

# The Oracle

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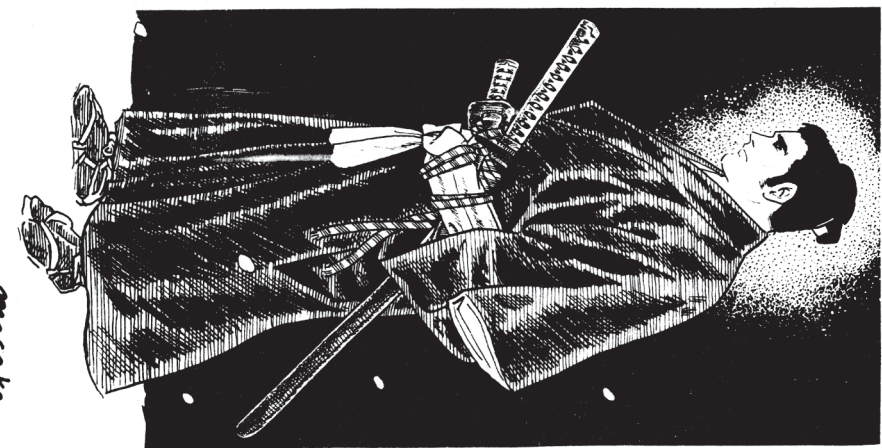
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## THE ORACLE

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Some important items to keep in mind - first, your subscription number on the mailing label. This number must appear on all items pertaining to your subscription, as it will speed processing. We throw all inquiries without a number into a basket to be sorted later, so don't let that happen to you. Secondly, the issue number your present subscription ends on is printed on that same little mailing label, right next to the subscription number (following the hyphen). When your subscription is nearing its end, we'll mail you a renewal form in advance so you can have uninterrupted service (providing you respond promptly).

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If ever our service is less than perfect, don't hesitate to call or write a letter to straighten us out.



## EDITORIAL: Happy Birthday!

After months of planning, and a few weeks of delay, the first issue of The Oracle is finally off the presses. In the limited space that I have, let me speak just a few words about our operation, and our plans for the future.

We are in the unfavorable position of being a brand new publication. For one thing, we are having difficulties resulting from a lack of writers. This is a problem that we can do little about. We asked for material from several writers in the gaming field, and got a few nibbles, but nothing major. Not that we are suffering terribly; I sincerely believe that the articles in this issue of The Oracle are very worthwhile. But we need some fresh ideas; some thinkers to give us some material for good (even great) articles. I'm not saying that the regular crew of writers is a bunch of dummies; they are far from it. I'm just pointing out that we need more help. The ideas of half a dozen people aren't going to last terribly long. Any writers out there?

There are also problems with money, naturally. We can't yet afford to produce a glossy, colorful cover. We can't yet afford to hire talented but expensive artists, or professional writers. This will all come in time (hopefully). Again, I'm not trying to cut down The Oracle; I think we're one of the sharpest semi-professional magazines in the field as far as appearances.

And then there's myself as an editor. I have had little experience with writing. But, I believe I have some basic talent, and am striving to apply it effectively here. You ask, what am I doing starting a magazine? It's because I've wanted to ever since I started gaming two summers ago. I've spoken with friends and relatives about starting a publication like this, but no one my age will take the initiative. So I did it alone, with writing support from good friends, and financial support from even better friends. I managed to raise the cash for some crucial advertisements in some of the major gaming publications. Don't get me wrong; I wouldn't be writing this now if I didn't think I could handle editorial work. It would be dishonest to take people's money for a poor magazine. I just want everyone to be aware that it might take me a me more than a couple of issues to get used to editing, and such things as figuring out what to put in the magazine, and which articles are best, etc. Got it?

A moment ago, I began to discuss the reasons why I started this magazine. Perhaps the most important reason is that I sensed a need. A need to bring the hobby a little bit closer together, something that neither huge press operations or tiny amateur publications can do effectively. We are semi-professional; we have important things to say, and aren't blinded by money or a reputation to keep up, like the bigger magazines who are supported by major gaming companies. We really listen to our readers and writers. We have a decent circulation; we reach quite a few gamers, something that small magazines can't do.

In months to come, The Oracle will go through many changes, such as a possible size expansion, the coming and going of new writers (see the bottom of page 19!!!), and differences in our lay-out, printing methods, type styles, etc. Also, there will be a refinement and a definite trend for the better in our editorial content. Hopefully, The Oracle will become an established magazine, not only successful in circulation, but also in reader devotion, because what we print will be what the readers want. Reader participation will be at a maximum. I will be swamped by letters of comments, suggestions, ideas, and subscriptions.

In this column, I intend to let down the bonds of professional or even semi-professional writing, and speak to you eye to eye, as gamer to gamer. I might overly criticise my own magazine. I might criticise the readership. I might criticise myself. But I hope the good can be taken out of it; I hope my ultimate goal of bettering the hobby can be realized time and time again. I need your comments; I cannot possibly know what you want to see in this magazine without them. In that respect, this first issue was a total shot in the dark, because we've not yet heard comments from you.

If I'm not buried every morning with letters from readers, you'll certainly be hearing about it. Enjoy this issue; talk with you next time.

*Chris K. Bigelow*

# THE HEALER

A new character class for AD&D

by Ronald Mark Pehr

Healers are characters who can cure the afflictions of others by taking damage into themselves. One cannot elect spontaneously to become a healer; characters will be presumed to have been born with the ability, and to have spent several years studying with a master of healing. Prerequisites for the Healer class are a Constitution of at least 15, and a Wisdom of 11. Evil or neutral Healers do not exist.

Healers never use weapons under any circumstances, because doing so would be in direct opposition with their purpose in life. Instead, a form of Judo is employed, which will subdue the opponent rather than kill him. Healers may use only those magic items and artifacts that are available to all characters classes. Armor may be worn, but must be removed when the Healer is performing his function, as it tends to interfere with the healing process. Treat the Healer as a Cleric for combat and saving throws.

At first and second level, the Healer may not engage in combat. Subsequent levels fight using the Monks Open Hand table, starting at first level; a third level Healer fights as a first level monk, etc. When an opponent reaches zero hit points, he will fall unconscious, rather than die. The victim regenerates at one hit point every three turns, unless a magical healing device or spell is used. Note that the Healer will only fight in self-defense, or if his party is losing a battle badly (if he's not too busy healing).

The Healer operates by "soaking up" damage from a wounded creature; the patient gains hit points as the healer loses them on a 1:1 ratio. The amount of healing is limited only by the Healer's available hit points, and by his desire to dispense them. The



Healer is always aware of the exact hit point level of both himself and his patient, and is able to control the exchange perfectly. There is no limit to the amount or type of creatures that may be treated, as long as the Healer's own hit points do not drop below zero.

The entire process of healing takes only one turn, regardless of the amount of healing necessary. The Healer places his hands upon the injured portion of the body, or as close to it as possible, and falls into a trance. The Healer and his victim must remain completely undisturbed for the duration. In the event that a disturbance does occur (such as an attack), the Healer will suffer the loss of 1-4 HP and his patient the same amount, due to the delicate mental operations involved. The procedure must be started anew, although hit points already exchanged will remain stationary.

While hit points that are lost in combat or normal activity by the Healer are regained as any other character, those expended in healing regenerate at a rate of one hit point per hour (6 turns). This regenerating of hit points lost in healing may not be aided by magical or other means, nor can the Healer work his power on himself in any way. DM Option: Because of his incredible vitality, the Healer may be allowed to fall to a point below zero hit points equal to his level, (due to normal causes only) with no ill effects except that he will be unable to practice healing until he is rejuvenated.

