



CLAWMARKS XIV



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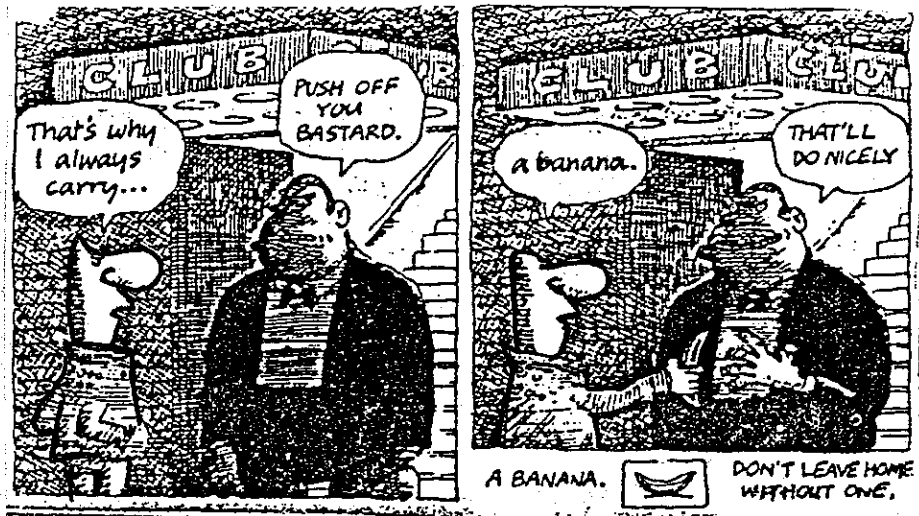
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Despite all Cosmic Effort to Prevent It, here is Another ClawMarks.

The Editor.

KATHY



The neo-hippie-dips, the sentimentality-crazed iguana anthropomorphizers, the Chicken Littles, the three-bong-hit William Blakes – thank God these people don't actually go outdoors much, or the environment would be even worse than it is already.

- P. J. O'Rourke (b. 1947), U.S. journalist. Parliament of Whores, "Dirt of The Earth: The Ecologists" (1991).



Letters to the Editor.



Dear Eds,

"I think that it is high time you all started judging yourselves, and the lie that you live."
Charles Manson at the LaBianca trial.

Raise your head. Take a deep sniff. Smell something? I smell a dead campus.

Oh, it wheezes, sometimes it roars, but it's dead nonetheless. Where's the SRC? Where are the Fresher's Week parties? Where ARE all the students? Oh - there they are. The confused looking ones on the Plaza.

I think it's time we took the situation in hand, don't you? We have things we can show these people, give them a jolt where it's needed. Think about it. Who is the average UCT student? Hard to say anymore. These people lack any cohesiveness, any sense of unity. Let's you and I not go down that route, okay? Let's you and I have a few beers, watch some movies, play some antisocial music instead. Maybe even dust off our old role-playing stuff and thrash out a campaign or two. I know there used to be some snotty fucking feebos around here who turned it into an elitist thing in the past, but they're gone now. Promise. You trust your uncle Dexter, don't you? We used to have fun. We could do it again. '96 is as good a year for fresh starts as any.

See you in the Clawroom

Uncle Dex



Dear Uncle Dex

One could take your venom more seriously if you were a tad more specific. You are evidently suffering from an aching sense of generalised wrong which is everyone else's fault. We suggest you come down from the moral high ground. Who's uncle are you anyway? Who gave you the right to judge? Grow up.

Annoyed Ed

Long-suffering Editors,

In the days of yore (or, to be specific, CLAWMARKS IX) I sought your aid in the matter of a one-foot immortal Peril. It took many years for my plea to reach Mars, but finally my prayers were answered! Join me now and raise your head to the sky in victorious shout! The fiend is gone, gone, gone!!! Thank you, editors, and thank you also, Xavier Alfonso III, who took my problem away, without guessing its true nature. Victory! Freedom!

Dear Nameless Thing,

Yeeehah!!! We leap and howl in jubilation at your escape. We also leap and howl due to the amount of caffeine coursing through our veins, but hey...

The Eds

Dear Editors,

A question which has been worrying me for some time. What happens to old CLAWmembers? Do they die, or just crawl away into some dank cavern?

No, seriously, what is being done to keep these ex-CLAW-people involved, and what options are open to those ex-students who fade away? It would seem to me to be a terrible waste if those who had been involved and had had a good

time all of a sudden disappeared. Are there programmes to keep an old CLAWperson's register going, to send out newsletters, media and so forth to them, or is nothing being done?

Yours in CLAWs ????????

Giles the Extremely Venerable

Dear Venerable Giles,

Here is an opportunity to officially report that things are being done, sort of: non-UCT individuals may become/remain members of the CLAWs library. This may happen only on condition that you sign away your sou...I mean, speak to the Head Librarian about the requirements. Apart from that, CLAWs is centred pretty much on UCT students. How about some of the ex-members starting up whatever programmes/registers they consider appropriate?

*Yours sensibly,
The Editor.*

Dear Eds

This is a bitch session. I am sick to death of certain CLAW attitudes which insist that roleplayers are somehow superior human beings at the same time that they can only lament the loss of a glorious CLAW past. The only reason there is not a glorious present is because these people can neither admit it nor make it happen. I think CLAWs should get its head out of its own backside, admit its membership of the human race, and do something with its life instead of bitching about it.

Dear Bitcher

*Repent and be saved, Fornicators.
(Sorry, I should have got to this sensible letter when there was less ccccaffeine in my system: it is worthy of a sensible*

answer of which I am entirely incapable at this point. But hear! Hear!)

*Yours manically
The Editor*

PS Of course Roleplayers are Superior Human-Beings.

Dear Editor

I just wanted to make a token response to the last edition of ClawMarks: some of the articles were less than complimentary towards CLAWs and/or its members. Nobody has seen fit to repond in any way whatsoever . Why is this the case?

Mildly Curious.

Dear Mildly

We were wondering ourselves.

Eds.

Dear Editor

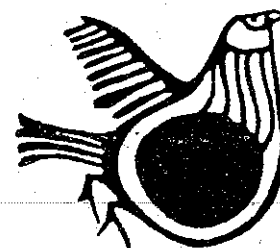
Why do you bother with Clawmarks anyway? Nobody really cares, does more than skim through it a time or two.

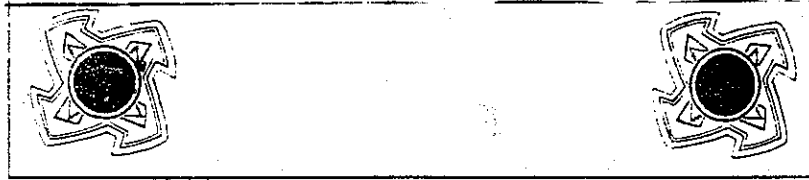
I Just Wondered.

Dear Justwon

You know, you're right. I resign.

The ex-Ed.





The total rookie's guide to

ROLE-PLAYING

by Jessica Tiffin

Role-playing. Hmmm. As is my wont when dealing with abstract and possibly confusing concepts, I turned to my trusty copy of the Concise Oxford Dictionary, (7th edition, circa 1987). The best it could offer under "role" was "-playing, behaving in accordance with specified function, etc." This

led me to conclude several things about the game, sport, pastime, art or satanic mind-blowing wosname that I am supposed to introduce to you, and in which you are presumably interested.

role, (rol) *n.*, actor's part, one's function, what person or thing is appointed or expected to do. - **playing**, behaving in accordance with specified function, etc [f. *F. role* and obs *F. roule, rolle* = foll].

1. What I mean when I say "role-playing" is rather a lot more specific than the dictionary definition - an unusual occurrence, given prevailing conditions of vagueness.

2. As hobbies go, it's obscure. Oxford didn't know anything about it in 1987. Don't expect dictionaries or people to have heard of it, or to do anything other than look blank or suspicious if you claim to indulge in it.

3. Those of us who do it are (a) exhibiting behaviour, and (b) fulfilling a function of some kind. I found this obscurely comforting, if not precisely helpful.

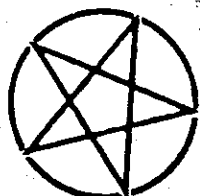
Oracles such as the dictionary having failed utterly to provide the succinct, authoritative definition for which I seek, I am on my own. The brief introduction to a wildly complex lifestyle which follows is the work of my own unaided and (please bear in mind) highly partisan brain. I hope it helps.

So, what is it, then?

Popular misconception 1: "Oh, role-playing, that's Dungeons and Dragons, isn't it?" Beep. Wrong answer. Role-playing is simply the generic and descriptive term for a social pastime which involves pretending to be someone else (known popularly as a "character"). Dungeons and Dragons was one of the earliest, most notorious and, to date, most successful *systems* which serve to define the knotty process of becoming someone else. Of which, more later.

Yes, you can play Dungeons and Dragons. If you want to. Lots of people still do, I believe. It's a nice, cute, simple system that doesn't require too much intelligence and can be played with perfect safety by fevered fourteen-year-olds in the privacy of their own homes. Some fevered fourteen-year-olds never grow out of it. Others do. But the spectrum of games available to the manic gamer is much, much, much, much, much wider. Almost infinitely so.

Thought for the paragraph: as a point of etiquette, referring to role-playing as "Dungeons and Dragons" is likely to get your knees nibbled by maddened role-players.





Why "dungeons" and "dragons"? Is this about Lord of the Rings?

In brief, yes, it can be. Then again, it may not. Dungeons and Dragons, TM, commercial success of the century (not really) which hourly makes money for the insurance agents at TSR (the company which makes the game, please spit on cue), is actually about dungeons and dragons, i.e. you pretend to be someone else in a magical, medieval world with wizards, sword-weilding fighters, dragons, goblins, etc.

Other systems assume a different world. Almost any different world. Not just fantasy, although there are huge numbers of fantasy game settings which do include Tolkien's Middle-Earth. (We recommend MERP, it's a good system). But you can also play Star Trek, Star Wars, dark near future (Cyberpunk or Cyberspace), James Bond (no-one does, really), Superheroes (they do play it but you wouldn't want to hear about it), HP Lovecraft's Cthulu Mythos (lots of cults, tentacles and a sanity score), Medieval Europe (Ars Magica), Victorian England, Victorian England with Elves and dragons and steam tech (Falkenstein), and Macho Women with Guns. (No, I'm not telling you what that is). And many more.

Thought for the paragraph: if you read a lot of science fiction and fantasy, you'll probably enjoy role-playing. If you find that you enjoy role-playing, be prepared to read a lot of science fiction and fantasy.

Game worlds do not have to be specific to a particular science fiction or fantasy novel's world, although a lot of them are. Some systems supply their own, often very weird worlds - examples are AD&D's Dark Sun, or

Jorune, or Rolemaster's ShadowWorld (punk elves, and seriously cute). Whatever your particular fancy as to who and where you want to be, there's a reasonable approximation out there somewhere.

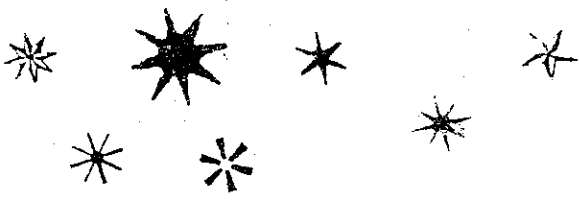
Umm, this "character" business...

I defined roleplaying, somewhere in the forest of words above this paragraph, as "pretending to be someone else." Roleplaying is a game of imaginative projection, if you'll pardon the long words. (English Academic In Training). It's what you did as a kid when you were the cowboys and they were the Indians, only discussed rather than played out physically, more realistic, and better sustained. You get to invent, define, describe, think for and react for, another person. The possible abilities of the person will be largely defined by the setting - sword or magic-weilding, gun-toting, computer-literate, physically strong or weak, whatever.

Thought for the paragraph: it is technically possible to kill someone else's character. It is also technically possible to do so and remain friends with the player. Technically.

Like a normal person in what we fondly call "reality", your invented person will have strengths and weaknesses in the abilities they have. They will have personal quirks and character traits. None of this need correspond to anything you yourself are in reality, although it's usually a mistake to try and play a person you can't, in some way, empathise with. But it's your chance to have a go at being someone with some ability or attribute you've always wanted - magical powers, enormous strength or agility, a really foul temper, whatever grooves your ploons.





The interesting thing about developing a role-playing character is, of course, that you don't play alone. The standard role-playing unit is a group of people, each with a character; the characters move through the same imaginary world more or less together, interacting with each other as well as with the world. This often leads to argument, but usually the group of characters will have a common goal; and their characters will emerge as individuals very strongly in the interaction.

System? What's a system, anyway?

Broadly speaking, a system is the set of numerical definitions which allow you to value strengths and weaknesses of your character, the imaginary person you are, against the strengths and weaknesses of other characters, opponents, or whatever the (imaginary) world throws at you. Which sounds complicated, and sometimes is.

Basically, you can decide you want to be (role-play) Lesley the Barbarian, who is long on strength but short on brains, and who gets into a

fight with Sssssselena the Ssssnake-Sssssorcere-esssss, who is big on magic but pretty puny when it comes to muscle. You can't just say, OK, I hit her with my sword and kill her, when she may be dropping snakes down your pants from thin air. You need to work out how fast your reactions and

hers are, how good you are at keeping your sword swinging with snakes in your pants, and how good she is at dodging slightly distracted swings.

On top of this, there needs to be a random element. Even ssssnake-ssorcere-esssss will have those off days when the sssnakes just bite their own tongues. Conversely, even a fumble-fingered beginner can sometimes just get it right by sheer fluke. Thus, roleplaying is conducted

Thought for the paragraph owing to the dice, role-playing games are not actually compatible with kittens.

Thought for the paragraph: attempting to remember the difference between the *player* (you), and the *character* (the imaginary individual you are role-playing) will reduce the chance of multiple-personality disorders.

with the aid of dice. Not just normal six-sided dice, but a whole range, from four-sided to twenty-sided. Different systems, just to confuse you, use different types of dice; some say that high rolls are good, some say low. Some systems use percentages, which means you roll two ten-sided dice and use a calculator (Rolemaster - we also recommend it). Castle Falkenstein, just to be different, uses playing cards. Amber uses no dice at all, but don't let it worry you. Effectively, you're introducing a random element to define just how good this particular shot/swing/zap/manoeuvre is, not just at how good your character is at this kind of action generally.

But who says who wins? Do I?

Ah! Good question. No, you don't. The whole point of a numerical system is to introduce balance and fairness to a role-played encounter; the



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Ummm... I'm not getting much idea of how this is actually going to work...

Not surprising. Theory is all very well, but the best way to understand how role-playing works is to role-play, or at least to watch a game. However, a brief attempt at a thumbnail sketch follows.

DM (from behind a sheaf of papers, a tottering pile of rulebooks and a screen which conceals her notes and dice rolls). OK, it's a normal forest path - tall trees surround you, the undergrowth is quite thick, the path is narrow. Who's walking first in line?

FRED (Nurgle the Barbarian): uh, Nurgle's in front, with his sword out, listening out for trouble.

JOSEPHINE (Araminta the Sorceress): I'm behind Nurgle; I'm carrying my staff, and Woolbat (her owl familiar) is on my shoulder.

DORIS (Shadowwind, a suspicious Elven type): I suppose I'm in the rear, a bit behind the others. I'm hungry; I'm scanning the forest for fruit or nuts.

DM: Fine. Nurgle, roll on your perception skill.

NURGLE: Oops, I fail dismally.

