

COMPLETE READY TO PLAY GAME INSIDE

THE MAGAZINE OF SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY ADVENTURE GAMING

Nr. 10

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Ares

STORY and GAME FEATURE

HARRY HARRISON'S THE RETURN OF THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT

Slippery Jim diGriz faces a deadly
maze controlled by a computer
programmed to kill.

Articles on
**UNIVERSE
DELTA VEE**
Complete Adventure for
DragonQuest

Critiques of
Outland ★ Dragonslayer
and Escape from New York



Preview of
StarTrader
and
Ghostship



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THE MAGAZINE OF
SCIENCE FICTION
AND FANTASY
ADVENTURE GAMING

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The Return of the Stainless Steel Rat

GREG COSTIKYAN

REDMOND A. SIMONSEN

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ENCLOSURES: *The Return of the Stainless Steel Rat* map, counters and rules; Feedback card, subscription form.

Looking Ahead to Next Time

Ares nr. 10 will feature *Land of Faerie*, a strategic level simulation of the Third Fomorian War in which the Dark Elves and Dark Trolls struggle to seize the Places of Power in fair Albion. Material on Celtic myth and early British history will accompany the game; in addition there will be reviews, Science for Science Fiction, Facts for Fantasy, and much more.

When to Expect Nr. 11

Domestic Subscribers: If you have not received your copy of *Ares* nr. 11 by 11 December 1981, notify our Customer Service Department. Please include your Customer Code and issue of expiration, both of which should be found on this issue's mailing label, just above your name. **Foreign Subscribers:** Add eight weeks to the above date to allow for the tardigradous pace of international mail.

On the Cover

The immortal Stainless Steel Rat as portrayed by Timothy Truman, based on a concept by Redmond A. Simonsen.



With this issue, *Ares* and its brother magazine, *MOVES*, make slight course corrections in response to market information developed by feedback and by direct interview and reader comment at the recent Michi-Con and Origins conventions. As you can see by this issue, *Ares* will begin to include articles directly related to games (i.e., analysis, technique, variants, etc.). *MOVES* will no longer publish material related to science fiction and fantasy games — only military and political games. This change points both magazines more in the direction you've indicated: sf/f games treated in *Ares*; military games in *MOVES*.

By the way, as with all SPI magazines, articles and features are *not* restricted to SPI products — we want material on all publisher's games. So, if you're inclined to write game-related articles on widely played sf/f games (see our games rating chart for guidance), submit a non-returnable copy of your

manuscript to our Managing Editor along with a return postcard to notify you of acceptance.

We're looking for articles from 1500 to 5000 words in length. Pay rates are \$.02 or .03 per word (depending on whether you've been published with any frequency heretofore). For game-related articles, SPI buys all rights.

Late Flash: *DragonQuest* wins Best Fantasy Role-Playing Game Award. At Origins 81, the Academy of Adventure Gaming Art and Design gave *DragonQuest* top honors in role-playing for 1980! *Redmond*



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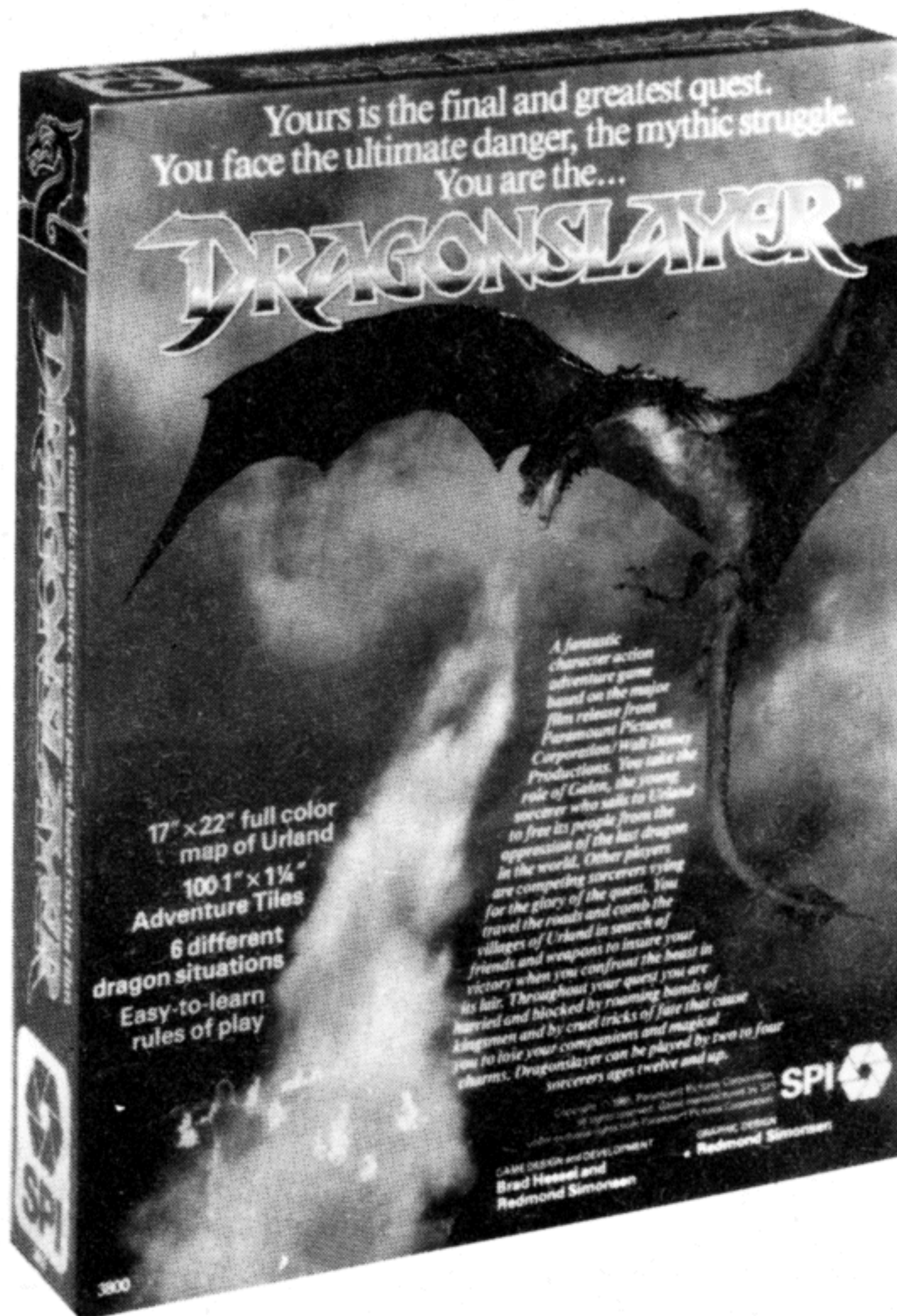


DRAGONSLAYER

A Fantastic Game of Quest and Adventure
based upon the exciting new motion picture
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A young sorcerer sets out upon a perilous journey to free a kingdom from the terror of earth's last dragon. Along his route he acquires weapons, charms, and true companions to aid him in his quest. Will he succeed or fall victim to bandits, the King's men, or the dragon itself? **Dragonslayer** is designed to appeal to knowledgeable fantasy adventure game players while at the same time remaining accessible to new gamers. This fast playing, self-contained adventure includes a full-color 17" x 22" map of Urland, 200 full-color playing pieces, easy-access rules, and Dragon lair displays, plus compartment plastic tray. \$15 at stores and game departments nationwide.

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Designer's Notes

Universe Mini-Adventure #1: The Devil's Eye

Devil's Eye Horror Revealed!

SIDEWINDER (FP)—Survivors of the Devil's Eye (GLY-1) exploration party today described the tragic events of their visit last week to the unsettled planet during a press conference in Sidewinder Spaceport. Expedition leader George Bjorling told of the deaths of three members of the five-man team. Originally scheduled to conduct a low-orbit mapping of the planet only, the party decided to land the ship, the *Kalingsrad*, in the heavily vegetated north polar region of Devil's Eye. There they set out for a quick survey of the multitude of life forms picked up by their scanners.

"I made a poor command decision," admitted Bjorling. "We were not properly equipped for that type of exploration having no weapons more effective than an old-fashioned laser pistol." Bjorling went on to say that they encountered "a fierce and deadly collection of creatures composed of organic and metallic mechanical parts. We found two or three versions of some creatures...One would be purely mammalian and docile while the same type of animal with a new steel-hard skin would attack ruthlessly. We lost Barnes, Williams and Lawson to seemingly docile creatures that ripped open their expedition suits with blade-like fangs and claws."

After the conference, Bjorling and his surviving crew member, Grace Bickers, went into seclusion in a GamLepCo retreat at an undisclosed location on Sidewinder.

The preceding is a newspaper bulletin that the players in our first *Universe* mini-adventure receive at the beginning of play. The adventure was originally conceived solely for use at *Origins '87* but has proven so popular with playtesters that we are preparing it for inclusion in an upcoming issue of *Ares*.

The adventure sends a party of adventurers to Devil's Eye in the Gamma Leporis double-star system (27 light years from Sol) to investigate the strange life-forms reported by George Bjorling. With an amphibian air-terrain vehicle and an excellent array of weapons, the party is better equipped than their predecessors to deal with the dangerous creatures in the jungles of Barnes River. The party must not only overcome the harsh environment, but must also discover the secrets behind the metallic life-forms. Look for this adventure in *Ares* 11 or 12.

John H. Butterfield

Ghostship

Ghostship deals with the interception of an alien vessel passing near earth by the US

space shuttle *Yorktown*, and with the exploration of the dark, quiet starcraft in hopes of finding its inhabitants. During the preparation before playing the game, the player must determine what faction on earth will finance the trip, which will affect victory conditions. He then chooses his characters. I have not yet decided whether the player may pick all his characters freely or if some should be selected randomly. Each will possess various attributes, special skills and a classification type (i.e., scientist, politician, military specialist, crewman, etc.). The characters' attributes will influence the results of each encounter.

The game itself will be an interesting combination of the chit revealing process of *Citadel of Blood* and the paragraph system of *Voyage of the Pandora*. Chits will serve two purposes. They will designate the shape of the ship by forcing certain passageways of the ship to be closed off. Also, they will identify the "finds" in each room or structure as they are entered. Each find chit will be cross-referenced to one of a hundred paragraphs which will identify what the object is or does. However, each paragraph will contain conditional dependent upon characters, previously discovered finds and time limitations. This approach will greatly expand the possibilities of each paragraph and make the game more intriguing overall.

Ultimately, the goal of the game will be attempting to encounter the aliens who built the ship. It will not be a simple task, and only the correct combinations of events will accomplish this. Yet this will be the most interesting part of the game. Rules will be included to cover possibilities of communication, capture and combat. More often than not, the alien visitors will not be too pleased with having their ship ransacked and will retaliate in kind.

The game's victory conditions will be based on the amount of money and prestige the various finds are worth to the initial financier. For example, a find with a high probability of being a weapon will be worth more to the Pentagon than to the UN. Some of the finds may even be relatively worthless. Of course, the greatest amount of points will be given for contacting the aliens. However, in making such contact, the characters may not return at all.

Right now, *Ghostship* is being designed for solitary play. However, ideas for multi-player versions are being worked on. In such a scenario, there would even be possibilities for the players to attack each other. Nonetheless, for the time being the emphasis of this designer's time is on the actual mechanics of the game itself.

Thomas Pecorini

Star Trader

Preliminary design work on *Star Trader* has been completed, and I am beginning work on the game's first prototype. Playtests should begin in a week or two. The game's components will include a 22" x 34" map depicting the star systems in play, 200 counters representing starships and planetary trade agencies, and a 16-page rules book which will be divided equally between rules and random events paragraphs.

In *Star Trader* each of up to five players takes the role of the master of a merchant

vessel, travelling the spaceways with cargoes exotic and rare. Starting with one ship and limited financial resources, each player tries to build a fleet of starships, amass a network of planetary bases, and dominate the trade-lanes of space.

Each turn in the game represents about three months. This time-scale was chosen for several reasons: I wanted the time-scale to be large enough so that the players would have a good shot at building a fleet in a scenario of moderate length. Also, the turns had to be long enough to allow for large price fluctuations. At the same time, however, the time-scale had to be small enough so that movement and the details of player interaction wouldn't become too abstract. Three month turns should work out as a happy solution.

Each turn the players buy and sell goods, negotiate with each other, react to unusual events, develop their network of trade agencies, and conduct acts of knavery aimed at making the other players' lives as difficult as possible. The players can also conduct a variety of illicit activities, such as smuggling, bribing customs, and evading law enforcement agencies.

I am working on the assumption that the far-reaching trade corporations of the future will be unscrupulous for the most part, and so the game emphasizes illegal activities; smuggling and piracy are common. Indeed, the quickest profits can be made by dealing in drugs and high-tech weapons. Naturally, a high degree of risk is associated with such ventures, however.

All markets, especially those for illegal goods, are highly volatile; every time a ship unloads its cargo, prices fluctuate dramatically. Timing and outwitting the other players have great importance; a player's profit on a voyage depends as much on when he gets to a star (and who gets there first) as on what he is carrying.

In addition to competition in trade, the players interact more directly, sabotaging each other's ships, subverting each other's crews, and even attacking each other's ships as they cruise between stars.

Banking and investment systems are also integrated into the game. Although these systems are abstract, they give the players more options to consider, and contribute to the variety of choices presented in the game. I also think that letting the players take loans out at usurious interest rates is a constant source of tension and excitement.

A detailed random-events system, using the *Voyage of the Pandora* paragraph format, will be included in the game. The variety of events presented should give each playing a distinct flavor. Each turn the players will be presented with smuggling opportunities, run-ins with Federation space troopers, and a multitude of unique incidents, from revolutions to meteor swarms.

This random-events system will be of particular interest to role-players; each paragraph sequence will be usable as the outline for an adventure in *Universe*. SPI's new science fiction role-playing game, *Star Trader* will be a completely independent game in its own right, but it is consistent with *Universe* and uses that game's rationale, technology, and history as a backdrop.

Nick Karp

THE RETURN OF THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT

BY HARRY HARRISON



ILLUSTRATION BY TIMOTHY TRUMAN

"You are the only one who can save us, diGriz! Say that you will do it, I beg of you...."

The words were music to my ears. I try to be humble in my own simple way, but it is very hard. People keep telling me how great I am. They know that I have saved the universe — twice at least — so they feel, rightly enough I suppose, that I can do anything.

"...please help. Four men have died already, that's why we need you...."

His words dropped me from the heights of elation into the abyss of despair. I snapped at him.

"So that's what you need me for. To be corpse number five. You think I'll look good in a coffin?"

There it was, of course. You get a reputation and you have to live up to it — even if you die in the attempt. I rose from my chair and paced the length of the room, trying to ignore the delegates grouped uneasily against the wall. Why should I listen to them? Why me, James Bolivar diGriz, the Stainless Steel Rat? Outcast of society — yet still a hero of society? A lifetime criminal who was now being called upon for help by the very people I preyed upon. It wasn't fair.

"Not fair!" I cried. "I should be robbing you blind, not doing you favors." They nodded eagerly at this.

"Rob us, Jim, rob us! We don't mind. Only finish this little job first!"

I sighed deeply. There is no escaping one's destiny. "Before I decide, would someone mind telling me just what the hell this is all about?"

All they needed was the starting whistle. In an instant they had a hologram projector up and running. A halo of a satellite station sprang into existence before me, soft music played and a deep voice began speaking.

"This is the orbiting satellite, Stanyan VI. It is the port of call of all the deep spacers approaching the Stanyan System." The spidery form of a spacer drifted up to the image and docked to drive home the point. "Cargo is then transhipped to the thirteen planets that comprise this solar system. The operation is successful, safe and speedy." Violins swelled up in the background playing successful, safe and speedy music. I began to doze off — but a crash of brass and tympany woke me up.

"But everything has changed!" the announcer gasped. "It all began when this passenger shuttle went out of control...."

THE FAMILIAR EGG-SHAPED FORM of a shuttleswam into view, drifting towards one of the satellite's docking bays. It was completely under computer control; accidents were an impossibility, the retarding jets would fire and ease it into place. Then the impossible happened. Instead of the braking jets being activated, the stern jets flared full on — sending it hurtling forward. It was over in an instant. The shuttle crashed into the solid steel of the docking port and burst open like a silver egg hurled against a wall. Air puffed out and froze instantly. Maimed bodies were hurled free — but unhappily did not freeze as fast as the air had done. I could not take my eyes away from this gruesome scene as the narrator continued in a hushed voice.

"Thirty-seven people were killed in this accident. Which proved to be no accident at all. When the mechanic went to examine the malfunctioning navigational computer, he found that a ten thousand volt current had been shorted through the metal door of the computer room...."

The halo of the space station puffed out of existence and was replaced by a lifesize image of the mechanic who had tried the handle on the hotwired door. I turned away.

"I've seen a fried corpse before, thank you," I said. "Can I have the rest of this nasty story straight without the sensational visual effects?"

The scene shifted back to the satellite again and the voice continued remorselessly.

"It soon became obvious that the navigational computer was not at fault. It had been overridden by the Central Control computer. This is the Galaxy grade, Mark 2500 model, absolutely reliable and never known to malfunction before...."

"There's a first time for everything," I shouted, trying to be heard over the booming voice and backup orchestra. "Will someone kindly switch off this ghastly holo show! Enough is enough."

The music died with a gasping rattle and the halo popped out of existence; the lights came back up. I turned and stabbed a finger at the cowering delegates.

"Now just bring me up to date without the special effects. You have a nutsy computer that has already polished off a lot of people. And it is a Mark 2500 which probably handles hundreds of flights a day, controls thousands of operations, along with hundreds of thousands of subfunctions as well — that must be one smart computer. If it has gone gaga it won't really like anyone coming near it. The four men who were killed — they tried to turn the thing off?"

The delegates all nodded together gloomily. I nodded as well. "I thought so. Have you evacuated the satellite?" At this they shook their heads even more gloomily. The leader of the delegation spoke.

"It won't let us. The Mark 2500. All of the ports are sealed and we can't get near the satellite. And there are over three hundred passengers trapped inside. You must save them, diGriz! Their lives are in your hands...."

"Not yet they're not! They are still in your hands which is why you are here — and why you are worrying so. You're all sweating — and I think I know why. This delegation represents the corporation that owns the satellite?" Reluctant nods. "And you also represent the insurance company that insures the satellite?" Heads nodding like crazy now. "So not only do you have a humanitarian interest in those poor souls trapped inside your hunk of space ironmongery — but you have a financial interest as well." Chins dropped to chests and a wave of financial despair sighed through the room.... I smiled and shook my clenched fists over my head.

"Despair not gentlemen — diGriz will save you! I will turn off your kooky computer and save you prisoners!"

I waited until the cheers and shouts of joy had died down before I put the boot in.

"But, like you, I am a businessman as well as a humanitarian. My reasonable and very low fee for the job will be the miserly sum of two million credits...."

I turned away and lit a cigar while their moans of pain and cries of anguish echoed from the chamber walls. Then I puffed out expensive smoke and raised my hand for silence.

"For shame," I chided. "You'll get that sum back within a few days of operation." My voice grew cold. "But if you don't get back into operation and if the relatives of the people you have allowed to be destroyed by that mad machine decide to sue you...." Temporary interruption by walls of despair. "...why, you will have to pay out billions. You have sixty seconds to decide. The fee will be payable one million on signing and one million upon delivery of the main fuse from the crackpot computer. Fifty-five seconds."

"How will you do it?" someone called out.

"I'll tell you as soon as you have paid. A computer with sick circuitry is as nothing to the man who saved the universe. Twice." Which meant that I had no idea how I was going to do it, but that was my business and not theirs. Just as their business was earning money and mine stealing it. "Thirty-one seconds."

"It's robbery — but we agree. We have no choice."

NOR DID THEY. Which was why I had made the fee so large. As soon as the money had been credited to my account, I threw them all out and spread out the technical reports. This was not going to be easy. I forced away the nagging realization that it was not only hard but completely impossible. Never say die! The Rat marches on. There had to be a way.

Except that three weeks later, in a shuttle floating in orbit about the insane satellite, I still hadn't found it. Nor was the captain of the shuttle any help.

"You're number five," he said, in an exceedingly gloomy voice. "You'll never make it either. Croaked or crunched like the other four. That cockamamie computer will let you aboard all right. Like a fly into a web. Then...."

"Then it is my worry. And I can do without your pep talk. I'm suing up now and I want to be launched as soon as this ancient machine of yours comes up with the orbital calculations that I asked for."

"Suicide...." was the last word I heard as I sealed shut the helmet of my modified suit. Modified in that all of the metal parts had been sprayed with insulating foam. The Mark 2500 was very free with its shortcircuits and two of my predecessors had been electrocuted. I had no desire to be tried for my efforts — even before I was inside the renegade satellite.

My plan for getting aboard the thing was simpler enough, although once I was sitting alone on the nosecone of the shuttle I began to have doubts about it. Because to make the plan work I had to trust the computer aboard the shuttle. And I was not very happy about computers at the moment. I felt

the ship stir behind me, then the steady pressure on my back as it accelerated. This lasted a few seconds — then ended as the braking jets close beside me puffed out clouds of gas. The shuttle decelerated. I didn't. The spaceship flit behind me as I continued on in what I hoped was the correct orbit. Aiming for the spot in space where the satellite would be. Optimistically launched not only in the direction of Stanyan VI, but also moving outward in a course that would bring me down right on top of an emergency exit. I hoped.

But it worked. Despite my fears I watched the satellite get closer and closer until it filled the entire sky. I knew the thing had no missiles or guns — but it could use its deceleration fields to launch something heavy in my direction. That's how one of my predecessors had bought it. But I was coming in on the side away from the landing bays. I hoped.

The seconds ticked by and I had my thumb poised over the button of my braking jets. The computer back in the shuttle was supposed to give me the signal to brake — but as I said I was not trusting computers very much these days. Closer and closer, larger and larger the metal wall grew. And I knew I would splatter myself all over it in a few seconds more. Where was the signal? The computer had blown a fuse. I was good as dead! Yet if I braked too soon I would miss the station completely and float out into space. I couldn't wait any longer....!

"Fire now," the emotionless voice of the computer said. It did not have to repeat itself. My thumb clamped down, clouds of gas billowed out and around me. I couldn't see a thing! The firing ended and the gas cleared — and there was the side of the satellite just ahead of me.

I hit, tumbled, bounced away again — and grabbed an antenna mast just before I vanished back into interstellar space. After that I just held on for awhile, waiting for the air scrubber to evaporate the perspiration from my forehead — and from the misted up helmet in front of my eyes as well.

"You know, Jim," I said, ignoring the quaver in my voice, "you're getting a little old for this kind of romp. Time to retire, some quiet little planet, rob a bank or two when you get bored. Leave this interstellar suicide to the kids."

But, even as I muttered to myself, I was hard at work. It's okay to bitch as long as you are doing something constructive at the same time. I hauled myself down from the pole and kicked off in a neat arc that ended over the emergency exit. Which was labeled,

by some moronic civil servant no doubt, EMERGENCY EXIT. Fine for me, but of little use to anyone on the inside trying to find their way out. There was a large handle in the center of the door labeled PULL. I did. It swung open neatly and I drifted into the airlock beyond. Entrance effected, troubles over.

Others might think that — but not me. I'm not called the Stainless Steel Rat for nothing. No sir. I know how to get through stainless steel walls and come out on the other side alive. Just ahead of me was an inviting, shining metal lever. Pull that once, the outer door would close, air would rush into the lock, and when the pressure was equalized the inner door would open automatically. Very simple. And very suspicious. Floating in the center of the airlock, touching nothing, I opened the toolbag on my hip and took out a multimeter. I jammed one prod into the handle — then touched the other to the wall close by.

There was a colorful display of sparks and the readout displayed 25,000 volts. Very interesting. Mark 2500 was expecting me.

I PUT AWAY THE METER and extracted a thick pad of insulation. Electricity in this quantity should be treated with respect. I wrapped the pad around the handle and tugged. The door slowly opened. I waited until it gaped wide before triggering a blast on my suit rockets. A strong one. Because as soon as I was past the door I would be in the grip of the satellite's gravity field.

This shot me forward — and I began to drop as I came into the ship. But I hit the deck well away from the entrance and did a shoulder roll, coming up on my feet, fists clenched, ready for anything.

"Are you the new troubleshooter?" a voice said. I spun about to face a gloomy looking man dressed in a soiled boilersuit.

"No," I said, smiling warmly. "I am Santa and I'm here just in time for Christmas."

He just gusted at that, a serious type, his expression one of darkest gloom. He pointed over his shoulder with his thumb. "They're waiting for you in the rec hall. Got a message you were coming. This way." He turned and, almost as an afterthought, called back to me. "My name's Corona. Tech fifth class."

"My pleasure," I said, but if he heard me he gave no answer. I was really beginning to feel welcome. I peeled off the spacesuit and trotted after him.

Things were much better in the rec hall. There were about a dozen people waiting there and they burst out clapping when I entered.

"You're welcome indeed," I said inclining my head up in a courtly manner. "As you have heard, I am here to save you." My voice hardened. "I would also like to know how you heard I was coming — since the kooky computer controls all of the radio circuits in this satellite."

A handsome woman with gorgeous red hair held up a portable radio. "With this," she said. "If we put it in front of a viewport we can receive signals from the rescue ships out there. We just can't answer."

"You can now. I have a souped-up transceiver with me. Might I ask your name?"

"Trina. Deputy Commander of the station."

"And where may I ask is the Commander?"

She looked at me and her nostrils widened. "Didn't you do your homework? He was in the shuttle that crashed and started this whole mess."

"I know only what I am told." My nostrils flared to match hers. "Now would you mind introducing me to whoever is in charge now?"

"An emergency committee of three. Myself, Dr. Putz here, and Commander Stark. Dr. Putz is Assistant Science Officer, while Commander Stark is Second in Command of security on the satellite."

"Assistant, Second in Command," I miffed. "I don't usually deal with the hired help. Where are their bosses?"

"Our superiors were killed in the same crash of the shuttle," Commander Stark growled. "What you see is what you get, diGiz."

"There is no time for petty squabbles," I told them. "I am here to save you. So you will give me all the help I need. Is that correct...?"

The emergency committee drew to one side and muttered to each other. They reached agreement quickly enough and Trina spoke for them all. "Agreed. You will pass your instructions through Technician Corona."

