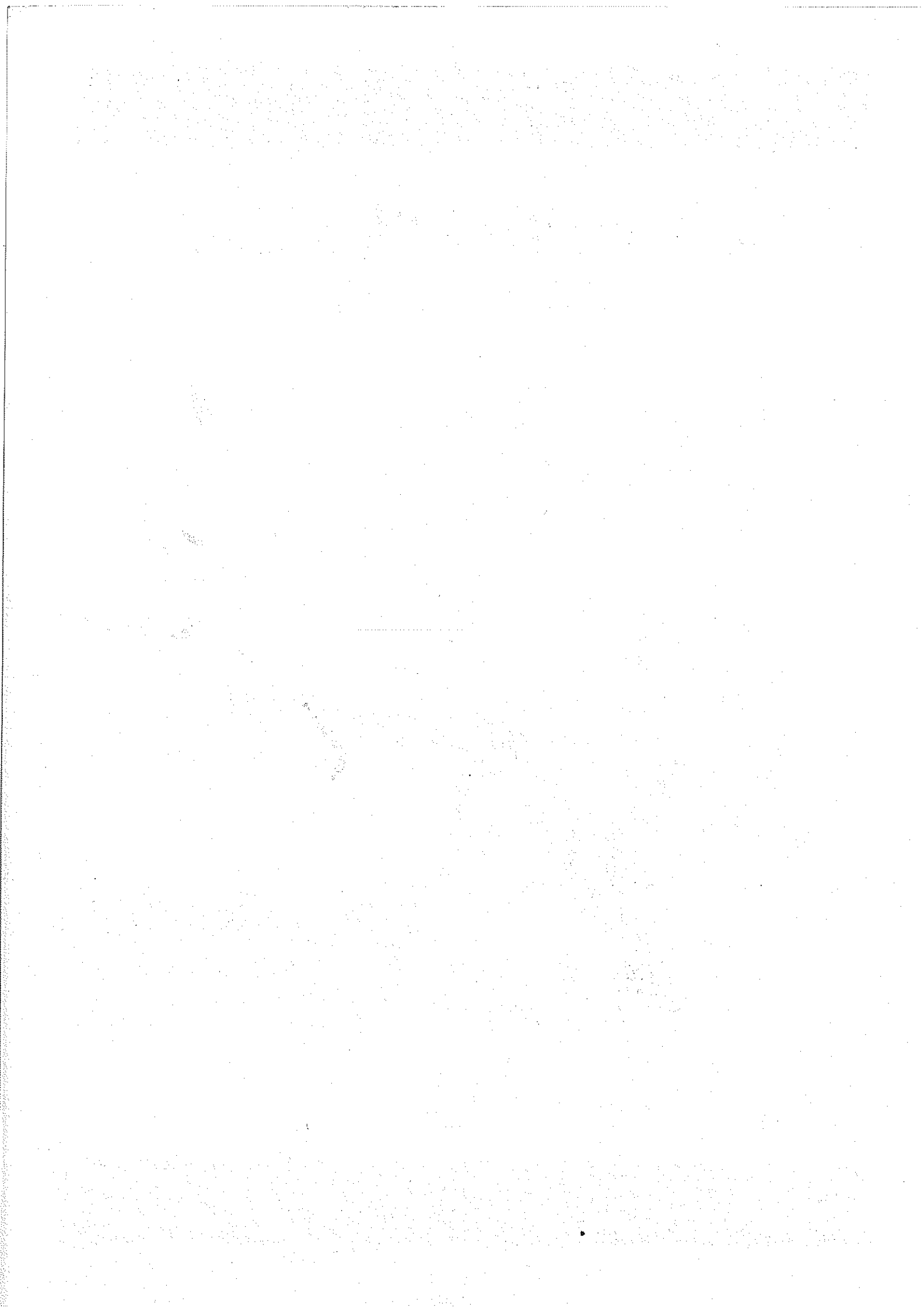


Clawmarks IX

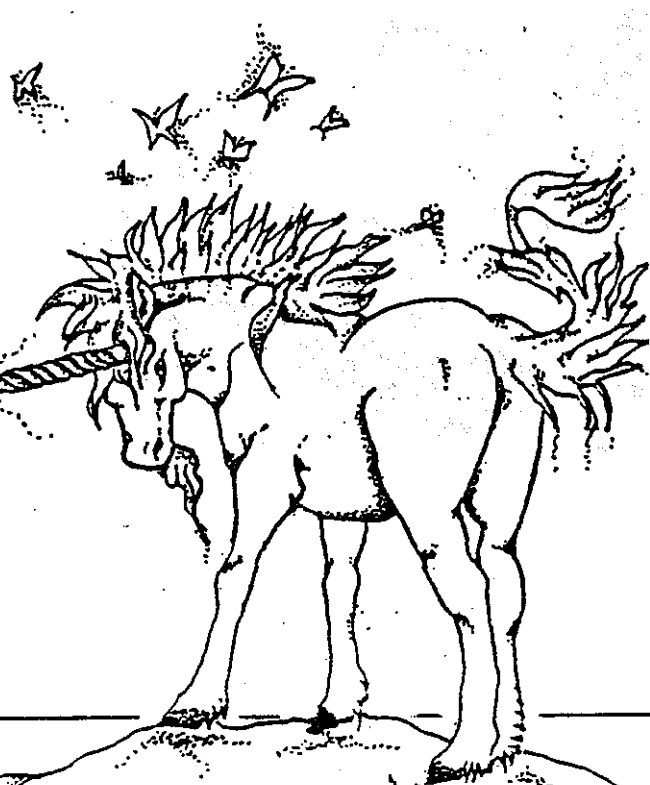


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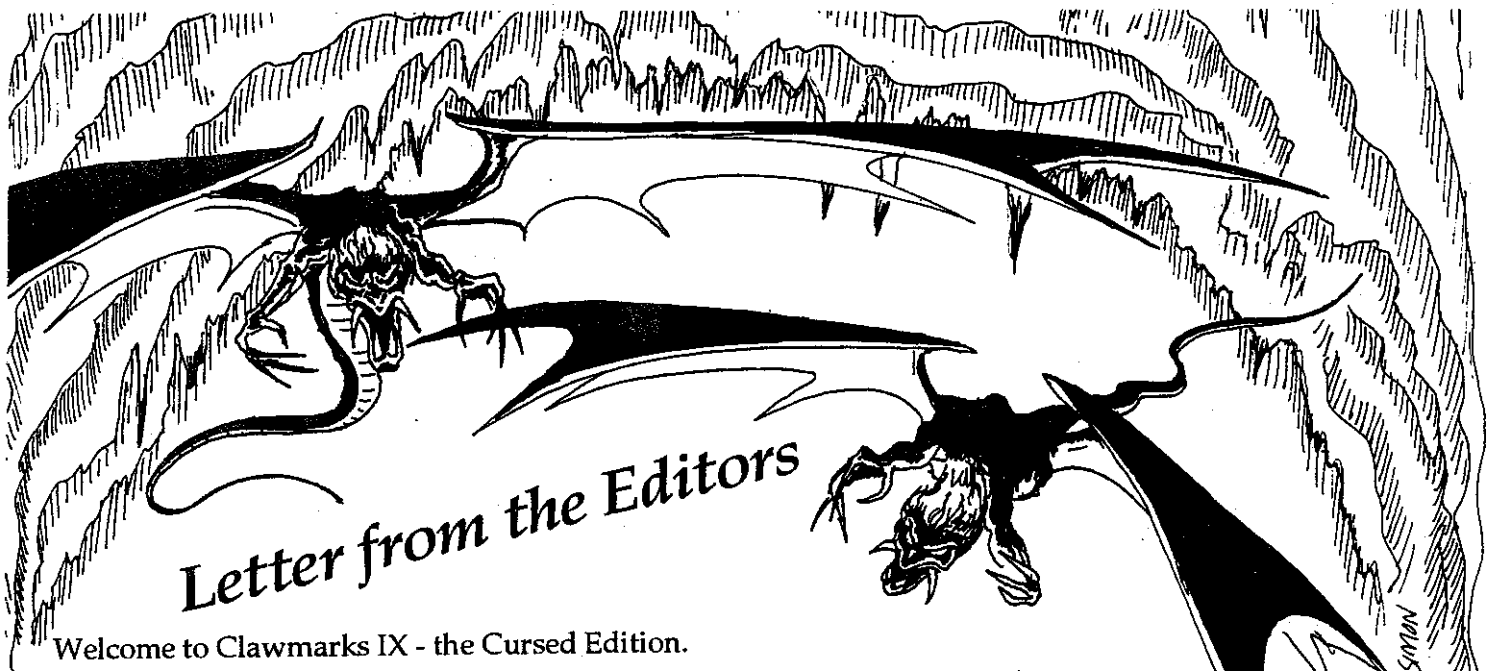


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Letter from the Editors

Welcome to Clawmarks IX - the Cursed Edition.

If you hadn't eaten your vegetables when you were little, and your parents had thrown you to the hellfiends (in this case, Dread Editors), you would probably have heard something like this...

"... gfhnjgfmhng, gggwwich pploh p eeyeah! drig, glug, little glug, crun, hairy manfrin dinginsin, tnag, tnag, gringle, iffinbneg, humbunny, nyif nyif nyif, Ny-ifgang Amadeus, nwhwwohhwohhwwohwwoh, mu-ha-ha-ha, wimbleshanks, wop wop wop, minge, more minge, subminge, minge, minge..."

Little do ye know, gentle reader, that such are the sound effects which routinely accompany the fearsome production of this, our fearsome magazine. This wodge of pages cannot manifest before you until the last shred of sanity has departed from the last editorial loon... The price is high on the arcane rituals that CLAWMARKS requires to attain its hideous life.

We think you should know that we had absolutely no intention of bringing CLAWMARKS IX out at Dragonfire. We WANTED to take our time over it. Nothing whatsoever went wrong with production or delayed us in any way. Whatsoever.

Tournament design did not monopolise the editors' time. We were not plagued by mechanical failures, nor did the computers eat our files (thereby getting terminal indigestion). Under no circumstances did the Clawthing's car stop working, nor were the computers ever double booked, nor was vital information unavailable to us. We absolutely did not start production under a waning moon.

That being established, we wish to warn you that this edition, along with Ventura and Ricky's section, is the Antichrist. Still, you're reading it (we hope), which just goes to show that bureaucratic bilgewater cannot ever hope to prevail against the seething might of CLAWs.

Diplomatic greetings to the Alpha Centauri nationals.

Minge.

Andrew *
Liza

The Neditors



Letters to the Editors

To the editors of the grotty little publication that calls itself "CLAWMARKS":

I noted with *great* disappointment upon reading your publication, CLAWMARKS VIII (only after it was lent to me by an acquaintance; I would NEVER condescend to actually paying *money* for your little bilgewater editions), that my letter to the editors in CLAWMARKS VII was to all intents and purposes ignored.

In my letter, I pointed out that the editors' policy of directing complaints to Mars was causing great consternation here; yet in CLAWMARKS VIII, the editors went so far as to give a Mars address to which complaints could be sent. Since then (a mere 6 months), 7662 complaints have been received. Furthermore, the address given happens to be a mere 2 dwellings from my own.

I resent this, and take it as a personal insult. Unless this stops IMMEDIATELY, this could well become an intergalactic incident.

Trusting that this matter will receive due attention,

Yours sincerely

Xavier Xolfonso III

Mars

P.S. I am NOT a "funny green man" - I am what you petty earthlings call PURPLE. In fact, the only colour worse than green to be on Mars is an uncivilised pseudo-pink colour. Furthermore, I am of the highest, deepest shade of purple.

Dear Funny Green Man

We've told you before, it is quite inconceivable that anyone dares to complain about us. You are obviously deluded.

We suggest that you relax and be all cosmic and, like, beautiful. None of this turning some ugly purple colour with rage.

Yours harmoniously

The Editors

Dear Editor

With reference to Mr van Heusden's article on "Gothic Darkness", CLAWMARKS VIII.

I found this pretentious, vague and self-deluded. Why, in a society whose common purpose is role-playing and nothing else, must conceited individuals attempt to create and identify themselves with a status quo? I don't know who he thinks he is speaking for, other than (obviously) himself and the sound of his own voice. An analysis of Mr van Heusden's personal problems cannot claim to be "an analysis of CLAW."

I would also like to suggest that anyone using pseudo-theoretical jargon such as "sliding signifiers" in a CLAWMARKS article, should be shot.

Irritated and individualistic CLAW-member.

Dear CLAW member

"A society whose common purpose is role-playing and nothing else?" How politically incorrect of you - what about the (hypothetical) wargamers? The Warlord will be most upset. But then, since the Warlord is Mr van Heusden, he's probably not very happy with your letter anyway.

The debate re Peter's "Gothic darkness" article continues in the Forum of this edition.

Yours in a pretense of neutrality

The Editors

Dear editors

If I may grab several quotes from the article [*Where Angels Fear To Tread*, CLAWMARKS VIII]:

"The players place a certain degree of emotional trust in the DM."

"consistency is vital"

"If the character narks you off badly and must die, subtly, - very subtly ..."

"There is every chance that several of them [the players] will be brighter than the DM"

Mr Shackleton evidently wants to have his cake and eat it too. If a character is narking you off - i.e. is not fitting in with the campaign (i.e. what the DM and other players want to achieve in that particular game, for roleplaying games are played for a whole spectrum of reasons), yet remaining alive (perhaps by playing the rules rather than a character), it is up to the DM to tell the player to, erm seek fulfillment elsewhere, or up to the other characters to bump his character off. If they have no desire to do so, then perhaps the problem is entirely in the DM's head.

Try asking your players what they think of the game (and any hypothetical narkitude of one of their number). The most dangerous assumption for a player to make is that he can only criticise a game by dropping out. The most dangerous assumption for a DM to make is to assume that if his players are not dropping out, then all is well.

Yours in anticipation of my cheque

Pemberton J. Hackensworth, Art Critic



Dear Mr Hackensworth

*We don't think one can dismiss problems that are "entirely in the DM's head". Whether or not it is a good thing, the DM's subjective reality is inevitably one of the greatest influences on any game. The DM's problems become everyone's problems, which is a good reason for choosing a DM carefully. Unfortunately, there are so few games currently available that most players will take almost any DM, just to get a chance to play. (See *Deathly Utter Destroyers of Absolutely Everything*, pg. 16 of this edition...)*

It would certainly make for more fulfilling role-playing, and a healthier social environment for all concerned, if DMs and players were to discuss their problems with one another, rather than stalking away in (dare we say Gothic?) silence and dudgeon. Sadly, we have yet to hear of a game in which the participants had the integrity and emotional maturity to manage this.

*Yours with an adverbial clause
The Editors*

Dear Ed.

Is it considered to be generally unsociable to lynch the GM? Even just a little?

... Please?

Frustrated Roleplayer

Dear Desperate Loon

Yes, it is. Go ahead.

Yours behind the guildmaster's back

The Editors

Dear Complete and Utter Bastards

How dare you in your worthless gully dwarf-like ignorance use the word plune (misspelt *ploon* by you grovelling pond scum) to represent an animal. Any grizzled mercenary from Crudden Field worth his salt will tell you that a PLUNE is a body part between the crown and the knees that one becomes aware of in times of stress (it wibbles most distressingly).

May all who misuse my words be cast into hell (or Crudden Field, whichever is worse) for eternity.

Yours cordially

Lord Annatar

(Chief Philologist to planet Earth and surrounding galaxies)

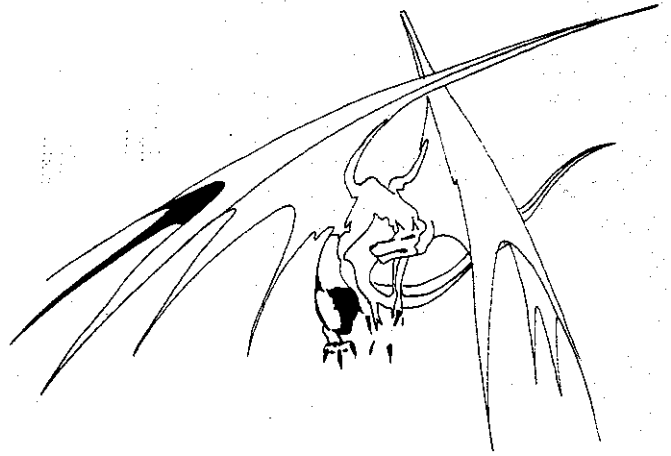
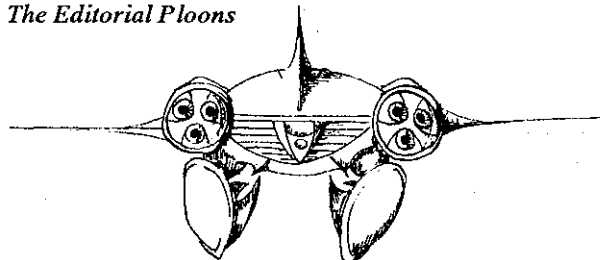
Dear ChiefPhil

Well gosh and golly! How foolish we were! How obviously we erred, oh Lord Annie. (Actually, we were under the impression that a ploon was a small geranium.) Gee whiz.

To show you just how sorry we are, we've printed a victory song on p. 46 ("War Ploons"). Enjoy.

Yours in ploonish sarcasm

The Editorial Ploons



Dear Editor

I recently returned home to find that my stamp collection had been infested with Balrogs. What can I do about this?

Concerned

Dear Concerned

Wash your cup out.

Yours

The Editors

Dear Editors

How much spon must a badger nadger before someone hits it with a large rubber object that goes meep?

Puzzled Exobiologist

Dear Scientific Person

How silly. You aren't making any sense at all. You've obviously been spending too much time in the CLAWROOM, known to be a diabolical lurk-venue, and a home to much foolery.

Keep it up.

Anyway, the answer is four and a half.

Yours with a nadgerous Ning!

The Editors

Dear Agony Aunties

I have just found out that my character is *impotent!* What must I do? I feel that this may affect my own functions, and am very worried!

Thanx

Concerned (frustrated) Roleplayer

Dear Wosname

Agony Aunties!!!????!!! What DO you think we are? Caring? My friend, we are very much on the dispensing end of the agony business.

As regards your worries, we really don't concern ourselves with messy things like corporeal forms. But there's a Puzzled Exobiologist in the letter above who may be able to help. Alternatively, read the article on swords (p. 30) and tell some poor psychologist how it makes you feel.

Yours without much interest

The Editors

Dear Editors

Did that Elven cretin Glynford Yesture, Forestall of Somewhere or Other say that he planted things in forge ash (Letters to the Editors, CLAWMARKS VIII)? I always suspected Elves were soft in the head, but terminally dim as well? Don't those pointy-eared eco-friendly forest-lovers know forge ash is toxic? Give you a quick open and shut case of heavy metal poisoning even the much vaunted Elven physique won't withstand. And mental retardation in children. Could kinda explain the whole Elven race in one go now, wouldn't it. Eating something grown in forge ash or something that ate something grown in forge ash, I ask you.

Now me, I just dump it down the nearest unused mine shaft, quick, easy and convenient. And bugger the Human village downstream I always say. Too many bleeding humans anyhow.

Dagrew Azurin, Dwarf

P.S. Ever wonder why Dwarves were never much for letter writing? You try carving granite slabs then getting some thieving Human postman to deliver them at letter rates. Or at all.

Dear Short Bearded Thing

How droll. Of course there are too many humans. That's because creatures such as yourself couldn't get their stubby little acts together to do something about it.

The human on the editorial team wants us to remind you that humans invented the dwarf spitoon, and intend to use it.

Yours in generalised loathing

The Editors

Dear Editors

What does spon mean? and nadger? and wibble? Tell, tell.

Meep

Dear Ignorant Meeper

"Wibble" is the motion made by that devastatingly silly denizen of the Cretaceous Period, the sheepsaurus (see CLAWMARKS VIII).

"Nadger" adequately describes the nadgerous activities of the nadgering followers of Nadger, Medium-sized God of Nadgering, Nadgerousness and instruments of Nadgery. We refer you to CLAWMARKS VI.

"Spon" doesn't actually have a meaning (in the normal meaning of "meaning", at least), and therefore can mean absolutely anything, and frequently does. It's all in the inflection. We refer you to the Goon Show.

Just in case you think we're trying to confuse you, one day we'll publish an article failing to explain traditional CLAW terms such as these in even more detail.

Yours smugly

The Editors



Darling Fascist Bully Boys

I have a problem.

I have a big problem.

I have a very big problem.

I have an oh my god I think I'm going to kill myself problem.

My problem is 1 foot long and covered in fur.

My problem is immortal. It just won't die.

I cannot name my problem, because then it would know I'm plotting against it. My problem knows too much. My problem must die. My problem won't die.

This is my problem.

HELP!

(I can't sign my name, otherwise IT would know.)

Dear Anonymous Gibbering Wreck

Understanding the nature of your problem, we suggest you apply the Clawthing's "little dog theory". This theory is based upon the premise that dogs are hellfiends, continually and inexorably receiving power from Dark and Raisinous Forces:

$E_D = K$: Any dog (D) has an energy level of constant K, irrespective of size (S). Therefore, large dogs (S+) need only lope about aimlessly a bit to release any excess energy for their size. Small dogs (S-), on the other hand, need to yip, jump, scamper, wriggle, bounce off walls, bite your ankles, and irritate you beyond belief to achieve the same equilibrium.

Therefore, $S + KN = mc^2 = E$ (where N = nails), i.e.: if one were to nail a small dog to the floor, thus preventing it from indulging in its moronic energy-releasing contortions, its internal energy would build up to a critical point, whereupon it would explode. In this somewhat messy manner, eventual harmony may be achieved.

Yours in experimental curiosity

The Editors

P.S. If the above theory cannot be applied to your Problem, we suggest you send the Problem to Mars. There's a little green twit there that needs it for a galactic incident or something. - the Eds.

Dear Committee of Loony Abnormal Wooses

We as concerned kommunititsleiers are very worried [sic, and we MEAN sic - the Eds] about subversiveness and general sponness what is spreading from your klub.

Please stop it now or we shall be forced to take extreme violent measures what are not comparable at all to your illusory painful violence.

Us

Dear Whoever Wrote That Letter

Sorry, we of the editorial staff only speak Taiwanese. Didn't understand a word you said.

Perhaps we should refer you to our reply to the letter written by a certain "Big Broer", in CLAWMARKS VII. He seemed to suffer from the same delusions of significance that you do. How mindnumbingly stupid of all of you.

Yours in Taiwanese

The Editors

Dear Sirs

Mr. Shackleton writes in the Forum in Clawmarks 8: "the call of darkness cannot be ignored, but neither must it be wallowed in".

I could not agree more, for we must be cognisant of the call of darkness, but beware its message. To "wallow in" the dark is to lay yourself open to THEM. They have many bodies, but a single mind, and cannot die.

