

Gamers' Guild

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THE GUILDSMAN

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A Word from the Editors

Well, here we are with the first edition of the UCR Guildsman. Please forgive our incoherent banter, but it has been four score and thirteen pages, and we're all pretty brain-fucked at the moment. This publication, being our first, isn't as *slick* as most of the others, and within it you will be shocked by many slang terms (i.e. *shit, fuck, piss, damn...*) and many other unwholesome words which you would not encounter in a "family oriented" publications such as Dragon magazine. What you will encounter, rather, is the heart of gaming, a thing which is rough around the edges and a tad unshaven. You will not find one big name among our contributors, because the words herein have been written about gaming, for gamers, by gamers. The bottom line is, we're here, we ate egg burritos, and we urinated off the second story bridge into the yawning mouth of apathetic conformity.

jimv, MAD, & Ray

UCR Gamers' Guild Constitution

Preamble

We, the Gamers' Guild of UCR, under contempt of the Regents with purple mushrooms majesty and looney-toons and fornication for all... blah blah blah... do hereby unite for the purpose of promoting gaming and consequentially having lots of fun. yea!

...and there was much rejoicing...

The Honorable Offices

We hereby create five (i.e. one less than six but not less than four) honorable, pompously-ignoramous and highly-noble offices, invincible before all save the dreaded rust-monster, most lordly and enviously powerful of powers, known and revered throughout the land of UCR. The means of management are therein bestowed.

The first and foremost of these offices is to be known as the *One to Rule them All...* the chief executive deputy marshall directorship of "FlakeSpanking." yea!

The FlakeSpanker's duties *art as followeth*:

- to **spank flakes** (i.e. to institute progressive disciplinary measures by which the other four officers and their administrative cohorts can be encouraged to perform at a greater capacity through the use of whips, chains, barbed wire, and left-over tofu),
- to form overall policy on club direction (hopefully with the consent of the top management team) and to be suspended by toe nails over a bottomless pit of warm marshmallow cream when suspected of leading the club in circles,

- to interpret this constitution and *bend* it where appropriate with the consent of the other officers for the purpose of expediting Guild projects,
- to call for the ousting and replacement of officers should that need ever arise,
- to pompously & jismatically preside over club meetings, and
- to keep a paranoid eye on the receipt and expenditure of club funds over which the Miser is responsible for accounting.

The second office is that of the Gamesmaster who's responsibility it is to coordinate games and to keep up-to-date records on existing campaigns and gaming groups within the club membership. The membership is herein accorded the right to split this office into numerous genre as is deemed appropriate and is further accorded privilege to review and modify this functional division on a quarterly basis.

The third office is that of the Miser (known also as the office of "Missing" which is likely to happen to club funds). The Miser's duties are the following:

- to keep all club financial records up to date,
- to modify the club's system of accounting as is believed warranted with the consent of the FlakeSpanker,
- to personally hold club funds and signature authority for all club expenditures except in cases where individual is illiterate in Common,
- to hold all receipts pertinent to club expenditures,
- to propose club dues when deemed appropriate,
- to present a financial report to the general membership at the end-of-quarter meeting,
- to keep membership records particularly with regard to dues collected and receivable, and
- to approve all asset outflows keeping careful watch for outbreaks of the hershey-squirts.

The fourth office is that of Crying. The Cryer is responsible for the promotion of club activities including flyer's design and approval, news advertisements (including but not limited to Highlander notices), mass-mailings, and t-shirt design.

The fifth and last of the honorable offices is that of the Bard who's responsibilities include the following:

- to design and produce club-sponsored publications,
- to appoint a selection committee (with the confirmation of the Flake Spanker) which will aid this office in the selection and editing of publication submissions,

- to record the outcome of all votes at club meetings,
- to record all *bends* & amendments to this constitution, and
- to hold the FlakeSpanker's statement of objectives throughout the the quarter and evaluate this officer's performance at the end-of-quarter elections.
- to call for the ousting of the FlakeSpanker should that need arise.

...and so endth the fifth, last, and final
of the glorious, malodourous, most-high offices...

Quorum

Ten (i.e. eleven less one, being the tenth number or that cardinal number following the ninth) guild members constitute a quorum given that the meeting time and place was made adequately public in the judgement of the majority (three-fifths) of the management team.

Elections

Elections for each of the five offices are to be held at the final general meeting of each quarter. The chosen representatives of those elections may not assume office until the beginning of the following quarter. If they should try to assume office before that universally defined date, they shall be dunked repeatedly in rancid orc-drool until they cease and desist from all leaderly activities. Individuals may only serve a maximum of four-quarters in a given office. If they should attempt to serve more, the membership may make up a sufficiently silly punishment to expel such ideas in the future.

Order of Offices

The offices will be elected in the following order:

Flake Spanker, Gamesmaster, Miser, Cryer, & Bard (i.e. this, of course, being the preferred and holy order... amen).

Order of Election

For any given office, the following order shall be maintained. First, canidacies may be declared either in writing or in person. Candidates must nominate themselves for office in order to be considered eligible. Candidates which feel too shy to nominate themselves must be stripped of all personal belongings and photographed repeatedly until such feelings are properly extinguished.

Second, individuals running for office who are present may be allowed a short period of time to summarize their intent in holding office. For the office of Flake-Spankers, "may" becomes "must" (i.e. Flake-Spanking candidates must not only present

their position in words but must also present a written statement outlining their objectives of office, and these statement are to be held by the Bard for end-of-term evaluation). At this stage, a short, moderated discussion may ensue consisting of much fervor and bloodletting if anyone has anything to add for or against the candidacy of the individual in question. The Flake-Spanker is expected but not required to evaluate the performance of candidates seeking re-election on the basis of pre-established criteria.

Third, the election (by simple counting of hands) may commence with two appointed individuals keeping separate tallies, after the candidates have left the room. If there is no room to leave, the candidates may simply stick their heads in the sand in preparation for public office. In the case where more than two candidates are running for an office and no single candidate holds a clear majority of the quorum, two rounds of voting are held for that office. The first eliminates all but the two most popular candidates, and the second decides between those two.

Voting

Candidates may not vote in the election governing their intended office unless, of course, they are truly pompous, and even then they must be duly punished with a multitude of silliness until they declare themselves reborn and promptly stick their heads in the sand. Flake Spankers, whether running for re-election or not, may not vote in the election governing the office of Flake-Spanking, lest their mighty and wrathful opinions be considered either mighty or wrathful. Abstentions and no-votes are not counted as part of the voting-bloc lest the guild be ruled by indecision.

Ousting & Succession of Officers

The FlakeSpanker may call for the ousting of other club officers or appointees at any general meeting. A two-thirds majority of the quorum may strip an officer of all invested titles and authority. The Bard is responsible for calling for the ousting of the FlakeSpanker should such a need ever arise. Special meetings may also be called specifically for ousting purposes, but if the meeting is not general, then it must be advertised in the Highlander at least three-days in advance of the event with the word "Yuchy-Foo" contained within the ad to signify the nature of the meeting to the membership.

If an officer voluntarily retires or is replaced before the term of service has been fulfilled, the FlakeSpanker is responsible for finding a replacement and must conduct the duties of that office until such time as a replacement has been found. Such replacements may be appointed without the formalities of an election. If the FlakeSpanker should retire or be removed mid-term, then the Gamemaster-elect is responsible for assuming this office. If it is the case that the Gamemaster has previously been replaced, the appointed Gamemaster may not assume the duties of FlakeSpanking, and so these responsibilities pass to the Miser and so forth by the Order of Offices.

Expectations of the Member

Guild members, known henceforth as *gamesters*, are accorded a variety of implicit rights and priviledges, and concordant with these are the following responsibilities:

- to attend general meetings, lest the gamester be accused of sloth. Members so accused shall be mercilessly flatulated upon until such time as the lazy slug gets up off that sedentary, posterior portion of precious anatomy, thus facilitating the retaliatory flutterblasts so rudely expected,

- to attend all gaming sessions to which the gamester finds him or herself committed, lest that individual be pummeled into unconsciousness by boiled leaks, and
- to pay all club dues promptly and with zeal.

Interpretation of the Constitution

The FlakeSpanker is charged with the overall interpretation of the constitution for purposes of expediency, however, on points of contention, these interpretations must be rendered to the Bard in writing and may be contested at any meeting being overturned by a simple majority of the quorum and reinterpreted as thought appropriate by the voting membership. The FlakeSpanker may also take luxury in a varying degree of *Constitutional Bending* whereby both substantive and procedural points of the constitution may be dispensed with for the greater efficacy of Guild operations. Such *bending*, however, must be done with the concurrence of the entirety of the top management (i.e. the five officers), and may be again shot down at any meeting by a simple majority of the quorum. All such *bendings* must be made known to the general membership, and all must be recorded in writing with the Bard. In this way, constitutional amendments may be tried out before being permanently enstated.

Amendment

This constitution may be ammended at any general meeting in which a quorum is judged present. This constitution is amended on a two-thirds majority.

Dissolution

The Gamers' Guild may be dissolved by a three-fourths majority of the quorum at any publicly announced general meeting. In the case of dissolution, creditors of the Guild are given *first dibs* on the Guild coffers. Any remaining monies must then be refunded to the general student body of the university through ASUCR.

The Secret Service vs. The Legion of Doom
Illuminati BBS Caught in the Crossfire
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Editor's Note: Steven J. Owens is a student in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania who gave us this documented account of how the days of "Big Brother" are already here.

Austin, TX, March 1st, 1990

In the crisp, predawn air, agents of the United States Secret Service in search of evidence and information about the Legion of Doom seized a computer system controlled by the Illuminati, a secret world-wide conspiracy whose goal is to rule the world through blackmail and deceit. Along with the equipment and files of the Illuminati system, the Secret Service seized several pieces of computer equipment belonging to the corporation that "fronted" for the Illuminati. It sounds like a postmodern parody of the late 1950s science fiction serials, but there's a twist to this story.

It's true.

The Illuminati computer system is a bulletin board system owned by a gaming company. The Legion of Doom is a club of "phreakers," computer hobbyists who enjoy the challenge of cracking computer security systems — usually illegally. The Secret Service? Well... they're secret.

The corporation that owned the Illuminati Bulletin Board System (and still does, albeit in absentia since the Secret Service has yet to return the it) is Steve Jackson Games. Steve Jackson Games produces, among other things, a humorous and fictional card game called Illuminati, in which players take the role of secret international conspiracies out to rule the world through all sorts of unlikely power manipulations. The Illuminati BBS, which occupied a backup computer system, was used both as a public relations tool and to provide feedback from game players with access to the computer equipment needed to call in.

How did this odd and unlikely combination come about? In a phone interview, Steve Jackson explained that the first knowledge that the corporation had of the search was when the staff was barred from entering their offices upon arrival that morning.

"When the staff showed up, the Secret Service was already here, and they wouldn't let anybody in."

Inside, the Secret Service agents were going through the building with a fine-toothed comb and a crow bar. In the Steve Jackson Games' warehouse, several boxes were torn open. In the offices, locks were broken, filing cabinets were needlessly damaged.

"They cut or broke their way in to filing cabinets and boxes ... we would have been happy to unlock things if they'd have let us in."

The Secret Service agents confiscated computer hardware and software and anything that looked even remotely related.

"It took two paragraphs to say it, but what [the warrant] boiled down to was 'computer hardware and software, and records relating to computer hardware and software.'"

The all-encompassing nature of the search and seizure was was something of a sore point with the folks at Steve Jackson Games.

"They descended on a desk being used as a repair bench" by the SJG staffer in charge of computer maintenance. "It had about 2 or 3 half-assembled computers and other junk on it. They took everything."

The staffer in charge of computer maintenance, Jackson commented, was particularly irked that the Secret Service even took a bag of nuts and bolts sitting on the desk.

Creede Lambard, who goes by the BBS handle 'Fearless Leader' and is the SJG staffer who serves as SysOp of the Illuminati BBS was neither arrested nor searched. What did the Secret Service do to him? Steve Jackson commented that they "ate some of the candy off his desk, but that's it." Explanations of the matter from the Secret Service are meager.

"All they will say is that it is in connection with a nationwide data piracy case. We have learned that it is in connection with the 911 emergency computer system, which is more than the Secret Service will tell us."

I looked the Secret Service up in the phone book (they're right there, between Secor International Services and Secret Whispers) and called to ask them if they could tell me anything. "I'm sorry, we cannot give out any information over the phone." Understandable enough, they are the Secret Service, after all. Since that was the only phone number listed, I asked if there was another number for inquiries about public information. "I'm sorry, we cannot give out any information over the phone." Well, there's no address listed, so I asked where I would go to inquire in person. "I'm sorry, we cannot give out any information over the phone." Catch-22.

I found out later, from a more cooperative Treasury official, that I had probably gotten the Secret Service's answering service, who really didn't know anything and were only allowed to take messages.

Turning to other sources, I found more information. According to Patrick Townson, moderator of a computer newsgroup Comp.Dcom. Telecom (A "newsgroup" is essentially a bulletin board, but distributed nationally or internationally over several hundred or thousand computers on the Usenet or Internet computer networks.), the "nationwide data piracy case" is focused on the Legion of Doom.

AT&T, sometimes referred to as 'The Deathstar' by computer crackers, because of the resemblance between its corporate logo and the moon-sized battleship in Star Wars and its long standing 'stormtrooper' reaction to tampering with AT&T computer systems, is also interested in the case. The data pirated in this case belongs to them.

It seems that the case does indeed involve a 911 emergency computer system, according to "A Networker's Journal," a regular column by Charles Bowen, in Info-Mat Magazine (an electronic journal distributed on many computer bulletin board systems throughout the United States), one which routes phone calls to emergency services for nine states. Presently two people have been indicted; Robert J. Riggs and Craig Neidorf.

According to the text of the federal indictment, the case revolves around a text file named "E911 Practice," a text file that "described the computerized control and maintenance of the E911 system."

Riggs, who goes by the bulletin board system alias Prophet, a member of the computer phreaker/hacker group known as the Legion of Doom, penetrated a computer system containing the file labelled "E911 Practice." Riggs copied the information and prepared it for transmission to Neidorf, a.k.a. Knight Lightning, an editor of the hacker magazine Phrack. The article would be published in Phrack, a phreaker/hacker oriented electronic magazine, distributed every few months. Riggs transferred the information via an account on a publically accessible computer system named Jolnet, in Lockport, Illinois.

So how was this linked to the Illuminati Bulletin Board system and Steve Jackson Games? What were they after? One odd fact was that the Secret Service confiscated all of the material related to a new gamebook being prepared for publication, GURPS Cyberpunk. The game is based upon a science fiction genre in which stories often involve extensive penetration of computer security. Apparently the gamebook was a little too close to reality for the Secret Service's comfort.

"When they were reading the handbook in my presence they were getting very upset and saying 'This is just a handbook for computer crime.'"

In fact, as Steve Jackson learned later, the Secret Service searched the home of Loyd Blankenship, the author of the GURPS Cyberpunk gamebook, earlier that day. They seized his personal computer, software, and related equipment. In some cases the relevance of the equipment was inexplicable. For example at both Steve Jackson Games and Loyd Blankenship's house,

laser printers were confiscated.

Was the GURPS Cyberpunk gamebook, I asked Steve Jackson, the focus of the search?

"We're not sure on that - maybe in a roundabout way," he explained his theory. "In the course of writing the Cyberpunk book, Loyd made lots and lots of connections with the computer underground. He was also researching a mainstream book on the computer underworld at the time."

He conjectured that contacts made in this research may have led the Secret Service to suspect that there was a link between the computer hackers they are tracking and Blankenship, and even Steve Jackson Games.

According to comments on the Comp.dcom.telecom bulletin board, one 'retired' member of the Legion of Doom, known by the bulletin board handle 'The Mentor,' is in actuality Loyd Blankenship. Somebody recently posted anonymously on Comp.dcom.telecom, using the handle 'The Mentor,' to defend the Legion of Doom in the ongoing discussion of the Secret Service investigation, saying among other things that the Legion of Doom was very much against abuse of computer systems:

"While we have occasionally entered a computer that we weren't supposed to be in, it is grounds for expulsion from the group and social ostracism to do any damage to a system or to attempt to commit fraud for personal profit."

Later, The Mentor remarked that, in fact, the Legion of Doom had been responsible for reducing the security risk of computer systems in the past:

"The biggest crime that has been committed is that of curiosity. Kim, your 911 system is safe (from us, at least). We have been instrumental in closing many security holes in the past, and had hoped to continue to do so in the future. The list of computer security people who count us as allies is long, but must remain anonymous. If any of them choose to identify themselves, we would appreciate the support."

Is The Mentor Loyd Blankenship? He had no comment on the question.

I asked Steve Jackson, "Was the Legion of Doom on the Illuminati BBS?" He didn't think so.

"It's possible that they were, but unlikely. I know of several people, who have that kind of background, who were on the board, but no active hackers."

The board did allow aliases, so it's impossible to be certain that LODers weren't online, but it is certain that their illegal activities, if any, were conducted in private mail, not e-mail. Secret Service seems to be confiscating computer systems out of hand; the Illuminati BBS was not the only computerized casualty. Other SysOps are concerned deeply about some of the issues raised by the whole thing.

In San Jose, California, John Higdon, of the Zygote computer system, posted his reaction to Comp.Dcom.Telecom:

"As administrator for zygote, should I start reading my users' mail to make sure they aren't saying anything naughty? Should I snoop thorough all the files to make sure everyone is being good?"

And later closed with the comment:

"This whole affair is rather chilling."

Meanwhile Bill Kuykendall, Sysop of The Point, a computer system in Chicago, Illinois, took drastic measures to protect himself from any legal ricochets resulting from prosecution of users committing criminal activities on his public access system. Notification of these measures was posted on Comp.Dcom.Telecom, along with an explanation:

"Today, there is no law or precedent which affords me, as owner and system administrator of The Point, the same legal rights that other common carriers have against prosecution should some other party (you) use my property (The Point) for illegal activities. That worries me."

"By comparison, AT&T cannot be held liable should someone use their phone lines to transmit military secrets to an enemy. Likewise, Acme Trucking is not vulnerable to drug trafficking charges should they pull a sealed trailer of cocaine to some destination unknowingly. Yet somehow, I am presumed to be cognizant of the contents of every public message, mailed message, and file upload that passes through this public access system. On a system this size, that may be nearly a gigabyte (1+ Billion characters!) of information a year."

Among the computer community, a feeling of apprehension and an attitude of "keep your head down" prevails.

The impact of the entire incident on Steve Jackson games has been severe. They've lost the use of a large amount of computer equipment (most of it unrelated to the case the Secret Service is investigating) and even some of their own products, in the development stage, that were seized by the Secret Service.

The Illuminati BBS hardware is gone, in the custody of the Secret Service. Steve Jackson has no ideas if or when they'll get it back.

"We've been trying to get one and set it up, but we're having software trouble. The Secret Service people have been promising that the software would be returned...every day they say 'It's in the mail, Federal Express will have it to you within 24 hours.' but so far we haven't gotten a copy."

Gone as well are several pieces of the computer equipment used by Steve Jackson Games. It's only a few personal computer systems, printers and assorted equipment, but it's not a minor loss of resources for the small games corporation.

The Cyberpunk gamebook, a major new product in Steve Jackson Games' line, was set back quite a bit by the incident. The Secret Service confiscated all of the GURPS Cyberpunk materials, including the copies uploaded on the Illuminati BBS. The staff at Steve Jackson Games recreated the text from material downloaded by gamers who called the BBS, old rough drafts, and material sent out to playtest groups, but it wasn't be easy.

Steve Jackson gave a rough estimate that losses would be at least \$10,000 a week for three or four weeks. He pointed out that the delay was exacerbated because they waited for the promised return of the document. At the time of the call they were still fighting for the return of their hardware and software, though they didn't expect the Cyberpunk material to be returned in time to make any difference, if it was returned at all.

They've considered suing the Secret Service, but Jackson admitted that their lawyer estimated little chance of success. The cost of temporarily replacing the confiscated equipment (and in this case "temporarily" might mean a long, long time) and the losses caused by the delay of the Cyberpunk gamebook might seem trivial compared to amounts of money involved in some larger computer crime investigations. To a small corporation walking the thin line between genius and insolvency, it may make the difference.

Postscript:

GURPS Cyberpunk, despite the problems and paranoia involved in its birth, has been published. The inside cover credits the U.S. Secret Service for "Unsolicited Comments." Check it out at your nearest game store. If your gamestore doesn't carry Steve Jackson Games products, tell them they should. IF they disagree, call the Steve Jackson Games voice line (512-447-7866) to inquire about the product.

Steve Jackson Games has not escaped from the affair unscathed; the delays and costs incurred have compounded other financial problems. To date, the company has cut its full-time staff severely, and cut back on planned new releases. SJG has produced some fine products, and they may be in danger of financial death. If you have an interest in some of their products but have put off buying, now would be a good time to invest in Steve Jackson Games products. If you've never tried them, take a look at some of their products, you may find them worth your while.

Although the hardware has yet to be returned to Steve Jackson Games, the Illuminati BBS has come back online. It can be reached at (512) 447-4449. It normally operates at 300/1200/2400 baud.

End Editor' Note:

This article was printed before in Necromonicon which is based in the Pittsburgh area of Pennsylvania. To get a subscription, write to:

Anthony Kapolka
2931 Spring Street
Pittsburgh, Pa, 15210

\$5 for a four issue subscription (or \$2 per single issue).

Riddles for 1st Level (or lower) Characters

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(possible solutions are on pg, more than one solution possible)

1) Posion riddle

Character slides into room with:

Pool of water in the south corner. Torches on the other three corners. One table. one spoon on table. Cockroaches are busy eating something in the north corner. On the table is two gobblets, one with rubies, one with diamonds. There is a leaf of parchment on the table before the glasses. The paper reads:

"The only way to get out of the room is to drink one of the cups. Be forwarned, one cup has a powerful contact posion on it, but the liquid in it is a potion of permanent water breathing. With the ability to breath water, you will be able to escape through the water passage. The other cup contains a powerful liquid posion, but is ok to touch the cup. If you drink the posion, you feed the roaches. Choose well and think first."

On the glasses it reads:

Ruby gemed gobblet: "The lips that touch liquore,"

Diamond gemed gobblet: "Shall never touch mine."

Which gobblet do you drink?

2) Ice riddle

The characer slides to the EDGE of a tank of sharks. On the bottom of the tank are some bones. Across the room is an archway with blue gems. Above the character is an incription:

"When I am warm, I flow like alchohol.
When I am cold, I am slow like mud.
When I am very cold, I float on my brothers.
When I am very cold, what am I?"

On a ledge is two wands. One is red, one is blue.

The object is to escape the edge and go through the door.

3) Friction riddle

The character is sucked up a shaft and is deposited in a room with at FRICTIONLESS floor. Around him are 8 pictures in a circle. The ceiling is high and a heavy crossbow hangs from a o-ring 1m above the adventurer (just out of reach). One of the picture animates and says:

"How nice of you to drop in. One of us is a glass window to the main cavern. The rest of us are windows to a starving troll. One of us is not the same as the others, which one of us is it? A hint, we were all warriors in life, one of us dishonored his King and expelled from the company. It is through him you can leave. Don't try to stand up, the floor is completely frictionless"

The object of the riddle is to escape the room.

For pictures, use playing cards. The one without a weapon is the window out. The troll is dead, long since starved to death.

Traps for The Larry, Currly and Moe Dungeon

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Editor's Comments: Well, they are traps — in a sense.

Whipped Cream Trap — Ego Buster

Start with a normal pit trap (add spikes if you really want to).

Fill it with whipped cream.

Note:

1. You can't breath whipped cream.
2. You can't swim in whipped cream.
3. Whipped cream makes walls and ropes too slippery to hold.
4. Casting a spell with vocal or material components is damned hard in a pit of whipped cream.
5. Nothing is quite as humiliating as explaining your character died in a pit full of whipped cream.

For effect, try scattering a fine grayish powder on top of the cream (to disguise the floor).

For the piece de resistance, have a little robotic hand come out of a wall and carefully set a cherry on top of the "adventurer sunday".

The Black X Marks the Splotch” Trap - Greed Buster

This trap is for those characters who are either too greedy or just not aware of their surroundings.

In the center of a typical adventures’ setting (meaning ANYWHERE) have a black X with a bag of gold on it.

X

If evil is being detected for let the black X glow mildly evil. Usually a character will decide to go somewhere else and not bother to try to set off a deadly trap for forty gold pieces. If the gold is lifted from the X then the change in weight triggers a spring and shoots anything that was within one yard of the center of the X about 50ft in the air and the character (+gold) goes SPLAT at the same point his or her feet originally left the floor and 50 gold pieces richer.

The Harrison Chapters

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These are the first two of several chapters Jim wrote during the late 80's as a prose exercise in description of the setting of his Traveller game. He says he writes exactly the same way he GM's: without any semblance of plan or preconception.

One

The morning sun's golden rays glided peacefully along the quiet coast, sparkling across the ocean waves as the water's edge shifted randomly between sea and shore. A chilly breeze swept its way over the waters and along the damp beach, quietly winding its way through the little used barbecue pits past a long, wooden pier, and then withdrew back out to sea.

Bright beams of sunlight danced across the eastern horizon as the coastal palm trees cut the early summer winds into multiple streams of cool jet and spray and the light into stark showers of silver and scarlet.

Michael Harrison walked barefoot along the shifting earth that divides land and sea. The ankles of his patched worktrousers skidded into the cold waters as he made his way home. The thin blue fabric of a wet dress shirt stretched down his muscular frame to near his knees. His mind pulsed with an overflowing emptiness; thoughts doubled back upon themselves, twisting and turning with the cold waves, drifting against the overwhelming tide.

He slowly turned and walked up the whitish sands climbing a thin railed stairway in contest with gravity. The thick wooden doors were already open, and entering, he stumbled in between the white walls of his beach home searching for the null-tube. The entire structure seemed to wobble slowly around him. Squinting between the specks of salt and sand which stung his eyes, he grabbed one wall with his right hand, keeping the left stiffly extended in case he should find another. Suddenly, the room turned sharply, and an invisible foot kicked his legs out from under him. A pleasant softness enveloped his senses as he rolled up warm and passed out cold.

* * *

"Michael..."

He awoke to a calm feminine voice. Kitara? Still sleepdazed, his bloodshot eyes roamed the room.

"Why am I on the floor?" he mumbled.

"Because that is where you retired for the..."

Mike groaned as he sat upright hearing the now familiar voice. "I was just talking to myself. You know Cindy, you don't have to..." Mike's voice drifted off as he slowly realized he was talking to his home's computer system. Her voice circuits paused momentarily waiting for him to continue as he massaged his numb arm.

"Talking to oneself is a sign of mental collapse.... Mr. Linden is on line one."

His boss. Mike slumped back on the floor and closed his eyes. "I'm too tired, tell him to fuck off."

Cindy paused for analysis. Mike heard a quiet buzz and a voice, "Hello... Mike?"

"No Mr. Linden. This is Cindy again. Mike said he was tired and he told me to tell you to..."

"Stop!" Mike's voice echoed around the entire house. Cindy's voice promptly cut off transmission.

"Cut off the video unit and transfer the line... voice only... to this room."

Mr. Linden's voice broke over the speakers, "...there? Hello? Cindy, I didn't get that?"

Mike sat up again and rubbed his eyes, "Chuck, Mike here...."

"Hi, Mike? How's it going?"

"Great.... What's up?"

"Well, I've got a gentleman over here from the board who'd like to congratulate you on your last piece. I told him I didn't know whether or not you'd be in today, so he suggested I call. How'd you like to come over and lunch with us?"

