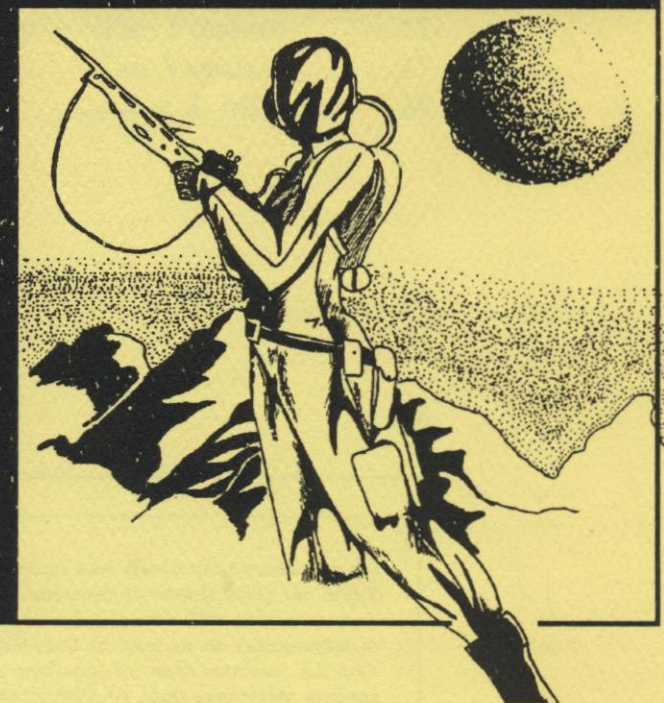
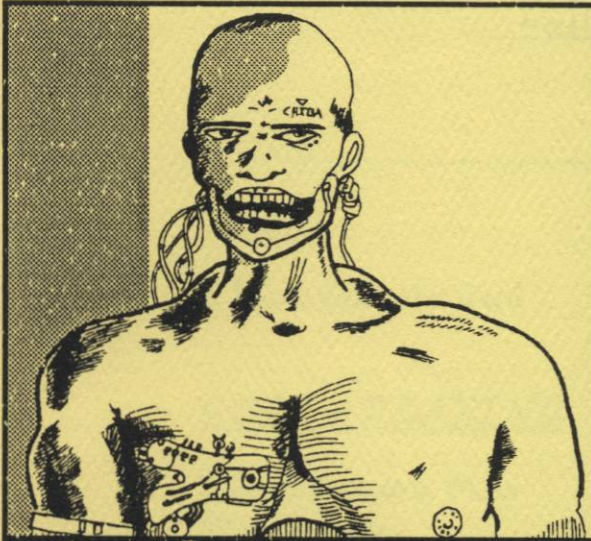


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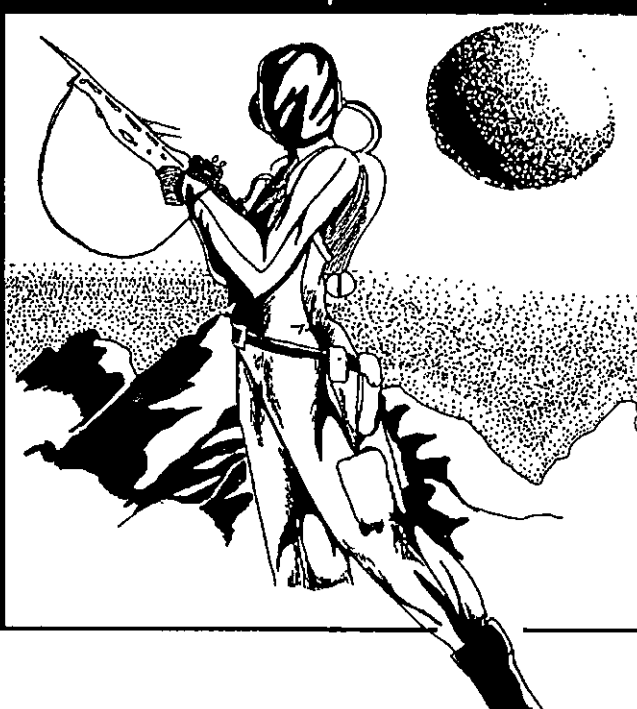
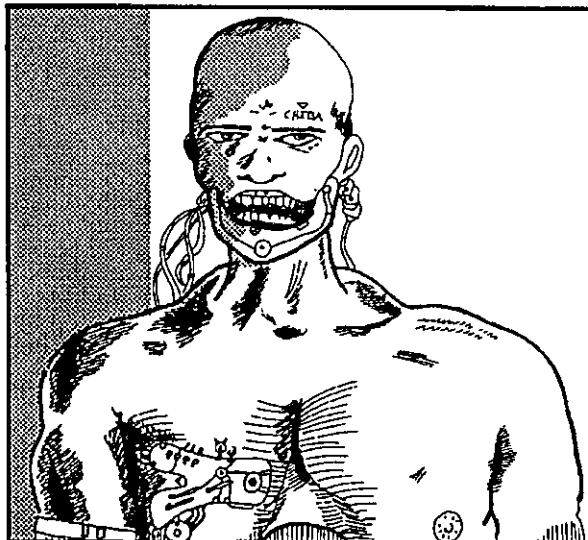
Issue #5, Fall 1991



The

GUILDSMAN

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The Guildsman #5

Gamers' Guild University of California, Riverside

Fall 1991

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Blurb From The Bard

Salubrious salutations, gentle reader, and welcome to a fifth, flagellant issue of The Guildsman, that gregarious guttersnipe of a zine, which having quaffed the proverbial Potion of Diminution, is now merely half the journal it used to be... Sniff... Gone are the days of Navero and his argumentative band of bewildered dragon-slayers... Sniff... Gone is Harrison, Neuro, and Killroy (who was that guy anyway?)... Gone is Dania... Sniff... Wah!!! Sob! Slurp! Pttthhhh!

Yes... the finance committee has had its way with us (a potentially pleasant experience, one should think), and the Guildsman seems to be winding down to its sudden if uneventful demise unless some brave, wanna-be-an editor dashes foolishly from the woodwork: "Ta-da! Here I am to save the day! I'm Justin Tyme!" Chorus: "Yes, but who are you?"

In any event, having once more stupefied his prospective readership with his mis-timed jokes which were just plain bad to begin with, the dejected Bard did crawleth under some strange rock and sputter forth such words that did shake the Oerth and splinter to crooked shambles all the plentiful planes of existence (or something to that effect): "Let the games begin!!!"

— Jim Vassilakos
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Pile of Palpable Plots

Original Compiling by Aaron Sher

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Hey GameMaster! Ever find yourself groaping for that one idea which will spice up the campaign? Here's a pile of palpable plots selected from Aaron Sher's Net.Plots.Books, muchos thanx to the various authors. Read 'em for inspiration or plagerize to your heart's content. We don't care; we'll make more!

Turnabout: Save the Dragon from the Evil Princess.

The Hijacked Alchemist: An alchemist hires the party to recover a shipment of supplies that was hijacked enroute. If he doesn't get them back, he faces bankruptcy.

Takes a Thief: Caught while stealing from a mage, the thief in the party is sent on a geas to steal an artifact from a colleague as punishment.

Mind F*ck: You are assigned to protect a person, but don't let them know you're protecting them. Defer to them in all things, but don't let them know you're deferring to them.

Inheritance: An obscure sect of a dark church is seeking the eight necessary items used in summoning a sleeping demon. Just so happens that one of the PC's inherited one of the items (it should be something innocuous like a simple pendant with inscriptions) from a dead relative.

Look-alikes: The party uncovers a plot to replace high-ranking officials with exact look-alikes (shapechangers): nice little conspiracy action. Which one of your trusted patrons is really an evil doppelganger? Who can you trust? Who will believe you? Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean someone *isn't* out to get you.

The Renegade: The party is hired by the local Mage Guild to find and capture (and/or kill) a renegade wizard who is breaking Guild laws (selling magic items to criminals, assassinating the previous Guildmaster, attempting to assassinate the current Guildmaster). Local law enforcement is not involved because the Guild likes to solve its problems internally.

City Adventures: Here's a bunch of *real* short descriptions of adventure ideas that work well in a city: Second-story jobs, picking a pocket and finding a map, searching the tunnels under the city for a tomb or catacombs, competing with the Thieves' Guild, smuggling arms into the city, spying on foreign officials, helping an orphan fight against cruel thugs, racing another party in a city-wide search for a magical artifact, investigating a corrupt church, wooing a noble lady, searching for your weapons instructor who has been abducted by a rival, trying to get apprenticed to a truly weird mage, etc.

The Accidental Lich: Go to kill the evil lich, get captured and put at his/its mercy only to have it ask, "Why are you bothering me?" Apparently it was/is a good wizard who got kind of absent minded as he died and sort of drifted off into lichdom without noticing. Since he's quite powerful, none of the various local monsters that he's geased into serving him have given him any trouble, nor have they pointed out the problem of his lichdom...

Play the lich as an absent minded old british gentleman, sort of surprised that anybody would want to kill him and having considerable trouble grasping the idea that he's a lich. A few accidental pats on the back while the players are held by some sort of spell should be amusing.

If you can't figure out how to set things up so a lich can capture and hold helpless a bunch of PCs, *shame* on you! Liches are something like 30th level M-U/Clerics, not to mention the hordes of followers, servants, summoned monsters, demons, elementals and the like.

LOv at First Sight: One of the PC's falls in love with a woman who happens to be a witch. Perhaps she is allied with a group working against the party?

Ambassadorial Retinue: The PC's are sent with an ambassador to another country to protect him

and do his bidding. There may be some espionage, rescuing, downright bullying, etc. Could make a nice medieval special operations background.

To Catch a Thief: After a rash of thefts from wizards in the Guild, the PC's are hired to catch the perpetrators. They could be other mages, three dozen halfling thieves, demons, or even time travelers. PC's need to figure out who might get hit next, how to catch the criminals, who are they, etc.

Enslaved: After a fight where all the PC's seemingly died or are captured, they wake up to the crack of a whip, as they have been sold into slavery onboard a galley. They have no equipment, they have to work to exhaustion, they get very little food, but if they play well, they might be able to escape.

Queen's Pissed: The Queen's beau (a very handsome knight-errant or something) is missing, and he was last seen in a tavern at the edge of town. The PC's are the people who were determined to have useful information, after a lengthy interview/screening by the Queen's Marshall-General, etc. They set out to find him, since it is thought he is in grave danger.

Forgotten Memories: The party wakes up around a table with wine goblets at hand. They discover that they have forgotten everything they did over the past two weeks. Apparently, as they uncover clues, they were hired by someone to do a job, and when the job was finished, the person invited them to dinner. Interesting events abound as the party attempts to piece together the events of the last fortnight.

Bonecrusher's Rampage: Bonecrusher (an Orc, now a Giant Orc Chieftain) has found the Gauntlet of Grummsh (an orcish Artifact) and is kicking some serious butt, raising an orc army and is about to invade the country to...er...root, pape, and lillage the area (he's powerful, but he's still an orc). Of course, the destruction of this gauntlet is very important to the party. Bonecrusher could be considered the Guardian of the Gauntlet, and destroying it *will* bring curses from Grummsh onto the party.

The Egg: In a cave, in an incredibly cold pool of water, is a large round white stone (about 3 or 4 feet in diameter). It feels to all the world like marble, and radiates magic.

It's actually a white dragon egg. It stays in stasis, just hours from hatching, until it's heated up...to just about room temperature. Then it hatches. If your players are like mine, they'll take a big white magic rock without thinking twice; it should then hatch at exactly the worst time. My players made it all the way back to their ship, and put it in the hold, before it hatched. Great fun.

A Bad Joke: One of the things I do for comic relief is have the PC's run across a particular ship full of really stupid sailors. They are almost always in dire trouble when the PC's come across them, like the one time they were out in the middle of the ocean and their sails were on fire. The PCs had to put the fire out for them, because they didn't think of using sea water to put it out themselves.

The name of the ship is the *Storm*, and the captain (pilot) looks and sounds an awful lot like Robert Plant. It shouldn't take too much prodding before the PC's start calling it the *Ship of Fools*.

Wolf in Sheep's Clothing: A demon (e.g. Cam-bion demon) has taken the shape of a respected member of the community (using polymorph self) and, masking his true alignment, shape and abilities, is slowly spreading death and terror in the city. The PC's are hired to find the perpetrator and capture/kill them before it gets even more out of control. The demon is able to change shape easily and hence occasionally changes to take the form of one of its victims to throw off the scent. Its sole purpose is to cause disruption and Chaos (or perhaps was brought here by someone for other reasons and escaped or was turned loose).

Curse of the Incontinent Dragon: The party ventures into a small town after their latest expedition only to find that the townsfolk are in an uproar. The mayor tells the party about the "cursed beast of darkness" which rises from its burrows to the north and flies over the hapless village dropping flaming missiles from his bowels. As the characters pass by the mayor's house, they note the gruesome stench. Gobs of acid-spitting larvae still snake through the burnt ruins. To make a long story short, the witch of the *wyrmwoods* which surround the village has cast a curse upon the foul dragon who used to be a nature loving and solitary beast. Now, in his incontinence, he regards the town as his private toilet.

Furthermore, the curse has also reduced his intelligence by, oh say, 15 points. "Aww... duh... you mean you know ahh... I wasn't a 'spose to poop der... dahhhh!"

The Doppelganger Brigade: The party is hired to transport scrolls to a temple in the hills, far from their hometown. They arrive in town, and discover that some townsfolk have disappeared. They meet the high priest, deliver the goods, and are prepared to leave, when they find the body of the high priest somewhere in town.

It seems a small band of doppelgangers have uncovered a lead to a magic item/relic that is buried beneath the tombs under the temple. The scrolls provide information of some sort the doppelgangers need to get to the item. The missing people are being used as slaves to dig beneath the tombs (which of course are full of nasties).

The final scene should be between the head doppelganger and his cronies just as the item is unearthed. To be explored: Did their employer know the high priest was a doppelganger? Is there a conspiracy to get doppelgangers into power in the human world?

Chez Ralph: In a big classy town that the PC's have reason to go to every once in a while (I have it set in a city near a paladin training center) is an even classier restaurant called Chez Ralph. It's about as nice a restaurant as you could possibly have. Waiters check on you every minute or so, there's a string quartet playing in the background, and glasses of water ("Mineral water, imported from halfway around the world" is what they tell you, and they're telling the truth) cost around 20 g.p.

Besides being a wonderful place to have players dump some cash, it's also Soap Opera City. The bizarrest people show up there, at the same time the PC's are there — but since nobody wants to make a scene, the whole feeling is very tense. Old girlfriends, major enemies, spies, polymorphed dragons, you name it, end up eating there — and usually with each other.

This requires a lot of continuity in the game. Most games couldn't support the type of background and tension Chez Ralph requires. You need long-term NPC's that the PC's have come to hate — and put them here, where you just can't do anything about them!

Tower Snatch: A mage returns home after a year away and finds that someone has taken over his

tower in the city. He wants it back and hires the PC's to reclaim it. He can supply maps of what it was like when he owned it (but someone may have moved "Walls of Stone" and placed whole new trap areas). The PC's can keep anything in the tower which is not specifically his (of course he can claim anything interesting and they won't know) and a cash reward. Nobody knows who has it but he suspects someone respected in the community, hence the attack must be done fairly quietly so as not to warn the current possessor (the mage can prove that he is the owner however, he is not setting them up — unless you want this to happen). The tower is appropriately trapped and guarded, mostly with the expectation of killing the mage who owns it when he tries to return. The guards and traps are there to kill (not capture) anyone breaking in. City guards will not take sides unless the conflict extends to outside the tower.

Gamma World: An item has been stolen from a temple/mage/lord, the thieves trailed to a portal leading to an unknown plane/realm. The PC's are hired to follow and retrieve the item and/or scout the realm. The realm escaped to is from the Gamma World game. Several thousand years after an atomic war, patches of technology still exist. Most survivors are animal and/or human mutants and have a mix of equipment. Laser pistols, bow and arrows, smart missiles, swords, armalite rifles, battle axes, war robots, etc. Survivors are *tough* and many have physical and/or mental mutations, as the weak ones have already died out. Several technological installations still exist, guarded by robots. The PC's must trace the item, find the current owners, retrieve the item and return before radiation traces in the atmosphere slowly kill them. (Optionally, the portal is now set so that it can only be used by someone carrying the stolen item, hence stopping the PC's escaping or more raiders coming through). Equipment bought back may or may not work. PC's with laser pistols, rocket launchers and mini-tanks are problematic in fantasy worlds.

Sword Of Kadorn: Players are a group of village adolescents who have discovered a Sword of Power. The local lord responsible decides that it should be sent to the capital where they have mages who would understand such an item, and since the PC's are not needed between spring shearing and harvest, the lord sends them with an advisor (village hedge-wizard, old man-at-

arms, family retainer, whatever). The sword has chosen one of the PCs as its carrier.

Beyond the simple journey to the capital is the fact that the sword has its own agenda. Possibilities include:

- The sword was created to kill a particular ethnic group in a war; that ethnic group subsequently won the war, and it turns out that all the PC's but the chosen carrier are descended in some way from that ethnic group. Over the course of the journey, that PC argues with the sword over whether or not the other PC's should be killed.

PC: "It will be rather a long fight if I have to kill everyone in the province"

SWORD: "But the glorious fight will at last be won!"

- The sword is a Lawful Good sword created a millennium ago, when morals were considerably different. *It* wants to encourage the kind of behaviour that it believes is good, probably rough eye-for-an-eye justice that is frowned upon in most civilized societies.
- The sword is a weapon to be used in an upcoming *Apocalyptic War between Good and Evil™* and is searching for the best Hero for the war. In this case, the PC's are simply a vehicle for it to get to the capital. It may have magical abilities that keep the PC's alive during the early parts of the journey, but after it leaves them, they must learn to live without it.

The Fall Guys: Here's a great way to get the starting-out party together.

Each PC is doing normal, everyday things (sword practice, study, drinking, etc.) when he is arrested by the city police (knocked unconscious if they do not go peacefully). The PC's all end up in the same jail cell. The next day, they are brought to trial for the murder of some important official. They are convicted and sentenced to burn tomorrow. They are returned to their cell (stripped of all equipment) to await their execution.

The PC's have at least two escape paths (more, if they're creative):

1. If they carefully search the cell, they can find a loose stone under a cot (everyone gets a *notice concealed doors* check). By

falling through, they can drop into the sewers, float to the exit, and batter away the grate.

2. Have a mage do something to the single guard (*charm* comes to mind).

Once they are out, they must flee the city (if they stay for long, they learn that the police have begun a house-to-house search). They may wish to steal some equipment, or maybe a friend will provide them with weapons, urging them to run.

The PC's can travel either to the ocean (if they can capture a small vessel) or to the unexplored mountainous regions. There, they can gain experience and hide until they are ready to return and find out who framed them for the murder.

Double-Cross: The PC's are hired to retrieve a family heirloom which was stolen from five years ago. The family has just found who now has the heirloom and want the PC's to steal it back. The current owner is the original thief and is an accepted member of the community (probably not Lawful Good but not Chaotic-Evil either). The theft must be done quietly so as not to attract attention, as the family would lose social esteem if it was known that the object had been lost (i.e. don't ask questions in town). The current owner has a normal house with normal traps and precautions to protect this type of treasure plus whatever skills or guards are required.