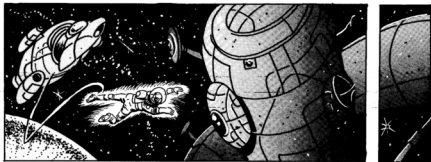
Corona's grunt hopefully indicated agreement. I nodded sagely. "A wise decision. The first thing I will need is a deck plan of this satellite."

"That's what they always ask for first," Corona said gloomily. He passed over a thick and dog-eared volume of plans. It was burned a bit at the edges and splattered with something that might have been blood. I had a dark suspicion. "Been used before?" I asked.

He nodded. "Four times." There was little humor in his smile. "Maybe five will be lucky."

"Thanks." I flipped through the pages. "You don't happen to remember how the other attempts on the computer were made, do you?"

"Sure do." He took the volume from me and flipped through it. He had a good, if morbid, memory and quickly indicated the various routes my predecessors had taken. Through the storage bays or radio room,



power central, food supplies, oxygen scrubbing, every way possible. Good intelligent plans — and all of them had failed.

"Any idea how you are going to go?" he asked, handing the plans back. I had none — but I wasn't going to admit this to the hired help.

"I have an idea, but I must perfect it. First some more information. See if you can pry the good Dr. Putz away from that five liter glass of beer and ask him he would be so kind as to join me for a moment."

"You wanted to see me?" Putz asked, wiping foam from his moustache with the back of his hand.

"If you would be so kind. As Assistant Science Officer you should know a thing or two about the Mark 2500 computer — shouldn't you?"

"Of course. In theory that is. I had nothing to do with the day to day operation."

"Even better. Would you then be kind enough to explain to me how a computer, which is nothing but a great big adding machine, could possibly go insane?"

"A good question," he said, pawing his jaw in deep concentration. "I have given that much thought and come up with a possible answer. The Mark 2500 series have a memory capacity in excess of ten to the fourteenth power. That is rather large. As I am sure you know, the human brain has a memory capacity of ten to the twelfth..."

"Which means the computer is far smarter than a human being?"

"Not in the slightest. I said memory, not intelligence. A computer is just a complex machine programmed for certain functions. But with that capacity for memory it is certainly capable of intelligence. Perhaps some internal shortcircuiting took place. This is just speculation, mind you. If the same accident that saw intelligence rise in animals billions of years ago, if that accident occurred in a machine brain..."

"I follow your point. There is the possibility that it could grow, learn, develop a personality. A machine mind without morals, love or hate. Coldly efficient..."

"This is just speculation, mind you!"

"I realize that, Dr. Putz, and appreciate the help. But it is almost academic as well. I think it is more important to know just what the machine can do, not why it is doing it."

"It can do anything it wants aboard this satellite. It controls every function, every operation. If it wanted it could shut off our air, poison our food, destroy us in a hundred different ways."

"But it hasn't?"

"No. And that is most interesting. It has sealed the major airlocks and will allow no one in or out. It has cut off our radio communication. But other than that it has made no attempt to harm us. Though, of course, it has defended itself by killing those who were sent against it."

"Aren't you forgetting the landing shuttle that it wiped out?"

"I meant since that time. There was, perhaps, a good reason for destroying the shuttle." He looked around nervously. I leaned close and lowered my voice.

"You wouldn't care to expand on that point, would you, doctor?"

"Again, just a theory. The three senior officers in command of this satellite were on that shuttle. If the computer wished to take charge that would certainly be a good way to start."

"It would indeed," I said, my brain whirling with thoughts. Pieces were beginning to fall into place. "Now, if you don't mind, Dr. Putz, I am a little tired after my adventurous journey here. I intend to lie down and study these plans and will confer with you all in eight hours time. Will you please convey that message to your associates? Thank you."

I spun on my heel and exited. Corona was waiting by the door.



"We'll meet here in eight hours. I'll have a plan by then and I'll let you know what I need. All right?"

"You're the boss," he said, shambling off, then calling back over his shoulder. "Plenty of empty transit passenger cabins on M deck if you want to shut your eyes while you are making your plans."

"Just what I had in mind." I picked up my spacesuit and the rest of my equipment and headed for the elevators. I punched for M deck, exited there — and went straight to the emergency stairs.

"Well done, Jim," I congratulated myself, since no one else was there to do this job. Nor did I want anyone there at this moment. "As Dr. Putz said, this computer is a smarty. It must be eavesdropping on everything said in the public rooms."

It might also be eavesdropping on me in the stairwell I realized. And shut up. It should have a hard job listening to my thoughts. Corona had revealed that all of the previous attempts on the computer had been known by him. So they must have been discussed, planned in public. And been overheard. Well, that wasn't going to happen to Slippery Jim diGriz, not for nothing named Slippery! I had slipped away, the computer would not be expecting an assault yet. By the time it woke up to what was happening I would have put it to sleep forever. But how?

I SAT DOWN ON THE METAL STAIRS and flipped through the deck plans. The central computer was located, as you might very well imagine, in the center of the satellite. Which was ideal for the computer, but not so good for anyone trying to sneak up on it. I

traced the various courses the other hopefuls had taken. All very imaginative. And all ending in the same way. And all complex. There had to be simple and quick way to get near the thing. But there wasn't. Instead of all the doors, hatches, floors and entrances, I wanted to get directly to it. Bore a hole straight down with a super laser? Good idea. Only I didn't have a super laser. I started to throw the plans aside — then pulled them back when something caught my eye. Of course! The hole was already there!

Drilled right through the satellite. From top to bottom. Passing right by the computer room. I permitted myself a chuckle of admiration and pleasure. You're a bright boy, Jim! I traced the opening with my finger.

The elevator shaft.

Nor would I make any attempt to reach the computer by elevator. That would be suicide. It was the shaft alone that I wanted. The magnetized boots on my spacesuit would get me there. To think is to act. Fast and smooth, that's the Stainless Steel Rat's motto.

I pulled on the spacesuit, checked my equipment, then went down the stairs to the lowest deck. The deckplans came in handy then because this was a machinery level. I slipped between the humming generators and clattering machines, working my way towards the bottom of elevator shaft 19. It was there, right where it was indicated on the diagram, with its number painted directly over the inspection hatch. All going according to plan!

I unclipped the hatch and lowered it gently to the deck, then poked my head through. Darkness. My light flashed up the shaft and I was aware of the bottom of the elevator far above. The way was clear to computer central. I did not stand around pondering the dangers, but went instantly into action — climbing inside and raising my boot and pressing it against the wall where it clung to the steel with magnetic cohesion. The gravity here was oriented towards the base of the shaft which made it difficult. But not impossible. I hung head downwards from the boots, uncomfortable but necessary. I switched off the current in the bottom boot and shifted it above the other. Current on, magnetized, stuck there. Then the other boot, repeating the process over and over.

And slowly, one clumsy step at a time I rose up the shaft.

It was hard work and tiring work. I was perhaps halfway there and panting loudly when I had to rest. I hung from the boots, gasping in air — when I heard it. A humming sound. What did it mean? With sudden and horrified realization I pointed my light upwards.

The computer had detected my presence in the shaft.

It was sending the elevator down to crush me!

I permitted myself one instant of panic, to promote the flow of adrenal, then clamped down hard with my mental control. No panic, Jim! You've been in tight spots before. Think — don't react blindly.

I couldn't retreat and reach the bottom

of the shaft in time. I would be crushed if I tried. Could I force open one of the doors and get out at a different level? An unknown; I had no time to make experiments. So if I couldn't go down, or out the side — there was only one direction left. Up! I would have to tackle the elevator itself!

Which was easier said than done. Everything depended upon perfect timing rather than on speed. No panic, Jim. You know what must be done. My mind was calm as I leaned back and coolly examined the bottom of the dropping elevator. Closer now. Power off on my left boot, that's it. Hang backwards from the other boot and raise the left one over my head. The elevator dropped, appearing to go faster and faster. Right on top of me....

It was bang, crunch — and it almost killed me. As the metal bottom of the elevator hit my upraised boot I magnetized it and turned off the other one. My knee buckled at the impact and I slammed against the bottom of the elevator — then dropped back to hang, dazed, from the single boot.

There was no time for this kind of suicidal behavior. Despite my muddled head I raised by other boot; it clamped tight. Then I bent at the waist, my hand with the thermal lance outstretched. The intensely hot flame roared out, slicing through the steel floor like butter. I moved it in a quick circle, trying to forget the bottom of the shaft that was rushing towards me.

THERE WAS A CREAK OF METAL and I pulled aside just as the circle of metal flooring dropped free and fell. Now! I let go of the thermal lance, ignoring the bash it gave me in the face as it swung from its safety line about my wrist. Reaching up and seizing the metal edge of the hole in my gloves. Switching off my boots at the same instant.

For an endless moment I dangled in the shaft. Then, with a single spasmodic contraction of my muscles, I hauled myself up and into the elevator.

Just as it hit the bottom of the shaft.

I just sat there for a few moments after that. Breathing deeply — and enjoying the fact that I was still breathing. Looking down at the buffers and the floor of the shaft just below the opening in the floor. I would have been squashed like a beetle in another second. That didn't bear thinking about.

"On your feet, James!" I ordered. "No rusty collection of silicon chips is going to out-think you. Act! Now! While the thing is still off its guard. You are but moments away from victory!"

I acted. Pressing the button that sent the elevator back up the shaft. Would it work? It did. The computer was not in command for the moment. I tore open the door of the control panel and counted the floors as we rose. Just a few more... there!

A blast from the thermal lance fused the controls and the elevator shuddered to a stop. Even as it did this I was pushing open the hatch in the roof and climbing out. The door to the computer room was just before me!

I did not waste time with delicacies. I simply burned off the door hangers and kicked the thing down. And dived behind it into

the room, the lance still flaring, ready for anything.

It was anticlimax. The room-sized computer just chuckled to itself. Some memory discs whirled; lights flashed on and off in interesting patterns. It appeared to be completely unaware of my presence. I straightened up and turned off the flame.

I HAD PENETRATED TO THE CENTER of its brain. It had no receptors here. Perhaps. I was still wary. I walked forward cautiously — then stopped when I saw the small metal box of circuitry in the center of the floor. A single red light glowed on its top. A large cable emerged from its side and squirmed across the floor to vanish into the computer. I leaned forward cautiously and unplugged the cable. The red light went out. I lifted the box and bounced it in my hand.

"I thought it might be something like this," I said aloud. "End of the insane computer." I walked to the control console and pushed down on the access key.

"Yes?" the calm, mechanical voice of the Mark 2500 said.

"You have sealed all of the airlocks?"

"Yes. I was issued overriding instructions."

"Cease this operation at once. And cancel any other abnormal instructions. Understand?"

"This operation is already completed. Normal operation resumed."

"Very good." I climbed out of my spacesuit. "Send out an announcement for all persons aboard the satellite to assemble in the rec room now."

I took the little metal box, but left all of my equipment, except for my pistol, then started towards the hall with the announcement booming in my ears from every loudspeaker I passed. The technician, Corona, was waiting outside the hall when I came up, his eyebrows lifted inquisitively.

"Are they inside?" I asked. He nodded.

"Good," I said, handing him my pistol. "As far as I know this is the only weapon aboard the satellite. Stop by the door and cover me. I may need help. Do you know how to use this thing?"

"You bet! You can count on me."

"Good," I said, entering the hall, my flank protected, I faced the murmuring crowd that was jammed in there and raised my hands for silence. "It's all over," I told them. "The danger is at an end."

"You've disconnected the insane computer?" Trina asked... awestruck?

"No," I responded sweetly, "I just disconnected this." I held up the metal box for them all to see. "Computers can't go crazy because they are not sane to begin with. They are not human. But they can be programmed to appear insane — which is what happened here. With this."

THERE WAS A UNIVERSAL GASP, and Trina spoke the thought that possessed them all.

"Programmed? Someone caused all this. But who...?"

"Why not you?" I asked sweetly. "Your boss died in the crash of the shuttle. Perhaps

you caused the crash in order to get his job. I looked at your personal record. You're very ambitious...."

"I'm also mechanically illiterate!" she snapped back. "Didn't you see that in my records? I'm an administrator, not an electrician. I couldn't possibly have designed or built that thing."

"True, true," I muttered, then spun on my heel and held the control box in front of Commander Stark's face. "But the commander here is no electronic dummy. His boss also died in the crash. You did it, Stark, to get his job!"

"Are you out of your teeny-tiny?" Stark sneered. "If you had looked at my file you would have seen that I volunteered for early retirement. I should have been home by now. The last thing I want is a better position. I just want out."

"Then we have the killer!" I shouted, pointing to the cowering Dr. Putz. "The assistant science officer, so jealous of his superior that he killed him. Then tried to palm me off with a dumb story about how a computer could go mad. He, a scientist, should have known better than to try and sell me that bill of goods. But he knew that someone had programmed the computer to appear to be mad. Himself!"

"You accuse me!" Putz screamed. "I know nothing about machines or computers! I am a geologist! Sent here as an emergency replacement. All I know is how to hit rocks with little hammers."

"Then," I said, jaw dropping more than a little, "none of you did it — who did? Who had the technical knowledge for this job? Who knew the plans of the other rescuers, knew their every move so that he could thwart them...?"

I turned about as I said this — and looked into the muzzle of my own gun.

"That's right, you fool!" Corona sneered, the light of madness now visible in those piglike eyes. "I did it! Me, the one they laughed at, gave orders! Well they aren't laughing or giving orders any more. I showed them...."

"Give me that gun," I said, stepping forwards as the others quailed back.

"Take it!" he screamed. And pulled the trigger.

THEN LOOKED DOWN AT THE GUN, pulling the trigger over and over again when nothing happened. My first caught him hard on the jaw and he slumped to the deck, unconscious. I bent and picked up the gun — and smiled.

"Unloaded," I told the gaping audience. "I was sure from the very beginning that someone had programmed the computer to do all this dirty work. And whoever did that programming had to still be aboard the satellite. Therefore, since you were all under suspicion, I could take no one into my confidence. Hence the accusations — and the unloaded gun. Corona seemed the obvious suspect, but I just wanted him to prove it himself."

A ragged cheer began, raising quickly in volume. I smiled and bowed acceptance. Accepting as well the impassioned kisses of the ravishing redhead Trina. All this and two million credits too! ■■

Science

for Science Fiction

by John Boardman, Ph.D.

Perennial Corn?

Maize, called by America's first European settlers "Indian corn," and now simply "corn," is America's biggest grain crop. It is extremely efficient at converting solar energy into food, as the Indians knew long before the Europeans landed. They had developed so many different domestic varieties that it was only recently that the wild ancestor was definitely identified: the Mexican grain *Zea diploperennis*.

There is, however, one major difference between *Zea* and domestic corn. *Zea* is a perennial, and yields a crop a year. Corn is an annual; after the stalk has produced its ears in the fall, it dies. Corn has to be planted afresh every spring. Nowadays farmers cannot even save any corn for seed, since almost all farmers plant hybrid varieties that do not breed true. New seed corn must be purchased each spring from the breeders of the hybrids.

There is a possibility, however, that a perennial corn can be developed. This, if feasible, would work a profound change upon American agriculture, which now plants 70 million acres in corn each year, for a total crop of nearly 7 billion bushels. If domestic corn can be crossed with *Zea* to produce a plant that is a perennial like *Zea* but yields as much as corn, then great amounts of time, money, and fuel can be saved. The fuel alone, which is used in plowing and sowing corn, amounts to 2% gallons per acre per year.

Since *Zea* is a plant of the tropics, there is a suspicion that it or a corn-*Zea* hybrid might not adapt so well to the icy winters of the upper Midwest. If so, then the hybrid might be more useful in the tropics, large areas of which have not yet been brought under cultivation so efficiently. But *Zea* seems to do well in the cold Mexican uplands.

Considering the world's need for both food and fuel, plant geneticists have been handed a real challenge.

New Scientist, 8 January 1981

Solar System Maps

We have recently discovered that it is possible to acquire rather attractive maps of the moon and planets from the US Geological Survey. You can request a catalog of lunar and planetary maps from them (see address below); we provide a brief description of a few maps, their order numbers, and the price here. Orders must be accompanied by check or money order payable to US Geological Survey in US funds; a surcharge of 25% is added for orders outside the US, Canada, and Mexico.

I-1083 Geologic Map of Mars: A very attractive four-color map of Mars divided into geological provinces. Scale 1:25 million, 38" x 48", \$1.50

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I-903 Reference Mosaic of Mercury: Composite photography of the third of Mercury's surface photographed to date. Scale 1:10 million, 23" x 26", \$1.25

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I-1239, I-1240, I-1241, I-1242 Preliminary Pictorial Map of Callisto, Preliminary Pictorial Map of Io, Preliminary Pictorial Map of Europa, Pictorial Preliminary Map of Ganymede: These are maps of the listed areas of the Jovian moons which were photographed by Voyagers 1 and 2. The differences among the four are quite remarkable. The few named features are labelled. Scale is 1:25 million. \$1.75 each. (Black and white.)

East of the Mississippi, write:

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Branch of Distribution / Eastern Region
1200 South Eads St.
Arlington, VA, 22202

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Note: SPI does not carry planetary maps. Please do not write us with any requests.

Greg Costikyan

The Great Explosion?

Most astronomers are convinced that the greatest explosive event that can occur presently is a supernova. As the final stage in the life of a large star, in a few days the star can be completely ripped apart and its matter and energy strewn out into the universe in a titanic explosion. A typical supernova, during this explosion, puts out as much energy as the other 100 billion stars in the galaxy together.

It would be difficult to imagine a greater explosion than this, except for the "Big Bang" from which the universe originated some 15 to 20 billion years ago. However, there is some indirect evidence indicating that on very rare occasions an explosion can take place that releases even more energy than a supernova.

This evidence began to accumulate over a hundred years ago, when the American astronomer Benjamin A. Gould (1824-1896) pointed out that there is an interesting array of bright young stars in this part of the galaxy. This group, called "Gould's belt," in-

cludes most of the bright stars that we see in the night sky. They are mostly hot, bright, blue-white giant stars which are using up their fuel much faster than our sun does and can therefore be expected to have shorter lifetimes.

Gould's belt consists of a system of stars with a diameter of 4200 light years and a thickness of 600 light years, whose center is about 300 light years away in the direction of the southern constellation Puppis. (The Solar System is thus within Gould's belt, but is not a part of it, being very much older.) The equatorial plane of this flattened disc of stars makes an angle of about 20° with the plane of the galaxy. The youngest stars in this aggregation seem to be closest to its center; the oldest stars in Gould's belt are about 60 million years old. The belt is expanding at a rate of about 10 kilometers per second.

Not only is the sun near the center of Gould's belt, but it is also near the center of a slowly expanding ring of hydrogen gas which was discovered in 1972 by the Canadian astrophysicists V.A. Hughes and D. Rutledge. This belt of gas is an ellipse whose center is about 900 light years away, and whose longest diameter is about 4200 light years. It is expanding at the rate of 6 kilometers per second. Interstellar dust seems to be distributed in a comparable pattern.

If the current expansions of these systems of stars, gas, and dust are traced back, it appears that they began, not far from the sun, about 65 million years ago. If this expansion is the result of an ancient explosion, it would have sent great shock waves through interstellar matter. Such shock waves would concentrate this matter in some places, and the greater gravitational attraction of these concentrations would pull in yet more matter. Eventually new stars would be formed — the stars of Gould's belt.

Nothing else is known in our galaxy comparable to Gould's belt. However, such rings of expanding matter are found in other galaxies. Around their rims are supernova remnants, suggesting that these explosions might have been triggered by the much greater explosion that created the ring of expanding matter.

While astronomers are investigating the remnants of a catastrophic explosion that happened about 65 million years ago, paleontologists have been looking for just such a catastrophe. It was about 65 million years ago that a great and sudden change took place in the earth's flora and fauna. Entire orders of animals, from microscopic forms of ocean life up to the dinosaurs, were wiped out in, by geological standards, a very short time. The evidence suggests a sudden lowering of earth's temperature, but far too short a period of time to bring on an ice age. A short spate of heavy radiation from a nearby astronomical catastrophe could have brought this about. Land plants could have survived as seeds. Insects and creatures which eat them would survive because insects can survive anything. Birds could forage over large distances for such food as might be available. But the dinosaurs and plesiosaurs at the top of the food chain would have been doomed.

Monsters in the Sky, Paolo Maffei, 1976

Facts for Fantasy

by Susan Schwartz, Ph.D.

Charlemagne's Daughters

Though Charlemagne sent his sons away from the palace in order to train them for independent action as royal administrators, he kept his daughters close by his side. He refused to allow them to marry, but tolerated their love affairs and illegitimate children rather than lose their companionship. Whenever he sat down to eat in any of his palaces, he never took a meal without them. Historians of Charlemagne's court record that at such dinners, Charlemagne's three favorite daughters — Berta, Rotrud, and Gisla — were characteristically present. Only afterward does he mention Liurgard, the queen, and his other daughters.

While his boys were brought up austere, too valuable to be treated like toys, the daughters were encouraged to dress as elaborately as they liked. Theodrada, another daughter, is described as wearing precious stones on her feet, hands, seams of her dress, her temples, and her breasts. Nor was this splendor for some major court ceremony, for Theodrada displayed her jewelry at a hunt.

The Carolingian Empire, by Heinrich Fichtenau, Harper Torchbooks, 1964

Romans of the New World

This was the name that the historian Francis Parkman gave to the Iroquois Indians. No group of Indians in the American Northeast affected the developing colonies of Europeans more. With Dutch and English-made firearms that the Iroquois acquired in the 17th Century, an alliance of five Iroquois tribes went east into the maritime provinces of Canada and west as far as the Illinois River. They crushed many of their traditional Algonkian-speaking enemies and took under subjection even some Iroquois-speakers who did not belong to their league. Since the Algonkians allied with the French in Canada, the Iroquois allied with the English. They fought on both sides during the War of Independence.

How did they accomplish so much, and who were these Iroquois who had such a profound effect on this country? Originally, they may have come from Cherokee country in Georgia and the Carolinas, or down from the north. In actuality, however, they developed just where the first colonists met them — primarily in upstate New York.

The Iroquois stressed community. In their own villages stood longhouses which could be 25 feet wide and 50 to 100 feet long. These frameworks of saplings, covered with sheets of bark, were subdivided into apartments that were occupied by closely related families. Running down the center of such longhouses were shared fireplaces. Each of the five tribes (who were joined by the Tusca-

roras, as "younger brothers" and semicentils) controlled two or more such villages. The village affairs were supervised by a local council. Above this council was a tribal council which met in the largest villages. These tribes were banded together in the "Great League of Peace," the confederacy which was governed by a council of fifty sachems who represented all the tribes. These men were elected by the clan mothers, who could not themselves sit on the council but who could recall representatives they considered unsuitable.

In central position and keepers of the league's fire, as their name implied, were the Onondagas. The four principal tribes in the League were the Cayugas, the Oneidas, the Senecas, and the Mohawks. At the beginning of the 18th Century, Iroquois territory extended from southern Ontario to Tennessee.

It is said that their League, with their elected sachems, had an effect on the American Articles of Confederation and the subsequent Constitution. It is certain the Iroquois had a profound respect for General — later President — Washington, of whom they created the myth that their gods established one particular paradise just for Washington alone.

League of the Iroquois, Francis Parkman: "The Iroquois Confederacy," *New World Archaeology*, James A. Tuck, W.H. Freeman and Co., 1974

Fire Worship

Before the ancient Iranians considered fire a symbol of the supreme god, it was worshipped for its own sake. This fire-cult was probably one in which all Indo-European people participated. Some of its participants — called Mazdaists — were called *ateshpers*, or fire-worshippers. A title only accorded a few of the princes of Parthia was *fratakara* or fire-maker. Among the magi, or wizards, the *herbedh* or fire-chiefs were eminent. Two fire altars survive until this day, while many *atesh-gah* or places of fire, are preserved in many places.

No matter how highly developed pre-Muslim Iranian religion became, it retained a basic allegiance to fire, with the result that all Iranian rituals stress the glorification of light and how pure it is.

One expression of this belief takes the form of the myth of Atar (fire) within Brahmanism. While Atar is represented as the sun of Ahura Mazda, supreme god of the Iranians, we can suspect that this "son" preceeds the father in mythic belief. Also, he is more than mere flame. As a personification, he brings mankind comfort and the way to live, in addition to wisdom, fertility and a paradise reserved for those who are virtuous. He defends the worlds against the principles of the Evil One, For Atar, the unforgivable sin is to cook dead flesh, which insults the Life Principle.

Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology

Sea-Sickness

Among many African tribes the king was also the high priest, with many rituals binding his life. For example, among the Ewe-speaking people of the slave coasts, the

king was held to be unapproachable by his subjects. He was allowed out of his dwelling to bathe or to do other things only at night. The sole people who might speak with him were three elders and his personal representative, the "visible king," but even they had to sit on oxhide with their backs turned to him. He could not see horses or Europeans, and he was strictly forbidden to look upon the sea.

This prohibition is widespread. The king of Dahomey may not look out at the sea, nor may the Guinean kings of Loango and Great Adra. To the northwest of Dahomey, Eyoo priests threaten the people and the king with death if they ever see it. In Senegal, the people of Cayor believe that if their king looks upon the sea, he will die within a year. He may not even cross a river (the chiefs of Mashiandland, particularly among the Runkwi and the Nyadiri also suffer this stricture). When one chief had to cross the river, he was blindfolded and carried across as his people shouted and sang. Had he merely walked across, he would have — they said — been blinded or died. Certainly, he would have lost his power. In Madagascar too, the kings may not cross rivers or sail.

The Golden Bough, Sir J.G. Frazer, MacMillan, 1969

Siva

The Indian god Siva is the head of an ascetic religion. He is called an Isvara, a Lord and Master. While he wears the cord of the high Brahman caste, Siva is also the patron of people without status — vampires and demons. He is also in charge of ascetics who have repudiated all the classes of the world. The Jains called Siva *digambara*, or "clothed with space." Though he is described as naked, sometimes he wears a necklace of skulls.

Hindu art gives Siva (or Shiva) many different aspects. When it anthropomorphizes him, he appears with four arms. The two upper arms hold a drum and a doe; the two lower ones give and reassure. His forehead is sometimes marked with three stripes, and a third eye lies in its center. His hair is sometimes tangled and sometimes knotted into the ascetic's hairdress, and is decorated with a crescent moon and a trident. He rides on the bull Nandi.

