

RACK & RUNE #16: Declaration of War—The Short Form

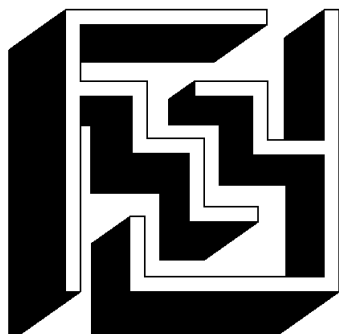


Copyright © Peter Maranci April 1993 / 81 Washington St., #2, Malden, MA 02148 / (617) 397-7958

InterNet address: trystro!rune@think.com or rune@trystro.uucp or pete@slough.mit.edu



For the first time in a long time I'm not actually playing in any game. I'm still GMing Nereyon of course, but that's just not the same as playing. I'm not happy about this, but I'm trying to withstand the pressures to start GMing another game. It's strange, but I've come to enjoy having a life... 8^>}



PALLID PALLADIUM

Following up on my report about the Palladium vs. Wizards of the Coast lawsuit, I was fortunately able to obtain a list of the charges via the InterNet. I hope they're accurate:

Palladium Books & Kevin Siembieda v. Wizards of the Coast Causes of Action



1. Federal trademark infringement.

They allege that we improperly used their trademarks without permission.

We agree that the trademarks in question are theirs and that we used them without permission, but we do not

agree that we used those trademarks improperly. We can cite case law that indicates it is permissible to use someone else's trademarks when the sole intention is to identify material named by those marks.

2. False designation of origin.

Their trademark appears on the back cover of TPO as part of a list of 17 different game systems with which TPO can be used. They allege that our use of their trademarks on the back cover of our books is likely to confuse purchasers, leading them to believe that there is some sort of association between Palladium Books and Wizards of the Coast.

We believe that since we have our own marks on the book, along with disclaimers stating that there is no association between us and any of the companies whose trademarks appear on the back cover, that no likelihood of confusion exists.

3. Unfair competition.

They allege that our use of their trademarks is intended to unfairly lure Palladium customers into believing that TPO is an authorized supplement for Palladium products.

We believe they have no evidence to support this assertion.

4. Common-law trademark dilution.

They allege that our use of their trademarks erodes the value and distinctiveness of those marks. In other words, they feel that our products are

so inferior to theirs that having their marks in our book damages their professional reputation.

We believe our overall product quality is at least equal to theirs, and that there is no evidence to support their assertion that we have damaged their reputation.

THE ABOVE MOTION WAS DISMISSED ON DECEMBER 14TH, 1992

5. Michigan Consumer Protection Act.

They allege that our conduct will cause irreparable harm to the plaintiffs.

We believe that this law does not apply here because the Consumer Protection Act is designed to protect consumers, not businesses.

THE ABOVE MOTION WAS DISMISSED ON DECEMBER 14TH, 1992

6. Copyright infringement.

They allege that TPO contains material that is original copyrighted material of the plaintiffs.

We disagree. The only Palladium material we referred to in TPO consisted of terms and definitions. Our review of the law indicates that terms and abbreviations are not copyrightable, and neither are definitions because they are simple statements of fact. Case law also supports the idea that even game rules are not copyrightable. We believe the only part of their material that is copyrightable is the form and expression, and since we rewrote the definitions in our own words, that is not an issue.

