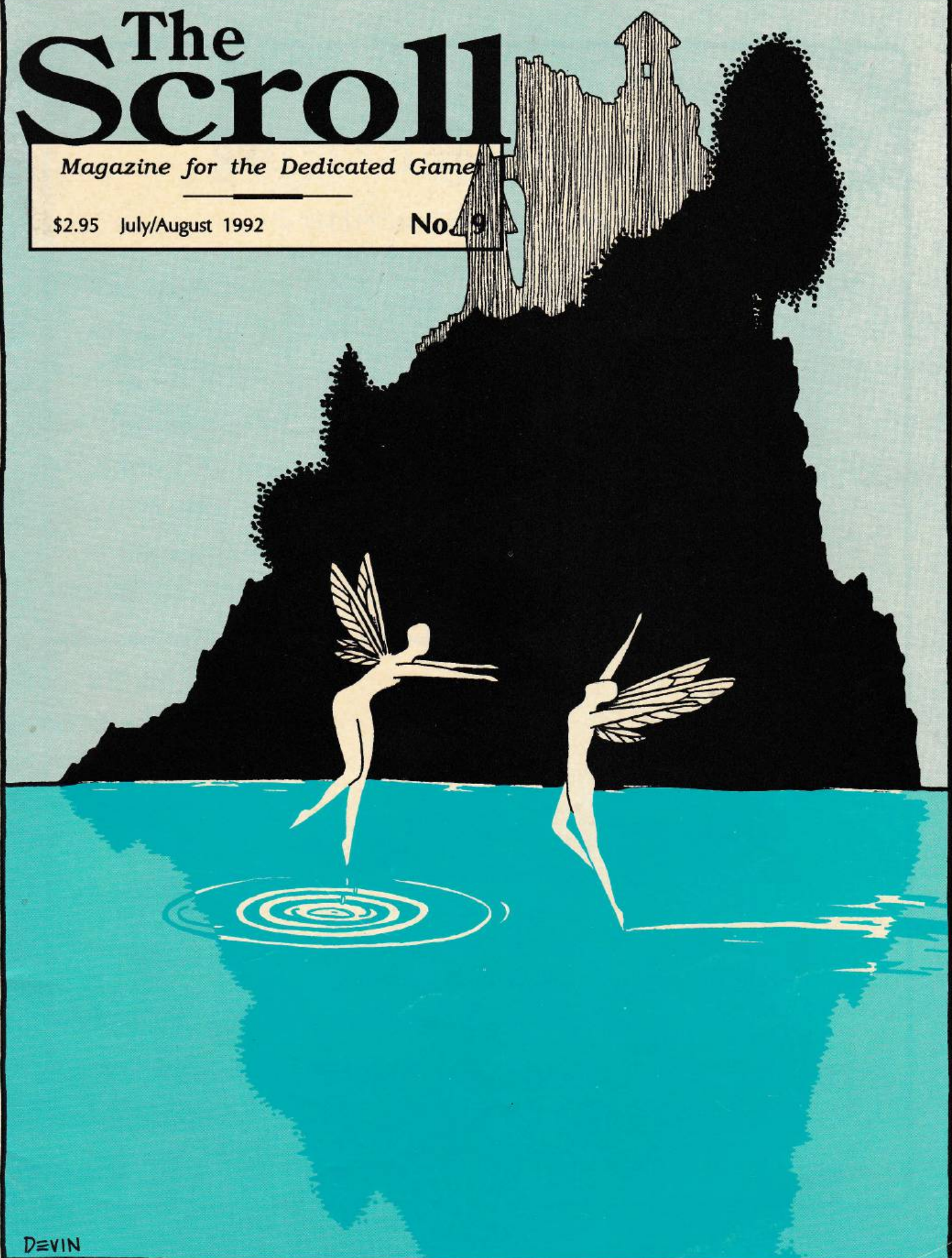


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*Magazine for the Dedicated Gamer*

\$2.95 July/August 1992

No. 9



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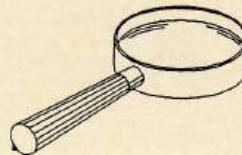
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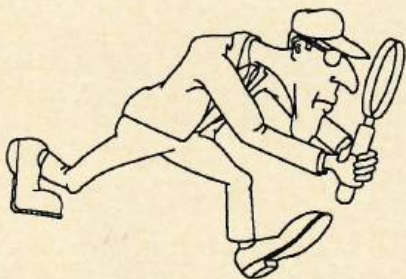
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# The Scroll

The Magazine for The Dedicated Gamer

Issue #9

July/August 1992

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Cover illustration by Devin Van Domelin: "Faerie Free"

# Editorial

Greetings fellow adventurers! I trust that the Summer has been filled with great gaming and excitement for each of you. We are distributing mega copies of issue #9 of *The Scroll* (the one you are reading now), at GEN CON for FREE. We want all gamers to see what a great magazine *The Scroll* really is. If you have picked up this issue at the convention and are a new reader, welcome! We sincerely hope you will find the information contained in these pages to be useful, entertaining, and of value. If you like the magazine, I encourage you to subscribe. If not, we ask that you pass it along to a friend or fellow gamer. But regardless, thanks for giving *The Scroll* a look over.

We have been swamped here at Sage Lore Productions, as the company continues to expand at a rate we can hardly keep up with. New products, new people, and *The Scroll* going bi-monthly are just a few of the reasons. So sit back while I tell you the news.

First, Michael Hopcroft will become the project manager for *The Scroll* beginning with issue #10. He is very excited about this project and has many fresh and innovative ideas to contribute. We are always looking for articles and artwork, so if you haven't already, write Michael for a copy of our writer's guidelines. As Michael assumes this role, my time will be freed up to work on some other major projects like the *Tarrak* game, which is long over due.

Secondly, Sage Lore welcomes Joe Williams into our fold. Joe is part owner of the Oregon based game company **Marquee Press**. As of now, Sage Lore will be handling the entire **Marquee** press line. All products will be featured in our upcoming catalog. (If you are not on our mailing list, you may not receive a copy, so be sure to write us and request to be placed on our mailing list). Future material for the *Legendary Lives* and *Lost Souls* games will be published by Sage Lore. Also, watch for our soon to be released mystery roleplaying game *Crimes People Play*. Joe designed this game and we are beta-testing it now.

Third, the magazine has grown. We are now

52 pages long! Our regular readers demanded it and you got it. More for the same cost. Please continue to send us your criticisms, complaints, critiques, comments, and complements. WE LISTEN TO OUR READERS!

This issue features a single player AD&D™ module, a comical adventure for *Tales From the Floating Vagabond*, a gruesome adventure for *Lost Souls*, and a weapon parrying system for the AD&D™ game. In addition, we spotlight the art work of Don Anderson, begin an epic fiction story "Cat Play", and introduce a new feature: Selected Monsters. Each forthcoming issue will contain new and exciting fantasy monsters presented in the popular compendium format.

And speaking of monsters, we invite our readers to submit their horrifying creations. Those selected by the editors will be printed in the magazine and the author will be granted a free subscription to the magazine, plus possible other prizes. We encourage all of our readers to participate in this new project. We may re-publish the best selections in a compendium package sometime next year.

We are looking for energetic folks who would be willing to give out free copies of *The Scroll* at your local gaming conventions. Participants will receive a free subscription to *The Scroll* as well as a discount on all Sage Lore's products.

We are also looking for a creative person to draw a cartoon or comic strip for each issue. Compensation is negotiable, and if you are interested, please contact us.

For those of you at Gen Con, I hope all of your adventures were successful. For those who couldn't make it, well, maybe next year. Watch out for the anti-gaming folks and keep your fantasies exciting.

Happy Adventuring,



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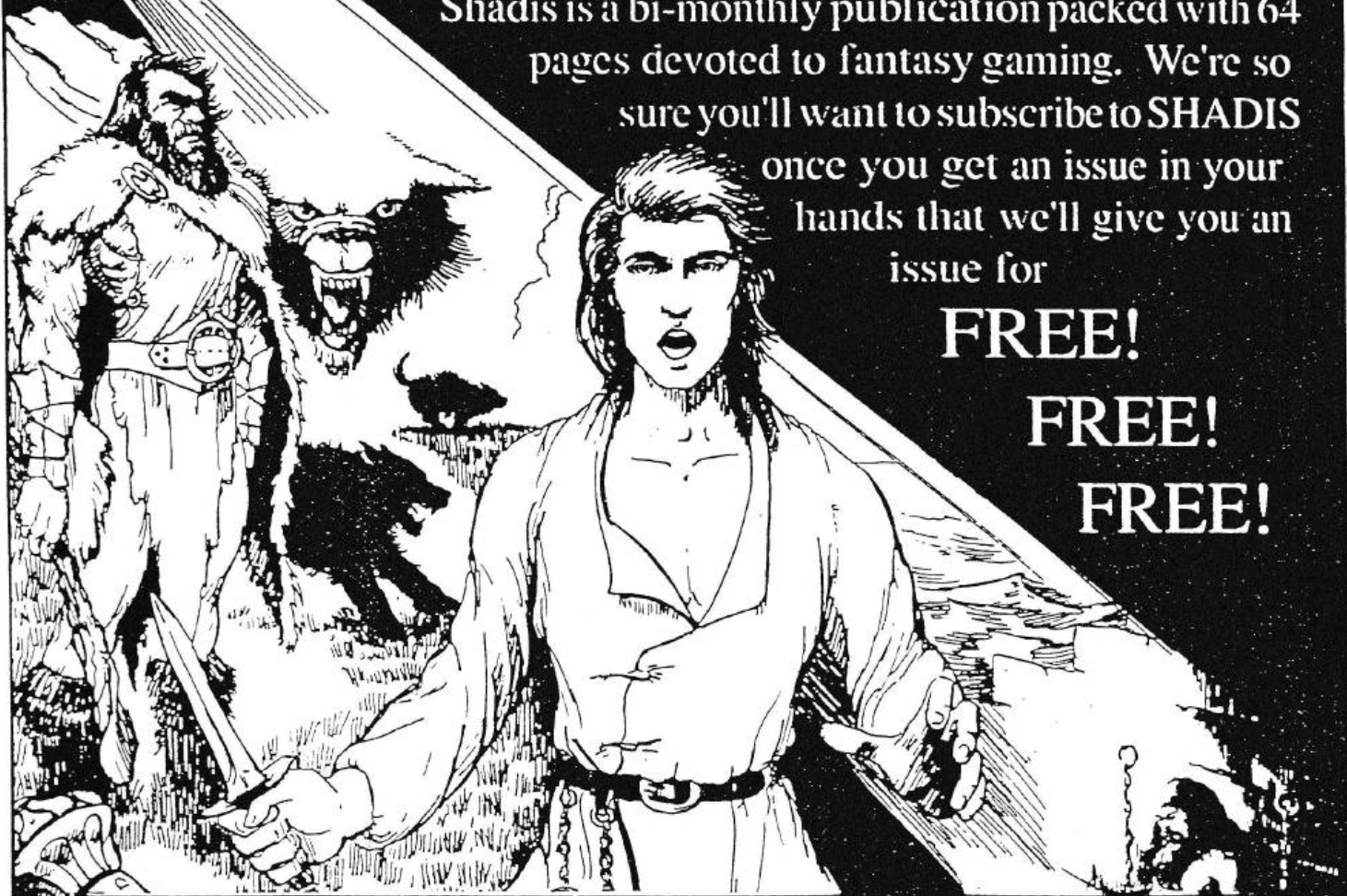
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# The Readers Quill



Hi, Folks,

Comments on *The Scroll* #8. Funny, I thought Jenny Hein was Australian. Was the co-author of "So You Want to be a Player" Alison Brooks? Good advice in any case.

Note to Arthur Bahr: you don't have to name spells cast in a story. As a matter of fact, naming a spell peculiar to a particular game is not a good idea, the owners of the rights to said spell might take exception. Instead of Philip saying he casts a *Mirror Image* spell he says he creates four images of himself to fool the trolls. We all know it's a *Mirror Image* but TSR Inc. can't get on your case about using their material without permission. Yes, I did like the story, having an aggressive female was delightfully different.

RE Cardwell's essay: Not only are Smurfs non violent, they're boring! One of my fondest dreams is that one day Gargamel will turn those little freaks into cookies ☺. Seriously, the attacks on our hobby by the satan hysterics are dangerous. And it isn't just us. These control freaks are against anything that threatens their world view and their attempts to force their religious beliefs on the rest of humanity. Such fields of interest as rock and roll, science, politics, reproductive choice, and anything they happen to hate get smeared with the charge of SATANISM. In addition they send out so called experts who will commit any lie to "prove" their case. Peter W. Huber's essay, "Junk Science in the Classroom", in the June *Scientific American* also deals with phony experts and the harm they can do. It is a must read.

To forestall the damage caused by anti role gaming attacks there's really only one thing we can do, make sure the general public knows the truth about role playing

games before the satan hysterics spread their lies.

Keep up the good work. By the by, wasn't the second letter a bit long, I mean, taking up 2/3rds of a page on that guys maundering ☹.

Til *The Scroll* gets a color cover,

Alan Kellogg  
San Diego, CA

***Thanks for writing again, Alan. As far as the Nationality of Jenny Hein, I can only say that the material sent to The Scroll was postmarked from England. The co-author of the article "So You Want to be a Player?" was David Flin, not Alison Brooks.***

***We appreciate your comments regarding the anti-gaming satanism folks. I would encourage any of our concerned readers to join the CAR-PGa (see their classified ad in this issue for more information).***

***As far as a letter being too long, NO! The Scroll is a gamers magazine and we want to print what gamers have to say. We encourage you to continue writing us with your comments and look forward to your submissions.***

— Bob

Dear Bob,

Received *The Scroll* #8. Good show. I loved the new logo and use of color. I also like the new format, the magazine really seems to flow now. All in all, the best *Scroll* yet.

The reason I'm writing is that you mentioned something in your editorial

that piqued my interest. The ASGC, Association of Small Game Companies. I've never heard of them and would love to get in touch with them. In addition I would like to run their blurb in our classified section. Could you possibly send me an address or point of contact for this organization? It would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Jolly R. Blackburn  
Shadis Magazine  
Myrtle Beach, SC

***Thanks, Jolly, for your kind and encouraging comments. It is good to hear from a fellow publisher, and we enjoy Shadis magazine as well. In case some of our other readers are interested also, the address of the ASGC is: ASGC, 713 N. Little Rock Ave., Ventnor, NJ 08406.***

Dear Bob,

I bought many games and supplements which we used at different times according to our moods. Then, as I began to improve as a GM/DM, things changed. We focused on our oldest, most developed characters and on the AD&D game. Slowly, the number of other games we play has dwindled as the adventure continues, because fantasy has offered the most excitement and enjoyment. I've begun to use the Forgotten Reams setting with one player already, and we love it; the rules have changed with us, incorporating new improvements and changes.

This leads to another issue: AD&D Bashing. One thing that roleplaying is built upon is acceptance of other people's ideas, customs, and hobbies. Because of this, it is very easy to hurt gamers on the

grounds of the games they play. Gamers become attached to certain games (as well as characters in those games), and hate to hear them being bad-mouthed. The fact that AD&D is so popular, and that it has a virtual monopoly on the market has led many people to put it down. This is unfair to the players of the game, who have become attached to the game they love.

I've written all this because I am somewhat saddened and disappointed to see AD&D bashing in *The Scroll*. Regardless of the motives, this is simply unfair. The fact which is often pointed out is that AD&D-type games are out of date; this is not true. The system is a fun one, even though it has its quirks - its the "look alike" games that are out of date.

Basically, what I am trying to say is: Lay off of AD&D, because there are a lot of people - including myself and my friends - who love the game. This would be greatly appreciated.

*The Scroll* is a cool magazine in general, and a fast-expanding one, as well. I love to read it, and "The Graveyard of Ships", in particular, was well presented. Another feature I enjoy is the game reviews, because of the non-mainstream games that are thrown in frequently. It is also nice to see aspiring artists featured (in recent issues). Obviously, I can't use everything in it, as with any other magazine, but I enjoy reading it.

In short, I love *The Scroll* and what's in it! So please keep it up!

Martin Ralya  
New York, NY

***Whew! Thanks, Martin, for your letter and your "defense" of the AD&D game. However, I wonder if you are not being a little unfair? Your response stems from a single sentence in an Editorial of a single issue which was intended to encourage people to try new gaming experiences. Suggesting that the worlds oldest roleplaying game might be outdated may not have been accurate (although many gamers feel this way), but this hardly constitutes "Game Bashing" in The Scroll. As the Editor-in-Chief of The Scroll, I am very aware that a good percentage of our readers are AD&D play-***

***ers, and I do apologize if this single comment has offended any of our patrons. I would like to point out that in almost every issue of The Scroll, there is at least one article or adventure for the AD&D game. It is our intention to continue this practice.***

***Anyway, I'm glad you like the magazine and I hope you continue submitting material. By the way, for those of you who may be new to The Scroll, Martin has an article in Issue #2 titled "Arcane Wizardry", a collection of spells. Thanks again, Martin, for sharing your comments with us.***

—Bob

Dear Bob,

I'm flattered that you've taken my suggestions so seriously; bravo to a 'zine that cares. I think the two-column format in issue #8 works quite well, especially for the modules.

A couple of other ideas came to mind while flipping through the *Lost Souls* and *Shadowrun* scenarios. I noticed that you tend to use a bold typeface of consistent size for almost all headings within the modules. This is perfectly fine if all the titles have equal importance, but this is not the case. In the vast majority of modules, the writer defines a location first, and later describes the people and creatures found there. This suggests that a more prominent header is required for the locations, perhaps BOLD CAPITALS, with the current Bold Titles as a "Sub-section" header. Consistent presentation of the material, regardless of the game system, will help the reader find information quickly, whether he/she is just casually reading it, or actually running it for a player group.

I am interested in subscribing [to *The Scroll*], but am somewhat confused about your subscription rates. The ad in the back of issue #8 suggests that a Canadian subscription costs \$22.95 in US funds for a single year, while the US subscription rate is only \$14.95. Why so much to mail *The Scroll* to Canada?

P.S. It would be really great to see a review of the MYTHUS game soon, I think a lot of us have been waiting a long time

for Gary Gygax to return.

Greg Ellis  
Ontario, Canada

***Thanks, again, for writing, Greg. GDW promised us a review copy of the Mythus game soon. As far as subscription rates go, we mail foreign subscribers via. Air Mail to ensure our customers that they receive the issue while it is current. This requires extra postage and handling.***

—Bob

Dear Bob,

Thanks for the latest issue of *The Scroll*! It's looking better and better all the time! I like the use of the two different colored papers as cover and center paper, adds a little pizzazz! And I noticed that you are using a two column format for alot of things now. I think that is a great idea - improves readability a great deal, especially for those of us with questionable eyesight anyway!

Some very interesting articles this time around, too. I had noticed that amidst all the hullabaloo about things being demonic and this and that that everyone fails to mention anything about FANTASIA! (Of course, I never brought it up myself because I happen to like FANTASIA, and Night On Bald Mountain is my favorite piece! Talk about tying the knot in your own noose!) Good, helpful article on How to be a Player, as well. I thrust that promptly in front of Ed's nose and I think it might have helped a little! We go around and around about that issue whenever he tries to be a player!

Anyway, really just wanted to tell you to keep up the good work!

Devin Van Domelin  
Portland, OR

***Thanks Devin! Your art work and constant support has been a great help. I really liked "So You Want to be a Player" very much and I think we all can benefit from it's advice.***

—Bob

# NAME GAMES FOR GAME NAMES

by Nick Parenti

Sometimes the hardest part of character creation in a role-playing game is picking a name. Normally you don't want a silly-sounding or trite name. Even when silliness is your goal it may be difficult to choose a satisfactory name. Here are some simple solutions to this kind of moniker malady.

You can always name your character like you might a baby. Buy a book. There are name books that list the history, nationality, and meaning of every name known to man (and woman) but these tend to be expensive. An affordable option is a baby name book. They usually contain unique, as well as mundane, names along with a shorter history and meaning. The cost of such a book can also be prohibitive but it may also be ridiculously small. Pocket versions of baby name books are often available at grocery store checkout counters for less than one dollar.

Once you have a book you can use it to choose a name that fits the character you want to create. You can do this by selecting a name: with meaning (eg. Nicholas; people's triumph), with a specific national/historical background (eg. Eldon, a Teutonic name), or simply choose a variation of your own name (eg. Dobbs, Dobson, Robin, or Rupert for Robert). With a well chosen name you have started to define your character's personal history and personality via the history, nationality, and/or meaning of it's name.

A second, even cheaper method of naming a character

is also the simplest. Write your name on a piece of paper, then reverse the order of the letters and read the new "name" phonetically. Many mysterious and exotic sounding names can be created with just a list of friends', relatives', heroes' and pets' names. This method can be used to help you tack some of the name donor's traits to your character for easier role-playing. You could even choose a name from a book, as above, and then reverse it to add to your character's originality while adding depth to his existence. Of course you may want to re-arrange, drop or replace a few letters to make the new name more pronounceable or to improve it's sound. For example: Nicholas becomes Salokin, Eldon becomes Nodel or Nodle, and Robert becomes Trebor or Treebir.

Surnames (ie last, or family, names) can be handled much in the same manner. To be more authentic you may want to create a surname the way most real ones were created. Most family names are derived from one, or more, of four sources: father's name (as in MacDonald), homeland (as in English or Hill), occupation (as in Smith) or physical trait (as in Short). Again, you can add depth to your character with hints to his family history in his last name.

Two other handy tools to naming are most likely already on your desk. A thesaurus can help with original surnames by providing alternatives to names describing occupation, homeland, or physical traits. In this manner Tinker replaces Smith, Hill becomes Brae or Curt replaces Short. Secondly, a foreign language dictionary can do the same. After all, Leonardo da Vinci is only Italian for Lenny from Vinci. Therefore, a short character's surname could be Short, Curt, or El Poco.

Further permutations of these examples are obvious. You could use the backwards spelling of a foreign word describing the region your character comes from as his last name. All of these techniques work equally well when used to create names for regions, countries, and geographical land marks as well. The possibilities are endless. The point being, you do not have to settle for a common, modern name nor a random, unpronounceable collection of consonants and vowels. You can be creative, provide depth, and be exotic all at the same time.Ψ



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## Diceless Role-Playing

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designer of *Vampire™*

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### 2. Do I have to read the *Amber* books to play?