After the theft has been performed, the object handed over, and the PC's are still congratulating themselves on a job well done, reward posters go up around town for the return of the object, the thieves wanted dead or alive or the object returned and no questions asked. The PC's have been suckered, the object has *always* belonged to the person they stole it from, and they are forced to either flee the area (never to return), or to get it back again from the person they originally stole it for (probably a member of the local Thieves' Guild or similiar). The preferred method is to lead them toward stealing it back again (if they can break into the thieves' guild) as there are no other safe alternatives. If they are captured, nobody will believe them unless the PC's pay for a cleric to *Detect Lie* (very expensive under the circumstances), and nobody will mind if they are accidentally killed while trying to retrieve the object.

Last time I ran this adventure, the object was a diamond tiara which was used in royal

coronations (one of which was due in two months)...nearly brought the whole political structure down.

Time War: An experimenting Cleric/Mage has opened a portal to another realm. Accidentally, this corresponded with an experiment in a modern-day underground military base which is performing a physics experiment on time/space. A trans time-dimensional portal is formed, both attuned to each other such that neither can be closed until both are closed simultaneously. Meanwhile, a military scouting party of Rambo types have passed through and are exploring the AD&D world (walky talkies, hand grenades, sub-machine guns and pistols, hand-to-hand combat). They don't believe what they've ended up in (save vs illusions and mind-affecting spells at +4) and are taking prisoners of anyone who can give information on the situation.

Mission #1: Stop the scouting party (including retrieving their gear if possible).

Mission #2: Find what equipment is needed to close both portals simultaneously (sages can probably help with this) and get the required equipment (I used a Redeye missile and Staff of power, both of which were in the possession of a Barghest on the plane of Gehenna).

Mission #3: Go through the portal to the Underground base, find the source controlling the portal, and get control of the area. The guards are the US-Army equipped with modern gear.

Mission #4: Destroy both portals simultaneously. For example, fire the missile into the controlling computer complex while simultaneously breaking (retributive strike) the Staff of Power at the fantasy-side entrance to the portal. Then, get the surviving PC's from the underground base to their home realm (either use plane shifting magic or have a time delay on the portal's destruction).

The Great Robbery: The elderly Lord of a small adventuring town was found missing from his home after a visit from some strange men. The man's family determines that he has been kidnapped and hires the PC's to find him. The PC's, following various clues, find the man, and, after a bit of a fight with some Kenku, the Kenku call for a truce.

They say they were hired to kidnapped the man, and the person who hired them has not shown up with their money. They want no more trouble with the PC's and hand over the old man. What the PC's don't know is that the *man* they take back is actually the Kenku leader, shape-changed into the old lord's appearance. The Kenku were able to use magic (my version allow them to be up to 3rd level mages) to *ESP* and *Charm* the lord into telling them about his home, servants and treasure.

All goes well until a few days after the PC's return the *lord*. It seems that most of the servants have been fired, the guard captain dismissed for failing his duties, etc. In other words, the *lord* is clearing the castle of any who could recognize a difference in him. His family (if any — in my campaign there was a granddaughter set off to a nunnery and a son who was locked in the dungeon for treason; he was blamed for the kidnapping) have been done away with and most of the loyal servants/guards are gone. The *lord* has hired new *people*; more Kenku coming in as advisors, guards, etc. Once this was done, they began cleaning out the castle treasury. Needless to say, the PC's will be curious and the townsfolk furious.

The *lord* has diverted all monies to his "new and worthwhile projects" while neglecting the town and allowing things to decay. In the meantime, servants (Kenku) are looking for a ship (with a captain that would not ask questions) to come to the castle's dock during the night. This does not go unnoticed by the PC's. It all comes down to a battle between the Kenku, their mercenaries, and the PC's on a treasure-laden boat. If the PC's are victorious, they find the true lord and his son in the castle dungeon.

The Hide of Harker: Baron Harksheen requests an audience with the adventurers. Background checks will reveal that very little is known about this baron. The local vassal is named G'caird, and is a duke. G'caird has never heard of Harksheen. Harksheen castle is rather remote, to say the least.

If asked, Harksheen will relate a story about saving the life of one of the kings' children many years ago and how he received this barony quite by surprise some years later. If the party asks too many questions, they may be imprisoned in the baron's dungeons. The baron has fifteen men at arms, and can command the skeletons which

inhabit all of the numerous suits of armor displayed in the great hall (Note that this armor gives the skeletons much better than normal defenses and weapons). If the party notices the skeletons in the armor, the baron will claim they are the remains of the great warriors who died in battle.

The Baron's story is that he would like to obtain a certain suit of armor that has fallen out of sight. He has uncovered some clues (which he will be glad to show any mages in the group), that indicate that the armor, called *The Hide of Harker* was interred with the remains of one Keforid, apparently a priest of some sort. The Baron would like to commission the party to recover the armor, will provide escort and livestock, and will allow the party to keep all other booty.

The Baron's real name is Harker, and he's a demon. The armor was once his hide. Besides the defenses of the armor and the fact that it is nearly weightless, it has the following abilities: telepathy with Harker, sense danger, and protection from cold. If Harker is killed, the telepathy converts to a sort of scrying from his skull. Without it, he is pretty weak, but if he gets his hands on it (or rather, the other way around), look out. He will warn the party that the armor is cursed and to be careful not to wear it (It isn't cursed per se, but with its special abilities, wearing it might be a tip off). The real reason Harksheen won't go after the armor himself is that the *Wraith* wearing the armor would know what he was going to do next and would be an extremely formidable opponent.

If the party looks closely at the warrior statue in the crypt, they'll notice that the base of the statue is a defeated demon who looks a lot like the Baron. One of the Tapestries depicts the skinning of the demon.

Puff the Magic Dragon: The PC's hear rumors of a Dragon down the coast, not far (30 miles) from the village through which they are currently passing. The local council can't afford to pay anyone to get rid of it, but it's been a pest to all the local fishermen for years. It used to be worse, they say, but has been a bit quieter for the last 15 years. The PC's will be heroes and a small reward may be found. The Dragon is actually *Puff the Magic Dragon* (from the song for anyone who knows it) and was drawn into this realm from the dimension of Dreams by a young boy's imagination (young Jacky Papers). They always used

to play together terrorising pirate ships (fishing boats) until Jacky outgrew his boyhood's "imaginary" friend. Puff has become broken-hearted with the loss of Jacky and just mopes around all day in his cave (hidden in the mists of the coast). He is also a compulsive coward, and the only valuables he possesses are those things he and Jacky collected when Jacky was younger (balls of string, used pirate's flags, blocks of sealing wax). Puff is a green dragon (nonstandard) with a sonic breath weapon (his cry/wail) which shatters/disintegrates metal/crystal/etc within 40'-70' (save applies) and does appropriate damage to people as suits the scenario. He can wail every 2nd round with no limits and will usually do so (he really is depressed). This makes it hard for fighters to do much to him unless they are lucky with their magic armor, magic swords, etc. Great way to get rid of those pesky +5 defenders.

At any time the PC's approach him, he will be sobbing gently. He appears as a huge ancient dragon of green color but is not *not* the Monster Manual variety. He is hit only by magic weapons, and the tears he is crying (every round) are actually large drops of acid (splash all within 20' for appropriate damage. If the party hurts him much at all, he will try to escape, still sobbing and wailing. Even when escaped, he will try to stay close to his cave (Jacky's toys are there) unless it is too dangerous. He will never try to seriously hurt anyone! Any damage is incidental and caused by crying. If the PC's try to talk to him, he will check to see if Jacky is with them, then stop communicating, breaking into even more heart-rending sobs (tears in all directions splashing out to 40' for 3 rounds).

The preferred solution to all this, if they bother to actually find out what's going on (the local sages/mages know and will explain for a fee), is to either send Puff back to the realm of dreams (extra adventure) or find Jacky Papers and reunite them (he is probably that madman wandering the kingdom having lost his memory with a great feeling of unease about dragons).

Artifact Search: Recently, a farmer in a rural area fell into an underground cavern while hunting. Within the cavern are remnants of a vanished culture with gleaming buildings and strange creatures moving about on unknown errands. The farmer fled the scene immediately but his stories soon spread, prompting several expeditions by locals and greedy adventurers. The only person to return from these was found dead out-

side a village in the area, clutching an object fashioned of a strange crystal form. The area is now treated with caution and fear.

The crystal form was soon acquired by a local mage who tells the players of a great, despotic race of Wizard-kings which once ruled before the alliance of freedom, long ago in a fabled era of the world's dim and distant past. The mage wishes to hire a capable group of adventurers with the intention of exploring further in search of greater treasures.

Options:

- The item was actually an artifact from the Wizard Kings and where there is one there should be others.
- The item was a portion of a legendary artifact, and the rest is desired.
- The item is now known to have been the key holding a major servant of the Wizard-Kings imprisoned. He/She/It is now free and the PC's are required to capture/track/kill it. Maybe the servant knows where some of the Wizard-kings are still alive, hiding in suspended animation or with their souls held in a magical gem, waiting their moment of rebirth.
- The item is actually a map to a hitherto hidden realm (in a magically shielded valley or alternate dimension) where the cavern's inhabitants have come from. They have been preparing themselves for a looting/slaving expedition into this realm and must be stopped before they have a chance to expand out of their cavern. This sets up a number of linked scenarios:
 1. Clean out the cavern area.
 2. Gain access to the hidden and unknown realm, and scout it.
 3. Find those who control the raiding expeditions, and stop them.
- The item is the key to time-travel. The mage who has it wants to travel back to the time of the Wizard-Kings, alter history so that the Wizard-Kings defeat the alliance of freedom, and rule with them over one of their realms. He intends to trick the PC's to act as his advance guards and protectors and take them with him to spoil the plans of the allied freedom fighters. This would involve lots of trickery and be sneaky to manage, as the players can't find out what's going on until too late — at which point they

will probably want to stop the mage and go back home.

- The object has given its new master some great abilities and he now wants to use the powers of the PC's to slowly build his personal power until he is able to rule as the great Wizard-Kings ruled.

The Obsidian Castle: In the far west, under a permanent cloud, sits the Obsidian Castle. Twice it has protected powerful beings bidding for domination of the world, and twice it has been foiled. But the Castle is patient and has nurtured a third Dark Lord who has already begun his march.

The Castle is made of jet black obsidian, each block is exactly the same size, mortared to the next with a dull brown film, the blood of the victims sacrificed to build it. Enchantment runs through the entire structure, and ordinary weapons can make no mark upon its walls. The castle is black, gloomy, and horrific. Light cannot travel far within it, being absorbed by the walls. The floors within are pure black ebony, with no trace of light or color. It's hard to breathe in the castle, though characters never seem to run out of air.

The castle actively protects the Dark Lord. It has a nearly infinite supply of glassy obsidian or ebony or black granite guardians. Gargoyles guard the upper heights; razor-winged obsidian bats range the great halls; the moat has no water but is filled with delicately balanced sheets of razor-sharp glass that would instantly shred anyone who fell within, even in armor, for the points would find every gap and pierce the body within.

The Castle is the home and last redoubt of the Dark Lord. Your characters must raise an army to defeat his orcs, ogres and trolls. They must forge a treaty with the beings of the light and air, the eagles and the ki-rin, to provide protection and cover against the Dark Lord's leather-winged reptilian flyers. But the army is a mere diversion to get the players inside.

Deep within the bowels of the Castle is a room perhaps 100 feet wide and nearly as tall, paved with gold. The walls are of brightly polished marble, hung with cloth-of-gold and studded with a multitude of tiny gems. The ceiling has an enormous crystal chandelier, the bright glow of which is nearly eclipsed by the six-foot-diameter gem on a low dais in the middle of the room.

The gem is a composite made of thousands of smaller gems, from fist-sized to tiny grains of every shape and kind. They are packed into a great sphere, facet-to-facet, edge-to-edge, and the sphere is alive with light of every color in the spectrum. Bolts of lightning flash from point to point within, tiny dots of color swirl about inside. It contains the evil spirit of the Castle — its *brain*, in effect. No living being has ever entered this room, but until the gem is destroyed, the Obsidian Castle will always rise again, and new Dark Lords will threaten the world.

Of course, you'll need to work out the details, but this idea should be good for three or four campaigns before the PC's figure out that they aren't facing "just another Dark Lord" but rather the Castle itself. Destroying it is merely a temporary setback. You'll need to decide who built it, and why, and when. You'll need more monsters in the "broken glass" idiom — many people are afraid of broken glass, it's a powerful symbol. Perhaps the Castle is lit with black light torches; you can see, though all is black and dark, and the flames rime the walls with frost and burn like frostbite. Good luck...

"...I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody's around — nobody big, I mean — except me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff — I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That's all I'd do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all. I know it's crazy, but that's the only thing I'd really like to be."

— Holden Caulfield

The Unspeakable Oath

An excellent CoC fanzine for \$4 an issue.

Every issue so far has had an excellent listing of guns; so far they've done Small Arms of Europe & Asia (1871-1936), Automatic Weapons (1897-1936), and U.S. Handguns (1847-1920). In addition, they feature scenarios, stories, new mythos books, and new monsters. Issue #3 had three scenarios in it! The zine runs 50-60 pages, is well-formatted, and has some excellent art by Blair Reynolds.

Write to:

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Columbia, MO 65201

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uc521832@umcvmb.missouri.edu

— Dakin Burdick
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Mapper Magazine

Mapper is a computer-written RPG magazine, each issue consisting of a randomly generated dungeon level. To check it out, send \$5 to Mark Manning at:

Simulacron I
P.O. Box 58598
Webster, TX 77598

Magic Armor

©1991 Tim Prestero

Here's some useful armor your AD&D characters might soon discover.

Mesh Armor: This isn't exactly a magic item. It's a new type of armor I've come up with. It's made of heavy, layered wire mesh. It's thicker (more layers) over vulnerable points, and thinner over the joints to allow increased flexibility. Treat it as elven chain for combat purposes, but it's almost silent as there's nothing to click, clank, or clatter.

Chain Mail of Variable Protection: This is a magical suit of chain mail with a varying AC bonus; at the start of each day, roll 1d6-1 to determine the AC bonus of the armor for that day.

Plate Mail of Temperature Balance (+2 to +4):

In addition to giving an AC bonus of from +2 to +4, a suit of this type of plate also allows its owner to maintain a comfortable temperature; this effectively imparts on its user resistance to heat and cold and other temperature variations.

Shield +2, +4 vs. missile attacks: Gives +4 AC bonus vs. all missile attacks, and +2 vs. all other attacks.

Helm of Charisma: Gives the wearer +2 to all reaction rolls. May (15%) have additional enchantments of +1 to +3 bonus to AC.

Helm of Mind Shielding: Protects the wearer from all charm and scrying spells/devices.

Erendil's Vest: A magical leather vest that has six 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).

Stealth Armor: A suit of black leather armor +1. It grants +10% to both hide in shadows and move silently abilities.

White Dragon Shield: This shield, usable only by fighter types, will cause a cone shaped area to appear, originating at the shield and extending outward 20' in the direction of the shield's face. The cone is one of frost (similar to *Cone of Cold*) and does 5-20 hit points of damage, save for half-damage. This function may be used twice a day.

Holding Shield: This shield, rumored to have originally been created by a wizard under orders from a very greedy fighter, can be used by any class which is allowed to use shields. On the inside face of the shield can be found some large slots, and several smaller slots. The large slots will accommodate a weapon up to two-handed sword in size. The smaller slots will accommodate a weapon, up to short-sword in size. The weapons become smaller and fit directly into the shield. The added weapons do not add any weight or any encumbrance to the wielder.

Large Shields	5 Large slots	10 Small slots
Medium Shields	3 Large slots	6 Small slots
Small Shields	1 Large slot	3 Small slots

Helm of Life Leech:

This metallic and often gleaming helm may be used by any class that is allowed the protection of helms. Once per day, the wearer may *leech* 1-4 hit points from 1-10 characters within a 15' radius. These leeched hit points then act as a buffer between the helm wearer and all damaging attacks. This helm functions somewhat like the *Armor* spell. Any leeched points that are not "used" will disappear in 24 hours.

"Hack and slashers will be shot on suspicion of sight."

— Guy Bock
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The Gods of Western Midway

Tim Prestero

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While clever cub scouts may notice similarities between Tim's gods and those of Harn or AD&D, none should claim that his world of Midway is without its own distinctive pantheon. Yet, should he suddenly disappear, following a TSR funded press release saying "he is sick" (a la Gorbachev), assume the worst, and learn a valuable lesson from his folly. Thus, in the spirit of derivative theology, the Guildsman doth present the Gods of Midway.

Despite cultural and geographical differences, most of the cultured inhabitants of western Midway share the similar metaphysical belief in a pantheon of thirteen gods. While most actively worship only one deity, it is common practice to pay respect to other deities in order to gain divine favor.

Many of the world religions are factious affairs, with different groups disagreeing over the *proper* aspect of a given god or the proper manners of worship. Disagreements range from passive theoretical debates to holy wars and inquisitions.

ALBANARRA

Major God

"The Merciful and Compassionate Queen of Heaven, the Lady of Truth and Virtue, the Healer, Lady of Industrious Labor and the Ripe Harvest."

Albanarra is the goddess of peace, healing, compassion, and agriculture. As the goddess of the peasant, she is considered the exemplary female figure.

The majority of the Albanarran clergy is celibate, and there are separate orders for men and women. Some local orders are:

The Order of the White Palm: a female order, whose activities include sponsoring a variety of orphanages, leper colonies, and food kitchens.

The Order of the Merciful Lady: a male order, whose activities are quite similar to the female

order, although the Order of the Merciful Lady also trains a number of mendicant priests, whose duty it is to wander the countryside, spreading peace, and the word of the goddess.

The Order of St. Ilmater: this is another male order, although this group is considered to be quite extreme by most other adherents of the faith. St. Ilmater was a priest in ancient days who spent his days in studious self-denial and ended up sacrificing his life to barbaric Hessian priests in the ultimate display of non-aggression. His order, founded several years after his death, consists of priests determined to take the world's pain upon themselves. They lead a rather grim life, leaping at any chance to take suffering upon themselves.

ALPHATON

Major God

"The Wise and Majestic King of Heaven, Of the Blinding Light, the Golden Lion, Lord of Paladins."

Alphaton is the god of light and the sun, portrayed as the King of heaven, and the ageless god of Wisdom. Alphaton's church was the source of feudalism, as well as the inventors of the code of chivalry.

Each of Alphaton's churches are dedicated to a saint, and many contain some holy relic associated with one of the saints. His priesthood is organized into various orders and brotherhoods, and many clerical orders support knightly fighting orders, usually for the purpose of protecting church holdings and interests. Some local orders are:

The Order of the Chalice: St. Ulric, in his long life of holy conquest, was said to have slain many a dragon and sea serpent, living a life of pious abstinence and dying while recovering the most holy Chalice of Aviens. His fairly small clerical

order is centered in Ar, with ambitions of spreading throughout the rest of Prydain.

The Order of St. Kenned: St. Kenned was another extremely pious knight, canonized posthumously after attempting to subjugate the barbarian northlands. This clerical order was recently granted lands in southern Prydain, and supports a fighting order.

The Order of the Mace of God:

The fighting order supported by the Order of St. Kenned. The order is currently cooling its heels in Ar, fighting brigands in the Gnome Heads.

Alphaton is served by a number of angels and saints.

