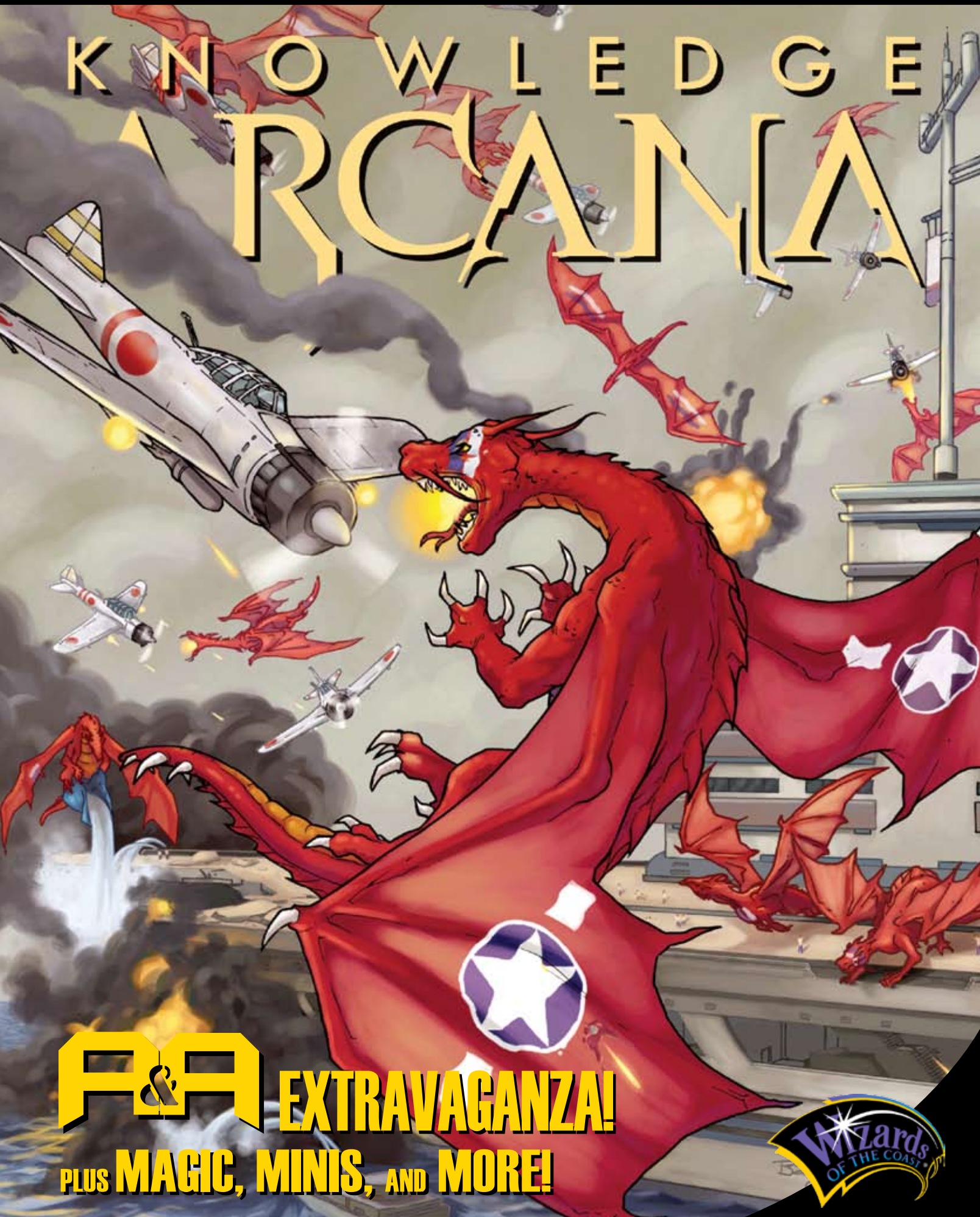


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ARCANE KNOWLEDGE

with **PENNY WILLIAMS**

It's summertime, and the gaming is easy. It's time to plan trips to the big gaming conventions, and the smaller ones too. Time to visit the game store and check out the new releases. Time to schedule a few extra game sessions while kids and adults are out of school. Time to work on the dungeon, the novel, and the minis campaign.

Who are we kidding, anyway? All this extra time we were looking forward to suddenly seems to be filled with other activities. The kids would rather go swimming than play D&D. The dog ate your AAM minis. Half your friends are working 24/7 at new jobs, and the other half are visiting Timbuktu for the summer. And if you do have leisure time, putting together a game when the warm weather beckons can seem too much like work.

But don't despair. If you need a way to lure your group back to the gaming table, check out Gaming Nights With Style in this issue. Our very own Monica Shellman (who by an odd coincidence has the same initials as a certain domestic diva) tells you how to whip up a game night feast and turn those old, worn-out gaming materials into snazzy decorations for your abode. Evan Hunt explains how to parley the M:tG card Silhana LedgeWalker into a win just about every time, and the diabolically creative minds in RPG Live have put together a monster that'll give your D&D players nightmares for months! Check out this issue's *Creature Feature* to see what's lurking in that refuse pile behind the inn, and you may never feel quite the same about your compost heap again.

You say you're an A&A or AAM player? Well, this is the issue for you. Bryce Whitacre offers a new Pacific rules variant for A&A, and Jon Mayes provides a rundown on

interesting AAM combos from the message boards. And as a special surprise, Jon has interviewed veteran member SSG_Huble for this issue.

Been playing Neopets with the kids? Then you may have what it takes to win the new Neopets contest right here in this issue. This one's for prizes, so be sure to get in on it right away!

Looking for a story to relax with at the beach? *Nevermore*, the second-place prizewinner in the 2005 UnCon fiction contest, is a supernatural suspense thriller that will have you gripping the edge of your beach chair. And for future issues, our brand-new Fiction Community Editor Mars Whitacre has plenty of great stories in store! If you have a story, be sure to seize your chance for immortality in the pages of KA. Just send in your submission to knowledgearcana@wizo.wizards.com, and she'll get in touch with you.

All in all, this issue is full of surprises, starting with our cover and ending with lots of never-before-offered features, such as gamer food recipes. If that's not enough to bring your players back to the gaming table . . . well, you might have to take the dicebag and minis outside, mix up some cool drinks, and enjoy the warm, balmy breezes while pursuing your favorite hobby.

Keep those dice rolling!

PENNY WILLIAMS, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Publisher: -Ras Pechuel
Editor-in-Chief: Penny Williams
Associate Editor: Monica Shellman
Content Manager: Bryce Whitacre (WizO_Sinister)
Art Director and Madman: Jose Boveda (WizO_Scion)

Community Editors:

Fiction: Mars Whitacre (ImpofIdres)
Hecatomb/Dreamblade: Anthony Baxter (Mtal muzicfan)
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ON THE COVER

COVER ART BY JULIA BAX

OK, pretend you're an artist (I do this every day). Also pretend you're a fan of KA (you do this every day). You, an art-loving, arcana-reading maven, get an email from a dashing yet dastardly art director. Dastardly director asks if you could do a cover depicting the events of Pearl Harbor. Dastardly director stresses the importance of historical accuracy in the illustration.

Then he says something like this: "Great, but could you throw in some dragons? Not just any dragons, though. *American* dragons. Fighting the Japanese with their fiery dragon breath."

Her silence was telling. Still, as you can see, this Wizards of the Coast member hit one out of the park. And despite declining to bear my children, she'll be returning to the pages of KA quite soon.

Who is this Brazilian belle? Check out pg. 34 where we have her full bio, or just check out her website at www.juliabax.com.

In a mad, mad world,
SCION

Answer for last issue's
Magic Mastermind:

DECREE OF JUSTICE



QUICK & DIRTY DDM

BY WIZO_PARADOX

YEAH, YOU AND WHAT ARMY

No fantasy campaign is complete without the mass destruction of land brought about by war. But just setting up a large-scale battle could take quite a while, let alone running an entire war. And let's be honest—not everyone has the million or so miniature figures needed to actually run such a battle. (So be sure to run right out and pick up some D&D miniatures today!)

Seriously, though, a war can add depth and flavor to your campaign world like no other single element can. It does take a lot of work, but the shortcuts presented here can help turn an arduous task into a few evenings' worth of fun for you and your players.

THE BATTLE VS. THE WAR

The terms war and battle are not interchangeable. A war is the entirety of a conflict, encompassing dozens or perhaps hundreds of battles, plus espionage, diplomacy, embargoes, and other methods of inconveniencing the enemy. A battle is a specific armed conflict in which the PCs can participate. In most cases, the outcome of a single battle does not mandate the outcome of the greater conflict—that is, even if the PCs are victorious on the battlefield, their side may still lose the war, and vice versa.

THE WAR

As DM, the first decision you have to make is who will win the war.

Whoa, what? Don't the PCs' actions matter?

Sure they do, but the PCs constitute only a handful of the thousands of characters involved in the overall war. Furthermore, most battlefield situations in which PCs





become involved are either one-on-one combats or groups of characters fighting groups of NPCs. Thus, they can't see the whole war—or even a whole battle—from on high the way their players do. All the PCs can reasonably influence are individual battles and their aftermaths.

So from a campaign viewpoint, the PCs may be able to influence the outcome of a battle, but the final resolution of the war is your decision. After all, the outcome of a war can have a significant effect on the direction of the campaign, so the decision about who wins rightly falls into your purview as DM.

Mechanically, designing a war works much like designing an adventure. You come up with villains, decide the details of their plots and plans, then introduce the situation to the players, who decide what actions their characters should take to influence the outcome in their favor.

Thus, it pays to start with a rough idea of where your campaign is going. When you're trying to decide who will win a war, consider the following questions. After the war is over, should the PCs be on the winning side or the losing side? Will they keep trying to fight the war, either on their own or in conjunction with some kind of underground movement? Will the populace hail them as heroes or revile them as invaders?

THE BATTLE

Though who eventually wins the war is up to you as DM, the players can help to decide the outcome of the battles in which they participate—and perhaps even save the day for their side.

As DM, your job is to pull the players from above the battlemat down to the level of their characters by describing what they can see—and only what they can see. It then becomes the PCs' job to fight the good fight, rally the troops, and help boost morale. The trick is to convey the atmosphere of a huge battle while keeping the PCs busy with small skirmishes. Let's look at a few methods of accomplishing that goal.

Keeping the Tension High: One way to model the chaos of a battlefield is to send wave after wave of combatants against the PCs. But doing so only ensures that they will eventually fall to the enemy, considering that a single encounter balanced using the CR/ECL system is supposed to use up 25% of their resources. Realistically speaking, armies consist of hundreds, or perhaps even thousands of troops, so the PCs can't possibly hope to take them on all by themselves. Furthermore, the "kill a soldier, move on to the next" routine is likely to get boring rather quickly. While the players might be thrilled at first to see bunches of troops fall to their *fireballs*, their elation will quickly

turn to dismay when their spells run dry and the enemy just keeps coming.

But where are their allies? It's highly unlikely that the PCs are fighting alone for their side, and certainly their allies should be able to take on their share of enemies too. But broadening the scope of the game to run those allies realistically is a good way to bog down play. No one wants to wait while you roll for hundreds of allied attacks, and keeping track of every NPC hit point is tedious bookkeeping that serves little purpose.

Thus, it's best to spotlight the PCs and let the rest of the battle take care of itself. To ensure that you keep your focus narrowed, try not to give the PCs an overall look at the combat when you describe a battle scene. Talk about the chaotic fighting all around them. Mention the screaming, the pain, and the smoke from fires started by flaming arrows and magic. You don't need to get any more specific unless a given character wants to pay particular attention to one area—and doing so might very well mean he's at a disadvantage against the enemy soldiers in front of him.

Meanwhile, you as DM must figure out the enemy troop movements and the options you will allow the PCs. Is another enemy regiment waiting just over the hill? Are the characters in fact in position to cut off the enemy supply lines, or would they be walking into a trap? Is another force at this moment sneaking up on the characters' position? The characters and their players aren't likely to find out such information until they see the enemy charging at them.