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"As a sourcebook, *Amber* is brilliant. Everything you could ever want to know about *Amber* and its inhabitants is in there."

Robert Hatch  
*White Wolf Magazine #31*

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Steward Wieck

### 3. How do I create player characters without dice?

Each player starts with 100 points to build their character, buying Powers, Allies, Artifacts & Creatures, and, for as little as one point, players can buy *Shadows*, whole universes built to their design.

But players can't spend their points until they establish their *Attributes*. Something they can only do by bidding against the other players in an *Attribute Auction* run by the Game Master.

Finally, each player determines their character's luck. *Good Stuff* costs points, and means that the Game Master will arrange for good things to happen to the character. Players short on points can get more by trading for *Bad Stuff* and misfortune.



"The *Amber* game is absorbing. The very first time I ran it was magical..."

Lester V. Smith,  
designer of *Dark Conspiracies™*

### 4. How do you role-play without dice?

Simple. Combat is resolved by comparing character *Attributes*.

However, since *Attributes* are secret, the most important thing in combat is sizing up the opposition.

Do you press for an all-out attack? Bide your time and act defensively? Or try to "cheat" with a dirty trick?

"...the intensity of the *Amber* game indicates Wujcik is on to something. When success in every action depends on the role and not the roll, players develop a sense of both control and urgency, along with creativity that borders on mania."

Allen Varney  
*Dragon Magazine #182*

### 5. Doesn't *Amber* require good Game Masters?

Honestly, yes. To make *Amber* role-playing better we had to also make it more challenging.

But *Amber* is also a book where Game Masters can learn from over 100 pages of tips, tricks & examples. There's even a section titled "*Good Game Masters create good role-players.*"

"While I would not recommend *Amber* to novices, it is a must buy for experienced gamemasters and players looking for new challenges."

Steve Crow  
*White Wolf Magazine #31*

### 6. Okay, I'm interested. How can I find out more?

Send us a stamp, and we'll send you more information, including a free set of character sheets.

Or just plunk down \$22.95 at your favorite hobby or comic store. Or by mail order send a \$25 (U.S.) check or money order.

### 7. I'm already sold on *Amber* but I need more...

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# THE WIGHT IDEA



An AD&D™ Game adventure  
For DM and one character, Levels 3-4  
by Robert Fowler

This adventure is designed for a single character, but it is possible to adjust the contents for group play or even play at higher levels. This modification is strictly up to the DM; he should know his players and their abilities. *The Wight Idea* can be inserted into game play quite easily. The character is returning from an adventure or expedition and just stumbles into this adventure, which is ideally suited for players who like to investigate mysterious happenings. If your players or group is into hack and slash, then this adventure is not what you or they are looking for.

### DM's Background

*The Wight Idea* is a little scheme that a thief by the name of Laicroft has cooked up. The plan itself is a simple one in Laicroft's mind; murder potential victims in their sleep and abscond with the valuables. The murders could be blamed on some horrid creature, so the local law would not think to look within the village for their murderer. Laicroft came into Benum-Ra under stealth of night and approached his cousin Vance. Laicroft sought to use his cousin as a source of village information as well as a tool in his plan. With a little coercion, Laicroft convinced Vance that it would be in his best interests to aid Laicroft in this deed.

The first murder was to be that of the sheriff, Manda Rift. Laicroft figured that a competent law officer would be a problem that he might not be able to control. As they murdered Manda Rift that night, Laicroft decided that plucking her eyes out could become the constant that the rest of the plan would hinge upon. The second and third murders were spawned because of the description Vance had given of Pence and Beckstra Royst's unique wedding rings. Laicroft knew of the Roysts and their merchant business, so he concluded that the rings would be quite valuable. After these murders, Laicroft hatched the next part of his plan.

Laicroft disguised himself as a priest and made his presence known to the population of Benum-Ra. He came upon the friends of the Roysts as they were removing the dead from their previous residence. Victims of a wight is what he proclaimed, foul, evil monsters that rip out the eyes of their victims and devour them whole. The only way to rid the village of this evil would be to burn the bodies and homes of the dead in an act of purification. The villagers fell for this ruse and carried out Laicroft's wishes. Leaving Benum-Ra, Laicroft vowed that he would hunt down the evil and destroy it. The villagers have not seen him since.

The next victim was a mystery to Laicroft until Vance had mentioned, in idle conversation, that his only friend in this village was going to school in the city. Laicroft, interested in the fact that a boy would be leaving his school here to go somewhere else, pressed Vance for more information. Vance recalled that Talmos Whist would be attending classes with some sage. Realizing that only families with money could afford a sage, Laicroft decided that the

Whists would be the next victim of the wight. Vance protested this time. Although Talmos' parents did not approve of Vance and Talmos' friendship, Vance still considers the boy to be his friend. Laicroft was firm in his decision, and Vance refused to help in the murder of his friend. That was fine by Laicroft who set off that night to accomplish what he had already done twice before.

The murder of the Whists went as Laicroft planned. The family was dead in a matter of minutes, and Laicroft had taken what he deemed valuable enough to sell. Laicroft had always made sure to take small things. If something large was missing, or if numerous items were gone, then the villagers would catch on to what was happening. Laicroft was too smart for something like that to foul up his plans. However, Laicroft got too caught up in himself for a thief who is supposed to be practicing stealth. An adventurous boy named Mugsy spotted Laicroft on the northern edge of Benum-Ra as Laicroft was returning to the underground lair. This is where the character comes into the picture.

### The Player Begins

"It is a pleasant day as you come into the village of Benum-Ra. The village seems to be a community of farmers for as you approached the village, you passed several fields that were on the outskirts of the central hub. One of the first things you notice in this quaint little place is a group of about twenty people gathered outside of someone's residence. Upon closer examination of the crowd, you find that their attentions are focused on one individual. This man is in the process of lighting a torch that he carries in his hands. He lights the torch and throws it through the open door of the house. The flame spreads quickly, the leading blue flame tells you that oil is most assuredly present. As the flame spreads, the man mutters under his breath, 'May the Gods have mercy on your souls.' Most of the gathered audience bow their heads in prayer while others stand in silent attendance."

If the character decides that he wishes to find out more on what just happened he can go and talk with the man who threw the torch. If the character wants to mind his own business, then let him. These villagers need a hero, not another innocent bystander.

The man will be visibly upset about what he has done. When the character approaches he will find that the man is relatively friendly under the circumstances. He introduces himself as Task Roffe, current sheriff of Benum-Ra. If the character asks why the house was burned, Task will tell him his tale:

"A week ago I found Manda Rift dead in her home. She was torn to pieces and her eyes had been plucked from her head. I was shocked, 'cause the only slaughtered thing I'd ever seen was cattle. She was our sheriff and someone or something had slain her in her sleep. Well, I was the deputy so I took over and began looking into it. I tried real hard,

but I couldn't discover a clue. There were no recent travelers through Benum-Ra so it wasn't a stranger, and the people here are good, solid folk so nobody here could have done it.

"Three days later we found another horrid sight. Pence and Beckstra Royst were found in their home, mutilated the same way we found Manda. Dorwid found 'em, that's the man who runs the general store for the Roysts. Well, news quickly spread through the town and the townsfolk were terrified. We really didn't know what to do. This sort of thing happens only in the big city.

"Later that day, as we were taking out Pence and Beckstra's bodies, a wandering priest came into our village. He called himself Laicroft and offered his aid in caring for our dead. Now we ain't had a priest here in a few years, so we were relieved to see him. When Laicroft looked at the bodies, he told us they must be burned as soon as possible.

"He told us that the Roysts had been slain by an evil undead creature called a Wight. He could tell because the eyes had been plucked out. Laicroft explained that Wights hate to see the spark of life in living eyes, so before actually slaying their victim the wight will rip the eyes out and devour them out of spite!

"Laicroft said that the one way to remove the evil taint from the murder site was to burn the bodies, house, and possessions of the hapless victims. He warned that nothing should be removed from the victim's house for fear that the evil taint might also be removed. Purification by fire is what he called it. We told him that our sheriff had been killed the same way and he demanded that we dig up the body, return it to where she died, and burn everything.

"After we burned their houses Laicroft took off to seek the wight and destroy it. That was four days ago and no one has seen Laicroft since. This morning we found the bodies of Theodore Whist, his wife Kori, and his son Talmos, victims of the wight. Most of us think that's the final straw. If Laicroft doesn't show up by tomorrow morning, I'm going to set up a hunting party so people don't go off in a frenzy and end up the same way the others have. Now if you'll excuse me I've got to make sure the fire doesn't get out of control and burn down the whole village."

The villagers are only doing what they feel is right. No one has any experience with or knowledge of the undead, and for the last few years nobody's been around to teach them. So they consider themselves lucky that the priest Laicroft came into Benum-Ra when he did. However, this is not the case as you (the DM) already know. A priest or a character that has had experience with the undead may know that a person slain by a wight will return from the dead. The time frame that Manda Rift was dead in was long enough for her to return as a wight. The villagers do not know anything about the undead, so they will not be aware of the ability of the dead to become undead.

## The Burning House

While the character is in the area of the burning house, he will hear a few of the villagers discussing what has happened. Listening in on a few conversations, he will learn a couple of useful (and one not so useful) bits of information:

1. "Such a sad thing, I had heard that Talmos was going to the sage Nellis Danvin for schooling." This is Caina Bartlett, teacher for the children of Benum-Ra. She explains that she had heard this tidbit of information from Vance, the village gravedigger and mortician. Talmos and Vance seemed to share a friendship that Talmos had not yet cultivated with the other children. She, as well as anyone else, can direct the character to the graveyard.
2. "I sure wish Manda was still alive. Task is a decent fellow and all, but he just doesn't cut it as a sheriff. I wonder when he's going to do something about this?" This is not meant to help the character, just to be a little diversion. The speaker cannot be found.
3. "I've seen it! It has glowing red eyes, fangs three inches long, and long daggers for fingers. It almost got me, but I ducked underneath it and got away." The source of this tale is a young lad by the name of Mugsy. The night of the Royst's murder, Mugsy was out and about exploring. This is something he normally does, but he does not tell adults because he could get into some real serious trouble. Mugsy did see something that night but it did not have glowing eyes or anything else along those lines. Mugsy did see, however, the figure of Laicroft, shrouded in black, returning from the foul deed he had just finished. Mugsy embellished his story a little to impress his friends and will not admit that he saw anything less. He can tell the character that he saw the wight stalking around on the northern edge of the village, right next to the graveyard.

After about half an hour, the flames start to die down and the crowd begins to disperse. A few of the villagers stay behind to help Task with cleaning up and extinguishing the remaining embers. If he wishes, the character can stay to help. Alternatively, the character can explore the town and see if he can gather any more information. Also, the character may wish to wait until Task gathers his hunters and go with them. Task will gladly accept the help and even set aside provisions for the character. Task will have a group of four men and will leave the following day at about noon. The hunting party will be out for four days and they will find nothing. Upon their return, the party will learn that another victim has been claimed. Nolin Bassin, a local farmer and rancher was found dead with his wife by one of the farm workers employed at the Bassin spread.

## The Village of Benum-Ra

1,2,3: These are the burned residences of the victims of the wight, 1 and 2 are several days old and belong to manda Rift and the Roysts respectively. Building 3 belonged to the Whists, and this is where the character has been during the beginning portion of this adventure. The character can ask questions at the neighboring homes, but will not find out much. All of the neighbors were at home the night of the murders and they heard nothing. They do seem frightened about what has happened over the past week. After all, these people were their friends and neighbors. These are the only residences of any real note. All other residences are nondescript buildings varying in size, but none taller than ten feet.

4,5: *Nolin Bassin's and Lanthas Church's Homes*. These homes are not necessary for the first part of the adventure. However, if the character fails, then these two residences will become extremely important.

6. *Sheriff's Office*. The building is 10'x15' and one story tall. Inside is a cell that is 10'x6' and has a cot and chamber pot. The rest of the building is taken up by the office proper.

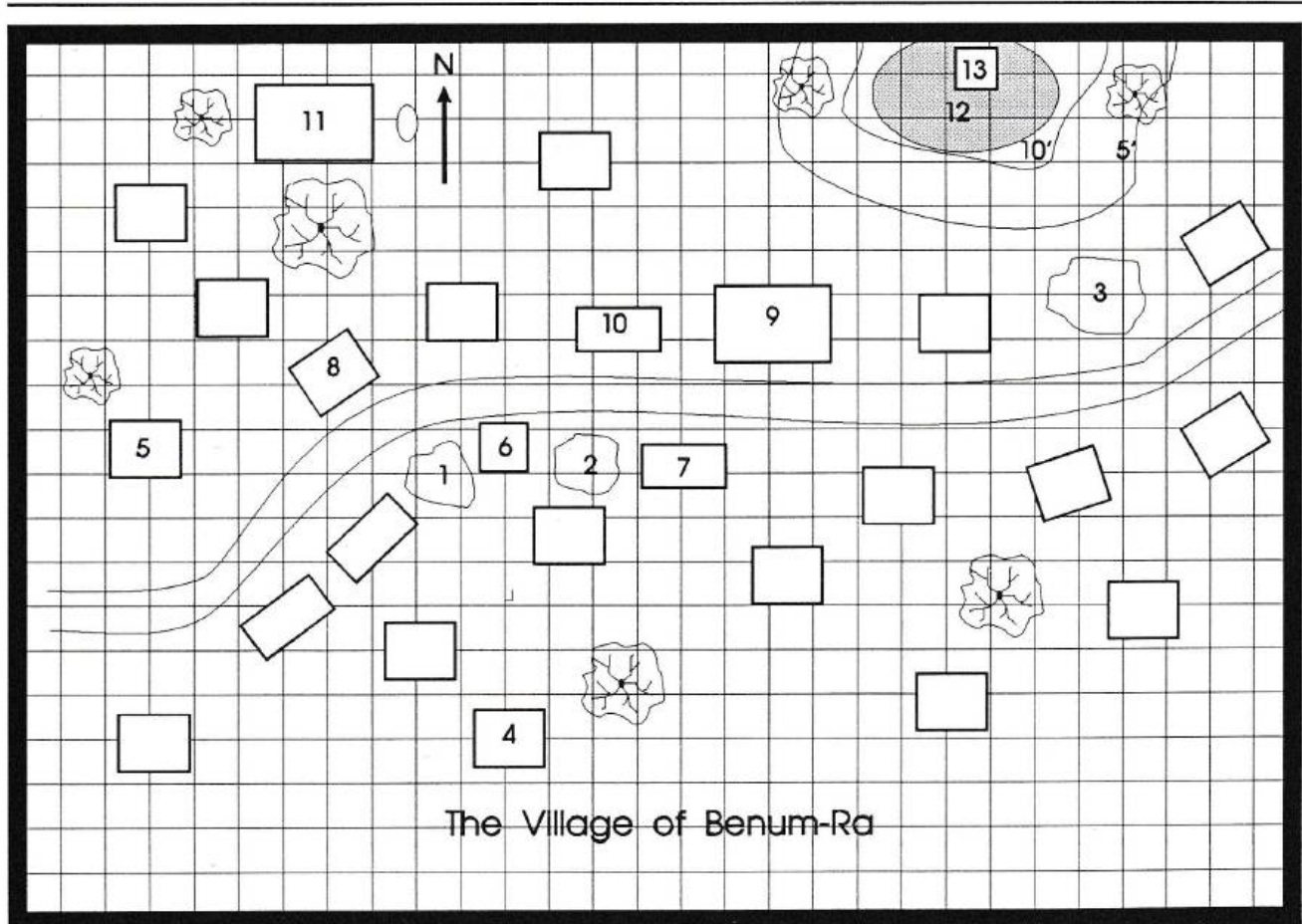
There is a desk with a slightly uncomfortable chair, and a sturdy cabinet.

This office is now under the control of Task. The desk is not locked and contains various records of the office. If the character reads through these he will find that there is not much call for a sheriff in Benum-Ra. The cabinet is kept locked at all times. Contained within the cabinet are two short swords, four clubs, and a light crossbow with a quiver of twelve bolts. Task has the keys to the cell and the weapons cabinet. Any information that can be gathered should have already been obtained from Task.

**Task:** AL CG; AC 10; MV 12; F0; hp 4; #AT1; THAC0 20; Dmg by weapon type; carries a short sword and keys to the cabinet and cell.

Task can gather one to four men within five rounds in case any emergency should come up.

**Men:** AL CG; AC 10; MV 12; F0; hp 3; #AT 1; THAC0 20; Dmg by weapon type; carries a club.



### 7. General Store (20' x 40')

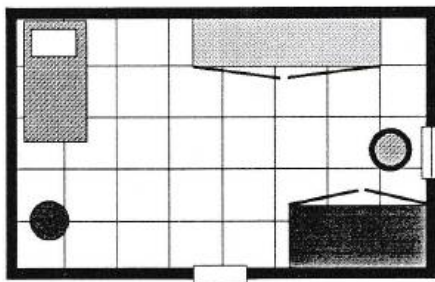
This store carries a variety of household items as well as everyday provisions. The general store carries no armor and the only weapons that are carried are small, generally defensive ones such as daggers and hatchets.

Prices are reasonable here at the general store, standard prices for the DM's setting. Nothing fancy or of extraordinary value can be found. The store is run by a man named Dorwid. He was hired by the Roysts who were a merchant couple who using Benum-Ra for their base of operations. Many years ago, Pence and Beckstra were extremely influential merchants in this area. The years passed, and the Royst looked for a way to keep working but get away from the active hustle and bustle of competition with their counterparts. The Roysts settled here in Benum-Ra and established the general store. A few years later the Roysts decided to retire completely and handed the reigns over to Dorwid who had worked at the store for several years. Dorwid will offer the previous information and that he is deeply saddened by the deaths of Pence and Beckstra for they were like family to him.

### 8. Smithy (20'x25')

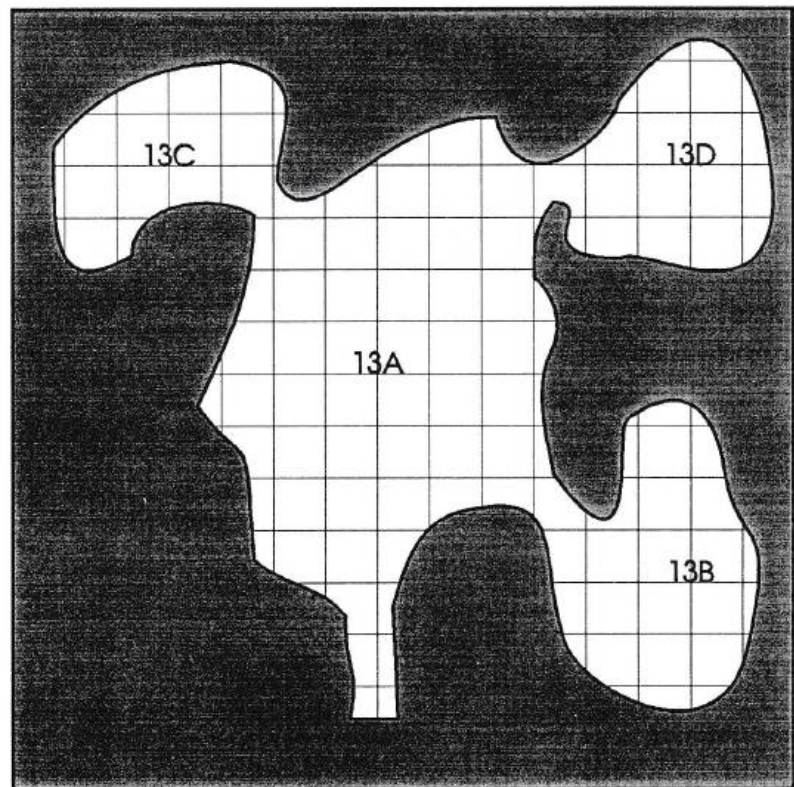
The sign outside proclaims that Mideo Mendic is the blacksmith of this shop. The walls of the building are covered with Mideo's wares and the forge can be seen in the back through a door that leads outside. The bellows to the forge as well as a water trough are also outside. Mideo is a large man who has small burn marks covering his upper body and parts of his face. These scars, you imagine, come from sparks that have sprung from his forge. Mideo's shop contains mostly metal housewares and tools. He has no weapons for sale and it does not look like he has the necessary tools to make such devices.

Mideo could fashion a crude weapon quickly, but the damage inflicted by such a weapon would be halved. Mideo can also coat a weapon with silver using his forge, but this procedure would severely weaken the weapon. The damage would be halved, the silver coating would only be good for about ten hits before the silver flakes off, and finally, because of this reheating process, the weapon stands a 2% cumulative chance of breakage each round of use. Mideo



Vance's Shack

1 Square = 2 feet



The Underground Lair

1 Square = 5 feet

will warn the character of the dangers of this addition. He will not use these exact terms but will say that something very bad could happen. Mideo requires that the character supply the silver to coat the weapon and will charge the character half the weapon's cost to do the work. He will not let the character use his forge to do the work himself.

#### 9. Inn (40'x50')

This building contains an upper level, which appears to be a residence. Inside the inn, 40'x30' is actual tavern space. The remaining 40'x20' is a large common room containing ten beds and a lockable footlocker for each. The furnishings are comfortable and the smell of food lingers in the air.

The inn is run by Nelson Adel and his young son Marc. The prices here at the inn are standard for the DM's setting and the food and drink are good quality. A bed costs five sp per night. As mentioned above, there is an upper level which is the residence of Nelson and his son. A stairway leads up to this level visible in the tavern area, but Nelson will not let the character go upstairs.

#### 10. Stable (25'x45')

The stable contains enough stalls for ten horses. Currently there are two riding horses here.

Marc Adel, Nelson's son, runs the stables. To stable a horse, the character needs to speak to Marc at the inn. Stabling a horse costs two sp a day and that includes food and combing. Marc will not negotiate the price but may increase it if a warhorse is to be stabled. The two horses already stabled are not for sale: One belongs to the office of the sheriff and the other to Nelson.

#### 11. School (50'x40')

The school is a single classroom with two exits. Inside there is a desk and a chair which more than likely belongs to the teacher. There are also tables fifteen feet long behind which there are stools for the students. Decorating the walls are pictures of various things, some appear to be quite artistic while others show the artistic quality of a sledgehammer. On the front wall, behind the teacher's desk, is a chalkboard with a few bits of chalk and a cloth covered with chalk dust.