Healers gain experience points by normal means, and by using their healing talent. The DM may award anywhere from 1-100 experience points for each hit point healed (or a similar scale in the case of special abilities), depending on the particular campaign. Note that this is only for "real" injuries; two Healers cannot spend time making minor knife cuts then healing each other to gain experience. As they acquire experience levels, Healers can use their powers to cure more than mere wounds. The following chart lists these special abilities along with level information:

Hit Points: 1d10+1 at first level, 1d8 per level after first

@ = the amount of hit points (or other specified item) the Healer loses from performing this ability

<u>Level</u>	<u>Experience Points</u>	<u>Special Abilities</u>
1	2750	no special ability
2	5500	Cure paralysis @ 1 HP per hit die of paralyzing entity
3	12000	Cure blindness, deafness, insanity @ 2 HP per level of patient
4	24000	Cure psychic damage @ 1 HP per psionic point; non-psychic patient's points equal Intelligence rating
5	45000	Cure disease @ 8 HP plus 1d8 per cure
6	95000	Cure poison damage @ 1 HP for every HP lost
7	175000	Restore experience points @ 1 XP for every XP lost
8	350000	Regenerate missing limbs @ 2 HP for every HP lost
9	700000	Cure lycanthropy @ 1 HP each HP of attacker
10	1050000	Destroy undead @ 1 HP for every HP to destroy
11	1400000	Remove curse @ 20 HP per curse
12	1750000	Dispel magic @ 6 HP per level of casting magic-user
13	2100000	Restore youth @ 1 year for each year; Healer regains one year per month of living
14	2450000	Stone to flesh @ HP equal to patient's total
15	2800000	Resurrect, as Cleric of same level, @ double patient's total HP



The DM will probably find that most players will disdain the healer as a character class. The reasons for this are obvious; the Healer exists to serve his fellow man, and not to further his own means. For this reason, it is recommended that the Healer exist primarily as an NPC. A more specific way the Healer might be used in a campaign is as a Hireling. The Healer will charge a certain up-front fee for accompanying a party into a dungeon or on a wilderness adventure, in addition to a price for every hit point he expends (he might accept something of appropriate value instead of gold). He will make it clear that he will not fight unless his own life is threatened; not even if the characters are losing a battle with a monster from whom the Healer can easily escape.

With a few well-placed strokes of his brush, the DM can add color and excitement to his campaign by incorporating this character class. The Healer class can be expanded and modified, with a little work and imagination. For instance, a certain branch might deal with the use of herbs and plants in healing. Characters are certain to enjoy this character class in any form, if the DM presents it in an interesting and imaginative way. Good luck!

# READER IDEAS

## SPELLS

CLASS ALTERNATION by Sascha Mornell

Level: 7  
Range: 0  
Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: three rounds  
Saving Throw: none  
Area of Effect: personal

**Explanation/Description:** By means of this spell, a magic-user can briefly add the qualities and functions of any character class to his own. For instance, a 16th level wizard might wish to change temporarily into a ranger, keeping his own attributes at the same time. Any class may be used; the level of ability will always be half that of the caster. In the instance stated above, the wizard would become a ranger of 8th level, with all inclusive abilities. At the same time, the wizard in question would also retain his own spell-casting abilities. This alternation would last for 16 rounds.

Because determining all the various factors of the new class is a fairly lengthy procedure, it is recommended that the player and the DM prepare in advance, so game time isn't wasted. The magic-user-player should decide on two or three possible classes, and pre-determine such things as spells, thieving abilities, combat, hit points, and special abilities.

Note that while this spell brings about the necessary changes in the mind and body of the character, it does not produce actual physical items, such as armor, weapons, spell components, or magic items. If the character desires, he can prepare these items in advance, as much as possible. Rule contradictions are not allowed; an elven magic-user cannot turn into a monk, as monks may only be human.

A variant form of this spell allows the caster to assume the qualities of a different race, following the same basic guidelines as outlined above. Spell components include a drop of polymorph potion, and a common article from the



class desired; sword for fighter, holy symbol for cleric, lock-picking tools for a thief, etc.

PROJECTED MEMORY by Richard Harrington

Level: 6  
Range: Touch  
Duration: Special

Casting Time: 1/2 turn  
Saving Throw: see below  
Area of Effect: subject's memory

Explanation/Description: Projected Memory is a spell which allows the caster to pick a time from the subject's past out of his brain and project it for both of them (and only them) to see, hear, smell, feel, and taste. When the spell is used, it appears to outsiders as if the caster and his subject are in a deep trance, oblivious to outside interference. In effect, they are both reliving the event exactly as it occurred, even if the subject cannot consciously remember the details.

The controlling magic-user may opt to allow certain noises or intensities of sound to interrupt the spell. This is in self-defense; if danger is lurking, it is obviously in the magic-user's best interest to be aware of it. It is often effective to have some trusted friends keep a close watch, so complete concentration can be maintained. If either the caster or the subject is physically attacked during the course of the spell, the concentration will be broken, and the spell must begin anew.

Before this spell may be employed, the subject must give his assent, unless the magic-user outranks him in levels. Then he is allowed a saving throw; 10% chance the spell will be effective per level the magic-user is above the subject.

If the subject remembers one smell, touch, etc. as standing out more than the others at the time it happened, then it will during the spell as well. For example, if the subject is a ranger who was listening for his partner's false bird call in the forest, then that sound would unmistakably stand out.

The caster must know something of the memory he is trying to extract from the subject's subconscious. Detail need not be known, but he must have enough knowledge to be able to distinguish one memory from all the others. If the desired memory is not correctly pinpointed, then the spell will negate.

One of the many advantages of this spell is the fact that the subject need not remember the scene in his conscious mind. Thus it is a good method, much like modern hypnotism, of regaining information lost through amnesia, or brain-washing. The spell is also quite useful to spies and psychiatrists.

\* \* \*

We'd like to take a few lines to invite any reader to submit his or her ideas for a new spell, monster or magic item for any fantasy role playing rules system. If we use your submission, we'll pay you \$5 per idea, or give you an 8-issue subscription to The Oracle free. If you send an illustration of your idea that we can use, we'll pay you extra. Also, give us your suggestions for a decent column name! So, think up some ideas, and send them in to:

READER IDEAS  
c/o Horizon International  
P.O. Box 27513  
Salt Lake City, UT 84127

# JUSTICE BE DONE

An AD&D™ adventure for character levels 3-5

by Daniel Struthers

This is the first installment in a series of adventures revolving around the city of Elcaro. The author welcomes comments or questions about this adventure, and is happy to consider any ideas for future Elcaro episodes.

All monster encounters found herein are detailed in the standard AD&D™ manuals, FIEND FOLIO and MONSTER MANUAL. Inspiration for many of the traps and magic items came from material found in two manuals, BOOK OF ARTIFACTS and HANDBOOK OF TRICKS AND TRAPS, published by The Dragon Tree, which will be reviewed in a future issue of this magazine.

While this adventure is presented in terms of AD&D™, it is easily adaptable to most other rule systems. The DM is encouraged to alter, delete or add encounter descriptions as desired. For this purpose, several areas for further development have been left open. Now, on with the adventure!

## CITY BACKGROUND

Elcaro is a small city located on the southern coast of a fairly large island. With a population of about 200, the main activities of the city include fishing and mining. Because of the lack of suitable land for farming, most produce must be traded or purchased from the merchant caravans that pass through the city at regular intervals. Elcaro is governed by a Lord who resides in a castle overlooking the city. Lord Arocel is known throughout the land for his unerring wisdom and justice, and is loved dearly by his people. The townspeople themselves are honest, religious folk, who are generally tolerant of strangers. Adventurers will find accommodations to be higher priced than expected, and what specialized adventuring equipment available is also overpriced. Standard commodities are readily available, at reasonable prices.

The physical characteristics of the surrounding land are pictured here, in a self-explanatory manner. The forest, hilly area and swamp are all excellent places for potential adventure, and will most likely be presented in the future as such. This particular adventure is located in the Leraco Hills, north of the city, as is explained in the next section.



Please note that the details and finer descriptions of the city have been left out in this adventure, due to limited space. The DM may either create the city from the guidelines given here, or use an established city from his own campaign. Perhaps, in the future, a complete description of the Elcaro and surrounding lands will be provided. Who knows?

#### ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Several weeks ago, a brutal murder was committed in the city of Elcaro. In the investigation that followed the discovery of the body, the City Guards found a man sleeping in a nearby barn, covered with crimson evidence and possessing the murder weapon. He was abducted on the spot as the prime suspect in the case. A trial soon followed, and the man was found overwhelmingly guilty, despite his pleas of innocence. The Lord of the town decided that his punishment would be a harsh one.....

A few decades ago, a new mine shaft was opened in the hills north of Elcaro. Not a major occurrence; new mines are opened regularly. But this particular mine was of special importance to the city, for it contained a rich supply of minerals, and much of the digging process was eliminated because of the convenient natural formations under the surface.

The mine was greedily worked for some time with great success. But in their greed, the miners began to develop new areas in the mines at an alarming rate. One day, when a whole new series of natural formations was uncovered deep below the earth, a hideous monster suddenly came charging out, and succeeded in killing several miners before it was driven back. The new area was hastily boarded up afterwards.