Advanced infra-red satellite photography has recently shown small patches of slightly elevated temperature in remote regions of Antarctic mountains during the dark Antarctic winter. These cannot be explained by any hypothesis other than that they are finally coming out onto the ice.

They are calling! Cape Town, due to proximity to their home, and certain geomagnetic phenomena of Table Mountain, is particularly susceptible. Their voice whispers over the waves, from beyond the horizon, from the continent of the night. They have been on this earth longer than man! We must resist! They are planning to emerge from their caves of ice and stone and slither across the ocean floor. We must fight the dark!

CLAWs is already heavily under their subtle influence. Several of the influential members are already controlled by them, although they do not know it. The proof is that upon opening the skull of an afflicted member, a giant tapeworm will be found eating into the brain (similar to the condition that afflicted Dr. H. F. Verwoerd in the last months of his life).

They have another fate in store for those foolish enough to knowingly become their servants. These unlucky individuals will be subjected to mutation experiments induced by mind-control microwaves while in R.E.M. states (accompanied by nightmares). Early symptoms will include radiation sickness, abnormal hair growth (particularly on the palms of hands), unusually pale skin, double fingernails, extra teeth, excessive moles, warts or other skin blemishes, avoidance of sunlight, mood swings, depression and growth of extra appendages and limbs.

Eventually they plan to split mankind into several subject races, specialised for various tasks, and as a source of meat.

They created man by introducing reptilian genes into apes. We have risen up against them once before (forcing them to retreat to their favored climes -- freezing darkness), but they have slept long, and planned even longer since then to take back their possessions. Their evil festers under the ice, like black puss in a pimple. We can defeat them again, if we remember.

Yours
Concerned



Dear Unfortunate Individual

Yes, we see you have something to be concerned about. Yes indeed. And here is perhaps the only solution that will work for you:

- 1. Purchase a handgrenade and the sheet music for "Evita".*
- 2. Place the handgrenade in your mouth.*
- 3. Remove and discard the pin, and wait for ten seconds.*
- 4. Try to sing "Evita".*
- 5. If 4. is successful, return to 1.*

Repeat as often as necessary.

Yours in euthenasiacal glee

The Sirs AND Ladies of the Editorial Team

Dear Editors

Congratulations! You've got this far through the letters section, and not one single letter to the editors has been written by the Editors. This has got to be a record. Well done!

We'd also just like to say what a scintillatingly brilliant journalistic masterpiece we think CLAWMARKS is. Keep it up!!

Yours enthusiastically

The Editors

Dear Editors

Damn. You would have to go and spoil it, wouldn't you. You're probably Editors, or something.

On the other hand, we do agree with your truly objective and constructive assessment of CLAWMARKS.

Yours predictably

The Editors

FOR ATTENTION: THE ARCH-BIGOT OF
NECROPOLIS (wherever he may be):

Dear "Arch-bigot"

Of course Computer Scientists use more acronyms than politicians. Computer Scientists use hardly any politicians at all.

Bill "Mr Logic" von Furry-Creature
BSc (Hons) ComSci, UCT

You, too, can send lettuce to the editors!

Write your gibbering nonsense (or even sense) to:

CLAWMARKS

CLAWs UCT

c/o the SRC

UCT

Private Bag

Rondebosch 7700

Metaphysica - mentis et spiritus

being an address to the Criamon Domus Magnus, at the Cave of Twisting Shadows, given by the Arch Mage Belisarius, Spring 1198 AD

Translated from the Latin by Andrew Sturman

Esteemed Colleagues,

Today I will discuss my thoughts on the matter of one of the greatest enigmas of the Order, the Metaphysics of Spirit and Soul.

We know that our magic has limitations, that it cannot affect the Immortal Soul, but can affect the spirit and the body. Thus I feel it important that we understand the relationship between these 3 facets of our being, their functions and limitations. Much of what I say today is only my considered opinion, and requires further research. Indeed, further research can only improve our understanding of this deepest of enigmas.

First let us consider what we know of the human. Church doctrine and our own researches have shown the person to be of 3 primary parts: the soul, our immortal spark of the divine fire; the body, our mortal shell and abode in this life; and our spirit, whose exact nature I will return to.

THE SOUL

In the first case, what is this Soul? We are told that we possess a soul, whereas animals do not. That our soul is immortal, and a spark of the Divine, is the most basic of Church doctrine.

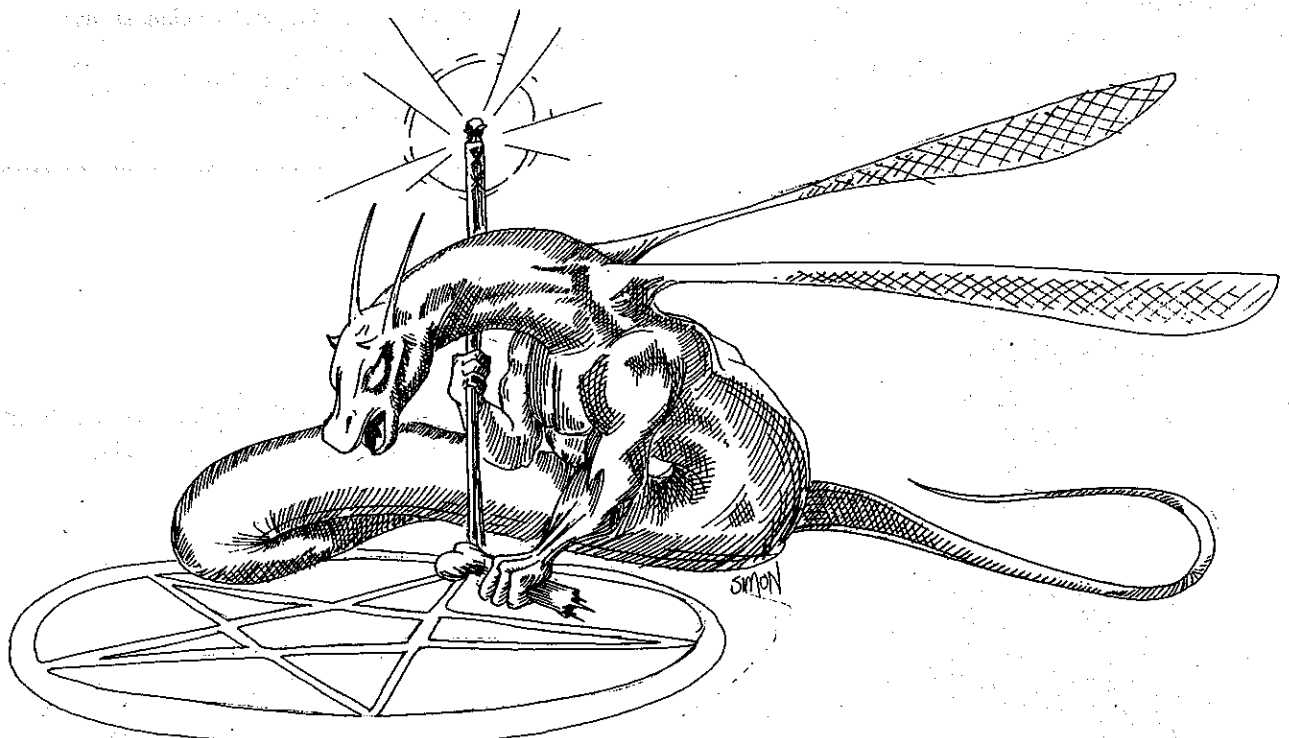
Emotion:

Our soul is our seat of conscience, that which knows sin and virtue, and our source of the higher emotions - Love, Hope, Faith, Honour. Also possibly the darker but still eternal emotions of Loss and Despair, and the emotions surely from Hell, those of Hate, Cruelty, Pride, Jealousy, and so forth. An animal cannot truly be cruel, or hate, so these emotions must be of the soul, as an animal has both spirit and body. Only the lower emotions are of the body, for example Lust, Greed, Ecstasy, Fear, Rage, Pain.

The primary difference that separates man from animal, if one ignores our separate origins, is surely our sense of self, of sentience: "I". Therefore, this gift of sentience must be what is granted to us by our souls, the gift of God to know ourselves, and to have faith in Him. It is this self which can know sin, and have free will.

The mind:

If then, the soul is the seat of our selfhood, is it also the seat of our mind, our marvellous faculties of memory and learning? No, this cannot be, as my experiments on animals have shown. Even a dog can remember its master and learn new tricks, thus the mind must be within the body or spirit. As we know from practitioners of the shamanic arts of spirit projection, without the spirit, the body slumbers deeply,



without awareness. Thus the intellect must surely be part of the spirit.

THE SPIRIT

Indeed, it seems that the spirit is of two major parts. Most prominent of these two is the mind, with memory and intellect, but without a soul, lacking sentience. Second of these is what I call the *animus*. This animus is the bridge between spirit and body, the faculty by which the thoughts of the mind and desires of the soul become actions of the body.

The Animus:

Without the animus, the body is useless; and although life remains within it, it does not respond, and seems as a sleeper. Thus when the animus has left the body, as occurs in the shamanic spirit projection, no action is possible in the body, even though the soul is still within the body (for the soul cannot leave a body while the body still lives, except perhaps by the darkest magics).

Possession:

When a person suffers possession by ghost or demon, their spirit is suppressed, and the invading spirit's animus takes control of their body. The fact that their entire spirit becomes dormant is clear in that when exorcised of the foreign spirit, they have no memory of the period of possession (we shall return to the topic of roaming spirits).

Undead:

My colleagues who practice the Art of Necromancy have long been aware of the concept of the two parts of spirit, and know that a minor undead servant can be created by binding just the animus of a spirit into a corpse. This produces an automaton which responds only to the mage's specific commands. The full spirit must be bound into a corpse for a servant with the ability to follow more complex orders. The Greater Undead (like the Vampire and the Lich), those with sentience and magical powers, are beyond our magic to create as they must either have connections to the Infernal Powers, or have their souls still within their dead bodies, tied there by use of powerful magic or curse. The animus is also

Spirit Blade

Description: A single-edged shortsword carved of bone (human thigh bone), with an intricately carved handle and skull hilt (with green turquoise eyes) with a tuft of black hair on the end.

Powers: It does +5 damage to ghosts, spirits, and creatures in spiritual form (including demons). Each point of damage subtracts 1 might point from the spirit. Spirits fear this item. It has a constant vision of the haunting spirit on it so the user can see spirits.

the target of the *rego corporem* magics which control another's body.

It is also known that the simpler the mind of a creature, the easier it is to bind its spirit into undeath. Many apprentices experiment on undead animals.

Arts:

I theorise that our art of animal affects only creatures without a soul, whereas our art of *corporem* affects the bodies and *animi*, and *mentem* the mind, of creatures with a soul (or links to soul - like demons and some faeries).

Fate of the Spirit:

Now if the soul is immortal and the body mortal, what then is the fate of the spirit? My extended studies, over the period of several centuries, have led me to the conclusion that after death, the earthbound spirit slowly fades. Its memories and personality slowly attenuate, until after centuries only



the raw animus remains. It is these animi that become the in-human nature spirits and elementals.

This fading of the spirit only occurs if the spirit remains on the mortal plane after death. The spirit will leave this realm with the soul if the soul's final resting place is clear upon death. Thus saints' and crusaders' souls and spirits travel directly to Heaven, the damned souls of diabolists are sucked down with their spirits directly to Hell, and the pagan souls and spirits of brave Viking warriors are carried to the Halls of Valhalla before their fallen bodies have cooled.

Summoning of Spirits:

Such spirits which are beyond the mortal realms are impossible to summon using our necromantic arts (although it is said that black magicians or demons with infernal powers can raise spirits of the damned).

It is the spirits less certain of their final destination who are accessible by our summoning. The spirits of souls in Purgatory, or of pagan souls, can be summoned as ghosts.

Ghosts:

One can also summon the restless spirit of a lost soul, one which cannot go to its final rest, due to an unfinished important task, unfulfilled revenge or lack of proper burial. These spirits often manifest as ghosts, haunting the area of their death.

A point of interest is that a ghost or spirit is without emotion as emotions are either of the soul or body. A spirit can still have the memory of emotions, and so can express hatred for their murderer, love for family members, and so forth, but emotion is no longer a driving factor in their personality. Of course, should a spirit inhabit a body, then emotions can return, such as the vengeful revenant spirit.

Projected Spirits:

Skull of Alexandros the Sage

Description: A yellowed skull with the word Alexandros carved on its brow.

Powers: When the word Alexandros is spoken over the skull, the sage's ghost is summoned forth, arriving in 1-10 rounds. A cold wind rises through the room, and the sage's weak, tired voice responds in Greek: "Yes, who disturbs the Shade of Alexandros?" Once the user has answered, the ghost materialises and can be posed questions (5 each day) or tasks requiring his materialisation or movement powers (eg. moving a marker on a map, writing up to 6 words). The sage cannot be summoned in a Dominion aura.

In a similar way, the spirit projected by a soul may exhibit emotions and sentience. Examples of this are the astral bodies sent out by Shamans, and demons which are the evil spirits projected by devils (damned souls and fallen angels in Hell).

PAGANS AND FAERIES

There remain two problems with my theory. One is what the fate of pagan souls is, if they do not go to Hell. The second is that, if the soul is the sentient part of a being, how is it that Faeries, which are believed not to have souls, appear to be self-aware. I believe these two problems to be related.

Faeries:

My colleagues in House Merinita, in their study of the Fey, have developed an interesting theory. This is that many of the inhabitants of Arcadia, Faeryland, were once men. This can be seen by their use of ancient farming methods - growing barley, and their preference for bronze weaponry. Indeed, the Merinita believe these Fey folk are refugees who fled advancing invaders by crossing into the Undying Lands. There, with the centuries, they have developed some faery powers and become alien to present dwellers. Thus the reason that some Faeries act like they have souls is because they do, if very pagan souls at that.

Another possibility is that many pagan religions believe that their dead go to other realms, domains of their gods. The descriptions of these other realms in most cases matches that of parts of Arcadia. Thus it is possible that parts of Arcadia are realms where dead pagan souls go to be with their gods - the Old Ones of Arcadia. These souls can project their spirits back to the mortal realm, as ghostly guardians or ancestor spirits of their people. Older, more powerful spirits may take on physical form, becoming very like the more powerful faeries.

Reincarnation:

Another strong feature of pagan belief is belief in reincarnation. The soul is reincarnated into a new body with a new spirit. This is why the newborn does not have memories of previous lives, as the memories reside in the spirit.

Lesser faeries:

The old spirit is left behind to slowly fade, and this spirit may be incorporated into a magically created body, to form the lesser faerie, sprites, goblins etc., who only have lower, bodily emotions. Thus the lesser faeries do not have souls. Also the lesser faeries' humanity and distinct personality fade, until they are reduced to impersonal nature spirits.

CONCLUSION:

This, my colleagues, is my understanding of the differences between soul and spirit. As I mentioned before, further research to prove or disprove my claims is required.

Thank you.

The ghost:

Characteristics:

Magic Might 8

Int 4; Per 3;

Sta 1; Dex 2

Qik 0; Str 0;

Pre 1; Com 3

Cnf 1

Skills:

Speak Greek 5,

Read/write Greek 6,

Speak Latin 5,

Read/write Latin 5,

Area lore (History of Byzantine Empire) 3,

Legend lore (mythic beasts) 2,

Etiquette (imperial bureaucracy) 3,

Debate (philosophy) 2,

Church lore (History) 2,

Occult lore (ghosts) 3,

Humanities (philosophy) 3,

Church knowledge (theology) 1

If consulted for an entire season, he can teach as a book equal to his knowledge.



Supplementary rules - The summoning of spirits

Human ghosts can be raised by normal magic if their souls are not yet in Heaven, Hell or Arcadia. As a rule of thumb, unless clearly damned or blessed, souls may take up to a century to arrive at their final destination - treat as a 1% chance per year after death. Thus a person dead for 50 years has only a 50% chance of being able to be summoned.

This may apply only if the body has been given a proper burial (as appropriate to the religion), otherwise the soul may be trapped in the body, and spirit haunt the area until laid to rest. An animal spirit/ghost may always be raised although will seldom be of practical use.

A ghost has a magic might equal to its int+sta+confidence (and any magic aura bonus) at death. This might dwindles at about 1 point per century (roll cnf diff 6+) with int (memory) fading first, then cnf (personality), and

finally stamina, leaving just the anima to merge with the Shadow Empyrian. It can make sounds (1 might per 5 minutes), gusts of wind (free), materialise (1 might per minute) or move objects (1-5 might per round), or even possess (see possession rules in "the Maleficium"). Only a ghost with its soul (e.g. trapped in the body) can use magic.

Spirits whose souls are not on the mortal plane cannot be raised with normal hermetic magics, although spirits of the damned can be raised like normal ghosts by those with infernal ties (Goetists with the Ashen Gift) using infernal spells. So theoretically spirits of those in heaven should be accessible to pious mages but it is a sin to disturb them. Likewise for high faeries and Merinita.

It is easy for demons (depravati) to raise spirits of the damned. It costs them 1 infernal might point per point of magic might of the ghost (average 1-5). They must flee at sunrise.

New Spells for *Ars Magica*

Mendel's Missing Mage - PeIm 20

Range: Self/touch
Duration: Concentration/Sun
Spell focus: Sock puppet +1

This spell is similar to the Veil of Invisibility spell (PeIm 15), except the mage can move at a walk and even sleep while the spell remains in effect. The mage gets +3 on his concentration rolls to maintain the spell.

by Reuel Miller

THREE SPELLS FOR THE FIRE MAGE

Balefire - CrIg 35

Range: Near/Sight
Duration: Instant, aimed

This spell hurls a three foot ball of flame at the target. On impact the fireball explodes with a dull roar, igniting everything within a 5 yard radius of the point of impact. It does +20 damage on a direct hit, and +15 to the surrounding 5 yard area. The fire burns and spreads the same as a house fire.

This spell was created by Arkos the Red and has reddish flames - his sigil. Also, with a terram requisite, this can be cast on a boulder which can then be launched by a siege engine or dropped from battlements.

Neptune's Fire - CrIg 45

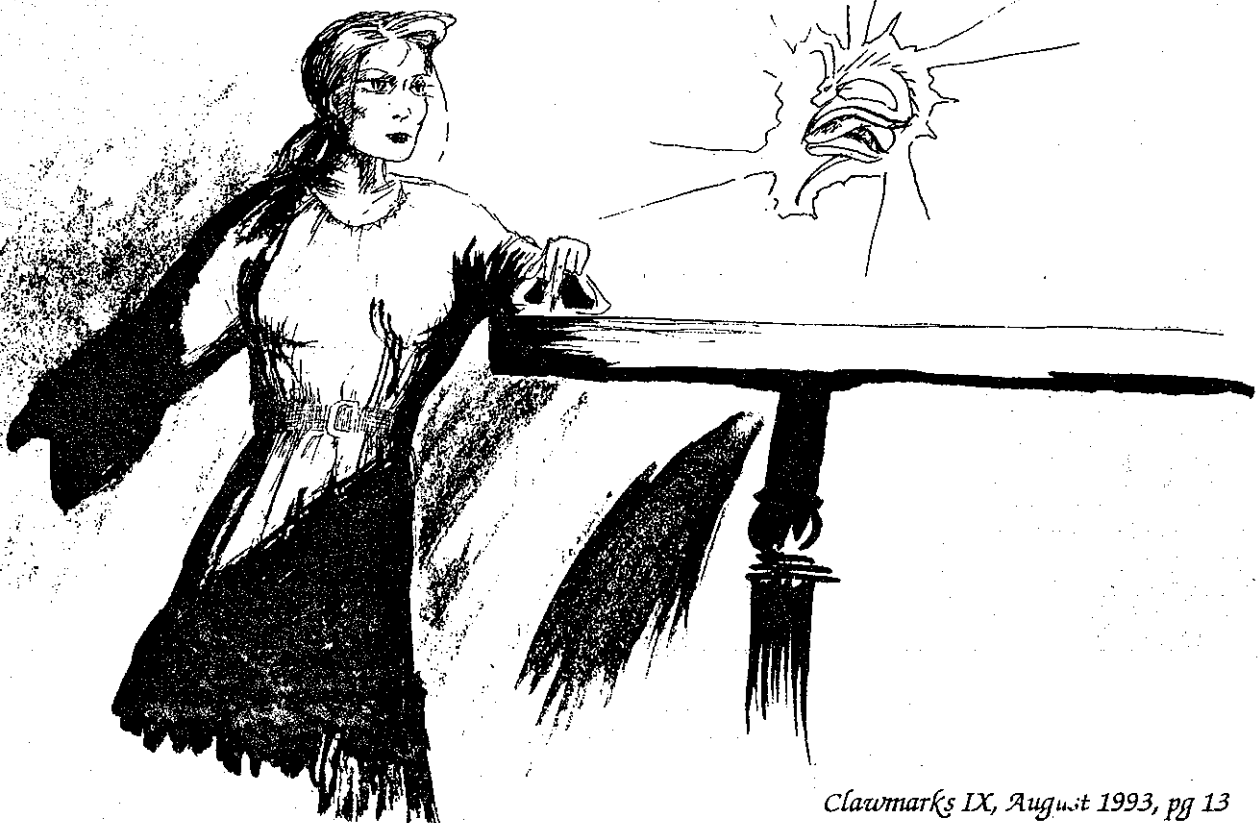
Range: Near/Sight
Duration: Instant, aimed
(aquam requisite)
Spell focus: vial of Greek fire +3

As Balefire above, but creates a virulent white fire that will burn on or even under water. Deadly against ships.

Hammer of the Sun - CrIg 50

Range: Sight
Duration: Instant, aimed
Spell focus: Dragon's tooth +2

A huge ball of golden fire that does +50 damage at the point of impact, +30 out to 15 paces, +15 out to 30 paces, and +5 out to 50 paces. It will obviously start fires and at the centre is hot enough to melt stone and boil iron.



This devastating spell was designed for covenant defence by Archmage Belisarius. Belisarius' version roars in flight and bursts with a thunderclap (his sigil is that his spells look impressive).

FOUR STONE SPELLS FOR THE WAR MAGE

Halt the Missile Perilous - ReTe 25

Range: Sight
Duration: Concentration
(auram requisite)

With this potent battle spell, the mage can halt the path of any missile he can see. With 1 round's concentration, a missile will be stopped in its tracks, and hang in the air motionless until released by the caster moving his attention elsewhere. The missile will then drop to the ground. A different missile can be halted each round of concentration, and the caster can attempt to block more than 1 missile a round. Missiles from siege engines (catapults, ballista etc.) can only be affected by the 40th level version of this spell.