The teacher's desk contains various teaching supplies. There is a bundle of a crude form of paper, several charcoal sticks, and books on history, math, and some of the life sciences. As mentioned before, Caina Bartlett is Benum-Ra's teacher. During the day she can be found here along

with twenty-eight children. School lets out at about 2pm, and Caina stays for another hour. After she leaves the doors are locked and no one will be in the building until the next morning. Outside the schoolhouse is a series of platforms mounted on poles of varying heights (none more than ten feet). There are ropes and ladders affixed to this wooden device and during the day at recess and after school, several children can be found climbing about.

#### 12. Graveyard

The graveyard is situated on a hill to the north of Benum-Ra. Enclosing the whole burial field is an ancient wooden fence that stands about three feet high. There are approximately fifty tombstones in the area surrounding a small shack at the top of the hill. Some of the graves do seem recent and one is nothing but a hole.

The hole is the grave of Manda Rift. As related in Task's tale, Manda was exhumed so that her body could be burned along with her house. The more recent graves are of particular note. There are two of these new graves, but the tombstones denote that death occurred several years ago. This may appear to the character that the dead are indeed returning from the grave, but this is not the case. The reason that the graves look freshly dug is because Benum-Ra's gravedigger and mortician is also a thief unto his own right. To supplement his income, Vance has turned to grave-robbing, taking the jewelry that the dead had been buried with.

#### 13. Vance's Shack (10'x15')

The shack is a run down hovel with one door and a window. The door is kept locked at all times. Approaching the shack, the character will hear a growling sound coming from inside. This is the sound of Vance's guard dog. If the character goes to the window to look in, the dog will leap at the character, but will not go crashing through the window. Upon seeing anyone except Vance, the dog will begin to bark quite loudly which will alert anyone in the underground lair.

The dog has been mistreated by Vance for quite some time. Vance has beaten it and fed it a variety of nasty herbs and peppers as well as powdered sulphur. This causes the dog tremendous discomfort and as a result the dog has developed an extremely ferocious demeanor. The dog will attack anything it considers to be food, which is just about everything. The sole exception is Vance. Throughout the dog's life, Vance has beaten the animal. So while Vance is present, the dog will cower and whimper unless ordered to attack. The dog looks severely abused and if it is not cared for, it is sure to die within the next two months.

**Dog:** Int 4; AL n; AC 6; MV 12; HD 2+2; hp 10(14), THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; SA +2 to hit, +2 damage for ferocity level; MR Nil; SZ m; XP 100.

If the character decides to subdue the poor beast and care for the animal after defeating it, then the dog will recover. The hit points in parentheses are the dog's normal value when fully restored. The reviving process will take a full month of care, and after that time the dog will bond to its savior. The dog will go with its new master and protect him to the death, and will attack opponents who are attacking its master in preference to all others. Against those opponents, the dog will receive its ferocity bonus. One the dog is defeated, the character can search the shack. Read the following:

There is an old, broken down bed that does not look like it is slept in often. The blanket is covered with dog hair. At the foot of the bed is a chamberpot. Unfortunate examination reveals that the pot is disgusting and has not been cleaned for some time. Beside the bed is a free-standing wardrobe. Underneath the window is a cooking pit. In the pit are some warm coals and an occasional bit of bone. You noticed that the doors are scratched as if some animal had been trying to get inside.

Underneath the bed are loose floorboards that give way to reveal a tunnel leading underground. At night this entrance is outlined in a soft light that is visible from the window. The light source is from the lantern that Laicroft and Vance use to light the underground lair. Inside the wardrobe are a couple of changes of clothing that are in a bad state of repair (dirty and spotted with holes). There is one suit that is not like the others. It is a black suit that is clean and has no holes (after all, Vance is the mortician). The pantry is latched and locked. The scratches are, of course, from the dog. Inside the pantry are a variety of tubers as well as a few bottles of clean water. In a tightly wrapped package is a slab of dried meat. The final item of note in the pantry is a large, tightly sealed jar that contains a mixture of herbs, peppers, and powdered sulphur that Vance occasionally feeds to his dog.

### The Underground Lair

The underground lair was dug out by Vance in his spare time. He uses it as his home for it is in better shape than the shack that the villagers gave him upon assuming this thankless gravedigging job. As mentioned before, Vance supplements his income by robbing the dead. Vance is not

an evil person, just one who likes to have cash on hand. The people of Benum-Ra are not too fond of Vance due to his profession, even though they know someone must do it. Currently, Laicroft is holed up in one of the chambers.

The tunnel is about three feet in diameter and slants at a forty-five degree angle. The walls seem to be stable even though the dirt is soft and loose.

Movement through the tunnel is at twenty-five percent of normal due to the angle of the tunnel and the give of the dirt. The tunnel descends eight to ten feet before opening up into the first chamber.

### 13A. Entrance Chamber (20'x20')

This chamber contains three exits other than the tunnel entrance. Within this chamber is a small table with two chairs. A lantern sits on the table as well as a piece of paper. Also on the table are a pair of dice and a deck of cards. Underneath the table is a 1' square box.

The paper on the table is a map of Benum-Ra. There are three locations that have been marked out, victims of the "wight". There is also a fourth area that has been circled. This is the residence of Nolin Bassin, farmer and rancher. If the character had gone with Task's hunting party, then Bassin has already been slain and his house crossed out. An alternate fifth house is circled, the home of Lanthas Church. If not, then the character has time to stop Laicroft's plans before they are carried out. The dice are loaded and the cards are marked. These gambling toys belong to Laicroft. The box underneath the table contains rags and three pints of lantern oil.

If Laicroft and Vance have been alerted to the presence of the character (the dog's barking), then the above description may not be appropriate. See later in the adventure for a possible new outlook into this area.

### 13B. Vance's Chamber (10'x20')

This chamber contains a bedroll set up here and a small footlocker. This chamber does not look like it is tended to very much. Some dirt has fallen into the bedroll, but whoever resides here has yet to clean it up.

The footlocker is locked and is not trapped. Inside is a set of black clothing designed for stealth. Also in the locker is a small leather pouch with twenty-five silver.



### 13C. Laicraft's Chamber

This chamber is similar in size and furnishings to the previously seen bedchamber. There is a set up bedroll and a footlocker lying at its end. The resident of this chamber, however, appears to be a better housekeeper than the other denizen of this underground lair.

Other than house-cleaning habits, the main difference is that Laicraft's footlocker is locked and trapped. The trap is a poison needle trap that will inflict a drugged sleep that will last for one day unless the character makes a saving throw vs. poison. During this time the character cannot be awakened without first neutralizing the poison. Inside the locker is a black suit similar to the one found in Vance's locker. Underneath the suit is a leather pouch that contains ten gold pieces.

### 13D. Treasure Chamber (10'x10')

This chamber appears to be a storage area. There is a chest along the far wall and two not so sturdy boxes lying beside the chest.

The boxes contain sacks that hold dry goods like flour, beans, and the like. These are some reserves that Laicraft

and Vance store down here where there is more room. The chest, unlike the boxes, is quite sturdy. It is locked and trapped. The trap is a small air sack that will spray acid at the thief trying to pick the lock. The acid will cause 1-8 hit points of damage and cause a chemical reaction with the clothing worn by the victim. This reaction takes form as a cloud of poisonous gas that anyone within five feet to the acid victim will need to make a saving throw vs. poison or take and additional 1-6 points of damage.

Inside the chest is 10 pp, 20 gp, 100 ep, 250 sp and three agates worth 50 gp, 25 gp, and 5 gp, respectively. Scattered through the coins are specific items that belonged to the victims of the "wight". There is a gold medallion that looks like a medal of some sort worth 50 gp, a set of silver earrings formed into a dragon's claw worth 50 gp, a platinum snake bracelet with sapphire eyes worth 150 gp, an ivory carving of a warrior worth 150 gp, and two matching rings of silver, electrum, and platinum strands woven together. The set of rings are worth 1,500 gp together, about 600 gp separately. The medallion and earrings belonged to Manda Rift, the bracelet to Kori Whist, the carving to Talmos Whist, and the rings were the wedding bands belonging to the Roysts. These items can be easily identified by the people who knew the victims.

Laicraft and Vance will most likely be found down here. Also, they probably will have been warned of possible intruders by the dog upstairs. They will do their best to set

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up an ambush for anyone who tries to come down. One possible trick is for Vance to take the lantern into 13D and wait. Laicroft will hide in 13B and try to sneak up on the character when he is investigating the light source. Laicroft will use his thief abilities to sneak up on the character and hit him with a surprise backstab. If the character is on his toes, it is possible that he may check out the other chambers before heading toward the light. If this is the case, then Vance will use his thief abilities to sneak up on the character while he is engaged in combat with Laicroft. Either way, the combat could get quite intense.

### The NPCs

**Laicroft:** AL CE; AC 5; MV 12; T4; hp 19; #AT 1; THACO 19; Dmg by weapon type; S 16, D 18; C 10; I 14; W 8; Ch 13; +4 surprise backstab; x2 damage on backstab; PP 40%; OL 50%; F/RT 35%; MS 55%; HS 55%; DN 30%; CW 70%; RL -; *Short Sword +1*, 3 daggers, leather armor, keys for footlocker and treasure chest, gold brooch worth 300 gp, xp 420.

Laicroft is a cunning opponent. He plays the intellectual when planning out his deeds and is overjoyed on how well his wight idea has turned out. He considers himself better than his contemporaries, so his thefts have some sort of flair to them. Since Laicroft has arrived in Benum-Ra, he has conned his cousin Vance into participating in this whole scheme. Laicroft could care less what happens to Vance, as long as Laicroft gets what he wants. Unsuspected by Vance, Laicroft is planning to kill his cousin after a few more "wight murders".

Laicroft fights two fisted, his short sword carried in his primary hand, a dagger in the other. Because of Laicroft's dexterity, the penalty for his dagger attack is only -1. Laicroft will try to get the upper hand in any fight, using Vance as an obstacle between him and the character. If the fight is not going his way, then Laicroft will try to flee. After all, it is better to be a live poor thief than a dead rich one.

**Vance:** AL N; AC 8; MV 12; T2; hp 8; #AT 1; THACO 20; Dmg by weapon type; S 17; D 16; C 13; I 9; W 10; Ch 7; +4 surprise backstab; x2 damage on backstab; PP 35%; OL 25%; F/RT 20%; MS 40%; HS 30%; DN 20%; CW 75%; RL -; digging pick SF 5 1-6/1-8, gold ring worth 125 gp; XP 120.

Vance is not the most overly bright human being on the planet. He is not stupid, he just doesn't think things out on occasion. Because Laicroft is his cousin, Vance feels that certain kinship towards him that one normally extends for family. Originally, Vance was against the wight idea. Robbing from the dead is one thing, but actually murdering for money seemed to be more heinous. Laicroft pointed out that no one in this town really likes Vance, and the only reason he had this job was that the villagers could not find one of their own to fill the position.

During a fight, Vance relies more on brute strength than guile. He wields the digging pick that he uses to dig graves. This should be considered a special proficiency

beyond normal thief proficiencies. One problem that Vance has during a fight is that he does not know when to back off. He hopes that Laicroft will back him up, but as you know Laicroft is not that nice of a guy.

### Concluding the Adventure

Laicroft has already planned another wight strike. He has targeted Nolin Bassin (as mentioned previously), a local farmer and rancher. Laicroft figures that most ranchers tend to be wealthy, and this is a hunch he is willing to gamble with. The murder is to take place the third night after the Whist slayings. If the character left with Task and the hunting party, then Bassin will have already been slain. If this is the case, add a small coffer that contains three matching emeralds worth 75 gp each to Laicroft and Vance's treasure pool.

Without any intervention on the character's part, one more murder will take place. Lanthas Church, an old retired fighter living out his last days in seclusion will be found three nights after Bassin's death. The treasure taken this time is an ornamental sword made of silver with eight jet stones embedded in the crossguard. This fine piece of craftsmanship is worth 2,500 gp.

With the death of Lanthas behind him, Laicroft plans to leave Benum-Ra. He and Vance will divide up the treasures and then Laicroft stabs Vance in the back for a more profitable share. Hopefully, the character will have long wrapped up this adventure so no more death will be in Benum-Ra's future, but this has yet to be seen.

There are several ways that *The Wight Idea* can end. The first and preferable way is for the character to find the underground lair and defeat Laicroft and Vance before they cause any more harm. The second way is for the character to go with Task and his hunting party (about four men with short swords). Nolin Bassin will have been killed by the time that group returns, but hopefully the character will realize that he should look within town for his answers. This possibility leads to the conclusion that the character will find the lair a little late, or that the character spies Laicroft and Vance going to or from one of the murders. A final outcome could be that the character does not find the lair, Laicroft, or Vance. Unfortunate indeed, for even though he tried, he still failed.

### Experience Points

Besides experience for the fighting, there is possible story goal experience to be awarded at the DM's option:

- Rescuing the dog: 50 xp
- Stopping Laicroft and Vance...
  - Before Nolin Bassin's death: 300 xp
  - Before Lanthas Church's death: 200 xp
  - Before Laicroft leaves Benum-Ra: 100 xp

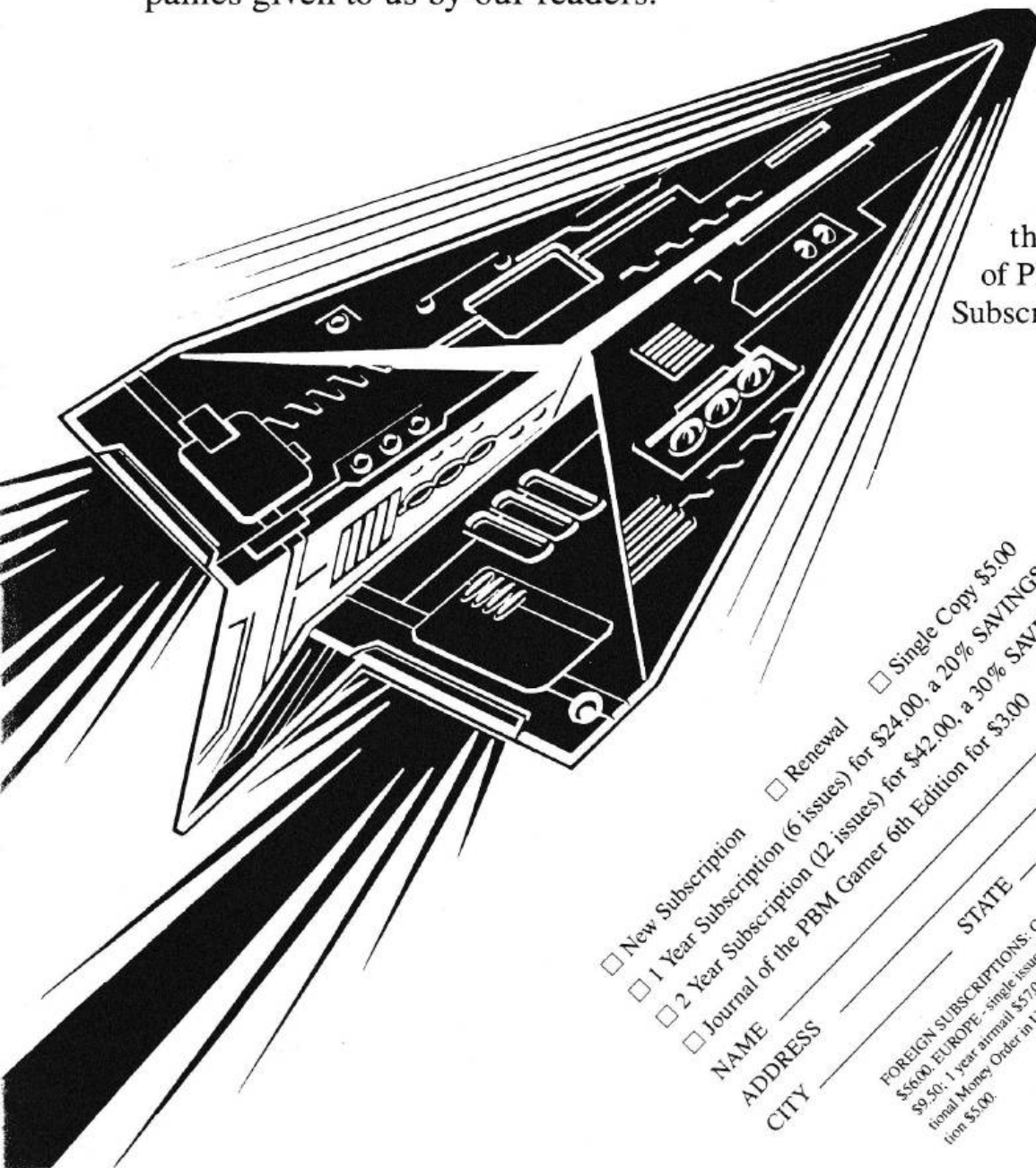
If Laicroft escapes Benum-Ra with his treasures, then he will be quite happy. The character will probably never run

(Continued on Pg 34)

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By Michael Hopcroft and Dimitri Ashling

In this adventure, three to six of your Patrons will find themselves faced with dastardly schemes, massive deception, elemental evil, and kamikaze poultry. An entire nation of chickens will be depending on them to save their world. Pretty unfortunate for the chickens, right?

### Starting things Out

If this is the group's first adventure, then explain that each of them had tried to walk into a bar in a different place. But thanks to the WARP portal they all ended up in the Floating Vagabond, an extra-dimensional watering hole in the middle of an asteroid field. Your players probably expected this to happen (after all, you did all agree on what game you were playing), but their *characters* are utterly astonished. Role play it, emphasizing the alien nature of the clientele and the strange smells of the drinks being served. Behind the bar is the ugliest man any of your characters have ever seen; this is "Spit" Luger, owner of the bar.

"Welcome to the Floating Vagabond. Your first drinks are on the house, after that you pay for. Specialty of the house is the Singularity. Name your poison." Spit will, if asked, explain that he takes just about any currency. He will also offer the strongest drinks he has to help you deal with your situation. Spit turns up his nose at "wimps" who won't drink *unless* someone in the party elects to become a Designated Driver. Designated Drivers make Spit happy, as people rarely return to the Vagabond after they end up dead. You don't need a vehicle to do this, but you only get one in the party. Choose your DD with care (or just roll a die).

Make your players keep track of what they drink. If the characters are drunk, then they will suffer the effects of drinking. Being drunk makes it harder to do coordinated activities, so driving a vehicle would be near suicidal (even after only one of the Vagabond's stronger offerings).

After the players have looked around, asked some foolish questions (give them foolish answers), and consumed their libations, a man in a leather jacket with an Indiana Jones hat will walk up to them. "Didn't you guys just come in from the portal?" he will ask. When told they have, he will start to explain the workings of where they are. This is the famous adventurer Arithon Kinkaid, and he is sizing up the patrons for adventurer potential. "You look like a pretty adventurous bunch," he finally says. "Why don't I set you up in the Lounging Pad?"

Before the patrons have time to ask what the Lounging Pad is, trouble will start. In fact, trouble will start now.

### The Trouble with Fryers

At just about this time, a chicken runs into the bar. This is no ordinary chicken, but a six-foot chicken in a seersucker suit. "Hide me!" he cries. "The Gatherer is coming!"

Spit will look at him nonchalantly. "Would you like a drink?" he draws. The chicken nods and Spit mixes something for him. After the chicken drinks it, he becomes a little

wobbly and bleary-eyed. "I have shome friendsh. They need shelp."

Sure enough, ten more chickens saunter into the bar. They attract everyone's attention by wandering around and talking loudly about how frightened they are of the Gatherer. They will not tell the patrons who the Gatherer is. They have a couple of rounds and pay Spit in Guldegs (ten Guldegs to the Fronz). Chickens do not hold their liquor well and they will become quite tipsy.

Someone shouts out "Hey, look at those drumsticks!" When the chickens hear this they stop talking, run over to the offending customer, and start beating the hell out of him. Spit doesn't intervene, but the patrons might. But while the chickens are at the bar this event will repeat.

Why? Because all the chickens have the Berserker Rage skill. Any one of several dozen words they find offensive will trigger it and cause them to attack ferociously until the offending person or persons are subdued. Any time a patron uses any of these words in conversation, the chickens will attack. It takes a difficult Cool roll to calm down the chickens.

Here are some of the words never to use around the chickens; "Drumsticks", "Fryer", "Broiler", "Colonel", "Kentucky", "Giblets", "Gravy", "Stuffing", "Picnic", "Crispy", "Scrambled", "Over Easy", "Hard-Boiled" or "Kosher". Anything that relates to chickens or eggs being eaten will trigger their berserker rage.

After there have been a couple of brawls, the feared Gatherer arrives. This is a tall man, stockily built, with the head of a bull. He will roar with anger the moment he enters the bar.

"AHA!" he cries. "That's where the chickens went! If the chickens do not come along quietly, I will be forced to blow up the room with my handy-dandy thirty-second time bomb grenade!"

The chickens panic and try to get behind the bar. Spit won't let them back, but he will call for the Gatherer to leave. When he refuses, Spit says "Get 'im" and most of the people in the bar rush towards the Gatherer. The patrons may wish to join the attack.

Whether the patrons win or not at this stage really doesn't matter. One turn after the attack, he will see that the tide is turning against him. In response, he will whip out his Portable Portal Generator (which he got from a late night TV ad for \$19.95), and go through a portal to get out of the Floating Vagabond.

In the process, he sets his grenade to go off & throws it at the chickens. Also, as he leaves through the portal, a brochure for an amusement park drops from his jacket.

The party can try to disarm the grenade, but they will fail. Not a problem, for when the grenade explodes in a puff of smoke, 5 Miniature Flying Woolly Mammoths appear. They say, "Hey. We're at the Floating Vagabond again! Good thing we still have a tab here. Let's go order drinks!" Spit asks what they want. If the players ask how they pay for

their drinks, Spit's not sure, but their tab is always paid up. They even buy drinks for the chickens.