During the night, the blockade was destroyed by the creature. It re-entered the mine, and was soon followed by other creatures of different species. The miners, upon returning in the morning, found that the entire mine complex was possessed by monsters. Wizards were immediately brought in to magically seal off the entrance shaft, and the mine was abandoned. The invading creatures posed too powerful a threat for the miners (who were untrained in the ways of fighting), and for the tiny City Guard. Thus the mine has remained, for many years.

Lately, cities along the coast of the island, including Elcaro, have adapted the practice of teleporting criminals and prisoners of war into the dreaded mine. It is a fitting torture, believed to be worse than death. No one knows what befalls the prisoners deep below the earth. No one even knows if the monsters still inhabit the complex. But everyone is sure of one thing; no one has ever returned alive.

Thus the plans and preparations were made to teleport the convicted murderer into the mines. The teleportation went smoothly, and the matter was soon pushed to the rear of the villagers' minds. That is, until a new development in the case surfaced.

In short, it seems that the murderer was incorrectly convicted. The real murderer cunningly set him up, and escaped from the city before dawn. Now, because of complicated matters having to do with some sort of blackmail scandal, the real murderer has been identified, and abducted. Lord Arocel is aware of his terrible mistake, but nothing can be done. Or can it?

Adventurers! The perfect answer! Send the word across the land. We need toughened adventurers to perform a high-risk rescue mission. The wrongly-convicted man must be recovered, dead or alive. If he's alive, a great tragedy will have been avoided. If not, we can at least bury him.



Thus the characters come to be in Elcaro. Lord Arocel thanks them for coming, and tells them that half the town's treasury is theirs if they successfully complete this task, in addition to any loot secured in the course of the adventure. The party is then provided with a description of the man to be rescued, and is given the opportunity to interview one of the eye witnesses of the original onslaught of the creatures.

The wizened old retired miner tells the party of "the terrible creature which attacked us that day." He vividly remembers the beast as having a large vulture-like head, a sickening mottled grey color, and terrible claws in the shape of sharp, wicked hooks. The creature charged forward, slinging helpless men right and left. Finally, some of the men managed to drive it back with a large beam, used as a battering ram. None of the men were too anxious to dig into any more new areas after that day, for fear of a similar thing happening.

The next morning, after spending a pleasant night in the Lord's castle, the party is escorted to the teleporting room deep in the heart of the castle, where three wizards begin to invoke the spells. At the last moment, the leader is handed a small scroll, which is a Scroll of Modified Teleport for when the party is ready to leave. The members must all hold hands, and speak the words of the scroll in unison. There is no need for a magic-user in the party to use this scroll; the wizards have developed it for use by any character class. There is no chance for error in any of the teleporting necessary to exit or enter the mines, regardless of where the party is at the time.

The party suddenly blinks out, and re-appears in Area 1. Read the appropriate description to them now.

#### NOTES FOR THE DM

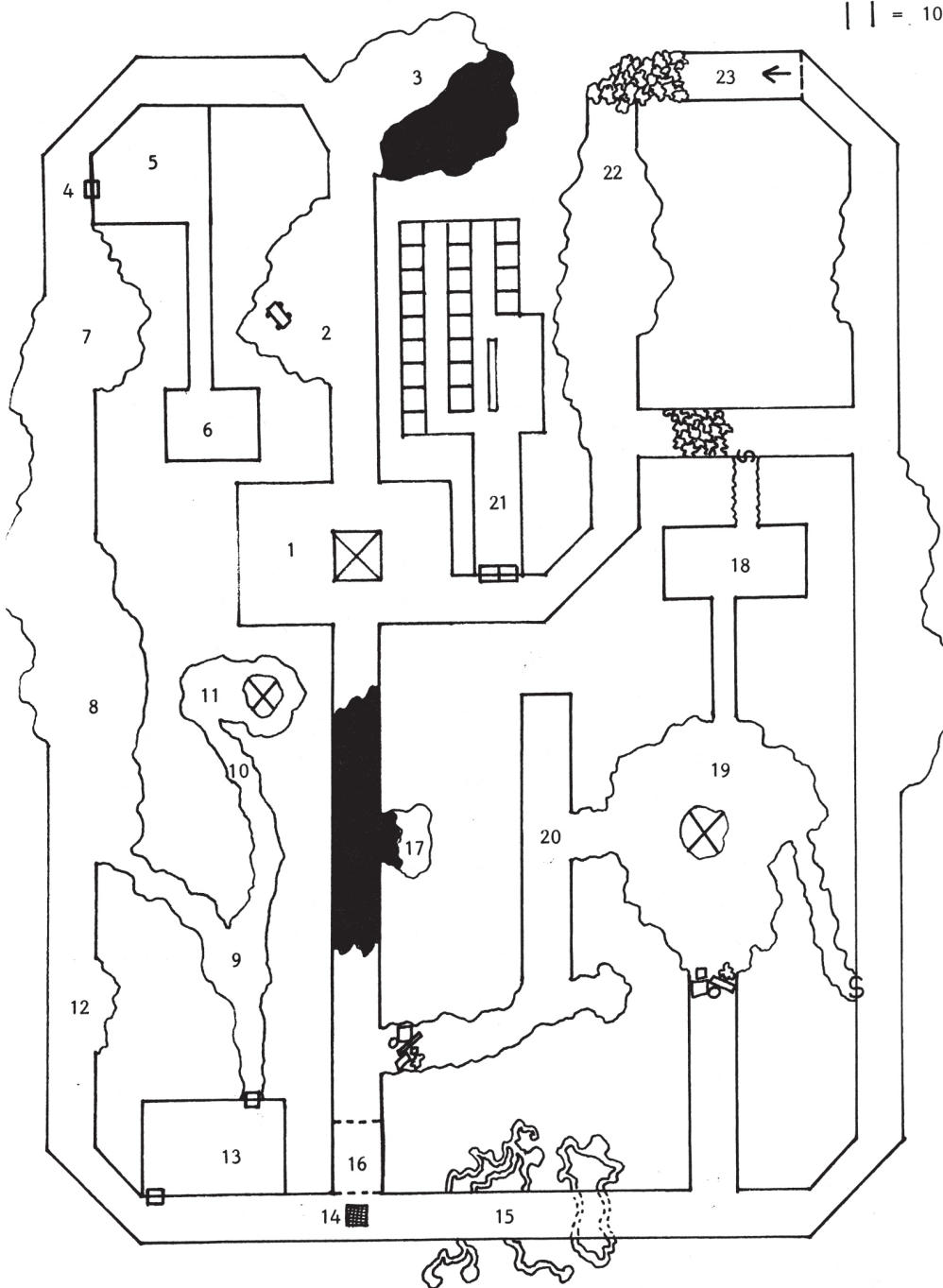
The mine complex is generally littered with rubble and debris. In all corridors or passages, shorings have been placed to brace the walls, at intervals of roughly 50'. All man-made passages (smooth, even walls) are 10' high, but natural corridors tend to be irregular in height, ranging from 8-15'.

The entire area is damp, with a plentitude of moss and lichen growing on most available surfaces. Dripping water can almost always be heard, and small puddles of water are commonplace. The party must watch footing to make sure that there are no slipping accidents. The DM might wish to penalize spells that could possibly be affected by a damp, humid atmosphere (fireball, etc.).

WANDERING MONSTERS: Check every turn; encounters occur 1 in 12.

<u>d6 Roll</u>	<u>Encounter</u>	<u>Statistics</u>
1	10 gibberlings	AC 10, MV 9", HD 1, hp 4(x2), 5(x3), 6(x4), 7(x1), #AT 1 (+1 hit), D 1-8
2	1 gorbel	AC 3/10, MV 18", HD nil, #AT 1, D 1-4 or 1-6 (See Fiend Folio for more info)
3	1 ogre	AC 5, MV 9", HD 4+1, hp 27, #AT 1, D 1-10
4	4 fire beetles	AC 4, MV 12", HD 1+2, hp 9,8,6,3, #AT 1, D 2-8
5	3 volts	AC 3, MV 6", HD 2+1, hp 16,13,11, #AT 1 and 1, D 1-4 and 2-12 (See Fiend Folio)
6	1-6 men (prisoners)	AC 5, MV 12", HD 3, hp 23,24,20,16,15,10, #AT 1, D 1-8





I strongly suggest that a good variety of character classes make up the party that ventures into these mines. I also suggest that a dwarf or gnome accompany the party (whether as an NPC, or a PC), as one would come in handy in recognizing and possibly avoiding certain "aspects" of the dungeon.