To stop a missile, roll a stress die+quickness+finesse

Difficulty:

small thrown (dagger, stone, axe)	4
large thrown (boulder, spear, javelin)	5
slingstone, short/composite arrow	6
longbow arrow/light crossbow bolt	8
heavy crossbow bolt	10

Modifiers to stress die:

range:

reach +5; near +2

material:

all stone +5; all metal +3; half metal +1

multiple: per missile after the first in a round -3 (unless it is mastered & multicast)

If the roll botches, the spell finishes and the missile is not stopped. The mage can only affect missiles he is aware of, and of course an all-wood (herbam) missile is unaffected by this spell, as are magical missiles. If the roll is less than the difficulty, add the (roll-3) to the target's defence total (dodge or parry).

The creator of this spell, Jacob Stonemaster, used it to great effect in the 2nd Crusade. He would stop a missile and then reverse it with a spontaneous rego auram or destroy it with a perdo terram or creo ignem. It had a noticeable effect on the enemy morale when they shot arrows at the mage and they burnt way before they got to him. The crossbow bolt that killed him he never saw.

Might of Stone - ReTe 15

Range: Touch
Duration: Sun/year

Cast on a striking weapon, this spell causes +3 damage on the next blow that connects. The wielder will also win the

initiative and force the opponent back a pace. If a pawn of vis is used, this power can be used once a day (on the 1st blow of the day). This spell can be cast multiple times on a weapon.

Stone Cleaver - ReTe 25

Range: Touch **Duration:** Sun/year

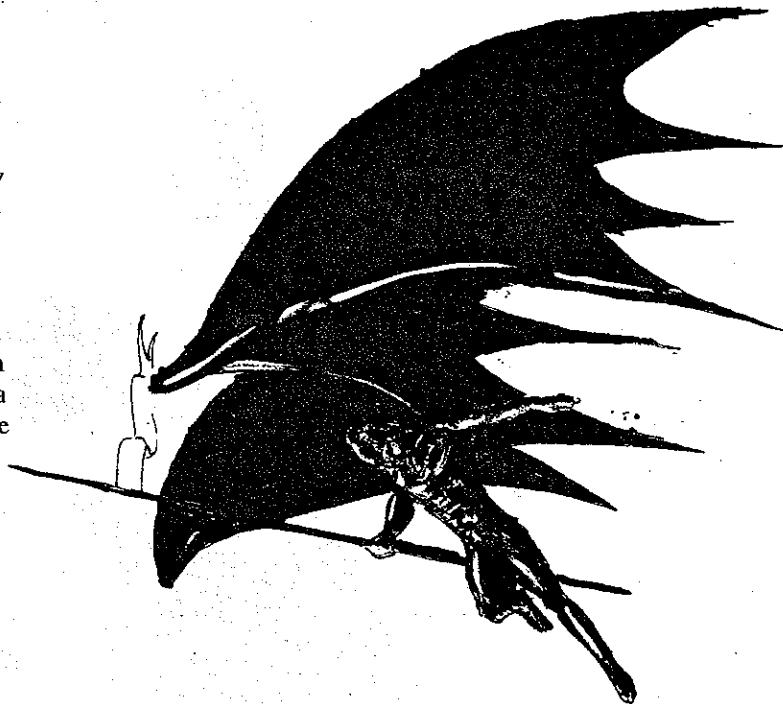
Cast on an edged weapon, this spell renders the blade so sharp it is able to cut through stone on the next blow that connects (it treats stone as clay). If used against a foe, it will do +5 damage, or if parried will cleave the weapon or shield struck in two. If a pawn of vis is used, this power can be used once per day (on the 1st blow of the day) for a year. This spell can be cast multiple times on a weapon.

Stone Hammer - ReTe 30

Range: Touch
Duration: Sun/year
(perdo requisite)

Cast on a crushing weapon (mace, war maul, etc.) this spell allows the weapon to shatter stone on the next blow (treat stone as glass). If used against a foe, it does +6 damage on impact, or if parried will shatter the weapon or shield parried and break the foe's arm (+1 body level damage). If a pawn of vis is used, this power can be used once per day (on the 1st blow of the day) for a year. This spell can be cast multiple times on a weapon.

Naturally all the above work only on metal or stone weapons.



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DEATHLY UTTER DESTROYERS OF ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING

or,

A Survivor's Guide to Role-Playing With Your Friends

Scenario One: Innocent DM, suffering from the recurring revelation that there are no good games around, idly comments to his friends, "I think I'll run a Super-Duper Kangaroo Heroes of the Nether Ploons campaign next term."

No.1 (Good friend): "I'm in!"

No.2 (Good friend): "No, I'm at the top of the list - I said so when our Death Avocados world blew up!"

No.3 (Semi-good friend): "I can run my 93rd level Ace Mega-Slaughterer Barbarian Super-Mage in it!"

No.4 (Complete stranger): "When do we start??"

No 5 (Girlfriend): "But I wanted to play Killer Fluffy Bunnies in the Hollow Earth!"

DM: "Aaaaaaargh!"

Scenario Two: The party lurk outside the cave entrance, discussing their next move.

Player 1 (Paladin): "Evil lurks within! Let us slaughter it!"

Player 2 (Cleric): "I'm sure that filthy Necromantic Death-Dealing Super-Fiend went in there, and he's got the Sacred Amulet of Pning. Forward, in the name of the great god Zgheue-b'paeghrrr!"

Player 3 (Thief): "Caves equals dungeons equals treasure equals money equals - DM, I hide in shadows and move silently and stand on my head and head for the cave."

Player 4: (Mage): "No, wait. Fred the Mighty has a deep personal problem with caves and doesn't like getting his robe dirty and is allergic to bats. DM, I head back to town. Oh, and the thief owes me money - I sell him as a slave. Then I go into a monastery for six years."

DM: "Aaaaaaargh!"

Yes, the stereotypes are horrible, and at first glance have no more in common than silliness and DMs going Aaaaaaargh!. However, they do illustrate (torridly) two extremes of the problem that interests me - the continual, aaaaaaargh!-mak-

ing tension between role-playing as something fun to do with friends, and role-playing as something to be taken seriously and done properly if it is to be in any way satisfying.

Scenario One is something with which I have a deep and abiding problem. This is possibly because I have just started DMing seriously, and have not yet perfected the necessary million-mile Stare Of Automatic Total and Utter Annihilation with which DMs are wont to cow the obstreperous. (I also get terribly flattered that anyone actually *wants* to play in my game). I still feel, however, that stomping on players before you've even identified them as players should not be necessary. What ever happened to good, old-fashioned courtesy? "I'm thinking of DMing..." in no way constitutes "Would you like to play in...?", but you wouldn't think so from watching many role-players react to the statement. The main problem being, of course, that they assume their inclusion with such earth-shattering certainty that telling them, "Sorry, no," becomes nearly impossible.

The result of such where-angels-fear-to-treading is, unfortunately, all too obvious - in any game you've seen where players have killed each other off, got bored and drifted apart, or arbed around without common purpose until the DM killed them in frustration. A game has to be carefully constructed in more ways than the DM sitting around drawing maps. If your players don't have some kind of common expectation - of setting, purpose, level of play, type of character - your game is doomed before it starts. Even more importantly, they must be sure that they are capable of playing the kind of campaign the DM wants to run. Desperation for a game - *any* game - leads to a kind of blase arrogance - I'm sure I can handle that, it doesn't really matter what or how I play. Unfortunately, it does.

The problem is, of course, that careful game composition requires a certain level of ruthlessness. Most DMs are liberally endowed with this, but it is remarkably difficult to apply it when the person blithely assuming they're automatically in your game is anyone you want to remain friends with. The average level of social upheaval in a role-playing crowd is equal to $n+x$, where n is the average of any other crowd and x is a very large number. Role-players tend to be highly

imaginative, intelligent, creative, socially insecure, and hell to live with. Telling bosom buddy that you don't want him/her in your game is likely, in many cases, to cause World War Three. You don't even *need* to mention the fact that it's because you can't stand the thought of the fiftieth version of the same boring character he/she's been playing for years, in yet another inappropriate setting.

It seems a mite pessimistic and/or smug to say it, but perhaps the problem is in the number and quality of games that are on offer in our role-playing community. To shout, "I'm in!" before the DM has even said whether he's running Straining War-Floons or Nice Druids, argues a level of desperation that is rather frightening. Any game is still better than no game; unfortunately, DMing for an unselect group of friends is a good way to get an unselective level of play. In an ideal role-player's world, great fields of superlative DMs would be permanently on tap, providing continuous streams of wondrous campaigns of all kinds. Happily drunken players could flit from one to another until they found the one that offered the best combination of setting, purpose and world-view. Welcome to reality. I, for one, haven't played in any regular campaign for over a year, simply because I haven't found one in which I actually want to play for any reason other than it's a game.

One could get heavily philosophical about the plight of the student player whose gaming skills are beyond AD&D hack-

ing, but who does not yet have the experience to DM the kind of games he nonetheless expects to play in. Mortality rate among experienced DMs is high. They leave Varsity, get religion, get bored, go Yuppie, their girlfriends/boy-friends hate it - or else, they get disillusioned with the level of play in their campaigns. A small community breeds lack of selectiveness in choosing games, which breeds poor play, which breeds disillusionment with the whole thing, which breeds a smaller community. It's a vicious world in here.

The social expectations of a crowd, then, can ruin the quality and depth of play in a game. So what's with the second scenario I invented expressly to quote from? In that, we see the flip side - gaming as a social pastime, wrecked by the insistence on rigid character consistency come what may.

The logical extreme of this problem is the utterly legendary Dreamthrall (with apologies to his no doubt meeping player). The Dreamthrall was a highly developed and very tortured character who, logically speaking, should have had nothing to do with a party at all. When the DM ran out of rationalisation for his presence, he simply stopped playing with the party. This effectively meant that the campaign ran twice a week, the party in one part of the world, the Dreamthrall solo in another. Once in a blue moon, they even met. It was all very well, the DM being happy to run twice as much campaign - but what if he hadn't been? The inescapable conclusion is that one cannot play interesting characters who conflict in any way with a group ethos.

AD&D has an awful lot to answer for (apart from most of us): it is based on the concept of the group of adventurers hacking through dungeons, their skills complementing each





other. Which works flawlessly in the limited AD&D sense, and happily reflects the group of friends who play the game because they enjoy it. It falls apart, however, as soon as one starts doing any real role-playing. Most of the fun of role-playing comes with interaction with the group - it is, after all, a social pastime. On the other hand, the character group is an artificial construct, and sooner or later a realistically-played character is going to have some really good reason to be elsewhere.

It's fine for the character to spend six years in a monastery if his bat-allergy is that bad, but what about the player? Bringing a new character to a campaign you've been playing in for some time is not always fun, particularly if realistic role-playing is the issue (what about player knowledge?), and the new character's settling-in can seriously disrupt the campaign. The alternative is to ignore the character's logical development, and grimly stick to the campaign - a profoundly unsatisfying experience. One thinks of Eredrin, unhappy half-elf, wandering around saving Gondor and thinking "Lorien! Lorien! What am I doing here?" at every step.

Again, part of the problem may be in the average psychological make-up of the average role-player, in which sheer idealism and monumental cussedness tend to play a large role. Many players know exactly what and who they want to play - and, if you give them half a chance, exactly how, where, when and why. It falls upon the DM to stretch his world and campaign to fit these idiosyncratic autocrats, and sooner or later the fabric will tear, as well-played characters demonstrate their fundamental unfittedness to be together at all. Of course, the problem is exacerbated by poor DMing, which may offer an excuse rather than a motivation for a character's presence in a campaign.

In logical conclusion of this, the DM should again be autocratic, and haul out the Death-stare at the stage where his/her players are designing characters. (I have achieved a fairly cohesive AD&D campaign by telling my players that they are all inhabitants of Hexworthy, and giving them reasons to be there - but that's beginners...) However, what good role-player is going to accept such a level of directedness from a DM - what fun is it playing if you can't play the character you want to?

In truly Taoist fashion, this discussion has come full circle - since, of course, my one extreme of problem solves the other. IF people chose their campaigns more carefully, i.e. for common goals with the DM and other players, then their characters would have more in common with each other and with the world. The level of social interaction necessary in a game must be based on more than real-life friendship - a careful consideration of who is playing and how they play should have nothing to do with a shared taste in night-clubs, and everything with a shared taste in character motivation.

Given a more discerning attitude to joining games, it seems likely that the wanton idiosyncrat who only plays bat-allergic ex-mage monks may find a saintly, sneezing campaign to suit himself, where his version of role-playing will not earn him the hatred of the dungeon-hacking party. Which is all very well, but the shortage of campaigns.....?

I venture to suggest that more DMs may be happy to run campaigns under the circumstances of my new, improved scenario:

DM: "I think I'll run a Super-Duper Kangaroo Heroes of the Nether Ploons campaign next term." (short, reverent silence; hats are removed).

DM (casually): "12-page application forms are available from me, please fill them out in triplicate. I'll put a list of acceptable candidates on my door."

No 1 (Good friend): "Is that Kangaroo Heroes with Sharpened Sticks, or the Vampire Nuclear Spaceships version?"

DM: "Actually, I was thinking of running it with the Mutant Toad-Bimbo cross-over pack - more meat."

No 2 (Good friend): "I was hoping to find another Death Avocado campaign, really."

No. 3 (Semi-good friend): "Nervil the Totally Psychotic is running a campaign of Deathly Utter Destroyers of Absolutely Everything - I'm modifying my 93rd level Ace Mega-Slaughterer Barbarian Super-Mage for it."

No. 4 (complete stranger): "Uh, DM, how many pages of character justification and style description do you want - 20 or 30?"

No. 5 (girlfriend): "But I still wanted to play Killer Fluffy Bunnies in the Hollow Earth!"

DM: "Aaaaaaaaargh!"

(And that can of wyrms I decline to open....)



A new and nasty NPC for AD&D:

The Nihilist

The nihilist is a cleric of destruction who through the awakening of his own god/goddess or worship of the void wishes to bring to total annihilation the world around him. Nihilists are fanatical, very evil and often insane.

The nihilist is a priest subclass, using the attacks, hit dice, experience, and saving throws of the priest. However, all Death Magic saving throws have a +2 bonus. The nihilist can also absorb or reflect back upon its caster any Death Magic spell of his level or lower if he has made his saving throw. The nihilist can be any alignment except True Neutral or Good.

The nihilist loses a charisma point for every level or every occasion he has direct contact with his god. It should be noted the nihilist is not a cleric of conversion and is for the most part as sociable as the necromancer. He must also sacrifice periodically or lose all spell like abilities. Unlike the necromancer, the nihilist hates all undead, whom he sees as creatures refusing their own inevitable annihilation. The nihilist, therefore, turns undead as a cleric; in addition, on a 1 the undead is automatically destroyed (this does not apply for the special table).

The nihilist cannot heal himself by standard magic, as normal healing is in opposition to the nihilist. The nihilist "heals" by draining others of their "health" until he has replenished his own. The nihilist can drain 1-4 hit points by touch as many times a day as his level; these points are added to the nihilist's hit points (until he has recovered all hit points). This cannot be done during combat. All healers, as well as midwives and pregnant women, can turn the nihilist as a cleric of their level; in addition their touch damages the nihilist (2 points per level).

A nihilist cannot create matter, and has a subtle but powerful destructive aura. All living creatures having prolonged contact with a nihilist will, unless protected, begin to weaken and sicken and will finally die.

Focus Weapon

Upon entering the church an acolyte nihilist is given a focus weapon. This weapon acts as a holy symbol and component for the nihilist magic. Its loss or destruction prevents spell-casting until another is prepared. A focus is prepared through cleansing with unholy water and the casting of the spells *Sanctuary* and *Curse*.

The focus is used in sacrifices and feeds on souls which it shares. For every ten souls taken the focus gains a +1 bonus; no more than fifty souls can be taken. The nihilist uses this focus as his weapon until further levels when he may take other weapons. The nihilist may wear any armour except plate, splint or banded.

Organisation

Nihilists are generally loners; most will only associate with others if their purpose is suited to the nihilist's plans. The nihilist order always exists within a church with its own cloistered clerics. The nihilists strive to bring about the direct coming of their god in a cataclysmic war, and for the most part travel causing mayhem and battling the unfaithful. Nihilists must return to a temple for major rites or to gain higher sacrament. Nihilists, upon attaining Prelate Shepherd level, will attempt to destroy any other nihilists they meet. Only in the Temples are nihilists forbidden to attack each other.





Level Titles

- 1 Bloodboy
- 2 Dark Aspirant
- 3 Supplicant Shepherd
- 4 Shepherd Anchorite
- 5 Shepherd Amoralist
- 6 Shepherd Sacristan
- 7 Prelate Shepherd
- 8 Ordinator Shepherd
- 9 Obiman Shepherd
- 10 Master Shepherd
- 11 Shepherd Dean
- 12 Grand Shepherd
- 13 Archimandrite
- 14 Suffragan
- 15-17 Nihilist Speculator
- 18 Iconoclast Speculator
- 19+ Grand Annihilator

It must be noted that level titles are not linked directly to experience. The titles are social and are gained from the nihilist temple at the subsequent level, thus a 5th level nihilist who left his temple as a Dark Aspirant will remain one until he is ordained into a higher title.

Abilities

1. The nihilist can detect life 60" when concentrating on a specific area.
2. The nihilist is immune to the negative plane magic such as undeath energy drain of those of fewer or equal level to the nihilist.
3. A nihilist gains a +1 save on Fear and a +2 save on Death Magic. All death magic spells saved against of an equal or lower level to the nihilist's can be absorbed or redirected.
4. Nihilists can cause a disease by touching at a rate of one per week for every five levels.
5. Nihilists have a vampiric touch which drains 2 points per level of the nihilist, usable once per day; these points are not added to the nihilist's hit points. This ability is in addition to the "healing" ability mentioned above.
6. From third level onwards the nihilist's touch starts to kill creatures of his hit dice or below, according to the following table. The nihilist must concentrate to use this ability.

Level	Plants affected	Animals affected
3rd	grasses/small plants	none
6th	bushes, small trees	small animals (birds, rodents)
9th	trees	medium animals
12th	large trees 1	arge animals

The nihilist can project this power once a day for an area of 2 feet/lvl.

1st level

- Augury p
- Aura of Fear new
- Burning Hands w
- Cause Light Wounds p
- Chill Touch w
- Command p
- Curse p
- Death Shadow new
- Enchanted Stone new
- Putrefy Food & Drink p
- Sanctuary p
- Touch of Pain new

2nd level

- Black Bolt new
- Bleed new
- Darkness 13' Radius w
- Detect Life new
- Detect Magic p
- Mark new
- Ray of enfeeblement w
- Resist fire p
- Shatter w
- Silence 15' radius p
- Spectral Hand w

3rd level

- Bestow Curse c
- Cause Blind/Deaf p
- Dispel Magic c
- Feed new
- Fireball m
- Flame Walk c
- Glyph of Warding c
- Hold Person p
- Mount new

4th level

- Black Armour new
- Cause Ser. Wounds p
- Dimension Door w
- Enervation w
- Eye of Fear/Flame new
- Sever new
- Sicken new
- Soul Hide new
- Speltl's Fingertips new
- Wall of Fire w
- Wrathform w

5th level

- Atonement p
- Cause Crit Wounds p
- Cloudkill w
- Contact Other Plane w
- Dispel Good p
- Flame Strike p
- Plague new
- Plane Shift p
- Touch of Withering new

6th level

- Death Fog w
- Death Spell w
- Eyebite new
- Forbiddance p
- Harm p
- Subsume new
- Transmute Water to Dust p
- Vampiric Touch w

7th level

- Chariot of Zog new
- Creeping Doom new
- Earthquake p
- Eye of Death new
- Internal Fire new
- Meteor swarm w
- Power Word, Kill w
- Sunbolt New
- Symbol w
- Unholy Word p
- Winds of Doom new

p = priest spell
w = wizard spell
new = new spell

New Spells

Aura of Fear

Level: 1
 Range: 0
 Duration: 1 round/level
 Casting Time: 1 round
 Area of Effect: 2 square yards/level
 Saving Throw: Neg.
 This spell sends forth an aura of fear from the nihilist which affects all creatures of levels equal to or lower than the caster's.

Death Shadow

Level: 1
 Range: 30 yards + 10/level
 Duration: 5 rounds/level
 Casting Time: 1
 Area of Effect: Special
 Saving Throw: None
 Similar to the wizard's sleep spell, affecting the same numbers and levels of creatures. All creatures affected must be within 30 feet of each other. *Death Shadow* sends its victims into a comatose death-like state for the duration of the spell.

Enchanted Stone

Level: 1
 Range: 20 yards
 Duration: Special
 Casting Time: 1 round
 Area of Effect: 1 pebble
 Saving Throw: None
 This spell is cast onto a prepared stone or pebble. As the nihilist increases in level, he has more options in the use of this spell (see below). It takes 1 segment (6 seconds) to throw the stone.
1st level - Stone of Attack: Any ordinary stone so prepared does 2 hp damage per level of the nihilist when it strikes someone. The stone remains enchanted until it is used, or until 6 rounds have passed.
3rd level - Stone of Warding: A semiprecious stone enchanted will glow and hum when an intruder (not ethereal or astral) is near. It remains enchanted for 12 hours.
6th level - Stone of Stealing: If the spell is cast on a semiprecious stone worth more than 100gp, the stone will drain 1-8 hp from any creature it touches (other than the caster). It remains enchanted for 1-6 uses. The stone stores the hit points until it is broken, when they are transferred to the holder.

Touch of Pain

Level: 1
 Range: Touch
 Duration: Instantaneous
 Casting Time: 1
 Area of Effect: 1 person
 Save: Special
 The effectiveness of this spell depends upon the level of the nihilist. A successful saving throw negates all effects of the spell EXCEPT for damage caused. At 1st level a *Touch of Pain* does 1-2 hp and causes the victim to lose its attack. At 3rd level it causes the victim to drop items with an additional penalty of -1 on the next attack, plus 1-6 damage. At 6th level the touch stuns for 1-4 rounds and does 2-12 damage. At 9th level it stuns for 2-8 rounds after which dex is -2, attack -4, save vs paralysis or heart failure, plus 3-18 damage.

Black Bolt

Level: 2
 Range: 10 yards + 1/level
 Duration: Instantaneous
 Casting Time: 2
 Area of Effect: 1 creature
 Saving Throw: 1/2
 This creates a black bolt of destruction which does 2-5 hp per level of the nihilist and saps 1 pt of CON for every level of the caster (CON returns after 1 rnd). Con of 0 requires a successful system shock roll or death.

Bleed

Level: 2
 Range: Touch
 Duration: Instantaneous
 Casting Time: 2
 Area of Effect: Creature touched
 Saving Throw: Special
 The touch of the caster under this spell causes damage of 1-8 hp/lvl as the victim's flesh starts to rot and fester. For each limb affected by this spell, the victim must save vs spells or lose the use of the limb for 1-4 weeks.

