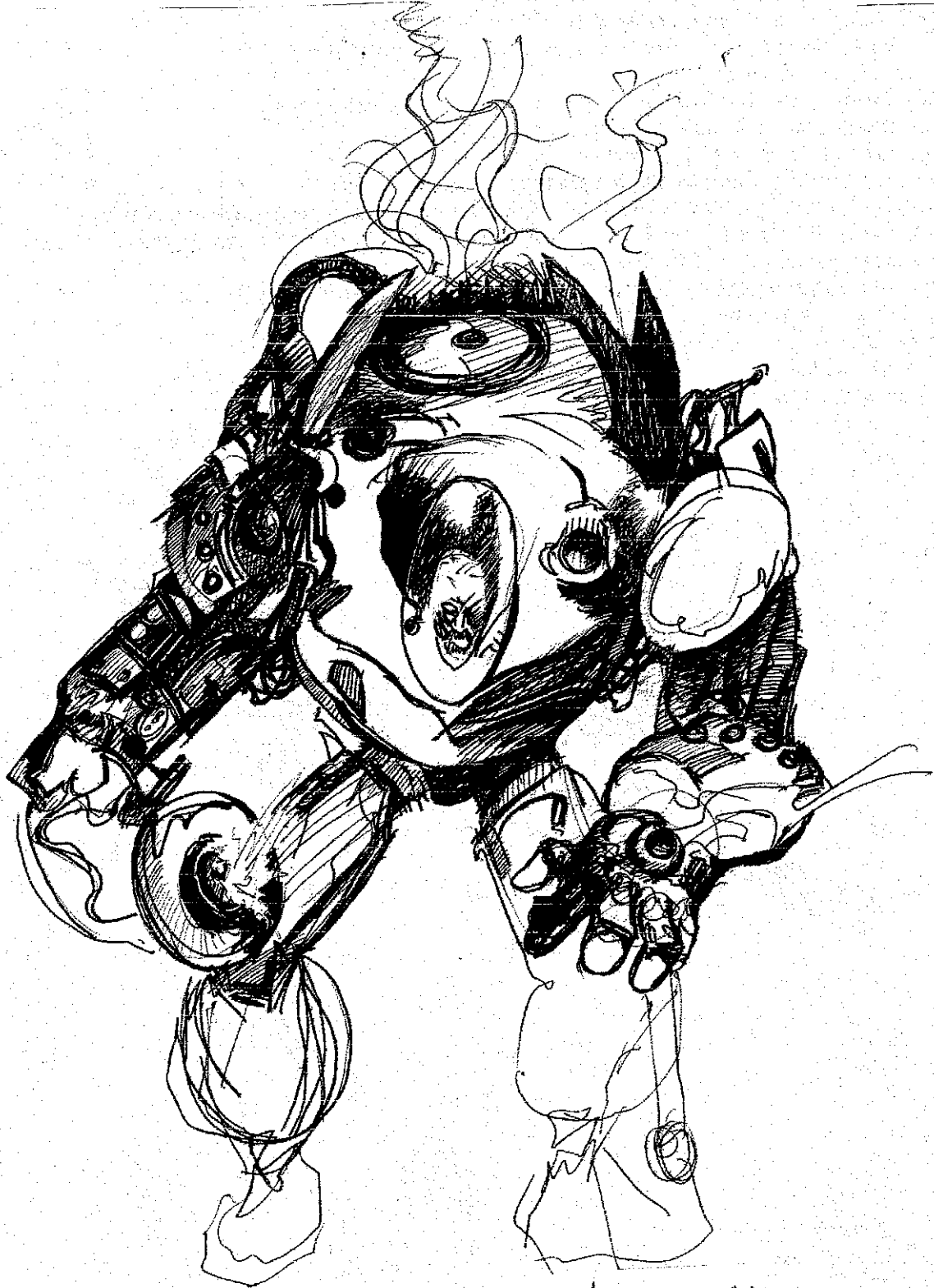
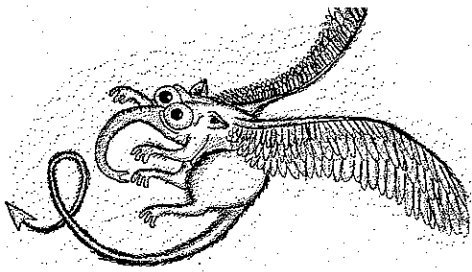


CLAWMARKS

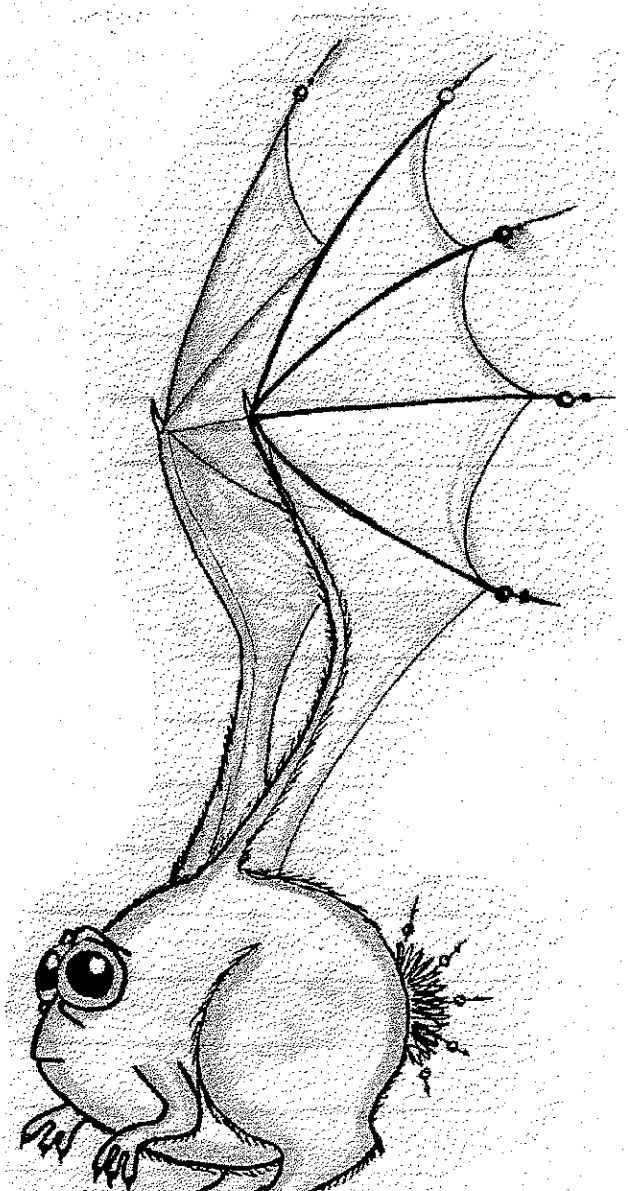
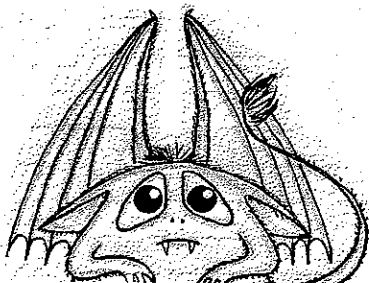


blackjack



CONTENTS

1. Nifty Cthuliod Comic-Andrei Nowicki
2. The editorial (complain if you will, but we have to at least pretend we have a real magazine)-Robanne Miller
3. Gencon (see if you can spot your name)-Dylan Craig
4. Dice are Evil-Robyn Saul (Robyn and the Archbigot bond)
5. An instant larp Generator, amaze your friends-Duncan Sellars
6. Baldurs Gate-Tim Lawrence
7. CLAWs: The Sequel, proof the hours you spend in the Clawroom are not wasted.
8. Ars nonhemetica-Simon Cross, tells us a thing or two
9. Schizo-Ivan Sadler, well what can one say
10. CLW101W-Lara Davison outlines the course requirements
11. Archetypes from the Edge-Robanne Miller helps you create typical Europeans
12. The Arch Bigot, tells us why he hates Dice (really, what did they ever do to you)
13. Keeping a Diary-Robanne Miller fills space!
14. Asylum the role-playing game, the rantings of a mad man-Dylan Craig
15. Memories, some misty water, colored ones-Francis Bryan
16. Some useful information-D@vid Seaward fills space!
17. Notices, so take note
18. We thank our SPONSORS



ÊËÏÔËĀĻ



Once again the time has come to write the editorial, the time that has come is 4:46 and counting. It has been decreed that should I actually finish everything I have to do in the next three days, I'll have to give up eating, sleeping and probably breathing too, just imagine how much time I could save.

Dragonfire has rolled around again, and nobody saw it coming. With our proposals in February, Dragonfire could have been moved forward a month and we would have been fine. As it stands now I beg you, one more

week!!!!

I am also not going to mention certain things that kept me away, I realize that I do it far to frequently. What I am going to do is thank the boys, Austin, D@vid and Dylan. Who as usual are there ever-cheerful selves. However, really what I should be doing is giving Austin extra thanks for sticking around until two despite the fact that he has, you know, like a career. In addition, my brother, who I got to see on stage in full make up and a lovely frock, it definitely put me in a mood to work.

Ok, so we thank everybody, our Clawmarks Groupies, we are learning how to treat you better! Some people even got their artwork back.

Welcome to friends, Romans and people from Jo'burg, Durban and all the other holes that we know you have crawled out of just to join us. We love you. We hope that Dragonfire will live up to expectation and deliver the usual amount of coffee and angst (not for you plebes, you the organizers, like)

TIC TACS, TIC TACS my country for some TIC TACS

Robanne

Head Gnome Pummeler

Chaustin

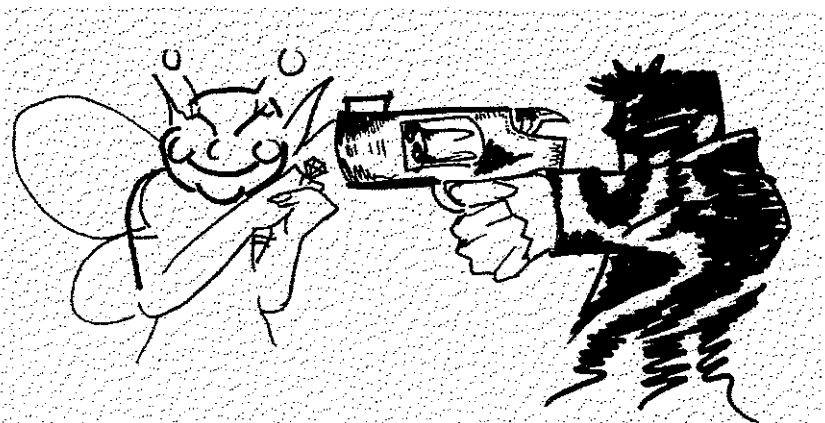
And a horde of flies, from N'ggad

Devid

Chief Gopher Tickler

Dylan*

Disgruntled Former Civil Servant beater





Gencon 1999

Bigger, better, faster, more!

BIGGER,

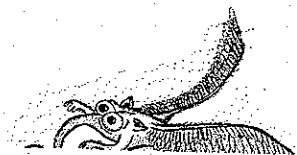
Gencon was, once again, huge. Over 3000 people went, and somewhere among the seething hordes was a viscous (and vicious, come to think of it) group of somewhere between 14 and 16 CLAW members.

We left Cape Town on the last Thursday of the holidays, and as usual we took the train up to Joeys. As we boarded, some kind of sneaky, unspoken, gender/age divisions quickly crept up, seemingly by themselves – soon we had a cabin full of grizzled old bastards, a cabin full of fresh-faced yooofs, and the wimmenfolk in the last, 3-person coupe. I don't know who organised this – it certainly wasn't me! First years bring better food, anyway.

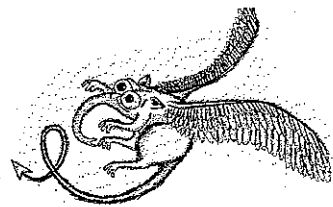
It's a long trip. Lots of Mythos was played, much to the chagrin of poor Dave Sharpe, whose plaintive wail of "Are we going to do any *roleplaying*?" was often heard echoing down the corridors. On-route entertainment was provided by Duncan Truter's tactful explanation of who we were to a fellow passenger ("We're not *SATANISTS!*"), and the jaw-droppingly bad, or rather ambivalent service from the conductors. "You want coffee? No! You can't order drinks more than once." Mind you, we were well fortified with caffienated beverages of a more cold and bubbly sort, so we managed. And once the conductors realised that we intended to actually TIP them, service improved markedly. We never did get around to the roleplaying, but we did play Mythos into the wee hours, undisturbed by the giggles and moans coming from the last CLAW compartment...

Sleep came somewhere in the Karoo. Unbeknownst to us, somewhere along the line, vagabonds had made off with a section of the power cable, so we stayed put for hours waiting for a fuel train to rendezvous with our train. When we woke up and found that this would make us two hours late... well, I'd like to say we panicked, but we didn't. What are you going to do, hang out the window and yell "Go faster" to the engineer. We took this as a cue to hang loose, gather our wits and stare out over the lunatic fringes of Gauteng vacantly as they whizzed by.

Marcus and Dave Turner, those modern-day Mercuries, were waiting for us at Johannesburg station. Between their vehicles and the hired CLAWChico, we all managed to pile in and go straight to Edenvale in time to play the Friday afternoon session of ICEBOUND 2, a generic system adventure set in Antarctica.