PALLADIUM AND WIZARDS OF THE COAST SETTLE

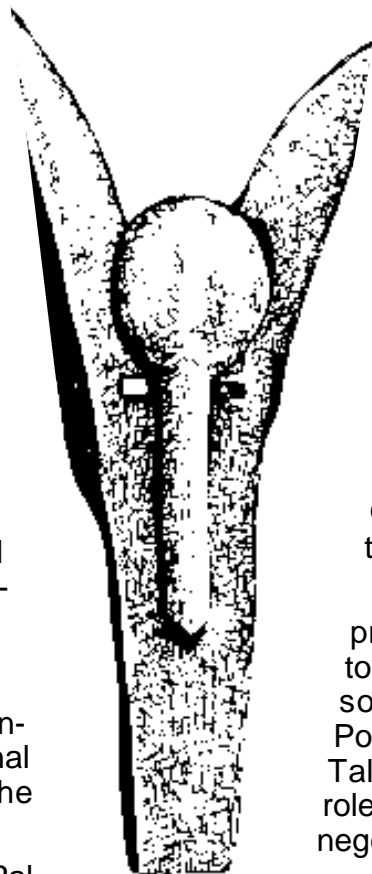
With mixed feelings I have to report that rather than slugging it out in court, Palladium and WOTC have settled their disagreement. The details were released over the InterNet by Peter D. Adkison of Wizards of the Coast:

It gives me great pleasure to announce that a settlement has been reached in the lawsuit between Palladium Books, Kevin Siembieda and Wizards of the Coast! I am not allowed to discuss the specific terms of the settlement, but I will say that we are pleased with the terms, we did not admit to any wrongdoing, and you will be able to continue to find copies of The Primal Order and Pawns: The Opening Move in your local retail store.

In particular, I'd like to express my deepest appreciation to the Game Manufacturers Association (GAMA) and Mike Pondsmith, the president of R. Talsorian Games, for the key roles they played in the settlement negotiations.

Now, for our official statement on the matter:

"The lawsuit between Kevin Siembieda, Palladium Books, Inc. and Wizards of the Coast, Inc. has been settled. All three of them want to put the suit behind them, and hope that their fans will do the same. In the spirit of industry harmony, Wizards requests that there be no boycotts or other action against Palladium. Thanks to all who have shown concern and support to both sides."



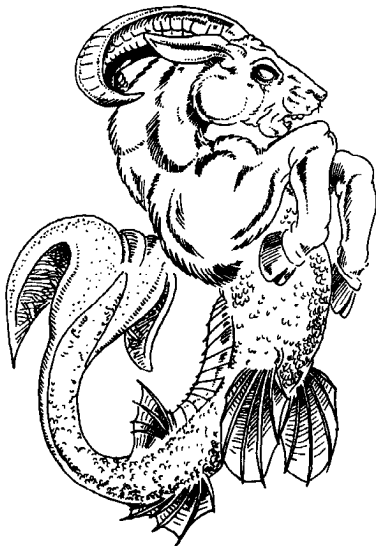
You are encouraged to download this and disseminate it as you see fit.

—Mavra!

Peter D. Adkison
Janitor, Wizards of the Coast
mavra@wizards.com

Despite Peter Adkinson's request for amity, I for one still think that Palladium's actions were really contemptible. I will not purchase any Palladium products in the future (unless they start publishing quality RuneQuest material 8^> }), and I'm not likely to play in any Palladium-system campaigns. Not that I ever planned to purchase any of their stuff anyway...from what I've seen it's not exactly cutting-edge...

“Industry harmony”? What the heck is that?! Maybe it existed a long time ago, before the ranting **Dragon** diatribes of a certain well-known eggomaniac? Before my time, anyway. 8^> }



Isn't it sad when Broo marry fish?

RANDOM RUNEQUEST

Waiting for the Wyrms...

There are several interesting RuneQuest developments impending. The folk who

publish Tales of the Reaching Moon are planning to put out “Wyrms’ Footprints”, a 64-72 page best-of collection from “Wyrms’ Footnotes”. It’s funny, but I only know one person who has any copies of the Wyrms’ Footnotes! Since many RuneQuest players I know would love to get their hands on any issue, this may be a hot item. Given the frequent delays they’ve experienced in getting “Tales” out, though, I’m not holding my breath...

RuneQuest: The Next Generation

A new playtest edition of RQIV is supposedly well along, though it hasn’t yet been released to playtesters (or at least not to me). In the meantime considerable discussion has taken place on the Net as to the future of RQ. There seems to be one real division of opinion among contributors to the Daily RQ Digest: rules complexity. Many have spoken strongly against what appears to be a massive increase in the number of rules for RQIV; I must credit **David Dunham** with being the first person I know to make this complaint. Nice call, David!