DM: Right. Nurgle suddenly vanishes from sight as a concealed pit opens under his feet. Roll on your Agility, Nurgle.

NURGLE: Total of 166.

DM: Wow. OK, you've fallen about 10 feet - you're winded but not hurt. The rest of you?

ARAMINTA: I look around the forest - um - 123 on perception.

SHADOWWIND: Mine is 45 - I think I'm still looking for nuts.

DM: Right, that means you take a moment or two to notice the two-headed purple bear which has just lumbered out of the bushes. You see it, Araminta. What do you do?

SHADOWWIND: Run away!! I duck into the forest and hide.

ARAMINTA: I blast it with a Shockbolt from my staff. Um - Woolbat flies into the air to see if there are any more around.

NURGLE: I attack! I attack it at once!

DM: You can't, you're in the bottom of a pit, you nit.

(Confusion reigns, etc.)

tendency to get involved with your character's doings is strong and often skews the player's own judgement. Role-playing games are necessarily run by a kind of referee, known variously as the Games Master, Dungeon Master, Host, Keeper, God, you bastard, etc, etc. This important person has several, completely vital functions.

1. Realistically, the character you're playing doesn't know what the world is going to throw at her next. Your whole attention should be on thinking as, reacting as, being that imaginary person. Who puts in the other half of the situation, i.e. the environment? Someone, effectively, needs to role-play the world.

This is a tall order. It involves not only knowing the world and the system, in a fair amount of detail, but knowing about the people in the world, their relationship with the player characters, their motivations, the major events of the worlds, and the way this will impact on the characters. Effectively, the games master will design a series of interconnected events which are likely to affect the players - i.e. the kind of adventure the players will experience. The games master will then describe setting, people, events, to the players, who will describe their reactions. Interactive social pastime, remember?

2. As suggested above, the games master is the final arbiter and referee in administering the system. No system covers every possibility, and sooner or later the person in control simply has to make a decision, preferably as fairly and realistically as possible, and often after separating embattled players.

3. Players will squabble among each other. It's very hard to accept that your cherished hero/ine fails to do what s/he wanted to do and which you think s/he should be able to do. Particularly if the person you want to do it to is another player's character, with that player's own investment in it. DMs are necessary to roar abuse at arguing players and enforce outcomes of interaction.

Thought for the paragraph:

DM is the widely-recognised abbreviation for Dungeon Master, the most commonly used term for the games master, referee, etc. It dates back to AD&D, which all of us are rooted in, deny it how we will. Most of us who spit on the name of TSR still talk about DMs and DMing.





OK, so I have some idea of what this is all about - is it worth it?

All hobbies have their drawbacks as well as their advantages. The potential fun in role-playing should already be obvious - the chance for a lot of creativity, using your imagination, interacting with a group of like-minded people. Role-playing is very good for shy and anti-social people - it's a lot easier to deal with people you don't know if you're busy being someone different. It's amazingly fun to do, both as a player and a DM; it can be exciting, challenging, terrifying, often hilarious. Role-players tend to be interesting people, if somewhat maddening at times.

Thought for the paragraph: role-playing will not actually cause you to grow hair on your palms.

It's also an inexpensive hobby for a beginner - if your DM has the various system manuals, all you need is a set of dice and a pencil, and not even the dice, if you're good at borrowing.

Drawbacks? The major ones I can think of:

1. It's fairly time-consuming, as hobbies go - a game usually runs at a regular time once a week, for

four or five hours, which tend to add up if you play more than one game. DMing is more time-consuming than playing, as DMs have to design a lot of stuff.

2. If you're the kind of person whose fancy is grabbed by the game, it's likely to be grabbed big-time. i.e. if treated incautiously, this can be addictive. OK, no more so than rugby is to those hairy muscle-bound types who practice every evening, but still absorbing.

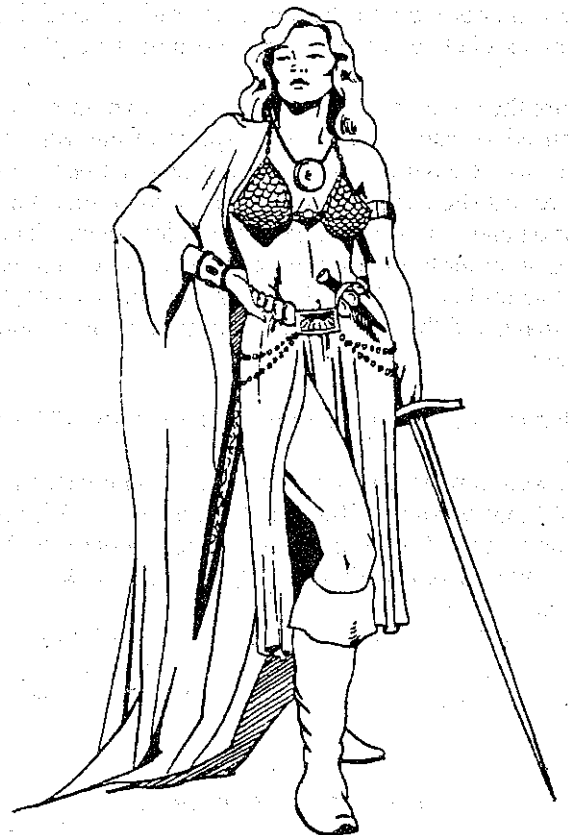
We give you fair warning of the CLW100W syndrome. CLW100W is a unique course taken by some CLAW members who spend their first year role-playing furiously and hanging around in the CLAWroom, to the almost total neglect of lectures, and furthering the establishment of records such as that held by the nameless person who could at one time claim to be playing in fourteen games at once. This is your own funeral, if you lack self-discipline to that extent, but we seriously don't recommend it.

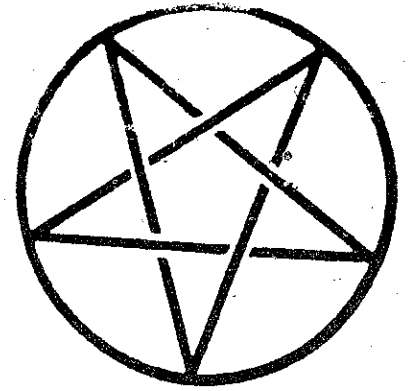
3. Your parents, religious friends, serious academic mentors and significant others are unlikely to understand your interest. Few people

actually know what role-playing is about, and a large, misinformed proportion of the non-players who have heard about it, have heard unpleasant things. Rumours include the fact that it's psychologically damaging (encourages multiple personalities and addiction), satanic (all that spell-casting), or simply socially irresponsible. Speaking as actual role-players, we don't believe any of the above, but don't say we didn't warn you when you encounter the attitudes. (Significant others usually resent the time you spend playing, unless you're bright enough to find a role-playing one.)

4. The kind of conversations you may conduct in other people's hearing may be both strange and misleading. (Overheard in a lift: "OK, so she's pregnant, but she's got a really fiery temper, and she kills people and probably eats them! And I'm not living with triplets! I'd just sneak away one night, but she'll follow me and incinerate me...") The unfortunate gentleman's Rolemaster character had just had a wild affair with a weredragoness of the fire-breathing variety, and was getting second thoughts, but tell that to the non-role-players in the lift...)

If any of the above has interested, titillated, maddened, shocked or stunned you, we suggest that you gird your loins, stiffen your sinews, tighten your belt and take the plunge, and try a game or two.. You may even enjoy it. And, as we all know, that's the first step on the thin end of the wedge...





LARP 101

or "But, I don't feel properly dressed without my dice!"

by Mark Cummins

Hello, and welcome to LARP 101. Don't bother sitting, you're going to be moving around quite a bit, so you're better off standing.

So, what is LARP, anyway? LARP is a catchy acronym for Live-Action Role-Playing, which is nothing new really. Everyone has LARPed at one time or another; when you were playing *Cowboys & Indians* as a child, rushing around and arguing over whether or not that last shot killed you; that was LARP. LARPs are distinct from traditional role-playing games in that the players are encouraged (sometimes forced) to dress as their characters and assume their role in a manner similar to that of an actor in a stage production. LARPs also take place in a physical environment rather than a virtual one described by a referee or dungeon master. In this way, a LARP is similar to improvised theater (improvised from the players' point of view, anyway).

Players? That's you, of course. As in any role-playing game, some of the folk do all the work, and some have all the fun. The people dressed in 1920s outfits having a good time, laughing and living it up in a speakeasy, are the Players; the wild-eyed folk with the harassed expressions, clipboards and valium habits, are the Referees. The Referees are responsible for organizing the event, distributing character sheets and information, finding and setting up the venue, casting Players for available parts, and running the entire show on the day. Players are responsible for immersing themselves in their parts, learning their characters' history and personality, getting whatever they need for a costume, and showing up on the day to have a good time.

I see you nodding your heads, as if you've heard this all before; perhaps an example is necessary to highlight the differences between LARP and "normal" role-playing.

Picture the scene: the Victoria, Cape Town harbour at dusk. Bemused tourists watch as the captain of the *Mary Celeste* listens to the eskimo castaway who has just been hauled aboard. As she explains, in broken English, that the ship is in great danger, shots are heard from below decks. The captain snaps an order to his first mate to open the weapons chest, and hurries below. There he finds Johann, a sailor, the second mate, and the ship's cook staring at a blood-stain on the gangway.

"What in God's name is going on here, today?" he shouts.

And well may he ask. The preceding scene was taken from "The Final Voyage of the *Mary Celeste*", a LARP run by Shadow of the Mountain. It was held onboard the Victoria, at the Waterfront, with a cast of twelve and two referees. The cast were all given character packets about two weeks before the game. These packages contained the rules for the evening (no pushing anyone overboard, how to resolve combat, using special abilities, and so forth), detailed informa-



tion about their character's past, present situation, personality, clothing, and goal(s) in life. Included in the package are also ability cards: these enable the Player to accomplish a special ability of the character by showing the card to another Player, who is then required to follow the instructions printed on the card. The Players were required to dress as their characters, and be familiar with the aspects revealed in their character packets.

Once at the ship, the referees answered any final queries, told everyone where to stand, and at the signal 'Action!' everyone assumed their persona and commenced play. Players were free to wander about the ship as they pleased, and do whatever they wished (within the confines of their character, of course). In cases where they needed advice, or some kind of conflict was involved, a referee was near at hand to sort things out. In this case the Referees were invisible to the characters, but in some other LARPS they masquerade as extras (waiters, policemen, etc.) or scenery.

Like most LARPS, "The Final Voyage of the Mary Celeste", is a 'closed room' LARP. This means that the characters have a limited environment, in this case, the ship, and a limited timespan. This prevents the characters from wandering too far away from the action, and keeps everyone at close quarters. The limited timespan keeps the action moving, because all of the characters have goals that they need to accomplish before time is up.

The "Mary Celeste" is also an interactive literature-type of LARP, as opposed to a 'boffer' LARP. Interactive literature stresses interaction between the characters; it is impossible to accomplish the character's goals without talking to several people, deciding who is lying and who is telling the truth, and putting the pieces of the puzzle together. Combat is usually abstract or low-key, and is handled chiefly by the referees, who arbitrate the "You're dead! No, I'm not!" arguments. This is done because the LARP environment isn't conducive to dice-rolling, people lose the dice and it breaks the flow of action. This encourages a more careful style of play when the Players are unsure of another character's abilities in relation to their own. IL LARPs are also stand-alone; they may have sequels, but they are self-contained, and the rule structure discourages campaign play.

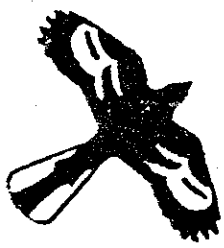
Boffer-style games require physical effort on the Player's part to resolve combat. This usually involves Players engaging in battle with padded weapons and armor. This is more realistic than an abstract system; of course, but it has the disadvantages of expense (those weapons and armor have to come from somewhere), danger (pretty safe, but people have been injured), and lack of skill on the Player's part (your character may be the finest swordsman in France, but are you?). Boffer-style games are often campaign-based, with characters gaining experience and going on to greater things. Most boffer games have a fantasy theme (if you're going to carry a padded stick around with you, it might as well be a sword), and can take place over huge areas with over a hundred people at a time. These are often very time consuming to set up and referee, and there are companies across the water whose sole business is the running of boffer LARPS. Laser Tag with a padded stick, some have called it, though there's certainly more to boffers than thumping your opponent.



Of course, no amount of theory is a substitute for practical experience, and you are encouraged to participate in a LARP as soon as possible, in order to experience the sensation first-hand. Where? Well, those of you at UCT can petition CLAWS to run a game, or get hold of Shadow of the Mountain and tell them to hurry up and run another LARP. The ICON games fair in Johannesburg will also be holding a number of LARPs as part of the proceedings, but early booking is advised in this case.

That's all for today, next week I'd like everyone in costume for the French Revolution, with a five-page description of your character. If the guillotine is delivered on time, we'll run through a few scenes.

Shadow of the Mountain's next LARP is "Down Among the Dead Men", a Vampire LARP set in Cape Town; playing in March. Contact Mark at gwf@iafrica.com or 559-4037 after hours for details.



AMBER

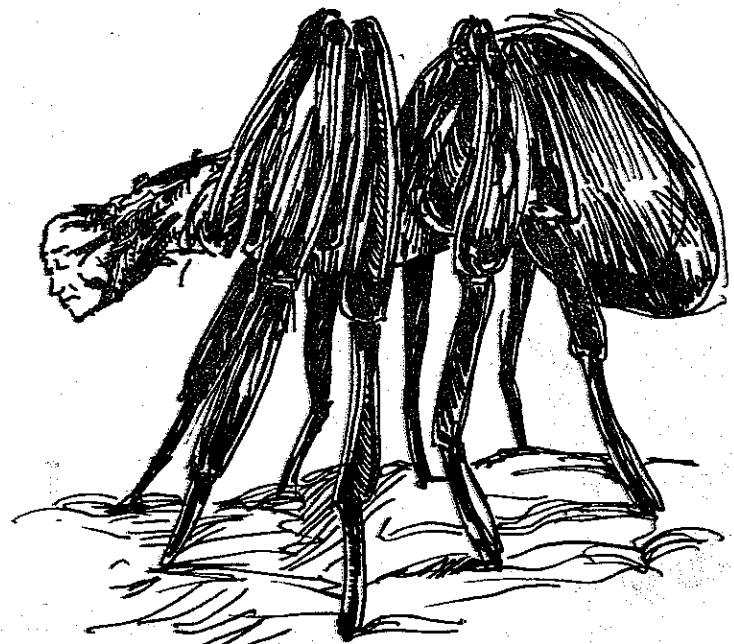
- DICELESS ROLEPLAYING

Roleplaying without dice? The seasoned roleplayers among us quiver with mild revulsion. After all, what's combat without those trusty D10s, D20s, D12s, 8s, 6s, 4s... Well, in a word, its AMBER. A fantasy/sci-fi system based on Roger Zelazny's famous decalogy. Whats it about? For those who haven't read it (and I STRONGLY recommend you do), here's a brief -and I mean brief - background.

In the beginning, there was nothing. Then, there was chaos - a maelstrom of pure destructive force. Where chaos and the remnants of nothingness intersected, were small regions of tentative habitability. These miniature universes, constantly changing, were home to the ever-adapting shape-shifters - the Lords of Chaos. The Lords of Chaos were the masters of the Universe (not to sound cliched). They mastered the powers required to survive within their ever-changing environs. They learned to move between these fragmented universes freely and tame the Logrus - the representation of primal Chaos - and use it as a tool.