Detect Life

Level: 2
 Range: 0
 Duration: 3 turns
 Casting Time: 1 round
 Area of Effect: 60' + 10'/level
 Saving Throw: None
 This spell is similar to the wizard spell *Detect Undead*, except it detects life rather than undeath.

Mark

Level: 2
 Range: Touch
 Duration: Permanent
 Casting Time: 2 rounds
 Area of Effect: Person touched
 Saving Throw: Neg.
 This spell places an invisible mark of the nihilist's on the recipient protecting them from the harmful (decaying) effects of the nihilist. Anyone marked will detect as the nihilist's god's alignment and cannot enter into any other faiths. The spell can only be dispelled by the nihilist or an *Exorcism* or *Wish* spell.

Feed

Level: 3
 Range: 40' + 5'/level
 Duration: 1 round/level
 Casting Time: 1 round
 Area of Effect: 10 yard radius
 With this hideous spell the nihilist is able to take in power through the negative emotions of others. Hate, pain, anger, fear and lust power this spell. For each round that the nihilist is under the influence of this spell, with such emotions around him, he gains 1 pt of strength, constitution and charisma, and his he heals 1 hp/level each round. When the spell expires, ability score increases are lost, but hit points gained remain.

Mount

Level: 3
 Range: 10 yards
 Duration: 6 hours
 Casting Time: 3 rounds
 Area of Effect: One creature
 Saving Throw: None
 The nihilist, by means of this spell, calls a negative plane creature to act as his mount. The creature serves willingly and well, disappearing to return to its own plane when the spell expires. The mount summoned is always a large "draught horse" creature with a dull grey coat, amber eyes and a thin wasted appearance. The mount however has a Movement of 18 and never tires. This movement increases by 1 for every 4 levels of the caster. The mount's armour class is a base 6 decreasing 1 point for every 4 levels, and the mount has 4+4 hit-dice plus half the hit points of the caster. Its hooves do 1-6/1-6 + caster's level. The mount frightens all normal creatures. The mount will only come if the caster prepares a fresh bowl of blood.





Black Armour

Level: 4
Range: Touch
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 4 rounds
Area of Effect: 1 creature
Saving Throw: None

This spell creates a gleaming black suit of full armour which covers the creature touched. The armour is slightly transparent and oozes an acid which on contact with others does 1-4 hp. The armour does not slow or hinder movement. It lowers the wearer's armour class by 4 + 1 per 4 lvls of the caster. The armour is only dispelled when the wearer takes (8 hp +2/lvl of caster) damage.



Eye of Fear & Flame

Level: 4
Range: 20'/level
Duration: 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: Special

This horrible spell turns the nihilist's eyes into shining globes from which streak a ray of either Fear or Flame. The rays may hit one person per turn. The Fear sends all those hit fleeing in terror, only those above the level of the caster may save. The Flame ignites all flammables doing 1-8 +2/lvl; save for 1/2 damage.



Sever

Level: 4
Range: Touch
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: person touched
Saving Throw: Neg.

Sever cuts the link between the person touched and the outer planes linking him/her with the Void. Once a being is severed, it can make no contact directly with any other planes, meaning that clerics lose their spells, undead are destroyed and all beings once dead but resurrected or reincarnated are drawn into the void. Affected creatures cannot travel beyond the prime material. All outer plane creatures who fail the save have their current prime material image destroyed. The spell can be dispelled by a *Dispel Magic* of 2 times the level of the nihilist or a *Wish* or *Restoration* spell.



Sicken

Level: 4
Range: 160'
Duration: 2-12 weeks
Casting Time: 4 rounds
Area of Effect: 1 person/level
Saving Throw: Neg.

Once cast, *Sicken* inflicts a mildly contagious illness which causes a loss of 1 con pt per week. A system shock check must be made each week; if failed, this leads to death. *Sicken* can be cured as any normal disease.

Soul Hide

Level: 4
Range: Self
Duration: 2 turns/level
Casting Time: 4 rounds
Area of Effect: The caster
Saving Throw: None
Soul Hide masks the caster's soul, making it inaccessible and undetectable to all creatures for the spell's duration. Thus, while the spell is operating, all soul/energy attacks have no effect. After the duration expires, the caster is left weakened for 1/2 the spell's duration and must rest.

Spelti's Fingertips

Level: 4
Range: Self
Duration: 4 rounds
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: The caster
Saving Throw: Special
This spell elongates the nihilist's fingertips, turning them into sharp white-hot ripping claws. The touch of *Spelti's Fingertips* causes extreme pain and the victim must make a save or be stunned. The touch does 1-8 + 4 hp and leaves horrible scars which never heal.

Plague

Level: 5
Range: 100' + 20'/level
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 5 rounds
Area of Effect: 30' cube/level
Saving Throw: Neg.
This spell gives all creatures in the area of effect and who are lower than the caster's level a highly contagious sickness which drains 1 pt of con per day for 1-4 weeks or until death. The spell can only be dispelled by a *Cure Disease* of a higher level caster than the nihilist, or *Heal* or *Wish*.

Touch of Withering

Level: 5
Range: Touch
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: 1 creature
Saving Throw: Special
Once this spell is cast, the creature touched by the caster suffers damage of 3d6 + 1/level, and must make a successful saving throw vs spells. Failure means one limb of the creature becomes shriveled and useless. If the limb is a leg, movement is reduced to 1/4 its normal. Armour class decreases by 3 and the person suffers -4 to hit.

Eyebite

Level: 6
Range: 20 yards
Duration: 1 round/3 levels
Casting Time: 6
Area of Effect: 1 creature
Saving Throw: Special
This spell is identical to the 6th level wizard spell *Eyebite*, except that the *Charm* and *Sleep* options are replaced by *Burn* and *Berserk*. *Burn*: The target ignites, suffering 1-6 hp per round for 3-36 rounds (3d12) or until death. *Berserk*: This launches the target into a fit of berserk attack. All attacks are physical with no spell or missile use. If no-one is in the immediate area to attack, the target will start to destroy himself. This lasts for 3-36 rounds (3d12) or until death.

Subsume

Level: 6
Range: Touch
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 1 hour
Area of Effect: 1 person
Saving Throw: None
Subsume transfers a lifeforce to the nihilist reviving and strengthening him. The spell involves a complex ritual and requires 1000 gp worth of components. The victim is tied down and the nihilist slays him in a lengthy ritual. The victim is killed but the nihilist gains the age, charisma and hit points of the victim to replenish his own. Once cast, the young attractive nihilist's ability scores are raised to their original. All components are destroyed. A nihilist must pray for permission to cast this spell.



Chariot of Zog

Level: 7

Range: 10 yards

Duration: 12 hours

Casting Time: 1 turn

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

This spell is identical to the priest spell *Chariot of Sustarre*, except it appears as a black flaming chariot drawn by two black misty creatures. All creatures below 2 hit dice will immediately flee from the chariot's presence. Anyone with 4 hit dice or below below touching the chariot must save vs death magic or die. The 3' scythe blades which protrude from the wheels cut through all non-magical structures, destroying them. All within 10 yards of the chariot take damage of 2-12 + 1/level of the caster, per round.

Creeping Doom

Level: 7

Range: 0

Duration: 4 rounds/level

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

This spell is identical to the priest spell *Creeping Doom*, except that the "doom" is a swarming black mass that destroys all vegetation, leaving the earth permanently barren.

Eye of Death

Level: 7

Range: 200 feet

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: 7

Area of Effect: creature looked at

Saving Throw: Special

This spell sends a deadly beam from the nihilist's eye causing all those under 2 hit dice to melt into pools and those above 2 HD to save or die. The nihilist can only destroy up to his hit dice in creatures whereupon the spell expires.

Internal Fire

Level: 7

Range: 60 yards

Duration: Instantaneous

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: 20 yard cube

Saving Throw: None

This spell creates a raging heat within the bowels of the victims causing them and all possessions to be consumed by flames from within. The spell affects no more than the caster's level in hit dice of creatures. Death is instantaneous.

Sunbolt

Level: 7

Range: 10 yards/level

Duration: 1 round

Casting Time: 3

Area of Effect: 10 yard rad. sphere

Saving Throw: Special

This creates a burning beam of solar heat. It inflicts blindness unless victims save. All undead are instantly destroyed. All others take 8-48

points of damage (may save for half). All combustibles are set on fire and destroyed.

Winds of Doom

Level: 7

Range: 1 mile

Duration: 1 turn/level

Casting Time: 7 turns

Area of Effect: 1/2 sq mile/level

Saving Throw: None

This spell summons devastating hurricane-force winds. The force of these winds capsizes all small boats, and 70% of large ships. Heavy articles are blown away, branches are ripped from trees, 70% of tree trunks are snapped. Medium and light-weight articles are torn free from their fastening. There is a 60% chance that a shack or small building is blown down. Common stone buildings collapse 20% of the time. Man-sized creatures are knocked to the ground 70% of the time (and there is a further 30% chance that they are blown 10-40 feet along). Reinforced buildings and stone buildings suffer structural damage. Seas become tempestuous, deserts are shrouded in massive duststorms and snowy regions are ravaged by blizzards. Small fires are blown out while large fires erupt into raging infernos. 85% of crops are ruined. Creatures caught in the wind suffer 1d10 damage for every turn of exposure. All movement is reduced to 1/4 normal; all hit rolls are at -8; and missile weapons may not be used.



Rumours of Further Nihilist Powers

adapted from the *Tome of Unravelling* by the Sage Manfryn Dynj'nson

Void Spells

It is said that certain orders of nihilism teach dangerous and unusual spells known as *Void Spells*. These spells operate by opening a link between the caster and the Element of Void itself. Supposedly a nihilist using *Void Spells* runs the risk of being driven temporarily or permanently feebler, or of being drawn into the void and lost forever.

According to the *Tome*, *Void Spells* manipulate the void as elemental energy, using it to attack (as bolts or exploding spheres), to defend (as walls or shields), or other darker purposes.

High Heralds of Destruction

It is also rumoured that some exceptionally powerful nihilist spells exist, those of the *High Heralds of Destruction*. Supposedly these spells may only be cast by one who is Chosen: a nihilist who has been granted the honour of heralding and completing his god/goddess' awakening and wrath on the earth.

Each *High Herald* spell can be counted as equivalent to an 8th lvl priest spell or a 10th lvl wizard spell. The use of such spells would certainly be felt by all powerful users of magic, and would attract the attention of gods of good alignment. What exactly these terrible spells may do, the rumours do not say.



DRUGS IN FANTASY AND SF

The table following this article details the effects of a variety of drugs in a science fiction role-playing setting. Many (in fact most) drugs will have significant effects on the stats and skills of character using them. They can be used to boost certain stats into areas not normally possible, so that characters can attempt actions of which they were previously incapable. So besides recreational drugs like alcohol, marijuana and tranquilizers, the list contains many possible substances, some of them high-tech inventions of the future, that the characters could use to sharpen their reflexes, heighten their awareness, reduce pain effects and the like.

It is very seldom that drugs make an appearance in any sword-and-sorcery type of fantasy fiction or RPG. In the works of such classic fantasy greats as Tolkien, or more recent authors such as Feist and Eddings, very little of what the characters eat, drink or smoke has any effect on them, apart from the ordinary effect of sustenance, or perhaps food poisoning.

Similarly, in most AD&D, Rolemaster and similar fantasy campaigns, drugs don't really play a major role at all. True, there have been games in which the party found itself buying psychoactive herbs from merchants, or getting extremely sloshed in bars, but these are the exception, not the norm. There is little need for specific rules in this regard.

By contrast, though, drugs proliferate in the works of many Science Fiction authors, including some of its founding fathers (such as Ray Bradbury and Robert Heinlein). Especially in the CyberPunk genre, drugs form a fundamental part of the setting. Most of Philip K. Dick's books and stories deal with drugs as a central theme, and William Gibson's main characters are almost invariably drug users of some sort.

It seems natural that some DMs will want to carry this element through into their CyberPunk/CyberSpace campaigns, or indeed into any campaign set in the present or near future (or recent past). Aliens, Star Wars, the new Vampire and Werewolf systems, and even Call of Cthulhu are all set in eras when drugs were/are/will be available, possibly even commonplace.



Unfortunately, the existing drug rules for these systems are scant, if any at all. While the CyberPunk and CyberSpace systems are the most comprehensive, they ignore many aspects of the reality of drug effects. But many DMs, myself included, feel that realism is very important in developing every aspect of the game world, even a minor one like drugs.

In the case of CyberPunk/Space, realistic development means extrapolating current trends into the future, specifically in a direction that corresponds approximately to the setting of CyberPunk literature. Such trends include the rise of the multinational corporations, population growth, increasing unemployment, increasing urban crime and unrest, globalization of the world economy and the rapid advance of computer technology.

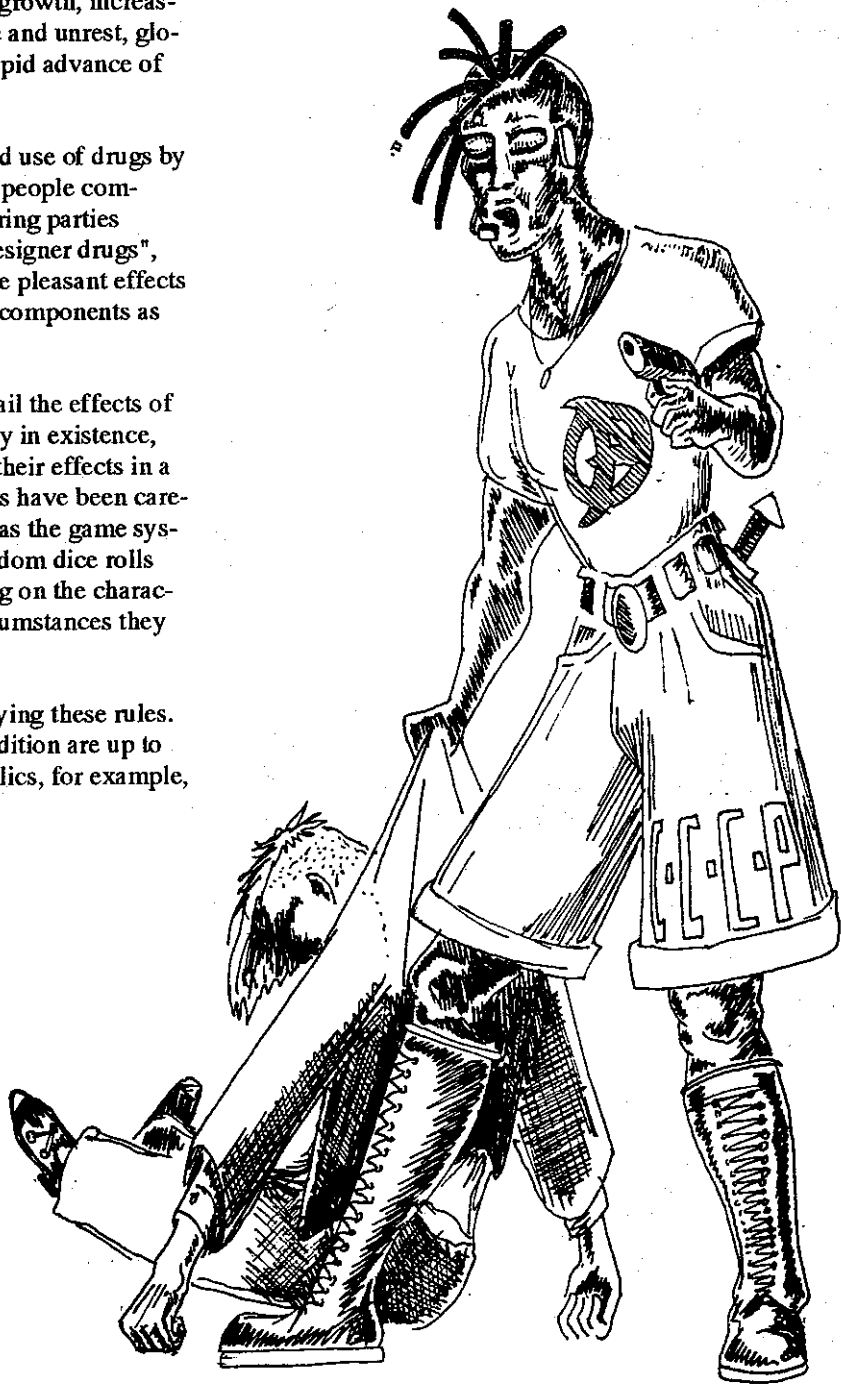
Another such trend, though, is the increased use of drugs by urban young people, especially the type of people commonly found in CyberPunk/Space adventuring parties ("sprawlies"); as well as the advance in "designer drugs", which are chemically engineered to provide pleasant effects with as few nasty side-effects or addictive components as possible.

The list and rules following this article detail the effects of almost 40 substances, some of them already in existence, others futuristic inventions; and describes their effects in a 2nd-edition CyberPunk setting. The effects have been carefully researched and are as close to reality as the game system will allow. Durations are given as random dice rolls because they tend to vary widely depending on the character's disposition, body weight, and the circumstances they find themselves in.

DMs are encouraged to be realistic in applying these rules. The effects on a character's emotional condition are up to the DM: being attacked while on psychedelics, for example, could be disastrous.

The rules may easily be converted to CyberSpace. Humanity costs, which in CyberPunk are subtracted from the Humanity Index, should be added to the CIRS stat. Costs are a guideline only and are given in EuroDollars, the CyberPunk currency. Stat reductions and increases should be approximately multiplied by 10, though DMs may want to scale that down a little. Modifications to REF would

apply to Quickness and Agility, MOVE corresponds to the Movement Rate, INT is Reasoning and Agility, STR is Strength, COOL is equivalent to Presence and Self-Discipline, TECH affects technical tasks (usually Reasoning or Intuition based), stun saves are RRs against pain and shock effects, death saves are RRs against death when mortally wounded and losing blood, and Endurance checks are uses of the Endurance skill (no equivalent in CyberSpace - modify the CON bonus accordingly).

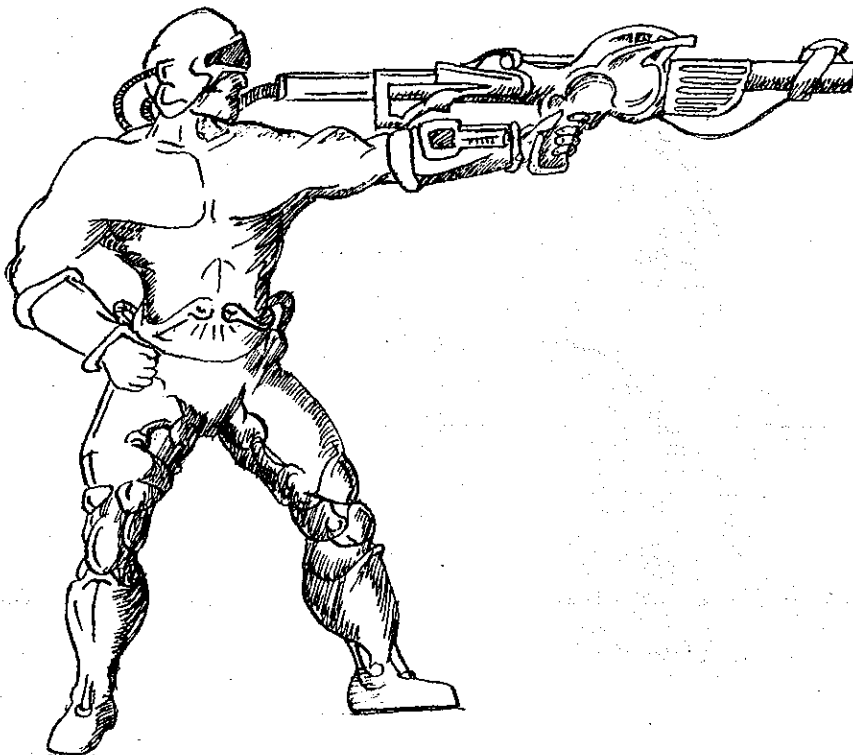


There are relatively few new drugs on my list. Most of these are mood-alterants (aggro, cooler, freek, intro, rocket, swing, white-out), drugs developed by the military for combat purposes (boosta, blue glass, death, lace, turbo) or designer recreational drugs that minimise the effects of existing drugs (brown study, colorama, magic-show, synthcoke). Overall, an effort has been made to provide a wide selection of drugs both nice and nasty, to cater for the needs of both player characters and devious NPCs.

CYBERPUNK : PSYCHOACTIVE DRUGS TABLE

These drugs all have positive and negative effects, given for one dose. Higher doses may have different effects and are at ref's discretion. Duration and humanity cost function as for medicinal drugs (see), and forms of use are abbreviated as:

- A = ampoule for hypo**
- P = pill**
- C = capsule**
- S = slap-patch (slow-release adhesive patch)**
- D = dust or powder (usu. inhale)**
- L = liquid (for drinking)**
- R = resinous paste (smoked)**
- G = chewing gum**
- N = natural form**



Addiction

Addictive substances require a d10 roll for each time they are used. A roll equal to or lower than the addiction chance (Add) indicated in the description means the character is addicted.

In the case of psychological addiction (Ps/Add), this means a COOL check each day the character does without the drug, failure meaning he/she is irritable and antisocial, and preoccupied with obtaining more of the drug.

Physiological addiction (Ph/Add) requires a STR check every day the character does without the drug, failure meaning he/she suffers pain and delusions all day and will strive to get more of the drug.

In both cases, effects of going without for more than one day are up to the ref, but are extremely unpleasant. Also in both cases, the initial addiction roll is made with a STR bonus/penalty equal to the modifier on inflicted melee damage (-2 to +2).

Mixing drugs

The effects of mixing drugs are quite nasty. To determine what happens, find the highest modification each drug causes (if a drug causes REF+1, INT+1 and COOL-2, for example, its highest mod is 2). Add these 2 numbers together. The character taking the drugs must roll a d10.

If the result is lower than this sum, really nasty effects kick in which are up to the ref.

If it is between this sum and double the sum, the negative effects are cumulative but the positive effects are halved, and if it is more than double the sum the effects cancel each other out and the negative effects are halved.

On a 0 roll the character passes out from utter weakness and drowsiness and wakes up 2/1d6 hours later, suffering no other effects.

HC = Humanity cost

* indicates an illegal drug; the price given is a black market average, and the actual price will vary with availability and dealer greed.