In the engineering of this dungeon, it became apparent that playability might be sacrificed in an attempt to keep the mines realistic. Such things as magic items and certain traps that live up a dungeon don't logically fit in with the theme of the mines. However, I have included some of these items, because playability comes first. You may delete anything you deem unreasonable in the mines, but there will be a corresponding loss of playability, and the dungeon might become a mundane "hack & slay" adventure, which is something that most role-players despise (with good reason). Use your judgement.

In this particular episode, only the first level is detailed (again due to space shortage). The monster break-in as described in the Background actually occurred on a lower level. In a future issue, would you like to see a description of the lower levels of the mines? There are rumours that Deep Gnomes and other creatures wander those deep places. Or would you rather have descriptions of some of the other areas around Elcaro (such as the growing monster threats from the swamps)? I'd like to hear your preferences; I will be doing Elcaro adventures as long as readers seem to enjoy them.

#### DUNGEON DESCRIPTION

##### Area 1: ELEVATOR ROOM

The party finds themselves in a spacious room, littered with piles of debris, including rubble, broken mining wagons (used to cart around everything from ore to injured miners) and other equipment, and splintered shoring beams. In the center of the ceiling, a 10' wide square shaft leads up into the gloom. The party will probably recognize this as the main entrance shaft to the mine complex. It is effectively sealed off above with stone, wood, and magic, and the winch-operated elevator (used to raise miners and ore) is put out of commission. As the party becomes aware of their surroundings, a nauseating slurping sound becomes audible from behind a particularly large pile of rocks and dust in the NE corner of the room.

Two carrion crawlers are feasting upon the fairly-fresh remains of a human male. The two worm-like creatures attack if the party disturbs them (AC 3/7, MV 12", HD 3+1, hp 20,23, #AT 8, D paralysis), fighting to the finish.

Examination of the room will prove fruitless as far as treasure is concerned. However, the party will notice that the floor immediately under the shaft in the ceiling is boarded up. This is a continuation of the shaft, and is one possible means of reaching lower levels (if the DM does not wish to continue adventure further, simply state that the boarding is too strong to be removed short of a magical spell, or omit it entirely).

##### Area 2: MINING AREA

A mining wagon is positioned as indicated on the map. Also scattered about the place are various mining tools (picks, shovels, etc.). A glitter comes from a pile of rubble on one side of the wagon.

Hiding in the cart is a blindheim, lying in wait as it heard the characters approach. If anyone enters the area, it will "pop" up and open its glaring eyes, hopefully catching the party unawares. Allow characters to take a +1 on the saving throw, because the blindheim popped up suddenly, without first

knowing exactly where the characters were. After the initial blinding attempt, the creature will leap out of the wagon and enter into normal melee (AC 1 or 3, MV 9", HD 4+2, hp 31, #AT 1, D 1-8). It will flee if it loses more than half its hit points, or if any spells are used against it.

In the glittering pile, characters may find some unrefined gold ore. For each round the party searches through the pile, their earnings increase by 100 GP, to a maximum of 500 GP. The ore may be sold to a local mining company in Elcaro. There is a 25% chance that characters not having any mining experience will overlook the gold ore (dwarves and gnomes are immune to this, of course).

#### Area 3: STAGNANT POOL

A pool of stagnant, scummy water fills half of this area. A large moss-covered boulder protrudes from the water, which is actually a giant bloodworm, who is ravenously hungry. It will lie still until characters come within attacking range, then it will attack (AC 4, MV 6", HD 6, hp 35, #AT 1, D 1-8 + drain). Note that characters employing infra-vision will detect the boulder to be a warm-blooded creature, and may act accordingly.

Amidst the rubble and debris filling the dry section of this room are several uncut gems. The party may sell them in the city, for a total of 250 GP. Gems are relatively easy to recognize, so the party has no chance to overlook them. Also, two rings tied together with twine lay half-buried in the rubble, misplaced by a miner in times past. They are rings of telepathic communication, attuned to each other so that the wearers can hold telepathic conversations over any distance, following the guidelines set in the spell of the same name. If one ring is not being worn, the wearer of the other ring can roughly determine its location (approximate distance and direction). Note that the ring will only be found by characters completely searching the entire area.

#### Area 4: OAKEN DOOR

From all appearances, this door is completely standard in all ways. It is unlocked, with a large brass ring to open it.

As soon as a character touches the ring, the door will violently swing open, causing that character 1-8 damage. If the character rolls his dexterity or lower on a d20, the damage may be halved. Note that the character will be thrown back, possibly dropping anything he or she is holding and bumping into anyone standing directly behind. The door will open normally after this.

#### Area 5: STORAGE ROOM

Once used as a storage area for various mining equipment, this room is now the temporary abode for two dark creepers, who will be hiding behind a large crate of mining picks and shovels. The creepers are from a village in a lower level of the mines, and have business in this level; mainly, to terrorize the prisoners. The creepers will perform as outlined in the Fiend Folio, avoiding combat. In the event that they are forced to defend themselves, the statistics are (AC 0 or 8, MV 9", HD 1+1, hp 9,6, #AT 1, D 1-4). Both creepers use a +1 dagger in combat.

One of the creepers wears a ring of diminuation, which functions as the potion of the same name. In using the ring, the wearer may choose any size to become (greater than 5%; as per the potion). The DM might wish to put a limit on the amount of uses the ring has left. The creeper will not use the ring unless his companion has been slain, in which case he will use the ring to possibly escape. A pouch on the belt of the creeper without the ring contains three small gems, worth 15 GP each.



Area 6: EMPTY ROOM

Area 7: MINING AREA

A hook horror dwells here (it was this individual's parent who originally caused the sensation that forced the mines to be closed), waiting to prey on unwise prisoners who happen to pass by. He will attack the party, due to his low intelligence, and fight to the death (AC 3, MV 9", HD 5, hp 40, #AT 2, D 1-8). This area, besides the remains of past victims and the normal rubble and debris characteristic of the place, contains nothing of value.

Area 8: MINING AREA

A man is charging down the hall, yelling "Fight! Fight!" in common. He wields a large mining axe, swinging it madly in front of him. He is a prisoner gone mad; a berserker, of sorts. Obviously, he attacks the party (AC 4, MV 12", HD 4, hp 29, #AT 2, D 1-8) and fights till the finish. He is dressed in leather skins, with a pouch at his side containing 100 GP worth of gold dust.

Area 9: NATURAL FORMATION

An aging man sits in the center of this three-way intersection, facing west. He holds a rusty dagger to his wrist, and is whimpering quite loudly. When he sees the party, he begins feverishly sawing at his wrist, seemingly unaware of the pain. If the party makes no move to stop him, he will kill himself in three rounds. If the party attempts to stop him, he will transform into a werewolf (AC 5, MV 15", HD 4+3, hp 33, #AT 1, D 2-8) in two rounds and attack the party ferociously.

The man is going insane because he is confined to the mines. His wolf instincts tell him to run free with the pack, but he obviously is not able to do so. He was teleported into the mines several months ago by the Elders of a city up the coast from Elcaro, for killing a little girl when in lycanthrope form.

Area 10: NATURAL FORMATION

Attached to the ceiling, waiting for prey, is a sheet phantom (AC 3, MV 6", HD 3, hp 19, #AT 1, D 1-4) who will drop on the third character to pass beneath him. See the Fiend Folio for information on the sheet phantom's method of attack, and special circumstances concerning the attacks of the characters.

A slight vein of pure gold runs along the wall near the phantom. If characters have suitable picks, they may spend time trying to extract the gold. For each turn spent, the party will gain 50 GP per person working. There is no practical limit on how long the party can work, but the DM is sure to roll a wandering monster or two before long.

Area 11: NATURAL FORMATION

This room holds the means of egress to the lower levels of the mines. It is through a naturally-formed pit in the middle of this room that creatures may come and go back and forth between levels. It is not evident if any prisoners have ventured into the depths beyond the pit; but if any have, chances for survival are sure to be very slim.

Again, the DM must modify this room if he or she does not wish to let the dungeon grow in levels. If this adventure is ever expanded in as an Elcaro Episode, it will most probably use this pit as a starting point. It is up to the DM to decide how to convince characters that they don't want to venture down just yet.



