

SORCERER'S APPRENTICE

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Spring 80
Issue 6



Janet Fox
Charles R. Saunders
Rocky Russo

Troll talk

who has done more than anyone else to make *SA* what it is today. It's with mingled relief and sorrow that I skip out. I've been proud to be associated with *Sorcerer's Apprentice*, but to be perfectly fair and honest it has been Liz Danforth's tour de force from the beginning. She's the one who has sweated blood getting it to the printer on time; she's the one who burned the midnight oil deciding on layout; she's the one who negotiated and got the advertisers we need to even approach breaking even; she's the one who's answered countless letters from our readers — I could go on for the rest of the page telling you about the endless details of putting out a magazine that she has taken care of for me for the last year and a half. Finally, Rick Loomis, Head Buffalo, got smart and asked the question, *What do we need Ken for at all?* When you look at the facts, the answer is obvious. They really don't need me at all. Best of luck as supreme editor of the magazine, Liz. With you at the helm and Pat Mueller as crew and right-hand man, uh, *person*, I know the *SA* ship will sail on to new glory.

As for me — there are lots of other things I want to do. I have at least four games I want to write this year, all of them begun and none of them finished. Plus, it would be really nice if I quit messing around and sold some fiction professionally. Then again, my little daughter Jillian is demanding more and more time as she gets older. Fear not, I'm not completely deserting Flying Buffalo and *SA* — I'll still be around in an advisory capacity. I'd enjoy hearing from anyone who cares to write to

Hello. And goodbye!

I've finally done it — finally found a way to get out of writing all these editorials. Yes, I'm leaving, surrendering the post into the capable hands of the one person

me, but if it's *SA* business, direct your letters to Liz henceforth.

And now, as my last official act, let me say a few words about some of our contributors.

We have in this issue two of the finest new fantasy talents in the field today. I refer to **Charles Saunders**, creator of the Imaro series and currently president of the Small Press Writers and Artists Organization, who had the courage to draw hard comparisons between the two supreme heroes in fantasy literature, Tarzan of the Apes and Conan the Cimmerian; and to **Janet Fox**, who is appearing in just about every heroic fantasy anthology on the market. Watch for her work — in a year or two she'll be as famous as Tanith Lee and Patricia McKillips, while Charles should soon rival that master fantasist, Andrew J. Offutt.

For the Tolkien fans in the audience, **Thomas Egan** brings you up to date on all the new Tolkien-related merchandise since the release of *The Silmarillion* in 1977. **Rocky Russo** returns with more on the history of archery — this time something on the how and why of crossbows. **John Morrison** paints an attractive picture of the future of the home micro-computer in fantasy gaming — let us all hope he proves a true prophet and not just a wild-eyed visionary. **Larry DiTillio** (who allowed us to use his room at Dunderaon in February for a giant T&T game one night) gives us a sample of his own T&T dungeon along with some non-trivial ideas on the possibilities of the use of the Tarot in T&T. Not to mention the usual features: Arcane Graffiti, Letters, a one-room GM puzzle dungeon, and more. We're also quite proud to present this rather unusual cover by the famed fan artist **C. Lee Healy**. I hope you like it as much as we do!

Keep your weapons shiny and your torches lit! Don't take any wooden Balrogs! Best,

—Ken St. Andre

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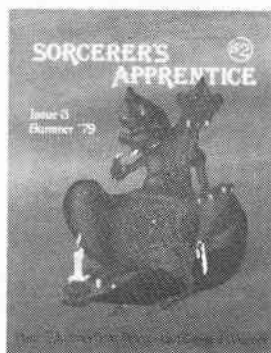
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Spring 80*

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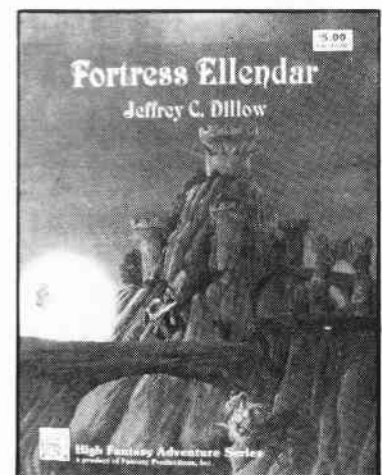
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In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit.

Thus begins the saga of the Mythos of Middle Earth, in *The Hobbit*. It began with Tolkien's daydreams and bedtime readings to his four children, spread to his Anglo-Catholic friends at Oxford — and now in 1980, more than 20,000,000 Middle Earth fans throughout the world have bought the various Tolkien books. We can't even begin to estimate how many others have borrowed friends' copies or scrounged through libraries!

From Japan to Oxford to Berkeley to behind the Iron Curtain, Tolkien's reputation and fandom grows, with the notable exception of the Hispanic and Latin-American cultures. Tolkien's literary creations have become unique in the field of High Fantasy for the 20th century. The only phenomena comparable are the *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* cults. And even they can't stand up to the growing potential of Tolkien's gift to popular literature and his innumerable fans throughout the years (1937/38 if you harken to the publication of *The Hobbit*, and 1954-56 if you reckon your devotion by the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy).

But now is the advent of the Fourth Age of Tolkienism — 1977 and beyond!

The reason is obvious. The Tolkien "canon" at long last is complete — *The Silmarillion* has arrived (mid-September 1977) and promises a long-term impact amidst gales of critical and literary controversy. Critics had been waiting for it since *LotR* in 1956. Originally conceived in 1917, the first draft was completed in 1927. When J.R.R. Tolkien died at the age of 81 in September 1973, his son Christopher took over. An academic philologist and medievalist at Oxford like his father, he labored to collate and "smooth over" the endless revisions John Ronald Reuel Tolkien had made over the decades.

Some of the difficulties involved in Christopher's editing of *The Silmarillion* can be seen in Clyde Kilby's excellent little book, *Tolkien and the Silmarillion*. Christopher warns his readers of what to expect and *what not* in his foreword as official editor. It did no good whatsoever — the critics in their scholarly journals and magazines (from *The New*

TOLKIEN IN THE FOURTH AGE

THOMAS M. EGAN

Republic to America to *The New York Times* to . . . well, you name it!) carped and scolded like a horde of Orcs cheated of their prey. Why? Because *The Silmarillion* was not the epic of *Lord of the Rings* with its strong clear themes of Quest and Character Development (and with symbols and allegory hidden everywhere, never mind what "The Master of Middle Earth" himself said).

Despite this, the hardcover edition was an all-time popular success, reaching the million-sales mark by January 1978. Given individual stores' fluctuations, it held bestseller status for more than a year and a half — not bad for this strange compendium of cosmology and Elven legends. *The Silmarillion* has led the way into the Fourth Age! Tolkien lives!

The Silmarillion is a strange but powerful book. Tolkien himself regarded it as the most important work of his imagination, the keystone to understanding the tragedy of Middle Earth. Popular demand brought out a paperback version by Ballantine Books in early 1979 which continues to sell briskly. This is a book of mythic beauty, a world so strange in its creative power (like the jewels of light, the *silmarils* themselves) that we *want* it to be true, some way, somehow. It is a book to

browse through — and to ponder. However, in *The Silmarillion* there is a sense of disorganization, and certain inconsistencies of figures and events, a feeling that not all important events have been told. This is as it should be, since Tolkien wanted to give the sense of oral legends and strange medieval-style chronicles and annals mixed with folklore and heroic poems of unguessed antiquity.

Whatever angel of the *Valar* guided Tolkien can be seen so much more clearly in the second most important book of this "Fourth Age." This is Humphrey Carpenter's authorized biography of Tolkien, appearing in the spring of 1977. Carpenter is English, an admirer of Tolkien, and had full access to Tolkien's personal correspondence, diaries, letters, and notes; he also had the full cooperation of the Tolkien family. This distinguishes him from the earlier 1976 effort, *J.R.R. Tolkien: Architect of Middle Earth*. The author, a Swedish journalist named Daniel Grotta-Kurska, created quite a bitter controversy with the Tolkien clan in 1975, and parts of his book have been "expurgated" by the lawsuit imbroglio.

Carpenter's role as the authoritative portrayer of Tolkien's life has further

been advanced by his 1979 hardcover, *The Inklings*. This gives much of Tolkien's personal correspondence, as he interrelated with his fellow gifted friends of academe (Charles Williams, C.S. Lewis, W.H. Lewis, Owen Barfield, etc.) who joined with him in an informal club to compare each other's work and talk over issues of the day. There are traces of bitterness and isolation over important moral and personal issues that may surprise many of the more innocent Tolkien fans.

1977 also added some important works of scholarship to Tolkien's Middle Earth. Avon Books published, in paperback form, J. E. A. Tyler's interpretive glossary *The Tolkien Companion*. Laden with lore from most of Tolkien's work (*The Silmarillion* being a notable exception) it spans the alphabet from A to Z, from *Accursed Years* to *Zirak-Zigil*. Yet this book is flawed in the general absence of source citations, and in debatable alphabetic selections. It reads well, though, and Tyler promises to have a second edition out in 1980 which will include the *Silmarillion* information.

Ruth Noel's scholarship is perhaps the best to date on the historic myths and legends that act as analogies and partial inspiration to the Ring epic. This is *The Mythology of Middle Earth*, a bit turgid but it really evokes the close interrelationship between myth and history. Charlemagne and King Arthur march side by side here with the Vol-sung and Beowulf. Dragons and Orcs beware!

Middle Earth came to television on Thanksgiving Eve 1977, in an animated special by Arthur Rankin Jr. and Jules Bass. Their portrayal of the story of "The Hobbit" (90 minutes) used such actors as Orson Bean (Bilbo Baggins), John Huston (Gandalf), Cyril Ritchards (Elrond), Brother Theodore (Gollum), and Richard Boone (Smaug). The animators, both American and Japanese artists, did a credible job of sticking to the original (though much material had to be excised in the name of brevity).

Ballantine put out this Bass-Rankin illustrated *Hobbit* with full text and over 230 full-color reproductions from the film. Art buffs may also want the hardcover version from Abrams. Artists include Lester Abrams, John S. Lynch, Gray Morrow, and Charles Vess, among others.

The film world also made the heaviest mark on Tolkienna with the November 1978 opening of Ralph Bakshi's interpretive direction of "Lord of the Rings," Part I. In a unique form of roscope (animation painted over living actors plus certain special effects), Bakshi made his own the dark side of Middle Earth. The critics were disgruntled with it, but it did quite well in popular



Peter Laird, from *The Hobbit*

response in 1978-79. The filming of the second and last part of "The Lord of the Rings" (Frodo's entrance into Mordor, and the aftermath of the Battle of Helm's Deep) should take place in 1980-81.

In late 1978, Bakshi created his "Tolkien Enterprises" to sell movie and Middle Earth "memorabilia." This involved persuading people to join "The Fellowship" (with \$5 fee please!) for color posters, decals, buttons, key rings, membership certificates — and the hopes of getting discounted retail Tolkien-related items in the future. It still survives (P.O. Box 2005, Berkeley, CA 94702), and Bakshi has also put out a 2-record set of his movie musical scores. *Warren* magazine put out a 50-page official movie brochure in 1979 (\$2.50), while a smaller version of the same can be had for \$1.50 from Loring Publishing Co. (45 E. 55th St., NY, NY 10022). A hardcover edition, *Filmbook*, was released by Ballantine. It was printed on heavy coated paper, with many defects in reproduction, but it gave some idea of Bakshi's better efforts. The *Fotonovel* of the Bakshi movie was extremely poor in a large portion of the reproduced film stills. It was produced in April 1979 by Fotonovel Publications (Los Angeles, CA 90069). Far too small for an art book!

1979 gives us three important books for fans and scholars alike. The first is Robert Forster's Ballantine edition of his revised *The Complete Guide to Middle Earth from The Hobbit to The Silmarillion*. His 1971 *Guide* lacked any information from *The Silmarillion*, and an index. The revised edition is a *sine qua non* for any scholar or enthusiast — superb as the complete index glossary of names and places from A to Z. The prose is terse, yet interesting in its own right.

In the last months of the year, Houghton-Mifflin has brought out quite a strange interpretive work — Timothy R. O'Neill's *The Individuated Hobbit: Jung, Tolkien and the Archetypes of Middle Earth*. It was highly praised by Tolkien's daughter, Priscilla, while she was on a visit to the US in October 1978. Tolkien himself spoke of strange dreams of exotic places in his childhood, and of a sense of inspiration while reading ancient Anglo-Saxon verse. Middle Earth comes from many "haunted" places of the mind!

I save the best for last — David Day's *A Tolkien Bestiary*. It can be used as a handy reference guide for all the beasts, monsters, races, beings, nations, fauna and flora in all the long history of Middle Earth, Arda, and Aman itself. The creators are young and relatively unknown — except for the artist Ian Miller, famed for the illustrations in Michael Crichton's *Eaters of the Dead*. They give a medieval



David Day, from *The Silmarillion*

flavor to their art as well as using the literary form of a 12th century "Book of Beasts." The prose style is graceful and somehow connotes a sad wistful air. The entries are like little essays — though being only 129, their number cannot compare with Forster's accomplishment or information. There is one magnificent composite map showing all the lands of Arda, and the requisite genealogies and indices for reference.

But it's the art all the way which makes the beauty of this book. Ian Miller's efforts are the most numerous of the 170 drawings, 36 of which are in full color in four sections, showing the full history of Tolkien's tales of Arda. He gives the inspiration of hellish beauty in his "pits of Utumno," his many, many insectlike dragons and his strange horrible battles in Middle Earth. Pauline Martin stresses the metaphysical beauty of Middle Earth, from Creation to the Halls of the Rohirrim. Styles vary from pastoral watercolors to Classical poise of solemn knightly warriors (John Davis) to soft variegated scenes of exotic and compelling beauty (Linda Garland) that call and call to us — and never can be achieved. Each painting invites our imagination to scenes of adventure bold, or horror that forces us to think ever deeper, or makes us wistful for

other worlds where right and wrong, and joy unendurable show forth without the hazy confusion of our own "truly" anarchic world. David Day — with his eleven chosen artists — has achieved something that Tolkien hoped would continue after he himself had finished writing. A spur to the imagination to build its own "secondary world" — and find how truth hides well behind the veil of myth.

For those who like puzzles and games associated with their "myth," the continuing efforts by International Polygonics (200 E. 27th St., NY, NY 10016) is a must. This company produces its public efforts under an agreed exclusive license with the Tolkien family estate. They have produced in jigsaw puzzle form such things as "A Map of Middle Earth" (Pauline Baynes); "Middle Earth Mural"; "Bilbo's Last Song" (text overlaid on Miss Baynes' painting); "Portraits of J.R.R. Tolkien" (three photos); "Father Christmas"; and "The Hobbit." The average size is about 15"x21", and each puzzle has about 500 pieces. The paintings are from the authorized Allen & Unwin British edition.

Music and oratory were High Arts in the Shire and among the Elf kindreds of Valinor and Rivendell. In the late 1960's and early 70's a number of

rock musicians, both American and British, adopted Middle Earth themes: Bo Hansson (1972 *LotR*-inspired album), the group Rush ("Rivendell" and "Necromancer" are good examples), the British group Barclay James Harvest (especially their "Galadriel"), for instance. The 1970's also saw a folk ballad sung by Leonard Nimoy of *Star Trek* fame ("The Ballad of Bilbo Baggins"). There has been nothing in 1977-80 save the scores of the Bass-Rankin "TV Hobbit," which was country style and pleasant to hear, and the music of Leonard Rosenman for Bakshi's film epic. The real achievement in music and oratory lies in the "J.R.R. Tolkien Soundbook" put out by *Caedmon* (1955 Broadway, NY, NY 10023).

Caedmon achieved a real coup in 1967 when they persuaded Tolkien himself to read extensively from *The Hobbit* and his Rings trilogy. These have been preserved on records and cassettes, and have been added to with the agreement of Christopher Tolkien to read selections from *The Silmarillion* in 1977. By 1978, a magnificent soundbook of four records (or cassettes, if preferred) had been prepared for the public. Herein, too, Tolkien recited a number of his poems and even sings lyrics from Middle Earth! The cover illustration is by the father, while Christopher

prepared the liner notes.

The greatest tribute to the Tolkien achievement still lies in our sense of joy and respect in what he stood for. For this, we must turn to the Tolkien fan societies. Unlike most other literary cults, these boast a unique symbiosis of "play" elements with scholarship — making friends and personal correspondence are as important as writing learned research articles; picnics and fan parties as vital as creating amateur art, fiction and verse. From 1977 onward, the two more established Tolkien society groups have been **The Mythopoeic Society** with its journal "Mythlore" (Gracia Fay Ellwood, Editor, Illirian, Pasadena, CA 91107), and Phil and Marci Helms' **American Tolkien Society** (with its journal "Minas Tirith Evening Star," 1408 Caprice, Union Lake, MI 48085). These two have been joined by a third — Bernie Zuber's **The Tolkien Fellowships** (with its newsletter "The Westmarch Chronicle," P.O. Box 8853, San Marino, CA 91108). These are the seedbeds for Tolkien's ever-growing Middle Earth of the future. It promises thousands of fans and just plain curious folk a taste and a participation in that joy-of-wonder that Tolkien tried so hard to convey.

It's the world of the Imagination — come and look. The Valar be with you!

LORD OF THE RINGS GAMES

Thomas Egan's article goes into depth concerning a majority of items that have been spawned by the whole Middle Earth phenomenon. However, he neglected to mention a number of games that have been produced in connection with Middle Earth and the works of J. R. R. Tolkien.

The best-known games that have been produced as a result of Tolkien's works are the Fantasy Role-Playing games. *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Tunnels & Trolls*, and the rest of the FRP games were created so that all the people who play could actually live and adventure in a fantasy world. As we all know, FRP games allow a player to create, arm, and live through a character who lives, loves, fights and dies in a fantasy world often similar to Middle Earth.

Board games have also been created from the ideas and battles outlined by Tolkien. The first two were produced in 1975 by Fact and Fantasy games. Richard R. Jordison designed *The Siege of Minas Tirith* and *The Battle of Helm's Deep*. The graphics is poor for both games, yet the games are simple to learn and quick to play. Neither game was authorized by the Tolkien estate.

In 1977, West Coast Games came out with *There and Back Again*. This is the only game I know of that deals with the adventures of Bilbo Baggins. I have only seen one copy of the game since its release, and as near as I can tell it has disappeared from the market.

Authorization for Tolkien games was obtained by Simulation Publications, Inc. In 1977 SPI released its three-game set of Tolkien games. The first, *SAURON: The Battle of the Ring*, simulates the battle prior to the Siege of Barad-Dur, which ended the Second Age. The forces of Gil-Galad and Elendil fight the forces of Sauron on a map of the terrain where the battle took place.

SPI's second small tactical game was *GONDOR: The Siege of Minas Tirith*. The map for this game more closely represents the actual terrain and make-up of Minas Tirith. The game is more complex than its predecessor, and the quality of this and the other SPI games is vastly superior to the earlier games.

Lastly, SPI produced *The War of the Ring*. This is the campaign game of the *Lord of the Rings* novels. It uses both military unit counters and individual counters to represent the main forces and characters in the trilogy. The game is a good and accurate representation of the series, and it is perfect for those who would alter the strategy of either side. The game may be played in a two- or three-player (Fellowship, Sauron, Saruman) version. Of the Tolkien games, the ones produced by SPI are the best.

—Michael Stackpole



Chris Carlton, from *Lord of the Rings*

Queries & Quandaries

A forum for questions and answers about Tunnels & Trolls, about the solo adventures, and about anything else in fantasy role-playing you readers can come up with for us to answer (if we can!). In reference to questions about T&T, let me make one quick policy statement: one of the most basic philosophies of T&T is to adjust the game as you see fit to suit your own style of play. So don't misuse the answers given here — if the replies to queries seem reasonable, feel free to use them, but do not feel compelled to use them. In T&T there is no "right way" — certainly not the "only way." This column is presented in the hope that our opinions and bits of information can help you out.

— Liz Danforth

How will we be able to convert the old solo games to the new rules?

—Ron James
Greenwood, Indiana

Rather simply — first of all, you don't need to do so. The new rules improve your chances of surviving in a solo, but not greatly. However, to keep the balance of play as it was, do these things:

1) Monsters (those with MRs) in a dungeon should have their ratings raised by 10 for each character going into that dungeon at one time. Since these are usually *solo* adventures — one person going in — this means just add 10 to every monster. In those solos where you can take several characters, add 10 MR to each monster for each character that enters, on a single trip.

2) If the monsters are armed with weapons and/or armor, you will have to adjust the dice value (or protective value, in the case of armor) to match that listed by the same name or its closest equivalent, i.e. a pilum that used to get 4 dice under the old rules now gets 5 dice under the new rules. Note that magical weapons and armor should probably *not* be changed in any way.

You may note that, with these changes made, some of the earliest-written dungeons (i.e. *Buffalo Castle*) become exceedingly deadly. In *BC*, the monster ratings were carefully adjusted to the rule of "½ MR for monsters' add on first combat turn, and ¼ MR for monster adds thereafter." (This rule is mentioned on page 1.6 of the new rules.) If you are using ½ the MR for monsters' adds every combat turn, your characters may be dying a bit too often. Using the new rules, you can *either*:

a) make no adjustment to the monsters' ratings but use the weapons on the new rules (which get more dice than their equivalents in the old rules), *or*

b) return to the old rule of ¼ MR for monsters' adds after the initial combat round.

These suggestions are for the earliest solo dungeons, and you should use "a" or "b", but not both.

"About monstrous weapons . . . why should DEX be multiplied x3 for a Trollish broadsword? I didn't know it took a DEX of 30 to handle something half your size . . . And armor — does

Ursak the Trollish Cannoneer's plate armor take 14 hits or 42? Is "hit taken" a factor of thickness of metal, or what?

— Kevin Hall

(and a related question . . .)

"How do you equip and arm a Fairy or a Leprechaun? Obviously not with a man-sized set of armament . . .?"

