The Dragon

#16

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JULY 1978
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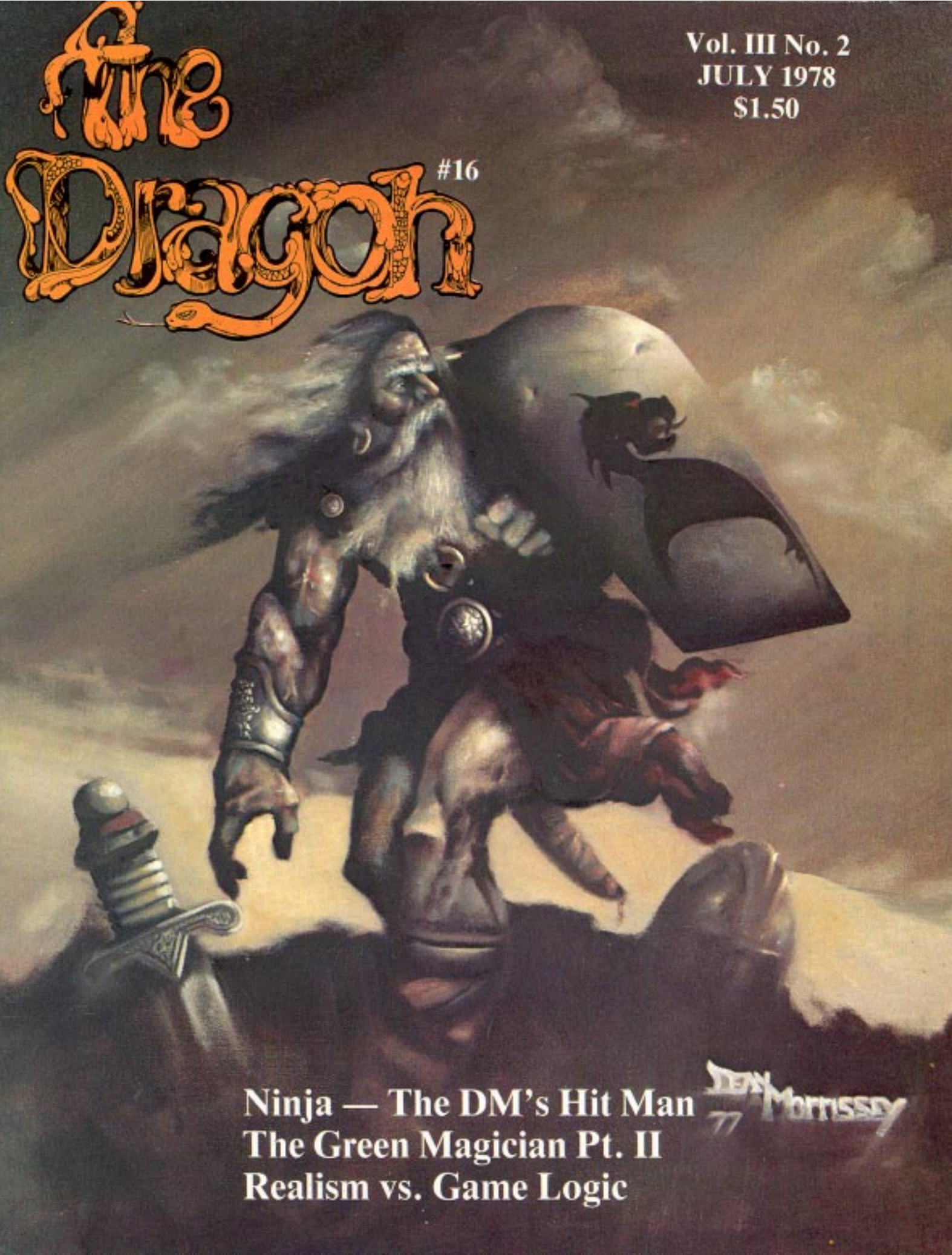

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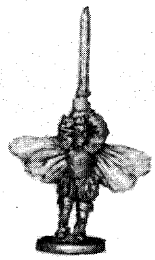

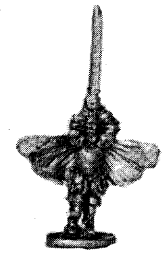

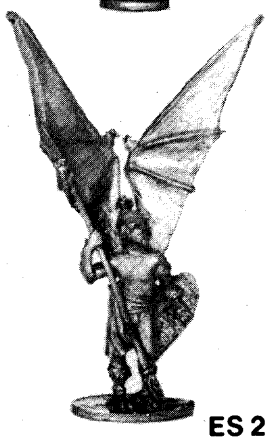

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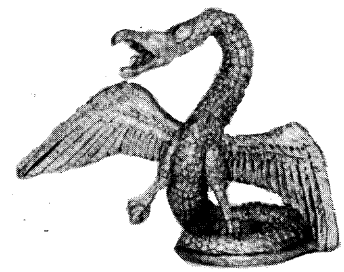

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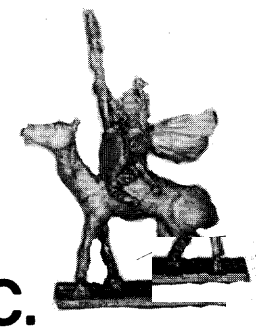

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Vol. III No. 2 June '78 #6

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Due to the length of the conclusion of THE GREEN MAGICIAN, we found it necessary to add an additional four pages this issue. Contrary to what some Philistines might think, this is not a fiction magazine. The Philistines I refer to are the ones that don't want to see any fiction at all in these pages. To forestall the howls, the extra four pages were added to compensate, not that the story NEEDS compensating for.

It has always been THE DRAGON's contention that roleplaying gaming requires large amounts of stimulation to ensure fresh and viable campaigns. Due to the fact that virtually all of the good roleplaying games require liberal interpretation, fresh ideas are paramount. We will continue to bring you quality heroic fiction.

On the opposite page, you will find this year's *Strategists Club Awards* ballot. We urge you to participate in this year's voting. We feel that this award is the most valid of all the awards given out this time of year. The nominations were made by a panel of over 50 members of the industry, as well as over a dozen Life Subbers. It is appearing in every gaming magazine of import this year, and voting is expected to be very heavy. The Awards will be presented at this year's SC Banquet. Details on the Banquet are elsewhere in this issue.

Ever since I got into this business, I have been troubled by some persistent questions: Why is it that so few people in this hobby have a sense of humor? Who do so many take themselves and the hobby so deadly seriously? What is it in our collective psyche that prohibits us from laughing at ourselves?

The manifestations of the deficiency are numerous: amateur 'zines (discussed in SORCEROR'S SCROLL this issue) are no longer what they once were — now they are filled with vitriol and bickering; satire goes unnoticed and/or unappreciated; humor is unwelcome. Recently, I was reading some other magazine, I *really* don't remember which one — honest, a review of someone's space game. (I believe it was *Alpha Omega*, by Battleline.) The reviewer seemed to take it as a personal affront that two of the ship types were called *Akroid* and *Belushi*, and seemed to have no idea whatsoever where they came from. Now this was a person that holds himself to be expert enough that someone should care to read what he writes. Why have we become so parochial? Are reviews being written by people that live in caves somewhere?

Far too many people take roleplaying gaming far too seriously, often finding it difficult to disassociate the fantasy from the reality, and tolerating no criticism or jesting at all. Judging from some of the letters *TD* has received, some people sit about and do nothing but work

(continued on pg. 36)

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FANTASY GAMING HALL OF FAME

"In recognition of their contributions to fantasy gaming." Please vote for one in each category. Present members are: REH, ERB, H.P. Lovecraft, JRRT, C.S. Lewis, Roger Zelazny, Andre Norton and Fritz Leiber. Do not vote for any of them.

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A. Merritt
Fletcher Pratt
Clark Ashton Smith
Jules Verne
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Anyone reading this in any of the fine magazines running it is eligible to vote, but only once. To that end, you must include your name and address somewhere on the ballot. This must be done, as it is our only method of preventing ballot stuffing; failure to do so will invalidate the ballot. DO NOT SEND IN THIS BALLOT! DO NOT PHOTOCOPY THIS FORM! All votes must be cast on a postcard or 3 x 5 notecard. Simply list your choices in numerical order. ONLY ONE CHOICE IN EACH CATEGORY. Ballots must not accompany any order or other correspondence with TSR Hobbies or TSR Periodicals; they must be sent separately. We recommend a postcard.

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Letters to the Editor

A Rebuttal to "The Cthulhu Mythos Revisited" by Gerald Guinn

Well, when one gets into religious controversy the first thing one discovers is that the scriptures are themselves self-contradictory or are subject to varying interpretations. Now here is Gerald Guinn, self styled High Priest in the Service of Nyarlathotep objecting to the interpretation given to the Cthulhu Mythos in *D&D (The Dragon,* May 1978, page 22).

Mr. Guinn makes a number of specific complaints, and readers should refer to his letter for his entire argument, but I am happy to comment on some of his allegations, as summarized below.

Guinn claims:

1. That Ubbo-Sathla, not Azathoth, is the center of the Universe. And yet:

"Til neither time nor matter stretched before me But only Chaos, without form or place. Here the vast Lord of All in darkness muttered Things he had dreamed but could not understand."

"Azathoth," from *The Fungi from Yuggoth*

and

"the boundless daemon Sultan Azathoth, . . . which blasphemes and bubbles at the centre of all infinity . . ."

from "Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath"

It is true that Clark Ashton Smith's Hyperborean sorcerer Eibon makes some contradictory statements about Ubbo-Sathla, but with all due respect to MU Eibon, he must be considered a secondary source.

Many of Lovecraft's friends wrote stories using the Cthulhu Mythos and as a result there are various versions of the more important events therein. Our article draws most heavily on Lovecraft's own works and the work of Mythos Scholars Frances T. Laney, "The Cthulhu Mythology: A Glossary," published in *Beyond the Wall of Sleep,* and Lin Carter, "H.P. Lovecraft: The Gods" published in *The Shuttered Room and Other Pieces.* Both of these books from Arkham House.

2. A major power of Cthulhu is the projection to sensitive minds of nightmare and madness. Certainly true, I would hope anyone using the god in his game would read "The Call of Cthulhu" and get some idea how fearsome he really is. In an early version of "the Gods" I said "if Cthulhu breaks out of R'lyeh, *everyone in the world* must make a saving throw or go insane." I later reduced this as being a bit too gross.

3. Guinn objects to the various hit point assignments given to the Lovecraftian Gods and races. This is too arbitrary a subject to justify serious contention. Any appropriate hit point assignment can be used by the DM. One of my concerns in writing up the gods was that players encountering them in a game might well want to call upon Zeus or Thor or Ra for help and the gods should be scaled to make this a reasonable confrontation.

4. Guinn maintains "the Elder Sign . . . cannot control Cthulhu in R'lyeh." I quote the *Necronomicon.* "In the land of Yhe as in great R'lyeh . . . it shall have power, but even as the stars wane . . . so wanes the power . . . of the five pointed star stone." Derleth's "The House on Curwen Street"

5. "If Alhazred was eaten alive in Damascus what is he doing in the Nameless city as an intact zombie . . .?"

My description of Alhazred's fate is taken from H.P. Lovecraft's "History and Chronology of the *Necronomicon."* I know Derleth had him reappear in a later story, but Lovecraft's account is probably the definitive one. Prof. Shrewsbury (in Derleth's story) says "Legend has it that he was snatched by an invisible monster in broad daylight and devoured horribly before a great audience; this is the story of the twelfth century biographer Ebn Khallikan, hands down; but it is more than possible that the devouring was an illusion . . ." in "The Keeper of the Key," the story referred to by Guinn above. Ah, in a dispute like this, who is to know what is illusion and what is reality?

6. "An Arabic volume of the *Necronomicon* . . . does exist." I know various authors have reported so, but again, to quote Lovecraft's "History and Chronology of the *Necronomicon"* "1050 . . . Arabic text now lost."

7. "Try Primordial Ones instead of Old Ones from the Mountains of Madness. Using Old Ones twice is not only redundant of another creature (the Great Old Ones) but confusing." I agree, but Lovecraft uses Old Ones throughout most of the story.

8. "Instead of Shaggoths, these creatures are known as Shoggoths." You are right, Mr. Guinn, although Laney's "Cthulhu Mythology: A Glossary," gives both spellings. If you are going to complain about how to spell words not intended (in the first place) for the human tongue, may I point out that in your letter you have consistently misspelled August Derleth's first name?

9. "If. . . Lovecraft . . . Derleth . . . or Howard saw your use, they'd roll over in their graves." If you listen very carefully over HPL's grave, Mr. Guinn, the sound you hear is not rolling, it is hearty laughter!

Sincerely,
J. Eric Holmes

Ed. Note: J. Eric Holmes, an author in his own right (Mahars of Pellucidar is my favorite Pellucidar noval — written by J. E. H.), was co-author of the original article.

D&D Variant

NEAR EASTERN MYTHOS

by Jerome Arkenberg

The mythologies of Sumeria, Babylonia, and Canaan are quite similar to each other. Usually, only the names of the deities are different (though there are slight differences, due to local needs). This is attributable to the fact that these mythologies all stem from that of the Sumerians (though local gods were added to it). In the following descriptions of the Near Eastern Gods, the letters in parentheses following the name of the god signifies the origin of the name. S = Sumerian, B = Babylonian, and C = Canaanite.

AN(S) or **ANU(B),** or **EL(C) = Father of the Gods**

Armor Class: -2	Magic Ability: See Below
Move: 18"	Fighter Ability: Lord — 15th
Hit Points: 300	Psionic Ability: Class 6

This god, besides being Father of the Gods, is also God of the Sky, and the source of order in the Universe. He appears as an old, bearded man, wearing loose fitting garments. He can use the following spells: Control Weather, Shape-Change, Time-Stop, Astral Spell, Teleport, and Meteor Swarm.

ENLIL(S) or **MARDUK(B)** or **BAAL(C) — Storm God**

Armor Class: -2	Magic **Ability: See Below**
Move: 18"	Fighter Ability: Lord — 18th
Hit Points: 290	Psionic Ability: Class 6

Enlil serves as the "executive" of An, Father of the Gods. That is, he is involved directly in the battle against Chaos. He appears as a young man with a beard, wearing a short kilt, and a horned helmet. He rides a chariot pulled by four horses (that move 36"). He is armed with a dagger (+ 3 vs. Chaotic creatures), a Net of Snaring, a Magic Bow and 30 Arrows of Slaying, a Mace of Disruption, and a Censer that summons Air Elementals. He can use the following spells: Control Weather, Teleport, Lightning Bolt, Ice Storm, Meteor Swarm, Cloudkill, and Wind Walk.

ENKI(S) or **EA(B) — God of Water**

Armor Class: -1	Magic Ability: Wizard — 35th
Move: 18"	Fighter Ability: Lord — 15th
Hit Points: 250	Psionic Ability: Class 1

Enki or Ea is also the God of Wisdom and Magic, a patron of the Arts, and a creator of Man. He is well disposed towards Mankind. He can also use these Clerical spells: Curse, Remove Curse, Remove Spells, Detect Magic, and Raise Dead Fully.

NANNA(S) or SIN(B) or YERAH(C) — The Moon

Armor Class: 0	Magic Ability: See Below
Move: 20"	Fighter Ability: Lord — 14th
Hit Points: 200	Psionic Ability: Class 6

Nanna-Sin is the father of Inanna-Ishtar, and is one of the Annunaki, or Great Gods. Yerah later marries Nikkal, the Canannite Moon Goddess. Nanna-Sin-Yerak appears as a mature man with a long Black Beard. He can use the following spells: Light, Darkness, Time-Stop, Teleport, Infravision, Astral, and Polymorph any Object.

NINHURSAG(S & B) or **ASHERAH(C) — Mother Goddess**

Armor Class: -1	Magic Ability: See Below
Move: 18"	Fighter Ability: Lord — 15th
Hit Points: 275	Psionic Ability: Class 6

Ninhursag is the wife of Enki-Ea, and as such, she created all vegetation. She is also the Earth. Asherah is the wife of El, and often intercedes with El on behalf of the other gods and goddesses. ninhursag-Asherah appears as a matronly woman, wearing a shirt, a necklace, and a headdress, and holds sheaves of wheat in her hands. She can use these spells: Hallucinatory Terrain, Teleport, Conjure Earth Elemental, Transmute Rock to Mud, Move Earth, Charm Plants, Speak with Plants, Create Food, and Earthquake.

UTU(S) or **SHAMASH(B)** or **SHAPASH — The Sun**

Armor Class: 0	Magic Ability: See Below
Move: 20"	Fighter Ability: Lord — 16
Hit Points: 200	Psionic Ability: Class 6

The Sun God is a Judge, a lawgiver, a warrior, and the God of Wisdom. He appears as a tall man, wearing a robe, and carrying a saw. He can use these spells: Light, Darkness, Shapechange, Teleport, Clairvoyance, Clairaudience, Strength, Magic Missile, Shield, and Fire Ball.

INANNA(S), ISHTAR(B), ASTARTE(C), or **ANAT(C) — Goddess of Love & War**

Armor Class: 0	Magic Ability: See Below
Move: 18"	Fighter Ability: Lord — 15th
Hit Points: 200	Psionic Ability: Class 6

This goddess appears as a beautiful, naked, young woman with Wings, at times wearing a helmet with ostrich plumes. She is often accompanied by a lion. She has a scimitar + 2, a magic bow, and arrows of slaying. She can use these spells; Shield, Magic Missile, Strength, Charm Person, Charm Humanoid, Charm Monster, Charm Plant, Shapechange, Teleport, Astral, and Seduction.

DUMUZI(S), TAMMUZ(B), or **ATHTAR(C) — God of Vegetation**

Armor Class: 2	Magic Ability: See Below
Move: 15"	Fighter Ability: Lord — 13th
Hit Points: 150	Psionic Ability: Class 5

This God is loved by Inanna-Ishtar-Astarte. Each year he dies in the Autumn, but is reborn in the Spring. He is also a Gatekeeper of Heaven, and, as Athtar, the God of Light. He appears as a handsome young man, wearing a kilt. He can use these spells: Growth/Plants, Charm Plants, Speak with Plants, Create Food, Shapechange, Teleport (and, as Athtar, use Light, Darkness, and Infravision).

ERESHKIGAL(S & B), or **MOT(C) — Ruler of the Netherworld**

Armor Class: -1	Magic Ability: See Below
Move: 18"	Fighter Ability: Lord — 14th
Hit Points: 200	Psionic Ability: Class 6

Ereshkigal is the Mesopotamian Goddess of Death. Her abode is Irkalla, a region of darkness and dust. She appears as a beautiful, naked, young woman. Mot is the Canaanite God of Death and Sterility. His abode is a place of ruin, dilapidation, and loathsomeness. He appears as a mature, bearded man. They both can use these spells: Darkness, Sleep, Haste, Slow, Charm Person, Animate Dead, Teleport, Reincarnation, Anti-Magic Shell, Death, Power-Word: Kill, Time-Stop, Astral, Silence, Speak with Dead. Animate Objects, Raise Dead Fully.

NERGAL(S & B), or **MEKAL(C) — God of Mass Destruction**

Armor Class: -1	Magic Ability: See Below
Move: 18"	Fighter Ability: Lord — 16th
Hit Points: 175	Psionic Ability: Class 6

This God is also the God of Plague. His weapons are heat, lightning, and plague. He also has a Mace of Disruption, Magic Bow, Arrows of Slaying, and a Dancing Sword. He appears as a mature man wearing a kilt, a helmet, and carrying two Lion-Headed staves. He can use these spells: Insect Plague, Fire Ball, Lightning Bolt, Magic Missile, Disintegrate, and Earthquake.

NAMTAR(S & B) — Fate

Armor Class: 2	Magic Ability: See Below
Move: 18"/36"	Fighter Ability: Lord — 12th
Hit Points: 150	Psionic Ability: Class 4

Namtar is fate in its evil aspect. He is also the messenger and vizier of Ereshkigal. He brings disease and pestilence wherever he goes. He appears as a balrog. He can use these spells: Insect Plague, Curse, Cause Disease, Shapechange, Darkness, Haste, Slow.

TIAMAT(B) or **LOTAN(C) — The Primeval Mother or Dragon**

Armor Class: -3	Magic Ability: Wizard — 20th
Move: 20"	Fighter Ability: Lord — 16th
Hit Points: 300	Psionic Ability: Class 6

Tiamat is the "salt water" that gave birth to the other Babylonian gods. Lotan is the Primeval serpent. Both appear as a seven-headed Dragon and both represent the forces of Chaos.

APSU(B) or YAMM(C) — Primeval Father and the Ocean

Armor Class: -3
Move: 20"
Hit Points: 300
Magic Ability: Wizard — 18th
Fighter Ability: Lord — 15th
Psionic Ability: Class 6

Apsu is the "sweet water" that existed before creation and fertilized Tiamat. Yamm is "Prince Sea and Ocean Current the Ruler." Both appear as an old man with a long white beard. They also represent the forces of Chaos.

KINGSU(B) — General of Chaos

Armor Class: -2
Move: 18"
Hit Points: 200
Magic Ability: See Below
Fighter Ability: Lord — 14th
Psionic Ability: Class 6

Kingsu was the husband of Tiamat and General of Chaos after Apsu was killed. He appears as a young, bearded man. He has a Magic Bow, many Magic Arrows(+ 3), and a Sword of Cold(+ 3). He can use these spells: Strength, Shield, Magic Missile, Fire Ball, Lightning Bolt, and Teleport.

NEBO(B) — Messenger of the Gods

Armor Class: 2
Move: 15"/25"
Hit Points: 150
Magic Ability: See Below
Fighter Ability: Lord — 10th
Psionic Ability: Class 6

Nebo is also the patron of writing and speech. His symbol is the stylus. He appears as a young man with wings; He can use these spells: Wind Walk; Fly; Speak with the Dead, Animals, Plants, and Monsters; Anti-Magic Shell; Teleport; Mass charm; Protection/Evil; and Protection/Normal Missiles.

"SKILFUL & PERCIPIENT ONE" — The Divine Craftsman

Armor Class: 2
Move: 15"
Hit Points: 150
Magic Ability: Wizard — 14th
Fighter Ability: Lord — 11th
Psionic Ability: Class 6

This Canaanite God is the patron of Craftsmanship and Magic. He is the one who makes all he weapons of the gods. He appears as a short, but strong man with a long beard.

THE HEROES

GILGAMESH(S,B) — The Supreme Mesopotamian Hero

Armor Class: 2
Move: 12"
Hit Points: 120
Magic Ability: Nil
Fighter Ability: Lord — 15th
Psionic Ability: Nil
Str: 20 Int: 15 Wis: 10 Con: 18 Dex: 17 Cha: 20

Gilgamesh is the legendary King of Uruk (or Erech) who is "two-thirds divine and one-third human." He is a fairly young man, with a short black beard, wearing nought but a loincloth. He is filled with a type of demonic energy and is very lustful. He is armed with the Axe "Might of Heroes", the Bow of Anshan, a Sword +3, and thirty Magic Arrows (+ 3). He also wears the Breastplate "Voice of Heroes".