Mike paused, "Sure, you two gonna be in the Gee-Pee?"

"Yeah, he's checking out our facilities, and he really wants to meet you."

It suddenly occurred to Mike that he should feel flattered. He rubbed the back of his neck and tilted his head sideways until the spine popped.

"Ok. I'll be over in... how's three cents sound?"

"Sounds great."

"Good."

"Okay, thanks. We'll see you then."

"Bye."

Line one closed with a short breaker. A computer a thousand kilometers away had already multiplied the duration of the call by its distance and tolled Chuck's fund. Mike wondered what the editor wanted.

* * *

The warm shower spray dissolved the dirt and sweat in no time, and Mike put on a blue mendswear dress shirt, white gelknicks, and a pair of light gravboots. He combed his long, thin, brown hair and tied it in the back. In a few minutes he was in the pantry searching for the standard grub. Picking up a flimsy and light pen he headed back to the living room and straightening his shirt stepped down the stairs into the street.

The sun was at high-noon, and the short walk to the subway entrance proved uneventful. There was the usual strain of gravcars and flycycles lined along the beachway, and the hundreds of floaters sailing above the coast made a moving pokadot design of shadows along the sands, but there was nothing unusual in the way the tourists eyed Mike over as if he were a specimen at an alien exhibit. Being the only decently dressed person within several kilometers he walked with a pretended importance, as if he owned the entire beach and could toss them all off at the snap of a finger. He grinned at the thought as he coasted down the escalator at the subway entrance.

Showing his all-month pass, he headed past security and straight to the terminal. The gravbuses entered and left the port in perfect succession; and within two minutes his bus had arrived. He boarded and easily found a seat. An old lady eyed him from across the car, and a handsome couple with kids quarreled over where to eat. He sat back and looked out the window. His hangover was nearly unnoticeable, and he rubbed his arm where Cindy had indubitably injected him with the get-well juice.

The train rose above the surface and fell again to catch another station more inland. Two young men entered the car talking current events but quickly quieted as they advanced awkwardly to two seats. The second looked Azazi, his tall bony frame and dark reddish-tanned skin giving him away.

The train started rolling again, and this time quickened its pace for some time before eventually rising to the surface. Out the window Silver-Tri-Towers stood as a testament to the might of man. Its arms branching from the main structure reached near the clouds, and the top of the structure blurred with the refraction of light against the atmosphere. The couple's children rushed to the window and pressed their noses against its surface leaving little spots of dense fog on the layered plastic.

The train lost speed and dipped under the surface to stop. The old lady got off and the two young men quietly resumed their discussion. The couple sat quietly, and one of their children asked when they would get to eat.

Soon the train was off again, and as it rose above the surface the kids resumed their former positions at the window, panting puppy dogs with eyes bent skyward. The train turned toward the structure, dipped

below the surface, and accelerated. It pulled into a large underground station. Mike quickly exited as a car load of people pressed in.

He made his way through the crowds to a lift. Dozens of people entered as the doors closed against the stragglers. The lift stopped on several floors, picking up and dropping off people along the way, until it reached public floor 872, and Mike stepped off. A short walk through the busy halls led him to the Gee-Pee. Mike peeked between the columns and spotted Linden talking with an elderly gentleman and a young woman over three highbowls of zardocha.

Mike held his position and studied the trio. His boss, the section's copy-editor, was putting on a smiley-face for his administrative counterparts. His small body wrapped itself into a tangled web of false composure, as a dim fluorescent beam caught his olive brown face, receding hairline, and large brown eyes at just the right angle to make Mike wish he'd been carrying his trusty camera.

The gentleman sitting across from the editor was well known to many in the press office. He had a reputation as somebody who could pull stings, and his white hair and often brittle manner did little to detract from his prestige. Just the opposite, they served to make him appear more distinguished. Mike had seen his picture a dozen times and fit together a dozen odd facts in his mind about the man, but he couldn't connect a name to the face.

The lady caught Mike's attention. She seemed strangely familiar. Aside from being simply a woman, her long blonde hair, tan skin, and lithe figure made her appearance incredibly attractive. She sipped her drink carefully, letting the ice flakes clink against the inside of her highbowl as she watched the two men talk.

The chatter from the rest of the room blurred together with their own conversation so well that Mike had trouble picking out specific words. He watched Linden's face. The editor looked like he was geared into brag-mode. The other two listened with fascinated expressions.

Mike slipped his consumer card through the scanner as he entered the room. Linden noticed him immediately and motioned him over.

"Well speak of the devil; Michael, this is Mr. John Clay from the company board, and his niece Miss Robin Clay."

"It's a pleasure to meet you Mr. Harrison. Charles has just been telling us a great deal about your work."

"Does that mean I get a raise?"

They all laughed, especially Robin. She seemed to have a special twinkle in her eyes as if there were a secret she wanted to tell him. Her eyes captivated Mike. They were deep sea blue, or maybe sky blue; he couldn't decide. They weren't too dark or too light. Must be implants, Mike thought as he shook off the fascination.

Then Robin extended her golden tanned arm as if she wanted it to be either kissed from pinky to armpit or broken in half at the elbow. Deciding on the third alternative, Mike extended his own arm in response, and with a smile he shook her hand. It was an archiac gesture to be sure, but one still used among gatherers.

Michael sat in the empty chair across from Robin. A fourth highbowl filled with zardocha dropped from overhead and floated in front of Mike. He tested it and sent it aside with a gentle nudge. The dark liquorice cafe stung his taste with its frigid strength.

"We were actually thinking along the lines of a different sort of compensation."

"Mr. Clay, I was joking."

"Within every joke, there must be an element of truth. Without it, the joke isn't funny."

Mike smiled, "Okay, get to the point."

"Michael, we at the Board of Galactic Press & Publications have been watching this division for a number of years. Your rapid progress and personal achievements have not gone unnoticed by the administration. Granted, there have been pieces of your research, some quite extraordinary pieces of information gathering, which were never published... with good reason."

"I'm sure." Mike echoed.

"You, perhaps more than any other gatherer within the sector, understands that we are much more than a news source, and that our gatherers are much more than reporters. They're investigators, they're a

form of police, they go into situations where they often risk life and limb."

"The point."

"Well, it's actually somewhat stale. I hope you're not offended, but we'd like to hold an awards' banquet for the division as a whole. Just something to boost morale, and to recognize a job well done."

Mike sipped the zardocha and glanced sideways at Linden. The editor smiled back; his cajoling face Mike thought.

"Go ahead."

"Well, as one of the key figures... as the key figure in your division's success I should say, we'd like you to speak at the ceremony."

Linden beamed, "You have become somewhat of a celebrity Mike."

Mike floated the highbowl in front of his chin, spinning in with one finger to quicken the fluid.

"I'm honored... but I wouldn't know what to say."

"What, with all your experience, with all the various worlds you've visited, not to mention those you've infiltrated," Clay laughed at his own joke, "I'm sure you could think of something to say."

"I really doubt it, sir."

Clay smiled, but Mike sensed something in the older man's eyes that told him to reconsider.

"Michael, Charles here has already hinted to me that you might feel this way, and in your shoes, I might feel the same. Afterall, a gatherer needs a certain amount of anonimity in order to be effective... and just considering what a high profile you have been earning lately... how long do you really think you can keep it up?"

"I really haven't thought about it, sir," he lied.

"Well, perhaps you should really think about it. This banquet isn't just to fill space and give our people something to do and be happy about. It's opportunity time. An opportunity for us to examine our talent, to redefine our direction, to recruit new prospects into the hierarchy... Charles tells me that you dislike social functions. Is that true, Michael."

"That would depend."

"On what?"

"On what's in it for me."

Clay paused dumbfounded and then suddenly burst out laughing. Charles and Robin chimed in as if on cue, but Mike was sure he felt someone kick him under the table.

"Shy, Mr. Harrison, you're not."

Linden set the floating highbowl down on the table. He looked a little tired and annoyed.

"Mike, what Mr. Clay is saying is that you've done a good job, but that with the success you're losing your value as a gatherer. It's time to step up the ladder."

"You mean behind a desk."

"Mr. Harrison," Robin spoke for the first time in the conversation, "if you were more valuable behind a desk than in the field, where would you rather be?"

"I'm still pulling my own weight."

"You and who's army?"

"What's that suppose to mean?"

"Okay, ask yourself this. How much of your gathering in the field is physically carried out by a third party? If your answer is more than half, then you already over the hill, and half way down the other side."

Clay coughed, "Take care with the metaphors, my dear. Mr. Harrison, forgive my niece, but we understand you've been training a number of research assistants?"

"I'm not going to take a job training gatherers. I've got enough of that already."

"We're not asking for that. We are simply proving a point, that your useful life is swiftly coming to a close unless you change your field of endeavor."

"I couldn't be an administrator, and I know I couldn't edit." Clay smiled, this time genuinely Mike thought.

"You'll be surprised at what you can do when opportunity beckons. Isn't that right Charles. Why, we ourselves are living examples. You think, Mr. Harrison, that your editor was born behind the desk, flimsy in hand? He started just like you. But we all must move on. The banquet is in three days, yes, it's honoring the anniversary of the founding. It will be at the Lion's Den in GreenFlower. Everything has already been set-up, the promotion has already been released in this morning's update, and all you have to do is be there and say a few words to entertain the masses, rub a few noses, and... and pretend that you're having fun."

Mr. Clay stood up and grimaced at the inside of his wrist. The timepiece implant seemed to tell him he was late. He shot Mike a departing glance, "Then we'll see you at the Banquet, Mr. Harrison... Mr. Linden."

Mike stood up, "Will your niece be there?"

"Of course."

"Then I won't," Mike felt like saying.

Miss Clay shook his hand in a comfortable contrast to the trial run. For the second time during the encounter she spoke, "Will you sit by me at the banquet, Mr. Harrison? I am very much interested in your work."

Mike grinned, "I really don't have a choice about this, do I?"

"Not if you know what's good for you."

Mike paused and tried to recall the question. He decided later that it was her blue eyes that made him give in so easily.

"I'd be delighted, Miss Clay. If you would like, stop by my house, and I can show you a few items of the trade."

She smiled, or perhaps blushed. "I might take you up on that. Where do you live?"

Mr. Clay conveniently interrupted, "Come now dear, we must be off."

Mike defused the interception, "Sector E-12, 81152 Beach Boulevard."

She smiled apologetically as her uncle grabbed her arm and led her out the door.

When Mike turned around Linden was looking a little angry.

"What?" Mike asked defensively.

Linden turned away and then tried to keep from laughing. "Nothing. Just..."

"Just what?"

"Just don't blow it, Harrison." Linden was smiling.

Mike smiled back, and they laughed. Everything was still okay.

* * *

Mike returned to the house. He recalled that he hadn't seen the morning update, but then he had no will to hear, see, smell, or otherwise comprehend what one dull reporter considered news. He entered the bathroom and relieved himself of the last night's merrymaking. The medical scanner's blue light twirled about until it found and homed in on Mike. He knew Cindy was conducting an analysis. Just as long as she kept to herself about it.

He strolled into his room and sat back on the circular bed. The entire chamber glimmered with an eerie, dim blue light. An opaque window on the wall farthest from the door kept out sunlight and the bothersome noises of modern civilization. He relaxed a bit on the edge of the bed and gathered his senses. A shimmering multicolored light on the controller wall betrayed Cindy's presence.

"What is it?"

It blinked and moved to the center of the wall. "What is what, Michael?"

He frowned. Computers weren't supposed to answer questions with questions. "What are you doing in my room?"

The light blinked a few times. "I work here." Her feminine voice was as matter-of-fact as ever he knew it to be.

He decided to beat her at her own game rather than simply getting frustrated. "Obviously you work here. Please allow me to rephrase myself. Why don't you switch off?"

"Would you like me to switch off?"

She did it again. He contemplated servicing the system by hand with a laser rifle but quickly decided against it. "No. You're too hard to deal with right now. Switch to lower brain mode."

"Done," the response was instantaneous.

From there he decided to do a little learning as long as Cindy's logic circuits were switched off. "Access. File. Information. Library. Galactic Press. Person. John Clay. Personal history."

"...Insufficient person specification. Please respecify at person."

"John Clay, Boardmember of Galactic Press. Personal History."

"...File accessed."

"Write Picture."

"...Insufficient picture specification. Please specify picture type."

"Facial, forward, most recent."

The light at the controller wall danced about for a moment, and suddenly the entire wall surface lighted up with a picture of Mr. Clay. Next to him was another man and a woman. They were all walking down a flight of stairs. The others looked vaguely familiar to Mike, but he couldn't place their names.

"Read picture from wall. Identify. Persons. All."

"...Persons identified."

"Say identifications."

"...Specify data format."

"Left to right. Name and official occupation."

"...Mrs. Helen Jaden, Galactic Press, Tizarian Division, Boardmember. Mr. Edmund Sandair, Galactic Press, Tizarian Division, Chairman of the Board of Directors. Mr. John Clay, Galactic Press, Tizarian Division, Boardmember."

Mike jotted down notes on a flimsy. "Clear wall." When he turned back toward the controller wall, the entire surface was black.

"Say personal history, format brief."

The light at the center of the wall reappeared and began to flicker on and off. "...Personal history, Mr. John Clay in memory. Loading format brief.... Mr. John Clay. Born two-hundred and twelve standard days into the Imperial year five-hundred and ninety-one. Attended University of Arcadia majoring in interstellar corporate business. Highest degree received, Master's, at age of twenty-four standard years. Joined with Galactic Press Arcadian Division as marketing advisor in Imperial year six-hundred and sixteen. Was promoted to chief marketing advisor..."

"Stop," Mike was getting bored, so he decided to zoom in on his real object of interest. "Access file. Information. Library. Galactic Press. Person. Miss Robin Clay, niece of Mr. John Clay, Boardmember of Galactic Press. Personal History."

"...File Accessed."

"Write picture, Planetary Identification, Tizar, most current."

A mug shot of the girl he met that afternoon slowly rotated on the controller wall. Mike studied it quickly and then prepared to jot down more notes.

"Say name. Format first, middle, last."

"...Robin Athena Clay."

"Say official occupation."

"...Independent contractor, gatherer, Galactic Press, Tizarian Division."

Mike blinked in disbelief. "That's what I am."

"...Illegal command ignored."

He went to the kitchen, got an algae-cooler and some nutrichips, and returned to the bedroom. Sitting once again in front of the controller wall, he watched the flickering light at the center of the wall for nearly

a minute before deciding on a course of action.

"Say list of accomplishments."

"...Illegal command ignored."

"Say list of articles where subject is mentioned."

The light at the center of the screen flickered for a while longer. With Cindy's interpretive processor shut down, the command would take time to be understood.

The light disappeared.

"Stop." Mike was becoming impatient.

"No process in effect. Command Ignored."

"What?"

"...Illegal command ignored."

"Is subject mentioned in any articles?"

"...Illegal command ignored."

Mike began to drink the cooler. He didn't stop until it was finished.

"Switch to higher brain mode."

"Hello Michael." The artistically feminine voice of the SNDI system, so often applauded by computer evaluators, had never sounded sweeter.

Mike got right down to business. "I assume you have all the data of my conversation with your lower brain."

"You assume correctly."

"Is Robin mentioned in any articles?"

"No."

"Has she written any articles?"

"No."

"What is her occupation?"

"She's a gatherer."

"...Who hasn't written anything."

"That is correct."

"She has to have been mentioned in at least one article."

"She isn't."

"Cindy, check for birth announcements."

"There are none."

"Is there a copy of her birth certificate on file?"

"Yes."

"When was she born?"

"On the ninty-first day of six thirty-three."

"Nearly a year before Niki."

"That is correct."

"Where was she born?"

"Greenflower, Silver-Tri county, Tizar."

"That's close."

Mike opened the package of nutrichips and began to munch. "Cindy, in all your experience, when have you ever encountered a person who was born without the mandatory birth announcements?"

"Offhand, Michael, I know of no single instance."

"Cindy, randomly choose one thousand people from that county, all who were born in six thirty-three, and tell me how many of those people do not have corresponding birth announcements in the news on the

day of their birth."

"...There are zero people who do not have birth announcements."

Mike popped a few chips into his mouth, "Check Tizarian Library files. See if her birth announcements are there."

"...There are birth announcements in the files of the Tri- Towers Library."

"Why don't we have them?"

"Because when the file was loaded into my banks, the birth announcements weren't in place." She changed her tone of voice as if a little annoyed at the obvious question.

"Check in our own files for her birth certificate. When was it loaded into your banks."

"The ninety-ninth day of this year, six fifty-six."

"Why wasn't her birth announcement also loaded in."

"News files are read-only after their initial loading. There are no editing features available with this system due to the inherent unlawfulness."

Mike munched on some more nutrichips. They tasted good for a change, and he wondered what the deal was about Robin.

"Mike, you have a visitor at the front door."

"Identify."

"The visitor is not identifiable from the people in your files."

"Describe"

"The visitor is female. She has blonde hair, blue eyes, her height..."

"Stop. Open the door." Mike headed out of the bedroom and toward the front door. Robin was dressed in the white summer dress she wore to lunch.

She smiled, "Hi."

Mike stepped outside. The sun was into its brilliant afternoon splendor, and the entire coast was lined with tanning bodies, just waiting to be sizzled to a crisp.

He smiled as if surprised, "Hi. Come on in. I wasn't expecting you so soon."

She stepped forward cautiously, a little embarrassed, and at the same time enjoying her predicament. "Well, I just happened to be cruising by... and when I remembered your address... and..."

They both laughed.

She stopped in front of him and smiled. The sunlight caught her bright blue eyes, but he was prepared for them this time.

"Well, since you're here... would you like something to drink?" He was careful not to talk into her. He didn't want to blow the second impression by the smell of munchies.

"Sure, if you have water."

He grinned, "Sorry, we're all out. No, just kidding... c'mon."

He led her to the living room. Getting two glasses and filling them with water was no major task, and soon he found himself sitting at the chair next to the sofa he had missed the night before. She nimbly seated herself on the couch and accepted the glass of water from his hand.

"So," he started, "Why ya really here?"

She paused and then smiled, "You said you'd show me some of the tools of the trade?"

"Oh, sure." Mike went to the bedroom and picked up his camera and workset. When he returned, Robin was in the kitchen looking for a place to drop the empty glass.

"Should I just put it here on the countertop."

"Yeah. That'd be fine."

She walked back into the living room while Mike hooked together the camera. "This is a Niko 700AR. The small lens in front here is an all-purpose zoom."

She walked over to him. "Can I?"

"Sure," he put it into her delicate fingers. "Careful, it's kind of heavy."

She looked through the lens and smiled, "Wow. Thirty all the way to a thousand millimeters... plus light intensification. No need for a flash."

"Yeah." Mike was pleased that she knew something about cameras. "That's not all, look." He showed her the storage drive, printer, viewer, and controller board. "Y'know what this is, too?"

She stared in wonder. "So this is top of the line."

He laughed. "For external stills, it's as close to as is practical to use. I mean, it low tech enough that it can fixed on most worlds if it gets damaged, and, of course, it's replacable. That's its best feature. This thing here is the storage drive. It can hold up to ten-thousand photos in color. More in black and white. I can plug this hundred picture cartridge into the camera, take pictures, and then transfer them to the drive. If I decide that I don't like them later, poof; I delete them. This thing lets me see 'em, and this printer makes a hard copy. With the controller board you can also edit the pictures in a number of different ways--splicing them, shooting color in, mixing them together, going in pixel by pixel and drawing. Like Niko says, 'It defies the imagination.' So what'd'ya think?"

"Pretty wild," She smiled.

"By the way, I heard you were a gatherer with the company."

"Who told you that?"

"Linden said something about it."

She bit her lip, "I'm just kind of getting into it. Right now I do some research for my uncle."

"Oh," Mike was disappointed, but he was far from through.

"What kind of research," he smiled innocently.

She mimicked the smile, staring straight into his eyes, "Y'know, research."

He stopped the questioning. It was still too early.

"So," she continued, "do you really make money at this."

Mike theatrically looked around the house. She laughed.

"Of course I make money at this."

"But how can you? Information is so cheap these days."

Double meaning, Mike thought. "Yeah, it's cheap. But there are a lot of buying customers. Every two to four weeks the Tizarian Division puts out an issue of 'The Galactican.' Every year, I get a good enough story to convince them to give me a large cut of the paper. That, plus front page stories three or four times a year keep me going nicely. We sell to almost a trillion people in this sector alone. Now even if I took only a millicredit off of every buyer every year, you start adding up the numbers and tell me how rich I'd be."

She grinned, "Very rich."

"Ridiculously rich. And I don't settle for any mere millicredit."

"Wow!" She was being obviously sarcastic.

"And that's only half the story."

She smiled, "What's the other half?"

"Through writing these articles people get to recognize my name; and when I turn around to sell other writings, they'll go ahead and load copies into their own terminals since the price of information, as you put it, is so cheap."

"What other writings do you do?" She seemed genuinely interested this time.

Mike shrugged, "Political stuff, argumentative essays, that sort of thing."

"You must be a fantastic writer." She looked serious.

Mike grinned, "Not really.... Y'see, when it comes to writing, it's not the style or the syntax or anything like that. It's your subject. Most of the news people I've met are great writers, but they simply can't research a story. They fall flat on their faces when it comes to the subject simply because they start

out with boring material."

Robin looked confused, "How can you say that? You're supposed to be a writer."

"No, I'm a gatherer, big difference. It's like your uncle said, the most important thing that I do right now is investigate. All the polishing can be left to the editor and staff, but researching the facts and getting them down is the most important thing for a gatherer. Hey, what're you doing?"

"I'm putting this thing together." Robin connected the storage drive and monitor. She began paging through the memory.

"You sound like you're already missing it. What's this?"

The picture was of a shallow sea. Sulferous storm clouds loomed heavy over the horizon, and a still yellow mist shrouded the water. Far away, a number of humanoid creatures crouched in the steaming mud and pointed toward the camera.

"That's Aiwelk"

"Are those reptiles?"

"Amphibians. They actually the descendants of mutated humans if you want to get technical."

"What are they doing there?"

Mike smiled, "They live there."

Robin rabbit-punched him in the ribs. "You know what I mean. What were you doing there?"

"I was taking pictures."

Mike braced his ribs for the second blow.

"Okay, they say one picture's worth a thousand words. I was working on a safari expedition at the time."

Robin gasped.

"It's not what you think. We were low on cash, so were hiring ourselves out as animal catchers. Aiwelk's a protectorate, so we couldn't catch there, but this science team hired us on to catch a few of these critters for 'scientific purposes.' They eventually set-up a base on-world, but at the time, they were working from a circular satellite. I took some picture, because the scientists wanted to know exactly where they came from, and what their physical and social environment was like. They already knew the physical pretty much, but they thought it was important to know who was standing next to who and how they were acting among themselves before we caught them. I don't know if that makes any sense."

Robin nodded, "So what'd you find out?"

"Okay, y'see this character here, in the middle. He's like their shaman. No, I'm not kidding. One thing you learn in this job is that everybody's got their own screwed-up religion. Now, before he was, 'examined' physically all-the-way, okay, the scientists were able to decipher a good portion of their language from him, and with it a good portion of their beliefs."

"Because every language is constructed of beliefs and values."

"That's right. I couldn't have said it better. Now, he wasn't the stong guy, but he was more or less their leader, and without these stills with him in the center, and without the moving pictures we caught of him giving instructions, he'd have never gotten the special attention such an important 'specimen' deserves."

"What'd he think about being a specimen?"

"I'm not sure he really thought about it at all."

Robin zoomed in on him and refocused. The dark scales showed well in the poor light of the dim red star.

"So how'd they examine him physically?"

"Oh, you know scientists." Mike looked away from the monitor.

"Yeah."

"Sometimes I just wish we let them be."

"Did they find anything unusual?"

"Would it matter if they did?"

Robin suddenly looked irritated, "Mind if I use the ladies room?"

"Through that door and to your left."

She got up from the couch and went through the hallway to the bathroom, leaving Mike to gather his wits and wonder what it was that he said.

He looked toward the speaker unit by the videophone. Its black shiny surface glittered in the blue fluorescent light.

"Cindy?"

"Yes Michael?"

"Use the medical scanner on Robin but keep its light off."

"What do you want to know about her?"

"Anything unusual."

"...She's taking her ear off."

Mike's heartbeat jumped. "She's what?"

"...She's taking her ear off, and she's not human."

"No shit.... What is she?"

"An android."

Two

Faint moonbeams caressed the dark ocean swells as they washed the damp beach with the gloomy remnants of memories past. Mike laid still along the water's edge, his bare feet slowly dipping in and out of the quiet tide. An empty flask rested at arm's length from his tired body as he dreamt about years past, and worlds far across the vast sea of space.

He remembered a gentle Sirian voice warning him of his own impending assassination just hours before her execution and recalled the words of a wealthy industrialist, "People are profits; individuals: losses." He dug out of the past a friend who committed suicide after having found freedom from an Imperial correctional institute and thought on the immoral techniques once practiced by a medical research lab on all assortments of non-volunteers. He remembered a gang of youths beating a elderly man to death because he was an off-worlder and fought back the recollection of twisted arms and limbs as all the remains of a Tizarian Foreign Embassy staff after a terrorist bombing.

Suddenly, he woke. The familiar sickness was there, but the feeling of being forcibly thrust out of the warmth and safety of Sleep's benign womb was lost to an insidious fear, as if he had barely escaped from the black pit of an ancient nightmare.

"You okay?"

Mike jumped, his nerves swinging his head around nearly to the point of whiplash. It was only Niki, and she promptly began her little giggle at Mike's initial surprise.

He looked over his research assistant with considerable distaste, "What're ya doin' here?"

She drew her hands to her mouth trying to control the spasms of hysteria which only succeeded in making matters worse.

Mike regarded her with a grin, "Fine."

He groggily got to his feet as she rolled on the cold sands clenching her ribs in a coughing fit of laughter.

"C'mon, it wasn't that funny."

Out of breath, she began slowing down. Mike reached for under her shoulders and lifted her small frame off the ground. She put up a mock struggle, laughing all the while.

"Michael... No! Put me down!" He carried her over his shoulder towards the house as she whined, squealed, and laughed.

The house was dark and lonely when they finally arrived. Mike walked in and tumbled Niki on the

couch. She rolled herself up around a large pillow and beamed up at him with a smile. He shook his head in disbelief and grinned.

"Aren't ya' gonna say hi?" She was in a playful mood.

"Hi."

They looked at each other for a moment before he continued.

"So, how's my psyche doin'?"

"Just fine... Boss."

"Don't call me that."

She laughed, "Why not? Is it a dirty word?"

He nodded, "Yes. And how's Mr. Fork doin'?"

"Okay-fine."

"Still locked up?"

"Yep, but he's gettin' better."

Mike laughed, "That's sayin' nothin'."

"No, Really. He's a lot better than he was. He's even beginning to talk now."

"What have you gotten out of him?"

"Nothin' much so far. It's still too scrambled to tell what he's thinkin'."

"Bet that makes for some interesting reading though. Look, I'm gonna get a beer, ya want one?"

Her smile faded. "Naw, ya' don't want beer."

"Yes I do," he headed for the kitchen.

"Drink some zardocha instead." She sounded hopeful.

Mike thought about it for half a moment, "Yuchi-foo."

"How 'bout milk?"

He mimicked, "How 'bout beer?"

"You'll get drunk."

He tapped the nozel release, and twisted the setting nob down to Niki's favorite.

She smiled, "You're not gonna get drunk."

He looked at her, mock-seriousness molding his features into a neutral expression. "Do I ever?"