Siva is a godly paradox. He destroys like time, yet is also merciful. While personally indifferent to pleasures, he is worshipped as the male generative principle. In Siva we can see the Buddhist and Hindu principle that the same thing must underlie good and evil, wretchedness and salvation. Sivaism destroys illusions and attempts to teach its followers to enter *lila*, the great game of life and joy. In this aspect, Siva is sometimes portrayed as Nataraja, lord of the dance.

Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology



Film & Television

OUTLAND

Executive Producer: Stanley O'Toole

Producer: Richard A. Roth

Director: Peter Hyams

Screenplay: Peter Hyams

Music: Jerry Goldsmith

Cast

Sean Connery	O'Neil
Peter Boyle	Sheppard
Frances Sternhagen	Lazarus
James B. Sikking	Montone

With each new movie writer/director Peter Hyams seems to get a little bit better. His latest production, *Outland*, seems to fit in nicely. Better than all of his other films, lacking many of his past mistakes, this new science fiction release, which seems to be basically *High Noon on Jupiter*, is a good, solid piece of summer fare. It is well worth a viewing, and is actually even better a second time.

Outland takes place on Io, a volcanic moon of Jupiter. Here, the Con-Am Corporation maintains a titanium mining operation. Everyone working there signs up for one-year shifts, unless they die on duty. The problem is that more and more people seem to be dying each month.

This fact upsets the mining operation's security marshal, O'Neil (Sean Connery), who decides to find out why the mortality rate is rising. Everyone on Io merely shrugs at the question of the deaths, answering that "people get like that here. Some guys just can't take it." The answer is not good enough for O'Neil.

Below the surface of Connery's character, we discover a complex set of motivations. He has begun to believe that he is among those who can't take it. Assigned from one company operation to another, each tour worse than one before it, he loses his son and his wife, and seems to be losing his future. He is a man without allies, without friends. Connery's subdued, quiet performance reveals a man who has come to the end of the line. Older and unsure of himself though he may be, he does decide to make a stand.

On the surface, *Outland* is a story of drug abuse, corporate greed and insensitivity, and typical John Wayne western-film righteousness. Below the obvious, however, the film explores the terrors of identity loss, mechanization, and dehumanization.

In his last five films Connery has left behind the Bond image for good, revealing an ever increasing range as a dramatic actor. Here he plays a character who is far more vulnerable than any other in his past experience. O'Neil's triumph at the film's end is made more dramatic simply because we know he isn't invincible. He is human; he bleeds, makes mistakes, is reckless, gets tired, is insensitive (at times), and can't even play a very good game of racquet ball.

He is, at the same time, courageous, loyal, honest and strong. He is strong in a physical sense, of course, but what garners him the audience's respect is his strength of character. He could easily do his job, serve out his year, and get a better tour of duty somewhere else merely by keeping his mouth shut and not making waves. But he is willing to buck the corrupt status quo, and he fights for what he thinks is right. His morality is outmoded. The company does not want him to stop the drug flow into Io. The workers who are dying from the drugs don't want their flow interrupted. Still, O'Neil acts because he knows what is happening is wrong. He is a hero because he goes up against overwhelming odds, knowing that he is probably going to lose. He must make the attempt, though, because he knows no other way to act and because, by that point, the only thing he has left is his honor; he refuses to let his integrity slide away from him the way the rest of his life has.



Besides the intricate workings of O'Neil's character, however, the film has plenty to offer those who aren't primarily concerned with the people in their science fiction films. *Outland* contains a wealth of impressive special effects. Jupiter is perfect. Looming in the background, it is exactly represented down to its newly discovered ring. Io, however, is the film's true masterpiece. The Con-Am 27 mining operation is one of the most exactly detail-perfect miniatures ever built for an American film. More impressive than the exterior of the mining operation, though, are the extensive sets which make up its insides. As Hyams envisioned it, there are no ray guns, lucite domes, conveyor belts or perma-pressed jump suits in evidence. Living space is at a premium, forcing the workers to herd into small functional units, which after a while begin to take on an almost penitentiary atmosphere.

Hyams explained: "The mining colony is a location, not a subject. A frontier is a hard, gritty, unpleasant place to be, and the people building it are always looking over their shoulders rather than ahead. Trying to stay alive and putting up with hell while making some quick, big money is the kind of commercial venture Con-Am #27 is involved in."

Hyams' vision is complete. The workers' areas are tight and unfilled. Their quarters,

dominated by the bunk area, are nothing more than layers of metallic, horizontal cages, one row piled atop the other, resembling pet store animal cubicles. (The design called for the beds to be made of thermal foam so they could be hosed down.) It is like living in an aircraft carrier-sized submarine, one which never surfaces to see the sun.

The layout of the mining operation is designed functionally and logically. The worker's private quarters have no extras, no luxuries. Only the general manager (Peter Boyle) has space to breathe. Even though the marshal has some extra room in his quarters, it is the general manager who is the king.

It is just this type of difference which is played upon throughout the film. The manager has casual clothing, a large, comfort-filled office, money, whores and power. The marshal has a uniform, small quarters, low pay, a run-away wife, and middle age insecurities. Everything on the surface of these two characters points to the general manager as being the better off of the two, which is why one has to look beneath the surface to examine their inner qualities to find the cowardice of corruption on the one hand and the strength of integrity on the other. In an age of the anti-hero, it is delightful to see a film hero torn with indecision and yet willing to take a moral stand and fight for what is right.

Despite the introspective nature of the sub-plots, *Outland* is not a slow-moving film by any means. The action is constant; the thrills and surprises are many. Despite its science fiction setting, *Outland*, like *Alien*, is really a mainstream film. *Alien* was a horror film; *Outland* a western. This is not a complaint, however.

Like science fiction literature, science fiction films have a tendency to rely on the typical simplistic hardware and conventions of the genre, rather than mold real characters with convincing motivations. This depth of character has always been left for the mainstream film makers. Now that science fiction and fantasy are becoming more and more a part of the mainstream, however, the audiences are demanding greater respect for the characters' emotional levels, and intelligence from the filmmakers.

Outland is a good movie, and not just for science fiction fans. Its success will undoubtedly inspire a few tired, low-grade imitations. Hopefully, it will inspire a few more solid, interesting and entertaining films as well.

Christopher John.

ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK

Producer: Larry Franco & Debra Hill

Director: John Carpenter

Screenplay: John Carpenter & Nick Castle

Music: John Carpenter (in association with Alan Howarth)

Cast

Kurt Russell	S Snake Plissken
Lee Van Cleef	Bob Hawk
Ernest Borgnine	Cabbie
Donald Pleasance	President of the US
Isaac Hayes	The Duke of New York
Season Hubley	Chock Full O' Huts Girl
Harry Dean Stanton	"Brain"
Adrienne Barbeau	Maggie

After the success of the small-budget horror film, *Halloween*, everyone keenly awaited to see what director John Carpenter would do next. When the movie, *The Fog* came out, cries were raised that Carpenter's career was over; those of little faith announced that he was a one-trick director who had already shot his bolt. These people had obviously forgotten his earlier works, such as *Assault on Precinct 13*, and *Elvis*. They must have also been extremely surprised when his newest film *Escape from New York* was released.

Escape takes place in 1997, a time when the island of Manhattan has been turned into a penal colony. Escape from this maximum security prison is impossible; the tunnels have been sealed and the bridges mined and walled. The Statue of Liberty has become a guard tower from which infra-red goggled officers can blast escaping prisoners on sight. Radar and rocket-firing helicopters track the island constantly, forcing the three million criminals inside to prey on each other for survival.

Into the decaying remains of New York is sent Snake Plissken; his mission is to rescue the President of the United States after Air Force One is sabotaged and purposely crashed in the center of the island. The President is carrying a tape cassette crucial to the survival of world peace (there has already been at least one more World War). The catch is that the tape must be presented to the Russians and Chinese at a summit conference within 24 hours, or the threat of another World War is almost certain. Plissken, both a war hero and a famous master criminal (everyone who comes across him in New York greets him with: "Snake Plissken. I thought you were dead.") is offered amnesty if he can go in, rescue the President, and bring both him and the tape out safely, inside of the 24-hour time limit. To insure his continued co-operation, two microscopic explosives are implanted in Snake's main arteries which will kill him instantly if they are allowed to detonate.

The film is fast-paced and logically developed. Snake invades New York by glider, landing atop the World Trade Center. From then on, his next 22 hours are a hell of sewers, fights, and back-alley chases. Surrounded by rats, cannibals, and three million hardened criminals, he struggles to save the President and win his freedom.

Escape is Carpenter's best work to date, much more entertaining than *The Fog*. He has taken the old "one-man-might-succeed-where-an-army-couldn't" storyline and has

decorated it with a fine cast and an extremely well thought out collection of sets and locations. (Most of the film was not shot in New York, but no one would ever be able to tell.) He has produced one of the best straight out action/adventure films of the summer.

Carpenter's vision of New York is a bleak, fire-lit one, the entire film taking place either at night, or inside poorly illuminated buildings. Very few sets were actually constructed for the film, although those which were are incredibly believable and elaborate. The central control center for the United States Police Force is more than the usual display of flashing lights and computers. Working video monitors offering three-dimensional readouts adorn the headquarters, and other recognizable bits of hard and software blend together to give the center a solid, functional look. By not setting the story too far in the future, Carpenter's presentation of things to come feels more believable simply through the high recognition values of known sights in the city. Coupled with the sets which make up the massive wall supposedly surrounding New York, Carpenter lulls one's disbelief in a rather outrageous plot situation.

Escape is not a special effects picture, however. Its main concern is with the people involved. Relying on a number of performers he has used before, Carpenter creates a realistic interplay among his characters. As usual, his bit players are a trifle too wooden, but they are on and off the screen quickly, doing little damage to the flow of the picture. For instance, in the opening sequences, there are a number of dully delivered lines from some of the secondary actors. Such moments are forgotten, however, when Kurt Russell and Lee Van Cleef exchange their pointed witticisms and ripostes. Carpenter has a talent for showcasing his stars which shines throughout *Escape*.

Another talent Carpenter has in abundance is his ability to inject humor into a dark situation without breaking the pace of his film. It worked well in *Halloween*; it works even better in *Escape*. The continuing "I thought you were dead" routines and the character of Cabbie (Ernest Borgnine) show Carpenter's ease with, and yet tight control over, humorous elements. Both of these running bits are used carefully through the picture and offer a necessary change of pace, as any good bit of continuing humor should do in a serious drama.

Of course, like any picture of this kind, *Escape from New York* is not a classic. It is solid summer entertainment of unusually high caliber. By not pretending to be more than it is, but by also not settling for any less than it could be, *Escape* becomes an exciting, fast-moving drama, the likes of which we haven't seen in years. Using a new, imaginative setting for what seemed to be a tired plot line, Carpenter has presented us with one of the better films of the summer.

Christopher John

DRAGONSLAYER

Producer: Hal Barwood

Director: Matthew Robbins

Screenplay: Hal Barwood & Matthew Robbins

Music: Alex North

Special Effects Supervisor (British): Brian Johnson

Cast

Peter MacNicol	Galen
Caitlin Clarke	Valerian
Ralph Richardson	Ulrich
John Hallam	Tyrian
Albert Salmi	Greil
Peter Eyre	Casiodorus Rex

After the death knell rang following the release of the simply dismal *Clash of the Titans*, few people expected much from the upcoming Paramount Pictures/Walt Disney production of *Dragonslayer*. Most moviegoers felt *Clash* would prove that stop-frame animation would look spectacular on the big screen and using the newer color film stocks. If anyone could pull off such a feat, they assumed, it would be master stop-frame technician Ray Harryhausen. Unfortunately, he couldn't, and *Clash* went down the drain. Thus, the feeling arose that *Dragonslayer's* dragon would prove to be a fairly mawkish creature.

Luckily, such is not the case. There is no doubt that *Dragonslayer* is destined to be a genre classic; it may be the best giant monster movie made by an American company. (With *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *Dragonslayer* proving so popular, Paramount Pictures should be feeling quite comfortable by the end of the year.)

The film starts at Castle Cragganmore, the home of the world's last enchanter, Ulrich. A delegation of peasants has come to beg his aid in ridding their land of a dragon which has settled in their midst.

The dragon's rage is mollified twice yearly by an offering of young virgins. The victims are chosen by lottery and left chained in a prescribed ritual for the dragon to devour. Those who live in the kingdom are tired of sacrificing their daughters. The problem is that there is no sure way of eradicating the monster. Warriors tried in the past, losing their lives and provoking the beast to massive retaliations.

Some villagers feel that Ulrich can stop the dragon and are willing to take the chance. The king, however, does not care to rouse the beast. While the delegation is with Ulrich, the king's man, Tyrian, appears and slays the ancient wizard. The enchanter's apprentice, Galen, offers to slay the dragon in his master's stead, and leaves with the villagers; during their trek Tyrian slays the boy's servant as a last warning to stay away.

Galen refuses to listen. Armed with Ulrich's most powerful amulet, he attacks the monster's lair, burying it beneath an entire mountain. He is celebrated as a hero, but it turns out he has not slain the dragon. It bursts from its lair and wreaks havoc across the countryside, forcing Galen to face it again, and yet one last time.

There is much more to the story than this, but it would be unfair to reveal it. Barwood and Robbins have taken a simple story line, and added a number of inventive, interesting twists and surprises which would be ruined if mentioned here. There is a lady for Galen, a secret to Ulrich's death, and many surprises, but the most important thing in the film is Vermithrax Pejorative, the dragon.

Vermithrax, a 40-foot, two-ton giant with a 90-foot wingspan, was responsible by itself for a quarter of the film's 16 million dollar budget. Britain's Brian Johnson,

[continued on page 29]



Media

Curse of the Coaxial Cable Creature

The word *television* no longer implies mere commercial pap, as it did a decade ago. Computer links, video games, and cable-movie channels have broadened the medium, bringing it closer to the limits such a tool might have originally inspired. But this diversification brings with it a slightly Orwellian odor — the idea behind it all seems to be to keep you at home, in front of that little, glowing screen... as much as possible.

The fad of home-subscription movie channels — perhaps the largest point of contention in the recent Writer's Guild strike against film studios — offers filmmaking, as an art, both life and death. Before an exploration of this paradox, though, a brief aside on the nature of art and audiences:

One factor in the recent deterioration of the movie-going experience (that is, seeing a film in a theatre) is the brace of viewing habits ingrained by watching television that many audiences bring into the theatre, in effect, playing one game by the rules of another. The incomprehensibility of many current films to many current audiences is, in many cases, due not to the density of a film, but to the Cyclopean TV eyeball audiences insist on retaining as an esthetic filter once inside the theatre. Commercial TV asks little attention in return for its endlessly recycled melodramas and clichéd comedies, because selling products is its central interest. The result, as Pauline Kael pointed out, is that TV babes have an attention span the length of an average commercial, and since all those 60-second messages are identical (and equally ignorable) it never occurs to a TV viewer that one given minute may be more important than another one. While the sponge method works peachy for something as non-demanding as TV, the audience befuddlement that greets any film more cerebrally complex than *Chainsaw Cheerleaders* proves that it is not the road to fulfillment inside a theatre. Movies are not merely "big TV," and therein lies the loophole that makes cable movie services something less than wonderful.

A prime selling point for cable-movie vendors is the operative word *uncut*. Despite contractual clauses guaranteeing for directors editing rights for commercial TV on their own films, the results are nonetheless horrifying. Networks may legally chop out entire sections of a film, rearrange the remaining bits, loop in altered dialogue and salt the resulting Frankensteinian mess with up to 28 commercials per hour. Those who wait to see theatrical movies "for free" on commercial TV ultimately pay up in a far more mind-numbing coinage.

Uncut proved to be a heavy piece of selling artillery to those for whom the solution to substandard movies on TV was finding a way to make viewers pay admission without leaving their houses. Why trudge out in the sleet to see a movie when you could see it — *uncut* — at home?

Cable systems have fairly straightforward advantages. They may readily serve invalids and children. With tape, they make a great reference tool for movie buffs and columnists alike. In a crunch, they are obviously better than nothing. Many home box-offices scoop up features which suffered either truncated runs, or no runs at all, being dumped by their distributors onto overseas markets as a tax loss (as with *Thirst* and *The Ultimate Warrior*, respectively). In this sense, cable may serve the genre completist, but in another, they restrict their own comprehensivity willingly. That one in a moment.

The drawbacks to subscription channels have mostly to do with their poor physical representation of what might have originally been a 70mm, 6-track, Dolbyized extravaganza (like *Alien*). The TV receivers to which such systems must conform offer shrunken, distorted images (due to the size and scanning limitations of a cathode-ray tube), rotten sound (about which manufacturers keep making lavish promises and have, to date, done nothing practical), and the restrictions of TV aspect-ratio, which causes the elongated rectangle of a movie frame to be cropped into a square. With this last, the 70mm, Cinemascope and Panavision formats suffer even more, and in the case of "big-screen" video-beam and other picture-enlarging gimmicks, the problem is the same. That distorted, tiny picture is blown up to bathtub size, and only the viewer's headache *really* gets bigger. It looks okay across the distance of a smoky cocktail lounge, with a scotch or two to smooth away the fuzzy scanning lines.

One prejudice pay/cable and commercial TV have in common regarding movies is a fickleness for current films, a requisite that undercuts true completeness in programming for the former. Frequently, pay/cable is too eager to snatch up *new* films in favor of *recent* films, which languish unseen after their premiere theatrical runs.

Most new films now have cable deals written into their contracts before they ever appear in a theatre; films made exclusively for cable are with us already. These moves are all profit considerations, of course — that theatrical filmgoing seems continually on an endangered species list due to such machinations is another annoying byproduct of what the electronics corporations who crank out all the shiny, new video hardware call progress.

Unless you own a private screening room, you must go OUT to get real movies. While the distractions of the home environment may not detract from *Buck Rogers*, they just might from *Apocalypse Now*, cut or uncut. Movies on TV and movies in theatres might *seem* the same to the people pushing cable-TV, subscription services, and "Z" channels, but the only people to whom they really are the same thing are the indiscriminate.

David J. Schow

Books

Star Drifter, Dale Aycock, Leisure Books, \$1.95
Vampires of Nightworld, David Bischoff, Del Rey Books, \$2.25
Space Doctor, Lee Correy, Del Rey Books, \$2.50
War Games, Karl Hansen, Playboy Press, \$2.50
Homeworld, Wheelworld, Starworld (To the Stars), Harry Harrison, Bantam Books, \$2.25 each
Schrodinger's Cat II: The Trick Top Hat, Robert Anton Wilson, Pocket Books, \$2.50

Among the *Ares* feedback questions is one asking readers to indicate which single category of science fiction and which single category of fantasy they prefer. Thirty-one percent usually choose space opera for SF and sword and sorcery for fantasy. Eleven percent choose "hard SF" and four percent choose "new wave." Feedback game proposals mirror this response; hard SF proposals (*The Human-Kzinti Wars*, *Dragon's Egg*, etc.) continually get lower ratings than trash SF proposals (*Night of the Androids*, *Rescue from the Hive*, etc.). The preferences of "adventure" and simulation gamers seem to run counter to the trends evident in science fiction since Campbell took the helm at *As-tounding* in the thirties and began to turn SF from a pulp genre to a form of literature. At the same time, gaming is bringing thousands of new readers into the science fiction fold; the renaissance of fantasy in SF publishing is largely attributable to the popularity of role-playing games. The trend toward trash is reinforced by the movies, which prefer to do space opera (*Star Wars* and clones) than serious SF (of which there has been a dearth since 2001).

Simultaneously, book publishers are beginning to speak of SF as the male equivalent of gothic romance (this despite the fact that *Star Trek*, fantasy, and feminist SF have brought increasing numbers of women into science fiction in the same way that role-playing games have brought increasing numbers into gaming). There is talk of "formalizing" the genre in the way that romances have been formalized. Laser Books, indeed, took precisely this approach and failed, but it may simply have been before its time. There is a real and increasing danger that science fiction, which was the only pulp genre to escape from its limitations to the status of literature, will undergo a reverse evolution and become, again, nothing more than another form of income-generating garbage.

Ares readers owe it to themselves — and to the literature for which they have some feeling — to reconsider their preferences. Devotees of *D&D* may feel that, in the abstract, sword and sorcery most describes the kind of fantasy they enjoy reading; but is it Conan and Edgar Rice Burroughs who come to mind as great writers of fantasy, or Tolkien, Donaldson, Wolfe, Le Guin, and Bradley? Science fiction gamers may think *Star Wars* is the kind of science fiction they



would like to see, but is E.E. Doc Smith their mentor — or Asimov, Heinlein, Niven, Ellison, or Wilson? In the future, do they want to see *Thorong of the Green Planet* or *The Sword of the Torturer*? Imperium or *Attack of the Mutants*?

This being said, we will proceed to review some space opera, which, after all, is enjoyable if not the be-all and end-all.

All of this is by way of introduction to... no, I'd better not put it that way. All of this is not by way of introduction to, because *Star Drifter* by Dale Aycock is quite an enjoyable little — dare I say it? — space opera; yes, quite enjoyable, and I don't wish to imply that it is caught in the pre-Campbell era or that it is enough to turn one's stomach. Quite the contrary. It is worth reading even if your forte is hard SF, though perhaps new wavers will find it a sterile recapitulation of overdone themes. The peculiarity is that it is published by Leisure Books, one of the smaller publishers in comparison to the giant conglomerates. Aycock is an appealing writer who deserves better distribution than Leisure may be able to provide.

The novel deals with the owner of a small interstellar trading company, threatened with bankruptcy as a result of pressure from the Federation — a sort of combination Ma Bell, Teamsters and Lloyds of London which wants the protagonist to sign up with them. He makes the mistake of falling in love with the heir to a planet, uncovering an interstellar conspiracy designed to impose tyranny on the galaxy, and so on and so on. The importance is not the plot, which is typical space opera, but Aycock's ability to flesh out characters despite slam-bang action and to turn a pretty phrase or two. *Star Drifter* is fun reading.

Karl Hansen's *War Games* is hardly classical space opera; indeed, its sexual themes are such that it could not have been published in the thirties. Nonetheless, it contains enough rapid action and meaningless violence to satisfy even the most frustrated Lensman aficionado. The protagonist is a scion of the rich in a pathetically decadent Terran empire (restricted to the solar system) — so decadent, in fact, that one suspects Hansen is saying "if you think modern America is decadent you ain't seen nothing." There's enough sadomasochism in the novel to choke Catherine the Great's horse (though I've read worse). Its saving grace is Hansen's imagination, which is remarkable. Hansen has given a great deal of thought to the potentials of biological engineering; the results are a series of bizarre and believable alien races bioengineered from human genes and capable of living, for example, in Titan's hydrocarbon atmosphere. Hansen seems well versed in biology and chemistry, though his physics leaves a bit to be desired.

Detrs, the protagonist, kills his parents to avoid their sadistic games and, with the aid of a gem with temporal powers, becomes an interplanetary thief. Eventually he is caught and sentenced to imprisonment; instead, he chooses to join the Empire's equivalent to the Green Berets, fighting a no-win war on Titan. The nature of warfare on Titan is quite reminiscent of Vietnam, and one wonders whether Hansen saw combat there. Detrs loses his precious stone and, as chaos

falls on Titan and the Terrans begin to lose, seaches for a replacement. In the process he slaughters thousands, becomes addicted, goes cold turkey, meets his love and switches sides in the ongoing war. The climax is satisfying, but there's a clear bid for a sequel. (The novel was originally printed as a series of short stories, mostly in *Analogue*, so one presumes that Hansen sees the story as an ongoing serial.)

War Games is involving and evocative; Hansen's descriptions of the Titanian scenery are believable and even lyrical. If, in the final analysis, *War Games* does not rise above the status of — that phrase again — space opera, the reason is that his characters are robots, there's very little warmth, and the protagonist is so bloody miserable it's hard to have much feeling for him. (Incidentally, *War Games* has nothing to do with wargames.)

As long as we are talking of space opera, we should certainly consider Harry Harrison's *To the Stars*, published in three volumes as *Homeworld*, *Wheelworld*, and *Starworld*, since Harrison is both the master satirist of the genre and a practitioner thereof. *To the Stars* can safely be described as "action SF," though the more pejorative term "space opera" should probably be avoided, since the action is not as relentless as space opera requires and since Harrison is apparently trying to write something more.

To the Stars is written in the sparse, neutral style that is often accepted in science fiction as good writing — the sort of style which Asimov, in his later fiction, used so well. The story deals with a class-stratified, totalitarian future in which the elite of Earth have ensnared not only that planet's masses but the rest of the settled planets as well. The protagonist of the three novels is Jan Kulozik, an upper-class engineer who eventually rejects his heritage and becomes one of the leaders of the revolution. The three novels divide logically into three stories: the first is "the man who learned better," in which the protagonist becomes aware of the tyranny of his society. The second is "man against nature," in which Kulozik overcomes the obstacles of the alien world to which he is banished for his rebellion. The last is "the revolution," in which Kulozik, the Israelis and friends overthrow the oppressors and bring freedom to the stars. All three themes are common ones; all are competently handled.

Harrison is best known in the genre for his satiric adventure stories — fast action written with an element of wit. *Bill, the Galactic Hero* and the *Stainless Steel Rat* stories come to mind. It seems clear that Harrison is trying to do something a little different — to write serious (in the sense of non-humorous) science fiction with something to say. Unfortunately, *To the Stars* is nothing more than competent adventure fiction. Harrison's characters are wooden, his prose contains little life, and when he engages in political commentary he generally stoops to the absurd. (The worst offense in this regard is his discussion of racism in America, a subject about which Harrison knows a good deal less than he thinks he knows.) Nonetheless, Harrison is incapable of writing a bad novel, and *To the Stars* is a fairly enjoyable way to kill some time.

Lee Correy (aka G. Harry Stine) writes in another subset of the genre for which I have little regard: super-science. Super-science is, in essence, hard science fiction taken to extremes: fiction in which the ideas and the machinery are all, and in which characterization and story-telling often fall by the wayside. Like space opera, super-science can often make enjoyable reading (witness *Dragon's Egg*) but is not a literature to be taken seriously. Lee Correy is a good enough writer as well as a good enough technologist to overcome the shortcomings of the genre, however; his most super-science of novels, *Star Driver* (about a working Dean Drive) is still enjoyable as a novel.