Eventually, before time as we know it came to exist, one of their members rebelled. He stole an artifact of power and fled into the fragmented multiverse - there to inscribe the Pattern. The pattern, a pure representation of order, opposed chaos. Between these two poles of existence, the Courts of Chaos and the rebel's Amber, an infinite number of "shadow" universes came into being. At the point where order held firmest, around Dworkin's pattern, the kingdom of Amber was founded. Dworkin, the rebel lord of Chaos, founded a dynasty. His son was King Oberon, and his grandchildren, Princes and Princesses of Amber, are the material for Zelazny's first five books. The Amberites draw their power from the pattern, which each child of Amber may WALK when he or she is able. Failure to navigate the pattern once the first step has been taken means cer-

tain death. The sons and daughters of Oberon roamed the multiverse at will, manipulating pattern and finding their own ideal universes in which to pass the centuries. Prolonged habitation in a shadow universe by one of amberite blood strengthens it. It becomes more solid - easier to find. (Such, of course, is the case with our own shadow earth). So the situation remained for aeons uncounted, until Oberon disappeared. His offspring immediately began plotting against each other to sieze the throne. Alliances formed and broke, fratricide became an all-too common danger and many of the Princes and Princesses departed into exile (both voluntarily and otherwise). For the rest of the story, you'll have to read Zelazny's books. Everything is resolved, eventually, and in some rather unexpected ways. The multiverse is temporarily restored to a semblance of order, and an important question is answered. "What would another generation have been like?"





You are that next generation of Amberites and Lords of Chaos. Your parents are the characters in Zelazny's book. You have inherited their powers, their incredible speed, strength, endurance and talent for plotting. Your ambitions span universes, you are a veritable immortal. You have no equals among the paltry beings who inhabit the shadow universes which you visit (though some impact on your life) and nothing to fear except the equally great ambition of your oft unknown relatives. Yours is the power of life and death, creation and destruction. What on earth could you possibly want with dice?

In Amber, the power of the Game Master extends to cross-universe politics - more than GM's in other systems will ever need to cope with. It is up to the players, however, to help with the creation process. Travel in shadow, following your desires, and expand the playing fields. Find your preferred

turf and defend it jealously. Is it enough to be worshipped by all of the inhabitants of a universe when there are so many? Amber is a game designed to expand the mind. Character interaction is paramount, and matters of physical and mental preeminence (for purposes of combat etc) are decided by an attribute auction before playing begins. Characters can "buy" ranks in attributes. A higher rank in strength in combat means automatic superiority in strength reliant competition. This may sound a little futile, but then no Amberite would enter a combat with another Amberite without having made careful plans (possibly over centuries) to sway the fight in their favour ...

Whether your passion is for fantasy, sci-fi, intrigue, hack-and-slash adventure or advanced politics, Amber has the universe you are looking for. The key is dedicated character creation and a limitless imagination. So. Who needs dice?

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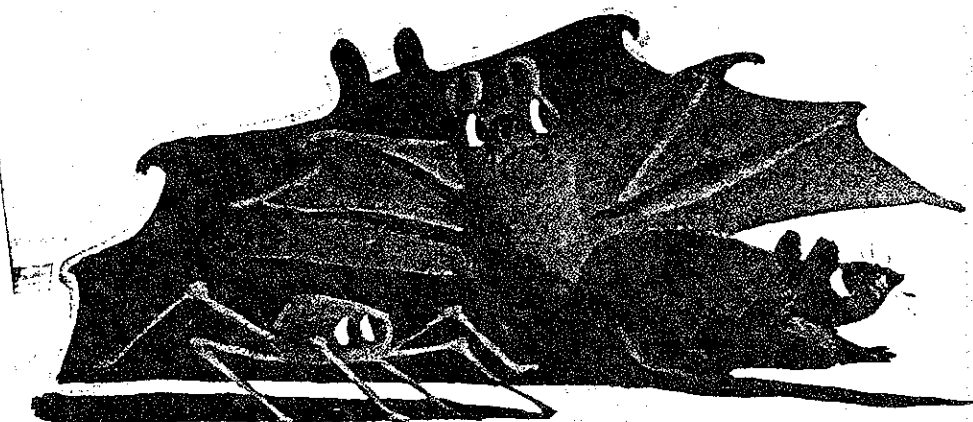
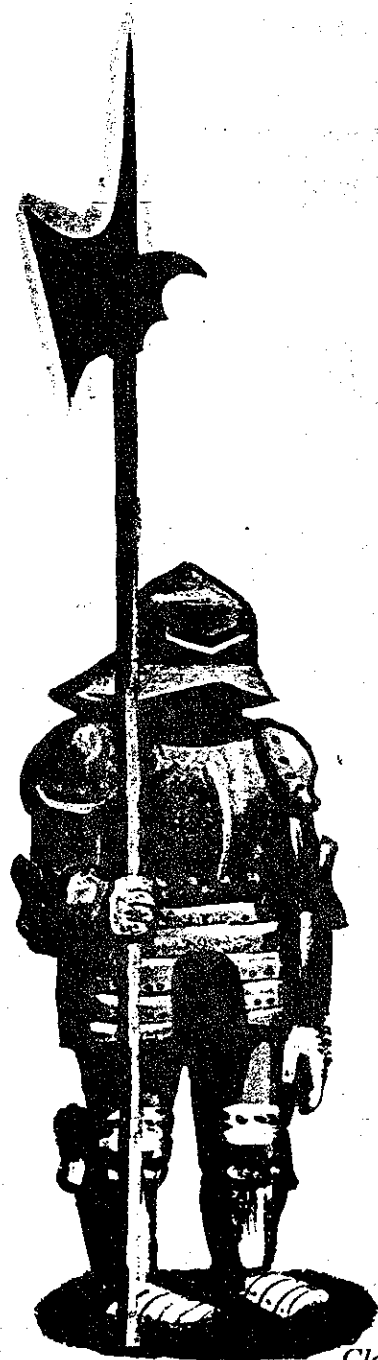
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Things to know about your **CLAW** library

The library has been in operation for over four years now, providing a necessary service to CLAW members as a collection of around 500 items of role-playing material that might otherwise be beyond the means of the average student role-player. The items include material from many of the more popular role-playing items (the largest collection being AD&D paraphernalia) and some lesser known and less appreciated systems are represented as well (Skyrealms of Jorune; Runequest). The library also contains a number of strategic wargames, from Chainsaw Warrior to A Line in the Sand.

Once a member of CLAWs, you can join the library by playing a nominal (at this time R4) fee. These fees and some of the CLAW budget are sunk into acquiring new material. As a Library member you receive 3 cards, each card allowing you to draw an item for a month. There are a number of rules which should be read before joining, but these are basically to safeguard our material in the event of things going wrong (angry parent burns the Fiend Folio, or you drop the Call of Cthulu manual into a rockpool while fishing...) The emphasis on new material is sourcebook material; modules can be left up to the DM. This does not mean we will refuse any donations (we have a large collection of AD&D modules, mainly donations, that are quite popular). A full catalog of material will be available during the year, as well as a copy of the rules. There are librarians on duty to help you if you need to take out/return items. These times will be posted in the CLAWroom. Once again, donations are always welcome.



SCHIZO "COMIC NOIR FOR THE MENTALLY RETARDED!"



END.



Castle Falkenstein

Castle Falkenstein

The Role-Playing Game for Gentlemen and Ladies of Honour, Refinement and Taste.

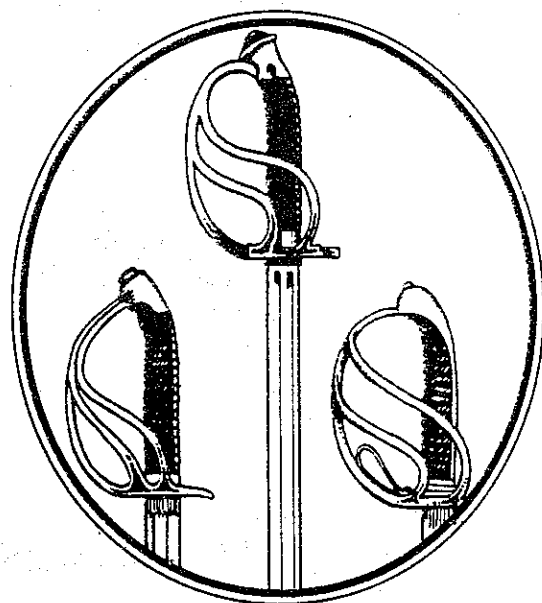
The strains of Strauss fill the ballroom, as beautifully-gowned women and their tail-coated partners twirl across the polished floor. Captain von Schlossberg of the Royal Bayernese Guard pauses to survey the scene before raising the heavy velvet curtain to slip out of the ballroom and onto the terrace. It is almost midnight, the hour appointed in the scented missive from an Unknown Lady, she who implored his presence on a matter of Life and Death.

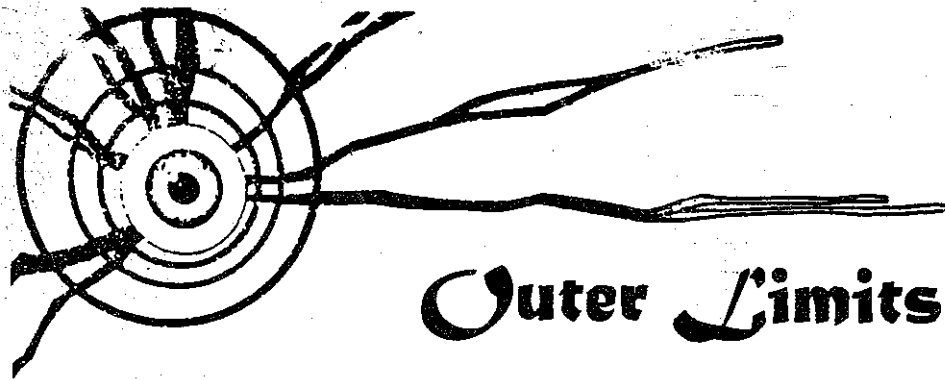
Through the violins of the waltz comes a clash of swords, and the scream of a Lady in distress. The gallant Captain rushes down the terrace towards the figures grouped at the far end. Blades flash in the moonlight as two uniformed men duel savagely. Behind them, a tall, sinister figure even now drags away the swooning form of the lovely Contessa de Villon. The Captain springs forward, pistol in hand, but too late! With a sudden lunge, one of the duelists transfixes the other with his sabre. The vanquished body slumps to the ground, revealing the well-known countenance of the Captain's friend, Lord Bertie Landsdowne. Even as the cry of horror leaves the Captain's lips, Lord Bertie's opponent, a dark-haired Sidhe in cavalry uniform, steps through the wall of the ballroom and vanishes. And the tall man, spreading enormous bat-wings, vanishes swiftly upwards into the mist with his fair burden.

The Captain staggers back into the ballroom, ashen pale. "The Unseelie Court!" he cries. "The Fiends have killed Bertie! And they have the Contessa..."

It's the 1870s, and New Europa has reached a temporary peace. The restless Prussian Empire, always greedy for conquest, has been beaten back by the sorcerous engines of the Bayernese aerial navy. In England, Victoria rules, but the Steam Lords hold sway. High Society across Europe moves through its usual round of balls, parties, politics. It is the age of steam technology, of secret sorcerous Orders, of Fey from the Seelie and Unseelie courts who move freely through society. It is a time when one may be privileged to meet a Dragon in the *salon* of a great social leader. A time of swords and swash-buckling, of Honour and Glory, of deeds of derring-do for Sovereign and Country!

Welcome to Castle Falkenstein, one of the most entertaining game settings yet. It's sort of historical, rather literary, entirely magical, highly technological. It's a system in which Daring Heroes and Heroines battle Villains and Fiends in order to Save the World!





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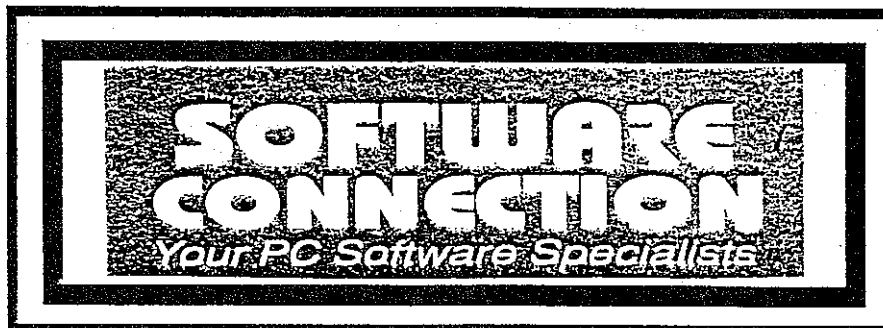
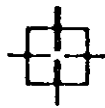
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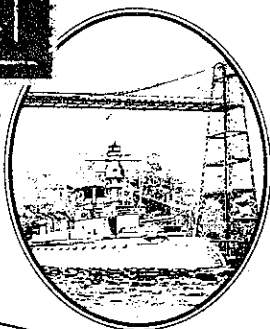
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Game Setting

As the above may suggest, the setting for Falkenstein is that of a kind of alternative Victorian Europe. Its history is roughly that of reality, although certain aspects are very different as a result of new elements in society.

* Steam technology has been developed to fill the place of electricity and the internal combustion engine - in everything from transport to children's toys.

* The Faerie folk have emerged from forest and hill to take an active and often rather aristocratic place in society. (Sidhe make particularly dashing cavalry officers. Dwarves are usually big on steam-tech). The Seelie Court are happy to integrate with humans, and rather enjoy human society, but the Unseelie Court are (naturally) working secretly to destroy humanity.

* Sorcery exists, as different Orders with different magical styles, enigmatic and ultimately motivated by the search for power. These include groups such as the Illuminati, the Freemasons and the Golden Dawn.

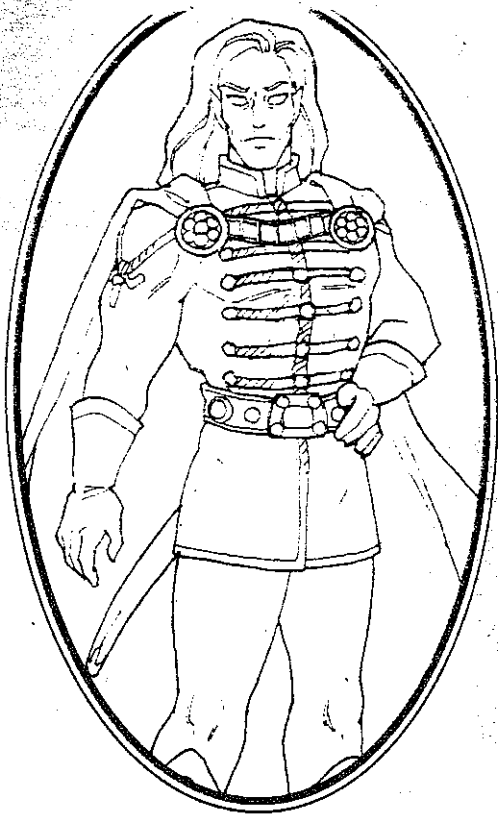
* Dragons have survived from the age of dinosaurs, and are powerful, long-lived, well-educated and highly efficient sorcerers. They're enigmatic and rather terrifying.

The game setting is in many ways an idealised Europe - only England has serious industrial problems, and a lot of the continent is a happy mix of pretty peasant farms, and gracious cities filled with glittering high society and a great deal of diplomatic manoeuvring. Not to mention romantic mountain regions filled with castles, bandits, vampires and the like. (Vampires are particularly nasty unseelie Fey).