I’ve already put in my two cents, of course. To me the beauty of RQII (and there are many who still prefer that version) was the elegant simplicity of the basic concepts involved, along with a profound appreciation of Glorantha. And, come to think of it, I recall admiring the realism, too; after all I was freshly liberated from AD&D. Can the holes of RQII be adequately plugged without a vast proliferation of rules covering every exception? Should “plugging” even be the goal? Should RuneQuest be the first major game system to move towards diceless, and possibly even sheetless mechanics? Perhaps not. But I know that I’ve long ignored large sections of the rules of RQIII (I read them every so often, though) for years. I suspect others do likewise.

Wounding Deeply

One thing about RQ that I and others

have remarked on is a possible need to increase the impact of damage to a character. PCs frequently have arms and legs hacked off, or nearly off, their heads and chests are smashed until they fall helpless to the ground, and yet with the application of a simple Spirit Magic spell they are up and about within *seconds*. Apart from disease, there is almost no long-lasting disability in Glorantha (I realize that maiming is possible, but the widespread availability of spirit magic healing makes this unlikely for most parties of PCs). Where's the danger? Where's the risk? And shouldn't there be *some* psychological reaction to being seriously damaged, even if you heal up immediately? What about shock, for example? Current mechanics seem less than adequate.

This may not be a serious problem for Glorantha, I suppose. Such rapid healing is integrated into the setting. Since many of my campaigns use RuneQuest mechanics but are not set in Glorantha, I often have to make wholesale adjustments on the fly.

When a PC in a game has been injured, I recommend that the GM take the requisite hit location of the player and slam it in the nearest door. Just kidding! But it does seem that there should be some sort of variable mechanic to deal with shock...something involving a resistance roll. As for the details, I'd say that the chance of avoiding shock should increase as the character becomes more and more used to being injured...a means of educating the body to the idea that damage will be immediately healed. This would mean effectively incorporating a learned reaction into the body's natural behavior. I believe this is possible, but that's not my field of study — does anyone out there have any

additional information?

FROM THE CLOSED SHELVES

The Prisoner Soundtracks Volumes 1, 2, & 3

I was recently astonished to discover that the soundtrack to the old Prisoner show was available on CD. I was even more amazed to discover that there are three soundtrack CDs now available, and that they're really very good. Volume #1 has the main themes and such, volume #2 has incidental and back-

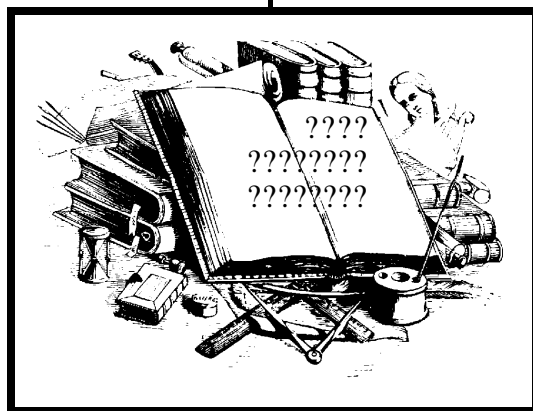
ground music, and #3 has even more obscure music. I have #1 on order, but #2 is great and #3 is pretty good. The perfect thing to get you into a really weird mood...8^>}

Cosmic Laughter edited by Joe Haldeman

Humor in science fiction is all too rare—which makes it a special pity that this fine anthology of humorous science fiction and fantasy short stories is so deeply out of print. After years of searching and special ordering, I finally gave up, took it out of the library and made my own copy. It's hysterical! I'm sure that every TWH will have read a few of the stories within—but I doubt anyone will have read all of them. There's an incredibly amusing take on Superman, and if the Conan pastiche doesn't have you laughing out loud I'll be amazed. There are classics too, such as "To Serve Man". Unless you're a masochist I wouldn't advise looking for your own copy, but it's well worth a trip to the library...