Space Doctor is, in essence, another "man against nature" novel — though in this case, nature is vacuum, radiation, and the other hazards to be found in geosynchronous orbit.

The hero of *Space Doctor*, Dr. Tom Noels, is the on-site medic during construction of the first Solar Power satellite. He's faced with a unique task; for the first time, hundreds of men and women are working for lengthy periods of time in space, and he must, practically single-handed, develop the field of space medicine to prevent accident and death. His problems range from the trivial — how do you use a bottle-fed intravenous saline solution when there's no gravity to feed the solution into the vein? — to the stuff of legend — how do you save a busted ship whose crew members are slowly dying of asphyxiation? Simultaneously, he must deal with the nuts in the federal bureaucracy — who want to close down the entire operation because of a minor mechanical problem in the space suits — and his own personal problems.

Space Doctor drags a bit, and the love interest uses one of the oldest tricks around, but on the whole it is an interesting novel, well worth reading — especially for those interested in near-future exploitation of space.

David Bischoff's *Vampires of Nightworld* is a sequel to his previous novel, *Nightworld*. There is a sort of subgenre of novels which are fantasy-but-really-SF, if you follow, though none that I know of reverses the trick; *Nightworld* is such a world. In the previous volume, we learned that the fantastic creatures crawling Nightworld's night were actually cyborgs created by a madman calling himself "Satan," whom our hero (with some aid) put an end to. *Vampires* deals with the aftermath; one of Satan's underlings, a vampire, decides to subjugate Nightworld and become its new master of evil; naturally, our intrepid hero must stop him. Improperly handled, this might have been a sterile recapitulation of a theme adequately handled in the previous book. Bischoff's somewhat Victorian style and the cozy Victorianism of his characters are quite charming. The reader comes to care about the characters (much more than in the first book); and the adventures remain believable while retaining an element of the fantastic. His vampires are also quite interesting, being a variant of the "demon bacteria" theme; vampirism is a communicable disease, in essence, with viral colonies gradually taking over the body of the afflicted. *Vampires of Nightworld* is a pleasant fantasy (or SF)

(Continued on page 31)

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A DragonQuest Capsule Adventure

The Camp of Alla-Akabar

I. Introduction

The *Camp of Alla-Akabar* is a *DragonQuest* adventure to be played in about eight hours by one or two players with one character each. It is designed to be presented as a single adventure, although it can easily be incorporated into an existing campaign.

Before play begins, the GM should read and familiarize himself with the character descriptions and possible situations. The *Camp of Alla-Akabar* relies primarily on the players discerning clues presented to them by the GM during encounters. Further explanation starts in Chapter IV.

II. How to Read the Maps

Two maps are provided with the adventure, one for the overland journey and one for the layout of the camp. Both maps are on hex grids; the scale for the overland map is 1 hex/2 miles, and the scale for the camp is 1 hex/5 feet. **Note:** If the GM wishes to place the adventure on the *Frontiers of Alusia* map, he should use Jungbar (hex 30-098) as the town and Korvin's Wells (hex 43-099) as the oasis. He should adjust all descriptions to fit if he does make this change.

III. Briefing for the Players

After many weeks of travel, the characters arrive in a large coastal town with their resources dangerously low. The characters find an inn and have dinner. After their meal, the bartender starts a conversation with the characters, as they are new faces in town. Explaining their plight and need for employment, they are told of the public notices posted in the town square.

The characters adjourn to the square, where they indeed find notices of openings. Only one draws their interest:

ENTERTAINERS WANTED

Seeking skilled male and/or female entertainers for engagement in small settlement beyond the mountains. Must be willing to travel through rugged

terrain; Prima Donnas need not apply.

See Rory at the Inn of the Daring Damsel between sundown and closing.

A few simple questions around town inform the characters that beyond the mountains lies the desert, where there are reports of marauding tribes of bandits. Few people from the town have any reason to go into the desert, as they rely upon trade arriving in town to supply all their needs.

At the Inn of the Daring Damsel, the characters are led to a back room, where they meet a halfling who introduces himself as Rory. He will ask them their specialties as entertainers as well as request a brief demonstration of their best work.

If sufficiently impressed with the audition, Rory will explain that he is acting as an agent for a travelling band in the desert who is seeking some diversion after completing a long and exhausting trek. He will ask questions about the characters' abilities to handle themselves in tight situations, as there is a chance the audience may become rowdy and downright unruly.

If the characters fill the bill, Rory will take their names, saying they have a good chance. He will answer any questions the characters have about where and for whom they may be employed.

Rory explains, in answer to any questions, that he is the personal manservant for Alla-Akabar, a leader of a tribe of bedouins who have spent the better part of the last year to the north. They rest near these mountains every year around this time; the tribe leaves the town alone, so no one bothers the tribe. Rory is in town to pick up supplies for the camp and find suitable entertainment for the men. Transportation will be provided to and from the camp, and the engagement should be no longer than a week. For these shows, the characters will be paid by Alla 500 Silver Pennies, plus whatever gratuities are thrown from the crowd.

Later that evening, the characters are approached by a man wearing a cape whose face is shadowed by a large hood. He asks if he may sit with them and introduces himself as Xarak. Wondering if they are contemplating taking the employment in the camp of Alla-Akabar, he informs them that — if they are — he has an offer which may be of interest to them.

He is seeking information concerning two women, named Kerona and Shyriya, who were taken by the tribe almost a year ago. He

wishes to know where they may be and what, if anything, has happened to them. He says he does not care how this information is obtained, so long as it is the truth.

He further informs them that he is offering a bonus. He will pay them 300 Gold Shillings each to get the information, and he will add on 200 Gold Shillings more if, in addition to getting the information, they can eliminate Alla-Akabar and bring back some proof that he is dead.

If the characters accept the offer, Xarak will stress that time is of the essence, and the information retrieval and the killing should be accomplished as quickly as possible. Xarak will stay to answer any questions he can (see Chapter IV), and then he will bid the characters good night and good luck.

Later that night, Rory appears and tells the characters they have been hired on as entertainers and will meet them late in the morning by the stables with horses and mules packed for the journey to the camp.

When they meet Rory, they will immediately leave and set out toward the mountains. At the end of that day, they follow a ravine and arrive at the edge of the desert. There the halfling starts transferring the supplies to a number of camels which he tethered there on his way into town. The next morning, after making sure that everyone is clothed properly to guard against the dangers of crossing the desert (see Chapter V), the party sets out across the sands.

After two days of travel, the party enters the camp of Alla-Akabar.

IV. Briefing for the Gamesmaster

The *Camp of Alla-Akabar* is designed such that at least one character should be able to skillfully entertain the camp. They should not be allowed to fake it without failure. Thus, Troubador or Courtesan skills are needed, and creative use of Talent Magic would come in handy. An Assassin skill might help in the attempt to kill Alla.

Rory and Xarak were telling the truth as far as they went; in fact, they are working together. Xarak has been waiting for Alla's tribe to make their annual encampment near this town. He waited for word of Rory's arrival in town and approached him about the possibility of an alliance. Rory was open to such an offer, as he is becoming more and more disgusted with the treatment he receives in camp. He was leery of becoming too involved, as Alla has shown qualities of omniscience. Xarak explained how he could keep Rory separate from the scheme by approaching the entertainers after Rory informed him who the most likely candidates were. **Note:** If the GM incorporates this adventure into his campaign, he may have to go through several characters before finding suitable ones.

There are some things, other than his complicity, which Xarak will not discuss with the party. If questioned, he will give a description of the two women (see Chapter VI for details), but he will not reveal that they are really his wife and daughter, who were taken during a raid. He will not tell the party

that his daughter wears an amulet similar to his, as he believes she is not in the camp. The GM should refer to Xarak's description in this Chapter for full details concerning the amulet and Xarak's appearance.

Rory will give the physical details of the camp as he knows them, and he will speak of the people in the camp during the overland trip. Full descriptions of the camp and its inhabitants are covered in Chapters VI and VII.

There are things neither Xarak nor Rory can know which present major obstacles to the party in completing the mission. It is up to the players to piece together the clues obtained through encounters with NPCs. Among these facts are the following:

1. The daughter has become Alla-Akabar's mistress.
2. The daughter is being kept drugged.
3. Alla's bodyguard, Garn, is a hobgoblin who is much more than he appears to be.

There is also a time factor to be considered. Xarak has told the party the deed must be done quickly. While he was discussing the deal with Rory, a bedouin from the camp who had come into town on his own had overheard their plottings. Xarak and Rory managed to capture him and are keeping him alive, trying to get information out of him, but he will not talk. They have decided to proceed with their scheme. At the end of three days, or at the GM's discretion, this captive will have managed to escape and made his way to the camp, arriving early on the morning of the fourth day to reveal Rory's treachery. Xarak will not mention the captive to the party, as he fears this would cause them to think again about his proposal and turn it down.

Xarak is in his mid-forties. He is very mysterious, because he wishes to maintain a low profile for fear of repercussions from his revenge. He is not trained as a fighter, although he has gotten some instruction in the use of a dagger, so he will under no circumstances accompany the party. He is obsessed with gaining what he feels is his rightful revenge, but he places finding his wife and daughter even higher. Xarak's physical characteristics are:

PS: 12 MD: 13 AG: 11 MA: 6
PB: 10 EN: 14 FT: 18 WP: 22
PC: 13 APA: 9

Xarak has no magical abilities, and he is Vernal-stars aspected. He is a Rank 10 Merchant and a Rank 5 Mechanician. He speaks Common and Elvish at Rank 8, and reads and writes Common at Rank 8. He carries a dagger concealed in his cloak and can use it at Rank 5.

Xarak's hair and beard are grey with white at the temples. His left cheek is scarred and shows no sign of ever receiving the care of a Healer. His face has become a permanent mask of grimace and resolution. His eyes are always watchful and slightly glazed with obsession.

Xarak's description should only be given by the GM if the players are inquisitive and ask for it. If they do, the GM should include that Xarak is wearing an amulet with a stylized design of a bird in flight. It is an inch

and a half in diameter and shows a high quality of workmanship.

Xarak spent many years building up a profitable system of trade routes and amassing a sizeable fortune. He met Korena during one of his journeys and they were soon wed. Shyrlia, their daughter, was the pride of Xarak, and he loves her dearly. He had taken her and Korena on one of his trading journeys when she turned 16 as he believed she should begin learning about the world. It was during that trip that his caravan was attacked by Alla's men and his wife and daughter abducted.

Xarak survived the attack, just barely, and was left for dead until found by some peaceful nomads. Since then, he has traveled in hope of uncovering news of his family's fate, until it became obvious there was only one place to find out...in the camp of Alla-Akabar. Realizing he lacked the proper training to execute such a mission, he began to formulate plans.

Xarak will stay in town until the party returns or he receives word that Alla is dead or is searching for the man behind the plot to assassinate him.

If Xarak's daughter is returned to him in good health, he will lavish a reward of an additional 500 Gold Shillings on the party.

V. The Desert

It is important to retain the flavor of the desert nomadic life throughout the adventure. This should begin when the party transfers their supplies to the camels in the mountain camp. If one of the characters is a Ranger specializing in Waste, the GM must decide how aware of survival techniques in the desert he is.

Travel in the desert with a horse is impossible, as the beasts will become exhausted and die trying to make it through the soft sand. By the same token, characters will find walking through the desert with the aid of a specialized Ranger will fall into the Medium Exercise range on the Fatigue and Encumbrance Table. Without the specialized Ranger, walking falls into the Heavy Exercise range. This fatigue loss applies only if the characters have taken some precautions against dehydration and exposure (wrapping themselves in burnouses or some sort of flowing robe-like garments). If the characters must make a hasty exit without such precautions, they will lose one Endurance Point for every day exposed, in addition to the fatigue loss. The GM should give some indication of these consequences during the adventure, as the party's escape should be planned or else they may die on their way back.

There is a further loss of 1/2 Endurance Point per 4-hour period if the party fails to take water into the desert. Also, wearing any armor other than Cloth will result in another loss of 1/2 Endurance Point per day, multiplied by the armor's weight factor.

The GM should consult the Encounter Chart (see Chapter VIII) for the possibility of sandstorms and their effect upon the party if they are caught in one.

If members of the party have lost half their original Endurance, there is a 50%

chance per day that hallucinations will set in, or they may start to wander aimlessly.

VI. Description of Non-Player Characters

1. ALLA-AKABAR

Somewhere in his thirties, the charismatic and handsome (Omar Sharif is a good role model) Alla-Akabar leads his band of 45 bedouins in a life of prosperous pillaging and looting. He is always charming, and his men are fiercely loyal to him, ready to eliminate any who pose a threat to him. Alla is Sun aspected, and his physical characteristics are:

PS: 17 MD: 18 AG: 14 MA: 6
PB: 21 EN: 14 FT: 22 WP: 19
PC: 15 APA: 10

Alla is a Rank 10 Military Scientist, a Rank 6 Ranger (specializing in Waste), a Rank 5 Healer, Rank 2 Thief, Rank 3 Courtisan, and a Rank 10 Beastmaster specializing in Great Land Mammals, Humanoids, and Lizards. He uses a Scimitar and a Bolo at Rank 7. In camp, he rarely goes about armed, relying on his men's loyalty and the protection of Garn. He can speak, read, and write Common and Bedouin at Rank 8, and speak Hobgoblin at Rank 5.

Alla has become almost a demi-god to his men. He treats them fairly when it comes to dividing treasure and captive women. His men have prospered under his command. The bedouins have stayed with him for a long time, and some have come back on a regular basis, as they respect and revere him as a leader.

Alla continuously amazes his men by anticipating their wishes. If a man expresses fear, Alla is soon there to comfort him without anyone reporting the circumstances. Other examples of past behavior include...

...A man who received word that his family was being thrown out of their home for non-payment of rent was presented with a fine gem from Alla's own coffers and aided in returning to his home. The man and the camp were awestruck by this unrequested generosity.

...Several times overly greedy bedouins plotted to steal from the general fund. Before any of their plans came to light, Alla had them whipped, claiming their evil intent was known to him, and he knew they had to be punished.

...The few times plots have been hatched to assassinate Alla, he always seemed to know about them even as the ideas formed. He has dealt with these types most firmly.

Alla, while a brilliant tactician and awesome warrior, does tend to flamboyance. He enjoys the adoration of his men and cultivates it. He views each man as a part of his own family, to be treated with kindness and tolerance. Outsiders are another matter. Alla, while he may only punish members of the tribe, will swiftly execute visitors who break rules or try to bring ill to his men.

He does have one weakness, though: Alla is quite a ladies' man. Female visitors to the camp will find themselves the object of his attentions if they are fairly pretty. Alla has always had first choice of female captives and his men acknowledge this right. This situation does not please Alla's wife, but it never seems to bother his mistress.

There is a very definite reason for Alla's omniscient, mystical powers: Garn.

2. GARN

Visitors to the camp, when introduced to Alla, will not help but notice the rather large individual who usually accompanies Alla: his bodyguard, Garn.

Garn is a hobgoblin who usually dresses in little more than pants. He is often seen wandering aimlessly about the camp carrying his war club or whip. The bedouins do not socialize with Garn for several reasons. One is that Garn is physically intimidating, being slightly more than seven feet tall and rather imposingly muscled, covered with coarse dark hair. Also, Garn does out punishment when Alla calls for it. He may flog, burn him, or flay the offender and do all this before hanging him out to dry in the sun. The third reason they do not communicate is that Garn does not speak and seems to understand only Hobgoblin.

Alla speaks fluent Hobgoblin, so he can issue orders to Garn, and in public Garn "speaks" only to Alla through use of a sign language. Because of Garn's apparent ignorance, the bedouins have no fear about vocally taunting him or speaking freely while he is around. But they never stop Garn when he sticks his head through the opening to their tents or helps himself to a piece of fruit or food anywhere he finds it. Garn's physical characteristics are:

PS: 21 MD: 16 AG: 15 MA: 20
PB: 6 EN: 16 FT: 23 WP: 12
PC: 14 APA: 10

NA: Hide absorbs 2 Damage Points.

Garn is Death aspected, uses his War Club at Rank 4, his Scimitar at Rank 5, his Whip at Rank 10, and both his Garrote and Spear at Rank 3. He is also a Rank 5 Assassin, Rank 7 Ranger (specializing in Waste), and has Rank 5 with Stealth.

In truth, Garn is neither mute nor stupid. He is in fact a very practiced Adept of the College of Necromantic Conjurings and has the following spells and ranks (Spell Code/Rank Achieved): T-1/6; G-1/6; G-3/5; G-6/3; G-7/10; G-9/3; G-10/10; Q-1/1; S-1/4. He also speaks, reads, and writes Hobgoblin, Common, and Bedouin at Rank 9.

Garn's potential was recognized early by a powerful mage of the College of Necromantic Conjurings who took in the young hobgoblin as a protegee. Garn learned quickly and decided to seek his fortune in the civilized world. Although Garn entered town well dressed and obviously cultured, the townspeople reacted to him as to a monster and fell upon him. After resoundingly beating Garn, they dragged him down to the river and threw him unceremoniously in.

This entire episode was witnessed by a much younger Alla-Akabar, who was at the

time a third-rate cutpurse. He did not share the people's revulsion to Garn and, after they dispersed, dove in to rescue the hobgoblin. Garn listened to Alla's proposal: separately they were ineffectual, but if they worked together they could become a potent force. Garn considered the words carefully and finally decided to throw in his lot with Alla, who soon formed his band.

Garn's meanderings through the camp are responsible for Alla's omniscience. Since the men speak freely when he is about, he is in a perfect position to eavesdrop. He reports everything to Alla, who acts upon the information he thus obtains.

Garn is often frustrated having to play the hulking brute, as he gets no intelligent conversation from anyone but Alla. He spends his nights in the tent next to Alla's practicing his spells and rituals after making sure no one is about. He accepts Alla's penchants for lavish loving and winsome women, but warns Alla they will prove his undoing.

If the party decides to test Garn and manages to surprise him, there is a chance he will utter some simple words if he fails to roll under 4 x his Perception.

3. ALLA'S MISTRESS

Alla is rarely seen about the camp without the company of his young mistress. She is a lovely young thing with tanned skin and light blonde hair, who spends most of her day lounging about the tent or just outside or hanging onto Alla's arms. She is always displaying her devotion to Alla and her love for him is obvious. She wears hourglass of silks and some bracelets, rings, and other jewelry. If the party checks out the jewelry, they will find it to be first class work, especially her amulet — one and a half inches in diameter, featuring a stylized design of a bird in flight. She is never referred to by name, just as "Alla's Woman," or by Alla as his "Little Flower," or "Star of the Desert." The Mistress' physical characteristics are:

PS: 12 MD: 18 AG: 20 MA: 8
PB: 21 EN: 10 FT: 14 WP: 11
PC: 6 APA: 11

Sun aspected, she can read, write, and speak Common at Rank 8 and speaks Bedouin at Rank 4. She is also a Rank 2 Merchant and Rank 6 Courtesan. She can use a Dagger at Rank 3.

The mistress is Shyrla, Xarak's daughter, who is being kept drugged by tranquilizers and love potions. If spoken with, she will appear to be an air-head with brief moments of lucidity. While under the influence of the potions, she is devoted to Alla and will fight rather than leave his side. Twenty-four hours after the last dosage she will regain her common sense and identity. She will become shocked at the state of her clothes and the amount of make-up she is wearing and may blame whoever is around unless calmed down and acquainted with the facts. She will be very eager to rejoin her father, whom she thought dead. It would be inadvisable at this point to remind Shyrla that, for the past year, she has been the sexual plaything of a man with a lot of imagination.

The party will not immediately recognize her from Xarak's description. If asked to describe the woman he is looking for, Xarak will describe the younger woman as a fresh-faced young girl with medium-brown hair, inquisitive eyes, and a ready smile. She now has her hair bleached and, at Alla's command, overdoes her make-up and underdoes her clothing.

Korena, when last seen, had dark brown hair, with a good figure and a Physical Beauty of 19. She was in her late thirties when abducted; it is up to the GM to decide what has become of her.

4. DELIAN

The presence of Shyrla is a major source of annoyance to Alla's wife, Delian. She is still quite beautiful but, in Alla's estimation, getting on in years (she just passed 25). Desperately in love with her husband, she is biding her time until he tires of his current fling, as he always does. But this affair has gone on longer than the previous ones, and she is growing increasingly perturbed. Delian's physical characteristics are:

PS: 13 MD: 15 AG: 18 MA: 5
PB: 20 EN: 12 FT: 20 WP: 14
PC: 10 APA: 11

Sun aspected, she speaks Common and Bedouin at Rank 8 and is a Rank 7 Courtesan. She is also Rank 4 with a dagger (which she is not at all hesitant to use), kept in her section of Alla's tent under her pillow.

Delian knows about when the mistress arrived, but she does not know her real name. Delian does remember how the girl looked at first and the fact her hair has been bleached. She also remembers at first the girl would put up a fight, but "Alla must have won her over."

Her dislike of the girl is pronounced, and she will be amenable to a plot to kidnap the girl, but will immediately report to Alla any inkling she has as to a plot to hurt him. By doing this, she feels she will prove her worth to Alla. Occasionally out of sheer loneliness, Delian takes a lover. If Alla hears of anyone mistreating Delian, he will kill the person responsible.

Delian believes what everyone believes about Garn, so the players will gain no new insights here.

5. RORY

There are seven halfling servants working in the camp at any one time. These halflings have average characteristics and may be created as the GM needs them. The one exception is Rory.

Rory is Alla's personal servant and acts as major domo for the rest of the servants. He has served Alla for a number of years, hoping by providing excellent service that Alla may one day set him free. He lays out Alla's clothes after he has cleaned them, cooks all of Alla's personal meals, and keeps Alla's headquarters neat. Rory's physical characteristics are:

PS: 9 MD: 17 AG: 14 MA: 5
PB: 15 EN: 15 FT: 19 WP: 20
PC: 16 APA: 10

Rory has no special skills or talents, nor does he have Rank with any weapons, as he was taken during a raid on a settlement of halfings and pressed into service. He does speak Common at Rank 8 and Bedouin at Rank 5, and is Moon aspected.

Rory has been biding his time hoping to be released, but has become disillusioned. Because Rory knows if the party's purpose is discovered he will be punished, he agreed to Xarak's deal only after Xarak planned to approach the party separately. To make sure no suspicion falls on him, Rory will not allow the party to use his food to poison Alla and, while he will talk to the party, he will not help them in the execution of their assignment.

Rory is more nervous since returning from town, as he wonders if Xarak can hold the captured bedouin until the deed is done. Upon arriving back in camp, Rory will be surreptitiously preparing to escape when the party has killed Alla or under the cover of any disturbance. He will try to make sure of what happens so he can report to Xarak.

Rory knows when Shyrla arrived, but does not know her name or how she is being kept. He did not associate the painted hussy with the virginal girl Xarak described. He knows of Delian's growing hatred for the girl and the general happenings around camp. He does not know about Garn.

6. TALAN

When Alla realized he would need a constant supply of potions to keep Shyrla interested, he decided he needed a skilled alchemist. Until then, he needed potions only to eliminate enemies and quiet his slaves. He found Talan in a city to the northwest, glutted with alchemists. Talan was open to the proposal despite Alla's reputation, simply because he was and is too busy working on his magic and mixtures to care much about what goes on around him. If engaged in conversation, he will talk shop, but will become bored and cut short any conversation on other subjects. Once he begins talking about alchemy, he may (60% chance) talk about the potions he supplies for Alla's mistress. Talan's physical characteristics are:

PS: 9 MD: 12 AG: 13 MA: 23
PB: 12 EN: 12 FT: 16 WP: 21
PC: 12 APA: 10

Talan is also an Adept of the College of the Sorceries of the Mind and has achieved the following Ranks (Spell Code/Rank Achieved): T-1/3; T-2/5; T-3/4; G-1/2; G-2/2; G-5/8; G-7/9; Q-1/4. He can read, write, and speak Common at Rank 9 and speaks Bedouin at Rank 4. He is a Rank 8 Alchemist (specializing in potions and medicines), Rank 3 Healer, and Rank 2 Astrologer. If Alla is uncertain before a raid, he will go to Talan to get a feeling of how the skirmish will go. He also possesses Rank 2 with a Dagger, but is certainly no fighter and would more than likely be oblivious to a major invasion. He is Sun aspected.

Talan provides a combination of potions: Control Person, Binding Will, and love philtres of various descriptions. All these are provided for Alla's use. A more complete listing of the ingredients can be found in the description of his tent in Chapter VII.

If asked about Alla's omniscience, he will relate how he has oftentimes gone to Alla suggesting they make a potion using this talent, but Alla has always refused.

7. THE BEDOUINS

There are 45 to 50 men in the camp. They are pleased with their latest haul, but are waiting for Alla to arrange to have a fantastic piece of jewelry sold so the proceeds may be divided. They are loyal to Alla and will follow him blindly. Average characteristics for the bedouins are:

PS: 21 MD: 18 AG: 15 MA: 7
PB: 12 EN: 16 FT: 24 WP: 15
PC: 10 APA: 11

All bedouins will have Rank 1 to 3 with Scimitar, Spear, and/or Bolo. They speak Bedouin at Rank 8 in addition to their 20% chance for speaking Common at Ranks 1 to 5. Among them, they will have some Beast-master skills (Ranks 1 to 5), Ranger skills (Ranks 1 to 4), Thief and/or Spy skills (Ranks 1 to 5). The lieutenants will have slightly higher characteristics and Ranks than the rest of the men have.

The bedouins will wear no armor in camp except when on guard duty over the treasure or slaves or when going into battle. Even then they wear only leather armor lest they start roasting in the desert heat. Suggested encounters for the bedouins can be found in Chapter VII describing the camp.

If asked about the two women, there will be a 12% chance the bedouin asked will remember Alla pulling a girl out of the slave pen, but will not be sure at all what happened to her. If the bedouins are asked what happens to captured women in general, they will state most are sold at slave auctions. There is a 23% chance they will tell the characters Alla keeps a record of slave transactions in with his maps and plans in his quarters. Given a detailed description of Shyrla and Korena, there is an 18% chance they will be remembered as the girl who is now Alla's mistress and an older woman who may have been a close friend or relation.

8. THE SLAVES

The bandits have taken prisoners on their raids and are preparing to sell them at the marketplace.