DRUG	FORMS	DURATION	HC	COST	EFFECTS/DESCRIPTION
alcohol	L	1d6/2 h	0	2	COOL+1, REF-1, euphoric (Ph/Add 1)
aggro*	AP	1d6 h	1d6	5	aggressive mood (Ps/Add 4)
amorine	PCD	1d6 h	0	20	increased sexual awareness & potency
barbiturates	PC	1d6 h	1d6	5	REF,INT-2, COOL+1, relaxation & euphoria (Ps/Add 4)
benedrine	PC	1d6+1 h	1d6	3	REF+1, COOL-1, nervousness, talkativeness, restlessness (Ps/Add 4)
blue glass*	PA	1d10+2 h	1d10	20	REF-2, INT-1, COOL+2, (Ph/Add 7)
boosta*	AD	1d10 min	1d6	10	30% chance incapacitation u/stress
brown study*	CR	1d6+4 h	0	10	REF+1, INT+1, Awareness+2, TECH-1
caffeine	PSLGN	1d6/3 h	0 1		REF,STR,MOVE at 1/2, TECH-2, INT+1, COOL+1d6+1, focuses brain on higher functions
cocaine*	D	1d6/3 h	2d6	50	awareness+1, insomnia in some
colorama*	PC	1d6+4 h	0	10	REF,INT+1, COOL-1, restlessness, euphoria (Ps/Add 6, Ph/Add 4)
cooler*	PC	1d6 h	1d6	8	INT,TECH at 1/2, REF,MOVE, COL-1, hallucinations, rambling conversation (Ps/Add 5)
death*	C	1d6+4 h	2d6	30	REF,INT-2,COOL+2, loss of anxiety
dexedrine*	PC	1d6+2 h	1d6+1	5	REF,TECH,INT-2, COOL at 1/2, euphoria, hallucinations (Ph/Add 6)
duralax	PS	1d6 h	1d6/2	3	REF+1, COOL-1, Awareness+1 (Ps/Add 4)
ecstasy*	PC	1d6+2 h	0	10	REF,INT-1, COOL+1, euphoria and loss of anxiety (Ps/Add 2)
ephedrine	PS	1d6 h	1d6	1	INT,TECH at 1/2, hallucinations, enhanced social/sexual interest
freak*	PC	1d6 h	1d6	5	REF+1, COOL-1, restlessness (Ps/Add 2)
hashish	R	1d6/2 h	0	5	INT,COOL-1 crazed mood (Ps/Add 4)
heroin*	A	1d6+1 h	1d10	40	COOL+2, INT,TECH-2, euphoria (Ps/Add 2)
intro*	PCS	1d6 h	1d6	5	INT,TECH,COOL at 1/2, MOVE,REF-2, euphoria, hallucinations (Ph/Add 7)
lace(normal)*	AC	1d6+1 h	2d6	30	COOL-2, REF-1, depressive appearance, introspection, quietness (Ps/Add 3)
lace(black)*	AC	1d6+1 h	2d10	60	REF+1, COOL+2, +3 to stun, death & endurance checks (Ps/Add 5, Ph/Add 5)
LSD(acid)*	PCSL	1d6+5 h	1d6/2	5	REF+2, COOL+2, +5 to stun, death & endurance checks (Ps/Add 4, Ph/Add 6)
magic-show*	PCS	1d6+2 h	0	10	INT,TECH,COOL at 1/2, REF,MOVE-1, hallucinations, unstoppable laughter, 10% chance of bad trip (mod. by ref)
marijuana	N	1d6/2 h	0	2	INT,TECH at 1/2, COOL,REF-2, vivid hallucinations and delusions, 10% chance of bad trip (mod. by ref)
methedrine*	AD	1d6+2 h	2d6	7	COOL +1, INT,TECH-1, euphoria (Ps/Add 1)
nicotine	PSGN	1/1d6 h	0	0.2	REF+2, COOL-2, Awareness+2, extreme restlessness/alertness (Ps/Add 5, Ph/Add 4)
opium*	CDR	1d6/2 h	1d10	20	no game effects (Ps/Add 6, Ph/Add 5)
PCP*	ACD	1d6+1 h	2d10	40	REF,TECH-2, INT-1, COOL+1, euphoria, sluggishness (Ph/Add 5)
rocket*	PD	1d6/3 h	1d6	10	INT at 1/2, TECH-2, REF+1, COOL+2, +4, +4 to stun, death & endurance checks, immunity to emotion (Ph/Add 6)
smash	L	1d6/2 h 1	d6	3	multi-rush euphoric, INT,COOL-1 (Ps/Add 5)
speedball*	A	1d6+1 h	2d10	80	COOL+2, REF,TECH-2, similar to alcohol, but stronger (Ph/Add 3)
swing*	PC	1d6 h	1d6	6	REF,COOL+2, INT-1, +4 to stun, death & endurance checks (Ph/Add 7)
synthcoke*	CD	1d6/3 h	1d6	15	INT-1, triggers 1d6/2 random mood changes; roll 1d6: 1-paranoid, 2-depressed, 3-hyperactive, 4-euphoric, 5-serene, 6-exuberant (Ps/Add 4)
turbo*	C	1d10 min	1d6	10	REF,INT+1, euphoria & restlessness (Ps/Add 6)
veritas*	A	1d6x10 min	1d6	50	REF,MOVE+2, INT,TECH-1, Awareness+1
white-out*	APS	1d6/2 h	1d6	5	INT,TECH at 1/2, COOL=1, talkativeness, anxiety, tendency to say whatever is on one's mind, not usually administered voluntarily
					INT,REF-2, MOVE at 1/2, quietness, docility (Ps/Add 2)

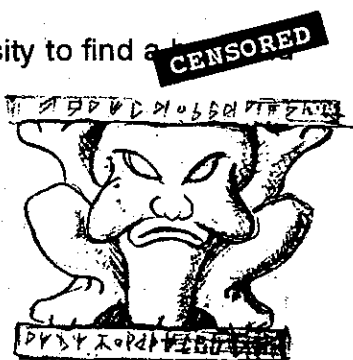
The strangest rumours have been circulating around campus. Usually, we'd be delighted (since they'd be either started by us, about us, or both). But these rumours are something different. Altogether.

They suggest that that erstwhile cursocrat, the feared and raisin-riddled Archbigot of Necropolis, has fallen into the clutches of ... people! Rumour tells of a plot to gather scriptwriters under the Archbigot's banner, through the subterfuge of forming an "Archbigot Fan Club". Indeed, we have discovered the names of some members of this "club", and have printed them on pages 68 and 69 of this edition.

Whatever the explanation, the Archbigot has been virulently busy of late. While we have some disturbing Theories about this, there is the possibility that the rumours are false, and that he has penned his latest torrent of loathing quite of his own free will. And it is because of this possibility, that we dare do nothing other than to bring you, upon these bits of dead tree...

128 REASONS WHY I HATE **ARTS STUDENTS**

They're arbs
They dress funny
They are only at university to find a
They don't do anything
They're useless
They wet their nests
They dress normally
Their parents are rich
They play AD&D
They do English
They're politically correct
They listen to silly music
They think symbolism is something new
They think that reading setworks is hard work
They talk about setworks
They have freckles
They don't play Roleplaying Games
They think that postmodernism is a literary movement
They like things that are cute and furry
They think post-modernism is new
They are neurotic about dead authors
They have entered into a social contract
They have never been North of the plaza
They sleep
They don't like getting their hands dirty
They can't fix their own car



They don't know what career to follow and they didn't have the marks to do anything else
They end up teaching
They end up married
They end up poor
They corects yor speling
They think they are weird
They look at people from the other side of campus funny
They have time for extensive social lives
They don't understand the symbolic meaning of ghknoti
They spell ghknoti, fnish!!!
They think "spell" has something to do with words
They end up selling hamburgers and chips
They think that silicon chips can be ordered "to go"
They think that normal people should know their way around the Leslie
They don't object to being called normal
They have to ask what happens in the CLAWroom
They think that a "monitor" is a kind of prefect
They can't tell the difference between a hard boot and a Doc Marten
They think Led Zeppelin is heavy metal

They think techno is music
They wear slippers
They have funny religions
They find meaning in modern art
They can't count
They think a differential belongs in a car
They don't like smoking
They talk funny
They think that a d20 is like a B52
They dress funny
They don't wear black
They never talk to trees
They think?
They wear sandals so that they can count to twenty
Explaining why I hate them wastes paper
They waste paper
They think that a crewcut is a hairstyle
They write funny
They enjoy Deviate
They don't notice this
They're paranoid
They're right
They read tormented anguish into a daisy
They can't get in character when they play computer games
They don't play computer games
They spell funny
They dress up to come to university
Architects designed the union
They see university as something to do after school
They think that democracy is a form of government
They demonstrate passively
They undergo spiritual growth
They think that nights are for sleeping
They wear funny hats
They can't pronounce Cthulu
They cheer for the good guys in horror movies
They think they're cultured
They can't gibber
They show emotion
They get in touch with their emotions
They write to their relatives
They don't know what spon means

They think that spon has a meaning
They think that square roots are the result of genetic defects in plants
They have disgusting personal habits
They're socially aware
They think they're profound
They read books published before the 20th century
They find deep meaning in silly films
They find deep meaning in everything
They like to psychoanalyse you
They get PhD's for reading books
They don't have long hair
They're always making statements they think the rest of us will appreciate
They're all ex-prefects
They think they understand the universe
They're politically active
They're all arrogant sods
They never use logic
They think they know what logic is
They think they're more intelligent than you are if they study philosophy
They're childish
They play with their food
They get the nicest faculty T-shirts
They think the earth is flat
They read "YOU" magazine
They're silly
They're noisy
They always have lots of money
They don't have pracs
They think they're experts on any subject
They think the word "reality" has meaning
They're horrid
They like little dogs
They are like little dogs
They are little dogs
They're afraid to think for themselves
They are arts students
They live with their parents
They take Freud seriously
They take life seriously
They are tidy
They have warty kin



Some role-players have little or no knowledge of matters martial, and have no wish to learn more. To them, the system is there to take care of the actual mechanics of combat: roll dice, consult table, apply result. This approach works well in many campaigns.

But there are others who want to know exactly what their characters do in combat, and they want it to be realistic. Players and DMs may want to know how the weapons were made, and what can and can't be done with them. Among these dedicated realists is one "Ulbrecht", who presents here, for like-minded beings, everything he considers worth knowing about swords (the condensed version).

THE DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF SWORDS

THE BASIC DEVELOPMENT OF SWORDS

The sword - often claimed to be the most perfect weapon ever developed. Is this true? We shall see, but personally I would prefer an automatic rifle.

A sword was a unique style of cut and thrust weapon which saw very popular use all over the world. The ancestors of the Greeks and Romans were probably some of the first peoples to use swords in an organised military fashion; yet the Celts were forging swords in 700 BC.

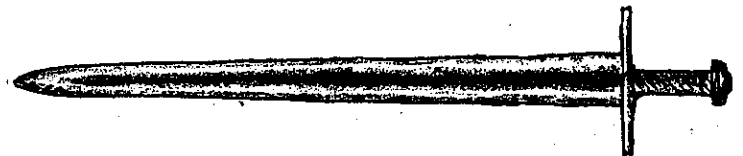
The Celts started off by collecting iron ore, purifying it and beating it together until it formed a sword. Eventually, this process became a lot more complicated as the ancient smiths started to *pattern weld* their blades. Cassidoras, secretary of Theoderic the Great, describes pattern welded blades as follows:

So evenly do their edges run to a point that they might have been shaped by files and not moulded by the furnace. The central part of their blades, cunningly hollowed out, appears to be grained with tiny snakes, and here such varied shadows play that you would believe the shining metal to be interwoven with many colours.

The pattern welding process involves the forging of distinct metal bars. Each of these bars was of a different hardness and flexibility. The bars were combined in a specific order to render a sword blade with a strong spine, tough enough not to crack under pressure. A hard edge was welded on to this. Winding and twisting snake-like patterns, as described above, could be seen on the flats of the blades.

In about 900 AD a new type of sword was developed. This was known as the *Ulbrecht Blade* after the smith Ulbrecht. This type of blade was characterised by the blade being wide at the hilt, yet slim at the point, with a definite taper. This type of blade was also made out of steel, not mixed bits of iron as was previously done.

Because of this design, the balance of the blade was a lot nearer the hilt, making it better balanced. This meant that warriors had a far more manoeuvrable blade on their hands. This blade became very popular, to the extent that we find blades inscribed with the Ulbrecht signature dating back to the 13th century. It has been suggested that Ulbrecht was, or is, immortal.



Viking broadsword after Ulbrecht

Variations of this design continued for many years until the advent of gunpowder. Since bullets were able to penetrate many armours, people started to wear less armour. When people began wearing lighter armours, a lighter blade could be used. And when lighter blades are used, skill became more important: hence the invention of fencing. This later period was characterised by sabres for horsemen, and rapiers for footmen.

THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF CUT

Before any discussion on the use of swords, it is necessary to understand the different types of cut which were used.

The hack: This involves a powerful shearing blow, common in the use of most broadswords and two-handed swords. (Such hacking could often shear through chain mail and cut shields in half.) The sword blade involved has to be flexible enough not to break when caught in the opponents shield, yet at the same time it needs enough weight behind it to make the blow effective.

The drawing cut: This action was common to the Japanese katana, as well as the scimitar. The stroke involves a light hacking action, so that the edge of the blade can get through any light armour or clothing to get a grasp in the opponent's

flesh. The blade is then drawn towards oneself, slicing the edge into one's unhappy opponent.

The lunge cut: This is the same as the the draw cut, except the slice is done while one's blade is moving forward. This would be done while lunging, or while on horseback.

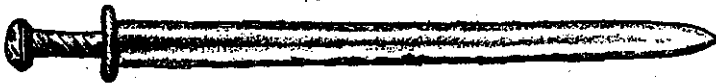
The thrust: This is a standard thrust with the point of the blade.

When swords are made to deal with unarmoured opponents, they are a lot lighter. Because of this, they don't have the weight to make the *hack* effective. The swords are then either made with a curved blade to help them *cut*; or with light, straight *thrusting* blade such as a rapier's; or as a mixture, such as the sabre.

THE USE OF THE SWORD

The Broadsword

The broadsword is a heavy blade used for close-quarters *hacking*. It weighs 3 to 5 lbs on average and is up to 5 feet long. The broadsword could hack through chainmail or through both legs of an opponent. If the blade was somehow stopped by heavy armour it could still break the opponent's bones.



Saxon broadsword

Saxo Grammaticus, a Danish historian, once wrote of broadsword use:

He leaped upon him and dealt him a blow upon his collarbone. It was a killing blow, and the weapon pierced Odovacar's body to the hip: It is said that Theodric exclaimed "In truth the wretch has no bones!"

These swords were generally used in combination with a shield, although Norse berserkers preferred using two blades in battle. Whether this is because they used them simultaneously, or because the one sword got blunted, is unknown.

The entire style of broadsword fighting was centred around striking huge blows with the sword and parrying the enemy's weapon on your shield. The first combatant would strike and his opponent would parry with his shield or dodge out of the way and then return the blow. With Ulbrecht's design the swordsman had far more control, and could feint at various parts of the opponent's body. When the opponent tried to cover that spot, the attacker could change the direction of the blow and strike elsewhere.

Saxo Grammaticus also writes:

For of the old, in the ordering of combats, the men did not try to exchange their blows thick and fast; but there was a pause, and at the same a definite succession in striking; the contest being carried on with few strokes, but those terrible, so that the honour was paid more to mightiness than the number of blows.

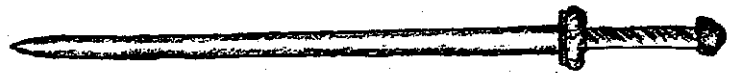
It was very dangerous to use a broadsword without a shield. When using the earlier and heavier broadswords, a warrior was often left off balance, and thus exposed to a counter attack.

A warrior in this situation would much rather take the blade into two hands and launch himself at his opponent in an almost berserker fury. Cedric Shieldless, in the days of Harold Godwinson, once defeated a famous Viking warrior named Olaf in this manner. Cedric had his shield cut apart and so went into a berserk fury and used his sword in both hands. Apparently he had to be restrained from hacking Olaf's body into very small pieces.

The Longsword

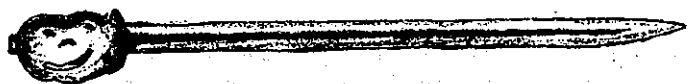
A sword in the form of the traditional fantasy longsword is highly impractical; in fact, the longsword never actually existed in the form that we know it.

The term "longsword" arose in reference to the sword of the Roman cavalry known as the *spatha*, which was based on a Spanish design. The Norwegian *longsax* also fits the description of the longsword.



Roman cavalry longsword

When the broadsword faded out of use, it was replaced by the Italian rapier, and then by the classic Venetian style broadsword. Both of these are stabbing and thrusting weapons and have wire or rounded ("basket") hilts. The classic D&D longsword has a plain crosspiece for a hilt and is thus an inefficient thrusting weapon. Against armour, the broadsword would out-perform it.



Venetian broadsword

The Rolemaster system also refers to the concept of the longsword and suggests that it is similar in length and

weight to the broadsword. At the same time it is meant to be better than the broadsword at penetrating heavy armours. There did exist a weapon which was a thrusting sword and good at penetrating armours, but it was a lot shorter and had a virtually triangular blade.

The Scimitar

This weapon originated either in the middle east, or in the northern regions of Africa. It is a curved sword, heavier than the sabre. Its primary use is to *draw cut* and *lunge cut*, especially from horseback.

A curved sword is easier to make than a straight sword, and balances well in one hand when making a cut. The curve in the blade of the scimitar assists the user in making a *lunge cut* or a *draw cut* (when making a cut with the scimitar the blade moves towards oneself). The curve also helps in reducing drag when cutting. To understand this better, just imagine trying to slice an opponent with a broadsword.



Scimitar

In the areas where the scimitar was developed we can only presume that heavy armours were not readily available, so the blade had to be better at slicing. In a classic meeting between Saladin and King Richard, Richard demonstrated how his two handed sword could hack through a set of steel chains. Saladin responded by showing that his scimitar could slice through a cushion dropped on his blade.

In the dark ages and early middle ages, the standard of many of the eastern blades was often superior to those made in Europe. The best-known style of eastern blade-making was the *Damascus* sword making technique. This process involved purifying iron ore to get iron, followed by the addition of large amounts of carbon to the steel, lowering the melting temperature of the iron so that it would almost melt. This helped to spread the hard bits of steel evenly through the sword, and when it was worked, resulted in the appearance of a blotched pattern on the sword blade. This pattern has often been likened to a river running along the face of the blade.

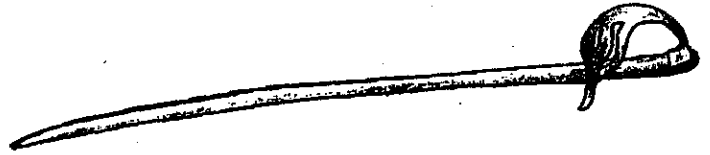
This process produced scimitars of exceptional quality.

The Sabre

The sabre was developed to be the ultimate horseman's weapon. It was a light, multi-purpose cutting and thrusting sword, with one edge and a slightly curved blade.

The curve in the blade was important for two main reasons. Firstly, the sword balanced better, so the swordsman could use a *lunge cut* and a *draw cut* as well as a *thrust*. This

made it practical to fence with a sabre, as well as use it from horseback.



Sabre

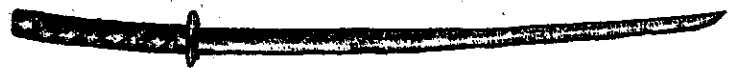
Secondly, the horseman participating in a cavalry charge would often impale his opponent on his sword. This posed a problem in that the attacker had to withdraw his sword from his opponent's body as he charged by. This had to be achieved without losing one's sword or breaking one's arm. The secret to this was to attack with a twisted arm, so you could unwind as your opponent charged by. The curve of the sword helped you get the blade out of your opponent's body.

This type of bladework could get very complicated if two opponents had similar skills and were placed in similar circumstances. Such was the case when the French hussars faced the British dragoons. Both parties would charge at each other on horseback and try to "psyche" the other out. Eventually one of the two had to give in and take the defensive, or they would both be hacked to pieces. Needless to say, the warrior to take the defensive was at a disadvantage.

The Katana

The katana is a very well-known Japanese sword used by the samurai. It can either be used in one or two hands and is made of very good steel.

It is necessary to dispel some illusions about this blade. It is not innately magical, nor can it cut through gun barrels or anvils. And for the benefit of a friend of mine, it can not cut through a knight in plate armour; and neither is does it have a layer of air bubbles between each of 2 000 000 layers of steel to give it flexibility.



Katana

The steel of a katana is purer than the steel used in the west, and its workmanship is better. However, the sword has a totally different purpose from western blades, and the two cannot be compared.

The katana is a very good *draw cutting* blade. The blade is pulled as it cuts, and in soft tissue and flesh it can be devastating. The blade, and especially its edge, is about as hard as well made knives are today. This means that the blade maintains a sharp edge for cutting. But because of the hardness of the blade, it will chip if another blade is parried with the edge, or possibly even break if it meets very hard steel.

armour at the wrong angle. For this reason, battles were fought mainly with the *yari* (spear) and the *naginata*.

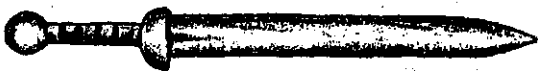
A common question is whether the samurai with a katana was a better swordsman than a Spanish mercenary (for example). The answer is that they were very well matched and both had a lot to learn from each other. In fact the famous Japanese *kensai* (sword saint), Miyamoto Mushashi, improved his two sword style after watching Portuguese sailors fight with sword and dagger. It is my personal opinion that a European swordsman with a rapier could vanquish a samurai with a good lunge before the samurai got in range to attack.

The Shortsword

This weapon became most widely used in the form of a *gladius*. The *gladius* had as much significance to swordsmanship and warfare as did the development of the firearm. When it became established that one could mass produce steel weapons, the entire military system changed. For one thing, the balance of authority changed, as the leader was no longer the man with the steel sword. It was an innovation of the Greeks (it would be the Greeks) to get everybody to work together in the form of a phalanx.

The *gladius* was both a hacking and stabbing weapon which did not require a large space to it wield in. It was used in combination with a *hoplite shield* (very large wall shield). Soldiers were taught not to over-extend themselves when fighting, but rather to keep in formation, so that they could cover the warrior on their left. I presume this meant that the warrior had to face his opponent.

Without the shield a lot more body movement was required to fight with the *gladius*. This was more to the effect of an unarmed combat style with weapon kata. This required far more skill and was much more dangerous.

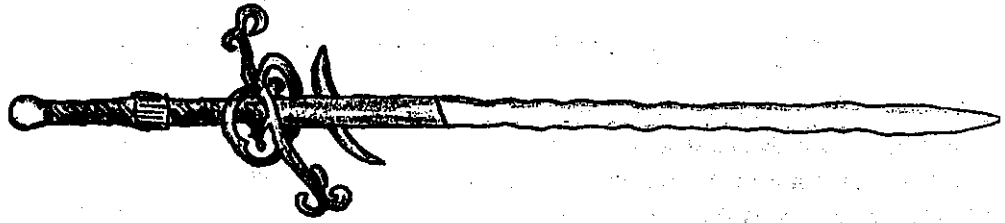


Roman gladius

The standard *gladius* was made out of good steel, whereas the officers' swords were made out of excellent steel, akin to *Damascus steel*, which was imported from Persia.