COMMENTS #180

Swanson: You certainly do lead a busy life! It's a pity your other obligations



leave you so little time for roleplaying. Tell me, do you think that you'll be able/willing to do more gaming when Edwin and Frances go to college?



This gives me a strange idea: senior citizen roleplaying. Older gamers are a relatively rare sight these days, but as time goes by more and more of the gaming population will be on the far side of forty (which gives rise to another strange idea—might not some game companies develop products aimed at this older market, pandering to the 50+ crowd in the same way that T\$R panders to pre-teens (and what might those products *be?*)?).

Whew. After a sentence like that I have to 8^>}

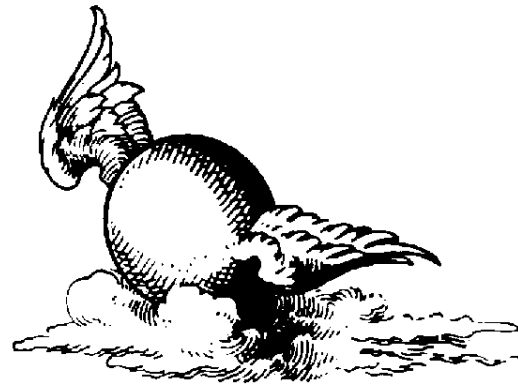
Ghostly visions of futuristic “senior gaming” communities in Florida float through my crazed brain...trim and vigorous LARP enthusiasts laughing at the grotesquely enlarged hands of wheelchair-bound tabletop gamers, fingers twisted and arthritic from rolling one saving throw too many...Greg Stafford “almost done” with HeroQuest...8^>}

As for PCs following codes of propriety, only one example leaps to mind from my past. It was in the Drachenwald campaign, the first sheetless game which I've written about often. One of the things we did for that game was work out our characters prior history; since we all came from the same village, this soon developed into a sort of pre-campaign game, though it was not played out as such. In that world all civilized peoples followed a Code much like the “Compact” of **Marion Zimmer Bradley's “Darkover”** novels. No ranged weapon could be used, nor could any weapon be longer than the user's arm. To do otherwise was barbaric.



My character Wyrn, as some may recall, was the lost last survivor of a noble family who, due to a curse, had grown up as a sniveling little weasel. One of the things he was good at was using a sling.

One day while in a forest, the young (pre-campaign) Wyrn decided to show off his sling skill to another PC, the son of a moderately prosperous trader who was to become a mage before the campaign proper began. The target of Wyrn's skill was unfortunately chosen, however — a small bird killed with a single shot. The young mage-to-be, enraged at this violation of custom, beat the living cr@p out of Wyrn. And Wyrn never used his sling on a living thing again. Unless demons could be considered alive...



Dunham: Good point about Chalanta Arroy. But mustn't one choose between Sorcery and Spirit Magic?

This was the first body-switch game I've run, or rather the first that I've begun to run — it's definitely dead. It seemed an interesting twist, and a certain way to bring the characters together...I'm not sure why it stalled. I'll admit I was looking forward to certain denouements—such as when the PCs would have to fight their possessed old bodies. It would have been an odd scene.

I agree that it's important that the GM in RuneQuest award skill checks, though I don't agree with the approach suggested in the RQIV playtest rules. It's one thing for a GM to judge the “sincerity” of the need for a skill roll, but quite another to have the GM award X number of skill rolls as a

reward to the PCs. That definitely seems a step backward. And the suggested mechanic for POW gain seems an extremely retrograde mechanic to me. An outright GM assignment of POW gain rolls over a period of game time, without any connection to any specific spiritual event? No.

Re **Mark Goldberg's** comment about faceless orcs, I must admit that I see his point. I still choke a little on the idea of orcs in Glorantha, though I suppose that they do fill a valuable ecological niche — that of nonhuman cannon fodder.

Glad to hear that the Pendragon Pass writeups will continue!

Erlandsen: I enjoyed the writeup of Jade Foster very much. Is the epilogue still available? It would make interesting filler. You know, a collection of such epilogues, collated and nicely bound, would make a very nice campaign memento. I wish I had something like that to remember some of my favorite campaign from years gone by—the details fade so quickly!