Enemy Tactics: Face it, NPCs don't usually care to stand toe-to-toe with obviously well-equipped foes. Thus, soldiers targeting the PCs are likely to run after them, take a swing or two, then run off to seek easier prey when the characters don't immediately fall.

The One-Hit Rule: The typical NPC opponent should fall to the ground after only one hit, even if the blow didn't drop its hit points below 0. Invoking this rule not only saves you considerable bookkeeping, but it also allows the players to feel as if their characters are fighting hundreds of soldiers without using up so much of the party's resources—though the accumulated damage from many smaller hits might still bring them down.

Any ally fighting alongside the characters should also fall after one hit. This rule should make players think twice about letting NPC allies do all the fighting for them.

Every now and then, you can also slip in a more powerful NPC enemy—a veteran of the art of war. These special NPCs help to determine the flow of the battle. If the players defeat such an NPC within sight of other fighting troops, their victory serves to boost morale for their side, and any troops already on the run are inspired by the PCs' heroics to turn around and

fight once more. On the other hand, if the characters lose the fight with the NPC, their side may very well turn tail and run.

Stand or Run? Laying siege to a castle is a long, drawn-out process, but battles are swift, hard, and painful affairs. The tide can turn quickly, and when it does, the characters must be ready to change their tactics accordingly. In particular, characters involved in a battle must always remain aware of their positions. If try to they "retreat" to better tactical positions, their NPC allies might think they're being routed and run. And if the PCs really do decide they've had enough and choose to retreat, their allies don't question it; they just follow their leaders to safety.

Aftermath: Once the battle is over, the cleanup begins. The wounded are tended, and the dead are taken from the battlefield, consecrated, and buried or cremated. Winning the battle may or may not help in winning the war, but another battle is always waiting for the PCs. Characters may receive rewards if they acted heroically, or they may be punished for cowardice if they ran.

MAKING MASS COMBAT EASY

Because the *Quick and Dirty DM* articles are about shortcuts, no hard and fast mechanics exist for this system. The idea is to keep the combat moving and not allow the players to take too long to determine what their next actions will be. Don't let them bog down in details or planning. For the most part, they should have just enough time to use the most time-honored battle tactic: Put the pointy end of your sword into the opponent, then move on.

One exception to the above rule is routing. The number of units each side has acts like a "hit point total" for that army. Keep track of it, and when one side reaches 50% of its starting total, it may be routed (50% chance). If the PCs' side starts to run, it's up to the characters to inspire their regiment to stay together and keep fighting. If they succeed, their army must make another such "morale check" every time it loses another 5% of its troops. You don't want to keep track of each individual combat swing, especially for all the NPCs involved in the battle, but since both sides take damage each round, you can simulate it by keeping track of the PCs' hits. For each enemy the characters dispatch, take 1 point off the opposing army's hit point total.

To simulate losses elsewhere in the battle, roll a d20 for each side and subtract that number from each army's hit point total. You may also add modifiers depending on how well the characters are doing in combat.

The side that remains standing on the field, whether by elimination or by routing, wins.

SAMPLE BATTLE

The following represents a sample battle run by the above system.

Round 1: After rolling initiative, the characters lead the charge to face the enemy. They begin to close the distance during this round.

Round 2: More distance is covered, and as the armies move closer together, rains of arrows and far-reaching spells are fired off.

Round 3: This round features the first melee clash. If the PCs try to stop moving and fight just the front row of enemies, the rest of the opposing army simply tramples them. The PCs roll to attack, and any enemy that is hit sinks to the ground, wounded.

Round 4: Enemies swing at the characters and their allies. Any hits drop the PC army's hit point total. Then the characters can swing back.

Round 5: A veteran NPC shows up to skirmish with the characters, and it's likely to require more than one swing to take down this enemy down. If they succeed, their troops give a cheer and press on. If they lose, their troops may decide to run.

Round 6: Though they have probably been injured, the heroes must press on to reduce the number of fighting troops.

Round 7: One side or the other may need to check for morale.

Round 8: If you feel the characters can take a face-off with another NPC veteran, start him at less than his full hit points, since the PCs too are probably injured.

THE STORY COMES FIRST

As in any other adventure, the idea in a battle scenario is to concentrate on the story aspect, not worry about bookkeeping—except for the final troop tally. The side last standing controls the field—at least, until it's time for the next battle.

If this article whets your appetite for even grander mass battles, take a look at *Heroes of Battle*, a D&D supplement detailing the roles of PCs in mass battles, and at *Cry Havoc!*, a war-oriented supplement from Malhavoc Press.

WizO Paradox lives on the East Coast with his wife and her cat. He has played D&D since 1983 and likes all editions of the game. His favorite setting is Planescape, and he collects speckled dice.





Creature Feature

the Ember Spawn

**BY PENNY WILLIAMS (PENNY_WILLIAMS), MONICA SHELLMAN (ELISANDRA),
DAVE PAUL (VRECKNIDJX), AND THE WIZARDS OF THE COAST COMMUNITY,
WITH ASSISTANCE FROM SKIP WILLIAMS (SKIP_WILLIAMS)**

The monster for this issue's Creature Feature was created by the Wizards Online Community at an impromptu Monster Builder Workshop conducted by Penny Williams in RPG Live. The playtest was conducted with Lexx416 as Lidda, ShumpDragonbane as Jozan, Baroque as Tordek, and Jh5 as Miale, and Penny Williams as DM. All four characters were 3rd level. The KA staff also thanks Dagoon, HobbitGuy1420, Iddig, Jhadred, SpartanPhoenix, Warghoul, WizO_Ettin, and all the others who participated in the creation of this creature.

Journal of Jozan, Cleric of Pelor, 8th day of winter

Rescuing a brass dragon egg seemed like a worthwhile mission—though what Gridwell, the wizard who had entrusted us with the task, might want with the egg was a disturbing conjecture. As always, though, I placed my faith in Pelor to guide us on the path of righteousness.

This day, that path led us to three immense bogs, arranged roughly in a triangle and filled with hot mud. It seemed a foul place to hide the egg of a virtuous dragon who would be more at home in a desert, but

wickedness rarely surprises me any more. Through the rising steam, I saw bubbles popping on the surface of the mud. Someone would need burns treated before this day was out, I was sure.

As usual, Tordek and Lidda approached first. The dwarf and halfling always manage to combine a certain bravery with a reckless disregard for their own safety. But they seemed cautious today, stopping a few feet from the edge of the pit closest to us. "My goodness, this would be a nice place for a spa, if it were not for the smell," commented Miale, wrinkling her nose. "Do you suppose we could get around it?"

"Well, Gridwell said that the egg was in a mud pit," I reminded her. "Shall we take a closer look?"

"How deep do you suppose these pits are?" asked the elf wizard thoughtfully.

Tordek gave a deep chuckle. "Why don't we toss in the halfling and find out?" he asked.

When Lidda responded with only a sweet smile, I knew that Tordek's evening meal would be laced with several interesting spices. I hoped that Pelor would forgive me for looking forward to the event.

Tordek picked up a great stone and heaved it into the muck. It sank with a sloppy spurt, and he grinned. "This is gonna be easy!"

Even little Lidda knew the folly of such a statement. "You mustn't count your chickens before they're hatched, Tordek," she warned in her high-pitched voice, but the dwarf was having none of it.

"I don't count chickens unless I'm eating 'em!" rejoined the dwarf, setting off toward the pit. A large mud bubble popped just as he reached the edge, dousing him with hot mud. "Agh! Bloody mud!" howled Tordek, wiping it from his eyes. Even Pelor liked a good joke, it seemed.

"If you think it's going to be that easy, why don't you just jump in and swim?" commented Mialee with a grin. "You're already muddy." The dwarf gave her a murderous look as he wiped the mud from his armor.

Mialee walked over to the edge of the mudpit and poked at the thick, heavy goo with a stick. "We could always try dredging," she said. Just then, another bubble popped, splashing Mialee with steaming mud. "Aeech!" Mialee shrieked. "I just had this robe cleaned, too."

"Now who's muddy?" crowed Tordek in triumph.

"Oh, were those the robes that you said were woven with thistledown?" Lidda asked Mialee innocently. "Or was that the nightgown?"

While Tordek and Mialee fussed over their appearance like cats, the little halfling chuckled and moved another 5 feet closer to the pit. Then she sheathed her sword, picked up a rock, and tossed it into the pit, much as Tordek had. "Hey, something's in there!" she cried, pointing to the spot where the rock had sunk.

"What was it?" I inquired. Not many things could survive such scalding heat, I surmised. Could we be lucky enough to have stumbled so quickly on the dragon egg we sought? I readied my crossbow and took a shot at the next bubble I saw. It burst with a wet sploosh, briefly revealing what lay beneath.

"Wow!" said the halfling. "Brown lumps! They looked like the dumplings Nanna Wigglefingers used to make every Sunday for dinner. I don't think I want to eat one, though," she said with a grin. "They're probably overdone."

The little halfling turned to tell Tordek and Mialee what she had seen, but she suddenly stopped short and peered closely at the elf. "Mialee, I don't know how to ask this," said Lidda hesitantly, "but . . . do elves use some kind of moving beauty marks? 'Cause I just saw a . . . bump . . . wander across your cheek. Is it a wizard thing?"

Mialee's cold face melted into panic. "No! What are you talking about? Are you joking?"

The elf grabbed my shield to study her face in the shiny metal. "I don't see anything. Are you picking on me again? Is this like the time you put itching powder

in my spell component bag?" she demanded, rounding on the halfling.

"It went up in your hair!" said Lidda, pointing at Mialee's hairline.

The elf began running her fingers through her hair, then suddenly stopped, an expression of horror crossing her face. "I felt something move! Jozan! Help!"

"Let me see it," I said, trying for a soothing tone.

"Yes!" cried Mialee desperately. "Find it and get it out! Hurry!"

While I pondered how best to aid the elf lady, Lidda deftly avoided a splash of mud from another bubble. "Look!" she cried, pointing at the ground. There, where she had been standing only a moment before, lay a tiny, multilegged maggot, bright orange in hue, with oversized mandibles that looked sharp enough to rend steel. I reloaded my crossbow and turned, skewering the creature with a bolt. The foul worm collapsed into a small pile of smoking orange goo.

Suddenly, our normally calm wizard began screeching in Elven. I glanced over to see her raven, Nightwing, perched on her head and pecking at her hair.

Tordek bellowed with laughter. "The daft familiar thinks the beastie is food! Priceless!"

"Here, Birdy," said Lidda, holding up the goeey remains of the maggot in an effort to tempt the familiar away from its mistress. "Nice and juicy! Come and get it from Auntie Lidda!"

After a moment, the bird flew over to investigate the orange mass, and I asked Mialee to bend her head so that I could see the spot in question. The bird had removed a chunk of her hair, but the lump was not visible. I checked her head and neck and found nothing. A moment later, however, there it was—darting across the bald patch.

But I was ready for it. Blocking its forward motion with the hilt of my dagger, I rolled the knob of my mace over the wriggling lump, crushing it beneath Mialee's skin.

The elf yelped loudly as the cold steel dug into her head. "What are you trying to do, scalp me?" she cried.

I resisted the urge to tell her that she could just learn to live with her new little friend if she'd prefer.

"Next time, I hope we have something to dull the pain," said Mialee with a shiver. "Ugh, it's cooling down out here. Strange, you'd think it would be warmer beside a hot mudpit."

Lidda snorted. "You hardly wear anything anyway, so I'm not surprised you're cold."

The dwarf started bellowing behind me, but I ignored him and kept working on Mialee's head.

Lidda giggled. "Last time I saw you naked, Tordek, you were just climbing out of the river. You got all red and wanted me to turn around."

That comment got my attention. I turned to see that the dwarf had stripped off all his armor and clothing and was flailing about like a maddened behir, screaming “It got on me, I know it got on me! Find it, Lidda! Don’t just stand there! Find it!”

“How can you expect me to find anything in all that hair?” said Lidda, crossing to the dwarf. “We’ll probably have to shave you.”

Tordek stopped his flailing and fixed the halfling with a glare. “I d’ruther die,” he said.

“Oh, there it is!” cried Lidda. “Right there on your nose!” Whap! Without warning, the halfling whacked Tordek across the nose with the flat of her dagger.