If the party decides to try to gain information or assistance from the slaves, it should be noted while they have skills, their depleted condition and lack of upkeep in these skills will make their effectiveness very low. They know nothing about Korena and Shyrla. If called upon to help with the entertainment, they will be too weak, thin, and ineffectual to make a difference.

If the party tries to enlist the slaves' help in a revolt, they will find no allies in the pen. If freed, the slaves will just break into a mad rush to get away from the camp (this will provide a diversion, if that is what the characters want).

VII. The Camp

9. BACKGROUND

At the end of each year's raids, the bedouins look forward to returning to the

oasis which they have made their safe haven. While at the oasis, they relax and celebrate. The highlight of this respite is always the entertainment Alla provides for his men.

The men will be eager and friendly with the entertainers, as they are hoping for an exciting evening. If a female is included in the party, word will rapidly spread through camp, bringing every bedouin to see how pretty she is. But male entertainers will also be welcomed, as the bedouins enjoy acrobats and jugglers.

The tribe's reaction to the entertainment will depend heavily on the type being presented. If the entertainers depend upon the spoken word (ballad singing, anecdotes, etc.), most of the tribe will not understand Common and will not be amused. Non-verbal forms (talent magic, acrobatics, mime, dancing, etc.) must be judged separately by the GM based on his estimation of the act's effectiveness. If the entertainers are not sufficient, Alla will pay them off after the first night and see that they get back to town.

All entertainment, punishment, and proclamations are presented to the men in the open area in the center of the tents. At night, two large bonfires are maintained in this area as indicated.

10. ALLA'S TENT

The camp consists of 15 circular tents, each approximately 15 feet in diameter. Upon their arrival, the party will be escorted to the largest of these tents (Tent 1), where they will be greeted by Alla (accompanied by his mistress), his lieutenants, Delian, and Garn. This meeting will be held in section C of the tent, where Alla conducts all his professional business. Section A is where Alla's mistress sleeps, and he spends most of his nights there. Delian sleeps in section B, dreaming of the day when Alla tires of the young girl.

Alla's tent is strewn with large pillows and cushions, which are used as chairs. Two short tables are in evidence, set with bowls of fruits or other delicacies in the manner of a buffet. Hanging lamps illuminate the entire area. In section A, there is a medium chest containing Alla's maps of the desert, plans for future raids, and records of the tribe's transactions.

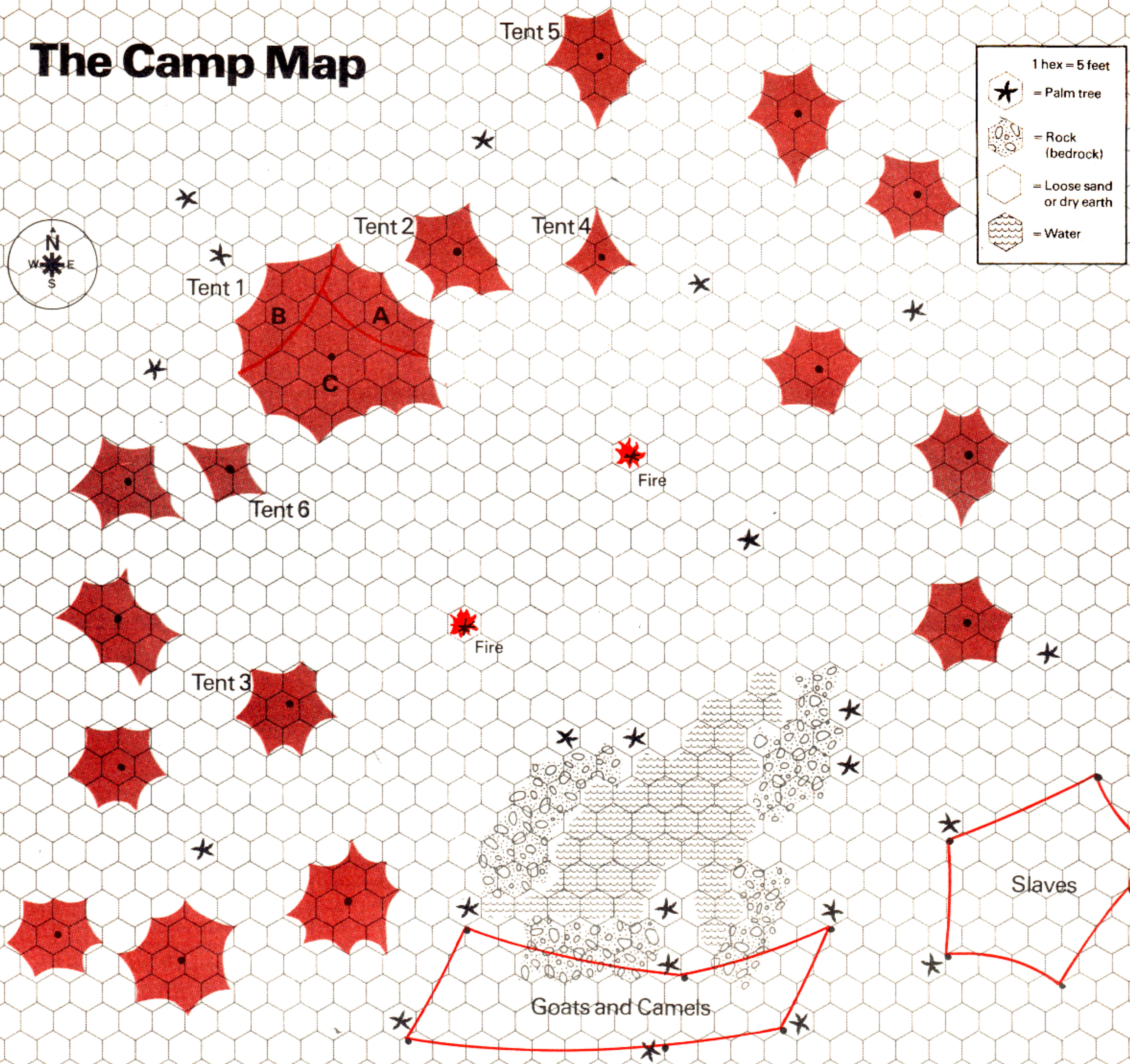
11. GARN'S TENT

Next to Alla's tent are Garn's quarters (Tent 2), which he occupies alone. The two tents appear to be separate, but there are concealed slits in both tents allowing access to one from the other. Garn and Alla often meet late at night to discuss strategy and the state of the camp. Alla makes sure the mistress is asleep by using potions.

Garn's tent is rather spartan compared with the rest of the camp. Garn owns a war club, whip, gilded scimitar, and bolo. Garn is very alert to strange sounds coming from Alla's tent, and the slightest suspicion will bring him padding silently through the slits to investigate after grabbing his whip and scimitar.

If Garn happens upon intruders in Alla's quarters, he will first attack with the whip, then with the scimitar. If there is more than one intruder, Garn will use his spells to confuse them and then attack.

The Camp Map



The Overland Map



12. THE TREASURE TENT

In a tent (Tent 3) near Alla's will be the tribe's treasure, consisting of four small chests containing 513 Truesilver Guineas and Alla's personal treasure chest with 279 Truesilver Guineas. This tent is guarded around the clock, and the two guards outside the tent have a clear view of the front of Alla's tent, so they may also watch for any late night visitors. Inside the tent is another guard. He is an added precaution to watch a piece of jewelry the tribe has acquired, a medallion with a diamond set in it worth about 200 Gold Shillings. All guards on duty will wear leather armor under their robes.

Any attempt to overpower these guards will result in shouts which will rouse the rest of the camp and bring the unchecked wrath of 45 bedouins down on the heads of the party. If captured, the party will at best be thrown naked into the desert without food or water after having been blindfolded. At worst, they will be publicly flogged and hung out to dry in the desert sun. Females may be thrown to the men and then tortured.

13. THE BEDOUINS' TENTS

The remaining tents are similar in design. Each is decorated in cushions and blankets with very little hard furniture. They are supported by a single pole in the center which is embedded in the sand (the sand around the oasis is firmer than in the surrounding desert). It would take a combined Physical Strength of 30 or more to knock the post over and bring down the tent. In addition, these poles will take 25 Damage Points before splitting. Each tent has its own hanging lamp and a few botas filled with water. Other botas are hung at various points about the camp.

The bedouins share these tents. Any males in the party will be placed in tents where there is room. Females will be placed in the smaller tent (Tent 4), unless they are invited to stay in the quarters of Alla.

Since the adventure does not require the specific placing of characters other than the major NPC's, the GM should use his discretion in determining the results of any investigation of the tribe's tents by the party. Some suggestions are...

...The occupants of the tent are of a particularly lusty frame of mind and a trifle impudent for the women Alla will be sending for.

...These bedouins are more avaricious than the others, and have managed to hoard a small cache of gems (worth 500 Silver Pennies) which they have hidden in one of their pilloWS.

...These men are being kept under guard, as they have stolen from the private stores of Alla. They are scheduled to die at a combination flogging and beheading.

...These bedouins are very occupied in dicing for Silver Pennies. One of them speaks Common well enough to invite the characters to join.

...This tent is the quarters for Alla's lieutenants. They all speak Common to one degree or another and will tell of past raids and great treasure and of their allegiance to Alla. They are very respectful when speaking to Delian, and one of them may be carrying a torch for her or, indeed, may be her current lover.

...These men are initiating an intramural wrestling match in the camp. All male characters will be invited to join in and test their mettle. The GM should make one of the bedouins a very strong fellow who challenges all who enter the camp.

...One of the occupants of this tent spends most of his time keeping a fine edge on his scimitar and bolo skills. He is probably very manic and will challenge any and all to test their skill against him.

These encounters are suggested to challenge the players' survival instincts and keep the discovery of Xarak's daughter from becoming too simple a task. These suggestions may be applied to groups or individuals as the GM sees fit.

14. TALAN'S TENT

The northernmost tent (Tent 5) is Talan's workshop and sleeping quarters. He spends most of his time there (a 90% chance he will be in) perfecting his sermons and potions. Occasionally, when Talan makes a mistake in mixing, a flat explosion can be heard resounding throughout the camp. Usually Talan has managed to escape injury, so he brushes himself off, extinguishes any smoldering embers on his clothes, shrugs his shoulders, and returns to work.

A search of Talan's workshop will reveal a wide variety of ingredients for potions. The inventory would include bloodroot, cyclamen, ginseng, amaranth, belladonna, caper, coriander, earthnut, jimson weed, and valerian. Talan's stores were severely depleted during the past raiding season. He gave Rory a shopping list of herbs and equipment to get for him when Rory went into town. He is very anxious for his return, and there is a 75% chance that Talan will be the first person to greet the party when they arrive in camp. He can be seen every night, however, making a delivery sometime after dinner to Alla's tent.

15. THE SERVANTS' TENTS

The halfling servants bed down wherever there happens to be room. Rory, though, stays in the second small tent near Alla's, as he must be ready to answer his master's summons. Rory's tent (6) is very sparse; he has a bedroll and a few changes of clothing, but no personal possessions.

Since returning to camp, however, Rory has been sneaking food into his tent (containers of rice, dried meat, some fruit) as he is preparing to leave when and if the party kills Alla. If the party manages to sneak up to Rory's tent at night, there is a 20% chance they will find him preparing a small travelling bag. Rory is not overly brave, and he will tell all when threatened with pain or death.

16. OUTSIDE AREAS

On the far side of the oasis, probably downwind from the rest of the camp, are kept the goats, sheep, camels, and slaves.

Two guards watch over the slaves, but they are not worried about a possible escape, as the slaves are too weak and are chained together. The guard has the keys. The chains are anchored to posts which encircle the slave pen.

The animals are docile and not easily scared. The camels are recalcitrant, bad tempered beasts requiring much prodding to move. A character with a Beastmaster skill of Rank 2 specializing in Great Land Mammals will have little problem getting them moving; for all others, the proposition is a bit more difficult.

During the time the tribe is in the oasis, they will be eating comparatively well.

The main drink in the camp is water with goat's milk served as an occasional change. Usually the goat's milk is fermented down and turned into a liquor. The men know Alla has some good wines in his tent, but they are not allowed to touch them, as they are reserved for his special guests.

17. RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

The camp is a bustling place during the day, remains fairly busy through supper, and quiets down after the entertainment at night. It will be rare during daylight that wandering characters would not run into someone, and this is reflected in the Frequency and Chance Encounter given in the Camp Danger Table. Not every encounter will prove dangerous (a reaction roll should be made upon meeting every NPC and bedouin), but the possibility of running into someone (or something) is rather high.

Thus, while the characters are in camp, a roll must be made at the appropriate intervals and, if the percentage rolled is less than or equal to the Chance of Encounter listed, an additional roll must be made on the Camp Encounter Table to see who or what was encountered.

In addition, an Overland Encounter Table is provided. This is for use once the party has reached the desert, with the frequencies and time intervals explained. Until the party has arrived at the desert, the encounters (if the GM desires them) should be determined as per the *DragonQuest* rules. There are two encounters on the desert chart which are not covered in the rules as they stand: Sandstorms and the Sand Golem.

Sandstorms come up suddenly and last for D+5 hours, with winds reaching 30mph. Characters caught in such a storm should find shelter immediately. If they insist upon continuing, they will lose one point of Fatigue (Endurance when Fatigue is lost) for each hour in the storm. There is a 90% chance that a party walking through a sandstorm will head off in a random direction unless there is a Ranger specializing in Waste among them.

The most fearsome danger facing the party is the legendary Sand Golem.

Sand Golem

NATURAL HABITAT: Desert

FREQUENCY: Very Rare NUMBER: 1 (Unique)

DESCRIPTION: Sand Golems are humanoid in shape and composed entirely of sand, with eyes of gleaming obsidian. They stand 10 to 15 feet tall. A small amount of sand continuously falls from their body like water off a man emerging from the sea.

TALENTS, SKILLS, AND MAGIC: Sand Golems can swim through sand as humans move through water. When a Sand Golem is in this state, only the black eyes can be seen, but they are often mistaken for ordinary stones. Sand

Golems have no magical abilities or skills. They can be harmed by any weapons except Class C, which do no damage. Because the Golem is composed of shifting sands, its structure gives it an effective natural armor.

MOVEMENT RATES: Running: 300
Sandswimming: 200

PS: 23-30 **MD:** 0 **AG:** 10-14 **MA:** 0
PB: 6-10 **EN:** 13-17 **FT:** 21-24 **WP:** 10-12
PC: 6-10 **APA:** 10-11

NA: 4 DP due to composition

WEAPONS: Sand Golems use no weapons. They can attack with both fists without penalty at a Base Chance of 35%, doing D + 2 damage. When the Golem is standing on sand, it can extend its arm to attack into an area two hexes beyond its own.

COMMENTS: No one is sure where Sand Golems came from; perhaps they resulted from a failed experiment by an Adept of Shaping Magics. They are very aggressive and will attack a party of up to seven beings. A Sand Golem's life is known to depend upon its keeping contact with the sand, as that is how it replenishes itself. The Sand Golem must be in contact with a large area of sand to extend its arm in attack. Rarely does a Sand Golem travel out of the desert, as when it loses contact with sand it loses one Endurance point per pulse until it crumbles. Damage done to a Sand Golem when it is not in contact with sand is not absorbed by the creature's NA.

IX. Assassination

Should the party attempt to murder Alla in his sleep, it will be necessary for them to steal into his sleeping chamber. During playtesting, some inconsistencies presented themselves involving such actions. We suggest that, if the party fails their stealth roll, another roll be made based on 3×Alla's Perception to awaken him.

Should a character manage to creep up on a sleeping Alla, then Alla should get a roll based on 4×his Perception. In either case, the Tactical Stage begins when Alla has awakened. If he does not wake up, the party should have no difficulty in simply cutting his throat, so long as Alla is alone. If Alla is sleeping with someone, they should get similar Perception rolls. Even the slightest untoward noise, however, will bring Garn to investigate.

X. Final Notes

The *Camp of Alla-Akabar* is intended to be as complete as possible to save the GM unnecessary labor. Naturally, the GM will have to use discretion and imagination at certain points, as everything the players might wish to know could not have been covered. The NPC's have been given fairly complete backgrounds in order for the GM to incorporate them into his own campaign beyond the completion of the adventure.

It is also suggested that the GM make some minor alterations in the maps and encounter descriptions to prevent players who also have copies of the adventure from becoming too overconfident. This situation

should be treated as a guide for the GM, not as a rigid and restrictive scenario.

In playtesting, Garn always managed to survive since most players were so surprised to find him a far more dangerous adversary than they expected that they would quickly flee after physically confronting him. This proved interesting later in the campaign for Garn sometimes would find his way to a city where those characters happened to reside. Upon meeting Garn, the characters expected to have to fight him, feeling sure he was there to exact revenge. On the contrary, he eloquently thanked them for killing off a man who had grown far too soft and weak to be useful. Alla's death had allowed Garn to take control of the band, and he and the Bedouins were much the happier for it. Garn's leadership proved more efficient (since he wasn't spending all his time in bed with a mistress) and everyone's wealth rose dramatically.

It should be pointed out that the relationship between Alla and Garn should be well considered by the GM before the adventure begins, as any hesitation on Garn's part to come to the aid of Alla would swing the advantage clearly in the party's favor in terms of accomplishing the assassination. Most player reaction to the adventure indicated that this adventure, more than most, required accurate acting by the GM of the NPC's since most of the information the players will be able to obtain will come through conversation with those individuals.

Finally, the intent of the design was that the camp and the whole adventure should have an air of mystery associated with Arabian intrigue. The GM should strive to emphasize this feeling, and some have gone so far as to play the soundtrack to *Lawrence of Arabia* or Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* during play, both of which helped set the right mood.

THE CAMP OF ALLA-AKABAR DESIGN CREDITS

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Camp Danger Table

TIME	FREQUENCY	CHANCE OF ENCOUNTER
Daytime	every ¼ hour	95%
Evening	every ¼ hour	75%
Night	every ½ hour	50%

Overland Encounter Table

Before the party reaches the desert, the GM should determine any random encounters using the Encounter Tables in *DragonQuest*. Once the desert is reached, use the following table. Check every 12 hours, with a 20% encounter chance.

01-10	D + 3 Dingos
11-20	D Buzzards
21-35	+ 6 Scorpions
36-50	+ 2 Tarantulas
51-60	D - 2 Camels
61-75	D + 2 Humans (with camels)
76-95	Sandstorm
96-00	Sand Golem

CAMP ENCOUNTER TABLE

DICE	DAYTIME	EVENING	NIGHT
01-20	Garn	Garn	Garn and Alla
21-30	Rory	Rory	Rory
31-35	Talan	Rory and Alla	Talan
36-37	Shyrla	Shyrla	D Scorpions
38-40	Alla	Alla	D + 2 Tarantulas
41-45	Delian	Delian	Garn
46-50	D - 5 Servants	D - 7 Servants	D - 8 Servants
51-65	D Bedouins	D + 2 Bedouins	D - 5 Bedouins
66-75	D - 3 Bedouins	D Bedouins	D - 7 Bedouins
76-95	D - 7 Bedouins	D - 3 Bedouins	D - 8 Bedouins
96	Scorpion	Talan	Shyrla
97	Asp	Alla	Delian
98	Tarantula	D - 2 Scorpions	Alla
99	Black Widow Spider	D - 5 Tarantulas	Asp
00	Escaped Slave	Asp	Escaped Slave

Being: A number of the given persons or beings appear equal to a roll on D10 modified by the number given. Modified rolls of zero or less are treated as 1.

DragonNotes

A Regular Feature For DragonQuest Players

By Gerry Klug

With this issue of *Ares*, I take over the writing and responsibility for *DragonNotes*. The great advantage of being able to write a bi-monthly column is that I can communicate with the *DragonQuest* playing public directly and offer help, suggestions, information, and guidance for all you hardy souls who play what I consider to be the number one FRP game on the market.

First, let me introduce myself. By the time you read this, some of you will have seen my name mentioned in the credits for *Universe* (elsewhere in this issue you will find an article on that game by me) and realize I am involved in science fiction role-playing. But *DragonQuest* players will not know why I came to inherit this column and take over the spiritual guidance of the *DragonQuest* line of products.

Being a role-player for five years prior to beginning work for SPI, I played many games including *D&D*, *AD&D*, *The Fantasy Trip*, *Traveller*, *En Garde*, *Gamma World*, *Runesquest* and *Boot Hill*. My emphasis has always been in fantasy role-playing, however, and I was in the process of attempting to design my own game when SPI released *DragonQuest*. Rapidly I discovered *DQ* was the best game available and thought SPI might need freelance adventure designs. I offered to do one and they accepted my offer (you will find the results of that assignment in this issue, titled *The Camp of Alla-Akabar*). The relationship was cordial and mutually agreeable, so they offered me a staff position to work on the new SPI science fiction role-playing game, *Universe*.

After a while it became obvious I was the person most familiar with *DragonQuest* (being the only person here who actually played it regularly) and I was then assigned to write this column. I enjoy *DragonQuest* immensely, playing the game twice a week. I GM a campaign which has existed since September of last year, and play characters in a friend's campaign which was started last August. Hopefully my experience with the game and the information I have garnered since working at SPI will aid us all in enjoying the game even more than we do now.

Recently I attended Michicon, a convention sponsored by Metro Detroit Gamers in Rochester, Michigan. This was my first opportunity to communicate directly with loyal *DragonQuest* players (and other role-players in general), and also their first chance to let me know their feelings about the game. The message to me was loud and clear: give us more support material (adventures, supplements, etc.) and re-design the original cumbersome combat system. On both counts we are proceeding rapidly.

As this column is being written, I am in the midst of a redesign of the combat system, which will replace the old one by the third printing of *DragonQuest* and should be ready some time this fall. Reaction to the combat system has been good and blind test

copies are going out shortly. The third printing means a few very good things: 1) *DragonQuest* has sold about 15,000 copies in one year and sales continue to rise, 2) it will probably appear in the stores in a new form, as a hard bound book, 3) massive addenda changes will be incorporated into the new printing. All this became possible because the popularity of the game continues to grow, and I feel very strongly this is because of the enthusiasm the regular *DQ* players are communicating to the "unbelievers." Keep up the good work!

Among the upcoming supplements and adventures are Steve Jackson's *World Generation* and Paul Jaquay's *Enchanted Wood*, both due out in the fall. Since they have been described in this column before, I won't talk about them again, save to say they are both tremendous designs. Also, we are actively soliciting freelance adventure designs and are continuing the design work for *Alusia* follow-ups as well as boxed city, boxed world, and the *DragonQuest II* projects.

I feel this column should be a way of disseminating additional rules material to *DragonQuest* players. Although the rules are certainly not errata free, most GM's I talked to found their own answers to rules questions within the books which already exist. What concerned them most was additional material and rules not covered in the original game which they felt was desperately needed. In partial answer to their request, below is another adventure skill, **Horsemanship**. This skill is treated in all respects as **Stealth**, and will appear (in a slightly revised form, thanks to the combat system changes) in the next printing of *DragonQuest*.

[83.4] An adventurer will use horsemanship to direct animals which he rides.

An adventurer may use his horsemanship with any animal or monster which he would ordinarily ride (such as horses, donkeys, camels, elephants, etc.). Enchanted or Fantastical monsters do not necessarily fall into this category, and the GM must make rulings governing these situations.

The character's player will roll percentile dice whenever his horsemanship is called into play. A character's horsemanship is equal to (Adjusted Agility + Willpower) / 2 + (Rank x 8). In the above equation, round all fractions down. The type of mount a character is riding will modify his horsemanship as follows:

Donkey	-10
Mustang	-12*
Quarterhorse	0
Dire Wolf	-10
Draft Horse	-5
Palfrey	+15
Warhorse	-5*
Camel	-15

Mule	-8
Pony	+10
Elephant	-10

An * indicates a negative modifier unless animal is trained by the rider; in that case, the modifier is 0.

The GM should also take into account the familiarity the character has with the individual animal type and apply modifiers thereby (e.g., the first time a character finds himself atop a camel should be worth at least an additional -15).

A character's horsemanship is called into play whenever he wishes his mount to perform an unusual or difficult action. Also, in every Pulse in combat a horsemanship roll must be made. Any mount can be directed into moving at a walking pace or even a brisk trot; an unusual or difficult action would be to break into a gallop (or charge), turn sharply around, come to a halt once goaded into a gallop or charge, jump an obstacle, etc. During combat, horsemanship is called into play during every pulse to: a) keep the mount controlled, b) regain control if it is lost, and c) direct the mount to take any specific Action, whether Maneuver or Martial. Remember, only a Warhorse can be directed to enter into Close Combat by its rider, and all other mounts will attack only if directly assaulted.

A successful roll (equal to or less than the modified percentage) will result in the mount obeying the directions of the riders. A roll above the modified percentage but less than the modified percentage + the rider's Willpower indicates the mount either does nothing or continues to do whatever it was doing. A roll above both of these indicates the mount will either disobey the rider, buck, attempt to throw the rider, or some other unpleasant result. The actual occurrence must be decided by the GM and should become worse the farther the roll is above the modified percentage.

If the GM judges the rider has totally lost control of his mount, the rider may take no other action until he has regained control (presuming he managed to stay mounted).

Using horsemanship costs no Action Points while in combat unless no other Action is taken that Pulse, in which case use constitutes a Pass Action. A trained horseman receives certain abilities as he rises in Rank:

Rank 3: Pays normal Action Point cost for Martial actions

Rank 5: May use weapons of 2 readiness points

Rank 7: May use two weapons at once

Horsemanship has a maximum Rank of 10 and an Experience Multiple of 125. Every adventurer has it at Rank 0 when beginning play. Rising in Rank is accomplished as *Stealth* (see 87.6, paragraph 2).

When I read the rules for *DragonQuest* for the first time, I was astounded they had

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DeltaVee Enhanced

by Justin Leites

Tactical space combat games which use a relatively realistic game system tend to be exceedingly deadly. Even when one side has a large advantage, there will still be heavy casualties in any battle. For this reason, character-players in SPI's science fiction role-playing game, *Universe*, will largely prefer to avoid combat as much as possible. The tactical combat rules as embodied in *DeltaVee* and the way the scenarios have been set up favor maneuver over actual combat. Most of the scenarios in *DeltaVee* are escape maneuvers, for logical reasons within a role-playing universe.