—Jeffrey Boes
Romulus, MI

There are two ways to approach the problem. What is listed in the rulebook is equipment that is commonly available. So you might limit yourself to using only those things that your small character actually has the ability and attributes to use sensibly. Thus, fairies generally have blowguns or stilettos, and never any kind of armor. Similarly, hobbits and gremlins generally fight with a dagger or two, and so forth for the other small folk.

For the oversized types — giants and trolls — don't automatically assume they have gigantic weapons and armor. It wouldn't be commonly available, and they are probably most likely to fight with large boulders and uprooted trees (rated in the latter case, say, as a club 5x as large). This was the original intention for the beings of non-human size.

The other method is to assume your small (or large) character has obtained custom-made armor and/or weapons. Page 2.41 of the fifth edition rules suggests multiplying the factors given in the weapons charts by a single number. The best suggestion is to use the *size/height* multiplier for the kindred you're trying to equip. (Note that the ST multiplier — a troll is 3 times as strong as a human, but only *twice* as big.) You should change the factors of the charts for these things: dice & adds (weapons), hits taken (armor), ST required (both) and weight (both).

The rules do suggest you multiply the DEX requirement, but logically the question is a good one — it should not take a DEX of 30 — or even 20 — for a troll to use a weapon that is the correct size for him. The DEX was included in order to slow down the muscle-bound characters (say, a burly dwarf) with enough ST to pick up a trollish broadsword. There should definitely be a severe penalty attached to account for the fact that the sword is many times larger than the character! (Imagine yourself

trying to fight with something the size of a telephone pole!)

A few examples: for a fairy (1/10th the size of a human) a suit of plate armor would take 1.4 hits (round up to 2 if you wish), weigh 100 weight units, and require a ST of 1.1 (again, round up to 2; the way you round — up or down — should be consistent in these matters). A troll with plate made to suit would have armor that took 28 hits (not 48), weigh 2000 weight units, and require a ST of 22 to carry around. A fairy-sized poleaxe would get 7/10 of a die (call it 1 die minus 1) and a troll's would get 14. Obviously, the fairy would still be better off using a weapon its own size — a blowgun would serve it better.

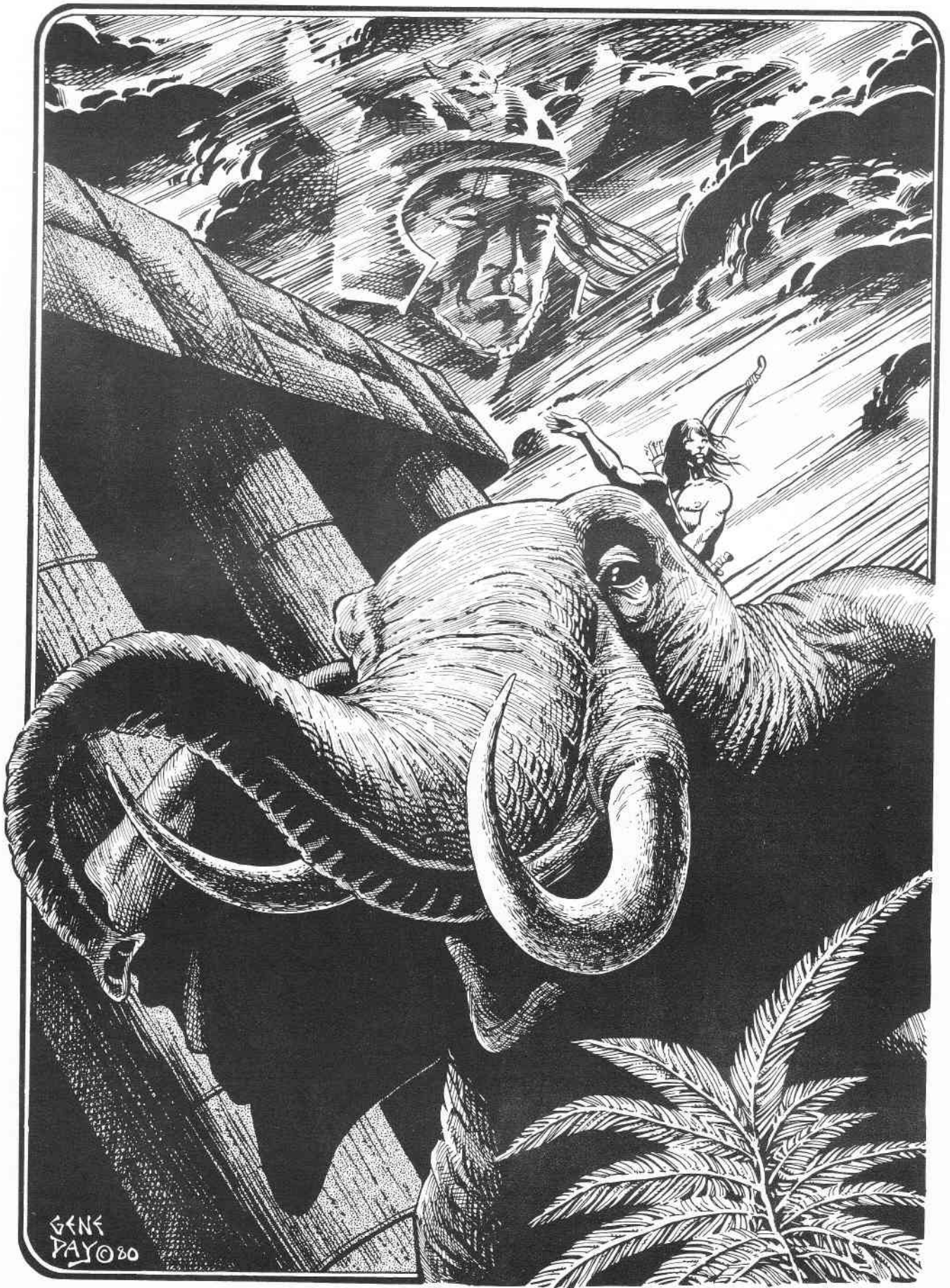
Then there is the matter of cost. Game-masters seem able to ignore matters of finance, but troll-sized armor is still not an easy thing to create. If there is a smith resident inside your dungeon walls, you might assume he or she makes the odd-size arms and armor for your monsters. Such a smith might also take in a good chunk of money from delvers by making custom-made armor or odd-sized weapons. Here the cost would be whatever the market can bear.

However, outside the dungeons, costs may vary. Miniature weapons and armor (for fairies, hobbits, etc.) will use less material in their construction, but are probably quite difficult to actually make. The cost would have to be *at least* the same as for a human-size suit.

Depending on the opinions of the game master, the cost may be as much as 3 to 10 times normal, for the smallest and finest fairy mail (for example). For the big folk, a lot more material is required which will necessarily raise the cost, possibly by the same factor as the size multiplier for the armor as a whole. However, the joints and links would have to be as tight for big armor as for normal size, and the cost for the new crafting might be inflated a bit more — say half again the figure indicated above.

As previously stated, this kind of thing should not be commonly available, and it should be quite costly in any case.

Got a question or a problem? write: Queries and Quandaries, Sorcerer's Apprentice, Flying Buffalo Inc., P.O. Box 1467, Scottsdale AZ 85252. We'll try to help.



GENE
PAY © 80

Illustration by Gene Day

FANTASY SUPERFIGHT!

Copyright ©1980 by Charles R. Saunders

“Ladies and gentlemen! Tonight, live from Madison Square Garden, we bring you the Fantasy Superfight of the Century! Introducing, in the red corner, weighing two hundred thirty and one-half pounds . . . wearing the leopardskin trunks with white stripe . . . accompanied by his manager Edgar Rice Burroughs and his seconds, Lieutenant Paul d’Arnot and Akut . . . hailing from the tribe of Kerchak . . . **TARZAN OF THE APES!**

“And his opponent, in the blue corner, weighing in at two hundred fifty-one and three-quarters pounds . . . wearing wolfskin trunks with black stripe . . . accompanied by his manager, Robert E. Howard and his seconds, Trocero of Poitain and Red Sonja . . . hailing from the icy hills of Cimmeria . . . **CONAN THE BARBARIAN!**

“Let’s listen as the referee gives the fighters their instructions.”

“Now, boys, I want to see a good savage fight. Remember to keep your heads up; no snarling in the clinches; and above all no hitting below the loincloth. When you hear the bell, come out fighting, and may the best brute win!”

“There’s the bell for Round One!”

BONG!

“**CROMMM!**”

“**KREE-GAAAH!**”

It is highly unlikely that Madison Square Garden will ever see a battle like the one fancifully introduced above. Fight fans will, unfortunately, have to remain content with the ring exploits of the successors of Muhammad Ali. But what a battle the Ape-man and the Cimmerian might have waged, had they ever chanced to meet.

Marvel Comics was intrigued by the idea of such an epic confrontation; and, in Issue #63 of their magazine *Conan the Barbarian* they gave us their version of what might have happened. Conan’s opponent was a red-haired Tarzan surrogate named Amra, raised by lions instead of apes. Conan won – but it was a flagrant home-town decision. There was no way Marvel was going to allow its premier sword-and-sorcery hero to bite the dust (or foliage) and bring the legions of devoted REH fans screaming for their scalps. Ironically, Marvel later acquired the comic-book rights to Tarzan, but the temptation of bringing the two loinclothed heroes together proved resistible.

Still, speculating on what the result of a confrontation between fantasy’s leading wildmen remains a source of fascination. Rather than attempt an actual scenario – and risk a personal confrontation with the copyright laws – the following is more like a “tale of the Tape”; a comparison of several pertinent

aspects of our heroes’ prowess and some cautious predictions on the outcome of a contest between them.

An obvious comparison is relative size. “A good big man always beats a good little man”; conversely, “The bigger they are, the harder they fall.” In his definitive Tarzan biography, *Tarzan Alive*, Philip Jose Farmer states that the Ape-man stands 6’ 3” and weighs approximately 230 pounds. Burroughs’ descriptions would seem to place his hero closer to 210, but both he and Farmer emphasize that Tarzan’s physique is more massive than it looks.

On the other hand, neither Howard nor his posthumous analysts ever provided concrete physical dimensions for Conan, although Howard did observe that at age 15 Conan stood six feet tall and weighed 180 pounds. In maturity he is invariably referred to as a “giant.” Usually, but not always, he is the tallest man in his adventures. In the 1930’s, when Howard did most of his writing, a man of Tarzan’s size was considered unusually large, but not quite a “giant.” Conan is probably somewhat larger than that. Given what Howard said about the Cimmerian’s adolescent proportions, and given a normal growth rate into adulthood, a reasonable estimate of Conan’s adult dimensions would be a height of 6’ 5” and a weight somewhere in the neighborhood of 250 pounds. By today’s standards, that would make Conan an average-sized defensive lineman

in professional football. In Howard’s time, and most likely the Hyborian Age as well, Conan would be a pretty respectable “giant.”

On the basis of that estimate, then, Conan enjoys definite advantages in height, weight, and reach over Tarzan. Among wildmen, though, size is less important than strength. The back cover blurb for the first Lancer Books edition of *Conan the Adventurer* proclaims that the Cimmerian is “A hero mightier than Tarzan!” But an objective comparison of the heroes’ respective adventures indicates otherwise.

For example, both men had frequent encounters with apes, gorillas, and other powerful species of anthropoid. Tarzan defeats his simian opponents with relative ease. Most often he dispatches them with a knife, but he also has the ability to break an ape’s neck by employing a full-nelson hold, as he does in *The Beasts of Tarzan*. With Conan, ape-fighting isn’t quite so easy. His battles with anthropoids are always cliff-hanging affairs ending with the Cimmerian winning only seconds before the fangs of the ape close over his face. While Burroughs portrays Tarzan’s strength as being on a par with that of his ape adversaries, Howard always emphasizes that Conan’s strength is inferior to that of the gorillas he grapples with. This fact is graphically depicted in Conan’s fight with the ape called Thak in the story “Rogues in The House.”

—*Charles R. Saunders*

Compared to ordinary humans, both Conan and Tarzan are nearly invincible. Either of them could kill a man with one blow of the fist. They can handle a reasonably strong, athletic man with frightening ease. They can prevail over seemingly overwhelming strength of numbers. In *The Return of Tarzan* the Ape-man thrashes a dozen Paris gendarmes after first disposing of half that number of thugs. Conan makes mincemeat of a score of assassins in "The Phoenix on the Sword."

Compared to each other, though, Tarzan's strength is of a higher order than Conan's. This is possibly due to Tarzan's feral upbringing. Savage as the Cimmerians may have been, they were still people, and the environmental demands on Conan were less harsh.

Speed is also an important factor in combat. Time and again, Muhammad Ali used speed to defeat stronger foes. But Ali was a slowpoke compared to our heroes. Tarzan's moves are described as being "faster than Ara the lightning." Conan's speed is "pantherish." If those descriptions were taken literally, Tarzan would have a decided edge, for lightning is faster than any panther. More realistically, though, the two heroes are much closer than that in this category.

In a flat-out sprint, Tarzan would probably win. His early experience as a hunter of swift wild game like the antelope and zebra led to the development of the ability to generate short bursts of speed like those of the great cats. Conan, who was raised in hill country, would not have needed to develop that kind of sprinting speed. This imaginary confrontation being a fight rather than a footrace, however, quickness would be a more appropriate criterion for comparison.

"Quickness" is a vaguely-defined term relating to reflex and reaction time. Here our combatants are not far apart. Both have reflexes so rapid that it would take a slow-motion replay to discern their movements clearly. If there is an edge at all here, it would belong to Tarzan. His reflexes were honed by dodging the claws of leopards and lions; Conan's by evading the strokes of foemen's swords. But Tarzan's edge would be only a slight one.

Stamina is a quality in which our antagonists excel. There are more frequent mentions of Conan reaching his limits of endurance than there are of Tarzan doing so. But Tarzan's foes were all of the natural world. Conan's adventures often pitted him against supernatural beings that were not subject to such mortal foibles as tiring. How Tarzan might have fared against the Pictish Swamp Demon in "Beyond the Black River" or Khosatrek Khel, the "Devil in Iron," it is difficult to say. Neither man has a clear edge in this category.

Both men have the ability to absorb tremendous amounts of punishment and still finish their battles standing bloodily over their fallen foes. In a battle of attrition, it would be difficult to choose between them.

The importance of non-physical factors like "desire" and "attitude" cannot be discounted. There is no disputing either Conan's or Tarzan's attitude in battle — they both fight to win. But it is Conan who almost invariably fights to the death. More often than not, Tarzan will spare an opponent simply because killing at times becomes repugnant to him. But when the beast in Tarzan gains ascendancy, the Ape-man is Conan's equal as a killer, especially when the old scar on his forehead blazes red. This primal ferocity is matched by Conan's berserk fury, which only his death or another's can quell. There is little to choose between these forms of battle-madness.

In terms of overall physical attributes, then, Tarzan appears to enjoy a significant, though not overwhelming, advantage. It is unlikely, though, that his and Conan's combat would be unarmed, unless they happened to be thrown together in the gladiatorial arena of some benighted despot. More realistically, a confrontation between the two would have to include weapons. Unarmed, neither would have survived long in their fictional environments, regardless of their incredible physical attributes.

Conan's natural weapon is a sword; Tarzan's a knife. With the hunting knife left behind by his dead father, the Ape-man became the equal of the mightiest beasts of the primeval jungle. And Conan is the man who put the "sword" in *Sword and Sorcery*.

Tarzan with a knife is like a soldier with an M-16. But Conan is no slouch at knife-fighting. With dagger or poniard, the Cimmerian more than once overcame opponents armed with swords. Still, because of his more constant use of the weapon, Tarzan rates a slight advantage here.

In swordsmanship Conan has a decided edge. Early in his career, Tarzan was described as an "indifferent" swordsman, primarily due to his lack of experience with the weapon. He defeats seasoned sword-wielding knights in *Tarzan, Lord of the Jungle*, but does so only because the knights' form of jousting depended more on strength than skill. Although he later learned the art of fencing under Parisian sword-masters, such late-acquired experience could never hope to match that of Conan, who was practically born with a sword in his hand. Conan's attack is like a steel hurricane; and his defense, impregnable. Burroughs' other major character, John Carter of Mars, self-proclaimed "best swordsman of two worlds," would prove a better test for

Conan here than Tarzan ever could.

The spear and the bow are weapons both men have used. A superb spearman, Tarzan, like most Africans, is able to use the weapon both for hunting and fighting. Conan utilized the spear less often, but still effectively, as the long-distance skewering of Askia in "Drums of Tombaku" demonstrated. Still, Tarzan rates the edge here due to his more constant use of the weapon.

Though competent in the use of the bow, Conan tends to scorn it as a "womanish" weapon. Tarzan doesn't. With a bow, the Ape-man can terrorize a small army of men armed with modern weapons such as rifles. Conan never had to cope with bullets.

Overall, it would seem that Tarzan is better at hunting-related weaponry, with an advantage over Conan in use of the spear and the bow. But it is more likely that they would fight with swords and/or knives, and Conan has a decided superiority in the use of those warfare-related weapons.

The comparisons over with, it is now time to advance some predictions, which will vary according to specific combat conditions.

Tarzan would win a weaponless, hand-to-hand encounter. His victory would not be easy, but his greater strength combined with the application of modern fighting techniques Tarzan mastered in his sojourns into civilization would prove too much even for Conan's primal ferocity. Still, Conan's own considerable strength and agility would cause more problems for Tarzan than any other human — save Doc Savage. (For an account of *that* battle, see Philip Jose Farmer's outrageous *A Feast Unknown*.)

In a fight using knives only, the outcome would be a toss-up. The winner would, quite simply, be the first man to get in a lethal blow, and there's no way of foreseeing which one that would be. Tarzan's speed and strength advantage would be offset by Conan's knowledge of every ruthless knife-fighting technique there is. Most likely their battle would be about even until one or the other slipped in a pool of blood provided conveniently by the writer for that purpose.

In a sword duel, Conan would be an overwhelming favorite. Tarzan's physical advantages would be overcome by Conan's expertise. Conan's own strength and speed are not *that* much inferior to Tarzan's; and with the skill gained over a lifetime of swordfighting, he would quickly disarm the Ape-man. At that point, it would be all over for Tarzan, for even he could never survive bare-handed against an armed Conan.

And in a boxing match in Madison Square Garden? The outcome of that, I'll leave up to your imagination — and Howard Cosell's.

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- MICHAEL STACKPOLE

News for the fantasy and gaming world — upcoming events, club announcements, the latest games and playing aids, conventions — are featured, reviewed and discussed in Arcane Graffiti. Personal ads and trade enquiries will be printed also, at 15¢/word (20 word minimum). Mail your news to: Michael Stackpole/Arcane Graffiti, Flying Buffalo Inc., P.O. Box 1467, Scottsdale, Arizona 85252.

news We've almost finished the completely revised and rewritten edition of *Overkill*. This solo dungeon is to be the first produced in a new format for T&T solitaires — full-color cover and magazine-bound. Prices for these new solitaires will be slightly higher than the previous spiral-bound ones, but with the new dungeons we have lined up for the coming year, you should find that the extra money will be worth it.

We've also decided to put together a collection of traps, and call it something like *The Great Book of Traps*. We were going to try to come up with a whole book-full — but we decided to ask you, the readers, to submit traps to us for inclusion in the Book. When you submit a trap, detail it as much as possible. Include diagrams if need be, and see to it that your explanations are crystal clear. Everyone who has a trap chosen will receive a complimentary copy of the manual. (Do keep in mind, however, that if 1,000,000 people submit a trap where the roof falls in on someone's head, we aren't going to send all of those people a free copy...) Make your traps original and as sneaky as you think you can get away with, and send them to: *Trap Design Editor*, Flying Buffalo Inc., P.O. Box 1467, Scottsdale, AZ 85252. All traps accepted become the property of Flying Buffalo Inc. Include an SASE if you want your trap back. We cannot assume any responsibility for submissions not accompanied by an SASE. And please include a return address with your submission. Submit as soon as possible — the deadline is August 31, 1980.

reviews The Chaosium (Box 6302, Albany, CA 94706) has released the second book of *Runequest* called *Cults of Praxis*. This book covers a number of Cults located throughout the world of Glorantha. Information on

joining the cult, benefits and the procedures involved in becoming a RuneLord of the Cult (or Rune Priest of the Cult) is packed into this well-illustrated booklet, which sells for \$12.

Also new from the Chaosium is *All The Worlds Monsters III* by Steve Perrin and Jeff Pimper. This is the third volume in their series and provides an incredible amount of information on a great assortment of monsters. It will prove to be a useful aid to any gamemaster, no matter what game system is used. It sells for \$10 and is worth every cent of it.

Metagaming (Box 15346, Austin, Texas 78761) has finally released *In the Labyrinth: Game Master's Module*. When I got my copy, I immediately sat down and began to pore through it. The *Game Master's Module* takes the *Melee* and *Wizard* rules and transforms them into an actual FRP game system; characters learn talents which help to round out their personalities and give them advantages in certain circumstances. The *Game Master's Module* retails for \$4.95 and contains many concepts that will be a welcome addition to most FRP games.

There is one problem with *In The Labyrinth: Game Master's Module* that I discovered as I scanned through the book looking for several tables I needed to finish working out a character. The *GMM* is not complete. *Advanced Melee* and *Advanced Wizard* rules will be released soon, and are needed to complete the *GMM*. Don't think you are getting a complete game system, because you will become just as frustrated as I was the first time out.

At *Dundracon 80* I had a number of opportunities to meet various game designers and obtain samples of their products. Dave Hargrave of *Grimoire Games* (PO Box 4363C, Berkeley, California 94704) was one of these gentlemen and he gave me copies of all the *Arduin Grimoire* books and associated dungeons. *Arduin Grimoire* is a set of three

books (*The Arduin Grimoire*, *Welcome to Skull Tower*, and *The Runes of Doom*) that are D&D supplemental material. They carefully outline new character classes, new monsters and treasure, and many concepts that greatly enhance FRP — in any system. The books themselves are fairly well thought-out, though they probably could have been better organized. For people who want to add a degree of complexity to their campaigns that will make the role-playing aspect more varied and interesting, *Arduin Grimoire* is just what they need.