BANE Demon Lord

"Lord of the Pitch Shadows, Master of Deceit and Evil Dreams, Protector of Thieves and Murderers, the Merchant of Death, the Unseen Lifter of Lives and Eater of Souls, Wealth's Worry"

Bane is perhaps the most merciless of the gods, save Tharzidun, who is incomprehensible. More than any other, he is the god of darkness and is often worshiped by thieves and assassins. He is often called the thief of heaven and is deemed a doer of the impossible and a master of lies and deception.

Apparently, Bane lacks an organized clergy, although several Thieves' Guilds support a small, hidden temple of Bane. Obviously, as the worship of Bane is forbidden by most governments, whatever clergy there is would not benefit from widespread knowledge of their existence. Bane is said to be served by a number of demonic beings.

DIOMEDES Minor God

"The Emperor of Opulence, the Queen of Pleasure and Self Fulfillment, the Maker of Bargains, Guardian of the Treasure Hoards of Heaven, Enslaver of Hearts and Loins, Mistress of the Stolen Moment Forever Lost, King of Fermentation, Lady of the Feast."

The Ruler of Pleasures is portrayed as a perfectly proportioned, sensuously lithe, human male or female, neither sex having precedence. His/her true form is so sensuous as to drive mortals mad with passion. Diomedes has many aspects, among them the helpless maiden, the worldly sophisticate, the drunken sot, and the canny usurer. Diomedes is obviously more than solely a symbol of sensuality, although he/she is commonly perceived as such by ignorant outsiders. Non-adherents have a tendency to perceive Diomedes as a god of little wisdom and his church as a shallow and spiritually bankrupt institution, but the goddess is the shrewdest of schemers, one who sometimes hides behind a facade of naivete or a well-timed, drunken stupor.

There is only one clerical order of Diomedes in western Midway, the Order of the Endless Feast. Serving Diomedes' are six demi-gods:

<i>Lydia</i>	Beauty, music, art.
<i>Elomia</i>	Business, commerce.
<i>Galopea</i>	Feasts.
<i>Sardura</i>	Contracts.
<i>Tania</i>	Sex and passion.
<i>Thalia</i>	Chance.

OCEANUS Major God

"King of the Endless Sea, Ruler of Watery Domains, Lord of Rivers and Water, Master of Sea Creatures, Creator of Storms, Protector of Those Who Work the Sea, Creator of the Ocean's Bounty."

Oceanus is the lord of the sea. His clerics usually serve amongst those who work the seas: sailors, fishermen, and merchants. His is an ancient god, and his kingdom is the greatest of the earthly gods. He is considered a patron of trade, particularly waterborn trade. Those involved in such trade petition for his mercy. His anger can sink whole fleets and wash away towns.

His church is not very well organized, most temples being independent entities, and many of his priests taking their positions from their fathers or mothers as an hereditary right. Oceanus is served by one demi-god:

Umberlee Oceans, storms, rough waters, shipwrecks.

SILVANUS

Major God

"King of the Wooded Realm, Protector of Beasts, the Unchanging, the Provider, Lord of Autumn."

Silvanus is another ancient god and is the brother of Oceanus. He is the master of the woods, and his adherents are simple woodsmen and druids. His appearance is said to age with the seasons: a youth in spring and old man in winter. His servants are said to be all the animals of the forest; they go to him and bring him news of his kingdom.

His clergy, in ancient times, were the druids, who have since left the civilized lands of western Midway. Now, his shrines are encountered, often untended, in forest depths and forgotten glens.

THARZIDUN

Major God

"The Unmaker, the Unnamed One, the Unescapable Doom at the End of Time, Master of Unlife, the Sleeping Lord of Evil Incarnate."

Tharzidun is said to be the oldest of gods and has been imprisoned in chains of sleep since the dawn of time. Tharzidun is the Unmaker. It is said that would reduce the world and the heavens to nothing. Tharzidun represents the opposite of life and growth, and he controls the essence of Unlife. To speak his name is to disturb his slumber and invite curses of the most potent variety.

The idea of a priesthood of Tharzidun is unthinkable. To worship such a god would be to invite the *End of Time* and the *destruction of All*.

GODS OF AUSTERRICH

The pantheon of Austerrich is quite different from that of the rest of the area, as many of their gods are unsophisticated leftovers from the days when Austerrich was merely a collection of barbarian tribes (days not long past).

As is evident, their gods tend to center around martial strength; a frequent test of a religion was whether or not a new god was 'stronger' than existing gods.

KHORNE

Demon Lord

"Lord of the Pit, Master of Balrogs, Immortal Warlord of the Land of Shadows, Master of the Bloodfire, Reasonless Reaper, the Insatiable Drinker of Blood."

Khorne is most commonly portrayed as a mighty humanoid figure with a bull's head, shrouded in smoke and flame, reeking of brimstone, with leathery, scalloped wings, cloven hooves and razor sharp claws. An old god enjoying recent popularity, he represents those who enjoy pillage, cruelty, rapine and destruction for its own sake. Khorne is the greatest warrior of the gods, though he is known for his unchivalrous methods. His favorite weapons are *Glamrist*, an enormous flaming broad sword, and *Armahn*, a great whip which is said to strike the ground with the sound of thunder.

His clergy is a divided group, with constant intrigue and competition between churches and orders often leading to bloodshed. Philosophical and political differences are not the only cause of disputes within the church. The church of Khorne seems to attract men as much concerned with power for its own sake as with theology. Competition between temples and orders is accepted, even encouraged. Often, violence is perceived as an act of worship in itself, and no adherent could make a greater sacrifice than his own life.

MALAR

Minor God

"Lord of Beasts, the Untamed One, Hunter of Men in the Darkness, Fearless Berserker."

Malar is the god of yet another ancient cult, however, his modern church has yet to make any sort of attempt at organization. Malar is popular amongst barbarians and a few civilized folk. He is the opposer of progress and the destroyer of civilization.

"What the world needs is not dogma but an attitude of scientific inquiry combined with a belief that the torture of millions is not desirable, whether inflicted by Stalin or by a Deity imagined in the likeness of the believer."

— Bertrand Russell

RAUGH Minor God

*"The Lord of Glorious Combat,
Courage in the Face of Insur-
mountable Odds, the Master of
Strength, the Hammer of the
Righteous, the Fearless Leader."*

Raugh, the name of the god, and the battle cry of his clerics, is a god that has only a few simple requests of his adherents: never show fear, spend your life in pursuit of the Perfect Battle, and die amongst the crushed bodies of your enemies. The early religion of Raugh was influenced by foreign missionaries and has adopted the philosophy that 'fighting is good; fighting evil is better.'

Raugh is perhaps the only god who attracts a clergy through conscription. A thump on the head, a few years in a monastery, and just about any hardy warrior can become a priest of Raugh. There is no such thing as a clerical order of Raugh; all of his clerical orders would be considered fighting orders by most standards. Raugh has a number of saintly servants.

TEMPEST Minor God

*"Lord of Lightning, Master of
Thunder, Lord of Storms and
Battle, Fury of the Skies, Mas-
ter of the Winds That Shake the
Heavens, the Ten-Slayer."*

Tempest is another ancient, elemental god. His worshipers are usually seeking martial prowess or protection from the elements. His religion is not widely spread outside of Austerrich, though several tribes follow various versions of this religion.

His clergy is becoming more organized, although few orders agree on the proper form the religion should take. Tempest is said to be served by the elemental forces of lightning, thunder, and wind.

"All dross of education and civilization slipped from me, leaving only the primitive man, only the primordial soul, red-taloned, ferocious."

— Robert E. Howard

FOREIGN GODS

These are gods worshiped outside the sphere of western Midway, although they are not without their influence in this region.

AL-AZIZ Major God

*"The Mighty, the Ruler of the
Desert, the Keeper of Wisdom,
the Lord of Majesty and Generos-
ity, the Raiser of the Dead, the
Master of Angels and Djinn."*

Al-Aziz is the god of the desert and its people, his religion formed from their culture. To his people, he represents the god of their way of life, the god of the harsh territory of the desert, its searing winds and scorched earth, as well as the god of the oasis.

The religion of Al-Aziz has been turned into one of intolerance; his worshipers view those not of the same faith as heathens, less than people. Recently, the attitude towards the infidel has been 'convert or die', as the religion of Al-Aziz has spread across the north coast of Mauretania and into Castille.

Serving the god's will is one demi-god:

Gabriel Herald of Al-Aziz.

ARIOCH Major God

*"Lord of the Frozen North, Lord
of Frenzied Battle, Wielder of the
Blooded Axe, Master of the Great
Beasts, the Grey Slayer, Tamer
of Thunder."*

Arioch is the god of the north, master of the icy tundra and frozen waters. To the people of the north, he represents their way of life, being the ideal warrior, statesman, and clanhead. Arioch is served by four demi-gods:

Jarlak	Carrion lord.
Oolpick	Lord of owls, skies.
Njehu	Lord of whales, seas, mariners.
Usnarl	Lord of bears, tundra.

NONHUMAN GODS

In addition to the human pantheon, most other races have their own pantheon, as well as their own creation story. Listed below are the various gods of the non-humans. In rare cases, some demihumans will worship human gods. For example, there is a dwarven order of Arioeh. It is extremely rare, however, for a human to worship a non-human god.

CORELLON

Minor God

"The Never-changing King of Dreams, Lord of the Starlit Realm, Lord of the Far West and the Blessed Realm, Hunter in the Deep Woods, Protector of the Race in Exile, Spirit of the Mist, Lord of Faerie."

The Lord of the Starlit Realm often appears as an elven lord garbed in a mantle of flowing green and silver with a wreath of stars about his head. His face and body bear no clues of age, but his eyes project wisdom, and his aura projects confused feelings of strength and longing.

There appears to be no formalized priesthood of Corellon. The duty seems to pass freely amongst various member of the community. Corellon is served by five demi-gods:

<i>Aerdrie</i>	Goddess of air and weather.
<i>Erevan</i>	Mischief, change.
<i>Solonor</i>	Archery, hunting.
<i>Hanilil</i>	Romantic love, beauty.
<i>Labelas</i>	Longevity.

BAERVANE

Minor God

"The Wildwanderer, Master of Mischief, Walker in the Deep Woods, Protector of Gnomes, Master of Crafts and of the Arts."

Baervane Wildwanderer is the god of the gnomes. He is constantly revealing greater means of mischief to his earthly followers. He is a master smith, as well as being the inventor of all other gnomish crafts.

His church is a simple affair, with mendicant priests wandering gnomish lands, telling proverbial tales, and encouraging an adherence to the true gnomish lifestyle.

BRANDOBARIS

Minor God

"The Guardian, Lord of the Bounty of the Fields, the Brewmaster, Lord of the Homestead Beneath the Hill."

Although many halfling cultures have adopted human or elven gods, Brandobaris is still worshiped in some of the more isolated communities. Brandobaris represents all of the qualities present in a halfling's lifestyle; he is an unobtrusive god, reluctant to leave his home, proud of his lands and works.

The church is actually quite similar to that of Albanarra, although the majority of priests are male. Services are held once every tenday and concern themselves primarily with simple requests on behalf of the community.

GRUUMISH

Minor God

"One Eye, The Great Chieftain, Slayer of Khuzdul, Befouler of Sindar, Lord of the Deep Realm, Warlord of the Night, Master of the Blasted Plains Beyond Krakendor."

Gruumish is the one-eyed god of the gargun. He appears as a massive, ten-foot orc, his one, huge eye staring from beneath a hoary brow. He forced the other gods into giving up land for the gargun, but the only lots left were those in the uninhabitable regions of Midway (caves, deserts, tundra). Gruumish granted his race the abilities necessary to endure in these harsh regions and prophesied that the gargun would one day cover the planet and rule the earth. Gruumish is an exceedingly warlike god and demands frequent sacrifice of the blood of his enemies, the Khuzdul and the Sindarin.

Gruumish's priests are born into their position, and are taught by the religious clan leaders. Many pluck out one eye, to better see with the wisdom of their god. Rivalry between priests of Gruumish is intense, as the god has decreed he will only allow the finest warriors to serve him in the afterlife. Gruumish heads a heavenly clan and occasionally sends his servants to Midway to wreak war and mischief.

MORADIN

Minor God

"King Under the Mountain, the Soulforger, Master of Stone and Metal, Keeper of Secrets and Ancient Wisdom, the Keeper of the Treasures of the Earth."

Moradin is the god of the dwarves, believed to be their creator. Moradin represents all of the qualities that embody the dwarven race. He is a keeper of secrets and a hoarder of treasure. He is a mighty warrior and stands steadfast against the innumerable hosts of Gruumish. Moradin is infinitely wise but only shares his wisdom with the worthiest of dwarves, whispering his secrets deep into the bowels of the earth. He has shown the dwarves the ways of metal and stone, secrets they dutifully keep.

Moradin's clergy is hereditary. His priests are born into a religious clan and learn the secrets of religion from their clan leaders. His will is served by five demi-gods.

<i>Clageddin</i>	Father of battle.
<i>Vergadain</i>	Wealth, luck.
<i>Dumathoin</i>	Keeper of secrets under the mountain.
<i>Abbathor</i>	Greed, avarice.
<i>Berronar</i>	Safety, truth, the home.

LESSER KNOWN GODS

In addition to these well known gods, there are a few other minor gods, those that are worshiped in only certain areas or have a small following with no established clergy. An example of this sort of god would be one of the gods and goddesses of the home, whose shrines can be found in the occasional peasant cottage.

Along with these minor gods, there are quite a number of demons worshiped, usually in secret, by various individuals and groups. These demons often trade powers and influence in return for mortal souls.

Finally, there are some minor deities related to the solar constellations. These gods are supposed to have influence only over those born in their phases.

"You are an evil and vicious man. You have no feelings; you have no soul. You are blackhearted and cruel. You are an abomination in the eyes of God. You mock everything that is right and true. You have no compassion towards anyone or anything. You would murder without a second thought. You are twisted and warped. You are an agent of evil and a servant of darkness. You revel in carnage, chaos, destruction and the misery of others. You are a tool of Satan, and I wouldn't be very surprised if you were not, in actuality, the Anti-Christ."

— From an Admirer

Paladin: "I'll try a detect evil on the room!"

DM: "You're in the Temple of Elemental Evil!"

Paladin: "Do I detect any?"

DM: "Lots!"

Paladin: "Good!"

— Ken Hunt

hunt@ria.ccs.uwo.ca

a.k.a. Sir Roderick Danske, Esquire

Traveller Tales

being an encapsulated history of future time

©1991 Jim Vassilakos
jimv@ucrmath.ucr.edu

Here are a few fanciful prognostications for the history of Jim's Traveller setting.

2011-2034 Germ Wars

The so-called peace following the Glowing War was short-lived. For another two decades, as the ability to produce bacteriological weapons became available to the developing nations through numerous advances in medical science, a series of *germ wars* plagued the earth. By the middle 30's, the death toll was at three billion people. The wars resulted in tremendous biomedical advances in the more advanced nations, however the third world nations rarely benefitted from new discoveries and were the hardest hit. Although relatively minor outbreaks occurred later in the century resulting in half a billion more fatalities, the wars were said to officially end with the Treaty of New Delhi in 2034, when India unveiled the Yama Bug, a class of germs with theoretically no possible immunization or antidote. Such a germ had already existed in the more developed nations for several decades, but never before had its release been threatened. The Prime Minister's statement, "If India dies, the whole world dies," brought an abrupt halt to the self-inflicted genocide.

A.D. 2004-2568 · The Infancy

2004-2007	The Glowing War
2011-2034	Germ Wars
2047-2080	The E-Grid
2068-2088	Only One Earth
2084-2102	The Farmers' Rebellions
2107-2181	Corporate Science
2162-2212	High Road to Peace
2197-2243	A Human Question
2212-2262	Conquest of the Solar System
2251-2292	Children of the Apes
2247-2299	Quest for the Stars
2273-2334	Problems in Space
2295-2367	Problems on Earth
2336-2419	Medical Renaissance
2374-2470	Resurgence of Religion
2470-2471	Harbinger from Nessus
2443-2568	Genetic Evolutions

2004-2007 The Glowing War

The 3rd Millennium kicked off with a bang, when in its first decade both Paris and New York fell victim to nuclear terrorism. The blow to the western psyche was heartfelt, yet the fear the terrorists hoped to illicit was replaced only by anger in the wake of the destruction. A handful of nations were held responsible for backing the terrorists, and repercussions were both swift and certain. Through a combination of neutron and bacteriological strikes, the alleged offending nations were decimated and a virtual moratorium on nuclear weapons was called for by the seven superpowers. A policy of *Cooperative Guardianship* was ruthlessly enforced by the superpowers in order to maintain the nuclear free world.

2047-2080 The E-Grid

By 2047, the world's first fusion reactor with a positive net power output was successfully tested in Tokyo. Although the news came as an astonishment to the energy community, the media and public reaction was one of disinterest. Several times before, nuclear fusion had been announced only later to be disproven. Further, the advent of fusion had been anticipated for next to a century, so that when it finally came about, people wondered only that it had taken so long for science to accomplish. Without going into the technical reasons for the delays, it can be stated with some accuracy that it was only until the middle 40's that the technological components for the nuclear fuser were available.

Several nations began extending their national energy grids, exporting inexpensive electricity to the third world by way of power lines or energy capacitors. The boost in world productivity was astounding, and with the energy crisis finally licked, the major stresses inciting conflict between nations were for a time relieved. In 2080, the national energy grids of the nine superpowers and twenty-seven other states joined together in an *energy confederation* under the auspices of the United Nations. The World E-Grid was born.

2068-2088 Only One Earth

In 2068, the nine superpowers joined in a treaty known as the *Green Pact* which was to later evolve into the *Only One Earth* restoration campaign. As the global-warming crisis continued unabated, the world community cooperated in the implementation of long-term solutions to the greenhousing of the earth's atmosphere and the environmentally sound disintegration or holding of toxic substances. Although initially greeted with mixed support, the efforts of this campaign were finally joined by the remaining nations in 2088, instituting policies of renewal over the entire planet.

2084-2102 The Farmers' Rebellions

In the years before the establishment of the world e-grid, particularly during the middle stages of the Only One Earth Campaign, the emerging energy-confederation began reclaiming large areas of infertile land traditionally used for small-scale subsistence farming. In so doing, the land was once again made fertile for collective farming, however, hundreds of millions of small-time farmers were displaced. This sudden shift in the social order created a people entirely dispossessed, and in the resulting chaos, a number of rebellions broke out beginning in 2084 and continued sporadically for eighteen years until the Noland's rebellion was ruthlessly crushed in 2102.

2107-2181 Corporate Science

Throughout the 21st century, the vast majority of critical research in the sciences was conducted with government funds, yet beginning in 2107, corporations took the lead role in developing emerging technologies. In 2107, Femm Biolabs in the United Kingdom engineered a new species of algae which not only helped reverse global warming during the 22nd century's period

of increased thermal-energy pollution, but also technologically paved the way for sea farming. In 2122, cryogenic suspension was refined to the point where long-term *freezing* became both feasible and relatively safe. In the early 40's, several breakthroughs in synaptic-electric links made artificial prosthesis of both limbs and major organs more feasible, and by the middle 50's, the human mind could be connected directly to computers for the transmission or retrieval of data. The 60's saw the advent of limb and organ regeneration, and by the 70's startling progress had been made on total body rejuvenation, enabling individuals to live up to 200 years. Yet it was in 2181 that the corporate science achieved its crowning glory: the development of gravitic technology. Though it wasn't for another three centuries that the science behind the phenomenon was understood, this step opened an entirely new field of technology, revolutionizing the global transportation industry almost overnight.