In an offensive combat, laser and particle beam weapons are intended to damage individual pods while a missile may be able to destroy an entire ship. There is no such thing as a defensive posture in space combat; both sides are going for victory at any expense.

When one considers that in a role-playing game the whole idea is to keep a character alive and growing through adventures, a head-to-head confrontation will probably see some, if not all, the characters killed. While on a planetary expedition a character may be able to escape through his use of skills or quick wit, in a space combat these abilities will be of limited advantage. Furthermore, the costs involved in building and owning a ship, particularly a merchant ship, may make any combat prohibitively expensive. Though the costs of building a ship is not as expensive in *Universe* as in *Traveller*, it will take a long period of adventuring to replace any lost ship.

Thus, the scenarios for *DeltaVee* were designed to keep the characters and their ships in existence for further adventures. In addition to escape, another popular maneuver is threaten-and-board, in which a more heavily armed ship can threaten a weaker ship. Once more, the character interaction takes place in an environment (inside a ship) where the characters' skills and wits can best be utilized. It is not unusual in a game to have a merchant ship yield a rich cargo simply under the threat of combat, an exceptionally cost-efficient method of gaining wealth.

The *DeltaVee* scenarios played down combat in favor of escape. The most important lesson to be gleaned was that a player should never exceed the maneuver rating of a ship with the velocity rating. A ship that can no longer weave is an easy target for missiles. A player who maneuvers a ship properly should be able to escape with only minor damage about fifty percent of the time.

For players who are more interested in testing *DeltaVee* as a tactical combat system, the following scenarios offer a chance to explore the tactics of such an approach. These scenarios will give players a better, albeit bloodier, feeling of ship-to-ship combat.

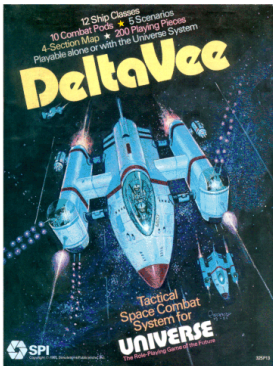
SCENARIO 6: Battle for B'Mali

B'Mali, a small, mineral rich planet on the periphery of the Federation, has decided to break off its ties with the central government. Normally, the Federation would let the peripheral planets have a certain amount of autonomy, but B'Mali has large quantities of rare fissionables the Federation requires. Thus, a punitive action is begun to bring B'Mali back in line.

Map Deployment:

A	B	C
---	---	---

Note: B'Mali is positioned in hex 0707 on Map A.



Player 1 (B'Mali) Deployment:

The *B'Spear* (spaceship counter A) with two arsenals pod, one battle communications pod, one tractor pod, and one crew pod, and one energy pod. Two *Swords* (counters B and C), each with two heavy weapons pods, one battle communications pod, one tractor pod, and one energy pod. All ships begin in hex 0101 of map C facing any direction and with a velocity of 7.

Player 2 (Federation) Deployment:

The *B'Spear* (spaceship counter A) with two arsenals pod, one battle communications pod, one tractor pod, one crew pod, and one energy pod. Two *Swords* (counters B and

C), each with two heavy weapons pods, one battle communications pod, one battlecraft pod, (with a *Terwillicker-X*) and an energy pod. All ships begin in hex 0101 of map C facing any direction and with a velocity of 7.

Victory Conditions:

The B'Mali player must destroy two of the Federation ships or he loses. Also, in order to win he must keep all Federation ships from landing on the planet. The Federation player wins if he lands any ship on the planet.

SCENARIO 7: Battle of Tau-Kati

Not long after the Federation took control of Tau-Kati, the Federation scouts encountered an alien patrol ship. Though communications were attempted, the aliens proved hostile, firing on the scouts who barely were able to escape safely into hyperspace. Now the aliens are sending a fleet into human space. For the first time, two cultures will meet in combat to determine the fate of two expanding hegemonies.

Map Deployment:

A	B	C
---	---	---

Player 1 (Alien) Deployment:

The Alien player gets 14 ships equivalent to the *Terwillicker-X*. These ships never expend Energy Units (though they are considered to carry the normal number of units as indicated on the Spaceship Attribute Chart, 4.9) unless they receive damage to their engines. The ships then suffer all penalties for such damage to their engines. All ships are deployed within two hexes of 0707 on Map A facing in any direction and with a velocity from 1 to 6. (**Note:** Players may wish to experiment with other alien vessels as outlined in the accompanying module.)

Player 2 (Federation) Deployment:

Three *Swords* (spaceship counters A, B and C) each with one arsenal pod, one heavy weapons pod, one battle communications pod, one energy pod, and one tractor beam pod. All ships start within 1 hex of 0707 on Map C with any facing and an initial velocity from 2 to 5.

Victory Conditions:

The first player to destroy more than 50% of the other player's ships automatically becomes the winner.

SCENARIO 8: The Bomb

The terrorist organization, *Basqua Revisa*, has secretly manufactured a hydrogen bomb in the prison colony on Ganymede and has commandeered one transfer and one guard ship to transport the bomb to earth. They threaten to destroy the Federation headquarters unless their demands are met. Inside sources on Ganymede were able to alert the Federation in time, and now a hastily assembled fleet is being sent out to intercept the terrorists and save earth.

Map Deployment:



Note: Earth is in hex 0707 on Map E.

Player 1 (Terrorist) Deployment:

One Corco *Gamma* (spaceship counter A) with three battlecraft pods (with a *Terwillicker-X* battlecraft) and one *Piccolo* (counter B) with one buffered cargo pod. The ships are deployed facing in any direction in hex 0808 on Map A with a velocity of 3.

Player 2 (Federation) Deployment:

Two *Daggers* (spaceship counters A and B) with a heavy weapon pod and a crew pod each. On each turn after the Terrorists have fired their first shot (either particle, laser, or missile, but *not* a shot from the battlecraft), the Federation player rolls a 10-sided die twice. On each roll of 1, another *Dagger* (counters may have to be created) appears on hex 0707 of map E (earth) with any facing and a velocity of 0; each new *Dagger* contains an arsenal pod and an energy pod. (**Note:** Players will have to move Map A to the position of Map E when all ships have left Map A.)

Victory Conditions:

The Federation player must destroy the cargo pod on the *Piccolo* before the ship enters

into earth's orbit. The Terrorist player wins if the *Piccolo* enters earth's hex with the cargo pod intact (he does not have to land the ship in order to win).

SCENARIO 9: Firepower

Posedy, a large military contractor, has built a ship they claim can beat any other ship ever made. The Federation authorities, dubious at best over the claim, offer Posedy the chance to prove this boast by putting down the continually rebellious citizens of Hai-Katu 4.

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CRAFT AND PODS COST CHART

SHIP TYPE	COST (IN TRANS)
Terwillicker-5000	3,100
Terwillicker-X	6,900
Dagger	12,200
Sword	22,100
Spear	27,900
Piccolo	5,400
Flute	20,700
Clarinet	14,100
Corco Gamma	6,700
Corco Zeta	6,400
Corco Iota	17,500
Corco Mu	14,500
Corco Omega	1,000
PODS	
Arsenal	5,000
Battlecraft (pod only)	500
Communications	3,000
Energy	250
Heavy Weapon	3,000
Hunter	2,000
Light Weapon	1,700
Jump	1,500
Tractor Beam	2,500
Crew	100

HEAVY CRUISER AND TRANSPORT

The two ships covered in this section were the ultimate products of the Federation's weaponry. The Military Transport could carry one entire fleet, and the Heavy Cruiser was an entire fleet's worth of weaponry. As the Federation's territory expanded and potential hot spots developed, nine Cruisers were finally commissioned. For over three hundred years these Cruisers, accompanied by the Transports with their complement of *Swords* to act as scouts, preserved peace throughout the Federation space.

No scenarios have been included for these ships, since they proved to be all but invincible in combat (when used properly). Players are encouraged to create their own scenarios if they wish to test the limits of these space dreadnoughts. Players should use the Hit Table at lower left when using these ships in battle in addition to the Heavy Cruiser Hit Table and Missile Hit Chart in this section.

Each Heavy Cruiser has four independent forcefields, which should be numbered on the Spaceship Log. Whenever a forcefield is hit as indicated on the

ALIEN ENCOUNTERS

The scenarios included in *DeltaVee* (and in this article) take place in human occupied space. No alien races have yet been discovered, though such an encounter is inevitable as exploration ships continue to chart unknown stellar systems. Players who wish to experiment with possible alien spaceships in combat may create scenarios using the ships described in this module.

Ram Jet

The alien culture which designed this ship has not yet achieved hyperjump ability for interstellar travel. Existing within a closely packed stellar cluster, they have instead developed travel by ram jet, which takes much more time for transit from one system to the next. The ram jet uses a vast electronic grid to trap the hydrogen atoms that exist in the interstellar medium. The hydrogen is either stored for later interplanetary travel or burned directly by fusion in the massive ram jets.

This alien vessel does not use pods. To interpret how damage applies from the Hit Table, use the following modifications: 1) if a result is rolled for a *bridge*, *engine* or *forcefield* hit, it is considered a *hull* hit and treated like a bridge hit on normal ships; 2) if a result is rolled for a hit on *Pods 1-5*, it is considered a *grid* hit and is treated like an engine hit on a normal ship; 3) if any other Pod number is rolled, it is considered a *miss* and there is no damage involved (the human player

HIT TABLE

FIRST DIE	SECOND DIE: 1-2	Part of Target Hit				
		3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
1	Critical					
2	Bridge	Engine	Bridge	Engine		
3	Forcefield	Pod 8	Pod 16	Pod 24	Pod 32	
4	Pod 1	Pod 9	Pod 17	Pod 25	Pod 33	
5	Pod 2	Pod 10	Pod 18	Pod 26	Pod 34	
6	Pod 3	Pod 11	Pod 19	Pod 27	Pod 35	
7	Pod 4	Pod 12	Pod 20	Pod 28	Pod 36	
8	Pod 5	Pod 13	Pod 21	Pod 29	Pod 37	
9	Pod 6	Pod 14	Pod 22	Pod 30	Pod 38	
10	Pod 7	Pod 15	Pod 23	Pod 31	Pod 39	

When a ship is hit, roll a 10-sided die to determine which row of the Hit Table to use. Roll the die again and cross-reference the second die result with the first number rolled to find where the ship was hit. If a ship does not have sufficient pods to match the number rolled, roll the second die again until one of the pods on the ship is hit. - = No effect.

Note: Players may wish to substitute this Hit Table in place of the table that appears in *DeltaVee*.

Hit Table, roll a 10-sided die to determine which forcefield is affected on the Heavy Cruiser Forcefield Table. If one or more forcefields is destroyed on a Heavy Cruiser and a missile subsequently hits the ship, refer to the Missile Hit Chart to determine which pods are destroyed. In addition, the player must spread three additional hits over the Heavy Cruiser as per 9.8, using the accompanying Hit Table.

MISSILE HIT CHART

- #1** Destroys Engines, Bridge, and Pods 1-10.
#2 Destroys Pods 11-20.
#3 Destroys Pods 21-30.
#4 Destroys Pods 31-40.

If a missile hits a Heavy Cruiser, each area not protected by an intact forcefield is destroyed. Example: If Forcefield #2 is destroyed, a missile hit would destroy Pods 11-20, though the other forcefields would not suffer immediate destruction. However, the player must also roll for three additional hits on the Hit Table, as per 9.8 of the *DeltaVee* rules.

HEAVY CRUISER FORCEFIELD HIT TABLE

DIE	FORCEFIELD HIT
1	1
2	1
3	1
4	2
5	2
6	3
7	3
8	4
9	4
10	Roll twice (circuitry hit)

When a forcefield is hit on the Hit Table, roll a 10-sided die. The number indicates which of the four forcefields was affected. If a 10 is rolled, then massive circuitry damage has occurred; roll the die twice more to determine the two forcefields affected. If another 10 is rolled during this process, two more forcefields are affected. It is possible for a multitude of forcefields to be affected by this process.

CRUISER/TRANSPORT ATTRIBUTE CHART

ATTRIBUTES	HEAVY CRUISER		MILITARY TRANSPORT	
	Cost	Classified	Classified	
Number of Pods		39	39	
Velocity Rating		1	1	
Maneuver Rating		3	2	
Energy Capacity		288	264	
Energy Burn Rate		24	24	
Streamlined		No	No	
Burster Class		2	1	
Armor Class		2	1	
Forcefield Class		2	1	
Civ Level		8	7	
Target Program		-6	-4	
Number of Forcefields		4	1	
Storage Pod Ability*		Yes	Yes	

*A Storage Pod takes up four pods worth of space on a ship. It can store any other military ship (except another Heavy Cruiser or Transport Vehicle), which may be launched following the same procedure as launching battlecraft. □□

does not roll the die a second time as indicated in the instruction for the Hit Table).

Other specifications for the alien ram jet are given in the accompanying chart. (Note: The ram jet has one forcefield.)

Solarship

Another slow interstellar form of travel, this alien ship uses a large, thin, reflective sail to gather the light from a star to propel it through space. It too is used primarily by alien cultures in tightly packed stellar clusters. Since travel is so slow, taking hundreds of years per transit, these cultures rely heavily on robots to handle the craft during their long trips. Only one such ship has ever entered human occupied space; the guiding robots immediately opened fire on the scout ship, forcing the crew to return fire. The ship was destroyed and its point of origin never properly established.

In combat the solarship has damage applied to it using the modifications as specified for the ram jet. Other specifications are listed in the accompanying chart.

Modular Ship

These alien vessels are really a number of individual pods which are loosely connected and which can act independently. In battle the pods break apart and act like individual ships, or they can keep bunched together as the alien commander wishes. Due to the mind link technique developed by this species, the individual

pods are able to attack as one; however, they are disadvantaged in that if one pod leader is hurt, the others also share his distress and ship's damage.

Each ship is made up of a variable number of pods. To interpret how damage applies from the Hit Table, use the following modifications: 1) if a result is rolled for a *bridge*, *engine*, or *forcefield* hit, it is considered a *miss*; and there is no effect; 2) if a result is rolled for a hit on *any of the Pods* of the ship, then *all* the *Pods* will suffer the same damage (thus, if the ship were composed of 4 Pods, then each Pod would take the same damage if the human player rolls a 1, 2, 3 or 4); if any other Pod number above the number actually composing the ship is rolled, it is considered a *miss* and no damage is taken (the human player does not roll the die a second time).

Each pod has the same specifications as indicated in the accompanying chart.

Pulsor

The alien culture which developed this ship has never established communications with humans. Though several of these ships have been sighted, none has ever been caught or studied thoroughly. These ships have been called the "ghosties" and "Flying Dutchmen" by humans; the few readings gathered by pilots seem to indicate that these ships are pure energy. Standing Federation Orders state that no ship will fire on these pulsors, though an occasional hot shot pilot has

been known to let loose a few laser blasts at the strange vessels...all to no effect.

The pulsor is known to have a velocity rating and maneuver rating of 10, and the one observation of its fire power (destroying an asteroid in the ship's path) indicates that it has a burster class of at least 2. No other specifications have been determined (the ship is too atypical for the standard *DeltaVee* system).

ALIEN SPACESHIP ATTRIBUTE CHART

ATTRIBUTES	RAM JET		SOLARSHIP		MODULAR SHIP	
	See 2	See 2	See 4	See 4	See 3	See 3
Number of Pods						
Velocity Rating		2	4	4		
Maneuver Rating		3	4	7		
Energy Capacity		See 4	See 4	288		
Energy Burn Rate		See 4	See 4	12		
Streamlined		yes	yes	yes		
Burster Class		1	2	2		
Armor Class		1	2	2		
Forcefield Class		1	1	2		
Civ Level		8	7	8		
Target Program		-4	-6	-6		

Notes:

- Each Pod of the Modular Ship has these specifications.
- These ships do not have pods.
- The Modular Ship has a variable number of pods, depending on the size of ship encountered.
- These ships are always considered to have sufficient fuel to function throughout the length of any battle. ■■

There's Only One Universe ...and How It Came to Be That Way by Gerry Klug

My first assignment upon being hired by SPI was to assist in the development of the science fiction role-playing game, *Universe*. Being a veteran of role-playing, I was intrigued with the possibility of being in a position to "fix" all the ill written and illogical rules I felt had been perpetrated on the science fiction role-playing community beforehand. When I started on the project, John Butterfield, the game's designer, had done much of the preliminary work already and what I saw excited me. Here was a science fiction role-playing game which seemed to solve the problems its predecessors had created.

John and I discussed what we felt the game should do and contain, and we came up with a number of items which we knew should be specifically addressed: 1) the rules should be tightly written so even a non-role-player could attempt to play the game without the need for a consultation every other page, 2) the game should be playable shortly after purchase, so it had to have an adventure included, and 3) everything the rules implied could be done with a skill or in a situation should be defined and delineated so as to make life easy for the GM. We feel we've succeeded and have created a game which is at least possible for a novice GM to pick up and referee, and at the same time, designed a game which stands up to comparison with any other in its field.

What should the veteran role-player look for when he purchases *Universe*? Among the many systems which the game features are two which stand out as unique: the Skills and World Generation systems. Both of these provide information and utilities not found anywhere else in role-playing game design.

When John was writing the Skills section, he was very concerned that the phrase, "up to the GM's discretion" did not become a catchall cop-out for us when we couldn't explain something. This concern led John to use a *task* system, whereby each skill has a set list of tasks which the skilled individual may attempt to perform and, if successful, yield specific results and/or information.

Each task is defined by a formula which figures the percentage chance a character has of performing it. The formula takes into account the proficiency of the character with the skill and any applicable characteristic of the character which may affect the outcome. Various modifiers may be applied also. Therefore, even characters with the same skill level may have a slightly different chance to succeed in the same task due to differing characteristics.

This task system allows the GM to rationalize any other situation which the player feels his character's skill should apply to. By comparing the unknown situation to the examples given, the GM may derive a chance of success (if any) which would apply in the situation and be fair. The GM is not left out in the dark attempting to define what a certain skill means (you don't have to have a degree in planetology to use the skill).

Also unique is the way in which skills are improved. Whenever a character uses a skill, percentile dice are rolled. Each skill has a range of several numbers indicated which add an experience point to the character's skill if one of those numbers appears on either die. These points are accumulated and cashed in later on to raise the skill by one level. In most cases, the numbers needed combine in such a manner that a successful use of the skill will, more often than not, gain an experience point whereas an unsuccessful use would not. Experience Points are not arbitrarily awarded in the game (unlike many other role-playing games) by the GM; the players themselves keep track of their advancement. There are guidelines for skills' use so none can be over-used in a manner designed to simply gain skill points.

The World Generation system is interesting enough to play as its own game. Science fiction role-playing has been crying out for a good, simple, complete and easy World (including both planets and moons) Generation system for a long time, and *Universe* may have the answer. In my experience as a *Traveller* referee, I always felt the need for an easy system for rapid star system generation. Often the players would travel in unexpected directions, and I would have to stop the games for long periods of time while I rolled dice. Needless to say, this was very boring for the players.

The *Universe* World Generation system is three tiered so that first, a cursory generation may be accomplished to give broad generalizations of the system and its worlds; second, a detailed look is then established for each world's geography and planetology; and third, specific details are given about settlements, resources, spaceports, law levels, etc. While the highly detailed examination of each world is lengthy, the cursory glance takes 5 minutes and gives both the GM and the players enough information to make such basic decisions as whether or not to stay and explore this system, what there is of interest, and so forth. This quick glance assumes all the players have done is hyper-jumped into the system and are examining it from the jump point with their scanners.

The World Generation system also details how to actually draw the worlds in a system. Rather than simply generating a series of numbers, the *Universe* system helps you portray the geographic features of the world on a *world log*. The world logs contain graphic layouts of the various size worlds as viewed from both the north and south poles. The GM generates the details of the world and draws in each *environ* (a space on the world which is a square 4000km across) the geographic type which exists there. As each *environ* is drawn in, the visual picture of the world begins to take form, and the GM mixes and matches *enviros* to form the kind of world picture he desires.

Along with Skills and World Generation, the rules for *Universe* detail Character Generation, Equipment, Robots, Character

Action, Space Travel, Creatures, NPC's and gives a full adventure to start the GM and the players right off, once they've invested their hard earned money in the game.

Included in the *Universe* package (both basic set and boxed version) is an Interstellar Display which details all stars located within a 30-light year radius of Sol (our sun). Each star is located using a Cartesian coordinate (X, Y, and Z) system, and its astronomical data is detailed. Various binary and trinary stars are also detailed with their configurations and data noted. All of the major stars' distances (in light years) are also given in a road-map style matrix (hm, let's see; the distance from Alpha Centauri to Sigma Draconis is...) for easy travel planning. All of *Universe* (for now) takes place within this sphere of stars and the GM generates the characteristics for each himself. Thus, while the map would remain the same from campaign to campaign, each GM's details of the stars would differ, creating interesting comparisons.

The Display itself is a work of art, being visually stunning as well as absolutely practical for play. We at SPI are wondering whether any map of its kind is really accessible to the public at this time, or do we have the only one? Many people have mentioned they would buy the map just for itself, gaining the information it contains. Alone it would be a valuable addition to a GM's science fiction source library.

Concern about the problems facing novice players or GM's when they picked up *Universe* for the first time was expressed often during the project, but especially in regards to the Adventure Guide. *Universe* has three rules booklets: the Gamesmaster's Guide (containing the rules), an Adventure Guide (containing creatures, non-player characters, and the adventure), and *DeltaVee* (the spaceship combat system). In the Adventure Guide we gave the fledgling GM as much guidance by example as we had room for. A crucial element for any beginning GM is the creation of other people with whom the characters interact. The list of 40 non-player characters provides the GM with examples of the myriad kinds of people to place in the characters' path. Some are deadly, some serious, some humorous, some inconsequential, but all interesting and, I hope, inspirational. GM's may use these NPC's straight out of the booklet as they are or change them to fit individual tastes. It is through the GM's non-player characters that the players most directly interact with the GM, which may be the single most enjoyable element of role-playing.

Also detailed in the Adventure Guide are various creatures. With the laws of probability being what they are, there is no way we could have listed every kind of alien creature explorers might find outside our solar system, and our list of 40 doesn't pretend to include all possibilities. What it does do, however, is set up an easily adapted system of mix-and-match powers which the GM can use to create creatures of his very own, and

DRAGON NOTES (continued from page 24)

left out (overlooked?) overland movement rates. How did one get from point "A" to point "B"? Apportion? Elevators? Subways? So, one of the first things I did was create an overland movement chart which I have used ever since in my campaign with little modification. What changes were made concerned mounted movement rates, for which I consulted Al Nofi once I began to work at SPI; he provided me with extremely valuable information regarding strategic cavalry movement throughout history. Thus, I believe the accompanying Overland Movement Chart is accurate not only in a "fantasy" sense (working in a campaign) but in a "historical" sense as well.

Some of you are undoubtedly asking, "Why do men on horses move at the same rate as men on foot?" Well, it has been shown historically that while horses can indeed move much faster than a man in short bursts, over the long haul the amount of movement evens out. The greater speed is neutralized by the fact horses have to stop and water, graze, etc., while humans need to stop less often.

[83.5] OVERLAND MOVEMENT CHART

TERRAIN	RATE OF EXERCISE				
	LIGHT	MEDIUM	HEAVY	STRENUOUS	
Cavern	5/-	10/-	15/-	20/-	
Field	15/15	25/25	30/40*	35/50*	
Marsh ¹	-/-	5/5	10/10*	15/15*	
Plain	15/15	25/25	30/40*	40/50*	
Rough ²	10/5	15/10	20/15*	25/-	
Waste ³	10/5	15/10	20/10*	-/-	
Woods ⁴	10/5	15/10	20/15*	25/-	

Number before the slash indicates movement in miles per day on foot; number after indicates mounted movement (assuming horses). Rates for other animal types must be adjusted by the GM. The day assumes a total of 8 hours marching.

The effects of adverse weather must be judged by the GM.

Notes:

-/-: That type of movement at that particular exercise rate is impossible.

1: Movement rates assume some sort of passable terrain; total swamp is impassable except by canoes (sometimes).

2: If terrain is mountainous, halve rates on foot and prohibit mounted movement.

3: If terrain is desert, the GM should apply strictures regarding effects of heat, dehydration, etc.

4: If terrain is deep woods, halve the movement rates.

*: In these rate of exercise categories, the horses' rate will deteriorate 33% per day. They can travel at these rates for approximately 4 consecutive days and then they will die.

Any paths or roads negate the effects of other terrain and the Plain movement rates are employed when using them.

The main advantage in mounted movement is that the rider does not get nearly as tired and can perform some tasks at the end of the journey; treat the rider of any mounted beast as expending Fatigue at a rate one less than normal (i.e., a rider mounted on a horse which is moving in the Heavy column himself loses Fatigue in the Medium column).

In the next issue, I will talk a little about Character Generation, Experience Points and Treasure. ■■

FILM & TELEVISION (continued from page 13)

responsible for many of the impressive effects in both *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Alien* (he won an Academy Award for his special effects in *Alien*), was in charge of making Vermithrax believable. The dragon was built at George Lucas' Industrial Light and Magic, Inc. outside of San Francisco. After construction it was shipped to England for Johnson to use in conjunction with his small stop-frame models.

Graphic artist David Burnett was the dragon's designer. "The most important actions for the dragon come in the final battle's flying sequence," said Burnett. "Because of this action, we decided very early along to design a dragon that looked best when flying. The emphasis on flight, subsequently, dictated that the dragon look light enough to fly, and have an enormous wingspan." Vermithrax is not just a mindless engine of destruction. Since the monster was supposed to register intelligence (along with a wide range of emotions), he had to be designed with more care than the typical movie monster. "The key to Vermithrax is the relationship of the brow to the horns, much like a man's temple and forehead structure. The dragon's brow sweeps back. It has a frown and a slightly human, intelligent look. This is not a creature that is simply programmed to eat, but a creature with a mind — albeit a malevolent one.

"You won't feel sympathy for the dragon," explained Burnett, "but it will have a kind of majesty. We didn't want to end up with the Alien which was too repulsive to look at."



They needn't have worried. The dragon is a graceful, yet menacing presence. The blend of giant-sized moving pieces with stop-frame work is so deftly pulled off that in places it is hard to tell what kind of effect is being employed.