The four *Arduin Dungeons* (*Caliban*, *The Howling Tower*, *The Citadel of Thunder*, and *Death Heart*) are more than they seem. Each contains a gamemaster's dungeon or overland adventure (yea!) that is well laid-out and easily explained. They also contain sets of cards that add to the number of characters, monsters and treasures that exist in *Arduin*. All of the *Arduin* products are of high quality.

Fantasy Art Enterprises (486 Boynton, Berkeley, CA 94707) has produced a number of FRP playing aids. The first is a book of spells called *The Necromicon*, and most of it is just plain silly. Spells that act as a shower or shave or cause one to lose all of one's hair are nonsense. There also seems to be some duplication — there are at least three spells that will cause all limbs to fall off, with differing degrees of death resulting. *Booty and the Beasts* is the product of a bit more thought, and most of the monsters therein are logically constructed. Both magical and science fiction/high technology booty and monsters are offered. This book, unlike the previously mentioned one, is something I would recommend for FRP gamemasters.

Task Force Games (405 South Crockett, Amarillo TX 79106) has released three new games in their Pocket-Sized game series. The first, *Intruder*, is a replay of the movie *Alien* as a board game. It is designed for solitaire play, and can be fun. Quick to set up and play, the only bad thing about the game is that the *Alien* counters must be moved face-down on a white playing surface. Since the *Alien* counters are red, and the color reflects off the board, one can easily discover the *Alien* and eliminate it.

TFG 7 is called *Swordquest*. It is a game in which opposing forces search for the lost Sword of Lumina. Players move over the map, discovering treasures and guardians and such; the Sword must be recovered and moved to a Citadel. The game has a new and unique ritualized combat system that adds to the flavor of the game. There are rules for solitaire, two- and three-player games.

The third game from Task Force is *Valkenburg Castle*, which deals with squad (four man) groups in savage fighting as they attempt to clear out the depths of the dungeon beneath the castle.

The game looks interesting, and the best part is the optional set of rules to allow for modern arms in the assault (Take That, You Fiends!)

David L. Arneson and Richard Snider have produced *Adventures in Fantasy* (Excalibre Games, Inc., Box 29171, Brooklyn Center, MN 56429). This is a new FRP game that is complete in the box. The game system is clean and well thought out, and the game itself is easy to master and supplies everything needed — from charts to a realistic world view and philosophy. The weak point of the game is its combat system (I'd suggest using the optional hit location part for ease). This game is able to stand alone, or can be combined to add a great deal to many other games. I especially like the mythical monsters that are not adulterated and I think this game is an excellent addition to any FRP library. (Good luck, guys!)

Fantasy Productions, Inc., (P.O. Box 27259, Indianapolis, Indiana 46227) has sent us copies of their FRP game *High Fantasy* and their GM dungeon for it called *Fortress Ellendar*. The game system is based totally on percentiles, and I feel the *High Fantasy* class and subclass systems have something to offer all FRP games. The dungeon is well-designed and looks very good and very playable.

Daystar West Media Production (c/o Tracy Hickman, 834 E. 300 St. #7, Provo, Utah 84601) has started a line of FRP gamemaster adventures called *Night Ventures* — adventures that can be played in one night. The first in the series is *Rahasia*, which involves an adventure into a temple, a search for gold and for a man who has cursed the village princess who is sending you on this mission. *Rahasia* is well-written, easy to understand and to adapt, and *Night Ventures* seem to be an excellent idea. Daystar West has a very fine product to introduce their line — I recommend these games and I cannot wait to see more. (Best of luck to you, also!)

-MS

CONVENTIONS

If you would like to publicize your convention in this magazine, send us a flyer or progress report. (We assume no responsibility for the accuracy of the following listings.) A ★ beside a listing means *Flying Buffalo* plans to attend!

★May 16-19. **CanGames 80**. Gamecon. Write CANGAMES, 201-360 Dundas, Vanier, Ontario, K1L 7W7

★May 23-25. **GenghisCon II**. Gamecon. Write: Denver Gamers Assoc., 2527 Gaylord St., Denver CO 80205.

★May 25-28, 1980. **GrimCon II**. Hyatt Edgewater Hotel, Oakland, CA. Fantasy and SF gaming con.

Information: Grimcon, 1749 Sonoma Ave, Berkeley, CA 94707.

★June 27-30. **Origins 80**. Write: ORIGINS, 293 Walchaerts Ct., Newton Sq. PA 19073

★July 4-6. **NanCon 88-III**. Holiday Inn, Houston TX. \$10 to June 1, \$15 afterwards. Nan's Toys and Games, 1385 Galleria Mall, 5015 Westheimer, Houston TX 77056.

July 4-6. **WesterCon 33**. Hyatt Hotel, Los Angeles. Registration \$15 to 5/31, \$20 thereafter. Westercon 33, Box 2009, Van Nuys, CA 91404.

July 11-13. **PhringeCon**. *A Con for the Fringes of SF Fandom*. Memberships \$12.50 until May 1st, then \$15, \$20 at door. Write: PhringeCon, P.O. Box 1072, Phoenix, Arizona 85001.

July 11-13. **Minnesota Campaign IV**. Nicollet Hotel, Mpls, MN. Guests of Honor: Dave Arneson, M. A. R. Barker, PhD. Information: Jeff Berry, 343 E.19 St., Mpls. MN 55409

★July 11-13. **GlasCon V**. Gamecon. Information: L. Daniel, 7048 Keokuk Ave., Canoga Park, CA 91306.

Aug.29-Sept.1. **NOREASCON II**. *38th World Science Fiction Convention*. Information: Box 46 MIT Branch, Cambridge, MA 02139.

★Aug.30-Sept.1. **PacifiCon**. *The West Coast Wargaming Convention*.

Dunfey Hotel, San Mateo, CA. Information: David G. Hinkley, Publicity, PO Box 5833, San Jose, CA 95150.

ads

CLASSIFIED ADS

Having a hard time finding other gamers in your area? Something to say? Something to sell? Take out a classified ad!

WANTED — T&T players and GMS in the Washington DC area. Contact John L. Vogel, 11307 Parkmont Dr., Upper Marlboro, MD 20870.

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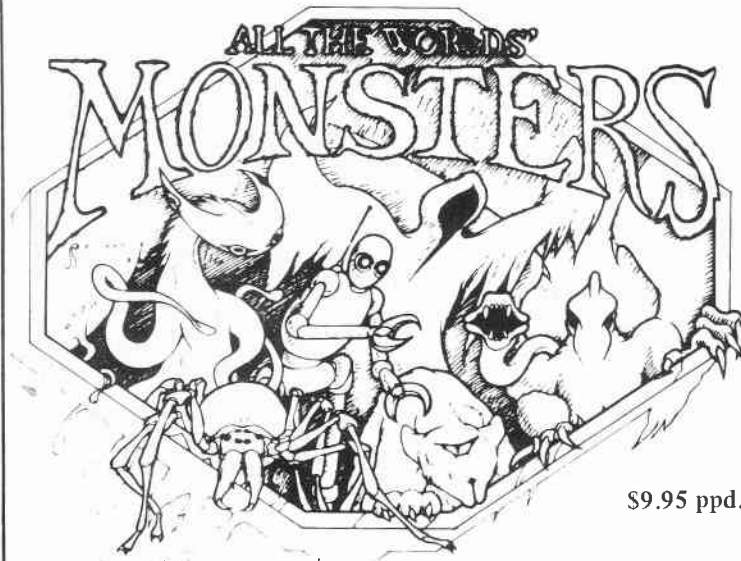


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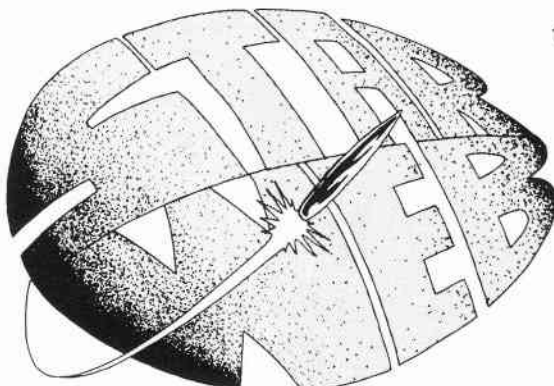
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Letters to the Editor

Dear Ken and Liz,

. . . I would like to register a complaint. Although Ken did a nice thing for GenghisCon II by mentioning it in his *Troll Talk* in the latest *SA*, it was missed in the conventions schedule! Now that I have complained, I will compliment . . . *SA* is beautiful! You two have done a great job of putting together a real quality magazine that rivals anything else currently available.

—Mark Simmons
Englewood, Colorado

Consider the error of not mentioning GenghisCon in the Cons section of Arcane Graffiti to be corrected as of this issue.

Hallo Ken,

I just received *Arena of Khazan*. I spent half the night playing it, and lost four 1-3 level characters before they finished their contracts. Finally, I sent in a 4th level elven warrior who retired after his 13th fight. He is going to leave it all and open up a tavern . . .

The artwork by Peter Laird was very good, page 15 in particular. On page 33, however, there is what looks like a mass of wet linguini. What exactly is that?

I'm glad that you have restricted the number of magical items available. It makes the game more realistic, not to mention fairer. Eventually, however, one will run out of magical items. I have an idea that might remedy the situation... any magical items, whether they're from *Arena of Khazan* or another dungeon, which were carried by a person killed in the arena, become property of the arena and are used to replace items on the enchanted weapons list that are given out. This way, no magical item is duplicated, yet there is a constant flow of items into and out of the dungeon.

—Tom Brenda
New Philadelphia, Ohio

Your suggestions about the turn-over of magical items obtained through characters who later die in Arena is an excellent one. Remember the worth of even so "mundane" a magical item as a deluxe staff — not just the big magic goodies should be returned, but the little ones as well.

The mass of wet linguini is ostensibly that awesome child of the Elder Gods, a Shoggoth.

Offutt to *SA*, peace.

Thank you, Mike Stackpole. You're
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quite right that I am a work-of-Tanith Lee fan, and enjoyed the weird and truly clever "Monkey's Stagger." I think it still holds up if Iss's possessive were formed that way, as *American* usage calls for.

It is Rocky Russo's archery article that really enthralled me, though: it is now 22 times marked with yellow highlighter! I have questions and comments, and maybe the rest of this letter is of interest only to Russo and Offutt. Or maybe it's of interest as it indicates a writer's thinking and research.

First: I have been hard on me and Dave Drake and John Morresy — oh, and Roy Thomas — in the matter of verbs used for loosing/shooting/lofting/speeding arrows. All I've been able to find out about the verb "to fire" is that it came into use with the employment of firearms; i.e. gunpowder weaponry. Fire was involved. Thus I feel I can't use "fired an arrow" or "fired his bow" or "arrow fire" because there'd have been no reason to apply that verb to that process before the invention of firearms. If Russo knows to the contrary, man does this careful writer want to know!

I should live to read more from Russo; tell me about lofting arrows. Who did and who didn't? How the hell can one allow for range and windage and trajectory — when one is going to aim not at the target, but into the air? Did "Robin Hood" (say, 1180-1220) and company loft arrows? Did the racing Heavenly Blue Mongols? — the Huns? — Does Russo? (I've never pulled, shot, or even fired a real bow in my life. I'm an ax-man.)

Stay well, and please be careful, and
— Write on!
—Andrew Offutt
Kentucky

Russo is back, as you can see elsewhere in this issue, and with luck and a bit of wheedling there will be more in the future (send him fan-letters!).

Dear Ken,

... something of interest on every page. Always some short pieces that you can read without having to plough through an entire article. (I even like the contents page!)

Dwarves. Mainly though a very useful piece of lore. I don't read a great deal of fantasy since I'm a gamer primarily. A short article like that is very handy.

One letter that could have been written by me, though, was the one calling for a lot of T&T zines. Here, here. I am trying to find someone in the UK who can do one. I just don't have the time. A lot of customers expect to get some sort of "support material" for T&T and magazines is one of the things they need. It makes

the hobby self-generating...

I'd like to suggest a type of article for *SA*, and it's rather like *Weapons Shop*. I do not read other fantasy zines for fun and I take no pleasure whatsoever in converting some idiot's 5-page dungeon from D&D to T&T. What players like me need is a lot of stuff worked out for them. For example, how about some suggested traps or situations for a T&T dungeon or adventure. I know the rules say that what I can do is only limited by my imagination, but what happens if my imagination is limited? I get stuck. How about a special page for inventions, situations, traps, tricks, events, occurrences, special effects? And a lot of other things as well!

—Chris Harvey
UK

An idea that makes a great deal of sense! All you writers...if the suggestions above strike you as interesting, write down your ideas and send them in! We will credit all that are used. Maybe we can call it "Grimtooth's Little Black Book of Tricks and Inventions" or something equally dire.

Dear K.St.A:

[concerning the T&T 5th Edition]
Your height and weight chart is good only at the extremes. Your typical character is 5'7" (too short) and 175 pounds (that's fat, if you're 5'7" — I'm 6'2 and 180 — so either I'm very skinny or people gain 5 pounds with 7 inches). I have redone the weight chart so that: 4:80, 5:90, 6:100, 7:110, 8:125, 9:135, 10:150, 11:160, 12:175. All others the same. Maybe you should just let people pick their numbers, to conform to their idea of who their character is.

—Dean Simmons
Paradise, California

Your suggestions for height-weight adjustments carry some weight to them (pardon) and they are offered as an alternative — personally, I feel the suggestion to pick your own numbers is in some ways the best if you don't feel comfortable with the chart in the rulebook.

Ken,

I was going to suggest a theme to expand on if you are ever stuck for an idea for your writing talent — An investigative reporter's article on my theory that alien invaders are engaged in a plot to destroy SciFi movies with schlock scripts like *Star Trek* and *Black Hole* — however, I now see the explanation in today's paper — the director of *Saturn III* worked on other great SciFi in the past such as *Seven Brides for 7 Brothers* and *Gidget Goes to Washington* — while the *Star Wars* mentor was a SciFi nut . . .

Victor Melucci
Bronx, New York

HORIZONS OF COMPUTER GAMING

— JOHN M. MORRISON

When John Morrison read "Fantasy Gaming & the Interactive Videodisc" in SA4, he was incensed at the reference to computer fantasy games as "stick figures and tacky sound effects." He now takes us along an alternate path into the future . . .

. . . one where John Q. Public, a worker at the Washington red tape works, returns home and pops a 45-sized disc into a certain slot. In a minute he is reminded that, as he left last time, he had just completed a deal with Rakshahr to steal a certain wizard's sceptre, and that he was outside the magician's tower. The scene, in full color, comes up on the television set, and Mr. Public is off. After an instant he runs into a troll. "You have six seconds," a voice warns. "Five. Four. Three. Two." But John has already typed "Draw sword. Fight." and the battle is on, an orchestra accompanying his every move on a nearby stereo.

Since Mr. Public does not yet have the sensor-glove apparatus, he must be content to type his moves into the keyboard. The program makes a lot of decisions for him, based on his expertise; all John Q. must do is to let the battle flow, but since he wants to cut it short he feints and stabs the thing in the side — a good stroke, and it's over. The body of the monster slumps to the ground with a sigh.

After a few minutes of traversing a corridor that has not been used for a while (as evidenced by the dead rats, decaying skeletons, and archaic weapons he must step over from time to time) our adventurer hears an alembic bubbling and a voice tinged with glass muttering arcane words. From his vantage point, John has a good shot at the old necromancer . . . but is that what he wants? He finally types "Throw Shattersteel at flask."

Perfect. The volatile chemicals explode and kill the wizard. Mr Public is affected, too, as shown by the thin red line on the side of his screen diminishing in size, but as it does not disappear entirely he is still around. The staff is his! All he must do is return it to Rakshahr, or maybe he'll keep it for himself. This can wait; "Your tea is ready," says the friendly voice, and John types "End adventure. Save." so that he'll be ready to pick it up

sometime in the future.

One refreshing cup of tea later, he turns his other terminal on, the one that is linked to the Phoenix computer. Hey, wait, Jane Doe is there! Although she's in the middle of a game John decides to contact her. (She lives in Australia, John in Virginia.) "Pleasant to hear from you, John," the monitor displays. "Have you tried my new 'Atlantis' adventure? It's got the Buffalo-6000 underwater scenes package."

"I'll have to try it, Jane," types John. "But first I want to explore a little further in 'Deathstalker'."

"Why, that's the one I'm in! I just entered the country of Tensford, so if you need any help let me know."

"Slim chance. I'm over eight hundred miles away. Still, if I get a teleport device I'll visit. Break link."

We could go on like this for some time, as John no doubt will. (In case he stays too late in the game, his home computer will warn him that, although tomorrow is Saturday, he has a hang-gliding lesson and must be up early.) In this example, the scenes shown could perhaps have been put on an interactive video disc; but there are certain other features I'll discuss. Incidentally, home computers (costing around \$2000) have the capacity for the first example right now.

Let us start with the roots. The first major computerized FRP game was 'Adventure' (often referred to as 'Advent' on larger computers), implemented by Willy Crowther and Don Woods. It was a lot like a solo dungeon in that you got a description of where you were, and then were asked what you wanted to do. The differences were that the choices were not displayed, so you could "Throw dagger" and something surprising might happen. Then again, nothing might happen. The total adventure was about 200 rooms long, and took many tries before you got enough adventure points to reach the "Endgame", or one last situation for experts. This was written in machine language, which is very hard to write in and is a lot like giving instructions to the inner workings of the computer without going through a language like BASIC or FORTRAN.

Next was 'Zork,' by four people at MIT. The layout was similar to Advent

(give scene, input action) but was written in a very high-level language called LISP (For LISP Processor). LISP was originally intended for robot control; one of the first projects in it was a program in which boxes and pyramids were displayed on a color monitor, and the computer would follow instructions like "Put the largest ball in the red box" by analyzing the sentence structure in terms of actions, actors (things that have the actions done to them) and adjectives. It would even tell you if something was impossible and why (i.e. if there was no red box). The data involved could even be changed for such variants as "Haunted House", but the adventure was in itself a program . . . in other words, instead of printing out the contents of a variable that contained what happens when you jump off the cliff, the program would go to the place where there was a "PRINT" statement saying "You have jumped off the cliff . . .". Besides that, not many people could program in LISP.

For a few years now, students at the Universities of Delaware and Illinois have had access to a system called "PLATO", and games such as "Dungeons, Monsters, and Treasure" in which you pilot a little human-shaped figure around a dungeon map, parts of your body falling off the more damage you take; and "Moria" and "Baguette", where the player "sees" (on a section of the screen) a line drawing, in acceptable perspective, of what the adventurer would see, including monsters. One can fight with weapons (and by getting gold, afford better ones), cast spells, and even pray as a last resort. Again, though, these are written in an esoteric language that one unfamiliar with computers would have trouble with; besides, you would need to somehow contact the large computers that have these games stored on them (although 'Adventure' is now available for home computers).

Ah, the home computer. One last mention of what is available now, then we step into the near future.

Currently the only computerized FRP games I have seen are by Creative Computing, and are for Radio Shack's TRS-80 or the Apple. They are much like 'Adventure' but vary widely, from 'Mission Impossible' to 'Pirate Adventure'. They are in machine language, and few know the secret of changing the data base so a new adventure may be written.

But that will soon be solved. Ronald Fischer and Ross Patterson, working at Rutgers, have developed both a program to run dungeons like this and one to write them. I have been doing something similar for home computers. With these programs, or others of the sort, anyone can write a computer adventure. (One person, totally unfamiliar with gaming, made up a dazzler

Sorcerer's Apprentice

that was very refreshing!) By using special codes, one can make an earthquake that changes the description of a room to "rubble" and hides all items in it. And that's only the tip of the iceberg.

Let's get away from the game aspects a minute and consider economics. Mr. Ballard's video discs would cost around \$20 apiece, would not have some of the features possible with computers, and would run on a machine costing about \$2000 (including the controlling computer). The computer runs about the same as the video setup, and five dollars apiece for a diskette. Thus one could have four adventures, ones that talked and made music at you depending on a lot more factors than merely where you go, for about the same price of a video-oriented system. But there's more.

One of the telling points of the computer is the ease in which ordinary people, with very little special training (usually self-taught) can put together a program. The cost for setting up an adventure from your own imagination? Five dollars for the disc.

However, for a video disc adventure, one would not only need "a team of artists and photographers" but a totally motion-free area and the equipment to reduce each scene into a stylus (or laser-readable mode); even though you couldn't get one at any price presently, you could perhaps assemble one for twenty thousand dollars. Add the cost of a few months labor by designers, painters, and photographers, and the number of zeroes is staggering, not to mention the actual cost!

Let us imagine a world where the *only* dungeon one could run was a pre-packaged one, from Judges' Guild, Flying Buffalo, or TSR. Good though they may be, they come out with a new one only once a year, and since they use the same passages, rooms, and monsters it gets rather monotonous after a while, especially since one has such a limited scope of things to do (walk, turn around, fight . . . although I know some people who would be happy as clams just doing this). This is the world of the video adventure system.

Now, let us assume that about a thousand discs, each made up by unique individuals, some better than others but all as fresh as a face-to-face dungeon. It only takes about a month to exhaust one, but you can always trade with a friend; maybe he'll even give you something he made up himself. You can talk to monsters and have them answer back, set up traps, leave warnings . . . this is the world of computer FRP games.

"Ha." I hear the critics scoff. "But with the TV unit one can actually see what's happening in color! Match that!"

I can and will. For a relatively small sum of money now, soon to be ridiculously small, you can get a 'color graphics package' — the ability to draw

on your computer, and store your works of art. It does not take an artist to do this, either . . . it's like doodling with an Etch-a-Sketch, only easier and in colors. Not only that, but once you have 'drawn' a room you can have the computer calculate what it will look like from any vantage point; you can superimpose tables, swords, monsters, etc. in any area within the room; you can even look through a corridor to the next room. Conditions will be different depending on what kind of light source you have, your height, etc. You could use up the 54000 frames on a videodisc in ten rooms like this!

More? You can have talking monsters, who react differently depending on your species, what magic stuff you have, etc. With a voice recognition circuit, you can even talk back and eliminate the need for a keyboard. A music synthesizer can produce any sounds that the vocal synthesizer cannot, and can filter speech to produce, let's say, a monster with a sore throat.