She started giggling, "Tee hee hee... you were so surprised."

"Was not."

"Hee hee... was too."

"Was not you little sneak. Besides, you never told me why you were there."

She stopped laughing, "Just came by to see how you were."

Mike glanced at the clock, "At ten after midnight? How'd you know where I was."

"And I thought ya' had intelligence. Where are ya' always when its dark outside and you're too lazy to answer the door?"

He gulped down half the glass, "Excuse the stupid question. I'm a little buzzed right now."

"Why do ya' sleep out there?"

Mike wondered whether she was requesting information or making small talk. "You've asked me that before."

"Ya' never answered me."

Mike paused. "To sleep..... perchance to dream."

"Did ya dream?"

He thought a moment. "Yeah."

"What about?"

"I dunno."

She laughed, "Liar."

He sipped his milk. It was as cold as ice but felt strangely good going down.

"Well?"

"You didn't read me while I was out?"

"Nah. I saw your eyes goin' though. But I still 'member when you said not to read you."

"I wonder why..."

"Aw c'mon. Y'know you can tell me."

He replied laughing, "I do?"

"Yes." For once, her tone was convincing.

He paused, "Okay. You remember hearing about the Tizarian embassy on Calanna?"

"Yeah, I heard got blown up. Hey, that wasn't when you were a correspondent down there, was it?"

Mike nodded, "I was pulled shortly before that, but I was still... sightseeing."

"Of course," she was smiling.

"Now... I had nothing to do with..."

"Don't even try lying, Michael."

"Okay... well anyway, the short of it is that I was there just a cent before it happened. I went out to make this call... the embassy was a notoriously bad place to carry on a private conversation. While I was walking back... I heard the..." He stretched out his arms to form the visual image.

"Boom?"

"Boom," Mike agreed hesitantly. "I started running to see what happened."

Niki watched him sympathetically, "No one survived."

They fell silent for a time as Niki let her milk sit scarcely touched. Mike's dream had shattered her mood.

Her eyes slowly grew glossy in the blue fluorescent light. "I'm sorry."

Surprised, he looked up, "About that?"

"I'm just sorry."

"It's okay."

Mike looked into her eyes and then averted his gaze downward toward the floor. "Drink your milk."

* * *

"Mike...?"

Mike awoke stiffly on the floor. Niki sat over him, one hand on his shoulder, gently shaking him to consciousness.

He squinted groggily in the dim light. "What time is it?"

"Twenty. Mike, Fork's in trouble."

Mike was suddenly wide awake. "What is it?"

"I dunno. I think somebody woke him up in the middle of a nightmare."

"Enough to wake you?" Mike asked in hopeful disbelief.

"No. I was still up. I just happened to be open to it."

"Did he wake up by himself?"

"No. I'm pretty sure somethin's up."

"Ok, let's go." Mike picked himself off the floor grabbing his black camera bag on the way out the door and headed straight for the back terrace. He hopped on the fly-cycle, felt under the seat cushion for the key, and switched on the grav-plates while Niki hopped on behind him and held to his waist.

The vehicle raced over the shoreline using its natural flat surface to pick up speed. The crisp ocean waves, remarkably changed in the past few hours, lashed the coast and pounded the beach crag with an

unrelenting fury as the bright full moon rose to its apex in an otherwise pitch black sky.

Within five minutes they landed just outside the nearby Tizarian medical center. Only a mile inland, the smell of salt carried by the chilly morning breeze floated through the air. A cargo shuttle rested on a pad under a hundred meters from the complex, and two guards in dark night-uniforms stood outside the entrance in the bleak, morning cold.

Mike dismounted the vehicle and quickly trotted towards the guards.

Niki grabbed Mike's arm cutting short his advance. "I don't have my doctor I.D."

He shrugged, "Forget it. We'll play it straight."

Mike stopped short of the guards and drew out his press card. "Michael Harrison, Gatherer, Galactic Press, Tizarian Division. I need access to this facility to see one of the patients."

The guard in front laughed, "At twenty in the morning?"

"Yes. This may be an emergency."

The guard mocked seriousness, "Well, it must be a pretty big one. What do ya' think George? Do we let little Mikey in?"

The other guard was older. His grey eyes depicted a sternness not much impressed by his partner's attitude. He coughed before speaking, perhaps to be sure he had everyone's attention, "Nobody's allowed in the medical center, mister..."

"Harrison. I'm with the Tizarian Division. I have permanent press clearance to this center. See? It says so right here." Mike pointed toward the card, but neither guard paid any attention.

The first guard laughed again, "Hey, who's your psych?" Niki's dark, Sirian features hinted at her purpose.

Mike talked while getting out his flimsy. "Didn't you here what I said? I have clearance. By the way, I didn't get you guys' service numbers."

The older guard broke in, "Look, buddy. We have orders not to let anybody in. Anybody! Do you understand? Now why don't you just hop back on your play-scooter with your girly-friend and get your snot-nosed face off our turf!"

"Orders from who?"

"From our commanding officer. Who do you think?"

"Who is?"

The older guard shouted, "I just said who!"

"As in a name."

The guard paused, not quite sure how to phrase his response. "That's classified."

Mike looked up from the flimsy. The guard who spoke reinforced his position by standing in front of the door, his plain, black uniform blending nicely with the purple background.

"You guy's aren't even wearing Tizarian badges. Who the hell are you?"

"Starlaw." The answer came simultaneously from both.

Mike shot a wary glance at the pair, "You Imperial police have some sort of identification?"

They pulled badges from their pockets.

"Why aren't you guy's wearing these things?"

There was no answer. Mike was fairly certain they couldn't arrest him.

"Oh, I guess that's classified too. Look, I'd like to speak with your commanding officer!"

The young guard pushed Mike backward and began to draw his gun, but the other held him back, the older guard's stare belieing a temptation to let his partner carry out the threat. Suddenly, Niki gasped as if shocked.

"What is it?"

She paused, regaining her breath. "He's gone."

"What?"

"No more signal."

Mike drew out his camera and backed away from the guards, pulling Niki back with one hand clenched around her shoulder.

"Smile dudes." Mike snapped the shot, and retreated quickly to the cycle.

* * *

The personal office of Charles Linden, copy editor for the Tizarian Division of Galactican Press, rested near the top of the center section of Silver Tri-Towers. It was, as Chuck liked to put it, a room with a view. Out the sky window, if the day was clear enough, the entire expanse of land all the way to the coast could be surveyed. From well over two kilometers high, it was a wondrous sight.

Mike sat at the edge of the editor's dark, mahogany desk staring blankly out the window as the clouds blew by. Niki, leaning against the close, white wall, quietly watched his profile, collecting his emotions, reading his worries.

The faint noise of footsteps approached the entrance, Niki turning to look as the antique, brass doorknob turned clockwise. Linden, stood in the doorway smiling suspiciously while surveying the duo.

"Well! If it isn't Mik and Nik."

Mike intentionally suppressed his smile. "Hi Chuck."

"That's Mister Linden to you Harrison. So, how's it going?"

"It sucks." The voice was Niki's.

Linden turned his head toward her, leaning his body on the desk toward Mike.

"Does it really?"

"Yeah, it sure does."

Linden laughed, "You teaching her slang, buddy?"

Mike smiled, "Y'know Chuck, you really have a way of breaking the mood."

"Yeah. I saw your entry this morning; suggested headline: 'Imperial Police Seize Hospital.' Very catchy."

"You don't like it?"

"First off, it isn't a hospital. It's a medical center. Big difference. Secondly, they didn't seize it."

"They refused my clearance."

"I just got off the phone with a Lieutenant Robertson. He tells me you tried to assault one of his guards."

Mike held the smile, "He's lying."

Linden confidently continued, "He also told me you never showed your press I.D. to the guards."

"Chuck, He's lying."

Linden looked Mike in the eyes, "Prove it."

"I have a witness."

"Do you have the encounter on crystal?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"We were in a hurry when we left. I forgot the recorder."

"You forgot the recorder; no substantiation. The paper gets sued. I lose my job. And as for your so-called witness... who has been illegally posing as a psychotherapist at the medical center for the past doce so that you could get a story which was never registered with the paper! What the hell are you trying to pull, Mike!?"

"The last time I registered a story with the paper my research assistant got her brains blown out by a firing squad!"

"That's because all your, quote-unquote, research assistants are unregistered telepaths!!"

Niki winced. Mike shook his head in disbelief as his boss continued.

"Look buddy, it's not like I don't believe you. I do. But you're just doing everything the wrong way."

"I'm doin' my best."

"I know. That's 'cause you are the best... usually."

Mike looked up hopefully, "So what do I do now?"

"Lieutenant Robertson is coming over. He'll be here in a few minutes. I suggest you wait around 'til he gets here. Question him. If you can, trap him."

Linden reached into his vest pocket and pulled out a small, pocket recorder. He placed it on the desk in front of Mike. "You're still on Tizarian turf. Use the advantage."

By that last remark, Linden meant that there were several advantages press gatherers had on Tizar which weren't granted to them on many other worlds. The right to publish recorded statements without the approval of the speaker, the right to use registered telepaths to gather information, and the right to access the non-classified records of any subject were just a few examples.

Mike sat down at the computer terminal in the far corner. Linden, a lover of antiquities, rarely ever touched it, and the file on Robertson revealed nothing out of the ordinary. The twenty-seven year old, Starlaw officer entered the service after attending Duke Marc's College. He earned a degree in Enforcement of Justice, and served Starlaw in the public relations department. He'd been promoted during his first four-year hitch and was now working through his second.

Mike looked up from the file as Linden's secretary knocked at the door to announce the lieutenant's arrival.

"Send him in, Jo... and tell the floor that I'll be down in a few minutes."

"Alrighty Mr. Linden."

A tall man with short blond hair and smooth brown eyes entered the office. His practiced smile was as wide as it was non-deceiving.

Linden returned the smile, "Lieutenant, please come in."

"Mr. Linden? How good it is to finally meet you in person. I must confess, I didn't know who to greet at first."

"That's quite understandable."

"You should get a videophone. That's what everyone I know uses."

"Yes. Well, on an editor's salary, I think I'll just stick to the basics. This is Michael Harrison, the reporter who spoke with your guards; and this is Nikita Sen, a research assistant with the press."

Mike smiled at the lie as he shook hands with the Lieutenant.

Robertson also shook hands with Niki but avoided her eyes.

"Mr. Linden. You hire Sirians. I am surprised."

"Why?"

Robertson laughed uncomfortably, "Have you not heard the Imperial convention against psionic trespassing?"

"Lieutenant, the Psionics Suppression is a matter for historians. Besides, this is Tizar. We have been granted freedom in those areas by your Archduke's grandfather long ago."

Robertson seemed to physically squirm in his stance, "Still, editor. I must insist that my mind... not be... violated." He smiled shyly at Niki.

Mike wondered what kind of people the Imperials were hiring, "You've got something to hide, Lieutenant Robertson?"

"Of course not. There are just certain classified matters.... Unrelated, you understand."

Mike smiled, "No problem. Niki's telepathy is very... weak." He decided to stretch the truth, "She can only read the answers to yes or no questions, feel surface emotions, and even for that she has to be

looking at the subject in question."

"Still Mr. Harrison, I must insist that she at least leave the room."

Niki broke in, "I don't mind leaving, but I would like to hear what is said. After all, I am to a certain extent involved. If I turn around, I'll be largely unable to use my telepathy. Would that be all right Lieutenant?"

Robertson shrugged, "I guess that'll have to do. Sorry about the inconvenience."

Niki smiled, "That's okay. I'm used to it."

Robertson looked at Mike and began to grope for a place to begin. "So Mr. Harrison, the guards at the medical center told me they had a little trouble with you."

"I suppose they did, Lieutenant. I wanted entrance; they denied it."

"Well, did you tell them you were a gatherer?"

"Yeah, I showed them my press card."

"Well... that's not their story. What were you doing out there so early anyway?"

"Me and Niki suspected that something may be wrong with one of the patients."

"Which one was this?"

"John Doe, number eighteen."

Robertson looked surprised. "Hmmm... that's quite a coincidence. That patient died in his sleep at around midnight last night."

Mike's mouth fell open, "What?"

"There's nothing you could have done. He was well on his way to the golden arches when you arrived, or wherever it is that he went. Wasn't he the insane gentleman who murdered a guard with a carving fork and injured two civilians?"

Mike tried desperately to regain his wits.

Robertson continued, "So, Mr. Harrison, what made you suspect that there was something wrong with the patient."

Mike looked back up at the Lieutenant. "Niki, turn around."

Robertson instinctively withdrew a step.

Mike continued as Niki turned about to face the lieutenant, "Is he lying?"

She nodded yes; her eyes burning red with antipathy.

Robertson avoided both her's and Mike's stare and turned to Linden for support. "I doubt I'd be the first. Mr. Linden, I protest."

Mike stood directly in front of Robertson. "Lieutenant, what was Starlaw doing there?"

"That's confidential, Mr. Harrison."

"Can't you at least tell me the branch of personnel, the name of the commanding officer?"

Robertson shrunk under the direct questions. "Internal Counter-Insurgency. ISIS Division. That's all I can say."

"ISIS!?" Mike almost jumped back into Linden's lap. "The Imperial Secret Police?"

"Please Mr. Harrison. You have me at an awkward position. I'm only regular Starlaw."

"Then why are you lying!?"

Lieutenant Robertson withdrew to the door. "I won't stand to be interrogated in such a fashion," he weakly complained. "I'm leaving."

Robertson opened the door and quickly escaped from the hateful stares of the three people he was sent to pacify. Mike took the recorder out of his pocket and turned it off. "Can I publish it now?"

Linden sat down and crossed his legs, a twinkling of a smile lighting his otherwise sharp countenance. "No. You can go out there and get some more facts, and then come back with a real story. I've got a feeling this'll be a winner once you've got it fully researched, and I won't even make you register Niki."

Mike smiled gravely, "It's a little too late for that; they already know about her. But thanks anyway. We'll take the offer. We'll also try to get some more info. I'd also appreciate it if you'd keep quiet about the

story."

"Okay. But I don't see how that's going to help you now either."

"Trust me, it will. Look, I'll catch you later. Thanks for the help."

"Ok, I'll see you two later."

Mike and Niki exited the office. Once in the outer hall, Niki tugged at the gatherer for attention. "Hey, ya' really know how to get people t' listen to ya'."

He looked her in the eyes, "I'm sorry."

She smiled, "About you or about Fork?"

"I'm just sorry."

She shrugged, "Let's get some milk."

* * *

The bar was cool and dimly lit. Several ceiling fans twirled silently above as Mike drank his milk on the rocks; Niki had her's straight.

"So," she began, cutting the solemn mood, "where do we start this time?"

Mike sipped thoughtfully, "I haven't the faintest idea."

"Liar." She was smiling.

He grinned back and took another sip.

She grew impatient, "Well?"

"Okay. I met this girl a while ago."

Niki laughed, "Is this one of your drunk maid stories?"

"No. This happened just yesterday. I don't know whether Chuck told you, but me and him met Mr. Clay and his daughter for lunch."

"Boardmember Clay?"

"Uh huh."

"And the girl's his daughter?"

"Yeah. Anyway, so we talked, and then they had to leave, but that afternoon she came over to my house."

"Alone?" Niki looked concerned.

"Uh huh."

"And you let her in?"

"Why not?"

She had no reply.

"So anyway, While she was in the bathroom, I found out she was an android."

"What were you doing in the bathroom with her?"

"I wasn't in the bathroom. I was in the living room."

"What was she doing?"

"Taking her ear off, or putting it on. I don't remember, but that's not important."

"You saw her take her ear off. Ooh gross."

"No, Cindy did."

Niki laughed, "What? You asked your computer what she was doing in the bathroom?"

Mike paused, "Yeah."

"Why?"

"I was curious?"

"Have you no shame? Guy, ya' won't be seeing me go to the bathroom at your place no more."

Mike laughed, "Oh, c'mon. Just one more time. I want to shoot some pictures."

She laughed, "No way, bud. So what happened then?"

"She had to take off, but I'm sure she was there to check me out."

Niki nodded, "I'm sure she was too."

"No. I mean for somebody else."

"Heck Mike, everybody's after you. Me, an android, your computer, now somebody else."

"Oh, c'mon."

"So where's Clay's real daughter?"

"He doesn't have one."

"You mean, Mrs. Clay gave birth to an android?"

They both laughed.

"Look, stop it. I want you to check up on her... and on Mr. Clay."

"I can't read an android."

"Read Mr. Clay then. No! wait a mil, it was his niece, not his daughter, his niece."

She laughed, "You've really got your facts straight."

"I was recovering from a hangover at the time."

"Excuses. Excuses."

They laughed and ordered some more milk.

She began again, "So what about Fork. I mean, this could be a dead end."

"I'm fairly sure his mind was shot by one of those Imperial mind scanners. They probably just decided to kill him."

"Why?"

"I dunno, and that's no lie."

"What do we do?"

"You do nothing."

"Aw, c'mon. I wanna help."

Mike refused, "No, they already know about you. I want you where you can do some good. Clay doesn't know about you, and I've got a suspicion he's tied up in this."

"How's that?"

"I think I remember seeing Robin, that's his niece's... I mean android's name... I swear I remember seeing her down at the medical center one of those times I visited Fork."

"Then she'd know me."

"Nope. You're not registered. I am. She wouldn't have any reason to remember your face unless you spoke to her or something, or unless you were registered with Galactic Press, and you're not..."

"Ya' don't think Mr. Linden would say anything about me?"

"Nah, Chuck doesn't talk to Boardmembers. You're in the clear."

"What about you?" She knew the answer to that without asking.

"I'll manage. Look, I'm gonna go home and grab a quick nap."

"Liar."

Mike smiled, "Look, I'll be okay. I promise. Come see me tonight."

"You mean next morning?"

"Whenever. I'll see ya' later." He got up and headed toward the exit.

Niki put down her milk, "Be careful."

"You too."

Niki stayed at the table as the highbowls slowly rose to the ceiling and coasted across the bar. From the opposite aisle a burley man in a heavy, tan coat rubbed a lather of foam from his moustache, his eyes scanning the morning headlines as they scrolled across the surface of his table. In the background, she heard a group of people laughing. Michael didn't want to be followed. She glanced toward the escalator ramp

and watched a sprinkling of people zoom by, the cushion of propelled wind whining where its outskirts met the stop-off. The bar seemed warm and snug when compared with some of the other places she had been recently; it was a good place to stay and pout. But not as good as a boardmember's house. She smiled at the thought as she threw on her wrapper.

Magical Funnies

Author Unknown

Ring of Paranoia

The Ring is made of a white metal. It's very light, and inscribed with some runes which no-one can understand. If someone puts it on, they can't get it off again. It may radiate a slight magical aura if someone casts "Detect Magic" on it.

For best effect, once some sucker - er, PC - has put the thing on, the GM should occasionally roll a 20-sided die and snigger a bit. When the Ring wearer asks what's happened, the answer should be "Nothing yet".

Hopefully, the PC will get suspicious enough either to cut his finger off, or pay a high-level mage a lot of money to remove the Ring.

The ring is in fact totally harmless. It's very light, not because of any magic but because it's made of aluminium. It was made by a now extinct tribe of Hill Kobolds, hence the unreadable runes (which are simply the maker's name). It won't come off the wearer's finger because it's marginally too small. And the slight aura of magic (optional) is the residue of a Detect Magic spell cast by an earlier finder who took one look at it, then threw it away. Incidentally, the GM doesn't have to throw the 20-sided die - any die will do. Just use the same one every time.

Naturally, the mage will put on a serious expression and demand a lot of money before removing the ring. He will also prepare a Fireball spell just before he reveals the ring's true nature, in case someone gets angry. Use of soap will allow the wearer to remove the ring relatively painlessly. But how many adventurers are hygienic enough to be carrying that around?

Ring of Gaseous Form

One of the funniest cursed items I ever saw was the Ring of Gaseous Form. It didn't work by a command word, but rather it activated when you put it on, and deactivated when you took it off... save for the fact that your hand (among other things) was vaporous.

Arrows of Conscientious Objection

If you put these arrows in your victim's quiver, would alter themselves to look like the other arrows. When used, they would disappear just before hitting the opponent for damage. 10% of them, however, would turn into harmless flowers before hitting.

Spells we really Need

So far we've seen many 1/2 level spells from D&D but, there are many of these spells that are very useful to the modern day warrior; the college student. here are some which my fellow adveturers and i have collected and mastered.

CHARM ENGINEER: great for getting those snotty little buggers out of your face. the components needed are a high charisma and alot of bull. verbals consist of something like " wow. you are so smart..."

HASTE TEACHER: perfect for those long classes. the material components are a screwdriver and the class room clock. the somatics are twisting your hand with the screwdriver clockwise. verbals are "yeah. that's right. my watch has 2:15,too."

HOLD TEACHER: also good for those long classes or when you think the teacher is trying to squeeze in too much material before the exam.the somatics are raising your right(or left) hand while saying "aahhexcuse me. could you go over the again. i really don't see how you did that. i mean i was paying attention and all but..."

FIREBALL: self-explainitory. materials; a 55 gallon drum of napalm, a zippo lighter and one failed mid-term.

CONFUSION: not usually cast by itself. material; one bright red box that says "pull in case of emergency". this spell frequently follows the casting of fireball

COMPREHEND ECONOMETRICS: a 12th level spell, thus, uncastable

MELD INTO DESK: great spell for teachers that like to go over homework with the class. material; bad posture or the left guard of the football team sitting in front of you.

INVISIBILITY TO PROF: when class is too unbearable or if the jerk just doesn't know when to end the lesson, lay this baby on yourself and jaunter right outta there. material;sneakers good timing and an aisle seat.

DETECT BULLSHIT: this spell is usually used by the teacher when grading essays and the like. the reverse of this spell,BULLSHIT, will require the teacher to make a saving throw else the paper will appear to be well written and deserving of a good score. material; a thesaurus and alot of quotes and paraphrases.

FUMBLE: this is a new spell developed in the inner sanctums of penn state. we hope it will work against Notre Dame! material; one can of W-D 40 and the key to the equipment room.

Spells we really Don't Need

Detect Terrain: This has a somatic component, namely the caster pitches forward onto his face.

Feign Death: Collapse on your back, and hold a lily on your chest.

Detect Life: Placing fingers on under-side of the subject's wrist (feeling for a pulse).

Figby's Fidious Finger: "The last act of defiance". An obscene gesture.

Find Traps: Material component: one dumb fighter. Verbal component : "Why don't you check on ahead while I guard the rear?"

Dig: Material component: one dumb fighter, one shovel.

Smucker's Transformation: The caster utters a gasp of dismay and turns into a quivering mass of jelly.

Explosive Familiar: The caster's familiar explodes in a flaming ball. Does 1d4 damage to all within 10 feet (and considerably more to the familiar). Special familiars explode for 1d4+1 points damage.

Detect Life: The caster grasps the wrist of the creature and utters the words "It's dead, Jim." (I have seen this one posted, but the verbal component was omitted.)

Drawmij's Instant Death: When this spell is cast, Drawmij, wherever and whoever he is, dies instantly, no saving throw. As this spell has been around for a while, Drawmij is getting pretty tired of it.

Monster summoning: Walk through the forest saying "Gee, I wish I had my sword with me, or a friend to protect me and my LARGE AMOUNT of GOLD. I hope no MONSTERS find me ALL ALONE and DEFENSELESS..."

Creeping Doom: Lay out a picnic lunch in the middle of the woods.

Find Hand: Look at the end of your arm.

Dwigbees Instant Death Spell: When cast, Dwigbee, whoever he is and wherever he is, dies instantly. This spell has been around for a long time, and Dwigbee is rather pissed about it.

Gaming Traditions

By Chris Thompson (christ@ccnysci.UUCP)

The oddest tradition we have is that of the BF, or buddy-fuck. The classic example of this is when you've played the whole scenario, you're in the vault bloody & exhausted, and the GM says, "Well, I was going to throw a Greater Lich at you here, but I didn't think you'd get this far tonight, so I didn't make him up." And a member of your party says, "WAIT! I'VE GOT ONE HERE THAT I WAS GONNA USE! IN MY GAME!" This is a buddy-fuck. It got to the point that a BF was worth a few XP if it was a good one.

I actually came up with the new 'classic': there you are. You've just entered a lit room in the dungeon. Your thief is on point, and sick of it. After you pronounce the way clear, the party files in after you. THEN YOU POINT TO THE CORNER OF THE ROOM AND YELL:

"LOOK!!!!!! A BASILISK!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

Gets 'em every time.

BAG OF CHAOS II

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A non descript looking bag that nevertheless contains a surprising array of effects. The bag cannot be ripped, torn, or in any way destroyed, as it is made of pure chaos. Any effects, magic fire, etc, are to be absorbed by the bag. A list of its effects follows:
--

(roll a d20 before rolling for effect, any roll of a 1 or a 20 causes the rolled effect on the user)

1. **Varicose veins** -1 to charisma
2. **Phlegm** -2 CON, 1d4 hours, no verbal spells
3. **Corns** -2 CON, 1/2 mv. -2 dex (1d4 days, save vs Poly. for 1/2)
4. **Athelete's foot** -1 dex (-1 to initiative)
5. **Heart attack** make save vs. death spells or be six feet under
6. **Hair-loss** every 1d4 rnds, falling hair obscures vision making attack impossible (-3 to hit until hair removed from eyes)
7. **Uncontrollable vomiting** spend 1d4-1 rnds puking. Because the only thing yer gonna be doing for 1d4-1 rnds is puking, you cannot attack or use DEX bonus in AC (Can't dodge whilst heaving m'lord)

8. **Gas no sneaking!** Causes release of gas at random times (Hey! Who farted? Not FRRRRRPP! me said the Thief)
9. **Backpain** If ya drop yer weapon, good luck pickin' it up again!
10. **Ageing** make save vs Poly. or be 1d20 years older (age modifies stats ya know, and not for the better)
11. **B.O** Horrible stench! (Ya ever hear of Point Guard, adventurer strength deoderant?) CHA -4, no hiding in shadows or surprise fer you buddy! Also if invisible, only -2 to hit for those attacking)
12. **Bites yer finger** You reach in, hopin' fer the "Nuke the Universe" effect, but instead get yer finger bit! 1d6 pts dmg. (OWWW!)
13. **Itching powder** Causes an itch in eveywhere where ya can't reach (unless yer a contortionist). -1 attack, acts as IRRITATION SPELL, lasts 1d6 rnds
14. **Arthritis** -2 melee attacks, -3 bows, (Spells with SEMANTIC componants? HA! HA! HA! No way dude!)
15. **Excedrin 3 headache** Remember those really brutal migrane headaches? This ones on about 10 TIMES WORSE!!! No spells, period. -2 attack, no dex bonus on AC. Lasts for 1d4-1 rnds (I gotta headache this big...it's got CHAOS written all over it!)
16. **Magic glow** 15' radius major light spell. +2 to AC, stick out like a sore thumb to those using infravision (if person attacked with bag is using infravision, he ain't no more!). Gives off magical heat, doesn't do physical damage, but sure is easy to track with infravision.) Lasts 1d4 rnds.
17. **Sunburn** (Owwwch! That smarts! I hate that when that happens! I know what you mean.). Equiv. or laying out in Hawaii for, oh, about 6 hours (each side). You're now burnt to a golden crisp (stick out REAL good on infravision +1 for attack on you to those using it). Any armor you may be wearing (with the exception of anything up to leather) will come off very shortly (or your skin will, which do you prefer?) 1d4 pts per round while armor on.
18. **Gangrene REAL NASTY STUFF HERE!** (PG-13 stuff follows): Make save vs. Poly. or a random limb rots OFF! Roll a d6 to determine limb if save failed.
 1. Head (didn't need it anyway)
 2. Left leg (that's why ya got two of 'em. Er, now only 1)
 3. Left arm (good thing yer right handed. Are'nt you?)
 4. Right arm (Don't complain, coulda rolled a 6 and ya coulda lost both arms. Who says the gods of chaos ain't just?)
 5. Right leg (Ya can't "stand up on your own two feet" anymore, can you?)
 6. ROLL TWICE, ignore this effect (Have a nice day! :-)
19. **Butt plug** (Yuck! Ed Zeamba's favorite!) Cork magically appears in butt. Stays in for 1d4 rnds, when it comes out, head fer the hills! Everyone within a 15' radius, make save vs. poison or take 1d8 dmg from gas inhilation (magical farts! Yuck-ola!)
20. **ROLL TWICE MORE** ignore this effect (He he he!!)