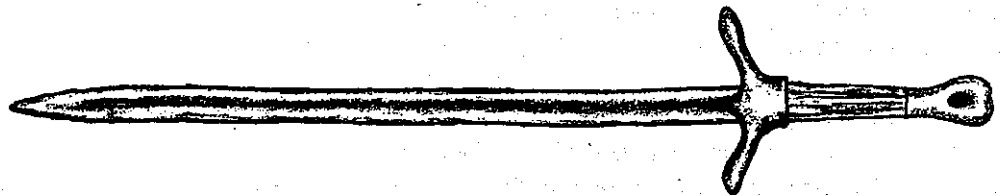
The Two Handed Sword

There are two main types of two handed swords which occur in history - the Scottish claymore and the strange design used by the German Mercenaries or *Landsknechts*.



Landsknecht's two-handed sword

The two handed sword was a very difficult weapon to master, as one would have to learn how to control its weight and six foot length. The sword was often taller than the user, but always straight. It weighed between 4 and 5.25 kg. The sword usually had a spike or small blade projecting out from the main blade about a foot from the hilt. The blade up to that point was usually padded with leather to enable the warrior to hold it if necessary.



Scottish claymore

I once had the experience of trying out a claymore in a mock battle. When I used the sword I found that it was easier to attack with the point of the sword rather than the edges. If my opponent had been heavily armoured and moving slowly, I would have hacked and put the weight of the blade behind the stroke.

When it came to my turn to face the two handed sword with a shortsword, I tried to remember all the theories about getting in close before his return stroke. I confess in all modesty that I am very fast with a blade, yet I did never actually get round to putting the theory into practice. It must have been the weather.

The Scots are well known for their claymores. History mentions that the Scots used to weave patterns in the air with their great swords. It is probable that these continuous swinging manoeuvres were required to keep the sword in balance and moving fast. The Scottish found out that these huge blades tended to work better against English knights than other Scots.

If the gentle reader should want to read more about the making and play of swords he or she should consult the following books. These books were used for reference purposes and the extract of Ancient text. They are as follows:

- 1) *The Sword in Anglo-Saxon England*, by Davidson and in the UCT library.
- 2) *The Archeology of Weapons*, by Oakeshott and to be found in the arts section of the city library.

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Discussions of Dungeon Mastery

LIFE AND DEATH - A DM'S View On Killing Characters

One of the most essential aspects of any role-playing game is the fear of death that must surround any character. This is a fairly strong sentiment, but one that is in my experience vital to the game. I, as both a player and a DM in many games using various systems, believe that at the end of the day it is the fear of death or oblivion that is the most final and key fear of any player, and thus the strongest motive and one of the most sensitive areas for a DM. While approaches to character death are as varied as games, I believe that this element of the game is one that every DM should consider, and one that should not be hidden behind the veneer of a random dice roll or two.

The various approaches may, I think, be generalised into three broad categories. Firstly there are the pure system killers. This is by far the largest category. In this the DM plans the combats on a broadly statistical basis, and then allows the players fair carte blanche with how they deal with the situation. The rest is then up to the rules of the system and the dice. This is largely the approach found in the planning and design of most tournaments. While having the advantage of being highly objective, there are some faults with this.

Firstly, within the realms of planning that a DM can do, there are some limitations. So it is often very difficult to predict the players' approach, often leading to disastrous re-

sults. The DM is then left with some difficult choices, is often unprepared, and at the heat of the moment thinks, "I didn't think that they would go that way first. Now do I fudge the dragon's damage rolls or do I kill off the main reason for the quest?"

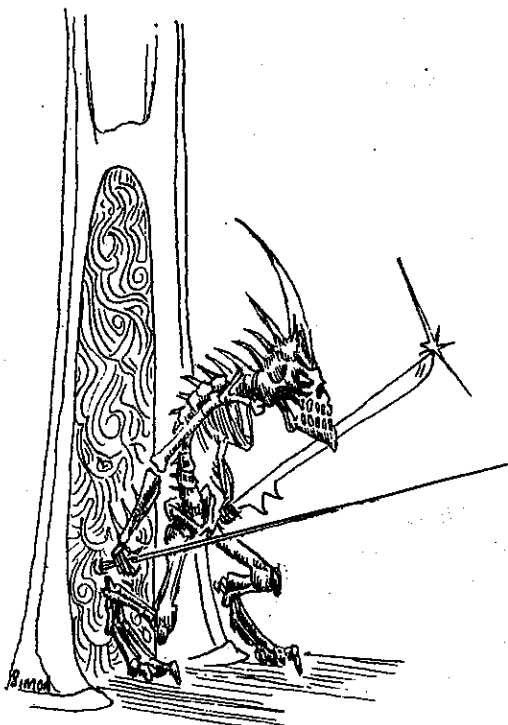
Secondly, it may lead to some very illogical results, leaving players with more than a vague sense of dissatisfaction. "I spent two weeks planning Fred the Slayer - character sheet, painting, history, family tree and so forth - and he dies being hit by an apple-cart driving past, by rolling open ended in the first few minutes of the game." A large part of the game is spent by the players in attempting to change this statistical probability of death. How much control should the DM exercise?

The next broad category is the world killers. "The world is the way it is, if you go that way and meet a thousand foot long dragon, well it's a hard life!" My main objection to this approach is that one is penalising players for a failure to gain sufficient information when it is often illogical or impossible, within the confines of the game, to give them such information. Also such a system tends to emphasize brute survival over all else, losing such elements as character personality development and role playing.

At the opposite end of the spectrum comes the "planned death" approach. In this the DM cold-bloodedly decides that at point X someone will die, and may even decide who that person is. This may sound like sacrilege but there are some merits to the idea.

A long-term campaign is like a novel in many ways, with the DM as the main author. The death of one of the central characters of a novel (and what player does not like to believe his or hers is a central character?) is such an important event, it is not taken lightly by the author. So how planned should the death of a player be? Furthermore, I, for one, would much prefer to die in such a way as to be memorable rather than at the toss of a random dice, especially if it's a character that I have been playing for a number of years. So perhaps under some circumstances it is best for a DM to very seriously consider points in his campaign where characters will die and why it will happen.

I am also a firm believer in the chance system, where the DM gives a player a number of chances and then its tough



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luck. The player will realise that he didn't just blow it once and was unlucky but rather that he made a series of unwise decisions.

Death is vitally important to the game. If players feel they can battle anything and get away with it then the game will lose some of its most vital tension. Likewise, if the players feel they can drop of at any moment, then long term pros-

pects and the character depth and development must suffer (as often happens in cyberspace games). However, it is such an indispensable part of the game that it cannot be randomly tossed off. It is best then for a DM to clearly consider it in the planning of any campaign, making it integral to the game, but not an essentially arbitrary decision.

Giles Embleton

LIFE AND DEATH - A Player's Response

"A long-term campaign is like a novel."

Hm. I can't help but find this statement to be irritating in the extreme. It implies that the DM has total control over the course of a campaign; that the DM has absolute power; that players' decisions count for nothing in the end.

As a player who enjoys the game because of the satisfaction one gets when goals are achieved due intelligent decision-making, I find it highly frustrating to play in a game where one walks into dead end after dead end, until one accidentally makes the "right" decision; the only possible outcome as planned for in the DM's novel of a campaign. If a DM structures a campaign so rigidly that it resembles a novel, I fail to see how this situation can be avoided.

Of course there has to be structure to a campaign, but the players must be able to make their own choices, to respond intelligently and "in character". A good campaign must be flexible enough to accommodate this. A campaign should be set out into "nodes" of action, accessed by paths that are undefined enough to allow the characters to traverse them in their own way.

If a certain node is crucial, at least give the players a pretty good illusion of choice by letting several paths lead to it. This structure certainly does not resemble a novel; rather it resembles a set of all possible novels, corresponding to every single choice made in the campaign.

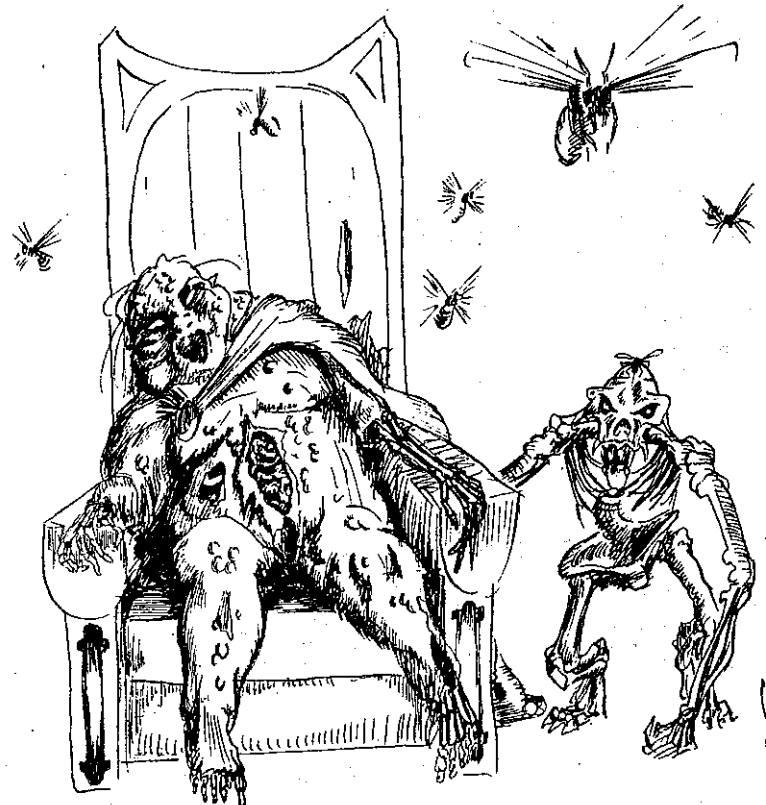
The DM should not be able to tell before hand what the final outcome of any encounter will be. It must be remembered that chance is fundamental to role-playing: if this were not so, we may as well not play with dice. If the DM restricts the players' ability to make choices, then he begins to dictate their actions.

If this is taken to its furthest extreme, one ends up with a situation in which DMs choose when and

how characters die. This is inexcusable. Role-playing is a game in which characters do battle with Chance using intelligent decision-making as the weapon. If the DM takes control of the game to such an extent that the characters' deaths are preordained, so to speak, then there is no point in playing.

We all know the old cliché "Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely". When DMs have the power to decide when and how characters die, their power is absolute, and they become gods. Players who don't believe in gods in this manifestation of reality do not appreciate them in role-playing worlds either.

- Sotek of Hexworthy, Druid. (Liza van Zyl in lesser planes)



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LIFE AND DEATH: A Response to the DM's View

Dear Editors

Mr. Embleton is perfectly correct in saying that the best environment for character development is one which provides a dynamic balance between the viscidities of fate and the fulfillment of destinies.

If a player realises that the DM will not kill him no matter what dangerous acts he performs, his actions, precautions, or lack thereof, become meaningless. If his life is perpetually threatened, he must become a paranoid caricature. Between these two extremes lies the realistic actions of a self-preserving, goal-oriented being. Between these two poles, striving for a goal (with the possibility of failure) has meaning.

Yet there is a second polarity. There is little scope for character development if the campaign is simply a routine of adventure; collect treasure; buy goods; go up levels; adventure again. The battles, in hindsight, cannot be distinguished. The foes all seem the same. There are no fixed plot goals, no great quests. At the other extreme, there is little scope for character development if the plot is foreordained and fixed. The only thing left for the player is to attempt to guess it and go along with it. When character actions can change the flow of events, then such actions are meaningful.

People do die in random events every day in reality. If the player realises that this can never happen to him, something is lost from the game. People die through foolish mistakes in reality. If the player realises that this can never happen to him, something is lost from the game. People do not die in reality because some god has decided on a whim that it will

make a fitting climax to some twist of fate. If a player realises that this is to happen, then something is lost from the game.

And let us not make the incorrect assumption that the DM's methods are totally beyond the understanding of players. Most of us have at least tried our hand at DMing. In a long term campaign, the players are sure to gain some appreciation of how the DM's mind works, how he structures his campaign.

To summarise the three types of character death presented: System killing is a necessary facet of a believable game. There must be the more than the DM trying to give the illusion of the possibility of death. It must happen every now and again for the purposes of game believability. World killing is simply the result of poor DMing, the DM giving the characters a setting that they are ill-prepared to deal with. The planned death is different.

A long term campaign is like a novel in some ways, but not like a novel in one important one. Specifically, the DM is not like an author. He does not control the character's destinies. The characters are free agents, who must impose their own meanings upon the world as they see it. What meaning will the death have for the player (who is perhaps the only one who knows the full extent of his own creation, the full scope of his artwork, the character)? The DM must ask: Whose quest is it that the player must die for?

Brother Boustrophedon
Of the Invisible College of Conspicuous Arts

The Brutal World of Cyberpunk (III)

Since the "Brutal world of Cyberpunk" debate has been raging since CLAWMARKS VII, we would like to give this topic a break for a while. Therefore, no further Cyberpunk forum articles will be accepted, unless they have something completely new and interesting to say. Borderline cases will be ignored. Jack in, turn on and write to somebody else.

In response to General Sir Jackson Baines, OBE, SD [CLAWMARKS VIII]

One must respect such quaint characters as the General for their innocently soft hearted natures. When one such as he arises to drip pearls of wisdom within our reach, rapt attention is due.

However, as with many of the older, slightly senile generation, he does tend to ramble on, stringing together a miscel-

lany of phrases in a style quite resembling that of some eminent political gentlemen. One can note with interest, and slight worry, the General's scribblings in that paragon of trans-generational authority, CLAWMARKS.

General Sir Jackson Baines (known, I am told, as Jack amongst his fellows) does at least admit that he is not an ex-

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pert in the field he discourses upon, that is, Cyberpunk, and particularly Cyberpunk Roleplaying. Such honesty is to be applauded, and indeed it is a good introduction for what is to follow.

The General (dare I call him Jack?) proclaims the growth of global commerce, and hails the coming of Green messiahs in the form of ecological groups. One does wonder which particular messiah he intends to save the world? Dear old Greenpeace are very pleased with their new boat, but sadly seem not too eager to expand beyond it, and as for our more militant friends in groups such as Earth First, their membership approximates that of a large house party more than a world shaking organisation. Global apathy continues to be the rule, and I am certain that only the isolation of a country residence saves the General from confrontation with consumerist society.

Furthermore, to maintain that one continent in debt and disaster would draw the rest into a similar condition is to remain blissfully unaware of the fundamentals of capitalist economics. A pointer to some elementary concepts such as competition and exploitation will show that inequality is considered the normal case. One might suppose this was even so in the days when the General was more in possession of his faculties.

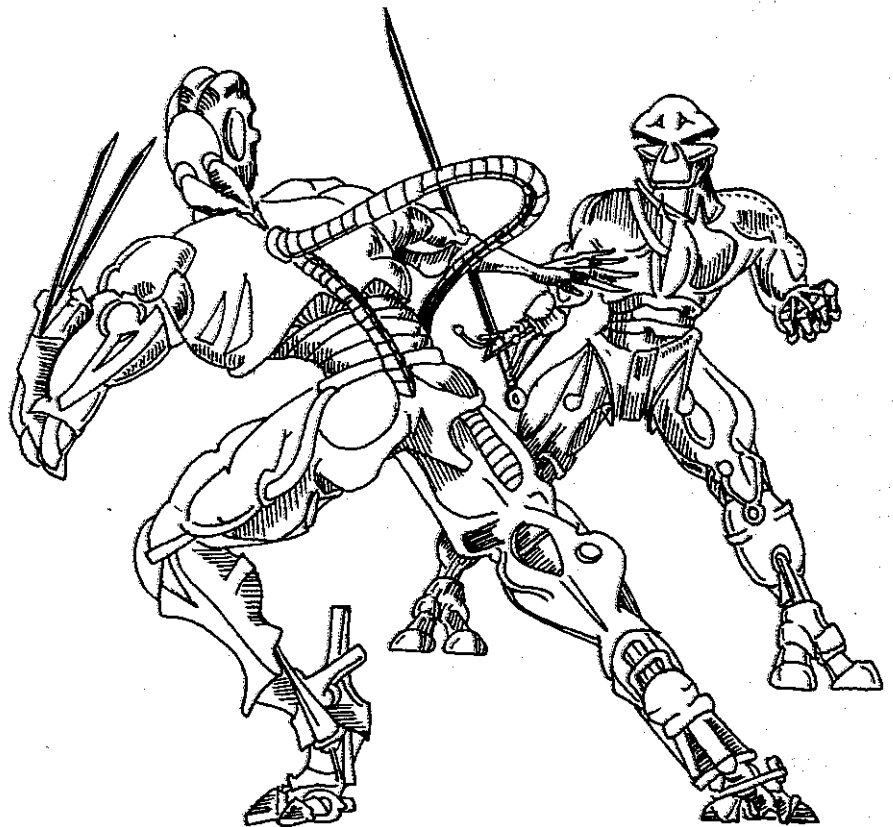
And as for the inoperable strategies of economic feudalism, I beg to differ. As, I do believe, do many corporate millionaires, such as that ghastly fool Perot. And it is precisely in those late 70's and 80's that the General seems to abhor so (and Perot surely loved), that Cyberpunk has its roots. The research carried out in neural interfacing in the late 70's was looking very promising indeed (the nerve damage had not, as yet, set in).

In a climate of impending nuclear war (at this point we offer our apologies to Ronnie, and point out he can still buy nukes, with pensioner's discount, from the Mafia) Cyberpunk was the soft edge of the future, not a dystopian vision at all. My dear Sir, you must realise that to have a dystopian future, you need to put effort into the process, you need to

DO something. And to DO something is most unCyberpunk. Jack in, turn on, burn out.

As for the General's perception of violence, one must point out that it would be quite unusual for any well balanced person to envision themselves battering anyone to death, or blowing brains out, in reality, no matter the particular martial style of the day. I realise the General's experience is military, but he must realise his experience is in that regard exceptional.

And as for brutality, and worrying detail, may I refer the



SIMON

General to a certain session of his friend Andrew D. M. Shackleton's Rolemaster game, wherein Thomas Cobbler, mage of Carinion, and Velvet, Chialla of someother forest, offed a particularly reprehensible doppelganger? And how Velvet ripped the back of his neck out, whilst Thomas sent a shockbolt into the thing's face that left its eyes resembling, um, I do believe it was hard boiled eggs? Said Thomas then proceeded to batter its head into a pulp. Tsk tsk, what awful violence. Please do not mistake me: Thomas, at least, highly enjoyed the session, as he had saved his companions, and a farm, from slow and agonizing death.

I wish merely to point out that such violence occurs in any roleplaying environment. It matters not that the thing was not a person, it appeared human enough (in fact, it appeared to be one of Thomas' companions) when it all began, and

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the reaction of violence was not against any generic form (being an open minded soul, Thomas has nothing against honourable dopplegangers) but merely against it being enemy, and murderer, and thus vermin. To-be-killed. Human reaction, Jack, human emotion. Not unusual at all.

As for by-the-by killings, one need not look far into the fantasy genre to find precisely such events (e.g. the massacre of an Elven village by one Chaos Lord and companions). It matters not that these events take place. They clearly exist in a realm of fantasy, not reality. More real, one would suppose, is the Cyberpunk hankering after firepower, more hardware, and glorious destruction. This is a definite occurrence, but I am hard pressed to find one example of a Cyberpunk's wish not replicated in the realm of fantasy. I must strain to see the difference between Fireballs and C4.

And I don't consider it childish at all. Mass destruction and IBS counts are great stress relief. (As are violent computer games such as Castle Wolfenstein.) As for guns being real, and fireballs not - I return to my earlier point. I treat the recipe for C4 or the trap in a Sprawl site on the same level as the book of Abraham the Mage or the runes of Gandalf. On a practical level, all are fantastic devices, not existing in the reality any of us choose to inhabit. If Cyberpunks were to go out and blow things up, I would think differently. But

they are no more likely to do that than D&D players are to try and summon Demons.

As for the rest of the General's rant, I do believe I have covered all his ground. Cyberpunk is by no means more disturbing than Fantasy, and it surely is a realistic, if not real, world. And is possible. Even plausible. As I noted, Cyberpunk needs only apathy.

To briefly deal with the negative aspects of Cyberpunk, I must point out that the General has never been as deeply into tech, or even connected to the Net, as most Cyberpunk players are, and thus misses out on the ecstasy of technological sophistication. Even ignoring such facts, the fascination with darkness in the Cyberpunk genre is a CLAW standard, and clearly exists in most CLAW games.

And finally, I must agree with General Sir Jackson Baines on his last point. If he ever finds CLAW members, or Cyberpunk DM's turning into mercenaries, there might be cause for worry. But as it is, our foremost Cyberpunk DM's are hardly militaristic. No one has bombed the CLAW room yet. I would advise Jack to go back to sleep.

Raubnetz B. Lib. (MU) Und.

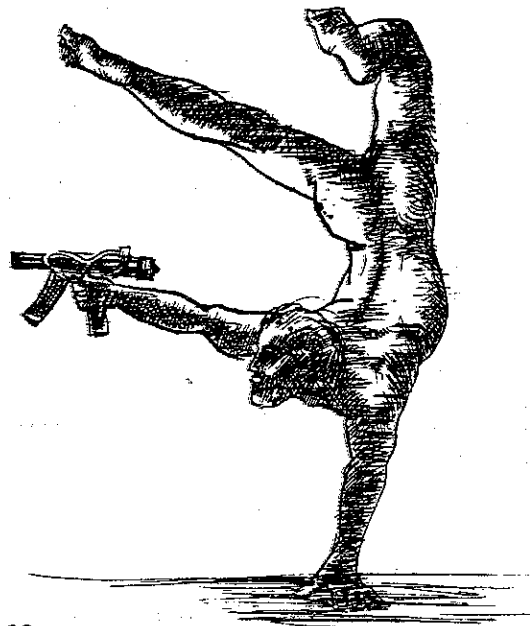
In response to Raubnetz B. Lib.'s response:

Bah! Impertinent Raubnetz pup. No respect for your elders and betters! Who, with your neverending ghastly waffle, are YOU to accuse ME of "rambling on"?

In my CLAWMARKS VIII letter, I was pointing out that there are alternatives to the Cyberpunk future. This aspect of the cyber debate is purely conjectural - there is insufficient evidence to draw any firm conclusions. You're in no position to dismiss alternatives.

You say: "Cyberpunk is by no means more disturbing than Fantasy, and it is surely a realistic, if not real world ... Even plausible." That, young man, is called contradiction. If you are any good as a role-player, you visualise what your character does.

The more plausible a world, the more plausible your visualisations, the more realistic a psychological experience they are. And the more disturbing it is to the player's reality when the character does disturbing things.