“OWWW!” howled Tordek, clapping a hand over his bruised proboscis. “By Moradin’s beard, lass, I need that nose!”

Pressing a cloth to her wounded scalp, Mialee muttered, “Why? It’s not like you can smell when you need to take a bath or anything.”

I wondered how I had offended Pelor, that he would punish me by charging me with the care of this particular flock. I decided that I would ask Him in my prayers later.

Lidda started toward the dwarf again. “Maybe I should give it another thwap for good measure,” she offered.

Tordek backed away. “Nay lass, let Jozan take care of it. He’s a bit gentler with his healing.”

I handed Mialee a pot of healing salve for her head, then went to examine Tordek. “Hold still!” I commanded.

“I can’t help it,” said the dwarf through chattering teeth. “I’m cold!”

“Well, you *are* naked,” I reminded him gently, probing through his beard.

“I’m cold too,” said Mialee, digging through her pack for a cloak. “How did it suddenly get so chilly out here?”

Lidda looked from one to the other. “Are you nuts?” she asked incredulously. “It’s like a steam bath out here!”

“You’re right, Lidda,” I said, suddenly concerned. “It’s quite steamy here, and even with very little on, neither of them should be that cold.”

Just then, a flash of movement under Tordek’s bronzed skin caught my eye. Catching the moving lump between two weapon hilts, I crushed it, then probed gently. The spot felt hot to the touch, but the flesh around it seemed curiously cold.

A fevered gleam entered Mialee’s almond-shaped eyes. “We should capture one of these creatures alive,” she said. “The academy will be most interested.”

Lidda waved an arm at the mudpits. “Be my guest,” she said. “I’m sure you can find another hundred or so of ‘em in there. Maybe you can take them back in your face. You’d look cute with your cheeks all puffed out like a chipmunk’s.”

Mialee glowered at the halfling. “Let’s just find the egg we came for. Then we can tell the wizards at the academy what we have seen.”

The rest agreed with that sentiment. After Tordek had put his armor back on, we probed carefully around the edges of the mudpits, using my shield and Tordek’s to protect ourselves from splashing mud. Eventually, we found the egg at the far end of the rightmost pit.

Triumphant, we wrapped the egg in cloths and set off for town. Our employer, pleased that we had returned so quickly and with the egg intact, paid us the agreed-upon price plus a small bonus.

Journal of Jozan, Cleric of Pelor, 14th day of winter

But all was not well with our group. Mialee and Tordek began to feel tired and rundown, had severe headaches, and both suffered from chills so severe that they refused to come out of their rooms at the inn, preferring to stay huddled under their blankets.

Their symptoms baffled me. I could think of no known malady that would affect them this way, but it seemed to me that a disease was the likely culprit. So I sent word to my old mentor Answorth, who was skilled with the study and treatment of diseases. Upon examining the pair, Answorth declared that he had never seen such symptoms before, but he promised to do what he could for them. After several days of treatment, he pronounced both cured.

Mialee went straightaway to the wizards’ academy to speak to her colleagues about the problem. Eventually, her investigations bore fruit in the form of an old, blind wizard named Stergos. “I know ‘em well,” said Stergos, after settling Mialee comfortably in his laboratory. “Those critters are what cost me my eyes nigh onto twenty years ago now. Ember spawn, they call ‘em. They were made by a pack o’ fools who thought they could fuse elemental fire with leeches to cure magical disease. Leave disease to the clerics, I say.

“You had more than one of them in you, my girl,” he continued. “Your cleric killed one, but there were still some under your skin. If you hadn’t gotten cured when you did, they would’ve come bursting out through your eyeballs.” Mialee shivered, thanked the wizard, and left. But it was several hours before she could bring herself to tell us all that the old wizard had said.



THE EMBER SPAWN

This creature lives life like the flames that spawned it—hot and fast.

Created by unfortunate researchers at the Collegia Arcanica, a prestigious institution of magical research, these foul creatures were originally intended to be tools of healing. Several wizards from the college, while on an extended sojourn on the Elemental Plane of Fire, sought to infuse leechlike creatures with the stuff of elemental fire to help in cauterizing wounds and healing magical injuries. But the resulting horrors quickly infested their creators, who carried them back to the Material Plane in their own bodies. From there, the creatures escaped into the city's slums and ghettos, creating a terrible plague.

EMBER MAGGOT (LARVAL FORM)

A disgusting orange maggot, approximately 1-1/2 inches long, leaps from a pile of warm mud, landing on a dozen fleshy legs. Numerous darker nodules dot its body, and bluish-red veins writhe beneath its skin. Its eyes are small and dark, but the slashing mandibles flanking its mouth overpower the rest of its head.

Colloquially known as an ember maggot, the larva of an ember spawn is amazingly fast. As a creature of fire, it is highly susceptible to cold, especially in its egg or larval form. Thus, it has evolved in such a way as to minimize its contact with cooler environments.

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

The ember maggot is not a particularly dangerous combatant—its threat lies in its ability to produce disease in an infested host and its explosive exit from that host's body after it has matured into its adult form.

Typically, two to six ember maggots assault a host at once to maximize the chance of infestation and ensure the continuance of the creature's life cycle. Larger infestations are rare, since the presence of six ember maggots lowers the host's body temperature enough that the creature can no longer be sensed as a potential host by other eggs.

SAMPLE ENCOUNTER

Towering garbage heaps and fetid cesspools are common in large humanoid settlements. In warm weather, the decomposition of the waste products in such areas creates sufficient heat to incubate ember spawn eggs.

A group of eight to sixteen larvae might be found in a large city's garbage heap or cesspool, occupying an area from 5 feet by 5 feet to 225 square feet. An encounter with this many ember maggots ranges from EL 4 to EL 6. Ember spawn pose little threat to characters above 4th level, but they can be a significant problem for commoners and lower-level characters.

ECOLOGY

Ember spawn progress through four stages of life. The eggs, which are laid in naturally warm locations, hatch out into orange, multilegged larvae. These maggots leap upon unsuspecting warm-blooded hosts and burrow beneath the skin, shedding their legs in the process. After incubating inside the host in pupa form, the fully-developed adult ember spawn erupt from the host's eyes and fly away in search of a hot place in which to lay their eggs.

An adult ember spawn lays clutches of eight to sixteen eggs at a time in hot springs, warm mud, blistering desert sands, or city refuse piles and cesspits. These eggs gestate during the warmer months, but they do not hatch until they sense the approach of a suitable host. Clutches of eggs are usually well hidden, since dragons find them a delicacy.

When a suitable host comes within 5 feet of an egg, it hatches explosively, propelling the maggot toward the potential host. If the maggot hits with this leaping chomp attack, it immediately attaches to its host with its long mandibles, which are coated with an anesthetic secretion that numbs the pain of its bite. The following round, it automatically burrows into its host's flesh through the wound it has made, shedding its legs as it slides beneath the skin. These legs quickly melt into ash in warm weather or freeze solid in a cooler environment.

The creature "swims" beneath the host's skin for 1 week, during which it feeds on the host's blood and body heat. Then it assumes pupa form and becomes inert for 3 more weeks while it metamorphoses into its adult form. At that point, it bursts forth through the host's eye, ruining it and causing a bleeding wound.

The adult feeds on warm organic matter (animal or vegetable) until it has reached its final adult size (about 6 inches). At that point, it mates, and the female flies away to lay her eggs. Minutes after mating, the male bursts into flame and dies (if the weather is warm) or freezes into a hunk of ice (if cold). Shortly after laying her eggs, the female meets the same fate.

ENVIRONMENT: Ember spawn can be found in the slums and ghettos of cities in climates where definite seasonal changes occur, as well as in hot deserts and marshes. Though ember spawn find very hot locations such as the inside of volcanoes pleasant, few creatures suitable as hosts can be found in such places, so the insects do not usually frequent them. Ember spawn cannot survive in areas that are always cold.

In a temperate zone, ember spawn adults emerge from their hosts in the spring, then lay eggs in the summertime. During the winter, those eggs hatch, and the larvae begin to infest hosts, which provide cozy homes for the incubating maggots during the cold weather. In climates that are always hot, the ember spawn's life cycle is not so tied to the seasons.

CHARACTERISTICS: An ember spawn egg appears as a small, brown nodule covered in a viscous slime that helps it to blend in with the surrounding filth. Clutches of eggs are often buried beneath a layer of sand, hot mud, or filth to hide them more effectively. When the eggs hatch, this covering is briefly blown away, revealing the clutch of eggs on a successful DC 15 Spot check.

In its larval stage, an ember spawn measures about 1-1/2 inches long and resembles a grub or maggot, except for its multiple legs and bold orange coloring. Beneath its somewhat thin skin pulse veins of blue and red. The two ends of the creature are nearly indistinguishable except for the sabrelike mandibles flanking its mouth. It is in this stage of life that the ember spawn presents the greatest danger to humanoids.

Inside its host, the ember spawn assumes pupa form after a week of frenzied feeding. Its pupa form is a hard, dark-orange case that usually lodges in the host's sinus cavities. Inside the pupa, the ember spawn slowly matures into its adult form. Its mandibles grow larger, and its body's dorsal side



EMBER SPAWN

CR 1

Always Neutral Fine Vermin (Fire)

Init +9; **Senses** heat sense 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

AC 23, touch 23, flat-footed 18
(+8 size, +5 Dex)

hp 1 (1/4 HD)

Immune fire, mind-affecting effects

Fort +2, **Ref** +6, **Will** +5

Weakness vulnerability to cold

Speed 30 ft., climb 5 ft.

Melee bite +3 (1–5 plus attach) or

Ranged leaping chomp +13 (1–5 plus attach)

Space 1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Base Atk +0; **Grp** +4

Attack Options attach, disease, leaping chomp

Special Actions explosive exit (1d6 plus bleeding & blindness), flesh burrow

Abilities Str 1, Dex 20, Con 11, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 9

SA attach, disease, explosive exit, flesh burrow, leaping chomp

SQ anesthetic slime

Feats Improved Initiative^B

Skills Climb +13, Hide +21, Jump +13

Advancement Adult stage

Anesthetic Slime (Ex): An ember maggot's mandibles are covered with a slimy secretion that numbs the pain of its bite, making its wound undetectable to the victim except by sight.

Attach (Ex): If an ember maggot hits with its leaping chomp or bite attack, it uses its razor-sharp mandibles to latch onto the opponent's body. An attached ember maggot is effectively grappling its prey. The ember maggot loses its Dexterity bonus to AC and has an AC of 14, but it holds on with great tenacity. An ember maggot has a +20 racial bonus on grapple checks (already figured into the grapple modifier above). An attached ember maggot can be struck with a weapon or grappled itself. To remove the creature through grappling, the opponent must achieve a pin against it.

Disease (Ex): Infestation by ember maggots produces a malady known as fire chills. Once an ember maggot has successfully used its flesh burrow to get inside the host's body, the host must immediately make a Fortitude save (DC 14 +1 for each additional ember maggot already inside the host). Success indicates that the host's body has fought off the infestation and the ember maggot that just entered has died, though any others already within the host's body are unaffected. Failure means the new maggot survives and begins feeding. Thereafter, it is treated as a disease.

The incubation period before damage begins to accrue is 1 hour. Thereafter, the host must make a Fortitude save at the same DC each day or take 1 point of Constitution damage, 1 point of Charisma damage, and 1d2 points of nonlethal cold damage for every ember maggot within its body. A character who takes any nonlethal cold damage is fatigued until it heals. The cold damage heals normally only while the character is bundled up or near a heat source; otherwise, healing is suspended until the character dons warm clothing or sits beside a fire. During the first week of infestation, the host's body temperature is constantly below healthy levels and he constantly feels chilly, but motes of high temperature (the individual ember maggots) float around his skin disconcertingly. Two successful Fortitude saves in a row indicate that the character has fought off the infestation and all the ember maggots within his body are dead.

During this period, the ember maggot can be removed with a successful DC 15 Heal check, which kills the maggot. Alternatively, the maggot can be cut out of the host's flesh with a successful attack roll using a dagger or other slashing weapon. In this case, the ember maggot is considered to have concealment (20% miss chance).