The quote of the hour:

"Women, you can't live with them,
 you can't make them dress up
 in skimpy, little nazi costumes
 and beat you with warm squash."
 -Emo Phillips

NAVERO

PRIEST OF THE CORRECT AND UNALTERABLE WAY !!

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I

Our story begins when our Hero is chucked out of his monestary at age 16 to go out and learn the ways of the world. The Order is (as you might guess from the title) quite Lawful Good, but dear Navero has a streak of obstinancy in him, concerning how following the rules might not apply in every situation; this means he asks lots of stupid questions, and annoys the h**l out of his superiors. It was decided that this rather foolish youth should go out into the world, and see for himself, that the Way was the only way; perhaps experience and a few clouts to the head would teach him to keep his mouth shut.

Our Hero was not sent out all alone, of course: a half-elven mage named Dania (female, 4' 9", VERY earthy) had stopped by to purchase some Holy Water, but could not afford it, and so instead of paying was told to escort this young idiot for a little while, and see that he didn't get hurt.

The rest of the party was assembled in the traditional barfight. Dania had gone into a tavern to unwind, as Navero had been pestering her for days: he had never been that far from home before, and everything prompted his curiosity. Dania went into the tavern; Navero tagged along, and received the shock of his youthful life. People sitting around, not doing anything productive, willfully imbibing spiritous liquors! Gazing at his new friend with obviously unwholesome thoughts! (He didn't seem to notice that she was gazing right back.) The noise! The smells! This must be one of those pits of decrepitude that Father Gulucios sometimes spoke of, when warning about temptations! But how could anyone find this sort of behaviour tempting? It was so... vile, and undisciplined, and really icky!

Our hero stood up on a table, and began to preach. He wasn't nearly as good as Father Gulucios — the big man with the black beard and scar on his face knocked Navero down, and some more people started tossing him around the room, and everyone was laughing at him. Then he landed on a VERY big man who grabbed the man with the scar and struck him in the face. A great fight began; It swirled around the room, Navero in the middle; he tried to tell them about the eternal damnation of their souls that these actions would no doubt assure, but no one would listen. Finally, a small man in a suit of plate mail (YES! a PC!) grabbed Our Hero and dragged him out into the street.

Cavalier: "You stay out here, good holy man... er, choir boy, er... No matter — I and my companions shall sort out this lot of unruly peasants."

There commenced much sound and fury, signifying nothing. After it was all over, Dania came out, looking rather disheveled, and told Our Hero in no uncertain terms never to do anything like that again.

Navero: "But I must! If I do not, I will have failed my duty to my faith. 'One must strike when Opportunity grants it.' It is written that our duty is sacred, to bring the light to the world, and save those who are lost."

Dania: "YOU almost lost your (obscene gerund) HEAD!! And mine, and that really (censored) (censored) (really censored!) you (Racial slur). I ought to..."

But at this moment, the short person in plate mail came out of the tavern, with someone who looked like a mercenary, and a mysteriously cloaked figure. There was a dent in the short person's helmet, but he did not take the time to try and explain it.

Cavalier: "Well, that was entertaining. You there, young priest! Do you know any sorts of healing arts?"

Navero: "Um... I took my training from Father Angorian, who once..."

Cavalier: "Very good! We have need of a healer, as we are going north to seek out an Orc lair that needs to be emptied. It shouldn't be too much trouble, but your presence would be appreciated. One of the others may have a need of you. There should be riches and glory for all involved. Your little friend can come along too, if she likes."

And so, the party formed and we went on our first adventure. I know that this hasn't been particularly funny so far, but what happened in that Orc lair should make up for it. When Navero first went into combat, the results were... well, shall we say, what you'd expect of him?

II

I believe that the last time I posted, I had just reached the point where Navero and Dania joined the party, which is now comprised of five people: Navero, Dania, Rizudo (a fighter), the Cavalier (whose name I do not recall) and an Assassin. They set out on horseback (our DM was kind enough to let starting characters have horses :-)) for a small keep to the north, in the middle of a swamp, which was rumored to be having troubles with Orcs. Of course, getting there was half the fun...

From the very first, we all hit it off like Nitro and Glycerin. Ever since that time, I have always felt that intra-party fighting should be normal at first. People who go out adventuring tend to be confident in themselves, and as such do not work well with others, at first, if they feel they can do it better alone. There are, of course, exceptions, and this strongly individual streak should wear out in time as the party members get to know and trust each other. But at first, for the party members to work together well is not realistic, and our party was no exception to this. The first day we were together, there were three actual fights between members - weapons drawn, and once blows exchanged. We hurt ourselves more than the monsters would for a week.

Anyway, we were travelling North to the keep, and found our first "real" combat. This is the first time Navero got to strut his stuff in a fight, and it's not a coincidence that it is the first time he nearly died. We had passed through a very poor hamlet, which an old woman told us was poor because of a ravenous beast that would periodically descend from the sky, and slay and eat and carry off children.

The Cavalier: "A DRAGON! It must be! At last, a foe worthy of my mettle! We must leave at once; these impoverished people's lives depend upon the aid we can give them. The beast must be slain, and its treasure looted."

Navero: "Well, we should help, of course. Do you think we can just convince it not to eat the villagers? I read that Dragons can talk. That would be a much better way to take care of the problem, and then maybe it could eat fish or something and everyone would be much happier."

(A short pause ensued.)

Rizudo: "I don't know about this, kids. Dragons are dangerous, ya know. Why don't we all just go away and let them sort things out?"

Dania: "Because Dragons have lots of money."

Rizudo: "Well, I guess that settles it. We should get to know each other better, babe. You're a chick after my own heart."

The Assassin: "With a large knife..."

And so our heroes bravely rode forth to do battle. Of course, they first had to find their opponent, which proved somewhat difficult as they were in a swamp. Time passed, and evening came, and the Cavalier waxed sorley pissed.

The Cavalier: "Where is the beast? One might almost think it afraid of me."

Rizudo: "Maybe it's female. Women run away from you, ya know."

At this point, we all heard a great flapping of wings, and looked up to see the evening sky blotted out by a great leathery shape... It was a dragon, or something very closely akin, although it had only 2 legs and was lumpy about the head. Whatever it was, Navero was quite horrified, his arms felt weak, his heart fiald, and he began uttering prayers to the Lords of the Correct and Unalterable Way. It was an instinctual reaction, one born of the years of his cloistered life, and of course he made his prayers as long and as loud as he could...

Dania: "NAVERO, SHUT UP!! IT'LL HEAR YOU... oh shit."

One beady red eye cocked in our direction. Slowly, with ancient grace, the thing turned in midair, and came shrieking into the middle of the party like a bat out of hell. The Cavalier charged forward to meet it; Rizudo ran away; Dania popped off a magic missile and ran away; The Assassin was long gone. Navero remained; his horse had thrown him and run, leaving him on his butt in a puddle staring at the monster coming right at him. He suddenly remembered that today was St. Kilgurian's Day, and he had forgotten to say the proper prayers that morning.

The great Beast slammed to the ground, by some miracle not landing on anyone, it's leathery wings about it, covering the road in smelly shadow. With a mighty shout that sounded pitifully small to Navero, the Cavailier charged the beast with his lance; it broke. A crossbow bolt came out of the bushes, and struck it in the flank; it seemed annoyed. Realizing that the beast was the implacale embodiment of all that was evil in the world, Navero roused himself and took out the flanged mace Father Gilliam gave him, and aimed such a mighty blow at its ridged back that when it bounced off, it hit Navero square in the face for 1 point of damage. (Critical fumble.) The beast tried to bite the Cavalier, but it missed; it's tail strike did not miss, but killed his horse and stunned him. The thing then looked around at Navero.

Rizudo: "We can't let it kill the medic! Wizard-bitch! Zap it again! And you, whats-her-face, do something or get your ass out of here."

Dania: "Fuck you, asshole. Get in there and do something with that sword."

Rizudo: "You want to see my sword in action? Now is harldy the time, but I'll take you up on it later. What do you use that staff for, anyway?"

The Assassin: Considers killing Rizudo, decides against it.

The Cavalier roused himself, and once again valiantly took to the fray. He struck twice, with two longswords, and miraculously both found soft spots in the thing's scarred scales, wounding it! Navero struck again, and this time merely hit the ground beside it. The beast then tried to bite Navero; it succeded beyond its wildest dreams, inflicting 13 points of damage to an otherwise inoffensive young priest. Navero dropped with a thump and heard no more of the mighty battle. He woke several hours later, to the sweet voices of his comrades in arms.

Rizudo: "Look, kid. Don't ever go charging in like that again. You're supposed to be healing US. Or do you have a thing about swinging your stick around?"

Dania: "Yeah. Leave the fights to the experts."

The Cavilier: "Good advice under any circumstances. While your presence may have served as a possibly useful distraction, I really did not require your aid to defeat the monster. After my first strokes, all the fight seemed to leave it, so powerful was my thrust."

Rizudo: "Yep. There was also that poisoned dart we found in it mouth, too."

The Cavalier: "Tut. Dragons are immune to poison."

* * *

Our "dragon" was actually a very old Wyvern, that had lost an eye and its poison tail barb in past fights. It was preying on the villagers because it was too decrepit to catch anything else. But to a first level party, such beasts would seem as dragons indeed. We found no treasure, and soon went on our merry way.

Dan Parsons "I didn't know Dragons were that rubbery."

III

Let's see... We were attacked by a crippled old Wyvern, killed it with no deaths, and continued on our way to the north. Navero was the only one seriously hurt in the encounter - he went to -4 hit points, but we play that you must go to -10 to die, so he was merely dying, until he was bandaged up. He Cured Light Wounds on the Cavalier, as his religion forbade him doing so on himself while another was hurt. The biggest problem was the Cavalier's horse, which the Wyvern killed, leaving our mini-tank on foot. He had to share with Dania, the lightest person in the party, which irked him no end; but then, he was easily irked.

The remainder of the journey was almost without incident. The only thing of note was the fact that Rizudo was a heavy sleeper.

Rizudo: * Snore *

The Cavailer: Dumps a bucket of water on Rizudo.

Rizudo: "**Glub! Huhh? Whaza fuckes goin on?"

The Cavalier: "A very small raincloud. It has passed now."

Our Heros arrived at Swamp Keep (Yes, that was the name) and were greeted with the customry fanfare and pomp.

Guard 1: "Gor, wha' a scruffy-looking lot this is, comin' u' the road."

The Cavalier: "Hail, good fellows! Run and tell your Lord and Master that we have arrived to rid your fair land of its infestation."

Guard 1: "Piss off."

Guard 2: "Are you the rat-catchers, then?"

Rizudo: "Shut up, open the gate. We want to see your inns, your ale, and your WOMEN! After that, we wanna talk about the Orcs."

Guard 3: "Why, whatever's going on here, Neville?"

Guard 2: "Oh, nothing, Percy. Some gentlemen, and a few ladies too, are here and making a fuss about something. Don't worry yourself."

Guard 1: "Shut up! (To Cavalier) Who are you?"

The Cavalier: "For shame, lout! Do you not recognize my device? My house is known far and wide, and has been heard of even in these impoverished lands. Come, open the gates and be quick about it; you try my patience."

Guard 3: "Oh, he's not very nice, is he?"

Guard 1: "Look, shrimp, all I see is a miniature buffoon ridin' with some little elf-bitch on an old horse..."

Again, there commenced much sound and fury, signifying nothing. Fortunately for our quest, there was more sound than fury, and we were able to get inside (eventually). Most of us went about practical sorts of business - Navero went to pray, and recover from his injuries. Rizudo, I believe, went to find the tavern, but it was not open at that hour. The Assassin disappeared for a while (The player who was running her was not there that day.) Dania studied spells. The Cavalier decided to go introduce himself to the Master of the Keep. He had his armor repaired and the device on his shield repainted (10gp well spent, or so he thought) and strode forth to meet the Master, who was out on his croquet lawn at that moment.

The Cavalier: Strides onto croquet lawn, plants his shield firmly in the sod so the device is plainly visible. "Greetings, Lord and Master of this fine Castle."

Master: "Oh! My croquet lawn! You've dented it! Wahhh..."

Courtier: "Oh, its alright, Eric. Just breathe calmly, now, and relax. Everything will be just fine."

The Cavalier: "Uh... I wish to introduce myself. I..."

Courtier: "Not now! Can't you see what you've done? Get out: just go, or I'll put the hounds on you!"

And so the day passed for our heroes. When night came, many of the party retired to the only tavern, a rather miserable one. Navero did not go to the tavern, of course; he had gone out among the townsfolk, and happened upon one who had wounded himself with an axe and was bleeding to death; Navero cured the hurt, and the grateful family was only too happy to put him up for the night. He quietly discussed religious matters with them, particularly their salvation and the joys of life in the Correct and Unalterable way, and although they were very polite, most of the family seemed to ignore him. The only exception was their young daughter, who payed a lot of attention to him. While he was pleased at the opportunity to spread the faith, she didn't really pay much attention to what he said; she just looked at him strangely, and sat uncomfortably close, and took every possible opportunity to touch him, which made Navero very uncomfortable. (As explanation, I should note that Navero has CHARISMA 13, COMELINESS 16. The DM rolled the young lady a LUST score of 17.)

And so night passed, and morning came.

Dan Parsons "Oh, you're injured! Let me take off all your clothes..."

IV

After a good nights sleep (yes — even for Navero) we all met at the castle gate, and went to see the Keep Master to tell him of our plans and secure his permission in our endeavour. At the door to his chambers, we met a pair of his elite guardsmen.

Guard 1: "Oh, It's those awful people from the gate yesterday. Send them away, please, they gave me a terrible tension headache."

Dania: "Oh, (obsenity). We are here to see the Lord and Master of this Keep, so that we can get his permission to go out and kill all the orcs in his lands."

The Cavalier: "Open the doors. And do be quick about it; we haven't all day."

Guard 2: "Orcs? Oh, yah, them. You in'rested in 'em, li'l lady? They'd take a real fancy to yu! (uncouth laughter) Now bugger off."

Dania: "Why? You don't want to loose any of your relatives?"

Guard 1: "How did you ever know about that?"

Naverro: "Please, please listen to me. Tales of the terrible deeds of this band of pillagers have reached our ears in our own lands, and our hearts do truly go out to you in your plight. We have come here with our only thought to aid you, and promise to you that, by whatever means, these terrible people shall no longer trouble your community with their harrasment and evil. We beg of you, please allow us to enter that we may seek the blessings of the castle Lord, and ride as your emmisaries."

Guard 1: "Oh, he's sweet."

Rizudo: "And then we'll kill 'em all. And we expect to be paid, too."

Naverro: "Killing them should be a last resort, one to which we fall when all hope is lost."

Rizudo: "Yeah, right. C'mon, let us in."

The Cavalier: "Indeed. I am unaccustomed to being kept waiting by servants."

Guard 2: "SHUT UP! I'm wornin' yu, be outa my sight, or I'll set tha dog on ya."

Dania: "A dog? A dog? Oh, watch me quake with fear!"

Rizudo: "I'll watch you shake anytime. Shake and bounce and quiver with.."

Naverro: "Uh.... May I please ask you to stop, um... I mean..."

Rizudo: "Yeah, what?"

Naverro: "Uh... Never mind."

Guard 1: "Oh, you've frightened him. That wasn't very nice. Your'e a brute."

Guard 2: "SHUT UP ALL O' YU!! Right! Tha dog it is, then! Rog!! Open the dog's door."

Guard 1: "Are you sure? You know what a time we had getting him back in there the last time you let him out..."

The party heard the clanking of chains and the groan of wood, and looked to the wall beside them to see another door was being opened. A very low growl shook the battlements, and the guard settled back with a satisfied smirk. We all retreated rather rapidly, except for the Cavalier.

The Cavalier: "A dog, then? I hope I can ammise myself with it. And after that, I shall deal with another dog which lies within my view, to his great sorrow, for trying the patience of..."

At this point, Rizudo hit him over the head with a large block of stone, rendering him unconscious, and we all went into a full retreat. We never did see the dog, and I'm not even sure there ever was one, as that guardsman certainly did laugh a lot. I should note that we had to get a private room for bandaging the Cavalier's head; he is a Dwarf, and normally wears his helmet constantly, and we did not wish to advertise his origins. This altercation left us with few alternatives. Do we go for the Orcs anyway? Do we leave, and hope something better comes along? Or do we all go our separate ways? Navero, of course, pointed out that we would have to go for the Orcs anyway, just because it was the only right thing to do. He had spoken to the family he spent the night with about the Orcs, and they seemed supportive of the idea of someone stopping them. Rizudo expressed the hope that they would have enough treasure to make it all worth it, a point on which Dania and the Assassin agreed.

Navero: "I realize that money can be useful, but it shouldn't be the only motive. Why is it that some people will risk their lives for it, but not for each other?"

Rizudo: "That's because people aren't worth shit, Nav. Someday you'll learn that. Take our insensible companion here..."

Dania: "Best description of him I've heard."

The Assassin: "Most people are useful, in one way or another, but pass away after only a short time. Truly lasting monuments cannot be built on weak flesh, but must be dedicated to something more lasting."

Navero: "But..."

The Cavalier: "Owww.... What struck me? Was it the Dragon?"

Rizudo: "Nope. A very small hailstorm. But it's gone now."

The Cavalier: "By my troth, I do think YOU hit me. You shall answer for it right now, you unworthy..."

Dania: "Please, lie down. I saw quite clearly that Rizudo didn't hit you. It was a horrible beast that moved so fast, it was but a blur. We were barely able to pull you away from it."

The Cavalier: "I did not see it at all."

Rizudo: "That's because you were wearing your helmet."

The Cavalier: "Priest! Do they speak truth? If they do not they shall pay dearly for it."

Navero: "Ummm... No..Ye..N..Ye... Rizudo never touched you. A rock did."

The Cavalier: "A rock?"

Navero: "A rock from the battlements."

The Cavalier: "I was struck down by a stone that fell from the battlements? Mage, I forgive you your lie. I am ashamed to know I was downed by such an ignoble accident. It is good that you thought to spare me the knowledge."

Dania: "Right."

The Cavalier: "Well, I must seek some way to redeem myself. We must go to the Orc den; there may I erase this failure with the blood of evil creatures."

Rizudo: "Ok."

Navero: "Um... Do we have to kill them?"

Rizudo: "Nav, Orcs are not going to sit down and parley."

The Cavalier: "Yes; they are notoriously unreasonable."

Navero: (looks pensive)

Our heroes secured their mounts, and rode off into the swamp in the direction the Orcs usually came from. How easy would it be for an entire band of Orcs to hide in a swamp?

Dan Parsons "I feel bad about this. I wish Father Lucius were here."

A Mariner Update

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The following is an short account of two sessions in a play by email (PBeM) campaign Wayne Wallace was find enough to submit to the journal. The DM, Phill Everson, runs his campaign over the computer net from the United Kingdom. This article is included in the journal to show one of the many uses Guild members may make of their guest accounts on ucrmath.

Campaign: mariner

Date: 1 Hammer, 1358DR Year of the Prince

Weather: Cloudy, Cold (20), None, Light, 88.4"

Location: The Dock's Quarter, Waterdeep.

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First day of the new year and boy is it cold! The snow's feet deep and unfortunately it doesn't look as if your funds are going to stretch out 'till Greengrass and the resumption of any significant business in this so-called metropolis of the North. OK, so it's big - very big - but in the dead of winter there's not that much going on.

Last night during the end of year celebrations you heard that a ship was recruiting crew to leave for southern waters in the next week. The meeting place is the CookHouse hall first thing on the first day of the new year. What a time to pick!

Not far to go now, CookHouse Hall should be just around this corner... there seems to be a lot of smoke about down this end of town this morning - must have been bonfires in last night's celebration round here...

'sfunny. There's been a big bonfire here. Ah. Oh. That's were the CookHouse Hall used to be... Oh dear ... I wonder what'll happen to that job - hope it's not gone up in smoke with the hall.

There's quite a lot of city guardsmen slithering around on the ice that has formed from the melted snow. The authorities didn't really have much of a chance of putting it out with ordinary water and by the time sea water could be brought to the scene the Hall was all but destroyed. Rumour has it that a break away group of the Leatherheads - one of the urchin gangs in the South Docks area was responsible. The guards and the 'heads themselves are out for the culprits in force.

Further on down nearer the actual quayside there's a crier ringing a hand bell, shouting, "All interested in signing up for the Merry Belle, heading south. The Merry Belle. Heading South. Meet at The Hanged Man on Net Street at Noon. Hanged Man . Net Street at Noon....". He repeats, "All interested in.." and moves off down the quayside out of earshot.

'Seems like a more sensible time...

By noon you're in the Hanged Man on Net Street. It's a nice warm tavern, even if it is a trifle small. The place seems to be quite crowded - hopefully they're not all after a job on the Merry Belle or you'll be getting hungry again...

A tall dark skinned man with a black goatee beard stands up, repeatedly bangs on a table with his flagon until the hubub quietens down and says, "Welcome. Gents... and ladies of course." He smiles before continuing, "I'm Pzakar Hulithos from Calimshan down south as I'm sure you can see. I'm looking for about 8 or 10 crew for my ship, The Merry Belle. Leaving for Baldur's Gate, Muran, Zazesspur and thence down to Calimport. Work for your passage and a salary of 5 gold crowns a week." He gestures towards a table with another man of obvious Calishite origins sits with scroll and pen ready, "Jahal Berishnik here, my Captain, will take your names. We leave on the morning tide 5 days from now. Any one signing on will be expected to help load the ship in the meantime." He pauses, "Come on then, let's be having you."

There's a bit of pushing and shoving, but you manage to be one of the 9 people hired. A pretty mixed bunch, but when you've marked the ship's papers and given the mariner's oath to complete your end of the contract at least to the first port of call, Jahal gives you each 4 gold crowns as an advance for the time you will be loading and says he expects to see you first thing in the morning. The hammocks in the 'Belle are available for all those who need someplace to stay before departure.

In the meantime with your new found wealth you make for the bar for some food and drink with your new companions and introduce yourself...

Campaign: mariner

Date: 1 Hammer, 1358DR Year of the Prince

Weather: Cloudy, Cold (20), None, Light, 88.4"

Location: The Hanged Man, Net Street, Waterdeep.

One of the first to the bar, squeezing nimbly between the crowds trying to get a drink, is an attractive girl with a tanned and slightly freckled face, a cheerful grin and a mane of wavy blonde hair which seems determined to escape from the small silver hair-slide which is trying to keep some of it pulled back from her face. She neatly dodges the uninvited attentions of a burly and leering dockhand, gets slapped on the behind by a sailor, flashes both a winning smile, collects her flagon of mead from the bar and sits down with the rest of the party, swinging her slim legs up to rest her boots on the table.

"So," she says, taking a pull at her mug and pushing her long hair out of her eyes with her free hand, "...Aaah - that's better... Anyone know anything about this Pzakar Hulithos character?" Her voice betrays the merest trace of a Dalelands accent. "No? Oh well, never mind." Her green eyes sparkle mischievously over the top of the flagon of mead. "You guys going to tell me about yourselves, then?"

"Good day Lady, My name is Mortimus Arms and I worship Silvanus, The Oak Father", pipes up a chubby, but seemingly well-muscled blonde haired man in studded leather armour. "What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this", he says, winking.

"Me?" She puts her hand up to brush her hair back again, mutters a most unladylike curse and shakes the unruly mane free of its binding, before tossing her head back and fastening the hair in some semblance of order. "I'm Philippa." She pauses, then grins, wickedly. "I'm a thief." She takes another long drink of mead, obviously enjoying the effect this statement has on the rest of the party. "There, that's better out in the open, isn't it? I'm sure you were all terribly suspicious." Philippa fiddles with one end of the thonging that holds her leather tunic mostly closed. "But," her voice and face turn serious, "I only steal things from people who won't miss them or who deserve it, and I won't steal from my friends." The irrepressible grin comes back. "And since you're all going to be my friends, you'd better call me Phil, like the rest of my friends. Anyone want me to fetch them another drink?" So saying, she drains the last of her flagon of mead.

"Another Ale." "Mead" "Yuh, mead for me too" "Mulled wine for me. Something hot, if they have it - an ale otherwise" "Shhays, jusht shome wasser for mess."

The deep lisping tones of the last order attract attention to probably the oddest member of the party, definitely bringing the group nearer to the term 'motley' rather than just crew. There's a tall lizardman wearing a thrown-back winter cloak standing in the shadows of the alcove just behind Philippa. A feathered lizard's head fetish hangs off a leather backpack harness hung at his belt. All of his worldly possessions are clearly in the backpack, and they don't look very valuable, unless you plan to live in a swamp for an extended period of time. A nictitating membrane flickers across his eye in irritation from the smoke as he continues, "Hst! Fhaive whole gold crowns ha week! His iss very good pay, no? Yes?"

The lizardman throws out his hand in a gregarious and happy fashion to the nearest person, a tall man with black hair and a rather heavy shaggy beard, which has obviously not been shaved for weeks. He looks like a drunk and down-and-out, but somehow seems to carry himself like a man of nobility.

"Hah! Haye ham Ssaynhar, What iss your name?", the lizardman continues.

(NB: Pronunciation Guide: Ssaynhar sounds like say-yin-har, the h being glottal, like the ch in l'chaim)

"I'm Fost Darkwing. A fighter from the North.", the back haired man replies attempting to gently extricate his hand from Ssaynhar's firm grip. "A pleasure to meet you, Ssaynhar. I'm sure you will be a very useful crew member on the Merry Belle."

"S'my pleashurse. I do hopshe so."

"Ah, my dear fellow. Perhaps you could advise me on which brew is the most refreshing? Oh... yes, of

course. Renald. Renald Telshire at your service", says a young man clad in green with a very large well-built bow slung over his shoulder.

(Renald speaks, I'm afraid, in a particularly overdone English accent. Certainly to my ears anyway! Ouch, those vowels. Phill)

"S'welth, I can triexs."

The lizardman and the Renald wander over towards the bar.

Philippa collects orders and money from everyone who wants another drink, pointing out "I didn't say I was buying, just fetching!" and with a smile, worms her way through to the bar and then navigates her way back with a tray full of drinks, and the correct change for everyone.

"There you are," she says, settling herself back into her former position with feet up on the table. She looks round enquiringly at the rest of the party, green eyes sparkling. "I suppose you want the rest of the story, now you've got over the first bit? Well," she says, setting her almost full tankard of mead down on the table, "there's not that much more to tell, really. I was born in Mistedale, and got rid of the Dales to come to Waterdeep before they got rid of me! I'm not too bad with a sword, I suppose— not as good as you though.", she says looking admiringly at some of the more obvious fighters in this corner of the tavern before continuing, "And I can climb walls and ropes, and get into most places, and get out again afterwards. And I can look after myself." The implication of this is softened by the impish smile she bestows on the rest of the party, before leaning her chair back against the wall and taking another draught of the inn's excellent mead, her eyes large over the rim of the tankard.