ENKIDU(S,B) — "The Wild Man of the Steppe"

Armor Class:
As a Normal Man
Move: 12"
Hit Points: 100
Magic Ability: Nil
Fighter Ability: Lord — 13th
Psionic Ability: Nil
Str: 1895 Int: 12 Wis: 15 Con: 17 Dex: 18 Cha: 15

Enkidu is at first a wild savage, but is later "tamed" and becomes Gilgamesh's best friend. He is as "swift as the Gazelle". He is a young man with a short black beard, and, like Gilgamesh, wears only a loincloth. He carries thirty Magic Arrows (+ 1), a Magic Bow (+ 1), an Axe (+ 2), and a Sword (+ 2).

LUGULBANDA(S) — Father of Gilgamesh

Armor Class: 1
Move: 13"
Hit Points: 140
Magic Ability: Wizard — 11th
Fighter Ability: Lord — 15th
Psionic Ability: Class 6
Str: 20 Int: 20 Wis: 20 Con: 20 Dex: 20 Cha: 20

Lugulbanda is not only the Father of Gilgamesh, he is also a god, a shepherd, and a hero in his own right. He serves as Gilgamesh's protector, or his "Guardian Angel".

ZIUSUDRA(S) or UTNAPISHTIM(B) — The Mesopotamian Noah

Armor Class: 2
Move: 13"
Hit Points: 140
Magic Ability: Wizard — 15th
Fighter Ability: Lord — 11th
Psionic Ability: Class 5
Str: 16 Int: 19 Wis: 20 Con: 18 Dex: 17 Cha: 15

Ziusudra-Utnapishtim was the legendary King of Shurrupak, and was renowned for his righteousness and piety. Because of that he was told in advance of the coming flood, and told to build a boat in which to escape. Later, he was given immortality and he now lives in Dilmun (the Sumerian Paradise).

KING KRT(C)

Armor Class:
As a normal man
Move: 12"
Hit Points: 80
Magic Ability: Nil
Fighter Ability: Lord — 10th
Psionic Ability: Nil
Str: 15 Int: 17 Wis: 12 Con: 13 Dex: 16 Cha: 16

King Krt was an ancient Canaanite king, celebrated in legend. He is a mature man, clad in a loincloth. He was the recipient of divine revelation.

KING DN'IL(C)

Armor Class:
As a normal man
Move: 12"
Hit Points: 88
Magic Ability: Nil
Fighter Ability: Lord — 11th
Psionic Ability: Nil
Str: 16 Int: 13 Wis: 18 Con: 14 Dex: 14 Cha: 15

King Dn'il is proverbial for his wisdom, righteousness, and intercession. He is a rather mature man with a long black beard, clad in a loincloth.

'AQHT(C) — Prince of Heroes

Armor Class:
As a normal man
Move 12"
Hit Points: 100
Magic Ability: Nil
Fighter Ability: Lord — 13th
Psionic Ability: Nil
Str: 1875 Int: 16 Wis: 10 Con: 13 Dex: 17 Cha: 17

The son of King Dn'il, 'Aqht spurned the goddess Anat, and was later killed by one of Anat's henchmen — Ytpn. He is a young man, clad in a loincloth, with a short black beard. He is armed with a Magic Bow, thirty Magic Arrows + 1, and an Axe + 1.

THE MAIDEN(C) — Sister of 'Aqht

Armor Class:
As a normal man
Move: 12"
Hit Points: 70
Magic Ability: Nil
Fighter Ability: Lord — 9th
Psionic Ability: Nil
Str: 14 Int: 14 Wis: 13 Con: 15 Dex: 17 Cha: 18

The Maiden is the sister of 'Aqht, and avenged his death by assassinating Ytpn, 'Aqht's killer. She is a beautiful young woman wearing a "woman's robe" and carrying a sword and dagger.

THE MONSTERS

HUMBABA(S,B)

Armor Class: 1
Move: 25"
Hit Points: 230
Magic Ability: Nil
Fighter Ability: Lord — 13th
Psionic Ability: Nil

Humbaba is the guardian of the "Cedar Forest". "His roaring is the flood storm, his mouth is fire, his breath is death, His teeth are Dragon's fangs, his countenance like a lion."

THE SCORPION MEN(S,B)

Armor Class: 1
Move: 20"
Hit Points: 240
Magic Ability: Wizard — 15th
Fighter Ability: Lord — 15th
Psionic Ability: Class 1

These creatures are half-scorpion, half-man. "Their glory is terrifying, their state strikes death into Men, their shimmering halo sweeps the Mountains that guard the rising sun." They guard the gate to Dilmun (Paradise).

THE ARTIFACTS

THE AXE "MIGHT OF HEROES"(S,B)

This axe has a + 3 hit probability and does 2-16 pts of damage.

THE "BOW OF ANSHAN"(S,B)

This bow gives all arrows shot from it a + 3 hit probability.

THE BREASTPLATE "VOICE OF HEROES"(S,B)

This acts as Armor + 5, and weighs 30 shekels.

THE MACE "DRIVER"(C)

This mace is only effective when used against Lotan. It has a + 3 hit probability when so used and does 3-18 pts. of damage.

THE MACE "EXPELLER"(C)

This mace is only effective when used against Yamm. It has a + 3 hit probability when so used and does 3-18 pts. of damage.

OTHER DEITIES

ANTUM(B) — Wife of Anu.
ARURU(S) — A Goddess of Creation. She created Enkidu.
AYA(B) — The Dawn, wife of Shamash.
BELIT-SHERI(B,S) — Scribe of the Netherworld Gods
DAGAN(C) — God of Corn
ENNUGI(B) — God of Irrigation
HANISH(S,B) — Herald of storm and bad weather
ISHULLANA(B) — Gardener of Anu. He was loved by Ishtar, but he rejected her and was then turned into a frog.
MAMMETUM(S,B) — Goddess of Destiny
NETI(S) or NEDU(B) — Gate Keeper of the Netherworld
NINGAL(S,B) — Wife of the Moon and mother of the Sun.
NINKI(S) — The mother of Enlil
NINSUN(S) — The mother of Gilgamesh and wife of Lugulbanda
NISABA(S,B) — Goddess of Grain
SAMUQAN(S,B) — God of Cattle
SHULPAE(S,B) — God of Feasting
SIDURI(S,B) — Divine wine-maker and brewer
URSHANABI-SURSUNABI(S,B) — Ferryman of the Dead
NINGIZZIDA(B) — A God of fertility, healing, & magic
NINGIRSU(S) — God of Irrigation & War

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D&D Variant

The Ultimate NPC: Ninja — The DM's Hit Man

by Sheldon Price

Editor's Introduction

In recent weeks, we have received a number of requests for more detailed and developed information to include in campaigns. Here it is, the DM's "hit-man". Got a crew of too-powerful PC's? Let a couple of Ninja show up, and they'll be happily bumping off each other in no time. Have another NPC that has a score to settle with one or more PC's? Let him hire a Ninja, or two. If a PC defeats a Ninja, it could become a matter of clan honor. And so on, and so on, etc.

Have fun with this one. A word of caution — these are bad dudes. Don't go overboard. This was originally submitted as a PC; it was far too powerful for that.

Author's Introduction

The *ninja* was a semi-mythical character in medieval Japan. He was feared not because he was terrifying, but rather because he was an unknown. He could do things which the people considered inhuman because of his special tools and training.

The ninja should not be an automatic character of terror in the game. While ninja did perform assassinations that was by no means all that they did. There is no reason why a ninja can not cooperate with lawful and good characters in the game. He does have much to offer.

These rules for ninja were based on the book *The Art of Invisibility: Ninjutsu* by Donn Draeger. The book was published in 1971 by Simpson — Doyle & Company; Shibuya P.O. Box 235; Shibuya-ku, Tokyo, Japan.

The ninja were grouped in families with a *Jonin* as family head. Some Jonin were heads of more than one family. Ninja had three ranks. Jonin were the family heads. *Genin* were the normal field operatives who performed missions. *Chunin* were the middlemen who handled Jonin-Genin contacts and assigned missions. The genin loved to operate in bad weather.

Ninja are a special oriental subclass of assassin. They are a combination of samurai, monk, thief, and assassin. They have trained since youth to master their art of ninjutsu. They are knowledgeable about poisons, are masters of disguise, have a virtually perfect sense of balance, have excellent night vision, and are very nimble.

Ninja are nonpsychic.

Alignment: The alignment of a ninja is strict neutrality. This means that rather than worrying about grand cosmic balances, a ninja is interested only in what is good for himself. This makes it virtually impossible for a ninja to change alignment. Ninja are incorruptible in matters of alignment.

In all encounters there is an automatic 20% chance that the being or thing encountered will consider the ninja to be of its own alignment. There is no penalty if this does not result, the ninja will be treated as if he were neutral for determining the character of the alignment. This applies for both beings or things such as swords. A ninja is able to simultaneously use, with no drawbacks if he makes the right rolls, swords of law, neutrality, *and* chaos. The probability is generated only once for each encounter. It is not generated each time something such as a sword is touched. The effects of this generation are permanent and are *not* altered by later events.

Languages: A ninja may know a number of languages equal to his intelligence — 6. They share a secret language. They may learn, if they wish, the languages of law, neutrality, and chaos.

Nonhuman and female ninja do exist though they are rare.

A ninja may not be multiprofessional. There is no limit by race as to how high a ninja may rise. No ninja may be higher than 16th level.

Abilities: A ninja has very good night vision. At first level a ninja gains the ability to see clearly up to 30 feet away. At sixth level a ninja gains the ability to see clearly up to 60 feet away.

A ninja is very hard to surprise because of his intensive training. A ninja is surprised as are monks.

Ninja are also very good at tracking down their victims. A ninja tracks as a ranger does with a 20% penalty.

A ninja is able to simulate death — lowering body temperature, slowing heart beat, and stopping breathing — for a number of turns given by (1-6)x(level) + 1.

A ninja of greater than second level can travel up to 50 miles a day. A ninja of greater than sixth level can travel up to 75 miles a day. A ninja of greater than tenth level may travel up to 100 miles a day These distances may be traveled without unduly tiring the ninja. These speeds are also subject to some modifications depending on the nature of the terrain.

Poisons: Ninja are very knowledgeable about poisons. A ninja is able to chemically brew poisons or neutralize poison broths as an alchemist three levels lower than the ninja.

Ninja have also studied the natural poisons available from animals and plants. He may collect these to form ninja poisons or neutralize poison broths. The time required to do this is not more than one day and can be done anywhere rather inconspiciously. The rules for these poisons are listed below and are to be used in addition to the rules in *"The Dragon"*. Neutralize poison broths are handled analagously to these poison rules.

There are two basic types of poison. There are poisons that kill and poisons that paralyze (drugs). These poisons also come in three different rates of effect: instant (1-2 melee rounds), slow (10-60 melee

rounds), and delayed (90-140 melee rounds). The numbers are the delay before the poison takes effect.

The paralyze poisons produce an inability to move. Kill poisons produce 0-5 in damage for each level of strength. The poison may kill either by accumulation of levels or by accumulation of damage. Neutralize poison removes both the poison and the damage it caused. If a character is hit by an accumulation of double his level in paralyze poisons he dies through suffocation. A kill poison produces only half damage if the saving throw is made.

As a ninja advances in experience his ability to collect natural poisons grows. At the level of *chigo* the ninja knows how to make a level one poison of one of the six types. Every time the ninja advances a level he gains the ability to make another level of poison. The poison strength that may be made may not be larger than the number of levels selected for that poison.

At level six the ninja must be able to make three different types of poison. At level 12 the ninja must be able to make all six types of poison of at least strength one. The three poison types used at level six must be of at least strength two.

Ninja poison may be made either fluid or viscous at the ninja's discretion. Viscous poison is used on weapons and is used as per blade venom for coverage. The poison evaporates rapidly being gone in about 12 hours after being applied. Fluid poison is used to poison food and drink. When the poison is used in either form there is a 20% chance that it will be noticed.

The ability to handle neutralize poison broths is handled in the same way as the ability to make poisons. No saving throw is needed against neutralization brews. A paralization cure neutralizes one level for every level of the brew. A kill neutralization cures 0-5 from poison damage and removes one kill level of accumulation. A cure brew is most effective against the poison it is designed for. It is of half effect against the other two rates of onset poisons and alchemist poisons. Paralization and kill cures do not affect each other. Kill if of no effect against paralyze and visa versa.

Fighting: Ninja do not like to wear armor. They will refuse to wear plate, but some *have* been known in emergencies to wear chain or leather. Note that a ninja will not like chain because it is noisy. The only special armor they really use is their special shield, the neru-kuwa ito.

A ninja advances in combat steps as a fighter. A ninja has the combat adds of a fighter. They may attack open-handed as a monk. They may use judo as a samurai.

The ninja's nimbleness allows him to evade fighting damage. In a fight give the ninja a saving throw against all missile, melee, and directed spell damage. They save as a magician of one level higher versus spells. Hobbits and dwarves do not add four levels.

A directed spell is a spell such as a thin lightning bolt. It is not an area spell such as sleep or fireball. The basic idea is whether the spell is directed at the ninja or the large area of ground the ninja is on. This same saving throw is granted against area spells if the ninja is on the fringe of the affected area. If the special save is not made proceed as for normal characters. If the save is made no damage results.

A ninja knows how to use all weapons. However they have a -3 on attack rolls applied against them at all levels. This penalty is removed in two special cases and is removed weapon by weapon. The penalty applies against ninja weapons that have not yet been mastered. The two special cases are a) the ninja has mastered the appropriate ninja weapon or b) the ninja has learned a disguise class that uses the weapon. Learning a disguise class gives mastery over all normal weapons the class uses.

Disguise class	Weapons reserved to disguise
Magician	Dagger and stave
Cleric	Mace, hammer, flail, slings, and the like.
Druid	Scimitar, sickle, dagger, spears, and sling.
Samurai	Katana, wakazashi, and yumi bow
Thief	Short sword, dagger, and sap
Fighter	Any weapon not listed above.

The -3 penalty is removed only once per weapon even if it is used by several groups.

Saving Throws: A ninja saves as a fighter. A ninja takes damage from books as a fighter if damage is due.

A ninja is granted a special save against missiles, melee, and directed spells as detailed above.

Disguises: Ninja are masters of disguise. Ninja are able to live for years in a disguise with no one guessing the truth. A ninja is able to change disguises with inhuman speed.

A ninja has a 4% advantage over an assassin in whether the disguise is recognized. A ninja will wear armor as part of the disguise (though he will hate it and will try to get rid of the armor at first opportunity — GM's please note!).

A ninja gains the ability to form disguises as he advances in experience. The ninja will not only look like what the disguise is, but he will be able to perform the correct social mannerisms.

As the ninja gains disguise classes they are drawn from the following list:

Disguise List

1. Fighter: basic low level
2. Cleric: basic low level
3. Magician: basic low level
4. Thief: basic low level
5. Artisan
6. Theatrical artist
7. Merchant
8. Farmer
9. Special: must have chosen at least three from #'s 1-8, this is a disguise of the character's invention. This also includes subclasses.
10. Nobility: must have at least five choices from #'s 1-9, this disguise is higher level types.

Magic: A ninja may use anything that a fighter, samurai, or thief is allowed to use.

Detection of Ninja: as most of the ninjutsu consists of trained reflexes, it is possible for these reflexes to cause him to betray himself. This should be done at the discretion of the gamemaster.

If a gamemaster should decide that this has happened, he should *never* simply say "He is a ninja." Instead he should say something more like "He avoided that rock (or oxcart or whatever) very nimbly."

It should be done this way to avoid having players throw rocks at everyone they meet!

As the ninja advances he learns to use the tools of this trade. These are weapons(W), disguises(D), ninja tools(T), and ninja equipment(E). The numbers in the table represent the number of draws in each category gained on reaching a level.

Level	Title	Hit Dice	Save vs Damage	W *	D *	T *	E *
0	Chigo	1D4	15	Basic Kit			
1	Bushi	lD6	15				
2	Genin	2D6	15	1	0	1	1
3	Genin	3D6	15	0	0	0	1
4	Genin	4D6	15	1	1	0	1
5	Genin	5D6	12	0	1	1	1
6	Chunin	6D6	12	1	0	1	1
7	Chunin	7D6	12	1	1	0	1
8	Chunin	7D8	12	1	0	1	1
9	Chunin	10D6	12	1	1	0	1
10	Jonin	9D8	8	1	1	1	1
11	Jonin	6D12+ 1D8	8	1	1	0	0
12	Jonin	6D12+ 2D8	8	1	1	0	0
13	Jonin	7D12+ 1D8	8	1	1	0	0
14	Jonin	8D12	8	1	1	0	0
15	Jonin	8D12 + 1D4	3	1	1	0	0
16	Jonin	8D12+2D4	3	0	1	0	0

There are no ninja levels higher than level 16. Any ninja may advance to that level.

Ninja families are each headed by one jonin. The same person may be jonin to more than one family.

The numbers under W, D, T, and E are the number of draws the ninja takes upon reaching that level. These skills are gained immediately upon advancing in level. A ninja may teach any ninja skill or knowledge to another ninja for a proper price. The time required per item taught should be at least one month.

Ninja are close mouthed about ninja secrets. They have been conditioned so that they will usually die before revealing ninja secrets, even when charmed. The ninja may of course attempt to lie when questioned. Extraordinary means are required to gain such information even when the questioner is a close friend of the ninja. Ninja do not talk in their sleep.

Ninja are as a rule secretive. This means that they will not usually tell people that they are ninja. This means that ninja weapons, tools, and equipment are not as a rule available for purchase. When these items are they are considered to be curios, possibly valuable ones. Non-ninja will not be able to easily recognize them or use them properly in a fight (-3 on attack rolls, -2 on damage rolls). This penalty applies no matter how much time is spent in an attempt at mastery.

A ninja must therefore make his own gear or modify available items. A ninja has this skill to make *any* ninja item that he has mastered.

The basic kit of a ninja consists of the following items: the ninja-to (his sword), sageo (a belt used in wearing the saya, also used as a rope and garrote), saya (his scabbard), the tetsu-bishi (calthrops), the tool osaku (a lockpick), one choice of disguise, and one choice of equipment.

Ninja skills at thievery: A ninja acts as a thief three levels below him. This is tabulated below including some special bonuses.

Character type	Pick lock	Remove trap	Pick-pocket	Move silent	Hide in shadows	Hear Noise
human	0	0	0	0	0	0
elf	0	0	5	10	15	0
dwarf	5	15	0	5	5	0
hobbit	10	5	5	10	10	15
female	5	5	5	5	5	5

These bonuses are all additive.

Percent chance of success with skill

Ninja Level	Pick lock	Remove-trap	Move pocket	Move silent	Hide in shadows	Hear Noise	Fall off walls
0	-5	-10	0	20	30	20	15
1	0	-5	5	40	40	50	14
2	5	0	10	45	45	58	13
3	10	5	15	50	50	67	12
4	15	10	20	55		70	11
5	20	15	25	60	60	73	10
6	25	20	30	65	65	77	9
7	35	30	35	70	70	80	8
8	40	35	45	75	75	83	7
9	45	40	55	80	80	88	6
10	55	50	60	90	90	94	5
11	65	60	65	95	95	100	4
12	75	70	75	100	100	104	3
13	85	80	85	105	105	108	2
14	95	90	95	110	110	112	1
15	100	95	100	115	115	117	0
16	105	100	105	120	120	121	-1

The table is used as follows. Generate a number 1-100 and compare the number generated to the table entry below.

Table entry	Number generated	Result
1-100	Less than entry	attempt is successful.
1-100	Greater than or equal to entry	attempt fails and may not be repeated
100+	1-99	attempt is successful
100+	100 or greater	subtract 100 from the entry and repeat procedure

A ninja falls from walls as a monk. He is able to climb the sheerest of walls with his tools.

A ninja scores the multiple damage of a thief one level higher than he is.

Assassination: A ninja operates as an assassin two levels higher than his own.

The probability of a ninja succeeding at an assassination is listed in the table below along with the cost of hiring a ninja. The units of price used is "K" which equals 1000 gold pieces.

A ninja pays 15% of his fee to the jonin of his family. As a chigo does not have a family he does not have to divide his fee. A ninja earns experience for an assassination as an assassin.

Special Ninja Devices: A ninja gains the ability to manufacture the tools of his trade when he masters their use. All ninja devices are as a general rule concealable. They will not in general be recognized as the professional tools they are to non-ninja. The prices listed in parentheses are suggested costs of manufacture for the ninja in their manufacture.

Assassination Probability

Percent chance of Success
Level of Victim

level	cost		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9-11	12-14	15+
0	1	K	50	45	40	30	20	5	•	l	l	l	•
1	1.5	K	85	80	75	65	55	40	25	10	1	•	•
2	2	K	90	85	80	70	60	45	30	15	1	•	l
3	2.5	K	95	90	85	75	65	50	35	20	5	•	l
4	3	K	100	95	90	80	70	55	40	25	10	1	l
5	3.5	K	100	100	95	85	75	60	45	30	15	1	•
6	4	K	105	100	100	90	80	65	50	35	20	5	•
7	8	K	105	105	100	95	85	70	55	45	25	10	1
8	16	K	105	105	105	100	90	75	60	45	30	15	1
9	32	K	110	105	105	100	95	80	65	50	35	20	5
10	64	K	110	110	105	105	100	85	70	55	40	25	10
11	128	K	110	110	110	105	100	90	75	60	45	30	35
12	256	K	115	110	110	105	105	99	95	80	65	50	35
13	512	K	115	115	110	110	105	110	100	90	75	60	45
14	1006	K	115	115	115	110	105	100	100	95	85	80	75
15	1518	K	120	115	115	110	110	100	100	99	95	85	80
16	2012	K	120	120	115	115	110	105	105	100	100	90	85

Ninja weapons (costs in gold)

1) Bo staff (0)

This is the basic quarterstaff. The selection of this weapon gives mastery in a fight over all staves.

2) Ninja-to (10: cost of basic short sword)

This is the ninja's short sword. It is not a particularly fine sword and should be treated as an ordinary sword.

3) Sageo (.1)

This is the belt or cord used to wear the sword's scabbard. It was a long cord that is also used as a rope or garrote.

4) Nage teppo (20 gold and one week to make 2-8)

These are small grenades made by filling empty eggshells. Treat these as an alchemist's flash pellets.

5) Sode tsutsu (50 gold and one week)

This is a crude one shot shotgun. It fires a triangular shaped cone of projectiles up to 30 feet away and 10 feet across at the base. Treat it as an arquebus for hitting. It causes 3-24 in damage when it hits. Allow a saving throw versus death for half damage.

6) Kakae ozutsu (50 gold and one week)

This is a crude large barreled one shot high trajectory mortar made from wood and paper. It has a minimum range of 30 feet and a maximum range of 90 feet. Treat it as a long bow for purposes of hitting. If it misses the gamesmaster should determine where the projectile went. The projectile will burst in a 10 foot blast radius. All within the blast radius take 1-20 in damage. Allow a saving throw versus death for half damage.

7) Uzume-bi (20 gold and 3 days to make one)

This is a land mine that bursts when stepped upon. It has a 5 foot blast radius. The blast causes 1-10 in damage. Allow a saving throw as for the sode tsutsu and kakae ozutsu to see if half damage results.