BETTER,



The "**ICEBOUND**" module was the sequel to one written for last year's Gencon, but had been written by a different person (Donald Mullany, from Durban), so although it represented a bit of a leap of faith, we entered a team for it anyway. Reports afterwards were favourable; the system is good, and the inevitable inter-party bloodbath that ended it off was fated to be mysteriously repeated in almost EVERY SINGLE MODULE over that weekend! If the Gencon modules had a theme this year, it was "Watch your back" with traitorous party members appearing in four of the six modules played by CLAW teams over the weekend.

By the time the afternoon session had finished, we divvied up CLAW members to their respective host families, and retired for a hard evening's recuperating and re-orienting. About half of our party went to the Horror Café, a Goth club in some nook of Joeys. According to these hardy punters (yours truly passed out after a round of Trivial Pursuit at about 9pm, I was that tired), the Horror Café kicks serious ass and reminds us that while we may have a nicer looking city, our nightlife sucks serious piles and could take a leaf out of Joeys' book any day of the week.

Saturday morning saw two teams piling into the first half of "**IMPERGIUM**", an AD&D module written by the irrepressible Mike Jones, who won the Best Roleplayer Prize and a trip to the UK last year. The characters were Dwarven fanatics leading an assault against an elvish-human alliance of magic-users, and everyone got down to some short-tempered antics with great gusto.

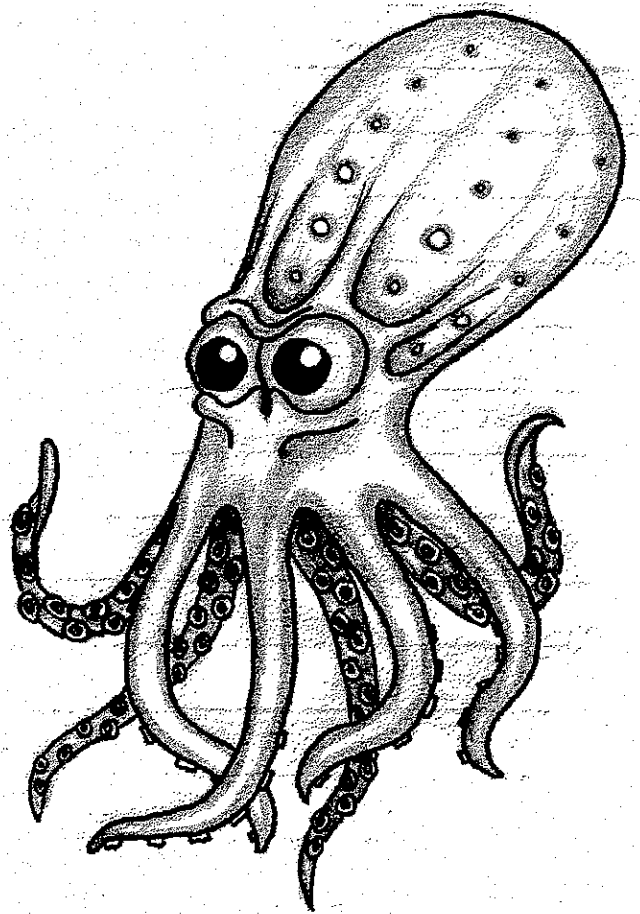
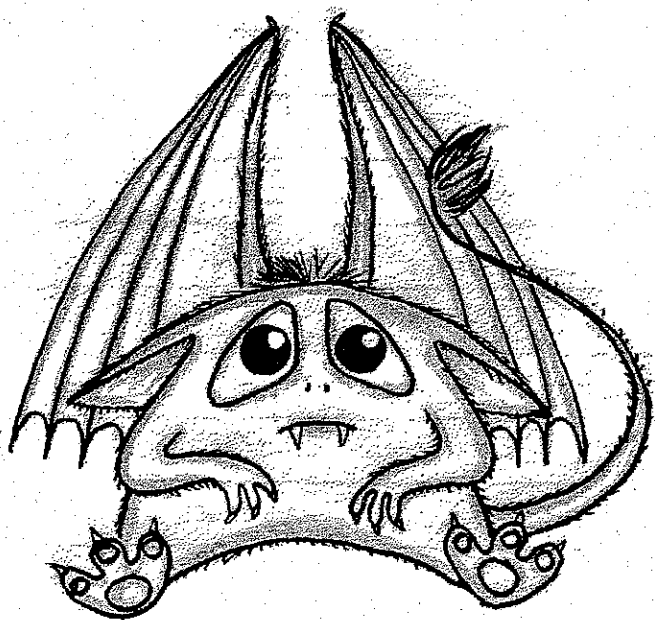
That afternoon, one team played "**TIKBALANG AHOY!**", another AD&D module set in a mythical Polynesian/Sumatran-type kingdom, and also written by Donald Mullany. The atmosphere of the module was light-hearted and colourful, and almost everyone was highly satisfied with the plot and the action. The other team played "**PRODIGAL SON**", a rather dodgy-looking Vampire module involving, according to the brochure blurb, "a maroon mystery" and "tantalising titbits of different times and places", or something along those melodramatic lines.

Egad! A maroon mystery! Now I know what's been lacking in my roleplaying life thus far - all my mysteries have been regular matt yellow! Just think; a quick colour change and I, too, can be a WOD looza! Those who played claimed that it had good points, but they could be lying.

Also taking place that morning was the big **STARCRAFT** competition. Sed Martin bravely took up the CLAW banner, but unfortunately was defeated in the first round, on points, by a BFCG. I watched the match over Sed's shoulder, and I can tell you it was a damn close one, considering some of the anal justice that was being inflicted in other matches. Sed was eventually outmined - yes, outmined - by the aforementioned BFCG, a highly tragic turn of events for which we offered Sed nothing but unparalleled sympathy and support for the rest of the weekend.

Saturday evening saw CLAW members participating in one of Gencon's three LARPs, "**DEUS VENAE IRIT**", written by Warwick (his surname

momentarily escapes me, but Gencon veterans should know who I mean immediately). Austin Chamberlain and Robyn Saul's **"THINKLE, THINKLE"** and the Chimera team's **"THE HOLVES ARE RUNNING"** were also available, but seeing as those LARPS were written by Capetonians anyway, and one is even appearing at Dragonfire, we settled for the Roman one in a spirit of "Vive le difference". "Vive le whingeing, disappointed LARPer" might have been a better spirit, though, as those of us that didn't get places and went off to cool our heels at ANOTHER great night-club nearby (The Doors), later found out. While we were swilling ale and dancing, our poor LARPing companions were sweating their way through what seemed, by all accounts, to be an enthusiastically written but fairly chaotic LARP. Several people felt that their characters were redundant, and some bridled at the rather obvious puppeteer-work in terms of "I do this..." "No you don't..." scenarios cropping up repeatedly. However, it wasn't all sobbing and warm gin; just because some of us are spoiled for good LARPs down here, doesn't mean that EVERYONE is. Still, togas were worn, lots of gory death was inflicted, and by the sounds of it, most people may just have had a bloody good time underneath all the grumbling.



FASTER,



For the revellers at **THE DOORS**, however, the day's *end* was in no way the conclusion of the day's *fun*. When we tramped out into the parking lot at 3am, a quick head count and Orientation roll made us aware that:

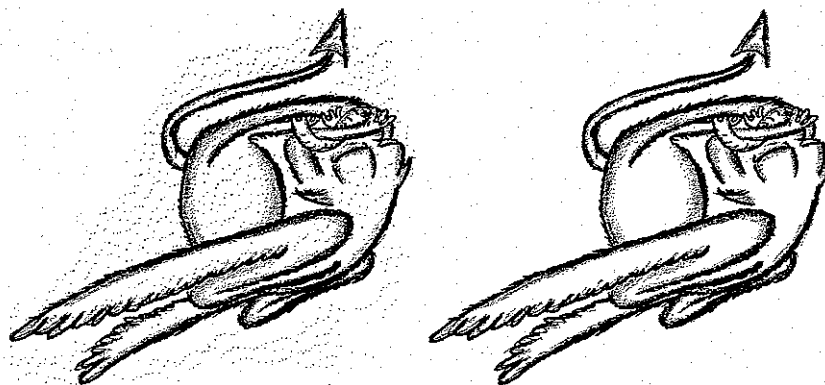
- (A) there were seven of us, all with bags and luggage, and only the CLAWChico to go home in, and
- (B) that our hosts had long since departed, leaving us no clue of how to get home.

Luckily, Mark Ferry had spent some time that day browsing through a Gauteng map book, and so with some trepidation we set out, hoping that "it would all start looking familiar". Uh-uh, cupcake! Even with Mark's intuitions, we still ended up driving around until 5am, hysterical with sleep deprivation, alcohol, and cramped conditions, roaring into various innocent Engen stations, commandeering their map books, and then roaring off again. We made it home, eventually, but I'll never look at a muffin in the same way again.

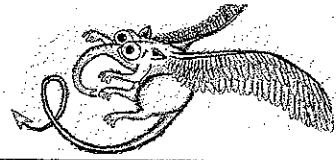
Sunday was quite mellow, thank god. On Sunday morning, two teams played "**RAID FROM INNESMOUTH**", a Call of Cthulhu module written by our own Philip Anastasiadis. Finally getting to play a filthy, GOO-worshipping murderer was quite liberating for us all, I'm sure (especially those of us who has had 3 hours of sleep the night before), and the module went down well. As always, the Call of Cthulhu module provided the "Messiest Death" war story of the weekend, as the result of a particularly effective flesh-melting spell cast on one of the characters by an opponent. It won't be repeated here, but it can't be topped for pure ghastliness.

Over lunch, we watched the dreaded Gencon auction in progress. God almighty, those Johannesburgers have a lot of money. This did enable a legendary event, however, to occur; a group of roleplayers, bidding as a coalition, bought a pack and then some of rare Magic cards, and then shredded them and danced on the pieces. Ya had to be there.

That afternoon, both teams competed in the final half of "**IMPERGIUM**", taking their mission to its dramatic conclusion at the heart of the magic-users' tower. Some grumblings of "dungeon crawl" were heard, but overall the module was well received and enjoyed. Also run that afternoon was my Deadlands module, "**AS COLD AS THE GRAVE**"; unfortunately, due to the placement of Impergium, no CLAW teams were able to play. Nonetheless, the hall rang with various yee-haa's and shouts of "Blast that dad-ratted varmint!" as the Gauteng Poses fought their way up a treacherous mountain pass, facing down an assortment of Things That Go Rip In The Night.



MORE!



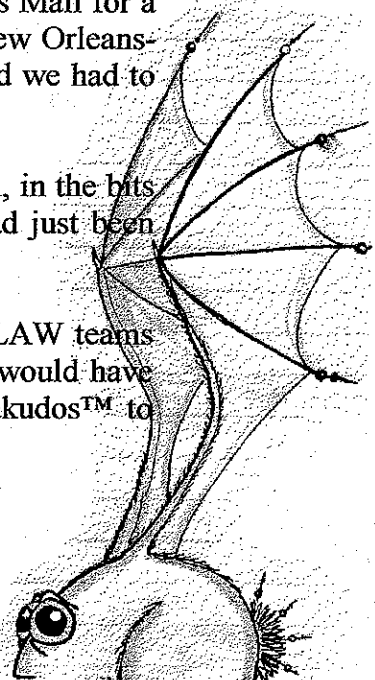
Well, Sunday evening had finally come. After waiting for what seemed like forever for the points to be totalled, chairs to be moved, etc., the Prizegiving took place. CLAW only took home one prize – a prize for DMing, won by Mark Ferry – but, in the final analysis, when you consider the size of Gencon and how many other teams of highly experienced roleplayers enter every year, we actually did pretty well. The “prize trawlers” who have cleaned up in previous years were not in the running this time around, giving other people a chance to take home a prize or two – best Player, for instance, was taken home by a fellow called Trevor, from Durban. I’ve never met him before, but he must have been pretty darn impressive to beat all the old roleplaying coots to the prize.

The CLAW teams being comprised largely of cash-strapped students, we weren’t able to attend the con-end dinner, but we made do at an eat-all-you-can Pizza joint up the road, and then sauntered back once the dinner was over, to join in on the tequila drinking and table-dancing. To give you some idea of the degree to which ‘unwinding’ happens at Gencon, I would point out to the reader that none of the venues (restaurants, etc.) at which the **AFTERPARTY** has been hosted have EVER ALLOWED US BACK. This year’s party was held in a marquee in the convention centre itself, which was probably a good thing seeing as the only thing you could break was the ground, and no-one managed. And once-again, ABSOLUTELY EVERYBODY expected the goddamned bloody awful **MEXICAN INQUISITION**. The MI, to the uninitiated, is a group drawn from the ranks of the tournament organisers themselves who proceed to take revenge for all the hassles that have been laid on their doorsteps over the weekend. These vengeful souls, armed with twin bottles of **TEQUILA**, prowl the afterparty, seizing the innocent and not-so-innocent alike, and inflicting oral justice with their filthy booze. It’s a damned disgrace! Will no-one stop these spirit-addled fiends? Apparently not... well, they’ll have to get through me first, anyway.

Monday was a nice quiet wind-down. After sleeping ‘till noon (ah, blessed slumber. How we missed you), we yawned and burped our way across to Fourways Mall for a spot of **ACTION GOLF**, some movies, and a late dinner at a New Orleans-type restaurant. But then, alas and alack, Tuesday was suddenly there, and we had to get a-packing.

And on the train trip back, we finally got down to some roleplaying! Well, in the bits where we weren’t comparing war stories or trying to figure out what had just been served to us in the dining car, that is.

Gencon 1999 rocked. Best of all was the good vibe that pervaded the CLAW teams and helped us get through those little irritations and inconveniences that would have had us at our throats by Friday night otherwise. Also, a gazillion Megakudos™ to everyone who helped us get there and back. Sorted! See you all next year!



DICE ARE EVIL!