"Ya gotta help us!" the lead chicken says. "All of us chickens are being lured to this place called Dizzyland. They claim it's a vacation paradise, but it's been three weeks and we ain't seen nobody leave. Somethin's goin' on! Hey guys, want another round?" Eventually the chickens will all get very drunk and start singing chicken songs. "Old McCluckcluck had a farm. E-I-E-I-O. And on this farm he had a worm. E-I-E-I-O." Soon the chickens pass out, and Spit has the characters take them upstairs to the "sleepi-toff" rooms. The patrons will also be allowed to pass the night there.

When the morning comes, everybody (even the ones that didn't drink) has really bad hangovers.

### Duck! Chicken! Duck!

In the morning the chickens will suggest that the patrons go to Dizzyland and check things out. They are willing to give the patrons transportation in the Roostmobile.

The Roostmobile is a spacecraft about the size of a van. It will be possible to fit ten chickens and the patrons into the van. Barely, and it will be a squeeze the whole way. The hangovers will make everybody even more uncomfortable. The chickens still have Berserker Rage. This can still be triggered by questions like "Why are we crossing the road?"

Eventually they will arrive at the gates of Dizzyland; the flyer the Gatherer dropped gives precise directions to the park in incredibly confusing terms. When they arrive, what appears to be a security duck at the gates will look the characters up and down and then say "Chickens?" The chickens will nod, as they see no point in denying that they are chickens. Then the security duck will nod, hand the chickens and the patrons ticket books, and say "Chickens and guests admitted free. Welcome to Dizzyland. We have a minimum of one ride per person. Enjoy your visit, and don't forget Big Top Dizzy's Mountain." The patrons should get a chance to figure out that the security duck is really something else in a duck suit. If the patrons blurt out "What's Dizzyland?", the pseudo-duck will look flustered for a few minutes then go into a sales pitch.

Dizzyland, of course, is devoted to that legendary cartoon hero, Dizzy Duck, star of screen and television. Dizzy's cartoons are all classics, bringing in billions of samoleans to a huge media empire. Dizzy is a little green-and-black duck who always gets out of bad situations by sheer luck. He is susceptible to being conned, but the plans of those who try to trick him inevitably turn back on their makers. The "duck" will explain that all of the rides in Dizzyland are

based on Dizzy Duck cartoons.

When everyone enters the park, give the impression of an overwhelming number of choices and a huge crowd. There is a little bit of everything in this crowd. In addition to chickens and ducks there are waterfowl of every description and many other animal-men. The patrons should encounter a few of the weirdest, like the bunny-man Echo who is always throwing his voice. They should also run into several people dressed in Dizzy Duck suits who are giving hugs to children, selling souvenirs, and taking long coffee breaks.

The patrons will also run into the real Dizzy Duck. This could be problematic. First of all, nobody believes that Dizzy Duck is real; everyone thinks he's just a cartoon character. What is more, Dizzy doesn't know he's in an amusement park devoted to himself. The lovable fool is really in the middle of a Dizzy Duck cartoon. Wherever Dizzy goes his amazing luck and naivete cause problems. He is currently in the midst of trying to raise money for an orphanage that just burned down. The guy who convinced

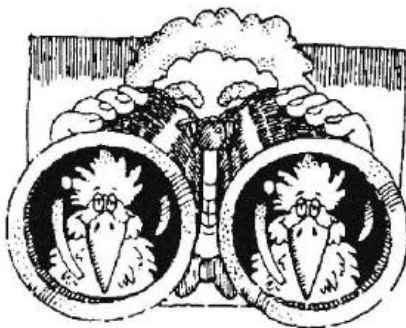
him to do it is looking to pocket the money, and is trying to get Dizzy out of the way. The con artist is really Finicky Fox, one of Dizzy's many foils. The patrons will probably notice a few of Finicky's attempts to get rid of Dizzy, done in particularly cartoony ways, that backfire spectacularly on him. Every so often put on an outrageous sight gag in the patrons' vicinity. Dizzy should approach the patrons a few times offering to sell them a "portable sun" that he's

keeping in his pocket. He might show it to them and turn it on for a second, which will blind the patrons for two or three minutes. Dizzy, of course, is unaffected.

There are also a couple of security ducks (real ducks) who start following the patrons around because the patrons are suspicious (continually acting like they don't know who Dizzy Duck is, and so on). They have been put onto the alert to anyone who discovers the real purpose of Dizzyland. The Gatherer is here as well, herding chickens into the "Big Top Dizzy's Mountain" ride. After a few rides the Gatherer will pass by, recognize the patrons, and send the ducks after them. When the Gatherer runs into Dizzy he'll get a little suspicious - he thought he'd registered all the people in Dizzy Duck suits.

### The Real Purpose of Dizzyland

The real purpose of Dizzyland is extremely sinister. A millenium ago there lived among the bull-headed people of Glorpp a king named Gorp. Gorp of Glorpp was a legendary trencherman, and liked to thumb his nose at the gods. One night he made a boast that he could eat everything he



saw. An angry god heard him and granted his request. Gorp was delighted, but Glorpp wasn't.

Gorp of Glorpp had been transformed into an eating machine. Everything that passed into Gorp's field of vision was instantly and totally consumed, turning into the energy that kept Gorp going.

Naturally this raised utter havoc. The population of Glorpp was decimated, and prayed to their gods for a solution. The gods responded by trapping Gorp in a pocket dimension. There was one condition; if the people of Glorpp did not feed Gorp, Gorp would be returned to them.

Not wanting this to happen, the people of Glorpp have devised many means of tricking people into entering Gorp's pocket dimension to be consumed. Their latest effort is Dizzyland, built with the well-paid cooperation of the giant corporation that earns reams upon reams of money off Dizzy Duck. The "Big Top Dizzy's Mountain" ride actually ends in a gateway to Gorp's realm. As people were reluctant to enter a ride from which no one emerged, the Glorpps have been bringing life forms of lesser and lesser renown into the park to be eaten. They settled on the chickens on a whim, and sent Gatherers to bring unwilling chickens to Dizzyland. When they run out of chickens, they plan to start drafting gerbil-men.

This then is the sinister secret that the patrons must discover and overcome.

#### Ride, Chickens, Ride

As we mentioned, each ride in Dizzyland is based on a Dizzy Duck cartoon classic. The chickens suspect that one of the rides is a trap, but they have no idea which. They will tell the patrons so. Actually all the rides are traps for the unwary, working on wonderful cartoon logic. There are lots of rides, so the Bartender has the chance to put in some really serious comedy mayhem. To get out of the traps requires the patrons to use cartoon logic, and if they try something sufficiently zany they should come out of the rides. OK. Here are some examples of rides:

*Desperado Dizzy.* Dizzy is in the old west to save the town from the evil outlaw Bad Brent. Bad Brent, of course, is amazingly stupid but thinks he is clever. The patrons will ride in cars shaped like horses and will be subjected to Indian attacks, Cavalry attacks, Outlaw attacks, and Barmaid attacks. In the middle of the ride the car stops in front of several sticks of dynamite. This is real dynamite, but it works in unpredictable ways. The ride, like all the rides in Dizzyland, is self-repairing, so when the bomb goes off the tracks re-form until the next riders arrive. The fuse of the dynamite is lit, but can be pulled out to give the patrons extra time. If the patrons can somehow get the dynamite off the tracks and throw it away, they will not be hurt. If it goes off, the patrons (and chickens) are singed but otherwise unaffected. The ride then continues until it returns to the midway.

*Deep Space Dizzy.* This one is a spectacular rocket ride with many slapstick pyrotechnics. In the middle of the ride the patrons are locked into a room from which the air is slowly being drained. Popping a balloon will bring the air back, and so will any similar noise.

*Draftee Dizzy* is based on a World War Two classic. In this ride the patrons witness much slapstick basic training. Occasionally people will shoot at them from the rifle range or hurl a grenade into the car. They will also be offered Army food. At the end of the ride a huge drill sergeant stands in front of the patrons and demands they do one million pushups each as punishment for going to an amusement park when there's a war on. Claiming to be a general traveling incognito will make the drill sergeant cower in terror.

*Dizzy's Candyworks* tells about the time Dizzy inherited a chocolate factory from a weird uncle, which Finicky Fox tried to steal. At the climax of the ride, the patrons find themselves thrown into a vat of chocolate. The approved way to get out of the chocolate is to yell "Fire!", in which case firemen arrive and pull the patrons out. The patrons will hopefully come up with an equally bizarre way to save themselves.

The patrons or the chickens may wish to investigate "Big Top Dizzy's Mountain" before they are captured. A few chickens should first volunteer to check out the ride, and when they don't come out that will probably arouse player curiosity. If they do enter the ride, the screams from the car ahead of them should convince them to get out of their cars and head back for the entrance. "Go back! Save yourselves!" should help encourage them.

If they go on, go to the encounter below and hope to hell they roll low!

#### "I never thought I'd go as part of a chicken salad!"

As was noted earlier, the patrons will occasionally run into security ducks as they go through the rides. These ducks are reporting back to the Gatherer about each failure to KO the patrons. When the Gatherer tracks them down he is accompanied by two security ducks for each patron. The chickens, if they are still with the patrons, will enthusiastically offer to fight the ducks beside them. But before they can get off a blow the whole bunch is grabbed and herded to the security office.

Once in the office the Gatherer will start gloating. "You thought you could get away from us, didn't you? All the chicken people are doomed! Doomed! You will all be consumed!" The chickens will Berserk at this point, and the ducks will work hard to subdue them.

At this point Dizzy Duck will wander into the room. The Gatherer will be startled. Dizzy will offer the patrons the portable sun again. The Gatherer will demand to know his Employee ID number. Naturally, Dizzy doesn't have one, so

the Gatherer has him subdued too.

The Gatherer will then briefly explain the story of Gorp of Glorpp, telling them what Gorp can do and explaining what "Big Top Dizzy's Mountain" does to those who ride it. Of course, now that I've told you this I can't let you live. You understand. Now it's time to feed you to Gorp. Bon appetit."

The ducks will lead the patrons, Dizzy and the chickens to "Big Top Dizzy's Mountain". Now, Dizzy's amazing luck will come into play. Finicky Fox has laid one last, desperate trap to destroy Dizzy — a great catapult to hurl him into the air. The way it works is that when someone steps on the pad it will activate the catapult mechanism and send the stepper airborne. When Dizzy and the patrons walk on it nothing happens. But the security ducks will trigger it, and fly into the air. Naturally, they will land on Finicky Fox.

Freed of their captors, the patrons will have to come up with a plan to disable the ride to stop more chickens from being fed into it. By now they should have figured out that the rides are self-repairing, so blowing up the tracks will only help temporarily (assuming they have any explosives handy).

Actually going into the ride and riding it all the way through is suicidal. If they try it, make each character roll a Luck check at Nigh Impossible (they have to roll their Luck or less on a d100). If any character fails the luck check, Gorp has seen them and they are consumed. Don't be afraid to warn them beforehand that such an event might occur.

To stop Gorp the patrons will have to work with whatever tools they have available and find a clever ploy. One possible solution is Dizzy's portable sun. If it blinded the patrons before, they should realize that it might blind Gorp. Luckily the device has both a continuous function and a time-delay switch. If it gets into the ride (by whatever means the patrons can come up with) it will blind Gorp and thus destroy him. Anything that can keep a continuous flow of energy into the center of the ride (like hooking a fusion power line to one of the rails) will accomplish something similar. When this happens a release of energy will wreck "Big Top Dizzy's Mountain" so the patrons will know they succeeded.

When the Gatherer discovers what has happened, he is at first annoyed until he realizes that the Glorpps are finally rid of Gorp forever. Then he will go back to his people and claim all the credit. Dizzyland will be closed down for repairs for a few months, and Dizzy Duck will continue to walk blithely through the universe in a cartoon haze. The patrons will be rewarded with the undying gratitude of the chicken people, who will gladly transport them back to the Floating Vagabond and buy them a whole evening's worth of drinks. And isn't that the important thing?

## Characters

### The Chickens

Species: *Pullus Sapiens*

STR: 2, NIMB: 3, AIM: 4, SMRT: 2, COOL: 3, CS: 1, LUCK: 3, OOPS!: 10

Skills: Berserker Rage (Hack), Hurt People (Hack)

Shtick: The Howard, Fine, Howard Effect

### The Gatherer

Species: *Taurus Sapiens*

STR: 9, NIMB: 4, AIM: 5, SMRT: 3, COOL: 2, CS: 2, LUCK: 4, OOPS!: 25

Skills: Hurt People (Expert), Shoot Things/Big Gun (Hack), Break Things (Hack), Intimidate (Professional)

Shtick: Trenchcoat Effect

### Security Ducks

Species: *Anas Sapiens*

STR: 3, NIMB: 3, AIM: 3, SMRT: 1, COOL: 1, CS: 1, LUCK: 1, OOPS!: 10

Skills: Hurt People (Hack), Shoot Things/Gun (Hack), Specific Knowledge/Dizzy Duck Cartoons (Hack), Look Like Stereotype/Security Guard (Hack)

### Dizzy Duck

Species: *Anas Ridiculii*

STR: 3, NIMB: 3, AIM: 4, SMRT: 2, COOL: 3, CS: 1, LUCK: 21, OOPS!: 22

Skills: Duck (Professional), Juggle (Hack), Make Wiseass Remark (Professional)

Shtick: The Murphy Effect Gone Gonzo



### Finicky Fox

Species: *Lupis Semiconscioni*

STR: 2, NIMB: 3, AIM: 3, SMRT: 6, COOL: 6, CS: 2, LUCK: 2, OOPS!: 15

Skills: Con (Professional), Invent (Dabbler), Mess with Dangerous Goop (Dabbler)

Shtick: Bylaw Effect (Cartoon Villains of the Universe - can never die while engaged in harassing Dizzy Duck) Ψ

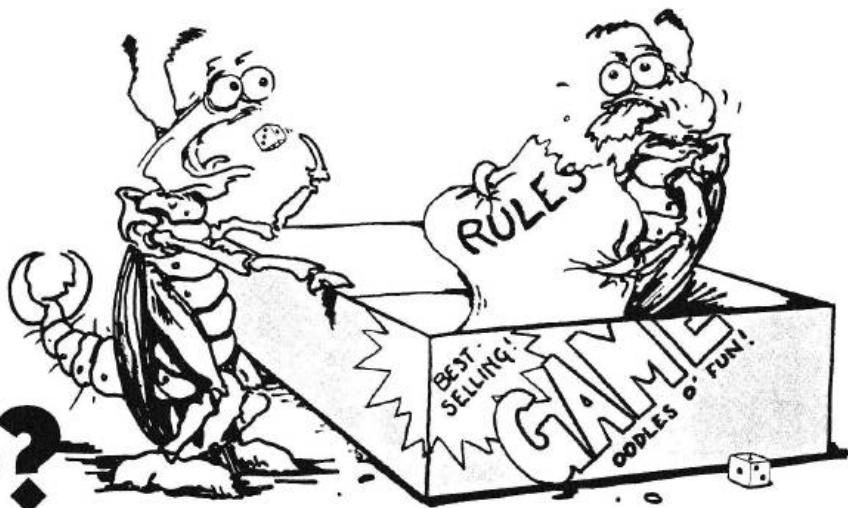


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

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# Cat Play

## Part 1

*Fiction by Ken St.Cyr*

A young lady disappeared one day. The daughter of Lord Scavis Arrenes, she was snatched helplessly from the city's elegant Park Baths. There were no witnesses. The lady's attendants had left the bathing chamber to fetch special (and expensive) perfumes for her lady's pleasure. They had been gone only a short moment, but when they returned, the lady had vanished.

Mischief was afoot this day in the city of Bourdonne. Mischief was afoot as it commonly was in this, the city of debauchery and crime, the city of a hundred bureaucracies where the only thing that mattered was one's name and quality of blood.

Mischief such as the kidnapping of a young lady that would normally be lost in a city the size of Bourdonne, its one hundred thousand inhabitants going about their business, unconcerned with what happened to the guy on the other side of town, a mile away. But on this day in Bourdonne, something unusual was afoot.

Captain Gurn, field officer of Little Hill's company of watchmen, climbed the steadily rising roads into Bourdonne's Park and arrived at the Baths where, in the colonnaded lobby, a small crowd of aristocrats and their servants were gathered. The bath operator caught his sleeve as he made his way through the crowd.

"It happened so fast, there was nothing I could do. My guards saw nothing—as if the abductors could move unseen!" A horrible look of realization spread across his face. "Aiiee! She has been stolen by the Assassins of Clister!"

Captain Gurn cringed under the pawing of the man, dodged through a cluster of people and tried in vain to get to the last known location of the victim. Instead a large, commanding figure broke through the crowd and stopped him.

"Find my daughter, Captain!" said the man, stabbing his finger into Gurn's metal breastplate. He was none other than Lord Arrenes, and he liked to make his presence felt. "That is all I ask from you this time.

No side deals, no secrets, just find her and bring her back to me."



"She will be found," said Gurn. He brushed off the aristocrat's brusqueness, then paused so he could find space to reassure the man. "Trust me," he said finally. "A crime of this magnitude cannot be easily carried out and escape the eyes of the watch. Sooner or later we will have the criminals."

"It had better be sooner!" demanded Lord Arrenes. "And," he added vehemently, "my daughter had better not be harmed!"

Though Gurn normally refused to feel belittled in the presence of the aristocracy, he inadvertently shuddered beneath the menacing words of Lord Arrenes. Perhaps it was a shudder of horror, and not fear, from a realization of the true motivation behind the warning.

It was common knowledge in Little Hill that the lady in question was the intended consort of the eminent Lord Emmorien of Tirreter. Lord Arrenes would gain tremendous influence should the alliance between his family and the Emmoriens be forged. What bothered Gurn was that the fears causing this powerful lord to threaten him were not so much over concern for a daughter's life than they were concern for the success of an ambitious power play.

Gum turned away from Lord Arrenes, to look around the scene. Between the baths operator and the serving girls, he managed to pick up as many details of the abduction as he could, but there was very little seen. He sighed.

This was the third time such an abduction had occurred within the past week. The first was a visiting merchant's daughter. Although bearing an aristocratic title, the merchant was foreign, and no one paid the loss of his daughter much heed, including, Gum admitted, himself. The second abduction was the youngest daughter of Admiral Intemene. It had taken place Burdivane, the city's old town district. Gum had heard about it, and how it mystified the watch company there, but as it occurred outside his jurisdiction, he again paid it little heed. Normally such crimes would require little attention. Slavers occasionally practiced within city limits, and unless caught in the act, were not responsible for producing any recent catches. But slavery practiced against the aristocracy was expressly forbidden. And these abductions were unusual in their frequency. Gum expected to hear of a raid on the Slavers Guild very shortly. As for now, however, he waved goodbye to Lord Arrenes and left the park Baths.

Meanwhile, in a luxuriant Little Hill villa, an overstressed aristocrat paced frantically about his salon. He sipped at a nectarous wine from bronze goblet while thick layers of scented smoke curled around his legs with every agitated step. Then his pacing halted abruptly at an ornately wrought cabinet. A dried, speckled hand, weary from tense flexure, left its place from the jewelled necklace on his breast and rested itself upon that cabinet, very near to a crystal bottle of murky wine.

Lord Vithi Merides forced a nervous sigh. It was late and he had been dictating to his scribe long since the hour of dinner had passed.

"That was three hundred beleurs for the drawing materials, two hundred for my ceremonial dress, and—" Lord Merides took another sip of that delicious wine. "—and fifty beleurs for Aunt's birthday gift. That is five hundred fifty ounces of silver which, in addition to my normal expenditures becomes how much?"

Betriti the scribe was, like most household servants in the Verentian Empire, a slave. He had been born a slave, son of a slave, and had worked with the Merides family all his life. Serving the aristocrats of the Empire was generally a highly valued position and, Betriti felt, quite agreeable, except, perhaps, on nights like this one. They had been dissecting the accounts over and over again, until he feared the parchment would crumble beneath his lightest touch.

Carefully tilting the writing board into the light, Betriti's knotted fingers swept the handle of his brush over the parchment up and down rows and columns of figures. His reply to the query struggled forth from a desiccated throat: "That leaves one hundred-fifty beleurs, mi-

lord...short."

Lord Merides gasped in frustration. "The Great Ceremony supersedes all else. Auntie can go without a gift this year. Can we not draw from our provisions?"

Betriti balked. "The staff is already down to only one meal a day sir. Could we not convince those cultists that we are unable to pay? That would leave us with more than enough for the ceremony, food and the gift to your venerable aunt."

"Cross the cult of Clister? There Assassins would have us for lizard feed! No one crosses them without paying dearly. Still, you are right. I really cannot afford to squander my wealth on the greed of extortionists."

At that moment there came a knocking at the gate, and through the window of his salon Lord Merides saw that two men had appeared in the courtyard, one large and lank, the other as short as the typical Verentian. Both were dressed in the black feline garb of the Clister Assassins.

"Their timing bespeaks their reputation. Quickly, Betriti, hide the wine bottles!"

The two dark men stood with their arms folded across their chests, looking at Merides through the same window from which he had seen them.

"We are here," announced the larger of the two.

Merides shook as he made his way down the hallway to the front door. He waved his doorman back, and opened the door.

"I thought you were not coming until tomorrow night."

"What, not ready for us?" asked the smaller man. "Do not test the patience of the Cat. We can be feisty."

With that, the small man drew a dagger from somewhere within his cloak and stepped forward.

"I cannot pay this week, my—er—Lirinean investments fell out. Please, I must have time to recover!"

"Thinking about holding out on us, eh?" The little man pulled the aristocrat by the collar, drawing him close until the aristocrat gasped under the thug's foul breath. "Every sane man in Bourdonne knows better than to cross us!"

He gestured over his shoulder to where the larger man drew a heavy-bladed sword and held over his head in executioner style. Suddenly the small man's eyes darted toward the aristocrat's breast.

"What's this?" he said, snatching the glowing yellow jewel from the chain around Lord Merides' neck. He contemptuously released hold on his prey and backed away.

"No!" cried the aristocrat. "You must not take that, it is dear to me!" Lord Merides was actually shaking, and there were beads of sweat forming on his brow.

"Hmm, nice little treasure you have here, Lord Merides. I should have my brother kill you now for this little incident."

*(Continued on page 28)*

# FANTASTIC ART





*Don Lloyd Anderson*  
Mr. Anderson is a professional artist who is 27 years old and lives in Burbank California where he draws storyboards for Hollywood movies.



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## Cat Play

(Continued from pg 25)

The aristocrat glanced at the large man with the sword held ready.