8) Hankyu (30 gold and one week)

This is a special bow that fires arrows, fire bombs, and/or other incendiaries. Treat it as a short bow for hitting. It has a maximum range of 150 feet.

9) Metsubushi (5 gold and 2 weeks, 5 gold and one week to make 5 darts)

This is a blowpipe. It fires poison darts called fukiya silently at a rate of one every other melee round. The darts cause 1-2 in damage and deliver poison. The maximum range is 30 feet.

10) Tetsu-bishi (15 gold and 4 days to make 2)

These are calthrops. They may be poisoned. They were commonly left on the ground in a pattern the ninja knew over his route of retreat. These may be sold in shops.

11) Kusarigama (7 gold, 1 week)

This weapon looks like a scythe with a chain attached to the base of the weapon. The chain is used as a flail. The weapon may be used in four different attack modes.

scythe: This is used one handed using the scythe blade.

flail: This is used one handed as a flail.

combo: The weapon is held two handed and gives two attacks each melee round without penalty. One attack as a scythe and one attack as a flail.

special: The chain may be used to entangle the enemy's weapon. This attack has a penalty of -4 on the flail attack.

12) Kyoketsu shoge (4 gold, one week)

This is a one handed weapon that looks like the kusarigama with the chain replaced by a piece of rope. It may be used as a scythe. It may be thrown as a hand axe. The rope may be used to entangle the enemy's hands (it uses speed and the enemy's reflexes against him). When he was entangled he could be pulled helplessly to short range and finished off.

13) Shinobi zue (6 gold and 4 days)

This is a staff with a concealed flail. It is used with two attack modes. One attack as a staff and one attack as a flail. The flail attack does not have to be used if the ninja wishes to keep the flail secret. Both attacks may be used in one melee round with no penalties.

14) Fukumi-bari (1 silver, no time)

Some ninja were able to spit poisoned needles called fukumi-bari out of their mouths at their enemies. They could even do this without injuring themselves. A ninja may spit two needles a melee round up to 15 feet. A maximum of five needles may be held in the mouth at one time. If a needle hits there is a 50% chance that it poisoned the target, else no effect.

15) Shuriken (3 gold, 3 days for one)

The shuriken is the ninja's main throwing weapon. Normally nine of these are carried for nine is considered to be a lucky number. Shuriken are often stuck into the ground with the blades up to deter pursuit. Placed in the ground this way they are very hard to see.

There are three basic kinds of shuriken. Each kind counts as a separate choice of ninja weapon. These three kinds are denoted as dart, star and whistler shuriken.

One shuriken may be thrown each melee round for every two levels the ninja has attained. This multiple throw may be made without penalty. Shuriken are easily concealed under robes and by clothing. Concealed shuriken may, however, be reached as easily as unconcealed shuriken and used without penalty.

Shuriken have an extra penalty of -1 on attack when they face shields.

Shuriken have a maximum range of 30 feet.

a. Dart Shuriken

These shuriken resemble long nails. They attack as a + 2 dagger. When they are used against chain the chain is considered to give protection equal to leather. The shuriken slips between the links of the chain and is slowed only by the padding underneath which is set equal to leather. The shuriken does a basic 1-6 against a man-sized target.

EFFECTS OF NINJA WEAPONS

Weapon	Man-sized	Expert	Larger than man-sized	Expert
Bo staff	1-8	1-10	1-6	1-8
Ninja-to	1-8	1-10	1-12	(1-8)+(1-6)
Sageo	1-6/round	1-8/round	1-6/round	1-8/round
Kusarigama				
scythe	1-6	1-8	1-10	1-12
chain	1-8	1-10	1-8	1-10
special			entangle the enemy's weapon	
Kyoketsu shoge				
scythe	1-6	1-8	1-10	1-12
rope			entangle the enemies hands	
Shinobe zue				
staff	1-6	1-8	1-6	1-8
f l a i l	1-8	1-10	1-8	1-10
Nekade	2-5	1-6	0-3	1-4
Sode tsutsu	3-24	3-24	3-24	3-24 save vs damage
Kakae ozitsu	1-20	1-20	1-20	1-20 save vs damage
Uzume-bi	1-10	1-10	1-10	1-10 save vs damage
Tetsu-bishi	1-4	1-4	1-6	1-6
Hankyu	1-6	1-6	1-6	1-6
Metsubushi	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2 plus poison
Kyoketsu shoge	1-6	1-8	1-4	1-6
Fukumi-bari			50% to poison	
Dart-shuriken	1-6	2-7	1-4	2-5
Star shuriken	1-4	2-5	1-3	2-4
Whistler shuriken				

The entries of save vs damage mean to make a saving throw versus death or poison. If the saving throw is successful half damage results.

b. Star Shuriken

These are the standard star shaped shuriken of legend. The many blades on the shuriken gives a much greater chance to hit than a dagger. The attack modifiers are listed below. The shuriken does a basic 1-4 against man-sized targets, the same as a dagger.

c. Whistler Shuriken

These shuriken are a further modification of the star shuriken. They are shaped as a star shuriken with a hole in the center. The hole in the center causes a terrifying sound when it is hauled. For this all in the target area save versus fear with +2 on their die roll. Do not give the + 2 if they are surprised or did not expect the noise. For combat purposes for damage and attack odds treat these the same as star shuriken. The hole changes the weight of the shuriken enough to make mastery count as a separate weapon. The hole was also useful as a nail puller.

NINJA HAND WEAPONS

	Armor Class							
Weapon	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Bo staff	-3	-3	-2	0	0	3	1	2
Ninja-to	-2	-1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Sageo	-3	-3	-2	-2	-1	-1	0	0
Kusarigama								
scythe	-1	0	1	1	1	1	1	2
chain	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	1
special	-2	-2	-3	-2	-3	-3	-3	-3
Kyoketsu shoge								
scythe	-1	0	1	1	1	1	1	2
rope	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shinobe zue								
staff	-3	-3	-1	0	0	2	1	
flail	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	
Nekade	-3	-2	-2	-1	0	1	0	

NINJA MISSLE WEAPONS

	Armor Class							
Weapon	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Sode	0	1	2	2	3	3	3	3
tsutsa	-1	0	0	1	2	2	2	2
(30 ft)	-3	-1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Kakae								
ozitsu	-3	-2	0	1	2	2	2	2
(90 ft)	-5	-4	-1	0	1	1	1	1
Hankyu	-3	-2	0	0	1	2	2	2
(150 ft)	-5	-3	-1	0	0	1	1	1
	-7	-5	-2	-1	0	0	0	0
Metsubushi	-3	-2	0	0	1	2	1	3
(30 ft)	-5	-3	-1	-1	0	1	1	2
	-7	-5	-4	-3	0	0	0	0
Kyoketsu	-4	-3	-2	-2	-1	-1	0	0
shoge	-5	-4	-3	-3	-2	-2	-1	-1
(45 ft)	-6	-5	-4	-4	-3	-3	-2	-2
	-1	0	2	3	2	3	3	5
Fukumi-bari	-2	-1	1	2	1	2	2	4
(15 ft)	-3	-2	0	1	0	1	1	3
Dart	-1	-1	1	1	2	2	3	4
shuriken	-2	-2	0	0	1	1	2	3
(30 ft)	-3	-3	-1	-1	0	0	1	2
Star, Whistler	-2	-1	3	3	5	5	6	6
shuriken	-3	-2	2	2	4	4	5	5
(30 ft)	-4	-3	1	1	3	3	4	4

The shuriken have special modifications against certain types of armor.

Armor type	Dart shuriken	Star and Whistler shuriken
Shield only	2/1/0	5/4/3
Leather and shield	1/0/-1	4/3/2
Chain	4/3/2	3/2/1
Chain and shield	3/2/1	2/1/0
Plate and shield	-2/-3/-4	-3/-4/-5

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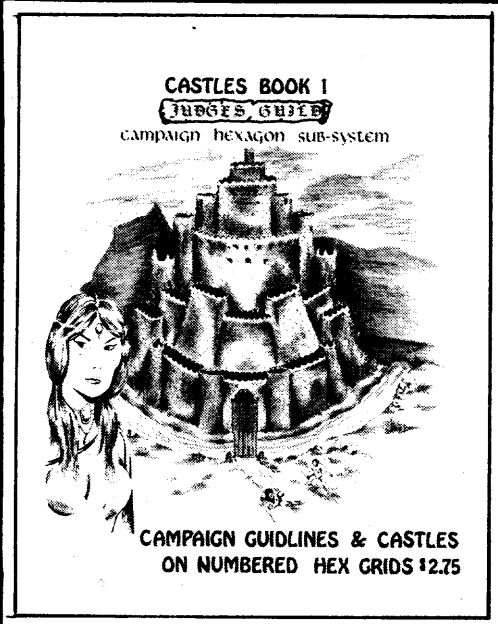

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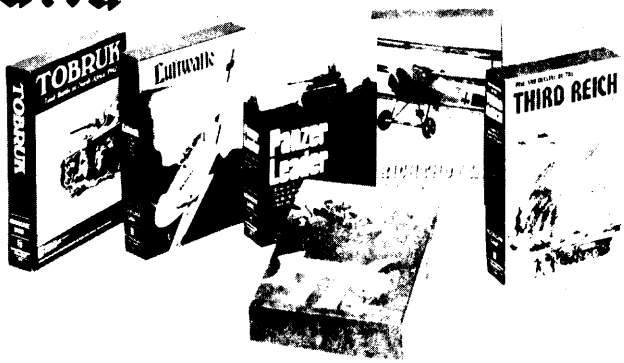

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The Adventures of Monty Haul #3

THE THURSDAY NIGHT *D&D* GAME FOR MONTY AND THE BOYS

by James M. Ward

It was Thursday night at Monty's house and most of our group had gotten together for our weekly D&D game. That night there was a feeling among all of us that something really big was going to happen.

The group had decided to take down our low level characters for the first adventure and we were getting out our booklets, graph paper, metal figures, character charts, and copies of *The Dragon* to begin the game. Then Freddie walked in and we all groaned our displeasure. It wasn't that any of us disliked Freddie, it was just his love of strange things that made him hard to bear. Monty, our best DM, was always willing to go along with our new ideas, but Freddie's were really the pits as far as we were concerned. Once, long ago at an Origins convention, Freddie had been rummaging in a trash can and found a copy of some strange D&D magazine nobody had ever heard of. In this thing was a plan for a sword being that could be a player character. Freddie went wild over the idea and immediately wanted several. All the rest of us, in an effort to stop such madness, made Freddie play clerics, but Monty loved challenges. Freddie got his wish and now had two player characters that were swords. One was a low level thing and the other had become a high level creature that no one could figure out (especially Freddie, the user). With Freddie coming along we started out with problems before we left the Gold Dragon Inn.

I had decided to take my little thirteenth level wizard. He was kind of weak, having only sixty-nine hit points and eighteen's in all his categories save strength, but I liked him and liked to use my few spells as opposed to artifacts and tech devices.

Ernie was going to take his thirteenth level wiz with the pet demon. He and I had both decided to rough it with these little guys. Robert was going to take his twenty-second level fighter with his magic armor, sword, rings, misc. magic items, and artifacts. Jake was going to take his permanently hasted iron golem (no one but Jake and Monty had figured out how that was accomplished). Tim and Brian were going to take their Storm Giants with their hand catapults (those Tractics boys were always doing things like that).

Dave wanted to take one of those strange "hoogies" (it sounded something like that) but we were able to talk him out of it, in favor of one of his twenty-fifth level clerics. Tom complained that all he had left were demi-gods and so we made him start out with a new character at the twelfth level. It served him right, having to start out all over like that. Mike was going to take his tenth level gargoyle (as long as his character could fly he never cared what it looked like). Will was the only other guy there that night and while he had a bunch of good characters he decided to take his fifteenth level hobbit thief. We all tried to talk him out of it, but he had made up his mind. Little did we know that his choice was the best of the lot.

Ernie, the adventure before, had gotten a weird golden chain that displayed strange magical properties. After legend loring, contacting higher planes, wishing about it, and communing we had found out that all we needed to do was all step in an oval made by the chain and we would be teleported to a land of great treasure and even greater danger. Monty had really been tricky with this one and wasn't telling us any more information than he had already given out. It sounded like just our cup of tea and we were going to take our little characters down first because we felt a need to scout the area. So, we all put our figures in an oval on the table (made out of gold thread) and regretted every second after.

We appeared on a frosty plain of ice and snow with four Storm Giants swinging their weapons and Monty chuckling something about "minor guards". We heard the sound of three clubs and a magic sword going smash, smash, smash, and chop. Mike's gargoyle was a grease smear on one of the clubs, Tom's Monk was down to one hit point, Dave's cleric was really hurting, and Jake's golem had one of its arms cut off by the vorpal sword. Robert clove one in two with his sword while Ernie's and my cold rays took care of two more (and the sword, we found out a bit later). The last one was missed by the rest of the group, but it didn't miss me for thirty-six points of bruises and nicks. With the next round, we were able to finish the giants off before the last one did any more damage. They didn't have a copper coin's worth of treasure on them, and we weren't pleased. After a bunch of cure spells and a raise dead on the gargoyle, we still hadn't figured out what to do about the golem's arm. We just let it go and traveled on. Tim and Brian put on some of the dead guard's clothes (which everyone thought was a good idea) and we were on our way towards a batch of caves.

The caves circled a huge crevasse and so naturally Freddie (the sword) wanted to go to the bottom (the worst thing we could have done). We all magically or physically flew down to the bottom by a series of giant snow drifts which became huge "white puddings" as we hit the snow covered earth. The things started chewing on everyone but the stupid hobbit and even Jake the golem was taking damage. After we blasted every one of the things with spells and five or six artifacts we had them down to a batch of ice particles. They didn't have any treasure either and we had just started to grumble a little bit. We traveled around and weren't getting anything but frost bite (according to Monty), when we came upon a warm cave. I think we entered the cave more for the thought of warmth than anything else (we always play our roles very seriously). The sight of the five Remorhaz didn't please any of us. I will not go into the gory details, but when all was said and done we killed all the monsters and had a golem that was a piece of slag and two giants that were smoking ash. We collected those guys and threw them into our (or I should say Ernie's) portable hole. Naturally the treasure those things had was ruined in our magical blasts. Our little grumbling was turning into loud mutters. We left the bottom of the crevasse and explored some caves until we hit frost giants. We killed them off in batches of four and five and while most everyone was taking their lumps, none of the giants could hit that

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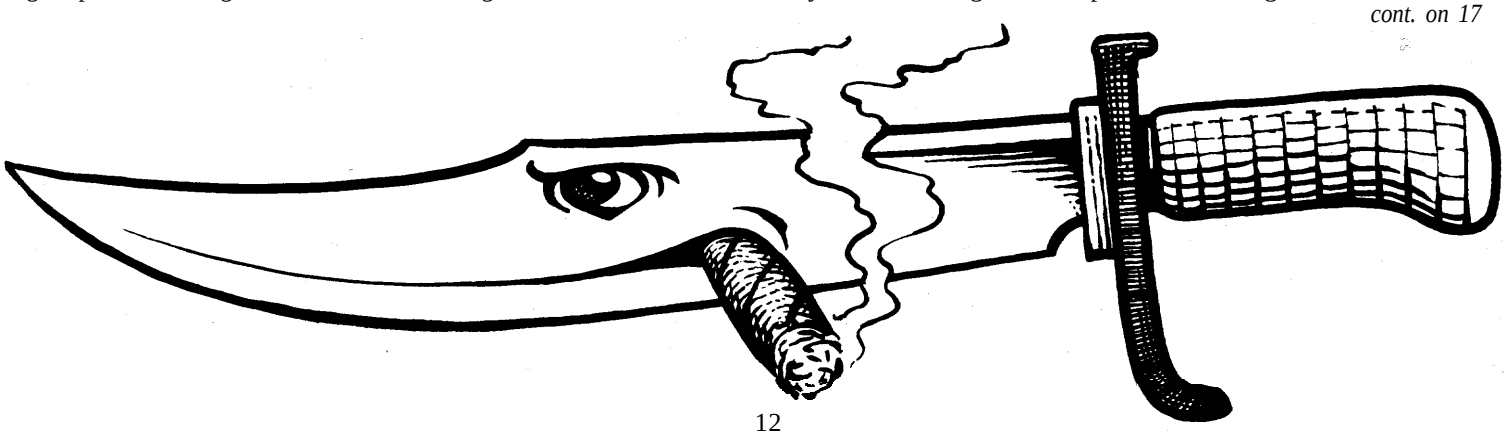
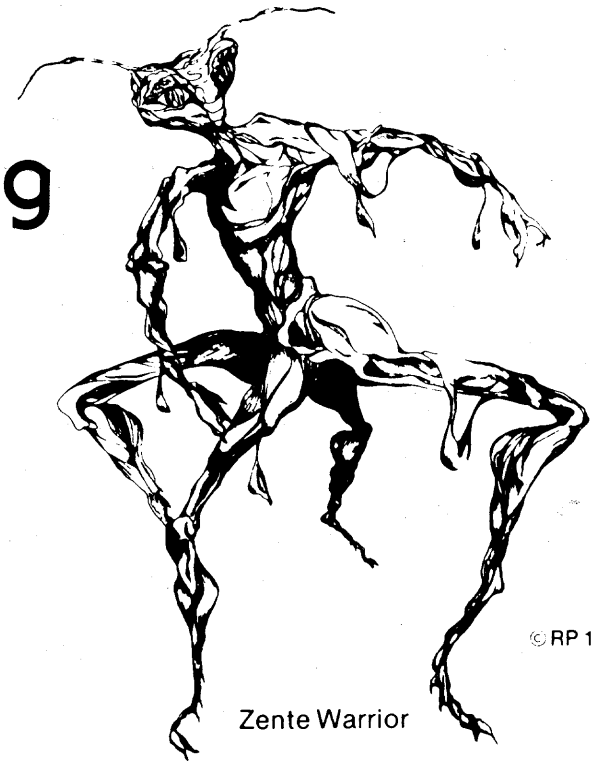


This guy is looking for a new food source. . . .

Are you it?



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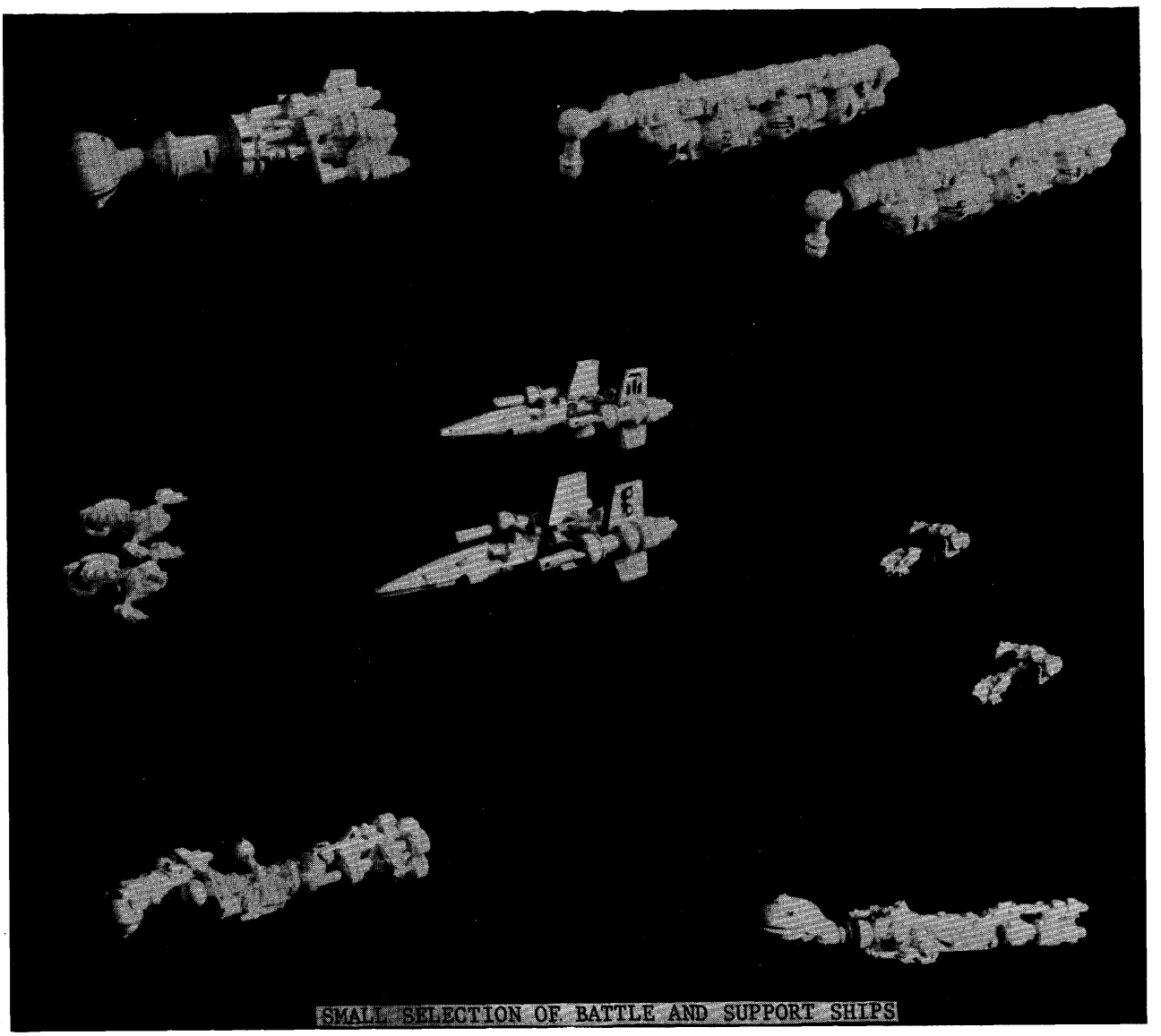

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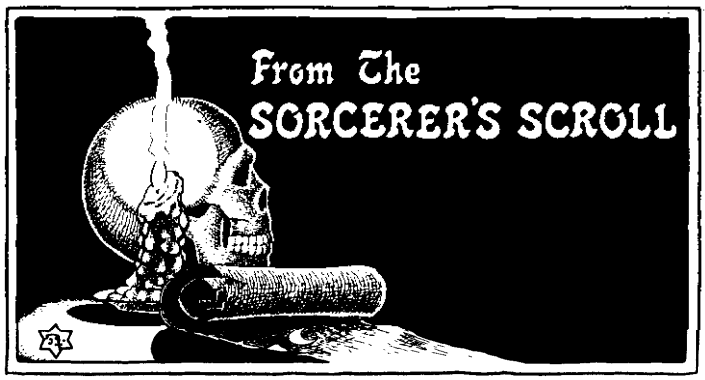

Role-Playing: *Realism vs.* Game Logic; Spell Points, Vanity Press and Rip-offs

by E. Gary Gygax

Despite the continued success of *D&D,* despite the evergrowing demand for the game, I remain somewhat amazed and very pleased that so many people share a love for the fantastic and heroic with me. It is indeed an unusual honor to have been able to bring so many people so much enjoyment. It tends to make one work harder at other projects so as to make certain the best possible effort is presented. Whatever is done will invariably be compared to *D&D,* and none of us at TSR have any desire to produce a game which falls short of public expectations.