The setting also draws heavily on literary roots, everything from Dickens to adventure writers such as Doyle and Haggard. One rather attractive effect of this is that both author and invention may co-exist in the world - Arthur Conan Doyle may bump into Sherlock Holmes in the street, or the characters bump into either of them. Doyle, of course, is the noted chronicler of the adventures of the noted Mr Holmes...

Characters

In keeping with the strong good/evil characterisation of the world, player characters are inevitably Noble Heroes/Heroines of various descriptions - humans, Fey, even Dragons, with almost any upper-class Victorian identity, not excepting Sorcerers, Steam-Tech Tinkerers and Secret Agents. They do battle with Evil Villains, Arch-Villains and Super-Fiends of the Darkest Dye, who are out to rule the world, destroy mankind, ally with the Unseelie Court, etc. Falkenstein uses a lot of Meaningful Capital Letters:



As an interesting innovation, the system does not provide a character sheet. Rather, players are expected to record character information as an in-character, in-period Diary, detailing background and motivations as well as game events. The effect is to insist on coherent role-playing rather than emphasis on mere numbers - an excellent thing, in my book. Players in my campaign were able to construct highly individual and interesting characters, using the suggested templates as they were intended - as no more than guidelines.

System

The Falkenstein system is particularly attractive. Rather than dice (which are Low Class things no Gentleman would stoop to) the system uses playing cards. Abilities are divided into four classes which correspond to the suits; characters are dealt a four-card hand, and may play any cards from it to add to abilities when they attempt to do something. Cards in the correct suit contribute a face value to the action.

The system itself is fairly minimal, a good thing in this particular gaming context. It makes no particular attempt at realism. Rather, the emphasis is on dramatic encounters, epic battles, entertaining special effects. Ability categories are broad and flexible. Game masters (known as Hosts) are encouraged to construct adventures as fast-paced, dramatic adventure novels; Heroes are Heroes and Villains are Villains, and usually the Hero should win. (Of course, you always have the option of turning a Hero into a Tragic Hero and killing them off anyway...)

Overall assessment

I really enjoy this setting - it's multifaceted, complex, literary, and basically a lot of fun. It's also beautifully packaged - the glossy rulebook is entertainingly laid out while still being easy to use, and the colour pen-and-wash artwork is attractive and atmospheric. The basic rulebook is all that is necessary for a game, although there are supplements, most notably *Comme Il Faut*, with additional player information, and a couple of entertaining steam and sorcery gadget compendiums.

The rulebook gives historical and political information in enough detail for fairly complex play, but the Host is still allowed a fair amount of leeway. The most important aspect, the flavour of the setting, comes across very well. The scarcity of rules is perhaps most noticeable in areas such as sorcery, which is in fact expanded in *Comme il Faut*, but I personally enjoyed the freedom this allowed for Host interpretation of reality.

This system must rank very high for sheer entertainment value. Players with any element of swashbuckle in them will find infinite opportunity to exercise their talents. Role-playing and realism purists may balk at the necessary degree of stereotype involved, and I would certainly not classify this as a highly realistic game. On the other hand, despite its essentially light-hearted nature, Falkenstein campaigns can offer real challenge as well as entertainment, and I see no reason why this less realistic paradigm should not allow for satisfying long-term gaming.



Introducing...

MIDDLE EARTH ROLE-PLAYING (MERP)

The original intention behind MERP was to create a role-playing system representative of and suitable for role-playing in Tolkien's world of Middle Earth. As a result, all of the supplementary material available for MERP revolves around this paradigm. If you are unfamiliar with the world described in the *Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* (and greatly expanded in a whole series of subsequent publications by Christopher "Mammon" Tolkien), do not despair, except of the fact that you are missing out on some phenomenal literature. The MERP system, while actually not strictly ideal for use in a Middle-Earth setting (the magic and combat system associated with *RuneQuest* are more suited to this purpose) is, nevertheless, a highly versatile and easy-to-use system (it's fun, too!).

The basic mechanics of MERP are similar to *Rolemaster* (percentile dice and skills that increase by level etc.) but have none of the many cumbersome tables that clog the *Rolemaster* DM's arteries. A more compact, elegant charactersheet removes the character creation nightmares that mar the *Rolemaster* player's existence (the weapon categories are simpler and the spell lists are more accessible, everything being in one book). This is not an attempt to put down *Rolemaster*, it is just the closest system to MERP for comparative purposes. MERP is an excellent system for DM's who are trying to convert long-term AD&D campaigns into other, less absurd systems (yes, this does happen sometimes) or for any roleplayer who is interested in a system that acts as a happy medium between the over-simplified AD&D system and the overly complex *Rolemaster* system.

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VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE

The streets are dark. Tall buildings, shadows clustered at their feet, loom over a city like yours, if a little darker. They tower over the straggler - a grey man in a city of grey people. Working late seemed like a good idea in the daylight. Now, however, darkness brings its fears. He gathers his trenchcoat tight around his chest and scurries a little faster, peering anxiously into the growing gloom of filthy streets.

A trashcan clatters in a passing alleyway. A dog barks hysterically. Twice. Feel the fear.

"Who's there?" A nervous question. Suddenly, a face materialises out of the darkness. Pale, almost corpse-like. Beautiful. The eyes shine with reflected gloom. A feral leer reveals gleaming fangs.

Darkness, and a memory of pain. He awakens to a fearful thirst. The lust for blood rises to a frenzied pitch, uncontrollable, and inherited powers emerge. Fighting this untested bloodlust, the grey man flits through the city at speeds unattainable by mortals; hides where no shadows conceal. He finds the strength to break down barriers - a hunter's sense of prey. Now the straggler is a vampire: no longer the hunted, he hunts.

There are things to be afraid of in the night. In *Vampire, The Masquerade*, you are one of them.

The System

In *Vampire*, characters are drawn up with set numbers of points in several categories. Thus, the player can still choose where his points are going to be spent, but all players are assured of starting with equal potential. The White Wolf system does allow the player to build up an intimate knowledge of how his character will think and react. A set of unique attributes, like humanity, reflect the struggle against the slow, but almost inevitable, deterioration into an almost mindless, beast-like state.

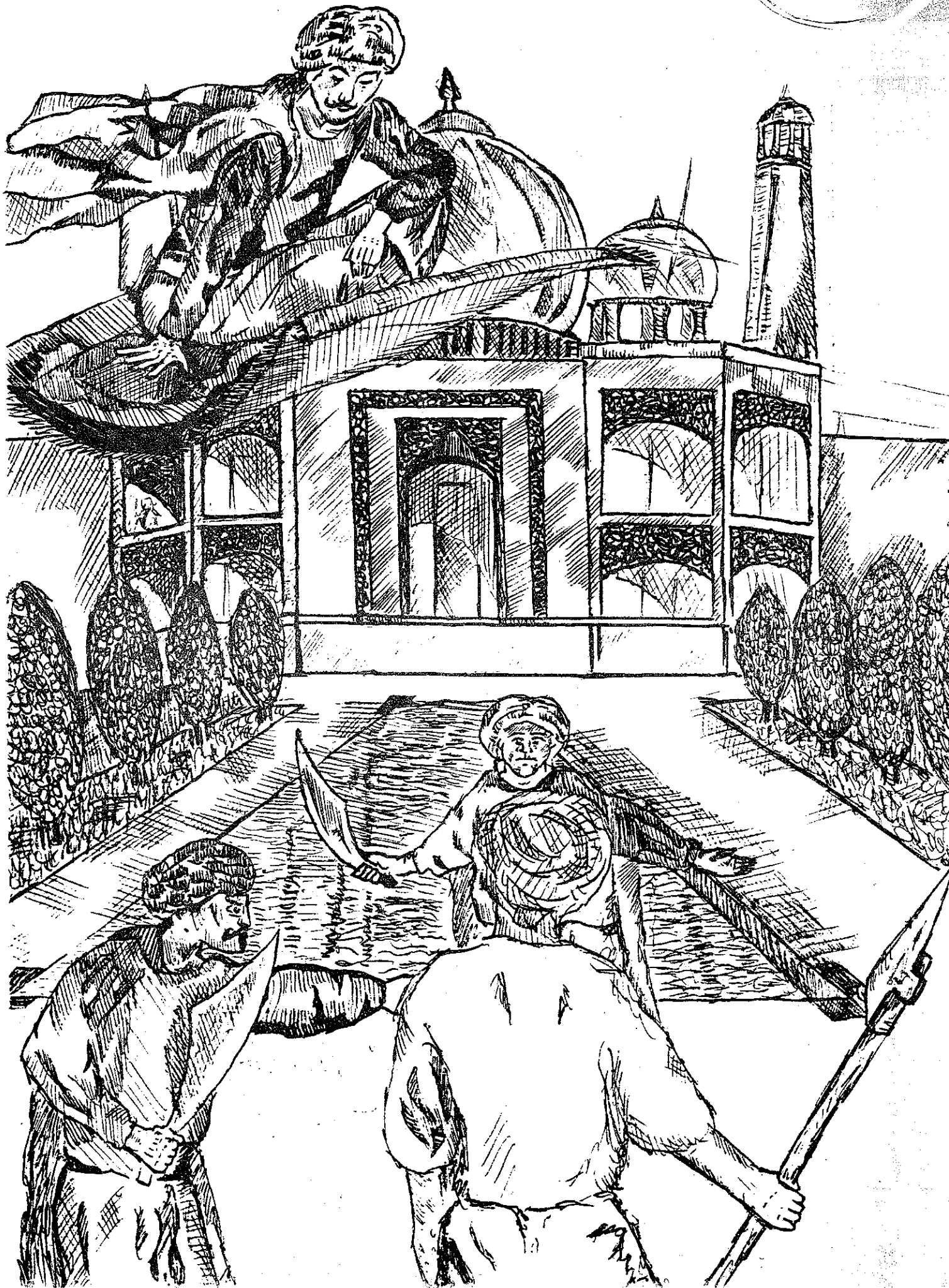
In addition to the more traditional physical attributes, a set of unique vampiric powers and lists of allies gives a well-rounded character - one that is easy to relate to as an individual rather than a set of numbers on a page.

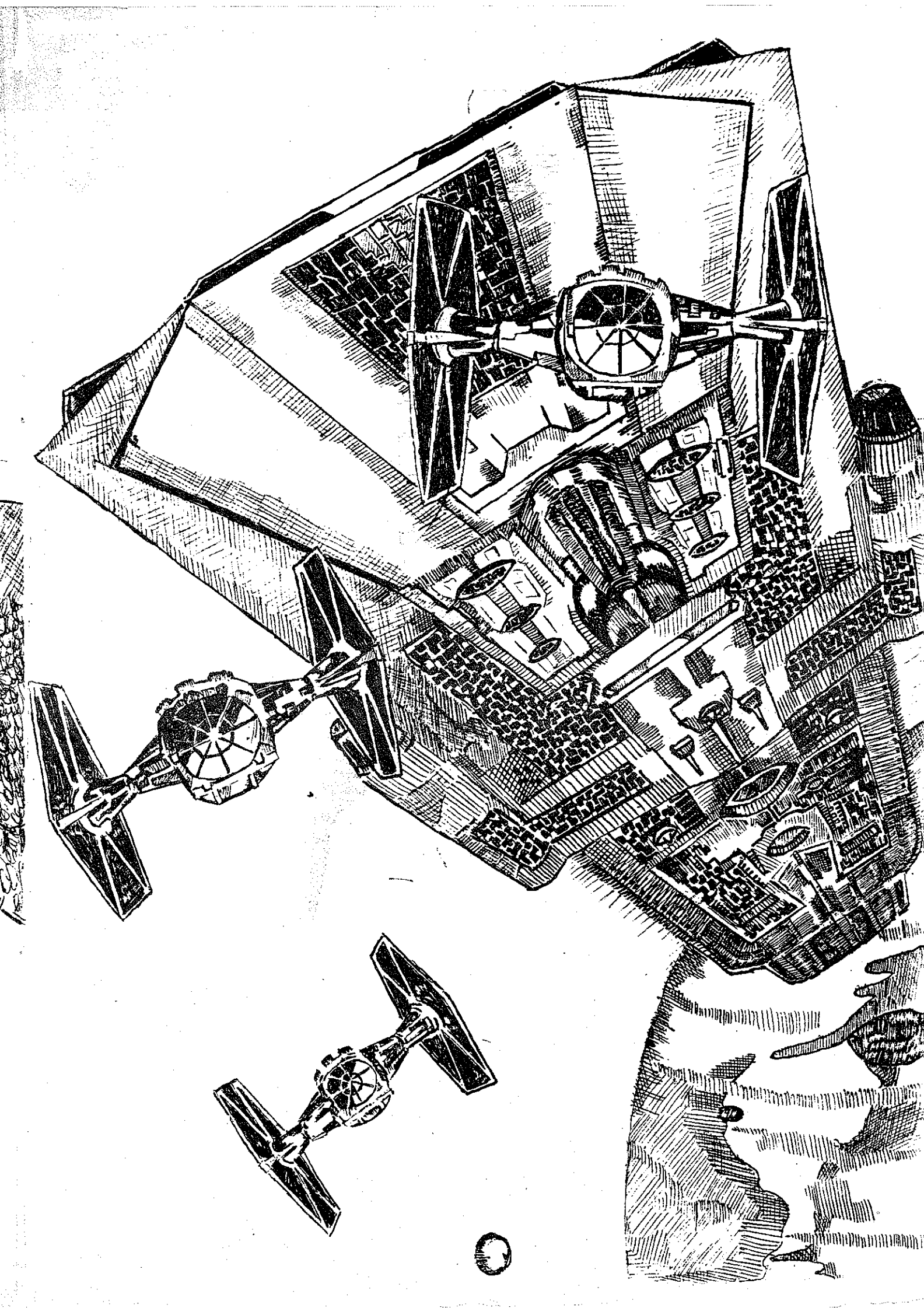
There is a good reason why the Game Master in *Vampire* is called the Storyteller. Once a session has started, the system allows play to flow smoothly, with little need to interrupt the game for long combats or similar dice rolling sessions. Usually only a couple of rolls resolve a situation.

With its entire range of games, White Wolf aims for a role playing experience, rather than roll play with a set of numbers.

Also available in the White Wolf range are *Werewolf*, *Mage*, *Wraith* and their latest game *Faeries*. All these systems are designed to interlink, allowing for a world populated by your best dreams - and your worst nightmare.







Why Play Ars Magica?

Why play Ars Magica, as opposed to AD&D, Runequest or Rolemaster? What does it have to offer that these other games of the same fantasy genre lack?