2162-2212 High Road to Peace

Despite all the progress made toward a unified social structure, renewed tensions began once again to sweep the seeds of discord. Disputes over territorial rights, population control, reparation for past injustices, patent infringements, and a whole host of other issues divided the varying and often fluid factions as though by an iron wedge. It is thus significant that the United Nations took the lead in renewing cooperative ties between the world's many states, inciting perhaps the most unifying gesture of the first quarter of the millennium. In 2162, the U.N. approved its first fifty-year plan for space exploration and colonization. Though this action may seem today more an attempt to divert the world's attention from the *real issues*, the joint venture did a great deal to quell nationalistic aggression and instill a feeling of *world community* among divergent peoples. By 2178, both Martian and Lunar colonies had been established, and by 2210, numerous colonies existed in the Jovian and Saturn systems and in the asteroid belt.

2197-2243 A Human Question

By the late 22nd century, the cyborgization of the human species was well underway. Since the 50's, numerous machines had been designed to do nothing other than link with the human nervous system and provide artificial sensations. These *psychedelic sensitizers* or *sex machines*, as

they were sometimes called, were by the close of the century responsible for as many as a million fatalities worldwide. To compound the problem, the public seemed oblivious to the mounting death toll. This *crisis* prompted the United Nations to create a Council on Human Affairs, and for the first time in its existence, the U.N. began dictating a universal morality from its high pulpit.

For the most part, this infringement on private enterprise came as a shock to the business sector which began moving its more questionable operations off-planet where the Council would not have legislative jurisdiction. However, as the 23rd century dawned, it became apparent the U.N. would have more on its hands than mere sensitizers.

In 2231, unprecedented breakthroughs in biogenetics allowed the precise description of an unborn child's future traits, and by the end of the decade, the IHM Corporation began marketing its *First Step* program to prospective parents. First Step was basically a euphemism for the alteration of the genetic material of an unborn fetus in an attempt to create *perfect* human beings. As the U.N. began wrestling with the ethics thereby involved, geneticists began work on altering the human DNA to even greater extremes. In the majority of cases, the geneticists delivered on their promises, producing evermore intelligent, physically powerful, and dexterous humans. However, in a certain number of cases mistakes were made, and artificial mutants were born. Although many of these *accidents* were promptly disposed of, not all could be hidden so easily. Finally, in 2243, the U.N. passed a comprehensive ban of genetic engineering on human DNA. By this time, however, several million super-children had already been born, and although this figure represented only a small fraction of earth's thirty billion inhabitants, the threat of superbeings pounded a serious impact on the social psyche.

2212-2262 Conquest of the Solar System

With the successful completion of the 1st fifty year plan, industry began to get heavily involved in space interests, particularly in asteroid mining and shuttle services. Thus, when it came time to draw the 2nd fifty-year plan in 2212, the U.N. conferred heavily with business leaders to form an opinion on what was possible and what was financially feasible. At the 2212 conference, the Aster Corporation unveiled its prospects for the

construction the Von Neumann Robotic Miner. Once complete, the spacecraft would be capable of self-replication, its sole purpose to find mineral deposits among the asteroids, mine them, and reproduce itself. By 2220, the first VNRM set sail for the belt, and within four decades, hundreds of the miners existed, plying the asteroids for minerals which manned vessels could later find neatly deposited with a homing beacon and refine in the deep of space.

Planetary population stress, however, proved to become an even more serious issue than the plundering of the belt. Despite the numerous microworlds and planetary settlements created during the first fifty-year plan, the Terran population pressures were more evident than ever, and by 2212 every nation on the globe practiced some variety of population control. It was, therefore, critical that some form of large-scale terraforming be undertaken by the world community. Again, the corporations came to the rescue with a number of exotic ideas involving the biological terraformation of Mars, Venus, and Titan. Forming into a cooperative combine later to be known as the Solar Planetary Trust Corporation, these companies demanded exorbitant property rights on the planets to be terraformed, rights which bordered on the creation of sovereign states beyond the United Nations' traditional jurisdiction. With the world community's grudging acquiescence in 2217, the long process toward terraformation was begun.

2251-2292 Children of the Apes

With the road to human genetic development legally cut short in 2243, many *human engineers* found themselves squeezed out of the private sector. One such scientist, Dr. Ukliv Eski, returned to the academia where he founded the Department of Hominid Studies at the University of Kampala. There, his research team raised several generations of chimpanzees, the genetic structure of which he successively modified toward humanity's own. By 2289, his chimps gained international notoriety on a holovideo talk show where, on several occasions, they argued the *world issues* with political leaders, the implicit parody of the situation flustering their opponents and creating a media circus. Although never progressing beyond a grade school intelligence, the chimps ingratiated themselves into their hearts of the common people. However, in a biological mishap at the University in 2292, the chimps and their trainers, including

Dr. Eski, were killed. Later that year, the U.N. extended its 2243 prohibition on the genetic manipulation of human DNA to cover the DNA of all hominid species.

2247-2299 Quest for the Stars

As the United Nations' second fifty year plan for space exploration and colonization came to its completion, science teams around the solar system raced to find some answer to the mass-deficiency syndrome which held back interstellar travel. Finally, in 2247, the Bourns Corporation announced its successful development of the hydrofunnel, a device by which hydrogen could be captured in the deep of space. Several companies, including Aster and MDC, began licensing production rights in lieu of the 2262 summit. There, a whole host of interstellar vessels were commissioned for service. The quest for the stars had begun.

To cap off the century in 2299, radio transmissions were received from researchers on Alpha Centauri. A primitive ecosystem had been discovered on the small world orbiting within the primary's habitable zone, reinvigorating ancient hopes and fears that human beings might find intelligent life in space, or vice-versa.

2273-2334 Problems in Space

To the exasperation of scientists, not all of humankind's efforts in space were fruitful. A combination of inexplicable failures and oversights gave pause to the U.N. space program while corporations continued to rush ahead. The first sign that Man had reached his limit came in 2273, when Femm Biolabs announced its latest breakthrough in the engineering of artificial organisms by unveiling a whole host of Martian settlers. Although the line proved extremely beneficial in the early terraformation efforts, the organisms proved unreasonably hardy and became a bane to the settlers during the late 23rd century when predatory organisms were called in to check the population of the pests. The situation fell entirely out of hand during the early 24th century as predatory Martian beetles would burrow through the foundation of domed settlements, exposing the colonists to the hazards of vacuum.

In 2306, reports from Alpha Centauri confirmed that Man had overstepped his bounds when Terran bacteria began running amok in the fragile, alien ecosystem. By the late 20's, the Terran

bacteria had completely usurped their indigenous rivals.

The final boot fell in 2334, when the UNS Halifax suffered a catastrophic failure of its hydrofunnel during a routine survey mission of the interstellar hydrogen clouds around the solar system. The crew decided by lots who would undergo cryogenic freezing, hopefully to be later rescued, while the losers sustained themselves for several years, finally resorting to cannibalism as their nutrition supplies became exhausted.

2295-2367 Problems on Earth

Despite the colonization and population control efforts of the 23rd century, the population stress on planet was insidious with a purported demographic summary of sixty billion people by the turn of the century. In order to combat this problem, the U.N. began a large scale sterilization movement in 2295 combined with the marketing of propagation rights three years later. Any children who were found to have been born without proper processing after the turn of the century were *confiscated* by the newly created World Peace Agency. Isolated rebellions against the policy were quickly put down, and political leaders, many of them in their 2nd rejuvenation with families of eight or twelve children, argued that enforcement of these extreme measures were the only way to quell population growth from bursting the seams of the world order.

To compound the crisis already forming, the U.N. initiated a policy in 2318 of forced deportation and/or cryogenic sleep for repeated law offenders as a means of humanly screening the undesirables from society's ranks. In 2329, a group of protesters broke into a cold berth confinement area in order to try and free the captives. The government responded by shutting down power to the sector, thereby killing the occupants in the low berths before they could be freed. This incident led to the London uprising of the following year in which an additional 1.3 million people were arrested and cryogenically frozen.

In 2315, corporations began responding to the crisis by building colossal *Arks* in which humans could travel cryogenically frozen for hundreds of years before reaching any of the various settlements promised to be robotically constructed before their arrival. Over the next five decades, some four hundred and eighty million people signed on for interstellar colonization. However, when compared to the size of the overall prob-

lem, the colonization effort seemed more like the proverbial drop in the bucket. The vast majority of population relief came due to the U.N. propagation restrictions, unpopular though they were, and by 2367 the legislation achieved its benchmark goal of a fifty billion population level with sustained negative growth.

2336-2419 Medical Renaissance

Part of the reason behind earth's population pressures was the increasing pace of advance in the medical sciences. In the middle of the 23rd century, geneticists already knew how to modify a species' DNA over successive generations to create, in effect, a new species. The more simple the organism, more available the model, and shorter the lifespan of the organism, the quicker the pace this engineered evolution could be carried out. By monkeying around with hominid DNA in the late 2200's, scientists at the University of Kampala were, in fact, learning a great deal about human genetics. The subsequent accident in 2292 was said to have set back the field of research perhaps as much as thirty years, and the extension of the 2243 ban significantly slowed down the rate at which science could catch up. Despite these hindrances, however, corporations carried out secret research off planet, finally culminating in the early 2330's with the development of broad-spectrum antiviral vaccinations. With the Terran inoculation of 2336, humankind had virtually licked the common cold, something that medical experts had only dreamed about for hundreds of years.

This event revitalized the medical research profession, lending new impetus to the fight against human suffering which had been for so long cheapened and abused by the morally questionable and occasionally dangerous products of medical science. Nerve refusion techniques were developed through the 2370's and 80's, and the first broad-spectrum antitoxin was introduced in 2419, a virtual cure-all against entire classes of disease. By this time, however, corporations campaigned openly for the right to re-initiate genetic research on human DNA without having to conduct their operations in secrecy. However, fears over the creation of *superhumans* still lingered in the public subconscious, and corporate sentiments failed to turn over this legislation.

2374-2470 Resurgence of Religion

With the interstellar exploration and colonization well underway, the popular media began

anticipating the contact of intelligent alien life forms while prominent scientists began staking their reputations on the prospect of first contact being just around the corner. However, "just around the corner" never came, and as radio transmitted reports of lifeless planets and primitive bacterial ecosystems came back to earth, the scientific opinion began to waver. It seemed as though humankind was very much alone in the universe. The initial evolutionary steps were simply too difficult and improbable to support a *teeming universe* hypothesis.

The outlook seemed so bleak that scientists reversed their stands, now questioning whether there was any intelligent life other than humankind, and if not, then what fortune led to the rise of sentience on Earth? This philosophical climate led to a resurgence of religion, Pope Joseph IX declaring from his lofty pulpit in 2374 that after hundreds of years of struggling, men of science had finally arrived to the true knowledge which was always offered to them by God. Each new *negative* discovery seemed to confirm this statement, and Catholicism found billions of new converts who hoped to cash in on the gift of immortality just as the human race had cashed in on its *gift* of the Universe.

However, with the resurgence of religion, so came a new division among people. While the majority of the world's people moved toward monotheism, and Catholicism in particular, several of the eastern nations diverged, holding true to the more ancient, eastern faiths. These deep rooted differences, combined with a yearning for independence from U.N. dictates, led to open animosities between the eastern and western nations during the early 25th century. Unrest continued to ferment until 2443, when Xao Ti Xang defied United Nation's authority by funding human geneticists from the Humanix Corporation and allowing the development of super-intelligent humans in China.

During the following two decades, this open schism over the nature and course of human development generated terrorist actions in China, which were countered by bacteriological offensives against supporting nations. An estimated twenty million people died in these reprisals, leading to further escalation of the crisis when the Catholic Pope declared a holy war against those who would play God. This militant Catholicism led to the outbreak of the Yama bug in China in 2467, however, advances in medi-

cal science managed to exterminate the dreaded virus, through only after a death toll of 570 million. Rather than respond in kind, the Chinese government unveiled the Lu Yueh virus in 2470, an engineered suborganism capable of mutating itself beyond even the reach of the broadest anti-toxins. The Pope called for courage, continuing to demand that the heathens leave the devices of life and death to God alone as the United Nations Secretary General demanded a reunion of the global alliance at any and all costs.

2470-2471 Harbinger from Nessus

So engaging was the new world-conflict, that when news of the UNS Erik's discovery of a somewhat more advanced ecosystem on New Amsterdam reached Earth in 2447, the Terran media scarcely took notice. It thus came as a fortuitous coincidence that in 2470, just as world war seemed imminent, radio transmissions reporting startling discoveries on Nessus reached Earth. Nessus, a world emerged in what appeared to be an artificially produced greenhouse atmosphere was literally strewn with ancient ruins. It appeared, for the first time in human history, that humankind might not be alone in the universe after all.

As the United Nations sat poised on the brink of invasion, reports from explorers on the distant planet's surface were received by their perplexed earthbound counterparts. From initial data, it appeared that the Nessusan civilization had simply faded away as if each and every individual had suddenly died without cause. Some alien specimens were found in cryogenic suspension but died during the thawing process. By a careful analysis of the raw data, it was finally determined by Terran geneticists a year later that the society had fallen victim to some form of biological germ, something too advanced for the explorers on Nessus to detect since they were still using outdated technology. Ironically, where the explorers lacked knowledge, they seemed to lend wisdom, the immortal words of the alien archeologist, Dvitro Xerxes, streaming as particles of radio light through the vastness of space, piecing together the final whispers of an alien people who died some forty million years before humans learned to build fires. This harbinger to Earth's own imminent destiny proved so powerful that support for the U.N. invasion of China immediately collapsed.

2443-2568 Genetic Evolutions

When corporations were finally given free reign to develop a super-intelligent human with the full backing of the Chinese government, genetic engineers flocked to Beijing from all over the solar system. The resources put into the project were enormous from the very beginning, however, unlike Dr. Eski, these researchers had no naturally evolved genetic model upon which to base their work. Therefore, the quest was likened to a grope in the darkness, when after numerous attempts, science had as its best example of experimental success produced only a colony of sterile, psychotic deviants.

Humanix was finally bought out by Femm Biolabs in 2470, during the uncertainty of the mounting U.N. invasion. Femm immediately diverted corporate resources toward the physical manipulation of the human species, something which was considered far more attainable by science, and the decision proved successful in 2502 with the unveiling of water-breathing sapiens who, though genetically fragile, were nonetheless capable of reproduction.

Japanese and Australian opposition to the creationists finally caved-in to business pressures as new corporations raced to catch-up in what soon became known as the Race of Evolutions. However, just as anxiety had grown three centuries earlier when the prospect of a race of superpeople loomed in the mind of ordinary man, so was there a resurgence of activity from various fronts attempting to regulate the flow of government sponsored research dollars as U.N. Articles were instated, effectively enslaving the newborn species even as they arrived.

Between 2510 and 2568, a plethora of human variants reached the market, one adapted for cold weather, another for extremes of heat, another with the ability to soar by the use of wings, and still others, often created as midgets, with little more than a dog's mentality and often purchased as household pets. Progress on the intellectual side of the genetic coin was finally achieved in the 50's and 60's with the development of super-intelligent children whose increased learning ability and pre-implanted knowledge threatened standard humans on a more psychological level. However, the majority of these creations were non-viable, unable to reproduce as does a true species, though, with time geneticists promised that they would learn the secrets of life itself, not merely

of its modification.

However, whether unfortunate or inevitable, the proverbial excrement finally hit the spinning rotor-blade in 2565, when a scientist defecting from the More Perfect Human Corporation stated to the media that a psionic child had been born. Suddenly faced with the prospect of mind-invasion and a whole host of alien mental powers, anti-creationist groups gained increased political power, finally forcing the passage of a U.N. Resolution in 2568 declaring Earth a standard-human zone. Individuals could either apply for special waivers to harbor non-standards or move off-planet. This resolution put a virtual stop to the creationists who relied on government sponsorship for a majority of their research and development and on the Terran consumer for a substantial market. In an attempt to continue the rally, the Chinese agreed to sponsor psionic research off-planet, however, in 2576 the U.N. extended its '68 resolution to the entire solar system.

A.D. 2568-3516 · The Corporate Era

2568-2597	The Beanstalk
2597-2663	Unearthly Plunder
2663-2710	Foundations of Anarchy
2710-2741	Open Defiance
2741-2872	The Corporate War
2794-2911	War Technologies
2887-2969	Post-War Exodus
2969-3130	Total Producer Monopolization
2981-3210	Age of Wonder
3210-3223	The Tomorrow War
3223-3309	Mutant Rebellions
3309-3516	Period of Recovery

2568-2597 The Beanstalk

With the 2568 U.N. creation of a standard-human zone around Earth, advancing biogenetics was effectively forced off-planet, causing the displacement of tens of millions of highly educated corporate personnel. The sudden influx of out-world traffic, combined with the industrial, service, and clerical personnel who were sure to follow, motivated the U.N. to step up plans for the renovation of the world spaceport, culminating in the construction of what was to become popularly known as the Beanstalk, a ground to space station over seventy thousand kilometers in overall length.

2597-2663 Unearthly Plunder

The beanstalk's finalization in '97 gave substantial impetus to a period of alarming growth in space imports. Entire earth-bound industries were flushed out as the use of *mutant* labor gave off-world firms a strong competitive advantage. Mitsubishi invested heavily in offworld trade and transport, sinking considerable assets into a major corporate gamble. During this period, samples of alien bacteria and primitive lifeforms began appearing on earth. Some were sold for research, but others were distributed through the black market to wealthy collectors for exorbitant prices.

Although most of these organisms proved less hardy than their Terran equivalents, wide-spread outcry resulted concerning the public's protection. Following the discovery of an advanced ecosystem on Darwin IV, the U.N. instated the Orbital Quarantine Command as a protective measure against the infestation of alien organisms. However, the passage of the Nakamura Resolution in '63 caused the OQC to evolve into a protectionist trade barrier, crippling off-world industry from doing business in the Terran market.

2663-2710 Foundations of Anarchy

After the close of the Terran market in '63, competition between off-world corporations intensified, eventually forcing the interstellar conglomeration of what was to be known as the big three: Mitsubishi, Aster, and Femm. By the turn of the century, the tensions of trade competition threatened to spill over into open conflict. Fleets of war vessels were built, and each conglomerate controlled its offworld business as though it were a separate nation-state, creating its own laws and effectively ignoring the edicts of colonial governments. The ice finally broke with the Martian ultimatum of 2710, when the Aster Corporation charged Femm with contract violations in the joint terraformation project. Due to political interests, both parties refused U.N. arbitration, but instead set-up a private arbitration council consisting only of non-Terran interests.

2710-2741 Open Defiance

With the success of the Martian accords, the terraformation of Mars, Venus, and Titan, which all began in the early 23rd century, neared the completion stages. However, the inner-system importation of *mutants* in the early part of the 28th century led the U.N. to threaten police action for

the violation of the standard-human zone. Aster and Femm agreed to submit the issue for arbitration, but only to a non-Terran arbitration council. The U.N. refused to agree to this condition and sent warships to enforce its will. Before they arrived, however, Femm's public affairs office, on Earth, threatened the release of undisclosed biological contaminants if the Terran warships reached their destination. The threat was later proven a bluff, but it gave the big three time to organize fleets within the solar system, resulting in the 2nd Martian accords of 2741.