The position of originating the concept of a paper & pencil fantasy role playing game and introducing it to the gaming hobby stands greatly to the credit of TSR. In my mind, it puts us beside the creators of chess (whoever they were), miniature wargames (H.G. Wells), and board wargames (thank you, Avalon Hill!). TSR designed and promoted the whole; it pioneered a concept which is today the most popular form of our hobby. Little did I — or the other members of the Lake Geneva Tactical Studies Association — realize as we fought out fantasy miniatures battles on my sand table that the publication of the rules we used to do so, the "Fantasy Supplement" to *CHAINMAIL (Copyright 1971),* would pioneer a whole new form of game. There are currently some 100,000 *D&D* players, and at the current rate of growth that number could easily double next year. This large audience is highly devoted. Well-wishers are many, and there but few who complain that D&D is not everything they had hoped for in a game.

However, amongst those who play the game avidly there are a vocal few who continually state their opinions as to how and where the game is lacking — and, of course, how *they* have the perfect solution. I do not take issue with any general statement that *D&D* is not flawless; obviously, human imperfection precludes the claim to perfection. I do admit to becoming a trifle irritated at times to read an article in some obscure *D&D* fan magazine or a letter to the editor of some small publication which attacks the game — or claims to be sure to improve D&D if only their new and "improved" rules are followed — with ill-conceived or asinine logic. My irritation is, I hope, only impatience with those who only dimly preceive the actual concepts of the game, and not wounded vanity. Consider what a game is:

Gaming is a form of play. Games are usually for diversion or amusement, although sometimes they are played for a stake (gambling) or prizes. They are typically contests. *Fun* is a synonym for game. To my mind, a game which provides ample fun and enjoyment is good, and if it brings endless hours of amusement and diversion it is proportionately better. This view is held in common with most *D&D* enthusiasts, but there are those vociferous few who seem to find their principal enjoyment in attacking rather than playing the game. The uniform element amongst these individuals is a complete failure to grasp the simple fact that *D&D* is a *game.* Its rules are designed and published so as to assure a balanced and cohesive whole. Each segment has been considered and developed so as to fit with the other parts. Each part, meshing with the others, provides an amusing diversion, a game which is fun to play and set so as to provide maximum enjoyment for as long a period of time as possible. Each separate part must be viewed as something which contributes to the whole. Pulling this or that section from the body and criticizing it is totally invalid unless the workings of that particular segment do not harmonize with the whole, thus causing the entire game to be unenjoyable. That the vast majority of players agree with this view is evident. There are very few who attempt to insert dissimilar rules into a system which was carefully designed to work on precepts totally at odds with what the would-be designer views as crucial to making *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* a "good" game.

D&D encourages inventiveness and originality within the framework of its rules. Those who insist on altering the framework should design their own game. Who can say that such an effort might not produce a product superior to *D&D?* Certainly not I.

Interestingly, most of the variant systems which purport to "improve" the game are presented under the banner of *realism.* I have personally come to suspect that this banner is the refuge of scoundrels; whether the last or first refuge is immaterial. "Realism" has become a bugaboo in the hobby, and all too many of the publishers — TSR included — make offerings to this god too frequently. The very definition of a game gives the lie to this false diety. *Real* implies being true to life, not artificial and related to actuality. A game is real, but its subject matter can, at most, give only a "sense" of what actually took place or exists. Paper maps, cardboard counters, plastic markers, or toy tanks and soldiers are not and never will be the stuff of historical reality. There, real bullets kill and maim actual people. Men, women, and children suffer and die, millions of dollars are spent and destroyed, all for the glory of war. Therefore, those who desire realism in wargames, or simulations of social or political events, or racing, or anything else used as subject material for a game should go and do the actual thing —join the military, enter politics, become a race car driver, and so on. At best a game can give a reflection of reality, and then only if its rules reflect historical actualities and logically proceed from truth and facts.

When fantasy games are criticized for being "unrealistic" — and by fantasy I certainly mean both imaginary "science fiction" games and heroic fantasy — the sheer magnitude of the misconception absolutely astounds me! How can the critic presume that his or her imagined projection of a non-existent world or conjectured future history is any more "real" than another's? While science fantasy does have some facts and good theories to logically proceed from, so that a semblance of truth can be claimed for those works which attempt to ground themselves on the basis of reality for their future projections, the world of "never-was" has no such shelter. Therefore, the absurdity of a cry for "realism" in a pure fantasy game seems so evident that I am overwhelmed when such confronts me. Yet, there are those persistent few who keep demanding it. The "camel" of working magic, countless pantheons of gods and devils, monsters that turn people to stone or breath fire, and characters that are daily faced with Herculean challenges which they overcome by dint of swordplay and spell casting is gulped down without a qualm. It is the "gnat" of "unrealistic" combat, or "unrealistic" magic systems, or the particular abilities of a class of characters in the game which makes them gag. This becomes hard to cope with, because I am basically a realist.

In a pure fantasy game, one based on myth, mythos, and its own unique make-believe, realism (as a reflection of the actual) and logic can not be defined in terms conventional to other game forms. Realism in such a game can only be judged by the participants acceptance of the fantasy milieu invoked by the game. If this make-believe world is widely and readily accepted, if players fully agree to suspend their disbelief when playing it, the game has reality for them. Involvement and enjoyment indicate acceptance of a *game reality,* and the game becomes realistic thereby. *Game logic* in such a fantasy can only follow the basic tenets of the game, logical or illogical. If the basic precepts of the fantasy follow the *imprimus,* it has its own logic. Just as the fantasy must be accepted to achieve the game reality, so must the underlying principle of the game system be understood to follow its logic.

D&D is a make-believe game. It is designed, however, to facilitate close personal involvement in all aspects of play; this makes suspension of disbelief easier for those who can initially accept a game form which does not relate to any reality except a few tenuous areas, *'viz.* actual kinds of weapons from the medieval period are generally named, as are actual types of armor, and the social order of medieval Europe (and occasionally the Middle East and elsewhere in the world) is mentioned as bases for the game, to state the most obvious factual sources for

D&D. It is a game for the imaginative and fanciful, and perhaps for those who dream of adventure and derring-do in a world all too mundane. As a game must first and foremost be fun, it needs no claim to "realism" to justify its existence. *D&D* exists as a game because thousands of people enjoy playing it. As its rules were specifically designed to make it fun and enjoyable, and the consensus of opinion is that *D&D* is so, does it need to have logical justification of any or all of its rules? Because logic does not necessarily create an enjoyable game form, the reply must be generally negative. Logic, even game logic, must be transcended in the interest of the overall game. If an illogical or inconsistent part fits with the others to form a superior whole, then its very illogicalness and inconsistence are logical and consistent within the framework of the game, for the rules exist for the play of the game, although all too often it seems that the game is designed for the use of the rules in many of today's products. When questioned about the whys and wherefores of *D&D* I sometimes rationalize the matter and give "realistic" and "logical" reasons. The truth of the matter is that *D&D* was written principally as a game — perhaps I used game realism and game logic consciously or unconsciously when I did so, but that is begging the question. Enjoyment is the real reason for *D&D* being created, written, and published.

With the popularity of *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* increasing so dramatically, I fervently desire to put the matter of variants, particularly "realistic" variants, to rest once and for all, so as to get on to other more important things, but it keeps springing up every time a sound stroke is dealt to it. Additions to and augmentations of certain parts of the *D&D* rules are fine. Variants which change the rules so as to imbalance the game or change it are most certainly not. These sorts of tinkering fall into the realm of creation of a new game, not development of the existing system, and as I stated earlier, those who wish to make those kind of changes should go and design their own game. In order to make this clear, a few examples of destructive variants are given below.

Why can't magic-users employ swords? And for that matter, why not allow fighters to use wands and similar magical devices? On the surface this seems a small concession, but in actuality it would spoil the game! Each character role has been designed with care in order to provide varied and unique approaches to solving the problems which confront the players. If characters are not kept distinct, they will soon merge into one super-character. Not only would this destroy the variety of the game, but it would also kill the game, for the super-character would soon have nothing left to challenge him or her, and the players would grow bored and move on to something which was fun. This same reasoning precludes many of the proposed character classes which enthusiasts wish to add to *D&D.* Usually such classes are either an unnecessary variation on an existing class, are to obtuse to be interesting, or are endowed with sufficient prowess to assure that they would rule the campaign for whomever chose to play as such (most certainly their authors). Similarly, multi-classed character types such as elves and dwarves are limited in most class progressions in order to assure game balance. That this can be justified by game logic, pointing out that humankind triumphs and rules other life forms in most if not all myths and mythos is a pleasant superfluity.

Combat is the most frequently abused area, for here many would-be game inventors feel they have sufficient expertise to design a better system. Perhaps someone will eventually do so, but the examples to date are somewhat less than inspiring of confidence. The "critical hit" or "double damage" on a "to hit" die roll of 20 is particularly offensive to the precepts of D&D as well. Two reciprocal rules which go with such a system are seldom, if ever mentioned: 1) opponents scoring a natural 20 will likewise cause a double damage hit or critical hit upon player characters; and 2) as a 20 indicated a perfect hit, a 1 must indicate a perfect miss, so at any time a 1 is rolled on the "to hit" die, the attacker must roll to find if he or she has broken his or her weapon, dropped it, or missed so badly as to strike an ally nearby. When these additions are suggested, the matter is usually dropped, but the point must be made that whole game system is perverted, and the game possibly ruined, by the inclusion of "instant death" rules, be they aimed at monsters or characters. In the former case they imbalance the play and move the challenge which has been carefully placed into *D&D.* In the latter, "instant death" no longer allows participants to use judgement when playing. Certainly some monsters are capable of delivering death at a single stroke, but players know these monsters and can take precautions. If everything that is faced has an excellent chance to kill characters, they will surely die before long. Then the game loses its continuity and appeal, for lasting character identification cannot be developed.

There are a number of foolish misconceptions which tend to periodically crop up also. *Weapons expertise* is one. Given the basic assumption that those normally employing weapons are typical of the medieval period, and *D&D* is plainly stated as a medieval fantasy game, it should follow in the minds of knowledgeable players that any fighting man worth the name made it a point to practice daily with all forms of arms. There was a prejudice against the use of the bow by knights, granted. This is of no consequence in game terms. Any particular preference as to weapon type by a fighter most assuredly was not indicative of any lack of ability with another one. More to the point, however, *D&D* presumes that the adventurers are the elite, the cream of the cream. Each is a potential Hero, Archmage, and so on. Certainly each is also capable of employing a simple hand weapon to effect, and correctly utilizing any such weapon. The truth of the matter with respect to weapon expertise is, I believe, another attempt to move players closer to the "instant death" ability. For those who insist on giving weapons expertise bonuses due to the supposed extra training and ability of the character, I reply: What character could be more familiar and expert with a chosen weapon type than are monsters born and bred to their fangs, claws, hooves, horns, and other body weaponry? Therefore, the monsters must likewise receive weapons expertise bonuses. While this does put part of the system into balance again, it moves player characters closer to situations where they can be killed before they can opt to follow a course of action aimed at extricating themselves. Again, this feature is undesirable and must be discarded.

In general, the enjoyment of *D&D* is the fantasy: identification with a supernormal character, the challenges presented to this character as he or she seeks to gain gold and glory (experience levels and magical items), the images conjured up in participants' minds as they explore weird labyrinths underground and foresaken wildernesses above, and of course the satisfaction of *defeating* opponents and gaining some fabulous treasure. This is the stuff of which *D&D* is made. Protracted combat situations which stress "realism" will destroy the popularity of the game as surely as would the inclusion of creatures which will always slay any characters they fight. The players desire *action,* but all but the odd few will readily tell you that endless die rolling to determine where a hit lands, having to specify what sort of attack is being made, how their character will defend against an attack, and so on are the opposite of action; they are tedious. Furthermore, such systems are totally extraneous to the *D&D* system. Although they might not ruin the game for a particular group of players, general inclusion in the published rules would certainly turn off the majority of enthusiasts. It would turn me to other pursuits, for if I was interested in that sort of game I would be playing a simulation of something historical, not a fantasy game.

Spell point systems are also currently in vogue amongst the fringe group which haunt the pages of "Amateur Press Association" publications. Now APAs are generally beneath contempt, for they typify the lowest form of vanity press. There one finds pages and pages of banal chatter and inept writing from persons incapable of creating anything which is publishable elsewhere. Therefore, they pay money to tout their sophomoric ideas, criticise those who *are* able to write and design, and generally make themselves obnoxious.* While there are notable exceptions, they are far too few to give any merit to the vehicles they appear in. From this morass rose the notion that a spell point system should be inserted into *D&D.* Strangely enough, "realism" was used as one of the principal reasons for use of spell points. These mutterings are not as widespread as the few proponents of such a system imagine. The *D&D* magic system is drawn directly from *CHAINMAIL.* It, in turn, was inspired by the superb writing of Jack Vance. This "Vancian" magic system works splendidly in the game. If it has any fault, it is towards making characters who are magic-users too powerful. This sort of fault is better corrected within the existing framework of the game — by requiring more time to cast spells, by making magic-users progress more slowly in experience levels. Spell points add nothing to *D&D* except more complication, more record keeping, more wasted time, and a precept which is totally foreign to the rest of the game.

cont. on pg 21

Monty Haul *fr pg 12*

stupid hobbit. We got used to having boulders by the dozen thrown at us and unfortunately we also got used to finding little or no treasure. Monty kept chuckling something about lowly guards under his breath and that didn't make any of us feel good at all. Finally we struck it big and were *struck* several times. We ran into this huge batch of frost giants. There were males, females, kids (fighting like ogres), and a pack of white dog things. Well, I should have known better, but the thought of all of those boulders they had been tossing at me since we hit the first batch didn't please me. I said I was going to take on the dogs while everyone else handled the giants (that was my first mistake). The other guys started taking their chops or tossing spells in Ernie's case. The battle was shaping up to be a good one as more giants started streaming in. The Frost Giant kids seemed to concentrate on Will, as the hobbit, and while no one said it, everyone was very pleased to see him take some of the heat off of everyone else in a way that might cause him a little damage.

I rushed up to the dogs and summoned a seventh level monster from a spell on a scroll I had, figuring it would take the heat off of me (my second mistake). Those blasted dogs breathed cold blasts at me and did all sorts of damage on my poor body. While my beasty was materializing, I sprinkled invisibility dust on myself; figuring that there were plenty of other enemies for the dogs and they wouldn't try to search me out (my third mistake). Those twice blasted things started sniffing me out and heading towards the corner I had run to. But it was too late for them, my creature had arrived. I had managed to summon an ancient red dragon. The dogs clumped together and breathed, but they were not effective on that old red thing. The dragon killed the dogs with one breath and while it turned to me for more directions, I was directing it towards the remaining giants.

Dave was a red smear on a heap of boulders; Mike was a part of eight or nine giant clubs; Tom and Will were just in the act of giving their dying chop; Robert was in pretty good shape but five giants were pressing him hard; that dumb Freddie had been almost unstoppable and Ernie and his pet demon had accounted for the king and queen of the giants. I headed the red dragon towards Freddie and his friends (with a subconscious death wish to Freddie's sword) and I directed a hold spell on four of the giants trying to squash Ernie. I got them all in a real lucky spell and Ernie took care of the batch that all hit Robert with their clubs and killed him deader than dead. While the dragon had taken care of the giants with his breath, in Freddie's area (doing more damage to Freddie than all the giants together), the giants had taken care of my dragon with their dying chops. The battle was finished by a well placed fire ball by me. After taking a few healing potions and collecting our dead in the portable hole, we looked around for treasure. The giants had a big batch of chests and several groups of things like skulls, horns, weapons, and rugs. I went for the skulls and grabbed a beautiful gem encrusted one that immediately started to shout for some creature called a "Drow". We got the skull quieted down by smashing it into a lot of pieces. We checked everything else out and got a horn of Valhalla, a horn of bubbles, a flying carpet, and several hundred thousand gold pieces worth of gems. We were thinking of leaving when two black elves came in.

There was one in the form of a beautiful elven princess with jet black skin and the other was an elven fighter type. Freddie charged in at the woman trying to cleave her in half. Monty smiled again for the first time since we started this latest battle and we knew we were in trouble. Monty said the Drow princess grabbed Freddie, negating all his magical abilities, and snapped Freddie in half. We all cheered, we couldn't help ourselves! When something great like that happens, even if it hurts the group, you have to give the deed some credit. We started throwing spell after spell to no avail, the princess was too tough. She stood there doing nothing as yet and we started getting very concerned for our welfare. Her companion simply stood at her side with his sword drawn, obviously there to guard her. We had made our saving throw against several death rays and hold spells when we both had the same thought. Ernie and I shouted out that we were tossing charm spells at the fighter. Ernie got the thing and he directed it to fight the princess. She snapped his sword and killed the fighter by turning him into ashes. She then turned to us and we took that as our cue to teleport out (without Freddie's broken sword, of course). After all was said and done, the loss of Freddie's sword was the best thing that happened on the adventure!

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WHY MAGIC USERS & CLERICS CANNOT USE SWORDS

by Charles Sagui

Dunegeons & Dragons is a game of fantasy. It is, however, based on fact and logic (Even though these may not be factual or logical in our present world.). I'm sure that every DM has encountered a situation something like the one that follows. It usually occurs after a Magic User uses his last spell to subdue a room full of monsters and finds that the treasure consists of a few silver pieces and a + 2 mace. The principle players are the DM and three players whom we shall call Whiner, Cleric, and Reader.

Whiner: Why can't my wizard carry a mace?

DM: He can carry anything he wants but he cannot use any weapon but a dagger.

Whiner: That's not fair: clerics can use weapons and spells too.

DM: They have a different set of rules. Even they can't use edged weapons.

Cleric: I've been meaning to talk to you about that.

DM: One problem at a time.

Reader: (Usually he has just finished The Hobbit for the first time and considers himself an expert on fantastic literature): *Gandalf had Glamdring.*

DM: D&D was written by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson with Robert Kuntz and Brian Blume adding to the supplements. No place does it list Professor Tolkien as a writer of the game. (If I desired to I could adjust the rules to fit my mythos but I feel that the prohibitions are needed for balance of play.)

Reader: Elric was a sorcerer and he had a sword.

At this point you begin to wonder if you could find a real Magic User and just how much he would charge to polymorph them into something useful like a set of polyhedra dice that glow in the dark for blackouts.

In fact, Ganddalf *did* carry the Foe Hammer, but he also had one of the three Elvish Rings of Power and other weapons most *D&D* MUs do not have. But this argument did get me thinking (I'm sure that many players feel this is a dangerous habit for a DM to get into). I could not see a 14th level Wizard hit an orc with a club and suddenly melt away. This is the System I worked out.

MAGIC USERS

In the distant past of my world warriors often learned spells and magic. Much as the fabled Prince Elric of Melnibone, they would use their spells to counter a MU's magic and then finish them off with more conventional weapons.

A group of adepts met to decide what could be done to halt the wholesale slaughter of young students of magic (These part-time MUs seldom took on Warlocks or above). It was decided that a curse would be laid on all desiring to learn sorcery.

These are the terms set down in the curse. For each hit point of damage done by a Magic User with a weapon other than a dagger he loses one hit point and one spell of the highest level he has yet to use. If all or a part of the spells are used up and the Magic User survives the spells that are owed for the transgressions are subtracted at the start of the next game. The loss of hit points will be for the duration of the current adventure (Until the spells would normally be renewed). If at any time in an adventure this loss of hit points occurs and later the character is killed and by some means is revived (Revival is not possible if over half of the hit points have been lost in the above method) his experience points drop to zero, as this experience destroys them.

Many times in the past Magic Users have made attempts to overcome the powers that keep them unarmed. Remove Curse and Limited Wish have been moderately successful (Lasting four rounds) in relieving the problem with a Full Wish more so (Lasting eight rounds). If a MU has this high a spell left he will probably not find mortal weapons necessary. I tell my players that a 64th level wizard developed a spell which allowed him the use of weapons, but it entailed the loss of Fifty Five levels. So I tell them that when they reach level 56 they may use the spell themselves by becoming First level again. (Unfortunately when my charactors reach level Twenty they have a bad habit of going totally and permanently ethereal. Of course, the players get to roll a new charactor and get the heartfelt sympathy of the DM *"Gosh, I'm going to miss him. I was really getting to enjoy the way in two melee rounds he spoiled traps it took me two hours to think up."*)

Another problem for Magic Users using hand weapons is that this necessitates participation in melee and with armor class 9, it not being possible for a man to use spells from inside armor (Don't ask me how Elves do it, Whiner, or so help me I will have a NPC cleric hit you five times in the head with a Staff of Withering), they tend not to survive many melee rounds.

Example

An Enchanter (7th level) who has used none of his spells and not been hit takes on a two hit die zombie.

Statistics

Enchanter — 16 HTK (If Max. is rolled) spells 4321 AC 9

Zombie — 16 HTK (If Max. is rolled) AC 8

All Magic Users fight as First Level. The Enchanter swings with a mace rolls a 12 and hits doing 5 points of damage the Zombie strikes rolls a 10 and hits doing 4 points damage. After the first melee round the Enchanter has only 7 hit points and four First Level and one Second Level spells. If he continues to fight with the mace he will probably not survive another round.

CLERICS

In the days long past, there lived a cleric who believed that his was the one true religion (The worship of certain mushrooms that thrive in cow dung in damp moderate climes.). He was in all ways like the present day Palidan except that he could use all cleric spells. He possessed a + 5 Holy Sword and a + 5 Armor and Shield. His favorite hobby was looting the Temples and Holy places of followers of what he termed false religions. At that time a short-lived alliance of all clerics regardless of alignment to remove this threat to the common survival. At this time a curse was laid on this scourge of all Holy Men. He could have no friends or followers; if any man befriend him he would surely kill them. Some say that he lives yet seeking revenge on all men of the cloth.

In order to prevent a recurrence of this sort of thing the council prohibited the use of edged weapons by clerics. Most of the religious orders signed a charter similar to the curse of the Magic Users. Because of the difference in nature between Magical and Clerical Spells it was possible for them to use armor. One group of clerics refused to even consider signing the pact and so they were denied both armor and spells they became the Monks of Martial Arts.

Because of the separate nature of clerics and their allowance to use other weapons any cleric using an edged weapon would have to do so deliberately and for this reason the penalty in hitpoints was doubled. The spell reduction, however, is reduced to ½ a spell per hit point inflicted with edged weapons. If half a spell is lost it is not usable. Death and revival are the same as with MUs as are ways of dispersal. Clerics fight as Level One until Patriarch (Level 8) when they fight as Level Two.

Example

A Lama (7th level) who has used one First Level and one Second Level Spell takes on a 4 + 1 hit die Ogre.

Statistics

Lama — 36 HTK (If max. is rolled) spells 11211 AC3

Ogre — 33 HTK (If max. is rolled) AC5

The ogre somewhat larger than human size strikes first rolling a 9, the cleric wearing a suit of plate mail so with a four hit die monster he is not hit. The cleric swings a two handed sword and rolls a 15 and so hits. Because the DM decided the creature was larger than human, three dice were rolled for damage. An 18 was rolled so the Ogre was badly damaged but because of the double hit penalty the cleric lost 36 HP he staggers and falls dead. If he had survived he would owe three high level spells next time out; as it was, he was unrevivable because all of the points were drained away.