These scenes are easy enough to set up, but let's make it even easier on the dungeon designer. Let's say that a company named Buffalo-6000 (a subsidiary of Flying Buffalo) has released several discs called "Humans," "Dungeon Passages," "Caves," "Dragons and Balrogs," etc.; each having from several dozen to a hundred different examples of the subject so the avid referee won't have to draw his own. If you need to extend a passage a few feet, just plug in "FBI wall 714." Of course these are modifiable both when writing and running a dungeon; you can have a standard section of a room with a water fountain of your own design on one wall, or a delver may drop a dagger in a tunnel and have it there when he returns.

You see, in final comparison, a computer is like a tray of paints, while a video system is like a rainbow. Both are beautiful in their own way, but with a computer you can have many shades in between those in the spectrum and can make your own rainbow, if you want. ●



illustration by Leslie Cohen



THE NAME UNSPEAKABLE

Ulph the Patriarch sat before his dwelling in the slant-rays of the westering sun, taking the rest granted his years and station in the Family. From the near field he could hear the tired but cheerful voices of the gleaners, taking advantage of the sun's last light, the children still teasing, making a game of it. It had grown almost cool, but that was pleasant after the day's sun. The wind lifted tufts of his sparse white hair, and he sat half-sprawled, sun-blackened hands clasped on his paunch, eyes half closed, so that she arrived as a kind of dream vision, the clop of her horse's hooves on the dry ground by some trick of the senses following the appearance. The horse was immense, Ulph's seated posture lending its own distortion to the gaunt and hulking shape. The rider swung down, a woman, but he had noticed that first. She was as gaunt as the beast she rode, golden of skin and not just with sun, her long, uncut lioncolored hair bound in a leather fillet. Her tunic was rough-woven, travel-stained and grimy and at her hip was slung a sword in a sheath of worn leather.

"You are Ulph?" she asked. "I passed some harvesters who said —" She seemed ill-at-ease.

"I am he."

"I saw also that the grain hangs

heavy on the stalk. I . . . I would offer my service as a harvester."

"This is our land, tended by the Family, generation to generation. You are not of our blood — an outlander, I would say, an Amazon, though if that be so you are far from your own land."

He saw her begin to speak; saw pride close her lips. She set foot to stirrup and he knew that within a moment she would be gone — a dream-distortion passing.

"If —" he said, raising a hand in true patriarchal style, "you would agree to comport yourself in all ways like our own women, perhaps you might find a place among us."

He had been as flexible as he was capable. Scorpia realized it and managed to overcome her own pride a little. She had long since sold the last valuable article she owned, and after the harvest came winter, a bleaker winter than any in her own land.

"A bargain," she said.

The old man had gotten unsteadily to his feet and was inspecting the huge war gelding. "Our women don't look a man in the eye," he observed casually, "unless . . . But the women can show you their ways better than I can." His fingers traced a thick, ropy scar across Blackmane's bluff shoulder. "But how came you here so far from your own land, Amazon?"

"I am a citizen of no country," she said, looking him in the eye, "and I do not wish to be named with that warlike tribe." She unbuckled her swordbelt and passed the weapon precipitously to him. "Take this and do what you will with it."

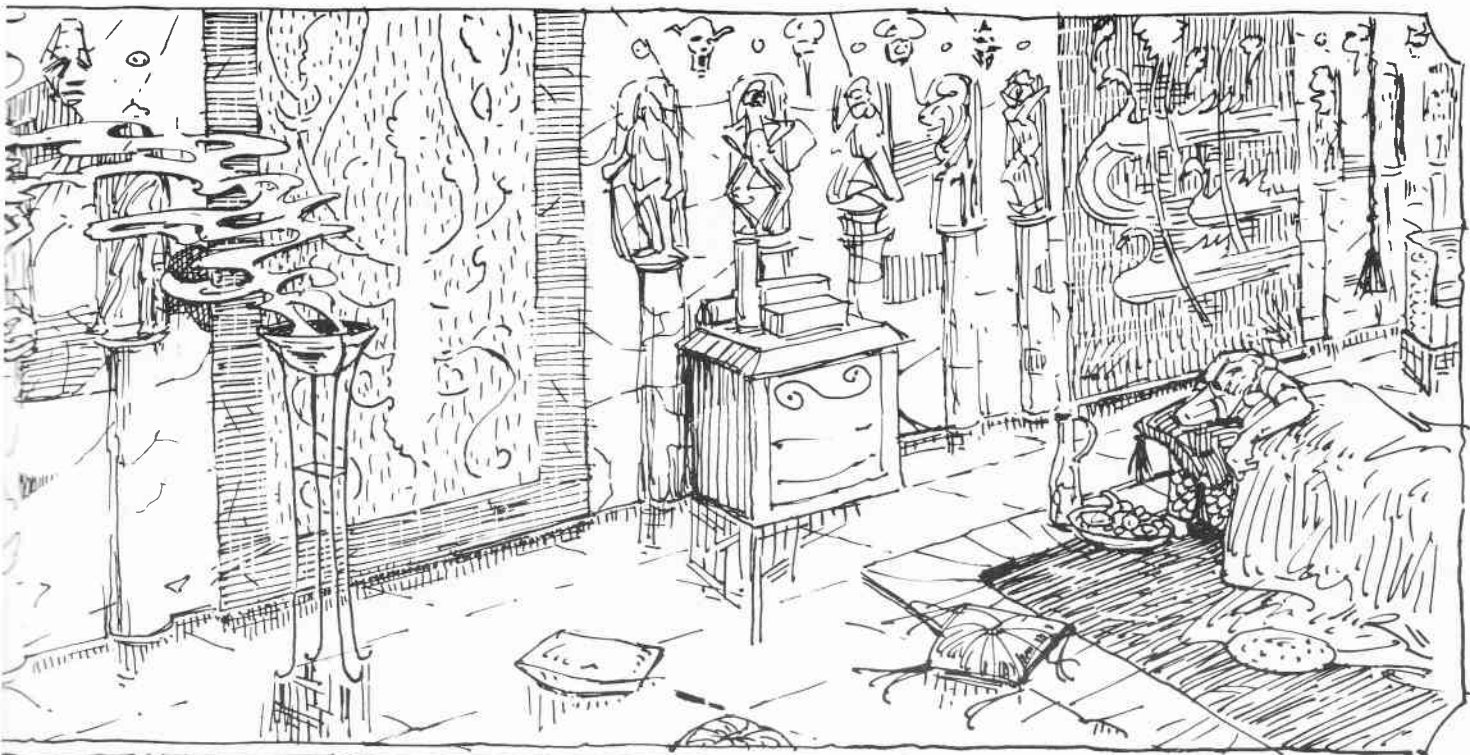
He half pulled the blade from its sheath and murmured at the strangeness of the lustreless blue-gray metal. "We keep no weapon of war here, but perhaps it might be melted down and something more useful might be made. What is your name?"

"I was called Scorpia, but I hope to earn another. Perhaps you will give it to me."

He pursed his lips doubtfully. "Perhaps."

The garments worn by the women were clumsy and confining, heavy skirts wrapped about Scorpia's legs as she tried to walk. The younger women laughed as she stopped to disentangle herself from the skirt's dark folds, muttering an alien oath.

"You will learn," said Serai, the Matriarch of the clan, but her face was thin-lipped and disapproving. On this first night they all looked alike, this Family, and names blurred into a general similarity. She was confused by the steamy activity of the kitchen hut, where she got underfoot while the rest



Illustrations by Richard Becker

IN TEL URATH — JANET FOX

prepared the meal, and at last Serai pressed her into service pouring wine while the men ate. A hefty young farmer shouted in protest as wine fountained out of his overfull cup and into his lap. Serai stilled the uproar and removed Scorpia, but her dry and bony face was still disapproving.

"What means this clumsiness, I thought if you knew naught of hearth-side chores you could at least do this simple task."

There was a hardness in Scorpia's face at the old woman's angry words, but she forced her gaze downward. "Forgive me, Serai, my attention wasn't on it."

"Of course it wasn't; you were staring at young Micael as if he were the Evil One incarnate. He's naught but an innocent child."

"He'd be . . . eight summers," said Scorpia.

"Yes." Serai nodded gravely.

"And his hair is yellow as grain . . . not dark like others in the clan."

"What claim would you be making?" asked Serai in shocked tones.

Scorpia half turned away, hugging the wine ewer to herself. "But I don't believe that such a thing would be possible," she said in a muffled voice. "And there would be no way to know."

"I think the old man has taken leave of his senses to think I could teach

such a one to be a woman," said Serai addressing her comments upward, toward the gods.

The heat of the sun rolled in as if in waves, cresting toward noon. A child staggered into the fields bearing a clay jar that sloshed, and the workers came as if hearing the faint sound from afar. Scorpia came walking from the threshing floor of a nearby structure, her hair festooned in chaff, a flail held over her shoulder like a weapon. Wordlessly she accepted her turn at the cup and drank, her wet hand smearing a streaky mask of grime across her face as she wiped the sweat from her eyes. She and the other workers found some shade at the field's edge and rested in it, most too numb from their labors to even engage in conversation. Scorpia sat silent. There was no word, hardly a perturbation but she became aware of a presence, nearby, regarding her.

The boy Micael.

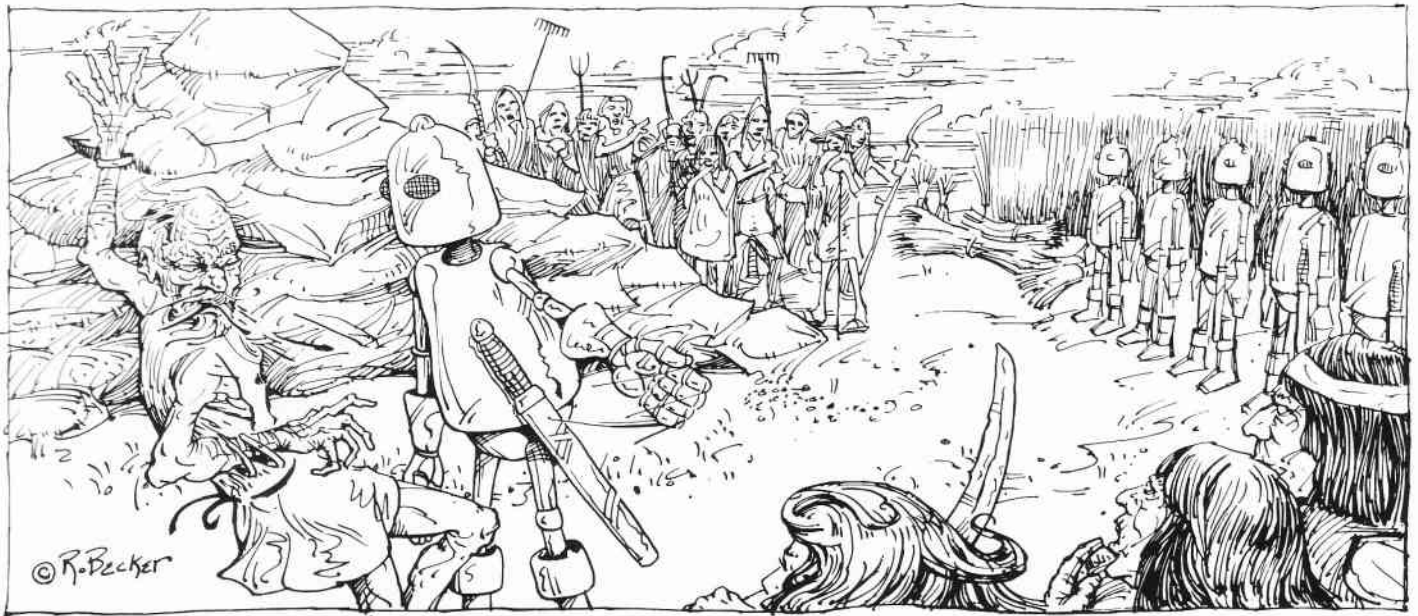
Though after that first night she had made it a point not to notice him, she found that something indefinable had grown between them, her indifference piquing an eight year old's natural curiosity, overcoming the boy's natural shyness. In all the heat and grime of the dusty fields, he was something fresh and vibrant, hair ripe-grain color, face retaining the innocence of infancy as it

began to reach toward the harsher contours of adulthood. She looked toward him, somewhat warily, but there must have been something of welcome in it because little by little the boy came nearer, finally choosing a place, not opposite her, but beside her and a little behind where he could watch her, but she couldn't see him except by turning her head.

Despite the heat there was a kind of peace here that was almost palpable (though perhaps that was only an effect of extreme weariness); it seemed that nothing could disturb it, yet in the next moment it was irrevocably shattered.

There was the measured beat as if of marching men, yet it was a cadence almost too perfect. The soldiers marched straight across the fields crushing down swales of the good, unharvested grain, but the workers only watched them come, silently, with no spoken protest of this outrage. The soldiers were uniformly small, identically gleaming in polished bronze armor, though it was the strangest armor she had ever seen, flawless, seamless, the helmet covering the head completely, bubbles of eye-protecting mesh bulging to either side. When they emerged from the grain she saw that their bodies were wrongly shaped, the legs seemingly too thin to convey the squarish bulk of the bodies.

"They're not human," she spoke



under her breath as if to herself, for it was obvious that the others, having seen this before, were acting out of some well-known protocol in which they dared make no sound of protest or gesture of self-defense.

Thinking that perhaps they knew best, Scorpia followed their example. The leader, though he was really not distinguished from the others in any way except his position at the forefront of the band, confronted Ulph where he stood among the workers.

"We have come for the tithe," said a voice that had a disconcerting hum somewhere in the midst of it. The Patriarch nodded and led the way back toward the complex of dwellings and storage huts. A few people followed the procession and Scorpia joined them. From the huts Ulph and the others began to unload sacks and baskets of grain until they had piled up an imposing hillock before the alien soldiers.

The ranking figure (Scorpia would not now call it a man) walked around the pile, but not in a casual way. She noticed that all their movements were crisp and precise; they went everywhere amarch.

"This is not the amount promised. The Master will be displeased."

"We must have a reserve to keep our Family fed during the winter," said the Patriarch, and from the looks on the other faces, Scorpia saw that he had committed some incredibly brave act, by merely speaking the words.

The soldier's skinny arm shot out, hitting Ulph across the face with a metallic gauntlet and sending him staggering backward. All save Scorpia stood frozen; the flail hissed through the air (not the weapon she'd have chosen but the only one at hand) and hit the gleaming bronze of the leader's armor. Instead of clanking against metal, it thumped and bounced away

leaving a dent where it had struck. The soldier-thing scarcely wobbled on its stem-legs and again the arm shot out with its deceptively delicate-appearing hand. Scorpia felt the bones of her forearm bend under the terrific pressure of that hand, and she thought next to hear the report of the bones breaking, but she was pulled off her feet and flung across the yard. When she was to think of it later in a calmer mood she would feel that there had been no malice in the act; she had not felt hatred — just a bit of unfinished business that had been meticulously attended to.

With a warning that, "All has not been settled here yet," in his droning voice, the leader urged the others to pick up the grain. They lifted the burdens with an easy strength that Scorpia now could well believe in. She spat sand and said an indelicate word, but since it was not in the tongue of these people it went unnoticed.

She walked toward the others, and her voice was angrier than she'd meant it to be. "Is this how men protect their families in this land?"

"None can be protected from that which rules in Tel Urath," said a red-faced peasant. "As well seek protection from the Storm-Lords when they bring the winds."

"Even an Amazon cannot stand before the Myrmidon," said Ulph.

"Not with a flail as weapon," she answered, rubbing the ache that now encompassed her arm all the way to the shoulder joint.

"Nor with any weapon. Perhaps we should return to the fields; if the harvest is very good, perhaps we may be able to fulfill the tithe owed to Tel Urath."

"Who is this that rules as a tyrant in Tel Urath? What name —"

"The Name that may not be spoken," said a plump matron. "We can only obey and not question such a power."

She stooped to retrieve the flail. "I will put this to its *proper* use."

As the harvesting drew to an end Scorpia thought much about the Myrmidon and the Name Unspeakable in Tel Urath. And though there was peace in plenty among the people of the Family, something was irrevocably spoiled, and she who had been born to violence, felt its presence suspended over these peaceful rural scenes like a suspended sword.

Ulph was taking his ease by the first fire of the season when Serai appeared, the frown lines of her face more deeply grooved than usual. "She must go from this place."

"How many she's may there be among the clanfolk; I must sort them out."

"Don't play the dotard with me, husband. This outlander you've allowed to live among us. Your Amazon, your harlot —"

He patted the bench beside him with a placating gesture. Serai's skirts puffed as she sat down angrily. "I myself saw them. There were rumors and talk, but I saw them . . . taking off their clothing and . . . disporting themselves where the river widens. It's a shame . . . a scandal, bringing that hussy among us to corrupt our pure young men. Helos . . ."

"You speak of Helos! By the Evil One, woman, he has slept with half the women of the Family, married or not . . . you, as well, as far as I know."

Serai's pinched face, first clenched, then softened into a half smile, first at the ridiculousness of that, and then she flushed a bit with pleasurable embarrassment.

"We are not talking about a clan- maiden, well-versed in our ways but a free woman who has lived a different life than we have."

"Then you do not think," said Serai in a bitter tone, "that such a one, come among us with no proper ties to a husband, will not cause contention?"

"I fear she will," admitted Ulph, "but she came to me, seeking, and —"

"And she has perhaps caused us much harm by attacking one of the bronze warriors."

"I made good the tithe through the blessing of this year's bountiful harvest. The Name is appeased."

"But you did not think it foolish that she dared strike?"

"She was indeed foolish, but what man among us did not wish he had dealt the blow?"

"None should defy the Name; it is death. Perhaps worse than death. I would think, old man, the way you defend the bitch, that you would have her to bed yourself."

Ulph laughed explosively. "Woman, I have few enough years left. Think you I would shorten them? But I will do this — I will counsel her against further 'corruption' of our Helos."

There was a rattle of hooves outside and when he went to the door he saw the huge Blackmane plunge to a stop, as if in the midst of battle, nostrils flaring. Clinging behind Scorpia on the saddle was the boy Micael, the rapid growth of early childhood lengthening his limbs and putting a darker tinge on his blonde hair. Scorpia swung him down by one arm, and he scampered away, casting back a teasing word over his shoulder.

Ulph gestured Scorpia inside. "Our Micael grows swiftly, and I see that you take a special interest in him."

"I love all the children," said Scorpia defensively.

"I have heard," said Ulph, "that among the Amazons, the bearing of sons is a disgrace and such children are sold into slavery or left in the wilderness."

"They are given away," said Scorpia, her gaze distant and cold, "to those who will care for them and raise them as their own."

"But never to know their own mothers."

"Never to know."

"And your boy, if you had known him, would be about eight summers . . . like Micael."

"What is this talk of children?"

"Would you love him less if I told you I knew his mother, that Serai helped with the birth?"

Scorpia turned away, and when she spoke her voice was low and uncertain. "I know it is impossible . . . and foolish. But I do not think that anything would make me love him less, now that I have found him, not even the truth."

"I see nothing wrong in this innocent love," said Ulph, "but I promised Serai that I would speak to you about certain rumors that —"

"You mean Adan and I? That was

nothing . . . less than nothing."

Ulph stuttered, paused, as if fearing that if he spoke longer, more corruption of young manhood would be revealed. "Well, if you intend to stay among us it must be as we agreed. These 'nothings' must not occur. Our women — all of us consider virtue a sacred thing."

"I would like to stay. I expected never to find a place where I could live without the sword. Your ways are different but I'll try to accommodate myself to them for the sake of being with —"

Ulph smiled and patted her shoulder, for Patriarchs are generous with such gestures.

It happened on a day when the Storm Lords sent the first strong winds of the impending winter. Dead leaves rustled on tree branches and scudded along the ground like rudderless boats. Through this crisp debris marched the precise feet of the bronze warriors, marching single file as was their wont. Ulph went out to confront their faceless and featureless leader again, though his experience gave him a cold premonition of what they might want.

"Summon all among you who are young and without blemish," buzzed the inhuman voice.

Ulph had heard that order before, and had never disobeyed. He wondered why this time it set his teeth on edge with a desire to defy it. Yet, he called to some of the women nearby to carry out the command. Quickly it was done and all the children, youths and maidens stood disconcertedly before the main hall. As he had done about the grain, the Myrmidon made a slow marching circuit of the group of young people. Then, as if he were a pawn, moved by a will other than his own, he chose three, reaching out with quick jerky movements to draw them away from the group. So enrapt was Ulph in his own personal cloud of depression, that it was a moment before he realized that Micael had been one of those chosen. Shouldering these living burdens over their gold-glinting shoulders, much as they had the sacks of grain, they turned to depart.

On the back of the charger, at full gallop, Scorpia burst from screening foliage. She did not know what demon of perversity made her go forth that day to put the war horse through his paces, a stout oak-staff replacing her sword as she played at soldier. Helos had come racing through the trees and at first she had mistaken his intention, thinking he had come to take up their amorous sport where they had last left off, but it took her only seconds to see the mingled fear and rage on his face, as he had told her in a hoarse voice what was happening at the hall.

The Myrmidons did not look

around, though the pounding hooves of the gelding were loud in the clearing. Ulph made a tentative gesture to halt her charge, yet he saw it was impossible. The hard shoulder of the war horse sent the last warrior reeling ridiculously away on pipestem legs, and as Scorpia came level with the next, her arm swung the oak staff in a whistling arc. As effectively as a sword would have, the stick snapped back the bulbous head on its reedy neck, severing it with a resounding crack and sending it bounding across the rutted field. Even the clan-folk who knew the bronze soldiers of old shouted in surprise as the torso turned to give battle, drawing its sword. Scorpia was so shocked that she wielded the staff as if it were a blade, and as it met the Myrmidon's weapon it was sheared in two. As three more fighters sprang to the attack, Blackmane reared and almost bolted, he who had always been a rock against the tide of battle. With only a broken stick as defense, Scorpia was not so sure herself, yet with a warcry she drove heels into the gelding's sides and attacked. Though great hooves crushed one warrior to bronze-gleaming fragments, the other two grabbed the big beast and as if they handled a newborn foal, toppled him off his feet, spilling his rider.