2741-2872 The Corporate War

The 2nd Martian accords saw a cessation of U.N. domination of the solar system and a loosening of quarantine restrictions with a corresponding collapse of Terran trade barriers. However, the accords also brought Mitsubishi to its knees with the domestication of its Earth-bound facilities which came under the control of the newly formed Terran conglomerate. Despite this, however, Aster and Femm continued to grow in power, waging a trade war against the untested Terran Corporation until Mitsubishi managed to claim reparations for its domesticated facilities. It was, thus, clear that the megacorporations were acting as a single economic entity.

The quasi-peace was short-lived, however, as within a decade, news arrived from Durhael, one of Earth's most distant colonies, that the shattered core of a nova had been discovered. This news, though unheralded by the mass-media, carried extreme weight with the scientific community, as it was hypothesized for several centuries that the eka-metals (heavy elements) to be found within such an astronomical find could be used to tear the *fabric* of multi-dimensional space at the subatomic level, in effect, opening the possibility for faster-than-light travel.

Although technically owned by the Terran Corporation under the 2741 accords, the Aster corporation was in a far better position to claim the find as its own, and this is exactly what it did. In order to protect its position, however, Aster began a conquest of the entire arm leading to Durhael. Noting the opportunity to rid Terra's influence in corporate space, the Mitsubishi and Femm conglomerates jumped to Aster's side, their offensive sweeping the entirety of Terra's immediate colonies, culminating in the decisive corporate victory in the battle of Osgiliath in 2872.

2794-2911 War Technologies

The Corporate War led to the hastened development of mutant technologies, when in 2794, Femm geneticists located the psi-gene and later incorporated psionic attributes and biocybernetics in its infamous line of mass-cloned Okuma war-mutants of the early 29th century. The 2830's saw major breakthroughs in artificial sentience, and various degrees of self-aware computers were deployed in Aster's Shambler series of self-replicating predator vessels akin to the Von Neumann robotic miners of the 23rd century. The discovery which ended the war, however, came in 2852, with the Mitsubishi-AI's derivation of the famed Deagol equation which, utilizing Eka-metals, actualized hyperspace travel as a technical hypothesis. In a joint venture with Aster, Mitsubishi developed the technology during the late 50's, and actual starships were in deployment by the middle 60's.

Several spin-off sciences were either invented or serendipitously arrived at during the following decades, including the rudiments of matter transportation during the late 80's, genetic reconstruction of the 30th century's first decade, and the anagathics discovery of 2911.

2887-2969 Post-War Exodus

After the conclusion of the Corporate War, the big three began consolidating the conquered territories, driving out the smaller independents and monopolizing huge chunks of the colonial economy. Psychohistorians predicted a future war far bloodier than the Corporate War, this to be fought between the big three with a sharp trend toward political-economic centralization during the interim. A symposium of wealthy industrialists met on Terra in 2887 to discuss these economic developments and psychohistorical prognostications, and a coalition of independents was formed the following year, the focus of the pact turning toward a mass-exodus of the colonized regions.

Plans were made, and the exodus began with the departure of the Ash in 2909, which carried over a million cryogenically suspended colonists. Other vessels departed over the following six decades for various systems in the Persei and Cassiopeiæ clusters. The project finally failed in '69 due to the bankruptcy of its sponsorship.

2969-3130 Total Producer Monopolization

With the failure of the Exodus Fund in '69, it became apparent that the ultimate goal of

the big three was total market monopolization. By the 80's, even Earth was not exempt from the trends, the Terran corporation finding itself slowly crushed and later purchased at bargain rates by Mitsubishi in 3010. Standard human labor was largely replaced with mutant slaves from the frontier, and by the turn of the millennium, billions of Terrans were effectively selling themselves and their families into the same corporate institution which had deprived them of their livelihoods.

During the next hundred and twenty years, the Aster-Femm-Mitsubishi conglomerate carried out a meticulous campaign of isolating and destroying the millions of smaller independent firms which still remained, finally officially merging into the AFM Corporation in 3130. The three controlling families became intertwined by a series of arranged marriages, and the ancient institution of nepotism became a model for ensuring the future peace.

2981-3210 Age of Wonder

The era of peace gave rise to many new sciences as AFM's separate components competed against each other without traditional government restraints. Thus, although there were tremendous technological advances, the median standard of living actually declined during the period, leading to urban unrest which was largely contained via brute force techniques employed by the corporate authorities.

During this period, teleportation and hyperspace projection technologies became widely utilized as forms of transportation. Communication technologies evolved to encompass a wide host of FTL-particles, making interstellar communication next to instantaneous. Finally, the first Tau-fields and pocket universes became realities.

However, with the rapid pace of technology, a great deal of power fell into the hands of those with the most direct control over scientists and knowledge-based resources. Thus, corporate power became more and more decentralized as individual upper managers and groups of middle managers combined resources in several ill-fated attempts to overthrow the ownership and seize control of AFM or to create breakaway divisions under independent ownership. As always, the corporate response was as ruthless as it was decisive.

3210-3223 The Tomorrow War

What followed the Age of Wonder is perhaps the least understood period of history. Apparently, an era of terrible warfare between the corporate divisions erupted sometime in the 35th century, but spread backwards in time, to the year 3210. This was the year to which the Mitsubishi Division, in its dying gasp, sent a prototype starship capable of travelling through both space and time. The starship, named the Mitsubishi Maru, was expected to arrive before the discovery of alternate temporal realities and to destroy Asterian and Femm research centers, thereby creating a timeline in which Mitsubishi might rule all of humanity.

However, another vessel followed the Maru backwards through the temporal continuum, this one named the Asterian War Dragon. The two vessels met several times in battle until 3216 when they destroyed each other in a fiery climax. The captain of the War Dragon, nicknamed "Draconius" by the war's spectators, survived the final battle and was appointed admiral of the Asterian fleets a year later. With the war now ignited, the corporations continued to fight until 3223 when Mitsubishi was finally forced to submit unconditionally.

Returning to Terra, Draconius turned against corporate ownership in a surprise bombardment of his own victory parade, assassinating each member of the ruling family in a single stroke. The attack left a vacuum of power, to which Femm's management could only have a single response.

3223-3309 Mutant Rebellions

The Femm Corporation had never had large war fleets. Instead of technical hardware, it concentrated on the manufacture of biological organisms. However, within each organism it produced, it created a sort of emergency-lever which could be pulled via the application of trace amounts of a specific chemical. Once pulled, the organism would be psychologically transformed from an obedient slave into an insane killing machine.

Thus, the 3223 assassination of Femm's ownership saw the beginning of the Mutant Rebellions and the corresponding breakdown of corporate government into total anarchy. Over half of the human population perished during the first ten years of the rebellion as Draconius used his fleets to crush one outbreak of violence after another.

It wasn't until the middle of the century that the cause of the rebellions was even understood, and not until the 80's that antidotes were synthesized. The fighting finally ended in 3309, with over nine-tenths of the human population slaughtered during the interim.

3309-3516 Period of Recovery

The next two centuries saw a slow period of recovery as Draconius *entitled* old AFM executives and their families with large provinces while charging them with various duties including social welfare, economic recovery, maintenance of the peace, and the administration of justice. This policy saw the foundations of Imperial bureaucracy and the caste system within which it became rooted, resulting, ultimately, in the coronation of Draconius as Emperor in 3516.

F.I. 0-1481 - The First Imperium

0-129	Age of Reckoning
129-137	The Reign of Blood
137-461	Athena's Imperium
462-467	The Little Empress
467-483	Emperors of Doomsday
483-1120	The Dim Time
1120-1484	Quest for Solidarity

0-129 Age of Reckoning

The mutant rebellions of the 33rd century combining with the contempt of an educated population for the corporate state set the stage for the formation of the First Imperium under Admiral Draconius. However, as the great stellar estates returned to their corporate masters during the economic recovery, tensions resurfaced, forcing the inevitable settlement of accounts between a once enslaved population, corporate management, and the futurian who would be emperor.

Draconius was crowned in A.D. 3516, also the year zero of the new calendar, during a symbolic ceremony in which his young empress-to-be, then a palace slave, was accorded the right of king-maker as a gesture of defiance against the lesser nobility. The gesture was not taken lightly, as during the Emperor's marriage four years later, an attempt was made on his life, killing instead his bride-to-be. Not knowing upon whom to retaliate, Draconius seized the opportunity to execute each and every member of the noble families while all were present and had nowhere to flee. The exercise in Draconian justice made the archaic roots of his name all the more meaningful

as he personally disposed of the last of his corporate rivals.

Claiming the wealth and power of his victims via the Imperial fleets, Draconius mercilessly slaughtered all opposition to his absolute rule. He indiscriminately butchered entire planetary populations in the name of his beloved empress, and by the middle teens, the pervasive anarchy which threatened to consume the Empire had been successfully quashed. The process of decentralization began anew, as Draconius called to the upper echelons of his fleets for his most loyal and capable officers. To these individuals, he invested the titles of nobility. Large fiefs and governorships were distributed arbitrarily, in a fashion which best suited the Emperor alone without consideration for the regions or peoples to be held subject.

By the early 30's (F.I.), the new order was intact and functioning. Perhaps to test the bureaucratic machinery, Draconius began the issuance of royal edicts, the first calling for an accelerated program of expansion. Production levels were driven upward to meet the increasing demand, and the median standard of living rose to all-time highs since the turn of the Terran millennium making Draconius the most popular and effective leader in historical memory. No one would foresee that within a century, his face would become virtually unknown.

129-137 The Reign of Blood

Before the murder of his empress-to-be, Draconius fathered a pair of paternal twins, Paulo and Athena. The brother and sister were considered as the two separate halves of their father's double personality, the former: sinister, evil, rash, and prone to tantrums, the latter: quiet, reserved, careful, and thoughtful.

Over the years, Paulo grew impatient with his father's rule. He desired mastery of the galaxy for himself, and in 129, he murdered his father, seizing the crown and marrying his sister, Athena. Rebellion broke out almost instantly as Paulo had carried out his plan without a strong network of conspirators, yet the ruthlessness with which he crushed the revolt dwarfed Draconius' cruelty. This policy of terror and intimidation would characterize the short remainder of his rule as Paulo lapsed into a guilt-ridden paranoia which drove him finally into an obsession to eradicate the memory of his father.

Paulo ordered that all the images of his father

be destroyed; anywhere the name *Draconius* was written, it was erased. Anywhere his father's memory lay, he would put its keepers to death. Soon, even if he heard that the name *Draconius* was so much as whispered on such a planet, all its inhabitants would be killed. Paulo used all the powers he could bring to bear to seek out and destroy all who would oppose him in his quest.

In a short time, Paulo had canceled every edict his father had ever decreed, erased every statement, undone every deed, destroyed every concrete memory he could find of his father. Soon, he believed, even he would forget *Draconius*.

Paulo's reveled in courtly games of pain and death to relieve a moment's pressure from the enormous task he had undertaken. He spent long hours developing new tortures of the mind which he tested on his chosen mate, Athena, and administered the Office of Emperor only where it would accomplish his ultimate goal of erasing the name of his father.

Despite his repeated attempts to impregnate his sister in the earlier part of his reign, Athena never bore him any children, nor allowed any of her ova for use in an artificial womb. This, a testament to her own psionic prowess, confounded Paulo with the greatest anger, and in a fit of rage he abused her to such extremes that she fell into a sleep of eight years from which even Paulo and all the Empire's sciences could not resurrect her. He ordered her ova surgically removed, but during the operation her life signs ceased until Paulo and his doctor's retreated.

This apparent threat of suicide kept Paulo at bay until the final year of his reign, when losing patience with her game he fell upon her, pushing her to decide between birth and death, nevermore allowing her to linger in that nether state she had created through her Psi talents. For those eight years, Paulo butchered nearly half of the Empire's population, and yet rebellion seemed a distant hope at best. Paulo grew madder by the day, until the hour of Athena's awakening when she bore him a baby boy.

Seized with joy, he resolved to allow her the tradition of naming the newborn child. She uttered but one word, "*Draconius*," which caused him to plunge into uncontrollable spasms of anger and fear. Observing her opportunity, she ordered him restrained and sedated and put him on Psi inhibitors to control his mental powers. That day, the people rejoiced as Athena became Empress.

137-461 Athena's Imperium

Athena's first act of office was to order Paulo exiled to the most remote planet in the Empire where she built a prison especially for her brother. Continually drugged, Paulo now seemed as helpless as the infant Athena had borne him. Due to the strange circumstances of its birth, however, the baby *Draconius* was greatly feared by the remaining population, and in a gesture of sacrifice, Athena had her only son exiled to a distant corner of the Empire and placed on agathic inhibitors to forestall his development into maturity. The population was placated for the time being, and Athena began her rule, instituting several edicts toward the amendment of the Imperial political framework.

The first of these edicts involved the creation of a Senate of Nobles who would enact laws with the consent of the Empress. This proved of tremendous importance, as it ended a long era of arbitrary legislation and provided the foundation for a firm legal code. The second of these edicts involved the creation of the Imperial High Court to interpret law in *cases of magnitude* for the better consistency of justice. This proved extremely valuable in centralizing legal authority.

Over the three centuries of her rule, Athena continued her father's program of expansion, though not nearly at the rate her father had forecast. She viewed Terra's ties to the outer worlds as already over-extended. Strangely enough, however, she continued to enforce Paulo's will that her father not be remembered. Over the period of a century, the effort proved effective with respect to the common citizen, however, an underground historical society eventually formed which preserved the memory of *Draconius*.

Athena finally consented to marriage in 449, bearing two issue to the Archduke of Deneb during the following year. Both children died shortly after birth, and rumors of an assassin within the Imperial palace circulated among the populace. Athena ordered the palace psi-shielded and sent a secret communique to Paulo's prison ordering that her brother be executed. By means unknown, Paulo escaped only hours before the receipt of the message, and *Draconius* mysteriously disappeared a short time thereafter.

Fear of Paulo swept through the masses, and Athena ordered the suppression of psionics to counter the panic; however, her actions were too slow in coming, and rebellion ensued from the

Siri (psionic class). For a short period, a movement known as the *Draconian Front* challenged the Imperial Right of Suppression, borrowing its name from the centuries old censure as a show of defiance against the Empire.

Lacking the ability to survive direct battles, the front relied on piracy and sabotage as its primary arguments, harassing Imperial shipping and communication routes during the early 50's. However, it lacked the momentum of a full-scale rebellion, and was soundly defeated at the battle of Aranruth in 456. The Empress rejoined her husband later that year and bore a daughter in 457 on the world of her victory. She stayed until 461, refusing to venture into the spacelanes until she was finally persuaded by her longing for Terra. There, the Empress and the Archduke both perished in a surprise attack by pirates.

462-467 The Little Empress

Christine of Aranruth assumed the crown of Empress at five years of age, almost a full year after the death of her mother and father in an act of spacelanes piracy. Prior to her ascension, various dukes of the Deneb clusters, all nephews and cousins of the late husband to Athena, formed a grand alliance and waged a siege on Terra in anticipation of the power vacuum soon to result.

The ransom of Christine in 462 provided the Terrans with a golden opportunity for home rule. Thus, crowning the young Christine as Empress gave the Terrans the legal authority to summon their defense. Once reinforced, the Royal Navy drove back the rebels in a gallant victory, but the winds of anarchy were not so easily quieted. As various dukes attempted to win favor and influence over the young empress, competition to control the Empire through Christine serving as its puppet figurehead led to open hostilities among the nobility. This, in turn, resulted in Christine's assassination in 467. She was ten years old.

467-483 Emperors of Doomsday

Before the young empress could even be accorded a proper funeral, the vacuum of authority left in her wake swept in all the worms of the muck. Over the following sixteen years, no less than forty-seven individuals proclaimed themselves autocrat of the Empire. Each new wave of invaders brought forth a new noble, admiral, or crackpot opportunist to power. To capture Terra was to rule the Empire, yet as the entirety of the 1st Imperium swiftly collapsed into desperate anarchy, numerous duchies announced their sepa-

rate independence. Finally, during the Battle of Doomsday, F.I. 483, 3999 by the old calendar, Terra was destroyed.

483-1120 The Dim Time

As humaniti entered the fifth millennium, the psychic blow of Earth's destruction carried with its passing an air of misanthropy. Although without focus, the war continued in sporadic outbursts for well over century.

Finally, the economy of the Empire became so depleted and ravaged by internal war and the political system so fragmented and disarranged that no true Empire could be said to exist. Within the core worlds, a long depression ensued, in which key industries fell apart, the caste system was destroyed, and communication and transport between the stars came to a near standstill. However, colonization still continued near the rim, and new states were built from the various duchies, kingdoms, domains, and governorships which remained.

Humaniti slowly re-established itself during the final centuries of the Dim Time, however, it was so politically fragmented that the more powerful states squabbled amongst one another for greater power and prestige, leading once more to outbreaks of armed conflict. An interworld trade language soon arose among the merchant class, facilitating exchange and communication, and many national leaders found their authority waning as merchants flocked to the least aggressive and least trade-restrictive of their counterparts abroad. Since trade wealth and privateering were still considered paramount to a state's prestige and defense, there was a concerted movement on the part of all nations to cease their hostilities and to renew their ancient bonds.

1120-1484 Quest for Solidarity

As nation states became tempered by the economic realities of the age, the ceaseless forces of political centralization countered the peace ethic inherent to a re-developing interstellar community. Ultimately, neither force could defeat the other, and in 1120, a solution was discovered with the first of several arranged marriages which would eventually rebind the Empire and make it whole once again.

Over the next three and a half centuries, the route to power was clear. As the fragments of the first Imperium steadily coalesced into ever

more powerful states, political leaders became increasingly concerned that their progeny should one day rule all of human space.

The merger was completed with the marriage of Prince Frederick of Omicron and Princess Anastasia of Sol in 1484, coinciding with the sixth millennium celebrations scheduled over the entire year. The young couple was paraded before the media, announcing a new era of peace and prosperity as their families continued to hold the real power behind the scenes.

S.I. 0-656 · The Second Imperium

0-359	Challenges to the Young
359-491	Good King Richard
492-499	The Civil War
500-656	The Modern Era

0-359 Challenges to the Young

Although the marriage of the Solian and Omicronian heirs brought about the existence of the 2nd Imperium, the splendid coronation of year zero lacked one vital ingredient of Empireship, that being a central ruler. The prenuptial agreement between Anastasia and Frederick, which served effectively as articles of interim confederation, left the actual reigns of authority to their grandparents until a child should be born, later centralizing authority and stabilizing the Empire. This, however, was unlikely, for although the young couple met under fair circumstances, family differences quickly tore them apart.

Remaining married for political purposes, Frederick returned to Omicron shortly after the *ordeal* in order to oversee industrial growth and reaffirm his family's power in the region. Mangled during the Dim Time, Omicron's primary agenda focused on centrality of control with limited growth. Sol, on the other hand, pursued a policy of exploration and conquest, spreading its dominion across the stars and claiming more territory than it could effectively administer. Therefore, Omicron maximized a policy of focused industrialization, while Sol spent its resources on traditional priorities such as colonization and expansion; and while a compact Omicron was easily controllable, Sol's colonies, primarily in the Perseus Arm, became increasingly rebellious.

Anastasia set up two strong rival governorships in order to handle the situation locally in the

interests of Capitol. Her idea was that neither would rebel because of the other's existence, yet both would be very capable of quenching internal revolts because they would both be close to their problems. The outcome proved disastrous for the untested Empire. Neither of the two governorships recognized any rivalry. They held the mutual interest of independence against a common enemy, and through intensive cooperation they realized their interests with the 341 Declaration of Independence of Persei and Cassiopeiæ beginning fleet maneuvers to prove the sincerity of their intentions.