This is the system I have worked out; I hope it will help to answer the players who always want a little more than they are allowed in the rules.

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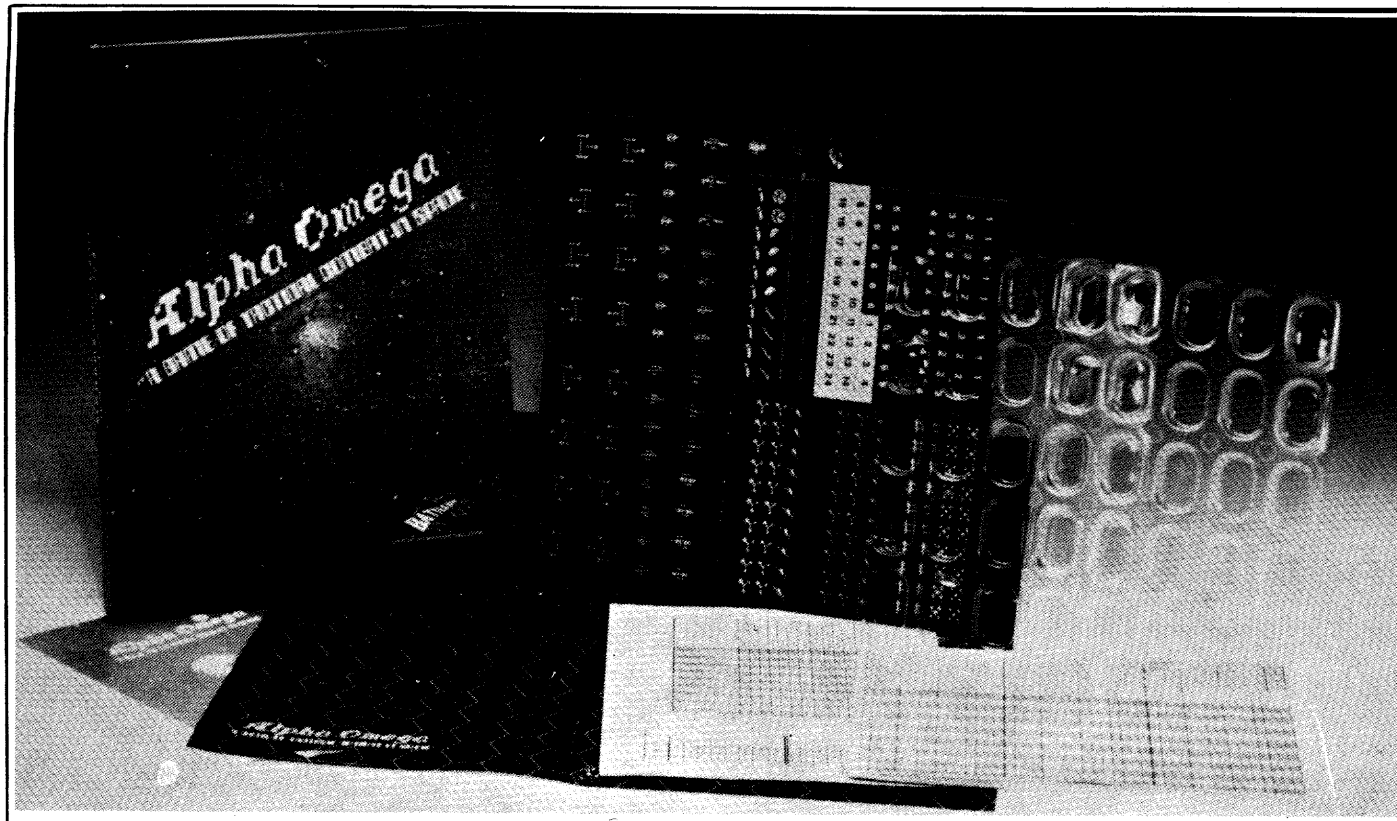

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Sorceror's Scroll *cont. from page 16*

There are numerous additions and supplemental pieces which are neither detrimental nor particularly useful to the game. If players find them enjoyable, there is certainly no reason why their particular group cannot include such material in their particular campaign. The important factor is the integrity of the game as a whole. The use of ***social*** level (as originally conceived by Game Designers Workshop and appearing in ***EN GARDE)*** is a good case in point. In the overall scheme of the game, social level is unimportant to a band of adventurers going out to slay monsters and gain treasure. However, in a campaign it can be used as scenario background — or not used — as the referee and his or her players see fit. Basically, social level means nothing to adventurers such as Conan, Fafhrd and Gray Mouser, Elric, Kugel the Clever, etc. Yet in a game, it can be a handy referee's tool for setting a stage or rewarding player characters. It does not pervert the intent of the game, it does not destroy game systems. It can be readily included, or ignored, without effect upon the whole.

Certain small publishers of amateur magazines or second-rate work have accused TSR of maintaining a proprietary interest in ***DUNGEONS & DRAGONS*** from a purely mercenary motivation. This is usually because they have fervent desire to trade on ***D&D's*** repute and make a reputation or quick buck on its merits rather than their own. Oddly enough, some individuals also fault TSR for being careful to protect its trade marks and copyrights and reputation, blandly faulting a desire to profit from our labors. ***D&D*** is inseparable from TSR. The repute of the game and of the company are high because we honestly strive to give buyers real value for their money. TSR's customers, the buyers of ***D&D, etal*** are satisfied and then some, for what they have purchased has provided them with hours of enjoyment, and will continue to do so for many more gaming hours. Just as we must prevent the ignorant and inept from spoiling the game by tinkering with the integral systems, we also take every possible step to prevent exploitation of ***D&D*** enthusiasts by publishers who hide shoddy products under a fantasy role playing guise. We cannot stop them from putting worthless material into print, but we can certainly make it clear that it is neither recommended nor approved for use with ***DUNGEONS & DRAGONS.*** As long as these worthless goods do not trade on the good name of ***D&D,*** we can only tell our readers that they should beware of the products they purchase, so read before you buy!

To some extent, this same exploitation continually takes place in fantasy gaming oriented publications. Many seek to trade on ***D&D's*** popularity by offering "new" or "variant" systems which fit only with ***D&D,*** even though the game is not actually named. Buy them if you have money to throw away, but at peril of your campaign; do not use material which alters the basic precepts of the game.

Commerce is neither immoral nor unethical. It is part and parcel of our world. Workers are paid for their services, just as authors and publishers receive financial gain for what they provide. The same individual has a family which depends upon commerce to support itself (and possibly the individual if he or she is a student). The individual does, or will one day, work to earn his or her own living. But our interest in ***D&D*** extends beyond money and even beyond reputation. TSR created the whole of fantasy role playing gaming as a hobby, and we are proud of this achievement. Pride is what we have accomplished gives us a paternal right to protect our creation. Be glad, for it will help to assure that your game remains a good one, and that when you see ***"D&D"*** on a product you will have reasonable expectations with respect to its quality. Use your imagination and creativity when you play ***D&D,*** for there is much room within its parameters for individuality and personalization; always keep in mind that everything in the game is there for a reason, that major systems are carefully geared and balanced to mesh together to make a workable whole. Changing one part could well ruin the rest, and then what would you play?

***Editor's Note:** In recent months, I have been the target of some pretty vicious and petty attacks from some of the "APA's". Much to the attackers' collective dismay, I am still alive and well. I've never made any bones about my feelings toward the field: they are unprofessional, unethical and seemingly ignorant of the laws concerning libel. Most of the so-called "authors" seem to live in some sort of fantasy world, totally unconnected with the realities of everyday life. A good many of them are incapable of even quoting correctly.

When apprised of error or inaccuracy, their usual response is an outburst of paranoia and persecution complexes. As the author mentions, there are a scant few exceptions in the field. A few have written material for this magazine in the past. Hopefully, a few will continue to do so. There is one who once wrote for ***TD*** who will *never* be asked to again, after he grossly misquoted something I said at Origins last year.

When I first got into this business, I felt that the APA-zines might be good for the hobby. I even reviewed a number of them for ***TD*** readers. Now I know the error of my thinking. They serve no useful purpose.

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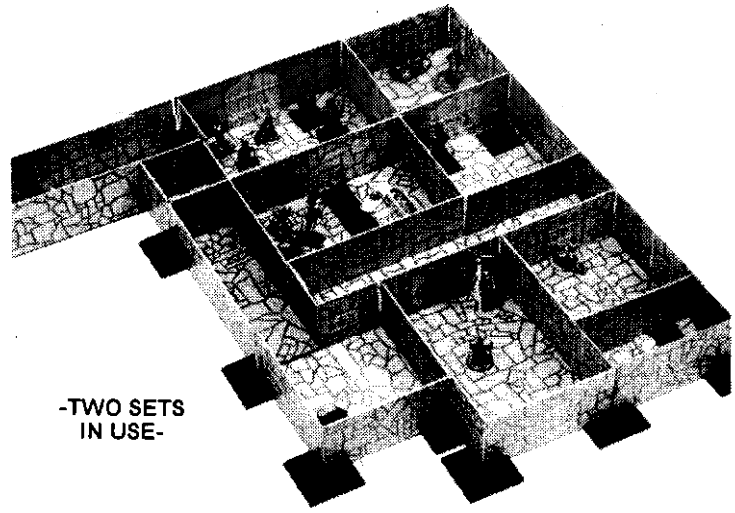

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MA Variant

METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA MODIFICATIONS

by A. Mark Ratner

While Metamorphosis Alpha (MA) is an excellent game certain problems arise for players choosing to play mutants (and for their ref's!) One common problem is how to evaluate a mutant's attempt to figure out how to use (or what is the use of) a device, weapon, etc. Humans use the rules on pp21-22, cross indexing their leadership potential and the item's complexity level, but mutants have no leadership potential, so a new ability for mutants is needed, their mechanical (or technical) aptitude. This ability is a regular three dice roll, and is used wherever humans would use leadership potential on the device learning table on page 22.

A more serious problem arises with mutations of animals other than human. Since in the unmutated form they have intelligence less than the human norm, and do not have hands or other manipulative members (with a few exceptions) the ref' should require that they use Mental Mutation (MM) 1, and Physical Mutation (PM) 4, to gain human level intelligence and manipulative paws or whatever. This ruling means that a mutated animal has two less useful mutations than a mutated human, so why should anyone pick an animal mutation?

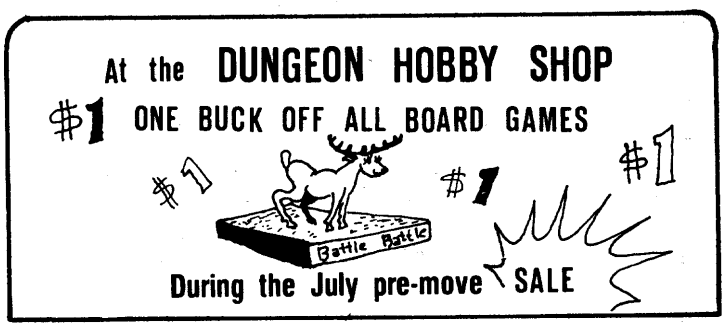
The answer here is that animals have certain advantages over men, and the ref' must allow his mutants to use them. Animals' senses are generally better than men's, they are often stronger then men, they have natural weapons, and many have special abilities that in a human would be a mutation, for example wings, natural camouflage (equal) to PM11 in their natural surroundings), tough hides and outstanding dexterity and balance.

The table given here is not intended to be an all encompassing list, but rather a guideline for ref's to use. Referees should expand the chart as needed in their games. Indeed, since MA is a free-form game system the ref' should not hesitate to modify the chart as he feels appropriate.

It is assumed that all player characters playing mutated animals use MM 1 to increase their intelligence to human level. To increase it beyond human norm use MM34 as well.

Players do not have to use manipulative members. If their creature does not have them (either naturally or mutated) they cannot use tools, devices, etc. Anything you can use with your hand in a mitten with the thumb taped down an animal could use, but few items fall into this category.

Players with animals are incapable of human speech without PM4, but would still be able to understand human speech and work out a system of communication. Alternately they can use MM 5, telepathy. If PM 4 is used once it can alter both the paws and vocal cords to allow both manual dexterity and human speech.



GEN CON XI

Game Designers Have To Eat Too!
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Enjoy a Prime Rib dinner with them Thursday night August 17, 1978. 7:00 P.M. at the Parkside Student Union.

Cost $7.50

GenCon Update & Preview

Of the many events scheduled as a part of GenCon this year, some are worthy of special mention and attention. Here are the daily highlights:

THURSDAY. AUGUST 17

Thursday at GenCon is reserved primarily for open gaming. with fewer scheduled events than the other three days to follow.

In the morning, Will Niebling presides over the first round of the **LANKHMAR** tournament, an event which last year featured 32 players on 8 gameboards. The second round will be held in the afternoon.

RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN players (16 in all) will begin their tournament's first round in the afternoon, with **Guest of Honor John Edwards** presiding as judge.

Avalon Hill's new release, **MAGIC REALM,** will be featured on Thursday evening as Rich Hamblen oversees the action in this event sponsored by AH.

Amateur detectives have their day starting at 1:00 PM as Tim Kask moderates a series of games of **SUSPICION,** with the contestants trying to determine whodunit . . .

In the evening, the highlight of the day will be the **Strategist's Club Banquet** at 8:00 PM.

The first showings of **movies** at GenCon will be on Thursday evening, beginning at 7:30 PM.

CHART NOTES

*This is not the number of hit dice, rather it is the number of dice rolled to obtain the number of hit dice, i.e. if a 3 appears in this column the animal has from 3 to 18 hit dice. Note that players and important nonplayer characters (NPC) have twice the hit dice of normal animals or men. Therefore a herd of horses will have only half the number of hit dice shown on this table, since the table is designed for player characters. Similarly the table on page 17 of MA is designed for normal NPCs, if a player becomes a creature from that table he (or she) would have twice the hit dice shown.

**Strength is not used with damage from natural weapons (unless PM25 is used) because the strength of the animal is designed into the table. The strength is used when the mutant uses a club, sword or other weapon.

1) PM 4 giving hands or manipulative paws decreases speed by 33%.
2) Cold blooded animal, will die of heat or cold quickly if not protected.
3) Good swimmer.
4) Natural camouflage.
5) Can go for long time without eating (several weeks).
6) Has fair manipulative organs without mutation.
7) Good climber.
8) Constriction damage varies with size, approx. 1 dice per 6' of snake.
9) Has tongue that can extend to catch insects, etc.
10) Dexterity halved if not coiled.
11) Has heat sensing organ, detects warm blooded animals at 10'
12) Keen eyesight, equal to PM 22 except cannot see irfra-red or ultra-violet.
13) Can see infra-red.
14) Can Fly.
15) Balance equal to PM 27.
16) Light bones and body structure, effect of PM 42 when struck with sword, axe, club, etc. Arrows, darts, spears, poison, and energy attacks do only normal damage.
17) Nocturnal, good night vision, vision may not be as good in bright light.
18) Has horns or antlers.
19) Can jump high obstacles and broad ditches.
20) Needs PM 4 to become an amphibian.
21) Smell equal to PM 19 upwind, 1/3 as good without wind, 1/10 as good downwind.
22) Hearing equivalent to PM 20 with 1/2 range. Can be surprised by something that is very quiet, base chance 1/12.
23) If PM 4 is used to gain manipulative members the animal becomes 6 limbed, with its hands above the forelegs (similar to a centaur.)
24) Poor vision.
25) Can hold breath for a long time (15 min. or more.)
26) Color blind.

W = water speed
F = Flying speed

MUTATED ANIMAL CHART

ANIMAL TYPE	SIZE	DICE FOR ABILITIES RR	MR	D	St	C	HIT DICE*	ARMOR CLASS	MOVE	DAMAGE**	NOTES
MAMMALS;											
Horse	1000#	3	3	3	5	3	5	7	18	1-8 hoof	19,21,22,23,
Deer	250#	3	3	3	3	3	3	7	18	1-4 hoof 1-8 antlers	18,19,21,22,23,4
Moose	1500#	3	3	3	5	3	6	7	15	1-8 hoof 1-12 antlers	18,21,22,23,3,4
Mountain Goat	200#	3	3	3	3	3	3	7	16	1-4 hoof 1-8 horns	4,15,18,19,21,22, 23,
Black or Brown Bear	300#	3	3	3	4	3	4	5	8	1-8 bite 1-8 claws	4,21,22,
Grizzly Bear	800#	3	3	3	5	4	6	5	8	1-12 bite 1-10 claws	4,21,22
Armadillo	15#	3	3	3	1+1	2	2	7	4	1-3 claws	4,21,22, has PM 17
Boar	350#	3	3	3	4	4	5	5	12	1-10 tusk	4,21,22,1,
Elephant	12000#	3	3	2+1	10	4	12	4	12	2-24 tusk 1-8 trunk, + crush	6,21,22,24,
Pigmy Elephant	350#	3	3	3	4	3	4	5	12	1-10 tusk 1-4 trunk	6,4,21,22,24,
Racoon	25#	3	3	3+1	1+1	3	2	8	6	1-4 bite 1-4 claws	3,4,7,21,22,
Skunk	20#	3	3	3	1	3	2	8	6	1-4 bite	4,22,has PM 8
Gorilla	500#	3	3	2+1	5	4	5	7	4	1-6 bite	6,21,22,
Sealion	100#	3	3	3	2	3	3	8	4 (12W)	1-6 bite	3,15,25
Canines:											
Coyote	50#	3	3	4	2	3	3	7	12	1-6 bite	1,3,4,21,22,26,
Wolf	80#	3	3	4	2	3	3	7	12	1-8 bite	1,3,4,21,22,26,
Fox	25#	3	3	4	1+1	3	2	8	12	1-4 bite	1,3,4,21,22,26,
Mastiff	160#	3	3	3	3	3	4	7	12	1-8 bite	1,3,4,21,22,26,
Felines:											
Domestic Cat	20#	3	3	4	1	3	2	8	8	1-4 bite 1-2 claws	1,4,7,15,17,21,22, 26,
Cougar	150#	3	3	3+1	2+1	3	4	7	12	1-6 bite 1-4 claws	1,4,7,15,17,21,22, 26,
Lynx	45#	3	3	4	2	3	3	8	12	1-4 bite 1-3 claws	1,4,7,15,17,21,22, 26,
Lion	500#	3	3	3	4	4	6	6	12	1-10 bite 1-8 claws	1,4,15,17,21,22,26,
REPTILES:											
Alligator	400#	4	3	2+1	4	4	6	3	4 (8W)	2-24 bite 1-12 tail	1,2,3,5,
Chameleon	2 Ft	4	3	2+1	2	3	2	5	2	1-4 bite	2,6,7,9,has PM 11
Gila Monster	2 Ft	4	3	3	2	3	2	4	2	1-4 bite poison (12) 1-3 claws	1,2,4,5,
Komodo Dragon	200#	4	3	3	5	4	5	4	6	1-12 bite 1-8 claws	1,2,4,5,
Swift Lizard	3 Ft	4	3	4	2	3	2	5	9	1-4 bite 1-3 claws	1,2,4,
Snakes:											
Constrictors	6-30 Ft	4	3	4	1/6	3	2 to 6 4 for large	6	1	1-6 bite constriction	2,3,4,5,7,8,10,
Pit Viper	4-6 Ft	4	3	4	1	3	2	6	1	1-6 bite poison (12)	2,3,4,5,10,11,
Viper	4-12 Ft	4	3	4	1	3	2 to 3	6	1	1-6 bite poison (15)	2,3,4,5,10,
BIRDS:											
Eagle	42 Inches	3	3	4	2+1	3	2+1	8	1,18F	1-6 Beak 1-4 talons	4,12,14,15,16,
Falcon	18 Inches	3	3	4	1	3	1 + 1	8	1,24F	1-4 beak 1-3 talons	4,12,14,15,16,
Owl	30 Inches	3	3	4	2	3	2	8	1,18F	1-4 beak 1-4 talons	4,12,13,14,15,16,17,
Duck	24 Inches	3	3	4	1	3	1+1	8	1,2W,18F	1-3 beak	3,4,12,14,15,16,
Swan	60 Inches	3	3	4	2+1	3	2+1	8	1,2W,18F	1-4 beak	3,4,12,14,15,16,
MISC.:											
octopus	100# 9' Tentacles	4	3	3	3	3	3	7	2 (8W)	1-3 tentacles	2,3,6,7,20
Turtle	125#	4	3	2	2	3	3+1	6	2	1-12 bite	2,3, has PM 17

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by

Steve Perrin & Friends

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THE CHAOSIUM

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Harold Shea, Belphoebe, and Pete Brodsky rode steadily at a walk across the central plain of Ireland, the Sheas on horses, Brodsky on a mule which he sat with some discomfort, leading a second mule carrying the provisions and equipment that Cuchulainn had pressed on them. Their accouterments included serviceable broadswords at the hips of Shea and Brodsky and a neat dagger at Belphebe's belt. Her request for a bow had brought forth only miserable sticks that pulled no farther than the breast and were quite useless beyond a range of fifty yards, and these she had refused.

All the first day they climbed slowly into the uplands of Monaghan. They followed the winding course of the Erne for some miles and splashed across it at a ford, then struck the boglands of western Cavan. Sometimes there was a road of sorts, sometimes they plodded across grassy moors, following the vague and verbose directions of peasants. As they skirted patches of forest, deer started and ran before them, and once a tongue-lolling wolf trotted paralled to their track for a while before abandoning the game.

By nightfall they had covered at least half their journey. Brodsky, who had begun by feeling sorry for himself, began to recover somewhat under the ministrations of Belphebe's excellent camp cookery, and announced that he had seen quite enough of ancient Ireland and was ready to go back.

"I don't get it," he said. "Why don't you just mooch off the way you came here?"

"Because I'm unskilled labor now," explained Shea." You saw Cathbadh make that spell — he started chanting in the archaic language and brought it down to date. I get the picture, but I'd have to learn the archaic. Unless I can get someone else to send us back. And I'm worried about that. As you said, we've got to work fast. What are you going to tell them if they've started looking for you when we get back?"

"Ah, nuts," said Brodsky. "I'll level with them. The force is so loused up with harps that are always cutting up touches about how hot Ireland is that they'll give it a play whether they believe me or not."

Belphebe said in a small voice, "But I would be at home."

"I know, kid," said Shea. "So would I. If I only knew how."

Morning showed mountains on the right, with a round peak in the midst of them. The journey went more slowly than on the previous day, principally because all three had not developed riding callouses. They pulled up that evening at the hut of a peasant rather more prosperous than the rest, and Brodsky more than paid for their food and lodging with tales out of Celtic lore. The pseudo-Irishman certainly had his uses.

The next day woke in rain, and though the peasant assured them that Rath Cruachan was no more than a couple hours' ride distant, the group became involved in fog and drizzle, so that it was not till afternoon that they skirted Loch Key and came to Magh Ai, the Plain of Livers. The cloaks with which Cuchulainn had furnished them were of fine wool, but all three were soaked and silent by time a group of houses came into sight through air slightly clearing.