Magic

- ◆ Ars Magica is Latin for the " Art of Magic" or "The Magical Arts", and this is really the focus of the game. Every player plays a mage.
- ◆ Ars Magica has the most comprehensive magic system I have ever seen(in 14 years of gaming). A mage can cast formulaic magic, the fixed effect spells of AD&D; spontaneous magic, where you make up the effects on the spur of the moment; and ritual magic, for large or long-lasting effects, or with several participants. It also has rules for defensive spells, to deflect another spell; fastcasting; multiple spells; casting from a book ; mastered spells; magical shields and wards; and wizard's duels. There are fifteen magical arts giving fifty types of spell.
- ◆ Ars Magica has excellent lab rules, covering learning spells, inventing new ones, researching magical arts, making magic items and potions, gaining and enchanting familiars, training apprentices, creating and adding to spell books, studying from libraries, making talismans and foci, and my own personal favourite, magical experimentation (Boom!). There is no arbitrary level limit to reach before your mage can start making magic items or inventing new spells. This is the first system I've seen where players complain of too many adventures, as they want some peace to do their lab work.
- ◆ The concept of vis, generalised chunks of raw magic in physical form, is useful, as it provides a motivation for adventuring, and a currency for mages, without the complication of specific spell components for each spell.
- ◆ Mages are powerful, in comparison to other systems magic-users. Because every player has a mage character, there is no need to weaken mages to balance them with other character classes. Thus they can be characters out of Legend. Even a starting mage can call up a storm and hurl fireballs.
- ◆ There is no arbitrary limit on the number of spells a mage can cast in a day, no set amount of points like Rolemaster. Instead, spell-casting causes short-term fatigue. A mage can do minor magic as easily as breathing. Throw battle magic for several minutes, and you'll need to rest, or at least catch your breath. And a huge spell far beyond your capabilities could kill you.

Characters:

- ◆ While every player has a mage, most also have secondary characters called companions. These companions span the range of mediaeval occupations, from huntsman to lady-in-waiting, farmer to highwayman, friar to merchant-prince. A pool of tertiary characters also exists, to be played by whoever is free, or by visiting players. They are the guardsmen and servants who serve and protect the mages.
- ◆ The party of mages live in a covenant, similar to a college of magic, and this provides a good rationale for why they adventure together, much better than the old "met in a tavern, and instantly became trusted companions".
- ◆ Did I mention no levels? A purely skill-based progression, with skills improving with usage and training.
- ◆ A simple attribute + skill + roll system, with no convoluted percentages or table lookups. A single d10 is required, and it handles fumbles and open-ending elegantly.
- ◆ Character creation includes no dice rolls, so you get the character you want, not what the dice gives you. A point-based virtue and flaw system ensures that every positive special ability has a balancing deficiency. This makes for unique, interesting characters with lots of role-playing potential, as one struggles to overcome their flaws and use their virtues. Many of the virtues and flaws are useful storyhooks, like "Enemy", or "Demon-plagued".





Setting:

- ◆ Ars Magica is set in the 'real world' of 12th century Europe, but a Mythic Europe as it was seen by people of that age, who believed in magic and devils, dragons and faeries. This means overworked DM's can tap into the rich strata of medieval history, economics, and culture, and real-world geography. Want a list of an areas feudal lords, or castle floorplans - just look it up. In many cases, historical fact is stranger than fiction. Also being set in this world makes description more evocative. The terms 'Knight Templar', "The Inquisition", "King Richard the Lionheart", "Pope" carry a lot more immediate meaning than the fantasy world equivalents.
- ◆ The characters belong to an organisation of all the mages of Europe, the Order of Hermes, which is organised into Houses, geographical Tribunals, and Covenants (q.v.). This allows the mages to get involved in byzantine politics and rivalries with their peers.
- ◆ Mythic Europe has four Supernatural Powers, in uneasy balance. These are the Dominion (Church, saints and angels), the Infernal (Hell, demons and diabolists), the Faerie Courts (Dark and Light faeries), and Magic (mages and magical creatures). This gives players never-ending challenges, as even though their mages can become powerful enough to level cities and move mountains, they'll never be all-powerful, and thus bored.
- ◆ The best reason for playing Ars Magica? You only have to buy one book.



CALL OF CTHULHU: A BASIC INTRODUCTION.

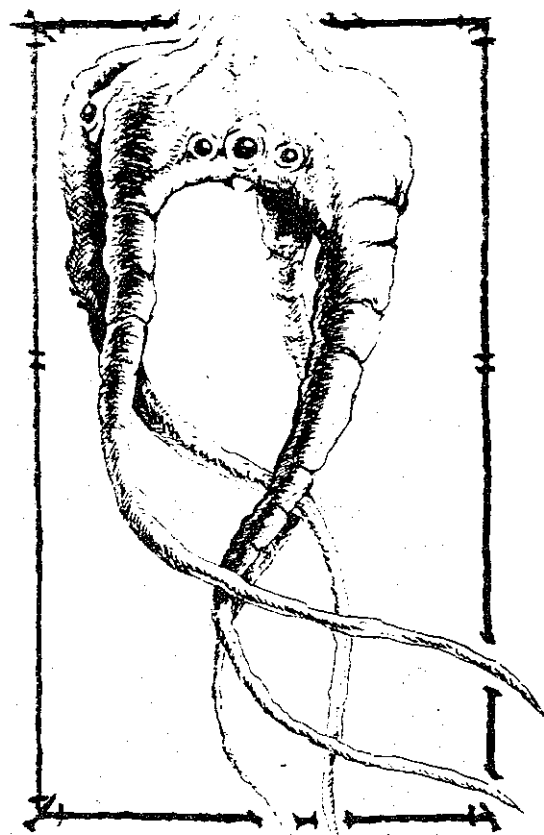
Tuesday, March 17: I had the pleasure of reacquainting myself with Robert Navarre yesterday, an old University friend I have not seen for many years. Although he did not visit me specifically, it was inevitable that we should meet as he was visiting all our favourite old haunts. Despite being naturally overjoyed to meet Robert again, I was nonetheless somewhat taken aback by the marked change in his appearance. Surely even a decade could not have been responsible for the sunken, red-rimmed nature of his eyes, the large collection of wrinkles gathered like a crumpled rug on his forehead, the twitches and shudders that shook his once calm frame? A strange transformation indeed, and one that intrigued me. I did not have much time to observe Robert, for indeed he did not have much time at his disposal. He was arranging lodging with Wieland Spiegel, the headmaster of our old school. The old schoolmaster had plenty of room for lodgers in his ageing, school-owned manor, yet such was its' decrepitude that few chose to live there. I believe there may be some connection between Robert's eeriness and Mr Spiegel. God knows what though. It all bears careful observation.

Wednesday, March 18: I had not managed to see Robert since Monday, so when he arrived at my door this morning I was a little surprised. He had the strangest expression, half grin, half grimace. Altogether most peculiar. I politely asked about Mr Spiegel, but all that Robert would say was that Mr Spiegel was caught up in a heraldry project. After this he gave a short and unpleasant laugh. I found myself suddenly wary, a little frightened. I asked him to leave, even though we had been fairly close friends for years. At this he staggered and caught himself on a chair. When he straightened up, his eyes had somewhat cleared, and in a voice that was almost that of his old self began to beg me to avoid him after this day. He was, he said, not to be allowed inside my house, and under no circumstances was I to approach him if we met on the street. I can remember that earnest, cold-eyed stare, that pleading commanding voice. Even hours later it



sends shivers of trepidation down my limbs. After delivering his speech he ran out of the house, gasping as though some great effort of will was all that drove him on.

It is only now, in the evening, that I remembered the bundle that Robert brought with him this morning. It had been on the chair next to which Robert had been standing, and had fallen underneath it when he had stumbled. Looking at it, it appears to be a stack of old parchments loosely bound into a book. Strange and thrilling designs are etched onto the pages in faded ink. Only my specialised interest at University allows me to recognise the archaic Hebrew writings. It would take some time, but I think I can decipher the text. If this was something on which Robert was working, perhaps it will reveal why it is that he has changed so much.



CALL OF CTHULHU: GAME AND BACKGROUND

Just as many Fantasy Roleplaying games are based on, or take place in the worlds created by an author (such as Tolkien or Moorcock), so too is Call of Cthulhu based on the writings of H. P. Lovecraft - the author of a series of horror stories that developed into the Cthulu Mythos. Other authors have expanded the Mythos since, until it became large and fleshy enough to support a thriving Roleplaying system - Call of Cthulu. I am going to avoid going into specifics about the Mythos itself since an ignorance of the Mythos is essential for a beginner player. As Cthulu is a horror-genre game, it is important to maintain a suitable atmosphere during the gaming session. Players do inevitably joke around during a session, but an ill-timed comment can immediately destroy any atmosphere of oppression or doom that a Keeper (Cthulu for DM/GM) has been trying to build. It may sound excessively serious, but it is inappropriate for a party of investigators to be making jokes as they watch the victims of some nameless Cult slowly having their intestines wrapped around a tree. This kind of grim fate could easily lie in store for an incautious investigator. Don't get too attached to your character: this is, after all, a horror game, and bad things will happen - often to you.

The central issue behind Cthulu is that of sanity and stability in a world that is only ostensibly real. The more one learns, the less one can believe in "reality". (If only others knew what you knew, maybe there would be others for Them to stare at. The Eyes! The Eyes! All around and around and around! No escape! They merely toy with you. This will never end...) Madness and despair play a large role in Cthulu, and players can expect only the possibility of a victory in a battle but never the war. Most will never descend into the depths of the Mythos far enough to even guess that there is a war, or at least, so much out there. Those that do seldom last for very long before madness over-





takes them. In system terms, a permanently insane character becomes an NPC (non-player-character) under the control of the Keeper.

The classic Cthulu setting is the 1920's, although supplements exist for Victorian and 90's play. A resourceful Keeper can probably set it in any period at all. After all, They don't care about time, They have always and will always Be.

GETTING TO KNOW THE CTHULU DEITIES.:

Don't.

SYSTEM:

The mechanics of the Cthulu system are simple and accessible. It is the same basic system as the one employed by Runequest (also a Chaosium product). What this means is that all the players' skills are on the character sheet, and rolling on skills is done on a percentile dice, low being good. This is a skill-based as oppose to level-based system, and the longer you can keep your character alive, the more competent (and mad) they will be. Statistics use the good ole' 3d6 system (human stats, that is). The unique feature (or at least, it was at first) of the Cthulu system is the sanity statistic. This is what determines the stability of your character. It leads to great roleplaying opportunities as your character slowly goes off the deep-end.

Call of Cthulu is a classic horror-genre game with a rich and gooey background (the books are out there for inspiration). For the game to be truly great a Keeper should have a very good sense of atmosphere, and the players should start off very naive, to grow with their characters into a fuller understanding of the enormity of the Cthulu Mythos.

Sunday, March 24: The church bells are ringing, but I daren't leave my room, for He will be waiting even by daylight. I have blocked every hole in my house, stopped up every nook, every cranny. Now the rats, His festering spies, cannot watch my every movement as I build the engine of my escape. Robert came again on Thursday, begging me to let him in, but how could I when even then I guessed at the truth? Now I know, and if I had the time I would be horrified. Only force of habit and the completion of my engine allows me to write this now. On Friday he was back, and he was no longer just Robert: he was some fiend that Hell itself would shun. It screamed for its' book, and threatened to crack my bones for my marrow. It is only thanks to the burning sign I found in the book that it cannot enter, and must use mundane spies. Ever since I scribed the pattern I have felt drained; one cannot fight the unholy with the unholy. His minions surround me and harry me night and day. If I had only read the book faster then no, no; that would mean I would be another Robert. Better to die now than over years, trapped in your own body as your brain splits in two and the new knowledge, like some gelatinous cuckoo, drives out what you were. Was it the old Robert or the new that left those pages? Was it the old or the new that forced me to this decision? I will never know. All I know is that, whatever he is, I will not give him the satisfaction he craves. The time is right, and I must do it while I have the strength. Farewell.

Henry. V. Stanley.

*So it is for
weak-willed. Soft-boned people!*

FUTURISTIC ROLEPLAYING GAMES

Futuristic Roleplaying games are fairly new, compared to the more traditional sword-and-sorcery games. However, they are one of the most popular.

Futuristic Roleplaying games can be divided into three main genres: Modern-day, Cyberpunk and Space-Opera. Modern-day games, such as *James Bond* and *Merc2000*, focus mainly on the adventures and missions of spies, mercenaries and other twilight types. Characters are often CIA goons, SWAT teams, assassins and so on. Adventures include investigations, body-guard duties and surveillance. Modern-day Roleplaying is a little underdeveloped in CLAWs currently: one *Merc2000* game and one *Twilight2000* game set in Viet Nam in 1967 are all that currently exist of this genre.

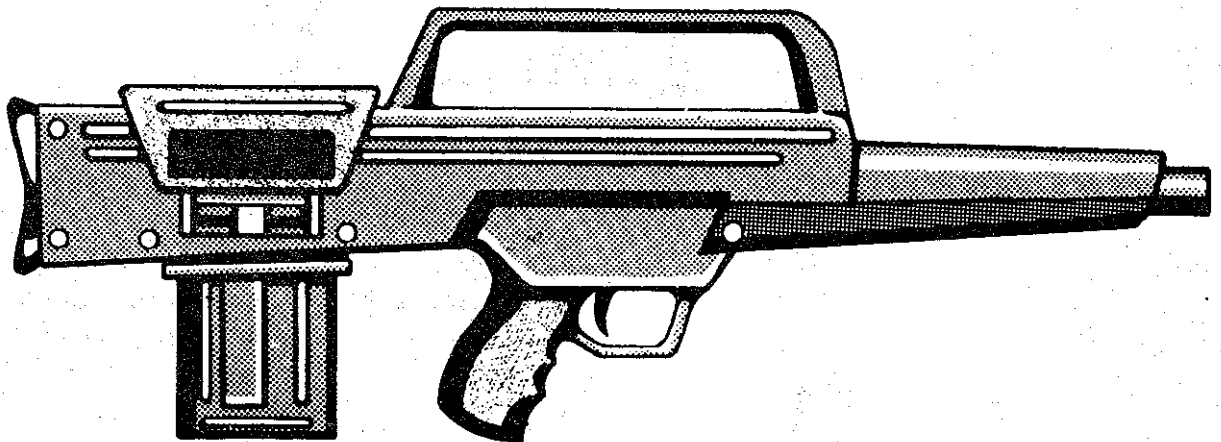
Closest in character to the modern-day games are the Cyberpunk games, set in the dark future of movies like *Blade Runner*, *Freejack*, *Aliens II* and *Max Headroom*. The skies are black with pollution, the streets wet with rain; flickering neon and screaming music pervade the cities. Characters are gang-members, criminals, mercenaries or smugglers, or any seedy-underbelly-of-the-city type of character. A large addition to the scope of these games is the concept of the NET - a virtual-reality computerspace as seen in the books of William Gibson's *Neuromancer* trilogy, which is as close to the "Cyberpunk Bible" as you can get. Cyberpunk games used to occur thick and fast in CLAWs, but are currently in decline. One criticism that has been levelled at these games is that they are easy to play sloppily - degenerating into a heavy-calibre gorefest of crime, violence and drugs. Some people say this is a bad thing.

Last and least, the Space-Opera games. You liked *Star Trek*? Command a ship in the *Star Trek* Roleplaying game. Swing lightsabres in the *Death Star* in the *Star Wars* Roleplaying game. Trade and travel the galaxy in *Traveller*. No-one *actually* plays these games these days, but the occasional once-off still crops up and can be a lot of fun.

There are a couple of modern-day games that I have omitted here as they are being covered elsewhere - the Storyteller systems, such as *Vampire* and *Werewolf*, have a brother system called *Mage* in which characters play modern-day wizards. The Superhero systems like *Batman* or *DC Superheroes* are not covered because they are such fringe interests that it is a waste of paper to discuss them. I hear they're fun, though.

And that's futuristic gaming. I like it because it's so easy to visualise what's happening to your character - hey, you see it all every day. Seedy bars, sprawling cities, people on the street are all easily describable by the GM. I would heartily recommend it to all you new folks, or even those who have played other RPG genres.

See you on the streets.