If 7 days pass and the victim is still infested, the ember maggots stop feeding on the host's blood and assume pupa form, taking up residence in his sinus cavities. The Constitution and Charisma damage cease, but the nonlethal cold damage continues to accrue each time

the character fails a saving throw. The save DC during this period increases by +5 to reflect the hardness of the pupa form. In addition, the victim suffers from constant, terrible headaches. The ember maggots remain in pupa form for 3 weeks, then emerge from their pupa cases as adult ember spawn and immediately exit from the host's eyes (see Explosive Exit, below).

Explosive Exit (Ex): After incubation, each adult ember spawn exits through the host's eye socket (or other orifice, if it has no eyes), dealing 1d6 points of damage and 1 point of Constitution damage. Creatures immune to critical hits are immune to the Constitution damage dealt by this ability. In addition, the host is permanently blinded in the affected eye. If only one eye is blinded, the host takes a -2 penalty on Spot and Search checks. If all eyes are blinded (that is, if the host was infected with at least as many ember spawn as it has eyes), the host is permanently blinded, though the usual methods of curing this condition still apply.

Flesh Burrow (Ex): If the ember maggot begins its turn attached to a host, it automatically burrows into the flesh through the wound made with its mandibles, shedding its legs in the process. The maggot then "swims" beneath the host's skin until it dies or assumes pupa form, appearing occasionally as a wormlike, fast-moving lump (Spot check opposed by the ember maggot's Hide check, which gains a +5 circumstance bonus while it is inside a host). The appearance of these creatures writhing beneath a host's skin is repulsive in the extreme.

Heat Sense (Ex): The ember spawn can automatically pinpoint the location of any heat source (including a warm-blooded creature) within 60 feet of it, even if it is currently within a higher-temperature heat source than the one approaching. The presence of six ember maggots inside the same host lowers that creature's body temperature to the point that it no longer triggers the heat sense of any other ember spawn eggs.

Leaping Chomp (Ex): When a warm-blooded creature comes within 5 feet of an ember spawn egg, it hatches explosively, propelling the ember maggot toward the target. This attack deals bite damage. If it hits with a ranged attack roll, it automatically attaches to the target (see Attach, above). If it misses, the ember maggot may attempt the leaping chomp again if it makes a successful DC 20 Jump check toward a target no more than 5 feet away.

Skills An ember maggot has a +8 racial bonus on Climb and Jump checks, and it uses its Dexterity bonus instead of its Strength bonus for both of these checks. It can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

becomes more leathery and takes on a deeper brown color, though the underside remains bright orange. Wings grow beneath the upper portion of the carapace. The adult spawn emerges from its host at roughly 2 inches in length, but it continues to grow, reaching a length of 6 inches before finally laying its eggs.

TYPICAL TREASURE

Because they are unintelligent vermin, ember spawn do not collect treasure. However, items of value are sometimes found in refuse pits where eggs are incubating. In general, the value of the treasure from an encounter with eggs or larvae should be coins and mundane goods or weapons. If an adult ember spawn is found near a dead body, that person's possessions become the treasure for the encounter. The treasure should be a mix of equipment and silver and gold coins.

ADVANCED EMBER SPAWN

Ember spawn cannot gain class levels, but their life cycle provides for an advancement of sorts. Most encounters are with ember spawn in the larval stage, but PCs can encounter adult ember spawn as well. In this case, use the alternative statistics provided for the adult ember spawn.

EMBER SPAWN IN EBERRON

Ember spawn can be found in many places throughout Eberron, but a few locations are more favorable than others. The populous and poor regions of Rhukaan Draal are ideal for a durable infestation, and the Shadow Marches, where the druids don't often go, could also harbor a festering plague-at-the-ready. The sewers and depths of Sharn are ideal places for ember spawn to spread their particular form of pestilence to city dwellers.

EMBER SPAWN IN FAERÛN

Ember spawn can appear virtually anywhere in Faerûn, and their presence can tie in easily with the DM's overall campaign plans. For example, in some of the larger cities, such as Waterdeep, an infestation could be part of a larger adventure, but those same large cities would probably have plenty of powerful individuals who could eventually eliminate the threat. If you're interested in making the ember spawn a consistent threat to some area, it would be better to place them in a region with fewer powerful clerics. In general, the poorer areas of port towns make excellent breeding grounds for ember spawn.

EMBER SPAWN LORE

Characters with ranks in Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (nature) can learn more about ember spawn. When a character makes a skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs.

DC	RESULT
12	An ember spawn is a magically created vermin with an affinity for heat and a vulnerability to cold.
17	The larval stage of this creature is the most dangerous. Those who wear armor or can dodge attacks especially well have the best chance of avoiding a painful parasitic infestation. The creature's eggs are found in groups of roughly a dozen, usually hidden beneath some warm substance.
22	Magic that cures disease removes an ember spawn infestation. A person infected by ember spawn larvae feels cooler than normal.

Monica Shellman lives in southern California with all her gaming stuff and some kid who calls her "mom" and makes her feed him. She has previously been published in the prestigious Turlagol Herold. It is not her fault you are too uncool to have ever heard of it.

Penny Williams joined the roleplaying game industry as Game Questions Expert for TSR, Inc. in the 1980s. Since then, she has served as RPGA Network Coordinator, POLYHEDRON Newszine editor, and Senior Editor and Coordinating Editor for the RPG R&D Department at Wizards of the Coast, Inc. Now a busy freelancer, Penny edits for several game companies. When not enhancing the cruelty of designers' creations, Penny puts up jam, does jigsaw puzzles, and works as a substitute teacher for all grade levels.

David Paul lives in lower southwestern Michigan with his wife, two sons, two dogs, four cats, a few hundred RPG books, and several thousand little plastic miniatures. He edited for Pencil Pushers Publishing, d20 Filtered, and Silven before joining the staff of Knowledge Arcana. When he's not busy daydreaming or plotting the downfall of his own D&D players, he teaches philosophy by night at a nearby university and high school mathematics by day at a nearby private high school.

WHICH COMBO DO YOU LIKE? WOULD YOU LIKE?

BY JON MAYES (DER_LEITER)

Ever since the *Axis & Allies Miniatures* Base Set came out, players have understood that certain units have great synergy together. Obvious combinations abound—such as the M1 Garand Rifle and a Commander to harness its Stars and Stripes ability—but other, more subtle or complicated options exist as well.

FAVORITES FROM THE FORUM

Posing the question, “What’s your favorite AAM combo and why?” on the *Axis & Allies Miniatures* forum netted some interesting replies. Some of these may seem obvious and others devious, but all are useful in the right circumstances.



WEHRMACHT OBERLEUTNANT + SS-PANZERGRENADIERS

Member Lotus was the first to respond with this combination—one of his favorites since the release of Set II. The Oberleutnant provides good antitank support, but more importantly, it gives your soldiers access to *Angriff*, which allows them to move and then attack with a +1 bonus. With 5/5 defense, the SS-Panzergrenadiers are difficult to stop with defensive fire, and they attack with 10 dice against soldiers and 7 against vehicles, hitting on a result of 3 or better. These values are enough to damage most units in the game, but what makes the SS even more deadly is their *Ruthless* ability. If they use *Angriff* against a disrupted unit, they hit on any result except a 1! Lotus correctly points out that this combo works well for supporting your tanks, especially as a deterrent to keep enemy units from approaching too closely.

Member RaidingParty suggests using SS-Stormtroopers instead of the SS-Panzergrenadiers because of their extra close assault and infantry attack dice up close. Since *Angriff* allows attacks only

against units in the same hex, the Stormtroopers become even more effective.

As a Japanese variation on this theme, RaidingParty suggests the Imperial Sergeant and SNLF Fanatic as a combo. The Sergeant’s *Banzai Charge* is the same as *Angriff*, but on a cheaper commander than the Oberleutnant. The SNLF Fanatics are deadly with *Hand-to-Hand 12* and *Hard Charger*. Even if defensive fire prevents the Fanatic from entering the enemy’s hex, *Hard Charger* removes the disrupted counter before combat. With *Hand-to-Hand 12*, the Fanatic should be able to cleave through enemy opposition. Predator666 adds that this combo also works well with the basic *Arisaka Rifle*—a cheaper alternative to the Fanatic that still has the same powerful *Hand-to-Hand 12* ability. But since they lack the *Hard Charger* ability, the *Arisakas* work best if machine guns or other ranged anti-infantry units soften up the opposition by disrupting the enemy infantry first.

In addition, members Frogslayer and Predator666 point out that throwing a *Panzerfaust 30* or *Panzerschreck* into the mix with either the Oberleutnant or the Imperial Sergeant provides some better antitank support, since the regular soldiers might not be enough to take on heavier tanks such as the *M26 Pershing*, *Churchill Crocodiles*, or *IS-2s*.

2

WEHRMACHT ELITE SNIPER AND PAK 40 ANTITANK GUN

Members FSSF and Canuck_Captain were among a few who posted a deadly and popular anti-tank combo using the Wehrmacht Elite Sniper and a PAK 40 Antitank Gun. This combo works best if you win initiative so that an SS-Hauptsturmführer may

increase its effectiveness. When you win initiative, you can use the sniper's Headshot ability to disrupt an enemy tank. (With a roughly 90% chance of hitting, it's unlikely that you'll miss.) Next, your PAK 40 can follow up with a powerful anti-tank attack. But even if the PAK fails to do serious harm, the sniper's Headshot ability keeps the enemy tank immobilized for the next turn as well, giving your PAK another chance.



3

TYPE 89 MORTAR AND SNLF CAPTAIN

Member Uncle_Joe suggests a Japanese combo that teams the Type 89 Mortar with the SNLF Captain. The mortar's 7 attack dice combined with shrapnel give it a 43% chance of scoring two hits against any infantry

in the game all by itself. But when you add the mortar's Seasoned Crew ability and the captain's Pinpointer, enemy soldiers hit by the mortar's attack can roll cover only on a result of 6, which greatly reduces their survival rate. Because it can strike up to eight hexes away, this combo poses a serious threat to enemy infantry and is an excellent choice for Japanese-themed Axis armies.



4

3" GUN M5 AND 40MM BOFORS L60

A proposal from member Frogslayer teams the 3" Gun M5 with 40mm Bofors L60 in the same hex because the two units complement each other's weaknesses especially well. The 3" Gun is a capable anti-tank unit, but it's next to useless against infantry. Aircraft in particular pose a

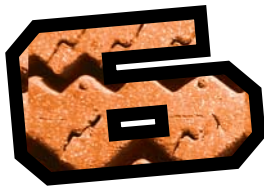
serious threat to it, since it can't return fire and has such a low defense. The Bofors AA gun, on the other hand, is only somewhat effective against light vehicles, but it's outstanding against aircraft and infantry. Together, these units can handle nearly any threat facing them, and the pair costs only 21 points.

5

82MM M-37 MORTARS AND KV-1

This popular Russian combo submitted by member Tragicmishap is somewhat expensive, but its utility can make the investment worthwhile. Units such as 82mm M-37 Mortars can be effective against infantry but difficult to use because their indirect fire requires

Forward Observers, which are easily killed early in the game. To help the Red Army Forward Observer survive, Tragicmishap recommends mounting the mortars on a KV-1, which can be very difficult to kill because of its high defense and its HULKING MASS ability. And even if the KV-1 starts taking a lot of fire, the Red Army FO can always dismount if necessary. To provide some anti-tank support and get more use out of your spotter, you can also add an IL-10 Sturmovik.



BM-13 KATYUSHA ROCKET LAUNCHER AND COMMUNIST PARTISANS

RaidingParty offers another excellent suggestion for the BM-13 Katyusha Rocket Launcher, which is notoriously fragile and difficult to use. If you field one, your enemies are likely to scatter their infantry to negate your rocket salvo. Furthermore, when you do make an attack, it's unlikely that Katyusha will survive with its mere 1/1 defense because any unit that has line of sight to it can easily destroy it.