There were about as many of the buildings as would constitute an incorporated village in their own universe, surrounded by the usual stockade and wide gate — unmistakably Cruachan of the Poets, the capital of Connacht.

As they approached along an avenue of trees and shrubbery, a boy of about thirteen, in shawl and kilt and carrying a miniature spear, popped out of the bushes and cried: "Stand there! Who is it you are and where are you going?"

It might be important not to smile at this diminutive warrior. Shea identified himself gravely and asked in turn, "And who are you, sir?"

"I am Goistan mac Idha, of the boy troop of Cruachan, and it is better not to interfere with me."

Shea said, "We have come from a far country to see your King and Queen and the druid Ollgaeth."

He turned and waved his spear toward where a building like that at Muirthemne, but more ornate, loomed over the stockade, then marched ahead of them down the road.

At the gate of the stockade was a pair of hairy soldiers, but their spears were leaning against the posts and they were too engrossed in a game of knuckle-bones even to look up as the party rode through. The clearing weather seemed to have brought activity to the town. A number of people were moving about, most of whom paused to stare at Brodsky, who had flatly refused to discard the pants of his brown business-suit and was evidently not dressed for the occasion.

The big house was built of heavy oak beams and had wooden shingles instead of the usual thatch. Shea stared with interest at windows with real glass in them, even though the panes were little diamond-shaped pieces half the size of a hand and far too irregular to see through.

There was a doorkeeper with a beard badly in need of trimming and lopsided to the right. Shea got off his horse and advanced to him, saying, "I am Mac Shea, a traveler from beyond the island of the Fomorians, with my wife and bodyguard. May we have an audience with their majesties, and their great druid, Ollgaeth?"

The doorkeeper inspected the party with care and then grinned. "I am thinking," he said, "that your honor will please the Queen with your looks, and your lady will please himself, so you had best go along in. But this ugly lump of a bodyguard will please neither, and as they are very sensitive and this is judgment day, he will no doubt be made a head shorter for the coming, so he had best stay with your mounts."

Synopsis

Fleeing Finland, Harold Shea, his wife Belphebe (late of FAERIE QUEEN) and the indomitable Pete Brodsky find themselves in Celtic Ireland instead of Ohio, arriving in a downpour.

It is Pete's knowledge of Ireland that saves them; a lifetime of being around Irish cops, and trying to be one of the boys, makes Brodsky invaluable.

Upon arrival, they are mistaken for Fomorians by the 'Hound of Ulster, the legendary Cuchulainn himself. However, they are set upon by Lagenians, and Cuchulainn rescues them, being upset with them for ganging up.

Falling in with Cucuc, as they came to find he was called, they set out for his camp. As usual, they claim to be magicians, and ask to see the leading druid in Ireland.

To resist the amorous advances of Cucuc, Belphebe strips naked in public, thereby violating a taboo, and driving Cucuc from her. To explain her behavior, Pete improvises the tale that she has a horrible geas laid on her that makes any man that comes near her violently ill. This mollifies Cucuc, but prompts the druid to attempt the lifting of the bogus geas. In so doing, he inflicts a real one, and Shea is even more bereft.

All his magic has failed dismally in Ireland; the return spell attempt nearly fried them when it tracted lightning, his water-to-wine spell nearly inundated the party at which he tried it. He has impressed Cathbadh, the druid of Cucuc's faction, by removing a werewolf-like curse from a man with some elementary hypnosis. When Cathbadh inadvertently puts the bogus geas on Belphebe, he admits defeat, and tells Shea that there is one other in Ireland that might be able to help — Ollgaeth, chief druid to the Connachta, hereditary enemies of Ulster.

Brodsky, with his knowledge of Celtic lore, has tried to warn Cucuc that the Connachta will still try to do him mischief. Cucuc is undismayed, and so the trio set out to meet Ollgaeth to try once more to return to Ohio . . .

Shea glanced round in time to see Brodsky replace his expression of fury with the carefully cultivated blank that policemen use, and helped Belphebe off her horse.

Inside, the main hall stretched away with the usual swords and spears in the usual place on the wall, and a rack of heads, not as large as Cuchulainn's. In the middle of the hall, surrounded at a respectful distance by retainers and armed soldiers, stood an oaken dais, ornamented with strips of bronze and silver. It held two big carven armchairs, in which lounged, rather than sat, the famous sovereigns of Connacht.

Maev might have been in her early forties, still strikingly beautiful, with a long, pale, unlined face, pale blue eyes and yellow hair, hanging in long braids. For a blonde without the aid of cosmetics, she had remarkably red lips.

King Ailill was a less impressive figure than his consort, some inches shorter, fat and paunchy, with small close-set eyes constantly moving and a straggly pepper-and-salt beard. He seemed unable to keep his fingers still. An ulcer type, thought Shea; would be a chain smoker if tobacco existed in this part of the space-time continuum.

A young man in a blue kilt, wearing a silver-hilted shortsword over a tunic embroidered with gold thread, seemed to be acting as usher to make sure that nobody got to the royal couple out of turn. He spotted the newcomers at once, and worked his way toward them.

"Will you be seeking an audience, or have you come merely to look at the greatest King in Ireland?" he asked. His eyes ran appreciatively over Belphebe's contours.

Shea identified himself, adding, "We have come to pay our respects to the King and Queen. . . ah. . ."

"Maine mac Aililla,. Maine mo Epert,"said the young man.

This would be one of the numerous sons of Ailill and Maev, who had all been given the same name. But he stood in their path without moving.

"Can we speak to them?" Shea said.

Maine mo Epert put back his head and looked down an aristocratic nose. "Since you are foreigners, you are evidently not knowing that it is the custom in Connacht to have a present for the man who brings you before a King. But I will be forgiving your ignorance." He smiled a charming smile.

Shea glanced at Belphebe and she looked back in dismay. Their total possessions consisted of what they stood in. "But we have to see them," he said. "It may be as important to them as to us."

Maine mo Epert smiled again.

Shea said, "How about a nice broadsword?" and pushed forward his hilt.

"I have a better one," said Maine mo Epert, exasperatingly, and pushed forward his. "If it were a jewel, now . . ."

"How about seeing Ollgaeth the druid?"

"It is a rule that he will see none but those the Queen sends him."

Shea felt like whipping out the broadsword and taking a crack at him, but that would probably not be considered polite. Suddenly Belphebe beside him said:

"Jewels have we none, sirrah, but from your glances, there is something you would prize more. I am sure that in accordance with your custom, my husband would be glad to lend me to you for the night."

Shea gasped, and then remembered. That geas she had acquired could be handy as well as troublesome. But it had better not be taken off till morning.

Maine mo Epert's smile turned into a grin that made Shea want more than ever to swat him, but he clapped his hands and began to push people aside. Shea had just time to whisper, "Nice work, kid," when the usher pushed a couple of people from the end of a bench and sat them down in the front row, facing the royal pair. At the moment a couple of spearmen were holding a serf and giving evidence that he had stolen a pork chop.

Maev looked at Ailill, who said, "Ahem — since the lout was starving, perhaps we ought to exercise mercy and let him off with the loss of a hand."

"Do not be a fool," said Maev, "when it is not necessary at all. What! A man in Connacht of the heroes who is so weak-witted that he must starve? Hang him or burn him, would be my decision if I were king."

"Very well, darling," said Ailill. "Let the man be hung."

Two little groups stepped forward next, glaring at each other. Maine mo Epert began to introduce them, but before he got halfway through, Maev said, "I know of this case and it promises to be a long one. Before we hear it I would willingly learn something of the business of the handsome pair of strangers you have brought in."

Maine mo Epert said, "This is a pair from a distant island called America. The Mac Shea and his wife, Belphebe. They wish to pay their respects."

"Let him speak," said Maev.

Shea wondered whether he ought to make an obeisance, but as no one else seemed to be doing it, he merely stepped forward and said, "Queen, you have become so famous that even in America we have heard of you, and we could not restrain the desire to see you. Also, I would like to see your famous druid, Ollgaeth, since my wife is suffering from a most unpleasant geas, and I am told he is an expert at removing them. Also, I have a message for you and the King, but that had better be private."

Maev rested her chin on her hand and surveyed him. "Handsome man," she said, "it is easy to see that you are not much used to deceiving people. Your embroidery is in the style of Ulster, and now you will be telling me at once what this message is and from whom it comes there."

"It doesn't come from there," said Shea. "It's true I have been in Ulster, in fact at Cuchulainn's house of Muirthemne. And the message is that your plan against him will bring disaster."

King Ailill's fingers stopped their restless twitching and his mouth came open, while Maev's eyebrows formed a straight line. She said in a high voice, "And who told you of the plans of the King of Connacht?"

Look out,, said Shea to himself, *this is thin ice.* Aloud he said, "Why, it's just that in my own country, I'm something of a magician, and I learned of it through spells."

The tension appeared to relax. "Magic," said Maev. "Handsome man, you have said a true word that this message should be private. We will hear more on it later. You will be at our table tonight, and there you will meet Ollgaeth. For the now, our son, Maine Mingor, will show you to a place."

She waved her hand, and Maine Mingor, a somewhat younger edition of Maine mo Epert, stepped out of the group and beckoned them to follow him. At the door Belphebe giggled and said, "Handsome man."

Shea said, "Listen . . ."

"That I did," said Belphebe, "and heard her say that the message should be private. You're going to need a geas as much as I do tonight."

The rain had stopped, and the setting sun was shooting beams of gold and crimson through the low clouds. The horses had been tied to rings in the wall of the building, and Pete was waiting, with an expression of boredom. As Shea turned to follow Maine Mingor, he bumped into a tall, dark man, who was apparently waiting around for just that purpose.

"Is it a friend of Cuchulainn of Muirthemne you are now?" asked this individual, ominously.

"I've met him, but we're not intimates," said Shea. "Have you any special reason for asking?"

"I have that. He killed my father in his own house, he did. And I am thinking it is time he had one friend the less." His hand went to his hilt.

Maine Mingor said, "You will be leaving off with that, Lughaid. These people are messengers and under the protection of the Queen, my mother, so that if you touch them it will be both gods and men you must deal with."

"We will talk of this later, Mac Shea dear," said Lughaid, and turned back to the palace.

Belphebe said, "I like that not."

Shea said, "Darling, I still know how to fence, and they don't."

VI

Dinner followed a pattern only slightly different from that at Muirthemne, with Maev and Ailill sitting on a dais facing each other across a small table. Shea and Belphebe were not given places so lofty as they had been at Cuchulainn's board, but this was partly compensated for by the presence of Ollgaeth the druid just across the board.

Only partly, however; it became quite clear that Ollgaeth — a big, stoutish man with a mass of white hair and beard — was one of those people who pretend to ask questions only in order to trigger themselves off on remarks of their own. He inquired about Shea's previous magical experience, and let him just barely touch on the illusions he had encountered in the Finnish Kalevala before taking off.

"Ah, now you would be thinking that was a great rare thing to see, would you not?" he said, and gulped at barley beer. "Now let me tell you, handsome man, that of all the places in the world, Connacht produces the greatest illusions and the most beautiful. I remember, I do, the time when I was making a spell for Laerdach, for a better yield from his dun cow, and while I was in the middle of it, who should come past but his daughter, and she so beautiful that I stopped my chanting to look at her. Would you believe it now? The milk began to flow in a stream that would have drowned a man on horseback, and I had barely time to reverse the spell before it changed from illusion to reality and ravaged half a county."

Shea said, "Oh, I see. The chanting . . ."

Ollgaeth hurried on, "And there is a hill behind the rath of Maev this very moment. It looks no different from any other, but it is a hill of great magic, being one of the hills of the Sidhe and a gateway to their kingdom."

"Who . . ." began Shea, but the druid only raised his voice a trifle: "Mostly now, they would be keeping the gateways closed. But on a night like tonight, a good druid, or even an ordinary one might open the way."

"Why tonight?" asked Belphebe from beside Shea.

"What other night would it be but the Lughnasadh? Was it not for that you would be coming here? No, I forget. Forgive an old man." He smote his brow to emphasize the extent of his fault. "Maine mo Epert was after telling me that it was myself you came to see, and you could have done no better. Come midnight when the moon is high, and I will be showing you the powers of Ollgaeth the druid."

Shea said, "As a matter of fact . . ." but Ollgaeth rushed past him with: "I call to mind there was a man — what was his name? — had a geas on him that he would be seeing everything double. Now that was an illusion, and it was me he came to in his trouble. I . . ."

Shea was spared the revelation of what Ollgaeth had done in the case of the double vision by King Ailill's rapping on his table with the hilt of his knife and saying in his high voice, "We will now be hearing from Ferchertne the bard, since this is the day of Lugh, and a festival."

Serfs were whisking away the last of the food and benches were being moved to enlarge the space around Ferchertne. This was a youngish man with long hair and a lugubrious expression; he sat down on a stool with his harp, plucked a few melancholy twangs from the strings, and in a bumpish baritone launched into the epic of the "Fate of the Children of Tuirenn."

It wasn't very interesting, and the voice was definitely bad. Shea glanced around and saw Brodsky fidgeting every time the harpist missed a quantity or struck a false note. Everyone else seemed to be affected almost to the point of tears, however, even Ollgaeth. Finally Ferchertne's voice went up in an atrocious discord, and there was a violent snort.

The harp gave a twang and halted abruptly. Shea followed every eye in the room to the detective, who stared back belligerently.

"You would not be liking the music now, dear?" asked Maev, in a glacial voice.

"No, I wouldn't," said Brodsky. "If I couldn't do better than that, I'd turn myself in."

"Better than that you shall do," said Maev. "Come forward, ugly man. Eiradh, you are to stand by this man with your sword, and if I signal you that he is less than the best, you are to bring me his head at once."

"Hey!" cried Shea, and Brodsky: "But I don't know the words."

Protest was useless. He was grabbed by half a dozen pairs of hands and pushed forward beside the bard's seat. Eiradh, a tall, bearded man, pulled out his sword and stood behind the pair, a smile of pleasant anticipation on his face.

Brodsky looked around and then turned to the bard. "Give a guy a break, will you?" he said, "and go back over that last part till I catch the tune."

Ferchertne strummed obediently, while Brodsky leaned close, humming until he got the rather simple air that carried the words of the ballad. Then he

straightened up, gesturing with one hand toward the harpist, who struck a chord and began to sing:

"Take these heads unto they breast, O Brian . . ."

Pete Brodsky's voice soared over his, strong and confident, with no definite syllables, but carrying the tune for Ferchertne's words as the harp itself never had. Shea, watching Queen Maev, saw her stiffen, and then, as the melancholy ballad rolled on, two big tears came out on her cheek. Ailill was crying, too, and some of the audience were openly sobbing. It was like a collective soap-opera binge.

The epic came to an end, Pete holding the high note after the harp had stopped. King Ailill lifted an arm and dried his streaming eyes on his sleeve, while Maev dried hers on her handkerchief. She said, "You have done more than you promised, American serf. I have not enjoyed the 'Fate of the Children' more in my memory. Give him a new tunic and a gold ring." She stood up. "And now, handsome man, we will be hearing your message. You will attend us while the others dance."

As a pair of bagpipers stepped forward and gave a few preliminary howls on their instruments, Maev led the way through a door at the back, down the hall to a bedroom sumptuous by the standards that obtained here. There were rushlights against the wall, and a soldier on guard at the door.

Maev said, "Indech! Poke up the fire, for it is cool the air is after the rain."

The soldier jabbed the fire with a poker, leaned his spear against. the door, and went out. Maev seemed in no hurry to come to business. She moved about the room restlessly.

"This," she said, "is the skull that belonged to Feradach mac Conchobar, that I killed in payment for the taking of my dear Maine Morgor. See, I have had the eye-holes gilded."

Her dress, which had been a bright red in the stronger illumination of the hall, was quite a deep crimson here, and clung closely to a figure that, while full, was unquestionably well shaped. She turned her head and one of the jewels in her coronet threw a red flash of light into Shea's eyes.

"Would you be having a drop of Spanish wine, now?"

Shea felt a little trickle of perspiration gather on his chest and run down, and wished he were back with Ollgaeth. The druid was verbose and hopelessly vain, but he had furnished the tipoff on the chanting. It was some kind of quantity control for the spells that went with it. "Thanks," he said.

Maev poured wine into a golden cup for him, more for herself, and sat down on a stool. "Draw close beside me," she said, "for it is not right that we should be too much overheard. There. Now what is this of planning and disasters?"

Shea said, "In my own country I am something of a magician, or druid as you call it. Through this I have learned that you're going to get all Cuchulainn's enemies together, then put a geas on him to make him fight them all at once."

She looked at him from narrowed eyes. "You know too much, handsome man," she said, and there was a note of menace in her voice. "And what is this of disasters?"

"Only that you better not. You will succeed against Cuchulainn, but it will end up in a war, in which you and your husband and most of your sons will be killed."

She sipped, then stood up suddenly and began to pace the floor, moving like a crimson tide. Shea thought etiquette probably required him to get up, too, and he did so.

Not looking at him, Maev said, "And you have been at Muirthemne . . . Which is to say you have told the Hound of what we hold in store for him . . . Which is to say that Cathbadh knows of it also . . . Ha!" She whirled with sudden panther-like grace and faced Shea. "Tell me, handsome man, is it not true that Cathbadh sent you here to turn us from our purpose? Is not that tale of wars and disasters something he made up and put into your mouth?"

Shea said, "No, it isn't. Honest. I did talk to Cathbadh, and he'd like to stop this chain reaction, but I came here for something quite different."

She stamped. "Do not be lying to me. I see it all. Cathbadh can no more protect Cuchulainn against the geas of Ollgaeth than a pig can climb trees, so he would be sending you here with your talk of magic."

This was getting dangerous. Shea said, "Cathbadh did admit that Ollgaeth was the better druid."

"I thank him for the sending." She turned and stepped across the room, opened a big jewel case, from which she took a gold bracelet. "Come hither."

Shea stepped over to her. She rolled up his sleeve and snapped the bracelet on his arm.

"Thanks," said Shea, "But I don't think I ought to accept . . ."

"And who are you to be saying what you will accept from Queen Maev? It is a thing decided, and I will never come to terms with Cuchulainn, no matter if it costs me my life and all. Come, now."

She filled the wine cups again, took his hand, guided him to the stools and sat down close beside him. "Since life will be so short we may as well have what we can out of it," she said, drank off the cup and leaned back against him.

The thought leaped across his mind that if he moved aside and let this imperious and rather beautiful woman slip to the floor, she would probably have his head taken off. He put his arm around her in self-defense. She caught the hand and guided it to her bosom, then reached for the other hand and led it to her belt. "The fastening is there," she said.

The door opened and Maine mo Epert came in, followed by Belphebe.

"Mother and Queen . . ." began the young man, and stopped.

To give Maev due credit, she got to her feet with dignity and without apparent embarrassment. "Will you be forever behaving as though you were just hatched from the shell, now?" she demanded.

"But I have a case against this woman. She made a promise to me, she did, and she has a geas on her that makes a man as ill as though bathed in venom."

"You will be having Ollgaeth take it off, then," said Maev.

"'Tis the night of Lugh. Ollgaeth is not to be found."

"Then you must even bed by yourself, then," said Maev. She looked at Belphebe and her expression was rather sour.

"I think we had better be going along, too, Harold," said Belphebe, sweetly.

VII

When they were outside, Belphebe said, "Tell me not. I know. She looked so fine in that red robe that you wished to help her take it off."

Shea said, "Honest, Belphebe, I . . .

"Oh, spare me your plaints. I'm not the first wife to have a husband made of glass and breakable, nor will be the last. What is that you have on your arm?"

"Listen, Belphebe, if you'll only let me tell you . . ."

A form stepped out of the shadows into moonlight which revealed it as Ollgaeth. "The hour is met if you would see the Hill of the Sidhe, Mac Shea," he said.

"Want to come along, kid?" said Shea. "This might be useful for both of us."

"Not I," said Belphebe. "I'm for bed — geas and all." She lifted a hand to stifle an imaginary yawn.

Shea said, "May I . . ." and stopped. He hated to leave Belphebe alone in her present mood, no matter how really unjustified it was. But it occurred to him that if he wanted to get any cooperation out of the vain druid, he would have to play along and butter him up. And it was distinctly important to learn about the system of magic here.

"All right," he said. "See you later, dear."

He turned to follow Ollgaeth through the dark streets. The guards at the gate were awake, a tribute to Maev's management, but they passed the druid and his companion through readily enough. Ollgaeth, stumbling along the track, said, "The Sidhe, now, they have the four great treasures of Ireland — Dagda's cauldron that will never let a man go foodless, the stone of Fal that strikes every man it is aimed at, Lugh's spear and Nuada's great manslaying sword that is death to all before it but protection to the bearer."

"Indeed," said Shea. "At the table you were saying. . ."

"Will you never let a man finish his tale?" said Ollgaeth. "The way of it is this: The Sidhe themselves may not use the treasures — there is a geas on them that they can be handled only by a man of Milesian blood. Nor will they give them up, for fear the treasures may be used against them. And all who come into their land, they use hardly."

"I should think . . ." began Shea.

"I do call to mind there was a man named Goll tried it," said Ollgaeth. "But the Sidhe cut off both his ears and fed them to the pigs, and he was never the same man after. Ah, it's a queer race they are, and a good man one must be to sit at table with them"

The Hill of the Sidhe loomed in front of them.

"If you will look there carefully, handsome man," said Ollgaeth, "to the left of that little tree, you will see a darkish patch in the rocks. Let us move a little closer now." They climbed the base of the hill. "Now if you will be standing about here, watch the reflection of the moon on the spot there."

Shea looked, moving his head from side to side, and made out a kind of reflection on the surface of the rock, not so definite and clear as it might be, more like that on a pond, wavering slightly with ripples. Clearly an area of high magical tension.

Ollgaeth said, "It is not to everyone I would be showing this or even telling it, but you will be going back to your America, and it is as well for you to know that because of the spells the Sidhe themselves place on these gates, they may be opened without the use of the ancient tongue. Watch how."

He raised his arms and began to chant:

"The chiefs of the voyage over the sea
By which the sons of Mil came. . .

It was not very long, ending

"Who opens the gateway to Tir na n-Og?
Who but I, Ollgaeth the druid?"

He clapped his hands together sharply. The wavering reflection faded out and Shea saw nothing but blackness, as if he were looking into a tunnel in the side of the hill.

"Approach, approach," said Ollgaeth, "If is not like that the Sidhe will be dangerous against a druid as powerful as myself."

Shea went nearer. Sure enough, he was looking down a tunnel that stretched some distance into blackness, with a faint light beyond. He put out a hand; it went into the hole where solid rock had been without resistance, except for a slight tingly feeling.

Shea asked, "How long will it stay open?"

"Long enough for whatever passes to reach the other side."

"Do you suppose I could open it, too?"

"Are you not a qualified magician, now? To be sure you could, if you will learn the spell. But you will give me something in exchange."

"Certainly," said Shea. He thought; there was the one he had used in Faerie. "How about a spell to change water into wine? I can teach it to you first thing in the morning." If he did it himself, the result would probably be rum of an uncommonly potent brew, but qualitative control was this guy's own business.