Scorpia sprawled, dazed and bloody, in the dirt of the field. Darkness loomed over her and a metal hand gripped her throat and without effort cut off her air. She felt her hands slide off cold smoothness as she struggled, then blackness descended.

She awoke with a convulsive gasping for air and a choking rush of bloody plegm which she spat. She had no way of knowing how long she had been unconscious, but it was obvious that the fight was over. She saw a bronze warrior, his chitinous body breached and torn apart. Inside was nothing human, as she had guessed, but only a great evil. A woman she did not recognize at first was crouched over a man's prone body, and she keened a death chant. Scorpia drew in her breath. "Helos." Her eyes burned. Others, who had evidently joined him in fighting the Myrmidon, either lay injured or were having their wounds tended. A youth she hardly knew cradled a bleeding and badly crushed arm.

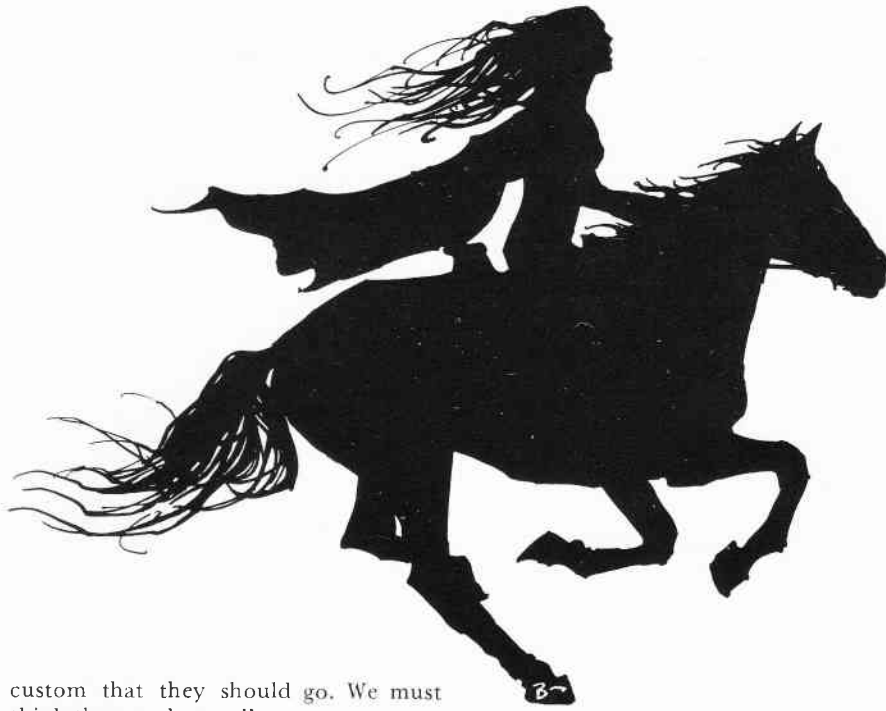
Serai approached, an angular shape, hands on hips. "The day you came, we opened our doors to the Evil One."

"Micael?"

"Carried off — chosen by the Name to serve in his Temple at Tel Urath."

Scorpia's fingers clenched in earth. "I will not have it so!"

"You will not? You have twice failed against the bronze men, and at what cost to us. We cannot question. Perhaps the children have a good life at the Temple. It is according to our



custom that they should go. We must think they are happy."

"This time custom be damned," said Scorpia getting shakily to her feet. "This time I will not have *my son* taken by strangers."

The Patriarch stood beside her, put out a hand to keep her from falling. "You will ride to Tel Urath?"

She nodded.

"She's mad," said Serai.

"Alone," said Scorpia. "I will injure no more of the Family in my fight."

Ulph tore at the oiled wrappings of a long bundle, brought out the strange dull-colored blade. "I could not destroy it; its metal resisted the flame. It seemed a sign so I put it by 'til a time of need."

Scorpia strapped the weapon to her side, where it tapped familiarly against her thigh as she walked, a bitter reminder of things past.

"Amazon, if you survive — if you wish to return — You said you wished a new name, perhaps it is still not too late."

She swung to the saddle, the gelding bowing his neck against the tight rein. "Father, I thank you for the thought, but if I am to have a new name, I think I must find it for myself."

Tel Urath was in reality two cities, Scorpia discovered, once she had spent some days there. The new Tel Urath was alive with merchants and tradespeople, mazed with narrow cobbled roads that moved in crazy directions and were constantly filled with peddlers and beggars and beasts of burden. It was a place of noisome taverns and open bazaars and new-built temples dedicated to new and progressive gods, who seemed to change almost momentarily at the whims of their worshippers. One might see any kind of folk here, black-

skinned warriors from Cush, Red Atlanteans in their feather cloaks and even a pair of Amazons, anonymous in hawk-head helmets. Scorpia passed them silently by. Tel Urath-the-old-city was walled, clenched into itself, built of cyclopean blocks of oily black granite that had neither weathered much nor crumbled, though the structures had an aura of great age. At its center was the Temple of the Name, featureless, windowless, devoid of beauty, set up on a gigantic platform of stone into which steps had been gouged. Unlike the new, improved gods, whose names were constantly on the lips of the city dwellers, that which dwelt at the heart of the city was scarcely ever mentioned, for it is difficult to discuss that which has no name, yet though the people would not speak of the Name, it was the way in which they would not speak of it that impressed Scorpia.

She had observed the temple from afar, from a rooftop in the new city and had seen the Myrmidon walking their antlike ways along the imposing walls of the fortress, and the sight of their blocky, metallic bodies made a tightness grow in her throat. She had made two blind charges against the men of bronze and had found herself lying in the dirt when it was over. This time she would look for a weakness.

The street urchin looked her body up and down with a half-suppressed leer, but she assumed he was only practicing, being yet beardless and soprano, so she ignored it.

"Can you be sure he knows aught of the temple?"

"It is all he talks of," said the boy. "I was a handsome lad when first I was

called to serve. I was given the run of the Temple . . . a favorite" he said in a mimicking voice. They had been walking down a narrow ill-smelling street, and now the boy stopped, pointed. "There he is."

A cold wind filled the alley, swirling Scorpia's heavy cloak and a cold sleet began to hiss on the pavement around them. "For a few cups of wine," said the boy, "he will tell you more than you want to know about the Inner Temple." Scorpia flipped a copper to the boy and approached the figure huddled on a clawfooted bench before the wine shop. She could not tell if he were old or young, but he certainly looked worn out by life. His body was bloated and his face was swollen and blotchy. Puckered pouches of bluish skin gave a look of fatigue to his eyes.

"Yan." She shook him gently. Rheumy eyes regarded her without cognizance until she gestured toward the wine shop, then he shuddered, rose ponderously and followed her inside, oblivious to what use he was to be put, willing to suffer any abuse at her hands as long as the wine flowed.

After a few drinks Scorpia removed the bottle from his clutching hand. "I don't want you that drunk. You are reputed to have lived in the Temple."

He began to speak then, and Scorpia understood what the boy meant by "more than you want to know." Yan had been, like Micael, chosen as a child to serve in the Temple, but when he'd grown old and ugly, with a taste for sweet wine, he'd been sent away — exiled, he called it. To himself, he was still a fresh-faced, fair-haired prince in exile.

"You served personally the One-who-may-not-be-named? You have seen his face?"

Yan giggled explosively, put his hand to his mouth, then, as if a chill of fear had crept up and enveloped him, his voice dropped to a dry humorless chuckle, and he looked stealthily around the wine shop. "It is not wise to speak of it, yet the Power in-dwelling in Tel Urath is a girl."

"A woman?"

"A girl — small-boned and delicate as a moth's wing — hair braided up — so. So dark it seems to draw in the light — well, not a girl, exactly. I think she was — *old* — I can't —" feebly his hand twitched toward the bottle, and she poured him another flagon.

"Others seem to think it is a man I seek."

"Others have not looked into the eyes of — No, it is all fantasy, all a dream. I woke up and was as you see me now."

Scorpia began to wonder if she could put her trust in one whose reason seemed to teeter so close to the brink of madness. Yet he, and no one else,

would dare speak of the unspeakable.

"I want to enter the Temple. Do you know a way by which you might return?"

"Return — return to the Temple — to stand before that awful Presence?"

"What was it," she wondered, "that could topple a man's very reason?"

"But to go back. To regain my place. I might yet be a favorite, to receive treats from her little jewelled hand. I do know a way, and I will show it to you."

Yan's "way" led through an ancient sewer, blessedly abandoned and out of use, though a narrow and foul trickle of water ran through its center. "I knew all the secret ways of the place; did I not play there as a child? This was to be used as a way of escape in olden times before she had fully consolidated her power."

Scorpia studied the ancient stonework by the smokily burning torch she carried. "Then this 'girl' was the ruler in olden times as well? For it is said that the rule of the Name has been long in the land. Perhaps it may be a dynasty, for mortals do not rule so long."

"I don't know," said Yan. "To a being such as that, perhaps even immortality is possible."

"If so, I will cut it short," said Scorpia, patting the hilt of her sword. "Are we not almost there? I seem to have been stooping and crawling in here like a blind rat for hours."

"We should be under the Temple itself by now, but it is cold in here. Could I not have a draught of that good wine to warm me?"

"I fear you could not make the journey if I gave you more. At journey's end you'll have it all to drink, at your leisure."

There was an adit going upward at right angles to the tube of the sewer and they inched their way up it, using hand and footholds cut long before, then there was a slanting tunnel very close and pitch dark except for the dancing torchlight.

"There. That sliding stone opens into the innermost chambers of the Name — where none go but she and her favorites. If I could but caress her delicate body as in olden times, but what would she think of me now? She is young and I am grown old." She heard him cursing himself in the darkness. "I think it was not a good idea for me to return here. There can be nothing here but memories, and if she is displeased—"

Carefully Scorpia slid back the stone. The escapeway was covered by a thick tapestry of rose and gold. It had perhaps been forgotten, for cobwebs stretched and broke as she thrust the stone back. She emerged behind the dusty hanging and edged to one side of it, to look out. The room, though it

had no windows, was bathed in rich ruby-red light, giving additional richness to the thick hangings, the precious furnishings, lending fleshy tones to marble statues of youths and maidens, nymphs and satyrs ranged along one wall. On a low couch of dark red with tasselled coverlet lay a sleeping figure.

"Micael. This is the boy I told you of, my son who was carried off. I could not have hoped for such luck." She ran to the lounge and put her hand on the sleeping boy's shoulder; the flesh was firm and warm, the sleeping face careless, stubby blonde lashes on unblemished cheeks. "Micael, I've come to take you home."

The eyelids fluttered; the boy looked up at her. It was at first as if he did not recognize her, for he started back, but who knew what cruelties he had suffered here.

"Come, we have come by a secret way. I had not thought to find you so easily here in the inner chambers." As she tossed aside the silken coverlet, she saw that the boy was dressed in a robe of scarlet over balloon-legged black silk trousers. Rings of half-dozen colors glittered on his small hands. Though all was rich and elegant, she found the effect of such opulence on one so young disturbingly incongruous.

"She wore such rings," said Yan, "on her little pale hands."

Scorpia found it strange that Micael had not embraced her or spoken since she had first discovered him. "Did they hurt you?"

Rather than speaking, the boy shook his head. He was watching her intently; she had never seen this expression on his face before. He looked furtive, as if hiding some guilty secret.

"But I see that she is not here," said Yan disappointedly.

"Come with me then," she said, gripping the boy by the hand. "The Name does not know that my finding you so near has kept me from slaying him . . . her." As she pushed back the tapestry to expose the gaping doorway, Micael slipped his hand from hers and ran back across the room where hung a braided golden cord which he tugged at two-handed. Far off she heard the faint clamor of a bell. An alarm bell.

Scorpia paused, made herself look at Micael as if she'd never seen him before. "What is wrong here?"

"Nothing."

"Why did you run from me. We must get out of this place. Don't you understand, everything's all right at last. After all these years, we can go home."

"A moment more." Though the figure was trying hard to achieve a childish tone, an awkward pose, Scorpia slipped her sword from its sheath in a reflex impossible to control. The hair along her neck and forearms prickled as she saw for the first time that *something else* looked out through the innocent face of the child Micael. "What are you?" she asked it, the question its own answer. The shape of Micael moved toward the door as if it knew help were coming, but she stepped in its



way, slammed the great door and threw down the stout bar with a secure-sounding thunk.

"I'm . . . your son," said the inhabitant, earnestly.

Scorpia wondered how she'd been fooled, even a little, for there was nothing childlike about the cold, implacable expression on the boy's face. It was the expression of one who knew things, bitter things about the uses of power, the passing of years — perhaps of centuries. A monotonous thumping began at the door, but age-hardened wood held for the moment.

"Is it you, little princess?" asked Yan. "I thought I felt your presence in this room." Micael gave them both a haughty look, reptile-cold that said it had no consideration for anything merely human, but Scorpia gripped its shoulder. "What happens to the soul of the one whose body you steal?"

"As well ask whither goes the soul when the body dies," said the presence. "Such concepts are meaning-


less, at least to me." The boy's sharp teeth met suddenly in the flesh of Scorpia's wrist, and he slipped past her, running to a black lacquered box atop a polished table. She stood there numbly, still holding her sword, while the door shuddered, cracked; in a moment it would burst inward under the Myrmidon's power. From the box the boy took a silver-handled dagger, then advanced on her, its expression now even more awful than before. Scorpia's knuckles whitened on the swordhilt, but it was as if she were paralyzed.

"Somehow," said the inhabitant, "I feel that you are not able to strike me. Is it this body I wear? It is indeed a pleasant fit." It looked down at itself and smiled, small white teeth gleaming, then came forward again, half crouched, the silver weapon glinting in its hand.

Her sword struck downward, but once, cutting easily the thin skin, the delicate musculature. The weapon slid free as the boy's head lolled, his body fell forward, and Scorpia sent the blade

flying across the room to strike ringingly against the wall, though it did not break. The sudden silence outside the door seemed louder than the noise had been. Scorpia looked at the small, huddled form beside her, then bent to spew vomit onto the gleaming tiles of the floor. The thing had been overhasty; had it not attacked, she would never have struck. A moment more and the door would have been broken. A moment more and it would have won. "And now you must know, thing of evil," she muttered, speaking to the utter silence of the room, "whither goes the soul, if anywhere. If anywhere at all."

She became aware after a while that Yan had carried her to the couch and was bathing her face with water. "One does not bring down a god without some pain," he murmured.

She reached up and felt the wetness of tears on her cheeks. He couldn't know that for the second time she had sacrificed her son. 

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Reader Survey Feedback

First of all, we need to thank all of the readers of *SA* who responded to the Survey presented in *SA4* . . . all 68 of you. If you find the responses unusual, don't be too surprised — surveys are unwieldy things at best, and although we may assume that the responses are some shadow of what the whole readership of *SA* is really like, that assumption is somewhat out of line. The response is a good indicator only of what the people who read *SA* and like to answer surveys are like!

Thank you all for taking the time and effort to reply, and to those of you who didn't — well, see how you compare!

— Liz Danforth

■ 89% of readership (who responded) are male, 11% are female.

■ Average age, 24.

■ 38% of the respondents listed their occupation as "student", but 57% of all respondents indicate they are still taking classes full- or part-time.

■ 52% have had some college education, of which 70% have obtained one or more degrees. 29% are in grades 9-12.

■ 71% of the respondents obtained their copies of *SA* by subscription; 24% of those remaining purchase their issues from a wargame or hobby store.

■ 82% want to see a Questions & Answers column, which is why one is appearing, as of this issue.

■ 92% of reader-respondents want to see fantasy game articles. Descending in popularity are: Game reviews, general gaming information, SF game articles, strategy articles, play-by-mail articles and factual information. And even the least popular article types are looked for by over half the respondents.

■ Four magazines stood out as the most-read: *The Dragon*, *The Space Gamer*, and *Flying Buffalo Quarterly* are each read by 44% of the respondents, *Omni* is right behind with 41%. *The Dragon* and *The Space Gamer* are probably significant answers; *FBQ* is not because *SA* reaches, to a large degree, *Flying Buffalo* customers; and *Omni* is not significant because I believe it reaches everyone!

■ Virtually everything in *SA* pleases *somebody* . . . only poetry was rated relatively low (23% said they looked for it in an issue). However,

the mini-solo dungeons, T&T articles, and the editorial seem to be the most popular. (All were over 75%.) Next, as a class (60-75%) were Artwork, Fiction, the Know Your Foe feature, and the GameMaster dungeons. The remaining categories weren't far behind.

■ Opinions of the quality of the *SA* covers was wildly mixed — every cover was rated "best" by a number of people — proving that taste remains a quality we can only nod our heads at. . . . Joan Hanke Woods' piece (cover, *SA3*) was generally rated lowest, however.

■ Response was generally positive to have posters made from the *SA* covers, but the number of no-opinion responses makes it a questionable proposition. Note, however, that a T&T Poster is now available (the cover illustration from the 5th edition of T&T.) This poster sells for \$4.50, and additional T&T posters in the same order are only \$2.50 each — part of the cost goes towards a sturdy mailing tube.

■ Every imaginable occupation is mentioned, although there is a predominance of those involved in the hard sciences . . . microfilm electronics, several computer-programmers/analysts, a geologist, a microbiologist. Also: chemists, pharmacists, several federal employees and "bureaucrats," accountants, lawyers, librarians, art directors, and clerks.

■ Earnings: because of large percentage of students who do not make their own living, the percentages are skewed. However, adjusting from those who state their occupation as student, 35% of those

remaining (the largest grouping) reported being in the \$10,000-20,000 earnings range.

■ 36% live in a "Suburban" environment; another 27% live in a small city.

■ The amount spent on games and game-related materials averaged out to \$18.85 per month. (Notes added to the survey indicate that this might be high — several referred to the "Star*Web Crunch.") Also, 3 respondents answered in numbers of hours spent!

■ Our respondents are spending about the same amount on books, movies, etc. in the SF&F area: \$18.12 a month.

■ On the average, respondents read more than a book a week, averaging 5.69 books per month. The lowest was 0, and the highest reported was 30.

■ The majority of respondents own the 4th and/or 5th edition of T&T — percentages would be misleading since many people had more than one copy of the rules.

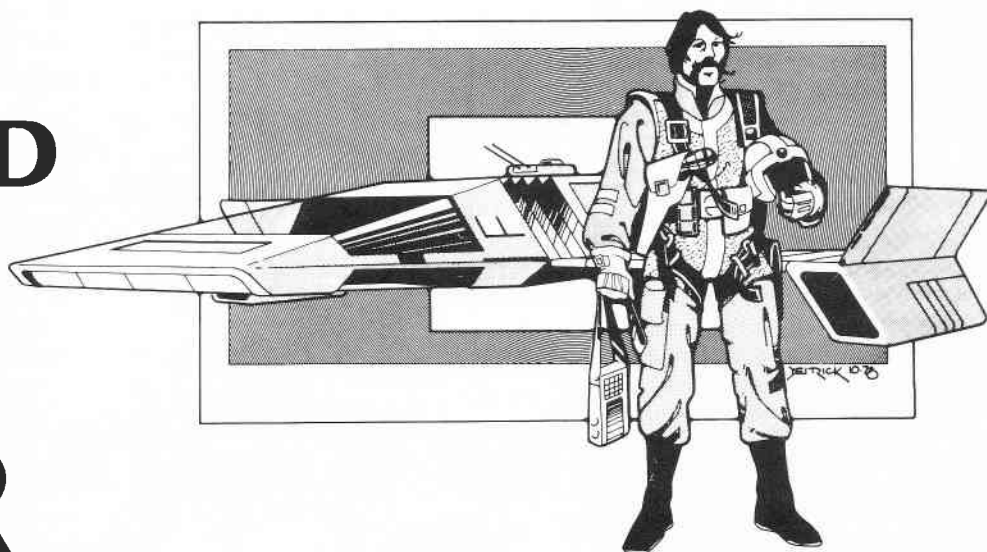
■ Only 6% of the reader-respondents (4 people) said they did not play the solo dungeons. Of those who play solos, 24% reported that they play *only* via the solo dungeons, with no face-to-face games.

■ 56% reported having or using *Monsters! Monsters!*, and 90% of those wanted to see a *M!M!* solitaire. (We're working on it . . .)

■ Response was generally positive about the small-format games; 44% want to see more Pocket Adventures (38% have not seen it to judge). (Thus, 71% of those who have seen it want more Pocket Adventures).

■ An even split by those who are part of a game club or gaming organization, or not: 48% belong, 52% do not.

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an encounter on the Isle of Greysmoke

illustrations by Lela Dowling



The Titan's Tarot

— Larry DiTillio

“The door is large and multi-colored and no lock is evident. It is engraved with strange symbols.”

Obracon turned to his friend Topi and shook his head in wizardly doubt.

“I like this not, Topi. I have been in labyrinths all across the face of Hylax and far beyond the Crushing Sea and all manner of ancient glyph and rune have my eyes devoured. Yet these! These are like none within my sphere of knowledge...” The dwarvish rogue nodded. He had adventured with old Obracon many a time and the mage was seldom disturbed without reason. Selene, The Rider of the Moon, had a different opinion however where the magic-user's trepidation was concerned.

“Do you grow so fearful with age, Obracon, that you shy away from that which is beyond your ken?” Obracon's milky eyes flashed in the Neophyte's direction. He did not like the young sorceress's cocky attitude, nor her wry disrespect for his august personage.

“Have a care, Moon-Rider! I have aged, yes, and with age has come the wisdom of caution, a wisdom you would do well to consider!”

“Consider it I shall, old one, once we are past this intriguing portal and not abiding in this dank corridor, daunted by it!” the silver-robed female replied sharply. Topi made an unpleasant sound in his throat. He too held little love for the rash Selene. Jacro and Aleria, warriors who fought as savagely as they loved each other, now joined the argument, Aleria speaking first in a voice that was like a silvered lyre amidst the unnatural silence of Greysmoke's den of mystery.