Angered that her hand-picked governors had turned traitorous, Anastasia began recalling naval forces from the far reaches of the Empire back to Sol to be overhauled, refitted for battle, and sent off to punish the traitors and reincorporate the governorships. However, the entire process of preparing for a major war took far too long to implement, and as soon as the local guard was pulled off other worlds, they too began to talk of independence. A new Draconian Front slowly emerged, calling for the cessation of Imperial domination of outworld states. Although the name was no longer suppressed, it did serve as a reminder of the Reign of Blood, eliciting support from otherwise neutral parties.

Anastasia was forced to withdraw her plans of attack and shift the focus of the war campaign toward the solidification of her rule. The Draconian Front was eventually stamped out, but only with the realization that the Solian half of the Empire had drastically over-extended itself. The Omicron half of the Empire, on the other hand, was compact and stable, and in the interest of preserving failing relations, Frederick ventured to Sol to make a rare visit with his wife in 354. The visit, scheduled to last one quarter of a standard year, ended up lasting three, and a prince was born by the name of Richard. Frederick left to settle affairs back at Omicron, but two years later he returned to stay. With this decision, the seat of Omicron's government had been moved to Sol, and with this act the two kingdoms became fused into one Empire more-so than ever before.

359-491 Good King Richard

Throughout the remaining years of their reign, the happy couple did very little in the area of their administrative responsibilities. Leaving the reigns of government to Richard, their son, they

spent the following years taking adventurous incursions into the outer sectors. In 383, their convoy was raided by pirates, and both were killed in the resulting battle.

Richard assumed the throne as soon as word reached Capitol and continued the work he had already made himself accustomed to. His reign can be characterized by the overall leniency with which he ruled and by his great charisma which won victories in a more peaceful fashion than those of his predecessors. He was probably the most well-loved Emperor ever; certainly, he has been the most missed.

Richard turned over even greater Imperial power to the Archdukes, further decentralizing the Empire and making its administration more practical and convenient. He formed a Senate of advisors which took actual power in the detailed planning of central goals, and he refocused the energies of government to rebuild the agricultural worlds' production capacities especially along the Betelgeuse and Spica fringe which had still not completely recovered since the Dim Time. He reformed the relationship between big business and the state, allowing greater corporate independence from Imperial strictures on noble ownership and anti-monopolization, but less freedom on stakeholder reparation issues and matters concerning technological development.

Richard conducted the first complete census of the 2nd Imperium and published the data in the Encyclopedia Galactica which he founded as a permanent storehouse for all knowledge. He opened diplomatic relations with Persei and Cassiopeiæ which flourished into a trade partnership and later a cooperative alliance. Perhaps most importantly, he allowed more states on the Imperial periphery to attain practical independence, and he granted independence to the Archduchies of Caprissa, Tigris, and Epsilon Aurigæ, emphasizing the need for peaceful cooperation between states, rather than warlike competition.

Richard was also somewhat of a scholar and philosopher of the other social and political systems which had suffered to exist along the Imperial periphery during his reign, and in 490, he became so enthralled with democracy that he outlined a plan which would have over the course of the next two-dozen standard years gradually formed the Empire into a democratic republic while simultaneously granting independence to the Archduchies of Scorpio, Herculese, Athens, and Nu Cephei. His *Grand Plan* outlined seven

free Duchies and seven Democracies of the new Imperial Republic (Sol, Omicron, Betelgeuse, Spica, Rigel, Deneb, and York). In effect, he was offering to permanently reduce the power of the throne for what he believed could be a stable and long-term peace for all humanity. His plan was never put into effect, however, as he died the following year in a starlanes accident, the Empire's management finally falling to his oldest son, Stephan.

492-499 The Civil War

Stephan saw things very differently from his father and often argued openly with Richard on matters of state and the suppression of inevitable rebellions. He vowed that when he should come to power, he would militarily strengthen the Empire rather than weakly submitting to colonial demands. When he finally became Emperor, he attempted to do just that; however, the moment was already lost and the power of his office, greatly diminished during Richard's reign, proved too weak to take control of big industry and wrestle back the periphery for direct Imperial rule.

During his first year, Stephan was always at odds with the now powerful Senate. He dared not dissolve the body, or he would risk rebellion from every front, but he did take the privilege of retiring senators and replacing them with his own friends, a practice very much set against the tradition instated by Richard.

By the middle of 492, the seven *Free Duchies* sent identical statements to Stephan, demanding a continuation of Richard's Grand Plan. Stephan flatly denounced the plan as an old man's folly and began preparing his military to reincorporate the lost territories including Cassiopeiæ and Persei. The Civil War began later that year with Nu Cephei's and Epsilon Aurigæ's simultaneous invasions of Deneb and Spica.

Caprissa, Tigris, and Scorpio quickly organized their defenses as Athens invaded York with all her forces during the early quarter of 493. Sol organized a defensive front along the Scorpio border where her forces stood for the remainder of the war facing the enemy but not attacking while Stephan called for Omicron to send reinforcements to help defeat the rebels. While not participating herself, Omicron allowed Betelgeuse to send minor reinforcements to aid the effort in Spica; but the assistance was far too little to be of substantial benefit to the Imperial cause, and

Spica eventually fell into rebel hands.

Rigel invaded rebel Caprissa in late 493 as Deneb halted the Nu Cephei invasion, and by the end of 494, Deneb was chasing the remaining Nu Cepheian rebel forces all the way back to Tigris. In 495, Herculese having just finished quenching internal uprisings, entered the war on the side of the Empire and invaded Athens from her back door. The Athenian forces were immediately recalled to a defensive front as York and Herculese pounded them from both sides.

In 496, reinforcements from York relieved the Deneb forces and carried on the war in Nu Cephei and Tigris. Deneb moved its attention to the defeated Archduchy of Spica, still in rebel hands. Another year of fighting only produced a stalemate, but in 497, Deneb's remaining border forces attacked Epsilon Aurigae directly. The shock produced a rebel withdrawal from three-quarters of Spica.

By the middle of 498, Athens had fallen, but Persei, Cassiopeiæ and the Outworld Coalition (at Herculese) were preparing to enter on the side of the rebels. Both sides were weary of war, and Omicron still hung on the sidelines like a vulture waiting for the best moment to enter and snatch its prey. Afraid of losing the upper hand, Stephan called for a peace conference to get out while he was ahead.

In 499 the conference met and signed a peace resolution. Scorpio, Epsilon Aurigae, Caprissa, Tigris, and Nu Cephei suffered a rearrangement in their borders which was to an Imperial advantage in return for Stephan's recognition. The empire suffered the severance of large regions of space from the Archduchies of Spica, Rigel, and Athens for the purpose of creating independent states and buffer zones in return for the rebel states' denunciation of Richard's plan toward democratization. Despite the fact that war could have been waged by both sides for several more years, the conference settled on this compromise, as victory for either side seemed too uncertain.

500-656 The Modern Era

Stephan began a program of intensive industrial reconstruction after the war, particularly in Rigel, Deneb, and York which were all hard-hit by rebel offensives. Appointing his son-in-law as the new Archduke of Athens, he executed the old family in 504 and paid a special visit to Archduke Constantine of Herculese a year later, personally thanking him for not turning traitor as did

the other six of the *seven free Archdukes* and for playing so critical a role in the defeat of Athens. He then visited Omicron in 509, supposedly to admonish the Archduke there for restraining the requested aid. To the surprise of the citizenry, he had the Archduke executed but allowed the family to live with its eldest son instated as the new ruler.

The trade agreement with Cassiopeiæ and Persei, which was discontinued at the start of the war, was reordered and extended to the border states. In 510 he had Omicron funnel aid to help in military reconstruction as he began reinforcing the borders along Sol, Deneb, Rigel, and York to protect the coreworlds from rebel invasion.

In recent years Stephan has gained a strong hold over the Imperial Senate's sub-bodies and has moved toward a large military build-up in the Imperial Core primarily around Sol, Rigel, Deneb and York, heavily taxing or seizing control of the megacorporations in order to finance his projects. Anti-Imperial sentiments have risen especially high along the Imperial periphery as both sides prepare for resumed armed conflict.

"Look. All of this talking is getting us nowhere! I think we should try a more direct approach."

**"MY GOD!!
THAT'S A HAND GRENADE!!"**

"Right. It's faster than Imperial arbitration, and it hurts less."

— Mark F. Cook

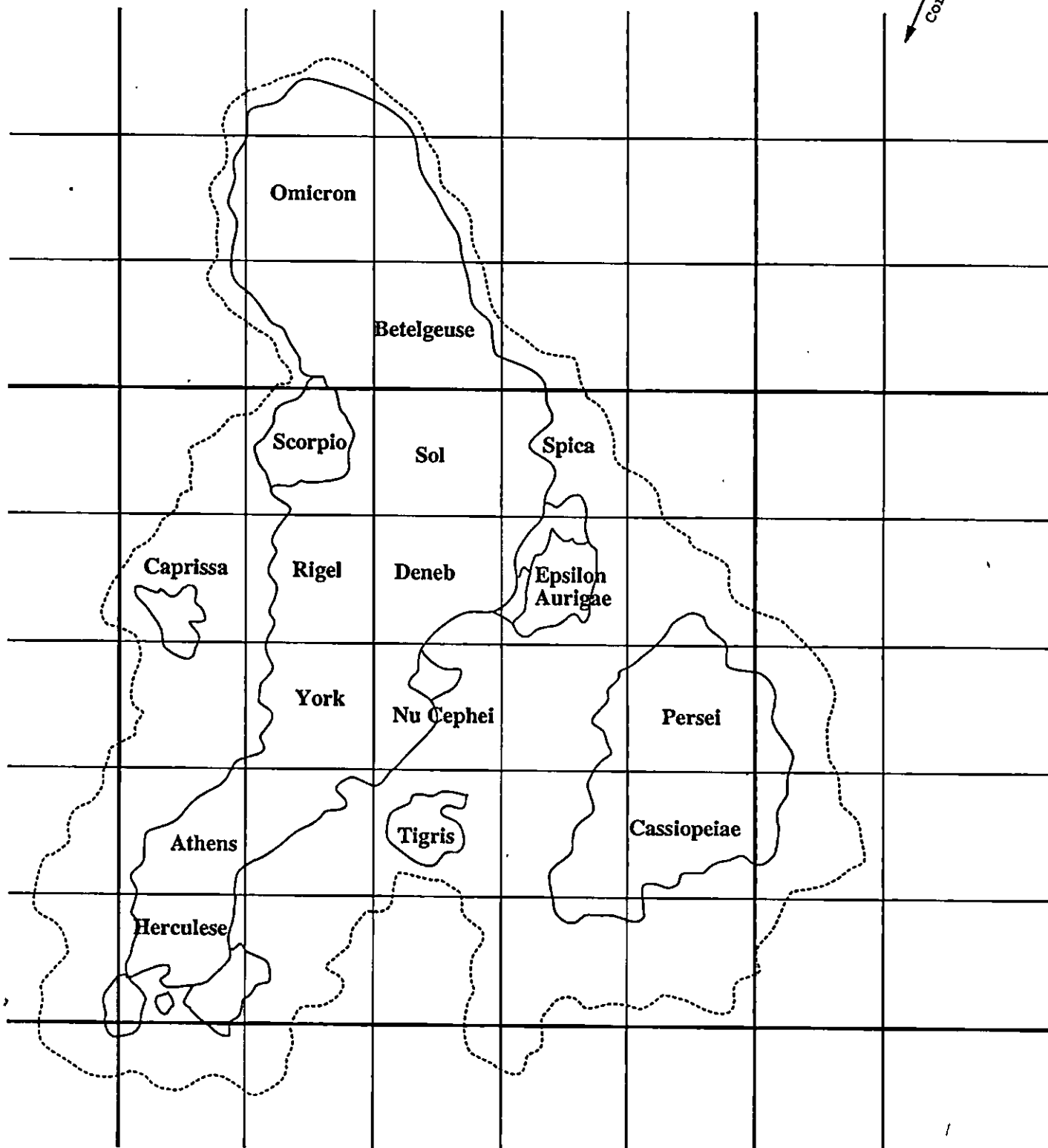
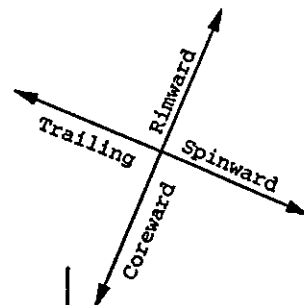
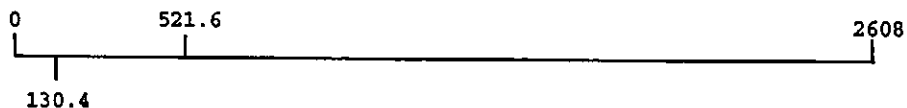


Archduke Constantine (by Paul Johnson, Sept.'87) is depicted on the eve of the 495th year of the Second Imperium, his decision to side with Stephan in the Civil War symbolically represented by the lighter side of his dagger turned upward, a decision for law and order over the dismal darkness enthroned by anarchy.

The Second Imperium

circa 656

Scale of Light Years



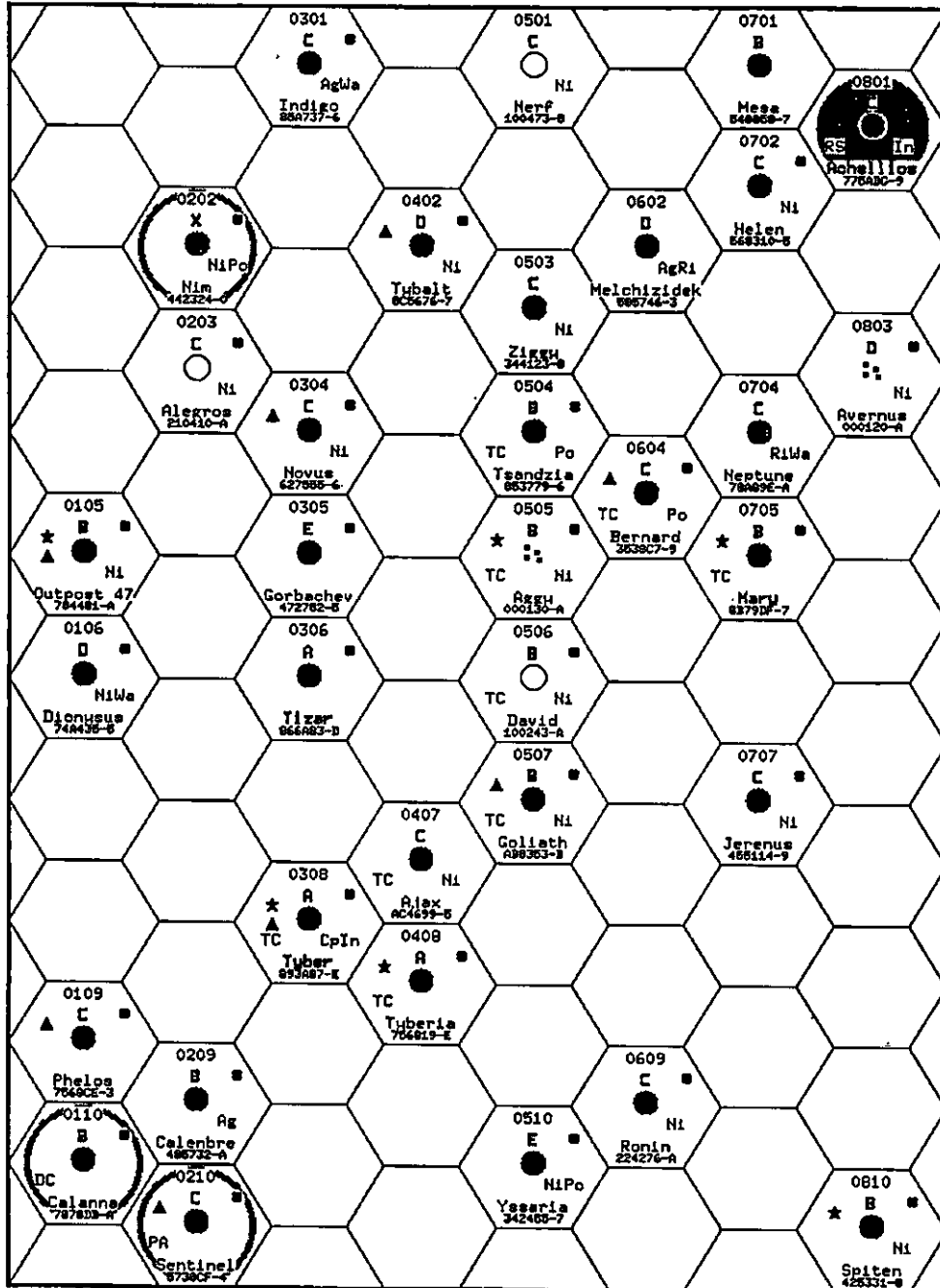
Herculese Centrant

Kronos	Zeus	Atlas	Plato	Sparta
Helena	Apollo	Herculese	Hermes	Tyche
Katina	Ares	Hapaestus	Pan	Rabanitas
Azazi	Draconia	Siri	Astela	Delta Cephei

Ares Sector

Arcadia	Tyber	Ares	Stanton
Mao	Poseidon	Oceanus	Pelston
Crystalight	Natal	Siri	Lurak
Bermuda	Dimstar	Sebastian	Ventura

SUB-SECTOR: Tyber SECTOR: Area



Monsters

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Allan may well be the most prolific writer of AD&D monsters on the internet. A few of his tamer creations appear below.

SHOCKER

Climate/Terrain:	Any
Frequency:	Very Rare
Organization:	Solitary
Activity Cycle:	Any
Diet:	Electricity
Intelligence:	Exceptional (15-16)
Treasure:	Nil
Alignment:	Neutral (Chaotic)
No. Appearing:	1
Armor Class:	-2
Movement:	18
Hit Dice:	16 or 24
THAC0:	16 HD: 6 24 HD: 5
No. of Attacks:	2 + special
Damage/Attack:	16 HD: 1-8 + 16/1-8 + 16 24 HD: 1-8 + 24/1-8 + 24
Special Attacks:	Lightning
Special Defenses:	See below
Magic Resistance:	25%
Size:	L (12' - 14' tall)
Morale:	Fanatic (17-18)
XP Value:	16 HD: 14,000 24 HD: 18,000

Shockers are residents of the quasi-elemental plane of lightning and are most often encountered on their home plane, but they may also be found on the prime material planes as well. Unlike most elementals, they are capable of traveling to the prime planes on their own (without being summoned) and are able to exist there for extended periods of time. However, shockers may enter the prime planes only via a natural lightning bolt, such as during a lightning storm, and on rare occasions, have even been known to enter through a *call lightning* spell. A shocker has 24 HD on its home plane, but they are reduced to 16 HD on the prime planes due to the absence of the energy which they thrive on.

Shockers are slightly different in appearance from other lightning quasi-elementals. They appear as a sheet of shimmering blue energy of a vaguely humanoid shape. However, they possess a limited shape-change ability that allows them to take the form of a human, elf, or half-elf five times a month. When encountered on a prime material plane, they will take the shape of a humanoid 75% of the time. When in this form, they appear indistinguishable from real humanoids; however, a *detect magic* spell will reveal a faint blue shimmering of alteration and evocation magic, and a *true seeing* spell, a *gem of seeing*, or other similar magic will show the creature's true form. The origin of this shape-change ability is unknown. A shocker will always appear in its natural form on its home plane.