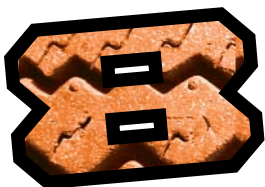
RaidingParty proposes using Communist Partisans in conjunction with the Katyusha, since they can be set up on the edges of your opponent's deployment zone. At a mere 3 points, the partisans should tie up at least an equal value of enemy infantry for a turn or two. Meanwhile you can move your Katyusha into position and unload a rocket salvo on them. This tactic is likely to result in the destruction of both the enemy and the partisans, but if the latter have managed to delay even a handful of infantry, they have done their jobs and can die heroically, in a true Soviet-style sacrifice. As RaidingParty notes, this tactic is a common defense used by "Commissar"-style players who don't mind sacrificing a few troops for the greater good.



BRITISH GURKHA RIFLEMEN AND INSPIRING LIEUTENANT

Member Towelie recommends an Allied take on the Angriff/Banzai Charge combo using the British Gurkha Riflemen and Inspiring Lieutenant. The lieutenant's Tally-Ho! ability allows the Gurkhas to move two hexes during the movement phase and enter the enemy's hex. The Gurkhas that aren't stopped by defensive fire can then use Hand to Hand 10 against infantry or Close Assault 7 against vehicles. Most enemy infantry—even elites—won't survive that attack, and Close Assault 7 is enough to stop all but the most heavily armored of vehicles.

Alternatively, Canuck_Captain suggests using the Gurkhas with a Bold Captain, giving them 5/5 defense against defensive fire to significantly increase their chance of entering the enemy hex. While using both the Bold Captain and Inspiring Lieutenant is certainly an option, that combo is pretty expensive for regular games. Thus, it is recommended only for those who enjoy playing larger games—say, 150 points and up.



COMMISSARS OR KUOMINTANG RIFLEMEN AND 82MM M-37 MORTARS

Member LoeweAusNorden notes that Commissars and cheap fodder such as Kuomintang Riflemen work well with the 82mm M-37 Mortars, negating their inaccurate 1 penalty. A Cossack Captain mounted on a KV-1 makes for a unit that's nearly invulnerable to close assault attacks from infantry. And the Marines M2-2 Flamethrower mounted on a Jeep is a highly mobile unit that can threaten nearly any target in the game.

SUMMARY

The combos detailed above are but a few of the options that can be created for *Axis & Allies Miniatures*. Simple combos such as the Imperial Sergeant and the SNLF Fanatic can be added to most Axis armies, while the more complex and costly Russian combos involving multiple units can form the basis of an Allied army. Try them out and see what works for you, and don't be afraid to experiment with them. Part of the fun of playing AAM comes from discovering which combinations of units work best.

Jon Mayes, aka Der_Leiter, lives in Newmarket, Ontario (Canada). He's been working in retail for a few years now, first as a customer service manager for Wal-Mart, and now as a sales rep for Best Buy. He's also majoring in History and Psychology at York University and hoping to become a teacher. When not working or studying, he's often organizing and playing in game events, building perilous dungeons for his D&D group, or reviewing the latest AAM units.

A&A PACIFIC

RULES FOR VARIANT PLAY

BY BRYCE WHITACRE (WIZO_SINISTER)

In a typical A&A game, Japan grabs as much land and as many IPCs as possible in an effort to gain enough victory points for a win. Most of the time, this strategy requires attacking Southeast Asia, where the IPC values are high. But time is of the essence, since America has 75 IPCs per turn to spend building a huge fleet that most often sails directly to Japan. Thus, either Japan wins on victory points by the time the American fleet reaches its shores, or it loses enough IPC value that it doesn't gain a victory point at all. This basic strategy does little to recreate the tension of the real historical island battles, so I decided to create an A&A Pacific variant that would make it possible to model some of the great island battles and engagements between the Americans and the Japanese.

CHANGES

The first necessary change was to provide Japan with a better reason to move against the USA. A quick look at the Pacific board map reveals nothing of value to lure the Japanese player toward America except the Round 1 surprise attack against Pearl Harbor. None of the islands east of Japan has any IPC value except the already controlled Bonin Islands. Thus, in this variant, every Pacific Island that previously had no IPC value now has a value of 1 for the Japanese, and every captured Allied island now has an IPC value of 2 for Japan. Suddenly, the whole strategy of moving toward America and recreating what actually happened in WWII becomes a viable Japanese strategy.

The next hurdle is the vast differential between the American and the Japanese industrial power. How could Japan, with its paltry 19 IPCs per turn, ever hope to go up against America, with its 75 IPCs per turn? A brief study of the setup quickly reveals that the US could replace all the value it lost at Pearl Harbor on the first turn of the game. So although the US wartime production really was significantly larger than Japan's in WWII, I decided to increase America's industrial power more gradually in order to entice the Japanese player. Thus, the US mainland has an initial IPC value of 15, which increases by 5 every turn until it reaches its maximum production of 55. This gradual increase gives the Japanese player the freedom to grab islands, fortify positions with pillboxes, and engage the Americans while keeping an eye on the gathering strength of their industrial machine. The American player may want to take more of a gamble as well, knowing that more IPCs are on the way on each subsequent turn. This arrangement should result in some risky early-stage battles for the US, along the lines of the real WWII battle over the Solomon Islands.

Next, the variant needed to stress naval combat over other options. So I reduced the cost of battleships and carriers and lowered the cost of fighters to 10 IPCs, keeping the entire cost system in line with the design philosophy of A&A: Revised. I also created an air dominance rule to illustrate the sheer tactical power of the fighter, the dive bomber, and the torpedo bomber. Finally, I added a pillbox rule because I liked the hard, gritty theme of Americans attempting to take islands back from the Japanese.

The last change was to the victory point system. In my opinion, the system in the current Pacific rules is more about avoiding war than fighting it. Not one of the Pacific games I have played has ever included a great naval battle after Pearl. The Japanese player simply takes out as much of Southeast Asia as possible before the American juggernaut destroys him. So I cut out VPs and made the goal an economic victory. This victory condition combined with my new IPC rules on unvalued islands makes moving toward America a very attractive possibility.

Although this variant has been playtested, it has not had nearly as much playtesting as the Avalon Hill rules have. So if you and your buddies try it out, you may very well find a loophole, or even come up with some cool ideas I hadn't thought of. I'd love to hear how your games went and any suggestions for improving Pacific engagement. You can e-mail me your battle reports or suggestions at Sinister@wizo.wizards.com, and if I get enough responses, you can be sure that a 2.0 revision will appear in these pages.



RULES OF THE PACIFIC: ISLAND ENGAGEMENT VERSION 1.0

Unless otherwise stated, all rules for A&A Pacific are in effect.

JAPAN VICTORY CONDITIONS

Japan no longer scores victory points, and the victory chart is not used. Japan can win either by capturing an enemy capital (India, New South Wales, or the United States) and holding it for 1 turn *or* by earning an income of 46 IPCs and holding it for 1 full round.

ALLIED VICTORY CONDITIONS

The Allies win if they capture Japan or force its production below 15 IPCs per turn for 1 full round.

SPECIAL JAPANESE RULES

The following rule changes apply to the Japan player only.

REVISED ISLAND IPCS

Japan begins play with 25 IPCs. Each island with no printed IPC value is worth 1 IPC to the Japanese. Each island Japan captures that was under Allied control at the beginning of the game generates 2 IPCs for Japan only.

BATTLESHIPS

At the beginning of the game, Japan may nominate two battleships as the Yamamoto and the Mushasi. Place a Japanese control marker under each of these ships. Each can take 3 hits before it is destroyed.

PILLBOXES

For a cost of 3 IPCs, Japan can construct a pillbox on a Pacific island. The presence of a pillbox reduces the effectiveness of enemy bombardment by 2 (battleships bombard on 2). Use a red chip to signify a pillbox, or you can use a blockhouse from *Axis and Allies: D-Day* if you own that game.

SPECIAL USA RULES

The following special rules apply to the US player only.

DELAYED IPC PRODUCTION

Though the United States was a major industrial power, its leaders were not prepared for Pearl Harbor. Thus, the country needed some time to maximize its wartime productivity. Therefore, the US begins the game with 35 IPCs, and the US mainland is worth 15 IPCs at the start of the game. Each turn, after placing US units, the US player adds 5 to the mainland US IPC value to represent

the country's new wartime production capabilities and collects the new amount. This process continues until the US mainland is worth 55 IPCs.

LEND LEASE

Once per turn, the US may lend up to 10 IPCs to any Allied player.

SPECIAL PACIFIC ENGAGEMENT RULES

The following special rules apply to this variant.

AIR DOMINANCE

In a naval engagement, if one side either has no fighters or loses all its fighters, the enemy player may choose his opponent's casualties for every fighter hit. This privilege is in effect for as long as the attacker has at least one fighter on his side. Thus, it is not advisable to move a fleet without air support into a CAP (combat air patrol), since the CAP player would get to choose the casualties he inflicts. This rule does not apply to land battles.

FIGHTER COST REDUCTION

To encourage the buildup of air power, each fighter costs only 10 IPCs.

BATTLESHIP/CARRIER COST REDUCTION

To encourage naval construction, each carrier costs only 16 IPCs, and each battleship costs 21 IPCs.

PROTRACTED ISLAND ENGAGEMENTS

If an island battle lasts more than 3 combat turns, the island is contested and generates no IPCs. All surviving units are left on the island, and combat resumes on the turn of the next player who is participating in that battle. A player cannot leave combat, but he may reinforce his position on his next combat phase. New units arriving on the island follow all the normal rules for amphibious assaults.

WizO Sinister resides in Fort Wayne, Indiana with his wife and two cats. He is an inventory manager for a local gaming store, the founder of the Friends of Gen Con (a fan-based gaming club), a playtester for Gorilla Games, a demoer for Your Move Games, and a moderator for Avalon Hill. He is planning a trip to Catan, where he intends to introduce "seize and control" war tactics to one group of settlers, while the rest cope with the limitations of resource management.



NEVERMORE

BY MEAGHAN HOPE
(MYST_THE_MOONSCOUT)

Oh, dreary night!
The rain never
seems to stop, but
even its incessant
pounding is not enough
to drive the knife from my mind. He is back
there—I know it. Every night that he follows me,
I can feel him. Will he never leave me alone?

The people on the street must think I'm crazy,
looking over my shoulder all the time. They keep to
their business and pretend not to see the pitiable creature
that walks beside them. Huddled in their long coats, they
shade their faces with their umbrellas and walk on with
purpose. I don't know whether their studied indifference
results from politeness or fear of me.

But the crows—oh, the crows! They see me.
Everywhere they sit, watching me. Their glass-
marble eyes follow my every step, and their cawing
drowns out the drumming of the rain, piercing my

ears like so many fine needles. I must try to listen though, through the rain and the crows. I must hear him coming. I can tell his footsteps by the three-beat cadence he makes with his cane—clack, clack, tick, clack, clack, tick. Most of the time when he comes after me, I can hear that odd gait—slow, methodical, and maddening. But tonight I can't hear it—the rain and the crows drown out all other sound. Curse them! I can't see him either, because the sooty sky offers no moonlight to illuminate the street for me. But I know he's there. The library will be closing soon—maybe I can slip in the door and hide for the night.

It is quiet here—a blessed relief from the cacophony outside. The library's antique roof muffles the drumbeat of the rain and keeps me dry. The rain walls me in now, running in sheets down the glass windowpanes like some kind of fluid skin on the building. The crows have stopped their chorus, but I can see their tiny forms perched along railings and power lines like rows of jurors in a courtroom. They turn their heads from side to side and shake the rain from their feathers, but they seek no shelter.

One by one, the library's lights go out. Hidden in the antiquities wing, I can see the shadowy feet of the security guards as they go about their rounds. A sheet of light spills under the doorway as each guard walks past with his flashlight, his footsteps growing louder and then echoing ever more faintly in the distant dark. Oh, would that they could help me! But they cannot—no one can. At least it is quiet here, and I can spend the night in peace. I curl up on the settee and wait for sleep to come.

It is just past midnight now. Fitful moonlight creeps through the windows, throwing fragments of light beneath desks and along aisles, and casting tangled shadows about the maze of bookshelves. Perhaps he won't find me this night. Perhaps this one night I will be free.

