list, your belongings will be conveniently found on the front lawn. Especially that awful hula dancing lamp.

Your character: Yeah, it -is- a little weird the way all the dungeon maps can fit perfectly on an 8X10 piece of paper, but the stars think you should stop thinking too much about it.

Card-Player: Technology seeks to hurt you and is definitely not your friend. Take some solace in the fact that you are not alone in this. Spread your net a little wider and you will find a new group of friends to the west that are feeling much the same. Show a little sympathy and you'll be pleasantly rewarded.

### Gemini (May 21 - June 20)

Role-Player: Quit creeping out the game designers at conventions by showing them the little dolls you have made of them. Yes, even though the stitching on the costumes is as good as a professional.

Your character: You have the feeling that you are merely a pawn in some cosmic game of chess. Actually, it's more like a cosmic game of tic-tac-toe. Let's face it, your "god" isn't the sharpest battle ax in the armory.



Card-Player: An unexpected opportunity to play in a tournament should not be ignored. That third darksteel booster you open will reward you with your namesake Engine.

### **Cancer (June 21 - July 22)**

Role-Player: The stars feel like they've done all they can with you. You are being referred to the mystic runes of the vikings. Don't make jokes about people wearing horny helmets either, as they have no sense of humor.

Your character: The stars know a big shot like you is busy, but would it kill you to write once in a while, mr/ms Famous Adventurer? The stars have feelings too, you know.

Card-Player: You will be reacquainted with an old friend next week. Cherish every brief moment you have together for after a few wonderful days of camaraderie, you will make a dire mistake by offering a friendly game of Magic Your inability to remember why you hadn't talked in all this time hasn't diminished your friend's memory of you using his alpha Black Lotus as a beer coaster.

### **Leo (July 23 - August 22)**

Role-Player: The stars want to know if you're just going to sit there and take it like a wimp when your brother-in-law tells you writing for d20 publishers isn't a "real" job? The stars remind you that he blew out his knee during high school football, so you could totally take that jack ass.

Your character: The sign on the door to the evil warlord's lair that reads "Please knock before entering" is nothing more than a sick, but funny joke.

Card-Player: Romance bodes well for you as the full moon approaches, however being the cowardly lion will eventually win the day with your chosen prey. Be prepared to capture your love's heart quickly, preferably with jewelry and no, a Darksteel Pendant will not suffice – even though it is indestructible.

### **Virgo (August 23 - September 22)**

Role-Player: Sure, you could move out of your mother's basement, get an apartment and better job than delivery boy at "Pizza Hovel". But then you'd have less to spend on gaming crap. Think of the struggling D20 publishers! They need you! (This reading sponsored by "Purple Worm Publishers: The Game Lizards!")

Your character: If the halfling doesn't shut the hell up, you are seriously going to go iron age on his ass.

Card-Player: Try to set reasonable expectations with people this week. A proclamation of the impending visit of a major celebrity will have your family, friends and neighbors in an excited uproar. Be prepared to face their

skills listed.

*Knowledge*  
**ARCANÆ**

But suppose you DO need to have the NPC with some skill. Most "normal" NPCs would have low-level skills. Keep in mind that you are the DM. You don't have to follow the rules that are written. If you want some gold to be pilfered from the characters by the NPC, you merely roll the dice and announce the missing gold or item only when the character next checks his pack; no actual "Pick Pockets" skill needed.

The same rules can be applied to the obligatory tavern scene. You just need the quick descriptions of the barkeep, the barmaids, perhaps a bard in the corner telling stories or singing songs for coins and of course patrons. If you were to work on each character's skills and descriptions, you are in for some serious character creation. Some DMs love to do that sort of thing, but most DMs these days don't have the time they once did as teens. When describing the scene, picture what the characters would see, and give the same first impressions you would have to such a setting. Remember, don't create info that you don't need until you need it. Yes, it does help to know that the barkeep is a retired fighter who has his old +7 long sword of negative energy burst under the bar, but if the characters aren't expected to cause problems, you don't need to worry about it. On the other hand, if your characters must start a tavern brawl in every game session, it would be handy to have such information readily available, or made up on the spot as the situation dictates.

Remember Race, Sex, Characteristics, What they are doing, and Name. Also, add other descriptive information as the situation dictates.