"Please spare me..."

The little man grinned and tossed the amulet in his hand. "Looks like its worth a fortune. Good night!"

Then they were gone, big cat and small, their cloaks flapping behind them as they ran like leopards across the courtyard and leapt over the enclosing wall. Lord Merides wished he could stop them, but he was too shaken, too weary, and yes, he admitted, too afraid.

Later that same evening, Gallien and the Baron enjoyed their ill-gotten earnings in the lambent glow of the Luminous Boll's Chamber of Entertainment. This was a place of a nasty reputation, an obscene itch hidden in one of Bourdonne's most unteachable places. Even for Burdivane, Bourdonne's old town district in the western end of the city, the Luminous Boll was where only the boldest and most daring purveyors of the fleshly arts would ever spend an evening of entertainment. Indeed its clients and proprietors engaged themselves in all manner of vice, just as now Gallien, fondling the little yellow gem he stole, watched with lurid pleasure the tangle of naked dancers squirming on the cushioned floor of the Pit of Ecstasy.

Looking away from this spectacle for a moment, Gallien

searched the room for his companion. His eyes drifted past the table where cutthroats were gambling at the card game called *Foremost*, lingered for a moment upon a naked couple entangled in a far booth (its curtain left carelessly drawn back), then wandered past the huddled group of street cons, whose attentions were curiously centered upon a burning stone, to settle on a booth at one end of the Boll's main chamber. There was the man, the blond exile from Andalor, whose name was unknown by anyone Gallien knew, carousing with a handful of slender slave girls. In Bourdonne this man was known either as the Baron, an extortionist and perpetrator of violent crime, or as the White Lion, a former star of Bourdonne's Arena.

"Eh, Baron!" called Gallien across the room, "ain't this even better than last week?"

The Baron, however, paid him little heed, as he was quite up to his arms in giggling slave girls, and up to his ears in drink.

Shrugging, Gallien turned his attention to the bright gemstone in his hand. It was a piece of yellow quartz, bisected by a black line. Very much like the nighttime eye of a cat. Gallien laughed to himself as he remembered the anguish of Lord Merides when he yanked the amulet from the aristocrat's puny neck.

"One could learn to love the pathetic high-born of Bourdonne," he said to himself. "Love their money, love their cowardice, love their stupidity. Heh, cats indeed." Ψ

Continued Next Issue...

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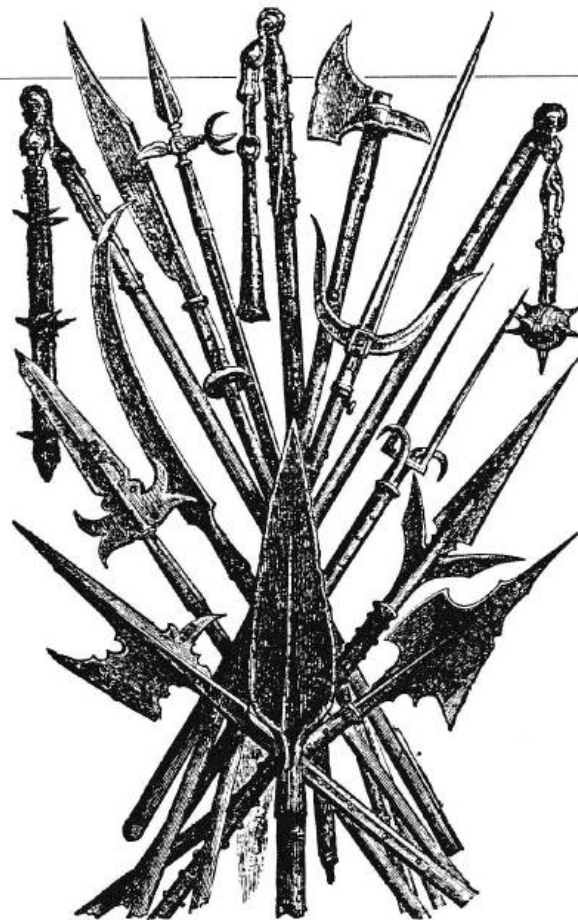
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**More Next Issue...**

# Combat with Flash, Clash, and Slash

A parrying System for the  
AD&D™ game

by Christopher Painter



**D**M: "Okay, Lord Lorimar, you're standing on the bank of the river, you can't swim, and the anti-paladin is heading towards you, looking hungry. You don't have your armor — you left it at the dryad's tree. All you have are a long sword, a loincloth, and a really dopey look on your face. What you don't have is a prayer." (Grinning wickedly, he pulls out a blank character sheet and 4d6.) "Looks like it's time for a new character..."

Player: "Now wait a second, I'm a ninth level fighter, I should be able to do something!"

DM: "You've got ten hit points."

Player: "But I'm resourceful, I'm cunning, I'm... I know! I'm waiting until he comes up to me."

DM (worried): "Okay. He comes up to you, raises his magic battle axe for a moment, then chops down on y..."

Player: "I'm going to parry his blow!"

DM (slowly): "You're... going... to..."

Player: "Parry! you know, block it, with my sword!"

DM: "Well, let's just look this up in the old DM's guide, shall we?" (Opens said tome) "Let's see, preface, Potions, Parleying — hey, that's close, but not quite — Parasitic Infection, ah, here we go, Parrying! Okay... says here that because you're ninth level, you can add five to your Armor Class by parrying." (closes book with authority) "Well, that's just enough to negate all of the anti-paladin's combat bonuses, but with your Armor Class of 10, he *still* will only miss on a roll of one." (Tosses book aside) "Now, about that new character..."

Player: "Aw, c'mon, you always see it in the movies, y'know, clashing swords, Errol Flynn, Conan..."

DM: "Kid, don't give me Conan. Now, do you die peacefully, or do I have to bring in the Princes of Elemental Evil again?"

Player: "Uh..."

Would the above scenario indeed be Lord Lorimar's swashbuckling swan song? So it would appear, as his only

other means of survival apart from divine intervention is parrying, and the rulebook is not very generous on the matter.

On page 61 of the DM's guide is the optional rule for parrying, which increases the defender's Armor Class level by a number of points equal to the character's level divided by two, with warriors receiving a bonus point. As the situation above with Lord Lorimar suggests, however, this will not always prove to be the least bit helpful. Usually only in the most desperate of circumstances would a character elect to forgo his attacks to parry, and then he would want something a bit more reassuring than a token penalty to be hit. This bonus for parrying also does not take into account the strength or dexterity of the defender, both of which would be relevant in such a situation. It also does not consider what kind of weapons are being used to attack and parry, meaning a dagger could easily block a mighty downward chop by a two-handed sword. And most importantly, it doesn't allow the character who is parrying any opportunity to get in that special move that could possibly allow the tide of the action to turn. Therefore, to improve on the notion of parrying in the AD&D game, but to still keep it as simple as a regular combat roll, the following system of three Parrying Tables has been developed.

## Using the Parrying Tables

The three tables that we will use are: Table I (Heavier Weapon Attacking, Lighter Weapon Parrying), Table II (Lighter Weapon Attacking, Heavier Weapon parrying), and Table III (Both Weapons Same Weight). This information on weight is gained from pages 68 and 69 of the Players



Handbook, and assumes standard, human-sized weapons are being used (See "Concluding Remarks" for comments on other weapon sizes).

The Parrying Tables work on a 1d20 system, just as a normal combat roll does, but rather than the attacker rolling a "to hit" roll, the defender instead rolls for what can be called a "to parry" roll. The character who is parrying rolls the die, adds his modifiers (if any — explained later), subtracts his opponent's modifiers, and consults the appropriate table.

#### Four basic rules

- 1) After initiative is diced for, either side may elect to parry. This gives the winner the first choice of what will happen in the round, and the loser, if he is in dire straits, to have the option to parry and save himself. If either side chooses to parry, then no regular "to hit" rolls are made (unless indicated on the parrying tables), and instead only the defender makes a roll "to parry".
- 2) The parrying attempt takes the place of the attack of the person who is parrying, so if he messes up, he has no other actions that round. Note that the person who wins initiative in the round, and would normally be considered the attacker, still has the option to forgo his attack and wait for his opponent attack to come, which he could then attempt to parry as normal.
- 3) High level fighter types, or fighter types with weapon specialization, who receive multiple attacks in a single round, could actually attack once and parry once in the same round, or even parry twice if so desired. On this same note, a Type V demon could get two parries and four attacks! Please note that some extreme results on the parrying tables allow for free attacks, and these are just that, FREE, and do not take the place of any other attacks that person may have in that round.
- 4) A weapon cannot parry another weapon's blow if the other weapon weights more than three times the parrying weapon. This is modified by one multiple for every +1 "to hit" in combat due to strength, magic enchantments, etc., the defender may have. Example: A dagger (weight 1 lb.) could not parry a quarterstaff (weight 4 lbs) under normal circumstances, nor could said quarterstaff parry a two-handed sword (weight 15 lbs). But if the dagger wielder had 17 strength, giving him a +1 "to hit", this would give him an extra multiple (from the standard three up to four), thus making the dagger and the quarterstaff on an equal par of 4 lbs, so a parry by the dagger could be attempted, using Table I. The same would be true of a 17 strength character with the quarterstaff parrying the two-handed sword ( $4 \times 4 = 16$ , which is greater than the sword's 15). They would use Table II.

#### Modifiers

The modifiers used for the parrying tables are the same as the "to hit" modifiers used in normal hand-to-hand combat. The only difference is that the defender (the one who is parrying) uses his as positive, and the attacker uses his as negative, so that these two are added together and applied to the parrying roll, the side with the more power, skill, or magic will have the advantage. There is only one thing that is used for the parrying modifier that is not used in a regular "to hit" roll — the reaction adjustment from dexterity. Treat every +1 reaction adjustment as a modifier on one of the parrying tables.

An example of the cumulative system for the modifiers would be: an elf with a +2 long sword and a dexterity of 17 has a total modifier of 5 (+1 for elf with sword, +2 for magic sword, and +2 for reaction adjustment). His opponent is a human fighter with a strength of 18/70 and a +3 footman's mace with specialization in it. His total modifier is 6 (+2 for strength, +3 for the mace, and +1 for specialization). In combat, the defender's modifier is positive and the attacker's negative, so if the elf parries the human, the elf will roll 1d20 and subtract one, and if the human parries the elf, the human will roll the die and add one. The elf parries on table I, and the human defends himself on table II.

Special note: If any modifier is negative, such as from a cursed sword or a non-proficiency penalty, then it is figured into the total score as a minus, and if this brings the total modifier below zero, then any remainder is carried over to the opponent's modifier and added as a bonus.

#### Optional Modifiers

Top the above, four options may be used to add variation and style. They are:

1) *Fighter Expertise*. These parrying tables usually assume fighter type vs. fighter type. If you have fighters or their like in a mixed group who will be parrying and attacking other classes, you may opt to give all fighters a bonus modifier or two, to reflect their greater knowledge of weapons and combat over the other classes. This bonus is in addition to any other modifiers.

2) *Level*. For each level or hit die of difference between the combatants, use a modifier of one. Example: between a 6th level fighter and a 7th level thief, the thief would gain a bonus modifier of one. This simulates the greater amount of skill and luck on the more experienced opponent's side. If you think this unfair to the fighter, more skilled at arms, use this in conjunction with option #1, negating the thief's bonus and giving the fighter a hearty modifier of one.

3) *Attack with Multiple Weapons*. On page 96 of the Player's Handbook there is a rule for attacking with two weapons. If you allow two-fisted fighting, and you choose to let someone parry with one weapon and attack with the other, keep in mind their penalties for primary and secondary hands, and convert these to negative modifiers. Exam-

## Parry Table I: Heavier Weapon Attacking/Lighter Weapon Parrying

### Modified

1d20	Result
01 - 02 (or less)	Defender's Lighter weapon instantly breaks unless a save is made vs. Crushing Blow. If the save is successful, then so is the parry. However, the attacker now gains a free attack of any kind (except spells), after which combat resumes as normal. Initiative goes to the attacker next round.
03 - 04	Defender's lighter weapon must save vs. Normal Blow. If successful, then so is the parry. Regardless of the save, attacker instantly gains a free non-lethal attack, and, after resolved, combat resumes with the attacker having the initiative next round.
05 - 06	Defender's weapon is torn from his hand and soars 1-10 feet away unless he can successfully roll his strength or less on 4d6. If strength roll is successful, then so is the parry. Attacker has initiative next round.
07 - 08	Successful parry; defender is forced back 2-5 feet, however, and attacker gains initiative next round.
09 - 12	Good job — successful parry. Determine initiative for next round as normal.
13 - 14	Successful parry; attacker off-guard due to opponent's elegant moves, however, and defender gains initiative next round.
15 - 16	Attacker fumbles with weapon, allowing the defender to sneak in a non-lethal attack for free. Otherwise successful parry, and initiative goes to defender next round.
17 - 18	Attacker loses his grip on his weapon unless he can roll his strength or less on 1d20. If unsuccessful, weapon travels 1-6 feet away. If successful, then so is parry. Defender has the initiative next round.
19 - 20+	Incredible moves made by the defender enable him to parry his foe's blow and receive an extra attack of any type (except spells) absolutely free. After which, combat resumes as normal, with the initiative going to the defender.

Note: Attacker modifies down, Defender modifies up.

ple: A 16 dexterity character could parry with his secondary weapon (-3 modifier) and attack with his primary (at -1 "to hit"). When making the final tally, however, keep in mind the reaction adjustment for dexterity.

4) *Shields*: Obviously, shields were made for parrying weapons and blocking blows, so if you wish to let players use the parrying tables with shields, use these rules; (1) A shield, no matter what size, can only effectively parry one opponent per round; (2) For the entire round that the character is parrying with his shield, should someone attack him, or should he fail his parry and the blow continue on its path, he is treated as not having his shield for purposes of armor class calculations; (3) If the character wishes to strike with a weapon in the same round that he parries with his shield, and the DM sees fit to allow this, the multiple weapon attack rules (option #3, above) should be used, with the shield almost always being in the secondary hand; (4) You may wish to use the following bonus modifiers for shield types to represent their superior parrying ability over weapons: Large Shield +2, medium or small shield +1, buckler 0. These are in addition to any other modifiers; (5) Magic shields gain a modifier of one for each +1 protective value they possess; and (6) The weight of the shield determines which Table I, II, or III, the parry is resolved on.

### Concluding Remarks

Occasionally, as in normal combat, many modifiers will crop up that aren't really covered anywhere, but make sense nonetheless. Now it rests upon the titan-like shoulders of the DM to, scientifically put, wing it. A good rule of thumb is, if it normally gives a bonus or a minus "to hit" in combat, simply convert this into a positive or negative "to parry" modifier. If it's something totally off the wall, then a basic modifier of two should cover any problem. Some examples of this would be a puny halfling attempting to parry a bugbear's mace with his short sword, a *slowed* opponent trying to parry a blow, mounted opponents, etc. It is in this miscellaneous category that the DM has final judgement.

And now, a look at the tables in action. Our hero, Lord Lorimar, has a 17 strength, 14 dexterity, and is ninth level. In combat he has a total "to hit" modifier of +1, so his parrying modifier is one. The bonus of two for fighters (optional rule #1, above) is not being used here since we have two fighters against each other, and they would simple cancel out. The anti-paladin has a 18/60 strength, a 9 dexterity, a +3 battle axe, and is 10th level. His total modifier is six (+2 from strength, +3 from magic axe, +1 for his one level difference from Lorimar). This negates Lorimar's sad one, and puts the anti-paladin's modifier at five, the only modifier we'll need to use in this battle, and it will always

## Parry Table II: Lighter Weapon Attacking/Heavier Weapon Parrying

Modified 1d20	Result
01 - 02 (or less)	Defender's parry is unsuccessful, and not only does the attacker get his normal attack for the round, but also a free attack of any sort (except spells), and after the extra attack is resolved, combat proceeds as normal, with the initiative going to the attacker next round.
03 - 04	Defender is awestruck by attacker's grace and style. Unsuccessful parry, and attacker's attack for this round continues uninterrupted. Attacker gains initiative next round.
05 - 06	Defender's heavier weapon is torn from his grip unless he can roll his strength or less on 1d20. If the roll is successful, then so is the parry, if not the weapon flies 1-6 feet away. Regardless, the attacker has initiative next round.
07 - 08	Successful parry; however, defender miscalculates and falls backward onto the ground unless he rolls his dexterity or less on 4d6. If he fails his check and falls, he is treated as a prone target until he spends a round getting to his feet. Note that he can parry from this position. Attacker gains initiative next round.
09 - 12	Successful parry. Determine initiative as usual.
13 - 14	Successful parry. Attacker overwhelmed by defender's obvious skill allowing defender to win initiative next round.
15 - 16	Attacker's lighter weapon is torn from his grip unless he can roll his strength or less on 4d6. If so, then a successful parry. If not, the weapon travels 1-10 feet away. Initiative goes to the defender next round.
17 - 18	Attacker's weapon breaks unless a save vs. Normal Blow is made. If successful, then so is the parry. If not, the attacker is justifiably worried. Initiative goes to the defender next round.
19 - 20+	Attacker's lighter weapon instantly breaks unless a save is made vs Crushing Blow. If successful, then so is the parry. Regardless of the save, the defender may now have a free non-lethal attack, after which, combat resumes as normal with the defender gaining the initiative.

Note: Attacker modifies down, Defender modifies up.

## Parry Table III: Both Weapons Same Weight

Modified 1d20	Result
01 - 02 (or less)	Defender's weapon fails to parry attacker's blow. Attacker may continue with his attack for this round, and gains initiative next round.
03 - 04	Defender loses grip on weapon unless he makes a strength check on 4d6. If successful, so is the parry. If not, the weapon lands 1-12 feet away. The attacker gains the initiative next round.
05 - 06	Defender briefly stunned by attacker's cat-like grace, and is forced back 2-5 feet. Successful parry, and attacker gains the initiative next round.
07 - 14	Successful parry. Initiative determined normally for the next round.
15 - 16	Successful parry, but the attacker is caught off guard and the defender gains the initiative next round.
17 - 18	Attacker loses weapon, unless a strength check on 4d6 is successful. If so, the parry is successful. If not, the weapon travels 1-12 feet away. The defender has the initiative next round.
19 - 20+	Attacker fumbles badly. Successful parry, and defender gains a free non-lethal attack upon said foe. Combat then proceeds as normal with the initiative going to the defender.

Note: Attacker modifies down, Defender modifies up.

apply to the anti-paladin.

*Round One:* Lord Lorimar was waiting for the anti-paladin's approach, and when the attack comes, brings up his sword to parry the axe blow. Lord Lorimar's player rolls a d20 for his "to parry" roll and gets an 18. A great roll, but when the anti-paladin's modifier of five is subtracted, a 13 is the result. Checking Table I, because the battle axe weighs more than the long sword, we see that Lorimar successfully parries the downward chop, and even takes the anti-paladin aback a bit, thus giving the initiative to Lorimar the next round.

*Round Two:* Lorimar takes advantage of his initiative and swings like a madman. The anti-paladin, thinking that Lorimar's last move was pretty neat, attempts to parry his stroke. Now we switch to Table II, the DM rolls for the anti-paladin, and gets a 14, which added to 5 is a whopping 19! Lorimar's sword hits squarely against the head of the anti-paladin's axe, but luckily makes its necessary save versus Crushing Blow with an 18. The anti-paladin flexes his muscles and pushes back Lorimar's sword towards him, and while Lorimar staggers a bit, a mailed fist heads straight at him! The anti-paladin rolls an 8, a square hit against Lorimar's Armor Class of 10, and deals him an uppercut for a point of damage, +3 for his strength, for a total of four points. His KO roll fails to knock him out with a 59. His level gives him another attack and he now has initiative for it, but as Lorimar is 9th level he too gets a second attack and chooses to, yes, parry. He rolls a 17, minus five is 12, and

we go back to Table I. Sword and axe again clash in midair. Lorimar, stunned at the fact that breathing is still coming naturally to him, makes a successful parry.

*Round Three:* Initiative dice are rolled, and Lorimar wins. Again he sweeps his longsword in a wide arc, and again the anti-paladin elects to parry. On Table II the DM rolls a two, which does not bode well, but is modified to a seven. The anti-paladin successfully blocks the sword swipe, but is caught off-balance a bit by the insane rage behind the force of the blow, and must roll 4d6 against his dexterity or take a backward fall. Twenty black dots come up, the anti-paladin stumbles backwards and, considering their current terrain, falls into the aforementioned river behind him. As he is wearing his trademark black platemail, he sinks like a basilisk's lunch. At this point Lord Lorimar, not too concerned for the anti-paladin's well-being, does a 180 and sprints off...

Player: "Boy, that was pretty fun! All that flashy sword-play, back and forth, parrying blows. Now that's what I call a medieval skirmish,"

DM: "I agree. So anyway, you're following the river along this forest trail, when all of a sudden, a wall of fire springs up ahead, this rushing barrier of torrential wind blocks your retreat behind, the river to your left cascades upwards in a thick slab, and to your right this massive jut of earth..."

Player: "Uh..." Ψ

## THE WIGHT IDEA

(Continued from pg. 16)

into him again. If, on the other hand, Laicraft escaped with only his life, then he will plan for a possible meeting in the future where he will have the upper hand over his "nemesis". Also, it is possible that the character is a true hero. He did not slay Laicraft and his cousin, but turned them over to Task and the forces of justice. Task promises that the two will be in jail for a long time. But before the City Watch can take the two murderers to a real prison, Laicraft pulls out a cleverly hidden thief's pick and escapes. Laicraft then goes into hiding so that he may plan his revenge against the one who did not get the wight idea. Ψ



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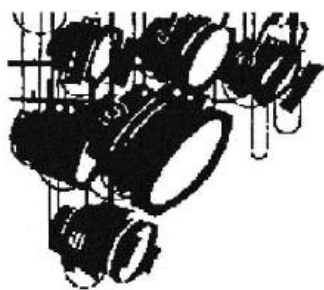
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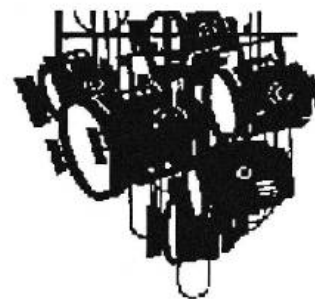
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You lost your job as a singing telegram girl when you outgrew the belly dancer costume. You knew you were taking a chance when you left your friends and family in Oklahoma to make it big in the city. Yet you never realized it would be so hard. Eventually, you were reduced to answering ads in the back of the "Daily Star." The advertisement you found was vague, yet provocative. "Wanted: Single Female who knows how to perform. Must be lonely, unattached, and acrobatic. Apply at the Morpheus Theater for good times and good pay." It sounded good to you.