But, praise to the special effects aside, there are better reasons to see *Dragonslayer*. The film offers hope that there will be a long line of fantasy films to come. The *Star Wars* boom has brought us more science fiction and fantasy films one after another than we have ever had before. Many of them have been exploitive and poorly made, but not all. *Dragonslayer* is more than "boy-meets-monster, boy-kills-monster, boy-gets-girl."

The film is a subtle study of early 6th Century Britain. The clothing is rough and hand-stitched. There is no dyed cloth, heeled footwear, or paving on the highways. The movie is populated with real peasants, subservient to authority and tired of day-to-day existence. They obey their king out of fear, for with no freedoms, they dare not complain.

Another touch of realism is the struggle evident in the film between the vanishing magicians and the early Christians. Not willing to bend their knee to popular culture, Barwood and Robbins have portrayed the world as realistically as possible. The villagers turn their backs on their druidic roots and run off to be baptized, hoping that the Christian God can stop Vermithrax. They cheer at the dragon's death, but give the credit to their God. The king also comes out to the dragon's smoldering carcass and drives his sword into it while his counselor proclaims him the "dragonslayer." The real heroes, Galen and Valerian, are ignored by all and must move on lest they become victims of the bawdlers.

The characters in *Dragonslayer* are portrayed as real human beings. Galen is a brash, sometimes insufferable snot. Often arrogant and childish, he is a hero who needs to be taught a lesson. Similarly, there are brave people, sensible people, cowardly people, stupid people, and so forth populating the film. Though the dialogue is occasionally stiff, there is a believable reality. When the people and settings of a fantasy are as carefully wrought as they are here, it is easy to get an audience to accept as small and wonderful a thing as a dragon.

Christopher John

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Feedback Results, Ares nr. 8

Rank	Item	Rating
1	Games Rating Chart	6.83
2	Games	6.79
3	Science Fiction Game Sampler	6.67
4	Designer's Notes	6.45
5	Ragnarok (article)	6.42
6	Ragnarok (game)	6.37
7	Pandora's Link	6.34
8	Science for Science Fiction	6.11
9	Facts for Fantasy	6.11
10	Film & TV	6.10
11	Books	5.94
12	Media	5.86
Ares 8 Overall		6.66

Games

Griffin Mountain

Authors: Rudy Kraft, Paul Jaquays & Greg Stafford
202-page softcover book, 20" x 29" monochrome map.
CHAOSium Co., \$16.00

Adventure supplements for role-playing games have been assiduously avoided in this column, because there are only so many ways to express displeasure with a type of product. The seminal adventures had player-characters kicking down doors and slaughtering monsters in the non-privacy of the latter's dungeon rooms like so many dogs answering Pavlovian bells, or presented the characters with vast, airy dungeons thinly disguised as "wildernesses." Admittedly, not every gamesmaster had or has the time to construct adventures — let alone worlds — but what was available commercially had less imagination than an autotopilot.

There is, of course, a learning curve for the design of adventures; just as there is with other game-related product. Either Flying Buffalo or Metagaming introduced the number paragraph style of adventure, which neatly presented the simplest of adventures without insulting the players' collective intelligences. Full-size adventures then began to offer multiple options, instead of single-solution puzzles or monster shooting galleries. But nothing has advanced the state-of-the-art quite as much as *Griffin Mountain*.

Though generically classed as an adventure, *Griffin Mountain* is properly a sourcebook. The subject is not a single expedition, which can only be used once for a given group of player-characters, but a thorough examination of a 20,000 square mile area in about the same detail as a Michelin guide. Instead of the location of the nearest AAA and the best restaurants, the gamesmaster is supplied with extensive background on local politics and beings. The authors have inextricably tied the package to the *Runequest* rules, though a hardy gamesmaster can convert the statistics to another system with a concentrated effort.

The mountain of the title is as convenient a landmark as any in the Balazar-Elder Wilds territory, which is a small part of the world of Glorantha. Greg Stafford introduced his fantasy vision to adventure gaming in the brilliant *White Bear and Red Moon*. (This wonderful name was brutally sacrificed on the altar of the great god Marketing, and now the game tamely goes by the name of *Dragon Pass*.) Glorantha is no Tolkien regurgitation, no pseudo-medieval hodge-podge, no "magic is really science" double-talk, but a genuine, original fantasy. The world needs no support from game material, and perhaps suffers slightly because it is viewed only from a role-playing and board game perspective.

Here the Crimson Bat spreads terror, the Red Moon's influence is greatest up to the Glowline, the Lunar Empire wars with (among others) Sartar, and the characters are swept into the epochal Hero Wars. Perhaps Roger Zelazny's *Jack of Shadows* conveys a vaguely analogous sense of wonder, perhaps Professor M.A.R. Barker's Tekumel

is more "realistically" described, but Glorantha is certainly a unique experience.

Balazar and Elder Wilds are, essentially, a refuge for characters from the Dragon Pass area. At Dragon Pass empires clash and great magics are unleashed, which is hardly healthy for beginning or moderately-experienced characters. True, the Lunar Empire has designs on Balazar, but the Imperial rulers content themselves with thoroughly infiltrating the tribes and fortresses with their agents. If and when the Empire enters in force, the divided peoples should fall swiftly to its armies, but for now its energies are directed elsewhere.

The character of the barbaric tribes and the semi-civilized folk in their fortresses is deftly sketched in several of the beginning chapters. We learn of the Balazaring tribesmen's love for their dogs, of King Glyptus of Elko's emulation of his Lunar masters, of Joh Mith's caravans, which unite the region as much as anything else. These soften the harsh impact of character statistic presentation, which often makes this sort of book look like an accountant's vacation reading.

What makes *Griffin Mountain* an evolutionary step in the progression of adventures is its treatment of player-characters. The world is real enough — and frightening enough — so that the player will not chivy the gamesmaster until they rule all they can see. Young and inexperienced characters have their riches in society, with plenty of potential to rise in the world. However, success comes from hard work, sacrifice and a little luck, which makes it all the more rewarding. No matter how powerful the characters become in game terms, there are beings who can put them in their place. The ancient powers are a part of this magical land, and not just something the gamesmaster tosses out at the start of his first adventure, never to be heard from again.

The sourcebook does inherit a problem common to works of this genre: much of the information is for the gamesmaster's eyes only. The time-tested stop-gap answer — that the players not be allowed to look at the text — is still the only truly satisfactory way to deal with this problem, though the sheer wealth of material makes it hard for any but the killjoy to anticipate all the surprises this area affords.

The authors recognize this potential drawback, and do address it from time to time. Rumors are not necessarily always true or false; the gamesmaster is given a set of rumors, and he may decide on the veracity of each (while remaining consistent with the rest of the scenarios!). Map locations are not fixed for all points of interest, which can disconcert the player who sneaks a look.

Griffin Mountain is a textbook illustration of how to sustain interest in a fantasy campaign: make it seem real. The gamesmaster inevitably puts more energy into his characterizations of the non-player characters because they are presented as fleshed-out beings. Players pay especial attention to rumors which they have to pay for and which are not always revealed as true or false at the end of the current adventure. A caravan guard's job is not so unpalatable when Joh Mith takes the guard with him to exotic locales without exposing him to excessive

risk. If this sounds like an argument for the suspension of disbelief, it is. Believable fantasy is the key to a successful adventure or campaign.

Consider Gonn Orta, a centuries-old giant who must decide between joining his ancestors as part of a mountain range or remaining the premier dealer in magical objects north of Dragon Pass. (Gonn Orta, his young-giant friends and his troll dependents are one of the more amusing — and interesting — encounters.) Or the Vampire of Gork Hills, who may or may not still stalk the land. Or Gondo Holst's caravan, which is a front for the most nefarious of activities. Because of these wonders, it comes as a disappointing surprise that *Griffin Mountain* is named for the griffins that inhabit its peak. The best recommendation for the material is that the reader will want more when he reaches the end of the book.

Not that *Griffin Mountain* is without its faults. Many anachronistic *D&D*isms pervade the monster and some of the people descriptions. (The term "*D&D*" is not meant as a slur on TSR's work on that role-playing game. If the company pioneered much work in the role-playing genre, it stands to reason that it originated many of the mistakes.) There is no reason, for example, for most of the creatures to have standard treasures no matter when they are met. Nor does the Balazar-Elder Wilds region have to be so conveniently self-contained (though this arrangement vastly simplifies the organization of information). The major drawback, for the majority of role-players, is the linkage with the *Runequest* system. *RQ* may be one of the better sets of role-playing rules, but it is hardly one of the most widely disseminated.

The layout of the text is extremely graphically attractive. Salient points are highlighted in each section, while the sections are clearly separated by topic or for new entries. It is a pleasure just to leaf through the pages of *Griffin Mountain*: if the reader is one of the many who collect game products to look at and not necessarily play, he will be quite satisfied by the content and style.

Griffin Mountain is not just better because it is bigger. Messrs. Kraft, Jaquays and Stafford have created a campaign which demonstrates, by example, what a gamesmaster should prepare for a serious role-playing campaign. They understand what should be highlighted as important — we are, after all, viewing a culture as adventurers rather than, say, as scullery maids — and, even more basically, what should be included. There is no magical, mysterious formula for writing successful adventure or campaign material; only solid work, imagination and an understanding of the needs of the role-playing public are required.

"Oh, to be on *Griffin Mountain*...you will be leaving there too soon."

The Lords of Underearth

Design: Keith Groos
24-page rules booklet, 12" x 14" map, 84 counters, bag, die, box.
Metagaming, Inc., \$3.95

All right, it's time to put to rest that old wargamer's tale that mini-games are for mini-brains. There is an art to design for a

small package, just as there is for the monster games. *Ogre* and *The Creature That Ate Sheboygan* are not, perhaps, the most thought-provoking of subjects, but both provide enjoyment and a completed game in about two hours.

Metagaming, which originated the small game concept several years ago, did give credence to the sneers of traditionalist gamers with its recent slew of execrable product. It takes a special skill — which is thankfully not that prevalent — to define the boundaries of incoherence as did the *Holy War* rules, or to have the gall to repackaging the ancient childhood game of "rock beats scissors beats paper" as a new release. (News may be slow getting to certain parts of the country.) The unlamented *Dimension Demons* — which has little to do with dimensions and nothing to do with demons — looked good by comparison to some of the poor material which comprise the last seven Metagaming releases.

The Lords of Underearth, on the other hand, is an excellent example of how to make a good mini-game. None of the design concepts will bowl the players over with their originality, nor need they do so. The rationale is quite familiar to role-playing if not the fantasy audience: dwarves, in the course of a mammoth underground renewal project, have unearthed enough treasure to warrant the attentions of greedy adventurers, monsters and armies.

The map displays a labyrinthine complex underneath a mountain. Passageways are graded by how wide each one is: a dragon has no difficulties flying through the wide corridors, but cannot even enter the narrowest of tunnels. The military companies have limited attack capabilities without the proper room to maneuver. With similar elegant touches, designer Gross bends some of the most conventional design concepts into rules uniquely suited to subterranean warfare.

The map gives *Lords* its flavor, and the game is tailored to take advantage of the challenges inherent in conflict in this most unusual terrain. For additional variety, the mapsheet can be cut into three geomorphic pieces, though I have not experimented enough with this approach to recommend it one way or the other.

The scenarios initially appear to be unbalanced in the favor of the inhabitants. This advantage is illusory, for the player on location must alert each of his units before he can use them. The marauding player hopes to dispatch the sentry units, which can alert friendly units within four hexes, so that he can destroy the powerful companies piecemeal. The game accelerates at a dizzying pace, as the invader is forced into desperate action by the mobilization of the forces of Underearth. The game is, at heart, a study of fantasy commando actions, and few other situations excite the imaginations of the game players as does this type of raid.

The scenarios ingeniously combine themes long ago clichéd by fantasy writers with inspired victory conditions. (It does not have enough experience with *Lords* to state whether or not it is balanced, but the conditions sure do generate a lot of fun.) There are the defeated remnants of an army fleeing in-

to their stronghold; a surprise orc attack on the Dwarven New Year (no doubt to regain the pre-67 borders); the usual draconian barbaric party at which the dwarves are unbecoming guests; good guys trapped in the caverns by an evil wizard; and a free-for-all for the gold. The last scenario is almost a game unto itself, as the players try to direct the nasties towards each other, and fervently hope that the dragon is dead as rumored.

My only disagreement with the design is the use of a hex-grid for the map. Hexes are a superfluous, both aesthetically and practically. The architecture of the tunnels is twisted into natural configurations by the regularities of the hex-grid, when hashmarks could just as easily have bounded each movement area.

Metagaming is also making forward progress with its physical quality. The company has come out of its Dark Ages to discover the mystical process of die-cutting. The counters still show a tendency to self-destruct when touched by human hands though, by way of compensation, the illustrations are quite attractive. The map is drawn in unappealing shades of green and blue, mounted on decently heavy stock, and is acceptably functional during play. The rules, most importantly, are remarkably clear — for any company, not just Metagaming — though the rules writers left a few minor flubs to remind us they are human.

Lords demonstrates that small fantasy boardgames can be the result of quality work. The emphasis is on the simple and the playable, but never on the simplistic. While other summer 1981 games are stoking winter fires, *Lords* will be played in front of those fires.

Second Thoughts

A spirited correspondence with Oregonian reader Donald McKinlay has caused me to conclude that I was overly harsh in dismissing Yaquinto's *Shooting Stars* (#6). The premise, as dreadful as it may be, should not have wholly overshadowed a decent vector-based movement system — whatever the system's antecedents. *Shooting Stars*, when considered solely as a game, can be ranked with *Vector 3* and *DeltaVee*, both of which are at least acceptable space tactical games. My apologies to Steve Peek, who tells me that the background which so infuriated me was added by another person well after the game part of the package had been completed.

The design team for Flying Buffalo's *Tunnels and Trolls* point out that the game functions best as an introduction to role-playing and as a vehicle to get time-constrained players in and out of dungeon adventures quickly. *T&T* is probably the best role-playing product in these two respects; however, I still believe it swiftly pales once the players want to get into any deeper involvement in role-playing (see *Ares* #3).

A gremlin wormed its way into the review of Steve Newberg's *Dark Stars* (#9). The three non-human races travel by slower-than-light travel. Only the Terrans have developed FTL travel.

Readers are invited to comment on opinions expressed in these pages. My words, after all, are writ in paper, not in stone.

Eric Goldberg

BOOKS [continued from page 15]

novel, head and shoulders — well, head — above most of the miasma that is fantasy being published today.

Schrodinger's Cat II: The Trick Top Hat is Robert Anton Wilson's sequel to *Schrodinger's Cat I: The Universe Next Door*, and, naturally, the second book in a trilogy. Like *SC I*, it is a sequence of disjointed and arbitrarily connected episodes dealing with a couple dozen characters, some of which live in different universes from each other, occurring at variously different times, some synchronously. Wilson seems to have taken upon himself the task of attempting to enlighten through confusion, a distinctly Zen and certainly discordant process. Cutting through the verbiage (much of which is delightful), one comes to the core of Wilson's argument. Wilson's premier metaphor is Schrodinger's cat, which he sees as the antithesis of Pavlov's dog. Schrodinger once stated an apparent paradox; suppose one locks a cat in a box, and connects to a shotgun in the box a mechanism triggered by the decay of a radioactive atom. After one half-life, there is a precisely 50% chance that the atom has decayed and that the cat is dead, and a 50% chance that the atom is yet whole, as is the cat. There is no way of finding out whether the cat is dead or not except by opening the box. Is the cat dead or alive? According to modern physics, there is no way of telling. According to the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, one can never determine the position and velocity of a particle. This is because the process of observation changes the system. Wilson answers Schrodinger's paradox by analogizing to the uncertainty principle; the cat is neither dead nor alive (or perhaps both) until an observer opens the box. The process of observation changes the system. Thus, Wilson claims, reality is a subjective concept; he stipulates what Heinein calls multi-ego solipsism.

Wilson is a peculiar writer. In some ways, he is the culmination of so many trends in science fiction; in others, he is the rejection of so many. He rejects linear storytelling, scientific extrapolation, and style-neutral prose; indeed, his favorite writer and, often, model is Joyce. On the other hand, he is certainly writing science fiction; his book is a purposeful exploration of the philosophical consequences of modern physics. (Readers should be aware that modern physics does not necessarily support Wilson's assumptions any more than Darwinian biology supports social Darwinism; Wilson is analogizing and theorizing, nothing more.) Thrown into the potpourri is a dollop of sex, a magnum of Wiccan magic, and more than a bit of mysticism. Wilson is not a writer for the unwary; the *Schrodinger's Cat* series is immensely enjoyable, but requires a reader who will think. Aficionados of space opera need not apply.

Greg Costikyan



GAMES RATING CHART

SCIENCE FICTION & SCIENCE FANTASY

Title	Pub	Date	Price	Comp	Time	Soil
1. Traveller	GDW	7/77	12 75	39	6.2	5.5
2. Imperium	GDW	12/77	10 75	32	6.1	6.25
3. Creation...Shogun	SPI	4/78	8 71	63	5.0	1.65
4. Battlestar Galactica	MC	7/8	3 11	63	7.5	6.5
5. Freedom in the Galaxy	SPI	6/79	20 71	36	7.0	7.5
6. Starfall Battles	TFG	7/8	13 21	29	6.5	2.65
7. Ogre	MGC	5/77	3 70	52	4.8	1.65
8. Cosmic Encounters	EP	76	12 70	23	3.5	1.20
9. Voyage of the Pandora	SPI	1/81	na	69	6.1	6.5
10. Dark Nebula	GDW	2/80	5 08	11	5.9	2.25
11. Battlestar Wars	SPI	4/77	10 58	62	6.8	6.0
12. John Carter of Mars	SPI	5/79	20 67	32	6.0	4.5
13. Stellar Conquest	MGC	2/75	13 67	22	5.8	6.0
14. Asteroid	GDW	80	8 67	19	5.5	2.40
15. TimeTrapper	SPI	7/80	8 65	12	6.0	2.70
16. Objective: Moscow	SPI	3/78	27 05	15	5.0	3.50
17. Traveller	SPI	3/78	12 65	12	5.7	2.40
18. Villains & Vigilantes	FGU	na	6 85	5	na	na
19. Wreck of the Pandora	SPI	5/80	8 64	69	6.0	3.70
20. Space Opera	FGU	80	18 64	8	6.0	4.0
21. Snapshot	GDW	6/78	8 63	19	5.3	1.40
22. After the Holocaust	SPI	1/77	18 63	22	7.5	7.0
23. Myriad	GDW	2/78	5 67	21	6.2	2.40
24. Star Troopers	AH	1/75	15 62	53	5.0	2.35
25. Starwars	FB	76	10 62	12	5.5	na
26. Invasion: America	SPI	12/75	18 61	30	5.5	6.45
27. Bloodstar Rebellion	GDW	11/78	13 61	28	6.0	5.25
28. Doctor Who	GW	na	20 61	4	na	na
29. Better	GDW	6/78	12 60	11	5.9	4.25
30. Star Soldier	SPI	3/74	12 60	45	6.0	4.45
31. Outreach	SPI	11/76	12 60	36	6.0	5.40
32. Dune	AH	6/79	15 60	25	na	na
33. Robots	TFG	80	4 60	11	5.8	2.55
34. Star Fall	SPI	8/78	13 59	8	na	na
35. War in the Ice	SPI	1/79	13 59	26	6.8	5.45
36. Star Soldier	SPI	1/77	12 58	27	7.1	2.55
37. Godfire	MGC	78	16 58	14	7.1	8.15
38. Starfall Battle Manual	GDW	6/77	6 59	10	6.3	1.50
39. Warp War	MGC	77	3 59	37	5.4	1.60
40. Time War	YP	8/78	13 59	8	na	na
41. Marine: 2002	YP	12/79	17 59	6	6.1	4.50
42. Starfall	TFG	6/78	5 57	8	na	na
43. Trek-40	na	na	15 57	3	na	na
44. StarGate	SPI	4/79	4 57	30	5.5	2.60
45. Olympia	MGC	na	3 58	24	5.5	1.20
46. Space Quest	TYR	na	na	5.6	5	na
47. Ice War	MGC	78	3 58	23	5.0	2.65
48. Lords of Middle Sea	TC	7/78	10 58	6	na	na
49. Ultimatum	YP	8/79	na	5.8	9	1.0
50. WorldKiller	SPI	3/80	8 58	19	3.5	1.40
51. Double Star	GDW	3/78	10 58	15	5.5	5.0
52. Carabus	TFG	6/78	4 58	7	na	na
53. Archon	MGC	80	4 55	10	5.5	2.60
54. Alpha Omega	AH	7/77	15 55	11	na	na

Title	Pub	Date	Price	Comp	Time	Soil
11. Swooshbucker	YP	80	7 67	16	4.5	2.60
12. OUBRS	EP	80	12 66	9	5.0	22.40
13. Death Trip	MGC	79	8 66	29	5.8	1.10
14. Divine Night	TSR	79	10 65	18	5.2	4.0
15. Swords & Sorcery	SPI	7/78	20 65	35	6.0	3.50
16. Bushido	TYR	na	10 65	7	6.8	5.10
17. Named Gods	TC	5/77	10 64	12	5.2	3.60
18. Adventure 060	TSR	79	39 64	48	6.0	1.0
19. Night of Blood	SPI	11/80	11 64	10	5.5	6.5
20. Intolider	TFG	180	4 64	16	5.7	2.60
21. DeathMaze	SPI	11/79	8 61	40	5.1	2.50
22. Tunnels & Trails	FB	75	8 61	18	5.8	6.0
23. Hammer of Thor	GNS	80	19 61	6	6.7	4.10
24. Valkenberg Castle	TFG	11/80	4 61	9	na	na
25. Gorder	TSR	79	6 60	2.5	4.5	4.5
26. En Garde!	TFG	7/75	10 60	18	5.7	2.62
27. Areas of Death	SPI	9/80	8 60	68	6.0	1.80
28. Treasure Ship Dragon	MGC	80	4 60	17	6.0	2.60
29. Empire of Petal Throne	TSR	8/77	5 59	21	7.4	1.0
30. Sauron	SPI	11/72	24 58	29	6.8	4.55
31. Dargonest	TSR	75	10 58	29	na	na
32. Slits and Stones	MGC	78	3 57	23	5.9	2.65
33. Wizard's Quest	AH	79	15 58	21	4.5	2.20
34. Demons	SPI	11/78	8 58	32	5.2	2.70
35. Elic	TC	7/77	5 55	9	4.5	3.30
36. Sorcerer	SPI	10/75	15 55	36	6.0	2.60
37. Swordquest	TFG	12/78	5 55	8	na	na
38. Master Monsters	MGC	78	4 55	6.8	8.10	8.10
39. Beast Land	YP	6/79	15 54	6	7.0	5.0
40. Stamp!	TC	11/79	3 54	10	na	na
41. Citadel	FGU	na	5 54	8	na	na
42. Tribes of Crane	SS	78	3 54	8	na	na
43. Lords & Wizards	TC	12	53	5.8	na	na
44. King Arthur's Knights	TC	7/78	10 53	6	na	na
45. Andon Grimore	GS	79	29 51	11	na	na
46. Sol's Revenge	TSR	78	7 50	22	na	na
47. Spellmaster	BL	na	na	5.0	7	na
48. Mythology	YP	4/80	14 50	6	7.0	3.45
49. Spellbinder	TFG	80	4 50	6	5.8	3.30
50. Shogun Stars	YP	80	7 49	5	na	na
51. Star Wars	TFG	7/79	10 49	5	na	na
52. Sword Quest	TFG	12/79	5 49	43	na	na

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS: AH=Avon; AW=Attack Wargaming; BL=Battletech; C=C-C-in-C; MetaCasting; L=Creative; DC=Dave Casiano Co.; EG=Excalibur Games; EP=Edge Products; FB=Fly Buffalo, Inc.; FG=Fantasy Games; FGU=Fantasy Games Unlimited, Inc.; Fm=Fantasy; GDW=Game Designers' Workshop; GG=Grimoire Games; GNS=Gameshop; GS=GameScience; H=Hare; H&H=Hare & Hare, Ltd.; JG=Judges Guild; MGC=Metagaming Concepts; OSO=Operational Studies Group; RP=Real Path; SJD=Steve Jackson Games; SPI=Simulations Publications, Inc.; SS=Schubel & Sons; TC=The Chaosium; TFG=Task Force Games; TSR=Tactical Studies Rules; TYR=Ty Ty Games; YP=Yagumo Publications. *Acceptability Rating* is the game's overall popularity. *% Played* is the percentage of readers who have played the game within the last twelve months. *Complexity Rating* is the relative complexity of the game on a scale of 1 (simplest) to 9. *Soil* is the game's ease of soilplay on a scale of 1 (easily) to infinity.

Universe [continued from page 28]

he is encouraged to do so. The creatures are very detailed; they are not broad generalizations which leave you with the feeling you've just read a text on basic zoology. We've gone in for visual and tactile descriptions rather than classifications, which will help the GM to referee them and the players to relate to them.

The rules were written with the beginning role-player in mind. No set of role-playing rules is easy; many people are intimidated by the "oh my god, it's as long as a book!" feeling they receive when they first pick it up. Our stated purpose, however, was to write rules that anyone could understand. Avoiding role-playing jargon as much as possible, we tried to say things in plain English (with the help of our editors), and say them as succinctly as possible.

The novice role-player who wants to try *Universe* should start out by leisurely reading

through the rules and examining the Interstellar Display and other aids provided. If he intends to GM, he should read the enclosed adventure, checking back to the rules whenever the descriptions of characters or situations therein raise questions. He should gather his group of players together for an evening before they actually play and let them see the Gamesmaster's Guide, showing them the sections on Character Action, Skills, and Character Generation in particular. Then they should use the personal combat rules and run a firefight with the characters provided in the adventure.

This approach will solve two problems: it will get them through a personal combat situation, which is often the hardest system to learn, and it will familiarize them with the characters they will play in the adventure. Each player should then choose a character from those provided and agree when to meet again. If they can procure a copy of the rules

to read before play begins, it will make the better. The fledgling GM should spend any intervening time becoming conversant with the *encounter* systems (character vs. non-player character, character vs. creature), the story line of the adventure, and the world on which the adventure takes place.

When all meet again to play out the adventure, it should become clear what problems have arisen which should be discussed then, before any misunderstandings take place. The first play-through is going to be very rough and all concerned will undoubtedly miss rules, misinterpret rules, and forget about rules. These are all necessary happenings and the evening should not be billed as anything else except a fun time for all.