Perhaps you should talk to your friend Mr Peter van Heusden, the player of the Mage Thomas of whom you speak. No doubt his character unleashed a devastating shock bolt, with gruesome results. But he probably believes that shock bolts are, in reality, impossible. Can you really claim that the effect on his psyche would have been the same if Thomas had blasted away with a shotgun, a weapon with which he knows people are killed every day?

FORUM FORUM FORUM FORUM FORUM

You pretend to justify the negative aspects of Cyberpunk by saying that high tech makes you ecstatic, and appealing to the ludicrous concept of a CLAW standard. This may explain your reasons for wanting to play the genre, but it does not change whether or not negative aspects exist.

Personally, I find too many negative aspects in the setting for me to want to play it myself, or for me to understand why people are keen to merge their imaginations with it. Naturally, this only applies to the presentations of Cyberpunk that I have experienced or heard about; it could be that stomachable versions exist somewhere. This is also a personal opinion, a matter of taste, and of course many people will have different tastes.

The problem with Cyberpunk that I feel is objective, rather than the subjective taste issue above, is that because the violence is generally more realistic than in fantasy, gratuitous violence poses more of a threat to the mindset of the players. Of course there is violence in both cyber and fantasy games. But, as I argue above, Cyberpunk violence is by nature far less remote.

However, for CLAWs, this is not the hassle that it used to be. The old Cyberpunk games of '91 and '92, with their high body counts and sloppy violence, are no more. The excessive, gratuitous violence that featured prominently in discussions of these games has given way to strategy and caution. Realism is catching up with Cyberpunk.

This doesn't change the fact that there is a difference between violence in Cyberpunk and in other genres, and that without appropriate DMing (which, I believe, only got on its feet this year), the cyber genre could have unpleasant effects on its players. The non-militarism of the DMs is irrelevant: it is any change in the mindset of the players that is significant here. Do you truly think that the only way people react to having violent minds is to be physically violent?

You advise me to go back to sleep. Youngster, I suggest that you jack out and wake up.

General Sir Jackson Baines, OBE, SSD (Still Slowly Dissolving)

THE CLAW MENTALITY (II)

The "Claw Mentality" debate (begun in CLAWMARKs VIII) will not continue in future editions unless someone who is not Peter or Andrew comes up with something radically scintillating to add.

In response to Lord Tasemen, Sir Bletchired and Andrew

I must admit, I never expected to see the CLAW Committee photocopying policy in practice. Yet here I stand, confronted by not 1, not 2, but 3 whole copies of the current Clawthing (Blechsnerglyftthpt be his name). Or maybe CLAWMARKS needed to have an extra page? Or maybe it was just mushed trees with scrawly things on?

I rolled 1d4-1, ignored negative numbers, and marked the Shackletons from 1 to 3. I then wrote 3 on all faces of the d4 and rolled. And decided to reply to Andrew.



I do believe, Andrew, you missed the point.

1) As you point out, roleplaying games play a psychological role in the dialogue between world and individual. And thus, my point is, necessarily we can say something about the individual by surveying the games. This survey leads me to the conclusion that the games I examined contained, to a greater or lesser degree, CLAWs members' reactions to darkness. And that the destruction of the facade of light leaves a group (which I do not believe you necessarily are part of) of My,

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people who live in heightened awareness of darkness, so to say the underbelly of reality. Conversations with CLAW members after the publication of CLAWMARKS VIII did nothing to dispel this conclusion. Whether this is good or ill is besides the point.

2) With respect to your game, I do believe my argument holds. If roleplaying games are an aid to dealing with indi-

vidual/society interactions, the modelling of a flawed substructure and the attempt to generate a eucatastrophic result point towards a discontent with aspects of the situation in society, and a hope for a good end. However, the means towards the end are for me the interesting part.

If my interpretation is correct, the process would leave no participants unsullied. The hope contained within the eucatastrophic premise is possibly hope for only a Pyrrhic victory, as can be shown by the embedded partial failure, the struggle against belatedness of the setting we observed. We did not get given a chance to save the initial farmer, we could only correct things to a point where the survivors could bury the dead, in peace.

In the above case the situation posed supposes a destruction of an order which is superficially pure, but finally corrupt. It is in the context of such portrayals that I originally claimed the "reactions to darkness" I perceived (to quote "To know the darkness as real, to seek deeper than the facade..."). It is the destruction of the framework of facade which allows these reactions in the first place, reactions which can be cathartic, and healing, but often are not.

Your game resembled very much the bright flames of anger I speak of, which are also evident in, e.g., White Wolf's Werewolf. I re-iterate, a moral judgement on the reaction is beside the point, and to propose one is to ignore the fact that those who react are individuals. And that I will not do.

Peter van Heusden

To respond to Peter van Heusden:

My, how times change. Just 7 months ago, Peter wrote an article claiming to answer the question "what is a CLAW type really?" He insisted that "If you examine CLAW, that is what you will find: reactions to darkness." The two unacceptable implications being that there was some kind of psychological standard in CLAWs (which Peter was, for some reason, qualified to report on), and that "reactions to darkness" is all that is worth saying about the psychological and sociological reactions of CLAW-members.

Now, under the guise of refuting my CLAWMARKS VIII disagreement with him, he has changed his tune considerably. He speaks of "a group" in CLAWs, rather than of the whole society. And he says that reactions to darkness may

be found in the CLAWs games he mentioned "to a greater or lesser degree".

For him to admit that his personal views are perhaps not universally valid, makes those views far less alienating. But despite this (welcome) change, I still find myself disagreeing with some of his implications this time round.

The introductory rant about the photocopying policy hardly deserves to be dignified with an answer. One must assume that these paragraphs are some kind of defensive reaction that comes from taking disagreement personally. But for the record: the ideas put forward by both Sir Bletch!red and Tasemen the Yelo were not mine, hence the pseudonyms.

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Perhaps Peter should have checked for anagrams before jumping to conclusions.

As for my ill-fated Carinion game, Peter is welcome to interpret it as he likes. If he was role-playing at all well, the game became a subjective experience for him, and as such would probably have been integrated into his existing mind-set in a way he felt he could relate to.

If the game meant "hope for only a Pyrrhic victory ... contained within the eucatastrophic premise" to him, so be it. But that's not how the other player I have spoken to about it, or I (the DM), understood it. Peter's convoluted view is just one possible interpretation; and since the game only lasted for a few playing sessions, he can only be reacting to the original setting, not to any overall campaign meaning.

Peter contends, perhaps correctly, that there is a "group" in CLAWs which clings to "the underbelly of reality" - an image which strikes me as faintly ridiculous. But to confine oneself simply to a "heightened awareness of darkness", without also a heightened awareness of anything else, seems limiting and self-destructive. My argument is not against darkness; it's against lurking exclusively at one end of a

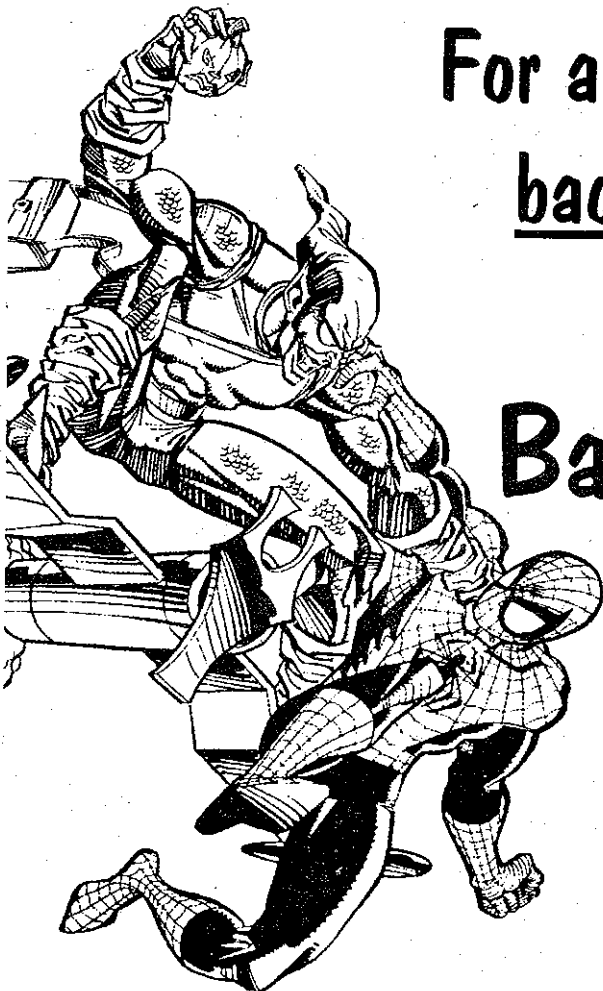
polarity.

While many people, myself often included, find darkness fascinating, there is another side to the "Gothic foundations" of CLAWs. The original social group from which CLAWs grew was, by all accounts, an insecure, incestuous mess. That group, for the most part, no longer exists; and CLAWs has grown beyond any single social group.

The majority of the CLAWs freshers - some to be the future hierarchy - are basically healthy, well-adjusted human beings. An attempt to imitate the past psychological problems of CLAWs' founders denies the dynamic and individualistic promise of new generations of CLAW-members.

Peter concludes his reply by implying that my response to him is a moral one. I don't see where morality comes into it. My point is that there are entirely valid aspects of CLAWs which he ignores, and that there are alternative explanations for what he does see. Perhaps Peter should examine what his concluding statement implies for his own generalisations: those who react are, indeed, individuals.

Andrew Shackleton



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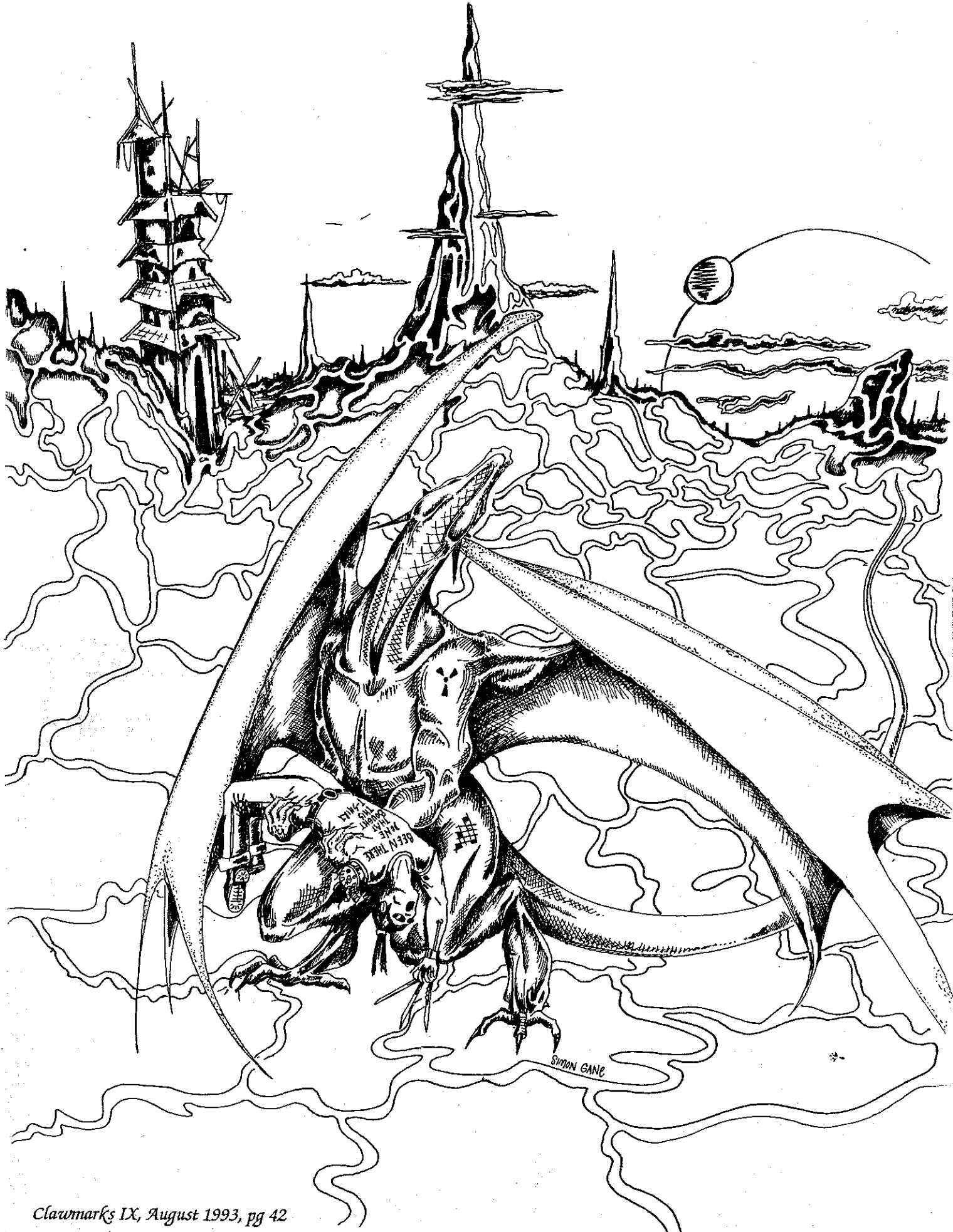
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Clawmarks IX, August 1993, pg 41



Dragonfire Results

In the mystic year of 1989, CLAWs was spawned, and we had Dragonfire - our first AD&D tournament module. Then, in 1992, Dragonfire expanded to three tournaments - AD&D, Rolemaster and Star Wars. This year, Dragonfire became a convention, complete with 3 tournaments, live action role-playing, tiny screen videos, thing-selling stalls and a Hairy Party.

The Dragonfire Con '93 was held on the weekend of 14-15 August in the UCT Students' Union. Although the event was plagued by ill fortune, confusion, spon and a waning moon, it was fairly well attended and generally enjoyed.

The three tournament modules were *When Dragons Die...* (AD&D), *Judgement* (Rolemaster), and

Killing Time (Cyberspace/punk). Teams entering numbered about 15 for the AD&D, 7 for Rolemaster, and 5 for Cyber. Prizes were mostly sponsored by Games Without Frontiers and Back and Forth Comics.

Here we present the results of the tournaments.

When Dragons Die...

(Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, 2nd Edition)

FIRST PLACE Targian Triad
 SECOND PLACE Jesus Wept...
 BEST ROLE-PLAYERS Sons of Kyuss
 BEST DM Pearce Armstrong

HONOURABLE MENTION to **Rampage** as runners up.

DISHONOURABLE MENTIONS

The following teams or individuals skillfully distinguished themselves with noteworthy foul-ups:

Ye Olde Guild of Adventurers - for, in a communication- and information-based module, realising half-way through (and after most of the major interactions) that they had a *Ring of Tongues*. In a similar vein, only towards the end of the module did **The Scatological Blurpshturpsters** notice that their ranger had a dog.

Masks of Mary - for carrying the *Circlet of Illusion Detection* (which gave headaches when wearer was in the presence of illusions) all the way to the section with most of the illusions, putting it on the mage's head, and, when the mage got a headache, taking it off and discarding it as useless.

Team 17 - for only noticing late in the module that Lady Morsina was female; also for asking, about half-way through, "who's Aodoct?"
Jaco Redgard - as the only DM who managed to forget the entire final battle at the end of the module.

Ye Olde Guild of Adventurers - for assuming that a wall of energy in the temple was the Gate Between Worlds, and deciding that they were in a different world once they stepped through it. They then religiously went back through it when they wanted to "return", taking further damage from the energy.

Company of the White Dawn - for manacling and trying to interrogate an unintelligent octopoid creature that they were given for dinner.

Dragonlance Heroes - for eating the ranger's dog.

Judgement

(Rolemaster)

FIRST PLACE: Sponsor Wanted
 SECOND PLACE: F.O.A.D.
 BEST DM: Steve Buys

HONOURABLE MENTIONS:

Choos ... Wakey! and **F.O.A.D.** - for managing the tournament without prior Rolemaster experience.

Who The Hell Cares, **Sponsor Wanted** and **Rampage** - for (in keeping with their religion) trying to heal the yetis they defeated.

Sponsor Wanted - for taking a perpetually regenerating zombie, shooting it till it stopped moving, dragging it away (while clubbing it to prevent it from rising up), and shoving it on holy ground to destroy it.

Rampage - for watering the Deacon's bonsai trees.

And to all the teams who buried the corpses of the zombies they destroyed.

DISHONOURABLE MENTIONS

F.O.A.D. - for managing 4 combat fumbles in 5 rounds, including missing a prone opponent.

Sponsor Wanted - for their nightblade who argued that she knew more about books than the sorcerer, saying "books are often used in assassinations".

Choos ... Wakey! - for claiming that they could use Midwifery as a similar skill to skinning.

And to all the DMs who suggested that the sleepless designers were replicas of the zombies in the module.

KILLING TIME

(Cyberpunk and Cyberpunk)

FIRST PLACE: Death on Acid
 BEST ROLEPLAYERS (shared) G.B.H. (Grievous Bodily Harm)
 and Bovine Assault Squad

The Dawn of the ICONoclasts

*a vagueish report on the CLAWs expedition to ICON, by Dr Terbald Ploon-Wrabler
(Totally Unbiased Chronicler of the War Ploons, sometimes Oberfunkmeister of YUKVOPP)*

It was dark. And cold. Twisted tendrils of fog curled upwards towards an unseen waxing moon. In the darkness, nameless horrors were brooding and gibbering. Ten of them, powered only by an eldrich Toyota minibus, raced northwards through the night. CLAWs had left for Johannesburg.

A new role-playing bunch started up in the Transvaal this year, calling themselves the South African Gamers Association (SAGA). Word reached CLAWs in about June that SAGA existed, and was holding an inaugural-type convention called ICON in Joburg at the beginning of August. It was years since the last CLAWs expedition north (in 1990, CLAWs attended the WARP tournament and duly won), so we scraped together enough silver pieces to dispatch an adventuring party or two.

Money was extorted from the SRC and the UCT Societies Council. The adventure was advertised on the CLAWroom notice board for a week (so if you didn't know about it, whose fault is that?). The responding fiends were just enough for two teams of four, and two DMs. These were the diabolical beings who departed Cape Town hideously early on the morning of Saturday 31 July, while all respectable folk were at home partying.

The journey itself was silly beyond belief. Apparently, spon factors increase exponentially when CLAW-members are cooped up in small spaces for long periods. Ears were assailed with King Otto's Hammond Organ Song, Flanders & Swann, the noise of Lurgy, and multiple Meeps, while the back seat role-played quietly to itself (on Venus, we think). Dodging the blistering verbiage of inter-driver warfare, the minibus's inhabitants debated at length the names for our two teams. The final choices: *Midnight At The Dwarf Spittoon*, and *War Ploons Straining At The Leash*. Epic, or what?

Having spent the night on Karen's lounge floor (receiving vastly generous hospitality from her parental force), on Sunday the Ploons and the

Spittoons, DMs in tow, dragged their corporeal forms to the convention itself.

The convention was a whole-day affair, with a four hour AD&D tournament, followed by a "secondary game" (team's choice of Cthulhu, MERP, Shadowrun or Star Wars; just for fun and not adjudicated) which ran while the designers scored the AD&D. There were various stalls (about 10) demonstrating wargaming and role-playing products and societies. Attendance was high: 35 teams competed in the tournament.

The CLAWs contingent made a characteristically dramatic arrival in full regalia - lots of black, cloaks and weird pendants; and Nephilim surging out from our music system. Surprisingly, there was not a Goth in sight amongst the indigenous population at the convention. It seems that while the predominant wierdo culture for Cape Town's role-players is Gothic, Joburg does metalheads instead. We got the impression that this distinction helps describe some of the role-playing habits of the two cities.

The convention was well organised, a feat that seems impressive in light of the organisational failures of Dragonfire this year. There were some fairly big-name sponsors for the tournament, including SEGA and Ster Kinekor.



ABOVE: CLAWs Does Joburg - the assembled motley horde.

The tournament itself, on the other hand, was fairly disappointing. The background was arb - "in order to become the new rulers of the land, you must pass through the dungeon before sunrise" - and the game was basically a dungeon crawl. The module made no provision for role-playing, and no really challenging combat was offered. Characters were an unwieldy 9th level in a dungeon that would have been a fair challenge for an intelligent 3rd level party. Although this was our impression, some of the other teams struggled considerably (one team somehow managing a negative score).

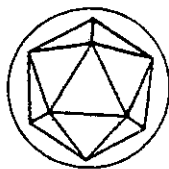
On the upside, the module was well laid out and easy to DM. Some of the ideas were clever, such as a cute stone lizard which animated and guided you if you were bright or lucky enough. The riddles were also good.

Of the secondary games, both CLAWs teams opted for the Call of Cthulhu (how surprising), which was much more impressive. This module was concise and well structured, and the War Ploons still haven't finished it. But it is good enough for them to be keen to do so sometime soon; when they have, a copy will be placed in the CLAW Library. The module is set in Victorian London - time of Jack the Ripper - and makes an excellent introduction to the Cthulhu game. (It's designed so that you don't have to know anything about the system to play it.) We also brought back a copy of the MERP module, which is set in Numenor just when Sauron was getting naughty (again), and, though a bit simplistic, looks good for an afternoon's entertainment.

Once the tourney was over, trumpets were sounded, banners were waved and signal guns were fired (well, they powered up the PA system) -- and the results were announced. We were not

expecting anything much: the War Ploons had even been planning to niggle the module until they decided that their DM was a nice person who shouldn't be psychologically tortured. (Incidentally, said DM was Pearce Armstrong, who later flew down to our Dragonfire Con and won AD&D Best DM.) Yet, to our multifurbinous surprise, the winners of ICON were ... *War Ploons Straining At The Leash*.