My eyelids have the weight of a downy comforter, drifting comfortably closed almost of their own volition. I snuggle down more firmly into the settee and try to sleep, but the air is heavy in my lungs, and easy rest refuses to come.

Then another set of footsteps approaches. My eyes snap open. I wait and watch, but no accompanying light shines under the door. Just footsteps—clack, clack, tick, clack, clack, tick. It's him! His heels and his polished cane click sharply on the hardwood hall floor, letting me hear each beat of his dreaded gait clearly as he draws nearer. Then the footsteps stop, just outside my door. I can feel the pit in my stomach growing bigger as I wait to see what he will do. Like a trapped animal, I roll up in one corner of the settee and hide my face in its velvet cushions. Maybe he doesn't know for sure that I'm here. If I make no sound, maybe he'll turn away. Then I hear another sound—a modest tapping at the door—slow but distinct raps in groups of three, like his footsteps. I hold what breath I have left in me and wait.

The sound stops. After a few moments of silence, I raise my eyes tentatively from the pillow and look around, but I see only the darkness, punctuated by small bits of moonlight. I pull myself up to the window. The rain has stopped. I look out into the calm night sky through the tiny beads of water clinging to the pane. The crows are still there—watching and waiting. I lean back from the window, away from the accusing flock, and fall to the floor. The old carpet feels like fine steel wool, pricking lightly into the skin of my palm. The air has grown thick with perfume, as though the room has aged by a hundred years.

Beneath my hands, an encroaching shadow spreads against the angle of the light. I turn sharply but cannot see its source—only the black pool of shadow eating up the fragment of moonlight. A gentle tapping sounds from above, drawing my eyes upward. There he sits, on top of a bookcase, one leg crossed over the other, tapping his cane lightly against the lower shelf. With each subtle shift in movement, I hear the tinkling of the silver chain that holds his waistcoat. I won't look into his face. No. I can't go yet—not yet—it is not time!

I am dreaming—I must be. Surely this is just another nightmare. No undertaker sits before me on a bookshelf at the blackest hour of the night. Perhaps it's the musky air and the insane chatter of the crows that has caused this hallucination. Or maybe it's the weight of undreamt dreams on my eyes. Or maybe it's a result of that fever I had years ago.

I have just about convinced myself that the vision is not real when a knock at the window startles me. I shut my eyes quickly. I will not see him! A second knock, much louder, deals a swift blow to my resolve, and I open my eyes to see one of the black-feathered birds, talons scratching at the window as it throws itself against the glass. I jump back and look up in spite of myself. He is still there. The elegant phantom sits atop the bookcase, watching me and tapping his cane. Then he tilts his head and touches a silk glove to the brim of his hat. With that gesture, his black shadow spreads over me.

I feel lighter somehow, but chilled, as though my blood has frozen and now sits outside me like a layer of frost. Trapped in that black shadow, I can see his form hovering above me like a great black bird. In his dreaming eyes are all the places my soul has feared to tread. I want to speak, to tell him to leave me to my state. My place is still here. But alas, the air is heavy and will not carry my words. Then he looks at me, and I behold my worst fear. Floating in the depths of that darkness with no body, I feel the sudden weight of the deathless years I have wandered. I would welcome the sun. He smiles, his lips curling into his cheeks like the horns of a demon. Said the raven, never more.

Meaghan Hope is a college student residing in northern British Columbia. She is currently studying social work and English at Northern Lights College, but she spends entirely too much time on frivolous writing projects that almost never get finished. To spare her meager budget, she limits her gaming to D&D and Magic: the Gathering, but she has to try at least a little bit of everything else.



GAMING NIGHTS

BY MONICA SHELLMAN (ELISANDRA)
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROGER EDWARDS

with Style

Ever look through the pages of a magazine such as *Martha Stewart's Living* and think "Sure, that article about turning an antique printing press into a laundry press looks great, but what about a few crafty ideas for showing off my minis to their best advantage?" Do you have more dice than you do games to use them in? Are you getting tired of your nongamer friends and relatives thinking you've got no style? Have you been wondering if you're ever going to find a use for that stack of Chimney Imps in your closet?

Do we ever have a magazine for you! Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and the publisher of *Knowledge Arcana*

are proud to present the premiere issue of *Ginger's Gaming*, a publication dedicated to the genteel side of imaginary violence. Below is an excerpt from one of the timely and useful articles in which Ginger teaches you how to use your gaming paraphernalia to create a beautiful home.

A GAMER NIGHT PARTY

A game gathering can be a great excuse to "put on the blink dog" and throw an elegant party for those geeks you hang out with—er, your friends and fellow gamers. With just a tiny bit of effort (and the Almighty

Hot Glue Gun), you can turn every game session into a festive and special event. After all, those dorks you play with every Friday night are part of your social circle—and not just because they chip in for pizza and sodas. So why not show them how important they are to you next time you host the gathering at your abode? No, we're not talking about hiring a stripper, you big perv. We're trying to give you a little style and taste here. So work with us, hmm?

Below are several "gamer night" ideas to get you started. Once you've tried a few, you're bound to come up with more ideas of your own. When you do, be sure to write to *Ginger's Gaming* at knowledgearcana@wizo.wizards.com and share them with the staff so we can have a good laugh—er, that is, consider them for publication.

- Want to protect your wood furniture from your group's glasses of Mountain Dew? Try covering those inexpensive and ever-plentiful land cards with clear contact paper on one side and self-adhesive cork on the other. Now you have a set of beautiful yet functional coasters!
- Character sheets covered with clear contact paper on both sides make attractive placemats. Just wipe with a damp sponge and air dry for a quick cleanup.
- Create an attractive "floral" centerpiece with dice, sharp pencils, and a worn-out, hex-based battlemat. Simply cut out flower shapes from your battlemat, using the hex grid as a guide for the petals. Punch a small hole in the center of each "flower" with your scissors and insert a pencil, point up, for a stem. You may color the petals of your hex flowers with wet-erase markers if you want some pizzazz. Then, fill a clear glass vase (or a clean, empty pasta sauce jar) halfway with some colorful dice. (This is a good way to use up pretty dice that no longer belong to a complete set.) Insert your completed pencil-and-hex flowers into the dice, eraser end first, and arrange them attractively, using the dice as anchors. Presto! You have a unique floral display that won't rot.
- Did you know that candles can help create an appropriately spooky or medieval mood during a gaming session? Create simple yet elegant votive

Junk Food Casserole

WHEN YOUR FOOD DEMANDS SACRIFICE



WARNING! This recipe is very high in salt, fat, carbohydrates, and probably some new, unhealthy food ingredient yet to be discovered by medical science. Do not eat this casserole if you have any health problems. In fact, your cholesterol might shoot up 100 points just from reading this card. Don't say you weren't warned.

- Olive oil (non-stick cooking spray)
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 lb. ground beef (1 cup canned whole beans, such as pinto, kidney, or black, drained and rinsed)
- 1 package taco seasoning, or to taste (1 teaspoon chili powder, or to taste)
- 1 bag Fritos™, Doritos™, Cheetos™ or your favorite snack chip (1 bag plain or baked tortilla chips)
- 1 or 2 cans sliced black olives (optional)
- 1 jar spicy cheese dip (1 can lowfat/low-sodium spicy or plain cheesy condensed soup)
- Milk, enough to thin the dip or soup
- 1/2 cup grated cheddar or Mexican-blend cheese (1/2 cup lowfat shredded cheese, or a soy cheese that tastes good and melts well)

Cookie/Candy Pizza

PIZZA WAS NEVER SO CONFUSED



- 1 tube refrigerated sugar cookie dough (1 tube lowfat cookie dough)
- Red jam or jelly, your favorite flavor (no-sugar jam)
- Shredded baking coconut (unsweetened coconut)
- Various bite-sized candies, such as M&M's™, Skittles™, jelly beans, or the like (fresh berries)

Pizza is one of the most famous, traditional gamer foods known—but so are candies and bite-sized snacks. This recipe morphs the two into one mighty abomination destined to destroy the world—or at least your waistline.

Green Slime Dip

THESE DORITOS FAILED THEIR SAVING THROWS



- 1 tub fairly thick prepared guacamole (at least 2 cups)
- 1 8-oz. container sour cream
- Green Tabasco™ sauce
- Green food coloring
- Chips or veggies for dipping

Looking for a delicious way to bring the "flavor" of your dungeon to the dinner table? Set out a bowl of this dip with some chips! You could even cut a piece of bread into the shape of a struggling human and place him in the dip, as though he were being slowly consumed by the slime.

Gaming Night Recipe Cards!

Just print this page out and cut along the dotted lines, and you'll never be at a loss for gaming goodies again!

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly grease a 2-quart casserole dish and set aside.
2. Using a small amount of your favorite cooking oil, sauté the onions over medium heat until translucent. Add the ground beef and cook until no pink shows. During cooking, add the taco seasoning, making sure you mix it in well with the meat and onions.
3. Cover the bottom of the greased casserole dish with the chips you have chosen. If they are large, break them up into smaller pieces as you place them in the dish. (Ordinary Fritos don't need to be broken, but Doritos or other tortilla chips probably do).
4. Add the ground beef and onion mixture, layering it on top of your chips. Top with half the olives, if you are using them.
5. Thin the cheese dip with enough milk to make it pourable but still fairly thick. If you are using a water-based soup, omit the milk and thin

it with some water instead. Pour this sauce over the meat and chips, making sure you get it into all the corners and cover as much surface as possible.

6. Lightly crush some of the chips and sprinkle them on top of casserole to create a crispy topping. Sprinkle some cheese over the crushed chips, then scatter the rest of the olives on top.
7. Cover your casserole with aluminum foil, making sure it doesn't actually touch the food. Seal the foil around the edges, then place the dish on the center rack of your oven. Bake for about 20 minutes, or until the liquid is bubbling. Remove the foil and bake an additional 10 minutes, or until the cheese toasts up a bit.
8. Make your peace with your higher power, serve, and enjoy!

1. Preheat oven to the temperature indicated on your tube of refrigerated dough. If you are using a pie plate, lightly grease it with butter or margarine, then press the cookie dough into it, making it as smooth and even in thickness as possible. If you are using a pizza stone, roll the cookie dough out in a circle on a cutting board, using sugar or a light dusting of flour to prevent sticking, then place on the stone.
2. Bake the giant cookie according to package directions (if the package includes instructions for "fruit pizza") or about 20 minutes. Be sure to check the cookie for browning and bake until it is golden and not shiny. Remove from oven and let cool.
3. Spread a layer of red jam over the top of the cookie, leaving a small margin around the edges for the "crust." Sprinkle the coconut over the top as though it were cheese, making sure you can still see some of the jam "sauce." Then press your chosen candies into the jam. You can use

one topping or many, just as if it were a real pizza.

4. Slice the cookie pizza into wedges and serve. If you have a small pizza box that you can clean up, you can serve it in that. Just make sure the pizza box:
 - Is no more than 1 day old
 - Has been scraped as clean as you can get it
 - Never contained a garlic or anchovy pizza
5. Cover the bottom of the box with clean waxed paper before putting in your creation to make sure no savory pizza flavors invade it.

1. Combine guacamole and sour cream in a bowl, mixing well until smooth.
2. Add green Tabasco sauce to taste; mix well.
3. Add green food coloring a few drops at a time, mixing well after each addition, until the dip is a shade not found in nature.
4. Mound dip into a glass bowl that shows off its color and stick a few chips or veggies in it for garnish. If desired, stick a plastic frog in it as well, but make sure no one tries to eat the frog. Serve and enjoy.



holders by gluing minis to the reflective side of an old game CD. Then place a votive or tealight candle in the center. The CD reflects the light of the candle, making it seem brighter, and the minis can create deliciously scary shadows on the table. Make sure your minis face outward, away from the candle, and pose heroically before the flickering light.