"What about the rest of you?", Philippa asks.

"I'm Nevindil Dark", says a rather average looking half-elf. All of his clothes are in dull earth tones - browns, greens and other non-exciting colours. He has long hair pulled into a pony tail at the back. "Looking forward to going back to sea."

"Ah, a sea elf!", interjects Philippa.

"Well, from the sea anyway", replies Nevindil after a short pause.

"Good day to you, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Ulfinor, or for those of you less used to the elven tongue, please call me Blade— I prefer it. I too look forward to going back to the sea", says a well tanned slenderly built half-elf with an almost courtly grace. "I look forward to serving on board the Merry Belle with you, kinsman Nevindil", he continues giving an almost imperceptible nod of his head towards the other half-elf.

"Kith and kin, kith and kin", says a elf from Ssaynhar's side. "I am Jade Skye— a pleasure to meet some of my... perhaps more... distant cousins", says a full elf with honey blonde hair, green eyes and a particularly nasty scar where his neck meets his left shoulder. He has a cutlass at his belt and numerous daggers in sheaths on his body— in his boots, across his chest and other similar places.

There is a silence.

"And I'm Th, uh Granger. A good day to to you all. What was your name again?", says a very young looking man with sandy brown hair in a brown robe that makes him look almost like an Altar Boy.

Nevindil finishes his drink and goes to fetch another.

"Good day Sir, I see that you are also travelling on the Merry Belle and thought that I would introduce

myself. My name is Mortimus Arms and as you can see I am also a priest like yourself. May I ask which God it is that you worship?", says Mortimus as he pushes his way through the group to stand next to Granger.

"Why, I'm a druidic devotee of Silvanus like yourself. You're a priest of Silvanus, are you not?", replies Granger.

The two clerics move slightly away from the rest of the group and begin to talk seemingly of religious matters— esoteric to the rest of the group.

Over by the bar Fost has just persuaded the barkeeper to fill his wineskin with rough house red wine and comes back with Nevindil to the rest of the group.

"Are you a thief like our little vixen?", Nevindil asks Fost, laughing.

"No, no. I'm a fighting man who, I suppose, has just lost his way and purpose in the world. I'm simply trying to survive— to make a living. Nothing mysterious, I'm afraid and definitely nothing exciting", Fost says.

"Well!", says a rather educated and almost imperious female voice, "my name is Tar Amarinda - a weaver of spells. Certainly not a thief", she finishes stressing the word not. She has dark hair and looks to be in her mid-twenties and is fairly tall for a woman although the drabness of her clothes clashes with the occasional cultured lilt of her voice.

"Tsh a pleashuresh, madams", says Ssaynhar.

"What's it like sailing on ships, Nevindil", asks Mortimus intently, breaking off his ecclesiastical discussions for a while, "I've never been to sea for any real length of time before."

"I'd imagine that we'll be hugging the coast most of the time. Should be seeing plenty of settlements on the long journey to Baldur's Gate. A goodly distance. You'll be having fun for the first few days, Priest, while your hands toughen up to the ropes. I hope the weather isn't too bad. Snow is OK, but a storm we could certainly do without," Nevindil replies.

After a couple of hours of aimable chat, drinking and eating, the group make their way down Net Street towards the quayside.

The Merry Belle is a Knarr— about 60 feet long and 20 feet wide. It has a single mast and looks like it would have a single square sail from the rigging. There are a few oars at the bow and stern and a covered cabin area in the centre of the ship beneath the mast.

(I have a postscript map/picture of the Merry Belle that some of you with access to a postscript printer may like a copy of. Email me if you do. Phill)

There is covered space on board ship and hammocks with hooks to hang them on. Most people get settled into their new cramped communal quarters, but Phil heads off into town. An hour or so later she returns sporting a new bronze hair slide.

There seems to be an awful lot of goods in the warehouse next to the 'Belle where it seems storage space has been rented. Mostly wood, but some cloth and finished goods— high quality chairs, metalwork and the like. Looks like its going to take a few days for you all to load this little lot!

(I await your instructions. Some of you might want to wander around Waterdeep during any free time you might have, converse with other crew members etc etc. I'm sure you've plenty of ideas. Phill)

My Interview with Smaug

This article was posted to rec.games.frp on January 12th, 1990 by climber@uvicctr.UVic.CA.UUCP of the University of Victoria, Victoria B.C. Canada.

My name is Rolaf Hanagin. By trade I am blacksmith in the town of Hasville in the northern province of the Tekseria. What you will find below, gentle reader, is a transcript of my conversation with the great and infamous evil Red Dragon, Smaug. What possessed me to interview Smaug only the Gods will ever know and understand. At any rate, I did arrange for the interview and somehow managed to survive it.

In the year 77070, Smaug was making some raids near my home during the summer. We were all afraid of him and the King had promised we would be protected from Smaug's attentions. We all know how much water such a promise would hold. Anyways, this last visit was the first in almost 200 years. It had been so long that the name Smaug was something we told our children if we wanted to them to behave; 'Smaug'll getcha if you don't go to bed right now!' I would not have believed it myself had I not been witness to the dragon packing off half of my Chlen herd not six weeks ago. Outside of my usual terror, anger and feeling of helplessness, I could not help but be overcome with a sense of wonder at this terrible creature that has struck fear into the hearts of so many. Three weeks after the above incident, I realized I could not overcome this mixed sense of curiosity and apprehension until I confronted Smaug, face to teeth. It was then I decided, that by Hell or high water, I was going to have a talk with him, just because.

Getting the interview was suprisingly easy. I just walked out into my field with 6 Chlen from the cave where I was hiding them and burnt a very large message into the field: 'Smaug, I would like to talk to you.' I left the Chlen tied to a post together in a loop. Looking back on it, I still wonder what made me do such a really DUMB thing. Three days after, while I was in bed, Smaug came to visit.

I woke up to a huge voice bellowing for whoever wrote this message to come out. Naturally, I nearly jumped out of my skin. But, after getting a hold of myself, I managed to overcome my fear and took some paper, a lamp and some quills outside to get it over with.

I left my home just at the moment he had finished off the last of the Chlen beasts. This rather impressed me since each weighs nearly 800 kg. He was very large, I figured about 30 meters from snout to the tip of his tail was his length. He was not quite as large in girth as I imagined. His wings were vast and when he opened them to stretch, they covered the sky like a large cloud. He emitted a powerful sulpherous odor that took some getting used to. He did not, however, emit a terrible rotting-type reke that I had expected from evil monsters. He gave off a strong red glow which dulled my need to use the lamp to see. Below is a transcript of our short conversation.

S: Are you the one that wrote that message in the field?

ME: Yes, I am. I was hoping I could have a chance to talk to you.

S: What about?

ME: Just to learn about you. I guess this is like an interview.

Smaug mulled this over for a few seconds. I guess he was terribly curious about this. I had hoped, for my sake, his curiosity was as strong as legend.

S: Ok, why not. But before we get started, I want to ask a question: Why are you doing this incredibly stupid thing?

ME: I don't know, maybe because no one has done it before.

S: All right, then. If you grovel properly, I may let you live afterwards. Start your questions, time is blood.

ME: How old are you, great destroyer of cities?

S: At least 7000 years and I have no doubt I have a few years left.

ME: Where were you born?

S: The word is 'hatched' you worthless little human. I was laid by the dragoness Wespersel in the East Umbrian mountains. My male parent is unknown to me.

ME: Is Wespersel her truename?

S: Yes, but she was destroyed in battle with a stinkin gold dragon about 3000 years ago, so forget any plans of using her truename. And, If I ever find that dork of a Gold Worm, I AM GONNA PULVERIZE THAT GOOD-FOR-NUTTIN SCUMBAG; LIKE THIS BOULDER HERE!

(Pulverize, pulverize, pulverize)

ME: (recoiling back) I don't understand, I thought no dragons ever felt anything for other dragons.

S: WRONG, you munchie. About the only thing we 'BAD' dragons feel any kind of affection for, outside of ourselves, is our mothers. We have yet to figure out why.

ME: Does anyone know your truename?

S: (burp) Nope.

ME: Why do you destroy cities and the like wherever you go?

S: Because I CAN.

ME: Oh, I suppose that's a good reason as any. Tell me, wonderous mauler of the hordes, do you have a mate or mates?

S: Well, not really. I think they would be better referred to as 'rape victims.' (chuckle, chuckle, snort) What about you, you yummy cracker-liner?

ME: No, she died years ago.

S: Gee, what a bummer. I really feel for ya, human. (Heavy sarcasm) I suppose its just as well, I would have probably demanded her as a sacrifice.

ME: I always hear dragons especially like virgin princesses more than anything else. Why? Do they taste better?

S: Actually, its not the taste. We like to eat princesses mostly because its good for our image. In addition, it really pisses off muscular Kings, Heroes and princes. Now, THEY'RE yummy.

ME: You are not at all what I expected, incredible calamity of calamities.

S: You were expecting a blustering display of fireworks, yelling, smoke, etc?

ME: Actually, yes I rather was. I thought all evil dragons were like that.

S: I decided not to bother. I usually reserve that kind of show for someone who can retell the tale of 'The Great Meeting With Smaug' and get believed by those who listen to him. (Leering close) You disappointed?

ME: WHO, ME? NO, NO, NOT AT ALL, powerful smasher of civilization.

S: Good, I just wanted to be sure. Also, we are NOT evil, we are BAD, it sounds a lot better. Now, this interview is terminated. I heard of some magic-user to the south that needs to get beaten on. I have decided in my infinite wisdom to let you live, for now. Sweet dreams, little mortal. Don't forget, 'good' is a four-letter word.

It was at this point he suddenly took off and headed south. I was very glad to finished with the interview since he was starting to look a little hungry. All in all, it went rather well, especially since I lived through the experience. I just kind of wished he hadn't taken a dump on my house as he flew away.

Date: Wed, 18 Apr 90 17:13:27 PDT
From: cyborg (aaron paul miaullis)
Message-Id: (9004190013.AA07776@ucrmath.ucr.edu)

Presenting

the "Dreaded Dwarven Yo-Yo Gambit"

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At the Friends of University of California at Riverside Convention (yes, FUCRCon) that was held 3/2/90 there was a bit of trouble that some 6/7th level AD&D characters got into.

They came out of a mine filled with corpses and spiders and crawled up a shaft leading to sunlight. There was a monk, a cavalier, a dwarven fighter/cleric, a mage and other assorted types in the party. When they got to the top of the shaft in thick overgrowth they saw a clearing twenty feet or so below them and a pack (15+) of troglytes (I think [I wasn't terribly awake at the time]) with the heavy possibility of more forces and a high level mage within summoning distance. There was a quick conference and all agreed (except the cavalier) that a frontal attack was out of the question because the nasties were out of spell range and would only take half damage from the fireball the mage had. So, the plan was made.

The dwarf had herself tied up (in her chainmail dress) and lowered on a rope (with muscled calf exposed). My suggestion of smearing barbeque sause on her leg was rejected.

The nasties, seeing a female dwarf dangling in the air shouting at them that she was so tough that she was just going to dangle there to prove what wimps they were, charged.

At the final second, when all the nasties were converging on the dwarf, the party yanked the dwarf out of there and fried the trogs.

I still think the barbeque sause would have been a nice finishing touch.

—with fried mental software,

Aaron (cyborg@ucrmath.ucr.edu)

FOOL TO FEED THE DRIVE

*A hundred parsecs out, on a ship quite second rate
The engineer, McQuillin, sent the word up to the mate: "Our engine's out of steam," he
said, "and soon our ship will die, If we can't find a planet with fuel to
feed the drive."*

*Now, our ship's a noble lady, and our captain, she is, too, But our
engineer is none too bright; the dimwit of our crew. The captain said,
"I thought you filled the tanks on Vega Five." McQuillin just looked
sheepish. He forgot to feed the drive.*

*Can curses stir the gods of space who dwell beyond the stars? If so,
they surely woke up then, for we used up most of ours. We thought we'd
drift forever, lost between the stars we'd die, And all because McQuillin
bought no fuel to feed the drive!*

*But then the captain's eyes grew bright. She said, "It seems to me That
a fusion drive burns H_2O ." McQuillin turned to flee. "Grab him, boys,
and hold him. He's no good to us alive, But two hundred pounds of
water will feed our dyin' drive!"*

*So once again we fly through space, avoiding all the stars. Who knows
what ruin will take us, what evil fate is ours? We didn't find our planet,
but we'll all but one survive. As long as we are granted some fool to
feed the drive!*

Jordin Kare Filk
to "Fuel to Feed the Drive"
by Cynthia McQuillin and Phillip Wayne

Of Ghosts and Treasure Division

From: stehman@hubcap.clemson.edu (Jeff Stehman)

Date: 14 Feb 90 00:35:59 GMT

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"It really is good to have you back, Faldwell," Arn said, slapping the priest on the back. "We were wondering if you were ever going to find a way off the Astral plane."

Since Sutekh's death, there had been no one to control Eldrad. Since Faldwell's disappearance, there had been no one to keep the arguments from getting violent.

"It is an excellent story, I assure you..." replied the priest.

"And we will undoubtedly hear it many times," put in Ivan the Elf. Faldwell ignored him.

"...But for now, there is someone I want you to meet."

Eldrad had a funny feeling about this. Faldwell had led them to a meeting room in a nearby inn. At the other end of the table stood a figure, a woman judging by the size, cloaked and hooded, with her back to them. As they all shuffled in, Faldwell closed the door and leaned his armored body against it. Eldrad sat down at the end of the table, allowing one hand to reach his weapons unseen.

"I am the servant of Paladin Bernaldo Bravos," rasped out a male voice. "It has come to our attention that Sutekh, the late servant of my master, had a will which you, his colleagues, failed to carry out. I am here to collect what is due my master."

"He had no will," replied Ivan. "But even if he did, I would not turn anything over to someone who claims servitude to a well known name."

The figure turned and, with one hand, pulled back the hood.

Eldrad was impressed at the theatrics; even Ivan the Unaffected raised an eyebrow. Setara muttered some profanity and lowered her head into her hand. Arn rubbed his eyes and took a second look. Poor Ivor just stood there staring, his mouth open, looking as if he had seen a ghost.

But Eldrad noted that he was the sole benefactor of Sutekh's unpleasant gaze.

"What is mine, on the table, now!" the supposedly dead dark elf hissed.

Neither drow faltered in their stares as Ivor hastily unbuckled his sword and dropped the weapon on the table.

"Keep it," Sutekh whispered, his gaze steady. "What I now wear is better. Nor are the potions of any consequence. I carried them, but they were never truly mine. However, my dagger, my bracers, and my ring, on the table . . . now."

Eldrad frowned, certain Ivan was enjoying this, but relented. He tossed the dagger onto the table. With some hesitation he removed the magical bracers and set them on the table as well.

"The ring," Sutekh insisted.

"I contest your ownership of the ring. It was a prize in our escape from the Vault and is as much mine as yours."

"Agreed; however, I believe Ivan. You are responsible for my will not being carried out. Recently Faldwell and I were in . . . another place, literally fighting for my life. Because I was equipped with mundane weaponry and defenses, I died in that fight. I blame you for that pain and I claim the ring as payment."

Eldrad slowly shook his head.

As Sutekh shook his hidden arm free of the cloak and raised the hand crossbow, Eldrad reach for the amulet around his neck. Both hesitated. Though Eldrad did not notice it, Ivan was grinning from ear to ear.

"It is only right that you die by this quarrel," Sutekh said in drowic. "For it was its brother that killed me. Drowic manufacture, you know, and not a drop of poison."

Eldrad's mind caressed the word of power, "pain," that would trigger the amulet. He need only close his fingers and speak to render Sutekh harmless for some time, but Sutekh need only squeeze his fingers to release unknow magic . . .

"It is yours."

"You could still kill him," suggested an obviously disappointed Ivan.

Sutekh shook his head as he removed the quarrel from the crossbow. "The thought did cross my mind, but I'm afraid our good cleric would feel it necessary to revive him as he did me."

That diverted the party's attention to the priest, but he put on a smug grin and said nothing.

Uses for Command Spell

From: eric@oakhill.UUCP (Eric Quintana)

Date: 16 Feb 90 04:58:05 GMT

Once in a gaming session, a lone PC cleric was being chased by an orc inside a large empty audience chamber. The only exit was sealed shut at the moment, but the cleric was agile enough to always keep a stone column or dais in between him and the orc. The entire time he was being chased around the room, he patiently explained to the orc what the word "hyperextend" means. He repeated the explanation a couple of times just to make sure the orc understood the word. As soon as he had the chance, he cast the Command "hyperextend". Several of the orcs limbs simultaneously obeyed and his weapon skittered across the floor.

It just proves that ignorance is bliss.

A short and a bitch: Glorious Death

From: stehman@hubcap.clemson.edu (Jeff Stehman)

Date: 10 Feb 90 08:25:23 GMT

Brandon and Brian fled down the rough cut tunnel, following the lantern of Barth and the beautiful Tamarand. The passage under the ruins of Blackmoor terminated on a small ledge thirty feet below the top of a cliff. It was nearly two hundred feet to the rocks below.

Brandon and Brian arrived on the ledge even as the bard slipped the small, rolled up carpet off his back and shook it open. He jumped onto the rug and was soon flying towards the top of the cliff.

In the distance they could hear the ringing of metal footfalls.

"You got anything that will stop it?" Brandon, his magical sword having already been proven impotent, asked of Brian.

"Yeah," Brian replied absentmindedly as he studied the walls and ceiling of the passage.

"I mean besides that."

Brian shook his head as a rope was dropped from above. Tamarand, a rival in their quest and a reluctant bride-to-be whom they had just rescued from her wedding chamber, grabbed the rope and was pulled upwards. Brian was pleased at how revealing her whisper-thin wedding gown was; much more complimentary than the priestess' usual over-modest dress.

"It won't kill him, will it."

Brian shook his head as Tamarand disappeared over the cliff.

The rope fell again as the stilted bridegroom tromped closer.

"Go," Brian said.

Brandon nodded and grabbed the rope. He began to rise, although slower than the woman.

Brian turned to face the dark passage and sighed. The footsteps were very close. "Whatever happened to the nick of time?" he wondered silently. He saw the fire in its eyes before it stepped into the light. Then the eight foot tall bronze golem was before him. It stopped twenty feet away and smiled. Slowly it raised its arms as if to embrace the thief.

"COME TO ME, MY SON."

Brian had seen the result of that embrace among the remains of Tamarand's Shadow Raiders. He slowly shook his head and smiled. "No," he said quietly. "My way."

Brian plucked the last of the crystals from his necklace and tossed it at the golem's feet. The golem's bellow was drowned out by the concussion that blew through the passage and the roar of the collapsing ceiling.

That was a once in a life time death. It had everything. It was a heroic, futile gesture. I knew very well that a rock fall wasn't going to do more than scratch the golem's paint. Plus it was a great act of defiance; the ultimate flip-off.

Brandon and Brian were heart-brothers. Brandon was kind enough to understand what was happening and not stand there arguing. Brian had no problem giving his life to give Brandon a slight chance to get away.

There was a bard present, who would undoubtedly sing the tale in such a way that, upon hearing the tale, women would weep and men would nod grimly.

Then there was the incredible Tamarand. How could she not fall in love with a man who did such a heroic deed, rival or not? Plus, she was a 8ish level priestess to the goddess of luck. Perhaps with her prayers Brian would do a little better than the lowest pit of the 8th level of hell.

It had all the fixings of a great death, except one: the gm was a wimp. When I said I was using the necklace of force he looked at me like I was crazy.

"You'll die!"

"Gee, really?"

He had me roll a saving throw for the blast, which only did 4d6 points of damage. Brian was already down to 10 and I hadn't really planned on trying to get out of the way, but why not? As an afterthought Brian successfully hit the deck and only lost 7 points. Then the gm ruled that the blast threw Brian over the ledge and, since he was an acrobat, had me roll vs. dex. I did and Brian grabbed the edge and hung on. Wasn't much for it after that except to go along with it. Brian climbed, reaching the top about the same time the demon possessed golem pushed his way through the rubble. End of the story was that the knife Brandon happened to have found early was bane to golems and he waxed the beastie in no time flat.

There weren't many times I got madder at the gm than this one. He messed up a really good death; nobody cares if you do a heroic deed and live—it must not have been that tough after all. It did work out fairly well, though. Tamarand, an npc, went off to reform the Shadow Raiders (a bandit company) and took Brian with her as lieutenant/scout.

Magic Items

(slightly screwy)

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WARNING: These magic items to be used at characters' & DMs' own risk.

1) Arrow of recall:

The arrow of recall is a magical item that would stick in a living target (+3 to hit) and cause a blinding blue/green energy arc around the target. The arc is powered by the stats of the character; for every round the arc is in existence, it drains one point from a random (d6) stat. The other pitfall of the arc is for every round the hapless victim must make a save vs. spells. Two missed saves causes the character to be teleported to the lair of the mage that created the arrow. For that reason, it is called the arrow of recall - the victim is being recalled for a "private conference" of pain.

2) Lecrucia the Thrifty:

Lecrucia is a magical dagger of grey stone. The dagger was crafted by a ancient, matronly, ogre mage for really pain-ful rites of summoning. The ogre cast her soul into the dagger when her temple was overwhelmed by troops of the good order. She has been causing more trouble ever since.

Lecrucia has intelligence of 17, wisdom of 17, ego of 17. Her powers are:

1. +0 base to hit/damage
2. +2 vs. high elves
3. +3 vs. grey and drow elves (rare treats)
4. +1 vs. things with blood
5. +6 vs. Vampires (they have lots of blood)
6. 2d12 blood drain AT LECRUCIA'S WHIM (sustains her lifeforce)

Lecrucia will turn against her master if he won't let her drink. If she gains control, she will plunge herself into her slaves heart and drain him or her completely. Lecrucia is Lawful Evil and will try to pervert anyone who uses her. She can only drain blood eight times per day, the number of diamonds on the hilt. When she drains blood, a diamond turns red.

MALTA'S MAGNIFICENT SPELLS

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Malta's Pattern Creation

Casting Time: See Below

Component: V,S,M

Range: 0

Level: 2

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: None

Area of Effect: See Below

Description:

With this spell, the caster can create a pattern for use with the spell Malta's Pattern Transport. The Pattern can be any image with any colors, but it must include a circle which forms the outer edge. The Pattern can be any radius, but the cost of making the Pattern is dependent on the materials used - so bigger Patterns cost more. The Pattern can be woven into cloth, painted onto cloth or a hard surface, or inlaid into a hard surface. The Pattern must be at least 1 yard in diameter with no maximum size. The cost to make a Pattern is equal to the square yards of the Pattern times the amount below:

Material	Cost	Time	Save
Painted on Cloth:	5 Silver	1 hour	15
Woven into Cloth:	1 Gold	10 hours	12
Woven into Rug:	2 Gold	15 hours	10
Painted on Wood:	1 Gold	3 hours	10
Painted on Stone:	2 Gold	4 hours	8
Inlaid in Wood:	3 Gold	12 hours	5
Inlaid in Stone:	5 Gold	16 hours	2

Patterns cannot be repaired, they must be remade completely. Patterns can be moved (assuming the material can be moved as one unit) without damage. The Save listed is the save the Pattern must make when used for transport (See Malta's Pattern Transport for details) - the material saves normally for any other damaging situation.

Malta's Pattern Image

Casting Time: 1 hour

Component: V,S,M

Range: 0

Level: 2

Duration: See Below

Saving Throw: None

Area of Effect: One Pattern

Description:

With this spell, the caster can imprint the size and image of an undamaged Pattern. This imprinted image can later be used by the caster to create a matching Pattern of his own. The imprinted image can be recalled by the caster for up to 1 month per caster's level (at casting time). If this time is exceeded, or the caster creates a matching Pattern (even if different size), then the imprinted image is dispelled. This spell is necessary to create an exact size matching Pattern if the original Pattern is not present for the creation of the matching Pattern. The caster can have up to one imprinted image/size per level at a time.

Malta's Pattern Transport

Casting Time: 1 turn

Component: V,S,M

Range: 0

Description:

Level: 3

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Area of Effect: See Below

With this spell, the caster can move himself and other materials from one Pattern to another Pattern. The two Patterns must have the same image and the destination Pattern must be at least as big in radius as the source Pattern. Both Patterns must be known to the caster (current locations) and they must be partially). The destination Pattern must also be uncovered such that there is room for the incoming creatures/objects.

If all of the above conditions exist, then casting the spell will transport the caster and any objects/creatures which are completely supported by the source Pattern to the destination Pattern. All objects transported will end up on the destination Pattern at the same ratio of distance to the edge as on the source Pattern. That is, if an object is halfway from the center to the edge on the source Pattern, then it will be halfway from the center to the edge on the destination Pattern (regardless of the size of the destination Pattern). An object is considered to be completely supported by the pattern when its weight is supported by the material inscribed in the outer circle of the Pattern or by something which is itself completely supported. That means that a person held in the air by another will be transported only if the holder is completely supported. Flying creatures must not be flying at the time of transport.

To cast the spell, the caster must stand in the center of an undamaged Pattern and cast the spell. In the first round of the casting, the Pattern will begin to glow (each color of the Pattern will emit its own color). Over the next eight rounds, the Pattern brightness will increase to approximately the same as outside on a sunny day. As the last word of the spell is stated, the brightness of the Pattern doubles and all completely supported objects/creatures are transported to the destination Pattern. If the destination Pattern is not available (see above), then the transported objects/creatures are returned to the source Pattern after one second (and the source Pattern's save is at -4).

The source Pattern is subjected to some heat and other energies in the course of the transport. These energies cause the source Pattern to make a save or be damaged (a single crack or burn mark will alter the Pattern and render it unusable). The destination Pattern is not subjected to the same amount of energy, so it does not need to make a saving throw.

The lighting conditions at the destination Pattern do not change, so the transported creatures will have to adjust to the current lighting (1-2 rounds, depending on lighting).

Some notes:

1. Tossing a rug over an inlaid Pattern prevents incoming transports.
2. Rolling up a rug/cloth Pattern prevents incoming and makes it easier to transport the Pattern.
3. The only bi-directional Patterns are exactly the same size (hence the Pattern Image spell).
4. The caster must remain in the middle for all of the casting, but creatures/objects also transported only have to be on the Pattern in the last segment.

Rules For Fallinggg.....

By Jim Vassilakos

An individual falls at 10m/s/s, so that's roughly:

Sec	Seg	Distance		Rate m/sec	Damage (save)
		m	ft		
1		10	10	10	d3 (dex for neg)
		20	20		d6 (dex for 1/2)
		30	30		2d6 (1/2dex for 1/2)
		40	40		3d6 (no save)
		50	50		4d6 (1/2dex or double)
		60	60		6d6 (1/2dex or double)
		70	70		8d8 (1/2dex or fatal)
2		80	80	20	10d10 (80% fatal)
		90	90		12d12 (90% fatal)
		100	100		fatal
3		60	180	30	
4		100	300	40	
5		150	450	50	
6	1	200	600	60	
	2	750	2250	120	
	3	1650	5000	180	
				5000 ft/seg hereafter	

(How's that for beating an undead horse? BTW, what did we decide terminal velocity was at one gravity & one atm? I'm prolly exceeding it by several factors.)