Great was the joy, high were the smugness levels! The Ploons strained even more strainsomely at their leashes. The Spittoons ... did whatever spittoons actually do. (Interestingly, second place



SAGA
ROLEPLAYERS' GUILD

LEFT: Their, like, official logo



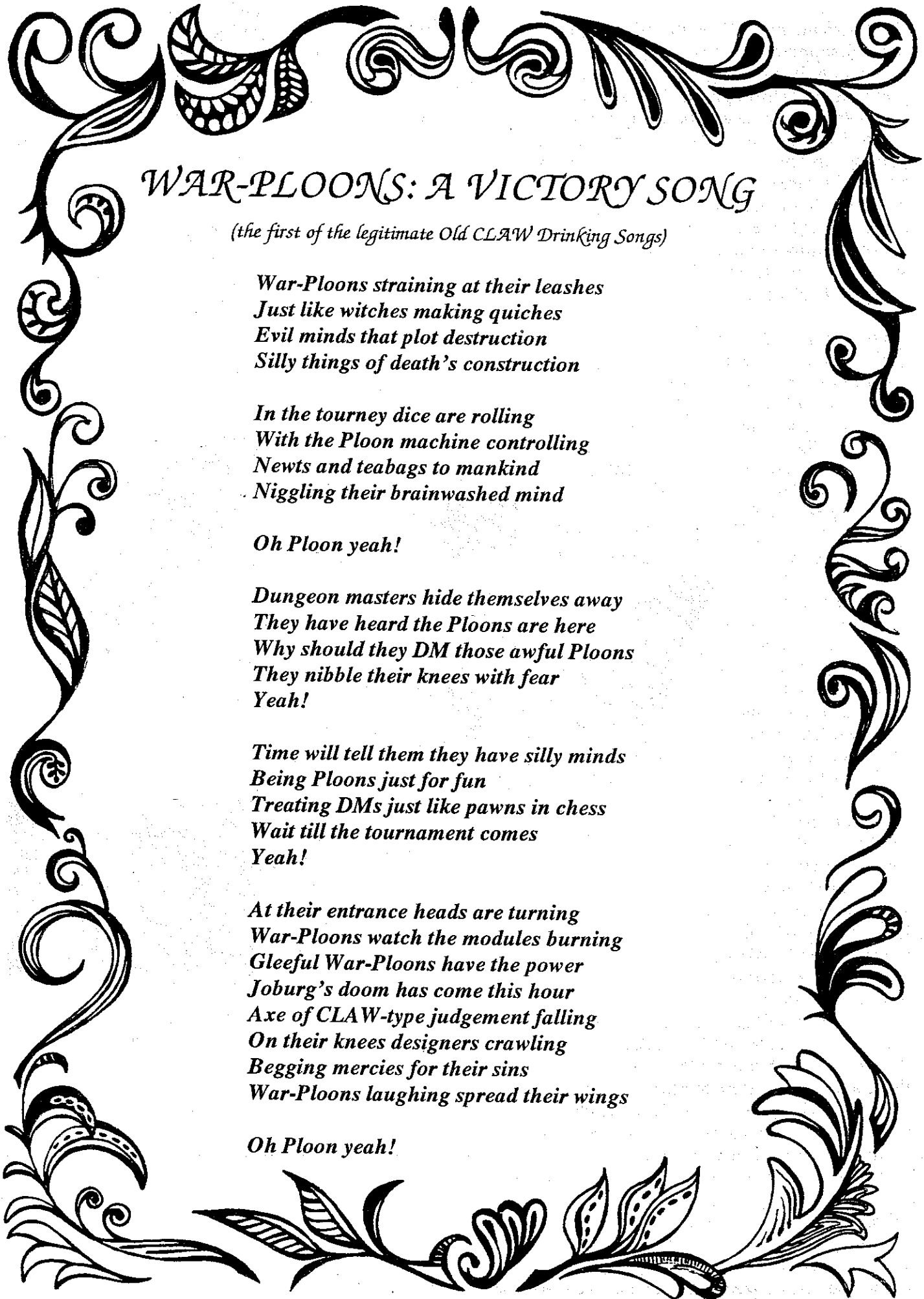
ABOVE: An assorted bunch of Ploons, Spittoons and DMs at a petrol-drinking stop



ABOVE: Entering the mechanical hellsteed somewhere in the land of Khar'oo

went to a bunch from the Durban Tolkien Soc, and third place to a group from the OFS?!? The 32 Transvaal teams didn't feature.) Nephilim was summoned, cloaks were swirled, and the CLAWhorde drifted gothically back to its mechanical hellsteed.

And yes, we did chant *Yog Yog Sothoth* and burn things - what of it?

A decorative border of black ink drawings surrounds the text. It features stylized leaves, scrolls, and floral motifs. At the top, there are large, intricate designs resembling a crown or a banner. The border is symmetrical and frames the central text.

WAR-PLOONS: A VICTORY SONG

(the first of the legitimate Old CLAW Drinking Songs)

*War-Ploons straining at their leashes
Just like witches making quiches
Evil minds that plot destruction
Silly things of death's construction*

*In the tourney dice are rolling
With the Ploon machine controlling
Newts and teabags to mankind
Nigging their brainwashed mind*

Oh Ploon yeah!

*Dungeon masters hide themselves away
They have heard the Ploons are here
Why should they DM those awful Ploons
They nibble their knees with fear
Yeah!*

*Time will tell them they have silly minds
Being Ploons just for fun
Treating DMs just like pawns in chess
Wait till the tournament comes
Yeah!*

*At their entrance heads are turning
War-Ploons watch the modules burning
Gleeful War-Ploons have the power
Joburg's doom has come this hour
Axe of CLAW-type judgement falling
On their knees designers crawling
Begging mercies for their sins
War-Ploons laughing spread their wings*

Oh Ploon yeah!

A Line in the Sand

Wargame review

In a blitzkrieg attack late this year, a group of CLAW beasts rushed off to Jo'burg, won the SAGA tournament, chanted Yog Yog Sothoth, and returned to Cape Town. No casualties were reported (though Anthony's Shamen tape is MIA).

The fruits of these labours were largely useless, including tickets to a Jo'burg movie theatre, amongst others. However, to pacify those of us who call for tactical thermonuclear warfare, they brought back with them a wargame called *A Line in the Sand*. And thus I shall review it. (Well, I've been skipping lectures for the last week playing it, so I might as well explain myself.)



A Line in the Sand is published by those cultureless fiends, TSR Inc. This is a friendly reminder to NEVER actually go out and spend money on anything made by TSR. E. Gary Gygax has freckles. Anyway, enough TSR bashing... *A Line in the Sand* (from here on referred to as ALITS) uses the same combat system employed in *Red Storm Rising*, also in the CLAW library. Basically, you roll a d10: if you get below your unit strength, you hit; otherwise you miss.

This suffers from the same problems as *Red Storm Rising* - it's unrealistic, simplifying combat beyond belief, and it makes fast, mobile warfare near-impossible. No heed is paid to the difference in strength between attacker and defender; all that matters is the number rolled.

ALITS has also followed *Red Storm Rising's* lead by posing a scenario which can at best be described as moderately interesting. TSR seem determined to follow current events rather than interesting battles. The Gulf war was, in the final analysis, very uninteresting from a military point of view. The US tactics used in the actual war threaten to put any hot blooded wargamer to sleep.

However, to make up for the gross inadequacies of the situation on the ground, TSR have included Diplomatic rules along with the military rules. I have not had a chance to play the Diplomatic rules, but they seem to be interesting enough, what with Jihad and War gauges, Scuds as diplomatic weapons, and pacifying speeches spicing everything up. Come along and test them yourself, because as of this writing, I cannot give a full report.

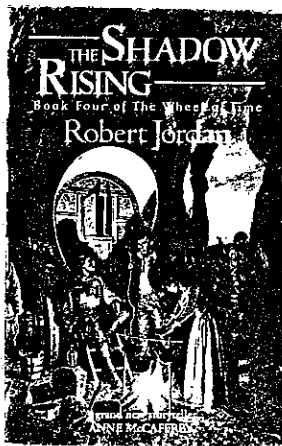
So, a final verdict. ALITS has fatally flawed rules from the serious wargamer's point of view, although they are really fast, so games last only about 2 hours. Don't even try and play the Isreal scenarios - they are far too cramped, and would bore anyone with an ounce of foresight to tears. Maybe with a bit of playing and fixing the mainline US alliance vs. Iraq scenario could be balanced out, but at the moment it is all rather a US walkover.

ALITS is a fine beginners game, but will probably not hold your attention for long, and pales compared to more established wargames like *Russian Campaign*.

The Bard's Best Tomes

Once again it is time for the Bard to tear himself away from his tomes and deliver learned discourse to his disciples, to advise those avidly waiting for words of wisdom...

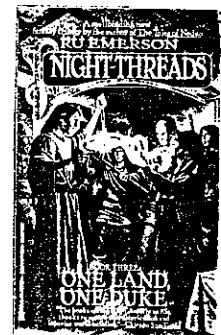
Let me then begin with an epic of epics: the great Wheel of Time by Robert Jordan, in specific the fourth massive volume, *The Shadow Rising*. It was with great pleasure and anticipation that I opened this book, for its predecessors had heralded great things to come. And it was with great pleasure also that I turned page after page, as the Wheel turned and the tale was told. And all that was heralded was proven true; and yet the end has not been reached. And since the Wheel has seven spokes, may it be that seven volumes will be the full tale told? But however many there are, may they lose none of their excellence.



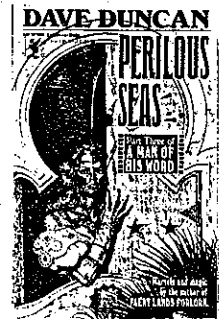
And utterly different yet no less wondrous and wonderful is Michael Scott Rohan's *The Gates of Noon*, sequel to the enchanting *Chase the Morning*. The lighthearted, swashbuckling touch of *Chase the Morning* continues in *The Gates of Noon* as Michael Scott Rohan weaves a deft tale intermingling magic and the modern world.

David Eddings, as everyone knows, also enjoys sequels, particularly sequel series, and has therefore started on *The Tamuli*, following on *The Elenium*. The first book, *Domes of Fire*, I regret to report as a disappointment. Eddings' particular brand of humour is starting to wear thin, the more so since all the characters act alike and are hardly distinguishable from each other, not to mention from characters in other series. Better to simply reread his masterpiece *The Belgariad*, and to forget about his most recent books.

Likewise a disappointment is Ru Emerson's *Night-Threads* Trilogy, consisting of *The Calling of the Three*, *The Two in Hiding*, and *One Land, One Duke*. A fairly stereotyped idea of three modern people drawn into a world of magic and intrigue, with some rather glaring gaps of logic, realism, and consistency. The characters, likewise, are fairly shallow and archetypal. Something to read when absolutely nothing else is available, but otherwise not worthwhile bothering about.



Worth your while, however, is Dave Duncan's *A Man of His Word*: being the four volumes *Magic Casement*, *Faerie Lands Forlorn*, *Perilous Seas*, and *Emperor and Clown*. Dave Duncan creates his worlds coherently and with intriguing twists, such as his fascinating characterization of traditionally 'magical' races - faeries, for example, as pygmy headhunters. Overall, the books are written in a smooth and light style, most enjoyable to read.



One rather inconspicuous thin volume almost slipped by me, but John Brunner's *The Compleat Traveller in Black* is excellent reading, with some very fascinating concepts at its base. *The Compleat Traveller in Black* is a sequence of five tales about the journeys of the Traveller in Black, who has many names but only one nature, and his constant struggle to make order out of chaos.

The Traveller in Black is not the only one who battles against chaos. Katherine Kurtz and Deborah Turner Harris have begun the tales of The Adept, of which the first book is named *The Adept* and the second *The Lodge of the Lynx*; these being the deeds of Sir Adam Sinclair as he and his companions strive to counter the forces of evil in modern-day Scotland. Conceptually this is not new, but the implementation is excellent. As in Katherine Kurtz's other books, the magic is well-devised and highly ritual, a fitting contribution to the vaguely gothic atmosphere.



Gene Wolfe's *The Shadow of the Torturer* also creates distantly gothic impressions. Set in a far future and a declining, mysterious technology, it recounts the travails of Severian, who is exiled from the Guild of Torturers. The story has a fluid continuity, creating vivid and often subtly menacing images; an excellent beginning to *The Book of the New Sun*, of which the other volumes are *The Claw of the Conciliator*, *The Sword of the Lictor*, and *The Citadel of the Autarch*.

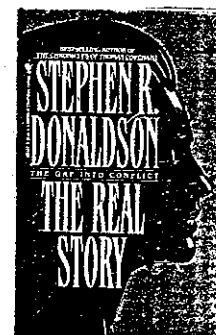
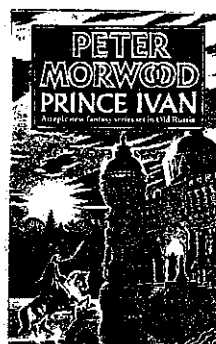
To something more lighthearted - in fact, very lighthearted and more than a little tongue-in-cheek. I recently had the extreme pleasure of acquiring a volume entitled *The Complete Compleat Enchanter*, being a collection of five adventures of one Harold Shea, as set down by L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt. Written near to half a century ago, they rather humorously deposit the main character in the middle of various well-known works - such as Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, or the Norse Edda (in which the frost giants talk like gangsters). Utterly non-serious, they are perfect entertainment.

Two truly intriguing books are Casey Flynn's *Most Ancient Song* and *The Enchanted Isles*, retelling the oldest of the tales of Ireland: of the Nemedians, the Fomorians, of Danu and the Tuatha de Danaan. Many names and beings will be familiar to those who know Celtic legend, but these books do not simply repeat the tales but recreate them, in a familiar yet unique way. It is most unfortunate that the two volumes do not reach a definite conclusion, so it must be hoped that a third book is under way.

Interestingly enough, William Sarabande has taken exactly the same legends and created *Wolves of the Dawn* out of them. Even more interesting, *Wolves of the Dawn* places the Fomorians as the peaceful people and the Nemedians as bloodthirsty pirates, as opposed to *Most Ancient Song*, which takes the opposite stand. However, *Wolves of the Dawn* takes a more mundane approach, insofar as that is possible, and will therefore disappoint those who wish for magic and high fantasy. Nonetheless it is interesting reading, attempting to place the legends in a historically accurate situation.

Another retelling of Ireland's legends is *Challenge of the Clans*, by Kenneth Flint, recounting the exploits of Finn MacCumbhal, one of the first and most famed heroes of Eire. *Challenge of the Clans* is very traditional in style and content, undemanding to read, but it pieces together the tales into a good accounting of the deeds of Finn.

And so that I may not be accused of favouring Irish legends, I must state that there are also other legends which sometimes are told. So for example Peter Morwood's tale of *Prince Ivan*, a Russian prince who becomes embroiled with sorcerers, necromancers, and witches. Russian legends are usually less well known than Celtic ones, but thus it is all the more enjoyable to recognize fragments of tales (such as Baba Yaga, Grandmother Hag). *Prince Ivan* is a neat little story which makes no pretence to be anything but an entertaining rewrite of a Russian legend.

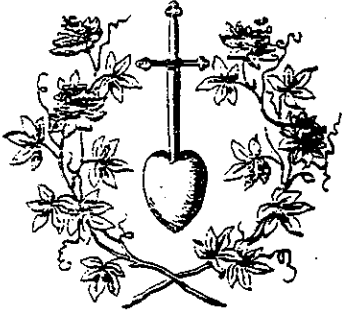


From the past into the future: Stephen Donaldson has begun a science-fiction cycle of five books, the first of which is *The Gap into Conflict: The Real Story* and the second *The Gap into Vision: Forbidden Knowledge*. As with most of Stephen Donaldson's works it is sombre and carefully detailed, a story set amidst the miners and pirates in the far-off ore belts of outer space. Of course, the real story is very different from what it appears to be at first.

Before I leave my pen to return to ancient dusty volumes, I feel obliged to mention that Janny Wurts and Raymond Feist have finally finished the Empire trilogy with *Mistress of the Empire*. Merry reading!

CLASSIFIED!

PERSONAL



HAWKMOON -
When the night has no end
And the day yet to begin
As the room spins around
I need your love.
- NIGHTBIRD

A psychic wave to the spirals. Greetings and spon. Eldricht, Ulaeria Belthar.

Pagan greetings of Spring to all like-minded individuals - from Gemreadh the CyberCeltic Goth.

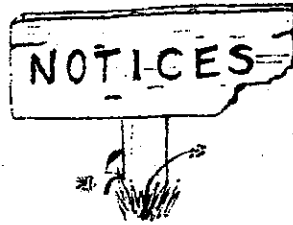
EXPECTING: Charlotte "Widget" Tiffin. Much congratulations from all of **CLAWs**. May your widglettes be innumerable.

CONGRATULATIONS to J. Smith, ex-Commander of the Guard of the temple of Death, on his recent attainment of lawful good gold dragonhood.

FREE TO GOOD HOMES: innumerable widgeletts, guaranteed cute, probably black and fluffy if Charlotte the Harlot's taste in boyfriends is meaningful at all. Free ear-plugs with each widgelett taken. (NB they may be goats). Contact Jessica, c/o desperation.

FREE TO NOT A GOOD HOME: One pet dwarf, Fingers. Strong fireproof cage provided. Contact Sotek of Hexworthy, Druid.

NOTICES



NOTICE: ETRIGYNN LIVES AGAIN!

NOTICE: The Lesser Cult of Hecate, late of the Silver Sparrow, will meet in the cattle-pen until further notice. Contact Jonas Ickleford, somewhere in the (damp) forest, dark of the moon.

NOTICE: The Society for the Preservation of the Philological Purity of Ploons will meet on Sponday at the mangling-factory. Lord Annatar and attendant funes will be burned in effigy.

WANTED: Nobly-born moon-mage, currently rendered non-existent by an Arbitrary, Deliberate, Malevolent and Sceptical Fate, seeks Threlion, Gilbury, manor house and employment, not to mention the Goddess. Prepared to put up with Inquisitors and Ostak for the sake of renewed existence. Amalthea, Limbo.

SOCIAL NOTICES: Moranoir, Compte de la Rose, has taken up residence at The Castle, Hexworthy, Northern Yorkshire, and expects worthwhile taxes once the locals are subdued. Friends and sycophants welcome to drop by for hunting, carousing and peasant-bashing.

To Lord Annatar: ploon, ploon, glorious ploon, nothing quite like it for plooning the ploon...

To the tall, dark stranger who changed my life. It was never to be between us. I have changed so much since we first met.

We will be happier apart, but I will always remember you. Your Widgeon.

NOTICE: Fingers: the days of your beard are numbered.

RETIRED: Govan, placid warrior monk with a strength of 25. Currently bartending and painting watercolours. Accompanied by his Small Dog, Glip.

WANTED: A permanent love potion that works on dryads. Contact Sotek of Hexworthy, Druid.

NOTICE: To First Sergeant J. Wicks, greasing gooks somewhere in the Yucatan: 59% of Bud drinkers prefer Coors. Make a saving throw...

NOTICE: For a walk in the woods, why not call Mystic Travels - ph. 689-1327. (P.S. Don't bother to bring any perishables, pets or friends.)

Gareth Milne's advice to new DMs: Always plan your games with the intention of killing the party.

FOR SALE:
1 staff from tree of life
1 bow of fear
Contact Snatch Derrel Burun

NOTICE:
If I were a niggle
Niggle niggle niggle niggle niggle niggle
niggle spon
All day long I'd niggle niggle spon
If I were a niggling mon!

FOR SALE: A wineskin of concentrated dreamweed. Addiction can be a real killer. Apply to the disintegrated party. (Most of them are on this plane, at least. We think. Maybe.)

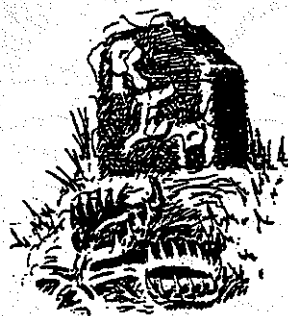
Postman Pat as a neo-taoist polytheistic quasi-comic seller fridge magnet supplier Cernunos archetype (all accessories sold separately)

WANTED: Pest exterminators. Must be able to withstand devastating sonic assault. Apply Pixie.

NOTICE: Owing to staff shortages, all wizards will now be issued with wands.

REST IN PEACE

RIP Jack the Ripper. Shot, stabbed, grilled and dissected. You were a most entertaining plaything for a selection of diseased minds.



RIP The DM who played Jack the Ripper. He was fun while he lasted - The Dwarf Spittoons.

RIP Limbleton.

*A thief without a climbing skill
A wall without a crack
A hundred metres was a thrill
Until he fell upon his back*

RIP Seekers of the sunsword. The path from energetic team to five grilled corpses was a steep and precarious one, easily navigated within fifteen minutes.

RIP 1 poor Polish peasant. Never wear a Russian Army greatcoat around a bunch of LAW-, CAWS-, SAW-, M60-, M16-, grenade-, and 60 mm mortar-toting paranoids. It is dangerous.

RIP Logan Beorn. Being dead wouldn't have bothered you so much if you hadn't thought the mayor would eat your elephant.

RIP The 4 guards at the gate - liquidised instantly by the Knut

RIP Carlos, Henri and Turnip, innocent bandits after the Hexworthy taxes. Despatched in spite of all efforts by the party wolf cubs. Thanks for the horses.

RIP HARD Core. Also, in various hails of gunfire, 17 Road Kids, 1 sniper, 3 assassins and 3 rabid dogs. Live fast, die young.

RIP A whole lot of Ukrainian guards - victims of the Knut

RIP Jurgen, Ether and Korea - victims of the Knut

RIP The Knut - victim of DM annoyance

RIP (eventually) Doc Hewered, renegade bioengineer (briefly). Fort Detrick was delighted with your return.

RIP Traxdore, evil master of the temple of Death.

RIP (of Innocent Bystander Syndrome) Peters the Bodyguard, the corporates, the stewardesses, etc, etc, etc. Live fast, die young.

RIP Kgha Tole

Gho tash na tosh es

Es tash na broghoes

(Trollish)

lit: He [was] strong and hit it

It [was] strong and ate him

RIP numerous singed goblins, the Silver Sparrow, one innocent stable, Zylvestre's mountain hideout, and the Wanton Wench and village goat (nearly). Victims of an incendiary Scottish dwarf.

RIP Simak "Sacred Arrow" Lem. Tried leopard crawling as a means of mine avoidance. Daddy still hasn't found all the bits. P.S. Jonny Kasheda is alive and well, and still cutting deals, in Florida I think. (confirmed - NMI)

RIP Ren's campaign: not with a bang but a whimper...

RIP Golgotha:

We shot, he died, he fell

Went back, were sent to hell

We kneeled, she healed, he's well!

RIP Sweet Ambriel - trees come down - i will find you ... soon. Farewell. Eldricht.

RIP Simon Ko'pathic. Fighting a salamander while carrying 20 flasks of Greek fire is a baaad idea.

RIP Flight Lt. Johnno. Charging the emplacement your gunner is covering with 25mm HEX auto cannon shells is not conducive to a good body score.

RIP Silver Ash. Channeling can be a mind-blowing experience.

RIP The Duke of Tragidore, Lady Emelda and the High-Mage Shadow; also +/- 60 nobles, servants and other bystanders. A ton of Greek fire and a fireball in the great hall can ruin your whole day.

RIP Retired In Peace: Piet Skiet aka. Hans Pieter Straumann. He flipped out, lucked out, wore out, and sold out.

RIP Squire Melior. Depression crits suck. So does manic depression. Avoid parties who leave you to be eaten by wolves.

RIP Marlu Fisk (finally). A belated farewell to Marlu Fisk (a snotbotwilly brilliant character). Last seen adapting to a hard vacuum.



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*Address any complaints or other garbage to:
2 doors down from P O Box 193
Xymflg'rst!kl
Mars*

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