As it turned out, the Great Akmar was looking for an assistant to help with his magic act. The job seemed easy enough. You wore a skimpy outfit, wheeled out heavy objects, and gestured as he performed tricks. You even got to star in a illusion or two.

There was no audition. Akmar asked you to complete a questionnaire, then told you he'd give you a call if he could use you. He never looked directly at you, and the whole time he seemed distracted, as though his mind were elsewhere. The next night, he called to ask you to do the midnight show because his regular assistant had unexpectedly quit. You said you'd be there in an hour, but he said there was no time, the show was starting in just a few minutes, and he had already sent his partner with a car. He promised he'd pay double if you bailed him out. You hung up and hurried outside.

Akmar's partner was Zelda, a swarthy, heavy set woman with black hair and green eyes. A faint mustache hung beneath her nose, and you thought she had a spider on her chin, until you realized it was just a hairy wart. She wore layers of silk cloth and a glittering assortment of baubles. On the drive, you learned she was a gypsy fortune teller



who opened for Akmar. When you asked her to tell your future, she said, "Your picture, it will soon be in all the papers. This job will make you very famous."

When you reached the Morpheus Theater, you found a restless audience already waiting. You met briefly with Akmar behind the stage. He showed you to a small dressing booth with a full length mirror on one wall, and telling you to hurry, he gave you a skimpy outfit to change into. As you stripped, you heard the audience hooting and hollering. They were very impatient.

The outfit was much too small. Checking the mirror, you saw that the thin straps barely covered you. Well, it was too late now for a proper fitting. The audience was almost in a frenzy, and you had to hurry before they got violent.

As you stepped from the dressing booth, you saw Zelda operating a video camera from the wings. As she set the camera up on a tripod, she said she she was taping the show for public cable access. You asked if you could get a copy of the tape for your portfolio, but she merely grinned in reply. Taking a deep breath, but not so deep that you popped out of our leotard, you stepped onto the stage.

It had been painted with silly magic symbols like you would expect to find on a cheap magician's hat. There were stars and planet and astrological signs and a few squiggles thrown in for good measure. At your feet, a large red circle was painted encompassing a five pointed star.

The show started well. First Akmar, who was billed as the Masked Magician, placed you in a box with your head and arms sticking out. He then inserted steel swords into the cabinet. You heard gasps from the audience as the swords went in. When he removed the swords and you stepped out whole and healthy, the gasps turned to groans. There was no applause. This was the deadest crowd you had ever played to. You could see their shadows behind the footlights, but you could not make out their faces.

Next was the guillotine trick. Akmar cut a cabbage in half with it, but when he used it on your neck, the blade seemed to pass right through. When your head didn't pop off, you heard catcalls from the audience. A few people laughed nervously. The excitement was thick, but still, no applause.

The expectant rustling grew louder as Akmar tied you to a board painted with a bulls eye. He then blindfolded himself and hurled knives at you. They came uncomfortably close, and you screamed as one drew blood from your arm. Akmar threw the final cleaver and it thumped into the board next to your ear, severing a lock of hair. Obviously, Akmar needed more practice.

For the first time, the crowd cheered, and you smiled. You would have curtsied if you hadn't been bound. Glimpsing the the red light of the camera in the wings, you hoped Zelda was getting your good side.

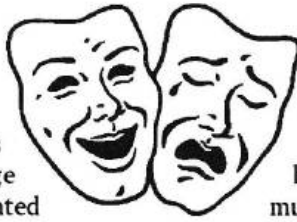
"Act it up," Akmar whispered to you as he tilted the board so that you were horizontal. "This audience wants blood. Pretend like this next one really hurts."

This was your biggest part of the night. Akmar lowered a box over your torso, so that your head, arms, and legs stuck out, and proceeded to cut through the box with a handsaw. You writhed dramatically, as through you were in pain, acting it up for the audience. They loved it. Their screams were a bedlam, and you could barely keep a smile from your lips. Until something went wrong and you felt the saw rip through your stomach. You screamed for Akmar to stop, but he must have thought you were acting. He continued sawing, the sweat dripping down his black mask, and when the blood started pouring from the box, the audience went wild.

The next thing you knew, you were on your way to Limbo.

### Beginning The Game

Theater of Blood, an adventure for Lost Souls, takes place in the Morpheus Theater. A map is provided, but because of space limitations,



only those rooms of special interest are described here. The Mentor will need to furnish the other rooms as necessary.

The central player receives a copy of the background story (beginning of this article). She must be a female Performer whose cause of death was the old sawing a lady in half trick didn't quite work this time." The other players can take any characters they choose.

In order to return to earth, the central player must make a ghostly vow not to rest until completing some task based on her backstory. Here are some suggestions:

- I will not rest until I learn why Akmar killed me.
- I will not rest until I gain revenge on Akmar.

All the characters have been sitting around Limbo, reading old magazines and watching re-runs of Gilligan's Island, when the central character stumbles in, looking for spirits to help her fulfil her ghostly vow. Anyone who doesn't want to help can go into another room and continue reading old magazines and watching re-runs, while the rest are sent back to earth.

### The Newspaper

You find yourself in an alley next to the Morpheus Theater on a July evening. The buildings on either side afford you protection from the sun's melting rays.

On the street corner is a newspaper machine. A color picture on the front page of the Daily Star catches your eye. It is a photograph of a small boy standing on a riverbank, a straw hat atop his head and a fishing pole in one hand. The hook is snared on a woman's shoe. The shoe is worn by a pair of legs, not a full body, just the legs, like those of a topless mannequin. The central character will recognize the shoe as one she was wearing on the night of her death. The headline over the picture reads "Little Boy Catches Big Surprise!" To read the article, you will somehow have to remove the paper from the vending machine and unfold it. The article reads as follows:

*Wee Willy Mathers caught an unexpected surprise yesterday. While fishing in the river, his hook caught on something heavy. "I thought it was a whale," he explained. "I kept tuggin' an' pullin', and out came this thing. I sure hope they let me keep it. I'll put it up next to pa's swordfish."*

*Authorities have not identified the owner of the legs. "Whoever she was, she's dead now," a detective disclosed. "She's so bloated and the fish have been at her so long that it's hard to tell the cause of death. There's a lot of marks on her, but we won't know what caused them until the coroner gets finished. I suspect she was swimming and got caught by a ship's propeller."*

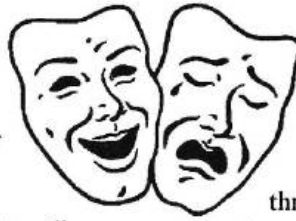
*Police are still looking for the woman's top*



half. Anyone finding a woman's upper body should notify their local authorities.

The date on the paper is one week after the central character's death.

Mentor's Note: You may wish to suggest other vow to the central player: "I will not rest until I find my upper half!")



*Howl* (Uses = 2): All characters in the local area must flee for (Sanity vs Good) x 2 turns.

*Cackle* (Uses = 2): The victim must cackle insanely for (Intelligence vs Poor) x 10 minutes.

*Ventriloquism* (Uses = 2): Beatrice may speak through the victim for (Intelligence vs Poor) x 2 turns.

### Basement

The windows of the Morpheus Theater are boarded over, and the doors are bolted. From the outside, the place looks one day away from being condemned. Inside, the building smells of rot and dampness. A leaking pipe dribbles water on the floor of the lobby; from the wet carpet, a cluster of fungus sprouts. The dim lighting is perfect for spectral prowlers.

As you explore the ground floor, you hear a moaning from the stairs to the basement. At the head of the stairs is a fire door which poses some difficulty for lost souls. Once the door opens, the moaning below stops.

The stairs lead down to a concrete furnace room. Heaps of lumber, broken chairs, and a tangle of ducts block your view.

Once you have descended the stairs, a spine tingling shriek fills the room. You feel your ectoplasmic body stiffen with fear. A moment later, a monstrous howl nearly deafens you. Panicked by the eerie sounds, a few of your friends bolt for the stairs. But you are held motionless, still paralyzed by that first shriek.

From out of the darkness, a pale shape glides, taking the form of a woman, her leotard torn and her hair matted with blood. A meat cleaver protrudes from her split skull. The cackling woman wrenches the cleaver from her skull and comes for you,

### First Floor

The theater seems void of all living inhabitants. While exploring the first floor, you glimpse a white figure from the corner of your eye, but when you turn to look, it's gone. Later, you think you see a shape standing in a doorway, but once again it vanishes when you try to descry it.

Searching the auditorium, you find black masks resting on the seats in the front three rows. From the seats, you can see the dressing booth where the central character changed clothes on the night of her death. You discover, on closer inspection, that it is outfitted with a one way mirror. When the light is on inside the booth, its interior is clearly visible to the audience.

You hear ropes creaking above you and tiny sounds that might be rats skittering among the rafters. A catwalk runs above the stage, affording access to the lights and the ropes that lower and raise the backdrops.

Once more you spot the white figure, only this time, it doesn't vanish. You clearly perceive the headless phantom of a woman wearing a skimpy outfit much like the central character's. She roams the halls, groping blindly as through searching for something. Your attempts to communicate with her are futile, your hands pass right through her, and even your supernatural powers have no effect on her. She, in turn, seems completely oblivious of you.

The headless phantom is a reoccurring visitor as you examine the theater. It's not until you locate Zelda's bedroom on the third floor that you find the answer to her quest. A woman's badly preserved head rests upon a nightstand, serving as a hat rest for for the feathered turban Zelda wears during her act. When you try to lift the head, you extract an ectoplasmic duplicate of it. The ectoplasmic version bears none of the decay of the original, leaving the unmarked face peaceful and surprisingly beautiful.

Once the ectoplasmic head has been handed to her, the phantom will place it upon the stump of her neck and her eyes will blink. Smiling with gratitude, she proves to be a lovely woman, with considerable charm to match her good looks. She provides you with the following information:

"Thank you for helping me. My name is Renee. I had to be Akmar's assistant, until the accident.

"When I met Akmar a year ago, he was perfectly willing to be a second rate magician all his life, and I wanted only to be his assistant. Zelda, his former assistant, never liked me. She was jealous of my looks and the attention Akmar

### BEATRICE

Agility	Strength	Intelligence	Defense
Passable	Good	Feeble	Passable

**Type:** Evil spirit (banshee), incorporeal.

**Value:** Players gain +1 karma for reincarnating her.

**Personality:** Violent and hysterical. The meat cleaver in her skull has caused significant brain damage. She is quite insane, and seeks only to destroy those she can lure to the basement. Her body is hidden behind the furnace, and her blood as been spiked to the concrete floor, binding her to this room.

**Combat:** In hand to hand combat, Beatrice will pull the cleaver from her skull and use it to inflict (Defense vs Passable) x 3 damage.

**Powers:** Beatrice has the following powers:

**Shriek** (Uses = 2): All character in the local area paralyzed with fear for (Strength vs Good) turns.



paid to me. She was especially infuriated by the way I accepted him as he was, instead of badgering him like she did to earn more money.

"One night, when Akmar was performing the guillotine act, something went terribly wrong. The blade didn't pass through my neck as it should have. I don't know whether it was a grim accident or an even grimmer plan. In any case, Zelda must have taken great satisfaction in watching Akmar unintentionally kill me before an audience of two dozen appalled witnesses. Though my head was severed, I held on, resisting the blackness of shock. I watched from the floor, seeing Akmar's horrified expression as he looked down at me. I tried to tell him that I forgave him, but no sound came out of my twisting lips. I must have looked quite the sight, for Akmar covered his eyes and turned away. The last I saw, before my vision narrowed to a grey pinprick, was Zelda bending over me, lifting me by my hair, and secreting me under her cloak. After that, I could hold to my body no longer. I was in complete darkness. I felt a pull to Limbo, but I could not find the way. Nor would I have gone even if I had stumbled across the passage. I wanted freedom from the darkness. I wanted to hear and see again. I wanted my head back.

"And so I have searched for three long months. Now I can finally rest. Tell Akmar for me that I forgive him."

When you suggest that Akmar may be committing murder, Renee laughs gaily. "Not my dear, sweet Akmar! He would never hurt anyone."

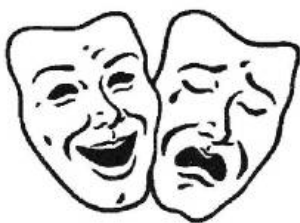
Renee knows nothing more of what has been going on at the theater. Without her head, she has not been very good at eavesdropping. A tunnel to Limbo appears, and Renee, with great relief, is carried away.

Mentor's Note: The players gain +1 karma each for helping Renee find peace.)

### Prop Room

As you explore the area above the stage, you are confronted by a ethereally beautiful woman armed with a curved scimitar in either hand. She has a gray pallor and a gloomy expression to match. Her incorporeal body bears a number open sword wounds, scarcely covered by the scanty outfit she wears. At first she holds the swords threateningly, but as you talk to her, she loosens up. You learn that she was one of Akmar's assistants.

"I was hired two months ago by Zelda. I was new to the city, without many friends, and I was desperate for a job. I met Zelda at the bus station, and she insisted I begin immediately. Things moved too fast for me to tell anyone where I was going. Zelda brought me here, where the audience was already waiting. I quickly changed into this ridiculous outfit, and without any preparation, I helped Akmar as best I could, mostly by standing around and ges-



turing while he pulled scarves from his sleeves. Finally, he guided me into a cabinet with just my head and arms sticking out. And then he inserted steel swords into the box. I thought they were meant to pass right through me, and they did. You can still see the holes!

"After the show, Akmar hid my body up here in the prop room, behind this old curtain where it still lies. Zelda drove iron nails through my bloodstains, and now I can't seem to leave this area above the stage.

"Since then, I've watched Akmar kill two other women. He seems to kill an assistant once a month, always in front of a receptive crowd, while Zelda films the whole thing. A month ago it was blond. He struck her in the head with a cleaver. And last week it was you." She indicates the central character. "I couldn't stand watching him do it to another girl, so I hid back here, and refused to watch. The screams were so horrible I had to cover my ears. I even thought I heard the audience screaming.

"Akmar is an evil man. I'll never find peace until he is dead!"

### GLADYS

Agility	Strength	Intelligence	Defense
Good	Good	Good	Good

**Type:** Lost soul (shade), incorporeal

**Value:** Gain +1 karma for helping her find peace by killing Akmar.

**Personality:** Morose and vengeful. Feeling betrayed by Akmar, she has taken a ghostly vow not to rest until he has been killed.

**Combat:** She carries a sword in either hand which allows her to attack twice per turn, doing (Defense vs Poor) x 2 damage per attack.

#### Powers:

**Moan (Uses = 4):** All those in the local area feel a terrible sadness for (Intelligence vs Good) x 3 turns. During this time, they cannot fight or engage in any form of conflict.

**Aura of Pain (Uses = 3):** All enemies in the local area are stuck by searing pain for (Stamina vs Good) turns. During this time, they cannot attack, only defend.

**Aura of Hostility (Uses 4):** The target is imbued with an aura of hostility that lasts (Charm vs Passable) x 3 turns. Each turn, everyone else in the local area must roll Passable on Will or else attack the target.

**Healing Hands (Uses = 5):** Heals (Passable vs Stamina) x 2 WTL. She will only heal the players if they vow to help her kill Akmar.



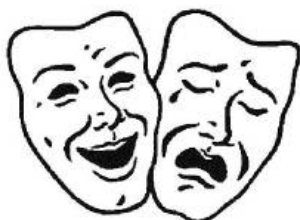
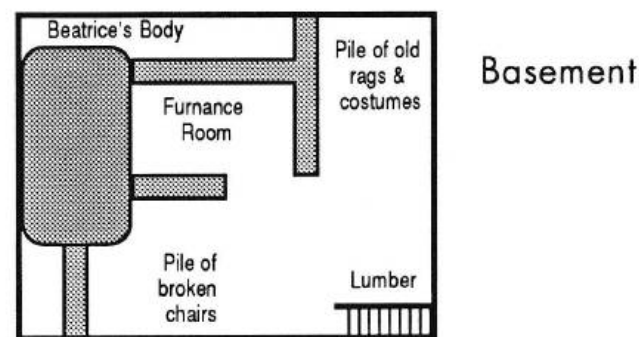
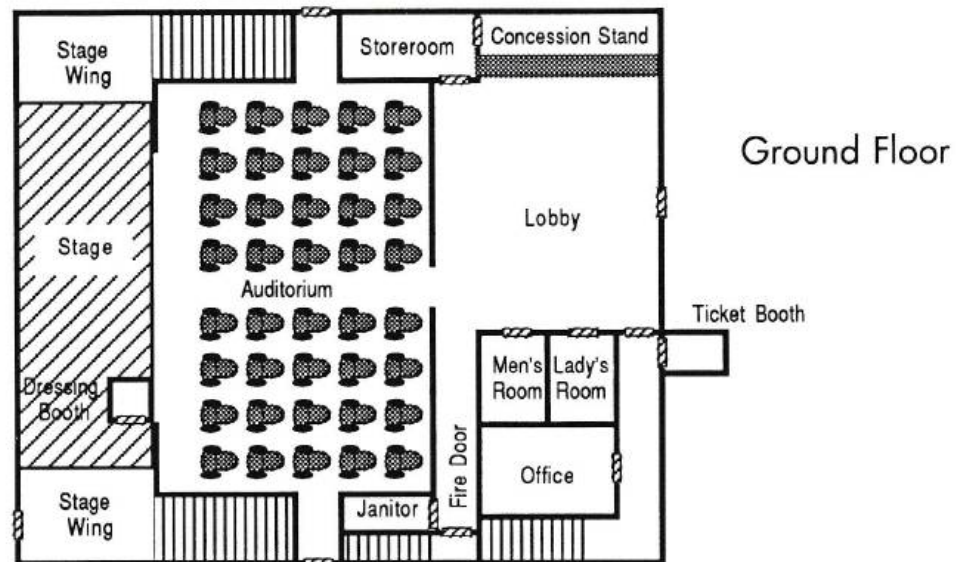
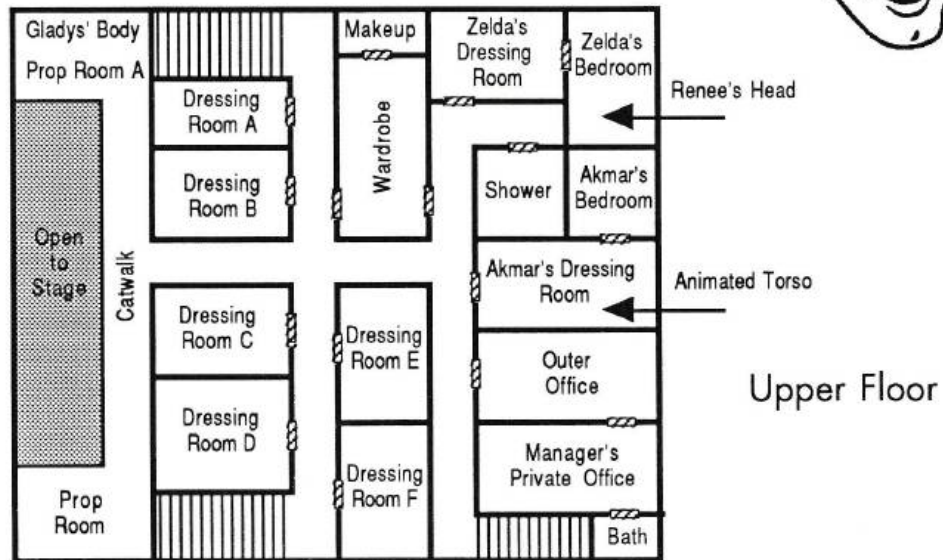
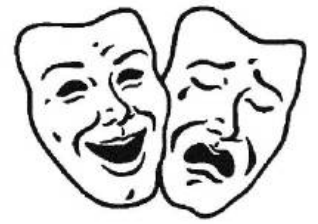
### Manager's Private Office

In the office are a video camera on a tripod, a





# The Morpheus Theater



### Manager's Private Office

In the office are a video camera on a tripod, a VCR, and a television set. A heavy iron safe, which is immune to all supernatural powers, contains four tapes labeled: Gladys, Beatrice, "The Cut Up," and one with the central character's name. When you view the tapes, you discover they are recordings of Akmar's performances. The tape "Gladys" shows the sword stuck woman meeting her fate in the box of blades. "Beatrice" shows the meat cleaver woman, who's body now resides in the basement, being slain during the knife throwing act.

The tape of the central character's death and "The Cut Up" begin exactly the same. They show the central character undressing, apparently filmed through the one way mirror of the dressing booth. The camera follows her as she walks onto the stage. The events follow those explained in the character's backstory, up to and including the moment of her death beneath Akmar's saw. As her screams and struggles cease, the audience shouts and goes wild. Akmar stands uncertainly, like a man just waking up.

This is where "The Cut Up" ends. But the unedited tape continues to show what happens in the next few moments.

Suddenly, the central character's head, protruding from the box, gives an ungodly shriek. Its arm smashes up through the wooden box, grabbing Akmar by the front of his bloodstained tuxedo. Its face, barely visible on the monitor, shows egg-white eyes and a black tongue coiling from parched lips. The creature babbles in an alien tongue.

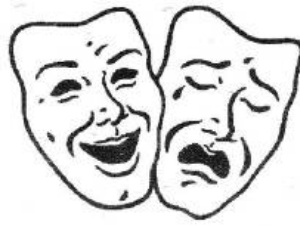
Zelda rushes forward, leaving the camera running on its tripod, but she stops short at the edge of the hokey pentagram in the middle of which Akmar stands, stilled pinned by the animated torso.

Blue light gushes from the eyes and mouth of the torso, blasting Akmar's face. His mask flakes away, showing the tightly clenched eyes and teeth beneath. The arm of the torso pulls him closer, until their lips almost meet. Akmar's eyes snap open, his jaw drops, and an indistinct form issues from the mouth of the torso, black and glistening like its tongue, only much larger and slug-like.