Re Shopping tips, I only wish we had a chance to actually do some shopping! Boston has some of the best shopping I've ever seen, better even than New York City (which is vastly overrated—all the wonderful little used bookstores are gone, replaced by yuppie housing. The only thing still worth seeing is **Forbidden Planet** which retains its position as King of the Science-Fiction Bookstores). Ah well. Maybe next time. Are you thinking of coming to the next Arisia by any chance?

Which reminds me—I've been invited to possibly GM a RuneQuest or other Chaosium scenario at either GenCon or Origins. I've never been to either one, of course. Care to offer an opinion on which one I should attend, if any?

"...pear-shaped men who live in filthy apartments smelling of cat-urine"—how did the media find out about me? But they're wrong about the cat. My landlady won't allow them. 8^>}

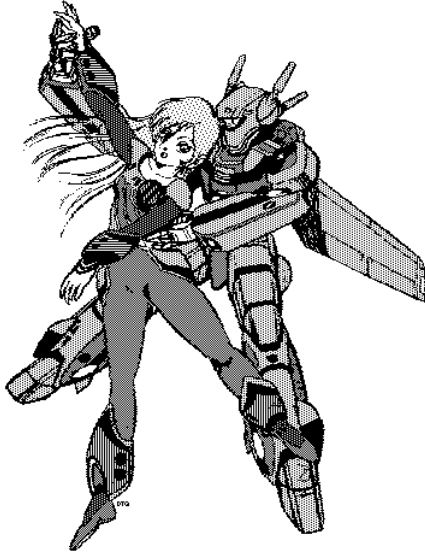
Regarding your comment to **Doug Jorenby** re script immunity, I'm not sure of the exact definition. However I have played in IFGS games where the PCs could not help but win. I didn't find that too objectionable, strangely enough. Probably due to the fact that I felt that hiking around for six hours with intermittent bursts of random violence was bad enough without losing the game, to boot! 8^>}

Given the hell I went through on the last Arisia video, I'm not too motivated to do another one. Especially since I can enter the GM's Hall of Shame, as there was no contest at all this year...on the other hand, video-making is a bit addictive. Kind of like zine-writing.

Regarding just what I mean by "damaging the hobby as a whole", well, you caught me—that was sort of a mushy definition. And a tough one to nail down. I'd say, though, that my view of the greatest danger to gaming has little to do with public perception. I'm more concerned about luring new folk into the fold, keeping the ones we have, and encouraging a sort of general upward movement — turning hack 'n slashers into roleplayers as much as possible. Perhaps that's arrogant of me, but so be it.

My opinion of SIL/ILF games is based on the two that I've played plus stories from many more experienced participants. At this point my contempt for the organizational political BS is so vast that I doubt I'll ever play in one again. Which is too bad, as I have a great idea for a SIL-type game. It's unlikely that the concept would work as an IFGS game, unfortunately. Perhaps I'll publish it here sometime.

Re Clan Brujar, I still haven't read the stupid thing to tell you the truth. However, from a more detailed "obscenity scan", all I've found is a few pierced body parts (nothing you couldn't see on TV), a little mild bondage art (ditto), and a neo-Nazi character template.



Jorenby: Your exploration of the social side of gaming interested me. I've long thought that no other form of human activity blends art and social interaction so well. And the social element seems to explain the boredom factor, too. I've noticed that when I've gamed with the same group of people for too long the games tend to get awfully stale, awfully repetitious. Yet a single new face can change everything. Complex patterns of interrelationships...hmm. You'd be more qualified to discuss this than I!

Re objectivity/subjectivity in the assessment of game quality, hurmm. I'll admit that I saw the internal contradiction as I was writing it. Yet I do think I had a valid basic point to express—I just expressed it badly. I get annoyed when I hear the “everything is subjective” argument used to justify bad games — or bad anything. Perhaps this relates to my own arrogance. Yet...yes, all moral decisions are subjective, in that they depend upon what postulates you choose. Religiously-based judgments merely displace the choice from a direct selection of moral postulates to the selection of a particular faith (forgive me for rehashing elementary philosophy. I'm sort of talking this out for myself).