JIHAD

Jihad or *Vampire*, as the new version is known, is the second game released by Wizards of the Coast. The same people that started the card mania with *Magic the Gathering*, joined forces with White Wolf to make a card game based on White Wolfs' *Vampire, the Masquerade*, role playing game.

Players take the part of a Methuselah, one of the ancient vampires. They compete for power by using their resources and the lesser vampires under their control to eliminate rivals and steal away their lifeblood.

Each player starts the game with a Blood Pool of thirty points.

These points represent the Methuselah's influence and power in the world. There are also two packs of cards per player: the one contains the vampires that will be used to do the Methuselah's dirty work. The other is made up of cards

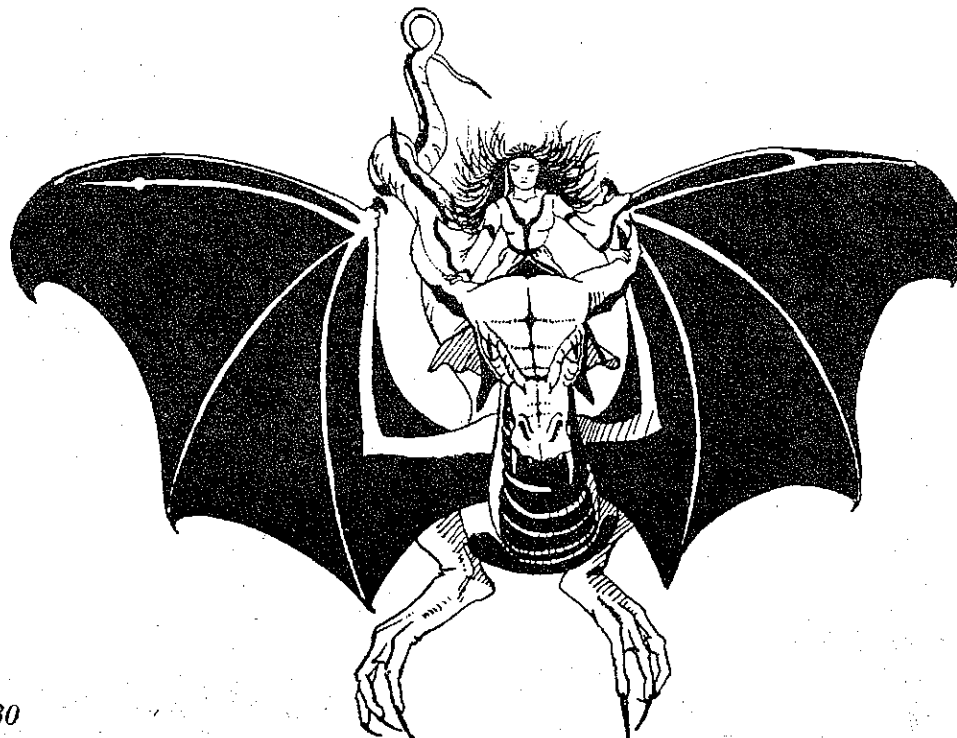
that give the vampires special powers or allow them to perform certain actions leading to the downfall of the Methuselah's opponents.

Jihad also has a political aspect to it, with the Methuselaha's having the power to vote for or against cards played by their opponents. Players thus have the option of making and breaking political bargains with each other.

The original range of *Jihad* cards consisted of about four hundred cards. Since then the deck has been added to with the dark sovereign's boosters - however these are only available in the new edition.

A game of *Jihad* takes longer to play than *Magic*, being designed more as a multi-player game - its counterpart is predominantly a two-player game.

To quote from an enthusiastic SAGA *Jihad* player, "Magic is a game for wimps who are afraid of the dark."



More than just a Ring

All right, so you have finally designed the wizard's / vampire's / king's / wosname's castle, complete with treasury and piles of gleaming bits and pieces. But sure as wosname, some smart-aleck player will go and ask, 'But what exactly does this ring / chalice / goblet / necklace / wosname look like?'

Now if it is just one piece, you can quickly rack your godly brain and come up with a description. Two pieces you can also manage, but after that things fall apart and everything is just 'a nice golden wosname'.

So, to alleviate both player and DM stress and to inject some detail into the wizard's / vampire's / king's / wosname's treasury, here are some easy guidelines and ideas on creating elaborate jewellery and wosnames. (NB these lists are far from comprehensive, feel free to add / change / delete whatever you want. I won't sue.)

First, simplest of all, decide on the item type:

- | | | |
|-------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. Anklet | 10. Diadem | 18. Pendant |
| 2. Armlet | 11. Earring | 19. Pin |
| 3. Bangle | 12. Locket | 20. Ring |
| 4. Bracelet | 13. Medal | 21. Sceptre |
| 5. Brooch | 14. Medallion | 22. Signet Ring |
| 6. Choker | 15. Necklace | 23. Stud |
| 7. Clasp | 16. Necklet | 24. Tiara |
| 8. Coronet | 17. Orb | 25. Torc |
| 9. Crown | | |

Next, select the basic material the wosname is made of:

- | | |
|------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Brass | 11. Pewter |
| 2. Bronze | 12. Platinum |
| 3. Copper | 13. Red Gold (Copper & Gold) |
| 4. Gilded Brass | 14. Silver |
| 5. Gilded Copper | 15. Silvered Copper |
| 6. Gilded Iron | 16. Stone |
| 7. Gold | 17. Tin |
| 8. Iron | 18. White Gold (Silver & Gold) |
| 9. Ivory | 19. White Gold (Platinum & Gold) |
| 10. Leather | 20. Wood |

You may think that wood is a rather curious substance to make, say, a crown of, but hey, the world(s) is(are) a funny place. (Ever read The Fionavar Tapestry? Remember the Oak Crown of Brennin?) So in case you need it, here's also a list of woods:

- | | | | |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|------------|
| 1. Alder | 10. Chestnut | 19. Lime | 28. Walnut |
| 2. Apple | 11. Ebony | 20. Linden | 29. Willow |
| 3. Ash | 12. Elder | 21. Mahogany | 30. Yew |
| 4. Aspen | 13. Elm | 22. Maple | |
| 5. Bay | 14. Fir | 23. Oak | |
| 6. Beech | 15. Hawthorn | 24. Palm | |
| 7. Birch | 16. Hazel | 25. Pine | |
| 8. Blackthorn | 17. Holly | 26. Rowan | |
| 9. Cedar | 18. Laurel | 27. Teak | |



Right, now comes the interesting bit: what precisely does this thing you've got look like? In other words, make some choice as to the basic kind of decoration. Combining two or more types can also lead to interesting effects.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. no decoration | 9. floral, simple pattern |
| 2. angular, simple pattern | 10. floral, interlaced pattern |
| 3. angular, interlaced pattern | 11. insignia or heraldic arms |
| 4. battle scene | 12. landscape |
| 5. creatures, simple pattern | 13. portrait |
| 6. creatures, interlaced pattern | 14. single creature |
| 7. curving, simple pattern | 15. single flower |
| 8. curving, interlaced pattern | |

Aside from the pattern, the style of ornamentation also lends distinction to an item:

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| 1. Carved | 6. Inlaid |
| 2. Cast | 7. Painted |
| 3. Chased | 8. Punched |
| 4. Enamelled | 9. Relief |
| 5. Etched | 10. Wrought |

In case you need some inspiration on animal decorations, here are some suggestions. Flowers, if needed, you will have to sort out yourself.

- | | | | |
|----------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. Angel | 23. Dove | 45. Jaguar | 67. Puma |
| 2. Badger | 24. Dragon | 46. Kingfisher | 68. Rabbit |
| 3. Basilisk | 25. Duck | 47. Lark | 69. Raven |
| 4. Bat | 26. Eagle | 48. Leopard | 70. Rhinoceros |
| 5. Bear | 27. Elephant | 49. Lion | 71. Roc |
| 6. Beaver | 28. Elk | 50. Lizard | 72. Seal |
| 7. Bee | 29. Fairy | 51. Lynx | 73. Shark |
| 8. Blackbird | 30. Falcon | 52. Magpie | 74. Snake |
| 9. Boar | 31. Fish | 53. Manticore | 75. Spider |
| 10. Buffalo | 32. Flamingo | 54. Mermaid | 76. Sphinx |
| 11. Camel | 33. Fox | 55. Monkey | 77. Squirrel |
| 12. Cat | 34. Frog | 56. Moose | 78. Stag |
| 13. Centaur | 35. Giraffe | 57. Nightingale | 79. Stork |
| 14. Chimera | 36. Gorgon | 58. Octopus | 80. Swallow |
| 15. Cockatrice | 37. Gryphon | 59. Ogre | 81. Swan |
| 16. Crab | 38. Gull | 60. Otter | 82. Tiger |
| 17. Crane | 39. Hawk | 61. Owl | 83. Turtle |
| 18. Crocodile | 40. Hedgehog | 62. Parrot | 84. Unicorn |
| 19. Deer | 41. Heron | 63. Peacock | 85. Vulture |
| 20. Devil | 42. Horse | 64. Pegasus | 86. Weasel |
| 21. Dog | 43. Hydra | 65. Petrel | 87. Wolf |
| 22. Dolphin | 44. Ibis | 66. Phoenix | 88. Wyvern |



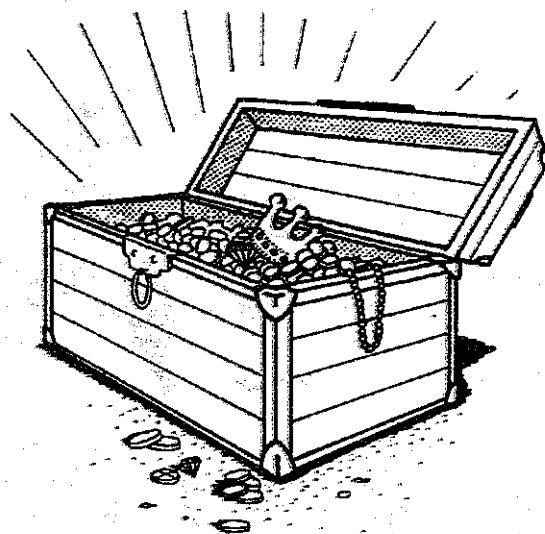
But there's something still missing - gems, perhaps? I'll not go into size and numbers, since these depend on the type of item, and in any case require merely a dice roll to determine. However, you may find the following list of minerals useful:

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1. Agate | 11. Garnet | 21. Pearl |
| 2. Amber | 12. Hematite | 22. Quartz |
| 3. Amethyst | 13. Jade | 23. Rose Quartz |
| 4. Aquamarine | 14. Jasper | 24. Ruby |
| 5. Beryl | 15. Jet | 25. Sapphire |
| 6. Bloodstone | 16. Lapis Lazuli | 26. Smoky Quartz |
| 7. Citrine | 17. Malachite | 27. Tiger Eye |
| 8. Coral | 18. Moonstone | 28. Topaz |
| 9. Diamond | 19. Moss Agate | 29. Tourmaline |
| 10. Emerald | 20. Onyx | 30. Turquoise |

Now that the item is almost complete, it just remains to add a suitably mystical inscription, if so desired. Here are some ideas about what the inscription might be - and remember that it can be in any language, and any style of writing:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Single Rune or Symbol | 5. Motto |
| 2. Single Name or Word | 6. Quote |
| 3. Several Words | 7. Spell |
| 4. Proverb | 8. Vital Clue for the Campaign |

Of course, there are always more detail that can be added or refined once the item is complete, but with a bit of practice a treasure of unique and detailed items can be created without much trouble.



Clawmarks presents Part II of Andrew Sturman's
NECROMANCY: THE BLACK ARTS

Necromancers in the Lab

With spells like "*The Walking Corpse*" (ReCo(Me) 25 Ritual) and "*Awaken the Slumbering Corpse*" (ReCo 20) why does a Necromancer need to spend time in the lab?

The two 'standard' Necromancy spells only create the weakest sort of undead, the walking dead, just corpses with animi bound into them. These mindless creations only respond to the direct commands of their maker, and have no motivation of their own.

The creation of more powerful undead requires at least two rituals, the first to summon a spirit, and the second to bind it into a prepared corpse or item. The summoning ritual calls the spirit and imbues it with magical might. After this it must be contained until it can be bound into the corpse or spirit focus. A magic circle is normally used to hold the spirit (although other containers are known), while the Necromancer recovers from the first ritual and prepares for the second. During this dangerous stage, sensible magi prefer the safety and seclusion of a lab. A permanent inlaid circle is also less prone to disturbance and catastrophic failure than a temporary circle in the sand, chalk lines, etc.

The other advantage to undead created in the lab, is the ability to tailor the undead's powers. This involves treating the undead like a magic item, either as a full or lesser magic item.

Lesser Undead

An undead created as a lesser enchanted item can have one virtue per 5 might, and must have balancing flaws. Both virtues and flaws are specified by the Necromancer (see the undead virtue and flaws table). The effective level of the enchantment is equal to the plus of the virtue times 5 (this effective level is also the magic might of the undead). As for normal lesser enchanted items, one's lab total must be double the required effective level to complete it in a single season. If one's lab total is high enough and sufficient raw materials are available (corpses and vis), multiple undead of the same type can be made.

Lab Total: A
necromancer's lab total
for undead creation =
(mentem + corporem) / 2 +
Rego + Int + Magic Theory
+ Aura + Lab bonuses.

Before enchanting, the corpse must be animated using "*The Walking Corpse*", assuming a corporeal undead is sought. If a specific spirit is required then it must be summoned using "*Summon the Haunting Spirit*". If an incorporeal, spirit-form undead is desired, the lab ritual "*Empower the Ghostly Spirit*" (CrVi(Me) Gen) is needed.

Optional rules to save Vis: *The season-long animation process substitutes for the quick 'n dirty "Walking Corpse" ritual (which only takes an hour and a half but costs 5 vis). Thus the zombie servants in the example below cost just two pawns of Vis each instead of seven. Even another pawn of Vis can be saved by the frugal if an embalming roll is made for each corpse (Int + Embalm of 9+). If successful, then no "Charm against Putrefaction" spell is needed.*





Exemplia Gratia I:

Tesera wishes to spend a season constructing some lesser undead servants. His lab total is $(\text{Int } +4) + (\text{Magic Theory } 5) + (\text{Aura } 4) + (\text{Lab bonus } 1) + (\text{Rego } 10) + (\text{mentem } 8 + \text{corporem } 15)/2 = 4+5+4+1+10+23/2 = 35.5 = 36$ (rounds up). Half his lab total of 36 means he can create an undead with a might of 18 in a season i.e. one undead with up to three points of virtues (might $18/3$ rounded down), or three undead with one point of virtue each (Note: he cannot make one with two virtues, and one with one virtue, as all the

ones created have to be identical). He opts for the three one-virtue ones. The +1 virtue he chooses (from the Undead Virtue and Flaw Table) is 'cunning', so they have some intelligence and don't have to be ordered to do everything. For the balancing -1 flaw required, he picks 'disfigured' (he never was that neat with his stitching). He sends Igor out for some corpses, and starts work.

Each virtue point costs one pawn of Vis (rego, corporem, mentem, or vim Vis). In addition either an Embalming roll or a "*Charm against Putrefication*" (CrCo5) is necessary to preserve the corpse. Thus after three months of work, Tesera has three mute, semi-intelligent, ugly zombie servants at a cost of two pawns of Vis each. The trade-off is time or Vis - he could produce these three zombies in a day or so at a cost of seven pawns of Vis each if he used the ritual of "*The Walking Corpse*" (five pawns of Vis). The zombies have a magic might of six.