#### Area 12: MINING AREA

A ordinary looking pick rests on the floor in this area. It is actually a magical weapon, which gives its user the ability to detect certain things as per a dwarf or gnome (see page 16 of the AD&D™ Players Handbook for elaboration). It also serves as a +2 weapon. If a member of the dwarven or gnomish race uses the weapon, the percentage for all the abilities mentioned is increased by 20%, and weapon becomes a +3, rather than a +2.

#### Area 13: STORAGE ROOM

This room is full of mining equipment, with some looting having taken place from the looks of things.

#### Area 14: VENTILATION GRILL

This is one of the means of ventilating the mining complex. The grill may not be removed by anything short of a magical spell, as it is firmly positioned. A breeze of foul-smelling air comes up through the grill.

#### Area 15: MAN-MADE CORRIDOR

Snyads (pesties) and osquips inhabit several small tunnels in this area, adjoining the main corridor. The party will notice nothing amiss, until suddenly four osquips appear and attack the party (AC 7, MV 12", HD 3+1, hp 23,25,16,14 # AT 1, D 2-12). Three pesties will attempt to steal various small items while the osquips keep the party busy (AC -4, MV 21", HD 1-1, hp 7,6,4, #AT nil). The pesties will retreat into the passages if attacked.

The tunnels may not be entered by human-sized creatures. If any smaller person does enter, he will find nothing of value (treasure is well-hidden) and might be attacked by 1-4 osquips (stats as above). Fighting in the tunnels is at a -4, using small weapons only. See Fiend Folio for details.

#### Area 16: MAN-MADE CORRIDOR

Any armored characters (metal) passing through here will suddenly slam to the floor of this corridor, taking 1-4 damage, because of a very strong electro-magnet below the rock. Any iron items will also be attracted (weapons, shields, etc.). Two rounds after the armored characters slam to the ground, they will slam to the ceiling, again taking 1-4 damage, due to an alternating current in the rock. The pattern will continue, with characters rendered totally helpless to move or take off any armor in the intermissions.

The only way to escape this trap short of destroying the electro-magnets is to have unarmored characters tie ropes to the stuck ones, and quickly pull them out between shifts. There is a slight delay between the current changes, so this action is possible. If the party is losing too many hit points, the DM will have to revise the trap slightly to allow them to pass by without taking too much damage.

#### Area 17: FLOODED CORRIDOR

A 1/2-2' deep pool occupies this corridor as the shaded part on the map shows. The floor is slick; if the characters must fight, they run a 1 in 6 chance per round of slipping, and losing the attack for that round.

An ice troll lairs in the alcove off the right side of the corridor, who will wait behind a corner of his lair to surprise the first ranks. He will

attack viciously (AC 8, MV 9", HD 2, hp 14, #AT 2, D 1-8). In his lair may be found 3 gems worth 40 GP each, and 364 GP.

#### Area 18-21: NATURAL AND MAN-MADE AREAS

Some of the prisoners of the mines have banded together to help their chances for survival. They have sealed off an area for themselves, using secret doors and blockades. If any intrusions are made, all prisoners will be aware of it and will be prepared to fight, or go to the aid of the others. The two blockades sealing off the area may be torn down in 5-20 rounds, by characters of high strength. The prisoners will obviously know what is happening.

#### Area 18: MAN-MADE ROOM

The prisoners have converted this storage chamber into a food room. In a pool taking up half the area are several blind cave fish, which are raised for food. Around the room grow various forms of edible mold. There are two workers on duty (AC 8, MV 6", HD 2, hp 14,13, #AT 1, D 1-8) armed with mining axes.

#### Area 19: NATURAL CAVERN

The prisoners are currently working on a method of escape. They have begun digging a shaft straight up through the earth, using the abandoned picks and shovels left in the mines. On work duty are three men; two are up the shaft, one is below shoveling the dirt resulting from the digging above, into piles against the walls. Stats are the same as those above (hp 16,15,12). The diggers can climb down using fabricated foot holds in the sides of the shaft within three rounds. All are armed with picks.

#### Area 20: MAN-MADE CORRIDOR

This is the commons room of the establishment. There are eight men in here, engaged in such exciting activities as gambling with bone dice, drawing on the walls, or sleeping. There is a fire burning in the middle of the hall, and a small commode off to one side. The men will rush to help those in area 19 if they hear fighting (stats as above; hp 16,16,15,13,13,12 10,4), armed with the familiar picks. One of the men fits the description of the person the party is to rescue. He will not trust or co-operate with the party, and will be supported by his fellow prisoners in combat. He must be taken by force.

#### Area 21: MAN-MADE ROOMS

This is where the mules and wagons used in the mining were kept. There are several stalls with rotting hay, wagons stacked in the alcove, and a trough for drinking in the center of the room. The place still stinks of mules, and there is nothing of interest to be found.

#### Area 22: MINING AREA

The poltergeist of a prisoner lurks here (AC 10, MV 6", HD 1-4, hp 4, #AT special). The prisoner was killed by a wandering monster, and now seeks revenge on any living thing entering the area. He will throw loose rocks as per the Fiend Folio. The unfortunate prisoner's remains lie off to one side, little more than bones now.

#### Area 23: MAN-MADE CORRIDOR

At the point indicated, the corridor begins to slope down, eventually reaching the next mine level. A collapse has effectively blocked it off, however, and characters attempting to dig through will soon realize the hopelessness of their plight. Wagons were sometimes taken down by this route, when the necessity arose.

## MOVIE REVIEWS

By Angie Carlson

What a summer for movies! Especially if you're a sci fi or fantasy buff. The growing interest in this area has sparked a number of related productions. Here are brief comments on some of the blockbusters released to date.

**CONAN THE BARBARIAN** - "The Incredible Hoke." This movie looks as though it were made by barbarians. Schwarzenegger of the incredible hulkish body, dopey grin and no acting talent leads this gorefest, with director John Milius doing his best to stifle the "real" Conan as created by famous fantasy authors. Besides being unfaithful in many ways to the books upon which it is based, CONAN follows the rules for making a rotten movie: Steal material from a myriad of other sources. Shoot most of the film in darkness. Include modern colloquialisms in the dialogue, even though the movie is supposed to be a pre-history epic. Let the action give way to blood, decapitations, sex, and "soup." Worst of all, hire Schwarzenegger as lead actor. Noteworthy set-design, worthy music, and occasional passing photography can't save this one. Let's hope any sequels (which there will be if this one makes money) are better!

The plot of CONAN has something to do with Conan's revenge upon a Snake Cult that was responsible for his parents' deaths early in his life and his resultant bondage into slavery. Later in his life, Conan becomes a sort of side show, where he fights in an arena with his trusty sword. When he gains his freedom, he sets out on a series of adventures, where he learns the secrets of the Snake Cult, and plots his revenge. He finally catches up with the leader of the band, in a climatic battle, and..... Well, even though the movie stinked, I won't totally ruin for you. See it for yourself, but be prepared for a big disappointment!

**E.T. The Extra Terrestrial** - If you've not heard the rave reviews for E.T., then you're either a hermit or an extraterrestrial! E.T. is indeed extra-special, with something for everybody. Special effects are marvelous, with excellent acting and directing. Young Elliott is especially good, not to mention the amazing E.T.-creature "itself." An interesting part in the first of the movie has some kids role-playing at the kitchen table... who says the hobby isn't growing!?

In a way, E.T. takes over where Close Encounters of the Third Kind left off. It isn't a sequel to the movie - the idea for E.T. came before Close Encounters, but it deals with the same type of thing. The story unfolds as an extraterrestrial creature is accidentally left on earth when his Exploration Party is forced to suddenly pack up and leave because of threats from some investigating humans. E.T., as the creature eventually becomes known, is found and befriended by a young boy (Elliott). But homesickness gnaws at E.T.'s heart (something he definitely does have!), and he tries to contact his home planet with an invention made of various household items. Anyway, the movie is perhaps the summer's best, and clearly demonstrates Steven Spielberg's superior talents in the directing and writing area. A must see, for everyone.

**STAR TREK II: The Wrath of Khan** - A rousing comeback from its disappointing predecessor, Star Trek: The Motion Picture, **WRATH OF KHAN** is a treat for sci fi buffs, especially fans of the classic TV series. Special effects rival Star



Wars (but aren't quite up to it; nothing is), with much attention given to the characters. Acting is at a peak, and the sets and costumes are wonderful.