BY ROBYN SACL

Anyone who really believes in randomness either is a consummate scientist, or does not pay attention during role-playing session. "Don't be silly!" the skeptics scoff, "Of course it's completely random!" They don't know dice!

Most role-players have developed at least one of two, umm, "habit's", to do with their dice over time. From BA to BSc, most of us have one or two not entirely orthodox beliefs when it come to dice and rolling them. The more determined of them will tell you it's all because of minute imperfections in the plastic of the dice causing them to be slightly weighted and thus to "favour" certain numbers. I, myself, have a number of strange customs, which I will gladly label under "superstitions". I believe my dice have personality. I can do things to offend them (although, strangely, never to placate them), and I have separate sets of dice for each system, since I believe that if you expect different types of rolls from dice they will get confused eventually. I have noted a number of people who have similar ideas about dice.

Take our weekly Delta Green for example: after an uncommonly large number of bad rolls over time from my "Cthulhu dice", I had Lara refusing to let me roll yet another roll with them. They have a nasty habit (I believe all dice have a twisted sense of humor - at least, every die I've ever used has - so for me to find one that actually mimics randomness is a pleasant change) of rolling very high - not good - during standard rolls, and a equally nasty habit of rolling just that little bit too low during rolls to raise stats - once again, not good. And can anyone in Delta Green honestly say that the number of 01's that Jessica's rolled can really be within the bounds of true probability? I hate my dice. But I won't tell them that, oh, no! Otherwise they might become even more offended. Maybe I need to make them a nicer dice bag.

Okay, you scoff, but, how many times, when struck with an unfamiliar system or when randomly asked for a roll by a GM have you asked, "High or low?", before you rolled? If the answer is never then I'm afraid you unaccountably blind to the habit's of dice. I've even seen the occasional opportunistic player try to get a re-roll out of a GM, on the grounds that he "didn't know" he "had to roll high!" At Oubliette a friend bought me a die because I was upset that I'd lost one, and I was about to use it for the module I was participating in when one of my group said to me: "Do you really want to christen that on AD&D?" I've seen people stand and 'test' dice before they will purchase them, to check that they don't roll the numbers they don't want. I've seen my brother's uncanny oversized wooden dice which roll pretty randomly separately, but together they roll doubles almost half the time. And Alastair's orange dice! Argh! Things got to the stage that no-one would play with them! Random, ha! Even now I sometimes get sadistic pleasure offering my Cthulhu dice to other players in session when they forget their own. Funny how they always borrow someone else's [maybe they're learning? - Ed].

Lastly, there was a test I heard of that was done to check this idea of "high or low?" at some university in America. They got a whole bunch of people together, and gave them d6's and told half of them to roll low and the other half to roll high. Guess what?! Yup, the difference was only a few percentage, but them's that tried to roll high on average did, and them's that tried to roll low, on average did too. Just goes to show - damn bastards, weren't using my dice!



IT'S JUST
GAME?!

LARPs (Live-Action Role-Playing) are hot property right now. But are you tired of everyone jumping on the LARP-writing bandwagon, when you don't have the imagination, time or motivation to write your own LARP? Well, a LARP's primary components are the character sheets. So, why bother writing your own when you can do it automatically with our unique

LARP CHARACTER SHEET GENERATOR

By Duncan Sellars

Simply fill in the blanks from the choices provided by each letter to complete the character sheet:

General Information:

The time is _____ A _____. You have been invited to a _____ B _____ by _____ C _____, who is _____ D _____ and also the owner of _____ E _____. Your host, who recently had a _____ B _____, wants to show off his latest possession, a _____ F _____.

Character Information:

You are really _____ C _____. Ever since _____ A _____, when you had that failed _____ B _____, you vowed to get revenge on _____ C _____, who treacherously stabbed you in the back for a _____ F _____ after conspiring with your arch-nemesis, _____ C _____.

Since then you changed your name and have been _____ D _____ while you planned your revenge.

Then, you heard about this recent event, and you just knew now was your best chance at payback.

Getting an invitation was easy. You have been sure to bring along your _____ F _____, as you are sure anyone who is _____ D _____ will want to get hold of it.

You also want to find out about the _____ B _____ held last week at _____ E _____. You long suspect it has something to do with _____ C _____ and the long-lost _____ F _____.

People you Know:

_____ C _____: She is actually _____ C _____, who you met once at _____ E _____. You know she is very ambitious, and is after the _____ F _____ owned by your host. Be careful of her.

A (time)

- 1329 AD
- the Triassic Era
- 1932 AD
- Stardate 3291.45
- just after lunch
- Henry VII's birthday
- the Year of the Crow

B (event)

- Cocktail party
- Ship crowning
- ee cummings poetry reading
- meeting with Al Pacino
- Vampire gathering
- Flat Earth society meeting
- Spleen surgery operation
- Square-dance competition
- Yuletide costume pageant

C (name)

- Queen Morgana le Fay
- Max Wazniki, a hitman
- Vincent Price, movie legend
- your evil twin, Marie
- Zebediah Watts, the Human Rubber Band
- the superhero Morpho
- Zonko the Insane Vampire Clown
- Josef Goebbels
- Veronica Lodge
- Zaphod Beeblebrox
- Sir August de Winter
- Sara Kelly, author of "I'm OK, you're a Drone"
- The Earl of Dorset
- Kitty Luvsit, international model and spy

_____C_____: You last saw him at a _____B_____, where he revealed that he was _____D_____. If you can, you would like to get hold of the _____F_____ he holds in his knapsack. Perhaps you can offer him something in exchange.

_____C_____: He seems a kind person, except he's awfully rude to _____C_____. Rumours say he's waiting until _____A_____, when he will inherit a lot of money, including a precious _____F_____.

_____C_____: You don't know much about this cryptic character. All you heard is that since _____A_____ he has been trying to get into the secret _____B_____ to be held next month. Why is he doing this? Could he be _____D_____?

_____C_____: A trouble-maker. He once tried to destroy _____E_____, before he went to work for _____C_____. Some say he is actually _____D_____.

_____C_____: International art dealer and a friend of _____B_____, she is said to be holding a grudge against _____B_____ for stealing a precious _____F_____.

From this character sheet, a simple calculation allows us to deduce we can generate $A^k B^m C^n D^p E^q F^r$ possible character sheets from this template, where each of $k, m, n, p, q,$ and r is the number of occurrences of substitute fields A, B, C, D, E, F respectively. A quick calculation shows that this gives us a total value of $2.391306 \cdot 10^{50}$ possible character sheets. Assuming a conservative average of 16 characters per LARP, this is enough for over $1.494566 \cdot 10^{49}$ LARPs! And you hardly had to move a single brain cell!

(If anyone wants to make this task simpler, a software version can be produced. Think of it - quadrillions of computer-generated LARPs! Email me at **Error! Bookmark not defined** if you have no life and are really interested.)

Apologies to Mad Magazine for the blatant use of the idea of character sheets by numbers. No offence to LARPs traditionalists is meant by this article.

D (adjective)

- astonishingly gorgeous
- a raging sex-maniac
- plotting the overthrow of Canada
- a spy for the Walt Disney Corporation
- determined to find the truth about UFOs
- looking for a long-lost child
- buying stocks of CyberTex
- a time-travelling Nazi
- into collecting pictures of spaniels
- covered in freckles from neck to toe
- raiding the King's granary

E (place)

- The local blacksmith
- Polly's House of Pork
- A Chinese laundry in San Angelo
- The brothel to the west of the town
- A mud hut near the Texas border
- 10 Downing Street, London
- A carrot farm in Jamaica
- A strip mine on Alphas VI



F (item)

- Lost treasure map of Southern Egypt
- Ancient Borzzian relic
- Piece of plastic shrubbery
- Potion of All-Consuming Anger
- Jovian Mechadroid
- 12-gauge shotgun last used by Doc Holliday
- Pair of matching nipple rings
- Edwardian wicker chair

Baldur's Gate

CJH LAURANCE

yes... But is it role-playing?

Baldur's Gate is the latest incarnation of AD&D on computer. Before its release it almost certainly became the most-anticipated role-playing game in living memory. Its development was avidly followed by the RPG newsgroup and countless fan sites. There was a great hope that Baldur's Gate would become the definitive computer role-playing game. Most were not disappointed with the results as its release was accompanied by scores above 90% in most gaming magazines. So, being a keen computer role-player, I bought it as soon as it hit the shores of South Africa.

The game itself is a (mostly) faithful rendition of the AD&D rules set in the Sword Coast in the Forgotten Realms campaign world. You control a party of up to six characters, figuring out the sinister plot that is threatening to plunge the Sword Coast into war, and kill the mysterious armoured figure who killed your foster father. The graphics and animation are really stunning, and the interface, once you get used to it, makes controlling the real-time combat a breeze. The game is long, requiring over 100 hours for most people to complete it, yet it is enjoyable enough to keep you playing for those hundred hours, and still make you want to come back for more.

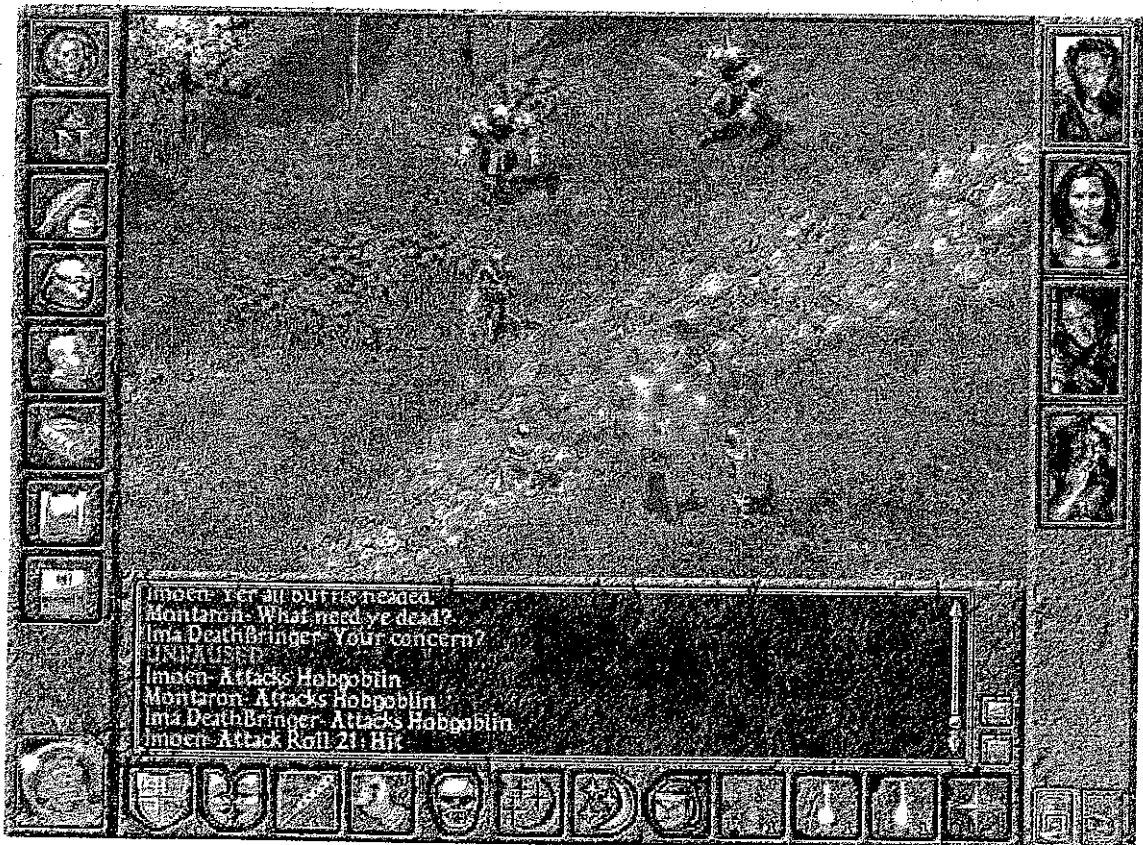
In the past, computer role-playing games have been criticized for providing dungeon crawling, hack-and-slashing and lots of statistics, and not much in the way of real role-playing. The real problem is that computer games can only have a limited amount of flexibility. While a human DM can make up an adventure on the fly, adjusting his plans as the players do something unexpected, a computer DM must have everything prepared beforehand – no deviations from the allowed paths are possible. This has led many computer RPGs to have a linear plot, “disguised” by tortuous dungeons, challenging combat and an inventory and skills to fiddle around with. The best attempt at making a CRPG more of a *role-playing* game has been Fallout. Not only did it provide you with many alternative ways of furthering the plot, your actions as a character could make a real difference to the world, and hence to the way in which you had to finish the game.

Baldur's Gate has tried to rise above the mediocrity of many of its fellow CRPGs, and in many ways it has succeeded, but it has also failed in some crucial aspects. Firstly, Baldur's Gate is the first party-based CRPG I know of that has given the individual party members unique personalities to the extent that the party members interact with other (admittedly in rather a predictable way, however). The area that you can explore is pretty large, and there are too many things to do if you just play it through it once. Also you can approach quests in different ways, depending on how you think your character would approach it: will your character hang on to his newfound treasure or will he return it to its rightful owner – both options may have consequences for later in the game.

Unfortunately, this brings us to the first of the weaknesses of Baldur's Gate. More usually your choice results in a change to your *reputation*, which is simply a number keeping track of how popular your party is. Doing the good and honourable thing results in your reputation rising by a point or two, and getting caught murdering and stealing loses you reputation points. One's reputation then becomes a simple numbers game, as you try and balance your reputation against all the nice goodies that you can achieve by breaking the law. Now maybe a true role-player wouldn't think like that, but the replacement of tangible consequences by a simple number means there are no "role-playing consequences" for your actions.