If the GM has succeeded in sparking a little interest in the players, he should have them back over to play out other scenarios in the star system the adventure provides while he starts creating his own *Universe*. ■

Feedback

Reader Survey, Ares nr. 10

Your opinions directly affect the editorial content of *Ares* Magazine. We invite you to participate in this, our regular survey of readers.

How to use the Feedback Response Card: After you've finished reading this issue of *Ares*, please read the Feedback questions below, and give us your answers by writing the answer-numbers on the card in the response boxes which correspond to each question number. See enclosures for card. Please be sure to answer all questions (but do not write anything in the box for question-numbers labelled "no question"). Incompletely filled-out cards cannot be processed.

What the numbers mean: When answering questions, "0" always means NO OPINION or NOT APPLICABLE. When the question is a "yes or no" question, "1" means YES and "2" means NO. When the question is a rating question, "1" is the WORST rating, "3" is the BEST rating, "5" is an AVERAGE rating, and all numbers in between express various shades of approval or disapproval.

1-3. No question

The following questions ask you to rate the articles in this issue on a scale of 1 (poor) through 9 (excellent); 0 = no opinion.

4. Return of the Stainless Steel Rat (game)
5. Return of the Stainless Steel Rat (story)
6. The Camp of Alla-Akabar (adventure)
7. There's Only One Universe
8. DeltaVee Enhanced
9. Science for Science Fiction
10. Facts for Fantasy
11. Media (review)
12. Books (review)
13. Film and Television (review)
14. Games (review)
15. DragonNotes
16. Designer's Notes
17. This issue overall
18. Is this issue better than the last one? 1 = Yes; 2 = No.
19. Did you send in the feedback card for your last issue of *Ares*? 1 = Yes; 2 = No.
20. Assume that you don't subscribe to *Ares*. Would the quality of this issue alone motivate you to subscribe? 1 = Yes; 2 = No.
21. For how many issues have you had a continuous subscription to *Ares*? 0 = I do not subscribe; 1 = This is my first issue; 2 = This is my second issue; 3 = This is my third issue; 4 = This is my fourth issue; 5 = This is my fifth issue; 6 = This is my sixth issue; 7 = This is my seventh issue; 8 = This is my eighth issue; 9 = I am a *LifeTime Subscriber* to *Ares* (regardless of the number of issues received).
22. Your age: 1 = 13 years old or younger; 2 = 14-17; 3 = 18-21; 4 = 22-27; 5 = 28-35; 6 = 36 or older.
23. Your sex: 1 = Male; 2 = Female.
24. Education: 1 = 11 years or less; 2 = 12 years; 3 = 13-15 years; 4 = 13-15 years and still in school; 5 = 16 years; 6 = 17 years or more.
25. How long have you been playing conflict simulation games? 0 = less than a year; 1 = 1 year; 2 = 2 years; 3 = 3-8 years; 9 = 9 or more years.
26. What is the average number of hours you spend playing simulation games each month? 0 = none; 1 = 1 hour or less; 2 = 2-5 hours; 3 = 6-9 hours; 4 = 10-15 hours; 5 = 16-20 hours; 6 = 21-25; 7 = 26-30; 8 = 31-40; 9 = 41 or more hours.
27. How many simulation games (of all publishers) do you possess? 1 = 1-10; 2 = 11-20; 3 = 21-30; 4 = 31-40; 5 = 41-50; 6 = 51-60; 7 = 61-70; 8 = 71-80; 9 = 81 or more.
28. What level of complexity do you prefer in games? Rate your preference on a 1-9 scale, with higher numbers indicating increased complexity. Use the following games as guidelines: 4 = *World Killer*; 7 = *Battlefleet*; Mars; 9 = *Ark War*.
29. What percentage of the games you plan to buy in the next year, do you expect will be SPI games? 1 = 10%; 2 = 20%; 3 = 30%; 4 = 40%; 5 = 50%; 6 = 60%; 7 = 70%; 8 = 80%; 9 = 90%.
30. Pick the one area of science fiction that you most enjoy reading: 1 = Space opera/science fantasy; 2 = "Hard"

science fiction adventure; 3 = Problem-solving hard science fiction; 4 = Extraterrestrial societies; 5 = Future societies (utopia/dystopia); 6 = Alternate history; 7 = Time travel; 8 = Soft science fiction (a.k.a. "new wave"); 9 = Other (please write in the category description).

31. Pick the one area about which you would most like to see science fiction games done: 1 = Strategic space conflict; 2 = Tactical space conflict (ship against ship); 3 = Strategic planet-bound conflict (army against army); 4 = Tactical planetbound conflict (man against man); 5 = Alternate history conflict; 6 = Conflict in a contemporary setting; 7 = Role-playing adventure; 8 = Economic/sociological/political conflict; 9 = Other (please write in the category description).
32. How many science fiction games do you own (including the game in this issue)? 1 = 1; 2 = 2; 3 = 3; 4 = 4; 5 = 5 to 10; 6 = 11 to 15; 7 = 16 to 20; 8 = 21 to 25; 9 = 26 or more.
33. Pick the one area of fantasy that you most enjoy reading: 1 = Sword and Sorcery; 2 = Mythological fantasy; 3 = Quest adventure; 4 = Classically-based fantasy (e.g., Arthurian legend); 5 = Fantasy in a contemporary setting; 6 = Superhero/heroic adventure; 7 = Anthropomorphic fantasy (e.g., *Watership Down*); 8 = Horror/occult; 9 = Other (please write in the category description).
34. Pick the one area about which you would most like to see fantasy games done: 1 = Strategic sword and sorcery battles (army against army); 2 = Tactical sword and sorcery boardgames (hero against evildoer); 3 = Quest/adventure boardgames; 4 = Sword and sorcery role-playing; 5 = Quest/adventure role-playing; 6 = Classically-based fantasy; 7 = Anthropomorphic societies; 8 = Horror/occult; 9 = Other (please write in the category description).
35. How many fantasy games do you own? 1 = 1; 2 = 2; 3 = 3; 4 = 4; 5 = 5 to 10; 6 = 11 to 15; 7 = 16 to 20; 8 = 21 to 25; 9 = 26 or more.
36. If you are a subscriber to *Ares*, indicate how you came to be one: 1 = An ad in *Strategy & Tactics*; 2 = An ad in *Analog*; 3 = An ad in *Games*; 4 = An ad in a previous issue of *Ares*; 5 = An ad in a sci-fi gaming magazine; 6 = An ad in a science fiction magazine; 7 = An ad in a science fact magazine; 8 = An ad in another kind of magazine not mentioned; 9 = Other (please specify in the Feedback card).
37. Indicate on 1 to 9 fantasy-to-science-fiction spectrum where your interest lies. For example, if you're only interested in fantasy games and stories, you'd write "1"; if you're more mainly fantasy but included some sci-fi, you might write "2" or "3"; evenly divided interest would be "5"; and, of course, pure sci-fi interest would be a "9".
38. How many persons, including yourself, will read this copy of *Ares*? 1 = 1; 2 = 2; 3 = 3; 4 = 4; 5 = 5 to 10; 6 = 11 to 15; 7 = 16 to 20; 8 = 21 to 25; 9 = 26 or more.
39. Would you like to see role-playing adventures rated in *Ares* Feedback and then listed in a way similar to the Games Rating Chart? 1 = yes; 2 = no. 0 = no opinion.
40. Would you like to see computer games rated in *Ares* Feedback and then listed in a way similar to the Games Rating Chart? 1 = yes; 2 = no. 0 = no opinion.
41. Do you own or plan to buy one of the following microcomputer systems? 0 = I have no interest in microcomputers or microcomputer gaming; 1 = I own an Apple II; 2 = plan to buy an Apple II; 3 = own a Radio Shack TRS-80; 4 = plan to buy a TRS-80; 5 = own an Atari 800; 6 = plan to buy an Atari 800; 7 = own some other microcomputer; 8 = plan to buy some other microcomputer; 9 = have no plans to buy a microcomputer because I already have access to a microcomputer.

Questions 42 and 43 ask about your income and possessions. Since feedback cards are anonymous, we hope you'll be willing to help us develop statistical information to help us attract advertisers; if you'd rather not, simply respond "0" for your answers. Thanks.

42. Your individual personal income: 1 = less than \$5000; 2 = between \$5,000-10,000; 3 = between \$10,000-12,500; 4 = \$12,500-15,000; 5 = \$15,000-17,500; 6 = \$17,500-20,000; 7 = \$20,000-22,500; 8 = \$22,500-25,000; 9 = over \$25,000.
43. Your total household income: 1 = less than \$10,000; 2 = between \$10,000-15,000; 3 = \$15,000-20,000; 4 = \$20,000-25,000; 5 = \$25,000-30,000; 6 = \$30,000-35,000; 7 = \$35,000-40,000; 8 = \$40,000-45,000; 9 = over \$45,000.

Question 44 through 62 ask about purchases you've made during the past twelve months or plan to make. Please answer the questions with the statement that is most correct: 1 = I have bought such an item within the past twelve months; 2 = someone else in the family or house

has bought this item within the past twelve months; 3 = I plan to purchase this item in the near future; 4 = someone in the family/house plans to purchase this item in the near future; 5 = there is no intention of buying this item.

44. Hand-held electronic game
45. Television video game
46. Video cassette recorder
47. Video disk player
48. Hand-held electronic calculator
49. Digital or LED clock radio
50. Digital or LED watch
51. Portable color television set
52. Console color television set
53. Polaroid-type camera
54. Instamatic-type camera
55. 35mm camera
56. Super 8-type movie camera
57. Videotape camera
58. Hi-fi or stereo component system
59. Hi-fi or stereo modular system
60. Cassette tape recorder/deck
61. Radio/speakers/tape deck for car
62. Portable electronic typewriter
63. Do you belong to a record/tape club?
64. Do you belong to a videotape club?
65. Do you belong to a military book club?
66. Do you belong to a science fiction book club?
67. Do you belong to a mystery book club?
68. Do you belong to a history book club?
69. Do you belong to a theatrical book club?
70. Do you belong to a literary/publisher book club?
71. Do you belong to a book-of-the-month club?
72. Do you belong to a computer book club?
73. Would you like to see more articles on *Ares* games (such as the DeltaVee article in this issue) included in *Ares*? 0 = no opinion; 1 = yes; 2 = no.
74. Would you like to see more articles on other science fiction and fantasy games by other publishers, examining such things as variants and additional scenarios, operational analyses of the tactics and strategies in playing these games, game profiles, and so forth? 0 = no opinion; 1 = yes; 2 = no.
75. What is the one feature in the past few issues of *Ares* you feel needs change to make it better (through alterations in quality, quantity, format, etc.)? 0 = don't change anything; 1 = the game; 2 = the fiction; 3 = science fact/fantasy background articles; 4 = material connected with the game; 5 = DragonNotes; 6 = reviews of the media; 7 = reviews of the games; 8 = art work; 9 = game analysis articles.
76. How would you describe how often you play *Ares* issue games? 0 = I never play the games; 1 = I rarely play the games (more than once or twice); 2 = I often play the games (about four to ten times); 3 = I frequently play the games (more than ten times).
77. How often do you play *Ares* issue games with other players? 0 = I never play the issue games; 1 = I play the games solo; 2 = I occasionally play the games with one or more players; 3 = I almost always play the issue games with one or more players.

We would like to find out how you feel about having role-playing adventures appear in *Ares*. Please answer questions 78 and 79, using the appropriate responses. 0 = I don't care about role-playing adventures in *Ares* or not; 1 = I would like to see such adventures appear rarely (not more than one a year); 2 = I would like to see such adventures appear occasionally (about once every two or three issues); 3 = I would like to see such adventures appear frequently (at least every other issue); 4 = I would prefer that such adventures not appear at all. Rate each kind of adventure separately.

78. DragonQuest Adventures
79. Universe Adventures

Rate the following game proposals on a scale of 1 to 9, with 1 indicating very little inclination to buy the game if published and 9 indicating a definite intention to purchase.

8. The Krishna Chronicles. Under the leadership of Krishna, the human species has created a galaxy-wide Empire. In one corner of this Empire is the beautiful world of Krishna, with its lovely blue forests and the warrior na-

tives who sail their square-riggers beneath the three moons. It is a world of swash-buckling, sword-wielding who battle constantly, kept "protected" in its pristine innocence from the encroachment of technology. Humans may visit this lovely world, but they must swear to ignore technology and live by the code of the broadsword. *The Krishna Chronicles*, based on the stories and novels by L. Sprague de Camp, would recreate at an operational level the clash of armies and the conflict of cultures. There would be two game systems included in the game: the first would be a character game in which players take on the roles of various humans interfering in Krishna's history and would emphasize the various goals and personal combats the characters would experience, and the second would be a campaign game in which players take on the various magical and barbaric kingdoms of Krishna. The rules would cover magic vs. technology, leading campaigns, individual duels, the various beasts and beauties of Krishna, and other chromatic detail for a rich fantasy world. To sell for \$20, including a short story or article by Mr. de Camp (subject to agreement with the author).

81. The Corridors of Time. What started out as a normal scientific expedition into the future via time dilator has suddenly turned into a terrifying headlong plunge towards eternity. A party of four scientists are being tunneled into the future at ever increasing speeds; though they are able to stop the machine at certain times in the future, they are unable to reverse their course. If they are not careful, they may bypass the sun's life and even the death of the universe. *The Corridors of Time* is a modified *Voyage of the Pandora* paragraph-story system and *TimeTripper* game system tactical display. Part of the game would be discovering what has caused the dilator to malfunction — internal mechanical failure, outside manipulation, or possible sabotage — and then reversing the machine's course before the universe is lost. The way the one to four players would meet unusual beings of the far future who may be either helpful or antagonistic and who may even decide to join the time travellers in their adventure. *The Corridors of Time* would contain a 22" x 34" mapsheet containing time tracks and tactical displays, 200 playing pieces, and rules with an extensive paragraph selector. A possible *Ares* game to sell for \$12.

82. License to Kill. As agent #2 learned over to fight his toughest and most dangerous foe, the darkness. Against all odds, he stretched his arms and brought them down behind his head where his Baretta was concealed. In a lightning quick move, he dropped to one knee and pumped the full clip into the man who was by then only three feet away. Fly, he thought. *License to Kill* is a role-playing game based on the exploits of James Earl Ray. As Solo, Our Man Flint, and any other slightly-above-average secret agent hero you may have known. (Any relationship between this game and the real world will be purely coincidental.) Important concepts in the game's design would be solo adventures (as most great agents would best when not encumbered with "helpers"), group play within an Agency of sorts, gadgetry of their heroes (what has Q come up with this time?), sex, scenario generation, suspension of reality, etc. Anything — however unlikely — these heroes would be able to do in the novels or movies, the players will be able to do in the game (yes, even fall out of a plane without your parachute, catching your enemy and landing in his back without any harm to yourself). *License to Kill* would contain a Game Master's Handbook, Agent Training Manual, combat display, and full introductory scenario. To sell for \$20.00.

83. Chronicles of Amber. Based on Roger Zelazny's fantasy series, this game would put the player in place of one of the children of Oberon, as they fight against each other to gain power throughout time as well as in beautiful Amber. A map would be included detailing various locations where personal combat may take place, as well as plans of the castle and the Pattern of Amber. Actually utilizing the Deck of Trumps, each player would have some control over his siblings' actions and locations through the use of the cards, but would himself fall prey to others who can control him. A fast paced but accurate personal combat system would be included to handle those minor fraternal spats. Amongst other possible inclusions is an army combat system with siege rules for those times when tempers get out of hand. Aliances (and broken promises) would both be encouraged. The game would include one 22" x 34" map, 200 counters, 50 tiles and 16 pages of rules in a 2" box for \$18. Availability subject to agreement with the author.

84. The High History of the RuneStaff. Based on Michael Moorcock's sweeping epic of heroic adventure in

the far future, this game would chronicle the efforts of Dorian Hawkmoon to defeat the maniacal demons who call themselves the men of Granbraten. Covering both the three volumes of the History of the RuneStaff plus the Chronicles of Count Brass, the game would pit Hawkmoon, Count Brass, Oladahn, D'Aver, Bowgentle, and the forces of Kamarg against Baron Meliadus and the advancing forces of the Dark Empire. The game would start soon after the initial onslaught of Granbraten. Covering both the time until the raising of either Londra or the Kamarg. The characters would battle the enemy forces and go on quests to seek aid from such artifacts as the Sword of the Dawn and the RuneStaff itself. Additional scenarios would start at the defeat of Granbraten and the search of Hawkmoon for his wife and children, captured by the Dark Empire even as victory was within his grasp. With both a personal combat and army combat systems, a random event system would simulate the sometimes strange workings of the destiny of the RuneStaff itself. The game would include a 22" x 34" map, 200 counters, 50 tiles, 16 pages of rules, to sell for \$18.00. Availability subject to agreement with the author.

The Lair of the Worm. This *DragonQuest* adventure depicts the attempt to track down and kill *Scatha the Dragon*. This recently published book is very similar to the *Frontiers of Alusia* map, this would be a trilogy of adventures, each requiring two sittings to play through, thus taking approximately six sessions of play in all. Each adventure would be complete unto itself or they may be played together in order to form an epic adventure. This adventure would emphasize brain power rather than brawn, as the only real way to even the odds against the beast are to collect two artifacts of power lost long ago in combat against the worm's father. *The Lair of the Worm* could be run in two different configurations; please rate them separately.

85. A trilogy pack of three booklets or one soft-bound book with all three adventures included; to sell for \$15.00.
86. Each adventure published separately in soft-bound booklets; each booklet to sell for \$6.00.

SPI believes there is a need for introductory role-playing games, games the non-role-player could pick up without needing divine guidance. These games (questions 87 through 96) would be designed to be played with a specific "world" within their genre, rather than attempting to cover all the bases at once. They would include an introductory scenario and give guidelines for rules expansion. All would include 32 pages of text (rules and adventure), one map or display, and possibly 100 counters. Each would debut in *Ares* and would then be available separately for \$10.

87. Tieren Vennus. Fantasy role-playing is a world where magic and religion are bitter enemies. The world in which it takes place includes humans and elves, but all other creatures are semi or non-intelligent. Characters would choose whether to believe in the gods or in magic (which is considered heresy by the Church). All characters would be able to use magic or perform miracles and also train and become proficient in the arts of personal combat. Emphasis would be placed on character (personality) creation, allowing players to mold their characters as they wish, and improve whichever facet of their personality they wish. Combat would use a matrix system and no dice, allowing for the superior swordsmen to defeat his opponent by wits and skill. Magic would be used as tools to help the player defeat hostile to the characters, rather than being an enemy unto themselves.

88. Adventures in Alien Space. Science fiction role-playing in unexplored space. Characters would be the inhabitants of a Federation starship whose mission is to explore strange new worlds, investigate their findings, and transmit any conclusions to the nearest Starbase. Problem-solving would be emphasized since the Federation is viewed by the Federation as a last resort when dealing with virgin worlds. The skills detailed would deal mainly with the ability to analyze and gather data. The heart of the GM's duties will be to generate worlds for the players to explore. A system for the creation of these star systems would be included, as would systems for the creation of artifacts, creatures, and other problems for the characters to solve.

89. Laredo. Wild West role-playing in the world of *Gunsmoke*, *Have Gun Will Travel*, *Bat Masterson*, *The Wild, Wild West*, and any other fanciful TV western you might have seen. Characters would choose to be proficient at any number of talents, including horsemanship, hand-guns, roping, robbing, riding (the three R's), trick shoot-

ing, ambush, etc. No characteristics as such would be used nor an experience point system; rather, each talent would be improved as it was used. Included would be a map of the pony express routes, train lines, and stage coach routes, as the players choose to be lawmen or villains. Play would include setting an ambush, fighting duels, chasing the villains, wooing the schoolmarm, and so forth.

90. Superhero! Ultra Lad and Snake Woman bound to wards Dr. Psycho and his mecho-beasts. Buildings crumble and submerge as the daring duo valiantly battle the metal monstrosities. Things look bleak for the forces of good; the mad scientists brain-drain ray is sapping their wills. But Mr. Amazing appears in the nick of time in his Amazingmobile and decks Dr. Psycho with one mighty blow. Now leaderless, the mecho-beasts grind to a halt. *Superhero!* is a role-playing game of fantastic heroes and adventure set in the present day. Players take the role of a superhero or a supervillain, each created using a unique hero/villain generation system. A large selection of possible origins, powers and weaknesses allow the players to recreate any existing superbeing or to develop one from their own imagination. The Gamesmaster introduces heroes, villains, victims and scientific gadgetry into play to lead the heroes and villains into quest and battle (quite often against each other). The game would include a 64-page book of simple rules and "story" ideas, a selection of combat displays for every type of environment on and around earth (air, space, underground, city, mountain tops, etc.), and 200 counters of various shapes and sizes, all in a 2" box to sell for \$20.

91. The Role-Player. A bi-monthly 40-page magazine devoted to all types of role-playing games. *Universe and DragonQuest* adventures and supplemental material would be featured each issue. Columns, reviews and advice on all role-playing products would be included regularly. \$5 per year.

92. The Cygnus Carina Arm. A *Universe* supplement with an expanded Interstellar Display. The 22" x 34" map would be similar in appearance to the existing display, but would be at a scale of 1:2500 (1 cm = 25 miles). The Federation space at the core. Known beacon stars would be shown and extensive rules for creating additional stars would allow the GM to create his own interstellar communities. Astronomical phenomena such as O and B type stars, neutron stars, wolf-rayet stars, nebulae, interstellar dust clouds, dwarf stars, comets, binary or trinary star systems, gas giants, black holes, and the theoretical worm holes and white holes would be explained. The Federation's discoveries beyond settled space and an adventure in the form of a long-range exploration mission would complete this supplement. To sell for \$12.

93. Metropolis. A *Universe* supplement with a complete map and guide to a city of the 24th Century. The map would present the individual and mass transportation, structure and support networks of the central area with capital city at a scale of 1:2500 (1 cm = 25 miles). Star-scrapers, modular housing projects, hydroponic parks, skyriders, a spacecraft terminus, industrial complexes, leisure centers and other points of personal and commercial interest would be shown using a color-coded three-dimensional mapping system. Smaller maps of other planets, a pioneer exploration settlement and a pacific institute would also be included. Special rules for character combat in built up areas, a host of urban NPC's, and guidelines for transferring information from the maps to the Action Display would complete the supplement. To sell for \$10.

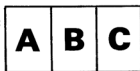
94-96. No question.

Call for Game Proposals

In the Feedback section of every issue of *Ares* we propose about a dozen fantasy and science fiction game ideas for your approval or disapproval. We would like to hear your ideas and to hear them up and send them to the attention of John Burt Foster here at SPI. Follow the format of the proposals in this issue: 10 to 20 typewritten lines including a brief background, a description of game mechanics (what other game might it be similar to), and a list of the possible game parts. All submissions shall be understood to be freely given to SPI with no expectation of remuneration or the retention by the submitter of any rights to any intellectual property or idea implicit or explicit in all suggestions.

DELTA VEE ENHANCED (continued from page 26)

Map
Deployment:

**Player 1 (Posedy) Deployment:**

One Corco *Mu* (spaceship counter A) with ten arsenal pods, one battle communications pod and one energy pod. The ship is set up facing any direction in hex 0707 on Map A with a velocity of 5. (**Note:** All pods and the hull have an armor level of 2. Also, the ship has a forcefield of 2.) One *Dagger* (counter B) with one energy pod and one crew pod. This ship enters in hex 0707 on Map A under the following condition: If at any time the energy pod on the *Mu* is damaged or has used up all its energy, the *Dagger* may be brought on to refuel the ship. The *Dagger* may transfer its energy pod to the *Mu* if it is in the same hex with the other ship for one friendly Movement Phase. The *Mu* must jettison one of its pods to be able to accept the new energy pod (a destroyed pod fulfills this condition).

Player 2 (Hai-Katu) Deployment:

Three Corco *Gamma* (spaceship counters A, B and C) each with a light weapon pod and two buffered cargo pods. Two Corco *Zetas* (counters D and E) each with a hunter pod, a light weapons pod, a crew pod, two buffered cargo pods and an energy pod. One Corco

Iota (this counter must be created) with two hunter pods, a tractor beam pod, three buffered cargo pods, a crew pod, an energy pod and a jump pod. One Corco *Mu* (this counter must be created) with two light weapons pods, two hunter pods, a battlecraft pod (with a *Terwillicker-5000* battlecraft), a tractor beam pod, four buffered cargo pods, and two crew pods. These ships are deployed anywhere on Map C facing any direction, and with a velocity from 1 to 4.

Victory Conditions:

For each ship the Posedy player destroys, he receives one Victory Point. If the *Dagger* resupply ship is brought into play, the Posedy player loses one Victory Point. If his ship has more than six pods *damaged*, he loses 2 Victory Points. If more than three pods are *destroyed*, he loses 2 Victory Points more. If the *Mu* is destroyed, the Posedy player automatically loses. The Posedy player wins if he has 2 Victory Points by the end of the game. (**Note:** The game continues until one side is completely destroyed; it is thus possible for the Posedy player to have at least two Victory Points, but still lose the game if his ship is destroyed.)

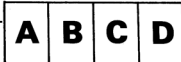
SCENARIO 10: The Chess Players

Marjan and Gandapor are multi-billionaires who have built far-flung financial empires. Usually acting outside Federation laws, the two men have been known to do anything to make an extra Tran or two. Fre-

quent raids on each other's shipping has lately caused such strain that each man is determined to eliminate the quasi-military fleets of his rival. The two assembled fleets meet near Beta Hydra to determine which empire will come out on top.

Each player has 175,000 Trans with which to build a fleet using the accompanying Craft and Pod Cost Chart. Each player should keep his fleet secret until the combat begins; at the end of the game players should examine each other's expenditures to make sure the opponent is more honest than the billionaire he is representing. If a player cheats, he automatically loses.

Map
Deployment:

**Player 1 Deployment:**

Before ships are set up, the player secretly writes down one hex number on any map. When play is ready to begin, the player sets up his fleet within one hex of the hex chosen, facing in any direction and with a velocity of 1 to 4.

Player 2 Deployment:

The second player sets up his fleet following the same directions as those for the first player.

Victory Conditions:

The first player to destroy his opponent's fleet entirely is the winner. ■■

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