WRATH OF KHAN was originally named REVENGE OF KHAN, but was changed to avoid confusion with the blockbuster of them all (coming out sometime soon), Revenge of the Jedi (the next movie in the Star Wars saga). The story, like Conan, is one of revenge; this time that of Khan (but the similarities end there!). It seems that in years past Captain Kirk supposedly wronged Khan and some of his men, by exiling them upon a harsh desert planet. Khan is fortunate enough to come upon an exploration party (made up of familiar characters) upon this planet, and abducts them, to use against Kirk, and the project Genesis. The movie had me on the edge of my seat the whole time, even bringing me to tears at the tragic end. Trekkies all about me were bawling outright..... (see the movie if you don't know what I'm talking about).

POLTERGUEST - Talk about edge of the seat! POLTERGUEST is a refreshing break from all the slasher movies that have been coming out lately. The movie had me squirmed up in my seat, with my legs on the lap of my neighbor, hands clenched up to my chin. Once in a while, I had to use my fingers as a mask, so I wouldn't die of fright! It has been said that POLTERGUEST was a bit overdone on the special effects, but I heartily disagree. Even if this is the case, it's at no loss to the movie. POLTERGUEST is a great example of how the scariest movies can be so without gore, sex, or R-ratings.

Spielburg has put a haunted house in a suburban tract. A typical all-American family is unfortunate enough to occupy this particular house. There isn't much else that can be told without possibly ruining the movie for someone who hasn't seen it yet! It's hard, but I'll restrain myself. POLTERGUEST has a beautiful mother/daughter theme to it, in addition to some of the scariest scenes and best special effects I have ever seen. It is a tribute to the Director, and to Spielberg, the writer. Protect your popcorn, or you'll lose it in a fright!

NEXT ISSUE: Angie will review more movies, including Megaforce, Firefox, Bladerunner, and Road Warrior

\* \* \* \* \*

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# PLAY-BY-MAIL GAMING

Perhaps the fastest growing area of fantasy gaming....

By Dave Parsons

A major complaint among fantasy gamers these days is the fact that there just isn't enough time to really become involved with a good, satisfying campaign. School, work, and other activities break up the day so that adequate time and effort cannot be put forth in this pursuit. As a result, role playing often fades into a once-a-month affair, or even, tragically, into oblivion.

But a relatively new cure for this condition has emerged; the play-by-mail game, or PBM game. In this game, all the paper work of running a character or kingdom in a fantasy game system is handled by a company, who acts as the Game Master in all respects; world and campaign generation, combat determination, and other related jobs. The player simply enjoys the excitement of running a character, or in some cases, a complete kingdom, while the company handles the tedious random determination and such. The time it takes for a player to detail action is minimal, and the company is usually able to process turns immediately, with computer aid. This helps to keep the game playable.

The first thing for someone who is interested in PBM to do is to decide what game is best for him. There are a number of things to be considered; the actual game rules, the subject matter of the game, and the company itself, just to list a few. There are games that allow the player to send pages of detailed turn description, and there are those that are little more than simply checking boxes. Likewise, there are companies who have huge booklets of rules, and those who have smaller, less complex rule systems. Both can be very satisfying, but the player's desires must be taken into account. If one has time on his hands, the complex game might be most enjoyable. But for someone who is suffering from lack of time, the simpler system is a more obvious alternative. It is often a good idea to try many games, and decide which is best; most companies offer a money-back guarantee, so, once the right game is found, the others can be returned. Many gamers are involved in more than one game, and find it to be just as fun as "real" role playing.

A wide variety of subjects are available, from ancient Japanese history to futuristic science fiction space warfare. In some cases, players will find that subjects not appealing in normal circumstances will be enjoyed enormously in the PBM context, and vice versa. Again, the "try them all" theory applies here. It would be unfortunate indeed if a person became involved in a game, only to find that there is a better one offered by another company.

A third point to be considered in choosing a game is the efficiency of the game company. How long does it take to process turns? How detailed may the turns be? Are errors common? Many companies supply the player with turn sheets, and some even go so far as to provide return address envelopes. Of course, this is reflected in the cost per turn. This brings up yet another point; what is the value? To elaborate, is the initial set-up worth it? How much are subsequent game turns? Can one afford to participate actively

in the game? These are all vital items to be thoroughly examined; a PBM is a long-term investment in most cases, and it needs to be well thought out.

For the next several issues, this column will be dedicated to the reviewing of some of the larger PBM games on the market today. After that, who knows? There may be some issues to address about the PBM industry, or perhaps not.

This issue, one of the simplest, yet most playable, of the PBM games is examined, with critical comments on the system, the company, and the other vital points as explained above. The idea is to help gamers choose a PBM game best for them. Hopefully this goal will be accomplished; hopefully we can stimulate interest in a branch of the hobby which has received all too little attention in the past. With this in mind, let us proceed....

# The Way of the Warrior

A play-by-mail game of ancient Japan offered by:

GENJI GAMES

Box 3689

San Bernardino, CA 92413

Bret Rudnick, Proprietor

If you've ever wanted to play a scenario in ancient Japan, then here's a game you should know about - The Way of the Warrior, by Genji Games. In TWW, one of seven players must unite an empire set on the ancient Japanese island of Honshu. Players assume the role of a powerful lord, who rules one of many provinces on the island, with the ultimate goal of conquering all other provinces. The Way of the Warrior succeeds in simulating the strategy and excitement of ancient Japanese feudal warfare, in addition to adding elements of magic and fantasy that serve to "spice up" the game.

## GAME MECHANICS

Of the 55 provinces existing on Honshu, seven are ruled by the players, with the remainder staying neutral. The object of the game is, of course, ultimate domination by one of the seven players, through the conquering of all provinces. Players lead armies of Samurai and footmen into battle with adjacent provinces, but must also take precautions to ensure that no one conquers the home province while this is happening. Players are allowed to detail attack and defense tactics, scout neighboring provinces, supplement a force with hired troops, employ the help of a mystical priestess or powerful magician, or ally with neutral territories. Players may also find that "fate" has either bestowed blessings upon them, or cursed them - whether it is a gift of additional troops, or a devastating earthquake.



An alternate way to win a game from that explained above is to possess the three

Sacred Treasures scattered randomly throughout the land - the Sword, Mirror, and Jewels. A player who conquers a province containing a treasure automatically possesses it, but no one knows just exactly where to find them. The game is won by this method if a player possesses all three treasures, through conquering the hosting provinces.

Initial set-up for The Way of the Warrior is \$5.00. This is a very competitive price when compared with other games, but the actual value of the materials is not outstanding. The set-up includes a small rulebook of good quality, a simple map detailing the island of Honshu, and appropriate correspondence sheets. The first turn is also included in this cost, but subsequent turns run at \$2.50 apiece. Genji Games claims to process all turns the day they are received, with aid of computer, and to send results immediately. My experience with the company indicates that this is a valid claim. The quick, efficient service is a definite strong point of the operation.

A possible disadvantage of the game is the "element of surprise" which exists; players are not aware of the results of other players' actions unless it directly affects them or the entire game. Genji Games backs this "no-tell" policy by saying, "after all, in those times it might have taken quite a while for a lord to be informed of an event." In defense, this statement is historically true to an extent, and it must also be considered that the company could not practically be expected to supply all player detail to the other players in literally hundreds of games without sacrificing efficiency.

While The Way of the Warrior is among the simplest games on the market, it is also one of the most enjoyable and the most accurate historically. The rules aren't suitable for use outside the PBM game itself, but then they are not designed to be. An interesting history section written by the proprietor of Genji Games, Bret Rudnick, sets the scene for the game. He has associated with an elderly Japanese gentleman whose father was himself a samurai, displaced during the Meiji restoration late last century. The flavor of ancient Japan definitely shows through in the rules, and, if not high-action gaming, the game stimulates interest and curiosity about Japanese history.

Mr. Rudnick, in discussing just why he started Genji Games, tells us that he was basically fed up with the PBM industry as it was a few years back. While he did enjoy most of the games he played, there were things that really bothered him, such as low-quality materials, long intermissions between turns, and other such things. Genji Games is his solution to this dissatisfaction with the industry. Mr. Rudnick's points are well made and he has certainly done an excellent job of organizing his game. I highly recommend it.

<u>Ratings</u> (1-10 scale)	Playability:	8
	Simplicity:	8
	Company Efficiency:	9
	Material Quality:	7
	Value:	6
	OVERALL:	8

Genji Games plans other game-releases for the future, including solo computer versions. Currently, there is a contest for "Best Player of 1982" in progress. Complete details are available on request, including info on the valuable first place prize. To enroll in The Way of the Warrior, send a check for \$5 to Genji Games, Box 3689, San Bernardino, CA 92413.