Interaction with NPCs is very simplistic – simply choose from a list of options that can be summarized as "I want to be your friend", "I am your worst nightmare" and "Can I go now?" Role-playing is similarly simplified: you play either a good or evil party, with neutral characters able to join either party. Having a good party forces you to keep your reputation high by choosing to help everybody. While having an evil party means you have to keep your reputation low, even though one can perform many 'evil' deeds without hurting your reputation simply by not being caught.

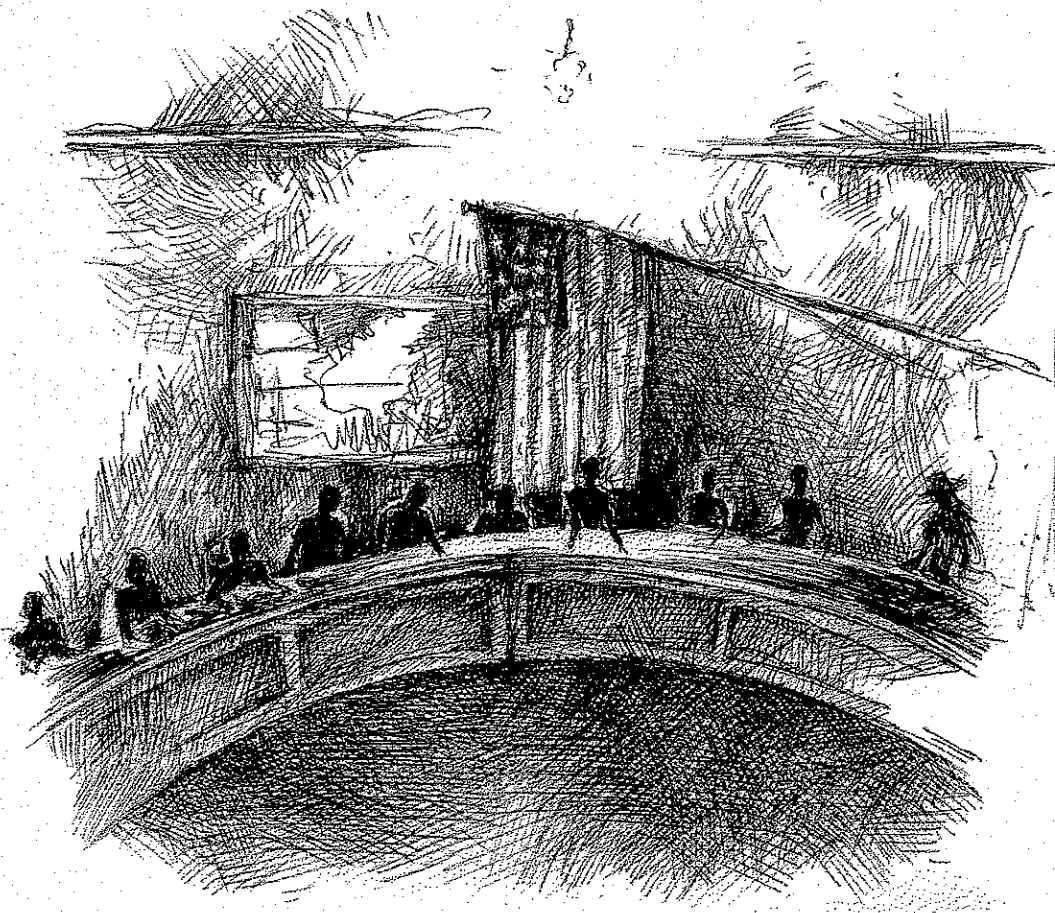
Like its predecessors, Baldur's Gate's story is very linear. Despite the fact that you can explore the world in any way you want, your progress through the main plot is restrictively channeled. The game progresses through chapters where each chapter has a simple goal and only one way to achieve it. But by far the biggest problem with Baldur's Gate is the snare that every other CRPG has fallen into. Death is too frequent. In tabletop role-playing the death of one's character is a terrible event and should only occur very infrequently. Of course, on a computer, death for a character is hardly anything to be mourned. One can simply reload and attempt the combat again,



and one has to reload often since combat is so difficult. But the designers have to make combat difficult because players have the save and load feature; gamers would feel cheated if there was no difficulty in the combat. It's a difficult dilemma that has never been successfully resolved in a computer RPG. This problem turns Baldur's Gate into a stop-start affair as soon as you reach one of the challenging battles.

The most disappointing thing is that Baldur's Gate's problems are typical of the entire computer role-playing genre. How does one make a really active, responsive world where your actions have lasting consequences? How can a computer direct a story that does not have every possible path pre-programmed? And how can you make the story flow without being interrupted by combat at every turn? (Could one write a successful CRPG that didn't have any combat in it at all?)

Baldur's Gate has many problems that prevent it from being a real *role-playing* game. But it is a really good *computer* game, providing you with over a hundred hours of addictive enjoyment. Despite the fact that combat becomes the portion of the game with which one spends the most time, the combat is really enjoyable since there are many strategies one can use, and as your mages advance in level you can try all the new spells that they learn. The game area is large, and there are so many things to see and do – if you enjoy computer RPGs you are almost certain to enjoy Baldur's Gate. It doesn't do anything stunningly different, but it is the best CRPG available today. Just don't let the AD&D license fool you into thinking that there's any real role-playing in the game – unless all you want from life is more monster flesh to hack.



CLAWs: the Sequel

"Are those dice in your pocket, or are you just happy to see me?"

Written and Directed by Kevin Smith
Executive Producer: Adeeb Bala

Adriaana	Winona Ryder (sorry Elizabeth)
Alistair Pearson	Rob Zombie
Anya	Sheryl Lee (blonde chick from <i>John Carpenter's</i>)
Andrew Mitchell	Michael J Fox
Andrew Kessler	Matthew Perry
Andrew Wiggle	"Johnny Bravo" ("Hey, hot sexy mama...")
Binky (Alan Searle)	Barbara Streisand in drag
Brendan Quinlivan	Nic Cage
Brigitte Krotz	Drew Barrymore
Brindley	Adrian Paul (Duncan Mcleod)
Bruce Norris	Thomas Griffith (vampire from <i>John Carpenter's</i>)
Danielle Erikson	Jeanine Garofalo
Dave Moore	Woody Harrelson (sorry Geoff)
Dave Turner	the lead singer from <i>Placebo</i>
David Campey	Mike Myers
David Maclay	Val Kilmer
d@vid seaward	Anthony Daniels
David Sharpe	"Archie"
Dermot	Fox Roadkill or Bobcat Goldthwaite
Duncan Seliars	Eric Stoltz
Duncan Truter	Axl Rose
Dylan Craig	Bruce Willis
Gareth	Dana Carvey ("Garth" from <i>Wayne's World</i>)
Garrick	"Iago" from <i>Aladdin</i>
Jason Burke	Mr Lifo from <i>The Jim Rose Circus</i>
J.D.	Keanu Reeves
Jem Norton	"Agent Smith" from <i>The Matrix</i>
Jessica Tiffin	a (very) young Angela Lansbury
Joanne	Fairuza Balk
Juan	Rhenoli ("Sally-can't-dance" from <i>Con Air</i>)
Judith	Maggie Winters' Boss
Lara Davison	Christina Ricci
Mark Ferry	Matthew McConashey
Marcus the Elder	Donald Sutherland
Marcus the Younger	Ethan Hawke
Melanie	"Strawberry Shortcake"
Michael	the blonde guy from <i>Placebo</i>
Michelle	Neve Campbell
Nenad Ristic	Roberto Benigni
Norman	Steve Busceni
Paul Berkowitz	a young Robin Williams
Paul Jacobson	Adam Sandler
Philip Anastasiadis	John Travolta
Robanne Miller	"Sally" from <i>3rd Rock</i>
Robert Kihn	Tay Hansen
Ross	Matt Damon
Ryan Kruger	Chef from <i>South Park</i> (minus 50kg)
Sed Martin	Art Malik (the head terrorist in <i>True Lies</i>)
Shan	played by his actor dad
Shatley Abrahams	Kevin Smith (in blackface)
Simon Cross	Julian Sands
Simon Dawson	as Himself
Simon Norton	"Mordred" from <i>Excalibur</i>
Steve	<i>Seinfeld</i>
Stuart Winter	Jim Carrey
Wayne Human	Jake Busey
the Magic players	a cast of thousands

and finally...

Adeeb Bala Jeff Goldblum (after all, who but a buff, annoying Jewish guy could play a buff, annoying Arab type?)

CLW101W - A COURSE OUTLINE

Throughout the last decade Claws has been offering one of UCT's most popular courses. Every year a brand new batch of freshers hand over their cash and sign up for an activity that they will carry through their entire academic careers. Although not all Clawmembers actually sign up for CLW101W in O-Week, as the year progresses more and more students find themselves unable to resist the temptation of the mental stimulation that this course offers. Here is a brief overview of what a prospective Clawmember can expect.

First Quarter

The first quarter is designed to help new CLW101 applicants settle into the course. This involves establishing an intimate acquaintance with the Clawroom, role-playing, and if you're lucky a committee member.

Your marks for each quarter will be based on the following:

1. Ability to fit a ridiculous amount of role-playing into a week. (20%)
2. Ability to resist becoming a smoker (10%)
3. Avoiding being talked into a committee position. (20%)
4. Getting your parents to accept the idea of being a Clawmember (50%)

Note: Course organisers are more than willing to assist those members who are having trouble with this assignment. LIE101W is a backup course offered for just this purpose.

Second Quarter

1. Acquisition of trench coat and boots (10%) *Marks will not be deducted if student has one already.*
2. Survival of first CLAW party without incurring alcohol poisoning. (Tutors Mark and JD will be on hand for this section) (20%)
3. Participation in Purity Test (20%) *While this test is not mandatory it is considered an important team building activity and failure to attend could lead to being DPR'd.*
4. Sitting around in the Clawroom (50%)

Third Quarter

1. Ability to appeal successfully to course supervisors to be allowed to write sups. (20%)
2. Ability to convince oneself that "this semester I'll go to all my lectures". (10%)
3. Ability to continue campaigns that were begun during vac. (20%)
4. Work Avoidance Behaviour Techniques. (50%)

Note: Bonus points will be allocated for Gencon attendance.



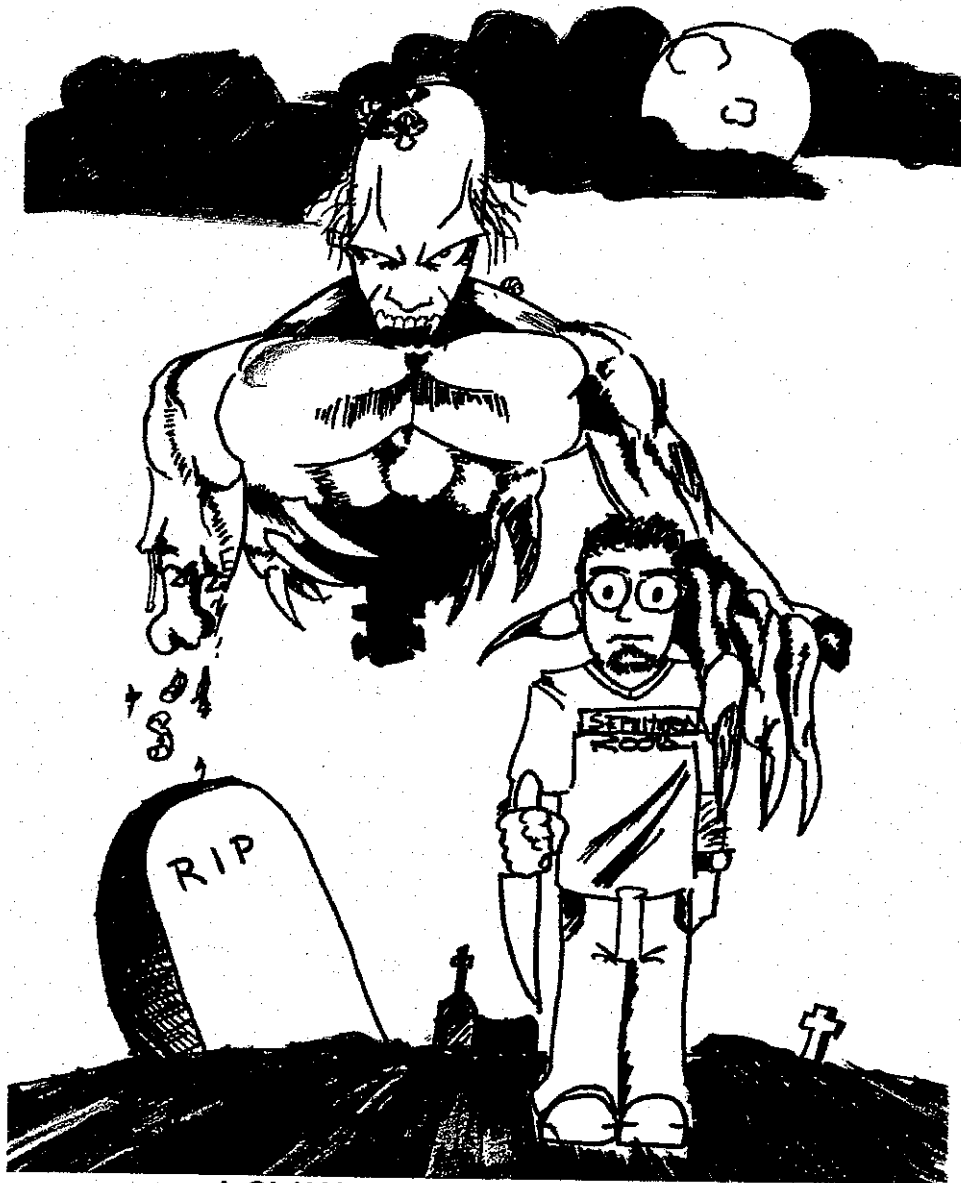
A senior CLAWmember plays an advanced tactical wargame.