Ollgaeth's eyes almost glittered in the moonlight. "That would be a thing to see, now. Raise your arms."

He followed Ollgaeth through the spell a couple of times, then repeated it alone. The wavelike shimmering disappeared, and the tunnel came open.

"I am thinking," said Ollgaeth, as they made their way back to the town, "that it would be as well not to come here again the night. The Sidhe will be noticing their gate clap open and shut and setting a guard over it, and though they are poor in arms, it's a bad-tempered lot they are."

"I'll be careful," said Shea.

Within, he tapped at the door of the guesthouse.

"Who's there?" asked Belphebe's voice.

"It's me — Harold."

The bolt slammed back, and the door opened to show her still fully dressed, a little line of worry in her forehead.

"My lord," she said, "I do pray your pardon for my angers. I do see now 'twas no more your fault than it was mine at Muirthemne. But we must be quick."

"'What do you mean?"

She was collecting their small amount of gear. "Pete was here but now. We are in deadly danger, but more especially yourself. The Queen has given permission to this Lughaid who accosted you to take your head if he will."

Shea put his hand on his sword. "I'd like to see him try it."

"Foolish man! He is not coming alone, but with a band — six, half a score. Come." She pulled him toward the door.

"But where's Pete? We can't go back without him."

"Nor can we go back at all if we do not live out the night," she said, leading out into the dark, silent street. "Pete is doing what he can to gain us time — his singing's wholly caught them. Hurry!"

"I don't see what good merely running away tonight will do us," said Shea. "Wait a minute, though. I can get in touch with Ollgaeth. You're right."

There was only one guard at the gate, but he held his spear crosswise and said, "I cannot be letting you out again the night. The Queen has sent word."

Belphebe gave a little cry. Shea half-turned to see sparks of light dancing, back among the houses. Torches. He swung round again, bringing his sword out with a wheep, and without warning, drove a thrust at the guard's neck. The soldier jerked up his buckler just in time to catch Shea's point in the edge of the bronze decorations. Then he lowered his spear and drew it back for a jab.

Shea recovered, knocking the spear aside, but was unable to get around the shield for a return lunge. He thrust twice, feinting with the intention of driving home into an opening, but each time a slight movement of the buckler showed it would be futile. The soldier balanced, drew back for another thrust, and then swore as Belphebe, who had slipped past him, caught the butt end of the weapon.

He shouted, "Ho! An alarm!"

They would have to work fast. Shea aimed a cut at the man's head, but he ducked, simultaneously releasing the spear into Belphebe's hands, who went tumbling backward as the man did a quick side-step and whipped out his sword.

Shea made a lightning estimate; the guard's face and neck were too small a target and too well protected by the shield, and the torso was doubly protected by shield and mail. Down.

He made a quick upward sweep that brought the buckler aloft, then drove the blade into the man's thigh, just above the knee and below the edge of the kilt. He felt the blade cleave meat; the man's leg buckled, spilling him to the ground in a clang of metal with a great groaning shout.

Behind them in the rath there were answering cries and the torchlight points turned. "Come on!" cried Belphebe, and began to run. She still clutched the big spear, but was so light on her feet that it did not appear to matter. Shea, trying to keep up with his wife, heard more shouts behind him. "The hill," he gasped, and as he ran, was suddenly glad that the Irish of this period were not much with bows.

There were only occasional trees, but the moonlight was tricky and dubious. A glance backward showed the torchbearers had reached the gate and were beginning to spread. There ought to be just barely time if he could remember the spell correctly. Whatever dangers the country of the Sidhe held, they were less than those to be encountered by staying.

He was getting short of breath, though Belphebe beside him was running as lightly as ever. The hill loomed over them, dark now by reason of the movement of the moon. "This way," gasped Shea, and led up the uneven slope. There was the black rock, still shining queerly mirrorlike. Shea lifted his arms

over his head and began to chant, panting for breath:

"The chiefs of the voyage — over the sea —
By which — the sons of Mil came. . ."

Behind one of the pursuers set up a view-halloo. Out of the corner of his eye, Shea saw Belphebe whirl and balance the spear as though for throwing; he didn't have time to stop and tell her that such a weapon couldn't be used that way.

"Who but I, Harold mac Shea?" he finished, resoundingly. "Come on."

He dragged Belphebe toward the dimly seen black opening and then through it. As he entered the darkness he felt a tingling all over, as of a mild electric shock.

Then, abruptly, sunlight replaced moonlight. He and Belphebe were standing on the downward slope of another hill, like the one they had just entered. He had time to take in the fact that the landscape was similar to the one they had quitted, before something crashed down on the back of his head and knocked him unconscious.

VIII

Briun mac Smetra, King of the Sidhe of Connacht, leaned forward in his carven chair and looked at the prisoners. Harold Shea looked back at him as calmly as he could, although his hands were bound behind his back and his head was splitting. Briun was a tall, slender person with pale blond hair and blue eyes that seemed too big for his face. The rest of them were a delicate-looking people, clad with Hellenic simplicity in wrap-around tunics. Their furnishings seemed a point more primitive than those in the Ireland from which they had come — the building they were in had a central hearth with a smoke-hole instead of the fireplaces and chimneys he had seen there.

"It will do you no good at all to be going on like this," said the King. "So now it is nothing at all you must lose but your heads, for the black-hearted Connachta that you are."

"But we're not Connachta!" Said Shea. "As I told you . . ."

A husky man with black hair said, "They look like Gaels, they speak like Gaels, and they are dressed like Gaels."

"And who should know better than Nera the champion, who was a Gael himself before he became one of us?" said the King.

"Now look here, King." said Shea. "We can prove we're not Gaels by teaching you things no Gael ever knew."

"Can you now?" said Briun. "And what sort of things would those be?"

Shea said, "I think I can show your druids some new things about magic."

Beside him Belphebe's clear voice seconded him. "I can show you how to make a bow that will shoot — two hundred yards."

Briun said, "Now it is to be seen that you are full of foolish lies. It is well known that we already have the best druids in the world, and no bow will shoot that far. This now is just an excuse to have us feed you for a time until it is proved you are lying, which is something we can see without any proof being needed. You are to lose your heads."

He made a gesture of dismissal and started to rise. The black-thatched Nera said, "Let me . . ."

"Wait a minute!" cried Shea, desperately. "This guy is a champion, isn't he? All right, how about it if I challenge him?"

The King sat down again and considered. "Since you are to lose your head anyway," he sid, "we may as well have some enjoyment out of it. But you are without armor."

"Never use the stuff," said Shea. "Besides, if neither one of us has any, things will move faster." He heard Belphebe gasp beside him, but did not turn his head.

"Ha, ha," said Nera. "Let him loose and I will be making him into pieces of fringe for your robe."

Somebody released Shea and he stretched his arms and flexed his muscles to restore circulation. He was pushed rather roughly toward the door, where the Tuatha De Danaan were forming a ring, and a sword was thrust into his hand. It was one of the usual Irish blades, almost pointless and suitable mainly for cutting.

"Hey!" he said. "I want my own sword, the one I had with me."

Briun stared at him a moment out of pale, suspicious eyes. "Bring the sword," he said, and then called: "Miach!"

The broadsword that Shea had ground down to as fine a point as possible was produced. A tall old man with white hair and beard that made him look like a nineteenth-century poet stepped forward.

"You are to be telling me if there is a geas on this blade," said the King.

The druid took the blade and, holding it flat on both palms, ran his nose along it, sniffing. He looked up. "I do not find any smell of geas or magic about it," he said, then lifted his nose like a hound toward Shea. "But about this one there is certainly something that touches my profession."

"It will not save him," said Nera. "Come and be killed, Gael." He swung up his sword.

Shea just barely parried the downstroke. The man was strong as a horse, and had a good deal of skill in the use of his clumsy weapon. For several panting minutes the weapons clanged; Shea had to step back, and back again, and there were appreciative murmurs from the audience.

Finally, Nera, showing a certain shortness of breath and visibly growing restive, shouted, "You juggling Greek!" took a step backward and wound up for a two-handed overhead cut, intended to beat down his opponent's blade by sheer power. Instantly Shea executed the maneuver known as an advance-thrust — dangerous against a fencer, but hardly a barbarian like this. He hopped forward, right foot first, and shot his arm out straight. The point went right into Nera's chest.

Shea's intention was to jerk the blade loose with a twist to one side to avoid the downcoming slash. But the point stuck between his enemy's ribs, and, in the instant it failed to yield, Nera's blade, weakened and wavering, came down on Shea's left shoulder. He felt the sting of steel and in the same moment the sword came loose as Nera folded up wordlessly.

"You're hurt!" cried Belphebe. "Let me loose!"

"Just a flesh wound," said Shea. "Do I win, King Briun?"

"Loose the woman," said the fairy King, and tugged at his beard. "Indeed, and you do. A great liar you may be, but you are also a hero and champion, and it is our rule that you take his place. You will be wanting his head for the pillars of the house you will have."

"Listen, King;" said Shea. "I don't want to be a champion, and I'm not a liar. I can prove it. And I've got obligations. I really come from a land as far from the land of the Gaels as it is from Tir na n-Og and, if I don't get back there soon, I'm going to be in trouble."

"Miach!" called the King. "Is it the truth he is telling?"

The druid stepped forward, said, "Fetch me a bowl of water," and when it was brought, instructed Shea to dip a finger in it. Then he made a few finger-passes, murmuring to himself, and looked up.

"It's of the opinion I am," he said, "that this Mac Shea has obligations elsewhere, and if he fails to fulfill them, a most unfavorable geas would come upon him."

"We may as well be comfortable over a mug of beer in deciding these questions," said the King. "We command you to follow us."

Belphebe had been dabbing at Shea's shoulder. Now she caught his hand and they went in together. The big sword was awkward, and they had taken his scabbard as well, but he clung to it anyway. When they were inside, and King Briun had seated himself again, he said, "This is a hard case, and requires thinking, but before we give judgment, we must know what there is to know. Now, what is this of a new magic?"

"It's called sympathetic magic," said Shea. "I can show Miach how to do it, but I don't know the old tongue, so he'll have to help me. You see — I've been trying to get back to my own place, and I can't do it because of that." He went on to explain about the court of Maev and Ailill, and the necessity of rescuing Pete and getting back with him. "Now," he said, "if someone will give me a little clay or wax, I'll show you how sympathetic magic is done."

Miach came forward and leaned over with interest, as someone brought a handfull of damp clay to Shea, who placed it on a piece of wood and formed it into a rather crude and shapeless likeness of the seated King. "I'm going to do a spell to make him rise," said Shea, "and I'm afraid the effect will be too heavy if you don't chant. So when I start moving with my hands, you sing."

"It shall be done," said Miach.

A verse or two of Shelley ought to make a good rising spell. Shea went over it in his head, then bent down and took hold of the piece of wood with one hand, while he murmured the words and with the other began to make the passes. He lifted the piece of wood. Miach's chant rose.

So did a shriek from the audience. Simultaneously an intolerable weight developed on Shea's arm, a crack zigzagged across the floor, and he half-turned his head in time to see that the royal palace and all its contents were going up like an elevator, already past the lower branches of the trees, with one of the spectators clinging desperately to the doorsill by his finger-tips.

Shea stopped his passes and hastily began repeating the last line backward, lowering his piece of wood. The palace came down with a jar that sent things tumbling from the walls and piled the audience in a yelling heap. Miach looked dazed.

"I'm sorry," began Shea. "I . . ."

Patting his crown back into position, King Briun said, "Is it ruining us entirely you would be?"

Miach said, "O King, it is my opinion that this Mac Shea has done no more than was asked, and that this is a very beautiful and powerful magic."

"And you could remove the geas on this woman and return the pair to their own place?"

"On the wings of the wild swan."

"Then hear our judgment." King Briun stretched forth a hand. "It is the command of the gods on all of us to help others fulfill their obligations, and this we will do. Yet it is equally true that a doing should be met with a doing in return, and this we cannot escape. Now, Mac Shea has killed our champion, and does not wish to take his place. There must be a balance against this, and we set it that it shall be this wonder-working bow of his wife's, which if it is as good as his magic, will surely shoot holes through the walls of the mountains."

He paused and Shea nodded. The man could be quite reasonable after all.

"Secondly," Briun went on, "there is the matter of removing his wife's geas. Against this we will place the teaching of this new magic to our druid. Now respecting the transfer of these two to their own country, there is no counterweight, and it is our judgement that it should be paid for by having Mac Shea undertake to rid us of the sinech, since it is so troublesome a monster and he is so great a champion and magician."

cont on pg 32

WE GOT OUR WORK CUT OUT... LOOK AT THAT CROWD!
YUP...
WORMY
8
YEAH? WELL I KNOW HOW TO HANDLE THESE LICHEN-THROATS.
THAT WEREBOAR IS GIVING IRVING A HARD TIME, FRANK.
LEGGO MY NOSE!!
OW!
WHO ARE YOU CALLING A WART-HOG?!
GRUNCH!
HNK!
GOOD WOIK, FRANK!
GOOD FOR ANOTHER DWARF-BURGER, I HOPE.
DUDLY, THIS IS A DIRTY BUSINESS.
YUP... I GET THE NEXT GUY.
TRAMP

Finieous Fingers, Fred & Charly in: Grond Invents the Hamburger or . . . Chicken Little Strikes Again

"Just a minute," said Shea. "That doesn't help us find Pete or get him back, and we'll be in trouble if we don't. And we really ought to do something for Cuchulainn. Maev is going through with her plan against him."

"We would most willingly help you in this matter, but you have no other prices to pay."

Miach said, "Yet there is a way to accomplish all they ask, save the matter of the man Pete, in the finding of whom I have no power."

Briun said, "You will be telling us about it, then."

"Touching the geas," said Miach. "Since it is one that was imposed, and not a thing natural, it can be lifted at the place and in the presence of the druid who laid it, and it will be needful for me to accompany these two to the place where it was put on. Touching the sinech, it is so dreadful a monster that even Mac Shea will be hard put against it by his own strength. Therefore let us lend him the great invincible sword of Nuada, which is forbidden to us by its geas, but which he will be able to handle without trouble, at all. Then he can lend it to this hero Cuchulainn, who will make a mighty slaughter of the Connachta we detest, and as I will be with the sword and Mac Shea, I can see that it is returned."

The King leaned his chin on one hand and frowned for a minute. Then he said, "It is our command that this be done as you advise."

IX

Miach was an apt pupil. At the third try he succeeded in making a man he did not like break out in a series of beautiful yellow splotches, and he was so delighted with the result that he promised Shea for the hunting of the sinech not only the sword of Nuada, but the enchanted shoes of Iubdan, that would enable him to walk on water. He explained that the reason for the overcharge in Shea's magic was that the spells were in the wrong tongue; but, as the magic wouldn't work at all without a spell of some kind and Shea didn't have time to learn another language, this was not much help.

About the sinech itself he was more encouraging. He did a series of divinations with bowls of water and blackthorn twigs. Although Shea himself did not know enough of the magic of this continuum to make out anything but a confused and cloudy movement below the clear surface of the bowl, Miach assured him that in coming to this world of legendary Ireland, he had himself acquired a geas that would not allow his release until he had accomplished something that would alter the pattern of the continuum itself.

"Now tell me, Mac Shea," he said, "was it not so in the other lands you visted? For I see by my divinations that you have visited many."

Shea, thinking of how he had helped break up the chapter of magicians in Faerie and rescued his wife from the Saracens of the *Orlando Furioso*, was forced to agree.

"It is just as I am telling you, for sure," said Miach. "And I am thinking that this geas has been with you since the day you were born without your ever knowing it. We all of us have them, we do, just as I have one that keeps me from eating pig's liver, and a good man it is that does not have trouble with his geasa."

Belphebe looked up from the arrow she was shaping. Her bow was a success, but finding seasoned material from which to build shafts was a problem. "Still, master druid," she said, "it is no less than a problem to us that we may return to our own place late, and without our friend Pete. For this would place us deeply in trouble."

"Now I would not be worrying about that at all, at all," said Miach. "For the nature of a geas is that once it is accomplished, it gives you no more trouble at all. And the time you are spending in the country of the Sidhe will be no more than a minute in the time of your own land, so that you need not be troubling until you are back among the Gaels."

"That's a break," said Shea. "Only I wish I could do something about Pete."

"Unless I can see him, my divination will not work on him at all," said Miach. "And now I am thinking it is time for you to try the shoes. King Fergus of Rury was eat up by this same sinech because he did not know how to use them, or another pair like them."

He accompanied Shea to one of the smaller lakes, not haunted by sinechs, and the latter stepped out cautiously from the shore. The shoes sank a little, forming a meniscus around them, but they seemed to give the lake-water beneath a jellylike consistency just strong enough to support him. A regular walking motion failed to yield good results. He found he had to skate along, and he knew that, if he tripped over a wave, the result would be unfortunate. The shoes would not keep the rest of him from breaking through the surface and, once submerged, would keep his head down. But he found he could work up quite good speed and practiced making hairpin turns until night put an end to the operation.

Next morning they went out in a procession to Loch Gara, the haunt of the monster, with King Briun, Belphebe, and the assorted warriors of the Tuatha De Danaan. The latter had spears, but they did not look as though they would be much help. Two or three of them fell out and sat under trees to compose poems, and the rest were a dreamy-eyed lot.

Miach murmured a druid spell, unwrapped the sword of Nuada, and handed it to Shea. It was better balanced than his own broadsword, coming down to a beautiful laurel-leaf point. As Shea swung it appreciatively, the blade began to ripple with light, as though there were some source of it within the steel itself.

He looked around. "Look, King," he said, "I'm going to try to do this smart. If you'll cut down that small tree there, then hitch a rope to the top of that other tree beside it. We'll bend down the second tree . . ."

Under his direction the Tuatha did away with one tree and bent the other down by a rope running to the stump of the first. This rope continued on, Shea holding the rest of it in a coil. "Ready?" he called.

"We are that," said King Briun. Belphebe took up her shooting stance, with a row of arrows in the ground beside her.

Shea skated well out in the lake, paying out the rope, which dragged in the water behind him. The monster seemed in no hurry to put in an appearance.

"Hey!" called Shea. "Where are you, sinech? Come on out, Loch Ness!"

As if in answer, the still surface of the lake broke like a shattered mirror some fifty yards away. Through the surface there appeared something black and rubbery, which vanished and appeared again, much closer. The sinech was moving toward him at a speed which did credit to its muscles.

Shea gripped the rope with both hands and shouted, "Let her go!"

The little figures on shore moved around, and there was a tremendous tug on the rope. The men had untied the tackle, so that the bent tree sprang upright. The pull on the rope sent Shea skidding shoreward as though he were water-skiing behind a motorboat. An arrow went past him and then another. Shea began to slow down, then picked up again as a squad of King Briun's soldiers took hold of the rope and ran inland with it as fast as they could. His theory was that the sinech would ground, and in that condition could be dispatched by a combination of himself, the soldiers with spears, and Belphebe's arrows.

But the soldiers on the rope did not yank hard enough to take up all the slack before Shea slowed down almost to a stop. Still twenty yards from shore, he could see the sandy bottom below him,

looking a mere yard down.

Behind him he heard the water boiling and swishing under the urge of the sinech's progress. Shea risked a glance over his shoulder to catch a glimpse of a creature somewhat like a mosasaur, with flippers along its sides. Just behind the pointed, lizard-like head that reared from the water, a pair of arrows projected. Another had driven into its cheek-bone, evidently aimed for the eye.

The instant of looking back brought Shea's foot into contact with a boulder that lay with perhaps an inch projecting from the surface. Over it and down he went, head first into the water of the marge. The sinech's jaws snapped like a closing bank-vault door on empty air, while Shea's head drove down until his face plowed into the sand of the bottom. His eyes open under the water, he could see nothing but clouds of sand stirred up by the animal's passage. The water swished around him as the sinech came in contact with solid ground and threshed frantically in its efforts to make progress.

The shoes of Iubdan kept pulling Shea's feet up, but at last he bumped into the boulder he had stumbled over. His arms clawed its sides and his head came out of water with his legs scrambling after.

The sinech was still grounded, but not hopelessly so. It was making distinct progress toward Belphebe, who valiantly stood her ground, shooting arrow after arrow into the creature. The same glance told him that the spearmen of the Tuatha De Danaan had taken to their heels.

The monster, engrossed in Belphebe as its remaining opponent, threw back its head for a locomotive hiss. Shea, skating toward it, saw her bend suddenly and seize up one of the abandoned spears to distract it from him. Tugging out the sword of Nuada, he aimed for the sinech's neck, just behind the head, where it lay half in and half out of water, the stiff mane standing up above Shea's head. As he drove toward the creature, the near eye picked him up and the head started to swivel back.

In his rush, he drove the sword in up to the hilt, hoping for the big artery.

The sinech writhed, throwing Shea back and ejecting the sword. There was a gush of blood so dark it looked black, the animal threw back its head and emitted a kind of mournful whistling roar of agony. Shea skated forward on his magical shoes for another shot, almost stumbling over the neck, but reaching down to grasp a bunch of mane in his left hand, and climbing aboard, cutting and stabbing.

The sinech threw back its head violently, it seemed to a height of thirty feet. Shea's grip on the mane was broken, and he was thrown through the air. All he could think of was that he must hang on to the sword. He had hardly formulated this thought before his behind struck the water with a terrific splash.

When he got his head out against the resistance of the shoes at the other end of his anatomy, the sinech was creaming the water with aimless writhings, its long head low on the bank, and its eyes already glassed. The sword of Nuada had lived up to its reputation for giving mortal wounds, all right. Shea had to develop a kind of side-winding dog paddle to carry him into shallow water past the throes of the subsiding monster.

Belphebe waded out to help Shea to his feet, regardless of the wet. She put both arms around him and gave him a quick, ardent kiss, which instantly doubled him over with cramps. Behind her the Sidhe were trickling out of the wood, headed by King Briun, looking dignified, and Miach, looking both amazed and pleased.

Shea said, "There's your job. Do you think that lets me out from under that geas you say I've got?"

Miach shook his head. "I am thinking it will not. A rare fine change you have made in the land of the Sidhe, but it is to the land of men you belong, and there you must do what is to be done. So we will just be going along to see if you can avert the fate that hangs over this Cuchulainn."

X

Shea and Belphebe were bouncing along in a chariot on the route from the section of Tir na n-Og corresponding to Connacht to the other-world equivalent of Muirthemne in Ulster. They had agreed with Miach, who was coming in another chariot, that this would be better than to re-enter as they had come and possibly have to fight their way through hostile Connacht, even though he was wearing the invincible sword of Nuada.

The country around seemed very similar to that from which they had come, though the buildings were generally poorer, and there were fewer of them. Indeed, none at all were in sight when they stopped at a furze-covered hill with a rocky outcrop near its base. Miach signalled his charioteer to draw up and said, "Here stands another of the portals. You are to draw off a little while I cast my spell, as this is not one of the holy days and a magic of great power is required."

From the chariot, Shea could see him tossing his arms aloft and catch an occasional word of the chant, which was in the old language. A blackness, which seemed to suck up all the light of the day, appeared around the outcrop, considerably larger than the tunnel Shea himself had opened. The charioteers got down to lead the horses, and they found themselves on the reverse slope, with Cuchulainn's stronghold of Muirthemne in the middle distance, smoke coming from its chimneys.