Let me wrestle with this idea for

another fall before letting it go. What I object to is the use of the “subjectivity” argument to justify inaction. Perhaps there are certain basic human judgements that are universal for our species? Instinctive ones, perhaps? I “instinctively” shy away from this idea. From what I've seen there's nothing a human being somewhere can't or won't find moral. Argh! I'll have to let this go for now, Doug. But if you have any ideas I'd be glad of some help...

Of course I don't believe that one must contribute to an APA to be a real gamer—after all, I didn't contribute to an APA for years. 8^>}

I don't mind that gaming will be different in the future—I've always tried to accepting of the principle of change. Heck, I'm a good example—fifteen years ago I failed the Boy Scout Computers Merit Badge, and decided that I'd be the last of the non-computer-using generation. And look at me now...you can't pry me away from the damn thing! 8^>}

No, I don't know what gaming will be like. But good things can disappear, and I'd hate to see this hobby come to an end. For one thing, I'd have nothing to write about. 8^>}

I've already said it to you, but I've got to say it again: Outstanding job on “The Haughs Of Cromdale”! I hope we'll see more.

Keller: I LOL at your description of the reaction of your co-worker to Rune-Quest. You know, I've never had a direct run-in with an anti-(A)D&D person—even the religious fanatics around here are too savvy to bother with it. Too bad—it would be kind of fun to deal firsthand with these twits. Maybe I should move to Rhode Island. 8^>}

Say, have you ever gone to H. P. Lovecraft's grave by any chance? I once planned with a small group of folk to rent a van and go down to his grave at midnight on Halloween. Nothing ever came

of it, of course, and in any case I doubt we'd have been let in.

Phillies: Say, I have a great idea, George: you could put minor personae characters in Pickering based on TWH contributors! On second thought, forget it—it would be too embarrassing to be “Pear-shaped Man”. And what would be my powers? 8^>}

Re your high-powered AD&D game: snicker. The scary thing is that I'm sure there's a game out there that makes even **that** game wimpy by comparison...characters with their levels expressed as factorials, perhaps.

It's been a while since I've played **Paranoia**, but I thought that it was standard that every PC had to be a mutant and a member of a secret society automatically?

Do you really think that the Bondage folk at Arisia were that offensive? Perhaps I missed something. Seemed to me that they were simply an extreme faction at a very varied Con.

Fast: Welcome back.

Your point about the all-white cast of Space Rangers was well taken, though I feel uncomfortable about such nose-counting. A while back someone (I wish I could remember who) told me that criticism had been made of **Star Trek: The Next Generation** and **Deep Space 9** because they didn't have *enough* minorities and women. When it was pointed out that there is in fact a considerable number of such folk on those two shows, the response was that Worf didn't count because he had to wear makeup, and Geordi didn't count because

he was maimed and had to cover his face. I can't recall what argument was used to discount Sisko and son, or the large number of women on the shows. The stupidity of it all was too annoying for my memory to function properly...there are some people that will *never* be satisfied! And I'm still not comfortable with all this counting and such...



Ferengi as Jews in space!? Whuff! 8^>}

Now I can't help but start wondering what the other races of the Star Trek universe could be interpreted to be. Vulcans, for example. The English with their stiff upper lips, perhaps? This could get weird...8^>}

Re Deep Space 9, I've been more impressed with the forthcoming shows than I was with the pilot, with the sole exception of the