With a horrified gasp, Zelda steps back from the pentagram, blocking the camera's view. She averts her face from Akmar, showing her pale, sickened features to the camera. The screams of the audience grow in intensity as they flee for the exits. The soundtrack plays an awful slurping.

The unblinking camera holds its gaze upon the spectacle. At last, the slurping ends, and a deep, guttural voice, like Akmar's but much more forceful, bellows "You have fed me well with your sacrifices."

Zelda turns, still blocking the camera's view of Akmar. Beyond her, the animated torso struggles to escape the wreckage of its box, dragging its abbreviated body with its arms. Its entrails leave a glistening slime-trail. Though it chitters, it is not the torso which



roars, "Free me or I will destroy you!"

Not while you're trapped in the magic circle!" Zelda cackles, her voice growing with confidence. Her nervous fingers, toying with an amulet about her neck, belie her aplomb. "If you want out of the magic circle, you must tell me your true name."

"The evil karma of this place summoned me hither, and now you would keep me captive? Free me, and I will bring you your heart's most wicked desires."

"We had no intention of summoning you, but now that you're here, you will have your uses. We will feed you well, and you will grow strong. But for my own protection, you must tell me your true name."

"Very well. My true name is Sl. . ." and at that point, the tape runs out.

(Mentor's Note: Any player who makes Good Occult roll will realize that by invoking a demon's true name it be forced from the body it inhabits, causing it to take its true form.)

### Akmar's Dressing Room

The door to this room is locked. Within the darkness of its interior it looks like a magic shop exploded. Cheaply made paraphernalia litters the floor, and crawling amongst it is a hideous guardian. At first, you think you have found the central character's upper torso, until you realize it has found you!

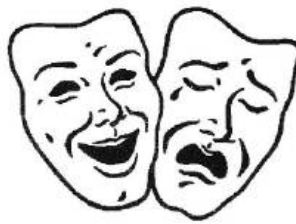
With surprising speed, the animated torso scampers about the chamber on its two hands, dragging the tattered stump of its trunk. It can even climb up the walls, its claws digging into the plaster, making it exceptionally hard to hit. Its eyes are like boiled eggs, and from its cracked lips a black tongue lolls. A ceaseless stream of shrill babbling streams from its mouth. The creature is so repulsive that it takes a force of will to approach it. Even then, its rotting stench almost knocks you over, making you feel weak and confused.

Before the evil entity inhabiting the torso loses all its will to live, it begins to screech, "Sluggoth! Sluggoth!" as it scabbles at the door in the northern wall. In answer, the door shakes on its hinges, and the very wall cracks. Something on the far side of the wall seems desperate to defend the dying torso, in the same way a tigress defends her young, or a hunter his favorite hound.

The door to and wall are inscribed with non-euclidian angles and geometric figures that seem to distort space itself. The glyphs, rendered in paint mixed with iron filings, make it impossible for supernatural creatures to enter Akmar's bedroom. The door itself is barred from the inside, preventing physical entry. Whatever is in the adjoining room is sealed away against all your powers, kept in by the same forces that keep you out.



(Mentor's Note: Those same symbols cover the walls, floor and ceiling of Akmar's bedroom, making it impregnable from all directions.)



## ANIMATED TORSO

Agility	Strength	Intelligence	Defense
Great	Good	Poor	Good

**Type:** Evil being, material.

**Value:** +2 karma for banishing the evil entity.

**Personality:** Violent and deadly.

**Combat:** While it can claw and bite material beings for (Defense vs Poor) x 2 damage, the torso prefers to use its supernatural powers.

**Powers:** The torso radiates an *Aura of Revulsion*. A character must do his best to stay (Willpower vs Passable) x 5 feet away from the creature.

The room is filled with the torso's *Rotting Stench*. Characters in the room are at -1 column on all actions for (Stamina vs Good) x 2 turns.

*Charnel Breath* (Uses = 6): The terrible blast does (Defense vs Good) x 3 damage to up to 4 ectoplasmic beings in the local area.

*Chill Touch* (Uses = 5): For 6 turns, the creature's touch does (Defense vs Good) x 4 damage to ectoplasmic beings.

### Akmar's Letter

After slaying the animated torso, you find a crumpled piece of paper on Akmar's dressing table. It reads as follows:

*I can stand it no longer. My dear Renee, how can I have lived three long months knowing what I have done to you? Each month my depression grows as though I were replaying that awful moment again and again. The police must have seen my anguish for they found me guiltless. But how can I forgive myself for what happened? I should have checked to make sure the guillotine was working properly. Whatever else I may forget, I shall always remember the way your decapitated head soundlessly cursed me as it lay upon the stage floor.*

*As if my depression isn't torment enough, I've been having blackouts ever since that fateful night. I seem to remember new assistants, but I can't recall what happened to them. Zelda told me we have a new assistant for tonight's show. I wonder if I shall remember her, or if she too will vanish.*

*I prey I will have the fortitude tonight after the final curtain to join you and escape this misery. Yet my sorrow has weakened me so, that I may no longer have the strength even for that. If it weren't for Zelda, I wouldn't know what to do. Even now, I hear her calling from downstairs. She wants me to greet our new assistant and I can not resist.*

*I hope she looks like you.*



### Human Visitors

You hear keys in the lock downstairs, and the door opening. Hurrying to investigate, you are time to see a wretched man with greasy brown hair and an unkempt mustache totter into the lobby. He wears black slacks and a white shirt with yellow stains and a name tag that reads "Hansel." Atop his head is a base-

ball cap promoting his favorite brand of beer, a six pack of which he carries with him. He locks the door and sets about turning on the theater lights. He brings the camera down from the manager's office, loads it with a blank tape, and sets it up on the stage.

Before much time has passed, a knock comes at the door. "We're not open!" Hansel shouts through the closed portal. The knock comes again, more insistent.

"Open up!" a voice calls through the boarded window. "This is James Mortimer!"

Grumbling and rolling his eyes, Hansel opens the door. A hugely corpulent man with glistening skin and an unhealthy flush stands in the gathering night. He wears a stained suit which, though expensive, is in bad need of dry cleaning. "Zelda told me she has a new tape for me," Mortimer says. "Told me it would be ready today. Called it 'The Cut Up.'"

"She's not here," Hansel replies. "Come back later."

"I know she's not here, that's why I came early. You must know where she keeps the tapes. I'd rather pick it up from you and avoid her altogether. That woman gives me the creeps." Mortimer tends to drool a lot, and is constantly sucking in his saliva. "This tape she has for me, is it of that last show?"

"Probably. The name fits."

"I heard from my clients that she put on a real spectacle. Akmar scared away the entire audience. When I told Zelda I couldn't get anyone to come back tonight, she laughed and said if my friends were too squeamish, she'd do it without them. Good luck to her. My clients love the sight of blood, but every one of them is terrified of coming back here. You think that tape will show what put the fear of god into them?"

Hansel's shrug is more like a twitch. "Maybe not. She edits them."

"She had better. I've found a good market for her tapes, but I'm not going to distribute something that's going to drive away my customers. What's she doing putting on another show tonight anyway? She just had one last week.

I told her when I hired her, we have a special show once a month. After that stunt with the beheading, she can't risk another brush with the law."

"Things have changed," Hansel mutters. "Since the last show, Akmar is not the same."

"He's not going to crack, is he? For Pete's sake, I told Zelda that boy might be too

sensitive for an enterprise like this. She assured me she could handle him. That's what I get for getting mixed up with amateurs. Would you believe when I first contacted her, trying to buy that head the cops never found, she refused to sell it to me? Said it had sentimental value. That's the problem with amateurs, they have no business sense. I just couldn't stand the shame of it. So I said, 'You just arrange another accident like this one, and I'll provide the audience. Only this time, get it on video.' It was the start of a beautiful arrangement, until she starts putting on unscheduled shows. Well, get me 'The Cut Up' and I'll get out of here. I don't want to be around when Zelda shows up."

"Wait here."

Hansel goes upstairs to the manager's private office and opens up the safe, from which he removes the tape labeled "The Cut Up." He closes the safe and returns to the lobby. After giving Mortimer the tape, he escorts him out the door.

### HANSEL THE DOORMAN

Agility	Strength	Intelligence	Defense
Poor	Great	Poor	Good

**Type:** Neutral person, material.

**Value:** None.

**Personality:** Nervous, twitchy, and fearful.

**Combat & Powers:** He carries a heavy flashlight, which does (Defense vs Great) x 1 damage to material beings only. Much to his regret, he has no supernatural powers.

### JAMES MORTIMER

Agility	Strength	Intelligence	Defense
Passable	Passable	Passable	Passable

**Type:** Evil person, material.

**Value:** +1 karma for reincarnating him.

**Personality:** Caustic and sarcastic.

**Combat & Powers:** Although Mortimer carries a 9mm pistol, which does (Defense vs Poor) x 4 damage, he is unable to harm incorporeal beings.

### A New Victim

As night deepens, the door to the theater opens again, and in comes Zelda, escorting an attractive young woman dressed in white. Zelda addresses the girl as Tina, and it quickly becomes clear that Tina will be tonight's victim.

"We're taping a show for public cable access," Zelda explains. "The seats, they will be empty. But you must put your heart into your act."

"Where's Akmar?" Tina asks.

From her robes, Zelda removes a small silver bell which she gently jingles. "He will be here shortly. Come now, let's get you into



something more appropriate for tonight."

They head for the dressing booth. Meanwhile, the clear peal of the bell has broken the spell sealing Akmar's bedroom. Akmar opens the door to his cell and makes his way to the stage, just in time for the final battle!

### TINA

Agility	Strength	Intelligence	Defense
Passable	Inferior	Passable	Poor

**Type:** Innocent person, material

**Value:** Gain +1 karma for preventing her death.

**Appearance:** Dressed in white.

**Personality:** Sweet and innocent.

**Combat & Powers:** Does not fight, and has no powers.

### ZELDA

Agility	Strength	Intelligence	Defense
Poor	Passable	Superior	Good

**Type:** Evil person (witch), material.

**Value:** Gain +1 karma for reincarnating her.

**Appearance:** Swarthy, heavy set, wart on chin.

**Personality:** Ruthless and spiteful.

**Combat:** Zelda lives in a bad neighborhood, and her work makes her cautious. She carries a .38 revolver which does (Defense vs Poor) x 5 damage.

**Powers:** Zelda can hear ghosts.

**Magic Powder (Uses = 4):** When her pendant warns her of spirits, Zelda will cast this powder around her. All spirits within thrown distance of her will become semi-material for (Dodge vs Poor) x 3 turns. During this time, they will be vulnerable to her .38 revolver, but they will also be able to physically attack her.

**Hypnosis (Uses = 3):** This power allows Zelda to control the mind of someone who is in an emotionally weakened state. After Renee's death, Akmar was plunged into depression. Zelda, knowing he would never approve of such an enterprise as Mortimer proposed, used her Hypnosis to put Akmar into a suggestible state. His mind, already weakened by his feelings of guilt over Renee, was easily dominated, making it easy for Zelda to arrange the deaths of his assistants. While he doesn't remember the acts he has committed while under Zelda's spell, his subconscious has led him into a dark depression.

**Magic Charm:** Zelda wears a pendant which protects her from ghosts. Any spirit getting within 10 feet of her takes (Will vs Passable) damage each turn. It is felt as a burning sensation. Her amulet grows warm as it functions, warning her of the presence of spirits.



*Circle of Protection* (Uses = 4): This creates an invisible barrier around her with a ten foot radius that no supernatural creature can willingly cross. The circle lasts for 15 minutes, and moves with Zelda.

*Exorcism* (Uses = 1): While protected by the circle, Zelda will perform an exorcism which requires 15 turns. From the time the exorcism is started, until the end of the duration, all supernatural beings take (Stamina vs Good) x 1 WTL damage, including the demon possessing Akmar. Those beings that flee the building during the exorcism can never return to it.



### AKMAR (POSSESSED)

Agility	Strength	Intelligence	Defense
Great	Awesome	Superior	Great

**Type:** Innocent person, material.

**Value:** Lose 2 karma for killing Akmar (an innocent). Gain +1 karma for driving the demon from his body.

**Appearance:** A tall, dark man wearing a short cape.

**Personality:** He is completely under the control of the demon.

**Combat:** In hand to hand combat, Akmar's Awesome strength does (Defense vs Good) x 2 damage.

**Powers:** Akmar has a slug-like demon affixed to his back. The demon may be driven from his body in two ways: by killing Akmar, or by invoking the demon's name and commanding it to depart Akmar. In either case, the demon will assume its true shape and continue fighting. While the demon is inside Akmar, it can still use all of its supernatural powers (see below).

### SLUGGOTH

Agility	Strength	Intelligence	Defense
Inferior	Awesome	Superior	Great

**Type:** Demon, incorporeal

**Value:** Gain +3 karma for banishing the demon.

**Appearance:** A glistening, four foot long slug with a half dozen tentacles sprouting from its head.

**Personality:** Confidant and cruel.

**Combat & Powers:** Sluggoth is very resilient, and hard to hurt. It uses its powers of trickery and distortion to fight.

*Compel* (Uses = 4): Compels the victim to perform a simple action, such as "drop your weapon," "attack so-and-so," or even "jump off a bridge." To resist, the victim must make a Good roll on Intelligence.

*Forget* (Uses = 4): Everyone in the local area forgets everything that happened in the last (Memory vs Passable) x 2 turns.

*Mutate Object* (Uses = 2): Sluggoth causes his enemies' weapons to turn into vipers, which bite for (Defense vs Good) x 1 damage.



*Cause Insanity* (Uses = 6): The victim must roll vs Sanity on table 1 below:

*Beguile* (Uses = 4): Sluggoth changes places with one of his enemies. The target will appear to everyone else as Sluggoth, while it appears as the target. The illusion lasts for (Will vs Passable) x 2 turns, but can be disbelieved by anyone making a Good

Intelligence roll (disbelieving counts as the character's action for the turn).

*Power Shield* (Uses = 2): For 9 turns, Sluggoth is immune to all supernatural powers.

*Sacrifice:* If Zelda or Akmar manage to sacrifice Tina to the dark gods, Sluggoth will feed off her fear, tripling his WTL to 60.

Result	Effect
Awesome to Great	No effect.
Good	Lose 1 WTL.
Passable	Lose 2 WTL, paralyzed with fear 1 turn.
Poor	Lose 3 WTL, flee in terror for (Catastrophic vs Sanity) turns.
Inferior	Lose 4 WTL, cry, whimper, scream, or huddle in a corner until slapped or shaken.
Feeble	Lose 5 WTL, lose memory for (Catastrophic vs Stamina) hours.
Pathetic	Lose 6 WTL, faint for (Catastrophic vs Stamina) hours.
Catastrophic	Lose 7 WTL, go catatonic for (Catastrophic vs Stamina) days, gain a mental illness rolled on the mental illness table.

Table 1: Results of Sluggoth's Insanity Power

### Conclusion

When this adventure was run, the ending was just the beginning. The players attacked Zelda before she ever reached the theater, and if she hadn't commandeered a passing vehicle, she would have been finished. Zelda escaped to a hospital, where she used a crystal ball to summon the central character. The character was trapped inside the ball, but found that by shifting her weight, she could roll the ball off the nightstand and under Zelda's bed. She was mistaken quite a few times as a paperweight, and finally ended up in an orderlies locker. Eventually, she frightened a nurse into dropping her on a concrete floor, thus breaking the crystal ball and freeing her to seek revenge.

This is a difficult adventure, and the Mentor should feel free to grant the players bonus karma at the end for good role playing.

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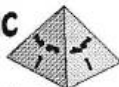
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<b>Intelligence:</b>	Low (5-7)
<b>Treasure Type:</b>	Nil
<b>Alignment:</b>	Chaotic Evil
<b>No. Appearing:</b>	1
<b>Armour Class:</b>	4
<b>Move:</b>	Infinite (see below)
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	4
<b>THACO:</b>	16
<b>No. of Attacks:</b>	1
<b>Damage/attack:</b>	0
<b>Special Attacks:</b>	Wisdom Drain
<b>Special Defences:</b>	See Below
<b>Magic Resistance:</b>	Nil
<b>Size:</b>	S (child-sized)
<b>Morale:</b>	Fanatic (17)
<b>XP Value:</b>	420 XP



## DESCRIPTION

In any dark and dangerous place, not too far from human (or demi-human) habitation, it is possible one will encounter the navky, undead spirits of children who died but did not receive a proper funeral. As this deprives them of their proper place in the Afterlife, they remain on the Prime Material Plane seeking revenge on the living.

While the body they wore in life can be miles away and decades decomposed, the spirit-replica of that body which the navky wears appears the same way the monster did in life; as a small child, or even as a babe too young to crawl. Of course, the spirits of the youngest have no language, but those who were old enough in life to speak (for some reason, there are no "adolescent" navky) will be able to speak the language they once knew, at the same level, and with the same vocabulary and speech patterns (such as a short attention span and marked self-centredness in conversation) they used in life.

## Combat

As navky are the spirits of children craving revenge on adults, they use as their primary weapon the same one which living children rely on; their voice. After finding a danger-fraught area to haunt, the navky will wait for passersby and then will call out to them from a short distance away in the direction of the hazards. Those with speech will use calls for help or other pleas, while those without will simply bawl like a

hungry and scared infant, in order to lure the unwary further and further into the wilderness, towards such things as a cliff-edge, or the lair of a powerful monster.

Navky move by teleporting ahead of their prey, staying close enough to sound "just around the corner" to the listening searcher. They usually don't let their prey see them until after the victim has fallen into the navky's trap, as the spiteful undead like to appear just out of reach of the victim to taunt him in his death throes. Less frequently, the navky will allow itself to be seen as part of the trap, serving as bait to entice the potential victim to take the last fateful steps (like onto a patch of disguised quicksand).

There are a number of ways to defeat a navky, the simplest of which is to ignore it and wander away, which of course leaves the navky behind to try his plan on some other unfortunate traveller.

The second way of dealing with a navky is to find its dead body and give it a proper funeral, forcing the navky to take its proper place in the Afterworld.

And then there's combat. Navky do not use armour or weapons in combat, but they can be defeated by them. In melee, a navky teleports about its chosen victim (hence its high armour class), swatting at him with its hands and temporarily draining a point of Wisdom with every successful hit. If the victim falls to 0 Wisdom, he will lose the will power to resist the navky's scheme, and can be lured to his

doom as if spell-bound. If the victim somehow survives the battle (either by killing the navky, or by being rescued by his friends), his lost Wisdom will return to him at the rate of one point per hour, so a good night's sleep will usually serve to put things right.

The navky is nearly fearless, but if it finds itself wounded to the point that one more blow would be likely to end its existence, it will teleport away from the combat to preserve itself. The wounds it suffered will be fully healed within 24 hours, and it will probably have forgotten the encounter of the previous day or night by then.

#### ECOLOGY

Although navky are life-hating undead, sometimes aspects of their child-life come to the fore, and then they can be talked to as any adult talks to a child. A particularly confident

or enterprising adventurer might even enter into combat with a navky in order to quiz it about its past life, for the ghost-child might hold some important memories of its past. Although there have been cases of navky setting up their lairs near the place where they lived in life, or where their body was eventually left in death, the majority of them choose a dwelling simply based on its potentials as a death-trap. Thus, in most cases the parents of the child that became the navky are completely unaware of their child's continued undead existence, and the revenge-seeking navky is not too particular about which adults suffer for its parents' misdeed.

#### CREDITS

The Navky was designed by Spike Y. Jones and illustrated by Devin Van Domelin.



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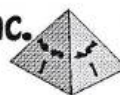
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# Creative Justice

## Game Reviews

### *How to Read a Scroll Review*

The following rating numbers apply to the review boxes with each article:

1. POOR. This aspect of the game is far below the average expected by most gamers.
2. BELOW AVERAGE. This aspect is substandard but not hopeless.
3. AVERAGE. Nothing exceptional but nothing poor. The Standard game.
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5. EXCEPTIONAL. Unique, new, exciting, and far above the average expected by most gamers. A must play game!

The following categories are rated: EASY TO LEARN indicates how difficult the game is to learn to play, where a '3' rating represents 2-3 gaming sessions. RULES PRESENTATION indicates how well the text is written, how easy it is to locate material during play, etc. COMPARES WITHIN GENRE rates the game with others of the same genre. VALUE FOR COST addresses whether the reviewer feels the game is worth the cover price.

The Scroll takes great care in selecting game reviewers as to their experience and credibility in the gaming community. We use both in-house and freelance reviews. However, the opinions and ratings presented in the Creative Justice section are those of the reviewer and not necessarily of The Scroll Editors.

### AMBER

Designed by Erick Wujcik based on the novels of Roger Zelazny

Published by Phage Press

GENRE: Fantasy  
EASY TO LEARN: 3.5  
RULES PRESENTATION: 4  
COMPARES WITHIN GENRE: 4  
VALUE FOR THE COST: 3.5  
REVIEWER'S OVERALL RATING:

4

We're not living in the real world, at least not according to a popular series of fantasy novels by Roger Zelazny. In these novels Earth, and just about anyplace else you can imagine, is but "Shadow"; a moldable and imperfect copy which those who come from the "real" world can simply alter at will. One place cannot be altered, because within its walls is the pattern upon which all reality is based. To walk the Pattern gives you great power if it doesn't kill you. This is the place called Amber, and if you are of the royal house you will be part of a great game - with unimaginable power to the winners and death and degrada-

tion to the losers.

This setting, which has won Zelazny many prestigious awards, is now available to role-players in Amber. But Amber is not a normal role-playing game. It is the first game that does not involve random factors to determine the result of an action. No dice, no playing cards, no electronic ultragizmos. If you as a player try to do something, it either fails or succeeds based solely on the judgement of the GM and the capabilities of your character. This game is unique, and setting and system are a perfect match.

In Amber you are "princes play(ing) a game to win a bloody throne". The player characters are all of the Royal Blood of Amber, son or daughter of a great prince. Only those of the royal house can walk the Pattern and live, and some PCs will start out having visited Amber and walked the Pattern. Others will choose to do something else. All of these characters are enormously powerful by RPG standards, and the most powerful of them can alter the reality around them almost at will. But you don't just fill out a point chart and get a character, although you do start with 100 character points. Amber values player interaction, and it begins at the first step in character creation.