- Plastic deck boxes make handy serving bowls for snacks of all sorts, from dips and veggie sticks to chips and the vitally important M&Ms' candies.
- Extra StarSisterz™ charms can be used to make interesting wine glass charms for marking each guest's glass. Simply slip a charm onto a length of ribbon and tie it around the stem of a glass with a nice bow. (You do have to be using decent wine glasses and not those plastic juice cups you got out of the cereal box, though.)
- When setting your sideboard, make the hunt for sustenance more exciting by strategically placing your *Axis & Allies* minis around the food to provide a historical context. Broccoli florets become a forest, dinner rolls are gently rolling hills, and punch bowls are lakes that must be crossed to get to the enemy beyond. Creating a historically accurate battlefield that mimics the site of some famous combat is sure to wow your gaming friends and have them talking for days to come. Battle of the Bulge, anyone?



- Create whimsical luminarias (or more accurately, farolitos) to decorate your game table or the entrance to your home. Simply take ordinary paper lunch bags and trace the included pattern of the Wizards of the Coast logo. Cut out the outline of the image, being careful not to cut the bottom of the bag. Unfold the bag and fill it partially with sand or nonflammable kitty litter, then nestle a

small votive or tealight inside. (If you'd rather use white holiday lights, just punch a small hole in the bottom of the bag and insert them there.) Never leave your Wizards of the Coast luminarias/farolitos unattended, and never place them on a surface that isn't heatproof. Dead customers are not repeat customers—at least, that's the Marketing Department's current theory.

- You can easily make attractive guest soaps to fit your decorating style. Simply purchase some inexpensive clear glycerin soap blocks at a craft store. You can also buy commercial soap molds there, or if you prefer, you can use your old deck boxes—just be sure to clean the sour cream and onion dip out of them first. Microwave the soap to melt it, following the package instructions, then pour the melted soap into your mold, plop a die in the center, and voila! After it hardens and you unmold it, you'll have some pretty hand soaps for your guests to use. In the bathroom, that is—before they return to the game table and touch your stuff. We're just saying.
- Don't be afraid to use your "antique" gaming items to help set the mood. *Empires in Arms* maps make attractive window coverings, and the video that was included with the *Dragonstrike* game can run in the background to delight children and adults alike. Be creative and have fun!

GAME FOOD

Since no gaming night would be complete without junk food, we've included a couple of recipes on the previous page to help you turn your junk food into delicious party dishes. Just cut out the handy clip-n-keep recipe cards and store them in a deck box in your kitchen. Your guests won't be able to stop talking about your culinary expertise—even from their hospital beds while they recover from their fat-, salt-, sugar-, and cholesterol-laden meal. Elderly gamers who have wet blankets for doctors may substitute the healthier alternative ingredients included in parentheses, even though they sound suspiciously healthy to us, and just a bit anti-gamer.

YOU KNOW YOU WANT IT!

Other items of interest in our fabulous first issue include crochet patterns for dicebags, how to craft a deck box from chipwood and wallpaper scraps, and much, much more! You just can't wait, can you?

Monica Shellman lives in southern California with all her gaming stuff and some kid who calls her "mom" and makes her feed him. She has previously been published in the prestigious Turlagol Herold. It is not her fault you are too uncool to have ever heard of it.



THE REAL REASON DINOSAURS ARE EXTINCT?



TRIKE TESTS PIZZA FOR YUMMY FACTOR



TRICERATOPS VS TRIDORITOSLOPS

FOOD STYLISTS:
DUSTIN AND ROGER EDWARDS



By: Carol Ellzey (Squee's Main Squeeze) and A.H. (Kirbyrockz)

REMEMBER THEIR NAMES

Although there is only a small chance that you will come across these monsters, if you do, you would be well advised to run as fast as you can. (<http://www.neopets.com/evil.phtml>)

Nothing strikes fear into the heart of your opponent quite like a Villain. The Neopets game offers Villain cards that make formidable adversaries in any arena, but in fact they are much more versatile than they first appear. Not only can these cards be used to slow down your opponent, but they can also be utilized to your advantage as part of a more complex strategy.

ARENA SUPPORT

In a simple deck—one designed simply to utilize cards that stand well on their own—Villains can make up the stats for your weak arenas. Here are some solid, well-rounded Villains that work well for each arena.

STRENGTH

Strength is a heavily played arena, but if you're lacking in buff, try using Scordrax the Furious, a Fire Villain.

To play this, you need a Fire Neopet. You can start contests against this Villain only with two or more Neopets. When this Villain loses a contest, the player who defeated it draws two cards.

Because of its whopping 28 Strength and the fact that it can be fought only with two or more Neopets, Scordrax destroys Strength arenas.

AGILITY

If you are lacking in the Agility arena, try using the Shadow Usul, a Dark Villain.

To play this, you need a Dark Neopet. You must also choose another card in your hand and discard it. When this Villain loses a contest, the player who defeated it draws a card. This Villain is returned to its owner's hand instead of discarded.

Although you have to discard a card to use it, and 19 Agility isn't the highest available, the fact that this Villain returns to your hand when defeated helps to keep the Agility arena blocked out.



MAGIC

For the Magic arena, the Darkest Faerie (Base set version), another Dark Villain, is an excellent choice.

To play this, you need a Dark Neopet. When this Villain loses a contest, the player who defeated it draws a card. Put a Basic Neopet that loses a contest to this Villain on the bottom of the Neopet stack. Discard a Hero or Experienced Neopet that loses a contest to this Villain.

With 23 Magic and the ability to force the discard of a Neopet or Hero it has defeated, it's no wonder that the Darkest Faerie caused so much trouble in Neopia!

INTELLIGENCE

For the Intelligence arena, Caylis from the Maraquas set makes a great Light Villain.

To play this card, you need a Light Neopet. When you play this card, you may search your deck for a Curse and put it into your hand, then shuffle your deck. When this Villain loses a contest, untap all its rivals.

On top of gaining a 20 intelligence, you get to search for a Curse and put it in your hand without revealing it to your opponent! Such a tactic opens up lots of strategies.

GENERAL UTILITY

Another Villain with all around versatility is Tura-Kepek, a Fire Villain.

To play this, you need a Fire Neopet. Heroes and Experienced Neopets can't start contests except against Tura-Kepek. When this Villain loses a contest, the player who defeated it draws a card.

Not only can you use Tura-Kepek to disable a couple of your opponent's strategies, but his 20s in both Magic and Intelligence mean that you're likely to disable them for a while!

BATTLE YOURSELF

Not only are Villains good for hindering your opponent, but you can also set them up to battle your own Neopets in order to gain an advantage. One good Villain for such a use is the notorious Dr Sloth.

To play this, you need a Dark Neopet. A player can't start a contest against this Villain with only one Neopet or Hero. When this Villain loses a contest, untap all its rivals, and the player who defeated it draws two cards.

Dr. Sloth can be a bit tricky to use, since at least two Neopets and/or Heroes are needed to defeat him, but 10 Agility is easy to overcome with two contestants, and you can gain a serious advantage by both drawing two cards and untapping his him.

Another Villain worth playing as a self-defeating ploy is the Angry Tax Beast, an Air Neopet.

When you play this card, each player who has at least 15 points in his or her bank must discard a card

from there. When this Villain loses a contest, the player who defeated it may bank an item or equipment from his or her hand.

Angry Tax Beast is a nice card to both knock back an opponent who is getting close to winning and give yourself an easy opportunity to bank a card—especially with only a 2 Strength!

COMBINATION PLAYS

Another way you can use Villains to your advantage is in combination with other cards. A tricky, game-winning combination is to pit the Shadow Usul (described above) against your own Neopet. Equip your Neopet in the Agility arena with the Petpet equipment Scream.

To play this, tap one of your Neopets. At the end of each agility contest this Petpet's Neopet or Hero is in, untap its Neopet or Hero.

Next, put the Shadow Usul in the same arena. You can have the two battle indefinitely, discarding and drawing a card with each winning challenge until you have exactly what you need in your hand to finish off your opponent!

Kirbyrockz is an expert Neopets TCG player and combo master. Carol strives to play the TCG when she can and to learn from Kirby's combo skills.



The Contest

Villains are not only super-cool characters from the world of Neopia that we alternately revile and love, they're also a strong card type that can be used to your advantage in a variety of ways.

So How Would You Design a Villian Deck?

Post your Villian-based deck on the message boards for a chance to win a starter deck and some Neopets Battle for Meridell Booster Packs from *Knowledge Arcana's* prize locker. Post your tournament-legal deck based around one or more Villian cards on the contest thread in the Neopets TCG General forum. The authors will review all the entries and choose the top five decks, based on creativity and playability. First place wins a starter deck and ten boosters, second wins a starter deck and eight boosters, third wins a starter deck and five boosters, fourth wins a starter deck and three boosters, and fifth wins a starter deck. The contest closes on August 13, 2006.

LIFE FROM THE

LEDGE

BY EVAN HUNT (MYSTERYHUNT)



A NEW TAKE ON UNTARGETABILITY

Let me introduce you to Silhana Ledgewalker—a card that doesn't appear extreme at first glance, but in fact may be the most powerful common in the set. Silhana is evasive—always an advantageous trait—but more importantly, she's untargetable only by your opponent!

This unique version of untargetability is easily exploitable and in fact, simply amazing. Unlike Kodama North or Solifuge, Silhana can carry a Jitte or, just as importantly, a Moldervine Cloak. She comes out on Turn 2, and by Turn 3—with a little help from Birds of Paradise or Llanowar Elves—she's an untargetable, evasive, 4/4 cloak-wearing beatstick! You have to admit, a result like that isn't too shabby.

Now you could argue that Silhana Ledgewalker might be a fun, troublesome surprise for your removal-packing opponent in a casual deck, but a 1/1 elf surely couldn't pose much of a threat in the world of Savannah Lions, Isamaru, and the undercosted threats that abound in the current standard. But you'd be wrong, according to a few players who recently competed in Pro Tour Honolulu!

SILHANA IN HAWAII

In the standard smorgasbord that was PT Honolulu, three players each included four copies of Silhana Ledgewalker in their decks, but only one ran those four copies in his main deck. And where did they finish? Pablo Anzorena (the one running the Ledgewalkers main deck) finished 276th, while Gabriel Willman finished 304th, and Tyler Hatchel finished 385th. Not surprisingly, all three of these players were running Umezawa's Jitte and Moldervine Cloak, with only Mr. Anzorena choosing to run the full double playset.

RAVNICA NINJAS COME IN GREEN >

What do Kodama of the North Tree and Giant Solifuge have in common? Both are bomb rares that hit hard while shrugging off those pesky little removal spells that always seem to get in the way of a good beat-down session. Their untargetability is what makes them extraordinarily effective.

But have you ever tried to equip a Jitte onto one of these bad boys? Not too effective is it? Untargetability's downside is that you can't target your own creatures either. That drawback has always been the price of playing unremovable creatures—until the release of Guildpact.

MTGO TOURNAMENT DECK

In the Magic Online tournament practice room, I've been running Silhana Ledgewalker in a borderline Tier 2 elf deck, and she hasn't let me down yet. When the cards draw just so, my elves can beat down with the best of them. The full deck follows:

24 CREATURES

4X LLANOWAR ELVES
4X ELVES OF DEEP SHADOW
4X GOLGARI GUILDMAGE
4X SILHANA LEDGEWALKER
4X CIVIC WAYFINDER
4X ELVISH CHAMPION

15 OTHER SPELLS

4X UMEZAWA'S JITTE
4X MOLDERVINE CLOAK
3X PHYREXIAN ARENA
4X PUTREFY

21 LAND

4X OVERGROWN TOMB
4X LLANOWAR WASTES
2X SVOGTHOS,
THE RESTLESS TOMB
2X TENDO ICE BRIDGE
8X FOREST
1X SWAMP

Basically, the deck is designed to slap a cloak or a Jitte on an elf as soon as possible. Furthermore, the elves' ability to produce or fetch mana keeps the land count extraordinarily low. If an opponent is playing forests, the Elvish Champion just destroys them. And even if an opponent isn't running green, the Champion's +1/+1 works well, since he pumps every other creature in the deck. The Svogthoses really shine against a blue deck or post-Wrath. And if Ledgewalker is active and equipped early, the opponent usually ends up with few options available.