Rules for the Gestation of Babies

(so's we's can eats them)

By Jim Vassilakos

Let Mean gestation period = $\sqrt{(Life \div 120) \times (9months)}$
 where Life = Maximum Venerable Age as per DMGv1 pg13

Race	Life (yrs)	Gestation (mos)
Human	120	9
Mnt Dwarf	525	19
Wood Elf	1350	30
Gray Elf	2000	37
Drow Elf	1000	26
Half-Elf	325	15
Halfling	200	12
Half-Ork	80	7

This chart came in real handy when the drow elf got pregnant... demon semen :-) (Okay, so I run a strange game... sue me.)

Actually, gestation periods probably correlate better with body weight than anything else... but that would involve research (shudder).

THE BILL AND TED REPORT

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The Lance Corporation was founded four years ago in California by ace autoduelist, John Steinathan, now president of Lance Corp. Originally, Lance Corp. dealt only with arena events (including prize money, salvage rights, product endorsements, etc.) and small share holdings just like any other autoduel corporation. Now, Lance Corp. has entered the automotive market by introducing two designs of their own, available commercially.

These two automobiles, the Blowout-2036 and the Puppeteer, are the focus of this report. Due to the fledgeling nature of Lance Corp. in this area, these two cars are off an assembly line that is disproportionately non-automated. That is, perhaps 20% of each are assembled by hand, so both are very limited in production, and the price is a bit steeper than what one might expect from similar cars until you actually drive one.

Bill and I flipped to see who would get the driver's seat on the Blowout-2036: Bill won. Our findings were as follows: the Blowout-2036 is a mid-sized car with a lot of interesting features.

The driver's set is extremely comfortable, the economic designing was well done here, right down to the beverage receptacle between the gunner's and driver's position. The displays are clear and the field of view excellent. My one complaint about the interior design is the off-line, asymmetrical configuration of the gunner's position. This particular design feature makes turns and accelerations feel funny like I was going to fall out and although we did no crash tests, I am skeptical of its safety in a head-on collision.

Coming standard with the Blowout is its front searchlight. A rather unusual accessory on such a car already, it is covered by a sort of venetian blind system called the "searchlight screen" in the owner's manual. This screen opens on activation of the searchlight and closes when not in use to keepm aerodynamic soundness and keep dust off. Besides this, the screen contributes to what I think this automobile's most attractive features: its archaic look. The screen looks much like the old radiator grills one might find 20th century cars.

The tinted windows, too, add to its aesthetics. Naturally the car does not really have windows, that would be unsafe, but the "windows" do serve the same purpose as real windows did. Instead of using the standard cameras, Lance Corp. designers put a special photosensitive layer under the plastic armor where windows would be. Not only does this look good, but it is practical as well. It is this feature that provides the occupants with an excellent field of view. In addition, the fact that the car's visual receptors are spread out over a large area, there is almost no way a single penetration will turn your screens into a dead channel as hitting a camera would, so there need not be backup cameras.

One other interesting thing about the Blowout is the selection of armament. This is not a heavy-firepower car, nor is it especially well armored, save the front. The main armament is the two grenade launchers in the external weapons pods. This vehicle is intended to immobilize a forward opponent at long range. The VMG in the turret is a backup.

The Blowout-2036 is an automobile with a couple of innovations, while the Puppeteer is an innovation in itself. Most cars are built with the duelist in mind. The Puppeteer is an option for that commuter coming home from a long day's work. Those familiar with Larry Niven's Known Space universe will understand why it is called the Puppeteer. I got to drive this one.

The Puppeteer is not actually a car, but a reversed trike - two wheels in front, one wheel in back, two wheels in front. It has heavy armament, but only to the rear. The Puppeteer is fast and handles better than any vehicle I've driven on or off the road. Its low profile makes it hard to hit. All of these things make clear

what the Puppeteer is designed for: running away, and I dare say that it does this very well.

One is apt to feel very safe in a Puppeteer. The radar system gives you fair warning of traffic around the vehicle. The powerful engine is enough to provide twice the acceleration and 150% the speed of most of the juggernauts on the road today. Very little technology was spared in its making, there's even a \$2500 stereo entertainment system!

Are there any problems with the Puppeteer? Well, for one, there's so much electronics in the thing that the panels are almost cluttered. Is the Euro-Business Machine Holo-game and Auto Secretary really necessary? But perhaps the hardest thing to get used to seems to be what is almost trademark of Lance Corporation – the asymmetrical arrangement. There is one recoilless rifle mounted on the Puppeteer's left side, giving a firing arc that extends to the left and rear, but there is no matching set on the right side. Given time, however, one would be able to adjust this. The most demerits come with its \$40,000 price tag!

Bill thinks that the price is too much for a purely defensive-stlye trike, but I think that the sound system more than makes up for this.

Puppeteer

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Puppeteer — Medium Reversed Trike with Carbon-Aluminum frame, Super Power Plant with Thunderkit fuel cells, Platinum Catalysts, and Super Conductors. Hvy. suspension, 3 OR solid tires, driver only, RR right with APFSDS warheads, Flaming Cloud Projector back, Radar System, No Paint Windshield, Long Distance Radio, Hi-Res Single Weapon Computer (for RR), Anti-Lock Brakes, HD Shock Absorbers, Spoiler, Vehicular Computer, Stereo Entertainment System. Cargo Capacity: no space and 5 lbs. Armor: sloped armor, Flame-proof, F17, R19, L19, B35, T10, U10. Accel. 10, HC3 on and off-road, 2215 Lbs., \$35,340.

(NOTE: the Stereo Entertainment System is not official, cost: \$2,500, no space, no weight, a supplement for the vehicular computer. Note also: the actual cost is \$40,000 due to uniqueness and hand-crafting.)

Blowout-2036

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BLOWOUT-2036 — Mid-sized, x-hvy chassis, Hvy. suspension, Large Power Plant, PR tires. Driver and gunner, VMG in turret, two Linked Grendade Launchers with Explosive Grenades (one in left EWP and one in right EWP) facing forward, one Searchlight front, one Smoke Discharger left, one Smoke Discharger right. Armor: F50, R30, L30, B25, T15, U10, 6pts. armor on each EWP, 3pt. Wheel Guards on rear wheels, 3pt. Armored Wheel Hubs on front wheels. Accel. 5, HC3, 5856 Lbs., \$16,780. Up to 1 space and 104 lbs. cargo.

(NOTE: Price is actually \$18,780, due to limited manufacture and hand-craftsmanship)

MONSTERS!! MONSTERS!! MONSTERS!!

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Phaselings			
	Normal	Warrior	Spellcaster
HD	1+1	3+1	2+1
AC	3	1	2
Size	S(4')		
MR	5%	10%	15%
Int	Avg	Avg	High
#At	by weapon		
Dam	by weapon		

Phaselings are a race of humanoids who appear as short, stocky elves, hairless, with a deep blue coloration (Beware: players tend to call them Smurfs). They have one racial ability: to phase. Phasing is not the same thing as a phase spider does; there is no extraplanar involvement. Basically, phasing is a line-of-sight teleport, to a maximum of 10 feet. Normal phaselings are much like anyone else, not using their power for anything special, but some phaselings take up the art of war for a profession. These warrior phaselings attack as 3+1 hit dice monsters, and normally use either a longsword (two-handed), or a shortsword-dagger combination (which they can do without penalty). However, they can also use their phasing power in battle, making them almost impossible to hit. This also makes shields useless against them, and only one-half DEX bonus is applied to armor class (round up) because the attacker doesn't know where the attack is coming from. Occasionally a phaselings will have some magical skills, but this is very rare. No phaselings will have better than second-level mage or first-level cleric skills, and they will never be specialists. Spells are normally inscribed on scrolls, which they carry in a scroll tube on their person. The magic resistance of phaselings is constant, regardless of caster level.

Phazer	
HD	3+1
AC	See Below
THACO	17
Size	S(4')
MR	Std
Int	Avg
#At	by weapon
Dam	by weapon

Phazers (no relation to phaselings, despite the similarities) appear as dwarves, except that their skin is normally a neutral gray color. They are often mistaken for duergar. They possess the special ability to alter their body's density at will. On the following chart, I have divided it into seven stages of density. A phaselings can go two steps per round (for example, to get from five to one would take two rounds).

Number	Skin Color	AC	Missile	Blunt	Edged	Equivalent
1	white	8	0	2	1.5	soft cloth(velvet)
2	pale	7	0.5	1.5	1	hard cloth(denim)
3	gray	6	1	1	1	flesh
4	dark gray	5	-1/d	1	-1/d	soft wood
5	black	4	-2/d	1	-2/d	hard wood
6	shiny black	3	0.5	-2/d	0.5	stone
7	silver	2	0	0.5	0.25	metal

The three columns labeled "Missile", "Blunt", and "Edged" represent how much damage a phazer will take from the specified type of attack at that density. A plain number (0.5) is a multiplier; for instance, 0.5 means half damage, and 0 means no damage. If the entry is of the -X/d format, that means that X points of damage per die should be subtracted. The "Equivalent" column lists an equivalent density for convenience. The DM should note that texture is not duplicated, only density; "hard cloth (denim)" will feel soft and squishy.

Additional Note: Phazers were designed for a plane on which denser objects would pass through less dense objects. On this plane, their density-changing ability would let them walk through walls, etc. They might not be particularly well suited for a normal campaign world.

Spiker	
HD	2+1
AC	3 (but see below)
#At	1-4
Mv	15"
Dam	1d4 plus special
Int	Animal
MR	Standard

A spiker appears as a ball (averaging about 7' diameter) composed entirely of thin metal shafts, radiating outwards from the center. Spikers can extend any of their "spikes" to a length of at least 10', sometimes more, and they travel by rolling, propelling themselves with their back spikes. Spikers are predators; they normally consume small animals (squirrels, mice, groundhogs, etc) but they will attack anything that comes within range. They "see" by sensing body heat and by tactile perception from their spikes (thus a spiker in a forest may seem to be bouncing from tree to tree - they prefer open plains). They attack by spearing prey with 1-4 spikes roll randomly each round), then secreting digestive juices down the spikes. The juices are highly corrosive, thus if the spiker strikes the target's armor or shield the object must make a save vs. acid or drop 1 AC value from corrosion (note a shield will be ruined); if the armor reaches AC 10, it is destroyed. To determine what the spike struck, use the following chart:

AC 10
Dexterity
Shield
Armor
True AC

Thus, if the spiker hits AC 10 but fails to hit the target's AC adjusted for dexterity, the spike has been dodged. If it hits the dexterity- adjusted AC exactly, it is assumed to have struck a shield (if applicable), or armor (if not). A person with a 17 DEX wearing banded mail and using a shield would look as follows:

AC Struck	> 10	> 7	7	> 0	0 or less
Object Hit	Nothing	Dodged	Shield	armor	Person

The outer spikes are as hard as steel, so the only vulnerable spot is in the center, where the new spikes are soft (spikes are periodically shed, as new spikes grow outwards and harden). A weapon must be at least 4'

long to strike this safely. If someone attacks with a weapon from 3 to 4 feet in length, they will take 1-2 damage from acid to the arm. Spikers are dusky brown and make a rustling sound as they move.

Lirana (Hunters in the Night)	
HD	2
#At	3
Dam	1-3/1-3/1-6
SA	spit acid
SD	hide in shadows, illusions
Mv	6"/15"
AC	0
Int	See Below

Note: Kudoes to Barbara Hambley, for her Darwath Trilogy.

The Lirana, or Hunters in the Night, are quasi-material beings from the Plane of Shadow. They can change their size, from less than a foot long to about twenty feet long, and their bodies are somewhat malleable, so they can go through holes smaller than their length. They attack with a claw/ claw/tail attack routine, and if pressed will spit acid for 2d6 damage, save for half. They will not approach light, but they have the power to cast a darkness zone, draining the power of any light within the zone. Lirana typically attack in large numbers, but they are almost impossible to count. from 50% – 90% of the lirana present will attack each round, but they will flee if they lose more than half their original number. They possess a communal intelligence, and are very clever. They live in great underground caverns, usually on the ceilings. They can become almost impossible to see in any shadows (though note they will never venture forth during the day, and even strong moonlight can drive them off), hiding with a 90% chance of success. They generally do not use this ability to ambush, preferring to cast darkness over their victims and attack during the confusion.

THE AIRWOLF

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climate/terrain	Temperate / Forest
Frequency	Uncommon
Organization	Packs
Activity cycle	Night
Diet	Carnivorous
Intelligence	Low
Treasure	R
Alignment	Neutral Evil
No. appearing	5 - 50
Armor Class	0 (4,8)
Movement	FL 25 (B)
Hit Dice	3
Thac0	17
# of Att	4
Dam/Att	@ 1-6
Special Attacks	None
Special Defenses	None
Magic Resistance	5%
Size	S (3'x3'x3')
Morale	11
XP Value	650

Description:

Air Wolves are small furry magical mammals. Air Wolves look like large balls of fluff with two eyes and a large mouth. They have light brown to black fur.

Combat:

Air Wolves attack by diving into the ranks of their prey from all sides. If possible an Air Devil will split its attacks up among it's enemies, with no penalty. This tactic is what gives it such a high armor class, if attacking a single opponent their armor class drops to a four and if held immobile (or surprised) their armor class is an eight. These tactics also give them a 50% chance of attacking from behind. For purposes of combat males and females are identical.

Habitat/Society:

They are nomadic and live in groups of up to fifty. The entire pack is comprised of 50% males, 30% females, and 20% young. During a conflict, the young (and one female for every five young) will hover above the area while the rest of the pack attacks. Air Wolves will attack anything of large size or smaller, whether they are hungry or not. They have been known to go out of their way to attack humanoids (which they consider to of great sport.) There are cases of Air Wolves and Worgs cooperating for short periods of time. A few (10%) have even learned to speak the tongue of Worgs.

Ecology:

Over two hundred years ago these creatures were accidentally created by the Wizard Gral. Being worthless to him he threw them out into the world and they have thrived since then. Air Wolves are mammals, giving birth to live young. Even though they are small creatures they have ravenous appetites and will eat anything

they can sink their teeth into. They live for approximately 20 years.

NEW MAGIC ITEMS

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Here's a few magic items that have quite a background in my gaming background. Due to the strength of these items they have had many owners.(Sometimes within the same party.) Some may think, Oh' the great Monty-Haul strikes again, not so. The finding/getting of powerful items is one thing, keeping that item & your head is where the fun begins.

VANQUISHER: quasi-relic. Dagger +2/+3 vs Larger than man...

INT: 17 EGO: 19 (20 in our world determines 'Relic' status.)

Known Languages:

- Ogre, Bugbear, Lizard Man, Fire & Hill Giant
- Can read magical runes.

Detects:

- Good/Evil 100'r
- Invisible objects 1'r

Power: Teleport 1/day (to known location)

Special Purpose: Slay non-human monsters

Special Purpose Power: Paralysis 1d4 rds., Sv vs Magic.

Notice no alignment. This has helped promote the vigilant search that develops whenever this weapon is known to be around. It has been pawned for @30,000gp by one player in our group who was an assassin. Needless to say, he retrieved the dagger after the sale. Oh, the dagger no longer has an alignment due to the fact that as long as it's special purpose is kept it dosen't care who uses it.

FIRST JUSTICE +2 NoDachi Quick Sword. Always strikes first in a battle, there after recieving +3 to further initaive rolls. Dam.1-10/3-18

This weapon was custom built for a duelist in our group who had a habit of picking fights with the wrong people.(Don't they all.) It was great until he lost his right arm dueling someone with a sword of sharpness.

ERENDIL'S VEST A magical leather vest that has 6 pockets on the front of it, three on each side. Once per pocket, per day a magic-user may call upon a pocket to produce all the physical components needed for the spell in mind. Unknown to the user is the side effect, the items called forth from the pockets are taken from the nearest source. (Even a party member)

The Mage/Thief in our party had a field day with this one. We never knew how he got our stuff...

MORE NEW MAGIC ITEMS

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Here are some magic items I created for my campaign. Most of these were an attempt to make weak items that weren't "standard" book items.

The Shadow Sword: Appears as a normal sword with a black blade. When someone picks it up, after a few seconds it vanishes. They can still feel the weight (only about two pounds) on their hand, but there's nothing there. Subsequently, any time they INTEND to have a sword (of whatever type) in their hand, the Shadow Sword will appear (in the expected form). It has no combat bonuses, except when fighting creatures of shadow, in which case it is +2, or in magical darkness (+1). Usually what happens is someone will pick it up, it vanishes. Then in their experimentation (WHAT the HELL?) they will attempt to draw their own sword (thus desiring to have a sword in their hand), and it will appear in the proper form. It will remain until they 1) put it down and someone picks it up again, or 2) will it out of existence again. It's a neat sword, flashy, but it doesn't usually help in combat. (BTW, it sheathes itself in the Border Ethereal)

The Silver Sword: A completely normal short sword, except for two features: it's made of solid silver, and it's indestructible. Completely and utterly indestructible, unless you want to go to the extremes of artifact- destruction methods. It has no other bonuses.

Stealth Armor: A suit of black leather armor +1, it grants +10hide in shadows and move silently abilities.

Shaping Crystal: A translucent crystal about 2"X2"X4", it has the power to form itself into anything the holder desires, with two limitations: it cannot change its material (i.e. anything made will be translucent crystal, and possibly fragile, if thin), and it cannot change its volume (i.e. every shape must be 16 cubic inches). Nobody has yet come up with a use for this item, in either of the two campaigns I placed it in.

Air Cup: Solely for humor value, this is a golden goblet of a usual size and shape. It has one power; that of not allowing any liquid of any kind into the cup. Water poured into the cup will strike and flow around it, as if it had a cap. Mud dropped into it will separate into dessicated dust and water, which will fall into and flow off of the cup, respectively. This item has no purpose whatsoever.

Illusion Bowl: This appears as a large copper bowl, with four rods sticking up out of the inside of the bowl, so that the bowl would rest on them if inverted. The rods are one foot apart, and one foot long. If the holder thinks of an image, that image will appear in the one cubic foot volume defined by the four rods. This requires very little concentration, and thus could be used to illustrate a story (as the bard in my party often does).

Spell Rod: This is an ebony rod, about two feet long, capped with gems at either end. It is intelligent (c. INT 9), and has the power to cast spells as a magic-user of whatever level is appropriate to the campaign (I used fifth). It regains these spells as if it were a human mage, with internal spellbooks. However, there's one little problem: it doesn't know (and is incapable of learning) any form of communication. It cannot understand language of any kind (including sign language and body language), and it cannot speak or convey meaning by any other method. Therefore, it uses its spells when IT thinks the situation warrants it, and it's not extremely bright. For example: the thief carrying the rod is creeping up through the darkness on the enemy camp. The rod helpfully casts a light spell on his forehead, to help him see. You can imagine the results yourself. If played right, this one can be hysterical. You must be careful to have the spells actually help the party most of the time (though possibly indirectly :-)), or they'll just ditch the rod.

One quick-and-dirty method of creating magical items is to simply look through the Players Handbook, pick a spell, and imbue the item with that spell. If it's a duration-spell (ex. Infravision or Spider Climb), then it will be a constant-effect item. If it's an instantaneous spell (ex. Fireball or Cone of Cold), it'll have charges or a time-limitation (3 uses/day, etc.). You can use multiple effects for a more powerful item.

EVEN MORE NEW MAGIC ITEMS

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Undead charms: These are small charms, 2" long. They come in 2 flavors: the skeleton variety, which is a small wax skeleton, and the zombie variety, which is like a small voodoo doll. When a charm is touched to a dead body, it crumbles to dust and the body is animated as an undead of the same type as the charm, and under control of the creator. Often found in clusters.

Cursed Undead Charm: Appears to be one of the normal types of charms. However, when touched to a body, it creates a skeleton (1-30), zombie (31-60), ghoul (61-90), or wight (91-00), which immediately attacks all living creatures nearby.

Date: 17 Mar 90 23:57:45 GMT
 From: allanm@esther.uucp (Allan J. Mikkola)
 Subject: New Monsters

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DRAGON, TITANIUM

Climate/Terrain: Any mountains
 Frequency: Very rare
 Organization: Solitary or clan
 Activity Cycle: Any
 Diet: Special
 Intelligence: Supra-genius (19-20)
 Treasure: Special
 Alignment: Lawful Good
 No. Appearing: 1 (2-5)
 Armor Class: -5 (base)
 Movement: 12, Fl 45 (C), Jp 3
 Hit Dice: 18 (base)
 THACO: 3 (base)
 No. of Attacks: 3 + special
 Damage/Attack: 2-12/2-12/5-50 (5d10)
 Special Attacks: Special
 Special Defenses: Variable
 Magic Resistance: Variable
 Size: G (58' base)
 Morale: Fearless (19-20)
 XP Value: Variable

Age	Body Lgt(')	Tail Lgt(')	AC	Breath Weapon	Spells Wizard/Priest	MR	Treasure Type	XP Value
1	8-20	4-14	-2	4d8+1	Nil	Nil	Nil	5,000
2	20-34	14-28	-3	8d8+2	Nil	Nil	Nil	6,000
3	34-48	28-38	-4	12d8+3	Nil	Nil	Nil	8,000
4	48-64	38-51	-5	16d8+4	1	Nil	H,W,T	10,000
5	64-82	51-70	-6	20d8+5	2 1	45%	H,W,T	12,000
6	82-100	70-88	-7	24d8+6	3 2 1	50%	H,W,T	15,000
7	100-120	88-110	-8	28d8+7	4 3 2 1	55%	H,W,T	16,000
8	120-140	110-128	-9	32d8+8	5 4 3 2 1/2	60%	H,W,Tx2	18,000
9	140-162	128-147	-10	36d8+9	6 5 4 3 2 1/2 2	65%	H,W,Tx2	19,000
10	162-170	147-158	-11	40d8+10	7 6 5 4 3 2 1/2 2 2	70%	H,W,Tx2	20,000
11	170-178	158-166	-12	44d8+11	8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1/2 2 2 2	75%	H,W,Tx3	21,000
12	178-190	166-175	-13	48d8+12	9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1/2 2 2 2 2	80%	H,W,Tx3	22,000

Titanium dragons are among the most powerful of all good dragons. They hate everything evil and their goal in life is to defeat the forces of evil in any way they can. Like gold and silver dragons, titanium dragons are often encountered in human form. The two forms they usually choose are paladins and ancient wizards; females opt to appear as beautiful young maidens. At birth, a titanium dragon's scales are a dull gray or even white; as they age, the scales become silver, platinum, and finally a deep titanium in color. Due to these colorations, and because their appearances are similar, younger titanium dragons can be mistaken for silver dragons. A titanium dragon has two "fins" on top of its head, instead on one like the silver, and they also have two smaller "fins" on the sides of their necks; otherwise, they are nearly identical to silver dragons.

Titanium dragons speak their own language, a tongue common to all good dragons, and 20% of hatchling titanium dragons have an ability to communicate with any intelligent creature. The chance to possess this ability increases 5% per age category of the dragon.

Combat: Because of their great strength, few intelligent creatures willingly attack a titanium dragon; those that do, usually meet with a swift death. A titanium dragon will attack unprovoked only if it witnesses acts of great evil. In combat, they use *_prayer_* and *_luck bonus_*; they also make heavy use of spells (if the situation warrants), especially those of the evocation and conjuration schools. Creatures summoned via spells will always be of good alignment.

Breath Weapon/Special Abilities: A titanium dragon has two breath weapons, each of which may be used once every three combat rounds. The first type is similar to a fireball: when used, a two-foot diameter sphere shoots forth from the dragon's mouth out to any distance the dragon chooses, up to 50 yards, plus 10 yards per age category of the dragon. Any creature caught in the straight-line path of this weapon receives 1/2 normal damage (save vs. breath weapon for 1/4 damage). The burst radius is of any size the dragon wishes up to 10' per age category of the dragon. Creatures caught in the area of effect may save vs. breath weapon for 1/2 damage.

The second breath weapon is a bolt of chain lightning which is identical to the spell of the same name, except for the following: damage is taken as per the table above (all victims may save vs. breath weapon for 1/2 damage); the possible number of affected targets is equal to the number of hit dice of the breath attack; each additional arc loses 1d8 of damage. Thus, a juvenile titanium dragon can affect up to 16 targets with this breath weapon. The first target hit suffers 16d8+4 points of damage, the second 15d8+4, the third 14d8+4, etc. The range is 50 yards plus 10 yards per age category of the dragon. The chain will never arc back to the originating dragon, or to any other lawful good dragon, and there is only a 50% chance to a creature with immunity to electricity. If a chain gets out of hand, the originating dragon can end it at will.

A titanium dragon casts its spells and uses its magical abilities at 12th level, plus its combat modifier. Like gold dragons, titanium dragons usually seek formal magical training; they also use spell books which will contain carefully selected and useful spells.

At birth, titanium dragons are immune to fire and electricity. They may also *_polymorph self_* four times per day as a gold dragon can. As they age, they gain the following additional powers: Young: *_wall of fire_* three times per day. Juvenile: *_prayer_* two times per day. Adult: *_luck bonus_* once a day (this is identical to the gold dragon's *_luck bonus_* except the bonus is +2 instead of +1). Mature Adult: *_true seeing_* (priest version); the duration of this ability is permanent. Very old: *_monster summoning VII_* once per day (summoned monsters will always be of good alignment). Venerable: *_prismatic sphere_* once per day.

Habitat/Society: Titanium dragons can be found in any mountainous region; they lair in the tops of the highest mountain peaks in caves or castles. They have loyal guards such as storm giants, good cloud giants, ki-rin, and even gold and silver dragons. They have been known to help good adventurers in times of need (they will usually require a service in exchange for their help, such as a quest to further the goals of good).

Because their territories often overlap, titanium dragons often clash with red dragons, which are one of the few creatures brave (or foolish) enough to attack titanium dragons. Because of their mutual immunity to fire, reds will usually attack in groups using spells, while titanium dragons use their chain lightning breath weapon and spells. The red dragons usually come out on the short end of such battles; there have been reports of an ancient titanium dragon killing five reds with a single chain lightning breath attack, but this remains unproven. If a red dragon is lucky enough to survive these combats, it will usually avoid titanium dragons in the future - even red dragons are not that foolish.

Ecology: Titanium dragons can eat nearly anything, but they prefer a diet of metals and gems. They will always have plenty of this stored in their treasure hoards, but will gratefully accept more from adventurers; they consider this a great gift, and will reward the gift-givers, if they are sincere.

OK, so I admit it; the titanium dragon, as originally presented is too strong. Therefore, I am reworking it to put it more in line with other *2nd ed.* type dragons. My original goal was to make the titanium dragon a step above the gold, and (IMHO) I did this, for the most part. However, I *did* go a bit overboard on spells (as you will see, they have been *seriously* reduced) and I suppose :) breath weapon damage. These (and other flaws) have been corrected and I think the result is more in line with what I had in mind in the first place. Of course, if you think it is still too powerful, don't use it!