NEXT ISSUE: Two of several games offered by Schubel & Son, Inc. will be examined; Tribes of Crane, and the new Star Venture.



# STORMBRINGER

Reviewed by Mike Dawson

Stormbringer is a recent offering in role-playing games from Chaosium, beginning their practice of adapting popular fantasy works to role playing. It is written by Ken St. Andre, who adapted the Runequest system to Michael Moorcock's Elric mythos, and Steve Perrin, who authored the basic mechanics. The list price is \$19.95, for which you get a boxed game including rulebook, reference sheets, a large map of the Young Kingdoms, character, minor character and demon sheets, an uncut card with silhouettes of characters designed to be used as miniatures, and a 20-, 8- and 4-sided die of high quality.

I was first impressed by the caliber of the artwork in Stormbringer. Except for the cardboard figures, all of the artwork including the full color box cover has been done by Frank Brunner. Brunner is well known for his work on several popular and acclaimed comic books, and Chaosium has put quite a feather in its cap by securing the rights to Brunner's Elric portfolio. His work conveys detail, precision of technique, and a sense of emotion equally well. My only real qualm about the artwork in Stormbringer is that instead of including small illustrations throughout the text, as is usually the case, the publisher took pieces of the full page Brunner art and reprinted them throughout the chapters. This doesn't add much to the actual text, and is not very pleasing from an artistic viewpoint.

The text of Stormbringer is organized so that the reader comes upon the information he needs just when he needs it. The text flows along the same way that the development of a character should; first comes the cultural background that every player and character should know, and then the text moves into increasingly specific areas. After the information for the players comes the chapters for the game referee, and these are just as concise and useful as the previous chapters. The reader will not find the huge number of charts and tables that are often found in other systems. More emphasis has been placed on the philosophy of gaming and on how to deal with the general problems than on giving room for 30 different tables and descriptions of magic items. A scenario is included in the "Notes for the GM" section, and this serves as a model for future adventures the GM can create. It is not super-powered, random, or filled with beasts that could never exist.

The first chapter of the Rulebook deals with the geography, political religions, and genetics of the nations in the Young Kingdoms. Natural features, languages, and special points of interest are also mentioned, always with an eye toward possible sites for adventure. The author has done a good job of presenting the rich diversity of the Young Kingdoms in a capsulized way.

The section on character creation follows the section on the Young Kingdoms, since the character's nationality has a strong influence on his statistics and social class. The character creation deals with the different attributes and their definitions, nationalities and their effect on attributes, character classes and skills, and the determination of skill bonuses based on the attribute scores. Following the instructions on how to roll a character up, the author provides "Merak Gren" as an example of the creation procedure. Merak is taken from the basic rolls to a completely outfitted assassin. Merak's adventures also appear throughout the book, acting as explanations of various rules and concepts, and serving as an invaluable aid to the novice GM.

I do have one complaint with the character class generation chart. Following the statistics the author has provided, 20% of all trained fighters

will be assassins. This percentage certainly seems a bit high, especially in light of all the extra talents that an assassin starts the game with. The GM is advised to use discretion in this matter.

Another problem is a built-in double standard that works against the player-character. In Stormbringer, it is possible to have a character who is a beggar. Aside from being at the bottom of the heap in almost all skills, a PC beggar is handicapped by at least one affliction, ranging from "bald and scabby" to dumbness, deafness, or even blindness, with an equal chance of being any of these. However, the author notes that it is possible for player-characters to encounter NPC beggars "whose only serious flaw is the disinclination to work for a living." Why is it that all PC beggars must be cripples, while NPCs can just be lazy bums? These are just a few examples of some of the minor problems in the system.

The mechanics of Stormbringer are much like its predecessor, Runequest. There have been some refinements that add to playability and realism, but there have also been some changes that seem useless and less playable. There are also a few places where Stormbringer has gone into more detail than Runequest, but for the most part Stormbringer simplifies Runequest, with a corresponding loss of realism.

The skills section of Stormbringer adds a few more skills and subtracts a few from the Runequest list, but for some reason that is supposed to simplify game terminology, the authors have changed the names of almost all the skills that are common to the two systems. "Pick Pocket" has become "Cut Purse," and bargaining has become "Credit," and so on. What's the point?

The big finds in the skills section are the rules on plant and poison lore. These are much more detailed and colorful than any other system I am familiar with, yet are easy to understand and use. The system takes immunities into account, deals with drugs, and in general is realistic without being cumbersome or complicated.

The sorcery system in Chapter Five is the biggest gem in the entire book. There is an interesting section on the nature of magic in the Young Kingdoms which opens up the chapter, and gives the DM an understanding of the basic theories of Moorcockian magic so that he can handle any situations not covered by the rules in specific.

Stormbringer magic is very colorful, and is the first magic system I have seen that easily simulates sorcery. This system very definitely is sorcery as opposed to simple spell casting. A sorcerer has no magical abilities of his own in this game; he is only able to bind other magical creatures to his will, forcing them to do his bidding. The magic system forces a player to think when planning a magical operation, and a successful player can look forward to having a very powerful sorcerer as a character - but only after having taken some terrible risks. These rules are well thought out, follow Moorcock's mythos closely, and should be a great deal of fun to play. They are some of the most colorful and "magical feeling" rules on the market today.

Clarification of religion is always a difficult subject, especially when the religions must be true to a literary myth that did not give a great deal of information to work on. The author has had to develop a whole new method of dealing with cults for this game, and he has succeeded admirably. The author has taken the sparse information available on the religion in the Young Kingdoms and has created a simple, workable system. In the following chapters that deal with the creatures and monsters of the Young Kingdoms, and the unique problems



of running a game set in a doomed world, St. Andre has stayed remarkably close to the original scenario found in Moorcock's Elric stories.

Though St. Andre has not been so faithful to Runequest, the game system that fostered Stormbringer's mechanics, the changes he has made can be easily reversed if the GM is familiar with the Runequest system. If St. Andre was a bit off the mark with his mechanics, then he hit dead center in his attempt to codify the societies, cultures, and magics of the Young Kingdoms for Stormbringer. Virtually everything that absolutely had to be correct is correct, and any problems with the rules are relatively minor.

Stormbringer is a great buy for \$20, especially when compared with the products of some other companies whose game systems can't be played until you have shelled out \$35-40 for several different components. In brief, I would rate Stormbringer the following on a 1-10 scale: Artwork 9 1/2, Rules 7, Playability 8, Adaptability (general) 7, Adaptability (to Runequest and other Chaosium products) 8 1/2, Complexity 7, Idea Source 8. If you enjoy Runequest and the Elric books by Michael Moorcock, buy Stormbringer. If you think that Runequest has the right idea but is too complex, buy Stormbringer. I'm glad I did.

\* \* \*

Editor's note: For those interested in purchasing Stormbringer, we suggest that you contact the manufacturer, Chaosium, P.O. Box 6302, Albany, CA 94706 for mail order information, or check with your local game dealer. The Elric books by Michael Moorcock are recommended for additional background on the game.

# GAMING PUBLICATIONS

by Rick Priest

Author's Note: Because of a boom in the small gaming magazine industry, it is worthwhile that we run a regular review column on several of the offerings available, both in the United States and in foreign countries. For this issue, we will briefly examine two APA (Amateur Press Association) publications that have been on the scene for a number of years. Because many readers aren't familiar with exactly what an APA is, an explanation has been provided.

An APA publication is the ultimate in free-form communication. Usually run by a group of gamers based in a local geographical area, the APA is an unedited medium of small circulation where anyone may express his thoughts, opinions and ideas about gaming, and respond to the comments of other writers. Because the cost of obtaining copies is usually fairly reasonable, the APA is often superior in value to the professional magazines, such as Dragon, Different Worlds, or White Dwarf, because of the relative amount of usable material presented in each issue, in an economical format that saves the subscriber money.

Of course, APAs have their share of problems. One of the more prevalent is the large amount of worthless discussion that sometimes clutters the articles. While this is fine for those who are familiar with the writer and associate with him outside the APA, it might cause a great deal of confusion for the newcomer. However, this difficulty fades away with a little time and patience, and shouldn't cause anyone to become discouraged and abandon all hope of ever enjoying the APA. Other problems also frequently occur, such as poor printing and binding methods, clumsy art, or messy layout and typing, but are easily dealt with or just simply ignored.