MGTO CASUAL DECK

Those who have no inclination to build decks around expensive rares can just as easily enjoy all the possibilities that Silhana Ledgewalker provides, since she's also an amazingly fun card to build around in casual play. The new aura, Wurmreaver Coil, is not only a natural fit with Ledgewalker's strengths, but it's also far more affordable than Jitte—and, frankly, a lot more fun. Slap a coil on Ledgewalker and you have a 7/7 untargetable, essentially flying creature—and probably a win as well.

24 CREATURES

4X LLANOWAR ELVES
4X ELVISH WARRIOR
4X ELVISH BARD
4X SILHANA LEDGEWALKER
4X CIVIC WAYFINDER
4X ELVISH CHAMPION

16 OTHER SPELLS

4X WURMREAYER COIL
4X MOLDERVINE CLOAK
4X BLANCHWOOD ARMOR

24 LAND

24X FOREST



I'M SEEING PLAY!

So with Ledgewalker, Moldervine Cloak, and Wurmreaver Coil forming the base for a casual deck, what other cards should be included? Green ones seem a natural fit, but how can the problems associated with two-color decks be avoided without the wonderful rare duals? The answer seems simple to me—play mono green elf beatdown and worry about mana quantity, not quality. I've included a possible deck built on these foundations.

This deck may not have much variety, but its very consistency is a commodity I value highly. Blanchwood Armor was almost a given for this mono green build, while Elvish Bard seemed too natural a fit to be left out. He pumps through various means with the auras and lures their board, hopefully wiping it clean.

THE TESTS

I took this mono green monster into the casual room of Magic Online and played it twice to see how it stacked up. In Game One, the win was mine by Turn 5—a very good sign in the current standard for an aggro deck such as mine. The sequence of play was Ledgewalker on Turn 2, Moldervine Cloak on Turn 3, Elvish Champion plus Llanowar Elves on Turn 4, Elvish Champion #2 on Turn 5—and that was it. My opponent basically played Civic Wayfinder, Told Time and Consulted the Soratami before the end. Perhaps a Simic Mage lost in the past? I guess I'll never know.

The second test was eerily similar to the first. My Silhana deck won on Turn 6 in much the same fashion against another blue/green deck, though this time my opponent used ninjas—specifically Mistblade Shinobi coupled with Infiltrator's Magemark to ensure it would not be interfered with in its bouncing mission. What card did my opponent employ to ninja his creature into the redzone? Why, none other than Silhana Ledgewalker herself! Smart man!

This deck does have one glaring weakness: It possesses no removal of any kind for any sort of permanent, though additional elves can compensate for this lack with the sideboard (or main deck, if you prefer) using cards such as Viridian Shaman and Nullmage Shepherd.

A NEW TREND

Silhana Ledgewalker is a nonvanilla power common that can be played effectively in both casual and tournament environments. Hopefully, we'll see more of the same in Dissentation and Time Spiral.

A recent graduate of Rice University, Evan Hunt lives in Los Angeles with his wife Natasha and his cat Chiyo-Chan. He freelances as an author and illustrator, and when he should be working the hardest, he plays Magic until the wee hours of the morning.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

SSG_HUBLE

In this issue, we turn our member spotlight on SSG_Huble, also known as Theodore J. Huble, one of the most innovative AAM strategists currently posting to the *Axis & Allies Miniatures* Forums. The 2005 Gen Con AAM Champion, Ted hopes to repeat his victory at this year's convention and get to know lots more AAM players.

KA: Let's start with some background information. What can you tell us about yourself?

TH: My name is Theodore J. Huble, but my friends usually call me Ted. I'm a 36-year-old husband and father of two. My full-time, pay-the-bills job is with Boston Scientific Corporation out of Natick, Massachusetts. I am also a U.S. Armed Forces combat veteran who operated in the Middle East Theatre in the years up to and including the first Gulf War (Desert Shield/Storm).

For entertainment and hobby activities, I spend a large amount of time operating as a Civilian/Law Enforcement/Military Firearms & Tactics Instructor. And I also play in *Axis & Allies Miniatures* tournaments at least three times a month.

KA: Are you a longtime fan of Avalon Hill Games, or is AAM a recent interest?

TH: My father introduced me to strategy and tactical gaming when I was about five years old, starting with checkers and chess, then moving on to strategy-based games such as *Stratego* and *Risk*. By the age of twelve, I had been introduced to a great many Avalon Hill games, including *Summit*, *Waterloo*, *D-Day*, and *Bismark*. When my father retired and moved to Arizona, he gave me his Avalon Hill games collection—all original editions, most of which still included the product catalogs from the 1960s.

KA: What other types of games do you enjoy playing?

TH: I really enjoy a lot of different games. I used to be an avid player of classic *Battletech*, starting back in the "Battledroids" days. I picked up the *Magic: the Gathering* bug back when Alpha, Beta, Unlimited, Arabian Nights, Antiquities, and Revised were the only sets available. I sold my moxes for \$50.00 apiece, and my Lotuses (that's right—plural) for \$75.00 each—and I thought that was a lot of money for cardboard! I've also tried a number of other collectible card games, such as *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, *Bloodwars*, *Warhammer 40,000*, and *Sim City*. (I actually still like that game!) And recently, my kids got me to try *Neopets*, which I think is a great introductory card game for children.

Other than my *Axis & Allies Miniatures* addiction, though, I pretty much limit my gaming to boardgames, especially *Settlers of Catan* (a family favorite), *Nexus Ops* (one the kids like), *Risk*, *RoboRally* (though my wife hates it), *Blood Bowl* (seasonally), *World of Warcraft: the Boardgame* (never met anyone who doesn't like this one), and others—the list goes on and on.

KA: What led you to play *Axis & Allies Miniatures*?

TH: I actually own a complete collection of the original Milton Bradley Gamemaster Series games (*Axis & Allies*, *Fortress America*, *Shogun*, *Conquest of the Empire*, and *Broadsides & Boarding Parties*). My father brought home *Axis & Allies* when I was a teenager because it was a game that could include multiple players and I had a brother six years younger than myself who was just becoming interested in this kind of game. That acquisition pretty much started my fascination with *Axis & Allies*.

Axis & Allies Miniatures was a natural progression—who wouldn't want to play skirmish battles with really cool-looking, pre-painted miniatures? Besides, now that I'm married with children, working full time, and frequently have to



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travel, painting miniatures and assembling model kits is an activity of the distant past. So the game began calling to me from the deepest recesses of my mind, like the spirit of an ancient ghost of war, transcending the boundaries of ether and time . . . er, I mean . . . the game peaked my interest. So a couple of friends and I watched the website carefully, tracking on all the announcements and downloads that led up to its release at GenCon 2005.

KA: What do you like best about *Axis & Allies Miniatures*?

TH: Wow, that's really a tough question because I enjoy just about all aspects of this game. But I guess my favorite aspect would be the infinite possibilities for force composition and the dynamics that the various combinations create in play. I never get tired of playing against opponents who strive, in keeping with the spirit of the game, to come up with unit combinations that really enhance each other's performance. I also find that players who attempt to "min-max" this game really have a hard time doing so consistently because a counter exists for every possible aggression tactic.

KA: You're the 2005 *Axis & Allies Miniatures* GenCon Champion. Can you tell us a bit about your experience there?

TH: *Axis & Allies Miniatures* had its world premiere at GenCon Indy 2005. In addition to the Inaugural Championship Tournament, the con also featured an ongoing league that provided a great opportunity to learn the game and win game pieces as prizes. Overall, it was a fantastic experience, and I'm looking forward to having an even better time this year.

KA: How do you think your winning GenCon army would fare now, with the release of Sets II and III? Would you use a similar army with just a few modifications, or something completely different?

TH: The Championship Tournament was run as a sealed event with one starter and two boosters, if I recall correctly. Traditionally, I perform at my peak in sealed events, regardless of the game. To toot my own horn a bit, I have an uncanny ability to analyze situations for their large-scale tactical and strategic angles and potentials (options and outcomes)—in most cases, at a level that entirely escapes most people. During my active military service, a Special Forces Captain (U.S.

Navy) approached me after our mission AAR and said, "You've got one of the finest on-the-fly tactical minds I've ever known." Coming from him, this remark was an incredible compliment, but I also feel that his statement is a testament to my style of gameplay when military tactics and/or strategy is involved. But seriously, let's not forget that we're talking about a dice-based game. The dice can fall badly—or very well—for anyone on any day.



SCION PREDICTS THE FUTURE OF A&A MINIS

To answer your question, I think the dynamics of the game have changed dramatically. To succeed today, I would obviously have to modify my forces to include elements of Sets II and III. The addition of aircraft, paratroopers, and any number of other individual units in these expansions would have to be considered. I guess the viability of the army I could build would depend on what came out of the booster packs. And as for how I would fare with such units included, I guess we'll have an opportunity to find out, since GenCon Indy 2006 is right around the corner.

KA: Do you still play competitively? Has the environment changed at all since GenCon 2005?

TH: I do still play competitively. The major change since GenCon Indy 2005 is that I now find myself acting as a Tournament Organizer more often than as a player. Furthermore, I now play not only to win, but also to expand my opponents' understanding of the game and open their minds to some of its more subtle aspects. In that sense, I function sort of like a chess tutor. Perhaps subconsciously I am trying to improve the competition base, but I'm having a good time nonetheless.

KA: Do you feel that any aspects of AAM should be changed to improve the game? If so, which ones?

TH: Right now, I am really enjoying the game the way it was intended to be played—according to the rules penned by the game designers. I think we all need to give the game some time to find its foundation—a couple more expansions, at least. This remark is not intended as a slam against the community members who are more "historically" oriented, and with whom I have engaged in debate. I simply find it personally rewarding to try to meet exceptionally high performance standards within the confines of the game rules, as written. Instead of striving to rectify various reality-vague or historically inaccurate nuances of the game, I'd rather dissect the rules "as written" and just play

the game. But then again, from a reality perspective, I've seen the elephant (so to speak), and I have no desire to turn *Axis & Allies Miniatures* into *Advanced Squad Leader*, or any other hybrid armchair battlefield simulation. I like what Wizards has done with AAM so far, and I like the direction the company is going with it. The game is simple and elegant, and it doesn't take hours to set up and more hours to play. Furthermore, the user doesn't have to spend days assembling models and weeks painting them. In essence, AAM is a game for people who like the simplicity of "everything-you-need-in-one-box" type games but enjoy the collecting aspect as well.

KA: What new rules or units are you looking forward to? In particular, what do you want to see in the D-Day expansion?

TH: I hesitate to answer this question because I actually am in the know. I'm a staff writer for Bob Mull and Ian Richards, so I'm privy to an incredible amount of information from Set IV and beyond. So to kind of cop out on this question, I am really looking forward to Obstacles-Fortifications.

KA: Do you have some advice for new players?

TH: I can offer plenty of advice to new players as well as seasoned veterans, but I'm better at advising

opponents I'm playing against. In actual play, I can usually get a really good feel for my opponent's tactical and strategic style in the first two or three turns. Then I can tailor my advice to that person specifically.

As far as general advice, the following two tips are always useful.

- Find an opponent who is better than you are at some aspect of the game. Play (and maybe lose) a lot of games while you are figuring out how that person operates.
- Don't think that winning one game makes you the Master. Play again and again to see how consistent you can be. What you learn from your opponent and about yourself will be invaluable if you are paying attention.

Jon Mayes, aka Der_Leiter, lives in Newmarket, Ontario (Canada). He's been working in retail for a few years now, first as a customer service manager for Wal-Mart, and now as a sales rep for Best Buy. He's also majoring in History and Psychology at York University and hoping to become a teacher. When not working or studying, he's often organizing and playing in game events, building perilous dungeons for his D&D group, or reviewing the latest AAM units.



THE ARTISTS

COVER: *Julia Bax is a 25-year-old artist currently living in Sao Paulo, Brazil. She started her career doing sequential art for comic books in her home country, Brazil, and recently began working for American companies illustrating books and comic books. For more of Julia's artwork, please visit her website www.juliabax.com.*

PG. 14: *Rachael Knight is a graduate of Savannah College of Art and Design working in the film industry. She's a wonderful talent, and the only person I know who has an Hermès scarf with her art on it. While not drawing bugs for fun and profit, she models clothes, works on her cooking, and enjoys being married to a ninja. Check out her work at www.onlyatknight.com.*

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