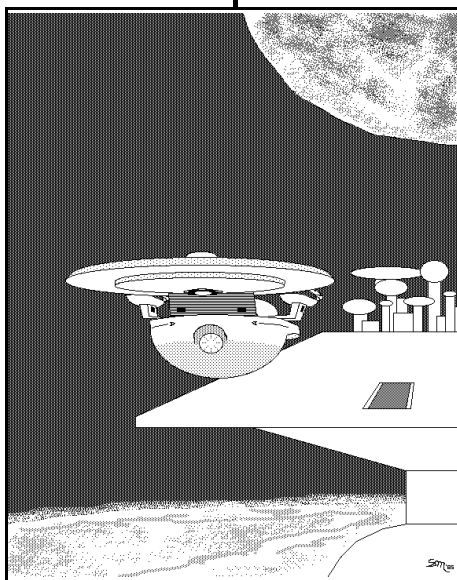
last episode which bit entirely (the one where they land on an ethnic conflict prison moon with the Holy Bjoran Mother KayoPectate, or whatever her name was...). **Bog** that was bad! What's your assessment of the show now?



Good point about BS science in Trek, BTW. I've found myself frothing at every new example lately. It's SOOO frustrating! And it scares my friends to see me spewing insane rambling pseudo-pseudo-science doubletalk like a loony whenever STNG comes on...8^>}

I'm surprised to hear that **Joel Rosenberg** even played one roleplaying session—you wouldn't know it from his trashy reconstituted-Heinlein Libertarian fantasy “novels”. What a putz!

Hoberman: For a long time I thought, like you, that most old people get





all encrusted with age and lose the ability to adapt to new circumstances. Now...I'm hoping like hell that ain't so. 8^>}

Actually I don't think it's a matter of a lack of open-mindedness on the part of most older folk. I suspect it's simply that gaming was never properly presented to people older than college age when RPGs first came around. As I mentioned in my comments to Mark Swanson, I suspect we'll be seeing many more older gamers as time goes by...

Hmm. Creativity and imagination may be as rare in the young as in the old. Certainly I noticed a severe lack in the young bulletheads I knew in elementary and high school. We are a benighted species! 8^>}

I wouldn't want to encourage any particular *style* of GMing in GMing classes. But there are skills involved in running any game, and those skills are learnable to at least some extent. For example, I can imagine that any GM might benefit from some time in acting class.

I've got to admit that the pictures of the Hunt folk were Bob Butler's fault, not mine. 8^>}

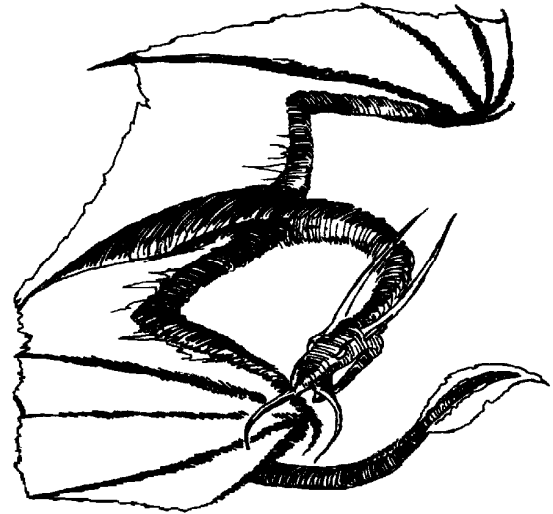
Say, how were we supposed to know that the planet was hit by biowarfare? A lack of higher mammals could have been due to ecological disaster, poor planning on the part of the original human colonists, or any number of other possibilities!

Nextish:



Stuff, though I'll be in Europe during the next collation. Guess I'll have to have my copy mailed to me for a change! I'll try and include the writeup of the Floating Isles one-shot, some Nereyon perhaps, and anything else that pops into my crazed mind...L.F. hopes to have some more Notes From Nereyon, and sends regards till then.

—>Pete



Colophon

**Rack & Rune #16:
Declaration of War—
The Short Form** was generated in ASCII form using PC-Write 2.5. It was formatted for desk top publication using Publish-It 2.0. It includes clip art generated with the Windows 3.0 Paintbrush utility, as well as clip art downloaded from several BBSes. It was printed on something more expensive than I can afford to buy. Do you suffer from headaches and eyestrain? Why are you reading this, then? 8^>}

Good luck, Sheila!



—>PM