The experience of participating directly in an APA can be both fun and rewarding, especially if the reader is also a regular contributor. As has been said before, APAs are basically unedited, thus nearly all reader submissions will be printed. Usually, printing will be directly from the typewritten manuscript supplied by the writer. Contributors should expect a small fee to help cover the costs of printing and production, but, again, it is well worth it. Complete details are available from the publisher.

It is important to note that the APA is definitely not for everyone. Some will find it to be a valuable source of new ideas for running a campaign, and others will find it to be a failure. Generally speaking, the more serious the gamer, the more to be gained from the APA. "Summer DMs" should stay away, but most other gamers will find a most worthwhile addition to the game, once they catch up on the comments about past issues and such. This author recommends that several publications be considered, and that the reader try to become involved with an APA, both on a reading and writing level.

Now with a little background established, here is some information about two of the top American APAs. While the information presented is not critical, it should be helpful in aiding the decision about which publications to try.

ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS is a monthly collection of articles and comments by American, British and Australian Fantasy Role Players. Games discussed include D&D, AD&D, Runquest, and C&S. New magic, new monsters, new character classes, new rules, modules, game reviews, songs, stories, adventure write-ups and general conversation all appear regularly. 100-160 full-sized pages (no advertisements), mimeo-graphed.

A&E is \$1.50 per copy plus postage. At current postal rates, a copy of A&E is \$2.13 domestic, or \$2.33 foreign. Anyone may contribute to A&E, the cost is \$1.50 per typed page, or less for contributions on mimeograph stencils. The contributor receives a free copy of the issue contributed in. Please make all checks to Lee Gold (the Editor), 3965 Alla Rd., Los Angeles, CA 90066.

PANDEMONIUM (formerly APA-DuD) is The New York Role Playing Amateur Press Association. To receive copies, you should contribute writing periodically, or send \$2.00 per issue. Please send 75 or more copies of your contribution, or arrange for a local printer at your cost. (Art used for covers will be printed at the expense of the APA). A sample copy may be obtained by sending \$2 to Robert Sacks, at the address below.

Send art material to: David Kaplan, 40 Fifth Ave., New York, NY, 10011.

Send written material to: Robert Sacks, 4861 Broadway 5-V, New York, NY 10034.

You cannot predict what games will be discussed; D&D, AD&D, TFT, Traveller, Runequest, a game under development, or whatever anyone chooses to write about. The culture shock between New Jersey and New York alone founded the APA over four years ago, and every month, 11 am, the First Saturday of the month, the APA gathers at The Compleat Strategist, 11 E. 33rd St., New York, NY to collate, talk and perhaps even play a few games.

Recent issues have included excellent artwork by Cathryn Berend and David Kaplan, comic artwork by Mark Blackman, Jon Favreau, John Fluker and Tim O'Donnell, and writing by David Allen, Eric Jablow, David Kaplan, Howard Mahler, Paul Rini, Ken Rolston, William Seligman, Patrick Sweeney, and Robert West. There is a calendar of events, news about gaming and science fiction activities, and some recruiting for local conventions.

NEXT ISSUE: Two semi-professional magazines will be critically reviewed; Phantasy and Abyss.

# CONTEST

The First Annual Dungeon Module Competition  
is now in process!

(Sponsored by Horizon International, in co-operation with  
the editors of The Oracle magazine.)

## Rules

For the sake of simplicity, all dungeon entries must be compatible with the official AD&D™ or D&D® rules. The material in the dungeon may be geared for any character level(s), class(es), or race(s). Maps must be drawn on graph paper (any readable size) in pen, with appropriate notes as to scale and encounter keys. Contestants are allowed to create new monsters, magic items or spells, with complete descriptions in standard form. Encounter descriptions involving monsters must include data on such things as hit points (HP), armor class (AC), etc.

All entries must be typed, double-spaced, with a maximum of twenty five pages of manuscript (including maps). The judges and playtesters will be rating ingenuity, originality, presentation and playability in deciding the winners. Illustrated entries will be given extra consideration on the area of presentation, if the illustrations are passable in quality. Contestant must enclose a signed letter stating that the entry is his original work, and will not infringe on any copyright laws, or on the rights of any third party. There is no limit on how many entries may be submitted by one person, but only one entry from any person can win a prize. Multiple entries must be mailed in separate envelopes.

## Deadlines

All entries must be postmarked no later than Nov. 31, 1982, P.M. Winners will be announced upon completion of the judging process (specutively in issue #5 Jan 1983). Horizon International reserves the right to cancel or delay this contest in the event that response is not sufficient to warrant the awarding of the prizes listed below.

## Prizes

First Place:	\$50.00
Second Place:	\$35.00
Third Place:	\$20.00

Honorary Mentions (3): 8-issue subscription to The Oracle

Consolation: All entries receive a discount coupon good for \$2 off any new subscription or renewal the The Oracle.

## Return

Entries will be returned if accompanied by a SASE of proper size and weight, except winning entries, which will be printed in upcoming issues of The Oracle. No entry will be returned unless accompanied by SASE.

Send entries or address questions to:

FADMC  
1445 E. Seville Way  
Bountiful, UT 84010

### READERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE

This Questionnaire is not intended to be a "filler." We sincerely need to have data on all the items listed, so we can decide such questions as: What games do we cover most often? To what character levels do we gear such things as adventures, monsters and spells? What gaming conventions should we attend, to better accomodate our readers? What type of articles should be printed? And other obvious questions.

Please - help us out! This page and the one following it may be photocopied if so desired, to avoid defacing this magazine. If you need more room, feel free to attach additional sheets full of comments, criticism, suggestions, items for our Reader Ideas column,.... etc., etc.

1. What role-playing games do you play most often? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the average character level in your playing group? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What gaming conventions do you attend, or plan to attend? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Please check off the types of articles you would like to see most often in The Oracle:

- ☐ Dungeon modules
- ☐ Monsters, spells, magic items
- ☐ Fiction
- ☐ Comics and humor
- ☐ Commentary and opinions
- ☐ Product reviews
- ☐ Rule variants
- ☐ Scenario expansion
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

5. What are your thoughts and opinions concerning a question/answer column that readers actively participate in? \_\_\_\_\_

6. What are your thoughts and opinions concerning a Product Swap Listing, for readers to list and purchase used items from? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Based on what you've seen so far, how does The Oracle compare with the other small magazines in the field? \_\_\_\_\_



8. What gaming magazines do you read regularly? (both professional and semi-professional) \_\_\_\_\_

9. What would be motivating subjects for Contests to be held in the future?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### FEEDBACK ON ISSUE #1

FEEDBACK is a regular feature to help us know what we're doing right and (alas!) what we're doing wrong. Your response is greatly appreciated, as are your comments on any aspect of our magazine.

Please rate the following items on a scale of 1-10.

Cover art:	_____	Stormbringer review:	_____
Interior art:	_____	Gaming Publications:	_____
Headlines, type:	_____	Contest:	_____
Advertisements:	_____	Movie Reviews:	_____
Editorial:	_____	The Healer:	_____
Reader Ideas:	_____	Justice Be Done:	_____
PBM Gaming:	_____	OVERALL:	_____

Questions Would you prefer numerous short articles, or fewer lengthy articles in The Oracle? \_\_\_\_\_

What is a decent name for our READER IDEAS column (see bottom of page 8)? \_\_\_\_\_

The first ten readers to respond to this combination Questionnaire/Feedback form will receive a free 8-issue subscription or renewal to The Oracle. Fill it out now, and send it in!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

# The Oracle

*A new magazine for role-players!*

Embark on an incredible journey through the world of fantasy and science fiction gaming — aboard The Oracle! Vast regions lie unexplored ... new realms await discovery ... and The Oracle is *the* way to do it!

Each digest-sized issue combines fiction, art and editorial comment with new game variants, dungeon adventures, new monsters and magic, campaign expansion ideas and reader commentary plus much more to create a wholly satisfying publication for all. And readers have the opportunity to purchase items from our Discount Game & Book Listing!

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## ABYSS

ABYSS is a bi-monthly magazine which explores the borderlands of fantasy gaming, with innovative articles, new variants, modules, and more. All material is compatible with D & D and other games. Regular features include magic items, monsters, world design, character classes, and other topics, covered by major writers and designers.

Each issue of ABYSS is at least 20 digest-sized pages of reduced type, which makes it the equal of magazines which look larger. Best of all, ABYSS is only \$5 for 6 issues or \$10 for 12. A sample copy is only \$1.

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