Shea said, "That's queer. I thought Cuchulainn was at Emain Macha with the King, but it looks as though he came back."

"By my thinking," said Belphebe, "he is most strangely set on having his own will and no other, so that not even the prophecy of death can drive him back."

"I wouldn't. . ." began Shea, but was interrupted as a horseman suddenly burst from a clump of trees to the right, and went galloping across the rolling ground toward Cuchulainn's stronghold.

Miach called from the other chariot, "That will be a warden, now. I am thinking the fine man there is expecting company and is more than a little ready to receive it."

They went down a slope into a depression where the fold of the ground and a screen of young trees on the opposite side hid the view of Muirthemne. As they climbed the slope, the charioteers reined in. Glancing ahead, Shea saw that the saplings and bushes on the crest had all been pulled down and woven into a tangle. At the same time a line of men jumped out of cover, with spears and shields ready.

One of them advanced on the travelers. "Who might you be?" he demanded truculently, "and for why are you here?"

Miach said, "I am a druid of the Sidhe, and I am travelling with my friends to Muirthemne to remove a geas that lies on one of them."

"You will not be doing that the day," said the man. "It is an order that no druids are to come nearer to Muirthemne than this line until himself has settled his differences with the Connachta."

"Woe's me!" said Miach, then turned toward Shea. "You will be seeing how your geas still rules. I am prevented from helping you at the one place where my help would be of avail."

"Be off with you, now!" the man said and waved his spear.

Behind her hand, Belphebe said to Shea, "Is this not very unlike them?"

Shea said, "By George, you're right, kid! That isn't Cuchulainn's psychology at all." He leaned toward the guard. "Hey, you, who gave the order and why? Cuchulainn?"

The man said, "I do not know by what right you are questioning me, but I will be telling you it was the Shamus."

An inspiration struck Shea. "You mean Pete, the American?"

"Who else?"

"We're the other Americans that were here before. Get him for us, will you? We can straighten this out. Tell him that Shea is here."

The man looked at him suspiciously, then at Miach even more suspiciously. He pulled a little aside and consulted with one of his companions, who stuck his spear in the ground, laid the shield beside it, and trotted off toward Muirthemne.

Shea asked, "How comes Pete to be giving orders around here?"

"Because it's the Shamus he is."

Shea said, "I recognize the title all right, but what I can't figure out is how Pete got away from Cruachain and got here to acquire it."

He was saved from further speculation by the creaking of a rapidly driven chariot, which drew up on the other side of the hedge. From it descended a Pete Brodsky metamorphosed into something like the Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's court. His disreputable trousers projected from beneath a brilliantly red tunic embroidered in gold; he had a kind of leather fillet around his head and a considerable growth of beard; and at his belt swung not one, but two obviously home-made blackjacks.

"Jeepers!" he said, "am I glad to see you! It's all right, gang — let these guys through. They're part of my mob."

Shea made room for him to climb in their chariot, and the spearmen fell back respectfully as Pete directed the driver through the winding gaps in the entanglement. When they had cleared it Shea asked, "How did you get here, anyway?"

Pete said, "It was a pushover. They had me singing until I almost busted a gut. I tried to get this Ollgaeth to send me back to Ohio, but he nixed it and said I'd have to throw in with their mob when they came over here to rub out Cuchulainn. Well, hell, I know what's going to happen to the guys in that racket. They're going to end up with their heads looking for the rest of them, and anyway I figure that if you go any here after you do your fadeout, it will be here. So one day when this Ollgaeth has me in the King's ice house showing me some of the flash, I figure it's a good chance to take along some presents. I let him have one on the conk, snatched everything I could and make a getaway."

"You mean you stole Ailill's crown jewels?" asked Shea.

"Sure. I don't owe him nothing, do I? Well, when I get here, they roll out the carpet and send for, Cuchulainn. Well, I give him a line about how this Maev mob is coming to hit him on the head, like I told him before, but I add that they're gonna put a geas on all his gang so they'll go to sleep and can't do any fighting. That was different, see? They all want to get into the act, but they can't figure what to do about it. I been watching this Ollgaeth, see, and the line I got is that if he can't get close enough, he can't make this geas business stick."

"That's good magicology," said Shea. "Couldn't Cathbadh send you home?"

"Home? What do you mean, home? They told me to go to it, so I stashed the combination around the place like we done in the army. Then they made me head shamus of the force. Do you think I want to go back to Ohio and pound a beat?"

"Now, look here . . ." began Shea, but just then the gate of Muirthemne loomed over them, with Cuchulainn and Cathbadh beside it, accompanied by a tall, beautiful woman who must be Emer.

The hero said, "It is glad to see you that I am, darlings. Your man is less beautiful than ever, but you will be handselling him to me, for I think that with his help I may escape the doom that has been predicted."

Shea climbed down and helped Belphebe out of the chariot. "Listen," he said. "Pete's already done all he can for you, and we don't dare go back to our own country without him."

Pete said, "Look, I'll write you a letter or something to put you in the clear. Leave a guy run his own racket, will you? This is my spot."

"Nothing doing," said Shea. "Go ahead, Miach."

The druid lifted his arms, mumbled one or two words, and lowered his arms again. "The geas is still upon you, Mac Shea," he said. "I cannot."

"Oh, I forgot," said Shea, and pulled the sword from his belt. "Here, Cuchulainn, this is the sword of Nuada. I borrowed it from the Sidhe for you, and it will have to go back to them after you're through, with the Connachta, who ought to be here any minute. But it will protect you better than Pete could. Does that leave us square?"

"It does that," said Cuchulainn, holding the great sword up admiringly. Light rippled and flowed along the blade.

"Now, Miach," said Shea.

Miach lifted his arms. "Hey, I don't want . . ." began Pete, as the chant rose.

Whoosh!

Shea, Belphebe, and Brodsky arrived with a rush of displaced air in the living room at Garaden, Ohio, and almost in a heap. Behind them, the door of Shea's study stood open. As the trio landed, a couple of heavy-set men with large feet turned startled faces, their hands full of Shea's papers.

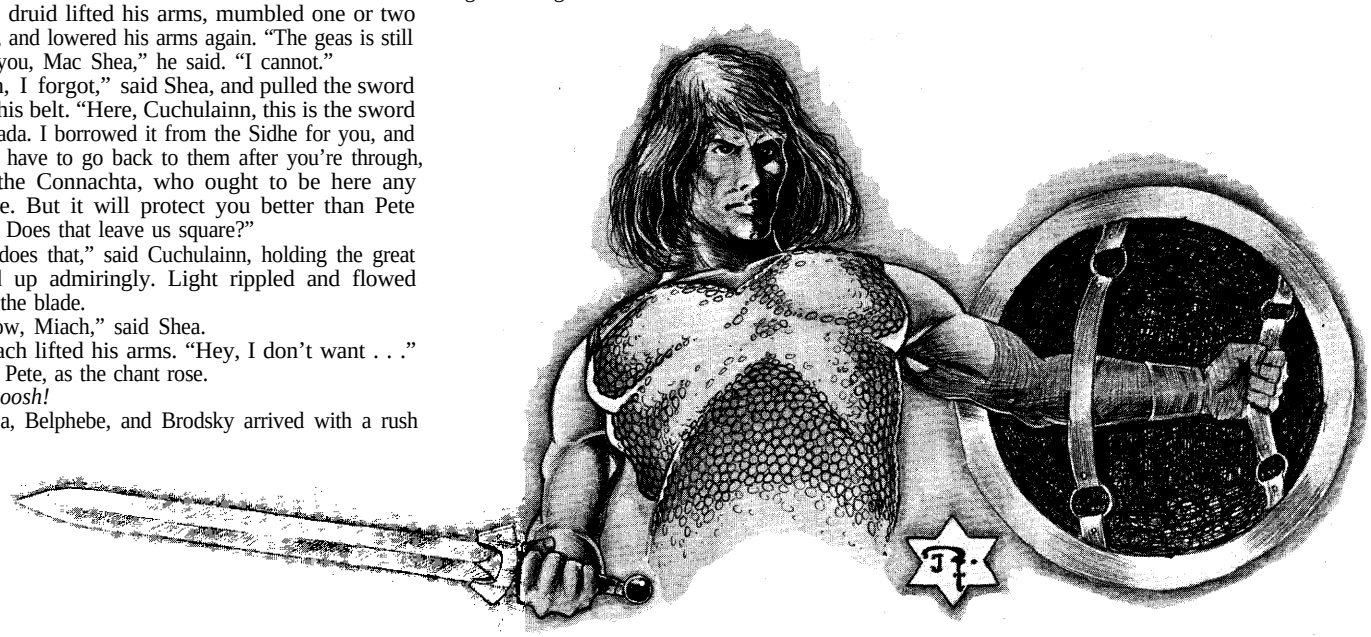
"It's them!" said one.

The other said, "And by gawd — Pete Brodsky, the synthetic harp, in a monkey suit!" They both began to laugh.

"Hell with that, you punks," said Pete. "I've had enough Ireland to last me. From now on it's *na zdorowie Polska!* See?

Shea paid little attention. He was too busy kissing Belphebe.

The End



Ninja *fr pg 10*

Ninja Tools

1) Tsuba (2 gold and one day)

This is the hilt guard of the ninja-to. The price and time listed is the modification cost and time required to modify the hilt-guard on a standard short sword of 10 gold piece cost. The tsuba was over sized so that when the ninja-to was sheathed it could be used as a first step up something. The long sageo was then used to recover the sword.

2) Osaku (1 copper, nil time)

This is a lockpick.

3) Tsuba-giri (1 silver, 4 hours)

This is a lever used to spring doors and cut locks.

4) Shikoro (5 silver, 1 week)

This is a pointed saw that cuts through wood and metal.

5) Kunai (5 silver, nil time)

This is a thin spatulate-shaped knife which is used to dig holes or bore. Ninja were able to dig holes very quickly. Some were reported able to dig faster than a mole.

6) Tatami nomi (5 silver, 1 day)

This is used to chisel out locks.

7) Escape skill

This gives a ninja the ability to dislocate his joints voluntarily. This makes it very difficult to keep him bound. Allow a 20% chance each turn the ninja is not under continuous close watch that the ninja has slipped free of any bonds. This is not cumulative and is granted each turn of effort to escape.

Ninja equipment

1) Saya (nil cost and time)

This is the scabbard of the ninja-to. It is longer than the sword so it is often used to hide powders which might then be blown at the enemy. It is also usable as a snorkel.

2) Shinobi kai (1 silver, 1½ weeks)

This is a bamboo tube that can be used to conceal a flail.

3) Shinobi kumade (2 gold, 1 day)

This is a concealable and collapsible 10 foot long climbing pole.

4) Nekade (3 gold and 4 days)

These are also called cat's claws. They are constructed similar to brass knuckles. The knuckles look like tiny claws and are worn on the inside of the hand. They are of some small benefit in hand to hand fighting. While they are worn the ninja may neither use judo nor attack open handed as a monk. They subtract 5% from the chance of falling while climbing.

5) Mizuzutsu (2 silver, ½ day)

This is a snorkle.

6) Musubinawa (1 gold, 1 week)

This is a light 20 foot long concealable rope that can hold up to thrice body weight.

7) Neru-kawa ito (10 gold, 10 days)

This is a thick laminated leather protective nonmagical shield of special value to a ninja. It is a modification of the regular wooden shield. Its value is listed below:

Shield action	user action	user type
Perfect missile protection	does not move or melee	ninja master of shield
+ 3 shield, add to saves	user moves	ninja master of shield
+ 2 shield as above	user fights	ninja master of shield
+ 3 shield	does not move or fight	ninja non-master of shield
+ 2 shield	user moves	ninja non-master of shield
+ 1 shield	user fights	ninja non-master of shield
+ 1 shield	all cases not described above	

8) Kama ikada (5 silver, 1 week)

This is a small, straw, foldable, and portable one-man raft that can be carried concealed under one's costume!

9) Mizugumo (2 silver, 2 days for two)

These are also called water-feet. They are used in pairs. They are basically rafts designed to go on each foot. They give the illusion of walking on water.

IO) Ukigusa (2 silver, 3 days)

This is a flotation device.

11) Tablets (10 gold and one week for 1-6)

A ninja is able to prepare condensed pellets of food and/or poison. The food and/or poison is obtained as normal and is then modified.

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Design Forum

GAME BALANCE

by James M. Ward

Game Balance, GAME balance, GAME BALANCE! I have heard this term loudly proclaimed by Gary Gygax, Rob Kuntz, and even a time or two by the very excellent editor of this magazine, Tim Kask. The theme for these expounders of "game balance" is almost always the same: if a dungeon master runs a give-away game it can't be a well run game and the same thing applies in the opposite direction of not giving enough to the players. When somebody as semi-awesome as Gary or Tim are telling you this it becomes very difficult for someone like me to do anything but nod my head in agreement (and maybe try to change the subject). I do not want to give the impression that the above mentioned people will not listen to a different opinion, it is just that it is very hard to hold a different position from the originators of the subject. Getting back to the concept of "game balance" it seems to me that the above mentioned people want an even balance of players getting magic items and treasure so that in their games (which are excellent by the way) the player does not have an easy time of it or too hard a time (when they stay on their proper level). For this effect they want to make sure their castles do not have magic at the rate of a gold piece a dozen. Rob especially has always thought it highly humorous and slightly insane that I like magic more than gold and gems. The time has come to present a different concept (for all you long denounced and ridiculed "Monty Hall" dungeon masters) "GAME EQUILIBRIUM".

In game equilibrium the judge does not care, and in fact likes his players to be walking magic stores. The treasure hordes in his castle usually contain some type of magic, with one difference being that the guarders of these hordes usually use the magic items they guard, example: when the iron golem is being hard pressed by several plus 3 weapons he breaks open one of the chests he was guarding and pulls out a plus 5 vorpal blade and starts swinging.

The above takes me to how the judge is going to keep his game from becoming too easy for his regular players. In game equilibrium while the judge does not care about the amount of magic his players get he does care about the ***quality*** of his monsters. Instead of rolling for the spells of the magic users and priests among his wandering monsters the judge gives them the most powerful of the attack spells, instead of rolling to see if a dragon breathes or bites the dragon always breathes the first two turns, for the higher level wandering human types they always have men at arms followers to back them up. These points are just to make the wandering monsters tougher, another aspect of game equilibrium is the toughening up of the placed monsters. The equilibrium dungeon master shies away from the simple treasure guarded by a monster type room (which can become boring fast if that is what your castle is full of), he leans toward the device guarded (must figure it out to get the treasure) type room, example: room with a large pool in the shape of a gold dragon filled with shimmering silver water, taking the liquid out causes it to turn into plain water stepping into the pool does one of six things depending on the roll of the die: 1. you are able to talk with the Platinum Dragon and he will look favorably upon you, 2. the queen of the dragons comes and breathes on you, 3. you are able to breathe as an old green dragon for one day, 4. you are granted a wish, 5. the pool tells you of a treasure on the level beneath the one you are on, 6. the pools liquid turns to stone until you are dead. When using game equilibrium in any given level with 20 placed treasure hordes 15 of them should be guarded by noncreature type things. Keeping the concept in mind do not hesitate to place 4th and 5th level monsters on your second and third levels and when your players shout, "a druid and 6 beserkers, what are they doing here?" "Guarding a great treasure, what else!" is your reply.

The final point to "game equilibrium" is what happens when your constant players get those great magic items (Rods of Absorption, Spheres of Annihilation, Wizard's Robes, etc.) and start cleaning up in your castle. The key to stopping this situation is "imagination". You start designing magic items that counteract the affects of the more powerful items on the magical charts, example: "Oh, you say that your ring of spell turning should turn that spell because you rolled and 97% of it was turned back, well didn't you notice that this magic user and his men at arms are all dressed like Vikings and the magic user is using runes not spells against you...." "Oh, you say that with your girdle of Storm giant strength you should be doing 7-42 points of damage on that puny hero? Well, this puny hero has a ring of reverse hit die and you are taking that 7-42 points damage this turn. . . ." "Oh, you say that your talisman of lawfulness should have sent that EHP to the center of the earth, well it seems that a demi-god of Set gave this EHP an amulet to protect him from just such an attack." I do not want any reader to think that this type of thing should be the case with every treasure, but 8 or 9 of them on any given level not only makes more of a challenge for the player it is more fun for you.

The end result of all the things presented above is that the judge can have many magical treasures in his or her castle without creating monsterous player characters that are unkillable. So, for all you "Monty Hall" type judges, take heart; your day is coming!

Dragon Rumbles — *cont. fr. pg. 2*

on their campaign, or ruins, or dungeon levels all day long. They become zealots of the worse kind, and the ***fun*** of gaming is lost. I have seen years-long friendships ***destroyed*** over the loss of a ***player-character;*** something that only exists in the imagination!

Our recent SNITS games are an excellent case in point. SNIT SMASHING was an experiment that was a success from our point of view. I wanted a ***fun*** game that would have wide age appeal, about ***NOTHING.*** By that, I mean that I was looking to see if a game could be successfully received if it was about nothing familiar or known. Tom Wham invented snits in another comic strip he was doing for TD at the time, and we knew we had an experimental vehicle. We had so much fun with the prototype that by the time we got it into print, we felt we should do another snit game.

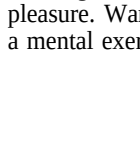
We stuck with the good things we'd learned; in fact, we even improved some of them. I had wanted a fun, fast, playable game; the initial letters and phone calls assured us we had the right idea. Our funny, fast, satirical (after all, if you can play quickie games about being a computer with hordes of bizarre little robots, or being bugs, or fighting cybernetic tanks (which I rather liked), why can't you be a snit or a bolotomus?) game was a success. SNIT'S REVENGE was even quicker, and just as much fun. At both of our last two mini-cons, SNIT'S REVENGE has been an overwhelmingly favorite tournament game.

And yet, you should hear some of the cries of anguish! They failed miserably to perceive what the two games were. TSR has been called to task for printing them by persons ignorant of what they were; a couple of fun, mildly diverting games, with no other deep significance. Must fun be sacrificed on the alter of "serious" gaming?

Wargaming conventions are supposed to be ***fun,*** but go observe a tournament and see how much fun is being had. I've judged a number of tournaments, both at Origins and GenCon, and participated in a few at earlier GenCons, and the atmosphere was seldom ***fun.*** Some of the tension can be attributed to greed-wanting to win that prize. Some can be attributed to nervousness. Where does the rest come from? I'm all in favor of concentration, but not to where it excludes pleasure. Competition is fine, and often a lot of fun, but there are groups you run across that make you glad weapons aren't allowed.

Lighten up! Hobbies are supposed to be fun, and give the hobbyist pleasure. Wargaming should not be the exception. After all, it's all just a mental exercise . . .

Timothy J Kask
Editor



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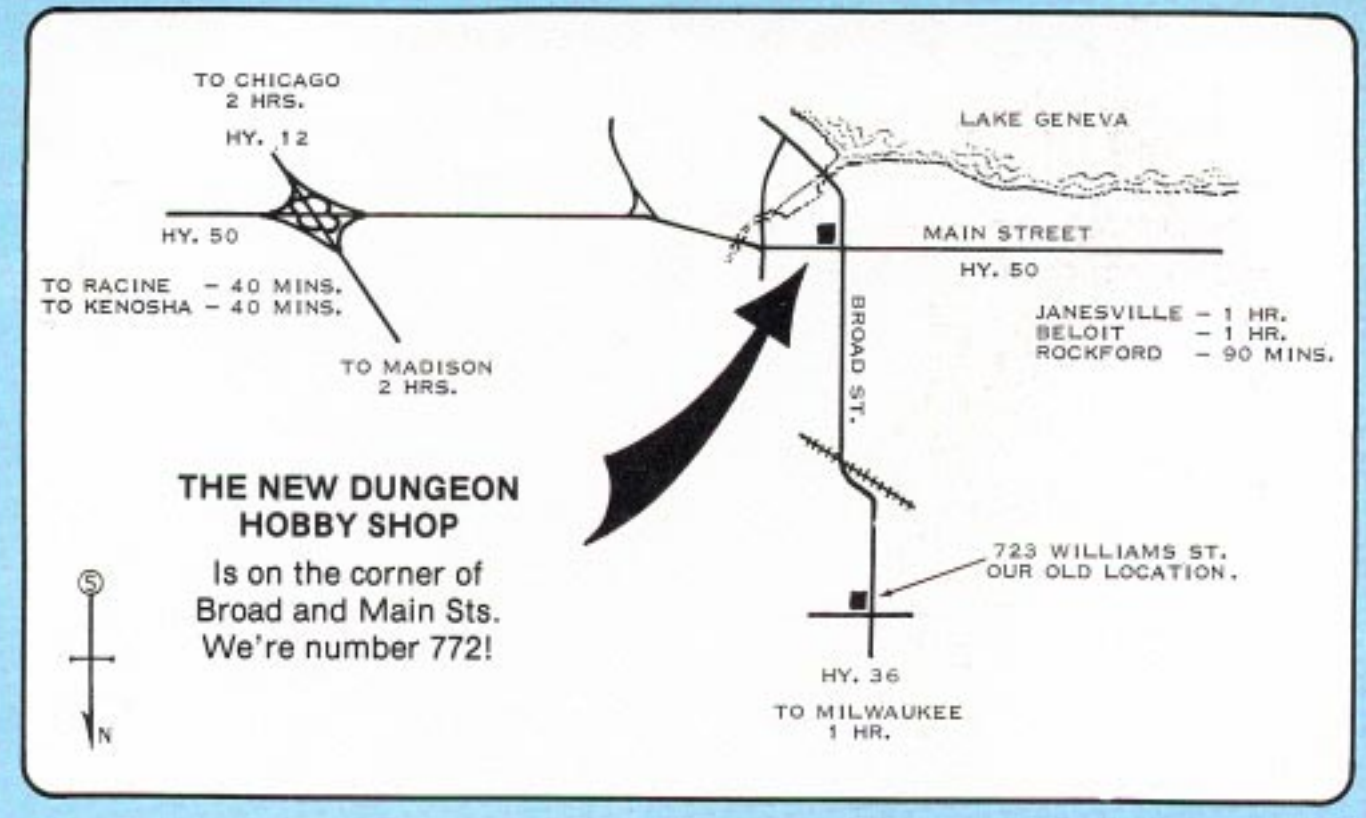

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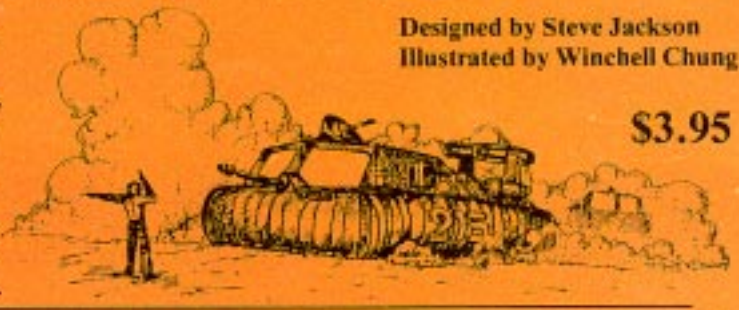

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