“This avails us naught, my friends. Obracon is right to espouse caution, as is Selene to suggest further exploration. Let us do both.”

“Aye and quickly,” agreed the brawny Jacro, planting a small kiss on his beloved's cheek. “Let us enter and see what is within rather than argue it here where the minions of Greysmoke have us at their mercy!” His plea was not without foundation. All manner of beast roamed these vile corridors and they had narrowly escaped notice of such several times already. Obracon exchanged a resigned glance with Topi and looked then to Selene. Her painted lips curved in a triumphant, contemptuous smile. More than anything else about her, Obracon detested that haughty smile. He signalled to Topi to examine the lockless door for a means of entry. The dwarf did so, and to his amazement his first touch caused the portal to move slightly inwards.

“Open,” he said uneasily. It was characteristic of the little rogue to distrust that which was not well-secured.

Jacro drew his broadsword, Aleria her enchanted mace. “Let us proceed first, Topi.” The dwarf gladly shuffled aside to permit the fighters entry. Weapons in hand, male and female warriors stalked forward, rogue and spellmakers treading close behind.

“The room is 30 by 30, the ceiling 40 feet high. Opposite the one door a massive, handsome figure sits on a huge throne. He is nearly 20 feet tall, attired only in a green kilt-like garment trimmed with scarlet, and bright gold sandals. His hair is curly, sea-blue in color, his eyes are darkish bronze flecked with red, his beard is close-cropped and sea-blue sprayed with silvery grey. A soft amber-hued light seems to emanate from his body and it is this light which illuminates the room. The chamber is sumptuously and strangely adorned and beside the throne is a huge table, its top 15 feet from the floor. The figure raises

his left hand (from which the little finger is missing) and speaks in a booming, resonant tone:

I am Manumar, Titan of the Plane of Eftyra. Welcome!” ...

Jacro and Aleria sheathed their arms. They were brave to be sure, but against this resplendant giant they knew their puny weapons would have little effect. Topi had the same thought — nevertheless, his war hammer remained in his fist. Obracon began pondering high-toned phrases with which to approach the mammoth figure, but before he could select one, the brash Selene stepped forward and spoke.

“We are happy to be so greeted, Large One. Tell us more of this Eftyra you speak of, and why you are here rather than there. . .” The Titan sighed, closing his eyes briefly as if in pain. A trace of despair crept into his next words.

“I can say nothing until Three agree to the Test of My Tarot.”

“What manner of test is this, Great Sir?” asked Obracon, ever careful. Selene clucked in disgust.

“More of your aged wisdom, Obracon! Is not the chance to receive knowledge from another plane worth some small risk?”

“You are a fool, Moon-Rider! An arrogant, impetuous fool! Do you...” The man's tirade was cut short by another statement from Manumar.

“The Test holds danger and even death at times. The knowledge to be gained, however, is formidable — particularly to ones such as you. More I cannot say, until Three have agreed to brave it.”

“And if we do not?” inquired Obracon. The Titan's face grew expressionless. His voice became a litany.

“The Test is Now Offered. The Choice is Yours,” reiterated the Titan.

Obracon meant to continue his protests, but Selene moved closer toward the throne and called to the Titan.

"I accept the Test."

"Selene, you cannot!" cried Obracon. The Moon-Rider treated him to another of her hated smiles.

"I do not fear great knowledge, as you seem to, old man. Jacro, Aleria — will you complete the necessary trio?" The warriors looked at her and at each other. Selene had aided them many times in the past and they were fond of her. Aleria nodded agreement as did Jacro, then hand-in-hand they too raised their voices to Manumar. "We also accept your Test, Mighty One."

"This is folly!" Obracon declared.

"Let us see, Obracon," said Topi, grateful that he was not required to participate.

"The Titan takes a deck of cards from the table. Each card is as large as a grown man. He cuts out three and places them face down on the floor before those who have agreed to the test. The cards shrink to normal size and the participants are told to pick them up and examine them carefully, after which they may exchange cards once if they wish.

"The First Card is a depiction of a Skeletal Figure holding a scythe. He stands on a grassy field on which three severed heads lie, and above him is an arcing rainbow and three stars . . .

"The Second Card portrays a man hanging by one foot from a staff suspended between two pillars, around which bunches of grapes are entwined. The man's hands are bound and coins are falling from them . . .

"The Third Card shows a large sar-cophagus out of which three figures rise, a man, a woman, and a child, all in shrouds. To the right of them, above them, is a man blowing a long, straight horn, surrounded by a sunlike sphere.

"Once the cards are examined and perhaps exchanged the test begins in earnest . . ."

Selene examined the skeletal figure on the card, a figure seeming to represent nothing less than Death itself. A tickle of fear coursed through her body, which she repressed. She would not give that old jackass Obracon the satisfaction of witnessing her terror, real though it was. The Titan pointed a finger at her and spoke with indisputable authority.

"You shall be the First." The Rider of the Moon took a deep breath and glanced once toward her warrior friends. They nodded their heads encouragingly, but she noted that they, too, seemed doubtful about the cards they held.

"I am ready, Titan," she declared as boldly as she could.

"Place the card on the floor, then." She did so and to her astonishment it stood upright. The Titan waved a hand



and the card grew to man-size, the scene upon it taking on a definite three-dimensional aspect as she watched. Manumar spoke once more.

"All may watch to see what they may. Interference, however, is quite impossible — so do not consider it on pain of your life . . . Go forward now, woman, and meet your test. May fortune be with you."

Selene looked back at her comrades. Their faces were all tight-drawn and fearful, even old Obracon's despite his dislike for her. She smiled to give herself courage, waved flippantly to them, then stepped into the scene before her. The others watched intently as her young, curvaceous form appeared within the card. She looked again in their direction, but from her side she could not see them. Indeed, she could not even see the gateway by which she had entered, a fact that troubled her.

The scythe-wielding Skeleton's head turned to her. A voice spoke, a voice as black and intangible as a shadow.

"Where in My Realm are you bound,

Traveller?" Selene swiftly surveyed the area, but saw no indication of any destination to which she could go. She racked her brains for a proper answer to his question, then at last she replied hesitantly.

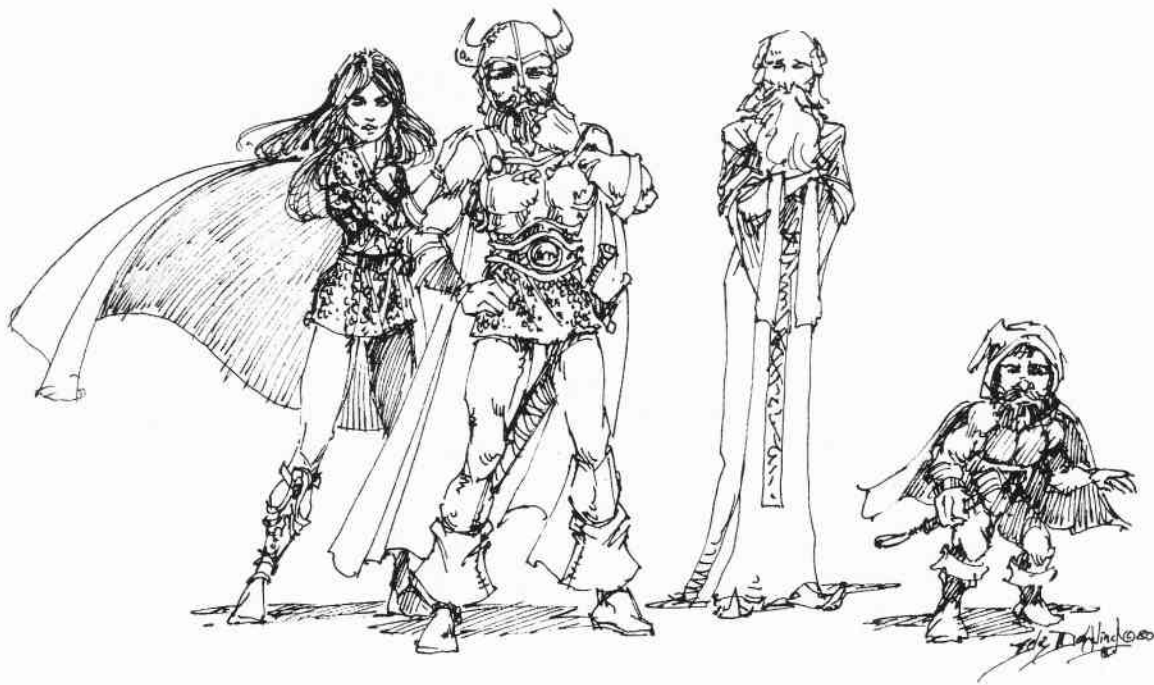
"I . . . I am bound . . . For Knowledge." The skeleton made no reply but swung his scythe through the air in a great arc. Instantly the place in which she stood seemed to shatter, her own person shattering with it. She became one of a billion fragments falling through time and space, all her perceptions intact but freed from the shell of her mortal flesh. Visions began looming all about her, visions of babies born only to age instantly and die, and thereafter become babes again; visions of graves from which radiant flowers grew. She seemed to smell an odor of decay, a scent which in the next second became a sultry, savory perfume, sweeter than any she had ever sniffed. She heard songs of peace, interwoven with the booming of war dreams, heard the cries of death meshing with the sounds of love's pleasure. A thousand upon a thousand centuries passed through her and in each whole worlds were obliterated only to be renewed as realms of a different nature. She saw fish crawl from the sea to become apes, apes evolving into men, men transforming into orbs of blue, coruscating energy. Sight, sound, scent all merged, blasting her spinning consciousness like great waves pounding upon a receptive beach. And then suddenly she was back again before the Skeleton, her body and soul reunited, her thoughts atremble with the terrible wonder she had witnessed. Once more the bony figure spoke.

"You have seen what I can show you. Do you now wish to receive my benefit?" The Moon-Rider paused. In the Chamber of the Titan, Obracon and the others looked on aghast. They had not seen any of what Selene had viewed. In their eyes, she had merely exchanged a few words with the Skeleton and then was asked if she wished to receive his benefit. Now, as she paused, Obracon screamed out a warning, unaware that she could not hear or see him.

"Deny it, Selene! By all that is holy, deny that benefit!!!" The mage began to prepare a spell, in hopes that the Titan's warning had been a bluff, but before he could act Selene replied.

"I think . . . Yes!" She screamed then, one hideous wail of terror as the scythe flashed downwards. Her own pretty head joined the three already on the ground. Silence reigned for one moment, then the card went completely blank and fell forward to the floor of the room. The Titan retrieved it and replaced it in his deck. His bronze gaze fell on the warriors remaining. He pointed at Jacro.

"One has Taken the Test. The



Second will now proceed." Aleria looked at her lover, fear in her eyes. Jacro drew his sword and kissed her, then began to make ready. Obracon, however, shook his fist at the Titan and screamed.

"NO! No more of this heinous madness. You promise knowledge and give death. If you are not a monster, release these two from their acceptance or kill us all, for we shall surely act to stop you!"

Manumar replied in a calm tone, "It is still possible to deny further tests. If those who remain wish it?..." The two warriors looked at Obracon and Topi. The dwarf was gripping his war hammer tightly; like Obracon, he was prepared to battle the Titan, no matter how futile it seemed. Obracon nodded to Jacro to give his answer. Jacro looked at his lover and she too bobbed her head.

"We wish to withdraw," the fighter declared. Manumar brought his fingers to rest on his temples and closed his eyes. There was a sound like rushing wind and the amber light emanating from the Titan's body began to pulsate. Topi looked toward the door, hoping they could flee before the Titan came out of his trance, but to his dismay no door was there. He cursed himself for not noticing this sooner, then turned back to await Manumar's decision. At last, the light ceased its throbbing and the Titan opened his eyes. He looked down at the quartet.

"Your refusal is permitted. But you must go immediately and ask nothing further of me." He pointed, and to Topi's relief the door again opened.

"Let us fly!" he yelled, heading for the portal. Jacro and Aleria followed suit, but Obracon paused and looked at the Titan with puzzled eyes.

"This makes no sense. Why have you..." His words were drowned by a thunderous howl from Manumar. The Titan began to rise from the throne, his bronze eyes murderous. Topi seized Obracon quickly and yanked him out the open door, which Jacro closed immediately, throwing his whole bulk against it with only slight hope of preventing the Titan's pursuit. Yet as he did so, the door vanished again, leaving nothing but blank, solid wall. He stepped back, astonished. For a heartbeat, all four gazed upon that wall, hardly believing they had been through what they had, and had survived. Nevertheless, the absence of Selene from their company made it painfully clear that all which had occurred in the Titan's Chamber was irrevocably true. Obracon shook his head sadly.

"Poor Selene. I told her. I told her."

"We shall mourn her," whispered Aleria, gripping Jacro's muscular arm tightly and shuddering slightly.

"At least we are alive," grunted Topi. "A turn of events I consider more than fortunate."

"Do you, little rogue?" said a voice which came suddenly from their right. They turned as one, their mouths dropping open in wonder. Standing in the corridor was a strange woman, garbed in saffron-hued battle armor. A green belt encircled her waist and hung from it was a formidable-looking bluemetal broadsword with a stunning sapphire set in the hilt. None of them had ever seen her before, and yet all had the feeling that there was something familiar about the smile on her lips.

"Who are you, woman?" challenged Jacro, his hand firmly on his sword. The

woman's smile grew broader.

"I have changed a great deal, I know, but is there nothing about me that you recognize?"

Aleria's eyes widened. "Selene!"

The woman nodded. "In a way, yes," she said.

"But we saw you slain!" cried Topi, much discomfited.

"Death is but transformation. That was the knowledge of my test. And as the Titan promised, it was a most formidable knowledge."

Obracon moved forward, studying the woman closely. There was none of the brash impulsiveness he had so disliked in the Moon-Rider, and yet his instincts confirmed that it was still, in some way, her.

"So, Selene, it seems that in this instance my aged caution was somewhat unfounded," he said.

"Perhaps. But as you always said, it is wise to be cautious. I shall endeavor to take that message to heart from this day forward." Obracon smiled and offered his arm to her. She took it graciously and returned his smile with one of her own.

"I believe, Selene, that we shall be better friends now than we once were," said the wizard.

"Selene is dead, Obracon. From now on you may call me Darinda . . ."

"It is a name I have always liked," said the mage. Her lips curved upwards once more and Obracon thought to himself that he had been a silly old fool to ever dislike such an utterly charming smile.

ENDWORD

The story you have just read is a dramatization of an encounter in one room of my Isle of Greysmoke Dungeon. The descrip-

Sorcerer's Apprentice

tions of the door, the room and the procedure for the test are all straight out of my dungeon key, with the exception of the description of the three cards.

I use actual Tarot cards in play, from the Egyptian Tarot deck. This deck is done in black and white and is much simpler in design than the European Tarot, making it very useful for dungeon trips. The cards used were Major Arcana #12, 13, and 20, and knowledge of the Tarot would definitely prove useful in taking the tests. I have omitted the two tests of the other cards to keep some secrets — besides, when a party watches one member bite the dust instantly they are prone to take an out (which I always offer).

I keep the nature of the tests strictly between myself and the individual player, and no outcome is given until all three are completed (or denied), either to party or player. I like giving individual players a chance to test their mettle without party backing and this is but one way to do it. It is also excellent for getting new or shyer players more deeply involved in the game, by offering them the first crack at the tests. The other two tests are totally different from the one Selene took.

Incidentally, you may have noted that Selene returned not only as a different woman, but also as a different class — she was a mage and returned as a warrior. This is one possible outcome of the test. Permanent death is another possible outcome. Note also that once inside, the party is virtually trapped there (the vanished door) and this spurs

people to take the test, thinking there is no other alternative. Moreover, the Titan is very formidable, though not hostile, which makes hack-and-slash advocates think twice about melee against him. Such eminently powerful monsters are almost required to force a party to negotiate instead of getting their way through force of arms (in the case of the Titan, I can assure you that such an action would destroy an entire party). Another incentive is that the Titan knows a lot about the dungeon and will give you information if all three tests are completed. That missing finger on his left hand is also the key to at least two huge treasures . . .

As easy to play as T&T is, this does not mean that your tunnels should be simple! On the contrary, the ease of T&T mechanics makes it a breeze to put your efforts into complex role-play situations instead of the run-of-the-mill melee, trick, trap stuff. It is such intriguing role-play that is the substance of fantasy gaming. Otherwise, I'd suggest sticking to wargames where the whole idea is just to fight and fight and fight.

Incidentally, both Ken and Steve Perrin (author of Runequest) went along on an expedition into this very dungeon. Though they were heading straight to this room, they opted for an eastward turn instead, where the whole party was captured by Trolls, stripped of all treasure and magic, and damn near made into Trolling Pins as well. What a difference a simple change of direction makes!

—Larry DiTillio



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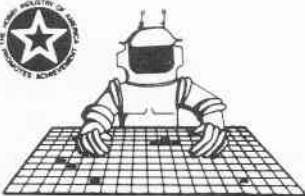


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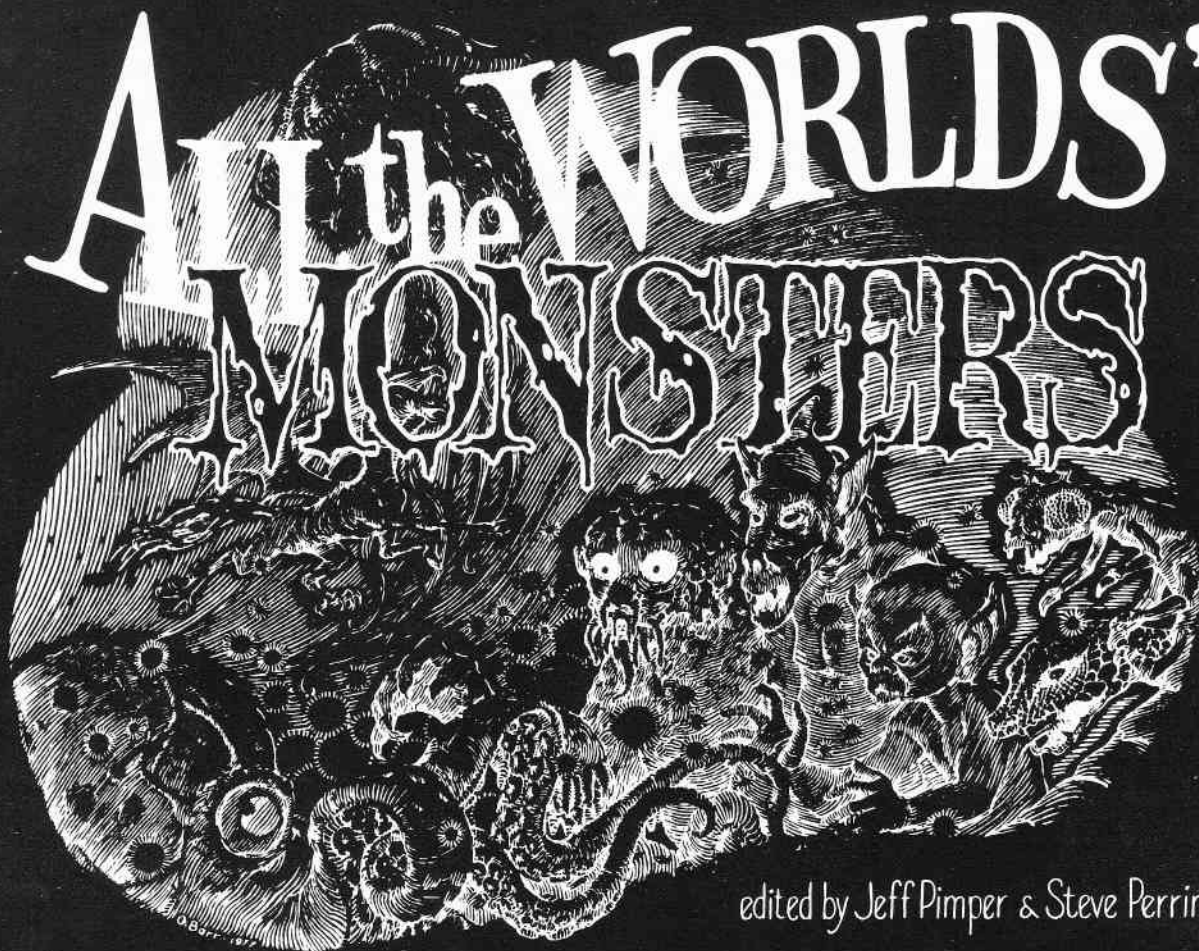
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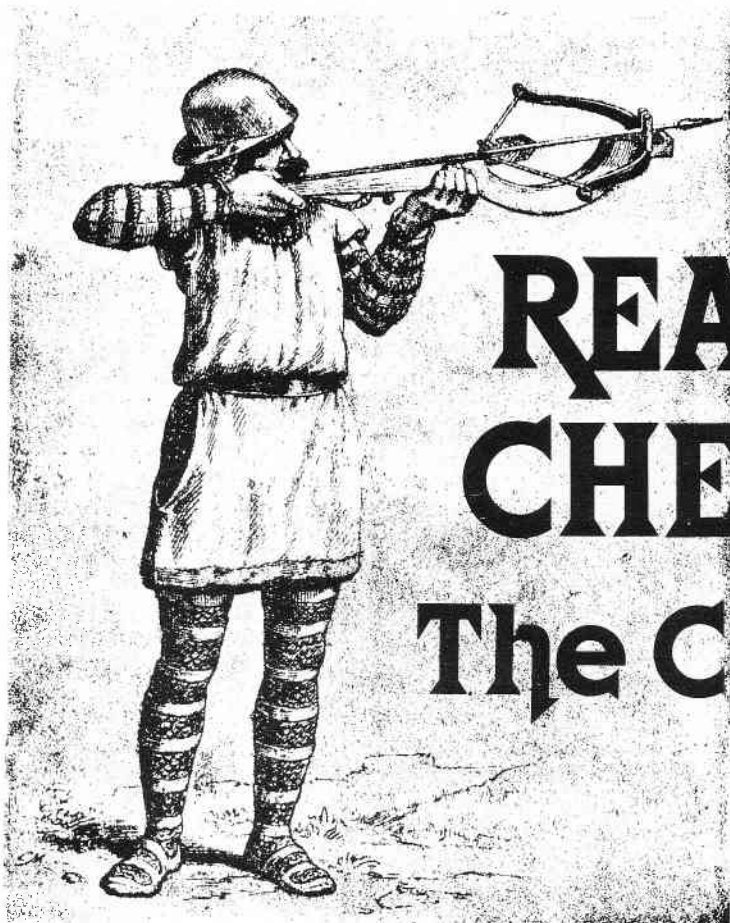
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REALITY CHECK II

The Cheater Stick

-- Rocky Russo

Robin Hood did not split the arrow at seven score yards plus ten. Or if he did, it was quite by accident.