Combat: When attacking, a shocker uses its two "hands" to deliver two viscous *shocking grasps*, each doing 1d8+16 (or 1d8+24) points of damage. In addition, a shocker can emit lightning attacks of up to 30d6 points of damage per day. A single bolt can inflict 5d6 or 10d6 points of damage, and either one or two bolts can be discharged per round. A bolt may originate from anywhere on the shocker's body, so an attack can be made in any direction; however, these attacks usually emanate from the hands, mouth or eyes so as to duplicate spells, breath attacks, and/or gaze attacks (this is especially true if the shocker is in humanoid form).

Shockers also have several special defenses. A +2 or better weapon is required to hit a Shocker, and a creature with fewer than 5 hit dice cannot harm a shocker without some sort of magical assistance. They are also immune to lightning and all types of electrical attacks, as well as air- and weather-based magic. Any creature scoring a hit on a shocker in melee will suffer 1d8 points of damage (save vs. spell for half damage) unless the attack is made via a non-conductor.

Habitat/Society: Shockers are not natives of the prime material planes, but can be found wandering in any climate or terrain (though they dislike rain). They normally use their shape-change

ability to fit into their surroundings. Shockers often take an interest in the affairs of humans and demihumans, and they seem to take pleasure in antagonizing them in any way they can. There are many speculations as to the reason for this type of behavior, but no one knows their true motives. For some reason, they seem to ignore dwarves and gnomes.

Not much is known of the origin, behavior, or social structure of these creatures. It is thought that they are composed of pure energy, but this is only speculation.

Ecology: There is a 2% chance that a *conjure air elemental* spell, staff, or similar device will summon a shocker instead of an air elemental. Shockers encountered in this manner will be in their natural form 95% of the time. The summoner has only a 5% chance per level over 6 of successfully controlling a shocker conjured in this manner (to a maximum of 90%). Also, there is a 10% chance per round that control will be lost, in which case the shocker will immediately attack the summoner and his or her party. Devices which control or protect against normal elementals do not work on shockers; *dismissal*, *banishment*, and similar spells and devices have a 20% chance of failing even if the shocker fails its magic resistance roll and saving throws.

It is rumored that magics exist that will summon and/or control a shocker directly; these are said to give results similar to the more common elemental-related devices.

From the sublime:

Glendower: I can call spirits from the vasty deep.

Hotspur: Why, so can I, or so can any man; But will they come when you do call for them?

— Shakespeare, Henry IV, Part I

To the ridiculous:

Rocksteady: "Eat blazing electric death tootle!"

Raphael: "Well, at least he likes his job."

— Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

TALLIN

Climate/Terrain:	Any arctic or subarctic
Frequency:	Rare
Organization:	Clan
Activity Cycle:	Any (but usually day)
Diet:	Carnivore
Intelligence:	Very (11-12)
Treasure:	E
Alignment:	Lawful Neutral
No. Appearing:	1-2 (10-20 in lair)
Armor Class:	0 (10% chance of -2)
Movement:	9
Hit Dice:	15 + 1-4 h.p.
THAC0:	2 (+3 STR bonus)
No. of Attacks:	1 or 2 + special
Damage/Attack:	4-40 + 8 or 1-10 + 8/1-10 + 8
Special Attacks:	Breath weapon (mature only)
Special Defenses:	Frost barrier (mature only), cold immunity
Magic Resistance:	30%
Size:	H (15')
Morale:	Champion (15-16)
XP Value:	
male:	16,000
female:	10,000
immature:	2,000

Tallin are large humanoids that live in frozen arctic wastelands. Their skin is gray, tan, or dull brown, and they are almost completely hairless. Tallin stand about 15' tall, weigh approximately 5000 pounds, and are very muscular; females are slightly shorter and lighter. Tallin live 300 years or more.

Tallin wear little except for some scraps of fur around their necks and waist; their low armor class is due to their very thick skin. Most tallin also wear a pair of wide bracers on their wrists; there is a 10% chance that these are special *bracers of defense*, which lower the tallin's armor class to -2. Tallin have never been known to use spells or any other magic items; it is not known whether they are capable of enchanting these bracers themselves, or if they are obtained elsewhere. The only other possession they carry, is their huge warhammer; their remaining items are kept in the lair.

Combat: From birth, tallin are immune to all cold-based attacks, but take +1 point of damage per die from fire-based attacks, as they are especially sensitive to heat. Tallin may punch or smash with their fists for 1-10 + 8 points of damage with each fist. However, tallin much pre-

fer to use their massive warhammers in combat. These huge hammers are about 6' long and 3' across, and are intricately carved. The hammers are made of some strange metallic alloy of unknown origin; it is widely accepted that no one has ever successfully returned one of these hammers to civilization for study. These hammers are extremely strong and heavy — a strength of 18/00 is needed to pick up these hammers, and a strength of at least 20 is required to wield one in combat. When a tallin connects with a hammer in combat, it delivers 4-40 + 8 points of damage due to the weight and unique composition of the weapon (the +8 bonus is the tallin's strength bonus).

When a tallin warrior reaches maturity (at the age of 10 years), he must forge and carve his own hammer (only the males do this; female tallin do not own a hammer and will use their fists in combat). All male tallin are proficient weapon smiths because of this experience, but the only weapon this proficiency applies to is the tallin's hammer.

Three times per day, a mature tallin (of either sex) may use a cone of cold breath attack. This cone is 40' long, 5' wide at the tallin's mouth, and 15' wide at the base; it inflicts 3-30 points of damage to all targets caught in the area of effect; those who successfully save vs. breath weapon suffer half damage.

This breath weapon may also be used in a defensive capacity. A tallin may breathe directly at the ground beneath itself to create a frost barrier that completely envelopes the tallin in the same round it is used. This barrier lasts 1d6 rounds and will negate a total of 50 points of fire damage. Any excess fire damage destroys the barrier and affects the tallin normally. Any ranged fire directed through this barrier suffers a -2 to hit due to the obscured target. Anyone passing through this frost barrier suffers the normal breath weapon damage, although a cumulative +1 bonus is given on the saving throw each round after the first (i.e. +1 on the 2nd round the barrier is in effect, +2 on the 3rd round, etc.).

Habitat/Society: Tallin live in clans of about 10-20; they reside in any arctic or subarctic region. They usually lair in large underground caverns in which they spend the majority of their time. They venture forth only to hunt or to fight (usually against white dragons or frost giants who invade their territory). The strongest male tallin

is the leader of the clan. His word is law to the other tallin; he is the leader of the hunt and the commander in battle.

When encountered in the lair, 50% of tallin present will be mature males, 25% will be mature females (AC 2, 13 HD, THAC0 4, D/A 1-10 + 7 per fist), and 25% will be immature tallin (AC 4, 8 HD, THAC0 10, D/A 1-8 + 6 per fist). There is also a 20% chance of 1d4 subdued white dragons being present as well (usually of adult age or younger). These are used as pets and/or guards.

Ecology: Tallin will eat nearly any type of meat, but especially like polar bear and seals. They often clash with white dragons and frost giants, with whom they share their territory.

TARQ

Climate/Terrain:	Any hills and subterranean
Frequency:	Uncommon
Organization:	Tribe
Activity Cycle:	Day
Diet:	Omnivore
Intelligence:	Very (11-12)
Treasure:	M (D,U)
Alignment:	CN
No. Appearing:	5-50 (10-100 in lair)
Armor Class:	6 (8)
Movement:	8
Hit Dice:	3+2
THAC0:	17
No. of Attacks:	1
Damage/Attack:	1-8 (or by weapon)
Special Attacks:	nil
Special Defenses:	nil
Magic Resistance:	nil
Size:	L (10' tall)
Morale:	Average (8-10)
XP Value:	120
Young:	65
Archers:	175
Guards:	270
Shield Guards:	420
Leader:	650

Tarqs are large humanoids that most often dwell in hilly regions in tribes of up to 100 in number. Although they have adapted to life in any climate, their lairs are always underground.

Tarqs average about 10 feet in height and resemble a cross between an ogre and a hill giant; in fact, it is rumored that tarqs are a cross-breed of these two creatures. They have brown, tan, or olive

green skin and long, dark hair; their eyes are usually black.

Tarqs speak their own language, as well as those of several other humanoid species such as orcs, ogres, goblins, and giants.

Combat: Although tarqs appear quite formidable, they are not nearly as powerful as their appearance might suggest. They are timid and even cowardly in combat, preferring to use ambush tactics when they fight at all. Often, they try to avoid combat entirely or flee from foes; this is especially true if a single tarq is encountered alone. Tarqs are also not as strong as other creatures of similar size; they have few hit dice, gain no strength bonus in combat, and their natural armor class is poorer than other comparable creatures.

Tarqs use a variety of weapons, including swords of all types, maces, axes, and most polearms; archers use light crossbows or longbows. Tarqs have a natural armor class of 8, but most use leather armor, which lowers their AC to 6.

Habitat/Society: Tarq tribes can be found in hilly terrain in any climate as well as in subterranean settings. Lairs are underground and are usually deep within a hilly region, well-hidden from outsiders. A typical tribe contains 80-100 members. Approximately half these are adult males, a quarter are adult females, and the remaining quarter are young tarqs. There is no appreciable statistical difference between the sexes, but young tarqs have only 2+1 hit dice, and a THAC0 of 19. Females and young will normally be encountered only inside the lair. A tarq tribe is ruled by the strongest adult male.

Tarqs of different tribes usually will not interfere with one another — they do not contest with each other as do orcs and goblins. If two tarq tribes have a dispute, it will be handled diplomatically, if at all possible. In times of great need, two or more tarq tribes may band together in order to defeat a common enemy or solve some other problem.

Tarqs prefer to be left alone and will not attack outsiders unless their lives are in danger or their lair is threatened. They hunt small animals, gather herbs and berries, and have even been known to participate in primitive farming practices.

Archers: For every group of 25 tarqs, five will be archers; these are normal tarqs armed

with short swords and either a longbow or a light crossbow instead of the normal weaponry.

Guards: The lair and its vicinity is protected by 10-20 elite warriors; these guards carry missile weapons (as per archers) in addition to the normal armament. They wear hide armor (AC 4) and have 4+2 hit dice and a THAC0 of 17.

Leader: For every group of 20 tarqs, there will be a leader present. Leaders will own the finest weapons of the tribe and have a 20% chance of possessing a magical weapon of some sort. They wear chain mail (AC 3), have 6+2 hit dice, and have a 15 THAC0. The strongest leader is the chieftan of the tribe. Leaders will have in their possession 1d2 miscellaneous magic items usable by the fighter class.

Shield Guard: A leader is rarely (10%) without his shield guard. This group is comprised of 5 elite guards whose duty it is to protect or "shield" their leader from harm. They swear an oath of loyalty to their leader and will protect him to the death. Their equipment and statistics are similar to that of a leader, except they have 5+2 hit dice and only have a 10% chance of owning a magical weapons (in which case they will possess 1d2 miscellaneous magic items).

Ecology: Tarqs have an average lifespan of 90-100 years. They have a gestation period of 11 months; female tarqs normally give birth to 1-2 offspring. The birth rate and infant mortality rate are relatively low compared to some other humanoids, since they engage in warfare less often and generally have better living conditions than orcs, goblins, et al.

While tarqs prefer to live in isolation from the world around them, they are often marked as targets by orcs, ogres, hobgoblins, and their ilk, despite their large size. These humanoids take advantage of the tarqs' timid nature in any way they can, and tarqs are killed, at times, solely for sport by these creatures.

"Battle not with monsters, lest ye become a monster, and if you gaze into the abyss, the abyss gazes also into you."

— Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche

SEX in Gaming

or

Grappling for the Groin in Gregarious if Goopy Adventures

If you thought you'd seen everything, think again...

What kind of weird monster-character, monster-monster, and character-character sexual relations have been encountered in your gaming experiences. Let's hear about it!!!

— Christopher Lynn Wilson
wilson_c@oxy.edu

Let's not...

— Bob Simpson
simpson@parc.xerox.com
Planet Ten Comics and Games
San Jose, CA

Dragon Bestiality

Well...I once ran an entire adventure that was just an illusionary castle created by a bunch of Faye Dragons. Monsters, treasure, damsels in distress, the whole thing was faked by about 10 FD's. After several game days (and nights) one of the (female) characters finally got wise and figured out the joke. The rest of the (male) characters had retired with various ladies of the court — and woke to find themselves laying on the cold ground hugging a small pink dragon. (*"Surprise!" *KISS* Poof!*) On a roll of 100, one of them actually conceived and (gods know how) delivered a half-human, half-FD kid who grew up to be the bane of the party at higher levels.

— Robert McLeod
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Livermore, CA

"Half of the Vargr you meet are sons of bitches. The other half are bitches!"

— Scott S. Kellogg

Curse of the IT

I had items of sex change peppering my world way back when. I'd made up a lot of dungeons in advance (I was still in the *AD&D = dungeons* stage). An elf grabbed an item of sex change and em poof became female. A remove curse changed him back, but then (s)he got killed and reincarnated as a female elf. She/it convinced the magic-user to polymorph him/her/whatever into a male. Then he grabbed *another* item of sex change! He asked the magic user to dispel magic...I ruled that there was an equal chance of dispelling the polymorph, dispelling the sex change, or dispelling both at once. Both got dispelled. So what happened? 50/50 chance to be hermaphroditic or asexual. He ended up with the nickname "Uni"...

— Steven King, aka Chelloveck
Software Archeologist
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Macro Computer Solutions Inc.
Wheeling, IL

"Earth women often feel guilty when they achieve sexual ecstasy with mechanical assistance."

— Heavy Metal

I can't get no-oh...

In the campaign I'm currently running, one (male) character has a comeliness of 19 (adjusted by charisma). Another male character has a character trait of falling in love easily. I've had some fun with that; point a female NPC their direction, the one falls head-over-heels in love, and the NPC inquires, "Who's your friend? Can you introduce us?"

— Janet M. Huss
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Ciprico, Inc., Plymouth, MN

"Reality sucks, but it doesn't swallow."

Be mah Woman

Non-Discrimination

I'm not going to give a lot of details, but I was once in a *very* sexually bizarre AD&D game. One of the main characters was named Pevert (his spelling). Pevert would rape *anything*. Male/female, live/dead/other, organic/inorganic, *ANYTHING*. He kept a list of all of the more interesting things he raped...his favorite was the re-killed dark elven lich king.

— Brennan M. O'Keefe
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"You stupid insufferable rodent of large size whose sexual affinity for felines embarrasses your alcoholic prostitute mother when she isn't too busy sleeping with diseased sheep and consuming unwholesome leavings from cowfields!"

— Ryerson Schwark
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UNIX System Laboratories, Summit, NJ

Babe with a Broom

In a college campaign where we were all being a bit silly, and the DM had us stay the night at an evil witch's house. The witch was an ugly old bat, but as a mistress of illusion, she took the appearance of a luscious babe and we, the players, competed openly for her favors. I won and enjoyed a night of bliss. In the morning, however, the DM revealed her ugly true self, hoping we would axe the old hag. My character was unabashed and asserted that "she was quite experienced" and that "no *real* women could have been that good." We happily waved goodbye and promised to stay again whence next we passed that way.

— Dakin Burdick
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Indiana University, Bloomington

"Hey, baby — wanna do some *heat transfer*?
Heh, heh, heh!"

— Mechanical Engineers On The Prowl

Me and several members of my party once hired a group of orcs to rape one of our party members. I don't think *he* enjoyed it at all.

— Radman
aka Ashman, Ashdude, Ashley Bowers
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Appalachian State University

"Calm down, have some dip..."

— George Carlin

What is Good for the Goose...

How many DM's love to breed party Discontent? Last night, while I was running, a new member of the party wanted to know a little about the rest of the party. He cast a know alignment spell on all the members...including the paladin and ranger. To get revenge on the little shit (he was a dwarven priest), the thief used his ring of invisibility and followed the dwarf. When the dwarf got near a female, the thief goosed her and made it look like it was the dwarf who had the honors. After doing this several times, the poor dwarf got arrested for public misbehavior. The thief, when he heard about this, used his disguise nonweapon proficiency to make himself look like an old man, and then he went to the trial.

Since there were witnesses to these goosings, the dwarf was found guilty but no suitable punishment could be agreed upon until one old man (the thief) spoke up and suggested that all women who could be gathered should give the dwarf a goose each...The party never let the poor fellow live it down.

— Jason Boardman
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"Maybe we should use a bigger gun..."

— The Elder Dan

And now for
something completely
different...

On his most holy reverend's excursions concerning the misunderstood apparitions commonly associated with the least of the mighty lords, that essence of dwarfdom's utter contempt, he who rideth the war donkey in a variety of intimate postures...

Bangrod Strongdong, Lesser God

<i>Race:</i>	<i>Dwarven</i>
<i>Sphere:</i>	<i>Perversity</i>
<i>Color:</i>	<i>Rusty Crimson</i>
<i>Symbol:</i>	<i>Phallic</i>
<i>Alingment:</i>	<i>Horny</i>

As Durin GodKing admitted to Malachai on his decent from the midget throne and to the eternal humiliation and degradation of his brethren, the Dwarven race is in half-part the product of the *grae-dig* earthen slug, and thus dwarves are subject to all the passions tenderly associated with these most wretched of worms.

It is then of little surprise that the Dwarven Pantheon, whilst revered for its many shining gems: Moradin, Berronar, Clangedin, Dumathoin, and Vergadain among others, it is also known for its fallen sons, the two most prominent being Abbathor and Bangrod.

The concentration of our study is on this last figure whose very existence, though quite certain, remains shrouded in enigma. Of what we do understand, the following can be said with relative certainty.

The Cult's History

Bangrod Strongdong, known also as *Saint Kittybalz* and appearing under various guises, first made his appearance in the Dimimar following the Edanic triumph over the GodKing. It was perhaps this humiliation which spawned his power, for in those cold wastes of the UnderUrth, an orgy of blood and other bodily fluids did arise, the midgetfolk of dwarven and goblin and jinxkin and sprite taken firmly by an unearthly possession; thus, the great mixing did occur, giving rise to whole offshoots of the races, their strains robust and hardy from the wild blood thus introduced. It was here that many thaumaturges dawned upon the methods by which interspecies mixing might transpire and be successful, the blending of body and mind and spirit made complete and henceforward indivisible.

However, the mixing did occur with its expected share of bloodshed, the raids for reproductive

rights wrecking havoc in the Edanic domain so that the conquerors were disgusted and repelled by the midget races, untamed by even the hand of man. In this way, though less a victory of might than attrition, the men returned to their surface world, their cities of the deep stagnant and soon overrun by all manner of madness.

The Dwarves, having finally unshackled the chains of oppression, ceased to behave as animals, and in one mighty cry did give thanks to Bangrod, their savior; though the price of freedom did bespeak a shame so great that its purveyor should never be forgiven.

Bangrod's worship was outlawed as the dwarven civilization rekindled its flame, and though never of its former brightness, the dwarves did manage to stamp out his religion in all save a few outcasts and renegades. However, among the lesser midgets, the worship of Bangrod persisted, particularly in those strains which were borne of his era and which never remerged with their former kin. Thus, the Church of Bangrod, though not an official monument, is indeed a sturdy structure which all the guilt and shame of a dirty rebellion could never topple entirely.