Amber has four main attributes; Psyche, Strength, Endurance, and Warfare. These attributes are not measured by numbers. Instead, an auction is held at the start of charac-

ter creation. Each of the attributes is auctioned off, with the highest number of points committed winning top rank in the group. The player who bid next highest gets second, and so on. Players are not obligated to bid on every attribute.

With the points left over from the attribute auction, the player then buys powers and abilities for his character. Pattern Imprint, the ability to mold reality, is the most powerful. It's also the most expensive. Character might have an imprint from the Logrus (the chaotic opposite to the Pattern), but that will make you *very* unpopular in Amber. Characters can also buy artifacts and creatures that will always be usable wherever the character goes in Shadow (because different things work in different shadows; for example, in some shadows magic works but gunpowder doesn't). They can also buy luck, either good or bad (bad gets extra points but leads to problems). The GM goes over the character with the player during this process, and has the right to make the player alter his character. This is especially useful to tame powergamers trying to gain maximum wallop for their points and trying to make themselves totally invincible.

Once play starts, everything is in the hands of the players and the GM. All these people had better be able to think on the fly! To do something, the player just says what he's trying to do. The GM then thinks for a moment and decides if the character can do it. It's his call. When characters act against each other, the GM compares ranks. The better ranked player will win *unless* his opponent does something especially clever and surprising.

Even those Amber character that haven't walked the Pattern are very powerful. If they were on a D&D shadow they could slaughter entire tribes of orcs armed only with a dagger. Obviously you can't run these characters through a standard adventure. Fortunately there are always characters out there in the multiverse

that are even more powerful than the PCs. The elders of the royal house love to use their offspring as pawns in "the game". There is also a continuing threat from Chaos to contend with.

The worst problem a PC can have, though, might be another PC. Amber is, when run and played properly, a game of characterization and intrigue. The players will not normally work as a team; they might even be working at cross purposes. They might even end up trying to kill each other! Playing Amber is not usually a matter of solving puzzles and slaying beasts. The characters will have to interact with each other and the worlds around them in creative ways. These interactions can become very complex, including lasting friendships and bitter rivalries. Players have to think about whether their character would actually do that; the GM can penalize the player for being "out of character" if he so chooses.

Taking the dice out was a good design move for this game. When you have characters at this level of power, making them roll dice to do things is a lot of extra hassle. When a player has a problem, he will have to think his way out. How well he does will depends on how clever he is, and whether he can get help from other PCs. It is the job of the GM to take into account all those subtle elements.

Running Amber is about as close to the pure GMing experience as you're going to get. Running this game tests all the skills good GMs have; thinking on the fly, keeping the game under control, role-playing the NPCs to make each a unique individual, and the imagination to constantly devise new challenges. The GM will also have to keep track of what each character can do. Players are always happy to point out some power they have ("But I've got an Invulnerable Cloak that transfers its Invulnerability to the wearer, and I'm always wearing the cloak, so nobody can hurt me! Ever!"), even if it gets in the way of the GM's plans.

Earlier in this review I mentioned

powergamers. Letting a powergamer loose in this system is just asking for trouble. I once had a player come up with a character who had a device that enabled him to do just about anything he wanted to do. It couldn't be taken away because it had shape-shifted into one of his internal organs and implanted itself in his body. No thank you. A player who thinks of his characters as collections of powers and skills is clearly the wrong type of person to play Amber with. Most gamers will have to break old habits to play Amber well. That characters can be so flexible creates a few problems; a combat between three people who can't be damaged by anything can get embarrassing.

Once I got past those temptations, I found running Amber a liberating experience. I no longer had to worry about sudden turns of luck, and I could bring characters into the game without even worrying about their stats or abilities. I just *knew* what they could or couldn't do. I ended up doing almost everything on the fly, and I loved it.

And there is the greatest advantage of all, the setting. The universe of Amber can contain just about anything, yet it still has a central core and unifying theme. It is an ongoing setting with enormous potential; even when the crown is placed on someone's head "the game" continues. The elders of Amber are all formidable characters who can really come to life in the hands of a good GM.

Phage Press is putting a great deal of effort into the Amber line. They have started a quarterly limited-edition magazine called *Amberzine* (obvious choice) which includes all sorts of stuff in all sorts of forms, from comic book to a near-novella based on an adventure played in testing.

Amber is different. It is a game you can either love or hate, but one you will always form an opinion on. It is challenging in ways that most conventional systems aren't, and gives the player and GM far more freedom than most games on the market. This is a game worth having.

Amber Diceless Role-Playing is available for \$22.95 from Phage Press at P.O. Box 519, Detroit, MI 43231-0519. The first issue of *Amberzine* is available at the same address for \$10 until supplies run out; subscriptions are \$40 for five issues. *Amberzine* is available only by mail.

## MILLENNIUM'S END

Designed by Charles Ryan

Published by Chameleon Eclectic Entertainment

GENRE: Near Future  
EASY TO LEARN: 3  
RULES PRESENTATION: 3  
COMPARES WITHIN GENRE: 3.5  
VALUE FOR THE COST: 3  
REVIEWER'S OVERALL RATING:

3

A few years ago we thought we could predict the future pretty clearly. Unfortunately that prediction usually ended with a sprouting of mushroom-shaped clouds. The gamers of this generation have grown up with the threat of sudden annihilation hanging over their heads, so it is natural that near-future games have been dark. It is also natural that these dark futures are popular.

But now the future is harder to predict. Hopefully it is also a little brighter. New near-future games have a bit of a bind in designing their futures. Into this field comes *Millennium's End*, the first game from a Virginia company called Chameleon. Like the lizard in the Slade song, it tries to be "all things to everyone". The result is a game that uses fairly complex mechanics to deal with some murky issues. Combat wobbats should love it, as it uses a level of combat detail I haven't

seen in quite a while.

*Millennium's End* is set in the year 1999. In the seven years between then and now, everything has gone to hell. A world-wide depression is on and has been on for eight years, the world is getting warmer, crops are failing, and governments everywhere are on the verge of collapse. Giant corporations are filling the power void, often to the ordinary person's detriment. In this world, you can't tell the good guys from the bad guys without a scorecard. Probably there *are* no good guys. The best way to describe the setting of *Millennium's End* is that it isn't cyberpunk - yet. But it might be on its way to that point.

The PCs, of course, may be in the way. But they aren't really in a position to save the world. The sample campaign centers around the agents of BlackEagle Security, a private trouble-shooting corporation with the ability to operate outside the law and the clout to get away with it. BlackEagle will take almost any job as long as their substantial fees are paid. This could mean protecting federal witnesses, *killing* federal witnesses, making sure an incriminating cargo gets off a ship about to be searched, or rescuing a hostage from terrorists or kidnappers. BlackEagle has a reputation for getting the job done, and the characters must live up to that reputation or die trying. (Although it isn't mentioned in the game, it's just possible that BlackEagle might have a secret agenda all its own, either noble or base. The players might well be working towards a good goal, but they probably won't know it.)

A character has ten attributes, and goes through a two-step process to get them. First 25 points are divided among the ten attributes, then for each point in an attribute the player rolls a d10 and multiplies the die roll by 2. Thus the player will have to make twenty-five rolls to get his starting attributes, after thinking about where he wants to make more rolls. The average attribute is between 40 and 45. Most die rolls during the game are percent-

ages. Several secondary attributes are figured from the base ones, such as speed and talent in various areas.

Skills are purchased from two pools of points based on education and "background experience". Both of these figures require a substantial amount of math to figure. Skill cost goes up as the level goes higher. To make a skill roll, the character must make a roll based on his skill and the "talent" that he brings into it (which is figured from the base attributes). Some skills can have specialties that help you do particular things. Again, most rolls are percentages. There are several sets of "packages", reflecting adventurous character types, the ones most likely to find steady work at BlackEagle, and there is a cost benefit for using these packages.

It is in the combat system that *Millennium's End* differs from the many skill-based near future games out there. Characters still make skill rolls to hit, but instead of a generic "I hit him" all combat actions are referred to a "body map". Body maps show a person in whatever position he is at the moment, with the body divided into different sections. A plastic overlay is placed over that body map and turned in a random direction. How much the roll was made or missed by will determine where the shot hit.

Thus, if you are shooting at someone from, say, 11 to 30 meters, you can make your roll and still miss as the bullet zips over his shoulder. Each set of ranges has its own overlay with its own penalties. These penalties get more extreme the farther away you are from your target; to even hit your target at, say, 35 meters requires that you make your roll by 31 or more! So the traditional range penalty regulates itself so players don't have to figure out to hit numbers. Which is good because the players and the GM have enough to do in combat.

Like doing damage. There are no hit points in this game. Instead, a body area becomes impaired when it is hit. Each weapon has a damage value that

is inflicted any time it hits; where it hits is what determines how bad the wound is. A rather complicated trauma table determines how much a character is impaired by his wounds. A character's mass can mean that the wound impairs him less than it would another, and armor can absorb some of the impact. A victim dies when his trauma level hits 25 or when an instantly fatal wound (such as a shot right through the brain) occurs. A player can keep separate track of all his character's wounds on his character sheet. So everything you need to know about an attack is taken care of by the hit roll, including damage.

The resulting system simulates a one-on-one gunfight pretty well. The main problem with this combat system is that it takes a while in larger actions. In the typical attack the gamemaster must find out how much the roll was made by, place an overlay over the relevant body map, spin it in a random direction, read the hit location for the overlay, go to the Impairment Table, look up the body part hit and the relative damage of the weapon, and figure out just how the target was impaired. He must do the same thing whenever an NPC shoots at one of the PCs. A firefight between two infantry squads (or between terrorists and hostage-rescuers) can take forever, especially the first few times you run it. Hand-to-hand combat works exactly the same way. The system is internally consistent and cohesive, however, and gets a lot done with little rolling of dice.

The other things characters can do are not so minutely defined. There are dozens of skills covering many things characters will want to know. Usually they will be making fairly obvious percentage rolls to do things like hide, pull teeth (there is a Dentistry skill - "Is it safe?"), predict the weather, or work with a computer. The character who can consistently get into computers is a plus for a party. So is combat ability and the ability to sneak and to handle

vehicles.

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thing for the ducks' attitude that is so common in cyberpunk settings. They can become cynical ("It's just the job - it isn't going to change the world."), paranoid ("Is the client gonna betray us *again*?") and selfish ("I don't mind everything going to hell - I'm getting my bucks."). *Millennium's End* is deliberately designed to be a game where good and evil are similar shades of gray. To the typical PC they might even be concepts that they have lost over the years. And in the backdrop of the various jobs is a world that is slowly disintegrating around them, where muggers shoot people through the head from behind to get their wallets on a regular basis and corporations are becoming more important than governments.

Evidently this is what the people who play this sort of game want. So if you're willing to work with it *Millennium's End* will meet those demands. I wish the game as a whole were a little less complicated, and I wish the setting wasn't so dark. But overall I think that *Millennium's End* is a decent game that will attract the hard-core combat wombat who likes to witness the effects of high-powered weaponry on anything in the vicinity.

*Millennium's End* is available for \$14.95 plus shipping from Chameleon Eclectic Entertainment at P.O. Box 1332, Centreville, VA 22020-1333.

## THE PRIMAL ORDER

Designed by Peter Adkison and friends

Published by Wizards of the Coast

GENRE: Gods

EASY TO LEARN: 3

RULES PRESENTATION: 4

COMPARES WITHIN GENRE: 4.5

VALUE FOR THE COST: 4

REVIEWER'S OVERALL RATING:

4.1

**O**K, mere mortal, suppose you are in the typical fantasy world and find a whole bunch of temples. They are in honor of gods you have never heard of, and you think the gods in question don't exist. So you do what any self-respecting dungeon-crawler would do; you loot the temples. You don't have anything to fear from foreigners' gods in your realm, right?

Sure. Go ahead and annoy a god. I hope you've got lots of dice handy to roll up your next PC. In high-level AD&D (in the first edition at least), a party had a decent chance of slaying some gods. In fact it seems to have been accepted that once you reach, say, 25th level as a party, it's time to kill Set. "What? Kill Set?" Yep, it sure sounds nuts, doesn't it? In other fantasy games where the gods are real, it isn't quite clear what they can do or why they do it. Enter a role-playing supplement for GMs who want to literally "play God".

The Primal Order is a thick book covering rules for using gods and goddesses in your fantasy campaign. It is all about what gods do, what they don't, and how they relate to the game world and to each other. It seems partly to be a game in its own right,

with extensive rules for running deities, but it also provides a way to bring the intrigues of gods into the campaign proper. It is also a very entertaining book to read, with lots of examples and some really funny line cartoons.

In this book, gods are beings of power who have power over "planes" of existence. Their existence is based on cosmic energy called "primal". Gods get primal from "controlling planes", being actively worshipped, and receiving sacrifices. They use primal to maintain their own existence and exert their power. They can use it to blast or protect mortals, to look into the planes (the god doesn't necessarily know everything that goes on automatically - it takes conscious effort), and to throw spells. It is possible for a "mortal" to become a god. It is also possible for a god to die if its "primal base" is exhausted or "detonated" (a god can commit suicide any time with a spectacular "bang" sufficient to level everything within hundreds of miles).

Many gods are built around a sphere of influence, or develop one later in their careers - this is some concept or ideal that represents all that the god means, and thus how he will relate to followers. Thus you have gods of war, gods of peace, gods of justice, farming, etc. One of the god-making examples is Joey, God of Basketweaving. None of these gods are powerful enough to create entire universes by themselves, or indeed to create planes (that sort of power is beyond the scope of *any* sourcebook).

What they can do is control planes of existence. A plane is a place that can only be entered or left by radical means (like gateways or dimension-hopping spells). A plane can be an altered state of existence ("Every time I go to sleep I find myself in Lexos"), or even an idea. Some planes might even be alive and sentient! They might *all* be part of a meta-plane that is beyond the reach of these gods. Each plane is also big enough to house the typical world of the typical fantasy GM.

Gods can make their way between

planes, and might eventually control many. The god who controls a plane can alter reality there to do what it wants to do *if* he has enough primal and there is no interference (like another god spending primal to block his act or power). A god that is worshipped in more places gets more primal and becomes more powerful. A god controlling a plane usually does not mean that other gods and their followers can't go there, and every so often the new god on the block will come around and try to take one of your planes away. When that happens it's all-out divine warfare, with the poor mortals on the plane caught in the middle.

Of course these gods are not alone. They can interact with lesser beings, grant spells, form pantheons, or wage war against each other. The religions they found can be great influences on the campaign even if the god himself is not present. By performing great works and by winning converts, gods develop followers on mortal planes who are willing to do anything for them - even give their lives. The god can reward faith, including taking people up into their own plane to be satisfied forever. Gods will act in the planes for their own reasons and their own goals. They might be good or bad for the mortals on the planes.

There is a lot of information in this book, written relatively clearly and with a sense of humor. Some of it can be a little hard to grasp, however. There are large chapters on the various things gods can do, including relative costs of things in primal. The whole basis of the book is that gods play a game of their own, by their own rules, and that mortals might occasionally be drawn into the game as pawns.

The only question is how to use it in the typical campaign. Having the gods make personal appearances is possible, but the sheer power of these beings makes it difficult to arrange. The unknown (and unknowable) machinations of the gods are great things to drive a campaign with. For

example, "Lall-Tuk is going to stop the evil rain and save us all from destruction, but we must find the Three-Horned Goat and sacrifice it to him, and the Three-Horned Goat is in the Bad Place over the mountains..." (The Bad Place, of course, is another deity's plane, reachable only by a gate in the mountains, and this god is not going to be pleased with intruders. I don't think the goat would be too happy either...)

These then are rules for role-playing gods. It isn't quite a full game, but it has the beginnings of one. It could be interesting for a while to have players running gods in conflict, although it could quickly lead to jaded players. These rules are mostly going to be used by the GM in the background of his campaign. He doesn't have to roll dice or let his players know what he is doing. This would be a great idea for the multi-GM mega-campaign; in addition to running each world each GM would also control a god and the GMs would interact with each other: Mind-Bender Deluxe! For that matter, a full-fledged "gods in conflict" game would be very interesting, although with guys like Jack Chick and Pat Robertson running around it probably isn't very safe right now.

Conversions are available for 19 different games in this package. Thus you can use the gods you create with AD&D, *RuneQuest*, *GURPS*, and most other popular fantasy games. Each game's section describes things like how much damage you do with a thunderbolt from above, how much your primal shield protects from attacks, and how important PCs have to become to merit divine attention. This section greatly increases this book's utility.

Still, not everybody is going to want this book. It is detailed, and covers a great deal of ground, including some you don't expect. For many fantasy GMs this is going to be overkill, especially those for whom the gods are not a major part of their campaigns or do not interact with mortals at all.

On the whole, though, *The Primal Order* is a good effort. Even if you aren't using the full rules for gods it is still a useful thing to turn to for inspiration, and I mentioned it is a fun book to read. It's definitely worth taking a look at.

The Primal Order is available for \$19.95 from Wizards of the Coast at P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057.

## MINION HUNTER

[Board Game]

*Designed by Lester Smith*

Published by Game Designer's Workshop

GENRE: Horror

EASY TO LEARN: 3.8

RULES PRESENTATION: 3

COMPARES WITHIN GENRE: 3.2

VALUE FOR THE COST: 3

REVIEWER'S OVERALL RATING:

# 3.3

It's 2025. Do you know where the monsters are? Of course you do. They're everywhere! (Are you sure you're not a monster?)

For a year now GDW's game *Dark Conspiracy* has given players a chance to explore the horrifying future of America. Using a system very similar to *Twilight: 2000* and the company's other near-future releases, *Dark Conspiracy* presents a world in peril from dark forces, with an alarming number of alien and magical beings seeking to destroy Man's world. It's a dark, grim game trying for the feeling of horror while offering the players a chance to make some progress against the threat. But if you want to save the world in a few hours rather than a few years, there is an alternative. *Minion*

*Hunter* is the *Dark Conspiracy* boardgame, in which one to six players take on the menace facing America.

In *Minion Hunter*, each player creates a hunter character who goes out and bashes monsters. Each hunter is rated for four "stats" which all start at one, and the object is to become the most famous monster hunter in the country. The board shows a running track around the edge and a map of "Dark America" in the middle. The track is used to improve stats, while the map shows where there are monsters to fight. There is also space for the cards and a "plot track" of twenty spaces. All of the components are nice, right up to GDW boardgame standards.

The game also comes with a deck of equipment cards and a deck of plot cards, and some money. Players start with no money and no equipment; they can draw equipment cards and either buy the card with money they have or trade it in for a lesser amount of money.

The plot cards show where to find the monsters and what they are, and are the most important part of the game. There are four major groups of monsters and a lot of other encounters. A plot is drawn at the start of the game, and at each player's turn it moves one space closer to success. The players must go to the city where

the plot is forming and destroy it by making a die roll based on their stats. If the plot is not destroyed, it comes to fruition. If it's one of the main monster's plots, then their token on the twenty-space plot track moves up the number on the card. If any monster hits 20, they have conquered the country and all the players lose.

Players move around the board by using a die roll on the outer track. If the player is on a corner, he can instantly go to any city on the Dark America map to fight the plot forming there. If he wins, the plot card is given to him and another plot starts. He can then go back to a corner on his next turn to pick up some stat boosts. If he loses, he sits out a few turns in the hospital but doesn't die. He also loses some equipment if he has any. Hunters can become formidable in a hurry. The better your stats, the more likely it is you'll stop the monsters.

*Minion Hunter* is not nearly so grim as *Dark Conspiracy* itself. The game is very luck-driven based on the shuffle of the plot deck; too many bad plots early and you're toast, but getting the easy stuff early dooms the monsters. The same plots are in the same cities every game, just re-arranged, so repeat play value may be limited. But *Minion Hunter* is a fun game that is nice to play between RPG adventures, even *Dark Conspiracy*. ♪



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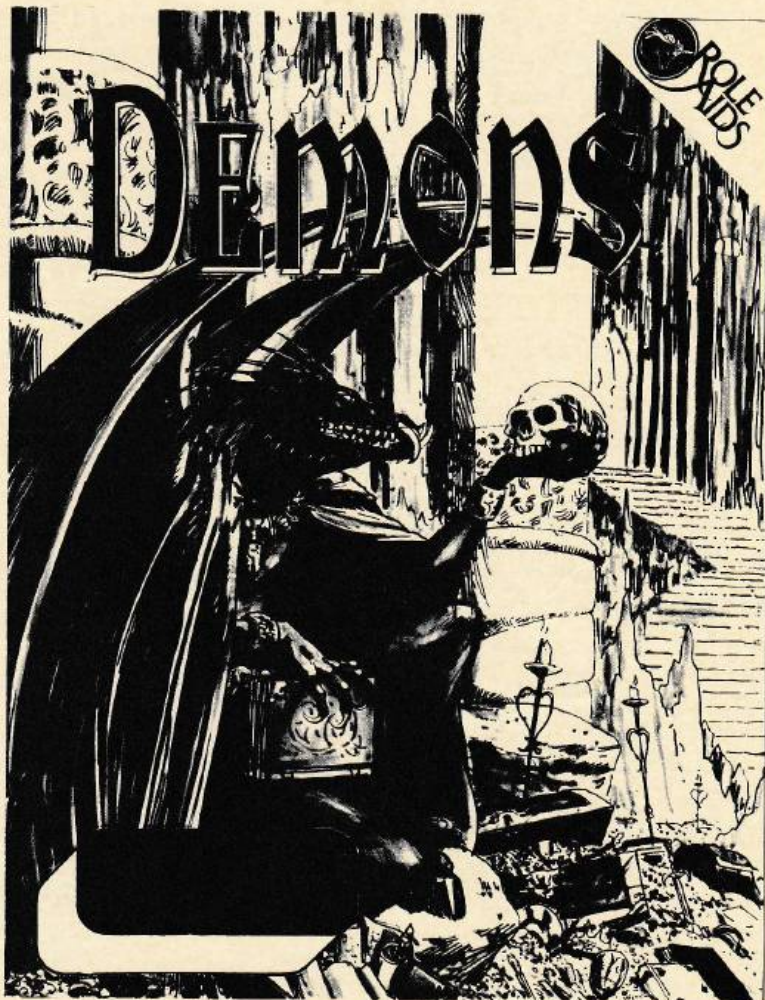
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