I *know* it says so in the stories. I *know* that Errol Flynn did it in the movie. But it really did not happen, and the “why” is the start of the tale.

In fiction it is quite easy to have something happen that is possible — but unlikely. (Look at all the Conan stories!) The tale of Robin Hood, while it might be based on fact, is essentially a myth. But such is the power of the myth surrounding the Welsh longbow that even writers who should have known better could not refrain from hyperbole (Robert Louis Stevenson in *The Black Arrow*, for instance).

Once the English discovered the longbow and it appeared in the battle arena, its performance was almost magical. In the last installment of **Reality Check** (in *Sorcerer's Apprentice* 4) I discussed the design attributes and performance of the longbow and its missiles. (If you haven't read the article, accept the fact that the longbow did very well.) One reason the archers made such an impression on their foes was that, in the old days, armies were drawn up in ranks differently than today. For the most part, shock tactics and hard fighting ruled Western military thought, and the best way to increase the effect was to have the men

stand very close together. There is a practical limit to this — about 36” wide and deep (for infantry) and 55” wide by 9’ deep (for cavalry) — but it also meant that when these dense formations faced missiles, the carnage was impressive. It is hard for an archer to miss a unit of, say, 1000 men and horses — the only problem is to hit where it hurts.

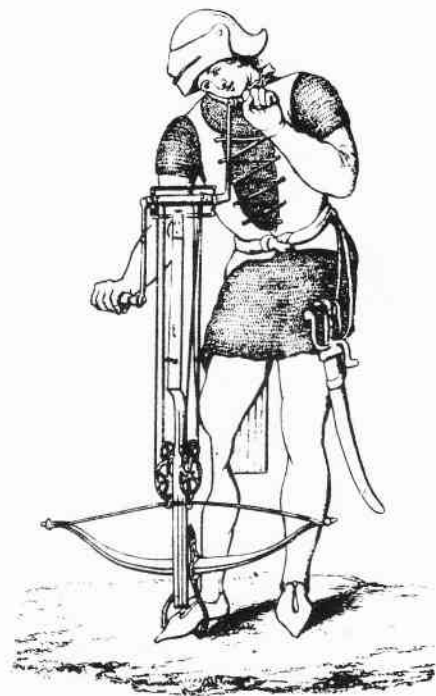
However, the situation in most FRP games is somewhat different. It may be easy to hit a crowd, but often the problem for the FRP character is to hit a single man or beast which might be trying to actively avoid the missile. This brings us to the consideration of the average “spread” of a missile weapon, as a function of the weapon and of your archer.

It would be nice to walk up to a bow shooter and say, “Tell me how accurate you are.” But it's not feasible. Modern target shooters use equipment which was simply not available to the ancient shooter we are concerned with. No Ghaznavid Turk, no Mongol, no Yeoman ever had matched aluminum shafts, dynamically balanced bows or compound pulley actions, or reliable sights or waterproof strings. Worse, no modern shooter has ever been shot at while plying his trade!

The principle of “spread” (which has nothing to do with Thanksgiving) is the concept that *within every weapon*

there is a margin of error. If a rifle is clamped in a vise, completely steady and shot by a machine with matched ammunition, it will still not put all the bullets in the same place at 150 yards. The distance between the two bullets which are furthest apart is the *spread* of the weapon — the maximum accuracy possible. While no one in the pre-gunpowder era considered the problem of spread with the precision of a modern rifle shooter, there is some indication of what was considered acceptable. For example, to be paid as an archer in the Seljuk army of the 14th century, one had to qualify by placing an entire sheaf of arrows in a 3’ diameter shield at 75 yards. As a minimum standard, this is not too impressive by modern standards, and it is impossible to discern how many archers barely met the standard. As a maximum standard, it was considered pointless to try to hit a moving horseman at 175 yards — there being a difficulty to *hit and to penetrate.* But hold on, because there is yet another fly in the ointment.

Pulling a 70 to 100 lb. bow was the requirement for the English Yeoman. Doing it once is fine, but these men were expected to shoot upwards of 100 arrows from this bow in perhaps half an hour. Small wonder that they were often described as the finest men in the country — and for once this isn't



hyperbole. To pull a bow that strong, that often, is a good indicator that these were big strong fellows! But it isn't merely the fair-skinned Northerners who pulled the great bow — by and large, it was the East that produced the finer bowmen. Contemporary observers during the fall of the Western Roman Empire described the Huns as 'Giants with short legs,' and 'Big men from the waist up.' All this adds up to the fact that not everyone would be capable of using the bows — and in any population which depends on the bow, there would be large segments of that population either ineffective or undefended because they cannot draw a good bow — or if they can, they can't hit anything with it.

Then, about 1050 BC, the Chinese invented the **Cheater Stick** — a device which even the Turks described as being the means whereby even a small man could shoot the mightiest bow: an 'Egalitarian Killer.' The device? The 'fabled' (that word again!) Crossbow.

Consider the points already made about the longbow: how easy or hard it is to hit, aiming at either a group or an individual; accuracy and at what ranges; if it's possible to hit *and* penetrate; and how strong a person is required to use the bow effectively.

The Crossbow is a machine, and therein lies its principle advantage. We earlier mentioned the Seljuk Turk standard of a sheaf of arrows in a 3' diameter shield. An average person with indifferent talent could qualify or exceed that standard within half an hour of picking up a crossbow for the very first time. It doesn't matter if the shooter may have never used a bow — only that he starts shooting. The inherent spread of a decent

crossbow is measured in inches at 50 yards — the reason is in the story of crossbow design.

The primary cause of inaccuracy in self-bow shooting is the archer, and the primary problem is the release of the arrow. There are two basic schools of release. That which is most common to a Western reader is the three-finger or "Mediterranean" release. In this, the first three fingers of the right hand draw back the string with the arrow resting on the left side of the bow. The difficulty arises because the fingers are not strong enough to produce a good sharp mechanical release. The second school, familiar to Eastern archers, is the "Mongol" lock (which predates the Mongols by at least 2000 years). Here, the right thumb hooks the string and a combination of fingers hook over the thumb. This is stronger and the arrow comes off the right side of the bow, but it is still not as crisp as the release on any crossbow.

The crossbow is mechanical, and the release is done exactly the same way every time. This means the shooter can aim with more confidence and assurance of accuracy. Aiming a crossbow is a joy in itself, because the shooter merely raises the device to his shoulder, looks along the top of the arrow at the target, and pulls the trigger. The arrow is delivered on target, and with considerable punch.

Also, with a regular bow the draw length of the bow and arrow are critical to the shooting. The draw must be long enough for the archer to be comfortable, and at the draw weights necessary to kill, the bow must be long also to spread the stress around so the bow does not break. With a crossbow, the draw depth is meaningless — a mere six inches will do nicely. And once cocked, the crossbow can be carried already set to fire at any time.

Properly speaking the Chinese did not "invent" the crossbow. It was simply too good an idea not to be discovered several times in several places: 1050 BC in China, 400 BC in Sicily, AD 500 in Constantinople, and AD 900 in Western Europe. One wonders why this magical device did not supplant *all* bows, especially in the military. And it did *not*.

Any decent blacksmith could build a crossbow once he saw one, so it was never a question of how difficult they were to come by. Certainly there was never any bow as precious as the oriental composite bow that took several years to make and was so valuable it was handed down as an heirloom rather than buried with its owner.

The exact things which make the crossbow so excellent for personal use mitigated against its use as a military weapon. A crossbow's advantage is

line-of-sight firing. In olden times it was possible to produce dense long-range missile fire — using the self bow — by arranging the archers in the same deep formations as the spear-armed infantry. It is a small thing to train troops to volley fire against a target they cannot even see at the call of a captain. However, to do this long-range fire at a captain's call requires indirect shooting — and to do this with a crossbow, the archer must be as skilled as the regular bow archer — directly contradicting the crossbowman's advantage. On top of this, the bow-archer can see and keep track of his target, even when aiming at a very high angle to loft the arrow a good distance. The crossbowman ends up with the crossbow in his way, impeding his sight. Furthermore, the most effective way to use archery in battle is to put your archers on horseback, combining incredible speed and maneuverability with excellent firepower. No crossbowman can match this — his arrow falls off and he can't cock the thing while in motion anyway. In short, it took a little while for the generals to discover methods to make a crossbowman as effective as a regular archer. As a weapon of hunting and sport, the crossbow was ever popular — but as a military device it definitely had a few problems.

Now consider the design of the crossbow. If you read the previous article it would seem that the crossbow has everything going for it in the way of design. It is always small — so there are fewer internal losses due to how much bow one has to move around. Still the bow is thicker than it would be if it were bigger — thus, the internal losses are greater and the additional efficiency of the smaller size bow is lost. The machine itself soaks up energy mostly in friction between the arrow, string and the stock. Finally, from a practical standpoint, the fact that a crossbow uses a special cocking mechanism (instead of the muscle-draw of the great selfbows) means that cocking the weapon is slower.

But the bottom line here is knowing that the crossbow is good — it causes damage, but how much? Unlike the bow, to my knowledge there is no great body of information available on crossbows tested by modern archers with arrows of known characteristics. With the regular bow we were able to use given tests of bow performance with some elementary math and predict reasonable numbers about bows shooting the common warhead arrows of the ancient world.

However, for the crossbow the parameters are somewhat simpler and there is enough information that one can make some good guesses about the problems. For one, there is only one

basic type of bolt — a heavy armor-piercing point, although there are other tests possible testing with modified flight arrows. Two, there is the initial velocity of the arrow to be examined for purposes of drag considerations. Three, noting the point-blank range of the arrow. This gives the maximum range from sighting-down-the-arrow, as opposed to lofting a shaft which requires the experience and skill of a regular bow archer. Finally, what is the bolt's ability to penetrate armor, once it arrives.

The problem with penetrating armor is basically that the arrow must arrive with about forty pounds of energy at less than a 60° angle. However, chain mail is a shot-box — the design precludes the arrow ever deflecting and therefore the arrow need only arrive to be dangerous (one reason why chain was never very popular in the East). Plate armor and lamellar have similar characteristics in their ability to deflect arrows, although lamellar is much more flexible.

It is possible to conveniently arrange all crossbows in history into 4 general categories, according to performance. Although there have been a plethora of crossbow designs, there are really only four types.

FIGURE 1.

| | point blank range & max. vs. plate | maximum vs. chain | maximum flight |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Crossbow I | 40 yds. | 95 yds. | 165 yds. |
| Crossbow II | 105 yds. | 153 yds. | 290 yds. |
| Crossbow III | 161 yds. | 195 yds. | 335 yds. |
| Crossbow IV | 185 yds. | 225 yds. | 380 yds. |

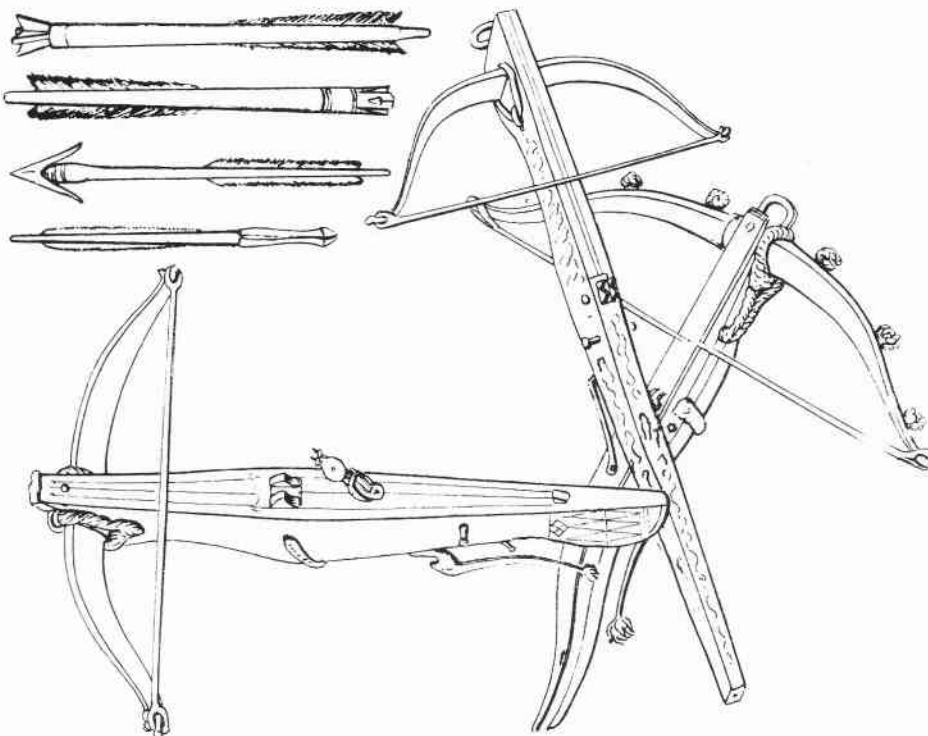
Crossbow I (see Figure 1) is a basic light hunting weapon. It is cocked by placing one's foot within the bow and pushing until the string catches the nut. It is also basically the crossbow used, for instance, by William's troops at Hastings. It is also similar in effect to the famed Chinese repeating crossbow (really a windlass-cranked bow which repeatedly cocks and fires a lighter bow). The stave may be expected to have a draw weight of about 60 pounds and would be made of yew or mulberry.

Crossbow II is analogous to the modern Wammo 80-pound draw crossbow. This is the class of crossbow most often used by warriors. Besides the Wammo bow, which is an aluminum alloy, the class contains the Western stirrup bow of yew (draw weight about 90 pounds), and the Turkic 80-pound composite crossbow. This is probably the optimum upper limit for a muscle-spanned bow. Although there are people who can pull greater weights, the problem is to do so 100 times in half an hour. This bow is not bad, comparable (in Figure 1) to a lot of good hand bows.

Crossbow III includes a bit more in the way of the exotic. The stresses become greater so construction techniques must be better — and thus more expensive. These crossbows are cocked by the aid of a tool, the 'goats prod' — a simple lever. It permits an average person to cock a bow more powerful than might be comfortable without the lever-advantage. However, the lever also means a slower rate of fire, and this mitigated against the use of the weapon generally. This bow is typified by a 150-pound yew crossbow in the West, a 125-pound composite stave in the East, and is probably not in general availability until the 13th century.

Galloway, for instance, was fond of showing off with a 1200-pound pull monster that weighed some 20 pounds without ammunition — it was used only from the walls of castles during sieges.

It should be noted that armor design, especially in Europe, paralleled that area's discovery of the effect of missiles on traditional armor. During the Renaissance, armor sought to stop arrow fire (and later, gunfire) by becoming progressively thicker and thicker, but to no real avail. As late as the Spanish Conquest of Florida, the Europeans were forced to stop wearing armor when facing the Indians because the arrows had little trouble defeating



Again, a nice weapon, but slow.

Crossbow IV, the ultimate in field crossbow performance, awaited the technology that allowed a steel bow. This did not occur until the late 14th century in Europe, and even then was never very popular. The mechanism had to deal with enormous stresses (making it expensive) and it had to be cocked by a windlass arrangement (which was slow). And when all that is done, the energy loss (loss of efficiency) was tremendous. The staves were steel alloy and the draw weight of the bow was between 400 and 600 pounds. Because of their excellent, expensive construction, and because of their value, more of these weapons survive than those in the other categories, but in their own time they were not the most common.

There were heavier crossbows, but these were in reality small siege weapons, not hand weapons. Payne-

the effect of the arrow — and it was simply not worth the extra weight.

In short, it should be clear from this and the previous article that arrow shooters — crossbowmen or handbow archers — do more than the 1D6 that most role-playing rules permit. Look at the numbers, perhaps read some of the sources, and decide if (and how) you want to adjust your own games.

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StarMaster

Air screams around your ships as they enter the atmosphere. Missile-launchers fire deafeningly to port and starboard while atmosphere-fighters drop in shrieking dives from their hangers below. Warriors, tightly clenching their weapons, check their pressure suits one last time and climb in grim silence into their landing shuttles. In the distance five more heavy cruisers of your empire are firing and unloading their cargo, their hulls gleaming crimson in the light of the red sun above.

This is not a drill. Already laser and missile fire from the mile-wide guardian fortresses below have turned the sky into an exploding nightmare of smoke, fire, and fragmented metal. Planes and shuttles twist and dodge down towards a landscape rapidly becoming an inferno of flame and radiation.

This is no mere raid. For years your people had explored nearby systems without violence, trading technology to the primitive civilizations there in exchange for raw materials. Some species had even thought you gods.

Then you met the Aeratang. Merciless, brutal, they destroyed your exploring ships and began to slaughter your colonies. But you found their home planet and launched the greatest fleet your kind ever built to carry the war to your enemy. To fight for your very survival.

Will it be enough?

StarMaster is a correspondence game of galactic exploration, diplomacy, and conquest allowing for interaction not only between each player and the worlds of the galaxy, but between the players themselves.

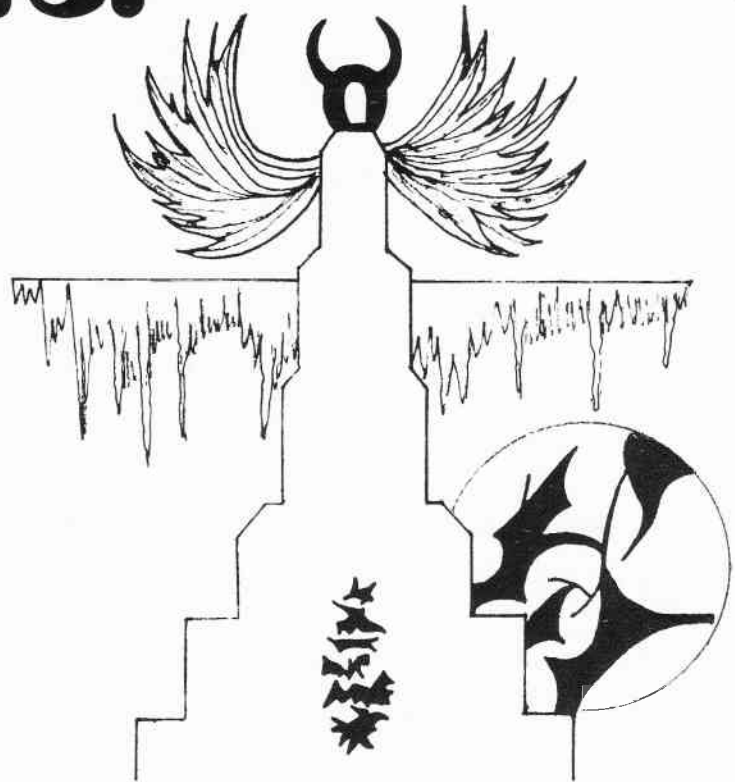
New players begin further out from the Galactic Center than established players allowing them to develop themselves among equals. You may lead a powerful reptilian race, carving out a vast empire of colony and subject worlds; or perhaps an insectoid species, engaged in a holy crusade to convert the galaxy to the worship of their many-legged god.

As chosen ruler of your people, you must decide what diplomatic and military policies will be followed in order to lead your kind to dominance among the sentient beings of the galaxy.

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Nor is the StarMaster environment limited in terms of playing area. There are multiple galaxies allowing for extra-galactic invasions across the voids. There are both natural and constructed gateways to (and from!) other dimensions and parallel universes.

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- Design your homeworld in terms of temperature, atmosphere, and mass.
- Choose your government and social order.
- You decide the production for all worlds of your empire, building colonizing ships, merchantmen, warships, warriors, and fortresses.
- Technology increases steadily, permitting faster, larger ships, deadlier weapons, and scientific breakthroughs.

The galaxies are dotted with the ruins of Elder civilizations lacking the strength to master the stars. Can you lead your world to greatness where so many others fell short?

StarMaster may be entered for \$10.00 which includes the first three turns, a rule booklet, and all necessary material (except return postage). Thereafter, turns are \$2.50 each. If dissatisfied after the first turn, you may return the material for a full refund. A rule booklet may be purchased separately for \$3.50.

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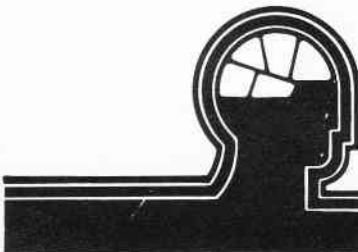
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Renlak's Do-or-Die Puzzle Room

A ONE-ROOM INTER-SYSTEM GAME MASTER'S DUNGEON

by Rick Goodman

Renlak's Do-Or-Die Puzzle Room is an unusual GM dungeon for two reasons. It consists of only one basic room, and the idea is not to defeat monsters, gain treasure and experience — the delvers simply must figure how to get out! Characters (one, two, or three is suggested) are magically teleported into the room. All weapons, clothing, gold and magic items are left behind, and no magic spells which could be cast by the characters will be effective. Players have only their wits with which to devise an escape.

Because there are no special attributes, abilities or magic systems to deal with, this is a truly all-system dungeon room. If your game system has the concept of characters adventuring, closed rooms, magic and monsters, you can use this with virtually no adaptation.

Because this is a puzzle room, with only one correct path to survival, the Game Master must be *completely* familiar with the room's contents and the actions, reactions, and cause/effect relationships of the room's magics. It is suggested that the prospective GM read the instructions *several times*.