DRAGON, TITANIUM (Mark II)

Climate/Terrain: Any mountains
Frequency: Very rare
Organization: Solitary or clan
Activity Cycle: Any
Diet: Special
Intelligence: Supra-genius (19-20)
Treasure: Special
Alignment: Lawful Good
No. Appearing: 1 (2-5)
Armor Class: -4 (base)
Movement: 12, Fl 45 (C), Jp 3
Hit Dice: 18 (base)
THACO: 5 (base)
No. of Attacks: 3 + special
Damage/Attack: 2-12/2-12/5-50 (5d10)
Special Attacks: Special
Special Defenses: Variable
Magic Resistance: Variable
Size: G (58' base)
Morale: Fearless (19-20)
XP Value: Variable

Age	Body Lgt(')	Tail Lgt(')	AC	Breath Weapon	Spells Wizard/Priest	MR	Treasure Type	XP Value
1	8-20	4-14	-1	4d6+1	Nil	Nil	Nil	5,000
2	20-34	14-28	-2	8d6+2	Nil	Nil	Nil	6,000
3	34-48	28-38	-3	12d6+3	Nil	Nil	Nil	8,000
4	48-64	38-51	-4	16d6+4	1	30%	H,W,T	10,000
5	64-82	51-70	-5	20d6+5	2 1	35%	H,W,T	12,000
6	82-100	70-88	-6	24d6+6	2 2 1	40%	H,W,T	15,000
7	100-120	88-110	-7	28d6+7	2 2 2 1	45%	H,W,T	16,000
8	120-140	110-128	-8	32d6+8	2 2 2 2 1	50%	H,W,Tx2	18,000
9	140-162	128-147	-9	36d6+9	2 2 2 2 2 1/1	55%	H,W,Tx2	19,000
10	162-170	147-158	-10	40d6+10	3 2 2 2 2 2 1/1 1	60%	H,W,Tx2	20,000
11	170-178	158-166	-11	44d6+11	3 2 2 2 2 2 2 1/2 1 1	65%	H,W,Tx3	21,000
12	178-190	166-175	-12	48d6+12	3 3 2 2 2 2 2 2 1/2 2 1 1	70%	H,W,Tx3	22,000

Breath Weapon/Special Abilities:

- >A titanium dragon has two breath weapons,
- >each of which may be used once every three combat rounds.

If you don't like this (which is what the 2nd ed. gold has) change it to: A titanium dragon has two breath weapons; one breath attack (regardless of composition) may be made every three rounds, as long as the same type is not used more than three times in a 10-round period. Personally, I'll keep it the way it is.

- > The second breath weapon is a bolt of chain lightning which is identical
- >to the spell of the same name, except for the following: damage is taken as

>per the table above (all victims may save vs. breath weapon for 1/2 damage);
>the possible number of affected targets is equal to the number of hit dice of
>the breath attack; each additional arc loses 1d8 of damage. Thus, a juvenile
>titanium dragon can affect up to 16 targets with this breath weapon. The
>first target hit suffers 16d8+4 points of damage, the second 15d8+4, the third
>14d8+4, etc.

change all those references of "d8" to "d6" and that should do it.

Oh yeah, one last thing: concerning that "rumor" about the ancient T-dragon killing 5 reds w/ one breath attack; now that the potency of the breath attack has been reduced, I think it's safe to say that this is a totally unfounded rumor with little or no basis in fact. 'Nuff said!

I now think that the titanium dragon fits *much* better with others of its kind, but just so you don't believe me, here's a quick comparison vs. the 2nd ed. gold dragon: AC is now identical; HD: titanium is 2 better (but I don't think a 26 HD creature is that bad - after all, the strongest elements are 24 HD); THAC0: same (only because the DMG says 5 is the best THAC0 a monster can have); claw & bite damage: titanium is somewhat better; Breath Weapon: identical on the high side, titanium is better on the low side - each has two types; Spells (@ Great Wyrms stage): titanium has an extra 1st, 2nd, 8th, and 9th wizard, but gold has an extra 3rd and 4th priest; MR: identical (except at stage 4); special abilities: gold: 8 (counting _water breathing_, _speak with animals_, and _polymorph_), titanium: 7 (including _polymorph_); immunities: 2 each. As far as the titanium not having enough treasure, it is identical to the gold (@ Great Wyrms stage) except it has type W instead of type R. Oh yeah, one last thing, XP (@ Great Wyrms stage): gold 20K, titanium 22K. Personally, I think all dragons are under-rated in terms of XP Value.

OK, so now what do you think? Better? I hope so. Additional comments welcome.

DRAGON, WAR

Climate/Terrain:	Any
Frequency:	Rare
Organization:	Renegade: solitary or clan; Normal: pairs or groups
Activity Cycle:	Any
Diet:	Special (Carnivore)
Intelligence:	Low (5-7)
Treasure:	Special
Alignment:	CG (25%), CN (50%), CE (25%)
No. Appearing:	Renegade: 1 (2-5); Normal: 2-20
Armor Class:	-2 (base)
Movement:	14, Fl 38 (C)
Hit Dice:	13 (base)
THAC0:	7 (base)
No. of Attacks:	3 + special
Damage/Attack:	2-12/1-12/4-40 (4d10)
Special Attacks:	Special
Special Defenses:	Variable
Magic Resistance:	Variable
Size:	G (44' base)
Morale:	Champion (15-16)
XP Value:	Variable

Age	Body Lgt(')	Tail Lgt(')	AC	Breath Weapon	Spells Wizard/Priest	MR	Treasure Type*	XP Value
1	3-10	2-10	1	2d10+1	Nil	Nil	Nil	3,000
2	10-20	10-16	0	4d10+2	Nil	Nil	Nil	4,000
3	20-38	16-26	-1	6d10+3	Nil	45%	Nil	5,000
4	38-52	26-44	-2	8d10+4	Nil	50%	E,Y,V	7,000
5	52-75	44-62	-3	10d10+5	Nil	55%	E,Y,V	9,000
6	75-93	62-82	-4	12d10+6	Nil	60%	E,Y,Vx2	11,000
7	93-106	82-96	-5	14d10+7	Nil	65%	E,Y,Vx2	13,000
8	106-126	96-116	-6	16d10+8	Nil	70%	E,Y,Vx2	15,000
9	126-144	116-134	-7	18d10+9	Nil	75%	E,Y,Vx3	16,000
10	144-152	134-142	-8	20d10+10	Nil	80%	E,Y,Vx3	18,000
11	152-164	142-150	-9	22d10+11	Nil	85%	E,Y,Vx3	19,000
12	164-170	150-156	-10	24d10+12	Nil	90%	E,Y,Vx4	20,000

* renegades only; see below

War dragons were bred hundreds of years ago to serve as minions of several nations' armies. They were intended to be highly resistant to magic and to be good fighters; in this role, they excel.

While all war dragons have bodies of similar size and shape, each alignment has a unique head, as well as minor differences in colorations. All three types have black bodies and heads. CG types have a silver neck, tail, and wings; their heads are similar in shape to a silver dragon's. CN war dragons have a gray neck, tail, and wings, and heads similar to that of a brass dragon. CE versions have a white neck, tail, and wings, with heads similar to a blue dragon's in shape.

War dragons speak their own tongue, a tongue common to their appropriate type of dragon (good, neutral, or evil), and 7% of hatchling war dragons have an ability to communicate with any intelligent creature. The chance to possess this ability increases 5% per age category of the dragon. A war dragon will also develop a telepathic link with a single rider; see below.

Combat: War dragons normally fight with a rider who directs the attacks; the dragonrider (usually a fighter, wizard, or fighter/wizard) ensures the breath weapons and special abilities are used at the right time and against the proper targets. Some armies have considerable numbers of war dragons; these highly organized "dragoncorps" are normally found at the forefront of battle, attacking enemy ground forces from above, or engaging enemy aerial forces.

Renegade war dragons (those that have struck out on their own) usually use breath weapon attacks at the beginning of any battle; their low intelligence prevents them from making better use of their abilities, and they are sometimes caught in a

tough fight with no remaining breath attacks.

Breath Weapon/Special Abilities: Each of the three types of war dragons have three separate breath weapons; one breath attack (regardless of composition) may be made once every three rounds, as long as the same one is not used more than three times in a 10-round period. Each breath weapon does identical damage, as per the table above (all targets may save vs. breath weapon for 1/2 damage). The dimensions of the various breath weapons are as follows: cone of fire/frost: 80' long, 5' wide at the mouth, and 30' wide at the end; gas cloud: 50' long, 50' wide, and 40' high; lightning bolt: 100' long and 5' wide; acid stream: 75' long and 5' wide. CG war dragons may breathe (and are immune to) fire, lightning, and gas; CNs may employ (and are immune to) fire, gas, and frost; CE types may use (and are immune to) frost, acid, and gas. All war dragons use their special abilities at 5th level plus their combat modifier. In addition to the immunities mentioned above (which they have from birth), war dragons gain the following additional powers as they age: Young: _protection from normal missiles_ three times per day. Young adult: _minor globe of invulnerability_ twice per day. Mature adult: _globe of invulnerability_ once per day. Old: _anti-magic shell_ once per day. Very old: _spell turning_ three times per week. Wyrmling: _prismatic wall_ twice per week.

A war dragon's magic resistance may be extended to include one or two riders at will. All special abilities will extend to completely envelop the dragon and its rider(s), except the _prismatic wall_, which will obviously cover only one side of it. Being immobile, the _globes of invulnerability_ are not of much use when flying, but will be used in ground melee, or to protect friendly ground forces (if other creatures are to be protected by a war dragon's special abilities, then the radius of the effect is as per the corresponding spell).

Habitat/Society: The majority of war dragons are "domestic" dragons, as they are used and controlled by humans. They are bred not unlike horses, and the offspring are trained for war while still in the very young or even hatchling stage. Each war dragon is exclusively trained by one dragonrider; after one year of training per age category of the dragon, a war dragon and its rider develop a telepathic link which is used to direct the dragon in combat. Once this link is established, the war dragon will not willingly leave its rider until one or the other is killed. If one of the pair is killed, the survivor immediately suffers 2-20 h.p. of damage with no saving throw. A war dragon may not be ridden into combat until it has established a link with its rider. If anyone attempts to ride a war dragon without a link to that dragon, the war dragon will attempt to throw the rider, unless its controlling rider is present as well.

If a war dragon's rider is killed, there is a 5% chance per age category of the surviving dragon, that it becomes a renegade, unless it is subdued or otherwise prevented from doing so. Renegade war dragons will live in any climate and terrain, and are usually loners; renegade war dragons will only rarely mate. Renegades are the only war dragons that will hoard treasure. If a war dragon is prevented from becoming a renegade, a new rider may take control of it, but only after it is retrained and a new link is established with the new rider. This new link is established in half the normal time (1/2 year per age category of the dragon).

If a renegade war dragon is encountered in the wild, it may be retrained. This may only be done by someone with war dragon riding proficiency, and only after the dragon is subdued. The retraining of a renegade takes twice the normal time (2 years per age category of the dragon), and as the dragon will normally try to resist, it may have to be subdued a number of times throughout the retraining process.

Ecology: War dragons are basically carnivores, but are capable of eating other food as well. They are either fed by their riders, or are allowed to hunt. CE war dragons will often feast on the corpses of slain enemies after a battle has ended. War dragons are normally encountered in patrols of 2-4 or in battle groups of 2-20.

DRAGON, SKUNK

Climate/Terrain: Temperate mountain valleys and subterranean
 Frequency: Very Rare
 Organization: Solitary or clan
 Activity Cycle: Any
 Diet: Special
 Intelligence: Average (8-10)
 Treasure: Special
 Alignment: Chaotic Evil
 No. Appearing: 1 (2-5)
 Armor Class: 1 (base)
 Movement: 12, Fl 35 (C), Sw 12
 Hit Dice: 12 (base)
 THAC0: 9 (base)
 No. of Attacks: 3 + special
 Damage/Attack: 1-6/1-6/2-16 + 1
 Special Attacks: Special
 Special Defenses: Variable
 Magic Resistance: Variable
 Size: G (28' base)
 Morale: Fanatic (17-18)
 XP Value: Variable

Age	Body Lgt(')	Tail Lgt(')	AC	Breath Weapon	Spells Wizard/Priest	MR	Treasure Type	XP Value
1	2-5	1-5	4	2d6+1	Nil	Nil	Nil	2,000
2	5-14	5-12	3	4d6+2	Nil	Nil	Nil	3,000
3	14-24	12-19	2	6d6+3	Nil	Nil	Nil	4,000
4	24-32	19-28	1	8d6+4	Nil	5%	1/2G,O	6,000
5	32-41	28-36	0	10d6+5	1	10%	G,Ox2,X	8,000
6	41-51	36-44	-1	12d6+6	2	15%	G,Ox3,Xx2	9,000
7	51-60	44-52	-2	14d6+7	3	20%	G,Ox3,Xx2	11,000
8	60-68	52-60	-3	16d6+8	4	25%	Gx2,Ox3,Xx3	12,000
9	68-78	60-68	-4	18d6+9	5	30%	Gx2,Ox3,Xx3	14,000
10	78-86	68-75	-5	20d6+10	6	35%	Gx3,Ox4,Xx3	15,000
11	86-96	75-82	-6	22d6+11	7	40%	Gx3,Ox4,Xx4	17,000
12	96-105	82-90	-7	24d6+12	8	45%	Gx3,Ox4,Xx4	18,000

Skunk dragons are a cross between black and white dragons, and combine the features and abilities of each type. They have the head and wings of a white dragon and the body of a black. Throughout the first two stages of a skunk dragon's life, its scales are light to dark gray in color; however, as it reaches the young stage, a skunk dragon obtains the distinctive coloration that gives it its name: white head with a black stripe on top, white wings with black ribbing, and a black body with a white stripe along the belly from the throat to the tip of the tail.

Skunk dragons speak their own language, a tongue common to all evil dragons, and 10% of hatchling skunk dragons have an ability to communicate with any intelligent creature. The chance to possess this ability increases 5% per age category of the dragon.

Combat: Against small or clearly inferior foes, a skunk dragon's favorite tactic is the snatch attack; the prey will be clawed, bitten, or dropped to its death. When fighting more numerous or stronger foes, a skunk dragon will close and melee with the opponent(s) using all of its available combat techniques. Against truly dangerous enemies, the skunk dragon will use its breath weapons and special abilities at a distance before closing to fight in melee. An opponent that clearly out-classes a skunk dragon will cause it to flee; its flying speed allows it to escape from most larger and superior foes.

Breath Weapon/Special Abilities: A skunk dragon has two different breath weapons; only one breath attack (of either

type) may be employed every three rounds, and the same one cannot be used more than three times in a 10-round period. The first breath weapon is a cone of acidic frost 80' long, 5' wide at the dragon's mouth, and 30' wide at the base; the second is a stream of near-frozen acid 70' long, and 10' wide. Two saving throws are necessary for these attacks: the first is against cold for 3/4 damage, and the second is against acid for 1/2 damage; full damage is suffered if both are failed. If a target has immunity to one component, damage is automatically halved, save against the other component for 1/4 damage.

From birth, skunk dragons are immune to acid and cold; they cannot breathe under water as black dragons can, but they may hold their breath for an extended period of time (5 minutes per age category of the dragon). As they age, they gain the following additional powers: Juvenile: darkness three times per day in a 10' radius per age category of the dragon. Adult: corrupt water (as per black dragon). Very old: acid rain once per day: an acidic rain falls for 2 rounds per age category of the dragon (radius of 10' per age category); opponents caught in this rain suffer 1d10 points of damage per round (save vs. spell for 1/2 damage); additionally, every 5 rounds, each victim must make saves vs. acid for all possessions. Wyrms: ice storm once per day. A skunk dragon casts its spells and uses its special abilities at 5th level, plus its combat modifier.

Habitat/Society: Skunk dragons live in deep mountain valleys in temperate climates far from civilization. They lair in large caves or subterranean caverns, preferably near lakes and light woods. Sometimes, these lairs are reachable only from the water, but they are always dry. Skunk dragons are excellent swimmers and can often be found swimming about in lakes, either for fun or while hunting fish or other aquatic animals. Skunk dragons are good parents and will fight to protect their offspring unless their own lives are threatened. Both parents rear the young until they strike out on their own at about 15 years of age.

Skunk dragon lairs can sometimes be found in the vicinity of copper, and to a lesser extent, bronze dragons. Skunk dragons usually avoid the bronze, using their superior speed to escape; they have been known to attack copper dragons, however, using their cold-based breath weapon and acid immunity to weaken the copper before entering melee (if the copper is not sufficiently softened up by breath attacks, the skunk dragon will usually flee, due to the superior bite of the copper dragon). Skunk dragons like any kind of treasure, but prefer coins and gems, especially diamonds and black onyx.

Ecology: Skunk dragons can eat nearly anything, but prefer fish, aquatic animals, and other medium-sized creatures that can be found in their territory.

DRAGON, CRESTED

Climate/Terrain:	Temperate wooded hills and mountains and subterranean
Frequency:	Very rare
Organization:	Solitary or clan
Activity Cycle:	Any
Diet:	Special
Intelligence:	High (13-14)
Treasure:	Special
Alignment:	Neutral Evil
No. Appearing:	1 (2-5)
Armor Class:	-2 (base)
Movement:	9, Fl 30 (C), Sw 9, Jp 3
Hit Dice:	13 (base)
THACO:	7 (base)
No. of Attacks:	3 + special
Damage/Attack:	1-8/1-8/3-30 (3d10)
Special Attacks:	Special
Special Defenses:	Variable
Magic Resistance:	Variable
Size:	G (42' base)
Morale:	Fanatic (17-18)
XP Value:	Variable

Age	Body Lgt(')	Tail Lgt(')	AC	Breath Weapon	Spells Wizard/Priest	MR	Treasure Type	XP Value
1	2-8	1-6	1	2d10+1	Nil	Nil	Nil	3,000
2	8-20	6-14	0	4d10+2	Nil	Nil	Nil	4,000
3	20-32	14-26	-1	6d10+3	Nil	Nil	Nil	6,000
4	32-52	26-34	-2	8d10+4	1	Nil	H	8,000
5	52-70	34-45	-3	10d10+5	2	35%	H	10,000
6	70-88	45-52	-4	12d10+6	2 1	40%	H,T	11,000
7	88-96	52-62	-5	14d10+7	2 2 1	45%	H,S,T	12,000
8	96-106	62-70	-6	16d10+8	2 2 2	50%	H,S,T	15,000
9	106-116	70-78	-7	18d10+9	2 2 2 1	55%	H,S,Tx2	17,000
10	116-124	78-82	-8	20d10+10	2 2 2 2	60%	H,S,Tx2	18,000
11	124-132	82-90	-9	22d10+11	3 2 2 2/1	65%	Hx2,S,Tx2	19,000
12	132-142	90-98	-10	24d10+12	3 3 2 2/2	70%	Hx3,S,Tx2	20,000

Crested dragons are a cross between red and green dragons; they have the body of a green dragon (but larger) and the head and tail of a red dragon. The distinguishing feature of a crested dragon is the red, cakadoo-like crest that extends from the top of the head to halfway down the back of the neck. The coloration of the crested dragon's scales are similar to those of the green and red dragons in the respective body parts. Due to cross-breeding, a crested dragon's body scales are thicker than those of the green, hence the better armor class.

Crested dragons speak their own tongue, a tongue common to all evil dragons, and 14% of hatchling crested dragons have an ability to communicate with any intelligent creature. The chance to possess this ability increases 5% per age category of the dragon.

Combat: Crested dragons will attack most good-aligned and neutral creatures without a second thought, but have also been known to attack evil creatures that invade their territory. Crested dragons will use their spells, breath weapon, and special abilities against more formidable foes before closing to fight, but will use +laws and bite against weaker opponents. At times, a crested dragon will attempt to control foes through use of suggestion and charm. These controlled creatures will be used as guards, or as information-gatherers. Their favorite targets for these tactics are humans and demi-humans.

Breath Weapon/Special Abilities: A crested dragon's breath weapon is a cloud of flaming gas 70' long, 40' wide, and

30' high. Creatures caught in this cloud must make two saving throws vs. breath weapon as follows: the first is against gas for 3/4 damage and the second is against fire for 1/2 damage. This breath weapon is composed mostly of flames; therefore, if a target is immune to gas, damage is automatically 3/4 normal, save against fire for 1/2. On the other hand, if a victim is immune to fire, damage is automatically 1/2 normal, save against gas for 1/4 damage.

From birth, crested dragons are immune to both fire and gasses. As they age, they gain the following additional powers: Young: affect normal fires three times per day. Juvenile: water breathing. Adult: suggestion once per day. Old: wall of fire once per day. Venerable: hypnotism once per day. Great Wyrms: pass without trace three times per day. Crested dragons cast spells and use their special abilities at 8th level, plus their combat modifier.

Habitat/Society: Crested dragons are found in temperate hilly and mountainous regions as long as these areas are heavily forested. Crested dragons are solitary creatures (except when mating and child-rearing) and fiercely protect their territory. Crested dragon lairs are usually found in large caves well hidden in deep forests. Crested dragons are good parents, and will protect their young to the death if necessary.

Enemies of crested dragons include hill giants and green dragons with whom they share their territory. They will attack hill giants on sight, but will not fight green dragons unless provoked.

Ecology: Although crested dragons can eat nearly anything, they prefer humans and elves, especially females; they have been known to attack small villages to obtain food. They will also eat plants and medium-sized animals if necessary.

DRAGON, CRIMSON

Climate/Terrain:	Subtropical and temperate hills and mountains
Frequency:	Very rare
Organization:	Solitary or clan
Activity Cycle:	Any
Diet:	Special
Intelligence:	Exceptional (15-16)
Treasure:	Special
Alignment:	Neutral (5% each with LN and CN tendencies)
No. Appearing:	1 (2-5)
Armor Class:	-1 (base)
Movement:	12, Fl 36 (C), Jp 3
Hit Dice:	12 (base)
THAC0:	9 (base)
No. of Attacks:	3 + special
Damage/Attack:	1-8/1-8/3-30
Special Attacks:	Special
Special Defenses:	Variable
Magic Resistance:	Variable
Size:	G (42' base)
Morale:	Fanatic (17-18)
XP Value:	Variable

Age	Body Lgt(')	Tail Lgt(')	AC	Breath Weapon	Spells Wizard/Priest	MR	Treasure Type	XP Value
1	5-15	3-10	2	3d6+1	Nil	Nil	Nil	3,000
2	15-26	10-16	1	6d6+2	Nil	Nil	Nil	4,000
3	26-36	16-24	0	9d6+3	Nil	Nil	Nil	6,000
4	36-46	24-38	-1	12d6+4	2	Nil	G	8,000
5	46-62	38-50	-2	15d6+5	2 1	25%	G,S	10,000
6	62-74	50-66	-3	18d6+6	2 2	30%	G,S	11,000
7	74-84	66-78	-4	21d6+7	2 2 1	35%	G,S,Z	12,000
8	84-98	78-90	-5	24d6+8	2 2 2	40%	G,S,X,Z	14,000
9	98-120	90-112	-6	27d6+9	2 2 2 1	45%	G,S,X,Z	16,000
10	120-140	112-120	-7	30d6+10	2 2 2 2	50%	G,S,X,Z	18,000
11	140-158	120-130	-8	33d6+11	2 2 2 2 1/1	55%	G,S,X,Zx2	19,000
12	158-166	130-142	-9	36d6+12	2 2 2 2 2/2	60%	G,S,X,Zx3	20,000

Crimson dragons are closely related to red dragons; they are nearly identical in appearance to reds, although they are smaller in size. Aside from the brighter red scales and some minor facial differences, the only appreciable difference is the black throat and belly of the crimson dragon. At ranges of 120' or greater, crimson dragons appear identical to red dragons; at closer distances, the differences are easier to distinguish (a successful INT check results in the observation of the brighter scales and/or the black belly. In any case, the differences are obvious at 60' or less. Unlike most dragons, the scales of a crimson dragon change little in color throughout their lives; they stay a bright crimson red from birth to old age.

While crimson dragons resemble red dragons in appearance, their temperament and outlook on life are quite different. They are far less vain and greedy than the red; while they still hoard treasure, it is not the crimson's *main* goal in life. Crimson dragons rarely take sides in conflicts between good and evil, only doing so to maintain the balance of neutrality, which is their main concern. Most (90%) crimson dragons are strictly neutral in alignment; of the remaining 10%, half are neutral with LN tendencies, and the other half are neutral with CN leanings.

Crimson dragons speak their own language, a language common to all neutral dragons, and 16% of hatchling crimson dragons have an ability to communicate with any intelligent creature. The chance to possess this ability increases 5% per age category of the dragon.

Combat: Crimson dragons prefer to close with their opponents, engaging them with every attack mode available; if possible, combat will commence with a screaming plummet from the sky above in order to gain surprise. The attack will then continue

with claw, bite, wing buffet, tail slap, etc. Spells, breath weapon attacks, and special abilities will not normally be employed; instead they will save for truly dangerous encounters. Crimson dragons are not above retreating if obviously out-classed.

Breath Weapon/Special Abilities: The breath weapon of a crimson dragon is a cloud of noxious vapors measuring 50' in all dimensions. Anyone caught in this cloud must make a saving throw vs. breath weapon or fall unconscious for 1d6 rounds; those who succeed must make a second saving throw vs. poison or suffer nausea (-2 on all "to hit" rolls) for 1d4 rounds. On the round following the breath attack, the cloud bursts into flames, inflicting the damage listed on the table above to all still in the area of effect (victims may save vs. breath weapon for 1/2 damage). Strong winds or a gust of wind spell will move the cloud, but no amount of wind short of hurricane-force will disperse it. Any fire (such as torches carried by victims) will set the cloud ablaze immediately and any damage caused (such as from a fireball) will be cumulative with the breath weapon damage. A favorite tactic of the crimson dragon is to cast a fireball spell into the cloud the following round, causing tremendous damage.

Crimson dragons are born immune to fire. As they age, they gain the following additional powers: Juvenile: flaming sphere three times per day. Adult: wall of fire twice per day. Old: telekinesis twice per day. Venerable: reverse gravity once per day. Wyrmling: incendiary cloud twice per week. Crimson dragons cast spells and use their special abilities at 8th level, plus their combat modifier.

Habitat/Society: Like red dragons, crimsons can be found in hilly or mountainous terrain, but unlike their cousins, dislike the tropics. Their lairs are usually in large caves in high hills or mountain peaks.

Crimson dragons are usually loners; they associate with other crimson dragons only when mating, and keep company with other creatures even less frequently. This is due mainly to the fact they are often mistaken for red dragons and are therefore mistrusted by most other creatures.

These cases of mistaken identity are the most common cause of unwarranted attacks against crimson dragons, and is also the main reason behind their neutral alignment - they don't trust others, and rarely form alliances; they spend most of their efforts furthering the goals of neutrality.

Ecology: Crimson dragons prefer to eat meat, but can eat nearly anything. When hunting, they rarely will kill an intelligent creature for food, except in extreme circumstances.

A crimson dragon's worst enemy is the red dragon, who think their cousins are inferior and give them a bad reputation. Combat between the two types are relatively common, and, assuming the combatants are of roughly the same age, these fights are usually quite evenly matched.