"You walk in to the Sleeping Griffon Tavern. The smell of ale and roses assaults your nose when you enter. The barkeep, a jolly looking human with graying hair is wiping down the bar with a rag. An elven barmaid lifts her tray over her head as



## Knowledge ARCA NA

she makes her way through the busy common room. Her wavy blonde hair sways side

to side as she maneuvers past the groping hands of some of the more rowdy patrons, including a nasty looking human wearing a dark cloak, and bearing a scar on his left cheek. His companions, a dwarf with a bright red beard, and a half elf with dark hair and green eyes that glance at you for the briefest of moments, laugh boisterously.

Smoke fills the room, mainly coming from a group of gnomes on the far end of the room. A female half-orc drinks alone in one corner, with a male human wizard watching her warily, not taking his eyes off her.

A second barmaid, this one a human female with red hair and one green eye, the other blue, invites you to come on in and have a drink."

See? Adventures abound, and not one character has any stats. Also keep in mind that looks oftentimes can be deceiving. The "wizard" could just be someone in robes, or gives off the airs of being magically inclined. That "elven" barmaid could be a dryad, working at the inn to investigate that has been chopping down a specific tree in a local forest. (It can be also decided that indeed, the barkeep is chopping down a specific tree, because it's wood burns longer or gives his ale a specific flavor to it.) The half orc may or may not know who the wizard type fellow is. The group harassing the barmaid might or might not be the "bad guys". It's now up to the characters to ask questions and feel out the adventure for themselves.

Of course, you could always have an old man stumble in with a quest, but that's just cheesy. (Sometimes however, cheesy works.)

Part 2 will be "Monsters Made Easy"



disappointment when your celebrity friend arrives. As much as we all love Daniel Myers, his celebrity means much more to you than to your friends.

### Libra (September 23 - October 22)

Role-Player: The surprisingly low price on that mint condition 1st printing, 1st Edition AD&D PHB signed by Gygax is not really God's little way of telling you to buy it. But you know, Knock yourself out.

Your character: Yes, the stars agree she has really great legs. But did you notice she's a medusa?

Card-Player: Forget balance this month my dear Libra. You will be more effective in making waves than being the peacekeeper. Rant. Rave. But choose your words wisely. The patience your parents show in housing and feeding their twenty-something child is growing thin, especially whenever they walk into your room and see that two-foot stack of Chimney Imps on your dresser.

### Scorpio (October 23 - November 21)

Role-Player: While the stars side with you in your dispute with your DM over the rules for magic item creation, putting out a contract hit on him might be a tiny over reaction.

Your character: The stars have it on good authority that Aquarius is going to die this session anyway. So taking his stuff isn't really stealing. It's more like recycling. Good for the sword, good for the gold. Cut us in on 10 percent, and we won't tell a soul.

Card-Player: Like your dad said, dressing up as a Serra Angel when you go clubbing will not attract the right type of guy. Those guys are all locked away in dark rooms, in front of glowing monitors, staring at pictures of Angels and Dryads on Magic Online. They only wish they could meet a girl like you. Ah, bitter irony.

### Sagittarius (November 22 - December 21)

Role-Player: The good news is: Your boss is an avid D&D player too! The bad news is she saw you at the convention when you said you were too sick to come to work. The stars suggest hiring a professional resume writing service. You know, just in case.

Your character: Only the good die young. This universal maxim is the only thing that will save you when you go up against Tiamat dressed in nothing but your underpants and a t-shirt that reads "Barbarians do it in a berserker rage".

Card-Player: You will complete that Myr deck you have been building quite accidentally as a friend graciously donates a Lodestone Myr to the your cause. Don't be easily fooled however. Your friend is only so generous because he wants to try out his new anti-Myr deck. Do not fear however, as your planning far exceeds his.