Note: he cannot add any additional permanent enchantments to them after creation, as they are effectively lesser enchantments, and additional spells using Vis would upset the enchantment.

Exemplia Gratia II:

Instead of the servants, Tesera decides on just one more powerful lesser undead, a ghost. The same lab total of 36 means up to three points of virtues. He chooses the virtues Int+2 and Poltergeist+1. He balances these with the flaws Vulnerable to Sunlight-2 and Uncommon Fear-1 (Mirrors). No body is needed for this one, but he must give the spirit magic might with the ritual "*Empower the Ghostly Spirit*" (CrVi (Me) Gen) cast at the level of the spirit's might i.e. 15 (18 rounded down). This requires three pawns of Vis (if Tesera wanted a specific spirit as opposed to a generic one, he would have to spend another four pawns in the "*Summon the Haunting Spirit*" ritual). Tesera also chooses to add the spells "*Tongue of the Dead*" (CrIm(Me) 5) and "*Riding the Eyes of the Man*" (InMe (Im) 20). The former costs one pawn of Vis and allows the spirit to speak to Tesera; the latter costs four Vis and allows Tesera to see through the ghost's eyes.

So, after a season and at a cost of eight Vis, he has an intelligent poltergeist with a magic might of 18. He can see through its eyes while it is within 15 paces of him and he is concentrating on it. Being a spirit, it can pass freely through walls, is invisible and makes an excellent spy. Tesera can only communicate with it when it is in his presence. He uses normal speech and it can speak audibly using "*Tongue of the Dead*".

Greater Undead:

Greater undead creation is similar to the lab rules for invested devices. If the desired undead is corporeal, the body must be opened for enchantment, at a cost of ten pawns of corporem Vis (for size 0, +- 2 pawns per size i.e. size +1 = 12 pawns, size -1 = 8, down to 1 pawn minimum for a size -5). This total is halved for skeletons. For an incorporeal undead, the Vis is spent opening the undead's focus for enchantment - see the box on foci. Either way opening the enchantment takes one season.

The physical attributes of the body are based on those of the corpse as in life, or of the relevant corpse parts. (This doesn't apply for skeletons - all physical attributes at 0.) Physical





tues like Keen Vision or Enduring Constitution can also be transferred. Thus after some stitching the ideal body can be constructed. (The spell "*Seeing the Corpse in its Grave*" (InTe(Co) 10) can save a lot of digging.)

Finding the required body parts obviously can necessitate a lot of grave-robbing. To find the required body-parts one generates a required target number which is the total of the desired stats, and accumulate Per + Medicine + Embalming points per season spent searching. This is a good job for apprentices.

The mental attributes of the undead are based on those of the spirit summoned. The Necromancer researches the spirit desired, or uses one detailed in a *Necronomicon* - a book of dead names listing useful spirits by name. To research a spirit with specific mental attributes and skills, total the attributes and accumulate points equal to Int + Occult Lore per season. Having a *Necronomicon* will give a bonus determined by the size and quality of it. Typical works have bonuses of +1 to +3 / season. THE *Necronomicon*, of legend, details ALL the names of the dead, updated constantly.

"*Summon the Haunting Spirit*" is used to summon the chosen spirit, at a cost of five pawns. (see the box on summoning Named Spirits)

Summoning Named Spirits

When summoning a specific spirit, there is a chance of it being unavailable. This chance is based on the person's reputation in life. Thus the spirit of Pythagoras is much harder to get than the spirit of Ned the village potter. As a spirit can teach up to it's level in skills like a book, Pythagoras is far more in demand.

Make a stress roll. If it is positive, and greater than the spirits reputation in life, the number rolled is that spirit's current might, which determines the difficulty of the summoning. If it is less than the reputation rolled, then the spirit is bound elsewhere, and the number rolled is the magnitude of the binding. If 0 is rolled, then the spirit is permanently unavailable, ie in Heaven or Hell, or destroyed.

If the spirit is bound elsewhere, the necromancer can 'poach' it, by having a summoning that exceeds the spirit's current binding. As you would expect, this practice causes a lot of annoyance, and is a common cause of conflict between necromancers of the Order.

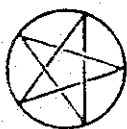
The undead's powers must be designed like a spell. The undead has however many virtues and flaws the necromancer wants to add, at a cost of one pawn per point of virtue, with balancing flaws. A balancing flaw can be avoided by paying double for the virtue. Spell-like powers (maleficia) can also be added, at a cost of one pawn per five levels.

The total enchantment level is equal to the number of points of virtues multiplied by five, plus levels of spell-like powers, less the number of extra points of flaws multiplied by five. Half this total enchantment level is the undead's magic might.

The lab total is the same as for lesser undead, but can be accumulated over several seasons.

The truly deranged can increase their lab bonus with experimentation, by cutting corners, but this isn't recommended. The results of failure are left to the Storyguides imagination...remember Frankenstein.





ADDITIONAL ARS MAGICA SPELLS.



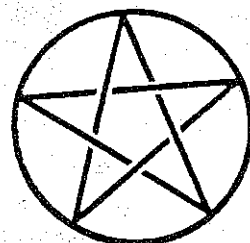
DREAM SPELLS

Rego Corporem

Dance to the Dreamweaver's Tune: Level 25

Spell Focus: Mannequin of the Target (+3)

R: Touch/Near D: Conc (Spec) Req: Mentem, Imagonem, Intelligo
(Arcane Connection)



The caster is in semi-control of the target's body and mind while the target is asleep. The caster can make the target get up, walk, talk and other basic functions. To make the target do complex actions (fight, write, use a skill or talent) the caster must manipulate the target's dream images and give mental suggestions - in dreams, it is possible to make the dreamer know something without knowing how they know it. The caster sees out of the target's eyes so they should be somewhere safe as they go into a trance at the start of the spell.

The target gets one resistance roll at the beginning of the spell, an Intelligence roll of 12+. If it succeeds, the spell will not work for that night. If it fails the target gets no other resistance roll until the end of the dream. They do, however, get personality rolls if they are forced to do something contrary to one of their personality traits. If it is 10+, the spell is broken. If they were put to sleep using 'Call of the Dreamweaver', they are still asleep, otherwise the target awakens. They will have no memory of what they may have done during the spell unless 'Grasp the Lingering Dream' is cast.

Intelligo Mentem

Looking With the Mind's Eye Closed: Level 25

Spell Focus: Eye Patch (worn by caster; +2)

R: Sight D: Sun/Moon Req: Imagonem

The target of the spell will not see anything that will alarm them. They will instead see any sight that seems normal to them, or that they can explain away or they will see nothing at all. The more outrageous the sight the less likely the target will be to see it. If this is cast on a mundane, they will happily witness ostentatious magic without batting an eyelid. If this is cast on a guard, they will not see an enemy walking up to them, in-

Hide From Oneiros' Grasp: Level 20

Spell Focus: Veil (put over the face of the caster; +1)

R: Near/Sight D: Sun/Moon

Req: Corporem

The target cannot fall asleep at all. The insomnia is complete. Even if the body is rested the target will still toss and turn so that no rest is achieved. The following penalties apply (they are cumulative):

First Week : For each full day without sleep : +1 Long Term Fatigue

Second Week: For every two days without sleep : -1 Body Level

Fourth Week: For every four days without sleep: +1 Derangement

[For Derangements, see *Vampire Rule Book*, pp202-203]

Every 8 hours the target must roll a stamina check against an Ease Factor of 9+ (All penalties apply and are cumulative. Unconscious on the fatigue table is a -10 penalty, thus the more tired the target is, the harder it is for them to fall asleep). If they pass they fall asleep, and will sleep in a coma-like state until they have regained all the sleep they have lost. Thus, if they have been awake for four days, they will sleep for 32 hours - eight hours for every 24 hour period awake.

Go With Orpheus' Blessing: Level 25

Spell Focus: Handful of Water (To be put on the eyes of the target; +1)

R: Touch/Near D: Sun/Moon Req: Corporem

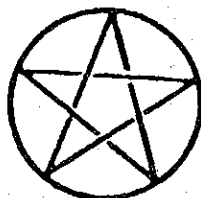
The target does not feel the need for sleep and does not miss the loss, even after the duration of the spell ends, as long as they pass a Stamina check of 6+. The penalties of failure are as follows:

Miss 1 Night's Sleep: Lose one Long Term Fatigue

Miss 1 Months Sleep : Age one year

Miss 1 Years Sleep : Gain 1 Decrepitude Point

To make the spell last a year it must be cast as a ritual, and double the amount of Vis must be used.





stead seeing another guard. Similarly, an assassin on the roof would be seen as a cat or a spider.

The spell will fail if, in obvious personal danger, the target passes an Intelligence roll against an Ease Factor of 9+. The spell will definitely fail if the object that would normally alarm the target actually touches the target.

Rego Mentem

Grasp the Lingering Dream: Level 15

Spell Focus: Rosemary (+1)

R: Near/Sight D: Instant Req: Muto

Cast as the target awakens. The target can remember the last dream they had fully, and if they fail an Intelligence check of 10+ they will believe it to be a memory of actual events.

Call of the Dreamweaver: Level 20

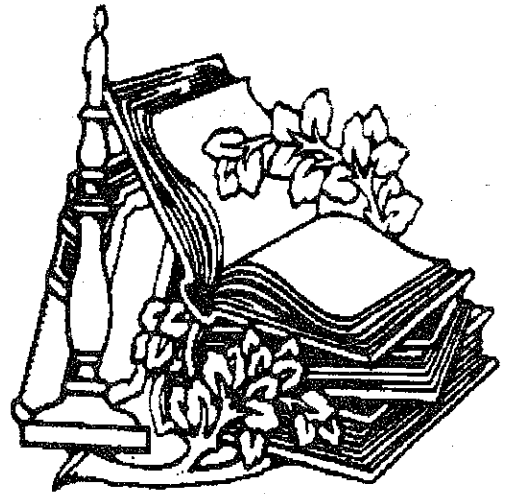
Spell Focus: Pinch of Sand (+1)

R: Near/Sight D: Sun/Moon Req: Corporem

The target falls into a magical sleep instantly that lasts as long as the duration of the spell or until the caster wills it (1 round concentration roll). The target will not wake up for any reason unless the spell is disrupted (entering an Aegis, a stronger Wake Spell etc). This allows the caster to cast other spells on the target that requires the target to be asleep without fear of them awakening.



The Bard's Best Tomes



The Bard, alas, is ill this day, and though he fiercely denies it is truly unfit to do even so light a work as wielding a quill. Thus I, his humble and patient scribe, have declared myself willing to take on his momentous task. Indeed, though my knowledge is far less than the Bard's, as is my skill, I shall endeavour to emulate him and bring satisfaction to you. I have here set down only such observations as I have gathered from the Bard himself as he was working through these tomes, that though these words were penned by my poor plain self the thoughts themselves are the Bard's thoughts.

Let me begin with matters of myth and legend. Many long years ago, one P.H. Adkins gathered the ancient tales of the Greeks and fashioned from them a story concerning the Titans and their days (see *ClawMarks* IV). This story he has now continued with **Master of the Fearful Depths**, concerning Kronos' demented plans and the shape-shifter Proteus' wiles to counter the Lord of the Titans. To me the most interesting aspect of Adkins' book lies in the way he presents the myths of the Titans - which were old even amongst the Greeks - and builds them into a coherent and quite credible story. To be honest, there are some logistical difficulties, such as the fact that the Titans were, well, Titans, and towered over the trees and hills, and yet they went hunting for deer - or were the deer Titan-sized in those days? Still, if one can accept such details as part of the mythology, **Master of the Fearful Depths** is a very worthwhile successor to **Lord of the Crooked Paths**.

Adkins has followed up **Master of the Fearful Depths** with **Sons of the Titans**, which deals with the youth of the god Zeus, Kronos' son, who is destined to overthrow his father and become King of the Gods. This book involves less Titan mythology and is more like a freestyle fantasy which just happens to include Greek gods. Probably this is due to the fact that there are hardly any tales at all dealing with the first days of the gods, and hopefully further books will be again based more firmly on the Greek legends.

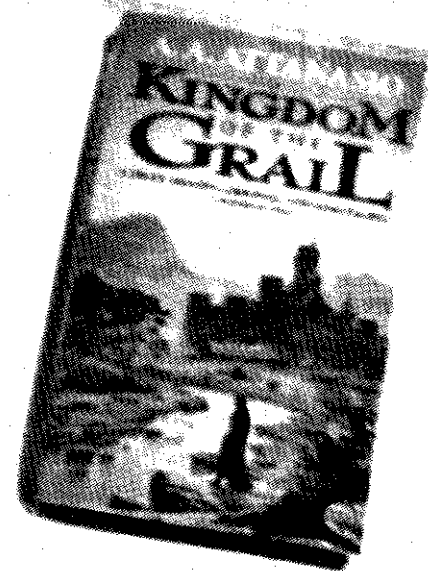
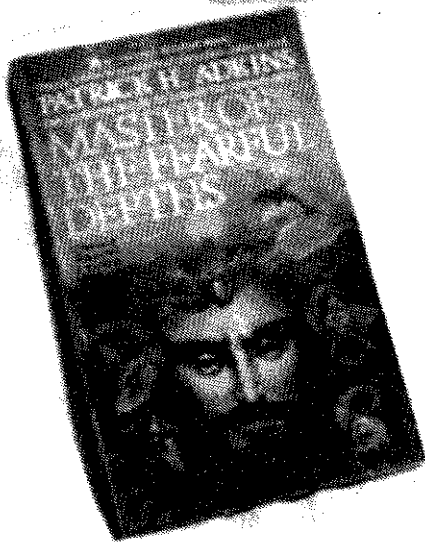
The Bard, I suppose, would now complain about other books before returning to favourable impressions, so I shall do the same.

Charles de Lint usually writes quite well, drawing on both Celtic and American Indian folklore and combining them in rather interesting novels. His two latest are **The Little Country** and **Spiritwalk**, of which I choose **Spiritwalk** to complain about. This is a sequel to **Moonheart**, but most sadly it falls short of the first volume. In essence, **Spiritwalk** tells three different stories and weaves them together around Tamson House, and though they fit together quite well the whole of **Spiritwalk** came across as somewhat superficial, the characters being to a certain extent stereotypical and not particularly distinctive.

Fortunately for de Lint, **The Little Country** has redeemed his reputation. It's main focus is a hidden book which tells a different story to everyone who reads it, and at the same time acts as a link to another place. De Lint cleverly tells both the story about the book, and the story in

the book, alternating so skilfully that at times it is hard to remember which is which. Even if some of the characters are a touch conventional (which book is without its power-hungry mastermind and the reclusive wise old man?) **The Little Country** is definitely good reading.

Michael Scott Rohan, long a favourite of mine, has finally seen fit to complete a sequel to **The Gates of Noon** (ClawMarks IX) and **Chase the Morning** (ClawMarks IV). Again Stephen Fisher is drawn into the magical Spiral, leaving the Core behind to - well, read the book



yourself. Which, by the way, is called **Cloud Castles**. As in the previous books, magic, mysticism, swashbuckling, derring-do and a host of bizarre characters are intermingled in an enthralling tale of adventure and discovery as Stephen Fisher has to defeat nefarious schemes and evil powers. Aside from that, it is also quite fascinating how Rohan has brought some of the more well-known myths and legends of Europe into his story and integrated them with his Spiral/Core construct.