Fourth Quarter

1. Enthusiastic and loyal Dragonfire attendance. (50%)
2. Ability to juggle sitting around in the Clawroom with attending just enough lectures to pass. (50%)

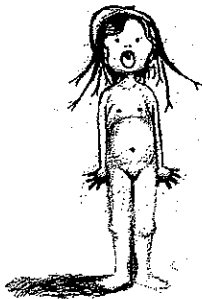
CLW101W is ideal for students who would like their university experience to challenge their skills of time management and negotiation. All applicants are welcome, but be warned, for some reason the more applicants we have for CLW101W, the fewer there seem to be for CLW201W and other more advanced classes. Can't imagine why.

Course convenor: Lara Davison.



A CLAWmember showing off skills and friends from his time in CLAWs

"Where in Johannesburg do you come from"... "Cape Town, actually"... "Is that North or South of Johannesburg"... "So you are from Cape Town, is that near the coast"



ARCHETYPES FROM THE EDGE



-BY A PATHETIC GROVELLING EDITOR

Having deserted everybody to Dragonfire, I set off on a brief but exhilarating European Encounter. In order to assure that the money was well spent I now offer up some observation you can use to create convincing European characters.

ENGLAND

Arbitrary Shop Assistant
Nationality: Not British

Physical Appearance

Poor teeth	87%
Poor skin	78%
Bad tattoos	45%
Can't speak English	60%

Skills

Singularly unhelpful	98%
Clueless	95%
Talks a lot about a relative, in Rhodesia. "Do you know him?"	93%
Take bomb threat seriously	03%
Disapprove of people not in Britain since the Doomsday book was published	90%

Quote: "How, may I be being of assistance?"

NETHERLANDS

Clueless Tool in the red light district
Nationality: The universe, man!

Physical Appearance

Godlike	65%
Chiseled jaw	87%
Vacant expression	90%
Well endowed	78%

Skills

Smoke two joints at once	69%
--------------------------	-----

Get home	03%
Do things with penis	78%
Get dildo into the right place	58%
Knows where to find the Grasshopper	99%
Ride Bicycle	78%
Eat cheese and walk in clogs, at the same time	89%

Quote: "More Heineken, it cost less than water"

GERMANY

Tour Guide

Physical Appearance:

They are German, who cares

Skills

Sense of humor	10%
Build castle	67%
Not mention the War	78%
Grow grapes in stupid hard to harvest places	89%

Quote: "Achtung"

SWIZERLAND

Watchmaker

Nationality: That's classified information, citizen?

Physical Appearance

Unassuming	89%
Forgettable	78%



FRANCE

Skills

Yodeling	78%
Make watches	68%
Make chocolate	79%
Build more mountain	79%
Tote heavy weapon	80%
Suspend yourself in ridiculous contraption many feet above the ground	75%

Quote: "I'll just be blowing you all up now"

AUSTRIA

Bartender

Physical Appearance

Hazy 100%

Skills

Mix damn good schnapps	80%
Introduce interesting drinking games	87%
Whitewater rafting	50%

Quote: "Another drink perhaps...."

ITALY

Restaurant owner

Physical Appearance

Greasy hair	67%
Tanned skin	89%
Decent body	58%
Bedroom eyes	78%

Skills

Stop and stare	90%
Find public toilet (it's not easy there are only seventeen in Rome)	56%
Eye foreign girl	100%
Call foreign girl Spice Girl	100%
Offer to marry foreign girl	47%
Living the Vida Loca	87%

Quote: "Table for the Spice Girls"

Hotel reception and check in desk clerk
Nationality: French, of course

Physical appearance:

Ugly	67%
Froglike	56%

Skills

Use fireworks responsibly	01%
Rude	89%
Find good excuse for lack of expected amenity	30%
Use perfume sparingly	24%

Quote: "Are your boobs real?"
"It does not exist in France"

SPICE

Also to spice up your parties travels, here
are some ideas:

Suitcase without garish luggage strap
explodes on baggage claim
Suitcase without brightly colored stickers
on it is stolen

Somebody id not impressed by the fact that
they are only taking black and white
photographs

Child sitting next to them on plane is
addicted to caffeine

The gay couple in front of them put down
seat at beginning of flight to cuddle.

Strip searched and probed about travel
arrangements for two hours in Heathrow

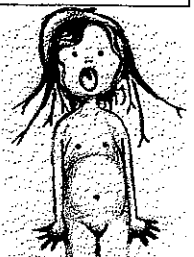
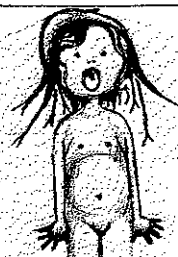
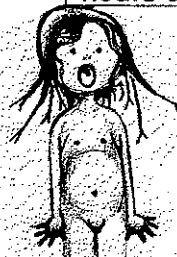
Magnetic strip on card goes

When gypsies try to steal purse by shoving
baby in face, the party member is
overcome with the urge to grab the baby
and run. And is left holding the baby so to
speak (they still have their purse though)

Serve something other than bread for
breakfast

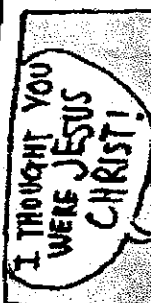
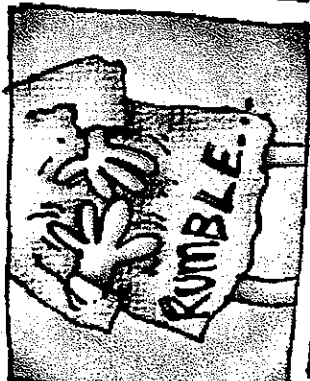
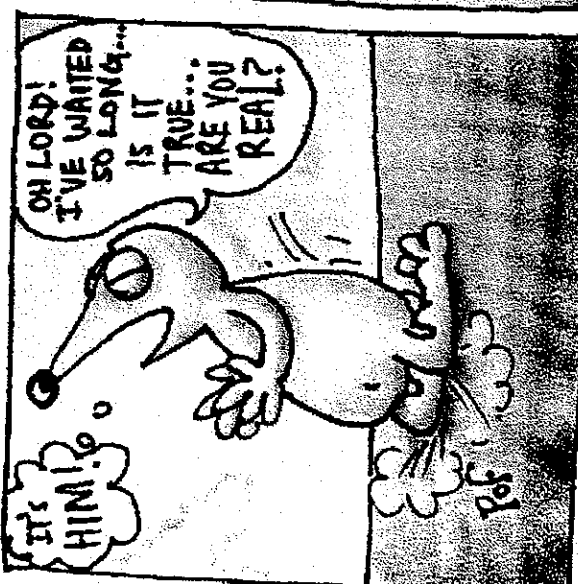
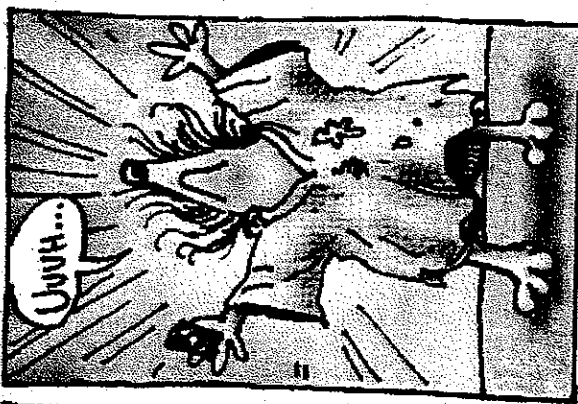
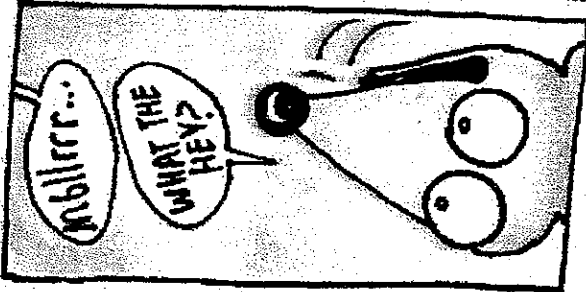
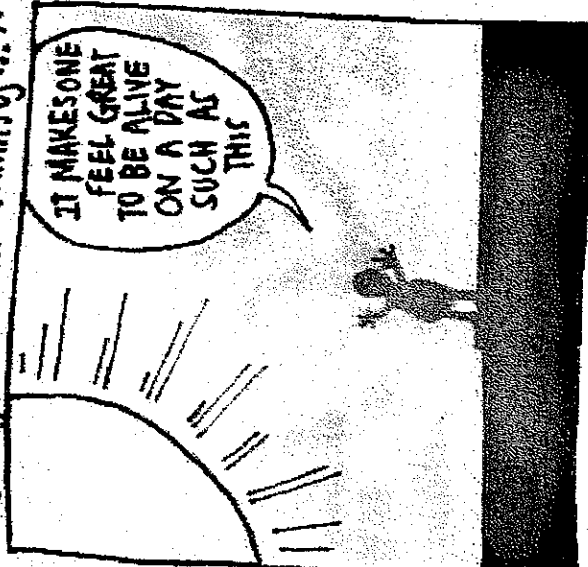
Force them to endure an entire evening
sober

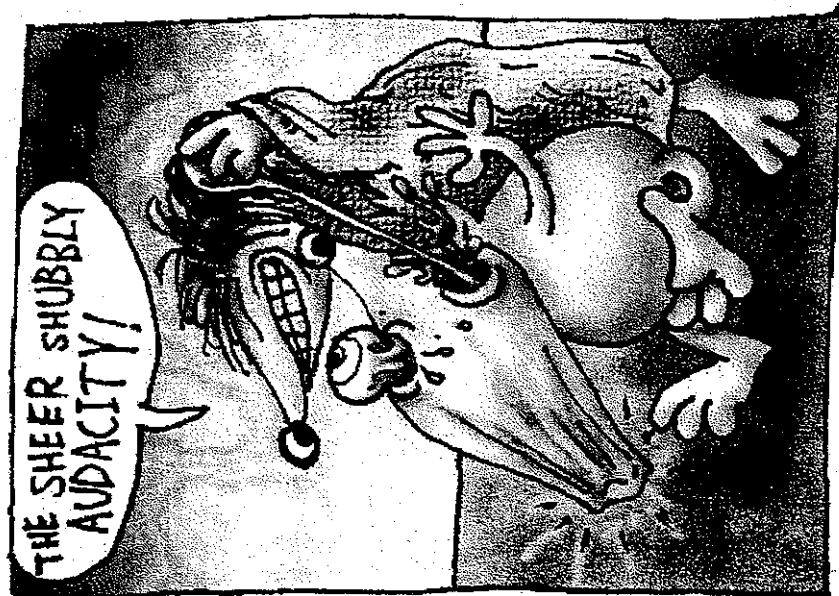
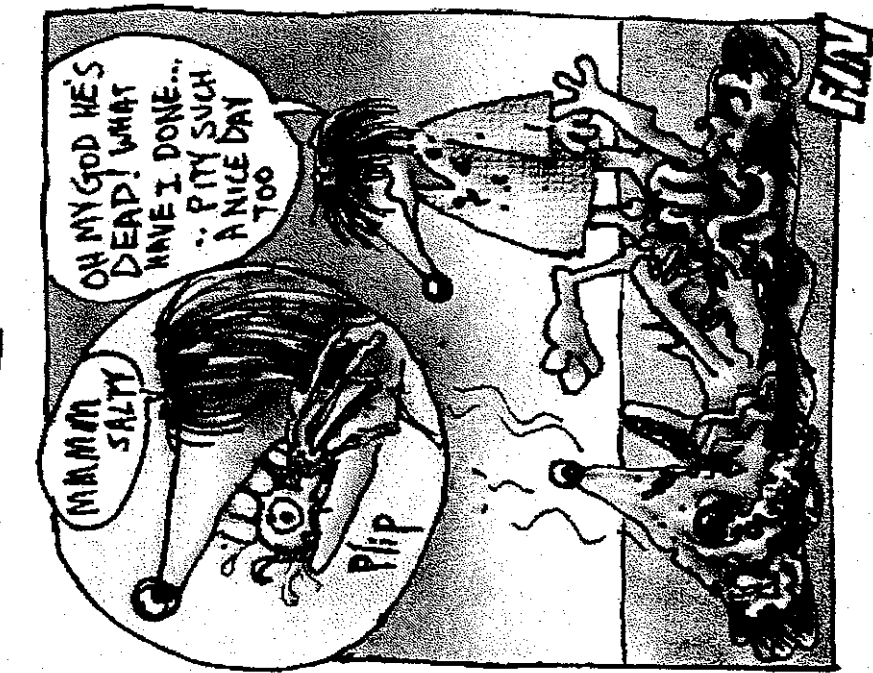
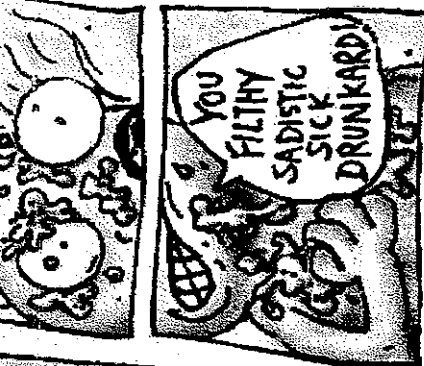
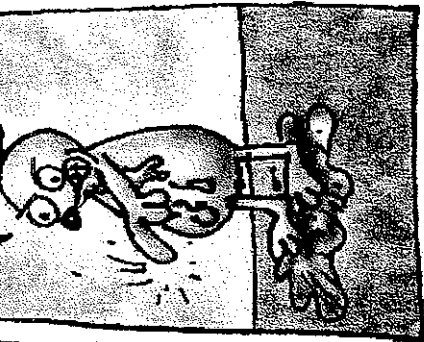
Make them sit in a Contiki coach of seven
hours a day



SCHIZO

by BRIAN "A life of Syphalis and Whimsy..."