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

The following information should be made available to the players at all times, as well as the drawings of the room itself (see the back cover). The quotes and inscriptions on the back cover are only those which any character in the room can see without setting off any traps or solving any portion of the puzzle.

1) **Door One** has both a keyhole and doorknob. Coiled around the knob is a snake. Door has the inscription *Scough Sat Ssmoke*.

2) **Door Two**. Has neither keyhole nor knob. Inscription on the door reads *Take note! The — to mi is C*.

3) **Door Three**. Has keyhole and the inscription *You can only open me when you've found the only key*.

4) **Door Four**. Keyhole and the inscription, *So you think you've had your fun, / But now your web is surely spun, / Unless you remember the ((smear))*.

5) **An empty goblet** on the table: made of silver, worth 500 GP. Inscription around the rim of the goblet reads, *Water, water everywhere, nor any drop to drink*.

6) **A large sapphire** worth 1000 GP, with the golden inscription, *Duration, one hour*.

7) **A small golden statuette** of a humanoid holding a skeleton globe overhead.

8) **A rather tall wooden stool**.

9) **Stone mummy statue**.

10) **Stone statue of a wraith**. On the floor in front of it is the inscription: *What I fear is very tragic / Don't touch me 'til you've found the ((smear))*.

11) **Unlocked chest**. The inscription here reads: *Dragon's Chest: Don't open unless you mean business!*

12) **Stone Dragon** in resting position.

13) **Fountain** about 2 feet deep, filled with water. Visible underwater are scattered 9 gold coins. In the center of the fountain is a pedestal of stone.

14) **Brazier of fire** bolted to the top of the pedestal in the center of the fountain. The fire is lit.

GENERAL NOTES FOR THE GM

This room is 30 feet square with a 15-foot ceiling. The floor, walls and ceiling are all made of a dark stone, blood-stained in places. What the players may see at all times is listed above, and is also given on the back cover of the magazine (you will probably wish to give them that page to look at periodically).

All monsters are stone until touched. The monsters do not have any type of rating, armor class, etc. — they simply kill. Touching the statues makes them come to life except *after* they have served their purpose. Once they have contributed to the solution of the puzzle room, they revert to stone permanently (except in the case of the dragon).

The snake coiled around the knob of Door One will hiss threateningly if approached, but will never attack — it only serves as a clue to the inscription upon the door. It is *only* an observer and cannot be killed, nor will it intervene in any way.

The golden statue will "come to life" when touched, and will introduce itself as "Oscar." Oscar functions as the voice of the Game Master. The statue is friendly and relatively intelligent, and is happy to converse with the characters in the room. He will not haphazardly give away information on the room. *If specifically asked, he will give 3 clues* — no more — and he should not say how many clues he can give until all 3 have been used.

Oscar will offer the following warning (which is not to be counted as a clue, and can be repeated as requested):

*Be it known all things have use,
Just find what they are and let yourself loose.
Those who miss the clues so near
Shall never, ever escape from here.
Skill and patience are a blessing,
You'll not survive by merely guessing.
You who have the lust to kill
Repent now! or your blood will be the next to spill.
So: be bold, be brave, and beware —
And escape alive, if you dare!*

Oscar has a special power which should not be revealed to the players: he can reincarnate characters killed *in* the room. There must still be some penalty (to be determined by the GM) attached to error and/or inaction leading to death. This should not be extremely severe, however, because characters may die several times before solving the puzzle. (see the Playtesters' Notes at the end of this dungeon for comments and suggestions along this line).

After reincarnation takes place, the room returns to its original state. This allows the adventure to continue when it would be impossible otherwise. The characters will have learned some of the correct actions, but will have the frustration of having to do them all over again.

The water in the fountain is magical, and to touch it is very painful. Prolonged contact (more than a second or two) is *impossible*. The character will be forced away as if touching a live wire. Contact automatically causes the loss of half of the toucher's constitutional attribute, and a second contact causes death. To reach the gold coins, the water must be removed in the proper fashion. Although the water is harmful to characters, it does not affect the monsters or objects in the room.

To get the players started, the fire in the brazier starts heating up the room very fast. In a total of 2 turns, the heat will kill the occupants of the room.

Everything in the room has a magic shell surrounding it, making it indestructible, and in the case of the chest, statues and table, unmovable.

GAME MASTER'S GUIDE TO SOLVING THE PUZZLE

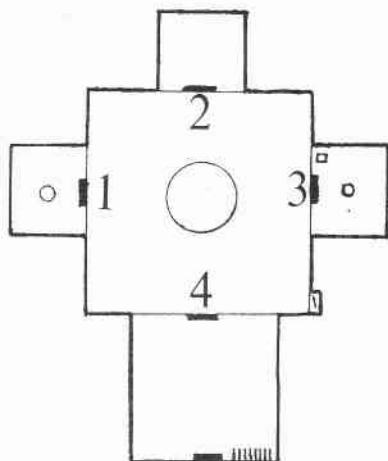
1. *The first step is to douse the fire before the room gets too hot and everyone dies.* The proper way to do this is to take the stool (taller than the water level in the fountain) and place it inside the fountain. A character stands on the stool and scoops water into the brazier, using the goblet to avoid touching the water.

The fire in the brazier *can* be put out by splashing water into the fire with cupped hands — but the character doing this risks the results of touching the water. However, unless he is on the stool and therefore capable of looking into the brazier's bowl, the ring will *not* be found.

If the character tries to balance on the narrow rim of the fountain, he or she will probably fall in. Total immersion in the fountain is immediately fatal.

2. *When the fire is put out, the room*

Figure 1. Game Master's Map



becomes completely dark. The sapphire on the table will become visible because it will start to glow *very faintly* in the darkness. If a character has gotten onto the stool to put out the fire, that character will also see a ring glowing faintly in the coals.

a) *When the jewel is touched, it will light up*, glowing brightly. This is necessary to see or function in the room. As the inscription states, the light will last one hour only. The jewel will not light up if the room is still lit by the fire.

b) *If the ring in the coals is found*, it can safely be taken from the brazier; it is not hot. It must be put on by a character — and so discovered that *the ring detects magic*. Almost everything in the room emanates magic, but the character wearing the ring will also detect magic coming from the southeast corner of the room (lower right on the map), between the wall and the table.

If the ring is worn by a single person for more than 3 turns, it will put the character into a death-like sleep for 1-6 turns (roll one die).

3) *In the southeast corner where the ring-wearer detects magic, a small secret compartment can be found*. It is easy to open, but only the ring will locate the exact spot for the characters. In the compartment is a magic wand. The ring indicates the wand is powerful magic.

4) *The wand is to be used against the wraith*. (None of the other monsters are bothered by it.) The wraith must be touched by hand first to bring it to life, then shown the wand. (The smeared word is "magic".)

For the first combat turn the wraith will not attack, but will conceal its fear of the wand (which causes it extreme pain). Thereafter, the wraith will be openly terrified of the wand. When threatened with the wand, the wraith will offer to give "something of value" in return for the destruction of the wand. If his offer is accepted, he will give a hidden amulet to the characters.

Although the wraith is terrified of the

wand, it will not yield the amulet until the characters agree to destroy (break) the wand. The amulet cannot be taken by force, and the wraith cannot be ordered or forced to do anything the holder of the wand would not do.

Figure 2. Amulet



5) *On the back of the amulet is the inscription "Place high."* (Figure 2.) The correct action is for the players to put the amulet into the brazier. This will cause the brazier to burst into flame again, emitting no heat but a great deal of greenish-yellow smoke. The room will fill with smoke in fifteen minutes, killing the occupants. This fire cannot be extinguished by the water in the fountain.

6) *To dissipate the smoke*, the players should follow the inscription on Door One (*Cough At Smoke*). When this is done, the door will open, dissipating the smoke. The fire will cease to emit the smoke, but will continue to burn.

7) *Behind Door One is a 10' x 10' room. Inside there is a solid stone pedestal upon which is an unlit torch*. On the pedestal is the inscription:

*He who fears the fire most
As you'll find has much to boast.
— HURRY —*

(see Figure 3) The torch will stay lit for a maximum of 2 turns.

Figure 3. Pedestal with Torch



8) *The torch must be lit at the brazier*. The character should stand on the stool again. Then, the mummy should be touched to bring it to life. (Being stone, it cannot be harmed by merely torching it before it is brought to life.)

Once alive, the mummy will appear shiny, not like a regular mummy at all, and will laugh tauntingly at the characters:

"Ha Ha, you can't hurt me because I don't burn!" It will not attack or advance as long as the torch is in hand and lit. When threatened, it will retreat but continue to taunt the characters.

The mummy must be backed into a corner and touched with the torch. It will not burn — because it is made of a hard wax and will melt when exposed to the direct heat of the torch.

9) *Inside the mummy's melted remains will be found a glass flute with three fingerholes*. (Figure 4.) One fingerhole has a bird design next to it, one has a fish design, and one has what looks like a snake or worm. (These designs indicate air for the bird, earth for the snake, and water — the "sea" or "C" — for the fish.) The "C" note must be played (holding all the other notes closed off) in front of Door Two.

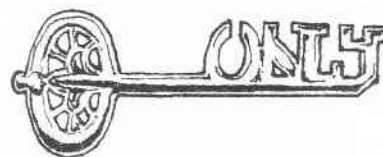
Figure 4. Glass Flute



10) *When the flute is sounded at Door Two, that door will open*. The room behind the door is all polished white marble, 10' square, and it appears to be empty. About 6' high in the center of the room is a small invisible chest, hung in midair. It can be pulled down, once found, and when opened the contents are easily visible. The chest is not (and cannot be) locked. Inside, there are two things:

a) *An ordinary key* with the head made into the shape "only" (see Figure 5). This key opens Door Three.

Figure 5. The "Only" Key



b) *A beautifully jewelled, gold-bladed dagger* (worth 75 GP) with the word "Skeleton" on it. (Figure 6.)

Figure 6. "Skeleton" dagger



11) The "Only" key will open this door into Room Three. *This room is extremely magical, and only one character may enter at a time.* The room is dimly lit from a source not visible to the character inside. (Hence, it is not possible to put out the lights.) This room is 10' square and is made entirely of polished, *unbreakable* mirror-like crystal that reflects exactly as a mirror does. When a character enters the room, a doppelganger exactly like him/her appears from the opposite side and mimics his/her actions *precisely*.

In the exact center of the room is a low pedestal upon which is a small, narrow-neck vase with a screwed-on lid. In the corner of the room near the character's door (and thereby reflected as a duplicate on the doppelganger's side of the room) is an alcohol lamp and a bowl of water on a taller stand.

Inside the vase is a powder the characters need for the next step of the puzzle. But because the doppelganger is a moving, acting, three-dimensional being that acts as a *precise mirror-image of the character in the room*, the character cannot merely pick up the vase and walk away.

If the character tugs at the vase, the doppelganger tugs in the opposite direction.

If the character tries to unscrew the lid of the vase, he/she will again be working in an opposite direction from the doppelganger. (It is strongly suggested that the GM bring out a mirror to check all possible actions.) The only direction where the doppelganger and the character will work together is if the character raises or lowers the vase — however, it still cannot be moved from the center of the room. The vase is unbreakable. The character cannot cross into the doppelganger's side of the room (being unable to pass through it).

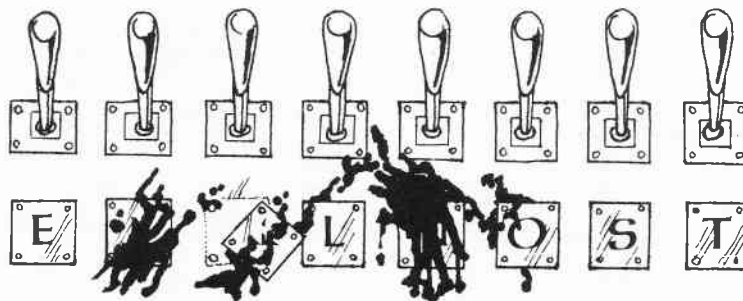
The correct action is to light the alcohol burner (from the brazier in the main room). The doppelganger will do the same. The alcohol lamp is then placed under the bowl of water. The water will boil, creating enough steam to fog all the mirror-like walls. The mirrors cannot then "create" the doppelganger since they cannot reflect any image, and the character is free to carry the vase out the door.

12) *The contents of the jar — a red powder — must be emptied into the fountain of water.* This causes a violent reaction, and all the water will fizz off, leaving the fountain dry. The characters can now remove the nine gold pieces.

13) Touching either the dragon or its chest will awaken the dragon. The dragon will ask, *What do you have for me?* If the characters have nothing to give, or if the wrong things are offered, the dragon will simply flame the characters, killing them. Either the gold pieces and/or the sapphire must be offered to the dragon.

a) *If the sapphire is offered*, the dragon will accept it, but will do nothing, will offer no trade, nor in any way aid the characters. When the dragon permits opening the chest to put the jewel inside,

Figure 7. Levers



the characters will get a glimpse of what is inside — a number of coins and jewels, and a silver key on top. Only the lives of the characters are maintained by giving the jewel to the dragon. The dragon will not exchange the key for the jewel.

b) *If all nine gold coins are offered, the dragon will offer the silver key as a "fair trade."* After this transaction, the dragon will return to stone unless the players try to take his treasure after solving the room — at which time he will come to life once again, killing everyone outright. (And probably Oscar would *not* reincarnate the greedy ones, in this case!)

14) *The silver key from the dragon's chest opens Door Four.* Behind the door is a 20' square room. There is a blank door and, near it, eight levers as described below. As soon as the door opens, Oscar speaks, saying:

You must hurry now, for the portal will soon close forever! Beware and be aware of the inscription!

Oscar refers to the fact that Door Four will close permanently in one turn, or when all members of the party are in the room behind Door Four. The missing word in the inscription is "Skeleton" — and refers to the gold-bladed knife acting as clue and reminder.

15) *Near the blank door inside Room Four are 8 levers*, of which 5 are marked with letters (the other three were marked, but the markings have been smeared away). (See Figure 7).

When the door closes, a voice fills the room, saying:

You must pull the levers in correct sequence, or die a red death as many have before. You have 15 minutes.

The correct action is to refer to the knife. The letters under the levers are the letters in the word "Skeleton," arranged in alphabetical order. If the levers are not pulled in the correct order to spell out "Skeleton," a red gas will fill the room and kill the occupants. If fifteen minutes pass and they have not deduced the answer, the gas will kill them also.

If the levers are pulled in the correct order to spell out "Skeleton," a red gas will fill the room — but will *not* kill the characters, only put them to sleep. When they awaken, they will either be facing an open door or, if the GM prefers teleportation, they may awaken elsewhere, safe. ☉

PLAYTESTERS' NOTES

Many adjustments to this room are possible, within the basic framework. I found it a good idea to "teleport" the party in spirit form only, except for one character at a time, who arrived in the room whole and able to take actions as required. Thus, as spirits, all party members could watch, learn the partial solutions until the acting character died, but had to be quiet to let the acting character do his/her part as best possible. When the acting character "died" he merely joined the spirit group and another character took real acting form. The penalty to escape might be that the room must be solved by the time every character had acted once, or the characters would die a *real* and permanent death. Or, alternately, all the characters could act once without a real death, but if they died a second time while being the acting character in the room, the death was permanent — or perhaps all attributes were cut in half. If your game system or style of play can function when penalizing a character by losing experience points, you might consider that method. (Note that in T&T, penalizing a high-level character in this fashion merely gives you a tough, well-armed, skilled first level character . . . not recommended.)

A RuneQuest GM will have to deal with a character's "Abilities" instead of magic spells. For example, someone capable at "Spotting Hidden" will expect to be able to find the secret compartment in the southeast corner of the room. Obviously, someone good at "Spotting Traps" will find them everywhere. You can assume that these abilities are dampened by the magic of the room, or let the characters Spot the compartment (will they be able to open it without the pinpoint accuracy of the ring?) or Spot the Traps (spotting them and disarming them are two very different things).

Rewarding characters who survive this room is the GM's decision. Experience may be awarded, if your system uses that. There is little in the way of cash to be removed from this room (what is in the dragon's chest is not available). Some items have been assigned gold-piece values — these may be adjusted according to how rich your campaign is and what the coin-of-the-realm happens to be.

The players will expect to somehow have their belongings returned to them — it is not excessively arbitrary to take their things away while they're inside the room, but it might be considered unfair to keep their belongings without other explanation!

The GM needs to be careful using Oscar's reincarnation ability to the point where death is only a farce. While penalty for error or inaction should not be overly severe — because death is apt to occur several times — there should *definitely* be the element of actual risk . . . loss of something of real value to the character, either in experience, attributes, or ultimately a real and lasting death. It is too easy to simply let Oscar patch up all the mistakes and say, "Ah, gee, you blew it again; here, start over one more time . . ."

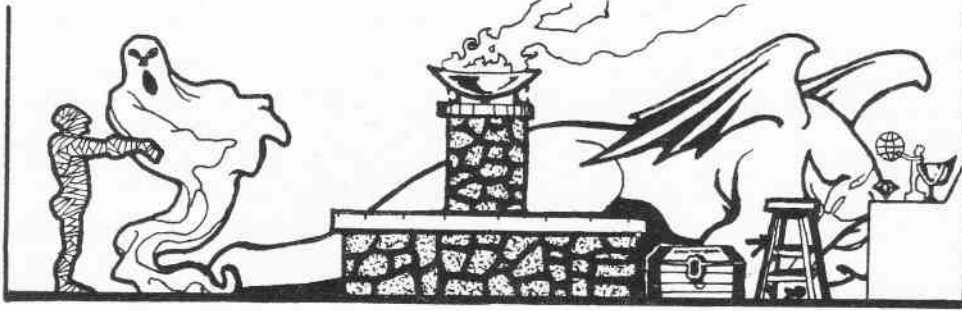
It is hoped that this puzzle-box will encourage more of the same to be invented by others. It is convoluted, tricky, and probably cannot be played more than once by the same people (because they will learn the right and wrong way, assuming they actually escape), but puzzles keep delvers on their toes better than any other type of adventure. Good luck designing and adapting more for yourself!

—Liz Danforth

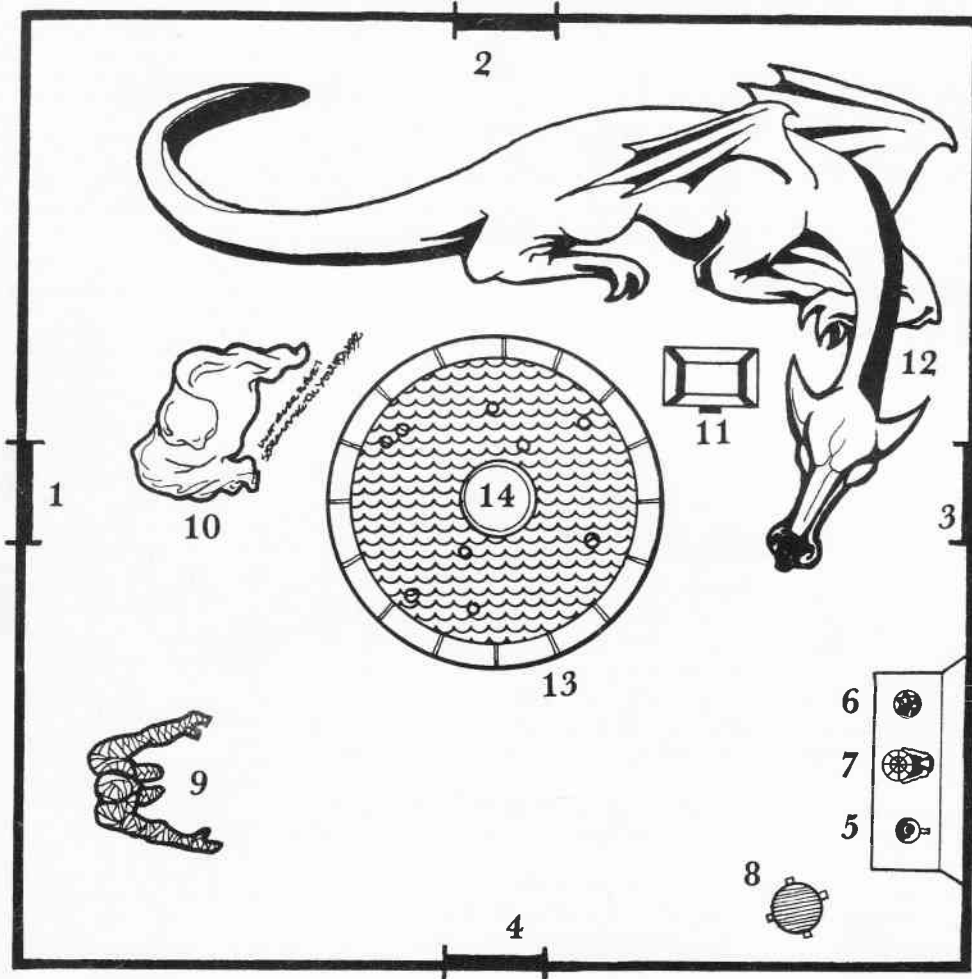
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«Renlak's Do-or-Die Puzzle Room»

A ONE-ROOM INTER-SYSTEM GAME MASTER'S DUNGEON



DURATION:
One Hour



“Water, Water Everywhere,
Nor Any Drop To Drink.”



WRAITH
“What I fear
is very tragic;
Don't touch me
'til you've found
the ((smear))

DOOR ONE

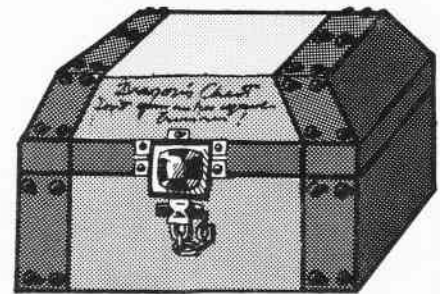


SCOUGH
SAT
SSMOKE

DOOR TWO



TAKE NOTE!
The key
to mi
is C



DOOR THREE



You can only open me
When you've found
The only key

DOOR FOUR



So now you think you've had your fun,
But now your web is surely spun,
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DRAGON'S CHEST
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