DRAGON, SCARLET

Climate/Terrain:	Temperate hills and mountains
Frequency:	Very rare
Organization:	Solitary or clan
Activity Cycle:	Any
Diet:	Special
Intelligence:	Genius (17-18)
Treasure:	Special
Alignment:	Lawful Good
No. Appearing:	1 (2-5)
Armor Class:	-3 (base)
Movement:	10, Fl 32 (C), Jp 3
Hit Dice:	15 (base)
THAC0:	5 (base)
No. of Attacks:	3 + special
Damage/Attack:	1-12/1-12/3-36
Special Attacks:	Special
Special Defenses:	Variable
Magic Resistance:	Variable
Size:	G (46' base)
Morale:	Fanatic (17-18)
XP Value:	Variable

Age	Body Lgt(')	Tail Lgt(')	AC	Breath Weapon rnd:1 (2,3)	Spells Wizard/Priest	MR	Treasure Type	XP Value
1	3-10	3-10	0	2d12+1 (1,1)	Nil	Nil	Nil	3,000
2	10-21	10-19	-1	4d12+2 (2,1)	Nil	Nil	Nil	4,000
3	21-40	19-28	-2	6d12+3 (3,1)	Nil	Nil	Nil	6,000
4	40-58	28-47	-3	8d12+4 (4,2)	2	Nil	H	8,000
5	58-77	47-66	-4	10d12+5 (5,2)	2 2	35%	H,T	10,000
6	77-96	66-85	-5	12d12+6 (6,3)	2 2 1	40%	H,T	12,000
7	96-115	85-100	-6	14d12+7 (7,3)	2 2 2/1	45%	H,T,Z	13,000
8	115-132	100-120	-7	16d12+8 (8,4)	2 2 2 1/1	50%	H,Tx2,Z	15,000
9	132-150	120-138	-8	18d12+9 (9,4)	2 2 2 2/2	55%	H,Tx2,Z	17,000
10	150-160	138-146	-9	20d12+10 (10,5)	2 2 2 2 1/2 1	60%	H,Tx2,Zx2	18,000
11	160-170	146-156	-10	22d12+11 (11,5)	2 2 2 2 2/2 2	65%	H,Tx2,Zx2	19,000
12	170-178	156-164	-11	24d12+12 (12,6)	3 2 2 2 2/2 2 1	70%	H,Tx2,Zx3	20,000

Scarlet dragons are related to red and crimson dragons; in appearance, a scarlet dragon is nearly identical to a crimson dragon, with the following exceptions: it is larger (nearly the size of a red), has different color scales, and has no black throat and belly; instead it has a black stripe on the back of the head, body, and tail, and has black wing ribbings on the top side.

Like crimson dragons, a scarlet dragon can easily be mistaken for a red dragon. If viewed from above, the chances for a mistaken identity are the same as for a crimson dragon; if only the underside is visible, these chances are as follows: at ranges of 80' or more, it is impossible to differentiate a scarlet from a red; at closer distances, a successful intelligence check is required to do so (unlike the crimson, there is no minimum distance where the differences are automatically apparent in this situation).

Scarlet dragons speak their own tongue, a tongue common to all good dragons, and 18% of hatchling scarlet dragons have an ability to communicate with any intelligent creature. The chance to possess this ability increases 5% per age category of the dragon.

Combat: Under normal circumstances, a scarlet dragon will not attack unless provoked. If they do fight, their high intelligence allows them to quickly determine what attack mode to use; they are therefore, very unlikely to use up spells and breath attacks against weaker foes, and in most circumstances will have these abilities available for use against dangerous

enemies. If faced with powerful opponents, they will be softened up with spells and breath attacks at a distance, before the scarlet dragon closes to fight in melee. When attacked, a scarlet dragon is a viscous fighter, and once the battle has been joined, will rarely back down.

Breath Weapon/Special Abilities: A scarlet dragon's breath weapon is a cone of greek fire 100' long, 5' wide at the dragon's mouth, and 40' wide at the base. Anyone caught inside the area of effect may save vs. breath weapon for 1/2 damage. The flames caused by this attack will continue to burn for two additional rounds; anyone still in the area of effect suffers the damage given in the parenthesis (the numbers represent the damage taken in the second and third rounds, respectively), and is considered to be covered by the flaming material. Therefore, these victims do not get a saving throw. However, all items carried by these victims must make saves vs. magical fire in these additional rounds, or be consumed by the fire. Anyone not initially hit by the flames, but who moves into the area of effect, gets a normal saving throw vs. dragon breath for 1/2 damage.

Scarlet dragons cast spells and use their special abilities at 10th level, plus their combat modifier. They are born immune to fire and all types of heat; as they age, scarlet dragons gain the following additional powers: Very Young: *faerie fire* three times per day. Juvenile: *flaming sphere* three times per day. Adult: *wall of force* twice per day. Old: *moonbeam* twice per day. Mature adult: *flame strike* once per day. Wyrmling: *prismatic sphere* three times per week.

Habitat/Society: Scarlet dragons inhabit temperate hills and mountains (they prefer hills, however). Their lairs are most often deep within a hilly area, in a well hidden cave. Scarlet dragons will protect their lairs and territory with various types of traps, both magical and mundane.

Scarlet dragons are very family-oriented; they will protect their young and mates to the death if necessary. Even after their offspring have grown and left the lair, a mated pair of scarlet dragons will stay together more often than not. Scarlet dragons also enjoy the company of other good dragons, such as silver and gold dragons, and will form alliances with them in times of great need.

Like crimson dragons, a scarlet dragon will often be mistaken for a red dragon, and they are therefore, attacked unjustly at times. This is a source of great frustration for scarlet dragons, since they are often assailed by good-aligned creatures and adventurers; in these cases, instead of counter-attacking, a scarlet dragon will attempt to disable their attackers and explain to them their mistake. If this does not work, the scarlet dragon will try to fly away. If attacked by evil creatures, they will retaliate without mercy.

Ecology: Scarlet dragons prefer to eat meat, but will eat nearly anything if it is necessary. Like crimson dragons, the scarlet's prey is almost always non-intelligent creatures.

Scarlet dragons and red dragons are fierce opponents; because their territories sometimes overlap, fights between the two types are not uncommon. The scarlet will usually get the best of these confrontations, but the pure persistence of the red often pays off with a victory, or at least a draw.

Hello Fellow Gamers,
To take the edge off of the most bodaciously powerful dragons that have been presented thus far (that would take out anything but a bogus dose of biological warfare) we proudly present dragons that wouldn't involve Thor on an overdose of testosterone or Zeus hooked up to an antimatter/matter reactor to defeat.

Presenting,

The Dragons of the Reef:

DRAGON, REEF (like surf's up, dude!)

Climate/Terrain:	Surf, Sand, and Water on small tropical islands, as well as anywhere Dragon-Babes can be found.
Frequency:	Very Rare
Organization:	hangin' loose
Activity Cycle:	about 2pm (wake up) to 6am (last pineapple beer)
Diet:	Pineapple beer, roast wild boar, bananas
Intelligence:	Questionable, definitely alien
Treasure:	Sun Tan lotion, RADICAL magical surf boards, golden tan
Alignment:	Chaotic Good (CHILLIN' RADICAL)
No. Appearing:	1-100(Depending on availability of Beer, Babes, Waves)
Armor Class:	4 (10 without board)
Movement:	12 without board, 100 with board (on water)
Hit Dice:	3
THACO:	all really depends on who we want to hit on, 'mon.
No. of Attacks:	"why attack, it hurts my karma, man?"
Damage/Attack:	(see No. of Attacks)
Special Attacks:	1:58am belch.
Special Defenses:	dat rad board, dude
Magic Resistance:	would depend on the magic, 'mon
Size:	S (15 cm)
Morale:	depends on how hardy we are partying, Ace!
XP Value:	depends on how much you party with us, dude!

Dragons of the Reef are small dragons that inhabit the Isle of Four Winds in the middle of the Sargo Sea. The dragons are a mutation from the originals and have been isolated from normal dragon culture and have not picked up the nuances that say "Kill, main, destroy and pick up treasure". They will greet adventures with a lei and personalized boards for the adventures. This odd behavior (and the odd size of the dragon) will come as some shock to your typical party, as will the fact the dragons have almost no treasure. The breath weapon of the dragons of the reef is a belch that can be delivered at any time, but 1:58am happens to be the most effective time. The belch can be resisted with a save vs posion at +5. Those that don't save decide to take up surfing as a permanant lifestyle. Those affected eventually mutate into a Dragon of the Reef, to PARTY ON, dude.

A person affected by the belch can be shocked out of the trance by being read either econometrics or biochemical metabolism, either one will be heinously painfull enough to remove the compulsion, man.

Thanks to A. J. Mikkola for all the dragons. Satire is known as a compliment. PLEASE NO SPELLING FLAMES (I know my spelink isn't so hot)

-with fried software in Riverside

Aaron Miaullis (cyborg@ucrmath.ucr.edu)

Personal experiences with game mechanics vs GM & player satisfaction

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"The Schizophrenic Squire" asked about what sorts of game mechanics produce enjoyable games. I'm interested in hearing what others have to say on this issue, so I'm offering my opinions to encourage the discussion.

Background: I have run AD&D (variants) as both player and GM. I've played in a home-brew system vaguely based on Bushido. I also have spent quite a bit of time reading rules for assorted FRP games before designing the GURPS-inspired system I now use (as GM).

Problems I've encountered that seem to be enhanced by game mechanics:

1. Players' attention wanders during combat

I've seen this problem crop up when a player doesn't get to act frequently. The player's attention wanders from the combat, then he loses state in what is going on and needs a description of what has happened when his next turn to act comes around. I try to keep up a fast pace in combat by:

- Keeping down the number of PC's and henchmen insofar as I can.
- Switching to a more interactive combat system - requiring a defensive die roll (especially if there are a couple of defensive tactics to choose among) gives players something to plan & do while their foes are acting.
- Use a stripped down action sequencing system. If there are lots of "segments" per combat round but characters act few times per round, players may stop paying attention while waiting for their segment.

2. Reasonable NPC planning during combat

I don't have the best memory in the world and find I have a tendency to forget NPC's during combat. Even with one card/piece of paper per NPC, I find it hard to remember the plan for each NPC (made at the beginning of the combat round) when it is finally time to act.

Another problem I've encountered is the amount of time I need to work out NPC plans. If all planning is done at the start of a combat-round, I take far more time than the players (having more characters to run) and so the players get restless.

When I worked on my game system, I tried for game mechanics that would:

- Use a combat system with short combat-rounds.
- Use an initiative system that defers planning until the time for a character to act. This also eliminates the temptation to illegally change plans in mid-round and reduces player frustration that their actions have become useless due to events during the round.
- Insofar as possible, do strategy & tactics planning for foes prior to the run.

3. Thrashing looking up spell descriptions, etc.

It seems to me that there is an inherent tension between the richness of detail in a game system and the amount of material that the GM must memorize and/or look up during a run. I've found that generally weapons, armor mods, etc. can generally be digested into tables that fit onto a GM screen. Spells (psionics,...), however, seem to have the general characteristic of being "magic" - ie,

exceptions to the laws of nature and frequently the normal game system mechanics. Spell casting times can be digested down to tables, but the exact effects need descriptions that don't compress (easily). Depending on how good your memory is, I'd recommend looking for the following attributes in a game system:

- Relatively small number of spells
- Some underlying rules/principles for spell effects that can be learned in lieu of an endless list of specific effects.
- Small number of variants for casting time, duration, range, and need for gestures, ...

4. Players feeling left out in planning

Whenever PC's need to work out a plan of action, they need information about the world (campaign region) in general and possibly about specific foes. I've observed that generally the players with the most access to information dominate the planning process. Those with little or no information can feel bored with the planning process or left out of the game (some PC's will wander off and do random, obnoxious actions just to be doing something). Two general principles I find useful are:

- Make sure every character has some ability to gather information.
 - Some game systems have knowledge skills. These are helpful IF those with no study of such skills can still prompt for common knowledge and for knowledge related to their skills/profession.
 - For class-based game systems, figure out at least principles for winging-it when players/PCs come up with questions.
- As a GM for a long-running campaign, try to give every player the chance to acquire world info (via e-mail, meetings, or at least the occasional missive of info learned by the PC).

5. Excessive "routine precautions"

I like a game in which tactics and strategy matter: in which advance preparations are useful. However, there comes a point beyond which keeping track of preparations is a real hassle (e.g., a list of 20 magic mouth spells to warn of thieves, ...; trying to accumulate lots of different protection spells [prot fire, prot cold, prot evil, prot normal missiles, spell shield, ...]). I find long lists of preparations even more of a hassle when designing a band of NPC's [and the thrashing during an encounter to check which NPC's have which protections is awful!].

Some game mechanics which seem to reduce the problems are:

- Rarity of magic items giving protection (however achieved)
- Rarity of protective spells (as in they don't exist)
- Protective spells that are helpful but not do not dominate play (less of a drive to have them)
- Lack of permanent or very long lasting spells (ie, keep duration down to fractions of a day)
- Inability to keep too many spells running at a time
- Inability to have too many triggerable spells around (or very inflexible triggers)

6. Immovable objects and irresistible forces

Some game systems use (at least implicitly) the phrase "always [produces result X]" especially in

spell descriptions. This leads to the hassle of keeping track of which “always” wins in cases like spell X makes you undetectable via all divination spells and spell Y lets you see through all magical cloaking spells. It also leads to problems in planning – players can feel betrayed if they bump into an NPC who has researched a counter to a spell that the players think will always work.

Systems that have absolute protections also tend to have foes (monsters) that are invulnerable except to one specific (and sometimes unlikely) attack form. I find that such are intensely aggravating to players.

I now look for game systems that explicitly quantify protection and other effect strengths — on scales that do not include zero and infinity.

7. Players feeling “cheated”

Players like to have control over the fate of their characters. I personally and most other players I’ve dealt with can handle the death of a PC if it dies as the result of insufficiently good dice rolls or bad decisions on the player’s part. Players tend to feel betrayed if they don’t have a chance to save their characters.

I like systems that:

- have a defensive counter to EVERY attack (parry/block/dodge vs melee attacks, observation rolls versus surprise, saves for every spell, etc)
- have few instant-death effects – i.e., characters can survive a couple of rounds even if disabled completely the first round.

8. Players feeling helpless

I and all the other FRP game players I’ve encountered hate being stuck in situations in which there is no way to influence the outcome of events. I mean situations in which:

- the PC has no skill which is relevant
- the PC is not entitled to roll dice to defend
- the foes have absolute (100%) protection against available attacks
- tactics such as retreat are impossible
- there is clearly no hope of negotiation or screaming for help
- the GM keeps re-writing the script to produce the desired end whatever the PCs do
- other PCs or NPCs totally dominate

A lot of these problems are best minimized by improving your GMing skill. The absolute protection problem I’ve already discussed.

I like game systems that give non-zero default skills. This doesn’t have to mean that 200 people can each take their 1% chance and be pretty sure of success. In my system, I use critical failures to stop this (e.g., 5% chance of progress might correspond to 10% chance of making matters worse). People don’t go for the 5% chance of progress unless they are really desperate.

I prefer game systems in which there is not too wide a disparity between the “hit points” (or equivalent) of a beginning character and an advanced one. I find that this seems to be a sufficient mechanism for bringing the dominance problem into the tolerable range.

Editors' Page

What Editors' Do When People Ask Them To Anounce Things

Editor's Comments: Bahhahahahaha, Bawhahahahaha, hehehehe

Plug for Cross-coast User Friendly Studentish Publication

The Necromonicon is a magazine out of Pitsburg that has been described as "modestly priced and has some decent, solid articles in it. It has about 100 readers, and is on issue eight or nine. There are anywhere from 24 to 36 pages per issue." To get a subscription, write to:

Anthony Kapolka 2931 Spring Street Pittsburgh, Pa, 15210

\$5 for a four issue subscription (or \$2 per single issue).

Steve Jackson Games - Dial-a-Gamecompany

The number for Steve Jackson Games is (512-447-7866) to inquire about the products (examples are GURPS(all types), Car Wars, Ogre, etc).

Although the computer system has yet to be returned from the Secret Service, the Illuminati BBS computer has come back online and can be reached at (512) 447-4449. It normally operates at 300/1200/2400 baud.

Right on Target Again (Society for Creative Anachronism)

Lynne Heffernon (aka Lady Margaret) of the Society of Creative Anachronism (SCA) has asked to get the following word out to UCR gamers and others interested:

The Barony of Dreiberger of the Kingdom of Caid (in other words the SCA group in this area) has newcomer meetings every 7:30pm at a house on Jurupa between Brockton and Magnolia. To get information, contact Lady Mora at Dragonmarsh

(781-4456).

Also, they have archery practice every Sunday at Dragonmarsh. There are two classes, the first beginning at 8am and the second at 10am. We don't know if there is a charge. The Lady Margaret can be reached at 714-369-6153.

ANNOUNCING POLYCON 8! (from those running it - not us)

The Simulation and Adventure Gamer's Association of Cal Poly proudly invites you to PolyCon VIII, the only gamer's convention on the Central Coast. This year we are aiming to bring you the best PolyCon ever, with enough stuff to keep you going all weekend long!

PolyCon VIII will be held the weekend of June 22, 23, and 24, 1990, on the beautiful Cal Poly campus in San Luis Obispo, CA. This year you will see a complete list of sponsored games, tournaments, seminars, figure-paintings, costume contests, aucitons, and live-venture. We also will feature movies, a snack bar, dealers galore, and, of course, Clay-O-Rama!

More information follows, but to register, drop a note to either jkusters or sdangelo @polyslo.CalPoly.EDU. Prices are: \$15 before April 13, \$18 before May 18. Housing will be \$35 per night for a one or two person room. Snail-Mail address is PolyCon VIII/SAGA, Box 168 University Union, Cal Poly State University, San Luis Obispo, CA 93407.

Official games will start at noon on Friday, June 22. These games will run uninterrupted until 3 p.m. on Sunday. That's 51 hours of gaming! We will be offering a full catalog of consponsored games as well as the traditional open gaming rooms. This year, we at PolyCon are working to divide our types of games equally between fantasy role-playing and wargaming. What eventually happens is up to you!

This year features the return of the annyal PolyCon Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Tournament. In addition, RPGA will be running four tournaments in AD&D, GURPS, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, and Champions. We will also feature several wargaming tournaments from a variety of soruces.

We are lining up this year's speakers right now in order to bring you the best in informative and enjoyable seminars. At the moment, speakers include Scott Haring from TSR West, Dave Arneson, Mike Stackpole, Felix Hack, and Rick Cunningham.

We are also looking for GameMasters for our "official" games. If your game is selected to be a sponsored game we will refund your membership fee after the game. We require that you run at least eight hours worth of games to qualify for a GameMaster's refund. If your game is longer, we do have a few 12 hour time slots available. If you have special requirements, let us know. In order to be considered for a sponsored game, your membership and information forms must be received by us no later than April 27th.

If the activities are not enough to entice you to attend, our catalog will supply the added incentive. For the first time, we will be featureing short storeis from well-known published authors along with the game descriptions and time schedules.

The figure-painting contest will have four catagories: Player Characters, Monsters, Dioramas, and Creations. All catagories will be judged on craftsmanship, precision, and applicability to the category. The contest for Player Characters will be run somewhat differently this year. If you are interested in Player Character painting, drop us a note with your character-type preferences. We will send you one of our four standard figures. Only these standard figures will be accepted for the Player Character category. Dioramas should be on a landscaped base no larger than 8" x 8" x 8". Crations are modified figures, especially ones with major changes. All Creations should be accompanied by a 3x5 card explaining what the original figure was and how the modifications were accomplished. All entries must be submitted no later thatn Noon on Satruday June 23. Winners will be announced after the Costume Contest.

The Costume Contest will be held Saturday June 23 at 2 p.m. All costumes will be judged on originality, creativity and flair. Prizes will be awarded for the best costume. Be advised that all conventions rules will be in effect during the contest (i.e. no weapons, real or fake).

The auction is an old favorite with PolyCon attendees. This year's auction will be held on Sunday June 24. If you have old games, books, or miniatures cluttering up your closet, bring them and make huge profits! (Well, maybe not that huge, but it's certainly fun anyways). When you arrive at the con, please list all of your consignments on a standard piece of 8.5" x 11" binder paper. Place your name and address at the top of the list, and bundle all of the articles for sale together. List the condition and minimum price you will accept for each item. Please do not send your consignments early for we will most certainly lose them. There will be a 50 cent consignment fee for each sale.

The fees for PolyCon VIII are as follows:

3-Day memberships:	\$15.00	before	April 13, 1990
	\$18.00	before	May 18, 1990
	\$20.00	at the door	
One Day Memberships:	\$12.00	at the door	

Housing will be available for Friday and Saturday nights. Each room holds one or two people dormitory style and costs \$35 a night per room.

To register or apply for GameMaster status, mail to:

PolyCon VIII Box 168 University Union Cal Poly State University San Luis Obispo, CA 93407

A Brief History

Of the UCR Gamers' Guild

By Jim Vassilakos

Steve asked me to write a brief history of the Guild some months ago, and I've never really known what to say; but with the journal deadline approaching, it seems like it's either now or never. Here's my somewhat abridged version of what happened.

But before I really begin, it should be understood that this Guild is not the only one that ever existed. There were others. By my reckoning there were many; each rising, growing, waning, and dying in a long string of successions like so many Emperors of the Flag, rarely knowing one another except for a day. When I founded the Guild, I wondered just what force had torn them apart.

During my freshman year in '86, I attended the final meeting of one of those dying Guilds. There were only a dozen of us whether due to poor promotion or lousy timing. The president was a tired senior looking forward to graduation. He basically turned the club over to a chaotic bunch of Gamers. *Rule #1: Gamers will fail to organize themselves into anything larger than a role-playing game unless into forced to do so at gun point.* He didn't use his gun, so we ended up breaking into two AD&D groups. I took one and Matt Eshelman (still a good friend of mine) took another. *Rule #2: Gamers refuse to think beyond the next game or alternately, the next slice of pizza.* The two groups lasted awhile, and then did as all campaigns do. They died.

That's disintegration. You don't really notice it until you stop having fun. During the rest of that year I ran a short campaign, and during the next two years I ran an extension thereof. Only at the beginning of my fourth year did I begin to recall the old-guild. Too bad it died, I figured. Then I met Wayne.

If anyone can be said to be the prime mover of the current Gamers' Guild, I'd have to award the position to Wayne Wallace. He was a freshman majoring in C.S., sort of your stereotypical gamer with lots of orcs and hobgoblins on his mind. He began to talk about how neat it would be to have a Guild. "We just need ten people... that's all." He sorta made me believe we could really pull it off.

Now, neither of us had ever managed anything more complex than brushing our teeth in the morning, but for some reason, we got the ten names, handed them into Campus Activities, and * poof *, we had our guild. January dragged until the 27th. I still remember the date because it was promoted so heavily. Two sets of flyers, two highlander ads, and loads of word-of-mouth. I originally expected maybe twenty people. We got more than twice that.

Well, if we're actually gonna have a guild, we both figured we might as well do a little gaming on the side :-) (that's a smiley face for the majority of you). So we decided to set up a mini-convention. Getting the name was the fun part.

Highlander Ad #3 — Gamers' Guild

"Alert! Swordswingers, Plasma throwers and other assorted gamers: The Gamers' Guild is hosting its FIRST gaming CONVENTION on Fri., March 2nd Friends of UCR Convention! A wide open forum will convene at high noon in the International Lounge and the chaos shall commence at 1:30pm and go to the wee hours of the night. Be there or fall into a bottomless pit of sherbert cool whip."

Actually, the name FUCRCON stood for Fornication Under Contempt of the Regents Conference, but we we're actively publicizing the fact. Both the name and the ad came courtesy of Aaron Miaullis. The great part was that he was so embarrassed when I actually used his suggestion (which was meant more as a joke at the time) that the first thing he did after the officer elections at the beginning of Spring was propose that we change the name to UCRCON. That was actually my original idea,

but FUCRCON spoiled me for all others. Except for NECRONOMICON, of course. That one had a twinkle hope... but I'm digressing. Whatever you call it, the Conference was a blast.

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Friends of
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Conference

Friday, March 2nd...

General Meeting @ Noon in the International Lounge

Wayne Wallace's AD&Dv2 Scenario: "Monsters' Revenge"
@ 1:30pm-6pm in the Commons Small Conference Room

Shawn Dudley's 2300AD Scenario: "Cybertech"
@ 3:00-11pm the Commands Small Conference Room

Aaron Conway's Cthulhu Scenario: "Hearts"
@ 3:30pm-11pm in the International Lounge

Brad Hall's AD&D Scenario: "Dwarven Mines"
@ 6pm-11pm in the Commons Small Conference Room

Colin Kameoka's Champs Scenario: "A New Political Party"
@ 4pm-11pm in the International Lounge

Only these five games ran, though it was a start. The positive note was that we increased our guild roster to some sixty gamers. In other words, we were still growing and the demand seemed far from bottoming out.

The next major event was new elections for a new quarter. I was trying desperately to write a UNIX manual to get gamers on UCRMATH. The system proved to be an ideal means of communication, and with the rec.games.frp newsgroup always available, the immediate benefits proved impressive. By the time elections rolled around, we had several new gamers on the system with the promise of more to come.

The elections were held at the 4th general meeting on May 6th. The turnout was very good, but the competition was rather disappointing. The only offices where any competition was present was for the positions of Bard and Miser (the two with potentially the most work involved). As an interesting and much warrented outcome, we acquired two bards instead of one. These were the results:

Guild Officers — Spring 1990

FlakeSpanker	Colleen Lee	<i>omalley</i>
GamesMaster	Colin Kameoka	<i>fandora</i>
Miser	Aaron Miaullis	<i>cyborg</i>
Cryer	Brian Chrisman	<i>chrisman</i>
Bards	Mark Dulyanai	<i>dulyanai</i>
	Steve Mays	<i>ranger</i>

I recall being particularly pleased that Colleen got the position of FlakeSpanker (effective president). She had been one of the few *doers* of the original admin'ing group which wrote the Constitution. She impressed me most one weekday evening,

starting at about 4-5 pm. I had appointed her and Kelly Nabours to present our appropriations request to ASUCR in hopes of gaining their recommendation for when the request would come before LegCon. The total amount came to over \$300, and none of us were very hopeful about getting the money for Spring.

I was just parking my rear-end in a comfortable corner of my bed when the phone rang. "Jim, get over here now!" We ended up taking the better part of the night writing our budget and fitting it item-by-item into the appropriations request. A week later, Colleen got a message on her answering machine from Jean Kim. We'd been recommended for the money.

To put it in as few words as possible, Colleen made that request go through when the FlakeSpanker (me at the time) was seriously flaking.

Over the Spring quarter we held a second gaming conference, went to the Renaissance Faire in Devour, purchased membership cards, sold t-shirts, and produced this journal. Judging on the basis of her record, she was a very good motivator.

Of all the activities, however, producing the journal was the most difficult and ugliest to relate. In short, it was a mistake to leave the duties of selection and editing in the hands of so few. It was my hope to train both Mark and Steve in \LaTeX so that the journal could be produced on the system, and to this end I wrote a Learner which later gained some notoriety in the department. However, Steve & Mark became far too busy early in the quarter to spend serious time learning the package, and in the end it was primarily myself and Ray Wong who carried the bulk of the chore.

I'd like to spare the reader the petty details of this chore, in which I am, of course, emersed as I write. However, the sort of collective mood which this enterprise has generated is unique in my gaming-related experience. To give the reader an example, I am currently pulling my second consecutive all-nighter of \LaTeX ing and just this morning I recieved the following email message from one of the more involved officers:

Jim,

I am serious. We need that mag out by tomorrow (Friday) morning so I can get the \$ to get it printed out. You need help, then ask for it. The collective ass of the club is on the line and mine is near the first in line. What happened to our bards? I am free from about 8pm tonight to about 6am on friday. Call me (E-mail may not get to me).

The fact of the matter is that between Steve's file archiving and Mark's artiscic talents, the set of integrated skills and positions did not meet the task at hand. The bards did the best we could expect of them, but their task was simply too great for them alone. Luckily, however, others were willing to pitch in and do the job. Ray's generous donation of time and effort was particularly instumental in making the journal possible.

As for the future (because no history is complete without a peek therein), there has been somewhat of a controversy surrounding the constitution and the very foundation on which the guild is set. Some individuals have stated that the charter rules stifle members who want to get involved. The argument has been proposed that gamesters accomplish the most in an environment free of politics and that the formalized structure of offices ought to be revoked. Looking externally, we have also entertained propositions for hosting a larger conference and of inviting the SCA onto campus to run an educational/promotional tournament for the battle-hardy. Finally, the advantages of attracting more guild members onto UCRMATH remains a long-term goal which will likely be pursued over the course of several administrations.