FIN



ARS



NON-HERMETICA

Ars Magica boasts the most detailed magic system ever to appear in a role-playing system. Yet, while the 5 techniques and 10 forms allow a hermetic magus access to an almost limitless number of spells, it is sometimes necessary to create characters whose magic is not quite up to the Quaesitors' standards.

1. A Brief look at Hermetic Magic



In many ways the defining characteristic of hermetic magic is the formulaic spell. The hermetic magus can cast these with supreme control, duplicating the desired effect every time with little worry of unexpected side effects or failures. This forceful control of magic permeates the Order of Hermes' thinking - the better your control of magic, the more respect you will gain within the Order. Indeed, Bonisagus, the co-founder of the Order, made understanding and harnessing magic his life's work.

2. Sources of Non-hermetic Magi



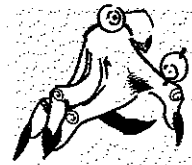
2.1 Shamans, Mid-wives, Healers, Craftsmen

In the parts of Mythic Europe where the Order of Hermes was most prevalent, non-hermetic magi are likely to be few. The Order's policy of join or die resulted in the conversion or extermination of almost all magi who reached the Order's attention. Nevertheless, many with minor magical talents are scattered throughout the towns and countryside of Mythic Europe.

Some may be blissfully unaware of their talents, fellow villagers seeing them only as skilled practitioners of their trade. For example, the village blacksmith capable of crafting finely balanced weapons.

Others may be revered by their peers for the spiritual guidance they offer the community, or the healing services they provide. Thus the local midwife, apothecary or shaman might possess a small portion of the gift. Obviously none of these options are suitable for a magus character. Still they make potentially interesting companions and NPCs.

2.2 Full Magi



In Europe non-hermetic magic is confined to small isolated groups, who avoid direct confrontation with the Order of Hermes. Many may be members of House Ex Miscellanea who still secretly continue their former practices. The most common of these are most likely druids, the dark primal forests hiding their pagan rituals from prying hermetic eyes. Other less populous parts of Europe, such as snow-covered mountain ranges, also provide safe havens for non-hermetic magi whose talents allow them to go where others cannot.

On three sides the Order of Hermes is bordered by other magical orders. Although more loosely organized, they are extremely powerful, especially when confronted on home ground. To the north, the Norse magi of the Cult of Odin have command over the icy cold seas and skies. In Spain, and to both the south and the east, the Arabic magi control the powerful Djinn and countless wonderful artifacts. Finally, in the Holy land, there are the Cabalists - keepers of ancient knowledge and constructors of golems.

Further away to the east, in India and China, lie possibly other orders of magi, as yet undiscovered by the Order of Hermes. Also to the north-east lies the tundra, home only to the fey.

3. Practical Things



3.1 Marginally Hermetic Mages

Hermetic magi are generally intolerant where non-hermetic magi are concerned. Thus any player characters are likely to be at least passably hermetic. They will most likely have gone through something resembling a proper apprenticeship and will cast magic in a hermetic fashion. They might even have their sigil.

This leaves mainly the virtues and flaws section of character creation with which to give the character his or her non-hermetic characteristics.

Firstly, a non-hermetic magus is likely to be weak in formulaic magic. This may manifest itself as a difficulty with casting, a lack of control, or through some other means. Appropriate flaws might be Loose Magic (-1), Warped Magic (-1) or Wild Magic (-2). However it is probably best to construct a new flaw or two specifically targeted at non-ritual formulaic magic.

For virtues I suggest that at least some be directed towards strengthening other aspects of the magus' magic in order to compensate for the weakened formulaic and to add a distinctive flavor to the magus' casting. In addition, supernatural virtues and/or exceptional talents should be considered as an expression of the magus' non-hermetic nature.

3.2 Druids



The druids once had their own house within the Order of Hermes - House Diedne. This house was destroyed for diabolism by the Order during the Schism War, and their name is no longer spoken. Even their emblem has been stricken from the history books. Understandably, many in the Order have a special hatred for druids.

The druids of House Diedne were renowned for their phenomenal ability to cast powerful spontaneous spells quickly: something like a combination of Fast Caster (+1) and Continuous Spontaneous Magic (+4) or Life-linked Spontaneous Magic (+3), although many Diedne magi could probably do things beyond even the capabilities endowed by these virtues.

Druids in general are also known for their dark paganistic rituals. Any sort of virtue relating to rituals (maybe an affinity) or concentration might be appropriate. Also remember that Druidic rituals are pagan, not hermetic. They will most likely involve animal sacrifice, henges, sacred groves, and ley-lines, and their effects depend heavily upon the time of year and phase of the moon.

Also, the druids' connection with the land must not be forgotten. Being at home in the forests, many may have Exceptional Talents such as Animal Ken, or Herbalism.

3.3 Cult of Odin

The magic of the Cult of Odin is far enough removed from that of the Order of Hermes to warrant some major changes in the system used. Norse gods tend to have simple and direct solution to problems and the abilities of a Norse magus should reflect this. One possibility, which is widely applicable, is to replace the 5 techniques and 10 forms with a new set more appropriate to the Cult of Odin.

The techniques are the more important of the two. All magi deal with the same surroundings thus the forms will most likely require only minor editing. For the Cult of Odin a set of techniques might be : Summon, Speak With, Repel, Enhance. Note that, unlike hermetic magic, things cannot be created from thin air (Creo) nor can they be completely destroyed (Perdo). Rather storms or animals are called (summoned) and then sent away (repelled). Muto is replaced by Enhance which only allows innate properties to accentuated and not the complete transformations allowed by Muto. Speak With allows the caster to converse with all manner of things, providing some of the functionality of Intelligo.

Many of the forms are not applicable to Norse magi. Ignem and Imagonem should almost certainly be removed. Mentum, Vim and Herbam are slightly less clear cut, but could probably go as well. Aquam and Auram might be altered to Sea and Storm respectively. Animal, Terram and Corporem will probably stay unaltered. This gives 4 techniques and 5 forms.

Norse magi are unlikely to study spells from books, and will definitely not cast formulaic spells. A system similar to spontaneous spell casting is probably best. Dividing the spontaneous spell roll by 2 or 5 will probably cripple such a character, so it is perhaps best to have them cast with their full total (form + technique + stress die) and have another way of limiting their casting. Preferably stick to the Ars Magica

method of having casting result in the loss of fatigue levels - this limits magi nicely without robbing them of any of their power.

3.4 Arabic Magi

While most of Europe languishes in the remnants of the Dark Ages, the Arabic empire is a place of learning and culture. Many Arabs can read and write, and some cities have public libraries. The sciences, too, are flourishing.

Against this background and the founding of Islam in the late 900s AD, the ancient tales of the djinn are perhaps not as well remembered as they once were. Nevertheless there are still magi who call upon the djinn to do their bidding.

While it is possible to create a system for Arabic magic in a similar fashion to that used for the Cult of Odin, it would inevitably not capture the essence of the relationship between magus and djinn. There is no hermetic magic equivalent for the djinn. For this reason, the summoning and binding rules for demons in the Maleficium are a better starting point. Of course, an 'Arabian Nights' feel will have to replace the dark, satanic feel of demon summoning.

If you're interested in playing/creating a more hermetic Arabic mage, there is an Arabic supplement, called 'Ars Arabica', on the web. This supplement ignores the whole djinn aspect and rather gives the Arabic magi an 'astral magic'. New techniques and forms are provided, as well as some background. The URL is <http://www.phoenix.net/~robbiew/ars/arsarab/arsarab.html>.

3.5 Cabalists

The cabalists were a secret organization who studied ancient religious and magical texts to uncover the hidden knowledge and power within. Few made themselves known to the outside world and many probably lead double lives. A hermetic magus apprenticed in Palestine might even be a secret cabalist. Their magic probably consisted mainly of arcane rituals discovered in the ancient tome, and might have varied greatly from magus to magus.



4. Playing a Non-Hermetic Magus

Playing a non-hermetic or almost non-hermetic magus in a party of hermetic magi can be difficult. It's important to stick to your own way of thinking about magic and to role-play this. It's easy to get caught up in the group's hermetic way of thinking. Also while you may have come to some sort of understanding with a few hermetic magi, the Order of Hermes as a whole will always be keeping a close watch on your doings. If tale of your spell casting reaches the ears of the Quaesitor you can expect to receive a summons to a tribunal - if you're lucky.



The Archbigot still manages to find us, even though we gave him a one-way ticket to the worst place we could find. (We hope you enjoyed your all expenses paid ticket to the nudist colony in Siberia.)

THE ARCHBIGOT RESENTFUL OF HIS SURROUNDINGS RIPS INTO SOMETHING YOU HOLD DEAR

„DICE

Yes, it's the Archbigot of Necropolis again, and this time he rages against something that every gamer has cursed many times ...

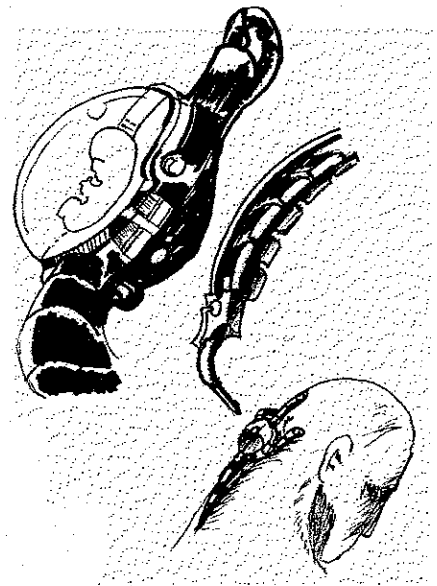
- ◆ They roll high
- ◆ They roll low
- ◆ They roll too far and fall off the table
- ◆ When they roll off the table they roll under the fridge and you never see them again until they have fungus colonies
- ◆ Cats like to chase them
- ◆ You need lots for proper gaming
- ◆ You need more than lots for some games
- ◆ They're funny shapes
- ◆ You're always losing them
- ◆ There are too many different shapes
- ◆ The blue crystal d10s are alien lifeforms
- ◆ You never have enough
- ◆ They're arbitrary
- ◆ Playing cards are better
- ◆ Marbles are better
- ◆ Newbies get confused by the shapes
- ◆ They obey Euler's law [$F + V - E = 2$]
- ◆ People get all superstitious about them
- ◆ They're expensive
- ◆ They blow goats
- ◆ Goats blow them
- ◆ Blow them goats
- ◆ They never roll what you need
- ◆ You have to explain what they are when mundanes see them - which means you have to explain what role-playing is, all because they wanted to know what you keep in your dice-bag!!!!!!!!!!
- ◆ The d10 is not a regular polyhedron
- ◆ There are only six different shapes
- ◆ Americans put warning labels on them
- ◆ The warning labels say "Not for human consumption"
- ◆ People steal them
- ◆ They're malignant and evil, and roll whatever you **don't** need

- ◆ You always end up with too many dice
- ◆ They smell of bananas
- ◆ Mundanes are freaked out by d4s
- ◆ You can never tell which way up the d4 is
- ◆ They're hard to swallow when psychotic Christians start harassing you
- ◆ ... and harder to retrieve afterwards
- ◆ Philip holds them in his mouth
- ◆ They keel my father ... now prepare to die
- ◆ You never have enough
- ◆ They have freckles
- ◆ You always have too few
- ◆ They don't even call the freckles freckles
- ◆ Some losers think their stone dice are cool
- ◆ d12s are totally useless
- ◆ Joburgers have better dice
- ◆ The players always forget them at home
- ◆ You lose them
- ◆ They always crop up again
- ◆ Sofas across the world eat them
- ◆ You roll great numbers when no-one is watching
- ◆ They're hard to train
- ◆ They melt when fired out of shotguns
- ◆ They're evidence at the crime scene



KEEPING A DIARY

The girls at High School all did it. My father does it. The president of the United States probably has people to do it for him. It's called keeping a diary. And I did it, not because I wanted to, but because my Marshall offered certain rewards...

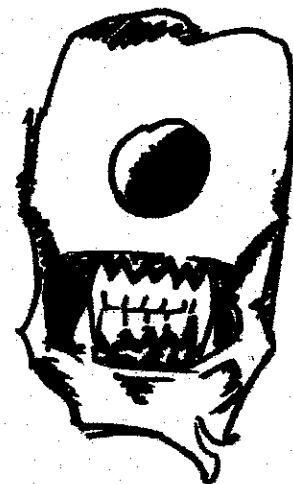


When we began our Deadlands game (over now, despite our protests) my character (more correctly, myself, seeing as that was my character - we played ourselves) began keeping a diary. Not just scrawled notes on paper but an actual diary in a hardbound book. Although I got started because the Marshall offered me certain benefits (extra experience points) for all the hard work, looking back on the experience I would suggest it to any people involved in a long-term fantasy, big-picture type game. When I sit down and look back I now have journal of a year of Saturdays I spent in that game, a record that I am slowly reworking into a graphic novel.

Some systems such as **Castle Falkenstein** and **Amber** include diaries as an integral part of the character. These contain personal experience and exist both within and outside of the game environment. However, the majority of systems don't, and you end up quickly forgetting details from previous sessions. Sometimes these details can be important, and that's where your diary can come in - as a "real" way for your character to keep important information.