## Crossword Theme: D&D Spells

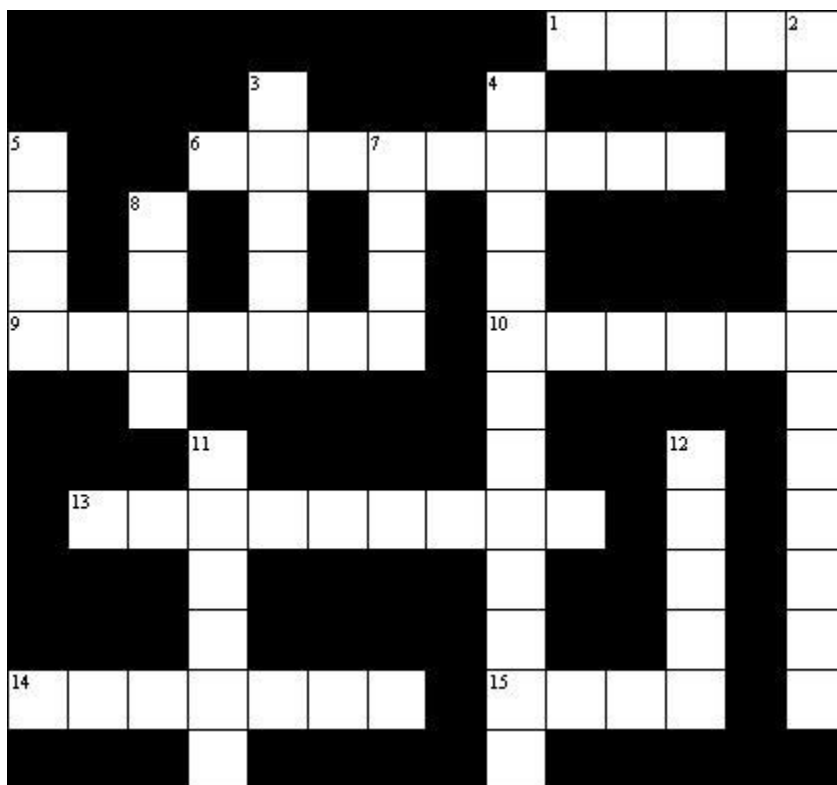
By Dragon Master

### Across:

1. Person, monster or animal - none can resist
6. Shockingly hard to keep chained down
9. Tick, tick, tick - BOOOM!
10. I monster, II monster, III monster - IV
13. Yellow, green, orange, red, blue, indigo, and violet
14. Evocation, sphere
15. If you strike, only then will you see the real resurrection

### Down:

2. With a sword, mansion and hound, no spell will be forgotten
3. Talk to the hand
4. None will see
5. Kill, stun or blind. Only you have the power
7. Stay... good monster
8. With the elements of fire and ice, no one will get through
11. Death, doom and magic surround me, and there are no corners to escape from
12. Blade or arrow - they both strike.



## Snatching Victory from the Jaws of Defeat

A Magic the Gathering Puzzle by Squee's Main Squeeze and Uncle Mikey

You're playing in a Mirrodin-Mirrodin-Darksteel draft. You have been beating your opponent slowly with your artifact-based red/black deck, but he has drawn into a plethora of pro-artifact creatures and has you dangerously close to death. If you don't finish him off this turn, one of his two Tel-Jilad Chosen or insect tokens will surely finish you. It is now the beginning of your first main phase, and you must win this turn or concede.

You have 2 life

### In play you have:

- 2 Swamp
- 5 Mountain
- Blinkmoth Nexus
- Leonin Bladetrail
- Talon of Pain, with 1 counter on it
- Myr Moonvessel
- Alpha Myr, with three +1/+1 counters on it
- Krark-Clan Stoker

### In your graveyard:

- Arcbound Ravager

- Grimclaw Bats
- Disciple of the Vault
- Arcbound Stinger
- Leaden Myr

### Your hand is:

- Oxidda Golem
- Betrayal of Flesh

Your opponent has 5 life and 0 cards in his hand.

### In play he has:

- 3 Forest, 2 tapped, 1 untapped
- 4 Plains, 3 tapped, 1 untapped
- Tangle Golem
- Tel-Jilad Archers
- Tel-Jilad Chosen, tapped
- Tel-Jilad Chosen, with summoning sickness
- Leonin Elder, with summoning sickness
- Infested Roothold
- 2 1/1 Insect tokens
- Leonin Sun-Standard
- Sphere of Purity

### His graveyard consists of:

- Deconstruct
- Purge
- Leonin Skyhunter
- Leonin Elder

Refer to the picture on the next page (please notice that the opponent's insect tokens are on the other side of their graveyard, and ignore the indications of summoning sickness. The creatures with summoning sickness are specified in the text above.)

Your opponent will take any steps necessary to prevent you from finishing him off with the permanents he has in play.

How can you win this game?

Look in the next newsletter for the answer!



IT'S COMING!



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