Rohan has also released a book called **The Lord of Middle Air**, based on Borderland legends of the sorcerer Michael Scot. Though I did not expect anything as excellent as the *Chronicles of the Winter of the World* (which are distantly based on the tales of Wayland the Smith), I had still hoped for something more powerful and in Rohan's usual distinctive style than **The Lord of Middle Air** turned out to be. Not that the book is bad; far from it, it is a well-written story - except that there is little to distinguish it from dozens of other fantasy books.

Likewise, I had expected more of Peter Morwood's **Firebird**, sequel to **Prince Ivan** (ClawMarks IX). The first book was in essence almost a retelling of some familiar Russian legends, and so I would have expected **Firebird** to be. Unfortunately Morwood has chosen to

include a little more history and a little less myth, and instead of drawing more heavily on the myths surrounding the Firebird he touches only lightly on them and fills in the story with a plot concerning the Teutonic Knights. And it is here that the book loses the fairytale-like quality of the first volume: by bringing in history it is possible to place the story at a certain point in time, and it becomes far less mythical than if it had not been fixed. Again I am left with a slight feeling of dissatisfaction and a not particularly special book.

Well, let me speak of something completely different. Has anyone ever thought of poker as being magical? Evidently Tim Powers thinks so, and in **Last Call** he proceeds to spin a bemusing tale of magic, ghosts, and poker; as is almost obligatory with cards, the mysticism of Tarot has not been neglected either. As usual, Tim Powers bases his story on rather unusual but intriguing ideas; he seems to have a talent for writing uncommonly good books. To give you a quick idea of **Last Call**: a one-eyed gambler has unwittingly sold his soul during a poker game, and only twenty-one years later does he realize that the winner is about to take over his body and leave him less than a ghost...

Back to something more traditional. So traditional, in fact, is Maggie Furey's **The Sword of Flame** - sequel to **Harp of the Winds** (ClawMarks XIII) - that there is little to recommend it except curiosity. **The Sword of Flame** is, in one word, middling, and I'll repeat what I've said about both previous volumes: your typical rainy afternoon reading.

The same cannot be said of A. A. Attanasio's **The Kingdom of the Grail**, a semi-historical story taking place mainly in Wales during the time of the Crusades. The old baroness Ailena Valaise is dispossessed by her son, but a decade later a young woman returns, claiming to be the selfsame baroness, miraculously restored by the Holy Grail. Both the son and the reader must wonder whether it is indeed the baroness, returned from the Holy Land, or simply a clever, blasphemous impostor?

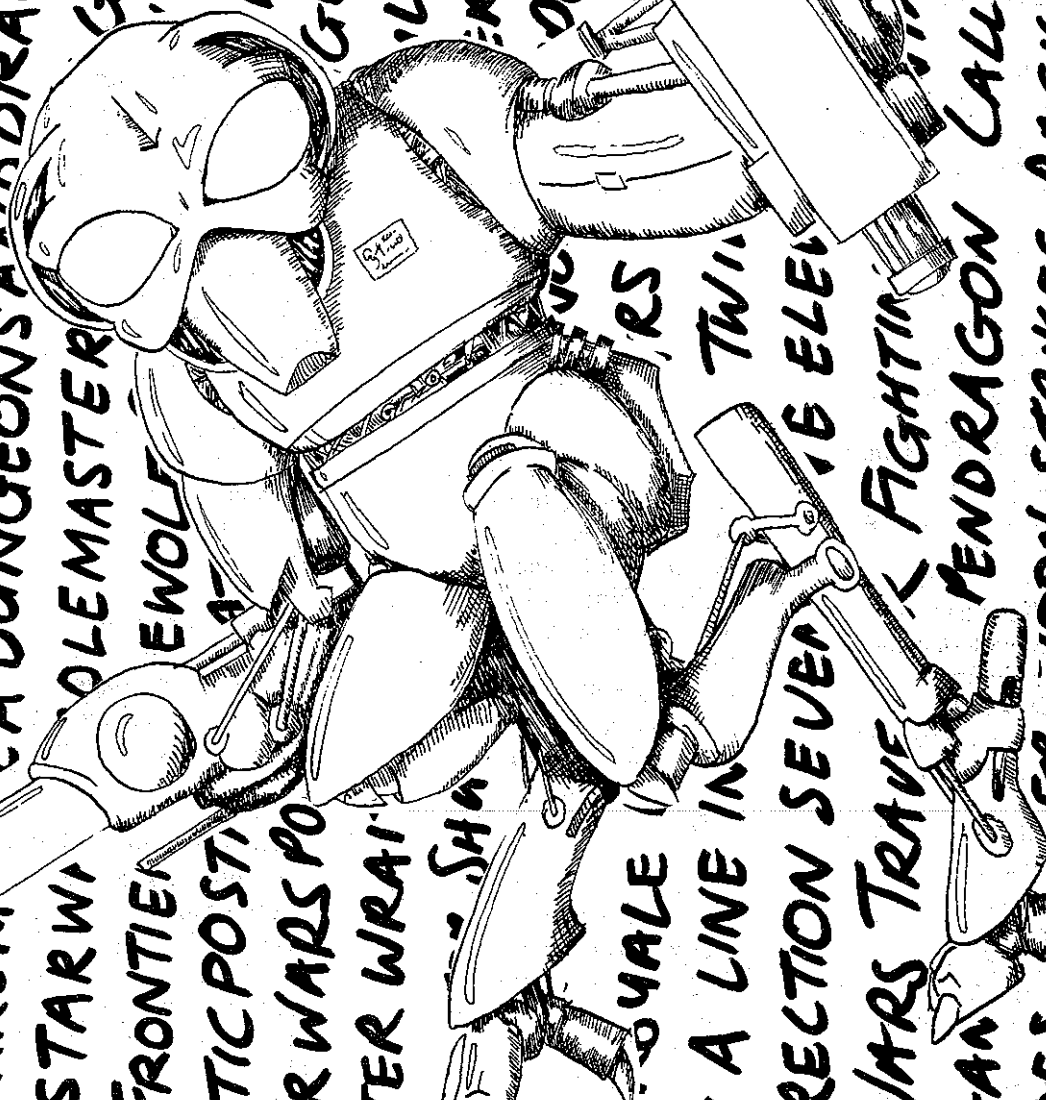
Again I shall close with a book of Sheri Tepper's - **Sideshow**, to be precise. I have the feeling that I repeat myself when it comes to Sheri Tepper, so I will merely say that like all her recent works, **Sideshow** is excellent. It is, in fact, a sequel to **Raising the Stones**, taking place long after the gods of Hobbs Land have spread throughout the universe, leaving only the planet Elsewhere untouched - Elsewhere, which has been preserved so that its inhabitants may answer the question: What is the Destiny of Man? A rather ponderous thought this may seem, but read the book and learn the answer.

To those who are interested I wish to remark the Guy Gavriel Kay has published a new book, **Lion of Al-Rassan**; Patricia McKillip's **The Forgotten Beasts of Eld** has just been reprinted; Orson Scott Card has completed **Alvin Journeyman**; and Robert Jordan's seventh book, **A Crown of Swords**, has been released, being, it is claimed, the penultimate volume of the *Wheel of Time* series.

Done! And I offer my apologies to all those who expected the Bard's own words and found my humble efforts lacking.



CYBERPUNK MIDDLE EARTH MEDIEVAL POSTAPOCALYPTIC MAGIC
 CONTEMPORARY STARS CYBERPUNK MACHO WOMEN WITH G
 UNS BOOTHILL ARMS CA DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS JYHAD
 MIDDLE EARTH STAR WARS ROLE MASTER GAMMA WORLD
 VAMPIRE STAR FRONTIER WOLF HERESY MAGIC
 POSTAPOCALYPTIC POST-A WITH GUNS
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 CED DUNGEON WOLF HERESY MAGIC
 WARHAMMER WOLF HERESY MAGIC
 ELKS AND TROLLS A LINE IN TWILIGHT RUNE
 QUEST RESURRECTION SEVEN GAMMA
 WORLD STAR WARS TRAVEL FIGHTING SKYREALMS
 OF JORANE GAN PENDING DRAGON CALL OF CTHULHU
 DC SUPERHEROES SUPERHEROON STRIKES BACK 2 CASTLE F
 ACKENSTEIN STAR FRONTIERS AGAIN MIDDLE EARTH ROLEPLAY
 CHAINSAW WARRIOR





CLASSIFIEDS

-FOR SALE: Lots of lovely pies. Very tasty, full of juice. Be at the next Iron Hill Faery Market.

LOST: Caskar. Day-tripping in the Shadowlands. **-WANTED:** Good home for wonderful wee doggy. Doesn't eat much. Incompatible with holy water. Apply Xavier Xalfonso III, Mars.

-WANTED: All Craftsmen attend: village of rich innocents require training in all crafts. Enquire Gorind, Dwarvenland.

-HELP WANTED: What can DM do with players who frame children?

-WANTED DEAD: Llouqu [ghluke], Bastard's gone mad, gotta be put down!

-WANTED: Passing Elder God or minions to enliven voyage through Mediterranean.

-WANTED: a life for crazed cricket lover with no life. Willing to play well.

-WANTED: A campaign - any campaign. Willing to swap sex, soul or sovereigns for decent character. Contact me at 555-555.

-WANTED: Some R&R, and a bakery in Minnesota.

Apply PFC Didier La Boux, Two Squad, anywhere bullets are found.

-WANTED: ANOTHER Star Destroyer. They Lag - We Frag. Gim Rith Ae and the other Rebel ex-cons.

SERVICE OFFERED: As much carnage as you need. Call Benthis at 1-800-MAD-AXEMAN. We deliver.



-NOTICE: Double-O-Gook; Licensed to boil rice. From Two Squad. -Where will I wander and wonder? Nobody knows, nor for how long. Farewell. Stefi.

-I have a million N.V.A. at my disposal. Lots of big guns. Fuck you G.I. Ho Chi Minh.

-Make that 999 980, Ho Chi.

-PFC Floyd. Welcome Home from Vietnam. Two Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star. No more Fugazi runs you fucking Indian. A kid now and 2 Squad Forever. The Wife. USA 1967.

-NOTICE: Weed. You have to sleep sometime.

-NOTICE: All mercenaries give up your pitiful attempts to cash in on immoral rewards. Join us

in our quest to create a rational world, free from Slopes and other demons. The Brothers of Light.

-NOTE: Anyone wanna 16 and some ammo?

-NOTE: The dew has dropped

The song is sung
What makes killing Elves so wrung?

NOTIS: thanx 2 thu nyce people hu fixxt mi leg! Boggle.

NOTICE: Attention all Elves. The Brothers of Light will not rest until every one of you Slopes lie twisted and broken in a mass grave dug with your own bleeding fingers.

CAPE VELVET CREAM:

500 ml cream
1 tin condensed milk
1 tsp vanilla essence
2 tblspns coffee (dissolved in water)
1+1/2 tsp glycerine
250 ml brandy
Rum

Mix slowly and chill.

-NOTICE: All are welcome at our daily services in the chapel on Thiera. Bring your souls with you. Father Halle. PS No Mages.

-NOTICE: Lots of pirates. Currently grist for the Benthis mill.

-NOTICE: Daniels - you can shuck your skin and send your heart crawling down heating vents all you like, but we'll get you yet. Alexander and

Chingatchgook.

-NOTE: We ride down the Slopes. The Brothers of Light.

-NOTICE: To Didier: Charlie to the left of us, Big gun to the right,

CLASSIFIED!

Here I am, stuck in the middle with you, Eddie.
- A special word of thanks to Glen and Alan for helping me plant my grass. From Giles.

Apology: A word of apology from Giles to all his players. "I'll be back."

-NOTICE: You gotta know your enemy before you can beat him... Brow furrows, bloodshot eyes stare into mug. *Someone give me a NON-TYTALIS VIM TEXT BEFORE I GO INSANE.*

Angus of Flambeau.

Get Well Soon: Lieutenant Gunther. Shot, spat at, bitten, shocked and dropped from a dizzy height onto pavingstones. I'm not sorry a bit.

God.

-NOTICE: Laelmar 4 Wayland.

-NOTICE: wossnamewosnamewosnamewosname.

-NOTICE: Mordred, keep your chattels in order, they're annoying me.

-NOTICE: 150 CROWNS REWARD for capture, in good health, of *three Sidhe women* (attractive) last seen in vicinity of Warwick. **WARNING:** dangerous Unseelie Witches. Have stolen children. Apply nearest notary.

PERSONAL: A little Bird has told us of a certain Tragic Loss suffered by a Scion of Royalty and Leader of Fashion, presently in Bayerne. Alas, that the Irregular nature of a certain Liason should Prevent the Hunting Down of the Foul Villains, responsible for the

Abduction of a Lady, with the Full Majesty of the British Crown.

TO SEVER:

You saw worlds within worlds
You looked for answers in puzzles

You left Derrel Burren an apprentice but when you bit upon the apple
You were a Mage.

It often takes a life to end a dream, however corrupt.
See you on the darkside of the River

-NOTICE:

Congratulations to Herne the Hunter on the birth of his son - we think...

RIPS



RIP: (Almost) Didier and Eddie. But we got that gun.

RIP: Six wagons and one length of grey hair (burned). Vengeance, tc. *Sure* you're the good guys.

RIP: Cerdic's dignity, often. Do you really think shrinking Tullach makes any difference...?

RIP: One Demon. Dropped in his tracks by his own dagger. The Brothers of Light.

RIP: Two trolls. Not pleasant being pierced through the lung by a hand, is it? Don't sneak up on the Brothers of Light.

RIP: Six Slopes. Not safe even in your own woods,

Slopes. The Brothers of Light.

RIP: (Almost) Llouqu, a victim of Mammon and two J criticals. Resulting huge blast atomised his horse, but left him alive to do community service.

RIP: (Almost) Llouqu: Demonstalker summoned by Bloodcause proved ineffective [paralysis from the waist down does not a Mentalist slay]. A little to the right next time, guys.

RIP: PVT 1st Class Gary Schneider - Be proud, Mrs. Schneider, your son was a fine, order-following soldier...pity about *those* orders, though [way to go, Dave].

RIP: PFC Gary Schneider & PFC Alberta Romerez. Vietnam 1967.

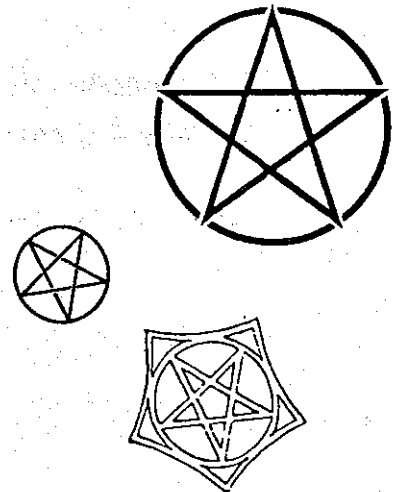
RIP: Gunther's third uniform...

RIP: My nerves in an *Amber* attribute auction.

RIP: Three Norman guards in purple, in a British forest somewhere.

RIP: Mnemosyne - Again, and again, and again...

RIP: Those poor little Faery Pies.

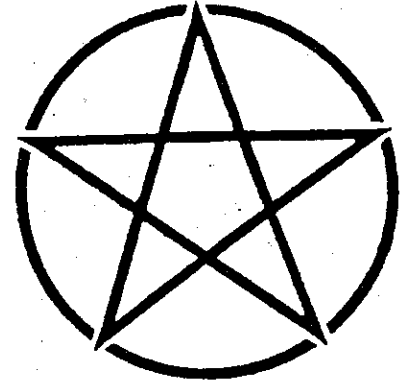


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Please ensure that it is
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