Unfortunately, it is lots of hard works to keep a diary - you frequently miss the action because you are desperately scrawling, trying to get everything in. In addition, if the diary exists within the game paradigm as well, who knows what some stupid yokels (literate ones, that is) might burn you for if they read through it. You also end up resenting the other players who seem to think... "Well, X is keeping a diary, so I don't need to worry" (while smoke begins to curl from X's ears). Thus, while the benefits are there in terms of DM support and results, the human reaction is to say "Blast, this is just too hard".

It's easier to keep a diary if it doesn't have to really exist in the game world - that way, you can use point form or mind maps or whatever, instead of doing all your writing "in character". Another thought or alternative might be to keep a group diary, in which you get totally "out of character" and write more of a story-type diary, detailing what happened to ALL the characters, not just when they were with your character but all through the game session. That is, of course, assuming that you don't have to run home straight after a session because you find three hours of your friends playing characters like Poxlux the Stupid One Legged Troll or Dadealus, the amazing metal man with -1000 humanity a little hard. A group diary could work in that for ten minutes after each session all the players and DM contribute memories (misty, water-coloured, ones will do) and important details from that session into a group diary, assigning different people each week to be scribes. I suggest a page-a-day diary, anything else and you are going to end up sticking foolscap into your book and your diary will look like a ragged bunch of paper which kind of defeats the object.



Then there are others who no doubt feel that role-playing is not fun if one has to work on things like a diary. If there is a sucker in the group, then let them do it. Which is kind of sad in a way as it results in the sucker and the DM doing the majority of the work and the others just tagging along. Group diaries, Horatio, I reckon that's where its at

asylum the role-playing game

by Inmate TSR#19

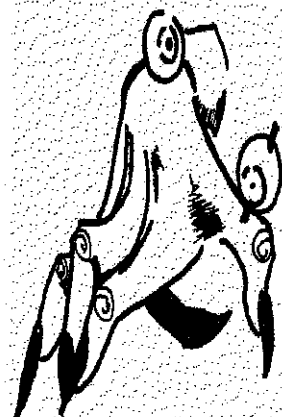
Imagine that the whole world suddenly went mad.

This is the basic premise of Clockwork Games' *Asylum*, a strange RPG I found while browsing the virtual shelves at www.leisuregames.com. It sounded irresistible - especially for someone like me who has often looked at the sanity/insanity rules in systems like Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu* and wondered, "Where's the *meat?*". Well, it appears that the main course has arrived and we can all grab our sharpened spoons. Instead of building an insanity system around a setting, Clockwork have built a setting around an insanity system, and the result is quite interesting. In fact, they've done such a good job that I wonder if the game itself is good for anything other than appreciative reading and the odd once-off, but I'll get to that later.

Asylum is a post-apocalyptic game set on a ruined Earth in which most of the world has become a series of giant Wards, populated by Inmates of varying degrees of sanity and staffed by brutal Orderlies. Above it all, the mysterious Wardens perform bizarre experiments and play God with their demented prisoners. The apocalypse is an novel one; volcanic eruptions in Hawaii send a dust plume high into the atmosphere. This dust plume, it is later discovered, contains an undocumented spore-like plant, later known as Blanket Seed. This plant has the strange property of being able to extract and store hydrogen from its surroundings. As a result, once the spores are propelled into the air by the eruption, they continue to float around up there - and begin to spread. Within a few years, almost the entire sky is covered in a hazy brown film which blocks direct sunlight and seems to crawl and form unnerving shapes when watched closely. It seems that research has already suggested that, deprived of a regular diurnal cycles, human beings experience increasing mental stress. In *Asylum*, years and years of murky twilight (accompanied by the death of 90% of plant and animal life on the planet) slowly drives the entire population mad.

Various interest groups and governments are able to save themselves, of course, but the vast majority of people are at the mercy of slow mental degeneration. Neurotic disorders, paranoia and aggressive mania become common as the human race gets tenser and tenser. Initially, the most insane are herded into huge internment camps; as time passes, the "insane" population so begins to outnumber the "sane" population that notions like government and human rights fall away, and the camps are larger than any city. The cities and Wards of *Asylum* are little more than grimy slums populated by ragged madmen. Apart from food (grown on automated farms, far away), the most valuable commodities are pills (sedatives and mood "normalisers") and ammunition for the crates of firearms that the sadistic Orderlies seed the city with to keep the Inmates occupied.

The system is really wacky. Instead of dice, *Asylum* uses marbles of 5 different colours selected from a bag, to generate a random number. It's a nice idea, but it means that every player (and the GM) needs their own bag of marbles (Yes, they make the "losing your marbles" joke many times. No, I'm not going to repeat it here.), or else a communal bag needs to be passed around. Either way, it seems a little unwieldy. Not too much of a problem though; the marbles can easily be replaced with a d10 for that more "traditional" feel.



asylum the role-playin' game

by Inmate TSR#19

The system is quite chart-reliant, but luckily all the charts are collated onto one page at the back of the book and are thus reasonably accessible.

The insanity system is a gem, of course. It differentiates between syndromes (called Disorders - chronic mental illnesses such as bipolar disorder, ADD, autism and so on) and Aberrations (more severe, but acute insanities like kleptomania and exhibitionism). It allows one to have degrees of each of these, from Latent to Advanced with many grades in between. Well, I guess the insanity system would have to be good, wouldn't it? You're not going to play this game for much of any other reason.



But it seems that there are always a couple of flies in the ointment when it comes to fringe games, and for me the most noticeable one in *Asylum* is the artwork. The artwork truly sucks - there is no other word for it. Seven people are credited with "Interior Art" in the acknowledgements - one would think that at least some of them would have been able to spin a pen around, but apparently not. The artwork is childish and detracts from the flavour of the game in many places. There are one or two nice bits - the photographs, for instance, are quite atmospheric - but by and large, it's a case of just gritting your teeth and turning the page.

I'm not too pleased with the soft-cover format, either; the whole shebang looks a little fragile to me. That, however, I'm prepared to forgive; not every gaming company can afford hardbacks or boxed sets. *Asylum* should weather a campaign fairly well if the spine is treated gently, but bang it around too much and I wouldn't be surprised if it disintegrated entirely.

One final gripe, which isn't even really a gripe, is the setting itself. Running a long-term *Asylum* game, seems to be task doomed to eventual failure. There is no real hope for salvation; eventually, your characters will either go entirely nutbars and get wasted, or they will get wasted while they are relatively sane (it's a dangerous world out there). You could play with the eventual aim of saving the world by destroying the Blanket Seed, I suppose, but short of some very obvious *deus ex machina* on your part, there's no way that the PC's will be able to restore humankind to sanity. I'm not saying that it can't be done, just that I can think of *easier* games to play.

I would consider *Asylum* to be a moderately good buy as far as roleplaying systems go. It'll certainly broaden your horizons more than another TSR product, and you can always hack out the insanity rules to use in your favourite system. It might even be useful for running a game in a setting where reality itself is twisted and strange, in the style of the *Doom Patrol* or *Sandman* comics. Finally, how about a Matrix-style campaign where the PC's all slowly discover that the world we know is an illusion maintained by hallucinogens fed to them in their food in the "real" world - the world of *Asylum*! Yep, I guess it has potential.

asylum the role-playin' game

by Inmate TSR#19

Outer Limits carries the *Asylum* game - at least, their Johannesburg branch did when I was up there for Gencon - or you can find it on the 'net. I owe my copy to the sterling efforts of two nameless Inmates (you know who you are!). Either way, good luck with going loony and takin' your players with you in *Asylum*.



MEMORIES

A CLAW retrospective by Émrys Firehand

A few faded and tattered fragments of fantasy posters cling obstinately to what is left of the walls, fallen chunks of plaster lie littered across the floor and the weather-beaten gaming table. The harsh winds whistle through the shattered balcony door, whipping the drifts of dust and leaves into uneasy airborne spirals. Vines grow through the rusty cabinets of the library, discarded seeds germinate out of the upholstery of the abandoned sofas. The cracked threshold, worn smooth by the passing of countless ages and the abrasion of the elements, bears mute and solemn testimony to the fact that no civilization has flourished here since long before living memory.

It was images like these that ran through my mind as I approached the Claw Room after my all too lengthy absence. Would I find anything I could recognize? Imagine the thrill of finding that it was still filled with the usual motley crew of oddballs, cracking jokes, arguing, or generating characters - or all of these at once!

Seeing that this edition of ClawMarks is being issued at the same time as the 10th Anniversary Dragonfire Tournament, it seems like a good time to look back into the mists of prehistory and remember what Claw was like in its early years. Not that I can lay claim to having played at Dragonfire I, or been a Claw member at the founding, but having joined up in 1991 and played in nearly every tournament since Dragonfire II probably defines me as enough of a grizzled old veteran to qualify for writing an article like this one.

It may not be very well known today that Claw started out as an acronym for **Cape Legion of Active Wargamers**, and that role-playing games were considered secondary in importance (fantasy CCGs, of course, not having been invented yet). Also, few now will remember the first Claw Room on Green Level (before that, members had a meeting place on Jammie Steps called Gargoyle Rock). We got this room because no one else wanted it. It was at the top of a lift shaft, reached through the top of the fire escape stairs. It had an irregular cracked floor covered in flaking red paint, on which it was very easy to lose the typical solid red dice of the time. Furiously hot in summer and draughty in winter, one corner of the room was taken up by a huge ventilation fan protected by a metal grid. At one stage, someone placed a ladder against the grid, leading up towards the rotating blades, and labelled it "*Stairway to Heaven*". Someone else got hold of an arbitrary door and set it up as a ramp out of the window, labelling it "*Highway to Hell*". The library was small enough to be housed in a single cabinet, probably because there was a relatively small number of gaming systems available at the time.

Yes, those were the days when AD&D 2nd Edition was considered to be The Modern Way, and many people still had the chunky green dice of the D&D Basic Set. The big debate was always AD&D vs. RoleMaster, with such things as RuneQuest attracting a small following. At least, that was the situation until the cyberpunk genre appeared. After that, fierce controversy raged for years between those who favoured the man-with-the-biggest-gun-wins world of cyberpunk ultra-violence and those who preferred to play half-elven bards with hang-ups about their parents. (For anyone who's really interested, see the Forum in ClawMarks 7, 8 and 9.)

These minor daytime differences never stopped the parties, though. Each year, Dragonfire weekend would bring a Saturday night pig-out in the Student's Union, involving unbridled substance abuse and loud, evil music, courtesy of the darker denizens of UCT Radio. This was at the time that many of the classics of alternative music were still being written, with artists like Dead Can Dance, Fields of the Nephilim, Nick Cave and the Sisters of Mercy at the peak of their careers. I must admit that I was a bit disappointed that the partying aspect of Dragonfire seems to have become much more sedate in recent times.

There have been other, hopeful changes as well. I don't know enough about Claw in 1999 to be able to go into much detail here, but it was reassuring to discover that membership has grown, and also that it has become more diverse. Female Claw members still complain that it is a male-dominated society, but this is much less true now. When I joined, Jessica Tiffin was just about the only one carrying the torch for the fairer sex.

Through her continuing involvement in Claw, Jessica probably remains well known to most of you. The other names from those days, on the other hand, probably survive only in old tales: Anthony Steele, Andrew Sturman, Carlo Kruger, Andrew Shackleton, David Maclay, Peter van Heusden, Andrew Higson-Smith. Anton Strydom, whose artwork adorns the covers of all the early ClawMarks, and André, Botha, the dedicated Star Wars GM. May the Force be with them. Many have joined and left since then. Other players have won renown, only to become tomorrow's history. And once again, the chill wind rustles the fallen leaves as I realize I don't know a single person in this room. It's time to do something about that! Claw lives! Claw thrives! First and Last and Always!



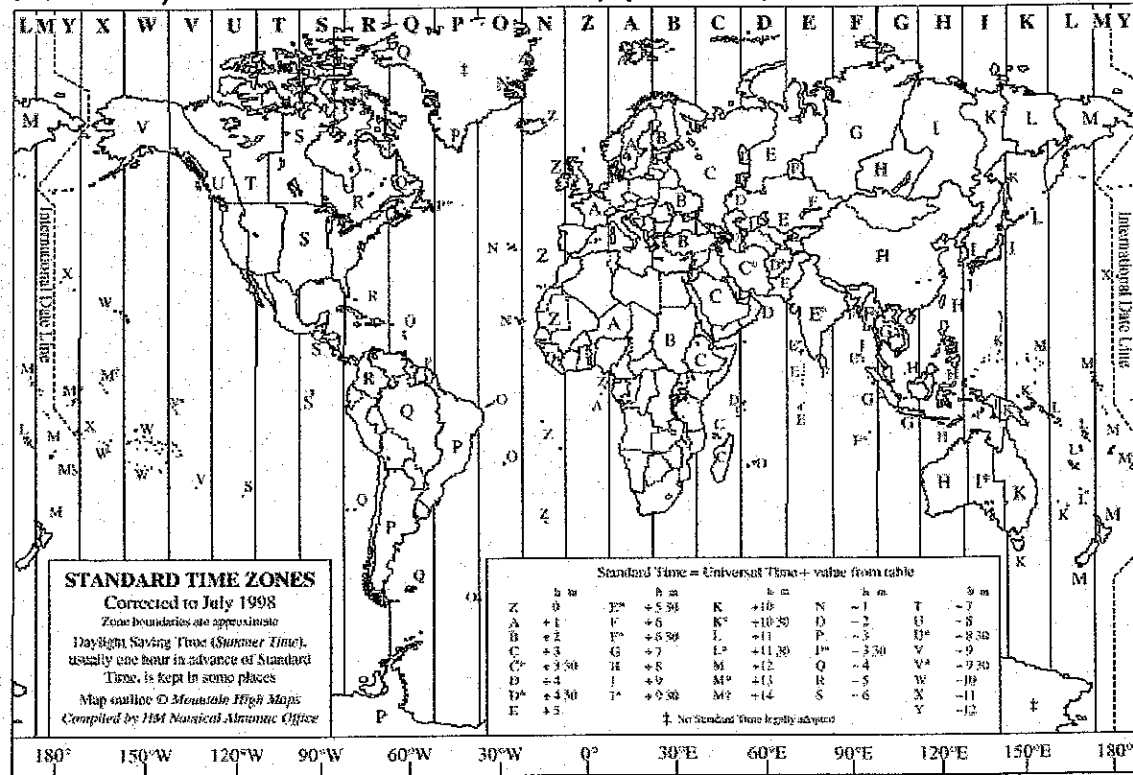
Random References

d@vid seaward

You never really know what you might need in your campaigns, as a player or GM/DM/Keepery type. In an effort to add to the collective CLAWmarks referencing thing-y... aargh, I will not live a lie, this article is, really, simply, space filler, but what nice space filler it is anyway...