Incarnations

When Bangrod appears on the prime material plane, he usually takes his form in one of many incarnations, the most common being an old geezer of a dwarf warrior, leading Rusty, his crimson-brown war-donkey at a feeble and broken pace. His lewd suggestions have the power of charming females of various races into doing his bidding, and his power may extend to males on frequent occasion. To back this peculiarity, he is often accompanied by his loyal servant-retainer, a rather short and flat-headed dwarf who most often responds to the name of *Blowjoko*. The Tower *Phumph*, Bangrod's mighty if phallic fortress, may also reside in close proximity on those rare encounters where his following is particularly devout.

Of course, being the "father" of many half-breeds, Bangrod, his donkey, and his servant may take a variety of forms, the ugliness and perversion of each being determined with respect to the proximity and type of his worshipers. As an interesting sidenote, it is important to clarify that unlike many of the other gods, Bangrod derives his power from his following. When it disappates (or is slain), so also will he.

Bangrod commonly wields a phallic war-mace and is very proficient in the lance as well, his brown steed often wearing rusty armor regardless of clime. His barbarian tendencies often lead to bloodshed for the sake of his perversion, however his servant,

though excessively loyal, has on occasion demonstrated greater wisdom and kindness than the master and has, in rare cases, turned aside from his servitude in favor of achieving a greater good.

Worshippers

Despite their questionable origins and malicious natures, worshippers of Bangrod are said to be accorded certain advantages by their diety in the arts of womanizing and wrecking havoc, luck often turning a favorable smile upon those who practice their faith most dearly. Summoning of the God often requires some precious sacrifice such as the virginity of a princess or some other such "human" commodity. Gold and jewels and especially mithril also have their place, as Bangrod is dwarven and appreciates the value of a precious items, however unlike his brethren, he values "personal treasures" even more highly.

One particular summoning ritual requires the sacrifice of one's penis. Purportedly, if the worshiper believes strongly enough in the God's powers, a new and stronger one will grow it its place. Thus, ironic as it may seem, many of Bangrod's worshippers are self-castrated eunuchs. This "swindling of the family jewels" as many critics consider the practice, has led some divine mages to question whether Bangrod is bucking for a position as the dwarven God of swindlers and thieves, however, to state any more on this topic would be pure conjecture.

Finally, worshippers of Bangrod, if particularly devout, learn a cult tongue, one of the prerequisites for entering Bangrod's priesthood. By these means, devotees communicate across racial lines. How widespread this language has flourished is not clear, however, the fact that it has borrowed heavily from various midget tongues tends to lend it credence as a legitimate field of study.

— Jim Vassilakos
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Hail to St. Kittybalz

M'lord, permit one so humble (of thee we sing, Lord of Phumph) to speak of his own piece of pulsating pork. Wide as the oceans, mighty the gods above, yea equal in might to Zeus, the all father, towering and majestic, even as the throne of the gods, Mount Olympus. Upon smiting the earth with my mound of meat, all planes of creation each with the sound of 1,000 thunderbolts! From

the very depths of vile Hades to the highest plane of bliss doth the echo ring out, and from every voice let fly the cry: "So shaketh the planes, needs must be the throbbing member of he whose manhood knows no bounds! No sock can contain it, no breeches, no city block may tame its expansiveness! Aye, so soundeth the gong of the mightily endowed Ranger!!!!"

And yet, even with all knowing expansity and girth in man, the epitome of all that is man, there is but one other, the *All Father*, the wellspring from which semen flows, the exalted one who sits on high (high atop his all screwing phallus), our lord and personal messiah, *Saint Kittybalz*, who may surpass all my efforts of hugeness.

I bow to you sir, to your might and girth, in the name of the all father, the semen, and the holy orgasm, let it be know by all life, be it animal, mortal, or god, that I, the incredible bulk, do humbly submit to the aegis of your presence and speaketh unto you these word, oh noblest of gods: "Shit Howdy!"

And may your plethora of phallic passions for pubics be public!

— The Long Ranger

"Don't take life too seriously. You'll never get out alive."

— Bugs Bunny

Weirdies

and general PC strangeness

Though it may be the prerogative of gamers to stray from the paths of normalcy, this is getting ridiculous.

While looking through my character folder the other day, I came to realize that it was full of characters who are, well... weird. Like, for instance, Squeaky the Wonder Rat. Originally, he was a tenth level magic user who drank a potion of polymorph and assumed the form of a rat in order to scout the area ahead of the party. Finding another potion, which he couldn't carry (and forgetting about the Potion Miscibility Table), he tested it to see what it was. It was a potion of delusion. The DM rolled a "00" for miscibility. Squeaky is now trapped in rat form and believes that he has always been a rat. The party had a ring of one wish, and wished him back into a tenth-level mage. They forgot to specify *human*. Squeaky is now a tenth-level magic-user rat.

Other interesting characters include Lowbrow (7'4" hulking Neanderthal, who carries a battleaxe the size of a telephone pole and has a little horned helmet on his head. He's a magic user (Str 18, Int 18, Cha 6 — I made him double-classed). Then there's Keeph, the elven magic-user/thief who snuck into a wizard's lair to steal an intelligent sword and wound up having his consciousness transferred *into* a sword. Anyone else out there have a collection of bizarre characters, or am I just weird?

— Benjamin R Pierce
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University at Buffalo

You're just weird...

Oh Gawd...*hic*

In one AD&D campaign I played in, we had an alcoholic Cleric. He had to keep on drinking, or he would get the DT's and couldn't cast spells. His name was Paul Masson.

— Cassandra L. Kinsey (kinsey@nas.nasa.gov)
Numerical Aerodynamic Simulation Facility
NASA

Lots of Weirdies

Weird characters? Oh, boy. I seem to be attracted to campaigns full of 'em.

How about:

- An Undead, alcoholic diplomat whose divinations are disastrous
- A samurai who cries if you insult him
- A dervish who dances to the Artsy-Fartsy God
- A 250 pound elvish opera singer/illusionist who likes pastries (yes, she had a spear and helmet)
- A chaos lord traveling incognito on a camel
- A young vampire whose goals include biting a werewolf, and who's half-demon due to biting the above-mentioned chaos lord
- An ent with a phobia for cutting implements
- A beastmaster with a pregnant, vorpal bunny and a humanoid, kung-fu rabbit.
- A reporter with a judo belt, a titanium tie/shield, teflon underwear, a "handkerchief of holding", and an umbrella a la The Penguin from "Batman"
- And, in the works, a disgruntled satyr.

— Faye Levine
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Carnegie Mellon, Pittsburgh, PA

Even more Weirdies

The campaign I co-ran had more than its share of weird characters. They included:

- A magic-user with a 16 strength, who had been killed and reincarnated into a nearby mangled corpse — a fighter. He was missing his right eye and his left leg from the calf down. Wore an eyepatch, sported a three-day growth of beard, and drank a lot of beer. Also carried a longsword just to be *the anti-mage*. "I am *not* a magic-user, dammit!!!"

- A vegepygmy Ranger with twin axes of hurling. When asked what would be his *hated race*, the player looked in the monster manual and said *Herd Animal*.
- A Priest of Fertility with an intelligent fungoid symbiote right arm that he could mold into any desired shape through potions of Plant Control. When the potions ran out, he was left with a big tentacle for an arm.

— Steerpike Rex
dbongard@sdcc13.ucsd.edu
 University of California, San Diego

Paladin w/ Magic & an Attitude

Once upon a time, there was a handsome, lawful good magic user. This handsome, lawful good magic user was wandering along, minding his own business, when he was jumped by a pack of nasty, evil creatures. But just as the biggest, baddest, and meanest of those nasty, evil creatures was about to put a two-by-four through his head, a bolt of lightning came from the sky, striking it and the other nasty, evil creatures dead. Miraculously, the handsome, lawful good magic user was spared within a halo of light as the last fingers of lightning crackled around him and through the now crispy bodies of the nasty, evil creatures.

This could only mean one thing. His God had saved him, and he must repay Him. And the handsome, lawful good magic user knew there was only one way to do this. Become a Paladin.

And so he did. Sure, he had to train for a while. But it was worth it. He could now serve his God while banishing nasty, evil creatures to the burning, evil place they belonged — *Riverside*. And boy, it sure was handy when he could use one of his old magic spells to thwart the nasty, evil tricks that nasty, evil creatures are wont to play on those poor, simple Paladins that know only swordplay.

Needless to say, he lived happily ever after.

— Trent Lange
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 UCLA Artificial Intelligence Laboratory

The Bozo Show

How about these thieving gnome brothers: Stick E. Fingers, Gimm E. Stuff, and Man E. Pockets.

— Craig A. Hier
craig@nmt.edu

Weirdest we ever got were the Ogre Brothers: Smash Der Ogre, Bash Der Ogre, Mash Der Ogre, Jake Der Ogre (the wimp), and, of course... Thund Der Ogre — say it quickly. He has the Sword of Ogres! Oh, and they rode on rhinos.

— Willis F. York
 Purdue

I once played a half orc fighter who was so ugly that he had to wear a great helm all the time to keep people near him from up-chucking.

— Robert L. Zort
zort@nisc.psi.net
zort@uu.psi.com
 Performance Systems International, Inc.
 Albany, NY

Barbarian-Mage?

I DM'd an adventure where one of the players had a Barbarian-Mage (I know how many first edition rules that breaks, thank you). He wore just the usual fur jockstrap with a small pouch for spell components and carried the obligatory huge weapon. He had to introduce himself by taking up the standard Conan pose and intoning, "I am Kaarg, Barbarian-Mage," and then slaughtering everyone who laughed.

— The Archmoron
apm935b@vaxc.cc.monash.edu.au
 Computer Centre, Monash University, Australia

You Weirdies!

I bet you roll up wolves in Bunnies & Burrows, priests in Red Hot Nuns on Motorcycles, negative Int Crawdads in Creeks and Crawdads, and PSH's in Gamma World! You probably play a law-abiding citizen in Judge Dread, pick Austria-Hungary in Diplomacy, and refuse to blow up the world in Nuclear Supremacy!

— Charles K. Hughes
Ordania-DM@cup.portal.com

Tell me a Secret

My weirdest AD&D character was Kaisunne, a twisted kensai. He had a charisma of 5, which I justified by having his lips torn off in a battle with

an owlbear. He was rather insane, as he would take deadly offense at even the most harmless slight, slashing away until the opponent was helpless. Then, he would put the blade of his sword to the victim's throat and say, "Tell me a secret." If the terrified victim could manage to stutter out a secret which Kaisunne deemed worth hearing, he would let the victim live with only a scar, or perhaps a lost hand. If the secret was not sufficiently interesting, he killed the guy.

Eventually, he died in a confrontation with a guildmaster assassin. The assassin told him the secret of safely penetrating the guildhouse defenses, then threw poison needles into his back as he turned away. I pretty much expected that to happen, after turning my back on an assassin and all, but I had to stay in character.

— FooDog
 socalgas@eql.caltech.edu
 Pactech Data & Research, Inc
 Pasadena, CA

Lots & Lots of Weirdies

How about:

- An android hero in Villains and Vigilantes, whose designers programmed him with so many conflicting directives that he made no sense when he spoke. (*"Planet of the apes is my favorite flavor of vinegar. Eat them vanderberg airport potatoes, son."*)
- A human fighter in AD&D with 18/00 strength, 18 Con, and 18 Cha but 3 in everything else. His name was Eddie and he was sorta like a 19-year old kid who had a good heart and was too cute to live, but he was so stupid he'd attack walls and doors.
- A human cleric who, while suffering from Insanity, developed a dual personality. His fighter personality wondered why he carried such sissy weapons, and his cleric personality just couldn't guess how his clothes could be so blood soaked.
- A female ranger in AD&D who donned a girdle of masculinity/femininity and became a man. She still liked men and was often mistaken for a homosexual. Our DM didn't run the people around her as being hateful of gays, but almost everyone felt that *he* was insane and should be cured. The attempts made to cure her were really out of the dark ages...

- A Lawful Good thief, who practiced his trade to gain first-hand knowledge of thieves and thus someday serve as the security chief for his beloved queen. He almost always asked humans and demihumans for permission to backstab them; if he broke a lock or ruined a trap he left money for the builder so he could later make repairs; he robbed people by the "holdup" method, preferring not to hurt anyone; he bought building plans so that he would perform his job efficiently; and he actually acted as party treasurer!
- A dark elf sorceress with a pet huge spider named Igor; she looked like a negative photo of Robert Smith of the Cure and used bizarre spell combinations in combat. She threw light on herself, then turned herself invisible a lot; monsters sometimes mistook her for a ghost. She also carried a skull in a bag and used Phantasmal Force to make it look like a medusa head; she greased every dungeon in the land; and she also had this fascination with dead, shriveled things.

— Charles Anthony Leone
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Skulls, Bones, & Mental Breakdowns

I once had this human magic user named Ignatz who started relatively sane, but once the campaign got going, I found that it was one of those 90% magic resistant campaigns. You know...

Ignatz: "I cast Magic Missiles at the kobold."

DM: "Well, he *only* has a 10% magic resistance, so let's see...you are first level, and that makes your chance..."

Ignatz: "Never mind..."

Finally, poor Iggy had a breakdown, partially triggered by the tragic death of his friend Mezzeron. As his comrade lay dying in his arms...

Ignatz: "Fear not brave Mezzeron, for we will get you to a cleric..."

Other player: "I think he's dead Iggy."

Ignatz: (*his eyes crossing and uncrossing like juggler's oranges*) "Then I will resurrect you with my magic." (*Babbles off meaningless words and makes bizarre gestures*)

Other player: "I think you need to be a cleric to resurrect people, Iggy."

Ignatz: "No, I have brought him back!" (*To Mezzeron's corpse*) "How do you feel, old friend?"

Mezzeron: (*Ignatz is working his jaw up and down and making a poor attempt at throwing his voice*) "Oh much better, thank you! Woooooooooooo!"

Other players: "He's finally flipped."

"Well, he *has* been under a lot of stress lately..."

From there on in, Ignatz carried Mezzeron's skull strapped to his left shoulder, and during stressful periods would consult with him regarding the party's best course of action. For example:

Ignatz: "Mezzeron, which branch should we take: right or left?"

Mezzeron: "Neither! Go back to the surface! Woooooooooooo!"

Ignatz: "Mezzeron! Who is the greatest sorcerer in the world?"

Mezzeron: "Why, Ignatz of course! Woooooooooooo!"

Others: "Maybe if we took the skull while he was sleeping?"

"No way, he'd just get another!"

"Yeah, but it wouldn't be Mezzeron."

"I don't think he *cares*."

And indeed, they were right. As we destroyed more monsters and lost more players, Ignatz's skull collection grew to epic proportions. And then came the day when he learned how to cast Magic Mouth...

Other player: "You know, Iggy, maybe if you didn't drag that bag of skulls around, you might have more room for treasure."

Ignatz: (*Brow furrowed in concentration*) "I never thought of that!" (*To his skulls*) "Hey you guys! Do you mind if I just bury you?"

Skulls: (*talking without the benefit of Ignatz working their jaw bones*) "Yes! You said you would resurrect us!" (*assorted moanings and wailings*)

Other player: "Never mind..."

Ignatz had a Mouth spell for just about every contingency. Then came one day when *another* party member learned how to cast MM...

Ignatz: (*after clubbing a kobold to death with his staff*) "Ha! That creature has *paid* for his crimes against society! Well, what do you think of that, Mezzeron?"

Mezzeron: "Shut up Ignatz !!!!!!"

Others: (*appropriate sniggering and laughing noises*)

I must say that Ignatz was the most *fun* character I ever played (except for maybe the Harie Krishna monk who used to hand out pamphlets and sell flowers when he was not busy killing things), and I was genuinely sorry to leave him when the campaign ended. I really wished I had learned to cast Animate Dead before then! Imagine a smug looking mage followed by *hundreds* of different types of monster skulls, hopping along by using their jaw bones!

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"If a man looks into a clear pond and sees his reflection... which is the real one, the man? Or the reflection?"

— Ariel Controna-Decene-Diversonac

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Shadis Magazine

There's this pretty good fanzine from South Carolina with one of its cornerstones being the ongoing creation of details for a fantasy world called *Alderac*. The editor put out 5 issues and a total of 900 copies of this *half-legal* format, 64-page mag, but then he got called off to the Iraq Slaughter (he was in the Army). Now he's back and quit the Army (no wonder), and the magazine has a new address:

SHADIS Magazine

The Alderac Group
755 Burcale Rd. #B-2
Myrtle Beach, SC 29577
(803) 236-9162

The editor is Jolly Blackburn, and his last advertised price for this interrupted magazine was \$12 (U.S.) for 6 bimonthly issues. As usual, you can send them a SASE for more details.

— Pierre Savoie
Micol Labs BBS, Toronto
psavoie@pro-micol.cts.com

Traveller World Designer

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Adventure Quest The Roleplaying Game

I and a number of people working together have developed a new Role Playing system. It is called *Adventure Quest*, and we believe that it answers many of the problems we have seen in other games out there.

First, some background. The campaign which this system grew out of was started in 1976 at Purdue University. We have played every saturday night since then. Starting with a modest group, the size of the club has grown considerably over the years. Now we play on two nights, splitting the 50-70 players into six to eight games. Since we started, we have run over 1500 games.

Even at the start, we saw problems in the games we had to use. Who wants to prepick spells? You never pick the right ones. Playing involved more rolling dice and hunting for tables than roleplaying. Over the years we came up with different ways to do things that were easier, faster and more fun.

Finally, being presented with the prospect of having to pick up about \$250 worth of books to upgrade to the newest version of a popular system, we decided that we'd had enough of outrageous prices. Here's what our homebrewed alternative has to offer.

- A Skill Based Task System (simple skill and resistance checks using d6's)
- Simple Combat Rules (d20 + combat modifier = best defence value you hit)
- Simple Buying Rules (Stats, skills, magic, languages, damage points all bought with experience points)
- Flexible Spell Casting (over 700 spell descriptions)
- Well Crafted Backgrounds (playtested worlds that make sense)
- No limitations (explanations on how to make creatures, actors, magic, adventures and campaigns)
- Completeness (everything you need between two covers)

Our first game is *Adventure Quest/Jaern*. Jaern is a remote world with a fantasy setting. Numerous races, deities, backgrounds and settings make for a lot of material for a campaign. There are over 400 pages of rules and background material in this book.

Over the next year we are preparing the following genre expansions along with a number of modules and gaming supplements.

AQ/Space	Science Fiction Roleplaying
AQ/Britannia	13th Century Britain
AQ/Powers	Super Heroes & Villains

Since the mechanics of each game are the same, adventurers can be moved from one genre to another with no translations needed.

We are not a large company with lots of financial support. We're just a few friends cranking out these games with our own laser printer and a lot of manual labor. We know what it's like to have to face gaming without a large budget. To contact us, send E-mail or write us at:

Lafayette Simulations
PO Box 6504
Lafayette, IN 47903

— Eric Delaney
Purdue UNIX Group
delaney@mentor.cc.purdue.edu

The Game Oracle

To get six bi-monthly issues of the role-playing magazine for sophisticated gamers send \$6 to:

The Game Oracle
1851 N. Ivar
Suite #208, Dept. 101
Hollywood, CA 90028

Back Issues

Back issues of *The Guildsman* are basically sold out, however, the Eaton Collection on the 3rd floor of the UCR Rivera Library has copies of issues 1-4 which may be examined on the premises free of charge by students and non-students alike.

Trying to Find Us?

To contact *The Guildsman*, write to:

The Gamers' Guild
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