TIMEZONES

In contemporary settings it is imperative that the player with contacts not disturb them if they're six or more time zones away (take note, certain PISCES ops)...



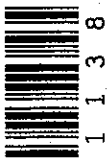
MORSE CODE AND CALL-SIGN ALPHABETS

Useful in a range of time settings and with those military-freak GMs who know these things by heart.

	Morse	English	American		Morse	English	American
A	.-.	Andrew	Abel	N	-. -	Nelli	Nan
B	-... -	Benjamin	Baker	O	--- -	Oliver	Oboe
C	-.-.-	Charlie	Charlie	P	.-.-.-	Peter	Peter
D	-... -	David	Dog	Q	--- -	Queenie	Queen
E	. -	Edward	Easy	R	.-.-	Robert	Roger
F	..-.-	Frederick	Fox	S	... -	Sugar	Sugar
G	-.-.-	George	George	T	-	Tommy	Tare
H -	Harry	How	U	... -	Uncle	Uncle
I	.. -	Isaac	Item	V	... -	Victor	Victor
J	.-.-.-	Jack	Jig	W	--- -	William	William
K	-.-.-	King	King	X	... -	Xmas	X [eks]
L	.-.-.-	Lucy	Love	Y	... -	Yellow	Yoke
M	.. -	Mary	Mike	Z	... -	Zebra	Zebra

If the duration of a dot is taken to be one unit then that of a dash is three units. The space between the components of one character is one unit, between characters is three units and between words seven units. To indicate that a mistake has been made and for the receiver to delete the last word send eight dots.

Whoop, there it is, Ms Editor - now I've got these other convention-y things to do, and the Muizenburg sunrise sure is pretty...



over things Mundane... to us

WHAT IS Githulu and his Pals went Insane

|||||



AN

NOTICES

PISCES - how many sieverts of radiation does it take to kill someone?

Answer: A lot less than you think.

NOW HIRING

The Pinkerton Detective Agency needs YOU to combat the unknown. Rapid advancement, good hours and state-of-the-art firepower. If you're interested in joining - we know already, and we'll be in touch.

WANTED

Experienced debugger, with proven track record in removing unwanted presences in large, LARGE systems. Ability to deal with sword-swinging female viruses beneficial.

Apply to The Lords, PO Mystere.

Experienced role-players, preferably with experience in several different systems, to play-test a new, highly flexible rules system and to help in adjusting its finer points. Interested? Contact Francis at 671-4763

Taser test subject.
R50 per shock you take from us. Contact gonzo@iafrica.com

A place in the sun

Contact Otto Bismark, c/o the horseman of history.

Another bunch of outworlders.

I can only skin so many fish. Luke.

Wanted: **Gullible group of Allansian villagers** for bogus mission leading to human sacrifice. Fleshy, tender applicants only. Apply to Khan Ulyya, Horselord Keep, the Flatlands.

REVENGE against those cheatin' scum who took my thumb, pals of God or not.

Like-minded companions

for former CLAWs member (M, 26) I have been out in the world too long and lost touch with the UCT role-playing scene. I can offer 8 years of role-playing and DM-ing experience (in addition to friendship and good humour). Other interests include astrology, alternative music, esoteric paganism and home brewing. Call me if you want to meet. Francis, 671-4763

RIP

Lots of Union generals, colonels, etc., and their glass-bottomed observation zeppelin. He who laughs last...

Lunch. You will be missed. St John

The huge blue tentacle. Done the dirty by pure fluke and a briefcase Erasotron.

One bunch of ravers: torn, shredded and mangled by frogmen. Shoulda become goths instead.

Insects from Shaggai, lots of them: shot, stabbed, x-rayed, zapped, sonic blasted, and generally abused.

Insects from Shaggai, Evil Plans for World Domination: What was in that deep space probe, anyway?

Major Cotton - died in a plane crash in the South Atlantic. And if you believe that

RIP (Almost): **Most of Strike Teams Alpha and Beta**, on some godforsaken mining planet somewhere. Aliens? No problem. Aliens AND Predators? Damn you, Sturman!!

Jimmy Rayne. A done deal! Love, Ty.

Lands of Mystery. Many thanks to players, RP widows, and supportive hangers-on. Sequel is on its way.

Mr. Troy, Mr. T, and Luke. But thank heavens for a point-and-click interface...

Some Yugoslav conscripts. Thought you had us, but we HAD you, beeyaches. Props to Motown.

RIP Delta Green, P4 Division, and assorted Feds, many times, at Gencon. Shoot 'em or blast 'em? Shoot 'em or blast 'em. Ah hell, let's do both...

DELTA GREEN UK QUOTES

Simon: "It's very hard to sneak in a F16."

David: "You shot an unarmed Lizard!"

Jessica: "SAS guys probably dig scars."

Duncan: "Precision engineering where you expect it least in a cultist temple."

Simon: "It's a bit rude to use someone's sausage"

Jessica: "Every good girl needs a pocket SAS member"

Lara: "Damnit Steven, I'm a doctor not a policeman."

Jessica: "You could kill someone and *then* make a Forensics roll"

Robyn: "Are there any more trees in the forest?"

Simon: " I take out full insurance."

Jessica: "No wonder he's been in torture for the last 14 years, he's had a small nuclear explosion happening in his head..."

...and you thought a hangover was bad."

Duncan: "We can still be in Libya by 12..."

Jessica: "Just say no to bloated tentacle sex!"

Duncan: "Yes, you strike me as a John Grisham reader."

NPC: "It is ritual."
Simon: "Isn't it always."

Duncan: "Anything is good when you're blind"

Simon: "Trying to defeat the fires of hell with a standard KIC freezer."

NPC: "Was it a grey?"
Simon: "No, more of a brown actually."

Robyn: "My mind may be screwed but at least *I'll* be able to reproduce"

Simon: "I have my lucky grenade on my belt."

Jessica: "The one that never misses 'ay?"

Simon: "It's lucky 'cause I've never had to use it."

Jessica: "We have buckets of blood on Bournemouth beach!"

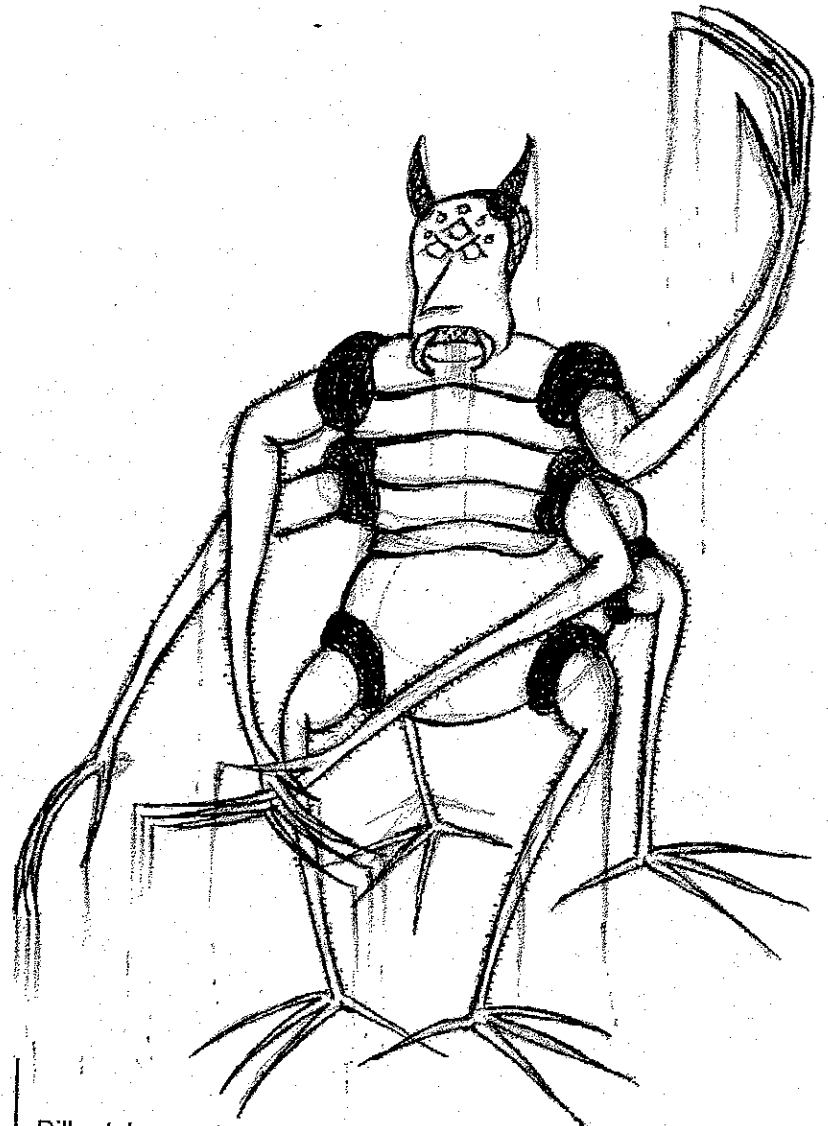
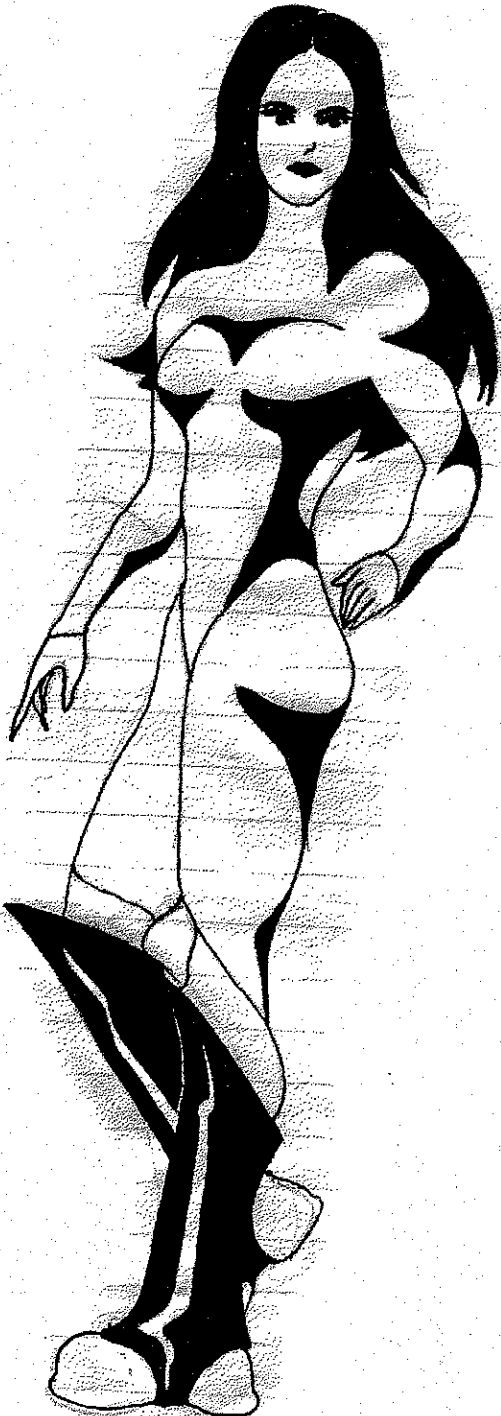
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DNA sampling
techniques
delivered galaxy-
wide!

Dial
9:4:1:CLARKE
for our
millennium
special...

MAN'S THANKS

1. To contributors of Journalistic material of the highest order, at the last minute as usual. Simon, Lara, Robyn, Duncan, Dylan, Tim, Francis and Arch, if weren't for you, babies!
2. Claws Groupies: Andrei, thank heavens we got it back to you unspumed on.



Dilbert began to realise that, in his way, the pointy-haired boss hadn't been all that bad...

3. Other art work people, Danielle, Adrienne, Michelle, Robyn S. Paul, d@vid and of course yours truly.
4. Sam of Smuts Hall, for generous use of scanner and coffeEEEE...
5. The too many cooks; Austin, Dylan, d@vid and Robanne, we did a good job despite argument about the relevance of some people's articles. I love you, boys!
6. Lara, for doing the attack Chihauhua
7. To Bruce, we really sorry you didn't find us and get it in, then again maybe it's for the best!
8. And to anybody else who thinks they deserve thanks, just for being the nice person we know they are.
9. Lastly, but not leastly, my mommy and daddy who saw fit to send me to Europe. "To get away from it all". Well, sure got back into it quick!

UNTIL NEXT TIME

